

LEAP – Policy Development Initiative
Frequently Asked Questions

1st Edition | Sustainable Production and Consumption | 2019/2020

Application form, Call for Applications and Regulation available at gulbenkian.pt

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ABOUT

1. What is LEAP?

LEAP is a 10-month training program focused on building the capacity of different professionals to contribute to public policy-making processes in an informed manner. It also aims at enabling a wider discussion on evidence-informed policy-making in Portugal. Specifically, LEAP will focus on improving participants' ability to conduct public policy research and analysis, that is, to do in-depth research and analysis of a local policy issue with the purpose of clearly defining the cause(s) of the problem, analysing potential alternative solutions and finally, putting forward their analysis and a policy recommendation to the community of opinion leaders and decision makers with the aim to influence an upcoming decision in this issue area.

2. Why is Gulbenkian organizing LEAP?

LEAP grew out of the ambition of the Gulbenkian Sustainability Program (GSP) to support better public policies related to Sustainable Production and Consumption, one of our key areas. We believe that GSP will have greater impact if we support those that share our concerns about Sustainable Production and Consumption in contributing to public policy-making by using evidence in a way that is attentive to the needs of decision-makers. We also hope that LEAP will contribute to promote a wider conversation about evidence-based policy making in Portugal, and about how to make such processes more open to external input.

3. Why is LEAP delivered in English?

LEAP is delivered in English for several reasons, both practical and strategic. From a strategic point of view, LEAP wants to appeal to internationally-oriented professionals working in Portugal, and proficiency of the English language generally reflects that orientation; participants that have a good command of the English language can also easily access and use international literature on their policy issue and policy development in general, enabling a wider understanding of these aspects beyond the Portuguese context; LEAP wants to provide its participants with access to mentors that have international reputation and that are policy-savvy in their field of expertise. Further in the field of sustainability, much of the leverage available to make policy change starts or happens through international treaties/bodies, movements and campaigns and the ability to access these processes will be key to participants.

From a practical point of view, methodological instructors do not currently operate in Portuguese, and soft skills instructors usually deliver training in English. We hope that after 2-3 editions of LEAP, some of its alumni are interested and willing to undergo “training of trainers” and be able to deliver LEAP in Portuguese, thus reaching a wider audience in Portugal.

ELIGIBILITY & SELECTION CRITERIA

4. Who can apply for LEAP?

Eligible participants are professionals that meet the criteria mentioned in section 3 of the [Call for Applications](#).

5. I have a bit more than 20 (less than 5) years of professional experience. Can I still apply?

Yes, you can. However, the more you are outside of this range of professional experience, the more likely you are to be excluded from the selection process. We are looking for professionals that have a career of at least 20-25 years ahead of them, so that LEAP has a long-lasting impact on their professional development and on their organizations.

If you are 2-3 years outside of the 5-20 yr range, have a very good research question, and the capacity and motivation to carry out policy research about it, then we encourage you to apply. Of course, we cannot guarantee that you will be selected, but we will be happy to review your application.

6. I have a scientific research scholarship (*bolsa*). Can I apply?

It depends. If you have a project scholarship (*bolsa de projeto*), a science and technology management scholarship (*BGCT*) or a postdoc scholarship, you are eligible to apply to LEAP. If you are receiving the scholarship as part of your academic training (*bolsa de doutoramento*), you are not eligible.

7. I work at a non-profit business organization. Can I apply?

Yes. Non-profit business organizations are civil society organizations, one of the target groups of LEAP.

8. I work for a private company. Can I apply?

No. LEAP is for professionals currently employed in organizations that represent collective interests in policy-making processes.

9. I'm interested in evidence-based public policies but in a field not related to Sustainable Production and Consumption. Should I apply anyway?

No. Applicants should propose to work on a policy issue that is demonstrably related to Sustainable Production and Consumption, that they know something about, on which they

have worked before and that is policy relevant (i.e., that others, besides yourself, recognize as being relevant). Future editions of LEAP can have a different thematic focus, so please consider applying in the future.

TIME AND MONEY

10. How much does LEAP cost?

There are no monetary costs associated with participation in LEAP.

11. Is there a stipend available or will research expenses be covered by LEAP?

LEAP participants will receive a monthly stipend in the amount of €350, to cover their research expenses and compensate them for the time dedicated to their research. The monthly stipend is for each participant to use in their research and should in no way be transferred to employers.

12. How much time will I have to dedicate to LEAP?

Participants are required to attend all workshops and dedicate on average 1 day per week to work independently on their policy research, analysis and advocacy work. There will be weeks where you will need to work more, and others when you will need to work less. Please check the [LEAP Overview & Schedule](#) for more details.

13. As a LEAP participant, will I do individual work, group work or both?

LEAP is a capacity-building program for individuals, from beginning to end. Participants are engaged on an individual basis, i.e., they will conduct individual policy research and work on their individual policy documents. However, thematic groups will be promoted, which will be formed by participants from different sectors and working on different research questions related to the same policy area; each thematic group will be mentored by a thematic expert in their policy area, and will be encouraged to engage in group discussions to share and test ideas, policy solutions, etc.

