

2025-2026 IMPACT REPORT

BUILDING THE LEADERS CENTRAL TEXAS NEEDS

Leadership Austin connects and develops courageous leaders across Central Texas. Through transformative experiences, we help leaders turn individual growth into community impact.



VISION:

A future where all people and communities contribute to a better Central Texas.



LEADERSHIP
AUSTIN

INDIVIDUAL GROWTH
COMMUNITY IMPACT

LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

The greatest challenge facing Central Texas isn't growth – it's whether we can continue to lead through it together. For more than 45 years, Leadership Austin has invested in the kind of leadership communities can't automate. We bring together people from different sectors, perspectives, and experiences to forge relationships, challenge assumptions, and tackle problems no one organization can solve alone.

That work grows because leaders invite other leaders into it. Our new [Ambassador Program](#) gives alumni and supporters a meaningful way to share their Leadership Austin story, open doors for future leaders, and strengthen the network of civic leadership shaping our region.

Roads, buildings, and technology all matter. But they can't replace the relationships that help communities navigate change together. Thank you for investing in the human infrastructure of Central Texas.



Board Chair



Chief Executive Officer

**CHECK OUT OUR
STRATEGIC PLAN!**



IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS:

#1

Record-breaking
support for Rising
Leaders Fund

#2

National partnership
to expand
bridging divides

#3

Reimagined alumni
ambassadorship

#4

Captured
100+ stories of
"Austin at its Best"

#5

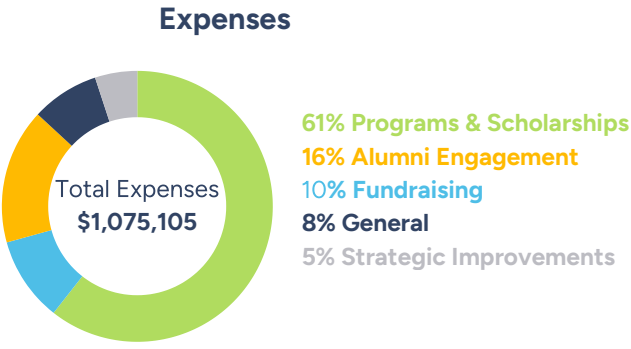
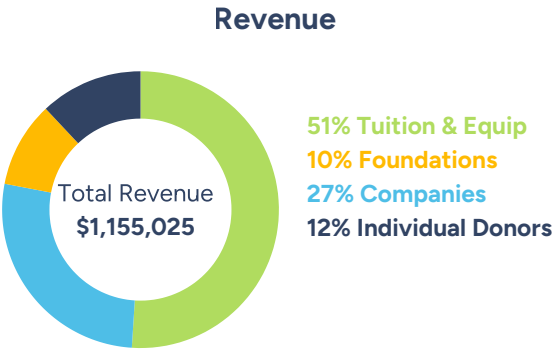
Built the team
to match the
mission

FINANCIALS & PARTNERSHIPS

140+ Leaders Invested in across 4 leadership cohorts

Scholarship Recipients: 2 in 5 participants

Fiscal Year
2026-2027



Net Revenue: \$79,920

Cash Reservers: 3.5 months

BEST EVER PARTNERS



BUILDING LEADERS

EMERGE

A nine-month program for rising changemakers ready to strengthen their leadership skills, build meaningful connections, and accelerate personal and professional growth.



"The program is great at serving the overall needs of our cohort, touching on topics no matter where you are in your leadership journey. It does take work to maximize the value you get from the program, but when you do the work, the program is a great way to facilitate growth over time."

Albert Tinay, Emerge 19-2026

ESSENTIAL

A nine-month immersive community leadership experience that brings together established leaders to deepen their leadership, expand their networks, and tackle Central Texas' most pressing challenges.



"Thank you for putting us together and ensuring there is a space in our community to step back, learn more, and get out of our bubbles! I appreciate the opportunity. We are stronger together and Austin is stronger because of Leadership Austin."

Elizabeth Nelson, Essential 47-2026

LEADER LAB

A peer circle on modern leadership for executives leading organizations and community initiatives.



"Being able to remove the ever-present cape of leadership and enter a room with others walking through life in similar circumstances is disarming in the most welcoming way possible. Peer support is needed now more than ever, and Leadership Austin is prioritizing building a dynamic community for Austin's best."

Shane Woods, Executive Director, Girlstart

EQUIPPING COMPANIES



Build your organization's momentum with tailored workshops. Learn Together. Lead Together.



