

# Advancing the Next Generation of LGBT Leaders

An Evaluation of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Program's  
Inaugural Cohort



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## PREPARED FOR:

### The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Program Partners

- The Pipeline Project
- The Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund's Flexible Leadership Investments Program
- The Rockwood Leadership Institute

### The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Funding Partners

- The Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
- The Arcus Foundation
- The Gill Foundation

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## OVERVIEW

People of color are greatly underrepresented in the executive leadership of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations. This lack of diversity at organizations' top-tiers can hinder work to advance the rights of a diverse LGBT community and be detrimental to the overall LGBT movement.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, many nonprofit leaders are at or near retirement and will soon be transitioning out of their positions. For the LGBT field to reflect an increasingly diverse society as well as prepare for the next generation of leaders, it needs to enhance the preparation, advancement and retention of emerging leaders of color in executive positions. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Program was formed to address this specific issue.

The impending nonprofit leadership deficit has heightened attention on the most effective ways to strengthen leadership. Traditionally and most commonly, funders support leadership development through stand-alone, off-site trainings. More recently, leadership development models have expanded tactics to include complementary and flexible supports that supplement in-person sessions, such as executive coaching, individual leadership development plans and projects, peer networks and focused supports for alumni. Some funders are also shifting the focus of their leadership supports to the broader organization, directing it at multiple individuals, teams and the organization more broadly (e.g., core support grants, organizational consulting, team coaching, board development). These approaches are gaining favor within the nonprofit field as ways to more effectively address leadership needs that benefit the collective leadership within organizations.

Click the icon to  
hear fellows talk  
about their  
Program  
experiences.



The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Program reflects the broader field's movement towards providing more comprehensive and flexible leadership supports. The program's initial five-day training, provided through the Rockwood Leadership Institute, focuses on developing both hard and soft leadership skills in a group setting. In the past, leadership trainings have often focused on developing core technical skills; however, with increasingly networked organizations, less hierarchal leadership structures and a greater focus on teams, more emphasis is being placed on strengthening "soft" skills such as building partnerships, communicating effectively, resolving conflict and developing and mentoring others. The Program's follow-up sessions are a promising strategy to build on and reinforce Program learnings from the initial retreat, while also providing valuable in-person opportunities for fellows to maintain and enhance their peer network. Since many emerging leaders of color report the lack of this network in their day-to-day work, it is an especially important Program component that fosters connections across

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<sup>1</sup> Movement Advancement Project (2007). *Issues of Racial Justice and Inclusion: A Primer for LGBT Movement-Funders.*

organizations, and hopefully over time will result in field-level impacts. The Program's addition of tailored strategies (e.g., 360° assessments, individual leadership development plans, availability of executive coaching) helps fellows better understand their specific strengths and areas for improvements, and provides them with focused support to address their unique needs.

Based on the preliminary evaluation findings from the first year, the Program model is aligned with other leadership development programs and is addressing an important need in the LGBT field. Its combination of strategies (e.g., learnings delivered in group and individual settings, curriculum focused on hard and soft skills) are contributing to tangible, important impacts. Fellows report that the Program has contributed to a wide range of improvements, including greater self awareness and confidence, improved leadership skills, advancement into more senior roles, greater responsibilities and an enhanced peer network. At this point, the primary areas of impact center on individual fellows; however, over time, the Program expects to see organizational and field-level impacts, as well as further career growth among Program alumni.

Reflecting on their initial Program experience, staff plan to make adjustments as they move into the second year, including reducing the frequency of the retreats, developing a more focused follow-up retreat curriculum and communicating more clearly upfront about program expectations for both fellows and their executive directors. Program staff are also in the process of developing an alumni component to help maintain the inaugural fellows' peer network, reinforce Program learnings and involve alumni in an advisory capacity. As the Program moves into its second year, staff should identify opportunities to support fellows in their application of learnings at their organizations, leverage other supports in the field and continue assessing the Program to document impacts and identify areas for further refinement.

### Program Partners

**The Haas Jr., Fund's Flexible Leadership Investments Program** provides Haas Jr., Fund grantees with tailored, flexible support (e.g., coaches, consultants) to help identify and strengthen their leadership needs.

**The Pipeline Project** develops and manages programs aimed to increase diversity within LGBT organizations by enhancing recruitment, retention, advancement and organizational support for people of color.

**The Rockwood Leadership Institute** delivers training to nonprofit leaders in core leadership competencies, such as visioning, partnership, communication, conflict resolution and team building.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2009, the Pipeline Project and the Flexible Leadership Investments Program created the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Program (the Program) with a primary goal of retaining and advancing the diversity that exists in LGBT organizations. The Program selects people of color who hold senior or middle management positions in their organizations and are identified as current or potential leaders in the LGBT movement. The Program's four key goals for its participants, or fellows, are to:

1. Build their hard and soft leadership skills,
2. Foster lasting professional peer networks between people of color within LGBT organizations,
3. Advance and retain fellows in executive positions within LGBT organizations, and
4. Support fellows to build stronger organizations that are equipped to advance rights and opportunities for all LGBT people.

The one-year leadership development Program begins with a five-day, intensive retreat conducted by the Rockwood Leadership Institute and includes 360° assessments and a variety of hard and soft skills training. Over the course of the next year, fellows gather for three additional two-day retreats to reinforce and build on the Rockwood learnings and deepen their relationships among fellows. After the initial retreat, the Program offers \$3,500 and a Plan Consultant to assist each fellow in the design and implementation of an individual leadership development plan, which includes specific leadership goals and the activities that they will undertake to reach these goals (e.g., coaching, trainings, conferences).

