

WOMEN'S WAY

CONNECTS
EMPOWERS
INVESTS

2025 - 2028 Strategic Plan

Our Vision	1
Values Statement	1
Mission Statement	2
Theory of Change	2
Our Five Strategic Pathways	3
Guidelines for Emerging Opportunities	6
Definitions	8

Our Vision

WOMEN'S WAY is working toward a Philadelphia region and beyond, where caring and mutual support guide the decisions that affect people's lives, and where everyone –especially those historically impacted by gender inequities – has security, dignity, freedom, and joy.

Values Statement

WOMEN'S WAY is committed to equity, power-building, self-determination, and liberation for all who are impacted by systems of gender, racial, and class oppression.

Our analysis is intersectional: Women and other gender-oppressed people bring their intersecting identities to their daily experience of being whole people. We believe that gender liberation can only be achieved in conjunction with race and class liberation.

For these reasons, we are committed to:

Centering those most harmed by racialized patriarchy, including everyone on the margins of the definitions of womanhood and whiteness;

Dismantling white supremacy in our minds, programs, policies, practices, and culture, and in the communities we are part of;

Ongoing learning at the individual and organizational level to expand awareness of the systemic causes of existing inequities at the individual and organizational level;

Relationship building to build mutual trust, create bridges of empathy that transcend racial, gender, class, and political divisions, foster collective learning, and inspire collective action;

Collective power-building by facilitating collective learning and investing in movement-building. We strengthen collective action – as the way to shift power and resources for the good of the whole, rather than for the benefit of the few; and

Building common cause with groups that center collective liberation around gender, race, class, and other sites of injustice.

Mission Statement

WOMEN'S WAY achieves gender equity by building collective power to disrupt oppressive systems and strengthen alternative models centered in love, dignity, and liberation.

Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change represents our understanding of the problems we aim to address and how our work leads to a transformation of those problems to get us closer to our vision.

Problem Statement:

Gender inequities are deeply rooted in longstanding systems of white supremacy and capitalism. These inequities are so central to wealth disparity that they are often invisible. So, efforts to improve the lives of women, girls, and gender oppressed people only go so far if they are not informed by an understanding of the systemic ways gender intersects with economic exploitation. Without this understanding, interventions focus on individuals as the source of their own poverty, treating the symptoms instead of the root causes of inequity, and avoiding the systems change that can truly transform lives and communities.

What we do about it:

- **Narrative change work to shift the conversation** about the gender wealth gap and build public will to strengthen new economic models centered in inclusion, equity, and liberation.
- **Capacity-building for systems-change** through individual and collective action.

How we do it and with whom:

- **We center the wisdom, stories, and expertise of those most affected** by systems of oppression.
- **We create tools and train people** – funders, practitioners, advocates, policymakers, and grantees – **to design and lead with gender equity.**
- **We invest in collective work aimed at root causes**, including strategies that reduce wealth extraction and those that help build individual and community wealth.
- As part of a movement ecosystem, **we convene communities of practice** to explore models of equitable and inclusive economies, experiment with transforming sites of wealth extraction, and build power with gender oppressed communities

Resulting in these changes:

- **A different cultural narrative grounded in the wisdom and lived experiences of marginalized genders** takes hold in communities, organizations, and in the halls of power.
- **Women and gender oppressed people's collective power is increased** to make systemic, transformative policy change.
- **Alternative community wealth-building models** grow and proliferate, providing new avenues for transforming economic conditions.

Our Five Strategic Pathways

WOMEN'S WAY Theory of Change guides us to follow five pathways that, woven together, collectively guide our journey toward gender justice and economic liberation:

Pathway 1: We center those most impacted by systems of oppression.

Our work is anchored in the lived experiences of those most impacted by the oppressive systems we seek to transform. We amplify and prioritize these voices, and these are whose stories shape our messaging and communication strategies. We deepen our relationships and support opportunities with fellows and others with lived experience to influence our sector and to shape our organization, ultimately serving in leadership at WOMEN'S WAY. Along this pathway, we will:

- Create a Speakers Bureau of WOMEN'S WAY fellows, shaping our communications strategy and using our platforms to amplify their voices and stories.
- Develop tools and joint programs for our partners and network to lift up our Fellows' stories.
- Engage Fellows to meaningfully partner in WOMEN'S WAY programs and advocacy.
- Support Fellows' leadership development, including taking leadership roles on our board of directors.

Pathway 2: We create tools and train people – funders, practitioners, advocates, policymakers, and grantees – to design and lead with gender equity.

