



**CHIEF
EXECUTIVES'
FORUM**

**CEF
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
2026-27**

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

The CEF Women In Leadership Programme offers aspiring/senior female leaders working in NI's public sector a unique opportunity to further develop their leadership capabilities and career opportunities.

This re-designed programme offers a uniquely challenging and engaging experience, enabling participants to get high impact results with and through the people they lead, and the organisations they serve.

'A wonderful opportunity to expand the mind and the contacts list! Access to an amazing group of women from across a wide range of disciplines, who support and challenge you in equal measure. By far the most stretching and enjoyable learning programme I have ever attended.'
(Past Participant)

Women In Leadership : CEF Vision

We are delighted to invite female public servants working at senior levels to participate in this 9-month leadership development journey followed by Senior Leadership Mentoring. Our aim is to address the under representation of women working in strategic decision-making roles across all public sector organisations in Northern Ireland, particularly at Chief Executive level. We are proud to be providing this leading-edge opportunity for women to further develop as leaders, while also critically enhancing their visibility and networking capability.

Who Should Attend?

Women with drive and ambition who are already senior leaders, or are aspiring senior leaders, working in the civil service, local government and the wider public sector in Northern Ireland. Those who want to make a greater contribution and develop further in their careers and feel they would benefit from an intensive leadership development experience. Women who have demonstrated potential to progress further in their leadership journey.

Costing & Funding

The 2026-27 programme fee is £4,120.00 plus VAT for CEF member organisations and £4,810.00 plus VAT for non-member organisations. The fee covers all programme costs including the residential leadership retreat. Sponsoring organisations are expected to meet any travel expenses. Places are strictly limited, so please get your applications to us at your earliest convenience and before the deadline of **12pm, 16 June 2026** to be considered for this programme.

WHO SHOULD APPLY

*“A well organised and professionally run programme. A CEF-type leadership programme should be compulsory for all middle/senior managers in the public sector/NICS.”
(Past Participant)*

Please get in touch if you require any further information to help with your decision on this application.

Chief Executives' Forum
mail@ceforum.org



Who Should Apply?

Typically, applicants should hold a second or third level post reporting directly to the chief executive or to a director.

They should:

- Welcome the challenge of change and leading within a complex organisation
- Demonstrate a 'growth mindset' and be prepared to attend, participate actively in and contribute fully to all elements of the programme
- Want to make a significant difference within their organisations and
- Be keen to network and influence with people to promote the wider public sector agendas.

The programme is for women who are:

- Regularly involved in developing the strategic direction of their organisation
- Leading or are about to lead significant organisation change in the context of ambiguity and uncertainty
- Contributing to new ways of working
- Taking responsibility for their own development and career opportunities.

HOW TO APPLY

“The public service needs to be representative of the communities which it serves, at all levels and across all disciplines, in order to inspire confidence and to provide the very best services within existing resources. Whilst huge progress has been made on gender representation, there is still much work to be done. This is particularly so in the context of violence against women and girls in Northern Ireland, where public service leadership can literally make a life-saving and life-changing difference to so many. The Chief Executives’ Forum is proud to support this programme, enabling participants to grow and achieve their potential as leaders, and to deliver meaningful results through the people they lead, and the communities they serve.”

Judith Gillespie, Chair, CEF

How to Apply?

We ask you to complete a short application form, including a one-page personal descriptor to help us get to know you, your career aspirations and why you want to participate on this programme.

Completed application forms must be approved by the Chief Executive/Accounting Officer for the organisation before they are submitted.

The programme places will be awarded based on the following criteria:

- The strength of your application, clearly demonstrating aptitude and suitability
- You are currently in a role where you have leadership reach
- The mix of candidates chosen reflects a wide range of organisations and experiences.

The closing date for applications is 12pm, 16 June 2026. There may be an additional selection process beyond your application, pending the number of applications received.

Application should be made through your Chief Executive/Accounting Officer. Appropriately endorsed application forms may be returned via email only to mail@ceforum.org

WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS SAY ABOUT THE COURSE?

