

WOMEN
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION
OF
MINNESOTA

FRAMEWORK FOR

Impact + Growth



Since 2001, the Women's Foundation of Minnesota's initiatives have grown significantly in size, financial resources, and impact. Beginning in 2001 with our girlsBEST program, our goal was to enlarge and focus our grantmaking. To do so, we crafted an approach that proved to be highly successful, which we have refined and employed consistently over the last 19 years, resulting in a 213% increase in assets and a 840% increase in grantmaking.

2001 - 2004*



Employing the first iteration of our Framework, we were highly successful, raising 50% more in funds.

2004 - 2009



Taking the lessons from girlsBEST, we launched our second endowment campaign, which provided a strong platform for MN Girls and the financial foundation for our work to this day and beyond. This campaign created the first endowment just for girls at any women's foundation in the world.

2011 - 2019**



Working off of the success of girlsBEST and Fund Forward, MN Girls Are Not For Sale leveraged hard-earned lessons to date. Using our positional power, we engaged cross-sector partners in co-creating and implementing strategies through convenings, advocacy, communications, and grantmaking. This systems change approach informs the Young Women's Initiative today. To learn more about our strategic, cross-sector plan to combat sex trafficking, visit MNgirls.org.

2016 - 2023



The most ambitious initiative yet, the Young Women's Initiative of MN (YWI MN) benefits from years of knowledge, experience, and credibility statewide, as well as the Framework for Growth and Impact honed through MN Girls. Partnering with the Governor's office, YWI MN brings even more diverse stakeholders to the table, centering young women of color-informed solutions and leadership, to increase resources, partnerships, and impact.

*girlsBEST continues as a hallmark program of WFMN.

**MN Girls Are Not For Sale has transitioned into overall Foundation work to end gender-based violence.

Based on the Board's strategic mandates, we...



Conduct Research:

WFMN focuses on the highest priorities statewide—based on quantitative and fact-based research, which can also include qualitative and public opinion polling.



Center Community Expertise:

With equity as our mission, we go statewide to listen and learn. Data alone does not tell the entire story — conducting listening sessions and focus groups allows us to understand the community context and how the data resonates.



Co-create Solutions to Design Initiative:

Working with community members and non-profit, government and business leaders, we engage cross-sector partnerships to generate innovative solutions and design an initiative that addresses system-wide change.



Bold Fundraising:

We know that money will follow our bold vision, grounded research, and solid plan. In every case, we have launched without being funded and investment has followed our leadership.



Lead Collaborative Implementation:

We employ our levers and exercise our positional power as a trusted, statewide foundation to advance the work. We lead and convene collective impact tables among diverse stakeholders to implement the work at scale.



Evaluate + Learn:

We invest in internal and external evaluation to see how our strategies are playing out in real time and to inform course-correction on both the small and large scale, if needed.



Reflect + Adapt:

This work is continually dynamic. There is a constant feedback loop between these steps to inform, re-inform, and adapt to change and opportunities.



Repeat + Scale



Each step of the process is informed by WFMN's Guiding Principles, Levers, and Theory of Change to maximize impact.

Visit WFMN.ORG to learn more.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Intersectional Analysis
- Transformational Relationships
- Systems Change
- Strategic Innovation

LEVERS

- Community Investments
- Research
- Public Policy
- Strategic Communications
- Cross-sector Partnerships

THEORY OF CHANGE

- Invest
- Leverage
- Learn
- Influence
- Scale

This transparent, co-crafted, fact-based approach generates support, impact, and a platform to scale.

girlsBEST IN ACTION



We began developing and iterating our Framework for Growth and Impact with the girlsBEST program in 2001. Some of what we now know as essential components weren't fully understood yet, but the seeds planted during this first initiative laid the groundwork for the more robust model we employ today. **Below we share components of the girlsBEST program to show how we got started and to inspire others as well.** On the following pages, we show the Framework in action today with our \$10 million Young Women's Initiative, a cumulative result of the Framework's success over the last 19 years.

2001 - 2004
\$3 million

To fulfill the Foundation's 2001-2004 Strategic Plan, which mandated enlarging and focusing its grantmaking, the girlsBEST program was launched and raised 50% more funds, prototyping this emerging Framework for Growth and Impact.

CONDUCT RESEARCH



In order to understand the greatest priorities of needs in the state, the Foundation hired researchers to analyze existing research on women and girls in Minnesota. Today, the Foundation continues to conduct biennial research on these four key focus areas: economics, safety, health, and leadership.



CENTER COMMUNITY EXPERTISE



We brought this data on a **14-community tour where we convened focus groups, facilitated by our researchers, to understand if the data described what people were experiencing in their communities and what the obstacles and solutions were.** From there, we shared findings and conducted targeted outreach to other key stakeholders, including community leaders, other philanthropies, chiefs of police, superintendents of schools, local politicians, faith leaders, advocates, and NGOs to generate shared understanding and problem-solving.



