



Brandon Hall Group

**EXCELLENCE
AWARDS 2023**

Liquor Control Board of Ontario: Best Advance in Coaching and Mentoring

LCBO (Liquor Control Board of Ontario) and The Roundtable

Best Advance in Coaching and Mentoring

January 2024



Company Background

LCBO

Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Year Founded	1927
Revenue	\$7.21 Billion
Employees	\$7.21 Billion
Global Scale (Regions that you operate in or provide services to)	Ontario, Canada
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	The Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) is a government enterprise and a responsible retailer and wholesaler of wine, beer, and spirits in Ontario.
Industry	Retail
Website	www.lcbo.com



Company Background



Company-at-a-Glance	
Headquarters	Toronto, Ontario, Canada
Year Founded	2007
Revenue	\$2 Million
Employees	6 FT + 10 Contract
Global Scale	North America & Europe
Customers/Output, etc. (Key customers and services offered)	Mid-sized to enterprise level clients across industries/sectors. The Roundtable offers group coaching, group mentoring, executive coaching and team coaching services to high potential talent from senior manager to executive level.
Industry	Professional Services
Website	www.goroundtable.com

Budget and Timeframe

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Overall budget	\$300,000 over three years
Number of (HR, Learning, Talent) employees involved with the implementation?	7 Talent and Learning team members
Number of Operations or Subject Matter Expert employees involved with the implementation?	27 senior leaders from across the organization took the role of Catalyst leader and 107 high potential manager participants over the course of 3 years
Number of contractors involved with implementation	2 program managers; 3 Roundtable coaches; 1 learning design contractor
Timeframe to implement	3 years
Start date of the program	March 2021 –present (program currently running the third year)



Business Conditions and Business Needs

When the global pandemic hit in 2020, the Ontario government declared the LCBO an essential service, and its stores were slated to remain open while many other businesses were shuttered. While this meant that the provincial revenues were not impacted, the organization had to navigate an incredible balancing act of motivating teams to persevere and managing very real concerns about health and safety. During this period, it was not unusual for individuals to be deployed to work in retail stores, and with leaves of absence due to Covid-19. One year later, there was a high level of exhaustion amongst leaders and managers.

While the organization had a business continuity plan in place, there was no blueprint for something of this unexpected size and scale, and no precedent in modern history. In an extremely short period of time the organization had to rapidly shift gears to focus on the safety and wellbeing of the employees during this time of uncertainty, anxiety, and profound change.

The LCBO saw this time as an opportunity to review their leadership development initiatives to look for both gaps and bright spots. Ultimately, they wanted a people strategy that would accelerate an inclusive culture, demonstrate care for employee wellbeing, and build collaborative leadership across the organization. This new inclusive culture would leverage coaching and mentoring to build an eco-system of continuous learning. While the review showed that they had a strong talent management program, they realized there were areas that could be improved, specifically around diversity, inclusion, equity and belonging, as well as continuous leadership development supports specifically related to their competency of coaching.

The Talent, Safety and Inclusion team decided to look for an experienced leadership development partner to help them create an internal program to build the needed behaviors to accelerate leadership agility, create an inclusive, supportive culture and develop the coaching capabilities of the leaders. Drawn to The Roundtable's "leaders leading leaders" approach, they contracted The Roundtable to roll out the Catalyst program, a group coaching and mentoring program that is aligned to organizational strategy and tailored to development needs.

Since 2021, The Roundtable has been working with the LCBO and graduated 22 Catalyst cohorts led by high potential senior leaders who were equipped to coach and mentor 107 high potential front-line leaders in their Catalyst group coaching cohort. At the time of submission, the LCBO was about to launch the next round of development for 4 more



high potential Catalyst leaders who would be coaching and mentoring 23 more high potential front-line managers.

In a short period of time, the organization has made a significant positive impact on senior leader coaching capability, an improved sense of psychological safety and strides in building a more inclusive culture. On a base of 10,000+ employees, this has enabled a cascade of learning, behavioral changes and a strategic approach to leadership development as well as creating a coaching culture more rapidly than possible through 1-to-1 mentoring. Additionally, the Catalyst leader (those who coach the group coaching circles) typically manage teams of 5 – 20 employees and so there has been a ripple effect in the application of coaching skills beyond the participants in the program.

