

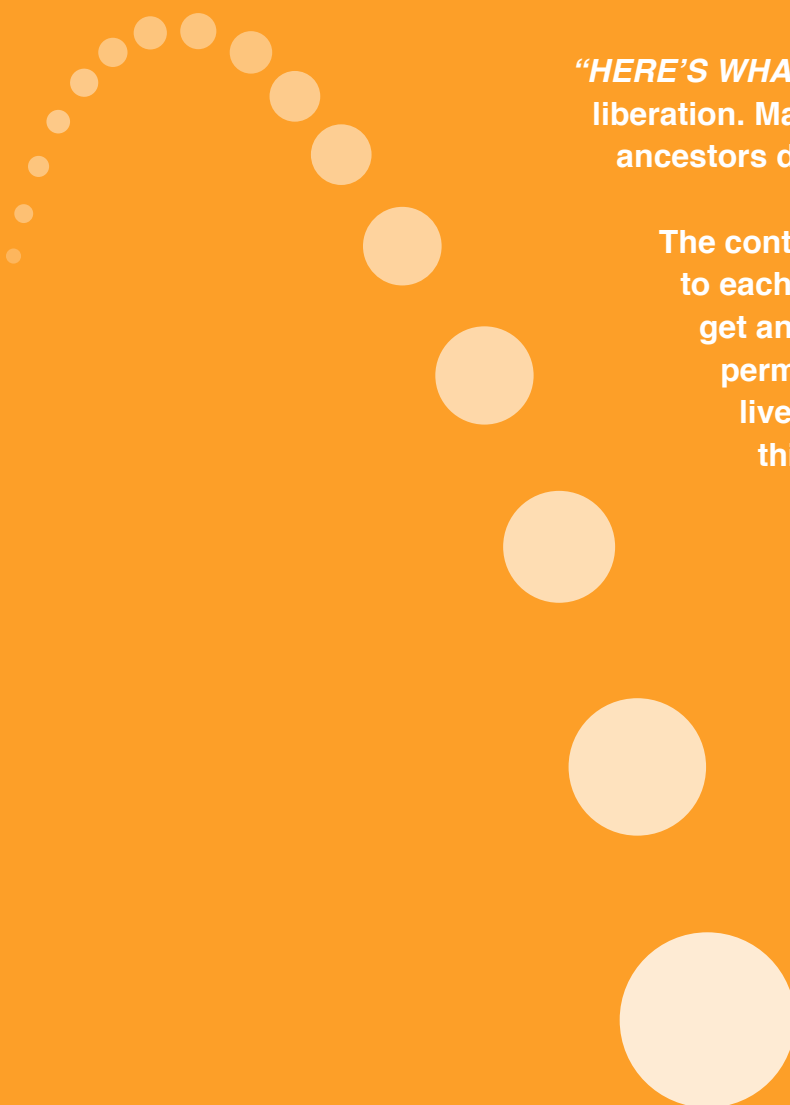


# TRANSPARENCY REPORT

## // 2017

### StartingBloc





**“HERE’S WHAT I KNOW:** we humans are on an inevitable trajectory toward liberation. Many of us have been working on that for a very long time. Our ancestors did their part even when there was no glimmer of hope....

The context has changed, but the work of deepening our connections to each other and to the natural world has not. Sometimes we’ll get angry and disheartened. That’s fine, but let us not build any permanent structures in the land of despair. That’s not where we live. It’s important to remember and remind each other about this.

Finally, let’s stay woke. And if we haven’t yet done so, let’s wake up. Let us not get distracted by this momentary foolishness — we are witnessing the death throes of patriarchy and white supremacy. That’s been going on for a while, and will continue for a while yet.

There is much to do, so let’s gather our wits, our trust, and our pals and keep steady on the path of building a just, loving, creative, and interconnected world. We can do this. I know we can. It’s the only thing.”

**- Akaya Windwood**

## OPENING LETTER

Akaya's words rest at the bottom of a letter we wrote and sent to incoming StartingBloc Fellows this year. I find great solace in them. Her phrasing and her wisdom in not building "permanent structures in the land of despair" and her confidence in saying "that's not where we live" have proven repetitively grounding.

### **2017 reminds me of why StartingBloc exists in the world.**

It reminds me that no matter what we may work to build or to create or to envision, if we aren't interrogating the paradigms through which we lead, exist, and act, then we're not really doing the work. We won't bring forth a world that thrives until we reckon with our past and present and future selves. Until we broaden the scope of our honesty and our curiosity. Until we uplift and call forward the voices inviting us towards collective liberation.

At StartingBloc, we believe in competence and badass achievement. We believe in maturity and the wisdom and perspective that it provides us in moments where we lean on ourselves and on one another. We believe in authenticity and in naming our values. We believe that we have a lot of work to

do and that we can always strive to be better.

In 2017, StartingBloc Fellows acted with in-the-moment kindness and generosity. Fulvia Morales [raised over five thousand dollars](#) to support rescue efforts in Mexico, and other StartingBloc'ers pitched in to make sandwiches for the search parties. Carla Fernandez, co-Founder of [The Dinner Party](#), supported the launch of [The People's Supper](#) which is designed to "repair the breach in our interpersonal relationships across political, ideological, and identity differences, leading to more civil civic discourse." Magen & Arielle Jennings [organized a week-long drive for the US Virgin Islands](#), through [Collab & Play](#), a coworking space with on-site childcare they co-founded in Glendale, California.