CO-CREATE SOLUTIONS TO DESIGN INITIATIVE



Through these gatherings, we began to cross-fertilize opportunities and design the initiative's strategy. **Based on the learnings of the tour, the Foundation launched girlsBEST to engage low-income girls across MN — using a race, poverty, and place lens — with the central goal of boosting their future economic well-being.**



BOLD FUNDRAISING



Based on the Strategic Plan, the intention was to increase the operating budget by 50%. That was a BIG stretch and at the start the Foundation had no new commitments. **However, we garnered attention from major donors who saw our approach and work as credible and innovative.** The Foundation met its goal and this approach and success set the stage for our second endowment campaign (Fund Forward), which created the first endowment just for girls at any women's foundation in the world.



LEAD COLLABORATIVE IMPLEMENTATION



The Foundation leveraged its positional leadership and led the facilitation and oversight of the work, developing an ecosystem of organizations serving girls across the state. While we hadn't explicitly adopted a systems change framework yet, community partnerships and grantmaking strategies were being knit together to create holistic change within and between communities.



EVALUATE + LEARN



We designed evaluation into the initiative from the outset, allowing us to learn, continually grow, and refine over the course of the initiative. girlsBEST is still going strong today because of this ongoing learning. Since inception, we have refined girlsBEST's theory of change and have deepened our understanding of culturally relevant and specific programming, stability in staffing, financial literacy, and multigenerational approaches. These continue to be hallmarks of our work and led us to the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota.



REFLECT + ADAPT



With this first iteration of the Framework, we learned numerous lessons, such as proactive and responsive ways to work with diverse stakeholders that have greatly informed how we convene partners today.

MN Girls Are Not For Sale **IN ACTION**

Through iteration and the girlsBEST program we began to hone our **Framework for Growth and Impact with the MN Girls Are Not For Sale campaign**. The multi-sector nature of sex trafficking prevention and intervention broadened the set of stakeholders and the types of strategies the community chose to pursue. This campaign provided the proof that the Foundation could bring this work to scale.

2011 - 2019
\$8 million

Stories from grantee-partners and colleagues in the state's criminal justice system, bolstered by preliminary research, informed a growing concern about the sex trafficking of girls in Minnesota and motivated deeper investigation — and action.

CONDUCT
RESEARCH



Two research reports by Native-led organizations in Minnesota, preliminary research commissioned by the Women's Funding Network, as well as Georgia's A Future, Not a Past (AFNAP) model, were inspiration to dive deeper into the issue in Minnesota. The Foundation used this research to build awareness statewide, incorporated it into the safety section of its *Status of Women and Girls in Minnesota* research report published in 2010, and presented it in 18 communities across the state on our Road to Equality tour.

CENTER
COMMUNITY
EXPERTISE



In 2010, the Foundation centered the leadership of survivors and brought together over 100 leaders from across Minnesota — donors, elected officials, state agencies, philanthropies, advocates, corporations, law enforcement, judges, faith communities, and many others — and created a strategic, multi-sector blueprint to combat child sex trafficking.

CO-CREATE
SOLUTIONS TO
DESIGN INITIATIVE



The group of community stakeholders adopted a collective impact model to engage across sectors and work strategically towards a shared goal. The campaign established three advisory committees and a steering committee to drive collaborative work. Together, they identified four key activities of the campaign: grantmaking, research, convening, and public education. As a community, they passed MN's Safe Harbor Law, crafted MN's No Wrong Door Model establishing a statewide director of child sex trafficking prevention, and developed model protocols for law enforcement, increased sex trafficking charges and convictions, published groundbreaking research on child sex trafficking, and inspired and advocated for historic federal sex trafficking legislation.

BOLD
FUNDRAISING



The initial feasibility study suggested a \$2 million campaign. **The Foundation and campaign partners decided this wasn't bold enough to meet the challenge and ultimately increased the goal to \$5 million**, creating essential momentum and resources. By 2019, the Foundation raised \$8 million for the campaign.

LEAD
COLLABORATIVE
IMPLEMENTATION



The Foundation took on the role of the backbone organization, acting as the convener and decision-making coordinator, and providing the primary staffing for campaign administration, communications, fundraising, and evaluation.

EVALUATE
+ LEARN



A key component of the collective impact model is to measure success across organizational lines to see larger impact and opportunities. The campaign invested in essential data collection and evaluation. The Foundation and its partners used findings from the evaluation to better understand, refine, and communicate the campaign's strategies and impact.

REFLECT
+ ADAPT



Reflecting throughout the campaign led the Foundation and campaign partners to adapt the campaign's tactics and strategies over time, including integrating prevention, policy, and funding priorities. These learnings also informed and inspired elements of the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota.



Young Women's Initiative **IN ACTION**

Essential components of the Framework are Evaluate + Learn and Reflect + Adapt. These have enabled the Foundation to apply nearly two decades of learning to the Framework and how we grow and scale our impact. With guidance from the 2016 Strategic Plan, the Young Women's Initiative, our most ambitious to date, is in full force. Below, see key examples from our Young Women's Initiative (YMI MN) that illustrate the Framework in action.

