

PROGRAM EVALUATION PORTFOLIO

Evaluation of the 2023 LeadNY Study Trip and related engaged learning preparatory work overview.

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Published: April 2024



LeadNY

LeadNY is a two-year leadership program for professionals in the food, agriculture, and natural resource sectors across New York State. It is a competitive program that will be celebrating its 40th year in 2025. With over 500 alumni, LeadNY is an established program across New York State's agricultural industry. Fellows meet in person once monthly for a multi-day seminar throughout the programming year (typically seven months out of each year). Professionals that take part in the program are delegated as LeadNY "fellows".

Year One focuses on self-awareness and skill building, with site agricultural and leadership site visits held across New York State. Year Two focuses on leadership fundamentals, where site visits expand beyond NYS, including the premier programming event: a 10-day study trip to a developing region of the world designed for fellows to experience culture, policy, food systems, and agriculture beyond New York State. Program fees are typically covered by the fellows' employers and LeadNY donors. Some fellows are self-funded.

10 DAY STUDY TRIP

The study trip is designed to broaden the fellows' global perspectives of challenges, opportunities, and successes of food, agriculture, and natural resources outside of the New York State context. This experience is strategically programmed during the second half of the fellows' second year, after they have worked to better understand themselves as a leader, and have gained great insight into common challenges and opportunities in agricultural operations. All fellows are required to participate and funding is covered by their program fees. The trip typically takes place in a developing region of the world and LeadNY has never gone to the same location for a study trip twice. The study trip is coordinated by LeadNY, working with partners to schedule tours and visits to farming, production, educational, and operational sites. Site visits vary greatly depending on region and include but aren't limited to large and small-scale farming sites, food and beverage production facilities, educational institutions and research facilities, as well as government and non-government organizations. LeadNY chose to visit Puerto Rico from February 5-15, 2023. Fellows prepared for their experience by reading and sharing information learned in group activities.

For the first time, the program implemented a third-party engaged learning provider as a mode of incorporating a more engaged and intentional learning experience to align with the goals of Cornell's Department of Global Development. Amizade, an organization that specializes in providing globally engaged learning experiences, was selected as the third-party provider. By partnering with Amizade, LeadNY took on a \$20,000 additional program expense that they believed would add value to study trip programming. Amizade also works within their own partnerships, and have a long-standing relationship with Caras con Causa, a community development initiative headquartered in the Cataño neighborhood of San Juan. Amizade partnered with LeadNY to facilitate the following programming features for a three-day period:

- Coordinate speakers on environmental programs, Puerto Rico history, and culture within an environmental context.
- Coordinate fellows' service-learning work in a local neighborhood, building raised beds, and in reforestation efforts in the local mangroves.
- Discussions with community leaders on food distribution programs, food access, and food insecurity.
- Group reflection and discussion facilitated by Amizade and Caras con Causa staff.

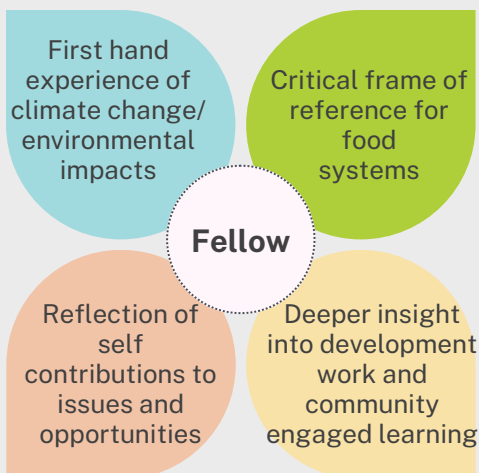
LeadNY coordinated travel, speakers, and site visits outside of the Amizade three-day experience, including a facilitated critical reflection component that I was responsible for leading. To prepare for this component, I presented the reflection process to the fellows, received attestations from the fellows to be a part of the reflection and survey components, and facilitated daily reflection throughout the trip. More information on this will be shared later.

PREPARATION

Prior to departure, fellows were provided an agenda, safety planning, packing suggestions, objectives of the trip, an overview of the Amizade component, and a presentation as well as in-class activities on critical reflection.

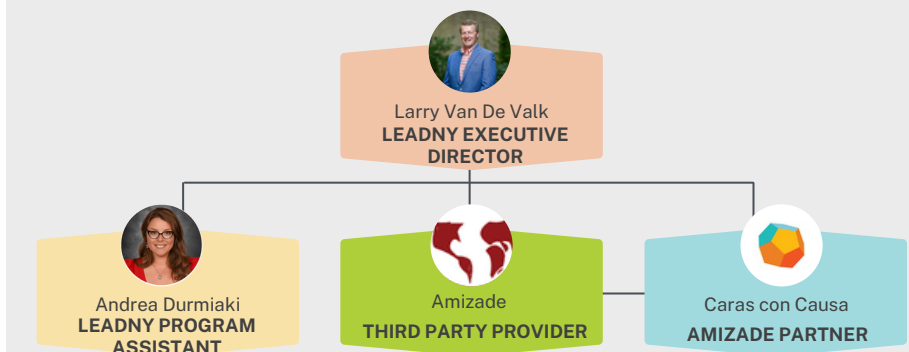
STUDY TRIP OBJECTIVES

Programming was designed to reach these learning objectives



PROGRAM FACILITATORS

Contributed to programming and learning objectives



35 FELLOWS PARTICIPATED IN THE STUDY TRIP

AGENDA

The fellows traveled independently to regional airports the night before departing as one large group out of JFK Airport in New York City.



Day 1 – Sunday, February 5 Travel – San Juan D
12:57 PM Arrive San Juan
Lunch on your own (plane or airport)
3:00 PM Walking tour of old San Juan
Transfer to hotel
6:30 PM Group welcome dinner



Day 2 – Monday, February 6 - Cataño
8:00 AM Depart for Catano (allow 30 min by bus with traffic)
8:30 Meet Brandon Blache-Cohen, Executive Director, Amizade and Mariana Pennet, Volunteer Coordinator of Caras con Causa (Intro to Caras, PR history with environmental context)
Lunch Provided by Amizade/Caras con Causa
PM: Split into groups for service learning
EVE Return to hotel to freshen up, then transfer to group dinner
6:30 Group dinner and speakers: Betty Enriquez, Taste NY and Mikol with World Central Kitchen



Day 3 – Tuesday, February 7 - Cataño
8:30 Brief presentation (food distribution/security)
Split into groups for service projects
Group A: CECC nursery, Carr 167, Catano
Group B: Water quality monitoring
Group C: Garden maintenance in Puente Blanco
Lunch provided at location (Amizade/Caras)
PM Discussion about food security
4:00 Bomba class
6:30 Group dinner



Day 4 – Wednesday, February 8 - Cataño
8:30 AM Reserva Natural Ciénagas de las Cucharillas (Mangroves)
Lunch provided by Amizade/Caras
PM Reforestation service project with Urban Roots
Closing group discussion and reflection in Caras con Causa classroom
facilitated by Brandon Blanche Cohen, Executive Director, Amizade
EVE Dinner on your own



Day 5 – Thursday, February 9 - Ponce
8:30 AM Depart hotel
9:00 AM Port tour and Port Authority staff in San Juan and presentation by Bicardi staff
Lunch Boxed Lunch from hotel
2:30 PM Visit Queen Conch program, Playa Hucares
4:00 Travel to Ponce via Caguas
6:30 Group dinner



Day 6 – Friday, February 10 - San Juan to Ponce
8:00 Depart for Bayer facility
8:30 Check in, waivers, safety instructions
9:00 Tour Bayer facility in several small groups
1:30 Visit Martex Farms
4:30 PathStone speakers at hotel
6:30 Group dinner at hotel



Day 7 – Saturday, February 11 - Ponce to Mayaguez
AM Tour at Hacienda Tres Angeles (coffee farm and production site)
Lunch at Hacienda Tres Angeles provided by staff
PM Tour La Destileria Luis Cruz (small-scale rum distillery)
Travel to Mayaguez
EVE Dinner on your own

Day 8 – Sunday, February 12 - Mayaguez to Rincon
AM Travel to Rincon
ALL DAY On your own
PM Bus returns to hotel



Day 9 - Monday, February 13 - Mayaguez – Aguadilla
8:45 Visit Finca Hekiti (cacao farm)
PM Group lunch
Overview presentation about the University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez – Raul Macchiavelli, dean and director
David Sotomayor, professor, and graduate student (sustainable ag course)
PM Travel to UPR experiment station
PM Return to hotel



Day 10 - Tuesday, February 14 - Aguadilla – Hatillo, Aricebo
9:00 AM Tour EarthShip (sustainable living community)
11:00 AM Lunch at Earth Ship provided by staff
1:30 PM Visit Hatillo Dairy and De La Crema
4:30 PM Class Debriefing discussion and critical reflection at group dinner
8:30 PM Prepare for departure day (the next day)

Day 11 - Wednesday, February 15 Depart back to US mainland/NYS

COSTS ASSOCIATED

The overall cost of the Puerto Rico study trip totaled over \$160,000.

The average per-person cost was \$4,400.

Frederick Waterloo Travel (3rd Party Travel Coordinator): \$130,000.00

Amizade: \$19890.00 + \$1,000.00 deposit

NYC Hotel: \$7689.78

Additional costs: LeadNY Executive Director and Program Assistant travel, salaries, and mileage reimbursements

Total cost: N/A



POLSON INSTITUTE FUNDING

LeadNY applied for funding from the Polson Institute. An award was granted of \$4,000 in funding, which covered the entirety of my travel and participation. In our award proposal, we stated that the study trip would reach all three Department of Global Development signature strengths:

1. **Wellbeing and Inclusion:** by experiencing food access issues, policy and trade challenges, socioeconomic issues, and the US mainland and PR history, the fellows would gain deeper insight into colonialism, poverty, inequality, disparate climate impacts, food insecurity and development work.
2. **Environmental Sustainability:** by experiencing first-hand effects of hurricanes and other natural disasters, the fellows would understand the impact of climate change and the importance of sustainable practices.
3. **Food and Nutritional Security:** by learning from and witnessing food access initiatives and community resource centers, the fellows would develop a critical frame of reference towards food and nutritional security not only in Puerto Rico, but throughout the developing world.

A report summarizing outcomes was submitted to the Polson Institute upon return from the trip. The report stated that Amizade's service-learning experience was highly rated by our participants. It also summarized my critical reflection work with the fellows with details of the program evaluation to follow.

CRITICAL REFLECTION AS A TOOL FOR ENGAGED AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

My role was to coordinate reflection activities related to the engaged learning aspects of the study trip. At our pre-departure seminar (January 2023—one month before departure), I presented an overview of critical reflection within the framework of engaged and experiential learning. I also led a “pre-reflection” exercise, using the Puerto Rico Critical Reflection Workbook I developed and handed out to each fellow. Throughout our time in Puerto Rico, I led brief, daily reflection exercises using the workbook prompts to provoke active discussion and group reflection.

