



U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership Framing Document

The Partnership

In 2002, a group of National and Regional Funders, The Synergos Institute, and twenty-one Community Foundations from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, formed the **U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership**/*Alianza Fronteriza de Filantropía México-EEUU*. This Partnership is a bi-national collaboration of National and Regional Funders and local community foundations dedicated to improving the quality of life in low-income communities in the rapidly growing U.S.-Mexico border region.

The Partnership operates under a shared belief that strategic collaboration and a passionate commitment to the border region is required to effectively address the region's persistent social, economic, and environmental challenges. To improve the quality of life along the border region, the Partnership seeks to increase community philanthropic activity, improve the organizational capacity and programs of border community foundations, promote collaboration among border community foundations and their funding partners and engage local philanthropic leaders.

The Partnership includes regional or national private or corporate funders from the United States and Mexico that have a strong commitment to the collaborative partnership process, interest in contributing to the development of border community foundations and border philanthropy, and willingness to catalyze concern for the quality of life in the U.S.-Mexico border region. It is also expected that the participating funders commit financial resources to the Partnership (through a pooled fund administered by The Synergos Institute and/or through direct grants to participating Border Community Foundations).

The Partners

Funders The nine United States and Mexican National and Regional Funders of this Partnership include:

- Ford Foundation (U.S. and Mexico)
- Fundación Gonzalo Río-Arronte
- William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- Houston Endowment
- Inter-American Foundation
- McCune Charitable Foundation
- Meadows Foundation
- Annie E. Casey Foundation and
- The Mott Foundation.

Community Foundations Twenty-one Border Community Foundations are participating in the first phase of this Partnership. The group includes the following seven community foundations incorporated or operating in Mexico:

- Fundación Comunitaria de la Frontera Norte
- Fundación Comunitaria de Tecate
- Fundación Internacional de la Comunidad (FIC)
- Fundación del Empresariado Chihuahuense – Juárez
- Fundación del Empresariado Chihuahuense – Ojinaga
- Fundación del Empresariado Sonorense
- Fundación Comunitaria de Matamoros

This partnership also includes the following twelve community foundations operating in the United States:

- Arizona Community Foundation (ACF)
- Brownsville Community Foundation
- Tejas Foundation
- Cochise Community Foundation/ACF
- Community Foundation for Southern Arizona (CFSA)
- Texas Valley Communities Foundation
- El Paso Community Foundation
- New Mexico Community Foundation
- San Diego Foundation
- Santa Cruz Community Foundation/CFSA
- Bi-national Border Women’s Development Fund
- Yuma Community Foundation/ACF.

Two participating Community Foundations are incorporated in the United States, but focus their grant-making activities in Mexico:

- International Community Foundation
- Mascareñas Foundation

Synergos Institute The National and Regional Funders have contracted with **The Synergos Institute** to facilitate implementation of this program. The Synergos Institute has 14 years of experience in Mexico and eight other countries, and extensive capacity-building work with over 200 grant-making foundations globally. As “managing partner,” The Synergos Institute will mobilize human and financial resources, bring increased attention and action to the border region, coordinate activities, convene partners, and provide capacity-building assistance to Border Community Foundations.

Mission

The mission of the U.S.-Mexico Border Philanthropy Partnership is to improve quality of life in the border region.

Objectives

The Partnership has two main objectives:

Objective 1: *To build and strengthen the organizational leadership, programs and institutional resources of border community foundations with the goal of rooting development efforts in local participation and building local social capital.* The Partnership will strengthen the institutional development of Border Community Foundations dedicated to improved quality of life within border communities on either side of the U.S.-Mexican international boundary.

Objective 2: *To encourage cross-border collaboration when such collaboration is likely to result in improved quality of life.* The partnership will encourage collaboration among community foundations, between community foundations and donors, and amongst donors at the local, regional, and national level.

Scope

For the purposes of this Partnership, the border is defined as the geographic region extending 150 kilometers south or north of the international boundary. This Partnership will support initiatives to address the social, economic, poverty and/or environmental challenges facing the communities that lie within this geographic region.

Strategies

The Partnership will pursue the following nine strategies in pursuit of stated objectives:

The Partnership will strengthen community foundation leadership and governance to build the necessary skill sets for staffs and Boards and to strengthen organizational infrastructure to support foundation development.

