

**Policy Change Ten Years in the Making:**  
*Evaluation of The California Wellness  
Foundation's Decade of Public Policy  
Grantmaking*  
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**PREPARED BY MASTERSPOLICYCONSULTING IN COLLABORATION WITH  
FENTON COMMUNICATIONS AND THE CENTER FOR EVALUATION INNOVATION**

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## Table of Contents

<b>I. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II. Overview of TCWF's Grantmaking</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III. Key Findings</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>A. Seven Characteristics of TCWF's Public Policy Grantmaking</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>B. TCWF and the Social and Environmental Determinants of Health</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>C. Internal and External Silos</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>IV. TCWF's Contribution to Policy Change</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>A. TCWF's Contributions to Laying the Foundation for Policy Change</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>B. TCWF's Contributions to Specific Policy Change</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>C. A Model for Assessing TCWF's Contribution to Policy Change</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>V. Conclusions and Recommendations</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>A. Conclusions</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>B. Recommendations</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Attachment</b>	<b>28</b>

## I. INTRODUCTION

In 2001, The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF or Foundation) launched its Responsive Grantmaking Program (RGP), which focused on eight priority areas: diversity in the health professions, environmental health, healthy aging, mental health of transition age youth, teenage pregnancy prevention, violence prevention, women's health, and work and health. A ninth portfolio, the special projects fund, also supported the safety net as well as health reform-related and other emergent public policy issues.

TCWF was an early leader in recognizing the importance of public policy change in achieving its goals and mission. To that end, informing public policy was explicitly included as one of four cross-cutting themes in the RGP, and all portfolios were required to include public policy grants and activities. In 2012, ten years after beginning the RGP, the Foundation sought to evaluate the collective contribution of its public policy-related efforts.

Public policy activities are fundamentally different from direct services and other types of programs or projects. Success is not solely dependent on how effective or efficient the organization operates, but is also influenced by dynamics outside of the organization's direct control. Success often does not come within the timeframe of a grant, and circumstances and goals frequently change during a typical three-year grant period. Finally, success is not solely defined by the policy outcome, but also by the progress made along the way. Therefore, the evaluation was designed to assess impacts at multiple levels and capture the incremental changes, as well as the policy dynamic and contexts in which the activities were carried out.

MastersPolicyConsulting conducted a multipronged evaluation that reviewed TCWF's impact at three levels:

- **Grantee** – How did the Foundation contribute to building the capacity and stability of advocates and other grantees?
- **Field** – How did the Foundation contribute to building the policy and advocacy fields of each priority area?
- **Policy** – How did the Foundation contribute to achieving particular policy outcomes?

The evaluation first sought to understand the dimensions and impact of the nine portfolios and created a snapshot of each of them. Using the snapshots (see Appendix), the evaluation then conducted a cross-cutting analysis to identify overarching or common themes. The main results are highlighted in the following sections.

### Methods

The evaluation consisted of the following data collection activities:

- Recoding and analysis of TCWF's inventory of 724 public policy grants totaling \$131 million
- Survey of 306 current and former grantees, with a response rate of 41 percent
- Interviews with 11 current and former program directors
- Interviews with 32 grantees and 18 key informants, covering each of the portfolios
- Literature review and research regarding the major policy accomplishments and changes in the public policy environment over the 10 years

## II. OVERVIEW OF TCWF’S GRANTMAKING

From 2002 to 2012, TCWF made a total of 724 grants to 306 organizations that were coded as public policy grants by the program directors. Grants were relatively evenly distributed across the years. Nearly 60 percent of all public policy grants were for core operating support, while nearly 65 percent were three years in duration. Consistent with Internal Revenue Service regulations, specific project grants made by TCWF were never earmarked for lobbying.

Portfolio Legend	
Diversity in the Health Professions	DHP
Environmental Health	EH
Healthy Aging	HA
Mental Health of Transition Age Youth	MHTAY
Special Projects	SP
Teenage Pregnancy Prevention	TPP
Violence Prevention	VP
Women’s Health	WoH
Work and Health	WH

The number of grants made within each portfolio over the course of the ten years was fairly consistent. As shown in Table 1, with two exceptions, each portfolio made between 246 and 283 grants; TPP made only 183 grants while SP made 754 grants. At the same time, the proportion of public policy grants within each portfolio varied widely; the proportion of public policy grants ranged from less than 14 percent to 62 percent. Moreover, more than 50 percent of all public policy grants came from just two portfolios: SP and EH.

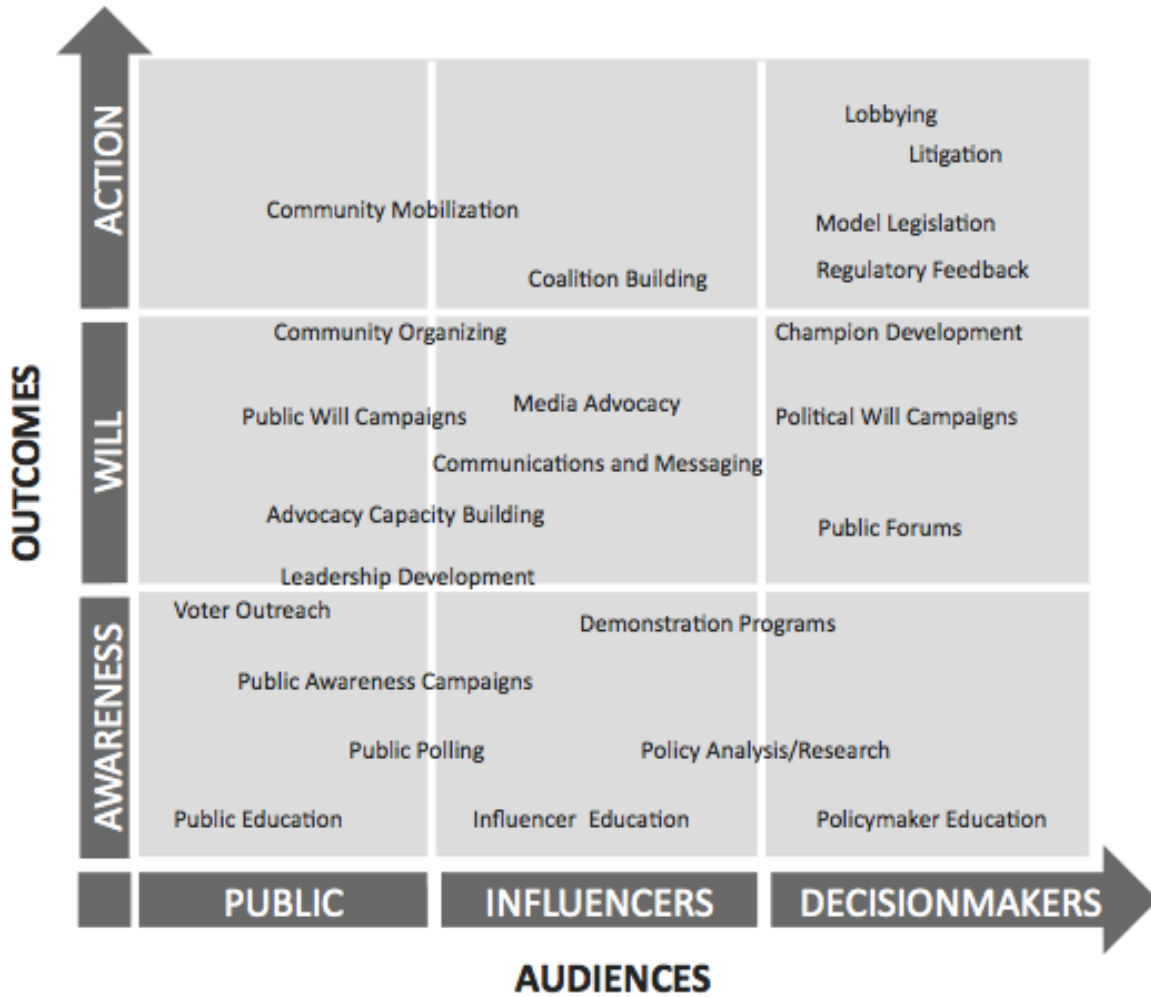
**Table 1: Grants and Funding Distribution by Portfolio**

