

The San Francisco Foundation

San Francisco, CA

sff.org

THE
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FOUNDATION

NCRP: Why was it important for The San Francisco Foundation (TSFF) to launch the Rapid Response Fund for Movement Building in November?

SSF: We believe that effective movements for social change have always been and must continue to be led by those most directly impacted by inequity, particularly low-wage workers and people of color. Soon after the election, The San Francisco Foundation launched the Rapid Response Fund for Movement Building¹ to provide fast resources to organizations needing urgent support to work on the front lines of equity movements. Through this fund, TSFF is responding to the urgent needs of low-income communities of color, and it is supporting actions led by and for people most impacted by the issues they seek to address.

Now, more than ever, we recognize that equity movements need the flexibility to respond, in real time, to pressing issues that disproportionately have an impact on the communities we serve.

NCRP: The foundation also announced that it had reached out to various community leaders about how it could best “participate, partner and lead” to support immigrants, refugees and their impacted citizen family members in the San Francisco Bay Area. What have you learned so far?

SSF: In November, we reached out to leaders in the immigrant rights movement

and to faith and community leaders to hear what they would need in response to potential federal action. In anticipation of federal action, we awarded grants to support nonprofit organizations that are focused on helping immigrants and their families. We quickly deployed resources to immigrant legal service organizations and community-based organizations to educate the immigrant community in our region on their rights, legal options and how to prepare their families for this new environment. We know that access to affordable and reliable legal advice and representation will be critical for families facing the possibility of deportation as well as mental health concerns that are greatly affecting children.

The current crisis facing immigrants and refugees and the communities where they live is unprecedented and requires a rapid and significant increase in resources from philanthropy – both from individual donors and institutions.

NCRP: Why is support for civic participation important to the foundation?

SSF: We believe that civic participation and leadership make a true democracy. With rising income and wealth inequality and the ongoing under-representation of young people, residents earning low wages and people of color in the political process, we see the critical importance of supporting movements that grow the voice and influence of those left out of decision-making.

We embrace the challenge of fostering and sustaining grassroots community and political leadership that reflect the growing diversity of the Bay Area.

NCRP: What tips would you offer other funders who are looking at how they can begin support for or improve how they’re advancing equity and social justice?

SSF: Be bold in your leadership on all levels – board of trustees, CEO, staff, donors and community partners. Listen to the community needs.² Gather strong data and analyze it.

The TSFF equity strategy was developed through a multilayered, data-driven process that engaged the full staff, the board of trustees, donors, nonprofit and philanthropic partners, grassroots leaders, academic experts and more than 1,000 residents across the region. It was a journey of listening, learning and poring through data. It challenged everyone who participated to grapple honestly with complex, often unspoken issues of race and ethnicity and how they intersect with place and opportunity. It pushed the foundation leadership and staff to be flexible, embrace uncertainty and take risks. ■

Notes

1. See <http://sff.org/programs/nurturing-equity-movements/rapid-response-fund-for-movement-building/>.
2. Learn more about TSFF’s listening sessions at <http://bayareavoices.org/>.