In 2017, StartingBloc Fellows envisioned a world they wanted to live in. Christophe Jospe founded [Nori](#), using Noriton tokens built on a blockchain to remove carbon from the atmosphere. He also facilitated a StartingBlochain learning group amongst Fellows. Antionette Carroll advanced her work with [Creative Reaction Lab](#), building a Board that includes 4 StartingBloc Fellows and

creating the model of Equity Centered Design - pushing for healthy and racially equitable communities for Black and Latinx populations.

In 2017, StartingBloc Fellows reflected, listened, and cared for one another. One scholarship recipient from 2014 funded a full scholarship for a 2017 Fellow. NY'17 Fellows shared a massive group hug around a woman in their cohort. LA'17 Fellows sang and filled a room with grace. There were countless times in which a Fellow offered up a home or a coffee or a call or a text in support of another Fellow. We brought mindfulness to the StartingBloc Institutes and over 50 Fellows opted-in to starting their mornings with meditation and silence.

In 2017, StartingBloc reminded me of what it might look like to inhabit Akaya's "*just, loving, creative, and interconnected world*".

It has been, and continues to be, a great privilege to witness and support StartingBloc. Onwards.



Kristine Sloan, Interim CEO

# A CLEAR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF STARTINGBLOC

**Our world needs better leadership.** Yesterday. Now. Really, now. We need people to turn to, to guide us. We need structure to engage with, to support us. We need learning pathways to help get us there. We need those pathways to be open to women, to people of color, and especially queer and transgender people of color. We need thought leadership articulated from these communities that is celebrated globally.

We believe in a paradigm-shift towards space for inclusive power and influence. We believe in human agency and the freedom of choice.

StartingBloc envisions a thriving planet stewarded by leadership that is purpose-driven, whole, inclusive, and collaborative. Our mission is to convene, grow and support the leaders our future needs.

Our community walks its talk. We've built and sustained an incredibly active community of change leaders through a cohort-based model. 65% are people of color, 55% are women, and the age range is 18-70, with average age of 30. We come from all sectors and industries, and as a result, we're able to move fluidly between sectors: 41% of Fellows have received a connection or referral from another Fellow.

We need a movement around the Future of Leadership. Growing conscious and transformative leadership is one of the greatest leverage points across all systemic challenges: climate change, social justice, poverty, education, business, peace, and more. StartingBloc has invested in building a community of leaders for 14 years, and our leadership community spans sectors and industries. At critical mass, these leaders will have the influence to fundamentally reshape the systems affecting millions worldwide.

**Why now and Why StartingBloc?** StartingBloc has staying power. StartingBloc is trusted. StartingBloc is inclusive. StartingBloc is widespread - we have community and partners throughout the world. StartingBloc has a vision for the Future of Leadership. We have ground. We're living in a moment in time in which the need for better leadership is blatant. Our work feels imperative, and urgent, and old.

## Vision 2022

**StartingBloc is financially well-resourced and acts with autonomy and agency.**

**StartingBloc leads a global movement around the Future of Leadership.**

**The StartingBloc Fellowship becomes the core flagship program of a broader, movement-oriented organization and community.**

**StartingBloc Fellows are supported with clear, well-defined learning pathways over a lifetime.**

## What This Looks Like

70% of annual budget earned income  
15% Fellow-funded  
15% Donor-funded

Our Fellows represent a nontraditional profile of a leader, and we want that voice, that complexity, and that strength to shine in how the world collectively defines the Future of Leadership.

StartingBloc's brand is core to The Future of Leadership.

Full Institutes held 10-15x per year around the world.

The StartingBloc Institute is the pinnacle of our programming.

StartingBloc hosts auxiliary programming with community partners, corporate allies, and visionary leaders.

Learning pathways are illuminated for Fellows and Fellows have clear ways to plug back into StartingBloc + drive and shape its visioning.

StartingBloc enlists a large group of master facilitators and coaches who operate within our network of support.

## 2018 Goals

- Emerge from 2018 debt free.
- Meet the 70/15/15 goal with funders who operate on a model of trust and who fund core programming.
- Secure funding to hire a 3rd full time team member focused on revenue generating structures and major gifts.
- Create a working definition of The Future of Leadership. Write Concept Paper and publish.
- Uplift the voices of Fellows in public content, launch Fellow committee on content creation.
- Secure funding to explore our role in movement making with an expert partner.
- Attend 7 conferences and workshops to continue to engage with the broader ecosystem and uplift the StartingBloc brand.
- Develop a stronger network of pipeline partners + double the application pipeline to ensure full Institutes throughout 2018.
- Obtain 2-3 external contracts and deliver training (0.5-2 days) with a minimum additional revenue goal of \$10k.
- Deliver five high quality Institutes with powerful facilitators and speakers.
- Reinvigorate our impact survey.
- Continue to strengthen our mentorship program and volunteer engagement.
- Fully map the StartingBloc ecosystem and find a platform that enables connections between Fellows.
- Secure funding to pilot in-person circles of learning between Fellows (1 year commitment). Develop content, curriculum, and execute.
- Develop and launch 3 online modules for current Fellows.

## Vision 2022

**StartingBloc's organizational culture is the model for employee engagement, care, and professional development.**

## What This Looks Like

StartingBloc has a well-articulated, flexible, and nourishing work culture.

StartingBloc employees have well resourced benefits packages and can build careers with the organization.

StartingBloc continually uplifts new voices in the organization, even with low employee turnover.

## 2018 Goals

- Develop norms and processes that enable our team to thrive. Nurture deep, honest, curious inquiry around organizational culture.
- Rewrite and publish an employee guide / ethos of StartingBloc document, congruent with Teal organizations.
- Fund benefits packages for team, inclusive of full health, clear vacation mandates, and professional development.
- In addition to our new Director of Admissions, hire 1 additional full time team member.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### Champion

Talk about StartingBloc with a friend or colleague. If you've been impacted by StartingBloc's programming, write about it online. A Fellow? Add StartingBloc to your LinkedIn profile, your corporate bio, and your resume. We want StartingBloc Fellows to be synonymous with the leaders that the future needs, the leaders that organizations seek, and the leaders that bring deep mindfulness paired with a career of action.

