



LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc.
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June 9, 2025

LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc. (LEAD) is accepting applications for the next cohort of Leadership Development Fellowship Program, Class XIV. This class will participate during 2026-27. Applications are due by the end of the day **October 1, 2025**.

All application materials are available at <www.leadmaryland.org> or <<https://go.umd.edu/LEAD14>>.

LEAD Class XIV application materials include:

- A. Application Brochure
- B. Program Information, including program participation benefits
- C. Calendar
- D. Application, a web-based form completed and submitted online
- E. Statement of Understanding and Code of Ethics
- F. Reference Form (3 references are required)

There are many benefits to participating in the LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program. Please consider applying by the October 1, 2025, due date.

Please contact me directly if you need more information or assistance. Thank you for your efforts in making the leadership development program a success!

Sincerely,

Susan

Susan R. Harrison
Principal Agent Associate,
University of Maryland Extension (UME), Agriculture & Food Systems (AgFS),
LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program-- a UME Signature Program
and
Executive Director, LEAD Maryland Foundation, Inc.



UNIVERSITY OF
MARYLAND
EXTENSION



LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program Information: Class XIV (2026–2027)

Developing Leadership to Serve Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Rural Communities

About the Program

The LEAD Maryland Fellowship is a two-year leadership development program offering participants numerous benefits that are realized for a lifetime.

The LEAD Maryland Fellowship is designed to cultivate emerging leaders who are committed to serving agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities. Fellows engage in a series of structured, multi-day seminars across Maryland and Washington, D.C., and participate in a domestic and/or international study tour. Fellows will develop a broader and keener awareness of issues facing agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities, and can apply their leadership skills to promote their businesses, industries, communities, and Maryland's rural sector, for the benefit of the future.

The Fellowship is a collaborative effort of the LEAD Maryland Foundation, University of Maryland Extension, and other public and private sector partners. The Fellowship supports individuals in building leadership skills, expanding networks, gaining policy awareness, and serving their communities and industries more effectively.

Program Benefits

For Fellows:

- See yourself as a leader. Become a life-long learner and leader.
- Expand professional networks—the number and diversity of people you can call on to help solve problems and to promote your industry, community, and state.
- Learn more about Maryland; meet local and regional leaders; better understand some of Maryland's history and heritage; better understand what shapes our future.

- Gain leadership skills to confidently share ideas, address issues, build partnerships, help shape policy, and solve problems.
- Learn about new technologies, markets, industry and community initiatives, and programs.
- Learn new perspectives; expand greater self-awareness, value systems, and beliefs; See your industry or your community, and Maryland, differently or more clearly.
- Strengthening communication skills to work effectively across communities and industries. Learn skills to help you reach diverse audiences of all sizes, work with the media, give a speech of public testimony, and work more productively in groups.
- Broaden understanding of agriculture, natural resources, and rural policy issues.
- Connect with a diverse network of professionals and leaders.
- Expand personal growth through assessments, new experiences, and reflective learning.

For Employers, Industries, and Communities:

- Invest in emerging leaders who will serve with greater confidence and competence.
- Prepares emerging leaders to embrace greater responsibilities at their place of work, within their organizations and industry.
- Fellows gain skills to better understand themselves and others in their work environment, and to find greater value in working with diverse teams.
- Creates professional networks, contacts, and other new resources to solve problems.
- Equips participants to understand different views of complex issues, to better identify and understand new trends, and respond to or lead changes.
- Motivates participants to connect their organization, community, industry, or government with others to meet common goals.
- Fellows educate others about the importance of their work and industry.
- Provide a higher level of training and unique experiences that most organizations and employers could not provide working alone.

Eligibility and Selection

Basic Requirements:

- Must be a Maryland resident for at least two years. (Applicants residing in neighboring states and Washington DC will be considered if actively working in or serving Maryland).
- Must be at least 21 years of age.

- Must demonstrate leadership potential and a commitment to agriculture, natural resources, or rural community service.
- Must have the ability to travel throughout Maryland, the U.S., and internationally.
- Must be willing to commit considerable amounts of time to fully participate (estimation of 45 days over two years). Fellows must have the ability to be away from work, family, friends, and other activities and responsibilities. Fellows need time to prepare and organize to be ready to participate and be at their best during the seminars. Fellows need to have home and work obligations met or covered to minimize distractions during the seminars.

