

# Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program

2025 PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT SUMMARY



Over the past decade, Cambia Health Foundation has invested more than \$25 million in the Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program (SSLP) to nurture emerging palliative care leaders who could improve care for people with serious illness. Our commitment to supporting leadership development as a catalyst to transform health care was purposeful and intentional and yet the results exceeded our expectations.

We proudly supported 108 innovative projects, but the “secret sauce” was that every aspect of the program was designed to prioritize the innovators themselves. Recognizing that growth flourishes in connection, we sought to cultivate a diverse community of leaders grounded in strong relationships. While we created opportunities for connection and collaboration at every turn, it was the scholars who brought the community to life and embodied the culture that has made this program so impactful.

The 108 scholars—physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains and other dedicated professionals—have brought compassion and innovation to their work in communities across the country, strengthening the field of palliative care and improving the experience of patients and families. Their work demonstrates how transformative it can be when emerging leaders from a variety of disciplines have the community, resources and support they need to advance whole-person care.

As we reflect on the past ten years, this evaluation offers an opportunity to learn directly from the scholars—how the program shaped their careers, advanced the field and what made this interprofessional leadership development model so effective. We hope these insights will inspire a continued commitment to supporting the next generation who will carry this work forward.

Thank you to every scholar, mentor, partner and supporter who has been part of this journey. Your dedication strengthens our belief in the power of collaborative leadership to create a more person-focused health care system.

With hope and optimism,

**Peggy Maguire**  
President, Cambia Health Foundation

#### ABOUT CAMBIA HEALTH FOUNDATION

Cambia Health Foundation is the corporate foundation of Cambia Health Solutions. Founded in 2007, the foundation has funded over \$138 million in grants to advance whole-person care models at every stage of life to build a just and inclusive health care system for all.

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### EVALUATION SUMMARY

To learn more about the program and its scholars, or to download the comprehensive report, please visit:

[www.cambiahealthfoundation.org/focus-areas/sojourns-scholar-leadership-program.html](https://www.cambiahealthfoundation.org/focus-areas/sojourns-scholar-leadership-program.html)

# MEET THE SOJOURNS COMMUNITY

SOJOURNS  
SCHOLARS



PAST AND PRESENT  
ADVISORY BOARD  
MEMBERS

PALLIATIVE  
CARE EXPERTS\*

CHF STAFF\*

# MEET THE SOJOURNS COMMUNITY

Throughout the report we will refer to the following groups:

## SOJOURNS COMMUNITY

Includes Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program (SSLP) scholars, advisory board members, mentors, palliative care experts and Cambia Health Foundation (CHF) program staff.

## SCHOLAR

Anyone who received a Sojourn Scholar grant award. Includes those with active projects and those who contribute to the community as alumni.

## COHORT

Group of scholars (10-12) who entered the program in the same year and participated together.

## ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

Past and current members of the SSLP advisory board.

## PALLIATIVE CARE EXPERTS

Leaders in palliative care who have supported the program, provided feedback on its impact and/or shared perspectives on the challenges and opportunities for the field of palliative care.

## CHF STAFF

Current and previous employees of Cambia Health Foundation that played a role in the SSLP.



*“Observing Sojourns Scholars achieve their personal goals and advance on their professional journeys is inspiring. I think the greatest strength of the program has been the collective impact beyond individual achievements.”*

**ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER**

## Key definitions

For the purposes of this evaluation, we use the following terms as defined below.

### PALLIATIVE CARE

Palliative care is specialized medical care for people living with a serious illness. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family. Palliative care is provided by a specially trained team of doctors, nurses, social workers, chaplains and other specialists who work together with a patient’s other doctors to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the patient’s prognosis. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and it can be provided along with curative treatment.

*Source: Center to Advance Palliative Care*

### PRINCIPLES OF PALLIATIVE CARE

These are less conclusively defined, but commonly understood by the SSLP to include:

- Whole-person care
- Skilled communication and informed choice
- Access and equity
- Interprofessional team

# EVALUATION APPROACH

This program was independently evaluated by Future Work Design in 2025. The evaluation was guided by a structured process that linked goals, data collection and outputs.

## EVALUATION PURPOSE

Using Michael Quinn Patton’s Utilization-Focused Evaluation framework<sup>1</sup>, Cambia Health Foundation (CHF) identified **Judgment of Overall Value** as the primary purpose of this evaluation. As the program concludes after a decade, the central question is straightforward: *Did the Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program deliver outcomes that justify the investment—did it work?*

Secondary purposes include **knowledge generation, accountability and learning**. These remain important and are reflected in the evaluation goals, but the guiding focus has been on assessing the program’s overall value across its lifespan.

## DATA SOURCES



**175+ existing data sources:** Scholar proposals and applications, scholar reports, Sojourns Summit evaluations, scholar surveys and videos, scholar articles, industry and conference literature and podcasts.



**5 focus groups** with scholars (12), advisory board members (5) and Cambia Health Foundation staff (3).



**18 individual interviews** with scholars (11), palliative care experts (5) and Cambia Health Solutions staff (2).



**An extensive evaluation survey** was completed by 90% of past and current scholars (97), 90% of past and current advisory board members (9), and a selection of palliative care industry experts familiar with SSLP (10), for a total of 117 participants.

## PROCESS

The evaluation process reflects the challenge that the SSLP is both one program and a collection of 108 diverse and unique projects. Because projects varied widely in aims, settings and methods, standardized outcomes were difficult to collect and compare. Instead, we use scholars’ professional judgment and evidence to understand subsequent system-level changes. This scholar-centered approach grounds conclusions in field expertise and real-world context, surfacing emergent and unexpected outcomes.

### HOW WE GATHERED THE EVIDENCE

- Reviewed existing program data to establish context and identify gaps.
- Conducted focus groups and interviews to collect stories and qualitative evidence.
- Fielded a survey to validate and extend insights.
- Synthesized findings across sources.

### CONFIDENTIALITY AND ATTRIBUTION

All survey responses and interviews were conducted anonymously to encourage open and candid feedback. Quotations and insights presented in this report are attributed by participant role rather than by individual identity.

# EVALUATION GOALS

Questions we set out to answer from 10 years of the SSLP:

NO. 01

Did the program achieve its goals?



Identify, cultivate and advance the next generation of palliative care leaders.



Invest in innovative projects that improve the care of people with serious illness.



Create a community of palliative care leaders that influence and accelerate broader system change.

NO. 02

What value did key components of the SSLP program design deliver?