The Partnership, through the Managing Partner, will organize bi-annual “Learning Communities” to identify and disseminate best practices in border community foundation development and programming. Learning Communities will bring together National and Regional Funders, Border Community Foundations, and key policy and community foundation leaders.

The Partnership will facilitate inter-foundation exchanges on common issues such as the unique structural and governance issues facing border community foundations seeking to address economic, social and environmental challenges along the border.

The Partnership will develop and deploy Mexican and U.S. grantmaking dollars to address acute poverty and environmental problems and to build local capital and local initiative along the border in both Mexico and the United States.

The Partnership will enhance the ways border community foundations use their grantmaking programs to build upon community assets, encourage border community

foundations to act as community “bridges,” and promote sustainable economic, social, and environmental development along the border.

The Partnership will mobilize untapped or underutilized local financial assets and human resources for community development, encourage volunteerism, cultivate new donors, increase the strategic philanthropy of private donors, and encourage long-term investment in border social and environmental issues.

The Partnership will work to facilitate interaction among Border Community Foundations to collectively advocate for the interests of border grantmakers and promote border philanthropy.

The Partnership will encourage and facilitate the establishment of new local partnerships between Border Community Foundations, other non-profit organizations, government agencies and business interests.

The Partnership will help community foundations raise endowment and program funds from and for border communities.

Expected Outcomes

In line with this general mission and these objectives, the Partnership focuses on achieving four outcomes:

1. Strengthened organizational structures and capacity of border community foundations.
2. Increased quantity and quality of community foundation programs benefiting disadvantaged families and the environment along the U.S.-Mexico border
3. Development of new community philanthropy along the border
4. Facilitation of a network of border grantmakers.

Available Funding for Border Community Foundations

The United States and Mexican National and Regional Funders have set a goal of raising approximately \$2 million pooled fund, administered by The Synergos Institute, to help Border Community Foundations to improve their institutional capacity. The Synergos Institute will use the fund to support technical assistance and learning activities for Border Community Foundations and to coordinate and manage communications and networking among this diverse group of U.S. and Mexican institutions. The Synergos Institute will also provide capacity-building support and technical assistance funds of up to \$10,000 annually to the participating Border Community Foundations.

For this Partnership, the National and Regional Funders have set a goal of raising \$8-10 million for direct grants to border community foundations. The Border Community Foundations will be eligible to apply for grants ranging from \$10,000 to \$250,000 per year from National and Regional Funders to support their institutional development, border programs and resource development. While the specific details will vary from case to case, the Border Community Foundations will be expected to raise local matching funds (including cash and in-kind resources) that will total a corresponding amount of \$8-10 million.

The National and Regional Funders are committed to supporting programmatic, organizational, and resource development objectives. However, due to the varying programmatic and geographic constraints of individual Funders, there will be careful collaboration among Funders to ensure complementarity of efforts and to create the synergy for effective contributions. Commitment levels and focus will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Timeframe

The Border Philanthropy Partnership has set high goals for improving the philanthropic environment in the U.S.-Mexico border region. National and Regional Funders and Border Community Foundations recognize that full achievement of these goals will require time, resources, and commitment. The Partners believe, nonetheless, that an initial 3 – 6 year commitment will establish the building blocks for future success.

Definition: United States and Mexican Border Community Foundation

Participating border community foundations are *all* currently defined by – or are planning to develop – the following characteristics (taken from the Community Foundation section of the Worldwide Initiative for Grantmaker Support – WINGS-CF):

- Dedication to improving the quality of life in low-income communities in a defined geographic area;
- Independence from the control of influence by other organizations, governments, or donors;
- Governance by a board of citizens broadly reflective of the community;
- Purpose to support through grant-making other non-profit groups;
- Commitment to address a range of community leadership and partnership activities, serving as catalysts, conveners, collaborators and facilitators to solve problems and develop solutions to important community issues;
- Goal, over time, to build local endowment funds;
- Plan to assist donors in achieving their local philanthropic goals; and,
- Accountability to the community.

Initial participation will be limited to twenty-one participating border community foundations. Participation by new community foundations in the Partnership will be by invitation of the established Partners. It is expected that additional organizations will be invited to participate from border areas not presently served.