



## *Leadership Dorchester 2027*

*"Leadership Dorchester gave me a much deeper understanding of our community and the people and organizations working to make it stronger. I learned so much through the program, but the relationships I formed with classmates, many of whom have become lasting friends, were just as valuable. I highly recommend Leadership Dorchester to anyone who wants to learn, connect, and make a difference in our community."*

*-Ciara Hedrick, Palmetto Goodwill*

Leadership Dorchester is an 11-month program designed for emerging and established leaders who want to strengthen their leadership abilities while gaining a deeper understanding of the political, civic, economic and social forces shaping Dorchester County. Upon completing the program, participants will be better prepared to serve as community leaders and share their knowledge of Dorchester County with colleagues, peers and prospective residents.

Class members participate in leadership development, professional networking, and have opportunities to meet decision-makers from across the region. They begin the program as individuals and finish with a lasting network of friends and colleagues-and a stronger commitment to serving their community.

The program is open to emerging and established leaders from business, industry, education, nonprofit organizations, government and other professional sectors.

### **PROGRAM MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

The mission of Leadership Dorchester is to cultivate a diverse group of proactive, forward-thinking leaders who can identify community challenges and develop innovative solutions.

The program's primary objectives are to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of the region's economy, government and community resources.
- Strengthen participants' leadership abilities.
- Build connections among current and future community leaders.
- Prepare participants to become more actively involved in Dorchester County.

The curriculum is presented by respected local, county and state leaders.

## **PROGRAM BENEFITS**

- Development of community and civic leadership abilities.
- A broader understanding of the critical issues and opportunities facing the region.
- Opportunities to build relationships with elected officials and influential community leaders who are helping shape the region's future.
- Hands-on community involvement through the class service project.
- Access to a broad and diverse network of Leadership Dorchester alumni.

## **CURRICULUM AND PRESENTERS**

Leadership Dorchester combines in-depth discussions of local issues with experiential learning and a class service project designed to benefit Dorchester County residents. Each monthly session focuses on a topic related to the county's quality of life and economic prosperity.

Throughout the program, participants will take part in more than 50 presentations and activities led by individuals representing a wide range of backgrounds, occupations and professions. Presenters are selected based on their professional experience, community involvement and ability to engage and inform participants. Leadership Dorchester alumni also play an integral role in the program.

Sessions are held at locations throughout the region, with each venue selected for its relevance to the day's topic. Previous locations have included the South Carolina State House, historic sites, manufacturing facilities, HCA Healthcare Summerville Hospital, local schools, nonprofit organizations and other community venues. The Town of Summerville and Dorchester County also host portions of the program.

Each monthly session includes time for planning and completing the class service project.

## **LIMITED ENROLLMENT**

Enrollment is limited to provide each participant with a meaningful and engaging experience.

Applications will be reviewed by a selection committee, which will select the final class from all completed submissions. Because active participation is essential to the program's success, applicants should carefully review the attendance and participation requirements before applying.

**Once completed, please submit the application to [Leadershipdorchester@GreaterSummerville.org](mailto:Leadershipdorchester@GreaterSummerville.org).**

The application deadline is **Wednesday, October 28, 2026.**

**Candidate Commitment**

Leadership Dorchester candidates must be committed to helping create a positive future for Dorchester County and its municipalities. They must also be prepared to participate fully in all aspects of the program.

If selected for Leadership Dorchester, I agree to:

- Attend the opening overnight retreat, graduation and the nine sessions.\*
- Arrive on time and participate fully in all program activities.
- Actively participate in the class service project. This will require meetings and activities outside regularly scheduled sessions.
- Support future Leadership Dorchester programs as I am able.
- Obtain full support from my employer before beginning the program.

**APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE**

I understand and accept the goals, expectations and commitments of Leadership Dorchester. If selected, I will devote the time and resources necessary to complete the program successfully.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

\*To complete Leadership Dorchester, participants are expected to attend the opening retreat, graduation and all monthly sessions, which are generally held on the second Thursday of each month. Participants must also take an active role in the class service project. A complete program schedule is included at the end of this application

**Program Cost**

\_\_\_\_ **Chamber Member** \$1,850

\_\_\_\_ **Non-Chamber Member** \$2,500

(includes one year of Chamber Supporter level membership)

Program fee paid by:

\_\_\_\_ Employer

\_\_\_\_ Self-sponsored (applicant pays program fee)

\_\_\_\_ Other sponsor

*\*If selected, fee must be paid prior to **Dec. 18, 2026***

**General Information**  
(Please Print)

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name \_\_\_\_\_

Employer \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title \_\_\_\_\_

Business Address \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Is this a landline or cell phone number ?

