

MS. FOUNDATION FOR WOMEN  
COLLABORATIVE FUND  
FOR YOUTH-LED SOCIAL CHANGE

# power and possibilities



## MISSION STATEMENT

THE MS. FOUNDATION SUPPORTS THE EFFORTS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS TO GOVERN THEIR OWN LIVES AND INFLUENCE THE WORLD AROUND THEM. THROUGH ITS LEADERSHIP, EXPERTISE AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT, THE FOUNDATION CHAMPIONS AN EQUITABLE SOCIETY BY EFFECTING CHANGE IN PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS, LAW, PHILANTHROPY AND SOCIAL POLICY.

## BELIEFS AND VALUES STATEMENT

OUR WORK IS GUIDED BY OUR VISION OF A JUST AND SAFE WORLD WHERE POWER AND POSSIBILITY ARE NOT LIMITED BY GENDER, RACE, CLASS OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION. WE BELIEVE THAT EQUITY AND INCLUSION ARE THE CORNERSTONES OF A TRUE DEMOCRACY IN WHICH THE WORTH AND DIGNITY OF EVERY PERSON IS VALUED.

# power and possibilities

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# introduction

“EACH OF US GOES ABOUT SOCIAL CHANGE DIFFERENTLY; WE RUN DIFFERENT KINDS OF GROUPS. I KNOW THAT WE CAN LEARN A LOT ABOUT STRONG SOCIAL CHANGE MOVEMENTS AND STABLE ORGANIZATIONS IN THIS INITIATIVE.”

– LATEEFAH SIMON, CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Exposing the myths of community revitalization. Making schools safer. Promoting after-school opportunities. Ensuring that workplaces are safe for young workers. Reducing sexual harassment of young women in the juvenile justice system. Raising awareness of the health care needs of Latinas. Fighting for the rights of immigrant workers.

Youth are changing the world.

Youth development and youth organizing efforts are demonstrating that youth can make a positive difference in their own lives and the lives of their families and communities.

Partnering with youth in social change efforts, and supporting their growth and development is no easy task. It must be done in ways that help youth build personal and professional skills—and it can only be fully accomplished by programs that address the identities that shape youths' lives: race, class, gender, and sexual

orientation. To ignore these factors and their interrelation is to fundamentally misunderstand youth and to neglect a vital opportunity to help them marshal their strengths, overcome barriers, and change the world around them.

Recognizing the power and possibilities of working at the intersection of youth development, youth organizing, and programming that recognizes the importance of multiple youth identities, the Ms. Foundation for Women and its partners launched the Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change (CFYS).

This exciting initiative works with donor and grantee partners from across the United States to:

- **Explore a variety of social change and organizing models** that are steeped in community, organizational, and political contexts.
- **Support intergenerational leadership efforts** that promote learning and mentoring between adults and youth, and provide

youth with real leadership opportunities in programs and organizations.

- **Build capacity of innovative organizations** to undertake program activities and build organizational strength and longevity.

- **Develop a learning agenda** that ensures that participating organizations and the field learn from this unique initiative.

A key to the success of CFYS is the strong commitment to promoting diversity. This diversity takes many forms—from the wide range of grantee and donor partners to the variety of organizational types and approaches to both youth development and youth organizing.

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Supporting this initiative is a framework of equal participation among donors, youth organization staff, and youth leaders. The partners work together to shape initiative activities and information sharing opportunities. Partners value the opportunity to develop working relationships with a variety of individuals

concerned about a holistic approach to youth development and organizing. These relationships ensure that each organization's approaches and practices continue to evolve.

It is out of this partnership that the learning component of CFYS will be developed. Based on questions from youth, youth organization staff, and donors, CFYS will engage all partners in a process of identifying, discussing, and documenting promising practices. This learning will inform the future activities of organizations that serve and support youth.

*Power and Possibilities: The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change* provides an overview of this initiative; the tenets upon which this work is built; the kinds of work grantee organizations are pursuing; the learning network created by this initiative; and the kinds of questions that donor, youth organization staff, and youth partners hope to address by participating in this Fund.

# youth development and youth-led social change

Much has changed in the youth fields and programs for youth in the last 30 years.

Reacting to negative stereotypes of youth promoted in the 1980s and 1990s, the youth development field began to advance a positive youth development frame. This frame, and programs built on it, underscore that youth can and do positively impact their own lives and communities.<sup>i</sup>

“THIS WORK IS SO IMPORTANT. TO CREATE REAL CHANGE IN COMMUNITIES, WE NEED TO FLOOD THE PIPELINE WITH EFFECTIVE LEADERS AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE SOCIAL CHANGE AS PART OF THEIR LIFE GOALS.”

— RUBIE COLES, MORIAH FUND, WASHINGTON, DC

Over the last ten years, the fields of youth development and youth-led social change (also called youth organizing or youth civic engagement) have begun to recognize the benefits gained by merging strategies.<sup>ii</sup> Some in the youth development field have recognized that many adolescents are naturally interested in questioning the social constructs that surround them. However, in working to develop individual skills, youth face societal barriers to their individual development, such as classism, racism, gender discrimination, poor schools, and lack of economic opportunity. At the same time,

some practitioners and funders working on youth organizing have realized that to be effective and responsible community organizers, programs needed to address the developmental needs of adolescents. The two arenas naturally complement each other.

Innovative work, including the partnership between the Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth

Development, and local and regional youth organization efforts supported by the Tides and Surdna Foundations, and the Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing, helped these fields better understand a new approach—an approach that is dedicated to individual development through civic engagement and community improvement through collective action.<sup>iii</sup>

**YOUTH IN THE LEAD:** Youth spearheading efforts to improve their own lives and the health of their communities, workplaces, and schools is just part of the story.

