

2027 Program Year

cba ASPIRE LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

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Advancing the Skills, Passion, Impact & Resiliency of Emerging leaders

The Connecticut Bankers Association's ASPIRE Leadership Academy is designed to develop and enhance the leadership skills of highly motivated emerging and current leaders. The Academy focuses on training those enrolled to better understand their teams and the soft skills required to effectively lead those teams. Over a period of 12 months, students will meet for 10 full-day sessions. Students in the Academy will be able to carry new knowledge and skills back to their bank after each session that they can put into practice immediately and begin implementing solutions. This long-term learning model allows students to learn and practice simultaneously and return to class each month to discuss the results of applying their newly acquired skills. Students will also leave the program with an established network of future bank leaders.

Who should enroll?

The CBA ASPIRE Leadership Academy is recommended for high-potential bankers who have recently undergone or will soon be undergoing the transition from a functional role to a leadership role within the bank. Individuals looking to enhance their leadership skills will also benefit from attending the Academy, as well as those moving into new or more complex leadership roles.

Program Details

All regularly scheduled monthly class sessions will be held at the Courtyard by Marriott in Cromwell, CT. Classes will commence at 8:30 a.m. and adjourn at approximately 4:00 p.m. with 45 minutes allowed for lunch. Students are required to attend and participate in each session in its entirety. Any emergencies or unavoidable absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the program administrator. To view the academic calendar, please visit the CBA website at www.ctbank.com

Students enrolled in the ASPIRE Leadership Academy will not be required to submit assignments for grading but are expected to complete in-class assessments and/or activities as well as any take-home reflection worksheets. Students will be awarded a certificate of achievement upon completion of the Academy.

Cohort size will be limited to ensure the integrity of the program. **Please note you are encouraged to apply early.** The application deadline is **Friday, October 16, 2026.**

MONTHLY SESSION INFORMATION

January

Session One - Introduction to Leadership

Facilitators: Kristin Zummo & Kim Tuttle

What is a leader? This opening session will introduce students to the core concepts of leadership, explore the differences between managing and leading, and encourage each student to define their own leadership brand. The session will introduce various leadership styles and explore how team dynamics, including the unique aspects of each team member, can shape leadership approach. Students will participate in leadership assessments to identify strengths as well as opportunities for growth as they maximize their leadership potential. This session will lay the groundwork for the remainder of the program.



February

Session Two - Emotional Intelligence

Facilitator: Randye Kaye, Communico

Changing times call for evolving leaders. Effective leaders must ask, “Why would anyone choose to follow me?” They must also ask, “What are the top skills leaders need for career success?” According to Forbes Magazine, nine of the top ten skills needed are soft skills, and all these soft skills can be improved by developing Emotional Intelligence (EI). This means leaders cannot be successful without continuously improving their EI.

This class helps leaders understand, appreciate, and practice the 12 elements of the Emotional Intelligence Competencies. Developing this strong foundation of EI can help leaders improve the other essential leadership skills of influence, trust building, communication, and accomplishment.

This program encompasses:

- An assessment with personal insights about the EI competencies
- Why EI is so important for career success and organizational success
- Definitions and descriptions of the key elements of EI theory and practice
- How the application of EI theory and practice within organizations creates a competitive advantage

MONTHLY SESSION INFORMATION

March

Session Three - Leading During Times of Uncertainty & Change

Facilitator: Barbara Rutkowski, Learning Dynamics

Change is a reality for every organization and every individual today. Managers face the special challenge of maintaining a positive outlook and helping others remain positive and productive during times of uncertainty."Leading during times of uncertainty & change" is a dynamic class that will provide students with the skills, tools, and techniques necessary to effectively lead their organization and coach employees through the ever-changing workplace environment.

