

JANUARY 2025

# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES IN THE AMERICAS:

A 10-YEAR REFLECTION



Participants at the CCA Symposium in Florianapolis, Brazil, 2024

**CFLeads** | Community Foundations  
Leading Change  
A CFLEADS INITIATIVE



CONNECTING  
COMMUNITIES  
IN THE AMERICAS

CONECTANDO  
COMUNIDADES  
EN AMÉRICA

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We are very grateful to each of the people we were able to interview for this report. We also thank so many others who have offered valuable insights and recommendations for CCA and have helped to shape this work over the years.



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
BEGINNINGS OF BBKA CONVERSATIONS .....	2
BBKA TO CCA .....	3
<b>COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FRAMEWORK .....</b>	<b>6</b>
THE PEG REPORT AND SPHERES OF INVOLVEMENT .....	6
A FRAMEWORK FOR CCA AS A NETWORK AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE .....	8
<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>9</b>
WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW.....	9
HOW WE GATHERED INFORMATION .....	10
<b>RESULTS.....</b>	<b>12</b>
WHAT VALUE DOES PARTICIPATION IN CCA BRING TO YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION? .....	13
WHAT DOES CCA OFFER THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER NETWORKS? .....	19
WHAT SHOULD CCA DO MOVING FORWARD?.....	20
<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>21</b>



**C**onnecting Communities in the Americas (CCA) is an initiative of CFLeads whose purpose is to inspire and strengthen community foundations and their partners for local impact as they address issues that transcend borders.

CFLeads has played a key role in both the conception and operation of the initiative during this time, while the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation has not only funded the initiative, but has been both a participant and critical connector.



# WHO THIS IS FOR

This document has been designed with three purposes in mind:

**TO GIVE AN OVERVIEW OF HOW CCA HAS DEVELOPED OVER TIME SO THAT WE CAN DECIDE HOW TO MOVE THE INITIATIVE FORWARD**

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**TO PRESENT A FRAMEWORK FOR VIEWING AND EVALUATING CCA AS BOTH A NETWORK AND COMMUNITY(-IES) OF PRACTICE**

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**TO PRESENT THE VOICES AND PERSPECTIVES OF PARTICIPANTS FROM ACROSS THE AMERICAS**

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We invite reflection on the value of and next steps for this collaborative initiative of community foundations and philanthropy support organizations across the Americas.

## BEGINNINGS OF BBICA CONVERSATIONS

Conversations about the initiative, then called Building Broader Communities in the Americas (BBICA), started with a core group of enthusiasts in 2014 and included CFLeads, the Inter-American Foundation, the Mott Foundation and the former CEO of the Minneapolis Foundation. A slightly wider group met in Washington D.C., Buffalo and El Paso in 2016 to review the initiative and help direct strategy, with a network of interested organizations in Mexico, Haiti, Puerto Rico and the U.S. starting to grow.

Much of the initial idea of BBICA was to strengthen transnational communities across the U.S., Canada and Latin America,

with the hope that these communities could become stronger by connections between community foundations in places of origin and destination. The IAF and Mott Foundation began funding Mapping projects to four community foundations – two in Mexico and two in the United States in 2017 – helping them to better understand the communities in their regions who have transnational ties, especially across the Americas. By 2019 there were eleven Mapping projects in underway and CFLeads contracted the Public Equity Group (PEG) to help with strategic planning.

In mid-2020 and based on PEG recommendations, the group hired a full-time BBICA project director under CFLeads.

## BBCA TO CCA

The new project director began by interviewing each of the Mapping project grantees and others involved with the initiative to get a better understanding of what value it had for their organizations and what learning had come from the projects. This led to the first Year-End Report and

the proposal to find a new name for the initiative that was more meaningful and easily translated across languages in the Americas. Working with the Advisory and Steering committees, the new name *Connecting Communities in the Americas (CCA)* was announced in early 2021, along with a revised mission statement and desired outcomes:

### MISSION & DESIRED OUTCOMES

## TO INSPIRE AND STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS AND PARTNERS ACROSS THE AMERICAS AS THEY ADDRESS ISSUES THAT TRANSCEND BORDERS

- 1 ADVANCE SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITIES WHOSE IDENTITIES TRANSCEND BORDERS.
- 2 INCREASE SHARED KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PARTNERSHIPS AND PRACTICES WITH THEIR TRANSNATIONAL AND OTHER COMMUNITIES.
- 3 STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS AND PARTNERS TO PROMOTE LOCAL WELL-BEING.
- 4 ENCOURAGE EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION OF MONETARY AND OTHER RESOURCES ACROSS THE AMERICAS FOR INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE COMMUNITY-BUILDING.

