



Preparing Diverse Leaders for Advancement in LGBT Organizations

An Evaluation of the 21st Century Fellows Program

PREPARED FOR:

The Pipeline Project

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Preface

ABOUT THE PIPELINE PROJECT

The Pipeline Project works to achieve significantly increased levels of diversity within lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) advocacy and service organizations and in the leadership of those organizations. Programs focus on recruiting and retaining diverse talent for LGBT organizations, advancing people of color to leadership positions within LGBT organizations and supporting organizations as they prepare for more diverse leadership and inclusion.

To find out more about the Pipeline Project or the 21st Century Fellows Program, contact Clarence Patton, Director, at cpatton@lgbtpipeline.org or visit www.lgbtpipeline.org.

ABOUT BTW *informing change*

At BTW we are driven by our purpose of informing change in the nonprofit and philanthropic sectors. We partner with our clients to improve their effectiveness and build a culture of learning and continuous improvement. We produce high-quality, easy-to-understand products that present useful information designed to be readily applied to practice. Our information-based services include:

- Evaluation;
- Organizational Effectiveness;
- Applied Research; and
- Integrated Learning

To find out more about BTW and our services, visit www.btw.informingchange.com

INTRODUCTION & PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A lack of diversity in executive leadership positions at lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organizations can impede efforts to create a strong movement for equality. While working toward equality and the attainment of full civil rights, the LGBT movement needs to ensure that the leadership of its organizations reflects the diversity of its constituents. As of 2008, only 4% of executive directors of LGBT organizations were people of color.¹ The 21st Century Fellows Program (the Program) was developed in 2009 to address this deficit.

The Program provides an opportunity for managers of color to shift the dynamic of their organizations by preparing them to take on higher-level responsibilities, assume new roles, and get ready to move into executive positions. The Program aims to achieve this through the following four goals:

1. Build individual fellows' hard and soft leadership skills,
2. Foster lasting professional peer networks among people of color within and across 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 the rights and opportunities for all LGBT people.

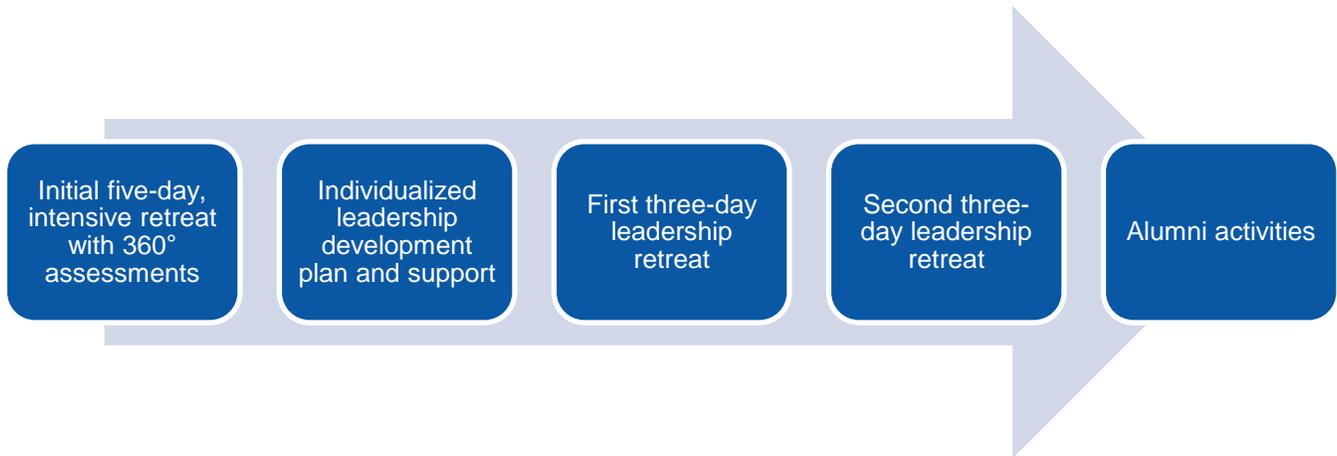
The Program selects people of color who demonstrate leadership potential and currently hold management positions at LGBT human rights, service or advocacy organizations. All fellows must work at an organization that receives funding from one of the supporting foundation partners—The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, The Arcus Foundation and the Gill Foundation.² The Program is run at no-cost to fellows or their organizations, and is administered by the Pipeline Project in partnership with Rockwood Leadership Institute and the Flexible Leadership Investments Program of the Haas, Jr. Fund.

