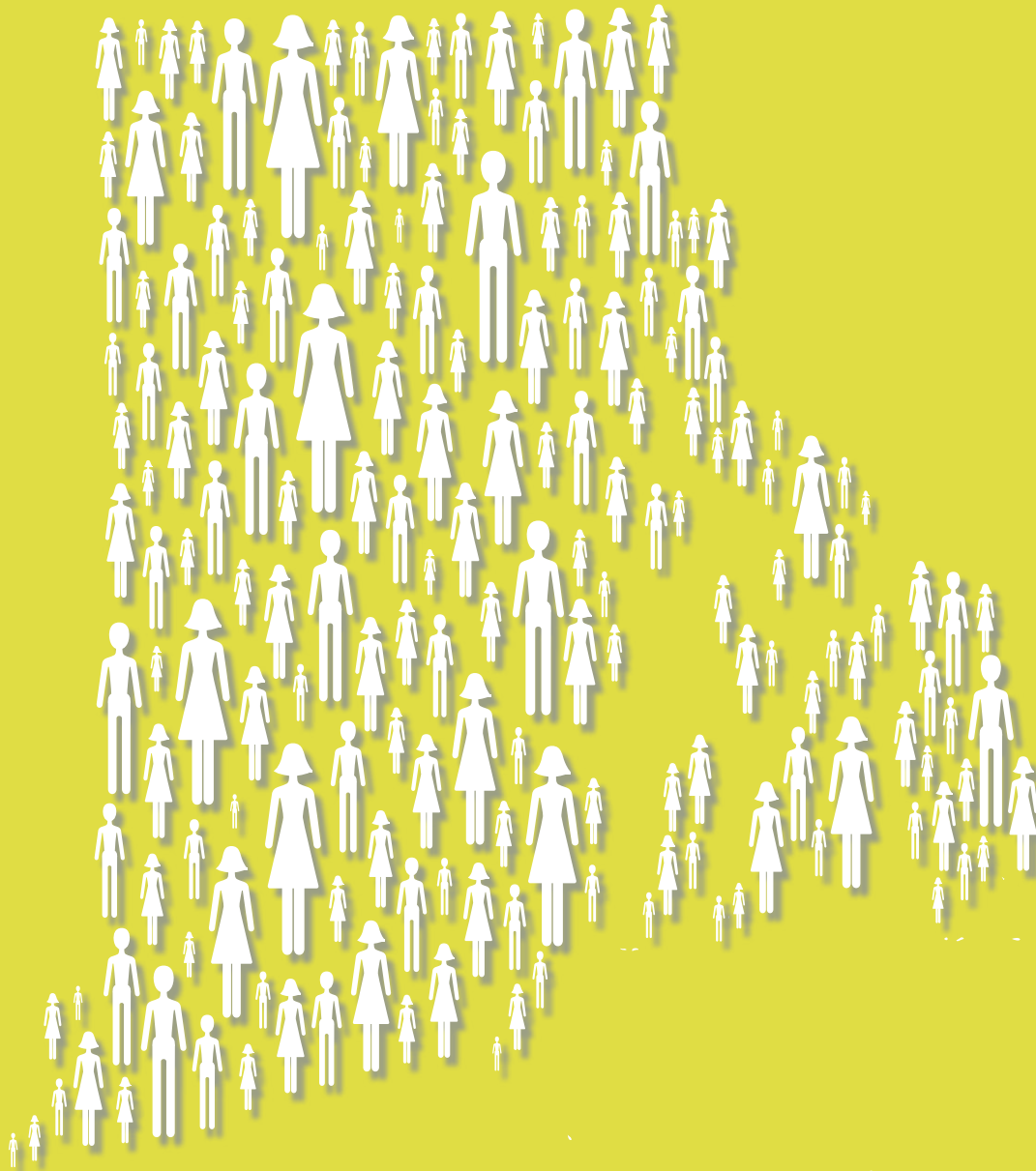


Dollars to Sense

Making Social Change Matter



We engage emerging ideas,
we invest in leadership,
and, together, we are actively
changing Rhode Island.



CONTENTS

2	Characteristics of Grantees	6	Behavior	16	Lessons Learned
3	Making Social Change Happen	8	Engagement	18	What Is the Difference That Makes the Difference
4	Definition	10	Policy	20	Strategic Investments
		12	Long-term Investments		

For the past ten years, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island has funded organizations that change the landscape of our political process. Grantees engage low-income girls, women from immigrant communities, women living in poverty without educational opportunities necessary to succeed, and women who have been victimized by abusers. Yet, with funding from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island these women and girls have become the backbone of social change. Together, their voices are heard.

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island is part of a global movement to help level the playing field for women and girls. The Women's Fund of Rhode Island is committed to social change grant making that focuses on long-term solutions to societal problems. We support organizations that tackle critical issues at their source: shifting public policy and discourse.