	Total Number of Grants 2002-2012 <sup>1</sup>	Total Number of Public Policy Grants 2002-2013 <sup>2</sup>	Percent Public Policy Grants	Total Funding 2002-2012	Total Public Policy Funding 2002-2013	Percent Public Policy Funding
Diversity in the Health Prof.	268	36	13.4%	\$36.2 M	\$7.4M <sup>3</sup>	20.4%
Environmental Health	252	157	62%	\$38.7 M	\$25.8M	67%
Healthy Aging	265	39	14.7%	\$38.7 M	\$7.1 M	18.4%
Mental Health Trans. Age Youth	251	37	14.7%	\$38.7 M	\$6.5M	16.8%
Special Projects	754	225	29.8%	\$131 M	\$35 M <sup>4</sup>	26.7%
Teenage Pregnancy Prevention	183	28	15.3%	\$24.8 M	\$5.9M <sup>5</sup>	23.8%
Violence Prevention	282	73	25.9%	\$36.0 M	\$13.4M	37.2%
Women’s Health	283	44	15.6%	\$38.8 M	\$7 M	18%
Work and Health	246	74	30.1%	\$38.7 M	\$12.4M	32%

In order to analyze how TCWF’s grant funds were used with regard to public policy, the evaluation used the Policy and Advocacy Strategies Framework (see Figure 1).<sup>6</sup> The Framework displays 22 strategies and tactics along two strategic dimensions important to any public policy strategy: the *audiences* targeted (x-axis) and the *outcomes* desired (y-axis). Both outcomes and

audiences are displayed on a continuum, and the advocacy strategies are mapped according to their relationships to the desired outcomes and target audiences.

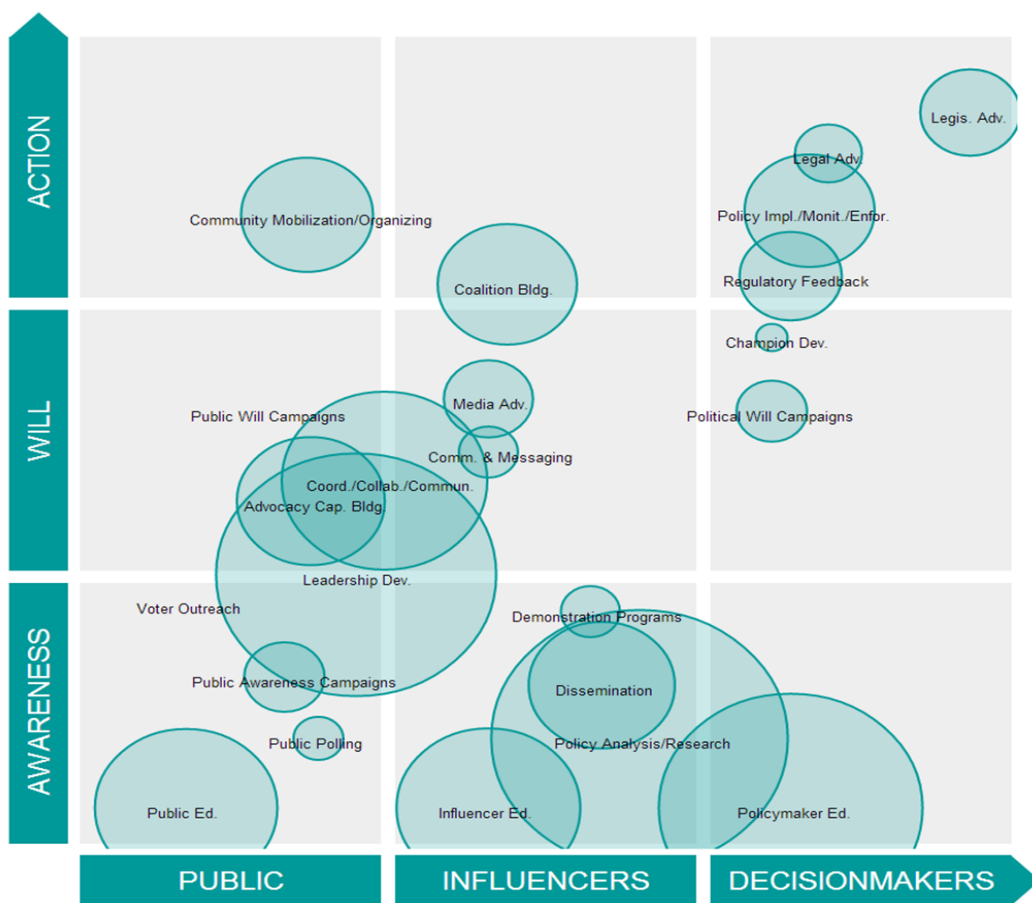
**Figure 1. Policy and Advocacy Strategies Framework**



Grant reports prepared by TCWF’s program directors for the 724 public policy grants were reviewed and recoded using a coding guide based on the framework; up to three codes were applied to each grant, reflecting the most prominent advocacy strategies and tactics described in the grant report.

Figure 2 displays the results of the recoding process. The size of the bubble reflects the relative number of times the code was applied in the inventory. The grants mapping shows that, with TCWF funding, grantees carried out activities primarily in the *awareness*-building quadrants and, to a lesser degree, in the *will*-building quadrants.

**Figure 2. All Public Policy Grants: Funded Strategies**

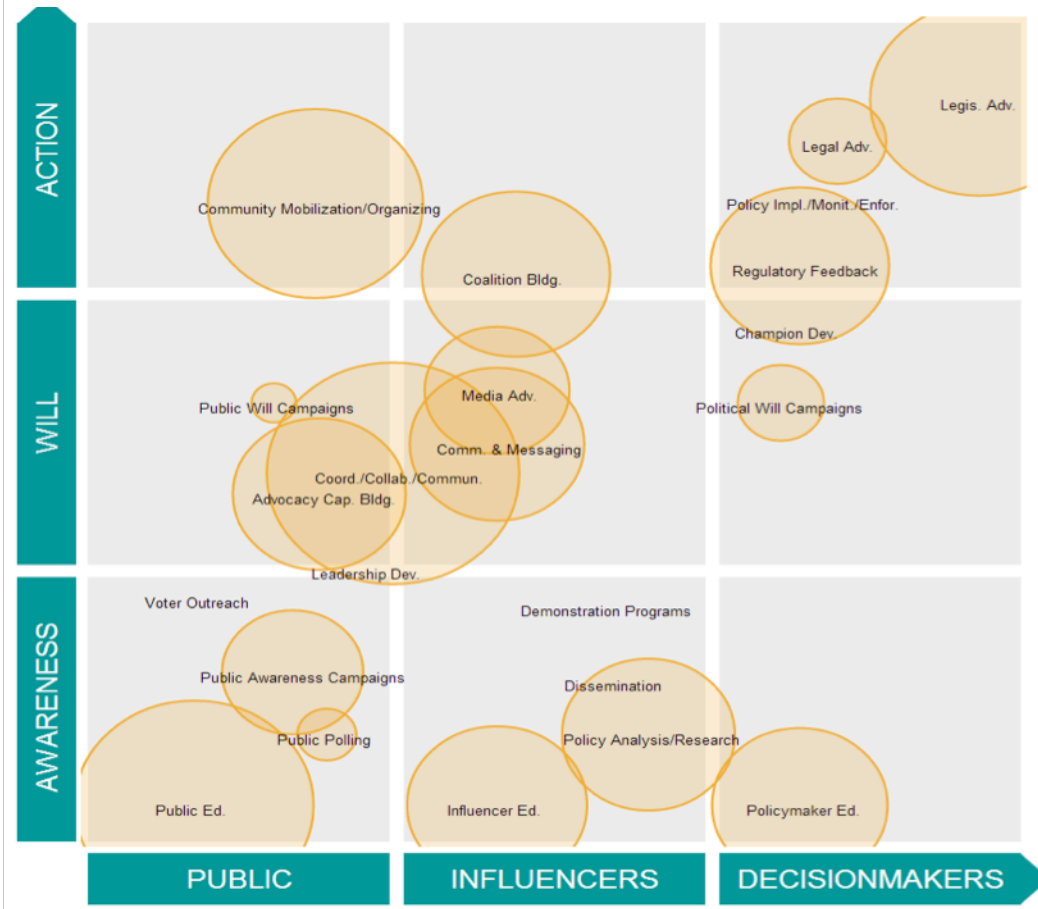


A separate database of grantee-reported advocacy strategies was created from a participant survey conducted for a TCWF-hosted convening of public policy grantees from all nine portfolios. Grantees were asked to report on the strategies and tactics they engaged in, irrespective of TCWF’s funding. A list of 24 possible strategies and tactics — similar, but not identical, to the set contained in the Policy and Advocacy Strategies Framework — was provided, and grantees could check all that applied. The data from that survey were mapped to the Policy and Advocacy Strategies Framework, shown in Figure 3.

