



Women & Girls of Color Fund

Evaluation & Learning: Process and Impact Report



**The Women's
Foundation of Colorado**
Women Thriving. Colorado Rising.®

Prepared by
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Introduction & Methodology

The Women and Girls of Color Fund is a community-developed, community-led field-of-interest fund dedicated to investing in and partnering with women-of-color-led organizations that are working to advance the economic security of Colorado women, nonbinary people, trans people and girls of color. The framework and funding priorities include funding to organizations that: are led by women, nonbinary people, trans people, and girls of color, are focused on women and girls of color, are Colorado-based and Colorado-focused, demonstrate radical practices of liberatory leadership, advance economic security, and support those most underfunded. In 2022, the fund supported 38 women of color leader grantees.

Point b(e) Strategies partnered with The Women's Foundation of Colorado to evaluate the Women and Girls of Color Fund's first year. The following outcomes were identified:

1. Women of color grantees are able to support their organization and communities more deeply.
2. Women of color grantees are able to take a range of approaches to advancing the economic security of women and girls of color based on their communities' needs.
3. Women of color grantees feel more connected to other women of color who are leading organizations.
4. Women of color grantees feel they are better able to perform at their full potential.
5. Women of color grantees increase their funding by leveraging funding from The Women's Foundation of Colorado.
6. Advisory council members feel they hold decision-making power within funding to women of color leaders.

Point b(e) Strategies utilized a mixed-methods evaluation to gather grantee feedback about the Women and Girls of Color Fund and how it impacts women of color leaders, organizations, and communities. The following data collections were utilized:



Key Findings

Women of color grantees are able to more deeply support their organization and communities.

- 93% of respondents agreed that they were able to invest in their operations, and 81% agreed that they were able to invest in their staff.
- Focus group participants shared they were able to provide self-care and wellness, especially nontraditional wellness and care.
- 85% of respondents increased the quality of services or programs for their community, and 74% increased capacity to work more closely with their communities served and increased opportunities to listen to their community.
- Community members shared feedback that grantees are driven by and for their community, have heart and care, focus on equity, inclusion and intersectionality, and respond to needs.

Women of color grantees are able to take a range of approaches to advancing the economic security of women and girls of color based on communities’ needs.

- 70% of respondents were able to increase the variety and approaches of services or programs for their communities, 74% were able to increase their adaptability to respond to and address community-identified needs, and 78% of respondents agreed that their organization has more capacity to think innovatively about their programs/services since receiving funding.

Women of color grantees feel more connected to other women of color who are leading organizations.

- 64% of respondents agreed that they feel supported as a leader of color and connected to other leaders of color. However, 80% agreed that they need more support as a leader of color.

Women of color grantees feel they are better able to perform at their full potential.

- 68% of respondents agreed that they were better able to perform at their fullest potential within their organization since receiving funding. However, 36% agreed that they felt less stressed in their job.
- 92% of respondents indicated they were better able to focus on leading authentically, and 76% indicated they were better able to focus on practicing liberatory leadership (generally) and building collective leadership structures and practices.
- Survey respondents and focus group participants shared that they felt validated, affirmed, energized, and motivated as leaders, and that they could focus on their leadership and invest in tools and resources for themselves.

Women of color grantees increase their funding by leveraging funding from The Women’s Foundation of Colorado.

- 46% indicated they were able to leverage funding from The Women’s Foundation to get more funding.
- Survey respondents and focus group participants shared that they were able to leverage funding to support their liberatory leadership practices, to reference the funding in other grant applications, and open doors for key conversations.

Advisory council members feel they hold decision-making power within funding to women of color leaders.

- 86% of respondents indicated they felt like they hold decision-making power in where funding to women of color leaders is deployed since joining the advisory council.

Strengths & Recommendations

Focus group participants shared that the funding was authentic and personal, and that they were proud and honored to be associated with this fund. Participants also shared that truly unrestricted funding is empowering and liberating.	Focus group participants shared that they liked that the grantmaking process was more relational than transactional and was relaxed and unconvoluted.	Survey respondents shared that they liked that the fund centered women and girls of color, and that the application process was accessible and approachable.	Grantees shared recommendations on providing multi-year funding, opportunities for connection between leaders of color, ideas for how to use the funds, and sharing a list of vetted BIPOC and women-owned businesses to support.
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Introduction

The Women and Girls of Color Fund is a grant fund through The Women’s Foundation of Colorado and is a community-developed, community-led field-of-interest fund dedicated to investing in and partnering with women-of-color-led organizations that are working to advance the economic security of Colorado women, nonbinary people, trans people, and girls of color. The framework and funding priorities include funding to organizations that: are led by women, nonbinary people, trans people, and girls of color, are focused on women and girls of color, are Colorado-based and Colorado-focused, demonstrate radical practices of liberatory leadership, advance economic security, and support those most underfunded. The fund is designed to award unrestricted funding to women of color executive directors and leaders to choose how best to allocate the funding for themselves, their organizations, and their communities. The fund also includes an advisory council that is comprised of those the fund seeks to support—women of color leaders from across the state. The advisory council independently evaluates applications and makes final decisions on who to fund and grant amounts. In 2022, the fund supported 38 women of color leader grantees. Point b(e) Strategies partnered with The Women’s Foundation of Colorado to evaluate the Women and Girls of Color Fund first year.

