

Building an Effective LEAF Application: From Idea to Submission

Wednesday 30 July 2025



Land Acknowledgement

We wish to acknowledge this land on which the University of Toronto operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Huron-Wendat, the Seneca, and the Mississaugas of the Credit. Today, this meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.



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Access Check

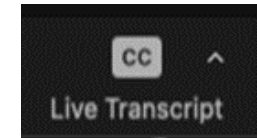
Is there anything about the virtual space that we can address before we begin?

Are there any other access needs that might affect your participation in today's session?

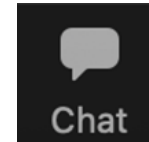
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Turn on live transcript if you would like closed captioning



Type questions and comments into the chat or raise your hand



Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Program Overview
3. Application Process
4. Faculty Roundtable
5. Considerations in Developing Your Application
6. Sustainability, Budgeting and Staffing
7. Assessment
8. Summary + Questions

1. Welcome and Introductions

Workshop Goals

By the end of this workshop you will have:

- Defined the LEAF application processes
- Identified key components of the Expression of Interest
- Recognized general assessment approaches
- Learned promising practices and common pitfalls from previous applicants



2. Program Overview

LEAF Priority Areas



Student Success

Developing or enhancing student learning experiences in academic courses and programs to support students succeeding academically in their courses.



Equitable and Inclusive Teaching

Advancing equity and inclusion in academic courses or programs.



Technology in the Classroom

Developing, expanding and implementing new technologies or technology-enhanced solutions in academic courses or programs.



Experiential Learning

Developing, redesigning, expanding or incorporating new experiential learning opportunities in academic courses or programs.

3. Application Process

LEAF: Eligibility

Applicants

- Proposals are welcome from U of T faculty, staff, and librarians with continuing appointments in first-entry undergraduate divisions (FALD, FAS, FASE, KPE, Music, UTM, UTSC).
- Staff applicants must include a faculty co-lead.
- Those from other divisions may partner with a co-lead from an eligible division with continuing status on an application that primarily benefits first-entry undergraduate students.

Projects

- Prioritize pedagogical or curricular innovation.
- Co-curricular projects need a direct link to curricular components (e.g., course or program requirement).
- Please note: a research component may be appropriate, especially for evaluating impact, however funds are meant for initiatives that enhance student learning experiences.

LEAF: Streams

LEAF Impact Grant

- Designed to support large-scale projects with the potential to significantly enhance core elements of undergraduate education within or across academic units and divisions at the University.
- \$10,001 to \$100,000 per year for up to 3 years

LEAF Seed Grant

- Intended to encourage experimentation at the local level, either within a course or a set of courses, as a means of fostering small-scale innovations or pilots with the potential for future scalability.
- \$5,000 to \$10,000 per year for up to 3 years.

LEAF: Seed and Impact Criteria

Criteria	Description
Priority Advancement	Supports the advancement of LEAF goals through alignment with at least one LEAF priority : Student Success, Experiential Learning, Technology in the Classroom, Equitable and Inclusive Teaching.
Assessment & Evaluation	The project has a clear assessment and evaluation mechanism built into it. The methodology for assessment is clear; the relationship between outcomes, activities and assessments is clearly defined.
Transferability & Scalability	The project's idea or concept is transferable and/or scalable to other units. The proposal clearly and specifically articulates how the project has the potential to be used by other units and/or have wide application within a division.
Budget	The proposal clearly presents a budget that is appropriately aligned with the project and articulates a strong justification for each expense. Yearly expenses continue to build off existing and created resources.
Sustainability & Feasibility	The project has clear and specific potential for long-term sustainability beyond the LEAF funding period. The project identifies planned deliverables based on specific timelines and resources.

LEAF: Impact Criteria

Criteria	Description
Collaboration	The project involves more than one person and/or unit and/or brings together a broader cross-section of stakeholders .
Connection to Scholarly Literature	The proposal situates the project within the relevant literature and provides a clear conceptual framework based on and grounded through relevant literature . The project maps out future scholarly directions made available through LEAF.

LEAF: Application Process

Expression of Interest

Complete and submit the online expression of interest by the deadline.

1

Consultation

You will be invited for a consultation with members of the OVPIUE to discuss your expression of interest.