The work of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is made possible by the commitment of hundreds of volunteers and donors. In the Fall of 2001, a group of committed women partnered with the Rhode Island Foundation to create a field of interest fund focused on improving the lives of Rhode Island's women and girls. The women volunteered their time, expertise, and enthusiasm. The Rhode Island Foundation invested staffing and financial resources. In the Spring 2005, with the a \$2.5 million endowment gift from the Rhode Island Foundation, the Women's Fund became independent. Since then, over 540 donors have provided gifts from \$5 to \$50,000. Additionally, 150 women representing all sectors of Rhode Island, have served as community reviewers for our grant application process. These women read grant applications, site visit grantees, and select projects that have a significant impact on women and girls in the Ocean State.

Since 2001, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island has received over \$4,418,000 in requests for funding and has distributed \$566,500. Grantees range from volunteer-led start-up organizations to policy organizations that are focused on improving the lives of Rhode Island's most disenfranchised women and girls. The Women's Fund of Rhode Island is a risk-taking grant-maker, willing to support groups with emerging leadership or innovative ways of organizing for change. Many groups are funded for advocacy work that would not be supported by mainstream donors. While grant investments are not large, they are always strategic: launching new initiatives, helping organizations collect data, or working with grantees to plan for ways to bring oppositional forces together.

Characteristics of Grantees

96% of funding assists low-income women and girls

While 100% of grants involve women, 32% also involve men

Over 70% of grants involve adult women

7 organizations specifically targeting girls under age 18.

Over the course of the past 10 years, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island has awarded 55 grants to 27 organizations. Grantees must apply for funding on a yearly basis, although 16 organizations have received more than one year of funding. The average award is \$10,656, with grant sizes ranging from \$5,000 to \$21,000. Initially, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island awarded larger grants in a wider range of topics. In the past three years, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island has narrowed its grantmaking to the key areas of domestic violence prevention, economic justice, civic engagement and political representation.

Grantees self-identified their key issue areas. For several grantees their issues crossed two or more areas. The most frequently cited issues addressed by grants include:

- Economic Justice/Development (45% of grants)
- Education (43%)
- Political rights and civic participation (42%)
- Gender-based violence (26%)
- Health (22%)

Projects also worked in the areas of combating racism, human rights, immigrant or refugee rights, reproductive rights, financial literacy, science and math, housing, and sexual harassment and rights.

The most common strategies used to address these issue areas are leadership development, advocacy or legal action, training, organizing, and research.

Self-Defined Ability to Affect Change Among Funded Projects

Shifts	No Progress	Beginning to Meet Goals	Met Goals	Exceeded Goals	Total By Shifts
Definition	0	1	1	0	2
Engagement	0	2	3	4	9
Policy	1	8	4	13	26
Behavior	0	4	5	3	12
Total By Progress	1	15	13	20	47

After one year of funding, grantees must document if the project has affected change. Even with limited amount of funding from the Fund, grantees are able to make significant impacts.

Making Social Change Happen

Over the course of the past ten years, data has been collected in a social change impact tool, *Making The Case™*, that defines five types of social change actions that are used alone, in multiple combinations, or fully integrate all five. These five shifts can occur simultaneously or sequentially. Creating social change is often a lengthy and complicated process; *Making The Case™* is an evaluation tool that helps organizations benchmark their progress along the way.

The five shifts integral to making social change happen are:

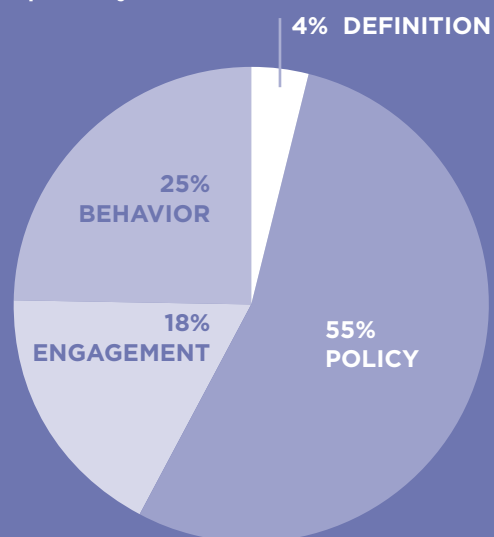
- **Definition:** An issue or idea is given new meaning. The community or society sees the issue differently as a result of the work.
- **Behavior:** An individual does things differently and for the better, usually building a sense of personal empowerment.
- **Engagement:** More people are engaged in an idea or action as a result of the work. Ideally, enough people get involved that they are noticed; voices are heard, and a critical mass or ‘tipping point’ is reached in the sphere of influence.
- **Policy:** Organizational, local, regional, state policies or practices have changed to better serve social change ideals as a result of the work.
- **Maintaining Position:** Earlier progress on issues is maintained in the face of opposition, and deep implementation activities make positive policy change a day-to-day reality.

