

## WHITE PAPER

# Strength in Numbers: OSI-Baltimore Community Fellowships Network



Didi Goldenhar  
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Open Society Institute-Baltimore

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*If you give an individual the freedom and opportunity to pursue a socially beneficial goal, the intended or unintended result is positive change for the person and the community, which can apply to a particular segment of the population or a group working on a common issue, a city block, or the entire city.*

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—George Soros, Founder  
The Open Society Institute

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*I love my project because of my mission to change the paths of those with no voice. Thank you for allowing me to be part of the OSI community. By sharing our struggles and successes, I realize there is a family, a community hell bent on change.*

—Matt Hanna  
2013 OSI-Black Male Achievement Fellow  
Next One Up Foundation

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*We love this city way down in our souls. Our people are coming together to demand social justice, to heal and rebuild with that great love. The system is cracked and as such, there is space for innovation. And we have joy, damn it! All kinds of Baltimoreans were in the streets this week, laughing, singing, dancing, and marching. Put that on the news.*

—Ashley Minner  
2008 OSI Fellow  
Baltimore American Indian Center

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## Introduction

*Baltimore is a city of profound contradiction.*

Baltimore, the glittering city of the Inner Harbor and Aquarium, Camden Yards and world-class museums, is also a city of neighborhoods blighted by disinvestment and structural inequity and racism, resulting in unemployment, drug addiction, violence, and incarceration. The contradiction between these two cities was thrown into stark relief in April 2015 when Freddie Gray, a 25-year-old African-American male, died of a spinal cord injury sustained while in police custody. The subsequent riots and civil uprising exposed decades of frustration around chronic inequality in housing policy, public education, and criminal justice, felt most sharply by the Baltimore's poor and working poor, the majority of whom are African-American.

The Baltimore uprising continues to influence the national conversation about racial equity, economic opportunity, and political power. The scope of this debate begins with the earliest stage of the life cycle and extends beyond the current electoral cycle. A recent study by Harvard's *Equality of Opportunity Project* asserts that the future financial success of children correlates to their first zip code. By that measure, poor children in Baltimore face worse economic odds than low-income children in most American cities. Solving problems of structural inequality in Baltimore, now and for the future, requires creative ideas driven by courageous leaders.

Courage and creativity are at the heart of the **Open Society Institute-Baltimore (OSI)**, launched in 1997 as the Open Society Foundation's first field office. For investor and founder George Soros, Baltimore presented the right attributes for testing hypotheses about place-based philanthropy -- a moderate-size city, a culture of community associations, and proximity to the national office in New York City. Both pursue the stated values of the first Open Society Institute, founded in 1984 to support the transition from Communism to democracy in Central and Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union:

*To protect and cultivate fundamental human rights, guarantee impartial justice, provide opportunities for people to make the most of their talents, and make public decisions through a democratic process that is open to full participation and constant re-examination.*

OSI-Baltimore invests in three program areas: helping youth stay in school and on the road to success; improving availability of high quality drug addiction treatment, and reducing over-reach of the criminal and juvenile justice system. OSI-Baltimore also created the Baltimore Urban Debate League and convenes a range of public events that address timely social issues.

In 1998, the **OSI-Baltimore Community Fellowships Program** was created to support risk-taking change agents whose projects engage the City's most vulnerable populations. Soros hypothesized that the Baltimore Fellows (like their counterparts in New York City at that time) would "restore and replenish the city's leadership, especially in inner-city neighborhoods; cultivate mentors and role models, and bring an entrepreneurial approach to the development and empowerment of underserved communities."

The Fellows bring this entrepreneurial approach to a broad range of areas – civil rights and criminal justice, economic and community development, public health, drug addiction treatment, education, immigrant and refugee rights, environmental and greening initiatives, housing, the

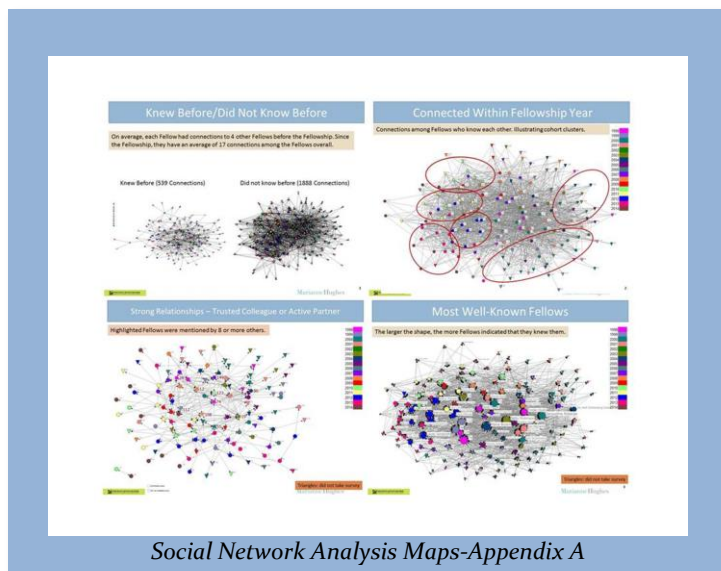
homeless, and the intersection of youth with the arts, media, athletics, and mentoring.

As of 2016, the Fellows number more than 180 and represent many of Baltimore's nearly 200 neighborhoods. Some are homegrown change agents. Others are sturdy transplants drawn to Baltimore's unique mix of crisis and potential. Eclectic by demographic, neighborhood, and occupation, what the Fellows share is a passion for equity and opportunity. Collectively, they represent an emergent network whose empathy, imagination, and expertise make manifest OSI-Baltimore's vision of a "prosperous city, where all children and adults are connected to opportunity."

## The Project - Reflection on the Fellows Program and the Fellows Network

In 2014, the OSI-Baltimore staff engaged a consulting team – Marianne Hughes, Patti Anklam, and Didi Goldenhar – to take a deeper look at the Fellows Program. The project would include a white paper, a social network analysis, and network leadership strategy and trainings for the Fellows Network.

This **white paper**, authored by Didi Goldenhar, synthesizes interviews with OSI staff, Board members, City stakeholders, and Fellows representing every cohort from 1998 to 2014. Conversations focused on the selection process, program offerings, impact on individual Fellows and the City, the scope of collaborative projects, and the perceived potential of this place-based network. The white paper concludes with a set of recommendations for strengthening and amplifying the Fellows Network in the City of Baltimore.



The **social network analysis**, derived from an online survey developed and analyzed by Patti Anklam, yielded a set of maps which display connectivity among the Fellows and with other Baltimore leaders and stakeholders. Additional data includes a demographic profile, evaluation of program offerings, and a catalogue of the Fellows' assets, skill sets, and learning needs.

**Network strategy and network leadership trainings**, designed and facilitated by Marianne Hughes, have introduced concepts of network theory and the specific skills required for deepening connections, building network capacity, and leveraging collective influence. As of 2016, three cohorts have participated in these

trainings as part of their fellowship experience.

The consulting team presented the social network analysis and key learnings from the interviews and survey at several meetings, with staff and Board members and at an all-cohort retreat in June

2015.

Through the project and this white paper, the consulting team seeks to nourish internal discussion, build the capacity of the Fellows Network, and provide intellectual capital for OSI-Baltimore's voice in the national conversation about social action and innovation on behalf of a truly "open society."

## I. The Fellows Program

### The Open Valve Approach - Taking a Risk on Talent

*People come from all walks of life and communities in Baltimore. What sells us is a person's passion and the sense they can carry it out.*

*—Robin Wood, OSI-Baltimore Advisory Board Member*

*OSI is unique for doing good in communities where you already live and work for social justice, without bureaucratic red tape. The freedom to think outside the box—who else would have given me that opportunity?*

*—Shawn James, 2003 Fellow*

*Mural Masters*

OSI's **Open Valve** approach to outreach and selection is unique among fellowship programs. Rather than funding "sure bets," OSI identifies change agents with original ideas, people rooted in their communities and fluent in their issues. Anyone, regardless of education or professional background, can submit a letter of inquiry describing the proposed project — geographic or demographic focus, social or economic need, a plan for achieving the goals, relationships and experience in the target community, and the desired impact.

The Open Valve is coupled with a vigorous approach to outreach. The program staff "blanket the City" with announcements to more than 7500 targets, through the listservs, the OSI mailing list, and media contacts. The annual yield ranges from 150-200 applicants. Those who pass the initial review submit full proposals. Following site visits and due diligence, twenty semi-finalists present their ideas to a six-member selection committee comprised of OSI Board members and local experts and practitioners. Spirited discussion narrows the list until a cohort of ten Fellows is selected. (From 2012 to 2014, two additional Fellows were designated annually as Black Male Achievement Fellows, supported by the Open Society Foundation's Campaign for Black Male Achievement).

