



New Mexico
Social Justice &
Equity Institute

2023

Workforce Development Program Evaluation

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About the
Organization



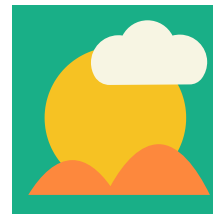
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Who We Are

The New Mexico Social Justice & Equity Institute is an Indigenous-led, community-based organization headquartered in Gallup, New Mexico. We work to change systems that perpetuate **environmental and health disparities** related to the impacts of **institutional racism and multi-generational trauma**.

We acknowledge that we operate on Dine', Zuni, and Acoma lands.

Our Mission

Using a health equity lens, the New Mexico Social Justice & Equity Institute seeks to change systems that perpetuate environmental health disparities related to the impacts of institutional racism and multi-generational trauma by empowering participating communities within the county to impact equitable policy change.

Our Vision

We have changed systems that perpetuated environmental and health disparities related to the impacts of institutional racism and multi-generational trauma. We have healthy communities in which the following elements are increasingly evident:

- Community Wellness
- Cultural Respect
- Educational Quality
- Access to Services
- Individual and Family Wellness

What We Do

Transforming Systems

New Mexico Social Justice & Equity Institute (NMSJEI) advocates for transforming systems that sustain health disparities resulting from centuries of environmental deterioration by the uranium industry, institutional racism directed towards Indigenous communities, and multi-generational trauma.

NMSJEI works to:

- Engage our community to execute collective action through education and institutional knowledge for working with various public and policy change arenas.
- Organize and mobilize our cohort of informed and equipped community members to take action and address the issues that will improve their lives.
- Sponsor training and provide technical assistance on conducting health impact assessments, an assessment tool that provides a set of evidence-based recommendations to inform decision-making.
- Develop expertise in conducting health impact assessments that seek to maximize the positive health impacts and minimize the negative health impacts of proposed policies, programs, and projects.

Workforce Development Program

Background and Context of the Program

Founded in 2017, our Institute has been committed to transforming systems that perpetuate environmental and health disparities, particularly those arising from institutional racism and multi-generational trauma. Through our dedicated efforts, we have fostered the development of healthy communities where community wellness, cultural respect, educational quality, access to services, and individual and family wellness are increasingly evident. We promote overall community health through supportive initiatives, honor diverse cultural practices to ensure all members feel valued, provide high-quality educational opportunities to empower individuals, ensure equitable access to essential services, and support the comprehensive well-being of individuals and families.

Our internship program launched successfully in 2023 thanks to Program Director Jayme Yancy, who recognized the positive impact of such a program on the development of early career public health professionals. Ms. Yancy collaborated with Project Director Anna Rondon and New Mexico State University's Department of Public Health Sciences to implement the inaugural program for the spring semester in 2023.

Internship Program

Our intern program covers key areas to enrich the intern experience:

- **Mentorship:** Seasoned professionals guide and support interns, offering industry insights and real-world advice.
- **Career Growth:** Assisting interns in identifying strengths, interests, and skill-building aligned with their aspirations.
- **Skill Enhancement:** Structured training, workshops, and hands-on experiences enrich their professional skill set.
- **Meaningful Projects:** Assigning impactful tasks allows interns to contribute meaningfully to the organization
- **Networking:** Facilitating connections with professionals to expand their professional circles.
- **Evaluation:** Formal assessments guide interns and identify potential future talent.

Our Impact in Numbers

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**Student Interns
Hosted**

NMSJEl hosted 4 student interns during 2023.

NMSJEl launched its own internship program in January 2023 through a partnership with New Mexico State University's Department of Public Health Sciences.

Interns logged a cumulative 500 hours for BPH students and 320 hours for MPH students during their participation in the NMSJEl workforce development program in 2023.

The value of learning about social justice and equity will positively impact both participants and the communities they serve.

