

LEADERS IN EQUITABLE EVALUATION AND DIVERSITY EVALUATION FINDINGS BRIEF



THE ANNIE E. CASEY
FOUNDATION

I. OVERVIEW OF THE LEEAD PROGRAM

Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity (LEEAD) is an evaluation training program designed to develop a pipeline of diverse leaders in equitable evaluation who will advance the field of evaluation and improve the life outcomes of children, families and communities. LEEAD is based on the fundamental belief that increasing diversity in the field of research and evaluation improves our knowledge base and makes for better science and social innovation.

LEEAD supports talented researchers in their pursuits of careers in culturally responsive and equitable evaluation through an intensive 10 to 13-month implementation of three essential components:

The core values of LEEAD are equity, diversity, leadership, and excellence. Since the program began in the fall of 2015, 35 Scholars have completed the LEEAD program (15 in Cohort 1 and 20 in Cohort 2).



II. LEEAD EVALUATION APPROACH

The Annie E. Casey Foundation commissioned a process and outcome evaluation of the LEEAD program. The process evaluation was conducted during year one of the program (2016-2017) to learn about implementation of the LEEAD pilot and inform the strengthening of the LEEAD program design. The outcome evaluation was longitudinal, including Cohorts 1 and 2 of the program, and helped ascertain whether LEEAD achieved its goals, objectives, and the following outcomes:

Scholars

- Changes in knowledge and skills in culturally responsive evaluation (CRE) and equitable evaluation
- Application of CREE approach and pursuit of evaluation opportunities and activities
- Expansion of relationships and networks within the evaluation field
- Enhancements in professional paths

Residency Host Sites

- Increased access to diverse evaluation professionals
- Incorporate of CREE into site's work
- Commitment to hiring evaluation professionals from underrepresented racial/ethnic groups

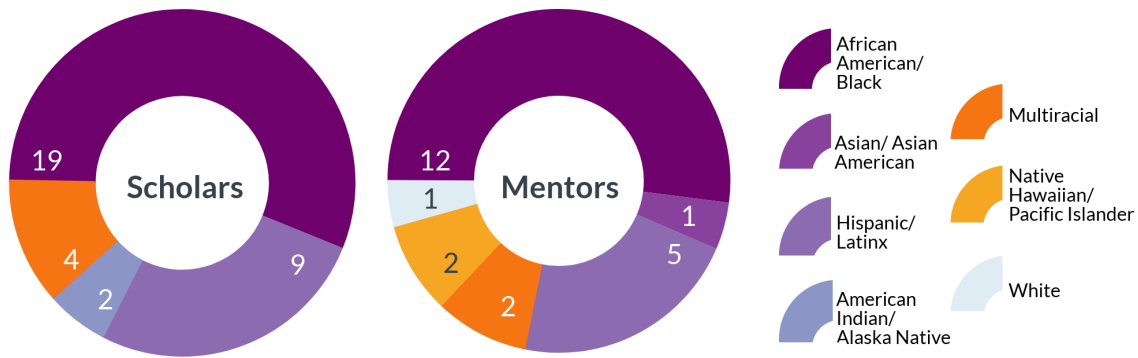
The evaluation of LEEAD involved a mixed-method approach in order to gain a full understanding of the program's implementation and outcomes. All LEEAD Scholars participated in an end-of-program survey ($n = 33$, 94%). Cohort 1 Scholars completed a 12-month follow-up ($n = 11$, 73%) which aimed to assess the intermediate outcomes of LEEAD to empower diverse Scholars to add to the evaluation field; and a 24-month follow-up ($n = 15$, 100%) intended to ascertain sustainability of outcomes of LEEAD Scholars. All of these data points from Cohort 1 at end-of-program, 12-month follow-up, and 24-month follow-up; and from Cohort 2 at the end-of-program are included in the development of this brief.

III. ABOUT THE LEEAD SCHOLARS, MENTORS, AND HOST SITES

The LEEAD Scholars and mentors are advanced degree holders who are racially and ethnically diverse (see figure below) and represent a wide variety of academic backgrounds. Across both cohorts, there were 24 mentors who represented various fields, including anthropology, community health, education, evaluation, family science, psychology, public health, public policy, social justice, and social work.

The program had national reach with all regions of the United States being represented by Scholars, their mentors, and the host sites. The 13 residency host sites in the LEEAD program included 1 nonprofit, 7 large-sized research firms (>50 staff), 3 medium-sized research firms (1-50 staff), and 2 universities. Many host sites contracted with more than a single Scholar, and many contracted with LEEAD Scholars across both cohorts. Host site supervisors were asked to

complete surveys for each LEEAD Scholar following their involvement for Cohort 1 (n=4, 27%) and Cohort 2 (n = 6, 30%). Due to low response rates among site supervisors, any results in this report should be interpreted with caution.

