

The CiviCo Social Enterprise Fellowship

a program of
The Barton Institute for
Philanthropy and Social
Enterprise

**EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT
2019 - 2020**

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SCHULTZ PATEL EVALUATION



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INTRODUCTION

The Barton Institute for Philanthropy and Social Enterprise started the Social Enterprise Fellowship during the 2017-2018 academic year. The idea for the Fellowship started as concurrent ideas from philanthropic staff and public policy faculty who wanted to create an opportunity for students to gain knowledge of and practical experience in the social enterprise sector. The goal was to create a space for students across disciplines to apply their skills to solve real world problems. In the first two years, the Fellowship was funded by CivicCO (formerly the Quarterly Forum), managed by the Barton Institute, and housed at The University of Denver. In this third year, the Fellowship maintained CivicCO funding and Barton management but moved outside of the The University of Denver.

The purpose of this evaluation was to assess implementation and preliminary evidence for the theory of change hypothesized during the previous year's evaluation. This report refers to the third year of implementation and is organized by evaluation question.

This year's evaluation questions were as follows:

EQ1. To what extent was the Fellowship implemented as designed?

EQ2. How satisfied were Fellows and host organizations with program implementation?

EQ3. To what extent is there evidence of the emerging theory of change as documented in the programmatic logic model?



EQ1. TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE FELLOWSHIP IMPLEMENTED AS DESIGNED?

As designed, the Fellowship was intended to include onboarding activities (team building, social activities, LEAP sessions, CiviCO networking events, mentorship by leaders in related fields, and LEAP sessions), a fall seminar on key social enterprise topics, and the completion of a capstone project with host organizations. By and large, all of these activities occurred. Due to the pandemic, some of these activities had to be scaled back (such as CiviCO networking events) or had to be held remotely due to social distancing requirements. For some Fellows, a remote setting may have diminished the quality of some of their experiences (*"I hated doing everything online;" "I think the pandemic made us miss out on that personal bonding and connection..."*) For other Fellows, this did not seem to be a problem (*"I don't feel that it really affected my experience too much."*)

Activities identified by Fellows as not occurring as expected were the CiviCO networking events and for some Fellows, the mentoring program. To begin with, the CiviCO networking events had to be scaled back due to social distancing requirements resulting from the pandemic. It would be difficult to hold a remote networking event that would retain the same social capital-building characteristics of impromptu interpersonal connections.

Challenges to Implementation

There were several challenges to implementing the Fellowship exactly as designed during the 2019-2020 year. The primary challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting in March 2020, non-essential in-person interaction was severely limited in an effort to limit spread of the virus. Practically, for the Fellowship, this meant that meetings, events, and experiences with host organizations had to be conducted remotely. This presented a challenge, as many interactions normally conducted in person had to be done remotely, which could be awkward and unfamiliar. Many people found themselves struggling with the burden of trying to conduct their work as usual at home while caring for their children, animals, and other dependents who could not be cared for through usual channels. Beyond these practical implications, the pandemic generated a level of generalized fear, anxiety, and uncertainty as the economy shut down and stay at home orders went into effect. Furthermore, those with close family or friends working in healthcare and/or who became infected likely dealt with increased levels of stress and anxiety. While a full assessment of how the pandemic affected society is beyond the scope of this report, it is necessary to highlight the implications this event had for the Fellowship.

Nearly all key informants, Fellows, and host organizations commented on the momentous effect the pandemic had on the program. First, the quality of interactions (whether between Fellows, Fellows and host organizations, or between Fellows and Barton staff) likely suffered. As one Fellow commented, *"I think the pandemic made us miss on that personal bonding and connection..."* Similarly, another Fellow reflected that *"having to complete the project online definitely affected both my enjoyment of the experience and my ability to create stronger bonds with our social enterprise."* This lack of bonding may have hampered the expected outcome of creating interdisciplinary connections across the cohort.

