

**“Building Our Philanthropy” – Presentation of the AAPIP Strategic Plan, 2017-2021**  
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Good afternoon. It’s my privilege to present this report on AAPIP’s five-year strategic plan, which reaffirms our core principles and mission, and sets forth the organization’s commitments and strategic directions from 2017 through 2021.

This is also my first opportunity to address many of you who are AAPIP members and stakeholders in person to share some of my thoughts and observations about AAPIP and AAPIP’s work, since coming on board as your new president and CEO just a year ago.

I think many of you know that I came to AAPIP not from the traditional social justice field, but from more than 30 years working in the arts and cultural sector both as a funder and nonprofit administrator. I’m often asked why I was drawn to lead AAPIP, whose mission has been, and remains, “to expand and mobilize resources for AAPI communities to build a more just and equitable society.” My answer is quite simple.

My lifelong passion and commitment to artists and the arts has been grounded in the belief that they are bridge-builders. Tellers of truth to power. And creators of both beautiful and provocative ways for human-kind to embrace our shared dreams, and understand our differences.

Artists work in many forms: as filmmakers, poets, musicians, choreographers, spoken word artists and painters. But many share a common belief in social justice – as stewards and defenders of immigrant cultural heritage, as storytellers for those who cannot tell their own, as transformers of our shared physical space, as builders of local economies and as advocates for issues and ideas about gender, race, sexuality and social inequalities that are too often swept under the carpet.

For a good part of my career I also worked in philanthropy, as a program officer and senior program director at two remarkable foundations. There, I learned a lot about the “how to” of philanthropic work. I also gained enormous respect for philanthropy’s aspirations: Striving for excellence, working with humility and integrity, seeking impact, with openness and transparency, and embracing collaboration.

And one of my greatest takeaways is that you can’t fund what you don’t know, and who’s at the table matters.

These two important strands in my career – working with artists on the front lines of social change and working in philanthropy – drew me to AAPIP. And what I’ve been learning over the

past year, as we've been engaging in our planning process and I've begun to meet a number of you, is that there's true power in the commitment and work of AAPIP's diverse stakeholders.

As an example, I think of my visit to Minneapolis at the end of last year to attend a program sponsored by the Coalition of Asian American Leaders, an AAPIP incubation project launched in 2013 under Senior Program Director Bo Thao-Urabe. The project grew out of our research there showing that the Asian community was largely Southeast Asian, and the fastest growing community in Minnesota, increasing by 53% since the year 2000.

It resulted in the creation of CAAL – a coalition of community leaders – working together to advocate for more educational and economic opportunities for Asian Minnesotans. The event I attended was called *CAAL Ignites*, which was aptly named. Everyone was there – legislators, governmental agencies, community leaders, chapter members, educators, artists, researchers and foundation representatives. It was clearly a coalescing moment, bringing leaders from all parts of the community together.

I'm also remembering a visit to Philadelphia, where I had a chance to spend time with AAPIP board member Nina Ahmad. Nina is the co-founder of a real estate development and finance company based in Philadelphia and has a doctoral degree in chemistry. She had just been appointed as the first-ever Deputy Mayor for Public Engagement by then mayor-elect Jim Kenney, to oversee the Mayor's commissions and offices on LGBT Affairs, the Office of Black Male Engagement and the Youth Commission

In the course of our conversation I learned about her larger work as a civic volunteer and advocate. As a trustee of the Philadelphia Foundation, an appointee to President Obama's Advisory Commission on AAPIs, as president of the Philadelphia chapter of NOW, and as a board member of the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition, among others. She was also a founding member of the Asian Mosaic Fund giving circle in Philadelphia! What I came away with was an appreciation of her committed activism to level the playing field for Asian communities, and I was glad she was also an advocate for AAPIP.

I was also fortunate to attend a New York Chapter event this past year, and met Frank Liu of the Dinner Guys. This is a group of friends in New York City, who had a tradition of getting together monthly over a very nice dinner, to catch up with each other's lives. There came a critical point when the group decided that Instead of treating themselves to expensive dinners they would get together – still over a good meal – and pool the savings to help people in need in the API LGBTQ community. Good food, good friends, great causes, one giving circle. It was that simple.

I share these stories with you because these encounters have introduced me to some great people, and I plan to meet more of you in the year ahead. But learning about this kind of authentic work also gave me insight into AAPIP's real strengths and purpose, and the powerful role AAPIP can play when it engages philanthropic leadership, partnerships, innovation, and advocacy for AAPI communities.

Our strategic planning process started just a few short weeks after I arrived, in the midst of celebrating AAPIP's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Having a new staff leader on board is always a good excuse to do planning, but rather than saying "Oh, great! Let's move on from the past and create a whole new set of programs and directions" the board and staff used this moment of transition to revisit some fundamental questions:

- After 25 years, is AAPIP's mission still relevant?
- What are AAPIP's program strengths and capacities?
- And how will changing community needs and challenges – and the changing face of philanthropy itself – shape our future?

Where we landed will probably not surprise you. AAPIP's vision of a just and equitable democracy, with the full civic and economic participation of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and the need to bring more philanthropic resources and informed action to address their needs, is still pressing. So we are committed to continuing our mission: *To expand and mobilize resources for AAPI communities to build a more just and equitable society.*

A deeper reflection on **what** our program strengths have been, and **how** we work best through partnerships, leadership and our networks, led the board to clarify and endorse three strategic directions that we will pursue over the next five years and beyond:

First, we will focus on achieving increased, and more sustainable investments in AAPI communities, from a broader, engaged network of philanthropic leaders.

Second, we will advance advocacy, action and resources benefitting AAPI communities, mobilized by philanthropic and community leaders working together using shared information, storytelling and relationships.

Third, we will continue to push the envelope by actively exploring new solutions and ideas that advance equity and resources for AAPI communities, generated by innovative partnerships and projects.

As tangible activities and results, what you expect to see over the next year and beyond are:

- A more expansive and inclusive AAPIP membership representing diverse institutions and individuals working to advance philanthropy;
- More robust convening and network programs for members, building on the kind of program you're attending today;

- A yearlong co-learning process with our 10 regional chapters and chapter co-chairs to jointly explore and plan place-based initiatives that can affect change for AAPIs in our chapter cities;
- New philanthropic partnerships to explore innovative AAPI social change initiatives;
- A heightened communications effort to keep members better informed and to share our collective community and philanthropic work; and of course
- A strong and well-managed national organization with the leadership and infrastructure to grow and sustain our vision for the future.

You have, on each table, a copy of the executive summary of the five-year strategic plan and I hope you'll have a chance to review it while you're here, and after you get home.

As we embark on the plans and directions that I've laid out, I'll be reaching out to many more of you for advice and assistance. We've come to an important milestone in defining AAPIP's purpose and direction, but you are the ones who can help determine just how that journey takes place.

Although our work is just beginning, I'd like to take a moment to thank a few people who played a role in moving our planning process forward to this point, especially Suk Rhee from the Northwest Health Foundation who chaired our board planning committee, and the entire AAPIP staff who were engaged as full thought partners from day one.

Now, the board, staff and I look forward to hearing back from all of you with ideas about how we can advance this work together. You can begin that dialogue today, but letting us hear from you on the feedback survey that you'll find in the breakout session rooms this afternoon, and in an online survey that we'll be sending to each of you following this meeting.

We hope you'll join us and continue to be engaged. So let's begin. Working with focus. Working with purpose. Working together, Building Our Philanthropy.

Thank you.