

CCC Fellows Program Structure and Process (2009-2018)

Fellows Program Origin

The CCC Fellows Program builds the capacity of the next generation of conservation leaders – leaders who are both scientifically competent and skilled in the art of collaboration. The CCC is committed to helping these “new conservationists” become highly skilled listeners, communicators, facilitators, team builders, boundary spanners, and problem-solvers. The CCC Fellows Program was launched in 2009 by CCC Director, Robin Reid, and CCC Program Coordinator, Stacy Lynn. In 2011, direction of the Fellows Program was taken over by CCC Associate Director, Kim Skyelander.

Types of Fellows

CCC fellows are people who wish to take their community engagement, conservation research or conservation practice to new collaborative levels through local partnerships, diverse engagement, participatory methods, and other innovative forms of exchange. Fellows may come from any discipline and focus on any conservation issue.

From 2009-2015 (Cohorts 1-6), the fellowship included individual fellows in three categories:

- 1) Faculty fellows, including research scientists and post-docs from Colorado State University (CSU),
- 2) CSU graduate student fellows (including both masters and doctoral students), and
- 3) Practitioner fellows working and volunteering outside the university.¹

In 2015-2017 (Cohorts 7 and 8), teams of faculty, graduate student, and practitioner fellows were added in addition to individual fellowships. In Cohorts 1-7, both individual and team projects had the option to compete for funds for a limited number of CSU undergraduate interns. In Cohort 8, CSU undergraduate students joined the ranks of fellows as *required* members on the team fellowships. In 2018 (Cohort 9), the Fellows Program moved to funding only team fellowships.

For Cohorts 1-9, individual fellowship awards were \$5,000 for graduate students and \$8,000 for faculty and conservation practitioners. Team fellowship awards were up to \$15,000 per team.

Fellow Selection Process

The fellowships are competitive, and applicants must apply to a Request for Proposals. To be selected, fellowship applicants must propose a project that: 1) has strong dual conservation and livelihoods components, and 2) includes collaborative methods to engage local partners in project design and/or implementation. Typically, 12-18 fellows are accepted into each cohort,

¹ Conservation practitioners are people who use, own, or manage natural resources as individuals (such as ranchers, foresters, farmers, land owners, conservationists, etc.) or through their work (professionally or voluntarily) as part of tribal nations, the private sector, NGOs, local, state and federal government agencies and other entities.

with an acceptance rate of 30-50% of applications. Applications are reviewed by teams of alumni fellows and CCC staff who rank the proposals on a rubric, discuss their strengths and weaknesses, and vote on which projects to fund. The Cohort 9 *Request for Proposals* may be found in the *Fellows Program 10-Year Report Supporting Documents* (<https://collaborativeconservation.org/media/sites/142/2020/09/Cohort-9-RFP-1.docx>)

Fellows Program Components

In addition to the funded project, the Fellows Program consists of a welcome reception, a training retreat, fellows' meetings, and social events. The fellows' project partners and collaborators are welcome to attend all events.

1) *Funded Project*

Fellows' projects last 18 to 24 months with awards of \$5000-\$15000 depending on the type of fellowship (individual or team). Projects can be domestic or international and must incorporate both social science and natural science concepts and methods. A list of fellows and their projects (2009-2018) may be found in Appendix 4 of the *Fellows Program 10-Year Report*.

2) *Welcome Reception*

The welcome reception celebrates the acceptance of a new cohort into the Fellows Program by introducing new fellows (and their project collaborators, if present) to their peers and invited public. Each individual fellow or team of fellows are asked to present a 2-3 minute "elevator speech" describing their project location, importance, goals and objectives, their collaborators, and expected outcomes and impacts.

3) *Fellows Training Retreat*

The training retreat builds fellows' capacity in the elements of collaborative conservation before they embark on their funded fellows' projects, and also builds camaraderie and networks within their cohort. All cohorts except Cohort 1 have received a training retreat. Training retreats are held off campus. They are two or three days in length covering 7-8 sessions, each session lasting 2-3 hours, and taught by experts in the fields. Trainings are based on the knowledge, experience and needs of the current cohort. The Cohort 9 *Training Retreat Agenda and Session Descriptions* may be found on the *Fellows 10-Year Report Supporting Documents* webpage (<https://collaborativeconservation.org/media/sites/142/2020/09/Cohort-9-Training-Retreat-Agenda-and-Session-Descriptions.docx>)

4) *Fellows Meetings*

In addition to the initiation events, the CCC Fellows Program arranges regular fellows' meetings to provide ongoing opportunities to support fellows during their fellowship and increase fellows' likelihood of successful completion. During Cohorts 1-7, active fellows met monthly to provide project updates, discuss interesting topics related to their projects, and ask for help with issues. Due to fellows' suggestions in their post fellowship evaluations, meetings were changed to quarterly during Cohorts 8 and 9. During Cohort 9, fellows' teams

began taking turns organizing and leading meetings based on their needs and have included guest speakers and mini-trainings.

