

Summary of Key Findings

BUSH FELLOWS AND REGIONAL IMPACT

- The Bush Foundation fellowship programs enable individuals to have a significant regional impact.
- Bush fellows have created new programs and services, supported and empowered groups of people, strengthened organizations, changed the way systems operate, provided new perspectives and insights, enhanced public policies, created vibrant art, improved health and more.

TYPES OF IMPACT

- Fellows have had an impact on a number of levels, including organizations, colleagues, disciplines or fields, government, policy and legislation, with a primary impact on specific groups of people.
- Groups most commonly affected by fellows' work were students, children and youth, specific racial or ethnic groups, and people living in poverty. Common changes among specific populations included new ideas or ways of understanding, and increased knowledge, skills, motivation and aspirations.
- Fellows are creating impact locally, regionally, statewide, nationally and, to a lesser extent, internationally. Over one-third of fellows identify their primary impact as national or statewide.

HOW IMPACT OCCURS

- Fellows' common pathway to broader impact includes five stages: fellowship experiences; individual changes in the fellow; work and activities after the fellowship; broader impact on colleagues, organizations, institutions or fields; and broader impact on groups of people or communities.
- Fellows report that the fellowship deepened their commitment to their communities (only 9 percent of fellows between 1990 and 2002 currently live outside the Foundation's region) and caused them to feel responsible, even obliged, to work to benefit others.

STRATEGIES FOR CREATING IMPACT

- While fellows use a wide range of strategies, they rate interactive and interpersonal strategies highest. A fellow's networks and communication skills influence the effectiveness of all the fellows' efforts.
- Fellows with the greatest likelihood of creating broader impact have thought about what they want to do and how to do it, yet remain open to new ideas and to expanding and focusing their vision.

CONTRIBUTORS AND BARRIERS TO IMPACT

- Helpful personal characteristics that contribute to a fellow's impact are passion and energy, persistence and a clear vision of what the fellow wants to accomplish.
- Contributing external conditions include support by others, an organizational culture that supports change, availability of funding and being able to capitalize on an initiative already under way.
- External barriers to impact include lack of funding, resistance to change, bureaucracy, complexity of the issue or area, public policy or politics, and lack of interest.
- Fellows' personal barriers include personal or family responsibilities or events, reluctance to promote themselves and their work, and a lack of a strategic vision or plan for how to make an impact.

ROLE OF THE BUSH FELLOWSHIPS

- The fellowship was critical to fellows' ability to have an impact on their communities, institutions or fields. It provided the time to step back from a job, concentrate on work and have a chance to reflect; the opportunity to develop new skills, have new experiences or study a new area; and flexible funding to enable fellows to pursue their goals.
- Fellows believe networking opportunities and opportunities to develop skills in leadership, communication and building/sustaining networks can support their efforts to create broader impact.