Overarching Assessment of the
Community Foundations Initiative

Final Report

Prepared for
The James Irvine Foundation

“For a relatively small investment, Irvine had a transformational role.”
-Humboldt Staffer

“We have looked at our role as community leaders, to play a role beyond the financial, to be a facilitator and convenor; to fill the leadership gap in the community.”
-Sonoma Board Member

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Executive Summary

The James Irvine Foundation (Irvine) has historically worked with and through California’s emerging community foundations (CFs). In 1995, Irvine established the seven-year Community Foundations Initiative (CFI) to build the capacity of seven small- to medium-sized, emerging foundations in diverse parts of California and nurture them as long-term partners to Irvine in philanthropy.

Two CFI “models” emerged: one focused on building community philanthropy and the other used as a substantive project to engage the community. Both have proven to be helpful mechanisms for the participating foundations to broaden their engagement, knowledge, reputation, and ability to support their respective regional communities.

CFI has helped all the participating foundations to reflect profoundly on their role in community engagement and to become more catalytic and helpful in convening and tackling the new issues and particular needs of their communities. Almost all report enhanced expectations on their own part and the part of their communities to be involved in key issues. All have learned much about the means to do the challenging and sometimes politically charged work of addressing these issues.

PPA has completed a second round of surveys of community stakeholders in six of the seven CF sites. These surveys show that the CFs overall are viewed as community-focused and involved, professional and well managed, associated with their charitable giving, and an asset to their communities. They also show that the CFs are fair in their grantmaking and have evolved in their grantmaking over recent years. The CFs are most associated with the roles of information provider, grantor, and contributor; to a lesser degree, they are seen as convenors, technical assistance providers, and fiscal agents or partners.

All of the CFs suggest that Irvine’s support has helped to accelerate desired changes. Some have made more strides than others and for varied reasons. As noted in previous reporting, the
Contributions of Irvine’s resources and engagement with the CFs on moving CFI outcomes are complex and indirect.

**Progress on Key Indicators**

As described in the full report following this executive summary, progress has been made on key indicators used to assess CFI overall. Following are the major conclusions and insights from this progress.

**Outcome 1: Strengthening Internal Infrastructures and Improving Grantmaking Practices**

**Diversity of governance and decision making (board, staff, and committees)**
CFI has increased attention to diversity in decision making among the CFs and has enhanced their sense of its importance; it has also provoked some tension within the CFs regarding how to deal with the topic. CFI’s values have encouraged CFs to be reflective and, perhaps, more attentive to diversity in their governance and decisions. As a result, some CFs have sought to increase diversity in their boards and decision-making structures, while others are making more incremental changes.

**Development of new funds and assets**
CFI has contributed to an overall growth in the number and nature of assets and funds; some foundations are proceeding more slowly in this area, and a few are just holding on to gains made in the market boom years.

**Increased community data-gathering and community-input processes**
As a result of CFI, most CFs internalize the gathering of community data and input as an organizational value and a part of their work in the community; they have increasingly applied these processes in that work.
Increased diversity in funding approaches, grantmaking, grantmaking guidelines, and the nature of grantees

CFI has brought about significant change in this area, particularly among content-project sites that tested, learned about, and embraced more strategic grantmaking. CFI appears to have led to larger, multiyear grantmaking strategies among several participating CFs.

Development and adoption of a plan for asset development

Asset-development plans are in place and, in many cases, have gone through several iterations.

Evaluation of grantmaking and alignment with strategic plan

As a result of CFI, several CFs embrace and use evaluation more deliberately and thoughtfully.

Organizational development

CFI has encouraged major transformational changes that have enhanced, tested, and stretched the CFs; the overall organizational effects of CFI on the CFs appear diverse and long-lasting. The CFs as a whole have enhanced capacities, and they credit Irvine directly with organizational support, technology, and communications capacity building. They have been challenged in recent years to deal with the fiscal downturn, staff cuts, and turnover, while internal and external expectations have increased due to CFI. The CFs’ competence appears to have grown and evolved during CFI; community stakeholders have demonstrated favorable attitudes regarding the CFs’ professionalism. The sustainability quotient of CFI-encouraged work varies and appears to be higher in two of the three philanthropy-building sites, where the affiliate-fund strategy has paid off in terms of building durable assets and continued engagement.

Outcome 2: Increasing Expertise as Community Catalysts, Convenors, and Strategic Grantmakers

Enhanced partnering with other organizations and efforts in the community

The constraints on their resources have increased selectivity and prioritization of partnering opportunities, but most of the CFs report enhanced partnering as well as increased variety and experience in different partnership roles. Among almost all, CFI has encouraged an evolution in
philosophy, causing the CFs to move beyond the traditional role of donor service/grantor to embrace a variety of partnering roles in community efforts. CF leaders generally feel more engaged in their communities. The two waves of community stakeholder surveys indicate that community engagement varies between the two waves, among the CFs, and within each CF. This is a function of significant differences in context, strategy, leadership, and personality. The reasons for this variability will be explored in the individual site reports; possible explanations include fiscal retrenchment, higher community expectations, or differences among survey respondents. The CFs are now struggling to play the community leadership role without CFI resources and with new, enhanced expectations on themselves and in the community.

**Expanding the role as catalyst and convenor around key community needs and issues**
Most of the CFs have embraced and grown more confident in their role as catalysts and convenors, and several have developed strong expertise, visibility, and credibility as leaders and valued partners in their communities. CFI has educated the CFs and accelerated their efforts to take on catalytic roles. CFI helped the CFs demonstrate the possibilities, gave them real experiences, and challenged their organizations to play an enhanced leadership role in their communities. There is also some evidence of a catalytic quality in the CFI projects themselves: they have created both internal and external ripple effects on the organization and within their communities. Perceptions of the CFs’ development as catalysts and convenors vary among community stakeholders and can be understood within the unique context of each CF. In general, CFI has heightened internal and external expectations: the CFs expect more, and they feel the community expects more.

**Outcome 3: Enhancing the Ability to Manage External Relations and Engaging Respective Communities in Philanthropy**

**Grants and Activity Reflect Diversity of Service Areas**
The CFs have continued to work at outreach to the full geography and diversity of their service areas; some have enjoyed tangible success, while others have made modest progress.
Dollars are steered to community projects and goals through the CF
Most of the CFs are playing enhanced roles as conduits, partners, and fiscal agents for community projects and needs.

Increase in visibility—media attention
Almost all of the CFs believe they have become more visible in their communities, but community stakeholder survey results show that some CFs are perceived as more visible than others. Media attention grows steadily after high-profile projects; where downturns in visibility exist, they may be attributable to new fiscal and staff constraints.

Professional advisors increase recommendations of the CF
The CF leadership believes relationships between CFs and professional advisors have grown and strengthened, and community perceptions show strong and growing confidence in CFs’ development role. Some stakeholders perceive significant gains in the number and quality of these relationships.

Community perceptions align around engaged role
In keeping with CFI’s encouraged goals, several of the CFs have enhanced their community perception around an engaged role in their communities; others, however, suffer a lag in this area or have yet to succeed in aligning their hopes with reality. A few have witnessed some downturn in recent years in community perceptions of their engagement and leadership. All of the CFs, however, are viewed as professional organizations that care about their communities and attempt to play a constructive role.

