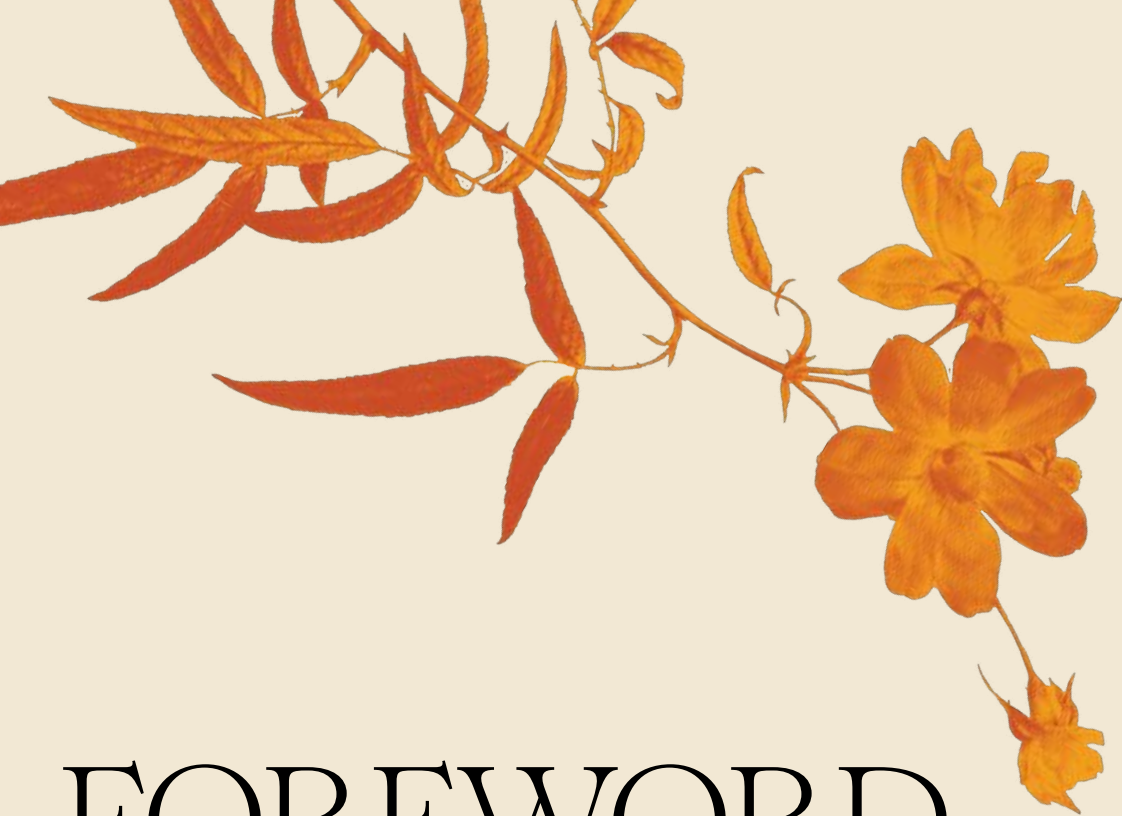


A CALL TO ACTION

# POCKET CHANGE

HOW WOMEN AND GIRLS  
OF COLOR DO MORE  
WITH LESS



# FOREWORD

Women and girls of color are pivotal frontline leaders and organizers in the powerful social change movements that pave the way for a more equitable and just democracy. Our report, *Pocket Change—How Women and Girls of Color Do More With Less*, seeks to better understand how they do this work and asks critical questions of philanthropy and donors: How is philanthropy supporting or not supporting women and girls of color? Are philanthropic practices in alignment with the breadth of advocacy and services that women of color-led organizations actually provide? How can we change our practices to center women and girls of color in our giving and hold ourselves accountable?

As a group, women and girls of color live at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression, and we already know that the COVID-19 pandemic is having a disproportionate impact on them. Our research reveals that, although philanthropy’s response to the pandemic has been extraordinary, the vast majority of funding flowing in this moment will not reach women and girls of color. In fact, shifting philanthropic priorities already suggest that funding to this group may substantially diminish in the aftermath of the public health and related economic crises.

As feminist activists and philanthropists working to advance gender and racial equity, we must grow and expand movements for equity while making space for taking care and healing. Each day brings significant challenges and pressures on women and girls of color, especially indigenous and transgender women. *Pocket Change* is a data-driven testament to how they rise to these challenges with ingenuity, resilience, fortitude, and integrity.

These are unprecedented times, and there are many, many ways to engage in philanthropy and activism. We hope that *Pocket Change* will provide new tools and a mandate to give more, better, and with greater transparency to our gender and racial justice movements. The model of feminist, trust-based philanthropy that centers women and girls of color is needed now more than ever.

ROZ LEE, VICE PRESIDENT OF STRATEGY AND PROGRAMS





# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women of color have led nearly every impactful grassroots movement in United States history—from the suffragette movement, civil rights movements, and criminal justice reform to fighting for farm workers’ rights, fair wages for domestic workers, and the end of racial profiling.

Solutions come from those who are most affected by the problem. When we invest in grassroots organizations and movements that center the voices and experiences of women and girls of color, we protect and build upon decades of progress. The Ms. Foundation for Women supports the work of organizations by and for women and girls of color<sup>1</sup> with the knowledge that these organizations are doing extensive, critical work with extremely limited resources.

Philanthropy was not created with or for women of color in mind, but the field has evolved rapidly in the last few years. There are donors committed to women and girls of color in their funding, yet organizations on the ground are not always able to identify this support. Social justice movements and women of color leaders have come a long way in holding philanthropy more accountable to communities, movements, and the change they seek.

Decades of experience and deep expertise in funding women-led movements have taught us that when we listen and respond to grassroots leaders offering the most innovative and creative solutions to the problems in their lives, and when we support them to connect, network, and increase their capacity and impact, we can make a difference—whether it concerns economic insecurity, incarceration, reproductive justice, violence against women, or COVID-19.

Although the story of doing more with less is not a new one for women and girls of color, there are very few sources of data about organizations by and for women and girls of color that are systematic and not merely anecdotal. This report draws on three sources of information: data provided by Candid<sup>2</sup> on more than 4,000 grants to recipients who work with women and girls of color, surveys collected from nearly 1000 organizations by and for women and girls of color,<sup>3</sup> and survey data collected from 23 foundations that focus their grantmaking on women and girls of color.

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Candid was formed in February 2019 when the Foundation Center and GuideStar joined forces.

<sup>3</sup> Source: Candid, 2019. Includes grants awarded or authorized by US-based independent, community, corporate, operating foundations, and grantmaking 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.

This report offers a much-needed, data-driven description of the funding landscape, including information about the organizations themselves, the donors who support them and the overall size of the pie. These findings call the philanthropic community to action. While some of the findings offered here reinforce what we are already doing to support women and girls of color, most highlight opportunities to do better.

As a public foundation and intermediary, the Ms. Foundation is intensely aware that there are always emerging trends in the field of philanthropy. Over the last five years the trends around diversity, equity and inclusion, and racial justice invite us to question power dynamics within our own field. The Ms. Foundation seeks to support the leadership of women of color in our work, as well as the work of organizations we fund. Philanthropy has the opportunity to permanently change the way we work to support equity and representation—a trend we hope is not short-lived.

This report invites us to ask critical questions that we should have been asking ourselves all along. It is another step in the process of bringing us closer to the critical work happening on the frontlines by juxtaposing the perspectives of organizations by and for women and girls of color with donor funding and perspectives on the funding landscape. We have the opportunity to hold ourselves accountable to our commitments and increase the resources available over time.

This report asks us to name our support for women and girls of color, track it, and ultimately increase it.

## HEADLINE FINDINGS

**Grantmaking to women and girls of color in 2017 totaled about \$356 million.<sup>4</sup> According to the 2017 United States Census, there are about 65 million women and girls of color in the United States, meaning that total philanthropic giving to women and girls of color is about \$5.48 per year for each woman or girl of color in the United States. This accounts for about one half of one percent of the total 66.9 billion given by foundations, according to Giving USA, 2018.**

<sup>4</sup> Data provided through an authorization memo between Strength in Numbers Consulting Group, Inc. and Candid; including search terms for “U.S.-based independent, community, corporate, operating foundations and public charities for giving in the U.S. and territories” and including search codes “women and girls and any ethnic/racial minority” for 2017. 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.



**Organizations by and for women and girls of color are at work in every part of the United States, including Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa.**

**Many, but not all, of the organizations in this study are led by women and girls of color.** Organizational leadership is defined here as the power to make and implement most or all financial decisions. To be led by women and girls of color, 75-100% of those making financial decisions must be women and girls of color.<sup>5</sup> Nearly three quarters of organizations by and for women and girls of color meet these criteria. Organizations that are led by women and girls of color are more likely to experience barriers to foundation funding.

**Many organizations serving women and girls of color address numerous issue areas simultaneously and use multiple strategies in their work—service delivery, advocacy and community organizing, among others.** This finding suggests that these organizations work in an interdisciplinary way to address the most pressing concerns in the lives of people who have intersecting experiences of oppression, such as gender and race.

On average, **two-thirds** of respondent organizations benefit, serve, or reach **women and girls of color.** There are few organizations that serve exclusively women and girls of color, suggesting that it is more common to have a mixed group of participants and that the work of women and girls of color benefits everyone.

Most organizations **have revenue below \$250,000**, and many lack 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 or African American women or girls, were more likely to have budgets under \$50,000. Although almost all organizations participating in this report have experience applying for foundation funding, many report encountering barriers when searching for relevant funding opportunities.

Organizations by and for women and girls of color report that they **do not see funding opportunities that benefit the populations they serve.** This is because even those foundations that strongly prioritize

funding women and girls of color **do not necessarily name women and girls of color in their public-facing documents** or use open calls for proposals to solicit applications for funding that explicitly invite women and girls of color to apply.

While foundations and organizations surveyed agree that community organizing is a priority, they are less aligned on the importance they place on voter registration and service provision, with three times as many organizations prioritizing voter registration (compared to foundations) and four times as many organizations (compared to foundations) prioritizing service delivery.



<sup>5</sup> These criteria were set by Strength in Numbers after consulting with women of color activists and field leaders who emphasized the importance of women of color occupying positions of power and making financial decisions. We have chosen the benchmark of at least 75% women of color in leadership to maximize the chance that collective decision-making bodies truly reflect the decisions of women of color.



*Ms. Foundation's*



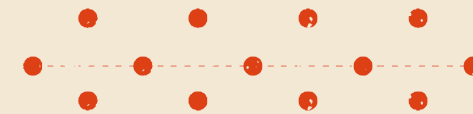
# CALL TO ACTION

*for Philanthropy*

● ● ● ● ●

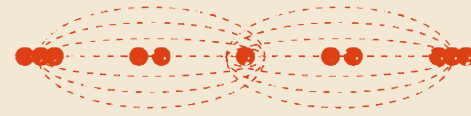
## MAKE INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS THROUGH PUBLIC FOUNDATIONS, INTERMEDIARIES, AND TARGETED FUNDS

Public foundations, intermediaries, and targeted funds committed to supporting organizations by and for women and girls of color develop deep relationships with organizations and can help overcome barriers to successful fundraising. These funders frequently have transparent processes that make it easier for women and girls of color to find them, even when they may lack broader connections to philanthropy. Many committed donors already use intermediaries to better reach women and girls of color on the ground. Join these donors in getting resources closer to women and girls of color organizations.



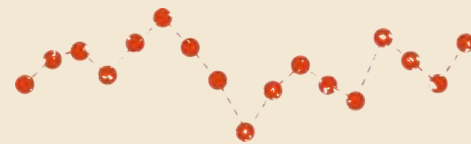
## BE MINDFUL OF THE IDENTITY OF ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERS AND DECISION MAKERS

Develop systematic processes for assessing whether an organization is by and for women and girls of color: look at who benefits from the work, how the organization talks about the intersection of race and gender, who is in leadership, and who makes financial decisions. If you do not fund these groups directly, you can initiate conversations with the intermediaries you support about what processes they use (or can develop) to ensure your investment is reaching organizations by and for women and girls of color.



