



LEADERSHIP OKLAHOMA CITY, INC.

Applying for Oklahoma City's premier community service training program

LEADERSHIP OKLAHOMA CITY

WHAT IS THE LEADERSHIP OKLAHOMA CITY "CLASS"?

The Leadership Oklahoma City Signature Program adult class is a community leadership training program. It is designed to increase the participant's *knowledge about, commitment to, and effectiveness in* the community in order to provide the region with a larger, more effective pool of volunteer leaders. The program is nine class sessions which each focuses on a different topic or issue: Personal and Group Leadership, Justice and Public Safety, Government and the Media, Human Services, Health and Medical Services, Education, Quality of Life and Economic Development are currently on the agenda.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE DAY?

We use hands-on experience as much as possible to teach. Sessions include tours, role-playing, panel presentations, videotapes, lectures, games, question and answer sessions, and other techniques. Preparation for a session may include riding with a police officer on a shift, spending time with a public school principal, researching the cost of a medical procedure, or working with a group to solve a problem.

WHEN ARE THE SESSIONS?

The one-day class sessions are October through May, second Thursdays. The Opening Retreat is the second Thursday and following Friday in September. Eight of the sessions are one day long, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The Opening Retreat requires two full days and a night.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ME?

You will learn. We can guarantee that every participant will increase his or her knowledge of the community. No matter how expert you may be in some areas, the breadth of the Leadership Oklahoma City experience will engage you in new ideas. You will meet new people, leaders in business, government, education, volunteer and charitable organizations.

You will get to know most of your classmates quite well, and you will become friends with many of them. Presenters and planners for the class sessions include scores of leaders from all sectors of the city.

You will gain new perspectives. Our class members are selected for their diversity of perspectives, so you will hear perspectives that are deeply felt, strongly supported, and very different from your own. You will speak for your experiences and beliefs to others who have not heard your voice before.

You will reinforce and energize your commitment to community service.

As a result, you will be considerably more effective in your business and community work.

HOW CAN ANYONE GIVE UP THAT MUCH TIME IN A YEAR?

You have to want to.

All our participants are incredibly busy people. We have had physicians, school principals, mothers of newborns, chief executive officers of corporations, retailers, government employees, and many other heavily-scheduled class members. It was important to them and they made time.

You have to be able to.

You can't miss any of the Opening Retreat and you can't miss more than two of the other sessions. If your job or family will require you to miss more than that, you should not apply.

HOW CAN I JUSTIFY THAT MUCH TIME AWAY FROM MY WORK?

Why would companies encourage their best and brightest to spend so much time away from work?

The training that Leadership Oklahoma City provides to the class is outstanding. A broad range of community issues, all of which directly affect the working world, are covered. Personal and inter-personal skills focusing on leadership and group dynamics are an integral part of the course. Class members finish the program with an address book crammed with the numbers of the city's leaders, many of whom they will have worked with personally during the program. Over 90 hours of training time are available to our planners to educate the class—the equivalent of two work-weeks of training for \$3000. And this training is locally based, so class members continue to have access to what they have learned and the contacts they have made.

More than 1500 of Oklahoma City's businesses and organizations have had at least one employee graduate from Leadership Oklahoma City. It is unusual for a company which has had a class member not to submit additional applicants for consideration. Some companies so value the Leadership Oklahoma City experience that they hold informal "mini-selections" within their companies to select the most qualified candidate to support.

HOW DO I JOIN?

The Leadership Oklahoma City Signature Program is limited to an annual class of members who are chosen from applications by a committee in the late spring of each year.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

To be eligible to apply, you must live or work in Oklahoma City **or** have demonstrable involvement in Oklahoma City's civic life.

ISN'T THERE AN AGE RESTRICTION?

No, as long as you are at least 21. We have had class members from 20s to 70s.

WHEN IS THE DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS?

