

2015

STARTINGBLOC TRANSPARENCY REPORT



“The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.



INTRODUCTION

StartingBloc exists to help build a kinder world. We do it by moving leaders of change from high potential to high impact. And we're good at it. Just over the past 5 years, we have supported 1,500 leaders. Most of them (80%) agree that StartingBloc significantly contributed to their professional growth, 61% say they are better leaders, and a full 94% feel they now have a much stronger network of support.

This year we delivered four Institutes: Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York, and Washington D.C. In doing so, we have found a sustainable rhythm that frees up some capacity for growing our organization and nurturing our community.

The intention for this report is to share clarity about where we stand and where we are going. We start by sharing where StartingBloc has been and what we've

accomplished this year. We also offer clarity on "who" StartingBloc Fellows are—their demographics, their backgrounds, their passions, and a host of vignettes.

In this report, we share data with you on the real impact of StartingBloc. It is abundantly clear that StartingBloc fosters leaders and changes lives.

We also take the time to open up our finances and share with you just what it takes to produce our Institutes and build this community.

Finally, we take a look at the future and answer some questions. Where is StartingBloc going? What are our plans for 2016? And what does a thriving StartingBloc look like?

WHERE WE'VE BEEN

Our Theory of Change

StartingBloc exists to help build a kinder world. We do this by moving leaders of change from high-potential to high-impact.

This means that first we select Fellows who have demonstrated a passion for social change and environmental sustainability, and then, we do everything in our power to support their leadership, their growth and their effectiveness.

We make assumptions about how to best support change leaders. We do it by:

1. Building an authentic and truly supportive community of leaders.
2. Equipping leaders with tools and skills to be more effective.
3. Helping leaders gain greater clarity & purpose.
4. Cultivating leaders' self-trust and self-reliance.
5. Supporting leaders in gaining new perspectives.

A Brief History

StartingBloc was founded 12 years ago by Martin Smith and Blake Bible at Northwestern University, with the intention of fostering social innovation on their campus. They focused on bringing in speakers and teaching social innovation.

StartingBloc then moved to New York, where it began working with young professionals and social innovators. As the field has matured, we've come to focus on building an authentic, talented, and supportive community, and on teaching tools for leaders of change (Transformative Action, Storytelling, Rapid Prototyping, Polarity Mapping, Unconscious Bias Training).

Over time, the age of our incoming Fellows has shifted to adults (current average age is 28) and, our Institutes have changed from several weekends to immersive, five-day experiences.

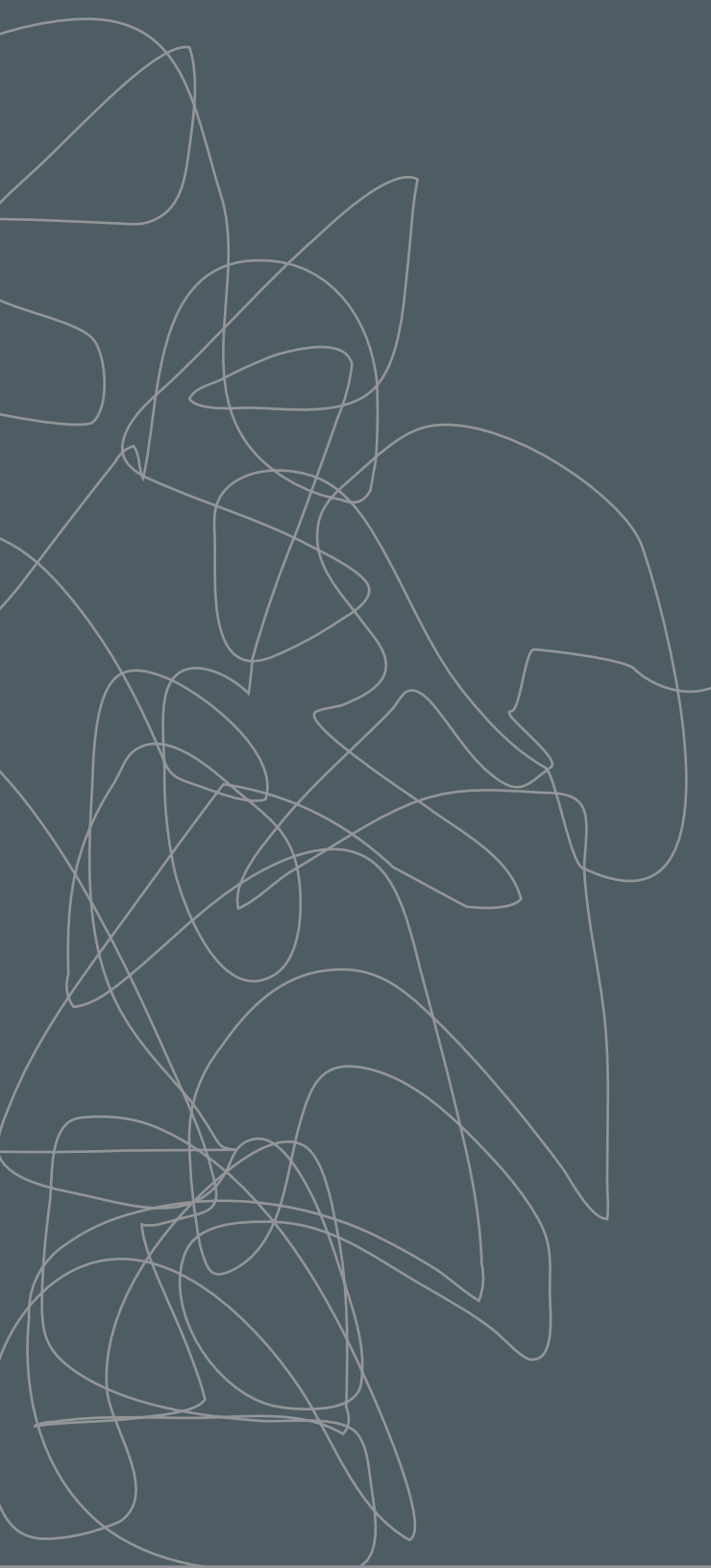
Over its history StartingBloc has delivered dozens of Institutes, built a community of 2,500 Fellows, sparked more than 100 new organizations, and changed many lives. In that time we have also weathered financial crises, a failed Institute, many team turnovers, and our fair share of bad catering. And yet, StartingBloc persists—we are tenacious.

The Past Two Years

2014 was a year of rebirth for StartingBloc. We brought in a new leadership team, moved operations to Colorado, and in a single year delivered five Institutes + 1 ReUP. We added cutting edge content to the curriculum, such as Rapid Prototyping and Polarity Mapping. And we also improved processes, launched a scholarship program, and filed three years worth of 990s with the IRS.

In 2015 we focused on stability and momentum. We scaled back to four Institutes and this freed up cycles to run a Kickstarter campaign and to support Fellow-led teams in delivering an Impact Survey and an #Unplugged event. It also gave us time to articulate an emerging vision for StartingBloc.