From the host organization perspective, the pandemic appeared to have several ripple effects. First, host organization respondents highlighted immediate challenges the pandemic presented, such as, *"it [was] very difficult for them to interact with community members and partners in order to complete their project."* However, the pandemic also had

a much broader impact on host organizations, as they scrambled to adjust to the new realities. As one respondent commented, *"We ended up doing a top to bottom re-org during the crisis and scrapping the program area [our Fellows] were focusing on. We were able to take some of their work and make it useful, and we were able to shift their project to be extremely relevant to there-org, but I felt bad that they got thrown into this situation."*

Despite these challenges, Fellows in particular expressed gratitude for how well the Barton Institute handled things. In an illustrative comment, one Fellow reported that *"It impacted a lot of what we were doing but the Barton team has been so flexible and supportive is helping us through it and helping us through the projects we have to finish."*

Other implementation challenges identified by key informant staff included snow cancellations of Fellow bonding events and the transition of the Barton Institute off of DU's campus. The snow cancellations of planned events were then compounded by impact of the pandemic; this may have hampered the Fellowship's cohort-building efforts. The primary challenge of the Barton Institute's move off of campus related to scheduling events and the loss of impromptu interactions. As some key informants identified, there was increased difficulty with scheduling or holding on-campus events as community members (rather than staff). Similarly, several key informants commented that being located off-campus limited the amount of drop-in visits Fellows could make to address a quick question or concern. This may have unintentionally caused Fellows to feel less supported at times.

EQ2. HOW SATISFIED WERE FELLOWS AND HOST ORGANIZATIONS WITH PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION?

All responding Fellows identified satisfaction with at least some parts of their experience with the Fellowship. In an illustrative example of this sentiment, one Fellow commented that *"the support provided to the Fellows throughout the process was efficient and effective."* Similarly, other Fellows positively identified other aspects of the Fellowship, such as the capstone project, bonding with their cohort, or the fact that they were paid for their time. Beyond this focus on various aspects of the Fellowship, several Fellows reported general satisfaction with the Fellowship overall. Fellows shared effusive comments such as: *"I think the current structure works really well,"* and *"I had a really valuable experience."* As one Fellow summarized, *"all of [the Fellowship] worked well..."* Several other responding Fellows identified their experience as key to their graduate education, making statements such as *"I think the Fellowship will play a key role in my career path and transition from grad school..."*

"The Barton Institute Social Enterprise Fellowship was one of the most insightful and educational components of my DU experience."



"This was a great experience. We couldn't be more impressed with the level of character and thoughtfulness that the Fellows demonstrated. Thank you for the opportunity."

This and similar reflective comments suggest that many Fellows enjoyed and saw the value of their experience.

Similarly, responding host organizations reported high levels of satisfaction with the Fellowship; particularly the Fellows. For instance, one host organization respondent summed up the experience as, *"Our Fellows were creative, took ownership of their project, and were willing to adapt to challenges that arose during the COVID pandemic."* Similarly, other host organization respondents reflected that, *"...their work quality was high, they laid out a clear process, hit their milestone targets, were fun to work with, and produced a very solid product"* and *"The Fellows were a perfect fit for our organization...."* These sentiments suggest that host organizations had a positive experience with their Fellows and the Barton Institute.

When Fellows were asked to consider aspects of the program that were less satisfactory, concerns mostly related to programmatic structure and differing expectations of how the Fellowship would run. For example, a common critique of programmatic structure was the perceived lack of time for group discussion in seminars and LEAP sessions. In an illustrative comment, one Fellow suggested, *"Some seminar time could be re-purposed to hear more from Fellows--we missed out on*

potentially rich discussion because of the lecture-based approach. There was always a sense that we didn't have enough time to cover all the necessary information, which led to reticence to pose questions." Fellows also expressed some disappointment with a perceived lack of structure during the host organization experience (*"The transition from class with an expert to be out on our own was jarring"*); the host organization matching process (one Fellow reported selecting a host organization based on their mission but the project they were assigned was not related to that mission, and neither partner had the skillset needed for the project); and with the lack of support in obtaining post-Fellowship employment (*"I didn't think the Fellowship did as much as they could have with helping us find post-fellowship employment."*)

