CU Leadership Thrive Circles

Guide for Facilitators

CU Thrive: Center for Workplace Well-being Research
Anschutz

Centers for Health, Work & Environment
colorado school of public health

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Quick Start Guide

Section 1

Quick Start Guide

Your Role

- Coordinate meeting logistics
- Facilitate group discussions
- Track and submit attendance
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The CU Leadership Thrive Circles Program is a six-month, peer-based program for CU School of Medicine leaders, grounded in evidence-based practices that support well-being and reduce burnout. The program aims to create supportive leadership development that influences individual and team well-being in healthcare settings.

During the program period, participants complete six self-paced learning lessons with corresponding challenge activities, followed by an in-person peer session focused on discussion and shared learning. Facilitators lead the in-person sessions with small groups of up to eight participants and are responsible for coordinating logistics and guiding the conversation.

Prior to the program launch, facilitators complete one brief virtual orientation session. Facilitators are also expected to complete the monthly learning lessons and challenges alongside their Thrive Circle peers. After the program concludes, facilitators will participate in a short post-program interview with researchers to learn how the program went.

Administrative Links

Website

- coming soon

Login & Navigation

- coming soon

Post meeting attendance survey

- coming soon

Who to Contact for Help

Program Logistic Support

Amy Schamberg, EdS
DrPH Candididate & Student Research Assistant
Centers for Health, Work & Environment
Colorado School of Public Health
Amy.Schamberg@cuanschutz.edu

Program Research Leads

Natalie Schwatka, PhD MS
Associate Professor & Certificate in Total Worker Health Program Director
Centers for Health, Work & Environment
Colorado School of Public Health
Natalie.Schwatka@cuanschutz.edu

Lotte Dyrbye MD MPHE
Executive Director, CU THRIVE: Center for Workplace Well-being Research | Senior Associate Dean for Faculty Well-being Professor
Chief Wellbeing Officer
Liselotte.Dyrbye@cuanschutz.edu

Section 2

Facilitator Essentials

Section 2

Facilitator Essentials

Core Responsibilities

As the primary point of contact for your group, you'll handle the practical details for each session, with the research team available to support you as needed (contact information is on page 4). Let's walk through some important logistical information.

Scheduling & Documenting Meetings

- Facilitators coordinate with their group to determine when to meet, based on shared availability and group preferences. Meetings should take place in the second half of the month to provide time for lessons and challenges.
- To gather availability, facilitators may use tools such as When2Meet, Doodle, or Outlook's Scheduling Poll to identify meeting times that work best for the group.
- We recommend scheduling the first three meetings early on, though some groups may prefer to schedule all six upfront.
- Groups may choose to meet over coffee or meals at a venue of their choice. The Common Good restaurant inside The Benson Hotel is a convenient nearby option. Wherever you meet, please plan ahead and make a reservation when possible.
- Please take note of attendance during the meetings.
- After the meetings, complete an online survey to enter attendance.

Meal Reimbursement

One meal per person per month may be reimbursed during the six-month program period.

One person per group will be responsible for purchasing the meals for the group and seeking reimbursement. This person can be the facilitator or another member of the group.

Please see the meal reimbursement guidelines and procedures on the following page.

Meal Reimbursement Procedure

During the Meal:

- The person purchasing the meals should put it on their **university procurement card**.
- Do not tip more than 20% of the pre-tax food and beverage total. Tips must be documented on the receipt.
- Obtain an itemized receipt (not just a credit card slip) showing food and beverage items that does NOT include alcohol.
  - Alcohol is not reimbursable. If purchased, it must be placed on a separate bill.
- Record the final attendee names and affiliations.

After the Meal:

If meal was placed on a PCard:

- Reconcile the PCard transaction in the Concur Travel & Expense system within the required timeframe (typically within 30 days of the statement date).
- Attach all required documentation:
  - Itemized receipt,
  - Attendee list with names and affiliations
  - A clear statement of the business purpose "To participate in the CU Thrive Leadership Circles peer group meeting"
  - Official function form
    - This will need to be attached to your Concur report every time to submit for reimbursement for this programs meals, but you only need to obtain signatures once.
- Enter Official Function details directly in Concur, including event type, date, location, and attendee count.
- Charge the expense to this SpeedType - XXXXXX.
- Submit the expense report for approval routing through Concur.

If meal was placed on a personal card:

- Submit the following to Jennifer.foxcroft@cuanschutz.edu with the subject line "CU Leadership Thrive Circles Meal Reimbursement"
  - Itemized receipt
  - Attendee list with names and affiliations
  - A clear statement of the business purpose "To participate in the CU Thrive Leadership Circles peer group meeting"
  - Official function form: This will need to be attached to your Concur report every time to submit for reimbursement for this programs, but you only need to obtain signatures once.