We also experienced a major team shift as Molly and Virgil thoughtfully transitioned to new opportunities in the summer. Kristine and Kat have jumped right in, bringing amazing energy, talent, and commitment to the StartingBloc team.



“The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence. It is to act with yesterday’s logic.”

Peter Drucker

A VISION FOR STARTINGBLOC

Our world is at an inflection point. The issues we face today are complex, our growth is unsustainable, and human conflict is widespread. But we also live in a more connected world, with greater equality, health, and more access to resources, knowledge, and opportunity than ever before.

We are at a crossroads,

and today we have the very real opportunity to build a kinder world; one that works for everybody. This version of the future is by no means a given, and one of our biggest levers to get there is growing and nurturing the leaders that our future needs.

Who are these leaders? They are people with fundamentally bigger mindsets. They lead from purpose and values. They are wired for service, rather than competition. They are leaders who think in terms of systemic change, rather than business models. And they are people more comfortable with uncertainty, who are willing to ask hard questions, and who have learned how to show up authentically.

StartingBloc already teaches skills, fosters leadership, channels resources, and builds a powerful community of change leaders. A majority of our Fellows (61%) are already in positions of leadership—whether executive directors, entrepreneurs, managers, or educators.

And a majority of Fellows already report that StartingBloc enhances the impact of their work, gives them clarity, and plugs them into a community of practice that is willing help them grow, share resources and hold them accountable.

StartingBloc is already growing and supporting the leaders our future needs.

Where we are heading, we simply get much, much better at this. Here are the ways we get there:

Deep Competence: Where the StartingBloc of today is chiefly a 5-day Institute followed by a loosely structured Fellowship, some content, and a powerful community, the StartingBloc of the future has clear structures and programs that support continued growth and practice, a deeper curriculum, and more clear and consistent ways to engage with the community and access its resources.

Global Fellowship: Where the StartingBloc of today happens chiefly in four US cities, the StartingBloc of the future is a global, massively networked Fellowship and community accessible to all leaders of change who deserve it.

Distributed: Where the StartingBloc of today is a centralized, relatively traditional organization, the StartingBloc of the future is a distributed organization and a public good, largely built and run by its Fellows. The StartingBloc of the future is both selective and inclusive, and designed to be of benefit to all, not just a select few who can afford it.

MEET THE STARTINGBLOC TEAM



Kristine Sloan

Director of Operations

Everyone can participate in cultivating the good in our world. This fact is both terrifyingly large and absolutely actionable – and Kristine loves a good action item. Kristine holds a Masters of International Studies specializing in Rural Development and has built a career creating efficiencies in resource constrained environments.



Kat Smith

Director of Communications

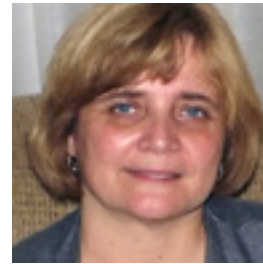
Kat is a mix of marketer, writer and planner. She has a background in digital marketing, operations and event planning. She believes in the power of good communication and the importance of authenticity. She is a graduate of the University of Denver and considers Colorado her true home.



Michael Williams

Director of Partnerships

As a serial entrepreneur, Michael founded Goodwin Investment Advisory & Williams and Jansen Investments, which lead him to invest in the launch of High Road Craft Ice Cream. Michael has previously served as Chairman of the Board for the Transformative Action Institute and he is currently the Managing Director of Gold Lake Retreats.



Kim Miller

Administrative Assistant

Kim has been a Business Vision Advisor and Administrator for about 10 years. She loves to organize and tackle new tasks, with a motto of “learning something new every day!”. Kim loves to travel with her family and friends, preferably somewhere sunny and warm. She is also an avid dog lover; especially her furry shih-tzu Willow.



Cesar Gonzalez

CEO

Cesar believes that for the first time in human history we have the real opportunity, the tools, and the will to build a world that works for everyone. He lives out this belief by supporting leaders of change to build the skills, the alliances, and the strength they will need to bend the arc of history. Cesar has a degree in Computer Engineering from Caltech, he is an Unreasonable Fellow, a StartingBloc Fellow, and has training and experience as a facilitator and speaker.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Mitchell Wade

Board Chair

Mitchell Wade helps innovators turn insights into change. At Choice Humanitarian, Mitchell and his team helped 60,000 people escape extreme poverty, quadrupled per-dollar impact, and launched their organizations toward sustainability.



Vikas Singhal

Board Treasurer

Vikas is an entrepreneur and investor and works with a number of specialty lending businesses as well as technology start-ups. Vikas has previously held positions at UBS Investment Bank in the Structured Products Group working to develop novel funding solutions for a variety of the bank's clients, as well as with Ashoka as a pro bono consultant to their Social Financial Services Group.



Mary Galeti

Board Member

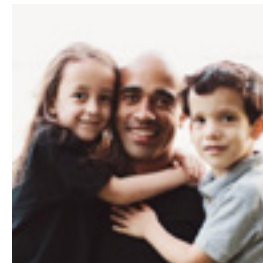
Mary currently serves as Vice-Chair of the Tecovas Foundation. Mary's experiences in the interactions between philanthropy and social entrepreneurship space have driven her to become a leader in the emerging generation of philanthropists.



Cheryl Yaffe Kiser

Board Member

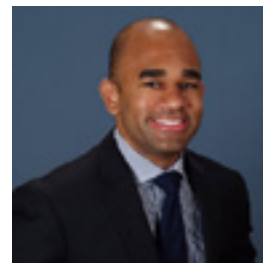
Cheryl is the Executive Director of The Lewis Institute and The Babson Social Innovation Lab, and is responsible for leading a critical aspect of the growth strategy for Babson by promoting broad support for Babson's work in integrating social innovation and social relevance into its curriculum and co-curricular activities.



J. Todd Smith

Board Member

Named "America's Most Promising Social Entrepreneur" by Bloomberg Businessweek, Todd is the co-founder and CEO of Oxen Innovation, a food systems innovation company enabling the next generation of hyperlocal, sustainable, and transparent agriculture through its farm-to-consumer subsidiary The Trusted Table, patented technologies, and a proprietary food metric.



Whitney Smith

Board Member

Whitney works in Development Finance with the Douglas Development Corporation. Whitney has worked with teams to manage approximately \$2.1 billion of private funds, with global placement using research based investment strategies. Whitney also acts as Executive Director of Sustainable Strength a 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization focused on sustainable economic and infrastructural development in urban areas.

CELEBRATING OUR WINS

Stability and Forward Momentum

STABILITY: In 2015 we reduced the number of Institutes from 5 to 4 and still served more Fellows than the previous year, finding a sustainable rhythm for US-based Institutes. We are committed to the same 4 cities for at least the next two years (LA, NOLA, NY, DC). We also ran bigger Institutes, improved our curriculum, grew our budget, stayed financially in the black, and built up our internal systems for finance, insurance, and legal reporting.

