

International Fellowship Program of the International Specialised Skills Institute Evaluation Report

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October 2018



Cover images (top to bottom)

Aaron Smith

2017 George Alexander Fellow.

Fellowship area: The preservation and conservation of antique locks.

Michelle Zuccolo

2013 Italian Australian Foundation Fellow.

Fellowship area: The importance of Italian art and design in education.

Michael Dal Zotto

2008 George Alexander Foundation Fellow.

Fellowship area: Cultivation and production of Prosecco.

Jan Davis

2016 Higher Education Skills Group (Victorian Department of Education) Fellow.

Fellowship area: Supported internships for young people with a disability.

To read all Fellowship reports go to
www.issinstitute.org.au

Acknowledgements

Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, Swinburne University of Technology

We would like to acknowledge the Centre for Social Impact (CSI) Swinburne, Swinburne University of Technology, the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute), and the many ISS Institute alumni who were willing to share their experiences with us through their participation in these surveys and telephone interviews.

We would also like to thank Sir James Gobbo, who passionately gave his time to provide the context and history of the organisation and a number of supporting documents.

The outcomes of this evaluation project will strengthen the ISS Institute's future work. It provides evidence of the valuable contribution made by the Institute's International Fellowship Program to building capacity in the Australian workforce and enhancing the skills and knowledge of the individual Fellows, and the positive and far reaching impact of the Fellowship program and the work of the ISS Institute.

Kiros Hiruy

Senior Research Fellow, CSI Swinburne, Swinburne University of Technology
October 2018

ISS Institute

The ISS Institute would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land upon which our programs are carried out. We pay our respects to their Ancestors, their Elders past and present, and to all First Peoples of Australia. We acknowledge that the land on which we work is the place of age-old ceremonies of celebration, initiation and renewal.

The ISS Institute would like to acknowledge the Ian Potter Foundation for providing funding to undertake this evaluation. It would not have been possible without the Foundation's generous support.

The ISS Institute would like to thank the many individuals, funding partners and organisations that have supported ISSI over the previous 29 years, enabling the Fellowship program's many achievements.

The ISS Institute would like to acknowledge the support given by our Patrons and Board members:

Patron in Chief: Lady Primrose Potter AC

Patrons: Mr Tony Schiavello AO and Mr James MacKenzie

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Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO

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Board Secretary: Alisia Romanin

Board Members: John Baker, Camilla Roberts and Mark Kerr.

CEO: Wendy Draayers



Image: Mosaics. From wearable adornments to environments of interaction, Fellow Laila Costa.

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Summary of Findings

In 2018, the Centre for Social Impact carried out an evaluation of the ISS Institute. This report presents the findings of the evaluation, representing 134 previous Fellows, carried out via the following methods:

- a. a document analysis of 35 Fellowship reports across 13 sectors;
- b. a series of 12 interviews – one with the ISS Institute founder and 11 with previous Fellowship recipients; and
- c. an online survey comprising quantitative and qualitative questions, which was completed by 87 Fellows.

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the impact of the ISS Institute Fellowship program over the past 28 years, with a focus on:

- i. the benefits to the individual;
- ii. flow-on benefits to the specific industry sectors which Fellows are/were involved in; and
- iii. the Fellowship's contribution to policy change and the community.

Primary findings

- Over 75% of Fellows surveyed reported that the Fellowship program had enhanced their knowledge, skills and capabilities.
- An overwhelming majority of Fellows (over 95%) indicated that they apply their learning from their Fellowship in their current work or role. This is significant considering some of the Fellows undertook their Fellowship in the 1990s.
- The majority continue to work in the sector for which they undertook their Fellowship.
- The Fellowship program has played a vital role in enhancing and sustaining specialist skills in several sectors including building and construction, textiles, art and design, conservation and restoration, and food and agri-business. Some of these industry areas have few or no accredited courses within Australia.

- The opportunity presented by the Fellowship has enhanced the individual skills and capabilities and has contributed significantly to the Fellows' professional success, building their confidence and enhancing their ability to create new business opportunities.
- New professional networks were established due to the Fellowship program, creating opportunities for Fellows to exchange information, examine international best practice and develop innovative products and processes in their sectors.
- Specialist skills, knowledge and networks built through the Fellowship program have led a third (30%) of the Fellows to start their own business, organisation and/or project. These are expected to play a vital role in filling the 'skills gap' in Australia.
- Over half (55%) of Fellows believe their Fellowship had benefited their sector.

Secondary findings

- Fellows were able to contribute to their sector by sharing innovative business models, best practice and processes, and training others in their industry. All entered their Fellowship with the intention to share the skills and knowledge they gained amongst their colleagues and others in their industry. These skills and knowledge have been shared in a variety of ways, including workshops, presentations, publications, and training.
- Fellows have contributed to practice change and policy debates by:
 - sharing Fellowship learnings in a variety of forums, and
 - integrating innovative processes and business models to their workplace and wider industry sector.
- Fellows have engaged with their colleagues and the broader community, and they contributed to the preservation of specialist skills and practice change in their sector. Assessing whether this engagement and contribution led to demonstrated policy changes was beyond the scope of the evaluation.

Image: Preserving traditional locksmith skills.
Fellow Aaron Smith.



1 Introduction

“I am deeply grateful for having had the opportunity to research my father’s art and culture, and gain a greater appreciation of my own heritage. I would not have been able to access this knowledge without the support of the Fellowship. I was able to meet with staff at major museums and galleries, and make investigations in to art practice on a very insightful level, because of the kudos associated with the program.” **Fellow Michelle Zuccolo, The importance of Italian art and design in education**



1.1 Organisational context

The ISS Institute plays a pivotal role in creating value and opportunity, encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice by investing in individuals.

The overarching aim of the ISS Institute is to support the development of a “Smarter Australia”. The Institute does this via the provision of Fellowships that provide the opportunity for Australians to undertake international skills development and applied research that will have a positive impact on Australian industry and the broader community.

The International Specialised Skills Institute was founded 28 years ago, by Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC, and former Governor of Victoria, who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the up-skilling of the Australian workforce. The Fellowship Program builds shared learning, leadership and innovation across the broad range of industry sectors worked with. Fellows are supported to disseminate learnings and ideas, facilitate change and advocate for best practice through the sharing of their Fellowship learnings with peers, colleagues, government, industry and community.

Since its establishment 28 years ago, ISS Institute has supported over 450 Fellows to undertake research across a wide range of sectors which in turn has led to positive change, the adoption of best practice approaches and new ways of working in Australia.

The Fellowship Programs are led by investment partners and designed in a manner which ensures that the needs and goals desired by the partners are achieved. ISS Institute works closely to develop a Fellowship Program that meets key industry priorities, thus ensuring that the investment made will have lasting impact.

1.2 Evaluation purpose and questions

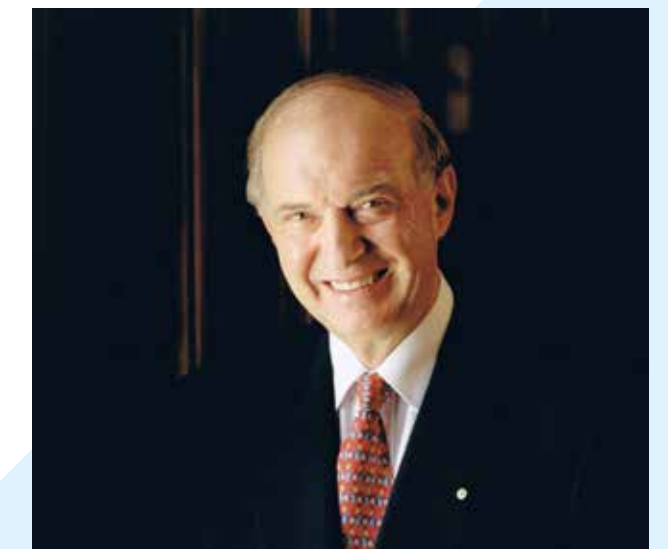
The evaluation project aimed to assess the impact of the ISS Institute’s International Fellowship Program. The focal areas of the evaluation included:

- The benefits of the Fellowship to the individual – has it enhanced the capacity of the individuals involved (their knowledge, skills and capabilities)?;
- The flow on benefits (impact) of the Fellowship to the Fellows’ industry and sector; and
- The Fellowship Program’s overall contribution to policy change and society (the community).

The evaluation addresses the following research questions:

- What are the specific benefits of the Fellowship Program to individual Fellows (their knowledge, skills and capabilities)?
- What has the Fellowship Program contributed to the Fellow’s industry and/or sector?
- What are the contributions of the Program to policy change and society (the community)?

Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC



"I have to say I am most proud of the fact that a small family winery in the King Valley has made Australian Wine Industry history by following a dream, and in doing so have brought a piece of their family history to their new home in Australia." **Fellow Michael Dal Zotto, Cultivation and production of Prosecco**



2.1 The role of Fellowship programs

Fellowship programs are a structurally diverse method of applied research or training which traditionally involve a merit-based scholarship in a particular discipline or specialised skill. Historically, they have been used in medical research and health fields. Many Fellowships involve a period of residency whereby a participant will travel to a specific university, organisation, or region, to undertake professional development in a particular area or skill. In this sense, a Fellowship can be characterised as a capacity building process—one which enhances the capabilities of individuals, organisations, and systems, such that they can conduct and manage their own goals successfully (OECD, 2006).

This work-integrated learning structure (see Jackson, 2013; Bates, 2005) allows a Fellowship to build capacity through not only enhancing individual capabilities, but also the labour productivity, capital productivity, and total factor productivity for the broader industry (Gordon & Chadwick, 2007). The scope of evaluative research looking at their impacts in the medical research and health sectors echoes in support of work-integrated learning literature (see Jackson, 2013; Bates, 2005). Fellowships of this nature are linked with an abundance of individual benefits, including growth in self-esteem, work competency, and networks with mentors and development opportunities (Liao, Nagy & Cook, 2016).

More broadly, some flow-on benefits to the sectors and institutions are known to emerge from the Fellowship experience. Among those most commonly cited are professional prestige, and knowledge and skill sharing through Fellows' dissemination of their learnings (Liao, Nagy & Cook, 2016). Such flow-on benefits of Fellowship programs have been attributed to the *multiplier effect* phenomenon. In economics, this describes the ripple effects of spending, which result in multiple re-spending outcomes (Wang & Chan, 2006).

In an educational context, it translates to the re-transference of skills through an organisation which not only reduces its training costs but also builds skill retention en masse, through establishing themselves in what Wang and Chan (2006) describe as 'organisational memory'. This 'snowball effect' of networking, skill sharing, and organisational capacity building, highlights the potential for Fellowships to generate prolonged impacts which cascade through the industry and the broader community (Hawe et al., 1997; Maertens & Barrett, 2013).

The multiplier effect has been demonstrated in numerous capacity-building programs, predominantly within in the health sector (Probandari et al., 2017; Wang & Chan, 2006; Zuber-Skerritt & Louw, 2014; Vian et al., 2007). However, scholars stress that this transformative impact can only be fully realised when the Fellowship participants are actively encouraged (or required) to share their knowledge after completing a said program (Zuber-Skerritt, 2014). As such, it is considered essential for an organisation to develop a systematic means of 'codifying' Fellows' knowledge and skill attainment (Wang & Chan, 2006). In the case of the ISS Institute Fellowship process, the written reports perform this function.

2.2 Fellowship and specialised skill development in Australia

Australia is experiencing a shortage of specialised skills and trade vocations, which are critical to the preservation of its cultural heritage. While Australia is regarded for its values-based practice, its physical standards of heritage conservation are comparatively low on an international scale (Mackay et al., 2010).

