Evaluation and Learning Report for Rockwood Leadership Institute

2000 - 2009

This report presents the findings from the evaluation and learning for Rockwood Leadership Institute's two main trainings - Art of Leadership and Yearlong programs

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Introduction

> *"To lead is to live dangerously because when leadership counts, when you lead people through difficult change, you challenge what people hold dear- their daily habits, tools, loyalties, and ways of thinking- with nothing more to offer perhaps than a possibility."*
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> *Ron Heifetz, Leadership on the Line*

This report presents the findings from the evaluation and learning relative to Rockwood Leadership Institute's two main training offerings - *Art of Leadership* (AoL) and *Yearlong* programs. The purpose of the study is to explore and assess the program components' impact on the development of alumni's various capacities and abilities that define leadership. In other words the basic evaluation question we seek to answer is, how effective are Rockwood's *Art of Leadership* and *Yearlong* training programs in the development of leadership among its alumni? This evaluation and learning project is conducted in the spirit of exploration, learning, and joint inquiry. Rockwood staff expects to discuss program adjustments based on report findings beginning this summer.

Report Methodology

The evaluation uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to answer the basic question. The primary quantitative measure was an online survey completed by a sample of Rockwood alumni. The instrument included both Likert Scale and open-ended questions. The general areas of inquiry include,

- Rating of the various program components;
- Impact on career;
- Impact on self-mastery;
- Impact on Rockwood's five essential practices;
- Impact on skills and abilities related to collaboration;
- Impact on skills and abilities related to organization effectiveness; and
- Additional comments, reflections and recommendations.

The qualitative methods include,

- four focus groups held in San Francisco/Oakland Bay Area; Washington DC; New York City; and Seattle;
- 17 alumni interviews; a review of a small, random sample of past evaluation forms filled out by participants;
- a three-hour session conducted with Rockwood's staff and a board member to distill its program assumptions;
- the evaluator's past participation and experience in an AoL session; and
- a scan of leadership development programs.

All of these evaluation activities took place between February and June 2009. The emphasis throughout is on letting Rockwood alumni speak for themselves, giving depth, nuance and

meaning to the quantitative data. Where available, we compare impact by characteristics of demographics of the group. For example, we compare impact by variables such as by gender, age, and position within organization. Only differences that were statistically significant at $P <$ .05 are reported. In other words only differences that were likely not due to chance are reported. The report includes a description of the sample, strengths and limitations of the study, an introduction to the assumptions that underlie Rockwood's trainings and key findings of the analysis.

The Sample

The Rockwood database of program participants contained 2,074 individuals who attended the *Art of Leadership* workshops and 103 that were part of the *Yearlong* Fellowship between 2000 and 2009. Of the *AoL* population, 1302 or 63% had an active e-mail address and were contacted. Of this population, 342 or 26% responded to the survey request. Sixty of the 103 year-long alumni were randomly invited to participate in the survey; 38 or 63% responded. This represents 17% of the entire Rockwood alumni population.

Who Responded to the Survey?

342 *Art of Leadership* alumni took the survey, which is a solid 26%[1] response rate that can be expected for a survey of this type. Although data on the population of Rockwood participants are not available to allow for comparison to the sample of survey respondents, a wide range of feedback, from critical to positive, was received through the survey and there does not appear to be reason for significant concern regarding sample bias.

✓ Of this sample:
- Seventy-three percent (73%) of survey respondents participated in Rockwood from 2005 – 2009;
- Close to 40% of respondents held senior leadership positions in their organizations as executive or deputy directors when they participated in Rockwood;
- Almost half had been in the nonprofit sector for ten years or more prior to Rockwood;
- Three-quarters (74%) of respondents are female;
- 63% between the ages of 31 – 50; 23% were 50 or older; and
- 68% self-identified as White/European American; 10% African American; 11% Latino; 11% Asian American[2].

✓ Of the 60 *Yearlong* program alumni who received an invitation to take the survey, 38 responded, which is an extraordinary 63%. Of this sample:

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[1] AoL has a total alumni pool of 2074; of this universe, Rockwood has 1302 active emails (62%). Of the alumni who received an invitation to take the survey, 342 responded.

[2] Since Rockwood did not collect participant demographics in the early years, we are not able to determine how closely this response set approximates the actual alumni pool.

- 60% are Fellows from 2002 – 2006 *Yearlong* programs;
- 71% have worked in the nonprofit sector for ten or more years; and half are executive directors of their organizations;
- 55% of respondents are female; 70% are between the ages of 31 – 50; 24% are over 50;
- 60% self identified as White/European American; 18% African American; 13% Latino; 10% Asian American.

✓ *AoL* **alumni who responded to the survey are largely an older, experienced group of nonprofit leaders, primarily White women, who hold significant positional power within their organizations.**[3]

- This survey response demographic is not necessarily reflective of the overall Rockwood alumni pool. For the *Yearlong* alumni pool specifically, between the years 2005 – 2009, 54% are White, and gender is equally divided between men and women. In this case, survey respondents' demographics are slightly different from the alumni population.

Limitations and Strengths of the Study

Leadership is an Adaptive Capacity

Leadership programs are notoriously difficult to evaluate since they operate in an open system where cause and effect are not entirely linear, and multiple inputs occur simultaneously. Challenges faced by leaders are complex, answers are not known, and there is no single entity that has the authority to impose solutions on other stakeholders. Therefore, it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw a straight line from one input, like one's participation in Rockwood, to an organizational output, such as increasing the organization's revenue.

The meaning and meaningfulness of the consequences of the training experience are likely to be highly specific to the particular person in his/her particular circumstances. While the individualized nature of learning is a basic premise of experiential education, it is still worthwhile to stand back from those individual experiences to look at the patterns of change that cut across the specifics of person and circumstances.

The Use of Self

As the evaluator and learning partner to Rockwood, I am an active part of the learning process: as observer, interviewer, data gatherer, participant in field settings, and interpreter. The use of self is imbedded throughout this evaluation as I come to this project with my own strengths,

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[3] Since Rockwood did not collect participant demographics in the early years, we are not able to determine how closely this response set approximates the actual alumni pool.

world view, cultural biases, experience as an organizer and advocate, and limitations. I do not see myself as a detached, "objective" analyzer of information nor is the purpose of this report to render judgment of what is going right and wrong. My participation in the *Art of Leadership for Philanthropic Leaders* in February 2009 gave me first-hand experience of the program; for this experience, I am grateful.

Retrospective
We should also note that the current study is a retrospective. The indicators being assessed were not measured at baseline. Relevant demographic information that would help us understand outcomes was also not collected. The data collection on which this report is based relies heavily on the memory and perceptions of the informants.

Rockwood's Core Constituents and Original Intentions
Rockwood's core constituents are social justice advocates and organizers. *This is one of Rockwood's key distinguishing features that sets it apart from other leadership development programs.*

Rockwood alumni are working to move the needle on some of today's most intractable social issues with little at their disposal other than their human and social capital, not unlike their predecessors in the Civil Rights Movement. A list of Rockwood alumni organizations reads like a "Who's Who" of today's movement building groups: MoveOn, Southern Coalition for Racial Justice, Center for Community Change, Race Against Global Warming, Southwest Workers Union, MomsRising, NARAL, Green Corp, Ella Baker Center, Coalition for Environmentally Safe Communities, 1Sky, and the list goes on.[4]

It is helpful to understand the general characteristics of the Rockwood alumni population to appreciate the training's impact. In general, social justice activists are passionately committed to a cause based on values, principles, political orientation, and desired end goals such as a policy change or a specific demand. They are often involved in highly combative settings of "us vs. them." They can be self-sacrificing to an extreme, and as a result, suffer from burn-out. There is a tendency to see one's work as one's life, ignoring the need for self-renewal. The use of deep reflection is rare; there is just not the time to spare.

