



POLICY ADVOCACY + GENDER EQUITY  
+ LEARNING COMMUNITY = RECIPE FOR  
SCALING TWO-GENERATION STRATEGIES

YEAR 2 EVALUATION | 2018

# Meet the Cohort

Women's economic equity and security is the number one priority for women's foundations, and two-generation strategies are a proven solution for empowering not only women but entire families to thrive. The Women's Funding Network (WFN), in partnership with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, launched the **Two-Generation Policy Advocacy Cohort** to expand the engagement and influence of women's foundations in two-generation work, bringing a gender equity lens to this effort.

This three-year policy advocacy initiative is designed to:

1. Foster connection and capacity across women's foundations to implement strategies that deepen and broaden two-generation (also referred to as "2Gen") work.
2. Create cross-foundation capacity to advance local and state two-generation policy goals that further a whole-family agenda, with a focus on employment as a means towards economic equity for women.
3. Increase local, place-based engagement in two-generation policy strategies.
4. Engage broader philanthropic circles to co-invest in two-generation work through local influence strategies.

The initiative launched in 2017. Early efforts focused on designing the cohort model and generating a request for proposals (RFP) to participate, as well as convening a meeting in Chicago to discuss this learning community opportunity with women's foundations engaged in two-generation work.

Four women's foundations — The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, The Women's Foundation of Colorado, Texas Women's Foundation, and Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona — were selected to participate, each bringing a history of supporting two-generation programming. They aim to **scale up two-generation strategies within their communities by advocating for policy and system changes that will support women's economic equity and security.**

The first full year of implementation ended in November 2018. This report, based on surveys, review of existing materials, and interviews with representatives from each of the four foundations as well as WFN Chief Strategist Marcia Coné; Learning Community Manager, Sarah Griffen; and Coach Roxane White, summarizes:

- » where 2gen policy efforts are now
- » where they are headed next
- » whether and how being in this cohort is beginning to help them get there



THE WOMEN'S FUND  
OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM



*Then:* WFGB entered the cohort with five years of experience in two-generation programming in a policy environment **resistant to two-generation solutions.**

*Now:* WFGB experienced the power of collaboration and coalition when they partnered to secure **passage of the 2018 Child Care Safety Act**, ensuring proper licensing and inspection of all child care centers.



The Women's  
Foundation of Colorado

*Then:* WFCO entered the cohort with experience in legislative policy advocacy and administrative advocacy in a state context that **embraces two-generation strategies.**

*Now:* WFCO has become an active leader among the existing statewide 2Gen Network and Strengthening Working Families Initiative. WFCO leadership, active network of advocates, and work by grantee partners has **secured policy wins and expanded resources for families.**



WOMEN'S  
FOUNDATION  
of Southern Arizona

*Then:* WFSA entered the cohort in a context of healthcare and workforce development advancements in the state, yet working in a policy environment that is **resistant to two-generation solutions.**

*Now:* Through research, strategy, and relationship building, WFSA has made tremendous progress with an ongoing **legislative proposal to amend definitions around the child care subsidy** in Arizona to include education and not just work efforts.



