

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

Summary of Results from a Survey of 103 Rockwood Fellowship Alums



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Prepared for: **Rockwood  
Leadership  
Institute**

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# Overview

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

This report details the findings of the survey of Rockwood fellowship alums. The survey was designed to gather feedback from former fellows about the following:

- The ways in which the fellowship affected their individual leadership
- Rockwood's contributions to movement-level change
- How Rockwood can improve to better meet fellows' needs

**A total of 448 alums were invited to take the survey. Of these, 103 alums completed the survey for a strong total response rate of 23%.**

As third-party evaluators, LFA is committed to maintaining the integrity and quality of all data collected in the evaluation process. Only LFA team members had access to data with identifying information (unless survey participants granted Rockwood permission to view their individual responses). For the purpose of this report, all data has been de-identified to ensure anonymity of the survey responses.

# Why Leadership Development Matters for Movement-Level Success

**Investment in leadership development is inadequate.** Resources dedicated to cultivating leaders are very limited, particularly in the nonprofit sector. Despite the important role of leadership development, only 1% of funding from foundations supports leadership development. And while over half of leadership development dollars went to social justice grantmaking between 2003 and 2012, only 4% of social justice grantmaking overall went towards leadership development.\*

**However, leadership development yields significant results:\*\***

- It increases leadership sustainability for those doing the hard work of social change.
- It enables the creativity and innovation needed to identify common ground across issue areas.
- It creates a pipeline of leaders who represent the diversity of the United States and the voices of those who often lack power in our system.

**Leadership development is essential for the success and sustainability of social change movements.** The success of the social sector depends on having a robust and connected group of leaders in the field who can advance important efforts and affect change. Leaders need to represent the diversity of the movements they are a part of in terms of focal issue area, stakeholder type, geography, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, and age. They must also be able to communicate and bridge the divides of issue area and breadth of social movements. **Rockwood seeks to strengthen the leadership and collaboration needed to advance social movements, cultivate and grow leadership, build social sector fields, and foster deep, strategic, and effective collaboration.**

**Movement-building leadership requires a different skillset than organizational leadership.** Clarity of purpose, vision, collaboration, and working across racial and generational differences are key abilities for leaders in movement building efforts. In *Social Movements and Philanthropy: How Foundations Can Support Movement Building*, Masters and Osborn define five core elements of movement building: organizing an authentic base, leadership, vision and ideas, alliances, and advocacy infrastructure.\*\*\* Three of the five elements have particular relevance for Rockwood: leadership, vision and ideas, and alliances. **By participating in Rockwood, leaders build the skills, knowledge, and practices to strengthen their leadership and make deep connections with other leaders. In turn, Rockwood fellows are able to develop shared visions and create alliances within and outside their issue areas, resulting in stronger social change movements.**

\*Kirk Kramer and Preeti Nayak. "Plan A: How Successful Nonprofits Develop Their Future Leaders." The Bridgespan Group.

\*\*Niki Jagpal and Ryan Schlegel. "Cultivating Nonprofit Leadership: A (Missed?) Philanthropic Opportunity." National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy.

\*\*\*Barbara Masters and Tori Osborn. "Social Movements and Philanthropy: How Foundations Can Support Movement Building." The Peer-Reviewed Journal of Philanthropy.

# Overview of Rockwood's Programs

Over the past 16 years, **6,000 social change leaders** have participated in Rockwood's leadership trainings. Through Rockwood programs, leaders learn and practice skills and tools, develop deep relationships with other leaders, and gain greater clarity about their leadership path so that they can be more effective in the movements that they serve. Rockwood offers two core types programs:

## Public Programs

**Art of Leadership (AOL).** AOL is a five-day intensive retreat that teaches powerful visioning, active listening, and feedback skills as well as strategies for connecting/reconnecting to purpose and decreasing burnout. The program is open to social change leaders working across a wide range of issues. **Advanced Art of Leadership (AAOL)** is offered for those who have completed AOL.

## Cohort-Based Programs

**Sector-Based Fellowships.** Rockwood fellowships bring together leaders in an issue area in order to catalyze more powerful and engaged learning communities and partnerships. A longer-term, multi-retreat experience, each fellowship includes a combination of residential leadership retreats, peer and professional coaching, and support between sessions. Rockwood intentionally curates cohorts of leaders based on race and other social identities, role within the field, and geographic diversity.

Since 2006, Rockwood has launched two geographically-focused and ten sector-based fellowships. Fellowships require the investment of considerable time and resources. Generous support from foundations and individual donors significantly subsidizes the cost of these programs.

