

Expand the Base: A Grantmaker's Guide to Gender Justice and Civic Engagement



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Terms & Definitions2
Executive Summary.....3
Introduction.....4
Strategy Recommendations.....5
Case Studies.....7, 9, 12
Conclusion.....13
Funders' Checklist.....13
Additional Resources15

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This guide for funders was a collaborative project from its inception. It reflects a diversity of voices and knowledge found within the civic engagement community – in its broadest and most powerful sense. We are partners, allies, and funders who care deeply about democracy reform and gender justice movement building. We want to personally thank all of you who work on these complex issues every day, those of you who ask hard questions, and those who do not shy away from advancing a democracy that works for all of us.

This set of recommendations was developed thanks to the wisdom, patience, and voices of: Rachel Bloom (FCCP); Vanessa Daniel (Groundswell Fund); Liz Doyle (TakeAction Minnesota); Tannia Esparza (Young Women United); Rebecca Flournoy (WDN); Sophia Bracy

Harris (FOCAL); Julie F. Kay (Ms. Foundation for Women); Kalpana Krishnamurthy (Forward Together); Eric Marshall (FCCP); Dan McGrath (TakeAction Minnesota); Nancy Meyer; Dennis Quirin (Neighborhood Funders Group); Amy Richards; Deb Ross (FCCP); Irene Schwoeffermann (FCCP); Tracy Sturdivant (Make it Work); Quanita Toffie (Groundswell Fund); Cristina Tzintzún (Workers Defense Project); Kristina Wertz (Funders for LGBTQ Issues); Riki Wilchins (TrueChild); WDN Reproductive Health and Progressive/Political Infrastructure Circles; and Rye Young (Third Wave Fund); with special thanks to Hildy Karp, whose guidance and input were essential in bringing this group together and keeping us on track to complete this funder guide.

This publication is part of WDN's Tools of the Trade series, featuring best practices and case studies about social justice philanthropy.

For more information, please contact Ginger Hintz, Program Manager at the Women Donors Network (WDN) and the lead author of this guide, at ghintz@womendonors.org.

TERMS & DEFINITIONS

Civic engagement: Civic engagement involves people participating in the public or civic life of their community in order to improve conditions for themselves and others by shaping policy, holding elected officials accountable, and demonstrating political power.

Gender: Gender is a central organizing principle of societies. It includes the ways in which gendered differences, whether real or perceived, have been valued, used, and relied upon to divide roles and expectations of women and men.

Gender identity: Gender identity refers to your sense of your gender, which may or may not correspond to the sex assigned to you at birth.

Gender norms: Gender norms are socially constructed ideals, scripts, and expectations on how to be a woman or a man. Gender itself is often invisible until gender norms or roles are threatened.

Gender justice: Gender justice is a movement to transform gender-based interpersonal, structural, and systemic inequities. It is broader than just the presence of women and girls. Gender justice requires an analysis and a strategy for addressing sexism in institutional/organizational policies and practices. Gender justice empowers, organizes, and mobilizes those most impacted by gender injustice. Gender justice is rooted in the leadership, power, and voices of women of color, low-income communities, youth, trans, intersex, gender nonconforming and queer communities within the larger social justice movements.

Gender justice analysis (lens and approach are also used interchangeably): Having a gender analysis means you are aware of the impact that gender equity and/or gender norms have on an issue or problem. A gender analysis recognizes that different strategies may be necessary to achieve equitable outcomes for women, men, trans, and gender nonconforming people.

Integrated Voter Engagement: Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) is an innovative strategy for grassroots power building. IVE blends community organizing and voter engagement in an ongoing and sustained way to boost the scale and power of grassroots organizations' ability to win systems change.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civic engagement funders are increasingly seeing the value of a gender justice approach as an important way to expand the base of people participating in our democracy. At the same time, many explicitly gender-focused funders are weaving civic engagement strategies into their work to help them build political power and create long-term change.