> *"We saw tens of thousands of passionate, brilliant and completely committed progressive social change activists giving their hearts, bodies and lives into the work of making a better world. And then we saw, over time, organizations that struggled and too often foundered, human beings burned out, and most social indicators moving in the wrong direction. We asked, given our knowledge and experience, what could we do about this? Our desire was no less than to shift the way social change was being done. We came up with four broad directions to help social change leaders and their organizations and networks move from fear and reaction to hope and positive*

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[4] www.rockwoodleadership.org/custom/organizations.php

vision; from piecemeal efforts to true partnership and systemic change; from activity to powerful results; and from burnout to a lifetime of sustained engagement."
Robert Gass, Rockwood curriculum founder

According to Founding Executive Director, André Carothers[5], Rockwood set out to "*reduce 'transaction costs' between people, to reduce stress, save money, lead to more effective and long-lasting social change. And to bring love and rigor to the workplace; applied love. The central guiding tenet of all Rockwood trainings, made explicit on Day One, is that in order to be successful and fulfilled in the long-term, we must align the inner and outer selves, and 'be the change we wish to see in the world.'*"

Rockwood founders wanted program participants to walk away with "*a significantly increased appreciation of how who they are impacts the results they create (or don't create) as a leader; inspired as to the importance of working on themselves, and come away with an increased commitment to continue this inner work over the course of their careers and lives; breakthroughs in one or more elements of the curriculum that will actually translate into some observable improvement in their performance as leaders; tools and practices that they can use to improve their leadership; and new allies (especially ones from outside their normal sphere of action). Collectively, we were pursuing a critical mass strategy: to train sufficient thousands of activists in these new approaches to leadership with the aim of helping to see a new meme and norms for social change leadership.*"[6]

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[5] In email correspondence with evaluator from André Carothers describing the origins of Rockwood

[6] In email correspondence with evaluator describing the origins of Rockwood from Robert Gass

Key Findings

By and large, the evaluation data show that the founders' vision has largely been met.

1. *Art of Leadership is a Transformative Experience for 78% of AoL Alumni; 97% of Yearlong Alumni*

   Four in five Art of Leadership participants who responded to the survey experienced a transformative impact on their lives. When asked "*Overall, the Rockwood training has had a transformative impact on my life*"

   - *51% agreed*
   - *27% strongly agreed*

   When asked *"To what extent has participation in Rockwood made a difference in your leadership development?"*

   - *38% of AoL survey respondents said moderate impact*
   - *36% said large impact*
   - *15% said it had a transformative/life changing impact*

✓ *Close to 90% of respondents said Rockwood has had a moderate impact in their leadership development; 51% said large or life-changing impact.*

> *"I had forgotten how to step back and reflect on my actions and was focusing on what was not working rather than what can work. My attitude at work, my vision, my priorities and what makes me happy and passionate are now aligned to my purpose and beliefs."*

> *"It increased my confidence as a leader, helped me understand that I have real talent and something unique to share and build on. I came to Rockwood in complete burnout. The experience helped me continue with my life's work and understand that my strength comes from within and I need to trust my gut and stay with my life's work even if it is really exhausting at times."*

The transformative changes that *AoL* participants cited here are all difficult to measure. What we have in these comments and interviews are personal perceptions about the power of one's leadership when aligned with life purpose. The evidence indicates that *AoL* alumni felt differently and, in many cases, behaved differently in their work and community lives as a result of their training. Different participants were affected in different ways and to varying degrees. A small group of alumni reported little or adverse effects from the experience.

> *"I loved the course and found it quite helpful and the course led to lasting relationships that have been invaluable for me and my organization. But, as useful (and fun) as it was, I'm not sure I'd call it transformative."*

"I took this training a long time ago and had already participated in a great deal of leadership work. I think the Art of Leadership is best for people who have not yet done a great deal of personal or transformative work. It's a wonderful program for those folks."

"I had an overall negative experience at the Art of Leadership. My experience was that we were being intentionally 'beaten down' by a process that was overloaded with emotional material without creating a safe environment for this kind of work. It also was never made clear beforehand that we were going to do heavy emotional work of this kind, and that felt manipulative. The trainers seemed very much out of their depth for the work."

The more common reaction, however, was surprise at just how much personal transformation occurred.

"I now OWN that I am a leader, which was really a way of putting in check the cultural barriers and stereotypes (from my immigrant and Vietnamese community) that women are not leaders."

"As a manager and leader, Rockwood helped me to realize some ways in which I am blocking creativity/solutions in the name of efficiency."

"Rockwood's true gift to me was digging deep and then charting why certain emotional triggers were keeping me trapped in unproductive behavior patterns – both in social justice work and personally."

"Rockwood helped me re-ground myself in a sense of purpose, both for my life in general but more importantly for my work. This helped me be far more proactive in my work, reframing my thinking from 'what do I have to do,' to 'what can I do, what is possible,' which has led to a much happier work me in general."

Alumni describe in great detail of their tranformation experienced either in the developmental fashion or as a fundamental shift of being.

"I had a growth spurt experience. I became more aware of my triggers, and worked on not getting so defensive from my 360 feedback. I was able to confront them, embrace them, and I walked back into the world (from my AoL session) a different person. It was an incredible interpersonal growth experience for me and it has impacted my life."

"I liken Rockwood's impact on my life with learning how to read. It's hard to attribute a single factor, but there were many… books in the house, parents who read to us, a great first grade teacher, and most of all, practice!"

"Leadership is in the doing. Rockwood has tremendous transformative potential for me if I did all the five practices! It did help ramp my leadership up to the next level, but it's hard to pinpoint my transformation to specific Rockwood skills or exercise. It's like when I went to Morocco or Cuba

for the first time or when I got my first union job; they helped open my mind and world, and it was an opening, a beginning."

The connection between personal changes and how they impact one's professional activities was an important theme throughout this evaluation.

> *"In general, people place judgment on folks who are outwardly emotional, and show feelings. Going thru the (AoL) process you do hit places that you may not have hit in awhile, emotions come up, brings up really deep feelings to the surface... I didn't have the awareness of how really connecting deeply to your own personal emotions, histories, feelings is so central to developing as and being a good leader. It's about knowing who you are, what drives you, what motivates you, what your tendencies are in relating to other people that is essential in all the different concepts that we learned... How you impact others is the sum of your culture, social factors, relationships that you have had, wounds, successes, affirmations, insults, that you have received that create how you act in the world. That is all incredibly deep. In this culture and society, there is this idea that we can compartmentalize ourselves. Me at work. Me at home. Me with friends. And then, there are the hard skill; how to be a good supervisor by following these steps. Rockwood broke it all down for me. To be a good supervisor, a good partner, it's the whole package that we really need to build."*

AoL's comprehensive nature fosters transformative change as noted in the following comment.

> *"Almost everything I find in Rockwood's curriculum I can find in a management school setting. Nobody ever said management school transformed anyone. So, what is it? It is the unusual relationship building, of trust, where we don't have much of in the work we do. It's the quality of the trainers. It's being in a secluded beautiful setting. And most of all, it's the sense that we're in it for something bigger – even if it's never defined. It permeates the tone of the setting that we're in something bigger, just like every business must stand for something bigger. Rockwood helped link me to that sense."*

✓ *Yearlong experience intensifies transformative impact*
  When asked "Overall, the Rockwood training has had a transformative impact on my life"
  ○ *26% agreed*
  ○ *71% strongly agreed*

  This is an astonishing 97% agreement that Rockwood provides a transformative experience for Yearlong Fellows.

  When asked "To what extent has participation in RW made a difference in your leadership development?"
  ○ *5% of Yearlong survey respondents said moderate impact*
  ○ *32% said large impact*
  ○ *60% said it had a transformative/life changing different*

An overwhelming 92% of Yearlong respondents said RW has had a large or life-changing difference in his/her leadership development.

The degree to which *Yearlong* alumni experience a fundamental transformation is profound. The comprehensive nature of the *Yearlong* experience is a key contributing factor. It is noteworthy that 76% of *Yearlong* alumni feel less burned out and are more able to maintain a work-life balance. Keeping in mind the core constituents of Rockwood and the constant threat of burn-out, this is an enormous success of the *Yearlong* program.

