

Strategic Plan 2010 - 2013

What's New ... the details



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Overview

The new Strategic Plan for Washington Women's Foundation builds on the strength of our traditions and introduces several new initiatives, adding more for members on many fronts. Our flagship Pooled Fund grant process remains intact, and we will build on this model by adding new grant making opportunities. The Foundation will continue to present a wide array of compelling educational programs for members, including new offerings in collaboration with other philanthropic and community partners. Women working together creates powerful community - the Foundation's commitment to encouraging this community and advancing women's leadership in philanthropy is stronger than ever.

Guided by input from members, community leaders, grantees and other nonprofits, the Board of Directors is pleased to present this new plan to position the Foundation for the future. We will capitalize on our experience and expertise while offering bold new ways for members to engage - and thereby increase WWF's overall impact. In addition to offering innovative approaches to education and grant making, this plan also assures the financial strength of the Foundation into the future.

The Strategic Planning Process

Framework

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to advance and enrich the mission of Washington Women's Foundation and to ensure its long-term financial health. Fulfilling its responsibility to establish the strategic direction and priorities of the Foundation, the Board of Directors launched the planning process in September 2009. A Steering Committee was formed to lead this work, representing a cross-section of board and staff leadership (*see list on left*). Barbara Dingfield of The Giving Practice, the professional consulting arm of Philanthropy Northwest, provided planning guidance. The Board's goal was to finalize a Strategic Plan within six months.

Input Phase

The Strategic Plan Steering Committee managed a robust, professional process, conducting extensive research and seeking comprehensive feedback. In addition to analyzing internal operations and the external environment, we conducted individual interviews with Board members and Emeritus directors. To discern member preferences, we solicited input through several open forums, emailed suggestions and analysis of results from member surveys over the past two years. We interviewed leaders in the philanthropic community and conducted a survey of more than 50 nonprofit grantees and finalists. This input has been essential in shaping the core elements of the Plan.

Evaluation Phase

During the project, the Steering Committee met frequently to research, analyze and deliberate on the issues. Several different scenarios, financial models and detailed program elements were evaluated, and the Board engaged in deep discussion at each board meeting over several months. Periodic updates were presented to the Committee Cabinet and the general WWF membership. The Steering Committee then finalized a single, comprehensive set of recommendations.

This Strategic Plan places key importance on innovation, education and partnerships, while maximizing efficiency and effectiveness.

Recommendations

The final Strategic Plan was adopted in its entirety by the Board of Directors in late January 2010. In February and March, board and staff together developed an implementation and communications plan.

Next Steps

In late March 2010, the new Strategic Plan is being announced to all WWF members. This Plan is a 'living document' intended to be a management tool for directing, evaluating and inspiring the Foundation's work over the next three years, and will continue to evolve.

Three New Partner Grants



Advanced Philanthropy Curriculum

The Washington Women's Foundation is committed to expanding our culture as a learning organization, and offers three new Partner Grant initiatives to add to the array of educational offerings. Building on the success of our well-established Pooled Fund grant process, these initiatives provide a deeper level of inquiry through an advanced curriculum of hands-on grant making.

With a spirit of openness and humility, we will build stronger relationships with a broad spectrum of communities and organizations. We will work with community partners to research, identify, and award a grant each year to a nonprofit program in each of the areas below.

- **Diversity Partner Grants:** Making our commitment to inclusiveness actionable, we will work alongside, and learn from, organizations active in diverse communities. The relationships begun through the work of the Inclusiveness Initiative task force will inform our approach. In addition to meeting critical needs through this Partner Grant, WWF also seeks to highlight the needs of diverse communities and welcome more women of color to become members of the Foundation.
- **International Partner Grants:** Honoring our members' strong interest in global philanthropy, we will build relationships with, and learn from, local organizations doing important work abroad. The learning already gained from the International Affinity Group's discussions will inform our approach. This program will also take advantage of Seattle's growing prominence as a center of global giving and allow a vehicle for the Foundation to participate in this work.
- **Innovation Partner Grants:** Recognizing our members' enthusiasm for discovering creative, cutting-edge projects, we will work alongside community grant makers with experience in venture funding. Whether the projects are small ideas with big aspirations, or big ideas with small budgets, we seek to provide the boost to propel these bright ideas to the next level.