At this time, participation in the Program is restricted to selected grantees of the Program funders: the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, the Arcus Foundation and the Gill Foundation. The Program is provided at no cost to fellows and their organizations.

In early 2010, the Program asked BTW *informing change* (BTW) to assist them in an evaluation of their inaugural cohort of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows. At the Program's mid-point, BTW analyzed data and provided a memo describing preliminary impacts based on the Program's stated goals. This report builds on the preliminary findings memo and updates the findings and learnings to reflect the full-year experience of the inaugural cohort, which includes 19 fellows from organizations across the United States as well as two fellows from organizations in Kenya and South Africa.<sup>2</sup> We also offer considerations for Program staff and funders, as well as others who are interested in or involved in developing leadership programs for nonprofit leaders.

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<sup>2</sup> The Program started with 21 fellows; however, two were let go prior to the final retreat.

Data represented in this report come from a variety of sources, including surveys, interviews and a review of Program related materials. Almost all of the information was collected by 21<sup>st</sup> Century Program staff, with BTW assisting in the development of data collection tools and the review and synthesis of data. In April 2010, three months into the year-long Program, staff administered a survey (50% response rate) and conducted in-person, video interviews with all 18 U.S.-based fellows, 16 of their executive directors and one faculty member.<sup>3</sup> In October 2010, at the end of the Program, they administered a survey (95% response rate), convened a focus group with three of the fellows' executive directors and conducted video interviews with two additional executive directors and 14 fellows. As part of a related project focusing on the inclusion of international fellows with the US-based cohort, BTW conducted confidential telephone interviews with ten key informants: two international fellows, five domestic fellows and three Program staff or facilitators.<sup>4</sup> BTW also reviewed a variety of Program materials including fellows' applications, nomination forms, individual leadership development plans and retreat evaluation summaries.

A number of potential limitations of the evaluation should be kept in mind. First, given limited evaluation resources, most data were collected by Program partners, which could potentially affect respondents' feedback. Second, the data are self-reported by fellows and executive directors. Third, the sample size is relatively small. Finally, fellows started the Program with different leadership experiences and strengths and work in different positions and organizations. As a result of these limitations, caution is warranted in generalizing these findings too broadly.

## **PROGRAM IMPACTS**

In this section, we examine the ways in which the Program has contributed to intended areas of improvement in fellows' leadership abilities. At this point, a year into the Program, the primary areas of impact center on individual fellows; however, over time, we would expect to see more organizational and field-level impacts. In the following pages we examine growth and changes in fellows' roles and responsibilities, self-awareness and confidence, leadership skills, connections and relationships, as well as organizational improvements.

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<sup>3</sup> The two international fellows did not attend the Program's second retreat and as a result, were not able to participate in a video interview. In one case, the most appropriate person to interview was a program director rather than the executive director.

<sup>4</sup> In September 2010, Program funder, the Arcus Foundation requested that BTW examine the Program's approach to including international fellows in the cohort. The findings related to this assessment are available in a separate memo.

## Roles & Responsibilities

*“The Program helped ground me and propel me to take the next step in my leadership development by becoming a new executive director.”*

—Fellow

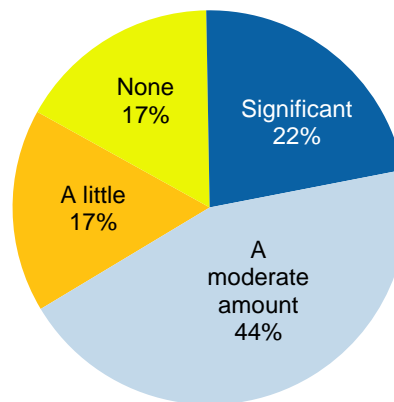
**Most fellows remain employed at their organization and within the LGBT field.** Eighty-three percent of fellows are employed at the same organization as when they started the Program and 94% are still employed in the LGBT field. Of those who are not employed at the same organization, one fellow moved from a full-time position at the organization to a consulting role. He notes, “The Program gave me the confidence and the skills to venture out beyond my comfort level.” Another fellow resigned from her position and is no longer employed in the LGBT field; however, she still maintains connections with the fellows. Another fellow left his organization to take a role as executive director of a national LGBT advocacy organization.

**Fellows are taking on more senior roles and accepting greater responsibilities.** Forty-five percent of fellows report that they have assumed a more senior position (e.g., executive director, senior management) since beginning the Program. Regardless of whether fellows have or have not officially assumed a new position, many report taking on greater responsibilities within their current position (Exhibit 1). Examples include directing new projects, taking on more complex tasks or accepting higher-profile work (e.g., responding to audits, co-chairing a diversity committee, developing new publications, designing new programs, engaging in a strategic planning process).

