



Fellows Model

Turning Rural Educators into Catalysts for Change



What We Do

ConnectED is working for a world where youth in Central America have access to a quality and relevant education. At the local level there are change agents, leaders in education. They live in the community, have the passion, the desire, but often lack the skills and resources to improve education outcomes. Our unique and proven model selects these local visionary leaders to serve as ConnectED Fellows. Through mentorship and leadership development they are equipped to be change agents who engage and empower their communities to understand education challenges, set goals, complete projects and realize their vision for improved education. The training that Fellows receive helps them develop skills such as, problem solving, project development, consensus building, coordination, communication and leadership. These skills serve the immediate needs of the education sector in their community and have a benefit many times larger for themselves.

In sum, our **Theory of Change** is as follows:

IF

Dynamic education leaders are empowered to effect change – through capacity development, resource provision, and support of locally-driven solutions

THEN

They can improve access, quality and relevance of formal and non-formal education in their community

WHICH WILL RESULT IN

Improved learning outcomes and prospects for youth in select communities

AND ULTIMATELY WILL

Provide education leaders with the opportunity to build skills and gain relevant experiences to improve their own livelihood.



Since 2014, more than 130 communities throughout Nicaragua and Guatemala have benefited from improved education outcomes as a result of the ConnectED Fellows Model. Fellows have built new schools, designed new and more relevant curricula, created professional development training for local educators, developed nutrition and school feeding programs, created libraries in indigenous languages, improved technology literacy and much more.

Purpose of this Guide

This document offers a GUIDE to show how the ConnectED Fellows Model is implemented in the field. It is not a canned set of instructions to follow, but rather a tool built on lessons learned and best practices that utilizes fixed and flexible programming components to ensure the organization achieves its mission, and that solutions are locally driven and relevant. It explains how ConnectED works with Fellows to strengthen their capacity to develop, implement, and sustain approaches to meeting education needs in their community. Each year, ConnectED solicits feedback from its growing network of Fellows and local partners and iterates the Fellows Model accordingly to ensure it is as impactful as possible.

What is a ConnectED Fellow?

A ConnectED Fellow is an education leader, nominated by a ConnectED partner or peer Fellow, who has demonstrated an exceptional desire and ability to improve the educational outcomes of learners in their community. The Fellow commits to projects which will benefit the learners and the wider school community in their locale.

What does access to education mean?

Access refers to the equality of opportunity to participate in and receive a good-quality education, regardless of socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, physical status and other aspects that may inhibit their opportunity to learn. Other barriers to access education can include distance to school, costs for tuition/supplies/uniforms, lack of family support, the safety and health of the school environment, the adequacy of its facilities (water, latrines, and sanitation), conflict, and prohibitive cultural norms.¹

ConnectED works to address barriers that will provide opportunities for the greatest number of learners. The Fellows select their projects based on a thorough community assessment and a rigorous vetting process by organizational leadership education mentors.

1 See the Commonwealth Education Hub's discussion document *Increasing Access to Education*, for an exploration of these issues.

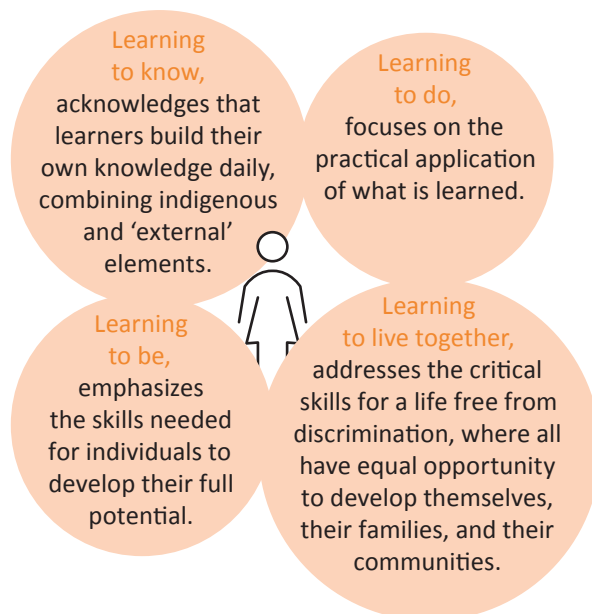
What does quality of education mean?

The quality of education is determined by several factors that include teacher preparation, curriculum design, appropriateness and adequacy of learning materials, opportunities for skills development and remediated learning, a physical space that is conducive for learning, a pro-social school environment, and family and community support for learning.

ConnectED targets interventions to improve educational quality by enhancing teacher skills, providing innovative learning experiences through extracurricular activities, and enhancing community support for education, among others.

What does relevance of education mean?

Relevance is a concept that changes with context but is undergirded by certain enduring principles outlined in the landmark document *Learning: The Treasure Within*, report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century. This commission saw education, throughout life, as based upon four pillars²:



ConnectED works to enhance the relevance of education by providing supports to ensure that the teaching and learning process better meets the needs of learners. We offer learning experiences to build skills and competencies that support individuals to know, to do, to live together, and to be.

