



2026 Program Year

cba ASPIRE
LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



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 17, 2025.**



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: Randy 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: Wilbur Pike, 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 discussion.

May

Session Five - Leading From the Middle

Facilitator: Cynthia Shahan, Ph. D, Shahan Consulting

In this one-day experimental 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.



September

Session Seven - My Team

Facilitator: Gail Eister, G.E.E Consulting

This class analyzes the impact of differing value systems on leadership styles. Participants will actively review how value systems can influence preferred work and preferred supervision of individual employees. It will build a better understanding of team member job satisfaction and motivation. Emphasis is placed on techniques for interacting with distinct value systems in the student's current workplace.

October

Session Eight - Coaching

Facilitator: Cynthia Shahren, Ph. D, Shahren 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

"This 12-month program has been an incredible journey, filled with opportunities to grow, learn, and refine my leadership skills. I'm excited to apply the skills I've gained- from team dynamics and communication to problem-solving and strategy- toward making a positive impact within my organization and the community we serve."

Antron Bailey, Torrington Savings Bank, ASPIRE 2024

"ASPIRE has been a great learning experience so far. The topics we've been learning about can be applied immediately at work. Some lessons go beyond just improving yourself as a leader, but also as an overall human. I enjoy having the opportunity to network with fellow banking professionals as well."

Melissa List, Union Savings Bank, ASPIRE 2024

"ASPIRE has been instrumental for my career development and growth. Each instructor has provided me with valuable information to lead my team and myself with a new perspective. However, what I have found most rewarding about ASPIRE is learning from my peers."

Jeannette Eschner, Essex Savings Bank, ASPIRE 2024

"I have really enjoyed my time attending ASPIRE! I have gotten to meet new people and make new relationships. Great instructor's, amazing content, overall great class! Anyone looking to grow should 100% attend this class. It is filled with very valuable information for anyone who wants to become a strong leader. Most importantly, it is a lot of fun!"

Meaghan Bain, NBT Bank, ASPIRE 2025

"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

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 2026.

Refund Policy:

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



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:
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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 17, 2025

Mail or email completed application to:

**Connecticut Bankers Association
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