

# OUR CHARGE

## Northern California Grantmakers 2007 Annual Meeting

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### *Sustaining our World: Global Forces, Community Action, and Transformative Philanthropy*

Transformation and Sustainability are concepts not easily defined; they are ideas that often confuse, because they imply work on a scale so large as to be difficult to imagine. Most broadly, sustainability is defined as activity that “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”<sup>1</sup> Sustainability can be seen as a tool for transforming, or making a significant change, in our communities and the way we work within them. The goal of NCG’s Annual Meeting is to create an open and informative dialogue that will help us begin to define these terms for ourselves and for our organizations.

In order to work toward these complex goals, as funders we can ask ourselves four questions:

1. *What is my organization doing now to transform itself and the communities we serve toward sustainability?*
2. *What are others doing now in this vein?*
3. *Is there anything else my organization could be doing to address sustainability and transformation?*
4. *How can we best share ideas and best practices to strengthen our work toward the goal of a more sustainable world?*

As you begin to consider your own answers to these questions, keep in mind that you may be working toward sustainability without thinking in those terms. As a funding community our organizations support after school programs, environmental education and programming, community asset building, affordable housing, economic development, community development, health and wellness, child development, education, social services, job training and workforce development, artistic expression, community-based organizations and global warming initiatives, just to name a few. Individually, by funding these initiatives our organizations are taking steps to improve our communities and the world around us. Together, these efforts can change our communities to become more sustainable places to live and work.

It is time to think on a larger scale. Sustainability is said to revolve around “**Three Es:**” the **economy**, the **environment** and **equity**. There is a new wave of actors and thinkers working to address these issues where they intersect. As a sector, philanthropy has the opportunity to become involved at the ground level, to support innovation and creativity and to partner within and across fields to enable potential breakthroughs. This new work, a more transformative kind of philanthropy, can bring funders and other community stakeholders together with greater intentionality to uplift and sustain our communities well into the future.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development