



Community Foundations: Drivers of Inclusive and Meaningful Local Change

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Cover image: The City of Atlanta received a grant from Partners for Places, a matching grant program that paired local funders, municipalities and frontline community-led groups, to help create an urban food forest.

Photo credit: City of Atlanta/Aglanta.org



The Community Foundation Water Initiative organized several site visits, including one to Los Angeles in 2019.



Participants of TFN's PPREP learning cohort connect with the broader funding community at TFN's annual conference.

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Executive Summary

In Summer 2020, The Funders Network (TFN) engaged Estolano Advisors to examine and surface key outcomes and lessons learned from TFN's three community foundation partnership programs: (1) The Community Foundation Water Initiative; (2) Partners for Places; and (3) Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Partnership (PPREP).

From the research, which included interviews with and a survey of participating community foundations and their local partners, program investors, and TFN staff, two key takeaways emerged. First, community foundations are crucial partners in creating meaningful and sustainable change in local communities. Second, community foundation partnership models employed for the Community Foundation Water Initiative, Partners for Places, and PPREP programs have proven to be successful and powerful frameworks for regional and national foundations to engage place-based foundations in building community power and advancing inclusive community change. Building on research findings this report presents:

1. How participation in TFN's community foundation partnership programs has supported the work and role of community foundations in their local communities;
2. TFN's role in supporting community foundations in building relationships with other place-based foundations, national funders, public agencies, nonprofits, and community coalitions;
3. Benefits of community foundation partnership models towards creating sustainable and equitable communities; and
4. Opportunities for national and regional funders to leverage the power of community foundations as conduits for meaningful local investments.

Overview: TFN's Three Community Foundation Partnership Programs

TFN's three partnership programs each model a different approach to fostering cross-sector collaboration and achieving equitable outcomes. The Community Foundation Water Initiative and PPREP are cohort programs that provide participating community foundations with technical assistance, skill building, and grant funding to develop their expertise and

capacity in the areas of water and disaster preparedness. Partners for Places, a matching grant program, is structured differently than the Community Foundation Water Initiative and PPREP. Although two recent Partners for Places funding rounds have piloted a cohort model, the program is now designed to facilitate partnerships between place-based funders, local governments, and frontline community-led groups to advance equitable sustainability goals. Each of TFN's three partnership programs is supported by one or several investors, which are typically larger foundations working at the national level and/or within a specific topic area.

Recognizing Community Foundations as Drivers of Inclusive and Meaningful Local Change

TFN's three community foundation partnership programs offer national funders innovative opportunities to make impactful investments that advance a variety of issue areas in diverse local communities across the country. Through the partnership programs, national funders can strategically invest in on-the-ground needs to which community foundations are uniquely attuned. In addition, recognizing the vastness and complexity of issues like climate action and racial justice, it is essential to grow more organizations' capacity and bring them into the work of advancing change. TFN's programs serve as a vehicle through which national and regional funders can work with place-based philanthropy to translate their investments into localized awareness-building and action.

Advancing Inclusive Change: Partnership Program Successes

Community foundations and their local partners have expressed tremendous gratitude for the benefits and successes they have received and experienced through their participation in each of these three programs, such as:

1. Greater understanding of, comfort with, and organizational capacity to engage in new issues;
2. Peer-to-peer learning and a network of supportive peers;
3. Forging new multi-sector relationships and deepening existing connections; and
4. Elevating community foundations as leaders and partners in advancing community goals.

Broadening Subject Matter Expertise.

Participating community foundation practitioners universally recognized that having the space and resources to dive into a new topic area and build their subject matter expertise enhanced their organization's ability to be more dynamic and effective in their work. In addition, program participants honed their skills in connecting donors to their new areas of work; leveraging relationships with local media; and meaningfully engaging local communities in policy development. TFN's partnership programs have also played a role in expanding participating organizations' knowledge of issues related to race, equity, and inclusion. Participants not already engaged in racial equity work benefited from having both the opportunity to reflect on racial equity within their organization's work and the resources to then act on advancing racial equity through their programs and grantmaking.

Growing Community Foundations' Peer Networks.

In all three programs, participants developed strong relationships with cohort members and now turn to these new networks of community foundation peers for assistance on a variety of topics, including those unrelated to a program's particular focus. The peer learning network that has grown among the participating organizations facilitates collective problem solving and resource sharing that allows local funders to be nimbler and more responsive in meeting local needs. Participating community foundations highlighted their new peer network as a significant value-add.

Deepening Local Relationships. Through the three partnership programs, community foundations have successfully established and strengthened relationships with local public agencies, nonprofit organizations, community members, and other place-based funders. With guidance and encouragement from TFN's programs, participating foundations pursued new cross-sector partners who are critical to making meaningful local change in areas like water, sustainability, and disaster preparedness and recovery.

Building Community Power. Bringing together their new knowledge, cross-sector partnerships, and grantmaking resources, community foundations across the three partnership programs found themselves advancing community goals in new ways. By expanding their own capacity as change agents, community foundations were growing into new roles as local leaders that built local community

capacity to engage in new advocacy areas, forged innovative partnerships to address unmet needs, identified opportunities to build community power, center racial equity, and more.

Behind the Scenes of Program Success

A critical component to the success of these programs has been TFN's role as program administrators and facilitators. TFN has a long history of supporting community foundations and recognizing them as invaluable partners in creating equitable and sustainable communities. TFN's breadth of connections in the philanthropic field, subject-matter expertise, grant management capabilities, and thoughtful and deliberate approach to directing each partnership program has resulted in enriching and productive experiences for program participants.

Next Steps: Building a Model for the Philanthropic Field

Community foundations are crucial partners in creating meaningful and sustainable change in local communities. The Community Foundation Water Initiative, Partners for Places, and PPREP employ successful and powerful frameworks that enhance community foundation capacity to build community power and advance inclusive local and regional change. These programs offer innovative and adaptable approaches and structures that serve as models for the broader philanthropic field to focus on community foundations as essential partners in the work of creating equitable and sustainable communities. Each of the three programs can be replicated in new ways that enhance the capacity of the philanthropic field to equitably address the many systemic issues of our time, of which climate change, sustainability, and disaster preparedness and recovery are just a few. Expanding the reach of TFN's program models will help to uplift and unlock the full power and potential of community foundations to be vehicles for local progress. In addition, these partnership programs create space for organizations and practitioners to learn and grow their work in critical areas like racial justice and equity.

I. Introduction

Founded in 1999, The Funders Network (TFN) works to “leverage philanthropy’s unique potential to help create communities and regions that are sustainable, prosperous and just for all people...[and] inspire, strengthen and expand the funding, leadership and learning that deepens connections, ignites action and improves outcomes.”¹ In pursuit of this mission, TFN supports three community foundation partnership programs: (1) The Community Foundation Water Initiative; (2) Partners for Places; and (3) Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Partnership (PPREP). The Community Foundation Water Initiative, Partners for Places, and PPREP each focused on helping communities address challenges related to the complex issues of water, sustainability, and disaster preparedness and response, respectively.

In 2020, TFN engaged Estolano Advisors to identify key outcomes and lessons learned from its three community foundation partnership programs. This report begins with an overview of each of the three partnership programs and then delves into the findings from program interviews and a survey, which overwhelmingly point to the value these partnership programs have provided to the participating community foundations and the national foundations funding the programs’ administration and grants.

¹ TFN, “The Funders Network,” <https://www.fundersnetwork.org/about-tfn/>.





