

Scaling the Impacts of FutureBUILDS

Evaluation and Learning Report

Prepared by Lynn Liao, PhD and All In Research & Innovation

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	2
Executive Summary.....	3
The Context.....	3
What was Learned.....	3
Incubator Program Outcomes.....	3
Fellowship Program Outcomes.....	4
Key Insights.....	5
The Issue.....	6
Project Description.....	7
Evaluation Methodology.....	8
Evidence and Insights.....	10
Incubator Core Program Outcomes.....	10
Social Capital.....	11
Essential Knowledge and Skills of Real Estate Development.....	13
NEXT Fellowship Core Program Outcomes.....	15
Social Capital.....	16
Essential Skills and Knowledge.....	17
Leadership Skills.....	18
FutureBUILDS Conference Events.....	19
Participant Experience.....	21
Participant Experience - Incubator.....	21
Participant Experience - NEXT Fellowship.....	22
Program Delivery.....	23
Program Staff Experience.....	23
Faculty and Mentor Experiences.....	24
Lessons Learned/Recommendations.....	26
Supporting Equitable Access to Networking Opportunities.....	26
Enhancing the Mentoring Component.....	27
Addressing Diverse Interests and Needs Across the Cohort.....	28
Aligning Time and Resources with Program Ambition.....	29
Implications for Policy, Government, and Industry.....	31
References.....	33

* Appendices A - K have been shared in a separate Google Drive folder, [accessible at this link](#).

Executive Summary

The Context

BIPOC professionals remain under-represented in Canada's real estate development and non-profit housing sectors, despite facing disproportionate housing barriers (Sioufi, 2025) and possessing the critical lived experience needed in the industry. FutureBUILDS was developed to address these inequities by building the technical knowledge, confidence, and social capital required for BIPOC entrepreneurs and emerging leaders to participate meaningfully in the sector.

This report details findings from the evaluation of the second iteration of the FutureBUILDS Incubator Program and the new Black Housing Fellowship, delivered by Monumental between March - July 2025, with a conference that took place in September. This evaluation examined how these programs supported learning, skill development, and social capital growth for BIPOC individuals entering the real estate development sector. The evaluation leveraged the use of surveys, focus groups, interviews, and administrative data to gather insights on the participant experience, program delivery, as well as the contributions of the public-facing events.

What was Learned

Both programs were experienced as high-quality, supportive, and culturally affirming. Participants valued the sense of care and psychological safety created through intentional design choices. Across both cohorts, peer connections were the strongest source of ongoing support. Some participants expressed uncertainty about networking norms and varying levels of readiness for engagement with industry experts. Both groups recommended more time for exploring the content in-depth.

Overall, the program contributed to equipping BIPOC professionals with skills, networks, and industry exposure, steps that are key to building solutions to address the housing crisis in Canada. It helped address structural barriers in real estate development and non-profit housing, and laid the groundwork for entrepreneurs and emerging leaders who can shape housing solutions in their communities.

Incubator Program Outcomes

The Incubator strengthened technical knowledge, expanded peer networks, built confidence, and clarified participants' next steps for their projects. Incubator participants demonstrated clear learning gains across all content areas, particularly feasibility, legal and financial literacy,

and project design. Site visits, pitch sessions, and mentorship offered meaningful applied learning, though mentor matching and group attendance varied in success and consistency.

Fellowship Program Outcomes

The Fellowship enhanced leadership confidence, increased understanding of Black-led housing initiatives, and fostered strong cohort bonds. Fellowship participants gained deeper understanding of leadership pathways and non-profit housing systems, with the Halifax trip emerging as a transformative learning experience.

Key Insights

- For mid-career professionals transitioning into the real estate development industry in the FutureBUILDS Real Estate Development Incubator, the most significant learning gain was in the area of feasibility and design. Participants' self-assessed understanding increased from an average of 1.30 before the program (between "little" and "fair") to 3.15 after the program (between "good" and "excellent")—an average gain of 1.85 points.
- For early-career Black professionals in the FutureBUILDS NEXT Fellowship, the most significant learning gains came from the Halifax Learning Trip. Participants deepened their understanding of community-led and non-profit housing development, land stewardship, and precedent-setting projects serving Black and African Nova Scotian communities. Average self-assessed understanding increased from 1.35 (between "little" and "fair") before the program to 3.75 (between "good" and "excellent") after—a gain of 2.4 points.
- To strengthen the social capital component, FutureBUILDS should explicitly consider how gender and socio-cultural norms shape networking experiences for BIPOC entrepreneurs. Embedding guidance on navigating these dynamics within networking activities would help ensure all participants can fully benefit from both formal and informal opportunities.

The Issue

Real estate development is a cornerstone of Canada's economy—accounting for nearly 10% of GDP and providing over 350,000 jobs nationwide (Statistics Canada, 2025). Yet despite the sector's scale and influence, representation of Indigenous and racialized professionals within its leadership and ownership ranks remains strikingly low. A 2016 survey (Varga, 2021) examining workplace diversity in real estate found that only 14% of ownership and leadership positions in the industry were held by visible minorities, while visible minorities accounted for over a quarter (27%) of Canada's population in 2021. Further, only 1% of those who identified as of Aboriginal descent were represented in the industry, while the 2021 census showed that Indigenous peoples make up approximately 5% of Canada's population (Statistics Canada, 2023).

As documented in Ebrahim and Hope's 2023 report, [*Mapping Racialized Experience in Canada's Real Estate Development Industry*](#), individuals in the industry noted racial biases and cultural differences that were barriers to recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion in the industry. BIPOC professionals seeking to enter the development field often encounter a complex and risky process, a lack of immersive learning opportunities, high financial thresholds, and difficulty enhancing their social capital. Even mid-career professionals with transferable expertise in fields such as architecture, planning, or finance face difficulty navigating the complex technical, legal, regulatory, and social landscape that governs the industry. Without targeted support, many promising ideas fail to progress from concept to implementation—limiting both individual advancement and the overall Black, Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) leadership in the industry.

At the same time, Canada's housing needs continue to increase. In June 2025, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimated that housing starts must nearly double to around 430,000 to 480,000 units per year until 2035 to meet projected demand. Furthermore, a report by BC Policy Solution (Sioufi, 2025) reveals that Canada's housing crisis disproportionately impacts Indigenous and racialized communities, who face systemic exclusion in homeownership and rental markets due to decades of discriminatory policy, planning, and finance.

FutureBUILDS addresses both the disproportionate representation of BIPOC entrepreneurs from the real estate industry and the housing need in Canada. The project recognizes that equitable access to development opportunities is not only a question of individual skill and confidence building but also one of social capital—creating entry points and access to networks for groups historically excluded from this industry. At the same time, the curricula highlights growth opportunities in the housing sector such as the missing middle, purpose-built rental housing

and Black community-led non-profit housing, which are needed to fill current housing market demand identified in the report by Ebrahim and Hope (2023).

