



THE GIVING CODE

SILICON VALLEY NONPROFITS AND PHILANTHROPY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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THE GIVING CODE: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Economic booms are not new in Silicon Valley, yet the region's recent growth has been nothing short of breathtaking. The technology companies sitting at the epicenter of Silicon Valley's economy continue to grow at accelerating rates, generating \$833 billion in sales last year.¹

In 2011 there were three so-called "unicorns" in Silicon Valley—startups with pre-IPO valuations greater than \$1 billion; in 2016 there were 21.² The amount of personal wealth being generated by this growth is difficult to fathom. Silicon Valley now boasts more than 76,000 millionaires and billionaires, and a startling 12,550 of the region's households have more than \$5 million in investable assets.³

As a direct result, philanthropy is also booming in Silicon Valley. Corporations and foundations are giving at unprecedented rates, and longstanding individual donors are being joined by thousands of entrepreneurs determined to direct both their financial capital and their ingenuity toward solving some of the world's most difficult problems. This new wave of donors is a leading reason why, between 2008 and 2013, total Silicon Valley-based individual giving rose from \$1.9 billion to \$4.8 billion—a 150 percent increase.⁴ There is much to celebrate in this growing culture of giving.

However, even as Silicon Valley's millionaires multiply, and its philanthropy rises, many of its 2.6 million residents are being plunged into financial distress. The regional cost of living has climbed so high that a stunning 29.5 percent of local residents—roughly 800,000 people—rely on some form of public or private assistance in order to get by.⁵ Silicon

Valley's middle class is literally disappearing. From 1989 to 2014, the middle class segment of the population in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties decreased by 11 percent and 10.5 percent, respectively.⁶ Across the Valley, it seems as if everyone is moving either in the direction of wealth or in the direction of poverty, with few left in between. Silicon Valley now boasts one of the greatest income gaps in California, with the average low-income family earning less today than it did in 1989.⁷ And Silicon Valley's nonprofits report a sharp increase in the number of [formerly] middle-class families accessing services such as free healthcare, food banks, and shelters.

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Unfortunately, Silicon Valley nonprofits are not able to keep up with this rising demand for their services and are themselves struggling to make ends meet. Paradoxically, while philanthropic giving is increasing overall, the proportion of funding from all types of sources allocated to these community-based organizations has stagnated in the past decade. As a consequence, many of these nonprofits lack the capacity to meet immediate needs, let alone gain traction on the complex, systemic issues they are trying to address—such as homelessness, poverty, and faltering public schools.

This widening gulf between the wealthy and working poor—and between local nonprofits and philanthropists—is

1 Leswing, K. (2016, April 25). Apple Scooped Up 40% of Silicon Valley's Publicly Traded Profits Last Year. *Business Insider*.

2 The Unicorn List: Current Companies Valued at \$1B and Above. [2016]. CB Insights; The Unicorn List. [2016, January]. *Fortune Magazine*.

3 Phoenix Marketing International's Global Wealth Monitor data. [2016, February].

4 Giving USA 2016: The Annual Report on Philanthropy. [2016]. Giving Institute. How America Gives 2014. [2014]. *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*. For further information, see main report, Appendix: Methodology.

5 Massaro, R. [2016, February]. 2016 Silicon Valley Index, 28. Joint Venture Silicon Valley.

6 Reidenbach, L., & Hoene, C. Inequality and Economic Insecurity in Silicon Valley. [2016, May].

7 Ibid.

hardly unique to Silicon Valley. Across the United States, citizens are seeing the fabric of their communities eroded by the imbalances that come when the cost of living outpaces growth in jobs, real wages, and incomes. In many communities, local governments and nonprofits don't have enough resources to meet real needs. Yet despite the pervasiveness of this dilemma, very few good ideas have emerged for how to address it. And thus far, Silicon Valley nonprofits and philanthropists seem to be emulating rather than addressing this gap.

