

# Creating a Women's Fund

A Philanthropic Strategy for Women and Girls  
2nd Edition

Dallas Women's Foundation with  
Chambers Family Fund

2017



# Table of Contents

## *ALL WOMEN'S FUNDS AND STAND-ALONE WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONS*

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PLANNING</b>	<b>6</b>
Why Create a Women's Fund?	7
How are the Needs of Women and Girls Being Met in Your Community?	10
Creating a Women's Fund within a Community Foundation	11
Creating a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation	13
Assessing Community Needs to Set Strategic Direction	15
What is the Timeline?	21

## *WOMEN'S FUNDS WITHIN COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS*

<b>ESTABLISHING</b>	<b>22</b>
Agreements and Governing Documents	23
Designating Staff and Administrative Responsibilities	23
Selecting the Advisory Board Chair and Members	25
Building an Endowment	29
<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>32</b>
Developing Financial Resources	33
Making Grants	36
Spreading the Word	39

## **STAND-ALONE WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONS**

<b>ESTABLISHING</b>	<b>43</b>
Agreements and Governing Documents	44
Designating Staff and Administrative Responsibilities	44
Selecting the Board Chair and Members	46
Building an Endowment and Fundraising for Grantmaking	50
<b>BUILDING</b>	<b>53</b>
Developing Financial Resources	54
Making Grants	56
Spreading the Word	59

## **ALL WOMEN'S FUNDS AND STAND-ALONE WOMEN'S FOUNDATIONS**

<b>PROFILES</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>RESOURCES</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>84</b>

In 2006, Chambers Family Fund published *How to Create A Women's Fund Within a Community Foundation* to inspire and support the creation of women's funds around the nation. The publication was based on Chambers Family Fund's five-year experience championing women's funds in Wyoming, Montana and Oklahoma. It was designed to share what was learned, to provide successful strategies to make such partnerships work and to offer recommendations based on experience. It emphasized the importance of building an endowment to provide a permanent source of grantmaking revenue for responding to the needs of women and girls. It gave an overview of the steps to plan, establish and build a women's fund within a community foundation.

Over the course of 2015, Dallas Women's Foundation was delighted to partner with Chambers Family Fund to update the publication, expanding on the means and methods for creating a successful women's fund or foundation. Our collective experience, along with that of our profile subjects, has shown us that there is more than one way to create a women's fund, and many factors need to be considered when building women's philanthropy in your community.

The success of a women's fund stems from an understanding of the opportunities and barriers for women and girls in the community. A thorough needs assessment should be conducted as early as possible in the creation process. An understanding of the economic and social profiles of women and girls in the area to be served, including their needs, current services available, organizations participating in service delivery and any apparent gaps or new opportunities for assistance, becomes a road map. Once a clear picture of the needs of women and girls is defined, the women's fund can use the information to establish its mission and focus its activity on addressing the needs of women and girls by raising community awareness and making grants.

For funds established in a community foundation, its commitment and support is important to the success of the fund and needs to be firmly established from the beginning. The leadership of the community foundation must value and support the mission and strategies of a women's fund, believe that gender-based grantmaking is an important contribution to the health and future of a strong community and be committed to the financial success of the women's fund. Although some funds may choose to become independent once they are financially able to do so, others, due to circumstances such as geography and the nature of philanthropic support in their community, may find it more beneficial to remain within the community foundation.

An understanding of the differences between the community foundation and the women's fund in grantmaking focus and fundraising activity will be beneficial to both organizations. This is also true of the community foundation's commitment to support the women's fund in establishing its own identity and philanthropic positioning. Clear policies, documentation, roles and responsibilities, operational and marketing support and the provision of financial and human resources must be discussed on an ongoing basis through open communication between the women's fund and the community foundation.

A strong, engaged and well-trained board or advisory board for the women's fund or stand-alone foundation is another critical key to its success. The selection of a diverse board brings a wide variety of resources to the women's fund. The board's most important responsibilities include actively fundraising, grantmaking and promoting the women's fund. In addition, the board's input on the women's fund's strategic plan, governing documents, marketing activity and fundraising plans will be necessary. For a fund within a community foundation, regular communication between the women's fund's advisory board and the community foundation is one effective way of maintaining mutual understanding.

---

## INTRODUCTION

There is no question that an endowment is ideal for a women's fund. It establishes a permanent source of grantmaking dollars that eliminates an annual cycle of fundraising for granting dollars that can drain both staff and volunteers. And, while development goals and fundraising strategies will change over time, a secure endowment allows the broader fundraising efforts of the women's fund to be targeted as needed while the availability of grantmaking dollars from the payout of the endowment continues to be ensured. A women's fund within a community foundation will most likely be required by its agreement with the community foundation to create an endowment. However, stand-alone women's foundations may choose whether or not to create an endowment. For those that choose to forgo an endowment, it will be necessary to raise money each year for grantmaking and may be more difficult to launch an endowment campaign while also meeting grantmaking expectations from the community.

Grantmaking is the most important role of the women's fund. It is the process through which the needs of women and girls documented in the needs assessment and then translated into the women's fund's strategic plan are addressed. The women's fund can build a strategic grantmaking program by creating and clearly communicating specific grantmaking priorities that are aligned with its mission and inviting appropriate organizations serving women and girls to apply for grants. Grantmaking raises the fund's visibility in the community and generates awareness of issues affecting women and girls.

Communications and marketing influence the success of a women's fund from the moment it is created. All communication has an impact on how the women's fund is perceived in the community by current and potential donors, grantees and the women and girls it has been established to serve. Key messages are most effective if they are well-defined and consistent in all tools used. While the women's fund's messaging may change over time, the core identity and purpose of the women's fund

will remain the same. Communication and marketing activities strengthen its position in the community from launch. Marketing is also effective when used to support the women's fund development goals and strategies.

Raising visibility of the women's fund and establishing its identity in the community is vital. A stand-alone women's foundation will need to do this on its own, building a reputation of effective grantmaking, thorough research and social change. For a fund within a community foundation, it will be important to maintain some flexibility in its identity. At times, it will be most effective for the women's fund to cultivate a distinct identity in the community. Other times, a fund within a community foundation will benefit from highlighting its identification with the community foundation. In this case, it is critical that the community foundation supports the women's fund's strategic communication goals with an understanding of its unique position and identity.

We have looked at the three phases of creating a women's fund or foundation: PLANNING, ESTABLISHING and BUILDING. There are lessons to be learned in each phase and sometimes the lessons learned in one phase resurface again later in a slightly different form. However, the end result – the creation of a funding source dedicated to improving the lives of women and girls in the community – is very worthwhile.

Our experiences have led us to a greater understanding of and appreciation for the positive impact women's funds can make in a community. We hope that sharing what we have learned along the way will help others in their efforts to create women's funds.

We hope you decide to embark on this exciting journey. When women and girls prosper, communities thrive!

The process of creating a new women’s fund requires thoughtful planning and strong commitment. In this edition of *Creating a Women’s Fund*, we expanded the guide to incorporate the creation of stand-alone women’s foundations. It is designed to share the experiences and perspectives of nine women’s funds – small and large, new and established – from across the country.

In this guide, we provide two distinct courses of action – to set up a women’s fund within a community foundation or to set up a stand-alone women’s foundation. The guide takes the reader through the succession of phases for each: PLANNING, ESTABLISHING and BUILDING. However, since the decision to create a women’s fund within a community foundation or a stand-alone women’s foundation must be thoroughly researched in the PLANNING phase, we recommend all readers begin with PLANNING.

At the end of the PLANNING section, readers may choose to either read the ESTABLISHING and BUILDING sections for funds within a community foundation (designated in blue for easy reference) OR for stand-alone foundations (designated in magenta). We have done this for brevity and ease; however, we strongly encourage readers to read through the

entire guide to fully determine the advantages and challenges of both formats. Since there are many common steps involved in building a fund within a community foundation and a stand-alone foundation, those who read both sections may encounter some repetition.

We expect the primary audience for this guide to be leaders of community foundations as well as champions and other community leaders who are interested in creating a women’s fund.

We have included PROFILES of nine women’s foundations:

- Women’s Foundation of Southern Arizona
- Women’s Foundation of California
- Chicago Foundation for Women
- Dallas Women’s Foundation
- Women’s Foundation for a Greater Memphis
- Women’s Foundation of Minnesota
- Women’s Foundation of Montana
- Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania
- Washington Area Women’s Foundation

RESOURCES conclude the guide on p. 82.

# Planning

Why Create a Women's Fund or Foundation?

How are the Needs of Women and Girls Being Met in Your Community?

Creating a Women's Fund Within a Community Foundation

Creating a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation

Assessing Community Needs to Set Strategic Direction

What is the Timeline?

A women's fund brings awareness and funding to a segment of our population that is underserved. Wherever you are in the world, women and children make up the majority of those living in poverty. Investment in the economic development and stability of women and girls helps to break the generational cycle of poverty and ensures the safety and vitality of communities. The needs of women and girls are significant and the creation of a vehicle to meet these needs can be an extraordinary asset for the geographic area it serves.

Women's funds empower women, listen to women's voices and help to break the cycle of poverty. Women's funds have been doing this at the local, national and global level for more than 40 years. Yet, according to

Women's Funding Network (WFN) research, less than 9 percent of private philanthropy in the U.S. is devoted to supporting programs specifically targeting women and girls. If 60 percent of those in poverty are women and children, then the 9 percent of private philanthropy funding for women and girls is insufficient in meeting the overall need. The establishment and growth of women's funds are critical.

Despite the statistics, there are many examples of partnerships where women leaders address solutions to community problems with astounding results. Women often see issues as family and community problems to be solved and are willing to put energy and commitment behind the struggle for a better life and the sustainability of the whole.

## Unique Needs Facing Women

- *Six out of 10 adults living in poverty are women, and six out of 10 children living in poverty live in female-headed families.*
- *Nearly 40 percent of female-headed families with children lived in poverty in 2013, compared to 19.7 percent of male-headed families and 7.6 percent of families with children headed by a married couple.*
- *In 2014, among those people 65 and older, more than twice as many women (3 million) lived in poverty as compared to men (1.5 percent). For African-American and Hispanic women over the age of 65, the poverty rates were 20.9 percent and 19.6 percent, twice that of white women (9.9 percent).*
- *Two-thirds of those making minimum wage for their work are women.*
- *Women still only earn 78 cents for every dollar men earn and for women of color the gap is even larger. African-American women earn only 64 cents and Hispanic women only 56 cents for every dollar earned by a white man.*
- *On average, a woman with a bachelor's degree earns \$11,000 less than a man with a bachelor's degree.*
- *One in four women in this country have been raped, sexually assaulted or physically abused.*
- *17 percent of women ages 18 – 64 do not have health care insurance coverage.*
- *In the U.S. in 2014, only 34 percent of women had health insurance coverage through their jobs compared to 43 percent of men.*



Women's philanthropy has not reached its full potential. A women's fund can serve to expand women's philanthropy and empower women as philanthropists. Donors who have never participated significantly in philanthropic efforts may be attracted to a women's fund because it appeals directly to women's motivations and it benefits other women and girls.

### **Why Women are Effective Philanthropists**

- *Women are creative and effective leaders for building community change.*
- *Women are key assets as both donors and grantee partners.*
- *Women's involvement makes sustaining healthy communities a real possibility.*

## **A Brief Overview of Women's Funds**

Women's funds have been in existence for more than 40 years. The first fund to grow out of the modern women's movement, the Ms. Foundation for Women, was established in 1972. The number of women's funds steadily increased in the 1980s to more than 100 funds by the 1990s. The women's funding movement continues to expand with new funds in the United States and around the world. Women's Funding Network was founded in 1985 to advise, strengthen and empower women's funds, and it currently has more than 100 member funds spanning 20 countries around the world. This international membership organization provides programming and expertise to build the capacity of its member funds.

Women's funds have highlighted the needs of women and girls nationally and around the world. Women's funds' constituencies and donors often engage in and articulate a distinct message for social change. When common societal problems such as those found in health care, education and the workforce are considered in terms of how they specifically affect women and girls, the most effective solutions often require nontraditional approaches. Women's funds focus their activities to ensure that women are fully contributing members of society.

In large part, women's funds grew out of the women's movement's emphasis on economic equality. Women's funds work to ensure that women and girls have fair pay, opportunities for economic security and decision-making power over money. They also work to affect social change, build awareness and change policies that will increase women's incomes and their ability to provide adequately for their families.

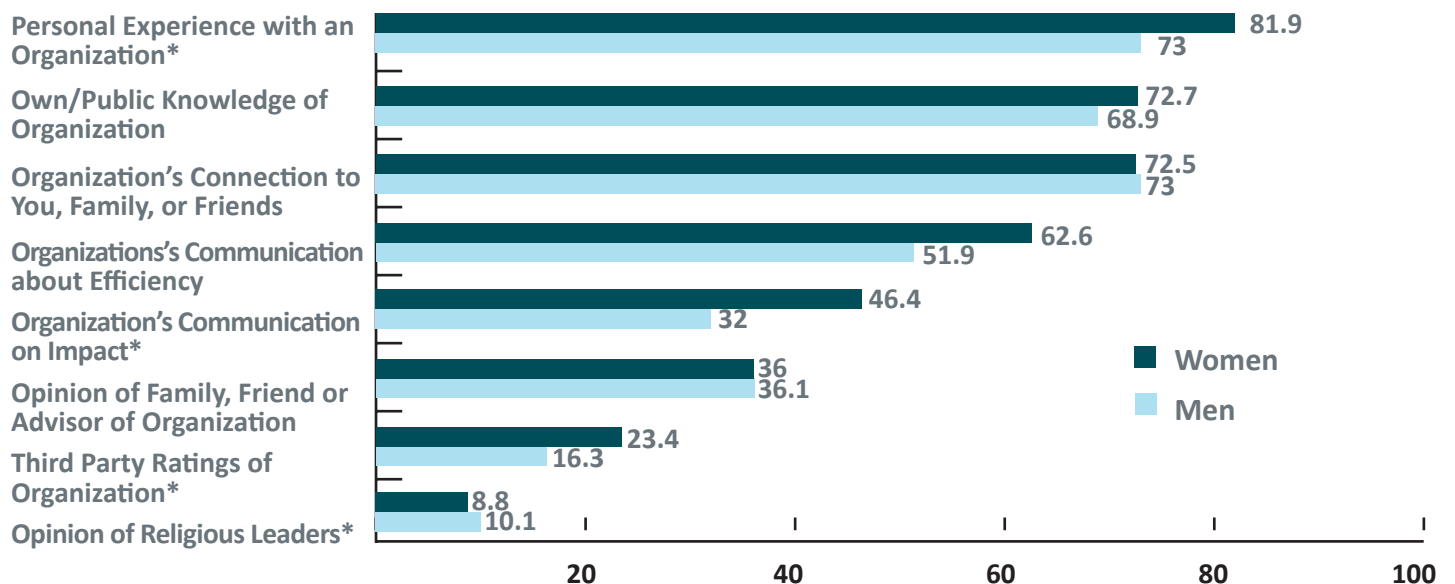
A women's fund uses a gender lens in grantmaking to effectively address the issues and barriers that women and girls face. Women's funds accomplish great things, improving the lives of women and girls and thereby their communities.

Women donors often seek a cause or organization that has a social change aspect to it. They want to develop relationships with other people who share their passion for social change and see personal involvement as a very important aspect of the entire philanthropic experience. An increasing number of women are choosing to support programs that shift behaviors and increase engagement across a community rather than ones that provide direct service to a specific number of people. They spend time investigating the importance of an issue and the ability of an organization to impact it. Once women are committed, they are more likely to support an organization for the long-term, viewing their gifts as investments in the future of individuals, their communities and the world.

## Examples of Women's Funds Activities

- Identify emerging needs and develop cutting-edge strategies to confront social injustices
- Use data-driven research to raise awareness of issues affecting women and girls in communities across the U.S., such as economic security, human trafficking and teen pregnancy
- Influence community partners to apply a gender lens to their work
- Engage in advocacy initiatives for legislative changes to increase the economic security of women and their families or to enhance protections for survivors of domestic violence
- Train local women leaders to become advocates and teach them how to navigate the legislative process in their community
- Provide the backbone of support for critical work, such as women's anti-violence programs including shelters, rape crisis centers and medical and court systems
- Eliminate barriers to higher education for single mothers
- Support solutions for the successful transition from welfare to work
- Increase access to medically accurate information regarding sexual health in areas with abstinence-only sexual education laws
- Encourage family planning services and teen pregnancy prevention programs
- Establish training for women re-entering the workforce
- Help women gain access to health care
- Fund programs for girls to expand their educational, leadership and career horizons
- Cultivate the next generation of women philanthropists through leadership and philanthropy programs for girls

## Factors that Influence Charitable Decisionmaking, by Gender (%)



\* The difference between men and women was found to be statistically significant.

The Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University / The 2011 Study of High Net Worth Women and the Impact of Women's Giving Networks

# How are the Needs of Women and Girls Being Met in Your Community?

---

The first step in planning for a women's fund is to assess the current landscape of philanthropic giving and services supporting women and girls in your community. An organizational needs assessment will provide information necessary to understand the challenges, opportunities and gaps in service for women and girls in the proposed fund's service area.

## An Organizational Needs Assessment

- *Identifies organizations in the area serving women and girls*
- *Evaluates the strengths of programming for women and girls*
- *Determines the gaps in service*
- *Assesses the capacity level of existing organizations to provide services to women and girls or to create social change*

A women's fund needs to evaluate the resources available in the community in order to choose the best approach for conducting the organizational needs assessment. The organizational needs assessment may involve a survey of area nonprofit organizations by online questionnaire, telephone survey and/or focus groups. It is specific to the local community by definition, so data sources will vary by geography. The women's fund may want to engage a local nonprofit association, graduate school of public affairs or consultants specializing in nonprofit research to locate and search databases of community nonprofit and government organizations. The women's fund must work closely with any third party that is retained to develop survey and focus group questions and direct data collection.

An organizational needs assessment may also help determine whether there are any existing entities that could become philanthropic partners of the fund. Potential partners could include a community foundation, another women's fund that serves a nearby area, a family foundation with a strong interest in serving women and girls or other philanthropic institutions.