Texas  
Women's  
Foundation

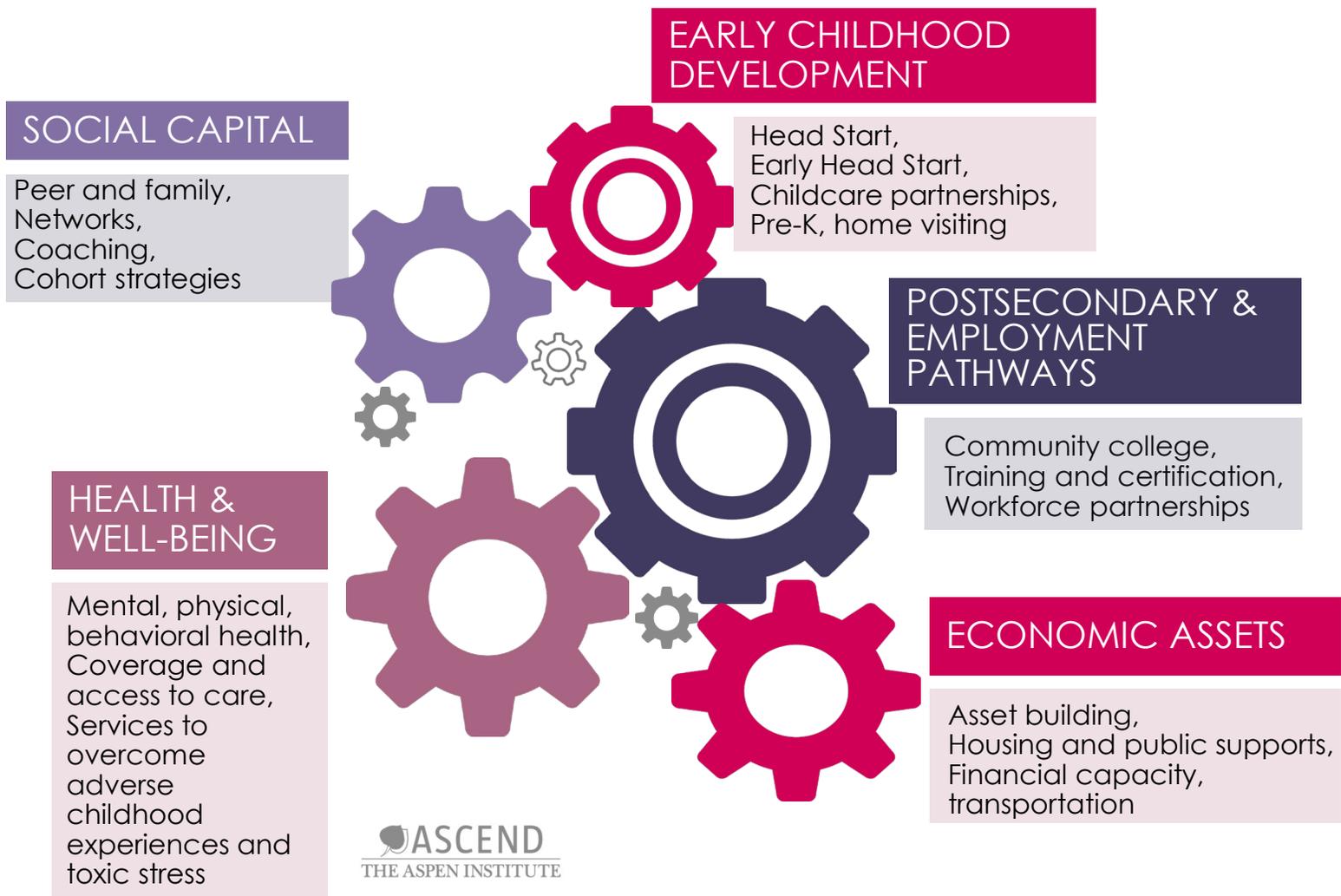
*Then:* TXWF entered the cohort with close to five years of policy advocacy and lobbying experience in a state context **resistant to two-generation strategies.**

*Now:* TXWF widened its advocacy efforts beyond lobbying elected officials, and is now partnering with grantees and stakeholders through investment & strategy. TXWF celebrated policy wins related to child care and making **comprehensive benefits more accessible for families.**

# What is 2Gen?

Two-generation approaches focus on creating opportunities for and addressing needs of both children and the adults in their lives together. The approach recognizes that families come in all different shapes and sizes and that families define themselves. Whole-family approaches focus equally and intentionally on services and opportunities for the child and the adults in their lives. They articulate and track outcomes for both children and adults simultaneously.

There are 5 Key Components of the Two-Generation Approach: 1) Postsecondary Education and Employment Pathways; 2) Early Childhood Education and Development; 3) Economic Assets; 4) Health and Well-Being; and 5) Social Capital.



While 2Gen policy advocacy seeks to pass policies that support the core key 2Gen components, the nature of this work is quite different than 2Gen practice. Advocates must become knowledgeable about and strategic in navigating the broader policy landscape. This may include identifying and building trust with state stakeholders, as well as identifying stakeholders who may oppose 2Gen policies that they perceive are threatening to their own policy priorities. Advocates must also become familiar with how state agencies work (or don't work) with one another and gain support from public officials.

2Gen policy advocates must be strategic in what policies they introduce, when they introduce it, and how they frame these policies to gain the political will of public officials and other interested parties. This requires advocates to start with a clear understanding of their 2Gen policy agenda and determine if they can propose a 2Gen policy that includes the *whole family* or to scaffold pursuit of their policy goals within that agenda. For example, the political environment may be ripe for passage of a policy focused on improving low-income families' access to quality child care but not currently supportive of increased funding for workforce development. The key is to remain attentive to the organization's 2Gen policy agenda.