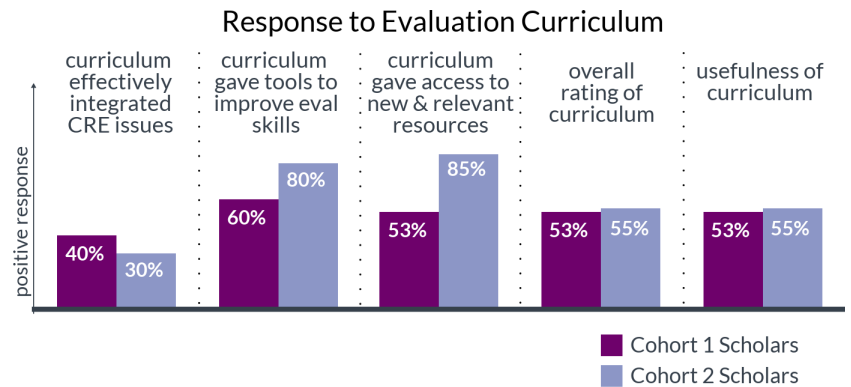


Race/Ethnicity of LEEAD Scholars and Mentors

IV. FINDINGS

ONLINE CURRICULUM MET SOME SCHOLARS' NEEDS

Scholars' experiences with the online curriculum were mixed in terms of the helpfulness of modules and the new knowledge and tools gained. Scholars with more research and/or evaluation experience prior to LEEAD reported that they did not feel appropriately challenged by the course content until taking the higher-level courses. Those Scholars without prior evaluation experience appreciated the foundation provided by the curriculum. The online curriculum experience did expose Scholars to tools and resources that improved their evaluation skills such as data collection through surveys and focus groups, introducing methodological tools supporting meta-evaluation, and materials outlining how to engage stakeholders throughout evaluation process.



SCHOLARS AND MENTOR MATCHED FOR SUCCESS

Matching of mentors and Scholars was found to be most successful when they had similar research/evaluation interests, work settings, and racial/ethnic backgrounds. Time and geographic distance from their mentors were challenges to developing a closer relationship for some Cohort 1 and 2 Scholars.

Across both cohorts, all except 1 Scholar rated the program's mentoring component as moderately or highly valuable to their LEEAD experience. All but 3 mentors from Cohort 1 returned to support Cohort 2

Scholars. Scholars received help from their mentors in a variety of areas, including opportunities for career development and advancement in the evaluation field (90%), navigating the field of evaluation (82%), culturally responsive evaluation (79%), and building a network (76%).

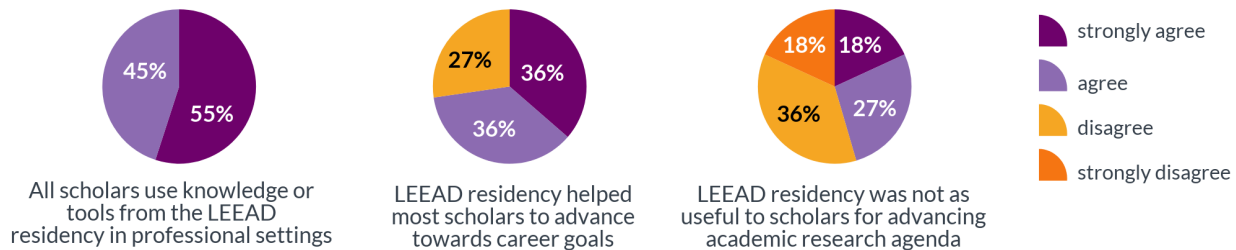
All Scholars except 2 (1 from each Cohort) said they were able to develop close relationships with their mentors. A year after the end of the program, all but three of the Cohort 1 scholars reported a continued strong connection with their respective mentors.

Each of the three Scholars who reported otherwise provided feedback indicating their relationship was good and the mentorship was very helpful during the program, but lost contact in the year following due to geographic distance and busy schedules.