April

Session Four - Creating, Managing, and Sustaining High Performing Teams

Facilitator: Kate Wall, EdD, Central Connecticut State University

People are often promoted to management due to their technical expertise, but those skills are often not enough to maximize individual and team performance. Being a good manager isn't about one person's achievement, it's about empowering the team. This session focuses on essential skills any manager needs such as improving: 1) delegating, 2) getting support from above, 3) projecting confidence, 4) focusing on the big picture, and 5) giving effective feedback. This class uses an interactive series of exercises, self-reflection, and discussion coupled with participants experiences to discover the underlying conditions for success such as effective communication, developing "psychological safety" and establishing learning zones. Participants will actively engage in individual and team exercises and small and large group discussions.

May

Session Five - Leading from the Middle

Facilitator: Cynthia Shahen, Ph. D, Shahen Consulting

In this one-day experiential workshop based on the decades of research conducted by social scientist Barry Oshry, we will:

- Examine the world of Tops, Middles, Bottoms, and Customers and the likely traps in each.
- Learn about our predictable and our possible responses in challenging interactions.
- Explore "how come it goes the way it goes."
- Discover ways to apply leadership stands when operating in any of these worlds.
- Explore ways to maximize potential at each level of the organization.

MONTHLY SESSION INFORMATION

June

Session Six - How to Be a Better Leader from the Inside Out

Facilitator: Cindy Donaldson, Red Barn Consulting

"Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power." - Lao Tzu

To master the art of leadership, you must go through a self-awareness process to understand who you are, where your strengths and weakness lie, and practice the art of self-care. How you show up daily matters and if you aren't taking care of yourself, you won't be able to lead others effectively. This class covers personal/self-awareness, celebrating your brilliance, resilience, and the art of influencing others with integrity.



August

Session Seven - Sustainable Leadership:
Managing Stress, Maximizing Fulfillment

Facilitator: Amy Dunn, Dunn Talent Consulting

Leaders must navigate their career both to maximize job fit and joy, while minimizing and managing stress. Participants will come to understand which types of work bring them joy and fulfillment, which they can tolerate, and which drain or frustrate them, and be equipped with tools to see stress differently, sort it into actionable categories and solve it with a simple method-reframing stress reduction as a joy and leadership strategy. Together, the tools offered with this instruction will provide a practical, integrated lens for career navigation and sustainable high performance.

October

Session Eight - Coaching

Facilitator: Cynthia Shahen, Ph. D, Shahen Consulting

The best leaders practice the art of coaching every day. They know that coaching is critical in the workplace for developing their employees' performance, commitment, skills, and career. Coaching has a proven track record of success, helping to build powerful teams and improve business results. This session will help participants gain an understanding of the importance of coaching and provide them with practical coaching skills and techniques through interactive instruction and application. Learners can take these skills back to the workplace and begin implementing them immediately.

MONTHLY SESSION INFORMATION

November

Session Nine - Transformational Leadership

Facilitator: Gregg Barratt, Communico

Changing times call for evolving leaders. We need to ask, “Why would anyone choose to follow you?” In MAGIC Transformational Leadership, participants will not only explore this question but learn to lead in a way that inspires others and engages the high achiever within. Leaders begin with a vision for themselves of what kind of leaders they want to be and develop their purpose and direction. Learning to communicate in a MAGIC consistent way inspires people to commit to the organization’s purpose and put in optimum effort to achieve goals.

This program helps leaders transform themselves and their teams and develop the strong foundation of trust organizations need to create a MAGIC consistent culture of service excellence and optimum performance.

December

Session Ten - Servant Leadership – 2/3 day

Facilitator: Bill Florin, Learning Dynamics

Leadership involves engaging and inspiring people to do their best work and to achieve common goals. Servant Leadership (SL) is a model that encourages formal leaders to start with the drive to serve followers, customers, and other stakeholders. This engaging class helps students learn how to use the servant leadership model to generate organizational success while avoiding some of the common pitfalls that can come from adopting the model. Communication, planning, and execution are all important in the SL model, and participants will learn strategies for effectiveness in all these functions through the SL lens. Rich in case studies, engaging table work, and skills practice, this program will give participants a thorough understanding of how to apply SL concepts in their daily work to drive individual and organizational performance to new heights while maintaining a culture of accountability and results-orientation.

