



FROM THE DESK OF
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Collaboration is Key to Complex Community Challenges

Think about the last time you faced a big challenge. Did you solve it alone?

Humans are natural problem-solvers. When we see challenges, we think of solutions. If we're dealing with everyday problems, we put those solutions into action on our own. It's called adulting, right?

The trouble is independence can become a habit. When we face more complex problems, we try to push through alone by sheer determination. Working solo seems more straightforward than finding a team.

And yet, the challenges we face in our communities—healthcare access, affordable housing, climate resilience, and so many

more—are too large and complex to be solved by individuals. Even the most powerful institutions and agile organizations can, at best, tackle pieces of the puzzle.

These problems demand multi-faceted solutions that can only be conceived and implemented through creative, well-organized collaboration across many sectors. How can we build that kind of collaboration? We must train and prepare individuals to work together.

That's what the founders of the Leaders Lab of Greater Charlottesville envisioned when they designed a new leadership program as the successor to Leadership Charlottesville, the long-standing Chamber program whose hundreds of graduates serve in many leadership positions throughout Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and beyond.

Executive leaders of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence, the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at UVA, and the Institute for Engagement and Negotiation at UVA crafted the Leaders Lab curriculum.

In September 2022, the Leaders Lab launched its first cohort, bringing together current and emerging local leaders who seek meaningful opportunities to engage in and strengthen the community.

Each Leaders Lab session addresses leadership development, community knowledge building, and collaborative problem-solving. Four program themes are continually woven throughout: equity, entrepreneurship, collaboration, and leadership.

I've been fortunate to experience the Leaders Lab as a member of the inaugural cohort, and it has been nothing short of life-changing. Over the past nine months, we've

practiced leadership skills like consensus building, principled negotiation, ethical decision-making, cultural competence, adaptability, and equitable collaboration.

We've immersed ourselves in local landmarks like the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, the Yancey School Community Center, and the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at UVA.

Some of our cohort members have accepted promotions. Some have left their former positions for exciting new opportunities. Others have found new confidence and courage in their current roles. Many of us reported changes in our management style or a new approach to our relationships at work.

We've also experienced firsthand the challenges and rewards of collaborating across industries, career stages, backgrounds, learning styles, and more.

We've built relationships with a diverse group of motivated leaders, and the seeds of future collaboration are taking root. As our first cohort members put new skills to work in the community, it's time to expand the Leaders Lab network.



We are now accepting applications for the 2023–24 Leaders Lab cohort, which begins in September 2023. If you are eager to grow as a leader, connect with others, and contribute to your community, I encourage you to apply!

Visit CvilleChamber.com/LeadersLab to learn more.



Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce
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The Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates, convenes, and engages to strengthen business in the greater Charlottesville Region.