



# Future Association Leader Program 2026

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Empowering the next generation of veterinary association leaders

[futureleader@wsava.org](mailto:futureleader@wsava.org)  
WORLD SMALL ANIMAL VETERINARY ASSOCIATION

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# 1 Introduction

Veterinary Membership Associations are central to the strength and resilience of the veterinary profession worldwide. They unite veterinary teams across borders, set professional standards, provide continuing education, and give the profession a collective voice in critical debates on animal and team health and welfare.

Yet, today's associations operate in a world of increasing complexity. They face pressures such as diverse needs in continuing education topics and delivery preferences, regulatory challenges, public misinformation, and workforce imbalances. Internally, many associations struggle with governance gaps, financial stability, volunteer engagement, and leadership fatigue.

The WSAVA Future Association Leader Program was developed in direct response to these realities. Designed through a process of listening to association leaders across regions, the program addresses the most pressing challenges they identified: sustaining member engagement, improving governance and leadership succession planning, strengthening advocacy, and building inclusivity across generations, roles and cultures.

Launching as a pilot in 2026, this nine-month journey will equip association leaders with the practical skills, resilient behaviors, and global perspective they need to guide associations through change and uncertainty. It is not just a training course, but a catalyst for action — helping participants strengthen their associations locally, regionally, and globally.

## 2 Overview of the Program Format

The WSAVA Future Association Leader Program offers a blended learning experience that balances expert input, peer-to-peer exchange, and real-world application.

Running from February to October 2026, the program is structured around eight themed modules, each addressing a core aspect of association leadership. Content is delivered using a 'blended' approach:

- Self-led modules (up to 45 minutes each) on WSAVA Academy prepare you for deeper learning and can be taken at your own pace.
- Live online sessions (2 hours per module) bring participants together with expert facilitators and peers from across the world to share perspectives and work through challenges.
- An in-person workshop at the WSAVA Congress 2026 in Warsaw brings program participants together to consolidate their learning, celebrate progress, and plan for impact.

This format is designed to fit alongside participants' professional and voluntary roles. You can expect to spend around 4–6 hours of learning per month, much of which is directly applied to challenges in your own association. The live online sessions will be scheduled during the last week of the month, between February and September.

By the end of the program, you will:

- Have practical tools to strengthen association leadership and governance.
- Gain strategies to mobilize and engage members.
- Build confidence to advocate for your profession and members and influence decision-makers.
- Develop resilience and clarity to lead authentically in high-pressure contexts.
- Expand your global perspective, learning from peers across regions and cultures.

### **3 Syllabus**

The program syllabus has been shaped by the voices of veterinary leaders worldwide and designed with input from t-three, a global consultancy with deep expertise in

leadership development and organizational behavior. It balances foundational leadership behaviors with practical tools for association management<sup>1</sup>.

### **Module 1: Purposeful Leadership and Personal Resilience**

Clarify your personal mission, connect it to your association's purpose, and learn strategies for maintaining motivation and integrity under pressure. Build resilience against criticism and burnout using practical frameworks for renewal and well-being.

### **Module 2: Strategic Influence and Advocacy**

Develop the ability to persuade, influence, and negotiate with stakeholders at every level. Learn the art of strategic storytelling and discover how to reclaim the narrative in times of change. Apply models such as the Hero's Quest and Change Curve to craft compelling stories that mobilize support.

### **Module 3: Communication and Conflict Navigation**

Strengthen your ability to listen deeply, build trust across cultures, and resolve conflict constructively. Explore frameworks such as the Kilmann Conflict Model, Erin Meyer's Culture Map, and advanced listening techniques to manage difficult conversations while maintaining authentic connections.

### **Module 4: Motivation and Mobilization**

Reignite purpose within your membership, overcome apathy, and inspire collective action. Apply frameworks such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Daniel Pink's Drive, and the Ladder of Engagement to design strategies that foster sustainable involvement.

### **Module 5: Succession, Renewal and Leadership Pipelines**

Ensure your association's future sustainability by designing effective succession plans and mentoring emerging leaders. Use practical tools such as Rothwell's Succession

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<sup>1</sup> The order of modules may change. Module content will be tailored to the audience and is an iterative process.