820

**Cumulative
Educational Hours**

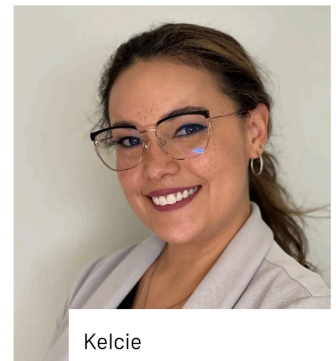
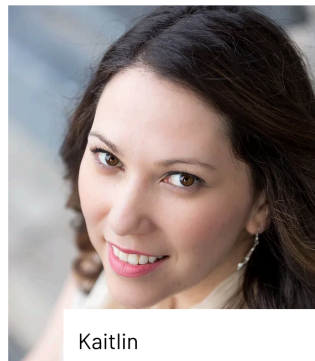
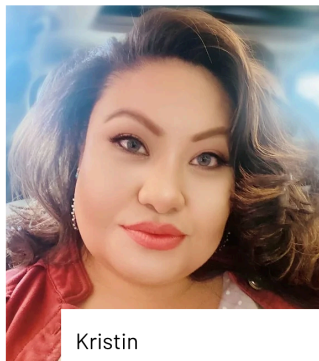
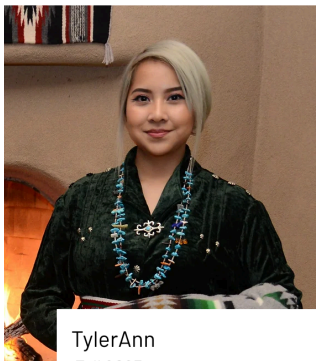
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Participant Projects

NMSJEl interns completed 12 projects in 2023.

Interns completed various projects during their programs, including attending community events, writing policy briefs, conducting research projects, and writing federal grant proposals.