The Women’s Fund of Rhode Island believes in making strategic grants, sometimes for only one or two years, but with the intent of addressing immediate social change. The Women’s Fund of Rhode Island also invests in the time necessary to make long-term social change.

This report highlights the impact of those strategic grants, both short-term and long-term investments.

Ten Years of Grantee Shifts

While grantees may have selected more than one shift in which to work, each grantee selected a primary shift.



Definition

Although only \$22,400 of grants awarded by the Women's Fund of Rhode Island have been to organizations that identify themselves as working primarily to change public perceptions about women and disenfranchised groups, nearly half of all grants are engaged in this type of activity.

25 grantees worked in this shift area, including:

- The Poverty Institute
- Southside Community Land Trust
- The George Wiley Center
- DARE
- RI Kids Count
- YouthBuild Providence
- National Coalition of 100 Black Women
- Domestic Violence Center of South County

While small, short-term funding cannot fully challenge long-held societal beliefs about poverty, domestic violence, or career options for immigrant women, some organizations are able to use the Women's Fund of Rhode Island grants to jumpstart the conversation.

"Our goal is to shift the dialogue when youth speak up and I believe we have."

- Karen Feldman, *Executive Director, Young Voices*

Successful projects provide concrete tools for women and girls to:

learn how to communicate to policymakers about their personal experiences

gain skills necessary to speak with the media, the public, and legislators

seek out opportunities for women and girls to be seen in leadership positions.

Redefining “Lazy Youth” as Young Leaders

Karen Feldman had a vision: that if young people were trained to have a voice in the political process, they could make significant changes in the way our state creates policies. With almost no funding, but a strong commitment to youth, Karen Feldman launched a new nonprofit called Young Voices and began to train youth to make change.

“In order to shift people’s perceptions of our youth, we need to first train kids how to talk in public, how to conduct research, and how to take leadership roles in community forums,” explains Karen, “We train youth how to be advocates, how to understand policy.”

With their signature purple shirts and professional style of talking, Young Voices participants began to redefine what policymakers thought of urban youth. Over the course of the past few years, Young Voices participants have sat on commission boards, conducted research, developed a policy platform, and held press conferences to explain their policy positions, all of which has earned the teenagers a high level of respect.

When Education Commissioner Deborah A. Gist pulled together a team of people to be involved in the state’s Race To the Top application for federal funding that would change our education system, Gist reached out to Young Voices. “Two Young Voices girls were in the room with the most powerful people in the state,” recalls Karen, “One of the girls, Amber Johnson, went to DC to present on Race to the Top.”

Karen notes, “Our goal is to shift the dialogue when youth speak up and I believe we have.”

Years Grants Awarded

2007
2008
2009

\$31,000

Total Grant Amount

92

Number of Youth Impacted

With their signature purple shirts and professional style of talking, Young Voices participants began to redefine what policymakers thought of urban youth.

Behavior

Women and girls who are trained, mentored, or otherwise engaged in changing their behaviors will ultimately be empowered to bring about larger social change. Behavior is the second highest funded primary shift among Women's Fund of Rhode Island grantees, with over \$141,000 awarded in ten years. 29 grantees have worked to shift behaviors in some way, mostly through the development of leadership skills, advocacy training, or improving the participant's financial capacity.

Grantees working in this shift area include:

- Latina Leadership Institute
- Center for Women and Enterprise
- English for Action
- Sojourner House
- RI Parents for Progress
- YWCA of Northern Rhode Island
- PRYSM
- We Learn

The most successful grantees in this shift area had several commonalities:

- Trainings offered specific skill-building activities (such as public speaking, working with the media, organizing strategies)
- Activities were tied to very concrete goals (such as learning how to advocate for a particular piece of legislation)
- Training groups were small and held regularly (such as weekly or monthly)
- Participants were motivated by their own experiences to help make larger societal changes

“Not only has the Women's Fund of Rhode Island helped with our mentoring program, it has helped the women in our chapter become more involved politically. The Women's Fund brought us together with others to learn about advocacy.”

- Jackie Ogidan, LEAD Coordinator and Member, Rhode Island Chapter of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women.

Going Forward by Giving Back

When Kafilat Lawal was a sophomore in high school, she understood how to succeed academically, but was struggling to overcome her shyness. She received a letter in the mail from the Children's Crusade telling her about a new program, called LEAD, which offered mentoring opportunities from the Rhode Island chapter of National Coalition of 100 Black Women. Kafilat thought the program might just be what she was looking for, "I wanted to step out of my comfort zone. I wanted to present myself in a more confident way."

Paired with mentors who held discussions about culture, career choices, sexual health, and self-esteem, Kafilat was inspired: "I had African-American female mentors who are successful, confident. I wanted to be like them."

The turning point for Kafilat came in her junior year of high school. "Our mentors decided to film us speaking," Kafilat recalls. "We spoke about our background and our goals. We had to speak for five minutes non-stop. For me, that was a big deal. I never thought of myself as a good speaker, but afterwards my mentors and the other girls said I did a great job. I took that with me to college."

