



FLEXIBLE LEADERSHIP AWARD

REFLECTIONS REPORT

The LeadersTrust believes that a deep investment in the leadership and organizational capacity of change makers is critical for success. By delivering responsive, long-term, high-touch investment in the people at the heart of organizations, we unlock the radical imagination and inherent power of leaders, organizations, and movements to achieve transformative change.



Our work builds on a history of more than fifteen years delivering the Flexible Leadership Awards as a core strategy of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund to invest deeply in the leadership and organizational capacity of nonprofit partners. Now an independent entity housed at the Tides Center, we partner with a range of foundations and a network of more than 75 capacity consultants to support more than 120 social change organizations and their leaders across the country.

In this Reflections Report, we evaluate the Flexible Leadership Awards by examining its impact on twelve grantee partners who participated in the program between 2016-2020. As you will read, these types of investments—totaling more than \$30 million over our history—are building a change sector where resources are invested equitably, power is shared, and leaders have the capacity, relationships, and investment they need to lead boldly and dream big.

Working with **the LeadersTrust**

To create the world we want, we need strategic and supported leaders, relevant and adaptive organizations, and durable movements for change. Our approach to cultivating leadership is:

- **TAILORED.** We customize and evolve our programs to meet distinct needs as defined by each individual, organization, and foundation partner.
- **MULTI-YEAR AND HIGH-TOUCH.** We go deeper than a one-time grant or an individual fellowship. Transformation requires **long-term investment and accompaniment.**
- **DISTRIBUTED.** Leadership is always about more than one person. Our programs don't focus solely on executive directors or one style of leadership but on leaders at every level, including staff, board members, coaches and funders. We **invest in the power and leadership of whole organizations.**
- **ECOSYSTEM VIEW.** Though leaders are at the heart of our mission, we know that people, networks, movements, and sectors work together to move social impact. We are **deep listeners who collaborate and bridge** to recognize and address what's emerging in the sector at large.

Our **Values**

- **EQUITY.** Our work is driven by our vision of a more equitable world for all people and the planet. We believe that centering racial equity is the surest path for transformative social change. We work in service of healing and liberation for communities of color and dismantling systems—even those within our own sectors- that are oppressive and unjust.
- **PEOPLE.** We believe in the power and expertise of the people who are the heart of organizations and movements for social change and follow their lead. We take a people-centered, asset-based approach that recognizes people and organizations' potential to achieve their goals and mission; our role is to do whatever we can to help them realize that potential.
- **CONNECTION.** Relationships are at the heart of our work as connectors. We recognize that no one can do it alone and that accompaniment- feeling seen, heard, held, and supported- is transformative. The leaders, funders, coaches, and partners we work with are valuable, equal partners whom we treat with utmost love and respect.
- **TRUST.** Not just part of our name, trust is essential to how we operate. We support and honor the wisdom of our partners to guide the work, define what they need, and determine the right path forward.

I. What is the **FLA model**?

The Flexible Leadership Awards, our time-tested core model, provides long-term, tailored support to leaders and organizations funded by our collaborating foundations to bolster their leadership and organizational success.

The process begins with an individual grantee-centered assessment to help leaders prioritize their leadership and organizational development needs in context of their strategic goals, challenges and location in their respective ecosystems. The FLA has three core components:



FUNDING

Multi-year, flexible capacity awards above and beyond general operating support they receive give leaders and organizations the spaciousness for leadership and organizational development activities.



STRATEGIC ADVICE

Partnership with a Capacity Coach who provides ongoing guidance and accompaniment. We match movement leaders with experts in the field who provide coaching, training, and support to plan and implement capacity building investment in their organizations. This kind of accompaniment is critical to help leaders feel seen, heard, and supported as they grow in their leadership and achieve their goals.



LEARNING COMMUNITY

Dynamic opportunities for peer learning, innovation, and reflection.

