

Inside Philanthropy

This Community Foundation Raised \$10 Million—and Counting—to Help Latinos Build Power

[Martha Ramirez January 06, 2022](#)



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Only six months after launch, the Latino Community Foundation (LCF) has raised \$10 million to support its new Latino Power Fund, surpassing its original goal of raising the amount in a year. The five-year, [\\$50 million fund](#) will support Latino-led grassroots organizations in California. Its

goals: to ensure that Latino communities receive an equitable share of federal recovery funds and to increase Latino civic leadership and political participation.

Having surpassed its initial milestone, LCF is expediting its other fundraising goals. It will now aim to raise its next \$10 million between January and June, and the full \$50 million in three years rather than five.

Among the fund's supporters so far are the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Annenberg Foundation, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, the Hellman Foundation, the California Health Care Foundation and Sobrato Philanthropies.

According to LCF's CEO Jacqueline Martinez Garcel, the growing momentum surrounding racial justice has been a definite contributing factor in this successful round of fundraising. The Power Fund represents a step toward undoing decades of underinvestment in Latino communities by leveraging not just private dollars, but public dollars, as well.

"This is a tangible opportunity to bring that money into our communities, create new jobs, improve our educational system, move to a more green economy and to include Latinos in that process," Martinez Garcel said. "It's a number of things happening right now, but it took being loud and demanding that we focus our attention and that we don't forget the pain and the losses that Latinos have suffered in the last 18 months."

As [numerous studies](#) have shown, Latinos in the state have borne a disproportionate brunt of the pandemic, accounting for [51% of cases](#) and 45% of deaths in California. At the same time, U.S. philanthropy has a history of underinvesting in Latino-led organizations, with only about [1% of all philanthropic dollars](#) going to Latino groups.

"Philanthropy as a whole has benefited from the economy in the last year and a half. Most large foundations have doubled, if not tripled, their assets,

so they're sitting on more money than they had before this pandemic," Martinez Garcel said. "And the question and the call to action is: will they redistribute that wealth and those resources differently by channeling it through organizations led by Latinos?"

In addition to helping organizations grow quickly so they can hire more staff, increase their budgets and procure federal funds, LCF will also focus its attention on the upcoming elections. While national congressional races draw the most attention during the midterms—and will be crucial for California's future—there are a number of local races with the potential to be equally significant. These include the mayoral races in Oakland and Los Angeles, among many others.

Through the Latino Power Fund, LCF will support organizations that are, as Martinez Garcel refers to them, "civic anchor institutions" for Latino communities in the state.

"They may be small, but they're the ones that are going beyond knocking on doors," she said. "They're the ones bringing local candidates to come and meet with people."

These grassroots groups will help ensure that Latinos are aware of the elections that are taking place, that they participate in them, and that campaign events are organized and convened early so candidates can engage with communities early—not in a last-minute push for votes. In addition, LCF will fund a number of polls during the time leading up to the elections to get a sense of where Latino voters' priorities lie.

Martinez Garcel also noted that it's important for people to see what the government is doing on their behalf. "There's a growing distrust of government institutions... These federal infusions of resources, it's our money. It's our taxes. And if people don't see how it's working for them, I fear that more people will lose faith in government." The worry is that reduced faith in government will mean less political engagement, which in

turn would lead to less representation for Latinos at all levels of government—and less power.

For LCF, building power is about more than helping Latinos recover from the pandemic—it's a means to ensure that California is a just and equitable state for everyone.

“Power is acknowledging the fact that it may seem like things are broken and they’ll never change, but that we as a people have the intellect and the solutions to lead and make change happen,” Martinez Garcel said. “When I think about power, it’s lifting up those community leaders that have been working locally and pushing for solutions. It’s scaling their work and making sure that the cities that they are in feel and see the difference in elevating them.”

LCF will announce its first round of grantees in the first quarter of this year.