### Lobbying Rules and Regulations

Foundations that seek to inform public policy must operate under certain state and federal rules, administered by the Internal Revenue Service and the California Fair Political Practices Commission. The California Wellness Foundation’s overall goal for its public policy-related activities is to inform and educate the public, news media and policymakers of key health issues and concerns. All grants are in compliance with applicable state and federal regulations.

**Figure 3. All Public Policy Grants: Grantee-Reported Strategies**



Grantees reported a much more even distribution of strategies, as compared to the Foundation-reported strategies. In particular, grantees indicated that they engage in more activities in the *action* quadrants, such as legislative advocacy, community mobilization, coalition building and regulatory feedback.

The analysis provided a means for placing the Foundation’s funding in context and assessing the alignment between grantee-reported advocacy activities and those that the Foundation indicated it supported. It also demonstrates the emphasis placed by the Foundation on activities associated with the early phases of policy change—e.g. awareness and will building—needed to lay the foundation for policy change to occur.

It is important to acknowledge a few key caveats with this analysis:

- The Foundation grant reports used for this analysis were the summaries of grantees’ reports written by program directors, not the grantees’ reports themselves.
- Grantees may not have fully described all their activities, such as legislative advocacy; rather, such activity may have been reported as policymaker education.
- In coding the grants, it was difficult to distinguish between some of the codes, e.g., whether an activity was considered leadership development or advocacy capacity.
- The two data sets were not identical; therefore, the comparative analysis focused on trends, not specific strategies or tactics.



### III. KEY FINDINGS

The evaluation developed snapshots of each portfolio, which can be found in the Appendix; each snapshot describes the following:

- TCWF's grantmaking
- The policy environment
- The policy accomplishments
- The state of the advocacy field

Because some of the issue areas were very mature, while others were nascent, there was significant variability with regard to the four dimensions described above. In addition to assessing each portfolio separately, the evaluation looked across the nine portfolios to identify common themes and trends. Three key findings emerged:

- A. Seven characteristics underlie TCWF's public policy grantmaking.
- B. TCWF carried out a significant amount of work across several social and environmental determinants of health.
- C. TCWF's impact was constrained by silos operating at multiple levels.

#### A. Seven Characteristics of TCWF's Public Policy Grantmaking

The evaluation identified seven critical characteristics of TCWF's public policy grantmaking across all portfolios. These characteristics are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Together, they defined TCWF's public policy grantmaking.

##### 1. Field Building

TCWF took a field-building approach and made a significant contribution to the development of the advocacy field in a majority of its portfolios. Depending on the stage of evolution of the field, TCWF played different roles, from helping to seed a field's creation to supporting its growth. In particular, the Foundation played a leadership role in building several fields, as is demonstrated in the WH, DHP, VP and TPP portfolios.

The Foundation did not have an apparent theory of change or systematic approach to field building. Rather, its approach was grounded in a philosophy of allowing grantees to identify needs, priorities and issues to inform its grantmaking. Program staff and grantees alike commented on the value of TCWF's focusing on a field rather than on a particular policy goal.

#### TCWF's Seven Characteristics of Public Policy Grantmaking

1. Field Building
2. Amplifying Grassroots and Community Voices
3. Knowingness
4. Long-Term Commitment
5. Filling a Niche
6. Core Operating Support
7. Policy-Oriented Convenings

## CASE EXAMPLE: CREATING A NEW FIELD IN WORK AND HEALTH

The Foundation recognized early on the importance of the relationship between the workplace and health. Consequently, TCWF funded a variety of organizations across many issues, populations and sectors — such as immigration, workers' rights and occupational health — to build their capacity on health, as well as their capacity to advocate. In addition, by intentionally encouraging these organizations to learn about each other's work and strategically connecting them, TCWF helped seed a new field — work and health. As a result, this field has been able to collaborate on a range of policy issues that impact low-wage workers. Moreover, organizations have been able to make the "health connection" with traditional workers' rights issues.

Worker centers are a lynchpin in the work and health field, acting as a point of integration for various low-wage workers across a number of sectors. Although they are fundamentally service-providing organizations, TCWF engaged them in health-related issues, leadership development, organizing and advocacy.

### 2. Amplifying Grassroots and Community Voices

TCWF prioritized vulnerable populations, especially those who are most marginalized. The Foundation's deeply held value that communities have an essential role in bringing about change led it to invest in grassroots organizations, particularly from communities of color, to develop their capacity to advocate and participate in policy debates.

The Foundation accomplished this through a range of grantmaking strategies, including the following:

- *Local and regional grantmaking*—Grants were made to organizations and grassroots organizing groups across the state. Additional local grants were made through intermediaries with greater knowledge of the region, such as community foundations.
- *Leadership development*—As one of TCWF's cross-cutting priorities, a heavy emphasis was placed on training to help individual leaders—youth, women, low-wage workers, as well as individuals representing ethnic and low-income communities etc.—develop their advocacy and public policy skills and knowledge. Leadership development was the second most frequently funded strategy behind research and policy analysis (see Figure 2). For example, TCWF funded youth organizing to foster advocacy leadership among transition-age youth.
- *Community organizing*—As a key strategy to engage communities in social change, community organizing comprised 11 percent of Foundation grants. TCWF was an early supporter of local PICO affiliates and has funded organizing strategies across all portfolios.

"Through civic engagement and finding their own voice, people get transformed. It's as important as psychotherapy. We measure our success by both the impact on the lives, as well as by the bills passed."  
MHTAY Grantee

### CASE EXAMPLE: DEVELOPING NEW WOMEN LEADERS

The women’s health portfolio focused on including women of color and broadening the policy focus of the field beyond reproductive rights. Historically, the field has been dominated by mainstream, white-led reproductive health organizations. As the program director explained: “My goal was to build the capacity of those who traditionally had not been part of the advocacy field to engage in community advocacy.” To balance the influence of mainstream groups and shift the frame to reproductive justice and women’s health, the Foundation focused on leadership development to elevate the grassroots voices of women of color. These training programs have had a significant impact on the field and the women’s policy agenda by “changing the face of who is doing advocacy and what policies have passed,” noted a key informant.

#### 3. Knowingness

A recurring theme in the interviews was what we label “knowingness,” an intangible quality in the Foundation’s approach to grantmaking and interaction with grantees. Knowingness describes the Foundation’s knowledge, attitude and most importantly, relationships with the grantees. Moreover, knowingness encapsulates the trust and respect grantees described they received from the Foundation.

Knowingness is woven throughout the Foundation’s work and is grounded in its vision. The Foundation’s approach of long-term core operating support and responsiveness to grantees has allowed them to better “know” and understand their grantees. This is particularly significant for foundations that fund policy and advocacy. Although organizations frequently speak about the power differential between funder and grantee, TCWF grantees did not express any concerns about TCWF’s use of power. The Foundation has an awareness of the power differential and, through this knowingness, works to balance and mitigate it in a way that is supportive to the grantees.

“TCWF had the original vision of identifying people who are aligned and giving them the flexibility to help you reach your joint goals.” – TPP

#### KNOWINGNESS: IN GRANTEES’ OWN WORDS

“They don’t micromanage the experts. They recruit the best people in the field and interact on the policy level but don’t get in their way. They **trust** the people they select ... and for long periods of time.” – VP

*“TCWF has allowed us to run with our ideas in comparison to other foundations who are prescriptive. That **freedom** and **trust** in us has allowed us to be flexible and change as the policy climate changes and allowed us to pivot as needed.” – WH*

“TCWF application and reporting process is as close to painless as you get. It’s clear, it’s straightforward and you are not trying to guess what the foundation wants to hear. The POs get it and you don’t have to second-guess what you are saying when you interact with them — they just want you to succeed and to know how they can help.” – EH

#### 4. Long-Term Commitment

Policy change takes time—years and sometimes decades. Entrenched complex social problems require a long-term vision for change and will not be solved over the duration of a grant period. TCWF's long-term commitment was critical to its impact both in terms of changing policy and building fields. For field building, a long-term focus is especially important to develop capacities and foster infrastructure and connections. With foundations regularly changing direction and priorities, TCWF's long-term approach was cited as helping to stabilize the field.

"It took us 10 years to remove the fingerprint requirement and 8 years on the auto [regarding undocumented immigrants]. We appreciate that [the Foundation is] sticking hard with it and providing long-term support. It helped us to focus and follow through on some of these barriers."