Outcome 4: Participating CFs Develop “Partnership” With Irvine
This outcome has proven the most challenging to define and execute; the realization of a well-developed partnership has seen some but not much progress during CFI. There is some disjunction between Irvine staff and CF staff in both the value and the accomplishment of key aspects of a desired partnership. The CFs give Irvine high marks for trust, respect, and communication in the relationship. They appreciate Irvine’s flexible, evolving, and multifaceted
support, and they appreciate the funding, values, and idea set they have gained from Irvine. The CFs are frustrated, however, that Irvine does not use them more to make local grants and inform its work. They demonstrate a strong desire to engage Irvine and understand and help with its new strategic plan.

The Irvine staff has gained new perspectives and working knowledge of the CFs, which helps Irvine to “work smarter” with the CFs. Irvine still wants partners who can take ideas and program agendas and “make it happen on the ground.” CFI has helped Irvine to become more aware that not all CFs are created equal in their ability to play a well-informed and sophisticated leadership role in their communities. Irvine has become more understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities inherent in CFs, as well as the CF field and the CFs’ catalyst role. Irvine also understands how stretched and limited in capacity CFs can be as a result of the huge demands placed on them by their communities and themselves.
Introduction

Overview

The James Irvine Foundation (Irvine) has long recognized and supported the important role of community foundations throughout California. Community foundations (CFs) encourage local philanthropic giving by offering donors a means for realizing their charitable interests while providing desirable tax consequences. Beyond these more traditional roles of asset building and grantmaking, Irvine has recognized that the real potential of CFs lies in their ability to foster community. Because CFs typically serve a specific geographic area—a town, city, county, or multi-county area—they are local philanthropies, well positioned to attract local leadership to address local, grassroots concerns.

Recognizing the unique roles that community foundations can play in stimulating local philanthropy and local leadership, Irvine developed the Community Foundations Initiative (CFI), an $11.7 million effort over an eight-year period of 1995-2003. The purpose of CFI is to help seven promising CFs of modest size to "take the next step" in their organizational development and to accelerate their growth as community leaders and resources.

Through CFI, Irvine selected seven small- and medium-sized community foundations, poised to emerge as stronger players in their communities, to receive grants of up to $1.5 million over seven years for planning and implementation. Over the years Irvine has also contributed significant additional dollars in support of particular technical-assistance needs of participants, including communications, technology-integration assistance, and help with strategic planning. The CFI sought to support the following four outcomes for participating CFs:

- Strengthen their internal infrastructures and improve grantmaking capabilities
- Increase their expertise as community catalysts, convenors, and strategic grantmakers
- Enhance their abilities to manage external relations and engage their respective communities in philanthropy
Become effective and viable partners with The James Irvine Foundation in serving their respective communities

In addition, several important assumptions initially informed the CFI capacity-building project. These included:

- A visible, strategic community project will help the CFs gain recognition and credibility with important local constituencies.
- As recognition and credibility grow, newly built relationships will help the CF identify and respond to local issues and attract a new and more diverse pool of donors.
- CFI organizational support will help each foundation solidify its infrastructure and achieve planned growth.
- CFI’s flexibility will ensure that CF strategies and projects are consistent with the unique needs and interests of both the CFs and their communities.
- In gaining experience and credibility in their communities, the CFs will be positioned to help Irvine and others make meaningful local contributions.

CF communities were initially chosen from small and medium-sized community foundations that were ready to take the next step, held promise or were proven in providing community leadership, had a likelihood of long-term success, and represented a geographic cross section of California.

Public Policy Associates, Incorporated (PPA) has conducted an ongoing assessment of the CFI since 1999. PPA’s evaluation of the initiative as whole and the progress on key indicators among the sites has been designed to:

- Determine the extent to which outcomes are being realized.
- Test assumptions of CFI.
- Understand whether, how, and why CFI contributes to outcomes.
- Document interesting developments for the participating CFs and the field.
PPA conducted a comprehensive set of evaluation activities in 1999 and 2000 that produced reports on each community foundation and the CFI overall, reflecting on the first four to five years of community foundation experience with CFI. In 2001, PPA again made site visits; gathered current data as well as historical data (some of which had been previously unavailable); and asked the sites and their stakeholders to reflect on their continuing evolution, the role of CFI and other factors in their growth, and changes in how the CFs view and make operational their role in the community. In addition, PPA interviewed Irvine program staff and CFI participants about their expectations and experience around developing a longer-term partnership between participating CFs and Irvine.

In the most recent wave of data collection, PPA conducted another round of community stakeholder surveys with six of the sites. Table 1 summarizes the number of responses for each of the sites for the years 2001 and 2003.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th></th>
<th>2003</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Totals Surveys Sent</td>
<td>Total Surveys Completed</td>
<td>Response Rate</td>
<td>Totals Surveys Sent</td>
<td>Total Surveys Completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Bay*</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>344</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>368</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*East Bay did not participate in the 2003 stakeholder survey.

Due to the small sample size, responses from the stakeholder surveys may not reflect the attitudes of all CF stakeholders. As a result, the survey responses that are presented in this report should be interpreted with caution but will serve as indicators of stakeholder opinions. Given
the great differences in site content and strategy, comparisons of survey data among CFs are not made in this report.

PPA also conducted a more limited round of data collection by obtaining updates of CF material and information on key indicators from the sites. PPA conducted interviews and, in some cases, made site visits with key participant stakeholders; interviews have also been conducted with key Irvine staff involved in the project for the duration. Some of this work is continuing at the date of this report. One CF (East Bay) has not been as active in this final wave of reporting.

This final overarching report, as well as customized reporting for the CF sites, is designed to draw together a sense of the overall impact and import of CFI; reflect on what is new in the last year and a half; and discuss the positioning, opportunities, and challenges faced by the participants in their relationship with Irvine as they look ahead.

The Changing CFI Context

The organizational variation among the CFs is great and has increased during the course of the initiative. One simple measure is size: At the launch of CFI, the variation in asset levels between participants was $32 million. Today, participating CFs’ assets range from $25 million to $132 million. Figure 1 and Table 2 display total assets for each CF beginning in 1995 and ending in 2002. This information was gathered from a community foundation survey conducted by The Columbus Foundation.
The years of CFI saw a general market run-up followed by the recent two years of stock market decline. The bulk of the CFs have recently held steady or seen a dip in their overall assets. Overall, the CFs appear to be handling the stock market decline well, with marked growth since 1995 despite some instability in the past two years. Other community foundations in California have demonstrated strong growth since 1995 as well.
Figure 2 and Table 3 show the total gifts received by the CFI foundations between 1995 and 2002. Figure 3 and Table 4 display the total grants received during the same period. The wide variations in growth shown in the charts are a reflection of particular CF patterns of occasional large gifts and, often, required grant outlays.

