

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rockwood Leadership Institute Evaluation and Learning Report

October 2009



INTRODUCTION

The Rockwood Leadership Institute was founded in 2000 to fill a specific niche within the social change movement: to provide powerful and effective training in leadership and collaboration to individuals, organizations and issue sectors. The Rockwood theory of change begins with the premise that *leadership can be taught and learned*—it is not something someone is born with or limited to a select few. By the end of 2009, Rockwood will have nearly 2,500 alumnae/i, making it the nation's largest provider of multi-day, transformational leadership trainings for public benefit sector.

Nearing our tenth year, we decided it was time to undertake our first impartial, third-party look at the long-term impact of Rockwood's various training programs. Rockwood's alumni, staff, trainers and board are grateful to the Open Society Institute which underwrote this important study, and to Rockwood's core funders over the several past years including the Ford Foundation, the Starry Night Fund of the Tides Foundation, the Seasons Fund for Transformational Change, the Kendeda Fund and the Hidden Leaf Foundation.

Most importantly, Rockwood is grateful to our co-founders, Andre Carothers and Robert Gass. None of this would be possible without their vision and hard work in creating a program that has had such impact on so many. Once housed at Andre's kitchen table, Rockwood now boasts eight staff, eleven national trainers, ten board members and thousands of national alumnae/i representing some of the most well-known national, state-based and regional organizations in the country.

Finally, we extend our thanks to evaluator Shiree Teng who conducted this study and report over the past five months. Her work has helped document that *leadership development is core to the success of individuals and organizations* in effecting social change—which means that funders and organizations are wise to invest in leadership training as a strategy of excellence. We are also pleased that, as Ms. Teng states, "the evaluation data show that the founders' vision has largely been met." We are thrilled that we now have hard data that support how Rockwood is, in fact, having a deep and profound transformative impact of the majority of its trainees.

The following is a re-cap of key findings and methodologies used in the evaluation of Rockwood's *Art of Leadership (AoL)* and *Yearlong* Fellowship alumnae/i. A full version of the evaluation report is also available: www.rockwoodleadership.org/2009evaluation_fullreport.

We hope you find this information exciting and thoughtful. We welcome your feedback and questions as we continue to partner in creating excellent 21st Century leadership needed in our changing world.

Yours in partnership and collaboration,



Akaya Windwood
President & CEO

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2009 EVALUATION REPORT

Note: A five-point Likert Scale was used, with 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = average, 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree.

1. Art of Leadership (AoL) is a transformative experience for 78% of AoL alumnae/i and 97% of Yearlong Alumnae/i

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 at least a moderate impact in their leadership development; 51% said large or life-changing impact.***

“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.”

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 Rockwood made a difference in your leadership development?”*

- 60% of Yearlong alumni survey respondents said it had a transformative/life changing difference
- 32% said large impact
- 5% said moderate impact

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

“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.”

2. Alumnae/i 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
- 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)

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
- 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 alumnae/i career satisfaction and feelings of job effectiveness

✓ ***AoL positively impacts alumnae/i 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 alumnae/i better understand her/his leadership style
- 81% AoL alumnae/i feel more effective in their job position
- 81% AoL alumnae/i feel more connected to their purpose

✓ ***AoL helps participants make a strong connection to purpose and to understand her/his own leadership style.***

These two interrelated leadership capacities significantly impact alumnae/i 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."

✓ ***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 being 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:

- 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

4. In major ways, AoL and Yearlong programs advance alumnae/i sense of self mastery

- 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 the various self-mastery measures that were included in the survey, the overwhelming majority of AoL alumnae/i 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."

Engaging in difficult conversations and being more aware and use of personal power and authority more appropriately and effectively are another two ways in which AoL trainings have had great impact on participants.

5. AoL deepens alumnae/i's essential partnership skills by leveraging self mastery

- 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)
- 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

"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)."

6. This report informs opportunities for Rockwood to consider key points for future program

In many ways, this evaluation is Rockwood's first full feedback loop. *AoL* and *Yearlong* alumnae/i have gifted Rockwood with over 200 pages of written comments. On the whole, alumnae/i 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, including:

- ✓ ***Integrating race, class, gender, and other traditionally divisive social dynamics more fully into the training design***
- ✓ ***Providing more follow-on support (Note: In 2009, Rockwood has launched an Advanced Art of Leadership and One-Day Regional Refresher Courses in response to alumnae/i requests)***
- ✓ ***Connecting the Rockwood network by unlocking the power of alumnae/i and using technology***

CONCLUSION

Rockwood teaches—and this report measures—lifelong leadership competencies. They cut across one's life, career, building partnerships or leading organizations. A final anecdote learned in this study is that Rockwood alumnae/i ***continue to work on leadership development beyond Rockwood***. This impact on alumnae/i 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.

In the end, this report gives evidence that ***leadership development is core to the success of individuals and effective partnerships and collaboration***. It is our hope that both foundations and organizations will heed this information and consider leadership development as a core strategy to lift the people, organizations and fields in which they work and support.

Rockwood invites partnerships to help achieve the excellence in leadership that is required in these critical times of change.

For the full evaluation report:

www.rockwoodleadership.org/2009evaluation_fullreport

For more information contact:

Akaya Windwood, President & CEO

(510) 524-4000 x 108

akaya@rockwoodleadership.org

www.rockwoodleadership.org

“This is the BEST program I have ever attended! The integration of critical thought, organizational planning, conscious action, personal ecology, change as a methodology, interdisciplinary practice and spirituality leads to an amazing amalgam of cohesive learning. Rockwood has been brilliant in pulling from a vast range of resources—corporate concepts to Native American philosophy to thorough self-examination and self-transformation—which in turn leads to organizational and coalitional transformation. Rockwood should be the standard for leadership development in the nonprofit sector. If more of our leaders experienced this training, our social and racial justice movement would be 100 times more powerful, united and purposeful.”

Barbara R. Arnwine
Executive Director
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law