Selection Considerations:

- A commitment to learning and service beyond the workplace.
- A commitment to a bright future for Maryland agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.
- An interest in learning about public policies that affect agriculture, natural resources, local communities, our rural communities, Maryland, the United States of America, and our world.
- A willingness to share knowledge and experiences with class members and others.
- A willingness to travel throughout Maryland, the nation, and internationally, and to obtain a passport and visa(s) as may be needed for program travel.
- Selected applicants must have demonstrated emerging leadership abilities and/or willingness to set personal goals for learning, improving, and applying skills. “Emerging leadership” typically refers to individuals who are not yet in taking significant leadership service, influence, or responsibilities, but are actively learning and demonstrating the potential, initiative, vision, motivation, or capacity to lead.
- While all individuals have room to grow, preference in the selection process is given to applicants who would benefit most from the opportunities LEAD Maryland provides—those who may not yet have had broad access to leadership development, training, or networks.

Applicants who are already highly accomplished and active in leadership, with extensive educational, professional, travel, and leadership experiences, may not rank as highly. This is because such individuals might already be operating at a level where they would contribute more by teaching than by being stretched themselves. To preserve the program’s focus on developing emerging leaders, applicants with significant leadership responsibilities or extensive experience will not displace those who are still growing into their leadership potential.

- Applicants need to be 21 years of age or older. There are no formal education requirements. Much of the curriculum is geared towards mid-career people who have a depth of work and life experiences to contribute to discussions for the benefit of the class. Having a wide range of ages in a class positively adds to the diversity of the class. Fellows must have an ability and willingness to teach and

share; at the same time, they must have maturity and readiness to learn, grow, and change to become leaders. Ideal applicants have a good mix of “life experiences” and a level of skills or knowledge to be able to teach or share with others.

- Applicants who seek to use program participation as a resume builder, for career shifts, to meet job requirements, or to redirect their career, are not recommended.
- LEAD Maryland does not teach people how to farm. The LEAD class will have visits and tours during seminars that may include visiting a diversity of agricultural operations, as well visits to businesses, government offices, nonprofits, rural and urban communities, and more.

Diversity and Representation

LEAD Maryland aims for diversity in age, geography, experience, perspective, and profession. There is a goal to have half of each class comprised of individuals directly engaged in production agriculture, broadly defined to include:

- Farmers, growers, producers, watermen/women, foresters
- Aquaculture, forestry, equine industries
- Greenhouse/nursery production, arboriculture, turfgrass, viticulture
- Fruit and vegetable farming, livestock, poultry, grain, organic production
- Agri-tourism, value-added products, food systems, and related services

Application Process

Due Date: October 1, 2025

Materials Available Online:

- Application Brochure
- Program Information
- Calendar
- Online Application Form
- Statement of Understanding and Code of Ethics
- Reference Form (3 references required)

Submission Requirements:

- Complete and submit the online application by October 1, 2025.
- Applicants are required to ask three people to submit references. A reference form is available from the website. Letters of reference are acceptable, too. Send

references by email to < leadmd@umd.edu >. References may be mailed or delivered to:

LEAD Maryland Foundation
Wye Narrows Drive
Queenstown, MD 21658

References are also due October 1, 2025.

Those completing the reference form are asked to submit forms confidentially and not copy to the applicant.

- Only the LEAD Maryland Foundation Board can formally extend the application deadline, and any changes will be posted at www.leadmaryland.org.

Program Participation Details

Class Size: 20 to 25 Fellows

Tuition: Applicants must have the ability to pay the \$5,500 tuition, which is a participation fee. Fellows must pay the tuition by the designated due dates. Tuition may be paid in part or fully in advance of the due dates. One fourth of the tuition (\$1,375) is due on each of the following dates, for a total of \$5,500 to be paid:

Payment Due Date Amount

February 1, 2026	\$1,375
June 1, 2026	\$1,375
November 1, 2026	\$1,375
April 1, 2027	\$1,375
Total	\$5,500

Each Fellow will receive an invoice for the tuition. Payment by check is preferred. Payment of the tuition/fee is not a charitable contribution to the Foundation.

