



PHILANTHROPIC CASE STUDY

The Civic Engagement Fund for Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, & South Asian Communities

BAY AREA DEMONSTRATION PROJECT



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OVERVIEW

In September 2006, the Civic Engagement Fund for Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (Fund) approved its first cycle of seventeen capacity building grants totaling \$129,000 to support Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities in the San Francisco Bay Area. The Civic Engagement Fund for AMEMSA Communities is a capacity building initiative designed to support AMEMSA nonprofit organizations through a mix of small grants and the provision of technical assistance. The Fund was developed through a strategic partnership between Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy (AAPIP),

an affinity group of the Council of Foundations, and The San Francisco Foundation, a regional community foundation. The collaborative now includes seven additional San Francisco Bay Area philanthropic institutions.

This paper explores this unique partnership between an affinity group and a community foundation developed with an explicit goal of developing new strategies to amplify the issues and challenges facing disadvantaged communities and identify innovative funding solutions.

HISTORY OF THE FUND

U.S. Census 2000 data reveal that the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities are among the fastest growing ethnic groups in the United States and California. These communities have been facing and continue to face significant challenges following September 11, 2001. They have been targets of hate crimes, media stereotyping, and laws that focus primarily on Muslim communities, for example the Special Registration requirements by the Department of Homeland Security have impacted many of their families. Recognizing the role philanthropy might play, a number of San Francisco Bay Area foundation program officers began meeting informally to determine how best they might assist in growing the capacities of community-based organizations serving the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities.

The San Francisco Foundation (TSFF), founded in 1948 by a small group of donors, is one of the nation's largest community foundations with over \$900 million in assets. AAPIP is a national membership and philanthropic advocacy organization dedicated to advancing philanthropy and Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. It has played an advocacy role, bridging philanthropy with communities, especially disadvantaged communities, for over 15 years.

After the events of September 11, 2001, staff from TSFF FAITHS Initiative hosted several convenings in the interfaith

community to understand the challenges the Muslim community was facing. At the request of Kathy Lee, former Tides Foundation Program Officer, TSFF's Social Justice Program and FAITHS Initiative, East Bay Community Foundation, Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, Irvine Foundation, Silicon Valley Community Foundation (formerly Peninsula Community Foundation), AAPIP, and Grantmakers Concerned with Immigrants and Refugees (GCIR) hosted a Northern California Grantmakers briefing on *"Promoting Civic Tranquility: Intergroup Relations and Civil Rights in the wake of 9/11"* in October of 2002. Out of that briefing, Kathy Lee conducted an informal scan of community and faith based organizations that serve the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities.

Since most of the foundations involved in this small exploratory group had limited experience or knowledge with these communities, they requested GCIR and AAPIP, to conduct a community scan to identify ethnic-based organizations in the Bay Area with the support of The California Endowment and TSFF. The community scan included interviews and a community roundtable with representatives from the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities in the San Francisco Bay Area. Out of the roundtable came a report published by GCIR and AAPIP in November 2004, *Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian Communities in the San Francisco Bay Area: An Introduction for Grantmakers*. The report identifies some of the issues, needs, and capacity

challenges expressed by those surveyed.

Following the report's issuance, AAPIP, GCIR, The California Endowment, and TSFF hosted a Funders' Briefing *"Immigrant Communities in the Crossfire: Challenges and Opportunities for Bay Area Philanthropy"* in February 2005. Gara LaMarche, at the time Vice President and Director of US Programs at the Open Society Institute gave a key note address on political landscape facing Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. Jayashri Srikantiah, former associate legal director of the ACLU of

Northern California and current Stanford Law Professor, and Heba Nimr, former Soros Justice Fellow shared with the audience of over 40 grantmakers their experience, challenges, and opportunities in working with the AMEMSA communities.

The Civic Engagement Fund for AMEMSA Communities emerged from the initial community scan and funders briefing as a vehicle to both build the capacity of community based organizations serving newcomer and long-term residents from the AMEMSA communities, and continue the education of the philanthropic community.

A UNIQUE PARTNERSHIP

Given the significant interest expressed at the groundbreaking funders briefing, staff from AAPIP and The San Francisco Foundation began to discuss the potential of creating a collaborative fund to support these communities. These two institutions worked together to draft and circulate a concept paper articulating objectives and outcomes of creating a pooled fund, starting initially in the San Francisco Bay Area, as a way of increasing philanthropy's response to this growing and underserved population.

Since the two organizations have common missions of engaging philanthropy in support of strong, diverse communities, forming a partnership was a natural response to the funder briefing.

