

THE SAN FRANCISCO FOUNDATION

The Community Foundation of the Bay Area

**Multicultural Fellowships:
A Model to Strengthen and Support Emerging
Leaders of Color**

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Introduction and context

The United States is experiencing a large demographic shift in its racial and ethnic composition. In August 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that groups historically termed as “minorities” will make-up the majority of U.S. residents by the year 2042. According to a recent *New York Times* article, one in four U.S. counties have passed or are approaching the tipping point where Black, Latino and Asian children are the majority of the under-20 population.¹ California reached the point where ethnic minorities became the majority in 2000. In order to better meet the needs of a racially, ethnically, socially, and culturally diverse society, the public sector must be culturally competent.² There is a pressing need to have people who represent the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. in leadership positions.

Despite the significant presence of communities of color, leadership in the public sector does not reflect these demographics particularly in philanthropy. Nationwide, racial and ethnic minorities account for 23% of paid full-time foundation staff.³ A recent study of 90 private and family foundations⁴ in California found that although 40% of overall staff is comprised of ethnic minorities, 45% of them are in support staff roles and 23% of them comprise the executive staff. The board members of private foundations are 14% people of color. Among 25 California community foundations, the staff is comprised of 43% of people of color. For community foundations, people of color comprise 48% of support staff, 28% of executive staff, and 16% of community foundation boards. These numbers suggest issues of inequity, underrepresentation, and lack of access by people of color to leadership roles in the field of philanthropy.

In an attempt to meet the diverse needs of Californians and increase accountability and transparency among foundations in California, Senator Joe Coto (D-San Jose) introduced AB 624, which required certain private foundations to collect race and gender-related data and post this information on their websites. Every private foundation with assets over \$250 million would collect:

- racial and gender composition of its board of directors and staff;
- percentage of business contracts awarded to businesses owned by specified racial minorities;
- number of grants and percentage of grant dollars awarded to organizations serving specified racial minority communities; and
- number of grants and percentage of grant dollars awarded to organizations where the grantee's board of directors and/or staff are ethnic minorities.

Although this legislation was ultimately tabled, it forced private foundations to address the importance of building leadership in diverse and low-income communities. The political climate and aftermath of AB 624 presents an opportunity for foundations interested in building the leadership capacity of people of color throughout the public sector of philanthropy, government, and civil society.

¹ Roberts, Sam. “Minorities Often a Majority of the Population Under 20.” *New York Times*. August 7, 2008.

² This paper defines the public sector as public institutions, philanthropic institutions, non profit organizations, and government agencies.

³ Council on Foundations. 2007 Grantmakers Salary and Benefits Report. 2007.

⁴ McGill, Lawrence T, Austin, Algeron and Briell Bryan. *Embracing Diversity: Foundation Giving Benefiting California's Communities of Color*. Foundation Center, 2008.

Background on fellowships

Fellowships are one way to conduct leadership development and diversify philanthropy. Mélange Matthews' 2005 report *Fellowships in Philanthropy* describes aspects and criteria of fellowships. They are time-limited or project-limited programs intended to develop the personal and professional skills of the fellow while allowing the fellow to contribute to the work of the organization. They generally have a blend of leadership development activities and hands-on application of programmatic work. Within philanthropic fellowships, there are a wide range of attributes, expectations, and skill levels of participants.

Fellowships can serve multiple objectives. One objective is to provide an alternative entry point for people of color to enter into the insulated world of philanthropy, which has barriers to entry and low numbers of people of color. While a wide range of people entered a philanthropic institution without participating in a fellowship, the intentional training, networking opportunities, and leadership development opportunities position each fellow for future success and achievement. A second objective is to bring new ideas and perspectives into a philanthropic institution. All grantmaking institutions benefit from deeper ties and contemporary knowledge of the communities that they serve. At The San Francisco Foundation (TSFF), the Multicultural Fellowship Program has been cited as an asset because the fellows bring knowledge and experience from their respective fields. As one former fellow explains:

“The fellows injected best practices, new ideas, and contemporary attitudes into The [San Francisco] Foundation about how to address inequity and create a healthier and just environment for everyone.”

