



Learning, Equity, and Power (LEaP) is an initiative of the Center for the Study of Policy (CSSP) to help turn "ideas into action." LEaP highlights and encourages learning about what it takes to advance equity and power in communities.

Authentic Community Engagement

Throughout the process of BHC, TCE learned about what it meant to authentically engage community residents, and how crucial that engagement is to truly advancing equity and justice. In order to advance health equity and racial justice, organizations and foundations need to listen to the wants and needs of community members. TCE learned that BHC communities—residents and organizational leaders and system partners—must be supported via their locally-determined strengths, power, and agency, even if this includes strengths, power, and agency that are perhaps not yet seen fully and completely.

Jordan, A. and Teng, S. "Sustaining Power-Building Momentum: Building Healthy Communities, 2010-2020." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2020. [Source found here.](#)

Focusing on Local Priorities

Local priorities were often broader than the "Four Big Results" that TCE defined early-on for the initiative. In BHC's initial years, local leaders pushed TCE to keep its promise for BHC's work to be community-driven rather than guided by foundation-prescribed goals. Local partners' persistence in expressing their priorities ensured that BHC's focus remained aligned with community leaders' perspectives on the social determinants of health. The lists below depict how TCE's focus shifted throughout BHC as local residents pushed the foundation.

TCE's Initial Goals:

- Providing a healthy home for all children
- Reversing childhood obesity
- Increasing school attendance
- Reducing school violence

Community Priorities:

- Gentrification and displacement
- Justice reform
- School culture (not just attendance)
- Affordable housing
- Environmental justice

Farrow, F., Rogers, C., Henderson-Frakes, J. (2020) "Toward Health and Racial Equity: Findings and Lessons from Building Healthy Communities." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2020. [Source found here.](#)

This LEaP highlights lessons and insights from selected research and evaluation of The California Endowment's (TCE) decade-long Building Healthy Communities (BHC) initiative. BHC is a \$1 billion initiative launched in 2010 that reached 14 communities devastated by health inequities. With various local campaigns, core strategies, and the

efforts of thousands of adults and youth, BHC took a broad approach to health equity and building community power. BHC learned many lessons along the way about what it takes to transform communities into places where all people have an opportunity to thrive. This LEaP features information from a collection of research that can be found [here](#).



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Grantmaking to Support Community Power Building

The list below is a summary of recommendations needed to sustain the power building momentum achieved through BHC, and honor the investment of time, money, and hard work of residents and community-based organizational leaders. While developed for TCE, these recommendations may be useful to other foundations who want to authentically partner with communities.

Center equity in grantmaking through fully understanding site context

Invest in site leadership and capacity to center racial equity in local efforts

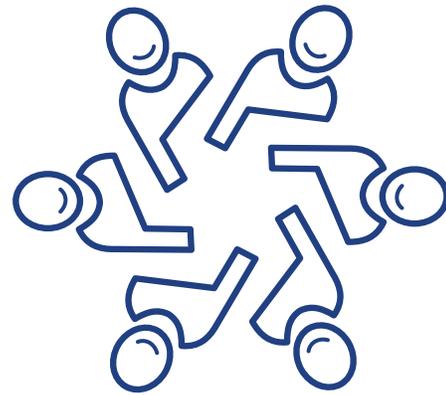
Invest in increased learning and accountability with communities

Intensify the local leadership pipeline building

Invest in the capacity needed for a durable, multi-generational power building infrastructure

Build out and support core competencies and practices for foundation staff

Adapted from Jordan, A. and Teng, S. "Sustaining Power-Building Momentum: Building Healthy Communities, 2010-2020." Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Social Policy. 2020. [Source found here.](#)



“ BHC and grantees have been great at ramping up the engagement of community residents, who were already engaged at some level, and getting them more experience in direct advocacy. They provide them training and help them develop the necessary skill sets. The capacity and the empowerment of the folks that were involved initially has substantially increased.”

– Community Partner

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Special thanks to evaluation partners Shiree Teng and Audrey Jordan. Their work, along with other research on BHC, can be found [here](#).



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