The year-long program starts with a five-day retreat hosted by Rockwood Leadership Institute that includes 360° assessments completed by the fellows and their colleagues, leadership training and cohort building exercises (Exhibit 1). Following the initial retreat, each fellow is paired with a leadership development consultant (Plan Consultant) who works with fellows to review their 360° assessments, determine areas for further development and identify resources to build these specific areas of knowledge or skills. The Program provides \$3,500 to each fellow to implement their individualized leadership development plan. During the course of the year, fellows also attend two, multi-day follow-up retreats where they receive additional leadership support, skills training and peer networking opportunities. The Program recently convened an alumni committee formed of cohort one alumni and held a cross-cohort “reunion” event in conjunction with the second cohort two follow-up retreat.

¹ Movement Advancement Project (2007). “Issues of Racial Justice and Inclusion: A Primer for LGBT Movement-Funders.” <http://www.lgbtmap.org/file/primer-racial-justice-inclusion%20.pdf>.

² For more information regarding the 21st Century Fellows Program, visit: <http://www.lgbtpipeline.org/programs/21st-century-fellows> or <http://www.haasjr.org/what-were-learning/resource/21st-century-fellows-program>.

Exhibit 1
The 21st Century Fellows Program Model



EVALUATION OVERVIEW

In 2010, the Pipeline Project engaged BTW *informing change* (BTW) to conduct an evaluation of the Program’s pilot year.³ The evaluation results described individual and organizational impacts, provided considerations for program refinements, and offered recommendations for staff, funders and others who support leadership development for nonprofit leaders. Based on the evaluation and the Program’s pilot experience, staff made adjustments to the Program as they moved into their second year, including reducing the number of follow-up retreats from three to two and lengthening the duration of each retreat from two days to three days, developing a more focused follow-up retreat curriculum, pausing their recruitment of international fellows, communicating more clearly upfront about program expectations for both fellows and their executive directors, and developing an alumni committee.

In late 2011, the Pipeline Project engaged BTW again to examine Program impacts, with a focus on the second cohort of fellows who graduated in January 2012, but including information about longer-term progress among the first cohort of fellows who graduated in September 2010. BTW collected survey data from cohort one fellows (71% response rate), cohort two fellows (93% response rate) and fellows’ colleagues—either their CEO or direct supervisor (64% response rate). BTW conducted 3 focus groups and 2 interviews (with 11 fellows and 5 colleagues participating) to complement the survey data.^{4,5} In addition, BTW reviewed secondary data, such as program overviews, staff memos, fellows’ applications and individual leadership development plans.⁶

³ To read the evaluation report of the inaugural cohort of the Program, “Advancing the Next Generation of LGBT Leaders,” visit www.btw.informingchange.com/publications.

⁴ The survey was sent to all fellows who graduated from the Program with the exception of the two international fellows from cohort one. The colleague survey was sent to the CEOs of each fellow with the exception of four colleagues who left their organization. In some cases, a CEO requested that the fellows’ direct supervisor complete the survey.

⁵ Throughout this report, the number of respondents for each item in the graphs varies. Some chose not to answer particular questions or were excluded by marking “I/my organization was already strong in this area” or “don’t know.”

⁶ Potential limitations to the evaluation include: a) data are self-reported and reflect subjective opinion; b) the sample size is small; and c) fellows began the Program with differing levels of leadership experiences.

PROGRAM FELLOWS & THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

The first cohort of 19 fellows attended the Program in 2009–2010. The second cohort of 15 fellows attended from 2011–2012. The cohorts comprise diverse individuals who represent various ethnic and gender identities, as well as a range of organizations (Exhibit 2).

