

## WFRI Case for Giving

Amelia is a 16-year-old high school student who wants to raise graduation rates for students of color. Christny is a young Vietnamese mother who wants to provide for her family, beginning with a new career in I.T. Carmen is a Latina entrepreneur. Joanna is a Black woman who wants to increase her salary and achieve promotion. Dianne is a senior citizen interested in discussing policy issues with her local legislators. What do all these women have in common? They are beneficiaries of programming funded and provided by the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, and each of them is making a positive change in their community.

### Mission

For women and girls in Rhode Island, the playing field isn't level yet, but it could be with your help. The mission of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is to invest in women and girls through research, advocacy, grantmaking, and strategic partnerships designed to achieve gender equity through systemic change. As a leader of social change, we are committed to advocating for and convening voices to advance gender equity and influence.

### Background/History

The Ms. Foundation for Women was the first national women's fund, launched in the 1970s. Today, hundreds of women's funds operate throughout the United States and in countries around the world. Their shared purpose is to improve the lives of women and girls. What do they accomplish? A lot, including:

- Adding millions of dollars each year to the pool of grant money available for the needs of women and girls
- Pushing for political change, using fresh, local and essential data on the status of women and girls on critical indicators such as health, economic stability, leadership, and other measures
- Developing innovative solutions to address severe social needs
- Building a community of shared purpose
- Celebrating women by inspiring positive, hopeful views of the future while creating and safeguarding the well-being and potential of women and girls

In 2001, the Rhode Island Foundation, together with founder Simone Joyaux, established a fund specifically for women and girls in Rhode Island. In 2005, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island became an independent charitable organization and had been working to create a more equitable state ever since.

### Rationale

Why a Women's Fund of Rhode Island? Communities are more robust, our economy is more prosperous, and our nation is more just when we invest in the health and well-being, economic self-sufficiency, and leadership and empowerment of women and girls. Despite these benefits, research indicates that only 1.6% of all charitable funding is specifically directed to

women's and girls' initiatives.<sup>1</sup> Besides, only 3.3% of all nonprofits in the United States are dedicated to helping women and girls.

WFRI's goal is to achieve gender equity through systemic change. When we invest in the individual, the burden remains on the woman to lift themselves and their children out of poverty. This work leaves in place the systems of oppression that cause or contribute to this poverty in the first place. If we are serious about women's equity, we must directly support the organizations and program that push for broader systemic change- we must support the women's *movement*, not just "empowerment." These reasons are why the Women's Fund of Rhode Island exists- to harness the power of philanthropy to create transformative social change for women and girls, our communities, and our nation.

### **Urgent Needs & Benefits/Opportunities**

#### **The Economy & Economic Self-Sufficiency**

Gender equity is everybody's issue. Research shows that gender equity makes men, women, and their children happier<sup>2</sup>, healthier<sup>3</sup>, and more productive<sup>4</sup>. When education and occupations are more gender-equal, employers attract better employees<sup>5</sup>, reduce costs associated with staff turnover<sup>6</sup>, and increase their corporate social responsibility<sup>7</sup> Fortune 500 companies with the most female managers boast returns 35% higher than their male-dominated counterparts<sup>8</sup>. For the economy as a whole, increasing female labor force participation could increase American GDP by 5%<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Girard, Françoise. (2019, November 4) Stanford Social Innovation Review, *Philanthropy for the Women's Movement, Not Just 'Empowerment.'* Retrieved from: [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/philanthropy\\_for\\_the\\_womens\\_movement\\_not\\_just\\_empowerment?utm\\_source=Enews&utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_campaign=SSIR\\_Now&utm\\_content=Title#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/philanthropy_for_the_womens_movement_not_just_empowerment?utm_source=Enews&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=SSIR_Now&utm_content=Title#)

<sup>2</sup> Veenhoven, R. (2012). Social Development and Happiness in Nations. *Taking Stock: Measuring Social Development*, 1-43.

<sup>3</sup> Courtenay, W. (2000). Constructions of Masculinity and Their Influence on Men's Well-Being: A Theory of Gender and Health. *Social Science and Medicine*, 50, 1385-1401.

<sup>4</sup> Elborgh-Woytek, K. M. (2013). Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity. *IMF Staff Discussion Note*. International Monetary Fund.

