

I. OVERVIEW OF THE LEEAD PROGRAM

[Leaders in Equitable Evaluation and Diversity \(LEEAD\)](#) is an evaluation training program that provides a pathway for diverse leaders in [culturally responsive and equitable evaluation \(CREE\)](#) to advance the field by centering equity in their work. LEEAD is based on the belief that increasing diversity in the field of evaluation improves the overall knowledge base and makes for better science and social innovation.

LEEAD supports talented, early and mid-career scholars from racially and ethnically diverse groups who aspire to become leaders in the field of evaluation. The rigorous 15-month training Program develops their evaluation competencies through the following components:



Since LEEAD began in the fall of 2015, [50 Scholars](#) have completed the Program (15 in Cohort 1; 20 in Cohort 2; and 15 in Cohort 3).

II. LEEAD'S EVALUATION APPROACH

Both process and outcome evaluations have been conducted of past cohorts (Cohorts 1 and 2) and used to strengthen the LEEAD Program model. The evaluation of LEEAD involves a mixed-method approach in order to gain a full understanding of the Program's implementation and outcomes. The evaluation of the most recent cohort (Cohort 3) has primarily focused on determining whether LEEAD achieved its goals, objectives, and the following outcomes:

Scholars

- Changes in CREE attitudes, knowledge, and skills
- Application of CREE approach in the pursuit of evaluation opportunities
- Expansion of relationships and networks within the evaluation field
- Enhancement in professional development paths

Mentors

- Quality of relationship with Scholars

Practicum Sites

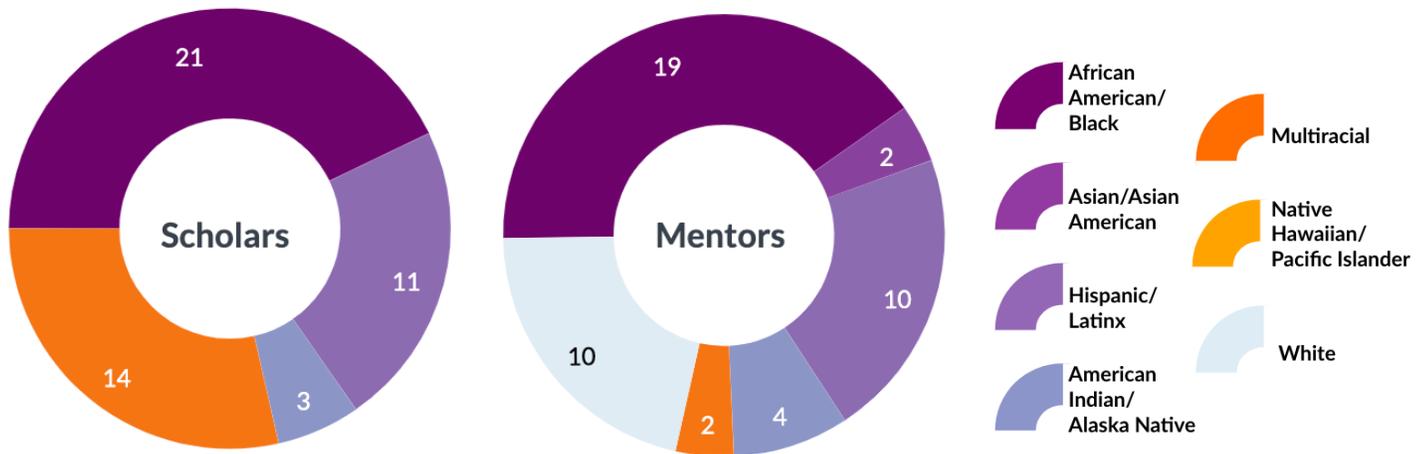
- Increased access to diverse evaluators
- Quality of relationship with Scholars
- Application of CREE into project work

Surveys were administered to all Program participants — [Scholars](#), [Mentors](#), and [Practicum Sites](#) — at the completion of each cohort. Some Practicum Sites sponsored multiple projects in each cohort. In Cohort 1 there were 15 Scholars (14 respondents), 15 Mentors (15 respondents), and 8

Practicum Sites (9 respondents). In Cohort 2 there were 20 Scholars (18 respondents), 20 Mentors (17 respondents), and 10 Practicum Sites (6 respondents). In Cohort 3 there were 15 Scholars (15 respondents), 15 Mentors (15 respondents), and 11 Practicum Sites, (15 respondents).