We would argue that Silicon Valley has a unique opportunity to change how these dynamics play out in a community, to disrupt the social breakdowns that occur from extreme imbalances, to break the old economic model and build a new one. It would be the ultimate disruption and the ultimate creative triumph: to figure out how to reengineer the economy and the physics of place to create healthier communities and opportunities for everyone, not just the wealthy. We believe it begins in part by inspiring a new kind of conversation and coordination among local nonprofits and the region's active and growing philanthropic community.

WHY THIS RESEARCH

As social impact advisors who live and work in the heart of Silicon Valley, we have observed that these two groups—nonprofits and philanthropists—often speak different languages and live in different worlds, with few bridges between them. We wanted to understand why: Why are local community-based organizations struggling to meet demand in one of the wealthiest and most sophisticated regions in the country? Why aren't more Silicon Valley philanthropists directing their dollars toward local organizations and issues—as opposed to national or global causes—and why hasn't more entrepreneurial ingenuity made its way to these nonprofits? What is the cause of these disconnects, and how might we help bring these two groups together in service of shared community?

With support from The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, we set out to answer these questions. We reviewed and synthesized mountains of statistics, built new datasets, and engaged more than 300 Silicon Valley stakeholders—including wealthy residents and their advisors, nonprofit executives, corporate and private foundation giving officers, and partners across all sectors—



For the purposes of our research, we define Silicon Valley as San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, even though a number of themes in this report could be applied to the larger Bay Area. These two counties have a tremendous amount of fragmentation, with 35 towns and cities, 25 unincorporated areas, and 55 separate school districts, creating challenges that are quite distinct from larger cities like San Francisco.

in conversations about community needs and the present and future of Silicon Valley's social sector. Along the way, we did endless rounds of sense-making in order to understand the nuances of the complex picture that was emerging.

The resulting report, *The Giving Code*, builds on work that others have done but also breaks new ground, providing a holistic portrait of the region's nonprofit and philanthropy ecosystems—their size and shape, how they operate, where and why they do or do not intersect, and how the gulf between local philanthropists and local nonprofits might begin to be bridged. In this executive summary, we highlight our key findings. We also encourage you to download and read our full report at openimpact.io, which offers deeper analysis, charts and graphs with data trends, and an appendix that includes a resource list and methodology.

LOCAL NEEDS, LOCAL NONPROFITS

On the surface, Silicon Valley's nonprofit sector seems robust, with the total number of nonprofits growing 28 percent in the last 10 years to 9,725. However, growth in the number of nonprofits doesn't necessarily equate with scale; the vast majority of local nonprofits (77 percent) report revenues under \$1 million.⁸ And many of them are financially unstable: more than 30 percent of these nonprofits are

⁸ IRS Business Master File. (2015, December).

Key Statistics on Nonprofit Health

Survey responses from 130 community-based organizations in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties to Open Impact, April 2016.

80%

Of nonprofits report an increase in demand for services over the past 5 years

74%

Don't have access to high-net-worth-donor networks, significantly hindering their outreach

51%

Say they will not be able to meet demand for services this year

46.3%

Say doing business in Silicon Valley is hard

52.6%

Have carried a deficit for at least one year in the past five years

63%

Say it's hard to find donors willing to cover full costs

95.6%

Of nonprofits have at least one donor that requires impact-data reporting

26.7%

Report that the data collection their funders ask for is significantly useful to their organization

running deficits above the state and national average, and 47 percent have less than three months of operating cash on hand.⁹ As these numbers suggest, Silicon Valley's local nonprofit sector comprises many small organizations that are meeting important needs for particular populations, but without significant scale or long-term sustainability.

To make matters worse, many of these community-based organizations are experiencing significant increases in demand for their services as the local cost of living escalates. According to a survey we fielded, 80 percent of Silicon Valley's community-based nonprofits report increased demand in the last five years, and more than 50 percent say they are falling short of meeting that demand. More than 54 percent have a waitlist for their services. In addition, many of these nonprofits serve populations that are at-risk: low-income residents, immigrant communities, the disabled, and others. Nearly 60 percent of the 130 nonprofits responding to our survey said they specifically serve non-white populations.

