“It made us feel seen, respected, and worthy.”

Grantee experiences with WCA Foundation’s Multi-Year General Operating Grant Pilot

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INTRODUCTION

The WCA Foundation launched its multi-year general operating (MYGO) grant pilot program in winter of 2023.

To identify prospective grantees, Minneapolis Foundation staff reviewed past WCA Foundation grantee organizations and selected several organizations to interview for initial screening through prospect calls (see Appendix A for this interview protocol). Minneapolis Foundation staff prepared memos summarizing these interviews and shared them with a ten-member WCA Foundation working group who made funding decisions.

Through this program, WCA Foundation members selected six organizations to receive MYGO grants of $30,000 per year. These grants were originally intended to be two-year grants, but WCA Foundation members decided to extend them for a third year.

GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

Beyond New Beginnings

Cornerstone Advocacy Services

Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery

Saint Paul & Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project

Wayside Recovery Center

Women's Advocates

About this Report

This report includes findings from a series of interviews with staff members from the six grantee organizations. These interviews were designed to collect data on the impact of the grants thus far as well as feedback on WCA Foundation's trust-based philanthropy approach (see Appendix B for this interview protocol).

The evaluator conducted one interview with staff from each grantee organization; one to three staff members from each organization participated. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were coded using an inductive thematic analysis approach with principles of trust-based philanthropy as analysis lenses.

All quotes in this report are from grantee staff who participated in the interviews, also referred to as "participants" and "interviewees." Some quotes have been lightly edited for clarity.

CONTEXTUAL NOTE

Grantee interviews were conducted in fall 2025, amidst a government shutdown that left many Americans without Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other social services. As many of the grantee organizations serve populations who receive SNAP benefits, the government shutdown was front-of-mind for many staff members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings

The WCA Foundation's multi-year general operating grant pilot has had a positive impact and was overwhelmingly well-received by grantees. All interviewees expressed satisfaction with WCA Foundation's approach, often highlighting the benefits of WCA's trust-based philanthropy principles.

WCA Foundation's grants supported organizations' innovation and stability while allowing them room for flexibility to meet changing needs and time to plan for the future. The grantmaking process went smoothly for grantees and they appreciated the positive community among grantee staff, WCA Foundation members, and Minneapolis Foundation staff.

In addition to affirming the positive impact of this pilot program, findings support the case for funders to consider multi-year general operating grants and a trust-based philanthropy approach more broadly as a means to positively impact their communities and cultivate meaningful partnerships with grantees.

"[WCA Foundation's] support has lifted a weight off of our shoulders and opened doors we didn't think we could knock on."

IMPACT AND SUCCESSES

- ➔ Multi-year funding supports innovation and stability.
- ➔ General operating funding supports flexibility and growth.
- ➔ The cohort model supports community and collaboration.
- ➔ The grantmaking process works well for grantees.
- ➔ Grantees experience positive relationships with funders.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

- ➔ Incorporate site visits for WCA members and grantees to see programming in action.
- ➔ Expand the cohort community to engage program staff and organizations' clients.
- ➔ Spotlight grantees to WCA Foundation and Minneapolis Foundation audiences.
- ➔ Extend the grant term or fund grantees for another term.

GRANTMAKING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Oct. 2023

Minneapolis Foundation staff invite ten former WCA Foundation grantees to participate in screening interviews

Nov. 2023

Minneapolis Foundation staff prepare memos summarizing the prospective grantee interviews

Dec. 2023

Based on interview memos, WCA Foundation MYGO working group recommends six organizations for funding

Jan. 2024

WCA Foundation advisory board approves grants to cohort of six organizations and distributes Year 1 funding

Jan. 2025

Second year of funding distributed

Apr. 2025

WCA Foundation advisory board considers and approves recommendation to extend funding for a third year

May 2025

Grantees notified of Year 3 funding

Jan. 2026

Third year of funding distributed

ABOUT THE GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS

Beyond New Beginnings provides stable housing and life skills training to mothers ages 18-26.

Cornerstone Advocacy Services provides housing and other services for victims of violence.

Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery provides shelter and home visiting services to families in crisis with young children.