Methodology

Point b(e) Strategies, in partnership with The Women’s Foundation, developed a logic model, including outcomes and indicators to guide the evaluation activities. The following outcomes were identified:



Point b(e) Strategies utilized a mixed-methods evaluation to gather grantee feedback about the Women and Girls of Color Fund and how it impacts women of color leaders, organizations, and communities. The following data collections were utilized:

- **Grantee Survey.** Point b(e) Strategies conducted a survey for grantees to better understand the fund's impact on grantees and program outcomes. The survey was administered online through Survey Monkey to 38 grantees. A total of 27 grantees completed the survey, for a response rate of 71%.
- **Grantee Focus Groups.** Point b(e) Strategies facilitated five focus groups with grantees via Zoom, engaging with a total of 20 grantees. The focus groups represented perspectives from both women of color executive director grantees and staff or leaders of a grantee organization. Two focus groups were specifically held for executive directors of color to provide a safer space for grantees to share their experiences as women and leaders of color.
- **Advisory Council Member Survey.** Point b(e) Strategies conducted a survey for advisory council members to better understand the fund's impact on them as leaders of color. The survey was administered online through Survey Monkey to 19 council members. A total of 14 members responded, for a 74% response rate.
- **Community Engagement Initiative.** Point b(e) Strategies also developed a community engagement initiative to better understand the impacts of women-of-color-led organizations and program outcomes. The community engagement initiative was also designed to help tell the story of grantees within their communities. Grantees had the option to send community members directly to an online survey developed by Point b(e) Strategies or to embed the survey questions into their own data collection method. A total of 72 community members shared feedback on five grantee organizations.



Outcome Areas

The evaluation provided various insights into the impact of the fund on women of color leaders, their organizations, and communities. The following section outlines the findings of the evaluation by each outcome area.

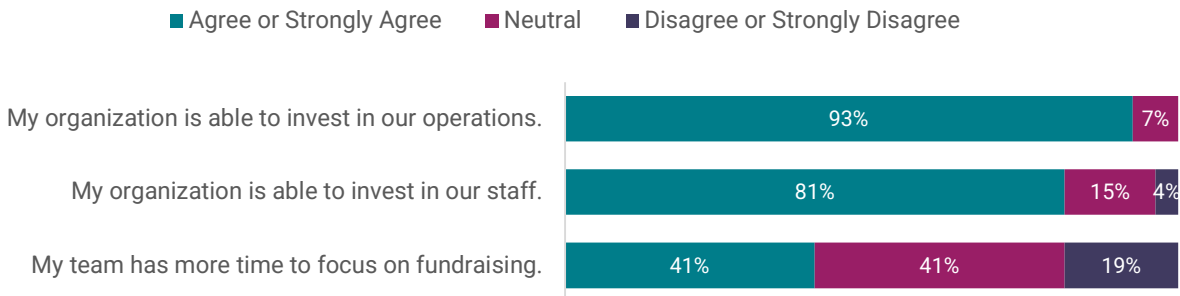


Women of color grantees are able to more deeply support their organization and communities.

The fund supports women and leaders of color grantees by providing completely unrestricted funding in which the executive director may choose how best to use the funds. By providing unrestricted funding, the Women and Girls of Color Fund sought to support women and leaders of color grantees’ ability to more deeply support their organization and communities.

Survey respondents were asked their level of agreement to a series of statements related to their organizational capacity (by rating on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree). As illustrated in Figure 1 below, since receiving funding from the Women and Girls of Color Fund, nearly all (93%) of respondents were able to invest in their operations, and 81% were able to invest in their staff. As the Women and Girls of Color Fund aimed to decrease the burden and time spent on the grant application and reporting, the evaluation also asked grantees’ feedback on their team’s time to focus on fundraising. As illustrated below, 41% of respondents agreed that their team had more time to focus on fundraising since receiving funding.

Figure 1. Feedback on Organizational Capacity – Grantee Survey



In addition, focus group participants shared feedback on how they were able to support their organization. The following themes emerged:

- **The ability to invest in staff.** Grantees shared how they were able to promote staff, give raises, hire full-time staff, and provide benefits. Grantees also shared they were able to support staff who are primarily women and people of color.

“[The funding] supported the fact that I was building my team so other people of color were promoted within the organizational chart. We also hired more people of color by promoting those leaders.” – Focus Group Participant

