

A Brief Introduction to Women and Philanthropy

Women's Involvement in Philanthropy

In the past thirty years women's philanthropy has emerged as a distinct movement using innovative and creative ideas to improve local, national and global communities. Women are engaged in philanthropy from many perspectives – as donors, as professionals, as fundraisers, as nonprofit leaders – in both formal and informal networks. This glossary identifies the kaleidoscope of approaches - audiences, methods, process, and purpose – and celebrates the characteristic common to all approaches within the women's philanthropic movement – many women working across the globe to improve the lives of others and to make a difference in their communities.

Women's Roles in Philanthropy

Women have long served as volunteers in the community, sharing their time and talent to improve their community and/or the world. Exceptional women in 17th-19th century American life contributed financial resources for specific projects. Notable among them are Lady Anne Mowson (Anne Radcliffe), Mary Lyon, Mary Garrett, Mrs. Russell Sage and others who saw a need and met it with boundless energy and enthusiasm. (For related information visit www.learningtogive.org and click on Briefing papers in the Resource section.)

Today as women make strides in business, government and the nonprofit sector, they have created multiple, overlapping opportunities to be involved with philanthropy, giving time, talent and treasure for the common good. Women are:

- Volunteers
- Professionals
 - In corporations driving corporate philanthropy
 - In nonprofits directing change
 - In foundations setting policy and serving as executives
- Fundraisers
- Members of family foundations
- Donors
 - Individual donors
 - Members of formal collectives
 - Members of informal collectives

And, sometimes they are all of these at once.

The Work Women Do in Philanthropy

The Center on Philanthropy's 2005 symposium, "Women and Philanthropy: Gaining Momentum," drew attention to perceived tension between women funding women and girls' programs and women funding all causes. Attendees posed the questions: Which do women and

which should women do? What is the way to maximize impact? If we don't fund women and girls' programs, who will? Is there one right approach for women's philanthropy?

A strength of the women's philanthropy movement is its *multi-faceted, kaleidoscopic approach* to changing how women actualize philanthropy. The myriad ways for women to be engaged in philanthropy expands exponentially the number of women across generations who seek the niche best suited to them to put their values into action. In the case of the women's philanthropy movement, one size does not fit all nor are there absolutely pure models to follow.

Models and Examples

Listed below are examples of the range of programs in which women are actively involved in raising and allocating money to meet community needs.

- Women funding women and girls' programs
- Women funding all causes
- Women's initiatives in higher education
- Women's programs in local United Way organizations
- Giving Circles

Women funding women and girls' programs

In this model the focus is programs for women and girls. Some organizations strongly emphasize social justice and/or equity issues in their grantmaking; some focus directly on grassroots programs for women and girls. These organized grantmaking agencies, all with charitable organization status (501(c)3 may fund programs that are local, regional, national, or international in scope.

- Examples:
 - [Ms. Foundation for Women](#) was created in 1972 with an emphasis on supporting the efforts of women and girls to govern their own lives and influence the world around them. The Ms. Foundation is a fundraising and grantmaking organization.
 - [Women's Funding Network](#) was founded in 1985. WFN is an international organization with over 160 member funds dedicated to improving the status of women and girls around the world.
 - [Global Fund for Women](#) was founded in 1987 with an emphasis on equality and social justice for women and girls around the world. Since then, the Global Fund for Women has granted more than \$85 million to 4,200 women's groups in 171 countries, enabling each organization to apply the funds to best address the specific needs of women in their communities.
 - [New York Women's Foundation](#) was founded by Helen LaKelly Hunt and several other women as a 501(c)3 organization in 1987. The foundation is a voice for women and a force for change. The foundation combines hands-on philanthropy with community-driven projects to change the lives of low-income women and girls. They offer funding in five issue areas: community organizing

- and advocacy, economic security, girls' positive development, violence against women and girls, and women's health and reproductive rights.
- **Women's Funds at Community Foundations** may fund only women and girls' programs. [The Women's Fund of Central Indiana](#), a special interest fund of the Central Indiana Community Foundation, raises money from women in the community and allocates grants to local nonprofits that support programs for women and girls. Grantmaking at [A Fund for Women](#) at the Madison (WI) Community Foundation focuses on education, employment, and self-esteem.
 - **Some foundations**
 - [Nokomis Foundation](#) – founded by Twink Frey, Nokomis provides grants to programs supporting women and girls in central Michigan
 - [The Sister Fund](#) – founded by Helen LaKelly Hunt in 1993, The Sister Fund provides grants to support women of faith and their organizations

Women funding all causes

In this model women raise funds and/or allocate resources for all causes, regardless of gender.

