

MAPPING PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY IN THE SHADOW OF HURRICANE SANDY

2015

THE NEW YORK
WOMEN'S
FOUNDATION®

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REPORT DEVELOPED BY THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S FOUNDATION'S STRATEGIC LEARNING DEPARTMENT

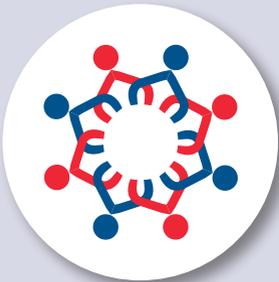
A SNAPSHOT OF COMMUNITY AUTHORED RECOVERY IN THE WAKE OF HURRICANE SANDY

The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF) is a cross-cultural alliance of women promoting economic justice for under-resourced women, families, and communities in New York City. We fund innovative, community-based organizations focused on women, girls, and LGBTQ individuals, to catalyze their economic security, their right to live safely and without violence, and their health and sexual rights. NYWF nimbly invests in special initiatives to address emergent community crises. In 2012, in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, The Foundation created the **Hurricane Sandy Response and Recovery Fund** to continue investment in providing immediate resources to address the crisis within particularly vulnerable communities impacted by the storm. The Fund is a three-year initiative focused on providing flexible investment to affected and unreached New York City neighborhoods in partnership with community-based organizations expert at providing tailored and culturally competent support. While immediate crisis needs have declined, NYWF intentionally designed The Fund as a long-term strategy in recognition that the path to economic security for low-income communities is a process that develops through sustained investment in recovery approaches that value the resiliency of local neighborhoods and require our sustained partnership.



WHY THE IMPACT OF HURRICANE SANDY CONTINUES

Low-income communities experience the burden of natural disaster more persistently than communities with greater resources and political influence. **The areas of New York City most devastated by Hurricane Sandy were particularly vulnerable geographically as well as economically.** The storm's destruction necessitated fast and flexible investment in community-led solutions that could comprehensively address immediate relief needs alongside complex and long-term individual and community needs. The areas we continued to support experienced historic underinvestment, which led to the compounding of systemic barriers when the storm hit.



WHY WE SOUGHT OUT NUANCED COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

NYWF invested in community-based organizations working in the hardest hit and under-resourced communities of New York City. **Grantee partners supported both geographic and relational communities through strengths-based strategies that responded to the direct needs of women and families while addressing the systemic barriers that perpetuate inequity.** While supporting the economic, health, and safety needs of residents, grantee partners expanded and deepened community supports through strengthening grassroots partnerships and fostering women's leadership. Small, grassroots organizations are not only better positioned to address challenges, but to do so through innovative strategies that make a critical difference in advancing resiliency in economically disadvantaged New York City neighborhoods.



WHY RECOVERY MUST BE THE PRIORITY

Low-income neighborhoods continue to struggle to overcome barriers as resources increasingly wane and while wealthier parts of the city have returned to normal. NYWF understands that relief strategies can only serve as band-aids when addressing the needs of impacted communities, as Hurricane Sandy exacerbated preexisting needs in underserved areas and created spaces for new challenges to emerge. As divestment in Sandy-related funding is predominant, **long-term investment is critical to ensuring that natural disasters do not permanently entrench marginalized communities in poverty.** Relief efforts supported during the first year of the fund demonstrated the leadership capacity of grassroots community partners to catalyze opportunities to strengthen community health. Supporting relief is critical but not enough. **Recovery is the space in which sustainable change is created** for under-resourced families and communities.

WHAT WE LEARNED IN SHIFTING FROM RELIEF TO RECOVERY

The targeted strategies employed by grantee partners include a range of approaches to recovery that improved economic security opportunities for women and families in New York City. The collective approaches demonstrate why and how investment in community-based organizations makes the critical difference in effectively addressing the needs of local communities during emergent crises.

1

Community organizations are critical first responders: Armed with local trust and deep community knowledge, grantee partners were better equipped to identify, understand, and address long-term recovery needs in innovative ways and to provide multi-faceted relief and recovery supports.

2

Community organizations grounded supports in knowledge of systemic challenges: Grantee partners worked to overcome chronic structural barriers by providing appropriately nuanced relief and recovery strategies that accounted for the diverse and interrelated challenges marginalized communities' face.

3

Grantee partners utilized social networks to learn about and seek out needs: Working with community members to informally map needs allowed local organizations to uniquely identify and fill in the gaps of broader relief efforts through the most relevant and community-oriented services possible.