> *"By understanding and focusing on my purpose, gaining confidence in my innate leadership style as authentic and valuable, and trusting my inner knowing, I can never return to the way I was before Rockwood. I may stray from practice, but I will forever carry those three things as part of who I am."*

> *"As a seasoned leader, I had the techniques down, from public speaking to supervision and from fundraising to strategic planning. But until Rockwood, I lacked the sense of personal power and presence to strategically aggregate and use them."*

> *"There is not a day that goes by that I'm not using or reflecting upon something that I learned in Rockwood. I have gained treasure chest of new skills and understandings about the way I approach my life and my work, and most importantly some of the best friends and most trusted mentors and colleagues that I know will support me forever."*

> *"Before Rockwood, I had a sense that I could be a more effective in building a new generation of organizing cadre, but I did not see any tools that would help me— and I thought that I was too busy to find any. While I picked up some new skills from Rockwood, the most important lesson that I've taken from the Rockwood program— including Robert, the daily practices and the amazing folks in our cohort— was that if I commit to reflecting and going slowly at deliberate times, our teams can achieve more with less effort. This has changed the way that I relate to the work and the way that I lead."*

2. Alumni Rated All Program Components Positively
When asked to rate the quality of various *AoL* components:
- All scores fell between four and five on a five point scale; trainers were rated highest at 4.6 and as opportunity to learn from colleagues lowest at 4.2
- 2000 to 2005 participants rated their opportunity to learn from peers higher than those that participated between 2006 and 2009; 4.52 to 4.34
- 94% rated trainers with a 4 or 5 (69% strongly agree, a 5 on a 5-point scale)
- 92% rated AoL content with a 4 or 5 (48% strongly agree)
- 83% rated the training being a space for me to be vulnerable and authentic (52% strongly agree)
- 80% rated opportunities to learn from others in the cohort (38% strongly agree)

A small number of *AoL* participants noted in the written comments that they found it difficult to be fully vulnerable and authentic because they were in a session with (a) people from the same organization with either reporting relationships or other organizational politics; or (b) people

they knew from coalition work that held a contradicting point of view and/or had a lot of history with; or (c) current or potential funders. These complex human dynamics are useful for Rockwood to acknowledge and grapple with in future participation design.

Yearlong participants rated the various components highly as well.
- All scores fell between three and five on a five point Likert Scale; with Quality of lead Trainer highest at 4.9 and in between peer coaching lowest at 3.8
- Whites rated in session work and exercises with Robert Gass higher than non-Whites, 5.00 to 4.60
- 100% rated quality of the lead trainer, Robert Gass, with a 4 or 5 (95% strongly agree; 5 on 5-point scale)
- 97% rated the training being a space for me to be vulnerable and authentic (86% strongly agree)
- 94% rated the content with a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale (70% strongly agree)
- 89% rated the opportunities to learn from others in the cohort with a 4 or 5 (76% strongly agree)
- 67% rated in-between-session peer coaching pairs with a 4 or 5 (17% strongly agree)

3. ***Rockwood Increased Alumni Career Satisfaction and Feelings of Job Effectiveness***
✓ ***AoL positively impacts Alumni careers; results are amplified for Yearlong fellows***
- Rating scores for questions on career impact all fell between 4.3 and 3.3; with understanding leadership highest and staying within the same organization lowest
- *AoL* participants that attended from 2000 to 2005 said that Rockwood helped them advance their career more than those that from 2006 to 2009
- *Aol* participants that attended from 2000 to 2005 said that Rockwood helped them maintain a balance between work and personal life more than those that attended from 2006 to 2009
- 87% *AoL* alumni better understand her/his leadership style
- 81% *AoL* alumni feel more effective in their job position
- 81% *AoL* alumni feel more connected to their purpose

IMPACT ROCKWOOD HAS ON CAREERS

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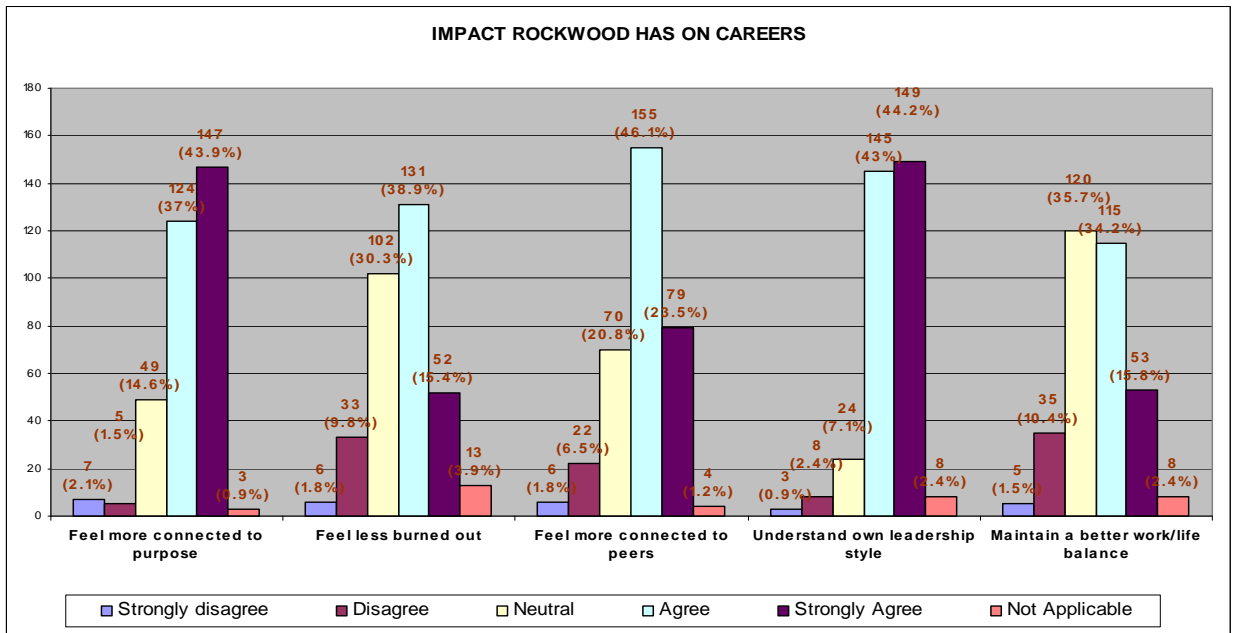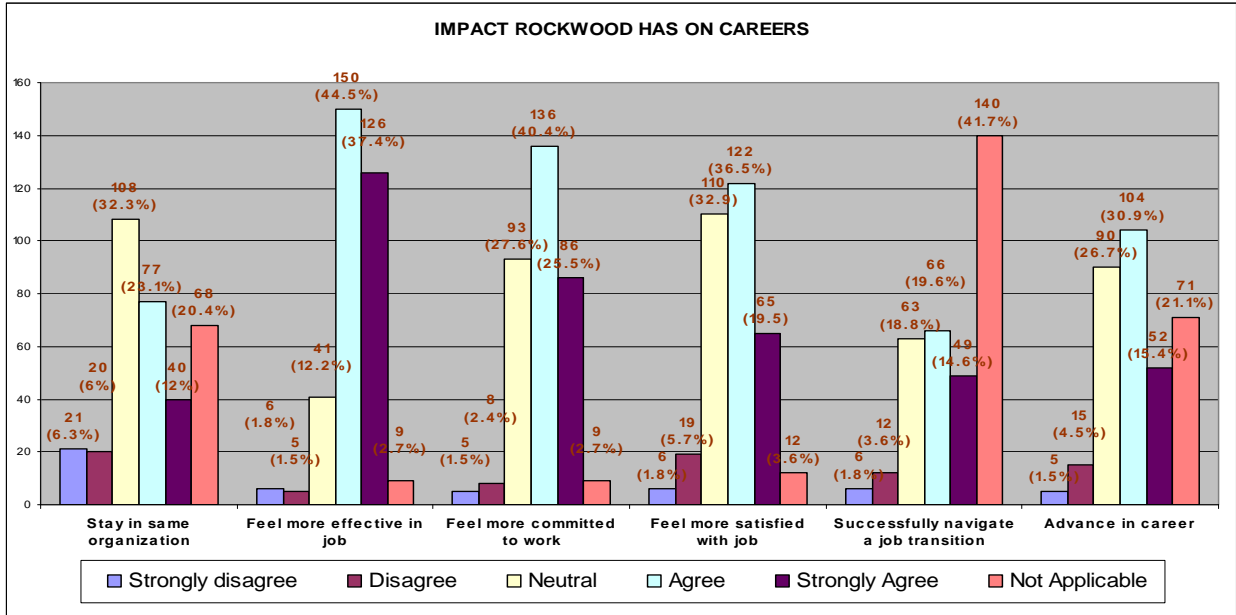
All the data represented by the graphs in the report pertain to AoL only.