When Kafilat left for Boston University, she knew she had the foundation from LEAD to become a leader on campus. As a college student, she sought out leadership positions, including becoming a student ambassador for the school. When she graduated, she returned to Rhode Island, knowing that she wanted to give back to LEAD in whatever way she could. Kafilat first served as a guest speaker and now, she is a mentor to her own cohort of girls. "I want these girls to appreciate LEAD. I know I took for granted at the time I was a participant how LEAD instills certain goals and values to become a leader, to be a strong woman. LEAD teaches you things you can't learn in school."

Kafilat wants to inspire girls to become strong, successful women. Having graduated college during difficult financial times, the leadership skills Kafilat learned at LEAD have helped her network in search of her dream job in economic development for the government. While Kafilat still hasn't landed her first career break, she remains hopeful, a belief she honed in LEAD, "I have always been motivated to succeed, LEAD helped me gain confidence."

\$29,000

Total Grant Amount

Years Grants Awarded

2007

2008

2009

60

**Number of Girls Involved
ANNUALLY**

Engagement

Bringing about social change involves bringing together many different people. In some instances, grantees engaged individuals, such as immigrant women, who have never participated in the political process; in other situations, grantees brought together seemingly opposing forces to address systemic barriers to policy change.

Although only 18% of grantees identify a shift in engagement as their primary shift, 64% of grantees identify a shift in engagement as one of their goals. The Women's Fund of Rhode Island has invested over \$100,000 in this shift.

Grantees working in this area include:

- Ocean State Action Fund
- YWCA of Northern Rhode Island, Political Empowerment Program
- Planned Parenthood of Rhode Island
- Healthy Kids Rhode Island
- AS220, Rossi Debate Program
- SOAR

Programs that are successful in engaging others have several commonalities:

- Initiative is hosted by a well-respected organization
- uses data to examine the issue in question
- uses existing legislation as the foundation of the work
- Uses multiple forms of media to influence public opinion

"I remember when the Women's Fund of Rhode Island was created, I thought, why hasn't this existed before? It is so necessary. It is the perfect match for our work. We felt validated for the work we were doing because there was a foundation that valued women having power. We knew the Women's Fund would be a great ally for our agenda to help women whose work is so undervalued."

— Chas Walker, SEIU Organizer

From Childcare workers to Advocates

In 2002, when the Day Care Justice Co-op first requested funding from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, childcare workers earned on average \$2.76 an hour and worked an average of 70 hours per week. The Co-op's grant application noted that while significant improvements were made in the early 2000s to childcare subsidies for low-income women, the women who worked as childcare workers did not receive comparable benefits, leaving many of them struggling to make ends meet.

Originally started in 1998 by a small group of women who worked in the childcare industry, the Day Care Justice Co-op became an entity that engaged childcare workers to advocate for change. The Women's Fund of Rhode Island supported the organization by funding a part-time organizer who worked to engage a broad group of childcare workers. What started as a group of 30, became a membership of 300, in part because of the Women's Fund's support. Together, the group first sought, and was awarded health care benefits from the State, and then organized in an effort to unionize. By the time the efforts to unionize completed, 75% of childcare workers in the state had joined the Day Care Justice Co-op, with a membership comprised almost exclusively of Latina and African-American women.

In 2004, the Co-op members voted to merge into a union and selected SEIU 1199, a union that historically represents health care workers. "It is a similar union in terms of the goals; we are all about providing quality care," explains Chas Walker, the Co-op organizer who is now an organizer at SEIU. The Co-op, however, laid the foundation for raising awareness of the issues facing daycare workers, "Before the Co-op, workers in home day cares were really isolated. You could live down the block from someone also running a daycare, but you didn't talk to one another about the checks from the Department of Human Services being three months late. We went out and brought people together. Suddenly, with 400 people in the room all having similar experiences, you realize there's power in the room. We cut through the isolation and then the providers took the lead."

By engaging women who are rarely part of the political process, Day Care Justice Co-op brought a new, powerful voice to the fight for social justice. In 2004, one of the daycare workers involved in the Co-op ran for political office. Defeating an incumbent, Representative Grace Diaz became the first Dominican-American to hold elected office in the United States. Representative Diaz is now a leading voice for childcare workers in the state in many different ways. "She even gives out her cell phone number to child care workers," says Chas.

\$28,500
Total Grant Amount

Years Grants Awarded
2003
2004

1200
Day Care Providers Impacted

Policy

The majority of funding from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is awarded to organizations that are working towards concrete policy change. Over \$310,000 has been awarded to grantees that view shifting policy as their primary goal. 29 grants involved shifting policy.

Grants included training women to testify at the State House, meet with legislators, address large audiences, develop organizing campaigns, and present at press conferences.

