



DLC Leadership Program

Program Syllabus · 2026–2027

Digital Leadership Certification for Digital Community Leaders

Program Overview

The DLC Leadership Program is the first modular, asynchronous, certification program for digital leaders, formalizing digital community leadership with the credentials, skills, and frameworks needed to build sustainable spaces while protecting their own wellbeing.

Director of Programming	Dr. Rachel Kowert (@DrKowert), Research Psychologist & Games Scholar
Director of Learning and Education	Dr. Kelli Dunlap (@DrGoose), Clinical Psychologist & Game Designer
Cost	Free to students
Format	Asynchronous, self-paced online certification
Certification	Awarded upon completion of all foundational and masterclass requirements
Program Platform	www.mydlc.org

Who This Program Is For

This program is built for the people who build, protect, and sustain online communities. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Moderators (volunteer and paid)
- Community managers
- Guild and clan leaders
- Dungeon masters and other digital community organizers
- Esports team managers and support staff
- Anyone stepping into a digital leadership role

Program Structure

The DLC Program is organized around three pillars (Development, Leadership, and Community) and two module types (Foundational Modules and Masterclass Modules).

The Three Pillars

Development	The foundational skills and knowledge to build communities.
Leadership	The foundational skills and knowledge to lead and guide communities.
Community	The foundational skills and knowledge to sustain communities.

Module Types

Foundational Modules	Masterclass Modules
• 90 minutes total (3 × 30-min sections) • Required for all participants • Structured using the FAX framework: - Foundations — the what and why - Application — the how - Xpansion — deeper context and advanced use • Each section includes a professionally produced video, written materials, and a takeaway activity	• 30 minutes each • Participants must complete a minimum number to certify • Deep dives focused on immediate application • Co-developed with organizational partners and subject matter experts • Each includes a professionally produced video, written materials, and a takeaway activity

What Every Module Includes

Video content	A professionally produced 5–10 minute video per 30-minute section. Foundational modules include three videos; masterclasses include one.
Written materials	Written content that expands on the concepts covered in the video, providing deeper context, research background, and practical frameworks.
Takeaway activity	A practical exercise designed so participants can immediately apply what they have learned in their own community.

Current Course Catalog

Module Title	Instructor	Type	Description
PILLAR 1: DEVELOPMENT — Skills and knowledge to build communities			
De-escalation	Kelli Dunlap, PsyD (American University)	Foundational	What de-escalation is and why it matters, practical techniques, and crisis intervention resources.
Operational Security	Henry Adams (Resolver)	Foundational	Protecting yourself and your community online.
Self-Care for Community Leaders	Kelli Dunlap, PsyD (American University)	Foundational	Recognizing burnout, setting boundaries, and building sustainable practices for the long haul.
Crafting Community Codes of Conduct	Rachel Kowert, PhD (University of Cambridge)	Masterclass	The EFFECT Framework for building clear, enforceable, community-owned guidelines.
PILLAR 2: LEADERSHIP — Skills and knowledge to lead communities			
Ethical Leadership	Celia Hodent, PhD (ethicalgames.org); Ashley Blake (vrCAVE & elsewhereNFP); Rachel Kowert, PhD (University of Cambridge)	Masterclass	Applying cognitive psychology and ethical frameworks to everyday community decisions.
PILLAR 3: COMMUNITY — Skills and knowledge to sustain communities			
Community Vibe Setting	Victoria Tran (Innersloth)	Masterclass	How to actively shape and sustain community culture using the RENEW framework.
Digital Bystander Intervention	Rachel Kowert, PhD (University of Cambridge); Elizabeth Newbury, PhD (Christchurch Call)	Masterclass	How to build a community where members look out for each other, the psychology of bystander behavior, and practical activation strategies.
Preventing Online/Offline Harm	Maria Tamellini (GamerSafer)	Masterclass	Recognizing and responding to escalating harm.
Creating Player-Facing Resources	Matt Soeth (Thriving in Games Group)	Masterclass	Designing accessible community resources that work for members — not just for the rulebook.

Certification Requirements

To earn DLC Leadership Program certification, participants must complete the following, as well as the pre- and post-assessment:

Foundational certification	Complete all required Foundational Modules across the three pillars, including the takeaway activity for each module.
Advanced certification	Complete all of the foundational courses and all of the Masterclass Modules, including the takeaway activity for each module.

Participants have access to all of the modules and can move through the content at their own pace over the month until the cohort **closes on November 1**. Module content is available at www.mydlc.org.

Each masterclass is designed to take about 30 - 45 minutes from start to finish. The three foundational courses are each made up of three 30-minute learning modules. All together, that is roughly 10 - 12 hours total, or a little less than 2 hours a week.

There is no live programming scheduled related to coursework. **However there will be weekly office hours that will happen on the DLC Discord every Wednesday, 2 – 3 EST starting on September 9.** (if you need accommodation for office hours at another time/day please let us know and we can make special arrangements).

One of the goals of the program was to be asynchronous, because time zones are a headache and life is chaos. That said, we are always open to hearing from the cohort about what they would want to see in the future.

More Information

Website	www.dlcleadership.org
Office Hours	To book a drop-in voice session with the DLC team, ping @DrKowert and @DrGoose on the DLC Leadership Circle Discord and we will coordinate a time to chat. Please come prepared with your questions.
Partnerships	For partnership, organizational integration, or content collaboration inquiries, contact Rachel Kowert at rkowert@gmail.com .