✓ ***AoL helps participants make a strong connection to purpose and to understand her/his own leadership style.***
These two interrelated leadership capacities signigicantly impact alumni careers. Staying in the same organization or position that is out of alignment with one's purpose leads to demoralization, burn-out, and otherwise general unhappiness.

> *"I was made to realize and own up to the leadership opportunities available to me. Once I was aware of these opportunities, I seized them and have become a much more integral part of my organization. Rockwood helped open my eyes and realize my own potential."*

✓ *A fundamental shift happens when one is connected to life purpose that leads to an increased sense of job satisfaction even if the position remained the same*

Of the 40% *AoL* survey respondents that have changed job positions, 85% consider their current position to be an advancement from their previous one. If they have had a position change, 75% see Rockwood as having been at least somewhat helpful in that process.

> *"The training was a real turning point for me. Because I felt more connected to my purpose, I stopped acting like a victim in my job. I became more accepting of the reality I found myself in and took agency to act more authentically out of my purpose. I also implemented what I learned about having difficult conversations in a way that really improved my work relationships, especially with funders."*

> *"The training helped me see that some of the qualities I had thought were weaknesses were actually strengths if I could reframe the way I looked at them and that I did actually love my organization and my work when I was happy with myself."*

✓ *Without ongoing support and coaching, it is difficult to sustain and/or make more progress*. This is a theme that is repeated throughout the evaluation.

> *"I felt more committed to what I had learned at Rockwood right after coming back from the training. Years later I find it difficult to remember exactly what I learned, but remember it beign very powerful for me at the time and months afterward."*

✓ *Yearlong impact on fellows' careers is significant*
The *Yearlong* program has positively impacted fellows' careers in the following ways:
- Scores on questions about career impact fell between 4.7 and 3.3; with feel more connected to purpose highest and staying with the same organization the lowest
- **Close to 90% of *Yearlong* fellows feel more effective in his/her job positions**
- 86% feel more connected to purpose
- 73% feel more satisfied with their work
- 77% maintain a better work-life balance
- 76% feel less burned out

Forty percent of *Yearlong* fellows have changed organizations since participating in Rockwood, and 93% are still in the nonprofit sector. More than half, 56%, of *Yearlong* fellows have changed job positions; of those, 94% think her/his current position is an advancement from the previous position, and 90% said participation in Rockwood was somewhat or extremely helpful in their career advancement.

Here we ought to life up a discussion on the finding for "staying in the same organization." While it is certainly true that in certain jobs, staff retention and longevity are often seen as a measure of program quality, such as in child development, mentoring, where the one-on-one

bond is a top measure for program quality. However, "staying in the same organization" as a measure by itself is *not* necessarily or always a good thing. Having the courage to leave one's job if it is not aligned with one's life purpose, or if it doesn't allow for one's leadership to be authentic, may actually be a healthy indicator.

> *"Once, again I have given Rockwood a triple AAA rating-- but I am at a loss to be more critical in any way. Now, one year after the last Rockwood retreat, I feel even more certain and thankful for the Rockwood training. In every way above* (survey measures), *Rockwood has helped me to be more effective in my life and work. I have now a powerful peer group I regularly consult and work with. In the past, I would have gone alone. I recognize the value of my peer community, and feel the incredible importance of making time for these kinds of advisors to my work and the rest of my life. This has helped me to keep joy, wisdom and lightness in a very stressful and demanding work life. Rockwood has given me renewed confidence in myself-- some 25 years into my career I had become a bit jaded, skeptical, wondering how to continue to be effective, to continue to make a difference. Rockwood helped me to be reborn to myself, reborn to possibilities. I am still in transition-- I have not made the full move I had hoped to make as a result of my thinking in Rockwood-- but I am almost there. I can see it, taste it, touch it-- and it is GREAT."*

> *"The training did an incredible job at equipping me to take my organization to the next level. Our impact has grown considerably, budget increased by 40 percent and our ambition has grown significantly. Not just mine, but my ability to help the organization see an ambitious path forward grew incredibly."*

A useful way of looking at how Rockwood impacts alumni's career satisfaction is represented by the following graphic.
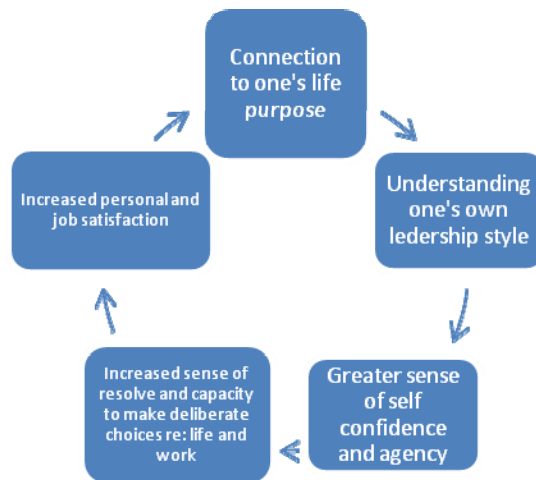
4. ***In Major Ways, AoL Advances Alumni Sense of Self Mastery; Even More So for Yearlong Fellows***
   - Scores on self-mastery questions ranged from 4.3 to 3.9 among *AoL* respondents and 4.6 to 3.7 among *Yearlong* Fellows
   - *AoL* participants rated Rockwood's help at engaging difficult conversations highest at 4.3 and clarifying priorities lowest at 3.9

- *Yearlong* participants rated Rockwood's help with listening more deeply highest at 4.6 and creating more results with less efforts lowest 3.7
- Among *Yearlong* fellows, females responded significantly higher to this question than males 4.67 to 4.31. In other words, Rockwood may help women clarify their priorities more than it does men
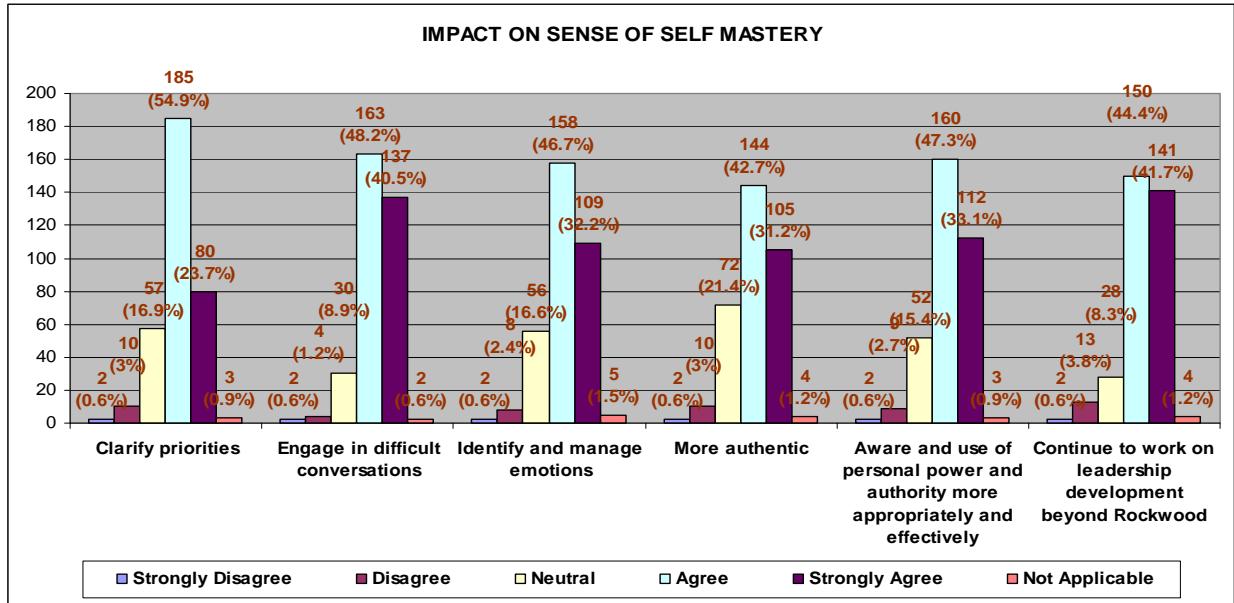
All the data represented by the graphs in the report pertain to AoL only.

