



Leadership Intensive

2026 Guidelines and Application Procedures

Important Dates

- **Application available online:** November 2025
- **Application deadline:** January 5, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET
- **Interview process:** January-February 2026
- **Participants notified:** Late February 2026
- **Program dates:** August 24-29, 2026

OPERA America
National Opera Center
330 Seventh Avenue
New York, NY 10001
operaamerica.org

About the Leadership Intensive

The Leadership Intensive program provides professionals in the field of opera with a unique learning and professional and personal growth experience designed to bolster their leadership capacity and advance their careers.

Seminars and networking opportunities, hosted for a full week at OPERA America's National Opera Center in New York City, provide an active learning environment for addressing strategic issues, building necessary skills, and fostering strong professional connections for meaningful leadership of the opera field. Following the program, participants are prepared to apply new skills, share their learning, and demonstrate leadership that contributes to local companies and communities.

Seminars will focus on, but won't be limited to:

- The skills and qualities leaders need to succeed in opera
- Governance tactics to build and maintain productive relationships with a board
- Public speaking and storytelling
- Nonprofit company finance
- Critical issues and opportunities in opera
- Developing clear strategies
- Communication skills
- Group coaching sessions

Participation

Those accepted into the program are expected to participate fully in all aspects of the Leadership Intensive's active learning environment before, during, and after the summer intensive. Each participant will serve as a resource and support system for others in the 2026 Leadership Intensive cohort and contribute to OPERA America's ongoing efforts to support future leaders. The summer intensive week should be considered a retreat, and due to the demanding schedule, maintaining other work obligations may not be possible during that period. OPERA America will work with the respective companies to support participants for the intensive week. Participants will receive complimentary registration for Opera Conference 2027.

Selection Process

Participants are scored according to the Selection Rubric and selected based on their knowledge of and contributions to the opera field, demonstrated leadership thus far in their careers, the clear learning goals they have set for their professional growth, career stage, and history of field citizenship. Selection is made without regard to current title, company affiliation, or area of specialty.

Final selection of the participants is made over three rounds.

- Round One: Review of Written Application
- Round Two: Phone Interview with OPERA America Staff
- Round Three: Interview with a Field Leader

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Requirements

Alumni of the program are ineligible to apply. The application must be completed in full.

Program Expenses (U.S. Participants)

This program is tuition-free for participants. Recipients must be U.S. citizens, residents, or green card holders, and must attend the program in full. Reimbursements of up to \$1,500 per person are available to cover 50% of eligible travel and lodging expenses (50% of total receipts of up to \$3,000). Participants are responsible for making their own travel and lodging arrangements.

International Applicants

OPERA America will welcome a limited number of international participants to the program. These participants are not eligible for transportation and accommodation reimbursements from OPERA America, although they are welcome to seek funding from other sources.

Canadian Applicants:

- Please apply through the application on the Association for Canadian Opera's website.

European Applicants:

- Please see Opera Europa for more information. Contact Audrey Jungers, managing director, Opera Europa at Audrey@opera-europa.org.

Central and South American applicants

- Please contact Paulina Ricciari, executive director, Ópera Latinoamérica, at PRicciardi@operala.org.

Other international applicants:

You may apply using the OPERA America application.

- Please note that no transportation or accommodation reimbursement will be available and you will need to arrange for any required visas.
- This program is delivered in the English language. All participants are encouraged to ensure their written and spoken English skills are at a level that will enable them to succeed in this program.

Alumni Services

Following the summer intensive, group coaching is available to the participants in the 2026 cohort. Alumni of the program are invited to attend special Leadership Intensive Roundtables at OPERA America's annual conferences. Attendance at Opera Conference 2027 is encouraged, but not a required component of the program.

Staff Contact

Please direct questions about the Leadership Intensive to Vincent Rutter-Covatto, director of leadership services, at VRutterCovatto@operaamerica.org or 646.699.5237.