

General FAQs

**Q: Why do you do a five-year plan?**

A: A strategic plan is a best practice for most foundations and non-profit organizations. WFCO does a five-year plan because it's important that every few years we reassess the needs of women in our communities statewide, evaluate if we are being responsive to the changing demographics and economic opportunities in our state, and identify the strategies for greatest impact.

**Q: Did you hire a facilitator?**

A: Yes. We worked with Joining Vision and Action (JVA) to develop our strategic plan. JVA conducted statewide research by surveying 1,300 diverse Coloradans, interviewing key local and national informants, facilitating focus groups with WFCO stakeholders, and guiding planning sessions with our Board, staff, and strategic planning committee.

**Q: What are your core values and how will you live them?**

A: Our core values include promise, leadership, community, learning, equity and inclusion, and stewardship and accountability. They guide our decision making so we act with integrity and intentionality in everything we do – whether that's grantmaking, working with a donor, or evaluating a new partnership.

**Q: Are there any big shifts in your strategic plan?**

A: WFCO's commitment to supporting economic opportunities for women and their families has not wavered since we were founded, however our organizational strategies continually evolve as community needs change. In 2017, The Women's Foundation is sharpening our focus on helping women earn livable wages, which we believe is the gateway to greater access and opportunity. Our sharpened focus is rooted in research: JVA surveyed nearly 1,300 diverse community members, many of them women who are not economically secure, on what WFCO priorities should be. Pathways to earning a livable wage – including higher education, job training and placement, and affordable child care – were top priorities.

**Q: What is the definition of a livable wage?**

A: We believe a livable wage is more than enough to adequately meet your family's needs without public or private supports, which is the definition of the Self-Sufficiency Standard. We believe that progress toward economic prosperity must include reaching economic self-sufficiency *and* surpassing it. Earning a livable wage allows women to move beyond impossible choices, such as addressing their own healthcare needs or enrolling their children in a higher-quality child care center. When women earn more than the Self-Sufficiency Standard, they can begin to live beyond necessity, saving for the future and investing in their children's dreams. Our partners, such as the Colorado Center on Law & Policy who regularly updates the Self-Sufficiency Standard for Colorado, will help us understand what women and their families truly need to achieve a livable wage in communities statewide.

**Q: What types of jobs offer livable wages?**

A: Jobs that are in high demand and require post-secondary education almost always pay more. Many top jobs in Colorado are in the STEM sector, which means science, technology, engineering, and math. STEM encompasses so many careers, such as environmental engineers, healthcare technicians, dental hygienists, software developers, agricultural technicians, and nursing. Beyond STEM, there are many careers where women can earn livable wages, including accounting and finance, law enforcement, and skilled trades such as welding or carpentry.

**Q: Are you focused on helping low-income women?**

WFCO is focused on helping women and their families achieve economic security. Our new strategic plan focuses on accelerating progress for women who live at or near poverty, as well as women facing significant barriers to economic security despite their hard work.

**Q: Have your research and public policy strategies changed?**

A: Listening to our stakeholders confirmed the value of our research and public policy work. Since our inception, research has been the foundation of our work and will continue to inform our work by helping us understand challenges and opportunities for women and their families. In fact, we have released more than 25 research reports since 1987. WFCO will continue to invest and deepen our engagement in research and non-partisan public policy and advocacy while integrating them with our grantmaking efforts to help women earn livable wages.

**Q: Will the work of WFCO continue to support women *and* girls?**

A: Our vision is a future where women and girls of every background and identity prosper. While our direct service grantmaking will focus on organizations that holistically support women in achieving a livable wage within 3-5 years, we use several other strategies to support Colorado women and girls. Our research, public policy and community education efforts will continue to support better opportunities for women and girls. Additionally, donor-advised fund holders can continue to support the issues statewide affecting women and girls that matter most to them.

**Q: How will you support STEM?**

A: As we focus our grantmaking on preparing women to secure jobs with livable wages, our STEM work will be career-focused. We do not anticipate continuing to invest in after-school programming for younger girls. We will continue to collaborate with leading Colorado employers to increase gender equity in STEM, with an increasing focus on pathways for low-income women to achieve livable wages through STEM. Also, we'll continue to use research and policy advocacy to improve access to STEM learning and earning opportunities for women throughout our state.

**Q: How will WFCO show its impact?**

A: To ensure our impact is clearer than ever, WFCO will work with an expert external evaluator and our direct service and public policy grantees to develop and execute a comprehensive evaluation to demonstrate women's progress toward livable wages because of our investments.