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AAPIP and TSFF staff circulated the concept paper and invited seven additional funders to participate in the first year of the collaboration, otherwise known as the Bay Area Demonstration Project. The eight collaborative members, who comprise the Advisory Committee for the Fund are:

- The Firedoll Foundation: Neil Sims, Program Officer
- Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation: Stacie Ma'a, Vice President
- Evelyn & Walter Haas, Jr. Fund: Henry Der, Senior Program Officer, Immigrant Rights; Racial Equity
- Walter & Elise Haas Fund: Stephanie Rapp, Program Officer, Jewish Life Program
- Silicon Valley Community Foundation (formerly Peninsula Community Foundation), Marjorie Fujiki, Senior Program Officer & Manuel Santamaria, Program Officer
- Rosenberg Foundation: Ellen Widess, Senior Program Officer
- The San Francisco Foundation: Ronald M. Rowell, Program Officer, Social Justice Program & Tessa Rouverol Callejo, Coordinator, FAITHS Program, Dennis Quirin, Fellow, Social Justice
- Y & H Soda Foundation: Robert Uyeki, Senior Program Officer

Two of the collaborative foundation members, in addition to TSFF, have been involved with the development of the Fund from the very beginning. Program staff from each philanthropic organization represented their institution on the Advisory Committee. Since the inception of the Fund, it has become quite clear that the specific number of representatives from each foundation should be made clear in order to minimize confusion in the decision making process.

OBJECTIVES OF THE FUND

The collaborative members agreed to three main objectives and outcomes of the Fund:

OBJECTIVE 1:

Create a three-to-five year pooled fund, beginning in the Bay Area, to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of community-based organizations serving the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. Grants awarded from the pooled fund would allow these organizations to strengthen their organizational infrastructure and effectiveness and build programmatic capacity and sustainability.

YEAR 1 BAY AREA DEMONSTRATION PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- Create a pooled fund in the Bay Area through a Bay Area Demonstration Project during the first year.
- Award small grants up to \$10,000 per year. The purpose of this grant strategy is to insure that small grassroots organizations, as well as larger organizations will have access to capacity building funds.
- Conduct a statewide scan to identify issues, needs, and capacity challenges facing the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian newcomer and long-term resident communities.
- Link recipient organizations to new funding opportunities.

POST-YEAR 1 OUTCOMES:

- Expand the Funders' Collaborative to support organizations in other regions of California (i.e. Central Valley and Southern California).
- Continue to award small grants. Explore opportunities in increasing grant amounts.
- Link recipient organizations to new funding opportunities.
- Connect immigrant coalitions and intermediary organizations to recipient organizations.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Build the organizational infrastructure and organizational effectiveness of the community-based organizations serving these communities by providing individual and group technical assistance and facilitate peer-learning opportunities.

YEAR 1 BAY AREA DEMONSTRATION PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- Conduct a needs assessment for individual organizations and potential group technical assistance opportunities.
- Design individual and group technical assistance components in coordination with recipient organizations. Create a peer-learning network among funders, intermediary organizations, and community-based organizations to share information on critical issues facing these communities and create an active learning agenda.

POST-YEAR 1 OUTCOMES:

- Evaluate technical assistance components and identify effective approaches.
- Convene grantees for peer-based training and discussions of interest to them to foster the leadership and collaboration among community-based organizations serving the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Create a replicable capacity building model for increased collaboration between foundations, community based organizations, and intermediary organizations in California.

YEAR 1 BAY AREA DEMONSTRATION PROJECT OUTCOMES:

- Create an advisory committee with representation from participating funders and community representatives that will participate in grant review and shape the decision-making process and the strategic direction of the Funders' Collaborative.
- Document the obstacles, successes, and lessons learned from the Bay Area Demonstration Project and the work of the grantees. Share this information with our grantmaking colleagues throughout California and the nation.
- Evaluate the Funders' Collaborative's Bay Area Demonstration Project and disseminate a report assessing the progress of the Funders' Collaborative. Make recommendations for the direction of the Funders' Collaborative.

POST-YEAR 1 OUTCOMES:

- Engage community foundations to play a key role in the Funders' Collaborative. Community foundations serve as an important regional resource and can play an important role as an anchor organization in the Funders' Collaborative.
- Invite other philanthropic partners to participate in the Funders' Collaborative through financial support, participation in a peer-learning network, and attendance in larger funders' briefings.
- Facilitate individual donor development to increase the sphere of learning and giving in the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities.