## BE VOCAL AND TRANSPARENT ABOUT YOUR INTEREST IN SUPPORTING WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

Be explicit about your intention to support organizations by and for women and girls of color in your external mission statements, on your website, and in open calls for proposals. If your foundation's strategies cannot be public about this commitment, consider funding through intermediaries that can. Organizations by and for women and girls of color are frequently unsure about whether donors are interested in supporting them. We must make our support clear.



## TRACK YOUR GIVING TO ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

Contribute complete data about your grantmaking to Candid. Make sure to tag the relevant gender and racial/ethnic categories so your giving will show up in efforts to track giving to women and girls of color. If supporting women and girls of color is a core part of your foundation's strategy, create mechanisms to systematically assess whether an organization is by and for women and girls of color in your vetting processes. Also consider tracking the gender and race of leaders and leadership bodies. The philanthropic sector can be more accountable to women and girls of color by better understanding representation in organizational leadership.



## FUND ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR FOR THE WAYS THEY DO THEIR WORK

When funding organizations by and for women and girls of color, loosen requirements for what strategies you will fund. In particular, explicitly make it clear that you will support the delivery of services, even if only as an accompaniment to other strategies. Organizations by and for women and girls of color use interdisciplinary strategies to respond to community needs. Only funding a single strategy, such as advocacy, can undermine the important work they do.



# INTRO— DUCTION



Women, particularly women and girls of color, continue to navigate decades-old, complex systems of oppression and a daily onslaught of threats to their autonomy, safety, and well-being. . . . Even in the absence of proportionate formal political power, women (especially women of color) have led and served as the backbone of nearly every impactful grassroots movement in the United States, including labor movements and the civil rights movement. At the Ms. Foundation for Women, we recognize and honor these women and strive to support them and future leaders in their efforts.

THE MS. FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN STRATEGY, 2018–2022





The Ms. Foundation for Women advocates for an increase in philanthropic funding dedicated to organizations by and for women and girls of color. Through deep, long-standing relationships with these organizations and their leaders, the Ms. Foundation is acutely aware of the extraordinary magnitude of work being done in communities with scant resources. This report is an effort to take action. While looking to ensure their grantmaking dollars are reaching those most in need, the Ms. Foundation also seeks to contribute to the broader body of knowledge about funding for women and girls of color.

This project was shaped by a central question: What does the funding landscape for women and girls of color look like? The Ms. Foundation and Strength in Numbers Consulting Group set out to understand what currently available information answers this central question and those that follow, such as how is funding reaching (or not reaching) women and girls of color? What is the size of the pie and what are the funding sources? How could donors committed to women and girls of color better support the critical work they do in their communities? We discovered that tax regulations in the United States make it difficult to track giving to a population, and funders' networks have focused their efforts on particular topic areas, such as reproductive justice. However, we also found that Candid is working to improve the quality of data on foundation giving, so it can be used more effectively for philanthropic strategy. By constructing a targeted search, we were able to identify a baseline of foundation funding that the Ms. Foundation could use to track investment in women and girls of color over time.

At the same time, the Ms. Foundation identified a need for more data about organizations by and for women and girls of color, so that foundations can better understand how they are accessing or not accessing funding. In response, the Ms. Foundation commissioned (1) a survey that reached nearly 1,000 organizations identifying as by and for women and girls of color in the United States and U.S. territories and (2) a survey of 23 committed donors.<sup>6</sup>

Drawing on these surveys and data from Candid, this report systematically reveals the current funding landscape for women and girls of color. This report is intended to inform the funding strategies of foundations and individual donors. It is also an invitation from the Ms. Foundation to collaborate in strengthening these organizations and ensuring they receive adequate support for their work.

6 This term is drawn from: Bhansali, Vini, and Ash-Lee Woodard-Henderson. "Season 2, Episode 3: Fund Us Like You Want Us to Win!, Part I." *Www. Whenwefightwewin. Org*, Aug. 2020, [www.whenwefightwewin.com/listen/season-2-episode-3-fund-us-like-you-want-us-to-win-part-i/](http://www.whenwefightwewin.com/listen/season-2-episode-3-fund-us-like-you-want-us-to-win-part-i/). Accessed 20 Sept. 2023

# WHO ARE ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR?

## IDENTIFYING ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

We chose to use the term “by and for women and girls of color”<sup>7</sup> because it invites organizations to self-identify while centering women and girls of color across age and racial groups. After consultation with activists in the field, we identified the following common characteristics for organizations by and for women and girls of color (in descending order of importance):



### **BENEFIT:**

Women and girls of color benefit directly from the work done by the organization



### **INTERSECTIONAL<sup>8</sup> LENS:**

Externally articulated commitment to a gender and race analysis



### **SELF-DEFINED:**

Explicitly inclusive of all who identify as women and girls of color, including transgender and gender nonconforming women



### **FOUNDED:**

Was founded by women and girls of color



### **INCLUSIVE:**

Of gender nonconforming people who do not identify as women

<sup>7</sup> The introductory text for the survey explicitly included Indigenous women and girls and transgender women and girls, inviting them to join this study for organizations “by and for women and girls of color”.

<sup>8</sup> Kimberle Crenshaw, Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color (Los Angeles: Stanford Law Review, 1991),1241-1299.

Note that not all characteristics may apply to all organizations, but they are useful as a framework for thinking about how to identify organizations by and for women and girls of color. In the survey of organizations, respondents were able to self-identify as by and for women and girls of color. Four in five organizations that took the survey report that they serve half or more women or girls of color as constituents. Nearly two in five (38.3%) state that their organization was founded primarily by and for women and girls of color.

## LEADERSHIP, REPRESENTATION, AND DECISION-MAKING

The activists interviewed reported that having a titular or token woman or girl of color in a managerial role is not sufficient evidence that an organization is led by a woman of color. They pointed instead to the substantive decisionmaking that affects the life of an organization, emphasizing that in addition to formal power some organizational stakeholders have informal power that they exert in decision-making. Although it can be difficult for donors to ascertain who is making financial decisions in an organization, it is a worthwhile inquiry to understand the degree to which women and girls of color control how funds are spent.

Almost three quarters (72.8%) of the organizations in this study are led by women and girls of color. The criterion for being women and girls of color-led was that the structure(s) that make financial decisions are either solely (as in the case of a single executive director) or greater than or equal to 75% occupied by women and girls of color. It accommodates the variety of decision-making structures that organizations by and for women and girls of color elect to use for governance and substantive decision-making.<sup>9</sup> This strict criterion was set after consulting with women of color activists who emphasized the importance of women and girls of color making financial decisions and the ways that representation may not guarantee the power to make decisions.

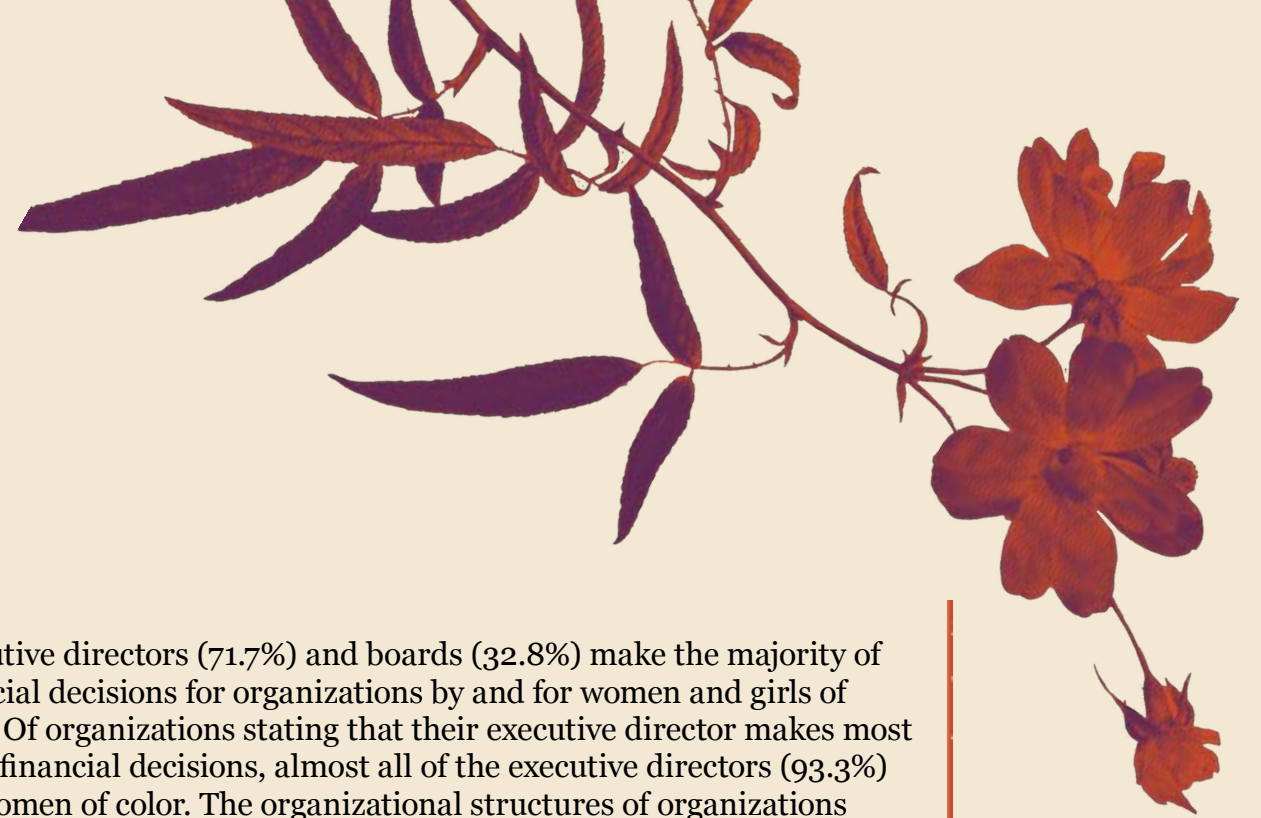
<sup>9</sup> Many organizations have a traditional structure, in which financial decisions are made centrally by an executive director or management team and approved by a board. There is also a strong tradition of participatory and collective decision-making and organizations with such non-traditional structures are also reflected in the survey.



## IDENTIFYING ORGANIZATIONS BY/FOR WGOC



The criteria for being women and girls of color-led was that the structure(s) that make financial decisions are either solely (as in the case of a single ED) or greater than or equal to 75% occupied by women and girls of color. WGOC-led organizations are more likely to have a WGOC founder and to include transgender and gender nonconforming people. These organizations also face greater barriers to funding.



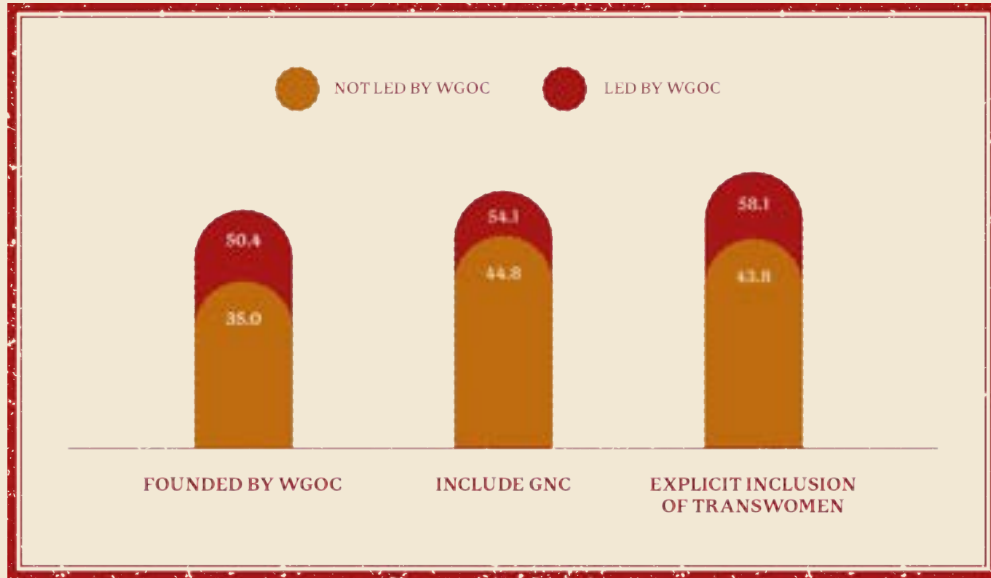
Executive directors (71.7%) and boards (32.8%) make the majority of financial decisions for organizations by and for women and girls of color. Of organizations stating that their executive director makes most or all financial decisions, almost all of the executive directors (93.3%) are women of color. The organizational structures of organizations by and for women and girls of color vary: about six in ten (61.0%) have collective structures;<sup>10</sup> fewer than half have boards of directors (45.1%); about two in five have membership (41.1%). When these organizational structures make financial decisions, they are less likely to meet the threshold of greater than or equal to 75% women or girls of color (i.e.: 53.2% for boards of directors, 51.4% for membership and 35.6% for collectives).