## POLICY GOALS:

- WFGB has been creating and investing in two-gen models for low-income female-headed households for the last four years. Their goal is to expand these strategies and advocate for the alignment of public funding streams and other critical policies that lead to economic opportunity for women and quality child care for their children.
- **2Gen focus areas:** early childhood development, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets and social capital

## YEAR 1 PROGRESS

- In partnership and under the campaign strategy led by the state's leading legislative advocate for children, VOICES for Alabama's Children, WFGB coalesced with more than 23 organizations from multi-sectors to secure an incremental and historic victory requiring more child care centers in the state to be licensed and inspected by the Department of Human Resources.
- WFGB had to make several shifts in their strategy based on negotiations on the bill that threatened to water down the impact of the legislation. Their coalition drew on the strength of organizing partners to increase pressure on lawmakers during tough negotiations.
- The coalition also hosted a series of lobby days at the capitol on days that coincided with votes. Sharing stories from impacted families proved to be a useful strategy.
- Given the early and unexpected timing of the Child Care Safety Act win, WFGB commissioned research to study alignment of public funding and reassess their new policy goals.

## POLICY WINS

- WFGB and its partners secured the passage of the 2018 Child Care Safety Act — requiring more child care centers in the state to be licensed and inspected by the Department of Human Resources. Ensuring that children have access to safe, quality child care is a core component of 2Gen practice as it paves the way for the long-term well-being of children and their families. This victory for young children and working families will require that all centers serving children who receive subsidy be licensed and inspected, accounting for roughly half of unregulated centers in the state. One example of this new policy is that it ensures that children have safe egress from the building in the event of a fire. Although the exemption remains intact for some faith-based centers, the passage of the policy ensures they shall conduct background checks on all employees and volunteers; submit to annual health and fire inspections; and post signage in plain view indicating their designation as an exempt provider, among other key requirements.

## CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

- WFGB drew upon the strength of organizing partners within their coalition to ramp up pressure on lawmakers during tough negotiations. The message of its opposition was unconstitutional and discriminatory. Given the resistant political climate, WFGB noted "we had to arm ourselves with the voices of those who can speak to all arguments that arise." Not only did they include legal and subject matter experts, but they also ensured women's voices were at the table.
- During a leadership transition, the foundation lost a leader who was experienced in constitutional law and policy development. However, their new leader is an experienced lobbyist and the foundation has plans to further invest in staff's capacity to continue their engagement in policy advocacy.
- Although WFGB will continue their efforts to conduct research and inform their efforts with evidence-based practices, the results of the Year 1 report turned up more questions than answers, forcing the foundation to return to the drawing board and reconsider if they are asking the right research questions.

## NEXT STEPS

- WFGB seeks to expand the Child Care Safety Act to include all child care centers.
- The foundation recognizes that the passage of the Child Care Safety Act would not have been possible without strategic collaboration and coalition. As such, developing a new policy strategy will take continued building of coalition support, developing legislative champions, unifying its message, broadening media outreach, and advocating to make 2Gen a priority among other competing and equally important policy goals.



## POLICY GOALS

- WFCO is working to link early childhood education (ECE) and workforce development resources to better serve families on the path to economic security.
- **2Gen focus areas:** early childhood development, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets, and social capital

## YEAR 1 PROGRESS

- Participation in the 2Gen cohort opened up many doors for WFCO to build upon their social capital by deepening connections with two-generation leaders in the state, such as organizations in the Statewide 2G Network and Strengthening Working Families Initiative (SWFI).
- Throughout the 2018 gubernatorial campaign, WFCO met with both major party candidates to share information about the needs of women and families, prioritizing 2Gen policies as an agenda item for both candidates. These meetings positioned WFCO as an influential leader and knowledgeable resource for Governor-Elect Jared Polis' administration.
- With technical assistance funds from WFN, WFCO provided capacity building opportunities to help its grantee partners to learn about 2Gen strategies.
- WFCO established and convened a working group of 50 diverse leaders of the early child care, education, and workforce development sectors from across the state to link early care and education systems and resources with workforce development and adult education resources and systems.

