



“ LEADERSHIP KALAMAZOO ENCOURAGED AND EMPOWERED ME TO DO MORE IN THE COMMUNITY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. I FEEL MORE CONFIDENT IN MY ABILITIES AS A LEADER.

- Kimberly Babineaux  
Family Health Center

## 2026 Program Overview

Southwest Michigan First believes the ultimate catalyst for our region's growth is a robust talent development strategy. That's why we offer **LEADERSHIP GREATER KALAMAZOO**, the region's premier leadership development resource.

Since 1987, Leadership Greater Kalamazoo has been equipping a diverse cohort of current and emerging leaders with the business acumen, strategic agility, and civic mindset needed to ensure our region's shared prosperity, both now and in the future.

We are thrilled to engage with the Leadership Greater Kalamazoo Class of 2026!

### APPLICATION

Apply Online by Friday, October 31

Apply at: [www.southwestmichiganfirst.com/events/leadership-kalamazoo](http://www.southwestmichiganfirst.com/events/leadership-kalamazoo).

Once you have completed your application, you will receive an email with next steps regarding your one-on-one interview should you require one. All applications will be reviewed after the deadline passes.

### PROGRAM CONTACT

Rachael Tiesenga

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Greater Kalamazoo

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## Program Structure

Through a proven combination of hands-on learning, interactive sessions, and community engagement, **LEADERSHIP GREATER KALAMAZOO** meets monthly to discuss everything from high performance teams to inclusive leadership to leading through adaptive change and more. A high emphasis is placed on community experiences and tours so participants may gain an even deeper knowledge and passion for the community they serve.

### LEADERSHIP GREATER KALAMAZOO INCLUDES:

- The Gallup CliftonStrengths assessment to help leaders at any level learn how to make the most of their own unique talents
- Interactive learning sessions covering leadership topics and best practices from an engaging lineup of guest experts
- Community tours designed to help participants explore our community's unique strengths and where their passions intersect with our region's greatest needs
- Plenty of networking sessions to strengthen connections with each other, the community, and more

## The Formula is Simple

**LEADERSHIP GREATER KALAMAZOO** follows the KNOW | GROW | GO model, providing a platform for leaders to:



Expand knowledge of self, community, and leadership best practices

Create an intentional plan for growth and development

Put skills into action with an individualized "go strategy" at the conclusion of the program



## 2026 Calendar

All sessions are from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., unless otherwise noted.

### SESSION 1 | WELCOME BREAKFAST

Tuesday, 1/13  
Sit down breakfast served  
9 to 11 a.m.

### SESSION 2 | LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Tuesday, 2/10 + Wednesday 2/11  
Welcome reception to follow day 1  
4 to 5:30 p.m.

### SESSION 3 | COMMUNITY TOUR: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT + GOVERNMENT

Tuesday, 3/3

### SESSION 4 | HIGH PERFORMANCE TEAMS + ACCOUNTABILITY

Tuesday, 4/14

### SESSION 5 | COMMUNITY TOUR: PUBLIC SAFETY

Thursday, 5/14  
Dine + Discuss to Follow  
4:30 to 6 p.m.

### SESSION 6 | COMMUNITY TOUR: COMMUNITY HEALTH

Tuesday, 6/9

### SESSION 7 | INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

Tuesday, 7/14

### SESSION 8 | CHANGE + EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE LEADERSHIP

Tuesday, 8/11

### SESSION 9 | COMMUNITY TOUR: EDUCATION + WORKFORCE

Tuesday, 9/8

### SESSION 10 | FINAL SESSION + GRADUATION

Tuesday, 10/13  
Graduation and celebration  
reception immediately following.  
Guests are welcome.

### INVESTMENT

\$2,500 per person | \$2,200 chamber member benefit

Tuition assistance available on a sliding scale for qualified participants. Payment due by January 6, 2026.