

Evaluations and Lessons Learned from Our Grantmaking

**The California Wellness Foundation
THE VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE:
Accomplishments, Challenges and Lessons Learned**

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1. TCWF's Violence Prevention Initiative

This report highlights the accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned from TCWF's Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI or Initiative) during the period 1992-2003.

When the Board of Directors of The California Wellness Foundation (TCWF) decided that violence prevention would be the first grantmaking program of the newly established Foundation, violence in the United States had reached epidemic proportions. The juvenile arrest rate for homicide more than doubled between 1984 and 1993 (Hawkins et al., 1998). In those years, homicide was a leading cause of death of all young people under 24 years of age, and disproportionately impacted youth of color. During this same period, the murder rate was reaching epidemic portions among young men. In 1991, murders peaked when nearly 25,000 Americans were killed, and California led the nation with close to 4,000 homicides. The impact was felt most profoundly in low-income communities of color, where there was a prevailing sense of insecurity, fear and malaise that resulted from the devastating toll of violence.

Shortly after the Foundation was established, a convening of a group of experts, six focus groups of clinicians, and community residents was held to prioritize health issues amenable to prevention in California. Six white papers were commissioned and presented to the Board of Directors. One of the papers, authored by staff at the Trauma Foundation, was on the issue of violence prevention. The Board decided to make violence prevention the focus of the Foundation's first initiative to improve the health and well-being of Californians. Strategies and interventions that had been utilized by public health practitioners to reduce death from disease and unintentional injury were to be modified and adapted to help prevent violence in California. Because youth were disproportionately represented both as perpetrators and victims of violence, the Foundation focused its efforts on young people between the ages of 12 and 24, and the overall goal of the Violence Prevention Initiative was to

reduce violence against youth in California. In October 1992, the Board of Directors authorized the VPI, a grantmaking program of \$60 million over 10 years. Recognizing the complexity and depth of the issue, a comprehensive, multifaceted grantmaking program was designed.

Eight other California foundations, the James Irvine Foundation, Sierra Health Foundation, Alliance Healthcare Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, S.H. Cowell Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Crail-Johnson Foundation and The California Endowment, provided an additional \$10 million for the implementation of the VPI.

2. VPI Structure/Goals/Activities

The Violence Prevention Initiative was innovative in that it approached violence from a public health perspective and took into consideration the concomitant forces that increase risk in communities, such as lack of access to jobs, poor educational systems, lack of health care and affordable housing, racism and discrimination. Prior approaches from the fields of criminal justice and medicine tended to focus on violence after the fact. The VPI framework, addressing “root causes,” provided an opportunity to prevent violence from occurring in the first place, with an emphasis on reducing access to handguns to reduce the lethality of the violence. TCWF was the first major health foundation to approach the issue of violence in this way; the Foundation’s decision proved to be a groundbreaking moment in the field of violence prevention and in philanthropy.

There were four interactive components in the VPI: the Policy Program, Community Action Grants (CAG) Program, Leadership Program, and the Research Program. While conceptually distinct, these components were seen as essentially interdependent and interactive to obtain the greatest impact. At the direction of the Board, staff assumed responsibility for the overall coordination of the VPI. All components were initially funded through a competitive Request For Proposal (RFP) process.

At the midpoint of the Initiative, staff made an assessment and reached the following conclusions and decisions: All of the components remained intact with the exception of the research program; only nine of the original Community Action sites continued as Grantees; and more funding was allocated for technical assistance for the original sites in the Community Action Grants Program. Additionally, the Policy Program was refocused on two policy goals: policies reducing firearm injury, and increasing funding for comprehensive violence prevention programs highlighting promising programs and strategies.

3. Policy Program

The research base in public health strongly suggested that while a balance of activities is necessary, policy change is a key factor in promoting public health goals. Publications by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and California’s Injury Control Program indicated the importance of policy development and implementation related to firearms, alcohol and drugs. Policy change to allocate additional resources for effective violence prevention programs was also needed. The VPI Policy Program was made up of three components: the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention (Pacific Center), the public education campaigns, and policy (formerly called supplemental policy) grantees. TCWF established the VPI Policy Program with the following goals and objectives.

Policy Goal I: Work to shift society’s definition of youth violence from a law enforcement perspective to include a public health perspective that addresses societal and environmental influences contributing to youth violence. Objectives were to: 1) educate and inform policymakers and opinion leaders about the need to shift the distribution of public resources from a focus on incarceration only, toward a focus that includes prevention

programs that foster the health education and employment of youth; and 2) educate the media about the need to change news practices regarding the portrayal of youth and violent behavior.

Policy Goal II: Advocate for public policies that reduce the access to alcohol and other drugs, which contribute to youth violence. Objectives were to: 1) educate policymakers and opinion leaders about the economic cost of alcohol and other drugs and their association with youth violence; and 2) educate policymakers and opinion leaders about the need to increase the enforcement of underage drinking laws by the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control.

Policy Goal III: Advocate for public policies to reduce firearm injury and death among youth. Objectives were to: 1) educate policymakers and opinion leaders about the need to formulate state policies to reduce the availability of, and access to, handguns by youth; 2) encourage and engage communities and local jurisdictions to enact policies and regulations to prevent firearm injuries; and 3) educate policymakers and opinion leaders about the economic cost of firearm injury to youth.

