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## Philanthropy fellowship allows for reflection, study

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By Sharon Charters

I had the pleasure of participating as a Senior Fellow with the City University of New York (CUNY), [Center of Philanthropy and Civil Society](#) fellowship program, from Oct. 18 to Nov. 12.

The centre offers fellowships to both international “emerging leaders” and “senior fellows.” Our group of four brought the total to 151 people from 54 countries who have participated in the fellowship program and who are working in the fields of philanthropy and civil society.

The process of being awarded a fellowship requires the submission of a proposal for an area of study which will benefit the field of philanthropy, specifically as it relates to [community foundations](#).

For me personally, this was a chance to take some time to reflect on [Hamilton Community Foundation](#)'s work in poverty reduction at a neighbourhood level, and to learn about the experiences of both my fellow “fellows,” as well as from guests from the private and community foundation



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### ABOUT VITAL SIGNS

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Vital Signs is an annual check-up conducted by community foundations across Canada that measures the vitality of our communities, identifies trends, and shares opportunities for action in at least ten areas critical to quality of life.

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world. And I must confess that the idea of doing this in the “city that never sleeps” was certainly an added enticement.

My colleagues were Inna from Russia, Patrick from South Africa and Nurah, who is originally from Trinidad-Tobago and currently working in the Bronx. We were able to meet with representatives from the Mott Foundation, the Carnegie Corporation, the Ford Foundation, the Council on Foundations, the Brazil Foundation, the Long Island Foundation, Ashoka, the Brooklyn Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and others.

We have each produced a position paper based on our original proposal and made a presentation to the fellows, along with the wonderfully supportive CUNY staff of Professor Kathleen McCarthy, Barbara Leopold, and Amal Muhammad.

It was truly eye-opening to hear about how community foundations can be a tool for change in such different environments. For Inna, this is an environment where the culture of organized philanthropy is being resurrected. For Patrick, his context is how a community foundation can work in a small, rural South African community building on current customs of giving. For Nurah, the question is whether a community foundation is the right vehicle for sustaining the work within a geographic area that is part of a larger philanthropic environment. We each take home a better understanding not only of our own foundations, but of the incredible diversity and flexibility within the community foundation movement.

*Sharon Charters is Manager of Grants with Hamilton Community Foundation*

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