

girls as grantmakers network

*Profiles of Six  
Innovative  
Programs*



# intro:

In boardrooms across the country, the face of philanthropy is slowly changing...it is younger, more diverse, and decidedly more female. In six boardrooms in particular, this shift represents the pioneering work of Girls as Grantmakers programs, launched from women's foundations and girls' organizations.

Girls and young women in these programs are discovering the satisfaction and the power of assisting their communities by making significant grantmaking decisions. These young women are tomorrow's volunteers, donors, grantmakers, activists, and effective agents of change. Armed with the skills and experience provided by Girls as Grantmakers programs, these innovative, skilled and committed young women will lead the next generation of philanthropists.

Girls grantmaking programs are a relatively new phenomenon in the field of philanthropy. This guide, profiling six existing Girls as Grantmakers programs, is designed to serve as a resource for others interested in developing similar opportunities for girls in their communities.

## girls as grantmakers network

# *Why the Girls as Grantmakers Network?*

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## introduction

Until recently, each of the six Girls as Grantmakers programs profiled here worked in relative isolation. Last year, the Three Guineas Fund helped to bring these groups together to share program development ideas and facilitate adaptation of the models across the country.

The groups met at the Women's Funding Network conference in Los Angeles in April 2000, and decided to create an ongoing network to share program ideas, develop creative solutions, and offer assistance to the other women's funds requesting information on adapting the model to their own organizations.

The Girls as Grantmakers Network (GGN) is training the next generation of women philanthropists as donors, activists, volunteers, and foundation staff by:

- Providing support for colleagues who direct Girls as Grantmaker programs,
- Promoting best practices and a forum to collaborate on problem solving and program design,
- Sharing expertise with other organizations developing similar programs,
- Encouraging adaptation of the model to better integrate young women's voices into philanthropy.



*The six founding Girls as Grantmakers programs are:*

- Boston Women's Fund—Young Sisters for Justice
- Girl's Best Friend Foundation (Chicago) — Sisters Empowering Sisters
- Michigan Women's Foundation—Young Women for Change
- The Women's Foundation (San Francisco) — Sisterhood Fund
- Women's Foundation of Greater Kansas City — Girls Grant Project
- Alternatives, Inc. (Chicago) — Girl World Resource Pool

Other organizations that do not have established Girls as Grantmakers programs, but are participating in building the network include the Atlanta Women's Foundation, Ms. Foundation ([www.ms.foundation.org](http://www.ms.foundation.org)), the New York Women's Foundation, and the Women's Funding Network ([www.wfnet.org](http://www.wfnet.org)).

MANY PROGRAMS. ONE VISION.

*The Girls as Grantmakers programs profiled here have different structures, but share common goals:*

- Prepare the next generation of philanthropists and effectively integrate the voices of young women into organizations committed to girls and women.
- Provide girls with leadership and grantmaking training.
- Recruit and train young women from diverse economic, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds.
- Instill participants with the discipline to stick with a challenging program.
- Give girls and young women the power to make significant funding decisions.
- Provide support and training on issues from social justice to money management.

*A tool kit with more information on these models will be available Fall, 2001. For more information contact Stephanie Yang at The Women's Foundation: [stephaniey@twfusa.org](mailto:stephaniey@twfusa.org)*

# *Boston Women's Fund*

young sisters for justice

## *Program Goals & Objectives*

The Young Sisters for Justice program was established in 1997 by the Boston Women's Fund as a way to include the richness of young women's voices in the field of progressive philanthropy. Currently, the program is designed as a two-year paid leadership development internship for young women from the greater Boston metro area.

A unique component of the Young Sisters program is their active participation in the Boston Women's Fund's intergenerational allocations committee, which is comprised of local community activists. Along with the 'older sisters' in the committee, the Young Sisters for Justice review all the proposals that the fund receives, conduct site visits, and have equal voting power in making final funding decisions. Through two grantmaking cycles annually, the young women review proposals for grants ranging from \$5000 - \$25,000. Since the inception of the program, the Young Sisters have participated in distributing over \$1 million to grassroots organizations dedicated to fighting for social justice.

In addition to the allocations process, the Young Sisters have participated in a wide variety of forums and projects. Some of these have included: designing and implementing a participatory research project looking at what makes a good girls' program, hosting a site visit for national funders on youth organizing, collaborating with other local funders on panels promoting youth in philanthropy, organizing meetings in local communities to spread the word about funding available for girls' programs, hosting forums for girls to discuss various issues and implementing an oral history project to collect the stories of activism from women of all backgrounds who have been on the frontlines struggling for justice and equality.

## *Participants*

Every two years, a group of six Young Sisters for Justice are recruited from the greater Boston area. They come from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds, are low-income, have a variety of experiences both within their schools and communities and range in age from fifteen to nineteen years old. There is a weekly three-hour session, based on the methodology of popular education, which focuses on topics ranging from social change philanthropy to issues of social, racial and economic justice. Topics are selected by the Program Director of the Young Sisters and everyone is involved in planning and facilitating the sessions.