The report also highlighted a desire on the part of the community foundations to further connect and learn from their peers across countries. While the Mapping projects

connected a few foundations at a time, there was interest and opportunity to create a larger peer learning network around other topics of interest.

## GROWING NETWORK AND PROGRAMS

Over the past four years, CCA has expanded its offer and has managed to grow substantially as a network.

### CCA PROGRAMS INCLUDE:

- **The Mapping Project** – CCA has been able to offer two additional rounds of grants for mapping transnational communities in Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and the United States.
- **Action projects** – Two rounds of grants were offered to those community foundations committed to following up their Mapping research with action-based programs across Brazil, Mexico and the United States. CCA uses a cohort model to enhance learning along the way.

- **Peer Resource Sharing** – This monthly virtual program invites organizations from across countries to share on similar topics of interest to the field.
- **Learning Exchanges** – CCA has offered three rounds of travel stipends to pairs of community foundations and support organizations to explore common objectives over a six- to eight-month period.

### ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS:

- **Convenings** – In-person convenings with local site visits are planned to deepen relationship building and foster new connections and learning.
- **Travel stipends** – Flight and hotel stipends are offered to ensure equitable representation at in-person convenings.
- **Publications** – CCA has published several reports on the CFLeads website:

[\*The Case for Transnational Work\*, 2020](#)

[\*Mapping our Transnational Communities\*, 2021](#)

[\*Embracing our Transnational Communities: A Case Study of 5 Community Foundations\*, 2023](#)

(also available in Portuguese and Spanish)

[\*2023 CCA Directory\*](#)

[\*Building Meaningful Relationships with our Latine Communities: Reflections from the Community Foundation Field\*, 2024](#)

Community Foundation [\*Mapping Project Reports\*](#) and [\*Learning Exchange reflections and the 2023 Summary\*](#) are available in various languages on the CFLeads website.



# CONNECTING COMMUNITIES IN THE AMERICAS 2014-2024

## MAPPING PROJECTS

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**29** COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS  
**4** COUNTRIES

## ACTION PROJECTS

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**10** COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS  
**3** COUNTRIES

## LEARNING EXCHANGES

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**36** COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS  
**9** COUNTRIES

## PEER RESOURCE SHARING

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**96** COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS  
**40** OTHER ORGANIZATIONS  
**15** COUNTRIES

## CONVENINGS

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**12** IN-PERSON CONVENINGS  
**582** PARTICIPANTS  
**15** COUNTRIES

## TRAVEL STIPENDS

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**41** PARTICIPANTS AT CONVENINGS  
**4** COUNTRIES  
**9** COUNTRIES



# COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE FRAMEWORK

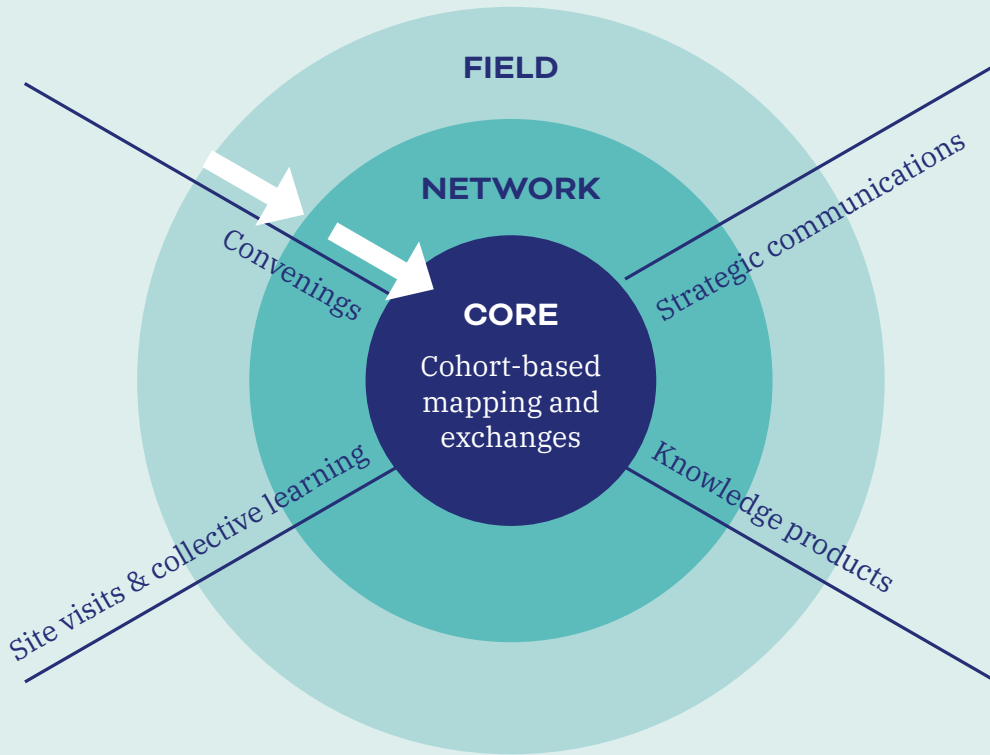
## THE PEG REPORT AND SPHERES OF INVOLVEMENT

