



Cultivating Community Impact: Sustaining Alumni Engagement After the Fellowship

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in collaboration with the GN alumni community*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In 2014, Gratitude Network planted the seed for the Gratitude Network Fellowship Program, leadership and scaling accelerator targeting leaders of growth-stage nonprofits and NGOs that are working with children and youth around the world. The Fellowship as it looks in its current year-long form (first piloted in 2021) includes three primary pillars in its design: executive coaching for each Fellow, a scaling up curriculum facilitated by industry professionals, and group peer connection discussions designed to deepen and integrate the experience. In 2022, Gratitude Network also began expanding its image of the Fellowship as not just the flagship program of the organization, but also as the entry point to an ever-growing ecosystem of global leaders and organizations tied together by their engagement with Gratitude Network. As part of this, GN began running dedicated programming for alumni leaders and organizations that had already passed through the program, as well as planning future points of engagement that would further GN's mission of empowering nonprofit leaders and their teams with the tools, strategy, guidance, and global community needed to accelerate their transformation into high-performing, sustainable organizations.

Beyond pivoting towards alumni-focused programming, this expansion towards deeper alumni community begs a larger question of best practice. The unique positionality of a fellowship program offers much to the idea of an alumni ecosystem, and it also has particular challenges. Given that there are fellowship programs all over the world that have built thriving alumni communities, how can we most readily discern best practices in conversation with our own work alongside the learnings of these other fellowships?

To answer this question, Gratitude Network has been working in collaboration with the Impact Fellowships Network (IFN) – a program funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and implemented by IREX – as part of a large-scale research study working to determine how alumni programs can most effectively facilitate impact, contribute to system-level changes, reduce friction with barriers to engagement, and establish best practices in enacting and measuring post-Fellowship alumni engagement. Within a larger IFN study encompassing 23 organizations running fellowship-based programming, Gratitude Network served as one of six Impact Grant Partners, designing a distinct research initiative in conversation with IFN's more focused research.

Scope

GN's research ran from May of 2025 through March of 2026 as part of IFN's larger year-long study, and was comprised of a mixed-methods design encompassing interviews, surveys, and focus groups targeting these key questions:

- To what extent do strategies facilitated by fellowship programs support alumni in contributing to changes at different levels of society (i.e. individual, institutional, community, systems)?
- How does the design of fellowship programs influence administrators' ability to effectively support alumni in contributing to changes at different levels of society?
- What are effective resources and approaches to evaluate the impact of fellowship programs in supporting alumni contributions to change?

Key Findings

Based on data collected from 64 survey responses, 21 interviews, and one focus group.

Finding 1 – What makes engagement valuable

Alumni engagement opportunities must be perceived as highly valuable, relevant, and accessible in order to compete with leaders' other priorities and time constraints. Valuable engagement opportunities should reflect value on several levels:

Dimension	What it means
Content	Opportunities should include both structured technical skillbuilding and peer-to-peer connection
Applicability	Offerings should serve both a broad audience and be personalized to individual contexts, models, and challenges
Scope	Value should be felt at any level of engagement – from a single WhatsApp comment to full participation in all programming
Freedom of choice	Alumni should have high autonomy over frequency, type, and scope of their engagement

Finding 2 – Gap in peer-to-peer connection

Structured opportunities for peer-to-peer connection are highly desired by alumni, and not currently proportionally represented in Gratitude Network's catalog of offerings.

Metric	Result
Alumni reporting strong interest in peer networking	72%
Alumni who feel current peer connection / collaboration offerings are valuable	14%
Alumni who feel current peer connection / collaboration offerings are valuable	>65%

Relevant Statistics

INTEREST IN TECHNICAL SKILLBUILDING

Area of interest	Interest
Professional development for team members	76%
Expert-led workshops and skill sessions	67%
Alumni executive coaching	66%
Skill development short courses (M&E, fundraising, board relations, etc.)	64%

IMPROVED PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

Outcome	Alumni
Actively continuing to use leadership confidence skills from the Fellowship	86%
Actively continuing to use leadership effectiveness skills	80%

INCREASED ACTUALIZATION OF SCALING

Outcome	Alumni
Reported major expansions to organizational reach	56%
Reported increased visibility and credibility from Fellowship participation	53%
Contributing to wide-scale systemic change since the Fellowship	27%

OVERALL PERCEPTION OF THE FELLOWSHIP'S VALUE

Metric	Result
Respondents who believe the Fellowship would still be worthwhile if a participation fee were charged	>50%

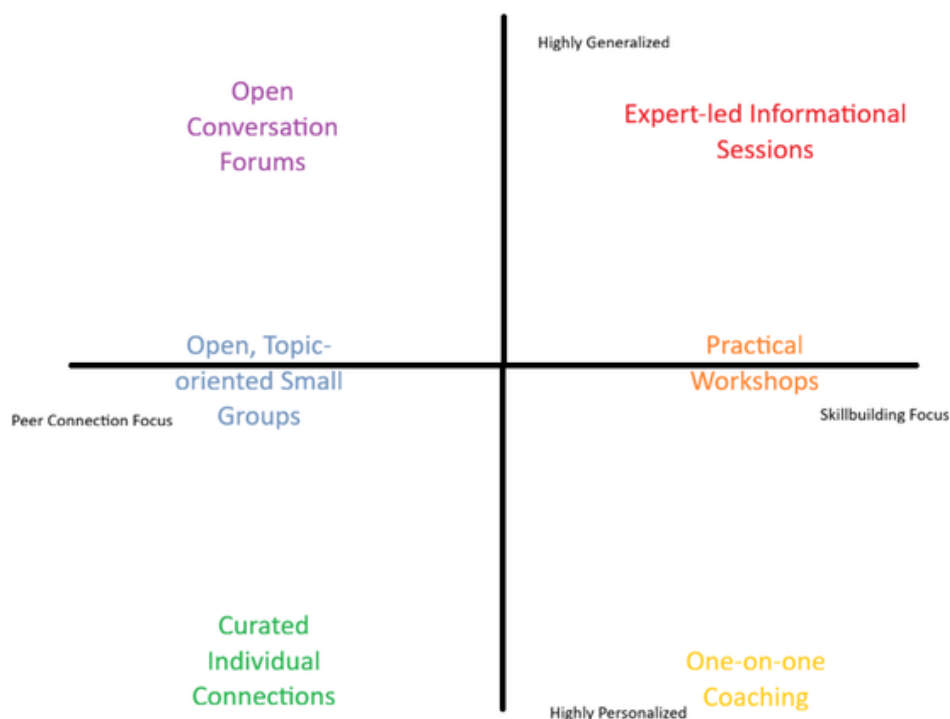
COMPARATIVE QUALITY ACROSS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