**Cross-Sector Fellowships.** The ***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. 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 retreats, expert and peer coaching, and assignments and daily practices to support and reinforce learning throughout the year. Candidates must be nominated by a LIO or XMY alum.

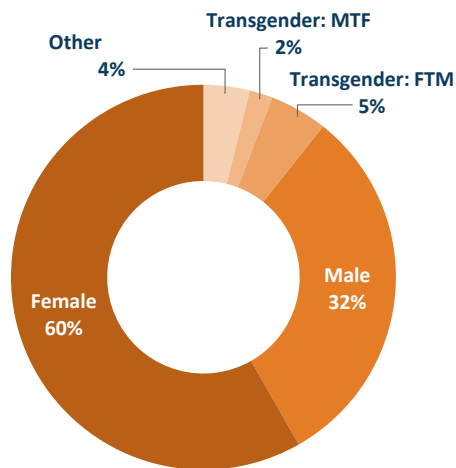
## Demographics of Survey Respondents

As compared to Rockwood participants overall, survey respondents reflect a representative sample of fellows, and reflect Rockwood's commitment to serve racially and culturally diverse leaders and communities. While survey respondents were not asked about their sexual orientation in the survey, **37% of all fellows identify as LGBTQ and 63% identify as heterosexual/straight** based on data collected by Rockwood.

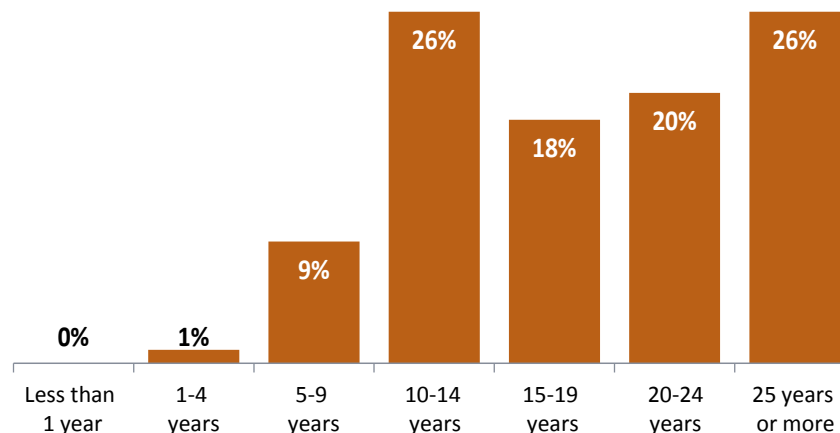
### Race (n=93)

**47%** OF SURVEYED FELLOWS ARE PEOPLE OF COLOR

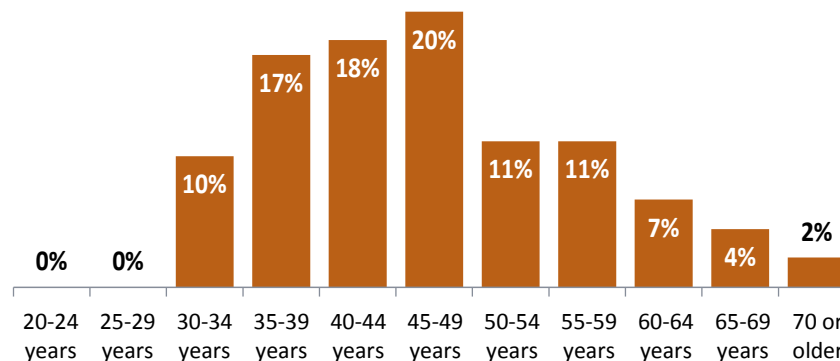
### Gender\* (n=93)



