



# Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership Excellence

The Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership Excellence is designed for Professionals who can meet the stated prerequisites, and aspire to become a member of an executive level leadership team within a parks and recreation agency.

## Session I - 2.3 CEUs

January 26-29, 2027  
Florida Elks Youth Camp  
Umatilla, FL

## Session II - 1.6 CEUs

August 29-September 1, 2027 (with FRPA Conference)  
Rosen Shingle Creek  
Orlando, FL

**Applicants are required to assess their comprehension of baseline concepts to assure they meet the minimum level of understanding and mastery of prerequisite learning. Documentation of this will be through the completion of a Supervisor Attestation verifying the applicant's comprehension of baseline concepts, and the Supervisor's commitment to supporting the applicant's engagement with the Academy. Not sure if this is the right level for you? Check out FRPA's other Leadership Intensive Programs at [frpa.org](http://frpa.org).**

**THE SETTING FOR SESSION I:** A project of the Florida State Elks Association, the Florida Elks Youth Camp offers a unique 405-acre retreat-style setting surrounded by natural beauty. Comfortable, hotel-style accommodations, inviting meeting spaces, and delicious meals create a welcoming environment for learning and connection. Housing options include single or shared accommodations in the lodge or standalone cabins with a mini kitchen (microwave, sink, coffee, and ice maker). Outside food and beverage options are limited, and the nearest town requires a drive. Dress is casual, and the peaceful surroundings offer opportunities to relax and recharge between classes. The Academy is intended for registered participants only; no guests are permitted onsite or at meals. Spouses and significant others are not permitted to stay onsite unless special accommodations are needed and arrangements are made with the FRPA Office.

Presented by



Sponsored by



# APPLICATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

The Academy consists of two sessions. Session I of the Academy will be offered in Umatilla, Florida at the Florida Elks Youth Lodge. Lodging will be onsite and is included in the fees. Meals will be provided according to the schedule. Three days of intensive lecture, group discussion, exercises, and self-reflection will be followed by six months of coaching, assignments, and conference calls.

Session II of the Academy will be held in conjunction with the FRPA State Conference. Session II will offer sessions that expand the leadership skills of participants by building off of Session I content and expanding into new areas required of today's parks and recreation leaders.

## All Applicants Must Have

- Shown progressive ascension from mid-level into higher level positions within the agency; and
- Have responsibilities that include administration and overseeing or coordinating the work of other full-time employees; and
- Comprehension of baseline concepts outlined in the application and mastery in applying certain concepts in their current position; and
- Commitment to dedicating the time to complete the prerequisite assignments for Session I, interim project assignments, interim virtual meetings and coaching sessions, and prerequisite assignments for Session II.

## Successful Applicants Must

- Submit a personal data form with the registration application; and
- Submit the supplied Supervisor Attestation verifying the applicant's comprehension of baseline concepts, and commitment to supporting the applicant's engagement with the Academy program; and
- Complete all prerequisite assignments.

**Pre-Reading Assignment:** Books/Articles that are required reading are included in your registration fee and must be read prior to attending. These materials prepare applicants for the courses and will be sent upon registration/payment for the Academy program. Early registration is encouraged to allow the maximum time for completing these assignments.

**Participation Once Accepted as an Academy Participant:** Attendance at all courses within each session is mandatory and participants are expected to be fully attentive during these times. Absence or lack of engagement may result in participants' withdrawal from the Academy. The program has been planned to provide a balance of formal education/instruction, as well as coaching and networking opportunities. Participants are expected to engage in all of these activities. There will be mandatory assignments between Sessions I and II. Participants are expected to manage their time so that these can be completed by the established deadlines. Participants should realize some of this will require time spent outside of their normal work hours. Any participant not completing the assignments will not be allowed to return for Session II or complete the Academy. Participants will be asked to turn cell phones and personal data devices, off during course instruction. Ample break time will be provided to allow check-ins at offices or with family.