From a policy and practice perspective, this initiative is highly relevant to current federal and regional priorities around inclusive economic growth and housing innovation. Canada's ongoing housing challenges demand new models of enhancing housing development and a more diverse generation of developers capable of advancing both market and non-profit housing. Supporting BIPOC participation in real estate development aligns with the Future Skills Centre's Pathways to Jobs and Inclusive Economy focus areas by enabling skill transitions into high-growth sectors while diversifying the leadership shaping Canada's built environment.

Project Description

The FutureBUILDS Real Estate Development Incubator and the FutureBUILDS NEXT Fellowship are both part of an initiative led by Monumental to address the systemic exclusion of BIPOC professionals and entrepreneurs from Canada's real estate development sector. Together, this initiative aims to build entrepreneurial capacity for participation in real estate development.

Underlying both of these programs is the assumption that knowledge and skill-building alone is insufficient to overcome systemic exclusion. Success depends equally on cultivating social capital, industry legitimacy, and gaining practical immersive experiences.

This phase of FutureBUILDS builds upon the successful pilot Incubator launched in 2023, which demonstrated strong participant learning outcomes, high satisfaction, and early project advancement. Similar to the first pilot of the FutureBUILDS Incubator, the intended participants in this phase were mid-career BIPOC professionals and entrepreneurs, many of whom have land or property that they would like to develop. The current phase explores a different mentorship structure, using group mentoring as a way to promote peer learning. This iteration also strengthens the financial capital component, and extends the model through the new Fellowship stream focused on non-profit housing. The NEXT fellowship was intended to attract Black youth ages 18-32 in more diverse roles but may include those in community building or engagement roles.

Participants for both the Incubator and Fellowship were invited to submit applications from throughout Ontario, although the in-person elements of the program were concentrated in the Toronto core and would have posed a logistical barrier to those who lived far from the area. As such, most participants resided within the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area (GTHA). There were two participants who resided outside of the GTHA, one each from the Incubator and Fellowship.

Depicted in a theory of change (Appendix A), the core strategy of the Incubator is to provide a cohort-based, experiential learning model that integrates technical training, site visits, mentorship, and applied project development. Participants learn the end-to-end process of real estate development—from feasibility and financing to design, zoning, and implementation, while building their professional networks and advancing their own projects. The NEXT Fellowship deviates from the Incubator by supporting an early-career Black youth cohort to gain insights into culturally responsive non-profit housing development and leadership roles in the sector. Both initiatives are intended to increase BIPOC leadership in the real estate development industry while contributing to the housing need in Canada, including non-profit housing options as a solution to Toronto’s affordable housing crisis.

FutureBUILDS functions as both a professional development program and a policy-relevant model for inclusive innovation in housing and development. It directly advances objectives in two of Future Skills Centre’s focus areas, *Pathways to Jobs* and *Inclusive Economy*, by preparing a new generation of BIPOC developers to lead housing projects that address Canada’s housing needs.

Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation framework (Appendix B) was co-designed with the FutureBUILDS team. The first two key evaluation questions examine how a sector-specific incubator and fellowship can serve as pathways not only to employment but also to ownership, leadership, community wealth-building as individuals in a community, and greater social capacity and social capital. The third and fourth evaluation questions focus on the experience of program delivery from both participants and program staff perspectives. The fifth and last question explores the contribution of FutureBUILDS public-facing events to the building of social capital for BIPOC entrepreneurs in this space.

A series of evaluation tools were developed to collect data throughout the duration of the project implementation. These include:

Participant rapid response surveys

Multiple rapid response surveys were administered to program participants of both the Incubator ($N = 26$) and NEXT Fellowship ($N = 15$). Four rapid response surveys were administered for the Incubator participants and three surveys were administered for the NEXT Fellowship participants. Response rates ranged as low as 3 (12%) and as high as 20 (77%) for the Incubator cohort, with an average response rate of 10 (38%). The response rate for the Fellowship group ranged from 5 (33%) to 11 (73%), with an average response rate of 9 (60%).

The surveys for each of the cohorts differed and were based on their respective curriculum. Summaries of the results from the rapid response surveys were shared with the FutureBUILDS team within a week of receiving them, to provide real-time feedback as the program progressed to inform any needed changes.

Participant retrospective post-program surveys

Two retrospective post-program surveys (Appendix C and D) - one for each cohort - were administered at the end of Incubator and NEXT Fellowship programs to evaluate the overall impact on participants in terms of their skills development, network building and experiences.

Thirteen Incubator participants completed the post-program survey, with a near gender balance (54% men, 46% women) and representation from across BIPOC communities, including 8 Black participants and others identifying as South Asian, East Asian, Southeast Asian, and biracial. Two respondents also identified as people with disabilities. Most were born in Canada (62%), while the remaining participants were permanent residents or naturalized citizens. Educational attainment was high, with 77% holding a university degree, and household incomes were generally above \$80,000, with only one participant reporting earnings between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

Ten Fellowship participants completed the post-program survey, all of whom identified as Black, with the majority (80%) born in Canada. Respondents were predominantly men (80%, 20% women) and largely university educated, with only two reporting college or high school credentials. Household incomes varied, though most reported earnings above \$60,000, with only two respondents falling below that threshold.

Participant focus groups

A series of focus groups were organised for participants of both the Incubator and NEXT Fellowship, to learn more about their experiences in the programs. Seven (26% of the cohort) Incubator participants attended focus groups while six (40% of the cohort) NEXT fellows took part in focus groups. Each session was approximately an hour long and consisted of semi-structured interview questions (Appendix E). Only some of the focus group participants filled out the accompanying demographics survey.

Across the combined focus groups survey respondents ($n = 8$), 100% of participants all identified as Black and while 50% identified as women and 50% as men. One person identified as having a disability. Just over half were born in Canada (63%), while the remaining participants were permanent residents or naturalized citizens. Most (75%) held a university degree, with only two

respondents reporting a non-university credential. Household incomes varied, with two participants reporting earnings below \$40,000 and one reporting income below \$20,000.

Staff reflection sessions

To provide a more comprehensive view of the program experience, we also hosted four staff reflections sessions. The Incubator and NEXT Fellowship program staff were organised into separate sessions, once at mid-point and again, after end-of-program (Appendix F). All program staff attended these sessions or provided notes afterwards.

Mentor/faculty interviews

Individuals who were involved in the program were interviewed one-on-one. Four interviews were completed lasting approximately 30 minutes each (Appendix G). We do not provide demographic data in these interviews because of the possibility of identification.

