



ARIZONA LEADERSHIP
— ACCELERATOR —

Cohort Overview

What the AZ Leadership Accelerator Offers

The AZ Leadership Accelerator is an 18-month learning experience designed for Burton Family Foundation (BFF) grantees who want to strengthen how they lead, how their organizations operate, and how they collaborate to solve tough challenges. The program includes 12 months of in-person and virtual cohort learning experiences, individualized coaching that begins six months into programming, and an implementation investment that begins at the conclusion of cohort programming.

Participants will join a small community of peers who are also navigating complexity leading nonprofit organizations in Arizona. Together, they will explore adaptive leadership, test new approaches, strengthen organizational capacity, and access tools and coaching that support real, lasting change.

The experience includes:

- Three in-person convenings (*Kick-Off, Midway, Closing*)
- Six to eight virtual learning sessions (*approximately every five-six weeks*)
- One possible regional OR local conference attended as a cohort (*in the event a regional or local conference is scheduled, the number of virtual learning sessions will be reduced*)
- Up to 12 months of individualized coaching (*starting mid-program*)
- Applied learning between sessions
- A modest post-cohort financial investment opportunity to help participants implement their learning

These components work together to support leadership formation, organizational capacity-building, and long-term impact in Arizona communities.

COHORT TIMELINE



Who should apply

This cohort is designed for leaders who are:

- From Arizona-based nonprofit organizations that have received BFF funding for two or more years and have an annual operating budget around or below \$5M
- In senior-level organizational leadership roles with decision-making authority or direct influence on decision-making who have been at their organization for a minimum of two years prior to applying
- Experienced in understanding their organizational and community landscape, even if newly promoted to their current role
- Ready to build capacity in planning, scaling, sustainability, and adaptive leadership
- Interested in learning approaches that help leaders navigate complexity, not just identify technical fixes
- Able to identify a meaningful challenge to work on (at the organizational, system, role, or people level)
- Willing to experiment, learn publicly, incorporate feedback, and focus on contribution over credit

Applicants representing diverse lived experiences, missions, and community contexts are encouraged to apply.

What makes this cohort unique?

Unlike traditional training or professional development programs, this cohort uses a developmental approach, grounded in adaptive leadership principles.

As a result of participating in this cohort, cohort members will:

- Lead more effectively through complexity and uncertainty.
- Clarify and advance a high-leverage organizational challenge.
- Strengthen organizational capacity.
- Build and sustain an enabling environment for change.
- Use reflection, feedback, and data to improve results.
- Engage peers as thought partners and contributors.
- Contribute to a stronger nonprofit ecosystem.
- Build and access a network of peers and collaborators that will grow over time.

The cohort is for leaders ready to stretch, grow, and lead change within their organizations and communities.

Application & Selection Process

The application is intentionally reflective and meant to provide value for applicants, whether or not they are selected. It will help leaders clarify the challenge they want to focus on, understand the conditions shaping that challenge, and assess their readiness to learn in community.

During the application process, applicants will reflect on:

- The challenge they want to address
- Organizational and contextual conditions influencing that challenge
- Their readiness to learn, experiment, and grow
- Their willingness to support peer learning
- How they navigate conflict, change, and learning



To be considered for the cohort, applicants will:

- Complete a DISC Questionnaire, the results of which will NOT be used to determine who is selected. Instead, DISC results will help facilitators understand learning and communication styles to inform session design. ([Click here for additional information on DISC and Driving Forces.](#))
- Share responses to a series of short reflection questions.
- Acknowledge they understand full participation in all cohort activities is required to complete the program, as well as receive individualized coaching and the Foundation's implementation investment.
- Provide a brief statement of approval from their supervisor or board chair confirming support for their participation and their ability to prioritize cohort commitments.
- Submit a short statement describing how they will adjust their work commitments to ensure they are able to fully engage in the program.
- Participate in an interview with selection committee members if selected as a finalist for the cohort.

A selection committee of foundation representatives and community members will choose the cohort.

Applicants not selected will have the option of participating in a DISC debriefing to help understand the tool, their individual results, and how those results can be helpful within an organizational context.

Program Dates & Time Commitment

Participants must commit to attending all convenings and virtual sessions. Between sessions, cohort members will engage in activities such as coaching, peer advising, applied learning, and/or reflection exercises.

Required Commitment	Date, Time, & Method
Finalist Interviews	Thur 5/28/2026 - Fri 5/29/2026 TBD virtual, in-person, hybrid
Onboarding & Orientation	Tues 6/15 (2:00-4:00pm) Virtual
Kick-Off Convening	Mon 8/31/2026 (6:00pm start) - Wed 9/2/2026 (3:00pm end) In-Person
Session #1	Thu 9/24/2026 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Session #2	Thu 10/29/2026 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Session #3	Thu 12/3/2026 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Session #4	Thu 1/14/2027 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Mid-Point Convening	Thu 2/11/2027 (6:00pm start) - Fri 2/12/2027 (3:00pm end) In-Person
Session #5	Thu 4/1/2027 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Session #6	Thu 5/13/2027 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Session #7	Thu 6/17/2027 (9:00-11:00am) Virtual
Closing Convening	Thu 8/19/2027 (6:00pm start) - Fri 8/20/2027 (3:00pm end) In-Person

**Note that a shared regional or local conference experience may be included as part of the cohort experience. In the event a conference is added as part of the programmatic experience, the number of virtual learning sessions will be reduced.*

Cost to Participate

There is no tuition or registration fee to participate in the cohort.

BFF will provide the following:

- All travel, lodging, and meals for in-person program days
- Reimbursement for mileage to and from in-person program days according to IRS standard business mileage reimbursement guidelines
- All required program materials
- A modest post-cohort financial investment opportunity to help participants implement their learning



For additional information please visit our website
burtonfamilyfoundation.org/azla

Or reach out via email at
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