MOMENTUM: In just two years we've welcomed over 600 stellar new Fellows into the community. The energy both online and offline is palpable with more resources flowing between Fellows online and many more community-led events in our flagship cities.

In 2015, a team of Fellows produced #Unplugged, a community-wide event in DC with close to 100 attendees. This year, we also had a leadership retreat in Colorado, a team of Fellows measured our impact for the first time ever, we launched our first product on KickStarter, and our website traffic doubled.

Increasing Access Through our Scholarship Program

Last year we raised tuition by 25%, allowing us to parlay the extra revenue into \$78,000 in need-based scholarships for incoming Fellows. After experimenting with several models, we settled on a tiered model which creates the most accessibility.

Scholarships are reviewed and selected by the Fellows' community, and they have greatly increased the inclusivity of our Institutes.

Better Inclusion at 2015 Institutes

We are proud of the fact that StartingBloc Institutes are becoming markedly more inclusive.

We have worked hard to make this happen through the scholarship program, through pipeline partnerships with more diverse organizations, and through a curriculum and an experience where inclusion is a clear priority.

The feedback and referrals by existing Fellows also reflect this trend. See the demographics section below for statistics on inclusion at 2015 Institutes.

Understanding Our Impact

We all know StartingBloc works; the anecdotes of how it changes lives are endless. But for the first time in 2015, a self-managed team of Fellows researched, designed, and delivered a comprehensive survey of our impact.

With a 16.6% response rate and questions spanning demographics, skills, personal growth, career, and community, we can now confidently show that StartingBloc moves leaders of change from high-potential to high-impact. We do it by building a strong community, creating clarity, teaching skills, sharing resources, furthering careers, and sparking companies.

We are deeply grateful to Jessica Collison - BLD '14, Niharika Hanglem - DC '14, Katherine Tan - BLD '14, and Micaela Gutierrez - NY '11 for their fantastic work in designing and delivering this initiative.



***“A revolution
without
dancing is
not a revolution
worth having.”***

CELEBRATING OUR WINS

Delivering the First Ever NOLA Institute

Bringing StartingBloc to a new city is hard work. But Fellows voted for New Orleans, and we set to work launching NOLA '15. Through strong partnerships with 4.0 Schools, Propeller, and the Taylor Center at Tulane University we successfully convened an Institute with a local feel, world-class speakers, and strong attendance from local leaders.

Our first NOLA Institute hosted 72 new Fellows, and 14 volunteer mentors flew in from around the country to support them. We built local partnerships, worked with 5 local organizations for the Scrimmage, and committed to returning in 2016 and 2017. See you there. And don't forget to try the beignets.

Launching a Product on Kickstarter; Raising \$22k in the Process

In the spring and summer of 2015 we designed, launched, funded, and delivered our first product through Kickstarter (whew!) With \$21,795 raised from 680 backers, and over 500 decks shipped, we handily exceeded our goals.

The campaign was for CONNECT, a beautiful deck of questions cards backed by research and proven to start better conversations. If you missed the campaign, you can download a free PDF of the cards, and read the full story on our website.

Adding an Inclusion Workshop to the Institute Curriculum

Conversations on race, gender, inequality, privilege and inclusion have always been a part of StartingBloc, usually because the Fellows incite them. In 2014 we experimented with bringing the conversation to the front of the room with a workshop on Unconscious Bias at the ReUP.

Today, leaders of change work in an increasingly complex and diverse world. What's more, understanding and working with one's own biases is critical to building effective teams and doing good work. That's why in 2015 we committed to bringing inclusion work into the core curriculum.

Although the content of the workshop is still under iteration (see the "Where we've Failed" section) we are excited and committed to having this conversation as a core piece of StartingBloc.

Visioning Retreat in Colorado with 20 StartingBloc Fellows

In September 2015 we convened a group of 20 highly-engaged Fellows to envision the future of the StartingBloc community. They spent three days delving into what powerful community actually looks like, rapid prototyping, and also hiking and cooking together.

Their work was focused around three workflows: Structures for Powerful Community, Adding Value to Current Fellows, and Partnership Opportunities. The outcomes were shared internally on the newsletter, and several ideas have made their way into StartingBloc's strategy moving forward.

CELEBRATING OUR WINS



StartingBloc #Unplugged: For Fellows, By Fellows

In November 2015, a hard-working team of Fellows delivered a 2-day event at the Impact Hub in DC designed to reunite the community and highlight Fellow-led workshops for the very accessible price of \$100 per person.

StartingBloc #Unplugged brought together 85 Fellows from across cohorts for a weekend of workshops on everything from Futurism, to Gender Issues, to Cultivating Courage. And of course, a dance party.

We are excited to support and replicate the #Unplugged model in 2016, giving space for Fellows to build their own low-cost, high-value community events.

And of course, we are deeply grateful to the core team of Jessica Collison - BLD '14, Job Amaro - BLD '14, Chloe Tseung - NY '12, Kelsei Wharton - NOLA '15, and Burcu Bozkurt - LA'12 who made it all happen!