Why gender justice? Our lives and our identities are multi-issue, and our strategies for change must reflect that as well. Gender justice seeks to address gender inequity – by centering on the experiences and leadership of those most impacted by gender inequity, including women of color, low-income women, and queer and trans communities. Having a gender justice analysis helps us move beyond assumptions about “male” or “female” behaviors, and also connects gender with race and class. It helps us better see how gender norms influence our cultural expectations of what is considered socially appropriate for men and women.

Prioritizing gender can lead to a deepened understanding of many pressing and complex social issues, and opens up political opportunities to address them. A gender justice approach to civic engagement helps ensure that everyone can participate in community, state, and national policy discussions. Active and informed constituents can improve conditions for themselves and others by shaping policies, holding elected officials accountable, and demonstrating organized political power.

This grantmaking guide and its accompanying case studies highlight four strategies for funders who want to incorporate a gender justice approach to civic engagement:

1. Make Long-term Investments in Infrastructure and Capacity

- Build power by investing in civic engagement work that includes a gender justice lens.
- Provide funding that is flexible and multi-year to support emerging issues that constituents identify as important.
- Support the capacity of data collection and analysis within the organizations closest to the community and solutions.
- Ensure that any capacity-building support addresses community groups' expressed needs.

2. Support Diverse, Networked, and Local Leadership

- Support the leadership of women, and particularly low-income women, women of color, young women, and gender non-conforming and trans people in civic engagement work.
- Whenever possible, the audience that is the focus of outreach efforts should be reflected in the leaders engaging them.
- See these leaders as more than just voters – they are effective advocates and potential future elected officials.
- Promote strong leaders and a diversity of leadership styles. Support those who work well in partnership with leaders from other backgrounds, types of organizations, and movements.
- Support locally developed strategies that reflect a community's culture.

3. Integrate a Gender Justice Analysis from Bottom to Top

- Work to incorporate a gender lens that includes gender equity, norms, expression, and identity. Stay aware of how each of these issues is connected to race, class, sexuality, or immigration status.
- Avoid assumptions about what is or isn't a "gender issue." Don't assume that gender is automatically "just a woman's issue" and/or that it is disconnected from core concerns like race or class.
- Include a diversity of voices in designing your funding strategies, as well as in discussions, presentations, and in your convenings. Bring them in early and authentically in the decision-making process.
- Disaggregate data by gender, race, and socioeconomic status, rather than only looking at any one of these identities in isolation.

4. Protect the Vote

- Ensure as many people as possible are able to actually cast their votes by supporting voter protection efforts, in addition to encouraging more people to vote.
- Develop a gender justice analysis that centers on voters who are often made invisible within national debates, like working mothers, single fathers, and trans communities.

Civic engagement strategies that include a broader gender justice analysis help move us toward a more robust democracy – where everyone participates in electing and holding our leaders accountable, and where policies reflect the full diversity of our communities' wisdom and experiences. It means not only authentic diversity, but also more effective solutions, and a greater philanthropic return on social investments.

INTRODUCTION: MAKING THE CASE FOR GENDER JUSTICE

In November 2011, Mississippi voters defeated a statewide ballot initiative (Measure 26) that would have criminalized abortion, even in cases of rape and incest, and granted personhood to a fertilized egg. In many ways, this defeat was seen as a lesson on effective grassroots organizing.

Yet, within that election cycle there was another threat to access. A voter identification constitutional amendment was passed, requiring that prospective voters have government-issued identification. As a result, it is now more difficult for people to vote – a disturbing prospect for both civic engagement and explicitly gender-focused funders.¹

Voter suppression efforts disproportionately impact the New American Majority, also known as the Rising American Electorate, which includes unmarried women, people of color, and people under the age of 30. These communities have tremendous voting power. The New American Majority is estimated to be 54% of the total potential voting population, and nearly 30% of this critical voting bloc are women of color.²

¹ State of Voting 2014, Brennan Center for Justice, <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/state-voting-2014>

² Celinda Lake, Lake Research Partners

The opportunity and the need are clear. In the 2014 midterm elections, only 36% of eligible voters went to the polls. Fortunately, a growing number of civic engagement funders are including a gender justice analysis in their work as they reach out to New American Majority voters, and they are seeing results. Explicitly gender-focused funders also are realizing the importance of including civic engagement as a strategy to build power and create change over the long-term.