<sup>5</sup> American Association of University Women. (n.d.). *Solving the Equation: The Variables for Women's Success in Engineering and Computing*. Retrieved from [www.aauw.org](http://www.aauw.org): <http://www.aauw.org/research/solving-the-equation/>

<sup>6</sup> Workplace Gender Equality Agency. (2013, April 29). *The Business Case for Gender Equality*. Retrieved from Australian Government: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-04-29%20BRANDED%20FINAL%20businesscase%20for%20web.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> ILO International Labor Organization. (2011, November 23). *Gender Inequality and Women in the U.S. Labor Force*. Retrieved from ILO International Labor Organization: <http://www.ilo.org/washington/areas/gender-equality-isnt-just-a-female-cause/>

<sup>8</sup> Mlambo-Ngcuka, D. P. (2014, March 7). *Calling All Men: Gender Equality Isn't Just a Female Cause*. Retrieved from Time: <http://time.com/14543/calling-all-men-gender-equality-isnt-just-a-female-cause/>

<sup>9</sup> Elborgh-Woytek, K. (2013). Women, Work, and the Economy: Macroeconomic Gains from Gender Equity. *IMF Staff Discussion Note*. International Monetary Fund.

Women – including cis and transgender women and nonbinary and gender nonconforming people – are the backbone of our economy. Today, women are more likely than ever before to be sole, primary or co-breadwinners, make key financial decisions and determine the financial health of their families. Women also make a majority of our nation’s consumer purchases and grow businesses at a faster rate.

**However, women also face the burden of systemic barriers that undermine their efforts to achieve economic security.** This is especially true for women of color and other women who are marginalized, including LGBTQ+ people, immigrants and women paid low incomes. In a lifetime, women earn hundreds of thousands of dollars less than men, own pennies on the dollar compared to what men own and have fewer opportunities to borrow money or obtain credit. They are more likely to live, and die, in poverty. Women of color suffer most from this inequity, and all women suffer as a result. Not only does this have a devastating impact on women’s lives, it hurts families, communities, future generations and our entire economy.

**We have an opportunity to break down these barriers and reimagine an economy that supports women in all their critical roles and fosters their success.** When we invest in economic security and dignity for women, especially women who have been marginalized, everyone wins. Without intervention, the wage gap won't close until 2058. If we increase women's wages to parity with men, this will generate an additional 11% in GDP<sup>10</sup>. Can we afford to wait 41 years to improve our economy through pay equity?

### **Advocating for Social Change**

Issues like pay equity, workplace pregnancy protection, and gender discrimination are directly impacted by work by leaders at the local and state level. 37% of the R.I. legislators in 2019 are women<sup>11</sup>; 15% lead our largest employers<sup>12</sup>. We know that when there is a higher percentage of women in leadership positions in government and business, support for women’s issues moves in the right direction.

The Women’s Fund of Rhode Island works address gender equity within the following issue areas:

- Economic self-sufficiency, including access to good paying jobs, child care, pay equity, paid sick time & paid caregiver leave
- Reproductive rights
- Health and well-being
- Educational attainment
- Political representation

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<sup>10</sup> McKinsey & Company. (2015, September). *How Advancing Women's Equality Can Add \$12 Trillion to Global Growth*. Retrieved from McKinsey & Company: <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>

<sup>11</sup> Center for American Women and Politics. (2018-7-31). *State Fact Sheet- Rhode Island*. Retrieved from Center for American Politics and Women: [http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state\\_fact\\_sheets/ri](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state_fact_sheets/ri)

<sup>12</sup> GoLocalProv. (2018, February 14). *R.I.'s Female CEO Deficit*. Retrieved from GoLocalProv: [http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state\\_fact\\_sheets/ri](http://www.cawp.rutgers.edu/state_fact_sheets/ri)

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island offers workshops in salary negotiation skills, creating equitable workplaces, advocacy 101, and other topics which help to address the societal inequities that occur in women's everyday lives.

In addition to educating the public about issues that impact women and families, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island engages in training women and girls in civic engagement. We have trained over 100 women to run for office, knowing that regardless of party affiliation, the more representation we have at the table, the more likely the good policy will be made for women and girls. In 2019 and 2020, we have trained over 100 volunteers to register eligible residents to vote. Our goal is to ensure that more women vote in the 2020 election and that more women are elected into office at all levels.

Our *Women's Policy Institute* (WPI) is a nine month program that focuses on cultivating women's skills to shape policy-making, increasing the number of women leaders in R.I. who can influence legislation to impact women and families positively. To date, 86 women have participated in this program. In addition, our policy and advocacy committee is made up of volunteers who actively advocate for our priority issues.