**Application:** The Application, combined into one pdf document, must be submitted in its entirety, including payment, no later than December 18, 2026 to [eleanor@frpa.org](mailto:eleanor@frpa.org). Applicants will be notified as quickly as possible if they have been accepted into the Academy. Tuition payment options are available for those paying for the Academy from their personal finances. Please call FRPA CEO, Eleanor Warmack, to arrange. Applications must be submitted electronically in a pdf format. Please note: Final acceptance into the program is contingent upon receipt of the above materials. If not received by the deadline, the application may not be acted upon and the applicant may risk not being accepted into the Academy.

|                        |                   |                   |                   |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Included Meals:</b> | <b>January 26</b> | <b>January 27</b> | <b>January 28</b> | <b>January 29</b> |
|                        | Dinner            | Breakfast         | Breakfast         | Breakfast         |
|                        |                   | Lunch             | Lunch             |                   |
|                        |                   | Dinner            | Dinner            |                   |

# SCHEDULE

## LEADERSHIP

**Tuesday, January 26, 2027 | 1:00pm – 7:00pm**

Arrivals

### Welcome, Introductions

*Erin Paige, Assistant Director, West Palm Beach Parks and Recreation*

### Leadership Overview and Setting Expectations

*Becky Gunter, Director, Seminole Recreation*

### Strength Based Leadership

*Erin Paige*

Utilizing your Strengths Based Leadership self-assessment, let's discover the three keys to being a more effective leader. You will gain insight as a group and take time to develop strategies to lead with your top strengths in mind.

## BIG PICTURE CONCEPTS

**Wednesday, January 27, 2027 | 7:30am – 7:15pm**

### Developing and Aligning Your Vision

*Becky Gunter*

As you arrive at an executive level leadership position, vision is no longer personal and individual. Everything you have done to this point has been in search of "your" vision. Now, it is about aligning your personal vision for success and legacy building, with the vision of your agency, and within your teams.

### Leadership Ethics

*Jennifer Cirillo, Director, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation*

We will delve into the importance of ethical leadership and how it directly impacts the well-being of our communities and the sustainability of our natural resources. Discover the core principles of ethical leadership and how they apply to the parks and recreation field.

### Executive Level Change Management and Critical Thinking

*Becky Gunter*

The only constant in our world is change. A primary responsibility of a leader is to create change, implement the change, communicate the change and evaluate the change. But leading change can be just as uncomfortable as the change itself. This session will give insight to understanding the role of leadership in change management, and how it requires that you help people BUY IN to your vision. This session will cover Dr. John Kotter's 8-step process to leading change and navigating the often rough waters it brings. Effective change management at the leader level requires the ability to clearly communicate how the future will be different from the past and how those on your team can make the future a reality.

\*Session II content and all speaker bios at [frpa.org/events/2027-abrahams-jones-academy-for-leadership-excellence-](http://frpa.org/events/2027-abrahams-jones-academy-for-leadership-excellence-)

## Planning

*Rick Durr, Director, Seminole Co Parks and Recreation*

Learn how comprehensive planning, asset management, capital improvement planning, and project management work together to support effective parks and recreation operations. Explore how these tools help agencies plan for future needs, manage resources, prioritize investments, and guide projects from planning through execution and completion.

## TOOLS AND CONCEPTS

**Thursday January 28, 2027 | 7:30am – 7:00pm**

### Reflection

*Erin Paige*

### Operational Planning

### Organizational Design and Disciplined

### Execution

*Rick Durr*

*Tommy Scott, Director, Charlotte Co Community Services*

This session will explore the principles of disciplined execution, emphasizing the critical role of mission, vision, and values in strategic planning. We will explore leadership's role to develop processes & standards that build a strong organizational culture. The discussion will focus on how performance measurements should be used to meet your community's needs to maximize organizational impact.

### Project and Program Management

*Rick Durr*

This section will offer an overview regarding effective planning, organization, and completion of projects by effectively managing timelines, resources, budgets, grants, and contracts to achieve desired outcomes while ensuring compliance with funding and regulatory requirements and best practices.

## FINANCE AND WRAP UP

**Friday, January 29, 2027 | 7:30am – 1:00pm**

### Recap of Thursday

### Financial Management for Executives

*Rebecca Schnirman, Director, Financial and Support Services Division, Palm Beach County Parks and Recreation*

In order to ensure the preservation of your parks system, it is necessary to understand the different funding sources available to your agency. This session will review several funding sources such as grants, impact fees, non-profit foundations, public-private partnerships, special revenue funds, ad-valorem, user fees, etc., and explain the limitations/challenges of each. This session will also discuss the timing of budget preparation, major budget item procurement and decision making, and forecasting for the future.