NO. 03

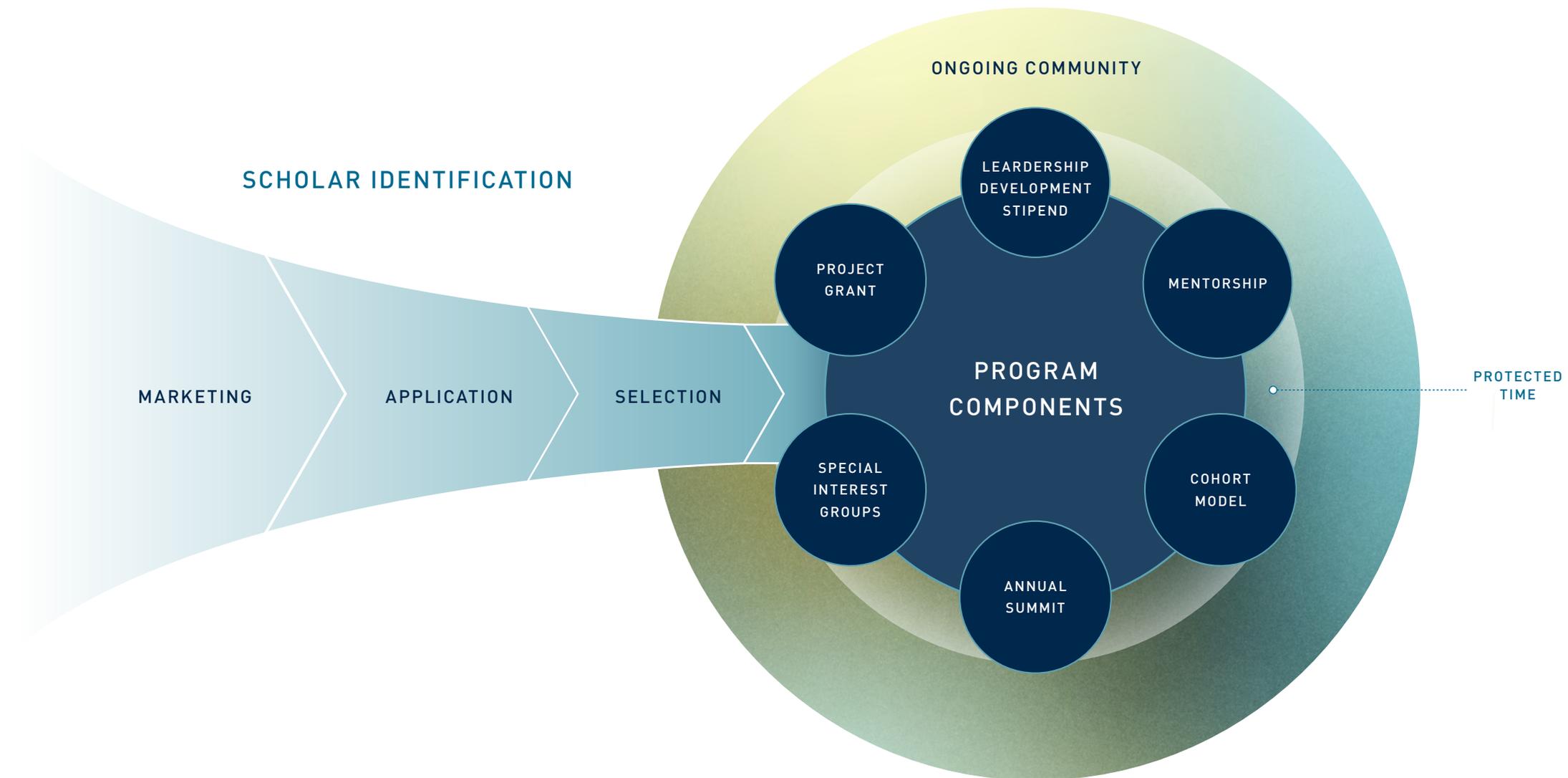
How might the SSLP or a similar leadership development program be improved in the future?

NO. 04

What lessons does the SSLP community have for palliative care, philanthropy and health care?

# PROGRAM DESIGN

The scholar experience was shaped by the interplay between what the program offered and how it was delivered. This section explores which elements were most and least effective.



# PROGRAM DESIGN

## HOW DID SCHOLARS RATE THEIR EXPERIENCE IN SSLP?

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



Scholars' highest-rated experiences were those led by CHF, highlighting the foundation's strong commitment to execution and follow-through.

## HOW DID SCHOLARS RANK THE PROGRAM COMPONENTS?

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED

RANKED FROM MOST TO LEAST VALUABLE

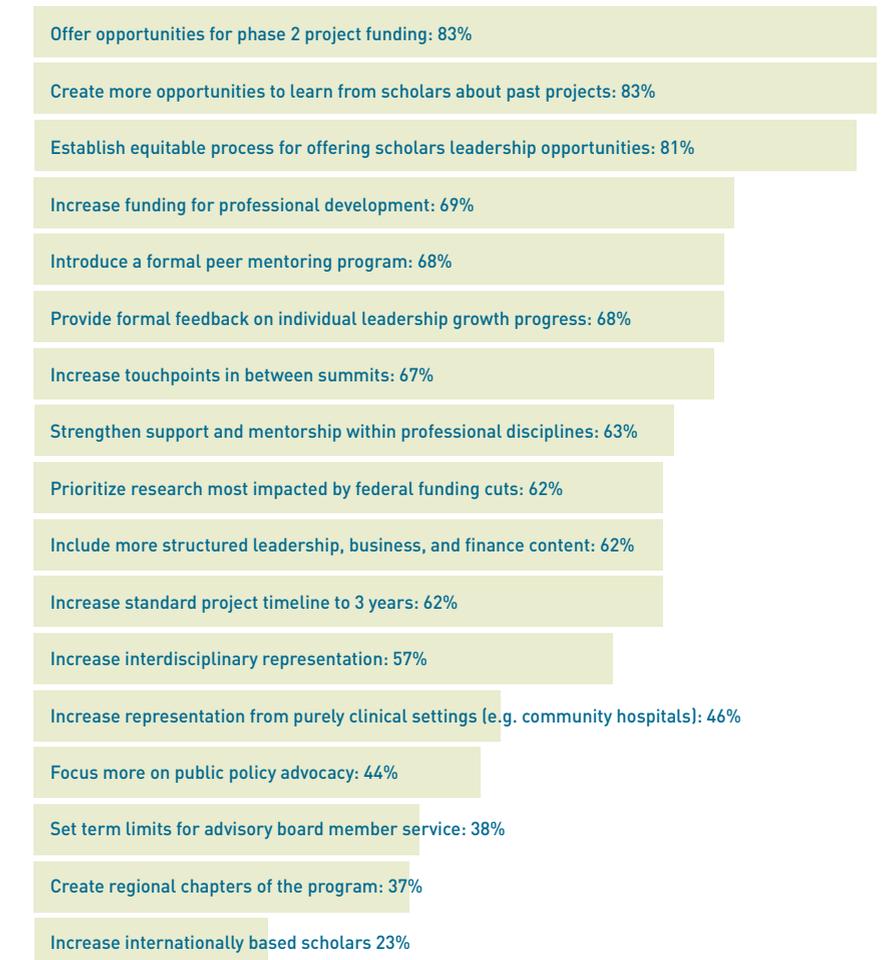
	COMPONENT	VALUE
1	Annual summit	Community building
2	Cohort experience	Peer based mentorship and support
3	Project grant	Dedicated time to advance their work
4	Leadership stipend	Personalized leadership development plans
5	Mentorship	Commitment and dedication
6	Special Interest Groups	Collaboration

The SSLP stood apart for integrating substantial project funding with structured leadership development and a sustained community of practice, a combination unmatched by other comparable programs.

