



STRATEGIC PLAN FY 2010 to FY 2012

Foundation Overview



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Foundation Overview

Chicago Foundation for Women (the “Foundation”) was founded in 1984 to support Chicago area organizations and projects that address the needs of women and girls, and to remove obstacles that prevent women and girls from achieving their full potential in all aspects of their lives.

Four women leaders in the Chicago philanthropic community – Marjorie Craig Benton, Sunny Fischer, Iris Krieg, and Lucia Woods Lindley – recognized that only a small portion (approximately three percent) of philanthropic dollars were allocated to support programs addressing the specific needs of women and girls, even though such programs addressing domestic violence, reproductive health, economic equality and other issues are critical to the well-being of thousands of women in Chicago (and, by extension, thousands of families affected by women’s situations). In addition, women were underrepresented in philanthropy, uneducated in financial matters, and disinclined to exercise control over their assets. There was a need for women to be taught about the power and significance of giving in the community.

The Founding Mothers brought together a number of collaborative planning groups that laid the financial and programmatic groundwork for Chicago Foundation for Women. It was incorporated on Dec. 31, 1984; a board of directors was elected; fundraising began; and an executive director was hired. In the spring of 1986, the Foundation awarded its first set of grants totaling \$50,000. To date the Foundation has awarded more than 2,600 grants to hundreds of organizations totaling \$16 million.

Today, almost twenty-five years later, the Foundation has grown significantly and remains part of a global women’s funding movement that recognizes that few community problems can be resolved without programs and strategies that intentionally address the needs of women and girls. Women’s issues involve and affect the entire community.

Strategic Planning Process

In January 2009, the Chicago Foundation for Women hired a new Executive Director. In connection with the new leadership, the board embarked on a strategic planning process with the goal of creating a comprehensive and bold Strategic Plan for the next 3-5 years.

Beginning in February 2009, a diverse Strategic Planning Steering Committee was formed, which included a founder, several current and former Board and Leadership Council members, a grantee, the Executive Director and other staff members. The Steering Committee's responsibility was to identify the priorities in the process and draft a strategic plan that would foster consensus and create enthusiasm among our decision makers and stakeholders. The plan is designed to allow for: facilitating the organizational transition with new leadership; monitoring progress toward the defined goals; communicating the goals to our internal and external constituents; and demonstrating the lasting achievements to those constituents.

Accordingly, the Steering Committee developed a process to include the voices of the Foundation's many constituents: donors, board and alumnae, staff, leadership council members, grantees and community activists and leaders. Over the next four months, numerous discussions were initiated by the Steering Committee among key decision-makers and stakeholders about the strategic direction of the Foundation. In an effort to cast a wide net, several different methods of communication were used to ensure that the Strategic Plan reflected the concerns and insights of stakeholders: (1) an online survey was emailed to almost 4000 donors, current and former board members, staff, leadership council members, and grantees; (2) five separate focus groups (one each of current Board members, Alumnae Council members, Leadership Council members, staff, and grantees) were convened in which issues and opportunities were discussed; and (3) more than 20 telephone and in-person interviews were conducted.

In addition to all of these conversations, the Steering Committee considered internal historical information about the Foundation, data about other women's foundations, materials about philanthropy and donor trends, and other relevant facts and figures. Over the course of several meetings, the Steering Committee drafted a proposed plan which was presented to the Board for preliminary review and comment on June 1. A final version of the Strategic Plan was presented for approval at the Board's Annual Meeting on June 17, to take effect July 1, 2009. The Strategic Plan will be used by staff to develop annualized operational plans that will guide short-term actions and provide a framework against which the Foundation's work can be measured.

The Strategic Plan set forth herein reaffirms the Foundation's Vision, clarifies our Mission, identifies our Core Values, and establishes five Goals that will guide our growth during the next 3-5years, and beyond.

Our Vision

Chicago Foundation for Women envisions a community and world in which all women and girls have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and live in safe, just, and healthy communities.