Saint Paul & Ramsey County Domestic Abuse Intervention Project provides crisis intervention and support to victims of domestic violence.

Wayside Recovery Center provides wrap-around services to women with co-occurring addiction and mental health diagnoses.

Women's Advocates provides shelter, violence prevention and education programming, and affordable housing support for victim-survivors.

MULTI-YEAR FUNDING SUPPORTS INNOVATION AND STABILITY

Multi-year funding allows grantees to innovate and strategize instead of "chasing the next grant."

Participants shared that multi-year funding has given them space to proactively think about their work in new ways and take more innovative risks. Especially when working with people in crisis, organizations lack "the time to sit down and think, 'How would we take this to the next level?'" and time for "creative thinking." Multi-year funding allows organizations to dedicate intentional time to longer-term planning without worrying about future funding.

They can step away from "the constant chase for money … because that is so stressful and that can take away from your creativity and your ability to grow." One interviewee reflected that the multi-year funding "took a little pressure off" because they knew they could depend on the grant for multiple years.

"[Multi-year funding] allows us to think more strategically. We're not hopping from moment to moment, but rather can take what we're hearing and seeing from clients and think about planning in a different way: longer term, more client-driven, and better aligned with what they're needing to do, what they want to do."

Another interviewee explained that multi-year funding helps them plan their budgets more effectively, allowing them to "forecast in a better, more stable way." One explained that "it's a lot easier to make [budgeting] decisions if we can plan two years out."

"Having that flexibility and that reliability can allow for even some small risks: let's test this and see if this can help us in the future. … There aren't a lot of funding opportunities that allow for that."

GENERAL OPERATING FUNDING SUPPORTS FLEXIBILITY & GROWTH

General operating grants allow grantees to meet critical needs, using their expertise and discretion to allocate funds to priority areas.

The grantee organizations operate within rapidly changing conditions: serving people in crisis, managing physical buildings, and navigating unpredictable political and economic conditions that impact their work and clients. As organizations adjust to these changing conditions, they can apply general operating funds to meet shifting needs as they arise.

"We're working with a community where needs shift, demand shifts, trust shifts. It's hard to predict what women in crisis are going to need from year to year. … We are trusted to … give the best possible response to what's needed in that moment. "

General operating funds also allow organizations to keep their work client-centered, meeting clients' needs even at the individual level. One participant recalled, "We had a [client] that we were working with who needed something very specific to meet their needs around their well-being, and there was no other grant that would pay for something like that."

General operating funds have allowed organizations to create contingency plans for challenges they anticipate in the near future, such as reduction of SNAP benefits or rental assistance, and challenges they may encounter "20 years from now" due to current policy changes.

Several interviewees highlighted the contrast between WCA's grants and the more restrictive or prescriptive grants they receive from other funders, including the government. With general operating funds, grantees "can tailor to the needs of the people that we serve." General operating funds allow them to stay in compliance with more restrictive grants while meeting needs beyond the scope of those grants.

"$60,000 over two years is two people's salary who are doing direct service work. And that's two people who we don't need to squeeze into a federal grant, or need to make sure that they're doing exactly what this federal grant says and nothing that the grant says we can't do."

"We had one grant that had no staffing in it because [the funder thought] … 'We want all this money to go directly to participants in programming.' And I was like, 'That's great, but I don't have any money to pay the staff.'"

General operating grants allow organizations to invest in their operations and build organizational capacity.

Interviewees emphasized the importance of smooth operations within their organizations, an important but often overlooked aspect of running an impactful nonprofit. General operating funds are essential to these functions. This funding can be used to support strategic planning, program evaluation, and time for staff to brainstorm and reflect upon ways to improve their work and deepen their impact.

For some, this involved building administrative systems and improving organizational policies. One participant emphasized the importance of funding to cover a full audit: "to be able to have the resources to have a full audit, to be able to demonstrate impact in the robust way that we can … is just really critical." Others used the funding to support administrative staff roles, like finance and maintenance, or to hire contractors for marketing and fundraising support.

"Strategic planning is expensive and we can't always bill that back to our grant."