Of the 78% of respondents who reported participating in other fellowship programs:

Outcome vs. other fellowship programs	Alumni
Rated quality of leadership development higher than other program(s) participated in	52%
Reported higher support for organizational capacity growth	50%
Reported higher preparation for scaling social impact	48%

While the structural limitations of this study limit our ability to conclusively determine causal relationships among our study, the trends in our results strongly suggest that enhancing alumni engagement through deliberate implementation of programming that accounts for these key insights will also have a positive ripple effect on the ability of alumni to create meaningful change in their target communities.

In light of the data from this study, GN has created this planning tool, a graph layout that helps to visualize programming alignment with the needs of the alumni community, both in reference to clarifying individual program offerings and in reference to understanding the interrelationship between all alumni offerings.



Conclusion and Next Steps

In light of these insights (and eventually in conversation with the final results of IFN's Impact Study), Gratitude Network will consider several approaches to enhancing alumni engagement and overall impact, as well as implementing aspects of the methodology from this study into GN's annual alumni longitudinal research.

Potential future programming may include: a fundraising-specific short course, the development of an 'emerging leaders' program for middle management and future leaders, regional communication channels and gatherings, and eventual opportunities for alumni ownership of elements of the alumni experience.

Overall, this research highlights that meaningfully cultivated post-Fellowship engagement has the potential to be a powerful catalyst for global impact, as long as that continued engagement reflects the needs of alumni and grows dynamically alongside them.

Going forward, Gratitude Network will continue to explore approaches to the question of what defines an effective and dynamic alumni community that supports the goals, needs, and growth of a vibrant global network.

Introduction

For additional context on Gratitude Network and the Fellowship model, see Appendix I

Current Alumni Program Model

Gratitude Network is currently piloting several programming models designed specifically to further the impact and engagement of alumni organizations, including an eight-session leadership development series with industry experts (Core Competency Conversations), themed open discussion time with peers and Gratitude Network staff (Coffee and Connection), three month mini-courses on M&E and fundraising (Springboard series), and pro bono executive coaching for select leaders.

Upon completing the Fellowship, leaders join Gratitude's alumni community, where they receive continued access to virtual forums and targeted professional development. Alumni can also request one-on-one support from a growing pool of expert advisors. This ongoing engagement ensures that Gratitude Fellows remain connected, supported, and equipped to drive long-term, scalable impact.

Research Goals

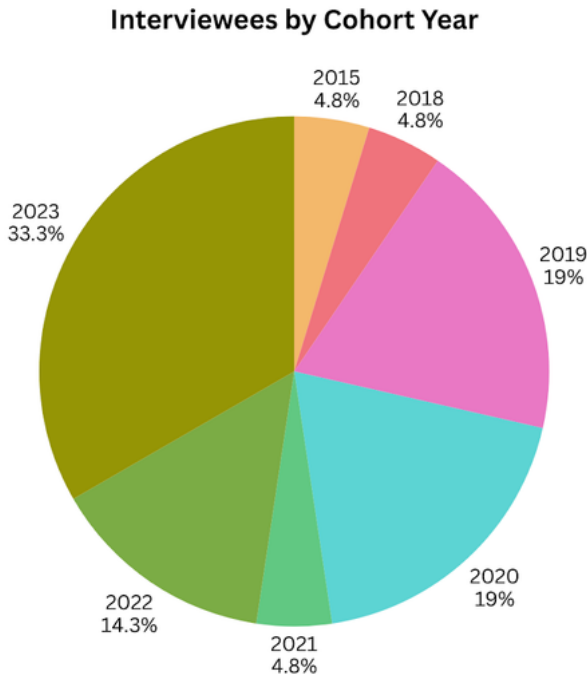
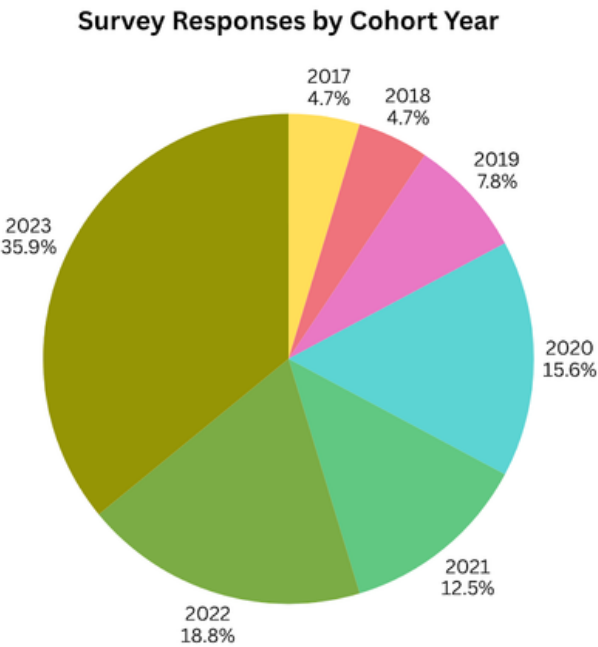
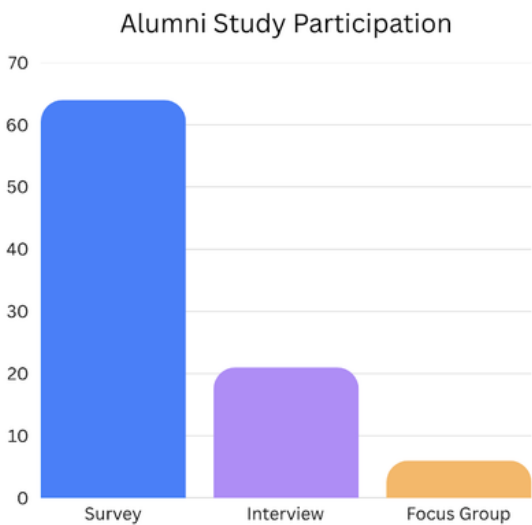
This research attempts to address the following three research questions, in line with IFN's larger research initiative:

1. To what extent do strategies facilitated by fellowship programs support alumni in contributing to changes at different levels of society (i.e. individual, institutional, community, systems)?
2. How does the design of fellowship programs influence administrators' ability to effectively support alumni in contributing to changes at different levels of society?
3. What are effective resources and approaches to evaluate the impact of fellowship programs in supporting alumni contributions to change?

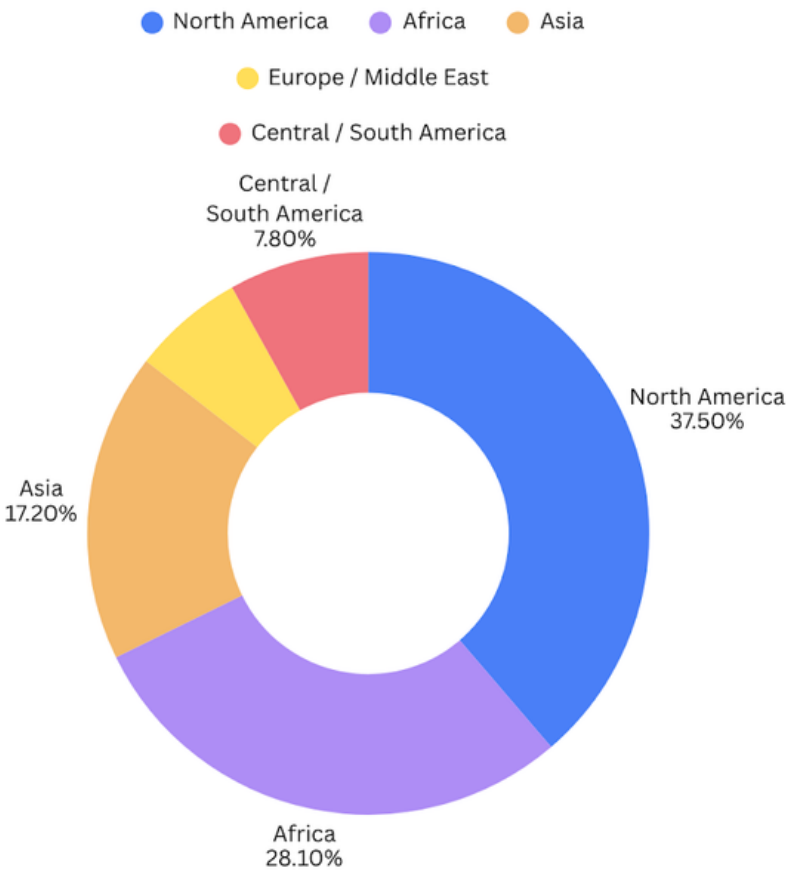
Methodology

For detailed phases and limitations of this methodology, see Appendix II

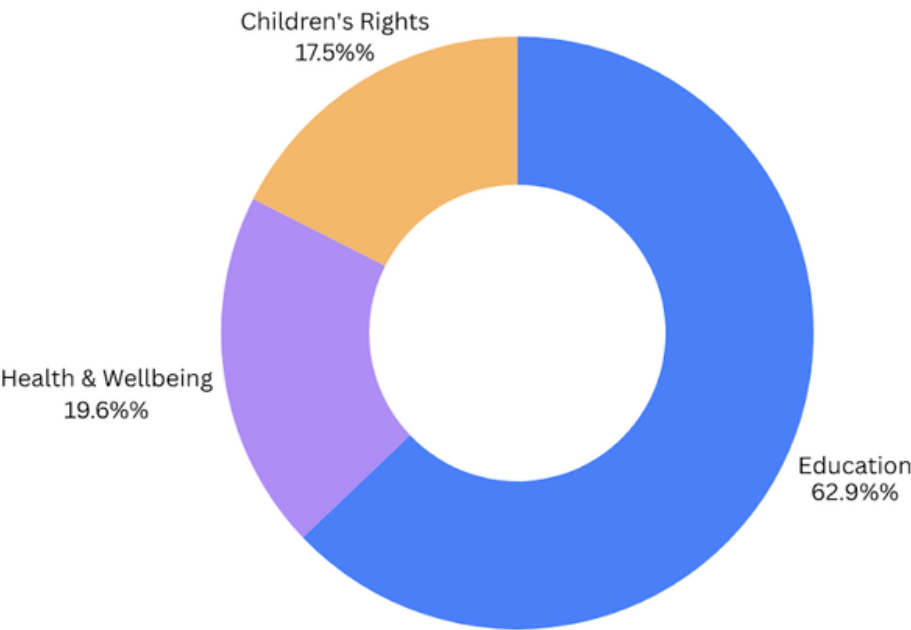
This study employed a mixed-methods approach, using a mixed (qualitative/quantitative) survey, one-on-one interviews, and a focus group with Gratitude Network’s most engaged alumni. Through a combination of population targets and incentives, Gratitude Network targeted alumni based on geographic location, demographic characteristics, cohort year, and sector of work, successfully building a study sample that reflected the larger alumni population along multiple axes of diversity.