### Invite

Invite the StartingBloc Team to facilitate retreats or workshops at your company or organization. Invite StartingBloc Fellows to present their work and their perspectives on your panels. [Invite your community to join the StartingBloc Fellowship.](#) Invite potential speakers or donors to attend an upcoming Institute and see for themselves.

### Invest

We're actively fundraising and seeking programmatic and operational support. Invest in a world of Better Leadership by donating to StartingBloc today, or by connecting us with potential donors and funders of our work. Invest your time by coming to mentor at an Institute, coaching a Fellow, or providing support and guidance to our community. Invest your resources in Fellow-led companies. Invest your energy in building a world that we all can live and thrive in.

“In short, my Institute experience provided me with the opportunity to learn from brilliant speakers and leaders, to be challenged by the ambitions and authenticity of my peers, and to be encouraged to become the leader and person I desire to be.”

- Trace Allen, NOLA'17 Fellow



## NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS

To match the evolving reach and vision, we brought on a new Board of Directors.

For the last 4 years, Mitchell Wade, Mary Galeti, Cheryl Kiser, Vikas Singhal, and Whitney Smith served, executed, and advised StartingBloc as its Board of Directors. Under their leadership, StartingBloc stabilized. Our Institutes grew more impactful and our community gained trust in the organization.

We began 2017 with a clear vision for the future of StartingBloc. That vision, as detailed previously, outlines an expansive future for StartingBloc and for the Future of Leadership as a whole. StartingBloc's existing Board of Directors made the decision to intentionally evolve to meet and welcome this vision, and we led our first in-person retreat with a new Board in June of 2017. Potential Board Candidates were identified by staff or board members and recommended to the full board for consideration. Candidates were then interviewed and voted on during an Executive Board session.

As a result, StartingBloc has moved from a 5 person Board to a 10 person Board. The full Board of Directors are StartingBloc Fellows and they are committed to a two-year term of leadership. We're proud to have a Board that is representative of the inclusivity and range of the Fellowship, that shares common identity as StartingBloc Fellows, and that is truly "on board" with where the organization is heading. Our Board is full of the love and leadership that the StartingBloc community has always expected and embraced.







### **Brandi Nicole Johnson, Board Chair**

Brandi Nicole Johnson has spent her entire career working within the nonprofit sector and is a celebrated contributor. She went from Intern to Executive Director in less than a decade and all before the age of 30. Prior to becoming an Executive Director, Brandi spent most of her career focused on democratizing leadership development at the Center for Creative Leadership. Brandi has degrees in Political Science and Communication Studies from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She loves consuming food that is life changing, asking provocative questions that inspire action and making the world a better place.



### **Corinne Baker, Board Member**

Corinne is a digital strategist & innovator focused on bringing people closer to the experiences they love. She has explored the way technology, communications and business come together for organizations such as Coca-Cola North America, MARS Chocolate, Washington Performing Arts and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. She is a huge advocate of the creative economy and still aspires to be on Broadway when she grows up.



### **Cortni Grange, Board Member**

Cortni Grange is the Executive Director of Future Leaders & Young Entrepreneurs (FLYE). Mr. Grange has been recognized in Black Enterprise, USA Today, The Washington Post, on ESPN, Fox and ABC. He was named a 2017 Top Millennial Influencer by The Next Big Thing Movement and received one of the first Creator Awards from WeWork for creating sustainable change in his community. Mr. Grange resides in Alexandria, VA with wife Jessica and son Jameson.



### **Sharan Bal, Board Member**

My career reflects my commitment to change how we do business to be sustainable and human. I began my journey as a corporate sustainability consultant in Hong Kong. I spent a year backpacking across Asia studying and supporting social enterprises in Laos, Mumbai and Beijing. Since moving to New York I have guided organizations towards purpose-led and values-based cultures. Now I help organizations upgrade their ways of working to be fit for the future.



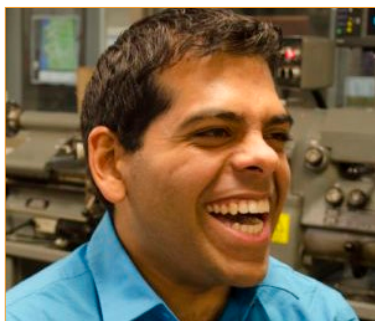
### **Ellie Bahrmasel, Board Member**

Eloise (Ellie) D. Bahrmasel is an Engagement Strategist & Entrepreneur, focused on helping individuals and organizations utilize the principles of human-centered design to solve problems and create impact driven solutions. Ellie has leveraged this skill set to advance initiatives in the private, public and nonprofit sectors, including work with The Kennedy Forum, Comcast, and The Office of the Mayor in Chicago. Ellie co-founded civic tech startup RISE/NewFounders in response to the results of the 2016 election cycle. After stepping away from day-to-day operations of NewFounders, Ellie launched DAWN PAC, which is a political action committee focused on resourcing women in down ballot races in key blue wall states. Ellie has recently been recognized for her work with a number of awards, including the Jewish United Fund's 36 Under 36 and the Chicago Scholars inaugural 35 Under 35. A lifelong Chicago resident, she currently lives in the Albany Park neighborhood with her husband, Matt Altstiel.



