

Inside Philanthropy

Finding the Cash for a Four-Year Plan to Alleviate California's Teacher Shortage

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A report published earlier this year sounded the alarm about an impending education crisis in California. The study found that the supply of new teachers in the Golden State is at a 12-year low, and educator program enrollment has dropped 70 percent over the last 10 years. You don't have to be a tenured professor to form an educated guess about which subjects are hit the hardest: math and science, which are increasingly taught by underprepared teachers with waivers and temporary permits in the absence of qualified STEM educators.

EnCorps, a California nonprofit founded in 2007 by former Paramount Chair and CEO Sherry Lansing, has spent the last decade recruiting STEM experts and military veterans to transition into second careers as public school teachers. It's since done reasonably well on the fundraising front. The W.M. Keck Foundation committed \$250,000 a few months ago, and a trio of funders – the American Honda Foundation, the Cheryl Saban Self-Worth Foundation for Women and Girls, and the Boeing Foundation—provided grants in May.

Corporate funders are a key part of the picture for EnCorps, which is true of other groups working on STEM. Many top U.S. companies – especially those involved in technology, energy, and manufacturing – are acutely worried about STEM skills of tomorrow's workforce. They're pouring millions into nonprofits working in this space.

So it's no great surprise to hear that the telecommunications giant Qualcomm will help EnCorps recruit and train an additional 670 teachers in Southern California

by June 2020, an influx of qualified STEM instructors that local schools desperately need. Qualcomm's corporate philanthropy policy calls for tight lips on grant amounts, but EnCorps believes that this new multi-year, long-term partnership will allow the nonprofit to fill up to a third of the state's annual shortage of STEM teachers.

Qualcomm's founder, Irwin Jacobs, has given away an estimated \$500 million of his considerable fortune to causes in the San Diego area. In addition to a \$100 million grant to the San Diego Symphony, Jacobs has supported education and health initiatives. As for corporate philanthropy, Qualcomm focuses its giving in areas where the company has a business presence. In the case of the EnCorps partnership, this means Orange County and San Diego.

The Qualcomm grant is an opportunity for EnCorps to scale its model and deepen its impact on local schools. The nonprofit recruited a record 118 fellows in 2015-2016, and will need to increase capacity to meet the ambitious goal of more than 165 new STEM educators annually for the next four years. To that end, EnCorps has hired a program and recruitment director to operate on Qualcomm's home turf of Orange County and San Diego. Three new staff members are focused on local engagement, and a new board member will offer legal guidance as the organization grows.

"Qualcomm has been a consistent funder and advocate since 2008," EnCorps' Business Development & Communications Director Cara Bibbiani tells *Inside Philanthropy*. "Qualcomm has played a pivotal role in the evolution of EnCorps, as we share a core belief in developing and strengthening communities through inspirational, innovative solutions that serve diverse populations. Heading into the 10th year of our critical mission, our model has been influenced by Qualcomm's regional footprint – San Diego Unified is the second-largest California district of need."

EnCorps reports that as of this month, the California Department of Education has designated the organization as the state employee giving nonprofit recipient, as part of a partnership to ramp up the recruitment of STEM professionals into public school teaching.