



## FIRST UP OVERVIEW

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### 2026 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN FIRST BELIEVES THE ULTIMATE CATALYST FOR OUR REGION'S GROWTH AND PROSPERITY IS A ROBUST TALENT DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY. THAT'S WHY WE'RE EXCITED TO HOST **FIRST UP**, OUR LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM DESIGNED TO EMPOWER EMERGING YOUNG PROFESSIONALS LIKE YOU.

FIRST UP WAS DESIGNED FOR EARLY-CAREER PROFESSIONALS WITH FIVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE OR LESS. IDEAL CANDIDATES ARE THOSE WHO ARE EAGER TO APPROACH THEIR PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT WITH INTENTIONALITY AND FULL SUPPORT FROM THEIR LEADERS.

### APPLICATION

APPLY AT [WWW.SOUTHWESTMICHIGANFIRST.COM/EVENTS/FIRST-UP](http://WWW.SOUTHWESTMICHIGANFIRST.COM/EVENTS/FIRST-UP) BY FEBRUARY 27, 2026. EARLY SUBMISSION IS ENCOURAGED AS APPLICATIONS ARE CONSIDERED ON A ROLLING BASIS.

### PROGRAM CONTACT

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# PROGRAM STRUCTURE

FIRST UP IS A COHORT-BASED PROGRAM MADE UP OF DIVERSE AND ENGAGED PROFESSIONALS THAT REPRESENT A VARIETY OF INDUSTRIES IN THE SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN REGION. THE FOUR SESSIONS WILL HELP YOU UNCOVER YOUR UNIQUE LEADERSHIP STYLE, SET GOALS FOR FUTURE GROWTH, CULTIVATE A MINDSET OF PROFESSIONAL RESILIENCE, AND COMMUNICATE WITH CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE IN THE WORKPLACE.

**FIRST UP** WILL EQUIP PARTICIPANTS WITH SKILLS IN THESE THREE AREAS:

**GUTS:**

Strategies to increase self awareness, build professional resilience and tackle the “imposter syndrome.”

**GRIT:**

Tools to navigate company dynamics, design a plan for professional development and develop a personal branding strategy.

**GO-TOS:**

Best practices of experienced leaders and the resources available in our community for the help you need

PARTICIPANTS WILL LEARN HOW TO:

- MASTER THE CORE COMPETENCIES OF SELF-LEADERSHIP
- CRAFT SMART GOALS THAT ARE ALIGNED WITH YOUR PERSONAL AND COMPANY OBJECTIVES
- EMBRACE AN INTENTIONAL APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL GROWTH
- COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY AT ALL LEVELS FOR POSITIVE OUTCOMES
- BUILD A ROBUST PROFESSIONAL NETWORK
- NAVIGATE WORKPLACE DYNAMICS AND CULTURAL NUANCES
- CULTIVATE RESILIENCE AND MANAGE STRESS AMIDST CHALLENGES
- COLLABORATE WITHIN DIVERSE TEAMS, BRIDGING GENERATIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC GAPS, AND MORE

## 2026 FIRST UP SCHEDULE

APRIL						
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

**SESSION 1: LEADING WHERE YOU ARE**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8, 2026 | 9 A.M. TO 12 NOON

- THE FIVE STAGES OF A CAREER AND THE PROFESSIONAL CORE COMPETENCIES NEEDED FOR SUCCESS
- ESSENTIAL LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS, MINDSETS, AND HABITS
- HOW TO IDENTIFY WHAT LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE IN YOUR ROLE AND PRESENT YOURSELF AS THE LEADER YOU ASPIRE TO BE
- YOUR PROFESSIONAL BRAND AND REPUTATION

**SESSION 2: SETTING GOALS FOR GROWTH**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22, 2026 | 9 A.M. TO 12 NOON

- WHAT SMART GOALS ARE AND HOW TO SET THEM
- HOW TO CHART THE COURSE OF YOUR CAREER AND SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS
- STRATEGIES TO ALIGN YOUR TIME AND ACTIONS WITH YOUR PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL GOALS TO MAKE MEANINGFUL PROGRESS

MAY						
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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

**SESSION 3: CULTIVATING PROFESSIONAL RESILIENCE**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 6, 2026 | 9 A.M. TO 12 NOON

- HOW TO IDENTIFY KEY STRESS INDICATORS AND CULTIVATE HABITS FOR HEALTHY STRESS MANAGEMENT
- PUT A GROWTH MINDSET INTO PRACTICE
- TOOLS TO NAVIGATE SETBACKS, FAILURE, CHANGE, AND THE UNKNOWN

**SESSION 4: COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026 | 9 A.M. TO 12 NOON

- THE CORE ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE
- BEST PRACTICES FOR POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE COMMUNICATION ON TEAMS
- HOW TO NAVIGATE DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS AND MANAGE STRESS ALONG THE WAY
- WAYS TO TAKE YOUR COMMUNICATION STYLE AND APPROACH INTO CONSIDERATION WITH YOUR ORGANIZATION/TEAM CULTURE