### Interim Assignment Instructions



*Julia Jones Memorial Scholarship Fund*

## 2027 Julia Jones Memorial Scholarship

*For Applicants of the Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership Excellence*

The intent of the Julia Jones Memorial Scholarship is to provide financial assistance to persons wishing to attend the Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership Excellence, a program of the Florida Recreation and Park Association.

Julia Jones served as a parks and recreation professional for over 40 years. She served a number of Florida agencies over the three decades she worked in Florida. Julia retired in 2021 from the City of Cape Girardeau, Missouri, where her historic family home was located. Shortly after her retirement Julia passed away, and a scholarship fund has been created to honor her commitment to creating and establishing the Academy.

### *History of Julia's work on the Academy*

FRPA began work on the concept for a leadership academy to develop future Directors in 1996. Then FRPA President Elect, Julia Jones made this a priority and began conducting research on other state association programs. During her Presidency in 1998 Jones led a work group that was named to develop the concept, curriculum, faculty, etc. In 2008, the first Abrahams Academy was held. Julia, after having spearheaded this initiative for ten years, shared the role of Lead Faculty with Karen Palus. They both served the Academy until 2012 when both left the State of Florida to pursue Director positions in Missouri and Colorado respectively. Julia's passion was assuring that parks and recreation was recognized as an integral part of every community. Her belief was the cornerstone of that effort; developing the professionals who will be stewards of the industry in the future. Her dedication culminated in the creation of the Academy and her desire was that it would continue in perpetuity.

The **Julia Jones Memorial Scholarship** is funded through designated donations to the Florida Recreation and Park Association Foundation.

**APPLICATION AND MORE INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT [frpa.org/scholarships](https://frpa.org/scholarships)**





|                                                 |       |                                         |  |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------------------|--|
|                                                 |       |                                         |  |
| NAME                                            | TITLE | #YEARS IN FIELD                         |  |
| EMPLOYING AGENCY                                |       | #YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION              |  |
| MAILING ADDRESS (MATERIALS WILL BE MAILED HERE) |       | # YEARS SUPERISING STAFF                |  |
| CITY, STATE, ZIP                                |       | PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION/ DESIGNATION |  |

|           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| TELEPHONE | EMAIL |
|-----------|-------|

|                              |
|------------------------------|
| EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME/PHONE |
|------------------------------|

|                                |
|--------------------------------|
| ALLERGIES/DIETARY REQUIREMENTS |
|--------------------------------|

**ATTACH THE FOLLOWING:**  
**CURRENT RESUME** | include education history (high school or college, university, continuing education highlights, etc.), professional or community organizations to which you belong, and leadership positions held, special honors received, etc.

**RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS** (answer questions with no more than 400 words—attach separately)

- What expectations do you have from your attendance at this Academy?
- What do you consider the most pressing issues facing our profession?

**COMMITMENT**

- I understand the purpose of The Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership Excellence, and if I am selected, I will devote the time and resources necessary to complete the program.
- I understand that any pre-reading assignments and attendance at all sessions is mandatory.
- I understand that even though emergencies do arise, any participant missing courses, for whatever reason may be asked to withdraw from the program and no partial credit or refund will be given.
- I have the full support of my employer for the time required to participate.

**SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_



**APPLICANT NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

This is to attest that I serve as the Supervisor of the above named Applicant for the Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership, and that I acknowledge said Applicant has the prerequisite experience and comprehension of the areas below: *(please initial beside each statement to show you attest to Applicant's prerequisite experience in the areas below)*

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | In the content area of Organizational Design – applicant has actively participated in the building of organizational mission/vision/values at some level.                                                                                                                                                           |
|  | In the content area of Leadership – applicant has experience in assessing their own strengths and identifying their weaknesses.                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|  | In the content area of Strategic and Systems Thinking/Strategic and Business Planning/Alignment of Plans with Budget and Vision – applicant has participated in the organization's master/strategic planning process, OR minimally has a division level understanding of setting/implementing goals and objectives. |
|  | In the content area of Strategic and Systems Thinking / Strategic and Business Planning / Alignment of Plans with Budget and Vision – applicant has an understanding of systems thinking and has the ability to see the connections between the differing layers of the organization.                               |
|  | In the content area of Funding and Big Picture Finance – applicant has experience developing and implementing at least a division level operation budget.                                                                                                                                                           |
|  | In the content area of Disciplined Execution – applicant has experience with reporting mechanisms, and has the ability to forecast and plan as well as follow through on specific initiatives.                                                                                                                      |

