

EDUCATION

Ph.D. University of San Diego | M.A. University of San Diego | B.S. Cornell University

SUMMARY

Strategic and practice-focused research leader with deep expertise in applied research, evaluation, and stakeholder engagement. Currently serving as Director of Applied Research Services at CCL, leading a newly formed team dedicated to advancing leadership development content and client solutions through high-impact, actionable research. Known for translating complex data into practical insights that inform program design, product development, and client delivery. Skilled in cross-functional collaboration, talent development, and thought leadership. Committed to expanding the understanding, practice, and development of leadership worldwide.

SUMMARY OF QUALIFICATIONS

Applied Research Strategy & Execution

- Leading the design and implementation of a stakeholder-informed process to establish CCL's Applied Research Services function, aligning with key account teams and enterprise strategy.
- Developing a strategic applied research agenda focused on delivering timely, actionable insights that inform leadership development, product innovation, and client engagement.
- Set and executed evaluation strategy aligned with Societal Impact group's strategic priorities, revenue targets, and ideal client profiles across nonprofit, education, and health portfolios.
- Designed and led research agendas for initiatives such as the Clare Rose Sabbatical Program (concurrent with CCL work), MANA de San Diego, MDRC, and regional "State of Nonprofits" reports.
- Key member of 4-person applied research project team for the global United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) Independent Review on Workplace Race Equality and Equity: designed and administered multi-lingual survey, cleaned and analyzed more than 6,050 responses, synthesized qualitative insights, and translated findings into equity recommendations. (Independent, concurrent with CCL work)
- Co-researcher for a multi-stakeholder, cross-sector research project funded by San Diego Zoo Global to inform the San Diego End Extinction Initiative. Designed and conducted interviews, analyzed survey data from 600+ residents, and synthesized findings into strategic recommendations that shaped a systems-change strategy and influenced policy, funding, and coalition-building efforts across environmental and governmental sectors.
- Serve as a key research, evaluation and content strategy leader for CCL's Amplify (formerly PropelNext) digital product; shape curriculum, evaluation tools, and strategy to align with market needs, cohort goals, and revenue growth targets.
- As Executive Director of national substance use prevention and youth development nonprofit Natural High, crafted and executed the organization's multi-year strategic plan, aligning programs, content development, and stakeholder engagement with mission-driven outcomes.

Research Services for Internal and External Stakeholders:

- Leading the design and implementation of a stakeholder-informed process to establish CCL's Applied Research Services function, aligning with key account teams and enterprise strategy.
- Developing a strategic applied research agenda focused on delivering timely, actionable insights that inform leadership development, product innovation, and client engagement.

- Collaborated with SI Portfolio Directors and Sales/Development team to analyze aggregate evaluation and participant data and identify leader challenges and trends; deliver tailored insights for grant applications, proposals, marketing collateral, and client discussions.
- Partnered with Sales & Development to develop tools/questions for identifying client challenges, informing tailored program design through discovery and needs assessments.
- Worked cross-functionally with product, marketing, and delivery teams to ensure evaluation and research inform enterprise decision-making.
- Provide research and evaluation services to high-profile clients such as American Express, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and MDRC, ensuring data-driven insights inform leadership development program design and can be leveraged for future field-level insights.
- Led integration of evaluation and research expertise into business development processes, personally contributing to and leading team participation in more than 40 business development and revenue-generating activities during FY25. Built evaluation components into proposals, strengthening CCL's value proposition to SI clients.
- Designed market-informed evaluation plans and experiments to test hypotheses for new product development, including Amplify.

Thought Leadership & Dissemination:

- Developed and disseminated field-facing insights across *Chronicle of Philanthropy*, *Training Industry Magazine*, CCL's Innovation Blog, and national conferences (ARNOVA, Independent Sector, SoCal Grantmakers), covering equity, leadership development, and nonprofit systems change.
- Co-authored "Navigating Chaos: How Mission-Driven Organizations Can Thoughtfully Utilize AI" (2025), offering a strategic response to sector disruption and highlighting opportunities to stabilize and scale purpose-driven work.
- Embedded thought leadership into team culture—established expectations for every role to publish, present, or contribute; team members have co-authored conference presentations, book chapters, and research talks and posts.
- Translated evaluation data into applied case studies and strategic briefs (e.g., MANA, Clare Rose Sabbatical, San Diego Zoo Global), supporting alumni engagement, fundraising, field advancement, and internal learning at CCL.

