

Together Toward Equity Fellowship | Phase 3 Memo

The Together Toward Equity (TTE) Fellowship is thoughtfully crafted to empower its Fellows by providing substantial opportunities aimed at enhancing their leadership skills. It simultaneously encourages profound reflection on the intricate challenges and significant responsibilities that come with advancing equity within the field of Public Health. This initiative allocates dedicated time for both educational growth and inward contemplation, allowing Fellows to thoroughly evaluate their advocacy techniques and equitable practices as they pertain to their organizations and the communities they serve. Understanding the critical value of ongoing progress and participant perspectives, the 2025 program evaluation sought detailed feedback from Fellows on their overall experiences, including the impact of Fellowship sessions and the curriculum content. This memorandum offers a comprehensive overview of the survey results gathered from the program's second cohort, consisting of 12 Fellows who successfully completed the Dynamic Leadership curriculum for phase 3 during summer 2025. The collected insights illuminate the Fellows' perspectives, emphasizing the key aspects of the TTE Fellowship that have significantly contributed to their continuous personal growth and advanced professional development within the realm of public health equity.

Challenges on the Ground

100%

of Fellows report **moderate to significant impacts** on their ability to participate in the Fellowship **due to the current political landscape**

*"As the anti-DEI landscape emerged, many grantors shifted their focus to other areas, **leaving health equity feeling deprioritized**. If not for this administrative shift, we as fellows might have been more focused on developing projects rather than creating safe spaces. Instead, the fellowship provided us with a circle of trust where we could openly share workplace challenges and explore the difficulties of engaging with our teams and communities."*



Fellows shared that significant changes in the public health and political landscape – including the rise of anti-DEI sentiment, shifting immigration policies, funding cuts, and increased workplace demands – have created a **landscape of uncertainty, fear, and resource scarcity** that undermines both organizational capacity and individual engagement in the Fellowship.

Many Fellows reported being **overwhelmed by staffing shortages, burnout, and the emotional toll of navigating volatile conditions**, including heightened fear and mistrust among immigrant and underserved communities due to increased immigration raids and threats to healthcare privacy. These factors have led to reduced participation in community programs, organizational downsizing, and even layoffs for some Fellows.

Despite these pressures, the Fellowship remains a **crucial space for reflection, connection, and resilience**. Fellows emphasized its role in fostering solidarity and helping them stay aligned with their core values.

Policy, Advocacy, Equity, and Impact

100% of Fellows agree or strongly agree:

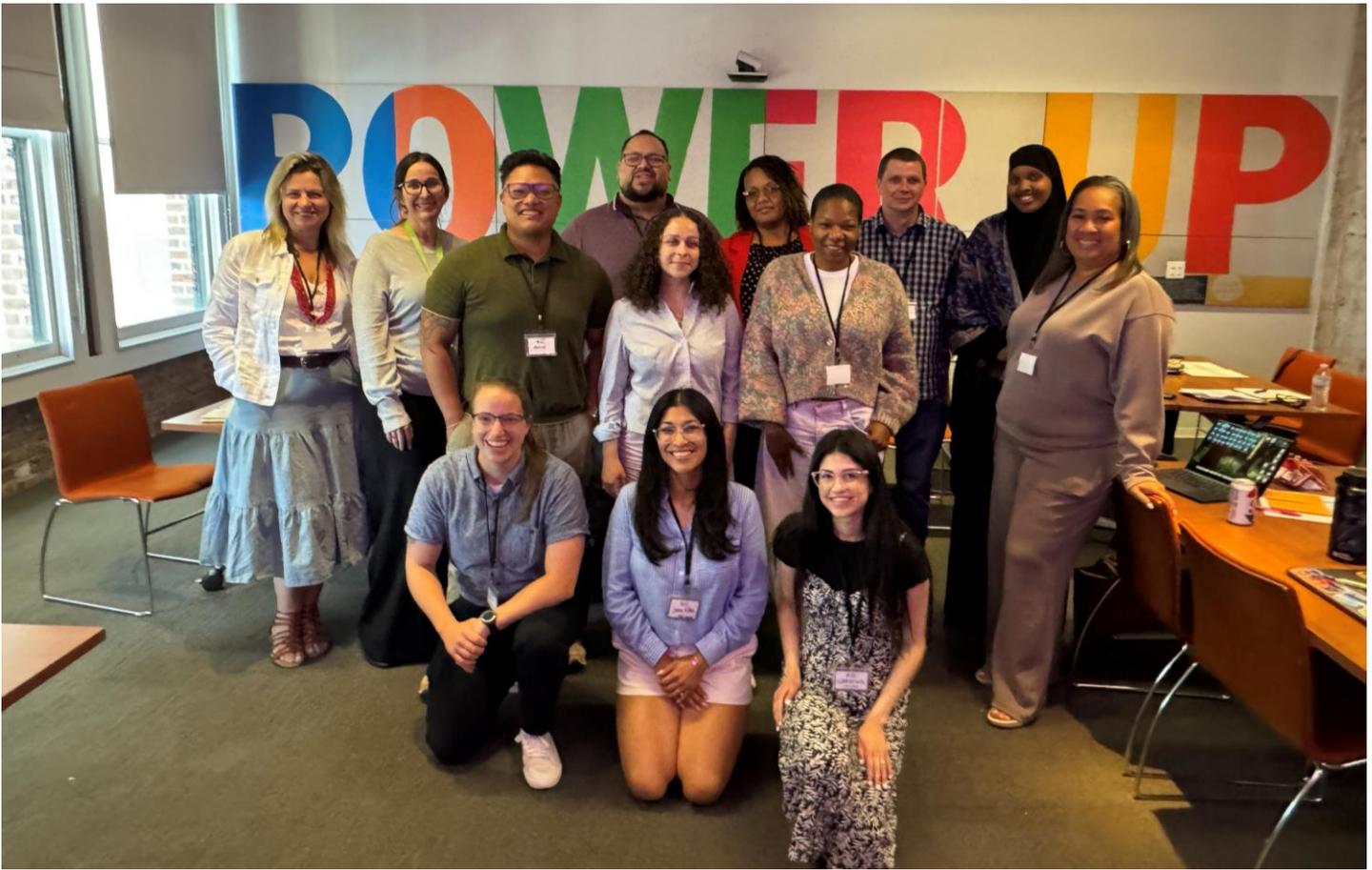
- They have a **better understanding of their role as a leader** as it relates to Policy and the impact on the work they do.
- They have a **better understanding of how to leverage their network** and use network mapping to support their organization's Policy and Advocacy Work.
- They **understand how Policy and Advocacy work can be embedded into their leadership** and/or Fellowship project.

*"I've been able to implement key learnings from Policy and Advocacy by **approaching my work with a clearer understanding of how systems and decision-makers impact community outcomes**. One example is applying advocacy strategies to build relationships with elected officials—I felt more confident scheduling and preparing for meetings by leaning into curiosity and framing issues in ways that center community voices."*

Fellows described a significant shift in how they understand and engage with policy and advocacy, moving from viewing it as separate from their roles to embracing it as a core element of their leadership and daily work. This transformation fostered **a more intentional, systems-level mindset**, encouraging Fellows to integrate an advocacy and equity lens into program design, internal communication, and decision-making processes. Many developed a deeper awareness of how systemic issues – such as housing, employment, and access to services – are shaped by policy, which led to framing these challenges as opportunities for collective action.

This newfound perspective deepened Fellows' sense of purpose and engagement, encouraging them to integrate advocacy into their work more strategically. Through this process, they not only enhanced their leadership capabilities but also reinforced their commitment to embedding equity within their professional practices. Fellows emphasized how the Fellowship provided a space to explore these shifts, nurturing their ability to lead with a broader systemic perspective.