Conference and event surveys

One event survey and one conference survey were administered during the project. The first survey for the event 'FutureBUILDS Insights - Foundations for Success' (Appendix H) was administered prior to the onboarding of the evaluators, while the second survey was administered at the FutureBUILDS XP conference (Appendix I). Survey response rates were 11% ($n=10$) and 27% ($n=53$) respectively.

Preliminary analyses of the data were shared with the FutureBUILDS team through three learning memos throughout the program implementation and at the end, during a co-sensemaking session for a second round of analysis.

Evidence and Insights

Drawing on the Future Skills Centre's focus areas of Pathways to Jobs and Inclusive Economy, this evaluation examines the key ingredients that enable BIPOC entrepreneurs to successfully transition into leadership roles within the real estate development industry. It explores how participants experienced and benefitted from the program, how implementers designed and delivered supports to foster learning and inclusion, and how these insights contribute to understanding what works to build equitable pathways and address systemic barriers in the industry.

Incubator Core Program Outcomes

This section examines the extent to which the Incubator program is achieving its intended short-term outcomes for mid-career BIPOC professionals and entrepreneurs. There are two main short-term outcomes that were possible to examine within the short timeframe of this evaluation: 1) social capital and 2) essential skills and knowledge for BIPOC entrepreneurs in real estate development. The Incubator cohort comprised 26 mid-career professionals who identified as BIPOC.

Social Capital

Social capital is a key short-term outcome and a critical lever for long-term success in the real estate development ecosystem. Aligned with the Future Skills Centre's *Pathways to Jobs* focus area, the analysis considers social capital as one of the essential "ingredients" that enable individuals to access new opportunities, adapt to evolving industry demands, and sustain entrepreneurial growth. In real estate development—where advancement depends heavily on networks, trust, and industry visibility—relationships can function as both a skill and a resource. The following findings explore how the incubator fostered, and where it could further strengthen, these social and professional linkages.

Peer cohort as a source of ongoing support and belonging

The most consistent form of social capital generated through the FutureBUILDS program came from within the cohort itself. Focus group participants described maintaining ongoing relationships with their peers after the program ended. Many emphasized the value of being surrounded by like-minded individuals and the sense of solidarity that emerged from shared experiences as BIPOC professionals navigating an industry. The cohort's diversity—across race, gender, professional background, and project stage—was also seen as a strength that enriched learning and expanded perspectives.

Participants placed significant value on the opportunity to connect with professionals such as architects, designers, urban planners, mortgage brokers, and experienced developers. However, participants' awareness of one another's projects and areas of expertise varied. One participant described having strong knowledge of their peers' professional backgrounds, while others wished they had better knowledge of their peers' expertise and projects. This variation appeared to depend largely on individual engagement styles, with some taking the initiative to do research and reach out to their peers and others relying on more structured networking activities within programming time. Nonetheless, the peer network represented the most

enduring and accessible source of professional and emotional support, underscoring the Incubator's success in fostering community among participants.

How personality, culture, and gender shape networking experiences

Not all participants felt equally equipped to take advantage of networking opportunities. Several described feeling “not ready,” “not far enough along,” or “not extroverted enough” to connect one-on-one with mentors or faculty members. Participants also noted that extroverted individuals seemed to benefit more from informal networking opportunities, such as during site visits and or outside of scheduled program times. Some focus group participants reflected on their uncertainty about what was appropriate in terms of frequency of contact and amount of guidance, while others who were still early in the process (e.g., did not have land or property) did not feel ready to ask project-specific questions.

One participant spoke about gender norms playing a part in the networking dynamics, implying that participants may be perceived or received differently depending on their gender (e.g., women may feel it is more inappropriate to ask a male mentor to meet in a more casual setting). This variation in comfort and confidence suggests that social capital development within the program was shaped not only by opportunity but also by personality, cultural and gender norms, and stage of readiness.

Mentorship as a core strength with opportunities for greater alignment

Mentorship and faculty engagement was a defining feature of the FutureBUILDS Incubator, providing participants with opportunities to apply knowledge in real time and connect with industry professionals. Participants had the opportunity to meet 10 guest speakers and 5 faculty members through the program. In addition, participants also had the opportunity to meet with 8 different mentors across the mentoring sessions. Seven mentoring groups were formed and scheduled to meet with their assigned mentor once per week for 7 weeks, with an additional ‘guest’ financial mentor that rotated through some of the meetings. Participants consistently emphasized that mentoring sessions were most effective when mentors offered concrete, actionable guidance that directly helped to advance participants’ projects such as clarifying next steps or honing a technical skill. These moments of targeted support were described as empowering and confidence-building, reinforcing the applied nature of the Incubator’s learning model.

At the same time, participants identified gaps in the design and implementation of mentorship activities that limited their overall impact. Because participants anticipated tangible, project-specific guidance that would help move their real estate initiatives forward, when this level of applied support did not materialize, they expressed disappointment and questioned the

efficiency of multiple mentoring sessions. A few participants felt that there may have been too many mentoring sessions relative to their early stage of project development, noting that their ideas were not yet mature enough to fully benefit from expert input. However, these participants remained inspired through hearing about their peers' projects and progress, and feel confident about reaching out once they are further along in their project.

A few participants noted misalignment between mentor expertise and participant project needs. Some participants had expected to be grouped with peers who had common interests that matched their own or with mentors who had expertise they did not. When this did not occur, they felt that discussions were less relevant or too general to meaningfully advance their work. One participant noted that their mentor struggled to find common ground across diverse project types, managing to fill the time but finding it difficult to connect everyone's ideas in a cohesive way. Another participant noted that mentors appeared unfamiliar with what participants had already covered in deep-dive sessions, which occasionally resulted in repetitive or misaligned discussions. Others felt that mentoring sessions were overly focused on design-oriented topics, noting that more finance mentoring would have been useful.

Despite these challenges, the mentoring component remained widely appreciated for its networking potential and opportunity to exchange perspectives with peers and professionals. Overall, findings suggest that mentorship is a powerful mechanism for applied learning within the Incubator, but its effectiveness depends on matching mentor expertise with participant need, and the specific developmental stage of each participant.

Social capital, a critical outcome of the FutureBUILDS Incubator, enabled participants to build meaningful professional relationships, strengthen confidence, and gain access to new opportunities within the real estate development ecosystem. The most enduring form of social capital developed through the peer cohort, which fostered a strong sense of belonging, mutual support, and shared understanding among BIPOC professionals navigating a complex and historically exclusionary industry. Participants also benefitted from engagement with mentors, faculty, and industry experts, with mentorship highlighted as a key mechanism for applied learning and network expansion. However, variations in personality, cultural and gender norms, and stage of project readiness shaped participants' comfort and ability to capitalize on networking opportunities. Challenges such as misalignment between mentor expertise and participant needs underscore the importance of intentional design in mentorship structures. Overall, the program successfully laid a foundation for participants to cultivate networks of trust and collaboration.