Many groups are moving to fully entrust the design and implementation of programs to youth participants. However, if we are serious about youth leading organizations and having a voice not just in the design of the project activities but also in the development of the youth program and the larger organization, we need to further develop intergenerational power sharing models for decision-making. Some youth programs are developing innovative approaches to involve young people in organizational decision-making, including involving youth on Boards, as staff, and in fundraising, program, and strategic planning. New models require adult staff to balance teaching and mentoring with providing youth with the opportunity and training to make and carry out organizational and program decisions. CFYS has found that this also requires a genuine commitment to two-way learning where youth and adults work with each other, learn from each other, and share leadership roles. Building organizational leadership skills and engaging youth in these tasks is not easy, but when the right conditions come together it can be a powerful strategy for positive change.<sup>iv</sup>

#### **YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND THE ROLE OF**

**IDENTITY:** Some in the youth development community have begun to explore how young people's development is shaped by factors including gender, race, and class.<sup>v</sup> While gender is listed as an identity in much of this work, little has been done to under-

stand if and how girls and boys programs need different approaches because of differences in life experiences and gender norms. An analysis of existing work showed that the most capable of these programs explored the social construction of gender and invited young women and men to challenge traditional roles, examine gender privilege, and create an even balance of power between them.<sup>vi</sup> Recent research finds that organizations specifically focusing on and supporting a diversity of youth identities are often the most effective at making youth feel comfortable, helping them assume leadership roles, and raising awareness of the role of identity and discrimination.<sup>vii,viii</sup>

While work in this area is increasing, few efforts concentrate on understanding the connection between gender identity and sexual orientation, and its role in youth development. CFYS incorporates gender identity and sexual orientation into a broader definition of gender that includes not only male and female, but also lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, or gender questioning. Even fewer efforts explore how the intersection of gender, race and class identities affect youth participation and experiences.

Earlier work of the Ms. Foundation's Collaborative Fund for Healthy Girls/Healthy Women contributed to the field's understanding of the benefits of youth development programs that explicitly



address the needs of girls and young women. Research from this initiative examines how programs recognize girls' voices and foster their individual and group empowerment. Effective programs created "safe space" for girls, recognized different approaches to leadership, established intergenerational relationships among girls and young women, and promoted opportunities for girls to improve the world around them.<sup>ix</sup> Emerging from this research was a recognition of the different strategies for social change that enable young women to make a difference in their lives and communities.

Creating a better world for girls and young women is about the delicate balance of building and strengthening relationships among girls and young women, and also building and strengthening their relationships to women, boys, men, and the broader society around them. Most young women in youth development programs are in mixed gender environments. Focusing on what happens with young women as well as young men in these environments will

move this partnership and the field closer to the goal of gender, race, and class equity.

Understanding the importance of strong young women and young men to the lives of all youth and the future of communities, the Ms.

Foundation moved to include boys in public awareness and programming. Most notably, the Ms. Foundation shifted its successful ten-year-old Take Our Daughters To Work<sup>®</sup> program, which focused on making girls visible, valued, and heard, to Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work<sup>®</sup> Day. The new program encourages both girls and boys to share their expectations for the future and think about how they can participate fully in family, work, and community. The program also challenges workplaces to consider policies that will help their female and male employees better integrate these multiple demands.

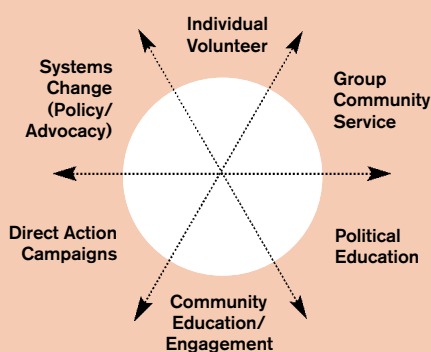
A combination of these forces led Collaborative Fund partners to realize the power and possibilities of the next phases of work—work that is positioned at the intersection of youth development, youth-led social change, and gender.

## YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH ORGANIZING:

# a spectrum of social change

Involving youth in social change requires a shift from unquestioning acceptance of the way things are to developing a strategy that engages communities and institutions to address injustice at a systems level. Such efforts are described and understood in many ways. To help define this work, Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change (CFYS) partners recognized and developed a spectrum that represents the forms of social change that youth and adults can engage in within different contexts and at different points in time. This working definition will be refined as the initiative unfolds.

### SPECTRUM OF SOCIAL CHANGE



This spectrum is not linear; rather, it is opportunistic, enabling participants and programs to engage in a variety of strategies shaped by the context of the community, background of the effort, needs of youth participants, and the social change desired.

To assist groups in evaluating their own readiness to take on youth development and youth organizing work, CFYS partners developed a series of questions used on site visits. Some questions included:

- Who sets the social change agenda and how is it set?
- Does the youth-led social change action have potential for long-term systems change?
- Does the youth-led social change action address issues beyond those normally seen as “youth issues”?
- How does the organization incorporate issues of gender, race, class, and age into its social change work?

Participants in CFYS come at their social change work from a variety of perspectives:

- **Khmer Girls in Action**—Working with young women of Southeast Asian descent, Khmer Girls in Action (KGA) builds young women’s capacity to assess how their physical, emotional, and mental well-being is influenced by political, social, cultural, and economic factors, and to develop action campaigns to address community issues. A major concern for KGA members is the devastating impact of anti-immigrant policies on their community. Because of new repatriation agreements, over 1,500 Cambodians who have lived in the U.S. for most of their lives (many of whom have children who are U.S. citizens and who may be the sole breadwinner for

their family) are being deported. KGA identified this as a crucial issue and, among other activities, mobilized 300 youth and community members in downtown Los Angeles to advocate for immigrant rights.