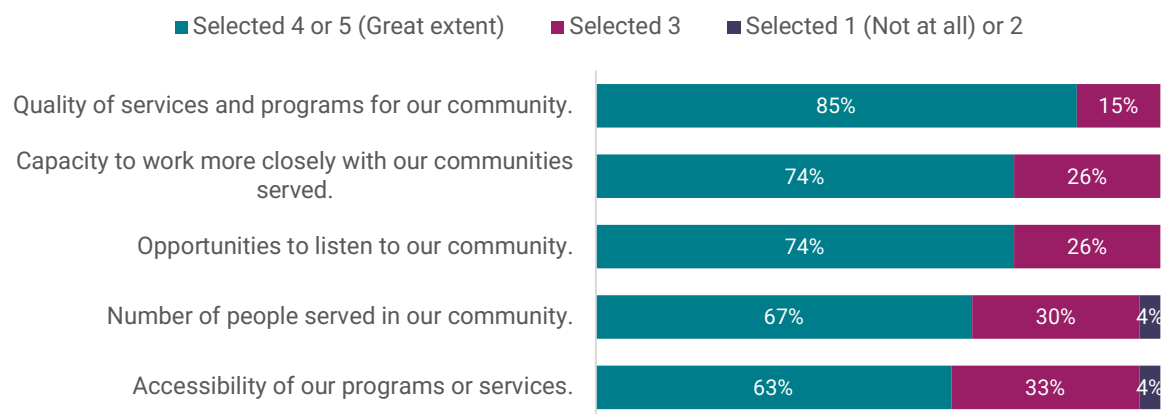
- **The ability to provide self-care and wellness, especially nontraditional wellness and care.** Grantees shared how they were not only able to support their staff’s wellness through things like gym memberships and hiring yoga instructors but were also able to provide self-care in ways that were non-traditional and better reflected and honored their culture. Grantees shared they were able to provide their staff with energy healing work and medicines harvested in honorable ways from their communities.

“Having this funding has allowed us to bring our cultural practices and not to be restricted.” – Focus Group Participant

“We could use the money to help staff and I go get energy healing work and we could go out of the norm on looking at different kinds of healing work for us.” – Focus Group Participant

Grantees were also asked the extent they were able to increase efforts to more deeply serve their communities (by rating on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1= Not at all and 5= A great extent). Since receiving funding, 85% of respondents were able to increase the quality of services or programs for their community, as illustrated in Figure 2 below. Nearly three-fourths (74%) were able to increase their capacity to work more closely with their communities served and have more opportunities to listen to their community. Additionally, two-thirds (67%) were able to increase the number of people served, and 63% were able to increase the accessibility of their programs or services.

Figure 2. Increases in Support for their Communities – Grantee Survey



Survey respondents also shared additional feedback on how funding has impacted their organization’s ability to serve their community. The following themes emerged from the survey:

- **The ability to expand or start programs for their communities.** Grantees shared feedback that they were able to expand and develop programs and opportunities for

their communities, including career advancement opportunities, offering free services and increasing the number of people served. Grantees also developed and launched new programs.

- **Support for their staff that then supports their communities.** Grantees shared feedback that they were able to provide stipends for teams connecting with community members and hire, train, and increase salaries for staff that helped them better serve their communities.

Grantees expanded and launched:

Education and career advancement opportunities for Latinas

Professional training for women to continue taking care of their neighbors

Teaching students forum theatre where they were able to talk about issues that matter to them

Free services to partner community organizations

A Women Giving Circle

A trip to Puerto Rico for girls of color

Opportunities for the LGBTQ community to gather

COVID vaccine pop up clinics

"Funding from the Women and Girls of Color Fund allow us to provide the staff that we need to compassionately support our community and families." – Survey Respondent

- **Support for safety and wellness for their communities and staff.** Several grantees shared feedback that they were able to prioritize and provide opportunities related to the safety and wellness of their communities served and staff.

A couple grantees also shared they were able to live out their values, serve women of color and those historically excluded or underserved, and be responsive to needs.

Several focus group participants also shared how the Women and Girls of Color Fund helped them spend more time connecting and engaging with and learning from their communities by giving them more time and reminding them of their passion for their work.

"Funding bought me time and reminded me why I am passionate about this work. I was able to spend time reaching out to people, doing research, and expand our community." – Focus Group Participant

Five grantees collected feedback from their communities, including their staff, volunteers, and participants, related to what felt different about working with their organization compared to other similar organizations or groups. The following themes emerged from community feedback:

- **Grantees' efforts are truly driven by and for local communities.** Community members shared feedback related to the true grassroots feeling and efforts by grantees, including feedback on feeling like they had a voice and choice, the community trust built by grantees, and the deep connections between grantees and their communities.
- **Grantees care and have heart.** Community members shared feedback on how grantees care about them, are nice to them, and are personal.

- **Grantees' focus on equity, inclusion, and intersectionality when engaging with community members.** Community members shared feedback on grantees' recognition, acknowledgement, and understanding of marginalized communities, including helping and allowing other community members to recognize marginalized folks. Community members stated that grantees' center those most directly impacted, work with marginalized communities, provide inclusive and safe spaces, and value and respect those with disabilities and BIPOC and immigrant communities.
- **Grantees respond to community needs and take action.** Community members shared feedback on grantees staying true to their goals and commitments to their communities by adjusting, responding quickly to, and taking action on community feedback and needs.

Several community members also shared positive feedback related to grantees' accessibility, opportunities for community members to engage authentically, a sense of community, and their focus on local communities.

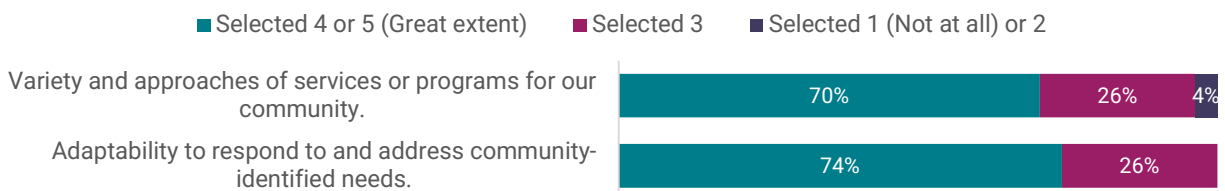


Outcome: Women of color grantees are able to take a range of approaches to advancing the economic security of women and girls of color based on their communities' needs.