Meet Our Interns

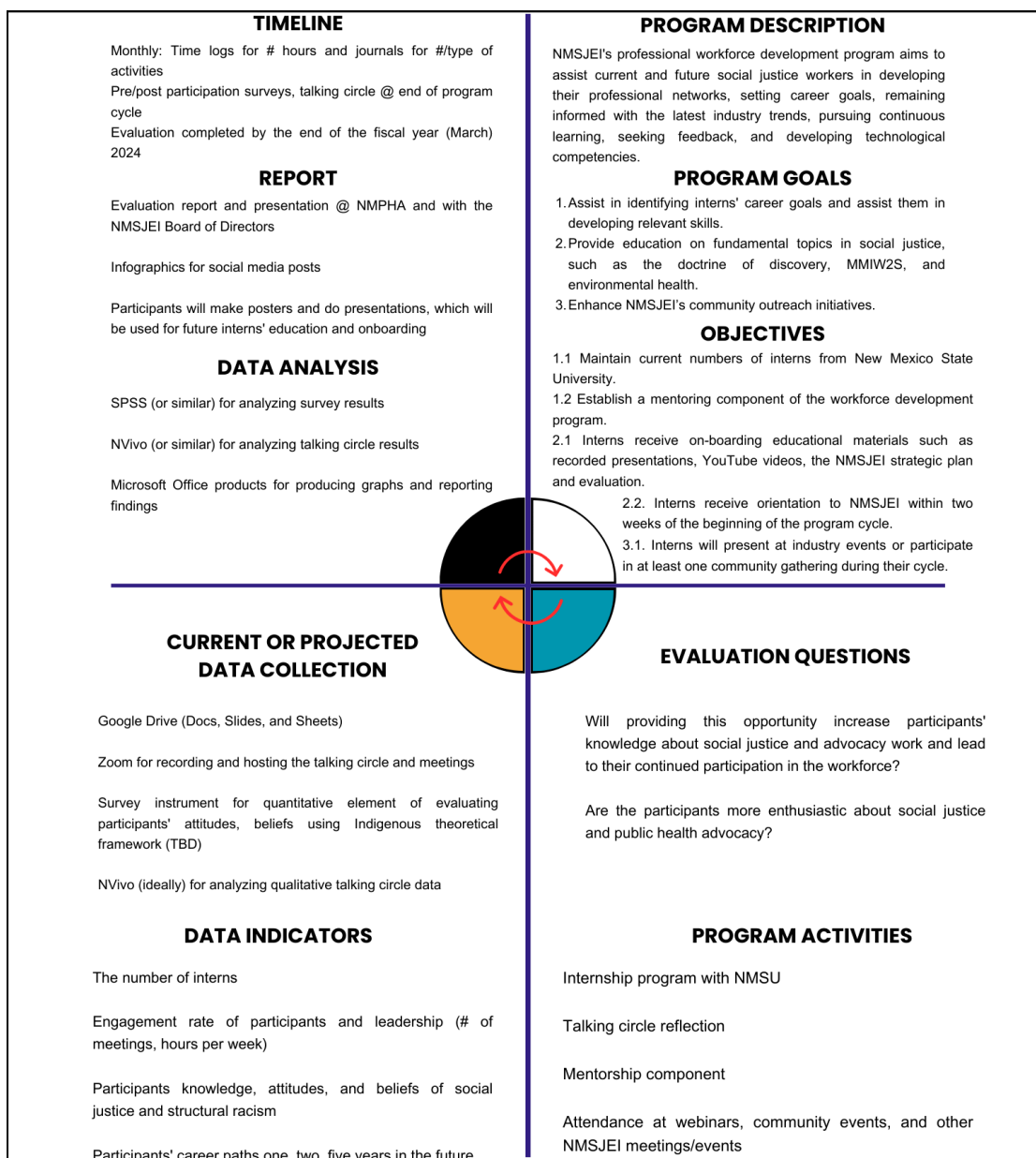


Program Evaluation

Workforce Development Program Work Plan

In June 2023, the program evaluator and program director collaborated on establishing the program's goals and how those goals would be achieved, identified metrics for evaluating those goals, and created a timeline of both program and evaluation activities. The following work plan was developed using the medicine wheel model. In this model, one begins in the East (upper right quadrant) and moves counterclockwise to create a work plan for the evaluation project.

The medicine wheel model was selected for the work plan because it complements the Institute's roots in Indigenous knowledge and practice.



Theory of Change

The purpose of NMSJEI's workforce development program is to expand and strengthen the public health workforce in both Tribal and rural New Mexican communities.

The Three Sisters model illustrated above demonstrates how the Institute's workforce development program is designed and intended to achieve the organization's vital mission of systems change.

The earth and roots of the plants represent the public health workforce for whom and with whom the program is intended to engage. The community of professionals in Tribal and rural New Mexico provides guidance for all program activities, much like how the soil provides nutrients and structure to the flora.

The corn stalk represents the workforce development program itself. It grows tall toward the sun because it is supported by the squash plants and the earth below. **The corn leaves represent the program's activities, accomplishments, and outcomes.**

The squash plants represent the people involved in administering the program. Squash provides cooling ground cover, moisture, and protection from weeds. The **mentorship and guidance** that the program administrators provide the participants are likened to how the corn and beans are more likely to thrive in the presence of the squash.

The beans are the program participants. They grow tall because the corn stalk provides a solid scaffold for learning and growing. The squash plants benefit the beans similarly to the corn, so all three plants thrive.

Corn pollen represents the next generation of plants and learners who will drift off in the wind and effect change by growing wherever they are planted. Program participants are more likely to effect systems change after their internship term is completed and the cycle of growth begins anew.



IMPACT

The next generation of the Public Health workforce is poised to enter the field armed with the knowledge of social justice to effect systems change

OUTCOMES:

Increased demand for NMSEI's workforce development program
Increased and sustained funding for program

EVALUATION Q's

- 1. Do participants continue to work in public health? Come-1 year? 2
- 2. What careers are participants pursuing before/after program?
- 3. Are participants planning to use social justice concepts in their careers?
- 4. How are participants' ideas and beliefs re: social justice concepts important in public health?

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Participants' increased understanding of social justice, structural racism & how it's tied to community's health

WHAT:

Participant's ideas & beliefs re: social justice via surveys, talking circles, documentation e.g. journaling

HOW:

mentorship, education, networking

WHO:

Aspiring early career professionals

Expand, Strengthen the Public Health workforce in rural NM and Tribal communities

Illustrated and prepared by:
Kelcie R. Creel, MPH
Tribal Data Champion Fellow
2023-2024

Evaluation Findings

Project Timeline

Phase

01

June-August
2023



Planning

The program director and evaluator collaborated on the program work plan, including identifying goals and objectives. Theory of change and evaluation questions identified by evaluator.

Phase

02

July - Dec
2023



Implementation

Pre- and post-program surveys developed by the program evaluator, surveys given to summer interns and fall intern identified by the director.

Phase

03

Feb - April
2024



Data Collection and Analysis

Survey results collected and analyzed by the evaluator, director and evaluator discussed preliminary findings to inform the program design for 2024.