2

Your Divisional Office

Based on your consultation, the OVPIUE will share your expression of interest and invite feedback from your divisional office.

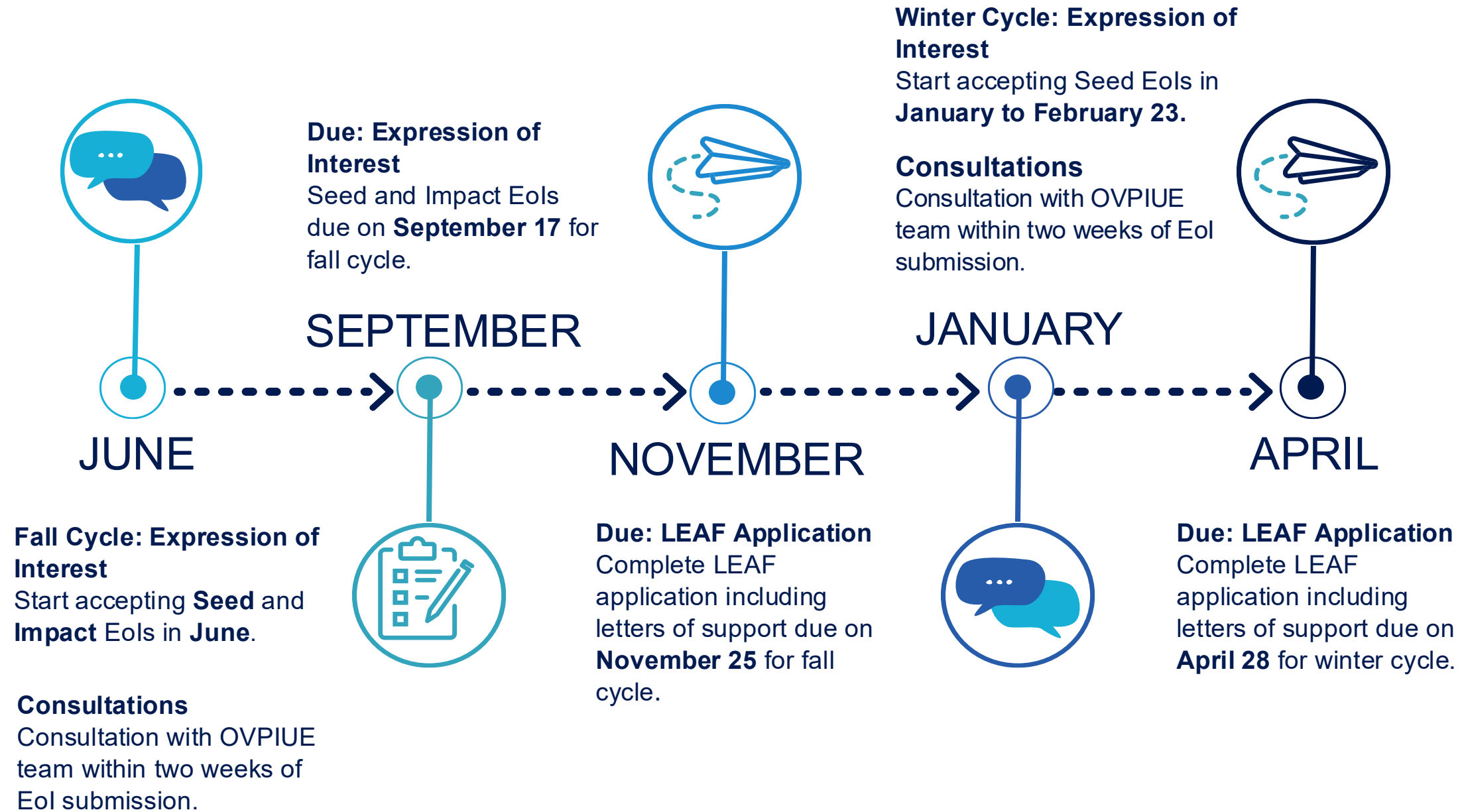
3

Full Application

Select applicants will be provided feedback and invited to submit a full application package.