Coaching

*"Coaching supported me by creating space to slow down and reflect on how I show up as a leader, beyond daily tasks. It gave me tools **to balance vision with practical steps** and reminded me of the importance of **aligning my decisions with equity and sustainability.**"*

79% of Fellows felt there were **the right amount of sessions**

21% of Fellows felt there were **too few sessions**

*"I also really valued the times when my coach **reflected my strengths back to me.** It reminded me that leadership is not only about fixing what I think is missing, but also about **trusting and leaning into what I already bring.**"*

Fellows described coaching as a **valuable experience** that fostered both **personal and leadership growth**. It helped them **gain clarity, build confidence, and deepen self-awareness**, often by aligning personal values with professional roles and developing their leadership identity and style. Many shared that coaching supported them in recognizing their strengths, addressing internal barriers such as self-doubt or imposter syndrome, and envisioning future goals.

Coaching also enhanced Fellows' **communication skills**, strengthened their ability to **navigate difficult conversations**, and encouraged a shift toward more **collaborative and equity-centered leadership**.

Relationships with coaches were marked by **trust, reflection, and guidance**, creating space for **vulnerability and intentional decision-making**. While most Fellows found coaching supportive and impactful, one noted it did not fully meet their expectations.

General Experiences

*"All of these things have been nothing short of LIFE CHANGING [sic]. I am a completely different person through this process of reflecting, learning and being in community... **The reflections have been incredibly foundational in my ability to navigate my current role and my professional development, especially paired with my coaching sessions.**"*

Fellows Valued the Reflection Questions, Resources, and the Big Picture Tool

Overall, Fellows felt that the reflection questions and resources provided by the Fellowship, particularly the Big Picture Tool, had a meaningful impact on their leadership development and project work. A strong theme was the way these tools helped participants **slow down, step back, and think more strategically**, which allowed them to **connect daily tasks with long-term goals and values**. Many described gaining clarity around their leadership style, building confidence, and learning to set boundaries and lead with intention. The Big Picture Tool was often cited as a practical framework that supported project planning, decision-making, and prioritization, while the reflection questions encouraged self-awareness, alignment with equity, and sustainability in leadership practices. Several Fellows mentioned these tools helped them communicate more effectively with stakeholders and stay accountable to their goals.

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.
- They **felt supported by the TTE team** throughout the Fellowship.

Fellows Deeply Value Reflective Space, Community, and Supportive Leadership

Fellows expressed **deep gratitude and appreciation** for the Fellowship and its leadership team. Fellows consistently highlighted the impact of the safe, reflective spaces – particularly the **in-person and peer-to-peer connections** – as some of the most meaningful aspects of the experience. Many noted that the program helped them grow as leaders and expressed hope that the Fellowship continues in the future, emphasizing its value to the field. Several Fellows called out specific staff facilitators for praise and acknowledged the care, intention, and skill in which the program was delivered.





100%

of Fellows agree or strongly agree:

The Fellowship has created **a network of peers that they can utilize for support and resources** in the near future.

"Going forward, I encourage the leadership team to continue offering structured ways for fellows to stay connected after the program ends, so that the relationships and collective knowledge built can keep growing. This...

sustained community is just as important as the skills and frameworks and would strengthen the long-term impact of the Fellowship."

Fellows Recommend More Peer Learning and Tailored Support

Fellows offered several suggestions to enhance the experience, highlighting the need for **more in-person meetings and increased peer-to-peer learning** with structured opportunities for sharing and accountability, especially around project work. Some emphasized the importance of tailoring content to different leadership levels and called for greater employer support, including schedule protection to allow deeper engagement. To address challenges with competing demands and virtual fatigue, Fellows **recommended shorter sessions, lighter assignments, more frequent check-ins, and small peer groups** to sustain momentum. Additional ideas included an Advocacy Day at the Capitol, greater use of circle practices in virtual sessions, access to shared resources, and more post-Fellowship support. Overall, Fellows valued in-person interactions – particularly the final session – and expressed a strong desire for more opportunities to connect and learn from one another.