Through unrestricted funding, the fund sought to support more capacity and flexibility for grantees to meet community needs and advance the economic security of women and girls of color. Thus, an outcome of the fund is that women of color grantees are able to take a range of approaches to advancing the economic security of women and girls of color based on communities' needs.

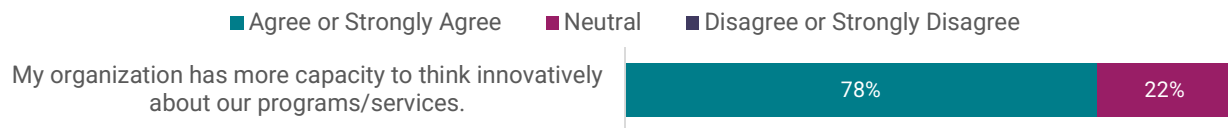
Survey respondents were asked the extent they were able to increase the variety and approaches of services for their communities and adaptability to respond to needs since receiving funding (by rating on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not at all and 5 = A great extent). As illustrated in Figure 3 below, 70% of respondents were able to increase the variety and approaches of services or programs for their communities, and 74% were able to increase their adaptability to respond to and address community-identified needs.

Figure 3. Increases in Range of Approaches – Grantee Survey



In addition, survey respondents were asked feedback on their capacity to think innovatively. As figure 4 illustrates below, 78% of respondents agreed that their organization has more capacity to think innovatively about their programs/services since receiving funding.

Figure 4. Capacity to Think Innovatively– Grantee Survey



Focus group participants also shared feedback on how they were able to respond to needs and practice liberatory leadership within their communities. The following themes emerged:

- **Grantees could readily support families and participants with their expenses.** Grantees shared feedback that they were able to support families with their expenses that they aren't normally able to that impact families' financial stability. Grantees also shared how they were able to respond to community member needs and emergencies more readily. Expenses grantees supported included rental assistance, groceries, car and transportation expenses, and insurance.

“*Having the ability as a director to be empowered because of unrestricted funding allows us to pivot quicker and respond to things like a pandemic to prevent loss and impact quality of life.*” – Focus Group Participant

- **Grantees were able to focus on youth and young leaders.** Several grantees shared feedback that they were able to support, develop, and empower young leaders within their communities, including building peer mentor leaders and taking girls of color on a trip outside their school and block.

Five grantees also collected feedback from their communities, including staff, volunteers, and participants, related to how organizations are uniquely serving their communities in general. The following themes emerged from community feedback:

- **Grantees find a variety of ways to meet the needs.** Community members shared feedback that grantees are open and inquisitive and provide a space for community members to share their feelings, needs, and feedback while also responding to those needs through a variety of services and programs. Programs included providing access to food, health, and education opportunities, as well as providing advocacy and youth empowerment.
- **Grantees bring together community members from diverse backgrounds.** Community members shared feedback related to grantees' efforts to bring community members together to meet the needs, tackle community issues, and support each other.

Additionally, a few community members shared feedback on grantees' focus on root causes and empowering the community.

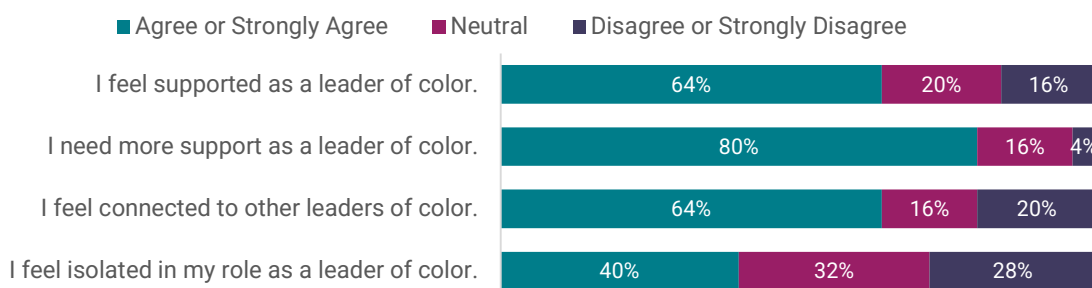


Outcome: Women of color grantees feel more connected to other women of color who are leading organizations.

As the Women and Girls of Color Fund is intentionally designed to support women and leaders of color, an outcome of the fund is that women of color grantees feel more connected to other women of color who are leading organizations.

Survey respondents were asked for feedback on their sense of connection by rating a series of statements (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strong Agree). As illustrated in Figure 5 below, 64% of respondents agreed that they feel supported as a leader of color and feel connected to other leaders of color since receiving funding. Although 64% feel supported and connected, most grantees (80%) agreed that they need more support as a leader of color, and 40% agreed that they feel isolated in their role as a leader of color.