"While many of my Directors entered the room feeling conflicted about being away from their desks for so long, all left feeling like it was incredibly valuable time well-spent, with a renewed sense of team and forward momentum."

-Jamie Herlich - Zach Theater Managing Director

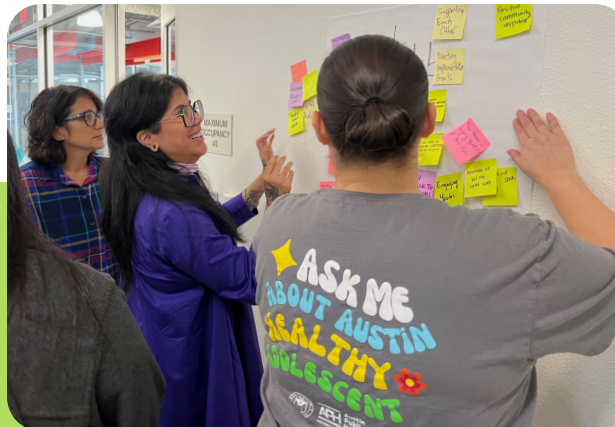
MASTERCLASSES

Skills-based courses for individuals and teams to build practical leadership skills for today's workplace.



"I loved the group size and the diversity of it. I loved the different resources that this curriculum was built with. Highlight was talking through real-life situations and experiences."

-Masterclass Participant



FOSTERING CONNECTIONS



ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT

Leadership Austin's alumni network provides ongoing opportunities for graduates to connect, learn, lead, and continue creating impact across Central Texas.

 **60+ ALUMNI SPEAKERS**

 **26 ACTIVE CLASS REPS**

 **375+ VOLUNTEER HOURS CONTRIBUTED**



PARTNERSHIP COLLABORATION

Leadership Austin partners with businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations to develop leaders, strengthen organizations, and address regional challenges together.

 **26 NEW COMMUNITY PARTNERS THIS YEAR!**

FOSTERING CONNECTIONS



Explore stories from **100+** leaders as they share the moments, experiences, and perspectives that define our city.



LEADERSHIP AUSTIN CONFERENCE

This annual one-day conference convenes hundreds of leaders to connect, learn, and lead at the pace of change through inspiring keynotes and 15+ breakout sessions that spark individual growth and collective impact across Central Texas.



PARTNERED WITH LEADERS ATLAS ON 'REVERSE KEYNOTE,' CROWDSOURCING A VISION FOR AUSTIN'S FUTURE



COURAGEOUS LEADERS LUNCH

Leadership Austin's annual fundraiser celebrates courageous leadership while expanding program access through the Rising Leaders Fund.



SAVE A SEAT CAMPAIGN RAISED A RECORD-BREAKING \$55K FOR RISING LEADER SCHOLARSHIPS



THE RIPPLE EFFECT

ESSENTIAL GRADUATE

From Essential **program participant** to a **“connected leader,”** Cookie Ruiz's Leadership Austin experience expanded her understanding of Central Texas, strengthened her civic leadership, and expanded her life-long network.



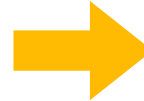
INDIVIDUAL GROWTH

Leadership Austin helped deepen Cookie's capacity as a community-centered leader. She continued **investing in her own leadership development through civic initiatives**, including the CityWorks Academy, national executive fellowships, and regional planning, becoming a trusted voice across sectors.



WORKPLACE LEADERSHIP

As Executive Director and CEO of Ballet Austin, Cookie transformed the organization into one of the nation's most respected performing arts institutions. **Her strategic leadership strengthened the organization's financial sustainability, expanded community programming, and elevated Austin's arts ecosystem** while mentoring countless nonprofit professionals and future leaders.



STRONGER CENTRAL TEXAS

Through decades of leadership alongside her “LA” classmates, Cookie has helped to build a stronger Central Texas and improve quality of life for thousands. **Cookie's impact shows what's possible when we invest in one leader – and surround them with a supportive community.** The result is a lasting ripple effect far beyond one person.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Cookie's leadership extends far beyond ballet. Inspired to give back, she later served on the Leadership Austin Board of Directors. Cookie has served on numerous nonprofit and civic boards, chaired major citywide initiatives, and advised public planning efforts. **Her volunteer leadership has shaped Austin's landscape.**

LOOKING AHEAD



EVENT CALENDAR



WAYS TO ENGAGE





**THANK YOU FOR
BELIEVING IN US AND
SUPPORTING THIS
WORK.**

CONTACT US!

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 leadershipaustin.org

