Top tips from Churchill Fellows on your Fellowship

Travel to learn…
return to inspire
The comments have been collated from Fellows’ experiences, as related at the annual seminars.
About the Fellowship

- Learning afforded by the Fellowship is vast, both professionally and personally. You will find that you will have as much to share with your hosts as they have with you, so go prepared.
- Your confidence and your resilience will increase; think about how your next steps in your career or personal life could benefit from the experience and how you can make the most of it now and for the next 3 to 5 years.
- You will learn not only from the meetings but from being in a new environment and a different culture, both of these are equally valuable experiences.
- The time away from home is longer than you think, be prepared to miss home and experience some homesickness and loneliness. See if friends and family can come out and meet you at some point. You may also wish to connect with other Fellows travelling at the same time to your destination. A good place to do this is the WCMT LinkedIn Group.
- The Fellowships are a rare opportunity to learn and help your country in a unique way. It’s a privilege so make the most of it by promoting it to others before, during and after your trip.
- The impact of your Fellowship is ongoing and life changing and may increase as more time passes, so keeping in touch with the Trust will be important to help monitor the success of your trip.

Planning your research

As a Churchill Fellow you’re charged to disseminate your findings for the benefit of other people in the UK and we hope you will promote the Fellowships and the mission of the Trust. It would be useful to have prepared something beforehand for those you meet, as they will be interested. Your preparation should include background on Churchill, the Travelling Fellowship scheme and your work. People you meet will be just as interested in hearing what happens in the UK as you are in what happens in your host countries.

Getting Started:

- Alert and inform immediate family and friends.
- Draft a short statement about your forthcoming trip, aims and dates. Share statement.
- Alert and inform work colleagues and seniors about your success and share statement.
- Connect with existing Fellows – look for them on the WCMT website and ask us to connect you.
- Contact local and national associations relevant to your topic and inform them of your trip/aims.
• Who do you know that can help share your research locally, regionally, nationally, internationally?
• Get people interested in your project before you leave. This will help with your planning and dissemination.

Planning your itinerary:

• Pin down your aims: this may mean narrowing your focus. If you leave it too wide your research may lack depth, and therefore usefulness, on your return. Be sure your hosts know your aims.
• Don't restrict yourself to your specific field when making contacts. Broaden your research to include related groups/sectors.
• Contacting umbrella organisations may increase your response rate as they will endorse your visit through their networks.
• In the US the Mayor’s office may be a good place to start, and in Australia, the WCMT network can be useful. The British Council may also help. Connect with the Ambassadors in British Embassies. They are keen to promote the best of UK culture across the world and WCMT Fellows are prime examples of this. All four UK regions may have consulates and they are often extremely well connected so worth a polite email with your WCMT introduction letter.
• Don’t over plan, you will receive more introductions once you’re travelling and if your itinerary is already packed you won’t be able to take them up.
• Plan for days off; allow time for sightseeing and to pick up on new opportunities that will present themselves.
• It’s also very important to build in time for rest and reflection and ‘processing’ what you’ve learnt. Down time will help keep you focused.
• Make sure your itinerary has a good balance between pre-arranged meetings and enough space to enable you to take up any spontaneous introductions.

Contacting host organisations:

• Not everyone will respond quickly, or at all, to your requests to visit, but the WCMT introductory letter really helps so attach it to every initial email. It will also be useful to send out to those you wish to influence on your return.
• Offer something in return in your follow up correspondence: run a workshop, do a talk about how things work in the UK, etc. Take a presentation or information on what's going on in the UK in your area; your hosts will be interested and it makes the process more reciprocal.
• Sometimes it works better to simply pick up the phone – checking for time differences first.
• Once you’ve made some contacts, ask them to recommend more organisations/places for you to visit.
• Don’t be put off if your requests to visit are rejected, you will find plenty of others are very keen to meet with you.
- Don’t prejudge a contact by their email manner.
- When making your plans, aim at least two rungs higher than you need, e.g. ministerial level. Recognition/endorsement from the top will encourage others to agree to meet you.

**Dissemination – some things to think about before you go:**

- It can be helpful to find a champion/mentor before you go who will support you and be able to help you share your findings on your return.
- Start generating an audience for your research before you travel so you have people to talk to when you return. (See dissemination flowchart)
- Keep in mind how you will benefit your own organisation and make a good impact on your return.
- Can your family, friends and immediate circle of professional/work colleagues help tell people about your Fellowship before you go?
- Have you got access to a journalist who is interested in your topic?
- Have you considered who would benefit most from hearing about your trip and your learning?

- What difference will your learning make to your local community or to a wider national platform?
- Do you use social media? If not do you know an organisation or someone who does?

**Social Media:**

- Share your statement on Twitter, Facebook, your blog or LinkedIn. Twitter can be great for engagement. Blogs give you scope to tell the fuller story, track your own learning and generate interest in your research. If you’re unfamiliar with these, it’s worth trying them out before departure to see if you want to use them on your travels. Also think about the equipment you will need and how/if you will be able to access the internet when away.
- If you decide to keep a blog, check whether your organisation needs to clear the content before publishing.

Send out an ‘I am off on my WCMT trip’ reminder to all one week before your departure.
Planning your travels

See Fellows' Handbook for more advice on travel planning.

General Tips:

- Prepare in advance.
- Understand the country you’re going to, especially their customs and laws, so you don’t inadvertently fall foul of them.
- Travel light – you will collect lots of literature on your travels. Take a pen drive or photograph documents so you don’t have to carry them.