Tips for Being an Effective Small-Group Facilitator

Set the Tone

- Establish a welcoming, inclusive environment from the start. Clarify goals, expectations, and norms.
- Reinforce that confidentiality is expected so participants can speak honestly.
- Create psychological safety by modeling openness and curiosity.
- Use language that is inclusive, expansive, and neutral.

Guide, Don't Dominate

- Ask thoughtful, open-ended questions rather than giving answers.
- Encourage participants to respond to one another, not just to you.
- Allow silence—give people time to think.

Promote Equitable Participation

- Invite quieter voices without putting them on the spot. "Would anyone who hasn't spoken yet like to add something?"
- Gently limit those who over-talk by summarizing and redirecting.
- Use round-robins, pair-shares, or structured prompts when needed.

Listen Actively

- Demonstrate attentive listening—reflect, paraphrase, validate.
- Notice verbal and non-verbal cues; adjust pace or energy accordingly.
- Acknowledge emotions and experiences without judgment.
- Summarize periodically to reinforce shared understanding.
- Ask open-ended questions.

Keep the Group on Track

- Start and end on time.
- Refocus the conversation when it drifts by returning to goals or key questions.
- Summarize periodically to reinforce shared understanding.

Foster Connection & Collaboration

- Encourage participants to build on each other's insights.
- Highlight common themes, shared challenges, and collective wins.
- Normalize differing opinions and help the group find forward momentum.

Handle Challenges Gracefully

- Address conflict with curiosity: “Say more about that…”
- De-escalate tension by validating perspectives and returning to shared purpose.
- If misinformation arises, correct gently and respectfully.

Be Flexible

- Adapt your plan based on group dynamics and engagement level.
- Shift between whole-group, pair, or small-team activities as needed.
- Embrace emergent questions or insights—they often add richness.

Close with Intention

- Summarize key takeaways and points of agreement.
- Invite final reflections or commitments to action.
- End on an appreciative, encouraging note.

Section 3

Session Plans

Section 3

Session Plans

Thrive Circle Agenda

As a facilitator, youare responsible for guiding the group experience during each session. The general flow of the sessions follows the Thrive Circle Agenda below. The following pages contain specific session topics and outlines.

Thrive Circle Agenda: Overview

Step	Description
1. Welcome & Expectations (5 minutes)	Emphasize confidentiality and openness.
2. Topic Introduction (3-5 minutes)	The topic will be provided (see following pages).
3. Topic Discussion (15-20 minutes)	Encourage equal participation. See tips for being an effective facilitator.
4. Open Discussion (30-60 minutes)	Encourage relaxed conversation.
5. Wrap Up & Next Steps (5 minutes)	Logistics for next meeting.

Session 1: Connection & Support

WELCOME & EXPECTATIONS

Welcome

- Welcome to our first Thrive Leadership Circle.
- Introduce yourself as the facilitator and thank participants for joining.
- This program has been created to help improve the well-being of CU School of Medicine faculty and staff.
- My job as your facilitator during these meetings is to ensure all voices are heard as we spend time discussing the learning lessons and corresponding challenges.

Introductions

For this session and the sessions ahead, we'll start with a quick round-robin to help us reconnect. Please share your first name and role, the reason you joined, and answer the icebreaker question. (Facilitator: Choose from the list below, or feel free to make up your own!)

- Are you an early bird or night owl?
- For one whole day, would you rather fly or be invisible?
- What do you like best, a beach vacation or a mountain getaway?
- Coffee or tea?
- For an entire week, would you rather give up your phone or your computer?
- What's a topic you could give a TED Talk on with zero preparation?

Group Norms & Confidentiality

Confidentiality:

- Before we continue, a quick reminder that this is a confidential space. What's shared here stays here, and sharing is always optional.

Shared Agreements:

- Let's spend a few minutes establishing norms and agreements for our time together.

SESSION 1 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 1: Connection & Support (continued)

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Briefly introduce the discussion topic.

Sample/Optional Script:

"Today's topic is purpose, and it centers on connection. Burnout isn't just about workload it's also about culture. How we show up for one another, and how connected and supported we feel in the workplace relates to our risk of burnout. So, we'll reflect on how supported the people we lead feel, as well as where we personally experience connection, because leadership and social support are built through relationships."

