

2026-2027

Applications Deadline:
May 15, 2026



You are invited to apply for the Leadership Manatee Program - a comprehensive series of lectures, discussions, and field trips designed to educate community leaders about the challenges and opportunities facing Manatee County and create new understanding about how dedicated leadership can make a difference.

Leadership Manatee is a program of the Manatee Chamber Foundation in partnership with Bradenton Kiwanis



Thank You 2026-2027 Sponsors



Scholarship Sponsor



PURPOSE

The Leadership Manatee program is designed to expose participants to major aspects of Manatee County, foster an understanding of the opportunities and challenges we face, and build a network of connected, committed leaders in our region. The program's purpose is:

- To identify community leaders of diverse backgrounds.
- To develop their potential and desire to accept civic responsibilities and leadership roles.
- To expose community leaders to the problems and opportunities that face Manatee County.
- To build a realistic understanding of leadership in today's complex society.
- To open a dialogue among emerging and current community leaders.
- To acquaint leaders with the processes, programs, opportunities, and challenges for individual involvement in Manatee County.

SELECTION CRITERIA

The most important factor in participant selection is identifying those individuals who are most apt to use their leadership knowledge and skills for the long-term benefit of this community.

Based upon this criteria, individuals selected will:

1. Have demonstrated commitment through past and current community engagement.
2. Have attained a leadership position within their business or organization or have the potential for advancement to top leadership positions.
3. Have a sincere commitment, motivation, and interest in serving their community.
4. Be interested in, or intend to seek, leadership roles in the community.
5. Represent a cross section of the business community and geographic representation, including government representatives, professional leaders, and community service volunteers. Because diversity is an important component of the program's purpose, it is not unusual for a participant to apply more than once before they are accepted.

The selection committee is comprised of three Manatee Chamber of Commerce representatives, three Bradenton Kiwanis representatives, one representative from each of the past three year's Leadership Manatee classes, and the Manatee Chamber of Commerce president or his/her designee.

GRADUATION & ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

One absolute requirement of participation in Leadership Manatee is attendance for the entire Orientation and Simulated Society sessions on August 24 and 25, 2026. Additionally, each class member will serve as a facilitator for one day of the next year's Leadership Manatee program and one day of the Junior Leadership Manatee program. So that participants can gain full benefit from the Leadership Manatee program, graduation from the program is based upon meeting attendance requirements. The equivalent of more than two (2) days of absences prohibits graduation at the end of the session year. No tuition refunds will be granted due to excessive absences nor leaving the program at any point after accepting a position in the class. If a day includes a bus tour, class members are required to ride the bus during the entire session.

TUITION

Tuition covers the cost of all session materials, field trips, refreshments, meals, transportation and the graduation ceremony. Funds are available, on a limited basis, for qualified scholarship applicants.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

R. David Jackson, Chairman, Persson, Cohen, Mooney,
Fernandez & Jackson, P.A.
Jacki Dezelski, Manatee Chamber of Commerce
Hon. Heather Doyle, 12th Judicial Circuit Court
Christi Haley, Pace Center for Girls

Brad Johnson, Manatee Co. Sheriff's Office
Andy Ramdath, Manatee Co. Sheriff's Office
David J. Reali, David J. Reali, CPA
Rita Smith, Coldwell Banker Realty
Brian Thiers, Bradenton Police Department

2. EMPLOYMENT

(List in chronological order starting with most current role, including military if applicable.)

Employer	Title/Responsibility	Dates of Employment
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What do you consider your most important professional responsibility, skill, or achievement?
500 character limit

3. VOLUNTEERISM & LEADERSHIP

Note: Community involvement is a **very important** component of the Leadership Manatee selection process.
Please be sure to list **all** current and past involvement in this section.

Have you participated in another community leadership program? Yes No

If yes, which program? _____

Have you applied for Leadership Manatee before? Yes No

If yes, what year? _____

Current Major/Top Volunteer Role

Organization _____

Position _____ Hours per Month _____

Describe your volunteer/leadership responsibilities with this role:

Please list your other current community volunteer/leadership roles:

Organization	Role	Hours per Month
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

What has been your most meaningful volunteer/leadership experience and why?

Please list your current business/professional/social affiliations.

Hours per Month

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Please list your past community involvement and/or business and social affiliations:

If you have not previously had the time or interest to become actively involved in civic and community volunteerism/leadership, what conditions have changed to allow you to become involved? On which community boards, committees, or groups would you like to become active?

4. COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

The primary goals of Leadership Manatee are to develop and train leaders and to improve the quality of decision-makers for the future who can provide the community with greater continuity in community leadership. Please include your answers to 4A and 4B on separate sheets/file(s) and attach/include when submitting your application.

A. Why do you want to participate in Leadership Manatee and what do you hope to gain from your participation?

B. Identify what you believe to be the three (3) most pressing problems facing Manatee County today. Explain why, and make recommendations for addressing and resolving these problems and issues. The purpose of this question is to determine how clearly you think about and express yourself concerning community problems and issues. Limit to a maximum of one page per issue.

5. TUITION

The tuition for Leadership Manatee is outlined below. Payment is due upon acceptance into the program - do not enclose payment with this application. A limited number of scholarships are available and payment plans are possible. Scholarship tuition grant forms are available online (ManateeChamber.com/LMScholarship) and must be turned in with your application.