Over the past ten years, grants have tackled the following policy issues:

Negotiated subsidized health care insurance for child care providers under state contract

Passed the Homicide Prevention Bill, which remove guns from domestic violence abusers with restraining orders

Prevented detrimental changes to the Family Independence Program

Maintained levels of RiteCare and child care benefits

Maintained Earned Income Tax Credit

Won a summer moratorium on utility shut-offs

Advocated for the amendment of the 2006 Energy Act

Added infant to protected class with Public Utilities Commission; then expanded infant protected class to include children up to 24 months old

Enforced the First Source hiring ordinance in the city of Providence

Improved the Department of Health's policies in order to protect abused women and girls at risk for HIV

Reviewed existing sex education policies in RI and established a coalition to implement those policies

Developed model firearm policies for all 39 cities and towns in RI

Introduced the Domestic Violence Child Safety Bill in collaboration with the Rhode Island Family Court

Held a Family Court training for judges on childcare visitation for families with abusive parents

Changed Public Utility Commission regulations, requiring a minimum payment for utilities to be turned back on

Implemented ADA regulations for women in health care settings

Developed a youth driven education reform policy platform

In almost every instance, grantees were successful in their legislative efforts. Grantees attributed that success to:

well-organized, creative campaigns that connected legislators with the people most affected by the legislation

political alliances, sometimes with seemingly oppositional groups, that supported the need for change

strong partnership among community organizations

leadership and technical assistance from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island

Speaking Up to Make Change

“Without people speaking up, the system will continue to operate in the same way,” begins Maggi Rogers, the volunteer Acting Operations Manager of the George Wiley Center. Maggi, who has volunteered at the George Wiley Center for over half of the organization’s 28 year existence, believes whole-heartedly in the Center’s mission to advocate for change.

People seek out the George Wiley Center when they have reached a crisis point, usually when their utilities have been shut off and they no longer have heat. Many want cash to defray the costs of their bills. “People want a quick fix, but we know that’s only going to be a short-term solution. We want people to look long-term,” explains Maggi.

Working with the individuals, the George Wiley Center advocates help people set up hearings with the Public Utilities Division so that they can develop reasonable payment plans to restart their utility services. Advocates, many of whom were trained through a project funded by the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island, attend the hearings.

Yet the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island supported trainings were not solely designed to focus on individual problems, but rather to help advocates connect the individual issue with systems change. “It is work to get long-term policy change,” notes Maggi. “People would come to a meeting to discuss a policy platform, then people would discuss their individual problems, but the trainings gave us focus on specific issues.” Over the past several years, the George Wiley Center has won many changes to legislation, including first creating a protected class for infants that prevents utilities from being shut off when an infant is in the home and then expanding that class to include children up to 24 months.

While the Center has gained significant success from both its advocacy strategies and the level of knowledge of its volunteers, Maggi believes that “the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island lent us a level of credibility we didn’t have before. We take it as a real compliment that we received this money.”

Years Grants Awarded

2006

2007


2008

\$23,000
Total Grant Amount

207
Number of People Impacted

Long-term Investments

Sometimes, organizations approach the Women's Fund of Rhode Island with a desire to make long-term systemic change and a commitment to allocate resources within their organization to do so. Because the Women's Fund of Rhode Island does not provide large grants, organizations interested in long-term change must have enough infrastructure to maintain the work. With the right opportunity, however, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island's grants can serve as catalyst.



Over the course of the past ten years, SOAR has trained women survivors of violence to advocate for change

Sisters Overcoming Abusive Relationships (SOAR) is a coalition of domestic violence survivors that is part of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. With an investment of \$63,600 by the Women's Fund of Rhode Island over the course of the past ten years, SOAR has trained women survivors of violence to advocate for change, changed our public perceptions of victims of domestic violence, advocated for legislation pertaining to child visitation and custody in cases of domestic violence, and advocated for the passage of the Homicide Prevention Law which requires law enforcement to remove guns from abusers in cases of domestic violence.

SOAR's work exemplifies the four primary shifts in social change. SOAR also exemplifies the need for long-term commitment to public policy, realizing that change to deeply held beliefs does not happen quickly.

“It is incredibly valuable that the work of the Task Force was funded. It has already led to other efforts that will bring about change.”

— Liz Tobin Tyler, JD, Roger Williams Law School

THE STORY OF SOAR: From Redefining Domestic Violence to Policy Change

Renee Brisette joined SOAR because she thought she could use her own story of abuse to help others. “When I came to my first SOAR meeting, I remember everyone talking about the Homicide Prevention Bill and thinking, Oh my gosh, what am I doing here? These women are incredible. I was so impressed by how determined they all were to make change.”

Despite her initial fear that she would not be able to be as successful as the other women, Renee returned to SOAR meetings. At first, she returned because she enjoyed having a practical way of dealing with her trauma. As she became more involved, however, Renee learned tools and techniques to talk about her experience and advocate for change. The experiences she gained through SOAR also boosted her confidence at work, enabling her to advance in her career as she became more confident holding press conferences, working with the media, and speaking in front of large groups.