Review the prework and challenge:

- We read: Burnout at Work Isn't Just About Exhaustion. It's Also About Loneliness.
- We listened to: AI Quick Summary of Mayo Leadership Index research
- We listened to: A Podcast Interview with Dr. Lotte Dyrbye
- We challenged ourselves to:
    1- Check in with a direct report about connection and support.
    2- Reflect on our own sources of connection and support.

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Invite participants to reflect on what stood out from the lesson or materials, and to share any insights or experiences from the challenge.

Read the following prompts, then guide the group to pick one to discuss.

1. When you think about your own experience of demanding work periods, have you noticed a connection between exhaustion and feeling disconnected from others? What did that look like for you?
2. In the past, what has helped you build connection and social support among your team?
3. During the challenge:
    - What did you discover about your own sources of support—or lack of them?
    - What did you learn about whether your direct report feels connected and supported?
    - How can we recognize when someone on our team might be experiencing loneliness? What signals could we watch for? What's one thing you want to carry forward into the specific leadership challenges ahead?

SESSION 1 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 1: Connection & Support (continued)

OPEN DISCUSSION

Help the group transition to an open discussion.

Sample/Optional Script:

"At this point, we'll shift into open conversation. You're welcome to build on what we've discussed or bring in whatever feels most important to talk about right now."

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

- Review with the group: date, time, and location for the next meeting.
- Remember to enter attendance in Qualtrics.
- Submit for meal reimbursement.

Session 2: Empowerment

WELCOME & EXPECTATIONS

Welcome & Reminders

- Welcome back to our Thrive Leadership Circle. Thank you for making the time to be here.
- As a reminder, this program is designed to support the health and well-being of CU School of Medicine faculty and staff through shared learning, reflection, and connection.
- My role as facilitator is to help guide the conversation and create space for balanced participation, so that all voices have the opportunity to be heard as we reflect on the learning lesson and this month's challenge.
- I also want to briefly revisit confidentiality. This remains a confidential space—sharing is always optional, and we ask that what's shared in the Circle stays here, so everyone feels safe participating honestly and openly.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Month 2: Empowerment

Briefly introduce the discussion topic and challenge.

<u>Sample/Optional Script:</u>

"This month's topic is using empowerment to support sustainable performance. Our challenge invited us to look at where small shifts in how we lead can create conditions for both quality outcomes and well-being."

Review the prework and challenge:

- We read: Creating Sustainable Performance
- We listened to: AI podcast audio of Creating Sustainable Performance
- We listened to: A Podcast Interview with Dr. Jennifer Reese
- We challenged ourselves to:
    - Identify a quality-relevant process, then
    - Implement four organizational mechanisms that create thriving: providing decision-making discretion, sharing information, minimizing incivility, and offering performance feedback.

SESSION 2 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 2: Empowerment (continued)

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Invite participants to reflect on what stood out from the lesson or materials, and to share any insights or experiences from the challenge.

Read the following prompts, then guide the group to pick one to discuss.

1. What has helped you empower your teams in the past? Which strategies work best?
2. Share a story with the group about a time you got empowerment right, and about a time it went sideways. How do you balance giving people autonomy with holding them accountable? What structures (e.g., feedback, check-ins, guardrails) make this work well?
3. Where on your team do people currently have too little — or too much — discretion? What would "the right amount" of decision-making authority look like?
4. What information did people need that they didn't have? How did sharing it change their engagement?
    a. Where did you feel the urge to take control back? What triggered that?
    b. How did feedback mechanisms affect people's sense of ownership and focus?
    c. What happened to the interpersonal climate during this challenge? Did civility improve or decline?

OPEN DISCUSSION

Help the group transition to an open discussion.

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

- Review with the group: date, time, and location for the next meeting.
- Remember to enter attendance in Qualtrics.
- Submit for meal reimbursement.

Session 3: Respect & Dignity

WELCOME & EXPECTATIONS

Welcome & Reminders

- Welcome everyone back to the Thrive Leadership Circle and thank them for being here.
- Reminder of purpose: This program is designed to support well-being through shared learning, reflection, and connection.
- Reminder of your role: My role is to help guide the conversation and ensure balanced participation.
- Confidentiality Statement: As always, this is a confidential space—sharing is optional, and what's shared here stays here so everyone can participate openly.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Month 3: Respect and Dignity

Briefly introduce the discussion topic and challenge.

Sample/Optional Script:

"This month's focus is respect and dignity—how everyday leadership behaviors signal who belongs and who is valued. Consistent respect shapes professional identity, strengthens engagement, and influences how teams treat one another and the people they serve."

