Creative Community Fellows Evaluation Report December 2016

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INTRODUCTION

National Arts Strategies (NAS)[1] contracted with FSG to design and carry out an evaluation of its Creative Community Fellows program (CCF). Evaluation activities were carried out from October 1 – December 31, 2016.

The purpose of the evaluation was to support NAS in telling the story of what changes have happened for Fellows since going through the CCF program. Specifically, NAS was interested in learning about the changes Fellows experienced or influenced on several levels:

- Themselves
- Their network
- Their organizations (when applicable)
- Their communities

About the program

The Creative Community Fellows Program[2] was created for individuals working at the intersection of culture and community. Over the course of a year, through online and in-person learning, the fellowship gives participants tools, training and access to a community of support. This combination fuels Fellows' visions for community change, sparking new ideas and helping propel them into action.

Fellows are selected because they are curious, open, and collaborative individuals who are interested in learning and sharing what they learn. Fellows are dedicated to creating healthy neighborhoods and are poised to recognize and seize opportunities for change.

Since its inception, 121 individuals have participated in the program:
- 48 in Cohort 1 (2014 – 2015)
  - 22 Residential
  - 26 Online
- 49 in Cohort 2 (2015 – 2016)
  - 22 Residential
  - 27 Online
- 24 in Cohort 3 (2016 – 2017)
  - 24 Residential
  - Online discontinued

The residential-track of the fellowship program includes a nine-day in-person workshop that takes place at the beginning of the fellowship (the name has transitioned from "Impact House" to "Creative Community House"), online learning, and a culminating in-person workshop called "Launchpad." Tuition,

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[1] More information on website: http://www.artstrategies.org/
[2] More information on website: http://www.artstrategies.org/programs/creative-community-fellows/

including room and board, is completely underwritten for all Fellows. Fellows are only responsible for their travel costs to any in-person events.

NAS offered the online track for Cohorts 1 and 2, which did not include onsite time with peers. The online track was discontinued with Cohort 3.

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was guided by a set of evaluation questions, developed in consultation between the evaluator and NAS program staff:

1. What motivates our Fellows?
2. What skills do our Fellows have coming in to the program? What skills have they built? What skills have they put into practice, and how?
3. To what extent and how have Fellows been able to successfully carry out their projects in their communities? Were they able to secure funding for their project?
4. To what extent have Fellows expanded and strengthened their networks? What facilitated this? How have Fellows collaborated with other Fellows or mentors?
5. How useful is the mentoring aspect of the program?

The evaluator collected and analyzed data from the following sources:

- **Application data (n=121)**.
- **Survey data**, including the following:
    - CCF Resident Cohort 1 surveys (3 surveys; n~17; ~77% response rate)
    - CCF Online Cohort 1 surveys (2 surveys; n~13; ~50% response rate)
    - CCF Resident Cohort 2 surveys (2 surveys; n~15; 68% response rate)
    - CCF Online Cohort 2 survey (n~10; 37% response rate)
    - 2015 Mentor survey (n~10)
    - CCF Resident Cohort 3 survey (n~21; ~88% response rate)
    - 2016 Mentor survey (n~5)
- **Key informant interviews (n=9)** by phone with Fellows from Cohorts 1 and 2. Quotes from interviews are used throughout the report, but are not associated with any Fellow's name

Data included a mix of quantitative data from closed-ended survey questions and qualitative data from open-ended application questions, open-ended survey questions, and interviews. Application data existed for all participants. We interviewed a purposive sample of 9 Fellows (20% of Cohort 1 and 2 residential-track participants)[3]. Given the mixed-methods data collection and relatively high response rates, the evaluator is confident that findings reflect the true nature of Fellow's perspectives.

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[3] We chose not to interview participants from the online track as that aspect of the program was discontinued with Cohort 3.

FINDINGS

This section shares findings from the evaluation, organized by evaluation question. In each section, evaluators present findings derived from analysis across multiple data sources.

1. What motivates our Fellows?

SUMMARY: On its website, NAS describes the kind of person they hope to attract to the CCF program:

"Community change requires individuals with grit, those who are passionate and dedicated to tackling the challenges that lie ahead. It requires trailblazers who carefully engage local partners, who listen to the advice and counsel of community members and who can adapt their strategy based upon community feedback."

Based on application data, it appears that NAS is successful in attracting those kinds of people.

Motivations

Residential- and online-track Fellows said they were motivated by the following (n=122)[4]:

- **38% were motivated by personal or family history, e.g.,**
  - *"I am a jazz vocalist and composer who is also a survivor of domestic violence and sexual assault. I experienced an awakening while in graduate school where I was forced to deal with my trauma while studying music. The combination of individual counseling and my music studies allowed me to discover so much more about myself than I ever knew. This experience was so powerful that I wanted to create a program that uses the arts to help other survivors overcome their trauma."*
  - *"As an immigrant myself, I feel very strongly about the need to a new model of social engagement - one that moves beyond the notion of assimilation. We need a 'salad bowl' to replace the outdated 'melting pot.' Where we can all come together - bringing our unique cultural ingredients and flavors while creating a fabulous and quintessentially American culture."*
- **31% were motivated by a love of art or their craft, e.g.,**
  - *"The power of art drives me. Art has the potential to show the world as it is in all of its glory and all of it grime. It also has the potential to show the world as it can be. Art can show us our problems and provide us the solutions. I promote art. I desire to sustain the people who risk much to share the perspectives of the world that we need to have. I desire for all populations to take part in the philosophical experiments that only art can provide. I want to build the bridge between the two."*
  - *"I am crazy about cooking and my great pleasure is bringing people and stories together around the table, I am passionate about traditional music, dancing and costumes and find great pleasure in exploring the world of villages which turn out to be as rich as the*

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[4] Many respondents included motivations that fell into more than one category, thus, percentages total over 100%.

world in terms of cultural depth, I am fascinated by the way contemporary arts has so many ways to ask us questions about the reality around."