After the recent period of experimentation, WOMEN'S WAY is ready to name the Gender Wealth Institute (GWI) as the overarching framework for our work. This framework is the way we innovate on, and share our methodology, that goes beyond temporary fixes to build equity and transform lives. Along this pathway we will:

- Reconfigure our work into four areas: Education, Research, Advocacy, and Grantmaking, and organize our programming this way.
- Finalize and codify the GWI framework and toolbox, and socialize it among partners and in our network.
- Develop a GWI Gender Equity Design product for grantees to use; share it with partners and as fee for service regionally and nationally.
- Design a series of educational workshops based on the GWI framework.

Pathway 3: We invest in collective work aimed at root causes, including strategies that reduce wealth extraction and those that help build individual and community wealth.

We will change how we use our funds both in grantmaking and how we invest. We will design new grantmaking approaches and shift our funding to organizations who aim for deep and long-term impact. We will be open to past grantees who have adopted this approach as well as new grantees, with the aim of proliferating their lessons and impact throughout our network and beyond. Our investments will follow our values. On this pathway, we will:

- Design and implement a new grants program, the Gender Economic Equity Fund, a three-year grant program that helps grantees strengthen equitable and inclusive care models.
- Share the grantees' strategies, impact, and learnings on our platforms.

- Gradually move our investments to have a 100% mission aligned portfolio over the next four years, and 10% of our investments to support local alternative economic models each year.

Pathway 4: As part of a movement ecosystem, we convene communities of practice to explore models of equitable and inclusive economies, experiment with transforming sites of wealth extraction, and build power with gender and racially oppressed communities.

WOMEN'S WAY is part of a growing ecosystem of organizations, thought leaders, and practitioners who are transforming the way we think about economic well-being, and who aim to shift culture and build power around issues of wealth extraction and inclusive economies. On this pathway, we will:

- Form communities of practice of our grantees to deepen our understanding of advancing alternative equitable and inclusive economic models.
- Use and grow our WOMEN'S WAY platforms – from the Gender Wealth Summit to our LinkedIn Forum – to connect organizations and individuals to resources and training opportunities to build a stronger and more coordinated gender wealth ecosystem.

Pathway 5: We invest in the sustainability and growth of WOMEN'S WAY to build our strength as a convener, educator, and driver of transformational change.

In order to fuel our journey toward gender justice and economic liberation, WOMEN'S WAY must make institutional investments to ensure our long-term success and impact. On this final pathway, we will:

- Grow and diversify our fundraising by leveraging multi-year grants, increasing major and new donors, and generating earned income (as listed in Pathway 2).
- Grow and invest in our staff; build a culture of learning, self-care, growth, and innovation; and invest in technology and systems that support staff to increase and/or deepen our work.
- Support the Board of Directors to uphold best practices to maximize its stewardship of the organization and be great ambassadors for WOMEN'S WAY.
- Implement a Strategic Communications Plan with strong branding that positions WOMEN'S WAY as a leader in advancing gender equity. This includes the roll out of the new strategic plan.
- Create a leadership succession plan for the Executive Director.

Guidelines for Emerging Opportunities

Historically the issue areas on which WOMEN'S WAY chooses to focus have changed in response to a combination of shifts in strategy and when new opportunities emerge. Our strategic clarity can be thrown off when we are faced with unpredictable (yet inevitable) events and influences. Moving forward, we will use this Guidelines tool to keep our focus when we face strategic decisions related to emerging circumstances and opportunities.

The following guidelines are a resource to support staff in decision-making. In choosing whether to initiate or respond to any opportunity to lead and/or partner on programs, we will assess it based on a discussion of these considerations.

The guidelines are presented in the form of questions. In some cases, the answer may be "yes" or "no" and the decision will be clear. In other cases, it won't be, and the questions below can help foster conversations that will lead to clarity on a decision. Before we can apply these guidelines, we will clarify who is making the decisions.

Criteria for choosing whether to initiate or respond to any opportunity to lead and/or partner on program:

1. Alignment with our values: Will the opportunity we are considering align with our commitment to these values?

- Equity, power-building, self-determination, and liberation for all who are impacted by systems of gender, racial, and class oppression
- Intersectionality, such that women and other gender-oppressed people are welcomed and affirmed in bringing their intersecting identities to their daily experience of being whole people
- A belief that gender liberation can only be achieved in conjunction with race and class liberation
- Building toward the good of the whole, rather than for the benefit of the few
- Staff health and sustainability
- The future viability of WOMEN'S WAY

2. Strategic Impact: How does this align with our strategic plan?

- What impact is possible or likely from this opportunity?

