

# ATCO Leadership Program

Driving Leadership Excellence and Interpersonal Impact

**COLLABORATION PROGRAM**



# Introduction

ATCO is a diversified global corporation (headquartered in Alberta, Canada with operations in Canada, United States, Mexico, Australia, and Europe), recognized for its extensive portfolio of businesses in energy, utilities, and structures. Spanning electricity generation, natural gas transmission and distribution, infrastructure development, and temporary workforce housing, ATCO operates in dynamic sectors that are prone to regulatory shifts, market competition, and technological innovations. As the organization continues to diversify and expand its footprint—both geographically and across multiple business lines—its leaders regularly face complex challenges involving cross-functional

collaboration, market changes, and the pressure to adapt to evolving customer and community expectations.

ATCO has a long-standing relationship with Ivey Executive Education, including a very successful custom program from 2008 to 2017 called the ATCO Strategic Leadership Program. Over nearly a decade, Ivey delivered close to 40 offerings of that intensive, three-day program for multiple cohorts each year. In 2017, ATCO chose to pause this longstanding initiative while it revisited its leadership competencies and explored how best to align new organizational needs with ongoing leadership development.

Though further disruption arrived with COVID-19, ATCO's commitment to growing strategic and interpersonal capabilities did not wane. Recently, the company worked with Ivey once again to create an updated, customized version of the program that reflects their refreshed leadership profile and evolving industry context and ensures alignment and cascading with the leadership development programs offered to leaders outside of the Director level. The result is the **ATCO Leadership Program**—an immersive, 4 day learning journey that integrates proven Ivey methodologies with ATCO's cultural priorities, business goals, and complexity of leadership demands.





# The Challenge

After delivering a long-running custom program from 2008 to 2017 and subsequently sending some leaders to Ivey's open programs, ATCO recognized it was time to reestablish a robust in-house leadership solution—one that would align with its refreshed leadership profile, align with the leadership development programs offered to leaders outside of the Director level and address its evolving business challenges. The organization's two main priorities for leadership development have been:

1. **Leading Individuals and Teams for Exceptional Performance** – ensuring leaders inspire and guide their teams toward high-impact and innovative results.
2. **Practicing Interpersonal Leadership** – strengthening negotiation skills, communication, emotional intelligence, inclusivity and cross-functional collaboration.

They saw a growing need to align leaders on fundamentals such as change management, negotiation, performance management, and driving results, while sustaining a people-first culture.



“We had a recognized development gap: a lot of our leaders came up through the ranks based on technical expertise. We needed something that would help them think more strategically and expand their leadership skills. It was recognized at all levels—that we needed to invest in a more holistic leadership approach, which was endorsed by our executive team.”

**ERIN JACKSON**

Senior Manager, Human Resources at ATCO

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We embed ATCO's leadership profile and values into the sessions, so it is a program tailored to them"

**ANN FROST**

Ivey Business School

# The L&D Initiative: Program Origin and Customization

Historically, ATCO executives and managers participated both in Ivey's open enrollment offerings and in a dedicated custom program—called the ATCO Strategic Leadership Program—that ran successfully for a decade. Starting in 2008, Ivey delivered this three-day custom initiative multiple times per year, ultimately reaching close to 40 cohorts by 2017. After ATCO decided to refresh its leadership profile in 2017, the program was put on hold, and subsequent organizational changes—plus the onset of COVID-19—led to further delays.

During this gap period, ATCO continued sending leaders to open-enrollment experiences but ultimately wanted a program that mirrored the scale and impact of its previous custom offerings.

Ivey faculty members Ann Frost and Gerard Seijts co-designed a new iteration—the **ATCO Leadership Program**—to incorporate fresh ATCO competencies, address post-COVID realities, and integrate current business challenges.



# THE PROGRAM WAS DESIGNED BY WEAVING IN THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS:

## KEY ATCO LEADERSHIP EXPECTATIONS AND VALUES:

Incorporated into each module, ensuring the content felt familiar and relevant to ATCO leaders and aligned with the company's leadership profile.

## FOCUS ON NEGOTIATION AND LEADING CHANGE:

Recognizing ATCO's business transformation, the program emphasized cross-silo collaboration and agility in a rapidly evolving energy market.

## INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC CONTEXT:

Emerging energy markets, tariffs, and new regulations served as discussion prompts for strategic thinking, problem-solving, and relevant roleplays.

## STRUCTURED LEARNING SUSTAINMENT:

Each cohort reconvenes four months post-program via Zoom for sharing successes, challenges, and continued accountability.

*"We tell them, 'We'll see you in four months—prepare to discuss what you've applied.' That accountability really matters."*

**ANN FROST**  
Ivey Business School





## PARTICIPANT SELECTION AND COHORT STRUCTURE

Each ATCO Leadership Program cohort typically includes 25–30 participants who hold director roles within the organization in Canada, United States, and Mexico. This structured selection ensures alignment with the program's objectives and the peer-group discussions remain at a comparable leadership level. The organization now runs multiple cohorts, bolstering a “cohort effect” which helps break silos and unify leadership expectations across ATCO.





