

# Share & Reapply: Spotlight on Success

## *Inspiring Excellence in AFP Chapters*

At AFP Greater Detroit Chapter, we believe in the power of sharing success stories to inspire and elevate our community of fundraising professionals. One of our proudest moments in the last few years has been the success of our Marjorie S. Fisher Fellowship program.

**About the Marjorie S. Fisher Fellowship:** The Marjorie S Fisher Fellowship program is the leading mentorship program in Metro Detroit for development professionals new to the field. Since 2014, the fellowship has been financially supported by the Max and Marjorie Fisher Foundation in Detroit. Their financial support of the program allows us to provide the fellows with a complimentary membership for the one year they are enrolled in the program. This gives them access to our educational sessions and the wealth of resources offered through the chapter and AFP Global.

- **Objective:** The objectives of this program are to allow newer professionals to engage with their more experienced peers and learn from experts on various topics relevant to the industry. Our overall goal is to ensure a pipeline of qualified and ethical professionals in the development field to improve our sector.
- **Key Strategies:** We employed the following key strategies to achieve our goal:
  - **Convey the importance of our mission to potential partners and sponsors:** It is important to provide updates and show impact just as you would with any other donor. When we visited with the foundation early on, we communicated that a consistent struggle is some fellows do not renew their membership after being a part of the cohort. We still struggle with this to this day, and we find that the more involvement they have with AFP outside of the program, the likelier they are to renew their membership. It is important to find partners that support the work we do and align with our respective missions. It is also important to share with potential funders the real barriers fundraisers face, and the impact that education and support can provide.
  - **Engage your mentees for long-term involvement:** As a chapter, it is absolutely critical that you engage these fellows for the long term as they are prime candidates to become mentors in the following years. Having opportunities to volunteer for events, sit on committees, and have a voice regarding programming, will go a long way toward retention.
- **Results:** Marjorie S Fisher Fellowship program has delivered remarkable results, including:
  - The program has graduated over 150 Fisher Fellows since 2017.
  - Many fellows have gone on to become mentors, committee leaders, and board members of our chapter.
  - Mentors who participate report feeling fulfilled and enjoyment from mentoring someone with a fresh set of eyes.

**Why our Marjorie S Fisher Fellowship Program Matters:** By providing fellows with a paid membership, they can access all of AFP's programming and resources as well as the chapter-wide offerings. This increases our engagement with our community and provides more access to those working in these underfunded areas of fundraising.

**How You Can Replicate our Fellowship Program:** We believe that the success of our fellowship program can be replicated by other AFP chapters. Here are the key steps to consider:

1. **Assess Your Chapter's Needs:** Identify specific needs or challenges within your chapter or community that a similar program could address.
2. **Engage a Sponsor or Partner:** Our chapter established a relationship with the Max and Marjorie Fisher Foundation, a local foundation whose executive director had a background in fundraising. They approached us with an interest in mentoring fundraisers who were new to the profession in the city of Detroit, with the goal of providing them support and hopefully keeping them in the fundraising field. The foundation had asked our chapter what the impediments were to joining AFP, and the two major ones were time away from work, and financially paying for dues. Together, we created the Marjorie M. Fisher Fellowship which, thanks to the generous support of the foundation, paid for the dues of each fellow in the program.
3. **Develop the Program:** it is important to establish the guidelines you will be using for the program (for both the fellow and mentor). What educational programming will you offer? How frequently and in what format? It is important to be aware of trends in philanthropy and really assess what your applicants desire to learn about. In what ways will you engage the fellows for long-term success?
4. **Plan Early:** We have found that by having 95% of our year planned by the end of March really helps with keeping the program running smoothly.
5. **Engage the Fellows Outside of the Program:** Our program provided one complimentary year of membership, however, to make sure the fellows renewed and remained engaged after their first year, we needed to make sure they got involved with as many aspects of membership as possible, not only participating in education, but meeting fellow members through networking opportunities and volunteering for committees. This type of engagement is crucial to keep these new fundraisers interested and build the pipeline of future leaders that the program strives to create.
6. **Share Your Success:** Once you've achieved success with your event, share your results, best practices, and lessons learned with other chapters and the AFP community.

**Get Started Today:** We encourage you to consider adopting a similar event to our fellowship program to make a positive impact on your chapter and community. Together, we can continue to elevate the fundraising profession and create lasting change.

For more information or to contact our team for insights and guidance, please contact Lauren Christilaw at [lkchristilaw@gmail.com](mailto:lkchristilaw@gmail.com).

Let's share success, inspire change, and make a difference together.