

WGA Agency Convening

August 6, 2018

Convening Participants

Agencies

Linda Ellis, Barnabas
Wanda Lanier, Barnabas
Kelly Franklin, Betty Griffin Center
Joyce Mahr, Betty Griffin Center
Lauren Hopkins, Catholic Charities
Crystal Taylor, Catholic Charities
Vicky Basra, DBWPC
Mary Anne Jacobs, Girl Scouts
TriciaRae Stancato, Girl Scouts
Kristi Brandon, Hubbard House
Stephanie Majeskey, JF&CS
Colleen Rodriguez, JF&CS
Judy Bradshaw, Learn to Read
Jessica Richter, Learn to Read
Lauren Goode, Micah's Place
Heather Jones, Micah's Place
Rena Coughlin, Non Profit Center
Ana Martinez-Mullen, Quigley House
Jennifer Rodriguez, Quigley House
Mary Pat Corrigan, Volunteers In Medicine
Faith Hall, Volunteers In Medicine
Teresa Miles Women's Center of Jax
Eileen Rodden Women's Center of Jax

Women's Giving Alliance

Julie Davis
Jan Healy
Jennifer Kowkabany
Allison Newberry-Dennis
Maureen Paschke
Tammy Shumer
Linda Simmons
Barb Wenger

Mary Pietan – By Phone
Ellen Wiss – By Phone

The Community Foundation

Teri Calinao
Kathleen Shaw

Introduction

WGA seeks out feedback from our grantee agencies in a couple of ways at a minimum – through site visits and reporting throughout the grant period and also by convening the agencies once a year. We learn the latest news in our focus area of interest and also to learn what WGA can do better, both in serving the community and in our grants process. This year we convened the agencies with our last mental health grants along with the agencies who received our first grants regarding breaking the cycle of female poverty.

That group of senior staff members from the agencies met on August 6 to share with WGA and with each other. Thirteen agencies attended, and were honest, open, and forthcoming about the current state of mental health services and female poverty issues. Here are some of the most telling (and sometimes alarming) facts that these leaders shared with us:

- The general consensus is that while we work hard to help women out of poverty one woman at a time, poverty is really a systemic societal issue – a community problem more than an individual problem.
 - Some neighborhoods have no grocery store, no bank, higher prices, and so on.
 - One agency said we need to do what we did in our Mental Health focus. You need to start talking about the issues, convene community leaders and advocate for systemic change.
- There is a great lack of female mentors – girls need exposure to more women of stature, more women who are confident and successful in all aspects of life.
 - There is a reluctance for mentors to venture into the critical zip codes because of safety issues.
- Confidence and self-esteem are essential for young girls so that they believe they can have a better life – this is not occurring in the early, formative years when it is critical.
- Sometimes poverty is seen as an easier path – it's often difficult to visualize a life out of poverty because of generational poverty. The role model that most girls have is their mother – so they tend to “stick by her” and carry on her life in poverty.
- Skill building is essential for young women.
 - They need to learn to budget, open a checking account, learn about credit scores, the dangers of high interest loans, etc. Many women question why no one ever taught them financial literacy in high school before they got out into the world on their own.
 - Women who do build their skills are sharing that knowledge with their kids with a multi-generational impact.
- Research shows that girls are feeling unsafe at home, at school and in their community in Florida – more than any other state. Florida ranks 39th in the nation for the status of girls.
- A working person with a high medical insurance deductible is only one step from financial devastation if they encounter a medical issue. VIM has seen their patient volume go up 18% this year. They expect it will go up higher because the penalty for no Affordable Care Plan was lifted.