## TO WHAT EXTENT DOES THE SOJOURNS COMMUNITY AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS FOR SIMILAR PROGRAMS AND/OR A FUTURE ITERATION OF THIS PROGRAM?

117 SOJOURNS COMMUNITY MEMBERS SURVEYED

% = AGREE AND STRONGLY AGREE COMBINED

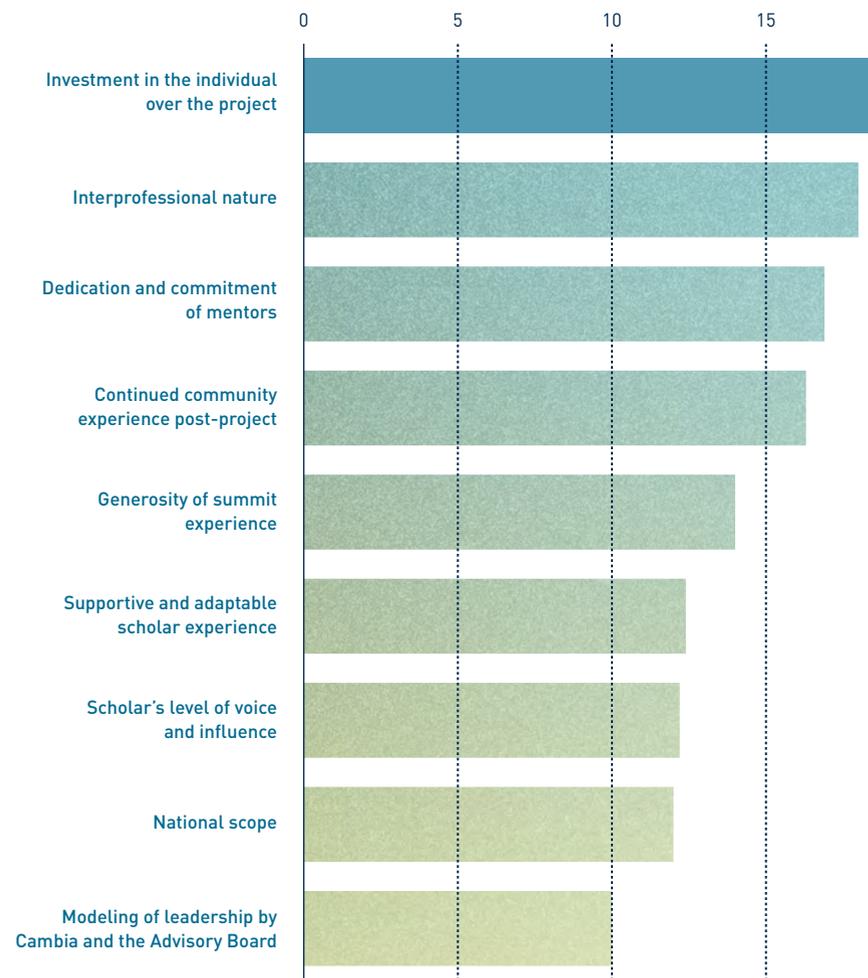


# PROGRAM DESIGN

## WHAT ASPECTS OF THE PROGRAM MADE IT SPECIAL OR UNIQUE COMPARED TO SIMILAR PROGRAMS?

 117 SOJOURNS COMMUNITY MEMBERS SURVEYED

COMBINED SCORE RANKED FROM MOST TO LEAST VALUABLE



## Top defining features



### INVESTMENT IN THE INDIVIDUAL

In every touchpoint it was apparent that the leadership development of the scholar was the priority. This was evident in the trust-based relationships built with scholars, flexibility and adaptability offered during the project grant and the generosity of the summit experience.

*"I felt deeply cared for and understood as part of the program. Cambia invested in me as a person and as a leader. That felt different than other programs which were more tied to the project or institution."*

2017 SCHOLAR



### INTERPROFESSIONAL NATURE

Making the program interprofessional had a profound impact on the work, the community and on the field.

*"The interdisciplinary aspect of Sojourns is unique. It built respect across disciplines and elevated the entire field."*

PALLIATIVE CARE EXPERT

*"The recognition of interprofessional leadership through the Sojourns Scholars Program has allowed me to finally be seen in my career."*

2021 SCHOLAR



### CONTINUED COMMUNITY EXPERIENCE

While many programs have an alumni network and some provide annual events, the level of investment that the SSLP program makes in supporting the scholar network through the summit and ongoing communications is extraordinary. It's this investment that draws scholars back year after year and their engagement is what fuels the community.

*"The program was invaluable for me in terms of developing a national network of support and collaboration. I have learned so much from my peers, mentors and the whole community."*

2014 SCHOLAR



### DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT OF MENTORS

Many scholars describe a form of mentorship that extended far beyond the life of a project and often became a lifelong source of support, advice and sponsorship.

*"Mentorship is a two-way street. The relationships work best when you can learn from each other and recognize the shared experience as human beings."*

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

# PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program was designed around three clear aims. This section evaluates the program's outcomes against these goals, highlighting both the measurable impacts and the ways scholars described their growth and contributions to the field.



DEVELOPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS



INVESTING IN INNOVATION THROUGH PROJECTS



ACCELERATING SYSTEM CHANGE

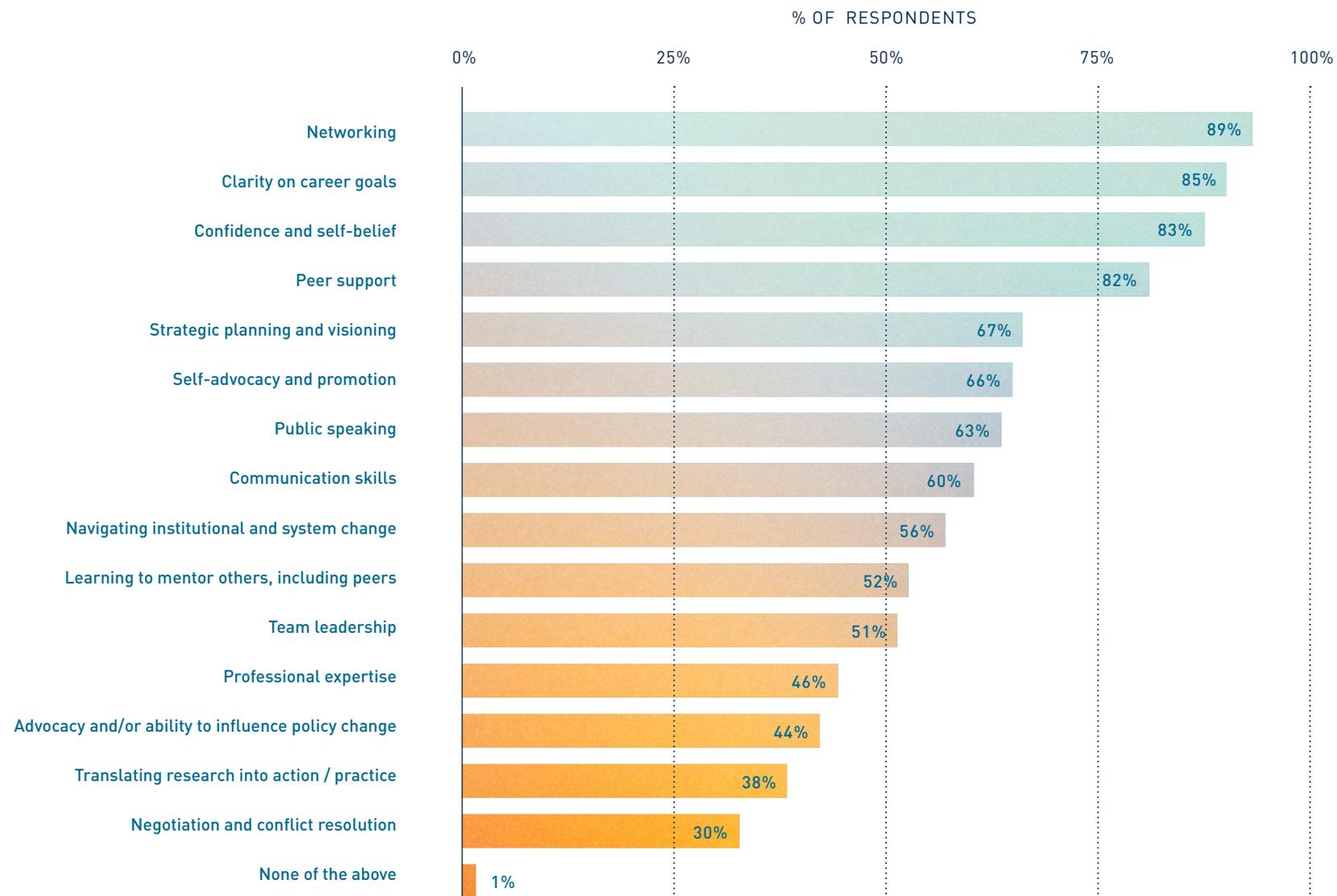
# PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