- Examples:
 - [Washington Women's Foundation](#) began in 1995 with 116 women committed to address the broad philanthropic needs of their community. With more than 500 members in 2012, WWF functions as an organized, sophisticated giving circle in which each member has a vote on how the pooled funds will be allocated.
 - [Women Donors Network](#) was founded in 1991 and now has more than 100 women philanthropists who each donate \$25K or more a year to progressive social justice causes. WDN functions as an organized, sophisticated giving circle with emphasis on strategic philanthropy, education, and information sharing.
 - Some women's initiatives at local United Way organizations
 - Some initiatives at community foundations
 - Some women's initiatives in higher education
 - Some private foundations founded by women

Women's programs in higher education

Women's philanthropic initiatives in higher education are generally housed in the advancement office and staffed by a development officer. Program emphasis ranges from strictly fundraising to financial literacy, leadership, and networking and more. Some programs direct funds for scholarships (University of Mississippi) or other specific projects. In some cases, the women's philanthropy initiative takes the form of a giving circle in which participating members contribute a designated amount and then decide collectively how to allocate those dollars (Ball State University, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville).

Long-standing women's initiatives and their focus areas include:

- [Women's Philanthropy Council, University of Wisconsin](#) was established in 1988 to encourage major gifts from women. The Council has targeted key women donors through programming and communications.
- [UCLA Women's Philanthropic Initiative](#) started in 1992 by holding focus groups for women donors and prospective donors to determine what they value in their connection to UCLA. The emphasis at UCLA is on giving and leadership at all levels of university engagement.
- [University of Mississippi – The Ole Miss Women's Council for Philanthropy](#) focuses on leadership, scholarship and mentorship. Created in 2000 to attract funds for scholarships, the Council emphasizes enhancing the educational experience and career counseling for male and female students at the university.
- [Iowa State University Women and Philanthropy Committee](#) was founded in 2000 to expand the involvement of women in philanthropy.

Women's programs in local United Way organizations

At United Way Worldwide, the United Way's Women's Leadership Council mobilizes the power of women to advance the Common Good in their communities. With more than 50,000 members in 120 communities around the country, the council energizes and inspires women to make a difference – by advocating for issues important to them, taking a leadership role in advancing the United Way's work, and making a personal financial commitment.

The emphasis of this initiative is to raise new or additional dollars from women donors to improve the lives of individuals in local communities. More than 120 of the 1350 local United Way agencies around the country sponsor some form of a women's leadership council. For more information, visit: <http://liveunited.org/pages/WLC>

Giving Circles

Giving circles are one of the fastest growing and most varied of the women's giving models. Giving circles can range from extremely informal settings such as four or five women seated around a kitchen table deciding how to allocate their "coupon money" to extremely sophisticated, structured and formal programs such as the Women Donors Network.

The concept behind giving circles, no matter what the composition or disposition, is that pooled giving has greater impact on making a difference in the community. For more information about giving circles visit <http://www.givingforum.org/givingcircles/index.html>.

Impact 100 groups are another model of giving circles in which donors raise major funds (\$100,000 or greater) from \$1,000 or larger contributions. Each donor has one vote in determining how the collected funds will be distributed. For example, visit the web site of Impact 100 Cincinnati: <http://www.impact100.org/>. There are now [more than 15 Impact 100](#) groups operating in large and small cities across the country.

Please contact wpiinfo@iupui.edu to share additional examples of how women in YOUR community are *energizing women and encouraging philanthropy*.