4

Local communities must author their definitions of success: Success in the initiative was defined by community members as grantees amplified local voices to inform and shape the recovery process. Attention to local priorities is essential to ensuring that the transition between relief and recovery confronts the persistent challenges that were exacerbated following Sandy.

5

Working through relief and recovery provoked new ideas and solutions: Evolving existing services to address Sandy challenges was a strength of community organizations during recovery. When new or previously unidentified needs were unearthed, grantees reshaped strategies in thoughtful and impactful ways.

6

Community organizations bolstered community resilience: Grantee partners' common alignment of strategies toward identifying persistent needs, deepening community engagement, and developing community infrastructure, all underpinned a broader goal of building local resiliency.

7

Activating women's leadership strengthens communities: Community recovery strategies created opportunities for the voices and leadership of women from within impacted communities to guide the direction of resources to where they were needed most and to shape policy reform as informed advocates.

8

Cultivating local partnerships deepens the work of organizations: Development of community networks allowed grantee partners to increase their reach throughout impacted neighborhoods and to develop long-term recovery strategies that reflected the needs and values of diverse communities.

9

Multilevel approaches create ripple effects for sustained benefits: By learning through needs identified while providing direct services to address community challenges, grantee partners created groundbreaking solutions to catalyze change for all New Yorkers.

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LEFT TO RIGHT: MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK WORKED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF JUANA LUNA AND OTHER IMMI GRANTS HARD-HIT BY HURRICANE SANDY AND TO ORGANIZE WITH SURVIVORS FOR A JUST REBUILDING. PHOTO CREDIT: KAREN SMUL
WHEN THE NEW YORK LEGAL ASSISTANCE GROUP'S DOWNTOWN OFFICES WERE FLOODED, THE AGENCY QUICKLY SET UP TEMPORARY OFFICES THROUGHOUT THE CITY TO OFFER ASSISTANCE TO THOSE IMPACTED BY THE STORM. PHOTO CREDIT: NYLAG
GRAND STREET SETTLEMENT, SENIORS HELPING SENIORS PHOTO CREDIT: GRAND STREET SETTLEMENT

01 | OVERVIEW / SCOPE OF REPORT

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, The New York Women's Foundation created the Hurricane Sandy Response and Recovery Fund (The Fund) out of direct understanding of the layered barriers that constrict the vitality of low-income communities. The funding initiative is a multi-pronged relief and recovery approach in which grassroots organizations from the heaviest-hit neighborhoods channeled their community expertise towards guiding, supplementing, and leveraging city-wide and national recovery support. 15 grantee partners (Appendix I) were supported to provide immediate relief across a range of communities bound by geography and shared identity in New York City.

Work achieved during the first year of funding led to tailored supports to meet the evolving needs of low-income individuals and families. Community based relief efforts also created an essential foundation for deepened service provision and advocacy as long-term recovery became priority in the years following the storm. The range of challenges that predominated in New York City during the relief period has been well documented by other researchers and nonprofit, journalistic, and governmental stakeholders. The experiences of NYWF grantee partners during the first year of The Fund reinforces the interconnected challenges that have been previously expressed, most notably around housing, health, and particularly mental health, trauma, language access and the ineffectiveness

of channels for local resource utilization. Rather than restating acknowledged issues, this report is concerned with elucidating additional experiences of relief and recovery that have not held central focus in discussions of Hurricane Sandy to date.



VICTORINA RAMIREZ RECEIVED SUPPORT FROM MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK AND ORGANIZED WITH OTHER IMMIGRANTS HARD-HIT BY HURRICANE SANDY. PHOTO CREDIT: KAREN SMUL

Findings from The Fund offer insights regarding how women and gender fluid individuals are uniquely impacted during times of crisis. To date, discussion of the intersections between gender and disaster has not been thoroughly explored and necessitates further research. We know that these populations experience significant challenges as extreme events exacerbate systemic barriers in their lives. *By*

grounding relief and recovery efforts in a gender lens, grantee partners created a space for the lived realities of marginalized individuals to be fully seen, valued, and addressed through integrated strategies.

Learnings gained from community based organizations who were leaders in providing supports to under-resourced geographic and social communities can broaden awareness of the storm's effect on historically marginalized communities and the consequent and sustained barriers that negatively impact their economic stability. This report focuses on exploring the lessons gained from both the relief and recovery periods of the Hurricane Sandy Response and Recovery Fund. In particular, the report demonstrates how community based organizations leveraged their unique strengths to effectively pivot relief services to facilitate long-term recovery goals.