To ensure that all components of the VPI had the opportunity to be integrated into the Initiative's Policy Program and to ensure that the goals and objectives of that program were accomplished, the Foundation awarded a grant to the Trauma Foundation of San Francisco General Hospital to establish the Pacific Center for Violence Prevention (Pacific Center). The Pacific Center was to offer media advocacy and public policy advocacy training to all individuals and organizations associated with the Initiative. The intent was to create a statewide network of social activists, connected by an electronic communication system that would inform policymakers and opinion leaders in California about programs and policies to prevent violence.

Because violence in television programming and in feature films was strongly associated with violent behavior, an Entertainment Industry Project was funded. The Foundation provided a grant to Mediascope for the purpose of working collaboratively with the entertainment industry to develop policies regarding the portrayals of violence; to develop and produce reports on current industry practices; and to design a curriculum for film schools that would balance freedom of expression with social responsibility.

The Foundation awarded grants to Martin & Glantz, LLC, and i.e. communications, LLC, to develop, implement and evaluate several multimedia public education campaigns with goals of reducing the availability of, and access to, handguns and of increasing resources for youth violence prevention programs. Based on the results of market research, the audience for campaign messages was divided into two sectors: the general public, with emphasis on specific geographic and demographic targets, and policymakers/opinion leaders. To effectively communicate with these two audiences, comprehensive multifaceted campaigns were designed that not only utilized substantial paid media, but also educated public opinion leaders and decisionmakers and actively invited the participation of organizations associated with the VPI.

The mass media/general public component of the public education campaigns consisted of three primary strategies: 1) paid advertising in target markets; 2) statewide PSA (public service announcement) placements; and 3) statewide earned media. The second major component of the public education campaigns centered around the opinion leader activities. The opinion leader program complemented the paid media by providing more in-depth information on the public health model, a rationale to reduce access to firearms among California's youth, and a rationale to increase resources for prevention programs. Opinion leaders were defined as those individuals who would most likely be called upon to make public statements and/or policy decisions on the issue of youth and gun violence in California. The opinion leader component of the campaigns also considered three key strategies focused around "communities of influence": 1) database and direct mail communications program; 2) policymaker education; and 3) teleconferences.

TCWF also funded 12 additional policy grants in an effort to provide funding across a variety of policy programs to contribute to the discourse and development of state and local youth violence prevention policy.

The work of these Grantees complemented and enhanced the efforts of the Pacific Center and the public education campaigns to educate policymakers, opinion leaders and the general public about the need to increase both public and private investment in comprehensive violence prevention programs for youth and firearms policy.

Accomplishments, Challenges and Lessons Learned. The following section presents a description of staff assessment of the overarching accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned from the various programs of the Initiative.

4. Leadership Program

Prior to the VPI, research and publications on the issue of violence prevention by the CDC and the California Injury Control Program indicated a need to develop leadership in the field. Recommendations called for the nurturing of strong grassroots leaders with the ability to address the root causes and consequences of violence in communities. The CDC also recommended the development of postgraduate programs to attract new people to the field of injury control and violence prevention and stressed the need to make particular efforts to recruit women and people of color for these types of programs. In recognition of these recommendations, the Foundation established a Leadership Program within the VPI. The VPI Leadership Program had three components: 1) Community Leaders Fellowship Program; 2) the California Peace Prize; and 3) Academic Fellowships.

The Community Leaders Fellowship Program was designed to provide financial support and recognition to individuals who had effectively organized community efforts in violence prevention. The goal of the fellowship was to empower communities by recognizing leadership in violence prevention. The objectives were to: 1) provide fellowship awards to 100 community leaders to acknowledge and support their work; and 2) identify and provide mentoring to 200 youth leaders in local communities.

Fellows were selected through a rigorous confidential nomination and selection process. The individuals that were selected represented different target populations, strategies and beliefs about the antecedents of violence. They were charismatic, energetic, determined and hardworking. Many had received some recognition for their work within their respective communities, but often times, awards and certificates stop short of meeting other needs such as training and educational opportunities, apprenticeships and networking for funding. The Fellowship Program provided these leaders with a chance to develop new skills as well as the financial resources to help apply these new skills. Over time, the fellowship evolved to meet the changing needs of different cohorts of Fellows and was managed both internally by staff and externally by Grantees.

The goal of the [California Peace Prize](#) was to establish an annual award that would publicly recognize and acknowledge outstanding violence prevention efforts of individuals in local communities throughout California. Each year, TCWF provided cash awards of \$25,000 to three leaders whose efforts have reduced violence and helped promote peace, and addressed root causes of violence. The Foundation also intended the award to draw attention to the issue of violence and prevention efforts to policymakers and opinion leaders. The selection process was similar to that of the community fellows program, with a confidential nomination and selection process with final approval by the Board.

The goal of the Academic Fellowships was to increase the number and diversity of health professionals who were trained in and committed to violence prevention. The fellowships were to support professional training of 60 individuals who represented ethnic minorities and women. Grants were made to eight organizations in California that provided fellowships based on a multidisciplinary public health approach. Postgraduate students in trauma surgery, psychiatry, psychology and public health were trained in epidemiology, advocacy and policy with the hope that this would foster a professional commitment to the prevention of violence.