The findings of the organizational needs assessment will help inform the structure of the women's fund. It is at this point that founders should consider whether the fund would be more effective as a stand-alone foundation, with its own 501 (c)(3) designation from the IRS, or as a fund within a community foundation.

While both formats can be successful strategies for meeting the needs of women and girls and expanding women's philanthropy, several important considerations should be taken into account when deciding on the fund's format.

*“Approximately 100 women's foundations on five continents collectively made over \$60 million dollars in grants in 2016 and have given over 260 million dollars in grants the past 20 years.”*

*Cynthia Nimmo, President and CEO  
Women's Funding Network*

# Creating a Women's Fund Within a Community Foundation

---

When a fund operates within a community foundation, the community foundation is the legal entity and holder of the 501(c)(3) IRS status. A women's fund is governed by the community foundation board, advised by a volunteer advisory board and supported by the women's fund's staff, hired in agreement with the community foundation.

A women's fund is not a donor advised fund because there is/are no donor advisor(s). Instead, the advisory board, which is comprised of community members, recommends grants and makes operational decisions. It is important that the advisory board understands its role within the structure of the community foundation. The advisory board's role is primarily fundraising, grantmaking and promotion of the women's fund. It also has certain operational functions such as budgeting operational dollars, marketing and communications and strategic planning.

## The Value of Creating a Women's Fund Within a Community Foundation

The partnership between a women's fund and a community foundation provides the women's fund with philanthropic expertise, visibility and a solid organizational foundation. The women's fund benefits from the community foundation's proven track record as a philanthropic leader. This credibility allows the women's fund to attract larger donors sooner because donors are more likely to give significant gifts to an established organization with a solid reputation. Donors will have the comfort of knowing their contribution will be well-managed and wisely invested. The women's fund will have the opportunity to invest its endowment in a more diverse portfolio.

In addition, the women's fund benefits from an arrangement in which the community foundation

provides administrative and organizational support. This frees up the women's fund leadership to concentrate on fundraising and grantmaking efforts. These efficiencies also minimize operational costs allowing the women's fund to build an endowment more quickly.

Furthermore, the women's fund will immediately have connections throughout its geographic area through the community foundation's established contacts and existing database information. It will also benefit from any economies of scale in joint marketing activities with the community foundation.

Creating a women's fund within a community foundation can be a very successful strategy for meeting the needs of women and girls and expanding women's philanthropy. The women's fund's mission and strategies complement those of the community foundation and a women's fund shares the community foundation's focus on meeting community needs, expanding philanthropy by attracting new donors and building endowment. Operations are similar, the missions align and each benefits from the synergy of their partnership.

*"We are a supporting organization of our community foundation. We are a tenant in their building, which has been very beneficial for us financially. And our partnership allows the community foundation to point to what their family of funds is doing for women and girls in the community. Our portfolio of research has raised not only our profile but theirs as well. We help strengthen the organization."*

*Laura Penny, former CEO  
Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona*

## Benefits for the Community Foundation

The start-up energy of a women's fund can be stimulating and refreshing for a community foundation. By focusing its research and grantmaking on women and girls, the women's fund:

- *Increases the understanding of community needs and positions the community foundation as a partner to address those needs*
- *Serves new constituents and increases the community foundation's visibility through its grantmaking to organizations serving women and girls*
- *Expands grantmaking to organizations serving women and girls without supplanting existing community foundation grants*
- *Attracts donors, grantees and visibility that will expand the community foundation's reach in the community*
- *Attracts new volunteers, expanding the community foundation's support base*
- *Raises awareness of the community foundation's role in serving the community, generating greater community participation and increasing its reach and the diversity of its donors and volunteers*

## The Challenges of Creating a Women's Fund Within a Community Foundation

The success of a women's fund created within a community foundation largely depends on its relationship with the community foundation. There are many factors that can affect the relationship, such as how the community foundation staff and board view the women's fund, the latitude it is granted in making its own decisions and its alignment on key priorities regarding community need. If the relationship were to become strained, it may be necessary for the fund to seek more independence from the community foundation, either as a supporting organization or as a stand-alone women's foundation.

The fund may be allowed to separate from the community foundation at any time if the initial agreement between the fund and community foundation allows for separation. Depending on the unique needs of the community in which a women's fund operates, it may be beneficial for the fund to remain within a community foundation. For example, women's funds located in rural areas or with service areas that have a broad footprint, such as statewide funds, may find the partnership and resources of a community foundation vital to the success of the fund.

*"I don't know that we could raise enough money to support all the work that needs to happen without the help of the community foundation. We have benefited from being part of the community foundation because it's a well-regarded organization, and many donors in our area have funds and relationships with the community foundation. The community foundation staff have also made introductions to people involved in state and national efforts that have provided us with greater opportunities."*

*Jen Euell, Program Director  
Women's Foundation of Montana*

# Creating a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation

---

When a stand-alone women's foundation is created, it holds its own 501(c)(3) IRS status. It is governed by its own board of directors and is supported by the women's foundation's staff.

All decisions regarding the foundation are made by the foundation's board of directors that is comprised of community members. The board may choose to create a number of committees, including an executive committee comprised of board members and other committees comprised of board members and ad-hoc members, to oversee a number of functions of the foundation. The committees may include governance, investment, development, grantmaking, impact assessment, planning, marketing and strategic communications, audit and finance, and public policy.

## The Value of Creating a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation

The greatest benefit for a stand-alone women's foundation is largely a philosophical one: a stand-alone women's foundation has the ability to fully shape and own its impact in the community. The staff and board of the foundation wholly determine all issues pertaining to the foundation, from funding priorities and board and volunteer recruitment to involvement in advocacy initiatives and research. This gives the foundation freedom to define its own identity, separate from another organization, and address issues affecting women and girls that may be deemed as too progressive or controversial for a more conservative community foundation.

## The Challenges of Creating a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation

A stand-alone women's foundation will need a substantial infusion of capital to support its operational, fundraising, grantmaking and administrative efforts. Unlike a fund within a community foundation, stand-alone women's foundations will need to consider operational costs as well as overhead for infrastructure, including office space and supplies.

It is especially important to look for potential partners that can provide financial and, in some cases, administrative support. For example, a family foundation with a strong interest in supporting women and girls could become an apt financial supporter. Likewise, if another women's foundation exists in a nearby metropolitan area or within the state, it may be more efficient to partner with that foundation to prevent the replication of infrastructure and/or back office needs.

As with the inception of any new nonprofit organization, the early success of a stand-alone women's foundation is largely dependent on the commitment and leadership of its founders, board members and executive director. Depending on the foundation's initial financial resources, early volunteers and board members may need to perform many back office tasks, such as bookkeeping and strategic communications. Once sufficient funds have been raised, these tasks can be outsourced, and then eventually brought in-house.



## Champions

Both a stand-alone women's foundation and a fund within a community foundation can benefit from a champion. In this context, we refer to individuals or organizations that make a long-term commitment to start the women's fund as champions. They may support the women's fund with a substantial contribution and/or with time and expertise. While it is possible to create a women's foundation without a champion, their vision and experience, as well as financial and fund development resources, often carry significant benefits for the women's fund. If the women's fund is started and supported by an individual champion, it may also be valuable to have that person on the board or advisory board.

Champions can participate in a variety of ways to support the new women's fund. A champion may provide challenge grants to jump-start fundraising and attract donors. They may contribute funds for community grants or operating dollars to allow the women's fund to concentrate fundraising efforts on building an endowment. They may also fundraise for the women's fund to stimulate others in the community to contribute. A champion may promote the women's fund by giving media interviews, public speaking, event hosting and by participating in promotional activities.

To find potential champions for the women's fund, founders might look to board members, private foundations that fund women's and girls' issues, women in the community and local activists for women's and girls' causes.

*“Being an independent entity has allowed us to stand apart, build a brand for ourselves and have the freedom to take on critical and progressive issues that I’m not sure we would have been able to address at the same level had we not been independent. This truly is an effort by women in the community.”*

*K. Sujata, President/CEO  
Chicago Foundation for Women*

# Assessing Community Needs to Set Strategic Direction

Once the organizational needs assessment has been completed and the organizational structure of the fund has been decided – i.e., stand-alone, in partnership with another entity, within a community foundation – the next step in planning is to conduct a community needs assessment.

The community needs assessment helps establish a research-based agenda and sets a clear direction for the women’s fund’s eventual grantmaking. Women’s funds use needs assessments to determine where to make grants, avoid redundancy in grantmaking, establish a baseline of data against which future accomplishments can be compared, identify potential grantee partners and maximize the impact of their grants.

## A Community Needs Assessment:

- *Gathers and analyzes statistical and census data about women and girls in the community – this research should be focused on issues such as poverty, numbers of female-headed households, population and demographic information, wage comparability among women and men, childcare availability and costs, barriers to economic security and comparisons to other geographic regions*
- *Identifies the barriers women and girls face*
- *Determines what needs to change*

The women’s fund must work closely with whomever is chosen to conduct the needs assessment. Many communities have universities, research organizations and independent consultants that may have this expertise.

A variety of resources for research component data exist, including the Institute for Women’s Policy Research (IWPR) and The Community Toolbox (<http://ctb.ku.edu/en>), which provide information on what a needs assessment is and how to complete one. Resources will vary by community, but local universities are often helpful in providing existing research as well as serving as research partners for the fund’s original research.

## Gathering Consensus

Before conducting the community needs assessment, the founders need to come to a consensus to support all issues affecting women and girls. This should be the ethos of the organization, even though practically, the fund will likely need to start small, focusing on one or two of the most pressing issues identified by the community needs assessment. A women’s fund cannot be successful if it is not open to supporting solutions to the issues that present the greatest community need, not just certain ones favored by founders. By making a commitment to support all issues affecting women and girls over time, the fund can avoid splintering of its founders into different issue areas.



## Using the Results of the Needs Assessment

The results of a needs assessment are critical elements in determining a women's fund's future direction. Information and analysis from the community needs assessment provide the women's fund with basis for its grantmaking priorities, its fundraising strategies and its communications planning.

With information about the status of women and girls and the challenges they face in the community, a women's fund can target its grantmaking to address the identified needs. It can use the information to articulate to potential donors the local importance of the women's fund. The data from the research will also help the women's fund develop compelling messaging for media and public awareness campaigns.

The results of the community needs assessment should include a list of organizations serving women and girls, many of which may provide services aligned with the women's fund's grantmaking priorities. These organizations can be included in a list of organizations to receive a request for proposal (RFP) from the women's fund. They are also potential partner organizations for strategic proactive funding addressing specific issues.

## Putting Needs Into a Larger Context

Across the U.S. and the world, women are the face of poverty. For this reason, many women's funds include economic security of women and social change among their top priorities. Considering the results of a community needs assessment within these areas allows a women's fund to build a bigger and more integrated picture of the needs of women and girls and a comprehensive set of strategies for effectively addressing these needs.

### Economic Security

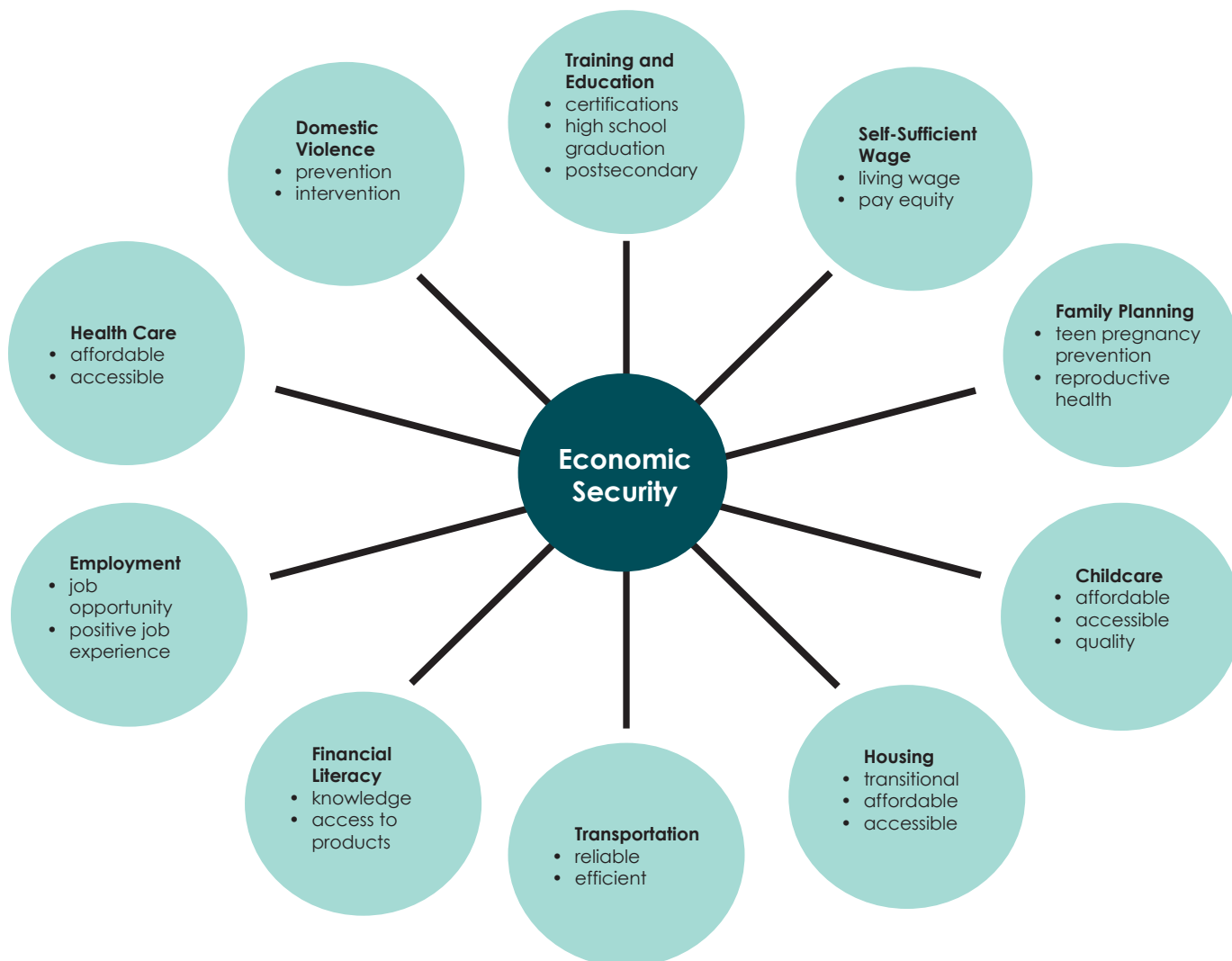
One of the primary goals of many women's funds is for all women to be economically secure and/or economically self-sufficient. Women lacking economic security struggle to adequately provide for themselves and their families.

Economic security for women is impacted by many factors. It is helpful to visualize the complexity of the issue in order to respect the depth of investment in multiple factors required to affect social change.

The chart on the next page reflects this complexity.

## Factors Impacting Economic Security

A chart adapted from The Women's Foundation of Colorado illustrating some of the myriad of factors affecting economic security follows. With limited grantmaking dollars, a women's fund may choose to focus on only one or two of the factors affecting security.



## Systems Change

Women's funds have learned that the current systems of institutions, programs and policies often limit the opportunities and resources available for women and girls. The purpose of systems change funding is to address root problems and to make fundamental, lasting and positive differences.

### The Requirements of Planned Change

- *Assessing the situation requiring change*
- *Articulating the desired change*
- *Developing a plan for change*
- *Identifying change agents and implementing the plan*
- *Sustained support, attention, patience and perseverance*
- *Developmental growth in knowledge, skills and feelings*
- *Sufficient resources*
- *Time and attention to building networks that model and mentor*
- *Broad support of the local community*
- *Incremental infusion into existing programs and policies through collaboration and cooperation among participants*
- *Small, incremental behavioral change*
- *Changing a single element triggers other changes throughout the system*

### The Change Process

- *Focuses on problems with systems not individuals*
- *Is long range and not a snapshot event*
- *Alters beliefs, attitudes and behaviors*
- *Impacts all within the system*
- *Requires a critical mass of individuals to advocate and implement*
- *Is an ongoing, constantly improving process*
- *Creates an environment receptive to continual improvement*
- *Requires the participation of those impacted by the change*
- *Involves diverse constituencies working together*
- *Changes the rules under which everyone operates*

## Women's Funding Network

Women's Funding Network (WFN) has extensive expertise, experience and resources to assist an organization or individual interested in creating a women's fund. Membership benefits include access to innovative capacity building programs, organizational development tools, consulting sessions, an online knowledge base, an online evaluation tool, a wide variety of publications and networking opportunities at trainings. Its goals include increasing members' collective assets, leveraging their assets and heightening their visibility.

Stand-alone women's foundations as well as women's funds are members of WFN, joining under the women's fund's name rather than the community foundation's name. WFN can connect a women's fund to other women's funds and make referrals to consultants with experience in creating and working with women's funds.

*"The Women's Funding Network is an invaluable resource for new women's funds or people contemplating organizing a fund. Its resident resources – intellectual property, physical resources, guides and information – provide a wealth of information to members. The Network is very generous in pairing emerging funds with more established member funds and providing matches to help you. It's a great asset for all of us."*

*Roslyn Dawson Thompson  
President and CEO, Dallas Women's Foundation  
Board Chair, Women's Funding Network,  
2015 – 2017*

## A Model of Social Change

In today's competitive philanthropic environment, organizations must affect social change and clearly demonstrate and articulate impact. Yet, social change can be difficult to measure since it occurs slowly and is often non-linear. To help measure impact, Women's Funding Network offers its members an online evaluation tool, called Making the Case, which tracks social change based on shifts in five key areas: definition, behavior, engagement, policy and maintaining gains.

Making the Case helps women's funds track progress toward a goal in an area of funding. This allows women's funds to focus on investments in programs that address root problems, rather than provide short-term solutions to entrenched problems. By addressing target issues from multiple angles, women's funds can create fundamental, lasting and positive change.