02 | CHALLENGES OF ADDRESSING DISASTERS WITHIN UNDER-RESOURCED COMMUNITIES

Low-income under-resourced communities experience the burden of natural disasters more acutely and persistently than communities with greater resources and political influence. The struggle of low-income communities experiencing poverty, crime, lack of truly affordable housing, high unemployment rates, and a growing homeless population, intensified after Hurricane Sandy. The storm destroyed neighborhoods, leaving thousands of people without transportation, electricity, and basic resources such as food, warm clothes, medications, and homes. Economically unstable individuals are more likely to struggle to recover basic resources in times of disaster, and this was evidenced after Hurricane Sandy. Thirty percent (30%) of homeowners and 65% of renters who registered with FEMA had household incomes that were at or well below the federal poverty level for a family of three. This fact indicates that many families impacted by Sandy were actively struggling to make ends meet for their basic needs before the storm made this a greater challenge. Despite this reality, few disaster plans account for the specific needs of low-income groups, people of color, and immigrants (Getting LES Ready, 2014).

Sandy shone the spotlight on parts of the city where the obstacles confronting residents existed at the juncture of historic underinvestment and the storm destruction. The areas of New York City most devastated by Sandy were geographically defenseless due to their proximity to the waterfront and were particularly vulnerable economically. These factors caused greater barriers after Sandy hit when coupled with new challenges introduced by the storm. Social isolation and governmental neglect of these communities contributed to a landscape of needs following Sandy that are not easily solved and necessitate multi-pronged col-

laboration between community-based organizations, residents, philanthropic partners, and government institutions.

Sandy destroyed over 300,000 housing units in New York City, many of which were home to economically disadvantaged households. Four hundred and two (402) New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) buildings lost electricity and access to elevators, many lost heat and water, and in total 77,000 residents were disadvantaged. The Housing Authority was unprepared to deal with the extent of destruction and consequential needs of its residents, especially those most vulnerable, including the elderly and disabled. Poor communication between the city

NEIGHBORHOOD SPOTLIGHT



LOWER EAST SIDE has a high proportion of affordable housing including Manhattan's largest New York City Housing Authority development, which is located in a vulnerable location for physical damage and redevelopment.



STATEN ISLAND faced severe physical devastation resulting in scarce affordable housing options for many, especially immigrant communities and families with mixed or undocumented status.



FAR ROCKAWAY has been a historically under-resourced region. A legacy of divestment has depleted economic opportunities and has complicated the relationship between local residents and service providers.

government and NYCHA resulted in the City overestimating needs being met, while hundreds of New Yorkers remained trapped in unrepaired high-rise buildings (NY-Times, 2013; North Star Report, 2014). Stemming from local government and NYCHA's challenges in providing relief post-Sandy, affordable housing has become a divisive subject during the rebuilding phase.

Unemployment due to Hurricane Sandy has intensified the hurdles low-income women face in identifying opportunities to support their self-sufficiency. Sandy created additional job loss for New Yorkers unable to travel to work due to isolation after the storm, and for those employed by small businesses that were forced to close and have not reopened. The devastation of Sandy displaced renters and homeowners as some apartment buildings and homes were destroyed and others became unsafe and unsanitary environments due to flooding. Consequently, homelessness was a central issue during relief work and remains a critical issue during recovery as individuals and families continue to struggle for stable housing in the shadow of the affordable housing crisis and long-term unemployment. Many New Yorkers are living with the burden of debt left in the wake of Sandy. Defaulting on mortgages while paying rent for temporary housing,

receiving individual aid loans, job loss, rent hikes, and increased insurance rates have all contributed

to growing debt for under-resourced renters and homeowners (SRL 2013).

Women are often disproportionately affected by disasters and face greater risks to their safety and health during and after a crisis. Women are more likely to live in poverty than men and consequently are more isolated from relief and recovery resources, health care, transportation, and housing in the face of storm



MIDLAND BEACH AFTER THE STORM. PHOTO CREDIT: KAREN SMUL

destruction. Contributing to displacement, these issues can intensify and sustain violence in women's lives. One year after Hurricane Katrina hit in 2010, the rate of gender based violence in Mississippi increased by 11.7 per 100,000 per day. While similar estimates have not been made in communities impacted by Sandy, it is likely that women, girls, and gender fluid individuals faced comparable dangers. Compounding these challenges, women are the predominant primary caregivers for children and elderly family members, which further strains women's ability to attain financial resources and support networks for themselves and their family outside the home (Institute for Women's Policy and Research, "Women, Disasters, and Hurricane Katrina," 2010).