III. ABOUT THE LEEAD SCHOLARS, MENTORS, AND PRACTICUM 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 all three cohorts, there were [31 Mentors](#) who represented various fields, including anthropology, community health, education, evaluation, family science, psychology, public health, public policy, social justice, and social work. Several Mentors worked with Scholars across multiple cohorts.



Race/Ethnicity of LEEAD Scholars and Mentors

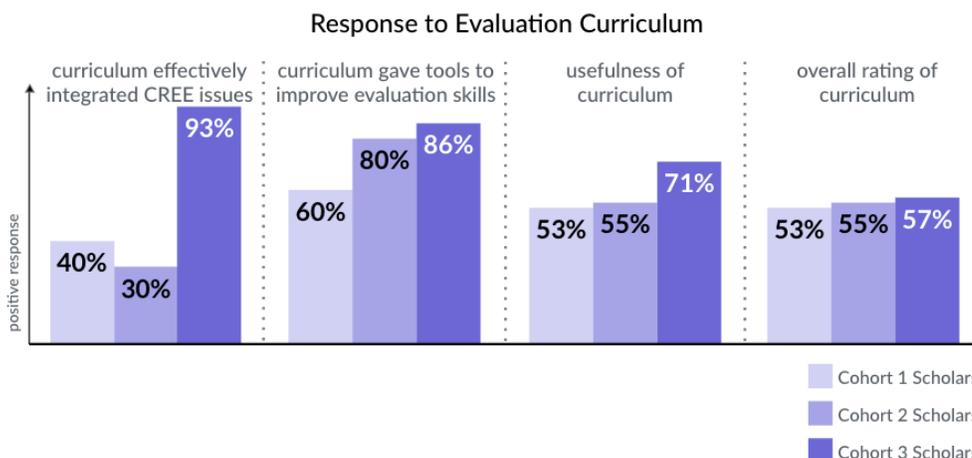
The [17 Practicum Sites](#) that have participated in the LEEAD Program include 11 large-sized research/evaluation organizations (>50 staff), three small/medium-sized research/evaluation organizations (1-50 staff), two universities, and one foundation. In some cases, Practicum Sites contracted with more than a single Scholar, and many contracted with LEEAD Scholars across multiple cohorts. Readers should note that Cohorts 1 and 2 had low response rates among Practicum Site supervisors.

IV. FINDINGS

THE CURRICULUM HAS IMPROVED OVER TIME

Cohort 1 and 2 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 curriculum did expose Scholars to tools and resources that improved their evaluation skills such as data collection through surveys and focus groups, introducing methodological