4

LEAF: 2025-26 Application Process



4. Faculty Roundtable

Faculty Roundtable

- **Emily Bell**, Assistant Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biological Sciences, University of Toronto Scarborough
 - LEAF Seed Grant, “**Bio-CURE: Removing Barriers to Undergraduate Student Research Engagement through Course-based Undergraduate Research Experiences (CURE) in Biological Sciences,**” 2022-2023
- **Sanja Hinić-Frlog**, Associate Professor, Teaching Stream, Department of Biology, University of Toronto Mississauga
 - LEAF Impact Grant, “**Truth and Reconciliation in Biology,**” 2022-2023
- **Jessica Slomka**, Lab Coordinator, Earth Sciences, Department of Chemical & Physical Sciences, University of Toronto Mississauga
 - LEAF Impact Grant, “**Fostering a Sense of Community and Belonging at the UTM Campus through Interdisciplinary Experiential Learning Opportunities,**” 2024-2025

5. Considerations in Developing Your Application

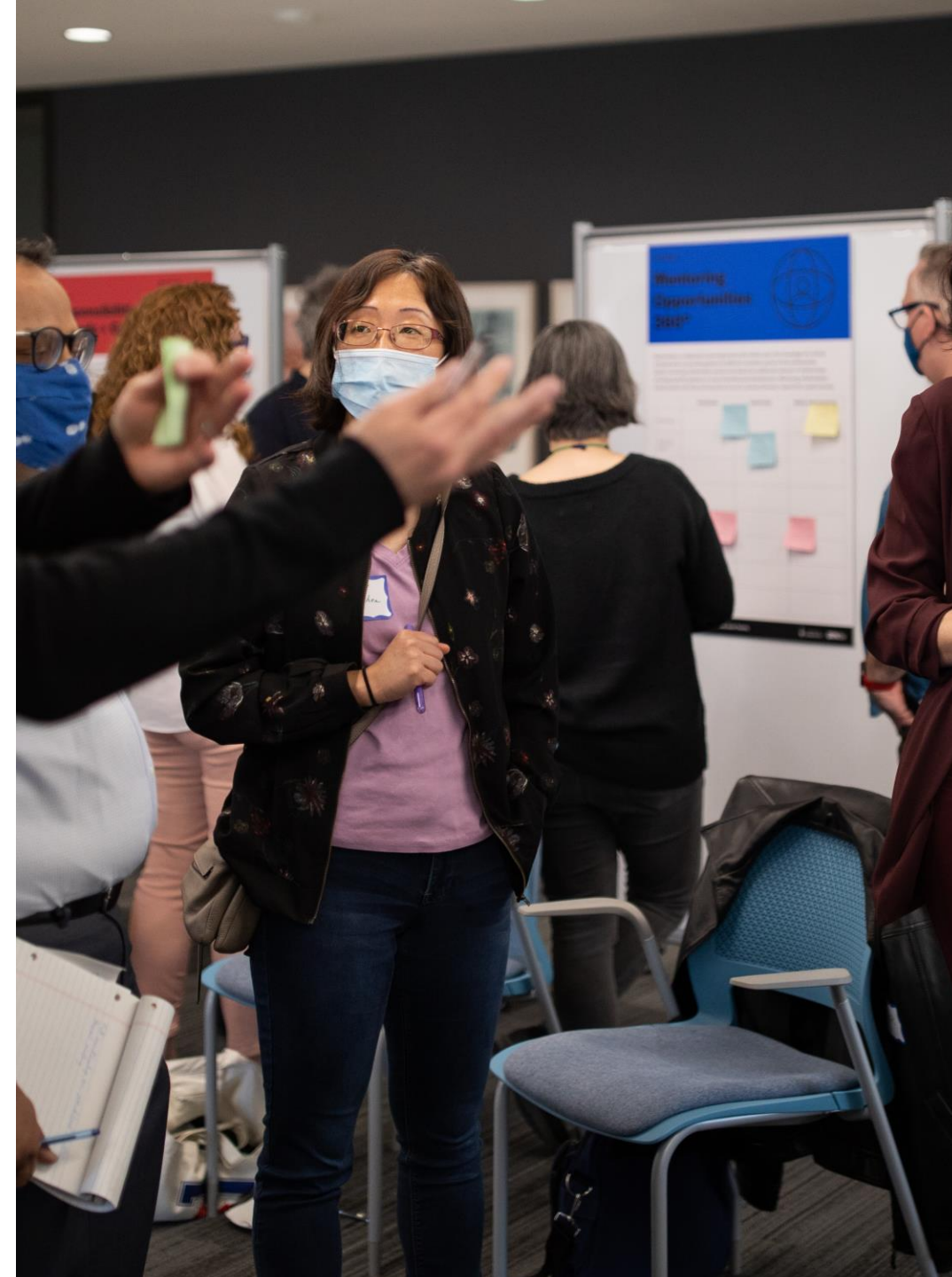
How to Design a LEAF Project

- What is the project?
 - How is it connected to the curriculum?
- Which LEAF priority area is your project addressing?
- What are the learning outcomes / goals you are aiming to assess through this LEAF project?



LEAF: Putting Your Proposal in Context

- **What has led you to identify this project?**
 - Do you have data to support the need for your project?
- **What is already known about this topic?** (e.g., U of T priority areas)
 - How can your project build on existing work at U of T?
- **Environmental scan and gap analysis**
 - Existing cases or models at U of T or other institutions (e.g., U of T Math Preparation Supports)
 - Literature reviews (only required for LEAF Impact Grant)
- **Consultation requirements?**
 - Consider reaching out to experts in your division (or at the institutional level) to leverage existing resources in your project area



Know Your Audience

- Who are the proposal readers?
- Why should funders care about this idea?
- What is the impact and significance of this idea?
- What's innovative about this initiative?
- How does it intersect with unit, division, and/or institutional goals?



LEAF: Common Missteps

- Is the project **manageable** for the proposed budget and timelines?
- Is the budget **reasonable** and demonstrably **justifiable**?
- Is the innovation **sustainable** beyond the terms of the grant and/or can it be transferred to other contexts?
- Does your project **leverage existing U of T resources**?
- Might it include opportunities for **employment** and/or experience for our students? (e.g., Work Study Program, A&S or UTM Research Opportunities Programs)
- Have you considered and outlined **partnership** opportunities?