Talent Management:

- Strong, experienced people leader with more than a decade of practice; currently lead and retain a high-performing social sector research and evaluation team at CCL.
- Revamped team performance processes to clarify expectations, create opportunities for self-assessment, and align contributions with strategic goals.
- Certified leadership coach, known for giving honest, encouraging feedback; stretch and support team members by leveraging their strengths and fostering growth and clarity.
- Led as Executive Director for a decade, developing a high-trust team and fostering collaborative execution; focusing on team well-being, role clarity, and purpose-driven work.
- View leadership as individual and collective: center personal growth while building cohesion, aligning team efforts with larger strategy and cross-functional priorities.
- Translate stakeholders need across groups, helping teams stay connected to organizational priorities and move work forward effectively.

Cross-Functional Collaboration and Integration:

- Active contributor to Societal Impact, LRA, and enterprise-wide initiatives (e.g., Governance Council, Data Workstream, OneCCL End of Program Survey Revision Team, Content Collaboration Board).
- Represent social sector research and evaluation work across both Societal Impact (SI) and Leadership Research and Analytics (LRA) groups, helping bridge applied research and enterprise strategy.
- Build and maintain strategic partnerships with internal teams, including Insights & Impact, Leadership Research and Analytics, SI Sales & Development, SI Faculty and Operations; initiate regular touchpoints to align goals, improve workflows, and strengthen collaboration.
- Translate evaluation into insights for product innovation (e.g., Amplify), marketing, and client service strategies.

SELECTED SIGNATURE APPLIED RESEARCH PROJECTS

- **UNHCR Independent Equity Review:** Global, multilingual survey; 6,050+ responses; equity-focused recommendations.
- **MANA de San Diego / Latina Leadership Program:** Evaluation supporting alumni strategy, fundraising, community and field-level impact.
- **Clare Rose Sabbatical Program (Fieldstone Leadership Network):** Multi-year evaluation; interim leadership research; findings influenced funder strategy and program design.
- **San Diego End Extinction Initiative (San Diego Zoo Global):** Mixed-method needs assessment to launch regional conservation collaboration.
- **Amplify (formerly PropelNext):** Serve as evaluation strategy lead and curriculum contributor; support alignment of program outcomes with client development and CCL strategic goals.
- **State of Nonprofits Reports (University of San Diego):** Sector-wide survey design, analysis, and dissemination to civic leaders and funders.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Director, Applied Research Services Center for Creative Leadership

June 2025 - current

- Lead the strategic direction and execution of CCL's applied research agenda, ensuring alignment with organizational priorities and leadership development challenges.
- Oversee the design and delivery of timely, actionable research studies that inform program design, product innovation, and client engagement.
- Provide tailored research services to internal teams and external clients, including needs assessments, data analysis, and insight generation.
- Collaborate with sales and delivery teams to integrate applied research offerings into client proposals and engagements, enhancing CCL's competitive advantage.
- Scan the external environment for emerging trends and technologies (e.g., AI, digital learning) to inform research priorities and thought leadership.
- Build and mentor a high-performing team of applied researchers, setting performance targets and fostering professional growth.
- Partner across function to ensure ethical compliance and seamless integration of research insights.
- Represent applied research on the RINCC leadership team, driving alignment, shared learning, and strategic impact across the organization.