2 Delors et al., 1996, as described in the EFA Global Monitoring Report (2005): http://www.unesco.org/education/gmr_download/chapter1.pdf

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How we do it

Phase **1** 2 3 4 5 6 7
Connect!
Identify Local Fellows



Purpose

The most critical component of the ConnectED Fellows Program involves identifying appropriate local partners to work with. Partnerships and collaboration make this work possible and targeting the right local education leaders (Fellows) and respective communities determines the success of a project.

Key Deliverables

ConnectED Fellows and communities selected.

Step **1** **2**

Identify and partner with local Fellows

ConnectED works closely with local partners, and existing Fellows, to identify potential Fellows who could serve as ambassadors of their community and their school. The goal is to catalyze local education leaders by giving them the tools and training that they need to act as long-term managers, leaders, and informed decision makers of community-driven education projects.

The strategy for selection of education leaders to participate in the ConnectED Fellows Program requires identification that potential Fellows have specific values, traits, and capacities. Through interviews with prospective Fellows, ConnectED learns about their prospective work ethic, demeanor, values, skills, and previous work to more fully understand their strengths and capacity to serve as a representative of their school and their community.

The following core areas are assessed based on the Fellows Selection Criteria:

- Resides in a community that meets the selection criteria and stands to benefit from the process
- Understands the ConnectED Fellows Program process and goals
- Connection to and understanding of education within the community
- Understands community dynamics and demonstrates ethical reasoning
- Ability to act as a community mobilizer and work effectively with others
- Capacity for ideation/design and to identify potential solutions to a specific problem
- Knowledge, capacity, and drive in areas that benefit the community
- Understands sustainability as an important component of projects
- Aligned personal values, passion, and enthusiasm

After meeting with prospective Fellows, through virtual and in-person interviews, ConnectED reviews the nominations and recommendations against the Fellow Selection Criteria and invites qualified candidates to take part in the ConnectED Fellows Program.

Resources

- Fellow Selection Criteria
- Community Selection Criteria



Phase 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Build Capacity!

Develop Local Leadership



Purpose

Building the capacity of our local Fellows is about developing resilience within the communities with which we work and strengthening the human resources that already exist. With increased capacity, local education leaders are better able to support their community in navigating changing education needs and opportunities in the long-term. Building the capacity and leadership of our Fellows begins straight away with a new cohort of Fellows and is ongoing throughout the duration of the Fellowship.

Key Deliverables

Fellows' leadership capacity strengthened.

Step 1

Strengthen local capacity

ConnectED provides each Fellow with training to build their leadership capacity, technology literacy, and professional development related to their individual project areas and/or profession. The training that Fellows receive as a cohort develops their knowledge and capacity to engage and mobilize their community to design and implement impactful projects. The technology training focuses on understanding the core functionality and use of an Ipad, which they receive as part of the Fellowship. Fellows learn communication platforms, word, excel, videography/photography documentary, and more. Lastly, they receive individualized training in key areas that strengthen their project outcomes and their professional development goals. This process results in the creation of a Fellow Leadership Development Plan, which identifies specific training plans for each Fellow. Once developed, ConnectED works with Fellow(s) and partners to implement relevant training in both a team cohort environment and through one-on-one mentorship.

Resources

Fellows Cohort Leadership Curricula



Phase 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Listen!
Assess Community Needs



Purpose

One of the most critical components of the ConnectED Fellows Model includes the use of human-centered design as a tool to inspire, prepare, and support local education leaders to turn knowledge into action in addressing critical educational challenges. Once selected, Fellows work with partners, community members, and ConnectED to gain a better understanding of community education issues by conducting a community assessment. The results of the assessment guide future action. It engages Fellows and community members to learn more about their communities, discuss findings, propose potential solutions, and create strategies to make positive education changes in their community. Through the community assessment process, Fellows also address existing communication barriers between local stakeholders that allows for more effective collaboration in both the short and long term.

Key Deliverables

Community assessment completed, and education priorities and potential solutions presented.

Step 1 2

Conduct Community Needs Assessment

The Community Assessment is both a process and a tool. As a process, it builds leadership, group cohesion, consensus, and a sense of local involvement. As a tool, it helps a Fellow engage their community to better understand its dynamics and composition and the primary issues that education can play a role in solving. The community assessment also helps to ensure that executed education initiatives are relevant to the community and build off of community strengths and resources. It is used to assess stakeholder strengths, needs, and challenges related to education, and to support our Fellows at the beginning of their project design, through focus groups, interviews, and relevant questions to gather primary data about the community and their perceptions.

Fellows are taught how to conduct the process and lead all of the focus groups, data collection, and analysis. The process is carried out in a transparent and sensitive way, respecting ownership and feelings of all participants. A key component involves inviting parents, students, school administrators, and local authorities to participate in focus groups, which aim to:

- Understand how the community sees strengths and challenges of the education system;
- Understand how the community can engage in making change;
- Identify areas for action in relation to educational goals (possible projects); and,
- Learn more about issues of access, quality, and relevance of the educational system.

