



GREEN ACCESS Program Retrospective

2007-2012



PREPARED BY
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Seven Hills Philanthropy

Photo Courtesy of APEN

Message from Staff

Over the past five years, we've had an incredible opportunity to support some of the nation's most impactful social justice work, having the great privilege to closely know the communities and individuals that made such work effective. While we always conducted our due diligence with great integrity, many of our grant partners were also in our larger circles of involvement, in organizations that we were ourselves members of or provided leadership within, or were in communities in which we grew up or currently live.

We carried out a strategy where the work we supported – locally as community-based and –led advocacy and organizing strategies, and nationally as efforts that centered on leadership by people of color - provided a unique opportunity to learn deeply the dynamic ecosystems of social justice that have for so long allowed change to happen. We gained insight and first-hand experience around learning realities that pushed beyond the pervasive images of our communities as victims to be saved or problems to be solved, but instead are full of diversity, conflicting voices, strength, courage, leadership, empathy, and a belief in shared faiths and collective action.

We want to be clear that funding such work is an invaluable opportunity to support and play a concrete role in dynamic and ever-evolving community leadership and learn so many otherwise inaccessible truths around how progress happens.

This retrospective documents the progression of our Green Access program from 2007 to 2012, and distills the themes and developments that characterize the work of the organizations we have supported.

In short order, the Foundation's work will significantly change, strongly driven by our board's vision of how we can make the deepest impact. Our hope for this retrospective paper is twofold: to share a little of what we've seen and learned, and to convey within this paper the depth of gratitude and admiration for having participated in and witnessed this critical social justice work.

Many thanks to Judi Powell for her insight and precision in helping to tell this story.

Sincerely,
Mario Lugay, Program Officer
Cedric Brown, CEO
Mitchell Kapor Foundation
May 2013

INTRODUCTION

The Mitchell Kapor Foundation's interest in environmental equity and justice can be traced back to events and ideas that were beginning to gain notice on a national level by the mid-2000s. Hurricane Katrina in 2005, followed closely by Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* in 2006, deepened the Board's concern, just as these milestones fueled a national conversation about global climate change and, in the case of Katrina, its disproportionate impact on low-income communities of color. The Board's nascent relationship with Van Jones, founder of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, gave them access to his ideas and work regarding eco-equity as they were taking shape.

It is not surprising, then, that when the Foundation launched its strategic investment in the environment in 2007—called “Green Access”—it did so with the intention of finding and funding work related to sustainability that was on the cutting edge. The Foundation coined the term “Green Access” to signal that its work would go beyond the conventional environmental justice framework—it would include the newly emerging ideas and concerns that integrated climate change and sustainability with their effects on low-income communities of color.

The Foundation chose three initial targets within Green Access for its grantmaking:

- » Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability: educating and engaging communities of color to make sustainable choices (e.g., recycling, consuming healthy food, saving energy);
- » Green Jobs: supporting development of sustainable industries and living wage job opportunities; and
- » Climate Justice: ensuring representation from low-income communities in climate change policy development and minimizing the effects of climate change on these same communities.

Between 2007 and 2009, the Foundation transitioned its grantmaking to more closely reflect community needs and trends in the social sector, and to remain aligned with the Foundation's available resources. First, the Foundation transitioned its Lifestyles grantmaking to Food Justice, as the latter became a significant movement with direct impact on the health and well-being of low-income-community residents. The Foundation's Food Justice grantmaking prioritized programs such as school- and community-based gardens, community-based food education, and food security. The Foundation explored the intersection of food justice and job

creation—green jobs related to food production and consumption—and began supporting efforts to create social enterprises with food as their main product. The hope was that these social enterprises would create jobs for those with even the highest barriers to employment and help revitalize low-income communities which, in turn, would draw in green grocers and full-scale markets. The need for significant capital to take social enterprises to scale proved to be a barrier, however, and the Foundation's impact in this area has been limited.

Similarly, the Foundation's investments in Green Jobs took a turn as it learned more about the field and as sector trends shifted. The first Green Jobs grants were mostly to support job training programs in weatherization and solar power. Soon, however, it became clear that there were limited employment opportunities for graduates of these programs. There appeared to be more opportunities in “greening the gray” fields (industries that clean up waste and pollution in sustainable ways or convert formerly dirty enterprises into sustainable ones). These included recyclers, composters, urban farmers, and sustainable food manufacturers—all growing industries. Once again, however, the Foundation discovered that high levels of capital investment were needed to take these operations to scale.

