



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There is a sizeable racial leadership gap throughout the nonprofit sector. A 2017 national study found that 90% of nonprofit chief executives and 84% of nonprofit board members were white.<sup>1</sup> Yet, many nonprofits predominantly serve people of color (POC) and have diverse frontline staff members. Leadership development programs focused on leaders of color, such as Tipping Point Community's Emerging Leaders Fellowship, help address this gap.

## VALUE OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS FOR LEADERS OF COLOR IN THE NONPROFIT SECTOR

Leadership development programs focused on leaders of color in the nonprofit sector provide tremendous value to the individuals and organizations that participate and the sector.

- **Leadership development programs help nonprofits better reflect the diversity of the communities they serve.** Nonprofits need leadership teams that reflect the diversity of the communities they serve to effectively understand constituents and to offer culturally appropriate programs.
- **Leadership development programs fill in organizational and sector-wide gaps.** Even nonprofits with the best intentions to reduce inequities are often not equipped to make these changes. Predominantly white-led organizations often do not know how to support leaders of color, even if they would like to. Additionally, many nonprofits do not have or prioritize the resources needed to support leaders of color.
- **Leadership development programs address the additional burdens placed on leaders of color.** Working in a nonprofit is already an emotionally stressful job. Leaders of color face additional challenges such as imposter syndrome and stereotype threat. Leadership development programs centered on POC leaders provide a safe space for POC leaders to support each other in navigating these issues so they can focus on the other challenges all leaders face.

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<sup>1</sup> BoardSource, Leading with Intent: 2017 Index of Nonprofit Board Practices (Washington, D.C.: BoardSource, 2017).

## ABOUT THE FELLOWSHIP

Tipping Point Community's Emerging Leaders of Color Fellowship ("the Fellowship") was designed to diversify the leadership pipeline in the Tipping Point portfolio. The Fellowship is a nine-month program to strengthen emerging nonprofit leaders of color's growth and leadership skills. The Fellowship annually brings together 10-12 mid-level managers from Tipping Point Community grantee organizations.

## ABOUT THE EVALUATION

Tipping Point Community partnered with Public Profit to understand the Emerging Leaders Fellowship Program's successes and challenges over the last three leadership cohorts, 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20.<sup>2</sup> The evaluation focused on the progress graduates made towards the Fellowship's intended outcomes, stakeholders' perspectives on the program strengths and areas of improvement, and the value of leadership development programs for leaders of color in the nonprofit sector. Public Profit conducted interviews, surveys, and focus groups with Fellows, fielded a supervisor survey, held interviews with the cohort facilitator, conducted a document review of past evaluations, a comparison group analysis between applicants who participated in the fellowship and those who did not, and a landscape analysis of similar programs. The evaluators would like to acknowledge that while the Fellowship is explicitly designed to support and address the needs of leaders of color, all contributing members of the evaluation team are white. The evaluators took several steps to address potential blind spots and unconscious biases, yet additional blind spots may still have persisted.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this evaluation, we present the following recommendations for consideration:

- 1. Continue offering concentrated professional development support for POC leaders that builds on the current Emerging Leaders Fellowship design.** The Fellowship has provided essential supports for POC leaders that are not available from their organization or the sector as a whole. The Fellowship's core design (kick-off retreat, monthly cohort sessions, one-on-one coaching, and the stipend) and skillful facilitation effectively built community and increased Fellows' confidence and skills. In turn, Fellows experienced wage gains and expanded responsibilities and influence.
- 2. Formalize and refine some of the Fellowship elements to maximize impact.** Stakeholders suggested several ideas to enhance the Fellowship's strong foundation: 1) Provide a more structured and detailed road map for the curriculum; 2) Increase formal post-Fellowship coaching and invest in a more robust alumni network; 3) Increase Tipping Point Community's connection to Fellows and promotion of the Fellowship.
- 3. Consider the importance of engaging employers with the Fellowship and other similar future initiatives.** Developing Fellows' capacity is only one part of the equation. We recommend Tipping

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<sup>2</sup> The start of the 2019-20 cohort was delayed until March of 2020.

Point increase its expectations for supervisor and organizational involvement with the Fellowship and other similar future initiatives.

- **Formally engage Fellows' supervisors with the Fellowship.** Continue expanding upon the changes implemented for the 2019-20 cohort, requiring supervisors to participate in key sessions and having mid-point and post-fellowship check-ins. Consider adding supports specifically for supervisors on how they can support Fellows' development and advancement.
- **Increase DEI support and expectations for Fellows' organizations.** We recommend that Tipping Point increase the expectations and support for DEI work at Fellows' organizations. Tipping Point staff have shared that Tipping Point is already moving in this direction. We recommend Tipping Point continue these efforts and consider the specific suggestions made by Fellows and Dr. Cadet outlined in the *Areas for Improvement* section.

4. **Revisit the overarching goal of the Fellowship and adjust the structure accordingly.** The Fellowship currently engages mid-level managers for just over nine months. While there is robust evidence that Fellows make professional progress, they are not yet entering executive leadership roles. Fellows might eventually join Executive Leadership Teams, but it will take more time. If the goal is to support Fellows in joining Executive Leadership Teams, consider changes to the model. Options include accepting applicants who are already in more senior roles, tracking Fellows' employment outcomes for a longer period of time after their participation, and offering incentives to organizations to involve Fellows in leadership teams.