The application deadline is the first Friday in April.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Tuition is \$3000. In addition to the training, tuition includes accommodations for the overnight retreat, meals for the class sessions, materials, activities, and some transportation. Many businesses or organizations pay all or some of the tuition for class members from their organization.

CAN I PAY THE TUITION OVER A PERIOD OF TIME?

Yes.

IS FINANCIAL AID AVAILABLE?

Yes, tuition waivers up to \$1500 are available.

IF I ASK FOR A TUITION WAIVER, WILL THAT HURT MY CHANCES FOR ADMISSION?

No, not at all. The Selection Committee does not consider requests for tuition waivers in its work. In fact, they don't even know who has requested a waiver.

ISN'T IT IMPOSSIBLE TO GET IN?

No. At least 48 people are admitted every year. Since we receive more applications than that, many people are not admitted, but the only sure way not to be admitted is not to apply. Re-applications are encouraged in subsequent years.

DON'T YOU HAVE TO BE A BIG DONOR IN ORDER TO BE ADMITTED?

No. Information about our contributors is not provided to the Selection Committee.

HOW DO I GET AN APPLICATION?

Applications are available from early January through the application deadline.

Leadership Oklahoma City
730 W Wilshire Blvd., Suite 116
Oklahoma City OK 73116
Or from our web site,
www.lokc.org

or phone 463-3331 or e-mail czelley@lokc.org and we will send you the link to apply.

Questions About the Selection Process

WHO'S ON SELECTION? The President of the Leadership Oklahoma City Board of Directors appoints a Selection Chair from among the Board members. Together, they then select the remaining members of the Selection Committee. While LOKC policies require no fewer than 5 additional “at-large” members, the Selection Committee more typically has between 10 and 15 members, to assure diversity and breadth of knowledge among committee members. Selection Committee members include other Board members, graduates, and community leaders who have not personally participated in an LOKC class. Again by policy, no one may serve for more than two consecutive years, but usually very few members have ever served before. *So no, there isn't some perennial Selection Committee member who is “keeping someone out.”*

DO YOU HAVE TO “KNOW SOMEBODY” TO BE ADMITTED? Notebooks are assembled with photocopies of all application materials, including two letters of recommendation but not any information about requests for tuition waivers, and distributed to Selection Committee members about a month before the selection date. Committee members are instructed to read all the applications and complete a ranking sheet prior to the final selection meeting. Consequently, committee members are very prepared to decide among applicants, even though they will personally know few if any of the applicants. *It is not uncommon for Selection Committee members to know fewer than 5% of the applicants—so it's not whom you know.*

DON'T YOU HAVE TO BE NOMINATED BY SOMEONE IMPORTANT? Any adult who lives, works, or is involved in Oklahoma City may apply. *Applicants do not have to be “nominated.”* We ask our graduates to distribute applications to candidates they think will make good class members, but there's no requirement that a graduate recommend an applicant.

IS MORE BETTER WHEN IT COMES TO RECOMMENDATIONS? *Lots of phone calls and/or letters of recommendation will not make a difference.* The Selection Committee is given only two letters of recommendation and no reference to any phone calls made on a candidate's behalf.

CAN MY COMPANY “BUY” MY WAY IN? Only the information in the application itself is used as a basis for decisions. *It doesn't matter to whom the applicant is married, or how much money may have been donated by the applicant's company, or what the applicant may have accomplished but didn't put in the application.*

AREN'T THERE SOME ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE RESERVED SPACES FOR AN APPLICANT EVERY YEAR? *There are no “slots” or spaces reserved for certain organizations' applicants.* If a company or organization appears to have a class member most years, it's because they always have a well-qualified applicant or applicants in the pool. There is no “Sim City Public Schools slot” or “Bank of Whatzit slot.”

