



# BUILDING YOUR LEADERSHIP PIPELINE

An Employer's Guide to Ignite Louisville

Presenting Sponsor



A NOTE FROM MARIA

# Where Louisville's strongest mid-career professionals become its next generation of leaders.

Hi, I'm Maria Della Bella, and I manage engagement for Ignite Louisville at the Leadership Louisville Center. I'm glad this guide found its way to you.

Ignite Louisville is a competitive six-month leadership development experience for mid-career professionals who are ready for more, the strong contributors, managers, and directors you're investing in for the long run. It gives them deliberate leadership development that closes real skill gaps before they step into bigger roles, rather than the trial-and-error most leaders navigate alone.

Since 2004, Louisville's most respected employers have sent their rising leaders here because of what comes back: stronger leaders, better decisions, and teams that run well when the manager is out of the room, plus a cross-sector network that becomes an asset for your organization, not just the individual.

This guide covers what the program builds, who to nominate, and how to ensure it delivers a real return rather than just a line item. When you're ready to talk it through, my team and I are here to help you find the right fit for your people.

Glad you're here,

**Maria**



**Maria Della Bella, Engagement Manager  
Leadership Louisville Center**

Nominations Close: June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Applications Close: August 3, 2026

[mdellabella@leadershiplouisville.org](mailto:mdellabella@leadershiplouisville.org)

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# Ignite Louisville at a glance



<b>WHO IT'S FOR</b>	Mid-career professionals ready for more, from strong individual contributors to directors, typically ages 25 to 45, across every sector
<b>FORMAT</b>	A two-day opening retreat, five monthly full-day program days, and a full-day graduation
<b>TIME COMMITMENT</b>	About a day a month in session, plus a few hours a week on the Leadership Challenge, heavier closer to graduation
<b>CLASS SIZE</b>	~55, selected competitively
<b>TUITION</b>	\$4,725, covering the full experience
<b>DATES</b>	Program runs October 2026 through April 2027 Nominations close June 30, 2026 Applications close August 3, 2026
<b>QUICK LINKS</b>	<a href="https://leadershiplouisville.org/ignite-louisville/">https://leadershiplouisville.org/ignite-louisville/</a> <a href="https://leadershiplouisville.org/nominate/">https://leadershiplouisville.org/nominate/</a>

## ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE SENT THEIR PEOPLE

Norton Healthcare · Brown-Forman · Humana · LG&E / KU Yum! Brands · Frost Brown Todd · Heaven Hill · Beam Suntory · Republic Bank · GE Appliances · Messer · Dean Dorton · Louisville MSD · Metro United Way

*Partial list; over 1,400 alumni represent nearly every major sector and industry in Louisville.*

## INSIDE THIS GUIDE

- The Business Case
- The Strategic Case
- The Framework
- The Curriculum
- The Leadership Challenge
- The Return
- The Cost
- Let's Talk

# Developing your best people costs a fraction of losing them

*The math on retention has rarely been this lopsided, or this urgent*

Engagement is at a ten-year low,<sup>1</sup> and the people holding your teams together are the ones with the most options elsewhere. When one of them leaves, replacing them can run from half to twice their salary, with managers at the top of that range.<sup>2</sup>

## **Developing someone you already trust costs a fraction of that.**

Development is also what keeps them. People leave when they can't grow, and the leaders you build tend to outlast the ones you hire in.

The work itself is changing fast. The World Economic Forum projects that 39 percent of workers' core skills will change by 2030, and the fastest-growing ones are human as much as technical: leadership, influence, and adaptability.<sup>5</sup> As AI reshapes the work and teams grow more distributed, leading people well is what holds an organization together.

