I’m very pleased to share Bank of the West’s Commitment to Community Report highlighting some of the many ways we are helping our communities grow and flourish.

We believe that beyond helping individual customers achieve their financial dreams, our Bank can help build strong and vibrant communities. We do this, in part, through our corporate philanthropy and support of innovative programs that advance economic opportunities in the regions we serve.

In 2015, we partnered with more than 600 nonprofit organizations to address needs of low- to moderate-income individuals and families. In this report, you’ll find examples of how we connect across our communities to:

- provide educational programs that help young people build their financial knowledge;
- help job seekers acquire or upgrade their skills so they can establish stable careers;
- support the success of entrepreneurs and small business owners through lending and technical assistance;
- increase access to affordable housing so that individuals can build equity and improve their long-term economic prospects; and
- fund public programs that promote access to the arts and contribute to the vitality of our communities.

Our team members are also integral to our community efforts and last year contributed more than 36,000 volunteer hours as financial education teachers, small business mentors, job-skills coaches, nonprofit board members and more. Our customers and community partners inspire us to do more and make the places where we live and work better. We hope the stories in this Commitment to Community Report inspire you, as well.

Nandita Bakhshi
President and CEO
June 1, 2016

Cover: Carolyn Fontenberry, Bank of the West Retail Banking Group
An Early Introduction to Financial Education Supports Positive Outcomes

In today’s complex economy, the ability to navigate financial products and services and also to manage money wisely is fundamental to economic self-sufficiency. Bankers and educators agree: An early introduction to financial education helps young people develop the awareness they need to succeed economically.

This is why, every year, hundreds of Bank of the West volunteers provide hands-on financial education in classrooms from kindergarten to 12th grade, often in coordination with community nonprofits and school districts. In Southern California’s Magee Academy of Arts and Sciences, for example, third-, fourth- and fifth-grade students were introduced to budgeting and saving in multilingual classes taught by Bank team members.

“Ordinarily our teachers are protective of their time with students,” says Gisela Castañon, Principal of Magee Academy, “but they gladly hand over the chalk to Bank of the West visitors for these programs. Without a program like this, many students would not receive the financial education they need.”

Marlene Stante, a Senior Vice President in the Retail Banking Group responsible for 30 branches in four California counties, is one of the many volunteers who participates in the Bank’s community outreach.

“Many of the children we teach are in underserved communities, often from immigrant families who are not used to the banking system or whose first language might not be English,” Marlene says. “We have a collective goal to help these children and families understand important concepts, such as how a bank account works, how to use debit cards responsibly, or why maintaining good credit is critical for purchases like a car, a home or a college education.”

Parents are also included in these financial education efforts. At Magee Academy, the Bank coordinated with the Parent Teacher Association and school administrators to offer evening sessions on budgeting and maintaining good credit, which in turn helps reinforce responsible financial habits in the home.

Last year, the Bank reached more than 12,000 students and adults with essential financial lessons, and we continue to expand our reach. In 2015, Bank of the West launched its Financial Scholars Program. This initiative, in association with education technology company EverFi, teaches financial concepts to high school students using an interactive online curriculum. Through nine weekly modules integrated into the regular lesson plans, students learn about savings, budgeting, financing college, avoiding consumer fraud and more. In its first year, the Financial Scholars Program helped 30 high schools in underserved communities in California’s Santa Clara, San Joaquin and Orange counties.
Overcoming Barriers to Employment Is Transformative

Bank of the West helps people in underserved communities overcome barriers to employment so they can build strong futures for themselves and their families. Last year, the Bank supported 100 nonprofits focused on helping job seekers obtain the skills, confidence and connections that can lead to sustainable careers and secure financial futures.

