

Evaluation Matters: Mandela Washington Fellowship Case Study on Learning



THE EVALUATION

Why: The evaluation was intended to help ECA management make decisions about Mandela Washington Fellowship administration and address accountability objectives.

What: The evaluation addressed the following seven questions:

1. What individual-level impact has the Fellowship had on its Alumni?
2. In what ways has participation in the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities?

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THE PROGRAM

The Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), launched in 2010, is a signature effort of the U.S. Government. The program's purpose is to invest in the next generation of African leaders as they spur growth and prosperity, strengthen democratic governance, and enhance peace and security across sub-Saharan Africa. The Mandela Washington Fellowship is the flagship program of YALI that empowers emerging leaders through academic coursework, leadership training, and networking.

KEY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- » **Support for Foreign Policy Goals:** The Fellowship has contributed to the U.S. foreign policy goals of strengthening democratic institutions and governance, spurring economic growth and prosperity, and strengthening ties between the United States and sub-Saharan Africa. An important aspect of Fellows' learning is witnessing democratic models and processes in the United States while leadership skills gained through participation support Alumni in applying these principles in their own countries.
- » **Impact of the Fellowship on Alumni:** Leadership skills were the most appreciated and applicable skills gained during the Fellowship. Fellows' activities and experiences expanded these skills and helped them achieve professional and personal goals. The Fellowship, Professional Development Experiences (PDE), and Reciprocal Exchanges (RE) components of the Fellowship all positively impacted Fellows.
- » **Benefit to home communities of the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship:** The U.S. exchange provided Fellows with key support to serve as change agents and expanded their network of like-minded peers. Fellows gained knowledge on organizing community activities, and implemented a wide variety of community service projects in their home communities.
- » **Benefit to home communities of the Reciprocal Exchange:** Reciprocal Exchange Awardees and Fellows developed strong personal and professional relationships through frequent communication and collaboration. Exchanges also produced short-, and potentially long-, term impacts on both African and U.S. communities. Participation often elevated the work of Fellows, positioning many to receive awards, certificates, recognition and in some cases funding.
- » **Benefits of the Fellowship to Local American Communities:** The Fellowship enhanced globalization and cross-cultural understanding in the U.S., increased Americans' job skills through RE projects, and improved U.S. community knowledge of and connection to African countries. The Fellowship strengthened ties and led to new partnerships between host institutes, local organizations, and corporations.



THE EVALUATION

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3. In what ways has participation in the Reciprocal Exchange component of the Fellowship allowed Fellows to benefit their home communities?
4. In what ways does the Fellowship benefit local American communities?
5. To what extent has the U.S. exchange portion of the Fellowship built lasting and productive relationships, both personal and institutional, between the U.S. and other countries?
6. How does the Fellowship's U.S. exchange support foreign policy goals?

Who: ECA's Evaluation Division contracted Guidehouse, LLP to conduct the evaluation.

When: October 2018 – September 2020

How Much: \$527,720

- » **Building lasting and productive relationships:** During the six weeks in the U.S., Fellows formed deep and lasting relationships, which continued after their return home. The PDE gave Fellows hands-on opportunities in U.S. organizations, while host organizations broadened their knowledge of African cultures and ways of thinking and working.
- » **Next Phase of the Fellowship:** ECA with the Bureau of African Affairs' Office of Public Diplomacy should reflect on program objectives, make updates as needed, and clarify program scope for stakeholders. ECA should also continue to refine the Washington, D.C. Summit. ECA should clarify PDE and RE criteria and training

INTEGRATING RECOMMENDATIONS

- » **Standardize and update the Pre-Departure Orientation.** ECA has updated pre-departure orientation guidance for Embassies to include further information on cultural expectations and differences, current events, opportunities for engagement and information on funding opportunities post-fellowship. ECA has also developed a webinar series covering this content.
- » **Tailor Fellowship experience to Fellows' profiles and professional interests.** ECA has updated implementing partner guidelines on communication with ECA is utilizing the postponed 2020 program to determine whether sharing Fellow profiles sooner with Institutes supports more targeted programming. ECA has also included requirements to shorten the application review process and provide Institutes with Fellow profiles further in advance in its 2021 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).
- » **Increase and standardize preparatory information for non-institute U.S. participants.** ECA has included a requirement in its 2021 NOFO for a community outreach plan to individuals who interact with Fellows during the Institutes, Summit, and PDE.
- » **Increase program flexibility with respect to community service.** ECA has incorporated an introductory session on volunteerism in the U.S. into Institute programming as well as flexibility for small group community service activities. In January 2021, ECA convened a virtual Institute Retreat to discuss virtual and in-person community service activities. This will reduce logistical challenges and allow Fellows to choose experiences that are most meaningful for them.
- » **Continue to iterate on the Summit experience.** ECA has already incorporated several of the recommended changes in the 2019 Summit, including a session on post-Fellowship funding opportunities and a networking day. ECA will seek to incorporate further recommendations such as additional time for reflection when Summit planning resumes.
- » **Expand post-Fellowship engagement and networking opportunities.** ECA will provide U.S. embassies with a model for structuring events post-Fellowship and will continue to work with the implementing partner and embassies on expanded post-Fellowship engagement. ECA has also launched the CANVAS portal, which provides virtual content and networking among alumni, Fellows, and Institutes.
- » **Expand the Reciprocal Exchange program and the Professional Development Experience.** Starting in 2021, Fellows may have the opportunity to complete an extended virtual experience or project with the U.S. host. As part of the RE component, ECA has expanded logistical information provided to program participants, including a webinar for Fellows and RE awardees as well as incorporating a virtual engagement component.