Figure 5. Sense of Connection – Grantee Survey



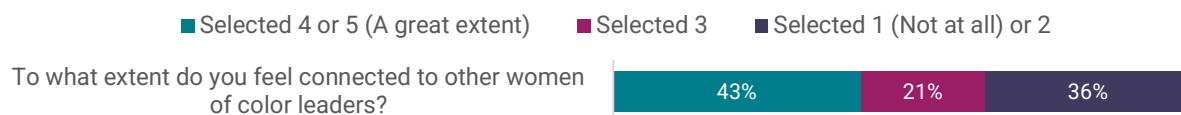
Several focus group participants also shared feedback on the connections facilitated by the fund, including feeling connected to other grantees and organizations centering women and girls of color overall, feeling supported, and feeling like they are not alone as a leader of color. However, focus group participants also stated that The Women’s Foundation can provide more opportunities for leaders of color to connect and gather.

Several survey respondents shared varying experiences related to feeling connected versus isolated, including feeling isolated within their local community, and feeling connected as a part of the grantee cohort. One grantee shared feedback that although they get support, they still feel a sense of isolation as their fellow leaders of color are all barely making it or exhausted themselves. Another grantee shared feedback related to feeling isolated due to their board’s lack of understanding of the impact of having a person of color as an Executive Director. Lastly, one grantee shared that although this fund is a step in the right direction, support for Black women Executive Directors is non-existent and challenged The Women’s Foundation to bring together other organizations to create a consortium that funds a larger pool of ED’s of color.

In addition, Women and Girls of Color Fund advisory council members were asked the extent they feel connected to other women of color leaders since joining the council (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not at all and 5 = A great extent). As Figure 6 illustrates below, 43% of respondents felt connected to other women of color leaders since joining the council, while 36% did not feel

connected. Responding council members were more likely to associate their connection to others in relation to the council itself as some respondents stated they wish the council met in person. One council member also shared how they don't feel connected to folks outside of the council and council meetings.

Figure 6. Sense of Connection – Advisory Council Member Survey

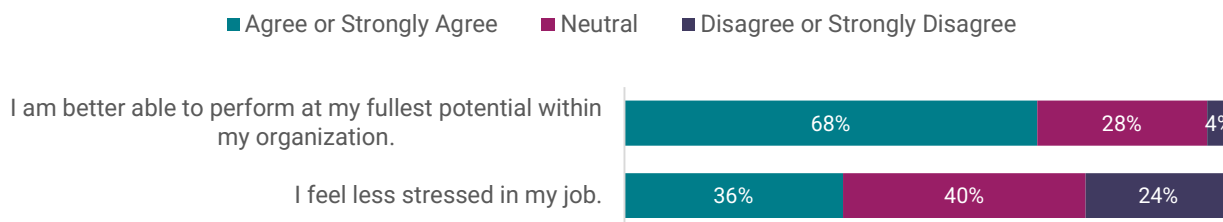


Outcome: Women of color grantees feel they are better able to perform at their full potential.

A core tenet of the Women and Girls of Color Fund is that grantees have complete flexibility in how to use the funds as an individual and leader rather than as an organization. For example, grantees can choose to use funds for their own self-care, their team's self-care, or to support their organization and community. Through this flexible funding and emphasis on trusting the individual leader, an outcome of the fund is that women of color grantees feel they are better able to perform at their full potential.

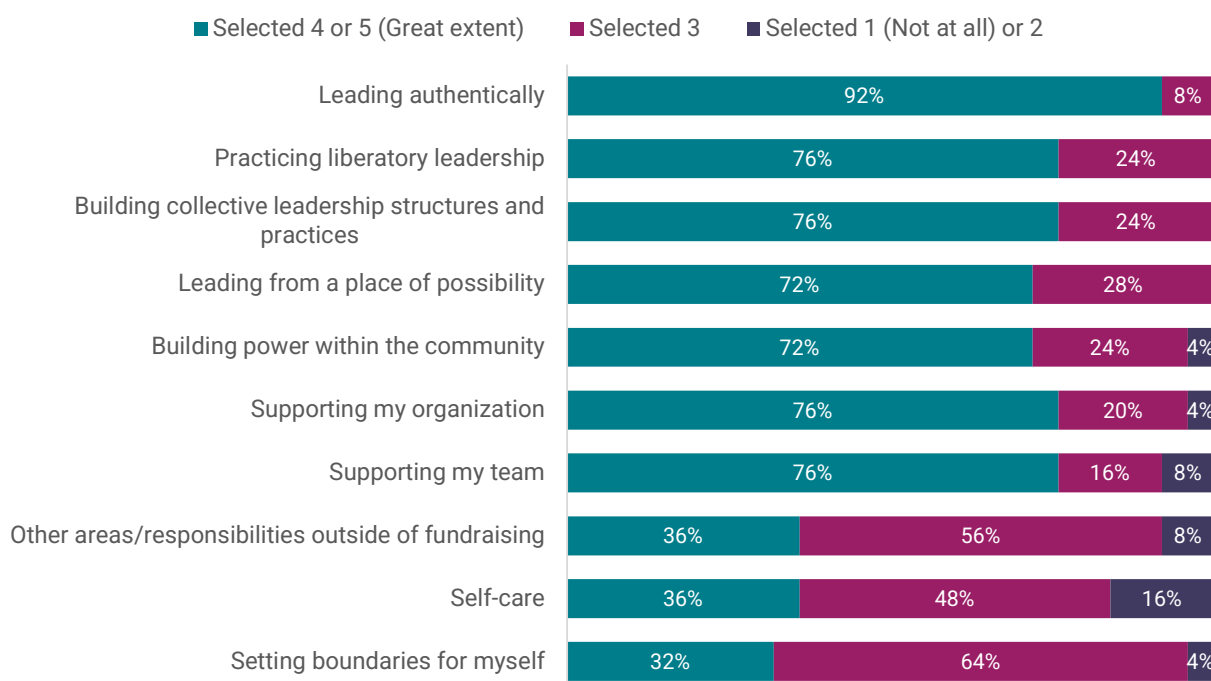
Survey respondents were asked feedback on their ability to perform at their fullest potential and on their stress levels since receiving funding by rating a series of statements (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Strongly Disagree and 5 = Strongly Agree). As illustrated in Figure 7 below, 68% of respondents agreed they were better able to perform at their fullest potential within their organization since receiving funding. However, only 36% felt less stressed in their job.

