

Professional Fellows Program FY 2012 – FY 2017 Evaluation Report

November 2020

Prepared for:

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United States Department of State

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The GDIT Evaluation Team was comprised of Dr. Marta Muco, Dr. Karen Aschaffenburg, and Ms. Giovanna Monteverde. This team was responsible for all aspects of the evaluation, from the initial evaluation design, through data collection and fieldwork, analysis, and preparation of the final report. The GDIT Evaluation Team would like to thank ECA Chief of Evaluation Natalie Donahue and Evaluation Officer Elizabeth Botkin for their oversight and guidance. They would also like to thank U.S. embassy staff in the fieldwork countries, U.S. implementing partners, their local offices and partners, and the PFP Program Office staff for their time and support. It goes without saying that this report would not have been possible without the willingness of the program participants overseas and in the United States to share their perspectives.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	I
Evaluation Overview	i
Key Findings	ii
Conclusions and Recommendations.....	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Program Description and Evaluation Goals	1
2. EVALUATION OVERVIEW	3
2.1 Data Collection Methods	3
2.2 Final Sample Sizes and Response Rates	4
2.3 Study Limitations	5
3. KEY PROGRAM COMPONENTS.....	6
3.1 Program Outreach and Recruitment	7
3.2 Professional Placement.....	9
Professional Alignment or Match	9
Nature of Engagement during the Placement	10
Other Challenges at the Placement	12
3.3 Living Arrangements.....	13
Homestay Experience	13
Shared Living Space Experience	15
Challenges.....	16
3.4 Volunteer Activities.....	16
3.5 The Professional Fellows Congress in Washington D.C.....	17
3.6 The Post-Fellowship Project.....	18
3.7 U.S. Fellows and the Reciprocal Exchange.....	19
4. PFP OUTCOMES	22
4.1 Individual Foreign Fellows.....	22
Knowledge and Skills	22
Professional Growth	25
Changed Perspectives	27
4.2 Impact of the PFP on Foreign Workplaces and Communities	29
Overall Impact	30
Post-Fellowship Project Impact	30
Impacts without a Post-Fellowship Project	33
Increased Credibility.....	33
4.3 U.S. Communities	34
U.S. Host Organizations	34
U.S. Fellows.....	38
U.S. Homestay Families	40
Wider Communities.....	41

4.4 Networks and Collaboration.....	41
Connections with Foreign Fellows	42
Connections with U.S. Professionals	43
Connections with the U.S. Embassy	44
Community of U.S. Fellows	45
5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	45
5.1 Conclusions	46
PFP Support for U.S. Foreign Policy.....	46
Meeting Program Goals	46
PFP Bringing Change in Workplaces and Communities.....	47
5.2 Recommendations	48
APPENDIX A: SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS	A-1
APPENDIX B: FOREIGN FELLOW PERCEPTIONS BY REGION	B-1
APPENDIX C: YSEALI FOREIGN FELLOWS	C-1

Definitions

ECA Program Office	The office responsible for managing federal funding for and working with U.S. implementing partners of the Professional Fellows Program.
U.S. Implementing Partners	The grantee organizations that receive federal assistance awards to implement the Professional Fellows Program.
In-Country Partners or Offices	Partner organizations or local office branches in foreign countries working with the U.S. implementing partners to implement the Professional Fellows Program.
Foreign Fellows	Individuals from countries outside of the United States selected to travel to the United States for an individually tailored professional placement as part of the Professional Fellows Program.
U.S. Fellows	Individuals from the Foreign Fellows' U.S. host organizations selected to participate in a reciprocal exchange to support individual projects implemented by the Foreign Fellow in their home country.
Home Organization	The organization at which the Foreign Fellow worked in their home country at the time of their selection for the Professional Fellows Program.
U.S. Host Organization	The organization at which the Foreign Fellow is placed for their professional placement in the United States. A Foreign Fellow may have a supervisor and/or day-to-day contact. Sometimes the same person fills both roles, but other times these roles are filled by different people.
Supervisor	Individual at the U.S. host organization responsible for the logistics and authorizing/approving of the Foreign Fellow placement, but who does not necessarily work with the Foreign Fellow on a daily basis.
Day-to-Day Contact	Individual at the U.S. host organization who works closely with the Foreign Fellow on a daily basis.
U.S. Homestay Family	The individual or family that hosts the Foreign Fellow in their home during their stay in the United States.
Placement in U.S. Host Organization (Professional Placement)	The component of the Professional Fellows Program where the Foreign Fellow is matched with a U.S. host organization for a professional development experience tailored to the Foreign Fellow's needs and interests.
Individual Project (Post-Fellowship Project)	A project Foreign Fellows identify or expand upon during the professional placement to implement when they return home. Travel by U.S. Fellows is often undertaken to support individual projects.

Executive Summary

Evaluation Overview

The Professional Fellows Program (PFP) is a two-way, global exchange program for mid-level emerging leaders from select foreign countries and the United States. Each foreign PFP participant (Foreign Fellow) takes part in an intensive five- to six-week fellowship program consisting of an individually tailored professional development experience and a networking and leadership Congress in Washington, D.C., at the conclusion of their stay in the United States. Fellows are placed in nonprofit organizations, private sector businesses, and government offices across the United States.

In addition to participating in substantive activities at their U.S. host organizations during their professional placements, the Foreign Fellows take part in community service and volunteer opportunities, attend social/cultural activities, and are exposed to American life and culture through homestays and home hospitality visits. A select number of U.S. professionals (U.S. Fellows) subsequently participate in a reciprocal exchange designed to support projects implemented by the Foreign Fellows they hosted, with the goal of fostering continued long-term engagement.

The program seeks to fulfill five public diplomacy goals:

1. Promote mutual understanding between mid-level emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States;
2. Provide opportunities for foreign and U.S. emerging leaders to collaborate and share ideas, approaches, and strategies to pressing challenges;
3. Enhance leadership and professional skills;
4. Effect positive change in workplaces and communities; and
5. Build a global network of like-minded professionals.

Employing a mixed-method evaluation design, qualitative and quantitative data were collected in five phases using 10 instruments. Data were collected in English, with the exception of fieldwork data from Peru, where interviews were conducted in Spanish.

Data Collection Audience and Phase	Data	Final Sample Size/
Phase 1: Interviews with PFP U.S. implementing partners	05/19	10
Phase 2: Interviews with Foreign Fellows, their colleagues and supervisors, in-country partners and offices, embassy staff in Egypt ,	06/19 – 11/19	163
Phase 3: Web-based survey of Foreign Fellows	11/19 – 1/20	1,237, 42% RR
Phase 4: Interviews with U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, and U.S. homestay families	06/20 – 07/20	250, 21% RR
Phase 5: Web-based survey of U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, and U.S. homestay families	07/20 – 08/20	201, 30% RR

Key Findings

Foreign Fellow Outcomes

Knowledge and Skills

- ❖ The majority (86%) of surveyed Foreign Fellows said their professional placements increased their professional knowledge. In interviews, virtually all said they had acquired new information, knowledge, approaches, and strategies related to their particular fields. Half of them (50%) reported their professional interests changed “a lot.”
- ❖ Foreign Fellows most frequently reported enhanced networking skills (87%) and communication skills (87%) from their participation in the PFP. They also reported increased leadership skills (72%). More than two-thirds of those interviewed perceived themselves to more of a leader after the program, and 27% of them felt they were perceived by others as leaders.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows also highlighted increased self-confidence and courage (more than 50%), which allowed them to take on new responsibilities, start and grow new enterprises, and take on the challenge of empowering others.

Professional Growth

- ❖ When asked explicitly if the PFP helped their careers, 82% of Foreign Fellow survey respondents answered affirmatively. Almost half (45%) reported gaining more responsibilities in their current roles, 38% were recognized as subject matter experts, and 37% became leaders in their home organizations. Fewer Fellows reported they got a new job as a result of the PFP (18%), were promoted (15%), or stayed in the same position but received a salary increase (11%).
- ❖ In interviews, Foreign Fellows explained how the program helped them to start new businesses or significantly transform/expand their existing business models.

Changed Perceptions and Perspectives

- ❖ Foreign Fellows changed their perceptions most positively with respect to American culture and people, with slightly fewer reporting their views changing positively with respect to the U.S. political system and religious diversity; 66% reported their perceptions of American culture and people changed “very positively” compared to 38% who said their perspectives changed “very positively” toward the U.S. political system. After people and culture, Foreign Fellows reported the most positive changes in their perceptions of the United States were towards freedom of speech (59%), and ethnic and racial diversity (49%).
- ❖ Daily interactions changed Foreign Fellows’ perceptions about American work culture. Fellows mentioned openness, gender equality, autonomy, and non-hierarchical teamwork. Foreign Fellows were also impressed by the religious tolerance in the United States, Lesbian Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) acceptance, and inclusion of people with disabilities.
- ❖ The opportunity to live and work with Americans gave the Foreign Fellows a window into the “real” United States. It helped them to break down stereotypes about Americans and the United States. However, Fellows were not expecting to see the level of homelessness, poverty, inequality, segregation, and safety issues they did.

- ❖ Foreign Fellows said in interviews they shared everything they learned with their colleagues and friends when they returned home (90%). They shared their new knowledge and approaches, new strategies, methods, and skill sets, as well as new and changed perceptions of the United States. All home organization supervisors and colleagues interviewed had virtually the same recollections about what the Foreign Fellows shared on their return home.

Impact on Foreign Workplaces and Communities

- ❖ Foreign Fellows perceived the biggest overall impact resulting from their PFP exchange to their professional fields (71% of them reported that the PFP had “a lot” of impact). The perceived impact in their workplaces and communities was less, but still significant (59% and 56%, respectively, reported “a lot” of impact). More than 80% of the Foreign Fellows with a post-fellowship project reported the projects had “a lot” of impact in their workplaces and professional fields, while almost three-quarters (74%) reported a lot of impact in their communities.
- ❖ Post-fellowship projects varied considerably with respect to how closely projects were linked to the Foreign Fellows’ work responsibilities and workplaces. Post-fellowship projects also varied hugely in scope: some projects consisted of targeted circumscribed activities for particular audiences, while others were focused more on larger-scale social change.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows, their home organization colleagues, and the U.S. host organization supervisors all recognized having a U.S. professional associated with Foreign Fellows’ post-fellowship projects enhanced their credibility. Having U.S. experts interact and engage with the Foreign Fellows’ stakeholders gave the Foreign Fellows and their post-fellowship projects even more influence and authority.

Impact on U.S. Communities

- ❖ U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts enumerated the benefits accruing to their organizations from hosting Foreign Fellows. Host contacts were positive about the international and intercultural benefits (85% said it benefitted them to “a great extent”), followed by the interpersonal benefits (83%) and the professional, technical benefits (34%). In the interviews, however, they were much more effusive about the technical contributions of the Foreign Fellows. Data from the survey reveal, despite any challenges, the vast majority would host Foreign Fellows again (95%) and would recommend others to do so (99%).
- ❖ Further, hosting a Foreign Fellow expanded the worldview of individual staff members and the organization, allowed for self-reflection about how they do their own work, and infused professional energy, ideas, and comparative perspectives into the workplace.
- ❖ U.S. Fellows who travelled on the reciprocal exchange had a “double benefit” from the PFP. U.S. Fellows were able to share and learn from the Foreign Fellows while they were in the United States and also when they were on the reciprocal exchange. U.S. Fellows gained cultural perspectives (97%), increased networks (86%), new information (83%), potential partners (53%), and learned best practices (53%).
- ❖ U.S. homestay families also reported improving their understanding of other cultures (66% to a “great extent”) from hosting Foreign Fellows. The connections and friendships forged during the homestay were manifested in visits by the homestay family survey

respondents and their families: more than a quarter (27%) had visited their Foreign Fellow(s), 13% had taken their whole family on the visit, and 13% had sent a different family member. Almost one-fifth (18%) of the homestay hosts reported their Foreign Fellow had come back to visit them after the PFP.

Networks and Collaboration

- ❖ Virtually all Foreign Fellows (97%) said they were still in contact with people they met during the PFP.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows were more likely to collaborate and share approaches and strategies with other Foreign Fellows from their own countries (79%), followed by Foreign Fellows from other countries (50%). Foreign Fellows are least likely to share with their U.S. counterparts (18%). However, interviews suggest sharing most frequently means a one-way flow of information to benefit the Foreign Fellows, with content evolving over time to be more personal than professional in nature.
- ❖ Almost three-quarters (73%) of the Foreign Fellows are in contact with their U.S. embassies, but only a-third (34%) are “sharing” with them. Foreign Fellows expressed a desire for more opportunities to be professionally engaged and interact with U.S. embassies in their home countries.
- ❖ U.S. Fellows do not consider themselves Department of State alumni and are not in contact with each other (or the Department of State).

Conclusions and Recommendations

The data collected during this evaluation demonstrate the PFP is meeting its intended goals, and supports larger U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives.

- ❖ Foreign policy objectives are met through the selection of program themes, the regional implementation model, housing and placement models, and alumni programming.
- ❖ The PFP enables Foreign Fellows to acquire new skills, gather information, broaden perspectives and create professional networks. Fellows return to their countries with self-confidence as leaders, and make changes in their home organizations and communities.
- ❖ The impacts of the program are felt in the U.S. communities as well, when the Foreign Fellows engage with U.S. organizations, families, and communities, and when the U.S. Fellows bring what they learn on their reciprocal exchange back to their communities. The biggest benefit for U.S. communities is an expanded professional and cultural worldview.
- ❖ If there is any area of the PFP where the program can improve, it is around the goal of creating a global network of like-minded professionals who continue to share and collaborate well after the program has ended. While Foreign Fellows are in close contact with each other in their home countries and across their regions, they are less professionally connected with their U.S. counterparts. Moreover, most collaboration and sharing of ideas across the network evolves over time from professional to mostly personal and social.

Based on the survey data, evaluation respondent comments, and observations from fieldwork in seven countries, the Evaluation Team offers the following recommendations for improving the program:

- ❖ **Match Foreign Fellows to professional placements earlier and provide advance notice.** The best strategy to ensure Fellows are fully able to benefit from their PFP fellowship is to provide the information to Foreign Fellows and to U.S. host organization supervisors as early as possible. Earlier communication about placements will provide Foreign Fellows sufficient time to do research about the organization, while more information about the Foreign Fellow (their resume and professional goals) will help the U.S. host organization to better plan and accommodate Foreign Fellows' professional needs.
- ❖ **Provide clearer guidance to the U.S. host organizations.** Host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts will benefit from clearer guidance about: program goals, roles and responsibilities, purpose and scope of the action plan/post-fellowship project, host role in the follow-up project, recruitment and selection processes for U.S. Fellows. Additionally, U.S. host organizations should be encouraged to work with U.S. implementing partners or their local coordinators to avoid conflicts with planned social and cultural activities for the Foreign Fellows.
- ❖ **Give more advance notice about homestay families and encourage communication.** Earlier communication will help set expectations prior to the program, which is especially important given the intensity and short timeframe of the exchange.
- ❖ **Revisit the balance between training and placement.** Some Foreign Fellows whose program entailed a week-long orientation and weekend group training felt there should be a better balance between the time spent in program-related training and the time at their professional placement. These Fellows also felt an overemphasis on training detracted from their ability to fully participate in cultural and social activities in their host communities.
- ❖ **Provide accommodations in as close proximity to the workplace as possible.** Access to public transportation and long commute times were big concerns for many Foreign Fellows, especially those outside of major metropolitan areas. They perceived the transportation challenge as impeding their ability to get the most out of their time during the fellowship, as engaging in after-work activities with colleagues, volunteering, or engaging in cultural activities was that much more difficult.
- ❖ **Reconsider the organization of the PFP Congress.** While Foreign Fellows were extremely positive about the Congress, some felt smaller, more thematically focused or regionally focused sessions would enhance its utility. A narrowed focus will allow Foreign Fellows to better develop their networks in their respective fields and in their regions, and will provide more opportunities for substantive collaboration.
- ❖ **Strengthen the relationship between U.S. embassies and Foreign Fellows.** Foreign Fellows expressed an interest to be more actively engaged by U.S. embassies. While they want to be invited to networking and social events, they also want to contribute professionally to meaningful and concrete projects.
- ❖ **Suggest, where feasible, hosting multiple Foreign Fellows at a time.** Both host organization supervisors and homestay families suggested it is easier for them and more productive for the Foreign Fellows when there are shared placements. Being together gives the Foreign Fellow a natural partner with whom to do things and to process the experience. It also serves the larger purpose of building friendships among Foreign Fellows and breaking down stereotypes, particularly when the Foreign Fellows are from different countries.

- ❖ **Provide additional support for long-term collaboration between Foreign Fellows and U.S. professionals.** Possible means of doing so include adopting the one-to-one project model for the reciprocal exchange to work on a common project; incorporating virtual follow-up sessions; and adding a post-program mentoring component.
- ❖ **Define and design the reciprocal exchange.** Cement relationships by funding more reciprocal exchanges related to specific projects implemented by Foreign Fellows. Make it clear to U.S. Fellows that the reciprocal exchange is not a reward for hosting, but a means of fostering long-term professional collaborations and relationships. Standardize the application for the reciprocal exchange and clarify the selection criteria for U.S. Fellows across participating U.S. implementing partners.
- ❖ **Utilize U.S. Fellows during their exchange to support U.S. embassy needs.** U.S. Fellows are a valuable resource for U.S. embassies. They are subject matter experts in their respective fields and can easily be leveraged to support U.S. embassy needs and objectives. For example, one U.S. Fellow was asked to provide training for the U.S. embassy staff in Myanmar on LGBTQ inclusivity during her exchange. This additional engagement will also strengthen the connection between U.S. Fellows and the U.S. Department of State.
- ❖ **Continue to connect Foreign Fellows regionally.** Continue investments in regional alumni activities, such as the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) conference and the annual summit in the Balkans.
- ❖ **Develop a strategy for staying connected with U.S. Fellows.** The U.S. Fellows can be valuable resources for the program and for each other.
- ❖ **Improve record keeping.** The Foreign Fellows and U.S. Fellows are vital resources for the program office, the U.S. embassies, and the U.S. implementing partners. There is no comprehensive historical database of Foreign Fellows, U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organizations or organizational contacts. An additional recommendation is to request personal contact information for the U.S. host organization supervisors and U.S. Fellows, so these individuals are not “lost” if they change their place of employment.

1. Introduction

“The program had an impact ... [not] only to me, but to my family, friends, and the people with whom I work. If it had not been for the program I would never have known the situation of the communities, their life conditions, how they manage their waste. It has been beautiful. Thanks to the program I have been able to go there [the United States] and know their reality. I had the chance to look a little beyond the reality we live here ...”

Male Foreign Fellow, Peru

1.1 Program Description and Evaluation Goals

The Professional Fellows Program (PFP) is a two-way, global exchange program for mid-level emerging leaders from select foreign countries and the United States. Each foreign PFP participant (Foreign Fellow) takes part in an intensive five- to six-week fellowship program. The program consists of an individually tailored professional development experience, followed by a networking and leadership Congress. Fellows are placed in nonprofit organizations, private sector businesses, and government offices across the United States based on their professional interests and the capacities of the host organizations. During their placement, the Foreign Fellows participate in substantive activities at a host organization, volunteer, attend social/cultural activities, and are exposed to American life and culture through homestays and home hospitality visits. At the conclusion of their program, Fellows participate in a three-day Congress in Washington, D.C., where they have the opportunity to network with Fellows from all over the world and share their experiences and plans. A select number of U.S. professionals (U.S. Fellows) are subsequently chosen to participate in a reciprocal exchange designed to support projects implemented by the Foreign Fellow they hosted, with the goal of fostering continued long-term engagement.

The program seeks to fulfill five public diplomacy goals:

1. Promote mutual understanding between mid-level emerging leaders from foreign countries and the United States;
2. Provide opportunities for foreign and U.S. emerging leaders to collaborate and share ideas, approaches, and strategies to pressing challenges;
3. Enhance leadership and professional skills;
4. Effect positive change in workplaces and communities; and
5. Build a global network of like-minded professionals.

The PFP evolved from the Legislative Fellows Program (LFP), which started in FY 2009, and was focused on the thematic areas of rule of law and legislative affairs in select countries. LFP officially transitioned into PFP in FY 2012 when the U.S. Department of State (DoS) Bureau for Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) expanded its focus to a global model focused on a variety of thematic areas. Since then, ECA has awarded grants to numerous U.S. public and nonprofit organizations to implement the PFP across six geographic regions. These U.S. implementing partners work closely with their local in-country offices or with local in-country partners to assist with advertising, recruitment, reciprocal exchange, alumni programming, and follow-up.¹ Since its inception, the PFP has focused on a variety of program themes in order to

¹ For the remainder of the report, the term “local in-country partners” will be used collectively to refer to both the in-country offices of the implementing partners and the in-country partners.

support evolving foreign policy objectives.² With input from regional public diplomacy offices and Public Affairs Section (PAS) staff at participating U.S. embassies, the ECA Program Office identifies specific themes (or substantive issues) for each three-year program cycle. Prior to FY 2012, specific themes often varied by funding year. Some themes have been single-year themes, while others have spanned multiple years and included a variety of sub-themes. The themes include economic empowerment, legislative process and governance, tolerance and conflict resolution, environmental sustainability, NGO development, rule of law/administration of justice, and media.

The focus of the evaluation is the FY 2012 – FY 2017 cohort of PFP Foreign Fellows and their associated U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization contacts, and homestay families. Between FY 2012 and FY 2017, more than 3,000 Foreign Fellows from 94 countries participated in the program.³ Fellows funded in a particular fiscal year travel in the following calendar year with one cohort in the spring and one cohort in the fall. For instance, Foreign Fellows funded in FY 2012 traveled in calendar year 2013. The distribution of the Foreign Fellows by travel year is presented in **Table 1** below.

Table 1. Distribution of Foreign Fellows by Travel Year

Region	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Missing Region	0	1	2	1	0	0	233
Africa	72	47	34	0	0	23	109
East Asia and Pacific	65	87	192	232	195	228	985
Europe	96	86	130	114	119	133	676
Near East	79	87	77	33	32	34	302
South and Central Asia	124	78	72	84	74	83	495
Western Hemisphere	102	57	74	43	27	0	219
Total	538	443	581	507	447	501	3,017

Note: Fellows funded in a given fiscal year travel in the following calendar year.

