

Foreword

We in California are accustomed to looking at indicators on unemployment, poverty, income, education, and more to gauge how we are doing as a state. What we urgently need—and what this unique and timely report provides—is a way to make sense of all these data.

A Portrait of California offers a nonpartisan, fact-based look at how ordinary people in communities across our great state are faring. It tells us who in California is thriving, and who is merely surviving—and why. The centerpiece of this work, the American Human Development Index, is a composite measure that summarizes with a single number the key ingredients of well-being and access to opportunity. The Index is based on an international methodology pioneered at the United Nations, used in 160 countries, and viewed as the global gold standard for assessing human well-being.

We in the donor consortium were attracted to the holistic human development approach that underlies this work because it offers a way to understand and address health, education, and living standards in the interconnected way that people actually experience them—rather than as separate issues requiring separate solutions. We believe that this report will thus prove tremendously useful not just to the philanthropic world but also to policy-makers, researchers, advocates, and those who deliver social services.

The *Portrait* presents American Human Development Index scores for different regions, metropolitan areas, and over two hundred neighborhood clusters. Scores are also available for women and men as well as for racial and ethnic groups. Perhaps the most innovative and exciting aspect of the report is the sorting of different parts of the state into the “Five Californias,” each with its own distinct profile. The gaps in well-being within California that this report lays bare are startling.

Given the current budgetary environment in California, there could be no better time for a road-tested tool like this one. We hope it can help all who have a stake in our state’s future to identify the most strategic and pressing areas for intervention, chart new paths to move California forward, and track progress over time.

The California Community Foundation, The California Endowment, the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. William Draper III, The San Francisco Foundation, United Ways of California, the Weingart Foundation