One of the concepts that the 2020 PEG study introduced was BBCCA as having “spheres of involvement,” as shown in the diagram below. The Core partners include current grantees, exchange participants and committee members, while the current network members are those connected to CCA through online sessions and in-person convenings, CCA sessions at conferences and other smaller projects such as the CFLeads CLAT Pilot for Latin America or as interviewees for the Latine engagement guide coauthored with Hispanics in Philanthropy. The chart shows participation in 2019 and underneath, a 2024 comparison.



*Workshop group at the CCA Gathering in Guadalajara, Mexico, 2023*

**BBCA KEY AUDIENCES**



2020 CORE PARTNERS	2020 NETWORK MEMBERS	TRANSNATIONAL "FIELD"
<p><i>Backbone organizations and CFs engaged in mapping:</i>                      23 organizations from Canada, Mexico &amp; US: CFC, CFLeads, Comunalia, Council on Foundations, IAF, Mott; Arizona, Boston, BPP, Chicago, Comunidad, Comunidar, Corporativa, Delaware, el Paso, FESAC, Fund. Internacional de la Comunidad, ICF, Malinalco, Minneapolis, Southwest Florida</p> <p><b>37 IN 2024</b></p>	<p><i>Participants in BBCA convenings:</i>                      88 organizations (including 23 core partners) primarily CFs, include some that welcome greater engagement, (e.g., Haiti, Oaxaca, Windsor-Essex) and transnational organizations (e.g., HIP, Alianza Americas, HTAs)</p> <p><i>Potential BBCA investors?</i></p> <p><b>206 IN 2024</b></p>	<p><i>Transnational philanthropy and development orgs:</i>                      CFs that have not attended BBCa convenings; private (&amp; other) funders that could become BBCA investors</p>

By the end of 2024, the core group was 37 strong, while the network has grown to just under 600 people. Community foundations represent half of the organizations, with philanthropy support organizations and others the other half.

Within the core group, 89% have been engaged in at least three CCA programs and 70% of them also engage more than one staff member, demonstrating the added

value they see CCA providing for their organizations.

Within the network as a whole, of the community foundations that are in some way connected to CCA, about 28% have been engaged in 2 or more CCA programs. While there are more U.S. community foundations in the network, Mexican and Brazilian foundations have had more frequent participation per organization.

## A FRAMEWORK FOR CCA AS A NETWORK AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

To be able to assess CCA as a network and community of practice, we reviewed several models. The one that aligned most with what we are trying to assess is based on the 2011 white paper *Promoting and assessing value creation in communities and networks: A conceptual framework*, published by the Open Universiteit in the Netherlands (Wegner, et.al.).

In this paper, Wenger, Trayner and de Laat discuss the distinction and relationship between social networks and communities of practice and present a conceptual framework to assess their value on different levels.