*We look for demonstrated, deep commitment to the people of Baltimore City, especially the voiceless to whom fate has been less kind. The Fellows are social entrepreneurs with passion and plausible ideas. What attracts me is the applicant who has been turned down a few times. But they think and improve their ideas. I find that exciting.*

*—Judge Andre Davis, OSI-Baltimore Advisory Board Member*



*Some people on the periphery are trying new approaches and move to their own drumbeats. We want to capture those people. We look for street smarts, not resumes. We're investing in risk capital. That's our role.*

*—Diana Morris, OSI Director*

The Open Valve enacts OSI's belief that the best talent often exists on the periphery and outside conventional channels. The Fellows are diverse by demographic, neighborhood, and level of professional experience. They include new college graduates, people with criminal histories, lawyers, scientists, artists, educators, and activists from the grassroots to the grasstops.

Fellowship applicants are not asked to provide demographic information. To construct a profile of the Fellowship Network, the project survey included a set of questions focused on age, race, and gender. According to program staff, the resulting data from this fractal mirrors the larger Network. Respondents range in age from mid-twenties to early seventies, with the majority in their thirties and forties. More than two-thirds are women. More than half identify as Caucasian/White; 37 percent identify as Black/African-American, with very small percentages identifying as Asian, Latino, or mixed race.

The Open Valve also refers to the range of issue areas. Many Fellows work on projects aligned with OSI-Baltimore's three program areas. Other initiatives address such issues as immigrant and refugee rights, environmental initiatives, the arts as a tool for civic engagement, and many more. Pamela King, director of OSI's Community Fellowships Program, notes that, from time to time, OSI's staff and Board have discussed the option of integrating the Program more closely with OSI's strategic priorities. The consistent refrain is that the Fellows' diversity of interests is a strength, "bringing projects to Baltimore that OSI would not address otherwise."

By all accounts, the OSI's Open Valve approach has yielded a large cadre of outstanding change agents. Several Fellows and city stakeholders hypothesized that the Open Valve might be "stretched" even more at the outreach stage. The perception was that Baltimore's historical patterns of segregation may favor applicants who live and work in close proximity to alumni. As one Fellow commented, "People run in the same circles. You can almost predict who will apply."

Program staff affirm that the Fellows Network represents many neighborhoods and occupations, with some organic subsets, including graduates of the Maryland Institute College of Art's Community Arts Program. The staff is committed to attracting applicants in every corner of the City through enhanced communications and by enlisting the Fellows as "talent scouts" throughout Baltimore. To correct for any impression that the fellowship favors a narrow range of change makers, mapping the Network by neighborhood will be an easy fix.



*Filbert Street Garden  
Jason Reed, 2013 Fellow*



## Supporting the Fellows - OSI as Brand, Funder, Coach and Convener

*The Fellows gave me support, credibility, and access. I had the vision, but OSI gave me the feeling that I was part of an elite group selected by people highly respected in this city.*

—Tammy Brown, 2002 Fellow  
Ex-Offender Project

*For me it was an investment, and not just financial, to leverage the OSI brand. I took George Soros on a tour of Baltimore – an opportunity to meet a billionaire concerned with a community far from his upbringing.*

—David Miller, 1999 Fellow  
Dare to Be King

The Fellows interviewed for this project all felt “blessed,” “honored,” and “affirmed” by the OSI fellowship. As Julianne Franz remarked of her 2001 award to train city youth as theater makers and community activists, “Because of the OSI fellowship, I had a web around all my cares for the world.”

The OSI “brand” provides what one alumnus called “automatic credibility.” Phone calls are returned, emails answered, and doors opened. Annual announcement of the fellowships creates a groundswell of media attention, from the *Baltimore Sun* and other local news outlets to Marc Steiner’s eponymous radio show. OSI features Fellows and alumni at its public events and recommends them for other panels and leadership roles.

For strategic purposes, some Fellows manage their new status more quietly. Karen E. Webber, director of OSI Education and Youth Development Program (and former Director of Student Support in the Baltimore Public Schools System) remarked that some fellows value the award as an entry point but understand that “broadcasting their status might be counter-productive to organizing in a school because of cultural issues around insiders and outsiders.”

Over the 18-month tenure, Fellows build their new projects independently or under the auspices of a host organization. OSI provides a \$60,000 stipend, health insurance as needed, \$3,000 for travel and start-up expenses, and graduate school debt relief.

*The Fellowship gives time to experiment without pressure to hit certain marks, even though we feel accountable. That’s unique. When we talk about social change work, sometimes it’s about letting people do what they do and getting out of the way.*

—Brian Francoise, 2014 Fellow  
Sister Neighborhood Arts Program

*I was working on an urban farm and there was a lot of talk: what if we had a network that could share resources? It was an idea taking shape but wasn’t going to happen unless someone had the time. If not for the OSI fellowship, there might have been some collaboration but the Farm Alliance wouldn’t exist.*

—Maya Kosok, 2011 Fellow

### *Baltimore Farm Alliance*

OSI's stipend and practical supports provide the freedom to learn, experiment, and make mistakes. **Janet Felsten**, whose 1998 fellowship supported the Youth Mapping Project, which evolved into Baltimore Green Map, characterized the award as "fertilizing time" to create tools and educational materials that would document and advocate for a sustainable city.

The fellowship is not a leadership development program. However, the program components do strengthen the Fellows' professional and organizational capacity. A three-day orientation introduces Fellows to each other and to alumni. Each new cohort meets regularly, sometimes at their project sites, to unpack challenges, explore collaborations, and learn specific skills. Fellows can apply for modest supplemental funds from OSI to attend conferences and trainings and make site visits to relevant projects. "Field of interest" meetings, hosted quarterly by directors of OSI's strategic program areas, allow Fellows to share information and build relationships with OSI grantees.

OSI's one-on-one coaching is highly valued by current Fellows and alumni. Fellowships program director Pamela King is described as a "relational connector" and a "deep well of wisdom" whose coaching helps the Fellows "dig into our own self-sufficiency." In recent years, OSI has funded executive coaching for Fellows whose projects required specialized support, such as managing the budget and staff of a growing organization.

The Program exercises rigorous yet flexible oversight over fellowship projects. The OSI contract requires that Fellows form an Advisory Board and submit reports at six-month intervals and at the conclusion. While OSI does not require reporting on predetermined metrics, Fellows are expected to document progress made toward stated goals and reflect on lessons learned.

Fellows and alumni value OSI communications as vehicles for timely information and catalysts for collaboration. A program associate manages the listservs, social media, and monthly newsletter to keep Fellows informed about accomplishments, public events, available resources, and opportunities for funding and professional development. Fellows are invited to contribute to OSI's blog and other publications.

## The Alumni Transition

*It wasn't until I lifted my gaze that I realized how we have to leverage all the components. Being passionate has its place, but the business component is very important.*

*—Andre Turner, 2013 Fellow  
Boys Coming of Age*

*The OSI Fellowship identifies scrappy underdogs. Some Fellows want to stay early stage. For others, what's the next steps? This ecosystem requires a range of funding, to have sustainable impact upon the city.*

*—Rodney Foxworth, Social Entrepreneur and Philanthropy Consultant*

Fellows transition to alumni status after 18 months. They submit final reports and attend a gathering with the new cohort-in-progress to share lessons learned.

Interviews surfaced key challenges of the alumni transition. The obstacles are typical of many fellowship programs but perhaps more pronounced at OSI because of its Open Valve approach. OSI Fellows enter the program from many doorways. Some are highly-educated and well-connected, with impressive track records. Some are artists whose community-building runs parallel to their lives in the studio. Other Fellows come to their projects with newly-minted degrees or fragile work histories. It's not surprising, therefore, that the alumni transition is experienced differently, depending on prior professional experience as well as progress to date. Some Fellows were poised to scale their projects or advance their professional development through such programs as Echoing Green's fellowship for social entrepreneurs, the Rockwood Institute's leadership program, and the Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Fellowship for executive directors, among others. Other Fellows spoke of struggling to keep their projects afloat and recalled the anxiety of transitioning out of OSI's structured program of support. As one alumnus said at the June 2015 all-cohort gathering, "The program improves literacy in social justice. But we also need literacy in funding models, organization building, setting priorities, and managing funder expectations around data."



*Writers in Baltimore Schools*  
Patrice Hutton, 2008 Fellow

While OSI is not equipped to provide customized strategic planning, it has explored several mechanisms to manage the alumni transition. To build organizational capacity, OSI has partnered with the University of Baltimore to offer coursework in marketing and fundraising for the nonprofit sector. It offered technical assistance grants to alumni in 2012 to develop strategic plans and diversify funding. In 2015, the program made a grant to Business Volunteers Maryland to match current and alumni fellows with

corporate volunteers who could offer advice and support.

