

THE ASPIRE LEADERS PROGRAM

Program Guide

Program Description

The Aspire Leaders Program is a self-paced, online learning experience that empowers learners to strengthen their leadership capacity, clarify their professional goals, and build the confidence needed to succeed in their careers and communities. Through engagement with expert faculty, compelling content, reflective activities, and peer learning, participants develop greater self-awareness, career readiness, and the skills to lead meaningful change.

Throughout the program, learners apply leadership principles and professional development tools to explore their aspirations, strengthen their professional identity, and create a project proposal that addresses a real challenge in their community. By combining personal growth with practical application, the program prepares participants to become purpose-driven leaders who can create lasting impact in the places where they live and work.

Learning Outcomes

By engaging authentically in the Aspire Leaders Program, learners will strengthen their competencies in the following areas:

- **Self-Awareness.** Analyze personal strengths, values, and areas for growth, and evaluate how these influence leadership approach, decision-making, and contributions to teams and communities.
- **Leadership Confidence.** Demonstrate confidence in taking initiative, contributing ideas, and exercising leadership in both formal and informal settings.

- **Goal-Setting and Self-Management.** Develop realistic goals and implement structured plans that include clear actions, timelines, and methods for tracking progress and adjusting as needed.
- **Communication Skills.** Communicate ideas clearly, professionally, and effectively across audiences, purposes, and contexts.
- **Critical Thinking and Human-Centered Problem Solving.** Analyze complex challenges and develop practical, context-responsive solutions that account for stakeholder perspectives, available resources, and potential barriers to implementation.
- **Professional Identity and Career Direction.** Articulate evolving career interests, professional identity, and pathways for continued growth, contribution, and impact.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the Aspire Leaders Program, learners will be able to:

- Analyze personal strengths, values, experiences, and areas for growth to better understand their leadership development and professional aspirations.
- Explain key leadership concepts, frameworks, and mindsets introduced in the program and connect them to real-world leadership challenges.
- Develop professional communication materials, including a professional objective, networking outreach, and a cover letter or personal statement, for different audiences and purposes.
- Set and monitor meaningful personal or professional goals using structured planning and self-reflection tools.
- Analyze how organizational, societal, and community contexts shape leadership challenges and opportunities for change.
- Identify a community-based problem, examine its root causes, and define a clear problem statement.
- Design a feasible project plan that considers stakeholders, resources, timelines, possible barriers, and the role of technology in implementation.

- Define intended outcomes and measures of success for a proposed community-based initiative.
- Present a clear, cohesive, and persuasive pitch for a project proposal that communicates its purpose, feasibility, and potential impact.
- Reflect on how the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained in the program inform future leadership practice, career direction, and social impact goals.

Resources and Assignment Types

The Aspire Leaders Program is delivered entirely online through the Engage Aspire Leaders portal, where learners access course materials, complete learning activities, and submit assignments. In addition to the self-paced curriculum, participants have opportunities to join live sessions with expert faculty and engage with a global community of peers through Discord discussions and collaborative activities.

For learners in countries where Discord is not accessible, Zoom accommodations are available to ensure equitable participation. Program materials may include interactive content, web resources, PDF readings, and embedded videos, providing a flexible and engaging learning experience that participants can access from anywhere.

Assignment Types

- **Reflection Prompts.** Formative assessments that invite learners to respond to open-ended questions, reflect on course concepts and personal experiences, and connect their learning to their leadership development.
- **Discussion Posts.** Formative assessments that encourage learners to engage thoughtfully with course concepts, respond to prompts, and deepen their understanding through written reflection.
- **Mini Quizzes.** Formative multiple-choice assessments designed to check learners' understanding of key concepts, frameworks, and course materials.
- **Feedback Forms.** Formative assessments that collect learner feedback through multiple-choice and short-answer responses to support reflection, continuous improvement, and program evaluation.

- **Peer Discussion Posts.** Community-building activities conducted through Discord that provide learners with opportunities to connect with peers, exchange perspectives, and engage in meaningful dialogue about their learning and leadership experiences. For learners in countries where Discord is not accessible, alternative participation opportunities are provided through Zoom.
- **Project Proposal.** An applied learning assignment in which learners translate their leadership development into meaningful community impact. Participants identify a real challenge in their community, analyze its underlying causes, and design a practical, context-responsive initiative to address it.
- **Final Assessment.** A summative assessment completed at the end of the program to evaluate learners' understanding, progress, and ability to apply the key concepts, skills, and leadership practices developed throughout the program.