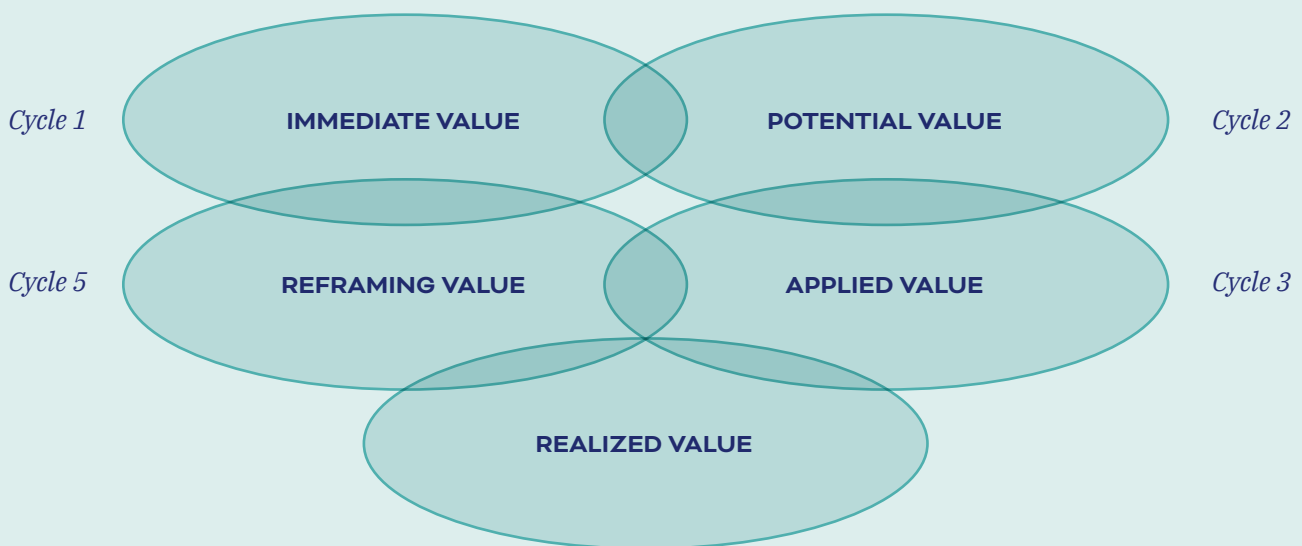
The authors argue that networks and communities of practice are two aspects of social structure in which learning takes place. Networks are a set of connections and relationships that are formed for the potential of learning, while communities of practice are groupings around specific topics

with the intention to process and sustain knowledge. CCA fits into both definitions – the network in the broader sense and that can contain or even be a part of larger communities of practice around migration, community foundation development or philanthropic processes and transformation as examples.

The authors also differentiate between cycles of immediate, potential, applied, realized and reframing value of a community of practice, that are in constant movement and are deeply intertwined.

They are often transmitted through stories that participants share with each other, whether of a particular challenge or practice that has worked for them (grounded narrative) or what they are working towards (aspirational narrative). Taking the time to regularly interview individuals in the network gives us the opportunity to go more deeply into the meaning of participation in CCA for them and their organizations. Below is a diagram of the cycles of value creation.

### CYCLES OF VALUE CRATION IN NETWORKS & COMMUNITIES



# METHODOLOGY

## WHAT WE WANTED TO KNOW

This document is primarily an evaluation of CCA as a network and community of practice that will serve to plan for future development of the initiative. These questions were used to guide the process:

- What do CCA participants value in CCA?
- What does CCA offer that differs from other networks?
- What should CCA do moving forward?



*Participants at the CCA Symposium in San Antonio, Texas, 2023*

## HOW WE GATHERED INFORMATION

The majority of information in this report is based on interviews with CCA participants. We interviewed 15 people from 10 community foundations and 5 philanthropy support organizations across 9 countries in the Americas for their perspectives about the value of their organization's participation in CCA. We wanted to capture a variety of

perspectives, from those who had been in the original BBCA discussions to those who have just started participating.

The interviews lasted 30-60 minutes and were carried out between September and November of 2024. They were facilitated in English or Spanish and were recorded so that we could access the transcripts and draw out perspectives in each person's own words. The interview questions were:

### 1 HOW HAS YOUR ORGANIZATION PARTICIPATED IN CCA?

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### 2 WHAT VALUE DO YOU SEE IN THIS PARTICIPATION, BOTH ON AN INDIVIDUAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL?

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### 3 DOES CCA OFFER ANYTHING THAT OTHER NETWORKS YOU PARTICIPATE IN DO NOT?

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### 4 DO YOU HAVE ANY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CCA MOVING FORWARD?

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Additional or clarifying questions were used as needed to draw out the essence of each organization's experience with CCA. Some of the quotes below are also from other CCA participants who have sent in their reflections through reports and surveys over time.

