



Local Leadership **Foundations**

**A new training program for
Ontario's municipal elected officials**



For the sector, by the sector'

Local Leadership Foundations is a new training program for Ontario's municipal elected officials.

As the new council term begins, elected officials face complex challenges, big decisions, and a steep learning curve. Local Leadership Foundations is here to help: a practical introduction to leading on council from the **Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)**, the expert voice of municipalities, and the **Institute on Governance (IOG)**, public-sector education experts.

Through extensive engagement with elected officials, administrators and experts, AMO & IOG have drawn on hundreds of years of municipal experience to give our local elected officials an unparalleled learning opportunity to start the new term on a strong foundation.





Who should enroll?

Local Leadership Foundations is for **municipal elected officials**. This includes members of council who are newly elected in October 2026, and returning members of council seeking a refresher or a reset for the start of a new term.



What's included?

The Local Leadership Foundations Program includes five modules for all members of council, and one additional module for heads of council. Elected officials can enroll for the full series or just one module. The modules can be completed in any order.

Each module includes two parts:

- Access to a **robust online course** for self-directed learning, available immediately after the election, including opportunities to learn from past elected officials and municipal experts on each module topic
- Enrollment in a **3-hour workshop** with an expert facilitator for content learning, peer-to-peer sharing, and a 'deep dive' case study to practice some of the most complex parts of being an elected official.

Elected officials who complete the five core modules will receive a **Local Leadership Foundations Certificate** from AMO & IOG, recognizing their commitment to well-informed and responsible local leadership.



AMO & IOG Local Leadership Foundations

Core Learning Modules



MODULE 1

Governing in Practice

Understanding the role and expectations



MODULE 2

Making Decisions

Navigating the decision making process; complex scope of municipal services



MODULE 3

Municipal Finance & Budgeting

Financial decisions, municipal budgeting and trade-offs



MODULE 4

Civility & Integrity

Council dynamics, council-staff relations, ethics and building trust



MODULE 5

Engaging Community

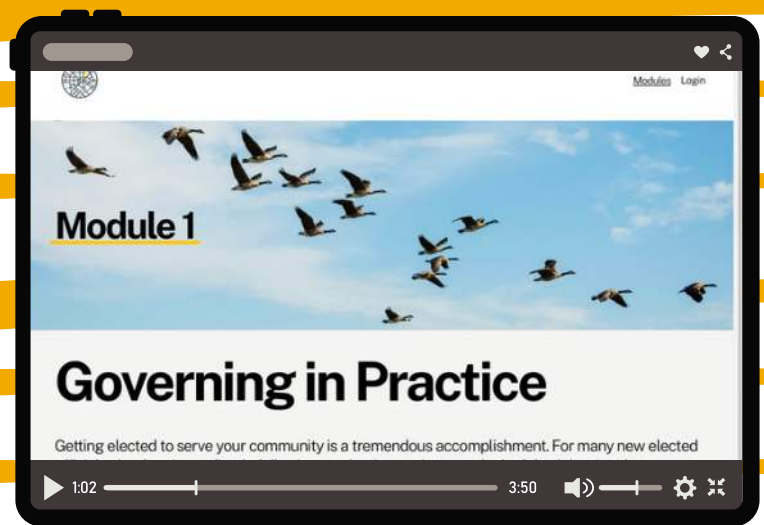
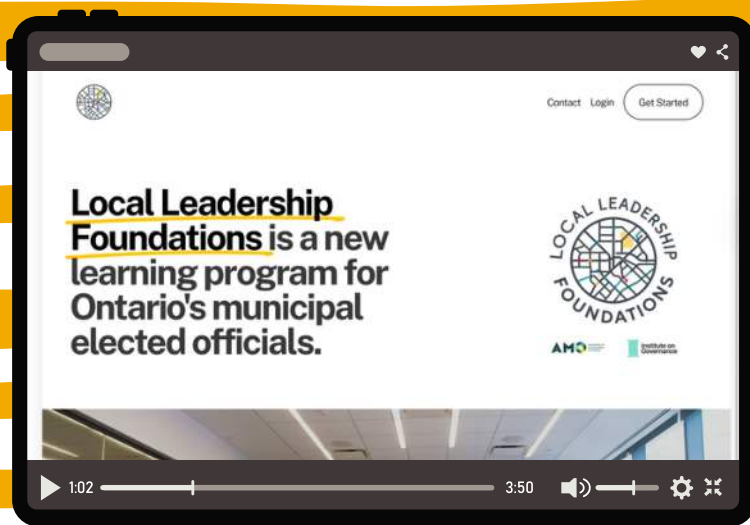
Public engagement and Indigenous relations; approaches to public service