WH Grantee

As unusual as it is that TCWF made a ten-year commitment to its Responsive Grantmaking Program (RGP), the Foundation invested in two of its portfolios for almost twice as long. TCWF began its engagement in violence prevention and teenage pregnancy prevention in 1992 and 1995, respectively, when it launched comprehensive strategic initiatives in these two areas. Extensive evaluations of both ten-year initiatives have demonstrated clear impacts in public policy. The Foundation's commitment to public policy continued through the RGP, during which it broadened its reach, albeit with less money. By reviewing the long arc of philanthropic investments, field building and policy change afforded by TCWF's commitment to these two issues, two important takeaways emerge:

- *Vigilance is required to maintain and sustain gains.* Major issues, particularly controversial ones like reproductive health and firearms, will experience setbacks. It can be difficult to maintain a high degree of saliency in the policy arena over long periods of time, and complacency can set in.
- *Broadening the field with new voices is critical for sustainability.* Issues evolve, and it's critical to continually refresh and broaden the field with new voices. In VP, for example, TCWF was very diligent in bringing people to the table, enabling the field to grow and respond to new ideas and dynamics.

#### 5. Filling a Niche

Of the Foundation's nine portfolios, four of them — DHP, TPP, WH and MHTAY — could be categorized as niche issues, which we define as narrow slices of an issue or population. Interviews with Foundation staff reflected the Foundation's focus on issues and populations that are aligned with its mission but that are overlooked by other foundations and the broader society.

"They go out of the way to make sure you get coverage and are in the paper. It's not about you, but advancing the issue."

Recipient of the TCWF  
Champions of Health  
Professions Diversity Award

The focus on niche issues demonstrated the power of the Foundation's spotlight and resulted in two primary outcomes: the highlighting of issues to give them visibility, and the building of new fields to support and sustain advocacy. For example, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative

and subsequent TPP funding in the RGP helped bring much-needed attention to the skyrocketing teenage pregnancy rates. This focused effort to build the capacity of a very specific field and enhance the awareness of policymakers and influencers was a major reason why California's teen birthrate has dropped more than 50 percent since 1995.

Grantees across TCWF's portfolios spoke positively about the Foundation's willingness to fund issues that often struggle to gain support from other foundations. However, there are also disadvantages to a niche approach. Exclusively focusing on a niche issue may serve to isolate the issue from other issue fields, movements and funders that could help advance and sustain it. For example, while the TPP portfolio continued its narrow focus on grantees that worked in this field, it did not also significantly connect them to a broader women's health field or other related issues, such as education, mental health or juvenile justice.

### **CASE EXAMPLE: SPOTLIGHTING A NICHE ISSUE THROUGH DIVERSITY IN THE HEALTH PROFESSIONS LEADERSHIP AWARDS**

Diversity in health professions can be likened to Russian Matryoshka dolls—an issue within an issue within an issue. As a narrow niche within the overall workforce issue, it had difficulty gaining attention amidst other issues of education, workforce development and diversity. The challenge, according to the program director, was that “it is such a niche issue that they don't think about it, and, on the state level, there were so many other issues around education that it was not as recognized. Our grantees made the case that that this was not diversity for diversity's sake but a way to get at access and quality of care. A more diverse workforce moves the quality of care. So getting this out was a critical point for the field.”

The prioritizing of diversity in health professions was described as “huge” by grantees and key informants. The Foundation used many of the same strategies previously discussed to elevate the issue, including advocacy capacity building and convening as well as a public education campaign to respond to a concern that grantees were flying under the radar and there was no attention to the issue.

The diversity in the health professions portfolio also utilized another TCWF signature strategy: leadership awards. Awarded annually, The TCWF Champions of Health Professions Diversity Award recognizes leaders for efforts to increase California's health care workforce and its diversity. Beyond providing cash awards to the recipients, the awards played an important role in coalescing and encouraging the field, as well as spotlighting the issue. One former recipient of the award reflected on her experience: “It validates the importance of working in the workforce arena. For me personally, I had people coming up to me saying I had no idea that you did that work.”

## **6. Core Operating Support**

The most frequently cited strength and characteristic of TCWF's public policy grantmaking is core operating support. Not surprisingly, advocates found it crucial to helping them be responsive to the fluid and changing policy environment because core operating support

provided maximum flexibility and freedom to the grantee. Four key benefits emerged on the role of core operating support for public policy grantees. Core operating support accomplished the following:

- Stabilized organizations by supporting their overall operations without requiring organizations to contort themselves into something they are not or do something they cannot do.
- Enabled adaptive advocacy by allowing advocacy organizations to employ a range of strategies as needed, and when needed, and to take advantage of unexpected windows of opportunity.
- Promoted innovation and exploration of new issues by giving organizations the flexibility and safety to be creative, explore, take risks and innovate.
- Strengthened the field by providing funding for multiple organizations in a field, which enables groups to collectively leverage a range of advocacy capacities and strategies, including lobbying.

### **CASE EXAMPLE: HOW CORE OPERATING SUPPORT CONTRIBUTED TO THE AFFORDABLE CARE ACT (ACA)**

In 2004, Health Access Foundation championed a bill, AB 356, which, among other things required health insurance companies to provide a 30-day notice before raising rates. Health Access had identified a need and developed a policy solution, which it advanced without much fanfare. Like most of its policy work regarding the individual market, Health Access relied on TCWF's core operating support since most health funders provided project-specific funding focused on Medi-Cal, children's health and other particular aspects of health coverage. This law had a major impact beyond what anyone could have predicted. At a critical moment during the federal debate on the ACA, Anthem Blue Cross announced a 39 percent rate increase. Under the AB 356 law, it was required to notify its members, which caught the attention of the news media and federal policy-makers, breathing new life into the ACA debate.

## **7. Policy-Oriented Convenings**

Convenings are a hallmark of TCWF's approach. They were a particularly important tool to advance public policy. Based on interviews and observations of several of TCWF's convenings, we identified a number of distinguishing best practices for policy-oriented convenings:

- *Representative planning*—involving grantees in the development of the agenda.
- *Fostering connections*—facilitating information and relationship building by, among other things, collecting and sharing information about grantees' policy strategies and activities.
- *Setting the policy context*—including state and national advocates to update grantees on relevant policy issues, and promote local, state and national collaboration.

"The convenings are useful for the information and the power building that occurs, especially across sectors."  
EH Grantee

- *Leadership and training*—promoting leadership from the field to share lessons learned and training.
- *Strategy development*—creating conditions so participants can develop shared strategies for collective action on relevant policy issues.
- *Self-organizing*—helping participants self-identify issues important to them and connect them with new colleagues.
- *Consistency and advance planning*—scheduling convenings regularly and well in advance to allow organizations to maximize the opportunity to advance their own interests and work.

## **CASE EXAMPLES: BUILDING TRUST AND RELATIONSHIPS AT TCWF'S CONVENINGS IS CRITICAL TO POLICY CHANGE**

### **Health Advocates' Retreat**

In 1999, TCWF launched the Health Advocates' Retreat. Although the first retreat was somewhat contentious, advocates quickly realized the importance of having the space and time to work through conflicts, develop relationships, and strategize on advocacy. The retreat also provided advocates with unstructured down time and an opportunity for interaction and reflection.

"At National Health Law Project, we're working on an issue that affects 300,000 women who have had breast implants, many of whom got them for cosmetic reasons. Now they are leaking, and there is a question about whether health insurance will cover them. I found myself across the table from somebody from the Transgender Law Center. Transgender women have breast implants, and they were hearing the same issues. So we're going to connect and come up with a more global solution. This would not have happened were it not for the down time at the retreat and exemplifies the benefit of a broad cross-section of advocates coming together."

### **Environmental Health Convening**

In July of 2004, two of TCWF's grantees—Center for Environmental Health (CEH) and Environmental Health Coalition (EHC)—jointly filed lawsuits regarding lead in candy against over thirty candy makers under California's Proposition 65, which requires warnings on products that can expose the public to cancer-causing substances or reproductive toxins.

The grantees had met at TCWF's convening. Each group had been working on lead in candy for more than a year, and they decided to strategize on advancing public interest litigation together to address the issue. One grantee said: "This could not have happened without trust. We won the case against the candy companies to get lead out of candy, and then we took this settlement and used it as the basis for state-level policy led by CEH and EHC."

## B. TCWF and the Social and Environmental Determinants of Health

Many of TCWF's portfolios made significant investments in issues and activities associated with several social and environmental determinants of health (SEDH). The SEDH—education, employment, income, community safety, and family and social supports—account for about 50 percent of a person's health outcomes. Healthy behaviors—many of which can be shaped by the environment as well—contribute another 30 percent.