Representation



Alumni Study Sectors of Work



Findings

Overall, Gratitude Network's analysis highlights a strong enthusiasm among alumni for continued and deepened opportunities for engagement, even among alumni who have not historically engaged with existing programming. Ideas for expanded alumni engagement are abundant, and current programmatic strengths and weaknesses are much clearer. Most notably, Gratitude Network has used this data to inform a planning tool that visualizes the central intended impact of alumni programming in relation to two fundamental directions of interest that were consistently shown by alumni throughout this process - technical skillbuilding and GN community connection.

Glimpse of Relevant Data:

- Peer connection:
 - 72% of surveyed alumni report strong interest in peer networking, while only 14% report currently feeling that peer connection and/or alumni collaboration opportunities are valuable
 - The desire for in-person events and/or deeper peer connection was referenced in qualitative survey responses by over 65% of respondents
- Technical skillbuilding
 - 76% of survey respondents report strong interest in professional development for team members
 - 67% of respondents report strong interest in expert-led workshops and skill sessions
 - 64% of respondents report strong interest in skill development short courses (i.e. M&E, fundraising, board relationships, etc.)
 - 66% of respondents report strong interest in alumni executive coaching opportunities

Furthermore, this data supports notable anecdotal observations of change at both the individual level (i.e. leadership perception and actualization) and the institutional level (i.e. the ability to scale organization sustainably and effectively), including continued use of curriculum skills, stronger perception of leadership ability, wider organizational reach, higher confidence in sustainable growth, and increases in revenue, beneficiaries served, and full-time staff. Additionally, qualitative interviews uncovered numerous stories of major mindset shifts, bold new initiatives, and network expansions that were spurred by a combination of Fellowship learnings, coach and mentor relationships, ongoing resources, and the re-introduction of in-person events through Gratitude Network.

Strengths

While most results from the survey phase of this study showed general alignment with expectations, this data also highlighted these strengths and areas for improvement to be pursued in further strategic planning around alumni engagement.

Consistent strengths included:

- Perception of leadership
 - 86% reported actively continuing to use leadership confidence skills learned from the Fellowship

Strengths Cont'd

- 80% report actively continuing to use leadership effectiveness skills
- Quote - Adriana Gomez (2019 Fellow, TeenSmart): "All the experiences were very valuable, and I can identify the importance of coaching, of accountability, and how to belong, and how to add value to a network of people around the world."
- Actualization of scaling
 - 56% of respondents reported major expansions to organizational reach
 - 53% reported increased visibility and credibility based on participation in the Fellowship
 - 27% of respondents reported contributing to wide-scale systemic change since participating in the Fellowship
 - Quote - Jyoti Thyagarajan (2018 Fellow, Meghshala Trust): I actually think the fellowship just gave me a... quick hard slap on the side of my face. And it woke me up, you know, it [showed me] there have to be stories, and they have to be moving stories. And so that you really shake people up and say, wake up, you know, which stone are you living under? And I said this to my team, I said, why aren't we looking at all the schools in the country? And there was this dead silence for a while, and they said, Jyoti, would you like to sit down? Are you kidding? Are you crazy? And I said, it's easy, you know, you just split the whole thing into bite-sized pieces, and each bite-sized piece has a bite-sized solution. All you have to do is to roll it out, like a rolling bit of surf. Why is it not possible? And they said it doesn't work like that, does it? And I said, doesn't it? And they said, does it? And after a couple of rounds of this, we decided we'd try it."
- Perception of the Fellowship's value
 - Over 50% of respondents believe that the Fellowship, though currently available as a free program, would still be a worthwhile investment if there were a fee for participation
 - Quote - Renata Couto (2023 Fellow, Desiderata Institute): "I think that it was a magnificent journey - with all the sessions, I learned something, so I've never had the feeling that I was wasting my time, which is for me a very good KPI, you know, because sometimes we do a lot of things, and not every meeting is worthy. All this time, I had this feeling that I was not wasting my time with the Graduate Network... We exchanged the experience, it was inspiring, it was wisdom. A very good journey for me."
 - Quote - Praful Nikam (2022 Fellow, Y4D): "Rather than considering my journey as a unique and alone, I think this fellowship given me a platform where I realized It's a broader sector, broader thing, and I can collaborate, talk to people, and maybe try their new mechanisms, actually."
- Comparative quality
 - of the 78% of respondents who reported participating in other fellowship programs, 52% reported that the quality of leadership development was higher than the other program(s) they had participated in
 - 50% reported higher support for organizational capacity growth than similar fellowships
 - 48% reporting higher preparation for scaling their social impact than similar fellowships
 - Quote - ElsaMarie D'Silva (2020 Fellow, Red Dot Foundation): "There's a certain element and part of the Fellowship that focuses on you as the leader, but then it also focuses on the sustainability of your organization. And whilst other fellowships and all do actually focus on sustainability, they'd never, ever ask you to invite your team. And how can you build sustainability if you don't involve them, and don't involve them right in the beginning? Because you then transfer diluted knowledge. So here, everybody gets it firsthand, and... that was so great. I think that was the turning point for me."

Areas for Growth

While leadership and scaling are both primary features of the Fellowship curriculum that are clearly retained and reflected in the alumni experience, the third primary aspect of the program – peer collaboration and feelings of connectedness – showed a strong need for improvement, both in terms of the desire for and current lack of access to this feature. Survey respondents report high interest in peer-to-peer networking (72%), but low value in current peer connection/networking offerings (47%) and peer collaboration (50%). Similarly, only 4% of respondents report feeling highly connected to other Gratitude Network Fellows and alumni, and only 6% report feeling connected to Gratitude Network's community.

Qualitative data similarly showed high perceptions of leadership, skill retention, impact, and post-Fellowship accomplishments, but low perceptions of connectedness and alumni networking.