## Leadership skills

WHAT SKILLS DID SCHOLARS REPORT HAVING GAINED AS A DIRECT RESULT OF THE PROGRAM?

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



*“Through my experiences in the program I was able to increase my confidence and collaborate with interdisciplinary colleagues that shared my same passions. It was the most valuable experience to date in my career.”*

2021 SCHOLAR



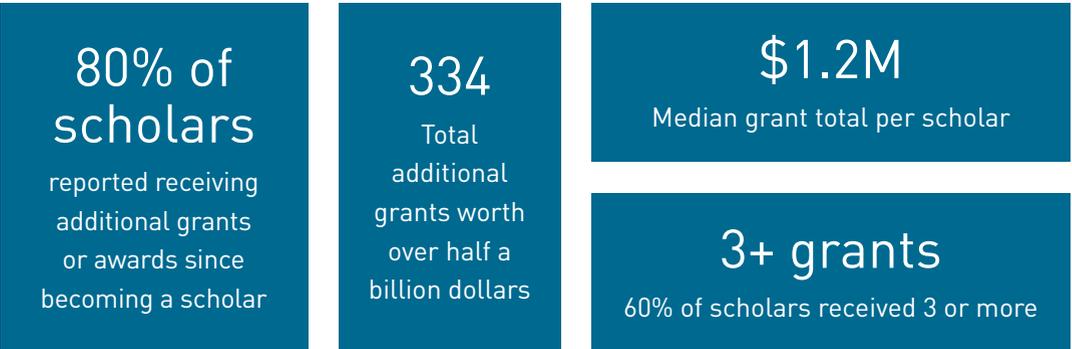
## Achievements

Scholars reported attaining the following achievements since they became a Sojourns Scholar:

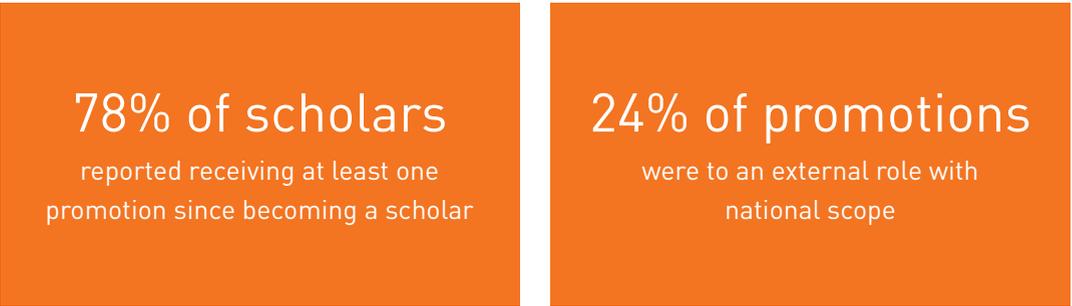
### APPOINTMENT TO NATIONAL COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL SOCIETIES OR BOARDS



### ADDITIONAL GRANTS



### PROMOTIONS



*“My community leadership as Chair of the Board for the Alzheimer’s Association Capital of Texas has allowed me to extend lessons from the Sojourn Scholar program into advocacy, public engagement and caregiver-focused programming across the region.”*

2022 SCHOLAR

*“The reputation of this national program, along with the leadership skills I gained through mentorship, was also a catalyst to an internal promotion within my organization.”*