Playa Vista Job Opportunities and Business Services (PVJOBS) is one of those nonprofits working to transform lives. The Los Angeles-based organization serves as an employment agent for extremely motivated low-income populations, including veterans, adults with employment challenges and youth who have been involved with the criminal justice system. Their participants want steady work but have trouble finding employment. They might lack a high school diploma, have a history of substance abuse or incarceration, or be too enmeshed in the challenges of single parenthood or even homelessness to job hunt. Every week, approximately 35 new arrivals attend PVJOBS’ orientation to explore job opportunities in the construction trade.

“It’s definitely a win-win,” says Ernest Roberts, Executive Director of PVJOBS. “These are exceptionally good workers because they are so motivated to turn their lives around. That’s why we’ve been able to place roughly 8,000 people since 1998, with 87% continuing to obtain solid work through PVJOBS.”

PVJOBS places its candidates in jobs that match their skills, from entry-level laborer positions to journeyman trades. As workers’ experience and abilities grow, they can seek progressively higher-skilled positions.

PVJOBS currently has more than 16,000 job-ready candidates in its database.

Beyond philanthropic support, Bank of the West provides leadership and guidance. For over six years, Richard Flores, Managing Director in the Commercial Banking Group, has been a member and president of the PVJOBS board of directors, and has also served on the board’s audit and finance committees. Today, he is a member of the organization’s advisory board.

“Without organizations like PVJOBS, many people have no viable way to transition from worrying about the necessities of daily life to being contributing stakeholders with pride in their communities,” says Richard.

PVJOBS also offers free classes where participants can expand their opportunities: math preparation for the electricians’ union exam, HAZMAT materials instruction and OSHA certification training. For workers who need help writing a resume or preparing for an interview—or perhaps a little cash upfront to buy work clothes, tools or even gas to get to their first day on the job—PVJOBS and its partner organizations work as a team to make that happen.

“I’m a firm believer in second chances,” Richard says. “If someone is seriously committed to turning their life around, I think it’s very important to give them hope and an opportunity to succeed.”

Ernest Roberts, Playa Vista Job Opportunities and Business Services (left); Richard Flores, Bank of the West Commercial Banking Group (right); Playa Vista participants on a job site (inset)
At Bank of the West we know that small business ownership can be a pathway to self-sufficiency. In addition, small businesses contribute to job creation and provide the goods, services and tax dollars that create healthy, vibrant communities.

Bank of the West is the fastest-growing small business bank in the nation. In 2015, the Bank provided $2.3 billion in loans to more than 18,000 small businesses and small farms. Seventy percent of those loans were $100,000 or less, which represents substantial support to small business owners across a diverse range of industries, including medical services, restaurant and hospitality, professional services, manufacturing and construction.

Beyond providing financial products and services, the Bank’s Relationship Managers develop a deep understanding of their clients’ businesses and work closely with them as advisors. Matt Bierman, Senior Vice President in Small and Medium Enterprise Banking, says “When a need is identified—whether it’s restructuring debt, buying equipment or growing in size—our business bankers find the best solution to save our clients money and to help them maximize their revenues.”

“Small business owners are the most fun to work with,” Matt says. “We love hearing about our clients’ successes and helping them grow through their challenges. You’re dealing with someone who’s a CEO, a CFO, an operations executive and salesperson. Entrepreneurs take on all these roles, and that’s a very special quality.”

Sometimes, serving entrepreneurs involves helping them make the right connections. Bank of the West supports nonprofit organizations, like Rocky Mountain MicroFinance Institute (RMMFI), that provide access to capital and training in essential entrepreneurial skills.

“We believe that business ownership has incredible power, and everyone has the right to explore what that power can do for them,” says Rob Smith, RMMFI’s Executive Director.

The organization supports entrepreneurs from underserved communities through several programs: Exploring Business Ownership Program, Business Development Program and Business Boot Camps. RMMFI programs are hosted in conjunction with other nonprofits, volunteer business owners, bankers and financial professionals who act as mentors and coaches. Since RMMFI’s founding in 2008, it has helped over 2,100 people explore business ownership and assisted with the launch of 126 businesses. To date, nearly 70% of its businesses are thriving, and its program is seeing a 95% repayment rate from its loan program.