■ **Appalachian Women's Leadership Project—**

Beginning in the summer of 2002, the Girls Resiliency Program (GRP) began alerting people across rural Lincoln County in West Virginia to the imminent closure and consolidation of four junior/high schools. Youth leaders of the GRP pressured the State Board of Education to move back the date of closure and hold public meetings. Young women designed and made badges, created posters, and prepared speeches voicing their opinions about the school closures. While the State Board of Education created roadblocks to public participation—requiring signing up 24 hours in advance to provide testimony at public hearings, and holding meetings on sudden notice—the youth and community members they had mobilized were successful in voicing their opinions to key decision makers. In addition, GRP has been working with a lawyer and community members from affected school areas to file an injunction against the school consolidation plan.

■ **Girl Scouts of the Milwaukee Area—**With the hope of establishing City Action Teens Teams (CATT) throughout Milwaukee County, the Girl Scouts of the Milwaukee Area is helping young women come together, identify issues of concern to the community, and promote individual and community response. For example, this year, one of the CATTs tackled the problem of

lack of information about and access to health services in the Latina community. The group developed and implemented two community health fairs, securing major health provider, business, and government partners who provided free health education, awareness, services, and referrals to participants. The CATTs also initiated a Teen Summit that brings girls from across the city together in a safe environment to articulate their concerns, connect to services that can support them, and identify action they can take to become change agents in their communities.

■ **Sisters in Action for Power—**At a strategic planning meeting early in 2002 designed to identify a new issue campaign, members at Sisters in Action for Power in Portland began talking about how their neighborhood was changing. Young women discussed the seemingly endless money available for construction, the overnight replacement of established markets and beauty shops with wine shops and art galleries, and forced displacement of families and friends from the neighborhood. At the same time as the term “revitalization” was used to promote and describe these neighborhood changes, young women were frustrated at the lack of resources and attention to “revitalize” public schools and housing. Portland Public Schools announced the sale of 60 acres of land, and a federal HOPE VI grant was given to Portland to demolish the largest public housing complex in the state. Sisters in Action for Power launched their new Land Equity campaign to dispel the myths of revitalization and fight the dismantling of public schools and public housing.

# the collaborative fund for youth-led social change

The Ms. Foundation for Women and its donor partners launched the Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change (CFYS) to further the fields of youth development and youth organizing, explore the role of gender identities and orientations in youth programming, bolster the efforts of innovative youth organizations and programs across the nation, and move forward the learning that will advance work across these areas.

CFYS donor partners represent a spectrum of giving within philanthropy. From women's funds and community foundations, to family, corporate and independent foundations, to individual donors, these organizations and individuals emphasize a range of giving and interests. Some emphasize

live up to its mission and better support the grantee partners of the fund.

The mission of CFYS is to create, sustain, and enhance a thriving network of funders and local youth-serving organizations that demonstrate the power and possibility of young women and men to create positive change in their lives and their communities, schools, and workplaces. Together, partners—including funders, youth organization staff, and youth—share models that recognize individual development, social change, and gender-identity as integral to the process of building an equitable society.

To reach these goals, CFYS partners identified three overarching fund objectives:

**"WE WERE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE COLLABORATIVE BECAUSE THE WORK WAS SOLID, WE KNEW WE COULD LEARN A LOT FROM THE INITIATIVE, WORK WITH SOME GROUPS WE HADN'T WORKED WITH BEFORE, AND HELP SHAPE THESE EFFORTS"** – ROBERT SHERMAN, SURDNA FOUNDATION, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

national giving, while others concentrate on a state or local community. Their issues include girls' and women's rights, youth development, community and youth engagement, and anti-poverty strategies. This rich diversity of donor partners enables CFYS to

■ **Support and document innovative social change models** that combine the best practices of positive youth development and youth organizing within programs that understand that young women and young men engage and develop differently.

■ **Strengthen the connection between girls' programming and youth-serving organizations.**

■ **Leverage resources from diverse funders** to bolster the youth development and social change efforts of innovative girl-only and mixed-gender programs.

The Fund includes three years of grantmaking, technical assistance, and knowledge-sharing opportunities.

The strength of CFYS is built on several core tenets:

■ **Partnership Development**—by equally engaging funders, youth organization staff, and youth participants, CFYS is a unique learning community that works to further the intersection of youth development and youth-led social change. The partnership will develop and promote approaches that recognize the importance of multiple youth identities to youth development, the range of approaches to successful social change, and the importance of accepting a diversity of youth leadership styles.

■ **Grantmaking**—financially supporting organizations at the forefront of this innovative work through multi-year grants is crucial to ensuring that their work continues and programs have the capacity to reflect on key lessons.

■ **Capacity-Building and Networking**—CFYS includes capacity building and networking activities that engage funders, youth organization staff, and youth partners. For the funders, participating in a collaborative fund and

engaging in real dialogue with program partners builds their understanding of the needs of the field and how best to support organizations and their programs. For youth organization staff, networking with peers and funders enables them to explore different organizational and program models that can help reinforce efforts, broaden their experience and build a common movement. For youth partners, networking with youth leaders and donors from across the country reinforces youth leadership development, exposes them to other approaches to social change, and supports their efforts to assume leadership positions within their organizations.