A few clusters of Fellows benefit from co-working space, peer support, and expertise offered by Baltimore ventures like Fusion Partnerships and Seawall Development. Fusion Partnerships is a nonprofit incubator that provides fiscal sponsorship and capacity-building for 12 projects launched by OSI Fellows. Seawall Development has renovated Baltimore's historic Union Mill as an affordable hub "where ideas are shared and collaboration takes place" among nonprofits, including those launched by several OSI Fellows.

Structured funding beyond the seed stage is a common challenge among fellowship programs in the social change sector. Echoing Green, which has supported hundreds of social entrepreneurs since 1987, recently published *Deviation from the Standard: Funding and Supporting Emerging Social Entrepreneurs*, drawing on alumni data and experiences. As might be expected, early stage

entrepreneurs perceive grants as overly restrictive, especially when funds are earmarked for specific initiatives rather than general operations. Executive Director Cheryl Dorsey has advocated for flexible funding and sufficient “runway” so that social entrepreneurs continue to experiment and maximize impact. “As a collective ecosystem fostering social innovation,” says Dorsey, “we must coordinate support so emerging leaders get the investment they need every step of the way.”

The philanthropic challenge is even tougher for people of color. The Greenlining Institute reports that organizations led by people of color receive less than five percent of institutional funding. In response, some Fellows have assembled more diversified portfolios. David Miller was awarded an OSI Fellowship in 1999 for his Dare to Be King project, which he created while teaching life skills to inmates at Baltimore City Jail. Miller subsequently developed consultation services, books, documentaries, and smartphone apps. He espouses the social entrepreneurship model as an alternative to the institutional funding mechanisms upon which most nonprofits depend.

“It’s hard to raise money when you’re small and definitely for an African-American organization,” says Miller. “Over the years, OSI has asked me to talk to new Fellows. I try to help them understand the idea of product development and the training component because that has been my saving grace.”

One social entrepreneur recommended that the Fellows learn how to reframe their issues in economic terms for the business community, leveraging their credibility as on-the-ground experts with fundamental solutions around education and workforce development. Advocating for second-stage funding through an incubator or cooperative funding model, Jay Wolf Schlossberg-Cohen, whose 2004 fellowship supported his Rebuilding through Art project with West Baltimore youth, says, “We have this talent growing year by year, and we all want the land planted and plowed.”

## II. The Spectrum of Impact

OSI Fellows have achieved measurable **outcomes** over the past 18 years—rising graduation rates and declining rates of incarceration among juveniles, expanded square-footage of urban farms and community gardens, city streets and blocks made new by bike pathways and vibrant murals, thousands of children and youth engaged in the arts, media, and mentoring, and layers of protection for immigrants, refugees, the homeless, and victims of domestic abuse, among many indices.

Assessing longer term impact calls for an expansive view of the larger system, beyond discrete problem-solving. For the purposes of the OSI Fellowships Program, deep-rooted social transformation can be identified by the following criteria:

- Resolution of the conditions responsible for the problem through changes in policy, and practice
- Strengthened capacity of an organization, constituency, or community to work together effectively
- Growth and learning leading to improved leadership practice
- Power shifts made possible by empowered communities or constituencies

The following examples, aligned to these criteria, suggest seven ways in which OSI Fellows are strengthening the social fabric of Baltimore. These profiles represent a slim fractal of more than 180 projects launched since 1998.

## 1) OSI Fellows serve as positive role models in their communities

*These projects change a child's perspective on what's possible – not what's immediately visible, but the impact for generations to come – in terms of a young person who stays in the city or the redemptive power for a person who falls and then gets back on the path.*

—Joe Jones, OSI-Baltimore Advisory Board Vice Chair  
Founder, Center for Urban Families

**Dwayne Johnson** showcases the power of role models. His youthful plan to join the Air Force was sidetracked by early fatherhood and imprisonment on drug charges. Johnson emerged from incarceration and graduated from the Center for Urban Families. His mentor and role model, 2012 Fellow Lawrence Brown, told him about OSI and “pushed me into the next chapter.” The result is Johnson’s 2014 project, **From Prison to Man of the House**, which provides transitional housing and skills for men emerging from prison. Johnson says that, when he walks through Upton Druid Heights, “you wouldn’t think I’m an OSI Fellow, walking down the street with my hat on backwards. But people in my neighborhood are proud, even the tough guys. They see me lead by example. That’s my job. OSI put me back on my feet.”



Baltimore American Indian Center,  
Ashley Minner, 2008 Fellow

As a graduate student at the Maryland Institute of College of Art, **Ashley Minner** designed **The Native Afterschool Art Program**, for which she was awarded a 2008 Fellowship. She was shocked by the response to an interview with her in *The Baltimore Sun*, bringing “many voicemails and Facebook notifications. People offered resources who otherwise wouldn’t have known about us.” Seven years later, her young artists lead and run this community arts project and have traveled as a delegation to meetings of Alternate Roots, a Southern-based coalition committed to social and economic justice. Minner, now completing her PhD in American Studies, often speaks at OSI events. “I bring a unique set of data and the voice of the urban Native American community.”



## 2) Fellows replenish and diversify the City's leadership pipeline

*My bias is keeping passionate people here and empowering them. Most of the Fellows stay in the city and continue to stay engaged, moving the city forward in areas of social justice.*

*—Fred Lazarus, President Emeritus  
Maryland Institute College of Art*

**Access Art** is an afterschool center for underserved and vulnerable youth which provides positive role models, problem-solving skills, and alternatives to violence and high-risk behavior. The center owes its early beginnings to its founder, 2000 Fellow **Tony Shore**, and to 2003 Fellow **Shawn James**, who located his Mural Masters project at this center. James says of his shift from the classroom to the wall, “That first time on the scaffold let me know that what I wanted, more than anything else, was to interact with students, neighborhood, and the community.”

In 2008, **Marshall Clarke** merged his photography project, **Youthlight Media**, with Access Art and subsequently succeeded Tony Shore as executive director, with Shawn James stepping up as Board Chair. To accelerate his leadership learning curve (alongside his career as a professional photographer), Clarke participated in the Weinberg Fellows Program, “an immersion which took me out of the day-to-day, to focus on the big picture.” This example highlights the ways that local collaborations and transitions keep the leadership pipeline stocked with talent.

**Tammy M. Brown** was working as a law clerk in 2002 when she was awarded an OSI Fellowship for her **Ex-Offender Project** to help homeless people with criminal records navigate the housing system. “OSI gave me the global view,” she says, “and the confidence even though I was just out of law school.” Brown now serves as the State’s Attorney’s Chief of External Affairs and continues to identify potential links between criminal justice and social services. For Brown, moving from the nonprofit sector to government was a strategic choice for advancing her social justice leadership. “When I went into state government, it felt like working for the enemy, but it’s important to have people in government, where you have the power to make change.”

## 3) Fellows incubate and scale innovative solutions

*There’s merit in seeding social innovation. You plant seeds because you never know what will work, and there’s beauty in that aspect.*

*—Cheryl Casciani, Director of Neighborhood Sustainability  
Baltimore Community Foundation*

Design thinking has moved front and center in the nonprofit sector. This process engages stakeholders to reframe problems and craft new solutions that respond to explicit and implicit needs.

**Sarah Hemminger**, like many OSI Fellows, exemplifies this kind of innovation. In 2009, Hemminger was completing her PhD in biomedical engineering at Johns Hopkins University and considering a tenure-track position at the National Institutes of Health. She instead applied for an OSI fellowship to support her volunteer initiative, now known as **THREAD – The New Social**



**Fabric.** This unique mentoring model provides vulnerable high school students with “surrogate families” that give unconditional support and keep the young people on track for college.

As of 2016, THREAD has worked with more than 250 students, employs thirty full- and part-time staff, and has engaged more than 800 volunteers. Thread’s graduation rates have attracted national attention, most recently from *The New York Times*, which devoted two articles to this “tapestry of care.”

The success of THREAD and its growth potential presented Hemminger with a strategic choice in 2015: replicate the program in other cities or scale the program in Baltimore? Hemminger decided to stay. “If we enroll 300 students every year for ten years, we’ll reach five percent of the City’s freshman class. That’s our North Star – to move the graduation rate by five percent.”