VALUES UNDERLYING THE FUND

The Collaborative members also agreed that all nonprofit organizations applying for funding from the Fund would have to agree to and share the following set of values, including embracing the diversity of all peoples, faiths, ideas and cultures. These values center on governance, commitment to social and economic justice, diversity, and leadership. They are:

- 1) **Governance:** Organizations must have a commitment to democracy, transparency, honesty and integrity, and be dedicated to excellence and maintaining the public trust. Organizations should endeavor to be participatory and inclusive.
- 2) **Commitment to Social and Economic Justice:** Organizations should work for the public good through the provision of services, community organizing and advocacy, should support civic participation/engagement, and be committed to nonviolent conflict resolution.
- 3) **Diversity:** Organizations must respect the worth and dignity of all peoples, views and cultures regardless of religion/faith, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, or ability/disability.
- 4) **Leadership:** Organizations should incorporate and promote leadership that is inclusive and represent the communities they serve/organize. Furthermore, organizations should strive to strengthen grassroots leadership in order to enable the transformation of their communities.

While these broad all-encompassing values have been very useful as an engagement tool for the Fund's advisory committee, it has also challenged the group. The key issue has been the need for clarifying and developing shared definitions for these critical terms.

STRUCTURE AND DECISION-MAKING

The Collaborative members also agreed to the following structure and decision-making process for the pilot year of the Fund:

1) **AAPIP would serve as the fiscal sponsor of the Collaborative Fund, which would not have a separate legal existence.** AAPIP would accordingly be responsible for the governance and oversight of the Collaborative Fund and would exercise proper discretion and control over grants dispersed out of the Collaborative Fund. Moreover, the Collaborative Fund would be managed under the ultimate direction of AAPIP's Board of Directors, with careful and thoughtful consideration of the Advisory Committee's grant recommendations. AAPIP's primary responsibilities would be:

- Convening the Collaborative Fund Advisory Committee ("Advisory Committee")
- Assigning AAPIP representatives to participate on the Steering Committee
- Employing staff and engaging contractors, as necessary, to administer the granting process (including the conduct of appropriate due diligence and the provision to grant applicants of technical assistance)
- Providing appropriate materials to the Advisory Committee

2) **The Advisory Committee's roles and responsibilities would include serving in an advisory capacity with respect to the strategic direction of, and grantmaking by, the Collaborative Fund.** Additionally, the Advisory Committee members would be committed to learning about impacted communities, building bridges between philanthropy and impacted communities, and making these communities more visible. Each Advisory Committee member would be expected to attend meetings to determine the Grantmaking Subcommittee's recommendations with respect to the RFP process, the grantees, and the performance of the Collaborative Fund. Furthermore, the Advisory Committee would create two subcommittees: the Grantmaking Subcommittee and the Education/Technical Assistance Subcommittee to deepen the work in these two areas.

Though the ultimate funding decisions would be under the purview of the AAPIP Board, the Advisory Committee agreed upon a consensus model for deciding on the grant recommendations, at least for this first pilot year. A consensus approach was seen as the best way to facilitate understanding and trust between members, many of whom had never worked together prior to this Fund. However, this demonstration year process has revealed that a non-consensus decision-making process may work better in this type of collaboration. This would allow for committee members to have diverse opinions and not require complete consensus for a funding decision to be made.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Initial Technical Assistance

Based on The San Francisco Foundation's technical assistance model, Staff conducted three "How to Apply" workshops around the San Francisco Bay Area. Staff also provided in-person and phone-based technical assistance expressly designed to teach applicants the most effective approach to requesting support.

All applicants met the June 1st application deadline, however, only one organization out of the 21 organizations that applied submitted complete applications. This is definitely a reflection of the significant capacity challenges AMEMSA organizations face and a signal to the Fund that more technical assistance will be needed on the front end of any future grantmaking process focused on underserved communities.

The organizations ranged from domestic violence service providers to community organizing groups to culturally appropriate food banks to community centers.

Twenty-one organizations requested a total of \$205,000. Four applicant organizations serve the East Bay, five serve the South Bay, two serve San Francisco, and the remaining nine serve the entire Bay Area region. The organizations ranged from domestic violence service providers to community organizing groups to culturally appropriate food banks to community centers. Collectively, the organizations represented the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian diasporas in the communities they serve. It is also critical to note that though we funded a broad cross section of organization serving the AMEMSA communities, it is also noteworthy that five anchor organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area did not even respond to the RFP due to deep capacity limitations, even after receiving individual outreach and provided technical assistance on the application process. These groups were the Islamic Society of San Francisco, United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance, Muslim Community Association, South Bay Islamic Association, and the Indian Community Center.

In the end, Fund staff made recommendations for funding 18 of the 21 grants during the Demonstration Project pilot year. This seemingly large number of recommended organizations was actually reflective of the growing population with emerging needs and scant resources, without even fully representing the entire scope of nonprofit organizations serving these populations.