Donors interested in supporting the leadership of women and girls of color may benefit from being explicit and asking about the composition of collectives, membership bodies, and boards that are involved in financial decision-making. Even if an organization has less representation of women and girls of color within these bodies, they could set goals for improvement and find other mechanisms to gather community feedback about whether their work is meeting community needs.

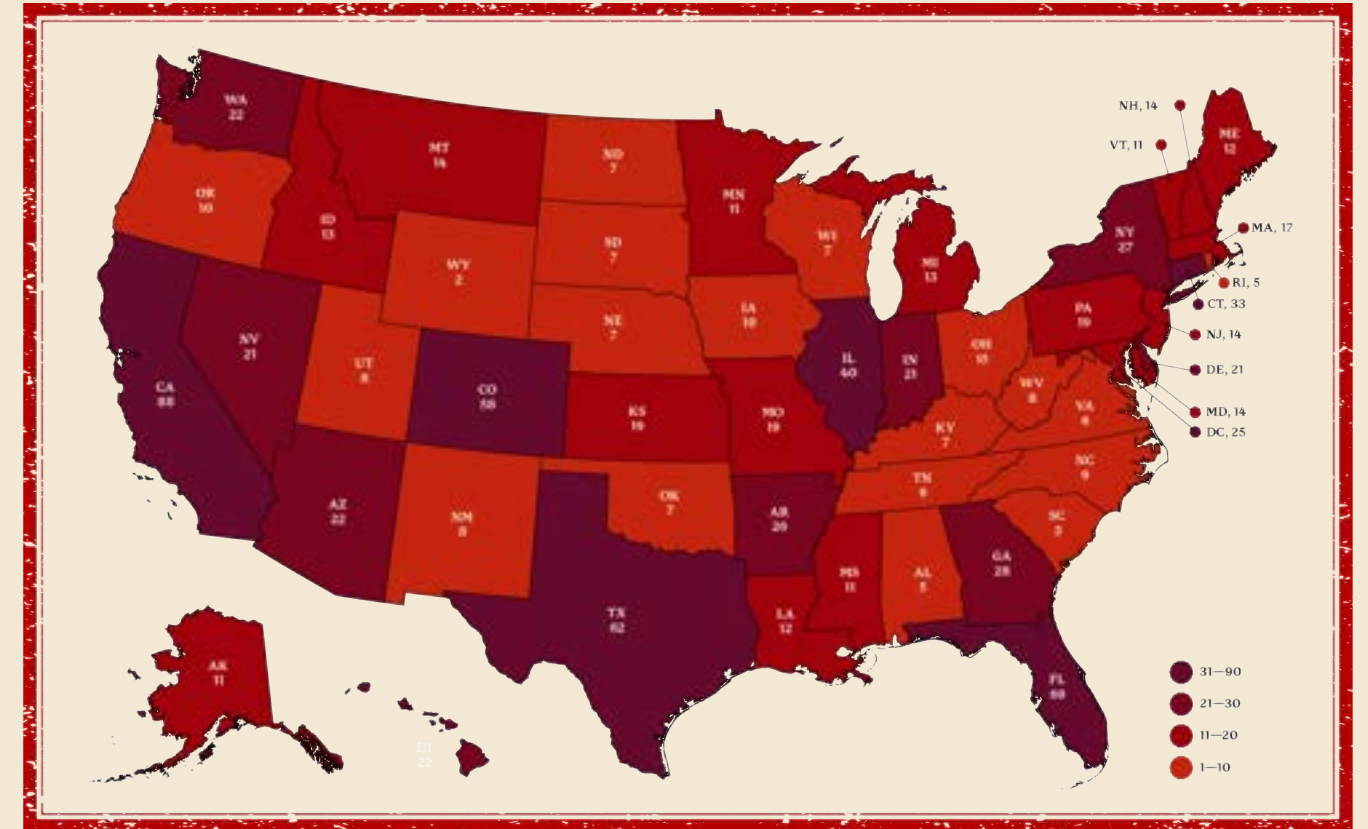
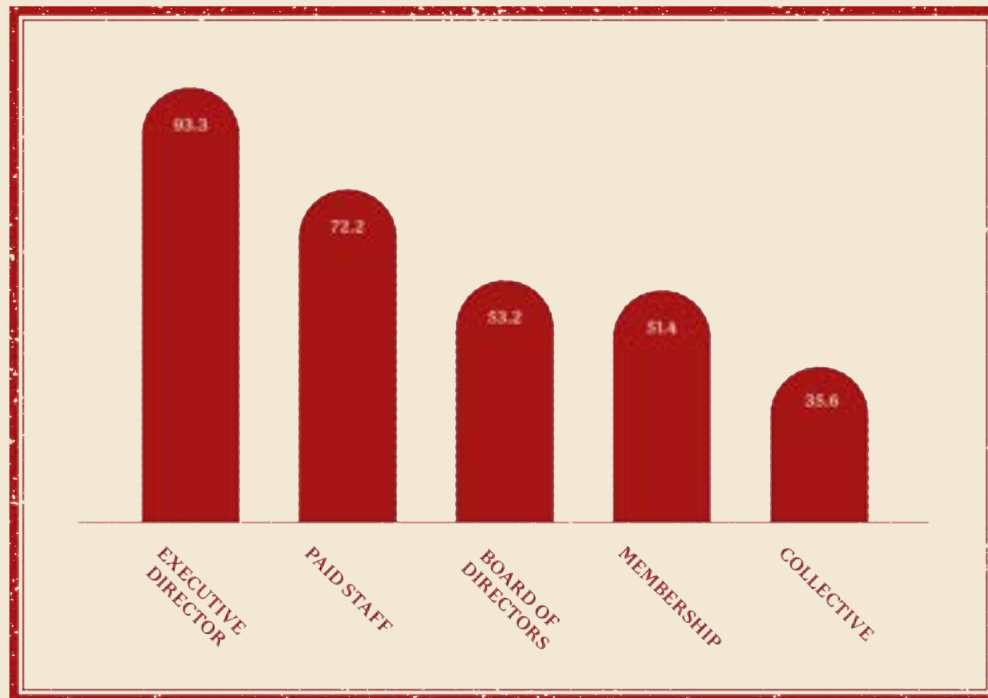
Organizations led by women and girls of color are more likely to be founded by women and girls of color (50.4% versus 35.0%), a feature women of color activists and field leaders identify as important. These organizations are also more likely to be inclusive of transwomen (58.1% versus 43.8%) and gender nonconforming people, regardless of whether they identify as women (54.1% versus 44.8%).

<sup>10</sup> Respondents could select any/all organizational structures. For example, more than half (51.8%) report having an executive director and a collective structure.

## FOUNDING AND INCLUSION OF TRANSGENDER & GNC BY WGOCL LEADERSHIP



## PERCENT OF ORGANIZATIONS WITH $\geq 75\%$ WGOCL IN STRUCTURES THAT MAKE MOST OR ALL FINANCIAL DECISIONS



## LOCATED IN ALL STATES AND TERRITORIES

Organizations by and for women and girls of color are located in every part of the United States. Organizations represent all 50 states along with the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and Puerto Rico. The largest number of respondent organizations are from the South (32.9%) and the West (30.5%), followed by the Midwest (18.0%) and the Northeast (15.5%).<sup>11</sup> A small number (3.1%) are in the U.S. territories (American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and the Northern Mariana Islands).

Over half of the organizations that responded were founded in the past ten years (61.0% since the beginning of 2010). Peak years for founding of organizations by women and girls of color were 2005–2015, during which 72.0% were founded (compared to 13.4% prior to these years and 14.6% after).

<sup>11</sup> Regions are categorized using the U.S. Census designations.



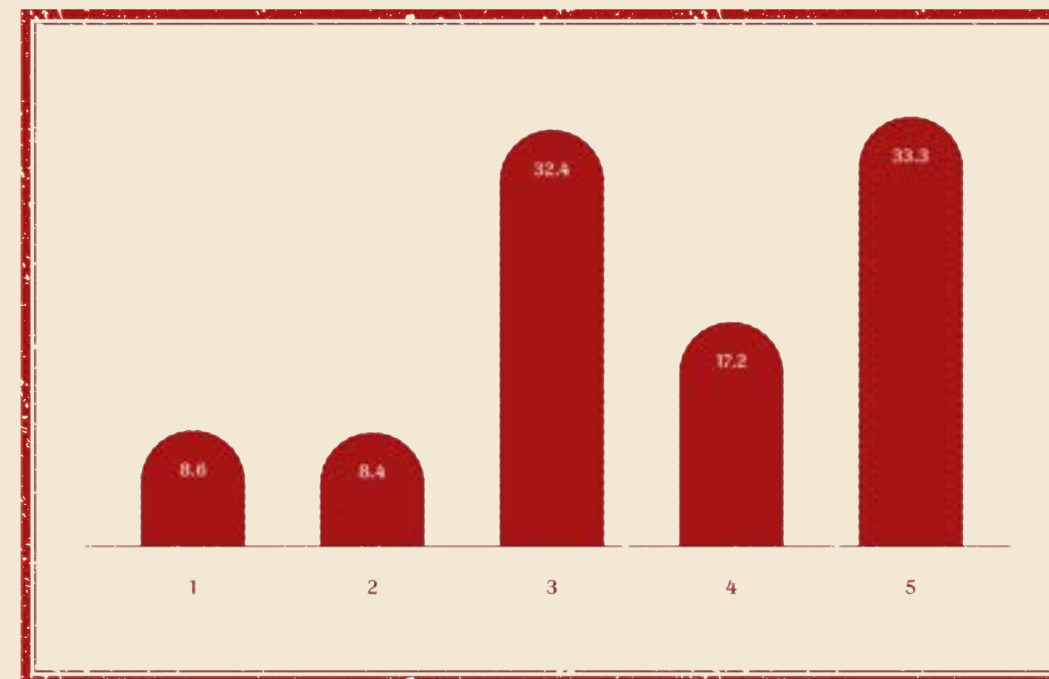
## MULTIPLE ISSUES AND MULTIPLE STRATEGIES

Organizations by and for women and girls of color use multiple strategies, including providing services, conducting policy advocacy, community organizing or doing base-building, providing leadership development or training, and conducting voter registration activities. About a third (33.3%) of organizations by and for women and girls of color said they use five or more strategies, compared to only 8.6% that said one strategy best describes the purpose of their organization.