2021 SCHOLAR

# PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

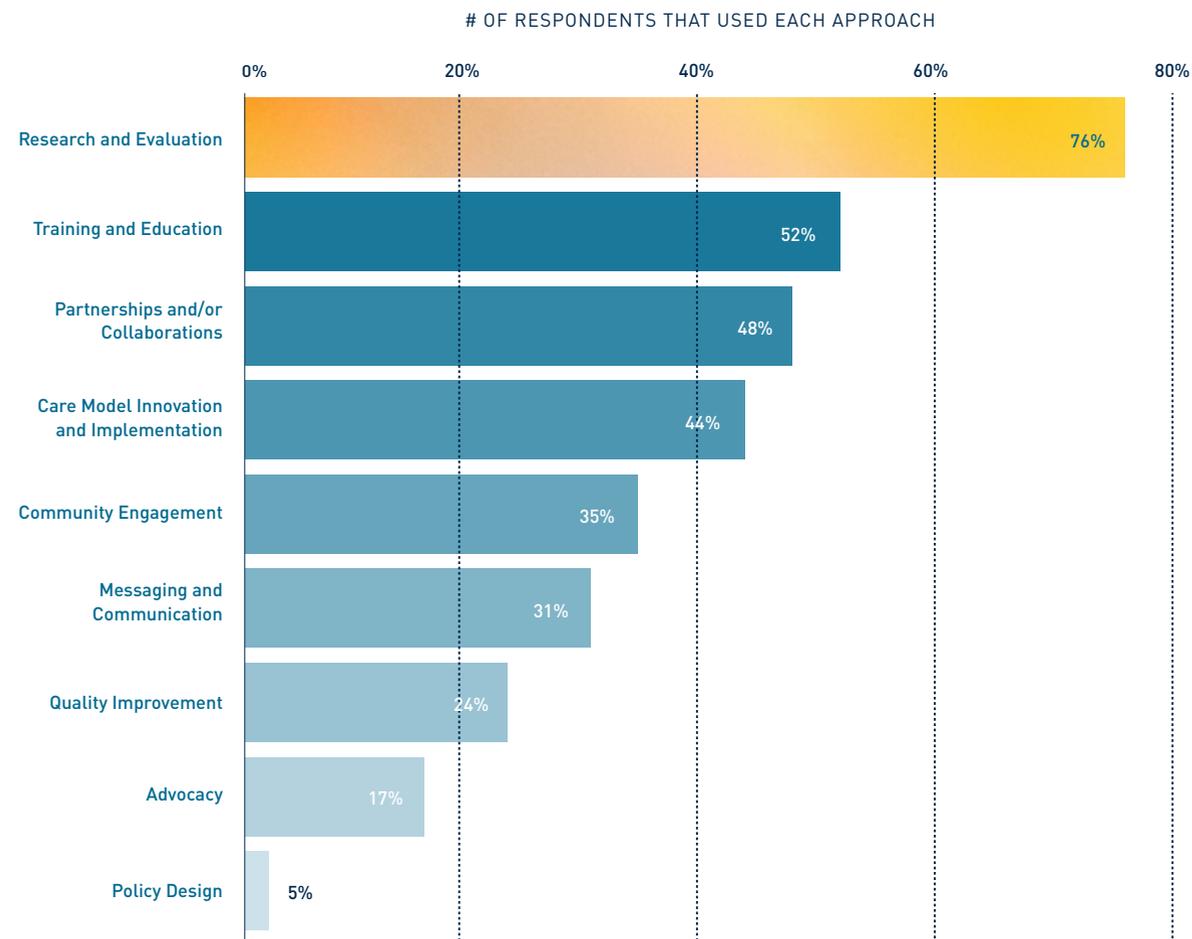


## Project approaches and methods

### WHAT APPROACHES DID SCHOLARS USE IN THEIR PROJECTS?

QUESTION FORMAT: MULTI-SELECT UP TO 3

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



**74% of scholars selected 3+ project approaches** indicating most projects used a multi-approach strategy.

Scholars are primarily building evidence and skills through research, education, and partnerships; fewer are pushing on quality improvement, policy, or advocacy.



*“The program has enabled me to better contribute to positive change in the field in every way imaginable—from modeling and mentorship to support for my project which I firmly believe will not only impact and expand my discipline and field but has already further catapulted my career as a researcher and leader—the program has been truly transformative for me and has allowed for meaningful professional self-actualization.”*

2022 SCHOLAR

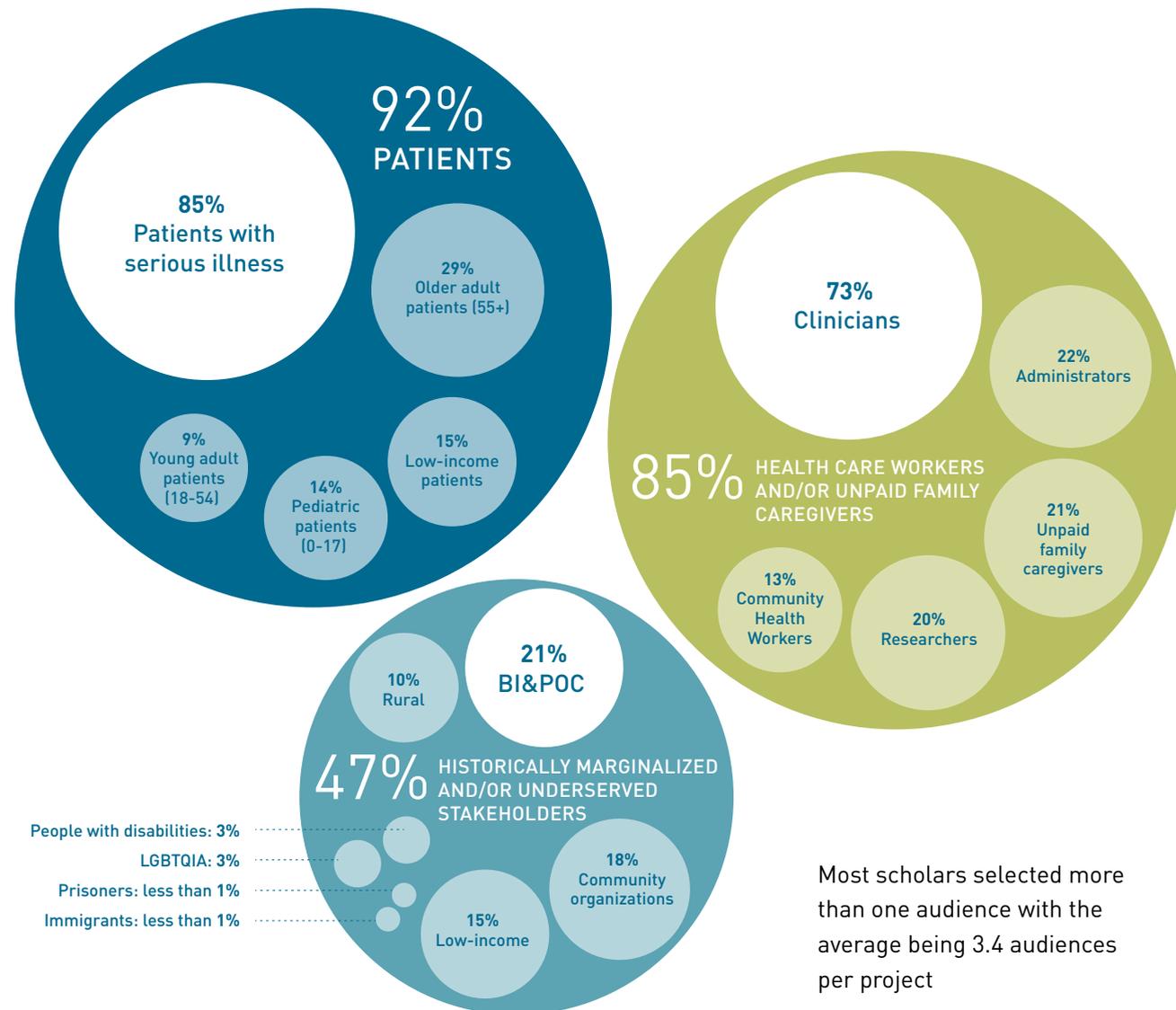
# PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



