

Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO)

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Education
and
Research



Role(s)	<p>Located within the Department of Economics at the University of Notre Dame, LEO is a domestic anti-poverty research lab committed to reducing poverty and improving lives through evidence-based programs and policies.</p> <p>LEO's impact evaluations generate evidence that is shared with social service organizations, policymakers, funders, and others who can put it to use to help move more families out of poverty.</p> <p>LEO performs research in six focus areas: education, health, housing, criminal justice, self-sufficiency, and emerging issues.</p>
Mission	<p>LEO believes that academic researchers, service providers, and policymakers all play a critical role in ending poverty. LEO matches top researchers with passionate leaders in social service agencies to conduct impact evaluations that identify the innovative, effective, and scalable programs and policies that help people move permanently out of poverty.</p>
History	<p>2012 – Founded by Notre Dame Economics Professors Bill Evans and Jim Sullivan as a research center within the Department of Economics, the only domestic poverty lab at that time focused on conducting randomized controlled trials.</p> <p>2019 – Inaugural Managing Director Heather Reynolds joins the LEO team, ushering in a new era of growth and setting the lab on a path to double its number of active and completed research projects within the next two years.</p> <p>2021 – LEO launched a 10-year strategic plan to become the go-to research lab for innovative providers building and using evidence-based domestic poverty solutions.</p>
Org	<p>Sixteen staff who provide administrative, fundraising, communications, and research support</p> <p>Eight research faculty, including LEO's two co-founders</p> <p>Fifty-one faculty affiliates making up an interdisciplinary network of scholars from institutions across the country who bring expertise and capacity to LEO's research projects</p> <p>Fourteen Notre Dame undergraduate interns and two Notre Dame graduate students supporting LEO operations and research</p> <p>Leadership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Bill Evans, Keough-Hesburgh Professor of Economics, LEO Co-founder • Dr. Jim Sullivan, Gilbert F. Schaefer College Professor of Economics, LEO Co-founder • Heather Reynolds, LEO Managing Director
Board	<p>LEO's Advisory Board provides guidance on the lab's strategic direction and work: https://leo.nd.edu/people/our-board/</p>
Finance	<p>FY2022 budget of \$4.8M, forecasted to grow to \$18M by FY31.</p> <p>Funding sources include private and government grants, individual donations, and endowment payouts.</p>
Data Source	<p>Three national data sets are used across many LEO projects: Infutor (a commercial dataset allowing us to measure housing stability), Experian (a commercial dataset allowing us to measure financial stability via debt and savings levels), and National Student Clearinghouse Data (allowing us to measure higher education persistence and completion outcomes).</p> <p>Primary Indiana source has been via the Management Performance Hub (MPH) to gain access to education and labor outcomes for studies including Indiana participants.</p> <p>We source state data from the following states: IN, TX, CA, WA, NY, IL, WI, SD and OH.</p> <p>County-level data comes from HMIS systems, school systems, Departments of Human Services, and Transportation Departments.</p>
Data Access	<p>Data goes through a process including a data sharing agreement and security review. Notre Dame Research reviews and approves all Data Sharing Agreements with external partners.</p>

Tech Capabilities	<p>Notre Dame has recently adopted a HIPAA-compatible environment available to LEO.</p> <p>We have in-house expertise utilizing Infutor and Experian national datasets. We perform monthly data extracts, clean data, and match to study data via identifiers.</p> <p>Notre Dame IT support staff and CRC scientists can help researchers store and access data.</p>
Projects	<p>Goodwill Excel Center - evaluating the impact of program that works with high school dropouts to complete the IN high school diploma and improve earnings and employment outcomes.</p> <p>Ivy Tech Success Coaches - evaluating the impact of a program that works with community college students to improve persistence and completion of an associate degree (or transfer to 4-year program).</p> <p>PACE Indy - evaluating the impact of a program that connects employers with individuals re-entering society after involvement with the criminal justice system.</p>
Future Focus	<p>This year, LEO launched a new strategic plan to reach its goal to become the go-to research lab for innovative providers building and using evidence-based domestic poverty solutions. Some metrics that will be crucial for meeting this goal including increasing LEO's number of partners and projects, increasing LEO journal publications of our research, and growing our dissemination work.</p>
Talent Development	<p>LEO trains new social service provider partners in impact evaluations and creating a culture of evidence at their organizations.</p> <p>LEO employs a number of undergraduate and graduate students every year.</p>
Data Sharing Agreements	<p>Many agreements in place; however, they are use-case specific</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Student Clearinghouse • Ray Marshall Center at UT Austin • Management Performance Hub, Indiana • Chapin Hall, University of Chicago • US Census Data Center (in progress) • New York Department of Labor
Programs/ Publications	<p>Journal publications: https://leo.nd.edu/impact/our-publications/</p> <p>Quarterly newsletters: https://leo.nd.edu/act/news/newsletter/</p>
Resources	<p>LEO partners and projects: https://leo.nd.edu/partners-projects/</p> <p>LEO-generated evidence: https://leo.nd.edu/impact/lessons-learned/</p> <p>Partnering with LEO: https://leo.nd.edu/mission/how-to-partner-with-us/</p>