The third Green Access target, Climate Justice, grew between 2007 and 2011 as a proportion of the Foundation's total investments. As climate change was a hot topic in policy and legislative arenas, Foundation grant recipients became increasingly engaged in supporting legislation and policies favorable to low-income communities of color. They linked their experience with civic engagement and organizing to climate change to great effect. Although the federal Climate Change bill was defeated in 2010, several efforts at the state and local levels won huge victories through the work of organizations supported by the Kapor Foundation as described in the pages that follow. The Foundation's investment in Climate Justice work grew as it saw the opportunity to capitalize on the momentum in the field and to support meaningful change.

All together, the Kapor Foundation invested more than \$3 million in Green Access organizations between 2007 and 2012. It cannot go unmentioned, however, that the same period witnessed the largest economic downturn in the United States since the Great Depression. Nonprofits were also challenged by the downturn, as funders reduced or eliminated funding altogether. The Kapor Foundation kept its sights on its strategic objectives, however, and maintained support for key partner organizations at or close to historical levels.

An Integrated Approach to Environmental & Economic Justice

From the beginning of its strategic grantmaking in 2007, the Kapor Foundation sought to invest in an integrated approach that combined environmental justice with economic justice. Traditional environmental justice (EJ) seeks fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. Its focus is on the disproportionately negative impact of pollution, toxic facilities, and environmental crimes on low-income communities of color. The Foundation's interest in environmental justice is where it meets with broader social and racial justice issues, including, although not limited to, economic justice. As a result, many of the Kapor Foundation's investments in Green Access have been to organizations that view their work in the broader frame of social justice and/or racial justice. They champion a range of causes that impact low-income communities of color, but with a holistic view that includes climate change and environmental issues more broadly.

Many of the organizations supported by the Kapor Foundation developed over time an integrated approach to environmental issues that affect low-income communities of color. A quest for greater impact and a wish to counter legislative threats drove them to recognize the connections between issues affecting their communities. They began to revise their theories of change and form coalitions that took them beyond their "silos."

For example, the **East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy** (EBASE) began its work in 1999 by mounting campaigns to secure a living wage for East Bay workers. Over time, as the organization began to look more broadly at the causes of poverty for people of color, its work expanded to include environmental issues in low-income communities as well as leadership development and civic engagement strategies. The **Ella Baker Center for Human Rights** experienced a similar evolution, widening its focus on juvenile justice and economic opportunity to embrace the possibilities of a green economy. (See profiles of EBASE and Ella Baker below.)

Another grant recipient, **Movement Generation**, was formed in 2007 to integrate environmental issues with other social justice concerns. Movement Generation helps organizations

in low-income communities of color that work on all issues—immigration, housing, transportation, economic empowerment, and so on—develop and integrate an environmental analysis into their strategies and work. Through retreats and workshops with young organizational leaders, Movement Generation helps organizations analyze and understand how environmental issues and climate change will impact their work and the communities in which they work.

People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER) and **Contra Costa Interfaith Supporting Community Organization** (CCISCO) are two other grant recipients that take an integrated approach to environmental and economic justice. Both are grassroots organizing nonprofits with a history of successfully mounting campaigns to promote environmental and economic justice for low-income residents. Their central strategy is to form coalitions of organizations that work on a variety of issues but that all work on behalf of the same communities. In PODER's own words, "As an organization that was launched at the onset of the environmental justice (EJ) movement, PODER has intentionally linked our local organizing with the EJ movement's call for a holistic approach to the social, economic, and environmental racism our communities face..." (2011 grant proposal) PODER, whose core constituency is Latino immigrant families in southeast San Francisco, routinely works with other community-based social justice organizations such as the Chinese Progressive Association and the Filipino Community Center on issues that combine economic and environmental concerns, such as affordable housing and workforce agreements.

