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Lilly Endowment urges community foundations to “take stock”

After a decade that has seen a phenomenal growth of community foundations in Indiana, Lilly Endowment Inc. is encouraging the state’s more than 90 community foundations to pause to reflect on past accomplishments and current challenges.

The Endowment has allocated \$11.5 million for the foundations to participate in “Taking Stock,” a program of the GIFT (Giving Indiana Funds for Tomorrow) initiative. The voluntary program invites the foundations to participate in a thoughtful, systematic organizational self-assessment in which the foundations would examine their own strengths and areas for improvements. They also would seek the opinions and assessments of other organizations in their communities. Using these internal and external assessments, each participating foundation is asked to prepare a *Report to Lilly Endowment*.

“The number of viable community foundations in Indiana has grown from about a dozen in 1990 to more than 90 today,” said William M. Goodwin, Endowment vice president for community development. “In the process they have built their assets from an aggregate value of about \$100 million to more than \$1 billion.

“Although the Endowment, through the GIFT initiative with its matching grants, has encouraged these efforts, it is the foundations and communities themselves who have raised the most funds from local sources to further charitable purposes in their own communities,” he said.

“Along the way they have fostered community spirit and civic engagement in communities throughout Indiana. This 10-year mark seems like a good time for these organizations to reflect on what they have accomplished and rejuvenate themselves for

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“Taking Stock”
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the tasks ahead,” he said.

Community foundations have been sent an explanatory letter, an application form, optional guides for self-assessment, and a copy of the *Report to Lilly Endowment*.

Foundations may apply for a \$25,000 grant to be used for expenses related to the self-assessment process, such as hiring a facilitator, convening special meetings, and the like. Applications are due at the Endowment by Oct. 6.

Foundations should complete the self-assessment and return the completed *Report to Lilly Endowment* by Feb. 28, 2001. For successfully performing the “Taking Stock” process, each foundation will be awarded a “completion grant” of \$100,000.

“We hope that this assessment information will help the Endowment understand better the current strengths of Indiana’s foundations,” Goodwin said. “At the same time, we expect to be able to determine what the community foundations see as their greatest challenges and how any future Endowment GIFT program may help them the most.”

Since 1990 the Endowment has committed \$345 million through four phases to the GIFT initiative. Of that amount, the Endowment has paid only \$167.3 million in endowment-building grants toward the \$1 billion aggregate asset value in Indiana community foundations. The remainder of the Endowment commitment has been applied in large part to community projects (endorsed by the community foundations) and operating support.

Questions about “Taking Stock” should be addressed to Jenny Kloer, GIFT program director at the Indiana Grantmakers Alliance, 317/630-5200.