“Having the opportunity to seek out help when I need it most...feeling that I can seek out mentors who have an expertise for additional advice, wisdom, and guidance...feeling that I am not alone in navigating academia or evaluation field as a scholar of color”
- LEEAD scholar

RESIDENCIES OFFER APPLIED EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD

The partnerships with and experiences at residency host sites were positive. All Scholars (except one Cohort 2 Scholar) reported that residencies were a good fit and match for their career goals. The residency experience gave Scholars tools to improve their evaluation skills (88%), provided access to new and relevant resources for their evaluation work (76%), and opportunities to incorporate CRE concepts (76%). At one-year post LEEAD, all of the Cohort 1 Scholars said they use knowledge or tools gained from their LEEAD residency in their current professional settings. Many of the Cohort 1 Scholars (64%) remained in communication with their residency supervisor 12 months after completion of their residency. On their LEEAD residencies, Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 Scholars reported:



Challenges that emerged as themes in the placement process for the Scholars and residency sites included the development of a process to contract with Scholars, the need to shift timelines and/or timing of projects, and lack of project clarity. Host site respondents indicated that Scholars met or exceeded expectations for performance (e.g., quality and timeliness of deliverables, relevant knowledge/ expertise, and communication). Additionally, all respondents from host sites expressed support for future LEEAD involvement.

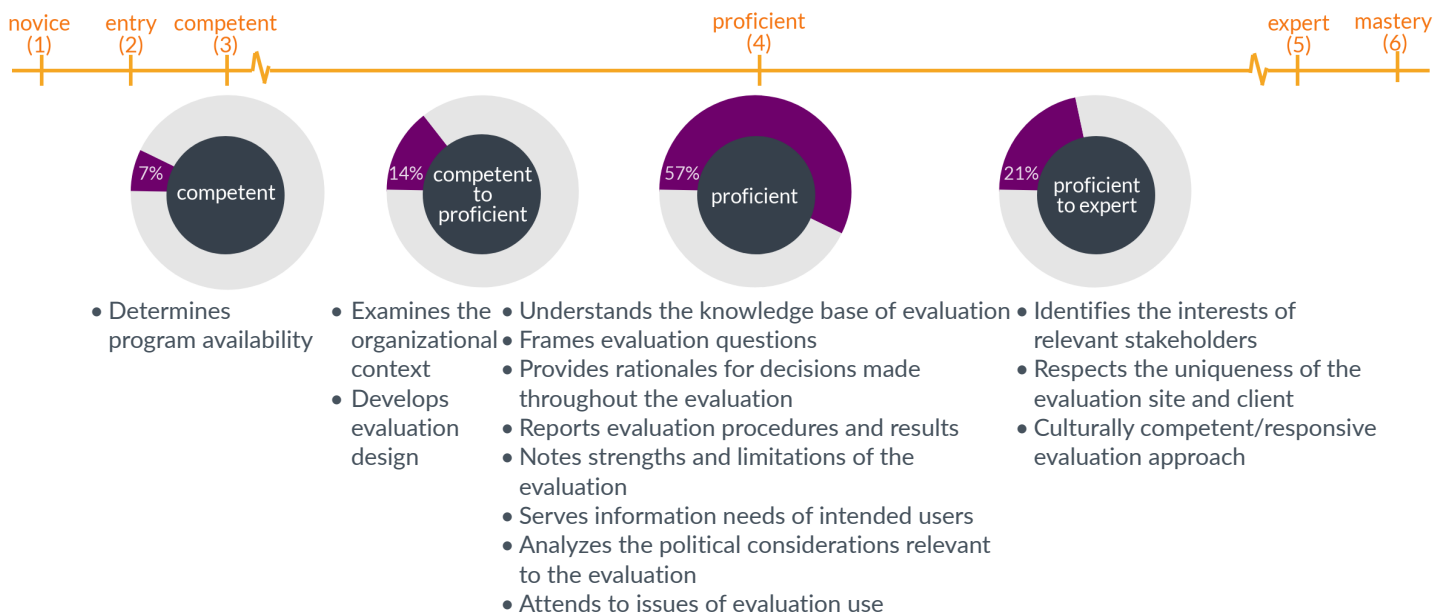
USING NEW KNOWLEDGE GAINED

As a result of their overall participation in LEEAD, both Cohort 1 and 2 Scholars gained new skills in culturally responsive evaluation, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, logic model development, and developing budgets. All Scholars applied these skills in their residency. The majority of residency supervisor respondents (over 80%) felt that the Scholars added to their ability to incorporate culturally responsive evaluation into the project.

At the 12-month follow-up, Cohort 1 Scholars reported their level of competency from "novice" (1) to "mastery" (6) in several categories, as shown in figure below. On average, they identified as being between "competent" (3) and "expert" (5) in all of the categories assessed. The competencies mapped below show that the highest rated competency was "respects the uniqueness of evaluation site and client." The lowest rated competency across the board was for "determining program evaluability" (competent, 3 points on a 6-point scale). That being said, prior to participating in the LEEAD program, the average rating of program evaluability was novice for most Cohort 1 Scholars, seeing an advancement of 2 points.

