

## The Leadership Development Group's Applied Physician Leadership Academy™ In Action: Atlantic Health System

### Organization's Background

Atlantic Health System (AHS), headquartered in Morristown, New Jersey is a not-for-profit private healthcare company that operates hospitals and health care facilities and is one of the leading nonprofit health care systems in New Jersey.

### Objective

To create a strong partnership with its physician leaders to support the organization's strategy and vision for the future.

### What We Accomplished

- 85% of the respondents indicated the overall quality of the program was Very Good or Excellent.
- 92% indicated they now have a better understanding of AHS' strategy and future direction.
- 92% indicated APLA™ increased their ability to work collaboratively with peers (both physician and administrative).
- 92% indicated APLA™ was applicable to educational and leadership development needs and it is likely they will make changes in their leadership behavior/practice.

### The Challenge

With merger and acquisition as the leading growth strategy, AHS aimed to create a strong partnership with its physician leaders to support the organization's strategy and vision for the future.

AHS recognized the benefit of engaging and developing its physician leaders to empower their peers and clinical teams. The health system's administration also realized it needed to facilitate an open dialogue with the physician leaders to enable them to become effective members of the management team. The changes required new alignment strategies between physicians and the hospitals they serve, as well as between the hospitals that make up AHS.

### TLD Group's Solution

As a progressive health system, AHS set a plan in motion to create a tailored on-site physician leadership process, with an initial focus on Division Chairs and Department Heads. AHS, through its partnership with The Leadership Development Group (TLD Group), a recognized leader in physician leadership development, designed and delivered the Applied Physician Leadership Academy (APLA™), a multifaceted physician leadership development program entirely customized to deliver high value and high impact to healthcare and life sciences clients.

The customized physician leadership development model addresses the special leadership challenges facing physician leaders and incorporates best practice adult learning methodology. The program utilizes multiple learning strategies that target and reinforce leadership development including on-the-job stretch assignments, coaching and mentoring, and in classroom/didactic training.

APLA™ targets physician leaders and physicians who have leadership potential, are motivated to grow and learn, have a passion for and are committed to the organization, and are characterized as people-oriented, resilient, tenacious and energetic. With tremendous support and commitment from AHS' senior executives and physician leaders, APLA™ was designed based on the following objectives:

- Strengthen alignment among physician leaders to AHS goals and objectives
- Foster relationships among physician leaders and with the executive team
- Focus on growth opportunities and innovation
- Develop physician leaders to drive the necessary changes through the system and be positioned for success



**“I think the program was excellent and I am thankful to our system leadership for supporting such an important initiative.”**

Medical Director

AHS' customized APLA™ was designed to meet the specific needs and challenges facing AHS. Commitment for APLA™ came from the top and was led by an internal Steering Committee composed of AHS' President, Site Presidents, Physician Champions, and top-level C-Suite executives.

APLA™ was designed to occur over a twelve-month period and began with assessments to identify AHS' unique physician leadership needs and organizational priorities to tailor the program accordingly. The organizational priorities were identified through structured 1:1 interviews with Senior Management and the APLA™ Steering Committee. Leadership competencies were assessed through interviews, the administration of the EQ-i 2.0 to all APLA™ participants, as well as review meetings with senior management. The outcome of the assessments was integral to the development of AHS' customized APLA™.



**“APLA™ demonstrated tangible commitment by organizational leaders.”**

Hospital President

## APLA™ Program Design

The customized, multi-faceted leadership development program included the following components:

### Learning Modules

Driven by the system's unique needs, the APLA™ participants were exposed to group learning through customized case analyses, small group learning exercises, interactive lectures and discussions, and application-based readings delivered in a workshop setting by APLA™ physician faculty and academics. In some cases, the learning exercises were co-led by AHS senior executives. Topics included creating high performing clinical care teams, business fundamentals for physician leaders, enhancing physician performance, as well as emotionally intelligent leadership.

### Coaching & Mentoring

Each physician leader received feedback on their leadership competence, emotional intelligence, and demonstrated effectiveness. Coaching was offered to a select group of physician leaders.

### Action Learning Projects

APLA™ included an Action Learning component, a facilitated experiential learning platform that utilizes application tools to enable teams to identify solutions to problems that provide measurable impact and organizational results. Team action learning projects were identified based on AHS' organizational priorities.

The APLA™ Steering Committee committed to fully support the initiatives and their implementation prior to kicking off the projects with the physician leader participants. Each initiative was sponsored and championed by a member of senior management and physician leader participants chose the project they were most passionate about.



**“Action learning was great learning. The work was important to physician leaders and they demonstrated commitment by making time to meet in between meetings.”**

Medical Director,  
Academic Affairs



**“Great presentations. TLD Group faculty were smart physician leaders who have ‘been there and done that.’ It exceeded my expectations (and my expectations are usually very high).”**

Medical Director, Continuum of Care Department



**“Led to a lot of collegiality. It got physicians working together in the same room (which was rare before). Strengthened physicians’ understanding of each other (different campuses, specialties, etc.).”**

Vice President and CIO

## The Results

APLA™ addressed organizational priorities and leadership development needs simultaneously resulting in the following:

- APLA™ enabled AHS’ physician leaders to develop their leadership prowess in real-time and create solutions addressing many of the system’s most pressing needs.
- The leaders have learned valuable skill sets including how to enhance physician performance in their departments, how to create high performing clinical care teams, how to lead with authenticity, and business fundamentals for physician leaders.
- The program has received very positive feedback based on participant survey results:
  - 85% of the respondents indicated the overall quality of the program was Very Good or Excellent.
  - 92% indicated they now have a better understanding of AHS’ strategy and future direction.
  - 92% indicated APLA™ increased their ability to work collaboratively with peers (both physician and administrative).
  - 92% indicated APLA™ was applicable to educational and leadership development needs and it is likely they will make changes in their leadership behavior/practice.
  - All respondents indicated improved ability to assess problems and develop solutions incorporating appropriate stakeholders.
  - Majority of respondents indicated a useful part of APLA™ was interacting with and learning from peers.

The action learning project teams were made up of 6-8 physician participants representing each hospital within AHS and led by certified action learning coaches for optimal impact. Action learning provides the real-world practice and accountability, skill development and insight that help ensure that the skills learned in the leadership development program are transferred to the workplace. Physician leader participants drew upon their leadership skills while driving tangible results through the action learning process. Initiatives included topics such as improving quality while reducing costs, growing the business, improving patient outcomes, as well as executing on leadership roles.

