Ascension Leadership Accelerator Announces Fall 2026 Cohort

Second cohort brings together 10 emerging leaders from across Chattanooga's business, nonprofit, education, and public sectors.



The Fall 2026 Ascension Leadership Accelerator cohort, a program of Hinton & Company in partnership with the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce.

CHATTANOOGA, TN, UNITED STATES, September 30, 2026 / EINPresswire.com/ -- Ten emerging and mid-career professionals from across the Chattanooga region have been selected for the Fall 2026 cohort of the Ascension Leadership Accelerator (ALA), a leadership development program created by Hinton & Company in partnership with the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce.
The new cohort represents organizations spanning business, government, education, philanthropy, and the nonprofit sector.

The Ascension Leadership Accelerator was launched earlier this year to address a challenge facing organizations across industries: how to intentionally prepare high-potential professionals for greater leadership responsibility.

The program combines individual assessment, supervisor input, personalized development planning, group learning, peer accountability, and one-on-one coaching. Participants explore how their identity, communication, decision-making, and leadership behaviors shape the way they lead while applying what they learn to real challenges within their organizations.

"What makes this cohort exciting isn't simply that we have talented people in the room. It's who they represent and what becomes possible when they learn alongside one another," said Wade Hinton, CEO of Hinton & Company. "Someone from local government is building relationships with someone from education, business, or philanthropy. We're developing individual leaders, but we're also building a network of people who can help shape the future of this community

together."

"The strength of Chattanooga's future depends in large part on the people who will lead its organizations next," said Charles Wood, CEO of the Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce. "These professionals represent the depth of talent that already exists across our community. By helping them grow as leaders and build relationships across organizations and sectors, we are investing not only in their individual success, but in Chattanooga's long-term economic strength."

"Developing leaders is ultimately an investment in the future of our community," said Dr. Keri Randolph, President of the Benwood Foundation. "These participants are already contributing to organizations that matter to Chattanooga. Giving them the opportunity to deepen their leadership, learn from one another, and build relationships across sectors strengthens the capacity of our community as a whole."

Fall 2026 Cohort:

- Amanda Jordan, Director of Student Experience, Chattanooga State Community College
- Austin Corcoran, Associate Director for Programming, Center for Professional Education, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
- Chris Adams, Donor Services Coordinator, Community Foundation of Greater Chattanooga
- Clarence Shields, Director of Post Secondary Pathways, Chattanooga Preparatory School
- Jennifer Crum, Vice President - Finance, Chattanooga Lookouts
- Khadesha Gordon, Grants Coordinator, City of Chattanooga
- Layla Ghazi, Recruiting Specialist, EPB
- Maggie Sparks, Community Investments Manager, United Way of Greater Chattanooga
- Robert Banks, Supervisor, Health Promotion, BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee
- Walker Rhodes, Director, Absence Operations, Unum Group

The Fall 2026 cohort will continue through the end of the year.

Hinton & Company is also exploring opportunities to expand the Ascension Leadership Accelerator to additional markets in 2027 and to provide customized, in-house versions of the program for organizations seeking to develop and advance their workforce.

"What we're building in Chattanooga gives us an opportunity to demonstrate what can happen when leadership development is treated as an investment rather than an event," Hinton said. "Our goal is to help organizations build stronger leadership pipelines by investing intentionally in people before they reach the next level, not after they get there."

Organizations interested in future Ascension Leadership Accelerator cohorts or customized in-house programming can reach the program team at team@hintonco.com.

Hinton & Company

Hinton & Company is a Chattanooga-based leadership development and executive coaching firm. Core offerings include the Ascension Leadership Accelerator cohort program, executive coaching, keynote speaking, and corporate workshops. Learn more at www.hintonandco.com.

Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce

The Chattanooga Area Chamber of Commerce is the region's leading business association, championing member businesses and promoting regional economic growth. Founded in 1887, the Chamber connects businesses, develops talent, supports economic development, and helps build a thriving Chattanooga. Learn more at chattanoogachamber.com.

Benwood Foundation

Benwood Foundation is a Chattanooga-based private foundation committed to making the region a place where everyone can thrive. Learn more at benwood.org.

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