Planning Model, the Performance–Potential Grid, and the GROW coaching model to develop leadership pipelines.

### **Module 6: Leading Through Innovation and Change**

Foster a culture of innovation while navigating uncertainty. Learn to empower teams, build psychological safety, and adopt “fail fast, learn fast” approaches. Draw on frameworks such as Amy Edmondson’s Fearless Organization and David Marquet’s Turn the Ship Around.

### **Module 7: Building Inclusive and Intergenerational Teams**

Leverage the diversity of age, gender and culture to build stronger associations. Explore strategies to reduce unconscious bias, create inclusive environments, and strengthen intergenerational collaboration.

### **Module 8: Strategic Foresight and Future-Ready Leadership**

Anticipate emerging trends and prepare your association for the long term. Learn horizon scanning, scenario planning, and PESTLE analysis to distinguish the ‘opinion of the few’ from meaningful trends and guide your association proactively rather than reactively.

## **4 Program Fees**

Program fees are tiered in line with the World Bank’s country income classifications, ensuring accessibility across regions<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> To find the World Bank income classification for your country, visit the World Bank [website](#).

Country Income Classification	Program Fee per Participant
High-Income Countries	1,500 USD
Upper-Middle-Income Countries	1,000 USD
Lower-Middle/Low-Income Countries	250 USD

Fees include:

- All self-led and live online learning modules
- The one-day in-person workshop in Warsaw
- Complimentary registration for WSAVA World Congress 2026

Fees may be paid in up to three instalments throughout 2026 (February, May, and August) and can be paid either by participants or by their nominating association.

Travel and accommodation to Warsaw for the in-person workshop and WSAVA Congress 2026 are the responsibility of each participant. Travel grants for participants from lower-middle/low-income countries will be provided.

## 5 Application Process

Applications for the pilot cohort open on 1 October 2025 and close on **30 November 2025** (23:00 UTC).

To apply, you must:

- Be nominated or endorsed by a WSAVA Member Association.
- Be an active member of that association throughout the program.
- Demonstrate a record of voluntary service or leadership potential.

- Show openness to learning, cultural collaboration, and teamwork.
- Be able to commit to the time, travel, and learning requirements.
- Pay all associated program fees.

Applicants must complete the official application form and upload their Member Association's letter of endorsement or nomination. Both documents should be submitted through the application form on WSAVA's [website](#). Incomplete applications, such as those not containing a letter of endorsement or nomination, will not be considered.

Once received, applications will be reviewed by the Selection Panel, made up of representatives from across WSAVA. Each submission will be assessed against clear criteria, including leadership experience, commitment to the profession, openness to learning, and potential for broader impact. The balance of the cohort in terms of geography, career stage, age, and experience will also be considered.

The final selection will be ratified by the WSAVA Executive Board, and applicants will be notified of the outcome by mid-January 2026.

To apply, visit: [wsava.org/futureleader](https://wsava.org/futureleader)



## 6 Program Timeline: Key Dates

Year	Date	Milestone
2025	1 October	Applications open
	30 November (23:00 UTC)	Applications close
	December	Applications reviewed by selection panel
2026	Mid-January	Applicants informed of outcome
	February	Module 1 – online
	March	Module 2 – online
	April	Module 3 – online
	May	Module 4 – online
	June	Module 5 – online
	July	Module 6 – online
	August	Module 7 – online
	September	Module 8 – online
	October	In-person workshop – WSAVA Congress, Warsaw

## 7 Frequently Asked Questions

### **Who should apply?**

You don't need a formal title to be a leader. If you are committed to your association and the veterinary profession, and ready to grow, this program is for you.

You are a great candidate if you:

- Have experience in a leadership role either formally or informally.
- Are a member of a WSAVA Member Association and ideally actively involved in one too.
- Have a record of voluntary service.
- Are open to learning and working across cultures, age groups, and perspectives.
- Believe in the values of inclusion, service, and collaboration.
- Want to support and mentor others as part of your leadership journey.

### **I have no experience as an association leader. Can I still apply?**

Absolutely. You do not need to have held a formal association leadership role to apply for the WSAVA Future Association Leader Program. What matters most is the potential you bring, your sense of purpose, and your commitment to making a difference in the veterinary community.

