



Strengthening Democracy, Increasing Opportunities:

Impacts of **Advocacy,** **Organizing** and **Civic** **Engagement** in **Los Angeles County**

by Lisa Rangelhelli and Julia Craig



A Snapshot:

15 organizations and their allies

\$75.5 million in funding for policy engagement efforts

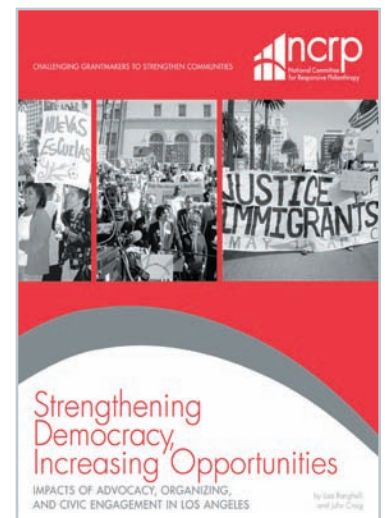
\$6.88 billion worth of benefits from their accomplishments

A return on investment at **\$91 for every dollar** spent

And examples of concrete community-wide benefits from citizen involvement

highlights

- In 2007, L.A. County's **2,930 active private and community grantmaking foundations** held assets of **\$42.7 billion**.
- Over the studied 5-year-period between 2004 and 2008, foundations and other institutional grantmakers provided critical monetary, capacity building and convening support to non-profit efforts. Funders contributed **\$58 million, or 77% of all advocacy and organizing funding for 15 organizations** over these years.
- Analysis of a small sample of diverse organizations in Los Angeles County revealed **substantial benefits for vulnerable communities** as a result of such funding, including more than **\$6.89 billion in monetary gains** as well as **many non-monetized impacts**.
- For **every dollar invested** in the advocacy, organizing, and civic engagement activities of 15 community groups collectively, there was **\$91 in benefits** to Los Angeles County communities.
- Data from 13 groups reveals that they collectively trained more than **14,000 leaders**, grew their membership by almost **40,000 individuals** and turned out close to **55,000 people at public actions**.
- As a result of foundation support during the 5-year-period, groups verified at least 45 separate community impacts, of which at least 25 were able to be monetized. These impacts directly **benefit tens of thousands of workers, families, public school students, immigrants, transit users, LGBTQ residents and other historically vulnerable groups**.



[Full Report](#) | [Executive Summary](#)

"On every issue of concern to residents of Los Angeles County, from clean air to immigration, from equality to education, foundation support for community-based activist organizations yields positive results. Foundation support turns indifference into democracy and the benefits of a thriving democracy are indeed substantial."

***- Aaron Dorfman
Executive Director, NCRP***

The 15 nonprofit organizations from Los Angeles County included in the report are:

- Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC)
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)
- Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment
- Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)
- InnerCity Struggle (ICS)
- Koreatown Immigrant Workers Alliance (KIWA)
- Labor Community Strategy Center/Bus Riders Union (LCSC/BRU)
- L.A. Voice PICO
- Los Angeles ACORN
- Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE)
- Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Community Service Center
- Los Angeles Metropolitan Churches (LAM)
- People Organized for Westside Renewal (POWER)
- South Asian Network (SAN)
- Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE)

The **Southern California Grantmakers** were partners in this project.

our experts



Lisa Rangelhi (co-author) joined NCRP in 2008 as senior research associate. She brings nearly 20 years of experience in the nonprofit and public sectors. Most recently, Lisa was a consultant to foundations and social justice organizations. Previously, Lisa was deputy director of public policy at the Center for Community Change, where she helped grassroots organizations mobilize successfully in response to federal and state policy issues. Lisa holds a master of regional planning degree from Cornell University.



Aaron Dorfman is the executive director of NCRP. He previously served for 15 years as a community organizer, including ten years as executive director of People Acting for Community Together in Miami, Fla. Aaron led dozens of successful grassroots campaigns to improve education, transportation, housing and other issues affecting low-income communities. He studied political science and grassroots social movements at Carleton College under the direction of the late Senator Paul Wellstone. Aaron holds an M.A. in philanthropic studies from Indiana University's Center on Philanthropy.



Julia Craig (co-author) joined NCRP in 2007 and now serves as research associate. She was a contributing author to NCRP's *Criteria for Philanthropy at its Best*. Previously, Julia served as an AmeriCorps VISTA at the Human Services Coalition, a nonprofit social service and advocacy organization in Miami, Florida. She holds a degree in social relations from James Madison College at Michigan State University.

FAQs

How was the ROI calculated?

The ROI was calculated with the following formula:

$$\text{ROI} = \frac{\text{aggregate dollar amount of all wins}}{\text{aggregate dollars invested in advocacy and organizing}}$$

It illustrates how the collective financial support from foundations and other sources for a set of advocacy and organizing groups in a location over time has contributed to the collective policy impacts of these groups.

How were the 15 sample nonprofits identified?

NCRP generated a list of local organizations after consultations with nonprofit, foundation and community leaders. Then researchers looked for those organizations that meet the following criteria:

- Existed for at least five years
- Had at least one full-time staff or equivalent whose work is devoted to advocacy or organizing
- Focused on a core constituency of lower-income people, people of color, or other marginalized groups, broadly defined.
- Worked on a local, regional (with-state) or state-wide level
- Had the capacity to provide data for the research

Why did NCRP focus on those organizations that work primarily with marginalized communities?

This criteria reflect NCRP's mission to promote a philanthropy that better serves the public good, supports nonprofit effectiveness and responds to the needs of those with the least wealth, opportunity and power.

FAQs (cont'd)

Is advocacy the same as lobbying?

No. Advocacy is the act of promoting a cause, idea or policy to influence people's opinions or actions on matters of public policy concern. Lobbying can be part of an advocacy strategy, but advocacy doesn't necessarily have to involve lobbying.

There are other types of advocacy activities, such as public issue education, nonpartisan voter registration/education/mobilization and grassroots mobilization. Nonprofits can lobby legally, although federal laws determine how much lobbying a nonprofit organization can undertake. Each state has different additional guidelines for nonprofits operating within its jurisdiction.

There are no legal limits to the amount of non-lobbying advocacy activities a nonprofit can undertake.

What specific strategies did the 15 nonprofits use to engage their constituents?

Researchers found that these nonprofits used a number of effective strategies, including:

- Organizing across race and ethnicity
- Youth organizing and leadership development
- Non-partisan voter engagement
- Ballot initiatives
 - > Coalition building
 - > Legal advocacy

FAQs (cont'd)

What L.A. area and California foundations were recognized most frequently for being effective partners with nonprofits in their advocacy, organizing and civic engagement efforts?

- California Community Foundation
- California Endowment
- California Wellness Foundation
- James Irvine Foundation
- Liberty Hill Foundation
- United Way of Greater Los Angeles
- Women's Foundation of California

Has NCRP conducted similar studies at others states or regions?

Yes, the report on Los Angeles County is fourth in a series. NCRP has published similar reports on **New Mexico**, **North Carolina** and **Minnesota**. Research is underway in the Pacific Northwest and Pennsylvania.

A summary of findings from all four study sites is available at www.ncrp.org/files/media/gcipfindings-media.pdf.

For more information, please visit www.ncrp.org/campaigns-research-policy/communities/gcip.

contact us

For more than 30 years, NCRP has served as the only independent watchdog of institutional grantmakers, providing information and analyses on issues regarding philanthropic accountability, effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of marginalized communities.

To speak with any of our **experts, representatives from the 15 nonprofits** and **our partner**, or to receive a media copy of the report please contact:

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