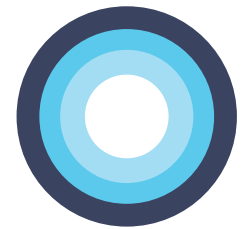


PARTICIPATORY CO-DESIGN FOR PROGRAMMES

Developing the Lifehack
Flourishing Fellowship 2015

Chelsea Robinson, 2015

*With special thanks to Penny Hagen
who has been an important and
generous mentor to our team
and completely expanded our
understanding of the word "design".*



LIFEHACK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the second year of Lifehack's running, 2014, we ran Lifehack Labs: a 5-week, full-time pre-accelerator programme aimed at bringing 20 young people together to radically upskill by increasing knowledge of entrepreneurial, design and wellbeing topics, forming teams and start technology-focussed ventures which encourage wellbeing in young people around New Zealand. We learnt a large amount from this experiment as well as the five regional events we ran across New Zealand.

In 2015, we wanted to build a programme which would further develop on this thinking and generate many more wellbeing outcomes for New Zealand youth. Testing a series of hypotheses around diversity, cost, community building approaches and the inclusion of Te Ao Māori in the design, we set out to create something new; the Flourishing Fellowship.

We started designing the Fellowship three months before it began, through a series of stages. The Lifehack team designs programmes using a mixture of design thinking and entrepreneurial techniques to ensure we're creating value for individuals as well as producing a wider ripple effect of secondary social impact outcomes.

In this report we are sharing a snapshot of our process and our experiment-driven way of thinking. We hope that by sharing this level of detail it can inspire those who design programmes to facilitate more participatory design processes for participants and other stakeholders.

Our 2015 Flourishing Fellowship was a huge success across many outcome areas. We look forward to running more programmes like it in the coming years. Check out our Flourishing Fellowship Impact report for more information about the people, projects, and outcomes.

WHY THE FELLOWSHIP EXPERIMENT?

In the second year of Lifehack's running, 2014, we ran Lifehack Labs. Lifehack Labs was our biggest programme at that time, operating right at the intersection of a number of key issues in the social enterprise and wellbeing sectors. In order to accelerate the number of wellbeing projects in New Zealand, we used Labs to explore whether young people would identify more systemic problems to solve if they were educated in a blend of lean start-up and design thinking methodologies. We also used a fully immersive approach to try to facilitate participants through a life-changing, transformative experience. We also rejected the accelerator approach and recruited for individuals rather than teams to apply for the programme. We focused the programme on validating the problem, rather than developing a Minimum Viable Product in order for projects coming out of Labs to benefit from other social enterprise accelerators in the ecosystem.

This programme represents many of the "hunches" we have as a team about how to help grow a flourishing ecosystem of projects which help young people flourish, however we also found it had significant limitations which we translated into lessons learnt. The full report will be available for reading on our website in early 2016.

Lifehack Labs 2014 taught us that:

TECHNOLOGY; NOT ALWAYS THE ANSWER

Not all wellbeing issues should be solved by technology ventures

FULL-TIME PROGRAMMES ARE HARD

Full-time programmes are hard for many kinds of people to participate in

DESIGN THINKING

A founder or leader of a project learning design thinking does dramatically increase the likelihood that they will start a project or venture which solves a user-validated and systemic problem

SAME LOCATION

People working in teams where they are working in the same location are more likely to pursue their ambitions for longer and learn from their experiences better

DIVERGENT LIVES

Teams of young people don't always stick together, their lives are divergent and change a lot

ETHICS, SAFETY AND RIGOUR

Learning to consider ethics, safety and rigour are necessary in ethnographic research and participatory design practice in order to get high quality data safely from youth user groups on wellbeing topics

MORE EFFECTIVE IF LONGER

It is possible to make meaningful progress in 5 weeks, but a programme optimised for project outcomes would be more effective if it was longer, or the programme would have produced similar personal learning / personal transformation outcomes even if it was shorter (as the first part was reported most transformative)

MOTORWAYS INTO BRICK WALLS

full-time programmes can build metaphorical "motorways into brick walls" in the sense that the participants don't always know what to do afterwards, can lose momentum and can possibly stop working on their project.

WILLINGNESS TO LEARN

Participants who entered the programme motivated to learn, tended to make more progress and build projects, whilst people who showed up expecting to nail a brilliant project realised they needed to do more work on themselves before they could do so. This showed us that open-mindedness or willingness to learn was a key prerequisite for future applicants

In 2014 we also ran five local events in communities across the country and we learnt that there are people in many communities trying to make a difference through projects that are already in progress. These people often feel isolated, like they don't have access to 21st century skills or networks of innovators to share with and learn from. A core strategy for our work in 2015 was to actively build on the lessons learnt with these communities, and continue to work with people we had begun to engage with to deepen the strength of their effectiveness in their communities.