Programmatic Alignment

With recognition of these strengths and areas for growth, the question then pivots back to one of the fundamental motivators of this study – determining how fellowship programs can best support their fellows and alumni in maximizing their impact.

When asked which barriers regularly interfere with participation in Gratitude Network Alumni offerings, over half of survey respondents (56%) noted that time constraints posed a significant challenge, and 42% said the same of their competing priorities. Qualitative data highlighted that engagement offerings had the potential to feel like a worthwhile use of time in comparison to other priorities, but didn't inherently meet that threshold unless proven to offer clear value, relevance, and accessibility.

While value, relevance, and accessibility can all be highly subjective and context-dependent, this research highlighted two primary themes in alumni interest and motivation: reliable access to impactful knowledge, and plentiful avenues for peer connection and collaboration. While any individual alumni may only be motivated by one of these foci (or by only one of these foci at a time) this study's data shows that value and relevance are highly influenced by ready access to both of these elements, and that offering a variety of programming that addresses both of these motivations is key to supporting the thriving of Gratitude Network's community.

Informing the theme of access to technical knowledge and skillbuilding, significant interest was shown in post-Fellowship executive coaching (66%), skill-based short courses in addition to GN's current M&E course (64%), and expert-led one-off workshops (67%). As discussed in the Strengths, technical knowledge dissemination and retention is already a strong facet of GN programming, and this data further confirmed both the interest in and need for continuing to expand in that direction.

Similarly, as discussed in the Areas for Growth section, there is a clear desire for deeper peer connection and collaboration. Interviewees overwhelmingly reported a desire to engage with this goal in mind, and survey responses reinforced this, as discussed above. Repeated ideas for expanded peer integration included: additional in-person gathering opportunities outside of Gratitude Network's annual Summit, non-US locations for these events, alumni mini-cohorts or WhatsApp groups organized by geographic location and/or mission

Programmatic Alignment Cont'd

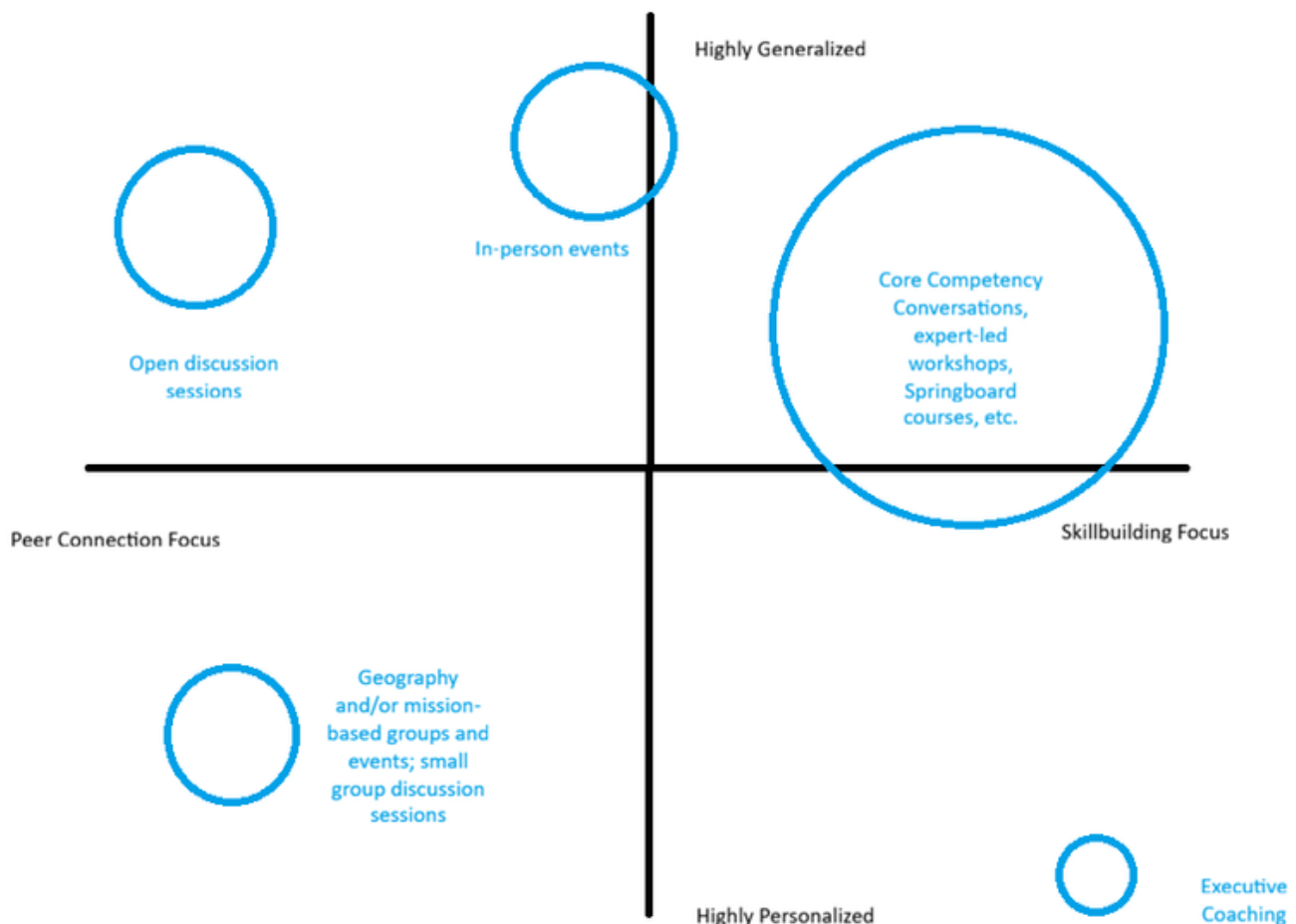
similarity, adoption of WhatsApp for primary alumni communication, theme-based discussion groups, and staff-facilitated networking introductions. Additionally, a whopping 74% of survey respondents expressed interest in hosting in-person, alumni-focused events in their local geographies, further confirming both untapped interest in general alumni engagement and specific interest in peer connection.