Phase

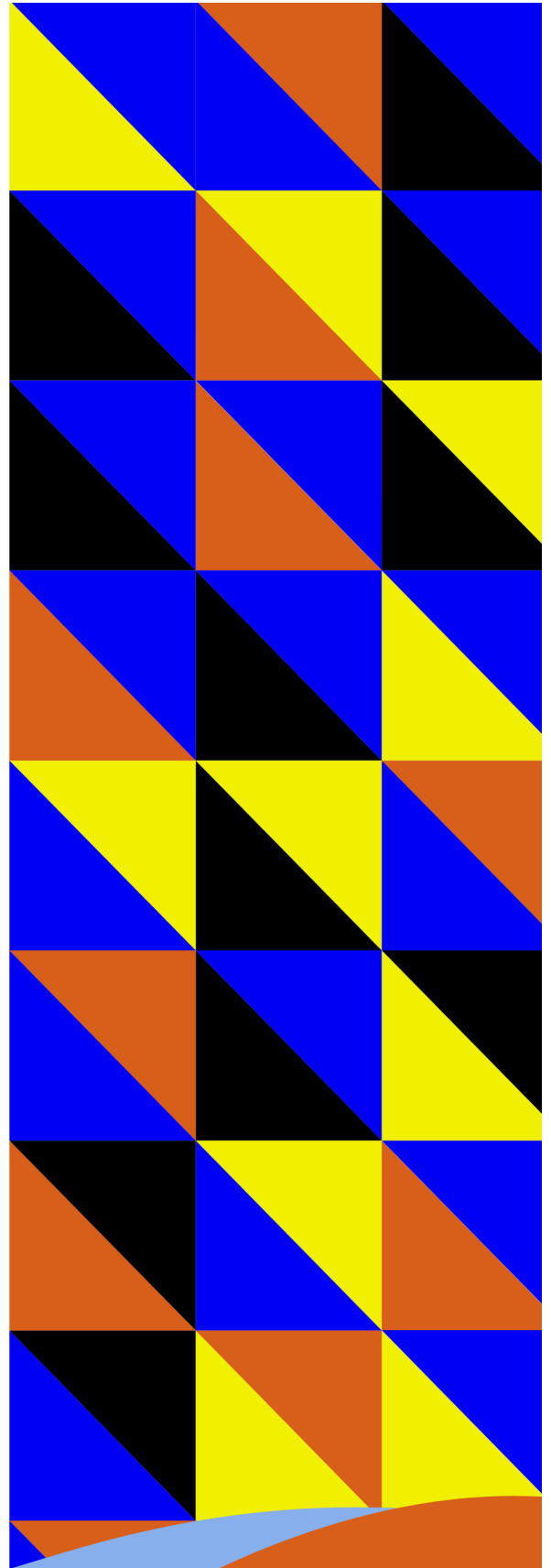
04

April - May
2024



Project Evaluation

The program evaluation report was completed and shared with the director. Past interns and community stakeholders were invited to a celebration of program achievements.



Evaluation Questions

The evaluation sought to answer the following questions that were identified in the work plan:

1. **Are participants planning to implement social justice concepts in their careers?**
2. **What are participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding social justice concepts' importance in public health?**
3. **Do participants have a career in public health 6 months to 1 year after their program?**
4. **What careers are participants pursuing before and after the program?**

A survey instrument was developed that assessed program participants' attitudes and beliefs about the importance of social justice and equity concepts in their careers. The survey was administered to participants within the first week of beginning their program as well as during the final weeks of their program. The survey also had participants rate their knowledge level on a Likert scale of 1 to 5.

Figure 1 shows the participants' average rating of their knowledge of social justice and equity concepts, their beliefs about the importance of these ideas in their work, and their intention to take what they learned with them into their careers in public health.