- **25% were motivated by a desire to connect people, or nurture their community, e.g.,**
    - *"My passion is people. Talking, learning, helping. My passion is justice -- social, environmental, economic. My passion is cultural power and art. And the link between them all: community."*
    - *"I am passionate about community. I am passionate about stories--telling them, hearing them, and drawing them out of people. I am passionate about bridging gaps. I am an American that spent much of his childhood in Thailand, and thus I am intimately acquainted with being 'in-between,' and desiring to build bridges between people."*
- **22% were motivated by a desire to create social change**, e.g.,
    - *"I have dedicated my life to making art that addresses social concerns. I have also dedicated my life to education and utilizing art as a tool to combat the violence that is deteriorating our communities one generation to the next. I am deeply concerned about the incarceration rates of our youth who are being marked like a "scarlet letter" and matriculating through a penal system that strips them of their humanity. It is imperative that we use our collective skills to transform community at its core."*
    - *"Seeing and knowing the injustices, the survival of low-income, immigrants and black & brown people in [my state] encounter every day drive me. I am inspired and motivated to provide and create, healthy, fun, artistic safe spaces where people can heal in community and celebrate their resiliency in such harsh state. I am passionate about health and social justice and access for all people to have quality art programs and holistic wellness practices at a low cost of free. Through this work I fight old systems of oppression that low-income, immigrants and black & brown folks encounter in the U.S."*
- **10% were motivated by a desire to build up individuals, or to help people, e.g.,**
    - *"As an artist, it is my life's duty to challenge and rewrite the status quo. I am happiest when I'm able to help others embrace their unique sense of creativity."*
- **6% were motivated by their faith – either religious faith or a moral imperative to do good, e.g.,**
    - *"My faith in God; with that comes a compassion for the poor and oppressed on this Earth."*
    - *"I feel a deep moral imperative to do what I can for humankind and planet Earth at this tipping point in time."*

Interviewees mentioned similar motivations, e.g.,

- Wanting to connect the dots in their communities (for example, between art and government, or art and public space), and
- Filling a need in their community (for example, one woman saw a car accident while on a walk with her daughter and built a project to reduce transportation accidents; another located a food-oriented project in a food desert).

2. What skills do our Fellows have coming in to the program? What skills have they built? What skills have they put into practice, and how?

SUMMARY: Participants had a number of skills entering the fellowship, including facilitation, project management, team building, storytelling, and cultural competency skills. CCF helped participants build their capacity to lead change, particularly in the areas of increased confidence, leadership skills, and communication skills. For most participants, the intangible gains like increased confidence were just as valuable, if not more so, than the hard skills they gained.

Participants had a number of skills coming into the fellowship

In application data, residential- and online-track Fellows mentioned a number of skills they already possessed, including (n=49):

- **27% had engagement or facilitation skills** (e.g., *"I think people can learn from me ways to engage and empower a community through the arts. I am a big believer in creating fellowship and a sense of ownership in a community around an arts project."*)
- **24% had project management, administrative, or entrepreneurial skills** (e.g., *"I've always had an ability to see the big picture, while, at the same time, paying staunch attention to the details.*")
- **16% had leadership or team building skills** (e.g., *"As a theatre director, I am used to orchestrating a unique form of collaboration based on trust and the bridging of ideas. My strongest skill is my ability to find common ground. To link ideas that may seem irreconcilable.*")
- **12% had storytelling, communications, or presentation skills** (e.g., *"I can teach people how to tell a story."*)
- **10% had cultural competency skills** (e.g., *"My ability to work, talk and listen, understand and communicate with diverse types of people."*)
- **10% had resourcefulness skills** (e.g., *"Due to the communities that I generally work in, I am subject to having little to no budget to create work. This has groomed me to think of out of the box solutions to develop professional level projects with amateur funds."*)

Skills built through CCF

Survey respondents from across residential-track cohorts overwhelmingly agreed that participating in CCF had helped them begin to develop the capacity to lead change. After Impact House / Creative Community House, a majority of all cohorts "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that attending had developed their capacity to lead change.