Essential Knowledge and Skills of Real Estate Development

A core objective of the FutureBUILDS Incubator is to equip BIPOC entrepreneurs with the foundational skills, applied knowledge, and professional confidence needed to participate meaningfully in Canada's real estate development industry. The second part of this question explores the extent to which participants acquired essential knowledge and skills that enable them to navigate this complex industry. Aligned with the Future Skills Centre's "Pathways to Jobs" focus area, this analysis identifies the learning mechanisms, collaborative structures, and contextual supports that helped participants build industry-relevant competencies and prepare for sustained entrepreneurial success.

Participant learning gains

Results from a retrospective post-program survey ($n=13$; 50% of program participants) show strong growth in self-reported understanding across all content areas of the FutureBUILDS Incubator. Average knowledge scores increased from before to after the program, with participants reporting the greatest gains in feasibility and design, legal compliance and contract negotiations, and financial analysis and project feasibility (Appendix J).

Learning content was relevant and easy to Understand

Based on the rapid response surveys, respondents generally reported that the Incubator's curriculum was both easy to understand and relevant to their specific projects. In particular, site visits were widely praised as tangible learning experiences, providing opportunities to see concepts applied in practice and to engage directly with developers, architects, and contractors. The "Raising Capital" session received the most neutral or negative responses, with participants noting that the content was not easy to understand or retain. Focus group participants echoed this relevance of the knowledge gained, expressing increased confidence and clarity around how to advance their projects.

Site visits and pitch sessions were noted as good hands-on learning opportunities. Site visits not only illustrated course concepts but also provided opportunities for more informal dialogue between participants and faculty. Pitch sessions helped participants refine how they communicate their projects and value propositions. Those who did not pitch noted that they benefitted from observing peers and hearing constructive feedback. However, some focus group participants noted that providing more real-time guidance on building a pitch deck or practicing presentation techniques beforehand could make this exercise more effective for participants newer to entrepreneurship or less comfortable with public speaking.

Financial literacy and investment readiness as a central learning need

Some focus group participants highlighted financial literacy as the most essential skill area for success in real estate development. They valued the introductory content but expressed a strong desire for greater depth and technical training in finance, including taking the time to develop a high quality pro forma, learning concepts like debt and equity, and how to do cost-benefit analyses. Participants wanted exposure to a wider range of financing options beyond private investment, including financing from banks and community land trusts. Participants also requested training using industry-standard tools for financial analysis.

Variation in participant experience levels, learning pace, and interests

The Incubator's diverse cohort composition, spanning professionals at very different stages of their real estate journey, was both a source of rich peer learning and a challenge for content accessibility. Some focus groups participants found the pace demanding, particularly when some content assumed prior familiarity with the industry. They recommended a pre-program orientation to establish a shared baseline of knowledge, terminology, and expectations.

Allowing time for debriefs and reflection could also help participants consolidate knowledge before moving to more advanced topics, facilitating smoother transitions into applying these skills post-program.

A few focus group participants also expressed strong interest in alternative or community-based housing types, including non-profit, eco-friendly, and social-purpose developments. While participants understood the reasons the Incubator was focused on more conventional market housing, those who were interested felt dissuaded from pursuing alternative ideas.

Survey results and focus group feedback indicate significant learning gains across key areas such as financial analysis, feasibility and design, and legal compliance, with site visits and pitch sessions offering valuable hands-on experiences. While participants praised the relevance and accessibility of most content, they identified raising capital and financial analysis as critical areas for deeper training, along with the need for pre-program orientation to address varying experience levels. The program's emphasis on experiential learning and peer exchange proved highly impactful, though future iterations could better support diverse housing interests and provide more structured opportunities for reflection and applied practice.

NEXT Fellowship Core Program Outcomes

This section looks at the extent to which the Fellowship program achieved the intended outcomes, in the short term for early-career Black youth and newcomers between the ages of

18-32. There are three main short-term outcomes that were possible to examine within the timeframe of this evaluation: 1) expanding social capital 2) essential skills and knowledge and 3) enhancing leadership skills of Black professionals in non-profit housing. This fellowship cohort was made up of 15 participants who identify as Black, between the ages of 18 - 32.

Social Capital

Similar to the Incubator's strategy and aligned with the Future Skills Centre's *Inclusive Economies* focus area, social capital is considered a key enabler to improve labour market outcomes for Black youth. Increasing social networks allows emerging Black professionals and leaders to make connections and transition into the industry as leaders working towards non-profit housing solutions that serve the diverse needs of Black communities.

Building social capital through peer networks and guest speakers

Participants acknowledged the thoughtful curation of fellows selected to participate and appreciated being in relationship with a group of peers from diverse backgrounds and experiences. This intentional program design element allowed participants to make meaningful connections with peers ranging from policymakers and community organizers to individuals with lived experience in community housing.

Focus group participants mentioned they formed strong bonds with their cohort and said they were most likely to maintain relationships with peers after the program. Having increased access to a network of like-minded people advancing impactful non-profit housing initiatives allowed participants to connect with others they could lean on as they work toward creating affordable housing solutions that serve the diverse needs of Black communities across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Participants also felt strongly that the program allowed them to grow their professional network and that learning from guest speakers was an invaluable component. They met 25 guest speakers and described them as welcoming and open to connecting outside of the sessions. However, similar to findings from the Incubator cohort, some participants mentioned not being as comfortable reaching out and focused most of their efforts on building relationships with their peers.

Employing a different approach to the Incubator, the NEXT Fellowship still effectively strengthened participants' social capital. Fellows expressed having an expanded professional network and a clearer understanding of who they can reach out to, for what, and when. While they valued the knowledge and openness of guest speakers, participants noted that maintaining

relationships with industry experts felt largely “on them,” and comfort levels with outreach varied across the cohort.

Essential Skills and Knowledge

The second core objective of the FutureBUILDS Next Fellowship is to equip Black leaders of tomorrow with the foundational skills and knowledge needed to contribute meaningfully in Canada’s non-profit and Black housing space. Aligned with the Future Skills Centre’s “Pathways to Jobs” focus area, this analysis identifies the learning mechanisms, collaborative structures, and contextual supports that helped participants build industry-relevant competencies to lead and develop affordable housing initiatives that serve the diverse needs of Black communities across the GTHA.

Participant learning gains

Results from a retrospective post-program survey ($n=10$; 67% of program participants) show strong growth in self-reported understanding across all content areas of the FutureBUILDS NEXT Fellowship, with the greatest gains in awareness of precedent-setting projects and strategies serving Black /African Nova Scotian communities, non-profit housing development, land stewardship, and best practices for building and leading teams (Appendix K).