Step 1 2

Assess and prioritize community needs

Once a community assessment is completed, Fellows work with ConnectED, to analyze and interpret collected information. Together, they identify key messages, trends, ideas, and exceptions. Through the facilitation of a community workshop, Fellows explain the goals of the research, what feedback they have received in the community assessment process, and what education issues have emerged as priorities.

The completed assessment provides the community with a written record and a broad snapshot of their community. It also serves as a conversation starter to ensure that the entire community is aware of the results and that there is consensus regarding primary issues of access, quality, and relevance of education.

Resources

- Community Assessment Focus Group Facilitation Guide
- Focus Groups – Presentation of Results

Phase 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Plan!

Generate Project Designs



Purpose

Through one-on-one mentorship and coaching from ConnectED, as well as peer-to-peer knowledge exchange within the cohort, Fellows are supported to assess/prioritize needs and design a clear and motivating mission statement and work plan to guide the achievement of project goals. Additional education/technical expertise are brought in, as needed, to provide Fellows with specialized skills and capabilities relevant to their individual project design and community needs.

Key Deliverables

Project team assembled, community project selected, and mission statement and project plan developed.

Step 1 2 3

Assemble the project team

Once the Fellow has engaged their community to identify their priority education need(s), ConnectED works with Fellow(s) to assemble a project team to support the design and implementation of their education strategy/project. The team often includes local Fellows, community volunteers, ConnectED regional staff, CBO staff, students and a selection of local, regional, and international advisors from private/public entities, with synergistic missions and relevant expertise that can support project goals and capacity building needs of local Fellows.

Step 1 2

Generate ideas, assess, and prioritize and select projects

Once the team is established, ConnectED and Fellow(s) assess community priorities and potential projects through a focused lens, to ensure optimization and empowerment of local assets to build a sustainable, long-term, low-cost program/project that delivers high return and education benefits for the given community.

Step 1 2 3

Develop the project design

After the assessment process is completed and a community project is selected, the Fellow develops a mission statement that briefly captures in a clear and motivating way the project goals and the values underlying them. The Fellow puts together a well-developed project proposal that communicates goals/deliverables (issue, community solution, local assets, and resources needed), timeline, and budget that are reviewed by ConnectED staff as needed.

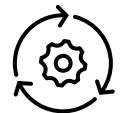
Resources

- Project Selection Criteria
- Project Logical Framework
- Project Proposal
- Project Budget

Phase 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Implement!

Pilot Small-Scale Initiatives



Purpose

Close monitoring of team activities and control processes are used to ensure final deliverables are achieved and to keep project plans on track. The use of locally available resources, investments in capacity building, and local partnerships are key to ensuring sustainability.

Key Deliverables

Project monitored and implemented.

Step 1

Move project deliverables to completion

The project Fellow, partners, ConnectED staff, and education mentors work closely throughout the process to move project deliverables forward, assess progress, troubleshoot hurdles, and engage team members as needed. Community members contribute their time to support infrastructure and project development. Lead partners and mentors provide valuable technical support and insight.

Resources

- Project Proposal Template
- Project Baseline Tool

Phase 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Evaluate!

Adaptively Manage and Scale
Successful Initiatives



Purpose

Greater long-term results are achieved by building partnerships, coordinating goals, and capturing lessons learned from experience. Once those experiences are collected, they can be shared effectively, and others can benefit from them. ConnectED works with partners, Fellows, and project teams to conduct robust monitoring and evaluation at both the program/organization level and individual intervention/project level. Of critical importance are lessons learned and feedback from local Fellows and partners regarding their experience of the ConnectED Fellows Model. Each year, ConnectED incorporates lessons learned via annual impact evaluations and an Annual Fellows Summit to ensure the Fellows Model is adaptively managed.

Key Deliverables

Project evaluated, and successful innovations identified and scaled.

Step 1

Assess impact and incorporate feedback from beneficiaries to adaptively manage

Impact assessments are carried out to measure the effectiveness of project activities by evaluating the significance of changes brought about by implemented activities. These changes comprise all the positive and negative, and intended or unintended results in all areas and allow ConnectED! to understand how its efforts impact a community and how its programming can be improved. A regular feedback system is used to engage with Fellows and community members to get their opinion and check that their expectations are being met.

Resources

- Project Evaluation Plan
- Project Impact Evaluation

Phase 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Elevate!

Fellows Network



Purpose

ConnectED provides continued support to Fellows via the Fellows Network to elevate their voice and make connections that can support their personal leadership and community needs beyond education. ConnectED maintains an active roster of partners in and beyond education and facilitates connections to Fellows, as well as an active roster of Fellowship or leadership opportunities to engage Fellows with, as relevant, and supports them in the application process, during or post project implementation. Alumni Fellows that have successfully gone through the Program and implemented a project mentor/coach new Fellows based on lived experience.

ConnectED provides Fellows with a Certificate of Program Completion at the Fellows Summit each year to recognize completion of the project and impact.

Resources

- Database/Repository of resources (organizations with expertise in areas beyond education, etc.)
- Open education resources to share tools/methodology of local solutions between the Fellows Network
- Certificate of Project Completion



