

Scholarships to Support Engagement of Low-Income Women in the Women's Foundation of Oregon

Grant Type: **Dollar support**

Dollar Amount: **\$4,000 in 2015; \$7,000 in 2016**

Foundation Name: **Doll Family Foundation**

What was your objective with the grant or initiative?

To help bridge the divide between low-income women in Oregon and the civic and philanthropic opportunities available to them, the Women's Foundation of Oregon, a statewide foundation whose mission is to focus the power of women's collective resources to improve the lives of women and girls throughout Oregon, launched a scholarship member program in 2015 with assistance from the Doll Family Foundation.

Of the foundation's three priority grant areas, this endeavor aligned with two—women's issues and promoting philanthropy—and centered on Portland, OR, one of the foundation's four geographic focus areas. In 2016, the Doll Family Foundation made a follow-up grant in support of this program.

What were the results of this grant or initiative?

The Doll Family Foundation's 2-year support of this new venture means that more than 100 low-income women—from late teens to retirement age—will participate as full members in the Women's Foundation of Oregon. Scholarship recipients will get to vote on grant distributions, have opportunities to serve on the Women's Foundation's board of directors and committees, and be invited to events and programs held by the Women's Foundation. This undertaking helps fulfill the Women's Foundation "identity as a public foundation by and for all women in Oregon." Scholarship recipients also will benefit through support services provided by a network of community-based organizations that the Women's Foundation of Oregon has built.

Why would you say this grant or initiative had outsized impact?

These two modestly sized grants impact how the Women's Foundation of Oregon operates and the lives of the scholarship recipients who participate in this venture. The Women's Foundation of Oregon is making structural and cultural changes to ensure it is a fully inclusive organization. This endeavor has expanded philanthropy beyond traditional participants to provide access to the kind of philanthropic decision making typically made in private foundation boardrooms. The Women's Foundation of Oregon also is adapting its work to reflect and further engage new participants by preparing materials in Spanish and English; using new media platforms for young women, homebound people, and elderly people; and reaching out to traditionally underserved neighborhoods.

Research has suggested that civic participation significantly improves participants' lives, regardless of their income. The Women's Foundation of Oregon has demonstrated that low-income women, when given the opportunity, want to be engaged civically. Scholarship recipients will enrich the Women's Foundation decision making. They also will benefit from productive engagement in their community and the support system provided through this venture.



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