

Asians get less grant money

Study finds foundations lag in giving to group

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The rate of giving from top U.S. foundations to Asian-American communities is disproportionately low, according to a study released this week.

Though Asian Americans comprise 4.5 percent of the nation's population, grants in 2004 targeting the group represented 0.4 percent of all dollars given by the 20 foundations surveyed.

The study was conducted over a two-year period by Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy, an advocacy organization with chapters in Los Angeles and San Francisco.

"We're really needing for this report to be a call to action for organized philanthropy to step up to the plate," said Audrey Chiang, AAPIP development director.

However, a lack of information on grants that do not target specific ethnic groups mean that the study findings should be interpreted with caution, said Jim Ferris, director of the Center of Philanthropy and Public Policy at USC.

"Some foundations don't even collect \ data. It's not what they're looking at when they make grants," Ferris said.

The report, "Growing Opportunities," looks at foundations that are nationwide in scope, have been around for at least 20 years and were in the top 20 in asset size in 2002.

"There is a perception that needs don't exist," said Peggy Saika, president and executive director of AAPIP "And that if needs to exist, that we will take care of it ourselves."

The report likely understates the amount of dollars given to Asian Americans, as it does not factor in programs available to the general population that also benefit Asian Americans. For example, a higher-education grant may target women, or prospective students interested in certain fields of study.

Chiang acknowledged shortfalls of the data but maintained the study's validity.

The data was culled from the Foundation Center, which maintains a database on U.S. grantmakers and their grants.

"It's a level of detail we weren't able to get into with this report," she said. "For our purposes, the Foundation Center data was useful because we're interested in organizations that are truly responding to \ needs."

For example, while the Red Cross assisted families affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, ethnic-specific groups may have been better equipped with language and cultural familiarity, Chiang said.

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