Local nonprofit leaders also describe an operating environment more challenging than any they've known. Many of these organizations are being adversely affected by the same trends that are driving demand for their services, including exorbitant rents that make it difficult for them to afford local office space. These nonprofits are also competing for talent in one of the tightest labor markets in the world. Despite rising needs and the rising number of Silicon Valley nonprofits, employment in the local nonprofit sector has decreased by 13.2 percent since 2007, in part because salaries are typically far out of step with the local cost of living.¹⁰

Meanwhile, the on-going addition of nonprofits into this challenging landscape creates greater fragmentation, making it difficult to create the alignment needed to solve some of the region's larger systemic problems. And many community-based organizations report being so busy delivering services and just trying to survive that they don't have time to engage new donors. As a consequence, they lack the capacity to effect larger change on the issues they are trying to address. Some of these nonprofits have offices just blocks away from the region's booming tech companies—but they aren't sure how to attract Silicon Valley's philanthropy to their causes.

9 Analysis of internal survey data collected from Silicon Valley-based grantees of The David and Lucile Packard Foundation [2013] and Sobrato Family Foundation [2013–2015], as well as the 2013 Nonprofit Finance Fund survey segmented for Silicon Valley-based nonprofits.

10 Massaro, R. [2016, February]. 2016 Silicon Valley Index, 86. Joint Venture Silicon Valley.

SILICON VALLEY'S NEW PHILANTHROPY

Over the last decade, Silicon Valley's rising prosperity has sparked an unprecedented wave of giving among local corporations, private foundations, and newly wealthy individuals—some of it on a truly momentous scale. Mark Zuckerberg and other entrepreneurs have set the bar high, publicly pledging most of their fortunes to address large-scale social issues. These trailblazers are being joined by entrepreneurs who have millions rather than billions but are no less intent on using their earnings for the greater good. Corporate giving is also on the rise, driven by both increasing profits and the region's growing culture of giving.

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But becoming an *effective* philanthropist involves a lot of work. Corporations, foundations, and individuals face similar decisions at the start of their giving: how much wealth to give away, to what types of causes and organizations, and via which of the many philanthropic vehicles now available to them. Our research found that four of these vehicles, often used in combination, drive giving in Silicon Valley.

Private Foundations & Family Offices

Private foundations based in Silicon Valley increased 47 percent between 2005–2015, more than twice the national growth rate. Additionally, the number of local foundations with more than \$10 million in assets has increased 72 percent since 2000, with 28 percent of them founded in the last 10 years. As of 2015 there were a total of 1,146 private foundations in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, with combined assets of \$31.6 billion. The top 10 givers to community-based organizations collectively gave over \$275 million locally, with Silicon Valley Community Foundation, The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, and Sobrato Family Foundation giving the most between 2010–2013.¹¹

Many of these foundations are being run or overseen by the founding donors, as opposed to professional staff. A recent national study by the National Center for Family Philanthropy (NCFP) shows that more foundations are being defined and led by the original donor than ever before,¹² and Silicon Valley appears to be leading this trend. Additionally, many ultra-high-net-worth donors in Silicon Valley are using family offices to help organize and coordinate their philanthropy, including their foundations. The same NCFP study found that 92 percent of family offices support at least one private foundation and 85 percent have paid staff focused on their philanthropy.¹³

Donor-Advised Funds

Donor-advised funds (DAFs)—a form of charitable savings account—are growing at a record pace as well. Charities founded by financial services providers and wealth management firms are significant holders of DAFs locally. Data shared exclusively for this study by the two largest national charities with DAF programs—Fidelity Charitable and Schwab Charitable—shows that these two charities now hold more than 4,500 DAFs among Silicon Valley clients, 292 percent more than they did in 2005. These combined DAFs have more than \$2.2 billion in assets, a 946 percent increase since 2005.¹⁴ And a significant portion of that giving is staying local. In 2015 total grants from Schwab and Fidelity DAFs given by Silicon Valley donors totaled \$432 million, with nearly \$91 million staying in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, and \$61 million of that going specifically to community-based organizations. Silicon Valley Community Foundation is also a significant holder of DAFs in the region; in 2015 it had \$7.3 billion in assets under management, with \$75.4 million in DAF grants going to Silicon Valley nonprofits.¹⁵

Corporate Giving

Many Silicon Valley entrepreneurs are also establishing corporate foundations, offering discounted products to nonprofits, deploying the “time and talent” of their employees to charitable causes, and providing matching

¹² Boris, E.T., De Vita, C.J., & Goddy, M. (2015, November). 2015 Trends Study: Results of the First National Benchmark Survey of Family Foundations. National Center for Family Philanthropy.

