



A JOURNEY OF COMMUNITY,
COMMITMENT, AND GROWTH:
POLICY ADVOCACY TO ADVANCE TWO-
GENERATION STRATEGIES

The 2Gen Policy Advocacy Cohort

Over the past three years, four women's foundations have embarked on a journey to unlock the power of two-generation (2Gen) strategies to build women's economic equity and security. 2Gen strategies are a proven solution to empower women and contribute to the success of the entire family. The W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded the Women's Funding Network (WFN) to launch the **2Gen Policy Advocacy Cohort** (2Gen Cohort) to expand the scope and influence of women's foundations in 2Gen work, bringing a gender equity lens to this effort. The three-year policy advocacy initiative was designed to:

1. Foster connection and capacity across women's foundations to implement strategies that deepen and broaden 2Gen work.
2. Create cross-foundation capacity to advance local and state 2Gen 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 2Gen policy advocacy strategies.
4. Engage broader philanthropic circles to co-invest in 2Gen work through local influence strategies.

Throughout this journey, the four women's foundations — **Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona, The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham, The Women's Foundation of Colorado, and the Texas Women's Foundation** — built upon their knowledge of 2Gen programs to enrich their internal culture around 2Gen strategies. This enrichment led to the ability to scale these strategies in the context of their communities and to advocate for policy and systems changes that support women's economic equity and security.

This final evaluation of this three-year 2Gen policy advocacy initiative reflects upon and summarizes the participating foundations' progress and resulting outcomes in:

- » Developing and implementing a 2Gen advocacy strategy,
- » The ways in which they've integrated a "2Gen-lens" throughout their organizational culture, and
- » Their plans for scaling their 2Gen work going forward.

What is 2Gen?

2Gen approaches focus on creating opportunities for and addressing the needs of 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 children and the adults in their lives, articulating and tracking outcomes for both children and adults. There are five Key Components of the 2Gen 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.

SOCIAL CAPITAL

Peer and family,
Networks,
Coaching,
Cohort strategies

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

Mental, physical,
behavioral health,
Coverage and access
to care,
Services to overcome
adverse childhood
experiences and toxic
stress



ASCEND
THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Head Start,
Early Head Start, Childcare
partnerships, Pre-K, home
visiting

POSTSECONDARY & EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS

Community college,
Training and certification,
Workforce partnerships

ECONOMIC ASSETS

Asset building,
Housing and public supports,
Financial capacity,
transportation

2Gen Policy Advocacy

2Gen policy advocates seek to secure policies that support key 2Gen components and their integration with each other. The nature of this work differs from 2Gen program and service implementation and requires advocates to be strategic about:

- what policies they introduce,
- when they introduce them, and
- how they frame these policies to gain the political will of public officials and other interested parties.

Define a strategic policy agenda

2Gen policy work can be most effective when it reflects the integrative nature of 2Gen by incorporating more than one cog of the 2Gen wheel. For example, when advocating for increased workforce funding, policy changes to improve access and coordination with childcare could be incorporated. However, in some states or regions, the policy environment may not be conducive to supporting an integrated 2Gen policy. Advocates must keep their focus on the whole family as they define their 2Gen policy agenda and determine whether they can propose a 2Gen policy that includes the whole family or will need to gradually move towards, or scaffold, pursuit of their primary 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 childcare but not currently supportive of increased funding for workforce development. **The key at times is to remain committed to the organization's long-range 2Gen policy agenda, while seizing opportunities for incremental progress in the near-term.**

Know the political landscape

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 those who may oppose 2Gen policies** that they perceive as threatening to their own policy priorities. They must learn how to bridge partisan divides and use strong narrative to build policy buy in.

Navigate the policymaking process

Advocates must also **become familiar with how state agencies work** (or don't work) with one another and gain support from public officials.

“ Now, **we are in a position that we've been able to attract the attention of decision makers and elevate this to address the important workforce issues.** The timing could not have been better to have a conversation around 2Gen, because our state is having conversations about workforce and childcare and all the things that have 2Gen elements to them. We've been able to elevate this as a crystal-clear model to be able to meet some of those workforce challenges.”
-Birmingham

WFN offers a glimpse into what 2Gen policy advocacy looks like on the ground in four different communities that serve as home to the participating women's foundations. They shine a light on the role that geography, political will, and internal culture play in shaping and winning policy goals.