To a large extent, this stems from an increasing reliance on mass production (UNESCO 2016; Jakob & Thomas, 2017), declining government and private sector funding for ‘traditional’ industries (Heath & Pascoe, 2014), and an ageing specialist workplace and concomitant rise of non-specialist tradespeople (Mackay et al., 2017).

Particularly ‘endangered’ specialised crafts and trades include carpentry, roof tiling, and stonemasonry (Mackay et al., 2017). This also extends across the arts sector, specifically those taught in atelier-based, tertiary craft courses in both university-based art schools and vocational education (Heath & Pascoe, 2014).

Labelled ‘intangible heritage’ by UNESCO (2016), such trades are often imbued with age-old systems of instruction and apprenticeship and are considered ‘safeguarded’ by the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2016). The Convention recommends that rather than focusing on preservation of craft objects themselves, we concentrate instead on passing down artisan skills and knowledge of

to others. However, the lack of specialised skill training in Australia has resulted in traditional craftspeople being imported from overseas to meet these national needs (Heath & Pascoe, 2014). Recent reports (Heath & Pascoe, 2014; Mackay et al., 2010; Mackay, 2017) explicate the recent decline in the quality and availability of educational training opportunities across the nation—particularly in rural areas (Mackay et al., 2017). Additionally, Mackay (2010) reports that the levels of training for practitioners entering the heritage industry in Australia are most often received on-the-job and without a formal qualification and that many attempts to launch formal curricula in these areas have failed due to inadequate funding.

This decline in skills and its detrimental implications for Australia’s cultural and economic landscape highlight a number of critical gaps in Australia’s training and education sector. Internationally, countries such as Italy and Japan have been presented as case studies showing the potential for institutions—particularly those focused in education and training—to play a central role in preserving specialised skills (Klamer, 2012). Not only do these models present opportunities for cross-cultural knowledge sharing and collaborations, but also the need for a cultural, organisational, and political shift in the prioritisation of skill preservation in the national agenda.



Image: A Study of the Farmers Market sector. Fellow Prudence Rothwell.

2.3 Evaluating a Fellowship program

Scholars have discussed the need for improved long-term follow-up on the trajectory and success of individual projects to better assess the impact of capacity-building activities over time (Montemurro et al., 2013). While multiple definitions of capacity development exist in the literature (Grindle & Hilderbrand, 1995; Bolger, 2000), they are broadly encapsulated through three dimensions: (i) individual-level, (ii) organisational-level, and (iii) systems-level capacity development. Based on these, the current evaluation of the ISS Institution’s Fellowship programs focuses on three corresponding areas: (1) the impact of the program on the individual, and whether it has enhanced the capacity of the individuals involved (through their knowledge, skills and capabilities); (2) the flow-on benefits to the industry they were involved in; and (3) its overall contribution to policy change, the community, and society more broadly.

It is essential to acknowledge that the interplay of internal and external factors involved in capacity development programs render their evaluation a complex and dynamic process (Gordon & Chadwick, 2007). Firstly, due to the individualised nature of Fellowship programs and their impacts, no single (universal) measure of evaluation can be applied to measure impact.

Moreover, many existing measures for evaluating capacity development schemes are criticised for their over-emphasis on producing quantifiable, aggregated numbers, such that a focus on social transformation is being lost (Vallego & When, 2016). Perhaps the most significant challenge of evaluation is that of attribution. This ties into the aforementioned multiplier effect—particularly in a vocational context, whereby the impact of a program is prolonged and multiplied through the sharing and dispersion of skills among the community (Hawe et al., 1997).

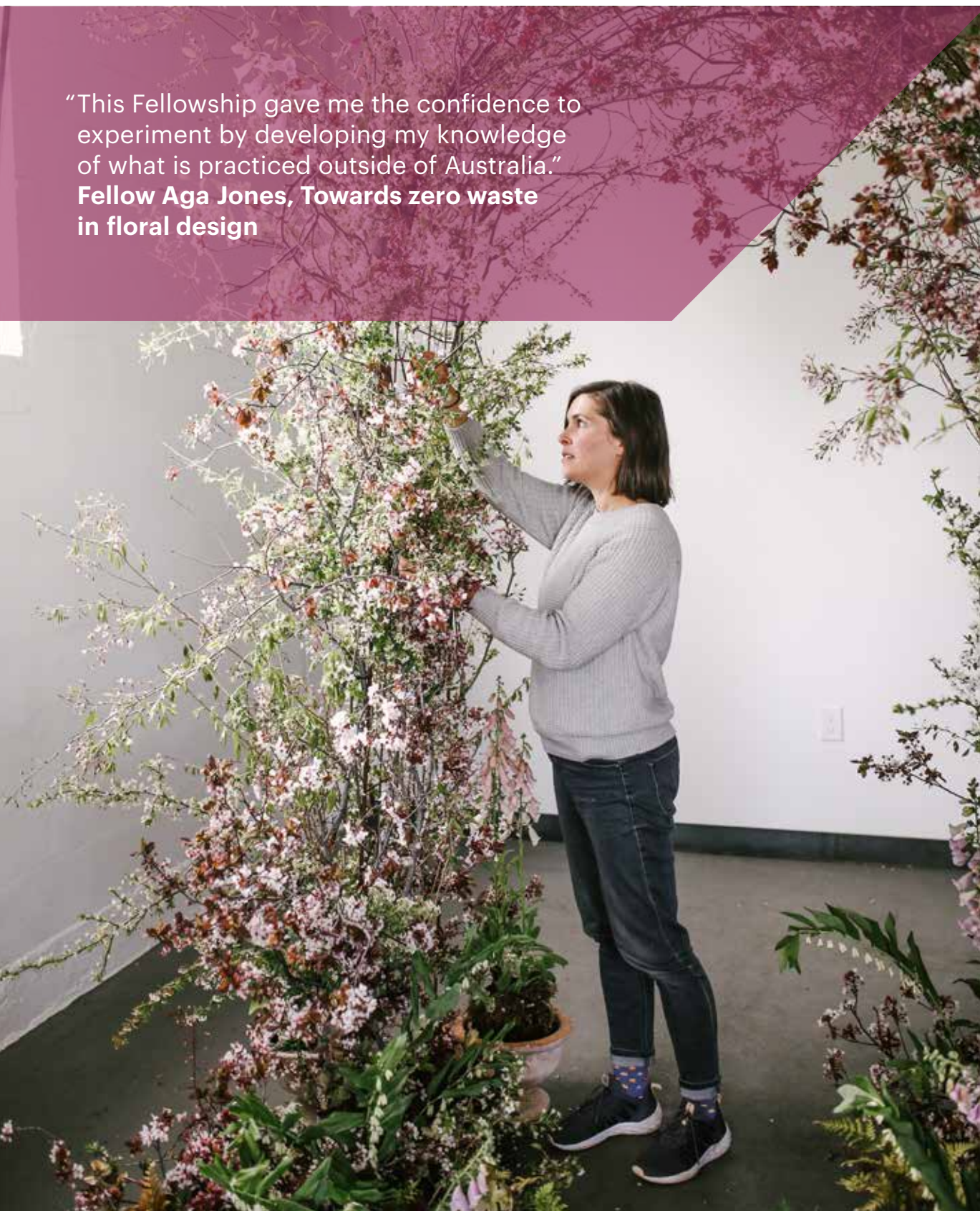
As Hawe et al. (1997) state, individual impacts are not necessarily an all-encompassing indicator of a program’s success; one must also observe the multiplied and prolonged effects on the industry or community as a whole.



Image: Fellow Michael Dal Zotto, Cultivation and production of Prosecco.

Methodology and Evaluation Framework

"This Fellowship gave me the confidence to experiment by developing my knowledge of what is practiced outside of Australia."
Fellow Aga Jones, Towards zero waste in floral design



This evaluation involved a mixed-methods approach, comprising (1) an online survey of 87 previous ISS Fellows; (2) twelve in-depth, semi-structured interviews – of these, eleven were with previous Fellows, and one with the founder of the ISS Institute – and; (3) a content analysis of 35 reports from previous Fellows.

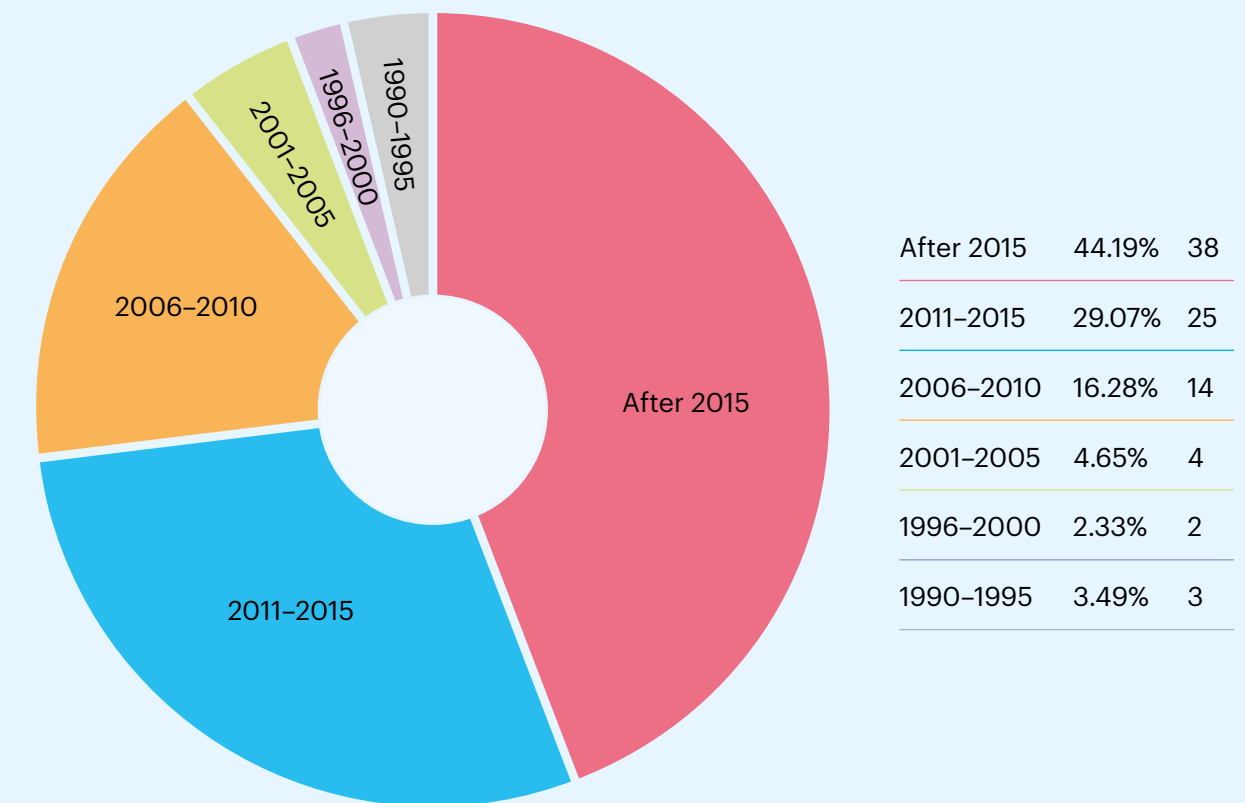
3.1 Data collection and analysis

3.1.1 Surveys

A survey, comprising both qualitative and quantitative questions, was circulated electronically to all Fellows with an email address who had completed their Fellowship since 1991. The survey was sent to over 300 Fellows, and a total of 95 participants attempted to complete the survey; 87 were included in the analysis with eight considered incomplete. Of those who completed the survey, a significant proportion – over 40% – had undertaken their Fellowship since 2015. A breakdown of participants by their Fellowship year is presented in Figure 1 below.

Year of Fellowship Completion

Figure 1. Breakdown of survey participants by years of Fellowship completion



The sample encompasses an array of Fellowship topic industries, most prominently the education sector, represented by 37% of participants. A breakdown of industries can be seen in Figure 2 below.