CCISCO organizes congregations and faith-based groups to work on grassroots campaigns to improve conditions in low-income communities in Contra Costa County, home of nine of the ten top greenhouse gas-emitting corporations in the Bay Area. For example, the multiyear Pathways to Quality Jobs campaign brings together CCISCO's constituents with the UC Berkeley Labor Center, local building and trades unions, and the Central Labor Council to create pathways to green jobs in conjunction with the redevelopment of the Concord Naval Weapons Station.

Kapor Foundation grant recipients are not alone in using an integrated approach; they are part of a broad trend in social justice circles. As one nonprofit executive director put it, "There's much more silo busting now." This strategy has the potential to be more effective at bringing about the changes sought because it engages communities and approaches reform in ways that more accurately mirror the integrated realities of people's lives. The Foundation financially supported this strategy and fostered opportunities for collaboration among its grant recipients as described later in this report.

PROFILE

East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE)



EBASE **EAST BAY** **ALLIANCE** **— FOR A —** **SUSTAINABLE** **ECONOMY**

“Changes in poverty and unemployment are linked to racial injustice and environmental degradation.”

—Nikki Fortunato Bas, EBASE
Executive Director

October 6, 2009, marked an important victory for the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy (EBASE). On that day, the Port of Oakland Board of Commissioners passed a dirty truck ban in the Port, the culmination of years of advocacy by EBASE and the Oakland Coalition for Clean and Safe Ports. The new regulation called for turning away old, dirty diesel trucks in order to comply with the state’s mandates for concrete reductions in air pollution. This ban would be the first step leading to significant improvements in public health in the communities surrounding the Port and for the more than 1,500 truck drivers who service the Port each year.

EBASE launched the Campaign for Clean and Safe Ports in 2007 and formed an 80-organization coalition to improve the unhealthy conditions in the U.S.’s fifth busiest container seaport. Port truckers were working on average 11 hours a day and spending 2-1/2 hours idling in diesel fumes as they waited in line to load their trucks. Residents of the surrounding community breathed in toxic fumes linked to cancer and asthma at levels that greatly exceeded those considered acceptable by OSHA.

The victory in October 2009 was the first of several that followed to support the low-income people—truckers and community residents—affected by conditions in the Port of Oakland. It also represented EBASE’s first large-scale effort that brought together economic and environmental justice concerns. Its “greening the gray” approach sought to create green jobs from gray ones in order to protect worker and resident health and safety.

EBASE was founded in 1999 to form alliances to create good jobs and protect the rights of workers in Oakland, CA and its surrounding communities. Its early work involved mounting living wage campaigns and later community benefit agreements (e.g., local hire). Among its early successes were living wage agreements in five East Bay cities.

In 2009, EBASE began to consider a more holistic approach to creating social change. Over the next couple of years, the organization refined its theory of change to reflect the inter-relatedness between economic justice and environmental justice, and also the connection between economic justice and racial justice. In fact, EBASE recognized the opportunity to combat the opposition between jobs and the environment that often exists by bringing them together with a focus on worker health and safety, as well as highlighting the connections between income level and health.

EBASE Executive Director Nikki Fortunato Bas explains that the shift in EBASE’s orientation stemmed

from a drive to be meaningful in the wake of the recession when many low-income people of color remained locked out of the economy. Bas and her colleagues realized that addressing the root causes of poverty required using an integrated approach that looked at the intersection of the economy, the environment and race. She credits support from the Kapor Foundation for helping her organization reach this conclusion: “Being a Kapor Foundation grantee, which brought us into conversation with other grantees at convenings, confirmed that we needed to be holistic.” Being part of the Foundation’s community of organizations also helped EBASE link environmental concerns to the health and safety of workers, further solidifying its newly-broadened perspective.

Bas also credits the Kapor Foundation for providing support at a crucial time for the organization. Just as she took over as executive director, the economic downturn hit and several funders reduced or eliminated support at that time and over the next few years. The Kapor Foundation came on as a new funder in 2009, adding stability and predictability at a time it was needed most. The Foundation’s support beyond

the grant has been valuable as well, pro bono support for communications, technical support on its 12th anniversary video, and consultation and assistance from the Foundation's director of assistance and advising.