Developing a 2Gen Policy Advocacy Strategy:

Prior to entering the 2Gen Cohort, WFGB had five years of experience in creating and investing in 2Gen programming in a policy environment that was resistant to 2Gen solutions. Although in the 2Gen space, the Foundation still saw room for its own growth. Through the 2Gen Cohort experience, WFGB was able to gain further knowledge of what 2Gen is for their board, committees, and volunteers. This shared knowledge allowed everyone to move forward on the same page and supported WFGB's successful engagement in policy advocacy.

Shifting Internal Culture:

Even as an experienced 2Gen advocate, WFGB underwent shifts in organizational culture during their time in the 2Gen Cohort. For instance, they brought new talent and staff on board to enable them to scale their work into the public policy realm. This helped deepen their understanding of the political context in Alabama and plan better for more productive advocacy efforts.

WFGB's leadership recognizes the critical role that racism plays in destabilizing women of color and their families from accessing economic opportunities. The Foundation is committed to prioritizing racial equity in their 2Gen work and everything they engage in, recognizing that it is woven into the fabric of economic inequities. Centering their work this way has impacted how WFGB thinks, communicates, and acts in regard to racial equity. WFGB has been offering racial equity trainings to deepen their board, staff, and grantees' understanding of these forces. Two initial outcomes include deeper engagement of women of color in WFGB's policy advocacy work, and its practice of reviewing the impact of policies they advocate for to understand how they will affect women and then how that impact is felt by race.

As a member of the 2Gen Cohort, WFGB received support in the form of coaching and peer-learning convenings provided by WFN. Through this coaching, WFGB was able to problem-solve for region-specific issues present in Alabama. Most importantly, when the 2Gen Cohort was able to convene in person, WFGB participants formed deep, rich connections to align strategies within the 2Gen Cohort. The benefits of convenings were demonstrated externally in policy advocacy and showed the importance of connectivity among advocates working on 2Gen issues.

Policy Wins:

WFGB achieved — in partnership with community leaders — several policy wins during their time in the 2Gen Cohort.

- **Ensuring Safe Childcare:** In its first year, WFGB and its partners secured the passage of the 2018 Childcare Safety Act, requiring more childcare centers in the state to be licensed and inspected by the Department of Human Services. This victory for young children and working families requires that all centers serving children who receive a state subsidy (roughly half of unregulated centers in the state) be licensed and inspected.
- **Passage of Equal Pay Act:** Similar to the Childcare Act above, WFGB is addressing 2G by having led an educational effort and legislative campaign to pass Alabama's first Equal Pay Act — advancing gender equity in Alabama's workforce.
- **Securing Budgetary Funding:** WFGB's advocacy team secured a \$300,000 appropriation in the state education budget to fund 2Gen programming that connects women with a post-secondary education and wraparound supports such as childcare and transportation.
- **Implementing a Research Based Strategy Agenda:** WFGB (also known as "TWF" — for, The Women's Fund) released the report, TWF 2019 Agenda for Women, which began an intentional step into the policy world and began building power and influence for women at all levels of state policy.

Scaling 2Gen:

WFGB is planning to apply the lessons learned from its 2Gen Cohort participation to scale up its engagement in the public policy process. The Foundation is focused on childcare using 2Gen strategies to uncover the gaps between resources available in rural Alabama in contrast to better served urban areas of the state. This work will require thinking about how best to sustain progress on previously passed legislation and producing creative public policy options on childcare that has not occurred in Alabama, while at the same time understanding that the state does not prioritize 2Gen investment.



Developing a 2Gen Policy Advocacy Strategy:

WFCO entered the 2Gen Cohort with experience in legislative, administrative, and regulatory policy advocacy in a state that already embraced 2Gen strategies. Their participation in the 2Gen Cohort supported the development of a strategy which moved the conversation and policy strategy to be intersectional ensuring women and women of color were prioritized in 2Gen policy advocacy. This led to stronger support for grantee partners, provided a comprehensive view of how to enact 2Gen strategy, and helped them identify a niche to add value to work underway in the state.