Sometimes LEAD Maryland Fellows depend on financial support or scholarships (financial assistance) from employers, organizations, or other sources to pay for all or part of the tuition fee. The LEAD Maryland Foundation, with support from the Rural Maryland Foundation, the MD Cattlemen's Association, and others, has a scholarship program.

An estimated minimum of \$25,000 is invested into each Fellow for completion of the Fellowship Program.

Relationship with Sponsors and Foundation Granters

The LEAD Program is provided through a collaborative effort. The LEAD Maryland Foundation and the University of Maryland Extension and many other organizations, businesses, and individuals work to plan, implement, evaluate, and fund the Fellowship Program, its curriculum, and activities. We are grateful for the many organizations and individuals who invest in the success of the LEAD Program and the LEAD Fellows.

The ideal class is intentionally balanced, with participants who both challenge and complement one another's viewpoints and areas of knowledge. Because the most successful LEAD class is diverse and balanced, there is no fair way to promise program partners/funders that any of their nominated applicants, employees, clients, or otherwise endorsed applicants will be accepted into the program at any given time. LEAD strives to have half of each class be representative of farmers, growers, and producers.

Should an employer, organization, or an agency want to support only a limited number of employees or organizational members to be in a LEAD class at any one time, it is up to the employer or organization to communicate their internal plans with their employees. Employees are encouraged to speak with their employers before applying. The LEAD Maryland Foundation will consider all applicants.

The LEAD Maryland Foundation expects that each applicant has obtained appropriate support from family and employers to participate in the program and has confirmed this support prior to submitting the application.

The LEAD Maryland Foundation Board and its Selection Committee uses submitted applications, supplied references, and personal interviews to select applicants.

Should an applicant have concerns about possible or likely attendance issues, or conflicts with other known commitments, applicants need to discuss their individual situation at the time of applicant interviews or apply in a future round when a better attendance commitment can be made. The Fellowship is awarded to a specific applicant, and no person can attend in their place.

Study Tour: Fellows participate in a study tour (domestic and/or international), with dates and destinations determined by the LEAD Maryland Foundation Board after the class begins. Tours are educational and full participation is expected.

Seminars: Please see the class calendar posted with the application materials. The multi-day seminars are 2-4 days each. Seminars are held in locations across Maryland and in Washington, D.C. Classes are held during the week, not weekends. All seminars will start on a Tuesday. Depending on the seminar, it will end on a Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Seminars typically start mid-morning on the first day and conclude in the afternoon on the

final day. Seminar details are provided prior to each seminar to assist everyone in their planning.

Seminar days can be long days, with breakfasts starting at 7:00 a.m., and the evening dinner or tour programs concluding at or after 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. Short breaks are provided throughout the day. Full attendance and participation are expected throughout the seminar.

The seminars use varied teaching methods and include field visits, discussions, workshops, and leadership training. Meals and lodging are included, though some expenses may be the participant's responsibility.

Attendance: Full participation is required.

Other Expectations

- Having and using an operational email address is vital, or Fellows will miss important information regarding seminar schedules, instructions, driving directions, and general updates. Seminar information is sent electronically through email (not social media, not text messages or other apps, not postal mail). There may be assigned short article readings, self-assessments, project work, or studying outside of the seminars.
- Fellows need access to web-based meeting platforms, such as Zoom. Class XIV seminars are in-person and on-site, but there may be occasions where the class will use Zoom. There may occasionally be a speaker during the in-person seminars who presents to the class remotely over Zoom or a similar platform.
- Fellows are expected to complete seminar and program evaluations to support program improvement.
- The required attire for participating in the LEAD Program will vary depending on the activities of each seminar. Most seminars require business casual attire. Some activities require outdoor attire. Requirements for each seminar will be shared in advance of the seminar.

Additional Notes

- Family members (spouses, siblings, parents/children) may not participate in the same class.
- The Fellowship is awarded to individuals and is non-transferable.
- Past applicants not selected are encouraged to reapply.

- Lobbying the selection committee is not appropriate and will not influence decisions.

About the Fellowship

The LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program provides leadership education and development opportunities. Though not a degree program, the Fellowship is designed to deliver high-level instruction, foster service-oriented leadership, and build capacity for action on complex issues affecting agriculture, natural resources, and rural life.

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The LEAD Maryland Fellowship Program is a "Signature Program" of the University of Maryland Extension. University programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class.

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