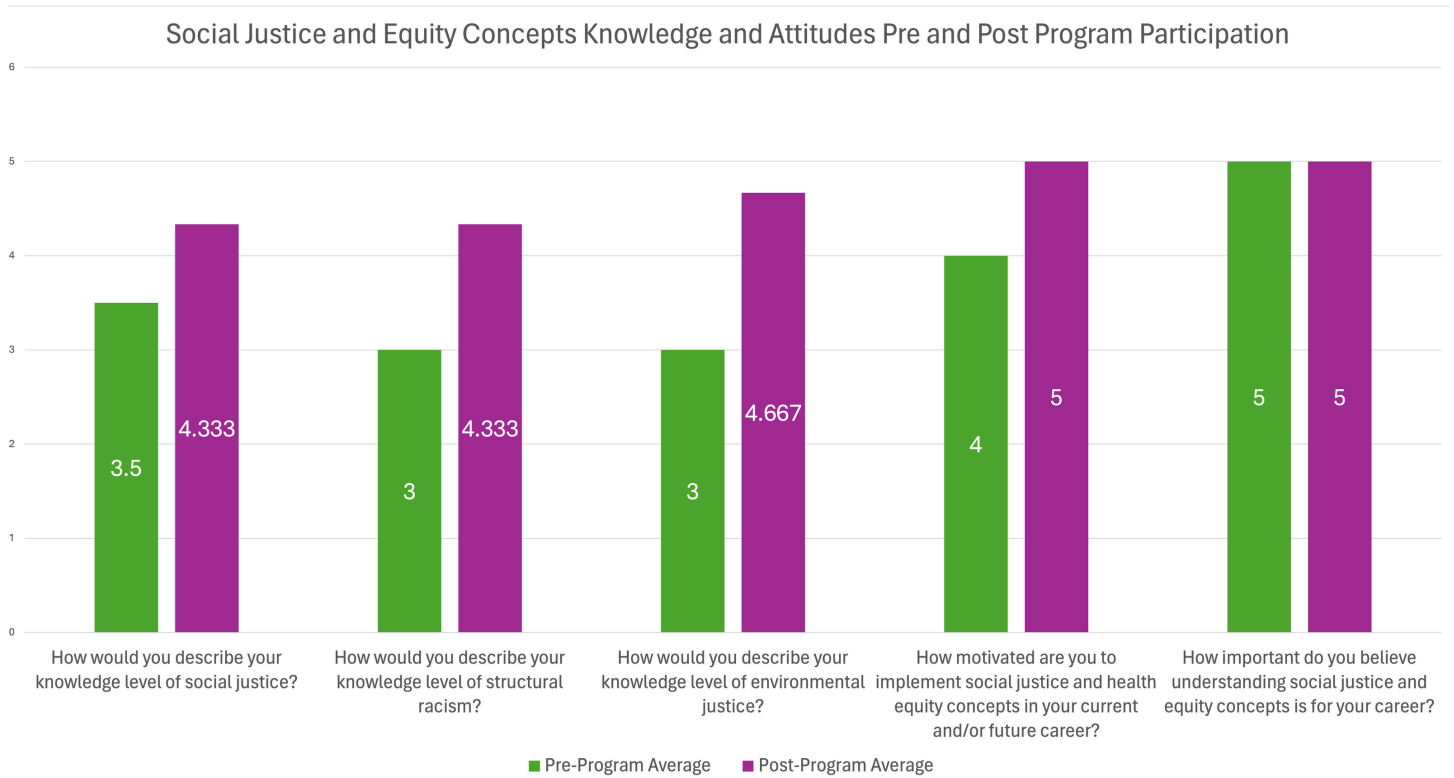
Are participants planning to implement social justice concepts in their careers?

Encouragingly, participants are **more motivated** to implement what they learned in their current or future careers at the end of the program than they were before. Interestingly, participants all believed that an understanding of social justice concepts is important for their careers both before and after the program, having an **average rating of five out of five** before and after completing their programs.

What are participants' attitudes and beliefs regarding social justice concepts' importance in a career in public health?

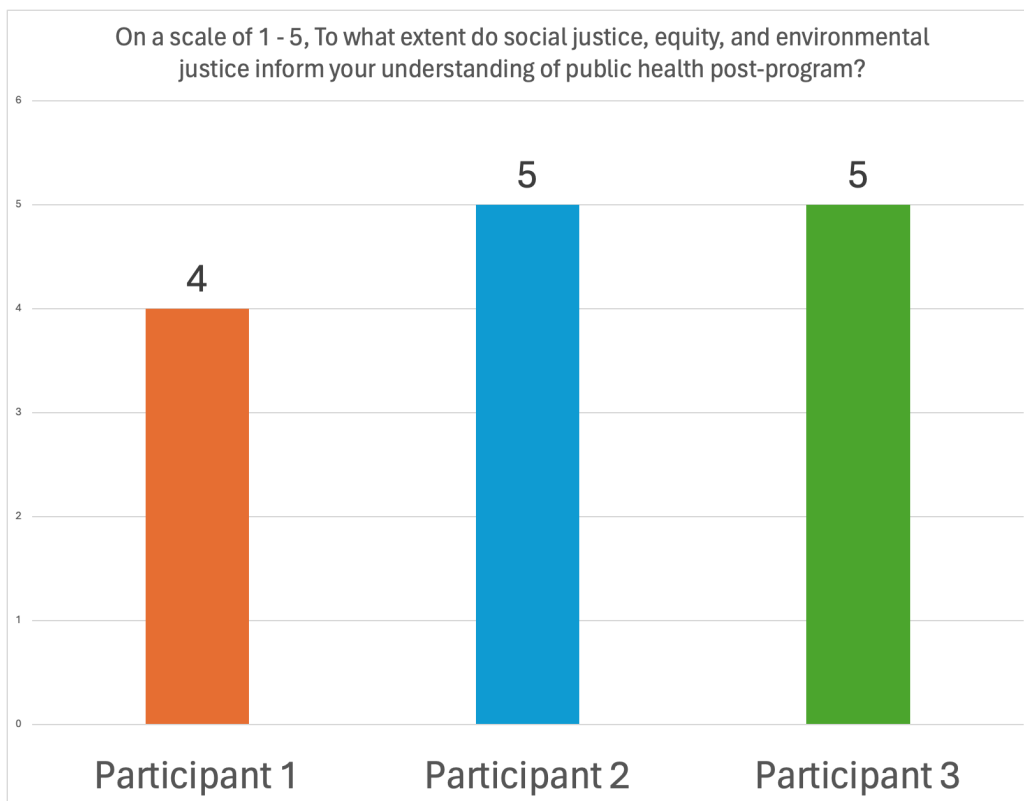
On average, participants had higher self-reported knowledge of social justice, structural racism, and environmental justice after participating in the Workforce Development Program than they did prior.

