A REPORT ON

THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

Key Findings and Lessons Learned from the First Four Years of the Fellows Program at Baruch College
As a generation of New York nonprofit executive directors retires, the sector faces a shortage of new leaders ready to take on tomorrow’s challenges.

We’re changing that.
In 2015, we created the New York Community Trust Leadership Fellows program at The Center for Nonprofit Strategy and Management, part of the Marxe School of Public and International Affairs at Baruch College of the City University of New York. We aimed to provide mid-career nonprofit professionals with an opportunity to improve their leadership skills, and increase the quality and diversity of talent available to lead the next generation of New York City nonprofits.

The program trains two cohorts each year (fall and spring) of up to 30 selected fellows in 12 full-day weekly sessions. Mentors are provided and fellows undertake an “organizational change” project at their place of work to apply their new learning. As of August 2018, 199 fellows completed the program.

The Fellowship

This Report

In the fall of 2016, The Trust commissioned Claire Reinelt, Ph.D., and Mindy Fried, Ph.D., to conduct an assessment of the first five cohorts (Spring 2015 through Spring 2017). The assessment used surveys and interviews with alumni, their executive directors or other supervisors at work, and instructors to identify the program’s impact on the fellows, their personal and professional networks, their organizations, and the broader nonprofit sector.

Eighty-five alumni responded to the survey (51% response rate). Twenty-five interviews were conducted with the fellows. Eleven supervisors participated in one of two focus groups. Fifty supervisors responded to a survey (57% response rate).

Being a member of the Leadership Fellows Program was truly a life-changing experience for me, both personally and professionally.

Rumbi Petrozzello
African Film Festival
Fall Cohort 2016
Key Findings

The Fellows

More than 90% of supervisors reported that participation in the program improved their employee’s leadership abilities.

- Almost half (46%) of alumni fellows reported that they received a promotion within a year of completing the program.
- Three-quarters of alumni fellows agreed or strongly agreed that the program improved their ability to think strategically, increased their confidence in presenting their ideas, and made them more effective leaders.

Fellowship Composition by Gender and Race

55% of fellows were people of color.

Fellows’ Personal and Professional Networks

Fellows cited the development of their personal and professional networks as one of the most valuable benefits of the program.

- Two-thirds of alumni included the two lead staff as part of this network and 56% included members of their cohort. One-third cited mentors or faculty members as part of their network.
- Alumni continue to use this network for friendship, sharing resources and expertise, and advice on work challenges.
Executive directors or other supervisors reported that 75% of program alumni were more involved in the organization’s strategic decision making and 70% have been given more leadership opportunities.

- Most (84%) alumni were still working in the same organization at the time of the survey (one to three years later). Of those who left, three-quarters cited better opportunities and higher salaries as the reason for the move; 57% said there was no advancement path at their old job.

- More than half (54%) of supervisors reported that the Fellows’ organizational change projects addressed critical issues that needed attention at their nonprofits.

Nonprofit Sector

Of the 168 alumni fellows included in the survey, 67% are age 40 or younger, 55% are people of color, and 76% are women. Their organizations represented 18 different program areas, with arts and culture, capacity building, and policy advocacy as the most prevalent.

- The Leadership Fellows program is one of the few opportunities in New York City for mid-level staff to develop leadership and management skills.

- It is not possible to discern the impact of the Leadership Fellows program on the nonprofit sector at large with these limited survey results.

“Every session was a mind-blowing challenge that kept me thinking about how to implement what I was learning for the whole week.”

Rafael Sánchez
Repertorio Español
Spring Cohort 2016
Lessons Learned

We learned that the fellows and their supervisors see great value in the program—but there is also room for improvement. The New York Community Trust is already working with the staff and faculty at Baruch to make changes to the program.

Faculty

Most alumni—74%—noted that the sessions created a safe learning environment. But less than half thought it was safe for discussing gender issues (49%) or racial issues (47%). Faculty should incorporate race and gender lenses into their sessions.

- Provide opportunities for fellows to engage with their supervisors, such as an evening gathering, regular check-ins, or webinars specifically for supervisors.
- Add staff (part-time or volunteer) to the Leadership Fellows program. The small staff is not able to handle all of the administrative functions as well as program assessment.

Curriculum

Three quarters of fellows stated that the curriculum content was well developed and met their learning needs.

- Create a more unified curriculum by articulating a leadership theory, which faculty would then incorporate into their sessions.
- Bring individual faculty together so that they know what each other will teach.
- Place the broad-based sessions, such as those that teach leadership skills, early in the schedule.
- The breadth vs. depth balance of various topics must be adjusted to satisfy the needs of a range of skills and experiences among the fellows. Suggestions included: using the “wisdom of the room” to identify fellows with deeper knowledge to guide discussions, or dividing into discussion groups based on experience levels.
- Continue to discourage lecturing and emphasize interactive teaching methods. Most alumni reported a good balance between lecture and small-group work.
Mentors

Mentors added value to the program, but the survey identified several areas for improvement.

- Enhance mentor/fellow matches by extending the mentoring period.
- Increase the number of mentors of color, including alumni fellows.
- Counsel mentors to provide help with the organizational change projects as well as professional advice.

Organizational Change Projects

Incorporate the change projects into the curriculum by drawing on examples or focusing class time on supporting fellows.

- Less than half (48%) of fellows said the organizational change project was very or extremely valuable. Thus it would be beneficial to finalize the topics of the project early in the schedule and ensure that the projects can be finished. (Nearly one-half—48%—reported that the project is ongoing; only 22% reported completion.)
- Provide support from the mentors and the home organizations on projects.

Alumni Network

Provide occasional professional development opportunities, such as summer institutes, webinars, and peer learning opportunities.

- Maintain a communications platform accessible to the alumni.
- Fund the platform and activities required to keep the network going.

Alumni Interaction Preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Alumni Listserv</th>
<th>30%</th>
<th>32%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Directory</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A More Interactive Portal</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni Newsletter</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likely to Use

Very Likely to Use
What’s next?

In New York, nonprofits are critical to so many aspects of urban life. This program ensures these groups have the leadership they need to continue their vital work.

Patricia Swann
Senior Program Officer
The New York Community Trust

Building Tomorrow’s Effective Nonprofit Leaders

New York State has the largest nonprofit sector in the nation. The city alone has 50,000 nonprofit organizations that make our life richer and better in countless ways. As the community foundation for our city, The Trust is dedicated to making sure these groups can deliver on their missions.

To do this, the nonprofit sector needs great leadership—leaders that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.

As a generation of founders and executives retires, the philanthropic community must act to ensure the sector has the leadership it needs to respond to the ever-changing needs and challenges faced by millions of New Yorkers.

A Special Thanks to:

New York Community Trust Leadership Fellows
Program Evaluators:
Mindy Fried, Ph.D.
Claire Reinelt, Ph.D.

Evaluation Advisory Group:
Gaurav (Mike) Bawa*
Sharese Bailey Bullock
Annette Goodman
Patricia Jenny
Rachel Pardoe
Michael Seltzer*
Patricia Swann
Barbara Taveras
Don Waisanen

* Fellowship staff

909 Third Avenue, 22nd Floor
New York, NY 10022
212-686-0010
nycommunitytrust.org