Figure 7. Ability to Perform at Fullest Potential– Grantee Survey



The evaluation also sought to measure liberatory leadership in relation to grantees' ability to perform at their fullest potential. Survey respondents were asked the extent they were better able to focus on liberatory leadership practices since receiving funding (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not at all and 5 = A great extent). 92% of respondents indicated they were better able to focus on leading authentically since receiving funding, as illustrated in Figure 8 below. In addition, approximately three-fourths of grantees were better able to focus on practicing liberatory leadership (generally), building collective leadership structures and practices, leading from a place of possibility, and building power within the community. However, only 36% were able to better focus on self-care and 32% on setting boundaries for themselves.

Figure 8. Ability to Better Focus on Liberatory Leadership Practices – Grantee Survey



A theme that emerged from focus groups that provides context to findings on self-care was that focusing on their own self-care as women of color leaders is a challenge that often stems from their cultural history and background. Focus group participants shared that there is a cultural component related to their desire to give to others and their community when possible. However, focus group participants recognized and appreciated the fund’s focus and intentions in which women of color leaders deserve to be invested. Participants shared that The Women’s Foundation can help support their self-care by sharing specific ways and suggestions on how grantees can use the funds for their own self-care.

Additionally, survey respondents and focus group participants shared feedback on how the fund has impacted and supported them personally as leaders. The following themes emerged:

- Grantees felt validated, affirmed, and strengthened.** Grantees shared how they felt validated and affirmed as leaders of color. Grantees also shared how funding gave them strength to lead and move into historically white-led organizations and communities.

“I would say that the last year of funding that we received really supported my transformational creative style of leadership. We were able to go out into the community to meet folks where they were at. Collaborate more with community - that was a big part. It allowed me and empowered me to share my story.” – Focus group participant
- Grantees felt energized and motivated as leaders.** Grantees shared how receiving funding helped energize and motivate them to continue doing their jobs, work within

their communities, and keep pushing. In addition, grantees shared that the funding helped remind them why they are passionate about their work.

“It has given me hope, dignity and inspiration to keep fighting, although exhausting this fusing proved there are great possibilities for funding that align with our values as an organization.” – Survey respondent

- **Funding helped grantees focus on their leadership.** Grantees shared how the funding helped them to fully focus on their leadership, including developing their skills, attending workshops, and further stepping into a leadership role.
- **Grantees were able to invest in tools and resources for themselves.** Grantees shared they were able to invest in memberships valuable to their work, and in new computers and software that they may not have otherwise.

“It allowed me in this transitional period to renew my membership with [a national] organization. To be able to access and continue to access those supports and resources is important to me.” – Focus group participant

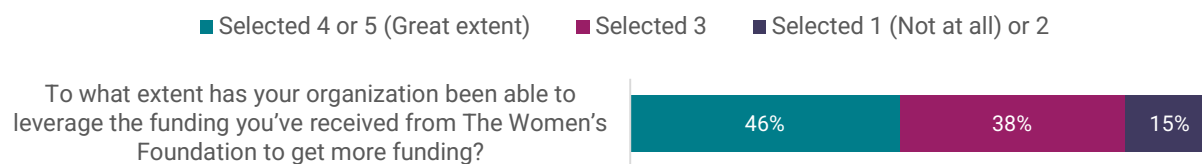


Outcome: Women of color grantees increase their funding by leveraging funding from The Women’s Foundation of Colorado.

The Women and Girls of Color Fund sought to support additional funding for grantees by connecting them to additional opportunities and elevating their voices and impact. An outcome of the fund is that women of color grantees increase their funding by leveraging funding from The Women’s Foundation of Colorado.

Survey respondents were asked the extent their organization has been able to leverage the funding from The Women’s foundation to get more funding (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not at all and 5 = A great extent). As illustrated in Figure 9 below, nearly half (46%) indicated they were able to leverage funding from The Women’s Foundation to get more funding, and 15% were not.

Figure 9. Feedback on Leveraging Funding – Grantee Survey



Survey respondents and focus group participants were also asked to share additional feedback on how their organization was able to leverage funding. The following themes emerged:

- **Grantees leveraged this funding to support grantees’ liberatory leadership practices and programming.** Beyond getting additional funding, several grantees shared that they were able to leverage funding and support from The Women’s Foundation to “back up”

their operational and programmatic decisions and efforts that reflect liberatory, equitable practices like pay equity, self-care and wellness, and hiring more staff.

