CLASS OF 2026
APPLICATION

LEAD HIGHER

ADVANCED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Powered by the Virginia Peninsula Chamber
in partnership with Christopher Newport University

ADVANCED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

DISCOVER LEAD HIGHER

Join us for LEAD Higher, a groundbreaking program developed through a strategic partnership between the Virginia Peninsula Chamber and Christopher Newport University (CNU). This transformative experience features one program day each month, each dedicated to a specific leadership principle. Our curriculum expertly blends theoretical knowledge with practical insights, delivered by esteemed CNU professors and enriched by engaging conversations with recognized leaders from the Commonwealth's business community.

Building on the solid foundation of the Virginia Peninsula Chamber's renowned LEAD Peninsula program, LEAD Higher is designed to propel you to new heights. While participation in LEAD Peninsula is beneficial, it is not a strict prerequisite. LEAD Higher welcomes emerging leaders from the Virginia Peninsula's business community, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and academic institutions.

Take the next step in your leadership journey. Embrace the opportunity to learn, grow, and make a lasting impact with LEAD Higher.

For more information on the LEAD Higher program, or for questions on the application process, contact Jaime Parrish at jaime@vpcc.org.

APPLICANT CHECKLIST

If you received a printed copy of the application, you can contact the Chamber to receive an electronic version. **Before submitting your application packet, make sure you have done the following:**

- ☐ Completed the 'Applicant's Personal Information' section (page 4)
- ☐ Completed the 'Applicant's Employment Information' section (page 5)
- ☐ Read the 'Applicant Agreement' section (page 5)
- ☐ Signed and Dated the 'Applicant Agreement' (page 5)
- ☐ Completed and Attached the Essay Prompt (page 6)
- ☐ Obtained your sponsor's/employer's permission—They must complete the 'Business/ Organization's Agreement' section of the application (page 6)
- ☐ Attached a recent (high resolution) headshot and bio
- ☐ Attached two (2) letters of recommendation to the application. If you are applying with a sponsoring organization, at least one letter should be from your supervisor or a senior manager in the organization. Reference letters should be signed and should address the following:
  - How the letter writer knows the applicant and the length of their acquaintance
  - An assessment of the applicant's demonstrated leadership qualities
- ☐ Completed the application packet in its entirety and saved it electronically

Submit original application by email to: jaime@vpcc.org
OR mail the entire application package to:
Virginia Peninsula Chamber | 11850 Merchants Walk, Suite 110 | Newport News, VA 23606

Application Deadline: Friday, October 10, 2025

NOTES

1. Applicants will receive written notification of their enrollment status by Friday, October 31, 2025. No advanced invoices or acceptance of payments until everyone is notified of their acceptance.

2. Applications are not held from year to year. Those not accepted for this year's class may apply again next year.

3. The anticipated Program Schedule is listed on page 7 of the application packet.

4. Participant's attendance records will be available upon request throughout the program year.

APPLICANT'S PERSONAL INFORMATION

Please print clearly.

SALUTATIONS: Mr. ☐ Mrs. ☐ Ms. ☐ Other (Including Military Rank) ☐ _____

FIRST NAME MIDDLE NAME LAST NAME

NICKNAME/PREFERRED NAME

EMAIL ADDRESS CELL PHONE NUMBER

WORK ADDRESS

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS
(If different from Work Address)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

SOCIAL MEDIA CONTACT INFORMATION
Personal and/or Business.

WEBSITE

LINKEDIN PROFILE

FACEBOOK PROFILE

INSTAGRAM PROFILE

OTHER

***Please attach a recent (high resolution) headshot and bio.**

APPLICANT'S EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

CURRENT EMPLOYER EMPLOYED SINCE (MONTH/YEAR)

JOB TITLE

Briefly describe your current responsibilities at work:

APPLICANT AGREEMENT

Participants are expected to:

1. Be actively and fully involved in all aspects of the LEAD Higher program.

2. Interact with classmates, presenters, and chamber staff.

3. The program asks participants to stretch themselves and to value and leverage diverse points of view. This objective works best face to face. As a result, **successful completion of the program stipulates that participants attend the mandatory retreat, and miss no more than one of the monthly sessions, or the equivalent amount of hours.** All missed time must be made-up prior to graduation. Special circumstances will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

All participants who fail to meet the above requirements are subject to dismissal from the class – with no refund of any portion of the tuition. A participant's failure to meet these requirements will be reviewed by the Virginia Peninsula Chamber, and a determination will be made. Interested persons are expected to be aware of these requirements prior to submitting an application to be in the LEAD Higher program.

