Emerging Leaders Application - 2025

Thank you for your interest in the Open Buffalo Emerging Leaders program.

Our mission at Open Buffalo is to advance racial, economic, and ecological justice. We do so through skill-building, network-connecting, and activating leadership opportunities. Our goal is that all communities in Western New York are thriving free from discrimination and poverty.

The Emerging Leaders program is a distinctive social justice curriculum aimed at building a stronger Buffalo and WNY by preparing new grassroots leaders in our region. If you are accepted into the program, you will participate in training sessions, learn new skills, and build a network of movers and shakers.

The Emerging Leaders program is highly competitive. Not everyone who applies will be selected this year. The cohort size is limited to provide the ideal learning environment. Applications will be accepted and evaluated on a rolling basis through 11:59PM March 31. If you make it to the next round, you will receive a follow-up email from the Open Buffalo leadership development committee and will be asked to an interview. Those not selected will be notified, and they will be highly encouraged to participate in other Open Buffalo workshops and trainings, and to reapply next year.

Prior to completing the application, we strongly encourage you to attend one of the following virtual information sessions:

- Thursday, February 27, evening info session 6:00-7:00PM (virtual)
- Wednesday, March 5, "lunch and learn" session 12:00-1:00PM (virtual)

Registration is required for the information sessions. To register, please visit our website at www.openbuffalo.org or contact the Director of Leadership Development at leslie@openbuffalo.org or 716-243-8777 x104.

All applicants must be able to commit to the full schedule at the time of application. The program runs from August through November 2025, beginning with a three-day rustic camp retreat August 1-3. Workshops will take place every Thursday evening from 6-8pm, plus full-day workshops on the first and third Saturdays each month from August through the week before Thanksgiving. The capstone project for the course is a proposal outlining the work you plan to take on as an Emerging Leader Alum. Program graduation is Saturday, November 22 in the evening.

**In addition to the following application, all applicants are required to submit a one-page letter of recommendation from someone who can speak to your leadership and/or community organizing skills. There is space at the end of this form to specify the name of your reference.

* Required

About You

Please tell us a little about yourself, your availability, and any prior experience you have with Open Buffalo programs and/or leadership development programs outside of Open Buffalo:

1. First Name *

2. Last Name *

3. Email Address *

4. Mobile Phone *

5. Street Address *

6. City *

7. State *

8. Zip Code *

9. How did you hear about the Emerging Leaders Program? *

- ☐ Radio

- ☐ Newspaper (e.g. Challenger, Buffalo News)

- ☐ Social Media ad

- ☐ Open Buffalo Social Media post

- ☐ Open Buffalo email

- ☐ Flyer/poster/postcard

- ☐ Word of mouth

- ☐ Other

10. Are you able to commit to attending the Opening Weekend Retreat August 1-3, plus workshop sessions from 6-8PM every Thursday evening and 10am-4pm on the first and third Saturdays of the month from August through the week before Thanksgiving? *

○ Yes

○ No

○ Other

11. Which of the following areas interests you the most? *

○ Racial Justice

○ Economic Justice

○ Ecological Justice

12. Have you attended Open Buffalo events, actions, or programs? If yes, please list them below. *

13. If you work, please indicate where: *

14. If you are a student, please indicate where and your area of study: *

15. Please list any organizations you are involved or affiliated with: *

16. Please list any leadership development trainings/workshops that you have completed: *

Leadership & Community Organizing

The following questions are required as part of the application. Applicants are strongly encouraged to answer these questions in the form of a video. Feel free to be as artistic and creative as you see fit.

If you choose to submit a video, please indicate that in your response to Question 17 below, and put "Video submission" in the answer field for Questions 18-23. Once your application is received, you will receive an email with a personalized, secure link to upload your video.

If you do not wish to submit a video, please answer "no" to Question 17 and give thoughtful written answers to Questions 18-23.

17. Will you submit a video for this section? *

○ Yes

○ No

18. Why are you interested in the Emerging Leaders program? What do you hope to gain from the program? If you were referred to us by a specific person, please tell us who referred you. *

19. What is a challenge facing a WNY community that you would like to focus on? *

20. What do you think it will take to solve the challenge you described in Question 19? *

21. Finish this thought: Buffalo will be open to everyone when... *

22. Please describe/tell us about a time when you had to take a leadership role in a community or a situation: *

23. What skills are you looking to develop in the Emerging Leaders Program to address the needs of your community? *

Letter of Recommendation

In addition to completing this application, all applicants are required to submit a one-page letter of recommendation from someone who can speak to your leadership and/or community organizing skills.

Your reference can submit their letter directly to Open Buffalo via email to leslie@openbuffalo.org with the subject line "Emerging Leader Recommendation for [applicant's name]", or send it by mail to:
Open Buffaloc/o Emerging Leaders Committee1327 Jefferson Ave.Buffalo, NY 14208

***Letters of recommendation must be received at our office no later than Friday, April 4. Please ensure your reference is aware of this deadline and follow up with them to ensure it is sent on time.

24. Name of the person who will provide your Letter of Recommendation: *

25. Email address of the person who will provide your Letter of Recommendation: *

Demographics

Note: answers to demographic questions will not have any impact on admissions decisions beyond enabling us to ensure that our cohorts are diverse and inclusive of people from a wide range of historically excluded backgrounds and identities. Demographic data is anonymized prior to review by the admissions committee.

26. Age group *

○ 18-24

○ 25-29

○ 30-39

○ 40-49

○ 50-59

○ 60+

27. Highest level of education completed *

○ High School Diploma

○ GED

○ Some College

○ Associates Degree

○ Bachelors Degree

○ Graduate Degree

○ Trade

○ Out of school youth

○ Did not complete high school

28. I identify my gender as... *

◯ Man (cisgender)

◯ Woman (cisgender)

◯ Man (transgender)

◯ Woman (transgender)

◯ Non-binary

◯ Genderqueer

◯ Gender non-conforming

◯ Other

29. How do you identify your race/ethnicity? (select all that apply) *

☐ Asian American

☐ Black/African American

☐ Latino/Hispanic

☐ Middle Eastern

☐ Native American/Indigenous

☐ Multiracial/Mixed

☐ White/Caucasian

☐ Other

30. Open Buffalo seeks to recruit applicants from diverse backgrounds and identities. We place specific emphasis on training and resourcing individuals from historically disenfranchised and marginalized communities and those who have been left out of traditional decision-making processes. If you choose, please self-identify if any of the following categories applies to you (check all that apply) *

- [ ] Immigrant or Refugee

- [ ] First-Generation College Student

- [ ] Previously Incarcerated

- [ ] Impacted by the justice system

- [ ] Impacted by community or domestic violence

- [ ] Person with a disability

- [ ] LGBTQIA+

- [ ] Having experienced homelessness

- [ ] None of the above

- [ ] Other