Exhibit 2
Descriptive Information about the Fellows & Their Organizations
 (n=32–34)

	Cohort One & Two Fellows
Number of Fellows⁷	34
Gender Identity	
Male	53%
Female	38%
Transgender/Queer	9%
Race/Ethnicity	
African American/Black	44%
Latino/Hispanic	22%
Asian/Pacific Islander	19%
Multiracial	15%
Employment Experience (average years)	
In the nonprofit sector	10 years
In LGBT communities	8 years
At current organization	3 years
Organization's Region	
East Coast	56%
West Coast	35%
International	6%
Midwest	3%

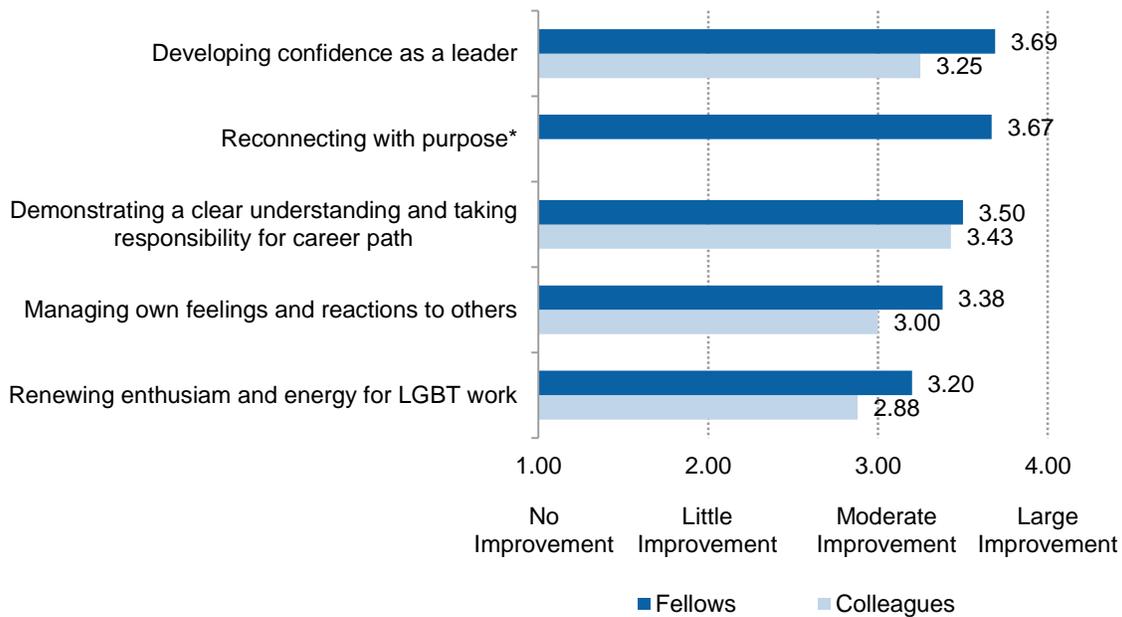
⁷ This refers to the number of fellows that graduated from the Program. A few fellows dropped out or were asked to leave during the course of the Program due to job changes outside of the LGBT field or performance deficiencies.

INDIVIDUAL & ORGANIZATIONAL IMPROVEMENTS AMONG COHORT TWO FELLOWS

The following section describes how the Program contributed to improvements in leadership skills, knowledge and confidence among cohort two fellows, as well as the extent to which their organizations have experienced improvements as a result of their participation in the Program. In addition to fellows' own perspectives on their enhanced leadership as result of their participation in the Program, their colleagues—CEOs and direct supervisors—add their perspective on their fellows' improvements.

Through the Program, fellows are developing personal mastery skills and are gaining a clearer sense of themselves as leaders. In particular, fellows are increasing their self-awareness, building confidence, managing emotions and taking care of their own personal sustainability so they can continue their work in the movement over the long term. As described below, fellows and their colleagues note various improvements in this area since the beginning of the Program (Exhibit 3).

Exhibit 3
Average Ratings of Improvements in Fellows' Self-Awareness, Self-Care, Confidence & Connection with the LGBT Movement
(Fellows n=10–14, Colleagues n=7–8)



* Only fellows were asked to respond to improvements in their abilities to reconnect with their purpose for working in the movement. Colleagues were not asked this question.

Fellows are more confident leaders. Fellows have more confidence in their natural work styles and their newly acquired or enhanced skills. They are more comfortable asserting themselves and their opinions. One colleague reports, “The most significant improvement was in our fellow’s perception of himself as a leader. He grew leaps and bounds in this area.”

