



MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTE

Multicultural Institute at a Glance

- Immigrant-centered services and advancement
- Located in Berkeley, CA (Bay Area region)
- Founded in 1991

Background

The Multicultural Institute (MI, or the Institute) is dedicated to transitioning immigrants from isolation and poverty to workforce participation and prosperity by overcoming economic and socio-political inequities. MI's programs primarily serve immigrants from low-income populations. MI has worked with various groups over the years but has developed its strongest niche with Latinos, particularly those from Mexico and Central America.

MI's key vocational and educational programs provide immigrants with opportunities to build their employment, social and educational skills. The Day Laborer Program—MI's signature program—provides job matching services, claim wage assistance, emergency and food aid, and on-site health screenings and treatment in collaboration with other partners. This program also allows local employers to hire day laborers through MI's website. Other MI programs focus on computer and business skills, and on educational development.

Assets and Vision for Change

All Multicultural Institute staff members are bilingual and bicultural, with the majority being immigrants, which has been critical for building “confianza” or trust within the community it serves. Low staff turnover, and the same executive director throughout the organization's history, has promoted stability and allowed MI to consistently focus on its programming. MI's financial stability and diverse funding base have also been traditional organizational strengths.

MI employs a unique culturally-responsive service model to day laborers that allows staff to offer services based on street-based outreach (an “office



without walls”), improve conditions on the street, and honor participants’ preference to be outside in the community proactively seeking work.

MI was well positioned for CLP 2.0 due to its participation in the first phase of CLP, during which MI developed a five-year strategic plan that also informed annual program area plans, as well as a course for further development under CLP 2.0.

CLP 2.0 Accomplishments

During CLP 2.0, MI reached significant milestones in its organizational development journey:

- **Communications strategy.** MI redesigned its website to present stories, videos, and other program outcomes to engage potential donors and increase visibility among constituents. Based on a Zero Divide organizational technology assessment, MI successfully integrated its website with social media and added an online donations feature. With the support of Silicon Valley Community Foundation, MI also created a

YouTube channel and LinkedIn page that features MI's programs. The Associate Director revived MI's Facebook page by regularly posting events and updates and doubled MI's Facebook likes

- **IT infrastructure.** MI invested in developing two computer labs at its satellite sites. While the organization opted not to move to a cloud-based client database system, the organization established mechanisms to ensure effective communication across sites.
- **Diversified funding for the day laborer program.** MI focused on diversifying its funding base to support the San Mateo County Day Laborer Program. The organization successfully raised thousands of dollars for this program by participating in fundraising campaigns hosted by two community foundations.
- **Long-term financial sustainability.** An MI board member developed a sustainability plan to support the organization's long-term financial health, with a priority on raising unrestricted funding sources.
- **Professional development and leadership succession.** All MI staff members completed a 40-hour training on immigration issues. In some cases, MI leaders restructured job positions to draw on employee strengths and/or develop areas of need. Multicultural Institute also developed and finalized a leadership succession plan.
- **New headquarters.** MI purchased and renovated its headquarters in West Berkeley.

Multicultural Institute's core goals for CLP 2.0

- Increase donor base (in San Mateo County).
- Increase institutional capacity to provide immigration-related services (in Redwood City/North Fair Oaks area).
- Update technological infrastructure.

Impact and Reflections

During its CLP 2.0 experience, MI improved its infrastructure, communications, and financial health. MI drew on a variety of CLP 2.0 resources—including technical assistance from Zero Divide and Silicon Valley Community Foundation—and appreciated the opportunity to connect with other community grantees during CLP 2.0 convenings.

Looking back on their experience, MI's Executive Director emphasized that passion and vision are not enough. Organizational leaders must invest the

time necessary, implement provided tools and resources, and stay the course despite any challenges that emerge. The Executive Director also encouraged funders to continue investing in small community-based organizations aligned with their long-term vision, and to have candid conversations about philanthropy's ongoing role in addressing social inequalities.



The **James Irvine**
Foundation



WILLIAM + FLORA

Hewlett Foundation

In recognition of the important role that **Multicultural Institute** plays in its community, in 2012 MI received support to participate in the second phase of the Community Leadership Project (CLP)—a multi-phased initiative of the **William & Flora Hewlett, David and Lucile Packard, and James Irvine Foundations** aimed at strengthening small and mid-size community organizations serving low-income people and communities of color in the San Francisco Bay Area, San Joaquin Valley, and Central Coast regions.

The first phase of CLP was launched in 2009, ultimately investing \$10 million in 100 organizations and 300 leaders to build their capacity to serve their communities. CLP 2.0 focused more specifically on organizational sustainability, dedicating \$8 million to the goal of helping 57 community organizations develop resilient leadership, adaptive capacity, and financial stability.

A hallmark of CLP was the role that community foundations played as regional regrantors, and the technical assistance and leadership development services provided to community grantees by various intermediary organizations. To find out more about the CLP initiative, please visit communityleadershipproject.org.