

Overview Strategic Vision 2010-2020: *Building Healthy Communities*

During the past year, The California Endowment's Board of Directors and Staff have been engaged in a rigorous review of the foundation's first decade of work. Included in this process were numerous interviews and conversations with partners and stakeholders to help appraise the foundation's work that included approximately 9,200 grants made to nonprofit organizations totaling \$1.7 billion.

Lessons learned from these grants as well as the feedback from the interviews and self-reflection, helped shape the future strategic direction and priorities of The California Endowment in the coming decade (2010-2020).

Lessons Learned and a Valuable Asset to California

Interviews and surveys confirmed that The California Endowment has matured into a valuable asset to the state of California – not only as a more disciplined grantmaker, but as a strong advocate for improving the health status of underserved populations. Stakeholders noted that the foundation's collective efforts have been most successful when community-level initiatives and innovations are linked to broader regional or state-level policy and systems change campaigns. Experiences with the Community Clinics Initiative, the Children's Health Insurance Initiative, the Healthy Eating-Active Communities program and the children's asthma program illuminated this important lesson. In each of these successful efforts, community-level voices, creativity and leadership set the agenda for a broader statewide vision to improve the health of underserved communities.

Those interviewed also shared a strong consensus that The Endowment could have an even greater impact with its resources if, going forward, the foundation becomes more focused and targeted in its grant making.

Where The California Endowment's Headed – And Why

During the past several years, The Endowment's grant making has been directed in three areas of work:

- Access to Health Care
- Cultural Competency/Workforce Diversity
- Community Health & Disparities

Beginning in 2010, resources will be focused on ***Building Healthy Communities*** across the state by linking policy and systems change with sustained community-level investments. Efforts will target the nexus of community, health and poverty to advance a "prevention movement" in California. In this new strategic vision, public, private and community leaders will become even great assets in helping reduce risk factors, changing systems and policies, and encouraging communities to become engaged in improving the health of California.

The foundation is now poised to make a decade-long prevention-driven investment in *Building Healthy Communities* — **places where children and youth are healthy, safe and ready to learn.** The health of a nation's children is one of the primary indicators of the health of its communities. Unfortunately, too many children (and their families) live in communities where they are deprived of the prerequisites for good health: healthy eating and fitness opportunities.

During its two-year ramp-up period, the foundation will be selecting a limited number of targeted geographic areas or communities impacted by poverty for deep, sustained and community-driven investments. The majority of the organization's grant making during the next decade will be invested in these areas. In addition, a portion of grant-making resources will be invested in emerging health issues and innovations that impact efforts to build healthy communities, as well as emergency preparedness and response efforts on behalf of low-income communities.

The strategic underpinnings and rationale for this new direction are threefold. First, it builds from an existing foundation of experience and success with community partners who are tackling prevention-based issues such as children's health insurance coverage, childhood obesity, childhood asthma and adolescent mental health, among others. We are attempting to integrate this body of work into a broader, more strategic vision for California's children and youth.

Secondly, community-driven investments in prevention and early intervention are the greatest use of our resources, and investing in the health of children and youth constitutes the best front-end investment in prevention. The California Endowment believes that all communities deserve health systems and physical, social, economic and service structures that support healthy living and choices.

Thirdly, the foundation and many of its grantees are deeply concerned about the health future of California, and in particular, children and youth in low-income families and underserved communities. The obesity, diabetes, asthma, mental illness, gang involvement, school drop-out and violent injury rates among these children are as alarming as they are unacceptable, and stand in the way of their ability to succeed. By investing in the health of children and youth, The Endowment supports the improvement of California's health for generations to come.

Achieving of the Strategic Vision

The foundation's work will be guided by an ambitious set of specific state-level policy outcomes and community-level population health outcomes that will serve as meaningful indicators of success. While The Endowment remains committed to working with grantees and partners to identify and track long-term health improvements in the targeted communities, the foundation will also be working in partnership with others to achieve a policy environment necessary to optimize health promotion in California's low-income and at-risk children. To achieve this vision, the next decade of work must be marked by a relentless pursuit of results, learning, accountability and transparency about the intended impact.

A focused strategy positions an organization to produce better results. After a series of discussions with the Board of Directors, The Endowment concluded that by attempting to champion a wide range of health issues facing all of California's underserved communities and populations, the ability to serve any one vision well becomes diluted. There will be implications with a more focused strategy, however, and the obvious one is that The Endowment will no longer be able to spread its grant-making resources across the same range of issues, organizations and geographies that occurred during its first decade of operation. On the other hand, community-based organizations who receive funding in the coming decade will likely receive more consistent and reliable support.

What to Expect Next

Because there is a perception among nonprofit groups that foundations seem to change direction or strategies with regularity, The California Endowment's Board has approved a 10-Year Strategic Framework to provide a more consistent and sustained grant-making approach, and a Two-Year Transition Plan to guide the foundation from the current strategy to the emerging one.

The Web site www.calendow.org/healthycommunities will be updated regularly with news and information regarding The Endowment's next steps until the launch of *Building Healthy Communities* in 2010.