

Lunch Panel – A Conversation with Funders

Panelists:

Pat Christopher, program director for Crail-Johnson Foundation in San Pedro, CA. Crail-Johnson is a family foundation that funds programs in Los Angeles County. It provides general operating support. www.crail-johnson.org

Julio Marcial, program officer for The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF) in Woodland Hills, CA. TCWF is a private statewide foundation that provides leadership and funding for violence prevention in California. The foundation provides general operating support. www.tcwf.org

Amanda Rounsaville, communications & public affairs grants officer for The California Endowment (TCE). TCE is one of the largest private foundations in the nation. Its funding priorities will change in 2010. www.calendow.org

Moderator:

Bess Bendet, director of Blue Shield Against Violence, a program initiative of the Blue Shield of California Foundation. BSCF is a corporate foundation, an independent licensee of the Blue Shield Association. www.blueshieldcafoundation.org

This guided discussion among foundation representatives provided insight into ways in which participants could connect to grant-making institutions. TCWF has an annual grant-making budget of approximately \$40 to \$50 million. The issue areas in which they fund include women's health issues, violence prevention, health aging and others. California Wellness is different from many foundations in that they take risks. It is not necessary to have other foundation funding in order to get money at TCWF.

Crail-Johnson donates about \$1 million annually with a focus on impacting the lives of youth and children. Like other family foundations, CJF looks for opportunities in the communities where the donor's family lives and does business. Pat noted that domestic violence is not a priority at CJF but said they are responsive to requests.

TCE is the largest health foundation in California. TCE's mission is to improve health in underserved communities. It grants up to \$170 million per year, mostly in California. Amanda announced that the organization is in the middle of strategic planning and about to shift key grant-making

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BSCF Training Institute at CPEDV Annual Meeting, September 9, 2008

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<http://www.blueshieldcafoundation.org/programs/domestic-violence/cpedv-annual-meetings.cfm>

policies and procedures. By the year 2010, grants made by TCE will focus on communities with the poorest health outcomes in the state and where concentrated resources are expected to produce significant improvements. In the meantime, their current grant-making guidelines continue and she advised that funding requests focus on “building healthy communities.”

Blue Shield is different from most foundations in that it is not endowed. BSCF relies on an annual gift from Blue Shield of California and typically provides grants totaling \$30 to \$40 million per year, almost exclusively in California. The commitment to funding domestic violence organizations extends from the CEO throughout the foundation. BSCF is more proactive in their grant making. The foundation staff actively examines the landscape and proactively seeks ways to strengthen organizations and efforts to make significant improvements.

Tips for Grant Seekers and Grantees from Panelists

- Domestic violence may not be a top priority for most foundations. Consider how best to educate and keep foundations informed of developments in the field.
- Be persistent! Foundations cannot fund every request received. Persistence usually pays.
- Effective communication is key. Keep foundations informed through newsletters, briefing papers, press releases, etc.
- Send letters to the program staff and the CEO.
- Visit foundation websites frequently.
- Use the websites to learn and respond to their often unique guidelines.
- Don't use templates or “cookie cutter” letters of interest.
- Los Angeles County alone has thousands of foundations. Each foundation is different. Use the Foundation Center (www.foundationcenter.org) to learn about foundations that serve your geographic area.
- Make sure to get on the email list for each foundation.
- Program officers often want to help you do what you're doing; keep in touch and make sure they stay informed.
- When formulating a grant request, be advocates for the issues of concern to your organization.
- Organizations in underserved communities can do independent needs assessments to give foundations better insight into their conditions.
- Call and speak directly to program staff to gain more insight into funding priorities, and potential for participation in partnerships or joint ventures with other grantees.