Additionally, 676 U.S. professionals – predominantly host organization supervisors – participated as U.S. Fellows in outbound exchanges. For the period of programs covered by this evaluation, the ratio of U.S. Fellows to Foreign Fellows is 22%.⁴

In October 2017, GDIT was awarded a contract by ECA’s Evaluation Division to conduct an evaluation of the PFP. The project was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the PFP’s impact on advancing DoS strategic policy priorities?
2. To what degree is the program meeting its stated goals?
3. How have PFP alumni used the skills and knowledge learned during their exchange experience to bring change to their workplaces, professional fields, and communities?

² Since FY 2012, more than 25 U.S. organizations have implemented the PFP. U.S. implementing partners have been selected based on regional and substantive expertise. Additionally, over time, the PFP Program Office has worked to bring consistency to program components and Foreign Fellow exposure/experiences across U.S. implementing partners.

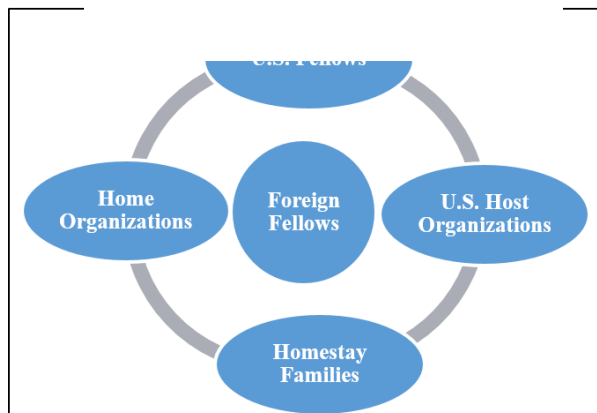
³ ECA did not provide a single source list of Foreign Fellows. The numbers here represent a constructed universe; names from the alumni archive, lists from surveys conducted by ECA between 2013-2015, and updated lists provided by the U.S. implementing partners with active grants as of May 2019 were combined and then de-duplicated.

⁴ Again, ECA did not provide a comprehensive list of U.S. Fellows. GDIT developed a single list by combining names from the alumni archive and from the updated participant lists, which provided information about the host organization supervisors and U.S. Fellows associated with each Foreign Fellow. GDIT constructed a ratio of the count of U.S. Fellows to Foreign Fellows based on these two constructed lists.

2. Evaluation Overview

The evaluation employed a mixed-methods design, incorporating qualitative and quantitative data collection from both foreign and U.S. program alumni and other domestic and international stakeholders. In total, 10 data collection instruments were developed.⁵

A global census approach was used for the quantitative data collection; all Foreign Fellows and their U.S. counterparts from these cohorts were included. For the qualitative data collection, a sampling approach was applied. The qualitative data collection model, as shown in **Figure 1**, was Foreign Fellow-centric: first, the sample of Foreign Fellows for each fieldwork country was selected. Then, individuals were selected into the sample for the next phase based on their affiliation with Foreign Fellows interviewed in the first phase of data collection. The advantage of including individuals in these Foreign Fellows’ “constellation of contacts” is that it allows for a robust, holistic, and matched view of program impacts.



2.1 Data Collection Methods

Data for the evaluation were collected in five stages:

- ❖ **Stage 1: Qualitative data collection from PFP U.S. implementing partners.** At the PFP Congress in May 2019, the GDIT Evaluation Team met with current U.S. implementing partners in attendance at the meeting. The purpose was to gather background information about program implementation and understand the differences in organizational program models, strategies, challenges, as well as solicit recommendations for the program.
- ❖ **Stage 2: Qualitative data collection in seven foreign countries.** Between June 2019 and November 2019, the GDIT Evaluation Team conducted in-country fieldwork in seven countries: **Egypt, Georgia, India, Indonesia, Peru, Slovenia, and Thailand.**⁶ During these visits, the GDIT Evaluation Team carried out in-depth in-person interviews with PFP alumni, their colleagues and supervisors, representatives from in-country partners and offices, and stakeholders at U.S. embassies and consulates, including alumni coordinators and other PAS staff. Interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of Peru, where some were conducted in Spanish by the GDIT Evaluation Team. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the respondents to allow for the generation of verbatim transcripts.

⁵ Data collection instruments are available upon request from ecaevaluation@state.gov.

⁶ Fieldwork countries were selected based on the number of Foreign Fellows, the thematic distribution, and to ensure regional representation across five of the six U.S. DoS regions. Fieldwork dates in 2019 were as follows: Thailand (June 19-30), Indonesia (June 30-July 9), Peru (August 20-28), Georgia (September 7-14), Egypt (September 14-20), India (October 12-20), and Slovenia (November 16-23).

- ❖ **Stage 3: Quantitative data collection from Foreign Fellows globally.** The GDIT Evaluation Team fielded a web-based survey of Foreign Fellows between mid-November 2019 and mid-January 2020.⁷ To launch the survey, the GDIT Evaluation Team sent the link to Foreign Fellows for whom an email address was available.⁸ During the survey period, the GDIT Evaluation Team sent periodic reminders.⁹ The ECA Program Office also asked the U.S. implementing partners to encourage their respective Foreign Fellows to participate in the survey.
- ❖ **Stage 4: Qualitative data collection from U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors/contacts, and U.S. homestay families.** The GDIT Evaluation Team conducted telephone interviews with U.S. program stakeholders between June 29 and July 27, 2020.¹⁰ Originally planned as in-person site visits, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a change in design. All domestic qualitative data collection was conducted via telephone instead. The GDIT Evaluation Team reached out individually to the U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, and U.S. homestay families (if applicable) associated with a sample of the Foreign Fellows interviewed during the fieldwork site visits. All interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the respondents. All interviews were recorded with the permission of the respondents.
- ❖ **Stage 5: Quantitative data collection from U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors/contacts, and U.S. homestay families.** The GDIT Evaluation Team launched two different web-based surveys on July 7, 2020. The first was distributed to U.S. Fellows and U.S. host organization contacts.¹¹ The second was distributed to homestay families.¹² Periodic reminders were sent to both groups, both by GDIT and, as a last push to improve response rates, by the U.S. implementing partners.¹³ Both surveys closed on August 3, 2020.

2.2 Final Sample Sizes and Response Rates

Table 2 provides the distribution of interviews conducted during the fieldwork visits by country and by respondent type. In total, 163 individuals participated in in-depth interviews. The distribution of Foreign Fellows who participated in the interviews by cohort, gender, and theme is provided in **Appendix A**. Most significantly, of 101 interviewed Foreign Fellows, 62 (approximately two-thirds) were women.

⁷ The exact survey window was November 19, 2019 - January 10, 2020.

⁸ The GDIT Evaluation Team constructed the email list by de-duplicating administrative data provided by the ECA Program Office. These data included records from the DoS alumni archive, survey lists of Fellows from 2013-2015, and updated contact information provided by current and some former U.S. implementing partners.

⁹ The GDIT Evaluation Team launched the Foreign Fellows survey on November 19, 2019. GDIT sent reminders on December 6 and December 16, 2019; U.S. implementing partners sent a final reminder on January 2, 2020. The survey closed on January 10, 2020.

¹⁰ The seven-month gap between the international and domestic data collection efforts reflects the time required to secure Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance for the domestic data collection instruments. The final OMB clearance package was submitted in November and approval was received June 22, 2020.

¹¹ GDIT utilized the constructed list for distributing the survey (see also Footnote 2). Updated email contracts were available from the U.S. implementing partner-provided lists.

¹² American Councils for International Education distributed the survey link to the U.S. homestay families associated with their Foreign Fellows.

¹³ The GDIT Evaluation Team launched the U.S. Fellow, U.S. host organization supervisor/day-to-day contact survey and the U.S. homestay family survey on July 7, 2020. The GDIT Evaluation Team sent a reminder on July 16, and the U.S. implementing partners sent a final reminder on July 24.

Table 2. Distribution of Fieldwork Sample by Country and Respondent Type (Interviews)

Country	Foreign	Home Organization	In-Country	PAS Staff	Total
Thailand	14	5	2	2	23
Indonesia	11	5	1	8	25
Peru	13	4	1	2	20
Georgia	19	2	2	2	25
Egypt	15	2	1	4	22
India	15	7	1	2	25
Slovenia	14	5	1	3	23
Total	101	30	9	23	163

Forty-seven individuals were interviewed in the United States as part of the domestic qualitative “constellation” approach, of which 32 individuals were either U.S. host organization supervisors or day-to-day contacts. Of the 32 organizational contacts, 15 participated as U.S. Fellows in the reciprocal exchange. Fifteen of the 47 individuals interviewed were homestay families.¹⁴

The three quantitative survey efforts resulted in more than 1,700 responses. Response rates ranged from 21% for the U.S. Fellows and host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts with current email addresses to 42% for the Foreign Fellows.¹⁵

- ❖ **Foreign Fellows.** The survey of Foreign Fellows yielded a final sample size of 1,237. This represents a response rate of 42% for the 2,937 Fellows with a current email address.
- ❖ **U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organizations supervisors, and day-to-day contacts.** In total, 250 U.S. counterparts responded to the survey from a list of 1,195 contacts with an associated email and to whom the survey was successfully delivered. This represents a response rate of 21%.
- ❖ **U.S. homestay families.** Of the 688 homestay families with associated email addresses and to whom the survey was successfully delivered, 201 homestay families completed the survey. This represents a response rate of 30%.

Demographic characteristics for all evaluation participants are presented in **Appendix A**, by data collection effort.

2.3 Study Limitations

As for any program evaluation, time and cost constraints influenced the final design and data collection strategy. These limitations should be noted, but the constraints on sample size do not seriously affect the generalizability of the findings to the larger PFP community.

1. Complete contact information for the multitude of stakeholders was difficult to obtain. The list of Foreign Fellows had to be generated from a number of different sources, therefore there is a possibility some Foreign Fellows were not included. Since FY 2012,

¹⁴ Per design, the domestic constellation interviews were conducted with the contacts for approximately one-third of the Fellows interviewed during the fieldwork. The number of homestay hosts is significantly less because only approximately 50% of the Foreign Fellows stayed with American families during their exchange.

¹⁵ Online survey responses typically range from 5% to 25%. The 42% response rate among Foreign Fellows is exceptional, and clearly demonstrates a high level of investment on the part of the Fellows in their PFP experience.

more than 25 organizations have implemented the program. Some of these organizations no longer had active PFP grants at the time the evaluation began and it was not feasible to reach out to them to update the Foreign Fellow contact information or to obtain domestic stakeholder contact information. Only U.S. implementing partners which operated the program between FY 2012 – FY 2017 and had active grants in FY 2018, when the evaluation was conducted, were able to provide updated information for U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, and U.S. homestay families.¹⁶

2. The original plan was to conduct in-person site visits across the U.S. to see firsthand the impact of the program activities (or PFP) in U.S. communities. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the GDIT Evaluation Team was unable to travel, and these interviews were conducted remotely.
3. As with all retrospective data collection, respondents from the earlier cohorts may be less likely to recall program details (and negative facts) than those who participated more recently.
4. By design, the international fieldwork occurred first. Feedback from the international fieldwork was subsequently incorporated into the domestic data collection instruments before they were finalized for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) clearance. For selected questions, it is difficult to compare exact responses from the various stakeholders, since the questions on the international and domestic data collection instruments were not perfectly aligned. However, the domestic data collection instruments were improved by the knowledge gained from the international data collection in the first phases of the evaluation.

Organization of the Report

The report begins with a discussion of each of the program components. It then describes the outcomes and impacts of the program from the perspectives of the Foreign Fellows, work colleagues in their home countries, the U.S. Fellows who travelled to their communities, their U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, and where applicable, their U.S. homestay families. In Section 5: Conclusions and Recommendations, the report ties these findings back to the research questions and provides recommendations, some based on feedback directly from stakeholders who participated in the evaluation, and others derived from the observations of the GDIT Evaluation Team.

3. Key Program Components

Since its inception, numerous U.S. public and nonprofit organizations have been responsible for implementing the PFP. While the goals and expectations of the program are the same, these organizations have employed slightly different implementation models. The variation touches on almost every aspect of program implementation: the use of field offices or in-country partners for recruitment, the organization and timing of orientation and leadership training, the length of time of the professional placement at the U.S. host organization, living arrangements and volunteering, the selection of the U.S. Fellows, and the reciprocal exchange model. In this section, we discuss each of these components in turn.

¹⁶ Updated contract information was provided by 11 U.S. implementing partners.

In reflecting on the ties between program model, variation, and exchange experience, it is important to highlight that despite these variations, the Foreign Fellows see themselves as belonging to a global community of like-minded professionals eager to engage in change. The response rate of 42% for the Foreign Fellows survey is by itself a strong testament to how important the program still is to them. Almost 80% of those who responded to the survey are still collaborating and sharing ideas with Foreign Fellows from their home countries, and 50% are doing the same with Foreign Fellows from other countries they met during the program.

“[Because of the PFP] I think the world we have is bigger ... We are not only in Thailand, we are in ASEAN, and also in the U.S ...”
Female Foreign Fellow, Thailand

3.1 Program Outreach and Recruitment

Foreign Fellows learned about the program from a variety of sources. Interviews with alumni in the field suggest prospective Foreign Fellows were most likely to have heard about the program from personal contacts – PFP alumni (30%), friends (31%), or colleagues (13%). In Peru, a Fellow even mentioned she learned about the opportunity from the mother of an employee of the local in-country partner. In comparison, survey respondents were most likely to cite social media (30%), colleagues and friends (28%), the U.S. embassy (24%), in-country PFP partners or offices (17%), or the U.S. implementing partner (8%) as the source.

Field interviews with Foreign Fellows revealed they were motivated to apply to the program by a multitude of factors, the most prominent being the desire for professional development:

- ❖ Professional growth (70%)
- ❖ Cultural exchange (10%)
- ❖ Exposure to U.S. work and social life (7%)
- ❖ Establishing ties with American professionals (2%)
- ❖ Enhancing English skills (2%).

“I’m ... a learner, I want to try new things and [am] trying to achieve things all the time, and I thought this could be a good opportunity for me to broaden my world.”
Female Foreign Fellow, Thailand

The outreach and recruitment efforts by the U.S. implementing partners and their local in-country partners and offices, and the level of engagement by the embassies in the process, differs significantly by country. From the interviews with representatives of the local in-country partners and offices and with PAS staff, it was evident there was variation by country in the level of awareness of the program among the target audience of mid-level professionals 25-40 years old and the prestige and competitiveness associated with it. This, in turn, has an impact on the level of effort required to advertise the program.

Based on conversations during the fieldwork, it appears that several factors interact to influence the success of outreach and recruitment efforts:

- ❖ **Experience of the U.S. implementing partner.** Among the seven fieldwork countries, there was considerable variation in the experience of the U.S. implementing partners in working with the DoS and in running exchange programs. More experienced implementing partners have a better understanding of DoS requirements and expectations, have stronger networks in the region, and are better positioned to reach out to and recruit diverse cohorts of Foreign Fellows.

- ❖ **Multiple implementing partners per region.** In the East Asia and Pacific (EAP) and South and Central Asia (SCA) regions, the large number of U.S. implementing partners and local in-country partners and offices responsible for program implementation contributes to inconsistencies in program messaging, outreach, and recruitment. It also increases the burden on the U.S. embassy to manage the various efforts. For example, U.S. embassy staff in Thailand and Indonesia noted how local in-country partners and offices conducted interviews using different methods; some were in person, others were online. In India, the PFP was essentially two separate programs run independently by two U.S. implementing partners, covering different regions, different thematic areas, different numbers of cohorts per year, and with differing in-country presence (one had a local partner, the other one did not).
- ❖ **Presence, quality/experience, and geographic location of local in-country partners.** Not all U.S. implementing partners had an on-the-ground presence in the countries where they were working. While some had in-country field offices (e.g., American Councils for International Education in Georgia) or a local in-country partner to assist with recruitment (e.g., Legacy International in Egypt, World Chicago in Slovenia), others did not have any local presence (World Learning in India).
- ❖ **Structure of PFP responsibilities across the U.S. mission.** When the U.S. mission is dispersed across the country, and the responsibilities for overseeing the PFP are distributed between the embassy and consulate(s), there may be challenges in coordinating across locations and maintaining consistency in outreach, recruitment, selection, and alumni engagement. In India, for example, the overall program was managed by the embassy in New Delhi, but the consulate in Mumbai also had distinct responsibilities, especially around alumni activities. Significantly, the alumni lists were maintained separately, so there was no sense of a unified PFP alumni community. When alumni moved from one region to another, they were not automatically included in activities in their new location.
- ❖ **Level of U.S. embassy engagement.** The level of engagement by U.S. missions is country dependent. While all embassies are engaged with the PFP, some are more engaged than others in program activities such as recruitment, the pre-departure orientation, and a post-program debrief. Engagement is a function of the time embassies have to devote to the program (size of the embassies' portfolios and competing responsibilities), the existence and quality of the local partner, and emerging political issues.
- ❖ **PFP awareness and prestige.** As noted above, the ability of the U.S. implementing partners and their in-country partners and offices to reach the target audience is a function of the experience of the implementing partners. However, it is also related to program longevity in the country, program awareness, its perceived prestige, and even the size of the country. All these factors influence the ability to identify the audience and penetrate the market. In a country such as Georgia, the program is well known and there is an overwhelming number of applicants for the number of slots available in each program cycle. In turn, because the program is competitive, the widespread knowledge of the program, reputation, and perceived value of the PFP experience reduces the burden on local in-country partners and PAS staff to advertise the program.
- ❖ **Diversity and access.** ECA's Program Office promotes diversity in program outreach and implementation and works to ensure Foreign Fellows do not all come from capital

cities. In some countries, this can be a challenge to implement. For example, in Thailand and Indonesia, the local in-country partners struggle to identify diverse qualified candidates with sufficient English language skills working in the specific thematic areas, especially outside of the capital cities. In addition to English language skills, regional variations in internet access/connectivity pose a challenge to recruiting diverse participants.

3.2 Professional Placement

The centerpiece of the PFP is the professional placement. The U.S. implementing partners match the Foreign Fellows to U.S. host organizations for professional development experiences tailored to the Fellows' needs and interests, as articulated in their applications.

According to the Foreign Fellows survey, more than half of Fellows said they were placed in either NGOs (34%) or in public sector institutions (25%). Another 12% said they were placed with private sector organizations and 13% said they were placed in academic institutions. This organizational distribution closely matches the organizational distribution as reported by host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts on their survey.

Table 3. U.S. Host Organization Demographics

Table 3 presents the organizational demographics reported by the U.S. host organization survey respondents. More than one-third of the U.S. host supervisors were associated with NGOs, 17% worked in local or municipal government, and 13% represented for-profit organizations in the private sector. More than 50% worked in businesses with fewer than 100 employees, the majority were associated with “mature” organizations (10 or more years), and 65% were based in large cities, with another quarter in small cities and towns.

Professional Alignment or Match

The vast majority (93%) of Foreign Fellows surveyed responded that their placement aligned with their professional goals. The qualitative data provides a more nuanced view. Because the question was open-ended, Foreign Fellows who were interviewed were able to be more reflective about the match with their host organizations: approximately half (47%) described their professional matches as perfectly aligned, 30% described their matches as good, 19% experienced partial matches, while very few (3%) said they were placed poorly. Interviews with their corresponding organizational hosts reflect the same pattern. Host supervisors and day-to-day contacts also recognized some Foreign Fellows were better matched with their organizations than others. Of the contacts at the U.S. host organizations who responded to the survey, 8% identified mismatched placement/interests as being a challenge, as was the lack of organizational preparation for hosting (6%). It is unclear if

Organization Type (N=249)		
NGO	35%	88
Local/Municipal Govt.	17%	42
Private Sector	13%	33
Academic Institutions	11%	28
State Govt.	10%	24
Federal Govt.	4%	9
Other	10%	25
Size (# employees) (N=245)		
1	3%	8
2-9	18%	45
10-24	14%	34
25-99	17%	42
100-499	18%	45
500-999	5%	13
1,000-4,999	11%	26
5,000+	13%	32
Maturity in Years (N = 170)		
0<5	4%	7
5<10	9%	16
10<25	27%	46
25+	59%	101
Location/Concentration of Population (N = 245)		
A large city	65%	158
A suburb near a large city	11%	26
A small city or town	24%	58
Rural area	1%	3

the perceived deficiency in organizational preparation is due to the U.S. host organization itself or a gap in training and orientation provided by the U.S. implementing partner. However, both Foreign Fellows and organizational supervisors and day-to-day contacts were clear that even theoretically imperfect matches still yielded significant benefits for Foreign Fellows.

For example, several host supervisors who responded to the survey mentioned that among the multiple Foreign Fellows they had hosted, a few were definite “mismatches”, but they still understood the Foreign Fellows were inherently “excellent” and qualified participants and nonetheless benefitted from their PFP experience.

As an example, one Foreign Fellow from Peru actually asked to change her placement within the first few days. At the encouragement of the U.S. implementing partner, she opened her mind to the possibilities and decided to remain at the organization. What she learned from the experience was she did not know what she needed to learn the most, and by persevering, she acquired skills and an idea about technology allowing her to subsequently transform the way her organization does work at home. From what appeared to be a non-perfect match came great things because the Foreign Fellow was willing to discover the opportunities, rather than follow a prescribed course.

Nature of Engagement during the Placement

Because the PFP is designed to deliver an individually tailored professional development experience for the Foreign Fellows, it is not unsurprising Foreign Fellows engaged with and were engaged by their supervisors and colleagues in diverse ways. As seen in **Table 4**, on a day-to-day basis, Foreign Fellows:

Table 4. Daily Activities of Foreign Fellows

Daily Activity	Percentage
Observed/shadowed a colleague in their daily activities	66%
Attended presentations	63%
Worked with colleague(s) on particular project/area of interest	62%
Gave presentations	44%
Worked without supervision on established projects	29%

N = 1,194

When asked in interviews about the nature of their work at the host organizations, approximately one-third of the Foreign Fellows stated they were given a concrete job assignment to accomplish, whereas the majority “shadowed” their hosts, observing and participating in the hosts’ work activities. The survey of the Foreign Fellows corroborates this finding: 29% worked without supervision on established projects and 66% shadowed a colleague in their daily activities.

Example of a concrete job assignment

A Fellow from Slovenia was placed at a business incubator at a university in Chicago which hosted a global consortium of entrepreneurship conference with representatives from 20 countries. The conference perfectly aligned with his interests and he supported them with all aspects of the conference as a fully integrated team member with deadlines and responsibilities.

Example of shadowing

A Fellow from Georgia was assigned to the Sheriff’s Office in Salem, Oregon. According to her supervisor, she was extremely active during the fellowship. She was exposed to all levels of law enforcement for a true 360-degree experience – community policing, local police, state police, and at the federal level (FBI). She even participated in overnight patrols.