![CFI Foundations: Total Gifts, 1995 - 2002](image)

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>$10.99</td>
<td>$8.96</td>
<td>$5.45</td>
<td>$31.69</td>
<td>$31.30</td>
<td>$37.00</td>
<td>$36.48</td>
<td>$26.60</td>
<td>142%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>$1.40</td>
<td>$3.53</td>
<td>$4.78</td>
<td>$5.70</td>
<td>$6.30</td>
<td>$6.39</td>
<td>$5.80</td>
<td>$5.55</td>
<td>296%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>$0.12</td>
<td>$0.09</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>$1.46</td>
<td>$2.49</td>
<td>$2.47</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>$5.22</td>
<td>4250%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>$6.42</td>
<td>$3.49</td>
<td>$2.10</td>
<td>$1.75</td>
<td>$6.90</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>$12.20</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>$0.42</td>
<td>$1.34</td>
<td>$2.77</td>
<td>$0.88</td>
<td>$2.98</td>
<td>$4.51</td>
<td>$6.82</td>
<td>$8.43</td>
<td>1907%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>$14.54</td>
<td>$1.92</td>
<td>$16.80</td>
<td>$4.14</td>
<td>$14.64</td>
<td>$26.50</td>
<td>$5.59</td>
<td>$12.36</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>$2.51</td>
<td>$1.94</td>
<td>$2.14</td>
<td>$2.43</td>
<td>$5.37</td>
<td>$3.78</td>
<td>$4.01</td>
<td>$5.33</td>
<td>112%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not available for these years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>$0.20</td>
<td>$5.67</td>
<td>$3.66</td>
<td>$8.34</td>
<td>$8.81</td>
<td>$15.90</td>
<td>$16.20</td>
<td>$15.90</td>
<td>6944%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>$1.54</td>
<td>$1.47</td>
<td>$1.84</td>
<td>$2.43</td>
<td>$2.14</td>
<td>$4.04</td>
<td>$4.79</td>
<td>$2.86</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside</td>
<td>$0.68</td>
<td>$0.99</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>$0.48</td>
<td>$0.84</td>
<td>$1.35</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>$2.48</td>
<td>265%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>$1.60</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>$1.08</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>$2.20</td>
<td>$6.61</td>
<td>$3.70</td>
<td>131%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>$0.43</td>
<td>$0.41</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>$0.75</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.47</td>
<td>$1.41</td>
<td>$1.33</td>
<td>211%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>$1.03</td>
<td>$1.86</td>
<td>$2.60</td>
<td>$2.21</td>
<td>$2.99</td>
<td>$6.85</td>
<td>$15.74</td>
<td>$11.26</td>
<td>993%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>$0.81</td>
<td>$1.40</td>
<td>$1.36</td>
<td>$1.20</td>
<td>$1.69</td>
<td>$1.65</td>
<td>$1.36</td>
<td>$1.82</td>
<td>126%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not available for these years.

The participating CFs believe their showing is good in terms of asset development and securing of additional funds. Sacramento has continued an upward trend of close to $40 million, fueled—in its view—by new community partnerships and entanglements that have significantly increased its relationships and successful pursuit of new-fund gifts. While challenged with staff leadership, Riverside maintains the stock market downturn has had very little effect on it. Riverside lost 5% last year; comparatively, in Riverside’s eyes, this is great. Humboldt, while
hovering around $50 million, is proud to note the highest per-capita giving of any CF region in California. Sonoma is down from a high of $86 million to $78 million, but much of that has consisted of major community projects that have seen Sonoma giving away $15 million over the past few years. All foundations have been growing new funds. Humboldt, Riverside, Sonoma, and Santa Cruz added between 23 and 31 funds apiece in 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Foundation</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>Total Funds to Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>527*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside/San Bernardino</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>200*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>NA*</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not available for these years.

The increases in staff at the participating CFs have also varied considerably. Table 6 compares the numbers of staff members in 1995, 2001, and 2002, as well as the percentages of increase among the CFs during the same period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Foundation</th>
<th>1995 Staff</th>
<th>2001 Staff</th>
<th>2002 Staff</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>700%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside/San Bernardino</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>233%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>200%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>125%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>550%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>177%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these gross, objective differences, each CF embraced and used CFI consistent with its own strategy, community setting, opportunity, and needs, as has been noted. Over the course of CFI, the biggest departures from the initial context have been the stock market; local economic conditions; the overall recessionary climate; and the particular California fiscal crisis,
which has reined in funding for constituent nonprofits. These forces have affected the participating CFs to varying degrees. Sacramento maintains that its local economy has been buffered from the blow. Humboldt, Sonoma, and Santa Cruz are all in communities hard hit by these forces. For most, however, the underlying local community challenges have remained consistent: land use and affordable housing in Santa Cruz, Sonoma, and Ventura; water and managing development and growth in Humboldt and Sonoma; and the diversity of a vast service area for Riverside.

It is difficult to determine exactly how the unique community conditions and unique leadership styles and abilities contribute to the changes among the CFs, but most stakeholders view these issues as profound. There has been much acknowledgement that CF leadership, especially in the form of the executive director, has had a major impact on the CFs, including their adaptability to changing economic and local circumstances.

Most of the CFs have had durable leadership over CFI, and this has helped them make progress. Riverside is candid about three leadership successions impeding its progress. Sacramento underwent a leadership transition two years ago and appears to have made significant headway since. Others have had consistent executive leadership and durable and increasing board support and engagement.

**Insights Around CFI Outcomes**

Tracking progress and evolution around key outcomes hoped for under CFI has exposed a number of important issues and patterns that are central to the development of community foundation capacity and their relationship with their community. These proxies and indicators of progress toward CFI outcomes were developed as part of the evaluation-design process, and a matrix of these indicators and their data sources has guided the evaluation.
Organized under the major outcome areas of the CFI, the following are what appear to be new or newly refined themes from the patterns that were summarized in previous reporting. Now, at the close of CFI, the following are some reflections on the overall progress on key indicators.

**Outcome 1: Strengthening Internal Infrastructures and Improving Grantmaking Practices**

Issues and indicators of progress explored in line with this outcome include:

- Diversity of governance and decision making (board, staff, committees).
- New fund development.
- Increased community data-gathering and community-input processes.
- Increased diversity in funding approaches, grantmaking, grantmaking guidelines, and the nature of grantees.
- Development and adoption of a plan for asset development.
- Evaluation of grantmaking and alignment with strategic plan.
- Organizational development.
Resolving Tension Around Diversity in Governance and Decision Making

CFI certainly carried a set of values that encouraged CFs to be reflective and perhaps newly attentive to diversity (in terms of race and ethnicity, geography, skills, and experience) in CF governance and decision-making structure. Figure 5 shows the status of ethnic-minority representation among boards and staff at the various sites. Some sites, notably Humboldt, have embraced and made changes toward a more diverse board as part of their evolution under CFI. Their own reports celebrate their success on this CFI indicator. Others are continuing to attend to this dynamic and are making more incremental changes.

“We’ve seen a dramatic change in our Board ... Previously our Board was dominated by a few voices from the same zip code. Now energy is coming from more places on the Board, and we have an approach to expand our Board from 20–25 members with conversation around the complexity of talent and diversity we need.”

-Sacramento Board Member

Figure 4

*Current data not available. For these CFs, data from the 2001 evaluation are used.
Similarly, Sonoma has consciously sought new perspectives as part of recent changes to its board: “We have not been very well connected to the growing Hispanic community. We have a new board member—a Mexican American who will play a major factor, whether it is grantmaking, convening, or whatever.”

Santa Cruz still has ongoing debate around the complexion of its board and the priority given to getting people of means versus other goods. They have moved a key LGBT-initiative advisory committee member onto the board, giving new energy and perspective.