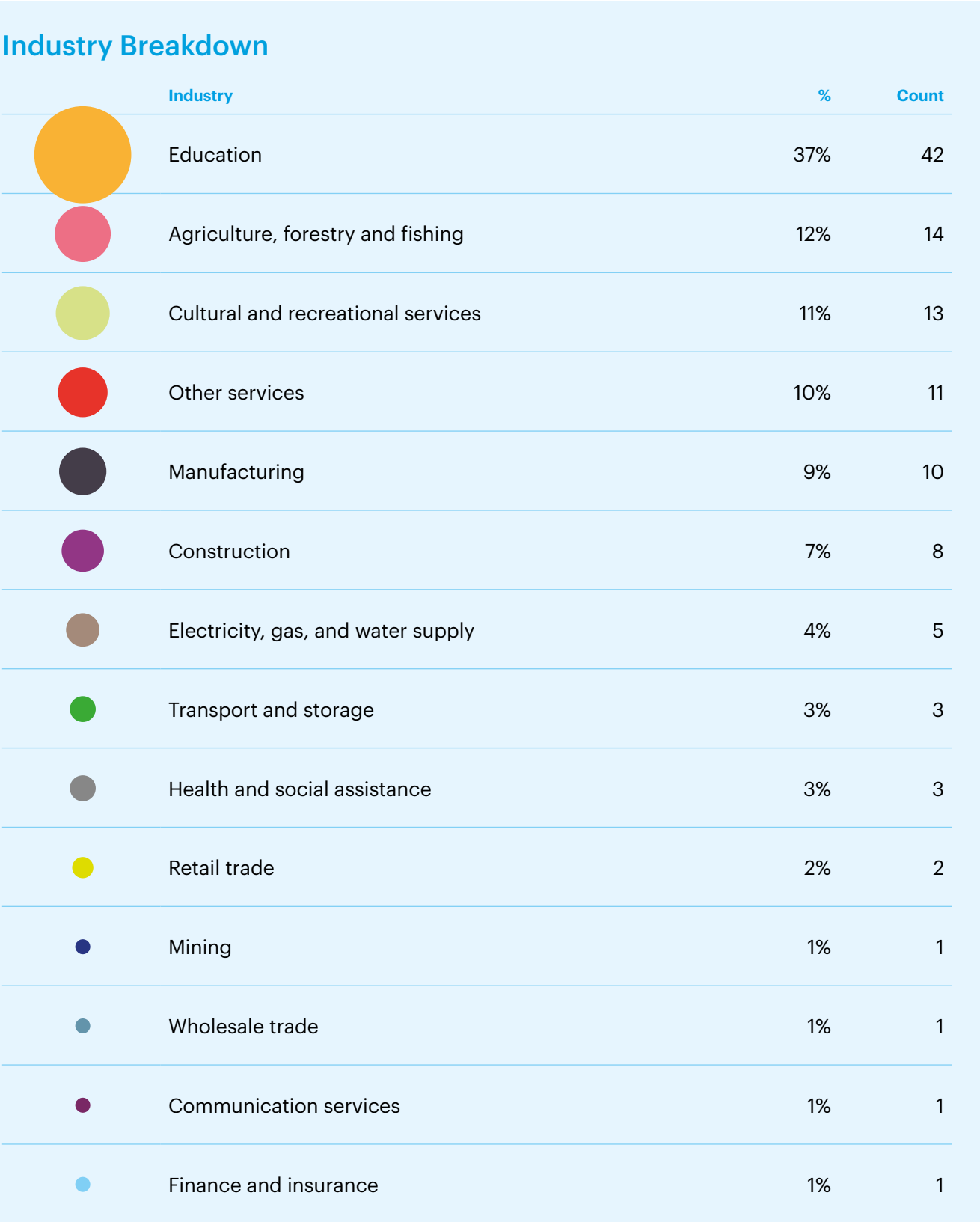


Figure 2. Breakdown of survey participants’ response counts by industry

3.1.2 Interviews

Stratified, purposive sampling across gender, industry sector and geographic location, was used to recruit participants for in-depth interviews to complete the data obtained both through the survey and document analysis. Of twenty invited, twelve returned their consent forms and were interviewed. One interviewee was a founding member of the ISS Institute, and the other eleven were Fellows of the Fellowship program.

The interviewees’ Fellowships were in diverse specialities, including knife-making, rural development, education, and food and agri-business. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and coded using a qualitative data analysis software (NVivo). Thematic analysis was then used to identify the key themes arising from the interview transcripts.

3.1.3 Document analysis

Again, stratified, purposive sampling across gender, industry sector and geographic location, was used to select 35 previous Fellows’ reports from the ISS Institute’s database for a systematic analysis. The analysis employed a focus on the industry in which the Fellowship was undertaken, its purpose and activities, the Fellow’s key recommendations, and the key benefits of the Fellowship to: (1) the individual; (2) their industry; and (3) broader policy change and society.

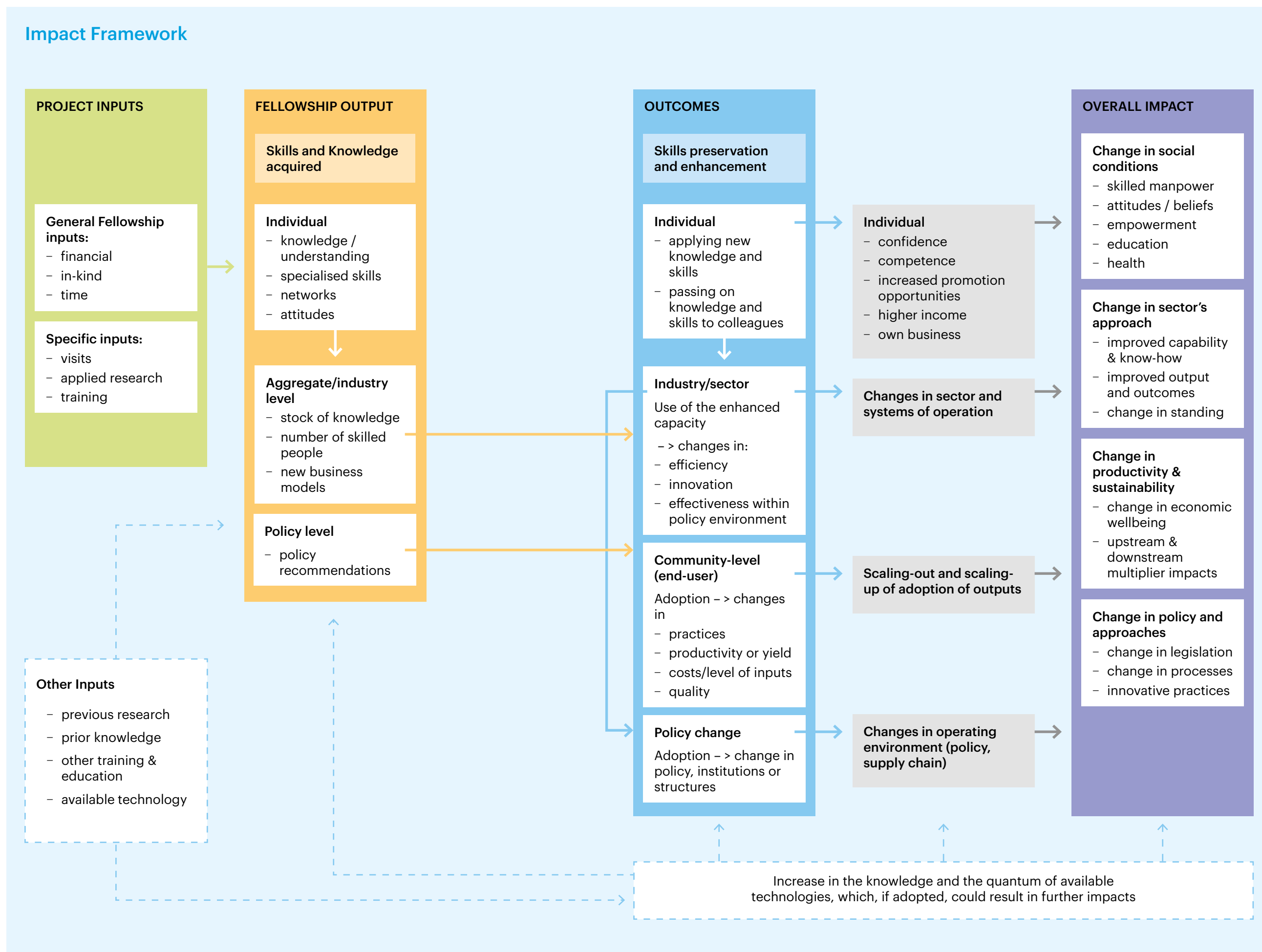
Image: Fellow Rebekka Hocking. Archaeological conservation.



3.2 Evaluation framework

Figure 3 shows the Capacity/Skills Development-to-Impact Framework. This framework highlights the impact of the Fellows' participation in the program, knowledge and skill development, recommendations and contributions to their respective industry, and the resulting changes to the sector, policy, and the broader community. The figure analyses the path from knowledge and skills acquisition, to the overall impact on the individual Fellow, their particular industry and the broader community through policy change.

Figure 3. Capacity/skills development-to-impact Framework [Authors' adaptation of Templeton (2009)]



The evaluation analysis assumes that Fellows were experts in their fields before undertaking the Fellowship program, and ISS Fellowships are fundamentally undertaken to enhance skills and knowledge and to acquire innovative ideas and methods. Therefore, it should be noted that the personal and professional impact of the Fellows' enhanced specialised skills and knowledge can only contribute to the overall impact on the industry and policy level.

In reporting on the findings, the evaluators have endeavoured to present both qualitative and quantitative evidence extracted from the data to account for the outputs and outcomes of the ISS Institute's Fellowship Program. The evaluators have used the findings and quotes extracted from the data to support and qualify the impact of the Fellowship at the individual, sectoral, and community or policy change levels (Simister & Smith, 2010; Templeton, 2009; Vallejo & Wehn, 2016).

3.3 Limitations

While stratified, purposive sampling was employed to select the most evenly-distributed sample of interviewees possible across gender, industry sector and geographic location, there are still limitations in its representativeness.

Firstly, although over 400 Fellows have undertaken an ISS Institute's Fellowship over the last 28 years, we interviewed only twelve of these individuals, representing a relatively small sample of the total number. Secondly, only 95 of the possible 400 plus Fellows participated in the survey, and 87 completed it fully. This represents about 25% of the population. Additionally, although the survey sample included Fellowship recipients dating back to 1991, over 40% of respondents had completed their Fellowship since 2015.

Overall, while the sample size in both the interview section of the evaluation and in the survey section seem small, given data saturation was observed in both cases, we are satisfied that the data collected offers a reliable picture of the impact of the ISS Institute's Fellowship Program. However, as noted in our literature review, attribution of impact to a program is not always a straightforward process. The context under which each Fellowship was undertaken are likely to contribute to the impact of the Fellowship. Thus, we advise caution in attributing the impact of the Fellowship program and in reading the results of our assessment.



Image: Preserving traditional and bespoke signwriting in Australia. Fellow David Stephenson.



"This Fellowship was an excellent chance to upskill, network and enrich my craft. It has given me fantastic networks to rely on for continuing my progress within my craft. It demystified a number of subjects for me and built my bladesmithing and knife making knowledge."

