

# A CALL TO ACTION:

Aligning Public and Private Investments  
in Asian American, Native Hawaiian and  
Pacific Islander Communities



By 2060, one in ten Americans will be AANHPI.

The AANHPI poor population grew by over 700,000 to 2.6 million between 2007 and 2014, making it the fastest growing poor population

With a 46 percent growth rate, **Asian Americans are the fastest growing racial group in the country.**

There are currently about 19 million Asian Americans and 1.2 million Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders, who make up 6% of the U.S. population.<sup>1</sup>

But demographic change does not automatically translate into thriving communities. The AANHPI community is not a monolithic one. **Certain AANHPI subgroups have high rates of poverty and linguistic isolation, and low levels of educational attainment.**<sup>2</sup> According to the most recent Census data, the AANHPI poor population grew by over 700,000 to 2.6 million between 2007 and 2014, making it the fastest growing poor population. Among AANHPIs, as with all communities, differences in education, income, race, ethnicity and where and how people live are interrelated and determine their health and life chances.

AANHPIs are also the **fastest growing segment of the American electorate** with a 128% increase between 1996 and 2008. As the AANHPI communities grow, they are becoming important constituencies to include in efforts to build the political will necessary to reform large-scale systems like public education and health care. The rapid growth of AANHPI populations means that the diverse issues and needs of AANHPIs must become more visible to both government funding agencies and foundations. This will require investments in strengthening civic participation and organizational infrastructure in AANHPI communities – especially in regions of the country where they are emerging.

As depicted in the following graphic, **organized communities and organizational infrastructure are the necessary drivers** that will build the power and voice of the AANHPI community, and accelerate efforts to improve educational attainment, economic mobility, health status, and cultural and racial equity.

Strategic investment is needed to build long-term infrastructure for AANHPI communities to engage on an ongoing basis with government agencies and philanthropy to better meet the needs of growing AANHPI communities. The civic and organizational infrastructure for meeting the needs of AANHPI communities requires investment and strengthening – especially to reach emerging communities. Key investment strategies include:

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from [http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS\\_13\\_1YR\\_DP05&prodType=table](http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_13_1YR_DP05&prodType=table)
- 2 Asian Pacific American Legal Center and Asian American Justice Center (2011). Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans in the United States 2011. Washington DC: Asian American Center for Advancing Justice.

## ALIGNING INVESTMENTS IN AANHPI COMMUNITIES FOR GREATER IMPACT

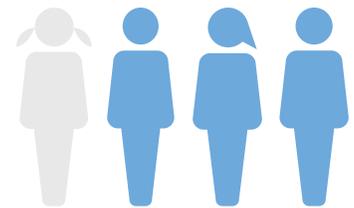


**Closing the racial gap in voting disparities.** Mobilizing the Rising American Electorate is increasingly a priority strategy for advancing racial justice and racial equity issues. Although AANHPI eligible voters constitute a potentially powerful slice of the electorate, of all racial groups they have the lowest voter registration rates – with only 56% of adult AANHPI citizens registered to vote in 2012.<sup>3</sup> Language barriers are an important factor in explaining voting disparities. About 74% of adult Asian Americans are first-generation immigrants, having surpassed Latinos as the largest immigrant group.

**Supporting community organizing as distinct from traditional civic engagement.** While community organizing and electoral civic engagement should be coordinated and can be undertaken together, it is important to structure and support them separately, particularly for AANHPIs. AANHPIs, as a community with a high proportion of immigrants and refugees, have large segments of the population who are ineligible to vote. Traditional civic engagement activities – i.e., voter registration, voter education, get out the vote – will not reach all important AANHPI constituencies, at least not in the near



AANHPIs are the fastest growing segment of the American electorate with a **128%** increase from 1996 to 2008



**3 out of 4 adult Asian Americans are first generation immigrants.**

<sup>3</sup> Asian American Voter Turnout Trends | Asia Matters for America by the East-West Center. (n.d.). Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://www.asiamattersforamerica.org/asia/asian-american-voter-turnout-trends>

## BACHELOR'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT AMONG AANHPI SUBGROUPS



Laotians: 1.2 out of 10



Cambodians: 1.5 out of 10



Hmong: 1.5 out of 10



Pacific Islanders: 1.6 out of 10



Native Hawaiians: 2 out of 10

term. It is therefore important to support organizing and engagement that does not necessarily have voting and other forms of formal engagement in the political process as a central outcome.

### **Coordinating capacity building strategies for AANHPI organizations in areas where AANHPI communities are both established and emerging.**

Conversations among national AANHPI organizations about deeper coordination and collaboration around capacity building have been initiated in particular among members of the National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA). Building upon member organizations' expertise, experience, and networks, NCAPA can continue to facilitate conversations and coordinate with philanthropy and government agencies to seed deeper coordination, collaboration, and development of more strategic and aligned capacity building to AANHPI CBOs.

**Planting the seeds for a national AANHPI non-partisan "action tank."** NCAPA can also convene AANHPI research, advocacy and community-based partners to design an "action tank" that would serve as the premier source of AAPI-related knowledge and actionable data on key topics in the public discourse – economic equity, housing and community development, the environment and climate change, technology and innovation, civic and political engagement, reforming our broken immigration system, and universal health care.

**Supporting continued collaboration with public and private entities on disaggregation of data sets and innovative strategies for AANHPI data analysis.** Investment in NCAPA to serve as a convener of AANHPI organizations, WHIAAPI and other entities can accelerate this important work. For example, efforts that bring national attention to AANHPI educational disparities, such as the *iCount* symposia held with the Department of Education and other federal agencies, are ripe for aligned public and private investments.

Many ideas have been identified for more strategic investment in AANHPI communities, including those described in AAPIP's 2015 publication **A Call to Action**. Philanthropy can play an important role in bringing together the collective knowledge of both the public and private sectors to move systems and institutions to improve, but AANHPI communities must be at the table.