FOR HEADS OF COUNCIL

Leading Council

Building council culture, effectiveness and strong mayor powers



Learning at your own speed

Ontario's municipal elected officials are a diverse group, bringing a wide range of backgrounds, professional experiences, levels of municipal knowledge, and different interests to their roles.

The Local Leadership Foundations program features flexible online courses designed to fit each leader's own schedule. These self-paced, on-demand modules give elected officials the freedom to engage with key municipal topics when it works best for them, at their own speed.

Elected officials can access the online modules shortly after enrollment, inviting them to build knowledge and leadership capacity at a time, speed, and place that works for them.





Learning with peers

Complementing the self-paced modules, the Local Leadership Foundations workshops offer a **dynamic, 3-hour collaborative learning experience** that brings elected officials together in an intimate cohort setting. Limited to a maximum of 30 participants per workshop, these sessions are structured to maximize both engagement and practical application. The workshops are offered both in person and online.

The workshops offer a mix of learning opportunities:

- one-third is dedicated to high-impact **content learning**;
- one-third focuses on **facilitated peer-to-peer sharing** to encourage personal reflection and to trade insights from across municipalities; and
- the final third features a **deep-dive case study**, inviting elected officials to practice the most complex, nuanced parts of community leadership alongside peers, transforming theoretical knowledge into real-world confidence.

Completing all five module workshops will be recognized with a **Local Leadership Foundations Certificate** from AMO & IOG.





MODULE 1

Governing in Practice

Understanding the role and expectations

Module 1: Governing in Practice offers an orientation to the councillor's role in Ontario today and the habits that set up a strong term.

- “Good governance” in a local context
- Council roles and responsibilities
- Legislation and expectations of ethical conduct
- Important changes for term starting in 2026
- Building constructive relationships



MODULE 2

Making Decisions

Navigating the decision making process; complex scope of municipal services

Module 2: Making Decisions focuses on how council decisions get made, how to prepare for meetings, and practical complexities of council decision-making.

- Procedural mechanics of a council meeting
- Meeting preparation strategies
- Effective deliberation and debate approaches
- Rules for open and in camera meetings



MODULE 3

Municipal Finance & Budgeting

Financial decisions, municipal budgeting and trade-offs

Module 3: Finance & Budgeting offers a plain-language grounding in municipal finance and the trade-offs behind the big decisions.

- Operating and capital budgets
- Municipal revenues and expenditures
- Practical drivers of municipal budgets
- Capital planning and asset management
- Effective financial stewardship



MODULE 4

Civility & Integrity

Council dynamics,
council-staff relations,
ethics and building trust

Module 4: Civility & Integrity explores building healthy dynamics with colleagues and staff and keeping debate respectful under pressure.

- Practical meaning of concepts like accountability, responsibility and transparency
- Rules and expectations of members of council
- Integrity Commissioner and other roles
- De-escalation techniques and strategies for respectful and constructive dialogue



MODULE 5

Engaging Community

Public engagement and
Indigenous relations;
approaches to public
service

Module 5: Engaging Community focuses on what community engagement really involves, from the residents you serve to municipality-wide consultation.