Two of TCWF's priority areas were SEDH *in and of themselves*. The WH portfolio, for example, existed at the nexus of multiple issues—health care, public health, occupational health and safety, workers' rights, immigration, economic justice and environmental health. As a result, the portfolio addressed multiple contributors to health, particularly employment and income, as well as hazardous and unsafe work environments, with a focus on low-wage workers across a range of employment sectors. Similarly, the EH portfolio worked to integrate health with environmental justice, furthering recognition of the relationship between exposure to environmental toxins and individual and community health.

Many other portfolios also addressed various SEDH. For example, by reducing the prevalence of firearms, supporting efforts aimed at reducing gang violence, and enhancing economic opportunity, the VP portfolio sought to improve community conditions. Similarly, the MHTAY and VP portfolios funded policy and advocacy efforts to reform both the child welfare/foster care and juvenile justice systems. These reforms provide at-risk youths with additional social supports to help them transition to adulthood.

"I really appreciated their sense of a broad understanding of what health means. They were the first foundation to think about health broadly—that it means more than medical care."

SP Advocate

### CASE EXAMPLE: THE ELDER ECONOMIC INDEX

One of the signature accomplishments of the HA portfolio was the enactment of the Elder Economic Security Index, which addresses the way poverty for seniors is calculated, potentially changing eligibility for various aging programs. As one grantee observed: "This was very forward looking for a health foundation, since it's primarily about economic security. It was very much about addressing a social determinant of health, since income is the biggest predictor of health."

## C. Internal and External Silos

The structure of nine independently functioning portfolios allowed the Foundation to concentrate its investments, and enabled program directors to gain deep familiarity with each portfolio's issues and grantees. However, because the Foundation's portfolios were structured around specific issues and populations, the structure also inadvertently promoted silos, even in instances where there was a natural interconnectedness of policy issues and grantees. For example, EH and WH have overlapping policy agendas and advocates, as does TPP and WoH; VP



and MHTAY both focused on at-risk youth. Such silos often resulted in potential missed opportunities for collaboration and field building.

While some program staff attempted to bridge these silos and connect grantees, there was no institutional incentive to encourage such efforts. Foundation guidelines, along with portfolio-focused progress memos and the grant coding system, collectively reinforced portfolio silos.

These silos also presented barriers to staff routinely learning from each other about the overall public policy environment, the types of strategies employed and grantees' successes. Silos existed even within portfolios — most prominently for the direct service and public policy grantees. Service delivery organizations live on the front lines in low-income communities, which gives them tremendous insight into the needs and issues of these communities. However, they need the skills, connections and mindset to be able to use that knowledge to inform public policy. Although some portfolios sought to engage direct service providers, much more needed to be done.

"I know TCWF wants to fund direct service and public policy. It would be a strength to talk about the two strategies as interconnected."

HA Grantee

Other silos also existed. TCWF's program staff, as a general rule, did not collaborate to any significant degree with other foundations, which limited opportunities for greater impact. Many grantees had expressed a desire for TCWF to open doors to other foundations and help identify other sources of funding, particularly in some of the niche issues. Grantees also believed that if TCWF collaborated more, other funders could learn from TCWF's approach. Lack of funder collaboration also created misperceptions about TCWF among philanthropic colleagues.

#### IV. TCWF'S CONTRIBUTION TO POLICY CHANGE

One of the seven guiding principles of policy change evaluation is that the evaluation should focus on the Foundation's—and grantees'—contributions, not attribution.<sup>7</sup> Any policy change effort involves significant numbers of organizations, policymakers and funders, so drawing a direct link from a single grantee or funder to a particular policy outcome is virtually impossible. The question remains, however: How can a foundation's contribution be measured?

In this evaluation, we identified major policy and systems changes that have occurred in the nine portfolio issue areas over the last ten years. To better understand TCWF's role, particularly because it primarily provided core operating support and didn't lay out a set of specific policy goals, input was solicited through the survey and interviews.

The survey asked grantees for their perspectives on TCWF's contributions to both the organization's public policy activities as well as to advancing policy or systems change overall. According to grantees, the most important contributions TCWF made to their organizations were its support of general operations and its role in helping them develop or deepen their advocacy skills. This finding reinforced other evaluation findings that core operating support is critical for advocacy groups.

Moreover, as displayed in Figure 4, grantees viewed TCWF’s activities to help strengthen the field and lay the groundwork for public policy change to be its most significant contributions to public policy change. Activities related to specific policy campaigns ranked fourth.

In addition to the survey data, the evaluation assessed TCWF’s contributions to a select number of specific policy accomplishments using qualitative data collected through interviews. Grantees and key informants were asked to describe the extent to which TCWF contributed to a) laying the foundation for policy change for their particular issues and b) specific policy outcomes. (Figure 5 shows the major phases of policy change. The Laying the Foundation phase, which can take years, is the time period during which the stage is set for successful policy change.)

**Figure 4. Grantee Survey Results: Perceptions of TCWF’s Contributions to Advancing Public Policy or Systems Change**



**Figure 5: Phases of Policy Change**



**A. TCWF’s Contributions to Laying the Foundation for Policy Change**

After analyzing TCWF’s nine portfolios and drawing upon several recent reports, we hypothesize that successful policy change—being able to transition from the Laying the Foundation phase to the End Game phase—depends on two particular conditions:

- Ripeness of the *issue*—the receptivity of the external policy environment to the policy change being sought,
- Readiness of the *advocacy field*—the internal factors associated with the advocacy infrastructure that can enable it to be mobilized when a window of opportunity opens

Consistent with the survey findings, grantee and key informants identified a range of ways in which TCWF contributed to enhancing the ripeness of issues and the readiness of the advocacy field—key elements of laying the foundation for policy change. Across the nine portfolios, four strategies, in particular, stood out—some of which were also identified as characteristics of TCWF’s public policy grantmaking. However, they bear repeating here because of their role in enhancing issue ripeness and field readiness.

- *Reframing issues.* Grantees and key informants from the DHP, EH and VP portfolios in particular, described the importance of reframing issues as key to them gaining traction with policymakers. For example, violence is increasingly being viewed from a public health perspective and not solely through a criminal justice lens.
- *Amplifying the voice of grassroots and community groups in the policy debate.* As described earlier, TCWF placed a priority on supporting vulnerable communities to engage in the public policy process. In particular, the MHTAY, WoH, and HA portfolios supported leadership development efforts to better enable individuals from these population groups to advocate and organize.
- *Supporting coalitions.* Coalitions are a particularly effective means of bringing various organizations

“With regard to green chemistry laws and regulations, the fact that regulatory agencies see the issues in a different way is tremendous—it’s a paradigm shift. This is a realization in a change of approach and attitudes ... and acknowledgement of public health.”

EH Grantee

together to develop common policy goals and strategies to advance policy change. Several portfolios, especially SP and EH, placed a strong emphasis on supporting coalitions.

- *Investing in overall field building.* As one of TCWF's defining characteristics, the Foundation invested in field building across the various portfolios. Field building strengthens the overall advocacy infrastructure and was a key strategy of the WH, DHP, VP and TPP portfolios.

## **B. TCWF 's Contributions to Specific Policy Change**

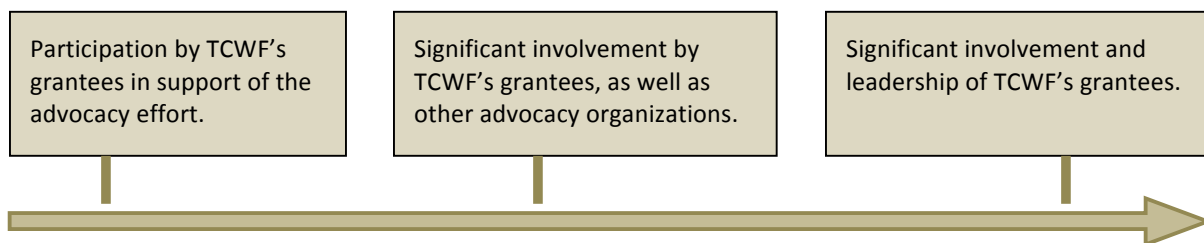
The evaluation found that TCWF's grantees participated in activities during all three phases of the policy change process, shown in Figure 5. With regard to the two phases associated with achieving specific policy change—the End Game Campaign and the Implementation phases—grantees conducted administrative advocacy, sought legislative policy change, defended programs and policies against rollbacks, worked on implementation of policy at the state and local levels, and ensured that policies were monitored and enforced. Although legislative policy was referenced most often in the survey and through interviews, TCWF's grantees and key informants also identified several defensive, administrative, implementation and enforcement successes:

- Stopped or mitigated many proposed state cuts to critical health programs during the years of major budget deficits
- Inclusion of consumer recommendations in the regulations establishing the Department of Managed Health Care
- Adoption of regulations by the California Air Resources Board, which require truck and construction equipment operators to replace or retrofit old diesel engines with cleaner engines
- Approval by the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach of the Clean Trucks program as part of a comprehensive plan to reduce port-generated pollution
- Approval by the California Air Resources Board of regulations to phase out the use of perchloroethylene by dry cleaners
- Incorporation of cumulative health impacts and the precautionary principle in environmental policy

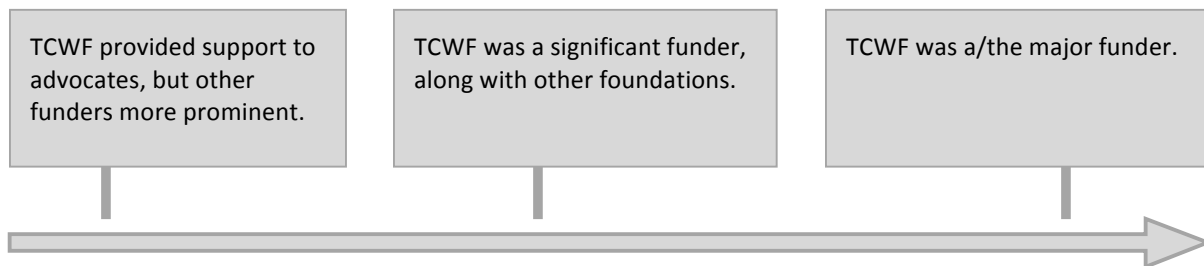
**C. A Model for Assessing TCWF’s Contribution to Policy Change**

In order to assess TCWF’s contribution to policy change, the evaluation identified three key dimensions of contribution: 1) the role of grantees, 2) the prominence of TCWF funding, and 3) the degree of alignment between the policy change and Foundation goals. With these as a basis, we propose a new model for describing funders’ contributions to policy change.

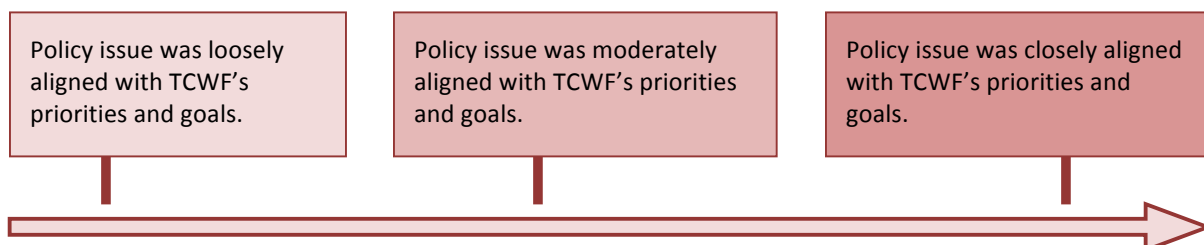
**1. Role of TCWF’s grantees in policy change effort.** In most policy or systems change efforts, there are multiple advocates, policy researchers, grassroots organizations and coalitions working to achieve the change. Some play leadership roles, while others may support the effort in more limited ways. In this aspect of evaluating the contributions of TCWF, the role of TCWF’s grantees, as compared to other organizations, in achieving the policy change, is assessed. In the framework shown in Figure 6, the y-axis displays the following spectrum of grantee roles.



**2. Prominence of TCWF’s funding, primarily through core support, in the overall policy change effort.** It is not unusual for several funders to support the same set of grantees in order to achieve the same or similar goals. In other instances, the number of funders is more limited or funders may act more independently. In this aspect of evaluating the contribution of TCWF, the role of TCWF’s funding—including the duration and level of funding—as compared to other funders in supporting the policy change effort is assessed. In the framework shown in Figure 6, the x-axis displays the spectrum of TCWF’s funding role.



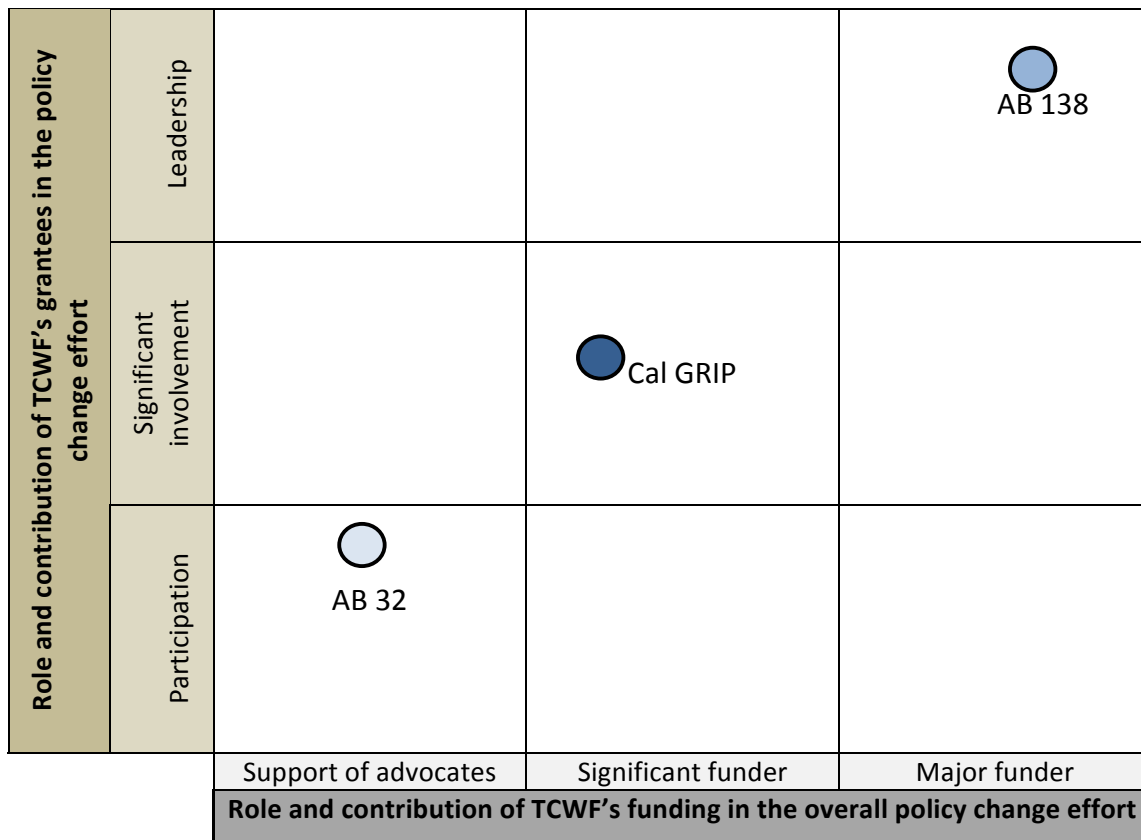
**3. Degree of alignment of policy change goals with TCWF’s priorities.** Because TCWF primarily provides grantees with core operating support, it is important to try to assess how tightly aligned the policy accomplishments were to TCWF’s goals. In some issues, TCWF had clearly articulated priorities, while in other portfolios (e.g., population-based areas), they were less well-defined. The degree of alignment is reflected by the intensity of the color.



Select policy accomplishments from each portfolio were analyzed according to each of the three dimensions. Three examples are provided below and displayed visually in Figure 6.

- AB 138, the Elder Economic Planning Act—The issue of measuring economic security of seniors was brought to TCWF’s attention through its open grantmaking process. TCWF funded data and research and, subsequently, advocacy, as well as other activities to educate policymakers about a new methodology; AB 138, which was introduced to advance the Elder Economic Index, was championed by many of TCWF’s grantees. This policy outcome was moderately aligned with TCWF’s policy goals regarding healthy aging.
- Launch of the Governor’s Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention Program (Cal GRIP) in 2007 and of the Los Angeles Gang Reduction Youth Development Initiative—TCWF supported the creation of California Cities Gang Prevention Network and other grantees who advocated for multi-faceted gang prevention programs. Other public and private donors also supported these efforts. These programs were tightly aligned with the VP portfolio’s goals.
- AB 32, the Global Warming Solutions Act—This law was one of the most significant environmental policy changes in recent years. TCWF funded many advocates who worked to address the health elements and environmental justice aspects of the law; numerous other funders and organizations were also leaders in this effort. Although the law contained many issues beyond the scope of TCWF’s EH portfolio, because it has the potential to improve conditions in low-income communities, it was loosely aligned with TCWF priorities and goals.