II. The FLA Reflection Project

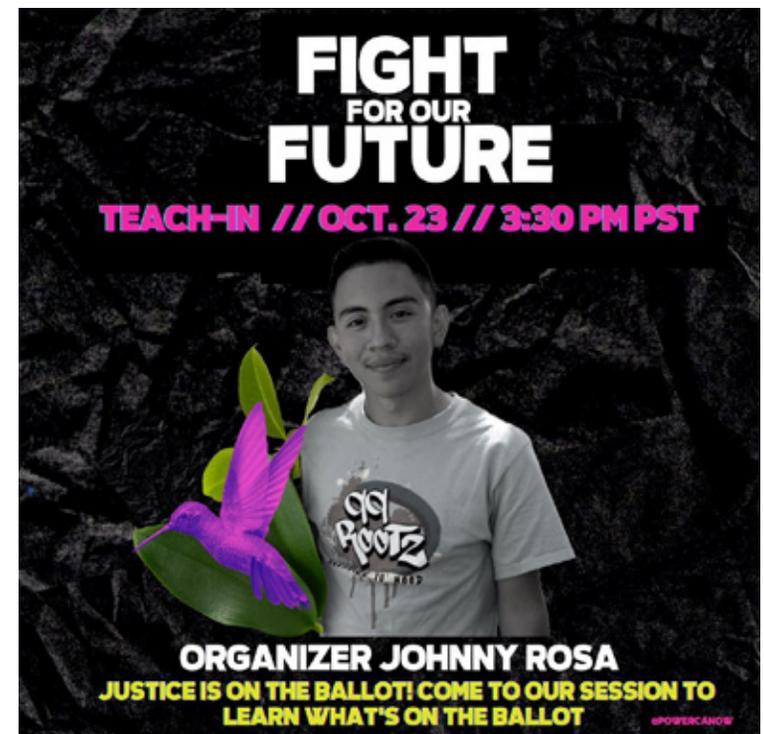
2016 - 2020

12 grantee partners

**emphasized grantee
experiences and
perspectives**

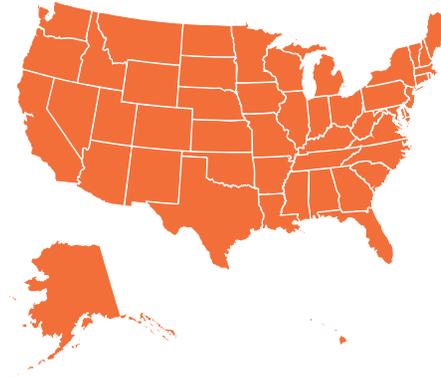
**informed by interviews with
grantee partners' staff and
Board + quantitative data**

Grantee Partner
Power California
social media
event posts



III. Grantee Partners in Context

A wide range of social impact areas—LGBT equality, immigrant rights, and equitable access to higher education:



GRANTEE PARTNER	FOCUS	CORE STRATEGIES
Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)	Immigrant Rights, Environmental Justice, Climate	Base Building, Advocacy and Policy
California Immigrant Policy Center (CIPC)	Immigrant Rights	Advocacy and Policy
Campaign for College Opportunity (CCO)	Equal Access to Education	Policy Advocacy
Mobilize the Immigrant Vote (MIV) now a part of PowerCalifornia	Immigrant Rights	Culture Change, Civic Engagement

GRANTEE PARTNER	FOCUS	CORE STRATEGIES
Coaching Corps (CC)	Equal Access to Athletic Enrichment	Coaching Infrastructure
Equality Federation	LGBT Equality	Capacity Building
LGBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD)	LGBT Equality	Legal Advocacy
More Light Presbyterians (MLP)	LGBT Equality	Advocacy in Faith Based Communities
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium (NAKASEC)	Immigrant Rights	Base building, Advocacy, and Policy
Reconciling Works (RW)	LGBT Equality	Advocacy in Faith Based Communities
Rockwood Leadership Institute (RLI)	Cross Social Benefit Sector—LGBT Equality, Racial Justice, Gender Equality, Economic Justice, Enviro. Justice	Leadership Development and Capacity Building
Transgender Law Center (TLC)	LGBT Equality	Legal Support and Advocacy, Culture, Community

Some **important characteristics** of the grantee partners who chose to work with FLA:

Leadership Transitions

All 12 grantee partners experienced major leadership transition during their FLA journeys.

Multiplier Effect

- Grantee partners actively operate within larger networks to bring about change, and they impact institutions and structures that define the fabric of our society.
- Investing in the leadership of these structures creates a ripple effect that goes far beyond the individual grantee partner.

“FLA work is like a secret weapon in the movement ... You’re [FLA] building so much capacity for people in the movement. The work gets developed in one place and then it’s leveraged somewhere else... Sharing all this capacity with our member organizations, and equipping folks to think about building capacity... It’s been phenomenal.”

–Michael Lewis, Equality Federation Board member

“...As a result, we have a leadership pipeline...FLA allowed us to be part of the program as a network, so not just our organization but our affiliates.”

–Becky Belcore, Executive Director, NAKASEC

IV. Working with **FLA**

EQUITY

Rigor and specificity around diversity and inclusion is important and anti-racism is central. Together with grantee partners, FLA advances racial equity in policy, action, and organizations.

FLEXIBILITY

in how FLA works, by learning from and following the lead of grantee partners in responding to their changing needs and environments.