## **Investing in a high performer is the move that compounds.**

### SOURCES

1. Gallup, "U.S. Employee Engagement Sinks to 10-Year Low." <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/654911/employee-engagement-sinks-year-low.aspx>
2. SHRM, "The Myth of Replaceability." <https://www.shrm.org/executive-network/insights/myth-replaceability-preparing-loss-key-employees>
3. LinkedIn, 2025 Workplace Learning Report. <https://learning.linkedin.com/resources/workplace-learning-report>
4. Knowledge at Wharton, research by Matthew Bidwell. <https://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/why-external-hires-get-paid-more-and-perform-worse-than-internal-staff/>
5. World Economic Forum, Future of Jobs Report 2025 <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>

**31%**

U.S. employees engaged at work in 2024, a ten-year low (Gallup)

**50–200%**

of salary to replace someone; managers sit at the top (SHRM)

**#1**

Career Growth, the top reason employees learn and stay (LinkedIn, 2025)

**61%**

more likely outside hires are to be let go early than internal promotes (Wharton)

# Ignite Louisville is a leadership lab, built for real application

*Built around both curriculum and practice, because skills stick better when you apply them*

A lot of leadership development happens in a conference room, where good ideas are presented, and everyone heads back to their desks. The ideas are usually sound; what tends to be missing is the part where you apply them, because that's when you learn what actually holds.

Ignite Louisville is built around that part, pairing an expert curriculum with a real-world challenge that runs throughout the program, so every skill is practiced under real conditions. That's how your nominee proves it works, and how you see the difference back at work.

**They lead through influence.** They learn to align teams, build buy-in, and move cross-functional work forward through trust and clear communication.

**Practiced in real conditions.** The Leadership Challenge puts your nominee on a cross-sector team, leading a real nonprofit project on a real deadline.

**A cross-sector lens.** Six months alongside leaders from healthcare, legal, corporate, nonprofit, and civic life. Perspective you can't build internally.

**A network that compounds.** Alumni stay in each other's corners for decades, and that network becomes an asset for your organization, not just the individual.



## Who You Should Nominate

You probably already know who they are. The people who thrive here tend to share a few things:

- A strong performer you're investing in for the long run: reliable, trusted, and ready for more responsibility.
- Strong in execution or influence, or maybe a little bit of both. Ignite Louisville closes the gap.
- Almost ready for the next step, usually within 12 to 24 months. The program accelerates readiness.

# Built around one idea: great leaders execute and influence at once

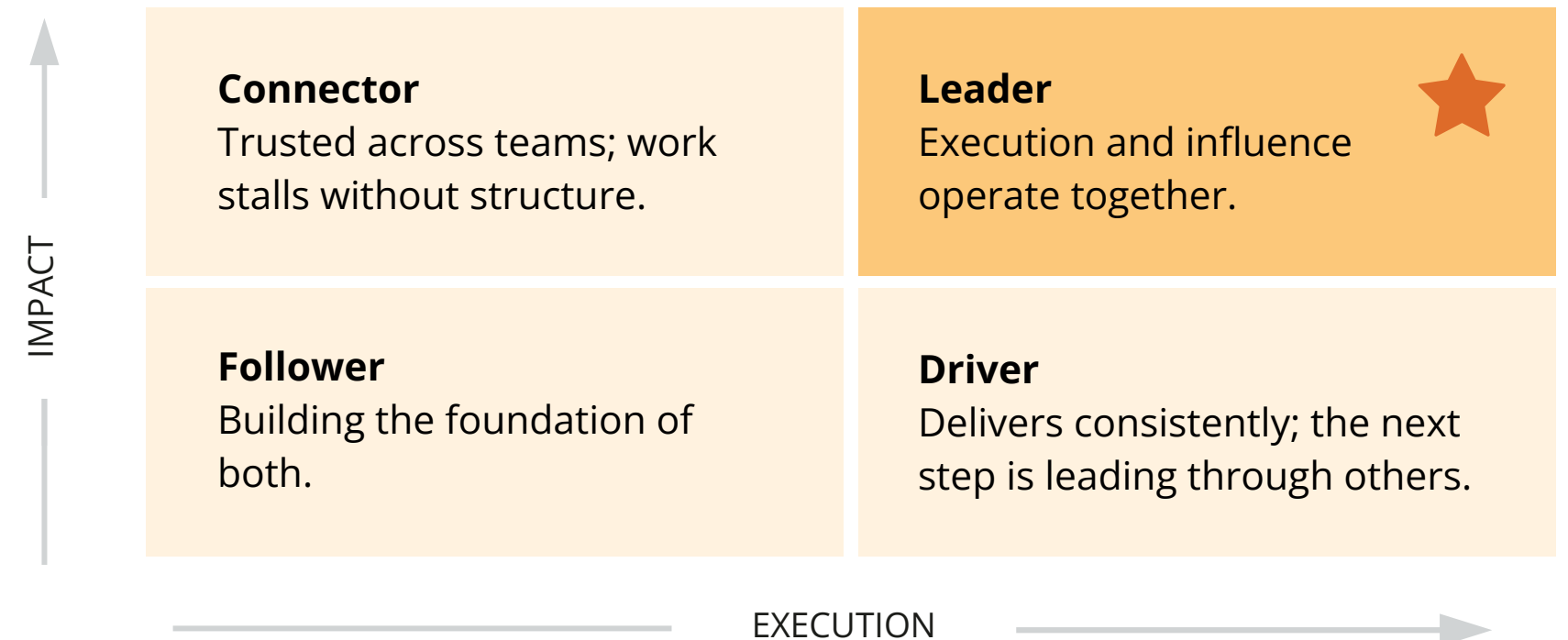
*The Execution × Influence framework, and where your nominee fits today*