## WHAT POPULATIONS DID SCHOLAR PROJECTS SEEK TO IMPACT?

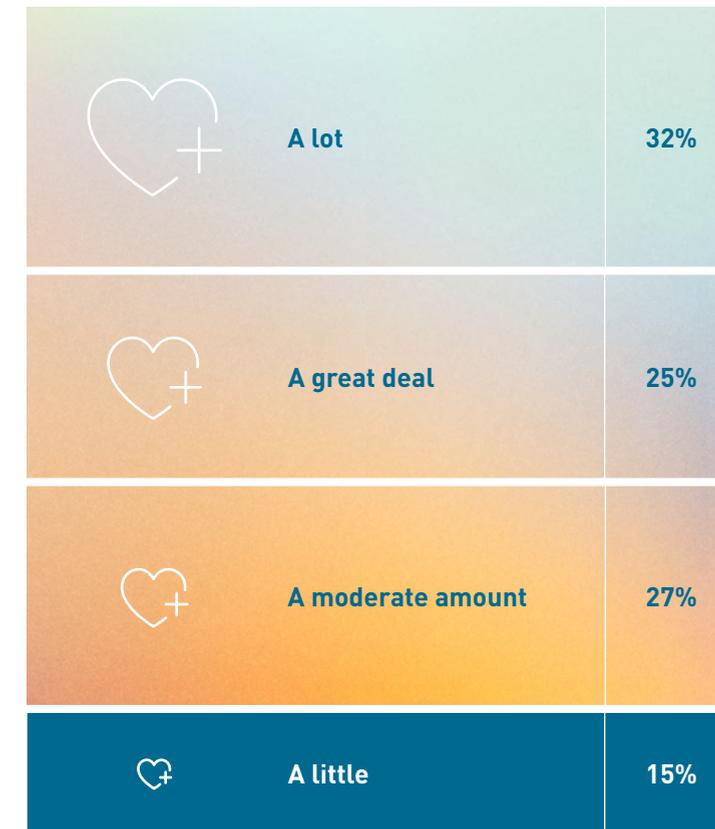
QUESTION FORMAT: MULTI-SELECT UP TO 3

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



## HOW MUCH IMPACT DID SCHOLAR PROJECTS HAVE ON IMPROVING THE CARE OF PEOPLE WITH SERIOUS ILLNESS?

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



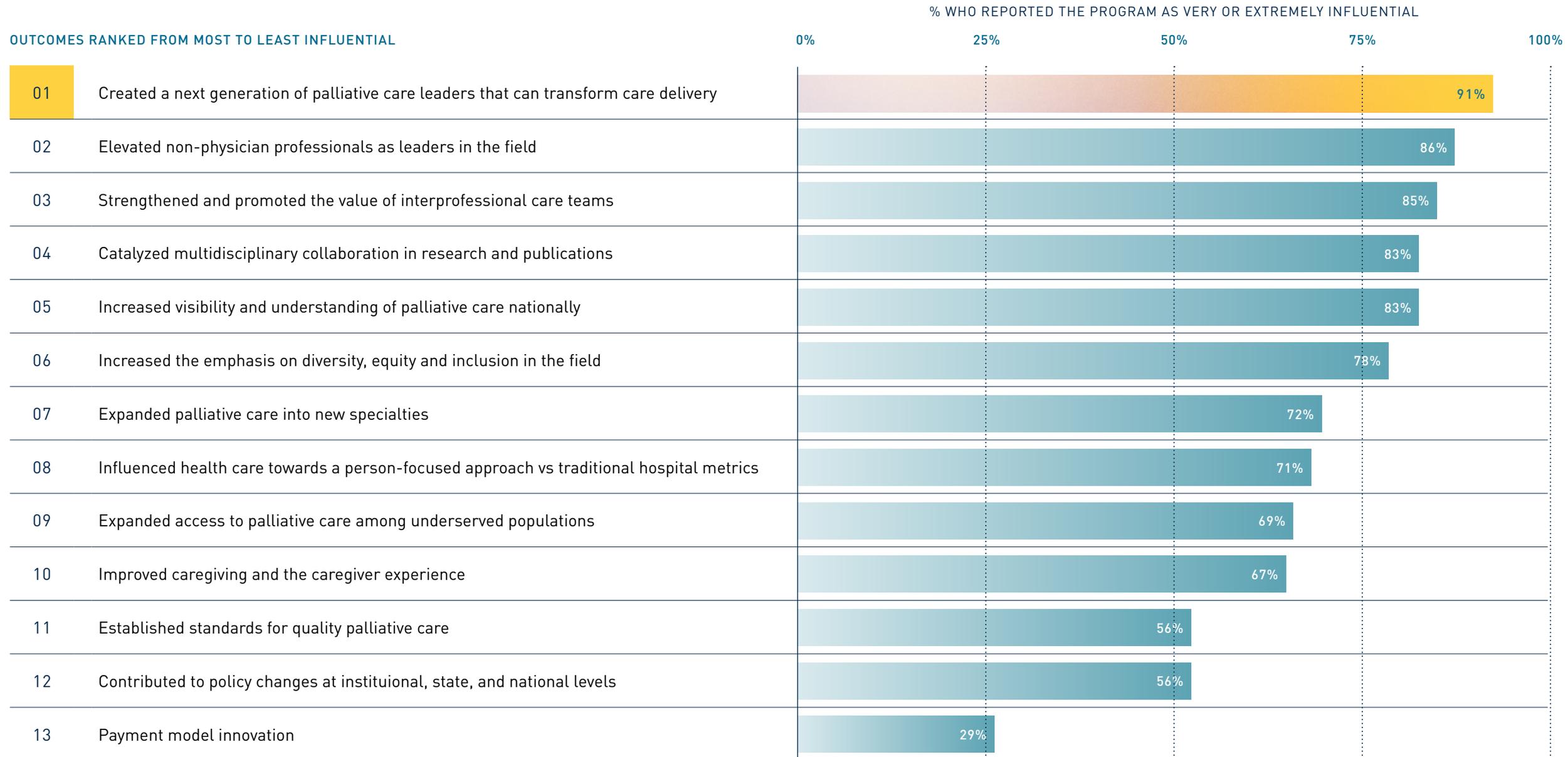
**84% of scholars** report their project had/will have a significant impact on improving the care of people with serious illness.

