



July 3, 2008

Dear Valued Partners,

Where we live has a direct impact on our health. Breathing clean air can lead to fewer cases of asthma in children; families with easy access to grocery stores with fresh fruits and vegetables have a better chance of maintaining well balanced diets and eating habits; and people with regular health care providers can use preventive services to maintain their health throughout their lives. While the need to make these kinds of improvements is clear, the solutions are not. But lessons we've learned from our first decade as a health foundation provided us with better clarity: We could enhance the impact of our work by adopting more tightly focused strategies.

So at the heart of The California Endowment's new 2010-2020 strategic vision of "Building Healthy Communities" is a sense of *place*: neighborhoods where children and youth are healthy, safe and ready to learn. As you may have read in our last correspondence, our foundation plans to make deep and community-driven investments in prevention in selected areas throughout the state, building on the experiences of our partners to create sustainable, healthy communities.

This process for place selection is being undertaken with great reflection and planning. Our Program, Evaluation and Policy staffs are currently working to reduce a list of more than 100 potential communities to about three-dozen by studying areas around the state with concentrated poverty and major health disparities. From these approximately three dozen locations, The Endowment will conduct deeper analysis in the field to ultimately select 10-15 places.

We are also mapping areas where The Endowment has already funded organizations and projects so that we can, where possible, build on the investments made in our first decade. We believe that our work in these places will enhance the likelihood that local innovations and policy developments will influence broader, statewide systems change.

But we understand that place selection cannot be solely based on statistical information and health indicators. A number of "intangibles" such as experience of local leadership, current and potential capacity of communities, potential funding partners and geographic distribution are also being considered in this decision-making process. When we present the recommended list of places to The California Endowment's Board of Directors at the end of the year, it is our intention that the spectrum of California's diversity – in both rural and urban communities – will be reflected in the selection, which will be announced in January 2009.

We recognize that other meaningful work, which aligns and supports our strategy of Building Healthy Communities, will occur outside of the selected places, and we are willing to support those organizations with our resources as well. Ultimately, we envision that our work in and outside of these "places" will create a greater movement for effective health systems reform as well as improved health outcomes throughout California.

As mentioned in our earlier communications, grants will continue to be made under our current guidelines until late 2009. We plan to release new grant application guidelines under our strategic vision in mid-2009.

If you have further questions about The Endowment's new strategic direction and place selection criteria, please visit our special "Building Healthy Communities" Web site (www.calendow.org/healthycommunities) for additional information.

Thank you for your patience with the process and in sharing in our commitment to building healthy communities in California.

Sincerely,

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