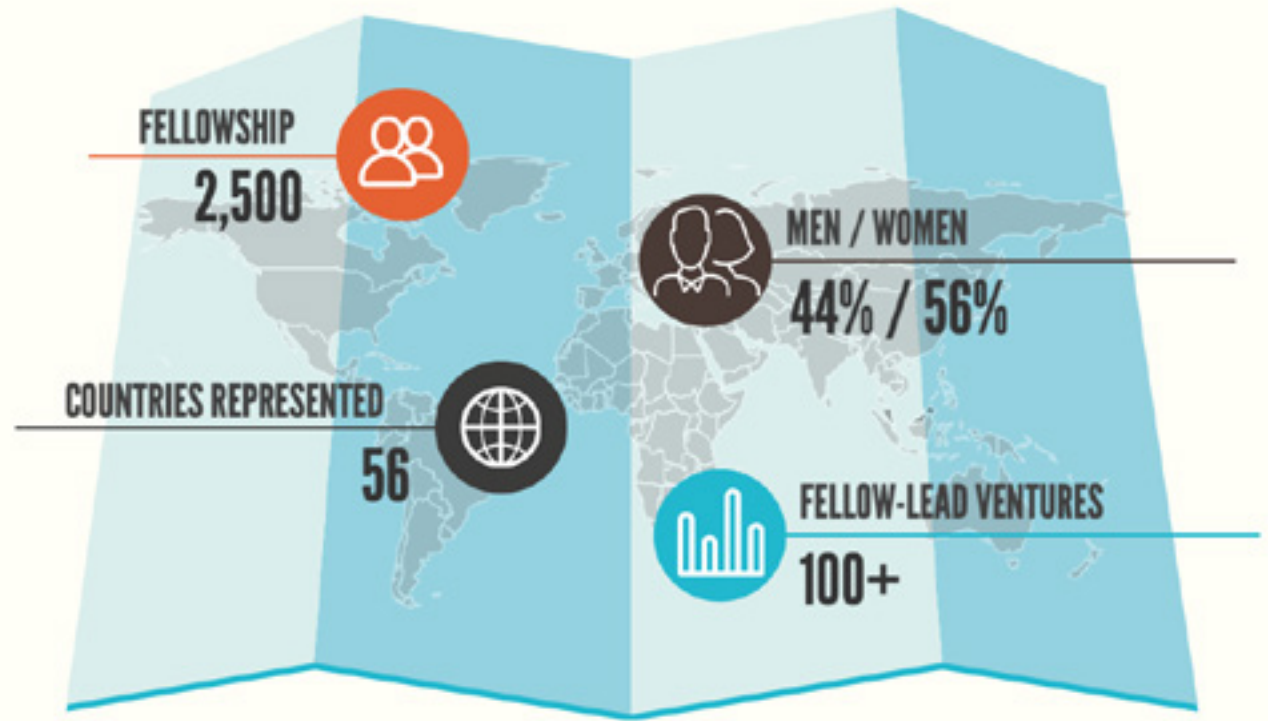
THE EVOLVING FELLOWSHIP

It's hard to answer the question "Who is StartingBloc for?" because it is exactly our commitment to uniting change leaders from diverse backgrounds and walks of life that makes our community so powerful.

What we know for sure is that we have always selected for:

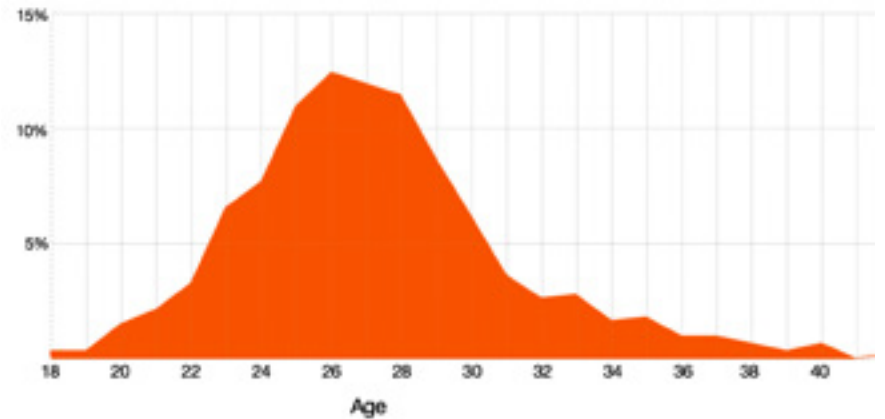
- 1) a demonstrated commitment to social and environmental progress,
- 2) leadership and initiative, and
- 3) alignment with the values of our community.

ABOUT THE FELLOWS



AGES OF THE FELLOWS

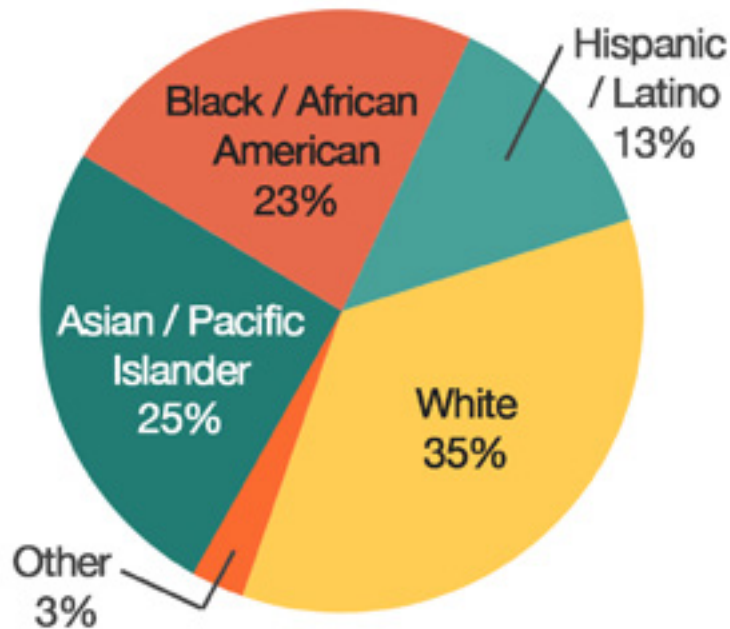
27.5 yrs
AVERAGE AGE of
2015 & 2016 Fellows



ABOUT THE FELLOWS



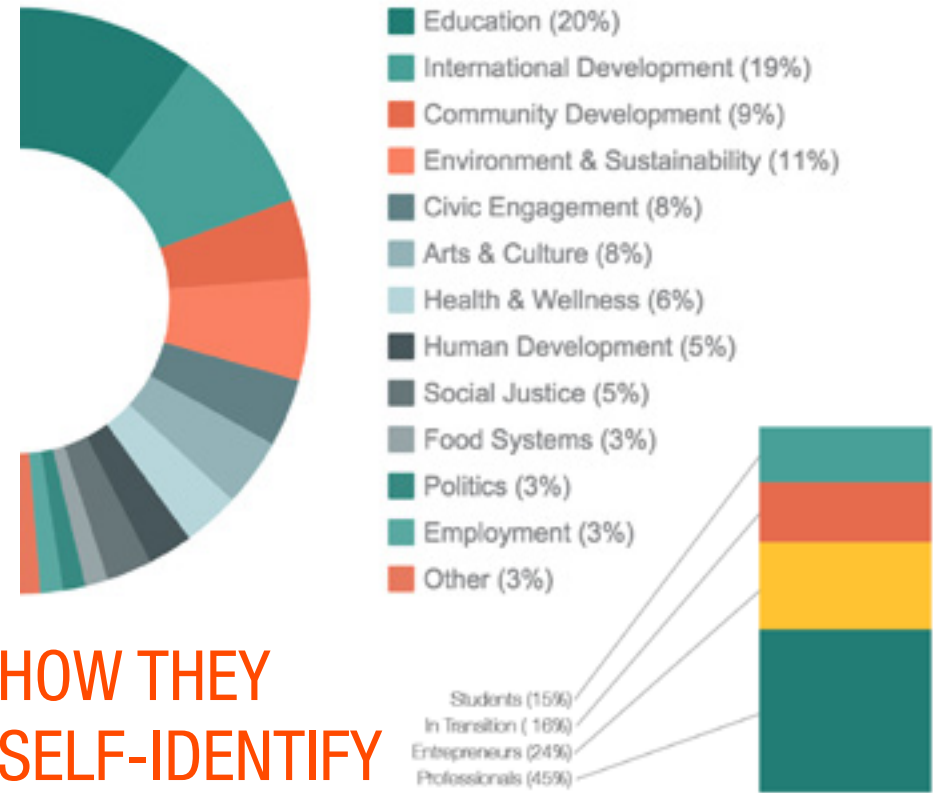
2015 INCLUSION DATA



ABOUT THEIR WORK



WHAT FELLOWS WORK ON



HOW THEY SELF-IDENTIFY

MEET THE FELLOWS

With 2,500+ Fellows, This is a tiny sample (about 1%) showing the power and diversity of our Fellowship. Many of the Fellows featured below have been deeply involved in growing StartingBloc to what it is today.