Our Mission

The Chicago Foundation for Women is a grant making organization dedicated to increasing resources and opportunities for women and girls in the greater Chicago area. To support our philanthropy, the Foundation promotes increased investment in women and girls, raises awareness about their issues and potential, and develops them as leaders and philanthropists.

Our Core Values

- Equality:** We believe that equality is a universal human right, and we uphold respect and dignity as guiding principles in all our work.
- Empowerment:** We believe in the right of individuals to make choices and have control over their minds, bodies and spirits.
- Diversity:** We value the strength and wisdom that come from all voices and embrace the complexities of communities.
- Collaboration:** We affirm the transformative power of collective efforts and the importance of having women and girls engaged in issues that affect their lives.
- Integrity:** We hold ourselves to the highest ethical standards and level of accountability.

Our Goals

#1 Increase the Foundation's Financial Resources for Today and the Future

- a. Increase the assets of Chicago Foundation for Women to \$10 million by 2011 and \$25 million by 2015
- b. Increase endowment to \$5 million by 2011 and \$15 million by 2015.
- c. Cultivate a diverse base of individual donors and improve relationships with existing/lapsed donors
- d. Raise money from foundations and corporations to cover all program initiatives
- e. Enhance planned giving, major donor programs, and Donor Advised Funds
- f. Create opportunities to engage men in our philanthropic efforts

#2 Increase Grant Making and Build Grantee Capacity

- a. Increase grant making to \$1.5 million in grants by 2011 and \$5 million in grants by 2015.
- b. Ensure that the grant making process allows the foundation to be nimble and responsive to a changing environment and facilitates high-impact grants
- c. Promote ownership of grant making within the Leadership Councils
- d. Work in partnership with peer foundations and other allies where appropriate to build a shared agenda that increases philanthropic resources for women and girls
- e. Support capacity building that equips grantees to achieve their missions and become sustainable through grants, programs and other resources.

#3 Promote and Expand Women's Philanthropy and Leadership Across Diverse Communities

- a. Advocate for women to give to women and girls
- b. Teach women and girls to be leaders in their communities through philanthropy
- c. Inspire and influence donors, donor advisors, and other grant makers to be responsible and engaged philanthropists supporting women and girls
- d. Build a strong community of and for women and girls by serving as a connector, resource and relationship builder among donors, organizations, and businesses
- e. Support and grow Alumnae and Leadership Councils to become powerful, strategic networks that invest in women and girls

#4 Champion issues and solutions critical to the success of women and girls through research, communications, and strategic partnerships

- a. Emphasize the value and necessity of analyzing economic and social issues through a “gender lens” (i.e., how policies, systems, institutions, etc. specifically affect women and girls).
- b. Support and disseminate research about the needs and positive outcomes of investing in women and girls.
- c. Bring together, listen to, and learn from a wide spectrum of stakeholders and partners (grantees, activists, academics, researchers, donors, business leaders, policymakers, etc.) in order to inform the Foundation’s work, connect resources, and build momentum.
- d. Frame women’s issues as important for the public agenda
- e. Participate as a prominent voice for women around major issues confronting the Chicago region.

#5 Ensure Integrity and Accountability

- a. Demonstrate excellence in day-to-day operations.
- b. Review internal programs and procedures and improve as necessary to ensure the efficient and effective allocation of resources, consistent with sound financial management
- c. Promote an internal culture of integrity and cooperation in which critical thinking, creativity, and sound judgment are valued
- d. Implement an evaluation process with measurable goals so that activities and programs are reviewed with Board oversight in a timely manner in order to enhance and improve accountability and effectiveness

Steering Committee

Board Members

Aylice Toohey (chair)
Susan Hassan
Alejandra Ibanez
Frances Zemans
Catherine Braendel
Mae Hong

Founder

Sunny Fischer

Alumnae Council

Deirdre Joy Smith

Staff

Kelly White
Shelley Davis
Allison MacMunn