Separately, alumni also show overwhelming interest (77%) in alumni programming that is either open to or specifically designed for their team members, in addition to existing programming designed only for leaders. Both quantitative and qualitative data strongly supports the idea that team-inclusive programming that encompasses the same two foci discussed above would not only fill a unique niche in the wider fellowship landscape, but would also significantly contribute to the overall value, relevance, and (perhaps most notably) accessibility of Gratitude Network's alumni ecosystem.

Following the idea of accessibility, an inference that can be made from analyzing current levels of engagement alongside both the prevalence of time-based barriers and numerous qualitative examples of overcommitment is that highly valuable alumni engagement opportunities should be meaningful at any level of commitment, from attending just a single workshop all the way up to engaging fully in all of Gratitude Network's programming. While increasing alumni impact requires some engagement with Gratitude Network, amount of impact and frequency of engagement are not necessarily directly correlated.

Use of Planning Tools

In order to integrate these findings into current and future initiatives with efficiency and intention, Gratitude Network has used these findings to inform a simple tool for measuring the alignment of current and future engagement efforts with the expressed interests of Fellowship alumni. The x-axis of this graph represents the primary focus of a given activity's content, while the y-axis represents the level of personalization built into the structure of the activity. The 'activity bubbles' are placed based on the primary intended outcome of the activity (with the recognition that many activities will touch on multiple points of this graph throughout their execution, and some participants may experience different alignment depending on their personal goals), and are sized based on their proportional prioritization within Gratitude Network's overall alumni curriculum.



Use of Planning Tools Cont'd

While there are some immediate limitations in the use of this tool – most notably that neither of these axes are necessarily dichotomous, and all four ‘extremes’ can certainly coexist in the same event or activity – its use as a planning tool captures several key takeaways from this research and helps ensure that as Gratitude Network continues to expand alumni engagement, future offerings can be strategically designed to ensure maximum alignment with alumni needs. Gratitude Network also plans to implement this tool as part of future longitudinal surveys, offering alumni the means to express their needs and interests through the same lens that staff will be using to make strategic adjustments.

Overall, this research has highlighted that a) alumni programming opportunities must be perceived as highly valuable, relevant, and accessible in order to compete with leaders’ other priorities and time constraints, b) valuable engagement opportunities should include structured opportunities for both technical skillbuilding and community connection, as well as varying degrees of personalization, c) valuable engagement opportunities should be meaningful at any degree of engagement, with a high degree of choice.

Conclusions

Reflections

While Gratitude Network maintains a thorough Monitoring & Evaluation system that includes annual longitudinal alumni-focused research, taking on a research project with this level of depth led to several reflections on the process and experience of implementing this structure. On the data collection side of this process, some key highlights of the process included incentivizing survey responses and prioritizing interviews (despite the time commitment that has historically led to interviews being extensions of existing meetings, instead of a standalone and structured experience). Both of these gave us a deeper window of access to information we’ve never been able to reach. Within that, a notable and surprising part of the experience was hearing from several alumni who have shown no engagement at all since their Fellowship year – all of these alumni expressed explicit belief in Gratitude Network’s ability to improve, even though the programming and offerings have never been valuable to them. Each of these alumni also offered to lend time, support, feedback, and/or expertise towards helping Gratitude Network reach a place of real value for them and others, which was a heartening surprise, and cemented the presence, importance, and mutual value of a true community network.

Another notable reflection on this process is that taking on qualitative analysis of this depth and time commitment would have been much stronger in tandem with Gratitude Network’s other M&E initiatives. Our qualitative data was a gold mine of information that could have benefitted several of our programming decisions, but would have required a significantly higher amount of initial structuring in order to make the analysis process intentionally relevant to initiatives beyond just this study. In other words, the sheer volume of qualitative data (in combination with limited staff time) would have been more efficiently used as part of a larger, more intentional M&E effort that encompassed several different M&E goals at once, as opposed to just the ones designed for this study.

Reflections Cont'd

As far as findings, our reflection is that while this research gave strong evidentiary support to several ideas, initiatives, and structural changes that have already been proposed and/or piloted, very few of our findings showed something we hadn't already considered or articulated. We will continue moving in the directions we have been with added confidence, but would have expected more novel ideas to arise throughout this process.

Future Plans and Next Steps

Based on the findings from this study, Gratitude Network will integrate this data into a three-year alumni engagement plan, making sure to prioritize both skillbuilding and peer connection, provide opportunities for leaders to readily involve their team members, and initiate structured options for alumni to take ownership of the alumni experience, including by hosting events and/or providing council to Gratitude Network.

Next Steps	
<i>Immediate</i>	• Launch Springboard: Fundraising alongside the existing Springboard: Impact program • Create low-lift touchpoints for in-person connection at existing gatherings with an alumni presence (i.e. Skoll) • Establish capacity needs for piloting regional gatherings in areas with strong alumni presence (i.e. India, Kenya, Bay Area of California) • Continue expanding the opportunity email series, promoting existing virtual connection opportunities, and exploring opportunities to increase access to the annual Gratitude Network Summit while it remains in the US • Revive Gratitude Network's WhatsApp presence, including adding regional and mission-based sub-groups
<i>Mid-term</i>	• Move resources towards an 'emerging leaders' fellowship (focus on team members and middle management) ◦ Establish capacity needs in conversation with target alumni ◦ Design a pilot program model • Establish a structured alumni coaching program, either maintaining continuity with the Fellowship's coaching program or as a fully standalone alumni initiative
<i>Long-term</i>	• Implement a nested alumni leadership structure within Gratitude Network ◦ i.e. an Alumni Council in which alumni pilot their own initiatives and feedback cycles in conversation with staff and other alumni ◦ Nested feedback and accountability systems for alumni-led and alumni-focused change
<i>Future M&E</i>	• Continue to utilize incentives as a means of increasing survey engagement • Incorporate valuable survey questions from this study into existing longitudinal survey structures, including: ◦ Systemic change ◦ Major post-Fellowship accomplishments ◦ Novel approaches to peer connection • Capture testimonials, accomplishments, and stories of change for marketing use • Continue to follow emerging research in measuring intangible and long-term experiential learning • If given the opportunity to continue research based on this study, a priority topic would be the effective facilitation of cross-collaboration across cultural context

