



# Leadership Development Academy

## Class of 2025 Employer Commitment

### ORGANIZATION/EMPLOYER COMMITMENT

Nominees for the Leadership Development Academy need the commitment of their employer or agency. The representative signature below indicates that the employer is aware of the work and time required and endorses the applicant. The full syllabus can be found on the following pages.

Name	Title
Company/Agency	
Address	
Telephone	Email Address
Supervisor Signature	Date

**ACADEMY FEE:** \$525; includes all meals, materials, and lodging

**PRPS SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS** (eligible for up to \$400)

- [PRPS Career Advancement Scholarship](#)
- [Donald V. Joyce Memorial Scholarship](#)

**SUBMIT** by September 1, 2025, along with the full application and two letters of recommendation at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/PRPSLEADER>



# Leadership Development Academy

## Class of 2025 Syllabus

### Dates:

- *Applications close: Friday, September 1*
- *7 Weekly personal reading assignments start: week of October 13; end week of November 24*
- *3 Bi-weekly one-hour virtual sessions: Thursdays, Oct. 23, Nov. 6, 20 tentatively 3-4 pm*
- *In-Person Workshop: Thursday, December 4, 9:00 am – Friday, December 5, 4:00 pm; PRPS Office*

### Course Materials (provided)

[Leading from the Roots: Nature-Inspired Leadership Lessons for Today's World](#), Dr. Kathleen E. Allen

### Instructors/Facilitators

**Lori Hoffner, Professional Speaker, Training and Consultant – Supporting Community, Inc.**

Lori has been offering training for community networking, organizational relationship building, and positive youth development since 1997 and has spoken nationally regarding employment and staff engagement, youth program development, as well as multiple community issues. Lori created Supporting CommUnity, Inc. her professional speaking, training, and consulting business that focuses on individuals being positive, having fun, and connecting to one another to create a confident culture within their organizations and for the greater community they serve. Lori has a great deal of fun with her audiences, engaging them in thought provoking exercises and encouraging intentional, affirming practices every day.

Accredited Resiliency at Work (R@W) Coach, Certified QPR Trainer, Certified Mental Health First Aide Trainer, safeTALK Instructor/Master Trainer, Certified ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) Consulting Trainer

**Kealy Daye, CPRP** [kealy@prps.org](mailto:kealy@prps.org)

**Niki Tourscher, CPRE, CPSI** [tour@prps.org](mailto:tour@prps.org)

### Behavioral Objectives

Upon completion of the Leadership Academy program, participants will be able to:

1. Demonstrate systems thinking by mapping their organization as a living system, identifying key relationships, sources of energy, and feedback loops.
2. Identify and describe core principles of nature-inspired leadership (e.g., interdependence, adaptation, feedback loops) and analyze how these apply to their work environment.
3. Engage in reflective dialogue with peers to deepen understanding of complexity and change and identify adaptive strategies for current challenges in their professional settings.
4. Define professionalism and the importance it has in the workplace by examining what is external and internal professionalism.
5. Describe leadership styles and the impact on communication success or failure, based on the different mental processes that we use to form impressions of other people.
6. Define critical conversations and how the filters one is using; generational, societal, or

- experiential, influence how messages are received.
7. Define the power of advocacy by staff, volunteers, and community stakeholders to promote the work and mission of your organization.
  8. Using proven models, the participants will discuss groups within your community that can provide additional insights for decisions on programs, facilities, and user needs
  9. Complete a Class Team Project benefiting PRPS and/or the recreation and park profession.
  10. Complete a Personal Leadership Project benefiting their municipality or organization.

## **Class Leadership Project Guidelines**

The purpose of the required Class Project is to contribute something tangible and lasting to PRPS; one that advances its mission, and aligns with a particular strategy and outcome of the current PRPS Strategic Plan, the Leadership 2025 Plan, or the State Outdoor Recreation Plan. These plans are all accessible at [prps.org/plans](https://prps.org/plans).

Time is allotted during the in-person workshop to allow the participants to decide on a particular project and begin planning its scope and execution. The project tasks are to be performed by all team members and completed during the following seven weeks. Volunteer time contributed by each team member during this period is considered part of the Leadership Academy requirements.