Figure 1: Creative Community House has helped me begin to develop the capacity to lead change
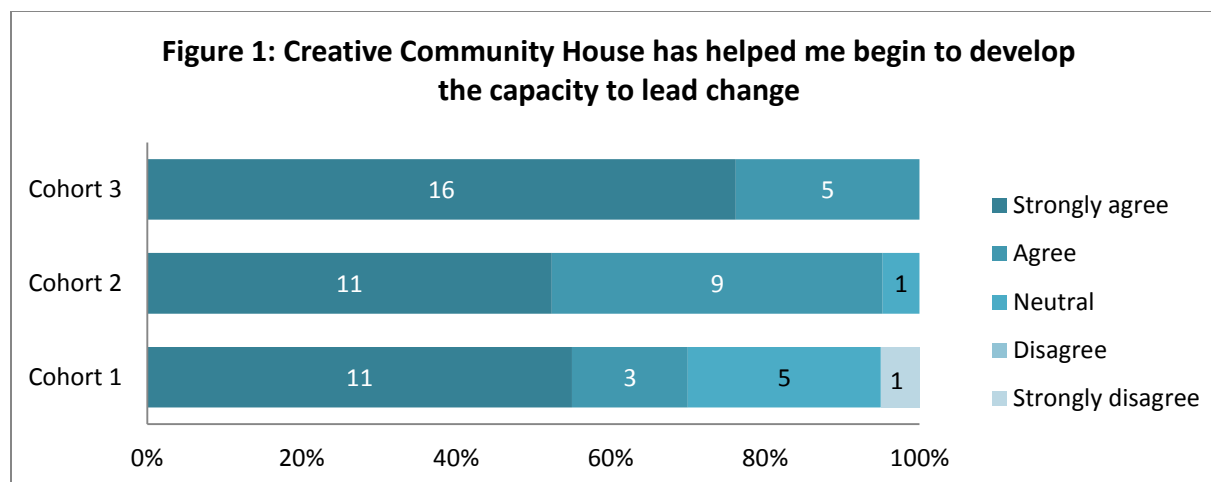
In open-ended survey responses, residential-track participants noted the following changes in their capacity to lead change:
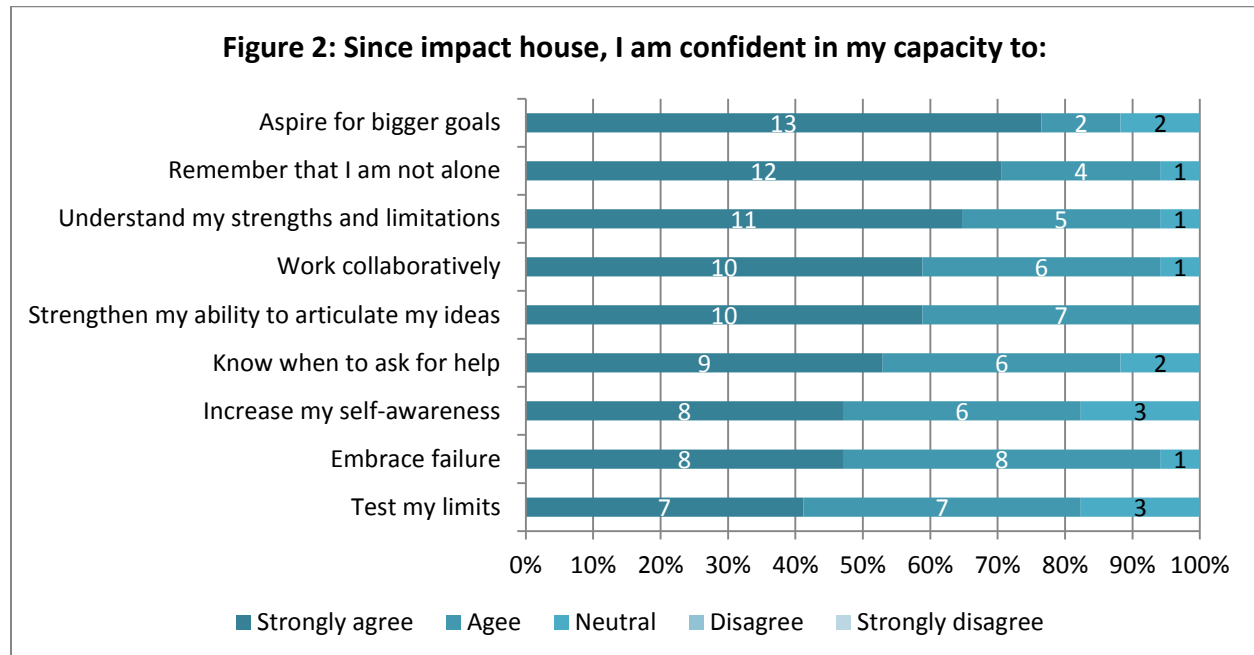
- **Increased leadership skills, e.g.,**
  - *"The leadership tools I have gained at Impact House give me the ability to create a more structured approach to influencing the changes needed to meet those challenges."*
  - *"Every day, I learned something new about my personal work style and capabilities, how I tend to think, how I communicate, and how I work in teams."*
  - *"It taught me skills that I'll use and connected me with people who will continue to further my growth."*
- **Increased confidence, e.g.,**
  - *"Impact House built my confidence in my own creative vision and my ability to lead my own enterprise/project."*
  - *"This experience has erased most of my self-doubt."*
  - *"I feel confident to start!"*
- **Improved communication skills, e.g.,**
  - *"I learned how to communicate about my project more effectively."*
  - *"[It helped] me clarify my thinking on my project and help think about partnerships that will help achieve the social mission."*
- **Increased motivation to do the work / felt more ready to do the work, e.g.,**
  - *"I feel less alone knowing there are others out there doing incredible work with the highest of aspirations."*
  - *"It was inspiring. It gave me energy and new ideas."*
  - *"I now feel empowered as a leader, and I was given the tools to take my project to a more dynamic level."*
- A few people from the first two residential cohorts **wanted more time on implementation, e.g.,**
  - *"I think we spent a lot of time in a heady space. The retreat itself does not address generating revenue or how to do day to day operations. It was great for ideas, but lacked implementation practices."*

> o *"It would have been slightly easier to formulate clear next steps if we had spent more time discussing our specific projects, possibly in the accountability groups."*