Fellow Aidan Mackinnon, Innovations in knife making

4 Evaluation Findings



“I am very appreciative of the Fellowship program – it has enhanced my life on so many levels. I thank the funders for assisting me in my difficult navigation of the artistic life. I would like you to consider the many other Laila’s who are out there waiting for their time to shine.”
Fellow Laila Costa, Micro and macro mosaics

In the last 28 years, over 450 Fellows have participated in the ISS Fellowship Program. Our data shows that Fellows’ areas of interests spread across a range of sectors, with a significant proportion (over 37%) coming from the education sector. Here we present the key findings from our survey, interview, and document analysis data, representing 134 previous Fellows, in conjunction with the ISS founder. Overall, the results suggest the Fellowship has significantly developed participants’ skills and knowledge, through exposure to exemplary methodologies and processes. We additionally found it has had a substantial impact on a number of industries which are diminishing in the Australian sphere and has contributed to broader policy and community impacts.

Survey participants were asked to identify the extent to which they experienced a range of benefits from their Fellowship, as shown in Figure 4 below. The benefits identified align to the three key focus areas of this evaluation and are presented accordingly through this chapter: individual-level impacts (4.1), industry-level impacts (4.2), and policy and community-level impacts (4.3).

How do you describe the benefits you have experienced from the Fellowship?

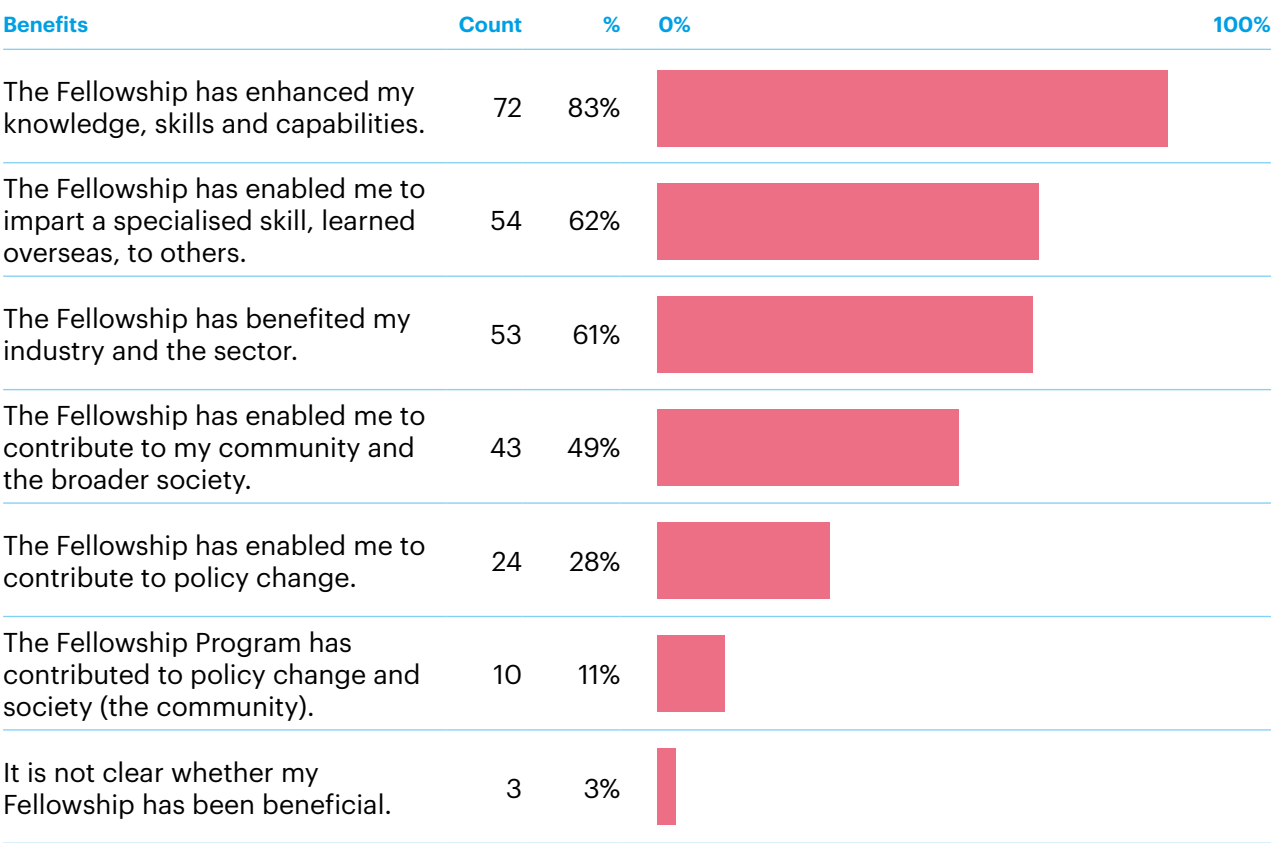


Figure 4. The extent to which survey participants have experienced benefits from the Fellowship

4.1 Individual-level impacts

This section explores these individual-level impacts and identifies five key areas which have enhanced the lives of Fellows themselves.

4.1.1 Specialist skills and knowledge-building

The program has contributed to the maintenance and furtherance of individual specialised skills across many sectors. Over 80% of Fellows we surveyed reported that the Fellowship had enhanced their knowledge, skills and capabilities (see Figure 4 above).

Moreover, an overwhelming proportion (over 95%) of Fellows we surveyed continue to apply the knowledge and skills they developed from the Fellowship in their current workplace. This is high by any measure. It is also an indication that most alumni still work in areas related to their Fellowship. Respondents were able to pinpoint these personal benefits with ease; when asked to describe the nature of this phenomenon, most respondents directly associated skills they acquired from the Fellowship to their current occupation. Survey respondents illustrate this sentiment in the following survey comments:

I continue to use the skills and knowledge I gained through my Fellowship in my day to day activities when planning curriculum and course content for the programs I currently manage. (Respondent 13)

I still work in education of plumbing apprentices, and I share that knowledge with upcoming tradespeople who are interested in innovation in their trade. (Respondent 2)

The problem-solving skills I learned [through my Fellowship] remain vital for my work. (Respondent 9)

I use information and techniques gathered from speaking with and observing people I met during my Fellowship in my work on a daily basis. Additionally, that exposure stimulates the thought process of how I operate and complete tasks and make me think about how I can do better or achieve better results. (Respondent 5)

As a consultant to the industry, I use the skills and knowledge gained through the Fellowship regularly. (Respondent 24)

I have worked on different contracts as an education consultant since returning that can be linked back conceptually to the practice that I was exposed to on the Fellowship. (Respondent 26)

It is also worth noting that the ISS Institute Fellowship Program offers Australians a unique opportunity to complete courses which are unavailable or obsolete in Australia. For example, one Fellow ('Interviewee I') was given the opportunity to complete a niche micro-mosaicking course in Italy, which allowed her to branch out her disciplinary skills and apply them to her work since:

...lots of skills that I gained would be from the micro-mosaicking course . . . There aren't any available in this country. I am an artist that works across many types of disciplines, so that allowed me to learn thoroughly how to do that.

This participant emphasised that these skills, which she gained in early 2017, continue to influence her practice today. In doing so, she aptly described the experience as akin to 'filling [her] bag with stuff that [she] learned'.

I think it just influences everything because it is like a part of it – [the] experience of learning – experience that just seeps into everything I do . . . So I might not have used bits of micro glass, but I might have used bits of plastic or bits of straw or bits of metal that have been put together. I feel as part of all that – like filling my bag with that stuff that I learned. (Interviewee I)

Another of our interviewees described a number of peripheral 'unexpected but positive' skills gained, including the opportunity to complete a calligraphy course on the side.

Also through this course I also did a small calligraphy course, ... you start off with the intention of possibly going to a place – like myself I went to Milan – but once you stay there it often leads into other things as well which are unexpected but are positive. (Interviewee J)

Similarly, another interviewee who completed a Fellowship in knife-making highlighted the personal benefits of taking these unexpected opportunities along the course of the Fellowship.

I had been suggested by other people to leave gap-time around each of the bladesmiths. So some people might go, 'Oh, why don't you stay for an extra day or something?' Or something might open up and you need to be open to shifting – for example, that guy whom I ran into. . . Changed my whole trip and [I] flew over to go work with him. That was beneficial to be able to do that. (Interviewee F)

Overall, the ISS Institute's Fellowship program has enabled the Fellows in our data to acquire a breadth of new knowledge and skills. These findings mirror the abundance of literature purporting sustained, long-term individual benefits Fellowships have to a sector, particularly

to the health and medical research sector (Liao, Nagy & Cook, 2016; Jackson, 2013; Bates, 2005). This success may stem, at least in part, from the targeted nature in which the ISS Institute identifies gaps in specialised skills in the Australian cultural landscape and facilitates the opportunity for skilled practitioners to learn new skills via applied research from innovative organisations overseas.

4.1.2 Exposure to exemplary methods and practices

Interviewees indicated that the Fellowship allowed them to learn from practices and processes in other countries and adopt these innovative practices in Australia. For example, one respondent who worked in shoe design, reported that they had been able to share 'a bespoke shoe designing and making process onto Australian practitioners over the last 17 years' as a result of their Fellowship (Respondent 22).

Another participant, who had undertaken a Fellowship associated with the use of social media in the AgriFood industry, was able to learn first-hand from both a small town in Italy studying Gastronomic Sciences and a large food chain in London:

... from a technical point of view, I think just having access to some of the biggest food companies in the world in London basically to see the methodologies in action, because nobody [here] quite knew how to do it well. So places like [restaurant name de-identified] were an amazing testbed for having massive audiences and seeing what did and didn't work on social media... (Interviewee A)

Other examples include a Fellow whose Fellowship taught them new ways of training in garment draping, then went on to lobby the industry training board to adopt units of competency related to garment draping (Respondent 14) and a Fellow whose Fellowship provided an opportunity to learn how 'Writers' Rooms' within the media industry worked in other countries. This led to aspects of the model being adopted in Australia.

I studied how writers' rooms worked ... [the learning] was used to discuss policy changes at the national ... conference [in Australia]. (Respondent 12)

The benefits of having this first-hand exposure to such exemplary fields is especially pronounced in Fellows from the arts industry. One of our interviewees described it as a 'rich experience', explaining, 'during that period I also visited art museums and had the opportunity to see artworks which I have never really had a chance to do' (Interviewee J).

Overall, the majority of Fellows interviewed and surveyed report that their Fellowship has provided them with the opportunity to learn from exemplary and state-of-the-art methodologies and processes in their chosen field, demonstrating many of the key benefits associated with work-integrated learning structures (see Liao, Nagy & Cook, 2016; Jackson, 2013).

Image: Sustaining and increasing the authentic art of Dry Stonework in Australia. Fellow Emma Knowles.



4.1.3 Networking opportunities

Our interviews suggest that most, if not all, Fellows have reaped significant personal benefits from professional connections their Fellowship had enabled them to foster, even though only a quarter (25%) of our respondents cited networking as a driver behind their original application. In some cases, these networks provided a basis and support network to start up innovative programs at home. Moreover, many interviewees have maintained an active connection with these networks and continue to leverage them in their day-to-day lives.