■ **Learning and Dissemination**—developing and supporting the work of cutting-edge efforts is most useful when key program components are carefully documented, lessons are extracted, and information about innovative and effective practice is disseminated to the field and funder communities. CFYS works with all partners to develop strategies to systematically document initiative activities and disseminate findings to key constituents.

#### **THE GRANTMAKING PROCESS**

With the mission, objectives, and core tenets in place, CFYS donor partners released a Request for Letters of Intent. In response, 576 youth-serving organizations from across the nation submitted letters. CFYS donor partners then collaboratively solicited proposals, reviewed materials, developed guiding questions and selection

criteria, and conducted site visits. Through this intensive process the partners gained clarity about the intent of CFYS, the strengths of applicant organizations, and potential learning opportunities presented by the initiative.

By summer 2002, 12 organizations were chosen because of their proven track record in at least two of the three main issue areas, their commitment to and vision for excelling

in all three areas, the organization's ability to contribute to national learning, and readiness to undertake the challenge of taking their work to the next level. In addition, priority was placed on creating regional representation, racial/ethnic balance, and on exploring how gender is addressed within the organization.

Each organization will receive \$105,000 over three years.

## the work of the organizations

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change is a learning community of youth organization staff, youth leaders, and donors. Our grantee partners, representing organizations from across the country, take

use a variety of tactics from popular education and campaign development to community mobilization and peer-to-peer education.

■ **Strengths**—Some come from youth development origins while others grow out of

“THIS COLLABORATIVE GIVES FUNDERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH A DIVERSE GROUP OF GRANTEEES, TEST PROGRAM MODELS, AND MOVE THE FIELD TOWARD A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF GENDER IDENTITY PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG ADULTS.” – LISA HOFFMAN, THE DIANA PRINCESS OF WALES MEMORIAL FUND (U.S.), ESTHERVILLE, IOWA

the lead in exploring the power and possibilities of working at the intersection of youth development, youth-led social change, and programming that recognizes the different and similar developmental needs of young women and young men.

Participating organizations vary widely, providing a rich partnership for developing and learning about strategies, tools, and models. Key differences include:

■ **Geography**—The organizations represent a wide spectrum of places, with one from the South, four from the West, one from the Northwest, three from the East, and three from the Midwest. They work in both urban and rural areas. They recognize the unique context of their community and adapt their strategies accordingly.

■ **Organizing Strategies**—These organizations

social change movements. All begin with a frame and understanding of young people’s strengths and possibilities.

■ **Participant Constituencies**—Eight organizations work exclusively with young women while the remaining four work with young women and young men. They represent African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Hispanic, multiracial, and immigrant communities.

■ **Organizational Structures**—Each program has different organizational auspices and histories. Some are independent, youth-focused organizations and some are part of larger organizations. Two groups are affiliates or part of larger national networks.

While some factors are unique to each organization, there are recurrent themes that link them together, including:

■ **Supporting Youth in Decision-Making Roles—**

Each organization is committed to engaging youth in program and institutional decisions. Further, these organizations will work to better understand power sharing between youth and adults in projects and organizations. For example, program and youth partners will explore ways to engage youth in planning, finance and budgeting, fundraising, board and staff development, and evaluation.

■ **Working Together to Change Community**

**Conditions that Primarily Impact Youth—**Each organization works with youth to identify the issues that impact their lives, the lives of other youth and the communities around them, and craft action strategies to address those conditions.

■ **Building New Leaders—**Each organization works with youth to develop and lead social change efforts and shape organizations. CFYS partners recognize the diversity of leadership styles and the importance of creating venues where a variety of young people have opportunities to lead. In building new leaders, organizations will explore the

balance of youth and adult partners in leadership development.

■ **Exploring the Role of Gender in Programming—**

Research and practice has helped these organizations understand that “gender matters.” In different ways, they address gender privilege and the role of race, class, and sexual identity in society, and work to eliminate societal biases. Gender identity and orientation is broadly defined to include not only male and female, but also lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, gender questioning, etc.

■ **Developing National Learning and**

**Organizational Capacity—**These organizations are motivated to share, learn and document successful strategies. They build capacity through examining organizational approaches and activities and working to expand and strengthen their work. They are looking to improve their own work and that of organizations across the nation, and learn from current developments in the youth fields. They are committed to active participation in a learning community of youth practitioners and funders.



# gender identities in programming

Genderidentity matters in youth programming. Understanding how youth think about gender and how it impacts their lives is a crucial component to building strong, successful youth development and social change programs. To reflect how many youth think about these issues, CFYS defines gender broadly to encompass gender identity and sexual orientation, including male, female, lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and gender questioning. This working definition will be refined as the initiative unfolds.

To assist groups in evaluating their own readiness to incorporate gender identity into youth development and youth-led social change work, CFYS developed a series of questions used on site visits. Some questions included:

- Does the program consciously address and support unique gender needs through program space, curriculum, education, training, safety of location, and/or access?
- What are the leadership opportunities available to young women and young men in the organization?
- What are the similarities and differences in the participation of young women and young men? How is the youth development and youth-led social change work supportive of a broad range of gender identities?
- What are some of the different approaches the program takes that respond to the unique needs of young women and young men?