The young women must be able to commit to two years, and be available to work three-ten hours/week, depending on the time of year and the type of projects that they are working on. The young women receive \$10/hr and can work a maximum of ten hours a week. Qualities that are emphasized in the selection process are a willingness to work with others, a desire to learn more about their communities, and openness to learning about different perspectives.

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*“The Young Sisters for Justice program has not only opened my eyes to all the issues and happenings going on in my community, but it’s made a window for me to really examine myself in a way that was never possible before.”*

# *Girl's Best Friend Foundation*

sisters empowering sisters

## *Program Goals & Objectives*

Sisters Empowering Sisters is a diverse group of young women from all over Chicago, between the ages of fourteen and eighteen years old. Established in 1997, Sisters Empowering Sisters (SES) brings the voices of girls to Girl's Best Friend Foundation (GBF) by having regular discussions and information exchanges between the adult Board of the foundation and SES members. The girls and young women in SES have direct impact on nonprofits by working with girls in these organizations to design their own girls' programs and apply for funding to support them.

The money distributed annually through Sisters Empowering Sisters grantmaking varies and has progressively increased each year. In 1998, SES distributed \$5,000 and in 2000, the committee distributed \$15,000.

### *Sisters Empowering Sisters members:*

- Participate in activities and discussions about grantmaking, social justice, and sisterhood,
- Make important decisions about granting money to projects developed by girls for girls ages eight to eighteen,
- Share information with the Board and Staff of the Foundation, and meet and share information with other groups of girls and young women in the Chicago area and across the country.

## *Participants*

Each year, the foundation recruits girls and young women ages fourteen to eighteen from all over the city and some surrounding suburbs. The Sisters Empowering Sisters committee is made up of nine members who make a one-year commitment. Members meet at least twice a month on Saturdays for four hours, and must be available periodically for site visits, presentations and other meetings after school.

The members are very diverse geographically, ethnically, and economically. They demonstrate an interest in making positive change with and for girls, an ability to listen and communicate with others, and a willingness to work with other young women and adults to accomplish specific goals.

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*“Not only do you make an impact in the community, but you also meet other girls your age from different parts of the community and make new friends.”*

# *Michigan Women's Foundation*

young women for change

## *Program Goals & Objectives*

Young Women for Change (YWFC) was created by the Michigan Women's Foundation in 1995 to accomplish the following goals:

- To meet the needs and improve the futures of Michigan girls and young women,
- To create a model of grantmaking which can be replicated in other Michigan counties,
- To actively involve young women in philanthropy
- To promote decisionmaking skills,
- To engage young women in understanding problems and inequities in their communities, as well as to generate ideas for resolutions,
- To help the Michigan Women's Foundation learn how to more effectively meet the needs of girls and young women through grantmaking.

The YWFC program has been meeting these goals by engaging high school young women of diverse backgrounds in a challenging, hands-on committee that impacts the community. YWFC committees currently exist in Kent County and the Metro Detroit area with plans to establish other sites statewide as funds become available.

YWFC trains young women in leadership, decision-making and philanthropy. The young women determine funding priorities, meeting agendas, proposal evaluations and grants. Each committee grants \$20,000 annually to nonprofit groups serving the needs of young women and girls in their geographic area.

## *Participants*

Each YWFC committee consists of approximately twenty high school aged young women from diverse ethnic, socio-economic and geographic backgrounds. Members are highly motivated and enthusiastic to learn more about women's and girls' issues and grantmaking. YWFC requires members to make a two-year commitment to the program and to demonstrate a high level of responsibility and maturity. Each year, members are also required to attend nine monthly meetings, two team-building retreats and other activities necessary to the grantmaking process, such as site visits to local nonprofit agencies.

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*“You have to be dedicated and stick with it, but the pay off in the end is definitely worth it.”*

# *The Women's Foundation*

the sisterhood fund

## *Program Goals & Objectives*

The Sisterhood Fund is a leadership and grantmaking program for racially and economically diverse young women from northern and central California. The Fund provides training and experience to help girls and young women become leaders and primary stakeholders in their communities.

The young women are members of a Grants Review Committee specific to the Sisterhood Fund, and separate from The Women's Foundation Board of Directors. The Grants Review Committee, comprised of program staff and community members, reviews proposals, conducts site visits and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors for final approval. The young women of the Sisterhood Fund receive extensive training around philanthropy, economics, human rights, the grantmaking process, and impact decisions at the Foundation. They distribute at least \$50,000 annually to girls' organizations in California. In 1999-2000, the young women allocated \$70,000. Grants are awarded for one year, up to \$5,000.

## *Participants*

The recruitment process for the Sisterhood Fund relies primarily on the efforts and recommendations of past participants in the program. Applications are distributed by Foundation grantees, partner organizations (including schools), and through staff and the Board of Directors. The selection process includes an evaluation of levels of interest, previous or current leadership positions, and each applicant's ability to commit to a six-month program.