As SOAR members learned new skills, they wanted to focus their work on systemic changes. Child visitation and fighting for sole custody of their children became a central point of concern. In Rhode Island, the Family Court primarily awards joint custody to divorcing parents, even in potential domestic violence cases. Victimized women were spending thousands of dollars filing petition after petition to prevent their abusive husbands from gaining access to their children.

Through its fiscal agent, the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence, SOAR submitted a proposal to the Women’s Fund seeking funding to study the problem: How often was joint custody awarded to a potentially abusive divorcing spouse? Were children continuing to be abused because of exposure to the abusive parent through the visitation process?

SOAR

Sisters

Overcoming

Abusive

Relationships

THE STORY OF SOAR: *continued*

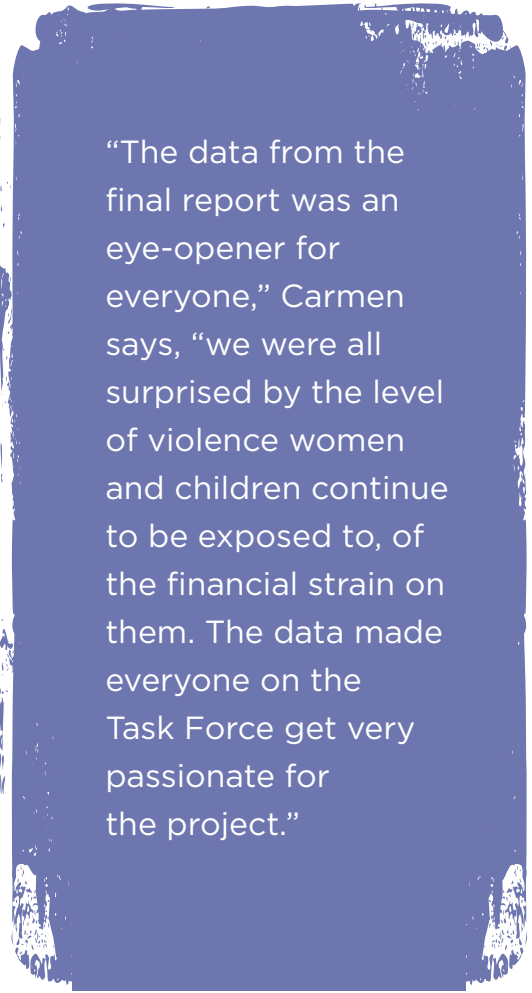
SOAR Coordinator, Carmen Recalde Russo, knew that to be successful SOAR would have to enlist the support of the legal community. SOAR developed a Task Force to study the issue and invited the Family Court, Roger Williams University Law School, family law attorneys, and Legal Aid staff to join. In the beginning, SOAR members were worried about working with lawyers, and the Family Court in particular. Carmen knew, however, that keeping the group focused on common ground would enable the different representatives to work together, but, she admits, “the first meeting was very awkward.”

Carmen held debriefing meetings before and after with SOAR members so that they could process their own experiences. “At first, all of the solutions [offered by SOAR members] were about changing the judges,” Carmen explains, “but now it is systems oriented. We are all talking about legislative changes. Everyone on the Task Force wants something to change.”

The Task Force worked for several months collecting data through surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, and over 200 case reviews of Family Court hearings. The results were staggering: 89% of survey respondents stated that their children witnessed domestic violence either before or during the custody and visitation process. 53% of children were abused during their legally required visitation. Not surprisingly, 75% of children were afraid of their abusive parent. Despite this, 58% of the cases of survey participants were decided in favor of joint custody. The financial burden was also overwhelming: while nearly all respondents were working, 76% made less than \$36,000 year. Yet, one-third of survey respondents had spent over \$25,000 in legal fees.

“The data from the final report was an eye-opener for everyone,” Carmen says, “we were all surprised by the level of violence women and children continue to be exposed to, of the financial strain on them. The data made everyone on the Task Force get very passionate for the project.”

While the report lists twelve recommendations for change, the most complex change would be altering the existing legislation that favors joint custody in cases of divorce. With the full support of the Task Force and the



“The data from the final report was an eye-opener for everyone,” Carmen says, “we were all surprised by the level of violence women and children continue to be exposed to, of the financial strain on them. The data made everyone on the Task Force get very passionate for the project.”

Family Court, Senator Maryellen Goodwin and Representative Elaine Coderre introduced Senate Bill 2705 and House Bill 7483 during the 2010 legislative session. If passed, this legislation would have established a classification of domestic abuse risk in child custody and visitation cases where domestic violence is present, created a rebuttable presumption that it is not in the best interest of the child to be placed in sole, shared legal or physical custody of an abusive parent, and would require the family court to provide for the safety of the child and the non-offending parent during visitation with the abusive parent.

“The bill was revolutionary last year,” explains Representative Coderre, “It is a very, very important bill and I am reintroducing it this year.” Because of resistance from some legislators, however, the bill may take years to pass.