When reviewing applications, we look beyond job titles and focus on the qualities and experiences that show you are ready to grow into an association leadership role. For example, a strong track record of voluntary service—whether through your national, regional, student, or specialist veterinary association, or through community and advocacy initiatives—demonstrates your commitment to the profession and its future.

Leadership can also take many forms. You may have shown initiative in your workplace, represented your association in some way, or contributed through committees, project teams, or working groups. What matters is that you can show evidence of stepping up, supporting others, and helping to move a cause or project forward.

Equally important is your willingness to learn and grow. We are seeking individuals with a growth mindset—people who are open to feedback, willing to adapt to different leadership styles, and ready to engage across cultures, generations, and geographies.

Collaboration is another key element. Successful leaders recognize the value of shared success, nurture the growth of those around them, and move beyond solo leadership models to embrace teamwork. Applicants should also align with WSAVA's values, supporting our mission to advance animal health and welfare while embracing collaboration, diversity, and education.

Finally, we are looking for individuals who can make a wider impact. Preference may be given to those who have the potential to influence policy or practice at local, regional, or global levels, act as ambassadors for WSAVA and their associations, and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the profession.

In short, if you bring passion, commitment, and the drive to make a difference, this program is for you—even if you have not yet held a formal association leadership position.

### **Who will deliver the program?**

The WSAVA Future Association Leader Program is delivered in partnership with t-three, a global consultancy with deep expertise in leadership development and organizational behavior. They have worked with international organizations across sectors and bring expertise in designing learning experiences that lead to lasting change. What makes this program unique is that it was co-created with input from veterinary association leaders themselves.

Before designing the content, WSAVA carried out interviews with association presidents, board members, and long-standing volunteers from around the world. Their voices shaped every part of the syllabus, ensuring the program reflects real challenges and opportunities. This is not a top-down initiative, but a program built by and for veterinary associations.

### **What is the time commitment?**

We know that veterinary leaders are already balancing demanding work and voluntary responsibilities. That's why the program has been designed to fit alongside your existing commitments. You can expect to spend around 4–6 hours per month learning, which includes:

- 2-hour live online session (once a month)
- 45-minute self-led learning module on WSAVA Academy
- Optional peer discussions and reflection activities (usually around 30 minutes)

The live online sessions will be scheduled in the last week of each month, from February to September. Final dates will be confirmed to all participants in January 2026.

Many of these activities link directly to the real-life challenges in your own association, so the time you invest brings immediate benefit to you and your association.

### **How long does the program run for?**

The program runs over nine months, starting in February 2026 and ending in October 2026 at WSAVA World Congress in Warsaw. The eight modules are spaced monthly to give you time to apply your learning between sessions with space for reflection, collaboration, and action.

### **Do I need to attend every live session?**

We strongly encourage attendance at the live sessions, as this is where you'll gain most from interaction with peers and facilitators. However, we understand that time zones, work, and personal commitments may sometimes prevent you from being able to join. If you miss a live session, you can complete the self-led module on the WSAVA Academy, ensuring you stay on track. To receive your certificate, you must complete at least 80% of the program.

### **What language is the program delivered in?**

The program will be delivered in English, as this is WSAVA's official language. A working level of spoken and written English is necessary to participate fully in discussions, complete activities, and collaborate with your peers. The facilitators are experienced in working across cultures and will ensure that language and terminology are accessible to all.

### **Will I need to travel?**

The only required travel is for the final in-person workshop, which will take place during WSAVA World Congress 2026 in Warsaw. This one-day session will bring together all participants to consolidate their learning, share experiences, and plan for future impact. The workshop also includes complimentary registration for Congress, giving you the opportunity to participate in the wider global veterinary community. You will also be invited to attend the WSAVA's General Assembly of Member Associations, allowing you to observe the association's own consultation and governance practices. Participants from lower-middle and low-income countries will be eligible to apply for a travel grant to help cover the cost of attending.

### **What kind of peer interaction is involved?**

This isn't just a training course it's a cohort experience. You'll learn alongside a diverse group of participants from around the world, and we'll create space for:

- Peer mentoring and feedback
- Group discussions and collaborative problem-solving
- Optional small group "learning circles" or reflection spaces

These relationships are a key part of the learning journey and often continue well beyond the program.