Shifting Internal Culture:

Even with a solid foundation in the work, WFCO was able to refine their internal practices in support of 2Gen. They received technical assistance from WFN which allowed them to grow in their role as a policy convener. For example, they hosted a workshop for their Colorado policy cohort to dive deeply into 2Gen strategies, with an emphasis on equity, marrying direct service strategies with 2Gen policy advocacy strategies.

With access to resources as a member of the 2Gen Cohort, WFCO benefitted from coaching, which helped them figure out how to carve out a niche in the 2Gen space that allowed them to contribute more meaningfully to the work in their state. This more sophisticated approach helped enhance their credibility, relationships, and connectivity in a shared policy arena. The coach and 2Gen Cohort facilitator also connected WFCO with their 2Gen state and national network as an additional advocacy resource.

Policy Wins:

WFCO and other 2Gen leaders throughout the state began meeting in 2018. These meetings led to a partnership with the governor's office, and the convening of a workgroup dedicated to exploring the crossover between early childhood education (ECE) and workforce development. WFCO's leadership in this work positioned the foundation to successfully engage in advocacy that contributed to many policy wins. The new laws propel women toward economic security by making it pay more equitable, high-quality childcare and college more affordable and accessible, and full-day kindergarten free throughout the state. For example:

- **Reauthorizing of Transitional Employment Program:** WFCO and its statewide network of advocates secured unanimous support from the Colorado 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.
- **Expansion of the Childcare Expenses Tax Credit:** Working in close collaboration with the Colorado Speaker of the House, WFCO advocated for expansion of the Childcare Expenses Tax Credit, HB18-1208, which passed with bipartisan support in both the Colorado House and Senate.
- **Passage of the Childcare Contribution Tax Credit:** WFCO played an integral role in the passage of the Childcare Contribution Tax Credit, HB18-1004, to incentivize charitable giving to childcare providers.
- **Supported successful effort to increase the TANF basic cash assistance grant:** WFCO's grantee partner, Colorado Center on Law and Policy (CCLP), successfully advocated for a rule change to increase the TANF basic cash assistance grant by 10 percent.
- **Passage of Equal Pay for Equal Work Act:** WFCO advocated for and passed CO SB 19-085, the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act, which promotes transparency by requiring employers to disclose the pay range for job postings and prohibits discrimination based on wage history.

Scaling 2Gen:

WFCO has gained momentum as a convener in Colorado's 2Gen Network Cohort and will sustain this role as a 2Gen convener beyond the term of the grant. They are currently focusing on passing legislation to improve training pathways and economic security for Early Childhood Education professionals. Although Colorado is a supporter of 2Gen, the state has fiscal restraints that affect the feasibility of 2Gen budgetary investments, which makes strategic policy advocacy invaluable.



Developing a 2Gen Policy Advocacy Strategy:

WFSA entered the Cohort with modest experience of 2Gen strategies. While Arizona's legislature has passed some policies supportive of healthcare access and workforce development for women in recent years, the state is resistant to 2Gen solutions. Through their research and conversations with the Governor's office and Legislators on both sides of the aisle, WFSA has secured funding and launched a 2Gen pilot program. WFSA will be commissioning research on the 2Gen pilot that they expect to bear fruit in several years by producing changes in policies and programming throughout the state that will lead to positive outcomes for women and their children. The coaching calls WFSA received as part of the Cohort helped them become more thoughtful and intentional about their 2Gen work and, ultimately, led them to refine every aspect of their work using that framework. Especially helpful to them was the guidance of their Family Advisory Council (FAC). The FAC — which elevates the voice of single mothers while supporting them as they build social capital with elected officials and their advocacy network — is a point of pride for WFSA. It has been mutually beneficial for the Foundation and for the women who participate as they grow into their advocacy roles, utilizing legislation and research to advance 2Gen.