Some grantees used the grant to expand supportive partnerships. One organization was able to pay a stipend to compensate a former client to join the board of directors, ensuring their clients are represented on the board and this client can share their lived experience. A participant explained, "we can go out there and bring in more partners, whether those are volunteers or community partners."

"The importance of the back-of-house in infrastructure–that is an investment, and we can't do our work without a solid foundation."

Some interviewees also stressed the importance of general operating funds to cover things philanthropy "kind of takes for granted," like comfortable office furniture for staff or maintenance on their buildings: "We have a beautiful building and there's not a lot of funding that pays for the things that we need to upkeep."

Receiving funding from WCA Foundation increases organizations' capacity to pursue and receive additional funding.

Interviewees shared that this grant has helped strengthen their credibility with other prospective funders. Organizations have been vetted by two well-established foundations, which supports their case when soliciting funding from other funders. The general operating funds can also support evaluation, reporting, and additional activities that support fundraising. One participant commented, "we have the resources to demonstrate impact, which allows us to apply for more funding."

"[WCA Foundation's] support has lifted a weight off of our shoulders and opened doors we didn't think we could knock on."

Another participant explained that being part of WCA's grantee program will "absolutely" open the door to more funding: "It was very exciting to learn that we were chosen to be part of this exclusive group of six organizations who receive multi-year funding. That is definitely something I'm happy to talk about with … other funders, because I think it gives us credibility."

"If the WCA invests in us, that says a lot to other potential grantees because of the brand and the name and I know it raises eyebrows, it's like, 'Oh yeah.' So, there's that. We really feel that that helps with our fundraising."

THE COHORT MODEL SUPPORTS COMMUNITY & COLLABORATION

The grantee cohort community provided opportunities for organizations to learn from one another and establish partnerships.

Participants shared that when they got together at grantee convenings, they realized they faced many of the same challenges as their fellow grantees. One shared that it was affirming to hear "that we're all six of us going through a lot of the same things."

Participants were able to problem-solve together: "I think it's been good to talk about some struggles and challenges. And [ask others], 'How are you facing that? How are you doing that?'"

"Even though we've been [in this field] for a while, it's always good to hear what other people are doing. And it's good to hear about some of the new ideas that we might take back. Or who are some of the people we might connect with."

The convenings also provided attendees opportunities to network, which was particularly helpful as the organizations' missions are intertwined in a variety of ways. Several participants noted that they were able to make plans for referring clients to one another's organizations and had set up meetings to visit each others' sites.

"The community that comes with this grant … that really widens our network and resources as well."

In general, participants described a helpful sense of community among the grantees. One reflected that it felt good to convene with others with whom "you speak the same language" and "hold the same values." They noted that in this group, "you're with your own people; you're with your own kind. You don't have to explain everything."

"You're with people that not only understand, but champion each other."

REFLECTIONS ON A WOMEN-CENTERED COMMUNITY & GRANTMAKING FOCUS

Participants appreciated the focus on women both in terms of the grantmaking strategy and the community of mostly women among the grantees, WCA members, and Minneapolis Foundation staff. They described the environment as "inspirational" and "empowering."

"We're looking out for each other, we're supporting each other. We're not afraid to feel. We hold each other accountable."

Several participants also explained that women have a sense of shared understanding of the grantees' work and issues that impact women more generally. One reflected that women have a way of "caring about the work in kind of a different way." They also noted that "women get things done," protect one another, and "communicate on a different level."

"Women understand things, too. You don't have to explain, when you're hearing the people on the panel talk and say that the moms are going through this or that, they get it more. And it isn't like, 'Well, why didn't they think of this? How did they get themselves pregnant?' Well, they don't get *themselves* pregnant. There's just an innate understanding of women's situations."

What does it mean to focus on women?

A few interviewees brought up the fact that several grantee organizations serve women as well as adults of other genders and children of all genders, but in communications to WCA Foundation, they choose to focus on their services that most impact women. With this focus, WCA Foundation might be missing out on potential areas of impact or learning about facets of the work that might be considered, in the words of one participant, "more radical."