### **Gordon Casey, Board Member**

Gordon is based in Vancouver (Canada) with his amazing wife and nauseatingly cute kids. He's growing the Brave Technology Coop as a user and worker-owned digital platform for technological tools to combat the overdose epidemic in North America. Prior to attending StartingBloc (NY15!) he ran a legal consultancy in Curacao. Gordon was raised between Africa, Qatar, Ireland and Canada and practised law in South Africa for a few years in the late 90's. He believes we all intrinsically want to be good, and kind - and thinks that maybe technology could be a tool to activate that...



### **Jai Krishnan, Board Member**

Jai Krishnan is a product manager at Google for the WebM project, an open source standard for video compression. He represents Google at several technical organizations including the Consumer Technology Association WAVE consortium, and Alliance for Open Media. Previously, he was an Accenture consultant working in the technology and energy industries. Originally from South Florida, Jai currently lives in San Francisco. He holds degrees in electrical engineering from Stanford and human-centered design from Northwestern. Jai became a StartingBloc Fellow at the Boston Institute in 2012, and has returned regularly to mentor Fellows.



### **Nils Klinkenberg, Board Member**

A StartingBloc Boston '11 Fellow, Nils has been delighted to mentor or volunteer at more than eighteen Institutes, including serving as StartingBloc's Mentorship Program Lead since 2015. Nils is the Executive Director of the Beacon Hill Friends House, a 21-resident housing cooperative and center for Quaker learning and social action in the heart of downtown Boston. He previously worked at The Cadmus Group helping federal and state agencies manage energy efficiency and sustainable transportation programs. Nils is enthusiastic about many things, including science, civic engagement, cooperation, community, big-picture sustainability, applied weirdness, civilizational resilience, clever people, and the future.



### **Rhoda Tamakloe, Board Member**

Rhoda K. Tamakloe is a NY '12 StartingBloc Fellow with over 10 years of experience working in higher education focused on improving college access and success for low-income populations. She is currently the Director of Operations of the Kapan Educational Foundation, a 501(c)3 public charity with a mission to increase access to higher education to underserved communities through support of the 2-year to 4-year transfer pipeline. Additionally, she currently serves as an alumni interviewer for her alma maters Wesleyan University and Phillips Exeter Academy. Originally from Sandy Hook, CT, Rhoda now resides in Brooklyn.



### **Whitney Smith, Board Member**

Whitney is a London '08 StartingBloc fellow. Currently, he serves an executive at Carr City Centers a division of Carr Companies, a best-in-class real estate investor, developer and owner based in Washington, DC. Prior, Whitney started Sustainable Strength, a 501(c)3 non-profit with a focus on sustainable urban economic and infrastructural development with a focus on Newark, New Jersey. Whitney holds a BA and MA from Dartmouth College an MBA from the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University and has completed related coursework at Oxford University, Columbia Business School and the Tuck School of Business.

## 2017 TEAM



### **Kristine Sloan, Interim CEO**

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 is a trained public speaker and facilitator who holds a Masters of International Studies specializing in Rural Development. Prior to joining StartingBloc, she worked in international development for six years, founding and leading teams across the African continent and in India. You'll find "+1 for Destroying the Patriarchy" as one of two sentences in her LinkedIn profile.



### **Annika Erickson-Pearson, Former Director of Search**

Annika is the consummate people-person and token extrovert on the StartingBloc staff. She believes deeply in the potential and capacity of every person she comes across, and knows that humans have the power to make the world a better, kinder, and more inclusive place. Having spent her career in community organizing, Annika values authenticity, curiosity, drive, and the curative power of a good hug.



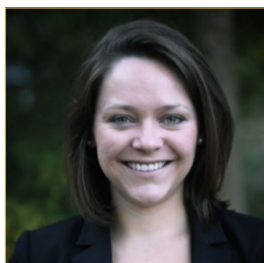
### **Cesar Gonzalez, Former CEO**

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.



### **Jordan Roodman, 2017 Business & Communications Apprentice**

Jordan envisions a world in which the circumstances you are born into do not impact your ability to live a fulfilling life. She sees empathy as an essential first step to meaningful social change and collaboration as the means to cultivate a world of inclusion and equity. Jordan is a rising Junior at Tulane University studying business management and social entrepreneurship, and never fails to enthusiastically sing the wrong lyrics to every song.



### **Allie Treske-Ahearn, 2017 Strategic Marketing Apprentice**

Allie Treske Ahearn is a marketing and impact business strategist who cares deeply about using business as a tool for good. Her accomplishments include scaling a social enterprise nationally, working to expand college access for thousands of students, and guiding companies through rigorous sustainability certifications to improve their triple bottom line. As a recent graduate from the Leeds School of Business, she works with a number of clients on their marketing and business strategy, all while enjoying time with her four-month old baby boy. Allie is a proud Tar Heel (C/O 2010), CU-Boulder MBA (C/O 2017), and StartingBloc Boston 2011 Fellow.

### **2017 Lead Mentors, [Ellie Bahrmassel](#) and [Nils Klinkenberg](#)**

As Lead Mentors, Ellie and Nils supported 56 StartingBloc Fellows who returned to our Institutes as mentors this year. Between the two of them, they devoted well over 250 hours to selecting StartingBloc Institute Mentors, designing and delivering Mentor facilitation training, enabling group check-ins and creating an overall positive experience.

### **2017 Lead Volunteers, [Alex Place](#), [Kenneth Andejas](#), [Kamrin Klauschie](#) and [Byron Go](#).**

At every StartingBloc Institute, dozens of Fellows return to volunteer their time to support the incoming Fellows. Alex, Kenny, Kamrin and Byron were responsible for leading these volunteer teams, managing the back-of-the-house operations at each Institute, and being the go-to support system for the StartingBloc team. At each Institute, they gave over 60 hours of their time to the community, ensuring that the five days ran smoothly and successfully.

