

# Kaiser Permanente Community Fund

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*Where health begins*

April 7, 2011

To Our Community Partners,

Over the past six years, we have been grateful for the opportunity to support community-driven efforts to improve health through the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund. The Fund – representing a partnership between Kaiser Permanente Northwest and the Northwest Health Foundation – has awarded nearly \$16 million in grants to organizations throughout the region served by Kaiser Permanente Northwest.

We have been constantly amazed by the innovation and dedication of our grantees as they work to improve opportunities for health through factors as diverse as educational attainment, public safety, affordable housing, early childhood development and civic engagement, to name but a few. Addressing these factors – often referred to as social determinants of health – allows communities to focus on where health begins: where we live, learn, work and play.

The Kaiser Permanente Community Fund has always been interested in learning from the communities we serve and applying those lessons to become a more responsive and effective grant maker. In 2010, we engaged the Center for Community Health and Evaluation (CCHE) to assess the first five years of the Fund. We were particularly interested in learning where grantees were achieving the most impact, and how we could improve the Fund for the remainder of its ten-year life.

CCHE's analysis included an exhaustive review of every report submitted by every grantee, key informant interviews and surveys. You can find the full report from CCHE posted on web site: <http://nwhf.org/kpcf>. We sincerely thank every individual who contributed to this report.

The KPCF Advisory Board has discussed this report and its implications for our future work together. Using the CCHE report as a starting point, we have identified priorities that we will pursue beginning this year. These priorities include:

- **Continue to embrace a broad approach to social determinants of health** – While choosing a few social determinants as priorities for KPCF grantmaking might make it easier to measure our impact in the future, the Advisors felt it was important to remain open to a wide range of community priorities and strategies.
- **Place a more explicit emphasis on the intersection of the social determinants of health and equity** – While initiatives designed to improve upstream health determinants can also improve social and/or racial equity, the two frameworks do not automatically overlap. Placing a higher priority on proposals that address both health and equity will offer better opportunities to fulfill the Fund's mission.

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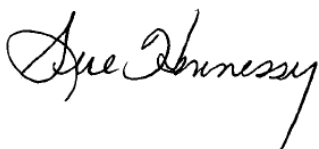
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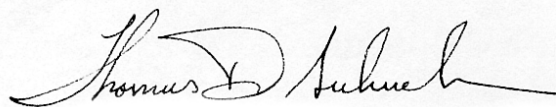
- **Place a more explicit emphasis on cross-sector collaboration** – Effectively addressing social determinants of health cannot be done in isolation. The highest-impact projects we have supported usually have involved diverse partners who bring different resources, expertise and perspectives to the pursuit of common goals.
- **Convene our grantees** – Several grantees requested an opportunity to learn from others in the field and identify new opportunities for partnership. We plan to organize such an event in the first half of 2012, and will keep you informed on its development.
- **Identify ways that we can effectively tell the KPCF story** – We look forward to working with a wider range of grantees and community partners to celebrate the achievements you are generating in the field.
- **Identify metrics that can demonstrate progress** – Moving upstream to address social determinants of health requires more patience, as improvements in many common population health measures are unlikely to be realized within a given grant period. We will work to identify interim milestones that are likely to predispose long-term health, social and equity benefits.
- **Determine the degree to which we are improving our region's understanding of social determinants of health** – Over the past six years, we have observed a significant improvement in the sophistication and competitiveness of proposals that have been submitted to the Fund. We will identify a broader range of methods to try to capture the degree to which we are building deeper community knowledge.

We welcome your feedback on the CCHE report, as well as any other suggestions you have to improve the Kaiser Permanente Community Fund. On behalf of Kaiser Permanente and the Northwest Health Foundation, thank you for your work to improve the health of our region.

Sincerely,



Sue Hennessy  
Chair, Kaiser Permanente Community Fund



Thomas Aschenbrener  
President, Northwest Health Foundation



NORTHWEST HEALTH  
FOUNDATION