2016 - 2023
\$10 million

In October 2016, WFMN launched YWI MN as a first-of-its-kind statewide public-private partnership with the Governor of Minnesota that centers the leadership and solutions of young women* (12-24) facing the greatest barriers in Minnesota. YWI MN is a strategy to realize equity in Minnesota, as data indicates that by centering and investing in young women of color's leadership and solutions, their families and communities thrive. WFMN committed to investing \$10 million over the course of seven years to implement YWI MN.

CONDUCT RESEARCH



From November 2015 to December 2016, we convened nine listening sessions featuring young women and advocates from the Somali and East African, American Indian, African American, Latina, Hmong and Karen, LGBTQ+, young women with disabilities, and northern and southern Greater Minnesota communities. The information gathered from the sessions helps the Foundation to develop a statewide agenda for gender and racial equity and increase resources for women and girls across Minnesota with the greatest disparities in outcomes.

CENTER COMMUNITY EXPERTISE



To center and solidify young women's leadership, the Governor's Office (in partnership with the Women's Foundation) appointed a Young Women's Cabinet comprised of 25 young women and youth leaders (ages 16-24) from the eight identified communities. The initiative also leverages leadership across the state through a Governor-appointed, cross-sector YWI Council to catalyze resources and enact policies in support of the Initiative.

CO-CREATE SOLUTIONS TO DESIGN INITIATIVE



With the direction and the active leadership of young women, we engaged an action research process with nonprofits, businesses, governments, and philanthropic organizations over 12 months to develop recommendations for how to ensure opportunity, safety, and leadership for all young women in the state. The iterative research process engaged over 800 young women and community members from eight specified communities. The University of Minnesota Robert J. Jones Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) convened community-specific working groups comprised of young women from the eight identified communities as well as cross-sector partners in facilitated conversations to identify barriers, strengths, and community-based themes to inform a statewide **Blueprint for Action**. Built upon the assets of young women and their powerful, community and cultural strengths, the *Blueprint* (released in November 2017) represents 20 recommendations to ensure all young women in Minnesota have what they need to thrive.

BOLD FUNDRAISING



WFMN boldly launched the \$10 million initiative before any funding was in place, knowing from past experience that the listening sessions and other research conducted, as well as the co-creation and design process, provided the necessary validation to bring diverse funding partners to the table. By 2019, \$6 million has been raised through our collaborative and cross-sector statewide efforts.

*The YWI MN definition of "woman" and "girl" is inclusive of transgender women, gender nonconforming people, and anyone else who experiences the world as a woman-identified person.



LEAD
COLLABORATIVE
IMPLEMENTATION



WFMN has begun sequential implementation of YWI and will be rolling out additional strategies in the years ahead based on the *Blueprint's* recommendations.

Active strategies in the first four years of the initiative include:

- **Launched in partnership with the Office of the Governor and co-led with the Lieutenant Governor,** YWI leverages the influence, leadership, and cross-sector partnerships of statewide office to drive maximum impact for young women.
- **The YWI MN Council comprises cross-sector leaders** from government, education, business, philanthropy, nonprofits, and the community. The purpose of the Council is to sequence the statewide *Blueprint for Action* and inspire and catalyze resources to move the recommendations forward. Members of the Young Women's Cabinet (see below) also sit on the Council.
- **The Young Women's Cabinet, comprised of up to 32 young women and youth leaders** (ages 16-24) from eight communities across Minnesota, is charged with ensuring that the work of the YWI Council stays grounded in the lived experiences of the young women and youth from each community and the community-specific challenges and solutions they identified. The Cabinet has engaged in leadership development, been trained as policy advocates, and has directed nearly \$1 million in grants to nonprofits and individuals to advance equity.
- Through the **WFMN Innovators program**, the Foundation provides microgrants of \$2,500 directly to young women (ages 16-24) to support their leadership and to drive their ideas and solutions that advance recommendations in the *Blueprint for Action*.
- **Grants support front-line organizations** working in the intersecting areas of economic opportunity, safety, and leadership with and on behalf of young women and girls. As part of their grant, partner organizations are invited to participate in a year-long learning cohort that aims to foster collaboration and learning to strengthen the infrastructure of the field of nonprofit organizations directly working with and for young women and girls.
- In concert with our YWI partners, we are also **promoting statewide policies** that create access to young women's economic well-being, creating indicators to measure and evaluate the progress made over time toward equity, and research to better understand the lives of young women in communities, identify assets and barriers, and fund solutions across the state.
- On the **national level**, WFMN is the founding member and former host of the National Philanthropic Collaborative of Young Women's Initiatives that includes eight women's foundations leading young women's initiatives in their communities.

EVALUATE
+ LEARN



Using a mixed method evaluation design that includes gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, WFMN is committed to evaluating and learning from this Initiative at the individual, systems, and societal levels. Is YWI elevating and connecting new solutions and leadership of underrepresented communities? Is there a shift in individual attitudes and behaviors resulting from strategic communications? Are effective cross-sector partnerships being catalyzed to resource and implement solutions? Are legislative and corporate policies being introduced and passed that increase safety and economic opportunity for young women?

REFLECT
+ ADAPT



With evaluation findings in hand, WFMN, young women, and its community partners will reflect upon lessons learned through its evaluation, adapt strategies going forward and continue to reflect for greater impact.





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