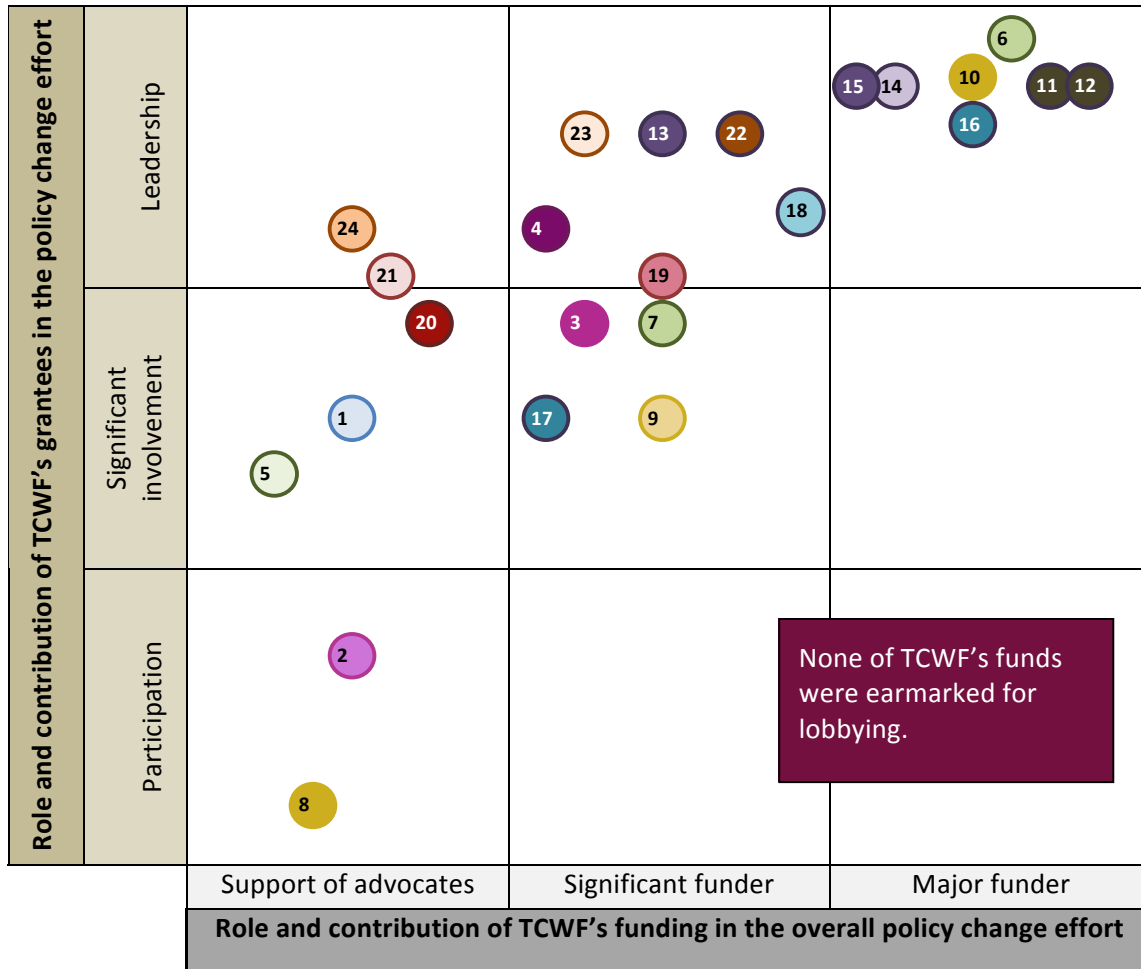
Figure 6. Framework for Assessing TCWF’s Contributions to Policy Change\*



\*The intensity of the color reflects the degree of alignment.

Twenty-four policy accomplishments (twenty-one legislative and three administrative or executive actions) associated with TCWF’s portfolios and identified by TCWF’s grantees were subjected to this analysis, the results of which are mapped in Figure 7. Each of the nine portfolios was assigned a color; the intensity of color relates to the degree of alignment of the particular public policy with TCWF’s goals and priorities. (See the Attachment for a full listing of the 24 public policies and the Appendix for in-depth analysis of each of the public policies.)

Figure 7. TCWF’s Contribution to select public policies



The broad distribution of policy changes across the framework demonstrates a continuum of ways in which TCWF contributed to policy change:

- TCWF was a leading funder in seven policy changes, a significant funder in ten and a contributor to another seven.
- TCWF’s grantees played leadership roles in 15 policy changes, had significant involvement in another seven and were participants in two.
- Eleven policy changes were closely aligned with TCWF’s priorities, eight were moderately aligned and five were loosely aligned.

Key takeaways of this analysis include the following:

- **TCWF made major contributions to the advancement of many public policies.** TCWF played a major role—through both the level and longevity of its funding as well as the leadership of its grantees—in seven policy accomplishments. In all but two, the policy change was closely aligned with TCWF's priorities. Most of these issues were associated with portfolios in which TCWF had a more defined policy agenda—such as TPP and VP (which began as initiatives)—or were focused on specific niche issues.

Given that TCWF did not stake out a set of explicit policy goals at the outset of the RGP and its general philosophy of deferring to grantees to set policy agendas, it is not surprising that less than one-third of policy accomplishments mapped to the upper right quadrant (e.g., TCWF and grantees played leadership roles). Funders that are more directive in their grantmaking and that have clearly defined policy goals would likely see the majority of policy accomplishments that are associated with their funding map to this quadrant.

- **TCWF contributed to the advancement of several of the most important public policy changes in the last decade.** By providing core operating support to a wide array of advocates, TCWF contributed to a number of significant laws, such as the Affordable Care Act, the Global Warming Solutions Act and the Fostering Connections Act. Enacting these types of major law changes requires an enormous effort from many policy, research and advocacy organizations, as well as from foundations and other donors to finance the effort. Through its provision of core operating support to advocates, TCWF played an important contributory role, even though it was not a lead in those efforts.
- **The alignment of public policy accomplishments with TCWF's priorities varied.** That less than half of the policy changes were tightly aligned with TCWF's priorities is reflective of the broad nature of TCWF's policy priorities, as well as the high level of core operating support it provided to grantees. Core operating support enabled advocates to respond to the policy environment and windows of opportunity, even if those policies were not identified at the start of a grant period or were not TCWF's primary objectives.

TCWF provided core operating support to the vast majority of its public policy grantees. Core operating support enabled grantees to use these funds for any activity they chose. Consistent with IRS regulations, TCWF did not earmark funding, either in writing or verbally, for any particular purpose and did not prohibit its funding from being used for lobbying activities.



## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### A. Conclusions

From its inception, The California Wellness Foundation recognized the importance of supporting advocacy and public policy activities in order to improve the health of Californians, particularly in low-income communities. In 2002, TCWF adopted the Responsive Grantmaking Program and identified eight priority areas, as well as a special projects portfolio to be able to support the safety net and respond to the policy environment. Public policy was one of four cross-cutting themes in the RGP, and public policy grantmaking was incorporated into all nine portfolios.

Although the Foundation did not establish specific policy goals that it wanted to achieve through the RGP, this evaluation sought to assess the impact of a decade of public policy grantmaking across the nine portfolios. By examining each portfolio in depth, as well as analyzing findings across the portfolios for common themes, several overarching conclusions emerged.

