

## **Our Grantmaking Philosophy**

Kern Community Foundation (“KCF”) believes that a healthy nonprofit sector is essential to the overall quality of life in our Kern community. Our commitment as a grantmaker is to be relentless in our determination to improve people’s lives and the overall quality of life in our community with such vitality that people stay, engage and invest by choice not circumstances.

In awarding competitive grants, KCF seeks to recognize grantees for their accomplishments not simply their activities. The following six principles guide the decision-making process we carry out when considering grant applications.

**Targets**, reflecting human gain for those served by programs are the best starting point for strategy, tactics, alignment, and course-correction in any organization or community. People who set and tenaciously pursue targets outperform those who pledge best efforts to do better.

**Sparkplug individuals**, those who lead change by example, are the basis of results. Look within any successful group - a school, block club, or unit within an organization - and you'll probably find a great leader. The right leaders are more critical than the right work plan, a large committee, or a big budget.

**Energy**, building on focus, optimism and vitality, is the key resource leaders generate and harness. Energy is scarcer than knowledge and is invariably increased by compressing time for any activity and eroded by extending it. Energy is a predictive characteristic of successful organizations and communities as well as individuals.

**Self-help**, defined as people doing everything possible for themselves, builds vital, sustainable communities and organizations. It reduces the reliance on external resources and earns a higher return on investment, which is every bit as essential in seeking human gain as in seeking financial profitability.

**Divergent thinking** solves more tough problems than increased doses of conventional treatment. When millions of dollars are poured into distressed areas with little result, the problem is a stale approach, not the lack of money. Innovation is less a matter of something new than of something better.

**Learning** is the lifeblood of outcomes. True learning is dynamic, moving beyond gathering knowledge to changing behavior. How much you have changed reflects how much you have learned. One strong tool for learning is prototyping -- trying something at a small scale to test assumptions and build on early experience.