Following on the success of its Campaign for Clean and Safe Ports, EBASE launched a second campaign

in 2010 that continues to advance the goals of good jobs and healthy communities. The Revive Oakland Campaign, made up of a coalition of 30 organizations, is working to secure a community jobs agreement for the redevelopment of the Oakland Army Base, a 333-acre parcel that has the potential to create more than 2,000 permanent jobs. The campaign calls

for job training, living wages, local hiring agreements, and community enforcement. Already the coalition has secured a precedent-setting community jobs agreement with the City of Oakland and developers for the City's portion of the development. Its next step is to seek the same strong standards on the Port of Oakland's side of the project.

PROFILE

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights

“The green jobs frame puts working people of color at the heart of climate change.”

—Jakada Imani, Ella Baker Center Executive Director

After two long years of advocacy and leadership by the Oakland Climate Action Coalition (OCAC), in March 2011 the Oakland City Council passed one of the most comprehensive and equitable climate adaptation and disaster relief plans in the nation. Oakland's Energy Climate and Action Plan (ECAP) was a victory for the Ella Baker Center (EBC), the original convener and organizer of OCAC, because the final plan included the provisions the coalition fought for, including a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and green jobs opportunities for low-income residents.

Many people know the Ella Baker Center for its work promoting green-collar job opportunities in low-income and communities of color. In addition to EBC's leadership role in the passage of Oakland ECAP,

the organization has sponsored and helped to replicate green jobs training programs for young adults, and successfully advocated for federal funding for green jobs training in 2007. Under the leadership of EBC's founding Executive Director Van Jones, EBC helped to put green jobs on the map.

But EBC started as a human rights organization that targeted police brutality and over-incarceration in low-income and communities of color as injustices that needed reform. It used a mix of tactics that included grassroots organizing, direct advocacy, media advocacy, public education, policy reform and legal service to unlock the power of low-income people and people of color to transform their communities. Over the years, EBC worked, and continues to work, on projects and campaigns aimed at criminal justice reform.

In the early 2000s, EBC ventured into climate change as its leadership began to see the connection between economic opportunity and the emerging green jobs sector as a way to revitalize low-income urban communities. Hurricane Katrina



in 2005 made the intersection of economic justice and environmental justice even more stark. It was a harsh demonstration that low-income communities of color were bearing the brunt of climate change, but they were being left out of decision-making regarding recovery and rebuilding resources.

With the launch of the Green-Jobs Campaign (then called Reclaim the Future) in 2005, EBC began its work in earnest to ensure that low-income communities were positioned to benefit from green economy opportunities. In 2008, EBC piloted a Green Jobs Corps in partnership with the City of Oakland, Laney College, Cypress Mandela (apprenticeship program) and Growth Sector (workforce intermediary). This program trained 40 young adults in solar installation and green construction. As the economic downturn hit, however, EBC shifted its focus to advocating for policies that would create more

local green jobs in the long-run. At the same time, Oakland's Green Jobs Corps became a national model.

Kapor Foundation support has been integral to EBC's work. Significantly, the Foundation provided support for the community-based planning process that helped to shape ECAP. EBC also benefited from the way in which the Kapor Foundation's two strategic funding areas—Green Access and Voter Access—work together. EBC's clearly falls into both program areas and has received

grant support and participated in nonprofit convenings from both.

More profoundly, EBC credits the Kapor Foundation for working to strengthen the ecosystem of nonprofits working for social and racial justice. The Foundation-hosted convenings that brought together the larger community of nonprofits were valuable opportunities to learn from peers and form partnerships for future work. EBC Executive Director Jakada Imani put it this way, "They get it. It's not one organization or set of issues

that's going to win this thing."

EBC continues its work at the nexus of environmental and economic justice. In July 2012, EBC introduced an Energy and Climate Action Plan toolkit to guide cities and communities through an inclusive process of developing their own plans. EBC continues to lead the way on policy as one of five organizations on the leadership team of Communities United, working for the equitable implementation of California's Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32).

ORGANIZATIONS EXPANDING THEIR REACH: Local to National, Education to Advocacy

The drive to achieve greater community impact has led several Kapor Foundation grant recipients to expand their reach beyond their original activities, or in some cases, beyond their initial geographical focus. Organizations that began with the purpose of educating low-income residents about environmental threats in their communities have grown to incorporate policy advocacy and community organizing into their portfolio of activities. Others that initially had a local focus for their advocacy work now have a seat at the table of state- and national-level conversations.