The perceptions of the daily role differed slightly between the Foreign Fellows and their host organization supervisors. Foreign Fellows perceived themselves more in a shadowing role, whereas their supervisors were more likely to say they played a combination of roles.

Whether or not Foreign Fellows had a specific assignment or whether they shadowed is not correlated with the value of the experience or the perceived success of the fellowship. Rather, as reported by Fellows, the attitude of the Foreign Fellows – their willingness to engage and their proactive approach – is what makes the difference. The inherent structure of the program – the tailored placement, flexibility, and leadership focus – allows for and supports the Foreign Fellows’ proactive approach. As one Fellow from Georgia explained in response to her colleagues not being happy with their placements:

“It all depends on you. If you know what you want to get from your workplace, you can get it.”
Female Foreign Fellow, Georgia

Another Fellow from Indonesia whose focus was on marine biology was placed in the local government of a small land-locked city. Although the host organization was not the best match – the organization’s focus was on fresh-water waste management – it was ultimately helpful and demanded creativity from him. The challenge was reciprocal: the host supervisor also said the experience made her think outside the box.

More than half of the Foreign Fellows interviewed (57%) were proactive in maximizing their time at their placement organizations. These “active” participants asked their supervisors and day-to-day contacts to connect them and facilitate introductions to a wider network outside of their host organizations. In some cases, the Foreign Fellows took it upon themselves to connect in the wider community. One Fellow from India, for example, actively pursued connections with the Indian diaspora in Texas; a Fellow from Thailand volunteered with Lesbian Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth and educators in schools and shared her story with them; and a Slovenian tech entrepreneur took it upon himself to initiate his own connections with some of the big technology companies in the Chicago. He even brought other Foreign Fellows with him to meetings he had arranged at Google, Microsoft, and Facebook.

The perceived quality of the match is not simply related to the substantive fit between the Foreign Fellows’ professional interests and the focus of the U.S. host organization. Interviews with both parties revealed important other correlates of “fit”:

- ❖ **Professional clarity.** When the Foreign Fellows are not clear about their professional goals and direction, the placement can be problematic. A Fellow from Indonesia was placed at a small farm in Arkansas, where he worked on the farm, among other things. In his interview, he indicated the placement was not what he expected and not a good match. However, his interview also revealed he had a number of different professional interests, including how to organize and manage an agricultural innovation business. His homestay mother, who also served as the local placement coordinator, explained in her interview she also felt his match was not ideal because his professional goals were not clear and he was unsure what he wanted to get out of the experience. Her point of

comparison was the other Foreign Fellow placed at the same farm, who came from a small farm environment and wanted to learn about small farming methods.

- ❖ **Misperceptions about the professional development interests of the Fellows.** As one case from India demonstrates, the professional expertise of the Foreign Fellow and what he hoped to learn/gain from the fellowship were not the same. He was identified, selected, and placed based on his professional political media experience, but his real interest was a project idea related to his NGO and developing medical camps for underprivileged youth.
- ❖ **Career-level.** The PFP is designed for mid-career professionals. When professionals are too senior, it is difficult for the program to meet their expectations and place them with U.S. host organizations commensurate with their experience. One such case was the economic advisor to the president of Indonesia, who was dealing with national development policies, but who was placed at a small domestic development institute at the University of Arkansas. A few U.S. host organization survey respondents (4%) also noted having too senior or too junior level Foreign Fellows created a challenge.

Regardless of fit, the need for more advance notice about the match and more explicit expectations around the exchange emerged as a common theme from interviews with Foreign Fellows and U.S. host supervisors. Some of the Foreign Fellows learned about their placements a couple of weeks in advance, while others received notice of where they were going only a few days before their departure. Foreign Fellows said knowing their professional placement in advance would have allowed them to better prepare for the exchange. One-fifth of the Foreign Fellows interviewed recommended program improvements related to advance communication with the U.S. host organization.

U.S. host organization supervisors and contacts said with more advance notice, they could have planned and designed a better program for their Foreign Fellows. For example, a host supervisor from Philadelphia said that in planning the schedule for his Foreign Fellow, he could have easily avoided scheduling conflicts with the social activities planned by the local hosting organization had he known about them in advance.

Best Practice

U.S. Implementing partners that send information about the U.S. host organization to the Foreign Fellows weeks in advance provide the Foreign Fellows with adequate time to research, learn more about the organization, and have the opportunity to request a change.

First-time and small host organizations were not always clear about the point of the program. For example, two host organizations said they thought of the Foreign Fellows as interns or volunteers. They did not fully comprehend the idea that the exchange was for mutual benefit and development.

Other Challenges at the Placement

Foreign Fellows and organizational hosts identified additional challenges associated with the placement, but it is worth noting none were widely experienced. In the interviews, Foreign Fellows specifically mentioned challenges around:

- ❖ Negotiating on-going work obligations at home and the obligations at the placement (6%)

- ❖ Language capabilities – and the fatigue associated with working all day in their non-native languages (6%)
- ❖ Timing – amount of free time in the schedule, not enough time at the placement to fully integrate, and lack of time management skills to balance the work of the fellowship with social/cultural opportunities and experiences (4%)

Challenges for the Fellows as identified by the U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts included: understanding of U.S. work culture and expectations around punctuality, commute time to the workplace, and language limitations. The supervisors and day-to-day contacts also admitted a lack of their own preparation for hosting a Foreign Fellow. The majority (67%), however, did not identify any challenges. Data from the survey reveal, despite any challenges, the vast majority would host Foreign Fellows again (95%) and would recommend others to do so (99%).

“The main challenge is the Foreign Fellows were very smart and driven so ensuring that we could find projects and experiences to keep them engaged through the work week as well on the weekends was challenging and a fulltime job in itself.”
U.S. Host Organization Supervisor

3.3 Living Arrangements

The living arrangements are an important means of fostering the program goal of mutual understanding between U.S. families and Foreign Fellows, and among the Fellows themselves.

As **Figure 2** shows, almost half of the Foreign Fellows (49%) who responded to the survey lived with homestay families for all or most of the time. Other Foreign Fellows (28%) were placed in shared living arrangements – apartments or group houses – with other Fellows. The remaining 22% were placed in hotels. More than 80% of the Foreign Fellows who did not stay full-time with a homestay family said they also were nonetheless able to experience American life through short-term homestays (weekends) and through home hospitality (dinners).

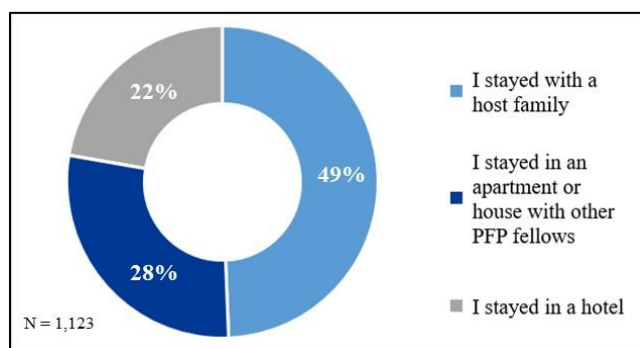


Figure 2. Foreign Fellow Living Arrangements

Homestay Experience

Living with an American family gave the Fellows insight into authentic American life in all its variations. Foreign Fellows learned about long commutes, work-life balance, family dynamics, American politics, food, religion, and the artistic and cultural landscape of the places they were living.

Foreign Fellows who lived with families experienced the full spectrum of American life. Survey respondents reported they ate meals together (93%), spent time at home with the families (77%), attended community events (78%) and religious services (31%), and visited local tourist attractions (74%). In the interviews, Foreign Fellows described how their

“It’s not only the host family, but the extended family of the host family, the neighborhood ...”
Female Foreign Fellow, Indonesia

homestay families introduced them to their friends, family members, and neighbors, and they spent time with them as well. More than 90% of the Foreign Fellows described their homestay experience in glowing terms.

The Foreign Fellows also shared their lives, culture, and politics with their homestay families. As explained during interviews, the most common way of sharing was to cook for their host families and share customs around food. When they were placed with families where there were young children at home, the Foreign Fellows engaged with them as well. A Slovenian Fellow with small children of his own was placed with a family with three small children. He arranged Skype calls between the children, magnifying the effect of the experience.

Interviews with Foreign Fellows and with homestay families revealed the Foreign Fellows were sometimes placed jointly in homestay families. Sometimes, the Foreign Fellows were from the same country, and sometimes they hailed from different ones. In these instances, the benefits were essentially “doubled.” Foreign Fellows were exposed to American family life, and, at the same time, were able to share and process their experience with someone else undergoing the same process/program. The benefits from shared living are discussed in more detail below.

Virtually all Foreign Fellows and homestay families who responded to the survey reported they spent time at home together, ate meals together, visited tourist attractions, and had conversations about the Foreign Fellows’ home countries and the United States. Almost half (47%) of the homestay families were somehow affiliated with the Foreign Fellows’ U.S. host organizations; thus, 88% of the homestay families and 76% of Foreign Fellows also had conversations related to the substantive work of the fellowships.

Best Practice

Homestay families in Oregon, California, and Illinois described how the local coordinator organized events (BBQs, outings, etc.) for all the homestay families and Foreign Fellows. The bonding from such coordinated events resulted in a community of homestay families that exchanged and shared the responsibility for Foreign Fellows’ site seeing or other activities.

Living with a family provided an illuminating moment in tolerance and understanding:

- ❖ A Muslim Fellow from Indonesia was placed with an interfaith Catholic-Jewish homestay family and learned he could talk to his host father about anything;
- ❖ A young, single Muslim woman from Indonesia was placed with an older single man, and after her and her family’s initial hesitation, had a wonderful experience;
- ❖ A Slovenian Fellow was placed with a gay man in Chicago; after his initial surprise and reluctance, they became friends.

As seen in **Table 5**, families who volunteer to welcome Foreign Fellows into their homes are committed to the idea of mutual understanding. In addition, almost 40% of homestay families indicated their motivation for hosting stemmed from their own experiences living abroad.

Table 5. Most Commonly Mentioned Motivations for Hosting

Motivation	Percentage
Believe in international exchange as a way of promoting understanding	90%
Wanted to share my community with an international visitor	76%
Wanted to expose my family to new cultures and ideas	53%

N = 191

Their commitment to these ideals is evident in

Homestay Family Preparation

- 68% received some kind of training/orientation about hosting prior to the arrival of the Foreign Fellows
- 87% received advance information about the type of program (i.e. the specifics of the PFP versus another exchange program)
- 65% communicated with the Foreign Fellows before they arrived

Shared Living Space Experience

The Foreign Fellows who lived in shared apartments and houses were placed with other Fellows from their regions, who were also working in the same thematic areas.¹⁷ Interviews with the Foreign Fellows showed the shared space model was experienced by Foreign Fellows from India, Pakistan, Egypt, Algeria, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay.

The Foreign Fellows spoke extensively about the advantages of having an intense shared experience:

- ❖ First, it helped them to break down stereotypes about people from neighboring countries. One Fellow from India, for example, was hesitant about rooming with another Fellow from Pakistan. At the end of the trip, she cried when they had to leave each other. At the beginning of their program, Fellows from Egypt were reluctant to share the space with Fellows from Algeria because of the political tensions between the two neighbors. Living together, they learned they had much in common.
- ❖ Second, the shared space also gave the Foreign Fellows the opportunity to decompress and process with each other what they learned and experienced in their respective placements. Fellows were exhausted at the end of their days from their busy schedule and from working in their non-native languages. These circumstances accelerated the bonding process.
- ❖ Third, the intensity of the experience generated many lasting friendships. One Fellow from Egypt remarked: “Friendship and connection ... we're still connected ... on the professional level and it wasn't just like a friend living together, or people from the same age living together, but it was also like lifetime connections. Because still I call ... to ask about things related to my work.”

Of the Foreign Fellows who did not live with a homestay family full time, most (83%) were still able to share and learn about American life through short-term visits (weekends) and home hospitality visits including dinners organized by the local coordinators or the U.S. implementing partners. Although brief, these experiences were impactful. For example, one Indian Fellow who took part in such home hospitality described how he bonded with children: he taught them how to play an Indian game similar to soccer. Conversely, his home hospitality host recalled sharing perspectives on marriage and family life with him.

¹⁷ The three examples come from the fieldwork countries. However, because the U.S. implementing partners responsible for those fieldwork countries use the shared space model and are responsible for particular thematic areas, Foreign Fellows from other countries in their regional portfolios most likely experienced similar grouped living arrangements. The survey, however, did not ask about the composition of roommates for those living in shared housing.

Challenges

While homestay families were more likely to identify challenges to hosting than the Foreign Fellows, the incidence of reported challenges is very low. Eighty-eight percent of the Foreign Fellows and 74% of the homestay families did not share any challenges.

Table 6. Challenges in Living with Homestay Family/Hosting a Foreign Fellow

Challenge	Foreign Fellow Experience	Homestay Family Experience
Cultural differences	12%	9%
Quality of accommodations	8%	NA
Dietary restrictions	6%	12%
Manners and respect	5%	5%
Language barriers	4%	8%
No challenges	88%	74%
	N = 739	N = 191

Other issues emerged in the interviews with the Foreign Fellows. The distance between the homestay family and their professional placement was formidable for some Foreign Fellows, especially those staying in the suburbs with limited public transportation. One Slovenian Fellow whose homestay family lived in Chicago had a more than 90-minute commute every day to his U.S. host organization in the suburbs. Another Fellow placed in Atlanta had a four-hour round-trip commute each day. One Fellow from Georgia who lived in North Carolina was extremely far from her placement, but her homestay mother – who was also her U.S. host organization supervisor – was able to drive her to and from work. The Foreign Fellows felt the long commute and the limited public transportation impinged on their free time, which could have been more productively spent engaging in social and cultural activities, including volunteering. Because the Foreign Fellows were generally so busy with their professional placements, they were eager to make the most of their limited free time.

Homestay families identified expected challenges stemming from personality differences: some Foreign Fellows were more outgoing, some were shy, some were more open to new experiences, and some were less so. Some also mentioned expectations around cooking and food, namely, whose responsibility it was to provide and prepare food for the Foreign Fellows.

“All challenges are manageable with hospitality and smiles.”
U.S. homestay family

3.4 Volunteer Activities

Volunteering was not uniformly required by the U.S. implementing partners.¹⁸ More than half (54%) of the Foreign Fellows interviewed participated in volunteer activities. They learned about volunteer opportunities from U.S. implementing partners, from U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, from their homestay families, and on their own initiative.

¹⁸ Because voluntary service was not always a mandatory program requirement, it was not uniformly enforced or encouraged by the U.S. implementing partners.

The volunteer experience provided a moment of revelation for many Foreign Fellows. A Fellow from Indonesia who volunteered in a school twice during his fellowship mentioned realizing how deeply volunteerism is ingrained in U.S. culture when he learned it was a high school graduation requirement. In his own words, the experience was “great,” and made him reflect on the difference with his own community. One Fellow from India was clearly “bitten” by the volunteer spirit; she volunteered by serving breakfast to the homeless eight times during her fellowship.

The impact of the volunteer experience was evident in the survey responses:

- ❖ 27% of respondents said the PFP helped them become involved in a community service/volunteer organization; and
- ❖ 70% said the PFP positively influenced their perspective on American volunteerism.

Foreign Fellows also described how it inspired them to continue doing volunteer work when they returned home. As a female Fellow from Indonesia explained, “I told my officemates, why don’t we try to regularly do this [volunteering]. We start from a small one, in our community, in our office, surrounding our office, and then maybe to your neighborhood one day. Yeah, it’s like initiating others, influencing others with good values.”

“... With my Fellows, co-Fellows ... we came to the answer [of] why volunteering is so important. We really saw... how social transfers work.”

Male Foreign Fellow, Slovenia

3.5 The Professional Fellows Congress in Washington D.C.

Participation in the Congress at the end of the fellowship is a program requirement. Virtually all Foreign Fellows (97%) participated in the Congress. Those who did not attend did so because of personal or professional obligations.

A quarter of the interviewed Foreign Fellows said the Congress was the best part of the program as it afforded them an opportunity to network and bond with their peers from all over the world. **Figure 3** shows how Foreign Fellows who responded to the survey perceived the utility of the Congress. Over 90% of survey respondents found the Congress to be useful across several areas, such as establishing new

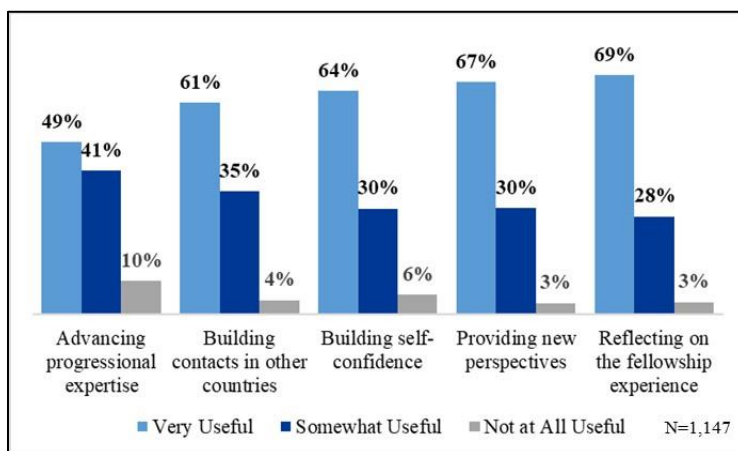


Figure 3. Perceived Usefulness of the Congress

contacts and reflecting on the fellowship experience, but relatively less useful for advancing professional expertise.

Although valued, Foreign Fellows provided suggestions for enhancing the Congress experience in their interviews. Their suggestions predominantly touched on the approach to sessions and the length of the Congress (versus the professional placement). Some Foreign Fellows were vocal about their views that they would have benefitted more from additional time with their U.S. host organizations. Fellows from Egypt, for example, participated in leadership training throughout their entire placement with the U.S. implementing partner, and hence did not feel the leadership training component at Congress had the same added value as those whose program design did not incorporate ongoing leadership training. Although Foreign Fellows recognized having everyone together was beneficial for their personal connections and friendships, some expressed preference for regional and thematic sessions to allow for more focused discussion and sharing. The story in the text box is a good example of how synergy between Foreign Fellows with the same professional interests can yield concrete collaboration.

Example of Networking at the Congress

A Fellow from Indonesia told the story of how he met a Fellow from Croatia with the same professional interests. They decided to work together and organized a workshop in Indonesia to support start-ups. The Croatian Fellow visited him in Indonesia.

3.6 The Post-Fellowship Project

As part of their initial applications, prospective Foreign Fellows identify a project idea that can be developed during the fellowship and implemented when they return home (through the creation of an action plan). The survey findings show developing a project was *not* a universally imposed and enforced requirement by the U.S. implementing partners; when asked about their project implementation, 9% said they did not have one to implement. As shown in **Figure 4**, of those who had a project to implement, 45% implemented their project in full, 44% partially implemented their project, and 11% did not implement a project. This distribution was very similar in the interview sample.

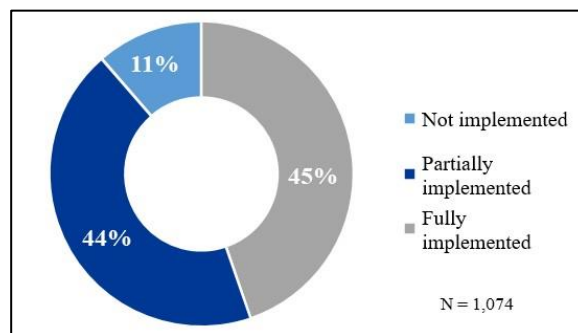


Figure 4. Project Implementation

Examples of Projects

- ✓ Playground to integrate Syrian immigrants into elementary schools (Egypt)
- ✓ Entrepreneurship training and handicraft workshops with minorities in Nubia (Egypt)
- ✓ Legal Training for ASEAN prosecutors (Thailand)
- ✓ Conceived and drafted law on the inclusion of people of with disabilities (Indonesia)
- ✓ Trash for Cash community clean-up effort (Indonesia)
- ✓ Organized an event on Women in STEM with IBM (Slovenia)

The Foreign Fellows identified numerous challenges to the post-fellowship project implementation during their interviews:

- ❖ Lack of support from their home organizations for the project (19%)
- ❖ Lack of funding to carry out the project (15%)
- ❖ External factors such as change in political leaders (7%)
- ❖ Organization/job change, which rendered the project no longer relevant (5%)
- ❖ Lack of time/too busy (5%)
- ❖ Logistical Issues (4%)

During interviews, Foreign Fellows also mentioned other challenges they faced in implementing their post-fellowship projects: managing multiple stakeholders; navigating the local government resistance/restrictions; bureaucracy; recruiting individuals to participate in their projects; and cultural resistance to new ideas. A Fellow from Thailand explained how challenging it was to implement the post-fellowship project because it was not directly related to her daily job responsibilities.

One-third of the U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts interviewed actively engaged with their Foreign Fellows in the development of their post-fellowship project plans. The remaining U.S. hosting organizations did not help their Foreign Fellows to develop their post-fellowship project ideas, while a few even indicated they did not know anything about the post-fellowship project or did not realize it was their responsibility to help. At the same time, another U.S. host mentioned the U.S. implementing partner had the responsibility for helping with the plan for the post-fellowship project (e.g., the University of Montana) and so did not engage. Even when host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts engaged with the Foreign Fellows around their post-fellowship project plans, the Foreign Fellows were the ones to initiate the interactions around the plans for their post-fellowship projects. Even though the final responsibility for the post-fellowship project plans falls with the Foreign Fellows, several supervisors wished they had had a better understanding of project requirements and responsibilities to have been better able to assist the Foreign Fellow.

3.7 U.S. Fellows and the Reciprocal Exchange

According to survey data, almost 60% of the Foreign Fellows were visited by a U.S. Fellow on a reciprocal exchange. U.S. Fellows are most frequently U.S. host organization supervisors, but they can also be host organization day-to-day contacts or even professionals from other organizations. U.S. implementing partners explained they, in coordination with the ECA Program Office and U.S. embassies, are principally responsible for identifying or selecting the outbound U.S. Fellows. The process for recruiting and selecting the Americans to travel on reciprocal exchanges differ across U.S. implementing partners. Some U.S. implementing partners described soliciting interest from U.S. host organizations, while others described requiring applications to come directly from the Foreign Fellows. The distribution of responses in **Table 7** most likely reflects this variation.¹⁹

For example, 38% of the U.S. Fellows were asked by the U.S. implementing partners if they would like to participate in an exchange. More than a quarter of the U.S. Fellows indicated they

¹⁹ U.S. Fellows who completed the survey were not asked to identify their respective U.S. implementing partners or when they participated in their outbound exchange. It is therefore not feasible to validate the use of different models by the various U.S. implementing partners, or to evaluate whether there has been alignment in the selection process over time.

were somehow identified by a Foreign Fellow and selected on the basis of the Foreign Fellow's application; another 23% of U.S. Fellows applied together with the Foreign Fellow.

