

2026 Water Leaders Program Frequently Asked Questions



Water Education Colorado's Water Leaders Program aims to positively impact the Colorado water profession by creating a pipeline of dedicated, effective water leaders across diverse fields who exemplify the four quadrants of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social management.

The program has continued to evolve since its inception in 2006 to include advanced development tools that help equip leaders to chart a path toward innovative and collaborative water solutions, while finding greater personal and professional fulfillment.

Who should participate in the Water Leaders Program?

Anyone working in a water-related field in Colorado who desires to gain increased influence and leadership effectiveness, who is also committed to self-discovery, growth and development. Some guiding questions applicants should ask themselves are:

- Am I a professional whose job is predominantly focused on water-related roles and responsibilities that will impact the future of water in Colorado?*
- Have I been working in the water field for at least 3 years? (*This is a minimum requirement to apply.)*
- Do I currently manage or have future ambition to manage staff or large projects?*
- Do I have a desire to increase my role and responsibilities at my current place of employment or in the Colorado water sector more broadly?*
- Am I looking for an opportunity to assess my leadership style and skills and explore how to use my unique strengths to advance collaborative solutions for water in Colorado?*
- Am I open to guidance from an executive coach and a cohort of peers to help me grow and develop to become a more effective leader?*
- Do I have space in my life to commit to an intensive program between April-Oct. 2026?*

** The Water Leaders Program is for water professionals who have already gained some footing in the field and have begun to assume leadership roles. The minimum 3-year duration in a water-related position demonstrates that applicants have begun to establish their professional identity and influence in the water sector. Many participants have been involved in water for significantly longer than 3 years.*

How do admissions into the program work?

Program admission is based on competitive criteria in order to maximize the impact of the program, provide the best possible experience for each participant, and ensure program diversity. Applications are reviewed by an admissions committee composed of Water

Education Colorado board members and staff and scored based on criteria that include demonstrated commitment to Colorado water, leadership potential, program readiness, and diversity of geography, profession, and background.

A cohort of 20 participants will be selected for the 2026 program. We consistently receive 2-3 times as many applications as we have seats available. Often, if a first-time applicant is not offered a seat in the class, they will be encouraged to reapply. Repeat applicants are given special consideration.

There are no organizations who maintain a designated seat for one of their employees in the class from year to year. Rather, Water Education Colorado strives to continue serving a diversity of organizations and individuals from regions across the state to advance effective leadership for collaborative solutions through this program.

More information about how to apply can be found on our [2026 Water Leaders Program Application Information Page](#).

What if more than one person from my organization wants to apply?

This is different for different organizations. Water Education Colorado will only admit a maximum of one participant per employer in the same year. Some organizations decide who they want to support as an applicant and will work it out internally so that only one person from their organization submits an application. In other cases, more than one applicant from the same organization applies. While all applicants are considered on their own merits, employer recommendations are taken into account when more than one applicant from the same organization submits.

What should participants expect from the Water Leaders Program?

Water Leaders is NOT a water-content course. Water is the context that frames the Water Leaders Program's focus on leadership skill building and personal/professional development. Expect to dive deep into your personality type and gain extensive self-awareness of your unique strengths and opportunities for growth. Expect to commit to being part of a safe space where each participant can be vulnerable about personal and professional challenges. Expect to think deeply about and explore key areas of leadership acumen like managing change, navigating conflict, and problem solving in the workplace. Expect to feel uncomfortable at times (in the best possible way).

What will participants gain from the Water Leaders Program?

Outcomes will vary depending on individuals' past experiences, their level of self-awareness prior to the program, and how deeply they invest in the work. All participants will gain a better understanding of their own unique strengths and a wide breadth of leadership skills. They will also gain exposure to multiple perspectives and positive leadership examples from the Colorado water community. Participants will also gain confidence in their unique voice and

leadership style, as well as their unique leadership opportunity to make an impact within the water sector. They will also gain a new network of trusted peers.

How is the Water Leaders Program structured and what kinds of assignments are participants expected to complete?

The Water Leaders Program consists of four, two-day sessions, and three virtual inter-session check-ins that last approximately two hours each. The in-person sessions consist of two-full days with overnight stays and include a group dinner and time for socializing that fosters group bonding and relationship building. All meals are provided, but participants are responsible for their own lodging and transportation costs.

The program uses a variety of personal assessments, peer feedback, and other homework assignments, as well as a mentorship experience to help participants better understand themselves and explore practical and effective methods to apply enhanced self-awareness to leadership growth for professional success.

Self-Assessments:

- Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
- FIRO-B
- 360 Feedback Assessment
- CPI 260 Leadership and Management Assessment
- Personal Fulfillment Assessment
- Other assessments may be added

Other Homework Assignments:

- Read various leadership articles, and 1-2 leadership books (PDFs will be provided; optional purchase available for an additional cost.)
- Complete assigned workbooks and worksheets.
- 3 one-on-one coaching sessions, with a focus on creating and beginning to activate a personal development plan
- 6 cohort meetings (Participants will be grouped into cohorts of four classmates.)
- Mentoring assignment (Participants will identify two water professionals to meet with during the program.)

You will receive the first homework assignments approximately one month prior to the first program day and they will take about 3 hours to complete. After that, participants can expect to complete about 5-12 hours of homework between each session.

What is required from participants in the Water Leaders Program?

Full Engagement: Participants must be ready to engage deeply in the Water Leaders process including by honestly answering self-assessments, accepting critical feedback from class participants and peer networks, investing time in personal reflection, and being willing to adapt and change personal and professional interactions to become a more efficient and effective leader.

100% Commitment: *Participants are expected to be fully invested in the program through attendance at all in-person training sessions and inter-session check-ins, participation in all coaching and cohort calls/meetings, and completion of all assessments and homework assignments.*

What is the Water Leaders Program NOT?

Water Leaders is not an opportunity to become more water fluent or learn water facts, figures, history, etc. Because the program has been developed for water professionals in Colorado, some of the leadership discussions will center around water topics because that is our common language and context. Bringing perspective on the water industry is helpful, but participants need not be experts in their field of study or on other water topics outside of the subject matter applied in their workplaces. Participants will assimilate a degree of water knowledge by nature of the program, but exposure to that knowledge is not the main focus.

Water Leaders is also not a place for participants to come only to market themselves or grow their network. Yes, participants' networks will grow by participating in this class; however, if an applicant's intent is only to grow their network and not commit to the full program curriculum, then this program is not the right fit.