## **PARTICIPANTS IN CFYS ADDRESS GENDER IN A VARIETY OF WAYS, INCLUDING:**

- **Blocks Together**— Focused on Chicago's northwest side, Blocks Together works with a Youth Council of young men and young women to identify concerns, increase youth's skills to advocate for themselves and their community, and develop leadership skills to win tangible changes. Trainings and exercises have helped youth council members discuss gender, race, and class discrimination issues. To address harassment by school security guards, the members of the Youth Council, in coalition with Chicago Youth United, started collecting information and stories from their peers. While the experience with security guards was not uniform across the city or even within an individual school, the youth noted that young women tended to experience sexual harassment whereas young men tended to be victims of physical violence. Both the young men and the young women realized that while the problems they faced were somewhat different, the solutions were the same. They are working to change the hiring and training practices for security guards.
- **PEARLS for Teen Girls**—As a girl-only program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, PEARLS for Teen

Girls employs teen facilitators to create safe space for girls ages 11 to 13, explore barriers, and create a better world for themselves and the women around them. Beginning with individual goal setting exercises, PEARLS and the teen facilitators work with the girls to create group and community goals. Especially focused on how they as young women can help improve the lives of other young women in the community, PEARLS is tackling the issue of increasing access to comprehensive sexuality education in public schools, through popular education strategies, theatrical performances, creating fact sheets, and accumulating signatures to petition the Milwaukee Public Schools to require sexuality education in public schools.

■ **Center for Young Women's Development**—Working to develop the skills of young women involved in the juvenile justice and foster care systems, the Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD) in San Francisco provides training and employment opportunities, identifies issues of concern to this vulnerable population, and crafts action strategies. Young women incarcerated in juvenile prisons are often vulnerable to sexual harassment. To address this issue, CYWD

leaders have gathered information from incarcerated youth, researched anti-discrimination policies, and pressured juvenile corrections to institute a landmark anti-discrimination policy to protect incarcerated lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender, and queer youth. Youth participants are now developing and implementing sensitivity training for juvenile hall staff.

■ **Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health**—Working in a mixed-gender program, MassCosh and its Teens Lead @ Work campaign engage low-income teens of color in social justice activity related to their rights on the job. This includes educating them about the social, economic, and political obstacles facing immigrant female teen workers, and helping them work collectively to create strategies for seeking systemic social change. Working to create equal opportunities for both young women and young men, participants raise awareness of the exploitation of young workers by serving as peer leaders, trainers, and organizers. To increase awareness of gender issues in the workplace, Teens Lead @ Work participants engage in discussions about power, the oppression of women, and sexual harassment of women and men.

## partnership and exchange

Increasing financial resources is just one component of strengthening organizations. Working together, CFYS partners will identify other capacity building areas such as organization and staff development, documentation, staff and youth transitions, and membership development. Through annual partner gatherings, conference calls, and targeted one-on-one assistance, CFYS partners will work together to develop these capacities.

2005 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. This convening gathered Ms. Foundation staff, 11 donor partners, 24 program partners, 24 youth partners, and guests for two days of plenaries, workshops, team building, and fun activities.

Titled, “Changing the World with Youth in the Lead,” the convening modeled CFYS principles, including shared learning, value

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“IT’S NICE MEETING NEW PEOPLE THROUGH THIS FUND. WE LEARN NEW STUFF TO TAKE BACK HOME TO OUR GROUP. AND IT’S IMPORTANT FOR ME TO LEARN ABOUT OTHER CAMPAIGNS, LIKE THE NELLY VELASCO PROJECT (CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN’S DEVELOPMENT). IT’S EXCITING TO SEE OTHER GROUPS FIGHTING FOR GIRLS AND BOYS WHO DON’T HAVE MUCH OF A SAY ABOUT WHAT’S GOING ON AROUND THEM.” – KITTY PAGE, YOUTH LEADER, BLOCKS TOGETHER, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

**ANNUAL CONVENING:** A key venue for progress on the learning agenda is the annual convening. These meetings are opportunities for all partners to come together, step outside of their day-to-day work, share strategies for social change, and learn from each other’s experience. Key to this is the conscious effort to build partnership between and among donors, youth organization staff, and youth. The first annual convening was held in June

in diversity, and recognition of peer expertise among the donors, youth organization staff, and youth.

Youth and adult partners worked individually and together to design an event that met individual and collective needs. A first order of business was creating an environment where all were welcome, developing a common understanding and language for the

work, and crafting opportunities for participants to get to know each other and the work of each organization. Plenaries and workshops focused on programmatic issues such

■ **Youth Teach and Learn**—Youth had multiple opportunities through a youth advisory planning group to shape the agenda and design the meeting. Youth partners led presenta-

“FOR THE FIRST TIME MANY OF THE GIRLS ARE SEEING THEMSELVES IN RELATION TO THE COMMUNITY AROUND THEM. THEY ARE ON THIS THRESHOLD. THEY HAVE BUILT A LOT OF GOOD PERSONAL AND LEADERSHIP SKILLS. NOW THEY WANT TO CROSS OVER. FOR THEM, TO GIVE THIS WORK MEANING, THEY WANT TO TAKE IT OUT...TAKE IT OUT TO THEIR PEERS AND OUT INTO THE COMMUNITY. THEY’VE FOUND THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD AROUND THEM.” – COLLEEN FITZGERALD, PEARLS FOR TEEN GIRLS, MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN

as popular education, community organizing, and leadership development. In addition, sessions on organizational development explored new models of intergenerational power sharing in fundraising, evaluation, Board development, and management issues.

The focus on intergenerational work, especially modeling what we mean by youth-led, was apparent in the issues and approaches discussed at the convening as well as in how the convening was designed. Three examples include:

■ **Youth Challenge and Create Approaches**—Youth leaders, youth organization staff, and donor partners had opportunities to talk about how to create a shared assessment of the issues facing their organizations, communities, schools, and workplaces. The partners also strategized about ways that youth lead social change work and how approaches vary by community.

tions, workshops, and team building exercises, individually, and in conjunction with program staff.