Appendix I – Gratitude Network Context

History and Impact of the Organization

Gratitude Network's Fellowship was first piloted in 2014 as a response to consistent skill and confidence gaps in leaders of global nonprofits and NGOs working with children and youth, with the goal of exponentially increasing the positive impact of existing organizations through personalized leadership support, executive coaching, and training for effective programmatic scaling. Since then, over 300 nonprofit and NGO leaders have participated in the Fellowship, creating a network of leaders whose work has touched over 274 million children in almost 130 countries. Gratitude Network data shows that beyond touching the lives of its Fellows' beneficiaries, it has also consistently contributed to the thriving and transformation of these leaders and organizations themselves, magnifying each Fellow's ability to contribute to direct and systemic change in their target communities. By empowering leaders directly, Fellowship organizations show major improvements in reach and sustainability: three years after graduating from the program, GN's alumni base has shown a 5.3x increase in children served and a 3.5x increase in revenue, not to mention that 95% of organizations who have passed through the program since 2014 are still in active operation.

Problem We're Solving For

Nonprofit leaders, especially in under-resourced communities, face systemic barriers to achieving lasting impact—including limited access to leadership development, high burnout rates, and unsustainable turnover. A 2020 McKinsey study found that capacity-building programs are often unavailable to those who need them most, while Bridgespan reports that 50% of nonprofits fail within their first few years. While Gratitude's one-year program drives measurable growth, there has been an identified need to explore the long-term impact of GN's support and the ongoing needs of alumni. This research centered on exploring how the Fellowship contributes to sustained leadership and organizational development, identifying gaps in post-fellowship support, and expanding structured alumni engagement strategy. By centering Gratitude Network alumni voices in conversation with IFN's Impact Study, we aim to build a dynamic, data-informed alumni ecosystem, and collaborate on valuable insights within a broader model of best practices for determining and facilitating the impact of fellowship participants at the alumni stage.

Fellowship Program Model

Gratitude Network's 12-month Fellowship program provides a comprehensive suite of support to nonprofit leaders, including:

1. **Personalized Leadership Coaching:** Bi-weekly or monthly sessions tailored to each Fellow's personal and organizational goals
2. **Scaling Up Curriculum:** Fellows and their leadership teams engage in interactive "Scaling Up" sessions focused on strategy, fundraising, and team alignment.
3. **Peer Learning and Connection:** Fellows join a cohort of ~30 like-minded leaders (as well as a global alumni network of 200+ organizations) to share insights, challenges, and solutions, fostering collaboration and mutual growth.
4. **Global Network Access:** Fellows tap into a broad network of professionals, corporations, and foundations offering resources, mentorship, and strategic partnerships.

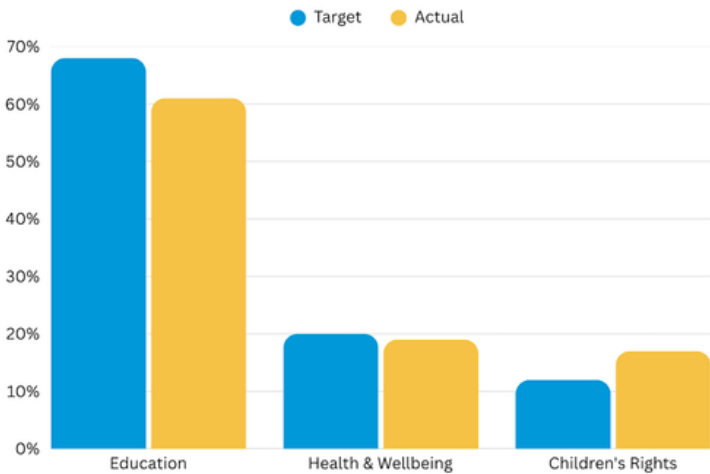
Appendix II – Detailed Methodology

Design Phase	
<i>Key Steps</i>	Establish outreach methods and population targets Design survey, interview, and focus group structures and questions
<i>Goals</i>	• Create a robust, goal-aligned, accessible, and maximally engaging data collection strategy • Establish population sample targets that capture appropriate diversity of geography, Fellowship year, gender, and post-program engagement • Ensure a response rate of at least 30-40% of eligible pre-2024 alumni (actual: 36%)

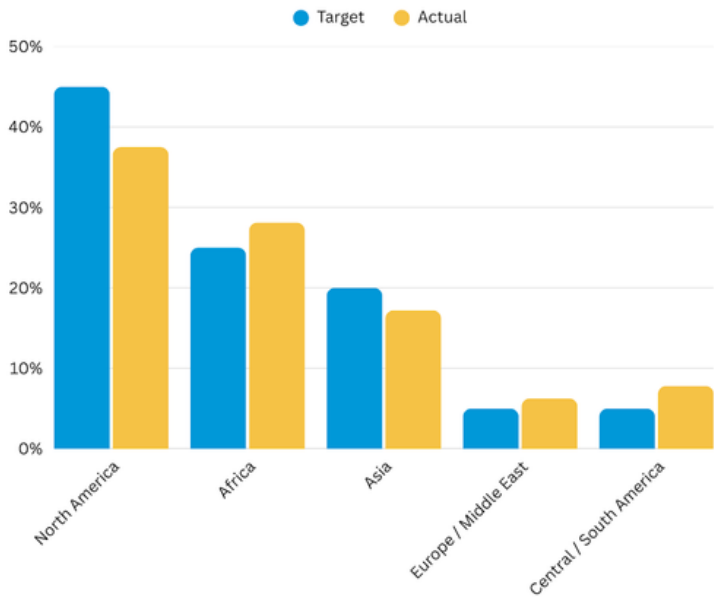
Data Collection Phase			
<i>Survey</i>		<i>Interviews / Focus Group</i>	
<i>Key Steps</i>	• Distribute 59 question Google Form via email to alumni from 2014-2023	<i>Key Steps</i>	• Facilitate one focus group with up to 6 highly engaged alumni • Conduct 20-25 (actual: 21) one-on-one, 45-60 minute interviews
<i>Goals</i>	• Collect existing longitudinal KPIs (number of children served per year, annual revenue, and full-time equivalent staff) • Establish a baseline of engagement with current alumni offerings, including common barriers • Gauge interest in future alumni offerings • Determine long-term impact of Fellowship and post-Fellowship engagement • Generate ideas and feedback	<i>Goals</i>	• Gather relevant stories, feedback, ideas, and experiences • Contextualize survey responses, if applicable