Fellows feel more connected with their purpose for working on LGBT issues. Fellows meet others working in different areas of the LGBT movement through the Program, become more knowledgeable about other organizations’ work and gain a greater perspective on the broader LGBT movement. Fellows note that during the retreats they have space to reflect on their own purpose and desired role within the movement. For some fellows, this also helps renew their enthusiasm for their work.

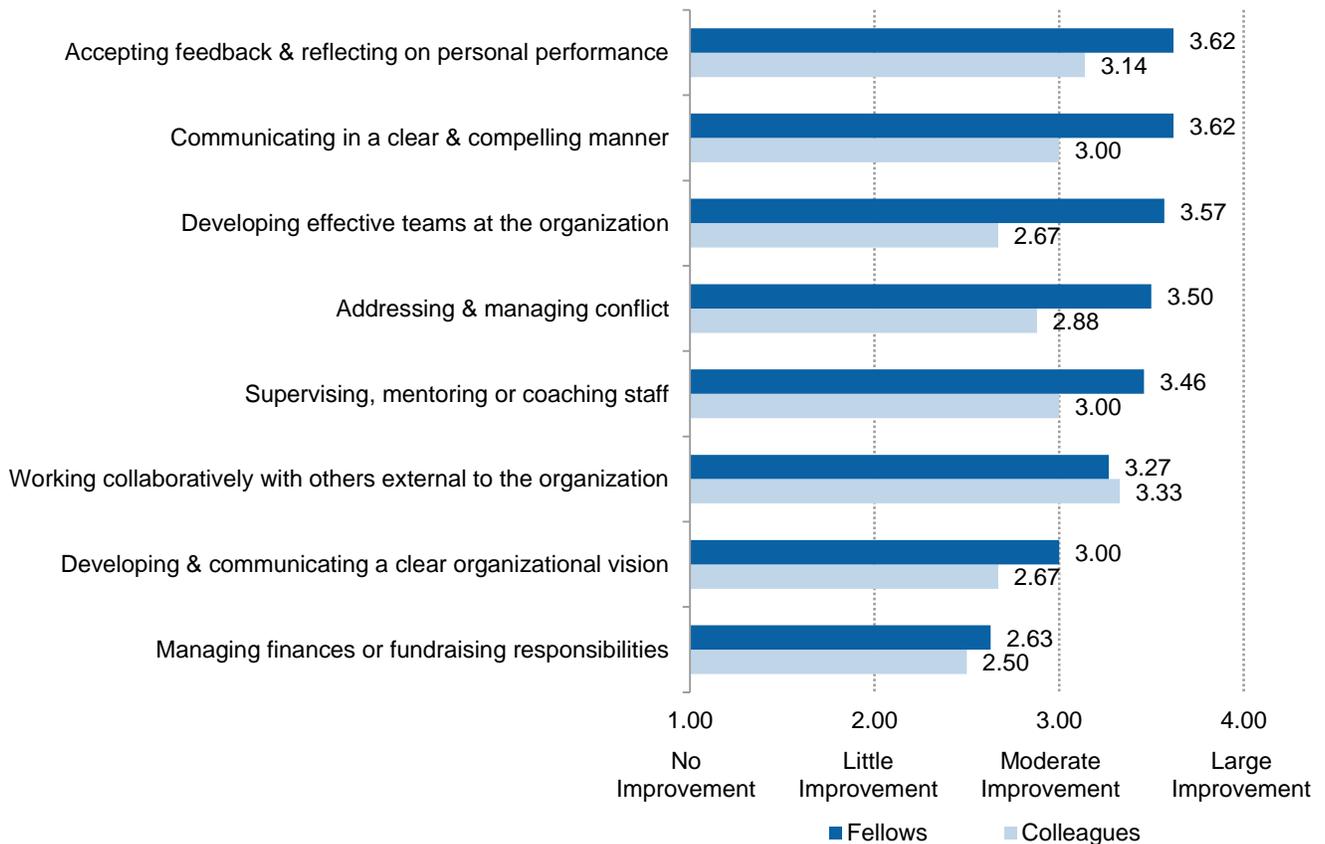
Fellows often experience increased clarity about their career goals. After connecting with their purpose and gaining a deeper understanding of their leadership style, fellows are better able to define a career path that fits their strengths and establish steps to work toward their goals. One colleague notes that after the Program, the fellow is “taking his career path seriously and is more intentional about his work and his growth.”