*“I was promoted to my organization's executive team. I now oversee all advocacy work with the Governor's office and state agencies. I believe that the Program has provided me with the confidence and the technical skills necessary to take my leadership to the next level.”*

—Fellow

**Exhibit 1**  
**Growth in Fellows' Job Responsibilities Since Program Began**  
(N=18)



## Self-Awareness & Confidence

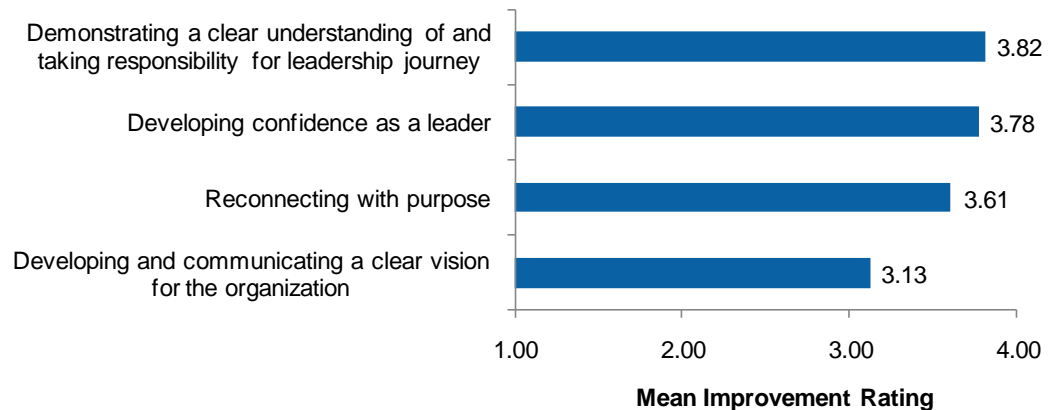
**Fellows are better able to reflect on and articulate their purpose and vision for themselves as leaders in the LGBT movement** (Exhibit 2). Both fellows and executive directors note how the Program has prompted greater introspection and self-awareness about fellows' current abilities and future paths as leaders. Fellows appreciate the opportunity to step away from the day-to-day business of their work to reflect on their passions, their purpose and how these intersect with their career paths. Fellows also note the importance of bringing their "full self" into their leadership, including multiple aspects of their personal and professional lives (e.g., as a gay man of color, as a spiritual person and an activist), and how this benefits not only themselves but also the broader movement (e.g., provides more diverse perspectives).

*"My confidence as a leader didn't just grow, it improved and expanded along more realistic and more appropriate lines that were connected to my purpose and my future leadership journey."*

—Fellow

### Exhibit 2 Mean Ratings of Improvement in Fellows' Leadership as a Result of the Program\*

The scale ranges from 1 "no improvement" to 4 "a large improvement"



**Fellows feel more personally responsible for their leadership journey and are more confident in asserting themselves as leaders** (Exhibit 2).<sup>5</sup> Fellows are stepping up within their organizations to take on new responsibilities both within and outside of the organization. In many cases, fellows note that the Program increased their confidence, which prompted them to advocate for themselves and seek more opportunities to enhance their leadership (e.g., deliver more presentations to improve their public speaking). While some fellows did not experience problems expressing themselves prior to the Program, others note how they are beginning to find their voice as a leader. For example, one fellow notes that while she is becoming more vocal and contributing her opinions

\* Throughout this report an asterisk symbol (\*) indicates that the number of respondents may range from 13 to 18 respondents for each variable. This is due to the fact that survey respondents had the option to mark "not applicable."

<sup>5</sup> The term leadership journey refers to the steps that fellows are taking to advance their leadership.

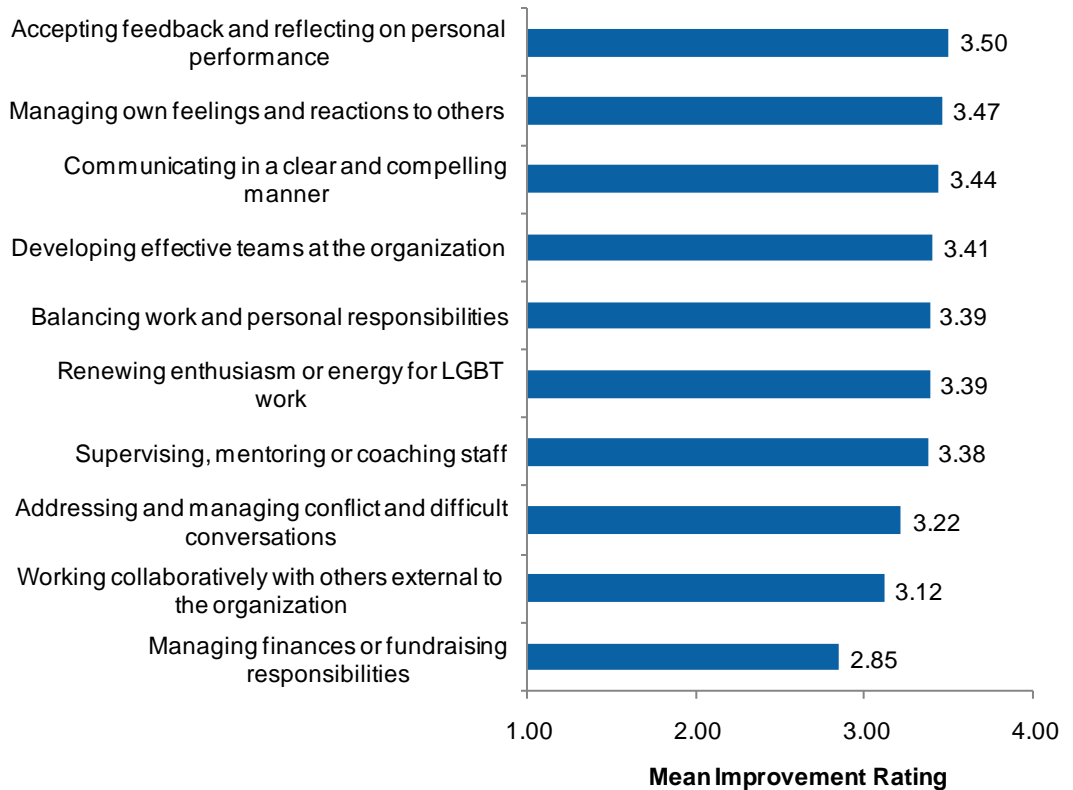
more often, it is a slow process, like “dipping my feet in cold water.” In addition, fellows note that they have more autonomy in their work and greater freedom to make decisions on their own.