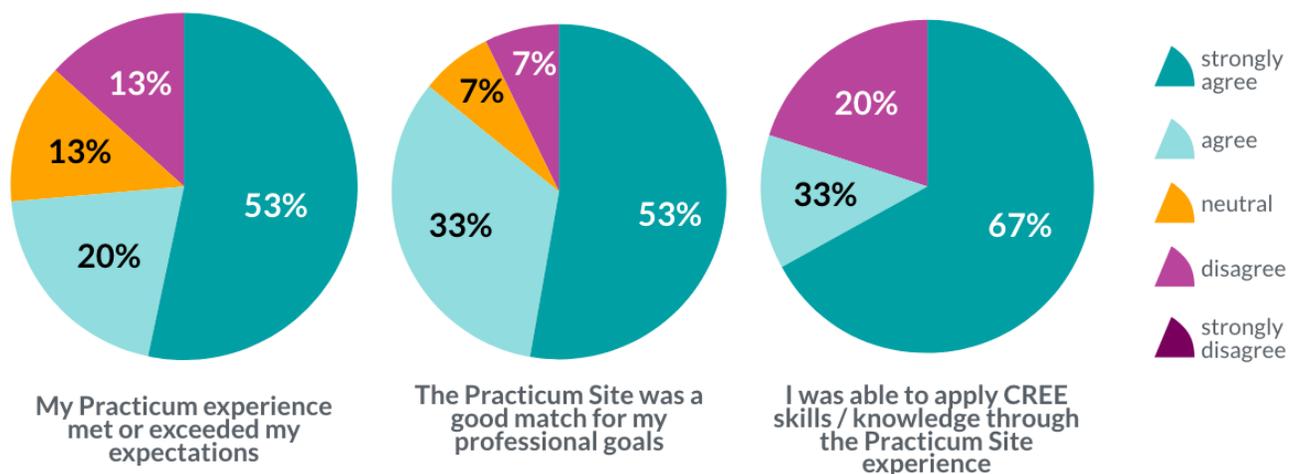
tools supporting meta-evaluation, and materials outlining how to engage stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.

The curriculum for Cohort 3 was redesigned to focus exclusively on CREE based on the input from Cohort 1 and 2 Scholars — a third of which (40%, 30% respectively) did not feel the curriculum effectively integrated a CREE perspective. The vast majority of Cohort 3 Scholars agreed that the overall curriculum gave them tools and resources to improve their evaluation skills (86%). While most (71%) stated the curriculum was useful, about one-third of Scholars also shared that the coursework was too challenging and not manageable for working professionals.

PRACTICUMS OFFER APPLICABLE FIELD EXPERIENCE

Overall, the partnerships with and experiences at Practicum Sites were positive. Almost all Scholars across the three cohorts (with the exception of three Scholars) reported that Practicums were a good fit for their career goals. The Practicum experience provided Cohort 1 and 2 Scholars tools to improve their evaluation skills (88%), access to new and relevant resources for their evaluation work (76%), and opportunities to incorporate CREE concepts (76%). Nearly all Cohort 3 Scholars (93%) felt their Practicum placement was relevant, interesting, and valuable to their LEEAD experience. On their LEEAD Practicum experiences, Cohort 3 Scholars reported:

Cohort 3 Scholars on the Practicum Site Experience



However, challenges were raised by the Scholars and Practicum Sites. These included the lack of a process to contract with Scholars, the need to shift timelines and/or timing of projects, and lack of project clarity. In several instances, the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted and delayed the Cohort 3 Practicum Projects. The Cohort 3 Practicum Sites identified that regular check-ins, strong communication, and Scholars' ability to both work independently and collaborate were all factors that impacted the quality of their relationships.

“She reflected back to us equity gaps in our approach and even language. She pushed us to consider what evidence is valuable (i.e. local literature in a literature review/annotated bibliography). She also was great at holding space for ALL members of our internal team to process new information.”

ANONYMOUS
LEEAD Practicum Site Partner

Cohort 1 and 2 Practicum Site respondents indicated that Scholars met or exceeded expectations for performance (e.g., quality and timeliness of deliverables, relevant knowledge/expertise, and communication). Cohort 3 Practicum Sites appreciated the Scholars' commitment and enthusiasm for the work and the extensive CREE and content knowledge that Scholars brought to the projects. Additionally, almost all Practicum Sites across the three cohorts expressed interest in future LEEAD involvement.

SCHOLARS AND MENTORS WERE MATCHED FOR SUCCESS

Similar research/evaluation interests, work settings, and racial/ethnic backgrounds continue to be strong predictors of successful Mentor-Scholar pairings. The overwhelming majority of Cohort 3 Mentors (93%) and Scholars (86%) reported that the Mentor-Scholar pairing was a good match for them; as did Cohort 2 Scholars (100%).