For example, a Fellow who completed her Fellowship in time-based art conservation – a field which is only just developing status in Australia – described her networking opportunities with curators and conservators through the U.S. and U.K. as one of the most valuable aspects of the Fellowship experience. They report to have held onto these connections since returning, and continue to exploit them in their current work:

I mean I was talking to [name de-identified] of the Guggenheim, just last week via Skype. So, it was hugely instrumental in being involved in this niche conservation community, that is kind of few and far. (Interviewee K)

Again, from the visual arts sector, an interviewee who was able to meet one of the founders of their field – a niche art pedagogy philosophy and methodology known as the ‘Martenot Method’ – was able to learn directly from the key founding figure of the field:

I also had a bit of experience with the local people that live there because I made friends with somebody. So, I think it is a very enriching experience, not just for me but also the fact that I had the opportunity to do this kind of unique pedagogy with a particular teacher who trained with the original person who came up with it. (Interviewee J)

These long-standing benefits of international networking were demonstrated by a Fellow who travelled to Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, and Germany, to learn about food and drink fermentation. They touted the impacts of these networks to their present-day collaborations:

...it is the context—the people I met while I was travelling—who have continued to provide. . . in one case, a mentor role in cluster design and development; and others just continue to be interested in what we do and [are] ready to collaborate. (Interviewee C)

Another participant stated that the Fellowship allowed them to develop a stronger network of like-minded artisans, and to:

... organise support from my institute to host international Fellows to run workshops which provided the opportunity to share and build on ideas and the creative process with a wide range of people. (Respondent 14)

Our survey reiterated the value of the Fellowship in providing opportunities to expand their professional networks. Comments of this nature include:

The Fellowship has widened my networks to be international and enabled me to consolidate and confirm practice. It has also extended my thinking and led to further research. (Respondent 32)

The Fellowship has opened opportunities for global networking and connections to the farmers’ market sector. (Respondent 35)

My professional standing and network of contacts have been significantly enhanced through the Fellowship. (Respondent 45)

In many cases, Fellows developed collaborations with key figures in their field, directly from the networking they conducted during the Fellowship. One interviewee spoke of the opportunity to network as being one of the main reasons for the Fellowship, given the insular nature of their field (knifemaking):

It has traditionally been quite an insular community, and there have been many people who are working solo and so being able to go over there and even just talk to people face-to-face and ask questions, that was a really large part of why I was going over there. Often because you are working in isolation, you do not know if you are getting terrible results or good results because you cannot compare them to anybody, people do not share these things. (Interviewee F)

Overall, our findings demonstrate that links forged through the Fellowship have expanded Fellows’ professional networks globally. These networks have created knowledge-sharing opportunities, resulting in the creation of new programs and projects. This finding echoes Liao et al.’s (2016) assertion that Fellowship programs are instrumental in developing opportunities for participants that stem from networks fostered during the Fellowship.

4.1.4 Furthering personal business and career prospects

Our findings indicate that the Fellowship has been instrumental in enabling close to one third (30%) of participants to start their own business, organisation or project, predominantly through enhancing their confidence and skills. Indeed, over 50% of our participants reported that they had an increased responsibility in their current work as a result of their Fellowship experiences.

This phenomenon demonstrates itself in a number of ways through our sample. Some Fellows have benefited directly, through building vital skills and knowledge they required to venture into a new business or progress their career. Others also report having furthered their business and career prospects by showcasing the Fellowship award itself as a symbol of merit and expertise. This allowed ISS Institute alumni to ‘market’ themselves as experts in their field.

For example, one participant (Interviewee A) reported having formed relationships with key industry networks in London. Upon their return to Australia, these connections paved the way for a job opportunity running digital campaigns. This participant noted that such opportunities ‘would not have happened without the Fellowship’. Another participant explained that she was in the process of applying for a Masters in Contemporary Art, and said, ‘when I go to the interviews, I will be plugging the Fellowship’. She later elaborated, ‘the Fellowship helps add another level to my professional experience – to be able to say, ‘I did this, I wrote this report, I want to keep exploring’. (Interviewee I)

Another Fellow commented that ‘winning the Fellowship provided me with some credence to say that we were awarded – this Fellowship has helped bolster the work that we do within [current company – de-identified] because it is an independent indication of credibility I guess.’ (Interviewee C)

In a similar vein, another interviewee commented that international prestige of the art galleries and institutions the ISS Institute linked them within the Fellowship is a significant leg-up for their career:

‘Even just being able to say that I went to those institutions and this is what they do, weighted significantly’. The interviewee explained that her Fellowship provided the background knowledge and training for her current occupation:

I have come back, and I have also obviously gone further with it in terms of having an art exhibition, and with that, I am also working on maybe writing a conference paper because I also work at [University – de-identified]. I am in the Design Department. (Interviewee J)

Several Fellows added that their current career, project, or occupation is a direct flow-on from their Fellowship. At the time of the interview, one interviewee was preparing to launch their own jewellery gallery. Not only was the jewellery itself heavily influenced by her Fellowship experience, but also the gallery curation.

...that would also relate to a gallery that I went to see over [in Italy]; the jewellery gallery and the glass galleries, how to present the collection, put a collection together. I went to a jewellery museum in Vicenza, and they had – it was themed on different topics like beauty and value and fashion. Just seeing something like that, which is curated in a different way, also indirectly and directly influenced it. (Interviewee I)

Another Fellow (Interviewee L), who travelled to four countries in Asia to investigate creative technologies, stated the influence of her Fellowship experience on her career trajectory.

I was invited then to do a residency, so I ended up staying in South Korea for a further six months, extending my Fellowship time, doing a residency that led to a large scale exhibition and that led to me returning again to South Korea and Taiwan, working probably on about eight or twelve exhibitions since that time and that’s all been a spin-off from the Fellowship time.

Image: Empowering positive post-school transitions. Fellow Nicholas Johns.



Through the interview, this Fellow emphasised the significant influence of the Fellowship on their current role:

Providing me with this opportunity at that point in my career totally changed my career for the better and it was super beneficial. . . it set up a whole export stream for the work that I do now and put me in a really good position for that. (Interviewee L)

Others have noted that the Fellowship process enabled them to explore business prospects by providing the ‘space and time to think’ about opportunities. This is demonstrated by an interviewee who went on to open their own consultancy business:

I have started a consultancy since returning from the Fellowship. Having had the six-week period [abroad] helped me to think outside the box and exposed me to many new ideas. This helped me upon my return to approach employment with a different perspective. (Respondent 08)

Overall, these Fellowships appear to have not only widened many of the Fellows’ career prospects but also fostered opportunities for them to create businesses, and in turn, new employment opportunities.

4.1.5 Enhancing personal confidence

Alongside the craftsmanship and networks participants gained from the Fellowship experience, many also relayed less tangible, albeit equally beneficial, personal skills and attributes, such as personal confidence. One interviewee who did their Fellowship in Arts said,

‘... it gave me reassurance and confidence to come back and, I suppose, explore and expose that experience particularly in an exhibition which I am currently in at the moment.’ (Interviewee J)

Another interviewee also noted that the Fellowship enhanced their personal confidence.

I have to say it certainly increased my confidence. I felt much more confident when I came back of working with local government and tourism organisations. I gave a series of presentations [to organisations and managers in the local area]. So certainly my confidence in talking about the experience I had and how we could learn from what was happening in other parts of the world – I really felt like ... for want of a better word – I went to another level in terms of my confidence to talk about that work. (Interviewee E)



Image: Sea urchin farming. Fellow Dr Imogen Fullagar.

A Fellow whose Fellowship ended up turning into a six-month residency in South Korea credited the ISS Institute for the life experience and personal, transferable skills she gained – most notably self-confidence:

It has given me the confidence to approach larger institutions that I might have previously thought were out of my reach and to approach them about my work and to have conversations with them about my work. Also the fact that it gave me reassurance and confidence to come back and, I suppose, explore and expose that experience, particularly in an exhibition which I am currently in at the moment.

I think one of the key things I feel is that I have been able to more strongly develop my thoughts and voice around my experience and position within the industry. I think that was definitely a wonderful thing, to be able to go over there representing [focus sector] in an organisation and being able to firm up what I feel about everything, or where I see opportunities in an Australian or Victorian context. (Interviewee L)

Overall, our findings demonstrate that the Fellowship has enhanced the competence and confidence of Fellows to achieve their own goals and succeed in their career. As the interviews illustrate, the skills and experiences gained through the Fellowship have strengthened Fellows believe in their capability and competence to achieve their goals.

4.2 Industry-level impacts

This section explores the industry-level impacts related to undertaking Fellowships. Fellows have made great contributions to the industries they work in as a result of participating in the Fellowship program. Fellows are expected to share their knowledge through the dissemination of key learnings and recommendations. Many Fellows have recommended innovative business models to revitalise old practices.

Interview and survey data show a clear benefit for the industry the Fellowship was undertaken in. Over 60% of survey participants reported that their Fellowship had contributed to their respective sector, either by maintaining specialist skills or introducing new technologies and processes to the industry through knowledge sharing, collaboration and by enhancing the innovation or creation of new business models in their respective sector. This begins to unpack the multiplier effect (Hawe et al. 1997; Maertens & Barrett, 2013), whereby these businesses, in turn, spark a larger chain of skills and knowledge sharing, employment, and growth for the broader industry.

4.2.1 Revitalising industry in a region

More than 40% of the Fellowships completed were in the sector of vocational education, and an equal proportion of Fellows still work in the same sector after completing their Fellowship (see Figure 5). One could, therefore, assume that the skills and knowledge attained through the Fellowship would relate entirely to education. This is true to some degree. Our analysis of the skills and knowledge Fellows have acquired (discussed in 4.1.1), however, paints a more nuanced picture. For example, a significant portion of Fellowships in the education sector was taken by TAFE instructors whose Fellowship resulted in acquiring specialist skills in construction, manufacturing, and heritage, which they brought back to Australia. Thus, even if over 40% of Fellows were working in the education sector, they have contributed to and will continue to contribute to other sectors such as construction, manufacturing, and heritage by dispersing these skills through training, as well as the education sector.

Image: Reproduction and restoration of carousel animals. Fellow Olivia O'Connor.