### Years Working in Social Sector (n=93)



### Age (n=93)

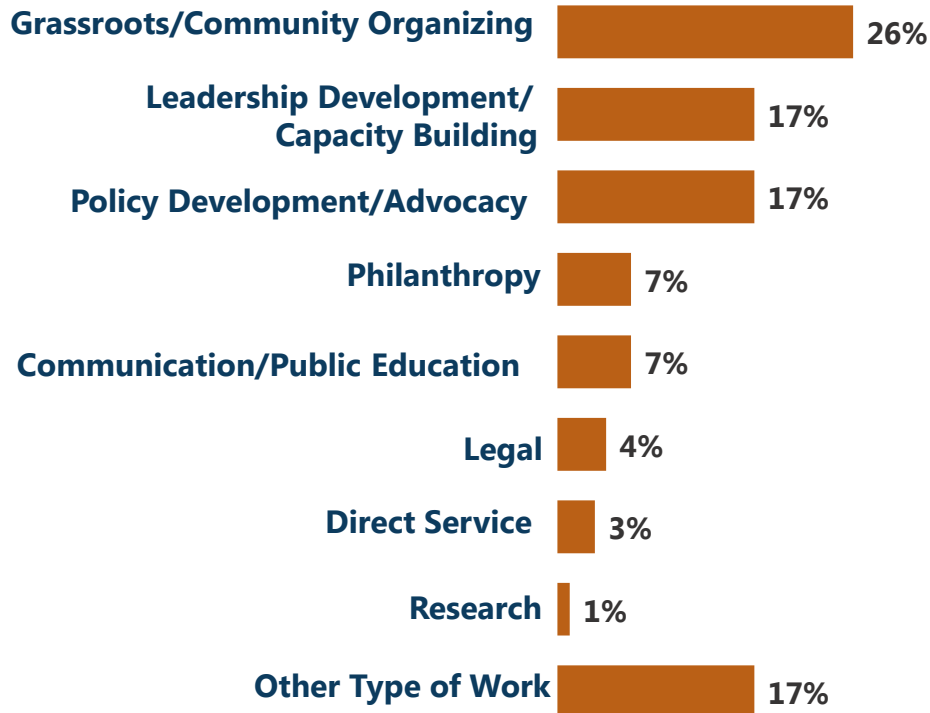


\*Note: Percentages do not sum to 100% because respondents were asked to select all responses that apply.

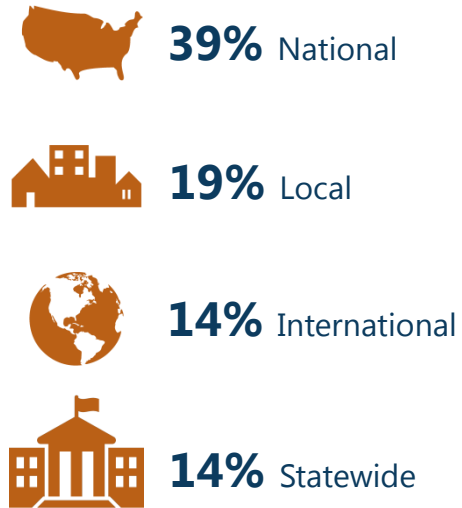
## Nature of Fellows' Work

Fellowship alums who participated in the survey employ a diversity of organizational strategies within many movements and at all geographical levels.

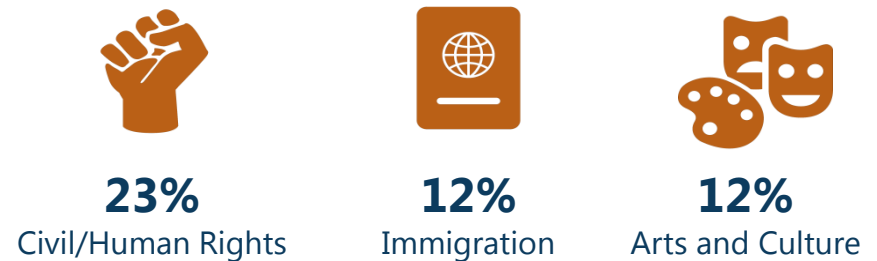
### Primary Type of Work (n=92)



### Top 4 Geographical Scopes of Work (n=92)



### Top 3 Issue/Movement Areas (n=93)



### Key Findings At a Glance

Alums reported **overwhelmingly positive results** from their participation in Rockwood fellowships. More than three-quarters of alums agree or strongly agree that Rockwood had a positive impact for nearly every individual and movement-level outcome included in the survey. The top eight outcomes are listed below.\*

**98%** of respondents **deal more effectively with leadership challenges** as a result of participation in Rockwood

**94%** of respondents are **more willing to have courageous conversations\*\*** as a result of participation in Rockwood

**91%** of respondents **inspire and align others to work more effectively towards common goals** as a result of participation in Rockwood

**90%** of respondents believe that participation in Rockwood's fellowship **had a transformative impact** on their lives

**87%** of respondents have a **clearer vision** for their work as a result of participation in Rockwood

**86%** of respondents are **better equipped to sustain their energy** over a lifetime of service as a result of participation in Rockwood

**86%** of respondents are **more willing to co-power** (own their personal power and lift up the power of others) as a result of participation in Rockwood

**84%** of respondents build and maintain **stronger interdependent relationships** as a result of participation in Rockwood

\*n = 103 for all outcomes.