My critical reflection work with the fellows was informed by David Kolb, Kurt Lewin, and John Dewey's research on critical reflection in engaged and experiential learning. Many of today's best practice models and pedagogy for engaged learning facilitation and implementation stem from David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Cycle which focuses on the cognitive process by which learners experience engaged learning. Kolb's cycle is characterized by four stages, typically, but not always, beginning with Concrete Experience (the experience itself which is defined by engaging within the task or activity itself), followed by Reflective Observation (communicating observations and solutions, questions or ideas developed from the experience) followed by Abstract Conceptualization (considerations or new ideas formed from having that experience), and finishing with Active Experimentation (taking what you learned and testing how you might utilize his information moving forward).

Kolb suggests that the experience itself is not what is educative, but rather reflection is the vehicle that allows students to transform ideas (Kolb, 1984). Kolb considers ideas as not being fixed, but rather “formed and reformed through experience” and that “no two thoughts are ever the same, since experience always intervenes” (p.26). Kolb's concepts and theory are framed from the simple determination that learning itself is a continuous process of experiences, followed by new experiences, that results in constant relearning (p.28).

Kolb's work often refers to learning models developed by Kurt Lewin and John Dewey. Lewin's (1947) Model of Experiential Learning is quite similar to what Kolb ultimately developed. It includes 4 stages: Concrete Experience, Observations and Reflections, Formation of Abstract Concepts and Generalizations, and Testing Implications of Concepts in New Situations. John Dewey's (1938) views education as "essentially a social process" (p.58). Much of his writing referred to experiential learning as a way of navigating individualized experiences catering to the needs of a learner's individual needs and knowledge (p.25). Dewey referred to reflection as the means in which a learner can find that purpose and meaning of an experience or of an outcome of a lived experience. In Dewey's 1933 book, "How We Think", he articulates this connection to purpose and reflection: "We reflect in order that we may get hold of the full and adequate significance of what happens. Nevertheless, something must be already understood, the mind must be in possession of some meaning which it has mastered, or else thinking is impossible." Simply put, and often repeated, Dewey noted "We do not learn from experience. We learn from reflecting on experience" (1933).

I used this same pedagogy to inform the development of the critical reflection workbook as well as the Post-Engagement Survey that the fellows were required to participate in. The Post-Engagement Survey was sent via email individually to each fellow two days after returning from the trip. Fellows had a two-week turnaround time to complete the survey. This allowed time for the fellows to revisit their reflection workbooks and gauge how they were actively applying the "Active Experimentation" and "Testing Implications of Concepts in New Situations" aspects of critical reflection to their daily work and lives. The Pre and Post Engagement Survey components will be revisited later.

In my literature review of Kolb, Lewin, and Dewey, I determined the following best practices to follow for the LeadNY study trip:

1. Critical reflection should be carefully defined as a process by which learning and relearning opportunities are achieved (as part of a lifelong learning process).
2. Personal experience and individuality should be discussed as an important factor in the experience itself. Individual needs and experiences should be discussed and acknowledged before the "during" component. Expectations should be addressed and considered.
3. The "post" experience should be equally valued among the "pre" and "during" work.
4. Purpose and meaning should be defined prior to engagement and revisited upon return so that the learner can connect their experience beyond themselves and to the larger world
5. The learner should follow the "What? So What? Now What?" approach. "What" defines the experience or observation. "So What" defines the purpose or learning moment. "Now What" defines the action item moving forward from the experience.
6. Prompts beyond professional observations can result in a more holistic outcome of responses, which could be achieved by asking questions about cultural awareness and observations on social experiences and perspectives.
7. Ethics, values, and goals should be considered by the learner and should be revisited during the experience through intentional prompts. Prompts should include questions on challenges of perspective and ideologies previously held by the learner to understand transformative learning opportunities.

The workbook was designed to be an insightful tool for navigating one's identity, previously held assumptions, and learning style throughout their study trip experience. Rather than focusing on the mechanics of the topics that were being explored, the workbook was developed to be utilized as a journal for self-reflection during the engaged learning process. It's important to note that a critical reflection workbook was not a component of study trips before 2023.

LEADNY CRITICAL REFLECTION PROCESS



CRITICAL REFLECTION WORKBOOK PROMPTS

Pre-Engagement Work - fellows were given activities and prompts to prepare for their experience in Puerto Rico. The following prompts and reflective activities were designed to create space for vulnerable conversations, questions, and perspectives while uncovering previously held assumptions about identity, culture, and the process of engaged learning.

Identity Mapping: fellows were asked to identify themselves using 10 words or phrases. Next, they were asked to circle any elements that were placed on their map because of the way they believed that others might perceive them. Then they were to identify using a star which elements of themselves may not be as obvious on the surface (or others may not perceive of them). And finally, they were asked to share those words and phrases with a peer and how this process made them feel. Fellows discuss perceptions and stereotypes. They also discussed what it might feel like to express their identity to others.

An additional pre-engagement activity asked fellows to list the first three words that they identify with Puerto Rico. Next, they were asked if any of the words they wrote down were associated with any stereotypes. They then exchanged their findings with a partner.

The final pre-engagement activity was a reflective prompt regarding their expectations of what they might experience in Puerto Rico. The prompt was “What do you think you know about Puerto Rico and how have you come to know these things? What makes you most excited and what fears might you have based on what you think you know or don’t know? How do you feel this might change once you are in Puerto Rico? This was an independent activity and the fellows were not asked to share, but rather reflect on this while they prepared for their trip.

Daily reflective prompts that were administered while in Puerto Rico - prompts were designed concerning topics for each day’s itinerary.

Day 1: What professional and personal goals do you have for this trip? What parts of your identity do you plan to highlight or work on? What actions can you take to achieve these goals?

Amizade Days 2, 3 and 4 asked the same questions concerning the group activity they did with Amizade that day. What did you find most engaging about today’s agenda? Was there anything new that you learned about yourself? Did anything you learn challenge your assumptions of what you thought you would learn? Why or why not?

Day 5: Midpoint check-in - What goals have you met and which goals do you still need to meet? (in reference to the pre-engagement prompt) What actions can you take to make the most out of the remaining half of your trip? Is there anything you are hoping to clarify or learn more about?

Day 6: What have you found most rewarding so far? Are there any elements of the trip that have been under or overwhelming? Be sure to define moments and use detail. Has any of this shocked or surprised you?

Day 7: What challenges have you faced? Were they new challenges or related to similar experiences you’ve had in the past? How have you addressed or worked on these challenges during this trip? How will you address similar challenges in the future?

Day 8: What have you learned that you can take back to your place of work and your community? What actions can you take to tell your story? How may this information be perceived by others in your field/career/community?

Day 9: What aspects of your identity did you share with your peers and the communities in Puerto Rico? Are there any skills that you highlighted or parts of your identity that you worked on? Have you discovered anything new?

Day 10: Thinking back on your time with LeadNY, which aspects of your coursework, readings, and programming resonated with you the most during this experience? How have the last two years [helped] share how you experienced your study trip?

During the critical reflection process, fellows prepared their individual "elevator pitches" as an additional step. Although not a new concept, it was a chance to revisit what they had learned during their two years with LeadNY. I informed them that during our final dinner in Puerto Rico, they would present their elevator pitch. Prior to this, I emphasized the importance of using the workbook and daily reflections to prepare for this moment. During the three-minute presentation, most fellows used their workbook to craft their pitch, demonstrating a successful return to the initial phase of engaged learning: Concrete Experience. Throughout the session, fellows shared their experiences, discussed solutions, and outlined their plans moving forward. This showcased their comprehension of critical reflection through the elevator pitch exercise.



QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

The Pre-Engagement and Post-Engagement surveys were carried out through Qualtrics. Subsequently, the data was exported into an Excel file with each question allocated to separate worksheets. Identifying common themes in the responses involved employing a simple coding pattern.

The coding pattern identified:

- similarity (occurrences are alike)
- frequency (occurring frequently)

Factors considered when identifying themes using the coding pattern:

- What actions are people taking?
- How do individuals discuss, describe, and interpret the situation?
- What assumptions are being made?
- What observations can be made in this context?

Initial observation of the data set allowed for theme retrieval, however, the primary approach was a deductive format, whereas preconceived themes aligned with the fellows' curriculum and LeadNY programming were considered. These themes shed light on insights by highlighting patterns centered around a core concept that structures analytical discoveries.

Example of the coding format:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Q1	Empathy	Community(ies)	Culture	Agriculture	Comfort	Food	Engage	Connect
2	What are 3 personal goals you have for this trip? How do you intend to meet those goals?	3	3	20	4	10	6	9	
	To gain more understanding/ empathy of communities that have less than enough. To look at what I considered to be my own struggle as a single mom, that did not have enough money in comparison to what real poverty looks like. I will use the reflection book/ journal to reflect each day what I see and do photo documents so I remember. I hope to find opportunities to give, invest or create awareness.								
3	To help those who are uncomfortable or nervous about group travel to feel included. I see lots of clickiness and group travel can sometimes leave some out. A few people have mentioned to me they are stressed about rooming situations or feeling included.								
	I am going to TRY to not worry about home. I am naturally worry filled and leave behind an almost family member with stage 4 cancer and my boys, who I think need me more than they do- my oldest son struggles with depression due to a trauma he experienced. Because I am not in charge of anything, I am going to try and give myself a little me time. Although it is a habitual learned illness that causes me anxiety.					See also: comfortable, uncomfortable, discomfort			
	Not that I have been asked for a 4th, but I have been trying to focus on my health - so remaining diligent about what I eat and getting exercise is important to me.	See also: empathetic	See also: communities	See also: cultural	See also: agricultural			See also: participate	See also: network

Themes were identified using synonyms, similarity, and frequency.

For example, answers that discussed "engagement" or used the term "engage" were also categorized by answers that discussed "participate". No instances of "participation" were found in this example.

Four shared common themes were identified. In some cases, varied qualitative responses were shared in place of common themes for context. In some cases, both common themes and qualitative responses were shared to reference responses in relation to the themes identified.

QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data was collected from questions that offered a single-choice format.

PRE-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

LeadNY surveys participants after each monthly seminar. The information gathered is intended to inform decision-making for future programming. The study trip was the only instance where fellows were surveyed before *and* after their experience. This process was designed for two reasons:

1. Fellows were able to engage in the critical reflection process by reflecting on what they knew about Puerto Rico agriculture, culture, agriculture, history, and politics, and what they still did not know. This allowed fellows to reflect on their preparatory readings and discuss expectations, previously held assumptions and perspectives.
2. The fellows were reminded of their responses upon returning from the experience as the first step before submitting their Post-Engagement Survey. Fellows were provided a PDF document with their individual responses from their Pre-Engagement Survey. Again, this was designed to reflect on what they thought they would learn, and allow them to understand the nuances between expectations versus reality.