Green For All exemplifies expansion to a national, systemic level by its very existence. The organization was founded in 2008 by leaders of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights to push the green jobs agenda to a national stage. Green For All expanded the regional green jobs work started by the Ella Baker Center and took it to a national level. The organization has built a strong national reputation in its three spheres: policy development and advocacy; capacity building among organizations, agencies, and communities that work to sustain a green economy; and movement building by developing a network of leaders, organizations, coalitions, and communities.

Since 1997, **REDF** has implemented a successful social enterprise model that creates jobs for those with the highest barriers to employment. With Kapor Foundation support, REDF replicated its model in California markets beyond its base in the San Francisco Bay Area. With a grant from the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and matching grants from the Kapor Foundation and others, REDF added six sites, including two in Los Angeles, to its portfolio in 2010. The SIF grant has given REDF greater visibility among a national audience, as has the national "job-creating social enterprise working group" recently established by REDF.

City Slicker Farms has become a regional leader in urban farming and food security, with a growing national profile as well. The organization has grown from its first garden in West Oakland in 2001 to seven community market farms, over 100 backyard gardens, a weekly farm stand, a greenhouse, and urban farming education programs. Notably, City Slicker Farms has taken on a prominent role in policy circles, locally as part of the Oakland Food Policy Council, and is recognized as a leader in food justice on a national level.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) began in 1993 as a network of the small but growing number of Asian environmental justice groups. Almost from the beginning, APEN also engaged in direct organizing, first by forming the Laotian Organizing Project in 1995 to work in Richmond, California, and by creating Power in Asians Organizing in 2002 to work in Oakland. Over time, APEN has become more active in addressing state-level policy as a way to increase its impact exponentially. (See profile of APEN, next page.)

PROFILE

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)



“Separate campaigns in two cities weren’t adding up to enough. We saw an opportunity; statewide there was a vacuum with API populations on these issues.”

—Roger Kim, APEN Executive Director

On August 6, 2012, a fire erupted at Chevron’s oil refinery in Richmond, CA, sending hundreds of nearby residents to hospitals seeking treatment for respiratory problems and nausea. Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) is no stranger to the environmental hazards presented by this refinery located in a low-income community of color 10 miles northwest of San Francisco. As the state’s largest emitter of greenhouse gases, this refinery has been the target of APEN organizing and action for more than a decade. In fact, an explosion at this same refinery in 1999 was the impetus behind APEN’s direct organizing work.

APEN’s earliest activities (1993) were community education about environmental hazards, such as lead and mercury. Working with the largely low-income Laotian community in Contra Costa County (which became known as the Laotian Organizing Project) and later with a diverse Asian population in Oakland (Power in Asians Organizing), also largely low-income, APEN educated residents about environmental threats

in their communities and mobilized them to fight successfully for ordinances and community agreements that improved conditions for workers exposed to toxins and established a multilingual early warning system, among other victories.

Though the accomplishments brought about by APEN were significant in their own right, APEN’s leadership wanted to broaden the organization’s impact in terms of scale and geography. Led by Executive Director Roger Kim, APEN set out to apply its ability to build power within the Asian Pacific Islander (API) community to effect change at the local level to a larger platform. Instead of changing conditions for thousands of residents, they would impact tens of thousands or even more.

The opportunity to affect state-level policy came with California Proposition 23 which was on the November 2010 ballot. Backed by oil companies, Proposition 23 sought to suspend the greenhouse emissions standards put in place by California’s 2006 landmark state law, the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32). APEN assumed a leadership role within the Oakland Rising coalition to mobilize API communities to educate their fellow residents and get out the vote. The broad-based grassroots campaign was successful. As APEN Executive Director Roger Kim put it, “We killed it. Prop 23 went down in flames.” Communities of color were the deciding margin of vote.

The No on 23 campaign was not only a turning point for APEN; it also changed the narrative of how

to influence climate change policy. No on 23 demonstrated to mainstream environmental organizations the power of communities of color and grassroots organizing, in effect, giving APEN’s communities and other communities of color a seat at the table.