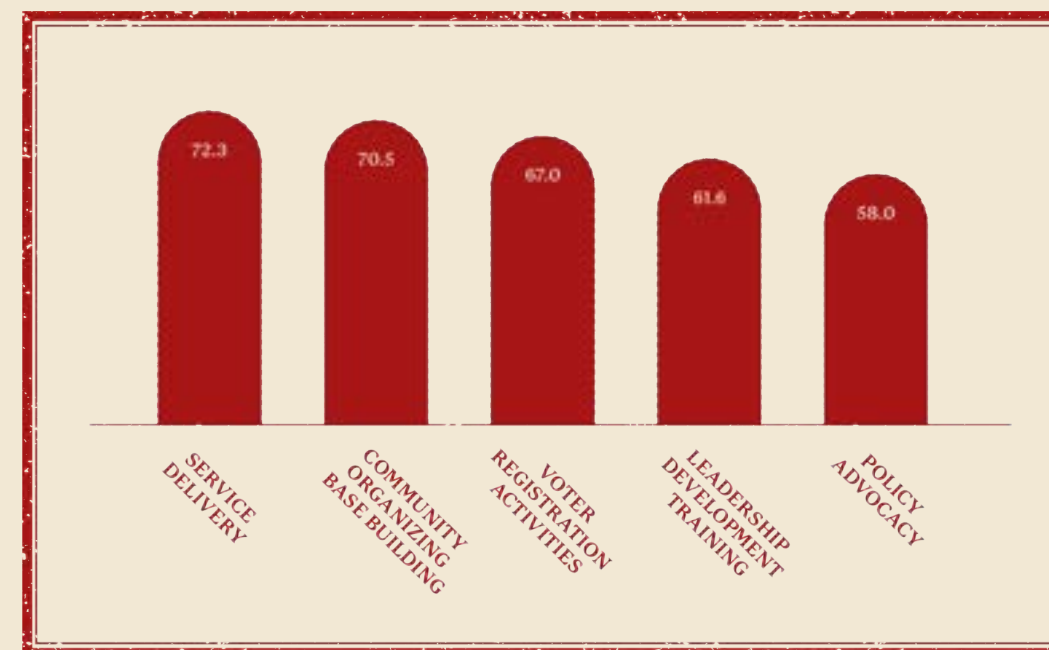
Service delivery is the most common strategy, followed by community organizing and voter registration. Nearly three quarters (72.3%) of organizations by and for women and girls of color identified this as a core purpose of their organization. Nearly all (95.3%) of the organizations that do service delivery selected at least one other strategy in our survey, indicating that organizations by and for women and girls of color almost always pair service delivery with other strategies. Leadership development and policy advocacy are only slightly less common strategies.<sup>12</sup> Organizations with budgets below \$50,000, like organizations overall, are most likely to do service delivery (66.6%) and community organizing (65.1%) and least likely to do policy advocacy (29.2%).

<sup>12</sup> Because many organizations undertake more than one type of activity but may emphasize some activities over others, they were asked to describe whether these are “not at all,” “a little bit,” “somewhat,” or “very much” their purpose or focus area.

NUMBER OF ACTIVITIES



ACTIVITIES THAT ARE THE PURPOSE OF THE ORGANIZATION



Organizations founded by women and girls of color are more likely to conduct advocacy, leadership training, and voter registration than are those that were not founded by women and girls of color. They are only slightly more likely to provide services or do community organizing.

Nearly nine in ten (89.2%) organizations by and for women and girls of color work on three or more issues because it reflects their reality and lived experience—their communities face multiple issues and need multiple strategies to address them. The most common issues for organizations by and for women and girls of color to work on are health equity (71.4%); gender pay gap/pay equity/economic justice (69.7%); criminalization/criminal justice/criminal justice reform (68.1%); reproductive justice/rights/equity (67.3%); and violence/safety (65.3%). About three in five (59.8%) identified education or employment in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) as core areas of work. Organizations led by women and girls of color work on more issues compared to those that are not (4.4 versus 3.8).

Organizations founded by women and girls of color are more likely to work on issues of violence and safety than organizations that are not founded by women and girls of color. They are also more likely to address issues of women in STEM professions and to work on health equity. They are similarly likely to work on reproductive rights and justice, economic justice, or criminalization than organizations that are not founded by women and girls of color.

## PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

### *THE MS. FOUNDATION SUPPORTS SERVICE ADVOCACY MODELS.*

As a public foundation that almost exclusively provides general operating support grants, we pride ourselves on trusting grantees to meet the needs of their communities, meeting basic needs while advocating for systemic change that addresses root causes. We frequently review proposals where service delivery is a strategy alongside community organizing, advocacy, and leadership development. Although we have not been as vocal as we could be about our willingness to support service delivery, we have always been committed to how grantees need to do their work. Based on what we have heard from grantees, we believe being more vocal about our willingness to support services is an important shift.

Here are some examples we have encountered about how the delivery of services plays out in the work of organizations by and for women and girls of color:

A reproductive justice organization provides childcare and a diaper bank alongside a rally against a ban on abortion access;

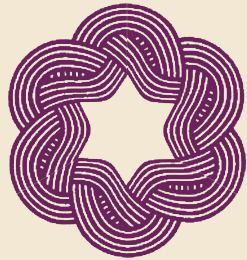
Women living with HIV attend a basic cooking class and also participate in a leadership development program where they can then do policy and legislative advocacy;

An organization that does political education work with youth of color provides needed health and wellness services and an opportunity to enroll in public health insurance at all events.

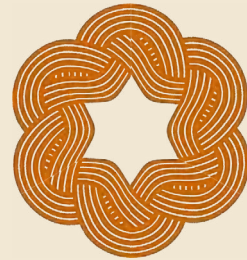
Organizations by and for women and girls of color work creatively to avoid using restricted funds to support critically needed services. We must let them know that we see the importance of service delivery to their work and we are willing to support it.

## HOW DONORS FUND

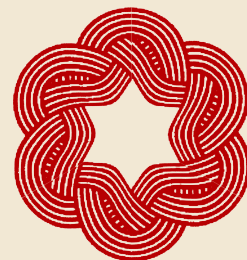
BY ISSUE



BY STRATEGY



BY POPULATION



## HOW WGOOC ORGANIZATIONS WORK

MULTIPLE ISSUES  
MULTIPLE STRATEGIES  
MULTIPLE POPULATIONS

## SERVING EVERYONE

Organizations by and for women and girls of color serve more than just their own communities. On average, about two-thirds of the people who benefit from their work are women and girls of color. This held true across all types of strategies, including service delivery and advocacy. As a result, about a third of those who benefit from the work of organizations by and for women and girls of color are other groups, including white women and girls, as well as boys and men.

More than nine in ten (90.5%) organizations by and for women and girls of color focus on a specific population or population(s) within women and girls of color. More than half (54.2%) of organizations serve one population of focus, about one in five (21.8%) serve two, and just under a quarter (24.0%) serve three or more populations (or do not have a specific focus within women and girls of color).

Among those that serve one specific population (54.2%), the most common specific population are Black, African American and/ or women and girls in the African Diaspora (53.5%); Asian, Asian American, Pacific Islander (16.5%); and Indigenous, First Nations, Native and American Indian (12.3%).

Large numbers of organizations by and for women and girls of color include transgender and gender nonconforming people in their work. Over half (55.7%) of organizations by and for women and girls of color explicitly include transwomen and transgirls in their work, while just under half (48.9%) said that they explicitly include gender nonconforming people who do not identify as women. Organizations that use multiple strategies and work on multiple topics were more likely to say they were trans-inclusive.

ON AVERAGE ABOUT TWO THIRDS OF PEOPLE WHO BENEFIT ARE WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

AND ONE THIRD ARE NOT.



## WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR MAKE THE MOST OF SCARCE RESOURCES

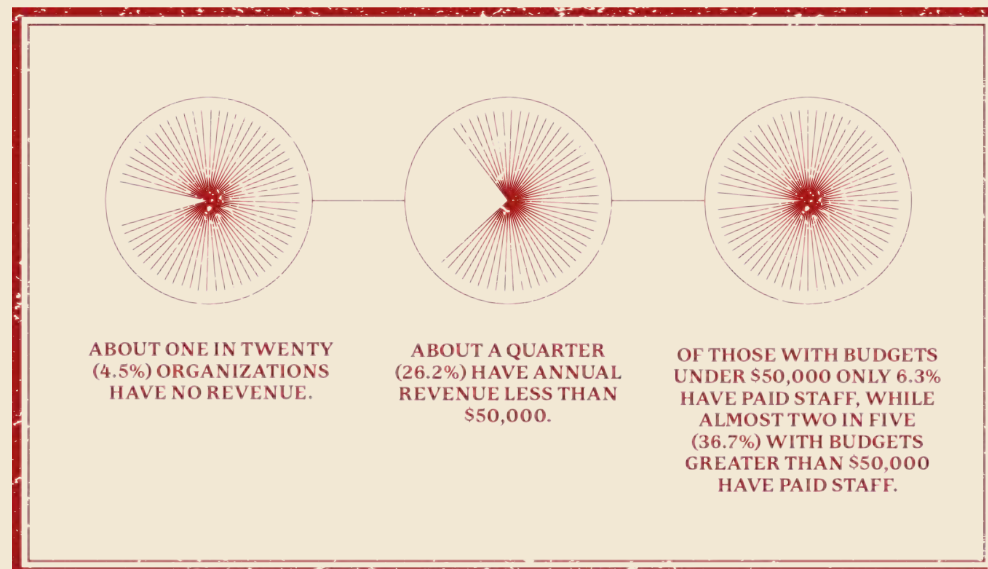
Despite serving a broad range of constituents, working on multiple issues, and using multiple strategies, organizations by and for women and girls of color vary in how well-resourced they are to do their work.

Low levels of paid staff likely indicate a reliance on volunteers and a critical mass of resources that are dedicated to programs as opposed to staff or organizational infrastructure at all levels of revenue.

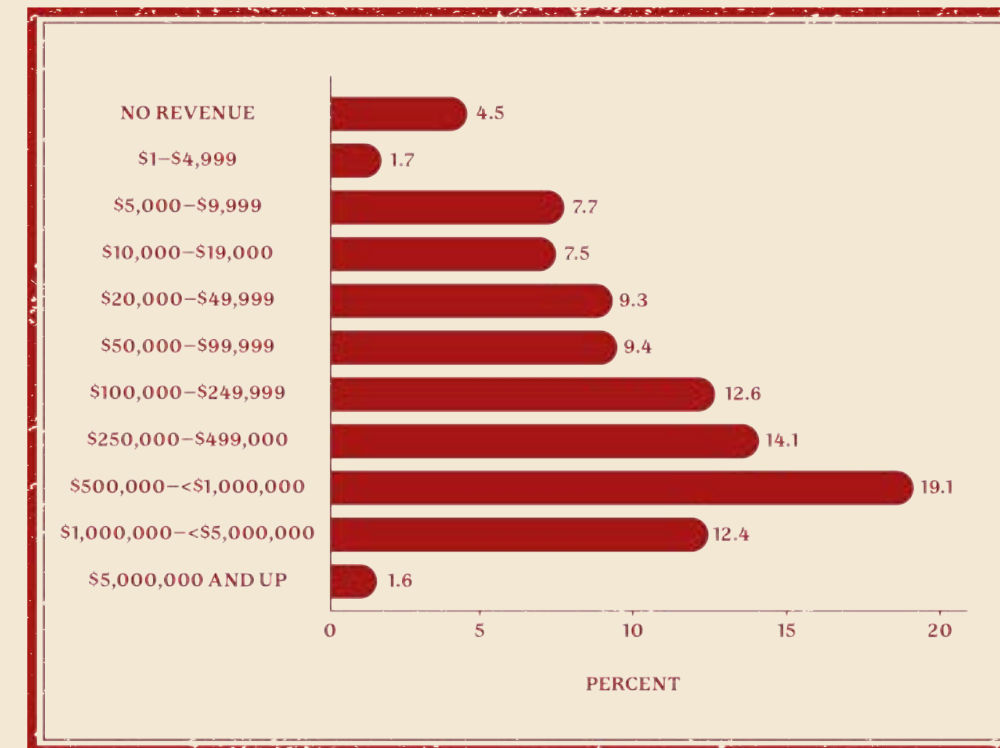
Four in five organizations by and for women and girls of color serve half or more women and girls of color. Higher levels of women and girls of color beneficiaries correlates with lower levels of funding. For example, organizations with budgets under \$50,000 are more likely to have at least 50% women and girls of color beneficiaries regardless of the strategies they use in their work.