Ignite Louisville is built around one core framework, **Execution × Influence**. Most mid-career leaders are strong in one or the other, either driving results or building relationships, and the leaders who keep getting promoted do both, consistently, even when the stakes are high.

The person you nominate probably lives in one of two quadrants today. The Driver delivers but can struggle to bring the team along, and the Connector builds trust but has a harder time moving work forward without authority. Ignite Louisville is built to move both toward the Leader quadrant, where execution and influence work together.

**Most participants arrive as Drivers or Connectors, and graduate knowing how to operate as Leaders.**

## Execution x Influence Leadership Framework



*Framework developed by Aaron Miller, VP of Programming at the Leadership Louisville Center, and delivered through LeadingBetter™ facilitators.*

# The curriculum behind the framework

*From self-awareness to influence, taught by Louisville leaders*

Throughout the program, these skills are put to work in the Leadership Challenge, the live nonprofit project that is part of the Ignite Louisville experience.

## WHAT THE SIX MONTHS COVER

- **Opening Retreat:** The Predictive Index assessment, emotional intelligence, and team-building, so the cohort starts by understanding how they are wired and how they work with others.
- **Project Management & Execution:** Proven tools for moving work forward.
- **Productivity Playbook:** Prioritization, delegation, accountability, and systems thinking to keep work moving once it is underway.
- **Innovation & Collaboration:** Structured methods for solving complex problems with a team, and the behaviors that help a group think better together.
- **Embracing Conflict:** How to disagree well and make sharper decisions.
- **Communicate with Impact:** communication style, executive presence, storytelling, and influence.
- **Graduation Day:** Final Leadership Challenge presentations to a panel of judges and a structured review of what they learned.



## Who Teaches It

The curriculum is taught by LeadingBetter™ facilitators, experienced leaders who have run teams and organizations themselves and now teach what they learned doing it.

Throughout the six months, the cohort also learns directly from senior executives across Louisville's most respected organizations, in conversation rather than lecture. Past and current guest speakers have included leaders from Norton Healthcare, Brown-Forman, Humana, Yum! Brands, LG&E, Doe Anderson, Greater Louisville Inc., and GE Appliances.

