

AMPLIFIED IMPACT FROM THE INSIDE OUT



Transformation at Rockwood from 2016-2021

LETTER FROM THE CEO

For anyone working towards social justice, the events of the last five years have resulted in a period of prolonged disruption: the 2016 election, subsequent gutting of civil liberties, the Covid-19 pandemic, and worldwide racial reckoning.

This context frames everything we share below about the pivots made at Rockwood since 2016. This has been a defining, challenging, and generative period for us and the majority leaders of colors with whom we partner each day.

Now, in 2022, we find ourselves at an inflection point. There is a gap between our legacy programming and our vision of open access or Rockwood for the Hood. Our demographics have changed significantly to over 75% leaders of color, and we must now retool and adapt our content to meet the needs of an emerging BIPOC leadership.

Personally, as a Black genderqueer masculine-of-center woman, support from a broad Rockwood network has strengthened my ability to steer the organization in turbulent waters. Named sole CEO in 2018, I was not immune to the struggles of this next wave of BIPOC executive leaders taking the helm of legacy movement organizations in one of the most challenging periods in social justice history.

My colleagues and I kept going thanks to the radical collaboration, commitment, creativity, and spirit of this vast Rockwood network—a community of thousands of people including former and current staff, trainers, Board, partners, funders, donors, movement leaders, and our extended families and communities. For bringing your whole selves to creating a thriving movement ecosystem, we thank you.

With much love and respect,
Darlene



Darlene Nipper

CEO, Rockwood
Leadership Institute

*National Leading
from the Inside Out
Yearlong Alum*

Impact Snapshot

Strategic Pivots

Organizational Strengthening

Future Directions



AN ANCHOR FOR MOVEMENT LEADERS DURING TURBULENT TIMES

IMPACT SNAPSHOT

"I believe that deciding to be a leader at this point in time is a revolutionary act....I know I am a stronger leader because of Rockwood, and my movement will be even stronger because of it."

MONICA SIMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
SISTERSONG WOMEN OF COLOR
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE COLLECTIVE,
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, RIGHTS, AND
JUSTICE FELLOW