Conversely, host organizations reported little dissatisfaction with any aspects of the Fellowship. While some pointed to the challenges presented by the pandemic (*"The COVID-19 pandemic definitely threw a wrench in the process..."*), and a few respondents highlighted the scheduling challenges presented by busy graduate students (*"We had to remember that these were students and scheduling needed to accommodate a lot of variables..."*), host organizations overall had little critiques to make about their experience of the Fellowship. When asked to consider any aspects of the Fellowship that did not work well or could be improved, suggestions mainly centered around the Barton Institute facilitating relationship building between host organizations and Fellows either through orientation events or a final event for all. One example of this type of statement was, *"I would have liked it if Barton had made a more concerted effort to facilitate a getting to know you process with the fellows before the program officially started."* More commonly expressed sentiments included *"We felt everything was beyond satisfactory"* and *"Honestly, there was nothing deficient about this experience."*

EQ3. TO WHAT EXTENT IS THERE EVIDENCE OF THE EMERGING THEORY OF CHANGE AS DOCUMENTED IN THE PROGRAMMATIC LOGIC MODEL?

Across data collection sources, consistent supporting evidence for the achievement of expected short term outcomes emerged. To begin with, the most consistent theme that emerged from key informant interviews was that despite unprecedented challenges, key informants still expected that planned outcomes were occurring. Further, Fellows and host organizations also tended to agree that expected short term outcomes were occurring. Specifically, at least half (50 percent) or more responding Fellows strongly agreed that they were achieving intended outcomes (see Figure 1). Similarly, most host organizations (60 percent) strongly agreed that outcomes relevant to their experiences were occurring (see Figure 2).

"The Fellows were able to provide a body of work that would never had existed without their engagement."

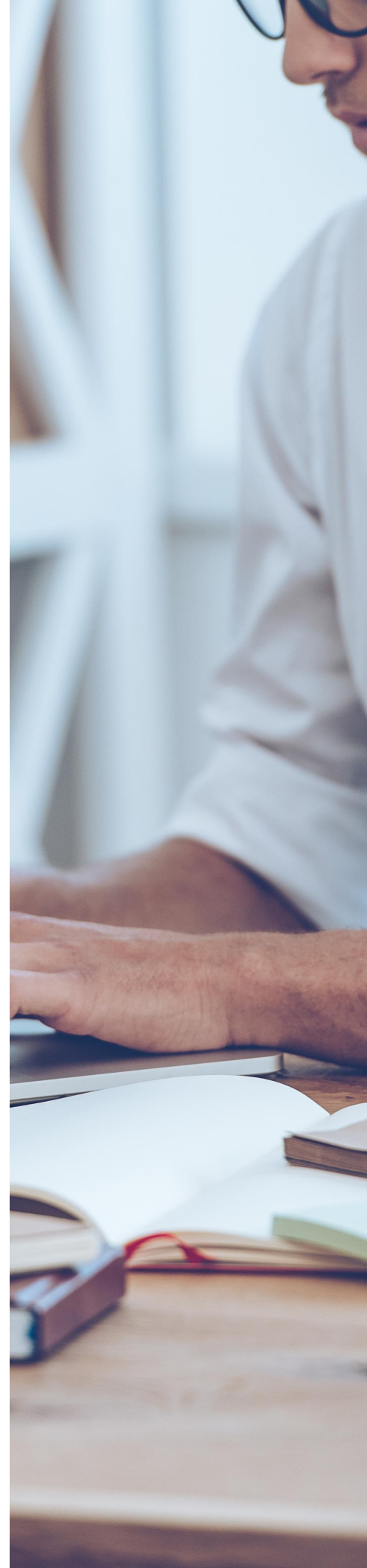


Figure 1. Fellows who strongly agreed or agreed that they achieved these expected outcomes.

