



GCC LEADS - Developing Middle Managers into Middle Leaders

Client: Gulf Coast Center (GCC)

Timeframe: Oct 2024–Oct 2025

Background & Challenge

Gulf Coast Center identified **middle managers as a critical yet under-developed layer** linking frontline teams and senior leadership—technically strong and mission-driven, but **less prepared for the human side of leadership** amid rapid organizational change.

GCC partnered with **3H Leadership Consulting (Dr. Julie Armstrong)** to launch **GCC LEADS**, a year-long development series that pairs evidence-based frameworks with real-world practice to **develop middle managers into middle leaders**.

Program Design

GCC LEADS (Leadership Expectations and Development Series) targeted five core domains:

- **Connection & Presence** — Build psychological safety and trust
- **Strategic Thinking** — Strengthen collaboration and alignment
- **Getting Work Done Through Others** — Delegate, prioritize, and drive accountability
- **Coaching & Feedback** — Develop people through reflective conversations
- **Agility, Flexibility & Resilience** — Lead the people side of change

Leaders engaged in monthly workshops, **Peer Leader Connections**, applied practice with their teams, and manager conversations to reinforce skill transfer.

At a Glance

GCC LEADS delivered **measurable leadership growth** across Gulf Coast Center—strengthening **76 middle leaders** who now lead with **greater self-awareness, empathy, and accountability**.

Direct reports confirm **stronger trust, clearer communication, and more consistent coaching**.

What began as a development initiative has become a **living, evidence-based system** shaping a **resilient, people-centered culture** where **leaders grow** and **teams thrive**.

"Great leadership development program — I can see the impact in the way I manage and lead my team and am excited for the next steps."

Approach to Measurement

Two complementary lenses captured impact:

1. **Direct Reports (n=94)** — *External lens*; pre/post Likert 1–5; qualitative comments.
2. **Participants (n=46/76)** — *Internal lens*; self-reported growth; qualitative reflection.

This dual lens design tests not only *self-perceived growth*, but also whether teams **experience** the change.

A full report on program measurement is available upon request.

Results & Impact



1) Quantitative Skill Growth

Domain	Direct Report Δ (Pre→Post)	Participant Net Growth*	Interpretation
Connection & Presence	4.27 → 4.22 (-0.05)	76%	Stable, high baseline maintained
Strategic Thinking	4.09 → 4.18 (+0.09)	87%	Moderate improvement
Getting Work Done Through Others	4.02 → 4.08 (+0.06)	64%	Mild improvement
Coaching & Feedback	3.94 → 4.09 (+0.15)	76%	Strong, meaningful improvement
Agility, Flexibility & Resilience	4.03 → 4.04 (+0.01)	78%	Stable, consistent strength

- **Coaching & Feedback +0.15 → Strongest Gain** | Leaders are now developing people, not fixing problems.
- **Connection & Presence Stable → High Trust Maintained** | Even through organizational change.
- Four of five domains improved | **Evidence of applied learning** and **durable skill growth** over 12 months

2) Behavioral Change in Daily Leadership

Direct reports observed:

- **+9 pts** in supportive accountability (fewer detractors)
- **+6–9 pts** in coaching behaviors (listening, questions, shared goals)
- **+4 pts** in feedback cadence and quality
- **Neutrality rising** in change navigation—reflecting more thoughtful evaluation (evidence of increased psychological safety), not disengagement

3) Qualitative Themes – Growth Leaders Describe & Teams Experience

Common themes across both lenses:

- Coaching orientation → from “fixing” to “developing”
- Emotional intelligence → calm, empathetic, intentional
- Communication clarity → clear expectations and transparency
- Psychological safety → speak-up culture
- Accountability with empathy → high standards + respect
- Resilience → steadiness through change

Direct Report: “Our team is more open and trusting.”

Participant: “I’ve learned to guide creative thinking rather than solve everything myself.”

*“The GCC LEADS program is a great tool to **improve growth and development** at all levels.”*

Cross-Cutting Insights



- **Mutual validation:** Teams and leaders report the same strengths — evidence of true behavior change.
- **Trust endures:** Connection & Presence remained high amid change.
- **Reflective neutrality:** Slight rise in “about the same” shows discernment (i.e. evidence of psychological safety), not disengagement.
- **Resilience visible:** With more than 75 % favorable growth, leaders demonstrate steadiness through change.

Participant Experience | What Resonated Most

Program Component	% of Total	Interpretation
Peer Leader Connections	≈ 35 %	Clear standout — valued for connection, reflection, and shared learning.
Applied practice with my team	≈ 22 %	Strong #2 — people valued applying concepts directly with their teams.
Monthly Workshops	≈ 17 %	Solid engagement — structure, consistency, and learning variety appreciated.
The Kickoff Event	≈ 15 %	Set tone, high energy; people remember it for emotional impact.
Talking with my manager about what I was learning and practicing	≈ 10 %	Reinforces that leader-leader conversations support transfer and accountability.

*“One of the most impactful aspects was the opportunity to **hear different perspectives and experiences** from other participants. It created a **sense of connection**, helped **broaden my thinking**, and reinforced that **many leadership challenges are shared**.”*

What Changed in Practice

- Leaders **shifted from managing tasks to developing people**.
- **Coaching** became the norm—better questions, deeper listening.
- **Trust** anchors culture; safety fuels candor and collaboration.
- **Accountability with empathy** defines leadership tone.
- **Strategic alignment** improved through collaborative problem-solving.
- **Resilience** is visible in steadiness and optimism under pressure.

Conclusion

GCC LEADS demonstrated clear, measurable leadership growth across Gulf Coast Center. Alignment between participant and direct-report perspectives provides **strong evidence that learning is translating into daily behavior**: leaders are more *self-aware*, *coaching-oriented*, and *emotionally intelligent*, while teams experience greater *trust*, *support*, and *accountability*.

More than a training initiative, GCC LEADS has become a living, **evidence-based system for developing middle leaders** who are shaping a **resilient, people-centered culture for the future**.