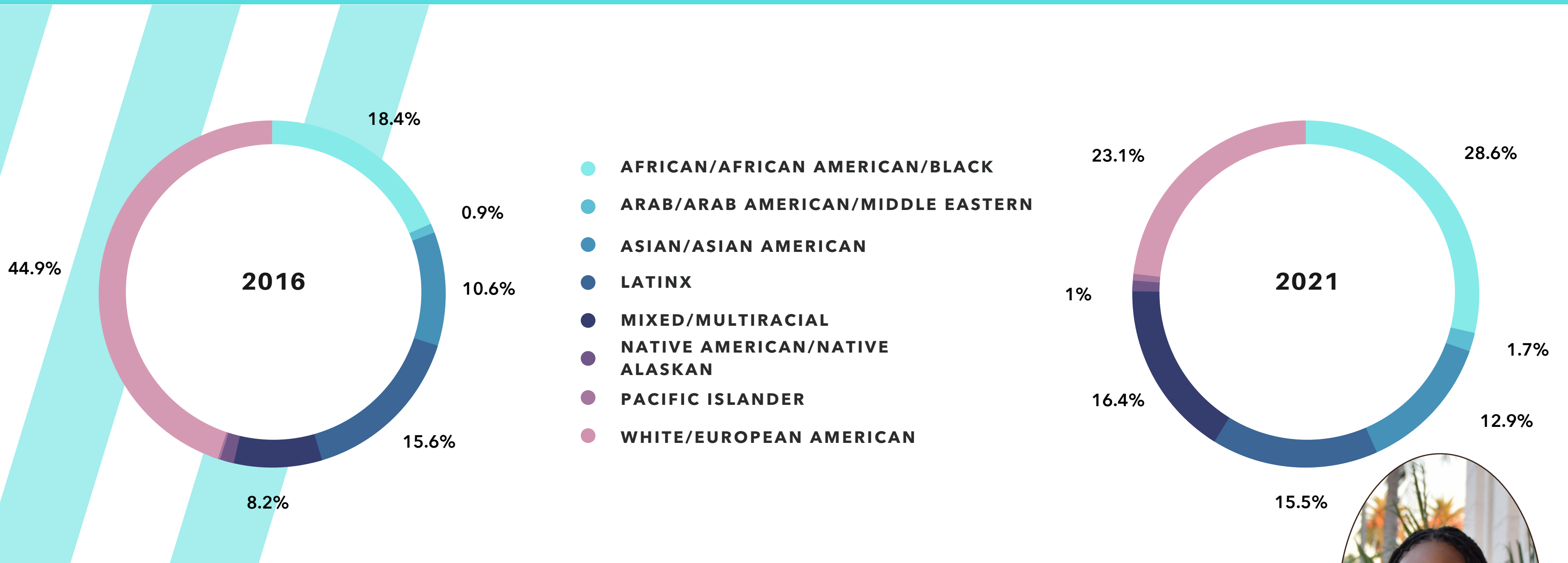


"In times of external chaos, Rockwood supports me and thousands of leaders to tap into our inner wisdom to move from reactivity to resilience-based leadership. We need institutions like Rockwood to anchor movement leaders and organizations, especially those who are told they don't belong in leadership positions."

RASHAD ROBINSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
COLOR OF CHANGE, NATIONAL LEADING
FROM THE INSIDE OUT YEARLONG FELLOW



2016-2021: 42% INCREASE IN BIPOC PARTICIPANTS, 56% INCREASE IN BLACK PARTICIPANTS



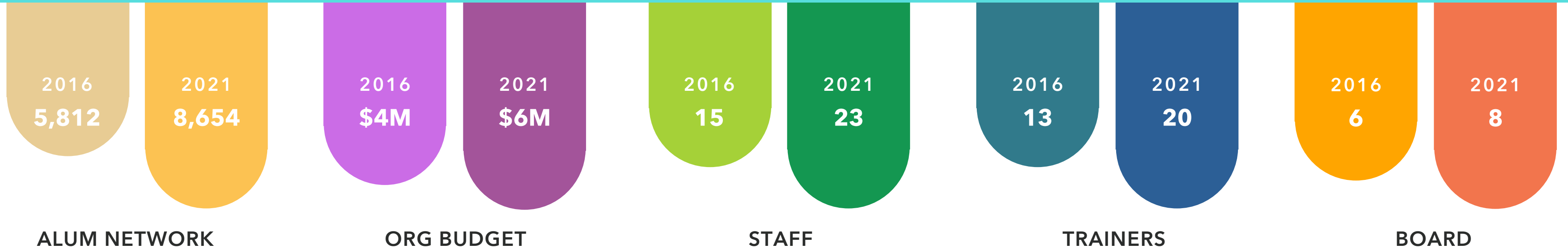
IMPACT SNAPSHOT



"This unique training was phenomenal! It provided me with a space to lament, to heal, to grow, to connect, and to deepen and expand my leadership practices in ways I never imagined were possible. I have never seen so many Black leaders in one place at one time being valued, elevated, and connected."

RAE SPRIGGS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR DIVERSE LEADERSHIP IN SCIENCE, HEART OF BLACK LEADERSHIP ALUM

50% GROWTH IN PEOPLE AND FINANCES



WHO WE ARE IN 2021



STRATEGIC PIVOTS

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A BLOSSOMING OF NEW CURRICULUM TO CENTER LEADERS OF COLOR



Unrestricted general support has been critical to Rockwood's ability to seize moments of opportunity and respond to unexpected challenges.



In the last two years, Rockwood developed more new curriculum than in our first 19 years of existence.



In response to the pandemic and racial reckonings, we overhauled our entire suite of programming to better meet the changing needs of BIPOC leaders.



Before 2016, a majority of Rockwood participants were leaders of color. However, there were no trainings exclusively by and for BIPOC leaders.



With flexible funding to revise curriculum, diversify our training team, and contribute to equitable sliding scale tuition rates, Rockwood is now hosting several trainings exclusively by and for BIPOC leaders.

A BLOSSOMING OF NEW CURRICULUM TO CENTER LEADERS OF COLOR

STRATEGIC PIVOTS

"The way that this training re-centers race equity every step of the way is something I've never experienced outside of my own organization, but have always longed for. I deeply appreciate the way Rockwood is leading the way forward during this precarious and pivotal moment in human history."