**Maya Kosok** moved to Baltimore as an AmeriCorps volunteer in 2011 to work on an urban farm. “I started with a survey to learn about gaps and needs,” she recalls. “Then, working side-by-side, I asked the farmers what they wanted to do together. Farm stands? Tool sharing?” Her Fellowship project, **Agricultural Alliance of Baltimore City** (now known as the **Farm Alliance**), coalesced around shared values for food justice and community-building.

“This is a ripe time for urban farming,” says Kosok. “Because of its impact in our communities and at the national level, this issue is gaining attention across class and social boundaries.” While she is no longer serving in the leadership role, Kosok continues to serve as a resource and flower-growing colleague in the Farm Alliance.

## 4) Fellows catalyze tipping points in policy and practice

***Bigger agencies put money into direct service. OSI Fellows are more interested in building power.***

***—Polly Riddims, Managing Partner  
Fusion Partnerships***

In 1998, **Lauren Abramson** was teaching in the Department of Psychiatry at Johns Hopkins University when she applied for an inaugural OSI fellowship for **Community Conferencing**. The project, adapted from the Maori tribes of New Zealand, resolves youth crimes and local disputes using a restorative, rather than punitive, approach.

“Our culture has leached emotional communication out of our institutions,” says Abramson. “In Community Conferencing, we sit in a circle and give voice to our stories, honoring each other’s point of view. This is a community-based way to be healthier with each other emotionally in the wake of crime, conflict, emotional grief, and stress.” Over the past 17 years, Community Conferencing has assisted neighborhoods, schools, juvenile justice system, and state attorney’s office and has diverted thousands of young people from the cycle of crime and incarceration.

**Agatha So** was awarded a fellowship in 2014 for her project with the **Southeast Community Development Association**, which improves the home-lending process for undocumented Latino families. Between 2000 and 2011, the city’s Latino population grew by 140 percent. Many of these new residents are workers who pay taxes through international identification numbers but cannot

use these same ID numbers to obtain a mortgage. So is developing alternative pathways to obtain credit and home-ownership counseling. Her goal is to bring the American dream to people who want to stay in Baltimore. “This will benefit individual families and also benefit the City.

## 5) Fellowship projects nourish and heal the City’s neighborhoods

*OSI is lifting up city life with visible work at the grassroots. In my District, Fellows are hugely influential in serving kids and through the arts and community gardens. We pray that this program stays in Baltimore and continues its orbital effect!*

—Mary Pat Clark

*Baltimore Councilwoman, District 14*

In 2011, the Baltimore Health Department compared social indicators in Sandtown-Winchester, the neighborhood where Freddie Gray died, to the city overall and found nearly double the rates of unemployment, poverty, homicide, and shootings. But Sandtown is also the neighborhood where **Paige Fitz** created **GEMS: Finding Jewels in Youth**. Fitz credits an early mentor for pulling her out of a “downward spiral” in high school, giving her a job and teaching her the basics of accounting, which led to a degree from Morgan State University.

In 2007, Fitz was awarded an OSI fellowship for her mentoring program which pairs middle and high school girls with volunteers who help them develop career goals, study for SATs, obtain drivers’ licenses, and manage the social turbulence of adolescence.

“Sandtown is really low-income, with not a lot of fathers around the house,” acknowledges Fitz. “OSI gave me the ignite button to facilitate social change, to have caring adults walk beside girls who were feeling peer pressure and not even thinking about college. We see the progression. Our mentors make evaluations, not by the numbers but by how the girls’ lives are changing.”

Theater artist and educator **Brian Francoise** seeks to build bridges between two neighborhoods, a microcosm of this divided city. Original Northwood, the largely white neighborhood where he lives, is adjacent to New Northwood, which is 97 percent African-American. In 2014, Francoise received a fellowship for the Sister Neighborhood Arts Program (SNAP). Among his ideas for building trust and civic engagement are a public art project and jazz performances on the street that links Original and New Northwood. Francoise envisions a process by which citizens, activists, and artists eventually will collaborate on a historical play about Greater Northwood. “This project is about two neighborhoods that don’t interact,” says Francoise. “There’s a lot of resistance and fear. But our futures are bound together. We’re looking for people interested in that dialogue.”

## 6) Fellows raise awareness and spark debate in the public square

*I don’t condone violence and destruction, the tearing down of what we need in our community, but the young people on the streets are some of the same young people we’re serving, filled with trauma and violence and a lack of opportunity for their whole lives. We have to fix our way of doing things so they feel included.*

—Lara Law, 2011 Fellow

*The Baltimore Sun*

*Citizens accused of committing crimes may be punished, but without a full and fair trial, how can we be sure that detention is “the least restrictive means” – an important legal term – to secure the defendant’s appearance at court or keep the community safe? We cannot unless there is a check on the bail system. Enter the writ of habeas corpus.*

—Zina Makar, 2014 Fellow  
OSI Audacious Ideas Blog

OSI Fellows are frequently profiled and quoted in *The Baltimore Sun*, *The Washington Post*, *Baltimore Magazine*, *City Paper*, and other print and online media. Following the April 2015 unrest in Baltimore, many Fellows were interviewed on radio and television. **Jessica Lewis**, **Lawrence Brown** and **Melissa Moore**, among others, spoke on Marc Steiner’s radio show about economic inequality, structural racism, and the link between race and police behaviors. *The Baltimore Sun* featured **Black Words Matter**, a writing project created by **Patrice Hutton** and **Andre Turner** to give young people safe space to share their experiences. The paper interviewed **Zina Makar**, who filed dozens of habeas corpus petitions challenging the detention of protesters, and **Lara Law**, whose commitment to homeless youth was undimmed by the fire that damaged her Youth Empowerment Society Drop-in Center. On the national stage, **David Miller** was interviewed by CNN and NPR about his “Ten Rules of Survival – If Stopped by the Police.”



At the YES Drop-In Center.  
Laura Law, 2011 Fellow

Fellows also raise awareness by bringing their on-the-ground intelligence to city and state-level decision-making tables. Program Director Pamela King says that Fellows “make people listen” because of the detail they provide about resources, access, constraints, and actual barriers to change.”

## 7) OSI Fellows are building the “cathedral” of a new Baltimore

*OSI wants systematic change. The return on investments has been significant. We may not see the final result. Like building a cathedral that takes 500 years, someone has to put a shovel in the ground to get started.*

—Donald Manekin

*Co-founder, Seawall Developmen;; former member, OSI-Baltimore Advisory Board*

*OSI Fellows are changing the city’s dynamic from dying to thriving and from community separation to reconciliation. We truly are the charmed city, the city that sees and loves, the city of brilliance.*

—Paige Fitz, 2007 Fellow  
*GEMS – Finding Jewels in Youth*

For more than 20 years, **Helen Keith** has nurtured thousands of children in her home and at the church next door, enriching their afternoons and summers with poetry and drama. In 2006, she wrote her first proposal and was awarded an OSI fellowship for **Promoting Children's Voices**, which allowed her to add more books and trips to her program in Baltimore's Southwest Franklin Square. "This is my life's work," Helen Keith says. "I've gone to college graduations and to weddings and baby showers. When you see kids who come back and say they're going to college, it's a good feeling."

The story of Helen Keith is one of many carefully-wrought stones in the "cathedral" being built by OSI Fellows. A cathedral needs many laborers and artisans – to dig the foundation, cut granite, carve buttresses and cornices, and glaze luminous panels of stained glass. Fellows bring their muscle, resilience, and craftsmanship to the City's social justice infrastructure and masonry.

A cathedral emerges from century to century. As the project survey affirms, OSI Fellows are committed to long-term change, with the majority still dedicated to their projects or working on other social justice initiatives, years after their fellowships have ended.

Just as the great cathedrals of Europe united communities around a shared story of hope, OSI Director Diana Morris believes that Baltimore's "story about itself" can suppress or bolster its aspirations and achievements. By investing positive energy into public service, OSI Fellows convey powerful messages about the capacity of mission-driven individuals to catalyze and produce far-reaching change in the city.

### III. The OSI-Baltimore Community Fellowships Network

In our globally-connected but highly-fragmented 21<sup>st</sup> century, the solving of complex social problems is beyond the scope of any one organization or sector. Networks, which can be described as flexible webs of individuals, institutions, and loosely-organized groups, are increasingly recognized as the drivers of social change. Networks eliminate duplication, replicate

and scale innovation, and create system-level change.

At the city level, cross-sector networks are an asset. In their recent book, *The Metropolitan Revolution*, Bruce Katz and Jennifer Bradley of the Brookings Institution assert that American cities stand on the forefront of social transformation, precisely because different races, religions, and socio-economic classes live together. The authors emphasize the value of networks that "serve as important sources of information, encourage experimentation and strengthen trust and collaboration



*Empowering Latinos One "Click" at a Time*  
Lanaea Featherstone, 2013 Fellow

within and across sectors.”