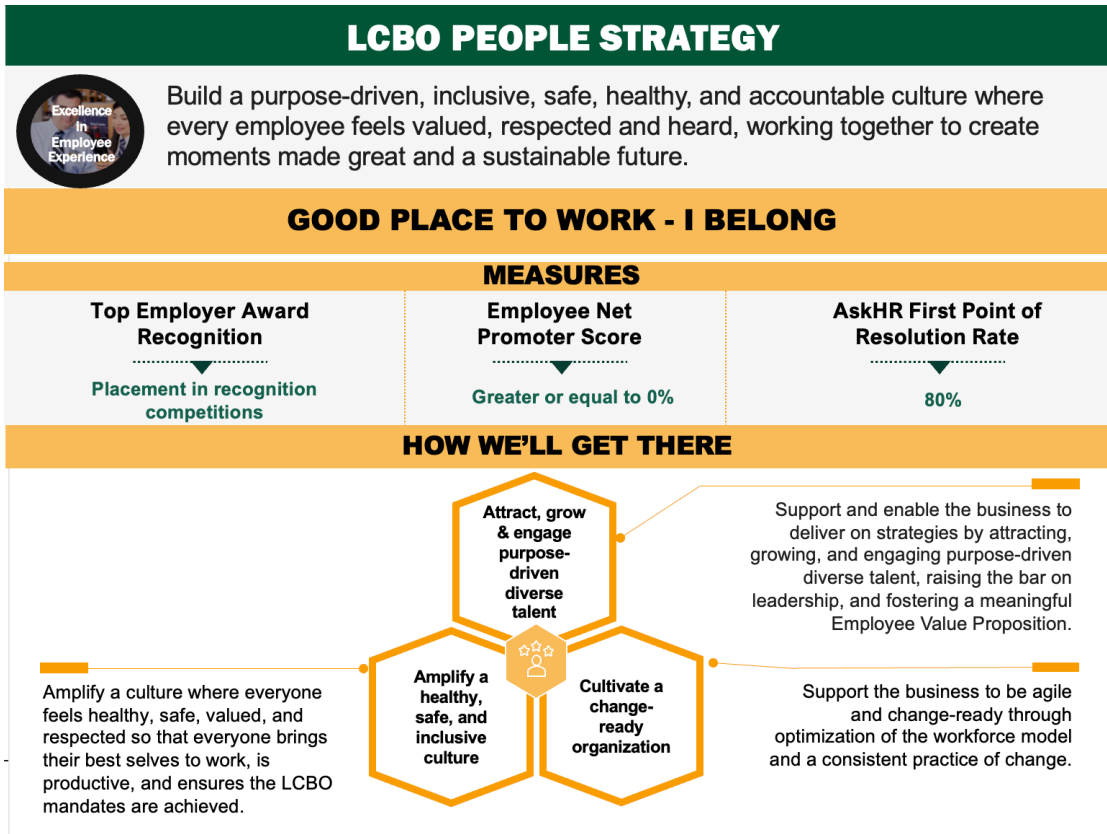
Overview

The Catalyst program was designed to enhance the leadership skills of a diverse group of senior leaders (Vice Presidents and high potential Senior Directors) who would then be equipped to coach and mentor the next level of high potential leaders (managers) at the LCBO. When Catalyst launched in 2021, the LCBO's people strategy and organizational objectives (shown in the image below) were the drivers behind the coaching and mentoring initiative, were built on three key desired outcomes. These were to:

- Amplify a culture where everyone feels healthy, safe, valued and respected so that everyone brings their best selves to work, is productive and ensures the LCBO mandates are achieved.
- Support and enable the business to deliver on strategies by attracting, growing, and engaging purpose-driven talent, raising the bar on leadership and cultivating a compelling Employee Value Proposition, driving up ENPS (Employee Net Promoter Scores).
- Support the business to be agile and change-ready through optimization of the workforce model and a consistent practice of change.



LCBO People Strategy:



The first year of the program began with 14 leaders, LCBO’s VP level as well as the highest potential Senior Directors. The identified leaders were selected based not only on their experience and abilities but also with the assumption that they would champion and “pay-forward” the program in future years as it continued to roll out in Year 2 and Year 3.

Design and Delivery of the Program

Since 2021, the LCBO team has engaged with The Roundtable to use their proprietary Catalyst group coaching program to help the organization realize goals of aligning leaders, accelerating new mindsets, and building learning cohorts. The program design is a framework that combines group coaching, mentoring, peer feedback, informal learning, assessments, and application activities.