History and structure of The San Francisco Foundation Multicultural Fellowship Program

The San Francisco Foundation has a commitment to expand diversity in the field of philanthropy, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and public institutions. The Foundation⁵ believes that in order to effectively serve and respond to local communities, the staff and board need to reflect the communities served. There is a need to build capacity and leadership within low-income and diverse communities throughout California. The San Francisco Foundation has a strong diversity policy that acknowledges the importance of cultivating diversity among donors, board members, staff, community partners, and grantee organizations.⁶ Another example of this commitment is the Multicultural Fellowship Program at TSFF, which is designed to nurture young leaders of color at a critical point in their career.

In 1981, TSFF established the Multicultural Fellowship Program to capitalize on the talent and knowledge of young and diverse professionals in the Bay Area. Fellows provide a connection to the priorities and issues of the communities the Foundation seeks to serve. Conversely, TSFF recognized the need for greater diversity and representation within the philanthropic sector in order to serve diverse communities and their complex needs. As a result, the Foundation positioned the fellowship as a pipeline of multicultural professionals to contribute to the public sector.

⁵ A community foundation is defined as “an organization supported by donations from residents of a specific geographical area, and which distributes its endowment funds for charitable purposes in the same general locality.” Community Foundations Leadership Team. Definition of a “Community Foundation.” Council on Foundations.

⁶ See <http://www.sff.org/about/about-our-work/diversity> for The San Francisco Foundation’s full diversity policy, updated in January 2009.

The Fellowship has evolved since Arnold Perkins, former director of the Alameda County Department of Public Health, started as the first fellow 28 years ago. Today there are six fellows, one for each program area in the foundation, who participate in grantmaking, convenings, special initiatives, and community outreach. The Foundation has committed to leadership and professional development for fellows during a paid full-time two-year position that includes:

- formal professional development;
- formal mentorship;
- professional networking;
- conference and travel budget;
- job coaching and placement assistance;
- health and dental benefits; and
- retirement benefits.

The Fellowship allows for unprecedented access to foundations, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other public institutions at a broad regional scale. Being a fellow affords an opportunity to understand the people, strategies, issues, and funding streams in a region or issue area. Even if individual fellows do not stay in the philanthropic sector, the knowledge and experience will improve their effectiveness in many forms of public sector work.

TSFF's experience with 55 fellows over 28 years has yielded a wealth of information on how fellowships can benefit emerging leaders of color, foundations concerned with diversity and capacity building, and the nonprofit sector at large. While the Multicultural Fellowship is structured as a program within philanthropy, lessons learned can be applied to efforts to diversify and develop leadership in other parts of the public sector including government, intermediaries, nonprofit, and other community-based organizations.

The following sections will summarize feedback on how the Multicultural Fellowship has affected the career and leadership development of its participants, its impact on the Foundation, and finally how a fellowship program like TSFF's can strengthen leadership of color throughout the public sector.

Impact on San Francisco Foundation Multicultural Fellows

Former fellows and staff who have worked with fellows have been interviewed or surveyed several times in past years, and have provided tremendous insight into how the Fellowship builds the careers of its participants.⁷ While there is a rich diversity of experiences in the program, 95% of respondents in a 2004 survey said the Fellowship had a positive impact on their lives, and all respondents in a 2008 recent survey felt that the Fellowship was successful in providing important opportunities. Respondents cited benefits as greater knowledge in their area of expertise, expanded personal and professional networks, and effectiveness in their future jobs. Most alumni report that

⁷ Among other surveys and informal interviews, consultants Montesinos & Associates conducted a stakeholder survey of fellowship alumni and staff in 2004. A broad range of alumni were surveyed in preparation for a 25th anniversary event in 2006. In late 2008, fellowship alumnus Dennis Quirin conducted interviews with 12 alumni from classes ranging from 1989 to 2008.

these benefits came primarily from the daily experience of grantmaking and interacting with colleagues.

“Definitely the most valuable thing I gained from being a fellow was the ‘learning by doing’ experience. While the fellowship did not, at least at the time, have much programmatic structure or a series of targeted workshops or trainings, what I did gain was likely more valuable – the ‘on the job training’ in all areas of community focused grantmaking.”