Fellows’ leadership and management skills also improve as a result of the Program. As described in Exhibit 4 and on the next page, fellows improve in a range of leadership and management abilities since beginning the Program. While the patterns are similar, overall, fellows’ ratings about their improvements are higher than their colleagues’ ratings, especially in areas related to developing internal teams, communicating and addressing conflict, and accepting feedback on personal performance. This may be in part due to fellows having more familiarity with the progress they were making throughout the Program, which may be less visible to their colleagues.

“I learned how to connect my passion for doing this work to a concrete goal, and I learned how to better present myself as an asset to my organization.”

—Cohort Two Fellow

Exhibit 4
**Average Improvements in
 Fellows’ Leadership & Management Skills**
 (Fellows n=8–14, Colleagues n=6–9)



- **Fellows exhibit greater awareness of themselves and their colleagues' working styles.** Through the Program, and especially through the 360° leadership assessment, fellows learn to reflect on their strengths and opportunities to develop as a leader. Along with this self-awareness, they are more in tune with how to identify and leverage their colleagues' strengths to complement their own work and leadership style.
- **Fellows communicate more clearly.** They are better at communicating their own needs and their expectations of others. One colleague notes that his fellow now plans meaningful conversations instead of “sweeping issues that need discussion under the carpet.”
- **Fellows learn strategies to resolve conflict and manage their emotions.** They are less reactive in periods of conflict or during difficult conversations with colleagues. They are better prepared to handle situations in a calm and productive manner. As one fellow notes, “I used to become too emotionally heated during difficult conversations and the Program has helped me learn how to navigate those choppy waters.”
- **Fellows work in teams more effectively.** They note that they are better able to coach, teach and motivate other staff on their teams, as well as give and receive feedback. As one fellow states, “The trainings on time management and supervision have continuing benefits for me every day.”

Fellows' enhanced skills and competencies are contributing to various improvements in their organizations (Exhibit 5). Colleagues generally report larger organizational improvements than fellows, which may be in part due to the different roles and positions that each respondent plays in their organization. Fellows report that their organizations have made the least improvements in terms of planning for leadership transitions, especially in recruiting, retaining and promoting people of color to leadership positions.

Exhibit 5
Average Ratings of Organizational Improvements
 (Fellows n=7–10, Colleagues n=7–9)



Organizations experience improvements in capacity, efficiency and effectiveness. For example, some fellows bring back Program lessons that benefit their organizations (e.g., coaching direct supervisees, improving the efficiency of team work based on knowledge of work styles) and tap into resources and expertise from other

organizations in the Program network. A few fellows note that as they take on higher-level responsibilities, this frees up senior managers' or directors' time to dedicate to other work.

Organizations' reputations for advancing and including people of color are improving. Colleagues credit the fellows for becoming model leaders to other staff of color and also credit the Program for helping the fellows take on more of a leadership role. One fellow notes that other people in the organization now discuss issues around race and push their organization to serve the most vulnerable communities. Another organization has furthered its commitment to leadership development by allocating resources for professional development in its annual budget.

“[My fellow’s] participation in the Program re-sensitized me to the importance of recruiting and mentoring people of color in leadership positions.”

—Colleague

CHALLENGES WHILE WORKING TO ENHANCE LEADERSHIP

During and after the Program, some fellows face challenges with continuing to enhance their leadership and take on new roles. Fellows often find it difficult to gain credibility as leaders, and some feel that their career growth is not always welcomed by others at their organization. For example, fellows experience challenges around how their organizations perceive them as more vocal and engaged leaders once they complete the Program. In other cases, fellows note that their current positions no longer reflect their purpose for working in the LGBT movement and the organization is not responsive to their need to grow.

CAREER ADVANCEMENT & NETWORKING AMONG COHORT ONE & TWO FELLOWS

The next section focuses on both cohort one and cohort two fellows' career advancement and network building. Fellows were asked to reflect on progress since each respective cohort began the Program. The data in this section are shown in aggregate; distinctions between the cohorts are noted at the end of the section.