Due Diligence Process:

- Staff reviewed financial and organizational materials provided with grant application;
- Staff and Advisory Committee members conducted site visits for twenty applicant organizations.¹ The majority of the meetings were with the applicant organization's executive director and at least one Board member and/or a staff member;
- Advisory Committee members sent concerns, questions, and information about organizations to the staff;
- Staff held conversations with other social justice community leaders to learn more about an organization's work;
- Staff conducted a second layer of due diligence –second to address specific questions raised by Advisory Committee members;
- Staff interviewed some of the partner organizations listed by the groups for more information about an organization's scope and scale of work.

GRANTMAKING CRITERIA

The Fund staff developed eight criteria to assess the level of overall program, administrative, and financial sophistication within the applicant groups. These criteria helped define the areas that needed the most attention among applicants, and gave guidance to refining the niche the Fund could fill in strengthening the field. The eight criteria for proposal evaluation were need, governance, vision, established, program sophistication, financials, infrastructure, and impact of the fund.

All of the applicants fell into the two categories of organization based on the grantmaking criteria above and the Advisory Committee supported funding these organizations based on this distinction. Seven groups fell under the category "developing." These were organizations with a history of program work in meeting community needs, but challenged by inadequate infrastructures and therefore unable to attract foundation funding. Ten organizations could be classified as "Almost Competitive" or groups with a proven track record of programs and limited foundation support but incapable of growing to scale due to having limited organizational capacity.

¹ Staff did not conduct a site visit with one of the groups since it did not serve Muslim, Middle Eastern, Arab, or South Asian communities.

Final Recommendations

The Advisory Committee made final recommendations for providing \$165,000 to support seventeen organizations. The Committee also reaffirmed the following:

- 1) Awarding small grants up to \$10,000;
- 2) Providing individual organization and group technical assistance;
- 3) Creating a peer-learning network among funders, intermediary organizations and community based organizations.

The Committee also agreed, after a substantial discussion, to support such a large number of organizations since the AMEMSA diaspora are so wide and so many of the organizations serving these communities face significant capacity challenges. All the grants were made in last quarter of 2006 and the technical assistance program began in February 2007.

Conclusion

The development and implementation of the Civic Engagement Fund for Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian Communities has provided AAPIP and The San Francisco Foundation with an incredible learning community and knowledge-sharing opportunity about developing a new collaborative model focused on supporting emerging disenfranchised communities. Additionally, the inclusion of another community foundation, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (formerly Peninsula Community Foundation) has greatly strengthened this new model of intentional work between community foundations and affinity groups. The Silicon Valley Community Foundation (formerly Peninsula Community Foundation) brings years of experience working with small community organizations through its Neighborhood Grants program in the South Bay region and an expertise in supporting faith-based organization through its FAITHS program. Furthermore, the awarded grants from the pooled fund are allowing the grant recipient organizations from AMEMSA communities to strengthen their organizational infrastructure and effectiveness and build programmatic capacity and sustainability.

As with all initiatives, there are many lessons as well as successes. Some of the critical lessons learned during the first year that can be used in planning for next year are:

- Ensuring there is clarity and a shared understanding about the roles of the various foundations involved in the collaborative.
- It is imperative that there is representation from the marginalized/disadvantaged community, in this case --a Muslim voice, to guarantee that issues and concerns are discussed with full information and inclusive perspectives. This representation should be in the form of a funder/donor since a non-funder on a predominantly funder advisory board can lead to a power imbalance around decision-making;
- Developing a deliberate process to invite foundations/funders to participate in the collaborative. The key to a successful funders collaborative is incorporating different perspectives, programming experiences and institutions with distinctive but complimentary missions and a shared vision;
- The shared values of a collaborative are literally the heart of such an endeavor. Therefore it is vital that there is a thorough deliberation process where values and terms are fully defined and agreed upon;
- Developing standard documentation and notation processes such as minutes, notes, and decisions are very important since open communication and transparent and accountable systems are pillars of a strong collaborative;
- As the collaborative's work moves forward it is critical that the original Fund goals and shared values guide the decision-making process.
- It is vital that Advisory Committee members representing the diverse grantmaking institutions play a strategic role in guiding the future direction of the Fund.
- Rather than a consensus model for decision-making, Advisory Committee members should consider other decision making models (i.e a 2/3rd or simple majority).
- A communications plan should be developed at the very beginning of the process;
- A realistic budget must be developed that accounts for actual administrative costs: For this fund, the administrative capacity needs were much higher than originally determined. For a majority of the first phase of this Fund, the staffing was part-time with no fully dedicated staff overseeing the work until August 2006.

For more information, please contact Archana Sahgal, Director of the Civic Engagement Fund for AMEMSA Communities by email: civicengagement@aapip.org or by phone: 415.273.2760.