Fellows Employment by Industry – Post Fellowship

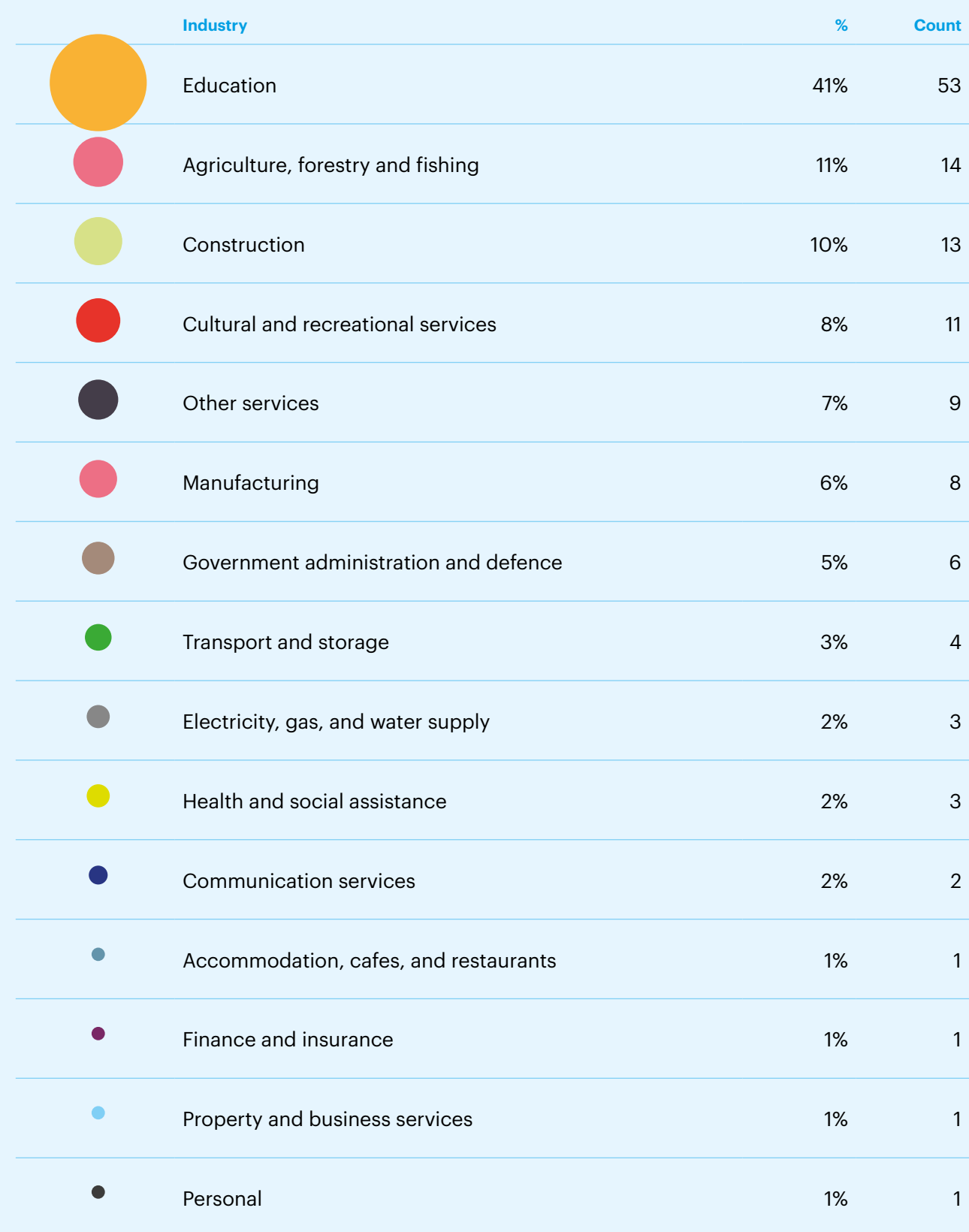


Figure 5. Industries in which Fellows worked after completing the Fellowship

Survey results show the Fellowship has contributed to diverse and specialised areas such as manufacturing, building conservation, heritage planning and administration, innovation in slow food, aviation, fashion, arts and film industry, environment and conservation, small-scale and regenerative agriculture, waste treatment, engineering and material science. Many of these areas are safeguarded by UNESCO (2016), classified as ‘intangible heritage’, and are experiencing a rapid decline in the Australian cultural and economic landscape. In passing down artisan skills and knowledge, rather than merely the preservation of craft objects themselves, the ISS Institute meets a significant gap in Australia’s education sector. In this sense, the Fellowship contributes directly to the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Almost all interviewees cited the benefits indicated above to a local area or a region in some manner—be it bringing the industry to Australia for the first time, or revitalising it in their local region. One of the Fellows interviewed claimed that his Fellowship had contributed to a dramatic growth of the prosecco industry in Australia:

Yeah, I think it has helped us – definitely put us at the forefront of prosecco in Australia. We have seen an industry that was basically non-existent become the fastest growing wine category in Australia at the moment. It is helped turn around a region, like King Valley and come from a region of – where we were – people were pulling out vineyards, and now people are looking for – there are wineries coming in looking for growers to grow fruit on contract for them... (Interviewee H)

Another Fellow claims to have raised awareness of time-based art conservation in Australia.

It’s helped to contribute a change of mindset in advocating for this area of conservation that requires a completely different skill set than traditional conservation and really, bringing a voice to an issue that many people felt overwhelmed or were hesitant ... to enter into and now I’m noticing that other institutions and individuals are feeling braver to kind of, enter into this sphere of new conservation. (Interviewee K)

Through the survey, a Fellow who worked in the vocational education sector has described how it contributed to his industry post-Fellowship.

The Fellowship inspired me to change things in the sector, and I am currently re-designing the learning content for apprentices. The Fellowship has changed my view of where my industry fits in relation to the big/world picture of water and sanitation. It has also changed some of my views on how to deliver effective education for today’s learners. (Respondent 20)

There is also evidence to suggest that the Fellowship has created opportunities for Australian businesses to collaborate with others on specific projects and interests not only in Australia but also globally. As one Fellow indicated, the Fellowship has created the opportunity for collaboration with industry experts in other countries.

... As for [my sector and organisation], it is the context, the people I met while I was travelling who have continued to provide almost – in one case a mentor role in cluster design and development, and others just continue to be interested in what we do and are ready to collaborate. (Interviewee C)

Other Fellows share this sentiment.

[The Fellowship has enabled me] to advise industry on current trends in global markets ... [and to] collaborate with others to advance knowledge uptake. (Respondent 19)

We are building a manufacturing hub to collaborate with industry similar to what I witnessed on my Fellowship. (Respondent 10)

The collaboration of Fellows with like-minded people across the globe and the dissemination of knowledge within Australia can also be said to have created opportunities for the Fellowship program to contribute to the preservation of knowledge and specialised skills. This is particularly significant in the area of preservation of heritage as one participant notes.

We are over 200 years old. Every time there’s a storm or there’s something or other ... you have a diminishing group of people who have the skill... to deal with it because those people do not come from a TAFE college – the people who could do that level of sophistication of work – of preservation, renewal and so on. So that is one aspect of it. (Interviewee B)

Overall, the reports and knowledge-sharing and collaboration that resulted from the Fellowship represented a systematic means for Fellows to codify the knowledge and skills acquired during the Fellowship. This is considered by scholars to be a central feature of generating prolonged impacts (Zuber-Skerritt, 2014), as well as an essential means of inscribing these skills in ‘organisational memory’ (Wang & Chan, 2006). It is also clear that the Fellowship experiences and resultant knowledge and skills sharing have flow-on benefits for the sectors, organisations and institutions involved (Liao, Nagy & Cook, 2016; Jones, 2010).

4.2.2 Knowledge-sharing opportunities

One of the ways in which the ISS Institute ensured benefits to respective industries were accrued was by requiring Fellows to disseminate learnings and recommendations from their Fellowship after their return. Participants reported a number of opportunities to share the knowledge, skills, and experiences they gained on their Fellowship mainly through workshops, presentations, publications, meetings, and training. Figure 6 shows the methods of knowledge-sharing (dissemination) used by Fellows.

A significant component of this knowledge-sharing aspect was the report Fellows are required to write post their International research, which includes Fellows’ recommendations for their sector. Our document analysis showed that Fellows in the various sectors including education and training, construction, transport and logistics, art and design, film and television, jewellery, agri-business, medicine and health, and heritage shared the knowledge and skills they gained through their Fellowship through the methods listed in Figure 6.

When asked about the ways they have shared their knowledge and skills post-Fellowship, many Fellows immediately mentioned the report they are required to write and submit. However, the mechanism used for knowledge sharing varied. For example, one Fellow reported that they shared their learnings with students and industry colleagues through formal presentations.

I have given a lecture relating to my Fellowship to approximately 240 students at a University [in the last six years]. I also made about ten presentations of my Fellowship findings to government and industry colleagues. (Respondent 2)

Ways in which Fellows shared their learnings

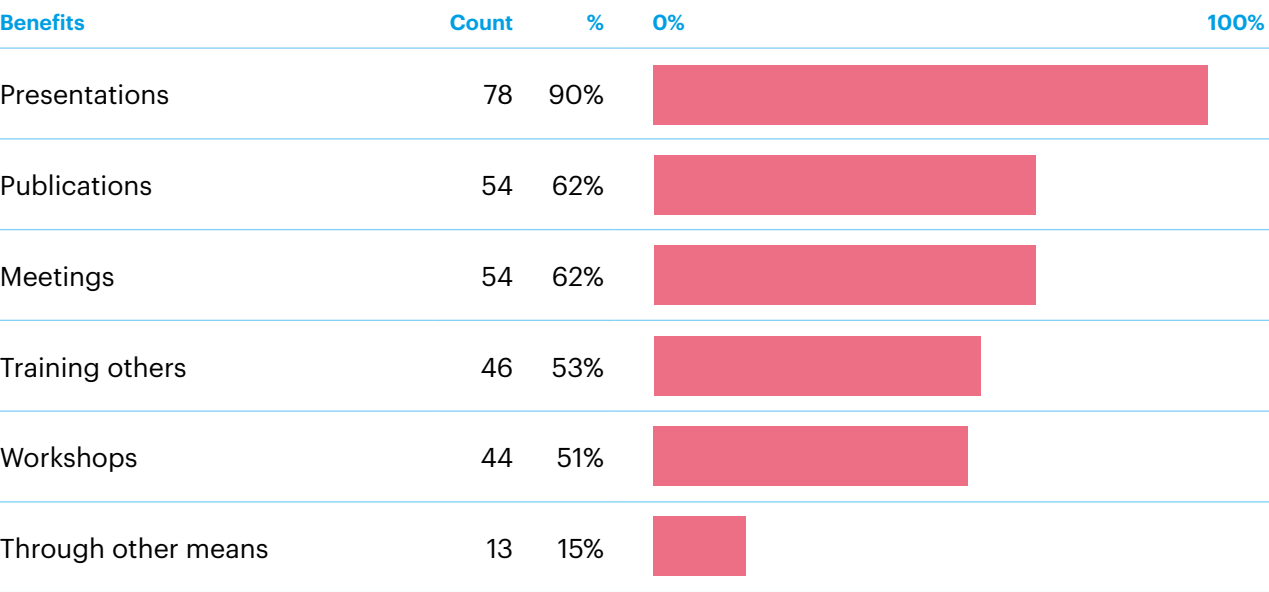


Figure 6. Ways in which Fellows shared their learning

This Fellow now shares knowledge through classes as described below.

[Now], I am running classes, one every month, and that is built around [my Fellowship] knowledge. Maybe I would have gotten there without [the Fellowship], but it massively speeds up these things and eliminates a lot of trial and error that can occur when you are doing these things solo.

Another Fellow discussed that his particular sector was insular, and that people were reluctant to share their knowledge base—which ultimately allowed them to remain competitive. Thus, the face-to-face contact of the Fellowship allowed them to address this barrier and share their learnings with the community.

It has traditionally been quite an insular community, and there have been many people who were working solo and so being able to go over there and talk to people face-to-face and ask questions was a large part [of the Fellowship]. Often because you are working in isolation, you do not know if you are getting terrible results or good results because you cannot compare them to anybody. So being able to go over there and talk [to them in person] and address some of my questions was useful. (Interviewee D)

Similarly, a Fellow whose Fellowship was in the Arts sector also indicated that they were able to share their learnings through presentations.

So institutionally; running staff workshops, presentations, track these presentations . . . Externally, doing talks and workshops for various students [and organisations] from New South Wales group as well as nationally. (Interviewee K)

Another Fellow has also indicated that they were able to disseminate their learning through conversations in meetings.

So, in terms of industry bodies – like a number of meetings that I am yet to organise that has expressed interest in wanting to understand and hear more about my learnings. I have definitely disseminated it amongst the networks that have – the organisation of Melbourne Farmers Markets.



Image: Contemporary Architectural Glass. Fellow Elisabeth Coleman.

Also – I am studying, so being able to draw a lot of the learnings from the Fellowship to kind of go deeper into certain issues in my studies and assignments. I feel like that has been such a great thing to be able to do because the Fellowship report, you do not go down into the tiny nitty-gritty. So, it has been good to be able to pick apart a few things further through the studies that I am also now doing. (Interviewee G)

Our findings demonstrate the value of the Fellowship program and the Fellows to their respective industries. Participants’ testimonies have illustrated that Fellows were able to contribute to their respective sectors significantly by actively sharing the knowledge, skills, and experiences they gained from their Fellowship through various mechanisms. As Wang and Chan (2006) note, the active sharing of knowledge and skills by Fellows are likely to have a multiplier effect or flow-on benefits to their industry. Such a multiplier effect is magnified specifically when the skills and expertise contribute to skill retention in rare trade and specialist skills that are in decline in Australia, and when the respective sectors can develop a systematic means of codifying such knowledge and skills.

4.2.3 Demonstrating the scope for new business models

As well as creating their own businesses, some Fellows were able to suggest innovative business models for their organisations and industry. Document analysis showed that the majority of Fellows had proposed, based on their learnings from the Fellowship, innovative processes and business models that Fellows argued would contribute to significant changes in their sector that included arts and design, the film and television sector, construction, and education and training. Interview results also confirmed this finding. For example, one participant explored a place-based approach to create a premier tourist destination.