- Does the opportunity further our mission?
- Will this opportunity center those most harmed by racialized patriarchy, e.g. trans, non-binary, gender expansive, and/or BIPOC people? Does it advance equity and belonging in both its outcomes and process?
- Will it promote ongoing learning at the individual and organizational levels to expand our awareness of the systemic causes of existing inequities at the individual and organizational levels?
- Will it help to dismantle white supremacy in our minds, programs, policies, practices, culture, and/or in the communities we are part of?
- Will it build relationships of mutual trust and create bridges of empathy that transcend racial, gender, class and political divisions, foster collective learning, and inspire collective action?
- Will it build collective action toward shifting power and resources?
- Will it build common cause with groups that center collective liberation around gender, race, class, and other sites of injustice?
- Will it invest in movement-building?
- Will this be a cost-effective and staff-energy-efficient use of our capacity?

3. Alignment with our organizational positioning

- Will our participation add measurable value in moving towards progress in these areas?
- Is this the highest-impact program for which we could deploy the same resources?
- Is there a group better positioned than us to take this on?
- Have the staff that will be responsible for this work bought in?
- Is our funding secure to ensure that staff capacity is available for the foreseeable lifespan of the program, including planning, implementation, and follow-up?

4. Managing boundaries: If we're moving toward a "yes," have we checked ourselves to make sure we really can do it? If we're moving toward a "no," are we okay with the costs of saying no?

5. Accountability: Who would we be accountable to around this program: women and

gender-oppressed people in Philly, the public at large, specific community partners, funders, WOMEN'S WAY donors, or?

DEFINITIONS

Equity is both a process and an outcome. As a process, it addresses the gaps in wealth, resources, support, and care intentionally created by those in power to benefit themselves and limit others from achieving an equal quality of life. As an outcome, it ensures that no physical, social, or political characteristic hinders one's access to joy, dignity, care, and support. As an institution, this work requires accountability: leveraging its power and resources towards repairing harm for the generational impact of inequity through dismantling of extractive and exclusionary practices and ensuring the participation of those marginalized by the system in the co-creation of new, equitable frameworks.

Source: The Equity Mindset by Ifeomasinachi Ike

Liberation is social, cultural, economic, and political freedom and emancipation to have agency, control, and power over one's life. To live freely, unaffected, and unharmed by conditions of oppression is to experience liberation. Liberation is also freedom from limits on thought or behavior. We become liberated as we reflect on the world and recognize that we have the power to take action and transform it.

Source: Design Social Change: Take Action, Work Toward Equity, and Challenge the Status Quo by Lesley-Ann Noel

Power-building helps us to impact the political, environmental, social, and economic decisions that affect our lives. By working together and combining our skills and resources, we can better fight injustices and create lasting change. This is an important tool for people most impacted by a problem because it helps us to challenge power structures, claim our rights, and gain more control.

Here's an example: A group of community members comes together to fight for affordable housing. They organize meetings, share stories to raise awareness, and work with leaders to push for more affordable housing. By combining their resources, skills, and voices, these community members gain more strength to influence decisions and create change.

Racialized patriarchy is a system where race and gender hierarchies work together to keep certain groups in power over others. It shows that oppression isn't just about the impact of one identity alone, but how multiple identities combine to impact a person's ability to live with freedom and dignity. In the case of racialized patriarchy, we are focusing on how the combination of gender and race affects people in complex ways. We use this approach to seek justice for everyone affected.

Here's an example: While white women often earn less than white men for the same work, the gap is even larger for women of color. For example, Black and Latina women are paid significantly less than both white men and white women. This reflects how race and gender combine to create deeper inequities, limiting opportunities and economic power for women of color.

Self-determination is the right or ability to make your own decisions and govern yourself without outside control. It's based on the ideas of freedom, independence, and the dignity of making your own choice. Self-determination can apply to individuals, communities, or nations.

Here's an example: When people fight for the right to make decisions about their own bodies, such as advocating for access to abortion or gender-affirming care, they are fighting for the right to self-determination.

White supremacy is a pseudo-scientific concept (*a concept that claims to be based on science but is not*) to create whiteness and a hierarchy of people based on race. It is used to protect and hoard power, disconnect and divide people, and justify dehumanization. This is the same concept that has been used to justify slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and genocide throughout history.

It has three main parts:

- **Political:** The exclusion of non-whites from voting rights, land ownership, labor protection, full participation in public institutions and services, political representation, and the protection of the courts (*Scot Nakagawa*).
- **Cultural:** The idea of "whiteness" is seen as the standard or "normal" way of being, and that white people are considered superior to people of other races. It's a belief that values white culture, traits, and behaviors above all others.
- **Social:** Whiteness as a socially significant structure that mitigates life chances in American society (*Teresa J. Guess*)-- *meaning, white people have better opportunities and outcomes in various aspects of life compared to people of color such as health outcomes or wealth building.*