The concept of networks is often conflated with social media. Online networks can scale and be mobilized rapidly. However, network depth and longevity calls for trusting relationships. Patti Anklam, network practitioner (and member of this consulting team), underscores this distinction in her book, *Net Work: A Practical Guide to Creating and Sustaining Networks at Work and in the World*: “The performance of a network comes down to the way that human, social, and relationship capital support its goals.”

Networks typically start as scattered clusters of people who recognize a problem and get involved. In the next stage – hub and spoke – an individual or organization consolidates activities and creates new opportunities. As networks develop, collaborations form around other leaders (or nodes) and clusters (or hubs). The goal is a core-periphery model, in which many hub-and-spoke clusters reach out to new people on the margins.

Strategies for network weaving typically focus on one of three types. **Connectivity networks** allow for easy flow of information and transactions, with the network weaver helping people to meet one another and increase the flow of ideas and knowledge. **Alignment networks** aim for a common identity and collective value proposition; here, the network weaver facilitates the building of a shared identity. **Action networks** foster joint action for specific outcomes, by aligned individuals and organizations, coordinated by the network weaver.

## Social Network Analysis - A Visual Diagnostic

OSI-Baltimore commissioned a **social network analysis** of the Fellows Network, starting with the comprehensive online survey developed by Patti Anklam. Survey questions probed connectivity between and among Fellows from multiple angles, including the number of relationships before and after the fellowship, level of familiarity, and degree of interaction, from conversation at OSI events to being a “trusted advisor” and an “active work partner.” The result is a set of social network maps, which serve as baseline diagnostic and a tool for crafting interventions that can weave the Fellows Network through multiple hubs and nodes. (See *Appendix A for selected maps*).

Key findings of the social network analysis include:

- **The OSI Fellowship has a multiplier effect on relationships.**  
Nearly 70 Fellows “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that the fellowship significantly expanded their connectivity in the city. The data supports this self-evaluation. On average, each Fellow named connections to four Fellows prior to the fellowship. After the fellowship, these connections increased to an average of 17 connections. (*Slide #1*)
- **Connectivity is strong within some cohorts and issue areas.**  
Fellows feel connected to peers in their cohort, with some cohorts more tightly woven than others. The maps identify clusters of Fellows collaborating within similar issue areas; notably, those working with children and youth. (*Slide #2, #3*)



- **The Fellows Network has outstanding “connectors” within its ranks.**  
Fellows identified “trusted advisors” and “active partners” from the full roster. The resulting map shows approximately 10 highly-connected Fellows, with 8 or more citations, and nearly 30 Fellows with a minimum of 4 citations. (*Slide #4, Slide #5*)
- **Fellows seek to share knowledge and skills within their Network.**  
The survey invited Fellows to report on assets and needs, respective to their knowledge and skills. Among the self-reported **strengths** are community outreach (45), collaborative problem-solving (33), project management (33), and network-building (31). Among the greatest **needs** are social media (64), budget and finance (62), strategy development (59), program evaluation (58), and leadership development (54). The findings show that, in each area of need, there is a cluster of Fellows who are equipped and willing to provide knowledge and skills.
- **Fellows want to engage with each other around broad issues.**  
The survey offered a robust list of social change issues and asked respondents to indicate their level of interest and/or activity. While “interest” does not necessarily translate to collective action, several issues ranked high among these Fellows: poverty, equity, inclusion, racism, leadership development, and civic engagement.

## About Collaboration - Generosity, Common Interests, Relationships

During conversations about interactions between and among Fellows, **generosity** surfaced as a resonant theme. From shared office space to refurbished bicycles, and from videotaping of public events to four-course dinners for low-income children, Fellows support each other’s work. On the organizational level, they contribute bookkeeping services, review grant proposals, and volunteer as board members. “Showing up” is also prized, whether speaking at a graduation ceremony or attending a fish fry fundraiser.

**Collaborations** have evolved within cohorts and between Fellows working on similar issues. By way of example, 2012 Fellows **David Hornbeck** and **Antoine Bennett** started working on a YouthBuild Program to connect high school dropouts to GED classes and workforce training. Hornbeck brought his expertise as a state-level superintendent whose OSI fellowship focused on community schools. Bennett contributed his experience as an ex-prisoner whose OSI project, Men of Valuable Action, aimed to reduce recidivism through education and career development.

Among the larger collaborations is the **Baltimore Art + Justice Project**, which was seeded at an OSI field-of-interest meeting in 2010 and was coordinated until recently by 2000 Fellow **Kalima Young**. Through an interactive map, online resources, and community dialogues, the Project



Next One Up  
Matt Hanna, 2013 Fellow  
Image from documentary film by Matt Cipollone



“strengthens arts-based collaboration for a better, more just Baltimore.” As muralist Shawn James remarks of such coalitions, “When you work hand-in-hand with multiple organizations, social capital is constantly being spent and being earned.”

While the tangible value of **relationships** is less quantifiable than donated space or pro bono services, many Fellows credited specific colleagues with “teaching me the layout of the neighborhood” or being a “safety net.” Also striking is the list of “trusted advisors” and “working partners” cited in the interviews, nearly identical to the list generated by the survey.

What matters most in relationships with other Fellows? How does someone become known as a good connector? Interview respondents typically identified people who placed primacy of the mission over self-promotion or “selling” the institution. As one good connector said, “I carve out time on my calendar every month to meet with people with whom we are aligned in mission and vision. I try to be useful. It’s a mindset.”

## Weaving the Network

The Fellows are proud of their affiliation with OSI-Baltimore and their collective identity as change agents. However, the sense of a cohesive Network was more elusive. The general impression was that the Fellows operate as a **connectivity network** for sharing information and catalyzing collaborations, with OSI serving as the major hub. As a starting point, **Janet Felsten**, whose Fellowship Youth Mapping project, which evolved into Baltimore Green Map was among OSI’s inaugural projects, recommended mapping projects by issue and geography “to get a better sense of impact and what strands to weave.”

Many Fellows expressed the desire for a more tightly-woven Network aligned around a common vision. Asked what would contribute to this weave, Fellows spoke about “breaking bread” at informal gatherings, from dinners rotating among their neighborhoods to weekend retreats outside the city. Some Fellows spoke of the need for “authentic conversation” about identity, privilege, and oppression as the prerequisite for collaborating on social justice efforts.

Scheduling is a dominant concern. While the Fellows place a high value on OSI-hosted events, skills workshops, and field-of-interest meetings, most of these gatherings have been held during the day.

Several Fellows, OSI staff members, and city stakeholders spoke about the Fellows’ potential influence as an action-oriented coalition or **action network**. Radio host Marc Steiner spoke of the Fellows as a “political and social force if organized to work together.” David Hornbeck proposed that Fellows select one issue “without pulling away from their main focus,” with OSI providing infrastructure, communications strategies, and tools for advocacy. OSI Director Diana Morris hypothesized that, by coalescing annually around one issue, “Fellows can leverage each other’s efforts and tap into their own power.”

Following a recent Fellows gathering, **Betty Robinson**, a veteran community organizer and 2003 Fellow, emphasized that “this is a critical time for Baltimore and the nation. There is overwhelming disregard in powerful circles of racial and class inequities. We can’t let this moment fade without doing things differently. I see my own liberation tied up in transforming the way our city and our country work.”

## IV Conclusion and Recommendations

Since 1998, OSI-Baltimore Community Fellows have demonstrated OSI's hypothesis about the power of mission-driven individuals to make place-based change. Fellows address urgent needs, reframe critical issues, and empower constituencies to act and advocate for a fairer, more just society. OSI serves as the hub of this **connectivity network** by facilitating the flow of information among Fellows and by offering varied opportunities for meeting, learning, and leading. Looking forward, there is potential for a quantum increase in impact for the Fellows as an **alignment network** that makes manifest the vision of a Baltimore where, as OSI affirms, "all adults and children are connected to real opportunity."

The following recommendations derive from the consulting team's synthesis of its social network analysis, interviews and meetings with Fellows and alumni, and a series of strategy meetings with OSI staff and Board members.

### 1) Shift OSI strategy from *Fellows Program* to *Fellows Network*.

By reframing the individual fellowship as a feeder system and putting the spotlight on a densely-connected Fellows Network, OSI will be telling a new story about the collective power of the Fellows Network as the city's "social fabric strengthener."

The first stage would be the formation of an **alignment network** in which OSI and the Fellows co-create a broad vision, e.g., *Baltimore Rising*. The vision should be compelling enough to weave the Fellows Network and attract the city's stakeholders and social change investors as partners. To support and scaffold this alignment network, OSI would invest in network infrastructure, capacity building, and "weaving" activities. These discrete investments need not compete with current investments in the Fellowship program. The expectation is that, as the Fellows Network emerges, there will be greater clarity about OSI's distinctive role and the responsibilities of the Fellows to manage the Network.

