

**Evaluation of state leadership program objectives**

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### Introduction and Theoretical Framework

Several states have agricultural leadership development programs, as a result of the Kellogg Farmers Study Program (W.K. Kellogg Foundation, n.d.). Mississippi State University Extension introduced the Thad Cochran Agricultural Leadership Program (TCALP) in 2017. TCALP provides professional development to meet the need for agricultural leadership within Mississippi. Nine participants attended eight seminars over two years. Each seminar explored a different sector of agriculture and unique qualities of leadership (“About TCALP,” 2019). For this study, our research objective was to evaluate the how well participants perceived meeting programmatic objectives. This objective aligns with AAEE’s research priority addressing “efficient and effective agricultural education programs” (Roberts, T., Harder, A., & Brashears, M., 2016, p. 43). The theoretical framework for this study was the Context, Inputs, Process and Products (CIPPS) evaluation model (Stufflebeam, 1971). This model is apt for evaluating developing programs in dynamic social contexts (Alkin, 2004).

### Methodology

TCALP applicants were asked to provide a statement of interest and completed a survey to indicate their perceived importance of the program’s learning objectives. We coded their statement of interests for themes that aligned with the program’s objectives. Any program objective that a participant indicated desire to accomplish in their statement of interest was recorded and totaled among the members. The program objectives were revisited to determine how well the desired objectives were achieved. After the completion of the program, participants were asked to indicate to what extent they were able to achieve each of these developmental and educational objectives.

### Results

The objectives of the program were at least somewhat met by almost all of the participants. There were more participants who indicated they “definitely” met the program objective than indicated a strong desire to achieve each of the objectives (see Table 1).

Table 1.

*TCALP Participant’s Perceived Desired and Achieved Accomplishment.*

TCALP Objectives	Desired	Achieved		
		Definitely	Somewhat	Uncertain
Accept leadership responsibility	5	7	2	0
Represent ag as effective communicators	4	8	1	0
Learn about major policy issues	3	7	2	0
Learn about globalization	3	4	4	1
Collaboration with ag professionals	6	9	0	0
Foster an entrepreneurial culture	2	4	4	1
Encourage lifelong learning & development	6	8	1	0

*Note.* Desired column indicates the number of participants who listed that program objective in their statement of interest. Achieved column contains an ordinal scale, participants were asked to indicate whether they were uncertain, partially, or definitely accomplished the objectives.

Participants were asked on the program application to indicate their level of desire to learn programmatic topics. The pre-program level of desire, as indicated on their application, was generally strong for the majority of topics. Applicants had the strongest desire to understand 1) agricultural markets and 2) trade and the legislative process (see Table 2). Applicants had the least desire for education on population and consumer preference changes.

An exist survey was given to participants to indicate their post-program development of programmatic topics. The post-program level of development was generally strong, but with an overall lower mean than the pre-program level for understanding agricultural markets, and trade. Interestingly, participants indicated that the population and consumer preference changes and education on agriculture in other states had their lowest level for desire in education, they also indicated the lowest level of development in these topics post-program.

Table 2.

*TCALP Program Topics Desire Level Pre-Program and Post-Program*

TCALP Topics	Pre-Program		Post-Program	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Foundational leadership concepts	4.56	0.73	4.22	0.44
Leading groups/teams/organizations	4.67	0.50	4.22	0.67
Leading change	4.78	0.44	4.11	1.05
Understanding agricultural markets and trade	4.89	0.33	4.00	0.71
Population and consumer preference changes	4.22	0.67	3.33	0.87
Rural community/economic development	4.56	0.73	4.00	1.00
Agricultural technology development	4.67	0.73	4.00	1.00
Legislative processes (federal, state)	4.89	0.44	4.22	0.67
International/global agriculture	4.67	0.53	4.22	1.30
Agriculture in other states	4.22	0.67	3.67	1.12
Mississippi agricultural topics	4.78	0.50	4.44	0.73

*Note.* Level of desire was indicated using a Likert-scale with 1 = no desire and 5 = strong desire.

### Impact

Knowing which program objectives were achieved by the participants is imperative for the Mississippi State University Extension Service to better prepare and deliver educational programming in the future. Insights from this study will be used to adjust educational contact and activities used in future seminars to best meet the program's objectives. The TCALP participants indicated that the majority of program objectives for TCALP were generally met or somewhat (see Table). Even though not all members indicated a desire to accomplish a specific objective, many objectives were met. Based on the results of the study, the program should place further emphasis on content and activities that focus on education about globalization and fostering an entrepreneurial culture. Generally, participants indicated a high post-program desire level (see Table 2). However, there is an overall decrease from the pre-program level dire. Further investigation should be placed on understanding this decrease.

## References

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