



A GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATIONS

The Developing Leaders Guide

How to build a leadership pathway that keeps people growing, from first promotion to the executive team.

Leadership development for the human side of work.
eleadershipacademy.com

For most leaders, development comes down to **luck or timing**.

Most leaders are promoted for being good at the work, then left to figure out leadership on their own. Development arrives late, if it arrives at all, and usually because someone happened to notice them. In the meantime, their team experiences whatever leadership they picked up along the way.

70%

of HR leaders say their organizations are not effectively developing senior or mid-level leaders.

SOURCE: GARTNER, 2025

9 years

between becoming a leader and receiving leadership training. The average person first leads others at 33 and first receives leadership development at 42.

SOURCE: ZENGER FOLKMAN, 2019

Why it matters to the organization

Engagement

People experience the organization through their manager. Gallup finds managers account for about 70% of the variance in team engagement.

Retention

People stay where they are growing. The ones most likely to leave are the ones who have stopped, and that is often your strongest performers.

Succession

Bench strength is a board-level responsibility, and in some sectors a regulatory one. A visible pathway is the evidence that it is being built.

A program is an event. Capability is what's left after it ends. The rest of this guide is about building the second thing.

Learning that sticks has **four traits**.

Across the organizations we work with, the development that changes how people lead has four things in common. None of them is a particular program. They are conditions, and they can be built around any good content.

1. Shared language

Leadership and coaching models everyone recognizes. When a manager and their director use the same words for coaching, expectations, and change, the learning carries from one conversation to the next.

2. Applied practice

Learning used in the role, not just completed. Each lesson ties to something the leader does at work that week, so the practice happens in meetings and one-on-ones rather than in a workbook alone.

3. Coaching capability

Leaders who develop others as well as themselves. Asking instead of telling is the skill that turns one trained leader into a team that grows.

4. Processes that sustain it

Reinforcement after the program ends: expectations from managers, refreshers, peer practice, and graduates teaching back what they learned.

"The one-and-done training moment just doesn't create a lot of behavior change. We put in a lot of time and energy, and then we don't really get an outcome."

Kelsy Colwell, Innovation Strategist

What this means for your plan: before choosing content, decide how each of the four will be built in. The three organizations on page 5 did exactly that, each in a different way.

Build a **pathway**, not a program.

There is no one-and-done in leadership development. A single program answers today's gap and leaves the next one open. A pathway gives leaders a visible route they can enter at any stage and keep building on, and it gives you a structure for talent planning that doesn't have to be reinvented every year.

Three things a pathway does that a program can't

- **Sets the expectation for the role.** It becomes part of what it means to lead people here, the way a credential is part of other professional roles.
- **Keeps engaged people engaged.** A next step is a reason to stay. Without one, growth stalls and the best people start looking elsewhere.
- **Answers "what next" for high achievers.** When a high performer finishes a program, the question is what comes after. A pathway has the answer ready.

A pathway by level

LEVEL	WHAT THEY NEED	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE
■ All employees	The same language leaders are learning, in a form everyone can take part in.	Short courses on change, inclusion, and resilience, so the models leaders use come up in everyday conversations.
■ Emerging leaders	Core habits and a view of leadership as a whole, years earlier than most get it.	A foundation program, often inside an emerging-leader cohort with mentorship and executive Q&A.
■ People leaders	Applied leadership and coaching skills, recognized with a credential.	A certificate pathway completed one program at a time, with a designation beyond it for those who keep going.
■ Executives	The same shared models, plus development built around their own potential.	The certificate pathway alongside one-to-one executive coaching, and a visible role sponsoring everyone else's development.

Leaders enter where they are. Everything they complete counts toward the next step.

How three organizations **did it.**

Three learning and development leaders, each starting from a different place, and each building the pathway into what their organization already had.

One program a year, for every people leader

Every people leader works toward the certificate over four years, one program per year. The budget stays predictable, the group moves together, and nobody is asked to commit to four years at once. Emerging leaders complete the foundation program inside a 12-month emerging-leader program with executive Q&A and mentorship. All employees take the short courses on change, inclusion, and resilience. Graduates teach back and mentor the next group.

