

THE CHALLENGE

Leaders are not born; they are developed. This is a fact that many don't realize. We take for granted the future of our area by simply assuming that the appropriate leadership talent will emerge to guide us whenever we need it. There is no better program to serve as the training ground for our future leaders than Leadership Benton County. The keys to northwest Arkansas' future are knowledgeable and skilled leaders who have an awareness and understanding of all facets of our community, including government, business, education, recreation, utilities, infrastructure, housing, health care, social services and more.

THE PURPOSE

Leadership Benton County develops a network of competent leaders for present and future community needs. To meet this goal, LBC seeks to:

- identify and motivate individuals with leadership potential;
- acquaint them with community needs, challenges and opportunities;
- offer a forum of exchange on methods for dealing with community issues;
- challenge potential leaders to become involved with local issues and the process of decisionmaking.

ACCOMPLISHING OUR OBJECTIVES

Leadership Benton County seeks to promote and develop dynamic community leaders for Benton County, while uniting a diverse group of people; to expose and educate while promoting a regional view of the area; to provide opportunities to learn, enhance and apply leadership skills; to provide a forum to offer solutions and alternatives to community needs and concerns.

CURRICULUM

The program consists of 12 sessions held monthly from August to May. Sessions include an evening Orientation, a two-day out-of-town Opening Retreat, a two-day trip to Little Rock, seven day-long sessions, and an evening Graduation Celebration. Each session runs approximately from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Session topics include Local /County Government, Human Services, Leadership Workshop, Economy, Education, State Government, Humanities & Healthcare, a class-planned session, and Regional Leadership Day. The class will also be required to complete a community-service project during the program year.

HISTORY OF LBC

Emerging from three community leadership programs, Leadership Benton County was designed in 2002 to promote a regional vision among future county leaders. LBC is a joint project of the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce, the Bentonville/Bella Vista Chamber of Commerce, and the Siloam Springs Chamber of Commerce.

LBC combines the best practices of the previous programs, and continues to innovatively incorporate a regional perspective in each session. The program is designed to ensure that county leaders possess the knowledge to enable them to meet the regional challenges of the future while enhancing the quality of life in Benton County.

The program is governed by a Steering Committee with equal representation from the Siloam Springs, Bentonville/Bella Vista and Rogers-Lowell areas. Staff members from each of the three chambers provide coordination and program planning.



CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Participation is open to persons 25 years of age or older, living and/or working in Benton County, and who possess the following characteristics:

1. Strongly professed interest and commitment to serve the northwest Arkansas region beyond the training period.
2. Willingness to devote time to Leadership Benton County in terms of attendance and field projects during the training program.
3. An occupational commitment to remain in northwest Arkansas, or little likelihood of transfer in the immediate future.
4. Community and/or civic service leadership as evidenced by the breadth and level of involvement in non-employment-related volunteer activities; or demonstration of interest in becoming more involved.
5. Demonstration of leadership skills and abilities on the job.
6. Demonstration of strong interpersonal skills and a tendency to be proactive on issues of concern to the community.
7. Ability to make a substantive contribution to the program, both in terms of issues and projects, as well as networking with peers.
8. Financial and time commitment of applicant's employer or sponsoring organization for applicant to participate in Leadership Benton County.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

Each year, the number of LBC applications exceeds the number of available slots. An anonymous Selection Committee gives careful consideration to choosing a class that represents a cross-section of the community. Participants will be active in business, education, the arts, religion, government, community-based organizations, ethnic and minority groups, and will reflect the diversity of the community.

Participants will be selected based upon the information in this application. Participants should be just approaching or already at the decision-making level in their organizations. Individuals who have the potential for advancement to the top leadership within their organization and who may play a significant role in the future of Benton County should also apply.

Since the number of appointments to Leadership Benton County is limited, applicants who are not selected are encouraged to reapply in subsequent years.

TIME COMMITMENT

LBC applicants should have the full support of their family and employer as the program requires a significant time commitment. The program consists of nine full-day training sessions, which are usually held on the second Thursday of each month from September through April. There are two required overnight sessions which include two full days: Opening Retreat on Aug. 23-24, and State Government on in February, 2008. Additional projects may be assigned.

Program participants are expected to attend each monthly session. Any participant missing more than 16 hours of scheduled events, for whatever reason, shall be automatically dropped from the program, and no portion of the tuition will be refunded. The Opening Retreat and State Government sessions are mandatory, therefore, no absences are authorized. Participants will be required to make up missed sessions by completing a specific assignment in a timely manner.

TUITION

Tuition is \$800 and may be paid by the employer or sponsor, or by the individual applicant. Tuition covers all sessions, materials, speaker and instructor fees, field trips, overnight lodging, meals, refreshments, tours and the graduation dinner.