



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### FALL 2002

**Note for the 2002 reissued report:** The *Common Ground* Report was originally issued in December 1999 and provided a snapshot of the landscape of collaborations that existed in the San Francisco Bay Area at that time. To help readers understand changes in Bay Area multi-issue coalitions and networks over the past few years, an appendix with updated information on current collaborative efforts has been included at the end of the reissued document.

#### DIVERSITY NETWORK PROJECT

The purposes of the Diversity Network Project (DNP) are to identify key lessons about creating and sustaining diverse, multi-issue coalitions and networks; to explore the working relationships among the Bay Area's regional community development, social justice and urban environmental networks and coalitions; and to share the findings with the community. The DNP is sponsored by the San Francisco Foundation, the Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

To further these goals, 33 Bay Area leaders were interviewed in 1999 to ascertain their views about key issues and trends in collaboration and best practices for sustaining viable, diverse coalitions and networks. In addition, thirteen regional networks that were active at the time were surveyed to gather information about their purposes, operations and working relationships with other regional coalitions/networks.

#### KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS

Through the interviews, Bay Area leaders identified the following key issues and trends, which have been grouped into three categories: **Organizing and Advocacy**; **Public Policy**; and **Philanthropy**.

## Organizing and Advocacy

### 1. **Building Partnerships**

It is essential for progressive groups with diverse interests to work in partnership across racial and political lines.

### 2. **Constituent Participation/Empowerment**

One of the keys to bringing about institutional change is organizing local constituents and empowering them to define their own needs, in their own way, on their own terms and with their own voice.

### 3. **Leadership Development**

To develop indigenous leadership and organizational capacity, it will be necessary to identify new leadership paradigms and new standards of leadership based on duty, justice, equity, and community empowerment.

### 4. **Race**

The highest priority should be given to bridging the racial divide among progressive, multi-ethnic/multi-issue groups.

### 5. **Youth Development**

There is a need to develop multi-cultural initiatives that enable youth from different ethnic backgrounds to work together on social, economic and environmental issues.

### 6. **Technology**

Recognizing that technology has its limitations, it still can be used more effectively as a community education and organizing tool.

## Public Policy

### 7. **Shifting Priorities**

As a result of shifting political priorities and a reallocation of tax dollars, California now lags behind many other states in providing basic public services.

### 8. **Changing Demography**

As a result of recent demographic changes, people of color have more voting power and will have a decisive voice in shaping public policy in the future.

### 9. **Devolution**

Devolution offers a unique opportunity for local communities to develop progressive public policies and increase the democratic participation of under-served groups.

## **10. Regionalism**

It is essential that all key stakeholders consider the equity implications of policy initiatives that are developed to address significant quality of life issues in our region.

## **11. Globalization**

There is growing recognition of the need to link economic, social, and environmental issues at the local, national, and international levels.

## Philanthropy

## **12. Foundations**

Funders can promote collaboration among multi-ethnic/multi-issue organizations by investing more resources in the development of *sustainable* collaboratives that function in accordance with the “best practices” in the field.

## NETWORK PROFILES

In 1999, 13 regional networks were surveyed to create an initial assessment of the relationships existing among key community development, social justice, and urban development networks working on a region-wide basis in the Bay Area. The survey indicated that:

- There is a great deal of diversity among the networks with regard to budgets, staffing, office sites, and membership.
- Most networks serve a large number of Bay Area counties.
- Most networks are involved with other networks in the Bay Area.
- All but one network reported overlap of staff, board, or organizational membership with at least one other network.

Detailed profiles of each network are included in the full report.

## BEST PRACTICES

As part of the interviews, the leaders shared the following insights about “best practices” in developing and sustaining viable coalitions.

### *Coalitions are most useful when*

- All members are clear as to benefits received.
- Members can jointly seek funding and pool resources.
- Members are linked to new opportunities.

### *Creation of shared mission and goals requires that members*

- Have open dialogue about why people are involved, what they hope to accomplish, and how the coalition can help them achieve their goals.
- Build strong, trusting relationships.
- Have a participatory process with the active involvement of member organizations.

### *Effective governance requires*

- Explicit membership criteria.
- Clear operating procedures regarding decision-making, communications, and accountability.
- Specific rules of conduct for member organizations.
- Strong executive leadership.

### *Effective membership requires*

- Having explicit membership requirements and expectations.
- Broad representation/participation in the governance process.
- Building mutual understanding and positive relationships among member organizations.
- Sponsoring relevant programs addressing the needs of member organizations.
- Implementing concrete projects with broad member participation.

### *Effective leadership requires*

- Developing a shared vision.
- Building strong relationships within the leadership team.
- Establishing a leadership development program, including mentoring.
- Rotating leadership roles.
- Providing cross-training among member organizations.

*Diversity requires*

- Recruiting a diverse membership.
- Pro-actively focusing on diversity issues.
- Committing resources to diversity.
- Having organizational leadership who are committed to addressing diversity issues.
- Developing core operating principles.
- Sharing information among member organizations.

*Effective staff and operations require*

- Ensuring adequate staffing with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Having written operating procedures for decision-making, communications, and accountability.
- Developing strong relationships within and between the board and staff.
- Creating a representative oversight team from member organizations.
- Committing to appropriate use of technology.

*To use funding most effectively, coalitions and networks need to*

- Honestly and openly deal with fiscal issues.
- Get seed funding.
- Diversify revenue beyond foundation grants.
- Be mission-driven rather than funder-driven.
- Speak with funders in a unified voice.
- Have designated fund-raising staff and volunteers.

*To effectively promote coalitions and networks, funders need to*

- Have flexible guidelines.
- Make a long-term funding commitment.
- Provide start-up funding.
- Provide funding for planning and organizational development.
- Continue funding individual organizations.