Several CFs have clearly created—either with new structures or revised old ones—avenues for broader community voices in decision making, including Sacramento and Ventura (which has enhanced diversity through a broad network of committee structures). These changes seem to be reflected in some of the feedback from community stakeholders. In addition, there is clear evidence that most CFs are consciously adapting their boards to include representatives from new communities of interest as they seek to broaden their reach and engage their full service areas.

Community stakeholders, not surprisingly, are largely unable to discern the nature of board and decision-making entities.
Changes in Grantmaking and Grantmaking Style

Grantmaking has evolved during CFI, and participating CFs appear to be keeping up their grantmaking while also being more strategic with their resources. This significant change may have been fueled by CFI, and it has been felt particularly among content-project sites that tested, learned, and subsequently embraced more strategic grantmaking during CFI. It appears CFI led to larger, multiyear grantmaking strategies among several participating CFs.

Table 7: Grantmaking, 1995–2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community Foundation</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Bay</td>
<td>$204,441</td>
<td>$14,400,000</td>
<td>6944%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humboldt</td>
<td>$1,540,000</td>
<td>$2,860,000</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverside/San Bernardino</td>
<td>$679,020</td>
<td>$2,480,000</td>
<td>265%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacramento</td>
<td>$1,599,078</td>
<td>$3,700,000</td>
<td>131%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Cruz</td>
<td>$427,684</td>
<td>$1,330,000</td>
<td>211%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonoma</td>
<td>$1,030,600</td>
<td>$11,260,000</td>
<td>993%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventura</td>
<td>$806,391</td>
<td>$1,819,640</td>
<td>126%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>$898,173</td>
<td>$5,407,091</td>
<td>502%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition, the CFs have developed new priority-setting processes that are more focused on major community needs. These processes are sometimes partnerships with other organizations (such as United Way) or are developed independently by the CFs.

"CFI was really our first involvement in larger grantmaking. It was a building block, learning the techniques of larger grantmaking and looking strategically at grantmaking. We don’t want to go back to being a foundation that makes $1,000 grants. We want now to identify priority needs with real value, but our ability is limited now without large, unrestricted funds."

-Sacramento Staffer

The community survey bears out this evolution. Survey participants largely agree that the foundations consider grant applications fairly and believe that the foundations’ grantmaking has evolved over the past five years. Of those who responded to the survey item, “The community foundation fairly considers grant applications received from all organizations,” 77% indicated they agreed with the statement. The response is fairly consistent with 2001 survey results in which 75% indicated they agreed with the statement, 21% were neutral, and about 5% disagreed.

This year, over half of all respondents (54%) thought that their local foundation’s grantmaking had evolved over the past five years. The stakeholder surveys suggest that, overall, those who know the foundation best (for five years or more) see the most real changes in grantmaking.

**Use of Evaluation**

Santa Cruz credits CFI’s focus on the use of evaluation with enhancing internal attention to the benefits of evaluation in its grantmaking, and Santa Cruz has been proactive and reflective in its use in recent years. Sacramento suggests that the evaluation of its first major initiative—the CFI project Operation Graduation—helped it reflect and learn about its ability and capacity and the ways to think about tackling community issues.

"ACCESS [CFI project] was one part of a lot of work to reposition ourselves—to learn to do regranting and how to make larger grants. We can take what we learned across to other interest areas."

-Santa Cruz Staffer
Humboldt reported to Irvine this year along the lines of the indicators developed as part of the CFI evaluation and used this evaluation as a guide for board self-reflection and mission shaping. Similarly, Ventura has consistently used evaluation feedback to inform board discussions regarding key issues and future direction.

**Organizational Capacity**

CFI has directly contributed to major transformational changes that have enhanced, tested, and stretched the CFs’ overall organizational effects. Most CFs have been enhanced in their capacities overall, and they credit Irvine directly with the organizational support and the technology and communications capacity building that have proven invaluable to their growth and ability.

One CF executive lists the contributions: “The technology, the broader networks we have as staff, understanding a communications plan, all has been very, very important.”

Humboldt credits CFI with facilitating a thorough transformation. “We changed our mission statement, we changed our Board structure, we changed our staff structure, we changed the relationships between grantmaking and donor relations.”

“Technology use was a large change and was critical for us; integrating our software was difficult, but everybody grew.” -Santa Cruz Staffer

In addition, the CFs appear to have grown in their professionalism and experience, both by their own accounts and from the vantage point of outsiders. Community stakeholders surveyed are very favorable regarding the professionalism and competence of CFs, which most feel have been directly enhanced by CFI.

Most CFs have been challenged in recent years to deal with the fiscal downturn, staff cuts, and turnover, which have affected both day-to-day operations and the culture that has been nurtured by CFI. Staff cutbacks range from seven in Santa Cruz to just one or two in Sonoma and Sacramento; Humboldt counts more staff this year than last. With continuing organizational
change, most CFs have found that keeping morale up and a vision set on realizing the more enhanced community role is an ongoing challenge.

“*We have had 50% turnover in our management team; [two Sacramento staffers] are the internal glue and ones carrying the culture of engagement with community forward that we have been trying to develop, in the face of these changes.*”

-Sacramento Staffer

Humboldt staff report they are focused more internally on the new community engagement brought about by its new community-center building; they are also challenged by the dramatically increased pressure and expectations on staff raised through their CFI/Institute for the North Coast (INC) work—requiring a bit of a retrenchment from other outside roles.

“I’ve moved from our INC [CFI project role] into the vortex of the foundation, now have foundation responsibilities that consume me.”

-Humboldt Staffer

Overall, Riverside uniquely has not realized the infrastructure improvement it had desired. Over most of the course of CFI, the organization faced too many internal management/leadership issues to really develop. Riverside’s experiences over the course of CFI have taught the staff about their organizational capacity, and they believe they have grown in experience and credibility.

“*[Riverside’s participation in CFI] did lead to a higher degree of professionalism among staff.*”

-Riverside Board Member

**Sustainability**

Philanthropy-building sites in Ventura and East Bay appear to have fewer issues with the sustainability of their CFI work. As reported previously, the development of new funds has helped these foundations continue the strategy of asset growth and community outreach. The content-project sites all face issues of being unable at the moment to continue the particular or general community-outreach strategy that CFI helped them initiate.
In Humboldt, where CFI fueled—apparently very effectively—the proactive community collaboration and agenda-building work of INC, the loss of those resources has meant some retrenchment, though it has confirmed Humboldt in seeking to play this role again in new and broader ways. “CFI suggests that the collaboration work takes funding above program services,” suggests Humboldt leadership; they would argue that to continue to “change the system,” they would require extra resources akin to CFI to fund the collaborative community work.

Santa Cruz, for one, would have welcomed more structure in CFI. Its most effective outside-funded initiative, the LGBT program, has taken on a life of its own and brought its own new cadre of committed partners and continued funding. “Our other initiatives didn’t have a plan for when the money ran out, including ACCESS. [In contrast, LGBT]—like the philanthropy-building programs of East Bay, Ventura, and Riverside—helped build an endowment along the way.” This appears to constitute additional evidence that while the overall effects from CFI in the CFs are diverse and long-lasting, the sustainability quotient of CFI-oriented project work is higher in the philanthropy-building sites.
Outcome 2: Increasing Expertise as Community Catalysts, Convenors, and Strategic Grantmakers

Issues and indicators of progress explored in line with this outcome include:

- Partnering with other organizations and efforts in the community.
- Expanding the role as catalyst and convenor around key community needs and issues.