5. Community Action Grants Program

The goal of the Community Action Grants (CAG) Program was to provide resources and technical assistance to communities to decrease youth violence through community health promotion programs. The objectives of CAG were to: 1) identify successful methods for delivering youth violence interventions at the community level; 2) determine if multifaceted community programs can reduce rates of violent behavior, injury and death associated with youth violence; and 3) build the capacity of local community agencies and organizations to intervene successfully in the youth violence problem. The Community Action Grants Program strongly encouraged representative decisionmaking from a segment of the population that is not often called upon to be active participants in the social services and policy planning process, namely young people.

The Foundation provided Community Action Planning Grants for 18 communities in California. Priority for funding was given to organizations that could demonstrate the following: 1) visible, broad-based collaborative community effort; 2) culturally appropriate services and linguistic capabilities to meet community needs; 3) a project plan that had the greatest likelihood of furthering the goals and objectives of the VPI; 4) institutionalized process by which program participants or clients were integrated into organized decision-making – particularly youth involvement in the site visit; 5) staff and board that accurately reflect the community the organization serves; 6) experience working in networks or coalitions; 7) experience in community organizing and planning for community action; 8) commitment to and/or experience in working with adolescents and/or young adults; and 9) a cost-efficient approach to the budgeting of the requested funds. All 18 Community Action Projects (CAPs) successfully completed their planning year and were awarded four-year operational grants.

Grants were awarded to community collaboratives that included youth most at risk to pursue action at the local level through a multitiered strategy that combined direct services, policy, media advocacy and community mobilization. Funded sites were encouraged, but not required, to participate in the policy activities of the Pacific Center and the VPI public education campaigns. The CAG Program was modeled after the CDC approach of creating a collaborative response to violence. As such, several grants were awarded to larger multi-service organizations that were cornerstone agencies in the community and could undertake the work of building a coalition and provide the infrastructure for the development of the programs. Grants were also awarded to grassroots community-based organizations including some new entities with little organizational structure.

In June 1998, after a competitive RFP process, seven CAPs were not selected to continue as VPI Grantees. These Grantees were awarded one-year “bridge” grants to help organizations transition to alternative sources of funding or phase out program activities. Each of these bridge Grantees continued to provide violence prevention work at some level – several sites continued smaller scale projects and others incorporated efforts with other activities.

Nine of the original sites were awarded continuation grants to support and institutionalize efforts. By the final year of the Initiative, eight of the originally funded CAPs remained with the VPI; however, many had changed over the course of the Initiative. The evolution and development of the CAPs over the 10 years varied, and four of the remaining eight CAPs, were not the originally funded organizations.

In 2000, the Board also approved the Promising Practices grantmaking component of the Community Action Grants Program to extend the Initiative’s reach and access to Foundation resources to support other viable and competitive community-based programs. The Promising Practices component was structured to support a variety of ongoing programs including: comprehensive youth programs, community service and volunteerism; mentoring and rites-of-passage programs; mediation and conflict resolution programs; school-linked youth services; and teen courts/alternative sentencing programs. Twelve grants were made to organizations throughout the state for this grantmaking program.

6. Research Program

The scientific literature contained findings of research that supported the goals and objectives of the VPI. However, to address unanswered and emerging questions relevant to informing public policy, an ongoing research program was needed. The Foundation awarded 15 research grants in an effort to inform each of the three aforementioned VPI policy goals.

Research grants were funded at: California State University, Fresno; Charles Drew University of Medicine and Science; The Marin Institute for the Prevention of Alcohol and Other Drug Problems; Prevention Research Center; Rand Corporation; Tomás Rivera Policy Institute; University of California, Davis; University of California, Los Angeles; University of California, Riverside; University of California, Santa Barbara; and the University of Southern California.

7. Management of the Initiative

TCWF staff had the responsibility of managing the overall Initiative. This included the day-to-day management of grants, as well as overseeing the planning of the annual conference for Grantees and convenings of the VPI advisory committee. Staff was also responsible for monitoring the evaluations of the Initiative.

The annual conference provided an opportunity for Grantees to develop and strengthen skills, share lessons and promote collaboration between and across organizations and components of the Initiative. The annual conference was a yearly opportunity for the Foundation to facilitate purposeful interaction among the components of the VPI to help strengthen the overall impact of the Initiative.

The role of the Advisory Committee was to provide technical assistance, guidance and advice to TCWF about the goals, strategies and activities of the VPI, with a particular focus on the policy programs of the Initiative. The Advisory Committee was convened twice yearly throughout the course of the VPI.

The evaluation of the VPI included an evaluation completed at the midpoint by Stanford University, Rand Corporation, and Johns Hopkins Injury Prevention Center. The evaluation was designed to provide timely information to the staff and Board to assist in decisions over changes within the VPI, as well as to measure the effectiveness of the interventions utilized by Grantees. The evaluation was designed to not only determine the effectiveness of each Initiative component, but also to develop an understanding of how the components interacted and reinforced each other. The evaluation reports from the first five years provided useful data and valuable insights; however, the evaluation failed to adequately capture the "stories" of the VPI and the Grantees. To complement the evaluation results from the first five years, TCWF awarded five grants intended to document the more qualitative aspects of the Community Action Grants Program, the Leadership Program and the Policy Program, as well as an objective history of the overall Initiative. In addition, a grant was made to produce a video that captured the experience of VPI Grantees.