### Leadership Skills

**Fellows have improved “hard” and “soft” skills, primarily through the Rockwood curriculum.** Fellows utilize the Rockwood leadership principles, guidelines and tools in their day-to-day work and report how these tools contribute to improvements in their leadership. For example, one fellow notes that she keeps seven key learnings taped to her computer. If she runs into problems, she turns to tools and techniques she learned in the initial retreat for guidance (e.g., prioritizing tasks, reducing stress, dealing with conflict). As shown in Exhibit 3, fellows report improvements in a variety of Program areas; for all areas, reported improvements are fairly high.

**Exhibit 3**  
**Mean Ratings of Improvement in Fellows’ Leadership Skills as a Result of the Program\***

The scale ranges from 1 “no improvement” to 4 “a large improvement”



Below we describe key improvement areas that have been especially helpful to fellows:

- **Taking care of oneself.** The Program emphasizes the need for fellows to create balance in their personal and professional lives to sustain energy and passion needed for this type of work over the long-term. Through the Program, fellows learned the importance of saying “no” to certain projects or requests so that they can focus more fully on their most important tasks. Some report utilizing prioritization and time management techniques that they learned during the Program retreat (e.g., the urgency index), while others report pursuing personal interests to balance their work commitments with other aspects of their life (e.g., dancing lessons, spending more time with their family). While fellows are making efforts to concentrate on self care and prioritization, they realize that this will be an ongoing tension that needs regular attention.
- **Being more intentional and proactive in dealing with difficult situations.** Fellows have used techniques that they learned in the Program to deal with a variety of difficult situations (e.g., individuals who are not LGBT friendly, talking to a boss about a time-off policy, bringing up the subject of race and organizational culture, facilitating compromises between conflicting parties). They note that the “crucial conversations” session has been particularly useful and relatively easy to integrate into their work.
- **Communicating more effectively.** Fellows are more aware of their communication style and its impact on others, as well as skills to modulate their message depending on the specific audience. Fellows with more abrasive communication styles are learning how to articulate issues in a way that is more likely to engage, rather than shut people out. Fellows report that they are more thoughtful in how they communicate across a variety of mediums including e-mails, one-on-one conversations, public speaking and advocacy.
- **Developing more effective teams and collaborations.** Fellows note that they are able to apply skills learned through the Program (e.g., setting expectations, communicating effectively, obtaining and giving feedback) that result in higher-functioning teams at their organizations. Some fellows report that they utilize these same skills to improve their collaborative relationships with staff and executives from external organizations.
- **Managing emotions and reactions more effectively.** Through some of the Program’s “triggering” or “bubbling” exercises, fellows are more aware of how to manage their emotions and stress. They are better at identifying when they are being instigated and utilizing techniques to manage their reactions (e.g., deep breaths, stepping back).

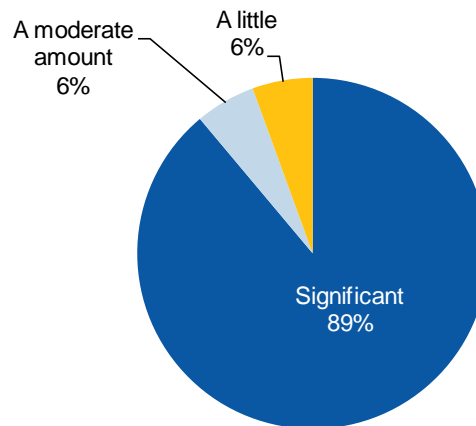
## Connections & Relationships

**Fellows agree that the Program’s structure fosters stronger relationships and connections with their peers in the LGBT movement** (Exhibit 4). They report that the safe space created at the initial retreat allowed them to be open and honest with their peers and create an almost immediate bond. This formed a good base from which they strengthened connections and relationships over the course of the Program. Some fellows note a higher likelihood of developing deeper relationships with fellows who are either located in the same region or work on similar content.

*“I’ve developed new friendships with several of the fellows that I expect to keep for life.”*

—Fellow

**Exhibit 4**  
**Extent to Which the Program Contributed to Greater Connections and Relationships with Other 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows<sup>6</sup>**  
(N=18)