- What is the **impact on the student experience and student workload**?
- How is the **success of the innovation** determined and shared?
- Have you **addressed the feedback** shared by OVPIUE?

6. Sustainability, Budget and Staffing

Sustainability and Feasibility

Sustainability

Address how your project will continue beyond the funding term. If you have had discussions with your academic unit or division, include details about their continued commitment to your project.



Feasibility

- 1 Consider alignment between the size of the grant (Seed / Impact) and project deliverables.
- 2 Outline how your project is realistic within the proposed timelines and budget.
- 3 Establish clear boundaries for what is included within the scope of your project.

Budget

As part of the LEAF application process, you will be asked to include:

- Budget justification: share the rationale behind anticipated project costs
- Excel spreadsheet: a detailed accounting of expected expenses and other funding sources (e.g., matching funding sources, in-kind supports)



Grant Boundaries: what is within the framework for the LEAF, and what is eligible for funding from your project.



Existing Resources: does your project leverage existing resources with your academic unit or division (e.g., match funding, in-kind supports).



Standard Costs: are there common or standard costs or hiring rates for teaching related supports in your unit (e.g., RA, educational developer)? Consult with your academic unit / division early to understand these rates and HR processes that may be involved.

A few guiding questions to support your budget planning.

- 1 Sustainability is a key tenet of LEAF. How will this initial infusion of funds set up your project for long-term success?
- 2 How will these funds be used to support student learning outcomes?
- 3 Are there common or standard hiring rates for teaching-related supports (e.g., RA, educational developer) in your unit/division?
- 4 Are there institutional or divisional offices that you may collaborate with to maximize resources or ensure long-term support or use for project resources or equipment?

Note there a few ineligible expenses under LEAF budget guidelines. LEAF budgets cannot be used to cover:



Basic computer and related equipment expenses (unless an exemption has been granted by the LEAF committee).



Conference-related expenses (e.g., registration, travel, accommodations).



Research publication-related expenses.



Expenses that violate the University's [Conflict of Interest Policy](#).



Travel or expenditures for events or activities outside of Ontario (unless an exemption has been granted by the LEAF committee).