Below is a chart of the participating organizations for the interviews, showing whether they are a community foundation (CF) or philanthropy support organization (PSO), the country where each one is based,

and whether they have participated in any of these activities:

- BBCA, between 2014 - 2020
- CCA committees
- Virtual Peer Resource Sharing sessions
- Virtual or in-person convenings
- Received travel stipends for convenings
- As panelists or speakers at CCA events
- Mapping or Action Projects
- Learning Exchanges

## ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATING IN THE INTERVIEWS

ORGANIZATION	COMMUNITY FOUNDATION (CF) OR SUPPORT ORGANIZATION (PSO)	COUNTRY	ORIGINAL BBCA PARTICIPANTS	CCA COMMITTEES	PEER RESOURCE SHARING	CONVENINGS	RECEIVED TRAVEL STIPEND	PRESENTED AS A PANELIST IN A CCA EVENT	MAPPING PROJECT	LEARNING EXCHANGES
FUNDACIÓN DE MERCED QUERÉTARO	CF	Mexico			X	X	X	X		
WESTERN KANSAS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION	CF	USA			X					
ANNAUMA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION	CF	Canada			X	X	X	X		
INSTITUTO PARA O DESENVOLVIMENTO DO INVESTIMENTO SOCIAL (IDIS)	PSO	Brazil		X	X	X	X	X		X
TERRITORIA	PSO	Colombia			X	X	X	X		X
FUNDACIÓN COMUNITARIA MALINALCO	CF	Mexico			X	X	X	X	X	
FUNDACIÓN TERRITORIAL PAISANO	CF	Colombia			X	X	X		X	X
FONDATION DU GRAND MONTRÉAL	CF	Canada			X	X		X		
THE BOSTON FOUNDATION	CF	USA	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
FONDATION COMMUNAUTAIRE HAÏTIENNE	CF	Haiti	X		X	X	X	X		
COMUNIDADES DE ORGANIZACIONES SOCIALES	PSO	Chile			X	X	X			X
ALIANZA DE FUNDACIONES COMUNITARIAS DE MÉXICO	PSO	Mexico	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
FONDO COMUNITARIO MONTEVERDE	CF	Costa Rica		X	X	X	X	X		X
TABÔA FORTALECIMENTO COMUNITÁRIO	CF	Brazil		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
COMUNA NACIÓN	PSO	Peru			X	X	X	X		

# RESULTS

What follows are the various perspectives that came out through the interviews and other resources. They are based on Questions 2, 3 and 4 of the interview questions, stated above.



*The 2023-25 Action Project grantees sharing their learning*

# WHAT VALUE DOES PARTICIPATION IN CCA BRING TO YOU AND YOUR ORGANIZATION?

Going back to the Wegner et.al. model of different types of value creation in communities and networks, we organized the responses to this question into 3 types of value:

- IMMEDIATE VALUE – WHEN PARTICIPATION HAS VALUE IN AND OF ITSELF
- POTENTIAL VALUE – RESOURCES (SOCIAL AND OTHER CAPITAL) THAT CAN BE USED IN THE FUTURE
- TRANSFORMATIVE VALUE – NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND DOING

## IMMEDIATE VALUE

CCA participant found both immediate personal and organizational value in engaging with and learning from colleagues in online and in-person spaces:

### PERSONAL VALUE

#### COMING OUT OF THE ISOLATION OF THEIR WORK:

*The network has been really important to see that we are not alone, that there are a lot of people that think like we do, who want to do things differently, and who are willing to share.*

**KELLY, COLOMBIA**

*Working in silos is very isolating and it's really good for people to get a sense of and opportunity to connect.*

**MARIE-ROSE, HAITI**

#### FEELING PART OF SOMETHING GREATER:

*(Referring to a colleague) She enjoyed learning about a very different reality to her own. She knew about the global movement but only had the experience within Chile.*

**MATÍAS, CHILE**

*The convening widened my perspective about the different forms of community foundations in El Paso, Florida, Canada, the Mariana Islands... it helped me to see it from a wider perspective.*

**FELIPE, COLOMBIA**

#### A SENSE OF SOLIDARITY:

*The learning exchange re-ignited sparks of interest and affirmed our solidarity to move forward with one another to share what we know, not just with each other but the rest of the field.*

**LEARNING EXCHANGE PARTICIPANT**

*Iowa was amazing. It was just heartfelt. Everyone was saying like how much love there was and the aligned values of everyone there. I felt like these are my people.*

**DANIELLE, CANADA**

#### FEELING OF INCLUSIVENESS:

*The leadership is so personal and purposefully highlights the rich diversity, the respect for diversity. It's like they are embracing this diversity, treating it like an asset, a resource, and not like something to just be tolerated.*

