



WHERE LOUISVILLE'S NEXT LEADERS ARE MADE

A closer look at how Ignite Louisville changes the way you lead.



Presenting Sponsor



A NOTE FROM MARIA

If you're reading this, you're already closer than you think.

Hi, I'm Maria Della Bella, the Recruitment & Enrollment Manager for Ignite Louisville. I'm glad this found its way to you.

If you're here, it's usually for one of two reasons. Someone saw where you're headed and put your name forward, or you put it forward yourself because you have bigger career plans and are ready to grow!

Here's what this guide is for: a deeper look at the curriculum, the Leadership Challenge, what changes by the end, and how to apply. Everything you need to decide with confidence whether this is the right next step for your career.

If part of what's on your mind is how to bring this to your employer, [the Boss Conversation Toolkit](#) is here when you want it. Some people lean on it, some barely need it, depending on where you are in your career and how you and your manager already work together. Either way, it gives you talking points, email templates, and answers to the questions managers tend to ask.

As you read, if anything makes you pause or sparks a question like "wait, what about that," my calendar is always open if you need to talk it through. I'd love to hear from you.

In Your Corner,

Maria



Maria Della Bella
Recruitment & Enrollment Manager
Leadership Louisville Center

Nominations Close: June 30th, 2026
Applications Close: August 1, 2026

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[Schedule a Call](#)

IS THIS YOU?

Built for the moment you're ready to take on more

The leaders who thrive here tend to share a few things

You're mid-career and already delivering. You're the person who gets handed the work that matters, and you handle it. Now you can feel the pull toward something bigger: a larger role, a broader team, more say over the decisions that shape your organization.

Ignite Louisville is built for that moment, when you're ready to lead at a higher level and you want the craft to match the ambition. The professionals who get the most out of it didn't arrive with everything figured out. They came in with the drive, and they found the framework, the room, and the push to go get it.

If you see yourself in any of these, you're in the right place:



You're ready for the next level, and you want a clearer sense of how to get there.



You're leading people, or about to, and you want to build that skill deliberately rather than learn it on the fly.



You see yourself on the lists that recognize the people shaping their company, their industry, and this city.



You have influence, but want it to carry more weight. The kind that moves decisions and aligns people through the work you lead.



You're ready for a room that pushes you, full of people who think nothing like you, from sectors nothing like yours.



You want a network that actually shows up, for each other, their organizations, and this city, and that grows alongside you for years.