RATASHA ELISE, FOUNDER & DIRECTOR
CHOCOLATE SOUL REVIVAL, ART OF
NAVIGATING CHANGE ALUM



THE HeArt of BLACK LEADERSHIP



In the immediate aftermath of the 2020 racial reckonings, we heard the need for more space for Black leaders. The HeArt of Black Leadership was born.



With flexible support, Rockwood was able to pour resources into tuition-free offerings by and for Black leaders. The team has a big vision for this work—stay tuned for more on Blackwood.



Pilot cohort launched June 2021

78% women/non-binary and 35% LGBTQ

Black, Afro-Latinx, Indigenous, multiracial

Intergenerational

Geographic diversity: South, California, Idaho, Texas, Upper Midwest



Overwhelming demand: 200+ applications for 24 spaces received in 2 days



Complete overhaul of curriculum to uplift Black leadership and personhood: Black feminist liberation ideology, legacy, lineage, healing, grief, restoration, affirmation



Intergenerational and intersectional all-Black team: Maura Bairley, Jasmine Burnett, Jeremiah Headen, Romeo Jackson, J.K. Nelson



THE HeArt of BLACK LEADERSHIP

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HEART of BLACK LEADERSHIP DAY ONE

JUNE 28, 2021

HOW HAS BLACKNESS SAVED YOUR LIFE?

Always the RIGHT TIME to get TOGETHER w/ BLACK FOLX

CAME TO ... TO BWE IT BACK GET IT ... - DAREN'S DREAM

SLEEP? COACH!

WELCOME TO BLACKWOOD

WORTH ALL the BLOOD SWEAT & TEARS

THE BAG

GO IN JUST BE HERE

YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO OFFER EACH OTHER

WE ARE IN the DREAM BUILDING AS WE GO

NEEDED THIS BLACK SPACE

RELATIONSHIP BEFORE TASK

PRIDE

PERPETUAL Community

THE MYRIAD of BEAUTY

THAT INNER KNOWING

MUTUAL AID

THE ANCESTORS

GRANDMOTHER

ALL THE WAYS

BLACK W/ SHARPS LAUGHTER

WHAT IS BLACK LEADERSHIP? WHAT'S AT THE HEART of IT?

90 MINUTE INVITATION to RESTORATION

WHAT DID YOU DO? HOW DID IT FEEL?

SPACIOUSNESS → EXCELLENT MODEL OF GUILT IN SPACE

TIME TO GET OFF THE WHITE MAN'S TREADMILL

RELATE BEFORE TASKS

1. PURPOSE

SPACE CONNECT & LEARN

(RE)DISCOVER POWER of BLACK COLLECTIVISM

2. OUTCOMES

2 CONNECTIONS PARTNERSHIP & SOLIDARITY

3. PROCESS

SELF REFLECTIVE SMALL GROUPS COPARTNERING LEVEL SETTING

PILOT UNPRECEDENTED COCREATION IMPROVISATION

FIND YOUR ANTHRA - GET IN

BELOVED COMMUNITY HOW WE BE TOGETHER

WHAT DO I NEED to SHOW UP FULLY?

