

Adopted by the Board of Directors on September 16, 2010

Women’s Fund of Mississippi

Strategic plan for the period 2010 – 2013

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Suggested Appendices:

- Appendix 1: Priorities for Fiscal Year 2011.....
- Appendix 2: Multi-Year (2010-2012) Financial Projections and Narrative
- Appendix 3: Endowment Capital Campaign Projects (2011-2012)
- Appendix 4: Multi-Year Fund Development Plan (2011-2013)

Introduction

In almost eight years, the Women's Fund has received gifts in excess of \$1 million. Like mutual funds, the Women's Fund of Mississippi expects a return on its investment. Instead of financial gain, the return on a women's fund is in human capital - the transformation of the lives of women and girls and lasting impact on the communities in which they live.

In 2002, a group of women started the Women's Fund as a field-of-interest fund within the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson. In April 2009, the Women's Fund became an independent nonprofit, separate from the Community Foundation of Greater Jackson. The Fund has since expanded its work to include grantmaking and policy advocacy initiatives statewide.

As a part of its transformation into a statewide nonprofit organization, the Women's Fund of Mississippi Board of Directors held a planning retreat in the fall of 2009. At that time, the Board set the strategic direction for the organization and focused on the formulation of its mission statement and guiding principles. Highlights from this first retreat, prepared as a written document, provide the detail that was used by staff and Board to begin development towards an articulated strategic plan.

To complement this first phase of strategic planning work, the Board of Directors held its second planning retreat in June 2010. Based on the retreat results, this document is being drafted to outline the overall goals for the multi-year strategic plan. Based on the multi-year goals, strategies and activities have been drafted for FY 2010/2011. At its September, 2010 meeting, the Board of Directors endorsed this document

Mission and Guiding Principles

Mission Statement:

The Women's Fund of Mississippi is dedicated to improving the lives of women and families in communities statewide by promoting social change and economic self-sufficiency through advocacy and strategic grantmaking.

Our Guiding Principles:

We are **ADVOCATES**, catalysts for transformation in the lives of women and families, monitoring public discourse, educating, sharing information, and supporting policies to achieve meaningful change.

We strive for **SOCIAL JUSTICE**, promoting equal access to opportunity and to equity in all aspects of life.

We believe in **INCLUSIVENESS**, embracing diversity reflective of Mississippi's population, welcoming and valuing different perspectives and opinions.

We believe in **ACCOUNTABILITY**, through transparency and informed, responsive use of our resources in achieving our mission.

We believe in **SUSTAINABILITY** for The Women's Fund, through fiscal responsibility and organizational strength, stewarding resources to meet the unique needs of women and families.

Background and Rationale

Why does the Fund focus on women and girls?

Mississippi has been ranked as one of the "worst states for women" by the Institute for Women's Policy Research in 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2006 (every year studied). The Women's Fund focuses on women and girls to reverse this grim statistic.

Fewer than 7% of philanthropic dollars nationwide go to programs that specifically support women and girls. However, we know that women control 51% of the nation's wealth and make 83% of all consumer purchases. A goal of the Women's Fund is to change the face of philanthropy by putting the decision-making power in the hands of women.

Theory of Social Change

When women are economically secure, safe, and healthy, then families and communities are economically secure, safe, and healthy.

Multi-Year Strategic Plan

Goal Summary:

- Goal #1: Strengthen Programs: Grantmaking and Policy Advocacy
- Goal #2: Strengthen Fund Development
- Goal #3: Strengthen Staff and Board Leadership
- Goal #4: Create a Communications Plan

Goal #1:

STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS: Grantmaking and Policy Advocacy

The Women's Fund of Mississippi (the "Fund") will carry out strategic initiatives that continue to broaden and strengthen social change grantmaking and policy advocacy, to move more women and girls in Mississippi to economic self-sufficiency.

For the next three years, the Fund will focus primarily on early childhood care and education; teen health; and prevention of violence against women, in order to move more women and girls in Mississippi to economic self-sufficiency. Investments in grantmaking and policy advocacy initiatives will *primarily* focus on these strategies. However, the Fund intends to be flexible and responsive to the needs and issues that emerge over time, reserving the right to allocate resources to emerging issues after careful consideration and deliberation.

