

Encore Fellows Pilot Gets High Marks

Independent Evaluators Conclude Program Could Ease Nonprofit Leadership Shortage

KEY FINDINGS

The Encore Fellowships pilot program proved a simple concept: With help from a well-run, well-designed fellowship program, experienced corporate employees can add tremendous value to nonprofit organizations, while transitioning to encore careers in the social sector.

That's the conclusion of an independent evaluation released by LFA Group and Civic Ventures in June 2010. The evaluators determined that the Silicon Valley Encore Fellows (SVEF) pilot "aimed to create a marketplace for highly skilled, executive-level employees to bring their expertise and experiences to support nonprofits in meaningful ways by creating transitional pathways for individuals to move across sectors into an encore career. The SVEF pilot proved remarkably successful at achieving this goal."

The evaluation showed extremely high levels of satisfaction among participants and nonprofit executives. All 18 of the fellows and nonprofit executives who responded to the survey said they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the program, with almost 90 percent very satisfied. In fact, a majority of nonprofit executives estimated the value of their Encore Fellows to be worth a full-time annual salary of \$100,000 or more. Meanwhile, nine fellows were offered jobs at the organizations where they spent their fellowships, and eight took permanent or temporary positions at their sponsoring organizations or other nonprofit agencies.

This evaluation provides the first insight into a small, but effective, pilot in California's Silicon Valley. Though the results are not meant to be generalized to other locations, fellows and nonprofits, the report lays the groundwork for further investigation of the conditions for success as the program expands.

STUDY BY

LFA Group, an independent, San Francisco-based research and evaluation firm serving the nonprofit, philanthropic and public sectors

METHODOLOGY

Evaluators conducted a retrospective assessment, interviewing and surveying key participants in the 2009 Encore Fellows pilot program, which

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paired 10 former corporate executives with nine nonprofits in Silicon Valley for temporary, high-level assignments designed to address various critical needs of the nonprofits.

BACKGROUND

The mission and the job: During the yearlong pilot, Encore Fellows worked at nonprofits focused on education and the environment, handling projects in marketing, human resources, financial management and other areas.

The exchange: The nonprofits received expertise that contributed to advancing their missions. The fellows received \$25,000 stipends, plus hands-on experience to help them launch encore careers for the greater good.

The players: Civic Ventures – a think tank on boomers, work and social purpose – developed and ran the pilot with support from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation and the Hewlett Packard Company.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESS

The evaluation identifies many characteristics of the pilot program that contributed to its success. These include:

- **Selection:** Careful selection of fellows (must have years of corporate, professional experience, transferable skills, humility) and participating nonprofits (must have a minimum budget of \$600,000, stable leadership, innovative and flexible culture)
- **Matching:** Intentional, high-touch matching of fellows to nonprofits
- **Onboarding:** A comprehensive process, involving nonprofit executives, for bringing fellows into the nonprofits
- **Assignments:** High-impact, meaningful work, along with collaboratively set expectations, realistic goals and timetables, available resources
- **Time:** A yearlong, part-time, single-organization arrangement that provided enough time to spur real change
- **Pay:** A meaningful stipend which recognized the value of the fellows' contribution and increased their commitment to the nonprofits
- **Community:** Purposeful development of a fellows cohort, sustained through monthly meetings, which provided support, counsel and peer learning
- **The intermediary:** An involved, attentive organization that manages both the big picture issues – including bringing in funders and corporate sponsors – and the details and relationships involved in running a high-quality program

To read the evaluation, and learn more about Encore Fellowships, go to www.encore.org/fellowships.