In a one-month follow up survey after Impact House, participants from Cohort 1 indicated to what extent they agreed with changes in their capacity. Respondents most strongly agreed with the statements that they were confident in their capacity to:

- Aspire to bigger goals
- Remember that I am not alone
- Understand my strengths and limitations

Figure 2: Since impact house, I am confident in my capacity to:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agee	Neutral
Aspire for bigger goals	13	2	2
Remember that I am not alone	12	4	1
Understand my strengths and limitations	11	5	1
Work collaboratively	10	6	1
Strengthen my ability to articulate my ideas	10	7	
Know when to ask for help	9	6	2
Increase my self-awareness	8	6	3
Embrace failure	8	8	1
Test my limits	7	7	3

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agee ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

Communicating about their projects

Launchpad helped residential-track Fellows better communicate the value of their projects (88% of Cohort 1 and 85% of Cohort 2 indicated "yes" when asked if Launchpad helped them better communicate the value their project creates).

In open-ended survey comments, residential-track Fellows explained:
- **Practicing over and over with different groups was incredibly helpful, e.g.,**
  - o *"It helped me hone my message delivery."*
- **Feedback from peers and the panelists was helpful, e.g.,**
  - o *"I really value the panelists' feedback. It gave me very focused and salient points to think more deeply about my project. I feel that this may have been one of the most fruitful parts of my experience in the fellowship program – to talk to people actually involved in related projects and who can offer some real world advice on how to take the project to the next step."*
  - o Though one noted that "*the best feedback came from other Fellows, not the panelists*"

- **Launchpad helped clarify messaging about the project, e.g.,**
  - *"The processes of preparing the pitch, distilling our ideas, articulating our vision, examining our communications styles, and gleaning feedback were all very helpful to me and my project."*
  - *I had a meeting just today that I didn't really have to prepare for because the Launchpad prepared me so well."*

An interviewee underscored this skill, saying, *"The fellowship gave me more concise language, and more examples. It was a subtle language shift -- instead of me struggling against the world -- I have 10 examples of how this has worked. I can share that I'm not reinventing the wheel, but standing on the shoulder of successes."*

Improving skills required to build relationships with stakeholders
The majority of Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 residential-track Fellows indicated that the Launchpad was helpful in improving the skills required to build relationships with stakeholders (65% of Cohort 1 and 69% of Cohort 2 said "yes"). Cohort 3 has not yet experienced Launchpad.

However, based on the qualitative responses, it appears that many survey respondents misinterpreted the question to be related to stakeholders *at the event*, specifically– the panelists.

Those that did comment on aspects of the curriculum that were aimed at building relationships (e.g., the social styles survey) commented positively, e.g.,
- *"The communication style assessment and the conversations were valuable for understanding myself and how I relate to others."*
- *"I was curious how the social skills workshop would play out, but it gave me a much better understanding of my past, current, and future relationships. Not only do I have better information about how to connect my project with a general audience, but also how to personally relate with other personality types."*

Intangible Gains
Interviewees shared thoughts on what were their biggest takeaways from the fellowship, many of which highlighted the importance of intangible gains like gaining confidence, having time to think, and becoming part of a network:

- *"The biggest thing that I came away with was **gift of time**; gift of time to develop the project; to think through a project that is so big in my head; practical tools to sit and think and marinate."*
- *"Gave me a place to **think more about what I was working on**; A quiet space; NAS gave me a chance to take a step back; look at the framework; talk with other like-minded people about framework and leverage that. It gave me new ideas because I had the time to think about what I wanted to accomplish."*
- *"**The content opened my eyes**. I had never heard of 'creative placemaking.' I'd been an advocate for migrant rights and, I'd been pigeon holed as an advocate and had never thought*

about the arts. … it's been a two-way learning experience; I can't do engagement without the arts -- can't just be through brute force of advocacy; it's gotta be fun and gotta be engaging; CCF gave me the opportunity to build a house around [engagement through arts]."

   o   Another talked about the design thinking content: *"I got the most out of the tools / tool kits for example design thinking strategies or awareness of being in the world."*

- *"The biggest thing I took away was **not feeling alone in the work**; finding a group of people dedicated to this; building connections to the other Fellows; the NAS team; mentors – it was really powerful. Without this program, I wouldn't have developed on my own."*

   o   Another echoed*: "The network of people, the camaraderie. I feel isolated in the Midwest where I don't always have the community I'm looking for. I still keep in touch with select people that I connected with at CCF."*

- *"Long term planning was helpful. Focusing on how to really create a plan that's well thought through. So much of this work is heart and soul focused – and **CCF allows the business and mind piece of it come together**, which is important for sustainability. Working on applying business concepts so that we can speak the language and deepen the plan and what we're doing."*

   o   That said, another interviewee pointed out that the **tools are most applicable to those who have a definitive project**: *"I wish I would have focused on what I was already doing, instead of trying to develop something from scratch. The resources felt geared toward people who were already pretty embedded in their projects. At times, it felt like I was fumbling to try and define a future project and felt like the tools were more applicable to something that I was already working on."*

3.   To what extent and how have Fellows been able to successfully carry out their projects in their communities? Were they able to secure funding for their project?

SUMMARY: Data suggest that residential-track Fellows left the program intending to take some sort of action – whether that was within their organization or community, or some action to continue to build their skills. In a one-month follow up surveys, Cohort 1 fellows indicated they had taken initial steps at applying what they learned (e.g., scheduling meetings with stakeholders or applying for grants). Interviewees shared data on how their communities continue to evolve, and how they were able to plug into and influence that evolution to realize change in a number of areas (e.g., incorporating design thinking into planning; seeing behavior change related to traffic safety). It is important to note that Fellows have spent, at the most, 18 months in their communities post-fellowship, thus, it is important to review findings in light of this relatively short time-frame.