The City of Bridgeport, Conn., received a Partners for Places grant to help revitalize the city's coastline.
Photo Credit: The Trust for Public Land

II. Overview: TFN's Three Community Foundation Partnership Programs

As part of its field-building work in philanthropy, TFN has a long history of supporting community foundations and recognizing them as invaluable partners in creating equitable and sustainable communities. These three partnership programs demonstrate TFN's commitment to uplifting community foundations as local leaders and enhancing the powerful roles they have in their communities as charitable institutions rooted in specific places.

Each program models a different approach to fostering cross-sector collaboration and achieving outcomes. The Community Foundation Water Initiative and PPREP are cohort programs where participating community foundations receive technical assistance, skill building, and grant funding to build their expertise and capacity in water and disaster preparedness and recovery. Partners for Places, a matching grant program, is structured differently. Through Partners for Places, community foundations and other place-based funders partner with local government sustainability offices to advance equitable sustainability goals. Two recent Partners for Places funding rounds piloted a cohort model.

Community Foundation Water Initiative

The Community Foundation Water Initiative was launched in 2015 to support a cohort of five community foundations from across California to individually and collectively advance sustainable water management in their respective regions and statewide. Participating foundations included: (1) California Community Foundation; (2) Central Valley Community Foundation; (3) The San Diego Foundation; (4) The San Francisco Foundation; and (5) Silicon Valley Community Foundation. The program, which ended in 2020, was supported by a single funder, the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation. Cohort members met quarterly to learn about water issues and challenges relevant to each of their regions; share progress and lessons learned from their individual efforts; and make grants to better integrate water and land use throughout the state. The total funding for the initiative's administration and passthrough grants was approximately \$2.9 million across five years.

Throughout the process, the Bechtel Foundation maintained a hands-off approach that allowed

the participating community foundations to shape their individual and collective learning and investments in sustainable water management efforts. The program was designed so that each community foundation within the cohort received funding from the Bechtel Foundation to approach and invest in water through its own lens. For example, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, which has grantmaking focused on racial equity and civic engagement, supported Youth United for Community Action, a grassroots organization to engage marginalized community members in local and sub-regional climate change planning efforts. The San Diego Foundation supported projects at the climate-water nexus, such as a community planning process with the Borrego Valley Stewardship Council that empowered communities in an unincorporated area, with a declining groundwater basin, to engage in decision-making around water resilience.

In addition to distributing regionally-specific grant resources, the cohort collectively managed a shared fund administered at TFN that supported collaborative regional water projects at the intersection of water management and land use. Through this shared fund, the cohort funded the Local Government Commission to develop a report that helped “identify and pursue opportunities at the intersection of integrated water management and land-use planning that advance equity, regional economic development, climate adaptation, housing and transportation planning.”² The report outlined regional and statewide opportunities and challenges, as well as recommendations for how stakeholders, including municipalities and community-based organizations, can achieve more equitable integration of water and land use. The cohort then supported the Local Government Commission in working with five nonprofits across the state to build on the findings of the report and develop their own action plans for addressing the equitable integration of water and land use through their own work. The nonprofit partners supported were: ClimatePlan (Bay Area); Youth United for Community Action (East Palo Alto); Anza Borrego Foundation

² Local Government Commission, “Bringing Water and Land Use Together,” April 2019, <https://www.lgc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/FINAL-REPORT-Equitable-Integration-of-Water-Land-Use-10-3-18.pdf>

(Borrego Springs); Nature for All (Los Angeles); and Fresnoland (Fresno).

Partners for Places

Partners for Places is a matching grant program that aims to scale best practices in sustainability across North America. The program made its first grants in 2012 and is now on its 17th grant round. Partners for Places creates opportunities for cities and counties in the United States and Canada to invest in local projects that make urban areas more prosperous, livable, and vibrant while also fostering long-term relationships between local government sustainability offices, community foundations, and frontline community-led groups. Partners for Places has been supported by a handful of national funders, including The JPB Foundation, The Kendeda Fund, The Kresge Foundation, the New York Community Trust, the Pisces Foundation, the Summit Foundation, and the Surdna Foundation. TFN implements the program in partnership with the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) and works closely with the national funder partners. As a matching grant program, other place-based funders leverage Partners for Places grants to invest in local sustainability efforts and partnerships. To date, the program has awarded more than \$8 million in grants to projects across the United States and Canada, and worked with 147 place-based funders, leading to more than \$17 million in investments.

Partners for Places has funded a diverse set of projects in 34 states, the District of Columbia, and three Canadian provinces over the last eight years. In addition, many cities have received multiple grants that often build on the outcomes of grants awarded in previous rounds. Projects ranged across sustainability topics, from supporting a community transition plan to 100% clean and renewable electricity that prioritizes resiliency, energy security, and green jobs in Cleveland, Ohio to supporting the creation of the nation's largest publicly-owned food forest that will deliver environmental, economic and social justice outcomes for a historically Black community in Atlanta, Ga., and more.³

³ A full list of supported projects can be accessed via the Partners for Places Idea Bank: <https://www.fundersnetwork.org/partners-for-places-idea-bank/>.

Although Partners for Places has not historically used a cohort model for its general grants program, it continues to evolve to include new focus areas, grantee partners, governance structures, and more. In 2016 and 2017, as part of a new Equity Pilot Initiative, 10 cities (Baltimore, Md.; Berkeley, Calif.; Charlotte, N.C.; Cleveland, Ohio; Dubuque, Iowa; Knoxville, Tenn.; Las Cruces, N.M.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Providence, R.I.; and Washington, D.C.) were awarded Partners for Places grant funding, as well as “a range of support services...including coaching from...[an] equity consultant team, an in-person kickoff meeting, and a monthly learning cohort hosted by TFN and USDN.”⁴

Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Partnership (PPREP)

The Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Partnership (PPREP), which began in 2014, supports a community foundation disaster preparedness and recovery learning cohort in a 10-state Midwestern region of the United States, roughly correlating with the Missouri River watershed. Through PPREP, participating community foundations gain the knowledge, skills, tools, and resources to help their communities prepare for and respond to natural disasters. Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies is the program funder, and the Center for Disaster Philanthropy (CDP) is TFN's key partner whose primary role is to provide technical assistance and curriculum design. The program is now in its third phase (PPREP 3.0), which will continue through December 2022. It has grown to include 19 community foundations and three regional associations of grantmakers, for a total of 22 participating organizations.

The program has four key components: (1) tools and technical assistance; (2) learning opportunities; (3) grant resources; and (4) network health and stewardship. Through the first two phases, PPREP 1.0 and 2.0, more than \$1.7 million in implementation grants were disbursed to participating community foundations. In PPREP 1.0, each community foundation developed a disaster preparedness workbook, with technical assistance from

⁴ The Funders Network, “Partners for Places: 2017 Annual Report” https://www.usdn.org/uploads/cms/documents/partners_for_places_2017_annual_report_final.pdf.



Participants in TFN's PREPP cohort attended TFN's 2018 annual conference in Houston, Texas, which was held in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey and explored themes around resilience and sustainability.

CDP, that assessed the organization's internal capacity and the external community's capacity to engage in disaster response. CDP also provided the cohort with a technical curriculum centered on addressing disasters along with the importance of community development. In PPREP 1.0 and 2.0, following the workbook process, participating foundations applied for PPREP implementation grants to fund activities needed to fill the gaps and meet the needs highlighted in their assessment. PPREP hosts two annual gatherings, in-person and virtually, that allow the community foundations to share with each other about the successes and challenges they are experiencing in their own communities and the lessons they have learned. The program's emphasis on joint learning and strengthening community resilience encourages community foundations to build relationships between community members and emergency

response organizations, with the intention of forming strong local and far-reaching networks that can be activated during disasters.

Current PPREP participants include:⁵

1. Central Kansas Community Foundation (Newton, Kan.)
2. Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque (Dubuque, Iowa)
3. Community Foundation of the Ozarks (Springfield, Mo.)
4. Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation (Duluth, Minn.)
5. Fargo-Moorhead Area Foundation (Fargo, N.D.)

⁵ TFN, PPREP, <https://www.fundersnetwork.org/pprep/>.



6. Greater Cedar Rapids Foundation (Cedar Rapids, Mich.)
7. Initiative Foundation (Little Falls, Minn.)
8. Lincoln Community Foundation (Lincoln, Neb.)
9. The Minneapolis Foundation (Minneapolis, Minn.)
10. Minot Area Community Foundation (Minot, N.D.)
11. Montana Community Foundation (Helena, Mont.)
12. North Dakota Community Foundation (Bismarck, N.D.)
13. Northwest Minnesota Foundation (Bemidji, Minn.)
14. Oklahoma City Community Foundation (Oklahoma City, Okla.)
15. Quad Cities Community Foundation (Bettendorf, Iowa)
16. Southwest Initiative Foundation (Hutchinson, Minn.)
17. Tulsa Community Foundation (Tulsa, Okla.)
18. West Central Initiative (Fergus Falls, Minn.)
19. Willmar Area Community Foundation (Willmar, Minn.)
20. Iowa Council of Foundations (Des Moines, Iowa)
21. Kansas Association of Community Foundations (Hutchinson, Kan.)
22. Minnesota Council on Foundations (Minneapolis, Minn.)



Partners for Places funds are helping the City of Atlanta create an urban food forest with educational and volunteer opportunities in the community.
Photo Credit: City of Atlanta Mayor's Office of Resilience

III. Research Methodology

The primary research methods for this report were interviews and a survey, with supporting information drawn from existing program and grant documents. Estolano Advisors interviewed eight community foundations across the three programs; four program investors; as well as key TFN staff who manage each program. Following

the interviews, Estolano Advisors conducted a short online survey to gain feedback from an additional 10 community foundation participants and four community foundation partners, such as local advocacy organizations and public sector agencies. See Table 1 for a list of the interviewed and surveyed organizations.

Table 1: Organizations Interviewed and Surveyed

Community Foundations			
1	Central Valley Community Foundation	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Survey
2	San Francisco Foundation	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Interview
3	Silicon Valley Community Foundation	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Interview
4	The San Diego Foundation	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Survey
5	Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation	Partners for Places / PPREP	Survey
6	Gulf Coast Community Foundation	Partners for Places	Survey
7	Hawaii Community Foundation	Partners for Places	Survey
8	Greater New Orleans Foundation	Partners for Places	Interview
9	Rhode Island Foundation	Partners for Places	Interview
10	Seattle Foundation	Partners for Places	Interview
11	Central Kansas Community Foundation	PPREP	Survey
12	Community Foundation of the Ozarks	PPREP	Survey
13	Community Foundation of Greater Dubuque	PPREP	Survey
14	Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation	PPREP	Survey
15	Lincoln Community Foundation	PPREP	Interview
16	Montana Community Foundation	PPREP	Interview
17	Northwest Minnesota Foundation	PPREP	Survey
18	Quad Cities Community Foundation	PPREP	Interview
Program Investors			
19	The Kendeda Fund	Partners for Places	Interview
20	S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Interview
21	New York Community Trust	Partners for Places	Interview
22	Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies	PPREP	Interview
Local Partners			
23	ClimatePlan	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Interview
24	Local Government Commission	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Survey
25	Water Foundation	Community Foundation Water Initiative	Survey
26	City of Evanston	Partners for Places	Survey
27	City of Providence	Partners for Places	Survey
28	Deep South Center for Environmental Justice	Partners for Places	Interview
29	Scott County Emergency Management	PPREP	Interview

IV. Recognizing Community Foundations as Drivers of Inclusive and Meaningful Local Change

For regional and national funders seeking to make progress on complex issues like sustainability or community resilience, working with and through community foundations is a strategic way to make local investments. Few national funders can hope to establish the trust, insights, and connections that community foundations have in their local communities. By trusting and investing in community foundations, national funders can become key partners in advancing progress on the local level.

Community foundations are uniquely positioned in their cities and regions to advance understanding of and progress on localized issues like water, disaster preparedness and recovery, and sustainability. These place-based funders work on a breadth of issues, affording them an ability to look at communities holistically and connect these issues to existing community priorities such as housing and public transit. Through TFN's three partnership programs and the participating community foundations, large foundations have had the opportunity to reach local communities and build place-based capacity around important issues.

Reaching Local Communities through Community Foundations

For each partnership program, investors highlighted that these programs presented unique opportunities to reach local communities and expand their grantee portfolios. In addition, these programs offer a way for national funders to conduct exploratory grantmaking by making investments through local philanthropy. Through each program, program investors can learn about and better understand different regions, which help to inform their own organizations' investments and work.

Partners for Places has an open call for projects, which creates space for realizing project outcomes different from what funders may achieve acting alone or within existing networks. Partners for Places convenes a selection committee comprised of program investors, local sustainability practitioners, and TFN staff. Partners for Places is an opportunity to distribute national dollars locally in a more

egalitarian manner and with great confidence that the money will be used well.

Through the Community Foundation Water Initiative, the Bechtel Foundation made connections to local organizations across California by working with community foundations as partners. By investing in PPREP, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies' impact in the Midwest is much broader than it would be if they were making individual emergency preparedness grants to local foundations.

Through these three programs, national funders have made crucial, context-sensitive, and meaningful investments in a diverse set of local communities throughout the country. Community foundations across the programs shared that the program investors were generous and non-prescriptive with the funds they provided to program participants, which allowed participants to be nimble in using resources to address local need. One Community Foundation Water Initiative participant shared that because of the funding made available, it was able to explore new giving areas and support new grantee partners they would not have typically supported. A Partners for Places participant shared that the program's centering on clear principles and priorities, rather than specific types of projects, allowed them to use their grant funding to respond to unexpected opportunities to meet local community need.

Building Community Capacity around Important Issues

Program investors and program staff highlighted the programs' success in not only building local foundations' technical knowledge about complex or overlooked issues, like water and land use, sustainability, and disaster preparedness, but also in equipping them to grow their communities' capacity in these issue areas. By providing training and grantmaking opportunities, these partnership programs have effectively grown the number of funders aware of and connected to specific policy areas. Program investors appreciate that the network of funders in their priority giving areas is expanding through TFN's three partnership programs. In addition, the partnership programs

have helped community foundations become local leaders in new policy areas and more effectively support their communities in the work. For example, Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, PPREP's program investor, has been pleased to see some community foundations move beyond grantmaking to also being issue advocates.

Through Partners for Places and the Community Foundation Water Initiative, program investors have been able to effectively support local leadership and establish new cross-sector partnerships. With the flexibility and trust the Bechtel Foundation provided for Community Foundation Water Initiative participants, each community foundation helped its local partners build an understanding of how water connects to other big picture issues that communities were already engaged in, like housing and workforce development. Partners for Places has highlighted the power of community foundations to guide local government in ways that support stronger connections between city agencies and local community-based organizations (CBOs). For example, in Seattle, a group of local funders helped secure a sequence of Partners for Places grants that strengthened the role of equity and community in the city's sustainability work.

“ The PPREP convenings have included specific trainings and resources on identifying and working with socially vulnerable populations, as well as site visit conversations that elevate the need for an equity-centered approach. We are looking forward to our future work, which is intended to be more equity-centric. It will help to move us from a lens of ‘who most needs our help’ to one more focused on building relationships, developing lasting partnerships, and infusing our work with a lens of addressing historic and current disparities in a respectful manner. ”

- Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation, PPREP participant



Since receiving funding from the San Francisco Foundation through the Community Foundation Water Initiative, ClimatePlan — led by Executive Director Channell Fletcher (right) — has been able to better incorporate water into its work and establish a unique position in the field.
Photo credit: ClimatePlan

V. Empowering Community Foundations to Advance Inclusive Change: Successes from Three Partnership Programs

The Community Foundation Water Initiative, Partners for Places, and PPREP have empowered community foundations to embrace and leverage their unique roles in cities and regions in ways that have facilitated meaningful change in communities across the nation. In interviews and survey responses, participating community foundations and their local partners described a variety of ways these three programs positively impacted their work and communities. Participants experienced major benefits and successes including:

1. Greater understanding, comfort, and organizational capacity to engage in new issues;
2. Peer-to-peer learning and a network of supportive peers;
3. Deepening connections to local communities;
4. Elevating community foundations as leaders and partners in advancing community goals.

Behind the Scenes of Program Success

Critical to the success of these programs has been TFN's role as program administrators and facilitators. Program investors and participants underscored the peerless role TFN plays in the philanthropic field. TFN's breadth of connections in the philanthropic field, subject-matter expertise, grant management capabilities, and thoughtful approach to leading and developing each partnership program ensured that program participants, particularly in the cohort programs, had enriching and productive experiences. The Bechtel Foundation noted that one benefit to engaging TFN as the Community Foundation Water Initiative coordinator was the opportunity to leverage TFN's existing relationships with each of the program participants. Having built rapport and trust with each of the participants through its management of the Smart Growth California network, TFN was well-equipped to jump into the Community Foundation Water Initiative. For Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, TFN's capabilities and perspectives were important factors in selecting them to lead PPREP. As a Miami-based organization well attuned to

severe storms and other threats posed by climate change, TFN was different from other intermediary organizations as it had more of a personal vested interest in the disaster space. The New York Community Trust has been impressed with TFN's leadership in crafting a matching grant program that continually grows and pilots new approaches in an effort to improve and strengthen the program's impact. For example, Partners for Places' 17th funding round leads with racial equity, placing a stronger emphasis on engaging frontline communities as co-creators in defining and executing projects.⁶

Both program participants and program investors highlighted the unique and innovative approaches TFN implemented to create and administer these successful programs. They praised TFN's network model and ability to create strong and effective cohort dynamics. Multiple participants described TFN as "the glue" that keeps the cohorts focused, organized, and working collaboratively. Participants also valued TFN's skilled leadership in inviting excellent guest speakers, carefully structuring meeting agendas, and coordinating program grants. Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies noted that TFN's learning cohort and peer network programs are truly a model for the field. Some PPREP participants have even adapted the program's model for their own local and regional initiatives.

In each program, participants commented on the effectiveness of the program design and the ease with which they were able to engage with the program. Community foundations commit a significant amount of staff time and capacity to participate in these three programs. Despite the commitment required of them, community foundations continue to see the value in these programs and put staff resources towards them. The Bechtel Foundation shared that every large foundation should be looking at the Community Foundation Water Initiative's model of engaging and partnering with community foundations to build community power through community foundations.

⁶. "Partners for Places General Grants Program: Invitation to Apply 2020-21," TFN, <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/y8mnow1sjzff4ue/AABsCG3ZRE5O3VyeFzWzGERX-a?dl=0&preview=1.Partners+for+Places+Round+17+General+Invitation+to+Apply.pdf>.

“ We are very grateful to TFN and its extraordinary team to advance equity and support us as we work to make our communities equitable and just. TFN’s expertise throughout PPREP, PLACES, Partners for Places, webinars, and the annual conference are pivotal in informing and influencing the work we do and how we do it to carry out our mission for serving our communities. We are extremely appreciative and honored to be working with TFN. ”

- Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation,
PPREP and Partners for Places participant

Broadening Subject Matter Expertise

Participants across the three partnership programs consistently shared that gaining subject matter knowledge and new skill sets were among the primary outcomes of participating in these programs. In addition to learning about complex policy issues, program participants honed skills such as approaching existing funder partners around disaster response, leveraging relationships with local media, and meaningfully engaging local communities. Most community foundations used their new skills and subject matter understanding to enhance their organization's existing programmatic work. In a few cases, such as with the Montana Community Foundation and the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, organizations created new program areas or areas of focus.

“*Prior to the Partners for Places grant, our environmental initiative was focused mainly on protecting natural resources, in particular our waterways. This grant gave us the chance to learn about consumer-oriented ways to improve the environment and help our local nonprofits at the same time. We are now looking at ways to continue down this path, promoting equity alongside environmental sustainability.*”

- Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Partners for Places participant

Acquiring these new skills and knowledge makes community foundations more dynamic and effective in their work. This was especially true with PPREP. We heard from numerous participants about how their work through PPREP equipped them to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic more swiftly and confidently. For example, Lincoln Community Foundation, which had never set up a specific community fund, worked with the mayor's office to set up a COVID-19 fund by March 13, 2020, a week before the city officially shut down on March 19. Quad Cities Community Foundation worked with their local United Way and the Iowa Regional Development Authority to build a COVID-19 response fund for the Quad Cities region.

“*Because of our positive experience with Partners for Places, we have also begun working together on possible future projects aimed at promoting health equity through environmental upgrades in our more traditionally low-income neighborhoods. Partners for Places has laid the groundwork for more projects, specifically in the realm of environmental equity.*”

- Gulf Coast Community Foundation, Partners for Places participant

Learning to Lead with Equity

Participants in each program highlighted the impact of TFN's partnership programs in increasing their organization's knowledge of issues related to race, equity, and inclusion. For community foundations already engaged in racial equity work, the programs reinforced key concepts and methods. For participants who were not already applying a racial equity lens throughout their work, the three partnership programs provided community foundations and their local partners support and space to reflect on racial equity, as well as resources to further embed and advance racial equity in their work.

Each partnership program maintains a commitment to creating equitable communities. Since launching Partners for Places' new strategic plan in 2018, the program has doubled down on its commitment to supporting local initiatives that scale the equitable implementation of climate-resilient and sustainable solutions. PPREP 3.0 will focus on equity and inclusion by preparing community foundations to address the systemic and racial injustices that are revealed and exacerbated during disaster. Through the Community Foundation Water Initiative's joint fund, the community foundation participants decided to support research on “opportunities at the intersection of integrated water management and land-use planning that advance equity, regional economic development, climate adaptation, housing and transportation planning.”⁷

⁷ Local Government Commission, “Bringing Water and Land Use Together: Final Report to the Community Foundation Water Initiative on the Equitable Integration of Water and Land Use,” April 2019, <https://www.lgc.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/CFWI-Phase-1b-Final.pdf>.

“Partnering with The Funders Network was an extremely positive experience and the perfect opportunity to advance water and land-use coordination in California. This work has been leveraged by other organizations to promote regional change across the state. The work conducted was especially meaningful in conjunction with the movement for racial justice, as we acknowledge that the history of water management and land-use decisions have directly marginalized Black and brown community members. The conversations that were able to be held because of this partnership were extremely important to a more equitable future of decision-making.”

- Local Government Commission,
Community Foundation Water Initiative participant

CASE STUDY: Quad Cities Community Foundation – Building Disaster Response Capacity in the Quad Cities

Philanthropic Preparedness, Resiliency and Emergency Partnership

Location: Bettendorf, Iowa

Geography of Focus: Quad Cities region, which includes the cities of Davenport and Bettendorf in southeastern Iowa and Rock Island, Moline, and East Moline in northwestern Illinois.

Years active in PPREP: 2014 – Present

Implementation Grants: PPREP 1.0: \$48,000, January – December 2016; PPREP 2.0: \$45,000, July 2018 – June 2019

Project Partners: 22 nonprofit organizations; Disaster Ready Quad Cities (formerly known as Quad Cities Community Organizations Active in Disasters)

Making Disaster Preparedness and Response a Core Program Area

The Quad Cities Community Foundation has been participating in PPREP since the program first started. The knowledge, skills, relationships, and resources it has gained and leveraged as a result of PPREP has made its participation in the program a “very powerful experience,” that completely shifted the foundation’s trajectory. Because of PPREP, disaster preparedness and recovery has become a primary program area in the foundation.

During PPREP 1.0, the Quad Cities Community Foundation created an external disaster communications plan to prepare the organization to better communicate with media, donors, and local partners about recovery strategies, donations, and available grant opportunities. The foundation also launched a Nonprofit Disaster Capacity Building cohort that strengthened 22 nonprofit organizations’ capacity to withstand emergencies and better serve their communities in the aftermath of local disasters. Participating nonprofits included a food bank, organizations providing childcare and elderly care services, media organizations, homeless shelters and residential service providers, and a mental health organization. The cohort, modeled after PPREP, provided nonprofits with technical assistance, training, and grant funding to develop and implement their own disaster and continuity plans. Disaster Ready Quad Cities continues to implement the capacity building cohort model initially carried out by the community foundation.

PPREP was key to the foundation being prepared to respond to regional flooding

in 2019 and the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Without PPREP, the community foundation would not have been able to pivot and serve its communities in the variety of ways that it has. Its abilities in disaster recovery has elevated its standing in the community as a leader in emergency preparedness and recovery.

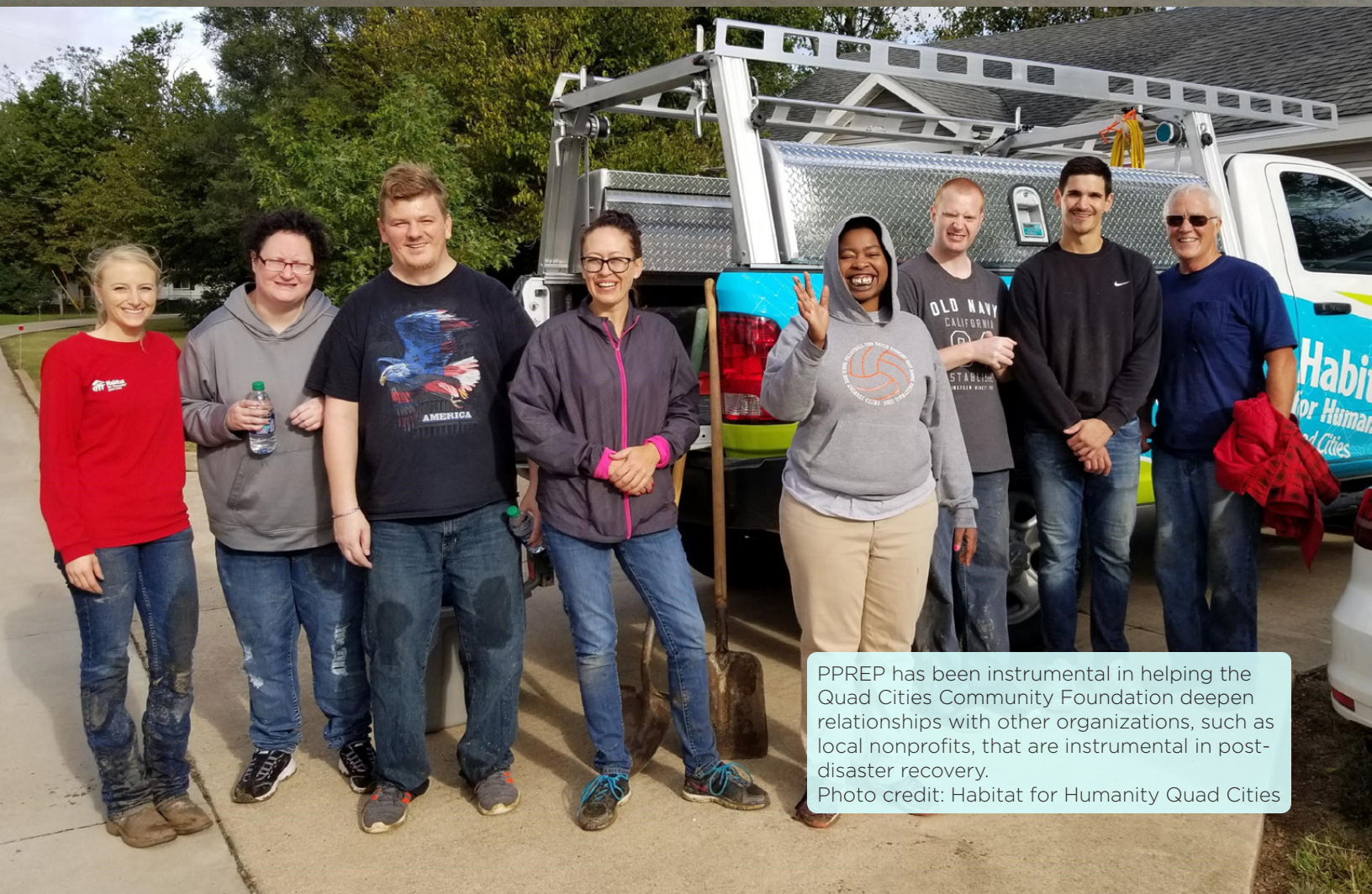
Emerging as a Regional Leader – Accomplishments through PPREP

PPREP has been instrumental in helping the Quad Cities Community Foundation cultivate relationships with organizations in other sectors, such as local nonprofits, first responder groups, and the media. Since 2015, the foundation has taken on a leadership role in the Disaster Ready Quad Cities. During PPREP 2.0, the community foundation used their implementation grant to build Disaster Ready Quad Cities’ organizational capacity and expand their membership. As part of this work, the foundation hired consultants to help Disaster Ready Quad Cities prioritize goals, develop an action plan, and carry out trainings to achieve the identified goals. The Quad Cities Community Foundation’s leadership and support helped reinvigorate and prepare Disaster Ready Quad Cities so that it was able to respond to the regional flooding that occurred in 2019.

Scott County Emergency Management Agency, which has been a key partner to the Quad Cities Community Foundation, praised the foundation’s vision and supportive leadership and underlined the crucial role that the community foundation has played in strengthening the Disaster Ready Quad Cities’ organizational infrastructure and increasing its effectiveness in serving Quad Cities communities. With the community foundation’s leadership, Disaster Ready Quad Cities has now developed plans for each of its eight committees, significantly increased membership and engagement, and re-activated its Long Term Recovery Committee, which is now chaired by the community foundation. Quad Cities Community Foundation continues to bring new organizations into the Disaster Ready Quad Cities and raise awareness about the importance of long-term, cross-sector recovery efforts that engage local communities.



Because of its involvement in PPREP, the Quad Cities Community Foundation has added disaster preparation and recovery as a primary focus area in a region that has grappled with severe flooding and other extreme weather.



PPREP has been instrumental in helping the Quad Cities Community Foundation deepen relationships with other organizations, such as local nonprofits, that are instrumental in post-disaster recovery.
Photo credit: Habitat for Humanity Quad Cities

Growing Community Foundations' Peer Networks

“The relationships have been priceless. We now have a network of community foundations we can reach out to ask if they have ever experienced this or thought of that. It has truly been invaluable.”

- Community Foundation of the Ozarks, PPREP participant

A majority of the organizations interviewed and surveyed uplifted network building and peer-to-peer learning as major benefits of TFN's three community foundation partnership programs. In the Community Foundation Water Initiative and PPREP programs, organizations appreciated the ability to learn from each other and share resources across regions both during and outside of their quarterly meetings. In particular, organizations with less experience in water issues and disaster preparedness and recovery were grateful for the opportunities to learn from their peers with more experience. Although Partners for Places does not have a regular grantee convening, participants have opportunities to connect with each other through the Urban Sustainability Directors Network's annual convening, TFN's annual conference, and other TFN convenings like the Urban Water Funders working group. The Greater New Orleans Foundation noted that because of TFN's range of well-attended programs, connections between Partners for Places grantees often happen organically.

Program participants praised TFN for structuring convening agendas with time and space for community foundations to meaningfully interact and build relationships with each other. Participants found the significant time dedicated to information sharing and networking to be very valuable.

In all three programs, participants developed strong relationships with cohort members and continue to turn to this new network of community foundation peers for assistance on a variety of issues, even issues unrelated to the program's particular focus. The deep relationships that organizations have built with each other facilitate collective problem solving and resource exchange and have been a significant added value to participating community foundations.

Learning in Place During In-Person Meetings

Participants across programs recognized learning in place as an impactful and valuable program component across the three partnership programs. Through site visits, participants engaged with and learned from different communities about how they implement the concepts presented in the program curriculum. Participants praised the intentionality in which TFN selects places and local partners to visit and amplifies learning opportunities that make concepts tangible. From these firsthand experiences, participants could bring new ideas and insights back to their own communities.

“The learning in place has been both innovative and helpful. It is informative to see strategy in action.”

- Northwest Minnesota Foundation, PPREP participant

“Learning in place provides a highly engaged learning process through experience and co-learning with peers.”

- Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation, PPREP and Partners for Places participant



PPREP brings funders from across the Midwest together to learn from and share with each other, building professional networks and personal connections in the process.

CASE STUDY: San Francisco Foundation – Equitably Integrating Water and Land Use in the San Francisco Region

Community Foundation Water Initiative

Location: San Francisco, Calif.

Geography of Focus: San Francisco Bay Area region, with a focus on the counties of Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, San Francisco, and San Mateo

Years active in CFWI: 2015 – 2020

Total Grants made through the Community Foundation Water Initiative: \$381,756

Grants made to ClimatePlan: Action Plan – \$40,000; Comprehensive Report – \$65,000

Project Partners: ClimatePlan, Local Government Commission

Integrating Water with Racial and Economic Equity Priorities

When the San Francisco Foundation joined the Community Foundation Water Initiative, the foundation was undergoing a strategic restructuring to focus its mission and grantmaking on racial equity and economic inclusion through a “People, Place, and Power” framework. The foundation used the funding received from the Community Foundation Water Initiative to bring water-related work into their new program areas. Their grant-funded work included creating a career pathway to good union jobs with the water utilities for residents from low-income communities; identifying best practices that housing agencies could implement to ensure greater water efficiency in existing affordable housing developments; and supporting youth organizers to do research and community engagement around water issues in East Palo Alto, a city with no guaranteed water rights.

Uplifting New Voices and Priorities in Traditional Planning Processes

Through the Community Foundation Water Initiative, the foundation was able to further its mission of advancing racial and economic inclusion. The foundation funded ClimatePlan — an organization led by a Black female executive director, Chanell Fletcher. Fletcher is bringing a voice and perspective rarely seen in regional planning processes — to develop an action plan to equitably integrate water and land use in the San Francisco region. ClimatePlan’s work leveraged and expanded upon the findings of Local Government Commission’s [Bringing Water and Land Use Together](#) report that

the Community Foundation Water Initiative cohort had supported to better understand the specific water and land use structures and geography-specific challenges that exist in the San Francisco Bay Area and throughout California. ClimatePlan worked with community organizations, Metropolitan Transportation Commission, Association of Bay Area Governments, and water agencies to develop the action plan and a comprehensive report titled [Overarching Principles for Land Use and Water Integration in the San Francisco Bay Area](#). The report identified opportunities at the local, regional, and state level to holistically improve water access and supply in ways that address the issues of displacement and housing unaffordability for low-income communities and communities of color. The report also provides specific and detailed recommendations for incorporating the equitable integration of land use and water into regional planning processes, such as Plan Bay Area 2050, the Bay Area’s Regional Transportation Plan. One key recommendation was for the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to increase coordination with water agencies and align funding and planning efforts when possible.

The S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation’s support through the Community Foundation Water Initiative program was pivotal in the foundation’s decision to invest in ClimatePlan’s ambitious and long-term work. Since receiving the Community Foundation Water Initiative funding through the San Francisco Foundation, ClimatePlan has been able to better incorporate water into its other areas of work and establish a unique position in the field that aligns with its mission, skills, and expertise. Because of these new efforts to integrate water policy into planning processes, ClimatePlan has been able to approach other Bay Area funders to secure more resources to support this work, in addition to build relationships with new partners in the region and across the state.



ClimatePlan, which received support from the San Francisco Foundation through the Community Foundation Water Initiative, is led by Executive Director Channell Fletcher (top left). Photo credit: ClimatePlan

Deepening Local Relationships

TFN's partnership programs have been incredibly successful in helping community foundations develop new relationships and deepen existing ones with local nonprofit organizations, other community foundations, and public agencies. Participants valued that each program's structure and activities emphasized relationship-building with community partners and pushed the community foundations to grow in this area.

Through the skills and resources gained through PPREP, participating community foundations have connected to their region's key actors in emergency response. PPREP participants highlighted the program's role in increasing their ability to respond to and support local and regional communities in disaster response. Lincoln Community Foundation, a cohort member relatively new to disaster response, has been able to extend its new knowledge to small surrounding communities. For example, three years ago, the community of Pilger, Neb. was devastated by a tornado. Pilger, a community of a few hundred people, was receiving a lot of national attention and interest, but it had no community foundation or community development financial institution to manage donations. The foundation was able to identify this gap and quickly set up a recovery fund for Pilger, an effort it would not likely have engaged in if not for PPREP.

Through PPREP, community foundations have been better able to understand and address the needs of vulnerable populations in disaster preparedness and recovery. PPREP has increased community foundations' ability to respond to and support local and regional communities in disaster recovery. Montana Community Foundation, an organization also new to disaster response, has used insights gained from community foundation peers in PPREP to build new relationships with indigenous communities and deepen connections to farmers and ranchers in rural Montana. PPREP's emphasis on resource-sharing among cohort members provided an opportunity for the foundation to use videos another cohort member had prepared to engage farmers and ranchers in disaster response.

Partners for Places participants noted that the matching grant program's structure created opportunities to better understand internal city dynamics and build relationships between the city and the community foundation and

the city and community members. Seattle Foundation shared that Partners for Places created a structure and a set of activities for local partnership between the City of Seattle, the community foundation, and community members. The grant opportunity created a healthy pressure for the city and foundation partners to act on a number of ideas that had been circulating, but for which there had been no funding or accountability.

San Francisco Foundation and Silicon Valley Community Foundation, two Community Foundation Water Initiative participants, shared that being a part of the Community Foundation Water Initiative cohort helped them develop and further relationships with organizations they may not have worked with if not for the program. Local Government Commission, a key partner of the Community Foundation Water Initiative cohort, reflected on how its experience in the program has helped it build and strengthen relationships with community foundations, nonprofits, and local governments across California, allowing it to connect local efforts across the state, share resources, and enhance a network of water leaders across scales and sectors.

Forming Relationships with Other Funders

For the majority of community foundations and local partners surveyed and interviewed, participation in these partnership programs has led to new relationships with local and national funders. Although not all of the new relationships have resulted in funding opportunities, many have. For example, Minnesota's Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation leveraged knowledge and experience gained through PPREP to convene local funders for disaster response and recovery efforts that meet the needs of the most vulnerable communities. Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation has begun working with local funders to strategically align around recovery needs, resources, and service gaps. The expertise and resources it has gained through PPREP has been an important value-add to the Cedar Rapids philanthropic community. In Florida, the success of Gulf Coast Community Foundation's Partners for Places project helped attract funding from another local foundation and influenced the grant guidelines of another. The San Diego Foundation shared that the Community Foundation Water Initiative helped them build stronger investments in sustainability.

“Involvement in PPREP made possible the creation of the Minnesota Disaster Philanthropy Working Group of the Minnesota Council on Foundations. Through this working group, we are connecting with funders of all types from across the state and connecting with many state government leaders serving across a wide range of areas impacting our communities.”

- Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation,
PPREP participant

“The Community Foundation Water Initiative cohort provided a space for community foundations to build relationships with other place-based funders. Regular cohort convenings allowed us to learn best practices, build our network, and build the case for support on why place-based funding is critical for bringing about regional change.”

- The San Diego Foundation,
Community Foundation Water Initiative participant

Building Community Power

“Partners for Places was a catalyst for a tremendous amount of work and progress towards centering BIPOC voices in our work and building the necessary relationships to do so. It created the foundation for the Climate Justice Plan, released in the end of 2019.”

- City of Providence, Partners for Places participant

TFN's three partnership programs helped community foundations deepen connections to their local communities and advance community goals by building community members' capacity to engage in new advocacy areas. As a result, the expanded interdisciplinary perspective and role that community foundations brought to their partnerships elevated their role as local leaders.

Each interviewed Partners for Places participant highlighted the ways the program enhanced community foundations' and local governments' abilities to engage community members in decision-making processes and implement systems that focus on creating more inclusive decision-making. For example, through Partners for Places, Seattle Foundation worked with the City of Seattle to create an environmental justice fund that is managed by an advisory board of community members. Similarly, the Rhode Island Foundation and City of Providence created committees of community leaders of color to focus on race and environmental justice issues. The City of Evanston, Ill., which was awarded a two-year Partners for Places grant, noted that the program enhanced its understanding of the need for relationship-building and community buy-in prior to applying for grant funding. The Partners for Places grant process enabled them to be more focused in building relationships with community-based organizations and aligning the city's priorities with community-generated needs.

The Community Foundation Water Initiative strengthened local organizations' understanding of water issues and activated communities in elevating water issues. For example, Central Valley Community Foundation supported Fresnoland, a local policy and media lab, in creating a media campaign to educate

community members on inequities related to drinking water supply. Fresnoland's series of five stories reached thousands of people and spurred genuine conversations in communities. Its work was inspired by that of another Community Foundation Water Initiative participant, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation, which had supported local journalists in elevating water issues in the local community.

With the knowledge and resources gained through PPREP, many participating community foundations have emerged as leaders in disaster recovery and response within their local and regional communities. Central Kansas Community Foundation noted one of its significant accomplishments stemming from PPREP has been elevating awareness of the trauma that vulnerable communities are often left with following disasters and the need for mental health care as a part of disaster recovery. Through the affirmations, opportunities, and relationships it has built through its PPREP work, the foundation now sees itself as a convener and collaborator, in addition to a funder, and feels prepared to lead future conversations around race, equity, and inclusion. Following its landscape assessment, Quad Cities Community Foundation was able to prioritize its PPREP funding for developing internal and external communications infrastructure. In the last few years, it has launched a media strategy that has strengthened relationships with media partners and elevated the foundation's reputation in the community. Quad Cities Community Foundation uses authentic and emotional storytelling to highlight the impact of the foundation's grantmaking and build its reputation as a partner attuned to community needs. Through fundraisers with media partners, where donations of \$5, \$10, or \$15 are encouraged, the foundation has been able to grow community members' understanding of the role of a community foundation and invite all community members to see themselves as part of the foundation.

“ We have seen huge returns on our investments in Southeast LA through our partnership with California Community Foundation. Local groups are activating around water issues and capacity has grown substantially, evidenced by the community’s ability to defeat a senate bill...that would have changed water board elections so as to disenfranchise thousands of Southeast LA voters. ”

- Water Foundation,
Community Foundation Water Initiative local partner

“ Participation in Community Foundation Water Initiative has enabled the foundation to make sustained efforts at the climate-water nexus for multiple years. Having the capacity to provide multiple years of regional funding for climate-water work has also enabled local organizations, public agencies, and other stakeholders to similarly make longer strides as compared to a one-year grant or successive grants on different issue areas. ”

- The San Diego Foundation,
Community Foundation Water Initiative participant

CASE STUDY: Greater New Orleans Foundation – Supporting Community-Driven Climate Action Planning in New Orleans

Partners for Places

Location: New Orleans, La.

Geography of Focus: Greater New Orleans Region

Years active in Partners for Places: Grant 1: 2015-2016; Grant 2: 2017-2018

Grants: Grant 1 - \$39,000; Grant 2 - \$45,000

Project Partners: Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, City of New Orleans' Office of Resilience and Sustainability

Creating an Equitable and Sustainable New Orleans

In partnership with the City of New Orleans, Greater New Orleans Foundation, has received two Partners for Places matching grants. The first grant, in 2015, facilitated the development of the Trust for Public Land's Climate Smart Cities tool through a multi-stakeholder process that included community members, public health organizations, and universities. The tool aided the city in making location decisions for green, climate resilient infrastructure throughout the city that help to address socioeconomic and environmental inequities.

The second Partners for Places award in 2017, helped the City of New Orleans create a climate action strategy that integrated equity into the city's implementation of its climate action plan. The Greater New Orleans Foundation partnered with the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and City of New Orleans to develop the Climate Action Equity Project in partnership with community members. The Climate Action Equity Project showed that communities most vulnerable to climate impacts need to be included in the development of sustainability plans early on in order to ensure more equitable outcomes. It also showed that when resourced and supported, community residents can and will identify the solutions necessary to equitably address climate issues.