OUR HYPOTHESES; A STARTING POINT FOR THE FELLOWSHIP

In 2015, we wanted to build a programme which would further develop on this thinking and generate many more wellbeing outcomes for New Zealand youth.

We identified a new set of hypotheses to test:

PART-TIME

A part-time programme will be accessible to a diverse range of New Zealanders from various backgrounds

SUSTAINABLE INTEGRATION

A part-time programme will allow participants to integrate what they learn into their lives in a more sustainable and meaningful way than an immersive programme, preventing “motorway into a brick wall” experiences

ONLINE MODULES

Using online modules between gatherings will support participants’ reflection on content which they would otherwise forget

SERIES OF GATHERINGS

Designing a programme around a series of gatherings will build a strong sense of community and foster participants’ passion to see each other succeed

CODESIGN FOR RELEVANCE

Codesigning the programme will improve the relevance of the content for the participants

CODESIGN FOR RESPONSIBILITY

Codesigning the programme with participants will give participants a great sense of responsibility for the success of the programme and the progress and impact which they could create in their communities

TE AO MAORI METHODS

Incorporating Te Ao Maori methods, approaches and cultural practices into the programme will increase the accessibility of the programme to Māori community leaders and Maori youth, which in turn will improve our ability to support people who work with rangatahi Maori to be more effective in their communities spaces.

SOCIAL-LABS APPROACH

Embedding a social-labs approach¹ into the design will encourage participants to start projects which better focus on the needs of their community, than would using an start-up accelerator-based approach

DEEPLY ENGAGED MENTORS

Providing a small group of deeply engaged mentors from the Enspiral community for the participants to access for support and inspiration will feel more supportive than matching each participant with an expert in the field of their interest, and the mentors will find it rewarding.

PAY TO LEARN

New Zealanders from a diverse range of backgrounds will pay to learn 21st century change-making skills to improve youth wellbeing