Carrying out projects in communities

In the Impact House / Creative Community House surveys, residential-track participants indicted that they planned to take the following actions in the next month, to apply what they learned:

Within their **organization**, e.g.:

- Strategic planning / business planning
- Updated evaluation practices (e.g., logic models)
- Apply for grants or seek new investors

- Work on their pitch / external communications
- Collect data from their community and/or users
- Implement design thinking (e.g., prototyping)

Within their **community**, e.g.:

- Attend community events
- Meet with community leaders
- Meet with potential corporate sponsors

Individually, e.g.:

- Reach out to their CCF mentor
- Meet with their CCF accountability group or connect with other Fellows
- Reflect on what they learned
- Continue to find ways to be inspired

In a **1-month follow-up after Cohort 1's Impact House**, survey respondents indicated they had *taken* the following actions:

- Applied for a small grant
- Met with people
- Developed marketing materials
- Wrote a business plan and drafted a logic model
- Carried out work related to their project (e.g., hosting an event)
- Conducted interviews with potential clients / users

Online-track Fellows indicated they had *taken* the following actions since beginning the program (2015 online cohort):

- Talked to people
- Applied for grants
- Launched a website
- Continued conversations with CCF mentor

Interviewees provided a deeper look into what had transpired in their communities since participating in the Creative Community Fellows program. The following table summarizes interviewees' descriptions of their communities' evolution, and how they think the fellowship helped them contribute to that evolution.

Table 1: Interviewees descriptions of their communities' evolution

From ….	To …	How?
A state disconnected from its arts base (the energy and the thinking)	Human-centered design concepts incorporated into a state-wide art agency's strategic plan	"When I came back from CCF, my acute awareness changed about the work that needed to get done. I needed to do work that would become part of the DNA of the community. I wanted to give the community tools to own it; I changed about my approach with the state -- rather than it being about what I think is the best -- it's about the we -- that's why I used the human-centered design approach; to ensure that this is something that the arts field felt like they helped create."
Redevelopment agency is mistrusted and disliked by most people	Pressure is mounting on the city to think more about who has access to planning discussions and how are organizations held accountable to residents	"We've been working in areas where development pressure is mounting; and we've always been vocal about problems with redevelopment approach. … Our project focused on the idea of master planning from the perspective of residents ... I came up with this idea -- sort of half during the fellowship; …. we were part of this larger pressure of the city to rethink its attitude toward planning"
Frequent road accidents involving motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists	Starting to see some behavior change among motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists	"Through our project, kids play an innovative card game to let them know the dangers of Queens Blvd; kids are more aware of the laws, and they want to show their knowledge; they are playing a fun card game, but tells them what to do about being safe; I think we managed to change behaviors and the kids are more aware; and now we have that in seven schools."
Our site was a vacant 18 acre field; illegal dumping: trash, dead dogs, pieces of pistols, drugs; some used the area for recreation	We kept the walking path; knocked down the fence; fruit trees will line the walking path; started 5 acres of gardens	"Our site is transforming, but is not yet transformed. We've done charrettes to engage the residents with community partners. We have a good group of people; we are listening to people and honoring their thoughts and opinions on the space – for example, keeping the walking trail makes it difficult for irrigation, but it was the right thing to do."
15 years ago, I would never have spent time in that part of the city; largest public housing project; a lot of economic downturn; no performing venue in the neighborhood	Now, the arts community here, is very political, is very social-change oriented; the neighborhood is changing; large developments are taking place; the main street association cares about small businesses and residents	"For one project, I worked with Main Street Association; working with the developer who owns the property; started two partnerships with local agriculture organizations -- food desert areas and another that runs the farmer's market; they know the area well. I also work with churches and staff at the housing project. For the other project, we started the work on the project lot – the biggest piece is making sure we know who the local organizations are - so that we aren't assuming what they need or know what they want. It's taken the past 6 months to get to know them and to make connections."
Even a few years ago, people weren't talking about mass incarceration	People in general are more aware and concerned; it was mentioned in the presidential debates in 2016	"I got involved as a curator of art by [state] prisoners; I speak with anyone who's making art work inside; put together art work for show at [the University]; it's a way for incarcerated men and women to have expressive outlet; a way for us to build a conversation about mass incarceration; humanizing men and women who are in prison."

From ….	To …	How?
My first naïve and very typical view of something very different -- rows of tents; people on the streets; very unfamiliar; "dangerous" territory	Our existence has changed the opinion of the community of the importance of arts in the community; and in a small way, has shifted the needle about how myself and other entities see [this neighborhood]	*"I'm now more curious about alliances with others regarding anti-gentrification. I'm interested in adding that into the way conversations happen in the studio; I'm interested in the role or art and artists play –and how they can be used as tools against gentrification. That is something that was not part of how I saw the studio prior to the fellowship."*
One of the big reasons why I created this project was because the things we collect are left out of the historical records	I recently found out that the American Library Association is going to be launching a program, through their office for intellectual freedom, to get more independent and self-published things into public libraries	*"We've always been more well known in the library world than the city of Chicago – because of our capacity – and so I don't know if we played any direct role in [the ALA initiative] but I am fairly positive that if it wasn't for the work we were doing – knowing the number of organizations and librarians we have influenced– that they would have gotten there. Three years ago when I was hosting a panel discussion, the idea of bringing that kind of approach was kind of verboten – we were in a room with folks that publish that kind of material and when it was brought up everyone was like 'oh no, no we can't do that.' So, seeing that level of change in the library community is huge."*
My project was only a small pocket within a bigger organization; it was at the risk of being siloed	We've institutionalized human-centered design in the organization	*"With CCF -- I felt like I could go back with a massive set of tools to build community; being playful but getting deep into certain things and to bring people together; within a month, I had programmed an organizational development day [within my organization of 60 staff] where we played with some of the tools."*

Preliminary trends suggest that CCF prepared and positioned Fellows to secure funding for their projects

Residential-track Fellows indicated in the Launchpad follow-up surveys that **exposure to potential funders (as panelists) was helpful**.