Fellows have advanced into executive or senior positions (Exhibit 6). More than one-third (38%) of fellows have obtained new senior positions, such as Executive Director and Senior Manager. About half (53%) of colleagues who responded to the survey indicate that within the next five years, there will be leadership advancement opportunities for the fellow at their organization. However, they note that the promotions are not guaranteed and fellows will have to continue to take on more leadership duties to be considered for advancement (e.g., continuing to expand their networks, thinking strategically, expanding their vision for the organization). Most fellows still work at the same organization as when they began the Program, though a few fellows have changed organizations because their position was eliminated or their former position no longer aligned with their career aspirations.

“Our fellow is now viewed as more of a leader and key strategist. He has become the main driver for much of our communications strategy and has become more forward thinking about what [our organization] can and should be doing.”

—Colleague

Regardless of whether or not fellows have new positions, they have assumed more and higher-level responsibilities (Exhibit 6). Since beginning the Program, almost three-quarters (73%) of fellows have taken on higher-level or new duties (e.g., supervising more staff, managing new programs) or expanded the scope of their work (e.g., transitioning responsibilities from a state focus to a national focus). Some fellows have also experienced greater autonomy in their decision-making and undertaken more external responsibilities for their organization (e.g., holding press interviews, representing the organization at coalition meetings).

In recognition of these advances, some fellows have received salary increases or other types of compensation since beginning the Program (Exhibit 6). About half (52%) of the fellows experience salary increases, primarily in the 1%–9% range. Other types of compensation include paid time off, better benefits, more flexible work schedules, or one-time bonuses. A few fellows that have not received a salary increase cite reasons such as organizational cut backs due to the poor economic climate or an intentional reduction in hours.

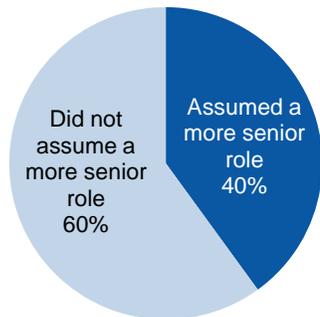
The majority of fellows report greater job satisfaction since beginning the Program (Exhibit 6). Eighty-one percent of the fellows report increased satisfaction, which is often due to taking on new roles, gaining a fresh perspective on their current position or reconnecting to their purpose and career aspirations. The small percentage of fellows with a reduction in job satisfaction say this is primarily due to lack of opportunities to advance within their organization or a perceived lack of alignment between their position and their career plans.

Exhibit 6

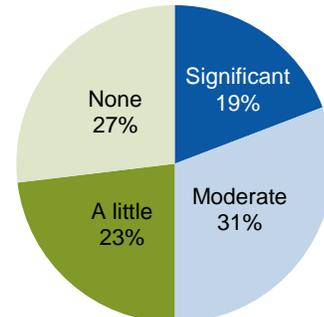
Extent Fellows Have Experienced Growth in Professional Roles, Responsibilities, Salaries & Satisfaction Since they Began the Program

n=25–26

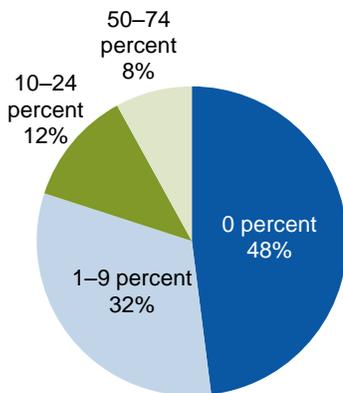
Assumed More Senior Roles or Positions



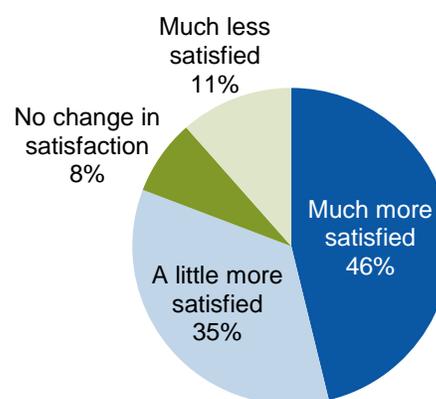
Growth in Job Responsibilities



Salary Increase

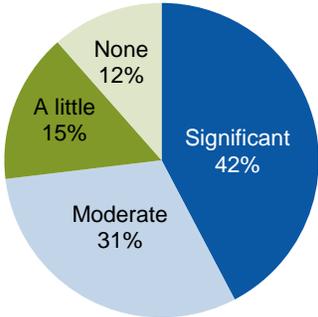


Change in Job Satisfaction



Almost half of the fellows report that the Program has significantly contributed to their career advancement (Exhibit 7). Fellows report that the Program has played a key role in their professional growth by improving their skills and confidence, providing assistance for their career development, and prompting them to seek out enhanced roles and responsibilities.