AREN'T MOST CLASS MEMBERS FROM NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS? The Board has directed the Selection Committee to select approximately two-thirds for-profit class members and one-third other class members, representing non-profits, education, government, and community volunteers. *The class is not mostly non-profits; in fact, there are usually less than 10% of class members from non-profit agencies.*

ISN'T IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE FROM NORTHWEST OKLAHOMA CITY TO BE ADMITTED? Diversity of all types is a strong consideration in selection. The whole point of Leadership Oklahoma City is to increase participants' network and capacity for implementing community improvement in today's society, and you can't do that if the class entirely is made up of people who already know each other. However, since the majority of our applications have typically come from folks who live in northwest Oklahoma City and work downtown, it is typically true that the majority of the class reflects that applicant pool. *It is true that it is somewhat easier (statistically more likely) to be admitted if you don't live northwest and work downtown, but the majority of class members do, so it's not a death knell for an application.*

IS THERE ANY REASON TO RE-APPLY IF YOU WEREN'T SELECTED THE FIRST TIME? Some people, having not been admitted the first time they apply, vow never to reapply. Others tell us that they are going to apply annually until they are admitted. Every class has about a quarter to a third of its members from the pool of re-applicants. Presidents of the Leadership Oklahoma City Board of Directors and Program Co-Chairs are among the graduates who will tell you they applied more than once before being admitted. The single most common reason for an individual not to be admitted is that he or she comes from a crowded demographic pool (which varies from year to year). For example, if there are 15 bankers in the pool, it's going to be less likely that a particular banker is admitted that year. If there is only one government official in the pool, it is more likely that that individual will be admitted that year.

What Can an Applicant Do to Increase Chances of Being Admitted?

COMPLETE THE APPLICATION FULLY.

You'd be surprised how many applications we receive with missing or incomplete information about the applicant's demonstrated community service and leadership experience. Our tongue-in-cheek slogan is "**It isn't a graphic design test—don't leave white space!**" Be thorough listing the community activities in which you have participated, and explain how you were involved. Don't forget church work, your children's school and sports activities you've led or coached, political campaigns on which you've worked, and professional organization work in addition to volunteering you've done with charitable agencies.

ASSUME NOTHING

Occasionally someone applies who appears to think that he or she and his/her accomplishments are so well-known that it is not necessary to complete the application fully—at least that's what the committee assumes, since the application is mostly blank. If you don't write it down, it isn't taken into consideration, no matter who you are. Also, please don't assume that organizational abbreviations and acronyms are known by committee members. President of AJLI? What's that? Is it a big deal or not? Add a little explanation about less-well known groups so the committee knows just what you've really achieved.

PAY CAREFUL ATTENTION TO YOUR LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION.

What the letter says is far more important than **who** signs it. A three-sentence letter from a Governor—"He's a fine fellow and I enthusiastically recommend him"—is not nearly as compelling as one from someone who appears to have worked with you personally on some project, or who knows you well and can illuminate how you would benefit from inclusion. It's better to have letters from local people if possible, and it's better to have letters from someone whose opinion is known to be thoughtful. But it is most important to have letters from people who truly know you and genuinely support your candidacy. A letter that begins, "I don't know him well, but he seems like a good fellow" is actually damaging rather than helpful—couldn't he find anyone who really knows him to write a letter?

SEPARATE YOURSELF FROM THE CROWD.

Virtually all the applications we receive are from well-qualified candidates. Try to make yourself stand out from the others who may at first glance seem to be much like you. If you've not been very involved in the community and now have more time, talk about how you intend to make a difference, where you hope to focus. If we've not had many of your occupation in the program, point that out. If you represent a group that's a little out of the ordinary, say so. Your application is not a place to be reticent about yourself.

FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS.

No, really! It's not like it's hard—be sure to send in your **photograph** and **application fee**, make sure **two letters of recommendation** actually materialize in the office, and don't attach a résumé or answer a question with "see attached." Other than your photograph and letters of recommendation, no attachments are allowed.

QUESTIONS?

Call Christy Zelle, Executive Director, at (405) 463-3331, or e-mail her at czelle@lokc.org