

History of the Civic Engagement Fund

The **Bay Area Demonstration Project of the CEF** was launched in 2006 to increase the capacity of nonprofit organizations from the Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian (AMEMSA) communities in the Bay area. These communities, while serving and representing ethnically and culturally distinct and diverse constituencies, collectively continue to face heightened challenges such as public and media scrutiny, misunderstanding and discrimination. A decade after 9/11 the challenges are daunting, yet the opportunities to support, invest and learn are immense.

Since its inception the CEF has been based on a learning model that creates avenues for shared learning and understanding on the part of our philanthropic partners and community partners, as well as AAPIP staff as the drivers of the process. The 2006-2009 period yielded two cycles of grant-making comprised of capacity-building convenings within a peer-based setting, and technical assistance support. The 2010 Program builds on lessons and accomplishments from the previous program period, while creating intentional space for building relationships and trust, connectivity and developing coordinated solutions.

Program Overview

This program is designed to support organizations to strengthen the civic participation of AMEMSA communities within the Bay Area. Whereas previous iterations of the Fund's capacity building program focused on strengthening organizational operations, the 2010 program supports groups to gain a deeper understanding of each others' civic engagement strategies and to coordinate shared agendas. Groups are co-creating a space to learn and share how they currently work in their communities and opportunities to incorporate strategies to build power regionally amongst AMEMSA communities. They come together to:

- *Strengthen organization relationships and developing a deeper political analysis of community assets and challenges*
- *Explore and develop a collective agenda*
- *Connect across communities to advance a collective agenda*

The Fund has a strong history of partnering with different types of groups working with varying levels of capacity and ability to advance social change and we believe that all perspectives provide tremendous value to this work. It is important to note that although the program focuses on groups strengthening relationships with other AMEMSA organizations and communities, we acknowledge and respect the distinctions that exist within and between communities. While we recognize the philosophical and political differences we hope that participating organizations will be willing to work through these differences in order to empower their communities to actively participate at all levels of civil society.

Program Structure

A fundamental element of this approach is to provide participating organizations multiple opportunities to drive the discussions and decisions of the cohort. As such, the cohort is divided into three smaller Leadership Circles to focus on specific issues determined by the cohort: **Immigrant and Refugee Rights; Civil Rights and Liberties; and Political Engagement**. Each circle is coordinated by one anchor organization, a Network Organizer, who leads the work of their respective circle in a participatory manner.

The Leadership Circle participants have equal decision-making for creating and moving collective agendas, and bring their respective organization's and community's perspectives and strategies. Through participation in the leadership circles, they develop and practice coalition-building skills that build upon shared analysis of issues that are critical to their respective communities. Success for this program is determined by each group's participation and ownership over the process, and the progress made towards their own long-term goals.

Projected Timeline

The Civic Engagement Fund recognizes the necessity of taking a long-term view of the time and commitment needed to achieve the goals of this initiative; therefore, the projected timeline of this phase of the Fund spans from 2010 to 2013. Groups selected for the program will commit to participation over the entire 3 years of the program.