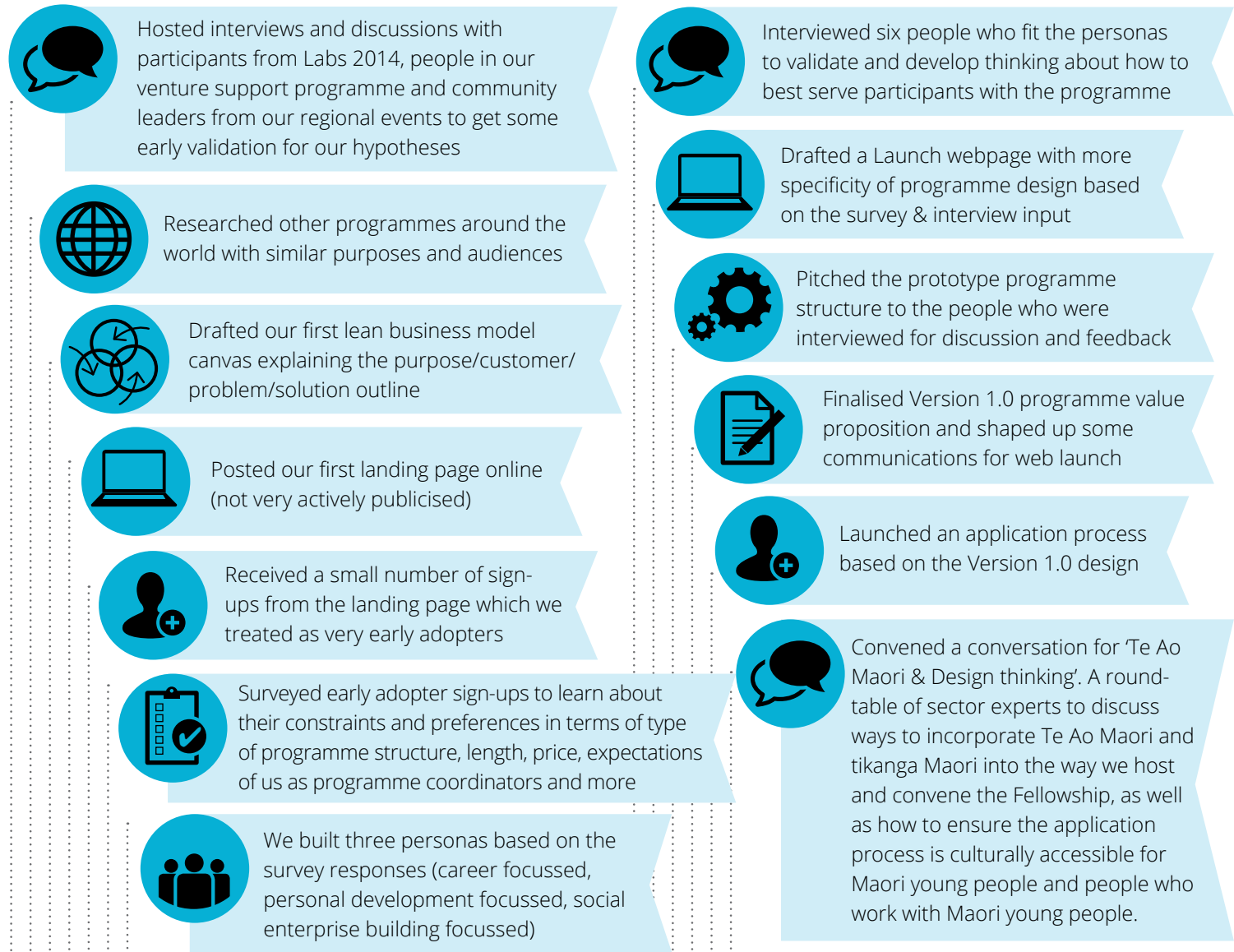
DIVERSITY OF BACKGROUNDS

Involving participants from across a diversity of backgrounds will support more systemic thinking within the participant group and allow the cohort to see issues across NZ communities rather than just those within their local community


1. A Social-Labs approach focuses on engaging a diverse group of people (including people suffering from the focus issue) to work together collaboratively and take on a research and curiosity mindset where they investigate the needs of their community and identify what they are called to act upon before coming up with new ideas for action, interventions and projects to prototype in the real world.


OUR DESIGN PROCESS


The design phase for the Fellowship starts 2-3 months before the programme kicks off, through a series of stages. Starting from our hypotheses, we aim to stay open-minded about how the shape of the programme will emerge. Through researching other organisations' work around the world, as well as building upon our own previous experiments, we form a rough understanding of the needs we are aiming to fulfill for the sector and for our imaginary participants. We develop our understanding of the needs of our imaginary participants over time through many conversations, surveys, interviews and focus discussions with people who we consider to be similar to those people we are aiming to engage with the programme. This allows us to challenge our thinking with real-world input across every aspect of our design. The shape of the programme, including content, mentoring systems, timing, price, number of participants and more, becomes visible to us near the end of the design process. One difficult tension you will see in this outline is the way it is challenging to give potential participants a clear idea of what they are getting involved with, because you are co-designing with them *as they apply and begin the programme itself*. The list that follows outlines in detail the actions we took to design the programme.





BEFORE ONLINE LAUNCH OUR TEAM...


 Received official applications from applicants, some of which were from our early adopters group


 Assessed application answers to more deeply understand who the possible Fellows were and what they wanted


 Designed all the programme content based on the answers about what applicants want to gain from the programme


 Selected 22 participants based on a criteria including their professional skills, open mindedness, self awareness, critical thinking, potential for transformation and ability to positively impact their community or workplace


 Finalised content for only the first half of the programme


 Liaised with the accepted Fellows to prepare them for the first in-person gathering


 Designed & scheduled the first gathering — leveraging existing knowledge within the team about how to run effective gatherings, rather than relying on participants to design it. In facilitation jargon, we would describe this as a need to design and hold the container expertly, and fill it with content desired by participants


 Facilitated the first gathering. We remained somewhat fluid about how the first gathering ran, inside a firm schedule, and were responsive to feedback throughout so we could constantly improve each day and across the rest of the programme


 Prototyped the first three to four online course elements, getting feedback at the second gathering

 Designed the second gathering based on our core team's understanding of Theory U

 Delivered second gathering

 Involved fellows in a strong discussion about how they want to proceed within the fellowship design during the second gathering. What do they want from the second half?

 Opened up space for them to feel they are responsible for the success of this Fellowship community going forwards.

 Reduced their dependence on the core facilitators to guide their learning and actions through facilitating less of the sessions and involving them more.

AFTER ONLINE LAUNCH OUR TEAM...

WHEN THE PROGRAMME BEGAN WE...