While 80% or more of a Multicultural Fellow’s time is spent on grantmaking, this work gives opportunities to learn about the broader public sector. Since TSFF supports hundreds of nonprofit organizations across five counties, fellows have a “bird’s eye view” of the social ecosystem and its interaction with government and the public sector. They also have networking opportunities with executive directors, program staff, community organizers, public officials, and others that allow fellows to learn about the challenges of running a nonprofit organization and different strategies for creating social change.

“As a grantmaker, I had access to the leaders and thinkers represented in our applicant batch and, directly or indirectly, that battery of community and executive leaders modeled for me what to do or what not to do.”

“The Fellowship gets very high marks for facilitating relationships with leaders in the field; some of it is not overtly intentional, but just facilitated by the grantmaking process.”

By the end of two years, Fellows gain a broad sense of their field through grantmaking, convenings, neighborhood and site visits, reading, and conversations. Their relationship with their program officer, generally a regional or national subject expert, is also an important source of mentoring, content knowledge, introductions, and advice. Fellows and other staff who have been interviewed universally agree that the relationship between fellows and program officer defines the fellowship.

The formal leadership development curriculum that separates the fellowship from a two-year grantmaking job also has great potential to prepare fellows for positions in foundations, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. While grantmaking is a constant of the Multicultural Fellowship, the curriculum has evolved greatly over the years. Using input from evaluators and Fellows, the Foundation now has an institutionalized curriculum, overseen by the Fellowship Coordinator.⁸ Monthly Fellows Days allow the cohort to concentrate on trainings that include strategic planning, grant due diligence, financial analysis, and presentation skills. Many alumni have found these specific skills, and their application in grantmaking, to be very useful.

“The skills I learned were/ have been tremendously helpful to me. The fellowship provided the experience of having to analyze organizational capacity, budgets, and leadership capacity of organizations.”

Other aspects of the leadership development curriculum include networking lunches, career coaching services, and participation in all-staff trainings such as a recent workshop on classism. More formal activities include Myers-Briggs assessments and Rockwood’s Art of Leadership

⁸ The Fellowship Coordinator has traditionally been a part-time position, held at various times by a half-time employee, consultant, or a Program Officer with other duties. Currently, the Foundation’s Organizational Development Officer spends 50% of her time on Multicultural Fellowship Program. Responsible for professional development across the entire staff as well as within the fellows cohort, she reports to both the Director of Programs and the Director of Human Resources.

training, a retreat that has earned positive reviews from recent participants and that some suggest should be a program requirement.⁹

Generally speaking, however, some Fellows who responded to surveys felt their professional development opportunities came mainly from their relationships with their program officer, cohort members, and outside colleagues and that the curriculum could be developed further. Learning from feedback over the years, TSFF has attempted to standardize the curriculum and incorporate more nonprofit administration training. Fellows have at times asked for the opportunity to do more autonomous grantmaking or create independent initiatives.

“A big part of leadership development... is to know that leadership trusts your decision making ability and provides you with opportunities to make impactful decisions.”

In response, fellows have created their own donor advised fund at the Foundation that will enable them to make small grants. Individual fellows, with the help of their colleagues, have expanded their projects into initiatives or proactive work that have changed the Foundation and the philanthropic sector. Fellows spearheaded the FAITHS initiative housed at TSFF and the post-9/11 Civic Engagement Fund housed at Asians and Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy. While not all fellows' projects take such a form, they are evidence that participants gain entrepreneurial, leadership, and partnership-building skills that can serve them well in future public sector careers.

Fellows and The San Francisco Foundation

The creation of an initiative like FAITHS is just one of many ways that Fellows have contributed to and changed The San Francisco Foundation. The Multicultural Fellowship is intended to build leaders of color in the nonprofit and public sector, but also transformative leaders within the Foundation. Organizations hosting a fellowship program can realize benefits for their own operations, capacity, and cultural competency.