APEN credits the Kapor Foundation’s steady and significant financial support with helping it to make the transition from a solely local focus to state-level impact. Also, the general operating nature of the grants allowed APEN to take risks and seize opportunities for growth. The No on 23 campaign was one such risk. The Foundation’s general operating support also gave APEN the bandwidth to form a 501(c)4 entity which is eligible to engage in lobbying without jeopardizing its tax-exempt status. This move will allow APEN to have a higher profile and greater impact in state-level policy circles.

APEN continues to build its state-wide policy presence, using lessons learned in the No on 23 campaign about forming coalitions and mobilizing on a large scale. APEN’s biggest current state-level battle once again has AB 32 as its focus. This time APEN is working to ensure that the law is implemented with the best interests of low-income communities of color front and center.

Successes

The Kapor Foundation's key partner organizations have been remarkably successful over the past several years, despite the challenges and threats presented by the economic downturn. As described earlier, they have continued to educate and mobilize communities for policy change, nurtured untapped sources of community-based leadership, created green jobs for those who are hard to employ, and expanded their reach for greater impact.

Policy advocacy organization **Brightline Defense Project** works in low-income communities and communities of color in San Francisco to promote sustainability and other quality of life improvements. Brightline has a history of successful community organizing for local hire agreements for green jobs and quality of life improvements (e.g., pollution abatement). With Kapor Foundation support, Brightline was instrumental in forming the Southeast Jobs Coalition to lead grassroots campaigns advancing the cause of community-based workforce development, most significantly in the green jobs sector. In 2010, Brightline's work with the Southeast Jobs Coalition led to the passage of a landmark agreement in San Francisco that has been called the strongest mandatory local hiring legislation in the nation.

The **Supportive Housing Employment Collaborative** (SHEC) began in 1996 as a project to train formerly homeless residents of supportive housing for jobs, including green jobs, and help them find permanent positions. Interns in its green jobs program—the Recycling and Environmental Awareness Program (REAP)—also engage in peer outreach that annually educates 1,200 of their fellow tenants on conservation and food justice. Despite cuts in public funding, support from the Kapor Foundation allowed SHEC not only to continue its operations but make modest improvements to its REAP internship curriculum and find more short-term employment placements on SHEC's Green Work Crew.

Through the 6 Wins Network, **Public Advocates** partners with more than thirty grassroots and advocacy organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area to ensure that low-income communities of color have strategic policy and legal support to shape regional planning decisions. Their current work focuses on implementation of California's Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32). Several Kapor Foundation grant recipients, including APEN, Brightline Defense Project, CCISCO, EBASE, and the

Ella Baker Center, are involved in the Network and have benefitted from Public Advocates' expertise in the highly technical legislation implementation process. Already the Network has succeeded in making changes to the SB 375 implementation plan that will positively affect low-income communities of color. For example, the Network proposed an alternative "Equity, Environment and Jobs Scenario" for the Bay Area in response to an official plan that lacked public input and failed to address equity. The Network's proposal included options for more affordable housing in job opportunity-rich places and more public transit where it's needed most. This proposal was unanimously passed by the executive committee of one of the regional governing agencies (Association of Bay Area Governments) and taken under consideration by the other (Metropolitan Transportation Commission).

Inner City Advisors (ICA) offers pro bono strategic business advisory services to growth-oriented companies located in Bay Area inner cities as a means to create jobs and revitalize inner-city communities. Among the more well-known companies in ICA's portfolio are Blue Bottle Coffee Co., Numi Organic Teas, and wholesome school lunch provider Revolution Foods. With Kapor Foundation support, ICA refined its own business model to focus on middle-sized companies that are looking to grow, and fine-tuned its consulting and education services to be more effective and efficient. Significantly, ICA also began to address its clients' need for capital by launching a debt/equity fund, Brightpath Capital Partners, to provide capital to the types of companies in ICA's portfolio.

Challenges

Capacity is a common challenge faced by the nonprofit sector, and Kapor Foundation grant recipients are no exception. Many organizations mentioned that capacity constraints prevented them from working at the level they would like. Whether in the form of limited staff resources, restricted capacity of coalition partners, inadequate funding to expand into new areas of need, it all amounted to a lack of funds to do the work. Sometimes it was a matter of cuts from other funders; in other cases the funding supply was not keeping pace with the rate of change and growth among Green Access organizations. Either way, Kapor Foundation grant recipients continued to do their good work, often by forming new and strong alliances to share the burden and increase the scope of work possible.