\*\* Courageous conversations involve engaging in authentic and clear communication in situations that might otherwise bring up feelings of emotion for people.

# Rockwood's Key Successes

Participation in Rockwood's cohort-based leadership programs enables leaders to build skills, develop connections, and clarify their visions for their leadership journeys. These key successes contribute to the development of more effective leaders, and, in turn, more effective movements. Based on responses from survey participants, four key successes of Rockwood's fellowships are:

- 1 Confidence + Clarity.** Clearer visions for alums' individual leadership trajectories enable leaders to be more confident moving into roles in which they may have previously felt uncomfortable. By stepping into their power, alums are more connected to their purpose and better understand their role in their movement. Rockwood fellowship alums affirm or reaffirm their commitment to their work and/or make room for fresh leadership to reinvigorate and innovate for their movement.
- 2 Leadership Sustainability.** Rockwood provides space for reflection, self-care, and connection to keep leaders committed to the movement. In turn, leaders are less isolated, less burned out, and better equipped to sustain their energy over a lifetime of service.
- 3 Co-Powering.** By becoming more highly attuned and self-reflective, alums build skills to better understand their needs and the needs of others. As a result, alums work more effectively across difference, they approach leadership in a way that allows for others to step into their own power, and the leadership pipeline expands to include people of color and LGBTQ leaders.
- 4 Shared Vision + Alliance Building.** Movements are strengthened when social change leaders come together and foster deep connections across race and other social identities, geographies, issues, strategies, organizations, and communities. Participation in a Rockwood fellowship allows for the development of support networks that alums leverage to navigate individual challenges, and, importantly, collaborate more effectively for movement-level change.



# Looking Forward: Opportunities for Rockwood to Deepen Impact

Building on the successes described in this report, there are opportunities for Rockwood to consider to further strengthen its offerings to leaders.

**Build a more intentional and sustained leadership network for fellowship alums.** Alums greatly value the skills and network they cultivate through Rockwood's fellowship programs. They want to continue building momentum on the connections they developed with other alums through more deliberate follow-up from Rockwood and ongoing communication across and within cohorts post-fellowship. Nurturing alum networks can be a time-consuming task, and thus would require additional and dedicated resources. Still, alums make a compelling case for a stronger and more cohesive alum network.

- Alums explained the importance of continued communication with other cohort members and want to **regularly convene to continue refreshing, refining, and practicing the leadership skills** they learned during their fellowships. Recommendations for continued communication include webinars, refresher/tune-up courses, in-person gatherings, and local cross-sector workshops or discussions.
- Several alums suggested **the creation of an online communication platform** to have a space to continue to connect with and support one another. Recommendations for online communication platforms include developing an alum Facebook page or using communications tools such as Slack.

**Continue the practice of bringing diverse leaders together so that participants can benefit from each other's unique perspectives, especially in conversations about privilege, race, and gender identity.** Rockwood alums deeply appreciate the meaningful conversations about cultural (especially racial and gender) equity that occur throughout the fellowships and want to ensure that other fellows are prepared to engage in rich conversations about these topics. Alums shared the following recommendations.

- Actively recruit people of color and individuals who **can engage deeply in rich conversations around race, gender, and equity.**
- Continue to **offer a specific program for leaders in the LGBTQ movement** who work at the intersection of race, gender, and sexual orientation.

# Acknowledgements

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## About Rockwood Leadership Institute

Founded in 2000 and based in Oakland, California, Rockwood Leadership Institute provides social change leaders with powerful and effective training in leadership and collaboration. Rockwood ultimately seeks to strengthen the leadership and collaboration needed to advance social movements, cultivate and grow leadership, build social sector fields, and foster deep, strategic, and effective collaboration. Over the past 16 years, 6,000 social change leaders have participated in Rockwood's leadership trainings. Through Rockwood programs, leaders learn and practice skills and tools, develop strong relationships with other leaders, and gain greater clarity about their leadership path so that they can become more effective in the movements that they serve.

## About Learning for Action

Established in 2000, Learning for Action (LFA) provides highly customized research, strategy, capacity building, and evaluation services that enhance the impact and sustainability of social sector organizations across the U.S. and beyond. LFA's technical expertise and community-based experience ensure that the insights and information we deliver to nonprofits, foundations, and public agencies can be put directly into action. In the consulting process, we build organizational capacity, not dependence. We engage deeply with organizations as partners, facilitating processes to draw on strengths, while also providing expert guidance. LFA's high quality services are accessible to the full spectrum of social sector organizations, from grassroots community-based efforts to large-scale national and international foundations and initiatives.