Exhibit 7
The Program’s Contribution to Growth in Fellows’ Roles, Responsibilities or Salaries
 n=26



Across all indicators of career advancement, cohort one fellows have experienced greater growth than cohort two fellows (Exhibit 8). This is most likely influenced by the duration of time that has elapsed since beginning the Program. Cohort one fellows have had more than 2.5 years to experience growth since starting the Program, as compared to cohort two fellows with 1.5 years.

Exhibit 8
Career Advancement Indicators for Cohort One & Cohort Two Fellows

	Cohort One Fellows (n=12)	Cohort Two Fellows (n=13–14)
Assumed a more senior role or position	50%	29%
Experienced significant growth in their responsibilities	25%	14%
Received a salary increase	67%	39%
Report more satisfaction with their job	83%	79%

Fellows have developed stronger connections to other people of color who work in the LGBT movement. All fellows report that the Program contributed to greater connections and relationships with peers, and a majority of fellows (87%) report a significant increase in their connection to the broader LGBT movement. Fellows find it especially useful to have a close-knit network of other LGBT leaders of color with relationships solidifying over time. They also appreciate the fact that the Program’s network comprises professionals with a diversity of job positions and responsibilities; they feel that this opens their eyes to other possibilities and connects them to an array of people with a range of expertise. Fellows have primarily tapped the network for personal or career support as well as resources and tools; they use the network less often for engaging in collaborative projects (Exhibit 9). For example, one fellow is providing online fundraising coaching advice and co-writing an article with other fellows in the network.

“It has been invaluable to get support from a network of fellows who are leaders of color in their organizations. Recently, I was encouraged to change my job responsibilities so that they better match my career goals.”