Topics and features of note across the foundations follow.

Enhanced Partnering Despite Resource Constraints

CFI appears to have encouraged more real partnerships and an evolution in philosophy on the part of the foundations: from more traditional donor service/grantor model to a diverse partner in community efforts. In choosing to partner and when and how to partner, the CFs appear to be growing selectively, setting priorities in light of current resource limitations. But this approach has been fueled by the experience gained through CFI.

The CF leadership generally feels more engaged in the community. Sacramento has seen major new partnerships with the state’s fire-prevention and forestry efforts and credits a new approach that looks for engagements not in financial self-interest but in terms of building relationships.

Humboldt credits both the INC and the new Community Center with dramatically expanding its role in the community. “We are the community hub, and we are bouncing into people all the time. Everyone from little old ladies to the other convenors in the community is in our office back and forth.” Humboldt also notes that it has significant new partners among the leading institutions of higher learning, as well as elected officials who want to help them do more in the broader region.

“Our focus has shifted from doing direct programs. We are focused on convening and working with donors on their needs.”

-Sacramento Staffer
In Sonoma, the asset picture has meant staff cuts and some retrenchment, leading again to some reconsideration of the opportunity costs of convening and community engagement. Some staff were wondering recently whether “devoting our attention to these community initiatives, didn’t distract us from our development efforts” and, perhaps, stall asset growth.

However, in Sonoma, where there has always been some tension among board and staff over how far to “get out there,” the issue appears to have been resolved in favor of partnering (when affordable). In fact, a new distinction has emerged that views “partnerships” as more prudent and more effective than “initiatives” for which the CF is responsible.

Sonoma has had a recent success with the long-running homeless question and has recently been engaged as a partner in important land-use and watershed issues.

Santa Cruz, despite serious cutbacks in staff and activity and a focus on “survival,” has played some new roles as a convenor of health care access discussions. Even Riverside reports it has developed new relationships with other community organizations.

In some cases, community stakeholders as reflected in the 2003 community survey saw a slightly diminished role of several CFs on key questions of community engagement. Smaller numbers of people felt that Sacramento and Sonoma were organizing attention to community needs and using community input to inform grantmaking. Riverside showed a similar decline on the last of those three questions: “To what extent does the CF organize attention to community needs and act as a positive leader for change?” While it is not large and may be a result of the sample, this change runs counter to the sense of the CF leadership. Another explanation may be that CFs got attention when they launched and were in the early stages of managing some high-visibility, outside-funded projects (including their CFI project, with less fanfare of late), perhaps diminishing the general sense of activity. It may also be that the overall retrenchment due to the stock market has meant less visibility.

“We have looked at our role as community leaders, to play a role beyond the financial, to be a facilitator and convenor; to fill the leadership gap in the community.”  
-Sonoma Board Member
Conversely, Santa Cruz, with a strong effort to encourage responses to the survey, saw significant gains in perception of the CF as initiating discussions to address community needs and being an active partner in the community.

Alongside this, Sonoma saw a spike in community agreement that estate planners and financial advisors encourage gifts and SCCF helps donors achieve their philanthropic interest, suggesting that the asset crunch has led to a renewed internal focus on fund development. The staff confirms that this is the case.

**Growing Confidence in Catalytic Role**

In Ventura and Humboldt—and, to a lesser degree, Sonoma and Sacramento—there is growth among the board and staff in their self-reported experience and confidence in playing a strong leadership role. In interviews, Humboldt leaders say with new confidence, “Our ability to convene with *everyone* is rock solid.”

> “Some folks say stick to core mission. But we have evolved and more people say, let’s provide some leadership in the community.”
> -Sonoma Board Member

> “We are now seen by some as the largest nonprofit leader.”
> -Sacramento Staffer

Sonoma now has a “community catalyst” heading on its Web page where the major leadership initiatives it has assisted are described, including the Resilient Communities Initiative (RCI)—Sonoma’s CFI project—as well as major leads in homelessness, health care, teen programming, civic life, and organizational development.

There is some evidence that the CFI-project sites and their projects themselves have been “catalytic” both internally and externally. In Humboldt, INC and Prosperity have “legs” beyond the direct involvement of the CF, which has had to pull back from day-to-day management. “We have a uniform set of strategies for development and a high level of agreement from lots of people.” While it has reluctantly had to cut back several outside-funded initiatives due to the end of their funding, Santa Cruz does see how its engagements with ACCESS and Vecinos,
another community-building initiative, helped to catalyze important, ongoing work with new actors in Santa Cruz and Watsonville, initiating local youth grants. In Sonoma, the RCI project, while perhaps not continuing in both sites, has brought new attention to the topics and has given Sonoma a broader network of contacts and involvement that is paying off in new affiliate-fund development and community-service work.

**Community Stakeholder Perceptions Match Foundation Catalyst Self-Identity**

Community stakeholders are generally favorable toward the community foundations. As noted, the CF leadership has increasingly embraced the catalytic idea and role and feels on balance there is more visibility and identification of the CFs as leaders and valued partners in the community.

The feedback from the community stakeholder survey, while incomplete and inconclusive, is somewhat mixed. In a few cases, the hoped-for role as convenor and catalyst remains unattained to date and less held in the communities than in the foundations, with several showing slippage over the past two years—but growth in constructive partnering has occurred even in the foundations least viewed as strong convenors and catalysts.

Similarly, almost all the CFs believe they are more visible in their communities, but the community stakeholder surveys show some up and others down in “visibility” measures. Most believe they are active in the community and increasingly visible to partner organizations, and some believe they are visible in the media as well.

On average across all participating sites, about 56% of respondents to the 2003 survey agreed that their foundations were becoming more visible. This remains consistent with data from 2001.

All CFs get high marks overall and are viewed in terms consistent with parts of their missions. Survey participants were asked to list three words or phrases that best describe their local
community foundations. The most common responses described the foundations in terms of community, professionalism, philanthropy, and accessibility. Each of the response categories is listed in Table 4.

Table 8: Words or Phrases Most Frequently Used To Describe the Community Foundations on the 2003 Stakeholder Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community (focused, involved)</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, organized, well-managed, efficient, effective, leadership</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philanthropic, charitable, giving</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible, friendly, available, accommodating</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring, well-intentioned, benevolent, dedicated, committed</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset, valuable, constructive</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant resource, grantmaking, funding</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respected, honest, integrity, reputable</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledgeable, informed, alert</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stable, solid, strong</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressive, forward-thinking, innovative</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad, umbrella, all-encompassing</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing, on the rise</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible, adaptive, changing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowment</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People, staff</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visible, well-known</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems, negative comments</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK/NA/Did not answer</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total participants</td>
<td>522</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Total exceeds 100% because responses include multiple (up to three) comments per participant.