*(See Appendix B for examples of place-based networks supported by institutional funders.)*

### 2) Invest in infrastructure for an alignment network.

- Map the network – The social network maps are a resource for identifying clusters and weaving relationships, for example, among Fellows working on the same issues. Mapping the Network by focus area, constituency served, and geography will illuminate areas of impact as well as show untended areas that require greater outreach.
- Upgrade technology – Interactive web platforms enhance communication and collaboration. While face-to-face meetings and relationship-building are the first priority, OSI can explore a range of online platforms, smartphone apps, and database management systems that access Fellowship projects by focus area, demographic, and zip code.

- Engage network expertise – OSI has engaged Marianne Hughes (from the consulting team) to cultivate the network weaving process, using the social network analysis to identify and invite “good connectors” to join a design team for network gatherings.

### 3) Adapt Program components to fortify the Fellowship Network.

- Open Valve – OSI already engages Fellows to participate in outreach efforts through their networks and social media channels. To increase the breadth of applications and target gaps in the Network, OSI can solicit ideas from city stakeholders and other people of influence who were cited by Fellows in the survey.
- Selection process – For Fellowship applications, vetting, and interviews, OSI might consider the inclusion of questions that touch upon “network potential.”
- Orientation and onboarding – OSI now includes network leadership training as part of the orientation for new Fellows. For navigating the early stages of the fellowship, OSI can fortify the peer mentoring model with a “family” of alumni, including leaders in the field of interest as well as alumni whose organizational expertise matches the new Fellow’s needs.
- Alumni transition – Fellows approaching the alumni transition benefit from monthly meetings, a cross-cohort gathering, and coaching by OSI staff and alumni mentors. OSI can fortify this process with a rigorous peer-led review of the Fellow’s sustainability plan.
- Learning Exchange – The survey yielded a comprehensive catalogue of the Fellows’ assets and needs. Since OSI already offers skills workshops and professional development opportunities, this is a time to experiment with scheduling (evenings, weekends), learning formats (webinars), and venues (neighborhood-based roundtables).

### 4) Identify and build Network leadership.

- Cultivate the connectors – The project survey and interviews cited a core group of Fellows as “trusted advisors” and “active work partners.” OSI has started to engage these Fellows in building the Network. Some of these Fellows have joined a design team for future convenings.
- Support experiments – Through a peer review process, provide funding for collaborative projects, with a minimum of three alumni Fellows.

### 5) Convene the Network to build relationships and grow the goals.

- Informal gatherings – Host quarterly dinners and provide resources for Fellows to organize potlucks in their neighborhoods.

- Field-specific events – Following an aggregate mapping of the Network, develop a well-publicized sequence of convenings to bring together Fellows within and across their issues and neighborhoods.
- Annual retreats – Host an annual Network retreat (two to three days) to foster trust and create space for meaningful conversations, crafted by the design team and network weaver.
- Experiment with single-issue advocacy – Bring Fellows together annually to select one issue for collective action. The commitment would be adapted by each Fellow, from signing petitions and letters to attending demonstrations and public hearings.

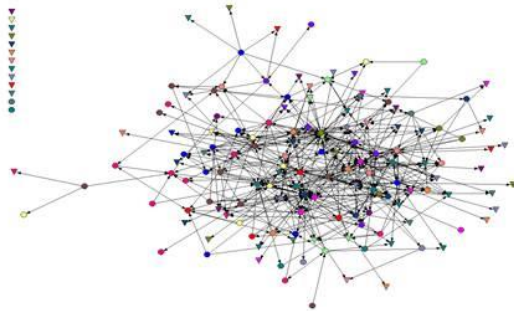
## Appendix A

### Side 1

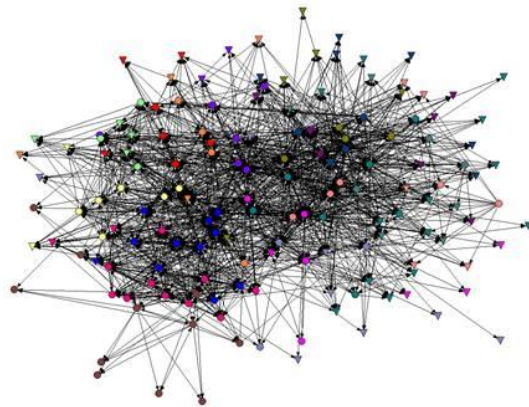
#### Knew Before/Did Not Know Before

On average, each Fellow had connections to 4 other Fellows before the Fellowship. Since the Fellowship, they have an average of 17 connections among the Fellows overall.

Knew Before (539 Connections)



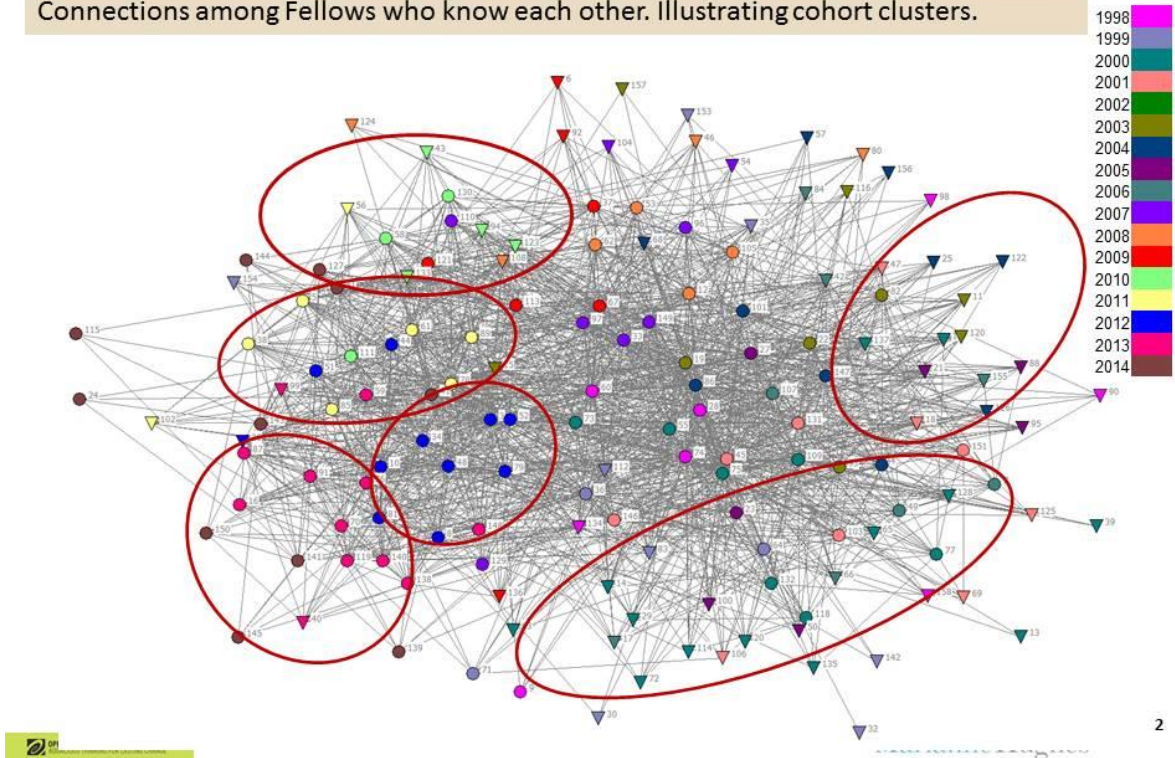
Did not know before (1888 Connections)



## Slide 2

## Connected Within Fellowship Year

Connections among Fellows who know each other. Illustrating cohort clusters.