# What separates Ignite Louisville from every other program

*Where the curriculum gets put to work.*

Alongside the curriculum, every participant helps lead a real challenge for a Louisville nonprofit, with a cross-sector team they didn't choose, real stakeholders, and a deadline that doesn't move. It's the live application lab where six months of learning gets tested, and **the skills your nominee practices here are the ones they bring back to you: prioritization, communication, execution, and the composure to lead when plans shift.**

## Examples of what the Class of 2026 practiced:

- **Strategic focus over doing everything.** For NAMI Louisville, a team used gap analysis to focus on the highest-impact work, then built a funding strategy, a path into area middle schools, and a brand and media toolkit.
- **Internal clarity before external momentum.** For Blueprint502, mid-rebrand, a team aligned staff around shared messaging, then took it public with a city-wide awareness campaign and lasting volunteer systems.
- **Turning ideas into impact, fast.** This year's winning team, for WAGS Pet Therapy, tested and refined in real time, delivering new volunteer onboarding, a live-tested social strategy, and a recruitment roadmap.
- **Leading through change.** For the Louisville Asset Building Coalition, a team kept moving when the director retired mid-project, training volunteers before tax season and delivering a brand refresh and the organization's first pitchbook.

## Graduation Day



Each team presents their Leadership Challenge projects to community leaders, judges, nonprofit partners, and employers, and it's the moment you see your investment on stage. You're invited.

# Changes you see right away, compounding every month

*The kind of capability that shows up in the work itself*

You don't wait until graduation to notice a difference. They start applying what they learn after the very first program day, a sharper way to run a meeting or a better-handled disagreement, and it builds from there. By the end of six months, here is what it looks like at work.

- **They build ownership across the team.** Rather than holding the work themselves, they develop their people, so it keeps moving even when they are out of the room.
- **They communicate with precision, up and across.** They walk into senior rooms with clarity, frame a message for any audience, and influence without leaning on title.
- **They handle conflict as a skill.** Hard conversations happen earlier, with better outcomes and less fallout.
- **They execute with more discipline.** They come back with frameworks for prioritization, delegation, and project leadership, and they actually use them.
- **They bring an outside perspective and a network that works for you.** Six months alongside leaders across sectors means ideas you couldn't have generated internally, plus contacts that stay useful long after graduation.

## *The Person You Sponsor Feels It Too*



They leave with a sharper read on how they lead, a credential that places them among more than 1,400 alumni, and a cohort that will know their name for decades. The message a sponsorship sends, that you're investing in them, is one of the strongest retention signals you can give.

THE COST

# The math makes the case

Tuition is \$4,725, and it covers the full six months: curriculum and facilitation, the opening retreat, every program day and graduation, the Predictive Index assessment, materials and meals, the Leadership Challenge, lifetime alumni access, and the credential.

OPTION	TYPICAL RANGE*	WHAT YOU GET
<b>Ignite Louisville (6 months)</b>	<b>\$4,725</b>	<b>A cohort, an applied nonprofit project, community visibility, and a lifelong cross-sector network</b>
Executive coaching	\$5,000–\$30,000 / engagement	One-on-one only; no cohort, applied practice, or network
Leadership conference	\$500–\$5,000 / person, before travel	A few days of content; no sustained practice, project, or credential
Mini-MBA / certificate	\$1,000–\$8,000	Academic coursework; no cross-sector cohort or community project

**Scholarship support is available for nonprofit leaders, small business leaders, and select voices where cost is a barrier. If that is a factor for your organization or a specific candidate, Maria and the engagement team can walk you through the options.**

\* Sources: International Coaching Federation, 2025 Global Coaching Study; SHRM Annual Conference rates and GoGather conference cost data; Rutgers Business School and Wharton Executive Education program tuition.



**LET’S CHAT**

*Ready to nominate, or want to talk it through first?*

Nominate or commit to sponsoring someone before June 30 (applications close August 3), and we’ll handle the rest.

Or take fifteen minutes with Maria and the engagement team to talk through fit.



**Maria Della Bella, Engagement Manager  
Leadership Louisville Center**

[mdellabella@leadershiplouisville.org](mailto:mdellabella@leadershiplouisville.org)

[Schedule a Call](#)

**What do people think of Ignite Louisville?**

Hear from the people who’ve been through the program, and the organizations that keep sending their teams back <The Ignite Effect Link>

For the full calendar and FAQ, visit [leadershiplouisville.org/ignite-louisville](https://leadershiplouisville.org/ignite-louisville), or call the engagement team.