Your Women’s Fund. Mobilized.

2020 Impact Report
The Women’s Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation leads our community in ensuring the economic self-sufficiency of women in our region and ignites a shared desire to improve it.

In 1995, our organization set out to improve the status of women in our region. What started as an idea has grown into a robust movement of people who are committed to speeding the pace of change for women’s self-sufficiency.

We are a leader, bringing people and information together to find the mutual advantage. We are a partner, channeling support and resources into making systems more equitable. And we are a catalyst, changing hearts and minds across our community.

The Women’s Fund is leading the charge for women to thrive in our region and blazing a trail for the nation to follow.
Dear Women’s Fund Supporters,

When faced with the overwhelming challenges of 2020, your Women’s Fund mobilized. Remotely, quickly, courageously and with intention.

The pandemic painfully illuminated what we already knew: our system is fragile. Women and people of color hold essential roles that keep our society moving. These jobs are also underpaid and undervalued. Thanks to our decades of experience in women’s employment issues, we were able to elevate the challenges of these workers quickly and competently during the pandemic. As we begin to recover, we will continue to work with employers to improve the quality and stability of jobs.

The pandemic was also a perfect storm for our childcare ecosystem. Quality, affordable, accessible childcare is a critical infrastructure need. It allows people to work and gives kids the tools they need to thrive socially and academically. Your Women’s Fund will be relentless in keeping the focus on jobs and childcare during the recovery and beyond. The health of our community hinges on it.

Last year also brought a powerful racial awakening across our country and world. Racial inequities are embedded across all of our systems and you can’t address gender without also addressing race. We continued our intersectional work with ground-breaking new research centering Black women in our economy. The startling and appalling findings will further activate the targeted and urgent efforts of your Women’s Fund.

No doubt, 2020 was a challenging year but it also spurred awareness and action on the most pressing issues we work on each day. Your support fuels our work and speeds the pace of change for gender equity. We are deeply appreciative.

Onward!

Lisa FitzGibbons
Leadership Council Chair

Meghan Cummings
Executive Director
“Everybody deserves and wants a better life. Everybody wants better schools for their kids, equal access to transportation, and quality employment.”

Kendra Davis

Kendra is a single mom, tax examiner, and community advocate. Through her work with Cohear, a community engagement company connecting decision makers with everyday experts, and Champions of Change, a leadership program for folks seeking to advance Black-led ideas, she’s grown into a fiery voice fighting for grassroots change from within. She laughs when she says she might run for office someday, but this woman has a serious plan, an enormous heart, and more.

“I’m really starting to become a champion for local. People can live in great cities and live in horrible states. People can live in great states and live in a horrible country. Local matters. It matters so much more than what we let ourselves get distracted by. Federal is federal, but local, I swear to God… Going to vote is so important for me right now. I kind of got caught up in that generation where it didn’t really matter. They didn’t tell you where to vote when it matters. That the primary matters a lot more than just that presidential election. Knowing who’s in your city council matters a lot more. Paying attention and reading an editorial every now again about what they’re thinking to do, whether it’s a highway, or a road, or construction… You need to know what’s going on.”

The Women’s Fund partnered with Women of Cincy to highlight the stories of Black women navigating life in Cincinnati, in a spotlight called Questioning the American Dream: A Look at the Economic Mobility of Black Women in Cincinnati. To read the full story, visit WomenofCincy.org.
Learning, listening and lifting is a specialty of the Women’s Fund.

Leaning on community voice has always been important, especially in times of crisis. We feel it is important to elevate and mobilize the voices of those who live closest to the pain. We partnered with Women of Cincy to produce six stories spotlighting the economic mobility of Black women in Cincinnati. This partnership truly allowed us to connect our work to the experiences of friends, family, neighbors, and co-workers. We are proud to feature these stories throughout this year’s Impact Report.

Appointed.

Appointed is a non-partisan initiative that identifies opportunities for women to serve on civic boards and commissions. We provide support and training opportunities and are a resource available to connect elected officials to interested board candidates.

Appointed held several virtual events, including our annual Appointed 101 training, a special Appointed Tomorrowland Townhall and a virtual happy hour for appointees. We also partnered with All-In Cincinnati to host a Civic Engagement Training event aimed at supporting Black women in Hamilton County. Appointed continues to grow with almost 600 members representing all eight counties that the Women’s Fund serves. Our goal is to reach gender parity on all civic boards and commissions by 2030!

From “A Conversation With...” to “A Late Summer Afternoon With...Nikki Giovanni.”

