



# Los Alamos Community Foundation

Los Alamos, New Mexico

*We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body.*

*John Winthrop, "City Upon a Hill", 1630*

A White Paper Prepared by:

Los Alamos Community Foundation Steering Committee

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## **We Live Here. Let's Give Here. Together.**

When educated about, and given a clear motivation to do so, Los Alamos residents donate to many worthwhile causes and many local organizations have been the recipients of this generosity. The demographics of Los Alamos County include more people who retire here and new families who want to make a permanent home here.

At this point in our community's history, each fundraising effort in Los Alamos is unique and separate. Furthermore, Los Alamos residents who want to help our community may not have a ready mechanism to do so, because there is no organization specific to their interests. A flexible, umbrella organization can help fill this need.

For example, private funds that may be collected toward public art have no sponsoring organization. Civic improvements such as upgrading the Duane Smith Auditorium languish pending availability of scarce tax dollars. Citizens of Los Alamos would support such projects that improve our lifestyle if given the opportunity.

For this reason and others, we need a flexible umbrella fundraising organization focused on Los Alamos community donors and Los Alamos community needs. Local donors who want to give back to the community that nurtured them and helped raise their children need to be presented with a menu of donation opportunities.

More generally, we need to organize and draw on ourselves to continue to build our community. Let's come together to build those activities and facilities that give Los Alamos its character and that make it a desirable place to live and work for all generations and cultures. Let's come together in a community foundation.

## **Mission of the Los Alamos Community Foundation**

The Los Alamos Community Foundation, organized as a 501c3 public charity, has have the following objectives:

- To facilitate and promote local philanthropy by Los Alamos residents and those with strong connections to Los Alamos County
- To highlight unmet needs and donation opportunities within Los Alamos County
- To meet those needs through financial and organizational support to existing and new organizations

## **Professional Fund-raising Support to Organizations**

There are many donation mechanisms and asset transfers by which a donor can contribute and some of these are quite complicated. Currently each local organization has to harness its own expertise to accept and manage these donations or else forgo the opportunity. A community foundation provides the necessary expertise that will then be available to each organization in Los Alamos.

A community foundation will have the resources and expertise to provide donors the right level of

focus and structure that he or she desires. For example, donor-advised funds permit donors to give to specific charities, while designated funds help a single organization.

Some donors, however, will feel an attachment to the community, but not have the desire or time to allocate donations among specific community needs. The Los Alamos Community Foundation will be a mechanism to accept general donations to benefit Los Alamos. Donors could be shown a menu of options, all presented coherently by a single organization.

Charitable donations come in a variety of forms. Aside from cash, one may donate securities, life insurance policies, annuities, etc. and these may be held in trust or as part of an estate. How and when to liquidate these donations requires expertise that the foundation can provide. Donors may want to arrange for planned gifts that pay donor income while they live, or alternatively arrange for donations that provide dividend income to a designated organization, yet preserve assets for donor's heirs. The legal and tax implications of these complicated gifts are daunting to any individual organization, but would be supported by a foundation as it structures and manages these gift mechanisms.

Thus, there are many advantages to this holistic approach to accepting and managing donations, and there is no need, and no purpose, for multiple organizations in Los Alamos to establish the infrastructure to provide this flexibility separately.

Moreover, the Los Alamos Community Foundation will develop ongoing communications with local banks, trusts, and financial advisors, educate them on the form and purposes of different funds that may be attractive to their clients, and present mechanisms for creating new funds under its management, a single and powerful approach to charitable giving within our community.

### **Financial and Organizational Support for the Community**

The Los Alamos Community Foundation will, of course, distribute the funds it collects within the community according to the wishes of its donors. But, aside from providing grants within our community, the Foundation will also magnify local generosity in several ways. For example, it will make available cost-effective professional advice to identify, write, or manage external grants. It will also identify and facilitate corporate teaming and sponsorship, and mentor other ways that organizations could receive increased support.

Fundraising resources could be shared among organizations. Organizations could “rent” a grant-application writer, either individually or in coordination with others. More generally, the Los Alamos Community Foundation will provide common training opportunities to the leadership of the different organizations so they can run their organizations more effectively.

The same argument of efficiency applies to the management of funds. Pooled funds can be managed more efficiently, and in a coordinated manner with the resulting economies of scale, than individual small funds. Larger funds can be invested in a more sophisticated manner, taking into account short-term needs as well as long-term growth opportunities.

### **Always having before our eyes our community...”**

There are many ways that the Foundation can promote a heightened sense of community. It can serve as common ground so that disparate groups move toward mutual understanding and support. It can

become a common “face” of charitable giving in Los Alamos, making it more visible, and satisfying. Donor recognition and relationship building are a key element of fund-raising. This may take the form of “donor societies,” plaques, recognition dinners, newspaper feature articles, etc. Having a community of donors who are recognized by the community provides the type of positive peer pressure that grows the donor pool. Small organizations may not have the resources to organize and fund such a recognition program, but as contributors to the Foundation, these donors would receive this recognition and encouragement, while encouraging their fellow neighbors to do the same.

The Foundation can sponsor block parties, neighborhood revitalization programs to improve our housing stock, other housing programs for teachers or other critical segments of our community, and many other ways to bring the community together.

Maybe the most valuable contribution that the Foundation may make to our community is to foster a sense of mutual care and understanding. This sense of community, if it can be harnessed and directed toward real progress, would permeate all aspects of our social fabric, from volunteer action to charitable giving to political activism. This sense of common mission and direction would help all charitable organizations in Los Alamos, whether associated with the Foundation or not, to accomplish their goals.