Shaheen Mamawala

Associate, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

At RWJF, Shaheen works to develop, train and network change leaders across disciplines who will drive action toward building a Culture of Health in America. Shaheen is a National Urban Fellow, a graduate of The College of New Jersey, and a lover of travel and trivia.



Sid Radakrishna

Chief of Staff to Daryn Dodson, Impact Investing Consultant

Alongside the Special Equities team, Sid leads projects that advance the field of impact investing. Sid is a marathon runner from Boston, MA, who is an avid reader, writer, and (sometimes) dancer.



Megan Nesbeth

Program Manager, Opportunity Fund at General Assembly

Megan has dedicated her career to building high-impact relationships and busting through the operational challenges that threaten big ideas from getting off the ground. Always curious, she's looking for facilitation opportunities and ways to learn more about urban revitalization and service design.



Jessica Collison

Former Director of Strategic Planning at SHRM

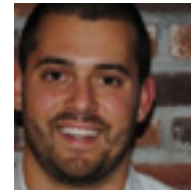
Jessica is a senior leader, strategist, organizer, planner, connector, changemaker, introvert, mentor, backyard farmer, dog lover, analyzer, researcher, facilitator and a native Floridian currently residing in Alexandria, Virginia. She recently left SHRM after 15 years and is looking for an encore that marries her strengths of execution and strategic thinking with her passion for helping others grow themselves and their businesses.



Olatunji Ajani

Co-founder, Asejere.com

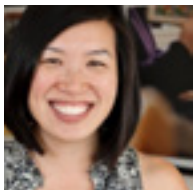
Olatunji is US Consulate Carrington Fellow and the winner of the Nigeria - America Partnership award. He runs a business development consultancy in Nigeria.



Tom D'Eri

Co-founder, Rising Tide Car Wash

With a background in research and strategy, Tom is dedicated to building an organization that shows the world how autism is a valuable diversity for business, not a disability that requires sympathy.



Christine Lai

Chief of Staff, Delivering Happiness

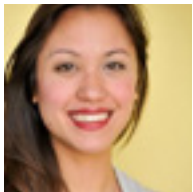
At DH, Christine helps companies understand how to create cultures that sustain happiness. Christine is a



Nafessa Kassim

Director of Global Engagement, MovingWorlds

Nafessa is a founding team member at MovingWorlds. Previously, Nafessa worked in Indonesia and India on global development projects and has worked in juvenile justice domestically. Nafessa holds a dual Master's in Global Public Health and Social Work from Columbia.



Erica Schlaikjer

Creative Strategist at Huge / Co-Founder of Media Rise / Curator of Benevolent Media

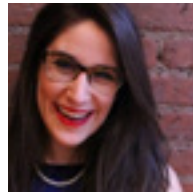
Erica is a creative consultant, marketing strategist & events producer with a background in journalism. She currently helps clients integrate social media into their business and marketing plans as a Creative Strategist for Huge, a full-service digital agency in Washington, D.C.



Job Amaro

Global IT Support Manager at Ashoka

For Job, it's all about big talk, vulnerability, and community. Job is an aspiring Social Entrepreneur, Technology Specialist, Connector, and Meetup Organizer.



Sophia Chitlik

COO at The Future Project

Sophia believes that leadership is giving leadership to others. She inspires people to live lives of passion and purpose, cultivating a team and a movement at The Future Project.



Gordon Casey

Managing Director, Front Shore N.V.

Currently beating his sword into plowshares by selling his hedge fund consultancy and leaving the Caribbean island where he lives to focus on two sharing economy technology platforms: a community-sourced emergency assistance app and a complementary currency for the sharing, creative and social economy.



Katherine Tan

Program Officer, Millennium Challenge Corporation

Katherine's vision is to unite public, private, and social sector actors to unlock the potential of "frontier" and "developing" economies which comprise 80% of the world's population. She has spent four years partnering with a C-level exec at the world's largest hedge fund and has experience driving projects for C-suite management at a \$20 M global NGO.



Rob Friedman

Campaigner, National Resources Defense Council

Rob is a pragmatic dreamer and an expert agitator, working to align NRDC's environmental policy and anti-fossil fuel advocacy campaigns with communities across North America in the fight for climate justice. He is a trained organizational coach, a passionate beekeeper and an avid outdoorsman.



Rhoda Tamakloe

Program Manager at Kaplan Educational Foundation

Rhoda is a solution-focused nonprofit professional with over 10 years of experience working with under-served and historically under-represented populations in higher education. Deeply committed to improving college access and persistence in low-income populations, she has a proven ability as a campus recruiter, managing relationships with partner educational institutions and community based organizations.



Taylor Buonocore

President, Born Free Africa

Taylor sparks change by building teams of catalytic talent in the private and public sectors. She has worked across the US, Asia, and East Africa. Currently, as President of Born Free Africa, Taylor manages a portfolio of advocacy and in-country investments to accelerate the elimination of mother to child transmission of HIV.



Divinity Matovu

Co-Founder at MBAMama.com | MBA Candidate at Wharton

Divinity is a fiery entrepreneur and independent thinker pursuing her MBA at Wharton with a focus on entrepreneurial management and finance. She is also a serial entrepreneur who has launched four start-ups: a fashion company in Los Angeles, a youth development non-profit in Uganda, a consulting firm with clients in Africa and the US, and now, MBA Mama.



Hassan Hassan

Portfolio Manager at 4.0 Schools

At 4.0, Hassan is shaping the future of school by finding and coaching promising early-stage education entrepreneurs and building partnerships that propel them forward. Hassan is from Sudan, he's an alumnus of the 4.0 Launch accelerator, Ed Pioneers Fellow,



Audrey Hickey

CEO and Founder at Thought Collective Design

Founder and CEO of Thought Collective, an ethical apparel company employing women in East Africa. Previously the coordinator of Faraja Orphanage and sponsorship coordinator at Davis Preparatory School in Tanzania. Lover of adventure, laughter, soul searching, live music and making new friends.



Mohamed Salia

Founder & Director - SEED, Sierra Leone

Mohamed is passionate about empowering women and youths affected by war. He is skilled in community mobilization, proposal writing, budgeting and market research.