# PROGRAM OUTCOMES AND IMPACT



## WHAT OUTCOMES DID THE PROGRAM INFLUENCE?

 117 SOJOURNS COMMUNITY MEMBERS SURVEYED



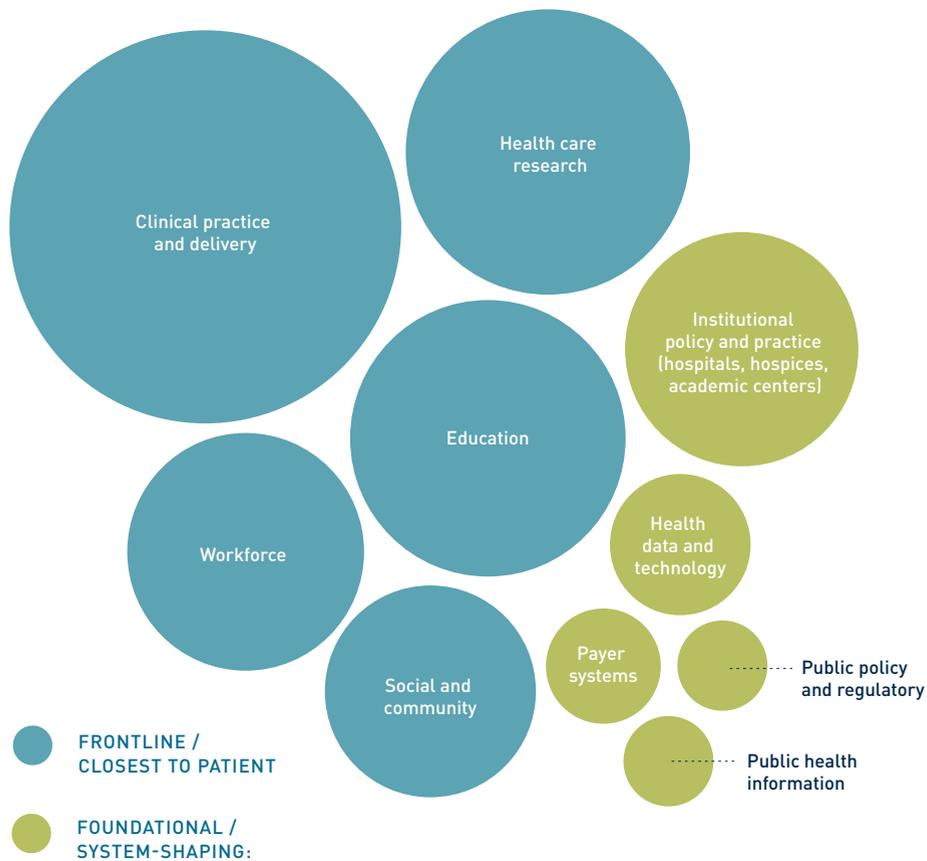


## Systems influence

Projects primarily influenced systems closest to the patient and demonstrated less impact on broader system-shaping levers, indicating stronger frontline improvement than large-scale system change. However, when we look at the activities scholars undertook outside their project work, we see clear examples of system-level influence, including advocacy and policy engagement. Much of this work occurred through collaborations among scholars.

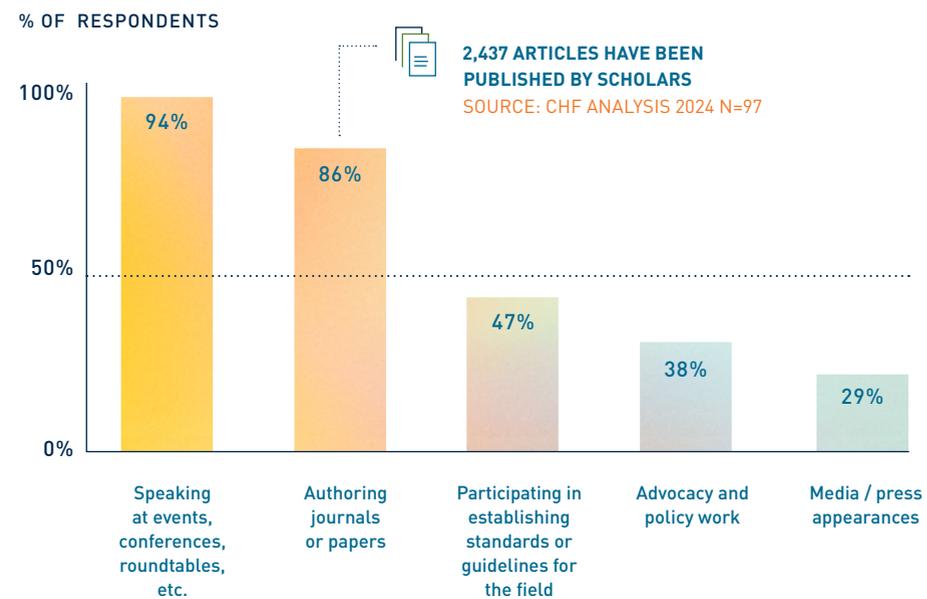
### WHAT SYSTEMS DID PROJECTS SEEK TO INFLUENCE?

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



### WHAT LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES DID SCHOLARS EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE OF THE PROGRAM THAT OCCURRED AS A RESULT OF PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM?

97 SCHOLARS SURVEYED



**85% reported** that they sometimes, usually or always collaborate with scholars on leadership activities such as speaking engagements, authoring journals or papers, establishing standards and advocacy.



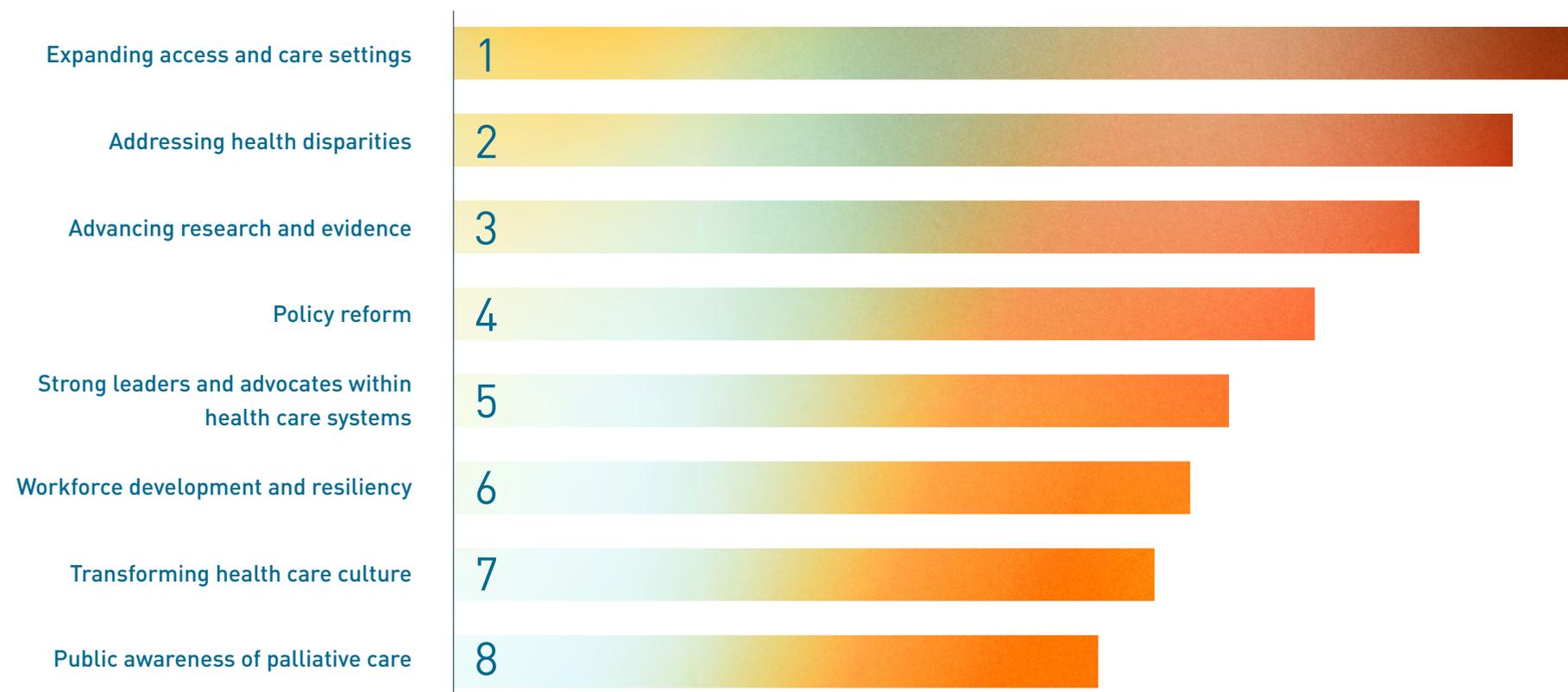
# PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF PALLIATIVE CARE

While previous sections examine what the Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program has accomplished, here we look at the field’s most pressing needs today and the trends influencing its path forward. These perspectives are those of the Sojourns community and do not represent the palliative care field as a whole or Cambia Health Foundation.

