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### **Advocacy Grantmaking Produces Real Results, Watchdog Says**

#### **Research shows high levels of return on investments, community-wide benefits**

Washington, D.C. (December 4, 2008) – As the nation’s worst financial crisis since 1932 continues to expand, foundations are bracing to cope with assets that took the plunge along with Wall Street.

“This is a time when every dollar counts for both donors and their grantees,” said Dolores Roybal, executive director of the Con Alma Health Foundation in Santa Fe, N.M.

New numbers from New Mexico suggest that foundations should turn to the underutilized strategy of supporting advocacy, organizing and civic engagement to be more effective at addressing social issues, recession or no recession.

According to a new report from the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP), for every dollar invested in the 14 advocacy and organizing groups studied, New Mexico’s residents reaped more than \$157 in benefits. That’s a total of more than \$2.6 billion of benefits to the broader public as a result of the \$16.6 million of support from foundations and other sources that went to these nonprofits to support their advocacy efforts.

“This is true strategic grantmaking that gives foundations a real bang for their buck,” said Aaron Dorfman, executive director of NCRP. “By supporting advocacy, organizing and civic engagement, foundations have touched the lives of numerous individuals and communities now and for many years to come.”

Thanks to efforts by coalitions of nonprofits in Santa Fe, Albuquerque and Bernalillo County, more than 200,000 low-wage workers have garnered over \$250 million. In January 2009, a statewide minimum wage increase will be fully phased in, bringing the base rate to \$7.50 per hour, higher than the federal rate.

“By providing financial support to those advocacy nonprofits involved in the effort to increase our state’s minimum wage, foundations went beyond using a Band Aid to address poverty in New Mexico,” said Terry Odendahl, president of the New Mexico Association of Grantmakers (NMAG), a partner in the study. “They realize how policy change is critical in addressing social problems.”

And it’s not just minimum wage. Local advocacy groups have been successful pushing the passage of the Home Loan Protection Act in 2003, one of the strongest anti-predatory lending

laws in the country. As a result, New Mexico has much lower foreclosure rates than in many other states.

A joint effort by a coalition of nonprofits and a state agency worked together to pass the State Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which ensures the long-term availability of funds for permanent housing.

"The economic security of thousands of lower-income families has increased as a result of advocacy and organizing efforts," said Lisa Ranghelli, senior researcher at NCRP and author of the report.

Gay Dillingham, executive director of the Livingry Foundation in Santa Fe, N.M. and chair of NMAG, cautions that as government funds shrink there will be more pressure to look to charities to make up the difference. The answer, she believes, is in seeing policy and advocacy in partnership

"We shouldn't overlook the opportunity to create more long range strategies," said Dillingham. "If you give a man a fish, he will eat for the day. If you teach him how to fish, he can feed his family."

The report "Strengthening Democracy, Increasing Opportunities" documents how New Mexico's overall economy has benefited from policy changes advocated for by local nonprofits from 2003-2007. For example, every new dollar in state Medicaid funds results in \$4.74 of business activity, benefiting all state residents and not just those who rely on Medicaid.

Fourteen New Mexico nonprofits participated in the study, including: Albuquerque Interfaith, Community Action New Mexico, Colonias Development Council, Enlace Comunitario/El Centro de Igualdad y Derechos, New Mexico Acequia Association, New Mexico ACORN, New Mexico Coalition to End Homelessness, New Mexico Environmental Law Center, New Mexico Voices for Children, Sacred Alliance for Grassroots Equality Council, Santa Fe Living Wage Network, Somos Un Pueblo Unido, Southwest Organizing Project and Tewa Women United.

The report highlights a range of successful efforts by these organizations on issues such as economic security, environmental justice, civil and human rights, health and education. It also examines the benefits of engaging communities, such as community building, leadership development, youth engagement and enhanced civic participation.

Some of the New Mexico-based foundations that have provided support for the groups featured in the report include the Brindle Foundation, Con Alma Health Foundation, Frost Foundation, McCune Charitable Foundation, New Mexico Community Foundation, New Mexico Women's Foundation, and the Santa Fe Community Foundation.

A number of large and small national funders also invest in advocacy and organizing in the state, such as The Atlantic Philanthropies, Marguerite E. Casey Foundation, the McKay Fund, Needmor Fund, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

"Strengthening Democracy, Increasing Opportunities" can be downloaded for free at [www.ncrp.org](http://www.ncrp.org). Hard copies are also available. For a press copy of the report or to schedule an interview with the author or participants of the study, please contact Yna Moore at [yyoore@ncrp.org](mailto:yymoore@ncrp.org) or (202) 387-9177 ext. 17.

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Note: Calculating return on investments: Researchers aggregated the dollar values of the impacts, as well as the percentage of annual budget spent on advocacy and organizing by particular groups to determine the total amount invested by foundations and other sources over five years. A return on investments was calculated by dividing the aggregate dollar amount of

all wins by the aggregate dollars invested in advocacy and organizing.

*The National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) in Washington, D.C. is a national watchdog, research and advocacy organization that promotes philanthropy that serves the public good, is responsive to people and communities with the least wealth and opportunity, and is held accountable to the highest standards of integrity and openness. For more information, visit [www.ncrp.org](http://www.ncrp.org).*

*The New Mexico Association of Grantmakers (NMAG) is a regional association of grantmakers dedicated to increasing the effectiveness and impact of organized philanthropy in New Mexico. For more information, visit [www.nmag.org](http://www.nmag.org).*

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