To live and excel in leadership, enthusiasm alone is not enough. Leaders must also possess the skills necessary to motivate, enroll and activate others. They do that by communicating persuasively. They model their words by aligning their actions with the values of justice. They listen deeply. They say the things that are hard to say and often hard for the listener to hear. They are aware of their power and use it for good. They understand that social justice leadership is a lifelong journey.

In the various self-mastery measures that were included in the survey, the overwhelming majority of *AoL* alumni feel that their sense of self mastery is appreciably strengthened by their experience at Rockwood. And, they are putting these skills to use.

> *"I really got how powerful I am. I can use powers to create or destroy. I catch myself doing both. In any instant I can readjust, take responsibility for my person… and reassert my leadership skills if they are not in alignment with what I am committed to happening."*

> *"The importance of authentic communication, particularly during difficult conversations was one of the most important things I got out of Rockwood. In my opinion, poor communication is the number one challenge for effective management."*

✓ *AoL has more impact on those who are younger*
Alumni comments reveal that many of them came to Rockwood with a high level of self-mastery, which is not surprising given their sector tenure and positional power. For those who are older, with more years of experience in the sector, their sense of self mastery were reinforced and/or validated by Rockwood.

> *"I think some of the habits that I personally have around not burning myself out, maintaining a work/life balance were already there and Rockwood training didn't impact those at all. The training around purpose and vision did create a new way for me to explore those bigger questions and has certainly been a credit to Rockwood."*

> *"The exercise on using personal power more appropriately & effectively was far too elementary/ cursory to actually lead to any significant behavior change."*

Survey data show a significant group difference between those who are 30 and younger and those 31 and older across the various leadership measures. Those who are younger experience a higher degree of impact on their self mastery skills.

✓ *Engage in difficult conversations, and be more aware and use of personal power and authority more appropriately and effectively are two ways in which AoL have had great impact*
These are lifelong leadership competencies. They cut across one's life, career, building partnerships or leading organizations. The third area of greatest impact on alumni is that they **continue to work on leadership development beyond Rockwood.** This impact on alumni is perhaps the most understated, yet profound, contribution to the field of leadership development. Specifically, for a group of leaders who are helping lead change on society's frontlines, and are often charged with developing others' leadership, this finding is substantial.

✓ *Yearlong fellows experience an Increase in self mastery*
In every measure in the self-mastery inquiry, *Yearlong* fellows' experiences are intensified. When asked to name the three most important ways in which Rockwood has impacted them, respondents said (1) handle difficult situations and conflicts; (2) live and lead from that which gives my life meaning; and (3) listen deeply and be more empathic to others.

5. *AoL Deepens Alumni's Essential Partnership Skills by Leveraging Self Mastery. Here, in Context of Partnership Building, Rockwood has an Opportunity to Make Explicit its Implicit Commitment to Racial and Social Justice*
   - Among *AoL* participants, scores on partnership building ranged from 4.0 to 3.4; with supporting others through feedback and coaching highest and managing differences across race, class, gender and ethnicity lowest
   - There were some differences based on age group, job position when they attended Rockwood. Younger participants (30 and younger) said Rockwood helped them be

better listeners; help others through coaching; communicate more powerfully; understand and manage differences across race, gender, and ethnicity more than older participants (30 and over)

- Program officers also reported higher scores than non-program officers with respect to understand differences across race, gender and ethnicity
- People that attended Rockwood more recently (2006 to 2009) also rated it higher than those than attended between 2000 and 2005 with respect to understanding differences across race, gender, and ethnicity
- Among *Yearlong* Fellows, scores on partnership building ranged from 4.5 to 3.3; with supporting others through feedback and coaching highest and managing differences across race, class, gender and ethnicity lowest
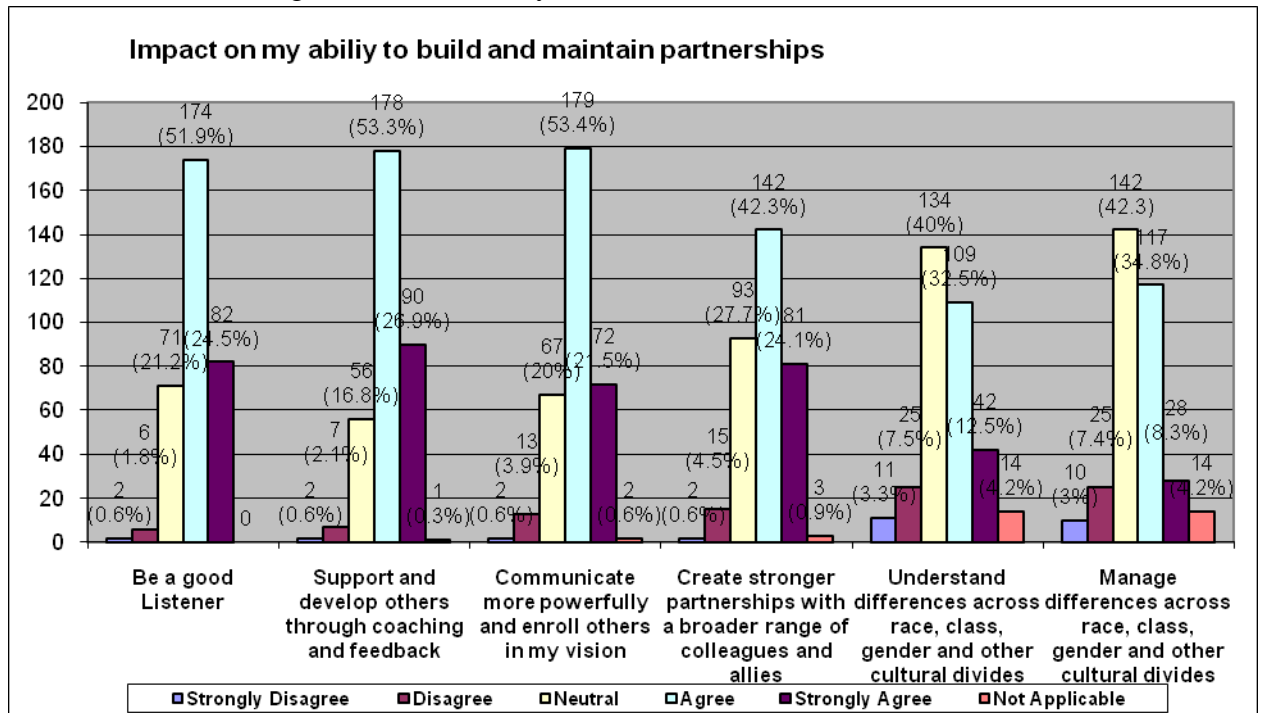
All the data represented by the graphs in the report pertain to AoL only.