Although staff were not the technical assistance (TA) providers, staff at the Foundation were charged with identifying Grantees able to assess the needs of grantees in the CAG Program and managing the delivery of TA to Grantees. Technical assistance was designed to build the capacity of individuals and organizations involved in the VPI.

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8. Policy Program

Accomplishments:

- *California now has some of the strongest gun control laws in the United States.* In the past decade of the VPI, there has been tremendous success in statewide and local firearm policy, which is attributable to the policy advocacy efforts of the Pacific Center and other VPI Grantees. Firearm policy successes include a ban on cheap, easily made, dangerous firearms called "junk guns." Other firearm bills signed into California law include: limiting handgun sales to one per month; expanding the definition of banned assault weapons; requiring that state-approved, gun-locking devices are provided at the point of sale; and licensing promoters and broadly regulating vendor and attendee activities at gun shows. Additionally, local firearms policy measures included the adoption of more than 180 ordinances regulating firearms in at least 60 cities and six counties in California. Thirty-three cities and four counties banned the cheap handguns most often used in criminal activity, known as Saturday Night Specials.
- *California has significantly increased the level of state spending to support youth violence prevention programs.* The annual state budget allocation for preventing youth violence increased from approximately \$8 million in FY 1992-93 to approximately \$370 million in FY 2002-03. This documentation, completed by Commonweal, demonstrates an exponential increase since the inception of the VPI.
- *The policy advocacy efforts of the VPI policy Grantees, public education Grantees and Pacific Center helped push forward the violence prevention agenda statewide and locally.* Many of the VPI policy Grantees were heavily involved in advocacy work, which complemented the work of the Pacific Center and public education campaigns, and helped to strengthen the reach of the VPI policy messages through its communications to various constituencies and service networks. A loose-knit group of policy

advocates, service providers, community activists and clinicians has been developed through the VPI, and is now considered a movement affecting policy change throughout California. Funding organizations that had a Sacramento presence and ongoing communications and relationships with policymakers helped increase understanding and dialogue about youth violence prevention.

- *Using many mediums and messages, the VPI public education Grantees were successful in developing user-friendly information that helped to reframe the issue of violence in the public sphere.* Images and terminology such as “...there are more gun dealers than McDonald’s in some communities” were a good use of “social math” to paint the picture of the problem of handguns in clear, simple language. Additionally, the public education Grantees employed various strategies including a youth mapping project, youth surveys and a county scorecard to illustrate the case for increasing public investment in violence prevention programs and supporting firearms legislation.
- *To increase its communication reach, the VPI public education Grantees developed and maintained a database of key policymakers and opinion leaders.* Early in the VPI and continuing throughout, the public education Grantees have maintained a database of local and state elected officials and related opinion leaders, such as school districts and juvenile justice experts. This database, now totaling more than 10,000 contacts, has become an influential roster. In an era of term limits when many state legislators begin their political career as local elected officials, it has become very beneficial to have local officials included in the database.

Challenges:

- *Pacific Center was not established as a traditional policy center where the main goal was research, publication and dissemination of public policy.* While Pacific Center was responsible for achieving some of these activities as outlined in its grant objectives, the role of integrating the components of the VPI Policy Program possibly detracted from its research and dissemination efforts. In reporting its progress, the Pacific Center frequently reported convenings as dissemination accomplishments. Pacific Center maintained an extensive library of resources; however, these materials were not widely utilized and its website was often outdated.
- *The Pacific Center’s focus was on the goal of reducing access to firearms.* Pacific Center staff became very involved in the Bell Campaign and Million Mom March, both national gun control initiatives, which crystallized Pacific Center’s focus on firearms. While these campaigns provided an opportunity to highlight the firearms issues and connect with the VPI Grantees, these activities distracted Pacific Center from the other two policy goals of the VPI.
- *Grant amounts for some of the policy Grantees were significantly smaller than other VPI grants, and perhaps insufficient in some cases to undertake the level of work and involvement in the VPI.* Many of the policy Grantees were small organizations that might have benefited from both technical assistance and support to participate in VPI activities.
- *The turnover of key staff at Martin & Glantz, LLC had a significant negative impact on implementation of the VPI public education campaign.* When the principal staff member implementing the VPI grant left the firm, there was a tremendous loss of institutional memory and the quality of the public education campaign suffered. As a result, a competitive RFP process was released to select a Grantee to conduct the final two years of the VPI public education campaign.

Lessons Learned:

- *It might have been more prudent for TCWF to frequently co-sponsor activities with the Pacific Center to ensure that the VPI policy center was not acting unilaterally or on behalf of the Foundation.* The Pacific Center’s convening objectives are not consistent with publication and dissemination of policy papers. Expecting that an entity can serve as both the policy center and convenor can result in blurred responsibilities and in many cases an identified “convenor” is viewed as an extension of the Foundation. On the other hand, the advocacy experience of the staff at the Pacific Center probably helped achieve major public policy outcomes.

