

Together We Thrive

Opening Doors to Prosperity for All Women
and Girls in the DC Region



Setting the Context

A City of Disparities

March, 2016

Washington, D.C. is one of the most powerful cities in the world. Yet nearly half a million women and girls in this region – 1 in every 4 – are experiencing economic instability and this number has remained stagnant for the last decade.

- **Nearly half of women over age 25 lack education beyond high school or some college**, in contrast with a labor market that increasingly requires postsecondary education or specialized training to obtain jobs with good wages and benefits.
- **More than 250,000 women are stuck in low-wage jobs or are unemployed**, and women in our region continue to earn only about 84 cents for every dollar men earn.
- **Low educational attainment, earning disparities, occupational segregation, and challenges associated with multigenerational poverty** limit women's ability to build wealth over time. These factors impact women's economic mobility, retirement security, and capacity to recover in times of crisis.
- **Racial and ethnic disparities** for women in our region also persist: 16 percent of Black women and 14 percent of Latinas live in poverty as compared with 6 percent of white women.

What has not remained stagnant is the greater Washington D.C. region itself: its rapidly changing demographics; a widening gap in income and education; and an evolving economy that increasingly requires an advanced education in order to pursue jobs with family-sustaining wages.

Reflecting on the convergence of these trends as well as what we have learned from our 20 years of on the ground experience, we know that despite the best efforts of many initiatives, generations of our region's women and girls have grown up in poverty, with little hope of a brighter future.

The time is now for bold and ambitious changes that will eliminate opportunity gaps and structural barriers, directly increasing economic security for women and girls in our region. Now is the time to harness new energy among elected officials, commitment from business and community leaders, and the generosity and innovation of philanthropists.

This strategic plan—the result of a diverse, analytic, and passionate series of conversations about the future of our region—will guide Washington Area Women's Foundation specifically through the next five years, while also informing our organization's long-term future. In the spirit of community and a commitment to results, we will regularly report on our progress against this plan as we work toward a vision of prosperity for all women and girls in the Washington, D.C. region.

Guiding Principles

What We Believe

We believe that every woman should have an equal opportunity to achieve economic security. However, multiple barriers often stand in the way of that reality and disproportionately impact women as compared to men, such as lack of access to quality and affordable child care, flexible work schedules and paid family leave.

We believe that by eliminating or alleviating these barriers, we can build pathways for women and girls to thrive.

Further, when we examine and address the root causes of poverty, we believe that we can encourage the growth of a model community, where women are empowered to serve as their own advocates, on behalf of themselves, their families, and their communities.



Our Vision

How We See the Future

Imagine a time when...

- All girls in our community can grow up with a clear vision of a future beyond poverty because they see women thriving all around them.
- Every woman who needs child care in order to participate in a job training program, pursue higher education, or work can access high-quality, affordable care.
- There is no gender wage gap, and no such thing as a nontraditional job.
- Women and girls feel safe and can thrive in their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces.
- A mother doesn't have to choose between medicine and food.
- Half a million women and girls living in poverty, in our nation's capital, is a thing of the past.

At Washington Area Women's Foundation, this is our vision of a model community.



A Path Forward

Our Strategic Priorities

Our bold and ambitious strategy is centered on a commitment to move all women and girls currently living in poverty to a place of consistent economic stability.

Achieving such a bold vision requires the commitment of our entire community. We intend to work closely with elected officials, business and community leaders and philanthropists—bringing them to the table in new ways to coordinate efforts region-wide.

During the first five years of this plan:


- We will **advocate for improved policies on behalf of women and girls**, in collaboration with business, community and government leaders, that will lead to tangible and measurable changes in the lives of low-income women and their families.
 - » We will amplify the voices of women experiencing economic instability, as well as our own research and analysis of key issues, to educate, inform and advocate for change.
- We will **pilot new methods of philanthropy and community engagement as a way to drive greater philanthropic change in our community**.
 - » Working with ambassadors from business, government and the social service sector, we will increase awareness about issues connected to women's economic security in the region, the barriers to overcome, and the solutions worth investing in.
- We will **quintuple our investments in the region's women and girls** in order to reduce the number of women and families living in poverty.
 - » We will grow our investments to be \$5 million annually in programs with a proven track record building the economic security of women and


girls, including education, job training, and asset building opportunities – as well as innovative solutions to help eliminate barriers like access to quality, affordable child care and transportation.