Brit Boroian

Global Knowledge Management, Dalberg Global Dev Advisors

Brit spent seven years exploring economic development abroad. Her travels took her to thirty countries, including Kenya as a Kiva fellow, a Peace Corps Volunteer in Paraguay, and two years in India as a Clinton fellow in Delhi, and then



Gina Uppal

Associate, Studio Y Fellowship

Gina is passionate about civic engagement as a mechanism for building healthy communities. She is an entrepreneur at heart and hopes to build platforms that engage young people around the issues that affect their health and well-being.



Nils Klinkenberg

Project Manager, Cadmus Group

A BOS '11 Fellow, Nils has mentored & volunteered at 13 StartingBloc Institutes, serving as the Mentor Lead for six. He currently works at The Cadmus Group as a consultant for the U.S. EPA and other government entities on the management of energy efficiency and sustainable transportation programs. Nils is enthusiastic about many things, including urban biking, big-picture sustainability, cooperation, community, applied weirdness, civilizational resilience, clever people, and the future.

in Mumbai at Dalberg. Brit recently moved back to the fabulous city of DC with Dalberg, and is excited about daily Bikram Yoga, Chipotle, and connecting with fascinating individuals who care about the world.

I honor your Gods, I drink at your well, I bring an undefended heart to our meeting place. I have no cherished outcomes.

Native American Prayer of Approach (origin unknown)

I will not negotiate by withholding, I am not subject to disappointment.

OUR IMPACT

StartingBloc Fellows are leaders of change; they are building a world that works for everyone. And StartingBloc is undeniably helping them to build it.

As a result of StartingBloc, our Fellows report becoming better leaders, accessing more opportunities, improving their effectiveness, and being more supported and plugged in than ever before.

How We Measure Impact

16.6% of existing Fellows completed a comprehensive survey across four impact categories: 1) the StartingBloc community, 2) personal growth, 3) acquisition of skills, and 4) career development.

We are deeply grateful to the Fellows' impact team—Jessica Collison, Niharika Hanglem, Katherine Tan, and Micaela Gutierrez for their fantastic work in designing, championing, and delivering this impact measurement report.

STARTINGBLOC GROWS LEADERS OF CHANGE



HOW SB HELPS LEADERS GROW...

Increased social / environmental impact of my work



Better understanding of passion, purpose, goals



Improved ability to deal with others



Improved self-awareness



Significantly contributed to my personal growth



The week I attended StartingBloc was the same week we launched ReWork's first website. Before going to the institute, I genuinely had no idea how many people were on the same journey as I was: trying to figure out how to align our values with our work. It's hard to hold yourself accountable to ambitious goals without a community of people who believe in you, and this is the true value that I got from StartingBloc.

Since attending, I've built relationships with other fellows as clients, coworkers, allies, and best friends. I attribute the early traction of ReWork to the strength of the StartingBloc community, and I strongly encourage all new employees of ours to attend the institute.

— Evan Walden, CEO, ReWork

FELLOWS SPEAK UP

“The amount of experience, talent and knowledge in the room was astounding and I’m so honored to have been a part of it. As I got to know more of my Fellows, I felt like I had finally found my tribe.”

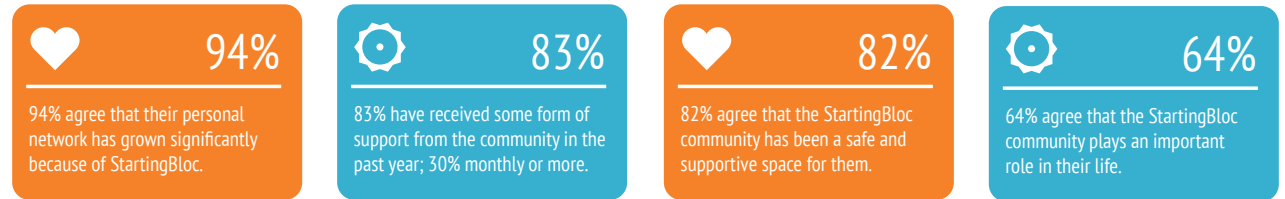
Hannah Johnson, Strategist, GOOD Corps

“StartingBloc changed my life. The Institute introduced me to a group of people that think in a different way, that dream bigger, that have pushed me to accomplish more in these last 2 years than I had in the previous 8 ... To be blunt: it was the best investment I’ve ever made.”

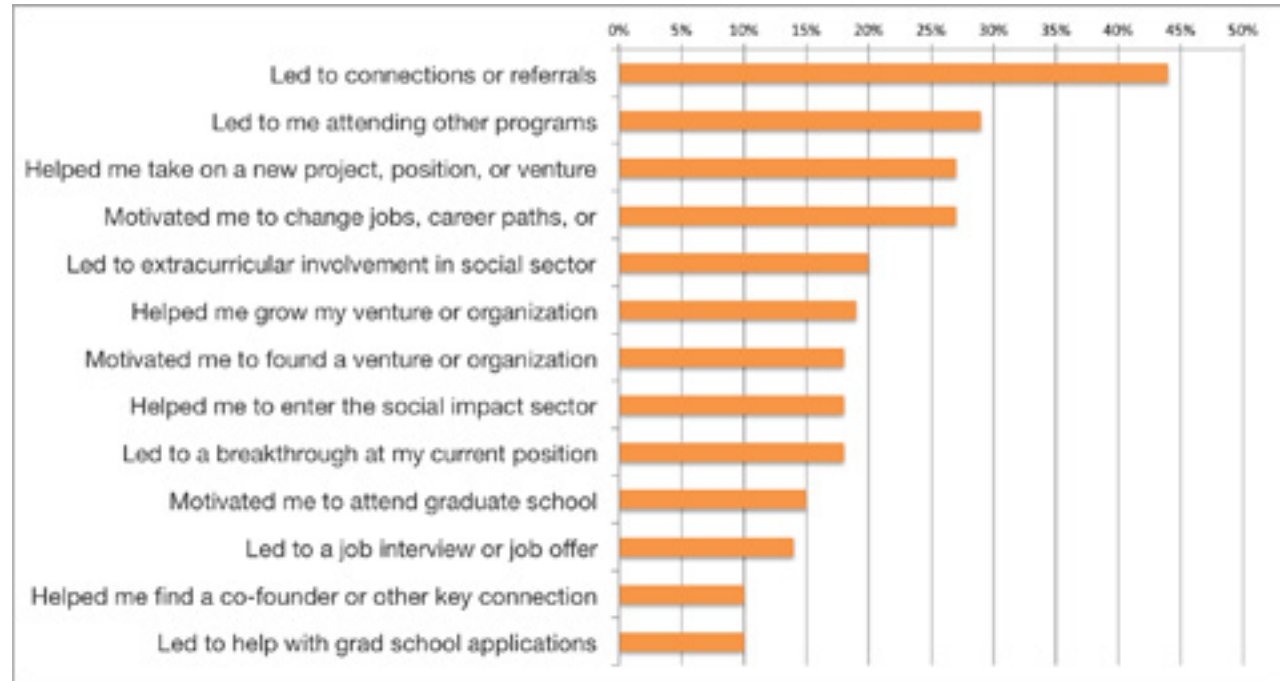
Adam Smiley Poswolsky, Author & Speaker

COMMUNITY: STARTINGBLOC’S GREATEST ASSET

Fellows agree that community is StartingBloc's greatest asset. For our Fellows, it is the engine for growth, the network through which resources spread, and a safe place to come back to again and again.