Table 7. How U.S. Fellows Were Selected

Method of Selection	Percentage
The PFP Fellow completed the application and included me	26%
The PFP Fellow and I completed the application together to submit	23%
Neither I nor the PFP completed an application, but somehow I was selected by my organization	4%
The PFP implementing organization asked me if I wanted to go on an exchange	38%
I applied	5%
Other	4%

N = 142

In the interviews and in the open-ended survey response, U.S. Fellows often did not have a clear understanding of program criteria for participating as a U.S. Fellow – how to apply, who made the selection, and even how many times U.S. Fellows were allowed to travel.

With respect to the timing of their reciprocal exchanges, half of the U.S. Fellows traveled to their Foreign Fellows within the first six months following the hosting experience; 41% traveled between six and 12 months afterwards, and only 8% traveled more than 12 months afterwards.²⁰ In the interviews, U.S. Fellows explained it was sometimes difficult to carve out time from other obligations to travel. An entrepreneur who hosted a Slovenian Fellow in Chicago was selected to participate, but was unable to leave her two businesses. Another U.S. Fellow had to postpone her exchange because of a medical issue; she ended up going the following year to work with a different Fellow, whom she had not supervised.

The U.S. implementing partners employ different models for the U.S. Fellow exchanges. These models are:

- ❖ the individual model
- ❖ the delegation model

From the survey, the most common model is the individual model (72% of U.S. Fellows).

In the case of the individual model, a given U.S. Fellow travels to work with their Foreign Fellow, and the Foreign Fellow, often working with an in-country partner or office and the U.S. embassy, sets the agenda for the U.S. Fellow. Sometimes, the U.S. implementing partners send two U.S. Fellows together, but again, the agenda is tightly related to the work of the Foreign Fellows and their professional field. In contrast, for the delegation model, the U.S. implementing partner identifies a group of U.S. Fellows who travel together, but their exchange agenda is not tightly related to the work of their specific Foreign Fellows. From the fieldwork, it was clear one model was used in any given country, irrespective of the number of U.S. implementing partners. By way of illustration, in India, both U.S. implementing partners followed a delegation model; in Thailand and Indonesia, each with four U.S. implementing partners, all followed the individual model.

²⁰ The 8% came from different regions.

The U.S. Fellow reciprocal model for any given country can also reflect the vision/goals of the U.S. embassies for the exchanges and takes security and other factors into consideration. In Egypt, for example, the delegation's activities were constrained by security concerns.

Survey responses show U.S. Fellows participated in a range of activities during their exchange. As **Figure 5** shows, almost all U.S. Fellows met with organizations in their professional fields (92%) and conducted site visits to various projects (89%). Two aspects of their activities stand out.

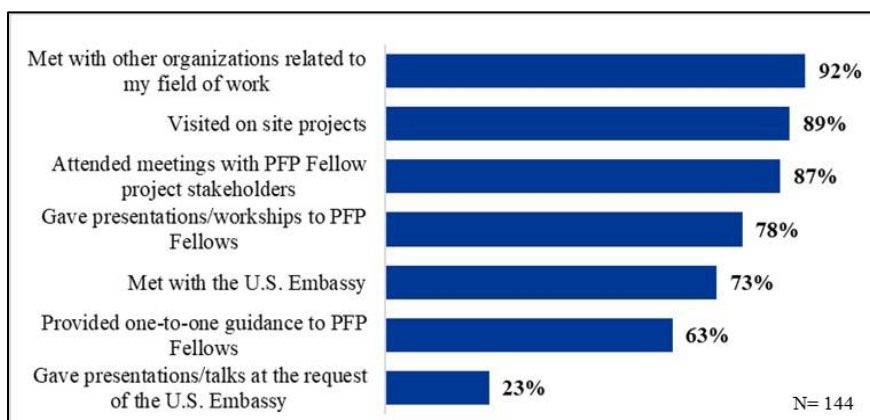


Figure 5. U.S. Fellow Activities during Their Exchange

When asked about what their U.S. Fellows did, the Foreign Fellows listed similar activities, and in similar proportions as did the U.S. Fellows – except with respect to the one-on-one guidance. Sixty-three percent of the U.S. Fellows reported they gave one-on-one guidance during their exchange, while only 36% of the Foreign Fellows who responded to the survey and had a U.S. Fellow travel to them, reported they had received such personalized project guidance. Again, this data point speaks to a certain level of ambiguity around the purpose of the U.S. Fellows' exchanges and how tightly activities are linked to Foreign Fellows' post-fellowship project plans and post-fellowship project work.

Foreign Fellow Perspectives on the Activities of their U.S. Fellows

- Attended presentations (66%)
- Attended meetings (80%)
- Gave presentations (70%)
- Worked with the Fellows on their projects (36%)
- Attended cultural events (63%)
- Provided technical assistance (27%)

From the qualitative data, several things were apparent.

- ❖ First, the data suggest a significant difference in U.S. Fellows' level of one-on-one engagement with their Foreign Fellows between the individual and delegation models, with U.S. Fellows who travelled individually being much more likely to have contributed to the Foreign Fellows' projects.
 - ✓ In the individual model, the activities of the U.S. Fellows were closely related to the Foreign Fellows. U.S. Fellows met with key stakeholders and gave presentations to Foreign Fellows and their colleagues.
 - ✓ Interviews with both the U.S. Fellows and the Foreign Fellows affirmed the lack of substantive connection between the post-fellowship projects and the U.S. Fellows who traveled as a part of a delegation exchanges. In Peru, for example, the U.S. Fellows met with the Peruvian Fellows who lived in Trujillo, but they did not "help" them or contribute to their projects. In India, a U.S. Fellow explained how she never had the opportunity to meet her Foreign Fellow, let alone help her.

Her perspective on the delegation model was that it was a “dog and pony show” – the delegation met with many people, but the conversation was superficial at best.

- ❖ Second, U.S. Fellows appear to be leveraged by the U.S. embassies as subject matter experts. Twenty-three percent indicated they had been asked to present or give a talk by the U.S. embassy. While the PFP is a vital way for the U.S. embassy to further their public diplomacy goals and objectives, U.S. embassy staff in India explicitly elaborated how they have used delegations of U.S. Fellows as a way to open up networks for the embassy. One U.S. Fellow was asked to provide training for the U.S. embassy staff in Myanmar on LGBTQ inclusivity.

Best Practice: A Reciprocal Visit Driven by the Foreign Fellow’s Project

A U.S. Fellow conducted the training portion of the Fellows’ post-fellowship project in Georgia. He taught local government officials how to communicate and better engage their constituencies in policy discourse. The U.S. Fellow did a presentation to 50-60 staff members at the Ministry of Internal

Affairs, where the Fellow worked. Together, they travelled outside of the capital and gave presentations to local government organizations, NGOs, met with high school students, and spoke with students and staff at a university for religious education. The U.S. Fellow’s training activities were broadcast on the local news.

4. PFP Outcomes

4.1 Individual Foreign Fellows

Knowledge and Skills

Virtually all Foreign Fellows said they had acquired new information, knowledge, approaches, and strategies related to their particular fields. Surveyed Foreign Fellows did not provide examples of what they learned, but they did report their professional placement increased their professional knowledge to a moderate (30%) or great extent (56%). As expected from a program designed to deliver individualized, tailored professional experiences, the examples Foreign Fellows recounted of such knowledge gained are unique to each person.

- ❖ A Fellow from Indonesia learned about storm water regulation and the Clean Water Act.
- ❖ A Fellow from Thailand learned about modern management and leadership philosophy by observing the budget process in local government. He observed how team decision-making works and the importance of sharing responsibility from top to bottom.
- ❖ A Fellow from Peru learned about environmental regulation and enforcement, and experienced public engagement with environmental issues in the public hearing process.
- ❖ Placed at a local Sheriff’s office, a Georgian Fellow was exposed to the concept of community policing.

U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts waxed poetic about what they believed the Foreign Fellows had learned while with them and how the Foreign Fellows had changed professional perspectives from their experiences in the United States. Each one had a

different story to tell about the Foreign Fellow or Fellows they hosted.²¹ Notably, the perspectives of the host supervisors and the Foreign Fellows with respect to the skills and knowledge the Foreign Fellows gained were in almost perfect alignment. For example, the U.S. host organization supervisor of a Fellow from Thailand who was placed at a nonprofit in Montana whose mission is for a more just inclusive society, related how the Foreign Fellow was able to learn how Montana empowers LGBTQ youth. In addition to meeting youth and working with them directly, the Foreign Fellow was able to learn how the nonprofit supports schools and educators with training and coalition-building support for inclusivity. In her interview, the Foreign Fellow also reiterated how important it was for her to learn about LGBTQ issues in the schools and to meet with youth. She also mentioned the most important concrete skill she gained had to do with NGO management, particularly regarding donations.

The Foreign Fellows observed differences in the culture of work between the United States and their home countries. Comments in the interviews revealed new understandings about the everyday organization of work, punctuality, efficiency, lack of hierarchy and openness, and planning. For example, Foreign Fellows learned about:

- ❖ Alternative work schedules
- ❖ Telecommuting/work from home arrangement
- ❖ Co-shared space
- ❖ Donuts and coffee at meetings for increasing engagement
- ❖ Non-hierarchical communication
- ❖ 10-minute stand-up meetings
- ❖ Checklists for planning activities and implementing projects

In addition to the information and knowledge Foreign Fellows acquired from their U.S. host organizations and the other professionals to whom they were introduced during their exchanges (e.g., on field visits), Foreign Fellows also reported enhancing their interpersonal skill sets and abilities. These skills include networking, communication, cultural awareness/sensitivity, leadership, time management, and problem-solving skills. Additionally, in the open-ended survey question about what they learned during the PFP, Foreign Fellows mentioned project management, human resource management, research, proposal writing, and public speaking skills.

²¹ Of the 32 U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts interviewed, 13 had hosted more than one Foreign Fellow; one had hosted ten, two had hosted five, and another two had hosted four. Seventy percent of the U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts who answered the survey had hosted more than one Foreign Fellow.

Figure 6 shows the Foreign Fellows most frequently reported enhanced networking and communication skills as a result of participating in the PFP. The same two skill sets were also the most frequently mentioned by Foreign Fellows in interviews.

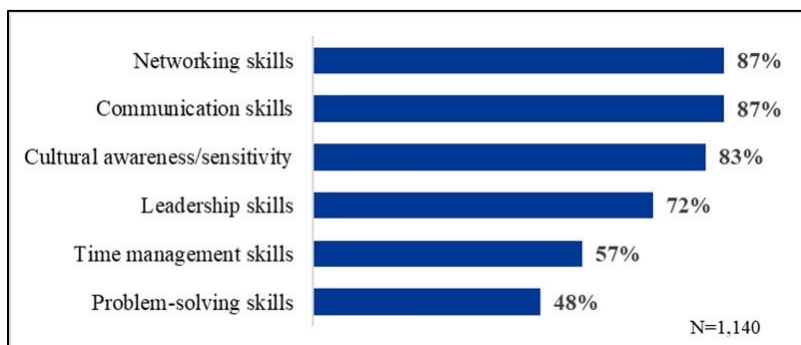


Figure 6. Foreign Fellows Enhanced Skills and Abilities

- ❖ A Fellow from Indonesia with an interest in disability rights recounted how the PFP program helped him develop skills to connect people from ASEAN countries in order to work together on disability issues.
- ❖ A Fellow from Peru, who teaches environmental law at a university, attributed her success in becoming part of a UN working group and establishing a relationship between the group and her university, to networking skills she learned during the program.
- ❖ A Fellow from Egypt whose first experience living abroad and living alone was on the PFP, said he learned how to communicate better.

From a Different Perspective: Networking is the Most Important Thing

A host organization supervisor who had worked with five different Foreign Fellows across three different cohorts and two project themes felt the most important thing the Foreign Fellows learned from working with him was the value of leveraging personal networks. Leading by example, he showed them how he uses social connections in the course of his work.

With respect to leadership skills, 72% of the survey respondents reported they gained leadership skills from the exchange; of the Foreign Fellows interviewed during fieldwork, 65% perceived themselves to be more of a leader after the program than beforehand, and 27% of them felt they were perceived as leaders by their colleagues.

During their interviews, several Foreign Fellows mentioned learning how to be more inclusive leaders. For example, a Fellow from Thailand established a social enterprise focused on tourism and inclusivity of ethnic and tribal minorities after her fellowship. She said she felt empowered to do things she had never imagined she would do, including feeling like a leader.

“When I came back I went to the same position, but I wasn’t heartbroken. My experience and my skills were with me. I had a huge network, I developed leadership skills, I learned how to communicate with people from different countries. And I was so confident. I knew I was going to make changes.”
Female Foreign Fellow, Georgia

More than half of the interviewed Foreign Fellows touched on the theme of confidence and courage, which allowed them to take on new responsibilities, start and grow new enterprises, and take on the challenge of empowering others.

- ❖ A Fellow from Thailand commented on how she grew as a leader because of the PFP. When she came, she saw herself differently, recognizing her own potential to do things without waiting for others. In her role at a university incubator, she works with young technology students to think about how they can make a real impact and launch their social enterprises.
- ❖ A Fellow from Slovenia underwent a significant personal transformation during her exchange. When she arrived, she was insecure, confused, and felt herself to be under significant pressure from an existing business model used at her family-owned restaurant. When she returned home after the fellowship, she was able to significantly change the dynamics in her personal relationships and take charge of her business. She felt empowered to try different approaches to advertising and was a more active planner.
- ❖ A Fellow from Thailand explained how she found her voice after participating in the PFP:

“... Now, I’m the spokesperson of the Customs Office, I’m the PR, when we have a visitor from the NGO organization I’m the one who presents. I can do it. Even though I’m the youngest one, even though I’m [a] woman.”
Female Foreign Fellow, Thailand

Professional Growth

The opportunity for professional growth motivated Foreign Fellows to participate in the PFP. Interviews and survey responses suggest their aspirations were fulfilled. When asked explicitly if the PFP helped their careers, 82% responded affirmatively. There are multiple dimensions to professional growth. As **Figure 7** shows, after being on the U.S.-based exchange, almost half (45%) of the Foreign Fellow survey

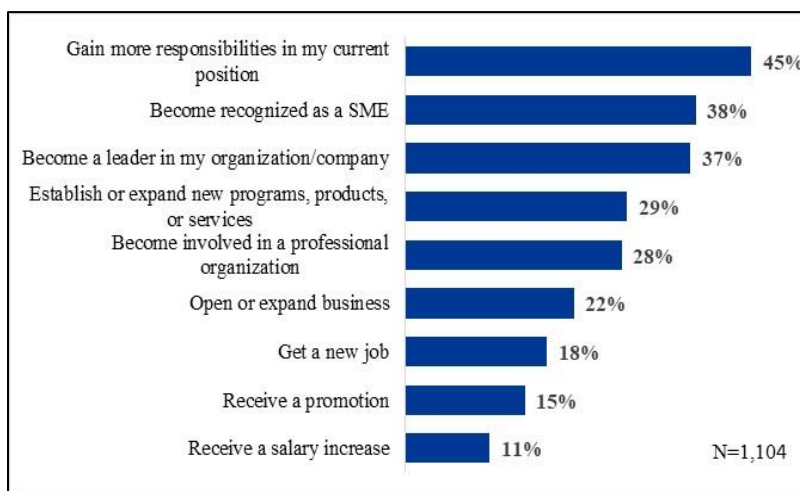


Figure 7. PFP Impact on Professional Growth

respondents reported gaining more responsibilities in their current roles, 38% were recognized as subject matter experts, and 37% subsequently became leaders in their organizations. In comparison, the percentage of Foreign Fellows who got a new job (18%), were promoted (15%), or received a salary increase in the same position (11%) was relatively less.

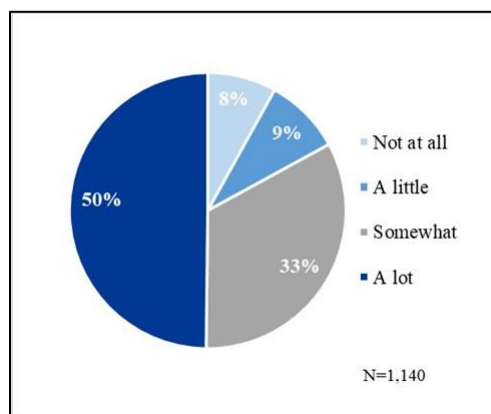


Figure 8. Extent to Which PFP Changed Professional Interests

The PFP experience also influenced Foreign Fellows' professional interests; 50% of the surveyed Foreign Fellows said their interests changed "a lot" (**Figure 8**). While the survey did not specifically ask why their interests changed, the qualitative interviews do shed some light on this question. Foreign Fellows said their new interests were shaped by their expanded horizons as a result of their placements: they learned about methodologies or specializations they did not know about before, they realized their communities (or regions/countries) needed a service or a skill that was missing, and they were inspired by something they saw on the program.

An illustrative instance of such a change in interest is the case of a Fellow from Georgia, who learned about gender auditing – which was something she had not previously known anything about. Upon her return, she became a specialist in the field, responsible for implementing gender auditing practices in the Parliamentary Budget Office. For a different Fellow from Georgia, the PFP opened her eyes to her own potential for growth and continued development. She noted: "I look at myself professionally growing. It's ... the ongoing process and it's something that I think will continue all the time."

Among the interviewed Foreign Fellows, almost a quarter (24%) said they assumed additional responsibilities when they returned from the program and 24% said they had more opportunities and changed jobs because of the program. Twenty-percent of those interviewed attributed their promotion to participation in the program, and 20% started new businesses or significantly transformed/expanded their existing business models. The comparison across fieldwork countries highlights how these kinds of business initiatives are correlated with country/project theme. Foreign Fellows who participated in a PFP focused on the theme of economic empowerment or entrepreneurship were more likely to have expanded existing businesses or started new ones than Foreign Fellows who participated under other program themes.

- ❖ A Fellow in Peru started his own organic farm with the goal of providing organic produce at an affordable price for the average person;
- ❖ A Fellow from Egypt started her own consulting firm to help small family businesses transform their operations. With a self-professed passion for innovation, she has expanded her vision to develop and deliver training curriculum for startup accelerators and incubators in Egypt;
- ❖ A Fellow from India, equipped with a clear vision and the subject matter expertise in early education and STEM that she learned in the United States, expanded her contract with the government of India to establish more than 200 daycare centers, train staff, and introduce STEM subjects.
- ❖ A Fellow from Peru attributed the PFP with increasing her confidence to apply for other opportunities. She was selected for a 40-day course in Israel on vegetable safety and sanitation, and subsequently won a grant to go to Mexico for three months to work with another Foreign Fellow on climate action for rural communities and food safety.

Changed Perspectives

The PFP experience changes Foreign Fellows' perceptions of the people, culture, politics, and social organization of the United States. Even Foreign Fellows who had been to the United States prior to their participation in the PFP said their perspectives changed. Their previous experiences as tourists or as young exchange program students did not give them any insights into adult, professional work life. The survey responses provide a general view of the directionality of their changed perceptions. Foreign Fellows changed most positively with respect to American culture and people, with slightly fewer reporting changing positively with respect to the U.S. political system and religious diversity; 66% reported their perceptions of the American culture and people changed “very positively” compared to 38% who said their perspectives changed “very positively” towards the U.S. political system.²² After people and culture, Foreign Fellows reported the most positive changes towards freedom of speech, and ethnic and racial diversity. From the interviews, it is possible to see the nuances of their changed perceptions and attitudes. Selected examples from the interviews, listed by category, are reflected below.

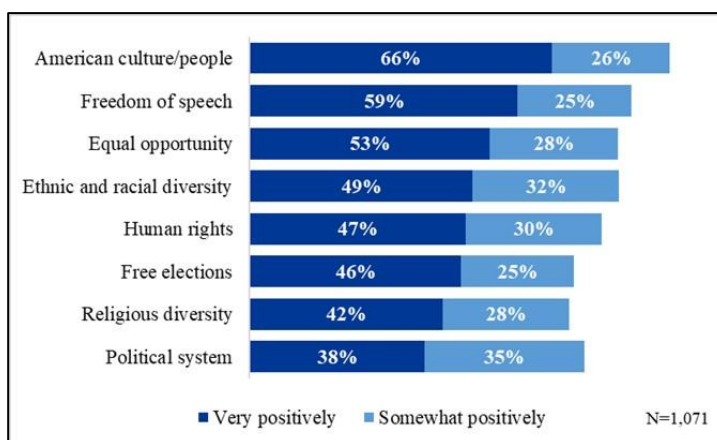


Figure 9. How the PFP Experience Changed Foreign Fellows' Perceptions

Perceptions about work. Daily interactions at their placements provided the Foreign Fellows with a window into the world of professional work.

- ❖ **Openness.** Foreign Fellows remarked on the willingness of their U.S. colleagues to share information and knowledge with them, and to explore within and outside their organizations. They were also struck by the accessibility, openness, and receptivity of U.S. institutions (especially the public sector organizations) to public input. Foreign Fellows from across the seven fieldwork countries mentioned the public hearing process as an example of a democratic and open process.
- ❖ **Gender equality at work.** A Fellow from India commented to her U.S. host organization supervisor on the professional respect she saw afforded to women in the United States compared to her own experience at home, where she felt her career was completely secondary to her husband's. A female Fellow from Peru also mentioned that she observed professional respect for women.
- ❖ **Autonomy at work.** A Fellow realized in comparison to his native Peru, the workplace in the United States allows professionals to exercise more autonomy.
- ❖ **Non-hierarchical work culture and teamwork.** A Georgian Fellow's impression of the lack of hierarchy and divisions in the workplace was repeated by a Fellow from India, who reflected on her newfound appreciation for teamwork.

²² A regional breakdown of how Foreign Fellows' perspectives changed is provided in **Appendix B**.

Perceptions about tolerance, diversity, and inclusivity. Foreign Fellows from all countries were generally amazed by the tolerance and acceptance they witnessed with respect to religion, sexual orientation and identity, and disability.