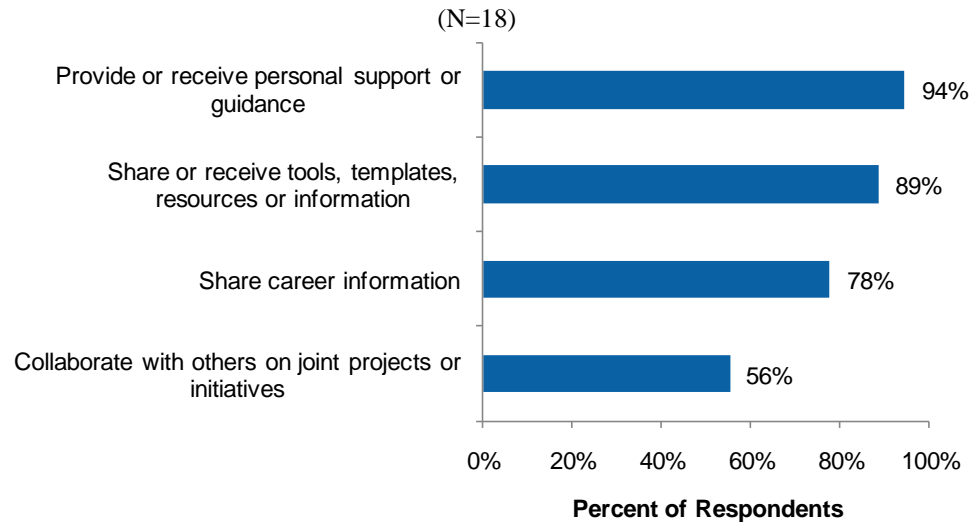
**Fellows connect with each other for both professional and personal reasons.** As shown in Exhibit 5 on the next page, most fellows connect with each other to provide or receive personal support or guidance (e.g., discussing challenges and accomplishments, validating each others’ experiences). Sharing different types of tools and information is also very common. For example, when one fellow resigned from her position and moved to a new city, she contacted other fellows for assistance in her job search. Collaboration on specific projects or activities took place for about half of the fellows. For example, one fellow invited her Program peers to participate in a panel discussion at her organization’s annual conference.

*“I think the Program has given me a support network and I have used the fellows for incredible advice that ranges from managerial to workplace to personal advice.”*

—Fellow

<sup>6</sup> Percentages do not total 100% due to rounding.

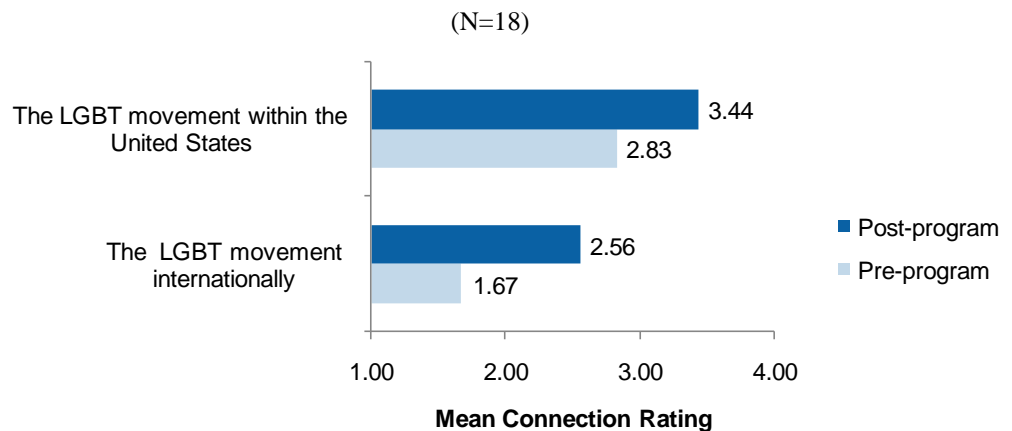
**Exhibit 5**  
**Frequency of Networking Activities with Other Fellows**



**Fellows feel more connected to others working in the LGBT field.** While fellows don't always agree about the existence of a singular LGBT movement in the U.S., let alone internationally, they describe how they feel more connected to each other due to a greater understanding of each others' experiences and new connections made among fellows. As shown in Exhibit 6, this is true for fellows' connection to a national LGBT movement and to a lesser extent an international one.

**Exhibit 6**  
**Level of Connection to National and International LGBT Movements Prior to and After Completing the Program**

The scale ranges from 1 "no connection" to 4 "strong connection"



## Organizational Improvements

**As shown in Exhibit 7, fellows report “moderate” organizational improvements, but consider their enhanced leadership skills as an asset for the organization that will grow in the future.** They note that they are using new skills and increased confidence to positively influence the organization on a small scale. Examples include: leading the organization’s diversity or multi-cultural committees, pushing for organizational changes in recruiting practices for people of color and building the leadership of other staff by sharing tools and Program learnings. As one fellow notes, “This experience may have improved my organizations’ recruitment and retention of people of color a tiny bit...but there is still a long way to go.” Fellows and executive directors hope to see more impact at an organizational level over time as fellows continue to strengthen their leadership and changes at an individual level can be applied to the organization; this is especially true for executive directors who sometimes worry about the out-of-office time that their participating fellow spends on Program-related activities.

*“I want our fellow to take my place when I leave the organization, so I need to make sure that the Program sets him up for success with leadership skills.... That’s why I am lending him to the Program, so that staff will send him back to me prepared to take on my role.”*