There are several significant outcomes of the Task Force’s work that are immediately apparent:

- The Task Force conducted trainings at the Family Court to explain the impact of certain decisions on victims of abuse;
- One sub-committee is working to create a manual for domestic violence survivors to help them navigate the family court system, and
- Another sub-committee is engaging the broader legal community to provide more *pro bono* services in domestic violence cases.

There has also been an immediate impact on Renee, “SOAR has been empowering for me and my children, too. When I got the [Task Force’s] report in my hands, I just realized, Oh my gosh, we are doing it. I was in tears. It was a victorious moment for me, for my children, for SOAR, and for all the other families stuck in this system.”

Renee largely credits the continued support of the Women’s Fund of Rhode Island for that empowerment, “Without the funding from the Women’s Fund, that never would’ve happened. While the outcome from this report won’t impact my court case, it has empowered my children. They now say, ‘Mommy, you have to do this because we don’t want any other children to go through what we’ve been through.’ It was only talk before the Women’s Fund gave us money and now it is a real movement. We are making concrete steps towards change.”

“It was only talk
before the Women’s
Fund gave us money
and now it is a real
movement.”

— Renee Brisette

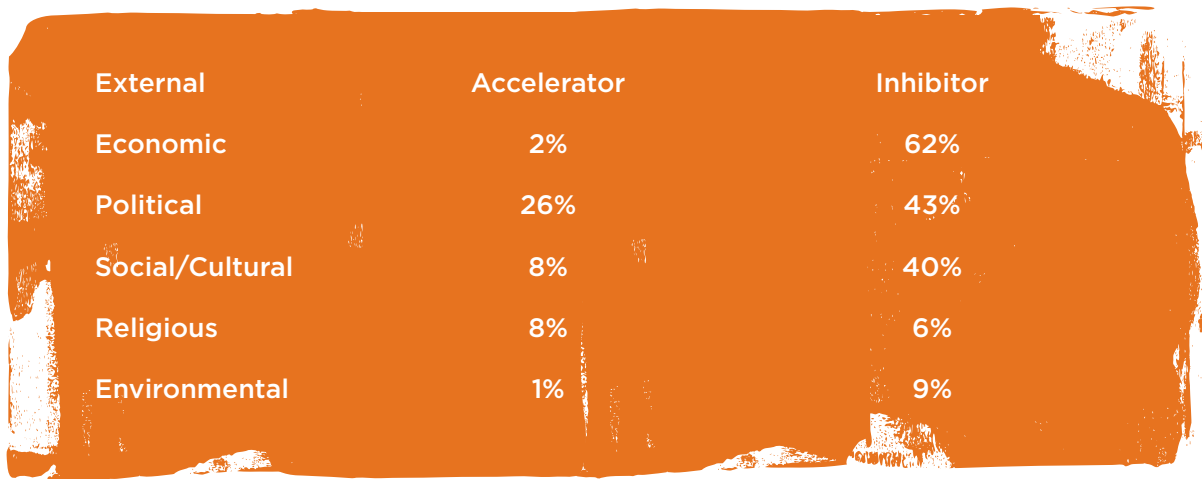
Lessons Learned

All organizations encounter accelerators that enhance their work and inhibitors that provide additional barriers to the success of the project. *Making The Case™* gives grantees the opportunity to identify both internal accelerators and inhibitors to their projects.

Self-Identified Internal Accelerators and Inhibitors

Internal	Accelerator	Inhibitor
Alliance Building	60%	-
Planning	55%	15%
Values	42%	-
Communications/Marketing	32%	11%
Staffing	15%	51%

Self- Identified External Accelerators and Inhibitors

A photograph of a wooden sign with a table of data. The sign is made of light-colored wood and has a table with three columns: 'External', 'Accelerator', and 'Inhibitor'. The table lists five categories: Economic, Political, Social/Cultural, Religious, and Environmental, with their respective percentages for each column.

External	Accelerator	Inhibitor
Economic	2%	62%
Political	26%	43%
Social/Cultural	8%	40%
Religious	8%	6%
Environmental	1%	9%

While nonprofit organizations struggle to meet the demands of the community during economically difficult times, they are doubly impacted by smaller donations from individuals and foundations. Not surprisingly, the economy is the single greatest inhibitor to success. Conversely, the downturn in the economy has encouraged even greater alliance building among the nonprofit sector. Organizational relationships, partially fostered by the Women's Fund of Rhode Island, as well as a financial necessity among many groups to streamline services, have lead to alliance building as the primary accelerator for change.

What Is the Difference That Makes the Difference?

The Women's Fund of Rhode Island grantees differ from other nonprofit organizations in the following way:

Female participants motivated by their own personal experiences to make a difference in the lives of other women and girls

A fundamental belief in the importance of giving disenfranchised women and girls a platform from which to learn and advocate for themselves

An ability to hone in on big picture issues (such as sex education and domestic violence) and break them down into smaller components in order to study the issue, engage a broader audience, and develop a plan for systemic change

What is the difference the Women's Fund of Rhode Island makes?