Requirements

The Aspire Leaders Program is designed as a primarily self-paced learning experience that combines asynchronous coursework with select synchronous opportunities for live learning and engagement. Learners may work ahead or catch up on assignments throughout the program, provided that all required work is completed by the final program deadline.

To successfully complete the program, learners must:

- Complete all Orientation activities.
- Submit all required weekly assignments through the Engage Aspire Leaders portal.
- Complete and submit the Midterm Reflection assignment.
- Complete the Final Assessment.
- Attend at least one live Masterclass session led by expert faculty.

Live Masterclass sessions are offered at multiple times throughout the program to accommodate learners across different regions and time zones, ensuring that all participants have opportunities to fulfill the live participation requirement.

Course Scope and Sequence

Orientation

Guiding Questions

- What is the Aspire Leaders Program?
- How can I prepare to contribute to and grow throughout the program?
- What tools and resources are available to support my success?

Overview

Before beginning the Aspire Leaders Program, learners complete an online Orientation that introduces the program structure, learning platforms, and expectations for creating a safe, inclusive, and productive learning experience. As part of Orientation, learners complete a Readiness Questionnaire that captures baseline information about their goals, confidence, and leadership development. These responses provide a starting point for measuring growth in relation to the program's learning outcomes.

Orientation also familiarizes learners with the Engage Aspire Leaders learning portal, program policies, frequently asked questions, and the resources available to help them navigate the program successfully.

Primary Deliverable

- *Readiness Questionnaire*

Week 1: Foundations of Leadership

Guiding Questions

- What are my personal dispositions and aspirations at the start of the program?
- How is leadership relevant to my personal and professional journey?
- How can I communicate my expertise, experiences, and passions effectively?
- What behaviors and mindsets reflect effective leadership?
- How can I cultivate the values and habits of an effective leader?

Overview

In Week 1, learners begin their leadership journey by exploring their personal dispositions, aspirations, and leadership potential. Through reflective activities, the Big Five Personality Quiz, and foundational leadership content, they examine the role of leadership in their own lives and develop a broader understanding of how leadership can be practiced across different contexts.

Drawing on insights from Dr. Tsedal Neeley, learners explore the Leadership Pyramid, with a particular focus on the Personal Leadership domain. They examine the values, behaviors, and self-awareness that form the foundation of effective leadership and consider how these qualities can be intentionally developed over time.

To conclude the week, learners apply the SMART Goal framework to create a specific, actionable professional development goal that will guide their leadership growth throughout the program.

Primary Deliverable

- *Professional Development Component: Leadership SMART Goal*

Week 2: Contextual Intelligence and Trust

Guiding Questions

- How do context-specific conditions create opportunities for leaders to initiate change?
- How do effective leaders define, analyze, and address complex problems?
- What challenges or gaps do I observe in my community?
- How do these challenges create opportunities for leadership and innovation?

- How does my community's unique context influence potential solutions?
- How can identifying the root causes of a problem lead to more sustainable and effective change?

Overview

In Week 2, learners expand their understanding of leadership by exploring the Relational and Contextual Leadership domains and examining how leadership is shaped by the environments in which it is practiced. Through case studies presented by Dr. Tarun Khanna, learners investigate how institutional gaps, local contexts, and societal conditions create opportunities for leaders to drive innovation and meaningful change.

Learners also explore the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a framework for understanding global challenges and connecting them to issues within their own communities. Building on these concepts, they identify a community challenge that is personally meaningful and begin developing their Project Proposal.

Using analytical tools such as Root Cause Analysis and the Fishbone (Ishikawa) Diagram, learners investigate the underlying causes of their selected challenge, moving beyond symptoms to better understand the factors that contribute to the problem. They conclude the week by developing a well-defined Problem Statement, establishing the foundation for the remainder of their project proposal.

Primary Deliverable

- *Project Proposal Component: Problem Statement*

Week 3: Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence

Guiding Questions

- How do the root causes of my identified problem inform an effective solution?
- How can technology, data, and artificial intelligence support meaningful and sustainable change?
- What makes a solution both innovative and feasible?
- What resources, partnerships, and actions are needed to bring my idea to life?

Overview

In Week 3, learners transition from analyzing community challenges to designing practical, context-responsive solutions. Drawing on insights from Dr. Karim Lakhani, they explore how data, digital transformation, and emerging technologies—including artificial intelligence—can support innovation and improve decision-making when addressing complex problems.