## POLICY WINS

- WFCO and its statewide network of advocates secured unanimous support from the Joint Budget Committee to pass a bill reauthorizing the ReHire transitional employment program. Continuation of the program provides vital resources for women overcoming barriers to employment.
- Working in close collaboration with the Speaker of the House, WFCO advocated for expansion of the child care expenses income tax credit, HB18-1208, which passed with bipartisan support in both the House and Senate.
- WFCO played an integral role in passage of the child care contribution tax credit, HB18-1004, to incentivize charitable giving to child care providers.
- WFCO's grantee partner Colorado Center on Law and Policy (CCLP) successfully led the charge for a rule change to increase the TANF basic cash assistance grant by 10 percent.

## CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

- WFCO recognizes that 2Gen work is broad and requires stepping back to see the big picture of serving families rather than focusing on either children or parents individually. As such, the foundation continues to face challenges aligning siloed systems across the state to work together. WFCO has learned that bridging siloed partners requires significant time and capacity to develop a deep understanding of one another, unified mission, and shared language.
- The foundation is experiencing an interesting point of reflection as their internal mission does not perfectly align with the priorities of the collective state-based group of 2Gen partners. WFCO is committed to improving access and opportunities for women to earn livable wages; meanwhile, the broader 2Gen community is focused on supporting women to access careers in early childhood through apprenticeships. WFCO is grappling with how to align these priorities as they know from experience that child care workers do not always receive livable wages in Colorado.

## NEXT STEPS

- During the first year, WFCO engaged in a planning period to understand the landscape of Colorado's 2Gen practice and policy networks. They are moving forward with working groups of 2Gen partners to breakdown the siloes.
- To continue their commitment to livable wages while serving as a collaborative leader in the state's 2Gen effort, WFCO plans to advance inclusive and meaningful apprenticeship opportunities, by applying their policy experience, leveraging WFN's investment, building on crucial partnerships with policy and direct service partners with relevant expertise, developing trust and buy-in with employers, and cultivating relationships with administrative and elected leaders as champions and supporters.



## POLICY GOALS

- WFSA has introduced legislation (SB1173) to amend definitions around the child care subsidy in Arizona, to include education and not just work efforts as qualifying for the subsidy. This will support more women to pursue post-secondary education that will ultimately lead to greater economic well-being, a core 2Gen concept.
- The foundation is also pursuing inclusion of financial support for a 2Gen CTE/Childcare pilot program in the Governor's upcoming 2019 budget.
- **2Gen focus areas:** early childhood development, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets, and social capital

## YEAR 1 PROGRESS

- WFSA conducted research and shared results with policymakers to demonstrate the need for child care as an important component of workforce development.
- WFSA began conversations with the Governor's Office to generate programmatic support for a 2Gen pilot program involving career/technical education and child care. These efforts informed WFSA's strategy to create a legislative proposal to amend definitions around child care subsidy in Arizona to include education and not just work efforts.
- WFSA conducted focus groups with women who would benefit from 2Gen programming and policies and developed a Family Advisory Council to review research reports and provide their perspectives to shape legislative work.

## POLICY ADVANCEMENT

- WFSA is currently generating bipartisan support for a bill to amend definitions around child care subsidies to include education in addition to employment. A Republican senator has championed the bill SB1173 along with another Republican and a Democrat co-authors, allowing it to pass in the State Senate with full support. It is currently moving forward through the Appropriation Committee and then will be sent for a vote in the House.
- The Family Advisory Council has been meeting monthly to review research, and they attended WFSA's Advocacy Day at the State Capitol and participated in meetings with 15 legislators to encourage support of SB1173. Their personal experiences and first-hand accounts of the importance of child care coupled with educational access has enhanced WFSA's social capital and been incredible assets to the policy dialogue.

## CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

- In Year 1, WFSA was met with unexpected enthusiasm for a 2Gen pilot program, and was being considered for inclusion in the Governor's budget, though ultimately that funding was not included in last year's budget.
- WFSA's child care subsidy bill faced opposition from the child care association based on concern that the bill would increase the Department of Economic Security's subsidy waitlist and would introduce competition for Community Development Block Grant funding. The foundation overcame the objection through advice of its lobbyists to amend the language to ensure educational qualification for the child care subsidy is available to those who are already in the program. WFSA noted that hiring a lobbying firm (outside of WFN funding) was a turning point in terms of closing the research-grantmaking-advocacy circle of their foundation.
- Relationship building with public officials in the Governor's office was a key advocacy strategy in Year 1. WFSA's CEO transitioned at the start of the year. The relationships that she had built with public officials are being rebuilt by the new CEO – recognizing they are key to gaining support and continuing the policy momentum. The foundation plans to utilize process metrics they learned during the evaluation capacity building to ensure internal changes in their organization does not lead them off track.