## EVALUATION FINDINGS

### Graduate Outcomes

Graduates of the Emerging Leaders Fellowship Program made progress towards most of the Fellowship's intended long-term outcomes, such as wage gains, promotions, expanded influence, increased career opportunities, and representation in organizational leadership. Since participating in the Fellowship, nearly all graduates (95%) reported they took on greater responsibilities. Most Fellows reported their career opportunities increased (89%) and their salary increased (84%). Fewer graduates, though still over half (58%), received a promotion. These promotions brought Fellows into more senior roles, but rarely to the Executive Leadership Team level.

Figure 1. Fellows' progress towards key Fellowship outcomes



## Program Strengths

- **Program elements made distinct contributions and reinforced each other.** Fellows highly valued the overall program design. In particular, the kick-off retreat, monthly cohort sessions, one-on-one coaching, and the stipend were described as essential program components.
- **Intimate cohort experience built a community of support and belonging.** The small cohort met regularly, which created a safe space where Fellows could feel seen, be vulnerable, and fully engage with the curriculum as their authentic selves.
- **Facilitators and coaches served as both experts and peers that Fellows could relate to and trust.** The skills and lived experiences of the people implementing the Fellowship were central to its success.
- **Validation of Fellows' existing skills and experiences gave Fellows the confidence to lead as their authentic selves.** The Fellowship program design and implementation effectively increased Fellows' confidence in their ability to lead and speak up for themselves and others.
- **Cohort model and connections to alumni created a powerful network of leaders.** The Fellowship's intentional selection of Fellows from a broad array of Bay Area nonprofits, the cohort model, and alumni connections enabled Fellows to deepen their professional networks.
- **Curriculum and peer support systems helped Fellows navigate inequities in their organizations.** Fellows developed the language to articulate these issues and the skills and confidence to address them effectively.

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*I've found my voice, which was something that I didn't know how to leverage prior to the program.*

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*It builds such a strong and powerful community. A place of refuge, understanding, and confidence building. Every person of color deserves this space!*

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## Areas for Improvement

- **Provide a structured and detailed road map for the curriculum.** Fellows spoke highly of the Fellowship curriculum, but would have appreciated a more detailed syllabus at the Fellowship's start.
- **Formally engage Fellows' supervisors and organizations with the Fellowship.** Fellows, graduates, supervisors, and the facilitator all agreed they would like to see Fellows' supervisors more formally involved with the Fellowship.
- **Increase formal post-fellowship support.** Fellows suggested ongoing coaching sessions for alumni and a "scale down" period where the Fellowship transitions to quarterly sessions. Alumni coaching is currently offered, yet several graduates were not aware this was an option.
- **Invest in a more robust alumni network.** Graduates valued the alumni network, but many felt it was not yet reaching its potential.
- **Increase Tipping Point Community's connection to Fellows and promotion of the Fellowship.** Graduates wanted to feel more connected to Tipping Point events, staff, and networks.
- **Increase DEI support and expectations for Fellows' organizations.** Tipping Point has an opportunity to continue to help organizations deepen their understanding of DEI work and connect them to the consultants and resources they need to make these changes.
- **If the goal is to support Fellows in joining Executive Leadership Teams, consider changes to the model.** Options include accepting applicants who are already in more senior roles, track Fellows' employment outcomes for a more extended period after their participation, and offer incentives to organizations to involve Fellows in leadership teams.

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*[I'd like more] leadership accountability - have a way to ensure our managers and organizational leaders have a way of being accountable for living DEI values and promoting POC and frontline workers.*

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*We're a small group of people and the systemic barriers still exist for us. It's not like the 25 of us, all of a sudden reversed the very real racism and structural issues that exist for people advancing into [executive] levels.*

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# ABOUT THE EMERGING LEADERS FELLOWSHIP

Today, people of color represent over 40% of the nonprofit workforce, but less than 20% of nonprofit executives. And while the U.S. population and workforce has become more diverse over the last 15 years, the leadership percentages remain unchanged.<sup>3</sup>

Tipping Point Community's Emerging Leaders of Color Fellowship ("the Fellowship") was designed to strengthen the Tipping Point portfolio's leadership pipeline. The Fellowship is a nine-month program to support emerging nonprofit leaders of color's growth and leadership skills. The Fellowship annually brings together 10-12 mid-level managers from Tipping Point Community grantee organizations, who hone their personal leadership style, build organizational management skills, and cultivate a group of peers focused on alleviating poverty in the Bay Area.

## FELLOWSHIP OUTLINE

The Fellowship is intended to:

1. Increase the number of people of color represented in senior leadership positions.
2. Develop pipeline to leadership for emerging talent.
3. Develop a network of equity-centered leaders.

## FELLOWSHIP COMPONENTS

The Fellowship includes the following components:

- **Residential opening retreat:** intensive two ½-days focused on topics including leadership identity, racial equity, and team building
- **Monthly day-long sessions** on topics including (sessions vary depending on Fellows' needs): leadership statements, race, culture, ethnicity, equity & leadership, social justice leadership, power & privilege, conscious & authentic leadership, adaptive leadership, nonprofit savior complex, change management, design thinking, and peer coaching.
- **Workshop access** to Tipping Point Community professional development offerings (no longer mandatory in the third cohort)
- **Customized 1:1 coaching** sessions for each Fellow
- **\$7,500 stipend** paid in increments throughout the program with full attendance and participation
- **Residential closing retreat:** intensive two ½-days focused on topics including leadership identity, racial equity, and team building
- **Alumni network** offers numerous formal and informal opportunities for graduates of the program to keep in touch and provide continued peer support.

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<sup>3</sup> Sean Thomas-Breitfeld and Frances Kunreuther, *Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap* (Building Movement Project, 2016). Accessed December 31, 2020 at <https://racetolead.org/race-to-lead/>