Many respondents to the 2008 survey stated that the fellowship was an asset to TSFF. This is most obvious through the increased grantmaking work a full-time fellow supports, but also by the fellows' connection to the community. Often coming from the nonprofit sector and representing communities of color and immigrant communities, Fellows provide a personal link to many of the Foundation's constituents. They are often the first person potential grantees contact, allowing smaller and grassroots organization to have an audience. Fellows present at the Foundation's How to Apply Workshops and often at external grantwriting workshops, making the proposal process more transparent and accessible to applicants. All of this supports TSFF's mission to connect with diverse communities and its values of listening to constituents and being accessible and responsive.¹⁰

Since fellows by definition do not have a background in philanthropy, they can offer an outsiders' critical eye.

⁹ As of 2008, fellows had a separate budget to allow them to attend Rockwood or a similar intensive professional development experience. Seven fellows have attended Rockwood's Art of Leadership Training since 2007, while one Arts and Culture fellow used his budget to attend and show his works at an international art exhibition. See www.rockwoodleadership.org for more information.

¹⁰ See Mission & History on <http://www.sff.org/about/about-our-work/mission-history>.

“[Fellows] consistently offered a fresh perspective: asked probing questions, supported the program officers with their workload, helped the Foundation expand its eyes and ears into various demographic communities (ethnic, age, geographic), [and] questioned assumptions.”

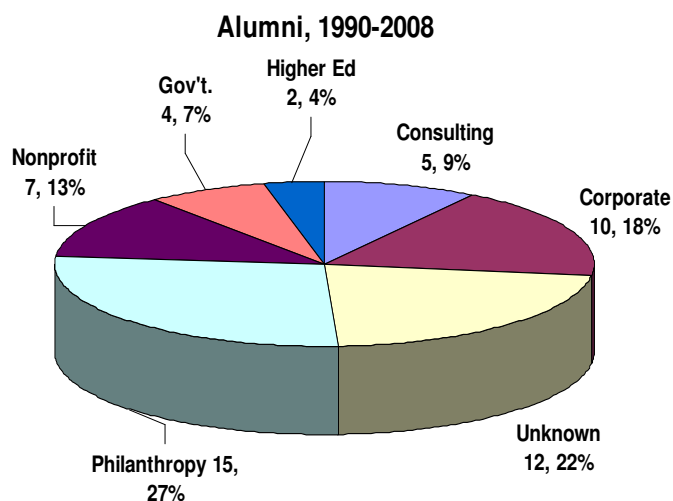
Fellows can make controversial observations and their recommendations are not always incorporated, but they are heard in internal meetings. Alumni commented that is difficult and occasionally frustrating to try to affect TSFF’s overall mission or operations, but cohorts have been instrumental in changing the Fellowship itself to better serve participants and the organizations as a whole. In 2004 several fellows collaborated with other staff and consultants to produce a strategic plan. Most of the specific recommendations in that plan – including restructuring the role of the coordinator, standardizing start dates and orientation of each cohort, and providing institutionalized job coaching – have been implemented. The lessons learned in making such changes are leadership development experiences in their own right, even as they help the Foundation become a more effective and culturally competent grantmaking organization.

Impacts on the field

While alumni and staff agreed that the fellowship can be very beneficial for the Foundation and train fellows as grantmakers, does it position them for leadership roles throughout the public sector? Surveys of former fellows suggest that at least 75% of alumni continue their career in philanthropy, nonprofits, government, or nonprofit and foundation consulting. Alumni appreciate that the networking and expansive view that they gained during the Fellowship equip them for a broad range of careers.

“Though my current line of work is in academia... the lessons learned from the experience have been invaluable in all the sectors I’ve worked in and with.”

The graph below shows the fields where the 55 Fellowship alumni are currently employed.



Graph 1. The San Francisco Foundation Multicultural Fellows Alumni Career Placement

As mentioned earlier, many of the networking and training components of the fellowship are generally applicable to the challenges of nonprofit leadership, including financial management, partnership building, public speaking, and strategic planning. In the course of their work – especially in cross-department assignments and internal committees – fellows are exposed to many administrative issues that apply through the public sector: budgeting, fundraising, IT, time management, event planning, public relations, and office operations. Some alumni stress that the curriculum should train fellows more directly in administrative and management issues so they have relevant skills. Fundraising and donor services, marketing, and finance are areas identified as particularly relevant to other careers.