Great leaders execute and influence at once

Where you lead from today, and where Ignite Louisville takes you

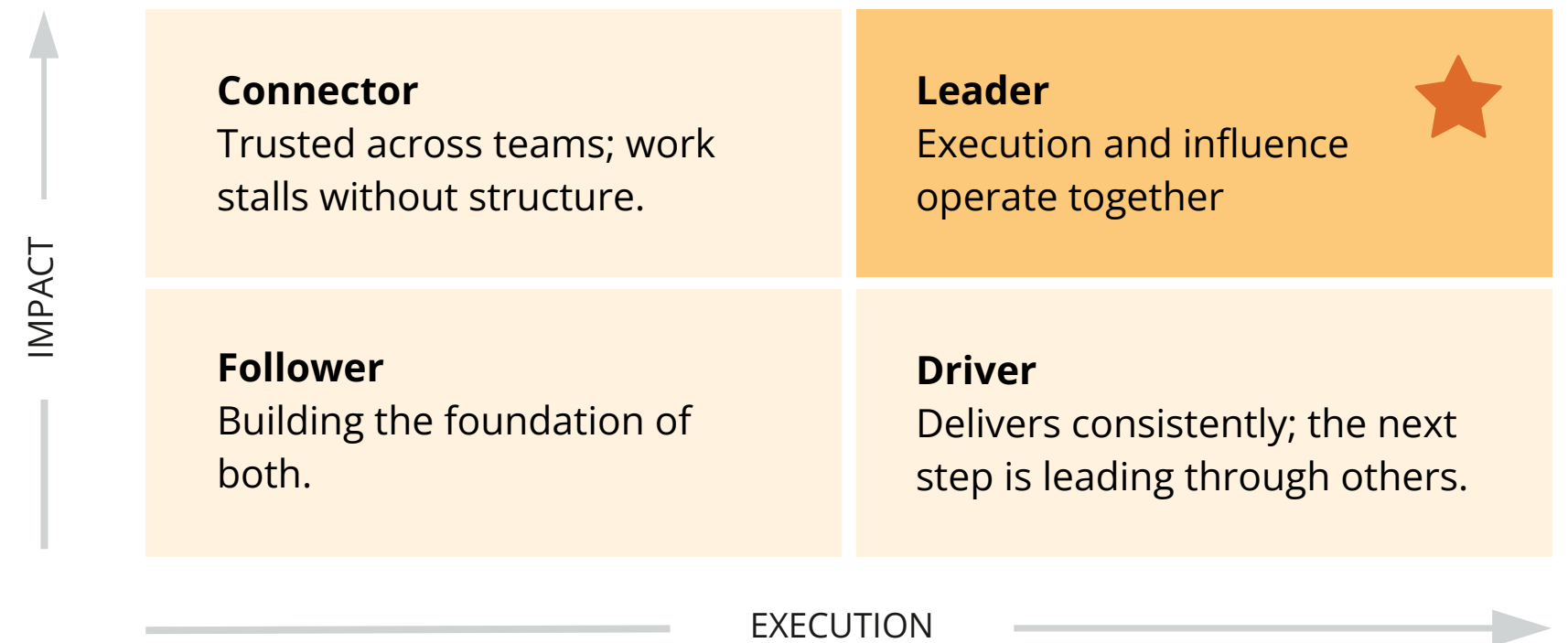
You've been promoted because you get things done.
That's execution.

The higher you go, the more the work becomes about getting other people to deliver: aligning a team when priorities compete, influencing a decision you don't own, keeping things moving when the path isn't clear.
That's influence.

Most people are naturally stronger in one, and Ignite Louisville is built to develop both.

Most participants arrive as Drivers or Connectors. They graduate knowing how to operate as Leaders, especially under pressure, ambiguity, and competing priorities.

Execution x Influence Leadership Framework



The skills you'll build over six months

What you'll learn, and how it shows up at work

Throughout Ignite Louisville, you'll build the practical leadership skills that show up in your work right away.

HERE'S WHAT THE PROGRAM COVERS:

- **Opening Retreat.** You start with self-awareness, the operational kind. Using the Predictive Index, you'll learn how you're wired and how you lead under pressure, alongside a cohort that comes to know it too.
- **Project Management & Execution.** Proven tools for moving complex work forward through other people.
- **Productivity Playbook.** Prioritization, delegation, accountability, and systems thinking, so the work keeps moving once it's underway.
- **Innovation & Collaboration.** Structured methods for solving hard problems with a team, and the behaviors that help a group think better together.
- **Embracing Conflict.** How to disagree well, because the leaders who do make sharper decisions and build stronger teams.
- **Communicate with Impact.** Communication style, executive presence, storytelling, and influence up, down, and across.
- **Graduation Day.** Final Leadership Challenge presentations to a panel of judges, and a structured look back at how far you've come.



Who Teaches It

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

Throughout the six months, you'll also learn directly from senior executives across Louisville's most respected organizations.

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.

Where everything you're learning meets the real world

A real project, for a real Louisville nonprofit

Running alongside the curriculum, your team takes on a real project for a Louisville nonprofit, with real stakeholders and a deadline that won't move. You'll be placed on a cross-sector team you didn't pick and handed a problem the organization genuinely needs solved.

It's the live application lab for the whole program. Everything you study in the room, you practice here: prioritization, influence, communication, and leading when the plan shifts. By graduation, you've put the curriculum to work on a live team, with something on the line.