Review the prework and challenge:

- We read: Do Your Employees Feel Respected
- We listened to: AI podcast audio of Do Your Employees Feel Respected
- We listened to: A Podcast Interview with Dr. Naresh Mandava
- We challenged ourselves to intentionally practice two visible respect behaviors:
  - One that reinforces baseline dignity for all team members, and
  - One that supports someone's professional identity or growth.

SESSION 3 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 3: Respect & Dignity (continued)

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Invite participants to reflect on what stood out from the lesson or materials, and to share any insights or experiences from the challenge.

Read the following prompts, then guide the group to pick one to discuss.

1. What do you do that shows respect? What are 2–3 concrete things you regularly do that signal dignity and respect to your direct reports?
2. What might you be missing? Because of your role or seniority, what forms of disrespect might you not see day-to-day? How could you find out?
3. How do you build people up? Can you think of a moment when someone treated you as capable and it changed how you saw yourself? How have you used that experience in how you model respect for others.
4. What are you modeling? If your team copied how you treat others, what would spread — and what would you want to be more intentional about?

OPEN DISCUSSION

Help the group transition to an open discussion.

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

- Review with the group: date, time, and location for the next meeting.
- Remember to enter attendance in Qualtrics.
- Submit for meal reimbursement.

Session 4: Coaching

WELCOME & EXPECTATIONS

Welcome & Reminders

- Welcome everyone back to the Thrive Leadership Circle and thank them for being here.
- Reminder of purpose: This program is designed to support well-being through shared learning, reflection, and connection.
- Reminder of your role: My role is to help guide the conversation and ensure balanced participation.
- Confidentiality Statement: As always, this is a confidential space—sharing is optional, and what's shared here stays here so everyone can participate openly.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Month 4: Coaching

Briefly introduce the discussion topic and challenge.

Sample/Optional Script:

"This month's topic is using professional coaching to support well-being and job engagement. The lesson and challenge focused on core coaching practices—how you show up as a leader, when coaching is helpful (and when it's not), and skills like active listening, motivational interviewing, and appreciative inquiry."

Review the prework and challenge:

- We read: The Leader as Coach
- We listened to: AI podcast audio of The Leader as Coach
- We listened to: A Podcast Interview with Dr. Brian Kavanagh
- We challenged ourselves to practice coaching in at least three real leadership moments:
  - Using coaching fundamentals in one interaction, and
  - Using the GROW model in a second interaction.
  - Model the coaching mindset publicly.

SESSION 4 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 4: Coaching (continued)

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Invite participants to reflect on what stood out from the lesson or materials, and to share any insights or experiences from the challenge.

Read the following prompts, then guide the group to pick one to discuss.

1. How have you coached someone recently? Share one real example of a coaching conversation you had with a direct report.
2. What strategies have you deployed to have productive coaching conversations?
3. How do you think about mentoring vs. coaching?
4. Describe a time you resisted giving the answer and instead helped the person find their own path. How did you support — not solve?
5. What changed because of the coaching? What was different for the person (or the team) after your coaching conversation?

OPEN DISCUSSION

Help the group transition to an open discussion.

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

- Review with the group: date, time, and location for the next meeting.
- Remember to enter attendance in Qualtrics.
- Submit for meal reimbursement.

Session 5: Recognition

WELCOME & EXPECTATIONS

Welcome & Reminders

- Welcome everyone back to the Thrive Leadership Circle and thank them for being here.
- Reminder of purpose: This program is designed to support well-being through shared learning, reflection, and connection.
- Reminder of your role: My role is to help guide the conversation and ensure balanced participation.
- Confidentiality Statement: As always, this is a confidential space—sharing is optional, and what's shared here stays here so everyone can participate openly.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Month 5: Recognition

Briefly introduce the discussion topic and challenge.

Sample/Optional Script:

"This month's topic is on using reflective recognition to help people feel seen for the work and goals that matter most to them, and not just what leaders happen to notice. The challenge asked us to slow down and listen before recognizing."

Review the prework and challenge:

- We read: A Better Way to Recognize Your Employees
- We listened to: AI podcast audio of A Better Way to Recognize Your Employees
- We listened to: A Podcast Interview with Dr. Heide Ford
- We challenged ourselves to intentionally practice reflective recognition in at least three real leadership interactions, using three techniques:
  - Invite them to share;
  - Probe positively; and
  - Reflect back.

SESSION 5 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 5: Recognition (continued)

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Invite participants to reflect on what stood out from the lesson or materials, and to share any insights or experiences from the challenge.

Read the following prompts, then guide the group to pick one to discuss.

