

A Wealth of Knowledge from Building Healthy Communities: An Annotated Bibliography

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Building Healthy Communities (BHC) is a signature program of The California Endowment (TCE) that has combined 10 years of continuous funding in 14 historically disinvested communities with related state-level and regional policy campaigns and coalition building. It is a novel approach to health improvement that both encompasses the social determinants of health and has increasingly focused on power building to promote systems change and advance racial equity. BHC is characterized by a unique blend of “proximal” neighborhood-level engagement with sophisticated media strategies to shift the public narrative toward a deeper understanding of systemic inequities and the potential of people power to transform them. This guide provides descriptions and links to key reports that summarize our key findings and learnings from what we have learned during Building Healthy Communities.

DESCRIPTION OF RESOURCES

TOWARD HEALTH AND RACIAL EQUITY: FINDINGS AND LESSONS FROM BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES (2020) by Frank Farrow, Cheryl Rogers, and Jennifer Henderson-Frakes, Center for the Study of Social Policy



[Ten-Year BHC Reflection Report \(Executive Summary\)](#)

[Ten-Year BHC Reflection Report \(Full Report\)](#)

A follow-up to the BHC Mid-Point Power Grid Report, this final report captures the major BHC accomplishments and lessons for the next decade of work. BHC has made key contributions in the field by instigating a **new health equity dialogue in California**; a **richer approach to power-building, game-changing policies and cumulative capacity** for change, and **an ecosystem approach to power-building**. The report concludes with key lessons and reflections for TCE and our partners as well as for other philanthropies and public sector agencies seeking to advance health equity and racial justice:

- Be prepared to invest for decades.
- Center racial equity and justice from the start.
- Redefine foundation leadership as part of the ecosystem not apart from it.
- Invest in long-term capacity to prepare for opening policy windows.
- Restructure grantmaking and investment practices to support a long-term health equity and racial justice agenda.
- Measure the growth of power-building capacity over time.

TEN YEARS OF BUILD COMMUNITY POWER TO ACHIEVE HEALTH EQUITY: A RETROSPECTIVE (2020)

by Tom Pyun



[BHC 10 Year Retrospective Dashboard \(Interactive Digital\)](#)

This comprehensive and interactive report highlighting progress towards the four BHC goals using TCE's North Star Goals and Indicators Framework, includes an interactive component—timeline and geographic map. BHC's evolving strategy over ten years led to many accomplishments. Here are some key highlights:

- **Adult & youth organizing:** TCE's investment in power measurably strengthened the intergenerational infrastructure.
- **Model for nation:** ACA implementation and undocumented coverage expansion became a statewide success story and a model for the nation.
- **Creating new fields:** TCE's Sons & Brothers and school to prison pipeline's approach to school discipline led the Irvine, San Francisco, Obama, and many other foundations to follow our field building framework.
- **Criminal and environmental justice reform:** Justice reform and reinvestment led to undoing zero tolerance and three strikes policies, and environmental justice work improved water and infrastructure in rural towns in Central Valley.
- **Leading philanthropy, following grassroots momentum:** BHC resulted in a new approach to philanthropic investment, building capacity where there is little to no capacity; and narrative change impacts. TCE does best when it follows grassroots momentum.

AN ECOSYSTEM TO BUILD POWER AND ADVANCE HEALTH AND RACIAL EQUITY (2021)

by Gigi Barsoum & Frank Farrow, Center for the Study of Social Policy



[An Ecosystem to Build Power \(Executive Summary\)](#)

[An Ecosystem to Build Power \(Final Report\)](#)

[An Ecosystem to Build Power \(Link to Recording of Report Briefing\)](#)

This report on building the power ecosystem delve into how networks of organizations, relationships, and infrastructure play a critical role in ensuring that people who have been historically marginalized have voice and agency to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps. Key findings include:

- Organizations in the ecosystem organize around **shared values and analysis**; through **alliances and coalitions**; based on **community priorities**; and **collaboration** may be catalyzed by windows of opportunity.

- **Grassroots organizing groups are central** to the power ecosystem because they build power in impacted communities while developing leaders & activists.
- The ecosystem **uses both wins and losses to build power** but requires **electoral, governing, and adaptive capacities** to do so.
- As a **funder ecosystem partner**, TCE must work across issues to address the root causes of inequities, to champion grassroots power, and to invest in long-term capacity building. TCE is also well-positioned to accelerate learning in the field of power-building research.