—Executive Director

**Exhibit 7**

### **Mean Ratings of Improvement in Fellows’ Organizations Since the Program Began\***

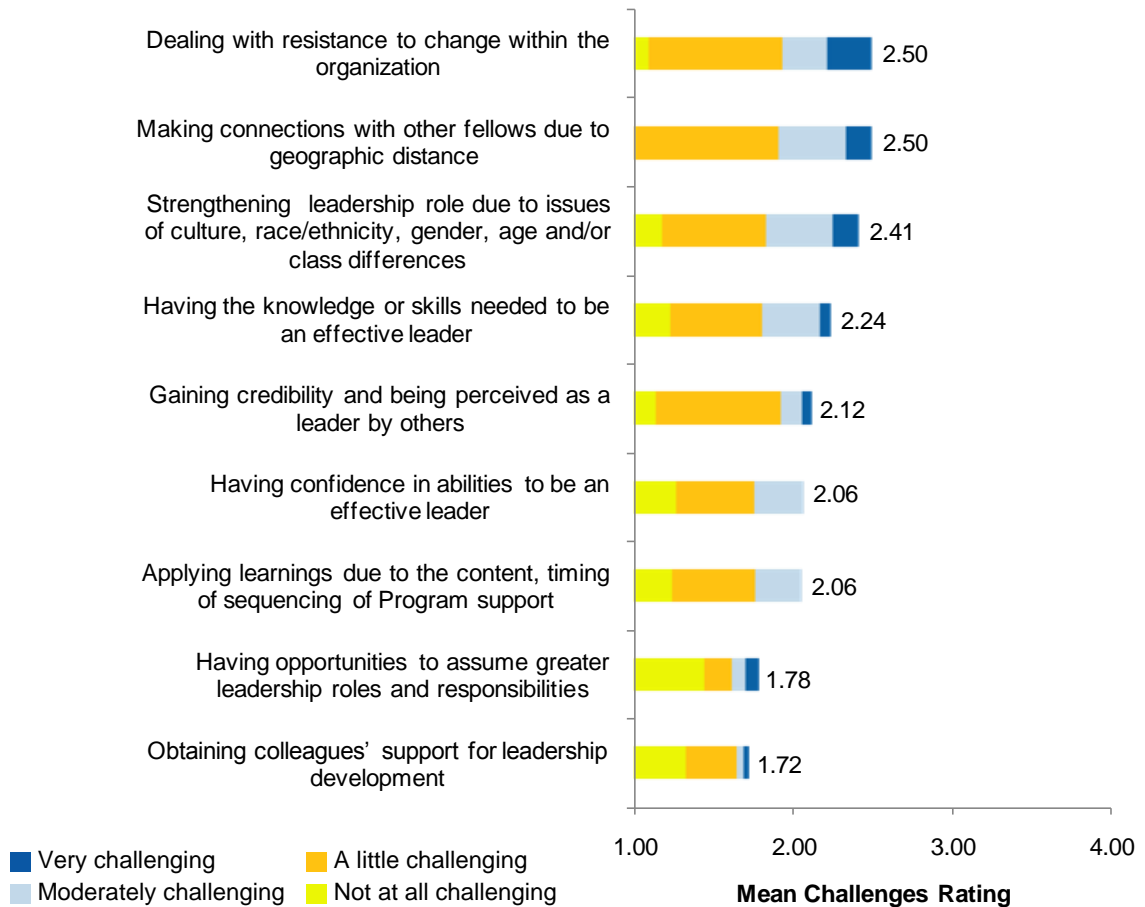
The scale ranges from 1 “no improvement” to 4 “a large improvement”



## CHALLENGES

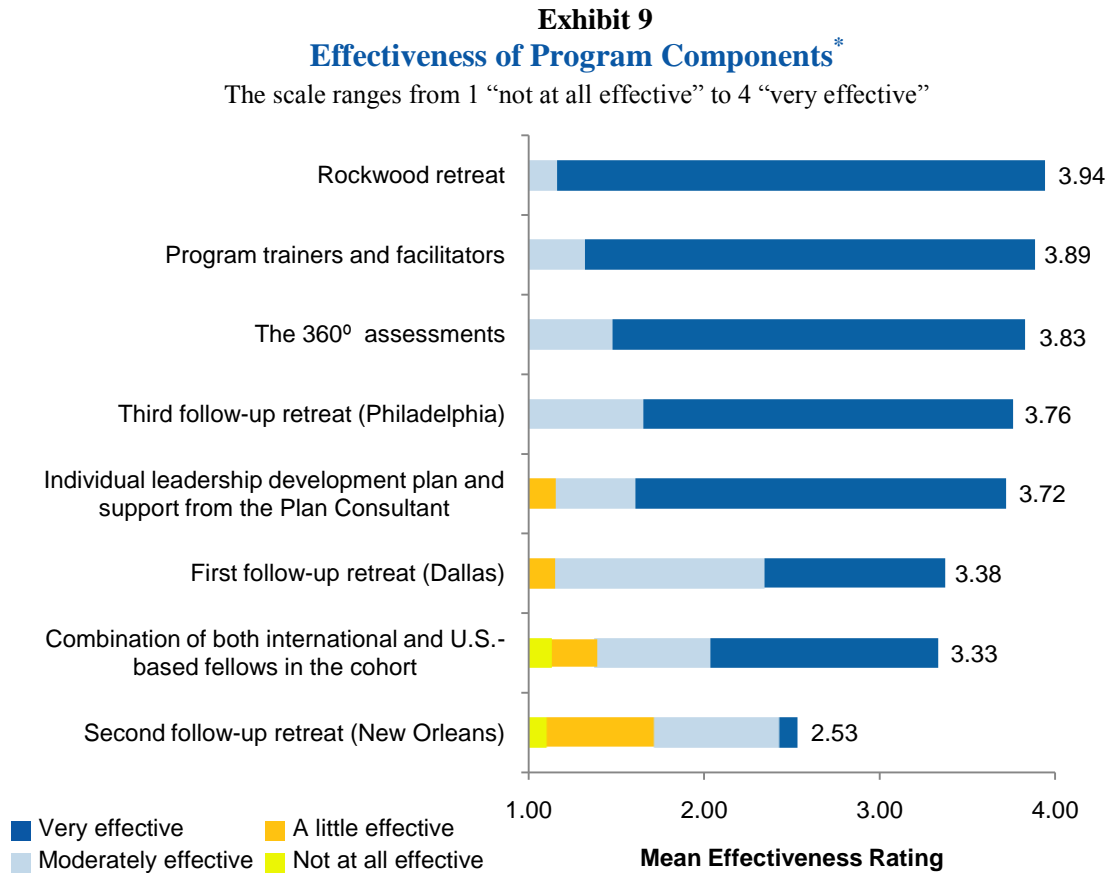
**Fellows encounter a variety of challenges while working to enhance their leadership.** However, as shown in Exhibit 8, fellows do not seem to experience these challenges to a significant extent. Dealing with resistance to change within the organization and making connections with other fellows across geographic distances seem to be most challenging. Fellows report the least amount of difficulty obtaining support from their colleagues, even though some executive directors express frustration when their fellows are out of the office at Program retreats.