■ **Youth Partner with Adults**—Youth, youth organization staff, and donors had a unique opportunity to share information and strategies with peers and other CFYS partners. The great diversity of participants—varied race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, geography, CFYS role—provided for a rich, learning environment that used everyone’s expertise.

The convening presented opportunities to talk about the theoretical underpinnings of the work as well as engage in the pragmatic exchange of a variety of models, experiences, and lessons learned. Most importantly, the convening modeled how CFYS hopes to build a true partnership among youth, donor partners, and staff of grantee organizations that strengthens and enhances youth-led social change work.

# intergenerational leadership

To ensure that youth are successful in leadership positions, they need to be exposed to varied approaches, receive support for their unique leadership style, and have opportunities to learn from experience. In thriving youth development and youth-led social change organizations, adult staff balance teaching and mentoring with providing youth with training and opportunities to make significant decisions. Teaching takes place between youth and other youth, and between youth and adults. For example, to fully embrace leadership, youth benefit from inclusion in the decision making positions within organizations, through service on Boards, finance and budgeting committees, and planning efforts. Our understanding of successful intergenerational leadership will be refined as the initiative unfolds.

To assist groups in assessing their approaches to leadership development and the roles that adults and youth play, CFYS partners developed a series of questions used on site visits. Some questions included:

- How are youth involved in decision-making in the organization and program?
- What are some challenges to youth leadership?
- How many youth are in your core leadership team? Who tends to be in this core leadership team? Is there rotation? What are the similarities and differences in the participation of girls and

boys, racially diverse youth, and older and younger youth?

- How are youth involved in the organization (Board, advisory group, part-time staff, paid interns)?
- What is the balance of adult supervision and youth autonomy?

Participants in CFYS address intergenerational leadership in a variety of ways, including:

- **Asian Immigrant Women Advocates**—Working with Asian youth in Oakland, California, this organization's Youth Build Immigrant Power Project (YBIPP) uses multiple strategies to cultivate leaders. Peer-to-peer leadership development occurs through youth-led trainings and workshops. Adult-to-youth leadership development occurs through adult staff and community members helping youth identify issues of concern to the community and crafting action campaigns. An example of intergenerational leadership occurred as youth identified the issue of the poor working conditions for immigrant women workers as a key community issue. Youth took leadership in raising awareness of the issue among community members, and worked with immigrant women workers to make demands to improve workplace conditions.

- **Sista II Sista**—This organization's Sistas Squads foster young women's growth in public

speaking, facilitation, and mentoring. This increased capacity lends itself to peer-mentoring and leadership development as program participants support other young women new to the program. Sista Il Sista uses a collective leadership model where girls, young women, and adult women are equally involved in planning and decision-making for the organization. Currently organizing to fight violence against women of color, young women in the program have raised awareness of the issue and challenged the police about their sexual harassment of young women of color in Bushwick, New York. These young women provided opportunities for other women—young and old—to talk about sexual harassment, their desire to see the violence stop, and how they can be involved in creating a solution. They have created intergenerational work teams to provide alternatives for women to turn to in cases of interpersonal violence.

■ **Young Women's Project**—Based on the experiences and input of young women leaders, the Young Women's Project's Teen-Led Projects combine a strong leadership development approach with social justice campaign work. To achieve both individual growth as well as collective action campaigns, young women work closely with peer mentors and adult staff to identify issues, create accountability within the group, and develop campaigns that benefit from the experience and guidance of youth and adults. For example, to improve the lives, rights, and opportunities of the more than 400 youth living in 30 Washington, DC foster care group homes, teens and adults worked together

to identify the problem, develop draft regulations, and conduct outreach to alert teens in group homes to their rights. Adults provided guidance to youth on how to craft the campaign, influence decision makers, and develop information and training curricula. Youth provided leadership to youth in foster care by developing information and training to help them know and act on their rights.

■ **Colorado Progressive Coalition**—Launched by two high school students who appreciated the mission of the Colorado Progressive Coalition (CPC) and wanted a greater role for youth, Students 4 Justice (S4J) works to raise awareness of issues affecting youth and communities of color, trains youth on campaign strategy and analysis, and provides opportunities for youth to engage in social change. To support the key role of youth in the organization, youth, with the support of CPC staff, developed an anti-ageism training for adult staff and Board members. In addition, youth representatives from three high schools serve on the Board, and youth take the lead in developing and implementing awareness and action campaigns. Youth surveyed 350 of Denver's Eastside residents and released a community report on racial profiling that resulted in the passage of one of the nation's toughest anti-race discrimination laws. They are also working to remedy racial tracking of students of color that dissuades them from college track classes and investigating the allocation of funds between public education and the construction of a \$100+ million jail.

## learning component

The CFYS learning component will engage all partners in a process of identifying, discussing, and documenting promising practices among organizations engaged in youth-led social change work. To this end, CFYS partners have agreed to participate in a learning component, which will include the documentation of capacity building and learning activities.

While Fund partners began to ask a number of questions in the early design stages and at site visits to select our grantee partners, the joint learning agenda is established with the active input of all partners,

including youth organization staff, youth participants, and donors. The first national convening provided the opportunity to identify themes that will be narrowed down to questions over the next few months. Key questions include: What are effective models for shared adult-youth leadership? How does youth-led social change look different in diverse communities and locations? And, how do gender and other identities impact youth-led social change work? Future convenings and site visits will provide opportunities to deepen shared learning on selected issues and questions.