Our signature fundraising event was cancelled; however, the Women’s Fund tribe was able to spend an afternoon with award-winning poet, educator, and mother, Nikki Giovanni - all in the comforts of our own spaces. We chatted with the Cincinnati legend as she reflected on the power of words and the importance of seeing purpose in every living thing. Kyla Woods, local media talent, served as our special event moderator. What a wonderful way to be reminded of the importance of our mission!
Women’s Fund Advisory Council

Decision-making power should live in the hands of people closest to the issue. Through our partnership with Cohear, we convene a group of everyday experts – women who are directly experiencing the cliff effect, barriers to child care and economic mobility, or understand the limitations of low-wage jobs, to advise our work. This council informs our research and advocacy efforts by using their experience to contextualize systemic issues in their own lives. They were also instrumental in our COVID-19 mobilization efforts. This Advisory Council also makes the grantmaking decisions for our Fund.

Impact Story

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, we connected with Cohear to talk to furloughed women about the technical limitations of SNAP benefits. We learned that EBT cards could not be used to purchase groceries via delivery or pick up (ex. Kroger Click list pick up). We used this insight to:

- Encourage the Greater Cincinnati Foundation to fund food delivery organizations,
- Influence the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund strategic team to fund a non-profit that specializes in grocery delivery for EBT card holders,
- Advocate to state and federal legislators to adjust rules around EBT cards, and
- Collaborate with the All-In Cincinnati Coalition to get Kroger to accept EBT cards at pick up of groceries.

Advocacy & COVID-19

As our government leaders addressed this national crisis, we remained focused on advocacy, paying attention to how COVID-19 impacted our low-wage workforce. We tracked federal, state and local legislation and participated in regular virtual meetings with those most affected to understand evolving community needs in real time. We leveraged these learnings and knowledge to advocate for policies that would better support families and low-wage workers through this crisis.

$7.3 million granted to 260 organizations in collaboration with the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and other entities through the COVID-19 Regional Response Fund.
Investing in Women in Our Region

According to the IUPUI Women’s Philanthropy Institute’s 2020 Women & Girls Index, only 1.6% of charitable giving is directed towards organizations that focus on women and girls, despite an overwhelming need. Over our history, the Women’s Fund has invested more than a million dollars to non-profits, through both systemic and programmatic grants, that support the needs of women.

Congratulations
to Our Recipients Who ReceivedGrant Funding in 2020!

Programmatic Grantees

Systemic Grantees
Shonetina Benson

“As a single parent, as a Black single parent, we have to get two, three jobs just to keep a roof over our heads and get food. We can’t sit down and do homework with our kids. We can’t go to all of our kids’ events.”

From a false eviction to housing insecurity to being undervalued in the workforce, Shonetina Benson has experienced a number of the economic barriers many Black women face every day. As a single mother, she’s worked tirelessly to provide better opportunities for her daughter, making tough sacrifices in the process. She shared her story with us – the happiness and the pain – with honesty and grace, beaming with joy as she talked about her daughter, her new business ventures, and what makes a home a home. Shonetina has a peaceful demeanor and an infectious laugh that entices you to join along, reminding you that although life is hard, there are blessings and sparkles of light in between the shadows.

“Women are not appreciated at all in the workplace. We make less money but we’re doing most of the work. You don’t want to pay us; when you give us our yearly evaluation, you want to give us 20 cents. The department managers get large bonuses. We have to get a second or third job to survive when they only work one job. And they don’t have to worry about how they’re going to get to work or how they’re going to pay a bill. In my department, 90 something percent is Black. All struggling. While struggling, we get belittled.”

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Through a deep and informed understanding of the current barriers to economic self-sufficiency, we are reimagining an equitable tomorrow.

The 2028 Jobs Outlook Report, released in 2018, revealed alarming data about the economic well-being of Black women: In 2018, their median annual earnings were approximately $24,100, which is on average 36 percent lower than median annual earnings across all workers in the MSA, and 42 percent lower than the Self-sufficiency Standard. These data points and the national conversation compelled us to launch a comprehensive research project on the economic mobility of Black women – the first of its kind for our region!

The pandemic required us to think about new ways to keep our region informed about barriers to economic self-sufficiency. We developed Tomorrowland Townhall to create a direct line of communication from our community experts to our Women’s Fund tribe. We want to engage, inspire and provide a deeper understanding on issues germane to our work, while connecting and networking, free of charge. Topics included: childcare, allyship, and civic engagement.

Our non-profit partners are critical to our mission. The Women’s Fund regularly convenes about 35 agencies to understand the trends, opportunities, and roadblocks they are experiencing as they serve women and their families. We hosted our community convening in July to discuss the Cliff Effect and new barriers caused by COVID-19. Through these conversations and based on their expertise in the field, our research and advocacy agendas are developed. This helps the Women’s Fund be as responsive and helpful to the ecosystem of nonprofits as possible.
Black Women’s Economic Mobility Project

The Women’s Fund launched our multi-phased research series on Black women’s economic mobility. This series consists of three papers: a historical analysis of labor trends and systemic barriers to employment, a deep dive in regional economic data, and a qualitative study of approximately 30 interviews with Black women to understand their economic mobility journey. Each phase concludes with systemic policy recommendations that could help uplift Black women’s access to economic self-sufficiency.