Requirements for Participation

These initiatives are constructed as 'advanced' grant making programs and will therefore have prerequisites for participation:

- Prior experience on the WWF Grant Committee or equivalent
- Echoing our model of collective giving, each participant will make a financial contribution of \$500 by directing her Individual Grant to the initiative, or through personal contribution
- Commitment to attend all required meetings (which will be pre-scheduled)

Program Outline

The initiatives will be structured as follows:

- There will be a three-person Leadership Team for each initiative consisting of a staff lead, a board member, and a WWF member with Grant Committee experience and/or experience in the relevant work of the initiative.
- Each initiative will operate over 10 – 12 weeks, with five meetings plus site visits, as appropriate.
- Each Partner Grant process will have a minimum of five members and a maximum of 20 members who will collaborate to determine the final grant recipient.
- At the outset, there will be a framework for each Partner Grant process that will include research, issue analysis, guest speakers, proposal review and site visits, based on what has proven effective through our Pooled Fund grant work, and customized to this shorter, deeper context.
- One initiative will be operating at a time, with the Diversity Partner Grant launching in Fall 2010. The International Partner Grant will start in early 2011, and the Innovation Partner Grant in Spring 2011.
- Consistent with the Foundation's focus on high impact, each Partner Grant will be made to a single grantee.
- The first round of these initiatives will be considered 'pilots', with opportunity to evolve the program to incorporate learning and feedback.

Funding these grants

Each of these Partner Grants will be seeded with \$10,000 from reserve funds during the first year. In the second year, the Foundation will provide \$7,500 per Partner Grant and in the third year \$5,000. Contributions from members are anticipated to increase as the Foundation contribution decreases. Because each grant will be supplemented by member contributions, we will be able to gauge the level of member interest in each initiative.

Members will have the opportunity to direct their Individual Grant to any of these initiatives each year, whether or not they choose to participate in the actual work of the Partner Grant process. Additional personal contributions can be put toward these Partner Grants as well, at members' own discretion.



Building Community Partnerships



Merit Award

Washington Women's Foundation recognizes that all ten organizations that appear on the annual Pooled Fund ballot are of high merit; that they have all invested time, effort and goodwill in our rigorous grant process; and that their participation plays a key role in the curriculum and education of our members. The Foundation will acknowledge these nonprofits in two ways: we will consider opportunities to highlight the work of these organizations to the WWF membership, and will give each runner-up a \$2,000 grant. We believe these Merit Awards will enhance WWF's visibility and relationships with community organizations.

Special Response Grants

In the 15 years since inception, WWF has evolved into a leading grant maker in the Pacific Northwest. As such, we are asked to join other major community funders to collaborate on local philanthropic initiatives, often in response to a pressing community need or natural disaster. To date, WWF has been unable to join in these responses due to the structure of our Pooled Grant process. Going forward, when such opportunities arise, the Foundation leadership will have the authority to make one-time grants up to \$10,000 annually as Special Response Grants. These grants will demonstrate leadership on community issues, and will allow WWF to have a "seat at the table" in critical community dialogues.

Partner Grant Initiatives

The new strategic initiatives -- Diversity, International and Innovation Partner Grants -- will offer fresh and varied opportunities for learning from other organizations across the philanthropy landscape. In addition, we hope these new relationships will result in a wider array of organizations participating in the Pooled Grant process, and introduce the Foundation to more prospective members.

New Education Programs

WWF is deeply committed to presenting high-caliber educational programs to our members. We will enhance our array of compelling and relevant philanthropic programming by introducing new collaborations with local partners.

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in community programs focused on philanthropy education. Many local organizations now present professional programs on sophisticated topics in philanthropy. We will deepen our partnerships with these organizations to provide a broader range of programming related to leadership, philanthropy and community awareness to enhance our own educational offerings, while gaining operational efficiency.

Announcing: "Reflections on Philanthropy from Today's Leaders"

We are pleased to announce a new partnership with Philanthropy Northwest, the UW Evans School's Nancy Bell Evans Center on Nonprofits & Philanthropy, and Social Venture Partners to present this quarterly speaker series. Now entering its fourth year, the "Reflections on Philanthropy" series features compelling topics from leading academics, philanthropists, foundation heads and community leaders. WWF is very happy to bring this compelling programming to our members, and proud to join these leading partners in philanthropy.

Individual Grant Making

Beginning in October 2010, members will be asked to allocate their annual Individual Grant Recommendation (IGR) either as a single \$1000 grant or two \$500 grants. This change will help limit the administrative expense of conducting the due diligence, processing and tracking required for each IGR, especially in light of new nonprofit fiscal regulations.

Members will continue to be invited to direct their IGRs to the nonprofits of their choice or WWF's Pooled Fund, Annual Fund and Endowment Fund. In addition, members can also recommend to direct their Individual Grants toward the new grant making initiatives: Diversity Partner Grant, International Partner Grant, and Innovation Partner Grant.