Costs of hosting special events such as receptions, exhibitions or conferences.

Budget: LEAF Support

Appointed Faculty / Staff

LEAF cannot be used to cover the salary costs of a faculty or staff member who have a continuing appointment at the University of Toronto.

Project Coordination: consider hiring coordinator if there are many moving parts to your project.

Technical Expertise: work with campus or divisional IT/Ed Tech offices to advise on scope and skills needed for technical work.


Casual or Contract Staff

TA, RA or other (e.g., casual staff): With your division / unit, discuss the work / responsibilities involved with a position to determine if it should be classified as a Research Assistant, Teaching Assistant or other.

Work Study Students: support faculty, staff or an administrative unit undertake core operations or special projects.

Procurement and hiring process are managed and administered by local units.

7. Assessment



"Effective assessment is best understood as a strategy for **understanding, confirming and improving** student learning."

Prof. Jillian Kinzie, Student Affairs Assessment in a Learning Quality Paradigm. Keynote at the ACPA Assessment Institute. Chicago, June 2018.

Each LEAF project assessment demonstrates the relationship between your intended goals and the learning outcomes for students



Rarely "proof" that the work "worked".



Unlikely to be a randomized control trial.



Not an evaluation of LEAF proposal implementation.



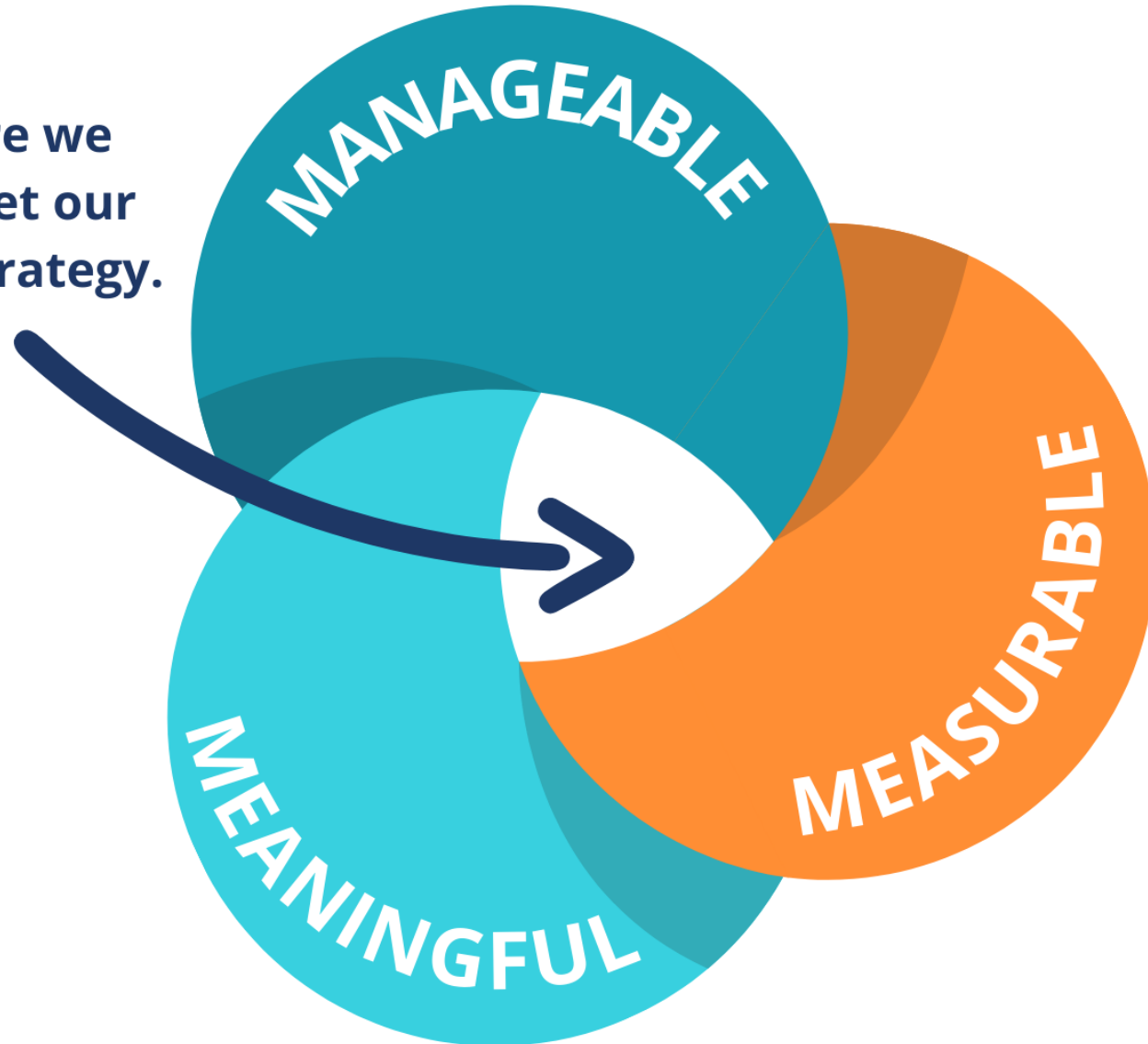
Not an evaluation of LEAF budget distribution.