A participant suggested that one way WCA members and Minneapolis Foundation could begin introducing and exploring these ideas would be through some questions around the LGBTQIA community in a panel discussion as part of the next grantee convening, noting that "trans men and women have higher rates of sexual violence, domestic violence." This would allow grantees to "tell that whole story of who we're serving, and that there is such a great need for those services."

One interviewee shared this lens for considering an expansive approach to WCA's focus on women: "I think WCA would be a great example of the platform that as women, we don't only take care of one another, we also take care of those that need it most. And can be a leader in that field, which then is more inclusive as well."

This perspective shifts the focus from women specifically toward individuals of all genders who experience gender-based violence or inequity.

THE GRANTMAKING PROCESS WORKS WELL FOR GRANTEES.

WCA's simple screening, selection, and reporting process is easy for grantees.

When asked to reflect on how the grantmaking process went for them, many interviewees could not remember the process, noting that if it had been arduous or challenging they would have remembered it. One recalled that the screening process felt like the "right amount of information to capture what they're looking for" without being overwhelming, sharing that some grants require "like, eight pages for one thousand dollars."

Another explained, "[The screening process] allowed us to really focus the attention where it needed to be, and not necessarily spend four days trying to gather information."

"I think if nothing is standing out … I guess that sort of answers it. I mean, we all remember the things that are extra onerous, right?"

"I think one of the results of having an unobtrusive grant process is that we don't really remember it."

This approach, especially in contrast to the government funding most grantees also receive, is easier and simpler than traditional grants. One interviewee described government funding proposals as "cumbersome," although they are essential funding sources.

Some also shared that following the Feeding our Future scandal, nonprofits have been under "greater scrutiny" from funders, which makes the "contrast of that with trust-based philanthropy [feel] extra stark." One explained, "Post-Feeding our Future, we've seen crazy burdensome decisions being made at the grant management level of all of our state funders."

"The questions were not only thoughtful, they were intelligent."

One interviewee also said that it was "such a relief" to receive the second and third years of funding without having to re-apply.

A couple participants shared that WCA's approach allows for smaller or newer organizations to access funding more easily. A representative from a larger organization reflected, "that trust-based philanthropy piece allows for organizations that maybe don't have the infrastructure and longevity, and resources … to be able to take that next step to grow," explaining that the trust-based approach can "level the playing field" for organizations. A representative from a smaller organization observed, "I think WCA respects what we do and not the numbers," acknowledging that their relatively small client population may not have caught the eye of other funders.

WCA members have done their homework, showing up well-informed and curious to support and learn even more about grantees' work.

Interviewees explained that it was clear that WCA members had done their homework or "due diligence" and had a high level of understanding of each organization's work. They appreciated that they did not have to "do the basic 101, like 'Okay, this is what we do, this is why we do it,'" when talking with members.

"Everybody I've met from the WCA seems really intelligent and compassionate and well versed in what we're doing."

"They're confident about how they can support us and they ask good questions about what we need and how they can make it happen."

Interviewees reported overwhelmingly positive interactions in general with WCA Foundation members. One was struck by the amount of curiosity of everyone at the grantee convening: "Immediately walking into the door, I felt like I was approached by people wanting to know more about what we do or just share, talk … the curiosity, I think that hit me both times, is the curiosity of people were asking, they're curious about this and curious about that and the families and this and that." A participant reflected, "we don't get asked a lot of that stuff necessarily in a curious way" by funders.

"They understand the population that they're focusing on serving. And they genuinely love the population they try to serve. You can tell that."

"Immediately, when you work with the WCA Foundation, … you think, 'They get this.' It's not even like, 'Oh, they're the choir. I don't have to preach to the choir.' They're part of the team; they're part of this. They're part of this movement, and that makes a huge difference."

Grantees can share their stories of impact in a variety of non-required ways.

Participants appreciated that WCA does not require complicated reporting, instead encouraging grantees to demonstrate impact in ways that work for them. One shared they appreciated "not having heavy reporting responsibilities. Because we are, like most nonprofits, pretty weighed down with those already."

Many also valued the chance to share their stories at the annual convenings in a low-pressure setting. One noted that these gatherings "don't feel punitive" and another shared, "it's not a high-pressure event for us attending." By shifting opportunities to share impact from a report to the funder toward the grantee convenings, organizations can share with one another alongside their funders.