In its planning, the team should define the project with its goals, action steps and measureable outcomes, and detail project administration, communications, marketing, and budget. If expenses are minimal, such as a simple graphic design, or other nominal materials, PRPS will likely approve and cover the expenses. If the project requires a more substantial investment, the team may secure in-kind donations and/or sponsorships.

At the completion of the Class project, the team will prepare a brief report of the process and results to the PRPS Membership at the Annual Business Meeting at the Conference & Expo, which may take the form of a video, infographic, interactive demo, or other creative means. Special mention should be made of specific leadership principles employed to reach the goal.

## **Personal Leadership Project Guidelines**

The purpose of the personal leadership project is to apply the regenerative leadership principles explored in *Leading from the Roots* through both inward reflection and outward action. This project invites you to choose one role in your life—such as employee, volunteer, mentor, or community member—and intentionally lead in a way that aligns with nature-based values like interdependence, adaptability, and stewardship.

This project emphasizes cultivating healthier systems, building relationships, and responding to real needs with thoughtful, regenerative action. Your work should include meaningful outward expressions — such as initiating a change, strengthening collaboration, or responding to a challenge — over the course of approximately eight weeks.

Just as important is the internal work of reflection: noticing how your mindset, energy, and actions influence the systems around you. Keep a personal journal of your process, documenting your goals, steps taken, reflections, and observations.

The written journal will remain your confidential record; you are not required to submit it to anyone—as you hold yourself personally accountable for your own progress.

## Reading, Assignments & Deliveries Schedule

Week		Assignments	Engagements
1	<b>Oct. 13</b>	Intro and Ch. 1: Living Systems, Generous Organizations p. 9-30 Complete LEAD Leadership Assessment	
2	<b>Oct. 20</b>	Ch. 2: Nature Runs on Sunlight p. 31-46 Ch. 3: In Nature Waste is Never Wasted p.47-62	<b>Thurs. Oct. 23</b> Virtual Session 3-4 pm
3	<b>Oct. 27</b>	Ch. 4: Nature Fits Form to Function p. 63-76 Ch. 5: Nature Rewards Cooperation p. 77-92	
4	<b>Nov. 3</b>	Ch. 6: Nature Banks on Diversity p. 93-106 Ch. 7: Nature Curbs Excess from Within p. 107-122	<b>Thurs. Nov. 6</b> Virtual Session 3-4 pm
5	<b>Nov. 10</b>	Ch. 8: Nature Depends on Local Expertise and Self-Organization p. 123-136 Ch. 9: Nature Taps the Power of Limits p. 137-148	
6	<b>Nov. 17</b>	Ch. 10: Leading from a Living Systems Mindset p. 149-168 Ch. 11: Growing Generous Organizations p. 169-178	<b>Thurs. Nov. 20</b> Virtual Session 3-4 pm
7	<b>Nov. 24</b>	Administrative Leadership Creed Self-Accountability Agreement	
8	<b>Dec. 1</b>	Review 2024-27 PRPS Strategic Plan, Leadership 2025, 2020-2024 PA Outdoor Rec Plan	<b>Thurs-Fri. Dec. 4-5</b> In-person Workshop
9	<b>Dec. 8</b>	Personal, Class Projects begun	
13	<b>Jan. 5</b>	Personal, Class Projects continue	<b>Thurs. Jan. 8</b> Virtual Session 3-4 pm
15	<b>Jan. 19</b>	Class Project completed by Jan. 23	Evaluation Survey
	<b>March 2026</b>	Class Project Presentation at PRPS Conference Completion Certificates	Recruit candidates for next Academy session

## **In-Person Workshop Schedule** *(subject to flux according to group discussion and needs)*

### **Thurs. Dec. 4      Leadership of Self**

9:00-9:30 am      **Arrival/Coffee and donuts**

9:30-10:00 am      **Introductions, Personal Meme Icebreaker, Rules of Discussion**

10:00-11:30      **Session 1: Moving into the Future: The Power of Transformational Leadership**  
Do you know the difference between transactional leadership and transformational leadership and why it makes a difference in EVERY industry? As the saying goes; “the only constant is change,” and if it’s important for you and your organization to move into the future with positive growth and a thriving staff, you will want to understand how to support this change. This includes appreciating leaders with strength of vision and personality who can inspire followers to change expectations, perceptions, and motivations to work towards common goals. Additionally, that change happens when there is an increase in the leader’s expectation of the follower’s performance which will result in overall increased performance.