It will take many bold and sustained policy actions to create a pathway to equity and mobility for Black women.

The history of Black women’s employment is consistently one of restriction, low wages and onerous work.

Despite the advancements of the Civil Rights era, Black women today are still overrepresented in low-wage jobs.

Black women are paid significantly less than their male and white counterparts.

The wage gap for Black women cannot be totally explained by accounting for differences in education, experience, union membership or region of the country.

The United States occupational structure remains segregated along lines of race and gender.

Stereotyping and structural racism continue to deeply affect the occupational sector.

The difficult journey to economic self-sufficiency for Black women has been exacerbated during the current pandemic and recession.

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Three important facts about gender and racial pay gaps:

- They exist at every level of the economy.
- The narrowing of these gaps has stalled over the past 20 years.
- When an occupation has a majority female and/or minority workers, the average pay is lower.

In October, the first paper was released and illuminated the intentional discrimination against Black female laborers over our country’s history.
Kurstin Jones, a social worker for The Salvation Army, has a passion for helping people reach their greatest potential. From housing to childcare to the workforce, Kurstin is open and honest about the uphill battles her clients face. She is undoubtedly committed to untangling the systems that have created generations of inequality and continue to function as roadblocks for the many women she works with every day.

“As a social worker, I have a lot of [clients who are] part-timers. And the ones that are working full-time, I mean, they aren’t making it. And what messes it up is that if they are working full-time and trying to get assistance through Jobs and Family Services, they make too much money. It’s like, I can budget them all day long, but we can only stretch a dollar so far.” This occurrence is called the “Cliff Effect.” The Cliff Effect is when a small increase in wages triggers a complete loss of benefits, almost always leaving families in a worse off situation financially.

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We bring together community members and decision makers from government, non-profits and the business community to enact long-lasting change.

Systems change is both a process and an outcome that can positively affect everyone. What would it mean to balance our attention on both the barriers presented to women in our region with the barriers created by the systems and institutions they come into contact with? Improving these circumstances for women in our region involves changing systems.

The Cliff Effect

In July the Women’s Fund released an updated research report on the Cliff Effect. This update focused on more recent data and Ohio-specific policies. The Women’s Fund began studying the Cliff Effect in 2012 and has since produced four research reports diving deeper into this topic. Currently, we are advocating at the State level to change eligibility requirement for child care vouchers, smoothing the “cliff” for thousands of Ohio families.

The Cliff Effect is a threshold where a family or individual becomes ineligible for public benefits due to a small raise or promotion, causing their total gross resources to decline. It creates a disincentive for individuals to transition off public benefits and negates the primary objective of these programs— to help lift people out of poverty.

Diaper Changing Table Ordinance

In May, we supported legislation passed by Cincinnati City Council to make diaper changing stations available to all caregivers, regardless of gender, in new and renovated public buildings. When a changing station is only available in the women’s restroom, it reinforces outdated gender norms that suggest caring for children is the primary responsibility of the woman. This law is a clear way to make our spaces more equitable by design. We’re continuing this work through our partnership with P&G on the Pampers Love the Change program, which provides free changing tables to organizations and businesses for their public men’s restrooms.
Employer Toolkit 2.0

February 2020, we relaunched our Employer Toolkit website. Created through extensive research, the Employer Toolkit is a collection of nearly 60 workplace policies that can help support, stabilize, and retain lower-wage employees. The new website includes:

- a dynamic search feature,
- a resource center,
- additional information on gender-based violence & second chance hiring in the workplace.

The resource was also updated to better meet the needs of employers and enhance our data collection, so that we can better understand the interests of employers using the Toolkit.

Access the Employer Toolkit at www.Toolkit.cincinnatiwomensfund.org

The Employer Toolkit’s Reach

Registrations from:
- 936 unique companies
- Across 40 states
- 52% in the Cincinnati area

Most downloaded/accessed policies:
- 90-Day Probationary Period
- Workforce Coach
- Family Leave Policy

Most popular industry/sector:
- Non-Profits
- Health Care
- Information Services
**Transportation Levy**

The Women’s Fund was proud to endorse Issue 7, the Hamilton County transportation levy passed by voters in March. This levy strengthens our regional public transportation system, making it more accessible and equitable for all, including women and low-wage workers. It does this by providing expanded and more frequent bus service, increasing access to jobs, eliminating bus transfer fees and creating a fund for free or discounted bus passes to low-income residents. We were proud to publicize our endorsement and stand with a broad coalition of stakeholders who championed this important community issue.