¹³ Working Together for Common Purpose: The First National Study of Family Philanthropy. (2012, October). National Center for Family Philanthropy.

¹⁴ Fidelity Charitable and Schwab Charitable provided aggregated and anonymous data about giving in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties by SV-based donor-advised fund holders, including number of accounts and total giving since 2005.

¹⁵ 2015 Year in Review: Possibilities Start Here. Silicon Valley Community Foundation; Silicon Valley Community Foundation online grants, 2015 Grants. (2015, December 31).

funds for employee donations. The amount that Silicon Valley companies have given away locally through cash contributions has more than doubled since 2009, from \$56 million to nearly \$117 million in 2015.¹⁶ However, as corporate philanthropy has become increasingly strategic over the last two decades, more companies are now focusing on issue areas or programs aligned with their core business objectives, which can result in less funding being directed toward community-based organizations.

AN EMERGING GIVING CODE

While Silicon Valley's new philanthropists, including wealthy Millennials, are still in the early stages of their journeys, certain patterns to both the motives and the style of their giving are becoming evident. While this emerging "giving code" is not yet set in stone, two things are clear: these donors seek to be "bigger, better, and faster" in their giving than the philanthropists who came before—and they are inherently skeptical of nonprofits. We're not the first to write about these patterns: with all the new wealth being generated in Silicon Valley, some journalists and a handful of sector thought-leaders have begun to document the philanthropy trends of this generation.¹⁷ Here, we seek to build on these previous articles and deepen some of the nuances and complexities associated with this emerging giving code.

HIGH IMPACT

This generation of donors is not interested in Band-Aid solutions. They aspire to get to root causes and solve social problems rather than just ameliorate them; they want to see real outcomes and data, not just anecdotal stories. However, this focus on impact and results doesn't always take into consideration the complexities of measuring social change, and community-based organizations don't always have the resources to measure their results in ways that new donors want.

INNOVATIVE

In addition to wanting to fund new innovations and scale them up, these new donors want to disrupt, displace, or reinvent existing dysfunctional systems—such as health care or education—and to create social change that is both scaled and sustainable. But the flip side of being innovative means they don't take the time to understand what has or hasn't worked in the past or learn from those community-based organizations that are closest to the end user and root causes of problems.

CONNECTED

These donors are not content to just write checks; they also want to volunteer, take board seats, mentor and advise nonprofit leaders, and even run some of their own programs. They also give first to causes and organizations that benefit them personally, such as their children's schools, where they have direct relationships or social networks. This can be challenging for community-based organizations, as many do not have the networks to connect with these donors, nor the capacity to engage them in ways that meet their needs.

DIVERSIFIED

Rather than tying themselves to a single issue or geography, these donors take a portfolio approach to giving. This applies to the vehicles and kinds of capital through which they give, as well as the issues, places, and organizations to which they give. The challenge for community-based organizations is navigating these many layers of diversification and making the case for support so they can become part of these donors' portfolios.

¹⁶ Source: *Silicon Valley Business Journal* "Top Corporate Philanthropists" Lists, Self-Reported Survey; 2007–2015.

¹⁷ We particularly want to highlight Laura Arrillaga-Andreessen, who has written extensively on philanthropy and new modes of giving, and Kim Dasher Tripp, whose recent writing on new philanthropy in Silicon Valley captured many of the same themes we heard in our focus groups and interviews.