- Engagement fundamentals, including the IAP2 Framework and key terminology;
- Strategies for external-facing and media communications
- Building Indigenous-municipal relationships



FOR HEADS OF COUNCIL

Leading Council

Building council culture,
effectiveness and strong
mayor powers

An additional **Special Module: Leading Council** is reserved for heads of council, on the added work of the chair, from running tough meetings to speaking for your municipality.

- Roles and responsibilities of heads of council
- Strategies for effective leadership, including during meetings and with other leaders
- Strong mayor powers, emergency management and government relations



How does this fit with what we're already planning?

The Local Leadership Foundations program is **designed to integrate with, not replace, municipality-specific onboarding efforts**. While local orientations are essential for introducing newly elected officials to your specific administration, municipal projects, and unique community contexts, this program serves as a valuable sector-wide complement. It handles the heavy lifting on broader, foundational governance principles, providing a shared baseline of knowledge to bring greater consistency to Ontario's municipal sector.



Can all five modules be delivered in person for a whole council or group?

Yes. On request through AMO, all five modules can be delivered in person to a specific council (or group of councils) through a **two-day in person workshop**. This option includes:

- Immediate post-election access for all members of council to the full suite (all modules) of online courses, encouraging elected officials to engage at their own pace and based on their own levels of interest;
- An expert-facilitated in-person two-day workshop which covers the most important content from the first five modules, including four in-depth case study activities for council to engage with together;
- Enrollment for the head of council in a separate 3-hour workshop with peer heads of council across Ontario; and
- Recognition of all members of council who engage in the workshops through a Certificate.



Lead Facilitator: Dr. Kate Graham



Dr. Kate Graham is an award-winning educator and local government enthusiast. She holds a PhD in Political Science (Local Government) and teaches at Huron University (Governance, Leadership & Ethics) and Western University (Local Government Program). She was recognized by students with the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance Award for Teaching Excellence in 2025. She is also the recipient of the Nelson Heapy Award for Outstanding Faculty Research (2025) and MacNaughton Prize for Excellence in Teaching (2021) for her work at Huron.

Before entering academia, Kate spent a decade working in local government as a public servant, most recently as the Director, Community & Economic Innovation at the City of London. She has since worked with local governments across the country as a researcher and advisor. In 2026, Kate and partners launched Local Matters (see LocalMatters.ca), a boutique research firm focused on local governance in Canada.

Kate is a qualitative researcher, conducting interviews with more than 250 leaders across sectors and roles in Canada for various projects. Kate is also a seasoned podcaster (see NoSecondChances.ca, a popular Canada 2020 podcast about the rise and fall of women in Canada's top political roles) and the author of four books.

Most importantly, Kate is a fierce believer that local politics can be a force for good. She is the lead facilitator for the AMO & IOG Local Leadership Foundations Program, working with a team of experts and educators to deliver next-level learning opportunities for Ontario's local elected officials.



AMO & IOG Local Leadership Foundations

Pricing & Registration



Individual Modules: \$325/module

Early bird price of \$275/module before September 30, 2026

Includes access to online courses and one three-hour workshop related to the specific module



Learning Series (All Modules): \$1200/series

Early bird price of \$1000/series before September 30, 2026

Includes access to online courses and one three-hour workshop for each of the five modules (six for heads of council)



In-Person 2-Day Delivery of All Five Modules

Contact AMO Education (education@amo.on.ca) directly for pricing - starts at \$15,000, based on municipality size

Includes access to all online courses for all members and an in-person two-day workshop covering Modules 1 to 5, as well as a separate 3-hr group workshop for the head(s) of council

Local Leadership **Foundations**

Registration is open!

You can reserve seats now and assign names after the election. Save \$100 per seat on the Learning Series, or \$25 per module, on 5 or more seats from one municipality.

Register at www.amo.on.ca

Contact **education@amo.on.ca** with questions or for more information.