Figure 1



For participants from whom post-program surveys were collected, they had a strong association between their understanding of public health and their understanding of social justice concepts. The self-reported scores can be seen in **Figure 2**.

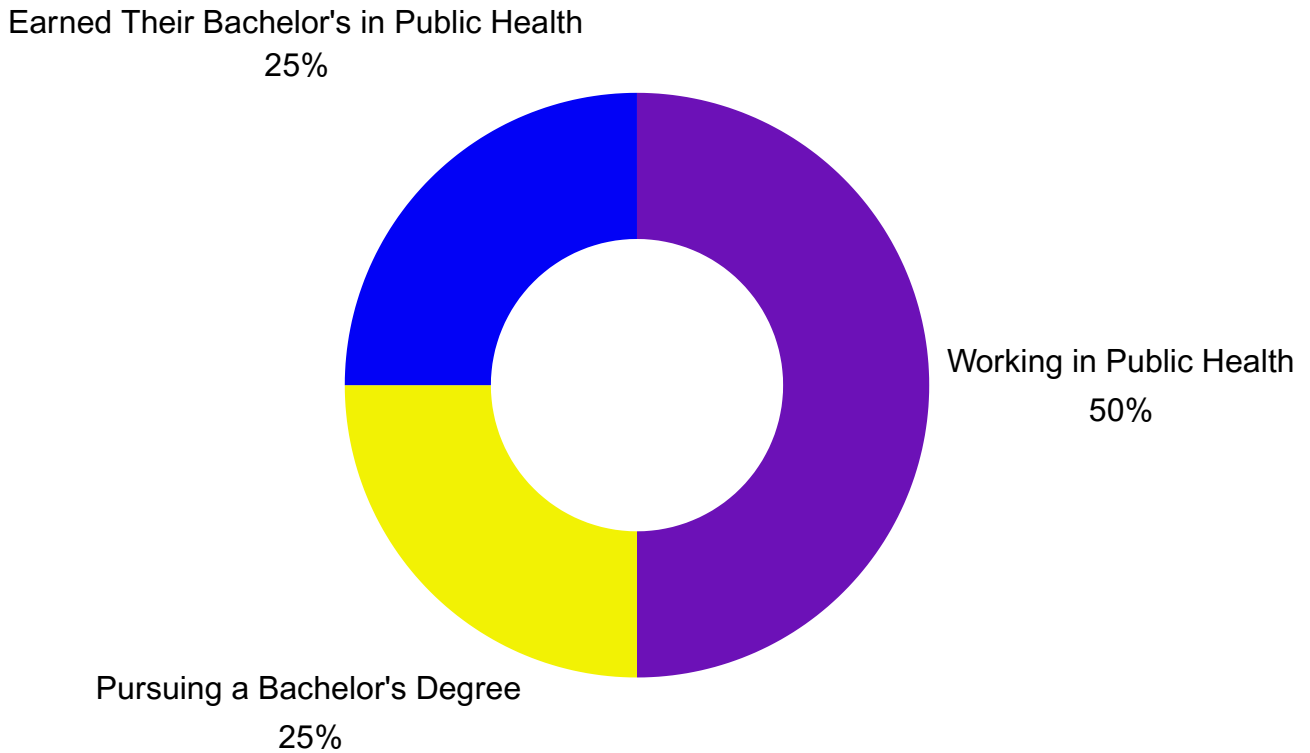
Figure 2



Do participants have a career in public health 6 months to 1 year after their program?

After participating in the program, the interns all intended to begin a career in public health, per the post-program survey they completed. Two of the four participants from 2023 are currently working in public health. One participant was still pursuing a Bachelor's degree, and one participant completed their Bachelor's program in Public Health shortly after participating in the program. See **Figure 3** for a visualization of participants' activities after they complete the Workforce Development Program.

