

Growing a Global Movement of Women's and Girls' Funds



WOMEN'S
FUNDING
NETWORK

Strategic Plan: 2009-2019

Women's Funding Network Strategic Plan 2009-2019

Prepared by Stephanie Clohesy, Clohesy Consulting

Contents

Preface	2
History	3
Assumptions and Mission Statement	4
Strategic Vision 1	5
Goals 1 and 2	6
Goals 3 and 4	7
Goal 5	8
Strategic Vision 2	9
Goals 1 and 2	10
Goals 3 and 4	11
Conclusion and Acknowledgments	12

PREFACE

Women's Funding Network is no longer simply a network. It functions now—more than ever—as a movement for social justice and an innovator in philanthropy.

This Strategic Plan, emerging from a year of dialog, research and analysis, is different from any other plan in the Network's history as it recognizes and articulates a unique moment in time for the Network and its more than 130 member funds and 20 associate members:

- This is the moment for the Network to move into more strategically unified work for greater impact on the lives of women and girls, their families and communities, and the larger systems in which we all live.
- It is the moment for the Network and its member funds to work collaboratively on women's rights and human rights, economic justice, freedom from violence, education, health and other major issues in which women-led solutions can be transformative for everyone.
- It is the moment to build on the unprecedented worldwide reach and increasingly diverse culture of the Network.

This self-recognition of the age-old principle that the "whole is worth more than the sum of the parts" was embedded early in these strategic planning efforts and increasingly picked up strength and shared recognition among Network members.

At the same time, members recognize that there is no need to move to a centralized structure in order to be more strategic. Being a network is already a perfect structure that enables many points of leadership, innovation and social entrepreneurship among members and also through the facilitation of the Network's own board and staff.

Several assumptions that guided this planning process include the following. Member funds:

- View the Network as both the collective of all the funds, as well as the international headquarters or "secretariat."
- Want to achieve higher-impact grantmaking and programs along with collaborative work within the Network and with other philanthropic partners.
- Understand that visibility, financial growth and successful social change are intertwined; they want to be more effective in sharing messages and working together to achieve greater visibility.

The plan for 2009-2019 will support the fulfillment of two main strategic visions.

Optimize the Network: The Women's Funding Network, through its member funds, will increase the power and visibility of women's funds, utilizing our strategic advantage of being a network and shared leadership for the purpose of creating a world that is just and equitable for women and girls and the communities in which they live.

Scale Up the Network: The Women's Funding Network, through its member funds, will grow the monetary assets, enhance marketing and communications efforts and increase both social justice grant making and impact of women's funds for the purpose of lifting women up as leaders and solution builders around the world.

HISTORY

As 2008 begins, Women's Funding Network is moving into its third major period of movement-building in women's philanthropy and social change. This strategic plan is a roadmap for the next decade (2009-2019) of innovative grantmaking and programs.

The breakthrough in this plan is that women's funds recognize the power of their Network and are willing to test and use that power together. This sets the 2009-2019 plan apart from all other previous periods of the Network's organizational history.

Looking back to understand this current moment for Women's Funding Network and its members reveals two previous and distinct periods of ambitious development, and lays the foundation for moving into our third phase:

1985 – 1998: FOUNDING AND FORMALIZATION OF AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO PHILANTHROPY

In 1985, women's ideas and projects, women leaders and social entrepreneurs were attracting less than 3% of philanthropy's grants in the U.S. The inspiration to create women's funds was an effort by the Network's founding members to secure the money needed to increase grantmaking for women-led solutions and, in turn, to accelerate the women's movement through women's philanthropy. Through the Network, the founding funds nurtured a culture of peer-mentoring and information sharing that launched new ideas for philanthropy and grantmaking and then supported this culture with professionally staffed leadership. More than 60 were created, mentored and developed during this 13-year period.

