

The Impact of Rockwood's Fellowships: the View from 15 Leaders Across U.S. Movements

Rockwood Leadership Institute's Cohort-Based Programs: 2016 Third Party Evaluation

Overview

In 2016, Rockwood Leadership Institute engaged Learning for Action (LFA) to conduct an independent evaluation of Rockwood's cohort-based programs, including contributions to individual and movement-level outcomes.

This study is one of several evaluation reports produced and details the findings from 15 stakeholder interviews conducted with a diverse cross-section of Rockwood fellowship alums.

Rockwood's Cohort-Based Programs

Sector-Based Fellowships. Rockwood fellowships bring together cohorts of leaders within an issue area in order to catalyze more powerful and engaged learning communities and partnerships. Each fellowship includes multiple residential leadership retreats, peer and professional coaching, and support between sessions. Rockwood curates cohorts of leaders based on race and other social identities, role within the field, and geographic diversity.

Cross-Sector Fellowships. *Leading from the Inside Out Yearlong (LIO)* is designed to build senior executive leaders' capacity to lead their organizations and networks effectively and to collaborate across issue areas, political and organizing orientation, geography, and background. In order to build leadership deep within organizations and across sectors, the *Cross-Movement Yearlong (XMY)* is comprised of senior staff from participating LIO organizations. LIO and XMY include three 5- to 6-day intensive leadership retreats, expert and peer coaching, and assignments and daily practices to support and reinforce learning throughout the year.

Summary of Key Findings

Changes in Individual Leaders

Rockwood provides social change leaders with the concrete skills needed to be effective in their roles and increase their emotional intelligence and understanding of their whole selves. By providing dedicated space for reflection and tools to be more intentional in all leadership aspects, Rockwood increases leaders' effectiveness and sustainability within their movements. As a result of their Rockwood fellowship experiences, alums have:

1. Increased **understanding of their innate strengths**, resulting in more confident and authentic leadership;
2. Increased ability to **effectively manage time and energy** resulting in a more sustainable work/life balance;
3. Increased **willingness and ability to work across difference**;
4. Deeper **relationships that decrease isolation and strengthen partnership**.

Movement-Level Outcomes

Rockwood fellowships accelerate social change progress by supporting leaders within and across movements. Fellows reported numerous movement-level wins, to which Rockwood contributed in the following ways:

1. Through **increased confidence and self-reflection**, alums pursue strategic movement roles, enabling them to serve their movements more effectively;
2. Alums gain the **skills, tools, and support they need to be vulnerable, take risks, and launch their next big campaign or idea**, ultimately leading to major movement successes;
3. The **deep, trusting relationships** formed during Rockwood fellowships decrease isolation, foster community, and empower leaders to **work across difference** and **collaborate across movements**.

Below are some of the **movement-level accomplishments alums credit Rockwood with contributing to**:

- Organizing the 2014 People's Climate March, the largest climate march in history.
- Bolstering voting rights following a Supreme Court decision that decreased voting rights protections.
- Developing strategy to win support for minimum wage laws at the city level.
- Reframing the narrative about and supporting policies for caregivers in the U.S.
- Implementing a digital strategy that impacted millions of workers at a national level.

Looking Forward

Opportunities for Rockwood to Deepen Impact

- Consider expanding Rockwood's model beyond nonprofit leaders.
- Consider taking a more active role in highlighting key movement-building moments.
- Increase access to Rockwood programs by reducing barriers to participation, particularly for grassroots leaders with limited access to funding or time.

Considerations for Program Improvement

- Assess the appropriate combination of depth and breadth in exploring racial justice issues in the program curriculum.
- Engage alums once programs are complete, and take a more active role in convening cohorts or offer opportunities for training with a specific focus or product.
- Continue to ensure that local, regional, and state work is represented in cohorts.
- Continue to offer both sector-specific and cross-movement cohorts to create opportunities for leaders to go deep with colleagues in their sectors as well as delve into cross-movement issues.

Acknowledgements

LFA would like to acknowledge the partnership, time, and insights contributed by Rockwood staff and alums. Rockwood and LFA also extend special thanks to The California Endowment, The California Wellness Foundation, The Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr., Fund, and Open Society Foundations for making this evaluation possible.