Opened up an online conversation about what the participants wanted from the second half of their experience



Got an external facilitator to come into the second gathering and help the fellows give clear feedback on what was working for them and what wasn't



Designed the later online modules based on what fellows wanted to learn more about



Designed the final hui with 100% guidance from the fellows / participants rather than ours



Facilitated the Fellows to design how they wanted to be in-action together following the programme, with our support

DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE PROGRAMME, OUR TEAM...



Involved the participants in analysing their own survey and evaluation data



Invited participants to edit our draft report about the impact of the programme



Invited participants to run weekend events with our staff team



Invited participants to run Hui Hapori, and our wider Lifehack Community retreat



Invited them to apply for our follow-up programme Te Koanga

AFTER THE PROGRAMME, WE...

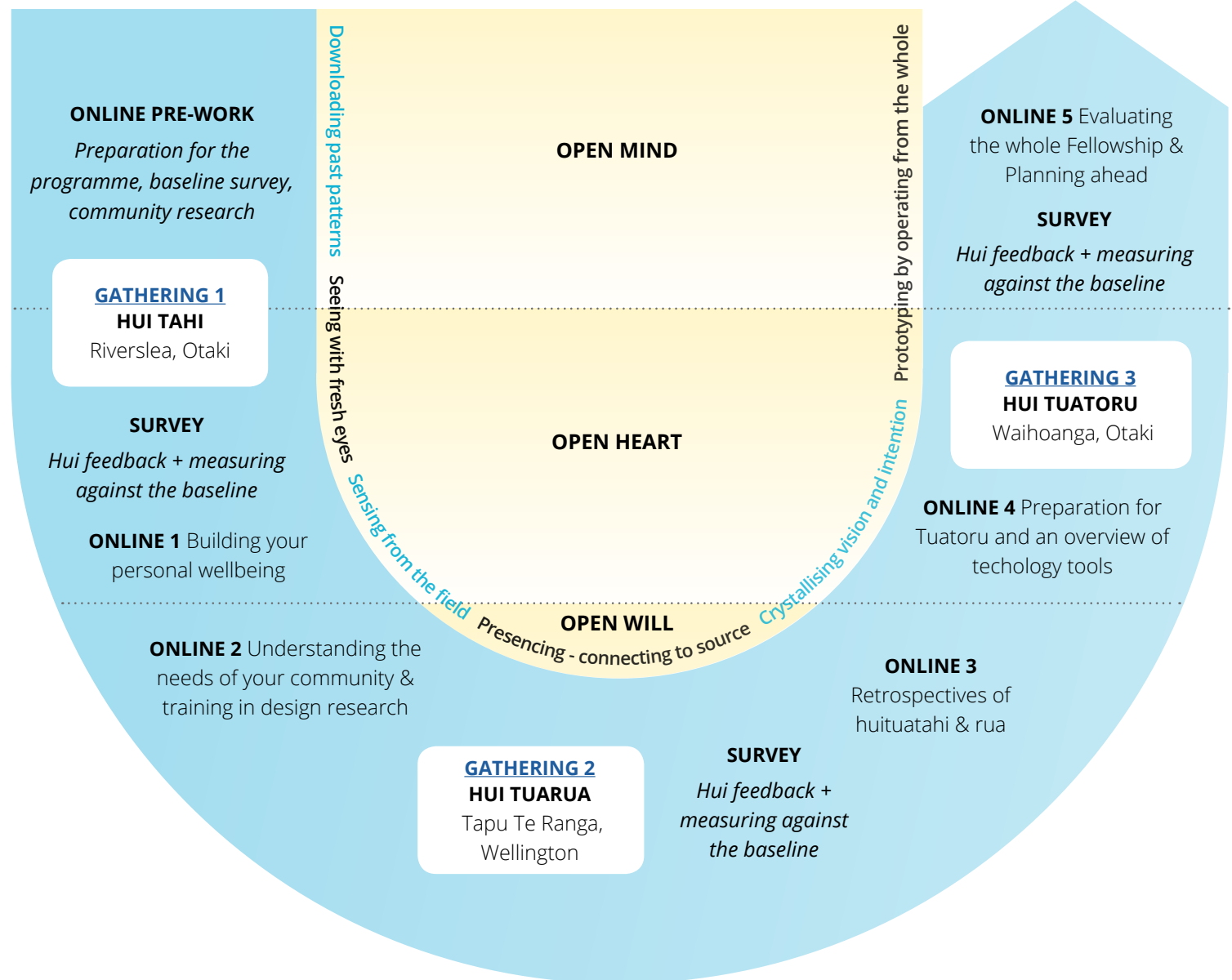
THE FINAL DESIGN: OUR FELLOWSHIP MUP IN ACTION

Two key modes:

Face-to-face, multi-day gatherings

Online modules, fortnightly (2 hours to complete each)

Outline of the programme:



HOW PROCESS AFFECTED THE OUTCOME

Compared to our early estimates about what a valuable programme would look like, the codesign process significantly changed a number of core elements of the programme.