### **Maximizing Impact through Philanthropy**

Women have the financial power to support causes important to them in a meaningful way. They are increasingly responsible for their personal and family wealth, including charitable giving and philanthropy.

Women as Philanthropists<sup>13</sup> :

- Women run more than 10 million businesses with combined annual sales of \$1.1 trillion and make 80% of consumer buying decisions
- 45% of American millionaires are now women
- 26% of working wives make more money than their working husbands
- Women will inherit 70% of the \$41 trillion in inter-generational wealth transfer expected over the next 40 years
- Women now control more than half of the private wealth in the U.S.

Public policy and impact investing are both areas where women are becoming more strategic in spending their charitable dollars. At the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, we believe philanthropic donations should be made in a strategic way to maximize impact.

### **Grant Making Through a Gender Lens**

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<sup>13</sup> Women's Philanthropy Institute. (2016, May). *Giving to Women and Girls: Who Gives, and Why?*

Retrieved from [www.iupui.edu](http://www.iupui.edu):

<https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/9624/Giving%20to%20Women%20and%20Girls%20-%20Working%20Paper%203%20-%20May%202016.pdf>

Research<sup>14</sup> suggests that women's funds such as the Women's Fund of Rhode Island are experts in women's philanthropy, and are trusted to distribute grants effectively. Grantmaking through a gender lens ensures that programs and projects which focus specifically on women's and girls' issues are not marginalized. It also ensures that women are represented proportionately in the policy-making and leadership positions in grantee organizations.

WFRI uses the participatory grantmaking process, which engages a diverse group of volunteer readers trained in gender lens giving to recommend which grants should be made in a given grant cycle. In 2020, we moved to a bi-annual grant cycle in order to provide more funding continuity to our existing grantees.

### **Vision/Goals**

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island envisions a community, nation, and world that is free of gender bias and where social justice exists for all. Evidence of this change will show by community engagement, the removal of barriers to resources, and the existence of equitable social and institutional systems.

Our current strategic plan (2020-2023) includes the following goals:

- Produce one new research piece per year on women's issues that will be used to affect policy change in Rhode Island
- Choose 1-3 issues annually as legislative priorities we will advocate for/ against
- Engage staff and board members in practices which enhance equity, diversity and inclusion for the organization, including involving men in our work
- Facilitate programs such as the Women's Policy Institute and workshops that impact the problems we are advocating for
- Educate the public and community leaders who build awareness about women's issues in Rhode Island, through policy papers, blog entries, forums and events
- Fund organizations working towards systemic change and long term positive impact for women and girls through grantmaking
- Grow our endowment to \$4M
- Ensure WFRI has the necessary resources (human, financial, other) to deliver on its mission and vision
- Become the leading voice for women's progressive issues in Rhode Island

### **Accomplishments**

Why give to the Women's Fund of Rhode Island? We are a credible, evidence-based resource on issues facing women and girls with an ever-expanding collection of national and local research to inform our community. Our programs and grantmaking are focused on creating a more equitable world through systemic change.

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island has conducted 16 self-published research studies and papers on topics including:

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<sup>14</sup> Women's Philanthropy Institute. (2016, May). *Giving to Women and Girls: Who Gives, and Why?* Retrieved from [www.iupui.edu: https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/9624/Giving%20to%20Women%20and%20Girls%20-%20Working%20Paper%203%20-%20May%202016.pdf](https://scholarworks.iupui.edu/bitstream/handle/1805/9624/Giving%20to%20Women%20and%20Girls%20-%20Working%20Paper%203%20-%20May%202016.pdf)

- 2019 The Uneven Path Ten Year Update
- 2018 Women of Color: A Snapshot
- 2017 Status of Working Women in RI Report
- 2016 Gender Equity in the Workplace
- 2014 and 2012 Economic Independence Snapshots
- 2014 Findings from a Survey on R.I. Voters on Women's Policy Issues
- 2013 Senior Women & Housing Then and Now
- She Said, He Said (Calling Out Gender Bias)
- 2013 RI-GAP Report
- Pregnancy Accommodations Fact Sheet
- Temporary Caregiver Insurance Fact Sheet
- 2011 Women & Housing in RI
- 2010 Women, Leadership and Wages
- 2010 Every Woman Counts: RI-GAP Overview
- 2010 Older Women in RI: A Portrait
- 2009 Dollars to Sense: Making Social Change Matter
- 2009 State Investments in Women's Economic Self Sufficiency: An Uneven Path
- 2006 Status of Women in RI