## NEXT STEPS

- WFSA plans to continue championing passage of SB1173.
- The foundation will also pursue inclusion of financial support for 2Gen CTE/Childcare pilot program in the Governor's upcoming 2019 budget.



## POLICY GOALS

- TXWF is prioritizing policy work aimed at ensuring that low-income families have access to child care as this is a key support women need in order to work or attend post-secondary education which will lead to economic well-being. They are advancing several child care-related policies as described in the NEXT STEPS section below.
- The foundation was originally focused on administrative changes at the state level; however, they are now focusing on two pilot programs that can provide effective 2Gen change at a more incremental level. One pilot seeks to provide access to afterschool programming and the other is focused on increasing the number of quality teachers by recruiting retired teachers.
- **2Gen focus areas:** early childhood development, postsecondary and employment pathways, economic assets, health and well-being, and social capital

## YEAR 1 PROGRESS

- TXWF built their social capital by bringing women's voices and perspectives to the table among coalitions, such as Early Matters Dallas and After the Bell Alliance, elevating the impact of 2Gen work on both women and children.
- TXWF staff, volunteers, and partners met with the Texas Workforce Commission, Health and Human Services Commission, Workforce Solutions, state senators and representatives, and other local and state administrations.
- Beyond advocating with elected officials, TXWF has utilized their social capital to widen their advocacy efforts and demonstrate incremental changes through pilot projects that provide groundwork for future governmental support.

## POLICY WINS

- Texas Workforce Commission has agreed to allow a common child care subsidy application across the state. Benefit websites for TANF/SNAP and child care subsidies will be linked to one another by this summer (2019) to help parents know the full range of benefits they are eligible for, including services related to health and well-being.
- The Legislative Budget Board approved an increase in Child Care Development Block Grant subsidy reimbursement rates to providers who are Texas Rising Star certified, helping support child care networks in lower income communities for infant and toddler care.

## CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNED

- TXWF's collaborations were key to the policy wins described above. However progress slowed considerably when the three top commission and staff contacts at Texas Workforce Commission resigned forcing the foundation to start over and develop relationships with the new commissioners and staff.
- TXWF made the bold move to transition from a regional foundation (the Dallas Women's Foundation) to a statewide organization in Year 1. With that transition, they are learning how to scale their approach and connect with other partners in the broader 2Gen network of Texas, and at the same time they are dealing with internal reorganization and staff changes inherent in such a transition.

## NEXT STEPS

- TXWF is introducing legislation that will enable school districts to partner with high quality childhood education centers to offer pre-k for four-year-old children at their facility.
- TXWF is also pursuing legislation that will allow local control over which centers workforce development child care subsidies can be applied, with the aim of reducing financial hardship of absenteeism on providers.
- The foundation also plans to create postsecondary and employment pathways by facilitating access to career-focused education for parents of graduating high school seniors and provide ongoing school and career mentorship.

# cohort roadmaps: from learning to action



Research conducted by the Women's Funding Network demonstrates that increasing the depth of involvement by women's foundations has significant potential to more deeply embed a gender and racial equity lens within two-generation strategies, particularly as it relates to systems and policy work within the two-generation field. In its first year, members of the policy advocacy learning community have experienced tangible benefits from participating in community learning offerings, such as web-based and in-person meetings, peer-to-peer telephone calls, coaching, and technical assistance. The following roadmap outlines the journey of the cohort's learning activities and strategies that have led to notable Year 1 outcomes.

## DECEMBER 2017

Introduction to 2Gen Policy Advocacy Cohort

## FEBRUARY 2018

Learning Community Launch + Introduction to 2Gen Practice & Policy Webinar

## APRIL 2018

2Gen Theory of Change Framework Webinar featuring Marjorie Sims, Managing Director of Ascend

## JUNE 2018

In-Person Cohort Convening in New York City

## JUNE 2018

Evaluating Policy Efforts Webinar featuring Lisa Korwin, Principal of Korwin Consulting

## PEER LEARNING CALLS

Every 6 to 8 weeks, the foundations participate in peer learning calls to share experiences, exchange resources, and update one another on progress or challenges.