Organizations that serve one population are less likely to have budgets over \$50,000 than are those that serve two or more populations

### WHAT'S IN THEIR POCKETS: REVENUE



### REVENUE

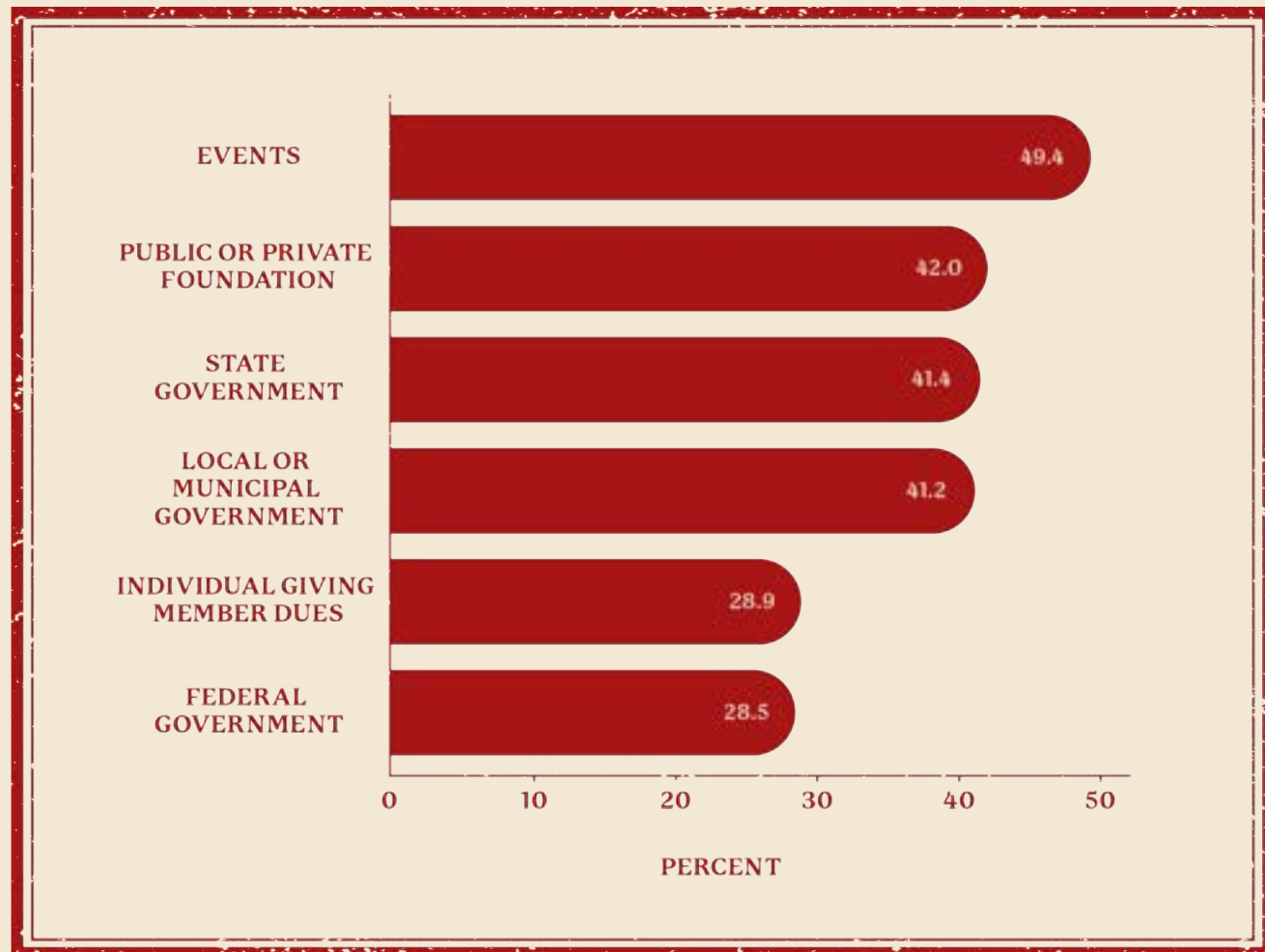


(57.4% vs. 84.4%). This difference is particularly noticeable for organizations that serve Black women and girls as their sole focus; only 58.8% of them had budgets over \$50,000 whereas 73.7% of all other organizations had budgets over \$50,000. Similar patterns emerge when comparing organizations that serve only Asian, Asian American and Pacific Islander women and girls, of which fewer than 4 in 10 have budgets above \$50,000 (39.5% compared with 72.4% of all other organizations) and those with a sole focus on Arab and Middle Eastern women and girls (45.5% vs. 70.2%).

The most common source of funding for organizations by and for women and girls of color is events (49.4%). This strategy likely relies on fundraising within the organizations' own communities, which may also be under-resourced. Other funding sources include public or private foundations (42.0%), state government (41.4%), and local or municipal government (41.2%). This is followed by individual giving or member dues (28.9%) and federal government funding (28.5%).



## SOURCES OF REVENUE



Organizations by and for women and girls of color that receive support from foundations often report that this funding makes up a substantial proportion of their revenue. Among those with at least some public or private foundation funding, more than half (55.3%) of their funding is, on average, from this source. The average proportion of foundation revenue comprising general operating support is a bit more than half (51.1%) and a slightly smaller proportion of revenue is multi-year grants (47.2%). Organizations founded by women and girls of color are also less likely to have government funding than were those not founded by women and girls of color (60.7% vs. 84.1%), the reverse was true for foundation funding, with organizations founded by women and girls of color more likely to report having it (60.1% vs. 31.2%).



# WHO FUNDS WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR AND HOW DO THEY DO IT?

## FUNDING PER CAPITA IS LOW AND GRANTS ARE SMALL

Grantmaking to women and girls of color in 2017 totaled about \$356 million. According to the 2017 United States Census, there are about 65 million women and girls of color in the United States, meaning that total philanthropic giving is about \$5.48 for each woman or girl of color in the United States.

The median size of grants made by foundations to organizations by and for women and girls of color is \$15,000. Nearly two-thirds (62.4%) of foundation grants are \$25,000 and under. Such small grants make it difficult to hire and pay staff sufficiently or adequately support the use of multiple strategies while working on multiple issues. To put this in context, for 2017, the median grant size for all foundation grants reported to Candid was \$35,000.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the median grant to organizations by and for women and girls of color is less than half the overall median.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

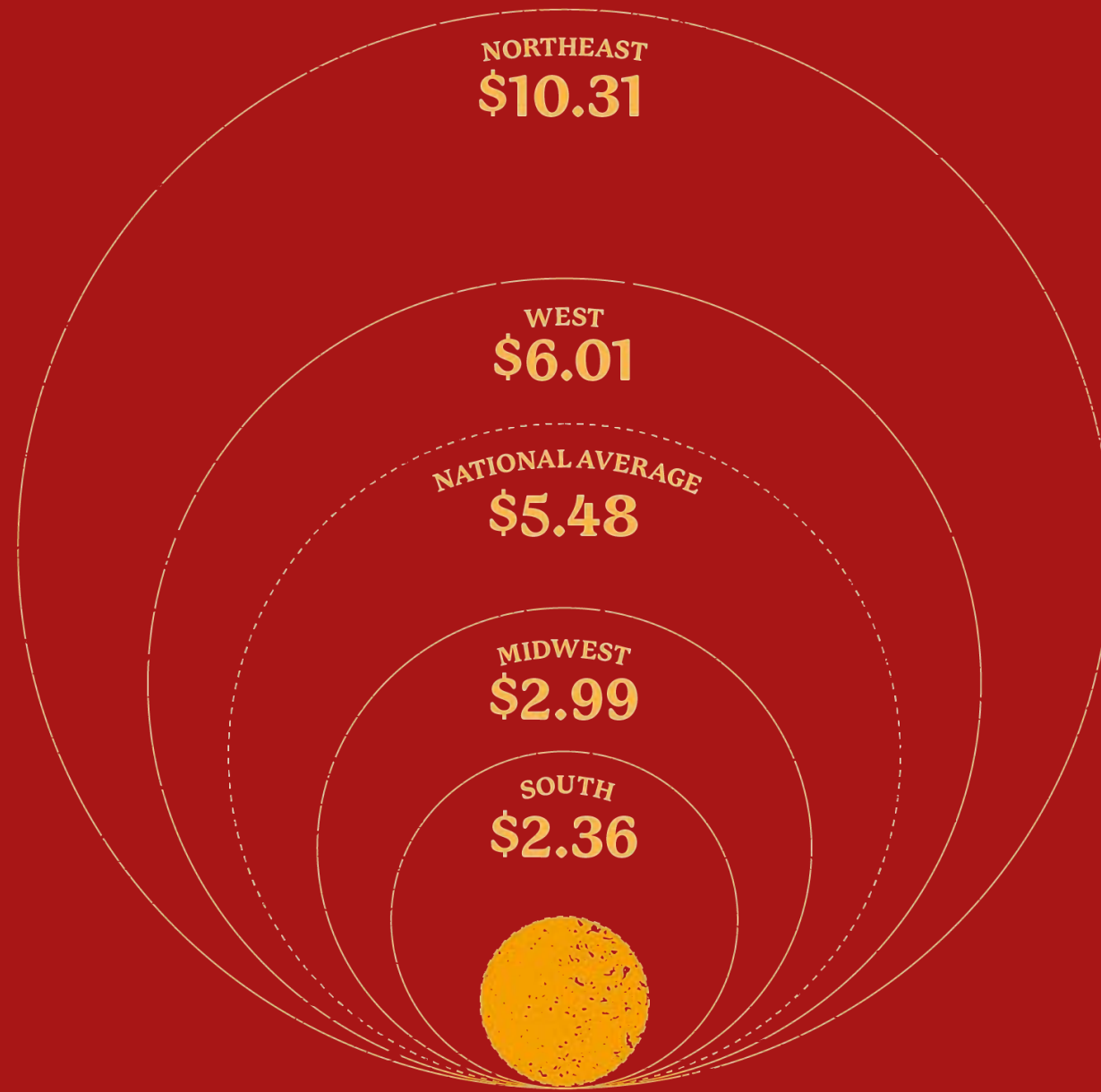
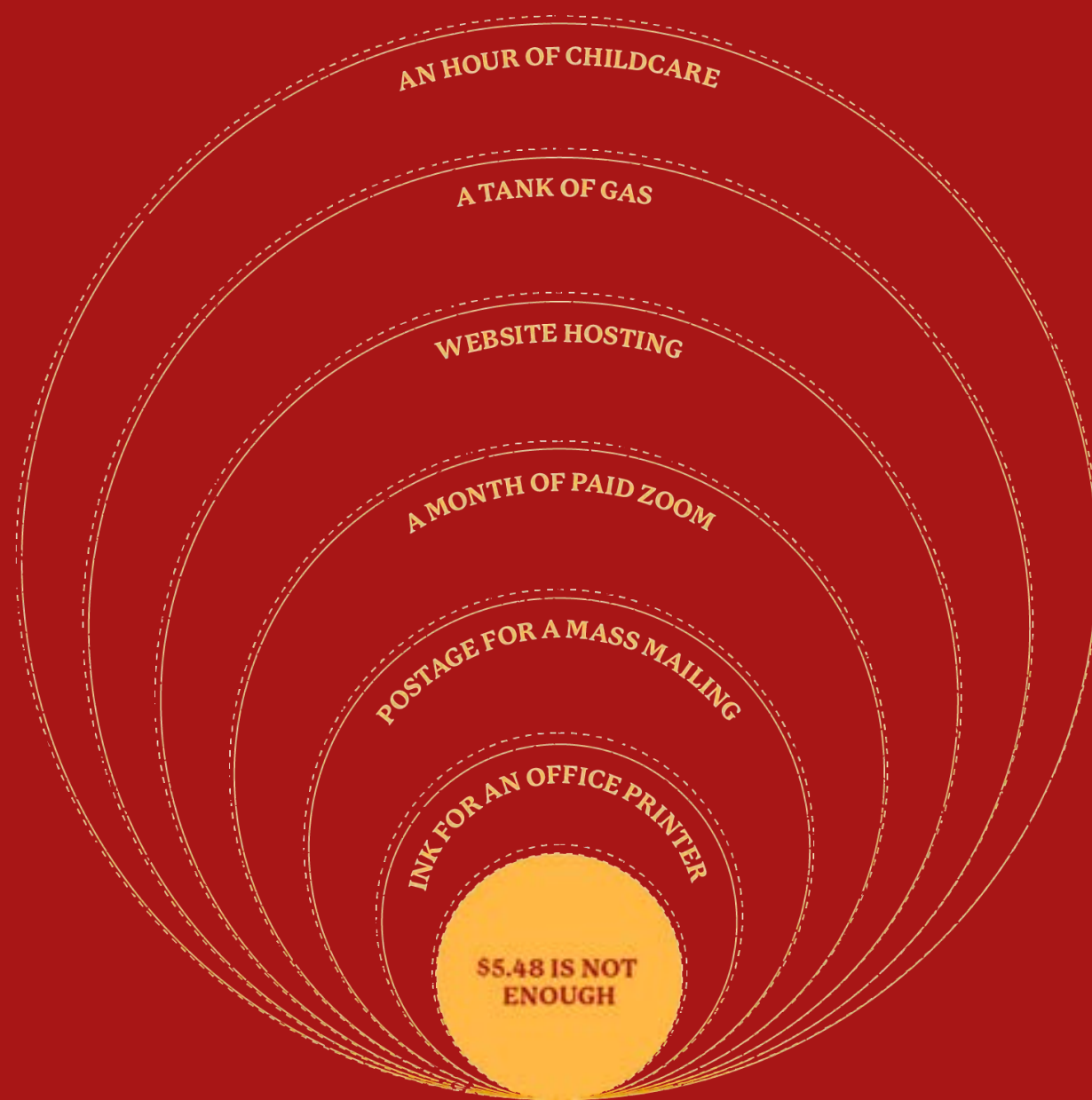
## TOP 20 FOUNDATIONS FUNDING WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR IN THE UNITED STATES

In 2017, foundations making grants to women and girls of color ranked in terms of total dollars granted as follows:

- NoVo Foundation
- Ford Foundation
- Spelman College Special 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



THE TOTAL PHILANTHROPIC GIVING TO WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR IS ABOUT \$5.48 FOR EACH WOMAN OR GIRL OF COLOR IN THE UNITED STATES.



