

FOUNDATION FUNDING FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR:

A Donor Brief

POCKET CHANGE

How Women and Girls of Color Do More with Less

The Ms. Foundation for Women supports the work of organizations by and for women and girls of color (WGOC)¹, with the knowledge that these organizations are doing extensive, critical work with extremely limited resources. Women of color have led nearly every impactful grassroots movement in U.S. history—from suffrage and civil rights movements to fighting for labor and reproductive justice—but philanthropy has never truly honored this fact.

While there are foundations committed to WGOC, organizations on the ground are not always able to identify this support. The story of “doing more with less” is not new for WGOC, and there are very few sources of data about the funding landscape that move beyond anecdotes to describe systemic failings.

This brief is for foundations that are already committed to or interested in supporting organizations by and for WGOC. It describes new data and analyses on the barriers that these organizations face in foundation funding and ends with a call to action. We can do better supporting organizations by and for WGOC.

Foundation giving to WGOC in the United States totaled \$356 million in 2017. This is about \$5.48 for each woman or girl of color.²

LET'S INCREASE IT, TRACK IT, AND NAME IT.

WHAT ELSE DO WE KNOW ABOUT FUNDING FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR?

Giving to organizations by and for WGOC is a small fraction of all foundation giving: The \$356 million given by foundations accounts for one half of one percent of the total \$66.9 billion given by foundations.³

GRANTS TO ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WGOC ARE SMALL: Nearly two-thirds (62.4%) of grants to WGOC are under \$25,000. The median grant size to organizations by and for WGOC is \$15,000 compared to a median grant size of \$35,000 for all foundation grants.⁴

FOUNDATIONS GIVING THE LARGEST AMOUNTS TO WGOC IN 2017*

- ◇ NoVo Foundation
- ◇ Ford Foundation
- ◇ Spelman College Spacial Ventures Fund, Inc.
- ◇ The Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation
- ◇ Fidelity Charitable
- ◇ W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- ◇ The California Endowment
- ◇ The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation
- ◇ Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- ◇ The JPMorgan Chase Foundation
- ◇ The James Irvine Foundation
- ◇ The JPB Foundation
- ◇ The David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- ◇ The Libra Foundation
- ◇ The Kresge Foundation
- ◇ Foundation for a Just Society
- ◇ Tides Foundation
- ◇ United Negro College Fund, Inc.
- ◇ Fund II Foundation
- ◇ The New York Community Trust

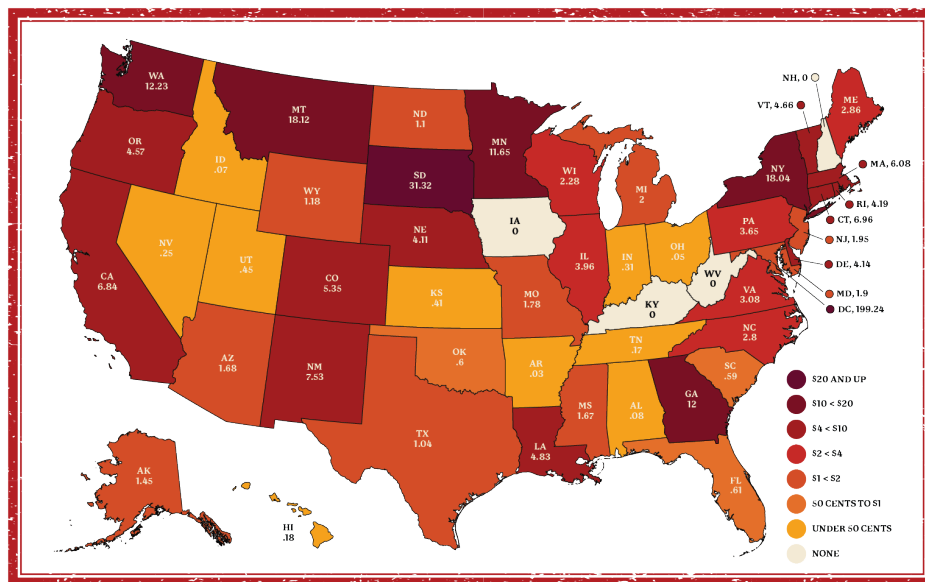
* List is in descending order of total amount contributed to WGOC based on the Candid data.



FUNDING IS NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED

Data from 2017 indicate that giving is not evenly distributed across geographic regions nor does it reflect the distribution of WGOC in the United States. Organizations in California, District of Columbia, Georgia, New York and Washington receive the most grant money in absolute dollars.

Iowa, Kentucky, New Hampshire and West Virginia, as well as all U.S. territories, do not report any foundation grants. Ten states receive less than 50 cents per woman or girl of color. Particularly low resource regions include the Appalachian South and Midwest (Ohio, Indiana, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee) and the Mountain West (Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, North Dakota). Overall, the South as a region receives less funding per woman or girl of color than other regions: \$2.36.