ADVOCACY THAT BUILDS POWER: TRANSFORMING POLICIES AND SYSTEMS FOR HEALTH AND RACIAL EQUITY (2021) by Julia Coffman, Gigi Barsoum, Albertina Lopez, Center for Evaluation Innovation



[Advocacy that Builds Power \(Exec Summary\)](#)
[Advocacy that Builds Power \(Full Report\)](#)

This report, and the evaluation that informed it, examines what it takes for advocacy to build power in addition to achieving wins. While getting policy wins and systems changes remains a necessary and important objective, what does it mean to center impacted communities as the drivers of change? The authors found that **power expanded**:

- Within each advocacy cycle or campaign to achieve a win but only **when impacted communities were centered in the work**.
- When advocacy was focused on **community-based solutions**.
- When advocacy was **grounded in long-term narrative change** that centered the experiences of those impacted.
- When **funders gave up power over priority setting and strategy direction**.

THERE'S SOMETHING HAPPENING HERE: A LOOK AT THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT'S BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE" (2014) by Manuel Pastor, Jennifer Ito, and Anthony Perez, USC Program for Environmental and Regional Equity (PERE)



[There's Something Happening HERE \(Full Report\)](#)

This report uses a Just Health framework to provide broad qualitative assessment of the progress of local BHC implementation (as of late 2013) and recommendations about the challenges that BHC needs to address in the future. Key findings include:

- Just **Health is about more than health care**. It requires moving policies, practices, and power dynamics to improve environmental, education, social, and economic outcomes.
- Just Health approaches **place as both an outcome and a strategy**.

- Just Health is about more than policy change; it is **about long-lasting civic capacity**.

ASSESSING THE POWER BUILDING LANDSCAPE: LESSONS FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT'S BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ABOUT PLACE, HEALTH, AND PHILANTHROPY (2018)

by USC Equity Research Institute (ERI)



[Health and Justice for All Power-Building Landscape Assessment \(PLA\)](#)

The goals of this brief by USC ERI are to provide a framework for understanding what types of organizations comprise the power-building ecosystem in California; to share key observations about local-to-statewide dynamics and capacities that drive policy, systems, and structural changes; and to provoke new thinking and approaches to measuring power. Key findings include:

- **California’s power-building ecosystem is dynamic.** To understand strengths and gaps, we must understand the level of alignment of groups around a common agenda, and the ability to implement that agenda.
- The **ecosystem has reached such a level of maturity that it can support growth, scaling, and impact** much more rapidly than it could have even a decade ago.
- While organizations take on initiatives and campaigns with near-term policy and systems change goals, they are **operating within a broader strategy for building power over the long term**.
- Criteria that can be used to guide strategic investments in organizations should reflect what effective power-building organizations share in common. In addition, the **ecosystem should be the unit of evaluation**.

A PIVOT TO POWER: LESSONS FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT’S BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES ABOUT PLACE, HEALTH, AND PHILANTHROPY (2018)

by Jennifer Ito and Manuel Pastor, USC ERI



[A Pivot to Power: Lessons from BHC](#)

This report by USC ERI, offers lessons learned from TCE’s shift from power building as a driver to supporting power building as a goal, with findings based on a multi-disciplinary review of academic and popular literature, surveys and interviews with organizers, funders, and intermediaries primarily from the 14 BHC communities. Key findings include:

- **Place is a scale for change** – not just a stage for change.
- **Health equity is an opportunity to build power** – not just pass policy.

- **Building power is about power among, to, with, and within – not power over.**

UNDERSTANDING YOUTH POWER BUILDING AND YOUTH-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS (2020)

by Veronica Terriquez, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center



[The California Endowment's Youth Power Infrastructure](#)

This report describes the TCE-supported Youth Power Infrastructure and indicators of impact. This report begins with a conceptual description of what youth power looks like and describes the organizations that directly serve youth along with recent milestones of those organizations. Suggestions for further strengthening this infrastructure include:

- Provide youth-serving organizations with the **opportunity to fine-tune their youth leadership development practices and scale up** campaigns so that their work has greater effect at the regional and statewide levels.
- **Connect youth-serving organizations to regional and statewide networks and alliances** including through the use of intermediaries.
- Learn from research on **best practices in order to strengthen the Youth Power Infrastructure** in ways that continue to **center the needs of young people most affected by health disparities.**

EVIDENCE OF POWER ISSUE BRIEF (2020)

by The Center for Outcomes Research and Education



[Evidence of Power Issue Brief \(Exec Summary\)](#)

[Evidence of Power Issue Brief \(Full Report\)](#)

Using a variety of local, state, and national data sources, this report summarizes the evidence of power and power building across all BHC domains. The report also highlights the challenges of and provides recommendations about how TCE should think about measuring power over the next 10 years. Highlights include:

- **83% of all BHC grants were power-related.**
- Between 2010 and 2019, **power building investments amounted to over \$1.4 billion.**
- More than half (**58%**) of BHC investments supported **organizing and base building.**
- About **half of all power building investments were made to organizations led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).**

CALIFORNIA NETWORK PROJECT: ECOSYSTEMS, PARTNERSHIPS, & POWER BUILDING (2020)

by The Center for Outcomes Research and Education



[Ecosystems, Partnerships, and Power Building \(Feb Report\)](#)