- *"It debunked the idea of 'they' the funders and saw them as we the people working for the arts/culture."*
- *"One of the biggest lessons of Launchpad is that funders and stakeholders are just people like us. After Launchpad, building relationships with stakeholders seems less daunting."*
- *"It helped break down some of my barriers as far as building relationships with funders, especially in hearing the places where they disagreed with one another during the panel."*
- *"I feel a lot more confident now in approaching funders, feeling validated in the project and its 'fundability' based on the discussion with my panel. … I also learned a lot in casual conversations with panelists about what funders are and are not looking for."*

Similarly, **online**-track Fellows indicated that it was useful to connect with a grantmaker in the field via Launchpad.

- *"I appreciated [the panelist's] knowledge and insight into the field, the market for it and what I need to do and say to move forward meaningfully."*
- *"This felt like a rare opportunity that I'm very thankful for. Not only was the grantmaker willing to continue a conversation about my project, but he also gave me the contact information of one other person who may also be able to help."*

- *"Funders will make the decisions so their input and feedback is critical."*

In interviews, we learned that **five of nine Fellows had secured grant funding**, and stated that their experience at CCF contributed to their successful applications:
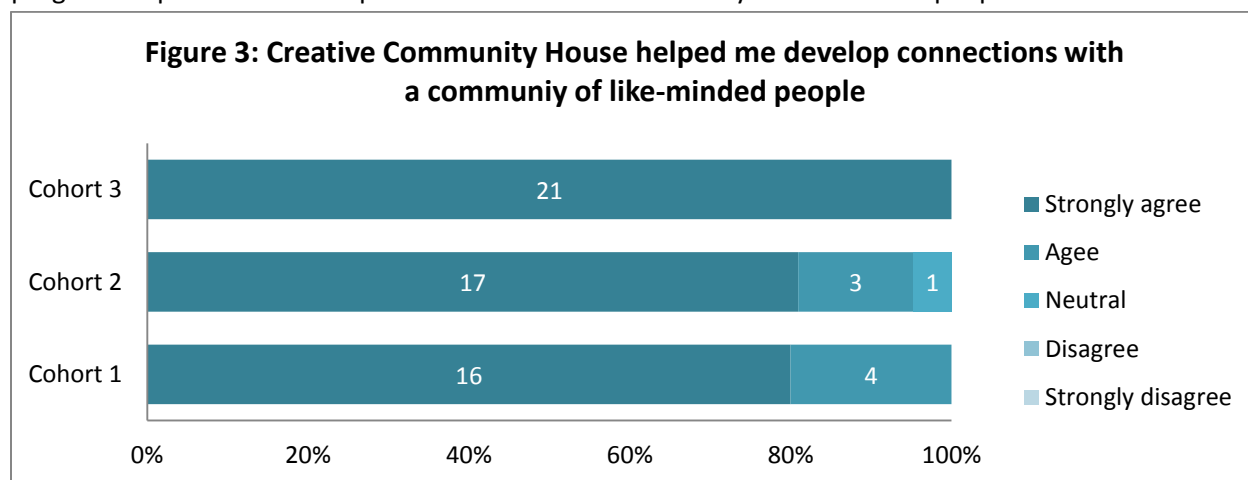
- *"I'm incredibly appreciative of the week away to think about the work that I'm doing; gave me time to come up for a framework for framework for how I engage in the word; I leveraged this in so many different ways; we got $200K in funding."*
- *"After the fellowship, we did a lot of work developing the project. Thanks to CCF, we got an Our Place grant thru Jan 2017."*
- *"We got an NEA grant; and in December, we're getting another big grant. We can't share what that is, yet. CCF helped us to that because the connections and conversations helped me put my thoughts together [into grant applications]."*
- *"It was helpful for me and for us organizationally, to map what we were doing and the audience, in a way that hadn't been mapped before. Through that process – I was able to create notes and materials that I applied to writing a grant that we ended up receiving. Launchpad was a great way to force me to organize thoughts and come up with a cohesive narrative and ask."*
- *"We managed to secure the $25M in funding -- in no small way due to my participating in the fellowship. In the way that I was able to convince funders that [my project] is valid, that it's strong – that's in no small way due to the fact that I came on the fellowship."*

4. To what extent have Fellows expanded and strengthened their <u>networks</u>? What facilitated this? How have Fellows collaborated with other Fellows or mentors?

SUMMARY: The residential-track fellowship expanded Fellows networks to include peers from across the country, as well as introduced them to arts & culture leaders and funders. The fellowship also appears to have deepened connections among those who participated in the residential-track, with many stating that felt strong connections and a sense of belonging while being with their peers.