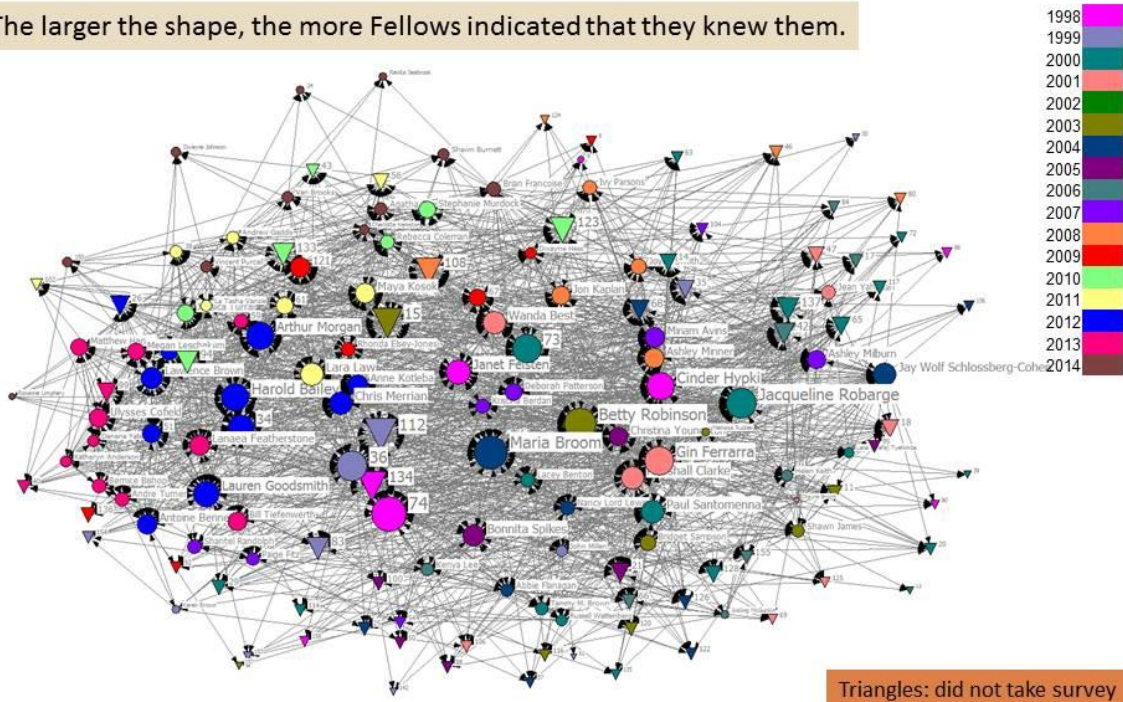
2



Side 3

## Most Well-Known Fellows

The larger the shape, the more Fellows indicated that they knew them.



OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE-BALTIMORE  
FUNDING THROUGH THE OSF BALTIMORE

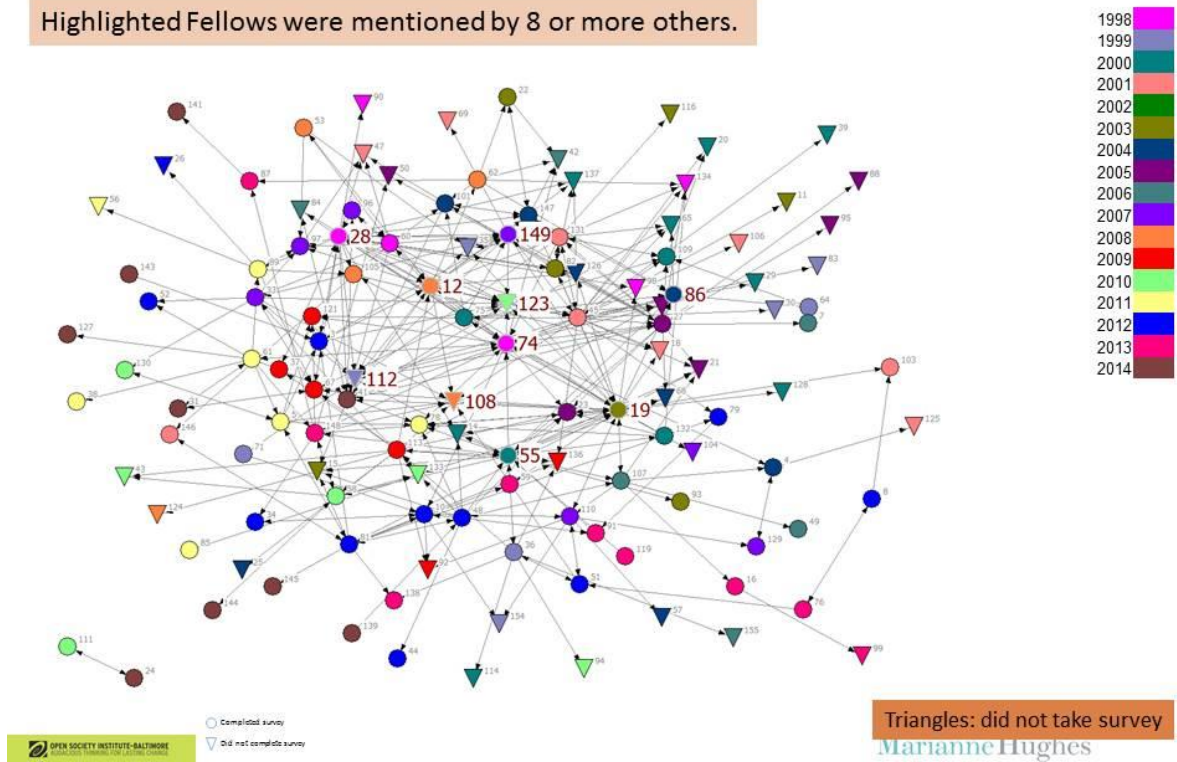
Marianne Hughes

3

Slide 4

Strong Relationships – Trusted Colleague or Active Partner

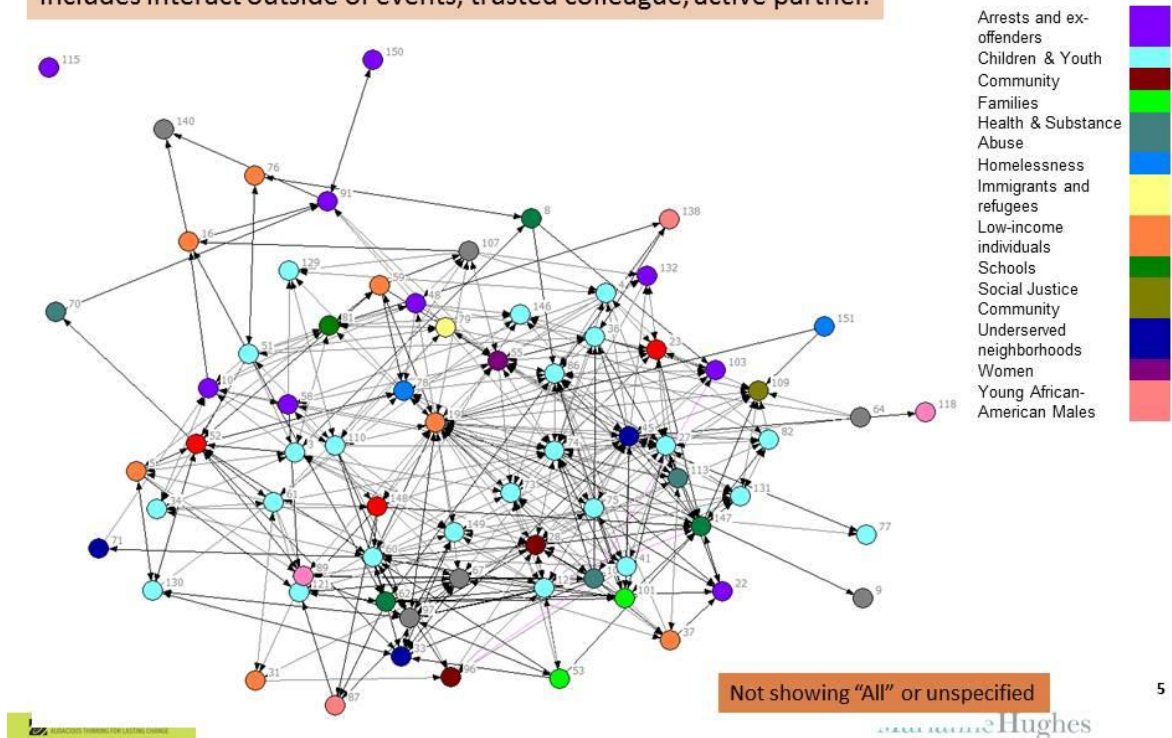
Highlighted Fellows were mentioned by 8 or more others.



Slide 5

## Fellows who Interact & Collaborate Outside of Events

Includes interact outside of events, trusted colleague, active partner.



## Appendix B

### Place-Based Networks

Each of the following networks is supported by institutional funders and focuses on place-based change. The Barr Network and Pioneers in Social Justice can be considered alignment networks. The Re-Amp Network is an action network.