Participants are expected to do policy research that is directly relevant to their organization, but *this is not* group work where you can bring a consortium of people from your organization to do policy research, nor can people from the same organization take turns in attending the workshops. You can consult others, of course, but this is a programme that works with ONE individual through all stages.

BENEFITS FOR YOUR ORGANISATION

14. How does my organisation benefit from my participation in LEAP?

There are 3 levels at which organisations can benefit:

1. *Research to support your agenda*

LEAP participants can do in-depth policy research about an issue of relevance to their organization for which there's never enough time to work on. The policy research carried out during LEAP could inform the organization's future work about that specific policy issue.

2. Advanced policy research, analysis and advocacy skills of key staff

From a practical point of view, the organizations of LEAP participants will benefit from having staff skilled in gaining an in-depth understanding of a policy issue, in proposing and evaluating options to tackle that issue that take into consideration the available evidence and a wide range of views, and in promoting the preferable option in a policy-making process.

3. Starting point for an improved policy agenda

From a more strategic point of view, in previous LEAP-like programs, participants have reported their organizations adopting new practices and being able to be more influential. For example, because of having staff participating in LEAP-like programs:

- Departments within Public Administration have improved evidence-informed decision-making based on the consideration of options and effective stakeholder participation. This approach often catalyses the institutionalization of policy-making processes that are aligned with international standards.
- Research centres have improved the way they provide advice to Public Administration; how they engage in public policy-making processes, as they become more attentive to the knowledge needs of decision-makers and to how policies are made; and professors have started to include policy development into the syllabus of their courses and make more targeted recommendations in EU projects.
- Civil society organizations have expanded their advocacy toolkit in the development and use of evidence, and in more effectively engaging policy making and public participation processes to influence outcomes.

PREPARING YOUR APPLICATION

15. Can I work on a policy issue I don't know anything about or haven't worked before?

No. You should have previous work experience in your chosen issue, and you should have worked on it in your current organization.

16. Can I choose a policy research question that is not listed in the Call for Applications?

Yes, you can. The research questions we provide are our priority areas. But if you can put forward a compelling argument on a policy relevant these within the field of Sustainable Production and Consumption, we would like to hear from you!

17. Will future editions be focused on these three priority policy areas too?

That's not likely to happen, as we are planning to have new priority policy areas related to Sustainable Production & Consumption for each edition of LEAP.

18. What if I change my research question during LEAP?

It is natural that your original research question and hypothesis evolves as you dig deeper into your policy issue. In fact, one of our guiding principles is that effective in-depth policy research is mostly a hypothesis-generating endeavour, i.e. part of the process of researching a policy issue involves listening to the new evidence and challenging the participant's initial assumptions about it.

19. What should be included in the research outline?

The research outline should include the rationale for the policy issue you are proposing to tackle, a proposal for the research approach, and justify why are you qualified to do this research.

20. Can the employer's consent letter be submitted in Portuguese?

Yes, your employer's consent letter may be submitted in Portuguese.

21. How will participants be selected?

Applications will first be checked against the eligibility criteria (see section 3 of the [Call for Applications](#)). Eligible applications will be reviewed by a Selection Commission convened by the Foundation, and comprising representatives of the Gulbenkian Sustainability Program, ICPA – International Centre for Policy Advocacy and IES – Social Business School. Each application will be assessed by at least two members of the Selection Commission, in terms of how they meet the selection criteria listed in n. 8 of the Regulation (in [Portuguese](#) and [English](#)).

LEAP TEAM

22. Who is involved in delivering LEAP and what is their expertise?

LEAP involves a range of partners, both organizations and individuals.

- The [Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation](#) is the promotor of LEAP, giving overall orientation to the delivery of LEAP, selecting priority policy areas, and providing logistical and operational conditions.
- [ICPA – International Centre for Policy Advocacy](#) is responsible for policy development focus of the work, providing methodological guidance and feedback to participants and delivering related workshops.
- [IES-Social Business School](#) is responsible for soft skills training, and for designing the LEAP experience, i.e., ensuring participants get the support they need throughout the LEAP learning process.
- **Thematic mentors** will each provide guidance to a group of participants working on the policy area in which the mentor has expertise.

23. Who will the mentors be and how will they be selected?

LEAP will engage methodological mentors and thematic mentors. Methodological mentors, from ICPA – International Centre for Policy Advocacy, have expertise in the areas of policy process, communication, research and advocacy. They will support and mentor participants in a step by step manner through the process of research, analysis/writing and advocacy.

The Gulbenkian Foundation has already identified a pool of thematic mentors with policy experience and expertise in the three priority policy areas. Their engagement in LEAP will be confirmed after the selection of LEAP candidates is finalized. Thematic mentors will provide thematic guidance to participants in their specific policy field; enable the access of mentored participants to his/her professional network, as appropriate; review and give feedback on policy documents at different stages; and liaise with the LEAP team about the progress of work and status of participants.