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Personal Information**  
(Confidential)

Full Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday \_\_\_\_\_ Are you over 21 years old? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Years in Dorchester County: Resident - # of years \_\_\_\_\_ Work - # of years \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Dietary Restrictions**

\_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests, hobbies and/or talents:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Any allergies and/or health issues that would affect your participation or that Leadership Dorchester staff should be made aware:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**To Be Completed by Supervisor**

Must be signed by the candidate's supervisor unless the applicant is self-employed or the CEO.

This candidate for *Leadership Dorchester* has my full support to participate.

**I have read and agree to all participation requirements. \_\_\_\_\_ (initial)**

Name of Supervisor \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that the tuition for *Leadership Dorchester* is payable to the Greater  
Summerville/Dorchester Chamber of Commerce.

\_\_\_\_\_ Our business will provide financial assistance in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ toward the  
candidate's tuition.

\_\_\_\_\_ The candidate is self-sponsored (applicant pays fee)

I understand the time and financial commitments associated with my employee's participation in  
Leadership Dorchester. I am aware that participants are expected to attend all scheduled sessions, arrive  
on time and participate fully in program activities. I also understand that the class service project will  
require meetings and activities outside regularly scheduled sessions. I understand that failure to meet  
these expectations may prevent the candidate from graduating.

By signing below, I confirm my support of this applicant's participation in Leadership Dorchester.

**Supervisor's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Application Questions**

Applicant's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Please submit no more than 2 pages in response to the questions below:**

Describe your current volunteer and/or leadership roles in community, civic, religious, cultural, or professional organizations.

| Organization | Responsibility / position held | From  | To    |
|--------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|
| _____        | _____                          | _____ | _____ |
| _____        | _____                          | _____ | _____ |
| _____        | _____                          | _____ | _____ |
| _____        | _____                          | _____ | _____ |
| _____        | _____                          | _____ | _____ |
| _____        | _____                          | _____ | _____ |

**Please type or print your answers on a separate page.**

Why are you interested in participating in *Leadership Dorchester*?

What are your personal expectations of *Leadership Dorchester*?

What do you feel are three (3) significant challenges facing Dorchester County? Why?

*Leadership Dorchester*  
**2027 Session Schedule and Locations**

*With a few exceptions, the Leadership Dorchester program is held on the second Thursday of each month. All sessions typically begin at 8:00am and last until 5:00pm. Lunch is included.*

**(Locations, time and topics are subject to change)**

**Retreat**

Thursday & Friday, January 28-29, 2027  
Orientation, Team Building and Special Project Kick-off  
The Inn at Middleton Place, Charleston, SC

**Community Service Day**

Thursday, February 11  
The Chamber & Summerville Non-Profits

**Government Day**

*Wednesday, March 10\**

*The date is tentative and may change due to the uncertainty of the statehouse calendar.*

*A final date will be available closer to March, 2027*

Columbia Statehouse & SC Chamber of Commerce

**Education Day**

Thursday, April 8  
Various Schools in Dorchester County

**Summerville Arts, History, and Tourism Day**

Thursday, May 13  
Multiple locations in downtown Summerville and Town of Summerville

**Health and Wellness Day**

Thursday, June 10  
HCA Healthcare Summerville Hospital

**Public Safety Day**

Thursday, July 8  
Dorchester County First Responders

**Our Natural Environment and Parks Day**

Thursday, August 12  
Brosnan Forest, Multiple parks, and outdoor sites across the county

**Industry & Economic Development**

Thursday, September 9  
Local Manufacturing Facilities

**Upper Dorchester County**

Thursday, October 14  
Various Locations "Above the Swamp"

**Graduation**

Thursday, November 4 (tentative)  
Middleton Place

### **Attendance Policy-Signature required**

For Leadership Dorchester to be a meaningful experience, class members must participate fully. Attendance at scheduled functions and interaction among participants are essential to the program's overall learning experience. **Please review this entire policy and sign the “participant acknowledgment” on the last page.**

Leadership Dorchester recognizes that work or family emergencies may occasionally prevent attendance. When an absence is excused, participants must complete assigned makeup work for the missed program day.