BARRIERS TO CONNECTION

On the face of it, this emerging Silicon Valley giving code and the donors who embody it seem well matched to help solve the many problems plaguing the region in which they work and live. Yet these new philanthropists and local nonprofits often operate separately, with little common ground between them. On one side are a growing group of Silicon Valley donors with significant wealth; on the other side are community nonprofits that need more capital to meet current and future demands. Unfortunately, our research shows that the gap between the supply and demand sides in this market appears to be widening.

What is standing in the way of local philanthropists and local nonprofits working together to address Silicon Valley's many social and systemic problems? One issue is structural: there are very few intermediaries operating within this gap, helping to bridge both sides. Silicon Valley's social sector intermediaries are currently undergoing a sea change—including both United Way and the community foundation—and emerging intermediaries aren't linking donors to local community or scaling fast enough to meet demand.

For philanthropists, additional barriers to giving locally include having limitless choices about where to focus; a belief that their philanthropy can achieve more impact in emerging markets; concern that local nonprofits don't have effective programs or lack clear strategies; and feeling overwhelmed by the many nonprofits crowding the Silicon Valley ecosystem. Meanwhile, nonprofit leaders find it challenging to identify potential donors and what they care about, in part because they don't have the networks



"Ancient Oaks catch the evening glow" (CC BY 2.0) by Jitze Couperus

or resources and also because these new giving vehicles don't operate as intermediaries for nonprofits. Many also lack familiarity with the newer ways that philanthropists are giving, report an unease about the approaches that new donors bring to the table, and lack the capacity to provide the kinds of data that these donors increasingly require.

Taken together, these barriers point to four critical gaps between local donors and local nonprofits that are serving to keep these groups apart:

KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION GAP: Most local nonprofits don't understand the new Silicon Valley "giving code" that is emerging or how to influence it; they also don't know how much money is out there, where it's going, or how to access it. Likewise, most new philanthropists don't have good information on local nonprofits and local needs: they don't know who is working on what, which local issues are most important, or who is succeeding at solving local problems.

SOCIAL NETWORK AND EXPERIENCE GAP: Nonprofit leaders and new philanthropists don't move in the same social circles. For the latter, community is increasingly defined not by physical place but by socioeconomic class. By contrast, nonprofit leaders tend to define community by place, culture, and ethnicity. Very few Silicon Valley nonprofit leaders personally know the region's technology leaders, and the two don't often have reason to meet.

MINDSET AND LANGUAGE GAP: In talking about the world and about their work, most nonprofit leaders speak a moral language that emphasizes social responsibility, social justice, equity, and the common good. The new philanthropists are far more transactional when describing their work and their strategies. Theirs is a language of finance, of metrics, of power, of capitalism, of winners and losers.

EMPATHY GAP: Without obvious common ground, it is easy for each group to reduce the other to a stereotype. The wealthy become "greedy" or "heartless," while nonprofit leaders are characterized as "bleeding hearts" who don't know how to think strategically. This gap might be the most unspoken as well as the most dangerous.

TOWARD A NEW GIVING CODE

So why should these various philanthropists amplify their local giving when they can donate their money anywhere? There's enlightened self-interest, for starters. Wealthy entrepreneurs do care about the communities in which they are raising their children and in which their employees live, so do corporations and foundations. Quality of life matters—not in just an altruistic sense but in a practical, bottom-line sense as well: it is a critical factor in continuing to attract talent to the region and remaining competitive globally.

Then there's the moral argument: the newly wealthy should care because they are part of the economic system that is creating these disconnects. Individually, no single person,

company, or industry is to blame—it's a larger system—but these leaders and their companies benefit the most from economic growth, so they should feel some compulsion to tend to the externalities created as a result.