1998 – 2008: BUILDING A WOMEN'S FUNDING MOVEMENT

In this decade, the increasing numbers of members, their financial growth and increasingly strategic grantmaking catalyzed a deliberate upgrading of the Network. The Network responded to a mandate from its members funds to build – out of the funds' own patterns of growth and experiences – a suite of tools for more effective social justice grantmaking, organizational development, financial growth and movement-building. In this period the Network and its members: grew from 60 to 125 funds and 20 associate members; more than tripled its working assets to \$450 million; and expanded its grantmaking from \$20 million to more than \$50 million.

2009 – 2018: THE POWER OF OPTIMIZING THE NETWORK AND SCALING UP FOR CHANGE

Women's Funding Network envisions its 3rd era and next decade as one in which its power as a network and a funding movement will further unify the grantmaking strength and leadership of its members, provide a powerful voice at decision-making tables and therefore make an even greater impact on the lives of women and girls – and entire communities – worldwide.

A NEW STRATEGIC PLAN: 2009-2019

This strategic plan is dedicated to a vision and goals for moving from a dynamic network of allies to a powerful network of strategic partners. Through this plan, Women's Funding Network must continue its own strong growth and sustainability in order to serve its members in their growth and sustainability through more effective financial leverage, knowledge and impact.

Assumptions Driving the Design of the Strategic Plan for 2008-2018

In addition to the assumptions that guided the strategic planning process, others emerged that drove the design of the plan and the decisions around priorities:

Women-led solutions can re-shape the way that communities and nations solve critical social issues from poverty to global security. Women's funds are diverse and inclusive through their boards, staffing, donors, grantee partners, community leaders and stakeholders. They are authentic voices, leading by and for women and their families and communities.

A network model with shared power and multiple sources of leadership and influence can sustain and accelerate a women's funding movement. The further development of funds, donors and grantees as leaders will strengthen the impact of the member funds.

In addition to values and mission, women's funds worldwide, share similar issue priorities, strategy and methodology in their grantmaking, which will lead to collaborative work with greater impact. The more women's funds work together, the greater the potential for transformative social change in the lives of women and girls.

Women's funds, as leaders in social justice philanthropy, influence and shape the future of philanthropy by modeling best practices in fundraising, grantmaking, diversity, and effectiveness.

Mission Statement

As a global network and a movement for social justice, we will accelerate women's leadership and invest in solving critical social issues – from poverty to global security – by bringing together the financial power, influence and voices of women's funds.

Strategic Vision #1 -- Optimize the Network

Women's Funding Network, through its member funds, will increase the power and visibility of women's funds, utilizing our strategic advantage of being a network and shared leadership for the purpose of creating a world that is just and equitable for women and girls and the communities in which they live.

Background

Women's Funding Network has succeeded in blending the power of strong, independent women's funds with a dynamic international office that facilitates and provides services for sharing, learning, innovation and effective impact. This interdependence of unique individual foundations (as of 2008 125 institutional members) and their shared creation of a specific philanthropic "brand" have helped the members to grow financially and to accelerate in impact.

The next decade's frontier is to intensify the collective power of the member funds to have impact across nations and regions both in the world of philanthropy and in legislation, policies, communities, as well as the day to day lives of millions of women and girls. The global geography of Women's Funding Network is key to its next decade's identity and success, especially in building effective and collaborative action.

Goals Toward Optimizing the Network

VALUES: Sustain and evolve the core values: diversity, equality, justice and partnership.

LEADERSHIP: Lead local, national and global problem-solving as effective voices "at the table," providing women-led solutions for justice.

KNOWLEDGE AND INFLUENCE: Be a world-class source of knowledge and influence about women's giving, funding and social justice issues.

EFFECTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION: Accelerate collaborative action among members.

GLOBAL IDENTITY: Embrace and embody a worldwide presence.

VALUES: Sustain and evolve the core values: diversity, equality, justice and partnership.

We will continue to thrive on the vitality of being a values-centered organization. We will honor the past and the core values of diversity, equality, justice and partnership values that drive Women’s Funding Network’s unique philanthropic approach while also incorporating new values that define the significance of a gender lens in philanthropy.