### The Shifts of Social Change

<b><i>There is a Shift in:</i></b>	<b><i>When Your Activities Succeed in:</i></b>
Definition	Reframing an issue or situation
Behavior	Changing individual, institutional or community conduct
Engagement	Involving more people, from awareness through action
Policy	Changing public or institutional policies or practices
Maintaining Gains	Ensuring that past "wins" for women and girls are protected

### Examples of Social Change Shifts

<b><i>Shift:</i></b>	<b><i>Micro:</i></b>	<b><i>Macro:</i></b>
Definition	Educate police officers about the dynamics of violence in the home	Educate a society about the dynamics of violence in the home
Behavior	Provide GED classes with childcare to local teen mothers	Provide GED classes with childcare for all parents at public colleges
Engagement	Conduct a meeting to alert neighbors about new criminal activity	Conduct a national media campaign for a new hotline to report human trafficking
Policy	Advocate for flexible work schedules with a local employer	Advocate to secure federal tax benefits for employers offering flexible work schedules
Maintaining Gains	Protect a women's soccer team from budget cuts at a local university	Protect women's sports programs from cuts in the federal budget

The timeline for building a women’s fund will depend on the women’s fund’s goals, but the following can be used as a general activity guideline.

<b>1 – 6 months</b>	<b>6 – 12 months</b>	<b>12 months +</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct an organizational needs assessment to evaluate the philanthropic landscape</li> <li>• If partnering with a community foundation, gauge the interest of the community foundation board in creating a women’s fund</li> <li>• Identify potential champion(s)</li> <li>• Register the name of the women’s fund or foundation and, if creating a stand-alone foundation, apply for 501 (c)(3) status</li> <li>• Conduct a community needs assessment to determine the needs of women and girls</li> <li>• Establish an endowment fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enact agreements and create governing documents</li> <li>• Develop a budget</li> <li>• Designate staff</li> <li>• Select a governing or advisory board chair</li> <li>• Select and convene the governing or advisory board</li> <li>• Publicly announce the creation of the women’s fund or foundation</li> <li>• Begin endowment fundraising</li> <li>• Create a strategic plan</li> <li>• Set fundraising priorities</li> <li>• Define a grantmaking process and make initial grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refine grantmaking process and procedures as grants continue to be made</li> <li>• Create and implement a communication plan to keep the fund or foundation visible to the public and to potential donors</li> <li>• Celebrate and publicize milestones</li> <li>• Review the strategic plan annually and revise as needed</li> <li>• Maintain an active, well-trained governing or advisory board</li> <li>• If within a community foundation, nurture relationships with the community foundation and the advisory board</li> <li>• Cultivate existing donors</li> <li>• Review fundraising priorities and continue endowment fund development</li> </ul>

# Establishing a Fund within a Community Foundation

Agreements and Governing Documents

Designating Staff and Administrative  
Responsibilities

Selecting the Advisory Board Chair and Members

Building an Endowment

Written agreements provide the framework for establishing a women's fund within a community foundation and clarify roles, expectations and responsibilities. Governing documents set forth policies for the advisory board and staff, operational rules and procedures plus the mission and purpose of the women's fund.

Since the community foundation is the legal entity responsible for the women's fund, it will create and

sign agreements establishing the women's fund and governing its operations. Champion(s) may also sign agreements with the community foundation regarding their financial contributions to the women's fund.

To give the fund the greatest degree of flexibility, a clause can be included in the establishing agreement with the community foundation to allow the fund to become independent at any time.

## Designating Staff and Administrative Responsibilities

---

Staffing is either funded by the community foundation or by dollars raised by the women's fund. The women's fund staff may be shared with the community foundation, but it is preferable to have at least one dedicated women's fund staff person. Since the women's fund does not have its own 501(c)(3) status, the women's fund staff is employed by the community foundation.

Staff support for the women's fund can be provided by one person or divided among several staff people, but it is critical to have one person as the designated liaison between the community foundation and the women's fund, as well as the primary contact for the advisory board. This lead staff person may be called the executive director or another appropriate title, but giving the lead staff person a women's fund title will be helpful in establishing the women's fund's identity. Lead staff must be committed to the women's fund mission. They need to have good relationship skills and varied experience since the responsibilities will be broad, including fundraising, donor development, responsive and proactive grantmaking, and managing volunteers. In addition to leadership responsibilities, the staff will also have administrative responsibilities,

such as communication with the advisory board and meeting coordination.

It is also important for the community foundation to consider the needs of the women's fund advisory board in staffing plans. It is helpful for the women's fund to use the skills of existing community foundation staff in areas such as database management, accounting and investments, because it is best if these functions are not duplicated.

The level of staffing in the women's fund will depend on available financial and human resources and will likely change over time. Staffing models vary as community foundations identify the most appropriate and effective staffing for the organization.

Investing time and energy to maintain open and regular communication among staff members in the women's fund and the community foundation and with advisory board members and other volunteers is important. Sending informal emails and holding brief meetings where people are encouraged to share information about what they are doing, contribute



ideas and feedback and bring up issues of interest to all creates a positive working environment, contributes to consistent organizational messaging and minimizes duplication of effort.

## Administrative Fee

The community foundation will typically charge an administrative fee for managing the women's fund's endowed fund. This fee is generally less than two percent of the endowment fund value. Community foundation services covered by the administrative fee may include:

- *Investment fees*
- *Accounting*
- *Financial reporting*
- *Grant database and tracking*
- *Grantmaking process*
- *Grant reporting*
- *Donor/pledge database and tracking*
- *Donor/pledge reporting*
- *Formal donation receipt and thank you letters*

## Database

One of the advantages of the women's fund's affiliation with a community foundation is that a community foundation has the capability to track individual donors and pledges to the women's fund separately in its database from those of the community foundation. The grant management database can administer grants made. Therefore, there is typically no need for the women's fund to invest in new stand-alone fundraising tracking or grant management systems.

## Reports

The women's fund's advisory board needs to receive timely financial reports generated by the community foundation. Quarterly reports are ideal and assist the advisory board in planning and managing the women's fund's activities. The following reports are suggested:

- *Operating – budget to actual figures, total expenses and fund balance information*
- *Gift – donor names (if not confidential), contribution date and amounts, pledge and challenge information*
- *Endowment – total gifts received, endowment earnings, fees and overall endowment growth*
- *Grants – grantee names, grant dates and amounts, grant totals by cycle*

## Operating Expenses

Typical operating expenses for the women's fund within a community foundation may include:

- *Staff salaries and benefits*
- *Consultant/facilitator fees*
- *Travel and conference fees*
- *Marketing material and website*
- *Supplies, reference materials, dues and subscriptions*
- *Telephone, postage and copying*
- *Donor development such as meals and informational presentations*
- *Board meetings and site visits*
- *Special events such as luncheons, celebrations and grantee convenings*

# Selecting the Advisory Board Chair and Members

---

It is essential to select the first advisory board chair in the early stages of developing the fund, and this may be one of the most important initial decisions. The chair's leadership and ability to communicate with others engages both volunteers and donors.

The advisory board chair will work closely with the community foundation staff to establish the fund and make organizational decisions before the advisory board is formed. Regular communication between the chair of the women's fund advisory board and the chair of the community foundation board is recommended. It is very helpful for a member of the advisory board to sit on the community foundation governing board.

It is important to have a talented and diverse advisory board to lead the women's fund. The advisory board for the women's fund is typically formed once the governing documents have been enacted, after staff have been hired or designated, the needs assessments have been conducted and initial marketing materials have been created. If the board or advisory board is formed before these operational pieces are in place, its efforts may be diverted from fundraising and grantmaking responsibilities.

The advisory board chair and community foundation staff work together to select and approach potential advisory board members for the women's fund. The women's fund advisory board chair, with the help of the community foundation staff and the champion(s), should create a prioritized list of potential board members based on candidates' passion for the mission, combination of skills and

diversity. A grid may be a helpful tool in charting the skills, demographics and diversity of potential board members. The advisory board chair then contacts these individuals, meets with them to discuss the roles and responsibilities and asks them to help steward the organization.

The advisory board provides an opportunity to develop the leadership and philanthropy of women who serve on the board. The experience of many women's funds has been that the advisory board served as a springboard for a significant number of women who are now leaders in the broader philanthropic community.

A diverse advisory board assists the women's fund in developing its pool of volunteers and in making connections with community decision makers. Diversity in the areas of ethnicity, age, life experience, career focus, sexual orientation, geography, ability/disability and skills is recommended.

*“The first board chair should have community connections, desire and willingness to fundraise and serve as a representative of the key connectors of the particular market or economy the women's fund serves.”*

*Roslyn Dawson Thompson, President and CEO  
Dallas Women's Foundation*

---

 ESTABLISHING A FUND WITHIN A COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

Backgrounds to consider for advisory board members include: academician, business owner, fundraiser/fundraising consultant, community volunteer, grantmaker, finance professional, government agency administrator, nonprofit leader, marketing/PR professional, attorney and champion/major donor.

The advisory board and staff share responsibility for the women's funds' activities and the continual clarification of roles and responsibilities is essential.

As the women's fund grows, activities increase and volunteer roles may become more segmented. For example, functional committees may be created in which individual advisory board members take leadership roles in areas of their own expertise, such as communications and grantmaking. Segmenting these responsibilities helps guide and strengthen staff support and allows staff to work more effectively with advisory board members.

### Advisory Board Roles and Responsibilities

The roles of the advisory board as a collective include:

- *Making annual contributions*
- *Fundraising and developing lists of prospective donors*
- *Planning for the future*
- *Promoting the women's fund*
- *Reviewing the budget and rules and procedures*

When the women's fund is in a position to engage in grantmaking, the advisory board will have the following additional responsibilities:

- *Establishing grantmaking priorities and strategies*
- *Reviewing grant applications and making site visits with staff*
- *Making grant recommendations*
- *Monitoring grants and evaluating past grants*

The roles of individual members of the advisory board include:

- *Adhering to ethical standards, including disclosing any conflicts of interest*
- *Making what is, for that individual, a significant financial contribution to the women's fund to indicate a personal commitment to its mission*
- *Participating in fundraising activities*
- *Participating in meetings and conference calls*
- *Staying informed on issues pertinent to the women's fund and women and girls in the community*
- *Promoting the women's fund*

## Operational Guidelines

### Number of Advisory Board Members

The size of the advisory board should be proportionate to the size and activities of the fund. A range of five to 12 members is small enough to be manageable and supported by staff and large enough to be diverse.

### Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of meetings will depend on geography. If the women's fund is statewide, travel may be very time consuming and three meetings per year with monthly conference calls may be more manageable. If the women's fund is community-based, the advisory board may be able to meet more often.

### Terms

It is important to have a stable advisory board, especially in the early years, to create a culture, a track record and an institutional memory. It is also important to bring in new members to recharge the board with energy and ideas. Terms are best set at three years, renewable for one additional three-year term. The initial advisory board membership can be staggered by drawing lots for terms with one-third starting with one-year terms, one-third starting with two-year terms and the remaining one-third starting with three-year terms. The women's fund may choose to create an honorary advisors council to ensure former advisory board members stay engaged and informed.

### Conflict of Interest Policy

It is wise to have all advisory board members sign a conflict of interest policy annually and disclose any potential conflicts prior to grantmaking decisions.

### Structure

Initially, an advisory board can designate a point person for each of its major focus areas – fundraising, communications, grantmaking and governance – rather than create a committee structure. As activities increase, the size of the advisory board may also increase and a committee structure may become necessary. The complexity of the advisory board's structure should be relative to the size of the fund and its level of activities.

*“You have to develop a board based on your overall purpose. It is a good idea to have someone with content knowledge of the kind of work you're trying to do. Look for individuals with policy experience, knowledge of women's issues, and financial management and legal expertise. Diversity should also be a top priority – make sure that your board reflects the communities you represent.”*

*Surina Khan, CEO  
Women's Foundation of California*

## Strategic Planning

Actively engaging the advisory board and staff in strategic planning as early as possible within the first year of operation will create a solid foundation for the women's fund.

The process of creating a strategic plan requires the group to set the funding priorities of the women's fund and to agree on goals and strategies to successfully fulfill its mission.

A strategic plan document serves as a roadmap for the women's fund's direction, operations and activity plans.

Clearly defined purpose or mission, goals and strategies help to guide grantmaking, fundraising and other activities and can be used in the future to refocus the women's fund's priorities. It is also a framework from which opportunities for growth can be identified and strategies to manage them outlined. Strategic plan documents often include both short-term and long-term goals.

Most importantly, the strategic plan should be developed in coordination with the community foundation to ensure that it is complementary to the community foundation's overall strategic plan and direction. It is likely that the strategic plan will result in specific goals addressing the areas of fundraising, communications, grantmaking and possibly advocacy or research. There are many ways to structure an effective strategic plan and many resources available to guide a women's fund through this process.

### *Elements of a Basic Strategic Plan*

- **Mission Statement**  
What the women's fund has been formed to do and/or achieve and for whom
- **Goals**  
The list of priority areas to which all resources of the women's fund will be consistently targeted and applied
- **Strategies**  
Guidance for how and when goals will be achieved, including specific measures of success
- **Tactics**  
Specific activities through which strategies are implemented and the assignment of operational responsibility to specific volunteers and staff; a dashboard can be created to measure progress and promote accountability among advisory board members and staff

## Training

Once the initial advisory board has been established, and prior to any substantive work, a training session for everyone will be helpful. The advisory board will be most successful if it begins its work fully informed about the fund and its mission, the responsibilities of the advisory board members and staff, the women's fund's working relationship with the community foundation, results of the needs assessments and key topics relating to women and girls in the community. An orientation session is also important when new members join the advisory board.

The first meeting of the advisory board is an important opportunity for members to establish relationships with each other, meet staff, learn about their roles as advisory board members and receive information about issues.

## Advisory Board Orientation Meeting Topics

- *Introductions*
- *Women as philanthropists and women's funds*
- *Results of the needs assessment*
- *Mission and priorities for funding*
- *Relationship to the community foundation*
- *Role of the advisory board or individual members*
- *Fundraising*
- *Communication*
- *Grantmaking*
- *Future meeting schedule*
- *Social time for building relationships*

## Building an Endowment

Building an endowment is very effective as the initial priority fundraising goal for a women's fund. Focusing fundraising activities on building an endowment is important because an endowment is permanent and generates funds annually that the women's fund can use for grantmaking.

Without an endowment, a women's fund, in addition to raising funds to support its operations, must raise the dollars it needs each year to award grants to community organizations. This creates an annual cycle of fundraising for grantmaking that must be repeated every year. Multiple demands for fund development can drain staff and volunteers.

The pressure will often be great to forego endowment building in favor of maximizing current grantmaking. Resist. As the chart on page 29 demonstrates, endowment building is not in competition with grantmaking in the long-term. To the contrary, it actually increases resources for grantmaking.

With an endowment, a women's fund has a permanent and secure source of funding for grantmaking to organizations serving women and girls. The endowment allows the women's fund to plan ahead based on the projection of an annual payout. It also provides more flexibility in grantmaking commitments. With an assured level of payout from an endowment, a women's fund can consider making multi-year grants. An endowment creates stability, makes planning for perpetuity possible and can make the difference in sustained financial viability.

Contributing to an endowment fund often appeals to donors who recognize its lasting value. Donors look for endowment funds as an option for their philanthropic dollars and as an opportunity to make planned giving commitments. Endowment donors often become consistent annual donors as well.

Leveraging the generosity of one donor champion or a group of donors through a challenge or match is a good way to start or grow an endowment fund.

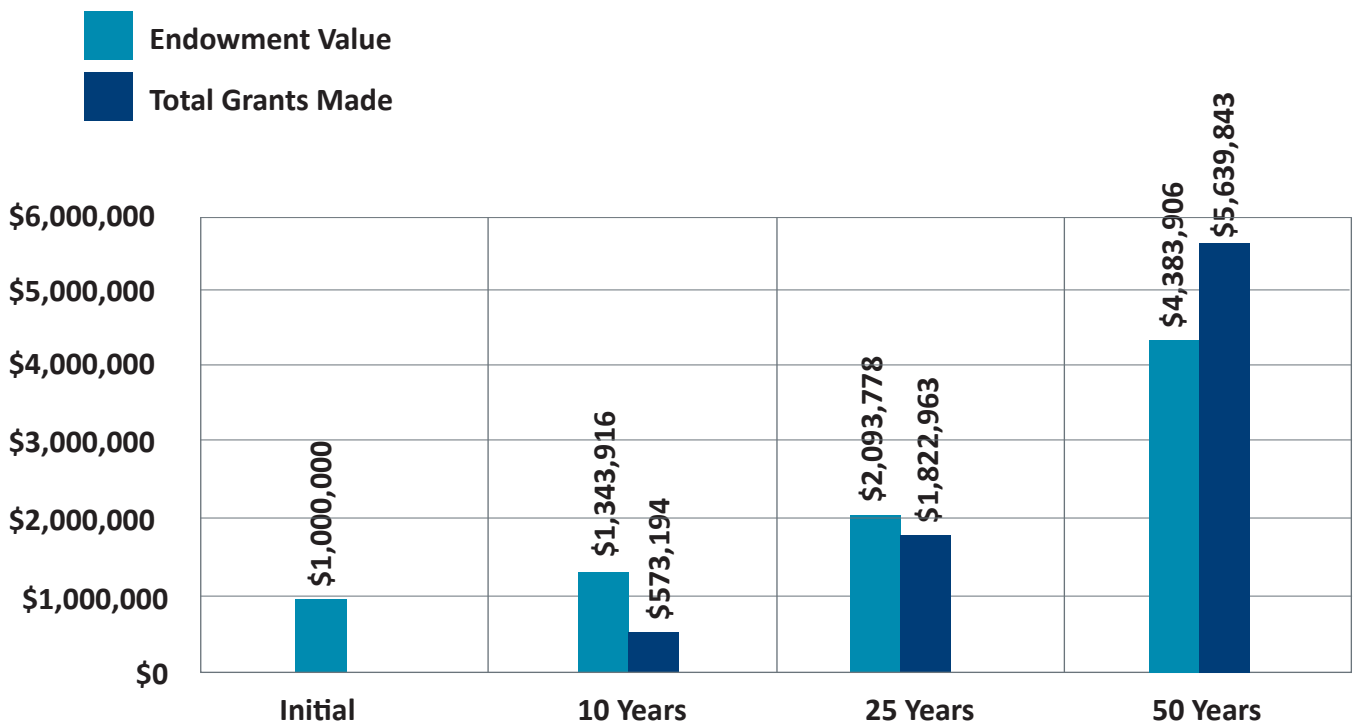
Donors are often attracted to the fact that their contributions may be doubled or tripled. Challenge grants are typically time-limited, thereby creating a sense of urgency that stimulates even greater activity in building the fund. The community foundation’s expertise and experience in building endowments will be very valuable to a new women’s fund.