The majority of Rockwood alumni work each day to bring hope and solutions to our society's most deep-rooted issues – poverty; climate change; systemic exploitation of women and workers and immigrants; habitat protection; violence prevention and the like. These adaptive issues, in contrast to technical issues, are without clear answers and impossible to solve by any single entity or sector. Nor can they be solved by imposing individual authority or power. Therefore, leaders' central task in building partnerships is to help stakeholders clarify what matters most, and what they are willing to give up for a social progress promise. This is not an easy task. Partnerships are never formed by implementing a formula or built by setting in place a set of policies or ground rules.

"The most important thing Rockwood has done for me is make me more connective, not a small thing in a line of work that has traditionally been combative (externally, against the bad guys) and competitive (internally, within the organization)."

"I have very much appreciated the strengths and awareness Rockwood training has helped raise in me. I know and can act much more deeply from capacity to show up in an authentic and self mastered way. This has helped me engage others in partnership."

✓ *Rockwood has an opportunity to make explicit its implicit commitment to racial justice*

More than on any other measure in the survey, respondents indicated "neutral" when asked if Rockwood has increased their ability to understand and/or manage differences across race, class, gender and other cultural divides at 40% and 42% respectively. The degree to which respondents indicate that they disagree on these measures when compared to other measures almost doubled. This is the only area in the data where this is true, and therefore warrants an in-depth look.

Any discussion of race, class and other social identities is potentially highly sensitive; our discussion of it here is no exception. While it is not Rockwood's mission to dismantle racism, or teach "oppression 101," it does implicitly recognizes the important place that race, class, gender and other social identity issues play in society. Alumni comments call this out into the open, and ask Rockwood to make this recognition explicit by creating a structure and container, as it does on the other curriculum elements, to help further participants' leadership in this arena.

"There was no container or preparation to talk about race. The women of color did not get to have a difficult conversation among ourselves on this. In the larger group discussion, I felt like I became a representative of my people, which made me feel really uncomfortable. There was no process for debriefing. There needs to be a fundamental shift... you can't just diversity by changing the color of the faces in the room, but to rethink a deeper shift. You can't just add a session on race and class, like it's some kind of charm. It's the elephant in the room. You are who you are because of your race, class, gender, and it has everything to do with privilege and access. It's the nature of the beast."

"Given Rockwood's obvious commitment to diversity, I found it curious that there was no explicit content around race, class or gender. As a person of color, I feel that insensitivity toward cultural difference has been a significant impediment that I've needed to overcome in white, middle and upper-middle class dominated progressive movements. Being truly authentic can negatively impact how one is evaluated by white peers and superiors. I've learned it's best to be silent or carefully pick my battles, especially related to race and ethnicity."

"In many ways the field is currently shifting. Often times, there is a false dichotomy between work that is transformational being called the 'inner work,' and work that is about power and class being called 'structural work.' They are often presented as two sides. We haven't figured out how to integrate the two sides. The only thing programs have done is to add a structural analysis to the inner work. I Invite Rockwood to be a part of the conversation to bridge the two sides. It's evident to me that this is still a developing, weak link, in an otherwise brilliant program, this incompleteness and a lack of mastery around race. Simultaneously I see that they notice the

problem, and I see them stepping up boldly to fix it. I'm extremely comfortable with their commitment and their taking action; that's evident."

Exposure to a Diverse Room Alone is Helpful

A number of respondents appreciated the opportunity to learn alongside people who look, and whose life experiences are, very different from theirs. Since we did not track individual respondent's demographic information to specific comments, it is not possible to see if white alumni reacted qualitatively different from alumni of color. The following comments suggest that alumni benefitted from the presence of others who were in their circles.

> *"The experience has helped me a great deal in understanding difference in the experience of other races, cultures, gender, etc. I thought I was sensitive to the other races, but I learned so much about what I did not know and am far less prejudiced and more open about the experience of others who may be different than mine."*

> *"I feel like working with diverse constituents has always been a challenge for me and Rockwood definitely helped me improve on this."*

✓ ***Yearlong fellows' responses to these questions are consistent with AoL alumni, with more intensity, and with higher level of agreement.***

Their responses in relations to the race, class, gender measures show the same degree of drop off, with "neutral" at 42% and 49% respectively. The following comments from *Yearlong* fellows are representative of the overall sample.

> *"The race work felt more like a patch than something integral, however, the composition of the group goes a long way to compensate for that."*

> *"I have learned a tremendous amount from Robert and the program regarding building trust and relationships across diversity (sector, race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.) particularly in terms of methodology. The one important area that I feel would be more helpful is a structured framing/discussion/understanding of systemic oppressions and how they shape individuals, organizations, and 'spaces' and the interrelationships on all those levels, especially as they are dictated, manipulated, influenced, etc by forces in power... I deeply appreciate that Rockwood developed a new module on 'race' for this year's program and asked for input from me and others. Waiting to see the final product..."*

6. ***Organizational Effectiveness is Not a Formal or Explicit Component of AoL. Advances in Organizational Performance are, At Best, Indirectly Attributable.***
   - Among the *AoL* participants, scores on responses to questions on Organizational Effectiveness ranged from 4.3 to 3.8; with help being more reflective about my leadership highest and increasing commitment and desire to measure organizational performance lowest

- Alumni of color scored Rockwood significantly higher than their white counterparts with respect to how the program helped in creating a more powerful sense of shared vision, and feeling more inspired to transform my organization
- Younger respondents scored Rockwood higher than older respondents with respect to the program helped in creating a more powerful sense of shared vision
- On the other hand, older respondents more than younger respondents rated Rockwood as more helpful at facilitating more authentic communication among staff

- Among *Yearlong* participants, scores on Organizational Effectiveness were quite high, ranging from 4.4 to 4.1; with feeling inspired to transform the organization highest, and helping my team focus and producing results the lowest
- Among *Yearlong* Fellows, males saw Rockwood as more helpful than females in terms of managing differences across positional power
- White alumni, more than alumni of color, rated Rockwood higher on managing and supervising staff
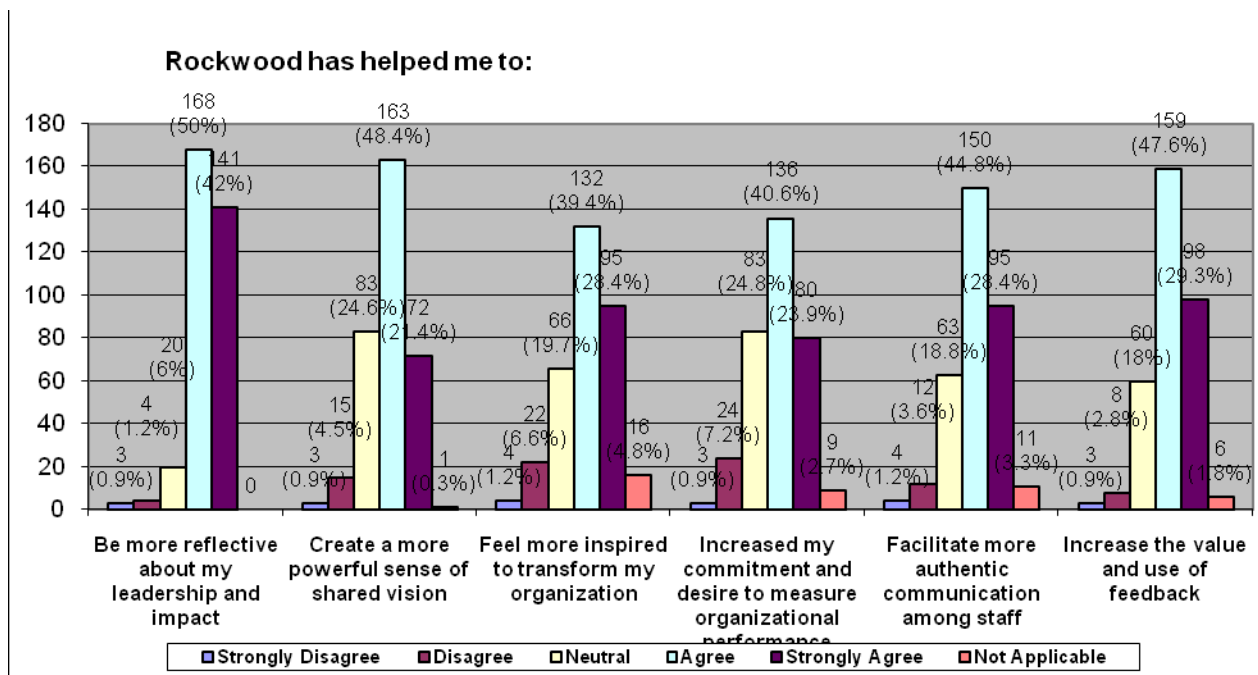
All the data represented by the graphs in the report pertain to AoL only.

