

A Wealth of Knowledge

An Invitation to Learn from Building Healthy Communities

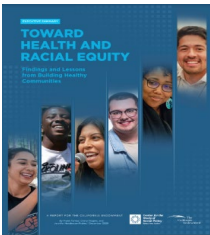
Hanh Cao Yu & Janine Saunders

Building Healthy Communities (BHC) is a signature program of The California Endowment (TCE) combining 10 years of continuous funding in 14 historically disinvested communities with state-level and regional policy campaigns and coalition building. A novel approach to health improvement that encompasses the social determinants of health, BHC focuses on power building to promote systems change and advance racial equity. It is characterized by a unique blend of “proximal” neighborhood-level engagement with media strategies that shift narratives to deeper understanding of systemic inequities and the potential of people power to transform them. This guide provides key reports that summarize key findings and learnings.

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



[Full Report](#)

This report captures 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; game-changing policies and cumulative capacity for change, and a rich ecosystem approach to power-building. The report concludes with key lessons and reflections for TCE, our partners, 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 an integral part of the ecosystem.
- 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



[Full Report](#)

Highlighting the progress towards the four BHC goals using TCE's North Star Goals and Indicators Framework, this report features an interactive timeline and geographic map. Key highlights from BHC's evolving strategy:

- 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 other foundations to follow our field building framework.
- Criminal and environmental justice reform: TCE's reinvestments 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 and narrative change impacts.

An Ecosystem to Build Power and Advance Health and Racial Equity (2021)

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



[Final Report](#)

Networks of organizations, relationships, and infrastructure play a critical role in ensuring that historically marginalized people have voice and agency to create an inclusive democracy and close health equity gaps.

Key findings:

- Organize ecosystem around shared values and analysis; through alliances and coalitions; based on community priorities; and collaboration catalyzed by windows of opportunity.
- Grassroots organizing groups are central because they build power in impacted communities while developing leaders & activists.
- Use both wins *and* losses to build power and require 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



[Full Report](#)

What does it take 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?

Power expands:

- Only when impacted communities were centered in the work.
- Focused on community-based solutions.
- 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)



[Full Report](#)

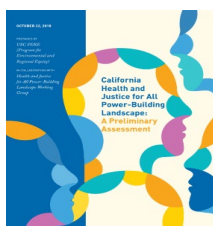
Broad qualitative assessment of the progress of local BHC implementation (as of 2013) and recommendations about the challenges that BHC needs to address in the future.

Key findings:

- Just Health is about more than health care. It requires moving policies, practices, and power dynamics to improve environmental, education, social, and economic outcomes.
- Place is both an outcome and a strategy.
- It's about long-lasting civic capacity, not just policy change.

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)



[Full Report](#)

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:

- California's power-building ecosystem is dynamic. 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.
- Operate within a broader strategy for building power over the long term.
- Criteria that can be used to guide strategic investments should reflect what effective power-building organizations share in common. 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



[Full Report](#)

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:

- 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



[Full Report](#)

A conceptual description of what youth power infrastructure, and impact looks like, this report 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.
- 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



[Full Report](#)

A summary of the evidence of power and power building across all BHC domains that uses a variety of local, state, and national data sources. Highlights challenges and provides recommendations about how TCE should measure power over the next 10 years.

Highlights:

- 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



[Full 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:

- 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



[Full Report](#)

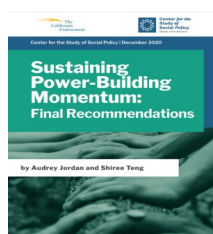
BHC partners and community stakeholders integrate place-informed and locally driven efforts with state-level policy and systems changes to advance health and equity. These changes, previously referred to as “policy wins,” are referred to broadly as policy, systems, and physical changes (PSP changes).

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.

Sustaining Power-Building Momentum: Final Recommendations (2020)

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



[Full Report](#)

TCE expects the power-building momentum to be self-sustaining as it transitions into a new phase of long-term funding. This report explores what is needed to sustain the momentum already built and found five areas of needs for sustaining the successful impact.

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



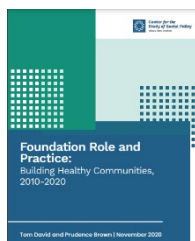
[Full Report](#)

A participatory process that grounded findings designed to understand capacity needs and strengths in a shared understanding with stakeholders in building power and changing narratives, this report 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. Additionally, participants identified several organizational capacities that are critical but insufficient in the ecosystem:

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

Foundation Role and Practice: Building Healthy Communities, 2010-2020 (2020)

By Tom David and Prudence Brown



[Full Report](#)

To function as a changemaker, this study found that TCE played six key roles that were particularly instrumental in shaping the trajectory of BHC: Patient Long-Term Investor; Proximal Ally; Narrative Driver; Principled Risk-Taker; Campaign Director; and Strategic Opportunist. Implementation of these roles both built new capacities within TCE and encountered challenges, particularly in the areas of partnership, collaboration, learning, and management.