Since 2001, we have awarded over \$760,000 in grants to programs that use a gender lens to create systemic change for women and girls in R.I. A sampling of recent projects/programs that have received funds include:

- Training advocates in unconscious bias and regularly bringing them together to address a critical community issue
- Supporting the work of the Coalition for Reproductive Freedom
- Addressing sexual harassment at the 10<sup>th</sup> grade level in Providence Public Schools
- Train-the-trainer programming for community leaders addressing reproductive health and freedom with displaced immigrants
- Supporting the work of young girls of color who have identified the need for change within their public school system
- Entrepreneurial training for Spanish speaking women interested in starting their own business

Through our Women's Policy Institute, we have trained over 86 women across the state to draft legislation and advocate for policies that help make R.I. a more equitable place to live. The members of these cohorts come from all walks of life with many different levels of experience in policy work. Participants successfully advocated for paid family leave and pregnancy accommodations in the workplace, policies which have been signed into law. Several participants have gone on to run for political office successfully; others have stayed involved in advocating for community change through a variety of organizations and coalitions.

In addition to WPI fellows and alumni, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island utilizes volunteers on our Policy & Advocacy Committee, who determine what legislative priorities our organization addresses each year. They write policy briefs, testify at hearings, and generate public will through blog entries and forums. Members of this committee helped to pay

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important laws like Earned Sick Time, giving nearly 60,000 Rhode Island employees access to paid sick time for the first time in their working careers.

In 2019, we helped to pass the Reproductive Privacy Act, codifying the protections of Roe vs. Wade into Rhode Island law. In addition, we helped to repeal the Tampon Tax. The expected number of people impacted by these two pieces of legislation is roughly 417,000. We also advocated for fair pay, extended family leave, increases in the minimum wage, and freedom from sexual harassment.

Since 2017, over 2,000 women have attended one or more of our workshops and report an increased ability to address women's issues within their community. Of the 55 women who attended our "Run As You Are" workshop, 18% ran for office in the subsequent election and 60% of those who ran won their legislative seat. Additional statistics show that another 30% committed to running for office in the next five years. 95% of those who have attended our salary negotiation classes indicated that they were likely to implement the ideas and concepts learned in the workshop. 75% of those who attended our gender equity in the workplace workshop felt they learned something valuable through the program.

### **Current Needs**

The 2020 annual budget of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is \$333,000. \$60,000 of the budget is directed towards grant making; \$200,000 is focused on programs and management, including \$45,000 to be used for our Women's Policy Institute. We are committed to growing our endowment to at least \$4M, enabling us to increase the impact of our grantmaking.

### **Means of Support**

Donors can contribute to the Women's Fund of Rhode Island by several methods, including:

- Participating in our annual giving campaign
- Charitable giving through your estate plan and retirement plan distributions
- Gifts to our endowment through the Rhode Island Foundation
- Sponsorships of events and programs
- Hosting a "widening circle" at your home or place of business to introduce your friends and colleagues to WFRI
- Joining our "Circle of Giving" with a recurring gift
- Purchase of named scholarships for our Women Policy Institute fellows, which begin at \$2500

### **Dreams for the Future**

In addition to raising funds for our current programming, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island has identified several opportunities for expansion if funding were not a concern. Ideas for this expansion include:

- Hiring a full-time Strategic Initiatives Director to manage all policy & advocacy efforts (including the Women's Policy Institute)
- Launching a Young Women's Initiative, similar to WPI, but focused on activating young women ages 14-24 to identify systemic barriers and recommend policy solutions to address structural issues that impact their lives
- Creating a venture capital investment fund for female entrepreneurs

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- Creating Rhode Island's Women's Well-Being Index as an online resource to provide data on women's health, safety, economic security, employment and earnings, and political empowerment
- Convening the diverse network of women's oriented organizations and programs in Rhode Island to identify and collaborate on an important issue for collective impact (ex: Pathways for Women to a Living Wage)
- Double overall grantmaking to advance gender equity in Rhode Island
- Acquisition of property to host WFRI offices, meetings, small events and coworking space for nonprofits working on gender equity initiatives and/or female entrepreneurs, perhaps showcasing artwork by local female artists
- Boost WFRI infrastructure by investing in marketing and fundraising talent (particularly through major and planned giving), which would in turn bring more resources to the organization over time