## DECEMBER 2018

Lessons from the Field: 2Gen Programs to Inform and Move Policy Webinar featuring Melanie Bridgeforth, CEO of the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham and Amy Kershaw, Associate Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Transition

## MONTHLY COACHING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Roxane White, 2Gen policy expert and fellow from the Aspen Institute, provides monthly one-on-one coaching with the foundations. Sarah Griffen, nationally renowned 2Gen expert and learning community manager, also provides technical assistance as needed.

## Foundations achieved the following outcomes:

- Increased *knowledge and understanding* of 2Gen work
- Established *community* of peer-learning
- Strengthened *cross-sector relationships*
- Improved *research & evidenced-based practices*
- Cultivated 2Gen *culture*
- Deepened *investment and strategy* in 2Gen work
- Achieved *policy wins* and legislative progress

welcome to  
**YEAR 1 OUTCOMES**

# cohort success stories

## INCREASED KNOWLEDGE & UNDERSTANDING

“ “ The clarity with which [the foundations] are doing 2G work has increased and improved. **The clearer they get, the more capable they're becoming** in articulating what they are trying to do, how to do it, and what partners they need to come to the table.

-Marcia Coné, Chief Strategist

“ “ We've seen very clearly when the folks around the table begin to learn from each other about how these pieces come together, lightbulbs go off about how we can work together. Many, many people are working on different aspects of two-gen work, but they aren't necessarily seeing what they are doing as two-gen. **When we build greater understanding about what two-gen is about, and when partners are able to learn together why it is important, change is possible.**

-colorado

## ESTABLISHED A COMMUNITY OF PEER LEARNING

The cohort has encouraged me tremendously through our team calls. Hearing about their work in different arenas has inspired me to continue our hard work.

-Southern Arizona

**Peer learning calls are an absolute given in terms of their value.** The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham plans to take advantage of the cohort in a more meaningful way outside of those calls and engage on a more regular basis.

-Birmingham

“ “ **Each opportunity to learn with our peers has been valuable...** the strong connections WFN has helped us develop with our peers have been incredibly useful, as we rely on each other to share gender-focused advocacy expertise. For example, the input we received from our fellow advocacy cohort members on our voter handbook, The Womanifesto, and the development of a conference presentation on hosting advocacy days was insightful. Similarly, we are happy to answer calls and e-mails from our partners to share our experience and perspective with our sister funds and find that we learn through every interaction with the cohort.

-colorado

# cohort success stories

## STRENGTHENED CROSS-SECTOR RELATIONSHIPS

“ “ The Women’s Fund [of Greater Birmingham] on its own could have never amassed the power it took to move such a critical piece of legislation. By **partnering with seasoned, multi-sector advocacy groups** we were all able to pool resources and influence to secure a win. *-Birmingham*

“ “ Our **relationship building with legislators** and with the Governor’s office in particular helped to shift our advocacy work in exciting ways for Year 1, and continues to shape our strategy for Year 2. *-Southern Arizona*

Tools that have shown to be most important are **personal relationships with elected officials and department staff and access to data that provides support for change**... By having TXWF board members meet with their own representatives and with those they have outside personal and business relationships with, the doors opened more quickly and conversations ran more smoothly. *-Texas*

“ “ Participation in the WFN Two Generation Advocacy Cohort opened up many doors for WFCO to deepen our connections with other two generation leaders in the state. *-Colorado*

## IMPROVED RESEARCH & EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES

Learning from the successes of our peers, **we conducted focus groups with single mothers** of children age six and under, who have accessed social services. From this experience with single mothers, our Family Advisory Council was created, resulting in six women who sit on our council to review our research reports, weigh in on the data, and give a critical eye to our executive summaries.

*-Southern Arizona*

“ “ To help continue our growth and trajectory toward being an effective and leading voice for women in the state of Alabama, our primary focus is to **use what we’ve learned and elevate our status to the driver’s seat for our next policy victory**. *-Birmingham*

“ “ We have found sharing evidence of impact is particularly persuasive in building support for policies, both with advocates and elected officials. Our experience has also taught us that we must be recognized as a **credible, nonpartisan source of information** for the research we share to be trusted. *-Colorado*

# cohort success stories

## CULTIVATED A 2GEN CULTURE

“ They are **creating a 2Gen culture within their cultures**. 2Gen is a lens that you bring to the work. It is a philosophical, values-driven lens. Then there’s the actual on the ground implementation. To do 2Gen well... it has to become part of your overall strategy and overall beliefs. It can’t just be an attachment... It’s deeper than that.