Shifting Internal Culture:

WFSA has embraced 2Gen approaches and shifted its grantmaking practices as a result. As they have put the lessons of the Cohort experience into practice, there is an air of excitement at the Foundation. WFSA had not specifically developed programs to support parents and children together. Participating in the Cohort has had a great impact on WFSA, which now intentionally incorporates 2Gen principles into its grantmaking. Through WFN's support, WFSA invited a leading 2Gen coach to facilitate a convening with WFSA's grantees — deepening their understanding and critical thinking about where they can further integrate a 2Gen approach into their work. The impact was tangible. Whereas in the past, the Foundation might have used the term "two-generation" in Requests for Proposals (RFPs) without specifying what that would mean, they now are able to provide greater clarity about what 2Gen means, asking grant applicants about "family voice" and other 2Gen concepts. In response, they have noticed applicants are providing much clearer descriptions of how their work addresses the needs of parents and their children in grant applications. In addition to the coaching Cohort members received, WFSA derived great benefit from the Cohort calls and peer-learning sessions. These components of the 2Gen Cohort experience allowed the Foundation to think critically about how to integrate the 2Gen model in their own work. For example, they provided a stipend and access to childcare for single mothers who testified on behalf of bills that WFSA identified as being supportive of 2Gen goals. Practicing 2Gen within their own internal culture was crucial to fully embracing the 2Gen model.

Policy Wins:

WFSA engaged in advocacy that laid the groundwork for future 2Gen policy gains.

- **Expanding educational and work opportunities:** WFSA drafted and introduced legislation (SB 1173) in the 2019 spring legislative session that would have allowed single mothers who work and go to school to receive childcare subsidies. While the bill did not pass, WFSA's presence at the Capitol helped them build relationships with legislators and the Governor's office, and there is support among them to reintroduce legislation.
- **Increasing access to government assistance:** With coaching and peer support made possible through WFN, WFSA worked to pass a bill to modify the state's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) policies by testifying in the assigned committee and advocating to elected officials.

Scaling 2Gen:

Although there has been political turnover in Arizona over the past three years, WFSA has built long-lasting relationships with elected officials and has a deepened connection to their lobbyists, positioning themselves for success. They are confident in their newly created 2Gen program — whose funding was made possible through their relationships with elected officials — and will use longitudinal research-based strategy and data, to influence change at the policy level. One topic they are interested in exploring is the value to families of public benefits, compared with lowering the taxes that single mothers pay, and the impact of these approaches on small children. WFSA is also continuing to move legislation forward to expand eligibility for childcare subsidies to benefit working mothers.



Developing a 2Gen Policy Advocacy Strategy:

TXWF entered the 2Gen Cohort with five years of policy advocacy and lobbying experience in a state that is resistant to policy solutions focused on both parents and children. After three years of deepening their work in 2Gen with the support of the Cohort, TXWF and the larger Texas community are looking at some of the state's racial issues with a different lens. There are large racial disparities in maternal health and wellbeing and infant mortality in the state. Viewing the woman and child through this new lens has been a tremendous step for the Foundation.

Shifting Internal Culture:

The Foundation's participation in the 2Gen Cohort helped clarify how 2Gen was communicated internally and externally. TXWF's greatest area of focus in its work is single mothers. Through the Cohort, the Foundation has become more intentional about expanding its focus, ensuring that the community funders and elected officials are also mindful of 2Gen solutions and the importance of serving the entire family.

Policy Wins:

TXWF has been taking incremental steps to move the state toward policies that would support both parents and their children. Two important policy wins the Foundation helped to generate support for are:

- **Common childcare subsidy application:** The Texas Workforce Commission has agreed to allow a common childcare subsidy application across the state. Websites for TANF/SNAP and childcare subsidies were linked to help parents see the full range of benefits they are eligible for, including services related to health and well-being.
- **Increase in Childcare Development Block Grant subsidy reimbursement rates:** The Legislative Budget Board approved an increase in Childcare Development Block Grant subsidy reimbursement rates to providers who are Texas Rising Star-certified, helping support childcare networks for infant and toddler care in low-income communities.

Scaling 2Gen:

TXWF embarked on 2Gen strategies in a very challenging policy environment. Understanding how to address the regional nuances they face is critically important for TXWF to continue to advance a 2Gen model in their state. The Foundation plans to continue its efforts to expand access and care for mothers and babies in the next legislative session. The Child Care Bridge program, which provides help for childcare expenses, has expanded its geographic scope in the state to provide high quality early childcare to mothers on a waiting list. TXWF is also considering advocacy and grant activities regarding housing stability. Specifically, they would like to see a decrease in the evictions and transiency among single mother-led families. Housing stability is important to the 2Gen movement and is a continuous need for families.