The Pre-Engagement Survey was sent by email January 23, 2023 to all fellows. The deadline to complete the survey was February 1, 2023. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using Qualtrics.



31/35 fellows completed the Pre-Engagement Survey

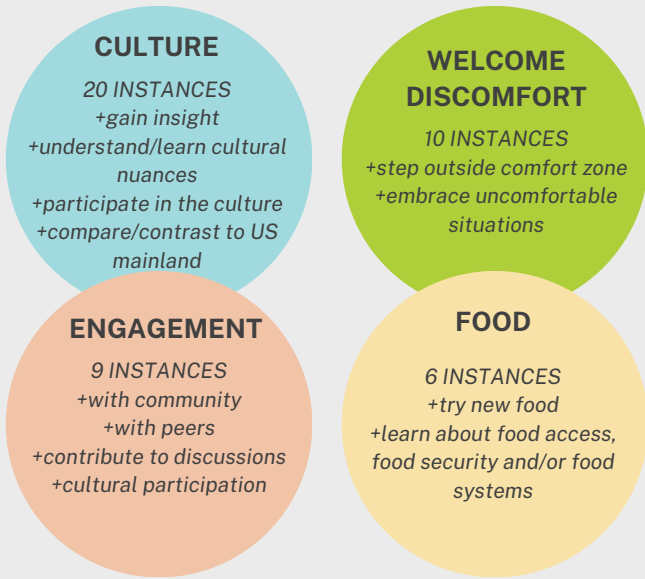
PRE-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. What are 3 personal goals you have for this trip? How do you intend to meet those goals?
2. How confident are you that you will reach these 3 personal goals? Use the scale to indicate your current confidence level. Options: Somewhat Confident, Confident, Very Confident, Exceptionally Confident.
3. What are 3 professional goals you have for this trip? How do you intend to meet those goals? Be sure to consider LeadNY programming - how has your coursework and experience helped shape your expectations and prepare you to achieve your goals?
4. How confident are you that you will reach these 3 professional goals? Use the scale to indicate your current confidence level. Options: Somewhat Confident, Confident, Very Confident, Exceptionally Confident.
5. Based on the information provided to you (Amizade presentation on 1/13/23 and bios/links shared) what expectations do you have for Amizade's facilitation and your current understanding of the programming they provide? How might this add value or change the dynamic of LeadNY's Study Trip programming?
6. Briefly define what "Community-Engaged Learning" means to you.
7. Take a moment to look over the agenda. Several agenda items may include service work and learning from, as well as sharing your knowledge/experience with, community members. Have you had a [familiar] experience taking part in or hosting community engagement initiatives (community service, civic engagement, or similar) in your personal, academic, or professional life? Options: Yes, No, and Somewhat Similar.
8. Select all that may apply to your engaged learning and/or community engagement experiences.
Options: Study Abroad (high school or college level), Service Work/Learning (Peace Corps, service work, or similar), Local engagement - work-related (open house, guided tours, or similar), Local engagement - personal/other (Rotary, Council, PTA, or similar), and Other.
9. Briefly define and explain your community engagement experience.
10. What expectations do you believe our hosts (community members and organization hosts) may have of the LeadNY fellows?
11. Briefly define and explain your current understanding of critical reflection. What are your expectations for utilizing the critical reflection workbook? How might daily reflection impact your learning experience?

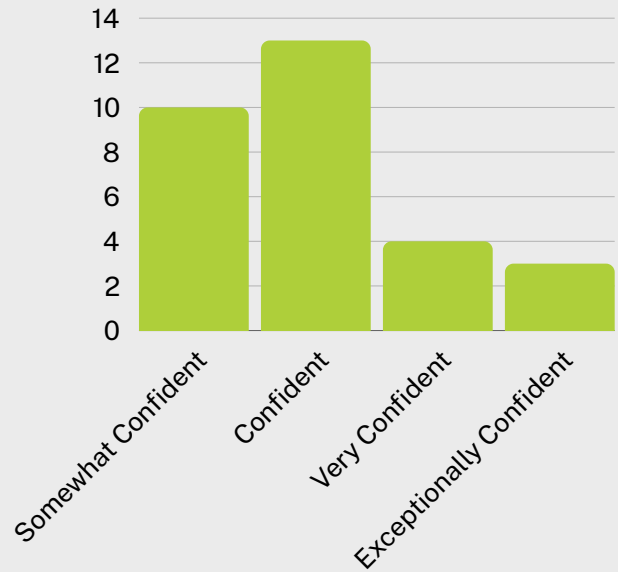
PRE-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY DATA

1. What are 3 **personal** goals you have for this trip
How do you intend to meet those goals?

Most common themes:



2. How confident are you that you will reach these 3 personal goals? Use the scale to indicate your current confidence level.

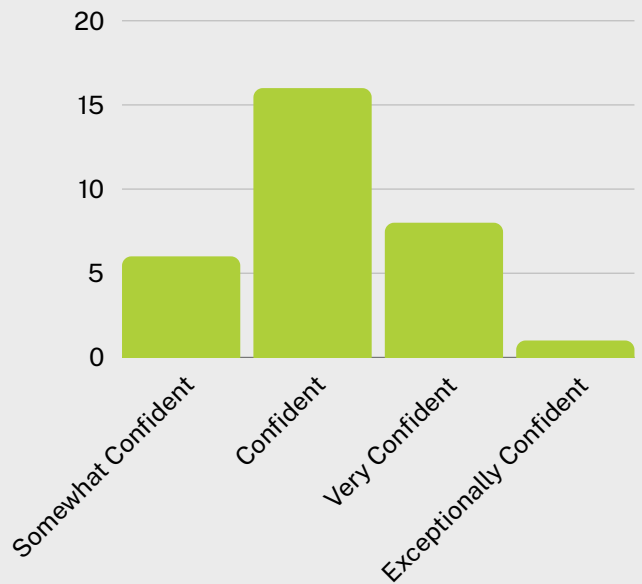


3. What are 3 **professional** goals you have for this trip?
How do you intend to meet those goals? Be sure to consider LeadNY programming - how has your coursework and experience helped shape your expectations and prepare you to achieve your goals?

Most common themes:

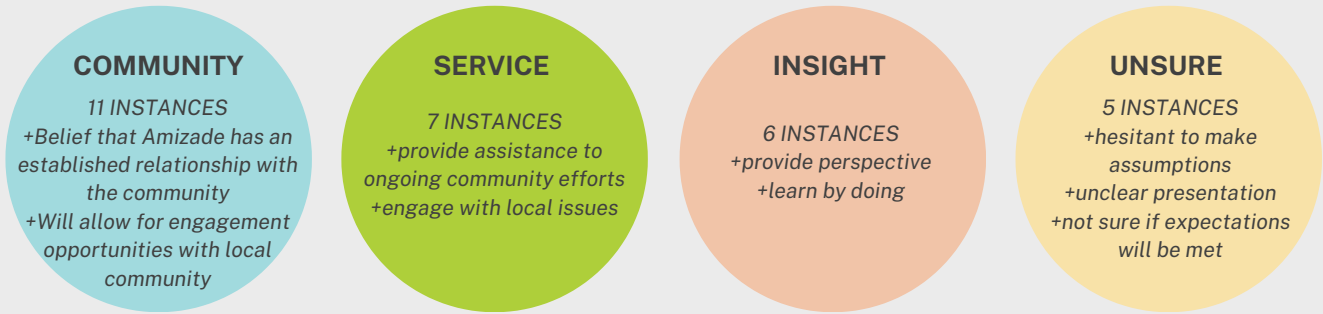


4. How confident are you that you will reach these 3 personal goals? Use the scale to indicate your current confidence level.



5. Based on the information provided to you (Amizade presentation on 1/13/23 and bios/links shared) what expectations do you have for Amizade's facilitation and your current understanding of the programming they provide? How might this add value or change the dynamic of LeadNY's Study Trip programming?

Most common themes:



6. Briefly define what "Community-Engaged Learning" means to you.

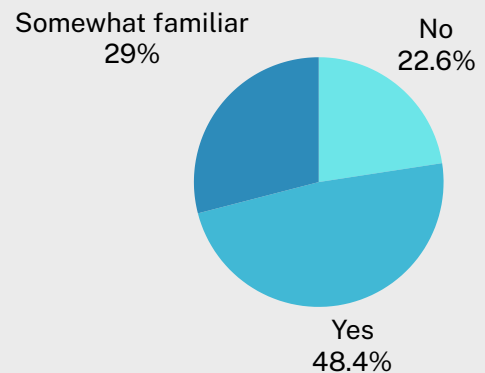
Most common themes:



7. Take a moment to look over the agenda. Several agenda items may include service work and learning from, as well as sharing your knowledge/experience with community members.

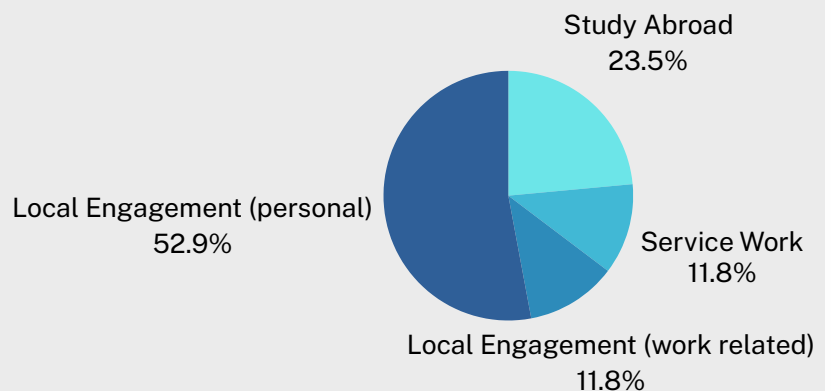
Have you had a [familiar] experience taking part in or hosting community engagement initiatives (community service, civic engagement, or similar) in your personal, academic, or professional life?

Options: No, Yes, and Somewhat Familiar.



8. Select all that may apply to your engaged learning and/or community engagement experiences.

Options: Service Work/Learning (Peace Corps, service work, or similar), Study Abroad (high school or college level), Local engagement - work-related (open house, guided tours, or similar), Local engagement - personal/other (Rotary, Council, PTA, or similar)



9. Briefly define and explain your community engagement experience.

VOLUNTEER

8 INSTANCES
+coordinated volunteer projects
+participated as a volunteer in community events
+4H, FFA, Farm Bureau, church, legion

FARM EXPERIENCE

7 INSTANCES
+hosting open houses and tours

FOOD BANKS

6 INSTANCES

YOUTH

6 INSTANCES
+experience as a youth (4H, FFA)
+volunteer for youth sports
+ member of Parent Teachers Association

10. What expectations do you believe our hosts (community members and organization hosts) may have of the LeadNY fellows?