Transferring the Learning: What’s My Next Chapter? – 1/3 day

Facilitator: Kristin Zummo

During the final session, students will have the opportunity to reflect on the knowledge and skills they have acquired throughout the program. The facilitators will work to guide students to draw connections between what they have learned and reflect on how they have grown as a leader throughout the year.

What Our Students Say About ASPIRE Leadership Academy

“From the well-prepared presenters to the amazing classmates, this has been an incredible experience. What I have heard and learned has been eye opening and so useful. The information received is useful not only in your professional life but in your personal life as well. All classes have been hands on, and you get the insight and advice from peers in your field that can relate with the scenarios. Anyone that has the opportunity to participate in this program should do so."

Magda Frontanes, Dime Bank, ASPIRE 2025

“ASPIRE has been a valuable foundation for new and ongoing leadership. It is a remarkable program, that uplifted me and so many others. It has provided me with tools that I will remember for the rest of my career.”

Madison Stepnoski, Chelsea Groton Bank, ASPIRE 2026

“Each class has been a new learning experience with very interesting topics on management styles and philosophy. I have left each class with new tools to keep in mind as I manage my department. I have been in management a long time, taken many management classes and this has been the most useful and most engaging. We are all active participants, and it's been helpful to hear and share other perspectives and experiences."

Kelly Cagianello, Union Savings Bank, ASPIRE 2026

“I've had an exceptional experience with the ASPIRE Leadership Academy. The opportunity to learn from a diverse group of accomplished leaders has been truly valuable, and each speaker brings meaningful insight and expertise. Their unique perspectives on leadership and personal growth have made the program both impactful and inspiring

Miranda Hosier, NBT Bank, ASPIRE 2026

“The program has challenged me to take an honest look at my own leadership approach. A key strength of the curriculum is its intentional focus on introspection, helping participants to better understand their own tendencies before offering strategies for growth. What sets this program apart is how it pairs that self-reflection with tools to use in day-to-day activity. Each session provides clear, real-world examples of how to adjust existing behaviors to communicate more effectively, create a driving vision and lead with confidence."

Christopher Henry, Ascend Bank, ASPIRE 2026

Tuition

Tuition for the one-year program is $2,450 per student. Institutions sending four or more students will receive a $200 tuition discount per student.

The above fees are per student and cover tuition, instructional materials, lunches, breaks, and other costs associated with the monthly sessions. These fees are in effect for students entering the Class of 2027.

Refund Policy:

No refunds will be given for individuals withdrawing from the program within 30 days of its start date.

Connecticut Bankers Association
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2027 Application

Applicant Name (Last, First, Middle Initial)

Preferred first name:

Institution

Work Address

City, State, Zip

Home address

City, State, Zip

Work Phone

Cell Phone

Work Email

Personal Email

EDUCATION HISTORY

High School:	Degree: Y / N	Year:
College 1:	Degree: Y / N	Year:
College 2:	Degree: Y / N	Year:

Professional Education (ABA, AIB, CBA, CFT, etc.)

Program Name & Year

EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCE

Present Position:	# of Years:
Responsibilities:	
Previous Positions / Titles:	# of Years:
Previous Positions / Titles:	# of Years:
Previous Positions / Titles:	# of Years:

Total years of experience with financial institutions:	# of Years:

Supervisory Status

Number of employees reporting directly to you:	#
Number of employees indirectly reporting directly to you:	#

List leadership roles that you have held, including education, employment, and community work:

What strengths and opportunities for learning do you have?

Strengths:

Opportunities for Learning:

What is your motivation for applying to the CBA ASPIRE Leadership Academy, and what do you hope to achieve by being a student in the program?

COMMITMENT

Students are required to attend and participate in each session in its entirety. Any emergencies or unavoidable absences will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the program administrator.

I understand the goals of the CBA ASPIRE Leadership Academy and will devote the required time.

Applicant's Signature: _____Date: _____

Nominating Manager's Signature: _____Date: _____

Application Deadline is Friday, October 16, 2026

Mail or email completed application to:

Connecticut Bankers Association
Kim Tuttle
VP, Director of Education
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Farmington, CT 06032
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860.677.5060