Creating the conditions for optimal learning

Participants described the program as having created a strong sense of community and connectedness. They praised the FutureBUILDS team for being able to create the conditions for optimal learning; a safe space and allowing participants to learn from where they are at. People with less experience were able to follow along and absorb the information and more experienced learners were able to apply knowledge to their work. A key enabler in the learning process was the creation of a welcoming space to feel seen and heard by industry experts.

Future Builds did a good job to create a culturally sensitive space for us, but also how to create our own, people felt represented and seen, especially in the session at Wild Seed: to learn about contextually sensitive spaces and how people can be seen and heard in those spaces. - Fellowship participant

A good mix of theoretical and practical: hands on learning as key to gaining essential skills
Participants gained a better understanding of the landscape, how things get done and next steps in their career. Learning from guest speakers provided participants with a better understanding of who and what is needed to advance non-profit housing development.

Participants talked about the value of gaining concrete knowledge and tools, both from guest speakers and their peers.

One of the standout components of the program was the learning trip to Halifax, which was described as an incredible experience and transformational for some. The Halifax learning trip was highlighted as a key component that helped bring conceptual learnings from previous sessions to real world learnings that greatly helped them in their professional growth. The trip helped participants get a picture of the history and a tangible understanding of what the challenges and opportunities are in the Black housing space.

Learning from the successes and setbacks of industry leaders

Guest speakers were an invaluable component of the program. Hearing stories from industry experts and concrete examples of how they overcame hurdles allowed participants to gain key industry insights. Learning from guest speakers provided participants with a better understanding of who and what is needed. Specifically, participants reported having a better understanding of the planning process, building partnerships, gaining financial capital, acquiring property and a better understanding of non-profit housing and building a community land trust. As a whole these sessions helped participants get a clearer picture of next steps they could take in their careers.

The “Art of Government Relations” session was also highlighted as an impactful learning session, allowing participants to gain knowledge on how to build relationships and work with people across the political spectrum in government to advance projects. Having an increased understanding and vocabulary to work with also impacted participants' sense of confidence and capabilities as emerging leaders.

The Fellowship successfully fostered both the technical and interpersonal capacities needed for emerging Black leaders to navigate and influence the non-profit housing sector. Participants reported significant growth in their understanding of housing strategies for Black communities, and leadership practices, while also developing the confidence and community connections necessary to apply these insights in practice (Appendix K). The program’s intentional design—balancing cultural sensitivity, experiential learning, and access to role models—demonstrated its impact. By integrating an immersive experience with opportunities for reflection and connection, the Fellowship provided a strong foundation for participants to step into leadership roles and contribute to non-profit, community-driven housing solutions.

Leadership Skills

Through their participation in the Fellowship, participants were expected to develop a deeper understanding of their personal leadership narratives, explore the roles they could play within Toronto's non-profit housing sector and Black communities, and gain insight into effective organizational leadership practices.

Learning leadership through connection and reflection

Focus group participants reflected that leadership was not taught in a prescriptive way where participants are told what it means to be a leader or how to be a leader. Rather the program allowed participants to build relationships with leaders in the Black housing and non-for-profit housing space and gain insights on how they might make their own contributions to the sector based on their unique strengths and capabilities. This was made possible through networking opportunities such as through Q&A periods after speaker sessions or built-in time for connecting with leaders during the retreat and learning trip.

It improved my understanding of the space, which makes me a more competent leader and being able to execute projects. I was able to have side-bar conversations with speakers from our community and learn how they navigate things, which reassured my apprehensions and gave me a better understanding of the landscape. - Fellowship participant

Tangible leadership skills gained

In terms of practical leadership skills acquired, participants have a better understanding of the operational and strategic skills needed to manage initiatives with community and government. One participant recalled gaining advice about best practices leading diverse teams during the program retreat and were able to apply the learning immediately. Fellowship participants also reported having a better grasp of the language needed to build leadership skills in order to reach out to municipalities and a better understanding of how to execute projects and who to connect with.

The Fellowship fostered both leadership growth by combining relational learning with practical skill-building. Participants developed greater confidence in their leadership abilities, a stronger sense of their roles within the Black and non-profit housing sectors, and a clearer understanding of how to mobilize their skills and networks to create impact. By centring connection and role modelling rather than prescriptive instruction, the program empowered emerging Black leaders to define leadership on their own terms and to envision meaningful pathways for contribution within their communities and the housing sector.

FutureBUILDS Conference Events

In addition to the core programming, FutureBUILDS also organised two public-facing conferences with the intention of building social capital and cultivating BIPOC leadership in the real estate development industry.

There were two main public-facing events which were evaluated through post-event surveys:

- FutureBUILDS Insights - Foundations for Success, held in March 2025
- FutureBUILDS XP Conference, held in September 2025

70% of professionals who attended the XP Conference identified as BIPOC

The intended audience for these events were BIPOC professionals in the real estate development sector in order to increase their public profile. Ninety people attended the Insights event and 200 attended the XP Conference. Attendees included 19 Incubator and 13 NEXT Fellowship participants, as well as 19 non-admitted applicants of those programs. 70% of attendees for the XP Conference identified as BIPOC (including program participants). There was also a good gender balance for the XP Conference, with 50% identifying as men, 42.3% as women and 7.7% as gender non-binary. Demographic information was not collected for attendees of the FutureBUILDS Insights event.

The networking aspect of the event was a highlight for most attendees

Survey respondents for both events reported making new professional connections, 70% of Insights respondents and 98% from XP Conference respondents. 90.5% of XP Conference respondents said that they are likely to engage with the new connections that they made at the conference, saying that they met like-minded professionals in fields such as local development, construction, investment, real estate, planning and architecture. The guest speakers were also rated quite highly by respondents at both events, finding them engaging. Many respondents highlighted networking as the most enjoyable aspect and requested even more time and opportunities for connection in future events.

“I actually made a few quality connections, more so than I have at bigger conferences.” - FutureBUILDS XP conference survey respondent

The events boosted the understanding, confidence and access to resources of most attendees 90% of Insights respondents and 85% of XP Conference respondents said that they improved their understanding of real estate development. 85% of XP Conference respondents also reported that the conference helped them feel more confident about the real estate development process and their own skills, and 80% felt that they were able to access resources

or tools to increase their real estate development capacity. 87% agreed that the information they learned could be useful for future projects, and 88.5% agreed that the content of the event was relevant to their work.

"It was very special to learn and network in a space that felt welcoming and encouraging. Seeing incredibly accomplished people that aren't the archetype of a big developer gave me confidence that it's possible for me to do this too."

- FutureBUILDS XP conference survey respondent

The FutureBUILDS events and in particular the FutureBUILDS XP Conference, successfully promoted networking between BIPOC participants working in the real estate and property development sectors. While the events contributed to a greater understanding of real estate development topics, the networking aspect was the highlight for most survey respondents.

Participant Experience

This section explores the participant experience of the programs, including 1) what worked well, and what didn't, and 2) how assumptions and expectations differed from reality.

Participant Experience - Incubator

Participants felt that the Incubator was a high quality program

All focus group participants said they would recommend the program and for many it exceeded their expectations. Participants valued being part of such a diverse group of people, and talked about how the program was designed in a way for people to feel supported and cared for and that psychological safety felt emphasized. Food was provided at the start of each session and came up as a factor in feeling cared for, and the ability to offer music suggestions contributed towards cultivating a sense of comfort and belonging for participants. The average attendance rate was 80%, with participation dropping off after the seven sessions, with 38% as the lowest attendance for the 12 sessions.

"What was important for me was, that I felt I was in a safe space and I really felt that I was part of something special...Maybe I sound overly passionate, but, I can't remember when I've been excited about a program, or excited about meeting people and saying, oh, I'm looking forward to this next week."

- Focus Group Participant

One participant noted and others agreed that racialized experiences could have been addressed more explicitly, especially given the cultural relevance of the program. They expressed a desire

to understand the intersectional experiences around race, gender and immigration status on how BIPOC people navigate the real estate sector, especially around accessing financial capital. Some participants also expressed wanting more intentionality around land acknowledgements was needed, particularly why and how. They noted that land acknowledgements felt somewhat like a forced exercise after some time, leaving some participants desiring more intentionality with the practice.

While participants felt that there was a good balance between the online and in-person components, participants would have liked more time between sessions to absorb the content between sessions, or have a recap at the start of the next session. A few also suggested having recordings of sessions although the FutureBUILDS team clarified that some sessions were less amenable to recordings because of the structure (e.g., breakout groups).

Participant Experience - NEXT Fellowship

The NEXT Fellowship exceeded participants' expectations

Participants cited that the careful organisation and attention to detail of the program by the FutureBUILDS team played a big part in making the experience more enjoyable. Communication from the FutureBUILDS team - including making sure participants knew in advance what to expect, sending reminders and providing meals - were all greatly appreciated and cited as key elements that made the program outstanding. The Halifax trip was the highlight of the program, and allowed for participants to bond with one another and increase their knowledge of Black housing in a different context. The average attendance per session was 90% and remained consistent through the program.

Unlike the Incubator, the Fellowship program was entirely in-person, and most participants felt that it is important to keep the in-person format to promote and encourage deeper learning and connections between peers, speakers and staff. While participants recognized there was limited time, they reflected that the program only scratched the surface of topics that they wanted to learn more about and wished it could be longer or go more in depth.

Participants from both the Incubator and the NEXT Fellowship described the programs as exceptionally well-organized and high quality, fostering strong learning, connection, and a sense of belonging. Participants emphasized the care and intentionality shown by the FutureBUILDS team—from thoughtful logistics and clear communication to creating psychologically safe, welcoming spaces. The inclusion of food, music, and opportunities for informal connection helped cultivate community and comfort, while the balance between structure and flexibility supported engagement. In the Incubator, participants particularly valued the program's

supportive environment and diversity, though some expressed a desire for more explicit discussions on how race, gender, and immigration shape access and experience in the real estate sector. Participants also suggested small adjustments—such as more time between sessions or recordings for review—to enhance learning retention. Similarly, Fellowship participants highlighted the in-person format and the Halifax learning trip as key to building trust and peer relationships. While they found the experience transformative, many wished for a longer program to explore topics in greater depth. Collectively, participant feedback reflected a strong sense of satisfaction and connection.

Program Delivery

This section captures the reflections of those involved in program delivery, including program staff and mentors.

Program Staff Experience

Program staff experienced delivering a high quality program with high impact

The FutureBUILDS program staff were satisfied with their program delivery and were encouraged by the overwhelmingly positive feedback received from participants, high engagement, and strong sense of community exhibited by both cohorts. Program coordination was a success with the team being able to pay attention to details that support participant well-being such as the careful planning of venue locations, balance of online and in-person components, food, and selection of guest speakers.. Furthermore, staff reflected that kicking off with the retreat for both cohorts had a positive impact in setting the tone and building relationships. The program team reported being able to respond to emerging needs and were able to maintain a certain level of flexibility to pivot when needed.

Compressed timelines constrained program planning and delivery

The need for more time came up as a key element impacting program implementation for both programs. Staff members from both programs shared that the program felt like it was fast paced and intensive on the implementation side. They mentioned needing additional team capacity in marketing, admin and logistics, and that there was a need for more time to pause and regroup between program component delivery.

The tight timelines in the incubator cohort also impacted the recruitment process, as there was a lower volume of applicants, and no Indigenous participants in the cohort. The time constraint did not allow adequate prospective candidate response times and answering questions before

confirming their spot. This resulted in the team accepting a larger volume of applicants who did not have land or a development project underway.

While the team accepted applications from people who lived outside the GTHA and the programming can still be relevant and have a positive impact on participants from external jurisdictions, the Incubator cohort creates logistical challenges in terms of travel and is less effective in terms of building a network of key people to advance development projects.

The program team also noted that the short timeline resulted in faculty office hours and mentoring sessions overlapping, which created some confusion distinguishing between the two functions. The level of coordination of the mentorship component like adequate onboarding for mentors and mentees, coordinating scheduling challenges and ensuring a careful matching process were also impacted by the time constraints.

A full year funding cycle can provide the time needed for contingency planning and to be better able to respond to real-time program challenges that require more time to manifest (e.g., mentoring matching).

Responding to emerging needs

Despite this, program staff were able to troubleshoot and respond to some emerging needs. For example, based on participant feedback to have more time to connect outside of learning sessions, the community dinner for the fellowship cohort was adapted to keep programming and speakers to a minimum. The XP conference event was also intentionally designed to incorporate lots of networking and relationship building opportunities. The team was also able to organise an additional seminar on CMHC financing due to participants requesting more learning content around acquiring financial capital.

The program team also made the decision to keep the learning trip for the fellowship based in Canada to avoid any unnecessary stresses with travelling to the US and the added border control protocols affecting people without citizenship. The shift to host the learning trip in Halifax had a great impact on the participants and staff alike. Another change was with respect to a challenge with recruiting mentors that had financing expertise. The team adapted by having mentors with specialities in financing and design rove between mentorship groups. While many participants mentioned getting invaluable information from the mentors with architecture and design expertise, there was a noted desire for more financial mentoring..