In the long-term, an endowment does not compete with grantmaking; instead, it increases resources for it. The chart below demonstrates the growth of an endowment and the women’s fund’s increase in grantmaking ability.

**The following chart illustrates the value of building an endowment over a period of 50 years, assuming 8% annual growth and 5% annual payout.**

A \$1 million endowment will generate approximately \$80,000 per year in earnings. At a payout rate of 5%, \$50,000 can be awarded in grants to the community the first year. The amount for grants will increase as the size of the endowment increases. Without additional contributions to the endowment, that same \$1 million will be worth \$1.3 million in ten years and \$2.1 million in 25 years with the 5% payout being spent for grantmaking each year. If the \$1 million endowment had not been established, the women’s fund would need to raise nearly \$570,000 over 10 years to achieve the same level of grantmaking and the \$1.3 million endowment fund would not exist.

**POTENTIAL GROWTH OF \$1,000,000 INITIAL INVESTMENT OVER 50 YEARS**



*“An endowment is essential for the long-term viability of a women’s fund. It provides a reliable source of funding for grantmaking and ensures stability that attracts donor advised funds and planned gifts.”*

*Merle Chambers, President  
Chambers Family Fund*



# Building a Fund within a Community Foundation

Developing Financial Resources

Making Grants

Spreading the Word



A women's fund, especially as a new organization, will need to devote substantial time and energy to fundraising in order to acquire the financial resources needed to accomplish its mission. Developing a fundraising plan that outlines tactics, activities and roles and responsibilities in relation to specific fund development goals identified in the strategic plan can be useful.

## Funding Needs

The community foundation typically provides some operational support for the women's fund, both as it is getting started and on an ongoing basis. This financial commitment needs to be decided from the beginning so that the women's fund advisory board has a clear understanding of the additional operating funds it must raise to support the women's fund's mission and the goals of the strategic plan. The women's fund may want to request operating support from other foundations. Some foundations that do not contribute to endowment funds may provide funds for operations.

Grantmaking dollars will eventually come from the payout from the endowment fund. However, if the women's fund wants to make grants to organizations that serve women and girls before its endowment has reached a sufficient level for the payout to cover those awards, it may consider targeted fundraising to an individual donor or a private foundation for community grant funds. This strategy ensures that the broader fundraising efforts of the women's fund are not diverted from endowment building and operations.

When creating a fundraising plan, funds should not be tempted to use a membership model in which donors pay annual dues to be members of the fund. While the

model can be intriguing for its ability to attract a large number of supporters, it stymies fundraising growth because it asks all potential donors to contribute the same amount when some donors may be capable of giving much more. Funds should develop fundraising plans that strategically cultivate and steward donors based on their capacity to give and their interest in supporting the efforts of the fund.

## Fund Development

Successful fundraising requires the talent and commitment of both staff and advisory board volunteers. The women's fund staff provides support for advisory board fundraising, coordinates fundraising activities and serves as a contact for donors. The advisory board chair takes responsibility for directing fundraising activity and ensuring that advisory board members meet their goals. Advisory board members bring additional human resources to the effort and link the organization to potential donors.

Funds within a community foundation will rely on their advisory board members and chair to direct fundraising activities. However, the women's fund should plan and coordinate its fundraising efforts with the community foundation. Establishing a coordinated process between the community foundation and the women's fund for contacting prospective donors and tracking donors and pledges avoids duplication of effort and maximizes the effectiveness of donor communications for both organizations. Often the women's fund will be raising dollars using fund development strategies that are not traditional for the community foundation.

## Fund Development Strategies

- **Leveraging Networks**

Advisory board members and staff can draw on their own community knowledge and contacts to build an initial mailing list for invitations, newsletters and solicitations.

- **One-on-One Personal Asks**

Staff and advisory board members can work with the community foundation to develop a list of potential donors to approach for major gifts and then meet with each potential donor to present the women's fund as an option to help the donor achieve her or his philanthropic goals.

- **Grant Proposals to Private and Corporate Foundations**

Staff and advisory board members identify potential funders, coordinate proposals with the community foundation and manage grant reporting.

- **House Parties**

Small parties hosted by advisory board members in their homes can be an effective means of raising awareness of the women's fund and soliciting donations.

- **Multi-Year Pledges**

Encouraging donors to give over a period of years can be an effective means to sustain donor commitment and minimize the number of asks.

- **Website and Social Media, Electronic Newsletter, Media Messages and Direct Mail**

These tools can be used strategically to implement fundraising strategies.

Donating to a new women's fund will appeal to people who are already passionate about women's and girls' issues, who want to have a positive effect on individuals and the community and who believe in leveraging dollars to increase their impact. They value the opportunity to be part of women's philanthropy by contributing to a women's fund that focuses its grantmaking. For these reasons, it is often effective for the community foundation to market its women's fund as an opportunity for donors interested in contributing to a reliable, permanent source of grants to organizations serving women and girls.

Some donors may express their preference to contribute to grantmaking so that their donation is put into play immediately in the community. However, the women's fund needs to articulate the wisdom of building an endowment and that contributions to it build a source of grantmaking funds for perpetuity.

Many women's funds have developed a philosophy of donor recognition that is inclusive. Rather than separating donors by giving level, funds recognize all donors for their contributions to the betterment of women and girls in their community. Thank you letters and personal phone calls from advisory board members are also important forms of recognition and stewardship.

## Changes in Development Priorities

The women's fund advisory board should regularly assess the women's fund's needs and refine its fundraising plan to effectively address them. When a women's fund meets its endowment goal, and as staffing and operating needs increase, fund development priorities will likely change. At this stage, the women's fund may consider:

- *Building an operating reserve for future administrative or capacity building costs; this fund can be used in case of a sudden loss of income, to make large capacity building investments, or to provide funding during a cash flow crunch*
- *Coordinating with the community foundation to offer planned giving resources and expertise as an option for women's fund donors*

A women's fund may choose to place a greater emphasis on soliciting unrestricted contributions. Depending on the needs of the women's fund, be they to raise money for an endowment, to enhance grantmaking or support operations, the board may want to consider the following options for allocating unrestricted contributions:

- *To support operations, with contributions in excess of operating needs being designated to an endowment*
- *By size, with larger contributions going to an endowment or reserve fund and smaller contributions supporting operations*
- *Equally between operations and an endowment or reserve fund*
- *To supplement the endowment fund's payout for grantmaking*

Grantmaking is the most important function of a women's fund. It is largely through grants to nonprofit organizations that the women's fund pursues its mission. A women's fund must devote sufficient time to planning grantmaking strategies and developing a grantmaking process.

A fund that is building an endowment will ideally have a champion or other sources to provide granting funds to start grantmaking after the needs assessment is completed and reviewed. In this way, the women's fund gains visibility and can make an immediate impact on the community. If a fund does not have a champion or other source of community granting dollars, the women's fund may decide to wait to make grants until the initial endowment goal is met and its payout is sufficient to supply grantmaking funds.

## Grantmaking Process

The grantmaking process should be easy for potential grantees to navigate. The complexity of the application and reporting processes are best kept in proportion to the amount of dollars given.

Since the community foundation and the women's fund both make grants, it is important to coordinate the grantmaking processes. However, because the women's fund may be making grants differently and will have limited funds in the early years, it may be more effective to schedule the women's fund's grantmaking process independently of the community foundation's process.

To start, we recommend that a women's fund create an annual grant cycle with one proposal deadline and one grant distribution cycle per year. This will help in the coordination of grant cycles with those of the community foundation. The list of organizations identified in the initial needs assessment may be used for the first request for proposal.

The women's fund will find it helpful to develop a consistent process for evaluating grant proposals and grants awarded. This process need not be complicated, but it provides the means for evaluating success and challenges. The evaluation process and the grantmaking process can be refined as needed over time.

Initially, the women's fund may choose to fund as many grantees as possible to establish itself in the community. As the fund continues to make grants, it will learn more about the needs of women and girls and how best to meet those needs through its research and grantees. Grantmaking will likely become more focused in subsequent cycles. As the women's fund gains more experience and knowledge of the community, it will increasingly be able to leverage its grant dollars and identify more opportunities for systems change funding.

### Initial Grantmaking Process

- *Utilizing the organizational component of the community needs assessment to target organizations for possible funding*
- *Distributing a request for proposal (RFP) that introduces the women's fund, its grantmaking priorities and schedule and that requests proposals from organizations that are aligned with the women's fund's mission*
- *Staff reviewing and summarizing proposals aligned with the women's fund's priorities*
- *Advisory board and staff selecting organizations needing site visits or phone calls*
- *Making the final selections and allowing enough time to identify potential leverage and systems change opportunities*

## Grantmaking Priorities

A women's fund's grantmaking priorities should be based on the results of the community needs assessment. As the women's fund gains experience making grants and evaluating its grantmaking program, it will likely review and refine its goals and strategies for future grant cycles to ensure that grantmaking stays focused on the needs of women and girls in the community.

As a result of the community needs assessment and the grantmaking process, the women's fund will acquire a broad overview of the needs of the community and be in a position to recognize both service overlaps and gaps. Through its grantmaking, the women's fund may be able to create opportunities for grantees to work together on systems change or capacity building, thereby maximizing the impact of the women's fund's grant dollars. For example:

- *Funding organizations with similar programs to learn from one another and to collaborate for more efficient programming*
- *Awarding a training or planning grant to build an organization's capacity*
- *Funding the creation of a resource tool such as a legal rights guide or an economic security calculator that benefits women and girls across the community, not solely the clients of one direct service nonprofit*

An example of grantmaking priorities appears on the following page.

# Women's Foundation of Montana

## 2017 Grantmaking Priorities

The Women's Foundation of Montana makes grants and funds social change impacting:

- Systems Change
- Economic Empowerment of Women
- Advancement of Women's Leadership and Power

### 1) Systems Change

**Objective:** To create systemic change that improves the economic status of women in Montana.

#### Program Priorities:

- Research that shapes the public debate and catalyzes stakeholder action to advance the economic independence of Montana women
- Advocacy that leads to the enactment of public policies that will improve the economic status of women, such as ending the wage gap and securing access to paid family leave

The Women's Foundation of Montana works strategically with partners across the state to achieve its goals. For example, WFM works in partnership with diverse stakeholders through the Governor's Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force to reduce the gender pay gap in Montana.

### 2) Economic Empowerment of Women

**Objective:** Ensure all women have the tools, skills and opportunities to reach their full economic potential for themselves and their families.

#### Program Priorities:

- Training that increases women's employability and earnings, such as:
  - o Financial literacy programming
  - o Career and entrepreneurship programming
  - o STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Programs
  - o Wage negotiation workshops

### 3) Advancement of Women's Power and Leadership

**Objective:** Increase the number of women in leadership in the public and private sectors.

#### Program Priorities:

- Programs to increase the political participation of women, such as voting and communicating with legislative and executive branches of government
- Programs that increase women's and girls' leadership skills

The Women's Foundation of Montana has launched a new initiative called PowerHouse Montana, [www.powerhousemt.org](http://www.powerhousemt.org). PowerHouse Montana is an online platform aimed at increasing access to mentors and resources for Montana women, while providing a go-to place for those seeking to recruit women for leadership opportunities.

Building the identity of a women's fund within a community foundation is critical. An effective launch announcement and donor recruitment strategy should clearly reflect the women's fund's positioning and key messages. All written material, media communications, website, social media, events and training should consistently include the same key messages.

As time goes on, it is important to review communications goals and strategies, refine the positioning and key messages and revisit the tactics used to ensure that the women's fund is maximizing the impact and reach of its communications efforts. Communications strategies may shift from focusing on the establishment of the women's fund toward efforts to build and sustain it. Documenting successes and storytelling are very important. They enrich the messaging and are significant to capturing the organization's history. Over time, messaging will change to highlight the fund's grantmaking success and the community programs with which the women's fund is involved. Emails, electronic newsletters, social media and the fund's website, which should be optimized for mobile viewing, should be the primary focus of communications. These can be supplemented by print pieces for important announcements, event invitations and, depending on the demographics and preferences of the fund's constituents, printed newsletters.

A women's fund will set specific communications goals, strategies and tactics in its strategic plan that complement those of the community foundation.

## Women's Fund Communications Goals

- *Create public awareness and identity for the fund*
- *Broaden the donor base and support development strategies*
- *Bring attention to the needs, programs and services that are already available or needed in the community for women and girls*
- *Lead collaborative efforts of groups interested in issues relevant to women and girls*

*“Communications for women's funds has to be personal and show value. People are investing in the work. Our challenge is to make sure they understand what we are doing by being clear and transparent.”*

*April Caller, Manager of Communications  
Chicago Foundation for Women*

## Communications Plan

Creating a communications plan may assist in prioritizing, budgeting, scheduling and evaluating the



effectiveness of a women's fund's communications activity. It also includes positioning, key messages and communications tactics.

## Positioning Statement

A positioning statement is the basis for all communications. It is an internal communications tool that summarizes the promise of your fund's brand – every action that your organization takes should align with your positioning statement. In several sentences it describes and identifies what is important to the fund, differentiating it from other funds or fundraising. For example: "For those who believe the prosperity of a community is directly linked to the prosperity of its women and girls, the Women's Fund of \_\_\_\_, an endowed fund of \_\_\_\_ Community Foundation, is the leading funder of change for women and girls in \_\_\_\_. We invest in systems change and programs that improve the lives of women and girls."

## Key Messages

A women's fund's brand is shaped by every contact the organization has with the outside world, whether it is through words, visual images or other forms of contact from speaking engagements to individual telephone conversations. Clear and consistent messaging is one of the most powerful ways a women's fund makes a statement about the organization and what target audiences need to know about it and its work.

Key messages provide details about the issues, solutions, actions and results upon which the women's fund focuses.

- *The issues: "Women still experience barriers that prevent full participation and fairness in society and keep them from fully contributing to their communities."*
- *The solutions: "We raise money for an endowment that provides a reliable, permanent source of grant money to be invested in economic self-sufficiency of women and brighter futures for girls."*
- *The call to action: "We invite you to be part of the movement to invest in solutions for women and girls." The more specific a call to action is, the better.*
- *The results: "Funds will be spent wisely. Our organization is operationally efficient through the utilization of shared resources and expertise."*

## Tactics

These include public and media relation activities, launch schedule and event plans, development of written material, website creation, advisory board training, events planning, creation of a speakers bureau and more. Target audiences may be the same or different for various tactics used.

A women's fund might use the following communications schedule at various stages of its development and as the budget allows.

## Marketing Communications Tools

It is important for a women's fund within a community foundation to create and maintain its own brand to generate public awareness and

## Communications Schedule

### Start-up

- *Create logo/graphic identity*
- *Develop consistent key messages*
- *Release media announcements*
- *Create digital communications vehicles (website, social media and e-communications)*
- *Develop appropriate collateral to support annual direct mail donor solicitation, including brochure and response card*
- *Hold strategic events*
- *Establish annual appeal plan beginning with quarterly email solicitations and a printed annual appeal letter*

### As the Foundation Grows its Endowment

- *Maintain electronic newsletter*
- *Expand direct mail campaigns to two per year*
- *Release media announcements*
- *Create annual report*
- *Secure public service announcement*
- *Hold strategic events*
- *Develop short online videos to support donor solicitation and awareness*

### With Continued Growth

- *Expand annual appeal plan in number of campaigns and number reached through both email and printed appeals*
- *Release media announcements*
- *Develop advertising and/or public service announcements*
- *Create a fundraising event to raise funds and expand awareness*
- *Hold strategic events*
- *Market the women's fund to financial advisors, businesses and women's organizations*

extend its visibility, yet it must also have a partnered identity with the community foundation. This can be achieved by coordinating efforts and communications tools. It is also recommended that all women's funds materials include the phrase "an endowed fund of \_\_\_ Community Foundation."

There are many options to choose from when deciding how and where to communicate for impact. Partnering with the community foundation will enhance the effectiveness of both organizations' marketing efforts and tools may be developed and used jointly.

A women's fund may want to coordinate some material with the community foundation for joint use and incorporate the women's fund into the community foundation's portfolio of giving options. A community foundation is likely to have materials for financial advisors, including information about planned giving. Information about the women's fund may be included in the packet as well. The women's fund should also be featured in the community foundation's annual report and newsletters. Media announcements may be made jointly with the community foundation or by the women's fund alone.

### **Communications Tools Needed to Raise Public Awareness and Differentiate the Women's Fund from the Community Foundation**

- *Logo*
- *Letterhead*
- *Brochure and fact sheet*
- *Advertising or public service announcements*
- *Digital presence including website and social media*
- *Direct mail letters and reply cards*
- *Videos to illustrate grantmaking priorities*
- *Major donor packet, including advisory board member bios, funding priorities and methods, research, statistics, grants made, donor giving options, a business reply envelope and information about the community foundation*
- *Electronic newsletter/donor reports*
- *Materials for financial advisors, including information about planned giving*

# Establishing a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation

Agreements and Governing Documents

Designating Staff and Administrative Responsibilities

Selecting the Board Chair and Members

Building an Endowment and Fundraising for Grantmaking

A women's foundation that is created as an independent entity will first need to register the foundation's name and obtain its 501(c)(3) status from the Internal Revenue Service.

Governing documents are needed to set forth

bylaws and policies for the board of directors and staff, operational rules and procedures, plus the foundation's mission and purpose. They can also clarify roles, expectations and responsibilities between the staff and board.

## Designating Staff and Administrative Responsibilities

---

A stand-alone women's foundation is responsible for its own staffing. As the foundation is established, it is important to select an executive director who is a strong fundraiser and connector of people, capable of bringing together key stakeholders in support of the foundation to lead the organization. Until there is funding in place to hire staff members, the executive director will need assistance to accomplish all that is required of the women's foundation, with as much help from volunteers as possible. Initially, an actively involved "working" board of directors can provide assistance in grantmaking decisions and review, as well as accounting, database management, marketing and other functions until the foundation is prepared to hire staff members to perform these tasks. In the absence of volunteers with the available time and skills to accomplish the foundation's work, outsourcing will also likely be necessary.