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## conclusion

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change provides an exceptional opportunity to explore new directions in the fields of youth development and youth organizing. By developing a unique partnership among youth, youth organization staff, and donors, we can explore program models that take youth identities into consideration and build

the capacity of youth-serving organizations. CFYS will document lessons learned and share these findings with the field. Most importantly, by bolstering the practices of youth-serving organizations, youth leaders from across the country will be recognized and respected for their contributions to their communities and the youth fields.

# the ms. foundation for women collaborative funds

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-led Social Change is just one of the Collaborative Funds that the Ms. Foundation has launched.

The Ms. Foundation for Women was one of the first funders to establish a collaborative fund in which donors pooled financial resources and made decisions together about the Fund's direction. This is an especially attractive strategy in emerging fields where leveraging resources, educating donors, documenting lessons learned, and building capacity are crucial.

Ms. Foundation collaborative funds seek out a variety of donor partners, aiming for a mix of large national foundations, small family funds, and individual donors. Grantee partners are diverse by geography, racial, ethnic and gender identity, and organizational size and type. Donor partners join the collaborative funds with a minimum three-year contribution of \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 for institutions. Donor partners can join at different stages of a fund's cycle. Grantee partners are selected through a Call for Letters of Intent and Request for Proposals

process, and remain the same throughout the fund cycle.

Donors new to a field can significantly shorten their learning curve through exposure to more experienced donors, collaborative staff, grantees, and the host of resource people engaged by the collaborative. For donors already experienced in an issue, the collaborative is a useful mechanism to spread lessons learned and leverage additional resources for a field. For grantees, the collaborative offers the opportunity to reduce isolation, try innovative approaches, connect with donors and peer organizations from across the country, and learn from shared experiences.

The Collaborative Fund Model: Effective Strategies for Grantmaking, a publication of the Ms. Foundation for Women, outlines a four-phase model that takes collaboration partners from internal planning and collaborative education, to grantee selection, research, monitoring, and capacity building.

The Collaborative Fund Model: Effective Strategies for Grantmaking can be found online at [www.ms.foundation.org](http://www.ms.foundation.org).



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## GRANTEE PARTNERS

# organization overview

### **APPALACHIAN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP PROJECT-GIRLS'RESILIENCY PROGRAM**

8106 Court Avenue  
Hamlin, WV 25525  
Tel: (304) 824-5660  
Fax: (304) 824-5661

Email: awlp\_wv@yahoo.com

Founded in 1996, the mission of Appalachian Women's Leadership Project is to promote gender equity in a community, state, and region of the United States where traditional gender stereotypes continue to predominate. The Girls' Resiliency Program develops young women's leadership by providing skills training in areas such as Board leadership development, website and newsletter creation, and action research techniques. They are currently working on challenging school consolidation in their community.

### **ASIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN ADVOCATES- YOUTH BUILD IMMIGRANT POWER PROJECT**

510 Eighth Street, #301  
Oakland, CA 94607  
Tel: (510) 268-0192  
Fax: (510) 268-0194

Email: stacykono@aiwa.org

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) was founded in 1985 by union organizers, community activists, and immigrant women with the mission to improve the living and working conditions of Asian immigrant workers in low-income communities. The Youth Build Immigrant Power Project develops the leadership and organizing skills of youth through training and internship programs. Youth leaders partner with adults to challenge and change the poor working conditions of immigrant women in their communities.

### **BLOCKS TOGETHER-YOUTH COUNCIL**

3914 W. North Avenue  
Chicago, IL 60647  
Tel: (773) 276-2194  
Fax: (773) 276-2296

Email: Btogether@aol.com

Working on Chicago's Northwest side, the organization addresses the root causes of poverty and inequality and works to ensure that needed resources are invested in the community. Through the Youth Council, youth identify issues of high priority and develop action campaigns to address them. Recent issues include: police accountability, safety in schools, lack of after-school or alternative programming, lack of access to higher education, and school repairs.

### **CENTER FOR YOUNG WOMEN'S DEVELOPMENT- SISTERS FOR CHANGE PROJECT**

1550 Bryant Street, #700  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Tel: (415) 703-8800  
Fax: (415) 703-8818

Email: lateefahs@cywd.org

Founded in 1992, the organization works to support young women from low-income communities who are involved in the juvenile justice system to build healthier lives and communities. The Sisters for Change Project has provided workshops in juvenile hall, given follow-up training and employment advice to young women recently released from the juvenile justice system, and produced a handbook on the rights of incarcerated youth and their families.

**COLORADO PROGRESSIVE COALITION-  
STUDENTS 4 JUSTICE**

1420 Ogden Street, First Floor  
Denver, CO 80218  
Tel: (303) 866-0908  
Fax: (303) 852-6416

Email: [soyun@progressivecoalition.org](mailto:soyun@progressivecoalition.org)  
Colorado Progressive Coalition works to unite diverse communities to fight for social, economic, and environmental justice. Developed by two high school students, the Students 4 Justice project trains youth on issue identification, campaign development, public engagement and mobilization, and systemic changes for racial justice in education. The program also works with youth to put an end to unlawful racial profiling by law enforcement.

**GIRL SCOUTS OF THE MILWAUKEE AREA, INC.  
-CITY ACTION TEENS TEAMS**

131 South 69th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53214  
Tel: (414) 476-1050  
Fax: (414) 476-5958

Email: [triveraz@girlscoutsmilwaukee.org](mailto:triveraz@girlscoutsmilwaukee.org)  
Founded in 1912, the organization provides girls and young women from diverse backgrounds with opportunities to develop self-confidence, creativity, values and a sense of community responsibility. Volunteers from the City Action Teens Teams engage in a comprehensive leadership development program, which includes convening a Girls Summit on community issues, and implementing an action plan to increase access to health information in the Latino community.