Cohort Roadmap: From Learning to Action



Research conducted by WFN demonstrates that increasing the depth of involvement by women's foundations in 2Gen strategies has significant potential to more deeply embed a gender and racial equity lens within these strategies, particularly related to systems and policy work within the 2Gen field. Over the past three years, the four members of the 2Gen Cohort have experienced tangible benefits from participating in learning community 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 highlights strategies that led to notable outcomes for Cohort members.

DECEMBER 2017

Introduction to the 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 2Gen Cohort convening in New York City

JUNE 2018

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

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 Transitional Assistance

September 2019

WFN's *Women Funded* 2019 convening

June 2019

In-Person 2Gen cohort convening in Denver, Colorado

MONTHLY COACHING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Provided through monthly one-on-one coaching calls with Roxane White, 2Gen policy expert and fellow from the Aspen Institute; and TA, as needed, from Sarah Griffen, nationally renowned 2Gen expert and learning community manager



PEER LEARNING CALLS

Every six to eight weeks 2Gen Cohort members participate in peer learning calls to share experiences, exchange resources, and update one another on progress or challenges

Impact of 2Gen Cohort Participation

Coaching

“WFCO has truly appreciated the connection with Roxane White and grown through her excellent advice and counsel. She is a true expert in many levels of this work, and there is no question that her participation has helped our project. We would be honored to continue to work with her.”
-Colorado

“Coaching calls with Roxane White helped to refine almost every area of our work and helped us to lean into the 2Gen approach with thoughtfulness, intention, and coordination across our areas. Her guidance and advice in preparing our strategies, thoughts, and plans for our own 2Gen grantmaking aided us in presenting these updates to our Board of Trustees and grantees in a cohesive, advantageous manner that maintained our vision and commitments.”
-Southern Arizona

Peer Learning

“The CEO of Arizona and I are in constant contact now. We realized that we had similar expertise. She is facing a childcare issue that I don’t face. I’m facing a childcare issue that she doesn’t face. We were able to problem-solve, just the two of us, based on our knowledge of what’s happening in our respective states.”
-Birmingham

“Being a part of the 2Generation Advocacy Cohort has been helpful in our 2Gen work. It has been interesting to learn from other foundations about the work they are doing in the 2Gen space, the challenges they have experienced, and their wins. Participating in a 2Gen panel at WFN’s conference provided the Cohort the opportunity to share what we have accomplished and learned with others working in the 2Gen space and those who are new to the concept.”
-Texas

“The peer learning was incredibly crucial for our success. Having the opportunity to learn alongside and from our colleagues who are addressing similar (often, the very same) challenges and hurdles made our learning and progress exponentially faster. From insights on our focus groups, to working with our Family Advisory Council, refining our grantmaking, and developing reports, this Cohort has been such a privilege to know.”
-Southern Arizona

“While many of the tools have been helpful, **the continued emphasis on relationship building and coalition growth have been the most impactful**, given where we lead in the work right now. We are working hard to ensure that many voices are heard as we move through the policy process and any way that we can continue to grow that ability is vital to the goal.”
-Colorado

Impact of 2Gen Cohort Participation

Scaling Up 2Gen

“We continue to see the infrastructure in the region gain strength and support around two-generational work with our grantees and key stakeholders...[We are] dedicated to supporting and funding projects in the region to support workforce development opportunities for women and quality childcare. We played a crucial role in this by not only funding the work being done in this arena but also by having our board members meet with their own representatives and with those they have outside personal and business relationships.”
-Texas

“We’re moving forward with our 2Gen grantmaking. This year we will fund our first entire Cohort of grantees who all have a 2Gen approach to their services. It’s been a trajectory. We had to lean into it and understand it. We had to adopt it in order to stand in front of a room and tell our grantees we had brought a person in who we could all learn from and end up doing a better job. We have gradually built up to this level of participation.”
-Southern Arizona