- We will embolden the entire Washington region to **collectively invest an additional \$100 million**.
 - » We will develop new funding mechanisms including Donor Advised Funds to drive dollars to the most effective programs and innovative ideas within our region.
 - » We will leverage our deep expertise and insight to advise others in their philanthropic investments.

This strategic plan is intended to position Washington Area Women's Foundation as a leading catalyst and driver of change on the issue of women's economic security in the Washington region, and a leader in the women's philanthropy movement nationwide. The Women's Foundation will serve as a hub, with spokes extending into our community and across the country, leveraging partnerships and resources all with an eye toward ending poverty for women and their families.

We will measure our progress during every phase of this plan and will regularly report out to the community along the way. Over the course of our five-year strategic plan, we will use several indicators to measure progress, including:

 The number of women served by grants

 The number of women who secure jobs

 The amount that women increase their income

 The amount that women increase their assets

 The number of policy changes implemented

Where We've Been

The Impact of our Grantmaking to Date: Stepping Stones 2005-2014.

In many ways, this strategic plan signals a return to the roots of Washington Area Women's Foundation. Then and now, we recognize the critical importance of women's philanthropy. We were founded by a group of women who believed that there should be a way for women to invest in women. Today, men and women from across our diverse region once again realize what's at risk if we don't invest in pathways for our region's women and girls to thrive.

Since 2005, we've had a proven track record of building economic security for women in the Washington region.



How To Join Us

A Call to Action

This strategic plan is far more than a guiding document for our organization; it is a call to action for our community to invest in pathways that allow women and girls in our region to thrive. There are many ways to be part of the change.

For supporters:

- Give with intention
- Encourage others to invest in women and girls' initiatives
- Become informed and share your knowledge with our community

For government officials:

- Become informed and influence policy
- Bring women to the table
- Encourage the growth of good jobs with quality benefits
- Invest in high-quality education for women and girls, beginning at birth and through high school, post-secondary, and workforce development and training
- Strengthen safety nets and policies that impact women and girls



For business and community leaders:

- Become informed and raise awareness
- Bring women to the table
- Connect with us for advice on how best to invest in women and girls
- Partner with government, nonprofits, and philanthropy to create long-lasting impact

Who We Are

About Washington Area Women's Foundation

Washington Area Women's Foundation helps build pathways out of poverty for women and their families. Drawing on nearly two decades of local research about the needs of women and girls, we target resources to support the most effective organizations and solutions working toward increasing economic security.

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“Investing in women and girls isn’t just about doing what’s right; it’s about doing what’s best – for our families, our neighbors, our community – and as a result, the local economy. We recognize that when women and girls have the resources they need to reach their full potential, their success is a powerful economic engine for our entire region.”

–Jennifer Lockwood-Shabat, President & CEO
Washington Area Women’s Foundation

MISSION

We mobilize our community to ensure that economically vulnerable women and girls in the Washington region have the resources they need to thrive.

VISION

The Washington region is a model community that ensures women and girls are on a path to prosperity.

VALUES

- We are a results-oriented, innovative catalyst for social change, willing to take risks in order to create deep and lasting impact in our community.
- We are committed to advancing an equitable, diverse and inclusive community.
- We value the full participation of women and girls of all backgrounds and at all income levels so that their diverse life experiences can enhance our community and one another.
- We value open and collaborative communication in all forums and see partnerships as a critical component to achieving change.
- We value excellence, accountability and transparency in all of our operations.



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Stand together. So she can stand on her own.

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