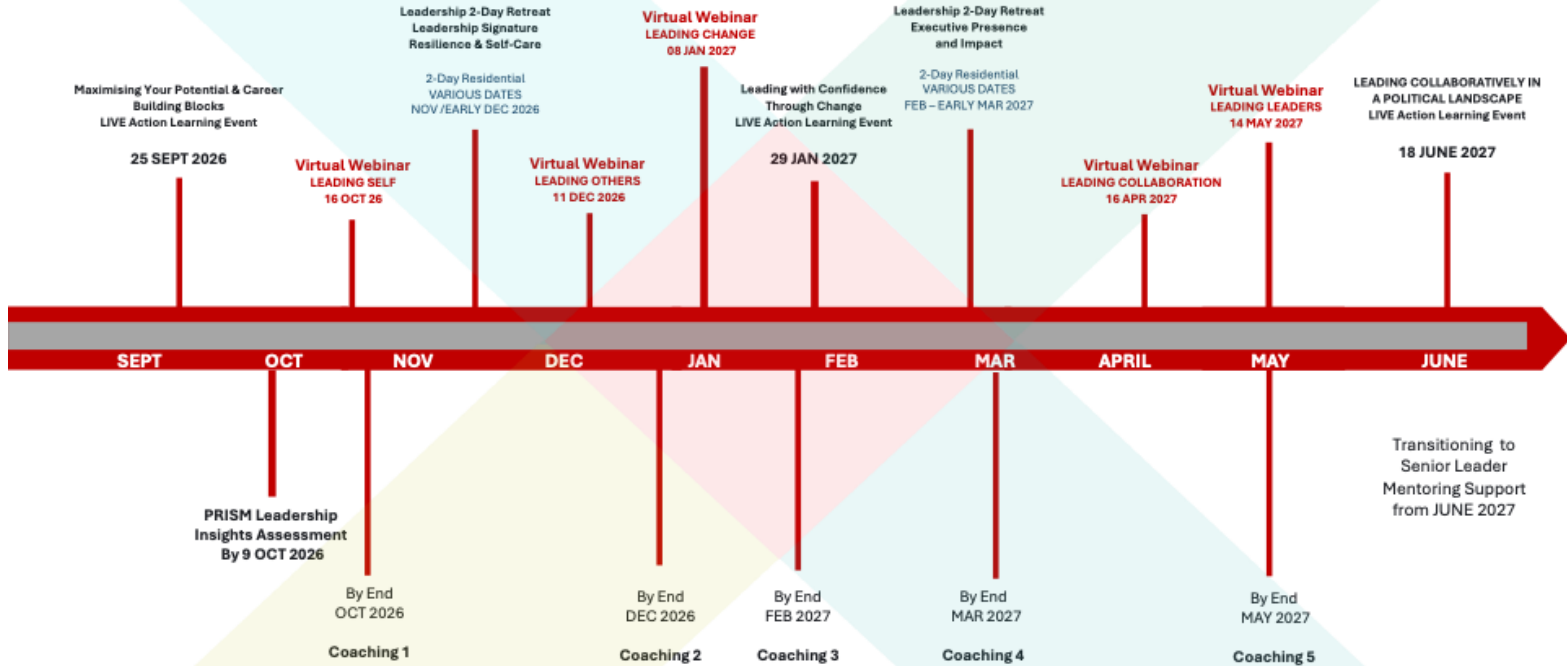
*"Without doubt, this is the best course I have ever attended and the journey of self discovery and awareness of my own ability as a leader has helped me in my work and personal life immeasurably."
(Past Participant)*

*"The programme gave me a holistic insight into myself - how I perceive myself, how I'm perceived by others, how to develop my leadership as well as generally opening up my mindset."
(Past Participant)*

*"... there is a real sincere and absolute effort here being made to invest in this so it automatically gave me a level of buy in that I have never experienced before ... it was so individualised ... we were all so different and unique in our personal circumstances and yet the course managed to tailor itself to meet those very specific and individual needs... it's like nothing I have ever experienced before and I can't speak more highly of it ... it was absolutely outstanding in every regard. I genuinely can say that it was the best course I have ever done, ever ... it superseded anything I have ever done before in terms of developing me as a person, both personally and professionally."
(Past Participant)*

*"The high quality and significant level of tailor made engagement invested in the programme was captivating from the outset. It created an environment where you welcomed every opportunity to assess and challenge personal traits and characteristics and felt confident in the skills being taught to improve or accept them."
(Past Participant)*

CEF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP COHORT 2026-2027 LEARNING JOURNEY



Please Note: You need to attend one 2-day residential in November/December 2026 and another one in Feb/March 2027. You will also have the option to arrive the night before each retreat. Dates and topics are provisional and may be subject to change.



