

Case Statement

Why Invest in Women?

The impact of investments towards women and girls can be seen in ripples throughout greater communities. Women, at every level of means, reinvest on average 90% of their income back into their families and local communities, contributing to their longstanding resilience.ⁱ Additionally, increased investment in women's health is proven to significantly improve family outcomes which in turn reduces poverty, helps strengthen community and promotes economic growth.ⁱⁱ

The Need

Although the United States is one of the richest countries in the world it is ranked as one of lowest of the developed nations on most measures of women's economic security, health and well-being. This means that American women everywhere bear a significantly disproportionate burden of poverty, workplace inequities, homelessness, abuse and other barriers to self-sufficiency. Women of color encounter these barriers and burdens more frequently.

In the United Statesⁱⁱⁱ:

--Women without a high school diploma have a 90% chance of raising their children in poverty

--Women that complete at least their secondary education are more likely to have fewer and healthier children that are more likely to stay in school

--Women working full time are paid on average just 80 percent of what men typically earn

--Nearly one in three women experiences some form of physical violence in her lifetime

Tracking existing foundation dollars towards women and girls issue areas reveals a large disparity in the financial support towards these organizations and programs. In the United States less than 8 cents of every philanthropic dollar goes to support services and issues that impact women and girls.^{iv} Additional analysis of foundational giving over a ten year period reveals that only one third of one percent of total grants in the United States (1.1 Billion of 2.4 Trillion Grant total grant dollars received) go directly to supporting women and girls' programming.

A closer look at the city of Boston reveals similar inequalities in the status of women and girls^v:

- 71 percent of Boston's households under the poverty line are female-headed households without a husband present
- Boston women earn 82% of men's wages—on par with the national average. This gender wage gap is even higher for women of color
- Less than 30% of 29.6% of Boston women get their recommended 5+ servings of fruits and vegetables per day
- 1 in 7 females in Massachusetts has experienced sexual assault

Recent trends reveal similar disparities in funding women and girls priority areas in Boston. Data on existing grant funding illustrates that over the past ten years only .3 percent of total grants (10.1 million out of 63.3 billion total

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dollars received) go directly to supporting women and girls' programming in Boston. An in depth investigation of the Boston area reveals that there are over 60 organizations that primarily serve women and girls.

The situation is clear. There is a pressing need for more financial support for women and girls' programming locally and nationally.

This small percentage of investments from foundations make it difficult to conceptualize meeting the multifaceted and changing needs of girls and young women. It is due to these existing disparities in funding that community women's giving funds are so critical in filling the gap of addressing the need to support women and girls.

The Role of Women's Funds

Roughly half of the fractional percentage of foundation dollars that go towards women and girls, serve to support health related activities (mental, maternal, and reproductive health)^{vi}. This funding trend leaves further gaps in supporting other issue areas such as women's education, mentoring, and domestic violence issues.

Women's funds play an integral role in addressing the full spectrum of issues that impact women and girls and are reported as being more diverse in their grant making priority areas compared to foundation based giving^{vii}. Additionally, women's funds are more likely to fund

organization's general operating support as opposed to solely funding activities and programming^{viii}. This strengthens the sustainability of organizations serving women and girls and ensures a lasting impact in the community.

Women's funds are critical in reshaping philanthropy by leading the way in comprehensively supporting women and girls in neighborhoods and communities.

Taking Action

Womenade is the only women's giving circle in the Boston area dedicated to supporting programming and organizations for local women and girls. Since 2011, Womenade has invested nearly \$600,000 in grants to local organizations in the Boston area. These award grants of meaningful size support the sustainability of organizations and programming and address a wide variety of issues specifically affecting women. Womenade works to empower each member to ensure that their impact makes a difference in the lives of local women and girls.

ⁱ Harvard Business Review, 2011

ⁱⁱ World Economic Forum, 2015

ⁱⁱⁱ US Census Bureau, 2010

^{iv} Foundation Center & Women's Funding Network, 2009

^v Harvard Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Boston, 2015

^{vi} Foundation Center & Women's Funding Network, 2009

^{vii} Foundation Center & Women's Funding Network, 2009

^{viii} Foundation Center & Women's Funding Network, 2009