**Gender Equality Task Force**

In May 2017, the City of Cincinnati became the eighth local government in the nation and the first in Ohio to pass a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) ordinance, signaling the importance of recognizing gender equality in city operations. A 14-person task force examined the composition and pay differentials in departments using HR resources, and took a deeper dive into five City departments. Meghan Cummings was the co-chair, and our team lead the effort to put together the final report to share to City Council. Among the recommendations made to the Mayor and City Council are:

- Create a permanent gender equity department and commission
- Elevate community voice during decision-making
- Increase implicit bias and cultural competency training for all city employees

Go to our website to view the remaining recommendations and access the rest of the report.

**Solidarity**

The murder of George Floyd fiercely fueled racial unrest in 2020. We never want to forget this and how we responded with our statement of solidarity. We urged local institutions to disaggregate data by race, involve more people of color at decision-making tables and evaluate how their policies and practices can have a negative effect on the Black community.
**Women’s Fund Statement of Solidarity**

The Women’s Fund of the Greater Cincinnati Foundation stands in solidarity with those who are speaking out and demanding justice.

We share the rage, exhaustion and frustration about the glacially slow progress on issues of racial injustice. And, yet, we are optimistic that the issues of structural racism and economic disparity are now receiving the urgent attention from our nation in the way they deserve.

Our current national outrage is layered upon the instability, fear and economic uncertainty exacerbated by the COVID pandemic. Make no mistake, our African American neighbors are shouldering the brunt of both epidemics disproportionately because of systemic issues—the very issues we are working to eradicate.

It shouldn’t take senseless deaths and a pandemic to realize the need for seismic changes in our society, yet here we are. We will leverage the public zeitgeist on these issues to push for the systemic changes necessary to propel our community to be more just and fair.

**The Women’s Fund can’t possibly build an equitable tomorrow without centering racial equity in our gender equity efforts. The two are inextricably linked.**

Now is a time for deep personal and organizational reflection and, we at the Women’s Fund are reflecting on our own actions and findings ways we need to improve. We have not been perfect. The women’s movement has centered the needs of white women for far too long. We are in this together and we are recommitting that women of color have power and voice to drive the Women’s Fund’s mission. One of the most critical measures of our work is how it positively impacts women of color and improves their economic condition. If there have been times when you haven’t felt heard in this movement, we deeply apologize. We must and will do better.

We are working tirelessly to get more women and specifically women of color at decision-making tables across our community. We want the viewpoints of everyday experts to hold just as much weight and power as people representing institutions. Our trajectory should be decided by those who reflect the demographics of the community. Join us by making your decision-making bodies more diverse and including the folks ‘closest to the pain’ of the issue you are discussing.

There should not be a study or a piece of research conducted in this community that doesn't disaggregate data by race and gender. Only then can we see and act upon the stark inequities that persist in every single area of our society-- from health outcomes to housing access, wage gaps to educational attainment. Join us by looking at your data with an intersectional lens and focusing your efforts on those experiencing the greatest inequities.

We are learning together how explicit and implicit race and gender discrimination has been baked into public policy over the course of our history. The effects of these policies compound over time, creating and widening disparities in our community that are difficult to reverse. The Women’s Fund is working to address policies around public benefits, the wage gap and specific workplace practices that affect low-wage workers. Join us by examining policies that govern your own sector. As new policy is created, does it specifically consider the effect it will have on people of color and women?

Your Women’s Fund is committed and mobilized. Alongside of you, we will continue to fight for a just and vibrant society where everyone can participate, prosper and reach their full potential.

In solidarity,

[Signature]
Now, more than ever, is the time to fuel the work of the Women’s Fund. When we faced crisis, our donors and volunteers stepped up in unimaginable ways. 

Mobilizing our mission through giving – the highest in Women’s Fund history!

$1,052,038
Recieved in 2020

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<th>Total Raised in 2020</th>
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PERSONAL PROPERTY

MATCHING GIFTS

BEQUESTS

LIFE INSURANCE

Greater Cincinnati Foundation
720 E. Pete Rose Way, STE. 120
Cincinnati, OH 45202

cincinnatiwomensfund.org
SPARK Change with Us!

Friday, September 24th through Sunday, September 26th. But, SPARK live with your Women’s Fund on Saturday, September 25th at 2pm EST.

Women’s Fund SPARK parties, our annual fundraising event, provide spaces for you to join the movement for gender equity in our region. We’ve reimagined our annual fundraiser and we’ve decided to bring the SPARK to you - there is a space for everyone to shine.

Learn more about our SPARK Parties at, cincinnatiwomensfund.org