- Community Involvement- From the very moment an application is accepted at the Women's Fund, community reviewers are involved in the review process. Over the course of the past ten years, 150 women have volunteered to review applications, site visit potential awardees, and make determinations of the best use of funding. Community reviewers include women of all ages who are leaders in politics, academia, business, and the nonprofit sector.
- Credibility – Receiving a grant from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island gives the organization a stamp of approval to the project which, in turn, improves the organization's likelihood of securing additional funding.
- Vision - the Women's Fund of Rhode Island is a statewide leader on issues that matter to women, and grantees, such as increasing the number of women involved in the political process, raising awareness of work/life balance issues, engaging a broader group of women in substantive policy discussions that impact all Rhode Islanders.
- Connections – Once an organization receives a grant from the Women's Fund, it becomes part of a greater community; a community that includes some of Rhode Island's most prominent women. Grantees are involved in forums, invited to the yearly gala, and attend press conferences.
- Prioritizing Social Change – the Women's Fund of Rhode Island makes social change a priority, including funding projects within organizations that do not usually see themselves as social change agents. The Women's Fund of Rhode Island also helps individual leaders within organizations see opportunities for social change that they might not have known were possible.
- Planning – The Women's Fund of Rhode Island lays the foundation for further policy change by providing grants to examine policy issues and develop strategic plans for action.
- Risk taking – The Women's Fund of Rhode Island takes risks on organizations that are new, innovative, or volunteer-based. Sometimes projects are not successful in meeting their project goals, and sometimes, the original project goals shift over time as more planning occurs.
- Identifying unusual power brokers - The Women's Fund of Rhode Island invests in organizations that put urban youth, daycare workers, domestic violence survivors, and those living in poverty in the driver's seat.
- Long-term investments in well-run projects – While individual grants from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island are typically small, the Women's Fund knows that to make significant changes, sometimes organizations must receive multiple years of funding.

STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS

Along with grantmaking to nonprofit organizations, the Women's Fund of Rhode Island works with other foundations and corporations on initiatives designed to improve policies that impact women and girls.

Some of these strategic investments include:



Rhode Island Governor's Appointment Project

In the Spring of 2010 as the election year began to heat up, the Hunt Alternatives Fund in Massachusetts approached the Women's Fund of Rhode Island with an idea of how to engage more women in policy making: collect resumes from interested, qualified women who would like to serve on boards and commissions or hold high-level positions in state government and deliver the resumes to the newly elected governor. Women's Fund of Rhode Island developed a multi-partisan steering committee including women from all political parties who encouraged their friends, colleagues, and other women to apply. In the Fall of 2010, all of the candidates for governor had agreed to participate in RI-GAP. By election day, RI-GAP collected 332 resumes.

Women's Policy Institute

The Women's Policy Institute, the second program of its kind in the nation, creates leaders who influence and advance policies that promote the well being of Rhode Island women and girls. Policy Fellows participate in a year of trainings on different issues, while learning advocacy and communication skills. Begun in 2007, the Women's Policy Institute has already graduated 15 women.

The Women's Policy Institute is supported by Women's Fund of Rhode Island donors and a strategic partnership with the Women's Foundation of California.



Verizon Foundation Corporate Giving Partnership

In 2008, Verizon and Women's Fund of Rhode Island created a strategic partnership to address domestic violence issues in Rhode Island. As a corporate foundation, Verizon had historically supported organizations that worked in the domestic violence field. Yet, a partnership with Women's Fund of Rhode Island would allow Verizon to go beyond funding direct service and, instead, begin to tackle root causes of domestic violence. Over the course of 3 years, Verizon has provided \$50,000 in grant money that is managed and distributed by the Women's Fund of Rhode Island. Grantees are selected by the Women's Fund of Rhode Island's community reviewers. Once selected, grantees receive more than just funding; they receive the technical assistance, support, and network of the Women's Fund of Rhode Island.



To learn more about our strategic investments visit www.wfri.org

Every dollar we receive makes social change a reality. Thank you to our 10 years of donors:

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We would like to extend our apologies in advance if we have omitted names as we aimed to capture everyone who has supported the Women's Fund.

Receiving a grant from the Women's Fund of Rhode Island can be transformational for the women involved in the programs. From staff people who learn more collaborative ways of working with program participants, to the participants' own sense of self, having a grant from the Women's Fund is deeply meaningful. Or, in the words of Renee Brisette, SOAR member and domestic abuse survivor:

"We know the vast majority of domestic violence victims are women. We are single mothers with children who are personally destroyed by our abusers and then when you finally go to family court, you think you will be protected, but instead, you end up feeling re-abused by the system. So, to know that a fund that advances women and their needs even exists, and that it supports us...that's hugely important to me."

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