Fresh Programme Elements



Strategic Leadership

Assessments

We Use a **Neuroscience-Based Leadership Psychometric Assessment** To Identify Your Leadership Strengths and Development Needs.

You Complete Your Assessment Online and Receive a Comprehensive Report & Feedback.



7 Face-to-face Learning Events

Two 2-day Leadership Residentials Personally Hosted By Cora Robinson

Nov and Feb/March

Plus 3 Action Learning Events:

Maximising Your Potential

Leading With Confidence

Collaborative and Inclusive Leadership



Virtual Coaching

We Add Urgency and Challenge To The Learning Journey Through a Targeted Virtual Coaching Intervention

5 X Coaching Sessions With An Experienced Executive Career Coach

Plus **Mentoring Support** From Senior Public Sector Leaders



Learning Nuggets

We Support With **Micro-Learning** Before Each Learning Event

- Pre-Reading
- Resources



Virtual Webinars

We Deliver Core Elements Of Content Via **Live Facilitated Virtual Discussions:**

- Leading Self
- Leading Others
- Leading Change
- Leading Collaboratively
- Leading Leaders



Guest Speakers

Hot Topics

Panel Interviews
Political Experts
Policy Makers

Key Role Models Invited To Attend Action Learning Events & Leadership Retreats



Resilience

We Drive New Habit Formation To Build Brain & Body Fitness Via Coaching.

We Track Progress Against 8 Key Variables: Exercise, Stimulation, Sleep, Downtime, Mindful Time, Focus Time, Play Time And Nutrition



Assignments

We Promote Peer Engagement, Peer Coaching, Leader-Led Elements, Social Learning Immersion Activities, Role Modeling & Reflective Assignments

TOPIC HIGHLIGHTS

This programme includes a range of fresh leadership topics that will stretch and fully engage participants.

Content is delivered via blended, face-to-face, team & immersive activities, designed using the latest behavioural science and research applied to leadership behaviours.

We Promote Peer Engagement, Peer Coaching, Leader-Led Content Elements, Social Learning, Immersion Activities & Role Modeling to ensure participants' learning is fully activated.

'Opportunities offered by this CEF Leadership Programme don't come around too often. When they do, you grasp them with both hands and hold on tight. I am so glad I did.'
(Past Participant)

Skill-Based Leadership

Savvy Decision Making - Change Leadership

Influence and Collaboration - Executive Impact and Presence - Building Networks

Political Savvy

Understanding Political Context - Politics and Policy Making –
Leading Through Uncertainty – Challenges and Opportunities

Personal Leadership Development

Leading With Purpose - Confidence

Psychometric Assessment - Motivational Stretch Goals
- Development & Career Planning

Inclusive Leadership

Unconscious Bias –

Leading Inclusion – Feedback Culture

Growth Mindset & Emotional Intelligence

Creating a Gender - Balanced Culture



VIRTUAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The programme webinars are custom-designed, level-appropriate, and informed by the latest contemporary behavioural science and applied neuroscience.

We design and deliver an optimal social learning experience and allow for appropriate spacing of virtual events across your WIL learning journey.

We support the webinars with micro-learning nuggets to sustain learning and to encourage reflection and integration of the content. Live virtual webinars are two hours in length to allow for high levels of interaction, debate, challenge and digestion.

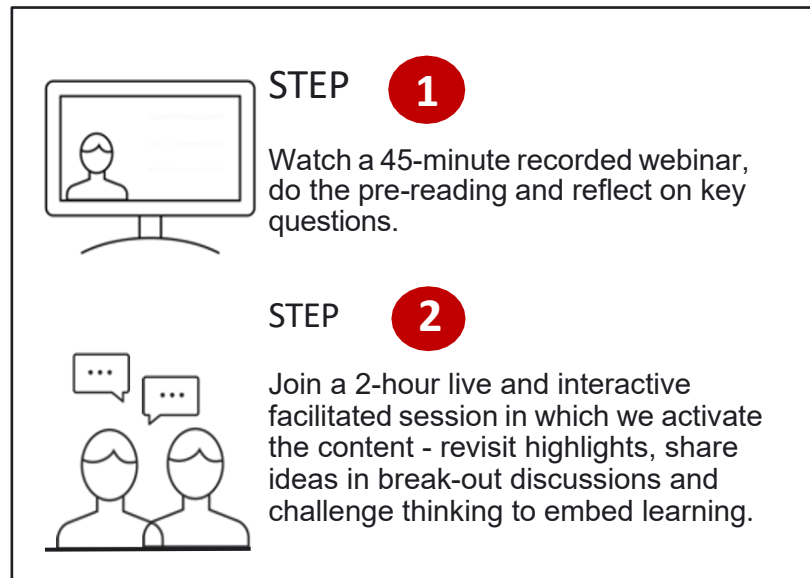
Webinar 1: Leading Self: Explores your level of awareness, worldviews and the organising frameworks on which your perceptions, decisions, emotional responses and leadership behaviour are based.