**MATÍAS, CHILE**

*I have never been to a conference where every single bit of me felt valued and validated.*

**CONVENING PARTICIPANT**



## ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE

### BEYOND THE PERSONAL VALUE OF PARTICIPATION ITSELF, VALUE WAS PLACED ON HOW THEIR ORGANIZATIONS CAN GROW THROUGH CCA PARTICIPATION:

*Sending staff members to CCA events gives them a more complete learning experience, it's like offering an emotional bonus - salario emocional - for their work.*

**BONNIE, MEXICO**

*I think it's important to not have only one person involved. I needed (staff member) to have a bigger view of this sector, so we need to invest in him and his knowledge individually. Investing in him is investing in the organization.*

**ROBERTO, BRAZIL**

*Our members recognize their own work when they present to others in the field.*

**MINERVA, COMUNALIA NETWORK IN MEXICO**

### SOME ALSO HIGHLIGHTED THE ROLE OF CCA AS A FACILITATOR AND BRIDGE AS VALUABLE FOR THEIR INSTITUTIONS:

*CCA has become one of our most important and cherished allies for the foundation, because it has this openness and warmth in its ability to connect us [to others]...it's much more difficult to establish this type of relationship and communication on our own.*

**JALIL, MEXICO**



*Site visit group in Mexico, 2019*

## POTENTIAL VALUE – RESOURCES FOR FUTURE WORK

Although participating is inspiring and motivating in the moment, organizations look for ways to translate learning into their own programs and strategies. In Wegner's et.al. work, potential value is defined as various types of capital: human, social, tangible, reputational, and learning capital that can be used in the future. Here, we use these to assess potential value of resources gained for future work, which are attained through learning and tools from others and building ties with other organizations doing similar work.

### LEARNING FROM OTHERS' EXPERIENCES

#### ALL OF THE PARTICIPANTS FOUND BENEFIT IN LEARNING WHAT OTHER ORGANIZATIONS ARE DOING, LEADING THEM TO REFLECT ON THEIR OWN WORK AND HOW IT MIGHT BE IMPROVED:

*It became clear to us that CCA could be a window for the organizations in the various regions to get access to knowledge and exchanges in all of the Americas.*

**FELIPE, BRAZIL**

*When we got together, it allowed us to form a broader vision for our work and to experiment with new practices in the region.*

**MAPPING PROJECT GRANTEE, COMUNIDAD**

*We didn't just learn from one activity, but by collecting ideas from several encounters and then forming our own vision for a youth program. It was about having access to others' experiences that helped us to form our own.*

**ROBERTO, BRAZIL**

Another example was from Ricardo, who was very new to the Executive Director position in Costa Rica when he visited Fundación Punta de Mita in Mexico through the Learning Exchange program. He commented that what he learned about strategic processes and documentation during the visit was like an induction to the leadership position that he was taking on.

### BUILDING TIES TO OTHERS

#### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS THROUGH CCA PROGRAMS, NETWORKING AND GATHERINGS WAS ALSO HIGHLIGHTED AS A VALUABLE RESOURCE FOR POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS:

*Doing the mapping exercise and understanding our own communities helped The Boston Foundation respond more quickly and effectively in sending hurricane support to Puerto Rico.*

**MAGGI, USA**

*Linking Comunalia to support organizations in other parts of the Americas through CCA is something we want to do but haven't been able to do on our own.*

**MINERVA, MEXICO**

Ursula, from Peru, felt that the times and spaces in between event sessions helped her to connect more deeply with others:

*I believe that it is in those free moments when you can get to know a person most – on the bus, for example, when I sat next to Cindy from Pennsylvania. This helps you connect enough so that later on you can find a way to work together.*

## POTENTIALIZING RESOURCES FOR LOCAL IMPACT

These resources and connections can then be applied in the future to strengthen local impact in their respective regions. An example that came out through the interviews is in Malinalco, Mexico, where the local community foundation participated in the CCA Mapping Project to research and capture stories on migration into and out of the region.

Through the Mapping project, they were able to publish research on there that had never been done before and that is now being used by others to learn about the context of migration in Malinalco. Since then, they have been contacted by other researchers who have found their report online and come to find out more on a local level.

It also gave them the opportunity to engage with groups in their communities that they had previously not known of before. As a follow up to this project, the foundation in

Malinalco worked with five community-led initiatives by offering training in project development, communication strategies and guidance over several months, while the project members raised funds both locally and from family and community members living in the United States.