Negative comments comprised a relatively small portion of the responses to this survey item (11%), considering that all of the other categories represent positive or occasionally neutral comments. For example, responses in the categories coded “Professional…,” “Caring…,” or “Respected…” would all be considered positive. Both neutral and positive comments fell into categories such as “Grant resource…,” where responses included comments such as “funding for programs” and “great source of funding.” Of the negative comments received, the most common types of responses were that the foundation was not well known or visible enough (11 participants) and that the foundation was distant, disconnected from the community, or elitist.
(also 11 participants). The remaining comments had no common themes and will be discussed further in individual site reporting.

**Heightened Internal and External Expectations**

CFs are all struggling with how to play the community-leadership role, particularly with new and enhanced expectations on themselves and in the community—expectations that have been raised through their CFI experience.

The issue of making priorities, which some CFs were doing very explicitly several years ago as they examined initiatives, is now driven further by tight money. According to one Santa Cruz staffer, “We are at the point where we are talking survival; we have to be careful what we are taking on.”

Both Sonoma and Santa Cruz are working under intense organizational efforts to raise assets and focus on core activities, which at this moment have crowded out some of the real desire and plans for doing more community-engagement work.

Some are looking at the challenge posed by tough fiscal and organizational times as an opportunity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“In a down economic period, there is less allure to building endowment, but the community activities are exciting … The Board is telling staff, ‘You’ve got the problem you’ve wanted.’”</th>
<th>“All the nonprofits in our community have been challenged, but also with that challenge is opportunity. Playing a leadership role and generating new initiatives is way to raise resources.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Humboldt Staffer</td>
<td>-Sonoma Board Member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Outcome 3: Enhancing the Ability to Manage External Relations and Engaging Respective Communities in Philanthropy

Issues and indicators of progress explored in line with this outcome include:

- Grants increasingly reflect diversity of service area.
- Dollars are steered to community projects and goals through the CF.
- Professional advisors increase recommendations of the CF.
- Community perceptions and the self-perception of the CF align.

Grants and Activity Reflect Diversity of Service Areas

All CFs have continued their work consistent with the goals of outreach to the full geography and diversity of their service area. For example, Humboldt is engaged in planning a successor to INC (its CFI initiative) that would bring the community data collection, input, and agenda development accomplished in Humboldt County to its broader multi-county service area.

“Fueled by INC, we have drawn in new geographic partners, new relationships with leaders in Humboldt.”

While historically perceived as favoring the city of Santa Cruz, the bulk of CFSCC’s grantmaking has gone to the South County, the largely Hispanic region of greatest need, and its latest community survey results indicate some success in changing perceptions on this score. A significantly larger number of respondents thought CFSCC was fair in its grantmaking, and the sense it needed to reach out more to its service area was reduced.

Sacramento has expanded its reach and is seeking affiliate-fund relationships in new parts of its service area. TCF in Riverside credits CFI with making the expansion into San Bernardino County possible; this has led to increased contact with new communities, organizations, and other foundations. According to TCF staff, it has dramatically increased the foundation’s
potential as well as the challenges it must face, including the challenge of possibly choosing a central issue (or issues) to focus on and be identified with.

Similarly, in Sonoma, the RCI project took the CF into new communities in which it now has a track record of commitment, important for credibly participating and raising resources there. The CF has new plans for affiliate funds in these and other areas.

**Community Perceptions Around Engaged Role**

Participating CFs are viewed favorably according to the community surveys. These surveys reflect the way the community views the CFs’ engagement, as well as which roles it associates with the CFs.

The most common roles that survey participants have seen their local foundations play have been those of information provider, grantor, recipient of a donation, and convenor. Community perceptions of these roles remained fairly consistent across the 2001 and 2003 surveys, as shown in Figure 7.

![Survey Question: "The foundation played the role of..."](image)

Note: Total exceeds 100% because participants were instructed to “select all that apply.”

**Figure 6**
The community sees them more as sources of information and grantors than as convenors or technical assistance providers. Almost all CFs believe they are more visible in the community, but it is hard to tell given only a modest analysis of news clips and public outreach.

The community stakeholder surveys show that some foundations are perceived as growing more visible, some less so. It may be that media attention has been steady or, perhaps, has seen some downturn due to organizational challenges and fiscal/staff constraints. Several sites are past some very high-profile projects and roles (sometimes the CFI project) that also may have boosted their visibility.

**Professional Advisors Increase Recommendations of the CF**

The CF leadership believes relationships with professional advisors have grown and strengthened. Community perceptions show strong and growing confidence in the CFs’ developmental role, professionalism, and service, even if the community-catalyst activity may be on hold for the moment. Some CFs believe they see significant gains in the number and quality of relationships among the community that influences donations. All the CFs are viewed as professional organizations that are growing their competency in their services.

**Outcome 4: Reflections on Participating CFs’ “Partnership” With Irvine**

Throughout the CFI, the fourth desired outcome—for community foundations to become effective and viable partners with Irvine in serving their respective communities—has proven the most challenging to define and realize. The evaluation-design process itself helped at the outset to expose different understandings among the CF sites and Irvine staff around their expectations for the effect of the CFI on the relationship between the CFs and Irvine.


“From an outside viewpoint things are better than ever, increased number of people in the community we are involved with, increased visibility.”

-Humboldt Staffer
Several waves of investigation helped to better define this outcome and to develop and explore the indicators of progress toward a strong reciprocal relationship between Irvine and the seven emerging CFs. Now, toward the end of the initiative, questions were asked of key Irvine staff as well as the CF leaders and stakeholders regarding the relationship with Irvine, its meaning, and its future.

During the CFI evaluation, aspects of a desired partnership were more firmly described; both the CFs and Irvine staff with involvement in community foundations gave their sense of the value of certain aspects and whether the relationship reflected these aspects. This led to reporting last year on some disjunction between Irvine staff and CF staff in both the value and the accomplishment of key aspects of a desired partnership. These connects and disconnects are summarized in Tables 5 and 6 based on a simple scoring of partnership attributes, their value to participants, and the degree to which they were fully developed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Value Mean</th>
<th>Development Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irvine is a valued broker, linking the CF to new opportunities and resources.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF gains prestige and credibility with the Irvine relationship.</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF can help Irvine make better grants in the community.</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There has been an established relationship of mutual respect and candor between Irvine and the CF.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF gains tangible content expertise, information, and technical-assistance resources.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is frequent and easy communication with Irvine and the CF.</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF is a valued broker for Irvine to reach key informants or resources in the community.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF gets needed resources for important programming and capacity.</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvine and the CF are forced to wrestle with new or different issues.</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 10: Partnership Survey Results: CF Executive Directors, 2001–2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Value Mean</th>
<th>Development Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irvine is a valued broker, linking the CF to new opportunities and resources.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF gains prestige and credibility with the Irvine relationship.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF can help Irvine make better grants in the community.</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There has been an established relationship of mutual respect and candor between Irvine and the CF.</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF gains tangible content expertise, information, and technical-assistance resources.</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is frequent and easy communication with Irvine and the CF.</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF is a valued broker for Irvine to reach key informants or resources in the community.</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The CF gets needed resources for important programming and capacity.</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irvine and the CF are forced to wrestle with new or different issues.</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.33</td>
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While giving high marks for trust, respect, and communication in the relationship, the biggest disconnects occurred in the degree to which Irvine used the CFs to make local grants and inform its local work, as well as the degree to which Irvine turned to the CFs as valued brokers in the community. CFs wanted to be “used” this way, but Irvine was selective in its engagements based on knowledge, relationships, and individual assessment of the CFs’ abilities.