“The \$300,000 in appropriations from the state for a 2Gen pilot program is evidence of exceptional advocacy, educational, and lobbying tactics by our advocacy team in demonstrating the effectiveness of 2Gen solutions. We are seeking to scale 2Gen work from a pilot level to an institutional level by working with community colleges and the Alabama Network of Family Resource Centers to streamline services with local family resource centers and nonprofits.”
-Birmingham

“As part of the 2Gen Advocacy Cohort, we have been able to deepen our own understanding and support our grantees in learning what that most holistic and complete version of 2Gen strategy looks like.”
-Colorado

Policy Wins

“Our most recent legislative session was a win for women in the workplace. We supported 18 bills in 2019, 16 of which passed. The new laws propel women toward economic security by making pay more equitable, high-quality childcare and college more affordable and accessible, and full-day kindergarten free throughout the state.”
-Colorado

“In the 2019 legislative session, **we successfully led an educational effort and legislative campaign resulting in the passage of Alabama’s first Equal Pay Act.** In addition, our advocacy team secured an appropriation in the state education budget to scale two-generation programming that connects women with a post-secondary education and the critical wraparound supports necessary for success such as childcare and transportation.”
-Birmingham

Lessons Learned

It is important for key stakeholders to understand 2Gen.

When embarking in 2Gen strategies, it is important that all key stakeholders understand what the 2Gen model is and have a shared definition. This includes staff, trustees, board, and grantee partners. Their shared definition is foundational to crafting effective and responsive 2Gen policies.

As foundations develop a 2Gen culture, buy-in from leadership will extend to growing grantee partners' understanding and engagement in 2Gen. This ripple effect will translate into direct benefits to families seeking economic security and well-being.

Investment in capacity building will help deepen stakeholders' understanding of 2Gen, which will in turn sustain the 2Gen culture. Two capacity building examples are: offering training for staff, trustees, and grantee partners on different facets of 2Gen, or hosting a grantee partner learning cohort to support peer learning on 2Gen practices.

Shifting one's internal culture to embrace 2Gen leads to deeper, broader change.

Shifting internal culture to embrace 2Gen not only leads to more productive policy advocacy, but this culture extends to everyone with whom the organization is in contact, including families seeking economic security.

Gender and racial equity are elevated, as the organization practices the values that are reflected in its policy goals. For example, ensuring single mothers are paid a stipend and provided childcare when they miss work to testify on behalf of 2Gen legislation communicates the value that the organization places on community members most impacted by economic inequality.

When organizational stakeholders are familiar and aligned with 2Gen goals this 2Gen work becomes more sustainable and less susceptible to the variable nature of local or regional politics.

Knowledge, planning, relationships, and timing are central to effective 2Gen policy advocacy.

2Gen policy advocacy requires being strategic in developing one's policy agenda, having knowledge of the political landscape, and understanding the policymaking process.

Relationships are critical to successful policy advocacy. There is significant value in building and nurturing relationships with many different key stakeholders including: individual community members, local organizations that serve or advocate on behalf of women and children, public agencies, elected officials, the private sector, educational and training institutions, philanthropic partners, and others with a vested interest or positional power to impact the lives of women and their families. These relationships may be leveraged to advance shared agendas, mobilize base supporters who will go to the capitol or local policy boards to advocate for 2Gen policies, dismantle opposition, and much more.

It is important for trustees and board members to understand and embrace 2Gen policy advocacy as a key strategy the organization can use to achieve positive economic outcomes for women and their families. As a fundamental strategy, skillful policy advocacy includes an understanding that, at times, the political winds may require holding steady and nurturing the foundation's relationships, while remaining poised to act when opportunities for policy action arise.

Lessons Learned

Challenges are likely to arise and must be addressed strategically.

Leadership transitions within organizations can slow down or advance progress of 2Gen initiatives. Organizations must prepare by creating a sustainable culture.

Elected officials may transition in and out of office or their status in the legislature may change from year to year. In addition, other conditions may change, such as the advent of COVID 19 resulting in stalling legislative efforts as legislatures adjourn. These changes will have an impact on 2Gen strategies and may require revising policy agendas and expectations.