Makeup work requires a time commitment comparable to the portion of the program missed and includes a written report. All makeup work must be submitted to the Leadership Dorchester facilitator and is subject to review by the Advisory Committee. The facilitator will provide a list of approved makeup options based on the missed program day.

Participants may make up **no more than one full program-day absence**.

Full attendance is mandatory at the Opening Retreat and Graduation. No portion of either event may be missed or made up.

### **MAKEUP WORK**

If a participant has an excused absence from a Leadership Dorchester session, the participant must complete **four makeup activities**:

1. **Two activities from the General Makeup Activities list**  
**and**
2. **Two activities from the session-specific missed session**

For example, a participant who misses Government Day must complete two General Makeup Activities and two Government Day activities.

### **GENERAL MAKEUP ACTIVITIES**

**Select two:**

- Attend a Dorchester School District Two or Dorchester School District Four Board of Trustees meeting.
- Attend a municipal or county council meeting.
- Participate in a charitable service project through a church, civic organization or professional association.
- Interview a classmate about the missed session, including the day's itinerary, key takeaways and their relevance to Dorchester County. This option may only be used for ONE of the four activities.

## **SESSION-SPECIFIC MAKEUP ACTIVITIES**

**Select two activities from the section corresponding to the missed session.**

### **Government Day**

- Attend a Chamber Public Policy Division meeting
- Attend a public court session - general, criminal, or federal
- Interview a state Legislator about key issues in Dorchester County. Interview must be done in person or on the phone. No email interviews.
- Interview Summerville Mayor or Council member regarding issues facing the Town Council and government. Interview must be done in person or on the phone. No email interviews.

### **Community Service Day**

- Attend a fundraiser for a Dorchester County nonprofit
- Visit a weekly meeting as a guest of a Town or County nonprofit
- Attend the Chamber Nonprofit Council meeting
- Tour and volunteer 2 hours at a Dorchester County nonprofit (Requires prior approval from LD facilitator)

### **Summerville History, Arts and Tourism Day**

- Visit the Summerville/Dorchester Museum
- Attend a Third Thursday event
- Experience a Summerville Orchestra or Flowertown Players performance
- Visit the Timrod Library and the Public Works Art Center

### **Our Natural Environment Day**

- Visit Colonial Dorchester State Historic Site
- Visit Givhan's Ferry State Park
- Meet with town or county park director
- Interview a local developer about responsibilities associated with community building.

### **Health and Wellness Day**

- Attend a community forum on healthcare
- Participate in a CPR or First Aid training course
- Tour the Summerville Family YMCA and meet with CEO
- Interview a staff member of Dorchester County Mental Health or HCA Healthcare Summerville Hospital

### **Education Day**

- Attend a local School Improvement Council (SIC) meeting
- Volunteer at a local school
- Meet with leadership at Trident Tech or Charleston Southern University
- Interview a leader in the DD2 or DD4 District Office

**Industry and Economic Development Day**

- Attend a County Planning and Zoning meeting
- Interview a Project Manager of Charleston Regional Development Alliance about economic growth in the region
- Attend any business enhancement, training or continuing education program
- Interview Director of Dorchester County Economic Development about economic development in Dorchester County
- Attend an event sponsored by Dorchester County Economic Development.

**Upper Dorchester Day**

- Visit the Tri-County Regional Chamber and interview Chamber Director
- Tour Applebee Church and the Koger House
- Visit the Dorchester County Quick Jobs Training Center in St. George
- Interview St. George Mayor
- Tour the Lourie Theater and the Historic Rosenwald School (requires advanced notice)
- Visit the Dorchester County Heritage Center

**Public Safety Day**

- Attend a Public Safety/ Disaster Preparedness Seminar
- Visit a fire station in the Town or Dorchester County
- Interview a Summerville or Dorchester County fire fighter
- Interview an Emergency Representative for the Town or County

**DOCUMENTATION AND COMPLETION**

Participants must notify the Leadership Dorchester facilitator of their selected makeup activities. Upon completion, participants must submit a written summary of each activity.

All makeup work must be completed and submitted within one month of the missed session. Failure to complete the required makeup work will impact a participant's eligibility to graduate from Leadership Dorchester.

**PARTICIPANT ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

*I have read, understand and accept the Leadership Dorchester attendance and makeup work requirements. I understand that an excused absence requires the completion of four makeup activities: two general activities and two activities related to the missed session.*

**Participant Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_