Booking Flights and Accommodation

- Don’t book all accommodation in advance. Take advantage of local knowledge once you’re travelling and some of your contacts may offer to have you to stay.
- Consider your personal safety when booking accommodation. Don’t book so cheaply that it means you’re in a dangerous area. Get advice on where best and safest to stay from your contacts. Try Airbnb, home stays, home shares etc.
- Booking through Diversity Travel is advisable as they can help if flights need changing once you’ve started travelling. WCMT has an account with them so they will invoice the Trust direct and they can secure charity fares.

Staying Connected:

- UK mobiles don’t work in all other countries, such as the USA, so investigate this before you go.
- Ipads are a luxury item but extremely useful if you can take one with you. You can also download films/episodes for quiet moments!
- Investigate signing up to Skype and other methods of keeping in touch with home before you leave. You may have lonely moments so contact with home will be important.
On your travels

Don’t be surprised at the status being a Churchill Fellow confers on you. Enjoy it and live up to it.

Safety:

- Make sure you know which areas aren’t safe to go into. Check with your local contacts.

Visits:

- Prepare well before meetings, research the organisation and have questions ready.
- Be clear about the ground rules of any interviews/meetings beforehand, particularly if the subject is sensitive and confidentiality needs to be a consideration.
- Keep a daily record of your conversations and allow time to reflect on them/process them before the next one – it’s very easy to forget.
- Some meetings will be a waste of time, don’t be discouraged.
- You may meet people who advocate an opposing view to your own and it may be a challenge meeting with them. It’s also a valuable experience.
- Take the opportunity to reflect on your own practice.
- Churchill Crowns are a useful and appreciated gift (available from WCMT office).

Dissemination – some points to consider whilst travelling:

- Be critical, look for evaluations, and corroborate with a third party about what you’ve been told. You’ll need to justify your recommendations and ideas on your return.
- Be up front that you will be writing a report. Be respectful of confidentiality issues, and give people you meet the option not to be featured in your report or to have their names changed.
- If you’re going to be critical in your report tell the organisation/contacts concerned in advance.
- Don’t expect to find all the answers, you may discover that what you’re doing already is good, which is a positive thing to establish.
- Start thinking about your recommendations early on, don’t set them in stone but an early focus will help you see where the gaps are while you still have time to fill them.
- Take lots of photos, they’re a useful memory jogger and will be needed for press releases and publicity later on. Make sure you ask someone to take some good photos of you as well.
• You may wish to go back for permissions or more information for your report after your visit, so make sure to mention this to your hosts on your visit. Their time is valuable too!
• Are there people or organisations you can connect with while on your journey?
• Are your aims still relevant to what you are learning or are there more valuable lessons you are gleaning?
• Do your meetings highlight people or organisations back home you haven’t thought about that could help support your findings?
• Have you met any politicians, journalists, bloggers or change makers who have UK connections of influence that can introduce you to key people to help on your return?
• Are you capturing key new contacts’ details and alerting them to your quest for information and UK networking opportunities?

Social Media:

If using social media:

• Use Twitter, Facebook and other cyber platforms to update on your trip.
• Exchange business cards/Twitter names/Skype and website details.

If not using social media:

• Exchange business cards phone numbers and postal addresses; email WCMT/friends updates they can post on your behalf.
• Keep a record of any new or interesting people you meet.
• Thank people as you go as it helps you not to forget anyone.
On your return

Be sensitive to your colleagues on your return, they have been holding the fort during your absence and haven’t had your opportunity.

Presenting your findings:

- Returning can be an anti-climax from the high of travelling, be prepared for that and have workshops and talks prepared. You may have different audiences so think about the key messages you wish to share that will resonate the most with each group.

- Writing journal articles or books and giving presentations, workshops, seminars or conferences are all excellent ways to crystallise and disseminate your learning. Be strategic and ambitious about who you invite to your presentations.

Report:

- Get it in on time.
- Keep your report focused, think of your audience, be prepared for writer’s block but you’ll get there in the end.
- Your report should stand alone but include social media with relevant web links and Twitter handles, Facebook pages etc., as these can be sources of further information for your audience.
- Read the section on writing your report in the Fellow's Handbook.

Dissemination:

Before you submit your report to WCMT consider the following points:

1. Ask a professional colleague to read and give you feedback
2. Is it interesting?
3. Is it factual?
4. Can it be replicated in the UK?
5. Who is your key audience?
6. Are your recommendations clear?

- Your Churchill Fellowship means that you are now an expert in your field. People will value your opinion and listen to you. Using that expertise to influence change will benefit both you and your audience.

- If you identified a champion/mentor before you left, work with them to share
your findings with your colleagues.

- For your press release on your return liaise with Ben Anstis at WCMT, as well as your own organisation’s Communications. Department closely to ensure you get maximum coverage. Always make sure you have permissions for photos or videos.
- Aim high with your report/paper. Always go to community and business leaders with your findings. Start with your immediate circles and check who has connections that can help (see dissemination flow chart).
- Local and national associations are worth contacting. CEOs, Chairs and MDs should be your first email targets.
- Your own local council may have a councillor with a portfolio that incudes your topic area – seek them out and make an appointment to speak to them to share your findings. Local good news ‘stories’ on their own patch are always valued.

Questions to consider when you get home:

- Have you thanked all contacts and hosts?
- Have you followed up on any last information needed or permissions for your report?
- Have you emailed all your pre-trip contacts to say you are home and your report will be forthcoming?