- ❖ **Religious tolerance.** Fellows from Egypt and Indonesia were surprised by the way they were so openly received. For example, a female Fellow from Indonesia anticipated living in the United States would be “scary for Muslim girl with a hijab.” A female Fellow from Egypt reiterated the same sentiment. They both had expected to face some level of discrimination because they were Muslim, but did not experience any “Islamophobia.”
- ❖ **LGBTQ acceptance.** A Fellow from Thailand shared how her volunteer service related to HIV prevention in the LGBTQ community. She experienced first-hand how these groups are accepted and supported in the United States. In her own words, “I think I changed ... whatever gender they are, I can accept the other ... they can be a best friend of mine.” A transgender Fellow from Thailand was surprised by the support LGBTQ youth received from their families. She also observed the United States has more legal protections for LGBTQ individuals than in Thailand, but individuals appear to be less socially accepted and more subject to hate crimes, despite these extra protections.
- ❖ **People with disabilities.** In using public transportation to get around Washington, D.C., a female Fellow from Georgia saw how the system is accessible to people with disabilities. Inclusivity in public spaces was also mentioned by the two Indonesian Fellows who came to the United States with this thematic interest.

Perceptions about everyday life. When asked what surprised them the most about the United States, Foreign Fellows mentioned everything from seeing democracy in action to serious social problems to the most mundane observations. Below is a sampling of these comments.

- ❖ Foreign Fellows were not expecting to see homelessness, poverty, inequality, segregation, and safety issues to the extent that they did. They were also surprised about the easy accessibility to guns.
- ❖ The lack of widespread and easily accessible public transportation shocked many of the Foreign Fellows. For Foreign Fellows outside of major metropolitan areas, transportation/commuting was a daily challenge they perceived as impeding their ability to get the most out of their experiences.
- ❖ At the most mundane level, Foreign Fellows mentioned big food portions, large supermarkets, walking and drinking coffee at the same time, the variety of home gadgets, the love and care showered on pets, the excessive use of plastic, recycling, respect for traffic rules and signals, easy access to casinos, and the general ease and convenience of everyday life.

Seeing Democracy in Action Had a Big Impact

- The Fall 2016 general election was a study in campaigns and electoral process for some Fellows from Egypt and India.
- Foreign Fellows placed at local and state government agencies were surprised by the level of civic participation – particularly through public hearings.

Clean Air

“I used to wear my white shirt for two days – that I cannot do in India. Pollution in India, in Delhi, it’s such a pollution that if I wear a white shirt, I cannot wear it tomorrow, but in the United States, I can always wear it tomorrow.”

Male Foreign Fellow, India

Perceptions about American warmth, generosity, and hospitality. The opportunity to live and work with Americans – as opposed to being in the United States as a tourist – gave the Foreign Fellows a window into the “real” United States. Foreign Fellows experienced first-hand more warmth, generosity, hospitality, and ultimately, friendship, than they had been expecting. A Fellow from India was eloquent about the difference between her pre-program perception of the United States as a war-mongering country and what she actually experienced: “Oh, you know, they (the Americans) invaded Vietnam ... they’ve invaded Afghanistan, they might just invade you as well next time. But when you go and meet the people, I swear this, I have never met people who are more helpful, more welcoming, more open, I have never in my life, never.”

A U.S. Fellow, who provided homestay hospitality for a Fellow from India, and who also had participated in a reciprocal exchange program to Bangladesh, Nepal, and Pakistan, provided his perspective on the stereotypes Foreign Fellows hold when they first arrive in the United States., compared to when they leave. Foreign Fellows’ perceptions are informed by Hollywood movies and television. Meeting Americans in daily life, as opposed to seeing Americans in movies, helped Foreign Fellows break down stereotypes and humanize them. Foreign Fellows realize Americans are not the “other.” Rather, they are “just like us.”

Sharing perspectives. Nine in 10 of the Foreign Fellows interviewed for the evaluation shared their perceptions and memories with their families, friends, and professional colleagues. The 30 colleagues and supervisors from the Foreign Fellows’ home organizations in their respective countries who agreed to participate in the program evaluation interviews corroborated the Foreign Fellows shared perceptions of the PFP exchange with them. It is striking the supervisors’ and colleagues’ recollections of what the Foreign Fellows shared when they returned closely matched with what the Foreign Fellows themselves said their perceptions were. The home organization supervisors and colleagues mentioned the Foreign Fellows cited U.S. work culture, professionalism and discipline, friendliness, openness, homelessness, poverty, and safety issues (e.g., easy accessibility to guns). For example, one supervisor from Slovenia recounted “his” Foreign Fellow shared Americans have a different mentality and mindset: in his view, Americans are less risk averse, more open, and more proactive. Perhaps even more importantly, supervisors noted the Foreign Fellows repeatedly interjected their impressions of the United States into regular workplace conversations.

**Sharing Perceptions with Work
Colleagues after the PFP**

“He [the Foreign Fellow] was very excited. He was always talking how it was there [the United States] when he came back, always telling positive things ...”

Home organization female
supervisor, Georgia

4.2 Impact of the PFP on Foreign Workplaces and Communities

There is an important distinction between the overall impact of the Foreign Fellows’ U.S. exchange program experience shared with colleagues in their workplaces – knowledge gained, ideas acquired, communication skills enhanced – and the impact of their specific post-fellowship projects implemented (either at work or in the community), evident in both the survey and interviews. As noted previously in **Figure 4**, not all Foreign Fellows had a post-fellowship project (9% did not), and only about half of those who had a project were able to fully implement it.

Overall Impact

Foreign Fellows are convinced their experiences had a transformative effect beyond their own personal and professional development. Foreign Fellows believe because of what they saw and learned during their exchange, they have been able to become better change agents in their workplaces, their professional fields, and in their larger home communities. As **Figure 10** shows, the Foreign Fellows perceived the biggest overall impact of the PFP to be in their professional fields (71% said it had “a lot” of impact). The magnitude of the perceived impacts in their workplaces and communities were still significant (59% and 56%, respectively).

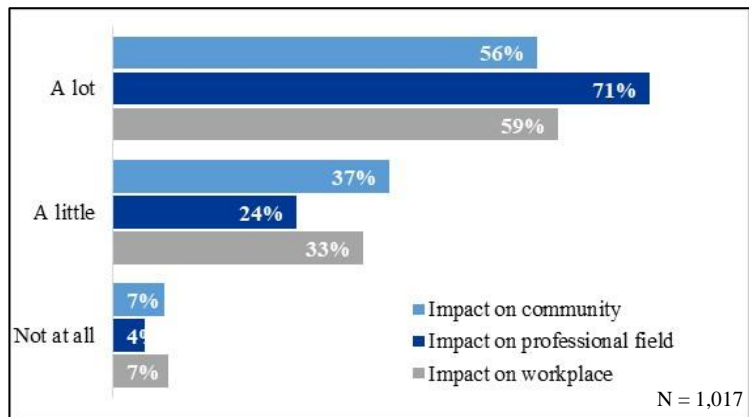


Figure 10. Overall PFP Experience Impact on Workplace, Professional Field, and Community

Foreign Fellows were also asked to assess the impact of their specific post-fellowship projects.

As **Figure 11** shows, more than 80% of the Foreign Fellow survey respondents said their post-fellowship project made “a lot” of impact in their workplace and professional fields (82% and 85%, respectively). Slightly fewer (74%) indicated their post-fellowship projects made a big impact on their community. The Foreign Fellows’ personal assessment of achieved impact in the workplace and in their communities following participating in the PFP was reiterated by 80% of those interviewed. Based on the descriptions of their projects in interviews, it is clear some Foreign Fellow post-fellowship projects had wider impact than others.²³ A few of the projects were sustainable as on-going efforts.

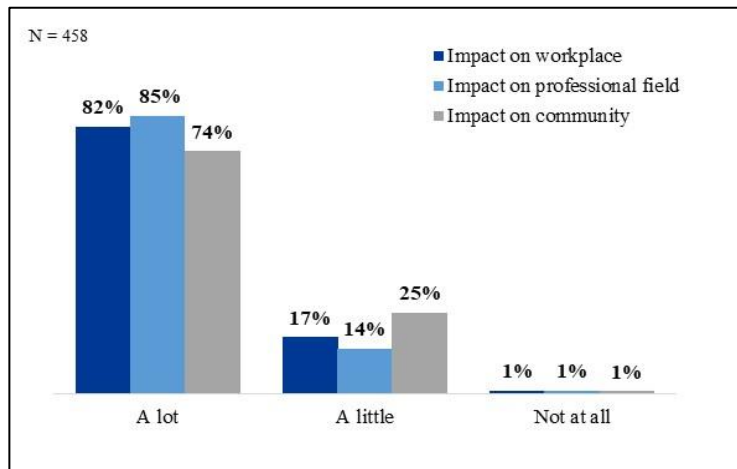


Figure 11. Impact of Post-Fellowship Project on the Workplace, Professional Field, and Community

Post-Fellowship Project Impact

Data from the interviews revealed considerable variation among Foreign Fellow post-fellowship projects with respect to how tightly they were linked to the Foreign Fellows’ work

²³ The GDIT Evaluation Team categorized the projects based on the details provided by the Foreign Fellows. The Evaluation Team considered various criteria in making the determination: the Foreign Fellows’ own assessment of their impact, the number of beneficiaries, the challenges they mentioned, and the overall scope of their project. Approximately one-third of those interviewed had only limited impact, and a few had no impact at all. The few that had no impact were poorly conceived and had an extremely narrow scope.

responsibilities and their workplaces. Some post-fellowship projects overlapped directly with the Foreign Fellows' work and work responsibilities, and some, while thematically related, constituted distinct activities in the local communities, or at regional or national levels. Post-fellowship projects also varied hugely in scope: some projects consisted of targeted circumscribed activities for particular audiences, while others were focused more on larger-scale social change.

Illustrative examples of post-fellowship projects are presented below. These include a mix of projects with differing intended audiences, areas of implementation, and project scope.

Where Post-Fellowship Projects Were Implemented:

Workplace Projects

- ❖ An Indian Fellow's work portfolio and PFP post-fellowship project were perfectly aligned. During the U.S.-based fellowship, he was placed in a foreign policy think tank, where he was able to learn how the think tank was organized and how it engages foreign scholars on a regular basis. His project was to set up a study program for scholars with a focus on Indian relations at his home foreign policy institution. The project has evolved into an ongoing policy study series, and a flagship conference on the Indian Ocean Region. It has helped establish stronger ties with U.S. foreign policy researchers.
- ❖ A human rights lawyer from Thailand was working for an NGO focused on urban refugee rights. As part of her job, she initiated a paralegal training program for refugees, so they could be better advocates for themselves and their communities. Her post-fellowship project was to expand and grow this capacity-building initiative. The U.S. Fellow had a clear role in this project, which was implemented in part during the reciprocal exchange. According to Foreign Fellow's colleague at their home organization, the U.S. Fellow provided trainings all over Thailand on how the U.S. deals with refugee issues. These trainings were of great benefit to the Thai refugee-support community.

Community Projects

- ❖ A Fellow from Peru implemented a community environmental education project, engaged 121 volunteers and collected 27 tons of electronics to recycle. Her professional responsibilities, however, had to do with environmental regulation. As a result of the PFP, she 1) was promoted to the position of director within her organization, overseeing 150 staff; 2) introduced new tools for monitoring compliance; 3) became recognized by leadership as the "go to person in her organization," and 4) drafted a new national law to regulate small businesses regarding environmental monitoring. Her home organization supervisor spoke in glowing terms about the pride the Fellow takes in her work, her desire to make an impact, and her ability to be innovative with ideas and technology.
- ❖ A Fellow from Indonesia was working for a joint venture in the telecommunications industry as a corporate engagement specialist, with a focus on diversity and inclusion, when she applied for the PFP. Upon her return, she convinced the management of her home organization to adopt a framework for women's empowerment and inclusion because "it would benefit the company in terms of business." As a result, she was promoted and her responsibilities were expanded to include government relationships. In parallel, she was working to implement a community project to teach creative writing to youths (aged 8-18) to help them share their voices. At the time of her interview for the

evaluation, she was working to establish a collaboration with the national library to utilize library spaces for the writing workshops.

Post-Fellowship Project Scope

Foreign Fellows developed projects based on their personal and professional interests and the perceived needs of their organizations, communities, and countries. The projects varied considerably in their scope, reach, and intended sphere of influence/impact.

Host Supervisor Feedback on Post-Fellowship Project Scope

Some supervisors suggested Foreign Fellows had difficulty defining the scope of their post-fellowship projects to something “doable” given resource constraints.

Post-fellowship projects with a defined number of activities and a well-defined target audience:

- ❖ Meetings and workshops with practitioners, NGOs, and policymakers to raise awareness about child abuse and child protection (Georgia);
- ❖ Trainings on sexual behavior, reproductive health, and HIV prevention with poor women outside of the capital (Egypt); and
- ❖ Workshops and trainings on public engagement communication strategies for national and local government officials (Georgia).

Post-fellowship projects specifically directed at bettering local communities:

- ❖ An Egyptian Fellow built school-based playgrounds to help integrate Syrian refugee children and combat bullying;
- ❖ A Peruvian Fellow helped establish a community vegetable garden;
- ❖ A Cambodian Fellow established an English Learning Center to teach youth computer literacy, life skills, new languages, and leadership skills;
- ❖ A Bulgarian Fellow created BraveLab, a safe space for the LGBTQ youth community;
- ❖ A Nepalese Fellow established Health at Home, which delivers healthcare services at home for those who cannot easily access external healthcare services. Now, 10 years later, Health at Home has grown to include 300+ employees, most of them women.

Far-reaching post-fellowship projects at the national level:

- ❖ In Thailand, a male Fellow employed at the Ministry of Education worked with more than 67 colleges to improve their vocational education curriculum and improve the management capacity of their administrators.
- ❖ In India, a female Fellow serving as the national media coordinator for the Indian Youth Congress had a project to expand media operations into the regions by recruiting local youth. More than 3,000 individuals applied, and more than 300 were selected to serve as local spokesmen/spokeswomen for the party during critical election campaigns.
- ❖ A male Fellow from Georgia employed at the Ministry of Internal Affairs worked to develop legislation around car safety (i.e., car seats and seatbelts) and drunk driving.

PFP to Alumni Engagement Innovation Fund (AEIF)

A Foreign Fellow from Tanzania registered her cashew farm after she came back from the PFP. The business has grown, and she just won an AEIF grant to train 100 women to process the outputs of her farm. This project has a significant impact on the economic livelihood of the women in her community.

- ❖ A male Fellow from Indonesia drafted the first-ever legislation recognizing disability rights. This legislation has subsequently been passed into law.

Impacts without a Post-Fellowship Project

Although implementing their post-fellowship project is a current requirement of the PFP, not all Foreign Fellows had a defined post-fellowship project to implement. Foreign Fellows from the earlier cohorts – those who travelled in 2013 and 2014 – were more likely than Foreign Fellows in the more recent years to report they did not have a project to implement because it was not a requirement at the time they participated. According to the survey, 15% and 20% of Foreign Fellows in 2013 and 2014 respectively did not have a project to implement. That number decreased with Fellows who participated in the program between 2015 and 2018, with the percentage of Foreign Fellows without a post-fellowship project ranging from 5% to 10%. Other Foreign Fellows with projects were not always able to implement them, or for some reason, chose not to implement them. It is important to emphasize the ability of the Foreign Fellows to make a difference in their communities is not predicated on having a post-fellowship project. Examples of significant impact without such a project or without implementing one include:

- ❖ An activist Fellow who is transgender from Thailand won a major court case against a university for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, became a popular lecturer on issues of discrimination, and the leader of a political party focused on inclusion. Her PFP project to engage high school students in discussions about gender and sexuality was not implemented because it was not approved by the government and school authorities. Nevertheless, she has become a leading voice on these issues in Thailand.
- ❖ Although a Fellow from India with a focus on rural development did not have a specific PFP project, she has accomplished many things in her home community. She has been able to improve the economic situation of more than 2,000 families in a farming cooperative. She did this by introducing farmers to new mechanisms for weeding; introducing a grading machine to sort produce based on quality; establishing collection centers so farmers can store produce out of the elements (as opposed to on the road); and introducing scales so farmers receive a fair, standardized price for higher quality produce.

Change Agents at the Top

Several staffers to the Parliament of Georgia were Foreign Fellows. The first vice-speaker of the parliament was a participant in the Legislative Fellows Program, the predecessor to the PFP. (Her chief of staff is a Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) alumna). All were inspired by their PFP experiences, and have a special bond that is attributable to their time in the United States on an exchange. The concentration and synergy among these like-minded professionals with an energy and desire for change in a position to have positive impact on the direction of the country is an exemplary model of PFP success.

Increased Credibility

One the most important intangibles of the PFP is the increased credibility attributed to Foreign Fellows, their post-fellowship projects, and even their broader professional work and aspirations because of their experience as a PFP participant and exposure to the U.S. professional environment while placed in a U.S. host organization during their time in the United States. Foreign Fellows, their home organization colleagues, and the U.S. host organization supervisors all recognized having a U.S. professional associated with Foreign Fellows' post-fellowship

projects supplemented their credibility. Having American experts interact and engage with the Foreign Fellows' stakeholders gave the Foreign Fellows and their post-fellowship projects even more influence and authority.

- ❖ A U.S. Fellow to Peru said the greatest benefit of her exchange was to give credibility to the Foreign Fellows' post-fellowship projects. She traveled as part of a delegation, and met with many Foreign Fellows and their counterparts/stakeholders in Trujillo.
- ❖ A U.S. Fellow to Georgia who went on an individual exchange said "Coming from [the United States] with words of wisdom about best practices on including stakeholders in developing policy" gave credibility to the Foreign Fellow's post-fellowship project.

4.3 U.S. Communities

The benefits and impacts of the PFP flow in both directions. U.S. communities derived significant benefits by having a Foreign Fellow or multiple Foreign Fellows in their community. The contributions of the Foreign Fellows were evident at all levels across communities: among supervisors, day-to-day contacts, and colleagues at U.S. host organizations, at other organizations the Foreign Fellows visited, and among the homestay families and their social circles. U.S. Fellows who travelled on reciprocal exchanges benefitted personally, but also shared their newfound cultural knowledge and new perspectives in their workplaces and social circles when they returned.

U.S. Host Organizations

The U.S. host organization supervisors, day-to-day contacts, and U.S. Fellows who responded to the survey represented a wide range of organizations, spread across the United States. The sample of organizations comprises all sectors, all sizes, all stages of maturity (organizational age), in areas with different concentrations of population (urban/rural). U.S. host organization

supervisors and day-to-day contacts believed having a Foreign Fellow or Fellows in their midst was a value-add for their organizations. As **Figure 12** shows, those surveyed believed the Foreign Fellows' most important contribution stemmed from the international and intercultural perspectives they brought to host organizations and communities; 85% said they benefitted "to a great extent" from having a Foreign Fellow.²⁴ Almost the same

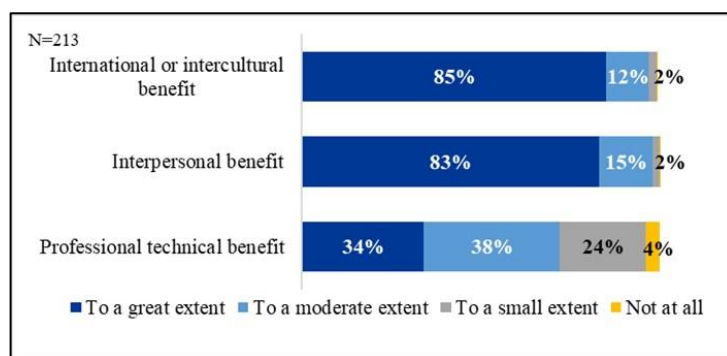


Figure 12. U.S. Host Organization Benefits from Hosting a Foreign Fellow

percentage found their personal relationships to be beneficial. While U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts were relatively less enthusiastic about the direct professional benefits to their organizations from having a Foreign Fellow, they were still positive about the Foreign Fellows' technical contributions. As noted earlier in the report and as testament to the

²⁴ There is no statistically significant relationship between organizational sector and assessment of benefits listed in Figure 10 of hosting a Foreign Fellow for the host organizations. This may possibly be driven by the small sample size of host organization respondents, but it is more likely all sectors really are positive about the experience and benefits.

value U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts attribute to the PFP, almost all interviewed said they would host a Foreign Fellow again and would recommend the program to others. These two findings together speak to the inherent value these host communities place in broadening their worldviews, fostering mutual understanding, and developing cross-border friendships.

An expanded worldview

U.S. host organization supervisors spoke about how having a Foreign Fellow helped diversify and expand their own horizons and their teams. Examples of the ways in which Foreign Fellows contributed to their U.S. host organizations are provided below.

- ❖ A host organization supervisor based in Oklahoma, who hosted a Fellow from India, said the best part of the whole experience was the cultural exchange. He recalled in his interview how they talked extensively about the differences between Indian and U.S. culture, family, and marriage.
- ❖ A host organization supervisor from a small city in Oregon noted, while the community itself was quite diverse, his staff had very little international exposure. The Fellow from Thailand, as well as the other Foreign Fellows he had hosted, “internationalized” his office, and helped his staff to recognize commonalities with the Foreign Fellows.
- ❖ A three-time host from Kansas wrote, Foreign Fellows “provide my staff with an opportunity to expand their horizons ... and this works to combat stereotypes and bigotry.”
- ❖ Similarly, a host supervisor from Massachusetts explained how most of the staff had not had a chance to work in the developing world, and how having someone from a developing country like Peru was illuminating for them because it helped them to appreciate all the resources, benefits, regulations, etc., they have access to in their daily personal and work lives.

Self-Reflection

Hosting a Foreign Fellow led U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts to reflect on daily routines and ways of doing business. Having time to think about their daily work inspired them to make changes to how they work and allowed them to see their work through someone else’s eyes.

- ❖ A host organization supervisor from Tennessee, whose Indonesian Fellow’s interests were not perfectly aligned with her organization – her focus was wastewater management and her Foreign Fellow’s focus was marine biology – realized she could be more proactive and inclusive in her approach to her job. She saw how easy it would be to engage with NGOs in her work.
- ❖ In the words of another host from Missouri who served as a host organization supervisor three times: “In preparing and supporting the Foreign Fellows, it forced our organization to examine what we were proud of as an organization and what we know we can do better ... and be able to share both.”

Professional Energy, Ideas, and Comparative Perspectives

The Foreign Fellows inspired their hosts, bringing new ideas and energy to the professional conversation.

- ❖ A Mongolian Fellow inspired his host organization to think about venturing outside of the organization's focus on music to explore other arts.
- ❖ Another host described how the Foreign Fellows provided valuable insight into different ways issues of poverty, economic development, migration, etc., are being addressed in other countries.
- ❖ According to one host, Foreign Fellows were able to provide concrete examples of how the courts and penal systems operate in their home country. This in turn allowed the host organization to have conversations with stakeholders, planting the seeds for improvements within the U.S. system.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows' cross-cultural perspectives on water, sanitation, housing, and emergency management gave the host organization ideas about how they could simplify things.

"The Foreign Fellows that I hosted brought a perspective from Eastern Europe to our agency that we did not have. They work with Roma youth and families and generate revenue and change in their communities in a totally different way. They showed us what a true grass roots agency and program looks like."

U.S. host organization supervisor

Concrete Contributions to the Work of the U.S. Host Organizations

The U.S. host organizations also benefitted from Foreign Fellows' concrete technical contributions and work products, not just from their comparative perspectives. Concrete contributions ranged from:

- ❖ Writing research papers
- ❖ Assisting with international conferences
- ❖ Designing websites
- ❖ Giving lectures/classes
- ❖ Conducting evaluations
- ❖ Writing business plans
- ❖ Creating a database for an NGO focused on homelessness
- ❖ Compiling data on wheelchair-accessible taxis and for-hire vehicles in a large urban area
- ❖ Conducting an organizational assessment and drafting a report on how the office did/did not operate within a human rights framework

Additionally, some Foreign Fellows served as points of contact for their U.S. organizational hosts for access to the local market to create possibilities for investment and trade.

- ❖ A Fellow from Egypt wrote an assessment on the viability/utility of her U.S. host organization opening a local office in Egypt.
- ❖ A host organization supervisor who had hosted a Foreign Fellow from the East Asia and Pacific region noted the Fellow and his YSEALI counterparts served as great contacts in their home markets.
- ❖ A host organization supervisor, whose Foreign Fellow worked with local artisans, tasked him to develop a price list for the American market.

One particular point stands out when reviewing the host organization supervisor and day-to-day contact interview and survey responses: respondents made repeated references regarding the contributions the Foreign Fellows made to their U.S. host organizations. These responses were more positive and provided more detail on the Foreign Fellows' technical contributions than the survey and interview responses of the Foreign Fellows. As seen in **Figure 12**, 72% of the host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts felt the Foreign Fellows contributed to their U.S. host organizations to a great or moderate extent (34% and 38%, respectively). In contrast, in their interviews, only 39% of the Foreign Fellows believed their hosts benefitted from their technical contributions. Most Foreign Fellows did not specify what those contributions were. This may have to do with cultural norms and an aversion to bragging, it may also just reflect they came with the orientation/conviction it was their opportunity to learn and perhaps did not fully process how appreciative the U.S. audiences were.

“My supervisor was sharing that they benefitted so much from me that they were wondering [if] I benefitted from them as well. Everyone was saying that I brought different spirit and different ideas into their working life.... My supervisor said that I always woke them up.”

Female Foreign Fellow, Georgia

The greater U.S. host organization community

As seen in the interviews, the benefits to having Foreign Fellows in residence extended beyond the immediate contacts with whom the Foreign Fellows worked. U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts introduced the Foreign Fellow to other groups and divisions within their organizations. In smaller organizations, the whole organization/community benefitted from the Foreign Fellows, with Fellows incorporated into the full working team. Further, almost all Foreign Fellows mentioned giving presentations about their country at brownbag lunches or other informal meetings at work. For example, staff from the U.S. Council on Disabilities developed a better understanding of the status of disability rights in Indonesia because of the Foreign Fellow's presentation during a brownbag lunch. The Foreign Fellow also connected her host organization to the Indonesian Embassy in Washington, D.C. When the U.S. host organization was fortunate to have one of their staff selected as a U.S. Fellow, the organization also benefitted from the U.S. Fellow's experiences overseas. During their professional placements, Foreign Fellows visited other organizations and met with professional contacts outside their host organizations. From the interviews with Foreign Fellows and U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, it became apparent the impetus for these visits came from:

- ❖ Host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts who introduced their Foreign Fellows to people in their wider professional network;
- ❖ Foreign Fellows who did research and reached out to professionals they were interested in meeting on their own;
- ❖ Other Foreign Fellows who shared their newly acquired contacts;
- ❖ Homestay families; and
- ❖ “Field visits” organized by the U.S. implementing partners or by the U.S. host organizations.

Regardless of who organized these meetings, other organizations benefitted from meeting the Foreign Fellows. While most of the time the benefits to the wider community of organizations

were amorphous – related to cultural exchange and sharing of other perspectives – in some instances, the benefits were concrete. As an example, a Fellow from India made a recommendation to the farm she visited, during her fellowship, to compost rather than waste poorer quality produce. A different Fellow from India helped his host supervisor to establish a relationship with one of the professional contacts he met during his time in Washington, D.C.

U.S. Fellows

U.S. Fellows who travelled on the reciprocal exchange had a “double-benefit” from the PFP. U.S. Fellows were able to share and learn from the Foreign Fellows while they were in the United States and also when they were on the reciprocal exchange. **Figure 13** presents the survey results with respect to what the U.S. Fellows gained on the exchange. U.S. Fellows were able to see and personally experience the context in which the Foreign Fellows worked – the work “on the ground”

– and in doing so, gain a new perspective, learn new ways of doing things, and even explore new markets. The following examples are taken from the interviews with U.S. Fellows:

- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from Ohio with early childhood education expertise was inspired by the resilience of the children and families she met living in the slums in India. One of the best moments of her trip was seeing children drawing the in midst of overwhelming squalor.
- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from the California State Senate staff developed a more disciplined approach to public speaking since he had to work through a translator. From his meetings with his staff counterparts in Georgia, he recognized the commonalities among staffers working in government. As a communications specialist, he was accustomed to setting up interviews; during his visit, he experienced what it was like to “be on the other side” when he was interviewed by the local media.
- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from Massachusetts with a focus on environmental consulting and ecological restoration was able to gather scientific data during her visit to Peru she later used in a published paper.
- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from Pennsylvania developed a strong business collaboration with his Foreign Fellow from Singapore. They have an export-import business together, and they speak to each other once a week.

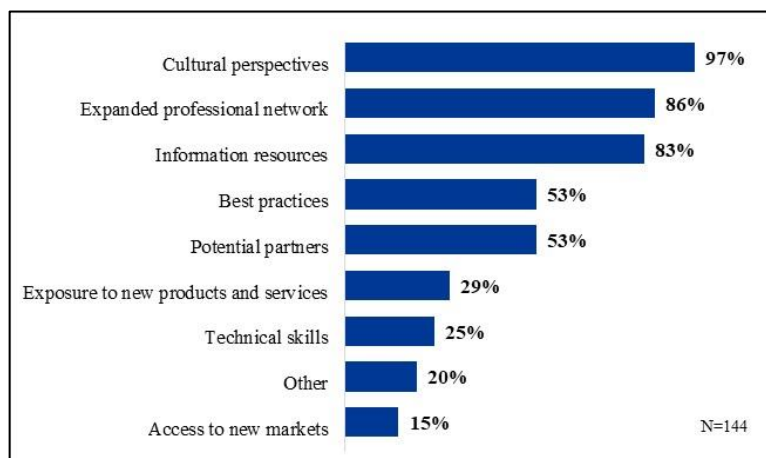


Figure 13. What U.S. Fellows Gained on Their Exchange

Traveling outside of the United States gave the U.S. Fellows insight into the position and role of the United States in the world.

- ❖ One U.S. Fellow reflected on how “the education system in the U.S. does not prepare students for a global economy or even a global world. I met a 4-year-old who speaks three languages.”
- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from Florida who went to Ukraine said: “I more fully appreciated the US's role in the world, the importance of having a strong democracy, and the importance of strong governmental institutions, particularly in overseeing and checking government power and corruption.”

“I didn't realize the extent of the U.S. Embassy's involvement in on-going capacity building in the countries, which was very positive.... [I didn't realize] how many local staff work for the U.S. Embassy.”

U.S. Fellow to Laos

A U.S. Fellow to Algeria perhaps best summarized the relationship between work, the exchange, and a more connected world. In the U.S. Fellow's view, the professional context is the vehicle for understanding:

“I had no previous knowledge of my host country before I went on the reciprocal exchange. I truly enjoyed the learning experience. People in my host country have the same struggles, challenges, and joys as we do in the U.S. While one understands that before going on the exchange, it isn't until you talk to other people doing similar work does it move from theory to reality.”

U.S. Fellow to Algeria

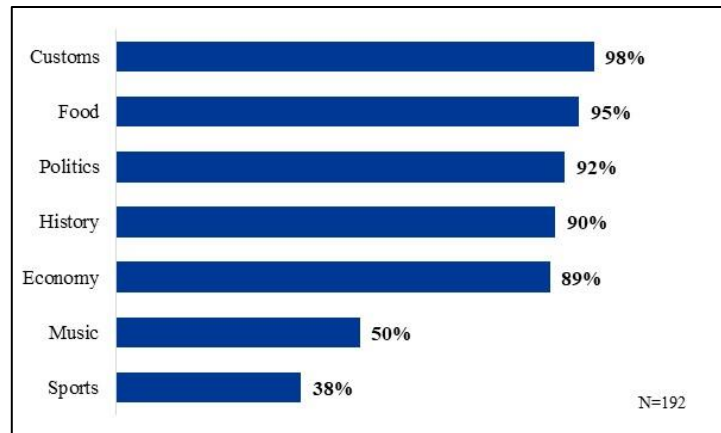
In both the survey responses and in the interviews, U.S. Fellows expressed a sense of pride in serving as “ambassadors” for the United States in the countries they visited during their reciprocal exchanges.

- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from Virginia wrote an open-ended response on the survey about representing the United States in the Philippines: “I learned more about the important relationship between the Philippines and the U.S. and it made me feel proud to somehow represent American democracy in the Philippines. The immersion into Filipino culture was an amazing experience and I left with a deep appreciation for its history, people, hospitality, and food!”
- ❖ A U.S. Fellow from Pennsylvania described during his interview how his reciprocal exchange to Armenia was one of the most meaningful events of his life, in part because of the pride and satisfaction he felt from being an unofficial ambassador for the United States.

When U.S. Fellows returned from their exchange, they were equipped with new knowledge, and comparative perspectives and approaches they then shared with their colleagues.

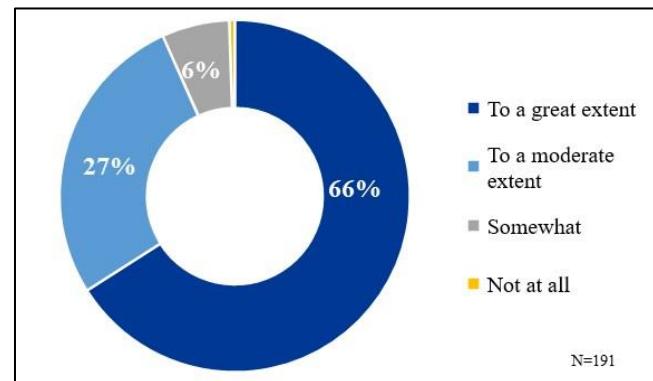
U.S. Homestay Families

From the homestay family perspective, hosting a Foreign Fellow was a gratifying experience for several reasons including: exposure to different cultures; learning about the history and politics of the countries their Foreign Fellows came from; and in some instances, exchanging professional experiences and viewpoints with their Foreign Fellows.



In interviews, homestay families were clear about the benefits of hosting for expanding the worldviews of their families. As one host mother put it, “We get to travel without travelling.” A different homestay father who hosted multiple Foreign Fellows explained how his horizons were expanded both internationally and within his own community through hosting. He gave the example of learning his community had halal markets as he strove to satisfy the dietary needs of his Muslim Foreign Fellow.

As seen in **Figures 14 and 15**, more than 90% of homestay family survey respondents said the hosting experience improved their understanding of other cultures to a great or moderate extent. They were less likely to learn about sports and music than about customs, food, politics, history, and economy.



Some homestay hosts also described a sense of personal gratification (and “fun”) in watching the Foreign Fellows develop professional and personal relationships with other Fellows. A homestay mother, who also served as the local coordinator, gave the example of how her two Foreign Fellows, who had never lived away from home before the PFP, grew as a result of their experience: “It was nice to see them grow and take on responsibility for their actions.” Another homestay host explained gratification in a slightly different way; she herself had travelled to Georgia many times and having a Georgian Fellow stay in her home allowed her family and circle of friends to see for themselves why she was so enamored of Georgia. In other words, the experience made her community understand her more.

The experience of hosting also inspired hosts to visit countries they had not visited before. The connections and friendships forged during the homestay were manifested in return visits by the homestay family survey respondents and their families: more than a quarter (27%) had visited their Foreign Fellow(s), 13% had taken their whole family on the visit, while 13% had sent a

different family member. Almost one-fifth (18%) of the hosts reported their Foreign Fellow had come back to visit them after the PFP.

Wider Communities

Benefits from the PFP accrued to the wider community as well. Foreign Fellows gave presentations about their home countries, culture, and food in the wider host community. They met with the friends and acquaintances of their homestay hosts and sometimes the social circles of their colleagues. They also gave presentations at cultural centers, libraries, and schools. A member of the House of Representatives in Illinois spoke about how the Foreign Fellow was part of his outreach to his constituents; the Foreign Fellow visited an elementary school with him and gave a presentation to 4th graders. They were “dazzled” by her, and she “put Georgia on the map” for them and for him.

4.4 Networks and Collaboration

One of the main goals of the PFP is to establish a network of like-minded professionals with common professional interests and goals, which is supported throughout the various program components. The U.S. implementing partners sow the seeds for regional networking when they place Foreign Fellows from different countries within the same region in shared houses or homestay families. The professional placements at U.S. host organizations foster connections between Foreign Fellows and American professionals. Homestay hospitality visits and longer homestays allow Foreign Fellows to connect with a broader spectrum of American society. Finally, the Congress provides the Foreign Fellows with a dedicated time and place to share and network amongst themselves.

On the survey of Foreign Fellows, virtually all respondents (97%) said they were still in contact with people they met during their program. Perhaps the most important finding from the surveys of Foreign Fellows and U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, supported by the interviews with both groups, is the contacts shift over time from being professional to more personal. The interviews highlight an important distinction between on-going professional contacts and instances of true concrete collaboration yielding some kind of output. Most contact between Foreign Fellows and their U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organizations supervisors, and day-to-day contacts, and among Foreign Fellows themselves was about providing professional updates, sharing opportunities, asking for references, and sometimes sharing ideas.

The specific connections with different stakeholders are described below.

Connections with Foreign Fellows

The responses to the Foreign Fellow survey reveal strong networks among Foreign Fellows (see **Figure 16**). Seventy-nine percent were collaborating and sharing ideas, approaches, and strategies with Foreign Fellows in their home countries. Half were doing so with Foreign Fellows from other countries.

As seen in **Figure 17**, more than 50% of the Foreign Fellows were communicating on a weekly or monthly basis with other Foreign Fellows from their home countries. Foreign Fellows communicated primarily via social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook groups. In each country, every cohort had its own WhatsApp group, but there was also a program-wide group. According to the interviews, Foreign Fellows frequently communicated with each other via social media, often weekly. Foreign Fellows also met face-to-face for tea/coffee or other social engagements, but less frequently given their busy schedules and other commitments. Most Foreign

Fellows belonged to their respective alumni associations, but the strength of the formal alumni associations varied by country. In the case of countries included in YSEALI, the Foreign Fellows felt their identity was somehow lost in the larger YSEALI brand. Some felt YSEALI alumni activities were more oriented towards the younger, academic alumni, rather than towards mid-level professional PFP alumni.²⁵

Foreign Fellows explained during the interviews their shared living arrangements and clustered placements helped to cement their personal bonds. These regional ties were apparent from the number of mutual visits and collaborations among Foreign Fellows within regions.

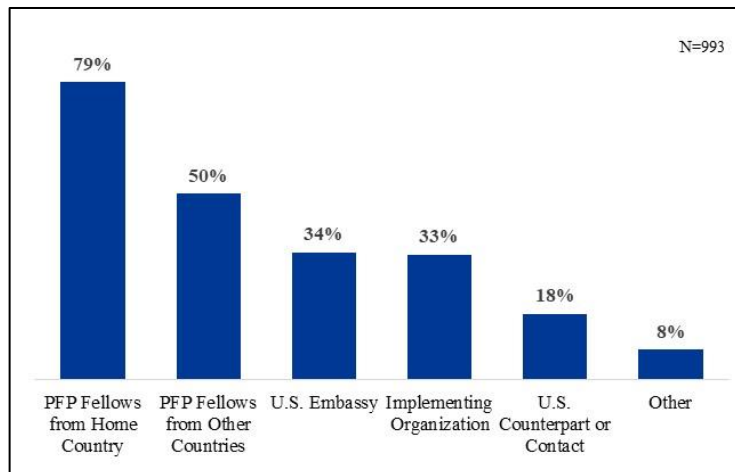


Figure 16. Foreign Fellows Collaborating and Sharing Approaches and Strategies

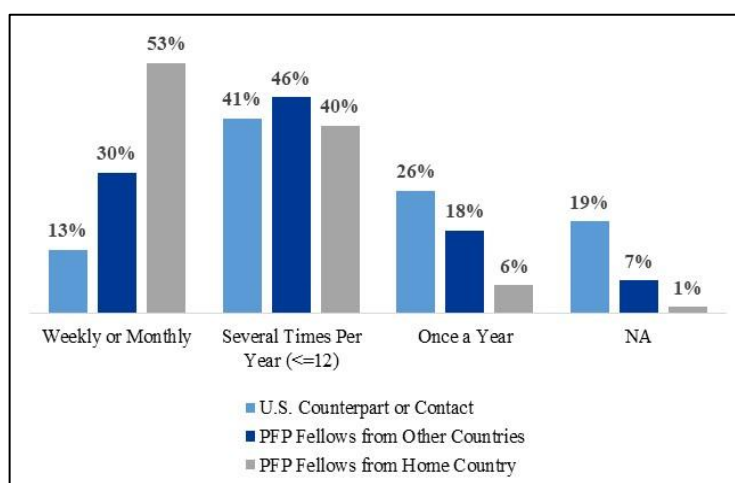


Figure 17. Frequency of Contact among Foreign Fellows and Their Networks

²⁵ For more information about differences between Foreign Fellows falling under the YSEALI umbrella and those from other regions, please refer to **Appendix C**.

- ❖ Fellows from Thailand and Indonesia were placed together with Fellows from Myanmar, the Philippines, and Singapore. Almost everyone spoke about mutual visits, attending regional conferences, and working together. A Fellow from Indonesia whose expertise was in drug policy, was invited by a German NGO in Myanmar to consult on converting opium fields to other uses. At the same time, he visited a Fellow from his PFP cohort.
- ❖ Egyptian and Algerian Fellows also formed close friendships when they lived together. A female Egyptian Fellow received a visit from an Algerian Fellow, and planned to work with her.
- ❖ Slovenian and Bosnian Fellows cemented their relationships made during the fellowship through joint activities organized by World Chicago, and through the yearly summits in the region. The Slovenian Fellows praised the activity as a way of extending the PFP experience and building relationships and collaborations throughout the Balkans.
- ❖ In an example of regional collaboration, at the time of her interview for the evaluation, a Fellow from Slovenia recounted she had just returned from Bosnia, where she was a speaker and mentor at an event organized by a Bosnian Fellow and funded by the U.S. embassy.

Connections with U.S. Professionals

According to the survey, 18% of the Foreign Fellows are currently sharing content (strategies, ideas, and approaches) with their U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts (**Figure 16**). Furthermore, **Figure 17** shows the frequency of contact. Only 13% are in weekly or monthly communication with their U.S. counterparts, 41% are in contact several times a year, and 26% are in contact once a year. As noted above, over time, the content of the communications between Foreign Fellows and their U.S. counterparts appears to shift away from the professional to the personal. Foreign Fellows spoke about receiving information about opportunities for conferences, fellowships, resources, etc., from their U.S. host supervisors, but rarely indicated what professional content was flowing back and forth. In other words, the collaboration/sharing was predominantly one-way flow, with the main beneficiaries being the Foreign Fellows, not the U.S. counterparts. A U.S. host organization supervisor described his contacts with his Foreign Fellow this way: “I have nominated her for a couple of awards and written letters of reference for her job applications, she initiated a couple of projects in her home country similar to the project she worked on with us here, and asks questions, sends updates, etc.” Over time, the sharing shifted to be mainly social and personal – occasional emails, birthday wishes, etc. The survey responses from the U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts verify the shift. Forty-seven percent of the U.S. hosts were still in contact with their Foreign Fellows, but for 88% of those in contact, the relationship is primarily personal.

“... Collaborating is too strong a word. Professionally they [the Foreign Fellows] seek out mentorship or references for other programs.”
U.S. host organization supervisor

There are two significant contributing factors to the general lack of sustained professional collaborations between the Foreign Fellows and their U.S. counterparts. First, Foreign Fellows did not appear to fully understand the goal of the program to establish on-going professional relationships. In the survey, virtually none (2%) identified establishing ties with American professionals as a motivation for applying to the program. Secondly, U.S. host organization

supervisors were not clear about the long-term expectation for on-going collaboration with the Foreign Fellows. Any on-going relationships seem to be the result of individual initiatives on the part of the Foreign Fellows and their colleagues from their respective U.S. host organizations.

From the fieldwork, there are two noteworthy exceptions of truly collaborative, ongoing initiatives with clear benefits accruing to both sides. These initiatives are exemplary PFP collaboration.

- ❖ A Fellow from India participated in the U.S. program implemented by the University of Oklahoma with the idea of learning new strategies to expand and develop his Eye Clinic. During his fellowship, he coincidentally connected with a doctor with a specialty in glaucoma, who became his de facto host. According to both the Foreign Fellow and his host, this is a growing collaboration. The host has visited the Foreign Fellow's Eye Clinic four times, performed surgeries, and conducted trainings there, and he is now working with the Foreign Fellow to establish a residency program in India where American medical residents can do a practicum and the Eye Clinic can benefit from U.S. expertise and labor.
- ❖ A Fellow from Slovenia who was an administrator at GEA College, a private college, forged a collaboration with DePaul University in Chicago to implement a holistic, hands-on 360-degree methodology in their business and entrepreneurship program. The U.S. host organization supervisor (who was also a U.S. Fellow) is supposed to return to Slovenia to teach for several months, and they have filed a number of grant applications to support the teaching exchange moving forward.