1. When did you slow down to listen? Share a moment this month when you paused to understand what mattered most to someone before recognizing them.
2. What did you learn that you didn't already know? What surprised you about their work, priorities, or goals after listening more deeply?
3. How did your recognition change? How was your recognition different because you listened first?
4. What impact did it have? What did you notice in the person (or the team) after you used this more reflective approach?

OPEN DISCUSSION

Help the group transition to an open discussion.

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

- Review with the group: date, time, and location for the next meeting.
- Remember to enter attendance in Qualtrics.
- Submit for meal reimbursement.

Session 6: Communciation about Change

WELCOME & EXPECTATIONS

Welcome & Reminders

- Welcome everyone back to the Thrive Leadership Circle and thank them for being here.
- Reminder of purpose: This program is designed to support well-being through shared learning, reflection, and connection.
- Reminder of your role: My role is to help guide the conversation and ensure balanced participation.
- Confidentiality Statement: As always, this is a confidential space—sharing is optional, and what's shared here stays here so everyone can participate openly.

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Month 6: Communication about Change

Briefly introduce the discussion topic and challenge.

Sample/Optional Script:

"This month's topic is communication about change. Research shows that almost one-third of employees don't understand why organizational changes are happening. When people don't understand the reasoning behind change, it creates resistance—and employee resistance is a leading factor in why change initiatives fail. Our challenge was to communicate about an upcoming or ongoing change using four specific guidelines."

Review the prework and challenge:

- We read: Don't Just Tell Employees Organizational Changes Are Coming- Explain Why
- We listened to: AI podcast audio of Don't Just Tell Employees Organizational Changes Are Coming- Explain Why
- We listened to: A Podcast Interview with Dr. Vineet Chopra
- We challenged ourselves to communicate about an upcoming or ongoing change using four elements:
  - Inspire with a compelling vision,
  - Inform with regular, honest communication,
  - Empower leaders and managers, and
  - Engage employees in the process.

SESSION 6 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Session 6: Communication about Change (continued)

TOPIC DISCUSSION

Invite participants to reflect on what stood out from the lesson or materials, and to share any insights or experiences from the challenge.

Read the following prompts, then guide the group to pick one to discuss.

1. How did you explain the "why"? Share a recent change you communicated — what did you say about why it mattered?
2. How did you check for understanding? What did you do to make sure people actually understood the change (questions, follow-ups, small groups, etc.)?
3. How did you address concerns? What worries or resistance did you hear, and how did you respond?
4. What would you do differently next time? Looking back, what worked well in your communication — and what would you improve?

OPEN DISCUSSION

Help the group transition to an open discussion.

WRAP UP & NEXT STEPS

- Review with the group: date, time, and location for the next meeting.
- Remember to enter attendance in Qualtrics.
- Submit for meal reimbursement.

Section 4

Troubleshooting

Section 4

Troubleshooting

Troubleshooting

Even experienced facilitators encounter moments that require flexibility and reassurance. The guidance below is designed to support you in responding thoughtfully while maintaining a safe and constructive group environment.

If this happens....	You might try...
Low attendance or engagement	• Check in individually to understand barriers and adjust meeting time or format if needed. • Normalize quiet participation—engagement can look like listening, not just speaking. • Use a simple, low-stakes prompt to re-open conversation rather than pushing for depth.
Challenging group dynamics	• Revisit shared agreements and model curiosity and respect in your responses. • Gently balance airtime by inviting quieter voices and redirecting dominant ones. • Name patterns neutrally if needed ("Let's pause and hear another perspective.").
Time management problems	• Set clear time expectations at the start and give gentle time reminders. • Use a phone timer for each agenda section. Ask for a volunteer "time keeper". • Use the open discussion portion to park topics that need more time.

TROUBLESHOOTING CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

Sensitive topics	• Acknowledge with empathy and thank the participant for sharing their experience. ("Thank you for trusting the group with that. I'm really sorry that happened.") • Hold space and allow for silence, giving participants time to process difficult emotions and thoughts. ("I want to acknowledge the impact of what you're describing.") • Slow the conversation down and refocus on listening rather than fixing or debating. • Offer to follow up individually or suggest taking a brief pause if needed.
Conflict	• Acknowledge the tension and validate feelings. ("I'm noticing strong reactions, and I hear this is important to you.") • Using active listening, reflect back what you hear to ensure understanding. • Reinforce shared agreements and the purpose of the Circle. • Interrupt and redirect. ("Let's pause for a moment and return to listening with curiosity rather than responding or persuading.") • Encourage participants to use "I" statements (e.g., "I feel..." Rather than "You..") to reduce defensiveness.