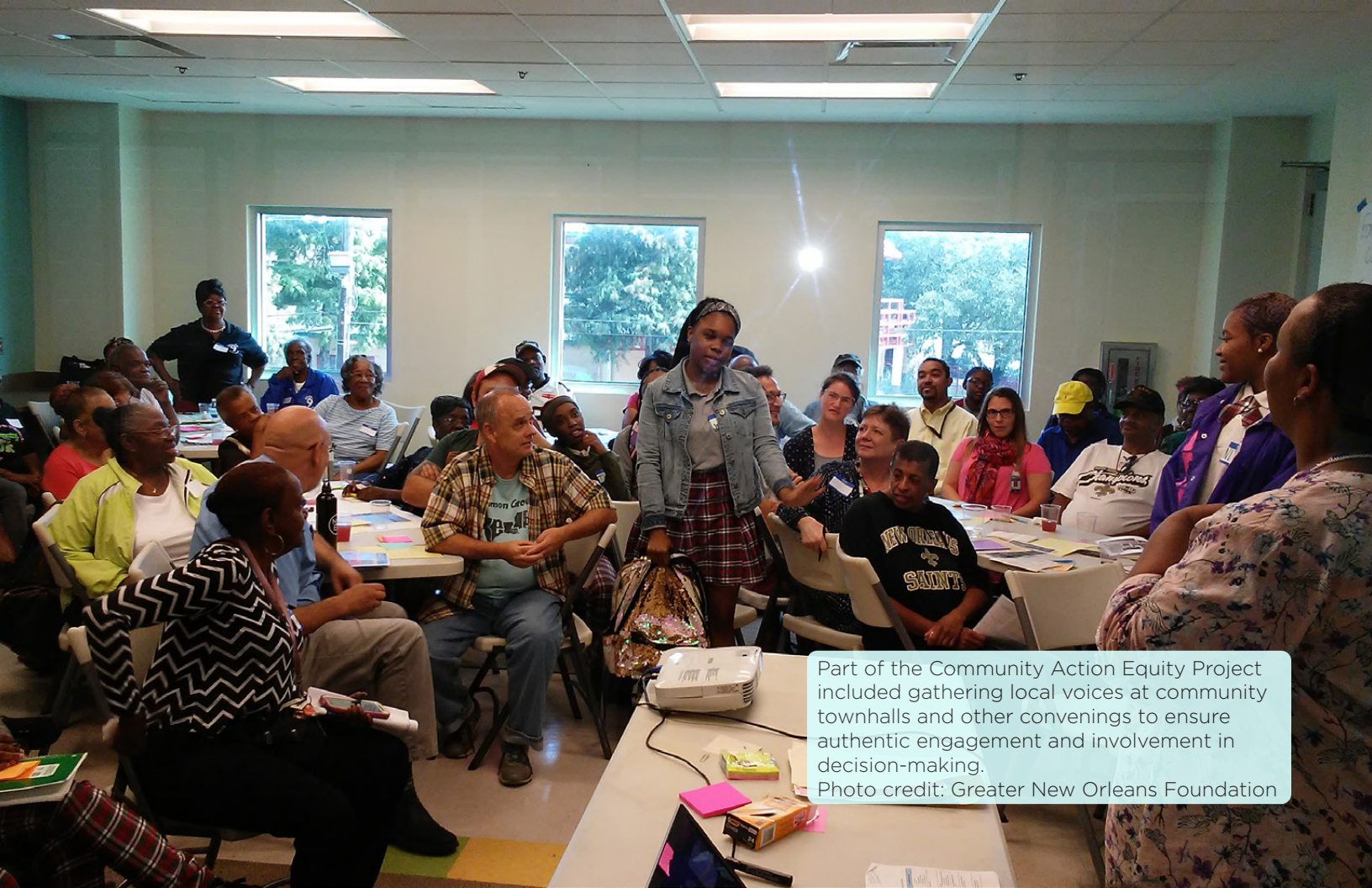
Developing a Community Agenda for Climate Action

The partnership between the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the City of New Orleans, and Deep South Center for Environmental Justice is an exemplar of Partners for Places' goals in supporting relationship building amongst cities, community foundations, and communities to achieve meaningful community change. Together, the foundation and the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

developed an advisory board to guide the city's climate action plan implementation. The 10-person board consisted of community leaders from each of New Orleans' five districts and subject matter experts from local advocacy and service organizations. The advisory board developed recommendations related to four priority areas from the climate action plan – energy, waste, transportation, and culture – that would make the city more equitable and prepared for climate change. The fifth priority, workforce development and culture, was an overarching issue area that was incorporated throughout the advisory board's recommendations.

Through the Climate Action Equity Project, the project partners partnered with the Gulf Coast Center for Law and Policy to host community forums in order to gather feedback on the advisory board's recommendations; learn which issues resonated most with communities; and to hear directly what inequity and climate action means in residents' daily lives. These forums helped build connections between residents from different neighborhoods throughout the city. The forums were also a catalyst for community members' engagement and advocacy around key climate issues directly related to their lived experiences, such as illegal dumping in Black neighborhoods, creating a community solar program, and developing a transportation plan that prioritizes transit-dependent residents over tourists.

The Partners for Places-supported Climate Action Equity Project culminated with a final report, [*Taking Steps Together On Equity & Climate Change: A Report By And For New Orleanians*](#), and spurred the beginning of a long-term climate action process in the City that is more inclusive and equity-oriented. Through Partners for Places, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, and the City of New Orleans were able to form the advisory group, as well as uplift and build community leaders' power. Looking ahead, implementing the advisory group's recommendations will help fortify the foundation's leadership in the community. Partners for Places has helped the Greater New Orleans Foundation form new partnerships with communities, grow its relationship with the city, and establish the community foundation's role and value within the local community.



Part of the Community Action Equity Project included gathering local voices at community townhalls and other convenings to ensure authentic engagement and involvement in decision-making. Photo credit: Greater New Orleans Foundation

V. Conclusion and Next Steps

The three community foundation partnership programs have been extremely successful efforts that highlight the power of community foundations and the need for cross-sector relationship-building to achieve meaningful community change. The Community Foundation Water Initiative, Partners for Places, and PPREP employ effective program models that can be replicated in new policy arenas to continue building the philanthropic field's capacity and leadership. They show us that community foundations have an important role to play in facilitating agency-community partnerships and they can be valuable drivers of progressive local change.

Community foundations, like all institutions, are not perfect, and as community-serving organizations, there will always be more that they can do to ensure that resources are distributed equitably to vulnerable communities most impacted by racial and economic inequities. The next phases of both PPREP and Partners for Places will see a strengthened commitment to racial equity and inclusion. PPREP 3.0 will lead with racial equity and support participants to more deeply address disaster preparedness and response through a racial equity framework. Partners for Places' upcoming funding rounds will have a sharper focus on advancing racial equity and sustainability by elevating frontline community-led groups as key partners in Partners for Places

projects. Although the Community Foundation Water Initiative wrapped up in 2020, the efforts initiated by the group continue to bear fruit throughout the California region, as groups like ClimatePlan continue to implement the recommendations and strategies for equitable water and land use integration that came out of the initiative.

PPREP, Partners for Places, and the Community Foundation Water Initiative offer the philanthropic field collaborative models for advancing equitable change that have yielded meaningful results in communities nationwide. These partnership models present different ways for national and large-scale funders to impactfully engage in issue-based work. Complex issues like water, sustainability, and disaster preparedness require sustained, coordinated, and context-specific problem-solving in order for meaningful change to be realized. The innovative and robust models employed by TFN's three partnership programs can be adapted and replicated for success in tackling new issue areas in new regions across the country. These learning and partnership models are well-positioned for expansion and are prime opportunities for national funders to make place-based investments through community foundations that contribute to advancing community-driven solutions for a more just, resilient, and sustainable future.



Community Foundation Water Initiative participants learned about water issues during a site visit to San Mateo, Calif.



Partners for Places is helping Miami-Dade County combat food insecurity through partnerships with local community gardens. Credit: Grow Roots Miami.



PPREP learning cohort activities have included a 2019 site visit to Duluth, Minn.



This report was produced by Estolano Advisors for The Funders Network.

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