STARTINGBLOC LED TO...



"It is impossible to live without failing at something, unless you live so cautiously that you might as well not have lived at all, in which case you have failed by default."

WHERE WE'VE FAILED IN 2015

We are proud of the real impact we are having and of the progress we've made over the past two years. At the same time, we have made mistakes, fallen short, and tried out things that flopped. Our team and this community value honesty, relentless iteration, and learning from mistakes, so we share some of our failures here in the hopes of learning from them.



Our 2015 Institutes Were Not Full

We welcomed 315 leaders into our Fellowship in 2015. But we could easily have accommodated up to 400 new Fellows at our Institutes. Those 85 unfilled spots would have meant more leaders supported, more momentum for our community, and more financial stability for StartingBloc.

As we head into 2016, we are excited to have Katherine Smith leading communications as a full-time role for the first time. She plans to uplevel all our messaging, build stronger channels for recruiting, and improve communications with existing Fellows.

We Have not Improved our Systems

There is SO much latent potential in this community of tenacious leaders. We have heard from many of you that one way to capitalize on that potential is to improve our systems—by intelligently building out our database of Fellows, by creating stronger chapter structures and guidelines, by supporting Fellows-led projects with toolkits, by streamlining our nomination and application process...the list goes on and on.

And yet in the past two years, we have largely failed to improve our systems, internal or external. We've fallen prey to working IN the business rather than ON the business. As a result, our CRM is cobbled together in google docs, our application process inefficiently

WHERE WE'VE FAILED IN 2015

spans five platforms, and there are no clear guidelines for chapters, Fellow projects, or succession planning.

That's why in 2016, we are setting aside six weeks in February and March for a "systems building sprint." We plan to mostly step out of day-to-day operations and focus on improving several of the systems that StartingBloc runs on.

The NY '15 Workshop on Diversity & Inclusion was a Missed Opportunity

This year we brought workshops on inclusion, privilege, and systemic structures of power into main thread of StartingBloc's curriculum. These conversations are absolutely vital to change leadership, and they are also emotionally charged and often difficult to facilitate.

At NY '15, we brought in a half-day workshop that missed the mark. The workshop didn't honor the depth of knowledge in the room, it tried to do too much in too little time, it had the wrong tone, and it didn't create enough safety or space for dialogue. Many participants were upset by the workshop, and the NY '15 Fellows lamented the missed opportunity for a truly constructive conversation.

On the upside, the NY '15 Fellows seized the opportunity to take ownership of their Institute experience and in many ways came together more powerfully as a cohort. We received a lot of feedback and were able to integrate a workshop on Inclusion and Effectiveness at DC '15 that was much better received, provided a framework, and did create space for dialogue. We're excited to continue to integrate and improve this part of the curriculum in 2016.

Failed Advisers Program

For the NOLA '15 Institute, we designed and announced the "SB Advisers" role as a way for experienced leaders and professionals to plug into Institutes and support our Fellows. We failed to convince even one Adviser to join us, and the program fizzled out. This was a simple case of overcommitment on our part, and taught us a lesson on being realistic about how much work things will take.

STARTINGBLOC'S 2015 FINANCES

StartingBloc is coming out of 2015 on solid footing. Our Institute attendance and application numbers are up, we are awarding more scholarships than ever, we (modestly) exceeded our 2015 revenue projection, we raised salaries, we ran a successful Kickstarter, and we decreased our financial liabilities.

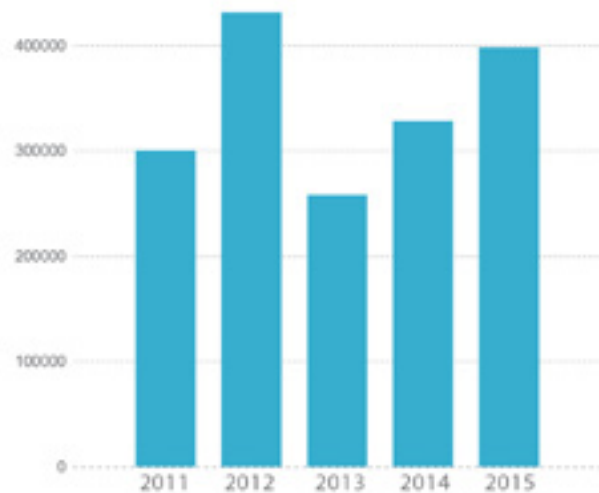
An Overview of 2015

Revenue increased again this year, as have Institute registrations and attendance at follow-on events like ReUPs and #Unplugged. Non-institute activities (KickStarter, #Unplugged, Fellows Retreat, etc.) generated \$35,000, which covered the costs to deliver them. Raising tuition by 25% allowed us to offer \$78,000 in scholarship funding to incoming Fellows in 2015.

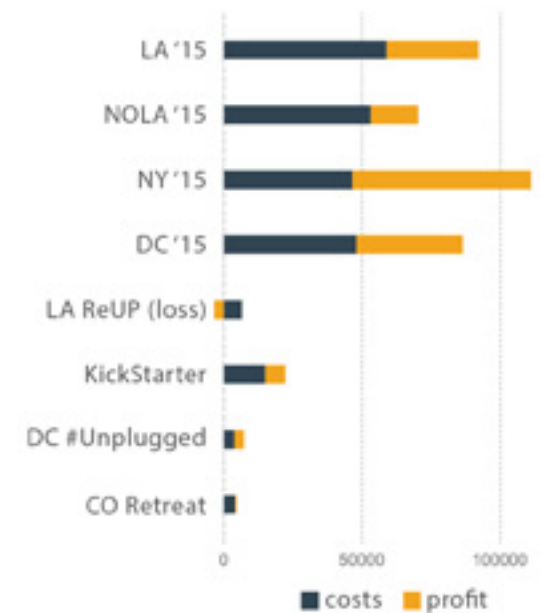
At the same time, our sustainability remains dependent on the success of every single Institute, and we generate 99% of our own revenue through program fees, despite being 501c3.

This fact limits our ability to grow our team, provide support to the Fellowship, pay market-rate salaries, invest in our backend systems, and experiment more boldly with new initiatives.

StartingBloc Revenue By Year



Revenue & Costs by Event



How Scholarships Worked

Starting with NOLA'15, we offered scholarships on a tiered model, where before they were an all-or-nothing affair.

