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# Bay Area CFO of the Year Awards

Financial stewards who keep a cool head and an eye on the fundamentals during downturn and boom alike

**Community Service – FINALIST**

## Finding 'magic in the mix'



Pressley

### Monica Pressley

**Title:** Chief financial officer.

**Company:**  
The San Francisco Foundation.

**CFO since:** 2003.

**Crowning achievement:** To be CFO during the Foundation's leap to achieve \$1 billion in assets, and with that, to collaborate in granting over \$300 million to our community during my five years here.

### San Francisco Foundation

**CEO:** Sandra Hernandez.

**W**hen Monica Pressley returned to San Francisco in 2003 after a three-year travel adventure to South America and the Himalayas, she decided that it was time to restructure her world.

With a new view on community, she wanted something that would pull together all the different pieces of her life — her desire to participate in her local community, her financial planning and investment skills gleaned from many years with Barclays Global Investors, Dividend Development Corp. and Schwab, and a decade of volunteering through the Harvard Community Partners.

As luck would have it, the CFO position was open at the San Francisco Foundation, one of the Bay Area's largest community foundations. "Community foundations do so many different things that they are all about pulling it together," said Pressley. "The magic is in the mix."

Since the Foundation's mix is so large — it gives away \$70 million to \$100 million a year to a variety of causes, including arts and culture, community development, community health, education, the environment and social justice, it helps to have an experienced CFO like Pressley at the helm.

"A challenge at a nonprofit like the San Francisco Foundation is finding out what the foundation is trying to do," said Pressley. "And the reality is that it's trying to do a million different things to make the world a different place, all of which are good ideas."

To bring focus, Pressley implemented a system that, for the first time, tracks all of money that goes out of the foundation's doors.

"The new system essentially replaces what were paper files," said Pressley. "We can now aggregate what we are giving our money to, spot trends, look at giving by program area, disability or geographic area, and track outcomes. Now we can easily look at the billion dollars we have given away in the last 10 years and see what has happened because of it."

The new computer system also helps with other crucial parts of Pressley's world: planning long term to ensure the foundation operates in perpetuity, conforming to all regulatory standards, preparing the reports the foundation's 47 fund managers present quarterly to donors, and getting her out of the office.

"I truly love going and seeing the work that is being done by our grantees," said Pressley. "They now have a CFO that comes out of the office. A CFO that salsas."