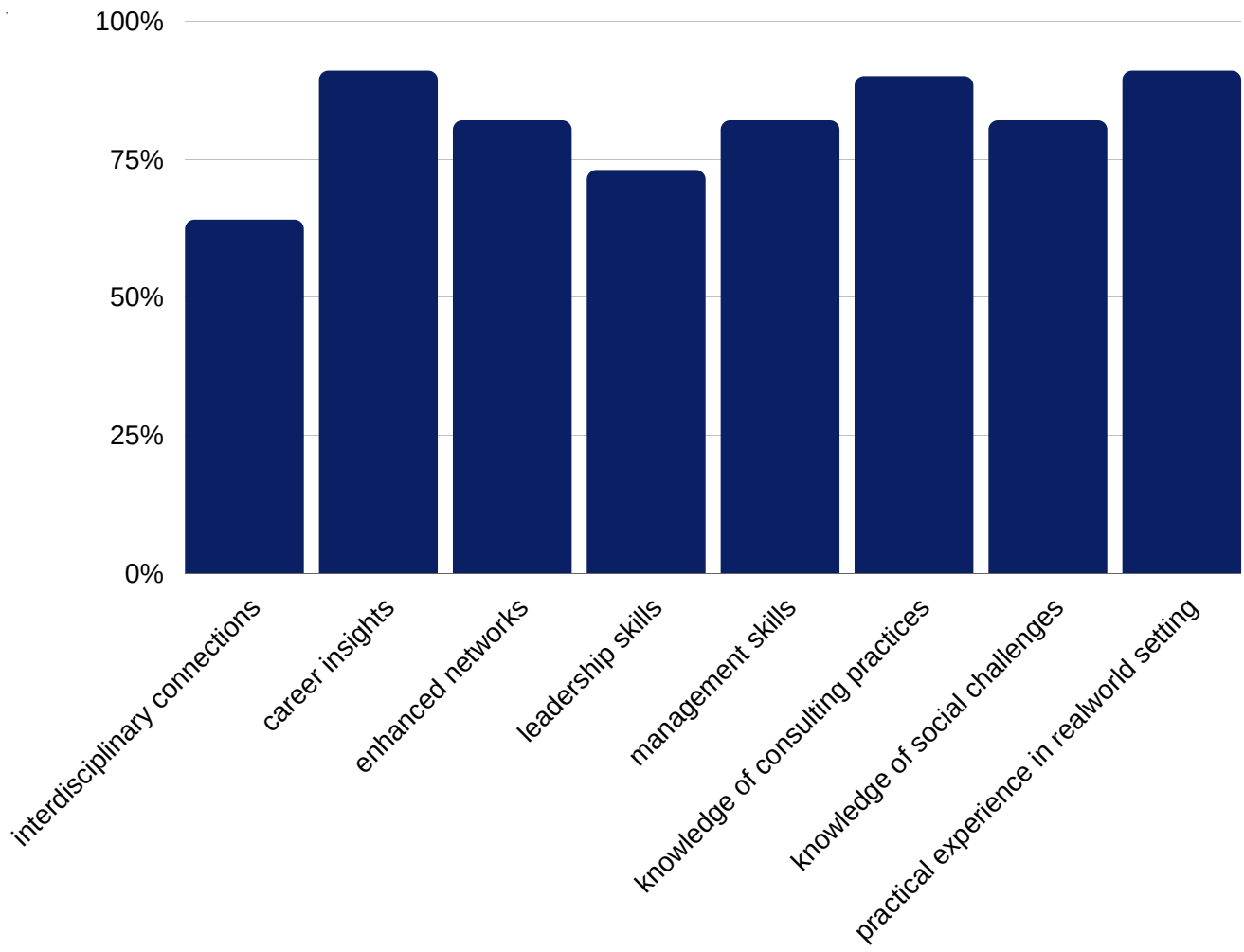
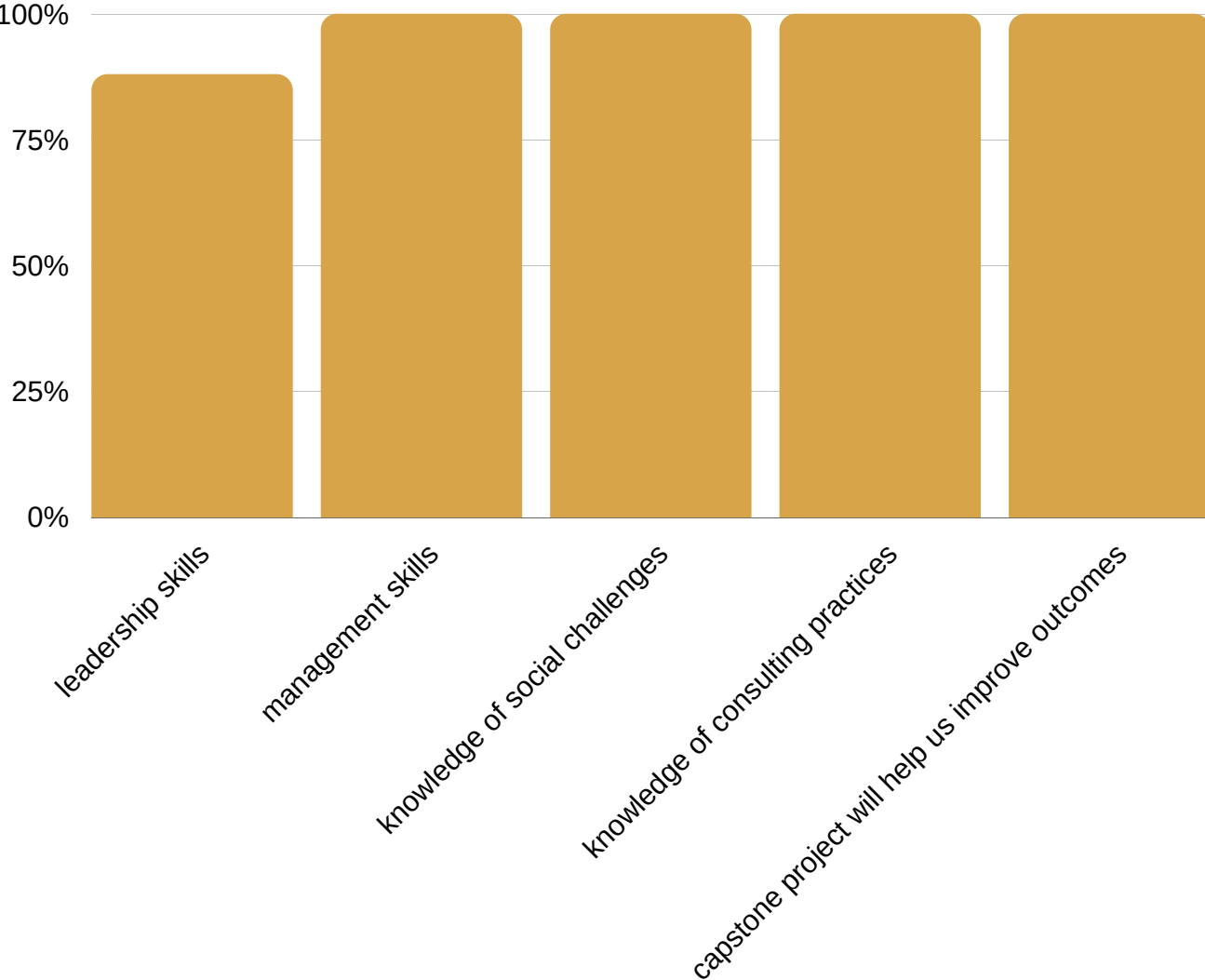