"[LEEAD has] opened the door for new opportunities in equitable evaluation, increased my evaluation network, and provided evaluation credibility within my company"

- LEEAD scholar

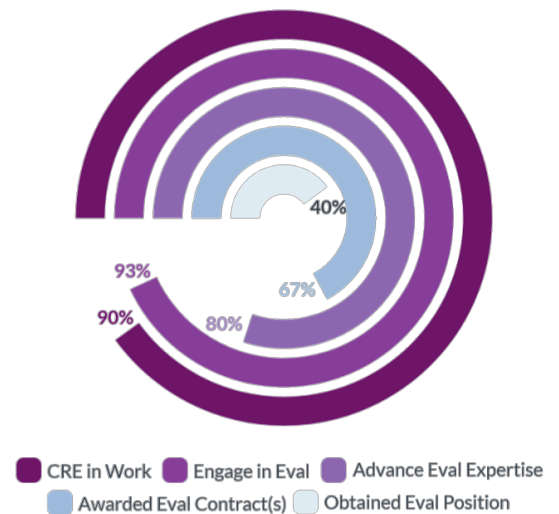


PURSuing EQUITY THROUGH EVALUATION

At the end of the LEEAD Program, Scholars across both cohorts were already pursuing additional evaluation opportunities (70%). The outcomes of the LEEAD Program were sustained well past program completion for Cohort 1 Scholars. In the 2 years following the conclusion of LEEAD, 6 of the 15 Cohort 1 Scholars (40%) had obtained a position in the field of evaluation. Many Cohort 1 Scholars were awarded evaluation-related contracts (67%), and all but one engaged in evaluation as part of their research portfolio (93%).

Almost all Cohort 1 Scholars (90%) were incorporating CRE or other equity-focused frameworks into their work, and 80% were pursuing continued opportunities to advance their expertise related to equity-focused evaluation frameworks. Cohort 1 Scholars have incorporated concepts of CRE into their work in many different ways, including honoring diverse perspectives and voices, increasing others' knowledge of CRE, and incorporating the concepts into research.

LEEAD Outcomes 2-Years Post-Program



LEADERSHIP IN THE FIELD

The LEEAD program expanded Scholars' networks by introducing them to mentors, residency supervisors within various types of evaluation organizations, other Scholars, LEEAD program staff, and other evaluators in the field. The ripple effect of LEEAD is evidenced in the types of collaborations and partnerships and opportunities shared by the Cohort 1 Scholars since their participation in the program concluded.

“LEEAD has sharpened my knowledge, given me a solid network, and helped me see more other potential paths forward my career.”
- LEEAD scholar

All but one of the Cohort 1 Scholars pursued evaluation-related opportunities with mentors, fellow Scholars, colleagues not associated with LEEAD, and/or alone. Some examples of these collaborations include the following:

- Co-authored journal article with residency site.
- Co-authored policy brief with mentor.
- Partnering with mentor to develop workshop and conference proposals.
- Partnering with LEEAD scholars and mentors to develop new evaluation projects.
- Presented symposium at the American Evaluation Association with LEEAD scholars and mentors and collaborating on a publication.

Cohort 1 Scholars who reported successful pursuit of professional opportunities most often did so in collaboration with others affiliated with LEEAD.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The evaluation of LEEAD involved a mixed-method approach in order to understand the program's implementation and outcomes across the first two cohorts. Data were analyzed to examine whether there were changes in evaluation knowledge and skills, application of CRE approaches in evaluation work, expansion of relationships and networks, and impact on pursuing evaluation opportunities.

The evaluation found that Scholar experiences with the curriculum were mixed, those without prior evaluation experience reporting higher satisfaction. Almost all Scholars reported their mentoring experience was valuable. These relationships were helpful in expanding their knowledge of CRE as well as supporting their career advancement, navigating the evaluation field, and building their professional network. Scholars appreciated the opportunities for application of new knowledge and skills gained through their residencies, and residency sites expressed that Scholars added to their ability to incorporate CRE into projects. At 12-month and 24-month follow up, the majority of Cohort 1 Scholars were incorporating CRE into their work and continued to pursue evaluation opportunities, with more than half having secured evaluation contracts.

For many scholars, LEEAD has helped to create pathways to advancing in their careers, raised professional development as an evaluator, and increased visibility for collaboration on evaluation projects. LEEAD Scholars are already adding to the diversity in the field of research and evaluation and improving our knowledge base to make for better science and social innovation.