Catalyst leaders are coached to become internal group coaches through a series of just-in-time booster sessions aligned to a specific leadership topic. The leaders first explore their own insights and understanding of the topic and then use that same content to have group coaching and mentoring discussions with their own cohorts of 3-5 participants.



Catalyst leaders receive a hard copy journal, the Make Change Happen Journal, which they use to track their progress as well as their group's progress. Catalyst group participants receive a Catalyst tracker to track their progress.

For the LCBO, the talent team determined that the program topics were not "one and done" and as such the program design has remained consistent year-over-year with continuous improvements and content advancements as the leadership knowledge elevated and the culture evolved. The group coaching format removes the pressure of leaders having all the answers and instead flips the conversation to enable safe space for participants to fully dive into the topics and share their own hopes, fears and uncertainties in a deeper manner that is grounded in the business realities.

The program was purposely designed to leverage high potential senior leaders as coaches for the small groups for several reasons:

- They knew the organization better than anyone else.
- They were passionate about driving change and delivering results.
- They could set the standard for the rest of the organization.
- They could share their energy and inspire others.

The program was intended to provide trusted space to drive critical conversations within the organization. It was key that this was not just another learning initiative led by an external trainer, it had to be credible senior line leaders facilitating different "coach-like" conversations on a variety of topics. It had to create safe space for participants to be coached and mentored on their strengths and areas of opportunities to close the "knowing/doing" gap and facilitate connections across organizational boundaries and silos.

The program design gave the senior leaders easy-to-use techniques and processes to lead group coaching and mentoring sessions with managers on topics aligned with the organization's most critical needs and aligned to the newly refreshed competencies. The senior leaders were the catalysts needed to develop managers and cascade sustainable culture change throughout the organization. The resultant program is a dual-level development experience that engages the organization's top high potential senior leaders as group coaches to pods of 3-5 high potential manager participants.

- The 1st session of the program is centered on contracting, trust building and exploration of goals with visible executive sponsorship.
- For sessions 2-5 the organization has consistently focused on session topics of strengths, inclusive leadership, adaptable leadership and motivating the team as starting points for deeper group coaching conversations.



- The final (6th session) is focused on celebration of progress, momentum and renewal of goals.

The content of the Catalyst program has been designed to ensure leaders have the capability and capacity they need to coach and mentor their colleagues as well as gain the self-awareness required to foster a more inclusive workplace.

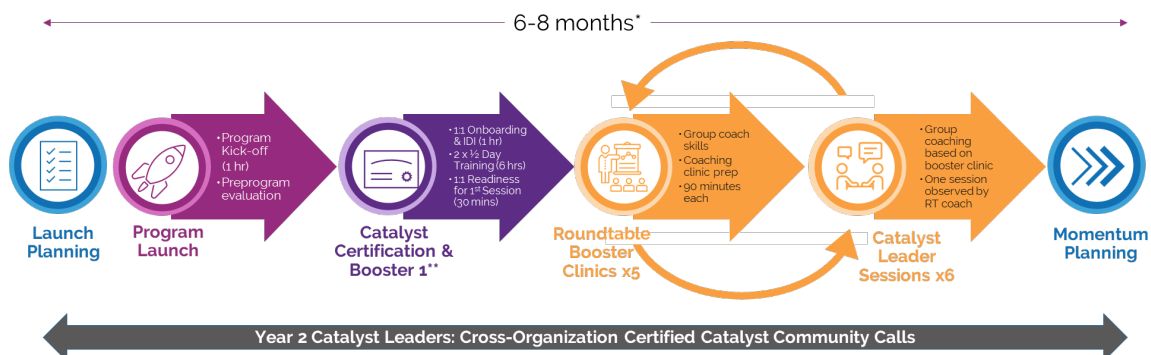
The program is designed to build psychological safety from the outset, with all cohort members agreeing to the 4 C’s (confidentiality, candor, commitment, and contribution). Additionally, there was a clinic specifically focused on inclusion as well as one specifically focused on adaptability, to be in synch with the organization’s objectives.

All booster sessions are facilitated by a Roundtable coach who is both a seasoned coach and leader, and able to bring a combination of mentorship, facilitation, and coaching skills to each group. Additionally, at least one LCBO Catalyst Coach (an internal leader who had been a Catalyst leader in a prior year) attended each session to share learnings from the previous year’s cohort.