RESPECTFUL

10 INSTANCES

PROFESSIONALISM

9 INSTANCES

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

9 INSTANCES

BE ENGAGED

8 INSTANCES

11. Briefly define and explain your current understanding of critical reflection. What are your expectations for utilizing the critical reflection workbook? How might daily reflection impact your learning experience?

TIME

13 INSTANCES
The workbook and critical reflection prompts intentionally carve out time to reflect, which is often hard to do otherwise.

DEEPER INSIGHT

8 INSTANCES
Critical reflection requires deep insight. The workbook allows for deeper insight throughout the experience by documentation.

FEELINGS

7 INSTANCES
+assess feelings
+discover feelings
+observe feelings
+document feelings

AID IN MEMORY

6 INSTANCES
Critical reflection helps with memory recall. The workbook enables one to revisit observations and the experience.

“ Critical reflection is thinking about an experience and seeing how a person interacts, feels and responds to the experience. Being aware of oneself in the context of experience and personally challenging thoughts, beliefs and assumptions. Reflection should cause one to ask why the thoughts and feeling are there, where do they stem from, are they right, or wrong and does change need to be made.

“ Taking more than a few minutes to actually think about the activities of the day and what was witnessed and then reflecting on our actual feelings about it. In addition to our feelings should include some action or actions for what we may do differently in the future. (time)

PRE-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY DATA SUMMARY

The personal goals shared common themes of culture, embracing discomfort, food, and engagement. The fellows aimed to enhance their understanding of Puerto Rican culture and the distinctions between U.S. mainland and Puerto Rican cultures. They set objectives to connect with the community and their culture, seeking insight into the challenges faced by Puerto Ricans. While anticipating stepping out of their comfort zones, they committed to embracing these experiences. Goals related to food focused on cultural exchange and understanding food security and access issues. Additionally, they aimed to engage with the community, hosts, peers, and in service work. While ten fellows had some confidence in achieving their goals, three were notably confident in their ability to reach their goals.

The professional goals shared common themes: focusing on relationships with the U.S. mainland and the island, agriculture, leadership, and local governance. Goals included understanding employer-employee relationships, Puerto Rican Government leadership, and leadership dynamics in agricultural businesses. The fellows aimed to delve into the history of disaster relief operations from the U.S. mainland, observe various leadership structures, study the Puerto Rican workforce, and explore challenges in the agricultural industry. Politics remained a key area of interest across all themes.

The fellows showed more confidence in reaching their professional goals than in their personal goals. Out of the group, six fellows were moderately confident about achieving their professional goals, which was three fewer than those who felt the same about their personal goals. In contrast, only one fellow felt extremely confident about achieving their professional goals, two fewer than those who were highly confident about their personal goals.

More than half of the fellows had experience in some aspect of community engagement, whether it was in their experience as students or youth, in college, or as adults serving their community in either their personal and/or work lives.

The fellows expressed an interest in setting aside intended time to work on reflection as a positive expectation, and they believed that being able to document their experience would aid in memory, deeper insight, and experience recall.

POST-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

The fellows were given a copy of their initial responses from the Pre-Engagement Survey to reflect on and compare their experiences with their expectations.

The Post-Departure Survey covered questions that were intended to answer:

- Achievement of goals/expectations and reasons for any variances
- The relevance of LeadNY preparatory coursework to personal experiences
- Unexpected or surprising elements
- Effects/results from using the critical reflection workbook
- Assessment of LeadNY facilitation
- Added value of Amizade facilitation

It was addressed to the fellows that survey results would be shared with various LeadNY stakeholders.



All 35 fellows completed the Post-Engagement Survey

POST-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. *Revisit your original response regarding your personal goals* and determine whether or not you met your personal goals.
2. Elaborate on why or why not your personal goals were met. What factors contributed to your experience? Did you take any action to meet your goals, and if so, what was the outcome?

3. *Revisit your original response regarding your professional goals* and determine whether or not you met your professional goals.
4. Elaborate on why or why not your professional goals were met. What factors contributed to your experience? Did you take any action to meet your goals, and if so, what was the outcome?
5. Now that you have experienced community-engaged learning, using your own words, describe what community-engaged learning means to you. Has this changed since before your experience?
6. Take a moment to revisit the expectations you had for the trip. What expectations were met? Were any of your previously held assumptions challenged or did they change?
7. Did you find the critical reflection workbook useful?
8. Please take a moment to elaborate on your previous answer. What experience did you have with the critical reflection workbook and the prompts that were given? Did this add value or impact your experience in Puerto Rico?
9. Do you plan to utilize the tool of critical reflection beyond your time in Puerto Rico (in your personal or professional life)?
10. Please explain your answer on whether or not you plan to utilize critical reflection moving forward.
11. Did we [LeadNY] meet our goals? Each question asked:
 - Get class members out of their "comfort zone" - experience different culture, food, language, etc.
 - Compare/contrast NYS agriculture and food systems to another part of the world - advantages and disadvantages?
 - Examine the US role in the rest of the world - their perceptions of us as "world citizens"?
 - See production, processing, technology, distribution, labor, environmental, trade and other issues through a different lens (examine issues from new perspective)
 - "Put it all together" - synthesize all that has been learned in LeadNY through discussion of leadership, or lack thereof, in other settings
 - Practice our listening, analytical, critical thinking, reflection & decision making skills
12. Please rate each of the following functions/activities/speakers. Each question asked to rate:
 - Pre-trip preparation - Canvas materials, speakers, readings, etc.
 - Service learning experience in San Juan
 - Tour stops outside of San Juan (remainder of trip)
 - Informal learning opportunities (discussions with guide, drivers, vendors, staff, other visitors, etc.)
13. Please rate each of the following Amizade facilitation days and activities
 - Day 1 (February 6) Intro to Caras con Causa, various service work projects in Catano
 - Day 2 (February 7) Visit to Vitenam Community
 - Day 2 (February 7) Visit to Catano food distribution facility and presentation
 - Day 2 (February 7) Visit to Catano food distribution facility and presentation
 - Day 2 (February 7) Presentation by Max (Permaculture Institute)
 - Day 3 (February 8) Bomba class
 - Day 3 (February 8) Mangrove tour and reforestation service work
 - Overall rating of Amizade 3 day facilitation
14. In a few sentences, explain your experience with the Amizade staff as well as the content delivery, service-work, reflective prompts facilitated by Brandon Blache-Cohen, and overall facilitation.
15. In a few sentences, explain your experience with the Caras con Casa staff as well as the content delivery, service-work, and overall facilitation. (Michael, Mariana, Juan, and other Caras con Causa staff)
16. Should LeadNY consider utilizing a third-party program facilitator such as Amizade for future study trips? Why or why not?
17. Earlier in the program, we shared an ancient wisdom with you: "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand". Was this true for you? Think of speakers and readings leading up to the trip as "tell me", the tours as "show me", and the service learning work we did as "involve me". Please comment on the value or impact of our service learning work relative to the overall trip experience.
18. Likewise, think of another old admonition to "think globally and act locally". What did you learn about leadership as service, community development and related themes? How might you apply these lessons back in your own communities?
19. Through our preparation (e.g. reading assignments) and the study tour itself, did you develop a deeper appreciation of and critical frame of reference towards colonialism, poverty, inequality, disparate climate impacts, food insecurity and/or development work? Please elaborate.

20. Through our observation of the effects of climate change, poverty and food insecurity in a developing region, are you thinking critically about your own (or your industry's) contribution to these systems in other geographies or at home? Which of your assumptions/paradigms have been challenged, if any?

21. What did you learn that was "off the script" - not part of the planned agenda items? In other words, something you learned during meal or travel time, through casual conversation with our tour guide, bus driver or other host, or just something you picked up through reading, observation, etc.

22. The study trip is the capstone event, bringing together much of what we learned in the months leading up to this event. Now that we are nearing the end of your LeadNY experience, how are you "connecting the dots" from multiple seminars, lessons, topics and discussions to develop a richer worldview of food, agricultural, natural resource and other issues? Please comment on how this may or may not have happened for you - how are things starting to "come together"?

POST-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY ANALYSIS

1. **Revisit your original response regarding your personal goals* and determine whether or not you met your personal goals.*

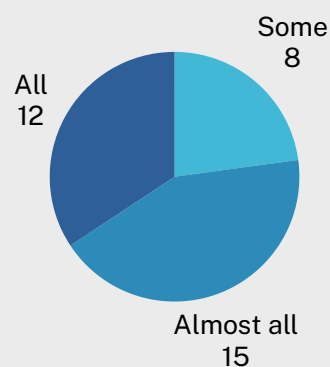
Options:

None of my goals were met

Some of my goals were met

Almost all of my goals were met

All of my goals were met



2. *Elaborate on why or why not your personal goals were met. What factors contributed to your experience? Did you take any action to meet your goals, and if so, what was the outcome?*

Most common themes:

TIME

18 INSTANCES

- +had time to reflect
- +took the time to acknowledge goals
- +did not have enough free time or time to gather thoughts

ENGAGED

14 INSTANCES

- +asked questions/engaged in dialogue
- +immersive experience

REFLECT

7 INSTANCES

- +Workbook was a tool for revisiting goals and documenting progress

COMFORT

6 INSTANCES

- +went outside comfort zone

“ One of my goals was to deeply take advantage of the prompts each day. [The] physical activity of writing in the workbook was a bit of a struggle - finding time to do it each day and because it was not in a format that was conducive to writing comfortably or realistically on the bus. On the days we were given instruction/time at dinner to utilize the workbooks I did strongly consider the prompts and referenced previous entries to take advantage of it.

“ Many of my personal goals were met. My main personal goals were to better understand the views of Puerto Ricans pertaining to big issues, specifically statehood and disaster relief. I did have an opportunity to meet dozens of Puerto Ricans ranging from not-for-profit staff members to private business owners. I am fortunate to be conversational in Spanish, and I found that I was able to hear much transparent and candid responses to my questions pertaining to statehood and disaster relief when I spoke with Puerto Ricans in Spanish.

“ Some factors that contributed to achieving my goals were we had the opportunity to be exposed to the PR culture in life styles in so many ways. To start off our trip we did some service work in a very poor community which really challenged me and forced me out of my comfort zone.

3. *Revisit your original response regarding your professional goals* and determine whether or not you met your professional goals.

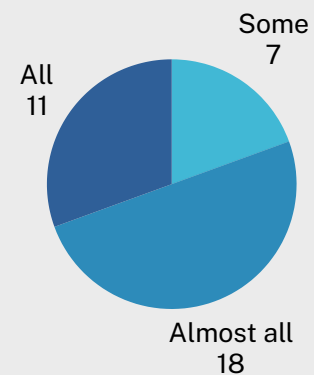
Options:

None of my goals were met

Some of my goals were met

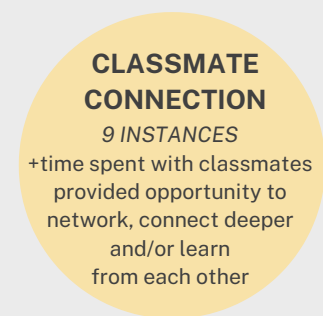
Almost all of my goals were met

All of my goals were met



4. Elaborate on why or why not your professional goals were met. What factors contributed to your experience? Did you take any action to meet your goals, and if so, what was the outcome?