Fellows interact with government and public policy through the Foundation’s proactive work, which involves local, regional, and state public agencies and allows Fellows to interact with government staff and elected officials. Because The San Francisco Foundation engages in lobbying and supports the policy advocacy of its grantees, Fellows become involved with political matters such as state and local ballot measures.¹¹

Fellows take this broad range of experiences and enter a diverse array of professions. Alumni to date include:

- Executive directors, associate directors, and program directors at regionally or nationally known nonprofits including PolicyLink, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Breakthrough Collaborative, and Urban Habitat
- Leaders in local government agencies such as the San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and the San Francisco Grants for the Arts
- Program officers at The California Endowment, the Goldman Environmental Prize, the Marguerite Casey Foundation, and the Mitchell Kapor Foundation
- Consultants, either independent or at firms including Devine and Gong, Inc., Social Policy Research Associates, and Blueprint Research and Design, Inc.
- Professors or doctoral candidates at institutions including Occidental University and University of California at Berkeley

Recommendations for program replication in other organizations

The previous section conveyed the thoughts and recommendations of alumni and staff members involved with the fellowship. In this section, the six current fellows give recommendations based on the 28-year history of the Multicultural Fellowship. This history offers insight to the evolution of the program and the key components that yield a successful program. We have identified several elements that have proven successful at The San Francisco Foundation and that we believe are necessary for replicating similar programs elsewhere. We offer the following recommendations as a flexible framework that can be institutionalized in the public sector, be it nonprofit, philanthropic, government, or otherwise. Our recommendations are intended to substantially increase and enhance

¹¹ In 2008 alone, The San Francisco Foundation became actively involved with local and statewide ballot measures including supporting Measure 1A (a bond for San Francisco General Hospital), opposing Proposition 8 (a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage), and supporting groups fighting Proposition 98 (an eminent domain measure that would have threatened many housing and environmental regulations). Fellows were directly involved in the Proposition 98 grantmaking, and also supported program staff on the other campaigns, voter mobilization grantmaking, and staff education.

the capacity and leadership of diverse individuals and communities and the qualitative and quantitative impacts.

At the very core of our recommendations is an understanding of the *commitment* needed to support a fellowship program. This commitment includes ensuring that internal staff, policies, work structure, and financial resources are aligned to support diversity and leadership development. There must be engagement and support from across the organization, and all staff must be committed to mentorship and leadership development and allow the fellow to be fully incorporated in all aspects of the work. This commitment entails full investment in organizational diversity with staff trained to be cultural competent to the needs within the organization and to the needs of the constituency. Ideally, staff represents the communities the foundation serves in terms of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, language, disability, and other issues.

Apart from commitment, a foundation hosting a fellowship also must demonstrate significant *capacity*. We believe that established foundations with strong finances and infrastructure are the ideal settings for multicultural fellowships. This environment can best support a network of mentors and/or alumni, mechanisms for evaluation, and opportunities and budget for training and learning, all of which are crucial for fostering leadership development within the fellowship structure.

We explain the elements of commitment and capacity, many of which have been mentioned in previous sections, below. While not the only components of a successful fellowship – which will look different at every organization – our experience has shown these are essential building blocks to ensure that the emerging leader, the host organization, and philanthropy all benefit from the program. With these pieces in place, we believe that multicultural fellowships can be replicated and expanded to significantly increase the leadership within underrepresented and low-income communities and grassroots organizations.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- **Commitment to diversity and leadership development:** Leaders of color are best supported in an organization that demonstrates a deep commitment to diversity. This commitment may be expressed in multiple ways: diverse board and staff; racism, classism, and other cultural competency trainings; strong diversity policy; transparent and equitable human resource policies; engagement in external affinity groups; and policy work related to diversity.
- **Commitment of the entire organization:** For fellows to have the best experience and for their host organizations to benefit fully, all levels of the foundation must be invested and engaged. Senior management sets the structure and tone for supporting a robust fellowship program. Management engagement is crucial for supervision and guidance, and support and administration staff needs to work closely with fellows.
- **Opportunity for mentorship:** In order for fellows to be supported at a wider scale than one organization, a network of mentors – former fellows and other community leaders of color – should be established. Fellows may be assigned one-on-one mentors, with whom they have formal or informal agreements on length of commitment, number of meetings, and expectations. The sponsoring organization may host events such as networking receptions and mentor lunches. Although we believe that fellows will most likely thrive in an

environment with other role models of color, an external mentor or alumni network can help support fellows who are in less diverse organizations.