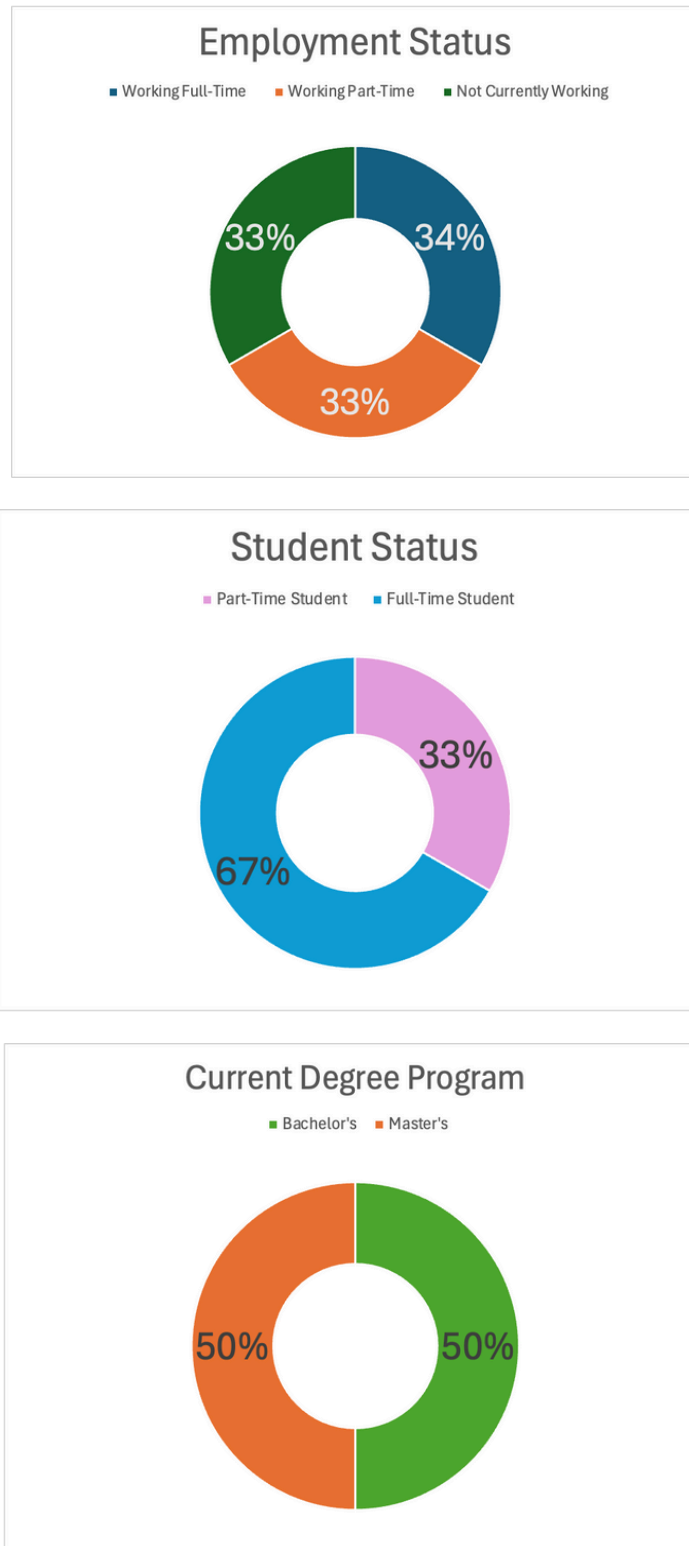
Figure 3



What careers are participants pursuing before and after the program?

Figure 4 shows the breakdown of 2023 interns' employment status, student status, and which degree they were pursuing during their program.

Figure 4



Two past interns from 2023 are currently employed in various public health roles, such as program management and consulting for public health associations in New Mexico and in health promotion in South Dakota.

Our Impact in Words

NMSJEl's interns shared their experiences in the survey they completed after their participation in their own words.



"I hope to find a career location within my area that deals with the specific communities and regions that my internship deals with. This way, I can fully implement what I've learned while being in the field area I desire."

Interns in 2023 reflected on their future careers and how they plan to take what they will implement their learnings.



"In my future endeavors, I plan to take future interns under my wing to do just what NMSJEl has done for me and share knowledge to help form the next generations. I am very thankful to NMSJEl for the opportunity to learn and work alongside them."

Past participants are highly committed to systems change.