AND THIS FUNDING TO WGOC ORGANIZATIONS IS NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED.

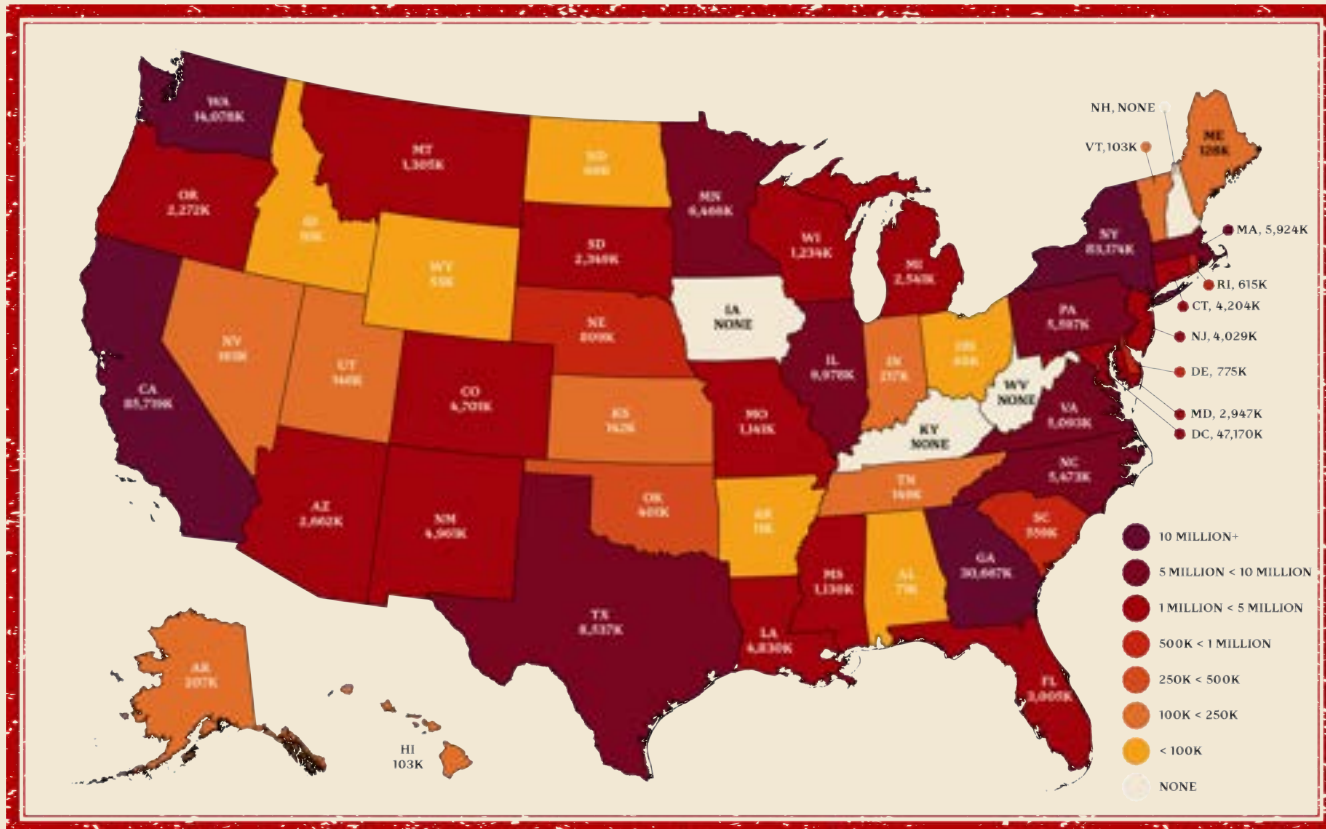
## FUNDING IS NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED GEOGRAPHICALLY

Data from 2017 indicate that giving is not evenly distributed across geographic regions nor does it reflect the distribution of women and girls of color in the United States. Organizations in California, District of Columbia, Georgia, New York, and Washington receive the most grant money and each state receives more than \$10 million dollars.<sup>14</sup>

Iowa, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and West Virginia as well as all U.S. territories do not report any 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 and Tennessee) and the Mountain West (Idaho, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, North Dakota).

<sup>14</sup> South Dakota, which has a relatively small number of women and girls of color, absorbed more than \$30 per woman or girl of color, nearly all of it for indigenous women and most given by one foundation.

	POPULATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR	FUNDING RECEIVED	AMOUNT PER WOMAN OR GIRL OF COLOR
WEST	19,383,951	\$116,408,721	\$6.01
NORTHEAST	10,066,127	\$103,774,925	\$10.31
SOUTH (NO DC)	26,998,890	\$63,647,694	\$2.36
MIDWEST	8,366,378	\$24,997,286	\$2.99



GIVING TO WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR BY STATE

However, when adjusted for the number of women and girls of color per state, some states with larger amounts of absolute dollars actually have fewer resources per woman or girl of color. For example, while Texas is 7th in funding received, it is 34th in funding per women or girl of color.

Taking into account the number of women and girls of color per capita, the South is particularly under-resourced. It has the lowest amount of funding per woman or girl of color giving in the United States with only \$2.36 per woman or girl of color. When we spoke with 23 foundations committed to women and girls of color about their giving, nearly seven in ten (69.6%) identify the South as a priority for their giving, including the Ms. Foundation.

## FOUNDATIONS ARE LESS LIKELY TO PUBLICLY IDENTIFY WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR AS A PRIORITY

Twenty-three foundations committed to supporting women and girls of color contributed data on their strategies and grantmaking. Despite their commitment to women and girls of color, many are not explicit, making it difficult for organizations by and for women and girls of color to identify opportunities and approach them for funding. Instead foundations are much more likely to name women and girls of color as a priority in their internal strategy (90%) and use strategies other than open calls for proposals to identify organizations by and for women and girls of color to support (85%).

Among the foundations interviewed, only half (50.0%) name women and girls of color as a priority in their public mission statements. The majority (60.0%) of foundations interviewed do not name women and girls of color in their calls for proposals or applications. A similar number (60.9%) do not, or rarely, use open calls for proposals.

## SIGNIFICANT BARRIERS TO FOUNDATION FUNDING

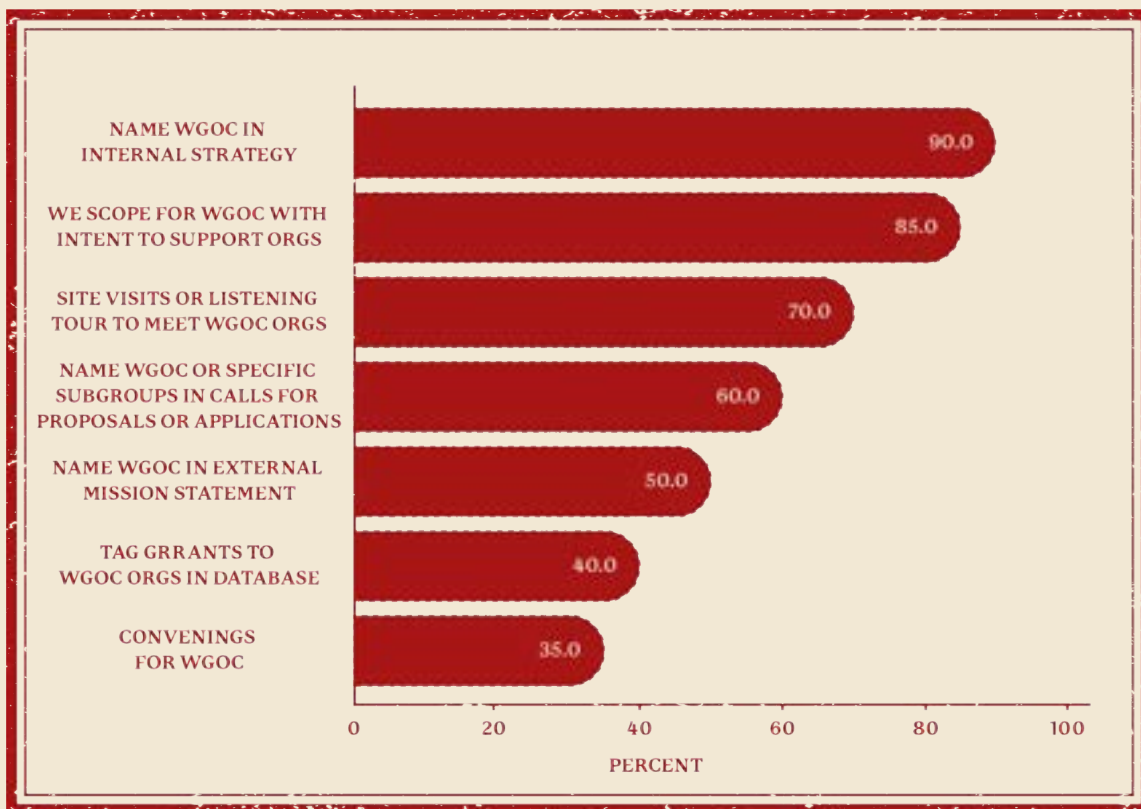
Nearly all organizations by and for women and girls of color apply for foundation funding (96.1%). Participants reported that one of the main barriers to accessing foundation funding is that funding opportunities do not describe the populations or groups they intend to support. This trend directly relates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