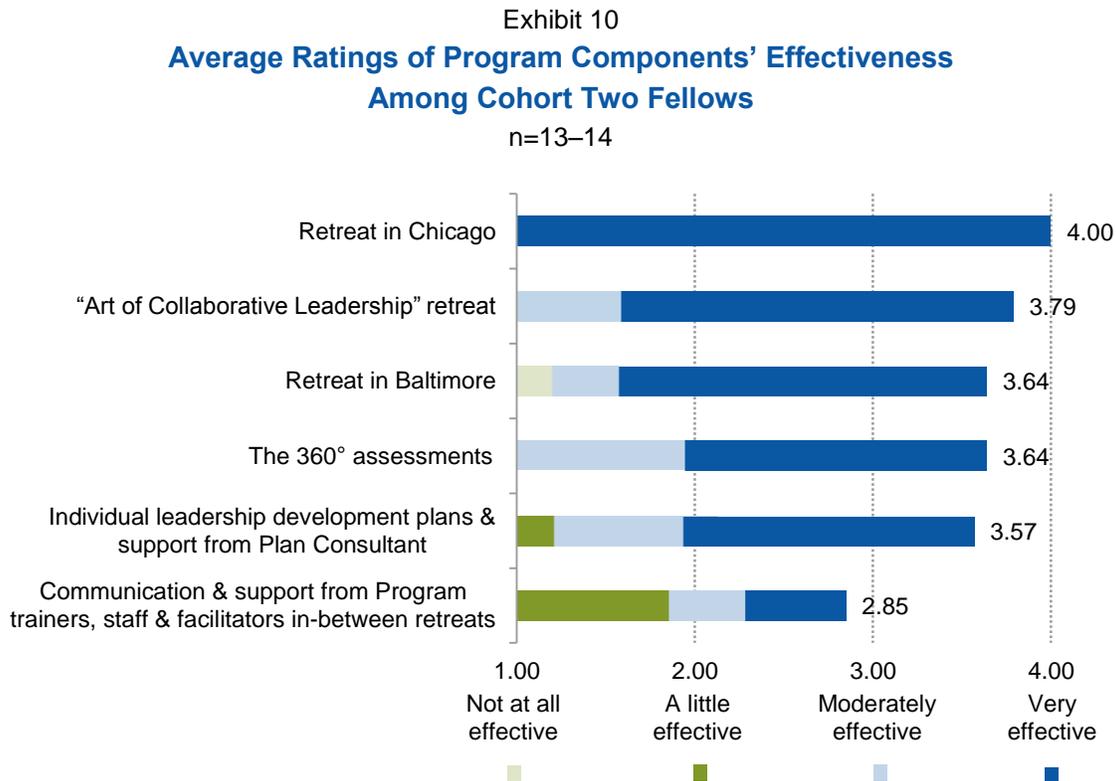
—Cohort Two Fellow

Exhibit 9
Frequency of Engagement in Networking Activities
 n=26



EFFICACY OF PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Overall, fellows report that the Program components are moderately to very effective (Exhibit 9). The majority of colleagues agree with participants about the Program’s effectiveness. As noted earlier, the Program components have changed slightly from cohort one to cohort two. In recognition of these program refinements, the below data reflect cohort two fellows’ perspectives only. As shown in Exhibit 10 and described subsequently, cohort two fellows offer comments and suggestions about the various program components.



The follow-up retreats are vital in maintaining a strong network of leaders and promoting a sustained commitment to LGBT work among people of color. Fellows enjoy the two follow-up retreats to reconnect with their peers. They favor the first retreat held in Chicago because of its focus on leadership styles and communication. They also enjoyed the second retreat held in Baltimore, but a few found the programming less powerful than the first two retreats and the weekend too compact. Some fellows note a need for more structure and coordination during the retreats and less emphasis on somatic exercises (e.g., dancing, exercises).

Fellows find the initial “Art of Collaborative Leadership” retreat to be a very effective part of the Program. The retreat, facilitated by Rockwood Leadership Institute, resonates with fellows who describe it as “powerful and profound.” Fellows appreciate that, from the onset, the retreat facilitated relationship-building among peers, but also emphasized personal sustainability. One fellow notes that although it was beneficial to talk about deep and personal issues during the retreat, she recommends that the Program staff be equipped to deal with the emotions or therapeutic needs that may arise during the conversations.

The 360° assessment, completed during the beginning stages of the Program, is an eye-opening experience for fellows. The assessment helps the fellows truly understand their leadership strengths and capacity, as well as areas for improvement. The assessment has a lasting impact beyond graduation for some fellows who regularly review or reference their assessment results on the job.

The personalized individual leadership development plans are highly valued by the fellows. Both the process of creating the plan with the Plan Consultant and its implementation are important to the fellows' growth during the Program. Colleagues appreciate having input in the process and, in some cases, think that this involvement led to stronger relationships with their fellows. Fellows utilize their plans to outline specific strategies for strengthening their capacity as leaders. All of the cohort two fellows apply roughly half of the allocated \$3,500 for their leadership development plan toward coaching and divide the remaining amount among other activities such as career-related conferences, courses (e.g., writing, finances) or self-care activities (e.g., yoga classes).

Fellows and their colleagues enjoy hearing from Program staff, but would like more clarity around logistics and communication about the Program overall. Fellows desire more contact from Program staff between retreats and more consistent communication throughout the year. However, fellows note their part in not fully engaging the Program staff when they had questions. Some colleagues express a desire for more frequent information sharing about Program happenings (e.g., quarterly calls, e-mail updates).

CONCLUSION

After two years of programming, it is evident that the Program provides a tremendous opportunity for emerging leaders of color at LGBT organizations and addresses an important need. The fellows from the inaugural and second cohorts are developing as leaders, advancing in their careers and being empowered to build the LGBT movement. Based on BTW's recommendations in the inaugural cohort evaluation, Program staff continue to strengthen the program by improving the design of follow-up retreats, communicating more clearly about Program expectations and forming pilot alumni activities. While the Program is making good progress on its primary goal of enhancing the leadership skills and networks that support the advancement of people of color in the LGBT movement, as to be expected, the leadership path is not always smooth. Many fellows would benefit from additional support in applying their leadership knowledge and skills, especially as some navigate challenges at their organizations (e.g., not being perceived as leaders, encountering resistance to change). Moving forward, and as discussed in more detail with Program staff, we suggest that the Program focus its efforts on continuing to strengthen the current programming, supporting fellows in applying their leadership, knowledge and skills at their organizations, and developing an engaging alumni program.



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