Faculty and Mentor Experiences

Both mentors and faculty see the benefit and impact of the program

Mentors and faculty had an overall positive experience, and mentioned how much the program has improved since its first iteration. They felt the staff were supportive and flexible to changes in the mentorship delivery, and that there were opportunities for check-ins and adequate communication. They mentioned that learning outcomes were clear and that there was a good facilitator to cohort ratio.

One mentor mentioned the benefit that they received from being part of the program, including increasing their own social capital with people who could be future collaborators, and getting to take a step back from their work and get a bird eye's view of the sector. Overall faculty and mentors acknowledge the impact and value of the program both in terms of creating more opportunities for BIPOC entrepreneurs and leaders as well as in delivering housing to the market.

Lack of compensation for mentors may lead to transactional approaches to mentorship

Mentors mentioned offering a mix of social-emotional as well as instrumental and technical mentorship with a little more emphasis on the latter based on the type of support mentees were seeking. The majority of the mentors and faculty spoke to how they were guarded with their time. For instance some mentors may have intentionally structured their weekly sessions in a way that needed minimal prep. The future builds team could explore different types of compensation that could benefit mentors, for instance, one mentor mentioned increasing promotion of their work, brand or organisation through social media to having more visibility on their contributions to the program.

Mentors and faculty echoed the need for more semi-structured relationship building opportunities

Echoing what program participants noted,, faculty and mentors also noted that additional semi structured opportunities to better get to know the participants could be beneficial. While the retreat and site visits were highlighted as great opportunities to have more informal dialogue, one faculty echoed that this depends on how extroverted participants are and that some people could benefit from slightly more structured opportunities to network. Similarly, one mentor mentioned that they could benefit from getting some suggestions on ways to get to know the participants to help move the sessions along without it being cumbersome (e.g., providing their pitch decks or organising smaller meet and greets in addition to the retreat).

Lessons Learned/Recommendations

Supporting Equitable Access to Networking Opportunities

Recognizing the impact of gender and socio-cultural norms

The theme around uncertainty related to networking etiquette came up for both Incubator and Fellowship participants. Focus group participants from both the Incubator and Fellowship expressed a strong desire for greater clarity and structure around how to build and maintain professional connections within the program.

As with many industries, there are differing nuances within networking culture, and for an industry that suffers from a lack of diverse representation, networking opportunities may be daunting for BIPOC individuals to navigate. Further to industry-specific networking norms, there could be intersections of socio-cultural and gender norms that impact how BIPOC entrepreneurs approach networking.

A recent Environics and Monday Girl study (2025) found that Canadian women professionals still face significant challenges in accessing meaningful networking opportunities. The majority (67%) reported feeling that traditional networking events are awkward and uncomfortable, while most (60%) believe these events fail to foster strong industry connections. Furthermore, similar to the impact of differing socio-cultural norms on the integration to workplace culture (Lai, Shankar, & Khalema, 2017), there could also be socio-cultural and gendered norms within the real estate development industry that make it less advantageous for some. Together, these findings highlight the need for clearer guidance and support around networking, particularly as participants navigate the transition into the industry seeking leadership roles.

Addressing power dynamics and comfort levels

Participants also noted that power dynamics between cohort members, faculty, guest speakers, and mentors affected how comfortable they felt initiating or sustaining professional relationships. Some were unsure how frequently or formally to contact mentors or speakers, recognizing the high value of their time and expertise.

Participants recommended explicit guidance on networking norms and expectations, including examples of how to approach and maintain professional relationships during and after the program. Structured networking opportunities—such as speed networking sessions, round-robin introductions at the start of workshops, and debrief discussions after guest speaker sessions—were also suggested to foster equitable engagement.

Adding a dedicated learning session on navigating gender and socio-cultural norms in networking could help participants develop the confidence and tools needed to build authentic, reciprocal professional relationships. Intentional scaffolding and expectation-setting would particularly benefit participants earlier in their entrepreneurial journey, ensuring all can take full advantage of both formal and informal networking opportunities.

This learning component could also strengthen the group mentorship experience by equipping participants with strategies to navigate interpersonal and professional dynamics with greater confidence and care.

Enhancing the Mentoring Component

Based on the focus group findings, focusing on creating stronger alignment between mentor expertise, participant needs, and project stage could strengthen the mentoring component. Ensuring that mentors are better briefed on participants' projects, that matching processes are more transparent and intentional, and that mentoring time takes into account specific developmental project milestones could enhance the Incubator's capacity to deliver personalized, industry-relevant guidance that supports both skill building and sustainable professional networks.

Consider personalities, values, communication, and learning styles

Beyond matching mentors and mentees with areas of expertise and housing development type, it could be useful to consider personalities, communication styles and values. The FutureBUILDS team can incorporate different tools and methods to ensure as much compatibility as possible. In addition to defining compatibility criteria based on experience level, personality, learning styles availability and other preferences, the program team can also allow participants to provide input such as ranking their preferred choices, or requesting a change.

Manage relational dynamics by setting expectations, accountability, and feedback loops

Ensuring that there is proper onboarding of both mentors and mentees will ensure that both parties know what to expect and how to approach challenges. Sharing the 'why' and associated benefits of a group mentoring model can increase engagement and optimize this component. While the project team did not want to make mentorship mandatory, there could be some value in adding some formality to the program by establishing clear expectations, commitment to a set number of sessions once you start and accountability structures.

Because it can take more effort and interpersonal skills to ensure all personalities work well in a group setting, it could be useful to begin mentoring groups with a discussion of expectations for attendance and participation. Allowing the group to co-develop an 'agreement' at the initial

session to better learn what people need in order to feel like they can speak up, fully participate and learn in group settings can make the sessions more productive and keep the participants accountable for the dynamic they want to have in a group mentorship experience.

Developing a collective agreement that outlines agreed upon attendance and participation could also reduce inconsistencies with the number of attendees per session and ensure participants get the most out of this mentorship model.

Creating a supportive structure with regular feedback loops could also enhance the program experience for all involved, as relationships and needs evolve. Mentees can share goals ahead of time, which can inform how mentors plan their guidance, and act as a baseline to measure progress along the way. Increasing the number of check-ins with program coordinators to ensure ongoing support with access to resources (frameworks, effective mentorship strategies etc.) and a safe space to share how things are going (e.g a Slack or business messaging channel for mentors) or short check-ins for mentors to share tips and approaches that are working.

Consider ways to compensate and highlight benefits for mentors

While direct financial compensation may not always be feasible, mentors can still be recognized in meaningful ways. Providing options for non-monetary compensation—such as tickets to industry events, networking or speaking opportunities, public acknowledgment, or brand promotion—can be other ways of compensating mentors. Clearly outlining these benefits during recruitment can also strengthen mentor engagement. Because mentoring requires time, care, and skill, offering training—especially for group mentorship—can further equip mentors for success. When mentors feel supported and appreciated, they are more likely to invest in their mentees, fostering deeper learning, connection, and engagement.