**Director, Societal Impact Insights & Impact
Center for Creative Leadership**

January 2024 - May 2025

- Served as key member of both the Societal Impact Leadership Team (SILT) and Leadership Analytics Research Knowledge (LARK) leadership team, bridging evaluation expertise across organizational divisions.
- Lead a team of evaluation professionals providing strategic measurement, evaluation, and learning support across CCL's social sector portfolio.
- Successfully navigated team through organizational restructuring while maintaining high client satisfaction and team cohesion.
- Developed standardized goal frameworks and evaluation approaches that align with CCL's broader impact measurement strategies.

**Senior Evaluation Associate – Societal Impact
Center for Creative Leadership**

April 2022-December 2023

- Served as evaluation lead for CCL's nonprofit portfolio, provided strategic thought partnership and high-quality evaluation support to nonprofit portfolio directors and faculty, including contributing to client proposals and discovery work, as well as leading evaluation work for high-profile clients such as American Express, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and MDRC.
- Co-led efforts to increase the strategic work of Evaluation Leads, resulting in a team charter, purpose, vision, values, norms, and shared goals to support SI portfolio leads and development.
- Supported the development of the 16-week beta pilot for the PropelNext product by contributing to content, and providing operations, evaluation, and marketing support.

**Evaluation Associate – Societal Impact
Center for Creative Leadership**

June 2020-April 2022

- Served as Interim Manager for SAVII team while the Director on parental leave.
- Led nonprofit and higher education client evaluation efforts for four clients.
- Supported PropelNext alpha pilot through core curriculum development, as well as consulted on Asset-Based Leadership content for an app-based leadership product. Supported market development and lead generation for PropelNext by co-authoring nonprofit leadership articles and participating in related external webinars.
- Partnered with cross-functional colleagues to update and roll out core evaluation tools across the global enterprise, including end-of-program and impact surveys and dashboards.
- Helped develop the theoretical framework for and the reporting related to the Community Equity Indicator, a new community-based assessment supporting community health equity.

**Senior Evaluation Analyst – Leadership Research and Analytics
Center for Creative Leadership**

March 2019 – June 2020

- Supported custom evaluation work for eight high-profile global markets clients through the development and execution of evaluation plans.
- Co-lead overall Point of View (POV) project on the impact of CCL's leadership development programs on individual leaders, their teams and their organizations.
- Support enterprise-wide end of program survey design and distribution support.
- Analyzed existing evaluation datasets to inform program design and uncover insights about impact.

- Supported Societal Advancement's Stanford/Gates Foundation discovery work with the WomenLift initiative targeted at mid-career women in global health, including leading the literature review, interviews, data analysis, and reporting.

Community Research – Doctoral Research Assistantship

2015-2019

The Nonprofit Institute, University of San Diego (*Full Tuition Awarded*)

- Lead/co-lead quantitative and qualitative applied research projects for high-profile San Diego-based nonprofits, including the development of literature reviews, logic models, research designs, asset maps, data collection instruments (interview and focus group protocol, survey development), and Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals.
- Conducted qualitative and quantitative data analysis (data cleaning, coding, statistical analysis) and synthesized to determine trends, outcomes, and gaps.
- Served as lead or co-lead on report-writing and presentations for nonprofit clients, academia, and the public.

Executive Director

2004-2015

Natural High (youth development, substance use prevention nonprofit organization)

- Achieved eightfold growth in staff and revenue, expanded the celebrity messenger network from 15 to 50, and sustained a delivery cost of under \$0.15 per youth—while scaling national reach to 7 million youth via education and marketing channels.
- Established network of 20,000 educators in public and private schools across the US.
- Used research-informed processes to improve program effectiveness and adoption of curriculum by educators, including responding to shifting federal and state mandates related to school-based drug prevention.
- Founding member of statewide Red Ribbon Coalition of education, nonprofit, and government agencies collaborating to develop targeted, consistent drug-prevention campaigns targeted to youth around the Natural High theme.
- Presented Natural High program to and solicited feedback from key federal stakeholders including: Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Association (SAMHSA).
- Led the organization through significant technological, operational, and mission-related transitions.