"It allows for us to learn from each other instead of us just like, 'Here's a report, here's what we're doing.'"

GRANTEES EXPERIENCE POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH FUNDERS.

Grantees' interactions with the WCA Foundation are relational, not transactional.

Interviewees described feelings of partnership and being in relationship with WCA Foundation, rather than a transactional funder-grantee relationship. One explained that supporting nonprofits is "not always a two-way street," but that their relationship with WCA "has absolutely been a two-way street and it's been lovely."

"It really feels like a true partnership."

Another noted that in their interactions with WCA members, it was clear that WCA members are "very sincerely committed and serious, in a really good way, to their goals as funding partners."

"Some of us are making waves and some of us are making trickles. But every time you push that water forward, it continues on and on to this greater, unstoppable wave of change. And that's what they [WCA] are part of. They are part of it."

"We love all of our grantors, but you don't always feel a connection like I feel a connection with WCA. Because they show up."

WCA demonstrates care, respect, and trust to grantees.

Participants reported feeling trusted, respected, and cared for by WCA, both in terms of interpersonal interactions and in the ways in which WCA supports grantees' work.

Several noted that WCA members seem to truly care about the organizations' work and that they are "very invested in the true meaning of philanthropy."

"[WCA is] providing really great support to nonprofits. But [they're] also using it as an opportunity to build awareness and understanding among members. And the value of that is huge."

Interviewees also noted that WCA trusts organizations to use grant funds responsibly without micromanaging or "trying to get in the weeds." Several emphasized the importance of this trust as organizations' clients' needs are constantly changing.

"From WCA, do I feel that they trust us to make the best use of the resource and put it where it's needed most in our organization? 100%."

Grantees value the annual convenings as a space to reflect, share, and celebrate their work with both funders and colleagues.

Participants shared overwhelmingly positive feedback about the annual grantee convenings, noting that they were well-run and a good use of their time. They appreciated time to connect with other grantees and with WCA Foundation members, especially in small group discussions. One shared that the conversations helped them build "meaningful relationships" and another appreciated that they happened without "that performative, surface stuff" that often occurs when interacting with funders.

> "Having opportunities to talk to funders, talk to WCA members, and to talk to our colleagues as well is kind of a rare opportunity."

An interviewee noted that in the environment cultivated at the convenings, grantees are able to have "really intentional conversations … where you're able to talk about real issues." They explained that this environment allows them to ensure clients' "stories are held with respect" and that they can share impact stories in ways that are meaningful for both funders and "for us who are living and breathing it every day."

Several also commented on the importance of the convenings as a time to step away from their "day-to-day grind" and reflect together, especially as many work in crisis settings. One reflected, "We're so often just like, head down, 'What do we need to get done today?'" explaining that they "don't really have intentional time together to talk about what we're experiencing commonly" and brainstorm solutions.

For most, the venue, timing, and length of the event worked well. They also appreciated that it was an "invite to attend" rather than a requirement of grantees.

> "We left [the convening] feeling like we were queens. … We got flowers, food, and people were sincerely glad that we were there. It was a nice feeling to be honored."

Grantees have had positive experiences with the Minneapolis Foundation.

Participants appreciated the Minneapolis Foundation staff and their coordination of the grant program and grantee convenings. One observed that the staff members who support WCA Foundation seem "a little bit more diverse in their experience that they come with to the Minneapolis Foundation," noting that several staff had come from fields outside of philanthropy prior to working at the Foundation. This interviewee shared that "this group seems to be connected and tied to the community in a different way" than others they had encountered in the philanthropic field. Others noted that the staff team is responsive, positive, well-rounded, smart, and informative.

> "It feels like this group of [staff] are leading for this current time."

One participant shared that they felt supported when staff reached out in January 2025 "when things were so wildly uncertain" to see how they could provide support, noting that the Minneapolis Foundation was "probably one of two [funders] that actually reached out during that time to see how folks were doing and what the needs were."