11:30-12:00 pm      **Your Leadership Style and What it Says About You**

12:00-1:00 pm      **Networking Lunch with PRPS staff**

1:00-2:30 pm      **Session 2: Accountability: It’s Everybody’s Responsibility**  
Accountability; the obligation of an individual or organization to account for its activities, accept responsibility for them, and to disclose the results in a transparent manner. It is the expectation we have for ourselves and others, but how often do we meet it? Do we find solutions when things don’t go as we had planned or do we play the blame game? Together we will discuss how we move beyond understanding the need for accountability, to engaging your team in ways that can win their hearts, minds and commitment. You will learn how to create a philosophy of accountability that everyone can embrace and practice. A philosophy that removes fear; increases skills, confidence and reliability.

2:30-3:15 pm      **Teambuilding Exercises**

3:15-4:30 pm      **Session 3: Professionalism and Why it Matters**  
New and emerging leaders quickly learn that when you have the reputation as a true professional, you will always be in demand. As a valued, and respected professional in your industry, you will not only be popular with others, but you will also develop a high sense of purpose and self-worth. Achieving and maintaining that kind of professionalism takes intentional effort and dedication. In this session, we’ll discuss the steps you can take using successful staff communication, strong organizational skills and mindful leadership. You will also learn the powerful role that emotional intelligence has for professionals creating an environment of inclusion, cooperation, and a sense of purpose for others.

4:30-6:00 pm      **Hotel Check-in**

6:00 pm      **Dinner and Social**

**Fri. Dec. 6      Leadership of Others**

**9:00-10:45 am      Session 4: Leadership and Advocacy; Creating a Collaborative Relationship with Key Stakeholders**

As a non-profit, a government agency, or any organization that depends on the support of the community for your success, you understand the importance of establishing and maintaining a positive relationship of trust. Gaining that trust comes not only from the work that you do but also from the story you tell about the mission and goal of your organization. The stories about the mission of your work ignites the passion of stakeholders and champions of your organization and those champions can encourage and support programs, funding and the important work of parks and recreation.

**10:45-11:30 am      Class Project Identification**

**11:30-12:15 pm      Lunch (continued project id discussion)**

**12:15-1:30 pm      Session 5: Successful Communication; Control, Filters, and Perception**

The way you communicate greatly influences the outcome of a conversation. What you say and when and how you say it determines the conversation's success or failure. Therefore, knowing the type of communication control one uses in any given situation can illicit engagement or dissent. Our communication is continually influenced by individual filters that delete, distort, or generalize a message. Those filters are established by many different factors, one of the most prevalent these days is the generational filter, developed in the process of socialization and experiences. These filters crucially affect communication and interaction. Finally, the perception we have about the person sharing a message will determine the "ear" in which we listen and ultimately affect the outcome of our conversation. We will discuss multiple communication models, helping you determine what will be the most successful approach for you and your staff.

**1:30-2:00 pm      Teambuilding Exercise**

**2:00-3:30 pm      Session 6: Challenging Conversations Don't Have to Weigh You Down: Elevating Team Success through Effective Communication**

In every workplace, challenging conversations are inevitable. However, the way you approach and navigate these discussions can significantly impact not only your personal success but also the overall effectiveness of your team. Positive communication is a cornerstone of staff motivation and retention, both of which are essential to delivering exceptional service and programs. In this session, we'll explore five powerful communication strategies that are essential for resolving workplace conflicts with confidence and skill. By mastering these techniques, you'll be better equipped to foster a collaborative environment where challenges are addressed constructively, and your team is empowered to thrive. Join us to transform difficult conversations into opportunities for growth and success.

**3:30-4:00 pm      Class Project planning arrangements. Wrap-up.**