

# CALIFORNIA EMERGING TECHNOLOGY FUND

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## POLICYLINK

JANUARY 30, 2007

### — ORGANIZATION AND PROJECT OVERVIEWS —

Name of Organization	<b>POLICYLINK</b>
Name(s) of Principal(s) and Complete Titles	Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder and CEO Judith Bell, President Victor Rubin, Vice President for Research Josh Kirschenbaum, Director of Planning and Development, <a href="mailto:jfk@policylink.org">jfk@policylink.org</a> Arnold Chandler, Program Associate, <a href="mailto:arnold@policylink.org">arnold@policylink.org</a>
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Name of Program or Project	Community Building in the Digital Age Initiative
Geographic Location or Focus of Program or Project	PolicyLink technology work extends nationally to both broaden and deepen the use of the Internet and other technologies to advance social equity and inclusion for low-income communities and communities of color.
Demographic Overview of Focus Community or Population	Underserved communities and communities of color
Description of Program or Project	The PolicyLink technology program is a national resource for innovative policies and an incubator for ideas. In the past three years, the program has focused on promoting the use of innovative technologies to advance economic and social equity through two major areas of work: 1) research; and 2) demonstration projects.  <u>Research</u>  <u>The Applied Research Initiative</u> PolicyLink has extensive experience in community technology policy and research in California. In 2005, PolicyLink collected and analyzed data on telecommunications and information technology access, funded by the Community Technology Foundation of California (CTCF). The lengthy study includes a broad literature review, a survey of best practices, and a policy scan. In the study, PolicyLink recommended a process for carrying out a multi-year initiative to address gaps and promote innovations in community technology research. Following this framework, CTCF has awarded roughly \$1million in grants through its applied research fund.
	<u>Broadband and Universal Service: Defining a New Agenda</u>

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California is the nation's bellwether state for the development and the deployment of communications technology innovations. In addition to being a seedbed of creativity, California's businesses, nonprofits, and citizens have a reputation for being early adopters of the latest technological advancements, and have defined the leading edge of Internet adoption, broadband deployment, wireless networking, and the distribution of media-rich Internet content. However, California's telecommunications policy framework is outdated and unable to nurture the adoption and diffusion of Internet access and applications among marginalized communities and the organizations that serve them. With a grant from MCI, PolicyLink launched a research program in 2006 to analyze existing telecom policy challenges and frame a new agenda to spark widespread use of the next generation of communications technologies.

#### Electronic Advocacy: Technology Innovation in Nonprofit Advocacy

Driven by the ubiquity of the Internet and email, electronic approaches to political engagement have become widespread since the 2004 election, yet community based organizations serving low-income communities and communities of color have not fully reaped the benefits of these powerful tools. In 2005, PolicyLink launched a new project to research and document promising and innovative practices in the use of Internet technologies to support advocacy campaigns in the social justice arena and the broader nonprofit sector. The insights and case studies gathered have been published in a 2007 reported titled *Click Here for Change: You're Guide to the E-Advocacy Revolution*. Key tools and techniques are identified that can help organizations working in the field of social and economic equity to leverage the power of technology in their advocacy work.

#### IT Workforce Development - Moving Beyond the Divide: Workforce Development and Upward Mobility in Information Technology

A low-wage future is not inevitable for disadvantaged groups. With less complex skills now required for many IT positions than in previous years, opportunities are being created to move large numbers of low-wage workers into entry-level jobs. Innovative community-based organizations – workforce intermediaries – play an important role in making the transition possible for many of those whom the educational system has failed, providing crucial job training programs that help workers cross the digital divide. The report, *Moving Beyond the Divide: Workforce Development and Upward Mobility in Information Technology* analyzes the career trajectories of disadvantaged workers who graduated from community-based IT training programs. Using case studies of training intermediaries in the New York, San Francisco, and Washington, DC regions, this study lifts up best practices for helping people cross the digital divide, enter the IT field, and advance in their careers.

#### Demonstration Projects

In addition to publishing a new library of community technology research, PolicyLink has been on the forefront of launching new technology initiatives. Two projects are currently underway including creating the LouisianaRebuilds.info information portal as well as creating a website for the Covenant with Black America.