### **The StartingBloc team is also supported by:**

Mike Gemm and [ForImpact/The Suddes Group](#)

Luke Sollner and [Blackwood Finance & Accounting](#)

Andrew Ferren and [Goulston & Storrs](#)

[Renee Freedman & Co.](#)

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**“I went to StartingBloc with few expectations and one purpose; I just wanted to recharge. StartingBloc is more than a place to recharge. It's a place where leaders can think about their place in the world, refine their vision and make a game plan for fulfilling their personal mission.**

**I left StartingBloc with a plan to further my noble purpose, hard skills as a leader and friends for a lifetime. What's even greater is that I was able to apply all of my learning the very next day I returned from Starting Bloc during a senior retreat that I was leading! As a lifelong learner, I know it's not easily done. Bravo to StartingBloc for inspiring me, teaching me and setting my soul on fire!”**

*- Terri Broussard Williams, LA'17 Fellow*



# CELEBRATING OUR WINS

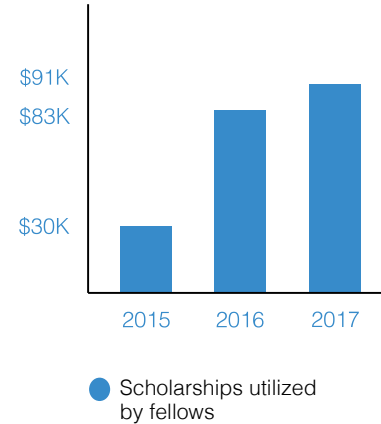


## Small Tweaks, Big Impact

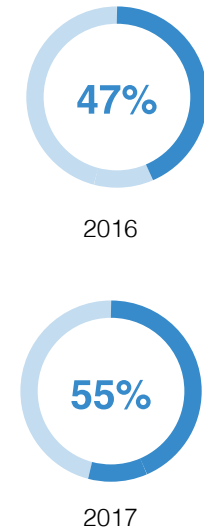
In 2017, we fine tuned. We improved our Institutes through small but important changes. Our Fellows hosted not one, but two Unplugged events this year - including the first one outside of the United States in Mumbai. We tweaked our internal systems and provided more opportunities for current Fellows to share their stories, their perspectives, and their expertise.

Incoming Fellows had a better experience at Institutes, jumping from a Net Promoter Score of 9.1/10 in 2016 to 9.3/10 in 2017. We brought in an [amazing roster of speakers](#) and we deepened our relationships with the core facilitators that make every single StartingBloc Institute strong.

## Scholarship Award Trends



## Pipeline Conversion Rate



We strengthened our commitment to access and inclusivity. We gave \$30k in scholarship funding to incoming 2015 StartingBloc Fellows. In 2016, we gave \$83k in scholarships. In 2017, we provided an incredible \$91k in scholarships for incoming Fellows.

We clarified and strengthened our messaging. We shifted the story of StartingBloc from a story about the organization to a compilation of stories about StartingBloc Fellows. We relied less on our impact data and the ROI (though we have it) and opened up systems and processes for Fellows to tell their stories and to share their expertise. Our pipeline conversion rates jumped from 47% to 55% and our public voice became more authentic.

## Fellow Ownership & Leadership

StartingBloc seeks to convene, grow, and support leaders that know how to share power. In 2017, we stepped into that.

We're proud to have built a Fellow-only Board. A Fellow-only Board puts us one meaningful step closer to a peer-to-peer style of organizational design and management. It matters that the duty of care to the organization is being upheld by Fellows.

We're proud that over 60 Fellows now donate on a monthly, sustaining basis to StartingBloc, ensuring the continued autonomy of our community. We're proud that we got there with a peer-to-peer fundraising model.

We're proud that 73% of our community partners at the 2017 Institute Scrimmages were teams led by StartingBloc Fellows. That's 57 hours of pro-bono work directed at organizations where Fellows work and lead.

We're proud that 56 Fellows returned to mentor at Institutes this year, representing 3360 volunteer hours donated in service of the Fellowship and its continued growth and culture.

We're proud that StartingBloc Fellows led not one, but TWO Unplugged events this year. The first, Unplugged Chicago, brought together 53 existing Fellows in a two-day event designed to celebrate the legacy of StartingBloc (founded in Illinois in 2003) and deepen the connections amongst our community. The event was led by Ellie Bahrmassel, Christina Gace, Leslie Thomas, Saachi Shah and Molly Black, and 92% of attending Fellows found the content inspiring, useful and relevant.





## **We Hosted the First StartingBloc Global Unplugged Event**

The second Unplugged was our first event held outside of the United States since 2008. Hosted in Mumbai, India, a Fellow-led team brought together 20 StartingBloc Fellows from around the world. They discussed social change in the Asian context and recommitted to working together as a strong community in the region. Sherry Ezhuthachan, Megha Modi, Sujith Yankanaik, Smiti Gahrotra, and Aneeq Dholakia demonstrated possibility when it comes to where StartingBloc hosts events and convenes community. Their team of volunteers worked together over a seven month period, taking on the task of designing, hosting, and creating an event as well as tracking, understanding, and sorting through which Fellows are in Asia, what their updated contact information is, and how they're feeling post-StartingBloc. We're hugely grateful for their commitment and their leadership.

## **We Completely Redesigned the Website**

Over two dozen Fellows worked with our team throughout the summer to reorganize and redesign our website. We created a new navigation frame, got rid of complexity (going from 78 total pages to 44), and wrote and designed 20 new pages of content within those 44. Final result: almost half of the website is completely new copy, totally relevant, and on-point for where we are and where we are going. We have new sections for Partners and Incoming Fellows as well as an updated Current Fellows page.