**Exhibit 8**  
**Mean Ratings of Challenges Fellows**  
**Encounter While Working to Enhance Their Leadership\***  
 The scale ranges from 1 “not at all challenging” to 4 “very challenging”



## EFFECTIVENESS OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Overall, fellows find most of the Program components effective in building their leadership skills and fostering connections among fellows. As shown in Exhibit 9 and explained in the following pages, fellows found certain Program components to be more effective than others.



### Retreats & Curriculum

**Most fellows describe the initial Rockwood retreat as a transformative experience that was vital to their leadership development.** The curriculum’s focus on self-reflection, visioning and skills building (e.g., crucial conversations, delivering and obtaining feedback, assembling high-functioning teams) provided a rich and organized agenda. The retreat helped fellows critically look at themselves as leaders, strengthen their vision and plan to move along their career path and create real bonds with other fellows.

*“At times, our facilitators did not cover some materials that were scheduled to be covered. I’d suggest shutting down some conversations that take up too much time and allow time for important agenda items.”*

—Fellow

**As compared to the Rockwood retreat, fellows found the three follow-up retreats less organized and effective.** While they appreciate the follow-up sessions as opportunities to check-in with others about their individual leadership development plans and challenges they face back at their organizations, they note a desire for a more substantive curriculum which includes more skill building content (e.g., around management practices such as strategic planning, managing staff and boards, financial management). Some note that asking fellows to present at retreats is a good way to build leadership and improve presentation skills; however, they wonder how much fellows should be relied on to provide material content for retreats. Also, while some fellows appreciate being able to address issues that arise during the retreats, other fellows regret that it sometimes comes at the expense of planned agenda items.

### **Program Staff & Facilitators**

**Fellows appreciate the Program staff and facilitators’ knowledge and support, but would like consistent facilitators throughout the retreats.** In particular, fellows value the mentorship role the staff and facilitators have played throughout the Program. Fellows and executive directors appreciate that they can easily contact the staff and facilitators during retreats and in-between sessions to ask questions, make suggestions and receive input. Fellows have approached Program staff for help with a range of issues from discussing job transitions and dealing with organizational crises to structuring individual leadership development plans and talking about racial identity. Since fellows rely on the facilitators as mentors, they desire consistent staff throughout the Program; this has not been the case throughout the four retreats.

### **360° Assessments**

**The 360° assessments completed by fellows and colleagues are a useful way for fellows to gain a better understanding of their strengths and areas for improvements.** The feedback from multiple colleagues provides fellows with straightforward and honest input from co-workers that they can use to identify and/or confirm leadership areas to strengthen. Although some fellows noted discomfort in receiving this type of feedback, especially in the areas for improvement, the assessment was viewed as an important springboard to launch into the Program. Some fellows noted it was the first time that they received this type of feedback from colleagues.

## Individual Leadership Development Plans & Plan Consultants

*“The individual leadership development plans are unique and helpful. Not only did this component address my individual needs, but it also opened my mind, changed my sense of responsibility about my leadership journey, made me feel more accountable and more valued, and increased my sense of connection to my purpose and the movement.”*

—Fellow

**Fellows appreciate the unique and individualized support they get through the individual leadership development plans.** Fellows work with Plan Consultants to set customized goals in their plan intended to strengthen their leadership. The goals span a variety of areas, including enhancing their networking; building leadership confidence and visibility; improving supervision, delegation and communication skills; and balancing work and life priorities. As part of their plans, almost all of the fellows have started or intend to work with a one-on-one coach. Some will access other supports, such as trainings (e.g., focused on communications, supervision, counseling, writing) or conferences (e.g., Creating Change, International Lesbian and Gay Association Worldwide Conference). A few fellows have identified more unique supports to achieve their individual goals, such as membership in professional associations, peer mentoring, yoga or dance classes.

**While fellows value the customized supports, they report experiencing difficulties during the plan development process.** At the mid-point of the Program, only about half of the fellows had completed their plan. Many fellows experienced challenges scheduling meetings with their Plan Consultants and report the lack of a strict deadline to submit their plans. Due to these factors, the finalization of some of the fellows’ plans took longer, which in turn delayed the utilization of their supports.