Growth and Retention

Washington Women's Foundation is a community of dynamic, diverse women. We continually renew and refresh our membership ranks by attracting new women to join in our work. We welcome women of any age, profession, ethnicity, race, religion, physical ability, sexual preference, neighborhood and philosophy.

Growth is essential for our organization. By increasing the number of women involved with WWF, we expand the financial support to our community and extend the impact of the Foundation. Our goal is to add 10-15% new members each year.

The loyalty of our long-term members is an enormous source of strength and value to WWF. We anticipate that our new grant opportunities and educational programming will enhance member engagement and retention. Our goal is to retain at least 90% of our members each year.

Strengthening our Financial Future



Streamlining Our Operations

Continued prudent cost management and strategic staff allocation is central to financial sustainability. We will make several adjustments in operations to enhance our effectiveness and to assure a high level of professionalism.

Board Committees to meet less frequently

The Board of Directors has four committees: Governance, Finance, Resource Development and Planning. These will all remain, but will reduce their meeting frequency over the next three years. They will transition from meeting nearly monthly to meeting six times a year, with Finance and Governance aiming for quarterly meetings.

Operating Committee changes

Operating Committees now consist of Grant, Impact Assessment, Education, Membership and Cabinet. In addition, the Foundation has an Inclusiveness Initiative and an International Affinity Group. We will implement the following changes:

Discovery Days Committee is now a full standing committee, in recognition of the successful structure piloted over the last two years.

A newly-formed **Member Engagement Committee** will combine the current Education and Membership Committees. This new committee, launching in Fall 2010, will be the central catalyst for programming ideas that are educational, engaging and welcoming for all members and prospective members. Committee meetings will continue to feature in-depth discussions on critical community issues and philanthropy that committee members have come to value so highly.

The **Inclusiveness Initiative** will transform into the new Diversity Partner Grants program, which will launch in the Fall of 2010. Based on the Initiative's progress building bridges with community partners and foundations of color, this grant effort enables WWF to put intentional funding behind its commitment to diversity. All members of the Inclusiveness Initiative, which formally comes to a close in June 2010, are welcome to participate in the Diversity Partner Grant program.

The **International Affinity Group** will transform into the new International Partner Grant program, which will launch during the 1st quarter of 2011. Recognizing the long-held interest of many of our members in global philanthropy, this grant effort now presents funding to enhance the learning. All members of the International Affinity Group, which formally comes to a close in June 2010, are welcome to participate in the International Partner Grant program.

Grant Committee and **Impact Assessment Committee** will each continue in their current structure. The **Cabinet** will reduce its meeting frequency to align with the Board schedule.

Financial Strength

WWF is financially strong, but needs to plan strategically for continued sustainability over the long-term.

Annual Membership Contribution of \$2,500

Effective October 2010, the annual contribution will be \$2,500 to more closely align member contributions to actual program expenses. The last time that the annual membership contribution was increased was six years ago. Since 2007, WWF has been independent of The Seattle Foundation (TSF) and has had to absorb the full cost of all accounting systems, banking, database, etc. that had previously been administered by TSF. WWF's strong professional infrastructure requires sustained operational support.

The Strategic Plan calls for a modest price increase at this time in an effort to keep Foundation participation as broadly accessible as possible; the balance of the operating funds will be raised through other fundraising and contributed support. The Strategic Plan also affirms that we will continue to have a single level of membership so that all members make the same annual contribution, reflecting the value of equality among members. Going forward, the Foundation will review the annual contribution level every 2-3 years.

Fundraising

Fundraising will continue to be a necessity for the organization's financial sustainability. The **Annual Fund** supports the annual operating budget of the Foundation, and is directed to educational programming, committee management and business infrastructure to support our vibrant and growing membership. Participation in the Annual Fund is entirely voluntary. We encourage members to consider an annual gift and contribute to the success and strength of the Foundation as they are financially able.

The **Colleen S. Willoughby Endowment** is a permanent fund established in honor of our Founder to help support the long-term viability of WWF. The balance is nearly \$2.5 million, and funds are released each year to support a portion of Foundation operations. Contributions are always welcome.

Sponsorships from community-minded corporations also play an important role. Members whose employers have community giving programs, or who own their own businesses, are encouraged to help make connections for WWF.

Planned Giving has become an appealing vehicle for donors to support organizations whose missions align with their values. WWF will develop the tools to make this option available, and encourages members to consider including WWF in their personal estate plans.