Example implementation strategies include:

- Engage new intergenerational views to renew and evolve the core values of equality, diversity, and partnership for social justice philanthropy.
- Advance the democratization of giving and grantmaking, engaging donors and leaders across class together in giving and in social change grant-making.
- Increase the culture of collaboration, including the integration of global voices and the sharing of power, information, practice and experience needed for true collaboration.
- Strengthen the dual identity of funds as social justice and financial institutions, supporting women’s innovations and ideas for a better world.

LEADERSHIP: Lead local, national and global problem-solving as effective voices “at the table,” providing women-led solutions for justice.

We will move to the forefront and lead local, national and global problem-solving ensuring that social justice ideas, both local and global, gain credibility when they include women-led ideas and are crafted with a gender lens.

Example implementation strategies include:

- Utilize social networking technology to support women’s funds virtual collaboration and action.
- Engage more multi-sectoral allies who support a gender lens theory of change and innovation and recognize the intersectionality of gender with race, ethnicity, class, sexual identity, and geography to solve major social and economic challenges.
- Support the transition to a next-generation of leaders.

KNOWLEDGE AND INFLUENCE: Be a world-class source of knowledge and influence about women's giving, funding and social justice issues.

Women's Funding Network will be a world-class source of knowledge and influence on social investment in women and on how women-led change can re-shape local and global approaches to critical issues.

Examples of implementation strategies include:

- Model the use of innovative technologies for the advancement of women's philanthropy and member services, financial management, and fundraising thus blazing a pathway for all to acquire and maximize the use of technology.
- Develop research strength, supporting coherent research priorities and building research skills.
- Upgrade published and online materials for multi-cultural sensitivity and move toward multi-lingual versions of major tools, enabling all members and constituencies to participate in the network's community for information and fundraising.

EFFECTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE ACTION: Accelerate collaborative action among members.

Women's Funding Network will accelerate collaborative action among members to create lasting change for women, their families, communities and nations.

Examples of implementation strategies include:

- Create a robust platform of shared ideas that enable women's funds and their leaders to initiate and lead debate on critical issues such as poverty and economic justice, raising the visibility and acceptance of women-led philanthropy solutions to those issues.
- Facilitate the creation of specific shared positions on critical issues, i.e. "theories of change" and plans for grantmaking, programs and leadership on priority issues, such as dismantling poverty and building economic justice and security.
- Raise and deploy resources for creating new tools and sharing best practices from within the Network to increase individual and unified strategic grantmaking on priority issues.

GLOBAL IDENTITY: Embrace and embody a worldwide presence.

Women's Funding Network will embrace and embody a worldwide presence with growing numbers of members in every global region.

Examples of implementation strategies include:

- Integrate the diverse cultures of giving and problem-solving within the Network.
- Create tools and materials that incorporate more diverse global perspectives, experience, cultures and languages.
- Grow strong and productive interrelationships with partners and allies globally

Strategic Vision #2 -- Scale Up the Network

Women's Funding Network, through its member funds, will grow the monetary assets, enhance marketing and communications efforts and increase both social justice grant making and impact of women's funds for the purpose of lifting women up as leaders and solution builders around the world.

Background

The women's funding movement is grounded in its social justice values and is sustained by a commitment to innovate and grow toward an appropriate scale for its vision and ambitions. Women's funds have grown rapidly and with resilience. This has created the momentum now for women's funds to take a quantum leap in size and influence; this is a moment for bold action to scale up the resources and impact of women's funds.

Strategically there could not be a better time for Women's Funding Network and its members to become major players in influencing public thought on pressing issues confronting women and girls and society as a whole. Numerous factors are aligned to support this increased impact and influence, including: a global context in which women are advancing to senior leadership positions; a shift in some institutions about the importance of equality for women and girls; growing influence of women's funds as innovators; emerging financial strength of women's funds; and a re-emergence of poverty as a root-cause issue in the public's eye.

Goals Toward Scaling Up the Network

MONEY: Grow the working assets of member funds and the financial base of Women's Funding Network.

MEMBERSHIP: Increase the numbers of member funds and allied members.

IMPACT: Accelerate the impact of women's funding to transform lives, communities and systems for women's and girls' equality and participation.