### **How many participants will be selected?**

The 2026 program is a pilot, which means the cohort will be intentionally small to allow for close interaction, deeper discussion, and individualized support. We anticipate

selecting up to 25 participants globally. This size ensures that every voice is heard, and every participant can contribute meaningfully to the cohort's learning journey.

### **Can more than one person from the same country or association apply?**

Yes, multiple applications from the same country or region are welcome. However, in selecting the final cohort, we aim to balance geographic diversity to ensure a truly global learning environment.

### **What support is available for participants from lower-income countries?**

We recognize that financial barriers should not prevent talented leaders from taking part. That's why fees are tiered according to World Bank classifications, and participants from lower-middle and low-income countries are eligible for a reduced cost of 250 USD as well as a travel grant to attend the final workshop in Warsaw. Fees can also be paid in instalments. Participants' home associations may choose to support or cover the costs in full or in part.

### **How do I apply?**

To apply, visit [wsava.org/futureleader](https://wsava.org/futureleader) where you will find an online application form. All applications must be submitted through this form. The form contains various open-ended questions designed to understand your motivations, interest in the program, and your experience so far. To submit the application, you will need a letter of endorsement or nomination from your association, as well as a copy of your curriculum vitae or résumé, which you can upload to the application form. You will also be asked to specify whether you will be paying the program fees yourself or if your association is funding your participation.

### **How will participants be selected?**

Applications will be reviewed by the WSAVA Future Association Leader Program Selection Panel, which includes representatives from WSAVA's Executive Board, committees, and Secretariat. Each application will be assessed against a clear scoring rubric (below), looking at your commitment to the profession, leadership experience

(formal or informal), willingness to learn, openness to collaboration, and potential for broader impact. Diversity of age, career stage, geography, and perspective will also be considered to ensure a balanced global cohort. The WSAVA Executive Board will ratify the final selection.

Score	Description
0	No evidence provided / does not meet criteria
1	Minimal evidence – meets criteria at a basic level
2	Moderate evidence – clear demonstration in some contexts
3	Strong evidence – consistently demonstrates relevance
4	Exceptional evidence – outstanding and exceeds expectations

### **What happens if I am not selected?**

As this is a pilot program, places are limited. If you are not selected for the 2026 cohort, we encourage you to apply again in future years. Your application will demonstrate your commitment to leadership, and as the program grows, we expect to expand the number of places available.

### **Will I receive a certificate?**

Participants who complete at least 80% of the program will receive a WSAVA Certificate of Participation, recognizing your commitment to association leadership development and contribution to the global veterinary community. While the certificate is not an academic qualification, it is a respected acknowledgement of your leadership journey within an international professional context.

### **Will this lead to a role in WSAVA?**

No. Completing the program does not automatically lead to a committee or board position within WSAVA. However, it is designed to strengthen both your personal leadership and your association's capacity. Many participants may find that the program opens doors to wider opportunities in their own associations, at regional levels, or eventually within WSAVA if they choose to get involved.

### **Why is this a pilot?**

This is the first global leadership program of its kind for veterinary associations. The pilot is both a learning experience for participants and a co-creation process for WSAVA. Your feedback will play a vital role in shaping future editions of the program. By taking part, you will not only strengthen your own leadership but also contribute to building a sustainable, globally relevant leadership pathway for the veterinary associations.

### **How can my association support my application?**

Your home association can support you by endorsing your application, helping with practical arrangements such as funding, and by working with you to identify real-life challenges that you can address as part of the program. The more closely your learning aligns with your association's needs, the greater the benefit for both you and your community.

### **What needs to be included in the letter that my association provides to endorse my application or nominate me?**

To submit your application, you will need to upload a letter from your association. In that letter, they must confirm that you are a member of their association and that they endorse your application to the WSAVA Future Association Leader Program or are nominating you. The letter should be signed by an official representative of the association and include their contact details. There is no need to provide further information in the letter; however, the association may include examples of your experience if they wish.

### **I have a question. Who can I speak to?**

Great – you can get in touch with the program team by email to [futureleader@wsava.org](mailto:futureleader@wsava.org)