Most common themes:



“ The farm tours helped me to gain more knowledge about agriculture in PR and the relationship farms/businesses have with other countries.

“ I met my last goal of continuing to expand my knowledge on ag production and trade. In conversing with my classmates, we all agreed that during this trip we leaned into each other's knowledge on practices in the US and how they differed from what we were seeing in PR and it helped me to better understand technique and technology here at home.

“ The biggest professional goal that was met was observing leadership of our hosts and connecting with classmates. I made a conscious effort to observe our hosts as well as their employees to see different leadership qualities that I would (and would not) like to embrace. I had some great conversations on the bus with classmates on leadership and my new role. The trip did broaden my ag exposure outside of the industries I see day to day and gave me another perspective. I was challenged a bit by a few of our tours trying to figure out how they generated revenues and the economic impact of agriculture in PR in general - something I am still struggling to wrap my head around. With fewer exports than I had assumed were happening, I am not surprised that I don't feel like I fulfilled my goal of global market perspective - but maybe I did in a different way, that I now understand the more limited scope PR has in the global market place from an export side, and their heavy reliance on imports.

5. Now that you have experienced community-engaged learning, using your own words, describe what community-engaged learning means to you. Has this changed since before your experience?

Most common themes:

**ADDRESSING
COMMUNITY
NEEDS**

10 INSTANCES

**DEFINITION
HAS NOT
CHANGED**

8 INSTANCES

IMPACT

9 INSTANCES

+Community-Engaged Learning is intended to make an impact (on the community)

**COLLABORATION/
CONNECTION**

9 INSTANCES

Community-Engaged Learning requires connection and collaboration among the community and partners

“ I don't think it has changed. One thing that I found confusing was that Amizade did not reciprocate the knowledge our group was bringing to the community. It became very clear very quickly that our group had an excess of skill for the tasks we were given, and I think they could have used this opportunity to have knowledge shared back to the community we were in for more of an impact.

“ Community engaged learning means understanding the community, it's members, and what the true needs of the community are, rather than what they are perceived to be. The learning piece comes from being hands on, and seeing and experiencing what that community is first hand. My definition hasn't changed but I have a greater appreciation for the impact this type of learning has based on our experience.

“ Community- Engaged learning to me is understanding the needs of individuals in a community, by listening to them, talking, and assisting in action. It doesn't mean that all the action must come from me, but a collective - without pre-conceived notions, stereotypes, or that I have the answer. It's a collective.

6. Take a moment to revisit the expectations you had for the trip. What expectations were met? Were any of your previously held assumptions challenged or did they change?

Most common themes:

**US/PR
RELATIONSHIP**

24 INSTANCES
+insight and knowledge gained on US/PR relationship

CHALLENGES

8 INSTANCES
+expectations of challenges across the island were met and/or exceeded expectations

AGRICULTURE

6 INSTANCES
+various learning opportunities to learn about agricultural operations

COMPLEXITIES

5 INSTANCES
+issues among the US and PR are complex
+PR has a complicated food system

“ Many of my expectations for the trip were met, and some of my previously held assumptions did change. I will forever remain shocked and in dismay of how difficult it was to find fresh fruit and produce on an island that should have plentiful fruit and produce - it is a small but powerful example of how complicated and fragile our food system is.

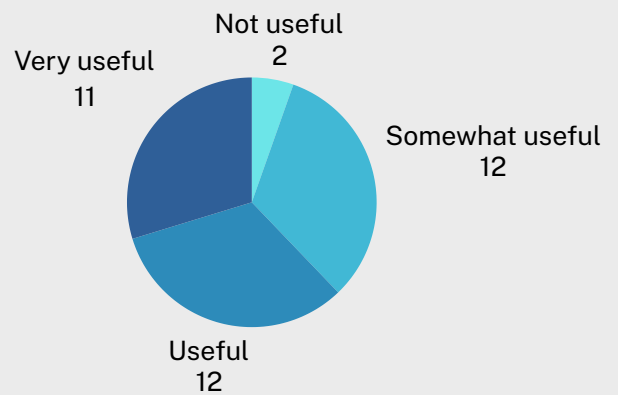
“ I would say my expectations were met, and then some. Getting to experience extremes from both sides of the economic divide was eye-opening and humbling. My assumptions that Puerto Rico was considered a US territory and would be subject to the same support systems we have here in the states was MAJORLY challenged.

“ From exploring the island, it is amazing to see that parts of the island do not seem possible to be part of the US and the extreme poverty. I was shocked by the amount of corruption and how tax dollars are not coming back to support the island the way it should be.

7. Did you find the critical reflection workbook useful?

Options:

- I did not find it useful
- I found it somewhat useful
- I found it useful
- I found it very useful



8. Please take a moment to elaborate on your previous answer. What experience did you have with the critical reflection workbook and the prompts that were given? Did this add value or impact your experience in Puerto Rico?

“ The critical reflection workbook provided me, a person who is often not a deep critical reflector, an opportunity to take a much deeper look into our daily interactions and prompts whereas [I] otherwise probably wouldn't have taken the time to have some deep reflection and ultimately, a response to what [I] was thinking/seeing.

“ Hands down, I wouldn't have set time aside to reflect daily if the reflection workbook had not been assigned. It really helped me process the trip and take time each day to organize my thoughts.

“ I found the prompts to be relevant to the day's activities, and a good jumping off point to my feelings of the day. I tended to be more personal in my reflections than ever before - more insight to my feelings, rather than just a recap of the day. I found this extremely beneficial because it allowed me to revisit those words a day or two later as I worked in the journal and think about underlying themes or reasons, I was feeling that way. I've picked up a gratitude journal to continue reflecting each day - something I wouldn't have done before without finding the value in our critical reflection work in PR.

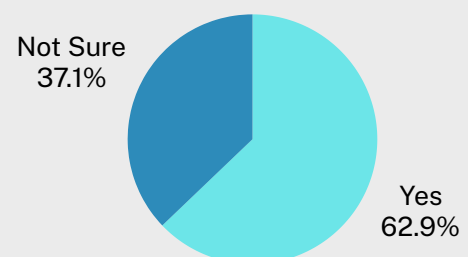
“ This workbook could have been more year 1 type idea to get us engaged with what we learned about ourselves and then carry it over to year 2. Ideally, I would have liked to see more of a complete LEAD NY workbook prompting us at each session that leads up to the final trip. Continuity of some of the learning would have been better. Over all I felt this didn't add value or impact to the trip.

“ I loved the critical reflection workbook because it forced us to stop and really think about the day instead of just powering through to the next thing which I am very guilty of. I felt bad because I think we all really wanted to do our best for Andrea and her project but it was really hard to want to sit down and write at the end of a long day. I felt like we were letting her down. I would have done much better with dedicated time in the morning with coffee when I'm good and energized!

9. Do you plan to utilize the tool of critical reflection beyond your time in Puerto Rico (in your personal or professional life)?

Options:

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure



10. Please explain your answer on whether or not you plan to utilize critical reflection moving forward.

“ I usually have trouble making time at the end of the day.

“ I tend to always be on the go and do not take time to reflect. I realized when I take the time to reflect/process, I can retain more and apply it to my professional and personal life.

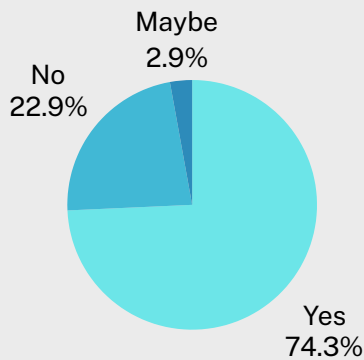
“ I think taking time to reflect on experiences, both professional and personal, is a great way to learn and appreciate each moment. I think being intentional about what we learn and what are the takeaways can be a huge part of my life going forward. I live at an often hectic pace and slowing down to take time to reflect is crucial.

“ I have members of my team who struggle to connect the dots in the work we do. I think this tool could be used to assist them - I have started giving them prompts and requesting updates, and so far it has helped them to organize their thoughts and take initiative with a little more confidence. The prompts are no where near the depth of what we experience in Lead, but on a very broad level it has helped.

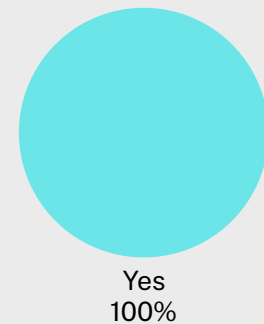
“ I 1000% know the importance and know that I feel better when I reflect so that I am putting thoughts to paper and not just letting them all roll in my head. I need to find a time to commit to this because that is my biggest challenge to reflecting in my day to day.

11. Did we (LeadNY) meet our goals?

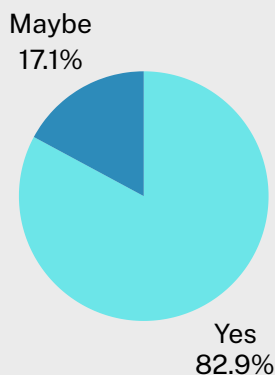
Get class members out of their "comfort zone" - experience different culture, food, language, etc.



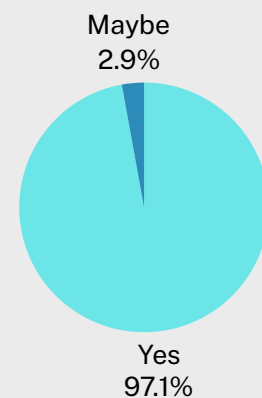
Compare/contrast NYS agriculture and food systems to another part of the world - advantages and disadvantages?



Examine the US role in the rest of the world - their perceptions of us as "world citizens"?

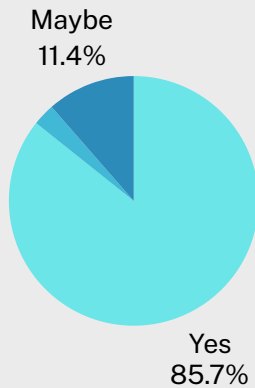


See production, processing, technology, distribution, labor, environmental, trade and other issues through a different lens (examine issues from new perspective).

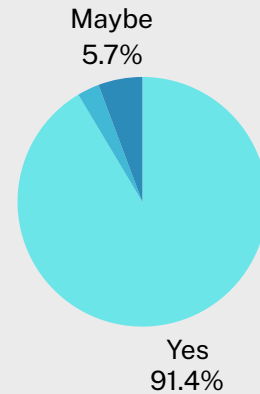


Did we (LeadNY) meet our goals? (continued)

"Put it all together" - synthesize all that has been learned in LeadNY through discussion of leadership, or lack thereof, in other settings.



