

# GULF COAST LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

An initiative of Gulf Coast Community Foundation

## 2026 Program Overview

*Gulf Coast Leadership Institute* is designed to identify and develop aspiring, emerging, and experienced leaders who reflect the diversity of our region. For the 2026 class, up to 25 people will be selected to participate in leadership development sessions over two months. Class members will take part in in-person, experiential small and large group activities that prepare them to become knowledgeable, skilled, and action-oriented leaders in their communities. Gulf Coast has commissioned the Leadership Development Institute at Eckerd College to provide this comprehensive training at no cost to participants.

*Gulf Coast Leadership Institute* participants receive:

- A full leadership development program led by faculty of the internationally acclaimed Leadership Development Institute at Eckerd College
- Various assessments which help you understand your leadership style and that of other leaders
- The chance to become part of a close-knit and diverse group of emerging leaders
- Leadership skills and resources necessary to positively impact the community

## 2026 Program Schedule and Locations

*Gulf Coast Leadership Institute* will be executed in person at Gulf Coast Community Foundation's Sarasota Philanthropy Center (***Sarasota Office Address: 1549 State Street, Sarasota FL, 34236***)

<p><b>OPENING RETREAT</b></p> <p><b>Day 1: Thursday, May 21</b>  <b>In-person Sarasota Office</b>  <b>12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Lunch and Snacks Provided</b></p> <p><b>Day 2: Friday, May 22</b>  <b>In-person Sarasota Office</b>  <b>8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b>  <b>Breakfast and Lunch Provided</b></p> <p><b>SESSION 2</b></p> <p><b>Friday, May 29</b></p>	<p><b><i>Understanding Yourself as a Leader</i></b></p> <p>Self-awareness is a critical leadership competency, and studies consistently suggest that people with internal self-awareness not only are better leaders, but they also have greater self-confidence and higher levels of life satisfaction. During the Opening Retreat, you will enhance self-awareness of your leadership strengths while learning more about the strengths of your classmates through self-assessment, experiential learning activities and facilitated discussions.</p> <p><i>Day 2: Class Project Assignment</i></p> <p><b><i>Understanding Your Impact on Other   Mastering Conflict Dynamics</i></b></p>
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<p><b>In-person Sarasota Office</b> <b>8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b> <b>Breakfast and Lunch Provided</b></p>	<p>This session explores two challenges regularly experienced by individuals at all levels of leadership: resolving conflict effectively and understanding how they interact with others to create either distance or connection. One of the ways to increase team dynamics, trust, and accountability is to understand our own interpersonal needs and those of others and to strengthen conflict resolution skills.</p>
<p><b>SESSION 3</b></p> <p><b>Friday, June 5</b> <b>In-person Sarasota Office</b> <b>8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b> <b>Breakfast and Lunch Provided</b></p>	<p><b><i>Valuing Community</i></b></p> <p>Through personal reflection, strengthening our listening skills and exploring our unique qualities and experiences, this session will challenge us to create an even deeper understanding of how to collaborate for greater impact.</p>
<p><b>SESSION 4</b></p> <p><b>Friday, June 12</b> <b>In-person Sarasota Office</b> <b>8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.</b> <b>Breakfast and Lunch Provided</b></p>	<p><b><i>Building Community Through Collaboration</i></b></p> <p>Communities thrive when they have an abundance of partnerships. Through experiential activities, you will discover strategies for collaborating, breaking down silos and spanning the boundaries successfully rather than being inhibited by them.</p>
<p><b>CLOSING RETREAT</b></p> <p><b>Friday, June 26</b> <b>In-person Sarasota Office</b> <b>8:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.</b> <b>Breakfast and Lunch Provided</b></p>	<p><b><i>Leading Community Change</i></b></p> <p>Though no one will want it to end, we will celebrate our experiences together as we learn how we each approach change and problem-solving differently.</p> <p><b><i>Followed by a Happy Hour at 4:00 p.m.</i></b></p>

**2026 Program Selection Process**

*Gulf Coast Leadership Institute* class participants will be selected with the intent of creating a diverse group of individuals from the public, private, and independent sectors that represent the region. Participants will be selected based on their leadership potential, desire to become a leader, and involvement in community or professional organizations. Participants should possess a personal commitment to use their leadership skills through community service for the long-term benefit of the community.

***It is a requirement for acceptance that you commit to participating fully in all training sessions.***

**Application Timeline**

Applications are currently accessible through Gulf Coast’s website at [GulfCoastCF.org/gcli](https://GulfCoastCF.org/gcli)

**Wednesday, February 25, 2026**

**Applications Open**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

**Applications Closed**

**Wednesday, April 15, 2026**

**Applicants Notified**

If you have any additional questions about *Gulf Coast Leadership Institute*, please contact Kelly Carlstein at [KCarlstein@gulfcoastcf.org](mailto:KCarlstein@gulfcoastcf.org) or 941.486.4600.