In 2012, 2,542 foundations called Los Angeles County home, one of every three foundations in California. They held assets of $42.8 billion – more than 40% of all California foundation assets – and accounted for $2 billion in giving – nearly 30% of the grantmaking dollars of all California foundations.

Los Angeles foundations continue to climb their way out of the Great Recession with total inflation-adjusted assets still below their pre-recession levels at $39.4 billion, and total inflation-adjusted giving below their 2008 levels at $1.8 billion.

Most Los Angeles foundations are young, having been established in the last 25 years.2

The more recently established foundations, with living donors or their families in control, have giving levels as a share of their assets that are twice those of foundations created before 1980.

Newer foundations are frequently a vehicle by which individuals make contributions with the intent to make grants in the near term. If the endowments of these foundations grow over their life-cycle, as earlier established foundations have, the future capacity of LA foundations will be robust, and even greater than it is today.

Foundations created more than a half century ago still play an important role in the LA foundation landscape accounting for 52.8% of all foundation assets and 31.7% of all foundation giving in the county.

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1 Fiscal data is based on The Foundation Center’s grantmaking database (circa 2012), which includes all independent and family, corporate, community and operating foundations that reported giving. Inflation adjusted data where indicated is in 2007 dollars.

2 Based on The Foundation Center’s survey of grantmaking foundations with at least $1 million in assets or making grants of $100,000 or more in 2011-2012.
Many of the larger Los Angeles foundations shifted their giving towards basic community needs, focused more on capacity building and increased general operating support in response to the Great Recession, a trend that they say will continue for the next few years.

These foundations are thinking about strategies beyond grantmaking to make a bigger difference, including collaboration with other foundations and government agencies, and impact investing.

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5 Includes Religion, Social Sciences, Science and Technology, International Development and Human Rights, and other Foundation Center categories.