“It allowed me to take the 10K and add it to our salaries and benefits and we could get it approved by the board because The Women’s Foundation values that. It was actually in alignment with what they wanted to do. It was appropriate to give us all raises because that was in alignment.” – Focus group participant

- **Grantees leveraged this funding in grant applications.** Grantees shared they have leveraged the grant award by mentioning and referencing their grant award to other foundations in grant applications.
- **It has opened doors to other opportunities for grantees.** Grantees shared how funding through The Women’s Foundation has opened doors for more opportunities and key conversations.

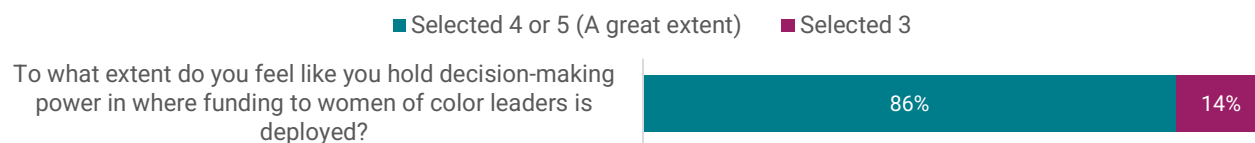


Outcome: Advisory council members feel they hold decision-making power within funding to women of color leaders.

The Women and Girls of Color Fund includes an advisory council that independently evaluates grant applications and makes final decisions on whom to fund and grant amounts. The advisory council is comprised of women and leaders of color from nonprofits across Colorado. The Women’s Foundation intentionally designed the decision-making process for the Women and Girls of Color Fund to be held by those the fund aims to support. Thus, an outcome of the Women and Girls of Color Fund is that advisory council members feel they hold decision-making power within funding to women of color leaders.

Advisory council members were asked the extent they felt like they hold decision-making power related to where funding to women of color leaders is deployed (by rating on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 = Not at all and 5 = A great extent). As illustrated in Figure 10 below, the majority (86%) of respondents felt they hold decision-making power in where funding to women of color leaders is deployed since joining the advisory council.

Figure 10. Feedback on Decision-Making Power – Advisory Council Member Survey



A couple respondents shared feedback related to creating opportunities for council members to take on more leadership and streamlining the process. In addition, advisory council members were asked how serving on the council impacted them. The following themes emerged:

- **Advisory council members learned about other leaders of color.** Council members shared positive feedback related to the opportunity to learn about other women and

nonbinary leaders of color and the work they are doing within their organizations and communities.

“It has given me insight into the amazing work being done with and for women, girls and people of color across the state. Especially in rural Colorado.” – Advisory council member survey respondent

- **Advisory council members have a new view on philanthropy.** Council members shared how serving on the council has given them the opportunity to see the other side of grantmaking and grantor’s perspective.

“As someone who is perpetually in the role of the grantee, It’s been a very illuminating experience thinking through things from the grantor’s perspective. The advisory council has really made me interrogate my own philosophy on philanthropy and how we can improve and have a lasting impact on this part of the work.” – Advisory council member survey respondent

- **Advisory council members felt empowered and inspired.** Council members shared how they were inspired and empowered while learning about the efforts and work being done by women and nonbinary folks of color.

Feedback on Liberatory Leadership Practices

As liberatory leadership is a funding priority of the Women and Girls of Color Fund, the evaluation also sought to further understand how grantees are demonstrating liberatory leadership. The following are ways that focus group participants are practicing and working toward liberatory leadership:

- **Operating from a leaderful model.** Focus group participants shared feedback that they operate from a leaderful model where all staff and individuals, regardless of position and age, are recognized as leaders. Focus group participants also stated that they help encourage their staff and participants, especially youth participants, to step into leadership roles.

“We operate from a leaderful model. People are leaders, despite title and positionality. Colleagues who are not in high level positions are able to step in and we all take on a leadership role to make sure the needs of the organization are met. In the midst of receiving this funding to now, we have gone through restructuring where we are trying to shift the internal role of [staff] and board members so that we are a non-hierarchical organization and work together in different ways.” – Focus group participant

- **Ability to express their authentic leadership style.** Focus group participants shared feedback that they are able to express their leadership styles more and share their story with others.

“I am able to express my leadership style, I used to adapt a lot to be a leader and now I can be myself and show others that it is ok to come across the way that you come across.” – Focus group participant

“It allowed me and empowered me to share my story. I was nervous about that but it really helped me to continue my quest to dismantle racism in our rural community. To know that there was support—that was priceless.” – Focus group participant

- **Increasing awareness with and shifting boards.** Several focus group participants shared feedback that they are working to diversify their boards, shift board and staff relationships and add new board roles, and bring awareness to pay equity, self-care, and investing in individuals.
- **Recognizing identities and dismantling white supremacy.** Several focus group participants shared feedback that they recognize the identities of those they serve and their staff to better serve and support them. Several focus group participants also shared that they are the first leader of color at their organization and are building a pipeline for other leaders of color, especially for the Latinx community.

Feedback on Strengths

The evaluation also sought to understand how this funding was different from other funding, as well as the strengths of the fund.