LOVE, SERVICE, AND SUPPORT

for leaders working in a space where scarcity and burnout are common and expectations for transformational change are high. FLA aims to increase resources, access, and ease for its grantee partners, not add to their burden.

RELATIONSHIP and CONNECTION

Relationship and Connection is the foundation of the work. It involves trust, transparency, and respect. Grantees are recognized as valuable and equal partners in the work.

DEPTH and CONSTANCY

in partnership with grantees. FLA provides multi-year funding, commits to the long haul, and embraces changes and challenges. FLA encourage boldness, experimentation, and learning from mistakes.

SELF-DETERMINATION and AGENCY

of grantee partners in guiding the work and determining what they need and how to get it—they know best.

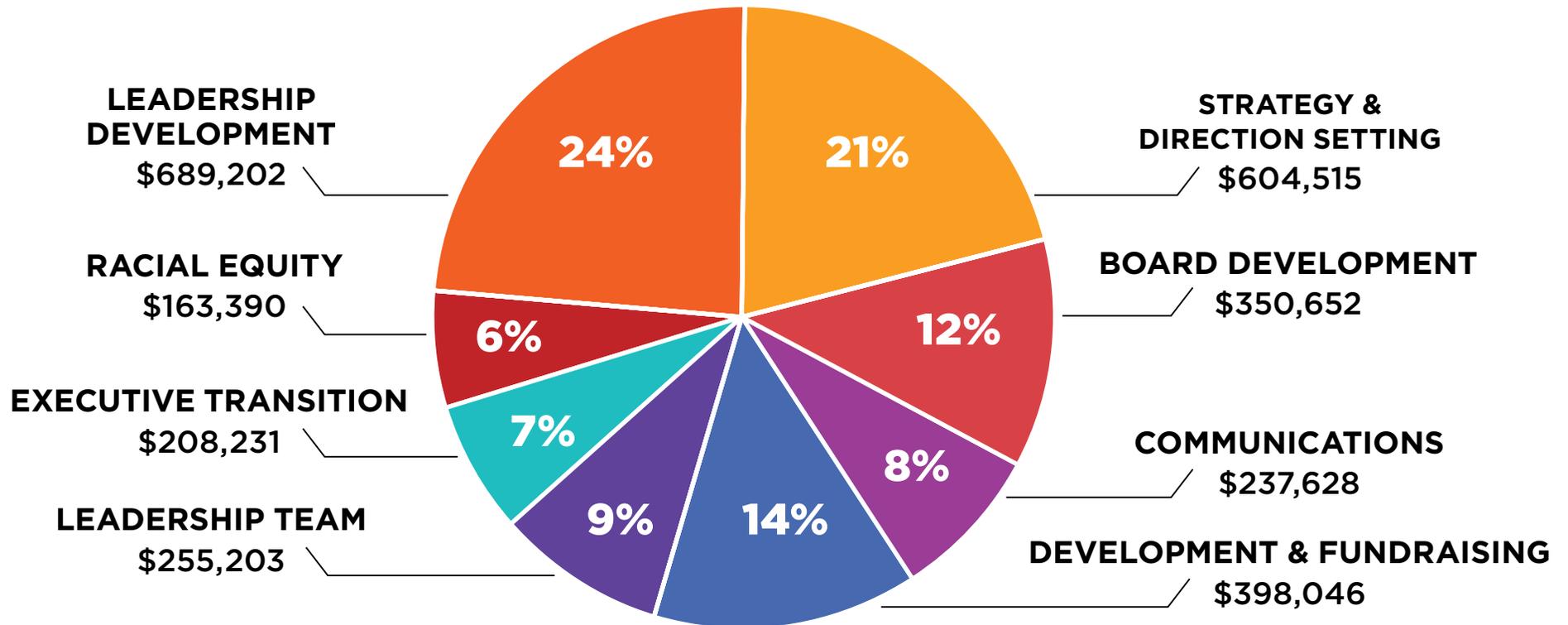
HONEST DIALOGUE and REFLECTION

By listening, reflecting, and facilitating access to resources, FLA co-creates a space of honest learning to increase focus and further mission impact.

“What I think FLA does really well is trusting that we are the ones who define what we need from this type of support, who we want to work with, and what the scope of work is.”

–Aparna Shah, former Executive Director at MIV and now Senior Advisor with PowerCA

How FLA grantee partners used their resources, by area of work, in total:



“It felt like learning. It evolved with us, it morphed with us as our needs changed. One of the most important words in the title is ‘flexible.’”

-Janet Carter, CEO, Coaching Corps

What does Impact look like?

FLA investments in leadership have contributed to greater organizational health and mission impact at the level of the individual leader, the organization as a whole, and resonate at a movement-wide level.