Figure 2. Host organizations who strongly agreed or agreed that Fellows achieved these expected outcomes.



V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Final recommendations were developed in conjunction with the program team and leadership. Recommendations for future efforts suggested by Fellows, key informants, and host organizations included:

- social enterprise partners need to be clear about what they want from their project
- be more clear with mentors about what's expected
- consider whether mentors are redundant with leadership development sessions
- accommodate range of experiences, knowledge, backgrounds of Fellows in Seminar; consider assigning optional pre-class reading for those unfamiliar with content
- consider other formats, such as students taking a class for credit that leads to a field placement
- consider shortening classroom prep time and start field time in the fall or an intensive one quarter Fellowship
- consider best practices from other leadership development programs
- hold networking event for all CiviCO fellows
- consider electing a "social captain" among Fellows to spearhead informal gatherings



Ultimately, the program team settled on the following key recommendations for future efforts (*Written by Rebecca Arno, The Barton Institute*):

- Set up systems to foster clarity between the social enterprise and the Fellows who will work with them, including a focused RFP process and targeted scopes of work
- Consider offering classes for credit that lead to field placements
- Hold more networking events, particularly to connect Fellows across years
- To accommodate the range of experiences, knowledge, and background of the Fellows, assign pre-reading prior to the Fellowship year