A strong gender justice approach goes beyond merely the presence of women and girls; it focuses on women and particularly women of color, low-income women, young women, and trans and queer leaders. It authentically addresses the intersections of race, class, sexuality, and gender. It questions gender norms and moves beyond assumptions about stereotypical "male" or "female" behaviors. It seeks to avoid favoring certain leadership styles and does not make assumptions about what legislative issues are most important to women or men. For example, it does not marginalize reproductive health and rights issues as only affecting women, or assume that paid sick leave and affordable childcare do not impact men's lives too.

Below are four recommended strategies for funders who want to effectively incorporate a gender justice analysis into their civic engagement work.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS: TOOLKIT FOR ADVANCING A GENDER LENS IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Make Long-term Investments in Infrastructure and Capacity

Historically, funding strategies for civic engagement work have often operated within an electoral boom and bust cycle. Women voters, as a monolithic category, are targeted when issues like restricting access to reproductive rights are on the ballot but receive attention only as an election nears. Fortunately, there are more civic engagement funders who are recognizing that providing ongoing support for long-term organizing, with a nuanced understanding of the intersections of gender, race, class, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, builds power and makes them more effective funders and partners.

To build this long-term infrastructure, funders are starting to provide year-round funding that is flexible enough to support advocacy on issues constituents identify as important, such as immigration reform, higher minimum wage, paid sick leave, and affordable health care. This kind of proactive, longer-term funding often results in new partnerships and deepens community groups' capacities for effective civic engagement over time. It also results in an electorate that is highly educated on a range of policy issues and regularly turns out for elections. [The Alliance for Justice](#) offers resources on how to provide grantees maximum flexibility under the law to engage in effective outreach and advocacy.

This focus on long-term infrastructure and capacity can result in a stronger voter base able to hold policymakers accountable during elections and long after elections are over. As the Florida New Majority

case study demonstrates, within four years of organizing with a gender justice lens, they saw a 20-fold increase in activated voters, with strongest turnout among Latina and African American women voters. The TakeAction Minnesota and Young Women United case studies also show how a gender justice approach can lead to informed, engaged constituencies able to advance important policy reforms.

For capacity-building support to be effective, it must address the needs of the community. It is important to cultivate trusting, authentic relationships with grantees to be able to discuss what they need to be successful. In efforts to build trust, we cannot overlook the importance of diversity, cultural competency, and humility at the grantmaker level, and also among capacity-building and technical support providers, and evaluators.

[Groundswell Fund](#), an organization committed to gender justice, provides capacity building resources to women of color, low-income women, and transgender-led groups who want to expand their civic engagement work. They note that many of these groups may have strong community organizing efforts yet are newer to voter engagement work. This is often because they have faced barriers when attempting to enter very male-dominated voter engagement spaces.

As a result, they may need different kinds of technical assistance that supports them in building skills and infrastructure. Any technical assistance support should be provided within a framework and culture that centers race and gender justice. It is important to see the nascent development of these groups in voter

engagement work not as a deficiency, but rather as huge untapped potential and an opportunity to broaden and engage more diverse constituencies.

Groundswell's highly effective Integrated Voter Engagement (IVE) program blends community organizing and voter engagement year-round, in a sustained way that catalyzes the scale and power of grassroots organizations, most of which are led by women of color. Participating organizations have achieved a rapid expansion of grassroots power in several areas critical to advancing policy and systems change for the long haul: the size of their grassroots constituency base; the number of leaders they are engaging; and the number, and the quality, of relationships with organizational allies and elected officials.

In IVE, voters are seen not just as numbers to move to the polls but as transformative agents building a sustained base of power. In just three years, the ten organizations participating in Groundswell's IVE program have collectively gone from reaching a handful of voters to reaching 400,000 voters in 2014. In the process they have increased

their grassroots base of support (people consistently engaged in their campaign work) from 6,000 to 26,000 people; their grassroots leaders from 97 to 1,861; their number of organizational allies from 26 to 324; and their number of public official relationships from 120 to 192.