	<p><u><a href="http://LouisianaRebuilds.info">LouisianaRebuilds.info</a></u> Despite the extent of Hurricane Katrina’s damage and the scope of the Gulf Coast evacuation effort, the relief process lacked a comprehensive effort to coordinate disparate recovery initiatives and to provide crucial information on relief and recovery to those who were affected. Inspired by the need to build a comprehensive communications platform to aid recovery efforts across the state, PolicyLink designed and managed an inclusive process to bring together the best local and national experts to construct LouisianaRebuilds.info.</p> <p>During the first five months of use, there were over 300,000 visitors and viewing almost 3 million pages of information that translates into over 10 million hits. LouisianaRebuilds.info has retained a communications team to frame the media messages for the portal. In partnership with PolicyLink, they are crafting a plan for getting the message of LouisianaRebuilds.info to displaced residents across the country.</p> <p><u><a href="#">Covenant with Black America Website</a></u> In partnership with Grassroots Enterprise, PolicyLink crafted and implemented a vision and blueprint for building a world-class Internet-based communications platform that supplies tools and resources to audiences to address the primary concerns of African Americans, as outlined in <i>The Covenant with Black America</i>. The redesigned portal, covenantwithblackamerica.com, provides its three key user groups—churches, organizations, and individuals—with a host of useful, multi-purpose tools: knowledge-building tools to locate and disseminate resources on the covenants; community-building tools to discuss and debate the covenants; organizing tools to enable users to work, collectively, to advance The Covenant goals; and advocacy tools to exert pressure on decision-makers to take the actions that promote these goals.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Goals, Objectives, Strategies, Actions, Outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>In 1999, PolicyLink launched the Community Building in the Digital Age initiative to provide policy and programmatic support for community technology programs. PolicyLink viewed the national attention and momentum around the digital divide as an opportunity to develop a new set of policies that advocate information technology (IT) as a tool for strengthening low-income communities. PolicyLink has made great strides in promoting computer access and training while deepening the understanding that access and training alone will not solve the challenges facing the nation’s disenfranchised neighborhoods. PolicyLink has found that public and private policy must address an evolving digital divide among families and individuals as well as create opportunities for residents and community groups to create and own digital content and applications. The Community Building in the Digital Age initiative has developed an approach that focuses on policy, capacity building, research and demonstration projects to advance this agenda.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brief History (when founded or launched)</li> </ul>	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Size or Magnitude of Program or Project</li> </ul>	<p>See above, the numbers are dependent on the focus of the particular project. Overall, the work of PolicyLink focuses on increasing economic and social equity for low-income communities, particularly communities of color. PolicyLink’s partnerships are at the local, regional, state and federal levels.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of People Served, Involved, Impacted</li> <li>▪ Budget and Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Judith Bell</li> <li>● Victor Rubin</li> <li>● Arnold Chandler</li> <li>● Josh Kirschenbaum</li> <li>● Sarah Truehaft</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding Sources and Partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Hewlett Packard Company</li> <li>● California Community Technology Foundation</li> <li>● One Economy</li> <li>● Grassroots Enterprise</li> <li>● The Covenant with Black America</li> <li>● MCI</li> <li>● Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation</li> <li>● Open Society Institute</li> <li>● The Annie E. Casey Foundation</li> <li>● Living Cities</li> <li>● PolicyLink has a number of partners in Louisiana and in New Orleans.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Results and Evidence of Success</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Metrics for Evaluation Progress</li> </ul>	<p>An evaluation plan is developed for each project. For the Louisiana communications portal, for instance, the number of hits and unique visitors has been carefully studied. Focus groups have been conducted with those affected to see what parts of the portal are working well and which need improvement, as well as which populations are accessing the portal and which need additional outreach to know about and use the portal.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Change in Outcomes or Metrics Over Time (How long does it take to secure results?)</li> </ul>	<p>Each project has a unique timeline and benchmarks that are developed at the very beginning of the project. Contingencies are also developed, when appropriate.</p>