- *Using TCWF as the spokesperson for the VPI public education campaign proved to be effective and kept the Foundation at the forefront of the discussion about violence against youth.* As a result, the Foundation was able to highlight the work of Grantees, serving a benefit to Grantees and furthering the goals of the VPI. Also, because the Foundation was seen as a neutral voice, it lent credibility to the messages of the public education campaign.
- *Policy Grantees outside of the Pacific Center's activities were involved in numerous projects and these successes were not documented and communicated in a systematic way.* This information could have been posted on the Pacific Center website or mailed to policymakers and opinion leaders with other mailings in coordination with the Pacific Center or public education campaigns.
- *Conducting and using the findings of market research is essential for the effectiveness of the public education campaigns.* Since 1996, each public education Grantee has conducted extensive annual voter polls and focus groups. This information has not only provided opportunities for media attention and timely information for the state budget process, but also informed the message of the public education campaigns and the targets for those campaigns. A side benefit was the ability to track public opinion over the life of the Initiative.
- *Politics plays an influential role in entertainment industry decisions and most assuredly impacted the Entertainment Industry Project.* Due to the nature of this type of project, more emphasis should be placed on evidence of buy-in or, at minimum participation, of intended constituencies.

9. Leadership Program

Accomplishments:

- *Significant progress was made toward achieving the goals and objectives of the VPI Leadership Program.* The California Peace Prize was awarded to 30 individuals, and 64 Academic Fellows and 71 Community Fellows completed their fellowships.
- *The California Peace Prize created greater public awareness of individuals and programs working to prevent violence in California.* The Peace Prize has become a prestigious award that has name recognition in the state and has provided a yearly opportunity to publicize the issue of violence in the media and with policymakers. The efforts of the TCWF communications staff, media strategies and opinion leader mailings have resulted in raising the issue of violence in the public sphere and provided coverage of the individuals and the issue throughout the state. Media strategies have resulted in an estimated 175 media stories about awardees, including coverage in the California Journal, Los Angeles Times and San Francisco Chronicle.
- *The impact of the Academic Fellowships on particular fields and at sites has been profound.* In the field of child and adolescent psychiatry and psychology, the topic of violence, as an area of research and discussion, has increased substantially as a direct result of the work of the Principal Investigator and Fellows at Stanford University. At several sites, violence prevention has been integrated into the general work of the Institutions, and programs that did not exist were established as a result of the fellowship and will continue after the end of TCWF funding.
- *The Community Leaders Fellowship Program developed individual leadership skills and the capacity of organizations as well.* Although the program was designed for individuals, many participants worked in differing capacities within organizations and brought the skills they developed to their respective organizations, expanding the reach of the program beyond the initial intended goal. In many cases, community programs were expanded.

Challenges:

- *Maintaining a confidential process for the California Peace Prize has been challenging in the face of inquiries from media, elected, and other high-profile officials.* The Peace Prize has become prestigious

because of the commitment and willingness of those involved to maintain confidentiality. However, this commitment cannot and did not prevent inquiries and attempts by some to become nominators and/or recipients of the award.

- *Ensuring ethnic diversity of Academic Fellows was a major challenge for this program.* One of the objectives of the program was to support professional training of ethnic minorities in violence prevention; nearly half (47%) of the Fellows were people of color and 81% were women. The earlier years of the fellowship did in fact have more diverse pools of Fellows; however, over time, the number of people of color in the cohorts diminished. The change in policy of the Regents of California and Proposition 209 may have had a significant effect on recruitment.
- *The Community Leaders Fellowship (CLF) Program included requirements for mentoring youth; however, the mentoring component of the CLF might have been too ambitious.* The original thinking was that participants in the CLF would mentor two youth and these youth would develop job training and leadership skills. This proved to be a difficult task for the Fellows to achieve, in part due to turnover of the mentee youth and the amount of time required to mentor a young person.
- *The use of intermediaries to provide logistical support, training and oversight of the Community Leaders Fellowship Program caused significant confusion and tension between the intermediary, Fellows and the Foundation.* This confusion and tension prevented consistent programmatic goals, as well as hampered “institutional memory” as it related to addressing challenges and retooling the program. There was also confusion among Fellows as to whether the goal of the CLF was professional or personal development, skills building or a sabbatical opportunity. This was in part due to the ever-changing management of the Fellowship program, as well as the changing format of the program itself.
- *In several cohorts, some Fellows worked at organizations already funded by the VPI, which created tension among Grantees and charges of “favoritism.”* While the thinking might have been that this award would strengthen those organizations funded in other VPI components, these decisions were perhaps shortsighted and did not take into consideration the closeness and ongoing communication of the Initiative Grantees.

Lessons Learned:

- *The impact of the California Peace Prize has far-reaching leadership and policy implications.* The Peace Prize is an internal process and is a relatively low-cost endeavor with high return and with much of the time spent being staff time. The annual award has become an opportunity for increasing statewide visibility of the issue of violence prevention, and the successful media strategies targeting policymakers and the public have complemented the policy advocacy and public education efforts of other VPI Grantees.
- *Confidentiality for the nomination and selection process of the Community Leaders Fellowship Program and the California Peace Prize was crucial.* Through written and verbal communication to all involved, an element of surprise was maintained and the integrity of the process was ensured.
- *Academic Fellowship sites that were most successful and had an impact have tended to be those with strong, charismatic leadership that had Principal Investigators (PIs) with a strong connection to the issue and a commitment to development of leadership in the field.* Identifying sites with this type of leadership was critical to accomplishing the goals set out by the leadership programs of the VPI. Future grantmaking for this type of fellowship should take the leadership of applicant organizations into consideration.
- *Helping PIs develop skills in the area of minority recruitment and retention issues might have ensured a stronger, more diverse fellowship program.* It is unclear how strongly each site embraced the specific goals of diversity as outlined, and the number of PIs of color was limited. While increasing diversity among PIs does not necessarily guarantee fellow diversity, one could argue that in academic settings, professors of color are often more in touch with ethnic minority students and may have been better positioned to identify and recruit students of color for the fellowship program.
- *Goals of fellowship programs should be clear and consistent.* While it is important to have programs evolve and grow and be responsive to feedback and evaluation of the program, the growth and evolution

should not occur immediately after each cohort. Instead, program revisions should be incorporated after a number of years transpire and several cohorts complete the program to get a more comprehensive review.

