

Mission of the Strong Communities Fund

The Fund aims to help our County's residents get their basic needs met and engage them in community life. This year, the Fund has the following Focus Areas:

- Investing in programs that give low-income and working-poor families and individuals opportunities to move out of poverty. **What we see:** In Napa County, a family of four needs to earn around \$50,000 a year to adequately meet their basic needs. For many working in our hospitality, retail and agriculture sectors, an annual income of that size is out of reach. These families live in or on the edge of poverty, and they lack assets that are instrumental to moving out of economic hardship: education, savings, equity in a home or business, financial literacy. Programs that help people build assets and earn a livable wage can reduce the episodic poverty that challenges many households, and also can increase the chances that families who work here will be able to afford to live in Napa County.
- Enhancing vulnerable populations' access to services that meet basic needs. **What we see:** Geography is an obvious barrier in our Valley, where transportation is essential to get services offered at only one location. We see other obstacles—language, familiarity with culture and knowledge of systems—that can deter members of our community from accessing health, housing or social services. Even people who receive public assistance don't have access to certain essentials, such as special dental or vision care, or certain types of housing arrangements, because those services aren't covered by public aid programs. We also find that low income or disabled people often don't have access to activities that improve quality of life. Removing these barriers isn't necessarily about large-scale change, but about efforts to connect services and targeted populations.
- Bridging the divides that exist in our community by promoting dialogue, as well as cross-cultural knowledge, awareness and respect. **What we see:** Geography, points of view and preferences, cultural backgrounds, and economics are just a few of the things that can balkanize us. Viewpoints are frequently shared on the opinion pages of our local papers, but that forum, while necessary, is insufficient. Opportunities to come together, discuss issues, share our different experiences and work towards common goals can help shape more resilient and inclusive communities. We also have seen the merits of free, public events that celebrate civic life—these kinds of programs build connections among neighbors.

Examples of Projects

\$40,000 to a financial savings and education program that is reaching 20 low-income families in Napa County. This grant helped attract another \$120,000 in grants from local and regional funders.

\$250,000 to nonprofits that provide food, shelter and emergency aid to families and seniors negatively impacted by the economic recession.

How to Apply

The Fund is open year-round for applications. Grant decisions are made at the discretion of the Community Foundation Board of Directors, with recommendations from staff. For more information, please contact Marla Tofle at 707.254.9565.