



Leadership Academy Program Guidelines - Participants

The Leadership Academy Program is a professional cohort of potential new leaders for AAFCS affiliate and national committees, communities, councils, and elected offices. The Leadership Academy was developed as an initiative of the Community of Building Leadership Capacity.

The Community of Building Leadership Capacity recognized the need for:

- Continuing a stream of competent leaders to drive and support the future of AAFCS;
- Developing strong leaders in affiliates and strengthening their relationships with AAFCS; and
- Giving back to the profession through leadership development and greater involvement.

The Leadership Academy, a biennial event which began in 2013, addresses competencies needed for assessing one's attributes and skills in Leading Yourself, Leading Others, and Leading AAFCS.

Applying to be Leadership Academy Participant

The Leadership Academy is held biennially in odd calendar years and participant applications are due in October of even years. Those interested in being a participant must apply and provide evidence of compliance with program guidelines to be considered.

- Individuals who are eligible to apply to be a Leadership Academy Participant include AAFCS members who:
 - have minimum of one year as a Professional member;
 - hold at least a bachelor's degree; and
 - complete the online application by October 1st in even years.
- Members of the Community of Building Leadership Capacity assigned to reviewing leadership academy program applications are not eligible to apply.
- AAFCS staff are not eligible to apply during their periods of employment with the Association.
- Application materials are prepared by the applicant and must be submitted in English.
- All policies, procedures, and guidelines must be followed for the application to be considered.

Submitting the Leadership Academy Participant Application

Applications are submitted via MyAAFCS submission portal. The submission portal includes: (1) acknowledgement statements regarding participant expectations and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI); and (2) application file upload. The application must be submitted using the official application form. Please be aware of the character and/or word limits for each section. Please keep a copy of all materials submitted to AAFCS.

Acknowledgement Statements:

- (A) **Acknowledgement of Participant Expectations:** The Leadership Academy is one way that AAFCS demonstrates its commitment to your personal and professional development. By participating in the Leadership Academy, you will join the ranks of other AAFCS members who have stepped into leadership roles, expanded their involvement in the profession, grown their networks, and advanced their scholarship through publications and presentations as a result of their Academy participation. You will have opportunities and experiences to learn more about yourself, explore AAFCS and affiliate projects, and further develop your leadership skills and professional networks. The success of each Leadership Academy is dependent on a large number of volunteers, mentors, and steering committee members who commit over 2000 hours to plan and implement each Academy. In addition, we invest and commit Community Funds for each participant. Given this commitment, we ask that you fully engage in the Leadership Academy and meet all requirements. By signing below, you acknowledge the expectations of participating in the AAFCS Leadership Academy. If you are unable to fulfill this commitment, you agree to repay an amount of the participant program cost.
- (B) **Acknowledgement of Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage:** We acknowledge that applicants may utilize artificial intelligence (AI) tools to prepare their application materials. However, all submitted responses must be written in English and must clearly reflect the applicant's own experiences, insights, and personal reflections. Any use of AI tools must be appropriately cited, and applicants are solely responsible for verifying the accuracy and integrity of all generated content. By submitting this application, applicants affirm that all responses are authentic, ethically developed, and grounded in their individual leadership experiences.

Application Upload – Official Application Form

Section 1: General Information

- Applicant Information
- Education and Training
- Professional Experience
- Professional Membership and Involvement
- Honors and Awards
- Publications and Funded Research

Section 2: Application Essay Questions

- (A) **Vision** (*up to 300 words*): Share an example of a time you influenced others in a personal or professional setting (academic, teaching, research, service, or workplace). How does this experience shape your vision for contributing to AAFCS over the next five years? (Alignment: Supports the Academy's mission to develop leaders who actively contribute to AAFCS and the FCS profession.)
- (B) **Contribution in Your Work** (*up to 300 words*): Describe your use of a leadership philosophy, structured approach, or framework used to achieve your leadership or program goals. Include the impacts or outcomes of your demonstrated leadership. (Alignment: Reflect the Academy's focus on practical, experience-based development)
- (C) **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Social Justice (DEIB)** (*up to 200 words*): Provide an example of when you intentionally incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, or social justice in a project, team, or initiative. What steps did you take, what challenges did you face, and how did this experience shape your evolving leadership style? (Alignment: Reflects the Academy's commitment to inclusive, culturally responsive leadership. Aligns with the mission to develop leaders who can address social justice and equity issues.)
- (D) **Planning and Growth** (*up to 200 words*): Describe one measurable goal for your leadership development over the next year. How will you use specific skills or strategies, including insights you hope to gain from the Leadership Academy, to achieve this goal? (Alignment: Reflects the Academy's mission of fostering growth through structured leadership training.)
- (E) **Reflection** (*up to 200 words*): Share your most significant contribution or leadership experiences, including challenges you faced. What did you learn about yourself as a developing leader that can transfer into your AAFCS leadership, and how have these experiences influenced how you contribute or lead in your personal and/or professional settings today? (Alignment: Reflects the Academy's commitment to developing ethical and adaptive leaders.)