Focus group participants shared feedback on what was unique about the Women and Girls of Color Fund. The following themes emerged:

- **This funding was authentic and personal.** Focus group participants shared how the application, selection and reporting process felt authentic and personal, including the questions asked in the application, the ability to use their own language and be their authentic selves, and their connections with The Women’s Foundation staff.

“It felt really like putting down a prayer of using our own language. We didn’t have to use the language we use for other grants. We could say it and write it and knew this was a space we could. An exercise in writing our mission and just saying it the way it is. It felt really good to be our authentic selves.” – Focus group participant
- **Grantees were proud and honored to be associated with this fund.** Focus group participants shared how they felt a greater sense of honor and were proud receiving this funding compared with other grant awards as it came from other women and leaders of color and, as stated earlier, felt more personal.

“For me, the fact that it is for women coming from women, there is such an uplifting empowering stance – we see you and we value you. It is not the same with other grantors who are mostly white men. That this is for us to take care of ourselves and our people is so nurturing and so empowering.” – Focus group participant

- **Truly unrestricted funding is empowering and liberating.** Several focus group participants shared positive feedback on the unrestricted funding that felt different from others that claim to be unrestricted.

Focus group participants were asked what they liked best about the fund. The following themes emerged:

- **Being more relational than transactional.** Focus group participants shared that they liked how the grant felt more relational and personal than transactional. Focus group participants shared positive feedback on the one-on-one conversations with The Women's Foundation staff and the application process.
- **The relaxed, unconvoluted structure and process.** Focus group participants shared that they liked the relaxed, accessible application and reporting process and hoped this wouldn't change.

In addition, survey respondents also shared feedback on what they liked best. The following themes emerged:

- **Centering and supporting women and girls of color.** Survey respondents shared positive feedback on the fund being specifically for and committed to supporting and advancing women and girls of color.

“*They are committed to building economic power and dismantling oppressive systems for the most vulnerable, especially women of color.*” – Survey respondent

- **An application process that is accessible and approachable.** Survey respondents shared that they liked how the application process was approachable and designed with busy organizational leaders in mind.

“*This was accessible, not strenuous and allowed us to stand in our power.*” – Survey respondent

A couple of survey respondents also shared how they liked the intentionality of the fund and that the funding was unrestricted.

Advisory council members were also asked to share what worked well with the advisory council. The following themes emerged:

- **The Women's Foundation staff.** Respondents stated that The Women's Foundation staff (Renee and Camisha) were valuable to the process and facilitated, organized, and coordinated the group and meetings well and met the needs of the council.
- **The smaller review groups.** Respondents shared that they liked the opportunity to meet with the small review groups in addition to the larger group in order to discuss and hear differing opinions.

A couple of council members also shared feedback on the continued check-ins and improvements to the process, as well as the diversity of experience and backgrounds on the council.

Grantee Recommendations

Lastly, grantees shared recommendations for how the Women and Girls of Color Fund can be improved. The following recommendations were shared:

- **Provide multi-year funding.** Focus group participants and survey respondents suggested multi-year funding as it is less stressful and provides more sustainability.
- **Provide opportunities for connection.** Survey respondents suggested opportunities for leaders of color to connect with and learn from each other.
- **Provide ideas on how to use the funds.** Focus group participants shared feedback that if the fund aims to support leaders in caring for themselves, The Women's Foundation can help make it more comfortable for leaders to use the funds for themselves by providing ideas on how to do so.
- **Share a list of vetted businesses, healers, wellness centers, etc.** Focus group participants suggested that The Women's Foundation should compile and share a list of BIPOC and women-owned and -led businesses across Colorado related to self-care, wellness, and coaching that they can use.

One focus group participant who was not renewed the second year also provided feedback related to more opportunities to hear from and talk with the advisory council when not selected for another round of funding.

Several advisory council members also shared feedback related to improvements. The following suggestions for improvements were shared:

- Be more inclusive for varying council members, including more inclusion for non-binary council members (considering language used during meetings), and those who have conflicting schedules due to their job by offering meeting times later in the day.
- Considerations to account for the large number of applications, including more time to review applications, more groups reviewing applications or narrowing the criteria to make the number of applications more manageable to review.
- Develop and emphasize meeting norms to allow space for more people to share their thoughts.
- Prioritize LGBTQIA+ serving organizations.
- More committee members.

Conclusion



The evaluation for the first year of the Women and Girls of Color Fund provided meaningful insight into the impact of the fund, experiences of the grantees as leaders of color and within women-of-color-led organizations, and how the fund is meeting and progressing toward its outcomes. Overall, the Women and Girls of Color Fund is a unique fund that allows and supports executive directors and leaders of color, along with their organizations, to lead and work with their communities and teams in authentic, culturally relevant and responsive ways. The evaluation also provided insight into the positive impacts of a fund that is intentionally designed to support and honor leaders of color while also identifying several challenges women of color leaders experience, especially related to self-care and wellness. By investing in women of color executive directors and leaders, encouraging them to be empowered to use the funds as they choose best, and centering relational-based grantmaking, the Women and Girls of Color Fund is supporting deeper relationships between organizations and their communities served.

While there are ways to improve the fund, including providing opportunities for connections and supporting self-care, the Women and Girls of Color Fund demonstrates the power of truly unrestricted funding that allows grantees to bring their culture and authentic selves into their work, teams, and communities served.