**Progress Toward Goal**

Looking at where the CFs were plotted on the “partnership continuum,” suggested as part of the discussions over the past years and summarized in Figure 7, there were relatively few instances of a reciprocal relationship being developed, and not much movement was initiated by the CFI.
### Partnership Continuum

**Nonengagement.** Irvine’s information gathering, initiatives, and grantmaking only intersect with the local CF by coincidence or as one among many regional nonprofit organizations.
- The CF has no ongoing communication or relationships with Irvine.

**Notification.** Whenever Irvine program staff are involved in organized information gathering, initiatives, and grantmaking affecting an area served by any of the seven CFI community foundations, Irvine will notify the leader of the CF.
- The CF provides Irvine information on its work, sharing its annual report or major community agendas and initiatives with Irvine.

**Consultation.** When Irvine has tentatively decided to pursue an initiative area, grantmaking agenda, or particular grant in the region served by any of the seven CFs or is involved in significant work with players in the region, the Irvine program officer will contact the CF leader to discuss the process, the agenda for action, the proposed players, or the grant and the prospective grantee.
- The CF has a point of general contact at Irvine to share information about developments in its region and its own interests and needs for information. In developing plans, researching options for action, or looking for information, the leaders or staff have the ability to get feedback and information from specific program staff.

**Collaboration.** Early in the consideration of whether to issue a grant or launch a program or initiative in an area served by any of the seven CFs, the Irvine project officer will contact the CF leader to discuss the agenda and seek intelligence, input, and advice.
- CF leaders or staff have a personal relationship with program staff that affords discussion of information needs, community issues and challenges, and interest areas.

**Full Engagement.** Either Irvine staff or CF leaders originate discussions of potential initiatives. As such initiatives progressed, there would be ongoing dialogue between the partners on all aspects of the initiatives.
- It bears noting that just past nonengagement, the continuum starts with notification. This presumes that Irvine and each CF would begin with at least that level of engagement, although research to date contradicts that presumption. It is likely that each CF would begin at a different point on the continuum. If the initial relationship is successful, the partners might test movement to the right on the continuum.

In response, Irvine took several concrete steps to aid in forging as fulsome a partnership as possible between Irvine and the CFs. These included:

- Organized discussion between Irvine program directors and Irvine vice president as part of the CFI annual meeting.
- Inclusion of the Irvine president as a participant in several CFI meetings.
- Greater information sharing between Irvine and the CFs, including Irvine board activities, grants approved, new reports, and updates on other activities and resources.
- Irvine also initiated discussion in two program areas (land use/sustainable communities and the faith initiative of the Civic Culture program) around partnerships with selected CFs in...
realizing program work in these areas. These led to new or enhanced program initiatives with several of the CFI participants.

All responding CFs noted that a positive relationship has grown with Marty Campbell. This is a constructive relationship with Irvine but is not a significant change toward the high degree of communication and consultation that would describe a thriving partnership. As expressed by a staffer at one CF where the relationship has been relatively weak, “Our relationship hasn’t really changed with Irvine. Irvine is in the county on other things, it would be great if they at least let us know what they are doing, but it never happens! We are not unique in that, but it would be good if we shared information so at least we are not at cross-purposes.”

**Prospects for the Irvine-CF Relationship Going Forward**

Meanwhile, Irvine has been in transition, with new leadership, staff changes, and a strategic-planning process that clearly is not headed toward a community foundation-specific capacity-building agenda but will likely continue to view CFs as potential partners in strategic work defined by Irvine.

CFs have been both curious and anxious regarding Irvine’s strategic-planning process and emerging priority areas and what they will mean for CFs generally and individually. The fact that there will not be a community foundation capacity-building effort at Irvine has been clearly communicated, understood, and accepted (sadly). There is some uncertainty on both sides of the equation regarding whether Irvine as an institution, animated by the values and disposition of its president, will maintain a culture that looks to CFs naturally and often as partners.

CFs are eager to understand the strategic direction of Irvine and how they can be helpers and, potentially, partners. According to one CF executive, “I hope their door will be open. I would like to understand what the strategic plan is, and I hope Irvine will think of the CFs as part of their constituency and that we can help inform the public about what Irvine is trying to accomplish.”
Preexisting relationships with Irvine have grown stronger through the CFI, but they were well on their way to begin with. Figure 7 shows the rankings PPA assigned in 2001.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nonengagement</th>
<th>Notification</th>
<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
<th>Full Engagement</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CFs</td>
<td>X</td>
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**Figure 7**

Based on the interviews conducted this year and the plotting of the foundations in relative terms, there may have been some movement up the scale in recent years. At the close of the CFI, the CFs with good or strong relationships with Irvine are even stronger and are moving toward more “collaborative” relationships. These CFs are as involved as any other community foundation in California in a relationship with Irvine that affords discussion of information, needs, community issues, and even (increasingly) CF organizational challenges. All CFs involved appear to have made some progress and are at least at the consultation stage now—able to reach one another with information when desired—although it appears that one believes it still lacks this contact and would welcome basic notification. The recent movement along the continuum is shown in Figure 8.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Nonengagement</th>
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<th>Consultation</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
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<td>CFs</td>
<td>X X</td>
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</table>

**Figure 8**

The sites value the funding, the values, and the idea set they have gained from Irvine. They appreciate Irvine’s flexible, evolving, and multifaceted support, continuing in recent years with new investments in communications capacity and strategic-planning help, as the CFI program and operational help wind down. Most value the flexibility and the willingness to support the CFs’ developed agenda for change.
One site, struggling with the disappointment of not being able to continue CFI-funded programming post-CFI, wished for more structured expectations for program development, matching, etc., that would have pushed the CF to plan more clearly for sustainability. Another site takes a very different view: “We said, ‘How much control does Irvine have over decisions in the community? None!’ If you are serious about change, it has to be the community’s vision. They [Irvine] were halfway there, but they demonstrated in the way they did the evaluation, technology, communications and other supports, they would let us do it in the way that worked for us.”

Irvine staff members also suggest they have gained new perspectives and valuable working knowledge of CFs that help them “work smarter” with CFs. As at the onset of CFI, Irvine still wants partners who can take ideas and program agendas and “make it happen on the ground.” Irvine is still interested in and looking for those who can play certain roles, including to:

- Help convene.
- Introduce to the right leaders.
- Regrant where desired.
- Play other roles as community guides, scouts, and intelligence gatherers.

Irvine staffers with durable engagement with CFs and the CFI suggest that not all CFs can do this job. In the words of one: “We used to believe ‘you’ve seen one [CF], you’ve seen them all.’” The fact that all CFs are not created equal emphasized the real need for a quality environmental scan and an understanding of each particular CF and its capacity. As another staffer put it, “Not all CFs are able to play the partnership role Irvine wants.”

CF staff appear to appreciate this reality, and some are eager to assert that in part because of CFI and the changes of recent years, they are in a better position

“"I'm a huge fan of Irvine. CFI was a painful effort for us. We were shaken up by it. All change can be painful. Expectations were very high, and we may have bitten off more than we could chew...but Irvine lends enormous credibility and strength.”