10. Community Action Grants Program

Accomplishments:

- *Mixed results were achieved in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the Community Action Grants Program (CAG).* A majority of the Grantees were able to build capacity to prevent youth violence; however, while rates of violence dropped in several communities, the five-year evaluation was not able to attribute this directly to Grantee activity. The evaluation was able to document effective youth development approaches at many Grantee sites, but was unable to detect effects at the community level.
- *Thousands of young people received mentoring, support, services, and training at the Community Action Programs (CAPs) and Promising Practices (PPs), providing alternatives for youth to stay safe from violence and violent activities.* Many of the youth involved in programs at the CAPs “grew up” with the Initiative and developed leadership, policy and professional skills through the VPI, including Youth Caucus activities. The cross-generational reach of the VPI has developed a new cohort of nonprofit leaders and organizations.
- *Several CAPs experienced exponential growth over the 10 years of the VPI. This was a result of innovation, organic development, and careful organizational growth throughout the decade of the Initiative.* In some cases, violence prevention programs housed in large multiservice organizations developed into stand-alone, grassroots community organizations.
- *Many CAG Grantees embraced policy change as an important complement to the direct service programs.* Organizations became very involved in policy goals in partnership with the Pacific Center and other VPI policy Grantees, as well as autonomously at the local level.

Challenges:

- *All of the Grantees in the CAG Program were funded as VPI Grantees at varying stages of organizational readiness.* The VPI was the first undertaking of its kind, and there were limited ways to assess organizational capacity to implement a comprehensive collaborative community-based program to address youth violence. Some sites required significant levels of technical assistance from providers. This proved to be challenging for the providers, particularly when trying to organize training sessions for the CAPs.
- *Grantees with strong leadership embodied in one or two individuals struggled when the key leadership left the project.* In a few cases, organizations struggled to regain the momentum of the early days of the violence prevention project, after original staff left the organization.
- *The expectation of providing direct service and engaging in policy work proved to be difficult for many of the CAPs.* This was a particular challenge for those organizations that were historically direct service agencies and for organizations that were small and had very limited resources to do one or the other. This also proved to be a challenge for funders to assess performance and measure effectiveness. Promising Practices Grantees also had difficulties in becoming involved with VPI policy activities because they were funded five years after the VPI began. As was the case with some of the original Grantees, time spent on policy work proved challenging because it took time away from providing direct services, specifically impacting organizations with few staff members.
- *Many Grantees seemed to have challenges regarding how to best involve youth in the program activities.* Several Grantees expressed that the missing voice of youth was felt at convenings and that there were few leadership opportunities for young people. Opportunities were developed to increase youth involvement; however, the feeling that youth should be driving the initiative was an ongoing issue for the VPI.

Lessons Learned:

- *Identifying organizations committed to the issue was key in the success of CAG.* Grantees that were most successful were those that were strongly committed to youth violence prevention as an essential part of their organizational mission. Sustainability, beyond the VPI, of programs housed at multiservice agencies, remains an open question.
- *The promise of funding for 10 years can work both for and against the Foundation.* Over the course of the 10 years, a few individuals from the Grantees developed something that can best be captured as a sense of “entitlement.” This was perhaps because the renewed funding was a fairly sure thing and because the amount of dollars committed was large enough to make it seem as if the Foundation had limitless dollars.
- *Incorporating new Grantees into a long-term grantmaking program after several years is a significant challenge.* Many long-term VPI Grantees became insular, making involvement of new Grantees challenging. When creating a new component, the Foundation should consider undertaking concerted and ongoing efforts to not only explain the structure of the Initiative, but also to ensure that strategies are in place to engage and incorporate new Grantees.
- *Providing geographical resources (e.g., VPI directory) and ongoing communications could help sustain and encourage learning and sharing amongst Grantees, beyond annual convenings.* In an effort to support cross-fertilization between Grantees, these efforts are low-cost endeavors with long-term benefits.
- *Programs that hired former participants, ex-offenders or others with firsthand knowledge about violence and its effects, were effective in increasing accessibility to and relevance of programs.* In many cases, these employment opportunities not only provided a “second chance,” but also encouraged youth involvement and service. These experiences have been transformational – thrusting youth into the position of serving as positive role models for other youth, changing their lives from violence and/or substance abuse addiction, in many cases.
- *Developing clarity about the role of youth in an initiative focused on both a specific population and an issue is important to ensure consistency throughout the process.* It is important for the Foundation to communicate clearly the role of youth rather than developing differing policies in response to programmatic requests. Some Grantees asserted that the VPI was a youth development initiative and that the Foundation should be more involved in this arena. This resulted in many of the Grantees contributing to the burgeoning youth development movement in California. While these contributions are significant, many Grantees had difficulties striking the balance between involving youth, when appropriate, and understanding the need to involve youth in some, but not necessarily all, activities.

11. Research Program

Accomplishments:

- *Several of the research papers had significant impact on community action and public policy.* The Research Program led to major findings on key violence prevention issues, lending support to the policy goal of educating the public, policymakers and opinion leaders. Significant research that had effect on informing public policy on firearms and alcohol access was published by VPI Grantees.
- *At the midpoint evaluation of the Initiative, the Research Program Grantees had produced at least 94 publications and participated in over 140 presentations in forums, conferences and academic settings.* Many Grantees made presentations at numerous national professional associations and published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. In addition, much research was carried out by Academic Fellows.

Challenges:

- *Limited dissemination of research outside of academic circles made the goal of influencing public policy difficult to achieve.* Many VPI researchers, as well as Academic Fellows, made presentations before state and national professional associations and conferences and published in scholarly, peer-reviewed journals. The majority of the TCWF-funded research papers were not used to inform public policy. At the five-year

mark, only four of 15 completed research projects had been utilized extensively to inform policy education and advocacy.

Lessons Learned:

- *If the intent of funding research is to impact public policy, funding of applied research may be more practical and effective.* Those research papers that were most successful included applied research methodologies, and were utilized in the VPI policy advocacy efforts, as compared to those Grantees that had historically published solely for academic circles.
- *There were other strategies for supporting youth violence prevention research.* At least two of the researchers funded in the VPI Research Program became PIs in the Academic Fellows Program and were able to continue research projects as well as to support and mentor Fellows. Also, a critical mass of the Academic Fellows published peer-reviewed articles during their fellowships.

12. Management of the Initiative

Accomplishments:

- *The bold decision by the TCWF Board to stay the course for a decade was critical for long-term sustainability of resources, programs and issue focus.* Throughout the VPI, the Grantees developed a strong ownership of the Initiative, which was fostered by ongoing funding and relationships among Grantees. Most Grantees, as well as policymakers and opinion leaders, have attributed the VPI with creating a violence prevention movement.
- *The annual conference created an opportunity for networking and celebration of the violence prevention work.* The format for presenting at the VPI conference, developed over time, provided Grantees an opportunity to submit a presentation and develop skills in presenting at conferences. Grantees became primary presenters at conferences, recognizing the growth and development of the work as well as the maturity of skills of those involved in the VPI.
- *The Advisory Committee was a strong, well-respected group of individuals representing experts in the field of violence prevention, public health and criminal justice.* This group lent credibility and provided important insights to the development and implementation of the VPI. The diversity of experience and professional backgrounds of the committee members provided a mechanism for staff to keep in touch with the “real world” from a variety of perspectives.
- *Funding partnerships can be an effective strategy for expanding and leveraging grantmaking programs.* As a result of leveraging funding from other foundations, TCWF expanded the original CAG Program sites from 10 to 18 throughout the state. These funding partnerships were essential in expanding the reach and support of the VPI at the local community level. TCWF staff designed opportunities to engage co-funders beyond providing support, which included joint site visits and reporting opportunities.
- *TCWF staff helped the Foundation gain recognition in the field through the sharing of information and lessons from the Initiative, and involvement in efforts locally, statewide and nationally to prevent violence against youth.* This included participation of staff on the Board of the National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention and involvement in the preparation of the California Attorney General’s report on violence prevention.
- *Using the CDC model for creating a multipronged approach to develop the VPI provided an opportunity to contribute to creating and strengthening community programs, policy, leadership and research in the violence prevention field.* The experimental nature of the VPI fostered a learning environment that was responsive and flexible.

Challenges:

- *Turnover of Foundation staff had a significant negative impact on the Initiative.* There were four changes

in the program officers working on the VPI during the 10-year period. These changes impeded consistent management and knowledge of the history of the Initiative, as well as being a challenge for many Grantees.

- *There was no clear, consistent role for the Advisory Committee, particularly after the first few years, and a phase-out plan was not developed.* The Advisory Committee played a key role in the early part of the VPI; however, over time, their role and responsibilities diminished. In addition, criteria for involvement and potential conflicts of interest (e.g., being a TCWF Grantee), which should have limited involvement, were not clearly articulated.
- *Some TCWF staff members were overinvolved in the management of VPI grants and in many cases became enmeshed with Grantee operations.* This was manifested in a number of ways, including staff providing directives to Grantees about how to operate programs, manage budgets and hire staff. In addition, managing the role of being a “funder” rather than practitioner was also a challenge. Over time, some staff developed close personal relationships with some of the Grantees. Such long-term funding arrangements, which can have the sense of “family,” can blur the distinction between funder and Grantee and exacerbate the feeling of entitlement for some and isolation for others.
- *The decision to implement a second set of evaluations was poorly timed, and not ideal, to be able to maximize involvement of Grantees.* These evaluations began in the last 18 months of the Initiative, which has proved to be a challenge for the evaluators. Some Grantees felt imposed upon and wondered if and how this would be beneficial to their organizations and programs. In addition, others felt that they had already participated in the previous evaluation, which they felt should have been sufficient.
- *TCWF’s decision to implement a dynamic grantmaking program allowed for organic and innovative changes; however, and at times added layers of complexity to an already highly complex grantmaking program.* The revisions and changes appear throughout the VPI history with limited opportunities for reflection. With Grantees implementing multiyear grants, many of these changes and rationales were not documented and explained thoroughly. At the mid-point of the VPI, staff made changes that had overarching impact on the programs but didn’t clearly communicate rationale to Grantees. In hindsight, it seems most prudent and efficient to craft a simple infrastructure to not only reduce confusion and improve TCWF monitoring, but to also provide straightforward opportunities for Grantee implementation and evaluation.
- *While there are tremendous strengths of the Foundation’s long-term commitment, a ten-year grantmaking program is a very long proposition and can be unwieldy.* Over the course of the VPI, there was significant staff turnover at the Grantee sites and at the Foundation. It seems as though an environment of entitlement was fostered where some Grantees believed that they, rather than the Foundation, were the drivers of the Initiative; however, very few seem to have developed strong sustainability plans to continue programs without TCWF funding.

Lessons Learned:

- *Individuals and/or organizations that act as consultants in helping to develop a grantmaking strategy or program should not be eligible for funding in that program.* A few individuals and organizations involved as consultants in the conceptualization of the VPI also became Grantees, causing some confusion over the “ownership” of the Initiative, misunderstandings over who was in charge, and questions of favoritism in grant selection.
- *Staff should be clear about their role as representatives of the Foundation.* This includes maintaining discretion, confidentiality and high levels of professionalism to preserve an ethical relationship between Grantees and the Foundation.
- *The type, level and style of technical assistance to enhance the work of community-based Grantees in an initiative remain an elusive question.* Various styles and types of TA were offered to Grantees, and there were issues related to trust and/or understanding of the need for TA among VPI Grantees. Many of the CAG Program sites believed that the TA providers came in with a set agenda of how to “fix” organizations without a real focus or consideration of the site strengths and how to use them. In addition, varying levels

- of organizational development of the CAP sites proved to be a challenge in designing TA.
- *Funding and support to attend conferences should be uniform and equitable for all Grantees to ensure participation and promote fairness.* Not all of the Grantees received support to attend the conferences, which set up an inequitable dynamic among Grantees. This added to the feelings of “in crowd” vs. others, especially for Grantees funded from the beginning and those funded later in the Initiative.
 - *While it can be beneficial to convene Grantees, it is important to ensure that the convenings are focused and do not distract from completing funded projects.* Although the Foundation’s initial concept had only one annual convening for VPI Grantees, over time Grantees were convened more and more frequently. There were annual conferences, retreats, monthly policy meetings, video conferences, quarterly sessions and a series of other meetings. For many Grantees, this was a challenge, and fewer periodic convenings sanctioned by TCWF would perhaps better address Grantee needs and help alleviate these types of challenges.
 - *Communicating changes at the Foundation is critical and essential towards supporting grantmaking programs.* In the final months of the VPI, despite continuous communication from staff, it appears that many VPI Grantees have not fully understood TCWF’s transition from an initiative-driven to a responsive grantmaking foundation. As the Initiative winds down, many Grantees are demonstrating a sense of denial – ignoring the fact that grants end in 2003, disbelief that the Foundation would conclude the VPI, or expecting that more funding will automatically be available because of the success of the VPI. All of these actions seem to have immobilized some Grantees from planning beyond the end of the Initiative.
 - *Unintended outcomes from funded projects can provide a vehicle for the Foundation to explore complementary funding opportunities; however, staff should exercise caution to ensure that these new innovations remain focused on the overall goals of intended grantmaking strategies.* Throughout the VPI, staff addressed contextual changes by incorporating and developing changes as the process evolved. This dynamic, responsive approach provided an opportunity for the Foundation to positively contribute to the violence prevention, youth development and leadership development fields. It was and is critical for the Foundation to be flexible to accommodate emerging movements, but it is even more important to remain focused on the original goals of the grantmaking strategy. Adopting an approach that takes into consideration changes in the field, encourages staff to stay informed about policy changes and connected with advocates, and helps ensure that grantmaking remains relevant.

13. Conclusion

TCWF's Violence Prevention Initiative has been significant in impacting the landscape of violence prevention in California and the nation. Beyond the funding provided through the Initiative, VPI was a catalyst for connecting an eclectic mix of violence prevention experts from throughout the state of California.

With the advantage of hindsight, we now know much more than we did 10 years ago. Despite all of the challenges and lessons learned, the Violence Prevention Initiative has been a great grantmaking experiment. It was the first major grantmaking program in the nation that addressed violence as a public health issue, and significant accomplishments have been directly and indirectly attributable to the VPI Grantees. During the course of the Initiative, rates of violence were reduced in many communities throughout California, and the public health language of prevention with respect to violence against youth has become more recognized and accepted. In the early 1990s, when California faced a multiple-billion-dollar budget deficit, there was little hope for increasing resources to address the issue of violence against youth. Yet, the funding and political climate have been impacted over the past decade. The state budget for violence prevention funding has increased exponentially from \$8 million in FY 1992-93 to \$370 million in FY 2002-03; legislation regulating firearms are more numerous; thousands of young people have directly benefited; and hundreds of lives have been saved from programs funded by the VPI. But the work is not complete. Ten years later, California is again facing a massive budget deficit, and some communities are facing escalating rates of violence. This gives credence to the importance and necessity of TCWF’s continued support of both grassroots-level violence prevention efforts, as

well as organizations working to educate policymakers and opinion leaders.