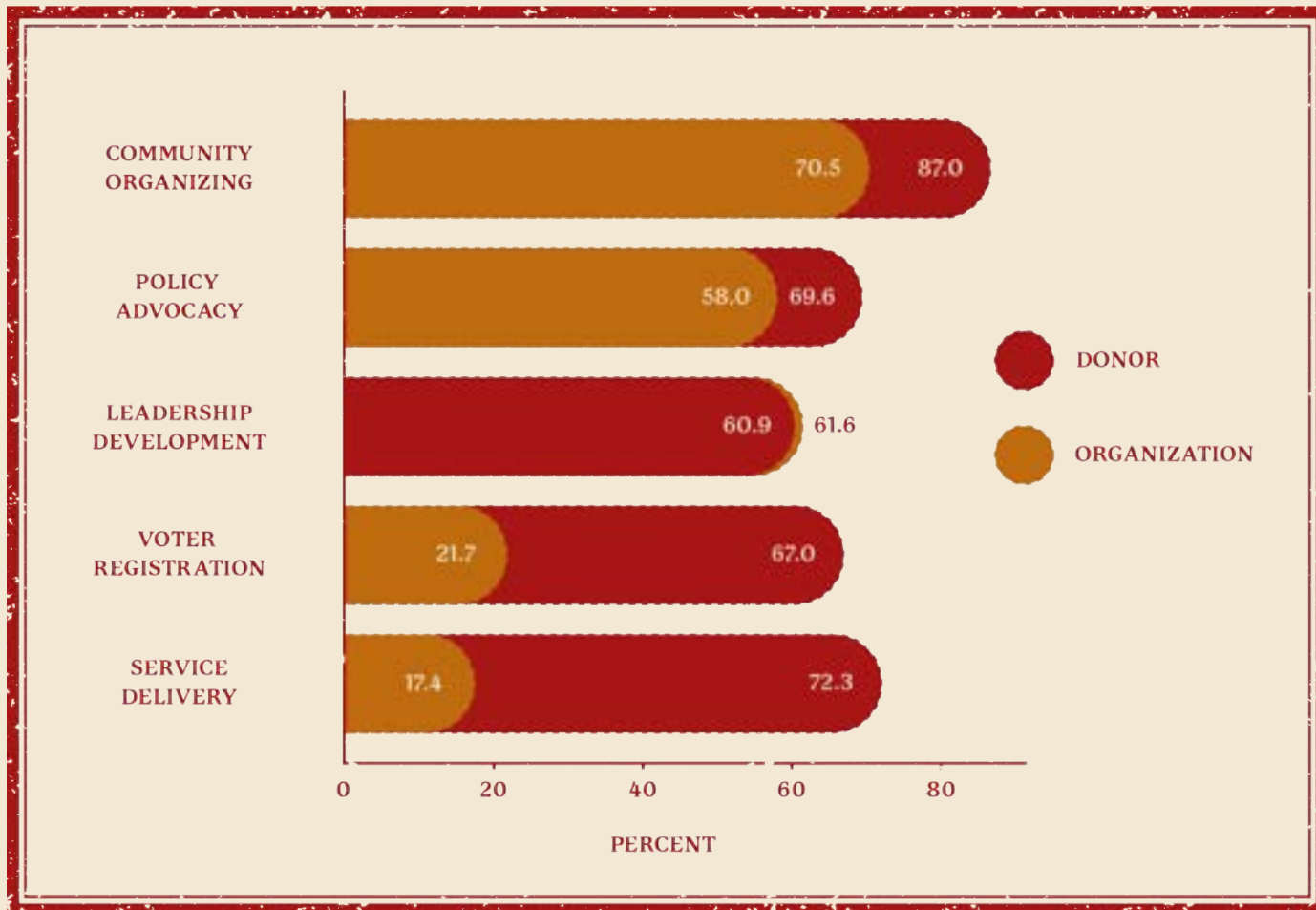
Foundations committed to women and girls of color are most likely to fund community organizing (87.0%) and policy advocacy (69.6%),

### HOW FOUNDATIONS EXPRESS PRIORITY THAT WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR HAVE IN GRANTMAKING



yet organizations by and for women and girls of color most commonly report doing service delivery (72.3%). Fewer than one in five (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 women and girls of color report doing voter registration while only about one in five (21.7%) foundations report supporting it.

### AREAS OF WORK FROM DONOR AND ORGANIZATION PERSPECTIVES



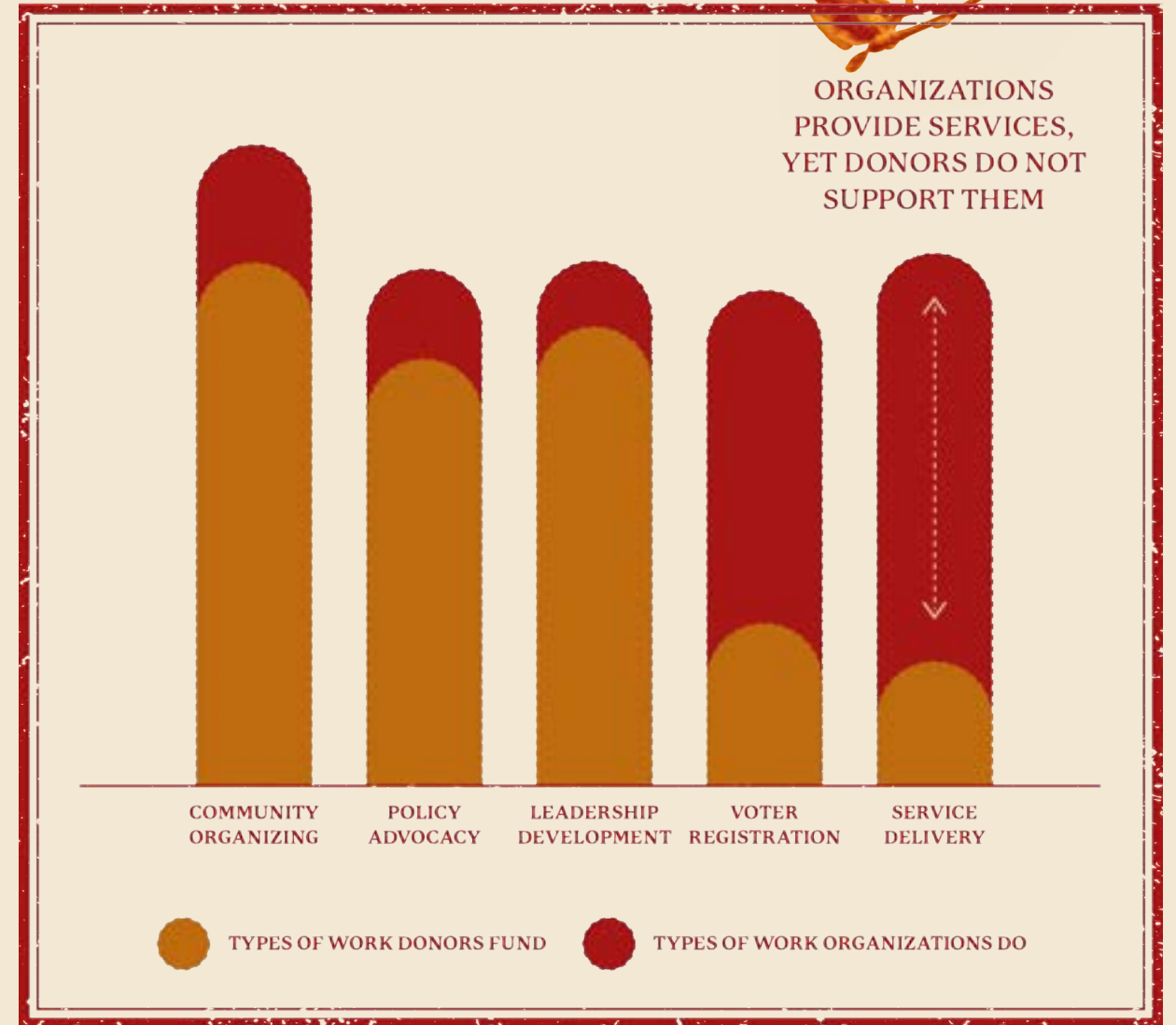
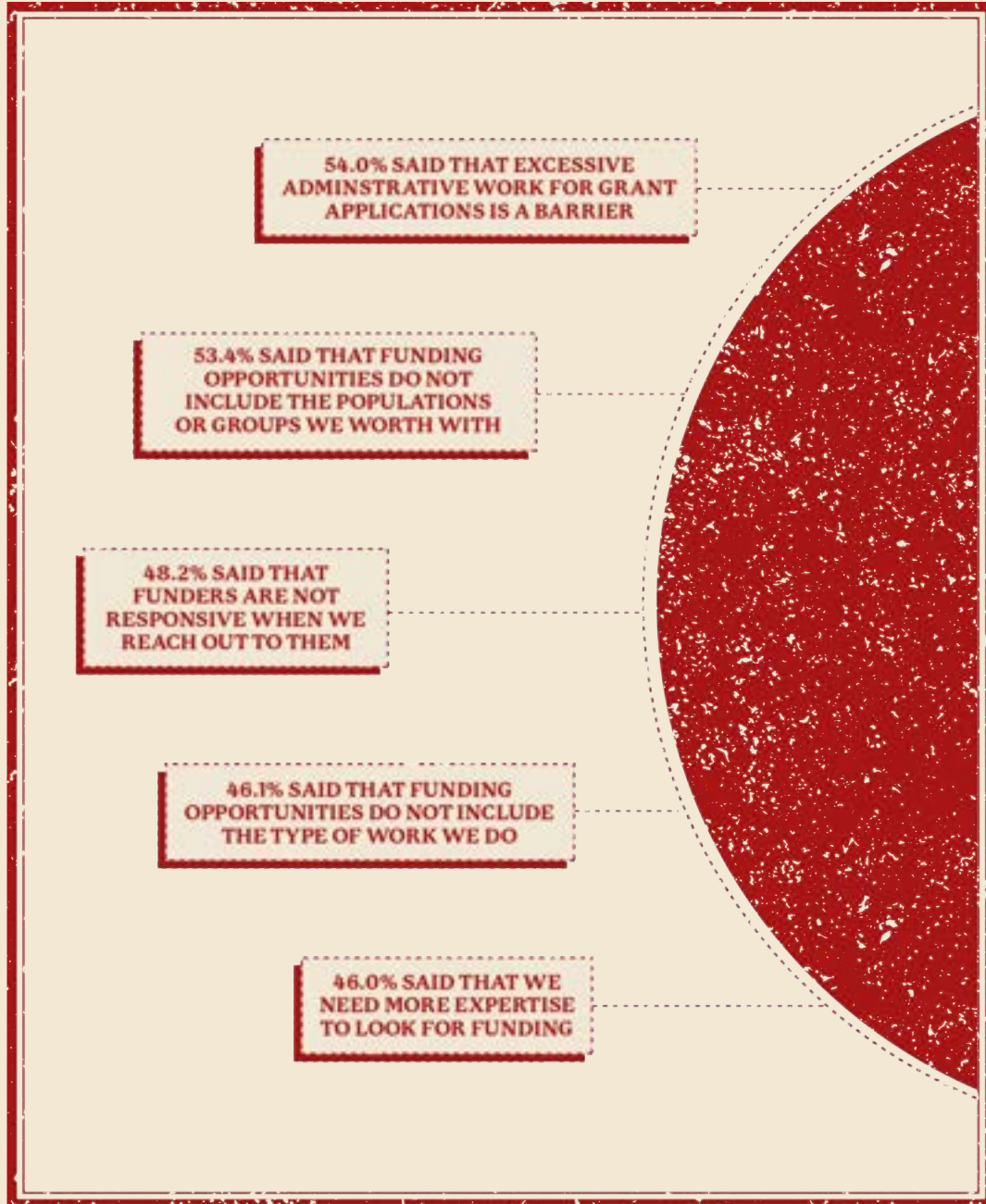
## PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

*CENTERING WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR IN ALL THAT WE DO AT THE MS. FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN HAS BEEN ITS OWN JOURNEY.*

Consistent with traditional philanthropic practices, our strategic grantmaking in previous years fell into issue area silos: Safety, Health/ Reproductive Justice, and Economic Justice, each with separate program officers and separate grantee portfolios. In funding by issue areas, we realized we might be excluding work we would like to support or making it more difficult for organizations to make a case to us to fund the totality of their work. To truly achieve alignment with the movements we support, we had to take a big step back and enter a process as a team to look deeply at our programs, beliefs, root causes, and intentions. We strove to align our grantmaking and capacity-building practice with the collaboration and cross-fertilization that is constantly occurring among grassroots movements for justice.