By signing below, the applicant (1) agrees to and understands the terms and conditions stated above, and (2) confirms they are available to participate on all proposed dates (listed on page 7 of this packet).

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE DATE

ESSAY PROMPT

One of the most important qualities of a leader is knowing their own strengths and weaknesses. Looking at yourself right now, what would you like to learn to help you grow further as a leader?

**Please use a separate sheet of paper for your essay, and attach to your application packet.*

TUITION

A one-time tuition payment commensurate with membership status covers all program costs including (but not limited to) program materials, meals, and a graduation celebration/ commencement ceremony. Tuition must be paid in full by December 1, 2025 — invoices will be issued once all participants have been notified of their acceptance status.

Member Rate: $4,000.00 | **Non-Member Rate:** $5,000.00*

**The Virginia Peninsula Chamber connects business with opportunities, providing long-term value by concentrating our efforts on the present and future business community, making the Peninsula a premier business community. To explore additional benefits of the Chamber and join us in our mission, please click here to become a member.*

NOTICE: Fifty percent of tuition may be refunded if the applicant withdrawals five business days before the retreat. No refunds will be granted after that date.

BUSINESS/ORGANIZATION'S AGREEMENT

Please print clearly.

NAME (PRINT) TITLE

EMAIL PHONE

BILLING ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP CODE

By signing below, you certify as the applicant's sponsor/employer that this applicant has the full support of this Business/Organization for the time, personal commitment, and financial support required to participate effectively in the LEAD Higher program.

SPONSOR'S/EMPLOYER'S SIGNATURE DATE

LEAD HIGHER
ADVANCED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

The LEAD Higher Class of 2026 will meet on the following dates:

TUESDAY
JANUARY 6, 2026
FUNDAMENTALS OF LEADERSHIP

TUESDAY
FEBRUARY 3, 2026
INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

TUESDAY
MARCH 3, 2026
ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION
AND GROUP DYNAMICS

TUESDAY
APRIL 7, 2026
FUNDAMENTALS OF SYSTEMS

TUESDAY
MAY 5, 2026
LEADING ACROSS THE DIVIDE

TUESDAY
JUNE 2, 2026
STRATEGIC PLANNING AND
BUILDING YOUR TEAM

TUESDAY
JULY 7, 2026
FOLLOWERSHIP

TUESDAY
AUGUST 4, 2026
CHANGE MANAGEMENT
AND ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP

TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER 1, 2026
CRISIS MANAGEMENT

TUESDAY
OCTOBER 6, 2026
EFFECTIVE NETWORKING AND
ENGAGING ACROSS CULTURES

TUESDAY
NOVEMBER 3, 2026
LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS

TUESDAY
DECEMBER 1, 2026
COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY

**Sessions will be held from 8:30 AM to 1:00 PM; with the exception of the Retreat and Commencement Ceremony.*

The LEAD Higher program encourages bold, values-driven decision-making.

Ben Chambley
1st Advantage Federal Credit Union

The LEAD Higher program is a highlight of my month—it consistently delivers practical, actionable insights that have made me a more strategic and effective leader.

Amber Kirby
Drucker + Falk

LEAD Higher can help you better understand yourself as a person and as a leader, allowing space to reflect and refine your leadership skills.

Nicole Stephens
New Horizons Regional Education Centers | Career and Technical Education Center

VIRGINIA PENINSULA CHAMBER

11850 Merchants Walk, Suite 110
Newport News, VA 23606
VAPeninsulaChamber.com

CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY

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cnu.edu