[I] was able to provide different models and examples ... for a premier regional destination. ...One of those was [promoting] farm-based products, like farm-based food products. So, we looked at a few agribusinesses who were value-adding by making different sorts of food products on their farms, not just primary produce. Now in the [region], there are all sorts of food products being manufactured. (Interviewee E)

Similarly, an alumnus who travelled on a Fellowship across Europe has stated that the Fellowship has been vital for him to inform the development of a business model in his sector.

... [Because of the Fellowship], we feel that we can design and deliver activities from a more robust research base. The benefit of the Fellowship will also accrue to the industry, in time we will be able to bring the expertise and contacts we made during the Fellowship directly to the industry in our state and more broadly Australia (Interviewee C).

Another Fellow, who was an art conservator, changed the structure of employment within her work based on her Fellowship institution.

Up until July of this year, I was an art conservator of the [de-identified art gallery] on contract. The research helped me to see – at the institution – to advocate for an ongoing permanent position and as such, the institution created one in July of this year, and it is the first and only one in Australia.

She also added:

It is helped to contribute a change of mindset in advocating for this area of conservation that requires a completely different skill set than traditional conservation and really, bringing a voice to an issue that a lot of people felt overwhelmed or were hesitant to ... enter into. And now I am noticing that other institutions and individuals are feeling braver to kind of, enter into this sphere of new conservation. (Interviewee K)

A Fellow who had been to Farmers Markets in the U.S. through their Fellowship also mentioned that the Farmers Markets they visited stand as an exemplary methodology for how they should be conducted. Thus, the Fellow was keen to bring the insights gleaned from these innovative Farmers' Markets back to Australia for practice and research.

Because they have got a lot of, for instance, access, education, farm, viability into the future. They have kind of built all of those programs into farmer's markets as opposed to just being a Farmer's Market Day. So, that was my key taking in terms of the potential and the opportunity for things to be built into what's already happening on market days. (Interviewee G)

Overall, our findings show that Fellows had been able to contribute to the enhancement of specialised skills in Australia by offering their sector the opportunity to consider new and innovative ways to revitalise old systems and processes including trades that are labelled 'intangible heritage' by UNESCO (2016). Such revitalisation of systems and processes is an essential contribution to the industry as it plays a crucial role not only in maintaining rare and specialised skills, but also in training upcoming tradespeople and other designers, art workers, and artisans to fill the skills gap in Australia.

4.3 Broader policy, community and society-level impacts

Our findings indicate that besides personal and industry-level impacts, the ISS Institute's Fellowship Program also had a more general policy, societal and community impacts. Fellows and the industries and trades they work in have and still are contributing to society broadly notably through the preservation of cultural heritage, promotion of community engagement and social inclusion, and broader policy changes.

4.3.1 Preservation of cultural heritage

One of our interviewees (Interviewee K) discussed the impact of studying time-based art at specialist institutions in the US and UK on the preservation of cultural heritage in Australia:

...so it is an area of conservation but doesn't have any training or specialist knowledge. So, what it did was it helps at a foundation for the best practice collection management procedures, conservation activities and sort of, change-making within the cultural heritage sector. So, it was very significant, being able to do that research.

In doing so, she was able to cement this in the creation of a permanent position of art conservator, rather than on contract.



So up until July of this year I was an art conservator of the [de-identified art gallery] on contract. So, the research helped me to ... advocate for an ongoing permanent position and as such, the institution created one in July of this year, and it is the first and only one in Australia.

This Fellow also claimed that their Fellowship had some direct benefit to the creative industries sector, but echoed issues in attribution expressing difficulty in the ability to 'quantify' this impact.

The creative technology is a growing area, so it is hard to gauge and quantify what my input in that has been, but I am pretty active in talking about this area and running professional development for other artists and practitioners, and so I suppose I do play some kind of role in that. (Interviewee K)

While acknowledging issues in attribution, one Fellow also made note that their sector seems to have attracted significantly more government funding since their Fellowship.

Again, it is difficult to tell whether I just elected to work in an area that was about to take off anyway or what my role in it has been. But since 2015, since I started this investigation, there's been a lot of funding, particularly from the Victorian government in terms of Creative Victoria and Victoria Innovation and that type of thing. There's been a lot of government money since 2015 being put into the sector and it is difficult to tell what my role in that has been. (Interviewee L)

Overall, as the above interviews demonstrate, the Fellowship has contributed broadly to the Australian community through the preservation of cultural heritage in Australia. This is particularly important as it reinvigorates rare specialised skills that are in decline in Australia and maintains 'intangible heritage' – skills and trades in the preservation of cultural heritage.

Image: The pathway to Australia's smarter, cleaner energy future. Fellow Kristian Handberg.

4.3.2 Improved community engagement and inclusion

One of the requirements of the Fellowship Program was for Fellows to write a report and engage with and disseminate their learnings within their community upon their return. The document analysis showed that a high proportion of the Fellows had community engagement strategies in place upon their arrival from their Fellowship studies abroad. Results indicate that Fellows have shared their learnings with both their professional colleagues and others in the broader community (see Figure 5).

For example, as one participant indicates, after the Fellowship there have been several occasions where they engaged the community to create awareness.

In the three years that we have been running full-time, we have had 30 [workshops]. Our goal the whole time from a business perspective has always been that we need to make people aware that this is happening. (Interviewee D)

Broader societal impacts can also be expressed through engagement in projects that promote social inclusion. A recurring theme through our interviewee data was a commitment to improving community wellbeing—namely making industries more inclusive or accessible, for public or community good.

A Fellow who completed their Fellowship in Farmers' Markets and 'slow food' in the U.S., and has continued her work in Australia through efforts to make the industry more inclusive through pursuing further studies and research since returning:

...a couple of assignments I was doing last year were very much around farmer's markets as white spaces and how in Australia, and particularly in Melbourne, looking at why farmer's markets are still recognised and known to be places that are expensive, that they're for the elite, looking at where they're located in the demography of the neighbourhood. Yeah, kind of looking at, why is it that way and what could be done to change that? Or, is the sort of issue that we just need to keep farmers farming and if that means the middle to upper class are the ones that can support them in terms of that scale, is that just what has to be accepted? There are so many different avenues to, sort of, unpick that way. So, accessibility has been a key thing that I have been trying to unpack more in terms of, how can we make farmer's markets more accessible. (Interviewee G)

Another Fellow discussed his impacts on improving gender equality in the knife making business. He commented that knife-making books are

'ugly, they are written in the 70s, they are gendered, they are incredibly gendered and this whole community has got a massive problem with that already. So, we need to be part of that kind of change.'

Image: Teaching tomorrow's automotive technology in today's training environment. Fellow Michael Cope.



In doing so, the work of the Fellow contributes to broader social change by challenging gender stereotypes and encouraging broader discussions around gender equality in relation to knife-making.

He comments:

...it is still a while away. We had hired a girl, and we had her on for nine months ... There are still some really tough things around – even before we work with someone and we are open to saying all right you do not have to have knife making skills, but girls are just taught less to work with their hands than guys are, and I assume that starts...as kids. Yeah it's – growing up in my household, it was – I would help change faucets and the washers on faucets, I would be the one mowing the lawn, I'd be the one helping to build things around the house and so that's – there's a comfort in hand tools that existed that I don't think – and I think that's a much broader thing that needs addressing, and that's really really hard. We absolutely want to be part of that. (Interview F)

While marginal, our findings show that the Fellowship has contributed to broader social change processes. The findings illustrate that Fellows have actively engaged different community groups in sharing their learnings. It also indicated that some of the unexpected impacts of these intentional engagements have led to broader societal impacts that improve community wellbeing and make industries more inclusive and accessible.

Image: Alberghi Diffusi 'Scattered Hotels'. Fellow Ingrid Giaotto.



4.3.3 Broader contribution to policy

A Fellow who works in the education sector also affirms that the learning from their Fellowship has provided information potentially impacting the Department policy throughout a region. This has also '*created the possibility of ongoing involvement with the Department in that region*'. (Interviewee D)

Another respondent echoed the role of government funding in affecting a broader policy change.

I hope the policy change will be that ... we will be able to argue our case more strongly to government and in a way that helps us attract funding to get [the sector] up and running. The policy change has not come, but I think it has good potential for happening. (Interviewee C)

Whilst literature highlights the need for policy to shift the prioritisation of specialised skill preservation into Australia's national agenda (Mackay, 2017; Heath & Pascoe, 2014; Klammer, 2012), these findings ultimately demonstrate the bureaucratic limitations underlying Fellow's ability to affect a more direct and transformative change—as summarised by an interviewee.

Just being able to share my experiences and the findings [may contribute to policy change]. However, ... policy is such a slow shifting machine, and it is difficult to make a dent in policy when it is so tied up in election promises and political cycles. (Interviewee D)

Overall, while evidence for tangible policy impacts is limited, the data indicate that targeted community engagement activities of Fellows have contributed to public policy debate and development in their sectors. As the founder of ISS Institute noted, the support of government for the Fellowships can also be considered as an endorsement of the fact that the new skills people are bringing back to Australia are influencing significant policy and practice change in Australia.

Observations and Insights



“Studying at West Dean College allowed me to fully immerse myself in practical ceramics conservation work. I had the opportunity to work on a wonderful selection of objects from an ancient Roman beaker to an English bone china plate, which enabled me to get a feel for different body types and learn a broad range of conservation treatment techniques. The Fellowship provided me with opportunities that I could never have accessed in Australia including assisting with collection moves at Buckingham Palace and Windsor Castle.”

Fellow Amy Walsh, Conservation of Ceramics

Complementing the Fellows’ reflections and the findings, several themes have emerged from the evaluation which provides additional insight into the nature and value of the ISS Institute’s Fellowship program.

Key insights from Fellows include:

- Many Fellows returned from their studies reporting a **sense of accomplishment**, generating the confidence to establish their own businesses.
- The number of Fellows that entered the program with existing businesses reported **increased networking opportunities** within their sector and the broader community upon completion. This allowed them to remain up to date with innovations and contemporary business practices, share their knowledge, and participate as leaders of their industries.
- Fellows were asked to reflect on the importance of the ISS Institute’s Fellowship Program in general terms to the respective Australian industries. The majority (over 80%) agreed with the view that the Fellowship program plays a vital role in **encouraging new thinking** and early adoption of ideas and practice; and in **preserving skills** that are becoming rare in Australia.
- Fellows also restated the belief that the Fellowship provides an opportunity to **develop skills, knowledge, critical thinking and leadership capacity**; and offers the opportunity to **influence change in policy and practice in their respective industry/sector**.
- Many Fellows believed that the Fellowship program is **unique** and that it provides **exceptional value**. The Fellows recognised that the ISS Institute does this by providing opportunities to learn specific skills and knowledge from experts in real-world settings, resulting in authentic learning experiences.

In addition, Fellows:

- make international and local **connections**,
- professionally **network**,
- **educate** others,
- **influence** modern practices, and
- provide **business and industry opportunities/expansions**.

Summarily, the evaluation found that core impact of the Fellowship is three-fold.

- 1. Personal impact.** Firstly, Fellows are provided with a rare opportunity to carry out significant professional development through applied research in an area of interest that aligns with their career. Through the application of specialised knowledge and skills developed during the program, Fellows can enhance their work skill set and improve their professional practice.
- 2. Industry impact.** Secondly, the range of knowledge and skills Fellows attain can be crucial for the expansion of their respective sectors and industries here in Australia, particularly in the case of many heritage trades.
- 3. Policy impact.** Thirdly, the program exposes Fellows to new and innovative ideas and methods, and it is anticipated that this exposure would help Fellows to influence the adoption of innovative processes and business models that can bring systemic and policy change in Australia.