“It is extremely challenging to absorb last minute funds and execute a canvass operation that meets funders’ objectives without having underlying infrastructure in place.”

**– Quanita Toffie,
Integrated Voter
Engagement Coach,
Groundswell Fund**

The Reproductive Justice Collective in Wisconsin, a member of Groundswell's IVE pilot program, notes, “Prior to our participation in the IVE program, we were liked as an organization. However, it was in a ‘pat on the head’ sort of way.” The program helped them strengthen their work and demonstrate results. They share that, “Because of the IVE program, we can demonstrate that we are more...we can show that we increased voter turnout by 30%, within the lowest voter turnout ward!” They also exemplify the readiness that exists among so many grassroots women of color-led organizations to use IVE to the fullest. Just two years into the program they note that, “We started with 200 doors and today we knocked on 3,500.”

CASE STUDY: ACHIEVING BIG RESULTS BY EXPANDING ORGANIZING AND RESEARCH CAPACITY IN FLORIDA



[Florida New Majority \(FNM\)](#), a statewide voter participation organization, was founded with a focus on organizing for rent equity in low-income communities. FNM has built a robust statewide civic engagement infrastructure that allows them to effectively organize women, African Americans, Latinos, new immigrant communities, and young people year after year. Consistent and flexible support from Four Freedoms Fund, Education Foundation of America, Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, and Solidago Foundation has allowed Florida New Majority to develop and empower the leadership of women of color across the state.

FNM has seen the importance of addressing a broad range of issues beyond stereotypical “women’s” issues. Thus they focus on detention and deportation, domestic violence, mass incarceration of men and boys of color, reproductive health and rights, and economic inequality. These issues directly connect to larger, systemic issues of gender, racial, and economic discrimination.

In the past, funders would approach FNM with requests to mobilize voters with very short timelines – sometimes with less than two weeks notice. FNM realized they needed long-term, capacity-building investments that would allow them to become a stronger organization that could respond to needs and opportunities as they emerged. They wanted to be able to more effectively organize community members over the short- and long-term, and build relationships with other organizational stakeholders who could help them win more ambitious campaigns. FNM began investing in infrastructure that would allow them to manage their own Voter Activation Network data program. This allowed them to grow their base and scale much faster. With their own database, they could track their constituents and better understand their organizing challenges and successes.

As a result of long-term capacity building, FNM's organizing has grown dramatically. FNM's activation of voters increased almost 20-fold (7,654 to 149,691) from the year 2008 to 2012. In 2014, women in their network voted at almost double the rate of men (15,983 vs. 9,765), with the strongest turnout among Latina and African American women voters. It is important to note that these numbers were lower in 2014 because it was a midterm election, when turnout numbers across the board are much lower than in a general election.

Bringing their own data analysis allows FNM to sit as experts at political tables where key campaign and policy decisions are made. This helps ensure that their constituents are able to shape Florida policy beyond just voting in elections. They are able to more authentically engage women voters through their outreach efforts, which helps FNM bring a critical gender dimension into policy discussions.

FNM now has the power to change the course of politics in Florida for long-term civic engagement success – building more ambitious campaigns, and holding elected officials accountable throughout their terms.



Support Diverse, Networked, and Local Leadership

Supporting the leadership of those on the frontlines of gender discrimination – women, and particularly low-income women of color, transgender, and gender nonconforming people – can help funders reach key constituents of the New American Majority. One example of this approach is the [Third Wave Fund](#), which supports and strengthens youth-led gender justice activism to advance the political power, well being, and self-determination of communities of color and low-income communities. Third Wave works closely with these constituencies to understand and respond to the needs and opportunities they identify as critical.

The Third Wave Fund supports small and nimble organizations like the Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network (JASMYN) with multi-year support. Over the last 20 years, JASMYN has developed a voice and built leadership capacity of young people who are trans/gender nonconforming in the heart of a traditionally conservative city. JASMYN has developed skills that allow them to effectively partner with other organizations in the area to expand their impact. Effective funders look at both the qualities that make a good organizational leader and how they work in partnership with other leaders and ally organizations.