Across all three cohorts, almost all Scholars rated the Program’s mentoring component as valuable to their LEEAD experiences. Scholars received help from their Mentors in a variety of areas, including opportunities for career development and advancement in the evaluation field; navigating the field of evaluation; culturally responsive evaluation; and network-building. Several Cohort 3 Scholars appreciated the level of support they received from their Mentors in multiple facets of both their personal and professional lives. They valued their Mentors’ openness, accessibility, and willingness to offer advice while pushing them to think critically. This relationship resulted in benefits to the Mentors as well. In addition to learning from their roles, some Mentors described developing a personal relationship that developed into a friendship and, in some cases, a professional collaboration.

COMMUNITY WAS CREATED

Beyond forming relationships between Scholars, Mentors, and Practicum Sites, the LEEAD Program expanded Scholars’ networks by introducing them to fellow professionals in their cohorts, LEEAD Program staff, and other CREE-practicing evaluators. Almost all of Cohort 3 Scholars (93%) felt



[The Scholar] is an incredible practitioner and someone we would turn to for evaluation (and planning!) services again. In addition to the needs assessment, she (and a team of evaluators) also responded to our RFP for a wealth-building landscape scan. She brought other excellent (CREE-informed) practitioners into our sphere and we’re the better for it. I can’t say enough about [her]; her knowledge, demeanor, professionalism, and commitment to the work modeled great practice for us.

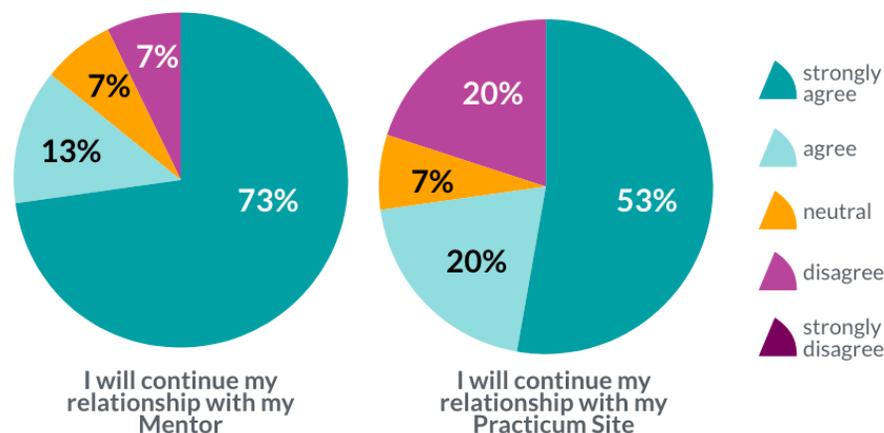
ANONYMOUS
LEEAD Practicum Site Partner



that a sense of community was created through the LEEAD Program. Many Scholars felt the relationships they built with fellow cohort members and other CREE evaluators was an

integral part of their LEEAD experience, especially because the field itself is not very diverse. Cohort 3 Scholars (86%) reported they were able to develop strong relationships with fellow Scholars and all intend to continue those relationships. Across all three cohorts, Scholars said they were able to develop close relationships with their Mentors (77%). Some Cohort 1 and 2 Scholars reported that time and geographic distance from their Mentors were challenges to developing a closer relationship.

Cohort 3 Scholars on Continuing Relationships



However, Cohort 3 Scholars did not cite distance as an issue, partly because of COVID-19-related social distancing requirements. Though 93% felt that they spent sufficient time with their Mentors, some Cohort 3 Scholars acknowledged they would have preferred more opportunities for face-to-face interaction. Notably, both Mentors (93%) and Scholars (86%) from Cohort 3 intend to continue their mentoring relationship.