Rockwood is a leadership training designed for individuals working in the social justice movements. To date, only 5%, or 60 out of a total of 1,263 organizations have sent more than four staff members to *AoL*. Since AoL was *not* designed with a formal or explicit component on organization effectiveness, advances in alumni organizations, therefore, are at best indirectly attributable.

If Rockwood wants to see a higher corollary result from *AoL* participation to organizational effectiveness, it will need to build-in explicit curriculum. Otherwise, Rockwood ought to consider revising its theory of change and to *not* make the assumption that training senior leaders will lead to organization-wide outcomes.

✓ *Difficult to start or sustain a fire with a single spark*

A minority of *AoL* alumni of less than twenty percent, describe a sense of personal powerlessness in trying to move the organization in a different direction single-handedly. In many ways, because *AoL* and *Yearlong* experiences are so powerful for the individual, Rockwood needs to consider how to best prepare them as they bring their heightened sense of awareness back into their organizations. Setting expectations and careful guidance will help strengthen program participants in this regard.

> *"I have been a bit frustrated by the gap between the desire I returned from trainings with to bring some of the Rockwood approaches to organizational effectiveness in my organization and my CEO's resistance to such practices."*

> *"This aspect of the training was particularly illuminating. Every question we received I kept thinking, 'yes! This is exactly what is wrong with my organization!' It helped me put into words the things that were out of place that I just couldn't put my finger on. It also made me realize that at the very top of my organization there is no desire to bring about greater organizational effectiveness at my present organization."*

> *"I feel more empowered yet I have to proceed carefully because not everyone in my organization has drunk from the Rockwood fountain."*

✓ *For Yearlong fellows, the degree to which that they feel Rockwood has positively impacted their ability to bring about greater organizational effectiveness, while still high, is lowest relative to self-mastery and partnership building*

The areas in which Rockwood has had greater impact on *Yearlong* fellows include how to understand and manage differences across positional power. On these two measures, male respondents indicate a much higher level of agreement than female respondents. Interestingly, the reverse is true when we asked about fellows' ability to understand her/his leadership style and clarify priorities.

The three areas in which Rockwood's *Yearlong* program have most positively impacted fellows are (1) increase the value and use of feedback; (2) feel more inspired to transform my organization; and (3) improve the culture and climate in my organization.

> *"I have always been able to inspire others to a vision to accomplish the impossible, but now it happens with less wear and tear and with much more joy and fulfillment."*

*"My thinking on all of the above (*survey measures*) was quite limited and uncritical before Rockwood."*

"I feel like I want to do more to transform the organization in a prepared and measured way but haven't succeeded because of 'busy-ness' over the past couple of years."

7. Rockwood is Not for Everybody. Make Program Philosophy More Transparent to Enable Better Applicant Self-Selection.

Just like there is no one-size-fit-all template for strategy development or childrearing, Rockwood is not for everybody. Rockwood could help program applicant better self select by making its underlying training assumptions, theories, and processes more transparent.

"I had been told that it would be an intense experience and I was glad that I knew that going in, because if I hadn't, I am not sure I would have been so ready to go with the program."

"There was definitely a group norm developed, and leaders, and if you were coming from a different place, you weren't cool."

"As a person who has actually had cancer, I hated the intro exercise where we had to imagine our own deaths. It hit way too close to home with no warning."

"… one of the participants was clearly required to be there by work and was disruptive."

Placing the discussion of race, class and gender and other cultural divides within a larger power analysis was also a thread in respondent feedback.

"I was really turned off by many of the methodologies that were being used by Rockwood at the time I attended the training. The trainers' approach and lack of analysis about power/oppression was particularly disconcerting to me since Rockwood claimed to be trying to support diverse leadership and the many movements that are working for social change in our country."

There is one particularly provocative comment from the survey and was echoed by a focus group participant that questioned Rockwood's core tenets of having a "single leader" model of leadership.

"I don't understand Rockwood's emphasis of 'leadership,' and find it questionable. I believe social change comes about through teamwork and cooperation, not leader and (by extension) followership. I think understanding and training what makes teams and other groups of people click and work together effectively is more important for social change than the individualistic 'leadership' approach. Being authentic helps in teamwork, and the Rockwood training was useful for this. But I regret that the whole concept of 'leadership' on which the Rockwood philosophy seems to rest was never made explicit or offered for discussion."

There is an opportunity here for Rockwood to make more explicit its' underlying leadership assumptions and theory of change. Rockwood may decide that its current model and training design are meeting the vision of training thousands with "*new approaches to leadership with the aim of helping to see a new meme and norms for social change leadership,*" or it may decide to invigorate its vision differently with other approaches as it enters its second decade.

8. *Key Opportunities for Rockwood to Stretch and Grow*

In many ways, this evaluation is Rockwood's first full feedback loop. *AoL* and *Yearlong* alumni have gifted Rockwood with over 200 pages of written comments. On the whole, alumni feedback is thoughtful, specific, affirming; celebrating and commending Rockwood for the contributions it has made on them individually; on the social justice movements they work in; and on society more broadly. Suggestions for program improvements are offered to Rockwood in the spirit of continuous reflection, improvement, and progress.

✓ *Integrate race, class, gender, and other traditionally divisive social dynamics into the training design*

At its core, Rockwood's commitment to the values of social and racial justice is clear. It has the opportunity to serve as an effective and lasting bridge to tackle the most divisive issues of our time: race, class, gender and other social identity that serve to divide and not connect. Participants are already bringing these issues into *AoL* and *Yearlong* circles.

Assuming Rockwood's core constituents remain the same, this is a natural next step in its evolution. These issues *are* the most prominent in most of the justice movements today, from bridging the gap between environmental justice and conservation work; reproductive rights and reproductive justice; racial disparities in health outcomes and criminal justice; the list goes on.

Rockwood needs to step into its core competency and create a structure and container for them the way it does with vision stance, what to do when triggered, and giving feedback. To do this, Rockwood may need to take apart its curriculum so to thoughtfully integrate these dynamics, and avoid what one focus group participant called "adding a charm."

An interviewee suggested that Rockwood convene a learning session with elders, leaders and teachers from various cultural traditions to begin a dialog on how leadership is cultivated in their respective cultures and communities. That would be a powerful way to begin.

✓ *Provide follow-on support*

In its first decade, Rockwood has penetrated the market with its new norms of social justice leadership development. It has reached thousands of social justice leaders. However, throughout

this reflection evaluation, respondents commented on "relapsing" into their default habits and patterns. Over and again, alumni expressed the need for follow-on support in the forms of coaching, daily practice, refreshers, dialog circles, and staying more connected to Rockwood and the circle of alumni.

These comments are appeals for Rockwood to rethink its design. Its existing practice to have *AoL* participants select a peer for follow-on coaching, in a more or less random fashion, is experienced as insufficient.