- **Standing curriculum for professional development:** Apart from the invaluable learning that comes from day-to-day work, fellows need dedicated and regular time for trainings that will help them advance as nonprofit or service leaders. At TSFF this takes the form of one full training day each month, but structure and timing can vary. Trainings may be conducted by internal experts or outside consultants. Subjects can include financial literacy, presentation and public speaking skills, nonprofit operations, fundraising, communications, marketing, and board development.
- **Mechanism for evaluation and feedback:** TSFF's fellowship is constantly evolving and seeking the input of fellows, alumni, and other foundation staff. Our model includes quarterly evaluations, annual evaluations, and an exit interview, along with frequent "check-ins" and other opportunities to give informal feedback. In this way, the fellowship can be shaped and modified for current fellows, who then can help the program evolve for future cohorts.
- **Opportunities for full integration of fellows into the organization:** Fellows should have an integral role at the foundation and access to all aspects of the organization. Furthermore, they should have the option to serve on committees and task forces, attend board and management meetings, and develop new initiatives and programs. As with any employee, fellows should have their ideas heard and respected.
- **Financial resources and capacity:** A foundation should have the financial capacity to provide fellows with competitive compensation, including benefits, that acknowledges the fellows' experience, life stage, and opportunity cost. Appropriate compensation will allow for recruitment of the strongest candidates, including those from a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. The compensation package may include health benefits or professional development funds. TSFF has a pool of flexible funding that fellows may spend on professional development including trainings, conferences, classes, and publications.

Conclusion

Given the economic downturn, it is more crucial than ever to nurture the next generation of talent, and to have diverse leaders that represent underserved and low-income communities in positions of leadership. The pressing need for greater diversity in philanthropy can be met through the untapped potential of innovators. Foundations can directly cultivate this leadership through a fellowship program that combines professional development with paid, hands-on job responsibilities. Any foundation undertaking a fellowship program must start with a commitment from all levels of the organization and the financial and personnel capacity to support the participants. A carefully stewarded fellowship offers numerous benefits to the host foundation and each fellow.

Appendix A: Comparison of three fellowship programs based in foundations

This appendix briefly compares three fellowship programs run by foundations. The San Francisco Foundation administers the **Multicultural Fellowship Program (MCFP)**, which is the focus of this document. In addition, The San Francisco Foundation runs a multiyear and multicultural fellowship program for outstanding community leaders called the **Koshland Civic Unity Fellowship**. The Koshland Civic Unity Program does not pay fellows as staff members. The **Associated Grant Makers** fellowship program is a paid fellowship program based in Boston. Each fellow has the opportunity to work on grantmaking at multiple foundations in the Boston area.

Table 1: Comparison of foundation-based fellowships

	The San Francisco Foundation Multicultural Fellowship Program	The San Francisco Foundation Koshland Civic Unity Fellowship	Associated Grant Makers
# participants per cohort	6	6 to 10	6 to 10
Duration of fellowship	2 years	5 years	1 year
Compensation	\$50,000	\$5,000 honorarium	\$45,000
Benefits	Health, dental, vision, life, 401(k), 2 weeks vacation	None	Health, dental, 3 weeks vacation
Professional development	Monthly training and budget	Quarterly training	Weekly training and regular networking
Grantmaking	80% time on responsive and proactive grantmaking	Direct grants to community groups	80% time on grantmaking
Work focus	One program area	Fellows select topic	Multiple program areas
Primary location	The San Francisco Foundation	Neighborhood-based; not a full-time staff position	Host foundation

Appendix B: Costs of administering The San Francisco Foundation Multicultural Fellowship

- \$88,000: Annual cost for one fellow including salary, benefits, and administrative overhead.
- \$16,000: One-time overhead costs for equipment such as workstation, phone, computer, etc.