A unique element of the Catalyst design is its built-in sustainability. The Roundtable works with organizations to identify leaders with a particular passion for coaching and then provide them with additional development so that after the third year of the program they can run booster clinics and conduct observations with only limited support from the Roundtable leader. This makes the program truly internally led and specific to the needs of the organization. The Catalyst coach development path is:

- Year 1: Be a Catalyst leader and have the regular Catalyst leader experience,
- Year 2: Shadow the Roundtable coach on all booster calls and learn how to conduct observations,
- Year 3 and beyond: Run the booster clinics and conduct observations, with behind-the-scenes support from The Roundtable.

Catalyst Program Schematic:





Components of the Program:

Orientation for all Catalyst Leaders, participants and program sponsors: to establish the connection of the program to the broader strategic objectives, share the program objectives and experience and discuss key success factors for all engaged in the program.

3 Step Onboarding of Catalyst Leaders:

- Individual Directions Inventory Assessment and debrief – generates awareness for the Catalyst leader as to their own motivational drivers and biases and the implications for them as a group coach.
- 2 X ½ day certification designed to: 1) Deep dive into the program components, 2) Review the core skills required to successfully lead a group coaching and mentoring sessions, 3) Create space for practice of coaching skills and 4.) Ensure readiness for their 1st meeting with their Catalyst group.
- Readiness Checkpoint – quick checkpoint call with their Roundtable coach to provide support in advance of their 1st group session.

Booster Sessions: The concept of the Catalyst program is “just-in-time” group coaching and mentoring. The Catalyst leader “experiences” the content and prepares for their own group session through the booster session and then is prepared to lead their session with their groups. The booster sessions are spaced four-to-six weeks apart and Catalyst leaders are expected to have their own group session completed prior to the next booster session. The six booster session topics for LCBO were as follows:

- **Chart Your Path:** This session builds commitment around key components of the program and lays the foundation for psychological safety and trust. Participants also share their goal that they plan to work on over the course of the program.
- **Fuel Your Strengths:** Participants identify/clarify their strengths and how they can bring a more strengths-based approach to their own leadership and their teams.
- **Broaden Your View (Inclusive Leadership):** This coaching clinic was written expressly for the LCBO program to support the broader learning goal of inclusion and belonging. The coaching clinic is focused on the elements of inclusion and the visible steps a leader can take to develop a culture of belonging.
- **Adaptability – Level up Your “A”-Game:** As with the above, this coaching clinic was written for the LCBO program as a response to the need for leaders to be highly adaptable and have coaching space to reflect on the challenges of what it means to be adaptable in a regulated and unionized environment.



- **Motivate & Engage Your Team:** This session brings together the elements of prior session and asks leaders to reflect on what they know motivates and engages their team and share best practices with their fellow leaders.
- **Momentum – Final session to close the learning journey for the group.** Allows individuals to reflect on their own progress against their goals and self-insight and their plans for momentum individually and as a group.

Observations: The Roundtable coach observes the senior leader lead their cohort of participants through the coaching clinic discussion and immediately following receives mentor coaching on their own strengths and development opportunities aligned to core group coaching competencies.

Year Two Resources: Once the Catalyst leaders complete the formal program, they are provided with additional resources (facilitation guides, tips, articles) to continue meeting with their groups on a less regular basis.

While the program officially “ends” after session six, in some instances groups continue into the second year using the Year Two resources provided as their momentum aides. The resources give leaders topic-driven conversation aids to continue their mentoring conversations but with less structure of Year 1. Groups often share the responsibility of facilitating the group coaching responsibility between the members. The focus shifts from group mentoring/coaching with the Catalyst leader to peer mentoring.

Adoption of the Program

The executive team at the LCBO stated that the following six competencies were the most important to develop as they were the North Star for the organization’s values and company culture. They are:

- Customer-centric
- Accountable
- Collaborate
- Inclusive
- Champion Change
- Coach & Develop

The Catalyst program is directly aligned with the organizational values and the impact of the program can be summarized in the following three points:

- **Drives continuous learning through coaching and mentoring.** By giving leaders the tools to teach, coach and learn from one another, they are provided with the skills they need to be successful as leaders.



- **Offers context to more effectively champion change.** The program gives them the unique ability to adapt their learning into the context of the business and the situation they are facing.
- **Accelerates collaboration across functional units.** Peer learning and coaching communities allow leaders to exchange and connect to share fresh perspectives and new ideas. The program curricula are brought to life by the coaching and mentoring wisdom from the senior leaders acting as group coaches.