5) *Social Functions*

During each cohort, one or more social functions have been organized during the summer and/or fall, during which active and alumni fellows are invited to reconnect and interact informally. Attendance at these events has varied from 5 to 30 attendees; they are most commonly attended by fellows who remain in town, since fellows are in the field at different times throughout the year depending on their project location.

6) *Engagement with the Fellows Program and the CCC Post-Fellowship*

Alumni fellows are encouraged to continue their engagement with the Fellows Program and the CCC beyond the term of their fellowship. Options for participation include reviewing future fellowship applications, providing training for fellows training retreats, and participating in CCC conferences, workshops and/or special events. Fellows often also serve as advocates for the CCC, spreading the word about what the CCC does and encourage others to apply to the program.

Required Fellow's Reports, Evaluations and Other Deliverables

Fellows in all cohorts have been required to submit several deliverables upon completion of the 18 to 24-month fellowship: (1) applied and/or academic products, depending on the type of fellowship, (2) a final report of their fellowship project, and (3) a post-fellowship evaluation of the Fellows Program. Beginning with Cohort 8, fellows have also been required to submit quarterly blogs, and in Cohort 9, teams have also been required to submit final report notes on a quarterly basis and a storytelling media project. Undergraduate team fellows in Cohorts 8-9 have been required to write a report to the CCC reflecting on their fellowship experiences and what they have learned from the project. The program reporting and evaluation structure is reviewed yearly. Once the reports and evaluations responses are reviewed by CCC staff, the questions are clarified or revised for the next cohort as needed to reduce redundancy and increase the relevance of the information gathered.

1) *Applied and Academic Products*

Fellows from all cohorts have been required to produce at least two products as part of their funded project. Fellows propose these products as part of their initial fellowship application. These products are intended as a mechanism for fellows to produce something valuable for the communities and stakeholders with whom they have worked, and to contribute to the community of collaborative conservation scientists and practitioners, respectively. For individual faculty and graduate student fellows, one product is required to be relevant and useful to the project community (e.g., training guide, website, interactive map, video, workshop, policy brief), and the other should be an academic product (e.g., journal manuscript, dissertation chapter, conference presentation, poster) that can be shared on the CCC website and through CCC networks.

Individual practitioner fellows are required to produce two community products. Teams are required to produce two community products and at least one academic product. For a summary list of fellows' products, see the *Fellows 10-Year Report Supporting Documents* webpage

(<https://collaborativeconservation.org/media/sites/142/2020/09/Summary-of-Fellows-Products-2009-2018.docx>)

2) *Final Project Reports*

The final report has been required of all the cohorts, and asks fellows to reflect on their projects, by providing specific prompting questions. Report guidelines and questions are provided to fellows at the start of the fellowship and again midway through the fellowship. Given the diversity of fellows' projects, the CCC has experimented with various questions and data collection formats to collect comparable information, including Survey Monkey, narrative reports, and short answer entries. Many questions ask for quantitative measures and estimates, others provide space for qualitative reflections of successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Beginning with Cohort 9, fellows have been required to submit quarterly notes, addressing some of the questions previously included in the summative final project report, to improve recall and reduce reporting requirements at the end of the fellowship. This practice is intended to result in more robust narratives on the collaborative process than in previous reports. The Cohort 9 *Final Project Report and Evaluation Questions* may be found on the *Fellows 10-Year Report Supporting Documents* webpage

(<https://collaborativeconservation.org/media/sites/142/2020/09/2020-Products-Reporting-and-Evaluation-KS.docx>)

3) *Post-Fellowship Program Evaluations*

The program evaluation has been required of fellows in all cohorts. It asks fellows to reflect on their Fellows Program experience as a whole and offer suggestions for program improvement. Evaluations are reviewed yearly by CCC staff, which then makes decisions about changes to the program. Fellows Program evaluations also provide insight on how participation in the program has impacted the fellows themselves and help the CCC assess if its meeting the program goals.

4) *Blogs and Storytelling Media Product*

Beginning with Cohort 8, each team of fellows has been required to produce at least four quarterly blog posts (see <https://collaborativeconservation.org/fellows-blog/>) and a storytelling media product to be shared on the CCC website. Blog topics are left to the discretion of the teams and are intended to provide others the opportunity to learn from the fellows' project journey. Topics may include discussions of progress, challenges, lessons learned, or successes of their projects. The storytelling media product is intended to provide fellows with the experience of creatively communicating the story of their collaborative conservation project in a format that any audience can appreciate. Media products may be videos, podcasts, radio programs, story maps, etc.