Family Services Director

2000-2004

Habitat for Humanity of the Jacksonville Beaches

- Established community education programs and formal after-school program for Habitat for Humanity homeowner children in partnership with the City of Jacksonville to promote high school graduation and college readiness.
- Supported the launch of the Scheidel Scholarship program, enabling youth and adults living in Habitat homes to pursue 4-year, 2-year, or certificate education for free.
- Grew education funding by 200%, enabling the hiring of education staff.
- Formalized Family Services Department by developing indicators for homeowner selection, resulting in 100% increase in homeowner applicants.
- Established a first-time homeowner support program, reducing home repairs by 300% and mortgage delinquency by 75%.
- Directed supervisor for two AmeriCorps Family Services members.

TEACHING, PRESENTATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS: ACADEMIC AND APPLIED

- Co-author, (2025) *Navigating Chaos: How Mission-Driven Organizations Can Thoughtfully Utilize AI*, Substack.
- Presenter, (2025) *Building Leaders from Within: Lessons from Nonprofit Interim Leadership Experiences*, Nonprofit Leadership and Governance Symposium, University of San Diego.
- Co-presenter, (2024) *Amplify Your Impact: Integrating Leadership Development and Program Evaluation for Greater Community Outcomes*, The Chronicle of Philanthropy Webinar.
- Co-presenter, (2024) *Amplifying Impact Through Nonprofit Leadership and Evaluation*, The Chronicle of Philanthropy Webinar.
- Co-author, (2024) *Unlocking Collective Genius Through Invitational Leadership*, Training Industry Magazine.
- Co-Facilitator, (2023) *Bridging Boundaries for Social Change Workshop*. Independent Sector, Upswell Conference, Dallas, TX.
- Lennox-Morrison, J., **Schneider, M.**, Ehrlich, V. (2023). *Transforming EDI: An Emergent and Equitable Evaluation Journey*. Research Blog Post, CCL Innovation.
- Lennox-Morrison, J., **Schneider, M.**, Ehrlich, V. (2023). Conference Presentation (author not presenter): *Foregrounding Participant Voice to Improve Capability Development in Facilitator Training Around Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Issues*, American Evaluation 2023 Evaluation Conference, Indianapolis, IN.
- Brondos-Fry, E. & **Schneider, M.** (2023) *Latinas Leading Change: A Case Study of Leadership Development for Community Impact*. Research Blog Post, CCL Innovation.
- Jones, J. A., Castillo, E. A., **Schneider, M.**, & Kahl, S. C. (2023). An Executive Search Gone Awry: Biased Hiring Practices in a Small Organization. *Journal of Nonprofit Education & Leadership*, 13(3).
- Co-Facilitator, Team Effectiveness Facilitation. (September 2023). Client Delivery, Center for Creative Leadership.
- Co-author/presenter for an article and webinar sponsored by the Center for Creative Leadership (2022). *Responding to the Great Resignation: This Simple Lever Can Release the Pressure*. The Chronicle of Philanthropy.
- Co-presenter for webinar (2021). *Creating Equitable Opportunities for Emerging Leaders*, Center for Creative Leadership.
- Co-author/presenter for an article and webinar. (2021). *Reimagining the Servant Leadership Model: Starting with Self*. Center for Creative Leadership.
- **Schneider, M.** & Tinkler, T. (2020). Strengthening Leaders and Building Capacity Through Nonprofit Sabbaticals: A Five-Year Summary of Fieldstone Leadership Network San Diego's Clare Rose Sabbatical Program. San Diego, CA: The Nonprofit Institute, University of San Diego.
- **Schneider, M.** (February 2020). Poster Presentation: *Nonprofit Sabbaticals: A Best Practice for Advancing Leadership Development and Succession Planning* 49th Annual Conference Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations (ARNOVA), San Diego, CA.
- Tinkler, T., **Schneider, M.**, Schumann, M. (2019). *Collaborative Species and Habitat Conservation Efforts in San Diego County: A Systematic Needs Assessment to Guide the San Diego End Extinction Initiative*. San Diego, CA: The Nonprofit Institute, University of San Diego.
- Teaching Assistant, LEAD 500. (Fall 2018). Research Methods, Program Design and Evaluation, University of San Diego