“While the vehicle for change is business ownership, we’ve seen incredible side benefits from the structure and support the program provides,” Rob notes. “Even for people who don’t end up launching businesses, they take what they’ve learned back into the employment world and are more successful than before. In fact, our goal is not necessarily self-sufficiency through business ownership. It’s self-sufficiency, period.”

Operation HOPE’s small business volunteer mentoring session; Christopher Rail, Bank of the West Legal and Regulatory Group (inset, left)
Healthy Communities Take a Well-rounded Approach to Affordable Housing

At Bank of the West, being responsive to affordable housing needs is a cornerstone of our economic development strategy. In 2015, the Bank provided $132 million through low-income housing tax credit (LIHTC) projects to support the creation and preservation of nearly 3,000 affordable units and benefit more than 4,400 people. Our commitment goes beyond bricks and mortar. In collaboration with local and national organizations, the Bank aims to elevate the quality of life for people who live and work in the communities we serve.

Encore on First West is a residential complex for low- and moderate-income seniors in downtown Mesa, Arizona, that exemplifies the Bank’s holistic approach to affordable housing. The Bank’s financing enabled the construction of this senior community in a thriving commercial district just two blocks from a planned Phoenix-area light rail station. Residents can expect lower utility bills due to environmentally friendly features, such as carports made from solar panels, energy-efficient appliances and enhanced building insulation. Importantly, Encore provides on-site, coordinated social services, including transportation for shopping and medical appointments, health screenings, nutrition classes, financial literacy instruction, and a full-time, on-site social worker.

These wraparound services are critical when supporting low- to moderate-income populations for whom basic services might be difficult to access. The Bank’s commitment to creating holistically healthy communities—in this example, for senior citizens—is equally shared by its nonprofit associates, such as B’nai B’rith International (BBI).

“To support safe, dignified living for our elderly clients, we include educational programs and advocacy within our residential properties,” says Mark Olshan, PhD, Director of Senior Services for BBI. Working with Bank of the West, BBI recently began conducting workshops on preventing financial elder abuse and using online banking as part of their comprehensive support for elders. “A large segment of our nation’s population is aging, and many of them are particularly vulnerable,” Mark says.

Bank experts, law enforcement and adult protective services agencies work with BBI to provide educational programs on avoiding financial fraud conducted through mail, phone or email. Steve Vallejo, Senior Vice President in Corporate Security at Bank of the West, is a leading fraud expert in the banking industry.

“We have a core responsibility to our customers to ensure safe and secure banking,” Steve says. “But we also have a community responsibility to share what we know, as widely as we can. Scammers don’t care if someone has very limited resources, and the harm they do can be devastating.”

“Bank of the West’s participation benefits nearly 9,000 low-income seniors in our nationwide network of communities,” Mark says. “Steve and his team have led workshops in senior communities in Arizona, California and Oregon. This information is then leveraged throughout all our properties. In addition, Bank of the West experts have taught fraud awareness skills to our service coordinators and managers across the country, and now our colleagues are using their enhanced capabilities to help residents in their respective communities. Working together, we’re providing essential knowledge in our communities and making an important difference in the lives of many people.”
Supporting Impact and Innovation

The Bank of the West Philanthropy Awards celebrate leading nonprofit organizations that improve the quality of life for individuals and families in the regions we serve. In 2015, Bank of the West was proud to recognize Barrio Logan College Institute and Lava Mae with $100,000 grants as the winners of the sixth annual Philanthropy Awards.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AWARD

The Community Impact Award recognizes an inspirational nonprofit organization making significant advancement in transforming life outcomes for people from under-resourced communities on a local, statewide or regional level.

