

# Together Toward Equity Fellowship | Impact Evaluation

Leadership development programs play a critical role in nurturing individuals who can drive meaningful change within organizations, communities, and broader systems. To understand their true effectiveness, these programs must conduct thorough impact assessments. Such evaluations serve multiple purposes: they ensure accountability to funders and stakeholders, provide valuable insights for program improvement, and offer concrete evidence of value. In an era of tight resources and growing demand for results-driven and equity-focused initiatives, having solid data on outcomes is not just beneficial—it's essential.

The Together Toward Equity Fellowship is designed to connect and support rising public health leaders. The following represents feedback from the 2023-2024 cohort of Fellows, after 6 months of program end. This memo is a summary of the key themes from a qualitative impact assessment with seven Together Toward Equity Fellowship Alumni. These findings will support strategic learning, especially as equity is centered as a core value. The findings will help program designers understand which aspects of the curriculum are most effective for participants and identify disparities in access, engagement, or outcomes. The memo is organized into three levels of analysis: growth at the individual level, impact on leadership, and rippled effects that are sustainable and scalable.

## Fellowship Experience

**A myriad of positive experiences contributed to Fellow's increase in self-confidence in their leadership skills and identity as a leader.** Several participants shared benefiting from the tailored support and resources that were offered. For example, alumni highlighted the holistic nature of support from program leadership as impactful on their growth. The Fellowship leadership's wealth of knowledge and strategy maintained a good balance for Alumni to learn about topics and apply them to their organizations, as well as in other Public Health circles locally and throughout California. Regardless of where in their career trajectory Fellows were during the program, participants reported that the Fellowship provided intentional support and resources that allowed them to either continue in their current professional position or gain promotion within their organization.

*One participant reflected on their increase in leadership confidence, "I think everything that I was able to glean from the Fellowship really strengthened my leadership [to become] more authentic and [to become a] stronger voice [and gave me] that confidence that my community needs this. In less than a month, I will be receiving the Neighborhood Leadership Award and...that is a testament to me that being in this Fellowship..."*

*"I was so grateful for this opportunity... there's not that many spaces where you can just go into and feel it was intentionally made for me and for the rest of the Fellows. So, [I am] trying to replicate those feelings with everyone that I interact with moving forward."*



**The Fellowship promoted a collectivistic mindset that fostered authentic relationships and wellbeing.** The collectivistic spirit of the Fellowship fostered authentic relationships and a deep sense of well-being among Alumni. Rather than focusing solely on individual achievement, the program emphasized shared growth and mutual support. Alumni formed strong bonds not only with their coaches, whom they selected based on trust and resonance, but also with each other through intentionally designed collective experiences. Activities like ancestral circles and in-person gatherings nurtured emotional intimacy and cross-community understanding, helping Alumni feel seen, heard, and connected. This shared journey cultivated a lasting sense of belonging and interdependence that Alumni continue to carry with them, reinforcing their connection to each other, to Fellowship leadership, and to the values they explored together.

*"One of the bigger highlights for me about the TTE Fellowship was that opportunity to get a personalized coach. We were able to shop around for different coaches, kind of like therapy, and make sure that we were partnered up and collaborated with the ideal person who would help us understand ourselves even further. In the Fellowship sessions with the rest of the cohort, we did a lot of personal and professional work on ourselves to further ourselves as leaders in the public health space...[and] when we were able to come in person for three times during the year, I thought that was so special."*



*"The Fellowship gave me the opportunity to express [myself] and be confident with expressing [my opinions]. It gave me the audacity to implement the things that I know would be capable of working [and helped me be] mindful of myself for how I show up as a leader, as a person...and it's also impacted my work [to have the] audacity to serve on national boards."*

**The Fellowship propels participants to increase their resilience and seek more opportunities for leadership positions and roles.** Alumni consistently reported that the Fellowship equipped them for promotions and greater leadership responsibilities within their organizations. It enhanced their resilience, enabling them to remain focused and effective in their work despite obstacles such as limited funding and conflicting administrative ideologies. The knowledge that a supportive Fellowship community exists instilled a lasting sense of confidence and motivation, empowering Alumni to assert their presence and leadership both within and beyond the network. The Fellowship also provided access to essential skills and resources—such as grant writing, budgeting, and leadership training—that many Alumni previously lacked. This practical support translated into greater self-advocacy, allowing Alumni to clearly define their career goals and step into leadership roles with purpose. Over time, they have leveraged these skills to deepen their commitment to community organizing, secure resources, and build strategic connections, demonstrating the Fellowship's enduring impact on their professional growth and leadership trajectories.



## Fellowship Impact

**The Fellowship provided participants with a network of supportive colleagues to continue and sustain the drive and motivation to engage in collective impact.** The Fellowship provided Alumni with essential leadership development tools that are foundational for driving sustainable change within their organizations and across the field of Public Health. A key outcome of the program was the cultivation of a strong, mission-aligned network of peers and mentors, which continues to serve as a source of professional support, collaboration, and motivation. This community has proven vital in helping Alumni sustain their commitment to equity-driven systems change, even in the face of structural barriers such as limited funding and institutional resistance. By fostering this network, the Fellowship not only expanded participants' capacity for leadership, but it also ensured they are not doing this work in isolation, strengthening their ability to engage in collective impact. In addition to deepening knowledge, the Fellowship supported personal transformation through trauma-informed practices, equipping Alumni with the tools to set boundaries, prevent burnout, and lead with clarity and resilience. The program's intentional integration of professional skill-building with interpersonal growth created the conditions for long-term leadership development. As a result, Alumni are better positioned to influence organizational practices, mobilize resources, and model equitable leadership—outcomes that directly align with funders' goals for sustainable, systems-level change in public health.

*"This program is highly important...and it is a program that should continue. We need that kind of foundation. We need leaders that have good leadership. Good, strong, authentic, passionate leadership is what has brought change. When you think back to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and what a strong leader he was, it was because of his foundation, what fed him to become that leader...This Fellowship is filling the gap of building the kind of leaders that will change the public health terrain and bring free healthcare and high-quality healthcare to all. We need those kinds of programs that will make sure that happens, building the leaders, strengthening the leaders to be that voice, to be out there, bringing that change, that transformation."*

*"The Fellowship, for me, was one of those things that I looked forward to as time went on, because it helped to remind me that I'm not the only one going through this, that there were other folks out there no matter what part of California they were based out of... And it was nice to be part of a space where we could just put all of that down in this Fellowship and really do the work within ourselves, so that we can, not give from an empty cup. As far as resiliency goes, just being in the Fellowship with everyone that's doing amazing work throughout the state was definitely a highlight...That helped to encourage me to continue, and to make some changes so that I don't reach burnout."*