PARTNERS FOR CHANGE: The Kapor Foundation Grantmaking Approach

Kapor Foundation grant recipients are well aware that the Foundation is an unusual funder—unusual in a positive way. The Foundation approached its grantmaking as a partner, meaning it brought all of its resources to bear—not just financial—to strengthen grant recipient organizations. This strong sense of partnership came in part from a shared commitment to racial and social justice which, while not unique, is uncommon enough that it gave the Foundation distinction among nonprofits. Several of the grant recipients referred to Foundation staff and Board as “partners” and “true allies” for just this reason.

Several nonprofits praised the Foundation for its willingness to be a first or early funder of their organizations. More than once, the Foundation was described as a “risk taker,” which was sometimes linked to the professional backgrounds of its founders, or as one executive director put it, “the Kapors’ DNA in technology, risk and innovation.” Nonprofits were also appreciative of the Foundation’s willingness to become or remain a key funder at a time of transition, either the arrival of a new executive director or the loss of other funding. These investments allowed nonprofits to continue to thrive and even grow.

The Foundation’s active partnership also helped nonprofits secure funding from other foundations and donors, locally and nationally. APEN, Movement Generation, PODER, Public Advocates, Brightline, ICA, and Ella Baker were among those who mentioned this benefit of Kapor partnership specifically. Not only did the Kapor Foundation name on organizations’ funder lists add credibility, at times the Foundation

was a “loud and proud” funder that introduced other funders to grant recipients’ work in face-to-face meetings.

The Kapor Foundation’s commitment to providing technical assistance to its grant recipients was also a hallmark of its grantmaking approach. Assistance included help with technology, including websites; communications support; evaluation training; access to pro bono professional support; and free meeting space. The Foundation’s commitment to providing support beyond the grant was reflected in its decision to staff a full-time director of assistance and advising who designed and coordinated all assistance programs, consulted directly with nonprofits, and acted as a liaison between nonprofits and external consultants.

The Foundation’s investment in technical assistance supported its goal to build a movement for social change in communities of color. Beyond the types of assistance already mentioned, the Foundation brought together cohorts of grant recipients for *What Works* convenings of nonprofits that dive into topics of common interest—green jobs, the federal stimulus package, etc.—and provided opportunities for extensive engagement with nonprofit peers. Several grant recipients spoke of the great value of these meetings. They helped create a network and community among the nonprofits which, at times, leads to new or better partnerships.

Not surprisingly, many of the nonprofits supported by the Kapor Foundation have worked together on projects, campaigns, or committees over the years. For example, APEN, EBASE, and the Ella Baker Center worked together on the No on 23 campaign (see APEN’s profile for more about this campaign); the Ella Baker Center, Movement Generation, APEN, PODER, and others work together on the Oakland Climate Action Coalition; Brightline and PODER have worked together on campaigns in San Francisco. Although these partnerships do not trace their origins to Kapor Foundation convenings, nonprofits report that the gatherings provide a unique space for them to talk with colleagues about the big picture and the possibilities as opposed to project meetings that focus on “the work.” These conversations forge the path to future partnerships that lead to larger and stronger movements.

CONCLUSION

The work being done by the organizations profiled above is cause for optimism. Despite the challenges presented by limited capacity, the nonprofits have, by and large, shown remarkable resilience and an ability to grow and adapt. As the landscape has continually changed—and will continue to change—these organizations have grown in ways that have deepened their impact. And they have benefited from the Kapor Foundation’s distinct brand of support for community change. Its willingness to

learn from its nonprofit partners and provide support that is most needed forms the foundation of its legacy to the field.

It is hoped by the Foundation that, as it transitions to a new organization and strategy aligned with the founders’ deep commitment to technology for social impact, the lessons contained in this report encourage continued reflection on philanthropic practices, and prompt ongoing investment from other funders in Green Access-related work.



Photo Courtesy of EBASE

On May 15, 2013
the Mitchell Kapor Foundation
will become the
Kapor Center for Social Impact

www.kaporcenter.org

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