Evidence and / or insights about the degree(s) to which intended or expected outcomes realized. It's about impact.

Reflect upon the 3 M's when building your assessment strategy.

This is where we
want to target our
assessment strategy.



A few guiding questions to support your planning.

- 1 What is the **problem** I am trying to solve?
- 2 What are the **goals** I would like to achieve? What are the best methods to use?
- 3 What **data** needs to be collected to measure how we did with these goals? Can I map backwards?
- 4 Do I have **access** to that data? What data can I **access already**? What **resources** are needed to implement this strategy?
- 5 How can I collect data in a **Seed** application, that can be used in a future **Impact** application?

Aligning goals to assessment ideas.

Case Study: Create a new EL opportunity where students conduct research based on needs of community partners.

Desired Learning Goal or Outcome	Assessment Tools or Strategy	Timing/Data Collection
Equip students with the ability to design, carryout and analyze research projects that address real-world problems.	Scored rubric of feedback from community organizations	Week 12
Foster students' ability to engage with community partners effectively and understand the importance of community-driven research.	Student self-reflections	Week 10
Encourage students to apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills in a practical context.	Survey tools and course assessments	Week 8 and 10

8. Summary + Questions.

LEAF Supports

Members of the OVPIUE and U of T teaching and learning community can be engaged for project support or advice at any time

- **LEAF SUPPORT GENERAL**

- Nina Mondré Schweppe | Teaching Initiatives Coordinator, OVPIUE, nina.schweppe@utoronto.ca

- **CURRICULUM REVIEW AND (RE)DESIGN**

- Jessie Richards | Curriculum Design Specialist, OVPIUE, jessie.richards@utoronto.ca

- **EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

- Sania Hameed | Special Projects Officer, OVPIUE, sania.hameed@utoronto.ca

- **ASSESSMENT AND ANALYTICS**

- Jeff Burrow | Special Projects Officer, OVPIUE, jeff.burrow@utoronto.ca

- **DIGITAL LEARNING (ONLINE, HYBRID, MODULES)**

- Laurie Harrison | Director, Digital Learning Innovation, laurie.harrison@utoronto.ca

- **SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Cora McCloy | Faculty Liaison Coordinator, CTSI, cora.mccloy@utoronto.ca

- **ACADEMIC TOOLBOX SUPPORT (QUERCUS, APPS)**

- Avi Hyman | Director, Academic, Research and Collaborative Technology, a.hyman@utoronto.ca

- **CENTRE FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

- Jennifer Esmail | Director, Centre for Community Partnerships, jennifer.esmail@utoronto.ca

- **DIVISIONAL SUPPORTS**

Reminder: LEAF Application Process

LEAF Fall Cycle (Impact / Seed)

- LEAF Expression of Interests are due on **Wednesday 17 September 2025**
- If your LEAF project is determined to be eligible to move forward, a full application is due on **Tuesday 25 November 2025**

LEAF Winter Cycle (Seed-Only)

- LEAF Expression of Interests are due on **Monday 23 February 2026**
- If your LEAF project is decided to be eligible to move forward, a full application is due on **Tuesday 28 April 2026**