Lead staff must be committed to the women's foundation mission. They need to have good relationship skills and varied experience since the responsibilities will be broad, including fundraising, donor development, responsive and proactive grantmaking and volunteer management. In addition to leadership responsibilities, the staff will also have administrative responsibilities such

as communication with the board and meeting coordination as well as office and financial management.

Investing time and energy to maintain open and regular communication among staff members in the women's foundation, board members and other volunteers is important. Sending regular email updates and holding brief meetings where people are encouraged to share information about what they are doing, contribute ideas and feedback and bring up issues of interest to all creates a positive working environment and contributes to consistent organizational messaging and minimized duplication of effort.

*"Like any start-up, a new women's foundation needs a leader who is all in with her time and energy. She needs strong fundraising skills, the ability to mobilize people on behalf of a cause, whether they are board members of volunteers. She should be well-known and respected in the community."*

*Laura Penny, former CEO  
Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona*

## Administrative Duties

Initially, stand-alone women's foundations will need to designate staff or volunteers to perform the administrative functions required by the foundation. The foundation may need to outsource responsibilities such as accounting until it can be handled in-house, and these costs should be incorporated into the foundation's operational budget. Administrative functions of the foundation may include:

- *Accounting*
- *Financial reporting*
- *Grant database and tracking*
- *Grantmaking process*
- *Grant reporting*
- *Donor/pledge database and tracking*
- *Donor/pledge reporting*
- *Formal donation receipt and thank you letters*
- *Investment tracking*

## Database

Women's foundations will be required to purchase a donor database to track individual donations and pledges and a grant management system to track grant requests and grants made. These are overhead costs that should also be considered in the creation of a stand-alone women's foundation. One possible source of funding for databases could be capacity building grants from interested corporations and foundations to meet the needs of a start-up organization.

## Reports

The women's foundation's staff needs to provide the board of directors with timely financial reports. Quarterly reports are ideal and assist the board in planning and managing the women's foundation's activities. The following reports are suggested:

- *Operating – budget to actual figures, total expenses and fund balance information*
- *Gift – donor names (if not confidential), contribution date and amounts, pledge and challenge information*
- *Endowment – total gifts received, endowment earnings, fees and overall endowment growth*
- *Grants – grantee names, grant dates and amounts, grant totals by cycle*

## Operating Expenses

Typical operating expenses for a stand-alone women's foundation may include:

- *Staff salaries and benefits*
- *Consultant/facilitator fees*
- *Travel and conference fees*
- *Marketing materials and website*
- *Supplies, reference materials, dues and subscriptions*
- *Telephone, postage and copying*
- *Donor development such as meals and informational presentations*
- *Board meetings and site visits*
- *Special events such as luncheons, celebrations and grantee convenings*

In addition to the expenses on the previous page, stand-alone women's foundations may also expect these additional expenses:

- *Rental payments and utilities for office space*
- *Computer networking and technical assistance*
- *Donor database*
- *Grant database*
- *Investment management fees*
- *Accounting (if this is not done in-house)*

*“In the early years, the board was a working board. Over the years, we had a number of great supporters who supported capacity building that allowed us to be positioned for growth. ”*

*Jennifer Lockwood-Shabat*

*President and CEO*

*Washington Area Women's Foundation*

## Selecting the Board Chair and Members

It is essential to select the first board chair in the early stages of developing the foundation, and this may be one of the most important initial decisions. The chair's leadership and ability to communicate with others engages both volunteers and donors.

The board chair will work with the executive director to make organizational decisions and establish governing documents. The board chair and executive director (with the champion(s)) work together to select and recruit potential board members. A prioritized list of potential board members should be created, based on individuals' passion for the mission, areas of expertise and diversity. A grid may be a helpful tool in charting the skills, demographics and diversity of potential board members. The board chair then contacts these individuals, meets with them to discuss what their role and responsibilities would be, and asks them to help steward the organization.

It is important to have a talented and diverse board of directors to advise the women's foundation. The board for the women's foundation is typically formed once the governing documents have been enacted,

after staff have been hired or designated, the needs assessment has been conducted and initial marketing materials have been created. If the board is formed before these operational pieces are in place, its efforts may be diverted from fundraising and grantmaking responsibilities.

The board of directors provides an opportunity to develop the leadership and philanthropy of women who serve on the board. The experience of many women's foundations has been that the board served as a springboard for a significant number of women who are now leaders in the broader philanthropic community.

A diverse board of directors assists the women's foundation in developing its pool of volunteers and in making connections with community decisionmakers. Diversity in the areas of ethnicity, age, life experience, career focus, sexual orientation, geography, ability/disability and skills is recommended.

Backgrounds to consider for board members include: academician, business owner, fundraiser/fundraising consultant, community volunteer, grantmaker, finance professional, government agency

administrator, nonprofit leader, marketing/PR professional, attorney and champion/major donor. The board and staff share responsibility for the women's foundation's activities and the continual clarification of roles and responsibilities is essential. As the women's foundation grows, activities increase and volunteer roles may become more segmented. For example, functional committees may be created in which individual board members take leadership roles in areas of their own expertise, such as communications and grantmaking. Segmenting these responsibilities helps guide and strengthen staff support and allows staff to work more effectively with board members.

*“The first board chair should have community connections, desire and willingness to fundraise and serve as a representative of the key connectors of the particular market or economy the women's foundation serves.”*

*Roslyn Dawson Thompson, President and CEO  
Dallas Women's Foundation*

## **Board of Directors Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles of the board as a collective include:

- *Making annual contributions*
- *Fundraising and developing lists of prospective donors*
- *Planning for the future*
- *Promoting the women's foundation*
- *Reviewing the budget and rules and procedures*

When the women's foundation is in a position to engage in grantmaking, the board will have the following additional responsibilities:

- *Establishing grantmaking priorities and strategies*
- *Reviewing grant applications and making site visits with staff*
- *Making grant recommendations*
- *Monitoring grants and evaluating past grants*

The roles of individual members of the board include:

- *Adhering to ethical standards, including disclosing any conflicts of interest*
- *Making what is, for that individual, a significant financial contribution to the women's foundation to indicate a personal commitment to its mission*
- *Participating in fundraising activities*
- *Participating in meetings and conference calls*
- *Keeping informed on issues pertinent to the women's foundation and women and girls in the community*
- *Promoting the women's foundation*



## Operational Guidelines

### Number of Board Members

The size of the board of directors should be proportionate to the size and activities of the foundation. An initial range of 12 to 20 members is small enough to be manageable and supported by staff and large enough to be diverse.

### Frequency of Meetings

The frequency of meetings will depend on geography. If the women's foundation is statewide, travel may be very time-consuming and four meetings per year with monthly conference calls may be more manageable. If the women's foundation is community-based, the board of directors may be able to meet more often.

### Terms

It is important to have a stable board of directors, especially in the early years, to create a culture, a track record and an institutional memory. It is also important to bring in new members to recharge the board with energy and ideas. Terms are best set at three years, renewable for one additional three-year term. The initial board membership can be staggered by drawing lots for terms with one-third starting with one-year terms, one-third starting with two-year terms and the remaining one-third starting with three-year terms. The women's foundation may choose to create an honorary advisory council to ensure former board members stay engaged and informed.

### Conflict of Interest Policy

It is wise to have all board members sign a conflict of interest policy annually and disclose any potential conflicts prior to grantmaking decisions.

### Structure

Initially, a board of directors can designate a point person for each of its major focus areas – fundraising,

communications, grantmaking and governance – rather than create a committee structure. As activities increase, the size of the board may also increase and a committee structure may become necessary. The complexity of the board's structure should be relative to the size of the foundation and its level of activities.

## Strategic Planning

Actively engaging the board of directors and staff in strategic planning as early as possible within the first year of operation will create a solid foundation for the women's foundation.

### *Elements of a Basic Strategic Plan*

- **Mission Statement**  
What the women's foundation has been formed to do and/or achieve and for whom
- **Goals**  
The list of priority areas to which all resources of the women's foundation will be consistently targeted and applied
- **Strategies**  
Guidance for how and when goals will be achieved, including specific measures of success
- **Tactics**  
Specific activities through which strategies are implemented and the assignment of operational responsibility to specific volunteers and staff; a dashboard can be created to measure progress and promote accountability among board members and staff

The process of creating a strategic plan requires the group to set the funding priorities of the women's foundation and to agree on goals and strategies to successfully fulfill its mission.

A strategic plan document serves as a roadmap for the women's foundation's direction, operations and activity plans. Clearly defined purpose or mission, goals and strategies help to guide grantmaking, fundraising and other activities and can be used in the future to refocus the stand-alone women's foundation's priorities. It is also a framework from which opportunities for growth can be identified and strategies to manage them outlined. Strategic plan documents often include both short-term and long-term goals.

There are many ways to structure an effective strategic plan and many resources available to guide a women's foundation through this process.

## Training

Once the initial board of directors has been established, and prior to any substantive work, a training session for everyone will be helpful. The board will be most successful if it begins its work fully informed about the foundation and its mission, the responsibilities of board members and staff, results of the needs assessments and key topics relating to women and girls in the community. An orientation session is also important when new members join the board.

The first meeting of the board of directors is an important opportunity for members to establish relationships with each other, meet staff, learn about their roles as board members and receive information about issues.

## Board Orientation Meeting Topics

- *Introductions*
- *Women as philanthropists and women's foundations*
- *Results of the needs assessment*
- *Mission and priorities for granting*
- *Role of the board of directors and individual members*
- *Fundraising*
- *Communication*
- *Grantmaking*
- *Future meeting schedule*
- *Social time for building relationships*

*“You have to develop a board based on your overall purpose. It is a good idea to have someone with content knowledge of the kind of work you're trying to do. Look for individuals with policy experience, knowledge of women's issues, and financial management and legal expertise. Diversity should also be a top priority – make sure that your board reflects the communities you represent.”*

*Surina Khan, CEO  
Women's Foundation of California*

There is a great deal of discussion among stand-alone women's foundations over whether to build an endowment or not. In the profiles that we feature in this guide, you will see that the foundations are divided among those with endowments and those without. Many of those with endowments feel strongly that endowments are critical to creating permanent, enduring institutions that will be able to help solve today's problems as well as those of tomorrow. Those without endowments maintain a strong ethos that their community's immediate need is too great to ignore for the length of time it would take to raise funds for an endowment of significant size.

Additionally, financial and economic circumstances play a large role in the success of endowment building. Some of our profile subjects had champions who launched their foundations with substantial initial endowment gifts. Others have struggled to build an endowment – either because they lacked a champion who could contribute to and spearhead their fundraising efforts, or because the timing of their endowment campaign(s) coincided with an economic downturn or because they focused solely on community grantmaking first.

With an endowment, a women's foundation has a permanent and secure source of funding for grantmaking to organizations serving women and girls. The endowment allows the women's foundation to plan ahead based on the projection of an annual payout. It also provides more flexibility in grantmaking commitments. With an assured level of payout from an endowment, a women's foundation can consider making multi-year grants. An endowment creates stability, makes planning for perpetuity possible and can make the difference in sustained financial viability.

Contributing to an endowment fund often appeals to donors who recognize its lasting value. Donors look for endowment funds as an option for their

philanthropic dollars and as an opportunity to make planned giving commitments. Endowment donors often become consistent annual donors as well.

Leveraging the generosity of one donor champion or a group of donors through a challenge or match is a good way to start or grow an endowment fund. Donors are often attracted to the fact that their contributions may be doubled or tripled. Challenge grants are typically time-limited, thereby creating a sense of urgency that stimulates even greater activity in building the fund.

Without an endowment, a women's foundation, in addition to raising funds to support its operations, must raise the dollars it needs each year to award grants to community organizations. This creates an annual cycle of fundraising for granting that must be repeated every year and an expectation by donors and the community that the foundation will continue granting the same dollar amount or more year after year. If a women's foundation delays fundraising for an endowment, staff and volunteers may find it challenging to embark on an endowment campaign later while they are simultaneously trying to raise an increasing amount to support grantmaking.

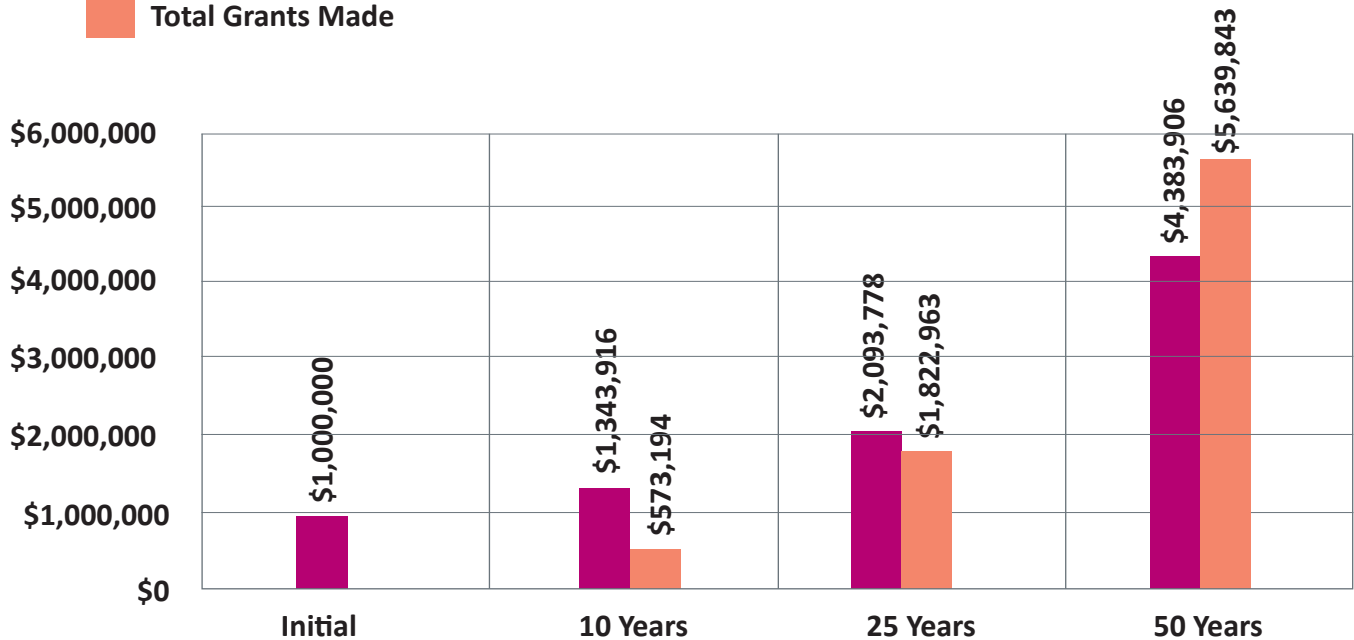
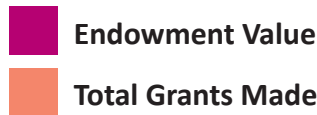
Foundations with or without endowments should consider building a board-restricted reserve fund. Although an operating fund can be designated within an endowment, endowment payouts typically support grantmaking. A board-restricted reserve fund can be used in case of a sudden loss of income, to make large capacity building investments or to provide funding during a cash flow crunch.

In the long-term, an endowment does not compete with grantmaking; instead, it increases resources for it. The chart on the next page demonstrates the growth of an endowment and the foundation's increase in grantmaking ability.

**The following chart illustrates the value of building an endowment over a period of 50 years, assuming 8% annual growth and 5% annual payout.**

A \$1 million endowment will generate approximately \$80,000 per year in earnings. At a payout rate of 5%, \$50,000 can be awarded in grants to the community the first year. The amount for grants will increase as the size of the endowment increases. Without additional contributions to the endowment, that same \$1 million will be worth \$1.3 million in ten years and \$2.1 million in 25 years with the 5% payout being spent for grantmaking each year. If the \$1 million endowment had not been established, the women's fund would need to raise nearly \$570,000 over ten years to achieve the same level of grantmaking and the \$1.3 million endowment fund would not exist.

**POTENTIAL GROWTH OF \$1,000,000 INITIAL INVESTMENT OVER 50 YEARS**



*“An endowment is essential for the long-term viability of a women’s foundation. It provides a reliable source of funding for grantmaking and ensures stability that attracts donor advised funds and planned gifts.”*

*Merle Chambers, President  
Chambers Family Fund*

# Building a Stand-Alone Women's Foundation

Developing Financial Resources

Making Grants

Spreading the Word



A women's foundation, especially as a new organization, will need to devote substantial time and energy to fundraising in order to acquire the financial resources needed to accomplish its mission. Developing a fundraising plan that outlines tactics, activities and roles and responsibilities in relation to specific fund development goals identified in the strategic plan can be useful.

## Funding Needs

A stand-alone women's foundation will need to create a strategic fundraising plan to raise money to support operations (including overhead costs), grantmaking and an endowment. Foundations should take a strategic approach to fundraising, targeting individual donors as well as private and corporate foundations to support their operations, capacity building, endowment and grantmaking, if necessary.

For foundations with endowments, grantmaking dollars will eventually come from the payout from the endowment fund. If the women's foundation wants to make grants to organizations that serve women and girls before its endowment has reached a sufficient level for the payout to cover those awards, it may want to consider targeted fundraising to an individual donor or a private foundation for community grant funds. This strategy ensures that the broader fundraising efforts of the women's foundation are not diverted from endowment building and operations.

When creating a fundraising plan, foundations should not be tempted to use a membership model, in which donors pay annual dues to be members of the foundation. While the model can be intriguing for its ability to attract a large number of supporters, it stymies fundraising growth because it asks all potential donors to contribute the same amount, when some donors are capable and willing to give much more. Foundations should develop fundraising plans that

strategically cultivate and steward donors based on their capacity to give and interest in supporting the efforts of the foundation.

## Fund Development Strategies

- **Leveraging Networks**

Board members and staff can draw on their own community knowledge and contacts to build an initial mailing list for invitations, newsletters and solicitations.

- **One-on-One Personal Asks**

Staff and board members can work together to develop a list of potential donors to approach for major gifts and then meet with each potential donor to present the women's foundation as an option to help the donor achieve their philanthropic goals.