Webinar 2: Leading Others: Examines the key steps to proactively get effective results with and through others.

Webinar 3: Leading Change: Dives into the science of how to lead people effectively through change while projecting confidence to others

Webinar 4: Leading Collaboratively: Explores how to build your collaborative leadership skills to lead teams in complex environments.

Webinar 5: Leading Leaders: Explores how to lead leaders inclusively in a complex environment.



'I don't feel my words do the programme justice, I can only recommend anyone to take the first step on this eye-opening, mindful journey.' (Past Participant)

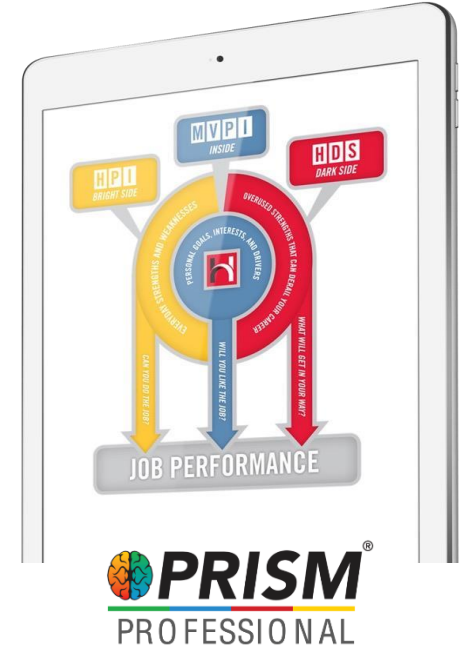
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP ASSESSMENTS

We use one of the most effective leadership assessments on the market to support you on your development journey.

The **Prism Leadership Assessment** is a leadership profiling tool that evaluates behavioural preferences, communication styles, decision-making patterns, and leadership impact. It provides insights into strengths, development areas, and team dynamics, helping individuals and organisations enhance self-awareness, improve collaboration, and develop more adaptive, effective leadership across diverse workplace environments. Your reports are confidential to you and are used to support you in identifying your strengths and areas for development for the programme and you will have the opportunity to deep dive on your results with your individual leadership coach.

“This was a truly innovative approach to the concept of 'leadership' and what that actually means in practice, but more significant is the lasting impact of the learning. I return time and again to various aspects to remind myself and 're-learn'. How many programmes inspire in that way for a lifetime?”

(Past Participant)



create
express

EXECUTIVE COACHING

A self-directed, results-based approach, to assist you in moving from insight to action to habit, supported by mentoring to sustain your development beyond the coaching element of this programme.



MINDSET

Your coach will focus on helping you to cultivate a 'growth mind-set' which supports you in sustainable habits and impactful outcomes.

You get 5 x virtual one hour coaching sessions with an experienced international executive development career coach:

Session 1: Assessment Feedback

Session 2-5: Focused conversations around three key pillars: Executive Leadership Development, Career Development and Executive Stamina to drive sustainable strategies for you beyond the programme.



HABITS



RESULTS

- Our high-performance coaching system defines coaching as 'facilitating accelerated change by transforming thinking and therefore behaviour'.
- Contemporary neuroscience sits at the heart of our model. Understanding the brain allows us to improve our own and others' thinking, the route to impacting behaviour and action. We combine the best of success factor modelling methodology & brain-based coaching to structure our approach, grounded in the very latest neuroscience & coaching principles.
- The coach's role is to facilitate or 'enable' a transformation in thinking. It is not counselling, consulting, training or mentoring.
- Urgency, challenge and feedback are key ingredients.
- Our coaches are best in class and share common values based on a set of shared principles – integrity, a belief in human potential and a desire to lift each coaching conversation to its very highest potential.