FOUNDATION FUNDING PER WGOC, 2017

SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO FOUNDATION FUNDING

Nearly all organizations by and for WGOC apply for foundation funding (96.1%). Survey respondents reported that one of the main barriers to accessing foundation funding is that funding opportunities do not describe the populations or groups they intend to support. This trend directly relates to foundations' likely unintentional lack of transparency about their interest in supporting WGOC. Foundations that only recently began the work of incorporating a racial and gender justice lens into their grant-making practice may not yet explicitly name WGOC, yet WGOC are the primary constituency most impacted and leading the fight on almost every issue of interest to social justice-oriented foundations.

More than half (53.4%) of respondent organizations said that funding opportunities that don't explicitly include WGOC are a barrier to foundation funding. Other common barriers include excessive administrative work

(54.0%) and funders not being responsive when the organization reaches out to them (48.2%). Given the relatively low levels of foundation funding in this group, it appears that many received funding from foundations for the first time during the year of the survey.

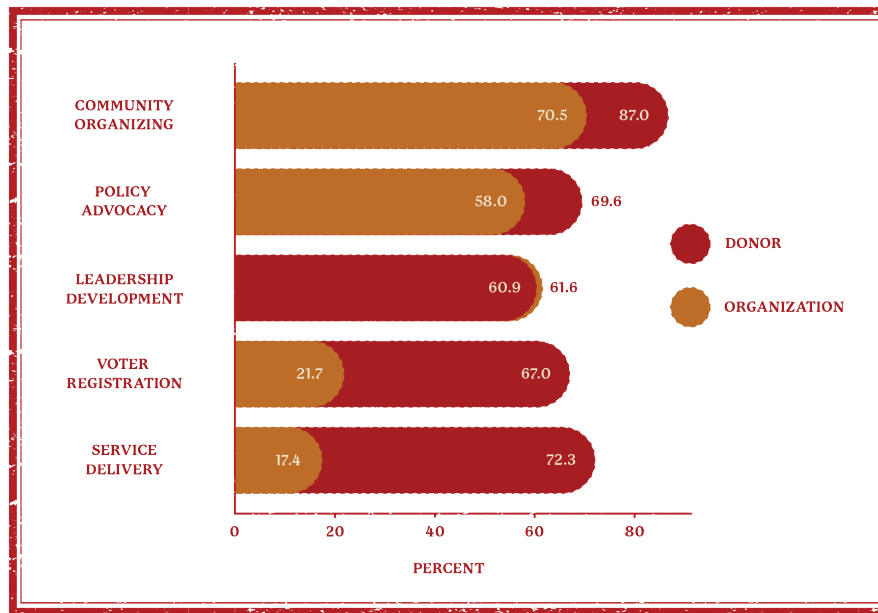
Almost half (46.1%) of organizations by and for WGOC reported another barrier to foundation funding: that funding opportunities do not include the type of work they do. The juxtaposition of areas of work done by organizations and areas of work that foundations report funding reveals this disconnect.

Foundations committed to WGOC are most likely to fund community organizing (87.0%) and policy advocacy (69.6%), yet organizations by and for WGOC most commonly report doing service delivery (72.3%). Fewer than 1 in 5 (17.4%) foundations report funding service delivery. Since organizations often use service delivery as an accompaniment to other strategies, these data

points show that this work may not be adequately supported. Voter registration is another area that may be under-resourced. More than two-thirds (67.0%) of organizations by and for WGOC report doing voter registration while only about 1 in 5 (21.7%) foundations report supporting it. All barriers to foundation funding were more pronounced for organizations led by WGOC. Despite efforts to identify, apply for and communicate with foundations about funding opportunities, organizations led by WGOC are more likely to experience barriers to funding at every stage of the process.



SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO FOUNDATION FUNDING (CONT.)



AREAS OF WORK FROM DONOR AND ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVES

HOW FOUNDATIONS CAN ADDRESS THESE BARRIERS: A CALL TO ACTION

Increase It

MORE RESOURCES ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WGO.

Most organizations (52.8%) by and for WGO have revenue below \$250,000 and only 2 in 5 (36.7%) with revenue over \$50,000 per year have paid staff. A number rely on funding from events, individual donations and member dues. These strategies focus on fundraising in communities that may be under-resourced already. Organizations that serve a specific subpopulation, like Black women or girls, were more likely to have budgets under \$50,000.

Donors committed to WGO already can support public foundations, intermediaries and targeted funds to ensure they are reaching organizations by and for WGO. Public foundations, intermediaries and targeted funds can improve how donors track their giving to organizations by and for WGO. Of the donors committed to supporting WGO surveyed, 71.4% gave through intermediaries. Private donors supporting WGO through intermediaries can also request that these types of data points be collected and engage in a dialogue about how they track support to WGO in their work.

