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## Lead with Purpose: Apply for NFDA's National Emerging Leaders Program Today

Brookfield, Wis. – The National Funeral Directors Association (NFDA) has begun accepting applications for the [2025-26 National Emerging Leaders Program](#). Since its inception, this transformative program has nurtured 58 funeral service professionals, equipping them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to excel as leaders in their funeral homes, communities, and the funeral service profession at state and national levels.

This comprehensive year-long leadership experience will empower 20 select participants to lead with vision, integrity and influence, providing them with tools and strategies to inspire and guide others. Additionally, participants will benefit from mentorship opportunities and high-level networking with leaders in the funeral service profession.

The 2025-25 program will begin with a retreat at NFDA headquarters in Brookfield, Wisconsin, June 22-24, and conclude during the 2026 NFDA Leadership Conference. Participants will engage in approximately seven virtual learning sessions throughout the year, featuring insights from both funeral service experts and distinguished leaders from outside the profession.

The NFDA National Emerging Leaders Program is open to all licensed funeral professionals in the United States and Canada – regardless of NFDA membership status – who are in the early stages of their careers (first-career funeral directors licensed at least three years or second-career funeral directors licensed at least one year).

“Being part of something bigger than myself – a program dedicated to advancing the future of funeral service – has been an inspiring and humbling experience,” said Sarah Ziesmer, a 2024-25 National Emerging Leaders Program participant with Heritage Funeral Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. “Sharing space with like-minded, passionate individuals from across the country has been one of the most impactful aspects of the program. The knowledge and tools I’ve gained are invaluable, and I’m eager to bring what I’ve learned back to my team. My goal is to empower my staff, strengthen our services and contribute to the evolution of funeral service.”

“As a participant in the National Funeral Directors Association’s Emerging Leaders Program, I found the experience to be invaluable for both my professional and personal growth,” said 2024-25 National Emerging Leaders Program participant Marshall Loring of Messinger Indian School Mortuary in Scottsdale, Arizona. “The program is thoughtfully designed to engage, support and develop future leaders in our profession. The mentorship from seasoned professionals was a cornerstone of the experience as well, providing guidance and encouragement every step of the way.”

The National Emerging Leaders Program requires an investment of \$1,500, covering retreat fees, registration for the 2026 NFDA Leadership Conference, approximately seven virtual learning sessions led by expert speakers and facilitators, printed educational materials, continuing education hours, and extensive networking opportunities. To help offset costs, participants will receive a travel reimbursement of up to \$500 for the retreat and up to \$500 for the 2026 Leadership Conference.

For more information and to apply, visit [NFDA.org/EmergingLeaders](https://www.nfda.org/emerging-leaders). Applications are due by 11:59 p.m. CST on April 15. Selected participants will be announced in early May.

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

“Investing in leadership development ensures a stronger, more resilient future for the funeral service profession and the families we serve,” said John Heald, chair of the Funeral Service Foundation Board of Trustees. “The Funeral Service Foundation is proud to support NFDA’s National Emerging Leaders Program, which empowers professionals to grow, connect and lead with purpose.”

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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