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

In interviews, participants were asked to share any aspects of the grantee experience and grantmaking approach that they felt could be improved. They did not have many suggestions for improvement, largely because they felt the WCA Foundation's approach is working well. In fact, one reflected, "I wouldn't change anything." Most suggestions identify areas to continue improving and growing, rather than addressing challenges or issues grantees experienced.

Incorporate onsite learning sessions so grantees have the opportunity to show their work to WCA members and the other grantees.

Several participants shared that they would enjoy either hosting WCA members and other grantees at their sites or visiting other grantees' sites. One reflected on the hospitality they had received from WCA and Minneapolis Foundation, and remarked that they would like to "do some hospitality in return."

"That's always something that we love–to have people come and see [our programming]. It's much easier to be able to be there and explain what it is that we do when people are there."

Others suggested hosting "an experiential visit," during which WCA members and other grantees could do volunteer work or other immersive activities to learn about an organization's work and see programs in action.

Expand the cohort community.

One participant suggested inviting clients to share their stories at the grantee convening, acknowledging that this can be exploitative, but also noting that they felt that the environment at the convenings "would be a safe space for folks to come in and engage and we can gain some insights." They felt the small group discussions would be an appropriate setting for WCA members to hear from clients.

Others suggested inviting program staff to attend convenings, allowing organizations to more effectively make connections that can support inter-program referrals and collaborations.

Spotlight grantees to WCA Foundation and Minneapolis Foundation audiences.

Participants shared that it would be helpful for WCA and Minneapolis Foundation to increase their public recognition of grantees. This would support grantees' marketing efforts and exposure to prospective funders. This could involve sharing about grantees on social media, recommending additional grants or funders to grantees, or making referrals between funders and grantees.

"Do you have a network of other funders that you can recommend? … [Can you] help to matchmake a little bit?"

Extend the grant length or continue funding existing grantees.

One participant suggested extending the length of the grant term from three years to five years or to award current grantees another three-year grant once the first term ends. This participant noted that often, funders want to seek "the shiny new thing" instead of providing the "consistency of continued multi-year funding" that supports organizations long term.

"[At the end of the grant period,] the rubber meets the road in what WCA wants to do. … We've had [other funders] be like, 'Oh, we believe in long-term, multi-year grants. So, we did one slate of people for two years here, and now we're going on to a completely new slate of people because we want to spread it around.' But you're just kicking that can down the road."

"Lots of foundations want to give to lots of different things. Because they're like, 'Ooh, this is shiny and new.' But then there's no long-term relationship with some of the funders. Then you just have all these little projects floating around and not people that have been invested in the work for a long time. We need all of those things. But that sustainable commitment is just so important."

CONCLUSION

The WCA Foundation's multi-year general operating grant pilot has had a positive impact and was overwhelmingly well-received by grantees. All interviewees expressed satisfaction with WCA Foundation's approach, often highlighting the benefits of WCA's trust-based philanthropy principles.

WCA Foundation's grants supported organizations' innovation and stability while allowing them room for flexibility to meet changing needs and time to plan for the future. The grantmaking process went smoothly for grantees and they appreciated the positive community among grantees, WCA Foundation members, and Minneapolis Foundation staff.

Several interviewees expressed the hope that this approach would become more common in the philanthropic field: "I would love to see it spread further and I think WCA is really leading in that space to an extent we're not really seeing anywhere else."

In addition to affirming the positive impact of this pilot program, findings support the case for funders to consider multi-year general operating grants and a trust-based philanthropy approach more broadly as a means to positively impact their communities and cultivate meaningful partnerships with grantees.

"During COVID, at the height of when things were feeling particularly [in] crisis, there were multiple funders who were like, 'You know what? Don't worry about reports, don't worry about applying this year, use the money however you need it.' And they just kind of pivoted to allow for greater flexibility. And I think at that time, as a sector we all kind of hoped that would be the way that it would continue. But I would say, with the exception of WCA, pretty much everyone went back to more of the traditional [grantmaking and reporting] process."

"The WCA funding has been instrumental in our ability to be able to provide services: 24-hour, multicultural, multilingual, responsive services to victims of domestic violence and their children."