-Marcia Coné, Chief Strategist

“ Because we’re doing culture change, [the foundations] needed a confidential place where they can resolve internal resistance within themselves and implement change strategies. The cohort offers them a safe place to do that. It is helpful to have people to talk to before we share our vulnerability.

-Robane White, 2Gen Coach

## DEEPER INVESTMENT & STRATEGY

The partners are taking action on two-generation strategies above and beyond their policy advocacy efforts. Most are funding two-generation work through their grantmaking. They are participating in regional, state and/or national two-generation coalitions, collaboratives and meetings, and they are incorporating two-generation theory of change into their organizational priorities and strategic plans.

In 2018, foundations *increased* their investments by the following amounts:



TEXAS

Between \$25-50k



SOUTHERN ARIZONA

Between \$50-75K



COLORADO

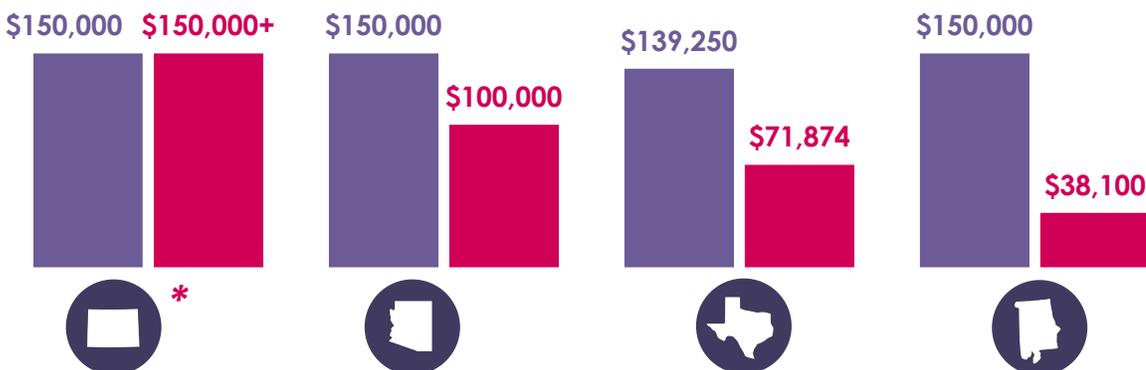
Between \$25-50k



GREATER BIRMINGHAM

\$300K

Foundations successfully brought new donors to the 2Gen funding table, with all four foundations making substantial progress towards **raising funds** to match **WFN’s grant**. To date, the foundations have raised **\$1,024,198** in matching funds.



\* The Women’s Foundation of Colorado exceeded their matched funding, raising **\$814,224**.

# Strengths of the cohort model

## HIGH VALUE & QUALITY OF CAPACITY BUILDING OFFERINGS

“ “ The convening was incredibly insightful and helpful to connect in person. The structure of the meeting allowed for intimate dialogue and real time examples of campaign goals and strategies.

-Birmingham

“ “ Webinars were very helpful, especially the Learning Community workshop. It was very extensive; it went through troubleshooting and dealing with state legislatures.

-TEXAS

“ “ The Policy Advocacy Tracker tool has been the most helpful for our organization. It helped to clarify the outputs that will result in the short and longer term outcomes for which we are working. This was especially amplified by the matrices that Lisa shared on measuring the number and depth of relationships we are forming with allies and policy makers, since that work has been the cornerstone of our progress thus far.

-Southern Arizona

## TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FROM COACHES & EXPERTS

“ “ We find tremendous value in continued access to learn from Sarah Griffen’s and Roxane White’s expertise and national perspective, with their guidance tailored to the unique opportunities in Colorado. Similarly, we value Lisa Korwin’s guidance as we continue to strengthen our advocacy evaluation.

-colorado

The one-on-one time with Roxane White has been spirited and thoughtful. The time to reflect and be generative in thought is critical, and our time with Roxane allows for just that.

-Birmingham

We’re fortunate to have the consulting team help them figure it out in each place and be contextually driven... Although the coaching is tailored, they also keep in mind the 30,000 foot view.

-Marcia Coné, Chief Strategist

“ “ Also, the coaching calls with Rox have been extremely helpful. Her individualized advice and insights have been incredible. She is a great strategist, and I’ve appreciated the chance to bounce ideas and thoughts around with her.