There are also funders looking at leaders running for elected office, since this can affect voter engagement and turnout. One example is the Reflective Democracy Campaign, a collaborative initiative of the [Women Donors Network](#). Based on the belief that we're strongest when our leadership reflects the full range of talent and lived experience that America has to offer, the campaign is working to address structural barriers that prevent women and people of color from serving in elected office. A first-of-its-kind analysis funded by WDN – available at [WhoLeads.U](#)s – shows that from President to the county level, women hold only 29% of the 42,000 elected offices, despite comprising 51% of the population. Women of color hold only 4% of elected offices even though they are 19% of the population. We know that when there is more public financing, more women and people of color run for election and win.³

³ <http://www.demos.org/publication/stacked-deck-how-bias-our-big-money-political-system-undermines-racial-equity>

The Reflective Democracy Campaign is now funding a range of solutions being developed by local, state, and national leaders to address structural barriers to change. These barriers include: gatekeepers who control access to money and relationships; the deleterious impact of money in politics; the need for capacity building that helps community organizations engage in the political process; the economic obstacles that most people face in pursuing office; and reforms to the electoral system that empower women and communities of color.

Reflective Democracy is the continuation of the New American Majority narrative – women and people of color should not only be valued as voters, but also as advocates with critical insights and as potential elected or appointed officials. Gender justice funders are having success by supporting a diversity of leadership styles across gender, race, sexuality, and class, and are funding locally developed strategies that reflect communities' unique lived experiences.

CASE STUDY: HOW INVESTMENTS IN LOCAL LEADERSHIP TRANSFORMED CAMPAIGN OUTCOMES IN NEW MEXICO

In the summer of 2013, Albuquerque voters were faced with an unprecedented municipal referendum to restrict abortion access at 20 weeks. Early polling showed voters were favoring the ban by a wide margin. With fewer than 12 weeks to election day, local advocates leapt into action.

The Respect Albuquerque Women Campaign formed to defeat the ballot measure. [Young Women United \(YWU\)](#), a local organization that focuses on organizing and policy led by and for young women of color, was one of six organizations co-leading the campaign.



Long before this campaign, the Ms. Foundation for Women, Third Wave Fund, and the Groundswell Fund had been providing long-term capacity, infrastructure funding, and general operating support that allowed YWU to develop strong working relationships, leadership, and strategic policy expertise. As trusted leaders in the community, they could move quickly to help defeat the ballot measure. During the campaign, YWU received additional funds from the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, another long-term funder, as well as individual donors.

YWU and [Strong Families New Mexico \(SFNM\)](#), another partner on the campaign, brought a critical women-of-color voice to overall messaging efforts in the campaign. Based on insights from long-term work within local Latino and working-class communities and campaign-related community dialogues, they shifted messages away from a pro-choice frame which did not resonate with their base to instead focus on respecting women and families to make decisions about their own bodies and lives.

Acknowledging the complexity of abortion, the campaign asked local communities to uphold that, “Decisions about abortion should be made by women, families and their doctors without government interference.” These changes allowed men, LGBTQ communities, and voters who might not identify with “pro-choice” language to shape the issue and see it as their own. Young Women United also created Spanish-language messaging, launched a photo ad campaign titled “Our Neighborhood, Our Decisions,” and created radio ads in English/Spanish alongside labor justice leader, Dolores Huerta.



SFNM and YWU worked together to build a field strategy that included the most impacted local communities. This meant focusing their phone banking and canvassing in communities of color to ensure they saw themselves reflected in the election and brought attention to the fact that they would be highly affected by the ban. They also engaged Equality New Mexico, a local leader on LGBTQ rights, in the campaign. This cross-sector movement building allowed the campaign to broaden its reach beyond heterosexual families and marginalized conversations about women's issues and engage a wide diversity of potential allies.