Developing connections

Nearly all residential-track Fellows across cohorts indicated in surveys that attending the residential program helped them develop connections with a community of like-minded people.

Figure 3: Creative Community House helped me develop connections with a communiy of like-minded people

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral
Cohort 3	21		
Cohort 2	17	3	1
Cohort 1	16	4	

Legend: ■ Strongly agree ■ Agee ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

In open-ended comments, residential-track survey respondents shared the following thoughts about how they were able to strengthen their networks:

- **They found a sense of belonging** (e.g., *"I feel like I've finally found a community that I belong completely to"; "I was able to find my tribe"; "I've never had such a strong sense of belonging in my life as I did amongst this group;" "This is a new family for me that I will be forever grateful for"; "I finally, truly, feel I'm not alone in this work"*)
- **They liked the group of Fellows** (e.g., *"I very much adored the group of Fellows"; I connected with most everyone quickly and deeply"*)
- **They felt like they connected to a diverse group of people** (e.g., *"It was fantastic to be able to connect with so many diverse voices in the arts and culture sector"; I rarely have the opportunity to speak to black men and women, people of diverse ethnic or religious backgrounds, let alone like-minded individuals who strive for social change"; "I loved that there were many different types of people from all over the country, very diverse from race, to demographics, ages, and from various parts from the U.S. rural and city"*)
- **They felt like they authentically connected to people** (e.g., *"A week later, I am still peeling back layers of connectivity, inquiry, inspiration, and affirmation"*)
- **A few mentioned wanted more structured time with each peer** (e.g., *"I wish there was a structured exercise … to speak to everyone about their project"*)
- **They planned to keep in touch with other Fellows** (e.g., *"I plan to keep in touch with everyone long after this fellowship ends"; "I feel like I left the experience with 20+ potential collaborations"*)

But**, online-track** Fellows were more equivocal in their responses. Although all ten respondents had connected with other online-track Fellows, only half had connected with the residential-track Fellows. In open-ended comments, online-track participants shared the difficulty in connecting with residential-track Fellows:

- *"I feel [the residential-track Fellows] had a much deeper, richer experience. I feel like I'm on the outside looking in."*
- *"The online-track Fellows aren't as meaningfully connected as the residential Fellows. In the Facebook group, I see stories of all these experiences that happened live. None of that synergy and intentionality has spilled over to my online track group. I think we are checking in because we have to, but there's been no shared experience to build upon for us. I think we missed something critical that the other group seems to have received and been energized by."*
- *"It was actually really hard to know that half the group was selected to participate in the residential track and half were not. Seeing the connections they were able to make on Facebook or other platforms makes me wish I'd had that opportunity to make those connections as I know that I can thrive in a face to face context. Making connections over the internet is just really challenging for me."*
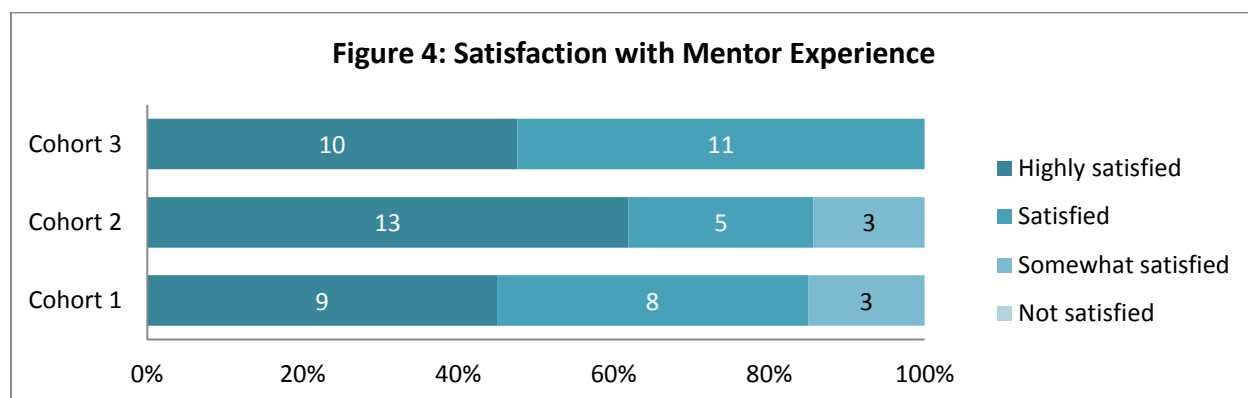
5. How useful is the mentoring aspect of the program?

SUMMARY: Overall, survey respondents across the residential-track cohorts were satisfied with the mentor program.

Mentoring

The majority of participants across cohorts were either "highly satisfied" or "satisfied" with their mentor experience.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with Mentor Experience

Cohort	Highly satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied
Cohort 3	10	11	
Cohort 2	13	5	3
Cohort 1	9	8	3

Legend: Highly satisfied, Satisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Not satisfied

As shown in Figure 4, satisfaction with the mentor experience has steadily increased by cohort, as NAS made changes to the experience based on feedback from early cohorts. Residential-track Fellows shared the following themes in open-ended survey responses about the CCF mentoring experience:

- They had **"incredible" conversations** with the mentors (their "official" mentor as well as the broader set of mentors)
- They appreciated the **diverse voices, viewpoints, skills, and backgrounds** represented by the mentors
- A few respondents from Cohort 1 noted that **some of their mentor appointments** weren't kept (e.g., "S*everal appointments I made with mentors were not honored*")
- Some indicated that they **didn't know how to fully utilize the relationship** with their mentor (e.g., "*It took me a few days to figure out what exactly I needed to talk to mentors about*")
- Some from Cohort 1 suggested that **mentors could have been better prepared** (e.g., read Fellows' bios in advance)
- Although many appreciated the thoughtfulness of pairing Fellows to mentors, and **many indicated it was a good "fit,"** that wasn't true in all cases (e.g., *"I didn't find my own mentor to be the most beneficial")* thus, some appreciated the time spent with other mentors
- Participants indicated they **wanted even *more* time with mentors** (e.g., "*In the future, might there be a 'speed-dating' version of meetings where Fellows get structured face time with every person?*")

In a follow up survey to *mentors*, they gave the following suggestions for improving the mentor experience:

- More structured time with mentees (e.g., two 45-min sessions on consecutive days)

- More information on what the Fellows do during the week
- House mentors and mentees closer together (e.g., in the same building)
- More clarity on what to expect after the in-person work session

WHAT NEXT

Interviewees offered the following pieces of "advice" for improving CCF:

1. **Rethink (or do away with) the online track option.**[5] *"Maybe there's a different way to do the online track, or do away with it … to focus more strongly on the community being developed in person. The online track automatically made people feel second-tier; and those people were so phenomenal as well, but maybe there's a different way to do that so it doesn't feel hierarchy."*
2. **More [structured] time between mentors and mentees.** "*Increase the amount of time that mentees get to spend with mentors; and maybe some guide for follow up without it being too heavy handed. Formalize a little bit so that people can opt in (e.g., check in 3 times with your mentees)."*
3. **Rethink the pitch.** *"Not all projects can be "pitched" -- think about the diversity of approaches to sharing; I wasn't comfortable with the format -- I didn't want to ask for money -- that was a little bit challenging."*
4. **Help Fellows think about how to engage with government**. *"Have a space for practitioners to talk about how to engage with government without getting swept into politics. If we're trying to change the system, and we have the amazing opportunity to work at the top of the system -- how do we do that?"*
5. **Help Fellows stay in contact.** *"After I left the bubble, it was easy to lose contact with folks; life got busy, and we all lost touch."*
6. **Consider having two people from an organization attend together**. *"I can imagine it being beneficial to have done this with my collaborator."*
7. **More time to think about the project.** *"More time to work on your own project; we spent a lot of time working on something to apply to our framework; but time could have been better served talking about our own projects."*
8. **Offer CCF 201**. *"What's the next stage after this? Other programs? Feels like we're just at the beginning stages. And now I have this whole other set of questions … we're at the next level with the biz, but how do we continue to grow it? That continued support is what I'd be looking for. So it doesn't feel like this thing that we did once and then was over."*

In addition, it appears there might be an opportunity to focus more content on **partnering** in the community.

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[5] NAS discontinued the online track with Cohort 3.

CONCLUSION

CCF has been successful in attracting motivated participants. Fellows have developed the skills needed to lead change in their communities. Fellows also benefitted from the time spent with their peers who shared their passions. Many also shared the importance of the intangible aspects of the program, like increased confidence and time to think, which better positions them create change within their communities.

Though Fellows have only had 18 months at most post-fellowship, those interviewed spoke of positive changes in their community, and mentioned that the CCF program helped them to catalyze that change in some way. Just over half of the Fellows interviewed had secured funding for their projects, and attributed their success to the skills, resources, and/or networks gained through CCF.

As NAS continues to implement the fellowship program, it will be important to check back with Fellows to learn more about changes that have occurred in their communities, to build upon this strong and positive early evidence.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEWS

Interview List

1. Kristina Newman-Scott, State of Connecticut   Cohort 1
2. Kate Balug, Department of Play   Cohort 1
3. Hayk Makhmuryan, LAMP Arts Program   Cohort 1
4. Hannah Fox, Derby Silk Mill – Museum of Making   Cohort 1
5. Yvonne Shortt, RPGA Studio   Cohort 2
6. Nic de la Fuente, Spaces of Opportunity   Cohort 2
7. Emily Arden Eakland, ReCreative Spaces   Cohort 2
8. Charlie Michaels, University of Michigan   Cohort 2
9. Nell Taylor, Read/Write Library   Cohort 2

Interview Questions

1. Can you share a brief background on yourself and your project?
   a. What motivated you to create this project?
2. I'm interested in learning more about what you've taken away from the Creative Community Fellows program. What did you take away from your experience? What did you learn through the program that you are applying in your project or other community work?
   a. Did it change the way you view your role, or the role of art, in community development efforts in your community?
   b. What about partnering? Are there any takeaways related to working with people in your community or with other fellows?
3. I'm interested in learning more about your community. I'd like you to think back to before your project started. Imagine you are walking down a main street in your community. [If community is not a geographic community – ask people about a virtual space] What does it look like? Who do you see? What are they doing? What are they saying? What do you feel?

   a. Probe for specific examples / stories

4. Now fast forward to the **present**. Same question. You've participated in CCF, your project is up and running. Imagine walking down that same street [or being in the same space]. What does it look like? Who do you see? What are they doing? What are they saying? What do you feel?

   a. How do you think your project contributed to that?

   b. What else is driving this change?

5. Let's talk about who you work with and how. Since participating in the fellows program, how do you approach partnerships?
   a. Probe for specific examples of partner relationships (e.g., within community, with other fellows, with mentor)
6. If you could give NAS advice about how to change the CCF program, what would you say?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your CCF experience or your work in your community?