Strong collegial relationships were also established between Scholars and Practicum Sites. Of Scholars across all three cohorts, 81% stated they would recommend their Practicum Site to other Scholars. Among Cohort 3 participants, the majority of Scholars (73%) and Practicum Sites (74%) intend to continue their working relationships after the LEEAD Program.

SCHOLARS AND PRACTICUM SITES ARE USING KNOWLEDGE GAINED

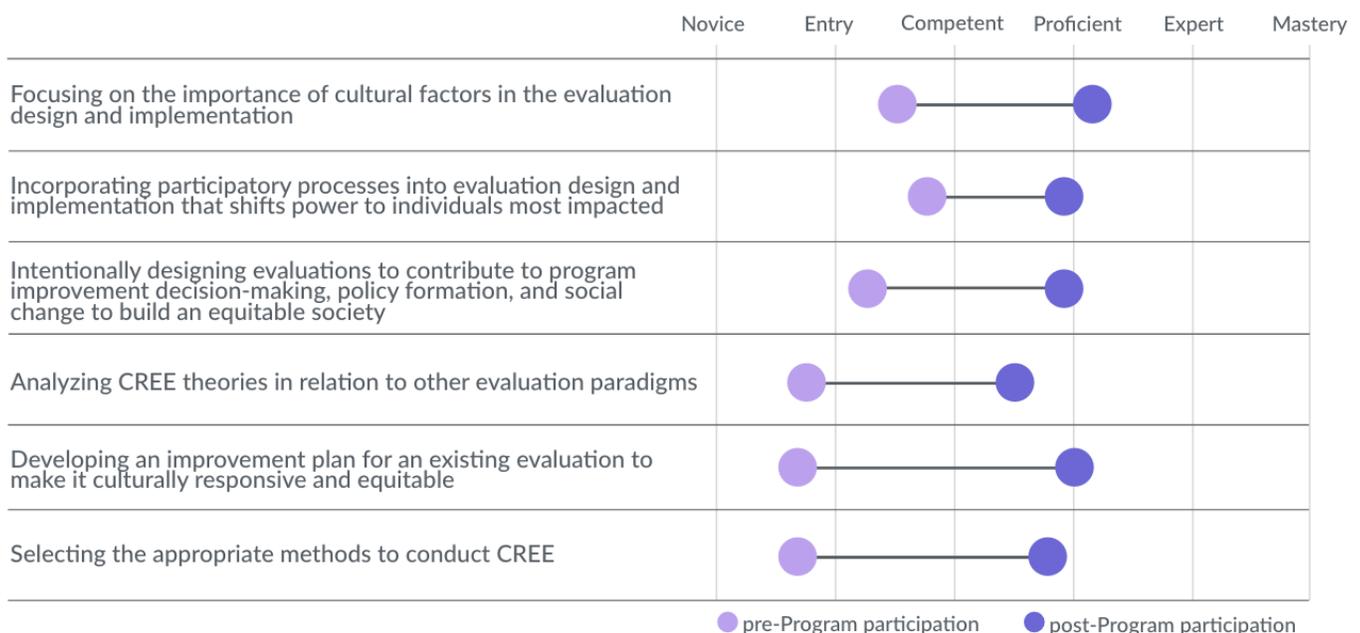
As a result of their overall participation in LEEAD, Scholars across all three cohorts (81%) increased their evaluation skills, and specifically around the areas of CREE, process evaluation, outcome evaluation, logic models, and developing budgets. Similarly, almost all Cohort 3 Scholars (93%) stated they gained CREE skills through the curriculum and most (80%) also reported they were able to apply their new CREE skills and knowledge through the Practicum experience.