We employed a Human Centered Design process to get this project done. 20 Fellows user-tested two prototypes of the website and a small group of four Fellows worked on the third round. Allie Treske Ahearn (BOS'11 Fellow) came on as an apprentice this summer and worked with our team on the website right up until her baby boy was born (48 hours before,



to be exact), ensuring that we launched on time. As a result: the copy is stronger, the navigation makes way more sense, and with absolutely no team experience in web development, we have a functional website.



## Comprehensive Fundraising Strategy & Growth Plan

One of our core 2017 priorities was Growth. In December of 2016, we partnered with [ForImpact](#)/The Suddes Group to get fresh eyes and expert knowledge on our vision and growth plan.

Relying upon the last 12 months of coaching with ForImpact and the qualitative feedback we have pulled in from Fellows over the last three years, we now have a clearly delineated growth plan. We have an engagement tool for funders. We have a Master Prospect List and a working process to update

and refine our asks. To quote ForImpact, we're spending more time with fewer prospects, and we received major gifts from the [Sequoia Foundation](#) and the [Cordes Foundation](#). We're working from a sense of deep abundance towards a well-resourced StartingBloc.

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**When someone asks us how they can help, we now have an answer. A clear, strong, purposeful answer.**

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The Institute was a 5-day journey of inspiration. The first day, I was immediately disarmed by the vulnerability and the sincerity of the mentors. I felt activated by the workshops - they were more than just lectures but were tools or methods for problem-solving both personal and professional situations. After the five days, I felt like I found a community that “got me”. It was a community of people that derived meaning from the help they were able to provide to others. We were dogged in our optimism, and relentless in our passion. We were fiercely loyal. Countless times while going through the Institute, I felt connection to other people’s dreams and ambitions, and by the end of the program, any breakthrough or progress a cohort member made, felt like a win for me as well.

- Corey Ponder, DC'15 Fellow in a 2017 Interview



# WHERE WE'VE FAILED

## Internal Turnover

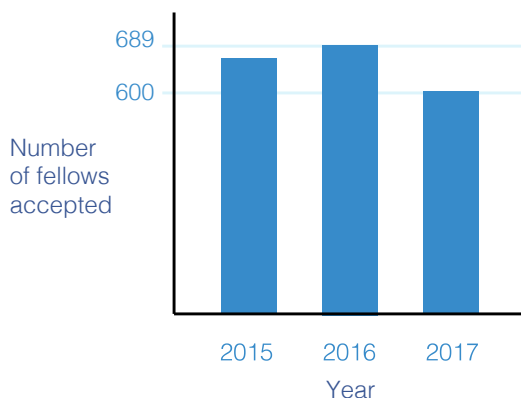
In the last 4 years, StartingBloc has brought on 6 team members and seen 5 depart. In our team size of 2-3, that represents a huge failure in capacity to hire the right people and care for them while they're on the team. In 2017, we lost two of the three members of our team to burnout and misalignment. We went through most of the year without the capacity to raise salaries, provide for full health insurance benefits, or ensure that our two-week vacation minimum was met. Regardless of how well this year went for incoming Fellows and for community engagement, internally, it felt hard.

In early 2018, we're moving to a two-person team. We intend to lead a recruitment process with laser focus on alignment. Responding to calls from our community, we're raising salaries by 30% for all team members and we're providing health insurance. Our goal is to fundraise for a third hire by June of 2018 and to grow to a healthy and robust team of 7 by 2022.

## Our Pipeline Shrunk

In 2015, we accepted 673 Fellows into StartingBloc. In 2016, we accepted 689 Fellows. In 2017, we only accepted 600 Fellows. While we raised our conversion rates and thus had more folks join the Fellowship this year (332, up from 321 last year), we still didn't fill Institutes and our pipeline actually shrunk. We focused our attention on our Fellow referrals and nominations, because that's truly what works to getting the right people in the room. We didn't balance that focus enough with work on developing strategic, cross-promotional partnerships that would bring our Institute applications in

## StartingBloc's Pipeline



front of a large audience quickly.

In 2018, we intend to balance our efforts on Fellow referrals with a concerted effort on pipeline expansion. We've laid out strategic partners we want to work

with and we're looking to develop stronger relationships with community organizers and corporate HR departments. We're launching a Raleigh-Durham Institute to ignite and build the StartingBloc brand in the American South East, traditionally the region of the country where we have a hard time recruiting for our other Institutes. We're bringing in an Institute coordinator for our New Orleans Institute to spend five months supporting on-the-ground recruiting. We're believe that having someone who is able to make and sustain in-person relationships will better articulate the value and commitment of StartingBloc in the Delta Region.

## We Didn't Sizzle

Our second core priority of 2017 was Sizzle. We wanted to uplift and better position StartingBloc's brand as the Future of Leadership. We wanted our Fellows and the organization as a whole to be featured in media and news outlets and we wanted more online content and presence. We invested in our PR and we got very few applications, partners, and

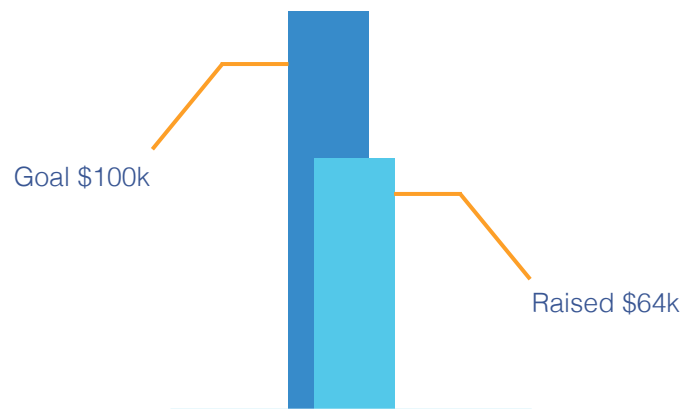
fundraising from that investment. We invested in conference attendance and event promotion and experienced a mixed bag of results. We focused on the wrong priorities to build a movement around StartingBloc and it showed.