1. **TCWF had a positive impact on public policy at three levels.** First, the Foundation helped seed, stabilize and grow individual advocacy organizations. Second, it led and supported efforts to build new fields and enhance them. Third, it contributed in a variety of ways to the successful enactment and implementation of both large and narrow public policy changes. The continuum of contributions exemplified the different ways in which a foundation can support public policy change.
2. **TCWF's contributions to policy change resided primarily in the Laying the Foundation phase, rather than in the End Game Campaign phase.** TCWF's investments in field building—including core operating support over a long period of time, support for grassroots organizing, leadership development and coalitions—were all critical to enhancing the readiness of the field to engage in policy change activities. Moreover, TCWF's funding of communications efforts to reframe issues and increase policymakers' awareness helped increase the saliency of issues, a key aspect of ripeness, in the public policy arena. All of these activities helped increase the likelihood of success when windows of opportunity arose and enabled grantees to work on the full spectrum of policy change activities from issue identification to policy implementation.
3. **TCWF's reputation and grantmaking approach was grounded in the combination of seven key characteristics.** These characteristics embodied the Foundation's philosophy, strategies and relationships with grantees.
  - Field Building
  - Amplifying Grassroots and Community Voices
  - Knowingness
  - Long-Term Commitment
  - Filling a Niche
  - Core Operating Support
  - Policy-Oriented Convenings

- 4. While TCWF defines itself as a responsive funder—it maintained an open application process and took a less directive approach toward grantees—the Foundation was also strategic in several respects.** The Foundation played an *active supporting* role for the grantees and provided added value through a variety of means, thereby enabling them to focus on their prioritized policy goals. Policy-oriented convenings, facilitating and supporting coalitions, and identifying and building new fields are examples of TCWF's strategic activities. The use of the term "responsive" to categorize TCWF limited the ability of the Foundation to fully describe its multi-faceted approach to both internal and external audiences.
- 5. TCWF used a range of approaches in the construction of its portfolios, focusing in some cases on narrow niches and, in other cases, on broad issues.** Both approaches have advantages and disadvantages. The key is to balance the goal of focusing on a particular niche, in order to help it gain greater attention, with the need to connect it to a broader policy arena for greater impact and sustainability.

In addition, some of the portfolios were focused on populations, as opposed to issues. These portfolios generally had fewer policy accomplishments (when considering the full range of policies associated with the nine portfolios, even beyond the 24 identified in the Attachment) and seemed to have greater difficulty developing a coherent policy agenda. Consequently, it was also more difficult to assess the level of alignment of the policy outcomes with the Foundation's goals. While a population lens helped to diversify some of these fields, as well as highlight the issues affecting these populations, it did not seem to provide an organizing framework that best facilitated the advancement of a policy agenda.

It is important to recognize, however, that the overall level of advocacy field readiness and issue ripeness varied across the portfolios. Some of the portfolios supported relatively mature fields with clear policy agendas from the outset, while others were nascent. The extent of actual policy change that was accomplished must be viewed in that context.

- 6. Silos existed at multiple levels at TCWF, which limited TCWF's impact and learning throughout the Foundation.** Although the Foundation promoted collaboration among grantees—and grantees identified collaboration as the most critical strategy for policy change—there was a lack of internal collaboration among TCWF's portfolios and external collaboration with other foundations.

## **B. Recommendations**

Based on these conclusions, the evaluation offers the following recommendations:

- 1. Build on the TCWF's strengths, assets and reputation to continue leveraging expertise and past investments.** TCWF had significant longevity with many issues, and its program directors developed expertise and relationships, which are highly valued by grantees. TCWF's reputation among grantees is considerable; it is built upon many of the seven characteristics described in this evaluation. As it moves forward, TCWF should give weight to

continuing those aspects of its grantmaking approach that are most valued in order to leverage its past work for greater impact.

2. **Enhance impact by more intentionally aligning TCWF's philosophy, policy goals and the level of directedness with the mix of strategies that best fit the state of the policy issues and field.** Although TCWF did not direct its grantees, it did provide active support to them. This is an area identified by the evaluation in which, without compromising TCWF's basic philosophy, the Foundation could be more intentional. By having more clarity about what it wants to achieve, and a deeper understanding of the kinds of strategies that are most critical at different stages of the policy change process, TCWF could provide greater value-added support to the work of its grantees.
3. **Facilitate bridge building across internal portfolio silos and help "connect the dots" among grantees and across issues.** TCWF's program directors have a bird's-eye view of their fields and could facilitate greater relationships and network building among grantees. Service providers, in particular, are an untapped resource in the advocacy arena. As a major funder of direct services, TCWF could seek to connect its direct service grantees with advocates to strengthen the overall capacity of the field. Finally, a cross-cutting population lens, rather than a portfolio, may be useful in connecting issues because populations are affected by multiple interacting issues.
4. **Be open to greater funder coordination when it can enhance TCWF's ability to achieve its goals.** Funder coordination and collaboration is particularly important when engaging in field building and in tackling the social and environmental determinants of health. More collaboration and transparency with other foundations could also help the broader philanthropic community understand TCWF's approach, as well as advance the work of the Foundation and its grantees. TCWF need not limit itself to pooled or aligned funding with other foundations, but rather, develop its own parameters on, and approach to, funder collaboration, that are aligned with its values and approach.
5. **Organize internal structures to promote learning, including aligning and simplifying coding processes.** TCWF's internal structures are not conducive to shared learning. Better facilitation of cross-portfolio learning could mitigate artificial divisions among the various issue- and population-based portfolios, which are interrelated and designed to achieve similar goals. Furthermore, while the coding system included four public policy-related codes, those codes were insufficient to gain an in-depth understanding of what grantees were using TCWF funds to do. Going forward, TCWF should consider developing Foundation-wide goals that drive each of the portfolios and design coding and learning systems to advance them

**Attachment: 24 Public Policies Associated with TCWF's Funding**

- 1 **SB 1440 and AB 2302**, which established a streamlined transfer process from community colleges to four-year universities. DHP

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- 2 **AB 32**, the Global Warming Solutions Act, which established a comprehensive policy to address climate change.
- 3 **AB 1879 and SB 507**, the California Green Chemistry Initiative, which increased regulatory authority over chemicals in consumer products. EH
- 4 **AB 685**, the Human Right to Water Act, which established a state policy that every Californian has a human right to safe, clean, affordable and accessible drinking water.

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- 5 **Temporary Assistance Plan for Medicare Part D**, which assisted seniors who were potentially harmed as the new benefit was being implemented. HA
- 6 **AB 138**, The Elder Economic Planning Act, which established a new more comprehensive methodology for calculating the cost of living for seniors.
- 7 **Community Based Adult Services**, a new program, which was created in the budget bill in order to preserve half the level of funding for adult day health services rather than totally eliminate funding.

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- 8 **Proposition 63**, the Mental Health Services Act, which provides a new ongoing infusion of funds to mental health and identifies vulnerable youth as an important target population. MH
- 9 **AB 12**, the Fostering Connections Act, which extended foster care services for youth up to age 21.
- 10 **Transitional Housing Placement Plus program**, which provided housing for youth at risk of homelessness.

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- 11 **SB 71**, which established comprehensive, evidence-based sex education requirements for public schools.
- 12 **Medi-Cal waivers** that continued Family PACT, which provides federal matching for family planning services, including to undocumented women. TPP

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- 13 **The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act**, which was implemented in California through a set of bills, that expanded health coverage to the uninsured and included numerous other provisions of importance to women's health, healthy aging and teen pregnancy prevention.
- 14 **AB 356**, which required health insurers to disclose rate increases. SP
- 15 **SB 853**, the Health Care Language Assistance Act, which established language access standards for health plans.

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- 16 **AB 50 and SB 48**, as well as other bills, which placed limits on firearms and ammunition.
- 17 **California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention Program** and **Los Angeles Gang Reduction Youth Development Initiative**, which are comprehensive gang prevention programs. VP
- 18 **SB 81, Juvenile Justice**, which shifted nonviolent juvenile offenders from state-operated facilities to counties.

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- 19 **AB 2348**, which allows registered nurses to dispense and administer birth control.
- 20 Defeat of **three ballot measures** requiring parental notification for abortions and abortion waiting periods. WoH
- 21 **AB 2530**, which prohibited shackling and restraining women during any stage of their pregnancies unless deemed necessary for the safety and security of the inmate, the staff or the public.

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- 22 Adoption by California Occupational Safety and Health of **regulations prohibiting hand weeding** and other farming techniques and setting **standards to prevent heat illness**.
- 23 **Proposition F**, in San Francisco, which required employers to offer paid sick leave. WH
- 24 **AB 241**, the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, which removed the exclusion of domestic workers from rights provided to other California workers.

<sup>1</sup> TCWF's internal Health Issue Mapping Tool, January 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Public policy grants inventory data, current as of January 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Excludes seven grants that were for >\$500,000 each, primarily for communications campaigns, for a total of \$10.1 million.

<sup>4</sup> Excludes a \$1.5 M, one-time grant for a public education forum related to health care reform.

<sup>5</sup> Excludes a \$4.4 M, one-time grant for a public education campaign related to the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Initiative.

<sup>6</sup> Martha Campbell and Julia Coffman, "Tools to Support Public Policy Grantmaking," *Foundation Review*, Vol. 1:3 (2009).

<sup>7</sup> Kendall Guthrie et al, "The Challenge of Assessing Policy and Advocacy Activities," *The California Endowment*, (October 2005).