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Build Your Leadership Skills and Network: Apply for NFDA’s 2026–27 Emerging Leaders Program

Brookfield, Wis. — The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) is accepting applications through April 30 for the [2026–27 National Emerging Leaders Program](#), a year-long leadership development experience designed to prepare the next generation of funeral service leaders.

Each year, a select group of 20 emerging professionals is chosen to take part in this collaborative learning experience that combines in-person training, virtual education sessions and mentorship opportunities. Created to support talented early-career professionals, the National Emerging Leaders Program equips participants with the leadership skills, professional connections and strategic insights needed to thrive in today’s evolving funeral service landscape.

The 2026–27 program will begin with a kick-off retreat at NFDA headquarters in Brookfield, Wisconsin, June 21–23, 2026, and conclude with graduation during the 2027 NFDA Leadership Conference.

Throughout the year, participants will take part in approximately seven virtual learning sessions featuring both funeral service experts and leadership professionals from outside the industry. Program topics include: mentorship and professional development; ethical leadership; employee relations; collaborative decision-making; strategic planning; servant leadership; communication skills; and small business ownership.

The program is open to early-career funeral professionals licensed in the United States or Canada, regardless of NFDA membership status. **Applicants must be employed full-time at a funeral home** and meet one of the following criteria:

- First-career funeral directors licensed at least three years, or
- Second-career funeral directors licensed at least one year.

Since its launch, the program has helped develop dozens of emerging leaders who now serve as leaders in their funeral homes, communities and professional associations. Past participants consistently describe the experience as career-shaping.

“The National Emerging Leaders Program presented by NFDA has been a transformative experience, both professionally and personally,” said N. Eddie Richardson of Miller, Moster, Robbins Funeral Home in Connersville, Indiana. “Through the program’s sessions and conferences, I gained invaluable knowledge and forged lasting relationships with fellow funeral professionals. I highly recommend this program to any young funeral director seeking to enhance their skills and expand their industry expertise.”

Participation in the program requires a \$1,500 investment, which includes retreat fees, registration for the 2027 NFDA Leadership Conference, continuing education hours, educational materials and networking opportunities.

To help offset costs, participants will also receive up to \$2,000 in travel reimbursement – up to \$1,000 for the 2026 retreat and up to \$1,000 for the 2027 Leadership Conference.

Funeral professionals interested in advancing their leadership skills and expanding their professional network are encouraged to apply. Visit [NFDA.org/EmergingLeaders](https://www.nfda.org/emerging-leaders) to learn more and submit an application. Applications for the National Emerging Leaders Program will be accepted through April 30, 2026. Selected participants will be announced in May.

NFDA extends its appreciation to the Funeral Service Foundation for its continued support of the National Emerging Leaders Program.

NFDA is the world's leading and largest funeral service association, serving 20,000 individual members who represent nearly 11,000 funeral homes in the United States and 49 countries around the world. NFDA is the trusted leader, beacon for ethics and the strongest advocate for the profession. NFDA is the association of choice because it offers funeral professionals comprehensive educational resources, tools to manage successful businesses, guidance to become pillars in their communities and the expertise to foster future generations of funeral professionals. NFDA is headquartered in Brookfield, Wis., and has an office in Washington, D.C. For more information, visit [NFDA.org](https://www.nfda.org).

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