In 2018, we're taking what we've learned and we're narrowing our efforts to what we believe will work. We will be generating content, developing more cohesive brand messaging, and attending seven events that will reach audiences in new industries and geographies. We think this aligns well with our commitment to showcasing the work and the voice of our Fellows.

### Fundraising is Tough

Well, duh. We set a goal of \$100k to be raised through fundraising this year and we only brought in \$64k. We underestimated the amount of work it would take to get our systems set up, our prospect lists built, and our donor relationships opened. Our commitment on fundraising sputtered alongside our internal transition, causing us to have strong periods of activity and movement followed by slower periods as we managed internal turnover.

#### Fundraising Goals 2017



### **HERE'S THE THING: WE NEED PEOPLE TO CHAMPION STARTINGBLOC.**

We need those champions to invite potential funders to start conversations with our team or to attend Institutes. [We need you to invest in helping us get there.](#) StartingBloc Fellows are amazing. StartingBloc the organization is a net positive to the world. The world needs better leadership. We're committed, we're on board, we're pushing. We're designing alternative revenue streams for StartingBloc, we're reimagining what the organization might mean for the Future of Leadership as a whole, and we're absolutely committed to remaining an inclusive community. Fundraising will continue to be a major priority in 2018.

# STARTINGBLOC'S 2017 FINANCES



**2017 was a strong year for StartingBloc.** Our Annual Operating Budget grew by 7%, the fifth year in a row that we have seen growth. We lowered operational costs by \$5510 and increased our spending on Institutes, still resulting in lower total costs for 2017. Incredibly, incoming 2017 Fellows utilized \$91k of scholarship funding.

## An Overview of 2017

In our 2016 Transparency Report, we reported a drop in program revenue and our 276% increase in scholarships as major contributors to financial constraint.

In 2017, we focused on growing program revenue instead of attendance numbers. By focusing on the financials, we made \$22k more in program revenue and actually increased our scholarships this year - moving from \$87k utilized in 2016 to \$91k utilized in 2017. We committed strongly to access and inclusivity, and we made more money doing it.

By reinstating our application fee, we brought in an additional \$7k in revenue and saw higher quality, more thoughtful applications come through. We also increased sponsorship revenue by a modest \$2k sum. We continued to operate largely on an earned income model (85% of our annual budget) but we diversified our revenue streams. To test viability, we ran a few corporate and online trainings this year and plan to expand those offerings in 2018.

**Individual Contributions Grew:** We started 2017 with 17 Fellows giving monthly, for a total of \$3300 in annual monthly giving. By the end of 2017, 62 Fellows were giving monthly for a total of \$16200 in annual monthly giving. That's a huge win for StartingBloc's long-term financial autonomy and

we're proud to have so many Fellows investing in our shared community.

**Little Progress on Major Gifts:** We made a significant investment in building our internal systems for fundraising, however, we only secured two five-figure gifts. We're excited about 2018 and feel confident that we will close on major gifts and partnership conversations that have begun this year.

**New Orleans fell short:** In terms of values and mission, our New Orleans Institute feels the most aligned. We love the city and we are proud to have hosted Institutes in NOLA since 2015. In terms of revenue, New Orleans is hard. It is half of the size of our other Institutes, we have no additional sponsors in the city, and we give substantial scholarships to get folks into the room. Our strategy on NOLA has to change.

## The 2018 Financial Picture:

In the past two years, we've proven our capacity to keep Institute costs low. That's why we're expanding our Institute locations in 2018. [We will host five Institutes throughout the year:](#) LA in February, NOLA in May, Raleigh-Durham in June (this one is new), NYC in August, and DC in October. In financial terms, we have a couple of intentions in our choice to expand: First, to bring the Institute to the Southeast and expand our local presence in a traditionally low-attendance region for StartingBloc. Second, to bring in a cash influx during the summer.

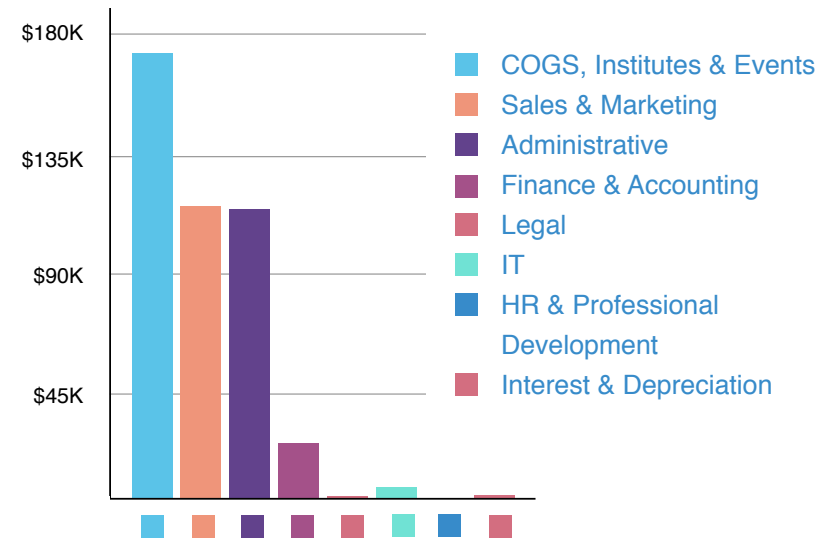
We're also switching up our approach in New Orleans to better align with the business culture of the city. We're bringing on a local Institute Coordinator to help us share StartingBloc with the local community, expand our local sponsors to cover

increased scholarships for folks coming from Louisiana, and to support us in cutting Institute costs even further. We're betting that by investing in relationships, we will see more folks interested in joining the Fellowship and supporting our mission.