- **Grant Proposals to Private and Corporate Foundations**

Staff and board members identify potential funders, create proposals and manage grant reporting.

- **House Parties**

Small parties hosted by board members in their homes can be an effective means of raising awareness of the women's foundation and soliciting donations.

- **Multi-Year Pledges**

Encouraging donors to give over a period of years can be an effective means to sustain donor commitment and minimize the number of asks.

- **Website and Social Media, Electronic Newsletter, Media Messages and Direct Mail**

These tools can be used strategically to implement fundraising strategies.

Successful fundraising requires the talent and commitment of both staff and board volunteers. The women's foundation staff provides support for board fundraising, coordinates fundraising activities and serves as a contact for donors. The board chair takes responsibility for directing fundraising activity and ensuring that board members meet their goals. Board members bring additional human resources to the effort and link the organization to potential donors.

## Women's Foundation Donors

Donating to a new women's foundation will appeal to people who are already passionate about women's and girls' issues, who want to have a positive effect on individuals and the community and who believe in leveraging dollars to increase their impact. They value the opportunity to be part of women's philanthropy by contributing to a women's foundation that is a reliable, permanent source of grants to organizations serving women and girls.

Some donors may express their preference to contribute to grantmaking so that their donation is put into play immediately in the community. However, for those foundations embarking on raising an endowment, the women's foundation needs to articulate the wisdom of building an endowment and that contributions to it build a source of grantmaking funds for perpetuity.

Regardless of a gift's designation, it is important to recognize contributions. Many women's foundations have developed a philosophy of donor recognition that is inclusive. Rather than separating donors by giving level, foundations recognize all donors for their contributions to the betterment of women and girls in their community. Thank you letters and personal phone calls from board members are also important forms of recognition and stewardship.

## Changes in Development Priorities

The stand-alone women's foundation board should regularly assess the foundation's needs and refine its fundraising plan to effectively address them. When a women's foundation meets its initial grantmaking or endowment goal, and as staffing and operating needs increase, fund development priorities will likely change. At this stage, the women's foundation may consider:

- *Creating an endowment, if it has not been done*
- *Building an operating reserve for future administrative or capacity building costs*
- *Offering planned giving resources and expertise as an option for women's foundation donors*

A women's foundation may choose to place a greater emphasis on soliciting unrestricted contributions. Depending on the needs of the women's foundation, be they to raise money for an endowment, to enhance grantmaking or support operations, the board may want to consider the following options for allocating unrestricted contributions:

- *To support operations, with contributions in excess of operating needs being designated to an endowment or board-restrict reserve fund*
- *By size, with larger contributions going to an endowment or board-restricted reserve fund and smaller contributions supporting operations*
- *Equally between operations and an endowment or reserve fund*
- *To supplement grantmaking or the endowment fund's payout for grantmaking*



Grantmaking is the most important function of a women's foundation. It is largely through grants to nonprofit organizations that the stand-alone women's foundation pursues its mission. A foundation must devote sufficient time to planning grantmaking strategies and developing a grantmaking process.

A foundation that is building an endowment will ideally have a champion or other sources to provide funds to start grantmaking after the needs assessment is completed and reviewed. In this way, the women's foundation gains visibility and can make an immediate impact on the community. If a foundation does not have a champion or other source of community granting dollars, the women's foundation may decide to wait to make grants until the initial endowment goal is met and its payout is sufficient to supply grantmaking funds.

It can be difficult for a stand-alone women's foundation to raise endowment funds before grantmaking begins because it is an unknown entity. In this instance, the women's foundation may decide to raise funds for grantmaking, so it can raise the foundation's awareness in the community and build a solid reputation for research and impact before launching an endowment campaign.

*“Our founders were not women of means. They were not in a position to create an endowment for our organization. We did not have immediate success with fundraising for an endowment. Donors said, ‘Why don’t you establish a track record and then come back to me?’”*

*Heather Arnet, CEO  
Women and Girls Foundation  
of Southwestern Pennsylvania*

## Grantmaking Process

The grantmaking process should be easy for potential grantees to navigate. The complexity of the application and reporting processes are best kept in proportion to the amount of dollars given.

To start, we recommend that a stand-alone women's foundation create an annual grant cycle with one proposal deadline and one grant distribution cycle per year. The list of organizations identified in the initial needs assessment may be used for the first request for proposal.

The women's foundation will find it helpful to develop a consistent process for evaluating grant proposals and grants awarded. This process need not be complicated, but it should provide the means for evaluating success and challenges. The evaluation process and the grantmaking process can be refined as needed over time.

Larger grants to fewer organizations will often have a greater potential to affect social change. However, initially, the women's foundation may choose to fund as many grantees as possible to establish itself in the community. As the foundation continues to make grants, it will learn more about the needs of women and girls and how best to meet those needs through its research and grantees. Grantmaking will likely become more focused in subsequent cycles. As the women's foundation gains more experience and knowledge of the community, it will increasingly be able to leverage its grant dollars and to identify more opportunities to affect social change.

## Initial Grantmaking Process

- *Utilizing the organizational component of the needs assessment to target organizations for possible funding*
- *Distributing a request for proposal (RFP) that introduces the women's foundation, its grantmaking priorities and schedule and that requests proposals from organizations that are aligned with the women's foundation's mission*
- *Staff reviewing and summarizing proposals aligned with the women's foundation's priorities*
- *Board and staff selecting organizations needing site visits or phone calls*
- *Making the final selections and allowing enough time to identify potential leverage and systems change opportunities*

## Grantmaking Priorities

A women's foundation's grantmaking priorities should be based on the results of the local needs assessment. As the women's foundation gains experience making grants and evaluating its grantmaking program, it will likely review and refine its goals and strategies for future grant cycles to ensure that grantmaking stays focused on the needs of women and girls in the community.

As a result of the organizational needs assessment and the grantmaking process, the women's foundation will acquire a broad overview of the needs of the community and be in a position to recognize both service overlaps and gaps. Through its grantmaking, the women's foundation may be able to create opportunities for grantees to work together on social change or capacity building, thereby maximizing the impact of the women's foundation's grant dollars. For example:

- *Funding organizations with similar programs to learn from one another and to collaborate for more efficient programming*
- *Awarding a training or planning grant to build an organization's capacity*
- *Funding the creation of a resource tool such as a legal rights guide or an economic security calculator that benefits women and girls across the community, not solely the clients of one direct service nonprofit*

An example of grantmaking priorities is on the next page.

# Chicago Foundation for Women

## 2017 Grantmaking Priorities

Chicago Foundation for Women will make grants and fund social change impacting:

- *Economic Security*
- *Freedom from Violence*
- *Access to Health Services and Information*

### 1) Economic Security

**Objective:** Chicago Foundation for Women seeks grantees that expand economic security to all women and girls so that they can care for themselves and their families in all stages of life.

**Program priorities** are to:

- *Support job training, postsecondary education and life skills necessary to secure and keep a job, earn a living wage and seek opportunities for advancement*
- *Expand women's equal opportunity in employment, including work/life balance policies, pay equity and inclusion in traditionally male trades*
- *Advance public policies to prevent and end poverty*
- *Preserve, support and improve public safety net programs, including food stamps, childcare subsidies, affordable housing, transportation assistance, state and federal Earned Income Tax Credits, Medicaid and Medicare*
- *Protect and support young women's and girls' educational inclusion and achievement*

### 2) Freedom from Violence

**Objective:** Chicago Foundation for Women seeks grantees that expand women's and girls' freedom from violence in all its forms, including family violence, child and elder abuse, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, prostitution and trafficking.

**Program priorities** are to:

- *Advance comprehensive violence prevention strategies and policies*
- *Improve the response of society's systems, including the courts, law enforcement, education, health care and other service providers*
- *Increase the coordination of services for survivors of violence*
- *Increase public understanding of the issues with the intention of ending violence against women and girls*
- *Involve men and boys in efforts to end violence against women*
- *Support survivors in underserved communities, including LGBTQ, older and immigrant women*

### 3) Access to Health Services and Information

**Objective:** Chicago Foundation for Women seeks grantees that expand women's and girls' access to high quality health services and information related to mental, physical, preventive and reproductive health.

**Program priorities** are to:

- *Address the wellness needs of an aging population of women and their families*
- *Advocate for reproductive justice*
- *Expand responsible sexual health education programs*
- *Provide culturally competent health services and information to diverse populations*

Building the identity of a stand-alone women's foundation is critical. An effective launch announcement and donor recruitment strategy should clearly reflect the women's foundation's positioning and key messages. All written material, media communications, website, social media, events and training should consistently include the same key messages.

As time goes on, it is important to review communications goals and strategies, refine the positioning and key messages and revisit the tactics used to ensure that the women's foundation is maximizing the impact and reach of its communications efforts. Communications strategies may shift from focusing on the establishment of the women's foundation toward efforts to build and sustain it. Documenting successes and storytelling are very important. They enrich the messaging and are significant to capturing the organization's history. Over time, messaging will change to highlight the foundation's grantmaking success and the community programs with which the foundation is involved. Emails, electronic newsletters, social media and the foundation's website, which should be optimized for mobile viewing, should be the primary focus of communications, supplemented by print pieces for important announcements, event invitations and, depending on the demographics of the foundation's constituents, printed newsletters.

A women's foundation will set specific communications goals, strategies and tactics in its strategic plan.

## Women's Foundation Communications Goals

- *Create public awareness and credibility for the foundation*
- *Broaden the donor base and support development strategies*
- *Bring attention to the needs, programs and services that are already available or needed in the community for women and girls*
- *Lead collaborative efforts of groups interested in issues relevant to women and girls*

*"Communications for women's foundations has to be personal and show value. People are investing in the work. Our challenge is to make sure they understand what we are doing by being clear and transparent."*

*April Caller, Manager of Communications  
Chicago Foundation for Women*

## Communications Plan

Creating a communications plan may assist in prioritizing, budgeting, scheduling and evaluating the effectiveness of a women's foundation's communications activity. It also includes positioning, key messages and communications tactics.

## Positioning Statement

A positioning statement is the basis for all communications. It is an internal communications tool that summarizes the promise of your foundation's brand – every action that your organization takes should align with your positioning statement. In several sentences it describes and identifies what is important to the foundation, differentiating it from other foundations or fundraising. For example: "For those who believe the prosperity of a community is directly linked to the prosperity of its women and girls, the Women's Foundation of \_\_\_ is the leading funder of change for women and girls in \_\_\_. We invest in programs that support social equality and economic opportunity to improve the lives of women and girls."

## Key Messages

A women's foundation's brand is shaped by every contact the organization has with the outside world, whether it is through words, visual images or other forms of contact from speaking engagements to individual telephone conversations. Clear and consistent messaging is one of the most powerful ways a women's foundation makes a statement about the organization and what target audiences need to know about it and its work.

Key messages provide details about the issues, solutions, actions and results upon which the women's foundation focuses.

- *The issues: "Women still experience barriers that prevent full participation and fairness in society and keep them from fully contributing to their communities."*
- *The solutions: "We raise money for an endowment that provides a reliable, permanent source of grant money to be invested in economic security of women and brighter futures for girls."*
- *The call to action: "We invite you to be part of the movement to invest in solutions for women and girls." The more specific a call to action is, the better.*
- *The results: "Funds will be stewarded wisely. Under the direction of a skilled and experienced board of directors, our organization is operationally efficient."*

## Tactics

These include public and media relation activities, launch schedule and event plans, development of written material, website creation, board training, events planning, creation of a speakers bureau and more. Target audiences may be the same or different for various tactics used.

A women's foundation might use the following communications schedule at various stages of its development and as the budget allows.

## Communications Schedule

### Start-up

- *Create logo/graphic identity*
- *Develop consistent key messages*
- *Release media announcements*
- *Create digital communications vehicles (website, social media and e-communications)*
- *Develop appropriate collateral to support annual direct mail donor solicitation, including brochure and response card*
- *Hold strategic events*
- *Establish annual appeal plan beginning with quarterly email solicitations and a printed annual appeal letter*

### As the Foundation Grows its Endowment and/or Operating Budget

- *Maintain electronic newsletter*
- *Expand direct mail campaigns to two per year*
- *Release media announcements*
- *Create annual report*
- *Secure public service announcement*
- *Hold strategic events*
- *Develop short online videos to support donor solicitation and awareness*

### With Continued Growth

- *Expand annual appeal plan in number of campaigns and number reached through both email and printed appeals*
- *Release media announcements*
- *Develop advertising and/or public service announcements*
- *Create a fundraising event to raise funds and expand awareness*
- *Hold strategic events*
- *Market the women's fund to financial advisors, business and women's organizations*

## Marketing Communications Tools

Unlike a women's fund within a community foundation, a stand-alone women's foundation does not have the reputation of a known organization with which to align or to help raise its visibility in the community. Since many foundations will have limited operating funding initially, it is critical to utilize communications tools that maximize reach. Developing a strong following on social media and an accurate and extensive email list can help defray marketing costs. However, a stand-alone women's foundation will also need a full array of marketing communications tools to establish its identity.

### Communications Tools Needed to Raise Public Awareness

- *Logo*
- *Letterhead*
- *Brochure and fact sheet*
- *Digital presence including website and social media*
- *Direct mail letters and reply cards*
- *Videos to illustrate grantmaking priorities*
- *Major donor packet, including board member bios, funding priorities and methods, research, statistics, grants made, donor giving options and a business reply envelope*
- *Electronic newsletter/donor reports*
- *Materials for financial advisors, including information about planned giving (developed in conjunction with a financial advisor and/or planned giving expert)*
- *Advertising or public service announcements*

# Profiles

Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona

Women's Foundation of California

Chicago Foundation for Women

Dallas Women's Foundation

Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis

Women's Foundation of Minnesota

Women's Foundation of Montana

Women and Girls Foundation of  
Southwest Pennsylvania

Washington Area Women's Foundation

***The profiles included on the following pages were created following a series of interviews with nine women's funds and foundations. It was our goal to feature a wide range of women's funds and stand-alone foundations that varied in age and size. The profiles reflect their unique experiences.***



Mission: We collaborate to achieve social, political and economic change that empowers women and girls.

- *Founded in 1992 as a fund of the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona; in 1999, the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona became a supporting organization of the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona; in 2016, the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona became an independent nonprofit organization*
- *\$3.5 million in assets (2017)*
- *Awarded more than \$4 million to 200 community organizations since our founding*
- *Four full-time staff*
- *20 board members, 50 advisory council members*
- *Website: [www.womengiving.org](http://www.womengiving.org)*

Two female philanthropists from Tucson who believed institutional philanthropy was not addressing women's issues began exploring the idea of creating a women's fund in 1991. They conducted a series of focus groups with women and organizations that served women in the area to ensure that a women's fund could play an active role in the southern Arizona community. The Southern Arizona Women's Fund, a fund of the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona, was created in 1992, and the fund's first grants were awarded in 1993.

In 1999, the fund became a supporting organization, as designated by the IRS, of the Community Foundation of Southern Arizona and changed its

name to the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona. The community foundation appoints 50+1 percent of the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona's board of trustees. Currently, the Women's Foundation identifies and recruits board members and presents a list to the community foundation for its approval rather than having names submitted to them.

For the first seven years of the fund's existence, its initial focus was on grantmaking, and no endowment was created. However, in 2004, the fund received a \$250,000 gift to support an endowment. A formal endowment campaign was launched in 2008, just prior to the economic downturn. Today, the fund operates with an endowment of \$2 million.

The fund's initial grantmaking priorities were widespread. Grants were made to support three areas: health, safety and well-being; economic justice; and social justice and human rights. In 2011-12, the fund narrowed its focus to support organizations that increase women's economic self-sufficiency.

The fund counts the following among its greatest successes:

**Building a Reputation through Strong Research:** In 2011, the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona commissioned the Grand Canyon Institute to examine the economic status of women in southern Arizona and the impact that state funded programs have on the economic self-sufficiency of low income women. The report, "Supporting Arizona Women's Economic Self-Sufficiency," was published in 2012 and widely distributed to nonprofit partners, the business community and government agencies. It was covered by news media outlets in Tucson and Phoenix and is regularly referenced by state government agencies. The Valley of the Sun United Way in Phoenix uses it as

a benchmark for its grantees that work on economic self-sufficiency issues. Although no policy changes have resulted from its publication, the report helped position the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona as an authority on economic security issues facing women.

#### **Expanding Giving Capacity and Impact through**

**Partnership:** Since 2012, the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona has partnered with a private family foundation to provide it with philanthropic counsel. As a result of the partnership, the family foundation has begun granting a significant amount of money annually to the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona to designate for grants. The Foundation has been able to double the amount of its annual grant round because of this partnership.

#### **Fostering the Next Generation of Women**

**Philanthropists:** Although the Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona conducts research and advocacy, it does not directly serve women through in-house programs, with one exception: Unidas. Unidas, the feminization of the Spanish word for "united," is a leadership and philanthropy program for Tucson high school students. Fifteen to 20 girls participate in the program each semester, which teaches them about community service, social justice, leadership and grantmaking. The girls design a grantmaking process and are given at least \$5,000 to award to the nonprofit recipient of their choice. They identify an issue affecting girls and young women, create an RFP, review proposals, conduct site visits and make a grant decision. The program was featured by Women's Funding Network in a project that highlighted girl grantmaking programs.

*"Thanks to our donors, board, volunteers and staff, over the years we've worked to position the Women's Foundation as the "go to" place for information, advocacy and grantmaking for women in Southern Arizona"*

*Maura Grogan,  
former Board Chair  
Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona*

**Mission:** The Women's Foundation of California invests in women and girls to make a more just and equitable society for all.

- *Founded in 1979 in San Francisco as The Women's Foundation, an independent women's fund*
- *\$1.1 million endowment as of June 2017*
- *Over 1,300 awarded in grants to community organizations as of June 2017*
- *13 full-time staff members*
- *15 board members*
- *Website: [www.womensfoundca.org](http://www.womensfoundca.org)*

In 1979, less than 1 percent of philanthropic funds were being used to support women and girls. A group of women in San Francisco formed The Women's Foundation in order to address the needs of women and girls in their community. Years later, they seeded the creation of the Los Angeles Women's Foundation. In 2003, the two women's funds merged to become the Women's Foundation of California (WFC).