"I want to ensure systems change in my future encounters with organizations and policies and stop the perpetuation of oppressive systems. "

Discussion

The New Mexico Social Justice and Equity Institute's inaugural workforce development program had a significant impact on its participants and will undoubtedly have a significant, positive impact on the public health workforce in New Mexico. As an Indigenous-led organization based in Indian Country, NMSJEI has a responsibility to guide the next generations in the fight for equity in New Mexico. The evaluation results strongly demonstrate that the future workforce in New Mexico can be equipped with social justice and equity fundamentals and is poised to implement these concepts in their future work.

Overall, participants' average scores of knowledge of social justice increased after participating in the program. Similarly, participants' average scores of knowledge of structural racism and environmental justice were also **higher** after they completed the program. The participants were also **more motivated** to implement what they learned about social justice concepts into their careers.

Participants held the belief that **understanding social justice concepts is important** for their careers both before and after the program. This finding suggests that public health students who participated in the Institute's program have already had some experience in social justice and equity to be able to see its importance and relevance in Public Health.

Understanding public health in New Mexico requires, at minimum, a familiarity with social justice and equity concepts and how structural racism manifests as health disparities for Native American people since first contact with Europeans. By strengthening the current and future public health workforce with knowledge of social justice and equity, the Workforce Development Program is advancing the mission of the Institute and contributing to the realization of its vision.

Program Financials

The Institute is a Native-led 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, ensuring that all contributions are tax-deductible. **The impactful work we do in our communities is made possible by the generous support of organizations, foundations, and individuals.** These contributions are immensely valued and play a crucial role in enabling us to serve our communities effectively. Specifically, funds directed toward our professional workforce development program can significantly enhance our offerings, allowing for more comprehensive training on Health Impact Assessments (HIA), leadership workshops, and other essential initiatives. Such support empowers us to continue delivering these vital programs, fostering growth and development within our communities.

We invite you to **support our nonprofit organization's** Professional Workforce Development Plan, which relies heavily on the generosity of donors. This year, we received funding from the Kellogg Foundation and the International Uranium Donation Campaign. These funds were allocated to staffing and programs, such as the International Uranium Film Festival and the Family Benefits Program. However, **we do not currently have specific funding for our Professional Workforce Development Program.** With funding for our program, we can significantly enhance accessibility to

vital staffing and essential resources such as Canva, Zoom, Microsoft, and Monday.com, which are integral to our operations.

Moreover, **funding would enable us to compensate our summer interns**, who currently undertake substantial work in addition to managing 6-8 credits during their final semester of college. By providing these students with financial support, we not only offer them real-world workforce training but also ensure they are rewarded for their dedication and hard work. **An investment specifically in our program** will help us cultivate a skilled and motivated future workforce, laying a robust foundation for our organization's continued success and growth.

The Future of the Program

The future of professional workforce development hinges on a comprehensive approach that emphasizes a commitment to social responsibility and activism alongside professional growth. As we look to expand our internship programs, partnering with a broader array of colleges and universities will be crucial. This expansion will not only diversify our talent pool but also enrich our organizational culture with fresh perspectives and innovative ideas.

By offering robust training in hard skills, such as health impact assessment research, leadership development skills, and public speaking, we can ensure that our interns are well-prepared for the demands of the modern job market. Additionally, facilitating networking opportunities through workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs will be key to their professional growth, providing them with the connections and insights needed to navigate their careers successfully. We are committed to educating our interns about the importance of activism and social change, encouraging them to become advocates for a more equitable and just society.

This dual focus on skill development and social consciousness will not only make our interns more competitive in the workforce but also empower them to drive meaningful change within their communities. By fostering a holistic development environment, we aim to produce well-rounded professionals who are as committed to excellence in their fields as they are to make a positive impact on the world. Through these efforts, we hope to build a workforce that is not only skilled and capable but also socially conscious and proactive in driving change.

Join us in our commitment to creating a workforce that is not only skilled and capable but also socially conscious and proactive in driving change. Together, we can empower the next generation of professionals to make a positive impact on the world. Whether you are a student seeking an internship, a university interested in partnering with us, or a professional looking to mentor and support emerging talent, we invite you to be part of our mission to foster holistic development and drive meaningful change. Get involved today and help shape the future of professional workforce development!



Acknowledgments

This evaluation project was prepared and researched by Kelcie R. Creel, MPH, with support from the University of New Mexico's Center for Participatory Research Tribal Data Champions Fellowship program. Ms. Creel was a Tribal Data Champion Fellow from 2023 to 2024 and received technical and financial support from the fellowship in Indigenous evaluation and research methods. She was motivated to take on an evaluation project for the New Mexico Social Justice and Equity Institute as a way to show gratitude and appreciation to the organization for providing an impactful education.

Contact Us

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