**KHMER GIRLS IN ACTION**

2338 East Anaheim Street, Ste. 201A  
Long Beach, CA 90804  
Tel: (562) 856-2612  
Fax: (562) 856-2712  
Email: [quedang@earthlink.net](mailto:quedang@earthlink.net)

Khmer Girls in Action works to build a diverse and powerful base of women and girl leaders to advocate and organize for the well-being of Southeast Asian communities. Through leadership trainings, research, and cultural productions, the organization works with girls to create solutions and take action on issues that impact their lives and community. They are currently working on mobilizing their community around anti-immigrant policies.

**MASSACHUSETTS COALITION FOR OCCUPATIONAL  
SAFETY AND HEALTH-TEENS LEAD AT WORK**

12 Southern Avenue  
Dorchester, MA 02124  
Tel: (617) 825-7233  
Fax: (617) 929-0434

Email: [marcy.gelb@masscosh.org](mailto:marcy.gelb@masscosh.org)  
Founded in 1976, the organization is a coalition of workers from economically distressed communities and their allies in unions, community groups, colleges, and the legal and medical professions. The Teens Lead at Work project works with immigrant teens and teens of color from low-income communities to engage in social change activities related to their rights on the job. The program works with youth to identify workplace issues, discuss concerns, develop organizing strategies, and become worker advocates.

**PEARLS FOR TEEN GIRLS, INC.–****PEARLS POWER PROJECT**

2266 North Prospect Avenue, Ste. 520

Milwaukee, WI 53202

Tel: (414) 347-7555

Fax: (414) 347-7557

Email: colleen@pearlsforteengirls.com

Founded in 1995, the organization pioneered a leadership development approach that builds an unwavering belief in each girl's ability to lead, create, and make a difference. The PEARLS Power Project provides opportunities for girls ages 11 to 15 to apply consciousness raising, communication, and leadership skills to change the issues affecting them and the world around them. They are currently working on increasing access to comprehensive sexuality education in public schools.

**SISTERS IN ACTION FOR POWER–GIRLS IN ACTION FOR POWER**

1732 NE Alberta

Portland, OR 97211

Tel: (503) 331-1244

Fax: (503) 331-1287

Email: sisters@hevanet.com

Sisters in Action for Power works to develop a base of grassroots leaders that can influence institutions and reshape the dominant culture to promote racial, economic, and gender equity. The effort works to empower girls of color from low-income communities to take leadership, work intergenerationally for social change, and develop community-driven campaigns to address social and economic injustices. Examples of recent work include campaigns on transportation and land equity.

**SISTA II SISTA, INC.–SISTAS SQUADS****AND THE FREEDOM SCHOOL FOR YOUNG WOMEN OF COLOR**

89 St. Nicholas Avenue

Brooklyn, NY 11237

Tel: (718) 366-2450

Fax: (718) 366-7416

Email: paula@sistaiisista.org

Sista II Sista works to engage young women of color in personal and political development through an exploration of cultural identity, community organizing, and leadership training.

The Sistas Squads and Freedom School help young women develop a gender-conscious approach to self-empowerment through workshops, networking, and community action.

Current work includes addressing police violence against women of color.

**THE YOUNG WOMEN'S PROJECT–TEEN-LED PROJECTS**

1328 Florida Avenue, NW Ste. 2000

Washington, DC 20009

Tel: (202) 332-3399

Fax: (202) 332-0066

Email: nadiamoritz@youngwomensproject.org

Founded in 1992, the Young Women's Project is a multicultural organization that supports teen women and girl leaders to improve their own lives and transform their communities. The project trains teen staff and volunteers who educate and train their peers through workshops and issue campaigns. Campaigns on foster care and sexual harassment challenge and seek to improve teen-serving institutions through regulation and policy writing, events, public education, membership recruitment, and other strategies.

# acknowledgments

The Collaborative Fund for Youth-Led Social Change is a thriving network of funders and local youth serving organizations that together demonstrate the power and possibility of young women and men to actively engage systems to create positive change in their lives and their communities. As a national partnership representing a breadth of diversities including race, class, gender, sexuality, age, region, and type of social change, we learn from organizations that promote and support gender-conscious youth leadership and social change agency in local communities and beyond. The Ms. Foundation would like to thank the numerous partners who work hard and have fun to make this collaboration possible.

**DONOR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS:** Your significant financial and intellectual commitments enabled us to launch this fund, guarantee multi-year grants to the grantee partners and move to the “Learning” phase of our collective work. Thank you to our donor partners who represent a diversity of giving from individual donors, to women’s funds, family foundations, and corporate and independent foundations.

## **PARTNERS**

- Brico Fund, Milwaukee, WI
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- The Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial Fund (U.S.), Estherville, IA
- Dobkin Family Foundation, New York, NY
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- Appalachian Women’s Leadership Project, Hamlin, WV
- Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, Oakland, CA
- Blocks Together, Chicago, IL
- Center for Young Women’s Development, San Francisco, CA
- Colorado Progressive Coalition, Denver, CO
- Girls Scouts of the Milwaukee Area, Milwaukee, WI
- Khmer Girls in Action, Long Beach, CA
- Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health, Dorchester, MA
- Pearls for Teen Girls, Milwaukee, WI
- Sista II Sista, Brooklyn, NY
- Sisters in Action for Power, Portland, OR
- The Young Women’s Project, Washington, DC

**MS. FOUNDATION STAFF AND CONSULTANTS:** From communications to development to program, we are a collaboration within a collaboration. Thank you for holding the partnership together through expertise, hard work and a sense of humor.

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