With known and respected New Mexico organizations in leadership, the Respect Albuquerque Women campaign won credibility with local residents. YWU and SFNM were able to move beyond traditional civic engagement work (door knocking and phone banking) to also incorporate community dialogue and merge cultural community celebrations with Get Out The Vote efforts. YWU used what might not be seen as traditional engagement tactics to more authentically connect with the local constituency. The campaign's success would not have been possible without deep ties to the local community, years of base-building and leadership development, and years of flexible, multi-year funding.

In the end the campaign was successful in defeating the measure, by a 10-point margin. Funders played a key role in this success by funding with a gender justice lens. This included valuing the power of young women of color; resourcing state infrastructure and expertise; supporting long-term policy strategy, organizing, and relationship-building that allowed campaigns to move quickly; and resourcing organizations that understand the power of bringing a diverse mix of partners on board.

Elevating women's issues and women's leadership, while also expanding the gender frame beyond women and girls, was clearly a winning strategy.

Integrate a Gender Justice Analysis from Bottom to Top

An effective funding strategy requires an in-depth analysis of the problem, an understanding of the key stakeholders, and a willingness to remain open to new approaches and solutions. Effective funders see the benefit of learning from and with a diversity of leaders with varying life experiences, particularly among those most affected by a problem. These key stakeholders can elevate critical issues and highlight creative solutions that are needed to solve complex social problems.

A gender justice analysis should address gender – with attention to equity and how gender norms influence our decisions – and also stay connected to other key components of identity such as race, class, sexuality, or immigration status. It is important to understand how these identities intersect, overlap, and can sometimes negatively reinforce each other. A gender justice approach can highlight the experiences of people sometimes

made invisible within national debates, including working mothers, single fathers, and trans communities. One way funders are addressing this complexity is to authentically include a diversity of voices – women, and particularly women of color, LGBTQ and gender nonconforming people – in discussions, presentations, and convenings. They should be included in the early decision-making process and continuously throughout the project. In addition, analyses that disaggregate data by gender, race, and socioeconomic status, rather than looking at any one of these identities in isolation, can help ensure that key contexts are not missed.

The Groundswell Fund has found that looking at disaggregated data can reveal important information, such as the importance of women-of-color voting blocs. Women of color are the fastest-growing segment of the women's vote – representing 74 percent of the growth in eligible women voters since the year 2000.⁴

Protect the Vote

Voter suppression efforts have accelerated in recent years. An analysis by the Brennan Center for Justice found that in 2014, voters in 22 states were faced with voting restrictions that made it more difficult to vote than in the last midterm election. They found that, “... of the 11 states with the highest African American turnout in 2008, seven passed laws making it harder to vote. Of the 12 states with the largest Hispanic population growth in the 2010 Census, nine have new restrictions in place. And of the 15 states that used to be monitored closely under the Voting Rights Act because of a history of racial discrimination in elections, nine passed new restrictions.”⁵

As the research shows, many of the voting restrictions affect people of color, with a disproportionate impact on women of color and young people. These restrictions include reducing early voting, requiring government-issued photo IDs (that often exclude student IDs), eliminating same-day registration, requiring proof of citizenship, and making it harder for people with past convictions to have their voting rights restored.

As civic engagement funders work to mobilize people to vote for candidates and policies that impact their daily lives, many are recognizing how important it is to also support strategies that protect the essential right to vote. We are learning more about the gendered impact of these restrictions – such as the effect on people who are newly married (or recently divorced) or whose gender may not appear to match their ID photo.

With these new restrictive laws, it is even more important to work with your grantees to develop a gender justice analysis.

“These voter suppression measures have the potential to significantly curtail the political influence of women of color before it is fully realized.”⁶

– Maya Harris, Senior Fellow, Center for American Progress

⁴ <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/wpcontent/uploads/2014/10/30/99962/women-of-color/WOCvoters3.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.brennancenter.org/analysis/voter-suppression-how-bad-pretty-bad>

⁶ <http://cdn.americanprogress.org/issues/race/report/wpcontent/uploads/2014/10/30/99962/women-of-color/WOCvoters3.pdf>

CASE STUDY: BUILDING POWER FOR WOMEN IS A WINNING STRATEGY

TakeAction Minnesota, a statewide network focused on racial and economic equity, realized the importance of a gender lens around two years ago. They wanted to invert the traditional organizing model – so that rather than thinking about issues first, the organizing focus would be on building power for the long term. They emphasized listening to diverse constituencies across the state and worked to understand what transformative, rather than transactional, relationships were needed to develop a broader and more inclusive base.