"The measure of success is not whether someone completed the session, but whether the learning is showing up in how they lead, how they coach, and how they develop their teams."

Joe Aspden, Manager, Learning & Development

Executives first, then reinforce

The CEO and executive team completed the coaching program before managers did, so every leader understood what their direct reports would be learning and could support it. The foundation program is the gateway, with points for an internal discussion group, a monthly in-house session on takeaways, and a summary at the end of each section copied to the participant's manager. Enough points earn an internal certificate.

"It's not an extra time investment to have coaching conversations. You're spending the same time having conversations, but they're different conversations. They're no longer focused on directing, they're focused on developing."

Connie McMann, VP, Training and Employee Development

A foundation you can build around

Rather than building a leadership curriculum from scratch, use a ready pathway as the foundation and add what is specific to your organization on top, such as your values and your strategy. Start by being honest about the capacity of your learning and development team, then choose what plugs in and flexes with you.

"Get really honest about your capacity. Leadership is on everyone's roadmap somewhere. It just doesn't get done very often, and when it does, it doesn't get done well."

Kelsy Colwell, Innovation Strategist

Start simple. **Start at the top.**

Trying to solve leadership development for everyone at once is what keeps it at the bottom of the list. The organizations that get it done start with one decision and build from there.

- 1 Get senior leaders in first.**
When executives take the program, or visibly sponsor it, it says leadership is for everyone, and they can support what their reports are learning. If a full program isn't realistic for the executive team, a condensed version is.
- 2 Pilot with people who have their hands up.**
Pick a high achiever or one team, and one program. Learn what rollout looks like in your organization before you scale it.
- 3 Budget one program a year.**
A pathway over three or four years is easier to fund and easier to sustain than one large investment, and it gives every leader a next step.
- 4 Build in reinforcement.**
Manager check-ins on takeaways, peer discussion, refreshers, and graduates teaching back. The program starts the learning, and this is what makes it stick.
- 5 Measure what changes at work.**
Shared language in everyday conversation, coaching happening in one-on-ones, and a baseline you can reassess. Completion is not the measure.

80%

of organizations lack confidence in their leadership pipeline.

SOURCE: DDI GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FORECAST, 2025

The pipeline doesn't build itself. One program and one group, this year. The second year is easier than the first, and the pathway takes care of what comes next.

HOW WE CAN HELP

One connected pathway. For **one leader, a team, or everyone.**

eLeadership Academy connects leadership development through one pathway and shared models leaders keep using: GAIN Model™ for coaching, CLEAR Model™ for expectations, A.R.R.T. Model™ for change, and LUCA, our AI mentor coach, for practice. Online, self-paced or in cohorts, with faculty with executive experience, group enrollment, and a fully supported rollout.



Four programs add up to the Certificate in Applied Leadership (CAL), and every program counts toward the certificate. The Coaching & Leadership Professional Designation (CLPD), jointly awarded with Royal Roads University, sits beyond it.

LEVEL	ON THE PATHWAY
■ All employees	EVOLVE Series: short all-employee courses on change, inclusion, and resilience.
■ Emerging leaders	IGNITE, the recommended starting point. One module a week over 12 weeks.
■ People leaders	The Certificate in Applied Leadership (CAL), one program at a time or all four, then the CLPD.
■ Executives	ExecREADY: the certificate pathway with a year of one-to-one executive coaching.

One clear roadmap.

Four programs give your team a visible route for growth.

Personal at scale.

Faculty feedback and coaching keep the learning personal, even across a whole team.

Credentials built in.

Progress is recognized at each step, and the full pathway leads to the certificate.

"It's the pathway I wished had existed, built for leaders who are still becoming."

Sandra McDowell, Founder & CEO

100,000+

hours of leadership learning

5,000+

credentials earned

1,000+

10/10 reviews

Shaping your plan? We'll help you choose the first group, the first program, and the rollout around it.

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