### Development FAQs

**Q: Why should I invest in The Women's Foundation of Colorado?**

A: Investing with WFCO results in maximum strategic impact for women in our state. We have a deep understanding of issues affecting women, and our comprehensive approach integrates research, policy advocacy, strategic grantmaking, and philanthropy to ensure that your investment has more impact. As a donor, you can learn about gender issues and connect with and join a network of philanthropists who care about women and girls. Lastly, we offer many giving vehicles to fit your individual needs and passions. One of our unique value propositions is that WFCO offers an investment portfolio that is 100 percent gender lens. This fund invests in companies that have gender diversity on their boards and executive management teams, recognize the business advantages of greater gender diversity, and embrace programs and policies that advance gender equity.

**Q: Can I still support girls through The Women's Foundation of Colorado?**

A: As the only community foundation in Colorado focused on women and girls, there are several ways you can work alongside us to support girls. WFCO donors have access to a range of giving vehicles, including donor-advised funds held at The Women's Foundation of Colorado, to focus their philanthropy on girls. Additionally, our updated grantmaking guidelines include a desire to fund organizations that utilize multi-generation strategies. We know how important it is for women and their children to be served through programs that advance and accelerate livable wages for its participants. Our public policy efforts also will continue to improve opportunities for women and girls in our state.

**Q: What are regional-advised funds?**

A: A regional-advised fund most specifically has a geographic focus and is similar in functionality to a donor-advised fund. We are looking at piloting a regional-advised fund model with a group of community members to direct funds to the needs of women and girls in their communities. In 2017 (fiscal year 2018), we will develop a strategy to launch a pilot program in one of our regions with a plan to pilot the regional advised fund in 2018 (fiscal year 2019). Evaluating this pilot, will help us determine how to expand and implement statewide.

### Grantmaking FAQs

**Q: How is your grantmaking model changing?**

A: With the implementation of our more focused strategic plan, we plan to improve opportunities for women in Colorado to achieve a livable wage. WFCO grantmaking to direct service and public policy organizations will focus on helping women access education and job training and placement opportunities with holistic support. Both direct service and public policy grantees will participate in a cohort learning community to deepen the impact of collective and individual efforts. Complete guidelines will be released on June 1, 2017 on [wfc.org](http://wfc.org).

**Q: How does the new strategic plan affect your current grantees?**

A: It is likely that some, but not all, current grantees will be a good fit within the updated grantmaking guidelines, which are focused on helping women facing economic barriers achieve livable wages within 3-5 years.

**Q: What kind of organization might fit within the livable wage grantmaking cohort?**

A: Direct service partners will include those offering job skills training, career-focused skills-training, training and support to secure and sustain employment, as well as assistance addressing barriers to stable employment and to meet their families' needs, such as financial planning, child care, nutrition, transportation, housing, and behavioral health care. Additionally, our updated grantmaking guidelines include a desire to fund organizations that utilize multi-generation strategies and support in STEM career pathways.

**Q: Why is WFCO investing in a cohort model?**

A: Our cohort approach to grantmaking is intended to help direct service and public policy partners learn from one another to leverage greater effectiveness in all their work. By sharing knowledge and effective practices, organizations can offer more value to program participants and the constituencies they serve. As we focus our work around livable wages, we will be poised to measure greater impact from these investments. Also, an external evaluation partner will work with each member of the cohort and the group, and we'll have better opportunities to learn how these efforts change economic outcomes for women and their families statewide.

**Q: Why are you requiring a letter of intent (LOI)?**

A: Using the most promising practices in philanthropy, WFCO will invite interested applicants to provide an LOI before submitting a full proposal. An LOI requires less staff time to develop than a full proposal and we want applicants to explore a fit with us without having to spend many staff resources. We've also streamlined the requirements for applicants who are invited to submit full proposals by aligning with the Colorado Common Grant Application.

**Q: Will smaller/rural/emerging organizations be competitive in this process?**

A: Absolutely. As a statewide organization with a focus on supporting women of diverse backgrounds and identities, WFCO is committed to establishing a cohort of grantees using innovative strategies to serve women in communities across Colorado. We are eager to learn more about the ways that small and large organizations or emerging partnerships are accelerating women's progress toward earning livable wages.

**Q: How and when can potential applicants learn more?**

A: We will release complete grantmaking guidelines on our website, [wfc.org](http://wfc.org), on June 1, 2017. Additionally, we will host learning sessions and grant application workshops in Denver and each of our regional locations in June. Please visit our website to find a learning session near you and return to our website beginning on June 1 to access an online seminar about our strategic plan.