There has been a spillover effect as both senior leaders and their cohort leaders share their learnings with their own teams, creating a more human-centered, empathetic leadership approach with a common language and cohesive approach to leadership development. For example, the Vice President of Distribution and Logistics took the initiative to share learnings and coaching clinic resources with 17 additional leaders across four Retail Service Centre locations. In that instance, leaders experienced the content from the strengths session in particular and were equipped to conduct conversations and apply learning with their direct reports at supervisory level.

The LCBO's desired leadership competencies are intrinsically tied to its guiding values.

Ritu Janveja reported that "we have an organizational competency called Coach and Develop, and another competency called Inclusive, and we see these competencies coming to life with this program."

Additional sponsor-level testimonials include:

- "This was really the first program and maybe the only program that provides a line of sight to a diverse array of talent. Senior leaders from other divisions are able to see high-potential talent across the board and that's something we really wanted to encourage and promote within the organization because we had been working in silos." Ritu Janveja, Senior Manager, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, LCBO
- "The Catalyst program was instrumental in strengthening the culture of continuous learning. Participants continued to meet as cohorts beyond the formal structure of the program and shared resources with their immediate teams." Nupur Khandelwal, Director, Talent Management, LCBO.
- "The Catalyst program was a cultural game changer for LCBO. High potential senior leaders learned skills to mentor groups of cross-divisional high potential managers who took their learnings to be better leaders of their own teams. Everyone working together to actively create our desired culture, knocking down the silos and getting to know our talent! Love it!" Priscilla Fraser, Vice President Talent, Safety & Inclusion, LCBO



Participant testimonials are provided below to convey the personal impact of the program:

- “Fantastic experience! This program is a game changer and culture accelerant. I'm so glad that we are investing in the development of our leaders.” - Participant
- “I enjoyed the connections with and sharing/learning from other peer leaders. I also enjoyed the connections with my group members, hearing their situations and observing how they learned and supported each other - analyzed the situations, challenged the thinking and offered ideas.” - Participant
- “The Catalyst program is like no other in the way that it invites authenticity and vulnerability into the professional domain, with a focus on building relationships and meaningful partnerships. Specifically, this opportunity facilitates collaboration and genuine integration of professional goals into the humanity we all bring to work with us on a daily basis. I am grateful to have had this opportunity and look forward to ongoing purpose-driven connections with colleagues across the organization.” - Participant

Measurable Benefits

The Catalyst program was the first and only program at LCBO to provide senior leaders with a cross-divisional view of high potential leadership talent. This helped raise the profile of diverse talent and improve internal hiring. Currently, 50% of hiring and promotions has come from within.

One of the key desired outcomes was to create a positive and inclusive company culture that helps engage employees. Prior to the Catalyst program, the Employee Net Promoter Score (ENPS) for the question “How likely are you to recommend the LCBO as a good place to work?” was 6.4. The score jumped to 10.3 after the program, a statistically significant improvement. In an employee survey, which was completed by over 6,000 employees, for the first time ever employees cited “supportive managers” as a Top 5 reason for promoting the LCBO as a place to work.

Another more recent question to the employee questionnaire related to whether or not employees feel a sense of belonging at the LCBO. The score average was 8/10. Employees also reported that their well-being was actively being supported by leaders and managers.

LCBO is on a clear path to ensure that their efforts in Wellness, DIBE and Mental Health are validated externally as well. Recently, the LCBO was recognized among Greater Toronto's top employers for 2023 and also won gold certifications for both Healthy Workplace and Mental Health at Work from Excellence Canada. The organization was the only retailer to have earned this certification to date. While there are many elements that



go into this win, the Catalyst program is acknowledged as a contributing factor as it provided a structured approach to engaging talent, opening up communication and improving collaboration.

Here are some additional impacts because of this program:

Cohorts build such a powerful bond that they continue to meet after the program has closed and have conversations because they see the value in a “brain trust” that shares insights, mentors one another, and keeps everyone accountable.

Ripple effect beyond the program - those 22 Catalyst leaders also lead teams in their “day job” and the average size of their team is 10, meaning an additional 220 employees experience leaders with improved coaching skills and the ability balance more effectively between the challenge of directing vs coaching.