The initial focus of The Women's Foundation was investing money in the community as quickly as possible to support its mission. Funds were raised for grantmaking rather than an endowment. Although WFC has never held an endowment campaign, today has a small endowment of \$1.1 million, which came as a result of the merger between the women's foundations in San Francisco and Los Angeles. The focus of WFC remains on advancing gender justice and the health, safety and economic security of low-income women and families in California. It is planning a comprehensive campaign to honor its

40th Anniversary in 2019 that will include support for immediate programmatic work and longer term sustainability through the endowment.

WFC sits at a unique and powerful nexus — pursuing community-led public policy change and investing grant dollars to support multi-issue movement building. Its four core strategies — invest, train, connect, and mobilize — address the contemporary political, economic, and social climates, with both critical challenges and extraordinary opportunities, to achieve the greatest results for building community power, defending progress and advancing justice in California.

As a grantmaker, WFC invests in strategies along the continuum of power-building, including community organizing, policy advocacy, civic participation, integrated voter engagement, and culture change in three core issue areas: economic security, health, and safety. WFC grant partners are pursuing pay equity, affordable childcare, workplace protections, access to education, an end to gender-based violence, criminal justice reform, reproductive health and justice, and environmental health and justice.

Through the Women's Policy Institute (WPI), WFC focuses on policy leadership development as a powerful means for shaping laws, regulations, ordinances, government allocations, and especially for building grassroots community power. WPI removes the real and perceived barriers to shaping the policies that affect low-income communities and helps direct the course of our democracy, economy, and shared future. Because women and girls, people of color, low-income women, immigrant women, and transgender people are often a critical voice missing in policymaking, WPI increases the number of grassroots community leaders who actively engage in this process.

Convening and partnership are central to every part of WFC's work, regularly convening and partnering with its network of stakeholders to advance progressive gender justice work and stimulate movement building. The goals of regular convening include building cross-issue coalitions, creating cross-sector solutions, diminishing the power dynamics that often exist between funders and advocates and connecting stakeholders together to enable collective learning, mutual support and collaboration for deeper results.

WFC mobilizes significant financial capital to address critical issues and advance gender justice in California. Its donors include entrepreneurs, corporate leaders and individuals of multi-generational wealth who reflect diverse ethnicities and cultures, ages, geographies and a broad range of interests within the overarching mission of gender justice. WFC donors are galvanized by opportunities to fuel community-based organizations and leaders with resources to pursue critical initiatives and movement building. WFC also provides donors with opportunities to learn about cutting edge, complex issues and solutions through educational events, briefings, and learning trips. It engages donors in movement building and convenes them with community leaders, policymakers, and policy advocates. It trains funders through a Philanthropy and Public Policy Institute. And it raises the profile of philanthropic leadership advancing gender justice.

*“On the cusp of our 40th anniversary, the Women’s Foundation of California is once again responding to the demands of the political times and to the needs and strengths of the women in California. Our strategy is consistent with the values held by the Foundation over four decades: investing in the leadership of women closest to the challenges they face and in their cutting-edge solutions and building bridges between political leaders, funders, and advocates.”*

*Surina Khan  
Women’s Foundation of California*

**Mission:** Chicago Foundation for Women is a grantmaking organization investing throughout Chicago in work that supports basic rights and equal opportunities for women and girls. As a trusted and knowledgeable partner, expert at identifying the most pressing needs, our funding helps remove barriers and provides safe, just and healthy lives.

- *Founded in 1985 as a stand-alone women's foundation*
- *\$14.0 million in total assets (Fiscal Year 2016)*
- *More than \$28 million awarded to more than 3500 grants since 1985 (Fiscal Year 2016)*
- *14 full time dedicated staff, two graduate level interns (Fiscal Year 2018)*
- *25 board members (Fiscal Year 2018)*
- *Website: [www.cfw.org](http://www.cfw.org)*

In 1985, Marjorie Craig Benton, Lucia Woods Lindley, Iris J. Krieg and Sunny Fischer became the co-founders of the Chicago Foundation for Women. With institutional philanthropy at the time designating a mere 3 percent of grants to support women and girls, the co-founders felt it imperative to create a fund that would immediately begin supporting women and girls in the greater Chicago area. Two individual donors each gave initial gifts of \$25,000, and the Joyce Foundation, a large Chicago-based, private foundation, gave a \$25,000 grant to help launch the Chicago Foundation for Women. The foundation's first grants – totaling \$50,000 – were made in 1986. The culture of the foundation is one that addresses immediate need in the community; therefore, building a large endowment has not been a top

priority. Because the focus of the founders was on grantmaking, efforts to build an endowment did not begin immediately. Since its founding, Chicago Foundation for Women has held fundraising campaigns at various times to support an endowment.

The foundation was created as a stand-alone women's foundation. This has allowed the foundation to stand apart, build a brand for itself and have the freedom to take on critical and progressive issues. As a fund created by women for women, the foundation has been able to focus on one of its main objectives – to promote women as philanthropists. The drawback of being independent has been that the foundation had to build its own infrastructure, without the support that a community foundation could offer.

The philanthropic focus of the Chicago Foundation for Women was established early on in three main areas: freedom from violence, women in the arts and reproductive justice. Today, the foundation's grantmaking priorities are:

- *Expanding economic security so that women and girls can care for themselves and their families in all stages of life*
- *Ensuring freedom from violence in all its forms, including family violence, child and elder abuse, dating violence, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, prostitution and trafficking*
- *Enhancing access to health services and information related to mental, physical, preventive and reproductive health*

The foundation funds advocacy and direct service work, including pathways to economic self-sufficiency, best practices and innovation.

The Chicago Foundation for Women counts the following among its top achievements:

**Expanding through Acquisition:** Lucia Woods Lindley, one of the founders of Chicago Foundation for Women, established the Sophia Fund, which was turned over to the Foundation in 1995. Since then, the foundation has been making grants through the fund to support advocacy issues. In 2012, the Chicago Foundation for Women acquired another local women's foundation with grantmaking priorities of economic security, especially for female heads of households, that aligned with the foundation's. Through this acquisition, the foundation has been able to enhance its economic security and stability initiative. The foundation considers both acquisitions a vote of confidence in its ability to raise funds and carry out work in the community.

**Earning the Trust of Other Foundations:** Recently, one of the largest private foundations in the region requested Chicago Foundation for Women to provide consulting services for their grantmaking around domestic violence issues. The foundation not only provides grant review, but also consults on systemic issues. As a result, the private foundation has been able to extend its capacity to serve the community.

**Supporting Innovation:** As part of its grantmaking, Chicago Foundation for Women supports innovation and best practices. The foundation has provided seed funding for many new organizations over the years, with a high rate of success. More than 65 percent of those organizations, or 110 organizations, are still serving the community after 10 years.

*“Chicago Foundation for Women has much larger influence than our footprint alone would indicate. We regularly hear from grantees that when other funders see our name on their list of supporters, they view it as a stamp of approval. That is a validation of our work in the community.”*

*K. Sujata, President/CEO  
Chicago Foundation for Women*



**Mission:** Dallas Women's Foundation invests in women and girls and empowers women's philanthropy to build a better world.

- *Founded in 1985 as a stand-alone women's foundation*
- *\$34.1 million in total assets (2017)*
- *More than \$37.6 million in grants to community organizations since inception*
- *16 full-time staff members*
- *45 board members, 48 advisory council members*
- *Website: [www.dallaswomensfdn.org](http://www.dallaswomensfdn.org)*

In 1985, an ethnically, politically and socioeconomically diverse group of 19 women started Dallas Women's Foundation to increase funding for programs benefiting women and girls. At that time, 3 percent of philanthropic funding supported women and girls. The foundation was created by women for women, as an independent entity, focused on advancing opportunities for women and girls and empowering women's philanthropy through research, advocacy and grant making.

In its early days, the foundation gathered hundreds of members, who each paid a flat membership fee of \$75. With this initial funding from members, and the first of many successful annual luncheons, the foundation was able to grant \$25,000 to community nonprofits serving women and girls. Within a few years, the membership model did not produce sufficient revenue growth to meet the needs of the community, so the foundation evolved into a broader fundraising model to include annual gifts, the annual

luncheon to support operating costs, and major gifts.

The first fundraising "campaign" undertaken by the foundation was to raise a \$1 million endowment. Subsequently, the foundation has engaged in a series of fundraising campaigns. These included a \$10 million campaign to increase endowment and build organizational capacity; a comprehensive campaign that raised \$35 million between 2006 and 2011; and the current \$50 million comprehensive campaign, initiated in April 2013, that had raised \$36.5 million as of June 30, 2017 to advance women's economic security and women's leadership.

The foundation considers these to be among its greatest achievements:

**Reflecting the Face of the Community:** From its inception, the foundation has focused on and reflected the diversity of the Dallas community. From racial, ethnic, socioeconomic and religious diversity of its founders, donors and board members, to the diversity of clients and beneficiaries of the foundation's grantee partners, Dallas Women's Foundation has embraced and modeled inclusion. Today, 42 percent of the foundation's board of directors are women of color or LGBTQ.

**Groundbreaking Research:** Dallas Women's Foundation is widely recognized as the source for outstanding research on the status of women and girls in Texas, as well as issue-specific studies that impact the region and the state. The first comprehensive look at the status of women and girls in North Texas was produced by the foundation in 2000. That study, titled *Out of the Shadows*, revealed the extensive disparities impacting women and girls, from economic and educational inequity to state policies and practices that disproportionately impact women and girls. The foundation used this research,

and all of its subsequent studies to direct both its advocacy efforts and its grant making.

Another key research initiative included the foundation's 2011 study of the commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of adolescent girls in Texas, which literally defined the scope and depth of the issue in the region and the state. This, in turn, prompted significant efforts in raising awareness, advancing policy advocacy to decriminalize victims, and greater fundraising in support of the foundation's first \$1 million grant in support of a first-of-its-kind residential treatment center for trafficked girls. The foundation's research was the driver of its strategic plan in 2012 and reaffirmed in 2015 that focused its efforts – and its \$50 million comprehensive campaign – on advancing women's economic security and women's leadership. In 2014, the foundation released its study on Economic Issues for Women in Texas, with the goal of establishing a common understanding of the issues and their impact, creating a common language for expressing the challenges and opportunities that Texas women face, and sharing the information and plans of action with community leaders, elected and appointed officials, nonprofit organizations, donor and partners across the state. The success of that undertaking continued with the release of the 2017 study, which is now considered across the state as the respected source for statistics, solutions and policy recommendations around the building blocks of women's economic security – child care, education, health insurance and housing. The foundation also continues to support targeted studies, as well as participate in funding national studies that examine and elevate issues relating to women's economic security and women's leadership.

### **Growing Generations of Women Philanthropists:**

Dallas Women's Foundation's mission focuses on the advancement of women and girls and the empowerment of women's philanthropy. From its inception, the foundation has been a safe and trusted source for women's philanthropy education and has enabled women to embrace their power and voice as philanthropists. The foundation is proud of its 32-year history as an integral part of the women's philanthropy movement, and celebrates empowering multiple generations of women philanthropists who have unleashed their capacity and ability to create the change they seek in the world.

*“We have driven real change in our community and in our state. We have revealed the depth of the issues through solid, respected research, and made real and significant investments in effective solutions. And this has happened through the collective power of women giving together and speaking out together, to ensure we are building a better world for all women and girls.”*

*Roslyn Dawson Thompson  
President & CEO  
Dallas Women's Foundation*



**Mission:** To encourage philanthropy, foster leadership among women and support programs that enable women and children to reach their full potential.

- *Founded in 1995 as resident supporting organization of the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis; in 2002, became a stand-alone women's foundation*
- *\$5 million in total assets (2017)*
- *More than \$18.2 million in grants to almost 500 programs involving more than 100 local non-profits*
- *9 full-time staff members, 2 part-time staff member, 2 part-time volunteers*
- *10 trustees, 33 board of directors members*
- *Website: [www.wfgm.org](http://www.wfgm.org)*

In the early 1990s, while the late philanthropist Mertie Buckman and her husband were comparing the budgets of the nonprofit organizations they supported, they noted the disparity in money devoted to supporting economic security for women and girls. Familiar with women's funds forming across the country, Buckman sought to determine whether there was enough collective interest in forming a women's foundation in Memphis. Joined with Beth Dixon, vice president of development for the Community Foundation, they began by conducting focus groups to engage women in conversations about women's philanthropy and programs that would impact women and girls. Buckman made an initial investment of \$50,000 and formed a 10-member task force called Women in Philanthropy that would become the Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis (WFGM).

In 1995, the task force was renamed and set up as a resident supporting organization of the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis.

When the WFGM was established, the founders intentionally chose not to begin with the creation of an endowment. Mertie Buckman, Barbara Hyde and Jeanne Varnell made contributions equaling nearly \$1 million to establish a board-restricted reserve fund held at the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis. The board strongly believed the need in their community was immediate, and therefore focused its efforts on giving back to the community through grantmaking. Its operating budget is derived from the previous year's annual fund campaign, including gifts from individual donors, foundations, corporations and board members as well as proceeds from fundraising events. In 1996, the fund granted \$60,000 to community organizations.

With a desire to support programs and organizations that were making the greatest impact in the lives of women and girls, in 1997 the fund commissioned its first research study with the Center for Research on Women at the University of Memphis – a profile of women and girls in Shelby County.

The results of the study were shocking. In one zip code, the average annual household income was \$90,000. Less than 10 miles away, it was less than \$5,000. It became clear to the fund's leadership that they needed to focus their efforts on providing resources for low income women and girls. They especially sought to tackle the most intractable obstacles to economic security for low or no income women – lack of skill-based training, lack of access to quality childcare and lack of access to transportation.

Building on the momentum of its successful research, fundraising and grantmaking, the board of directors, with the support of the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis, voted in 2002 for the fund to

become a stand-alone women's foundation. That year, the fund gained its 501(c)(3) designation.

Since 2002, the foundation has strived to form a direct connection between the data from its research with its work and investment in the community. As a result, it has garnered several victories on behalf of women and girls in Memphis, including:

**Elevating Women's Philanthropy:** Since WFGM's early days when Mertie Buckman invited women to join the conversation about women's philanthropy, it has continued to encourage and elevate the role of women's philanthropy. The foundation has recognized women's contributions and leadership, amplifying the voice of women in the community as they advocate for social change.

**Raising \$8 Million for Low Income Families:**

Together with the City of Memphis and the Memphis Housing Authority, the foundation developed Urban Strategies Memphis HOPE, a public-private partnership that provides comprehensive, personalized case management services for families of targeted low income communities, a majority of which are led by single mothers. The foundation raised \$8 million over five years to implement a new model of case management, called Community Support Services (CSS), where women and their families receive wrap-around support. The foundation monitors program goals and evaluations to ensure the responsible use of investments made by local and national partners. Through Memphis HOPE, the foundation has been able to implement solutions derived from its research and become part of the national and local dialogue on poverty. Since its inception in 2005, the foundation has raised and leveraged more than \$8.5 million helping more than 3,000 families.

**Catalyzing Partnerships within the Community and on the National Level:** Out of the foundation's unique partnership with the City of Memphis and Memphis Housing Authority have come opportunities to leverage local funding to gain national funding and vice versa. Partnerships have also allowed the foundation to share its CSS model with other organizations around the country. In addition, by partnering with national and international women's research organizations, such as the Women's Funding Network, Tennessee Women's Fund Alliance, Walmart Partnership for Women's Prosperity, and Women's Economic Security Campaign, the foundation has strengthened its participation in national and global research initiatives.

*"The Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis' diverse leadership is highly respected in the community for its philanthropy and commitment to our mission. Our donors, both individuals and corporations, provide financial and volunteer resources supporting the women and children served, making a difference one family at a time and empowering success for all. We have a solid public-private partnership that engages strong collaboration between for-profit and nonprofit organizations."*

*Ruby Bright  
Executive Director and Chief Administrative Officer  
Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis*

**Mission:** The Women's Foundation of Minnesota invests in innovation to drive gender equity in Minnesota.

- *Founded in 1983, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota is the first and largest statewide women's foundation in the country*
- *\$26.1 million in total assets (2017)*
- *More than \$22 million in grants to community organizations*
- *17 total staff members, including one fellow and one intern*
- *20 trustees; bylaws allow for a maximum of 24 trustees*
- *Website: [www.wfmn.org](http://www.wfmn.org)*

In 1983, a group of women who had been involved in philanthropy in Minnesota came together out of a concern for the shortfall of funding for programs supporting women and girls as well as temporary, rather than long-term, solutions to entrenched problems.

The founders embarked on a year-long planning process, involving more than 400 women's organizations, foundations and individuals. The process culminated in a public symposium in May 1983 to discuss the special needs of women and girls and identify resources to meet those needs. From these discussions arose four pressing issues affecting women and girls in Minnesota that have become funding priorities for the foundation: 1) economic security; 2) domestic violence; 3) lack of leadership opportunities; and 4) health and reproductive rights.

The founders felt strongly that despite the urgent need for solutions to these issues, their priority was to establish a sustainable organization that could help solve problems today while ensuring that it would be able to meet community needs tomorrow. To do this, the fund was created as a designated area fund within the Minneapolis Foundation, and for the first three years of its existence, its fundraising focus was on building an endowment.

In 1985, the fund received its first \$1 million gift, and, in 1986, it began making grants to community organizations across the state.

The fund had built into its fund agreement with the Minneapolis Foundation that it could become independent at any time. The founders felt this was especially important, as the purpose of the community foundation was to serve as an incubator for the fund, not to provide ongoing support. By 1989, the women's fund had raised \$5 million toward its endowment fund, and members of its advisory board felt it was strong enough to operate as a stand-alone women's foundation with its own 501(c)(3).

Since then, the foundation has grown its endowment to \$15 million, while also building temporary restricted funds totalling to \$10 million. The foundation is able to grant more than \$2 million each year to community organizations and has become one of the largest women's foundations in the nation. Foundations, corporations and women and men, including women of color, women from all socio-economic levels, and urban, suburban and rural women, made this possible.