And the work matters beyond you. Every year, Ignite Louisville teams leave their nonprofit partners stronger than they found them. It's the part alumni talk about years later, partly for what they learned, and partly for how it felt to build something lasting for their city alongside people they came to trust.

Graduation Day



Your team presents its Leadership Challenge project to a room of community leaders, judges, and nonprofit partners. It's the day your work takes the stage, and the day you join 1,400 Ignite Louisville alumni.

See the projects past teams have taken on → leadershiplouisville.org/ignite-louisville/challenge/





BY THE END

You won't lead the same way again

The shifts you'll feel in how you work, lead, and show up

You'll notice the difference almost right away, and what you learn compounds over the program.

BY THE END, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO:

-  **Get the right things done, through the right people.** You came in strong on execution. You'll leave sharper on everything around it: prioritization that holds when the work gets bigger, and delegation that grows the people around you.
-  **Lead across different teams and working styles.** Lead through conflict instead of around it, influence where you don't hold the title, and build the kind of safety that lets a team do its best thinking.
-  **Stay steady when it counts.** You'll know how you operate when things get hard, and you'll have a cohort who knows it too, in your corner for decades.
-  **Point to a real project that proves it.** You'll finish with a completed project for a Louisville nonprofit, real results you helped deliver, and a clear story about your leadership in it: the calls you made, the team you moved, how it all came together. Concrete proof for your next interview, performance review, or board conversation.



"Participating in Ignite Louisville was a transformative experience. I emerged not only as a more capable leader, but as a more confident individual. It didn't just elevate my career, it enriched my life."

Skyler Daugherty · Class of 2024

[See more alumni stories →](#)
[The Ignite Effect Youtube playlist](#)

WHO YOU'LL JOIN + AT A GLANCE

The room that raises your game

Six months alongside people as driven as you, and a network that lasts decades

You'll learn a lot in the curriculum and prove it in the Leadership Challenge. But the people you do it with are what stay with you. Around 55 mid-career professionals, from every sector in Louisville, together for six months.

What happens in the cohort doesn't end at graduation. More than 1,400 Ignite Louisville alumni sit in C-suites, run organizations, lead civic work, and serve on boards across Kentucky. They recommend each other, hire each other, and show up for each other for years.

Organizations that have sent their rising leaders here:





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)

WHO IT'S FOR	Mid-career professionals ready for more, from strong individual contributors to directors, typically ages 25 to 45, across every sector
FORMAT	A two-day opening retreat, five monthly full-day program days, and a full-day graduation
TIME COMMITMENT	About a day a month in session, plus a few hours a week on the Leadership Challenge, heavier closer to graduation
CLASS SIZE	~55, selected competitively
TUITION	\$4,725, covering the full experience
DATES	Program runs October 2026 through April 2027

HOW TO APPLY

Ready when you are

The path from here to the Class of 2027

-  **The application.** It asks how you lead today and where you're going next: your leadership style, a challenge that shaped you, where you want to grow, and why now.
-  **Admission is competitive.** A committee reads every application, and not everyone who applies is selected. That's part of what makes the cohort what it is, so give yours real thought.
-  **The timeline.** Applications close August 1, 2026. Decisions are shared in September. The program opens with the mandatory October retreat.
-  **One class a year. *If not now, the next opening is more than twelve months away.*** You've already done the harder part, getting specific about the leader you want to become. The application is the easy part.

[Start your application for the Class of 2027 →](#)

Bringing it to your boss? Most participants are employer-sponsored, and [the Boss Conversation Toolkit makes the ask easier →](#)

LET'S CHAT

If anything's holding you back, the timing, the fit, the employer conversation, reach out. No pressure, I just want to make sure it isn't something I can help with.



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[Schedule a Call](#)

Want to hear it from someone other than us?
[Meet the alumni in The Ignite Effect](#), people from every sector who've been through the program.

Looking for the full calendar and FAQ?
Visit leadershiplouisville.org/ignite-louisville, or call the Recruitment Team anytime.