INCREASED ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE

FLA supports organizations to be more resilient—to weather unexpected, sudden and/or significant events and transitions, to be in tune with rapidly changing environmental conditions and to respond by aligning resources with external demands.

💧 These next ten years are going to ask a lot of us...Helping organizations navigate uncertainty is going to be crucial. FLA is in an excellent position to help to build muscles to do that.”

-Akaya Windwood, former President and CEO, Rockwood Leadership Institute

What does Impact look like?

INCREASED REPRESENTATION OF MOST IMPACTED AMONG LEADERSHIP

Building the Bench of BIPOC Leaders, Women, Non-Binary/LGBTQ Leaders, and Leaders from Working Class Backgrounds.

“If you really want to see concrete progress in developing a bench of leaders of color, then leadership development is really essential. Not just giving the skills to be leaders, while obviously important but also for me it was really helpful in convincing me that I wanted to step up to leadership.”

-Janson Wu, Executive Director of GLAD



What does Impact look like?

INTERNALIZED RACIAL EQUITY LINKS TO INCREASED IMPACT AND EFFECTIVENESS

Working from the inside out, walking their talks, grantee partners shared with us their clarity about how deepening racial equity internally increased the depth, reach and effectiveness of their impact externally. They see the two as essential and intertwined. FLA was instrumental in moving racial equity work forward.

INCREASED STRATEGIC FOCUS and COORDINATION

All grantee partners engaged in some form of strategy work as part of their FLA, taking stock of a changing environment, articulating and refining goals and strategies, and in some cases, developing a theory of change, as a map for the direction of their work.

What does Impact look like?

INCREASED INTERNAL ALIGNMENT

Stories from each organization shine a light on how FLA supports them to “row together in the same direction.”

“FLA gave us resources and access to talented consultants and feedback and held us accountable to progress along these plans... because you report to them what you’ve done. It really raised the bar in terms of professionalism of the board as a group, improved group dynamics and functions as a group.”

-Dianne Phillips Past Board President, GLAD



What does Impact look like?

INCREASED SELF CARE AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Building an organization with distributed leadership and a strong leadership bench are key building blocks to sustain individual leaders and to having a deeper and fuller leadership well for organizations as a whole.



Image from grantee partner social media

“Through this work, I realized that what I do is very valuable, and who I am is very valuable, and I actually need to sustain myself for the long run...

Now I am in the practice of managing my energy and making decisions about what I show up for and it makes a big difference in who I am now and how I show up as a leader and how I show up in coalition spaces.”

-Suguey Hernandez, formerly Senior Field Engagement Officer at MIV and now Chief Political Strategist at PowerCA

What does Impact look like?

INCREASED INNOVATION, FLEXIBILITY, and BOLDNESS

FLA has supported partner organizations to adopt a stance of inquiry and experimentation, testing the meaning of leadership, organizational development processes, and mission. FLA's supports for experimentation have been unusual, and have enabled their partner organizations to act boldly to face the tremendous challenges of our times.

“That whole idea of dream big, fail big, fail forward. Indigenous folks, Black folks, young people, folks of color, immigrants and refugees, trans folks, we have to have those same opportunities to learn.”

-Aparna Shah, former Executive Director at MIV and now Senior Advisor with PowerCA

“The stability at all levels had to do with FLA. It allowed us to take risks in context, to say ‘Let’s be thoughtful about the kind of risk we are going to take.’ We couldn’t have done that without that support.”

-Akaya Windwood, President and CEO, Rockwood Leadership Institute

Leadership sets the table and drives every organizational endeavor.

If “culture eats strategy for breakfast,” then leadership eats culture.

“Grants can be sometimes too much like a straitjacket. Here there was enough flexibility it made the dollars go further. We were able to use it in a way that we knew was going to have the most significant impact for the organization. That’s a thank you. It worked very well.”

-Richard Yurko, GLAD Board Chair



FLA quenches the perennial capacity thirst.

Leadership and organizational capacity building is no longer a nice-to-have but a must-have.

Yet to fully function at full power and reach, organizations and leaders need capacity and leadership like trees need water and sunshine.

💧 What FLA offered us was funds to create a space so we could pause, come together, and connect the dots through reflection. Where did we begin? Where was there an impact? FLA has allowed us to strengthen the foundation of all the work we do.”

-Chris Farjado, Chief of Program, Coaching Corps



How do social benefit organizations—especially those led by oppressed people fighting back against structural exclusion and violence—thrive without ongoing leadership and capacity investments?

They don't.



Photo: Grantee Partner
California Immigrant Policy Center



For more information, please contact:

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