They came to recognize that women were a key constituency to engage, and that they needed to incorporate a more explicit, authentic gender analysis into their work. Funders such as the Make It Work campaign (a funder and partner), the Rockefeller Family Fund, and the Ford Foundation supported their efforts to move forward in this area.

In the last election cycle, they saw the power of women organizing based on their experiences, with women calling and meeting with other women voters. An unexpected outcome was that their meetings started to look different. Childcare was made available at events and babies were in the room during phone-banking events. They organized community leaders, many of whom are women, to tell their stories. They supported emerging leaders to define what policy changes were needed and built a powerful, engaged base to advance specific goals that focused on structural barriers they identified such as gender oppression and corporate power.



Rather than leading with issues, they led with conversations about women and their families, and their experiences with the economy. Paid sick leave emerged as a next step in a long-term strategy to engage a more diverse base that would be organized and powerful in both issue and electoral campaigns. They were able to bring together diverse partners in the campaign, from groups with a strong gender lens who saw intersections between this issue and their ongoing work to groups (like unions) who saw how this strategy was complementary to other ongoing priorities.

TakeAction also has been very engaged in ensuring that as many people as possible are able to actually cast their votes. In recent years they were part of a coalition that successfully defeated a state voter identification constitutional amendment that would have disproportionately affected lower-income people, people in military service, young people, and people of color. They are currently working to address voting rights for people who have been convicted of a felony. A recent American Civil Liberties Union report notes that there are racial disparities in local arrest rates, and that there are many people with convictions who are active members of their communities and yet are unable to have a voice in the political system. Ensuring that all members of our society can cast their votes is a critical part of gender justice and effective civic engagement.

These short-term and long-term local organizing efforts have had impressive results. Last year Minnesota passed a Women's Economic Security Act (HF2536). It is a comprehensive set of policies that increases the minimum wage, includes equity pay provisions, expands access to affordable childcare, provides family and sick leave, secures better protections for victims of domestic violence, and protects pregnant employees against discrimination.

TakeAction notes that, "it is a winning strategy to focus on women" and that "how we win is just as important as what we win." The Make It Work campaign worked closely with TakeAction in the second half of 2014 and will continue partnering in 2015, as TakeAction continues to expand and deepen their work on gender justice.

Make It Work will be producing an in-depth guide for organizations that want to incorporate gender justice into their civic engagement work. For long-term change, we need a broader and more diverse leadership base – and that means addressing gender as a critical part of the equation.

CONCLUSION: FOCUSING ON GENDER JUSTICE BENEFITS US ALL

Recognizing the connections between gender justice and civic engagement has tremendous potential to effectively engage a broad range of constituencies, identify and secure strong policy solutions, and build the community-led power that is critical for an inclusive democracy that works for all.

When we have a gender justice analysis embedded within our funding strategies, we are better able to recognize who is leading bold and innovative strategies. Often these leaders are women, and particularly women of color, young people, and gender nonconforming people. These leaders are engaging important new constituencies and advancing strong community-led policy solutions that can shape a better future that works for all.

We are all stakeholders in how gender shapes our practices, policies, and culture, and we can all benefit from an intentional focus on gender justice. A gender justice and civic engagement analysis will help funders develop strong and innovative funding strategies long into the future.

HOW TO GET STARTED: A CHECKLIST FOR FUNDERS

Here are several suggestions and questions to ask to help you incorporate a gender justice and civic engagement approach to your funding strategies:

Make Long-term Investments in Infrastructure and Capacity

- Consider the timelines of your gender justice/civic engagement grants.**
 - How are your grants supporting long-term capacity building? Are you helping your grantees build critical infrastructure around data, leadership development, and relationship building?
 - Are you providing capacity-building support that addresses your grantees' expressed needs?
- Provide flexible support.**
 - Are you providing flexible funding that allows your grantees to work on the issues their constituents identify as important?
 - Are you providing core operating support whenever possible?