- Affordable housing and available, affordable transportation are on-going needs.
 - Domestic Violence shelters are seeing longer stays in shelter because affordable housing is so hard to find. This makes it difficult for them to make room for emergency residents who are in danger.
- Research shows that pre-school has a significant impact on success later in life. There is a lack of quality and affordable childcare/preschool.
 - More preschoolers get expelled from daycare than from high school. This is because of behavior issues. Since there is a waiting list for pre-school, they kick the kids out and get a new child. Those misbehaving kids are often kids that are in homes with domestic violence that need these services most.
- Systems that are in place in housing developments have been set up to make it difficult to challenge (to get repairs done and to have basic tenant's rights met). These systems benefit the landlords. There are many barriers to getting basic tenant's rights addressed and to navigating complex housing systems. This is a community issue that needs to be changed.
- Being poor is hard but many women/girls also don't have the emotional support they need. We call this emotional poverty.
- Access to birth control keeps girls/women in school and work. It is the best preventive measure to keep women out of poverty.
- Huge numbers of women are coming forward to expose sexual assault and abuse (as a result of the Me, too movements). We need to expose generational incest and bring this issue to the forefront.
- Policy changes are essential – especially in the areas of pay equity and minimum wage.

Ways WGA can help:

- WGA needs to do what they did for Mental Health – they started talking about Mental Health and got the ball rolling. It changed the community as a result. The same needs to happen for Poverty.
- Help change the dialogue around poverty.
 - Increase community understanding on the issues. This will help shift people's thinking and myths will be busted.
 - Help start community conversations to bring movements toward legislation.
 - Become a voice in the community on this issue.
 - Make specific issues the focus of advocacy.
 - All groups should stand together – currently we have a lack of joint efforts in advocacy.
 - Change the message from “Breaking the Cycle” to “Finishing Poverty”
- WGA needs to be more vocal
 - Call people (politicians, corporations and community leaders) to task for their actions.

- Make people “squirm”. When decision makers “feel the pain,” they are more likely to fix the problems.
- Speak boldly about girls – they are our future. We all need to stand together and work together.
- Encourage WGA members to become Mentors to provide needed role models
 - Need more volunteers on an episodic volunteer basis to work alongside our partner agencies near where these girls live.
- Feminine hygiene products are not covered by SNAP (food stamps) funds. WGA members could donate basic personal hygiene products (tampons, shampoo, lotions, etc.) to help girls and women maintain dignity.
- Many agencies have excellent programs that help move women out of poverty. However, there is a very significant time commitment to participate. “Life” often gets in the way. Some of these women are working so hard at their job that they are exhausted when they try to take part in programs to build the skills they need to improve their life. Often program participants need to take advantage of opportunities to pick up work and they are not able to complete the program. If there were ways to augment client income so that they didn't have to miss an agency's training/counseling/education for work, there could be a higher completion rate and greater success.
 - Provide augmentation of a living wage so women have time to get skills they need to improve their employment status.

WGA Grants Process – what is working well and what could be changed/improved?:

WGA's Process is VERY long

- Length of the WGA's process discourages application to other organizations/funders for the same funding (and can derail the project if WGA doesn't fund their project)
- Timeline hurts leveraging funds
- July 1 is the fiscal year start for most agencies. Not knowing proposal outcome until October affects agency budgeting.

Not fully funding a grant request is hard – agency may not be able to offer the program in question with reduced funding.

LOIs

- They tend to like the LOIs.
- If moved forward, agencies would like to know what additional information is requested. This would require a personal RFP approach to each agency.
- Could the LOI and RFP be one document? They could just enhance certain sections if they move to the RFP stage.

RFP

- Limited character counts are difficult
- Can you add an “open question” so the agency can elaborate on a story or tell you what they

want you to know?

Agencies like multi-year grants. Thank you for doing 2 year grants!

The new project budget form was well received

Would like more time from grant approval to implementation/start date

- Negotiate grant start date with each agency based on their project and how much lead time is needed to start up? For instance, if the grant involves the hiring of personnel, then starting the grant in a few months would be better for the agency.

Should WGA have a negotiated grant where we tell the agencies what we want instead of the agencies telling us what they want to do? This would provide a different ways of getting “organized collaboration”.

Some wondered if WGA would share Decision Team scoring on RFPs. They were told to talk to Joanne Cohen who keeps notes about the concerns of DT members.