## Current needs

WHAT ARE THE MOST PRESSING NEEDS FACING THE FIELD OF PALLIATIVE CARE TODAY?

 117 SOJOURNS COMMUNITY MEMBERS SURVEYED



*“Palliative care leaders are the solution to today’s health care problems.”*

PALLIATIVE CARE EXPERT

# PERSPECTIVES ON THE FUTURE OF PALLIATIVE CARE

## A CALL TO ACTION

The following practical measures were gathered from interviews and focus groups, reflecting the priority needs we heard from scholars.



### Palliative care community

#### 1. CREATE A BROAD COALITION FOR POLICY ADVOCACY

Build a bipartisan alliance that includes clinical specialties and patient advocacy organizations, articulate a clear set of policy proposals and prioritize actions that will drive the greatest impact.

#### 2. DRIVE ON-GOING INNOVATION IN DELIVERY AND PAYMENT MODELS

Support the definition and development of community-based palliative care models. Promote interprofessional engagement in expanding access to community-based palliative care.

#### 3. ACTIVATE THE BUSINESS CASE FOR PALLIATIVE CARE

Continue to support leadership development in palliative care by building finance literacy and executive skills. Equip promising palliative care leaders with the data and strategies they need to influence change within their systems.



### Health care community

#### 1. EXPAND PALLIATIVE CARE IN HEALTH SYSTEMS

Integrate palliative care in institutions as part of a broader vision for economically sustainable whole-person care. Become educated on the facts of how palliative care is a win-win, improving care and the patient experience while reducing costs.

#### 2. PROMOTE LEADERS WITH PALLIATIVE CARE EXPERIENCE IN HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS

Elevate leaders with palliative care expertise into administrative and executive roles, embedding its principles into organizational values, culture and everyday leadership practice.

#### 3. IDENTIFY, CONNECT AND SUPPORT CHAMPIONS INSIDE EACH DISCIPLINE

Ensure every specialty and subspecialty has national champions for the palliative dimension of their field. These leaders should be equipped to drive the creation of specialty-specific guidelines, training and resources. These leaders should collaborate across disciplines on shared strategies. The ultimate goal is that, together, these champions promote the value of primary palliative care skills for every clinician who interacts with people with serious illness.



### Philanthropy community

#### 1. INVEST IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This program demonstrates what a 10-year commitment to leadership development can achieve. Whether it is continuing to support the next iteration of the Sojourns Scholar Leadership Program or applying this approach to other fields, funders can collaborate to sponsor an interprofessional cohort model to catalyze change very effectively.

#### 2. LEVERAGE PARTICIPATORY DESIGN

This program demonstrates the importance of (1) engaging an advisory board who are experts in the field and (2) engaging participants in shaping the program at every step. The program used the principles of community-based participatory research to respond and adapt to a rapidly evolving field over 10 years of investment.

# EVALUATION SUMMARY

## EVALUATION GOAL

## CONCLUSION

NO.01A



Did the program reach its goal to identify, cultivate and advance the next generation of palliative care leaders?

Yes.

**91% of the Sojourns community** agreed that the program created a next generation of palliative care leaders that can transform care delivery.

The SSLP effectively **identified** and supported emerging palliative care leaders in **research** and **academia**. However, it was less effective in reaching frontline clinicians—particularly those in community and rural settings—due to limited awareness of the program and eligibility requirements (such as dedicated time and mentorship) that were less accessible to clinicians.

The program cultivated 108 emerging palliative care leaders by building confidence and fostering skills in communication, public speaking and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

It contributed to the advancement of those leaders by opening doors through its network and reputation. A significant number of scholars advanced in their careers and broadened their influence because of the program.

**85% of scholars** reported that the SSLP had a lot or a great deal of influence on their achievements.

NO.01B



Did the program achieve its goal to invest in innovative projects that improve the care of people with serious illness?

Yes.

**84% of scholars** reported their project had or will have a significant impact on improving the care of people with serious illness.

The SSLP seeded innovative work that, collectively, is improving care.

### Demonstrated areas of innovation include:

- Reaching underserved groups
- Person-centered stakeholder engagement
- Integrated approaches that support patients, families and care teams

As is typical of innovation, project reach varied widely—from small pilots directly touching fewer than 25 people to expansive implementations reaching 10,000+. The pathway from research to results was often indirect, making consistent, comparable impact metrics hard to capture. Despite the measurement gap, **impact was compounding over time** as projects persist, attract follow-on funding and are adopted by other organizations.

NO.01C



Did the program achieve its goal to create a community of palliative care leaders to influence and accelerate broader system change?

Yes.

The Sojourns community identified the following as top outcomes of the program:

- Elevated non-physician professionals as leaders in the field
- Strengthened and promoted the value of interprofessional care teams
- Catalyzed multidisciplinary collaboration in research and publications
- Increased visibility and understanding of palliative care nationally

We also saw evidence of systems change through scholars collaborations. Together, they converted their insights into broader impact by shaping standards of practice, informing policy and amplifying their work through speaking engagements—ultimately improving care for people with serious illness.

**85% of scholars** reported that they sometimes, usually or always collaborate with scholars on leadership activities.

# EVALUATION SUMMARY

## EVALUATION GOAL

### no.02

What value did key components of the SSLP program design deliver?

## CONCLUSION

The SSLP was highly effective at building a community that delivered connection, inspiration and collaboration among scholars.

The SSLP stood apart for integrating substantial project funding with structured leadership development and a sustained community of practice.

### The scholars' most valued program components were:

1. The annual summit which became the backbone for the community
2. Smaller format cohorts which provided peer support
3. The project grant which provided dedicated time for scholars to advance their work

### The Sojourns community identified the following as top defining features of the program:

1. Investment in the individual
2. Interprofessional nature
3. Dedication and commitment of mentors
4. Continued community experience post project

### no.03

How might the SSLP or a similar leadership development program be improved in the future?

### Overall, scholars rated their experience extraordinarily high: 4.9 out of 5.

A core driver of SSLP's success was its intentional, long-term investment in scholars as individuals. Unlike programs that focus chiefly on project outputs, SSLP emphasized learning, growth and the relational infrastructure that enables leaders to flourish. Dedicated mentors and a supportive, enduring community elevated scholars across their careers. This person-centered, relationship-driven model offers valuable lessons for the field.

### Key opportunities for improvement include:

- Creating pathways to follow-on phase 2 funding for high-potential projects
- Ensuring consistent mentorship and feedback across disciplines
- Making access to external opportunities transparent and equitable
- More structured leadership, business and finance content

### no.04

What lessons does the SSLP community have for palliative care, philanthropy and health care?

Palliative care has made great progress in becoming the standard of care for helping people with serious illness, and yet the field faces significant ongoing challenges.

### The Sojourns community consistently called for action to address critical needs in the field:

- Expanding access and care settings + addressing disparities
- Advancing research and evidence
- Policy reform
- Workforce development and advocacy within health care systems

We look to the palliative care field, health care partners and funders to sustain momentum through **policy advocacy, ongoing innovation in models of care** and investments in **leadership development.**