A NOTE ON DATA SOURCES

Ms. Foundation commissioned Strength in Numbers Consulting Group to construct a targeted query from Candid data (formerly The Foundation Center) to identify grants intended to benefit WGO in the United States and its territories. The query resulted in 4,123 grants across 939 recipient organizations and 1,770 foundation donors. These data were supplemented by a survey of 979 organizations by and for WGO in the United States and a survey of 23 foundation donors committed to WGO. Although foundation donors could submit data online, the majority were interviewed by researchers via phone or teleconference software.

HOW FOUNDATIONS CAN ADDRESS THESE BARRIERS: A CALL TO ACTION (CONT.)

Track It

SYSTEMATICALLY TRACKING GIVING TO WGOC IS VITAL TO UNDERSTAND TRENDS IN FUNDER INVESTMENT.

Of the donors we surveyed that are committed to supporting WGOC, only about 4 in 10 tag grants to WGOC in their database. Although dedicated program staff often can estimate their foundation's investment in this important work, without a formal mechanism to track giving, it can be difficult to quantify, especially when staff turn

over. In 2019, Candid intensified efforts to increase data quality on foundation giving on a variety of topics. However, these data are only as good as we make them.

Contribute your grant-making data to these efforts. Make sure to use tags for gender and racial/ ethnic groups so we can monitor progress together. If you are interested in refining how these data are organized, contact Candid. The Ms. Foundation will continue to monitor giving to organizations by and for WGOC over time, and we hope that through our

joint efforts, we will see an increase in funds for these organizations from the philanthropic sector.

Please join our efforts to track giving to organizations by and for—and led by—WGOC. You can create mechanisms in your own grant-making database to track giving to WGOC. These data can be useful for your internal learning and evaluation efforts and will also help to ensure your funds are reaching the organizations you intend.

Name It

DONORS PUBLICLY NAMING THEIR SUPPORT FOR WGOC IS CRITICAL FOR ORGANIZATIONS LOOKING FOR RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK.

More than half (53.4%) of organizations by and for WGOC identify funding opportunities that do not explicitly include WGOC as a barrier to foundation funding. Despite their commitment to

WGOC, foundations participating in the survey are much more likely to name WGOC as a priority in their internal strategy (90%) than to name WGOC as a priority in their public mission statements (50.0%).

The majority of foundations interviewed also do not name WGOC in their calls for proposals or applications (60.0%) and a similar number do not, or rarely, use open calls for proposals

(60.9%). These practices make it difficult for organizations by and for WGOC to identify funding opportunities relevant to them. Organizations by and for WGOC need to be able to identify donors who want to support them. For donors with less public strategies, this can be done by increasing funding through public foundations, intermediaries and targeted funds that can be direct about their support for WGOC.

Together we can ensure organizations by and for WGOC have the resources they need from foundations to lead social movements—**INCREASE IT, TRACK IT, NAME IT.**

1 Activists and donors interviewed for this study agreed that people who identify as women and are also racial and ethnic minorities comprise the population referred to as “women and girls of color”. While we believe the term is a useful starting point for discussing the distribution of resources to organizations, and have chosen to use it here, we acknowledge that the term is not without challenges. Not everyone consulted for this study agreed that all groups subjected to racial and ethnic stereotypes, such as “immigrants,” or ethnically coded religious minorities, such as Jews or Muslims, are “people of color” if they present as white and benefit from white privilege. Some participants had concerns that “women and girls of color” can sometimes be understood to mean only Black women, or Black and Latina women, in its colloquial use. This coded use is problematic because it elides and obscures identity.

2 Source: Candid, 2019. Data provided through an authorization memo between Strength in Numbers Consulting Group, Inc. and Candid. Data include grants awarded or authorized by U.S.-based independent, community, corporate, operating foundations, and grant-making public charities

in 2017 for giving in the United States and territories and include search codes “women and girls and any ethnic/racial minority”. See <https://taxonomy.candid.org/populations> for further information. The data in this report are based on available data through the Candid database and are not comprehensive of all grants awarded by all U.S. foundations.

3 Giving USA, June 2018. Giving USA 2018 Infographic. Available at: <https://givingusa.org/see-the-numbers-giving-usa-2018infographic/>, accessed May 20, 2020.

4 Candid, April 2020. Key Facts on U.S. Nonprofits and Foundations. Available at: <https://www.issuelab.org/resources/36381/36381.pdf>, accessed May 20, 2020.

SUGGESTED CITATION Howe, E.E. and Frazer, S. (2020) Pocket Change: Foundation Funding for Women and Girls of Color: A Donor Brief. The Ms. Foundation for Women: New York, NY. forwomen.org. Access date.