## PROGRAM FORMAT AND TOPICS

Delivered in a four-day intensive model—complemented by follow-up sessions—each cohort examines cases, exercises, and simulations designed to strengthen leadership effectiveness and interpersonal influence. Sample modules include:

**TAKING  
OWNERSHIP OF  
YOUR CAREER**

**PERSONAL  
LEADERSHIP &  
INFLUENCE**  
(with an integrative  
negotiation  
exercise)

**WORKING  
IN HIGH-  
PERFORMING  
TEAMS**  
(Everest  
simulation)

**LEADING  
CHANGE AND  
MANAGING  
CONFLICT**  
(Mitch Landrieu  
and Ron Ventura at  
Mitchell Memorial  
Hospital)

**FOSTERING  
COLLABORATION  
VIA MULTI-PARTY  
NEGOTIATION**  
(Harborco  
simulation)

**CHARACTER  
AND  
EXCEPTIONAL  
LEADERSHIP**  
(Invictus video  
case)

These topics emphasize *learning by doing*. Participants engage in roleplay scenarios to refine both negotiation skills and leadership character. On post-program surveys, participants note that although they can be initially nervous about roleplays, they ultimately discover a deeper appreciation for collaborative exercises and practical skill building.

## ONGOING REINFORCEMENT

Post-program learning sustainment is a key hallmark. More recently, in addition to a four-month reconvene session led by faculty, ATCO supports continued development through **leadership pods** or small groups that encourage accountability and practical application of the lessons. According to ATCO's team, these pods intend to meet monthly to discuss real-time leadership challenges, share new insights, and keep momentum going between formal modules.

# The Impact

To capture the effect on individual leaders and the broader organization, Ivey conducted an impact evaluation survey of ATCO Leadership Program alumni. With a 31.48% overall response rate, the results indicated the following:

## Applying Program Learnings:

100% of respondents agreed they were successfully applying what they learned to some degree, with a mean rating of 5.8 (out of 7) on "I am successfully applying what I learned."

## Program Value:

The program was widely seen as a worthwhile use of time (average 6.4 out of 7). Notably, 93.3% reported feeling more confident in their leadership role since completing the program.

## Negotiation & Communication Gains:

Many cited the multi-party negotiation exercises (Harborco) and case discussions as valuable frameworks for difficult conversations and cross-functional projects back on the job.

## Leadership Language & Networking:

ATCO stakeholders confirm that with multiple cohorts completing the program, there is now a common leadership vocabulary across teams. "It leads to a 'cohort effect,'" Ann Frost explains, "that helps break silos and unify leadership expectations."

## Anticipated Future Improvements:

Participants also expect further positive outcomes, with 93.3% predicting ongoing leadership growth. Respondents mentioned improved comfort in managing conflict, delivering feedback, and fostering employee engagement.

"The negotiation activity provided me with a framework ... I have shared the importance of communication and promoting open discussion within my department."

**ATCO LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANT**

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# ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES

## ► COMMON LEADERSHIP APPROACH:

Having multiple cohorts attend fosters a shared leadership language and a unified skill set, creating more cohesive collaboration across different lines of business.

## ► ENHANCED COACHING CULTURE:

Managers who completed the program report being more proactive in coaching their teams and holding challenging conversations.

## ► ACTION ON REAL BUSINESS CHALLENGES:

Exercises such as Everest, Harborco, and integrative negotiation equip participants with practical tools to solve real-time issues—especially relevant in ATCO's evolving energy sector.





# Conclusion

The ATCO Leadership Program exemplifies how an organization can refresh and deepen a longstanding engagement with their trusted leadership development providers into a high-impact, custom initiative. Building on the success of a previous 10-year program—and later supplemented by open-enrollment offerings—ATCO recognized the need to align its evolving competencies and industry context with a newly refined, in-house solution.

The outcomes speak for themselves: nearly all participants reported immediate application of their new skills, and post-program data shows heightened confidence, stronger negotiation ability, and shared leadership language. These program successes highlight the value of building on an existing relationship and an open-enrollment foundation to create a tailored solution that fosters leadership excellence for both the individual and the broader organization.

By championing high-caliber learning and development—and following through with post-program sustainment—ATCO sets a powerful example of how to nurture future-ready leaders capable of exceptional performance and interpersonal leadership.



“ATCO has recognized the importance of equipping our leaders with strategic, interpersonal, and change-management skills. Partnering with Ivey in this customized way

helps us meet our leadership goals while staying rooted in our unique business realities.”

**TANYA CAKE**

**Lead, Organizational Programming**  
ATCO

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