



# DIVERSITY IN PHILANTHROPY

## Diversifying Your Donor Base

While research on grantmaking to minority-led organizations and hiring persons of color at foundations is readily practiced, there is a dearth of data on donor diversity. The only thing for certain is that the donor base at most foundations in this country do not reflect the diversity of the communities they serve and represent. Grantmakers must modify their donor cultivation strategies to be more inclusive and foster stronger relationships with growing, unengaged ethnic groups.

Take the country's Hispanic population, for example. The number of Hispanic people grew 20% between 2000 and 2005 to 42.7 million, making it the fastest growing ethnic group, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Ignoring this type of phenomenal growth would be missing an opportunity for community engagement and resource sharing - both fundamental principles that drive grantmakers' work.

The California Community Foundation has made great strides to tap into this emerging market of donors, especially since Los Angeles County is one of the nation's most diverse counties. The foundation is proactively reaching out to new populations so its donor base will reflect the rich diversity that makes Los Angeles communities so vibrant.

CCF has outreached to groups such as the African American Alumni Association of the University of Southern California, the Asian American Business League, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and the Association of Latino Professionals in Finance and Accounting by raising awareness about partnership opportunities that can fulfill their philanthropic goals. In the three years the foundation has done this work, the following lessons have resulted.

### 1. Outreach to new donors is not rocket science.

*When members of the Taiwanese community were approached to contribute to a Chinese Garden at a local library a few years ago, many of them had never been asked before despite being "high net worth" individuals. Similarly, an African American participant at an event said that perhaps for the first time, he felt welcomed in the philanthropic community, and it made a world of a difference to his comfort level for future dealings. The importance of overcoming this initial barrier to entry cannot be overstated enough.*

### 2. Familiarity of potential donors before approaching them is crucial.

*While a big step, making someone feel welcomed is insufficient to kick off a meaningful collaboration in which both parties understand each other's goals and capacity. For example, the Persian community may define philanthropy differently from the LGBT community. In the foundation's LGBT outreach, CCF is cognizant of issues affecting that community, such as marriage equality and estate planning for same sex couples, and are able to engage this audience in conversations that help advance understanding and cooperation in these fields. For minority groups, it is imperative that outreach strategies speak to cultural uniqueness beyond merely being linguistically appropriate.*



### 3. Multi-pronged strategies should be implemented.

*Estate planners and tax advisors* - CCF currently gets over 80% of its referrals for new donors from this group. The foundation reaches out to professional advisors who work closely with these communities and obtain exposure through them. Tracking entails tagging these advisors in CCF's database system, and ensure they regularly receive pertinent information on the foundation's events and services.

*Nonprofit partners* - By promoting CCF's planned giving efforts with nonprofits working in diverse communi-

*ties, they are informed of the foundation's philanthropic services and are conveyed the message that their communities truly matter. These conversations also entail interaction at the board level among those representing the civic leadership and wealth in these communities. In addition, these organizations frequently host gala events and award ceremonies, and sponsorship opportunities abound to continue expanding our visibility.*

*Professional affiliation groups* - There are a number of professional networking groups in Los Angeles, especially those focusing on LGBT professionals and professionals of color, that can serve as conduits to reach the intended audience.

These efforts seek to maximize exposure and relationship-building opportunities in the short-term, with the goal that these activities are embedded into the fabric of the foundation. Ultimately, the goal is to nurture an institution that truly values the richness of diversity. Combined with engagement efforts focused on these communities, it is the fostering of this culture that will attract the donor of tomorrow - the constantly changing face of America.

Grantmakers must take a look at their donor profiles and think about how a more diverse donor base may benefit funders and grantees, and ultimately strengthen communities.