One of the initiatives, led by a local preschool, thought of a social media campaign where the parents shared about their initiatives online and requested support for the project. In return, they offered raffle tickets for baskets of typical Mexican sweets. The funds that they raised were matched by the foundation.

*That's where we talk about impact. The impact wasn't in how much money was raised, rather that they themselves worked to create a new strategy for fundraising. These are the important areas of learning, both for us and for them.*

**JALIL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

The Community Foundation of Malinalco was able to expand its reach in the region through the CCA program. Then, when the earthquake of September 2017 hit with a magnitude of 7.1, Jalil says that they were better equipped to receive and distribute other funding coming in. Maggi, from the United States, also commented:

*In Malinalco, we really saw how the community foundations had directed recovery funds and how they were accompanying those community organizations in a much deeper way than anyone could from the United States.*

With the earthquake funds, the foundation supported individuals with technological equipment, training and support for economic reactivation and food sovereignty in agroecology.

Panel session in Guadalajara, Mexico, 2023



## TRANSFORMATIVE VALUE – NEW WAYS OF THINKING AND DOING

Transformative value is perhaps the most difficult to define and identify, yet is what we strive for as a multinational network and learning community. Here, we give examples of transformative value creation in three ways, as changes in attitudes, practices and policies:

### CHANGES IN ATTITUDES

#### ABOUT PHILANTHROPY:

*We had never heard of the concept of community philanthropy in Colombia, and the idea we had of philanthropy was very different and negative... It has been interesting to learn that there are organizations that are working in community philanthropy and who have different ways of working that is more flexible, with more trust, and it is when we asked ourselves, is this possible?*

**KELLY, COLOMBIA**

*New ways of thinking about philanthropy – not “for” but “with”*

**CONVENING PARTICIPANT**

*Breaking the paradigms about philanthropy and integrating perspectives that are necessary to carry it out, for example along the lines of human rights and gender equity.*

**CONVENING PARTICIPANT**

#### ABOUT IMMIGRANT-SERVING ORGANIZATIONS:

*[Through the Mapping project] we have realized that all organizations are immigrant serving organizations. Although some organizations' missions focus on serving immigrants, many more whose missions are focused on health, housing, and education serve large immigrant populations and have developed special skills and competencies to do so.*

**MAPPING PROJECT GRANTEE, USA**

### CHANGES IN PRACTICES OR ACTIONS

The foundation from the last quote above changed their grantmaking policy to accept applications within their health, housing and education programs from immigrant-serving organizations. This was the first time that these organizations were considered eligible to receive foundation funding.

#### DEVELOPING NEW SUPPORT NETWORKS:

*We got stronger in the feeling that we should create networks in Brazil. [The CCA Gathering] was part of this learning journey, because after Mexico we decided to create the Aliança Territorial.*

**ROBERTO**

#### WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY:

*We are supporting a food hall because we think this is the most visible demonstration of what a welcoming community looks like. We have conversations around food, around community and I think that's the space we need to be in and it also helps to shift from talking about immigration to talking about community. Reframing it by welcoming and inviting people.*

**CONNIE, USA**

*I can honestly say that being part of the CCA cohorts has transformed me, my work, and how I show up in the community.*

**JESÚS, USA**



*Table conversations at the CCA Gathering in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 2024*

Other changes in practices or new actions included:

- Allocating more time out in the community to build relationships and trust
- Investing in language interpretation when working in the community
- Making changes to strategic objectives and approaches
- Committing more resources to welcoming work

### CHANGES IN POLICIES

Perhaps the most important transformative change among CCA participants has been a shift from foundation-directed work to community-directed and community-focused work:

*[We learned that] building trust with our target communities needed to be approached in a more conscientious way and through local allies... individuals from the community are the ones who should take the primary role in this process of defining and co-creating.*

**PACO, MEXICO**

*It's all coming kind of more together in a new direction to serve our communities more strategically. By more listening, trying to understand the community's needs, fighting barriers, and going beyond traditional grantmaking – it's about meeting nonprofits where they are. There are also other ways to support community: educating around voting in a very culturally diverse community or having conversations with local government about why voting booths at churches might keep some people from voting. There is another way to go about the community leadership role.*

**CONNIE, USA**

# WHAT DOES CCA OFFER THAT IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER NETWORKS?

As we consider how to make a case for the continuation of CCA, we needed to know what makes it unique as a network, when there are other options for our participants on national and regional levels. There were several aspects that came to light as being unique to CCA:

## THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

*In terms of educational sessions and so on, there's always that slight difference that you can access through CCA that you won't be able to when you're looking at CFC.*

LINDA, CANADA

*It's very enriching to learn what is happening in other countries*

BONNIE, MEXICO

## SPACES TO SHARE ABOUT A NEW WAY OF PRACTICING COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PHILANTHROPY

*Really, it's a very colonial model with the donor advised funds, but they're stuck in this mindset that this is what a community foundation is. So, it was really refreshing to be part of this group that is doing things differently.*

DANIELLE, CANADA

*[I have heard that] you have to first be sustainable before you can take on community leadership role. But there is another way to go about the community leadership role. I believe that you and CFLeads and others have opened that.*

CONNOR, USA

## TRAVEL STIPENDS AND LEARNING EXCHANGES BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONS

*No one else offers them and without them it wouldn't be possible.*

URSULA, PERU

## FUNDING FOR RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENTATION

*There are few investors or donors that give you the opportunity to begin with a diagnostic study. It enabled us to learn about the general panorama of migration in Malinalco.*

JALIL, MEXICO

*The fact that we can count on resources to try different ways of working is fundamental and something that I believe the social sector needs to be doing at this moment in history...for us it has been wonderful to find a funder for these experiments and to try things out – to do them differently – because the traditional way that philanthropy has been practiced has left a lot of gaps.*

KELLY, COLOMBIA

## A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH RATHER THAN A GRANTMAKER APPROACH

*The flexibility of the grant deliverables is well received. The pandemic and our assumptions really changed the direction we needed to take the project and CCA staff have been very accommodating.*

MAPPING PROJECT GRANTEE, USA

*Sharing your budget – I've never seen that in other spaces I have participated in, at least not that transparently. I loved it.*

MATÍAS, CHILE

# WHAT SHOULD CCA DO MOVING FORWARD?

Recommendations that the interviewees and other CCA participants have given for CCA are divided here into three areas: activities, actions and topics:

## ACTIVITIES

- Continue to support learning exchanges, but provide more support in matching organizations
- Continue in-person connections, with travel support and separate spaces for networking
- Present in other spaces what community foundations are doing in the Americas
- Have thematic sessions during the convenings, for smaller groups to go deeper into the topics
- Continue using a cohort model for grantees and learning exchanges

*Even for me as an executive director, to have that time to bring me out of the day to day and connect with other leaders and learn from one another—that's really important, and we don't typically have funding for that type of thing.*

**DANIELLE, CANADA**

## ACTIONS

- Offer spaces to work together on strategy and processes
- Work on fostering more cross-country collaboration
- Develop a conversation group between CEOs and Executive Directors
- Develop ways to work in clusters, based on areas of interest
- Help U.S. and Canadian donors understand how they can partner with Latin American community foundations
- Develop an online repository of

resources that we all can contribute to, to grow our collective knowledge

- Provide more spaces to go deeper into topics during convenings
- Bring U.S. and Canadian community foundations to Latin America

*Maybe have a convening here so that those in the United States and Canada can learn about other realities... to open their worldview a bit from the different perspectives. That's what these convenings are able to do.*

**URSULA, PERU**

## TOPICS

- How we support local nonprofits and grassroots groups
- How CCA has used models of participatory budgeting
- How to engage meaningfully with local leaders and stewards
- How to communicate about impact
- How to raise our voices as one, to move the needle on issues across borders
- How to strengthen multicultural competency in community foundations
- How to build effective boards of directors
- How to use consensus-grantmaking strategies
- How to build sustainability of second tier institutions and networks
- How to address our most challenging issues, internally or externally

# CONCLUSION

After ten years of the Connecting Communities in the Americas initiative, it has grown to include participation by more than 200 community foundations and other organizations across 13 countries in the Americas. Initially focused on creating understanding and support for transnational communities and the roles the community foundations can play in connecting in places of origin and destination, it has also developed into a community of practice for strengthening community philanthropy and community foundation work more generally. With new foundations forming across Central and South America while those in North America are being called to reimagine philanthropy, this space has created opportunities to share a variety of perspectives and instill deeper understanding of how to best support and serve our diverse communities.

The hope is that this document will help to evaluate CCA both as a network and community of practice, and to make decisions moving forward as an "All of America" initiative. In gratefulness to all of those who have offered valuable time to reflect and share their thoughts and experiences.

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Program Director

*Connecting Communities  
in the Americas*

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