Learners also examine the Inspirational Leadership domain, considering how leaders foster trust, encourage creativity, and create environments where individuals feel safe to take thoughtful risks. They explore how these leadership practices enable teams and communities to generate innovative solutions while remaining responsive to local needs and circumstances.

Building on the Problem Statement developed in Week 2, learners begin designing their proposed initiative by identifying the activities, resources, stakeholders, and implementation steps required to achieve their intended outcomes. Through this process, they assess the feasibility of their ideas and develop a structured Project Plan that serves as the next component of their Project Proposal.

Primary Deliverable

- *Project Proposal Component: Project Plan*

Week 4: Outcomes and Impact

Guiding Questions

- How do clearly defined intended outcomes strengthen a project plan?
- How can an initiative's success be measured to support accountability and continuous improvement?
- How does anticipating challenges or resistance prepare leaders for successful implementation?
- Who are the key stakeholders whose support is essential to sustaining this initiative?
- How can I build credibility and engage others in advancing my vision?

- How can leaders learn from setbacks and adapt their approach to achieve greater impact?

Overview

In Week 4, learners build on their project plans by defining what success will look like and determining how it can be measured. Through the Supportive Leadership domain, they explore how effective leaders foster accountability, empower others, and create conditions for continuous learning and improvement. Learners identify meaningful key performance indicators (KPIs) and consider how measuring outcomes can inform decision-making, strengthen accountability, and support long-term impact.

To strengthen the feasibility and sustainability of their initiatives, learners use stakeholder mapping to identify the individuals, organizations, and communities whose engagement will be critical to implementation and success. They consider strategies for building trust, establishing credibility, and cultivating partnerships that can help advance their proposed initiatives.

Finally, learners synthesize their ideas into a concise project one-pager and practice communicating their proposals through a persuasive project pitch. These activities strengthen their ability to articulate their vision, inspire others to support their work, and effectively communicate the value of their proposed solution.

Primary Deliverables

- *Project Proposal Component: Intended Outcomes*
- *Professional Development Component: Project Pitch and One-Pager*

Week 5: Communicating in Professional Spaces

Guiding Questions

- How have my professional goals and personal values evolved throughout the program?
- How can I continue developing my professional identity beyond the Aspire Leaders Program?

- How can I communicate my experiences, strengths, and aspirations effectively in professional settings?
- In what ways can networking and career planning support my long-term goals?

Overview

In Week 5, learners revisit their leadership journey, professional identity, and long-term aspirations through the lens of the Responsible Leadership domain. Reflecting on their growth throughout the program, they consider how their values, strengths, and leadership experiences inform their future educational and career pathways.

Using tools such as the Ikigai framework and career exploration resources, learners examine how their interests, skills, values, and sense of purpose align with different industries and professional opportunities. They also explore strategies for building a strong professional network, preparing for interviews, and cultivating the relationships and experiences that support long-term career success.

To conclude the program, learners strengthen their professional portfolio by creating either a cover letter or a personal statement that clearly communicates their experiences, aspirations, and leadership development. This final professional development assignment encourages learners to articulate their unique value and prepare for future academic and professional opportunities.

Primary Deliverable

- ***Professional Development Component: Cover Letter or Personal Statement***

Week 6: Leading in Action

Guiding Questions

- Which leadership concepts and practices will I carry forward into my personal and professional life?
- How have my interactions with peers broadened my perspective and strengthened my ability to build relationships?

- How has my understanding of my leadership identity evolved throughout the program?
- What are my next steps for continuing my leadership and professional development?

Overview

In the final week of the Aspire Leaders Program, learners reflect on their growth, synthesize their learning, and develop a plan for applying their leadership beyond the program. Revisiting key concepts and frameworks from each module, they consider how their understanding of leadership, community impact, and professional development has evolved over the past six weeks.

Learners also reflect on the value of engaging with a global community of peers, recognizing how diverse perspectives and collaborative learning have strengthened their capacity to lead across cultures and contexts. They identify opportunities to continue developing their leadership skills, expanding their professional networks, and pursuing educational and career pathways aligned with their aspirations.

To conclude the program, learners complete the Final Assessment, demonstrating their understanding of the program's core concepts and reflecting on how they will apply what they have learned in their future leadership endeavors. They also submit a written summary or recorded pitch of their completed Project Proposal, showcasing the community-based initiative they have developed throughout the program.

Primary Deliverables

- *Final Assessment*
- *Completed Project Proposal (Written Summary or Project Pitch)*