APPENDIX A. SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES

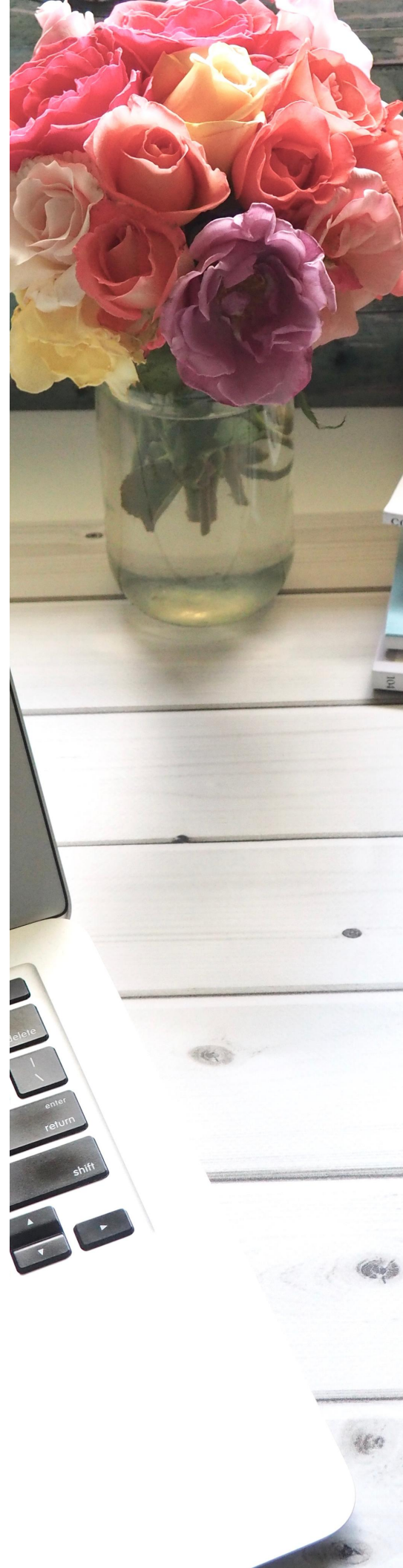
To answer the primary evaluation questions, data were collected through a Fellow survey, a host organization survey, key informant interviews, site observation, and case study interviews with a small number of Fellows. Due to budget constraints, many evaluation activities were abbreviated. Future efforts may include more extensive process and outcome evaluation activities.

Fellow Survey

The primary purpose of this mixed method survey was to test outcomes from the Fellows' perspective. Specifically, questions were intended to measure connections made with other students, enhanced network and career insights, increases in leadership and management skills, increases in knowledge of social challenges and consulting practices, gains in practical experience, and use of training to develop actionable deliverables to host organizations. The secondary purpose of this survey was to gather information on implementation. The survey was distributed in May 2020 and the response rate was 92 percent (n = 11).

Host Organization Survey

The primary purpose of this mixed method survey was to test outcomes from the host organizations' perspective. Specifically, questions were intended to measure Fellow



outcomes related to leadership and management skills, consulting practice, and delivering actionable products from the perspective of the host organization. This approach was used to provide an extra level of validity to Fellow outcomes. The secondary purpose of this survey was to gather information on implementation from the host organization's perspective. This survey was distributed in May 2020 and the response rate was 73 percent (n = 8).

Key Informant Interviews

The purpose of key informant interviews was to meet with program designers and implementers to discuss their understanding of program implementation in its current iteration, drivers of success, and challenges to implementation. These provided valuable implementation feedback and documented lessons learned. Interviews were conducted in April 2020.

Site Observations

The purpose of conducting site observations was to witness the program in action. These were conducted in an unstructured fashion. The insights generated during these observations are often key to understanding program implementation and the unique context in which the program is operating. Observation was conducted at one seminar, LEAP session, and social event.

Case Studies

A small sample of Fellows (25%) were interviewed as case studies. These case studies provided a more comprehensive view of how the Fellowship did or did not lead to expected outcomes. Interviews were conducted in June 2020.

Data Collection Limitations

There are limitations to collecting data from open-ended questions. While this approach is more participatory and democratic in that it allows respondents to discuss whatever they choose, it is often difficult draw conclusions across responses. As an example, several Fellows specifically identified the level of support provided to Fellows as exemplary; another Fellow identified the level of support as lacking. This may reflect different expectations or experiences.