THE JAM BOARD

HELP US to BE PRESENT

COMMUNITY INGREDIENTS & PROTOCOL

VARIED INTERACTION

LET GO of OUTSIDE ENERGY

ADD'S +

MIND UP INNER DEFENSIVENESS

DEEP LISTENING WELL VERBAL FEEDBACK

PRESENCE

HOW TIME IN

WHAT IS WAITING TO OPEN GATE

ABUNDANCE

DEMANDS internalized OPPRESSION

DESIRE to RESISTANCE & NAME/DATE

EMBRACING of COMPLEXITY

CONNECTIVITY

LISTENING + Curiosity

AWARENESS of the ARTS

AFFIRMATION

OPENNESS

GENEROSITY and vulnerability

CONNECTION TO SPIRIT

WISDOM + CODES

GIFTS WE BRING

PERSEVERANCE

EMPATHY

UNIQUE & VARIED EXPERIENCES

PATIENCE & GRACE

DEEP STRATEGY

LIBERATION

COMPASSION & MODESTY

SPACE for VULNERABILITY

JOY-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

RECOVERY

LEVITY & JOY

TONGUE MIND & TENDER HEART

RELENTLESSNESS

REFLECTION

COMMUNICATION CREATIVE ENERGY

GRAPHICS BY: DRAINVEERATION

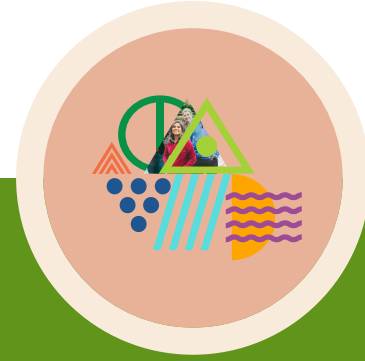
STRATEGIC PIVOTS

A STRATEGIC SHIFT IN NATIONAL MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP

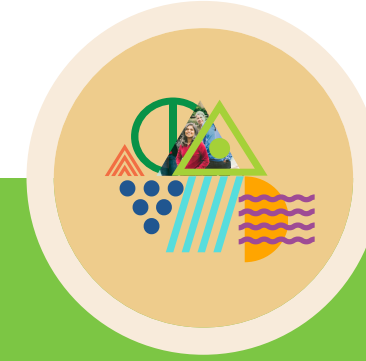
As Rockwood's key influencer strategy, the National Leading from the Inside Out (LIO) Fellowship has become the connective tissue of an aligned and effective social justice ecosystem, and home to some of the most visionary leaders and organizations.



Rockwood general support contributes \$100,000-\$200,000 per year in tuition reductions primarily supporting Black, Indigenous, and non-binary BIPOC leaders.



From 2016-2021, LIO has increased its focus on the leadership of women and non-binary leaders of color.



LIO cohorts are now on average over 80% BIPOC, and over 70% women, trans, or non-binary.



[2021-22 cohort](#) exemplify strategy shifts:

- weaving Texas leaders with leaders from the South and Midwest
- 5 youth-led orgs, 4 climate leaders
- 80% BIPOC

A STRATEGIC SHIFT IN NATIONAL MOVEMENT LEADERSHIP

STRATEGIC PIVOTS

"Six years later, the insight, tools, and relationships I built at Rockwood remain critical in my ability to lead in such relentless times. I am now a more courageous, loving, and balanced leader, partner, daughter, sister, and friend."

CRISTINA JIMÉNEZ MORETA, CO-FOUNDER, UNITED WE DREAM NETWORK, NATIONAL LIO YEARLONG FELLOW, ROCKWOOD BOARD MEMBER



"Rockwood surrounded me with a motivating and supportive cohort, the tools to dig deep and refine myself and my leadership, and the inspiration to step into a big purpose."

MARK CRAIN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DREAM OF DETROIT, NATIONAL LIO YEARLONG FELLOW



UPLIFTING BIPOC LEADERS TO STRENGTHEN MOVEMENTS, SECTORS, PLACES



Rockwood Fellowships and Partnerships are multi-year initiatives that build an intergenerational and intersectional bench of leaders committed to staying in the sector and advancing social change over time.



General support helped to fill gaps in funding, which enabled us to choose into work with more leaders on the margins across a variety of movements.



Between 2016-2021, Rockwood supported 904 fellows across 43 distinct multi-session fellowships, and 1053 participants in 48 one-session partnership trainings.



Examples include: Black Women in Georgia, Building Power, Chicago Women of Color, Equity in Philanthropy, Strengthening Democracy

UPLIFTING BIPOC LEADERS TO STRENGTHEN MOVEMENTS, SECTORS, PLACES

STRATEGIC PIVOTS

"I believe the RHRJ Fellowship has fundamentally changed the future of our movement. What leaders need and deserve has shifted. The clarity of purpose reverberates in all of the spaces where we share liberation work. People's lives are literally changing after this fellowship, who they are, what's important to them, how they feel about this movement and the power they have or not to change it."