Evaluating the Leadership Academy Participant Applications

- Individuals who apply for the Leadership Academy Program cannot serve as application reviewers for the program in the same year.
- Application reviewers cannot review applications from family members or applicants who share the same employer.
- Application reviewers are responsible for identifying any applicants that include a potential conflict of interest and recusing themselves from the review process.
- Application reviewers agree to review and score applications using the Evaluation Criteria.

Identifying Leadership Academy Participants

- A maximum of 15 participants can be accepted in a given program year. The Community of Building Leadership Capacity may select less than 15 participants at their discretion.
- Recipient(s) will receive a welcome letter from the Community Leader of the Community of Building Leadership Capacity acknowledging their acceptance into the program.
- Each selected applicant will be required to sign an acceptance agreement acknowledging all program requirements before being accepted.

Participating in the Leadership Academy

Participants must fully engage in the Leadership Academy and commit to all requirements. Only those who complete the full responsibilities (noted below) will be recognized as program graduates. If accepted into the Leadership Academy, participants are expected to:

1. Fully engage in the Leadership Academy and commit to all requirements;
2. Attend virtual bimonthly sessions beginning in January before the AAFCS Annual Conference in an odd year;
3. Participate in the in-person academy 1½ days prior to the AAFCS Annual Conference;
4. Register for the AAFCS Annual Conference immediately following the academy to participate in conference sessions and additional academy sessions;
5. Meet virtually with mentor* once a month after the AAFCS Annual Conference until the following June to enhance leadership abilities and meet individual leadership goals;
6. Work with a small group from the cohort to:
 - a. Complete an Affiliate/AAFCS Project by the following June;
 - b. Submit a report based on the results of the project;
 - c. Present the Affiliate/AAFCS project at a subsequent AAFCS Annual Conference;
7. Join virtual networking and learning sessions in the year following the academy;
8. Acknowledge the Leadership Academy Program from the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences in research publications and presentations when related to their Affiliate/AAFCS project.
9. If possible, attend the AAFCS Annual Conference the year following the academy.
10. Seek leadership roles in affiliate and/or AAFCS, and in other professional areas

To clarify and protect the rights of both the AAFCS and Leadership Academy Participants, AAFCS requires participants to acknowledge AAFCS and the Leadership Academy as supporting any results whether program, initiative, product or research. AAFCS has the right to use any of the results (programs, resources, products, research, etc.) and to publish them to the AAFCS website or in an AAFCS publication for all AAFCS members to use. Credit will be given to the author/creator and AAFCS. Therefore, a signed project form is required for all participants indicating these parameters prior to project approval.

Evaluation Criteria

The following criteria correspond with the application guidelines. They provide clarification, ease in preparing the application materials, and consistency in evaluation.

Essay Component	Scoring Descriptor	Score
Vision	0–4 Points: Minimal, unclear, or no example provided. 5–8 Points: Provides an example, but the explanation is partial or surface-level.	/15
Contribution in your Work	9–12 Points: Clear and relevant example with measurable outcomes. 13–15 Points: Compelling, well-developed example with strong measurable outcomes.	/15
Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, and Social Justice (DEIB)	0–4 Points: Minimal or no example; unclear or missing insight. 5–8 Points: Some examples, partially explained, measurable, or connected to leadership outcomes. 9–10 Points: Strong examples; clear, measurable outcomes; demonstrates insight, growth, and strategic leadership.	/10
Planning and Growth		/10
Reflection		/10
Total Score		/60