-Southern Arizona

## COMMITMENT TO LEARNING & SHARING

“ “ Our cohort members are always good at sharing. We will share the impact of this first year [of the policy advocacy cohort] with the 22 members of our Learning Lab.

-Marcia Coné, Chief Strategist

“ “ Roxane has also provided us with good resources... We’re sharing with our grantees who are trying to set [2Gen work] up. It is helpful having access to what is working and not.

-TEXAS

# cohort challenges & opportunities

## FORWARD THINKING & STRATEGIC PLANNING

### CHALLENGE

In the first year of the policy advocacy cohort, the foundations experienced early policy successes. While the initial expectation was for the cohort to achieve two policy wins over the three-year grant period, Colorado, Birmingham, and Texas collectively achieved eight policy wins and Southern Arizona has made substantial progress. Although these wins are worth celebrating, WFN staff noted it has been challenging for the foundations to pivot towards new policy goals. For instance, after passing the Child Care Safety Act, the Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham invested in research to study the alignment of public funding and shift their priorities to new policy opportunities. However, the research did not provide useful information, forcing the Foundation to reconsider if they were asking the right questions. Despite the 2Gen cohort members early success, a project consultant mentioned that the foundations sometimes get stuck on issues that require regulatory change and assume that they cannot move forward. For example, when The Women's Foundation of Colorado was not successful on the legislative front to increase TANF, the group was challenged to consider what can be done outside of legislation (e.g., through rules or regulations).

### OPPORTUNITY

To ensure foundations are thinking more deliberately rather than opportunistically, capacity building offerings can focus on strategic planning. Furthermore, research questions should be vetted with stakeholders and studies should be conducted to understand the broader systems-level implications of 2Gen policy to help foundations consider next steps.

## EXPANDING 2GEN CAPACITY

### CHALLENGE

WFN staff and consultants noted that it is challenging for the foundations to fully adopt a 2Gen lens for their entire portfolio of work. While they have made noticeable progress in cultivating 2Gen cultures within their organizations, WFN staff found that they have trouble bringing a 2Gen lens to policies that are not explicitly 2Gen. A consultant also pointed out that the foundations have different definitions of 2Gen and are still working towards mutual understanding. When asked to rate the foundations' knowledge on 2Gen approaches on a scale of 1-10, a consultant gave the cohort a 6, explaining that they have improved greatly, but there is still room to improve. She also mentioned that most of the foundations tend to be more opportunistic than deliberate in their policy agenda. For example, she described foundations are quick to change their strategy based on the priorities of political administrations, rather than adhering to a cohesive 2Gen framework.

### OPPORTUNITY

WFN should continue to offer high-quality curriculum to increase foundations' knowledge and understanding of 2Gen approaches. Furthermore, coaching should help foundations generate buy-in from their leadership and boards to ensure 2Gen culture is deeply rooted and sustainable.

## CONTEXTUAL DIFFERENCES

### CHALLENGE

While, the foundations had positive opinions of capacity building offerings, the degree to which each offering was useful differed depending on their needs and contexts. For instance, while most foundations expressed being motivated by the peer learning calls, one of the foundations felt they were not always helpful given the sites' vastly different political environments. One of the consultants noted that the type of technical assistance needed for each foundation varies depending on their distinct challenges. For instance, while Birmingham is figuring out their next policy direction, Southern Arizona is coping with leadership transitions that require building new relationships with key public officials. Meanwhile, the Dallas Women's Foundation transitioned into the Texas Women's Foundation, which has presented a new set of challenges in scaling 2Gen approaches. In Colorado, the Women's Foundation continues to face challenges breaking down siloed systems as they expand statewide partnerships. Overall, WFN staff and consultants noted that all foundations would benefit from more capacity building on evaluating their advocacy efforts and developing process metrics to measure their progress.

### OPPORTUNITY

During the upcoming in-person convening in June, foundations should clarify their different goals and needs to ensure technical assistance is as tailored and useful as possible. Additional capacity building should focus on how to measure process metrics and longer-term impacts of policy advocacy.

# Acknowledgements

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- Roxane White, 2Gen Coach, Strategy with Rox



Korwin Consulting, an evaluation and planning firm, advances social justice solutions by identifying community strengths, building organizational capacity, and evaluating impact. More information on Korwin Consulting is available at [www.korwinconsulting.com](http://www.korwinconsulting.com).

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