**The Barr Fellows Network** – In 2005, the Barr Foundation, a philanthropy steeped in systems-level change, created a sabbatical program for seasoned executive directors of Boston-area nonprofit organizations. Barr Fellows receive a three-month paid sabbatical, travel together to the global south and attend two retreats annually for three years. The Foundation continues to support alumni through learning journeys and all-cohort retreats. The Barr Network now counts more than sixty leaders. Collaborations include the city's first bilingual high school and the design of a neighborhood Promise Initiative, encompassing schools, social service agencies, community centers, and arts organizations. In a city known for its turf-bound behaviors, the Barr Fellows have evolved into what The Boston Globe calls “a web of collaboration rippling through the nonprofit community with increasing effect.” The Foundation cites the investment of “patient capital,” without predetermined goals and metrics, as the necessary ingredient to feed this emergent network.

**Pioneers in Justice** – In 2009, the Levi-Strauss Foundation noted the trend of retiring executives at veteran social justice organizations in the Bay Area. To support the leadership transition from baby boomers to younger activists, the Foundation designed Pioneers in Justice. The five-year program focused on weaving a network of five leaders and building their individual and collective capacity. The main components – leadership development and social media training – were delivered through bi-monthly meetings. The catalytic element was the provision of grants for collaborative experiments, which resulted in close-knit relationships among the Pioneers and the diffusion of knowledge among the participating organizations and their constituencies, within and across issue areas. Over the years, some of these micro-collaborations, especially those focused on immigration, have grown in scope and scale.

**The Re-Amp Network** – Since 2005, the Garfield Foundation has invested in the Re-Amp Network, which comprises more than 160 nonprofits and foundations working on clean and renewable energy across eight Midwestern states. Twenty-five funders eventually joined the consortium; their combined contribution now exceeds Garfield's funding by fifty percent. Through an online collaboration platform and annual convenings, the Re-Amp Network co-create strategy and leverage philanthropic dollars. Results include retirement of coal plants; financing programs for energy-efficient improvements; and greater leverage on public transportation legislation.

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- Fellowship Scan

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- Annie E. Casey Fellows/Children and Family Fellowships <http://www.aecf.org/>
- Barr Fellows <http://www.barrfoundation.org/>
- Detroit Revitalization Fellowship <http://wayne.edu/detroitfellows/>
- Echoing Green – Global, Black Male Achievement, and Climate Fellowships, Alumni Support <http://www.echoinggreen.org/>
- Greater Baltimore Committee <https://gbc.org/>
- W.K. Kellogg Foundation – Community Leadership Network <http://www.wkkf.org/>
- Rockwood Leadership Program Fellows <http://rockwoodleadership.org/>
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## CODA

In the two years since this report was commissioned, OSI-Baltimore has embarked on a holistic effort to strengthen the Fellows Network and amplify its impact throughout the city. Some initiatives, like network leadership training for new Fellows, were launched simultaneously with the research and inquiry process. Other efforts have been catalyzed by the Social Network Analysis and White Paper recommendations, such as fellowship retreats that deepen relationships and strategy sessions focused on the Network as a collective force for social change.

### Framing and Naming

Prior to the Social Network Analysis and White Paper, the idea of the Fellows as a “network” was informal and internal to OSI-Baltimore. OSI now incorporates the language of the “Fellows Network” in its description of the program in all communications and publications:

*The Baltimore Community Fellows is a network of social innovators—now 170 strong—all of whom work directly to revitalize underserved communities, demonstrating the potential of talented individuals to catalyze social change.*

### Network Training for New Fellows

Starting in 2014, each annual cohort of Fellows has engaged in network leadership training as part of its three-day orientation. This full-day training provides space and time for new relationships to form and introduces the basic elements of network theory. As described by Marianne Hughes, a member of the consulting team who leads the training, the “tectonic shifts” in every institution and movement call for “a whole systems view, authentic relationships, and dense connections among network members. Out of this connectedness, right thinking and right action will emerge.” Many Fellows have reported the benefits of introducing the fellowship to a network lens:

*The Network has opened so many doors for SAFE that would probably have remained closed for much longer.*

– Van Brooks, 2014 Fellow  
Safe Alternatives Foundation for Education (SAFE)

*It’s been a really rich process, learning from other Fellows about how to get an entrepreneurial project off the ground.*

– Charlotte Keniston, 2014 Fellow  
Pigtown Food for Thought

*I will be leveraging the OSI Fellowship by creating Moonshot Mondays, twice a month, for OSI fellows to ask questions, exchange resources, promote events, or simply just work side by side during these sessions.*

– Brian Gerardo, 2015 Fellow  
Baltimore Dance Crew Project (BDCCP)

## Network Convenings

OSI-Baltimore has hosted several gatherings for the Fellows to build trust among Network members and put network theory into practice. For example, more than fifty Fellows attended a daylong **retreat** in June 2015. The Fellows analyzed the connections and collaborations revealed by the social network maps and explored the opportunity and challenges of weaving a more intentional Network.

## Building Network Leadership

The project survey and interviews identified a core group of Fellows as valued “connectors” in the City. In May 2016, the **Fellows Network Summit** brought together thirty “connectors,” representing cohorts from 1998 to 2015. Over two and a half days, these Fellows participated in meaningful conversations and activities designed by Marianne Hughes and a Design Team of Fellows. They shared stories about the experiences that inspired or pushed them to pursue social justice work. In peer-exchange clinics, Fellows unpacked and provided feedback on leadership challenges. Throughout the Summit, creative workshops demonstrated the power of art for self-discovery and as a tool for network weaving and community building.

The Summit also provided the context for Network strategy development. OSI-Baltimore currently serves as the hub or backbone of the Network, by convening and weaving the members. In the next stage of evolution, the goal is a common 2020 vision about how the Fellows Network will “move the needle” on critical issues in the city. In this stage, the Network would become more self-sustaining as a shared hub where Fellows “show up” and leverage their collective expertise.

Following the Summit, the **Design Team** met in July 2016 to reflect on takeaways from the Summit and articulate the key questions that will infuse the next chapter:

*What work will empower the Fellows Network and transform the City? Is it a common goal, advocacy campaign, electoral politics, or annual community action project?*

*What are our agreements or covenant? What is our commitment to each other?*

*How will we hold each other accountable?*

## Conclusion - Strength in Numbers

*The uprising motivated people across class and race lines to take a hard look at the unacceptable conditions in which too many Baltimoreans live, and to propose changes. It is critical that we do not lose the momentum of the uprising... And broad citizen engagement will provide important direction to our leaders.*

*– Diana Morris, Director  
OSI-Baltimore*

**In April 2015**, the Baltimore Uprising brought a national spotlight to the City’s structural racism and decades of disinvestment. Since that time, OSI-Baltimore has been convening residents across the city to address the problems and identify solutions. These meetings invite community

members, practitioners, advocates, academicians, and civic leaders to identify top priorities for changes in policy and practice.

The work of the Fellows Network reflects OSI's efforts to engage Baltimoreans in authentic dialogue across race and class. Through their inherent diversity, immersion in target communities, and attention to root causes, the Fellows model an inclusive approach to social change, whether they advocate for bail reform, help undocumented families purchase homes, increase access to healthy food, or blend the arts with community organizing, among dozens of projects.

OSI-Baltimore also is modeling new approaches by crafting social movements that access the behaviors of organizations and networks. In their recent article, "Living in the World of Both/And," Adene Sacks and Heather McLeod Grant (SSIR Online, 9/16/16), promote the development of such "bilingual" leaders:

*Networks can be powerful generators of new talent or innovation around complex multi-sector challenges... However, without specific structure or "handrails" for the work, networks can dissipate quickly. Organizations are good at creating centralized structures to deliver products or services ... However, that efficiency and effectiveness can stifle new ideas or growth opportunities... An important aspect of this cultivation is allowing time and tolerance for experimentation.*

Over the next several years, the Fellows Network has the potential to evolve as a collective of "bilingual" social entrepreneurs and a dynamic force that contributes to the momentum for change in Baltimore.



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Open Society Institute-Baltimore  
Baltimore Community Fellows Network  
201 N. Charles Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
Pamela King, Director

The Open Society Institute-Baltimore launched the Community Fellowships network in 1998. It is now a corps of social innovators 180 strong. The program seeks dynamic activists and social entrepreneurs interested in implementing projects that address problems in underserved communities in Baltimore City. Fellowship awards are in the amount of \$60,000 for a term of 18 months.

## **PRIORITIES**

### **Identify talented social entrepreneurs**

Recruit, select and support dynamic, resourceful and committed social entrepreneurs to become Baltimore Community Fellows.

### **Enhance each Fellow's work**

Offer technical assistance and capacity-building resources to increase the impact of the Fellows' work.

### **Create a dynamic Network**

Support network-weaving activities that strengthen the connections of the Fellows to one another and that encourage collaboration.

*For more information, go to [osibaltimore.org](http://osibaltimore.org)*