Additionally, the Staff and Board will develop and implement the activities within our strategic initiatives.

Grantmaking Objectives:

1) Focus on grantmaking that leads to economic self-sufficiency for Mississippi women

Action Steps:

- a. Articulate Fund definition of Social Change
- b. Use evidence-based research to identify barriers to economic self-sufficiency
- c. Evaluate social change grantmaking through Making the Case (MTC)
- d. Support organizations for multi-year grantmaking

2) Identify needs and opportunities for replication of successful programs/projects

3) Strengthen potential community partners

Action Step:

- a. Collaborate with local organizations, nonprofits, businesses, and foundations to identify promising grant opportunities
- 4) Provide training and networking opportunities for potential grantees to better understand Fund grantmaking

How to Measure Success in Meeting Grantmaking Objectives:

- Concept Briefs and proposals submitted are in-line with Fund theory of social change articulated in the RFP.
- Making the Case reports by grantees include measurable outcomes and success stories and thus articulate the Fund's theory of social change (see page 4 for definition).
- Fund Staff maintains regular communication with all grantees.
- Grantee organizations report positive feedback to independent evaluator.

Policy Advocacy Objectives

- 1) Develop and support policy initiatives that move women and families toward economic self-sufficiency and which align with the 3 areas of strategic focus (early childhood education, teen health and prevention of violence against women)

Action Steps:

- a. Engage a policy advocacy consultant (funding available)
 - b. Articulate specific advocacy targets within each of the 3 areas of strategic focus
 - c. Establish partnerships for policy initiatives
 - d. Prepare the Board for its role in policy advocacy work
 - e. Train the Board/Staff on legal issues surrounding 501c3 and lobbying
- 2) Develop relationships with policymakers and key individuals and organizations engaged in policy issues
 - a. Identify allies in Legislature
 - b. Meet with state legislators
 - c. Identify and collaborate with individuals and organizations that are working on allied policy advocacy areas
 - 3) Build public awareness of issues that impact women's economic security

Action Steps:

- a. Host community education forums
- b. Continue having op-eds published statewide
- c. Host Forum for political candidates to discuss topics that concern women
- d. Investigate the possibility of having a Women's Policy Institute

How to Measure Success in Meeting Policy Advocacy Objectives:

- Attendance at advocacy gatherings will reflect the degree of community engagement (including organizational partners) in Fund advocacy work. Attendance at Forums will be 40+. Attendance at letter-writing gatherings will be 20+.
- Board members will be aware of policy priorities and able to communicate these priorities to potential donors, friends, and policymakers.
- The Fund will support at least 2 bills each session that are in line with the Fund's strategic plan.
- The demographics of the people who attend each convening will reflect the demographics of the community.

Goal #2:

STRENGTHEN FUND DEVELOPMENT

Develop strategies that increase the endowment, support the annual operations of the Fund, and broaden and strengthen relationships.

Fund Development Objectives

- 1) Create a Fund Development Plan that articulates internal and external resources needed and strategies and tactics to acquire these resources.

Action Step:

- a. Convene a group of current Board and staff to work with a fund development consultant to create a fund development plan

- 2) Develop a capital campaign as part of an overall fund development plan to increase the endowment to \$1,000,000 by the end of anniversary year 2012.

Action Steps:

- a. Convene a small working group comprising of Board, staff and key members of the community with known successes in capital campaigns
- b. Articulate a plan to raise \$300,000 by the end of anniversary year 2012
- c. Strengthen existing relationships with current donors and prospects to contribute to capital campaign

- 3) Broaden audiences, increase engagement, and strengthen donor relationships.

Action Step:

- a. Engage and expand the community of donors (e.g., generational, geographic, ethnicity, etc.)

How to measure success in meeting Fund Development Objectives:

- A Fund Development plan is created.
- Endowment is \$1,000,000 by 2013.
- Number of donors increases each year.
- Diversity of participants/supporters expands each year.

