Discovery Leads to Momentum

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We are very excited to announce that our discovery strategy is working in transforming philanthropy for community sustainability for all! As we gain momentum, donors, funders, and leaders of foundations have been following our "discoveries" and supporting our community projects. Most recently, Metta Fund in San Francisco gave Wildflowers Institute a grant to support Chinese elders in their polling of residents in the Tenderloin. In addition, we have realized an increase in funding this year, including that from a noted public speaker, a prominent author of systems thinking and organizational learning, and a colleague of Peter Senge at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Twelve additional philanthropists from international and community foundations are supporting our work. Friends at the Aspen Institute continue to be seminal contributors to the direction we are taking, including Aspen's Senior Advisor for Humanistic Studies, Todd Breyfogle, who this week has contributed an essay aligned with our approach entitled "Philanthropy and the Wisdom of Hospitality."

Alongside eleven "Radiant Lights" elders, we are creating a bridge between the community's natural forces for good and those of philanthropy. While traditional foundations fund nonprofits based on specific theories of change, Wildflowers Institute takes a different path—directly supporting individuals driving diverse, grassroots efforts. This approach supports those on the ground level and is rooted in a study of Flow Funding Circle reports (1992–2022) at the Rockefeller Archive Center. Flow Funding is an innovative approach to empower all people through small gifts and to democratize the practice of philanthropy. Our findings show that this model efficiently leverages community ecosystems, culture, and organizing to deliver fast, cost-effective impact.

We believe that the forces for good in a community arise from people giving of themselves to others. Across all cultures and identities, a shared ethic endures—shaped by lived experience and passed down through generations. One pertinent example of this is Aristotle's description of friendship of the good in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (circa 350 BCE):

> *Friendship . . . stimulates to noble actions . . . "two going together" . . . for with friends men are more able both to think and to act . . . to be friends, then, they must be mutually recognized as bearing goodwill and wishing well to each other . . .*

Our Tenderloin studies have pinpointed the family meal at the kitchen table as a spiritual communion uniting differences. Around the kitchen table, family members gather after long, challenging days to share a lovingly prepared, affordable meal. The beauty of these moments is

the care that is shown for one another by sharing food, stories, and wisdom across generations. The table also remains open, welcoming guests from all walks of life as part of the family's daily communion.

At a recent focus-group session at Antonia Manor, we witnessed the collective will and the extraordinary determination of residents to respond to the food crisis impacting them. The photo below shows the residents raising their hands to volunteer and participate in the From My Heart Project, a threefold approach to strengthening relationships through meals at the kitchen table.



Our strategy of discovering community-based solutions is succeeding. Tenderloin elders are being guided by their moral compass, and communion at the kitchen table is receiving strong endorsement from residents. This approach relies on local leadership and resident insight to uncover what truly empowers the community. By tapping into local knowledge, we create a synergy between philanthropy and grassroots energy that strengthens the neighborhood's moral courage and spiritual intelligence.