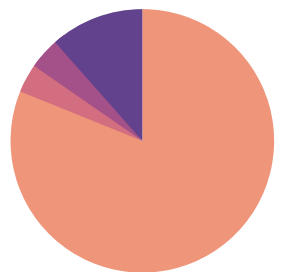
Finally, we're going to continue focusing on fundraising and developing new revenue streams for StartingBloc. We're going to be pitching major funders to support the growth and vision for StartingBloc and we intend to bring StartingBloc content to more corporations, organizations, and communities through trainings and offsite retreats.

We intend to increase program revenue by \$45k and secure \$100k in major gifts. We will use operating support to hire a third team member by mid-2018. Their role will be focused on high-level creative partnerships and revenue generation, and we're excited to invest in that work.

### 2017 Costs

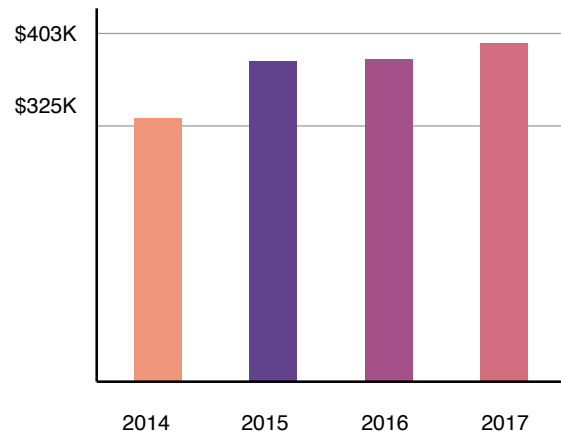


### 2017 Revenue

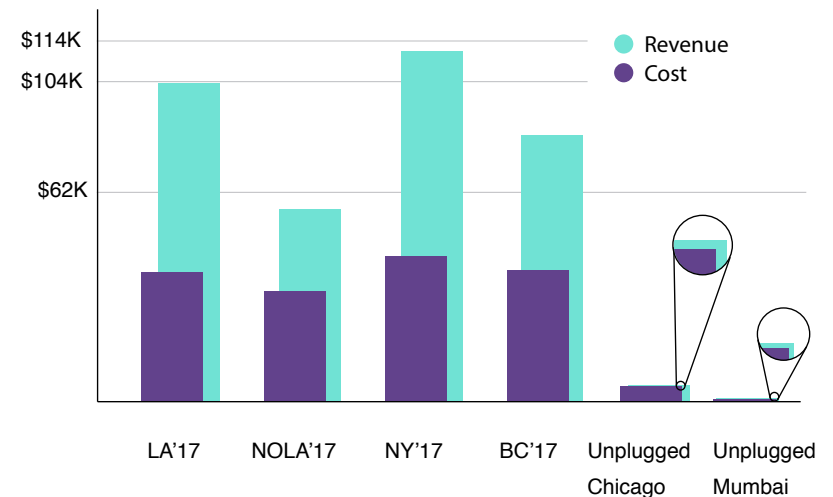


- Program Revenue: 81%
- Application fees: 4%
- Sponsorships: 4%
- Donations: 4%

### Operating Budget



### 2017 Event Profit Margins







## IN CLOSING

### In 2017, our two themes were Growth and Sizzle.

On Growth: We grew our operating budget and the number of Fellows who attended Institutes. We developed the internal systems needed to build fundraising relationships and we invested in growth strategy coaching for our team. And StartingBloc expanded our reach: bringing our curriculum outside of the Fellowship and into corporations and aligned-organizations. We hosted our first event outside of the United States in 9 years, and we brought on a new all-Fellow Board of Directors. In terms of Sizzle: our Fellows got a ton of national press and Kristine [is writing for Forbes](#); still, we largely failed here.

**Our 2018 priorities?** Organizational Culture, Pipeline Development, and Creative Partnerships. We will be shifting our team culture to structures more closely aligned with [Teal](#) organizations. We re-scoped our team roles and are bringing on a newly designed Admissions Director to focus on pipeline development (in the StartingBloc way, so expect a lot of authentic, wholehearted recruitment). We are focusing on Creative Partnerships and thinking expansively around StartingBloc's role in defining and ushering in the Future of Leadership. We intend to grow our small-but-mighty team to three people, double the pipeline, and close two high stakes partnerships.

### A closing note from Kristine:

In a recent On Being episode, Rebecca Solnit says:

*“If you study history deeply, you realize that, to quote Patti Smith, ‘People have the power’ — that popular power, civil society, has been tremendously powerful and has changed the world again and again and again; that we’re not powerless; that things are very unpredictable and that people have often taken on things that seemed hopeless — freeing the slaves, getting women the vote — and achieved those things. And I feel like so much of what we’re burdened by is bad stories, both people who have amnesia, who don’t remember that the present was constructed by certain forces to serve certain elements and can be deconstructed and that things could be very different, that they have been very different, that things are always changing and that we have agency in that change.”*

Deconstruction leads to liberation, and it starts with us remembering to recognize our power and to build our collective agency. I leave 2017 in deep gratitude to the StartingBloc community, and with fresh energy and focus for the year ahead. Thank you. Let's be well, together.