My signature below also demonstrates my commitment to the Applicant to support their effort to complete the Abrahams-Jones Academy for Leadership Excellence, and to be accessible to them to assist with gathering any information or resources for interim assignments/projects.

|                                             |  |
|---------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Supervisor Name</b>                      |  |
| <b>Supervisor Signature</b>                 |  |
| <b>Supervisor Email</b>                     |  |
| <b>Supervisor Phone</b>                     |  |
| <b>Agency Director Name</b>                 |  |
| <b>Agency Director Signature of Support</b> |  |



Registration includes coursework and training materials for both sessions, meals noted on the schedule, and registration for the 2027 Annual FRPA Conference in Orlando, Florida. Individuals are responsible for their own accommodations for Session II. Silver and Gold Agency Members can register non members at the member rate using this form.

For planning: Hotel for Session II: \$179/night; Rosen Shingle Creek, Orlando, FL; Reservation link TBA

### LODGE ROOM PRICING — LIMITED AVAILABILITY

| FRPA MEMBER |                                 |  |                                           |
|-------------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------------|
|             | \$1,900 (single room Session I) |  | \$1,700 (double occupancy room Session I) |
| NON MEMBER  |                                 |  |                                           |
|             | \$2,000 (single room Session I) |  | \$1,800 (double occupancy room Session I) |

### STANDALONE CABIN PRICING — LIMITED AVAILABILITY

| FRPA MEMBER |                                  |  |                                            |
|-------------|----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------------|
|             | \$1,975 (single CABIN Session I) |  | \$1,775 (double occupancy CABIN Session I) |
| NON MEMBER  |                                  |  |                                            |
|             | \$2,075 (single CABIN Session I) |  | \$1,875 (double occupancy CABIN Session I) |

### PAYMENT INFORMATION

|                                                                                                                               |          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| TOTAL AMOUNT PAID:                                                                                                            | CHECK #: |
| CREDIT CARD: CREDIT CARD NUMBER MUST BE CALLED INTO FRPA OFFICE AT 850-878-3221 (DO NOT PLACE CREDIT CARD NUMBER ON THE FORM) |          |
| NAME ON CARD:                                                                                                                 |          |
| SIGNATURE ON CARD:                                                                                                            |          |
| BILLING ADDRESS:                                                                                                              |          |

**RETURN COMPLETED REGISTRATION AND APPLICATION TO ELEANOR@FRPA.ORG BY DECEMBER 18, 2026**

**Registration Policy** | Should a candidate not be able to attend Session II of the 2027 class, a fee of \$200 will be charged to continue their registration to Session II 2028 (this will not include attending Session I 2028). Should you require dietary needs that incur additional cost to FRPA, you will be responsible for additional charges. **Cancellation Policy** | All refund requests must be made in writing. Full refunds will be made for requests received prior to the registration cutoff date. Requests received between the cutoff date and three weeks prior to the workshop date will be eligible for a 50% refund. No refunds will be available for requests made within two weeks of the Academy or after the Academy occurs. Refunds will not be available for weather-related cancellation. **Other Policies** | The Florida Recreation and Park Association recognizes the diversity that exists within our profession, our membership, and those attending FRPA events. As a participant, we want you to enjoy your time at this event. We ask that you join us in encouraging and maintaining the highest professional standards possible at all functions within this event. Attendees, presenters, vendors, and staff at FRPA events are expected to always conduct themselves in a courteous, professional, and respectful manner. Attendees are required to abstain from behavior that reflects poorly on their agency, the Florida Recreation and Park Association, and the membership. Such conduct includes, but is not limited to, actions disrupting the businesslike atmosphere, harassment, discrimination, inappropriate language, failing to comply with all local, state, and federal laws, and activities that endanger self and others. While we do not anticipate these challenges, we do want to be transparent regarding our commitment to assuring a safe and enjoyable environment for all event participants and let you know that misconduct will be addressed with you individually and/or with your employer. Attendees, presenters, vendors, and staff who do not comply with this code of conduct at any event may be removed from said event and barred from attending all future FRPA sponsored or co-sponsored events. By registering for this event/activity/workshop, I give permission and consent to allow photographs and video to be taken during activities sponsored by the Florida Recreation and Park Association (FRPA). I further give permission and consent that any such media may be published and used by FRPA and its agents, to illustrate and promote the association and its programs. I understand that it is my responsibility to communicate with FRPA if I do not wish to be photographed or videoed.