Within the legislature, there may be a hostile political environment that runs counter to 2Gen goals. Organizations need a solid understanding of the political environment and should identify allies and opponents. It is also important to note that some opponents may become allies after understanding a 2Gen position and be willing to explore compromising to get something that suits both sides.

A learning cohort accelerates 2Gen programmatic, strategic, and policy progress.

A learning cohort provides women's foundations an opportunity to share their diverse experiences, perspectives, and challenges. Cohort peers can borrow successful strategies and practices from each other and be better positioned to avoid pitfalls than they would be on their own.

Providing cohort members with access to a 2Gen coach supports them to become more thoughtful and intentional about their 2Gen efforts and can lead them to contributing more meaningfully to the work in their region.

Providing funding, coaching, and access to a 2Gen facilitator knowledgeable of 2Gen resources and individuals throughout the country positions individual foundations new to 2Gen policy advocacy to engage in this work more quickly and effectively than possible on their own.

The Path Forward

Through their participation in the 2Gen Policy Advocacy Cohort, each foundation propelled their 2Gen work forward in both shared and unique ways. All four foundations deepened their understanding of 2Gen overall and several brought this lens to all facets of their organization — from grantmaking to honoring and centering the voice of women experiencing poverty in their work. They also built relationships with each other and with local partners that will continue beyond this 2Gen policy advocacy initiative. And all but Colorado, faced the challenge of learning how to navigate around or through a traditionally resistant state to achieve policy wins.

Each foundation was situated within a different geographic landscape that brought with it different accelerators and barriers. For example, as a state, Colorado embraced 2Gen strategies, and the WFCO's participation in the Cohort as well as their access to resources helped that foundation to increase the number of policy wins they helped bring about in the legislature.

Other states were not as receptive to 2Gen work, and the foundations felt they needed additional resources to support their advocacy and capacity building efforts in order to realize their full potential. This included support to ensure that different stakeholders closest to the foundations — board, staff, and grantee partners — became grounded in a common definition of 2Gen, so that their strategies could be more effectively aligned with the 2Gen model.

Throughout the duration of the Cohort, the foundations changed internal practices to reflect their increased knowledge. This knowledge shows up in how they select grantee partners that embrace a 2Gen lens. It can be witnessed in how they engage and value impacted populations. And it can be seen in the extent to which they research, evaluate and advocate to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The 2Gen Cohort members overwhelmingly felt that the coaching and peer-learning were the most impactful elements of the Cohort. They also appreciated the resources that WFN brought to the table to support them in their efforts. The Cohort forged a bond throughout the three years that will provide a basis for their continued support of one another, as they implement 2Gen programmatic and advocacy strategies in the years to come — strategies that will foster greater economic opportunity and security for women and their families throughout their regions.

Evaluation Methods

Korwin Consulting used a mixed methods design to evaluate the 2Gen Policy Advocacy Cohort. Methods included:

- Reviewing Cohort members' annual reports submitted to WFN,
- Conducting annual interviews with participating representatives from Cohort foundations,
- Conducting annual interviews with the Cohort facilitator, coach, and WFN's Chief Strategist who managed the learning cohort,
- Reviewing survey data gathered by WFN, and
- Reviewing prior years' evaluation reports to ensure three-year comprehensive overview.

Acknowledgements

We appreciate the following individuals for participating in interviews and providing supporting materials which contributed to this evaluation:

- Melanie Bridgeforth, President & CEO and Jacob Smith, Grants and Research Director, The Women's Fund of Greater Birmingham
- Lauren Y. Casteel, President & CEO and Louise Myrland, Vice President of Programs, The Women's Foundation of Colorado
- Marcia Coné, Chief Strategist, Women's Funding Network
- Sarah Griffen, Learning Community Manager, Griffen Consulting LLC
- Dena Jackson, Chief Operating Officer and Lisa de la Garza, Vice President of Programs, Texas Women's Foundation
- Amalia Luxardo, Chief Executive Officer and Krista Millay, Vice President of Community Impact, Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona
- 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.

Lisa Korwin, Principal
Robin Horner, Evaluation Manager
Justin Nalley, Evaluation Associate
Sophie Punkar, Jr. Evaluation Associate