-TCF Board Member
to build partnerships. “We are different now, and we would like to discuss what their strategic
directions mean and how we can help them.”

Irvine staff consistently say that, thanks in large part to the CFI, they are smarter about CFs—
more discerning and understanding of the strengths, weaknesses, and possibilities inherent in
community foundations. They better understand the community-engagement dynamic—so
critical to CF success and nurtured directly through CFI. Irvine has a better understanding of the
community foundation field and the catalyst role, what it means, and how it looks and feels in
practice. Irvine also understands how stretched and limited in capacity community foundations
can be—with huge demands placed on them by the community and themselves. Irvine staff
report they are struck anew by the challenges of building the capacity of regions and
communities—a very tough job.

Also because of more intimate involvement with some CFs, Irvine understands better how the
CF views its role, which is a key to success in Irvine’s understanding of how to work with CFs
and, according to some, a very important change on the part of Irvine.

Coming out of its strategic-planning process, Irvine staff suggest that CFs will remain part of the
mix in terms of Irvine’s search for regional help with its emerging strategic grantmaking. As one
Irvine program officer suggested regarding Irvine’s search for ways to implement its new
strategies in various parts of California: “We will often be saying: do we have a partner we can
work with? … CFs are one potential partner among many.” There also appears to be a broader
understanding among Irvine staff of the different ways CFs can work with Irvine—from
information, contacts, and reconnaissance to assisting with a community-engagement process
(when a program officer needs that help), regranting, and many other activities.

The CFI only reinforced the sense emerging from current strategic-planning work that regions
are the prism through which to view California’s people, culture, economy, needs, and work to
be done.
Today, through the assistance of some of its senior staff, Irvine can use more accurate language and look with greater precision for the strengths and weaknesses of CFs. Irvine sees CFs playing a role in any strategic program area where they help deliver the goods; where there is alignment of interests, “CFs can be good partners.”

Again, the degree to which Irvine staff forge working relationships with CF leaders and staff whose interests coincide with those of Irvine will determine this relationship. As before, the quality and potential of the partnership appear to depend greatly on such factors as community foundation leadership, particularly in the executive director; the capacity and knowledge of community foundations to be sophisticated local partners with Irvine (really engaged and knowledgeable about their community); whether grantmaking interests such as sustainable growth, leadership, education, and civic-culture building are compatible; and the durability and quality of relationships and mutual recognition among staff at Irvine and the CFs.

Looking ahead, there is some concern that Irvine leadership may or may not understand the potential and possibilities of CFs and the opportunity/ability for them to play the catalyst role (although with the ascension of Jim Canales to the presidency, this concern may be reduced). “Dennis [the former Irvine president] clearly did see this possibility; he would proactively engage the CFs and encourage program directors to do the same.”

One TCF board member said that TCF has a great vision for its future relationship with Irvine; however, “Right now, it’s hard to lift our sights beyond our immediate needs.”

Despite not having or maintaining a particular CF capacity-building mission, Irvine has been active in supporting the growth of CFs in California. In addition to CFI, Irvine has been the lead funder to start the CFs in Sacramento, Ventura, Santa Cruz, San Luis Obispo, and Orange County. Irvine also helped start the League for California Foundations and has provided core support to it for the last six years. Since 1997, Irvine has supported LCCF’s technical assistance

“I had hoped that we could get other program officers comfortable with CFs, but this hasn’t happened. I guess this was a standalone initiative and has been somewhat ghettoized.”
-CF Staffer
to new CFs in the state. The CFI built stronger CF partners in several regions of California and helped to connect Irvine, the CFs, and others beyond the CFI cohort. Because of Irvine support, several community foundations in and out of CFI are stronger players in broader networks that they value.
Looking Ahead: CFI Creates Challenge and Opportunity

In summary, the following are offered as what may be the major themes emerging from the initiative as it winds down and the CFs, informed by the CFI experience, face a future of trying to do more good community work.

**Enhanced Expectations**

One of the most apparent legacies of CFI is meaningful growth in the sense of expectation among CF boards and staff that they can and should play an engaged role in their communities consistent with the encouragement of leadership, catalysis, and partnering by CFI. This growing sense of commitment to a community mission is apparent across the CFs—and while this sense of raised expectations for the CFs’ role in the community is viewed as somewhat temporarily frustrated by short-term organizational and fiscal challenges, it appears more deeply embedded in the gestalt of the CFs. Similarly, it is apparent that the community may also have an enhanced sense of the possibility of the CFs and an eagerness to see them realize and act on a leadership role.

**New Knowledge, Norms, and Values**

Irvine and CFI are broadly credited with bringing new skills and competencies to the CFs that are very tangible—in technology use, communications, evaluation, etc. They are also credited with bringing a set of values, a style of acting as a funder, that are largely valued and durable parts of the legacy of CFI. Irvine is credited almost universally with being more thoughtful, informed, flexible, and sensitive to the needs of the CFs. One CF staffer said recently: “They weren’t fixated on what they wanted to accomplish, but actually seemed interested in helping us.” Irvine has challenged and enriched the participating CFs by encouraging them to reflect on...
their willingness and ability to listen and learn from the community; to represent the community they serve; to focus on solving community problems; and to be as flexible and committed to the success of their own grantees as Irvine has been in CFI.

“Before CFI we knew the problems better than the solutions; now we have learned about the process of community engagement and can say the outcomes we hoped for are possible.”

-CF Staffer

A Lull in the Action
Most CFs value the flexibility afforded through CFI to use Irvine’s significant resources. Several are challenged by the fact that, absent these resources and without firm plans for sustainability, they have to retrench a bit. Almost all are facing a time when they are challenging themselves to do more and don’t have all the resources they would like to play new roles. One CF called its current position a “lull” between a period of intense community engagement and agenda building and hoped for similar future work fueled with new soft money or a rebound in asset positions. Some are retrenched due to financial challenges; they may be “sticking to their knitting” of fundraising and may be less directly engaged in the larger-scale projects (of which CFI was one) that typified some CFs’ first years in the initiative. All appear eager to use any opportunity to engage and practice many of the strategies and methods they experimented with and developed through CFI.

Hopes for a Real and Realistic Partnership With Irvine
Participating CFs generally suggest that among all the large private foundations they work with, the relationship with Irvine has been among the best, if not the best. While participating CFs are generally happy with Irvine, they are frustrated that the relationship—good with Marty Campbell and some other senior Irvine staff—hasn’t transcended the silos or extended across Irvine in meaningful ways.

Irvine staff certainly feel they have a better-informed and more realistic understanding of CFs, their promise, the challenges they face, the demands they are under, and the nature of their limitations. While the type of partnership initially fashioned as a goal of the CFs doesn’t happen
easily or naturally in the course of events, it is still a desired outcome and has to some extent been enhanced through CFI. CFs may also, in turn, be better informed about the dynamics of dealing with Irvine and how best to connect and develop the partnership, realizing better their ability to demonstrate valuable knowledge and competency in the community that allows the partnership to fully develop.

“We started this with no institutional partners in the community, and now we have the biggest institutional partners following our lead, our state senator calling for advice and our state representative putting the community plan of action we helped create in their platform ... I'd call that success.”

-Humboldt Staffer