Practicum Site contacts stated that LEEAD offered the opportunity to collaborate and they appreciated the new perspective that LEEAD Scholars brought to the work. One Site described the perspective as “helpful for breaking our internal team out of our normal mental models.” Across all three cohorts, the majority of practicum site respondents (70%) felt the Scholars added to their ability to incorporate CREE into the project work. When Practicum Sites were asked about the value the Scholar added, Sites mentioned that the Scholars’ knowledge of CREE was essential to the success of the Practicum experience. And beyond the specific Practicum projects, the majority of the Cohort 3 Practicum Sites (87%) stated they value the importance of using a CREE approach and intend to apply it to other project work.

“The other invaluable aspect of LEEAD is my relationship with my cohort. One cohort member initiated communications after our kick-off and since then we’ve continued to gather and support each other. The cross-disciplinary perspectives and experiences of the cohort members has helped to expand my thinking and exposed me to new opportunities and resources. Similar to the mentorship, it can be difficult to develop new and rich professional networks mid-career. We are committed to continuing to support each other going forward.”

ANONYMOUS
LEEAD Scholar

Self-Reported Changes in CREE Competencies Amongst Cohort 3 LEEAD Scholars



SCHOLARS ARE DEMONSTRATING LEADERSHIP IN THE FIELD



[The Scholar] completely changed the way we think about evaluation not just for this project but in all our future projects. Working with her, especially over several months, enabled us to learn the information about CREE principles, digest it, apply it in some ways, and think about more ways to apply it in the future. It was an invaluable experience.

ANONYMOUS
LEEAD Practicum Site Partner



Almost all Cohort 3 Scholars (93%) reported that they see themselves as leaders in their role as evaluators (87%) and that their confidence and leadership skills grew through their LEEAD experience. Scholars have found opportunities to apply their learnings to other projects. All Cohort 3 Scholars reported that they incorporated CREE concepts into their work, including course curricula, trainings, presentations, webinars, and publications. The majority also reported also that their CREE skillset and participation in LEEAD were valued by their colleagues (86%).

Moreover, all Cohort 3 Scholars have sought additional opportunities to advance their expertise in CREE or other equity-focused evaluation frameworks. As a result of LEEAD, most Scholars (79% in Cohort 1; 67% in Cohort 2; 87% in Cohort 3) were pursuing evaluation-related opportunities and 73% of Cohort 3 Scholars have been offered opportunities as a result

of their CREE knowledge and/or LEEAD experience. And in some of these efforts, Scholars have collaborated with their fellow cohort members and Mentors. Some examples of these collaborations include the following:

- Co-authored journal article with Practicum Site
- Co-authored policy brief with Mentor
- Partnered with Mentors to develop workshop and conference proposals
- Partnered with LEEAD Scholars and Mentors to develop new evaluation projects
- Presented symposiums at the American Evaluation Association with LEEAD Scholars and Mentors and collaborated on a publication

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The evaluation of LEEAD explored the changes among Scholars' knowledge, skills, and attitudes that resulted from participation in LEEAD. It also examined whether they were able to apply CREE approaches in their evaluation work, expand their relationships and networks, and their reported leadership in the field. The evaluation found that Scholar experiences with the curriculum were initially mixed but have improved with each cohort. Trends have shown that over the past three cohorts, the curriculum has been responsive to participant feedback and increasingly focused on CREE.

Across the three Cohorts, Scholars continue to report that their mentoring experience was valuable. They also report that formed relationships were helpful in expanding their knowledge of CREE, supporting their career advancement, navigating the evaluation field, and building their professional networks. Scholars appreciated the opportunities for application of new knowledge and skills gained through their Practicum Projects, and Practicum Sites expressed that Scholars added to their ability to incorporate CREE into projects.

For many Scholars, LEEAD has helped to create pathways to advancing in their careers, raised their professional development as a CREE evaluator, and increased visibility for collaboration on evaluation projects. Almost all Cohort 3 Scholars (93%) report that LEEAD helped them advance their career goals. Finally, LEEAD Scholars are already adding to the diversity in the field of research and evaluation and improving the field's knowledge base to make for better science and social innovation.