## Supervisor Involvement & Support

**Fellows would like greater involvement on the part of their direct supervisors or executive directors.** Currently, the Program requires that executive directors complete a nomination form in support of their fellow’s acceptance into the Program and review and sign off on their fellow’s individual leadership development plan. Some executive directors appreciate the fact that they are allowed to provide input on the fellows’ plans to ensure that the fellows’ goals align with organizational goals, while others are not aware that they had this opportunity. The Program also invites them to the final retreat to acknowledge fellows’ accomplishments and meet collectively with other executive directors. Although Program staff may be wary of requesting executive directors’ time, some executive directors note how they appreciate these invitations and want to learn how to support fellows in their professional development and application of learnings with other staff. Due to their varying positions, some fellows have less access and daily communication with their executive directors, but note greater involvement of their direct supervisor in their leadership journey.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR FURTHER REFINEMENTS

In this section, we offer considerations that are informed by fellows and their colleagues who are involved in this evaluation, as well as BTW's experience evaluating leadership programs. We offer very specific suggestions, as well as broader considerations that Program staff and funders may want to discuss. Given the dynamic and evolving nature of a first-year program, Program staff are already addressing, or planning to address, most of these considerations to different extents.

### How can the Program further strengthen the retreats' content and format?

- **Continue developing more content-rich agendas for follow-up sessions in subsequent cohorts.** Strike a better balance between skill building sessions and structured time for sharing personal experiences and networking. Adhere to a set agenda that reserves time for “open space” to discuss relevant issues as they arise. Consider pursuing staff's current thinking of reducing the number of follow up retreats to two a year to allow for more in-depth sharing and skill building. If needed, supplement in-person retreats with skill building webinars or check-in conference calls.
- **Enhance communication around expectations.** Pursue plans to give fellows more advanced notice about the retreats' content, so they know what to expect and can prepare accordingly (e.g., send agendas earlier, give guidance to upcoming presenters). If the Program continues to ask fellows to present content at retreats, ensure that everyone has enough notice, preparation and guidance on how they are expected to participate. Continue to define the meaning of “full participation” at retreats for fellows and executive directors. Encourage fellows to disconnect from their organizational work during the entire retreat.

### How can the Program improve the process for developing and implementing the individual leadership development plans?

- **Proceed with plans to set requirements for fellows to submit their individual leadership development plans by the Program's mid-point.** By setting this deadline, fellows will be able to access their individualized support while they are still engaged with the Program and as they are processing new ideas, applying learnings at their organizations and taking on greater responsibilities.
- **Continue assessing redundancies in providing both a Plan Consultant and, oftentimes, an executive coach.** In other leadership programs, coaches often help fellows articulate their professional development plans. Assess whether the Program could expedite the plan development process by matching fellows with coaches and having the coach work with the fellow on developing their plan.

## How does the Program want to structure their alumni component moving forward?

*“Fellows have said that our graduation from the program was not the end but rather a beginning of a new phase in our leadership. This program has helped rekindle and reignite my commitment to the work.”*

—Fellow

- **Pursue plans for regular activities where fellows can maintain their connections and continue their learnings as alumni.** Consider planning an annual alumni retreat that provides an opportunity for content refreshers and networking. Determine the benefits of holding an alumni retreat in tandem with the next cohort’s second or third retreat, or in conjunction with an annual field conference. Also, consider forming regional groups where fellows from across cohorts could meet more informally in-person (e.g., lunches, happy hours) or schedule regular check-in calls to discuss their leadership. Think about creating a mentoring component, where fellows in the next cohorts can call on cohort one fellows for advice, guidance or counsel.
- **Go forward with plans to form an alumni advisory board.** Since fellows are eager to provide assistance to the Program in tangible ways, involve them in an alumni advisory board that provides input into Program planning and implementation. The board could be a valuable source of information for Program staff and provide fellows with additional leadership opportunities. Advisory board members could also assist staff in conducting outreach and marketing for the Program, recruiting and reviewing applications and presenting at retreats.

## What level of involvement does the Program want from the organizations’ executive directors and/or fellows’ supervisors?

- **Re-iterate expectations for executive director and/or direct supervisor involvement.** Pursue plans to clearly articulate, in writing and phone conversations, the Program’s expectations for involvement (e.g., nomination form, initial 360° assessment, periodic executive director conference calls, check-in meetings with fellows regarding their individual leadership development plans). Be clear when a direct supervisor and/or executive director can or should be involved. Bring executive directors into a collective conversation earlier in the Program. Consider holding a conference call or regional in-person gatherings to talk about progress, expectations and concerns a few months after the initial Rockwood retreat.
- **Move forward with refining the individual leadership development plan process to require greater buy-in and support from organizational leaders.** To enhance the Program benefits for participating organizations, encourage fellows to meet with their executive directors and/or direct supervisors during inter-session periods to discuss organizational needs. Ensure that fellows incorporate their supervisors’ input on their plans, so that it benefits both the

individual and the organization. Communicate directly with executive directors about expectations for their input on the formation and approval of individual leadership plans.

- **Examine ways to leverage other supports that Program funders provide to fellows' organizations.** Look for supports that will facilitate the application of Program learnings and enhance Program impacts (e.g., through capacity building, succession or strategic planning grants).

## CONCLUSION

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Fellows Program is meeting an important need among emerging leaders of color in the LGBT movement. The Program takes a holistic approach to supporting these leaders in their leadership journey, including a focus on developing both hard and soft leadership skills, providing a supportive space where emerging leaders of color can develop strong relationships with others in the field and offering customized support that fellows can tailor to their individual leadership needs.

Fellows are well positioned to continue to enhance their leadership to benefit not only themselves, but their organizations and the movement more broadly. This is evidenced by fellows' plans to continue their professional development, apply skills at their organizations, shape discussions around diversity in the movement and take on more visible and active leadership roles. As the Program moves forward with subsequent cohorts, we hope that Program staff and funders will consider slight adjustments to the Program and proceed with plans to develop an alumni component to help fellows move along their leadership journey once they graduate from the Program.