The young women who participate in the Sisterhood Fund are from northern California, the Bay Area (San Francisco region) and the Central Valley, living in urban, suburban

and rural communities. A goal of the Sisterhood Fund is for the young women participants to be representative of the communities within California whom they serve through the grantmaking process. In addition to ethnic representation, the Sisterhood Fund also brings together young women with varied economic backgrounds, and representing a diversity of sexual orientation and identity, levels of community involvement and volunteerism, ability, educational achievement and access, and political viewpoints.

Each year twelve to fifteen young women, ages fifteen through twenty one, participate in the Sisterhood Fund program which requires four mandatory training retreats, (Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday) over a period of six months. The young women are also involved in site visits to meet with potential grantees during the two months between the third and fourth retreat. These visits are scheduled based on the young women's personal schedules and the number assigned to each one is dependent on the number of proposals received.

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*“When I'm going through my day and I remember, “Hey, I'm in the Sisterhood Fund!” I smile. I smile, because I realize the power that young women are being given through these programs and I am filled with such hope for the future of our world.”*

# *Women's Foundation of Greater Kansas City*

girl s grant project

## *Program Goals & Objectives*

The Girls Grant Project was established in January, 1999 to engage young women, ages fourteen through eighteen, to:

- 1) develop leadership skills,
- 2) make funding decisions,
- 3) create change in their community,
- 4) work in partnership with adult female role models,
- 5) make new friends, and
- 6) have fun.

The girls are part of a grants allocation committee and distribute \$10,000-15,000 each year. Members of the Girls Grant Project learn about philanthropy, women's issues and grantmaking. They also receive training in understanding and analyzing budgets, conducting site visits and evaluating programs.

## *Participants*

Members of the Girls Grant Project come from a six-county area that makes up metro Kansas City. They are diverse in geographic, socioeconomic and ethnic background. The program consists of twenty-two members who commit to a one-year term. Criteria for selection include their ability to be dependable and committed, with an effort to get a mix of personalities and skills. Members meet once every other week for three hours, during the summer months. During the school year, meetings are held twice a month for approximately two hours.

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“  
*I was attracted to this  
program because it was  
an all-girls group dealing  
directly with problems  
that girls around me  
have, and I would be  
helping with solutions  
to these problems.*”

### *Program Goals & Objectives*

The Girl World Resource Pool was established in 1996 to help seed and support new programs for girls and women in the Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods of Chicago. This model is different from the other Girls as Grantmakers programs because it is not housed in a foundation, but in a community-based organization.

In Girl World, girls work with women volunteers to learn the art and challenges of strategic grantmaking. They create a grant application, complete site visits, and decide which Chicago-based girls' organizations deserve funding. Participants, aged twelve through sixteen distribute \$3,000-\$6,000 annually. The program is run by volunteers and Girl World staff, and funds to support the program are raised by the development department at Alternatives Inc.

The girls participate in both the strategic planning process for Girl World and Alternatives Inc., the parent organization. They serve on Alternatives Inc.'s core strategic planning groups, attend Board retreats, and are an important part of the hiring process for Girl World staffing. Participants do not receive school credit and are not compensated monetarily, but they do earn the support of a community of women that value their voices and involvement.

## *Participants*

Participants in the Girl World Resource Pool are recruited through local community-based organizations, family relationships, and friends of the girls. They are selected based upon their willingness to work as a team, read and write documents, and their interest in learning about supporting girls' programs.

This is a small program, generally working with a team of seven girls per year. There have been 33 participants, age 12-16, since the program was established. The program takes place annually, and the girls meet weekly in the spring, for thirteen weeks, learning grantmaking basics. Graduates or alumnae of the program are invited to mentor the younger girls.

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# *The New York Women's Foundation*

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program in development

## *Program Status & Plans*

The New York Women's Foundation is in the initial stages of developing a Girls as Grantmakers program, working with a team of Board members, staff, girls-programming practitioners from the grantee community and girls to develop a program format. A proposal will be drawn up and proposed to the Board of Directors for approval with the target date for program start-up being Fall, 2002.

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# *Atlanta Women's Foundation*

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program in development

## *Program Status & Plans*

The Atlanta Women's Foundation is in the pre-planning stages of a girls grantmaking program. An ad hoc committee of the grantmaking committee has been established to plan the design of an inclusive process and to discuss possible sources of funding. Committee members are currently collecting information on girls' grantmaking models.

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*Support for this project from:*

Three Guineas Fund: [www.3gf.org](http://www.3gf.org)  
W.K. Kellogg Foundation: [www.wkkf.org](http://www.wkkf.org)

*Special thanks to:*

Girl's Best Friend Foundation  
for providing photographs for this project.

*Design & Production:*

Slingshot: [www.slingshotproductions.com](http://www.slingshotproductions.com)

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