VISIBILITY AND MARKETING: Expand visibility and marketing for greater financial growth and social justice impact.

MONEY: Grow the working assets of member funds and the financial base of Women's Funding Network.

Women's Funding Network will demonstrate the full power and effectiveness of resources that flow through it and its member funds by growing direct financial resources and leveraging opportunities both in the working assets of member funds and the financial base of Women's Funding Network.

Examples of implementation strategies include:

- Increase Network-wide working assets of \$1.5 billion and increase Network-wide annual grantmaking to \$150 million by 2018.
- Embed into the fundraising culture: consumer action, entrepreneurial models, and other new forms of non-traditional capital formation as additional means for raising money for social justice impact and organizational sustainability.
- Expand online fundraising, including ideas for an online donor-match program that lifts up member funds' grantees for donations via the member fund.

MEMBERSHIP: Increase the numbers of member funds and allies

Women's Funding Network will increase the number of both its partner and associate members, as a step toward reaching critical mass in social justice philanthropy and social entrepreneurship.

Example implementation strategies include:

- Involve foundations representing all forms of private and public philanthropy that are advancing a social justice agenda for women and girls.
- Expand a member-network of allies and who will support the accelerating growth and impact of women's funds.
- Update and expand criteria for both partner members and associate members.

IMPACT: Accelerate the impact of women’s funding to transform lives, communities and systems for women’s and girls’ equality and participation.

Women’s Funding Network will accelerate the impact of women’s funding to transform lives, communities and systems for women’s and girls’ equality and participation, using all facets of women’s funding: grantmaking, programs, donor and financial growth.

Examples of implementation strategies include:

- Have benchmarks for progressive change in poverty/economic justice and other priority issues.
- Support members in using advocacy for greater influence and more systemic change.
- Increase the usage of Making the Case™ to maximize learning from Network-wide data.
- Refine and fully market its effectiveness tools: Making The Case™, Smart Growth, Women of Color International Development Incubator.

VISIBILITY AND MARKETING: Expand visibility and marketing for greater financial growth and social justice impact.

Women’s Funding Network will expand its visibility and influence for greater financial growth and social justice impact. Women’s Funding Network and its members will be perceived as leaders and innovators in funding for social justice impact.

Examples of implementation strategies are:

- Build the Network’s brand that incorporates members and cements understanding of women’s funds/women’s philanthropy within media and public forums – locally, nationally, globally;
- Upgrade the Network’s web presence and develop an online platform to enable the movement’s visibility and marketing goals.
- Position women’s fund leaders and grantees as experts and position women as critical solution builders on vital social issues.

CONCLUSION

The future success of this plan will come from the integrated implementation of its two main forces of action: Optimizing the Network, and Scaling Up for size, impact and reach. Each individual force supports the other. Maximum effectiveness will be achieved as both sets of goals are implemented in step with each other.

The illustration for this plan communicates the powerful simplicity of two intersecting forces leading toward growth and social justice. Ultimately these two intersecting forces will flow together, energizing each other in a constant and fluid loop. These ambitious goals have been chosen carefully, with the recognition of the continuing need of so many women and girls on the planet; the achievements, innovations and assets represented by many of those same women and others; and the unprecedented resources in the hands of current generations that can be put to work through women's funds for innovative ideas and solutions to persistent inequalities.

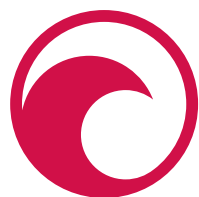
Women's funds – with their combined structure as financial institutions and social justice leaders – are ready to grow their financial resources, sustain themselves as smart institutions, and meet pressing social justice needs. As we make progress over the next 10 years we will implement our ideas as aggressively as possible, taking time along the way to listen, learn and evolve together, as a network of donors, leaders, and change-makers.

THANK YOU!

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WOMEN'S
FUNDING
NETWORK

505 Sansome Street, Second Floor
San Francisco, CA 94111 USA

www.womensfundingnetwork.org
T: (415) 441-0706
info@womensfundingnetwork.org