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, RIGHTS, AND
JUSTICE FELLOW

Rockwood is a life-changing experience. It teaches you humility, love, and focus. It teaches you that the only work worth pursuing is that which seeks justice and tears down our white supremacy-infused country. Rockwood is joy. Absolute, full mission-driven joy.

LEILA ABOLFAZLI, DIRECTOR OF
FEDERAL REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS,
NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER,
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, RIGHTS, AND
JUSTICE FELLOW



ORGANIZATIONAL
STRENGTHENING

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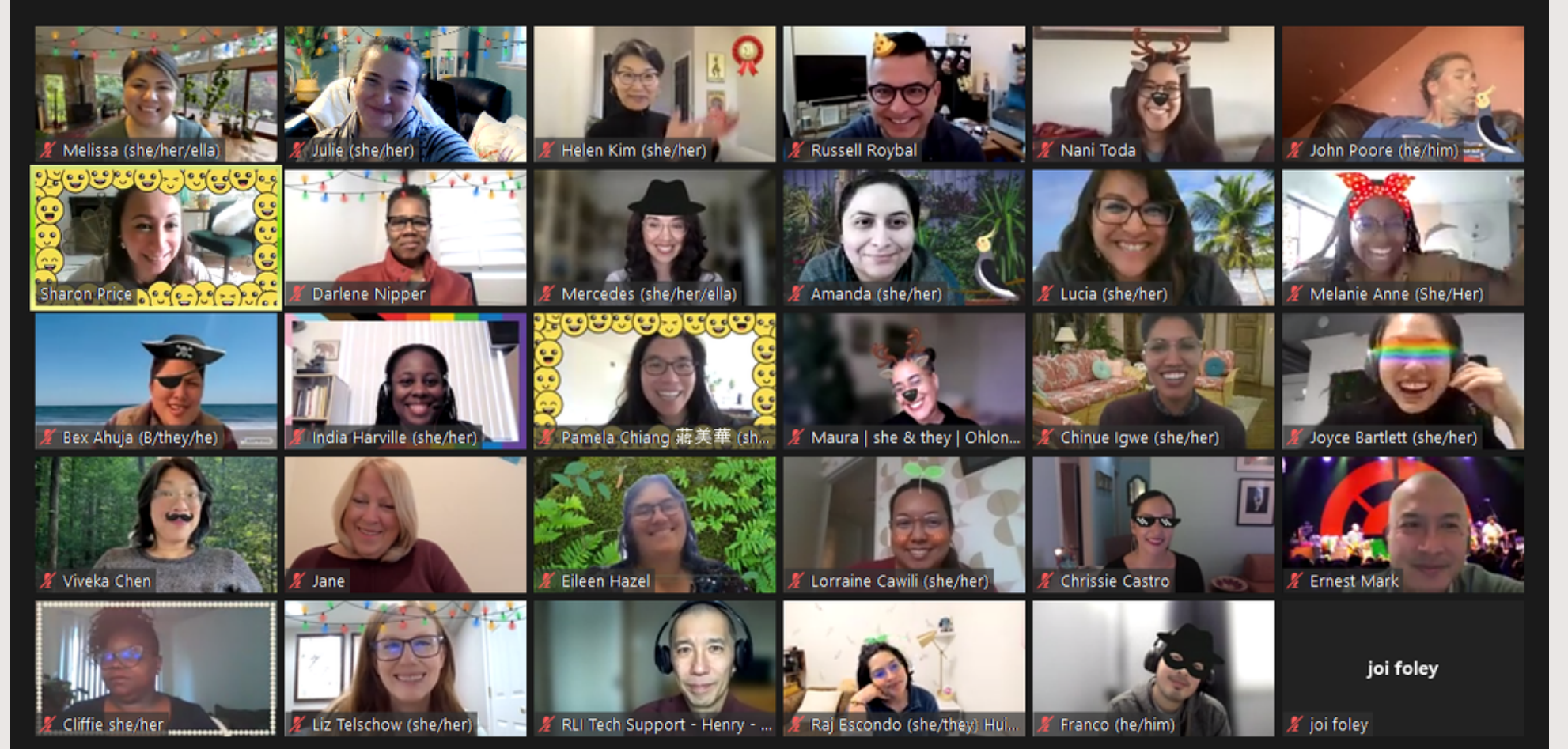
FORTIFYING PEOPLE, SYSTEMS, + FINANCES

With flexible funding,
Rockwood has been able to:

Invest in essential operations
often left unfunded by project-
restricted grants.