Appendix II – Detailed Methodology Cont’d

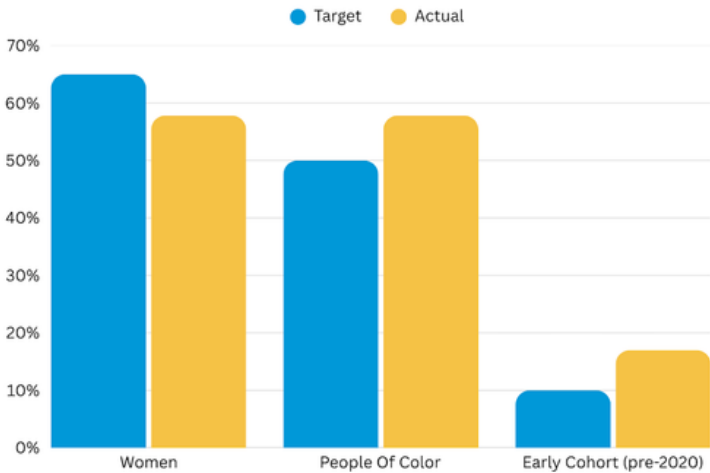
Survey Responses: Sector of Work



Survey Responses: Global Geography



Survey Responses: Demographics



Appendix II – Detailed Methodology Cont’d

	Data Analysis Phase
<i>Key Steps</i>	- Analyze quantitative data using Google Sheets, highlighting strengths, weaknesses, baseline engagement, future programming interest, self-perception of leadership, post-Fellowship impact, and systemic change - Analyze qualitative data using Dedoose, highlighting recurring themes, feedback, and powerful stories of impact
<i>Goals</i>	- Establish a data-supported baseline of current strengths and weaknesses, realistic areas for future growth, practical next steps, and longitudinal comparisons - Catalog stories of success, change, and impact

	Data Integration Phase
<i>Key Steps</i>	- Codify research into a distributable report - Attend IFN’s International Fellowship Summit - Establish a three-year alumni programming implementation plan
<i>Goals</i>	- Engage in reciprocal learning through IFN’s final research report and summit gathering - Codify best practices, next steps, and future strategy in line with Gratitude Network’s positionality and data

Limitations

Key limitations of this methodology include:

- Access to pre-2020 alumni: Due to a lack of existing avenues for alumni engagement at the time of their Fellowship completion, Gratitude Network’s most active alumni network skews heavily away from older alumni. While the voices of cohort years are incredibly enriching to this research, access to these leaders remains limited, and many of them faded out of Gratitude Network’s community altogether. The Gratitude Network team aimed to mitigate some of this limitation by specifically targeting early-cohort alumni in their initial outreach, and leveraging existing personal relationships that these alumni maintain with staff and stakeholders.
- Perceptive biases: Much of the quantitative data collected for this study consisted of self-reflective Likert scale (or otherwise numeric) responses to statements about perceptions of identity, impact, or skill. Responses of this type are highly subject to biases, misconceptions, mistranslations, cultural context, and other subjective influences that may be held by respondents. Any of these influences might affect the accuracy of these responses when compared across large swaths of data, as well as longitudinally in comparison with existing data from the same respondents. The Gratitude Network team aimed to mitigate some of this limitation by including qualitative (open-answer) questions in tandem with quantitative (Likert scale) questions about each topic in this survey in order to maximize available context.

Appendix II – Detailed Methodology Cont’d

Limitations Cont’d

- Non-probability sampling: the data in this study was collected through non-probability sampling, and is therefore subject to several kinds of bias, including voluntary response bias and non-response bias. The Gratitude Network team aimed to mitigate some of this limitation by maintaining awareness of non-generalization throughout the research process.
- Digital community: The nature of Gratitude Network as a fully digital community introduces several limitations, especially in reference to attendance and investment. It is not uncommon for digital communities to report higher rates of no-showing than in-person communities, and/or for participants to enter digital spaces without sensory anchors (video and/or audio). Our findings from this study support that perception of connectedness in digital spaces remains less positive than connectedness in in-person spaces, and this remains a challenge in fostering meaningful connections, trust, and thorough data. In this study, this was exemplified through the dissolution of an intended second focus group (comprised of recently re-engaged alumni), for which all members confirmed attendance but only two actually attended. The Gratitude Network team aimed to mitigate some of this limitation by introducing incentives for survey completion, primarily scheduling interviews with only those individuals who expressed active interest during the survey process, scheduling interviews to accommodate a variety of time zones, and creating thorough invitation processes for a clear ‘paper trail’ of dates and times.
- Staff interview styles: Because these semi-structured interviews were split between multiple Gratitude Network staff members, the styles, foci, and outcomes of these conversations varied depending on the staff involved. The Gratitude Network team aimed to mitigate this by establishing a small number of high-priority questions to be asked in every interview, and relying on thorough qualitative analysis to highlight consistent themes.



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