Through the early surveys we discovered a new persona called “career changer” which we hadn’t accounted for originally. This kind of applicant wanted the programme to help them reconsider their work life completely; they wanted to work out how to position themselves to have greater impact and wanted support working out if their current role could be reshaped to do this or if they would need to change their path completely to have the impact they desire.

In some of the earlier validation surveys and conversations, we experimented with what people would pay to partake in the programme. We have never charged anything for Lifehack programmes previously so we were evaluating a large range of options from only a few hundred dollars, to multiple thousands. After many conversations, we thought participants would be willing to pay

more than \$1000, especially those participants whose employers were supporting them using their professional development budgets. However, when we surveyed our excited sign-ups list (early adopters), we found a preference for between \$500 and \$800. The final cost of the three months was \$600 +GST per person, which came to a total of \$9,600 +GST, where the total expenses of running the programme was \$28,300 +GST.

The application process helped us learn that some people would definitely need scholarships to participate, especially mothers, and people of Maori descent from more rural areas. We were able to restructure the budget and provide some scholarships as a way of valuing the participation of a greater diversity of people. Additionally, from the application process we gleaned that some participants were bringing lived-experience with different personal health issues, both physical and mental, to the programme. This information enabled us to design a supportive environment which could hold them safely and supportively through hard experiences with a lot of understanding.

During the second gathering of the programme, one of our trainers/provocateurs [facilitated a retrospective session with the participants](#). We gained the kind of feedback you might expect at the end of the programme, halfway through. Participants discussed what was engaging and what wasn’t, and we took notes. We learned that we needed to put a lot more effort into designing interactive learning processes, and making more space for participants to facilitate sessions. We also learned that the participants themselves wanted to facilitate more as they became more confident in what conversations they wanted to host and share with the Fellowship group. As a result of this, our final gathering was entirely focused on sessions run by participants and Lifehack facilitators. The sessions run by the Lifehack team were requested by participants in advance.

NEW IDEAS TO TRY NEXT TIME

Getting so much input on how we design and run the Fellowship was a great challenge and starting point for our team's journey to improve our co-design practice overall.

Going forward, we have some ideas about what we would like to try next time to improve our process.

New hypotheses for the future:

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

If we hold a focus group discussion with a small group of participants a week before the programme started, with representation from every persona group, we could change and improve the programme outline of the first gathering to better take into consideration the nervous and overwhelmed feelings of participants as they meet a new group of people and take in new information all at once.

AROUND THE COUNTRY

If we select participants who are more evenly spread from around the country we could more easily allow participants to choose the locations and to possibly host gatherings in places where they are from, rather than meeting in Wellington three times because it's the region most participants are from or close to.

REGULAR FEEDBACK

If we invited more regular feedback on the content in the online modules, we could refine and improve their effectiveness to a much higher degree, rather than only asking for feedback after we sent out the first four modules.

COLLABORATION TECHNOLOGY

If we introduce collaboration technology like Loomio.org earlier in the process, it would be easier for everyone to use and access and we would be more likely to be able to make inclusive decisions about the content of the programme even when not all the participants can make it to the events.

EXPLICIT ABOUT DESIGN

If we are more explicit about the design of each of the gatherings beforehand, there would be opportunities for participants to request changes prior to the events, rather than discussing the format of the events right up until the day before, which makes it hard to ask the whole group for final feedback as well as learn which sessions they might want to facilitate.

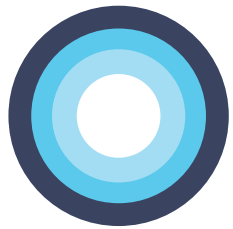
A COMMENT ON THE IMPACT OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Lifhack has a commitment to sharing what we are learning, so we also have a report which outlines the impact of the Fellowship overall. This report is specifically focussed on what we did across the entire design from application criteria to how we evaluated and what the results were. Check it out if you are interested in more detail.

The impact report shows that the Fellowship has helped participants feel connected, supported and upskilled in areas where they previously felt unconfident. We are also noticing the participants taking action on their project ideas, joining each others' teams and actively providing financial and in-kind support to help each other succeed.

You can read more about the impact of the Flourishing Fellowship in the report available in early 2016.

We believe the programme would not have been so successful had we not invested time and energy into understanding the needs and desires of our participants at every stage.



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