The Roundtable uses the Net Promoter Score methodology. NPS scores can range from -100% to +100% and are based on how likely program participants are to refer others to a program. NPS above 0 is considered “good.” An NPS above 50 is “excellent.” An NPS above 70 “class leading.”

In the launch year the program had received an average NPS of 53 from Catalyst participants and Catalyst leaders. This increased to an NPS of 57 in Year 2. The line manager Catalyst leaders received outstanding scores from their own teams on their leadership abilities, actionable feedback, and team encouragement, significantly raising engagement levels. The Catalyst coaches themselves received an NPS of 79 in Year 1 and 87 in Year 2.

% of Catalyst participants reporting moderate to major improvement in the following factors:

- 93% - self-awareness as a leader
- 93% - understanding of leadership strengths and development opportunities.
- 92% - expansion of leadership toolkit
- 89% - size and scope of professional network
- 89% - self-confidence as a leader
- 89% - ability to overcome challenges in current role.



% of Catalyst leaders in Year 2 reporting moderate to significant improvement in the following factors:

- 100% - coaching skills
- 100% - mentoring skills
- 100% - view of talent in the organization
- 100% - ability to develop others.
- 100% - feelings of engagement with my organization
- 100% - understanding of leadership strengths and development opportunities.
- 100% - size and scope of professional network

Overall

Catalyst launched during the global pandemic with Ontario, Canada, still in a stay-at-home mandate. This caused us to pivot to a virtual environment in Year 1. While it was unexpected, the nature of Catalyst allows us to always share and build on best coaching and mentoring practices, whether or not the program is delivered virtually or in-person.

To assist with scheduling and planning logistics, in Year 2 we rolled out physical workbooks and journals for all Catalyst leaders to help them stay on track. Catalyst leaders received a hard copy of the Make Change Happen Journal, which they use to track their progress as well as their group’s progress. Catalyst group participants receive a Catalyst tracker to track their progress.

When the program wraps up, there is a strong bond between the cohort members. So, one of the things that The Roundtable implemented that was unique for the LCBO was to create a very simple set of topical discussions that the cohort could use to keep the learning and bonding going. These topics were aligned to the LCBO’s competencies, allowing them to continue to expand their leadership capabilities.

Key Findings	Lessons Learned
<p>Start with strategy... The program must be aligned to the overall business strategy and leadership competency model. Individual goals and group learning goals must ladder up to the “big picture” of the organization’s priorities.</p>	<p>Annually, exploration of what success would look like, understand what’s been tried in the past, what challenges have emerged and anticipate the critical themes to address through the program.</p> <p>It’s critical to review all HR programs and processes (e.g.: succession planning) to understand how they connect with our programs and be thoughtful about the timing that works best within the business cycle.</p>



<p>Structure is key... Programs must be delivered in a regular cadence to allow participants to put their learning into action. Particularly with a focus on building behaviors, it is crucial that participants can apply, consolidate and ultimately integrate their learning over time.</p>	<p>Planning to ensure that the cadence of sessions occurs during optimal business windows.</p> <p>During program orientation the critical nature of commitment and contribution of each participant is underscored and reinforced during the first group session.</p>
<p>Size of Cohort...To create and maintain psychological safety, the ideal size for a group coaching experience led by a busy senior leader is 4 – 6 participants.</p>	<p>Small groups more readily support vulnerability and trust building that will lead to psychological safety. This can be harder to achieve in larger groups where learner participation may be less balanced.</p> <p>Small group cohorts also create a healthy level of peer pressure on the learner to truly participate and commit, as every participant shares a progress update and commitment at every session.</p> <p>Group coaching delivers high-value impact when the size is balanced. When individuals can be held accountable and have the space to explore their biases and strengths.</p>
<p>Collaboration must be curated.... Opportunities for colleagues to learn together, from each other to build community, practice collaboration and expand perspectives.</p>	<p>Leverage a learning philosophy that leaders learn best from each other.</p> <p>Embed pre-work, peer coaching and reflection into each session.</p> <p>Leverage a flipped classroom and coaching approach, with pre-session reflection and post-session application.</p>
<p>Culture can be cultivated Common learning experience to reinforce desired culture.</p>	<p>Create opportunities for group and individual reflection throughout the learning journey as leaders work towards their individual action plan.</p> <p>Assign inter-session learning partner activities to deepen understanding and make the connection back to the workplace.</p>



Brandon Hall Group

EXCELLENCE AWARDS 2023

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