Scholarship applications are reviewed by a committee of Fellows, and applicants who are awarded scholarships receive either a full scholarship (\$1250), or a partial scholarship at one of 3 levels (\$950, \$625, or \$300).

This allows us to award scholarships to a greater number of people in a way that is responsive to their needs, while still asking them to make an investment and put skin in the game. We saw our attendance numbers spike after introducing the tiered model, and plan to continue it in 2016.

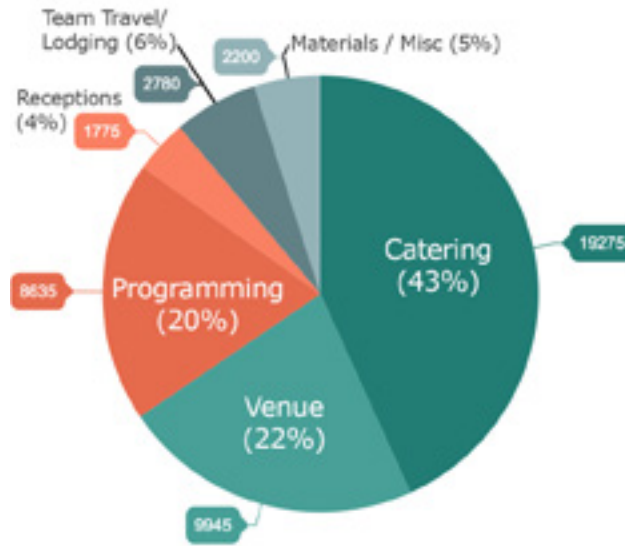
STARTINGBLOC 2015 FINANCES

Better Institutes = Increased Costs

In 2015 we improved our programming with more paid opportunities for speakers (for example, adding an Inclusion workshop). We also invested more in important partnerships like the Scrimmage, which in 2014 had been largely subsidized by ReWork. Finally, our average Institute attendance grew from 63 to 79, so our variable costs went up accordingly.

All this means that our average institute costs rose from \$37,000 in 2014 to \$44,600 in 2015.

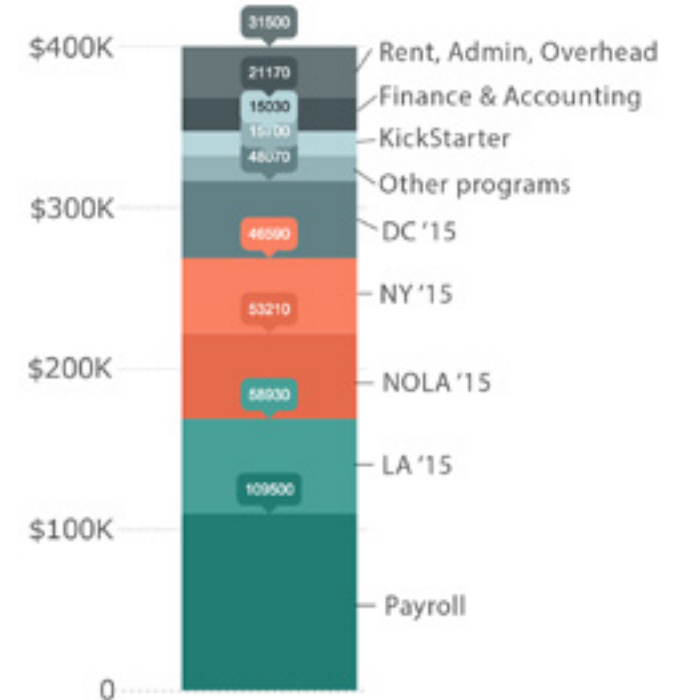
Average Institute Costs in 2015



At the end of 2014 we decided to scale back from five Institutes to four per year. Our hypotheses were that 1) we could make each Institute more profitable, 2) we would run better Institutes, and 3) we would have extra cycles left to try new things.

All three hypotheses worked out, and Institute profit grew from \$23,000 to \$40,500, program feedback improved overall, and we were able to try new things like a KickStarter campaign, a Fellows Retreat in CO, and supporting teams of Fellows as they delivered an Impact Survey and an #Unplugged event in DC.

Budget Expenditures in 2015



Holding Steady in 2016 & 2017

Coming out of a solid year, our plan is to run the same four programs (LA, NOLA, NY, DC) for the next two years. In fact, we already have dates. Our hypothesis is that we will iteratively improve programming, grow per-Institute attendance and revenue, spend less time event-planning each Institute, and free up more cycles for other initiatives.

IN CLOSING

2015: Momentum & Stability

With 4 great Institutes, 315 new Fellows, a ReUP in LA, a CO Retreat, and a big Fellow-led Unplugged event in DC, this was a big year for StartingBloc.

The Fellowship is stronger than ever and our community's momentum is palpable both in online and offline activity. The markers of engagement such as local events, mentorship applications, facebook activity, and Fellow referrals are all up.

This year we've also strengthened our curriculum, offered many more scholarships than in 2014, grown into a more inclusive organization, successfully launched a product on KickStarter, strengthened our financial position, and measured the real impact of StartingBloc on our Fellows.

Where We Are Heading

Perhaps most importantly, a clear vision is emerging for StartingBloc. We are here to build a kinder world by convening and growing the leaders that our future needs. Leaders that are more comfortable navigating uncertain waters, leaders that start from purpose and values, and leaders that know how to steward power in an increasingly networked and distributed world.

2016: Systems & Partnerships

We are holding the wheel steady on Institutes this year. Running the same four Institutes allows us to improve through iteration, while freeing up more cycles for other work. Our intention is to invest those cycles in two things: Systems & Partnerships.

Systems: Internally, we plan to improve our processes, our application system, our CRM, our website, and our payment gateways in order to save time, to

improve our ability to communicate, and to simplify things for incoming and existing Fellows.

Using what we learned through #Unplugged and the Fellows' retreat, we also plan to build better "scaffolding" for the Fellowship. This could take the form of support systems for local chapters, resources and guidelines for Fellow-led events, and post-Institute structures such as a coaching program, mastermind groups, and membership services.

Partnerships: With a clearer vision, concrete data on our impact, and a real understanding of StartingBloc's uniqueness, we are also ready to invest our extra cycles on building strategic partnerships.

Through partnership we plan to integrate more cutting-edge curriculum and grow the value we offer to Fellows. Also through partnership, we plan to seek funding for increasing inclusivity and deepening the post-institute Fellowship experience. Finally, we also see opportunities to access new markets and regions at a lower risk through working with partners.

With Gratitude

We feel immense gratitude that we get to do this work, at this time in history. It is important, impactful, challenging, fun, and life-affirming at the same time.

StartingBloc—the Fellowship and the Community—exist only through the combined work of thousands of people. Community happens one conversation at a time, and we want to thank all of you, for showing up courageously to the conversations that truly matter.

Let's do this.



***“The future is already here—
it’s just not very evenly distributed.”***

William Gibson