

MEKONG POLICY PROJECT: Leveraging Modest, Steady Support for International Recognition

Grant Type: Dollar

Grant Amount: \$10,000 initial grant, \$250,000 total

Organization: Chino Cienega Foundation



What was the objective of your grant or initiative?

Since our founding in 2003, Chino Cienega Foundation has concentrated on international grantmaking, an unusual focus for a small foundation and an area often overlooked by the private philanthropic community.

Our grants have ranged from cultural preservation and fostering sustainable river ecosystems to helping vulnerable communities address the effects of climate change.

Two aspects of our approach to grantmaking have served our grantees and us well. First, we try to address issues that have received little funding by providing seed grants that we encourage our grantees to leverage. Second, we try to assist our grantees in other ways: in networking or collaborating with kindred organizations, for example.

Overall, the foundation provides ongoing core support for innovative and successful programs, and urges our grantees to leverage their support for discovering new and pioneering collaboration.

What was your approach?

Beginning in 2006, we made annual grants (initially \$10,000) to the Henry L. Stimson Center for a project to demonstrate the critical environmental and other effects that proposed upstream dams on the Mekong River would have locally and on downstream communities.

A seed grant from the foundation developed into multiyear grants to sustain research for the Mekong project until larger foundation support ensured the program in 2011. The Mekong Policy Project would not have been successful without the early and vital support of the foundation.

What were the outsized results?

The Stimson Center successfully leveraged CCF's modest but steady funding by developing a program that is well respected internationally and has garnered major project support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and other donors. Stimson's Mekong work was prominently mentioned by MacArthur in a special \$1 million Award to Stimson for Creative & Effective Institutions in 2013.

Chino Cienega Foundation continues its involvement with small grant support and has given more than \$250,000 to sustain the Mekong Policy Project.