Addressing Diverse Interests and Needs Across the Cohort

Strengthening early-stage participants' industry readiness

The Incubator was primarily designed for individuals with access to land or financial capital. However, due to a lower number of applicants this round as a result of the state of the real estate market and economic conditions during this period, the decision was made to include participants earlier in their development journey. Participants with limited sector experience recommended offering a pre-program orientation or adjusting pacing to establish a shared baseline of knowledge across the cohort. If the program continues to accept participants who are newer to the industry, additional supports could be built into the program design, such as:

- Pre-reading materials to build baseline knowledge
- Office hours dedicated to reviewing session topics and offering additional Q&A

- Session recaps provided after or before sessions to reinforce learning
- Keeping the meeting space open for optional debrief sessions with staff and participants

Provide optional deeper dive materials on financing and alternative housing solutions

Participants had few criticisms about what could be improved in terms of better supporting knowledge and skill acquisition and retention. For incubator cohort participants, there was a desire to dig deeper into the topics of accessing financial capital. This key learning area was seen as crucial to ensure success in the industry and participants could benefit from more in depth knowledge on these topics. To manage the different levels of comfort and experience related to financing, sessions could be broken down into more manageable topics and supplemented with optional deeper dive sessions organised externally or through additional reading materials.

Participants expressed a strong interest in more technical, hands-on finance training and exposure to a wider range of funding options. Providing supplementary materials on alternative financing and housing types for participants would perhaps make it less discouraging for participants who are interested in pursuing non-conventional market housing and routes, while still being able to focus the content on more conventional development.

Aligning Time and Resources with Program Ambition

The greatest factor affecting the project team's experience of program delivery was time. During both midpoint and post-program reflection sessions, staff highlighted how tight timelines affected delivery, team wellbeing, and workload intensity. Despite these constraints, the team delivered a high-quality program in half the time of the pilot while also launching the new *FutureBUILDS Next* stream.

For future iterations, the program should either increase team capacity—by securing funding for additional key roles, increasing the duration of the funding period, or reduce program scope to align with available resources. The latter would significantly alter program design and participant experience, whereas enhancing capacity would sustain the high-quality delivery demonstrated in the evaluation findings.

The following key additional resources identified would strengthen implementation without changing program design.

Curriculum design lead with real estate development expertise

The FutureBUILDS program team noted that delivery could be strengthened by having an internal BIPOC expert in real estate development and non-profit housing to oversee curriculum

design. This role would promote consistency, reduce fragmentation, as well as support onboarding and liaison functions with faculty and mentors. A faculty member also suggested that such a role could help weave a “red thread” throughout program components, ensuring alignment and coherence. If the individual is not Indigenous, they should work closely with Indigenous faculty to embed Indigenous approaches and perspectives across program design, delivery, and evaluation.

Marketing and promotion support

The team also identified the need for dedicated marketing and outreach capacity to support recruitment and visibility. The Incubator cohort experienced lower application volumes and no participation from Indigenous entrepreneurs, suggesting a need for more intentional community outreach and communications. A marketing specialist could lead outreach to BIPOC and Indigenous communities, strengthen social media and communications strategies, and enhance alumni engagement. Reframing the branding and marketing of the program around the needs of the real estate market at the time may also lead to increased application numbers

Increasing Indigenous participation could also be supported by greater Indigenous representation within the project team, as well as among guest speakers, mentors, and faculty. This would help ensure that Indigenous perspectives are embedded from the planning and curriculum design stages, allowing prospective participants to see themselves reflected in the program.

Additional administration support

Program participants consistently praised FutureBUILDS for its high quality, attention to detail, and thoughtful administration. Participants noted that the team was responsive, communicated clearly, and demonstrated care in logistics such as food, venue selection, and supporting materials.

However, staff reported that the team was often stretched thin during periods of high logistical demand. Bringing in additional administrative support after the mid-point reflection greatly improved operations. Given the program’s event-heavy design—featuring site visits, learning trips, community dinners, and conferences—maintaining dedicated administrative capacity is essential to sustain program quality, reduce staff strain, and uphold the participant experience that the program is known for.

Overall, investing in additional time and resourcing would sustain program quality, support staff well-being, and its strong reputation among participants and partners.

Implications for Policy, Government, and Industry

The evaluation findings from the FutureBUILDS program offer valuable insights that extend beyond program delivery, pointing to broader systemic considerations for policymakers, funders, and industry leaders seeking to foster equitable access to the housing development sector. The recommendations highlight that achieving meaningful inclusion requires not only supporting individuals through targeted programs, but also transforming the structures, norms, and resources that shape participation and leadership in the field.

Building inclusive industry networks

FutureBUILDS participants' experiences underscore how gender and socio-cultural norms continue to influence who has access to professional networks and how those networks operate. Government and industry partners can help address these barriers by investing in initiatives that promote inclusive networking practices across the sector.

This could include:

- Supporting industry-wide mentorship and peer learning programs that explicitly address gender and cultural norms in professional relationship-building.
- Promoting alternative, non-traditional networking formats—such as facilitated roundtables, peer cohorts, and cross-sector exchanges—that prioritize psychological safety and equitable participation.
- Developing sector-wide guidance or toolkits on inclusive networking practices to support organizations, developers, and associations in diversifying their networks.
- Encouraging industry associations to set standards and share resources for effective, inclusive mentorship models that consider personality, communication, and learning styles.
- Creating a sustained network through opportunities for FutureBUILDS participants and guests to engage with each other more frequently.

Addressing structural barriers through targeted investment

The evaluation demonstrates that delivering a high-quality, equity-focused program requires sufficient time, staffing, and funding. Specifically, the reality of networking and relationship building, which is a key activity to increase social capital, is often in tension with funding constraints. However the time required to build relationships cannot be underestimated especially within the context of addressing inequities and addressing the power imbalances that exist within the real estate development sector for BIPOC entrepreneurs. For government and

philanthropic funders, this highlights the importance of aligning funding models with the complexity and ambition of inclusive sector-building initiatives.

Policy and funding mechanisms can support scaling and sustainability by:

- Extending program/funding timelines to allow for relationship-building, iteration, and community trust to develop;
- Embedding dedicated resourcing for BIPOC outreach, marketing, and engagement into funding agreements;
- Supporting the integration of specialized expertise—such as curriculum design leads with real estate development and equity experience—to ensure content remains relevant and reflective of lived experience;
- Developing and testing FutureBUILDS offerings at different scales, including models that require less intensive time and resourcing (e.g., 1-2 day immersive sessions focused on core knowledge and skills).

Such structural investments can help programs like FutureBUILDS move from pilot initiatives to enduring pathways that reshape access to the sector.

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