Barrio Logan College Institute

In San Diego’s underserved Barrio Logan community, where higher education is not often a reality for many young people, Barrio Logan College Institute (BLCI) is offering a pathway to college. BLCI provides academic support, assists in social and leadership development, and fosters a “college-going culture” to students as early as third grade. BLCI also requires at least 30 hours per year of parental or guardian participation, ensuring a full-family commitment to educational success. Since 2007 when the program began, 100% of BLCI high school graduates have enrolled in a college or university, and 90% of BLCI alumni are college graduates. The Bank’s Philanthropy Award of $100,000 supported BLCI’s College Success program, which was proud to announce that all 15 high school seniors from its class of 2016 accepted offers to attend colleges.

INNOVATION IN PHILANTHROPY AWARD

The Innovation in Philanthropy Award recognizes a visionary, ambitious and entrepreneurial nonprofit organization that employs new and creative approaches to address challenging social issues that affect under-served communities.

Lava Mae

For homeless people in San Francisco, the fundamental need to keep clean is often a barrier to health, housing and employment. Since 2013, Lava Mae has been operating mobile shower buses to meet this need. The organization’s work rests on the principle that with hygiene comes human dignity, and with dignity comes opportunity. Its buses feature beautiful, human-centered design and its staff treats clients as guests, remembering their names, learning their stories and serving them with respect. Through this innovative model, Lava Mae delivers its services where they are needed most and without the restriction of San Francisco’s high real estate prices. In a six-month period, Lava Mae provided more than 4,200 showers to nearly 1,000 people. With support from companies like Bank of the West, Lava Mae has expanded its services to help its clients gain access to a broad spectrum of social services, including food, clothing, medical assistance and legal advice.
Bank of the West has a long tradition of supporting the arts. When we celebrate our rich cultural heritage and encourage up-and-coming artists, we contribute to vibrant, inclusive communities. In collaboration with regional arts institutions, we strive to encourage access to the arts.

The Bank’s support of San Francisco-based Alonzo King LINES Ballet helps the world-renowned company bring its artistry to national audiences and local schoolchildren. The ballet’s HeART with LINES community program offers free dance education for youth in San Francisco who may not have access to a quality arts program. Designed for underserved students in the third to eighth grades, this effort teaches universal dance concepts and fosters creative self-expression and confidence.

Each year, on Independence Day weekend, the Bank sponsors a free concert by the Des Moines Symphony on the lawn of the Iowa State Capitol. The concert celebrates the birth of our nation and supports the annual Yankee Doodle Drive Against Hunger. In 2015, the seventh year of the drive, Bank of the West volunteers helped collect 23,000 pounds of food to support the Food Bank of Iowa.

Working with Omaha Performing Arts, the Bank sponsors the Musical Explorers program for kindergarten to second-grade students. Developed by New York’s Carnegie Hall, Musical Explorers integrates singing and listening skills into classroom studies, with special training provided for teachers. The program culminates with an interactive concert at the Holland Performing Arts Center, highlighting the musicians and songs featured in the semester-long curriculum.

The Bank proudly funds San Francisco’s Stern Grove Festival, an outdoor cornucopia of performing artistry that has been a city tradition since 1937. This free event includes diverse music and dance performances as well as educational opportunities for children and adults.

To promote the visual arts, Bank of the West sponsored the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which hosted a major exhibition of architect Frank Gehry’s designs; the Cantor Arts Center in Stanford, California, which promotes access to the collection through its free Family Education Sundays program; and the Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, whose Arts Rewards the Student (A.R.T.S.) program brings teaching artists into local classrooms.

Bank of the West also provides opportunities for discourse on diverse cultural topics, through its support for the Look West series of public conversations presented in partnership with the New York Times. Look West brings leading innovators in the arts, media and technology to stages throughout the western U.S. for lively and engaging discussions led by New York Times journalists. In 2015, these uniformly sold-out programs included an exploration of art collecting, a view on the future of television, a look at the experiences of cinema’s leading ladies and a contemplation of the adventure-filled life with “Wild” author Cheryl Strayed.