Connections with the U.S. Embassy

As seen in **Figure 18**, nearly three-quarters (73%) of the Foreign Fellows who responded to the survey are still in contact in some form with the U.S. embassy. One-third (34%) asserted they were collaborating in some way with the U.S. embassy.

Notably, the same proportion said they were collaborating with the U.S. implementing partner (**Figure 16**). From the interviews, the Foreign Fellows appear to have a stronger relationship with the U.S. implementing partners than with the U.S. embassies, even though DoS is the program sponsor. This closer relationship is due to the frequency of communication with the U.S. implementing partners, in-country partners and offices, from initial recruitment through program experience to alumni activities on the backend.

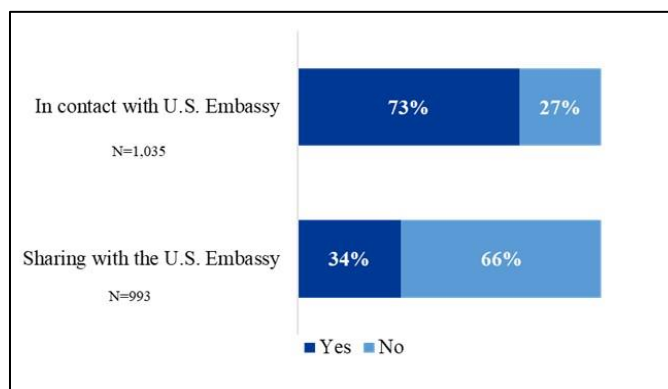


Figure 18. Foreign Fellows' Relationship with U.S. Embassies

Often, the contact lists of PFP alumni at the embassies are not always comprehensive and up-to-date, making ongoing communication more difficult. Interviews with embassy staff and the Foreign Fellows in both India and Peru revealed different reasons for the gaps in the PFP alumni

lists. In Peru, turnover at the embassy and the end of the grant for the U.S. implementing partner, and hence the local in-country partner, contributed to the exclusion of some Foreign Fellows from embassy-sponsored events. In India, the responsibility for the program was split between the embassy in New Delhi and the consulate in Mumbai. When alumni moved from one region to the other, they became “lost” if they did not actively update their contact information with the entity responsible for their new location.

Foreign Fellows are happy to have contact with the U.S. embassies, but not entirely satisfied with it. As expressed in their interviews, they generally feel underutilized professionally by the U.S. embassies. Given the investment the DoS has made in their professional development and their personal commitments to be a force for social change, Foreign Fellows are hungry for more opportunities to engage with the U.S. embassies in their home countries. The interviews show they see themselves as subject matter experts who are equipped and ready to help the embassy advance its strategic and public diplomacy goals. Rather than being only invited to social and networking events, Foreign Fellows want to be engaged in their professional capacities as a way of giving back. However, embassies and in-country partners do regularly involve selected Foreign Fellows to help orient new cohorts of Foreign Fellows.

“They help me a lot. When I face these challenges, I know there’s the U.S. Embassy, they know me really well and what I do because I always keep them posted about my success, if I have a project, if I want to teach something.”
Female Foreign Fellow, Georgia

Community of U.S. Fellows

The community of U.S. Fellows is relatively weak. There are very few connections amongst U.S. Fellows. The survey shows while U.S. Fellows are invited to register in the International Exchange Online Community, only about one-third have registered, and of those, only one-third consider themselves to be actively engaged (meaning, just over 10% are engaged). None of the U.S. Fellows interviewed were in contact with any other U.S. Fellow.

Although the U.S. Fellows are grateful for the opportunity to travel and open their horizons, they do not appear to conceive of themselves as PFP program participants or alumni of the DoS. One of the reasons for this is most likely the fact the selection process to be a U.S. Fellow is unclear for some, and handled variably across the implementing partners.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The PFP is a complex program designed to stimulate the creative energy, intellectual curiosity, and optimistic visions of professionals around the world to solve local, regional, and global problems. To make it work from a purely logistical standpoint, the program requires the involvement of a wide range of individuals, organizations, and community actors across the United States to welcome foreign participants. To be successful, the program must find and invite forward-thinking, mid-career professionals with clear professional objectives to pursue opportunities to learn and connect with their U.S. counterparts. Masterful matching between these professionals and their U.S. hosts creates the foundation for lasting impact and benefits in the United States and abroad.

5.1 Conclusions

The data collected during this evaluation demonstrate unequivocally the program is meeting its intended goals and supports larger U.S. foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives. Foreign Fellows acquire new skills, gather information, broaden their perspectives and create professional networks. They return to their countries with self-confidence as leaders, and make changes in their home organizations and communities. As with any program or project, there is room for the program to grow and evolve. Before turning to recommendations, we present our conclusions with respect to each of the major research questions.

PFP Support for U.S. Foreign Policy

PFP support for U.S. strategic priorities and public diplomacy goals is evidenced by the selection of programmatic themes, regional implementation models, and on-going support for regional alumni activities and networks.

- ❖ In the early years of the PFP, program themes were selected every year. Starting in FY 2014, the thematic selection cycle shifted to a three-year cycle. The ECA Program Office works with the regional bureaus and embassies to select the program themes that align with U.S. strategic priorities and interests in each respective region. The thematic portfolio shifts over time to reflect and accommodate emerging country and regional needs to ensure the program supports with U.S. foreign policy.
- ❖ The ECA Program Office supports global and regional foreign policy objectives through a region-specific implementation model. U.S. partners are selected to implement the PFP, including promoting the program and recruiting and identifying the best possible candidates, based on their regional expertise. U.S. embassies work closely with these U.S. implementing partners and in-country partners and offices in each country.
- ❖ U.S. interests in brokering positive and productive relationships between countries is furthered by the model of placing Foreign Fellows in the United States in clusters, based on specific regions, whereas other “scatter” their Foreign Fellows in pairs or smaller groups. For example, Foreign Fellows from Egypt are co-located with Foreign Fellows from Algeria. Foreign Fellows from India are co-located with Foreign Fellows from Pakistan, Kashmir, and Bangladesh. This strategy has the immediate effect of helping to breakdown stereotypes, demystify the “other,” and foster mutual understanding. It has the longer-term effect of bringing citizens from disparate countries together in friendship for a better future.
- ❖ U.S. investments in local and regional PFP alumni activities and networks have a trickle-down effect to local institutions and businesses that fall within the perimeter of U.S. interests. U.S. implementing partners, in coordination with U.S. embassies and local in-country partners and offices, facilitate cross-country relationships among alumni within specific regions through annual summits and periodic reunions and meetings.

Meeting Program Goals

The PFP is unique among public diplomacy programs because it promotes mutual understanding by providing an opportunity for both foreign and U.S. exchanging participants to undertake international travel and participate in the exchange program. The two-sided nature of the exchange embeds the “mutual” into the program’s DNA, ensuring a true mutual exchange of ideas and perspectives.

- ❖ The constellation of activities comprising the PFP creates the opportunities for professionals to collaborate and share information, ideas, best practices, challenges, and strategies. The benefits accrue in the exchanges between U.S. and foreign professionals, between foreign professionals of different countries, and in some instances, even in the exchange of information between U.S. professionals themselves.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows attest the program gives them new skills and perspectives that influence how they embrace leadership roles. Foreign Fellows not only see themselves as leaders, but are perceived by others as being leaders. Additionally, the vast array of information Foreign Fellows receive – coupled with new knowledge about methodologies, processes, and policies – creates the basis for introducing change in their workplaces and communities.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows and U.S. Fellows are ambassadors of change connected through a network. Everything the program does is designed to support the development of a global network. Time spent at their professional matches helps the Foreign Fellows to develop relationships with U.S. organizations, U.S. professional counterparts, and U.S. families. Time spent at the PFP Congress supports the Foreign Fellows by giving them time and space to expand their connections and, ultimately, build a global network of like-minded professionals. A key finding of the evaluation is the program is not fully meeting the program goal of building a global network. It is more successful in creating regional and country networks and less successful in creating sustainable networks between the U.S. and foreign professionals.
- ❖ Foreign Fellows come with preconceived notions and expectations about the United States. Working and living with Americans gives them realistic insights into American society and helps them to realize Americans are “just like them”. The same holds true for the U.S. Fellows who travel overseas in the reciprocal exchange.

PFP Bringing Change in Workplaces and Communities

One of the goals of the PFP is to support positive progress and change in local workplaces and communities, both in the countries from which the Foreign Fellows come, and in the U.S. communities they visit.

- ❖ Equipped with their experiences in the United States, the Foreign Fellows change their work dynamics by sharing what they learned, introducing new ideas, taking on additional responsibilities, and assuming leadership roles.
- ❖ Following their time in the U.S., most Foreign Fellows implement concrete post-fellowship projects for change based on their specific goals and professional interests. Because there is considerable variation in project scope, reach, and challenges encountered, it is no surprise there is also variation in the impact of post-fellowship projects. Foreign Fellows also contribute to change, even without post-fellowship projects, just in the course of doing their regular work.
- ❖ When U.S. Fellows travel on reciprocal exchanges, U.S. counterparts contribute substantive expertise, while their presence lends a level of credibility to the Foreign Fellows’ plans. The impacts of the PFP are felt at the local, regional, and even national levels overseas.
- ❖ Changes are also introduced into U.S. workplaces and communities by the Foreign Fellows during their fellowships, by the U.S. Fellows who participate in the reciprocal

exchange and then share their experiences, knowledge, and perspectives with their colleagues and social circles.

5.2 Recommendations

The Foreign Fellows, U.S. Fellows, U.S. host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts, and U.S. homestay families had thoughtful recommendations for improving the program.

- ❖ **Match Foreign Fellows to professional placements earlier and provide advance notice.** A critical element of the PFP program is the fellowship placement of Foreign Fellows at host organizations across the United States. When the interests of the Foreign Fellow and the host organization are not aligned, it is more difficult for the Foreign Fellows to gain the most out of their experience, and it is equally difficult for the organizational hosts to develop a meaningful program for the Foreign Fellows. The best strategy to ensure Fellows are fully able to benefit from their PFP fellowship, is to provide the information to Foreign Fellows and to U.S. host organization supervisors as early as possible. Earlier communication about placements will provide Foreign Fellows sufficient time to do research about the organization, while more information about the Foreign Fellow (their resume and professional goals) will help the U.S. host organization to better plan and accommodate Foreign Fellows' professional needs.
- ❖ **Provide clearer guidance to the U.S. host organizations.** Host organization supervisors and day-to-day contacts will benefit from clearer guidance about a number of programmatic and administrative topics:
 - ✓ Program goals – especially the hope for long-term connection and professional collaboration;
 - ✓ Roles and responsibilities – i.e., the professional level of the Foreign Fellow and who is responsible for developing the plan for the individually tailored fellowship placement;
 - ✓ Purpose and scope of the action plan/post-fellowship project and the host's role vis-a-vis its development;
 - ✓ Need for coordination with social and cultural activities planned by local coordinators or U.S. implementing partners; and
 - ✓ Clear recruitment and selection processes for U.S. Fellows, and clarification about the goals and purpose of the reciprocal exchange.
- ❖ **Give more advance notice and communication with homestay families.** Both Foreign Fellows and homestay families expressed a desire for information about each other in advance of the stay. This is particularly important for the full-time homestays. Host families wanted to know the backgrounds of the Foreign Fellows, as well as information about dietary restrictions, medical issues, allergies, etc. The Foreign Fellows, in turn, wanted advance information to understand their homestay families' expectations about participating in family life. The U.S. implementing partners (through local coordinators or in direct communication with host families) need to communicate clearly to homestay families background information on the PFP, what the PFP professional obligations will be, and what, if any, responsibility the families have for providing/facilitating transportation. Setting expectations early is important given the intensity and short timeframe of the exchange.
- ❖ **Revisit the balance between training and placement.** Some Foreign Fellows whose program entailed a week-long orientation and weekend group training, felt there should

be a better balance between the time spent in training and the time spent at their professional placement. They also felt an over emphasis on training detracted from their ability to fully participate in cultural and social activities.

❖ **Provide accommodations in as close proximity to the workplace as possible.**

Transportation was a big concern for many Foreign Fellows. The lack of public transportation in some areas, coupled with the distance between the host institution and their accommodations, meant some Foreign Fellows had long commutes. They perceived the transportation challenge as impeding their ability to get the most out of their time during the fellowship, as engaging in after-work activities with colleagues, volunteering, or engaging in cultural activities was that much more difficult. Using taxis and other for-hire transportation was cost-prohibitive, given their stipends. While some U.S. implementing partners provide public transit cards to help defray these costs, for Foreign Fellows living in the suburbs with long and expensive commutes, a special “transportation stipend” would be beneficial.

❖ **Reconsider the organization of the PFP Congress.** While Foreign Fellows were extremely positive about the Congress, some felt smaller, more thematically focused or regionally focused sessions would enhance its utility. A narrowed focus will allow Foreign Fellows to better develop their networks in their respective fields and in their regions, and will provide more opportunities for substantive collaboration.

❖ **Strengthen the relationship between U.S. embassies and Foreign Fellows.** There are two parts to this recommendation. The perception of some Foreign Fellows and some embassy staff is the PFP alumni lists are not comprehensive and up to date. This of course makes it difficult for U.S. embassies to reach out to PFP alumni. Secondly, Foreign Fellows expressed a desire to be more actively engaged as professionals by embassies. They want to be invited to networking and social events, but they also want to contribute on concrete projects.

❖ **Suggest, where feasible, hosting multiple Foreign Fellows at a time.** Both U.S. host organization supervisors and homestay families suggested it is both easier for them and more productive for the Foreign Fellows when there were shared placements. Doing so gives the Foreign Fellow a natural partner with whom to do things and to process the experience. They have a “built-in” person to talk with. It also serves the larger purpose of building friendships among Foreign Fellows and breaking down stereotypes, particularly when the Foreign Fellows are from different countries.

The GDIT Evaluation Team has additional recommendations to strengthen the overall efficacy and impact of the program.

❖ **Provide additional support for long-term collaboration between Foreign Fellows and U.S. professionals.** When identifying host organizations and host supervisors, it is important to communicate one of the program goals is long-term collaboration. It is difficult for organizations and individuals to contribute and support continued collaboration, if they are not made explicitly aware of this goal. Additional ways of fostering collaboration between the U.S. professionals and Foreign Fellows include:

- ✓ Adopting the one-to-one project model for the reciprocal exchange to work on a common project, when possible, and assuming security considerations overseas allow for it;
- ✓ Incorporating virtual follow-up sessions;

- ✓ Adding a post-program mentoring component, with regular check-ins after the Foreign Fellows return home.
- ❖ **Define and design the reciprocal exchange.** Currently, there are multiple models for the reciprocal exchange: 1) U.S. counterparts travel to help the Foreign Fellow they hosted with a post-fellowship project; 2) U.S. counterparts travel to work with a Foreign Fellow, but without a specific post-fellowship project role; 3) U.S. counterparts travel as part of a delegation and associate with specific post-fellowship projects and Foreign Fellows who they may or may not have hosted; and 4) individuals travel in delegations, but do not have specific roles.
 - ✓ The GDIT Evaluation Team learned from Foreign Fellows and U.S. Fellows relationships are best cemented when the reciprocal exchange is related to specific projects and specific Foreign Fellows. The more generic the reciprocal exchange, the less useful the experience is for both parties.
 - ✓ It is also important to make it clear to U.S. Fellows the reciprocal visit is not a reward for hosting, but a vital means of fostering long-term professional collaboration and relationships.
 - ✓ PFP should standardize the application for the reciprocal visit and clarify the selection criteria for U.S. Fellows across participating U.S. implementing partners.
- ❖ **Utilize U.S. Fellows during their exchange to support U.S. embassy needs.** U.S. Fellows are a valuable resource for U.S. embassies. They are subject matter experts in their respective fields, and can easily be leveraged to support U.S. embassy needs and objectives. For example, one U.S. Fellow was asked to provide training for the U.S. embassy staff in Myanmar on LGBTQ inclusivity during her exchange. This additional engagement will also strengthen the connection between U.S. Fellows and the U.S. Department of State.
- ❖ **Continue to connect Foreign Fellows regionally.** The PFP's model of a regional approach is a program best practice. Foreign Fellows make strong connections with others in their regions, evidenced both by personal friendships and by professional cross-border collaborations. Continued investments in regional alumni activities, such as the YSEALI conference and the annual summit in the Balkans, will further public diplomacy goals and the program's objective to foster collaboration.
- ❖ **Develop a strategy for staying connected with U.S. Fellows.** The connection between U.S. Fellows and the DoS is quite weak. In general, U.S. Fellows do not seem to think of themselves as DoS alumni. U.S. Fellows are more connected to the U.S. implementing partners than to the PFP, and are not organized as a U.S. alumni community. The U.S. Fellows can be valuable resources for the program and for each other.
- ❖ **Improve Record Keeping.** The Foreign Fellows and U.S. Fellows are vital resources for the program office, the U.S. embassies, and the U.S. implementing partners. There is no comprehensive historical database of Foreign Fellows or U.S. Fellows. This is due in part to the ECA Program Office's reliance on U.S. implementing partners to provide this information. The turnover of U.S. implementing partners and changes in thematic areas from FY 2012 to FY 2017 has resulted in gaps in historical memory. Defining and requiring unified recordkeeping and data reporting requirements for PFP implementing partners will help the ECA Program Office maintain complete and accurate records. An additional recommendation is to request personal contact information for the U.S. host

organization supervisors and U.S. Fellows, so these individuals are not “lost” if they change their place of employment.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHICS

Fieldwork Sample

Fieldwork Sample by Gender

Interviews by Country	Gender	Foreign Fellows	Home Organization Colleagues or Supervisors	In-Country Partners or Offices	Total	Post	Grand Total
Thailand	Total	14	5	2	21	2	23
	Male	4	1	1	6		
	Female	10	4	1	15		
Indonesia	Total	11	5	1	17	8	25
	Male	5	1	0	6		
	Female	6	4	1	11		
Georgia	Total	19	2	2	23	2	25
	Male	6	0	1	7		
	Female	13	2	1	16		
Egypt	Total	15	2	1	18	4	22
	Male	5	1	1	7		
	Female	10	1	0	11		
Slovenia	Total	14	5	1	20	3	23
	Male	5	0	0	5		
	Female	9	5	1	15		
India	Total	15	7	1	23	2	25
	Male	10	6	1	17		
	Female	5	1	0	6		
Peru	Total	13	4	1	18	2	20
	Male	4	2	1	7		
	Female	9	2	0	11		
Totals	Total	101	30	9	140	23	163
	Male	39	11	5	55	0	
	Female	62	19	4	85	0	

Fieldwork Sample by PFP Program Theme

Interviews by PFP Program Theme and Country	Legislative Process and Governance	Governance and Society	Civil Society	Entrepreneurs	NGO Development	Economic Empowerment	Environmental Sustainability	Civic Engagement	Totals
Thailand	3		2			6	1	2	14
Indonesia	2	2				4	3		11
Georgia	16	3							19
Egypt					12	3			15
Slovenia						14			14
India	2	2	5	5	1				15
Peru							13		13
Totals	23	7	7	5	13	27	17	2	101

Fieldwork Sample by PFP Program Travel Year

Interviews by Travel Year and Country	(LFP) 2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Thailand					1	4	3	6	
Indonesia						2	3	6	
Georgia	4		2	4	2	1	2	3	1
Egypt					3	3	6	3	
Slovenia					3	2	4	5	
India					3	3	5	4	
Peru					7	5	1		
Totals	4		2	4	19	20	24	27	1

Domestic Interview Sample

Interview Sample	Male	Female	Total
U.S. Host Organization Supervisors and Day-to-Day Contacts	15	17	32
<i>Subset: U.S. Fellows</i>	4	11	15
Homestay Families	5	10	15
Total	20	27	47

Foreign Fellow Survey Sample

DOS Region	N	Percentage
MISSING	159	11%
AF	60	4%
EAP	446	32%
EUR	292	21%
NEA	115	8%
SCA	227	16%
WHA	89	6%
Total	1388	100%

PFP Travel Year	N	Percentage
2011	2	0%
2013	95	8%
2014	122	10%
2015	162	13%
2016	261	21%
2017	280	23%
2018	314	25%
Total	1,236	100%

Program Theme	N	Percentage
Economic empowerment	392	32%
Legislative Process and Governance (inclusive of Education and Disability Rights)	289	23%
Tolerance and Conflict Resolution	30	2%
Environmental Sustainability	133	0%
NGO Development	115	9%
Rule of Law/Administrative Justice	37	3%
Media	34	3%
Disability Rights	18	1%
I don't remember	8	1%
Other	180	15%
Total	1,236	100%

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	552	45%
Female	674	55%
Prefer not to say	6	0%
Prefer to Self-identify	4	0%
Total	1,236	100%

U.S. Fellow, U.S. Host Organization Supervisor/Day-to-Day Contact Survey Sample

Career Level	N	Percentage
Entry level	5	2%
Mid-career	90	36%
Senior level	154	62%
Total	249	100%

Work Sector	N	Percentage
Federal Government	9	4%
State Government	24	10%
Local/Municipal Government	42	17%
Private Sector	33	13%
Academic Institution	28	11%
NGO	88	35%
Other	25	10%
Total	249	100%

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	97	46%
Female	108	52%
Prefer not to say	3	1%
Prefer to self-identify	1	0%
Total	209	100%
Education	N	Percentage
Completed some high school	0	0%
High school graduate	0	0%
Completed some college	5	2%
Associate degree	3	1%
Bachelor's degree	47	22%
Completed some post graduate education	11	5%
Master's degree	94	45%
PhD, Law, or Medical degree	47	22%
Other advanced degree	2	1%
Total	209	100%

U.S. Homestay Family Survey Sample

Career Level	N	Percentage
Entry level	3	2%
Mid-career	47	24%
Senior level	145	74%
Total	195	100%

Work Sector	N	Percentage
Federal Government	2	1%
State Government	9	5%
Local/Municipal Government	5	3%
Private Sector	37	19%
Academic Institution	30	15%
NGO	30	15%
Other	82	42%
Total	195	100%

Gender	N	Percentage
Male	61	31%
Female	130	67%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
Prefer to self-identify	2	1%
Total	195	100%

Education	N	Percentage
Completed some high school	0	0%
High school graduate	1	1%
Completed some college	2	1%
Associate degree	1	1%
Bachelor's degree	34	18%
Completed some post graduate education	17	9%
Master's degree	91	48%
PhD, Law, or Medical degree	40	21%
Other advanced degree	3	2%
Total	189	100%

APPENDIX B: FOREIGN FELLOW PERCEPTIONS BY REGION

Areas	AF	EAP	EUR	NEA	SCA	WHA
Volunteerism/Community Service	70%	70%	75%	64%	68%	58%
Ethnic and Racial Diversity	47%	50%	45%	52%	50%	51%
Religious Diversity	38%	45%	36%	51%	49%	27%
Freedom of Speech	72%	63%	47%	57%	69%	46%
Equal Opportunity	58%	59%	44%	45%	57%	44%
Free Elections	42%	55%	38%	37%	54%	32%
Human Rights	51%	52%	40%	43%	54%	38%
Political System	38%	40%	29%	36%	51%	33%
American Culture/People	57%	63%	70%	74%	69%	57%

Note: Table reflects only the percentages of Foreign Fellows whose perceptions changed “very positively.”