So how do we start collectively influencing and shaping a new giving code in Silicon Valley? How do we make tangible gains against the goal of better aligning the work, passions, skills, and insights of these two vital groups for the betterment of their shared community? The proposed solutions we surfaced in our research were a mix of existing ideas that deserve greater investment and new ideas for filling critical gaps. All of the ideas have the same goal—to begin building networks and relationships that can help the local system work more optimally. Most will require existing

How You Can Help Strengthen the Giving Code

Philanthropy	Nonprofits
Give to issues by investing strategically in great leaders, organizations, or networks with unrestricted funding (i.e. "general operating support"). Consider pledging multi-year gifts, especially if clear milestones are in place.	To win unrestricted support, create a realistic, multi-year plan with clear goals, anticipated outcomes, and stated risks. Make sure the plan has a clear "theory of change."
Join a giving circle or donor network to learn about the language and frameworks of the social sector and develop your skills as a philanthropist.	Find or create learning opportunities for you and your board members to understand 1) the frameworks of the social sector and 2) what these new donors are looking for in their philanthropic investments.
Engage with the nonprofits and causes you support in a way that adds greater value. First ask questions and listen, seek to understand their challenges, and look for opportunities to connect directly with their clients.	Consider creative ways to engage your current and potential donors to advance your cause; build the cost of this engagement into your budget.
To know if you are creating impact, don't restrict your funding to programs, but provide additional funds to cover the costs of assessing and measuring the work as well. Also consider supporting greater collaboration among nonprofits focused on the same issue.	Develop an evaluation plan with projected costs and clear implementation. Articulate metrics that you can track now and those you will track over time. Work with your key funders to standardize these metrics.
Only require metrics aligned to a nonprofit's existing plans and goals, so they can standardize their reporting to funders.	Before committing to a new project or program, do research to confirm the needs. Then create a plan with clear goals and interim milestones that can be the basis for setting expectations in your organization, and with your donors.

and new intermediary organizations to step up and help. Ideas include:

LEARNING: Creating structured and well-facilitated opportunities for nonprofit leaders and new philanthropists to learn from one another—and learn together—about local issues and solutions, through “learning journeys” and other experiential opportunities like virtual-reality simulations and hands-on volunteering.

CAPACITY-BUILDING: Offering workshops and trainings to introduce new philanthropists to the frameworks and best practices of the social sector and better familiarize them with the landscape of local nonprofits; similarly, offering workshops to help nonprofit leaders frame and communicate the fundamentals of their work in ways that business leaders can understand.

COORDINATION: Creating new models for cross-sector collaboration and for coordinating the vast array of resources required to drive scalable solutions, and encouraging funders to create more efficient mechanisms for reporting impact such as shared standards and metrics.

Ultimately, we hope that in reading and engaging with *The Giving Code* you will come to the same conclusion that we have: that Silicon Valley is poised to become a region of vibrant nonprofits and committed philanthropists—along with business and government leaders—empowered to work in more connected ways to address the challenges we face in our local communities and around the globe. Our greatest hope is that Silicon Valley’s powerful philanthropic community, in alliance with local nonprofits, will come to see significant, scalable, place-based change as one of the most important outcomes it can hope to achieve.

If philanthropy’s true role is to serve as society’s “risk capital” for social change, then the moment has never been riper to consider how the formidable assets accumulating in Silicon Valley could revolutionize how we address the most challenging issues of our time—starting right here, right now in our own backyard.



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Open Impact founders (from left): Alexa Cortés Culwell and Heather McLeod Grant

Alexa Cortés Culwell and Heather McLeod Grant are the cofounders of Open Impact, a strategic advisory firm partnering with leaders to design and accelerate the work of social change. The firm brings together teams and leaders to envision and implement solutions for both community-level change and the most pressing issues of our day. Heather is a social entrepreneur, author, and consultant

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Partners supporting our research and outreach efforts



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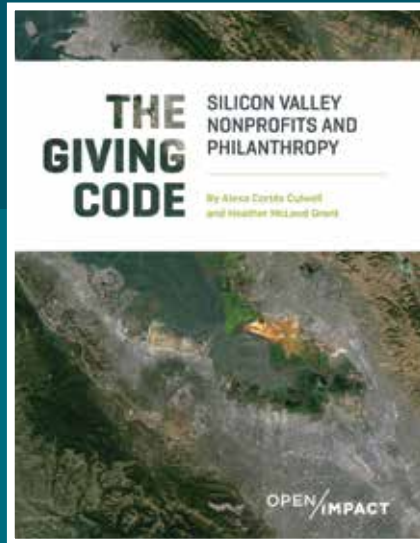
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