"It is an excellent programme and has truly changed how I think about myself. It gave me the confidence to extend myself professionally and that has paid off. I love the opportunity it affords to network and collaborate with other women too. I've really benefited from the one to one sessions and mentoring too." (Past Participant)

LEADERSHIP RETREAT

Originally built in the 1800s, The Manse on the Beach is situated on the sea front in the tranquil village of Cloughey in the Ards Peninsula, a short 45 minutes drive from Belfast along the scenic Strangford Lough coastal road.

This beautiful space provides the perfect backdrop for your leadership retreats. Our superbly appointed ensuite rooms and studios and our range of stunning communal areas to dine and relax, include our charming 'outdoor room' which allows you to sit back and enjoy our mature gardens at any time of year.

Our Haven Spa with new outdoor pool is just what you need to unwind after a day of leadership development activity. It includes a wet area, a sauna, and a whirlpool bath.

The retreat programme of events and all meals are served at the Manse. Our delicious food is locally sourced and cooked to your liking by our expert chefs and caters for all dietary requirements.

Based on extensive participant feedback, we now give you the opportunity to attend **two retreats** as part of the 2026-27 Programme.

Take time out to re-energise, re-focus and re-invent your leadership approach at The Manse on the Beach, our boutique retreat in the heart of Northern Ireland's Ards Peninsula www.manseonthebeach.com. We pride ourselves on our attention to detail for all aspects of your stay.



'The idyllic and relaxing surroundings offered me the opportunity to pause, reflect, unwind and refocus. The retreat developed my leadership approach ... whilst stretching my personal capacity and capability. The sumptuous meals provided by the chef, allowed me to decompress and slow down, giving me time to truly engage with my fellow participants and make the most of this very special experience.' (Past Participant)



YOUR PROGRAMME FACULTY



Cora Robinson is CEO at Create. Express., a global leadership development boutique, based in Hollywood Co Down.

Cora is a highly engaging facilitator and senior team coach, with 20+ years experience working with executives and senior teams in a variety of public sector environments as well as blue-chip organisations worldwide - she and her team has designed and delivered global leadership programmes for a range of Corporates including PepsiCo, Dechra Pharma, adidas, Associated British Foods, Coca Cola Hellenic, CCI, Campari, Zalando, Heineken, KP Snacks and Northern Trust. She has a strong track record in bespoke leadership development that drives career advancement and generative contribution.

With an Advanced Certificate in Management, Strategy, Innovation and Digital Business Strategy from MIT and a practitioner certification in applied neuroscience, she specialises in applying neuroscience to leadership, culture and high- performance. She is an accredited NeuroLeadership Brain Based Coach, a senior practitioner in Systemic Team Coaching. She is accredited in a range of leadership assessment tools, including PRISM, CPP, Values Orientation, ESCI, Hogan 360, Discovery Insights, Personal Resilience Indicator, Mindset Mapping and the Advanced Hogan leadership suite.

She also personally designs and hosts unique residential executive leadership retreats at Create. Express's beachfront venue in the heart of Northern Ireland's creative peninsula. Connect with Cora at [linkedin.com/in/corarobinson](https://www.linkedin.com/in/corarobinson).

Cora is supported on this programme by a very experienced international project management, event management and executive coaching team.

FRANCOIS COETZEE



Francois has spent three decades exploring, understanding and solving unique corporate and personal challenges through innovative solutions. He currently provides coaching, training and consulting services in the fields of business start-up, business innovation and human potential activation.

NICOLE DOBINSON



Nicole is an accredited Neuroleadership Brain Based Coach, trainer and facilitator. An international relations and capacity building specialist, she has worked with the UN through to social entrepreneurs, designing creative solutions and immersive experiences that prepare leaders for the emerging future.

DEIRDRE MAHON



Deirdre is a highly accomplished accredited executive coach who has worked in senior leadership positions in the Northern Ireland public sector. She spends her time coaching and developing individuals and teams to achieve highest levels of performance. She has a passion to help those she works with reach their highest potential.

SARAH JONES



Sarah is a Professional Certified Coach, an accredited Neuroleadership Brain Based Coach and certified action learning coach and facilitator with extensive international experience. She creates a motivating and challenging coaching environment, and delivers bespoke coaching experiences to maximise people, potential and results.

ILENIA NEGRINI



Ilenia is a specialised event and programme manager with over a decade of experience designing and delivering complex events and leadership programmes across Europe. Known for her precision, cultural fluency, and human-centred approach, Ilenia creates seamless learning experiences that allow leaders to focus, grow, and connect.