Practice our listening, analytical, critical thinking, reflection & decision making skills.

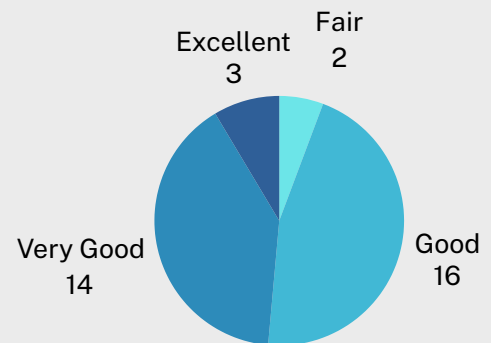


12. Please rate each of the following functions/activities/speakers:

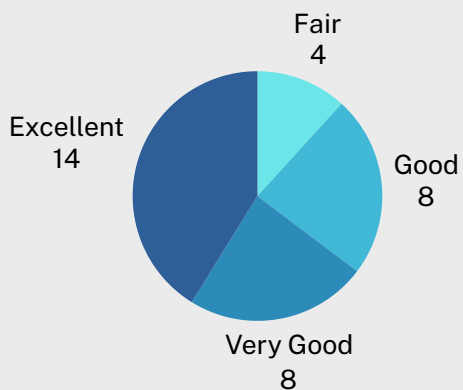
Pre-trip preparation - Canvas materials, speakers, readings, etc.



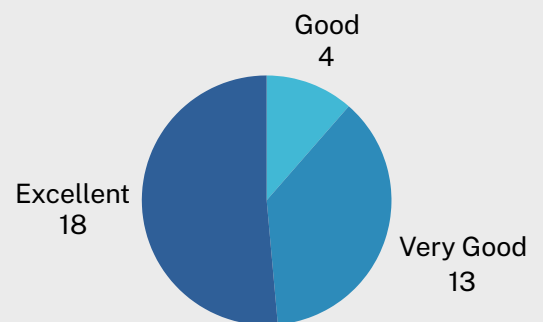
Overall rating of trip logistics - meals, hotels, travel, etc.



Service learning experience in San Juan

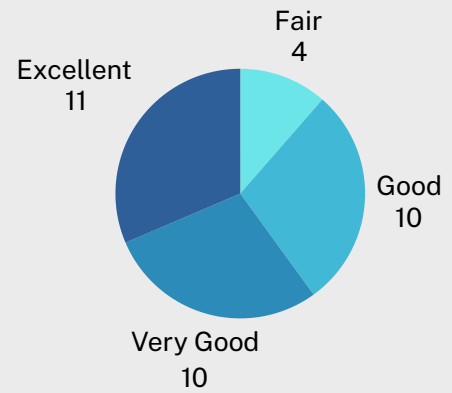


Tour stops outside of San Juan (remainder of trip)



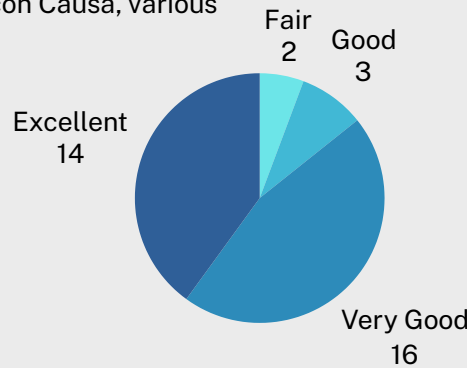
Please rate each of the following functions/activities/speakers
(continued):

Informal learning opportunities (discussions with guide,
drivers, vendors, staff, other visitors, etc.)

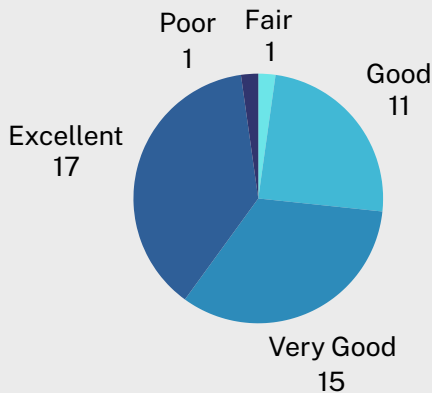


13. Please rate each of the following Amizade facilitation days and activities:

Day 1 (February 6) Intro to Caras con Causa, various
service work projects in Catano



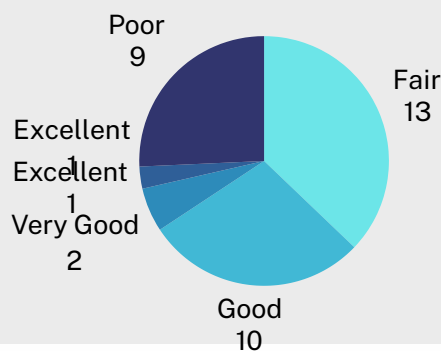
Day 2 (February 7) Visit to Vitenam
Community



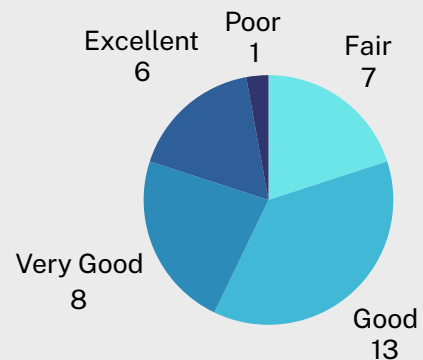
Day 2 (February 7) Visit to Catano food distribution
facility and presentation



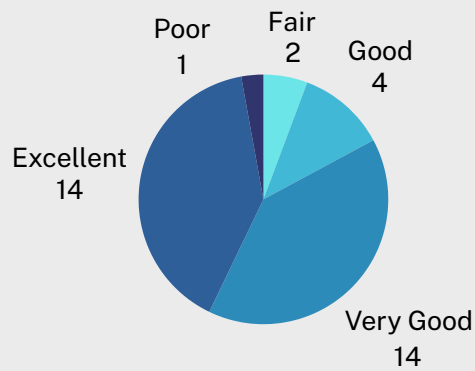
Day 2 (February 7) Presentation by Max
(Permaculture Institute)



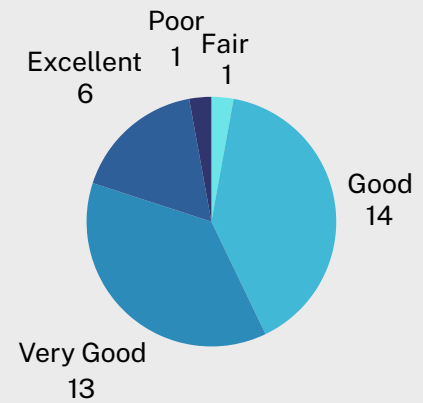
Day 2 (February 7) Bomba class



(February 8) Mangrove tour and reforestation service work



(February 8) Overall rating of Amizade 3 day facilitation



14. In a few sentences, explain your experience with the Amizade staff as well as the content delivery, service-work, reflective prompts facilitated by Brandon Blache-Cohen, and overall facilitation.

- “ Loved this part of the trip and am glad we did it first. I found Brandon to be a calming, welcoming presence and enjoyed his exercises and general outlook. The class clearly loves hands-on hard work which is not a surprise but as such, I think we were underutilized. We could have done more in less time. This was a great experience though and I hope they enjoyed having us.
- “ Overall I was very unimpressed by Brandon Blache-Cohen. Though his reflective prompts were interesting and perhaps helpful, these seemed a bit repetitive as we covered many of those things earlier in LEAD. Also any of the reflection about being part of a larger community could have been done more effectively in house with LEADNY. It felt as though the interactions with Caras were far more beneficial than the ones that involved Amizade.
- “ Overall I was very unimpressed by Brandon Blache-Cohen. Though his reflective prompts were interesting and perhaps helpful, these seemed a bit repetitive as we covered many of those things earlier in LEAD. Also any of the reflection about being part of a larger community could have been done more effectively in house with LEADNY. It felt as though the interactions with Caras [con Causa] were far more beneficial than the ones that involved Amizade.
- “ Loved this part of the trip and am glad we did it first. I found Brandon to be a calming, welcoming presence and enjoyed his exercises and general outlook. The class clearly loves hands-on hard work which is not a surprise but as such, I think we were underutilized. We could have done more in less time. This was a great experience though and I hope they enjoyed having us.
- “ To me, community engaged learning benefits both parties and while we exceeded expectations in terms of quantity of work performed, I think Amizade could have taken an extra step to understand the skillset of the group to improve the quality of the projects selected for the community.
- “ To be completely honest, I'm still trying to figure out what Amizade's role was in the service learning? It seemed that Caras Con Causa was the organization that spearheaded our involvement in the community. That being said, Brandon from Amizade seems to be very knowledgeable in critical reflection and in debriefing.

15. In a few sentences, explain your experience with the Caras con Casa staff as well as the content delivery, service-work, and overall facilitation. (Michael, Mariana, Juan, and other Caras con Causa staff)

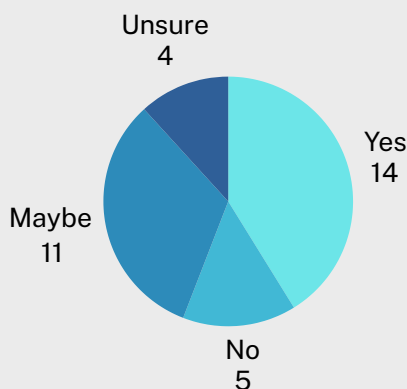
“ I feel that Caras con Causa provided serious value. All of the staff were great hosts, and took a lot of time out of their schedules to work with us. Michael and Juan provided very transparent insight into what Puerto Rico is facing, I felt that those two really brought the value to the 3 day period spent with Amizade.

“ I think the service work was okay, but what came with the service work was what made the experience valuable. It was the conversations, questions and discussions with the staff that made the experience valuable to me. Michael's presentation was really interesting and I wish every presenter was as candid as him. While his presentation wasn't the full truth of PR, it is just his perspective, but it helped connect the dots for me.

“ It was one of the most impactful portions of the trip, hands down. It really set the pace for how we could view and reflect on the remainder of our trip. I think the staff are some of the most selfless, proud and courageous people I have had the opportunity to interact with. I think again, we were underestimated in our ability as a group to do more or have a larger impact in our short time together.

“ I really enjoyed our time with Caras con casa, Michael's intro talk was a great way to set the stage for the rest of our trip. I think the service work day at the center could have been better organized to maximize our effectiveness, our group had too many people for the task at hand- we could have been more effective in our efforts if the projects were more well thought out prior to our arrival. The service work in the mangroves was especially frustrating, I don't think any of us were prepared for that experience.

16. Should LeadNY consider utilizing a third-party program facilitator such as Amizade for future study trips? Why or why not?



“ NO. I don't see the value. Organizations like Caras Con Causa are more than capable of hosting groups such as ours and facilitating. That was a confusing aspect of this trip for me was Amizade's purpose in our service learning.