> *"Although the program was extremely helpful and I continue to refer back to the manual and my notes to reconnect and keep growing, I do feel that the 4 day program was not enough to be following the principles and concepts I learned at Rockwood. I feel as though the information I got there was a bulb that was just put there and left alone. I often feel and wish there had been more follow-up in terms of retreats, opportunities to continue the conversations, and just continuation of the flow of ideas, concepts, etc."*

> *"great experience, biggest problem is one-shot deal: almost impossible to retain & practice everything we learned, need to figure out way to do more consistently over time/sustained training."*

> *"In evolutionary theory, there are two types of species. The R selected species produce a ton of offsprings and eventually you'll have enough to survive. The idea is to generate a ton. K selected species, on the other hand, put a lot of energy into one offspring and you make sure it succeeds. Rockwood is too close to the R selected side. The movement needs Rockwood to be more like K. You do need a cadre, but Rockwood needs to nurture them more. There needs to be a system to build stronger alumni circles. Coaching has to be imbedded."*

An interviewee shared her vision of creating a Rockwood journal that is filled with reminders, daily practice, questions, stories, skills and definitions, guided visualizations. This Rockwood journal would be a small but concrete way to help remind alumni of the *AoL* teachings and their own awakening moments.

Among *Yearlong* respondents, there was modest interest in additional Rockwood activities; with highest being day long sessions; art of living refreshers; and coaching (2.5) and lowest in E-learning and Webinars (1.9) and online social networking (1.7).

✓ ***Connect the Rockwood network by unlocking the power of alumni and using technology***
Today, there are five Rockwood alumni working in the Obama administration. Over 2,200 alumni - advocates and change activists - are spread across 41 states. They are leading some of the nation's most respected social justice organizations. They are organizers. They know about networks. Rockwood can tap into the power and talents within its alumni network and live up to its brand promise to "*build a network of powerful and collaborative leaders.*"

Implicit in this promise is the idea of helping leaders work in sustained, trusting, and cross-issue partnerships so that, collectively, we can more quickly and decisively turn the curve on the most pressing social issues of our time. Rockwood's *AoL* has done a tremendous job of offering a deeply satisfying, intense, transformative leadership training. It has, however, yet to connect these leaders so that they are intentionally collaborative.

> *"As an alum, I would have liked to have been 'used' more by Rockwood. It would have helped me practice while continuing to learn."*

In focus groups and interviews, alumni seem almost eager to volunteer their time and energy to be facilitators. One alumnus mentioned exploring the model of "each-one-teach-one." Rockwood would naturally have to consider the issues of quality control, and how to feasibly train a pipeline of Rockwood facilitators, etc. The use of technology and the Rockwood website is a good way to start.

Final Reflections

By thoughtfully unlocking the power of its alumni, Rockwood will be more able to deliver on its brand promise to "*build a network of powerful and collaborative leaders.*" To end this report, we return to the many voices that have informed this learning and evaluation project.

> *"I have been truly enriched as a person from my experience with Rockwood. The people that I met were incredibly inspiring and i was very intimidated at first. But throughout the workshop as each layer of our lives and experiences were laid bare, I began to realize the vulnerabilities that we all shared and became more and more empowered. The trainers were challenging and nurturing as well as very honest and open with their own struggles. The world would be a better place if everyone could have the experience of this workshop."*

> *"The content was good, but I have found in the year since that the content has not stuck, has not inspired me to work/act differently. Not sure if this is a problem in the content/methodology or in me. Although it was exceptional, I think there could have been more opportunities for peer learning and drawing wisdom from the group."*

> *"Rockwood should continue to focus on up and coming leaders in the nonprofit sector – to select top talent, develop it, and connect it with other sources through the cohort experience and through the Rockwood network more broadly. The progressive movement is in need of top leadership and we should look to Rockwood as a significant pipeline for this talent."*

> *"Hold on to your soul -- loved the spiritual purpose based aspect of the training. Really made it so qualitatively different from other leadership trainings."*

> *"I see the value in framing this training to make sure it doesn't alienate certain people who could deem some of the material "woo woo" or "touchy feely," but, dismissive descriptors aside, this very material is such an important resource for growth and leadership development. I wouldn't shy away from it, which is why I would suggest more transparency in dealing with the deep personal work that is demanded of its participants."*

"Wow... it has been a decade. Congrats Andre on a powerful vision. Grow, grow, grow, there are many out there in need. I see still too much wanting to be in power, instead wanting to transform the status quo. Still seeing too much of the NGO thing, where it all looks ok, but there is still treading of water. Trying to look good instead of take real risks and make mistakes that open up the possibility of a real shift."

"Rockwood is unsentimental. It's supportive, but does not let you hide from how powerful you are. From how you need to have authentic conversations, feedback, and yet it's an extremely supportive and loving environment. It doesn't let you hide from what you bring to the table. It's a 'get real' program."

Acknowledgements

- ❖ Thank you to all of the Rockwood alumni who took time to respond with thoughtful and authentic feedback to the survey and your outpouring of written comments; those who came to the focus groups, and those whom I was able to interview. Your feedback is a gift to Rockwood and I have learned much from you. I hope you hear your voices represented in this report.

- ❖ Thank you, Rockwood leaders and staff, for your openness, candor, and engagement in this process. In particular, Stacy Kono who served as the evaluation project liaison; Corrine Van Hook for scheduling interviews; Akaya Windwood for your faith and confidence; and Robert Gass for your critical and careful review along the way.

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- ❖ My analysis and findings are infinitely strengthened by a group of powerful peers, in particular, Heribeto Escamilla of Philiber Research; I have gained much from your quantitative analysis and knowledge. And, my appreciation goes to Linda Wood, Senior Director of Leadership at Haas Jr. Fund for your insight and colleague-ship; and David La Piana for your review. I am grateful for your generosity and wisdom.

Focus Group Participants

- ❖ Walter Barrientos, The New York State Youth Leadership Council
- ❖ Andrea Black, Detention Watch Network
- ❖ Wendall Chin, Sun Consulting & Associates
- ❖ Alix Davidson, Co-op America
- ❖ Josue Guillen, May First
- ❖ Amparo Hofmann-Pinilla, Research Center for Leadership in Action
- ❖ Sujatha Jesudason, Generations Ahead
- ❖ Jonathan Lawson, Reclaim the Media
- ❖ Mandara Meyers - Center for Progressive Leadership
- ❖ Paula Morris, Flexible Leadership Investments Program
- ❖ Sharon Negri, Earth Island Institute
- ❖ Jennifer Ostrow , New York Harbor High
- ❖ Earl Plante, One Voice PAC
- ❖ Harlan Pruden, NorthEast Two-Spirit Society
- ❖ Julie Rinard , Seva Foundation
- ❖ Sabrina Roach, KBCS 91.3 FM Community Radio / Reclaim the Media
- ❖ Nia Robinson, Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative
- ❖ Esperanza Tervalon-Daumont, Oakland Rising

Individuals Interviewed

- ❖ Dimple Abichandani, The Proteus Fund
- ❖ David Brinkman, Desert Aids Project
- ❖ Gillian Caldwell, 1Sky
- ❖ Pamela Chiang, Center for Community Change
- ❖ Peggy Clark, Aspen Institute
- ❖ Anita Earls, Southern Coalition for Social Justice
- ❖ Cheryl King Fisher, New England Grassroots Environment Fund
- ❖ Inez Gonzalez, National Hispanic Media Coalition
- ❖ Sara Gould, Ms. Foundation
- ❖ Maritza Guzman, Public Interest Projects
- ❖ Richard Healy, Grassroots Project
- ❖ Deepa Iyer, SAALT
- ❖ Rick Johnson, Idaho Conservation League
- ❖ Roger Kim, Asian Pacific Environmental Network
- ❖ Ann Krumboltz, Brainerd Foundation
- ❖ Gibran Rivera, Interaction Institute for Social Change
- ❖ Nadine Smith, Equality Florida
- ❖ Odin Zackman, DIG IN

"Rockwood changed my organization and my life. We have always given our best, but we never had clear bench marks to measure our growth. Rockwood gave me that to share with my organization. It also gave me a community of capable visionary leaders to use as a resource in my growth as a leader. "

Jakada Imani
Executive Director
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights