



CCEF MEMBERSHIP ADVISORY

Recent national study showing the growing impact of education foundations has strong implications for California LEFs

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A national commission comprised of well-respected education and philanthropic leaders is calling for an increase in the nation's financial commitment to public education. The independent National Commission on Civic Investment in Public Education (created by the Public Education Network) issued a report, *An Appeal to All Americans*, urging the public to "redouble its efforts to ensure that the nation's public schools provide a high-quality education for all young people."

As federal and state governments make drastic cuts to public education funding, the commission sees local education foundations playing vital role in shoring up faltering education budgets. As a result, the report is recommending broad standards and best practices that should be followed by foundations and organizations supporting public schools.

The National Commission asked the Center on Nonprofits and Philanthropy at The Urban Institute to conduct a study of the structures, focus and impact of these organizations. The Urban Institute's study, *Who Helps Public Schools?*, found there were more than 19,000 such nonprofit education assistance organizations (booster clubs, parent-teacher groups, public and local education funds, scholarship funds and high school alumni associations). These groups, which play key policy and advocacy roles in many communities, spent more than \$4.3 billion in 2007 alone to support public education.

- Between 1997 and 2007, the number of public education foundations more than doubled.
- More than 20 million children in the United States are served by public education foundations.
- Public education foundations tend to be more numerous in highly populated states such as California, Texas, Illinois, and New Jersey.

The report calls on LEFs and organizations like CCEF to:

1. Adopt and adhere to standards as a requirement for membership
2. Regularly provide or refer members to "best practices" information through training and technical assistance, including periodic ethical audits
3. Document and disseminate best practices to their core constituencies (members, funders, donors, public schools and the general) public
4. Develop and implement ways to recognize exemplary organizations through awards and/or stamps of approval that demonstrate that they have met the standards

PEN is launching an effort this summer to promote adoption of the Commission's standards among its membership.

CCEF already meets several of these recommendations through its professional development and support services to members.

The study analyzed the latest data available from the National Center for Charitable Statistics and surveyed LEFs that were members of PEN.

To support their growth and impact, the Commission called on these organizations to adopt operating standards that are consistent with the highest levels of nonprofit practices and accountability. While LEFs and organizations have diverse purposes and goals, these generally accepted standards can be applied to all public and local education funds. These model standards for nonprofits, developed by The Independent Sector, demonstrate how these groups can operate in both a transparent and ethical manner, and describe what school districts, prospective donors and the public can expect from these organizations. CCEF is posting a link to the Commission's report on the CCEF website: www.cceflink.org

How does this national study impact California?

In three significant ways:

1. Organizational Development & Training

CCEF has been a leader since 1982 in cultivating and improving the operational effectiveness of local education foundations in California. Through its annual conference, new Critical Conversations seminars, and Education Foundation Fundamentals workshops CCEF has provided basic and advanced training to thousands of community and educational leaders throughout the state. In 2011, CCEF will continue to host these high-impact training sessions for new and experienced LEF leaders.

2. Regional Networking/Service Model

As part of its vibrant new strategic plan, CCEF is developing a regional structure that brings together foundation and education leaders in ten geographical networking groups. Coordinated by volunteers and members of the CCEF Board of Directors, these regions will conduct networking meetings, email listservs and blogs, technical assistance, best practices dialogues, and online professional training. These activities are very much aligned with the national commission's recommendations.

3. A Resource Clearinghouse for California LEFs

Through its rejuvenated web site and information outreach, CCEF is compiling and disseminating useful resources that can guide LEF leaders on technical and legal organizational issues, and keep them up-to-date on the latest educational policy trends, laws and regulations governing nonprofits, financial reporting mandates, and advocacy concerns. A major objective for CCEF's 2011-12 fund development campaign is to actively expand these informational and resource services to its members.

California is a leader in accountability and effectiveness

California is a major center in the educational foundation movement in America. CCEF surveys indicate that in 2009, California education foundations raised more than \$250 million dollars to benefit public schools and address the local needs of California's students.

All education foundations have bylaws in place as required for incorporation as a non-profit organization. A majority of foundations also have separate conflict of interest, gift acceptance, and finance policies in place. 30%-40% have policies governing their relationships with the school district and the board of education. 40% have adopted personnel and employment policies.

LEFs sponsored programs as diverse as the communities they represent, ranging from teacher grants to purchases of instructional technology to after school enrichment, art and music programs to providing dental vans. More than 36,000 community leaders served on the boards of LEFs and as volunteers, bringing new ideas and perspectives to educational issues. Often these community leaders go on to become school board members and elected officials. These leaders serve as ambassadors for local schools and spokespeople for public education and children.