Support Diverse, Networked, and Local Leadership

- Support the New American Majority leaders and diverse leadership styles.**
 - What are the demographics of your core grantee leaders, their boards, and their constituencies? Do they represent and reflect the New American Majority?
 - Are your grantees working to build partnerships and allies across issues and movements?
 - Are you supporting local leaders linked to local constituencies?
 - What key stakeholders would help ensure diverse perspectives and a broader picture in your decision-making?
 - How and when could you engage your grantees and new partners? How can you make sure they have influence early and throughout the process?

- Does your funding strategy focus on engaging voters and developing future leaders?**
 - What capacity-building support would be most helpful and directly relevant to your grantees' unique needs and experiences?
 - How can you strengthen cross-issue alliances and facilitate opportunities for your grantees to learn from one another?
 - Do your funding strategies include leadership development?

Integrate a Gender Justice Analysis from Bottom to Top

- Analyze how attention or inattention to gender and civic engagement is impacting your funding decisions.**
 - What assumptions are you making about gender norms and gender equity? For example, this could include assumptions about what is a "woman's issue," who should have a seat at the table, who should have a voice in decision-making, and who should lead.
 - Are there ways your internal practices are inadvertently undermining your intended outcomes?
 - Are you connecting gender to race, class, sexuality, and immigrant status?

- Understand how disaggregated data can help you see a clearer picture of how women overall, women of color, transgender, gender nonconforming people, men of color, etc. are impacted by an issue. When data is disaggregated, or broken down into smaller subpopulations, you can begin to see important patterns or trends that may be masked by averages.**
 - Have you analyzed disaggregated data that influences your funding decisions?
 - How could disaggregated data support the development and implementation of an innovative strategy or policy solution?

- Lead with inquiry and listen.**
 - How can you be intentional about a focus on gender justice and ensure that you are elevating the perspectives and leadership of voices that have been marginalized?
 - How might this open up space for new ideas that could strengthen your success, your grantees, and the field?
 - Have you reached out to gender analysis experts, including organizations like re:gender and Institute for Women's Policy Research?

Protect the Vote

- Are you supporting efforts to protect and expand voting rights? If not, are you partnering with others who support this work?**

- If your grantees are engaged in voter protection work, how can you support their long-term civic engagement organizing and help facilitate a stronger gender justice analysis in that effort?**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[A Guide for a Gender Lens](#) – Chicago Women in Philanthropy

[The Absence of a Gender Justice Framework in Social Justice Organizing](#) – Linda Burnham, Center for the Education of Women, University of Michigan

[Bolder Advocacy](#) – Alliance for Justice

[Environmental Success Through Democracy Reform: A Grantmakers' Win-Win Toolkit](#) – Funders' Committee for Civic Participation (FCCP)

[Gender Transformative Philanthropy reports](#) – TrueChild

[Grantmaking with Gender Lens](#) – Grantcraft, of the Foundation Center

[Growing the Reproductive Justice Movement: A Toolkit for Funders](#) – A Project of the Women of Color Working Group of the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights

[Integrated Voter Engagement: A Proven Model to Increase Civic Engagement](#) – Funders' Committee for Civic Participation

Organizing with a Gender Frame: How to Step Up Your Game and Win (Available in Fall 2015) – [Make It Work Campaign](#)

[Tools for All Program](#) – A collaborative initiative hosted by State Voices that provides free innovative civic engagement tools and access to technical support

[Who Leads Us](#) – A Project of the Reflective Democracy Campaign from the Women Donors Network

[Women of Color: A Growing Force in the American Electorate](#) – Maya Harris, Center for American Progress



WOMEN DONORS NETWORK
Generosity Multiplied

565 Commercial Street, Suite 300
San Francisco, California 94111

info@womendonors.org
womendonors.org

T 415.814.1333
F 415.814.1334