Goal #3:

STRENGTHEN STAFF AND BOARD LEADERSHIP

At the forefront of the strategic plan should be development of skills of board members and staff to ensure successful governance of the Board, fulfillment of fiscal and fiduciary responsibility, management of the business of the Fund, and establishment of steps to achieve smooth transitions in board and staff alike.

Leadership Objectives

1) Board governance and engagement

Action Steps:

- a. Stewardship: Each Board member demonstrates her ownership of the Women’s Fund by her participation in activities including governance, relationship building and fund development, and support of strategic initiatives.
- b. Board diversity: Fund will continue to engage women from across the state of Mississippi to reflect our diversity.
- c. Board members will have opportunities to work within their areas of expertise.
- d. The Board will continue its strong history of distinguishing between governance and management, avoiding micromanagement while fulfilling its legal and moral obligations.

2) Staff support and professional development

Action Step:

- a. Staff will actively seek out new opportunities to engage in skill building and professional education.

3) Regular review of the Strategic Plan and benchmarks

Action Steps:

- a. The Board is legally, morally, and ethically accountable for the health and effectiveness of the corporation. The Board will monitor the progress of the plan. At regular intervals – at least quarterly – the Board will review and discuss progress on the multi-year strategic plan and the annual priorities.
- b. The Fund will set annual programmatic and budgeting priorities based on the strategic plan.
- c. The Executive Director presents quarterly progress updates to the Board. Performance of the Executive Director is to a large degree, evaluated within the context of progress on the strategic plan.

How to measure success in meeting Staff and Board Leadership Objectives:

- Board members will perform an annual evaluation of the Executive Director.
- There will be an annual poll of Board members regarding their involvement.
- The agenda of each Board meeting will be built upon the Goals put forth in the Strategic Plan.

Goal #4:

CREATE COMMUNICATION PLAN

1) Develop communication strategy for Programs (Grantmaking and Policy Advocacy)

Action Steps:

- a. Develop a communication plan that aligns policy advocacy work with grantmaking, fund development, etc.
- b. Ensure messaging of policy advocacy work aligns with the mission and guiding principles of the Fund
- c. Ensure that staff and Board are trained in communication and messaging to ensure consistency and alignment

2) Develop communication strategy for Fund Development

Action Steps:

- a.
- b.

Accomplishments and Strengths in 2010

Accomplishments and Strengths: *Grantmaking*

- All grants funded promote social change
- Focused
- Increased grant award
- Fewer grants with increased financial support
- New organizations/programs
- Grants funded in each focus area
- Closer relationships with grantees
 - Hosted Community Forum with panel of grantees
 - Grantees attended Board meeting to share impact
- Increased accountability
- Increased communications for applications
- Target asking
- Better at saying no to proposals that lack alignment
- Grants committee consisted of experts in their fields of interest
- Website

Opportunities: *Grantmaking*

- Funding in the Delta
- Increase communications
- Statewide communication strategy
- Clearer guidelines
- Establish criteria – number of grants and range of funding
- Funding strategy
- Capacity building grants
- Multiyear funding
- Advocacy focus
- Grant writing training - could be web -based

Accomplishments and Strengths: *Advocacy*

Aligned to mission
3 bills that passed on domestic violence
Skill level on Board and staff
1 letter writing campaign
Emails on advocacy
Session with legislators (Day at the Capitol)
Empowered organization/empowered individuals
Media—quotes, expertise, becoming the go-to organization for information about women in Mississippi
Visibility
Statewide resources
Legislative forum
Identified advocacy consultant

Opportunities: *Advocacy*

Create partnerships
WFMS umbrella organization for network of organizations – legislative focus
Social marketing
Blog
Communication Consortium Media Center training
Craft and write legislation
Timeline for advocacy strategy
Focus—strategic about the issues WFMS targets
Communication and messaging strategy

Accomplishments and Strengths: *Fund Development*

Men's group
Ms. Foundation grant
WFN grant
Kellogg grant
Annual luncheon
Increase number of people attending events
Engaging high end donors
Increased number of donors
Goals set for number of donors
Should have demonstrable measures/goals

Opportunities: *Fund Development*

Fee structure for donors
What "IS" being a member of WFMS?
Messaging
Transition members to donors