NOTE: No refunds of tuition nor transfers of class selection are permitted.

Applicants will be notified of selection status by late July. Selected applicants will also be notified if there are changes to the dates in the course.

TUITION SCHEDULE:

\$1,800 Application received no later than 4:00 PM on April 27, 2026.

\$2,000 Application received between April 28 and May 15, 2026.

**** No applications will be accepted after 4:00 PM on May 15, 2026.

6. COMMITMENT

A. Please include one letter of recommendation. (Do not include more than one.) The letter should be from someone who knows you well and can comment on your ability to take your Leadership Manatee experience and use it for long-term leadership within our community.

B. Applicants for Leadership Manatee must have the support of their sponsoring business or organization. The sponsor or employer must sign this form to indicate their support of the applicant's participation in the program. Applications will not be considered without this signature. We will accept two separate PDF signature pages (one for each signature) due to remote work situations.

Sponsor or Employer Signature _____

Print Sponsor or Employer Name _____ Title _____

Applicant Signature _____ Date _____

7. DELIVERY INSTRUCTIONS

Application Checklist:

___ Completed PDF Application with Signature Page(s)

___ Response to Section 4.A.

___ Response to Section 4.B.

___ Letter of Recommendation

___ Shirt Size: ___ Men's ___ Women's | ___ S ___ M ___ L ___ XL ___ XXL

Options (you will receive a confirmation via email when your application is received):

- Mail to: Manatee Chamber of Commerce, P.O. Box 321, Bradenton, FL 34206-0321
- Email Scanned PDF file(s) to: DebbieM@ManateeChamber.com
- Hand delivery to Manatee Chamber of Commerce:

Bradenton Office: 222 10th Street West, Bradenton, FL 34205

Lakewood Ranch Office: 4215 Concept Court, Lakewood Ranch, FL 34211

No hand-written applications will be accepted.

QUESTIONS? Please email DebbieM@ManateeChamber.com or call 941-748-4842, ext. 117.

2026-2027 COURSE OUTLINE

Schedule is subject to change.

Sessions typically begin at approximately 7:15 a.m. and end at approximately 5:30 p.m.

Monday, August 24 - Afternoon & Tuesday, August 25 - Day & Evening

ORIENTATION & SIMULATED SOCIETY PROGRAM - The simulated community game develops interpersonal communications and explores diversities in socioeconomic structure through role playing situations which test personality and leadership skills in confrontational situations. Attendance is mandatory for entire course of both Simulated Society sessions. A dinner with the Board of Governors is held on Tuesday evening for class members and their guests.

Wednesday, September 9

COMMUNICATIONS & CULTURE - Half of this session looks at the communications media located in the area and the role they play in commerce and quality of life. The second half reviews area cultural opportunities and explores Manatee's vision for cultural activities and the arts.

Wednesday, September 23

EDUCATION - A look at the structure and operation of our public, charter, and private educational systems K-12 and post-secondary. Includes discussion and interaction relating to education's role in our economic prosperity. This class requires independent attendance at a Manatee School Board meeting prior to the session.

Wednesday, October 7

HEALTHCARE - An overview of medical care in Manatee County including tours of hospitals, clinics, and special care facilities. Discussions will focus on the current health care issues facing our community.

Wednesday, October 21

LOCAL GOVERNMENT - An overview of the structure and function of our local government along with discussion of government's role in addressing local challenges. This class requires independent attendance at a city or county government meeting prior to the session.

Wednesday, November 4

ESCAPE TO REALITY - Leadership and team-building initiatives involving preparation, problem solving, trust and cooperation. Includes discussion relating to personal discoveries through the initiatives. A challenging and fun way to learn more about yourself.

Tuesday, November 17, 12:00 - 1:30 PM
Farm City luncheon with Bradenton Kiwanis

Wednesday, November 18

AGRICULTURE - Discover agricultural resources as a key component of the economy and history of Manatee County.

Wednesday, December 2

LEADERSHIP TRAINING - Fast-paced, high-energy exploration of leadership traits and what you do best. Helps leaders develop their greatest talents into strengths. Requires completion of an online strengths assessment prior to the session.

Wednesday, January 6, 2027

LAW ENFORCEMENT - A look at our law enforcement agencies and how they interact. Includes tours of the County jail systems. This requires a minimum three (3) hours of observation with the Sheriff's Department or other law enforcement agency prior to the session. This involves riding with police patrol and observing various aspects of law enforcement.

Wednesday, January 20

BUSINESS/INDUSTRY - A look at the diversity of the local business economy including a statistical overview of the county. Includes tours of several area businesses and industries.

Wednesday, February 3

LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION - An in-depth look at growth guidance and the tools that control land use decisions as well as developing a deeper understanding of infrastructure, including transportation.

Wednesday, February 17 - Day & Evening

HUMAN NEEDS - Exposure to some of the programs and facilities in Manatee County that work to meet the challenges facing our community, particularly by our non-profit service providers.

Wednesday, March 3 - Evening

GRADUATION - A special dinner event honoring those who have completed the Leadership Manatee Program.