

Together Toward Equity Fellowship | Phase 2 Memo

Built into the Together Toward Equity (TTE) Fellowship are opportunities for Fellows to spend crucial time learning about leadership and reflecting on what it means to be a leader working toward achieving equity in Public Health. It is important to acknowledge the current context in which many Fellows and their organizations are operating. In January 2025, a wave of social and political changes set into motion significant shifts that directly impacted Public Health as a system. These developments have led to drastic fluctuations in funding and staffing, while also introducing new stressors and compounding existing trauma. As a result, many organizations—already operating with limited capacity—are now facing even greater strain.

As part of the 2025 evaluation, Fellows were asked to provide feedback on their experiences and share the impact of the Fellowship's sessions and curriculum. This memo provides a summary of survey responses from the second cohort of Fellows (n=12) who participated in this evaluation and completed Foundational Leadership curriculum in Spring 2025. The findings below share Fellow's feedback and highlight elements of TTE that have made a lasting impressions on them personally and in their and professional work.

Communications and Storytelling

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

The Storytelling Workshop **positively impacted their leadership development.**



Overall, Fellows applied lessons learned from the Storytelling Workshop as a leadership tool to **grow their communication skills**. Using Storytelling has allowed Fellows to **build stronger relationships** with their teams, communities, and funders by building trust through sharing honest, impactful, and concise narratives.

"One of the most impactful lessons was learning how to connect emotion with data, which has strengthened my advocacy and leadership."

"This shift has helped me secure deeper engagement from potential collaborators, funders, and community members."

Power Dynamics

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They have been able to **see the connections** in their work between networking and power mapping.



Fellows shared that they are **mindfully considering power dynamics** in their organizations and within their networks. Largely focusing on **power redistribution**, Fellows also worked towards **centering the lived experience** of their stakeholders and practicing **shared leadership** with their staff in the planning and implementation phases of projects. Through these collaborations, Fellows lead their organizations in creating spaces where **staff feel more accountability** and **community members have more active roles** in decision-making processes.

"I've worked to shift from a top-down approach to one rooted in shared ownership, where everyone's expertise is valued, whether they're a grassroots leader, a youth participant, or a community member. These practices have not only made our work more equitable but also more effective and sustainable."

Network Mapping and Network Support

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They have been able to think through **and assess the connections of their networks** using network mapping.

92% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They have been able to **develop networking strategies** at their organizations.

83% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They have been able to **expand their network** of colleagues, partners, and collaborators.

Despite challenges navigating organizational capacity to shift work culture and operations, network mapping provided Fellows **with strategies for better identifying strengths and gaps in their networks.**

Being able to clearly see strong relationships as well as relationships that would benefit from intentional communication, allows Fellows to more actively **establish shared goals** with their staff and partners. An increase in alignment also helps to **empower Fellows' staff** through increased transparency and sustainable planning.



" Whether it's clarifying roles in a partnership or being transparent about capacity, I now lead with honesty and care, which has deepened trust and helped build healthier, more sustainable systems of support."

Coaching

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

The support received from their coaches has **supported their professional growth and leadership development.**

Coaches have provided guidance on the following topics: balance, burnout reduction, conflict resolution, culture, problem management, vision alignment, among other leadership-centered topics.

Overall, Fellows have positive experiences with coaching. Coaching is viewed as one of the **most valuable assets** in the Fellowship and allows Fellows to **explore a range of personal and professional topics** in navigating leading their organizations and serving their communities. Further, the bonds that Coaches build help **Fellows feel safe in exploring their leadership skills and practices** that encourage organizational sustainability.

" This guidance helped me gain clarity and stay grounded in my work."

" These sessions have strengthened my confidence and helped me to lead from a place of purpose, not pressure. This level of support is rare in community-based work..."

Trauma Informed Work

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They learned how to **lead and supervise through a Trauma-Informed lens.**

They have a better understanding of how a leader can **implement a culture of community care** within an organization.

Fellows are using a trauma-informed lens by exercising **empathy and patience** in their daily work. They are also focusing on **empowering their staff and communities** by building safe environments and normalizing difficult conversations. When planning, Fellows are **centering emotional sustainability, healing, reflection, and collaboration** between diverse perspectives to encourage meaningful community outcomes.

" This has been especially helpful to manage the high stress times we are living with ICE traumatizing our communities. These practices have helped build deeper trust, reduce re-traumatization, and create a stronger sense of belonging..."

Equity

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They understand how they can **influence the direction of their organizations** through an equity lens.

92% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

They have been able to **advance health equity within their projects** and/or leadership development.

Current barriers in advancing health equity include budget/funding cuts, short staffing, unavailable leadership, current political climate, and resistance to change.

Fellows have overcome challenges in centering health equity in day-to-day work and projects. Fellows report ensuring their clients have **access to needed services and resources** through their organizations' programming. By prioritizing resources that consider systemic barriers, such as culturally relevant services, Fellows **increased equity awareness and commitment** in their staff and have continued to serve their communities. Further, Fellows are building in equity-centered activities and conversations to **maintain staff wellbeing and the collaboration** integral to community-centered work.

"I've been able to identify more allies in the community ...These people have a shared vision and goals when it comes to prioritizing health equity in the community and gaining insight and perspective from their work has enhanced my capacity to seek out alternative resources for clients and problem solve in the face of uncertainty."

General Experiences

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree

The Fellowship has allowed them to **deeply process and better understand themselves**, their identities, and how their self-perception and awareness influence their leadership.



Overall, the Fellowship has helped Fellows **leverage their identities to become more equitable leaders**. Leaning into their identities, Fellows report an **increase in confidence** as leaders by understanding how their identities give their leadership nuance and strength. Further, embracing their own identities has also helped Fellows grow to **embrace the identities of others**.

"I've come to better understand how my lived experience can build trust with some staff and participants, while also recognizing where I hold power or blind spots."

Fellowship resources, such as reflection questions and the supplemental Big Picture Tool, have encouraged Fellows to **think deeply about their projects** and their work at their organizations. The tools have also encouraged **leadership growth** by helping Fellows **draw connections** between planning and implementation, as well as **aligning their goals** with their day-to-day work.

"These tools have helped me better organize my thoughts, prioritize my actions, and remain grounded in purpose, particularly when navigating complex or emotionally charged situations."

Fellows **appreciate the leadership team** behind the Fellowship and remain grateful for the opportunity! They **encourage incoming Fellows** to prepare by having an open mind to communication, relationship building, and growth.

"This Fellowship is more than professional development—it's a space for deep personal transformation, relationship-building, and clarity around your purpose."