



Leadership Rutherford

LEADERSHIP RUTHERFORD APPLICATION PACKET 2026-2027

Online Application Packet: leadershiprutherford.org

PROGRAM INFORMATION AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Please review this section (pages 1-3) carefully before filling out your application form (pages 4-5).

LEADERSHIP RUTHERFORD BENEFITS AND REQUIREMENTS

Benefits of Class Membership

Leadership Rutherford's annual program identifies and trains future leaders to use their skills and energy in community service to benefit Rutherford County.

The program includes:

- An introductory team-building retreat.
- Nine full class days, on the second Tuesday of each month (unless otherwise noted), addressing themes important to the future of Rutherford County.
- Travel throughout the county to visit a number of businesses and facilities.
- Access to as many as 60 county leaders who participate as speakers and presenters during the program.
- Network development:
 - Community contacts
 - Trusted friends among class members
 - Participation in community leadership

Program Requirements

Attendance Policy

- Attendance is **mandatory** for the opening retreat, all subsequent program days, and graduation.
- Participants **may be absent no more than 8 hours total** throughout the year in order to graduate.
- Hourly attendance is tracked at each scheduled session.

Any participant who misses more than eight (8) hours total may attend graduation with their class, but will not receive their plaque or award(s) until their hours have been completed. They may return in the subsequent program year to make up their missed hours at no additional cost. They will officially graduate and receive their plaque and awards at the end of that year.

A typical program day begins at 8am and concludes at 5pm. It is expected that all class participants will attend all class-related activities. **Applicants must make every effort to ensure their availability for all Leadership Rutherford activities prior to committing to join the class.**

2026-2027 Class Schedule

*Class Sessions: 8 AM – 5 PM, unless otherwise noted**

August 25 *Orientation: Time TBD
September 8
October 13
November 10
December 8

January 12
February 9
March 9
April 13
May 11
May 18 *Graduation: 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Eight-hour service project with cohort members (to be completed between October 1 and May 1).



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APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

| GENERAL APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS | HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS <i>2025-26 Sophomores / 2026-27 Juniors ONLY</i> |
|--|--|
| Complete the Leadership Rutherford Application Form included in this packet according to these instructions. | A Leadership Rutherford informational meeting will be held at each high school in March or April for all interested <i>rising Juniors</i> (current sophomores). |
| The application must be complete and accurate: all blanks not noted as optional must be filled in or marked N/A. | Interested students must fill out the Leadership Rutherford Application Form included in this packet, paying attention to these high school-specific instructions . |
| One essay question must be answered fully and attached. | The application must be complete and accurate: all blanks not noted as optional must be filled in or marked N/A. |
| All attachments to the application must be included when the application is submitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Essay Question Response ○ Letter of Recommendation ○ Scholarship Request Form, if applicable | All attachments to the application must be included when the application is submitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Essay Question Response ○ Letter of Recommendation |
| The complete application packet must be submitted to Leadership Rutherford by <u>Wednesday, July 15, 2026</u>. The completed form and attachments may be submitted by either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email: leadershiprutherfordnc@gmail.com ● U.S. mail to Leadership Rutherford: PO Box 794, Forest City, NC 28043 | The complete application packet must be submitted to Leadership Rutherford by <u>Friday, May 15, 2026</u>. The completed form and attachments may be submitted by either of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Email: leadershiprutherfordnc@gmail.com ● U.S. mail to Leadership Rutherford: PO Box 794, Forest City, NC 28043 |
| REVIEW OF GENERAL APPLICATIONS | REVIEW OF HIGH SCHOOL APPLICATIONS |
| Members of the Leadership Rutherford Board of Directors will review all valid applications and select general finalists for interviews. General interviews will take place in early August. | Members of the Leadership Rutherford Board of Directors will review all valid applications and select student finalists for interviews. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student interviews will take place the week of June 8, 2026. ● Up to four (4) students in total will be selected for the class of 2026-2027. |
| NOTIFICATION OF SELECTION | |
| Applicants will be notified of their selection status following the interview process. | Applicants will be notified of their selection status following the interview process. Participants under age 18 must sign and submit a Leon's Law Student Educational Records Acknowledgment Form prior to enrollment in the program. This form will be shared with Isothermal Community College. |



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TUITION

Tuition: \$595.00 total per participant

All tuition payments are non-refundable.

- **If you are selected to participate in the program**, you are responsible for paying the required \$595 tuition, unless you are awarded a scholarship or are sponsored by a third party.
 - Checks should be made payable to “Leadership Rutherford,” with your name and “2026-27 tuition” in the memo, and mailed to:
Leadership Rutherford, P.O. Box 794, Forest City, NC 28043
- Tuition may be paid in installments, but *must be paid in full on or before the date of the January session*.
- Some companies will pay the Leadership Rutherford tuition on behalf of their employee(s). Contact your supervisor to find out about your company’s policy.