Tackle significant organizational
challenges by investing in
people and systems.

Weather the financial
turbulence of the pandemic.



ORGANIZATIONAL
STRENGTHENING

PEOPLE, SYSTEMS, + FINANCES CONTINUED

PEOPLE

Executive Transition + Org Restructure:

Underwent executive transition after 14 years; re-organized teams; conducted salary equity adjustments; added Managing Director and Director of People, Wellness, and Culture.



Internal Race Equity Transformation:

Conducted equity assessment with consultants; created a stewards team; identified the need for healing circles, spaces to address harm, race equity education.

STAFF SUSTAINABILITY + ORG CULTURE:

A full suite of investments in staff including professional development funds; wellness bonuses; healing retreats; expansive healthcare coverage and unlimited sick leave; 32-hour workweek; office closures for deep rest and activism.

PEOPLE, SYSTEMS, + FINANCES CONTINUED

SYSTEMS

FISCAL SPONSORSHIP:

Honed our practice in fiscal sponsorships for aligned projects such as Coaching for Healing Justice and Liberation, the first school of its kind to build capacity of BIPOC movement leaders; and Viveka Chen and Anushka Fernandopulle's executive transition and succession planning project with BIPOC-led social justice organizations.



SECURITY AND CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS:

A 2018 grant helped Rockwood upgrade digital security hardware and software; increase physical security at our office and training sites; support our ability respond to public attacks; author a tool available to other movement organizations on "[Practicing Digital Resilience.](#)"

REMOTE WORK:

A transition to a high-functioning remote team was made possible with tools like Slack, Zoom, Asana and remote work policies that were already in place well before virtual work was suddenly required in March 2020.

PEOPLE, SYSTEMS, + FINANCES CONTINUED

FINANCES

TRUE COST BUSINESS MODEL:

Delving into a profit margin analysis that illuminates the cost of existing and new offerings, we are developing an income model that supports us to advocate for true costs and diversify revenue streams.



COVID RESPONSE:

At the beginning of Covid-19, Rockwood was prepared to lose \$2.5 million in fee-for-service revenue. Unrestricted funding provided financial breathing room to sustain operations while we revamped our business model. We also received \$400,050 through the Paycheck Protection Program, and flexibility from long-term funders.

MACKENZIE SCOTT GIFT:

In 2021, Rockwood received a \$3,000,000 unrestricted gift from MacKenzie Scott, alongside many of our peers across the capacity-building ecosystem. While significant, it has been a challenge to debunk the myth that Rockwood no longer needs support. We plan to allocate half the funding in reserve and the other half in growing staff. This investment will represent 7% of our operating budget per year for the next three years.

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WHAT'S NEXT FOR ROCKWOOD



FUTURE DIRECTIONS



Rockwood is now more durable and resilient.



There is still a major gap in who we want to be, and who we are right now.



Key internal and external initiatives will be required to retool and strengthen Rockwood for this next era.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ROCKWOOD

Internal Institutional Strengthening:

The reality of an organization our size is we do not yet enjoy the economies of scale in our people, systems, and infrastructure yet we have the challenges and complexities of a large organization.

We need flexible funding to:



**Deepen an internal
race equity and
liberation journey**



**Hire, onboard, and
retain staff in a
volatile employment
market**



**Develop Board
and Trainer teams**



**Overhaul goals
and evaluation
metrics**



**Refine a
sustainable
business model**



**Diversify revenue,
become less reliant
on one-time project
funding**



**Launch major
donor
engagement**



**Adapt risk protocols
to return to in-person
training**

WHAT'S NEXT FOR ROCKWOOD

External Impact Initiatives:

A retooling of Rockwood requires evolution of our curriculum and offerings to be in partnership with emerging BIPOC leaders and communities on the margins.