- **Schneider (formerly Ahearne), M.** (November 2018). Paper Presentation: *Becoming a Leader on the Job: Examining How Internal Interim Leaders Build Leadership Capacity*, 47th Annual Conference Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations (ARNOVA), Austin, TX.
- **Schneider (formerly Ahearne), M.** (October 2017). *Current Trends and Unintended Consequences of Your Own Workforce Development Policies*. A panel presentation at the State of Nonprofits and Philanthropy Conference, Nonprofit Institute, University of San Diego, San Diego, CA.
- Trull, C., Hunt, K. & **Ahearne, M.** (November 2016). Poster Presentation: *Exploring Donor Behavior in an Election Year: The 2016 Presidential Election and Its Impact on Charitable Giving and Volunteerism*, 45th Annual Conference Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations (ARNOVA), Washington, DC.
- Deitrick, L. and **Ahearne, M.** (April 2016). *Nonprofit Sabbatical Programs as a Human Capital Investment Strategy for Organizational Sustainability*, 14th Annual West Coast Nonprofit Data Conference, Las Vegas, NV.
- **Ahearne, M.**, Tinkler, T. & Schumann, M.J. (2017). *The Fieldstone Learning Group Effect: Leadership Development as Capacity Building. A Five-Year Examination of the Fieldstone Leadership Group Program*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.
- **Ahearne, M.** Tinkler, T., & Schumann, M.J. (2017). *The Nonprofit Sabbatical as a Catalyst for Capacity Building: An Evaluation of the Fieldstone Leadership Network's Clare Rose Sabbatical Program Year 2 Evaluation Report*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.
- **Ahearne, M.**, Tinkler, T., & Schumann, M.J. (2016). *Evaluation of the Fieldstone Foundation Learning Group Program*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.
- **Ahearne, M.**, Tinkler, T., & Schumann, M.J., (2016). *Fieldstone Leadership Network's Clare Rose Foundation Sabbatical Program: Year 1 Evaluation Report*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.
- **Ahearne, M.**, Davari, A., Tinkler, T., & Schumann, M.J. (2016). *Food, Friends, and Health: An Evaluation of North County Senior Connections Thyme Together Food Truck Lunch Program*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.
- Schumann, M.J., **Ahearne, M.**, Hennessy, L., & Trull, C. (2015). *Fieldstone Leadership Network's Clare Rose Foundation Sabbatical Program: Year 1 Evaluation Report*. San Diego, CA: Caster Family Center for Nonprofit and Philanthropic Research, University of San Diego.

CERTIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

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| • 4MAT® Advanced Instructional Design Certification | 2023 |
| • Group Relations Training: Variations of Very Asian+, Women's Lives: Authority, Complexity, Intersectionality | 2019, 2022 |
| • Center for Creative Leadership Training: The Resilience Advantage, Beyond Bias, Leading in Disruption, BCE Table Coaching, Maximizing Your Leadership Potential | 2019- 2025 |
| • 360 Feedback Assessment Certification, Center for Creative Leadership | 2020 |
| • Foundations of Evaluation and Applied Research, Claremont Grad University | 2019 |

- Culturally Responsive Evaluation, Claremont Graduate University 2019
- Leadership Coaching Certificate (12 units), University of San Diego 2018
- Certified Nonprofit Professional (CNP) credential, Nonprofit Leadership Alliance 2017
- Courage to Lead, Nonprofit Leader Retreat, Fieldstone Leadership Network 2012 2015
- Not-For-Profit Program using Case Study Method, Harvard Business School Club San Diego 2013
- Certificate in Fundraising Management (CFRM), Indiana University 2007
- National Substance Abuse Specialist Training, University of Nevada 2005

MEMBERSHIPS & TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Technical Skills: SPSS, R, Dedoose, Qualtrics, Teams, Clickup, Airtable, Venngage
- Member, Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Associations (ARNOVA), American Evaluation Association (AEA)