This report uses data from the CA Network Project to explore networks of organizations connected by the regions and topics in which they work, and to answer questions about networks' structural characteristics and collective power building capacity; describe the history and activities of organization-to-organization partnerships; and evaluate the relationship between TCE investments and power building capacity. Key findings about partnerships include:

- **Most organizations in the ecosystem work across systems and geographies:** about half work across geographic regions and 90% work across multiple systems.
- **Most partnerships in the ecosystem are well-established and multi-faceted:** 58% have existed for more than 5 years; 63% have a formal agreement (such as an MOU) in place; and 67% involve collaboration on multiple power building strategies.
- **Partnerships by BIPOC-led organizations tended to include collaboration on more power building strategies** than partnerships described by other organizations.
- **Organizations with a history of TCE funding** in a given power building area were more likely to report “mature” capacity.

POLICY, SYSTEMS, AND PHYSICAL CHANGES (2020)

by The Center for Outcomes Research and Education



[Policy & Systems Change Brief \(Exec Summary\)](#)

[Policy & Systems Change Brief \(Full Report\)](#)

BHC partners and community stakeholders integrate place-informed and locally driven efforts with state-level policy and systems changes to advance health and equity. These changes, previously referred to as “policy wins,” are referred to broadly as policy, systems, and physical changes (PSP changes). Key findings of this analysis include:

- Site and statewide work done by **TCE and its partners resulted in the accomplishment of over 1,500 PSP changes.**
- The **impacts of PSP changes reached beyond the site boundaries, are interconnected,** and build upon one another to create momentum to achieve more changes.
- There is **strong overlap of state and local PSP changes;** the evidence of overlap suggests that the impact of the PSP changes

often spreads beyond the original jurisdiction level in a way that maximized BHC partners' work.

FOUNDATION ROLE AND PRACTICE: BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES 2010-2020 (2020)

by Tom David and Prue Brown, Center for the Study of Social Policy



[Foundation Role and Practice During BHC Sustaining Board Engagement During BHC](#)

This report focuses on the roles and practices that the Foundation brought to bear in designing, implementing, and learning from BHC. Areas of inquiry included how TCE conceived of its role and how did the role evolve; what was the role of the Board in that evolution; and what lessons about foundation practice might benefit other philanthropic organizations? Findings suggest that TCE played six roles that were particularly instrumental in shaping the trajectory of BHC:

- **Patient Long-Term Investor**
- **Proximal Ally**
- **Narrative Driver**
- **Principled Risk-Taker**
- **Campaign Director**
- **Strategic Opportunist**

SUSTAINING POWER-BUILDING MOMENTUM: FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS (2020)

by Audrey Jordan and Shiree Teng, Center for the Study of Social Policy



[Sustaining Power-Building Momentum](#)

As TCE transitions to a new phase of long-term funding to further evolve and extend the impact of successful strategies emerging from BHC, it is expecting the power-building momentum achieved to be sustained. This report explores what is needed to sustain the momentum already built and found five areas of needs for sustaining the momentum. Sites need:

- **Ongoing resources** to build out community organizing, leadership, site-focused learning and documentation, and organizational capacities to cultivate partnership building.
- Power to **hold institutions accountable using racial equity principles and practices.**
- Resident and youth leadership **capacity to do more constituent-led base building and coalition building.**
- Organizational capacity-building in **sustainability planning and resource development, including capital investment.**
- Agreement to **link all TCE investments regionally.**

NARRATIVE CHANGE FOR HEALTH & RACIAL EQUITY: EXPLORING CAPACITY & ALIGNMENT (2020)

by Jewlya Lynn & Lyn Kathlene, PolicySolve



[Narrative Change for Health & Equity \(Exec Summary\)](#)

[Narrative Change for Health & Equity \(Full Report\)](#)

[Narrative Change for Health & Equity: Highlights for Funders](#)

This study was designed to understand the capacity needs and strengths in California related to narrative change. The study, a participatory process that grounded findings in a shared understanding with stakeholders directly involved in building power and changing narratives, engaged over 40 narrative change leaders in shaping the study focus, data sources, and interpretation of results. Participants articulated a diverse array of complementary approaches that vary in tools, tactics, reach, capacities, and how different voices are centered. In addition, participants identified several organizational capacities that are critical but insufficient in the ecosystem including:

- **Communications knowledge & skills** with a preference that capacity be built across existing staff and deeply embedded in the organization.
- **Trauma support** for “firsthand” storytellers who are retraumatized by telling their stories.
- **Conducting research and planning**, including integrating narrative change strategies into organizational plans.
- **Physical facilities** for engaging in narrative change work, including recording studios and spaces for community meetings.
- **Rapid response capacity**, including the ability to act quickly and strategically when an external event makes the problematic dominant narrative more fragile.