"This money in our budget is life and death to the people we serve."

Appendix A

Prospect Call Grantee Interview Protocol (November 2023)

Q1. What have you learned in recent years about the barriers faced by the women your organization supports? How has this learning shaped or influenced your organization?

Q2. How might a flexible general operating grant help strengthen your organization overall and enhance your efforts to support women?

Q3. Has your organization undergone any significant changes at the leadership, programs, operations, or board-level governance during the past year? How have the changes impacted the organization's capacity to fulfill its mission and support women?

Q4. How do you assess your organization's impact on the people and communities you serve? Please briefly describe any quantitative and/or qualitative approaches you use.

Q5. What else would you like for me and the WCA members to know as we consider offering a general operating support grant to your organization?

Appendix B

Grantee Interview Protocol (October-November 2025)

Project Background: We have invited you to participate in this interview because you represent an organization that received funding as part of the WCA Foundation's pilot multi-year general operating granting initiative. The Minneapolis Foundation supports WCA Foundation's work through coordination and advising; in addition to WCA Foundation, TMF provides similar support to other collective giving groups. Your feedback today will be used to help TMF improve its support of WCA Foundation and other groups and to inform WCA Foundation's future strategic priorities.

Consent: I will be recording the audio from our conversation today (no video) and will transcribe the conversation. This allows me to stay present in the conversation and not worry about taking notes. My transcriptionist and I will be the only people who have access to the recording and the transcription.

I will analyze the transcripts of my interviews and share insights, themes, and quotes in a report to TMF. Quotes will not be attributed to specific interviewees. While I am careful to remove obviously identifiable information from data during analysis, the small group of interviewees and the specificity of your work makes it difficult to guarantee full anonymity. For this reason, please let me know if anything you share is "off the record."

Any questions? Do you consent to participate?

Introduction

Q1. Please share your name, organization, and role. How long have you been at your organization/involved with the WCA Foundation grant work?

Impact

Q2. Briefly tell me about the work your organization does and what the WCA Foundation grant covers.

Q3. How has the funding impacted your organization?

Q4. How has the impact of multi-year/gen op funding differed from the impact of other one-time grants you've received?

Q5. How has being part of the WCA Foundation grantee community impacted your organization? Probe for connections with WCA members, technical assistance, exposure to new donors, connection with other grantees/cohort feeling, etc.

Q6. In August, you attended an event with other grantees and WCA leaders that featured a panel and group discussions (and you may also have attended a similar event in June 2024). Tell me about your experience at these events. What did you/your team get out of it? Was it a good use of your time? What could have made it more valuable?

Grantee Experience

Q7. Imagine you were in charge of choosing the ways in which members and grantees engage with each other for the upcoming third grant year. Take a minute and envision what this could look like, and feel free to be creative.

Q8. In general, what has been your impression of the WCA Foundation members? What have you observed in your engagement with them? Did anything surprise you?

Q9. What has been your impression of the TMF staff you have engaged with?

Q10. In November 2023, your organization was invited to apply for funding; went through an interview process with Julia Ruther at TMF; and a committee of WCA members selected organizations to fund. Tell me about how this process went. What went well? What could be improved? [Skip if interviewee was not at the organization during the application process.]

Q11. How have your experiences as a grantee with WCA Foundation differed from experiences with other funders? Probe for trust-based philanthropy principles, multi-year, gen op, women-focused funder - how does it feel to engage with a women's grantmaking group compared to other funders?

Areas of Improvement

Q12. Next year will be the third and final planned year of this pilot grant program. What are your hopes for year three?

Q13. Fill in the blank: If philanthropists/funders understood _____, my organization could do better work. Probe for specific things that would improve in their work, sustainability.

Q14. If you had magic powers and could change one thing about the WCA Foundation's multi-year gen op grantmaking approach, what would you change? (Caveats: no saying "more money" as grant amounts are already set; TMF is committed to one engagement event/initiative per year.) Probe for length of funding, gen op, member engagement, level of engagement with cohort/TA provided to grantee cohort, application process, hands-off approach (no reporting), etc.

Q15. Is there anything I didn't ask you about that you think is important for me to know?