“ I would argue yes, until at least Lead has positioned itself with organizations that can do it during visits. I found it more impactful than any visit we had engaged in prior over the course of our "2-years" in the program. There's a tangible difference between "discussing" something, and then rolling up your sleeves and "doing" something.

“ I think that decision would depend on time savings x cost... I don't think they did a better job than we could do on our own, but if an organization can provide "inside information" it is valuable. I think the facilitators could have helped more, although I understand that the need to manage the work of facilitators would probably make that effort moot, or detrimental to efficiency.

“ Not sure- while it was nice to meet and get to know Brandon (learned a lot about leadership and Amizade from side conversations), I do feel that Andrea and Larry could facilitate just as well.

17. Earlier in the program, we shared an ancient wisdom with you: "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, involve me and I will understand". Was this true for you? Think of speakers and readings leading up to the trip as "tell me", the tours as "show me", and the service learning work we did as "involve me". Please comment on the value or impact of our service learning work relative to the overall trip experience.

“ The service work was good, but I do really feel it could have had a greater impactful with more integration into the community. I felt lucky to be able to plant the gardens at the house the first day rather than build garden boxes at the main site. I enjoyed being out in the community seeing first-hand the living challenges and talking to a few residents.

“ The people from the community may not have even known we were there. I think it would have been more meaningful to decrease the manual but isolated labor efforts and assist in some of the community efforts, like delivering and cooking meals, or other community outreach or school needs or needs on small farms on the island, so we could better understand the way of life of those we were assisting, and feel more involved.

“ The service work was involved but I felt I lacked the complete picture when we did them so I felt not authentic doing so. They didn't seem impactful for us to do them. I could be wrong but I felt like a busy bee and not really doing something that had an impact to what we were doing.

“ While I think the Amizade pieces could have been better, I think it was definitely worthwhile as opposed to doing an additional 3 days of tours and speakers. Having a real experience like we did will both make it less forgettable and also gets us way more information regarding what things are really like vs just what someone tells us.

“ I think if we had found a way to get into more communities, whether through grocery store exploration or food stalls/trucks/restaurants we might have experienced a bit more of Puerto Rican life as it relates to an essential part of living through food. I did find great value in the tours and how the places we toured connect to social/political/environmental aspects of Puerto Rican life.

“ As for the work itself, I feel like we honestly didn't do that much. Our group is overall very skilled and it felt like we could/should have done a lot more for them during our time there, which was frustrating.

18. Likewise, think of another old admonition to "think globally and act locally". What did you learn about leadership as service, community development and related themes? How might you apply these lessons back in your own communities?

“ As a leader, I have thought about knowledge and expertise I have to make an impact, but one point that came up several times in Puerto Rico was to ensure that what we do is something the community wants. I know that I have been involved in projects time and time again that just act to help communities rather than asking what they want/need. I am keeping this in mind as I work in the local communities.

“ Working with Caras con Causa in the Catano community made me realize there are people in need right in my own community and I would like to do what I can to help. We need leaders to step up and act towards getting as many people involved in their own communities as possible.

“ One of the lessons that I will definitely apply back home is the 15% solutions activity that we did. I think that service work and community development can be such an overwhelming task if you try to solve all the problems. Starting with small solutions is a great way to not get frozen with anxiety and not do anything.

19. The study trip is the capstone event, bringing together much of what we learned in the months leading up to this event. Now that we are nearing the end of your LeadNY experience, how are you "connecting the dots" from multiple seminars, lessons, topics and discussions to develop a richer worldview of food, agricultural, natural resource and other issues? Please comment on how this may or may not have happened for you – how are things starting to "come together"?

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

24 INSTANCES

+gained insight on global perspectives of food, agriculture and leadership
+deeper insight on global social issues

AGRICULTURE

18 INSTANCES

+gained knowledge on agricultural complexities, systems, economies, and policy

INSIGHT ON LEADERSHIP

16 INSTANCES

+gained knowledge on leadership styles, skills, and areas for improvement

FOOD SYSTEMS

13 INSTANCES

+understand further issues of food systems and food access

- “ This program experience along with the study trip has helped me to broaden my knowledge to gain a worldview of food/agriculture and social issues. It has helped me to think about the community I work/live in and how it can better be supported by thinking more globally but acting locally.
- “ Through all of the seminars, conversations and relationships built over the last 3ish years. This trip, may not have turned the light bulb on, but it certainly brightened up the room. Being able to see all of the leadership qualities and different points of view, put into action, has really helped connect the dots from our day one leadership training to our first day back to work from PR.
- “ My experiences in LeadNY have brought me a better understanding of agriculture across the world and how it is connected to a global economy as well as the importance of a local agricultural economy.
- “ Lead has certainly lifted the veil on the complexity of legislature, scale of what it takes to grow, distribute and feed our population, as well as the diversity of food systems locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. Heading into the program, I thought I had a good understanding of what our food system, agriculture, and legislature - but continue to be surprised by the sheer scope of work and the challenges it takes make things happen.
- “ Switching thumbs, pausing, listening, reflecting, really gelled for me. Also ditching my preconceived notions about people and places don't serve anyone, but taking the time to have 1:1 conversations with people are the most impactful thing. I don't think they were my original goals at the start of LEAD, but they were for the trip, and while I did well at working toward them throughout the trip, I plan on keeping them going.
- “ Things are starting to come together. The trip has solidified the issue of food in not just the world but our country and our communities. Agriculture can be a part of the solution to the problem but it can not solve anything on its own. Education, understanding and willingness to admit mistakes and make changes is the only way to work toward the solution of this problem. I struggled with my leadership goal and after this year and the trip I have been able to identify something that stirs passion in me and how I can work to help communities.

20. *Through our observation of the effects of climate change, poverty and food insecurity in a developing region, are you thinking critically about your own (or your industry's) contribution to these systems in other geographies or at home? Which of your assumptions/paradigms have been challenged, if any?*

“ I think about the impacts agriculture can have on future generations - good or bad - are likely to impact our industry. We saw a big generational gap in agriculture in PR because of the colonization and industrialization of ag. That generational trauma imposed on people will continue to have ripple effects. I know my organization is working on food sovereignty, but what about food dignity? What about respecting people's cultures? How can we do better?

“ This trip has encouraged me to think more globally. Most opportunities and achievements come with support from other sources. Leveraging ones network on a larger scale can accomplish local goals much more efficiently to some extent.

“ I was encouraged to see so many climate-resilient farming practices being incorporated by Puerto Rican growers, and it has led me to begin discussions within my organization on how we may be able to replicate some of these practices on our farms.

“ Learning about poverty and food insecurity in Puerto Rico was the same as learning about poverty and food insecurity in our visit to New York City. I think of Catano being near the port of San Juan the same as the Bronx being so close to Hunts Point. How with so much food moving in and out of these ports is there such poverty right in the backyards? It just doesn't make sense!

21. *What did you learn that was "off the script" - not part of the planned agenda items? In other words, something you learned during meal or travel time, through casual conversation with our tour guide, bus driver or other host, or just something you picked up through reading, observation, etc.*

“ Puerto Rican' are extremely proud people that have been held-in-check and have had to continuously re-invent or re-establish their cultural identity and values generation after generation.

“ I observed that a majority of the places we toured were owned or operated by people who spent time in the US and had financial resources.

“ The meals in Catano really shocked me- very little access to fresh fruits and vegetables. We only ate this for 3 days, but the community is receiving these meals on a continual basis. This made me think about the larger picture and why this is and what can be done.

“ From some conversations with our tour guide and other hosts I learned that the quest for experience and knowledge is universal. The people I talked with are interested in learning about their food supplies and how they are be part of a solution or at least understand why the system is what it is. Talking with our tour guide, he was very interested in our experience with growing food and plants. Then talking with our host at the coffee farm it was great to see how she followed a passion for nature and farming even though she did not have experience with it growing up in the city.

POST-ENGAGEMENT SURVEY DATA SUMMARY

Close to one third of the cohort's personal goals were completely met. Fifteen fellows stated almost all of their goals were met, while eight expressed that only some were met. Factors involved to meeting and not meeting those goals both were addressed with time in mind. Some fellows expressed gratitude that time was made for reflection and prompts, while others addressed that the prompt sessions and reflection times were cut short due to a busy schedule. Some fellows addressed that because of the busy schedule, they did not have enough time to reflect fully on what they were experiencing. A common factor for reaching personal goals was centered around engagement. Fellows often stated that due to their commitment to engage in the discussions, ask questions, and immerse themselves in the experience, they were then able to achieve their goals. Additional common factors included reflection and the ability to document progress, as well as stepping outside of their comfort zone.

30% of the cohort stated that all of their professional goals were met, while 50% met almost all of their goals. Seven fellows believed that only some of their professional goals were met. Common factors for reaching these goals include furthering their knowledge on agriculture, the US-PR relationship, and social nuances on the island – much of this knowledge was related to engaging with leaders (farmers/business owners and other leaders) during site visits, as well as observing during the site visit experiences themselves. Additionally, fellows believed that time spent with their classmates added value to their experience and contributed to reaching their professional goals.

Several fellows believed that their understanding of community-engaged learning did not necessarily change, but that several experiences may have validated their already preconceived ideas on the topic. There were ten instances that related to community-engaged learning as a means to addressing community needs and making an impact towards those needs. Nine instances addressed collaboration (among program partners and communities) as a key element of community-engaged learning.

24 instances related to the United States and Puerto Rico relationship showed that the fellows learned a great deal of information that may have challenged their previously held assumptions or exceeded their expectations. Eight instances addressed that the challenges (surrounding agriculture, disaster response, and the US-PR relationship) they assumed to experience across the island were met, and five instances addressed the complex nature of the Puerto Rican food system as well as the US-PR relationship, which that itself was a contributing factor to key issues in the food system recognized by the fellows.

23 fellows found the critical reflection workbook useful or very useful. 12 found it somewhat useful, and two did not find it useful. Many fellows reported that they did not reflect often before utilizing the workbook, and that they enjoyed documenting their observations as well as thinking more deeply about what they were feeling and thinking throughout the experience. Time was an important factor among several fellows' remarks, as there were instances throughout the itinerary where reflection time was sacrificed in order to stay on schedule. Some fellows felt that this impacted the experience negatively. While no fellows reported that they wouldn't use critical reflection moving forward, 63% said they had intentions on using critical reflection in their personal and/or personal lives, and 37% were not sure. Time was a factor involved for those that were unsure. Those that intend to use critical reflection moving forward acknowledged the intention and strategy for using it to assess progress in their leadership or within their teams.