We need flexible funding to:



Expand the HeArt of Black Leadership to meet overwhelming demand from the field



Deepen work with Indigenous leaders through NDN Collective partnership



Reach community and grassroots leaders, including rural, low income, and leaders unaffiliated with nonprofits



Increase language access, building off Spanish language programming



Underwrite a solidarity sliding scale so more people can access our trainings



Meaningfully invest in disability justice, inclusion, and access

DECOLONIZING + RECLAIMING INNOVATION FOR EQUITY AND LIBERATION

RADICAL (DECOLONIZED) INNOVATION MODEL



ATTRIBUTION TO CO-LAB, CORE ALIGN, & CLAUDIA LOPEZ



Rooted in years of innovation in the reproductive health, rights, and justice space through the organization CoreAlign, Art of Innovation (AOI) invites innovation as a core leadership and liberation practice.



We are learning with participants about how (re)awakening our inner innovators can help disrupt habits of white supremacy and power, and develop breakthrough solutions big and small for our communities and organizations.



Currently prototyping several formats including a 6-session, 3-day, and 2-hour workshop, our hope is for AOI to become a core offering across our public and private programs.



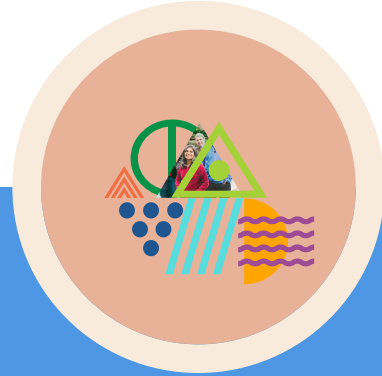
AOI has been a labor of love, community, and creativity. We want to thank our partners for the radical collaboration: Sujatha Jesudason, Professor of Management and Faculty Director of the Social Movements + Innovation Lab, and Monica Dennis, Viveka Chen, and Maura Bairley of the consulting group co-LAB.

BEYOND ROCKWOOD: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP FOR THE MASSES



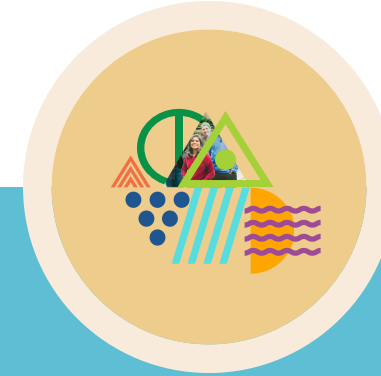
Alcoholics

Anonymous (AA) has been one of the most powerful, effective, and transformative efforts of the past century, reaching millions of people each year.

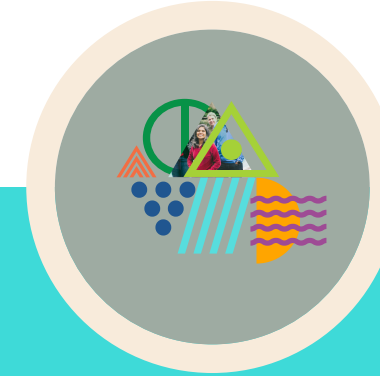


Social justice

movements need a breakthrough model to exponentially reach more people who want to transform themselves, support one another, and change the world.



Transformational Leadership for the Masses aims to adapt the very best organizing principles of AA and graft them onto the most impactful Rockwood processes and tools for social justice leaders.



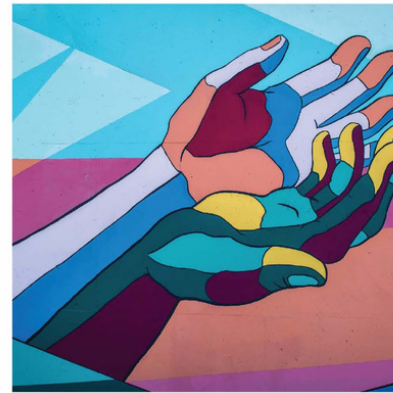
Rockwood is conducting research and piloting a train-the-trainer initiative with grassroots community leaders.