SCHOLARSHIPS

- Financial assistance of up to \$595 *may* be available in case of need. If this applies to you, please complete the Scholarship Request Form (separate form) and submit it with your application. Scholarship awards are dependent upon the availability of funding.
- The separate Scholarship Request Form may be downloaded from the Leadership Rutherford website at [HOME | Leadership Rutherford \(leadershiprutherford.org\)](http://HOME | Leadership Rutherford (leadershiprutherford.org)).
 - Scholarship applicants must provide the reason for their need.
 - Scholarships will be awarded when applicants are selected to participate in the program.
 - Scholarship recipients will be notified of their award when they are notified of their acceptance to the program.

The Leadership Rutherford application form begins on the following page. Please complete the entire form (pages 4-5) and submit it to Leadership Rutherford along with all required attachments.

You may keep pages 1-3 for your reference.

If you have any questions about completing this application, please call Justin Conner at (828) 748-7956 or email leadershiprutherfordnc@gmail.com.

Leadership Rutherford values engaged, committed, and diverse participants. We strive to make this an inclusive program that reflects the community it serves. Leadership Rutherford does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations.



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LEADERSHIP RUTHERFORD APPLICATION FORM: CLASS OF 2026-2027

General Application Deadline: July 15, 2026 | High School Student Application Deadline: May 15, 2026

Please review the preceding **PROGRAM INFORMATION AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**, especially the section entitled **APPLICATION PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS**, before completing this form.

Full Name: _____ Date: _____

Preferred to be called (first name or nickname): _____ Date of Birth: _____

Street Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Personal email address: _____

| Employment Information – General Applicants Only | High School Information – Student Applicants Only |
|--|---|
| Employer: _____ | School Name: _____ |
| Title: _____ | School Address: _____ |
| Office Address: _____ | City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ |
| City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ | School Phone: _____ |
| Office Phone: _____ | Will you be in 11 th grade in the 2026-27 school year? |
| Education Level Achieved: _____ | Check one: _____ YES _____ NO |

Community Involvement

In order of importance to you, list two (2) organizations (civic, business, religious, social, community, arts, athletics, employment, etc.) in which you demonstrate an active leadership role beyond your employment affiliations and activities.

A. Organization: _____ Dates of Activity: _____

Contact: _____ Phone # _____ Role / responsibilities: _____

B. Organization: _____ Dates of Activity: _____

Contact: _____ Phone # _____ Role / responsibilities: _____



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Essay Questions: On a separate sheet of paper, please answer one (1) of the following four essay questions:

Typical answers are around 250 words in length. Enclose your essay response with your application packet.

1. What are the three most significant problems facing Rutherford County?
2. What do you hope to gain from your participation in Leadership Rutherford?
3. How would your selection to Leadership Rutherford enrich our organization and the region?
4. What unique qualifications can you offer as a potential leader and candidate for selection as a participant?

Recommendation Letter: One (1) *signed* letter of recommendation should be provided from someone who can cite specific examples of your previous or potential community leadership and engagement. Family members are not eligible. Include the letter with your application packet. *(An electronic signature or typed name is acceptable instead of a handwritten signature.)*

Commitments: Please be sure that you have reviewed the **LEADERSHIP RUTHERFORD PROGRAM BENEFITS AND REQUIREMENTS** section in the **PROGRAM INFORMATION AND APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS** part of this packet before signing this commitment.

Tuition will be paid by:

- Applicant (self-pay)
- Employer Sponsor
- Other Sponsor - Contact Name: _____ Phone Number: _____
- Scholarship: Please include the Scholarship Request Form with the application, if applicable. A Scholarship Request Form is *not required* for high school students.

Applicant

I have reviewed, and I understand the Leadership Rutherford program requirements detailed in this application packet. If selected, I agree to the terms and conditions as stated. I understand that, if selected, I am obligated to pay my full tuition by January 12, 2027. I have reviewed the program schedule and the attendance policy. I commit to attending all program activities and class sessions as scheduled. I understand the penalties for non-attendance.

Signature: _____ Date: _____
An electronic signature or your full name typed above is acceptable instead of a handwritten signature.

Authorizing Official

- If the applicant is a high school student, this section is not applicable and may be left blank.
- If the applicant is employed, this section must be completed and signed by their direct supervisor. Only self-employed or unemployed applicants may leave this section blank.

This applicant has my full support to participate in Leadership Rutherford. I am aware of the time commitment and financial obligation required.

Additional Comments (optional): _____

Name: _____ Title: _____

Name of Employer: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____