Among its greatest achievements are:

**Using Research to Inform Grantmaking:** In the early 2000s, the foundation's strategic planning

process led to greater focus on grantmaking. In response, the foundation conducted a listening tour in 14 communities across Minnesota to identify the most pressing issues facing women and girls. Every community visited echoed the same concern – the economic and social hardships facing girls, such as lack of leadership opportunities, trajectory of violence, body image issues and additional responsibilities girls have within the home. The foundation used this research to develop girlsBEST (girls Building Economic Success Together), a grantmaking and public awareness program to place girls on a path to prosperity. In 2008, the girlsBEST fund became the first permanently endowed program for girls in the United States. Since the program's inception in 2002, more than 2,500 girls have participated in the program. Of those, 100% graduated from high school (compared to 65-93%\* statewide), 97% enrolled in postsecondary school (compared to 34-54%\* statewide), and had a teen pregnancy rate of 3 in 1000 (compared to 32-132\* statewide).

\* *Dependent on ethnicity*

#### **Serving as a Catalyst for Constructive Policymaking:**

In 2014, the foundation's research on economic issues affecting women, conducted in partnership with the University of Minnesota Humphrey School's Center on Women & Public Policy, was used to pass the Women's Economic Security Act, 14 bills designed to improve women's economic well-being in Minnesota. Funding from the Women's Foundation of Minnesota supported the MN Coalition for Women's Economic Security and was used to hire a lobbyist who helped navigate the political field to make the Act become a reality.

**Responding to Community Concerns:** Motivated by grantees and colleagues in Minnesota's criminal justice system, the foundation became increasingly concerned about the issue of child sex trafficking, a crime that targets all children, but particularly girls. In July 2010,

it convened 100 stakeholders – donors, elected officials, state agencies, advocates, corporations, law enforcement, judges, faith communities and more – to create a strategic blueprint to combat child sex trafficking in the state. The result was MN Girls Are Not For Sale, the foundation's five-year, \$5 million campaign to galvanize resources to end child sex trafficking in Minnesota through grantmaking, research, public education and convening. Since the campaign's launch in November 2011, the foundation has helped pass the state's Safe Harbor Law, which decriminalizes trafficked children under 18 and mandates safe housing and trauma-informed care. The foundation also helped create a comprehensive statewide response in the *No Wrong Door* model, which has increased housing and trauma-informed care for victims, from two beds in 2011 to 41 beds today (May 2015), with a total of 60 beds projected by January 2016. The foundation has leveraged resources to attract a total of \$8 million in state funding (as of May 2015) to fund *No Wrong Door*. Minnesota is the first state in the nation to provide state funding for sex trafficking victims.

*“We don't want to fix things for just one person – we want to figure out which policies, protocols and laws need to be changed so that we can make that change for women today and for those coming up behind them. That will be our enduring legacy.”*

*Lee Roper-Batker, President and CEO  
Women's Foundation of Minnesota*

**Mission:** The Women's Foundation of Montana advances economic independence for Montana women and creates a brighter future for girls.

- *Founded in 1999 as an endowed fund of the Montana Community Foundation*
- *\$1.3 million endowment (2017)*
- *More than \$730,000 in grants awarded to more than 30 community organizations*
- *One full-time staff member*
- *9 advisory board members; bylaws allow for a maximum of 11 members*
- *Website: [www.wfmontana.org](http://www.wfmontana.org)*

The Women's Foundation of Montana (WFM) was established in 1999 with a \$500,000 challenge grant from Chambers Family Fund to the Montana Community Foundation. Chambers Family Fund sought to build a permanent resource for women and girls in Montana, where the family's oil business previously operated.

The challenge was met in January 2005 when the \$500,000 from Chambers Family Fund was matched dollar-for-dollar to establish the initial \$1 million permanent endowment for the Women's Foundation of Montana. Chambers Family Fund also provided funding for operations and grantmaking to allow WFM to demonstrate impact across the state while building an endowment.

Today, the Women's Foundation of Montana continues to build its endowment to create a permanent source of capital to advance women's

economic independence and a brighter future for girls. WFM has used its endowment as its primary source of funding for grants to community organizations. The fund also engages in strategic fundraising and holds a large annual fundraiser as well as smaller house parties to support grantmaking and operations.

Organizationally, the Women's Foundation of Montana considers its partnership with the Montana Community Foundation invaluable. WFM credits the community foundation with providing financial stability through back-office support, introductions to strategic local and national resources and access to donors.

Montana ranks 46th in the nation in women's pay and Montana women earn only 75¢ for every dollar men earn. The Women's Foundation of Montana researched the needs of women's organizations in Montana and in its 2001 needs assessment learned that, in addition to increased levels of financial resources, the organizations' greatest needs were for attitudinal shifts regarding the role of women in society and the workplace. There was also a need for organizations working on women and girls' issues to share information, expertise and experience in order to build a more efficient network serving women and girls. In April 2002, the foundation convened representatives from 22 of Montana's women-serving nonprofit organizations. This laid the groundwork for a strong statewide network and ongoing opportunities for the exchange of knowledge, experience and expertise, particularly among organizations operating with few resources in rural Montana. As a result of this initial research and discussion, the Women's Foundation of Montana chose to focus its grantmaking and initiatives on advancing women's economic independence and opportunities.

The Women's Foundation of Montana considers these its greatest achievements:

**Raising the Profile of the Economic Status of Women in Montana:**

In 2004, the Women's Foundation of Montana partnered with the Institute for Women's Policy Research to research and publish its first Status of Women in Montana report. The fund has published two updates since – in 2012 and, most recently, in 2015. The fund's publication of status of women reports has raised awareness of issues facing women and started productive conversations that led to the fund's participation on the governor's Equal Pay for Equal Work Task Force. In collaboration with this group, the fund hosted two statewide Equal Pay Summits to raise awareness of the gender wage gap and advocate for stronger education and training programs, jobs, benefits and economic development.

**Protecting Montana Women from Predatory Lending Practices:**

Between 2006 and 2010, the fund funded advocacy efforts to change policy around predatory payday lending practices. In 2010, advocacy efforts were successful, capping payday lending rates at 36%, helping to protect Montana women for years to come.

**Taking the Lead on Behalf of Women and Girls in Montana:**

The Women's Foundation of Montana has raised the profile of women's philanthropy in a state where few organizations actively engage donors to support women and girls. For the fund, this has meant taking the lead on funding pilot programs to help women and girls that would otherwise not exist. Additionally, the fund has developed its own initiatives, including hosting educational events and webinars to teach women how to negotiate better wages and launching PowerHouse Montana, an online network connecting women and employers in Montana.

*“Our work has brought together people who care about women’s issues – nonprofits working with women and girls, business sector and policy experts. Through our convenings, we have initiated big conversations about what women need to be economically successful. In a state as vast and rural as ours, unless you make these conversations happen, they will not.”*

*Jen Euell, Program Director  
Women's Foundation of Montana*



# Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania

**Mission:** Women and Girls Foundation achieves equality for women and girls, now and for generations to come.

- *Founded in 2002 as a stand-alone women's foundation*
- *\$420,000 in total assets (2017)*
- *\$1.25 million awarded in grants to community organizations*
- *Three full-time staff members, one part-time staff member and two interns*
- *18 board members, maximum of 21 board members allowed by bylaws*
- *Website: [www.wgfpa.org](http://www.wgfpa.org)*

Inspired by a keynote speech given by philanthropist Teresa Heinz, from western Pennsylvania, at a Council on Foundations conference for women in philanthropy in the late 1990s, two women from the Pittsburgh area became motivated to establish a women's fund in their area.

They gathered friends and held a series of house parties before expanding to conducting focus groups. After receiving a grant, they held focus groups in 11 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania to research the feasibility and need for a women's fund. While the traditional philanthropic community did not see a need for a women's fund, data and research indicated that women and girls disagreed.

In 2002, the Women and Girls Foundation was incorporated. The foundation has operated independently since its founding. The initial focus of the founders was to make grants rather than

establish an endowment. Thus, the foundation began grantmaking in 2004. When the foundation came to maturity in 2009, the Great Recession prevented fundraising efforts for an endowment. An endowment has not yet been created.

Advocacy has become an important part of the foundation's strategic plan and its identity. In the late 1990s, Pennsylvania ranked 48th out of 50 states for women's representation in politics. The lack of women in politics impacted legislation that was passed, much of which did not adequately address the needs of women and girls in the state. To help raise awareness of political inequalities and discover long-term solutions to combat them, the Women and Girls Foundation has focused on investing in public policy initiatives affecting women and girls that will result in long-term systemic change.

The Women and Girls Foundation counts the following as its greatest successes:

**Building From the Local Level:** One of the first grants the foundation made was to a local organization, Lydia's Place, in 2005 to support advocacy efforts in Allegheny County to ban the shackling of female prisoners during childbirth. The organization succeeded in establishing the ban at the county level, and the foundation followed up with a larger grant to build a coalition at the state level. Several partner organizations and additional grantees, including the ACLU and New Voices for Reproductive Justice, led this coalition effort. Legislation was passed in 2010 that banned shackling of female prisoners during childbirth throughout Pennsylvania.

**Turning Failure into Success:** An early grant made to The Midwife Center for Birth and Women's Health to help low income women access midwife services on "Well Women Tuesdays" had little success. In

reviewing the challenges faced by the center, the foundation learned that midwife services were not covered by Medicaid, giving low income women little possibility of seeking the services. The Women and Girls Foundation made a new grant to the Center to advocate for coverage of midwife services by state Medicaid. The center succeeded, and the foundation made another grant to the center to support its participation in a national coalition advocating for coverage of midwife services in the Affordable Care Act. This effort was successful, resulting in millions more women having access to these services.

**Engaging Girls and Young Women:** In addition to grantmaking, the Women and Girls Foundation also operates its own programs, including GirlGov. It is a free, year-long program for teenage girls in Pennsylvania that provides girls with the opportunity to learn about civics, women's history and leadership, and to get involved in government. At age 14, Sarah Pesj, a high school freshman and former victim of stalking, wrote a bill to enhance protections for victims of stalking. Three years later, as a participant in GirlGov, she learned advocacy skills to help move the bill through the state legislature. In 2014, six years after its writing, Sarah's Bill was passed into law in Pennsylvania, ensuring that victims of stalking by someone other than a family member or intimate partner have access to protective orders.

*“Women and Girls Foundation has made a significant impact on many issues – wage equality, political representation and representation of women on corporate boards – in southwest Pennsylvania. While we cannot take sole credit because many organizations have been involved, we have been instrumental in moving people from talk to action. Many of these issues had not changed in many years. While there is still a lot of work to do, much has changed since our creation.”*

*Heather Arnet, Chief Executive Officer  
Women and Girls Foundation of  
Southwest Pennsylvania*



**Mission:** Washington Area Women's Foundation mobilizes our community to ensure that economically vulnerable women and girls in the Washington region have the resources they need to thrive.

- *Founded in 1998 as a stand-alone women's foundation*
- *\$2.2 million in total assets (2016)*
- *More than \$12 million in grants to community organizations (December 2016)*
- *15 full-time staff members*
- *16 board members (June 2017), bylaws allow up to 21 board members*
- *Website: [www.thewomensfoundation.org](http://www.thewomensfoundation.org)*

Surprised that there was not a women's fund in our nation's capital, a group of women who were familiar with the women's foundations in California and Colorado came together in the late 1990s to talk about what was needed to create one. They gathered friends and family and held a house party to raise money for what would become Washington Area Women's Foundation. In 1998, Washington Area Women's Foundation received its 501(c)(3) status, and a full-time executive director was hired. It raised \$35,000 in its first year of operation and made grants of \$17,000.

Because it was established as an independent entity, Washington Area Women's Foundation had to create its own infrastructure. A very active working board, including corporate women who were able to attract corporate support in the form of capacity building grants, helped to provide operational resources

needed by the foundation in its early years. The foundation leaned heavily on the expertise of its board members who provided support in areas of finance, communications and fundraising. Staff members now perform those tasks in-house.

The initial fundraising focus of the foundation was on small nonprofits that were unlikely to receive funding from larger funders in the region. Since then, the foundation has sharpened its focus to concentrate on supporting the economic security of women and girls.

The foundation considers the following to be its greatest achievements:

### **Gaining a Reputation for Expertise through**

**Research:** In 2003, the foundation published a research report called the Portrait Project, which provided a comprehensive look at the status of women and girls in the Washington, DC area. It was the first time such comprehensive research had been done on women and girls in the region. The Portrait Project has become a touchstone for the foundation. A collaborative project, it was emblematic of the foundation's inclusive approach – community-based organizations, foundations, research institutions and individuals all played a part in the research. A follow-up report was completed in 2010, and today, policymakers, media and other nonprofits regularly seek the foundation out as the authority on women and girls in the region. To increase the foundation's ability to produce and disseminate important data around the status of women and girls in the Washington region with greater frequency, and build the in-house evaluation capacity across the organization, the Washington Area Women's Foundation added a research and evaluations program officer position to the staff in 2014. The organization is able to produce a variety of original

research/education products to the community on a regular basis including infographics, fact sheets and in-depth issue briefs on a range of topics related to the economic security of women and girls.

**Using Strategic Grantmaking to Drive Change:** The findings that emerged from the Portrait Project – the principal conclusion of which was that low income single mothers and their children were the most economically vulnerable in the region – led to the foundation's multi-year initiative, Stepping Stones. This initiative focuses on building long-term economic security and financial independence of women, with a special emphasis on female-headed households, who are living at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. As of December 2014, the foundation had invested nearly \$8 million into community-based organizations through Stepping Stones which, in turn, has raised the income and assets of low income women by \$49 million through higher wages, decreased debt, tax credits, increased savings and growing equity related to homeownership.

**Influencing Others to Use a Gender Lens:**

Washington Area Women's Foundation made a grant to Goodwill of Greater Washington, a multimillion dollar organization with a much larger footprint than the foundation itself. The grant was to support the planning of a vocational training program in construction for women. After the program was implemented, Goodwill shared what it had learned with the foundation. It realized that women required a set of services they had not anticipated and asked for another grant to hire a case manager who could assist the women in the program with barriers they were facing outside of the curriculum such as child care, transportation support and other wrap-around services. After several years, Goodwill recognized that although it was helping the women in the

program overcome barriers with the help of the Foundation's continued grants, it was not helping its own female employees. As an organization, it implemented the same kind of case management for their own employees. Catherine Meloy, President and CEO of Goodwill, attributed this cultural shift to its work with Washington Area Women's Foundation.

*“One of the greatest ways Washington Area Women's Foundation has impacted the community is by influencing people and organizations to think about programs using a gender lens. Being at tables where we can ask these questions – did you look at the data by gender? Are you noticing different outcomes with women and girls? – spurs others to think about their work in a different way. Because we are considered an expert on women and girls, people trust us. We are able to bring together people who might not do so otherwise. By joining unlikely partners and different viewpoints, we're able to come up with better solutions.”*

*Jennifer Lockwood-Shabat, President and CEO  
Washington Area Women's Foundation*

American Association of University of Women  
[www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org)

Assets and Opportunities Scorecard (CFED)  
[www.assetsandopportunities.org](http://www.assetsandopportunities.org)

Charity Navigator  
[www.charitynavigator.org](http://www.charitynavigator.org)

Corporation for Enterprise Development  
[www.cfed.org](http://www.cfed.org)

Council on Foundations  
[www.cof.org](http://www.cof.org)

Criterion Institute  
[www.criterioninstitute.org](http://www.criterioninstitute.org)

EY Report on Gender Parity: Women. Fast Forward.  
[http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership/\\$FILE/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership/$FILE/ey-women-fast-forward-thought-leadership.pdf)

Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media  
[www.seejane.org](http://www.seejane.org)

GirlsHealth.gov  
[www.girlshealth.gov](http://www.girlshealth.gov)

GuideStar  
[www.guidestar.org](http://www.guidestar.org)

Institute for Women's Policy Research (IWPR)  
[www.iwpr.org](http://www.iwpr.org)

International Center for Research on Women  
[www.icrw.org](http://www.icrw.org)

9to5, National Association of Working Women  
[www.9to5.org](http://www.9to5.org)

National Center for Family Philanthropy  
[www.ncfp.org](http://www.ncfp.org)

National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy  
[www.ncrh.org](http://www.ncrh.org)

National Women's Health Information Center  
[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov)

National Women's Health Resource Center  
[www.healthywomen.org](http://www.healthywomen.org)

National Women's Studies Association  
[www.nwsa.org](http://www.nwsa.org)

Re:Gender (National Council for Research on Women)  
[www.regender.org](http://www.regender.org)

SheSource.org  
[www.shesource.org](http://www.shesource.org)

Social Investment Forum  
[www.ussif.org](http://www.ussif.org)

SPARK Movement  
[www.sparksummit.org](http://www.sparksummit.org)

Ultraviolet  
[www.weareultraviolet.org](http://www.weareultraviolet.org)

Wider Opportunities for Women  
[www.wowonline.org](http://www.wowonline.org)

Women's Funding Network  
[www.womensfundingnetwork.org](http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org)

Women's Media Center  
[www.womensmediacenter.org](http://www.womensmediacenter.org)

---

## RESOURCES

Women's Perspective  
[www.womensperspective.org](http://www.womensperspective.org)

Women's Philanthropy Institute  
<https://philanthropy.iupui.edu/institutes/womens-philanthropy-institute/>

Women's Sports Foundation  
[www.womenssportsfoundation.org](http://www.womenssportsfoundation.org)

Dallas Women's Foundation would like to thank, first and foremost, Chambers Family Fund, for its generosity and leadership in developing the first edition of *Creating a Women's Fund* and for helping make the second edition possible.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the women's foundations that generously shared expertise, experience and time with us to help create this guide.

They include:

**Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona**

Dawne Bell, CEO  
Laura Penny, former CEO

**Women's Foundation of California**

Surina Khan, CEO  
Kelly Pierce, Executive Assistant

**Chicago Foundation for Women**

K. Sujata, President/CEO  
April Caller, Manager of Communications

**Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis**

Ruby Bright, Executive Director and CAO  
Brittany Tuggle, Executive Assistant

**Women's Foundation of Minnesota**

Lee Roper-Batker, President and CEO  
Prisca Lupambo, Campaign Manager, MN Girls Are Not for Sale

**Women's Foundation of Montana**

Jen Euell, Program Director

**Women and Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania**

Heather Arnet, Chief Executive Officer

**Washington Area Women's Foundation**

Jennifer Lockwood Shabat, President and CEO  
Nicole Cozier, Chief Operating Officer