Growing and Changing in 2022 and Beyond

**Strategic Planning Background & Context**

Over the course of our 23-year history, Sand Hill Foundation has been guided by the belief that a community dedicated to taking care of its people and its environment, year after year, is a community that will prosper. We have invested in work that strengthens families and protects environmental resources across San Mateo and Northern Santa Clara counties in Silicon Valley. To build on this legacy and ensure its sustainability, we have always prioritized listening to and learning from our nonprofit partners across the region. In this spirit, we spent 2021 committed to gathering feedback and reflecting on how our work could shift to better support your critical work. The learning process allowed us to:

- Gain a better understanding of the shifts in community needs and assets as a result of increased local income inequality and the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Fine-tune grant funding priorities to better support families with low-income and the programs and systems they engage with; and
- Explore opportunities to better leverage resources and strengthen the foundation’s capacity to be an even more trusted community partner in 2022 and beyond.

With the guidance and partnership of Wendy Todd Consulting, nine months were dedicated to researching and compiling relevant local qualitative and quantitative data. We conducted an applicant survey completed by 122 people, interviewed 17 local public servant leaders, who share our commitment to the Peninsula region, and engaged in numerous strategic planning discussions with board, staff, and guest experts.

Research reveals that young people and families with low-income and poor health outcomes (which is correlated with poverty) are clustered in specific areas of San Mateo County. Given the high concentration of low-income families in these communities and our desire to ensure that funds are bolstering families with the most need, Sand Hill Foundation will bring a sharper geographic lens to its grantmaking within the County.

- San Mateo County is home to a diverse population with varying assets and needs. It is also one of the most inequitable counties in the Bay Area, ranking near the top of the other nine counties in the region for household income inequality. There are many young people and parents who work jobs critical to the success of our community, and essential to the health and well-being of all San Mateo County residents, and yet their

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1 http://www.smcalltogetherbetter.org/
2 http://www.gethealthysmc.org/general-information/income-inequality
income is not sufficient to make ends meet. This includes staff of many nonprofit organizations.

- As noted in San Mateo County’s Healthy Cities report, “Financial insecurity makes it difficult to afford and meet basic needs, leading to higher rates of depression and stress, and subsequently more health problems.” Income inequality not only negatively impacts the health of individuals and threatens the economic well-being of families, it also impacts entire communities and longer-term economic growth.

- Further, San Mateo County ranks as California’s #1 County most at risk for climate change impacts from sea level rise and flooding – with disproportionate impact in neighborhoods where families with low-income live.

**Grantmaking Focus**

Although the foundation will continue to focus on poverty alleviation, mental health, and environmental stewardship, feedback from nonprofit leaders, funders, and public agency staff indicates we could have a deeper impact and become a more trusted partner with the advent of narrower, more clearly articulated funding priorities.

**Moving forward, Sand Hill Foundation will advance its mission by focusing its efforts in San Mateo County and will support locally-based nonprofits working in three, reframed areas that build on the foundation’s prior approach: Opportunity, Wellness, and Environment.**

**New Program Areas**

**Opportunity – building family economic stability**

Funding in this category will support:
- College access and completion
- Job training and entrepreneurship
- Housing security

**Wellness – promoting mental health and well-being**

Funding in this category will support:
- Prevention and early intervention mental health services
- Mental health systems change
- Environmental education and outdoor access

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3 https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/DocumentCenter/View/66153/Healthy-San-Mateo
4 https://www.winmeasures.org/statistics/winmeasures/california/san-mateo-county-equity
5 https://calbudgetcenter.org/resources/inequality-economic-security-silicon-valley/
6 https://riskfinder.climatecentral.org/county/san-mateo-county.ca.us?comparisonType=postal-code&forecastName=Basic&forecastType=NOAA2017_int_p50&level=3&unit=ft
**Environment – advocating for nature and sustainable communities**

Funding in this category will support community engagement for:

- Climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Open space preservation
- Sustainable agriculture

Grantmaking and staff time will be dedicated to community-based organizations serving young people and families with low-income\(^7\) who experience the greatest barriers and challenges in San Mateo County. Resources will be directed to organizations and collaborative efforts that provide pathways to economic security and wellness for residents, and protection of our surrounding natural assets.

**New Mission Statement**

*Sand Hill Foundation is driven by optimism about the resilience and hopefulness of the human spirit. We partner with and fund locally-based organizations to strengthen economic stability and wellness among families with low-income and to advance advocacy efforts that create a more sustainable environment in our home community of San Mateo County.*

Our commitment to collaboration and our core values of Compassion, Growth, Nimbleness, and Trust remain unchanged.

**What is Different**

Funding will no longer extend to northern Santa Clara County.

Sand Hill Foundation will prioritize support for organizations in San Mateo County that:

- Operate programs aligned with our focus areas in Daly City, South San Francisco, Redwood City/North Fair Oaks, and/or the Coastside that serve families with low-income;
- Incorporate diverse stakeholder perspectives in their planning and operations with demonstrable cultural competence;
- Provide high quality programs as a trusted community resource; and
- Focus on youth aged 11-25 and their families as they navigate daily life with limited financial means.

Within our three focus areas, grants will be responsive to the needs of our partner organizations, funding such things as general operations, project support, planning, capacity building, and capital needs. Over time, we will have fewer grantees but are challenging ourselves to provide more types of support to them. We will no longer have separate funding cycles for small capital and capacity needs.

While Sand Hill Foundation has a history of accepting applications on a rolling basis at any time of the year, we have learned that deadlines are helpful and signify an invitation to apply – so

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\(^7\) Families with low-income includes parents and children ages 11 and older.
we are exploring the possibility of instituting deadlines in Fall 2022. We are also immediately streamlining and simplifying the application process for nonprofits by eliminating the need for a letter of intent pre-proposal.

Our goal is to live our mission and values by being in more intentional, proactive partnership with our grantees. This is a work in progress, but we have the following ongoing aspirations:

- We want to concentrate our resources on building community-based solutions and prioritize organizations located in San Mateo County.
- We want to create a more equitable distribution of philanthropic capital in the County by giving in the areas where the most families with low-income and limited opportunities reside.
- We want to seek out our grantees, and not always depend upon them reaching out to us.
- We want to spend more time listening to and learning from San Mateo County residents where they are and less time in front of our computer screens (County health guidelines permitting).
- We believe in the power of collaboration and will continue to nurture and grow partnerships that strengthen our community and improve systems at the local level.

Impact Investing
Sand Hill Foundation has transformed its portfolio over the last several years to be 50% invested with environmental, social and governance screens, and has made some direct investments in funds and companies with social missions. **Sand Hill Foundation’s goal is to reach an endowment investment portfolio that is 100% values-aligned over the course of the next 3-5 years.** Although investment selection will not be tied to the local area in the same way as grantmaking, attention is being given to identifying investments in the areas of poverty alleviation, health/wellness, and education so that the foundation’s assets are aligned towards social good and all dollars are catalytic.

We’re excited about these changes and welcome your questions, reflections, and ideas. I can be reached at ash@sandhillfoundation.org.

Ash McNeely
Executive Director