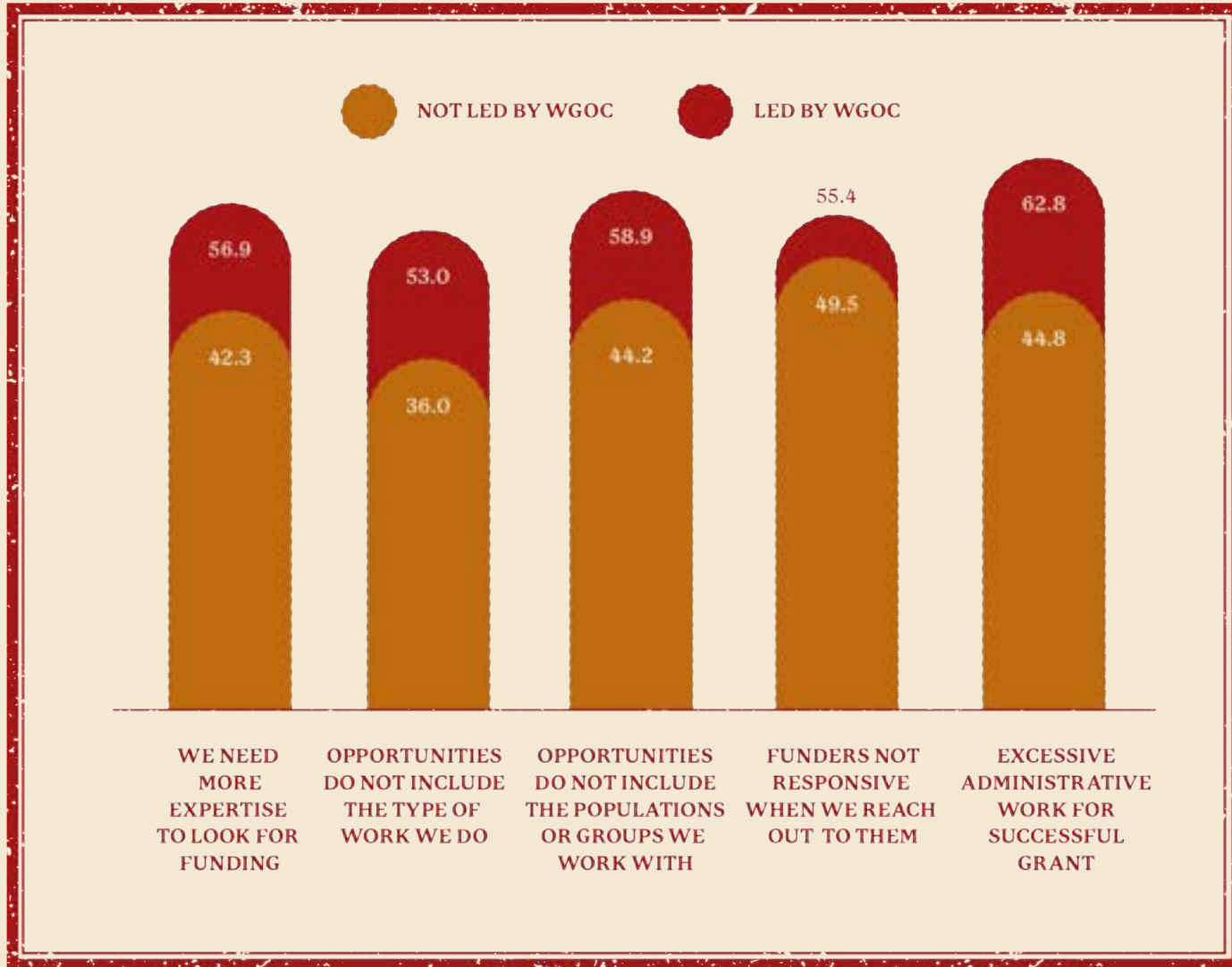
Over a period of 12 months, we restructured our program department to a shared grantee portfolio model, shared proposal review process, more streamlined processes for grantees, and we carved out a new director role for capacity building and learning. The strength of this approach mirrors the strength of womenled organizing that we see in the field every day. Now we are more nimble, able to assess and take on a new regional focus in the South, a new national grantmaking strategy for girls of color, and a new capacity-building strategy. We have also started an Activist Collaboration Fund, a funding mechanism dedicated to supporting organizations led by women and girls of color, including indigenous and transgender women and girls, to deepen collaborations across movement building organizations, with a focus on relationship building, shared analyses, strategy and planning, and healing justice support.

## BARRIERS TO FUNDING





## BARRIERS TO FUNDING AND WGOCL LEADERSHIP



All barriers to foundation funding were more pronounced for organizations led by women and girls of color. Despite efforts to identify, apply for and communicate with foundations about funding opportunities, organizations led by women of color are more likely to experience barriers to funding at every stage of the process. Foundations can address these barriers by prioritizing and systematically assessing their support for organizations led by women and girls of color.



## THE MOST COMMITTED FOUNDATIONS ARE NOT FORMALLY TRACKING THEIR GIVING

Formally tracking giving to women and girls of color is important to ensure that resources reach the communities that foundations intend to reach. Tracking also encourages donors to think systematically about which organizations qualify as by and for women and girls of color. Tracking can be used to support internal evaluation and learning efforts, as well as for external communication with other donors, donors' networks, and movement organizations.

Committed foundations often report that they have no formal way to track their giving to organizations by and for women and girls of color. Many draw on anecdotal information about the foundation's grantmaking to determine the approximate giving to women and girls of color. Of the seventeen foundations reporting that they "very much" prioritize giving to particular populations in their work, only seven (41.2%) track their giving to women and girls of color in a database. This absence of formal tracking contrasts with the report by ninety percent of foundations that women and girls of color are a priority in their internal strategy documents.



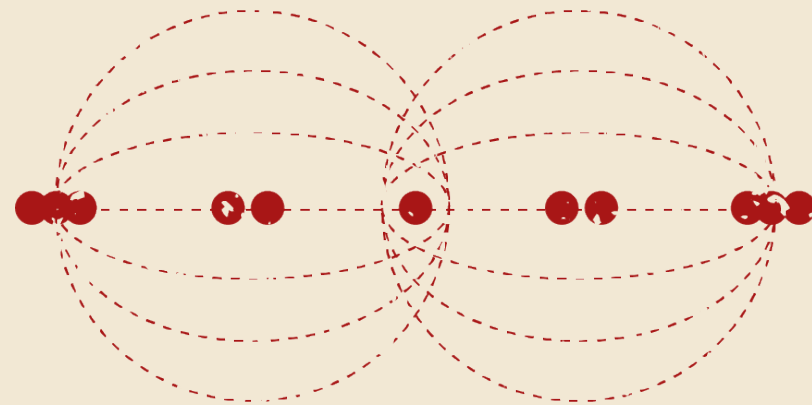
Of the seventeen foundations reporting that they “very much” prioritize giving to particular populations in their work, only seven (41.2%) track their giving to women and girls of color in a database.

This absence of formal tracking contrasts with the report by ninety percent of foundations that women and girls of color are a priority in their internal strategy documents.

# WHAT IS THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND SUPPORT?



**INCREASE IT**  
Use intermediaries



## GIVE THROUGH PUBLIC FOUNDATIONS, INTERMEDIARIES AND TARGETED FUNDS

Effective funders cultivate and maintain deep relationships with organizations by and for women and girls of color. By publicly and transparently centering women and girls of color in their work, these funders help organizations by and for women and girls of color to find opportunities for support.

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

## BE MINDFUL OF REPRESENTATION IN LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

When assessing whether an organization is by and for women and girls of color, note who benefits from their work and whether their outward-facing materials demonstrate a commitment to working on the intersection of race and gender. Keep in mind that organizations that focus on a single subpopulation, particularly true for Black women, or organizations that were founded by women of color, are more likely to be under-resourced.

Analyze the governance structures of the organization and look for women and girls of color in leadership positions. Explore who is making financial decisions. Strive to include organizations by and for women and girls of color that are self-led. For this study, we have identified having a woman of color executive director or having three-quarters women and girls of color in decision-making bodies as the benchmark for being a woman or girl of color-led organization. If you fund through public foundations, intermediaries or targeted funds, initiate these conversations with them and encourage them to incorporate these factors into their vetting process for identifying organizations to support.

## PUTTING INTO PRACTICE

*MS. FOUNDATION HAS A STRONG COMMITMENT TO BEING ACCOUNTABLE TO ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR.*

After we developed our strategy, we commissioned a retrospective analysis of our past grantmaking. We discovered that our systems were not always set up in a way that would help us track and understand our investment in women and girls of color. Roz Lee, Vice President of Strategy and Programs said, “In my career in philanthropy, I have learned that without a consistent method of tracking who is receiving our support, I can’t be sure I am reaching those I most want to reach—this is as true for organizations led by women and girls of color as it is for trans-led organizations.”

As we implement our new strategy centering women and girls of color, we are making changes at the Ms. Foundation to better track who benefits from and leads organizations by and for women and girls of color. We plan to share these data with other donors who are committed to this work, so we can learn from one another about how best to support and track investment in women and girls of color. We are committed to doing right by organizations by and for women and girls of color, and we know that tracking our giving is part of the work.



### BE VOCAL AND TRANSPARENT ABOUT YOUR INTEREST IN SUPPORTING WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

Organizations by and for women and girls of color struggle to find funding opportunities that are relevant to their work. More than half of these organizations report that funding opportunities do not include the populations or groups they work with, which makes it difficult for them to see themselves in what foundations would be willing to support. While foundations already committed to women and girls of color were much more likely to include this in their internal strategy documents than to state their commitment in public mission statements, foundations frequently did not explicitly state their interest in supporting women and girls of color in open calls for proposals or applications.

Organizations by and for women and girls of color 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 women and girls of color.

## TRACK YOUR GIVING TO ORGANIZATIONS BY AND FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR

Systematically tracking giving to women and girls of color is vital to understand trends in funder investment. In 2019, Candid has continued and 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 data about your grantmaking 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 women and girls of color 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—women and girls of color. You can create mechanisms in your own grantmaking database to track giving to women and girls of color. 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.

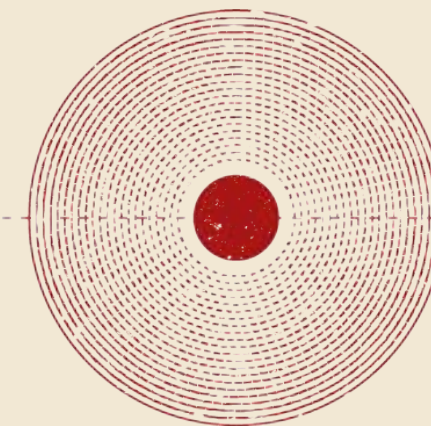


## FUND WOMEN AND GIRLS OF COLOR FOR THE WAYS THEY DO THE WORK

Consider loosening requirements about not funding services and be open to funding efforts that involve multiple strategies and issues, because this is how organizations by and for women and girls of color work. Supporting this work could be done through general operating support grants or through explicit invitations to include more strategies including service delivery—a core strategy that accompanies other strategies—in project grant proposals. Foundations committed to women and girls of color can better support these organizations by including this message in their philanthropic advocacy work.

### NAME IT

Align giving with what organizations actually do,  
and be transparent about it



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Strength in Numbers would like to thank the women of color activists and movement leaders and the committed donors that support them—they shared both wisdom and data with us, without which this report would not have been possible. We also appreciate Roz Lee, whose vision started this project and carried it through. We are grateful for Ellen Liu, Ruth McFarlane and Tamara Vasan for their strategic guidance and support, as well as their colleagues at the Ms. Foundation who contributed to this project in large and small ways. Lillien Waller provided careful copyediting and Yeonjae Lee diligently checked every statistic. Design and infographics by Raquel Hazell of Saalt Press.

# SUGGESTED CITATION

Howe, E.E. and Frazer, S. (2020) Pocket Change: How Women and Girls of Color Do More With Less: A Call to Action. The Ms. Foundation for Women: New York, NY. [forwomen.org](http://forwomen.org). Access date.

# ABOUT US

## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS CONSULTING GROUP

Strength in Numbers Consulting Group (SiNCG) focuses our research, evaluation and strategy practice on marginalized and underserved communities in New York City, the United States and international contexts. We work with foundations, nonprofits and government agencies to provide high quality research and evaluation services, as well as philanthropic strategy and capacity building. SiNCG is committed to both rigorous, credible scientific process and assuring substantive participation and influence from the marginalized communities most affected by our work. In our work with the philanthropic sector, we aim to generate and compile data to better align funding with community needs. [www.sincg.com](http://www.sincg.com)

## THE MS. FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN

The Ms. Foundation for Women transforms our democracy by building women's collective power. Guided by a gender and racial justice lens, we resource grassroots movements that center women and girls of color, advance feminism in philanthropy, and advocate for policies that improve women's lives across the country. Since 1973, we've opened up worlds of possibility for women and girls. But to finally achieve justice for all, we need you in our fight.

Learn more and get involved at [ForWomen.org](http://ForWomen.org).



**Ms. FOUNDATION**  
FOR WOMEN

1 Willoughby Square  
Suite 2000  
Brooklyn, NY 11201

[www.forwomen.org](http://www.forwomen.org)

This work is licensed under  
CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.