APPENDIX C: YSEALI FOREIGN FELLOWS

This appendix provides data for the sample of YSEALI Foreign Fellows who responded to the Foreign Fellow Survey. They constitute 36% of all Foreign Fellow survey respondents.

The distribution of YSEALI Foreign Fellows by country is presented below.²⁶

Table C-1. Distribution of YSEALI Foreign Fellows by Country

Country	Count	Percentage
Brunei Darussalam	14	3%
Cambodia	46	10%
Indonesia	109	25%
Lao People's Democratic Republic	33	8%
Malaysia	43	10%
Myanmar	63	14%
Philippines	52	12%
Singapore	4	1%
Thailand	32	7%
Vietnam	43	10%
Total	439	100%

Based on the survey responses, 55% of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows were women; 44% were men. Several responded preferred not to self-identify or preferred not to answer the question. More than three-quarters travelled between 2016 and 2018.²⁷

Table C-2. Distribution of YSEALI Foreign Fellows by PFP Travel Year

PFP Travel Year	Count	Percentage
2013	10	2%
2014	26	6%
2015	51	12%
2016	111	25%
2017	116	26%
2018	125	28%

²⁶ ECA did not provide a single source list of Foreign Fellows. The numbers here represent a constructed universe; names from the alumni archive, lists from surveys conducted by ECA between 2013-2015, and updated lists provided by the U.S. implementing partners with active grants as of May 2019 were combined and then de-duplicated.

²⁷ See footnote 26 above.

Key Program Components

YSEALI Foreign Fellows were most likely to have participated in the ECA designated themes of economic empowerment (42%), legislative process and governance (25%), and economic sustainability (15%).

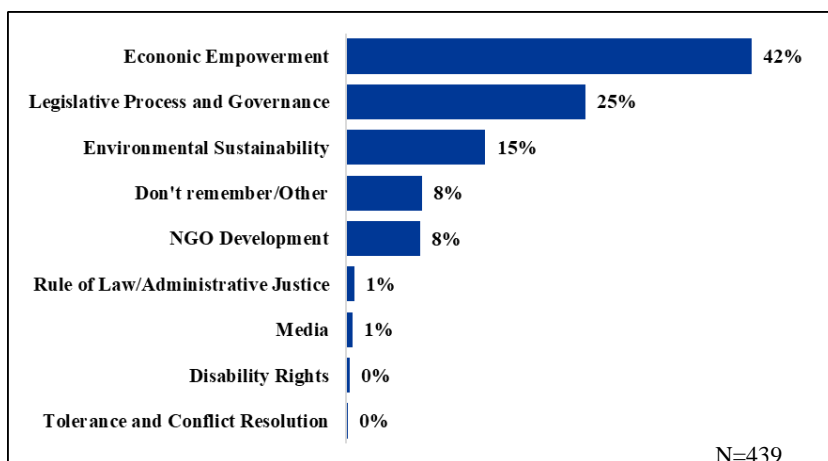


Figure C-1. YSEALI Foreign Fellow PFP Program Themes

They were most likely to have been placed with U.S. host organizations from the public sector (40%) and from NGOs (30%). Less than a quarter were placed with organizations from the private sector (13%) or with academic institutions (11%).

Virtually all of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows reported that their professional placements were aligned with their professional goals (95%).

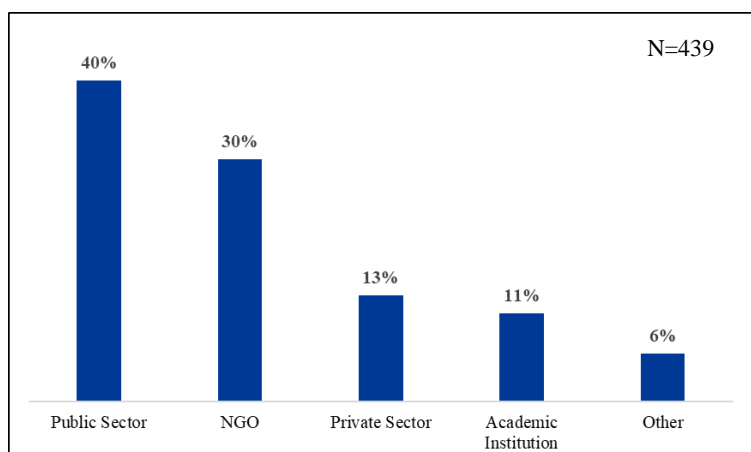


Figure C-2. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Host Organization Sector

During their placements, they attended presentations, observed or shadowed a colleague, and worked with colleagues in their areas of interest in almost equal measure (66%, 65% and 61%, respectively). They were less likely to have given a professional presentation. Noticeably, less than a quarter (24%) indicated that they worked without any supervision on established projects during their professional placement.

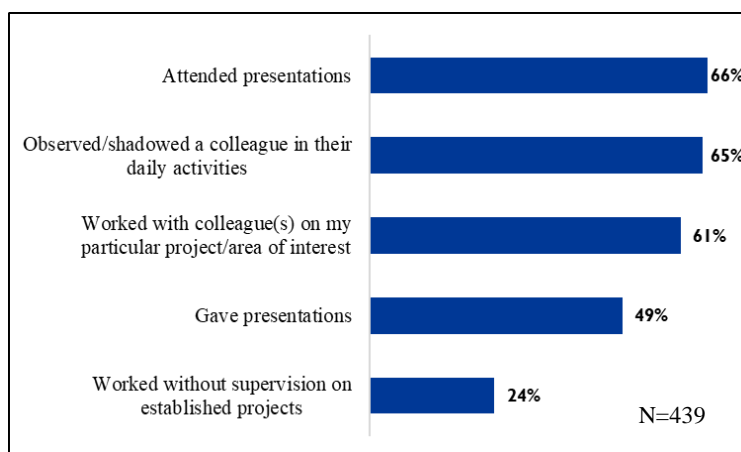


Figure C-3. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Activities during the Professional Placement

Half of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows lived with homestay families for the majority of time during their fellowship. Of the remaining YSEALI Foreign Fellows, slightly more lived in shared apartments or group houses (27%) than lived in hotels (22%).

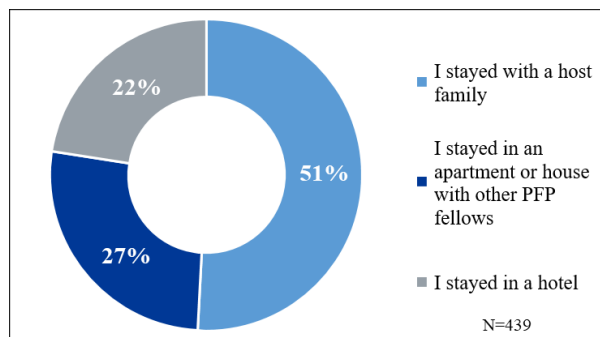


Figure C-4. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Living Arrangements

Virtually all (99%) YSEALI Foreign Fellows attended the end-of-program Congress in Washington, D.C. Three-quarters said that the Congress was very useful for reflecting on the fellowship experience and providing new perspectives. They also saw the Congress as helping to build self-confidence (70%). Although Foreign Fellows were still very positive about the utility of the Congress for building contacts in other countries and advancing professional expertise, they were relatively less positive about these aspects; 64% found the Congress very useful for building contacts and 57% did so for advancing professional expertise.

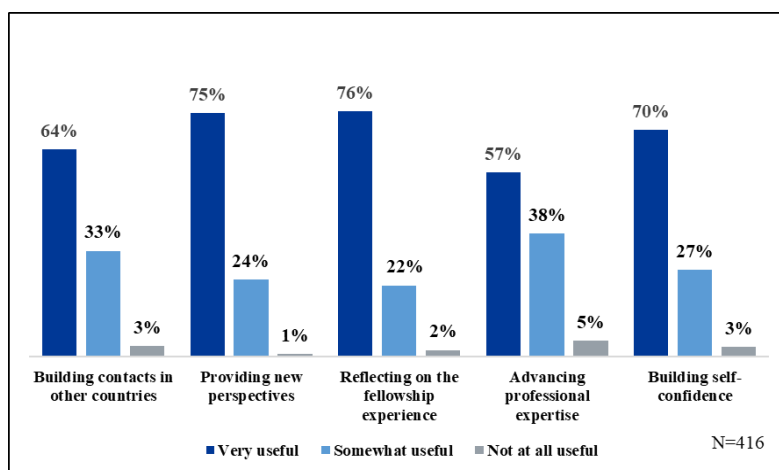


Figure C-5. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Views on the Usefulness of the End-of-Program Congress

Upon their return from their fellowship, Foreign Fellows are required to implement a post-fellowship or follow-on project. However, 18% of YSEALI Foreign Fellows did not do so. Nine percent reported that they did not have a project to implement, and 9% had a project, but for some reason did not implement it. More YSEALI Foreign Fellows partially implemented their projects (45%) than fully implemented them (37%).

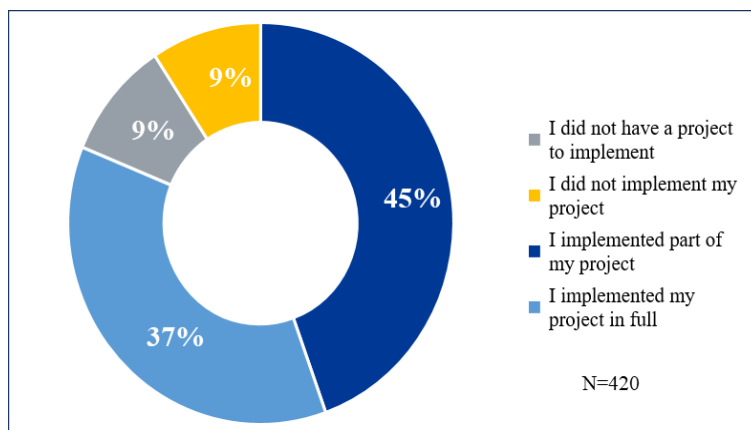


Figure C-6. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Post-Fellowship Project Implementation

Forty-seven percent of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows had a return visit by a U.S. Fellow.

Outcomes

Individual Outcomes

The YSEALI Foreign Fellows improved their skills during their PFP Fellowships. Eighty percent reported that they gained networking and communication skills, 78% said they gain cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity, and 70% improved their leadership skills. Just over half also reported gaining problem-solving skills.

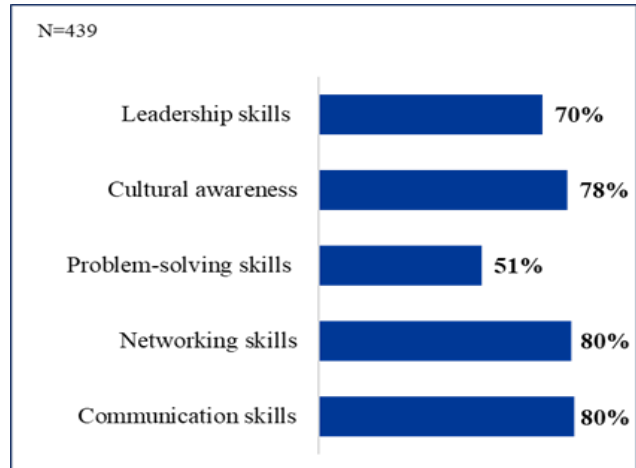


Figure C-7. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Skills Gained

The YSEALI Foreign Fellows attributed their participation in the PFP with helping them to grow professionally. Almost half (47%) said the PFP helped them to gain more responsibility in their current positions, and more than a third said that their participation helped them become recognized as an SME in their field (37%) and become a leader in their organizations and communities (35%). Just under 20% reported that they were able to open or expand their business (19%), get a promotion (18%). Fewer experienced job mobility (15% said the PFP helped them to get a new job) or increases in salary (13%).

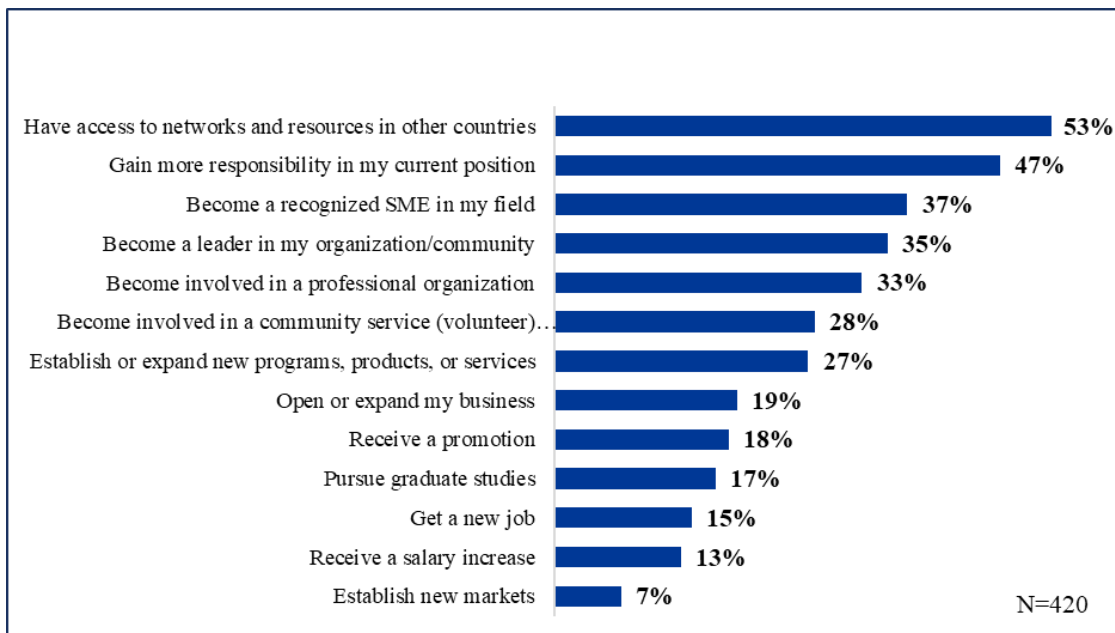


Figure C-8. How being a PFP Fellow Has Helped the YSEALI Foreign Fellows

Half of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows said that their participation in the PFP changed their professional interests “a lot.” Another 36% said that the PFP “somewhat” shaped their interests.

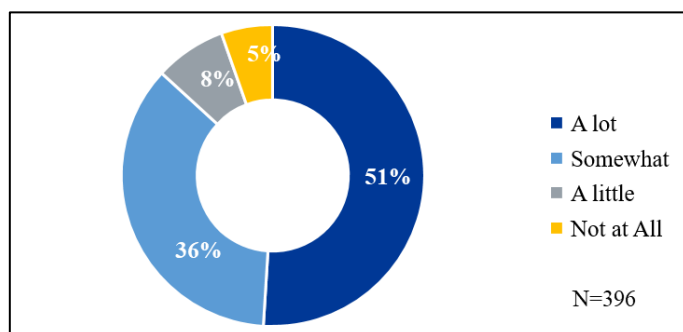


Figure C-9. YSEALI Foreign Fellows Changed Professional Interests

The perspectives of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows with respect to the U.S. changed as a result of their participation in the PFP. Perceptions changed most positively regarding volunteerism and community service and freedom of speech, where 66% and 64% of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows respectively, reported their perceptions changed very positively. They were least likely to have changed positively with respect to religious diversity and the political system, with less than 50% reporting very positive change.

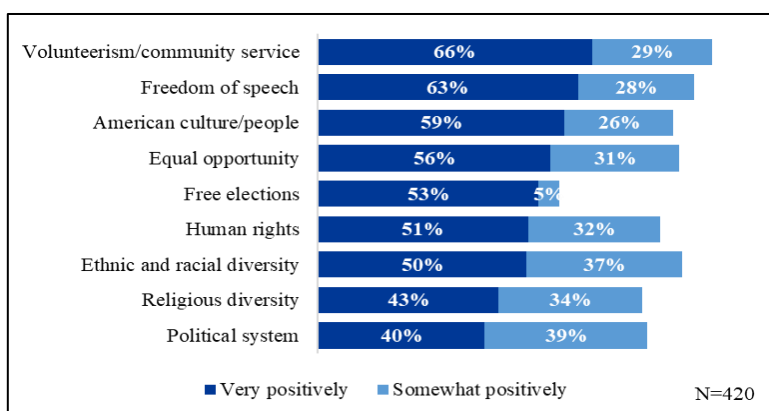


Figure C-10. YSEALI Foreign Fellows Changed Views

Outcomes in Foreign Workplaces and Communities

According to the survey, the YSEALI Foreign Fellows believed that their overall PFP experience had the most significant impact in their professional fields; 77% reported that the general experience resulted in “a lot” of impact. In comparison, 62% said that it had a lot of impact in their workplaces, and 61% said it had a lot of impact in their communities.

The YSEALI Foreign Fellows were even more positive about the impact of their specific post-fellowship projects. Of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows who fully implemented their post-fellowship projects, almost 90% felt that their projects had a lot of impact in their professional fields, 84% felt that it had a lot of impact in their

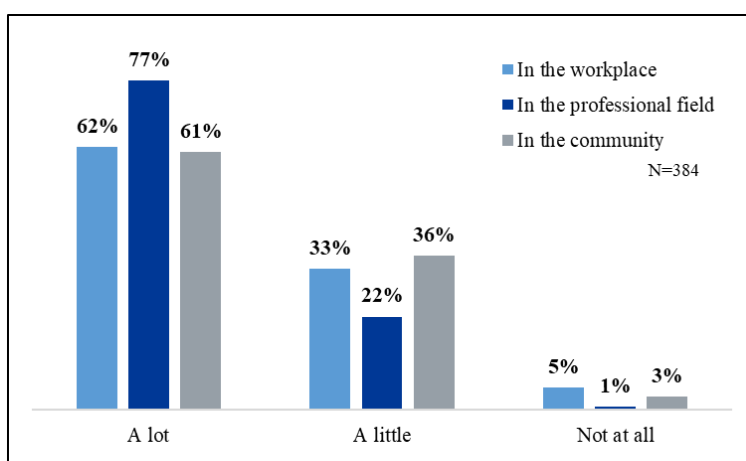


Figure C-11. Impacts of YSEALI Foreign Fellow PFP Experience

workplaces, and 77% felt that it had a lot of impact in their communities.

Networking and Collaboration

Almost all (97%) YSEALI Foreign Fellows reported that they are still in contact with people they met during their fellowship. As expected, fewer, but still significant numbers reported they continue to share and collaborate to this day. They were most likely to be collaborating with Foreign Fellows from their own countries (67%), followed by Foreign Fellows from other countries (46%), and U.S. embassy (34%). Only 13% reported ongoing sharing and collaboration with their U.S. counterparts after the completion of the reciprocal exchange.

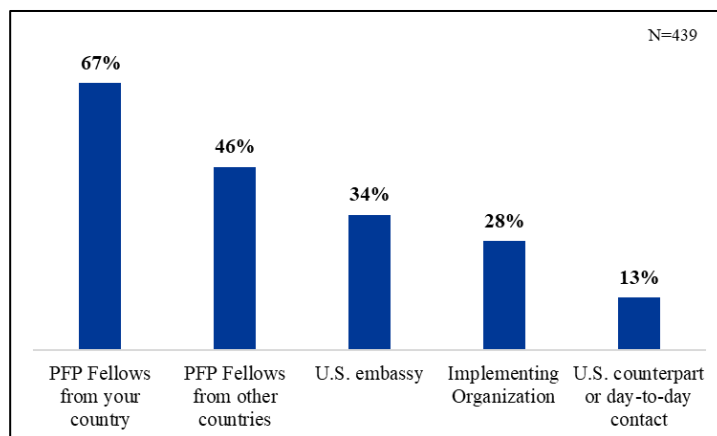


Figure C-12. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Collaboration and Sharing

The Foreign Fellows from the same countries are in frequent contact with each other; 51% were in weekly or monthly contact, and 43% were in contact several times a year. The connection between the Foreign Fellows from other countries was less frequent; over a third reported contact weekly or monthly, with more just over half reporting contact several times per year. YSEALI Foreign Fellows were more likely to be in contact with their U.S. counterparts or day-to-day contacts either several times per year or once a year. Notably, 21% of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows reported that they were not in contact at all with their U.S. counterparts.

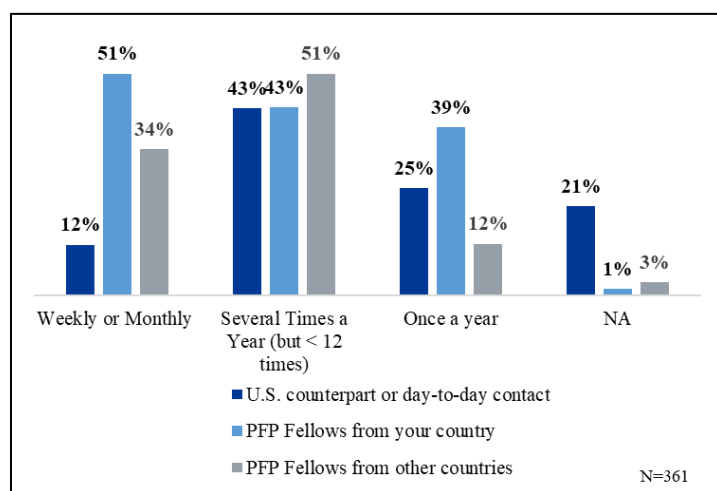


Figure C-13. YSEALI Foreign Fellow Frequency of Contact

With respect to the U.S. embassy, 88% of the YSEALI Foreign Fellows reported that they are in contact, while only 34% are actively sharing and collaborating with the U.S. embassies.