Image: Conservation of books and library materials. Fellow Sally Kilby.



Key observations include:

- Fellowships can be considered as **important professional development opportunities**, vital in sustaining industry and sectoral growth, through a combination of vocational training and applied research. Fellows are given the opportunity to learn from the best, share their new knowledge, and in many cases educate colleagues and the community on their findings.
- Fellowships can also be considered as a **means or vehicle for funders to strengthen their sector** and achieve their organisational goals. To provide an example, the findings indicated that more than 40% completed their Fellowship in the area of vocational education, and an equal proportion of Fellows still work in the sector. This is likely to strengthen the vocational education sector and provide high return on investment given a number of these Fellows are instructors in specialist skills including construction, manufacturing, and heritage trades.
- The Fellowship process has led to the **creation of a network of Fellows** who are experts in specialist skills in their own right. The networking and exchange of information, formal and informal, is expected to play a key role in enhancing and sustaining specialist skills in several sectors including building and construction, textiles, art and design, conservation and restoration, and food and agri-business.

- The writing of a report capturing the Fellow's experience creates the opportunity for the Fellow to reflect on their Fellowship, embed their learning, share their findings and make recommendations. Once written and published, these reports help **position Fellows as an expert in their field**, and aid in **furthering their career**. The evaluators believe these reports are a valuable resource and suggest that the ISS Institute allow researchers to access them.
- Lastly, through regular communication between a network of Fellows, an opportunity to exchange information aids its members (many of whom are industry leaders) in **remaining up-to-date** with contemporary methodologies, practices, research, business operations and innovations. Access to such a repository of information can significantly influence the operations and culture of any given sector, with an aim to bring about policy change and have a positive impact on communities.

Image: Investigating golf course architecture.
Fellow Scott Champion.



“My Fellowship enabled me to see, first-hand, a range of alternative service methodologies and to experience a shared passion and dedication for developing support systems for people facing entrenched and often complex barriers. Someone said, “No matter how much you know there is always more to learn” – this sums up my Fellowship. It has created a network of international professionals that are engaged, supportive and interested in what we are doing; it was a game changer.”
Fellow Mark Little, Rethinking employment services for those experiencing justice issues

6

Recommendations



“This is a unique and transformative opportunity for someone in the early to mid-stages of their careers in specialist areas. I have found the Fellowship so unbelievably valuable and unlike any other opportunity in Australia.” **Fellow Craig Middleton, Political History and Museum Practice**

6.1 Preserving Specialist Skills

The ISS Institute Fellowship program has played a significant role in preserving specialist skills that are rapidly declining in Australia. Primarily, it does this by enhancing the knowledge, skills and capabilities of its Fellows. Fellows develop a variety of practical skills and knowledge from connecting with international experts in their field. Upon their return to Australia, many Fellows seek ongoing guidance from these international mentors.

Over 80% of Fellows state the program has enhanced their workplace capabilities and over 95% state that they use the knowledge and skills gained from the Fellowship on a daily basis. This demonstrates the unique contribution of the ISS Institute Fellowship program to passing down specialist and artisanal skills and knowledge that are classified and safeguarded by UNESCO as ‘intangible heritage’. It is worth noting that few Australian education institutions offer courses in these specialist skills.

Recommendation 1:

That ISS Institute recognises the importance of continuing to support Fellowships that focus on preserving specialist skills.

Recommendation 2:

That ISS Institute continues to advocate for the specialist skills and heritage trade sector, leveraging off its ability to strengthen the sector through applied research Fellowships and dissemination of findings.

6.2 Expanding Networks

The ISS Institute Fellowship Program has been instrumental in enabling Fellows to expand their professional networks globally. These networks are shown to create fertile ground for knowledge-sharing and the promotion and maintenance of rare and specialist skills in Australia.

The ISS Institute currently organise events to promote information exchange among Fellows in Australia. Building on this, there may be value in the ISS Institute promoting international networking opportunities for Fellows.

Recommendation 3:

That ISS Institute investigates the potential to host international networking functions, based on the interest of Fellows, on its own or in collaboration with the relevant industries and/or other organisations. This may, in turn, expand the Institute’s organisational capacity to further promote specialist skills in Australia.

6.3 Marketing

When asked for constructive feedback about their Fellowship experiences, several key themes emerged around the ISSI’s marketing approach. These feed into two actionable recommendations for the Institute: firstly, to diversify the sectors through which it offers Fellowships; secondly, to innovate and expand its marketing techniques, such that it can reach a broader, more targeted applicant base.

Recommendation 4:

That the ISS Institute review its marketing approach and consider how it can increase its branding impact.

7 References



Image: Bone China plate before and after treatment. Fellow Amy Walsh.

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Appendix 1:

Interview questions (semi-structured)

1. Can you tell me your recollection of your involvement in the International Specialised Skills Institute's (ISS Institute's) International Fellowship Program?
2. What was your Fellowship on and where did you travel to? And what was the main purpose?
3. In practical terms, what did you gain from the Fellowship? (knowledge, skills and capabilities)
4. Have there been any other individual benefits you have experienced as a result of the Fellowship? If yes, what were the specific benefits?
5. Thinking about the Fellowship and your work since, were there any opportunities for you to share your learning from and your experiences of the Fellowship? If yes, please reflect on these opportunities.
6. Do you think that your Fellowship had any flow-on benefits for the industry and the sector you work(ed) in? If yes, can you think of the main flow on benefits for the industry and the sector?
7. Again, thinking about the Fellowship and your work since, do you think that your Fellowship has enabled you to contribute to policy change and/or your community in some way? If yes, in what way.
8. Overall, what is your perspective on how ISS institute's Fellowship Program has impacted policy change?

Appendix 2:

Survey questions

The Centre for Social Impact (CSI) Swinburne, has been commissioned by the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute) to evaluate their International Fellowship program. This evaluation forms part of the ISS Institute's continuous quality improvement approach, to promote ongoing innovation and to learn from Fellowships that it provided to over 450 people over the last 25 years. The International Fellowship program supports both Australian and international leaders across diverse industries, to undertake applied research that yields economic development impact(s) through vocational training, industry innovation and industry advancement.

You have been invited to participate in this survey because you are a past or current Fellow of the ISS Institute's International Fellowship Program.

This survey aims to understand the impact of the Fellowship Program over the past 25 years by exploring (1) the benefits of the Fellowship to Fellows, (2) any flow-on benefits to the industry and the sector, and (3) its overall contribution to policy change and the community.

The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you consent to participate, please respond to the survey questions below. If you complete the survey, you are indicating consent to have your survey responses anonymously included in the analysis for this evaluation. This will involve aggregating information from the survey responses and will not involve disclosing information about individuals.

Using data from this project, the CSI Swinburne research team and the ISS Institute will produce an evaluation report.

All research participants' privacy will be protected and managed in accordance with Swinburne's privacy policy.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact the research team at khiruy@swin.edu.au or by phone on (03) 9214 3881.

If you have concerns about the ethical conduct of this project, you can contact Swinburne's Research Ethics Officer on 03 9214 5218 or resethics@swin.edu.au

Thank you again for your time and participation.

Help Available

If you have problems completing this survey or require additional information, please contact the research team by email at csiswin@swin.edu.au or by phone on (03) 9214 3881.

1. When did you complete the Fellowship?

- ☐ After 2015
- ☐ 2011 – 2015
- ☐ 2006 – 2010
- ☐ 2001 – 2005
- ☐ 1996 – 2000
- ☐ 1990 – 1995

2.a. To which area or industry/ies was the Fellowship related to? Please select all that apply

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Electricity, gas, and water supply
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Wholesale trade
- ☐ Retail trade
- ☐ Accommodation, cafes, and restaurants
- ☐ Transport and storage
- ☐ Communication services
- ☐ Finance and insurance
- ☐ Property and business services
- ☐ Government administration and defence
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health and social assistance
- ☐ Cultural and recreational services
- ☐ Personal
- ☐ Other services

2.b. If “other”, please describe here

3.a. In which industry/ies did you work since completing the Fellowship?

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Agriculture, forestry and fishing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Electricity, gas, and water supply
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Wholesale trade
- ☐ Retail trade
- ☐ Accommodation, cafes, and restaurants
- ☐ Transport and storage
- ☐ Communication services
- ☐ Finance and insurance
- ☐ Property and business services
- ☐ Government administration and defence
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Health and social assistance
- ☐ Cultural and recreational services
- ☐ Personal and other services

3.b. If “other”, please describe here

4.a. Besides the sector or industry, how would you describe your Fellowship area?

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Artisan
- ☐ Rare trade
- ☐ Heritage and conservation
- ☐ Vocational education
- ☐ Other

4.b. If “other”, please describe here

5.a. Please indicate how you were able to disseminate the learnings and recommendations from the report and recommendations you produced as part of your Fellowship.

Please select all that apply

- ☐ Workshops
- ☐ Presentations
- ☐ Publications
- ☐ Meetings
- ☐ Through other means

5.b. If “other”, please describe here

6.a. Which of following statement(s) best describes the benefits you have experienced from your Fellowship?

Please select all that apply

- ☐ The Fellowship has enhanced my knowledge, skills and capabilities.
- ☐ The Fellowship has benefited my industry and the sector.
- ☐ The Fellowship has enabled me to contribute to policy change.
- ☐ The Fellowship has enabled me to contribute to my community and the broader society.
- ☐ The Fellowship Program has contributed to policy change and society (the community).
- ☐ It is not clear whether my Fellowship has been beneficial.

6.b. If you selected any of the top four items above, please identify what you consider to be the most significant benefit and explain why.

7. Were there any further advantage(s) of the Fellowship that you would like to share?

8. Do you continue to apply knowledge and skills you gained through the Fellowship program in your work?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Have you started your own business, organisation or project as a result of the Fellowship?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

10.a. What were the main drivers for you to apply for the Fellowship (please select the top three)?

- ☐ To develop rare trade skills
- ☐ To maintain and enhance artisanal skills
- ☐ To learn new ways of doing things
- ☐ To create opportunities for people in rare trade
- ☐ To provide opportunities for networking
- ☐ To further develop a product or service
- ☐ To explore and research an innovative product or service
- ☐ Other

10.b. If “other”, please describe here

11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the ISS Institute’s International Fellowship Program.

1 = strongly disagree;
2 = disagree,
3 = neither agree, nor disagree,
4 = agree;
5 = strongly agree.

- ☐ It plays a pivotal role in encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice
- ☐ It plays a central role in preserving skills that are becoming rare in Australia.
- ☐ It plays a critical role in the preservation of Australia’s cultural heritage.
- ☐ It provides an opportunity to develop skills, knowledge, thinking and leadership capacity, particularly in artisanal, rare trade, heritage and conservation industry.

Survey completion

Thank you for completing this survey.
Your responses have been recorded.



“It was highly valuable to finally be able to afford to attend overseas courses I’d been dreaming of. I learnt from the greats and was then able to pass on the knowledge to peers and students, locally and globally. It helped me to develop improved ways of teaching, and become more knowledgeable about relevant subject areas, such as veterinary treatment protocols. Due to my Fellowship I’ve expanded my business, increasing my reach by having veterinarian representatives in Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra. In 2018, I was awarded Distinguished Fellow of the World by the World Aquatic Veterinary Medical Association. Thank you so much to GAF and ISSI for this Fellowship! I’ll be paying the generosity forward.”

Fellow Richard Loh, Aquatic Veterinary Medicine

Publication design by Atticus Design

“The Fellowship connected me to international experts in earthen architecture and provided me with the knowledge and ability to explain and advocate for new ideas to both universities and clients in Australia.”

Fellow Clare Kennedy, Building with earth in remote arid regions





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