The community service aspects facilitated by Amizade/Caras con Causa were acknowledged with nuances among intent versus impact. A majority of the fellows stated that they felt their skillset was underutilized, and many fellows expressed confusion or a lack of clarity regarding the tasks that were distributed (in acknowledging addressing community needs). Many fellows pointed out that they were unsure whether or not the community knew of their presence or weren't understanding of why LeadNY was visiting the neighborhood. Yet, many fellows discussed their observations and conversations during service moments as contributing factors resulting in a positive experience. A majority of the fellows discussed newfound goals of becoming more engaged within their own community - specifically in food access and climate change resiliency.

Amizade facilitated an activity called "15% Solutions" which is an activity that asks learners to consider a challenge they would like to address or fix, and subsequently asks the learner to decide on small steps towards larger progress. This activity was highly favored among the cohort and was referenced throughout many responses. The fellows referenced using the 15% method as a means to becoming more involved with their community and/or in their team environment as a leader.

74% of the fellows believed that LeadNY met their goal of creating an experience that got fellows out of their comfort zone. 82% believed LeadNY met their goal of examining the US role and perceptions that may exist of the US throughout other world views. 97% believed that the cohort was able to view production, processing, technology, distribution, labor, environmental, trade and other issues through a different lens. 86% believed the trip aided in synthesizing the LeadNY experience by tying together previous learning to their time in Puerto Rico. 91% believed that they were able to practice listening, analytical, critical thinking, reflection and decision making skills throughout their experience. Collectively, the cohort agreed that LeadNY met their goal of comparing and contrasting advantages and disadvantages among New York State and Puerto Rico's agriculture and food systems.

The majority of fellows rated the pre-trip preparation highly, either stating the preparation was good, or very good. Eleven fellows believed preparation to be excellent. The majority also rated logistics (meals, lodging, and travel), where 30 believed it to be good or very good. Fourteen fellows believed the service learning with Amizade and Caras con Causa to be excellent. 8 found the service learning to be good, 8 found it very good and 4 found it fair. The site visits and experiences outside of the Amizade and Caras con Causa experience were highly rated as well. Eighteen fellows rated these experiences as excellent, thirteen rated them as very good, and 4 rated them as good. No fellows rated these experiences as fair. The experiences outside of the three-day service window were more favorable to the fellows than of the days facilitated by Amizade and Caras con Causa.

The highest rated experiences among the activities facilitated by Amizade and Caras con Causa were the days in which Michael Fernandez, founder of Caras con Causa, facilitated and presented. These experiences were Day 1: Orientation and Day 2: Visit to the Vietnam Community. Michael Fernandez was referenced throughout several responses as an important factor in the fellows' understanding of challenges in community organizing, societal opportunities, and the local food system. The mangrove restoration experience was also highly favored among the group. The least favorable experience was a presentation by a regenerative agriculture hobby farmer that the group found did not resonate with their expectations or align with their interests or belief system. The fellows participated in an interactive Bomba (native dance) lesson, where 17 fellows found it to be very good, 10 found it good, six found it excellent and two found it poor. Overall, the fellows rated the three-day Amizade and Caras con Causa experience in good favor where the majority found it to be good or very good, six found it to be excellent, one found it to be fair, and one found it poor.

When asked if LeadNY should use a third-party provider for future study trips, 14 said yes, five said no, 4 were unsure, and 11 said maybe. Their responses proved a diverse perspective among the group, where some stated they suggested LeadNY use third-party programs to identify hosts and site visits, but that LeadNY should facilitate all aspects of the learning and engagement process. Others believed the third-party programming to be a necessary tool in providing engaged learning and many fellows were in favor of service learning as important concept for future study trips. Most fellows also found informal experiences (outside of the formal programming) to be a contributing factor to their overall learning experience.

When asked about how the study trip synthesized previous LeadNY programming and curriculum to this capstone event, the common themes that fellows mentioned were gaining insight on global perspectives, broadening their understanding and knowledge of agricultural challenges and systems, a greater knowledge gained on leadership skills and practices, and advancing their understanding of food system challenges.

Some fellows noted observations of Puerto Rican business owners or leaders as those who have spent time outside of PR and may have not necessarily experienced the same issues as the locals that the fellows learned and heard from. The fellows often referenced food access issues and concerns about a lack of diversity of food options, which ultimately resulted in the fellows questioning how this might be happening in their own communities.

Fellows addressed having deepened their comprehension of climate change as a result of witnessing the affects of natural disasters on the island, as well as linking the food system challenge to issues stemming from climate issues. Many fellows questioned their industry's motives or methods of improving their engagement with climate and food access initiatives. Some fellows discussed intent on involving their businesses or organizations in more civic engagement opportunities. Many of the fellows conveyed having gained a better grasp of the term "thinking globally, acting locally", whereas they exhibited plans to engage on a local level to contribute to a much larger global issue.

PROGRAM EVALUATION SYNOPSIS

Fellows' personal goals centered around culture, discomfort, food, and engagement. The fellows aimed to deepen their understanding of Puerto Rican culture, connect with the community, embrace new experiences and engage in service work. About one third of the cohort achieved their personal goals. Factors affecting goal attainment included time constraints, with some fellows appreciating reflection opportunities while others felt rushed due to a busy schedule. Engagement in discussions, asking questions, and stepping out of comfort zones were common factors for reaching goals.

Their professional goals focused on relationships, agriculture, leadership, and governance. The fellows were interested in learning about leadership dynamics in agricultural businesses, the Puerto Rican workforce, and disaster relief operations. They expressed more confidence in their professional goals than their personal ones. 30% of the cohort achieved all professional goals, 50% nearly all, and 7 fellows only some. Factors include learning about agriculture, US-PR relations, and social dynamics through engaging with leaders and classmates during site visits. The fellows gained new insights and challenges about the US-Puerto Rico relationship, including agriculture and disaster response. They discovered complexities in the Puerto Rican food system and its connection to key issues, challenging their assumptions.

Many fellows went into the experience interested in documenting their experience to aid in memory and insights. After the experience, 23 fellows found the critical reflection workbook very useful, 12 found it somewhat useful, and 2 did not find it useful. Many reported increased reflection and deeper thinking, although some felt time constraints impacted the experience negatively. 63% intend to use critical reflection in their personal or professional lives, while 37% are unsure, mainly due to time constraints.

Coming into the study trip experience, more than half of the fellows had previous experience in community engagement. Some fellows' understanding of community-engaged learning was affirmed rather than altered. Ten instances highlighted using community-engaged learning to address community needs. Collaboration among partnering programs and local organizations was emphasized in nine instances as vital for community-engaged learning. Fellows highlighted gaining global perspectives, understanding agricultural challenges, and improving leadership skills as a means for strengthening their civic engagement. These themes contribute to the framework of community-engaged learning.

Fellows noted Puerto Rican business leaders with outside experience may not fully understand local issues like food access and diversity concerns, prompting reflection on community parallels. Fellows deepened their understanding of climate change by witnessing natural disasters' impacts and connecting food system challenges to climate issues. They questioned their industry's approach to climate change and food access, expressing further interest in civic engagement. They aimed to apply the concept of "thinking globally, acting locally" by engaging within their own communities to address these global challenges. It can be assumed that most of the cohort was impacted by the framework of community-engaged learning during this study trip.

Amizade/Caras con Causa community service was acknowledged for its positive impact despite some challenges. Fellows felt underutilized, lacked clarity on tasks, and felt that their presence was not exactly explicit among the community in Cataño. However, service moments led to positive experiences and inspired fellows to engage more in their community issues such as food access and climate change resilience. Amizade's facilitation of daily reflection was met with mixed feelings. However, Amizade led the "15% Solutions" activity where learners address challenges with small steps for progress. It was well-received and referenced by fellows to use as a skill moving forward.

Most LeadNY fellows - 74% - felt that the program pushed them out of their comfort zone, and 82% believed it successfully examined the US role and perceptions in other parts of the world. Almost all - 97% - felt that they saw global issues from a new perspective. 86% found the Puerto Rico trip valuable for tying together their previous learning. 91% felt they practiced valuable skills. The cohort agreed LeadNY succeeded in comparing New York State and Puerto Rico's agriculture and food systems' advantages and disadvantages.

Fellows rated pre-trip preparation, logistics, service learning, and site visits highly. Pre-trip prep and logistics were rated good or very good, with some fellows finding them excellent. Service learning with Amizade and Caras con Causa received positive ratings. Site visits and experiences outside of the service window were also highly rated, in fact they were rated more highly than of the three-day Amizade experience, with no "fair" ratings given.

Results of rating the Amizade/Caras con Causa experience showed that certain experiences stood out from the rest. Specifically, Michael Fernandez's Orientation and Visit to the Vietnam Community was rated the most highly, followed by the mangrove restoration activity. However, a presentation on regenerative agriculture by a hobby farmer received the least favorable feedback. Overall, the majority of the participants rated the three-day experience positively, with some considering it excellent, and only a few rating it as fair or poor. These results suggest that the activities were well-received, and that the leadership of Michael Fernandez played a crucial role in their success.

LeadNY members had varied opinions on using third-party providers for study trips, with some suggesting third-party programs for identifying hosts but preferring LeadNY to manage the learning process. Others viewed third-party programs as essential for engaged learning, with many supporting service learning for future trips. Informal experiences were also valued for enhancing overall learning. Finally, the fellows greatly benefited from sharing their elevator pitch on their final day in Puerto Rico, and by working through this reflective exercise, found great meaning in the process.

SUGGESTIONS

LeadNY and its Advisory Board may benefit from considering the following when planning the 2025 and future study trips:

1. Maintain service learning as a key experience in the study trip programming.
2. Partner with a third-party service learning provider to, at the least, establish relationships with local organizations, however, have LeadNY continue facilitation in the learning process/content delivery when relevant/possible.
3. IF a third-party service learning provider is responsible for planning presentations and guest speakers, ensure the interests of the group are confirmed and that relevant topic areas are considered.
4. IF a third-party service learning provider is utilized, ensure that the skillset and strengths of the cohort are addressed, while also ensuring that the fellows understand that their greatest strengths may not be used to their full capacity -- but that community-engaged learning is an act of doing for and learning from the community based on community needs.
5. Consider facilitating a preparatory community-engaged learning workshop in advance of the study trip, which may be inclusive of critical reflection content.
6. Utilize a reflection activity similar to a workbook or other tangible device that allows fellows to document their observations and findings.
7. Intentionally carve out more time for group reflection activity that is not vulnerable to being amended or removed from the itinerary altogether. Keeping time and space for group reflection should be consistently facilitated.
8. Keep the elevator pitch and wrap-up session in the itinerary as a way to synthesize the reflection process.
9. Consider providing a pre-study trip survey to gauge the participants' expectations and goals. Consider sharing the results back to the fellows when they are prompted to answer their post-experience survey, so that they can revisit their goals and expectations prior to engagement.
10. Continue with the pre-study trip planning workshop and be sure to discuss social/cultural expectations just as well as packing/logistical planning.

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LeadNY

<https://cals.cornell.edu/global-development/our-work/our-initiatives/leadny>

Amizade

<https://amizade.org/>

Caras con Causa

<https://www.causapr.org/>



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