DESIGN AND OPTIMAL STRUCTURE FOR TRAININGS WITH GRASSROOTS LEADERS



CO-CREATE WITH PEOPLE IN COMMUNITIES + INVOLVE IN DESIGN

- Ancestral healing
- Decolonize leadership
- Collective purpose
- Circle formations
- Spiritual and holistic practices



INCORPORATE THERAPEUTIC ELEMENTS TO ADDRESS INEQUITABLE IMPACTS OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

- Breathwork
- Smaller groups/1:1
- Breaks and debriefing
- Trauma informed practices
- SA recovery & support



PROVIDE TARGETED OFFERINGS BASED ON THE NEEDS OF GRASSROOTS LEADERS

- Sliding scale + funding
- Support childcare, gas, food, time off work
- Virtual is accessible, and some folks prefer in person
- More support with communication and compassion fatigue



CONNECT TO BLACK AND INDIGENOUS ROOTS

- Community leaders, not just those who've gone through educational system
- Value lived experience
- Less focus on goals and tasks
- Incorporate more storytelling

MADE WITH
beautiful.ai

THE NEXT ERA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

Ford Foundation Executive VP of Programs Hilary Pennington writes in [this article](#),

“The work of tackling inequality is immensely hard, but keeping a social justice organization up and running is nearly impossible—and it shouldn’t have to be.”



WHAT IF SOCIAL JUSTICE BECAME A FIELD KNOWN FOR TAKING CARE OF OUR PEOPLE, FOR THRIVING ORGANIZATIONS, AND GAME-CHANGING RESULTS?



A next generation of BIPOC leaders and organizations are becoming the bedrock of the future of our movements.



There is an uptick in interest in investing in people and relationship-building as proven medicine for depletion, isolation, and burnout.



The capacity sector is not scaled to meet this demand nor the specific needs of BIPOC leaders due to years of underinvestment in leadership.



Rockwood is now at the precipice of another wave of growth that will allow our institution to meet increasing demand, and begin operating at scale.





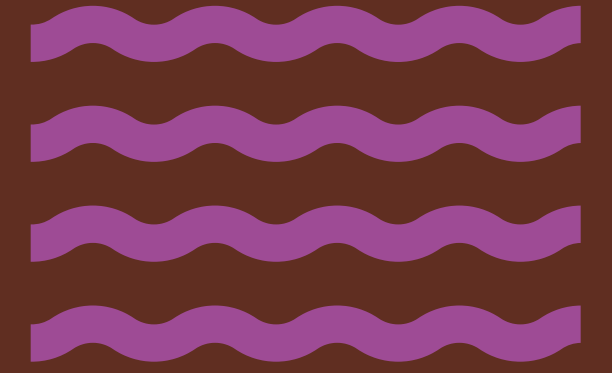
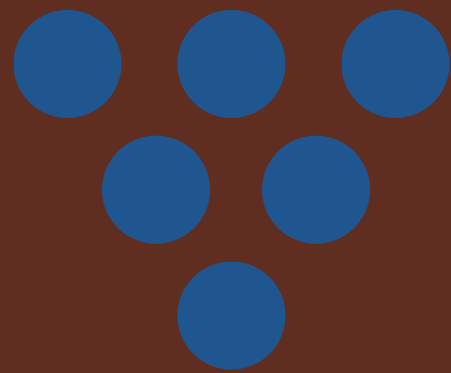
"We need to be able to reimagine sustainability so leaders are able to build with one another, reconnect with their purpose along with their joy, and determine when to pass the baton so that they can be ready for that next race. I arrived at Rockwood a couple months after taking on the CEO baton from people who co-founded and led the National Women's Law Center for 45 years. My LIO cohort supported me in stepping into my own power. I wanted to create my own pathway to lead authentically with effectiveness, grace, and joy."

**Fatima Goss Graves, President and CEO, National Women's Law Center,
National Leading from the Inside Out Yearlong Fellow**



A GENERATION OF MOVEMENT LEADERS HAVE PUT THEIR TRUST IN ROCKWOOD AS A SOURCE OF RESILIENCE AND A SPACE FOR CROSS-SECTOR CONVENING. WITH FURTHER INVESTMENT, ROCKWOOD CAN EXPAND OUR ABILITY TO BE A RESOURCE FOR A THRIVING MOVEMENT ECOSYSTEM.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP.



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