03 | NYWF PRIORITIZES LONG-TERM RECOVERY

At first glance, recovery may appear to be well underway in New York City as local infrastructure has been rebuilt and many damaged areas have been repaired, yet the livelihoods of under-resourced individuals and communities remains threatened. Low-income New Yorkers continue to lack long-term safety and stability, while having higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and poor health as a result of the storm exacerbating pre-existing inequalities. Immediate crisis needs have declined and yet, long-term relief has not been realized due to the reality that historically underserved groups, including communities of color, seniors, immigrants, and women, still struggle to obtain economic security. Shifting from relief to recovery is essential to ensuring that obstacles amplified by Hurricane Sandy do not create long-term inequity. The New York Women's Foundation intentionally designed The Hurricane Sandy Response and Recovery Fund as a flexible and long-term relief and recovery initiative. We focused on addressing the inequities that were exacerbated by the storm and still persist today. The strategy of long-term investment in local organizations providing specialized recovery for marginalized communities was the most necessitated solution because:

- These communities have the greatest need, yet are the first to be forgotten and the last to be resourced.
- Communities are complex and it is critical to focus

on both geographic and relational communities to create effective solutions that comprehensively address long-term individual and community needs.

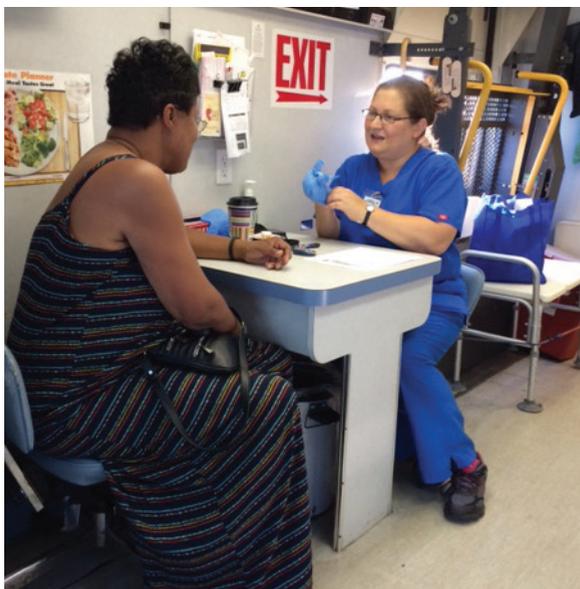
- The path to economic security for low-income communities is a process that develops through sustained investment and cannot be achieved without valuing the resiliency of local neighborhoods.

If recovery must be a priority in a post-Sandy economy, the question remains-how do we understand and define the shift from relief to recovery as it differs across communities? Different groups writing about this issue have predominantly understood the context for recovery in two ways. One perspective identifies Sandy-related obstacles and inequality as the direct

consequence of the storm and aim strategies at returning the city to a pre-Sandy status quo. In contrast, a second perspective, especially present among community-based organizations, recognizes that the economic and social crises highlighted during Sandy were chronic and pervasive barriers for low-income communities before the storm and that subsequently worsened (Superstorm Research Lab White Paper, 2013). This

later perspective was captured by one NYWF grantee partner sharing, "Sandy ripped the band-aid off" existing and previously hidden issues.

While many communities throughout the city



COMMUNITY HEALTH ACTION OF STATEN ISLAND'S MOBILE HEALTH UNIT PROVIDED MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES TO STATEN ISLAND CHILDREN, ADULTS AND FAMILIES SEVERELY AFFECTED BY SUPERSTORM SANDY. PHOTO CREDIT: JIM PONA

FOCUS DURING RELIEF:

- Basic Relief needs
- Infrastructure repairs
- Neighborhood canvassing/outreach
- Health issues (physical, mental, emotional)
- Legal & benefits counseling

FOCUS DURING RECOVERY:

- Persistent & late blooming needs
- Local disaster preparedness
- Affordable housing and health issues
- Employment & skills development training
- Community advocacy for supporting rebuilding policies

experienced destruction and loss due to Sandy, NYWF focused on underserved women, families, and communities. These groups had significant needs before the storm and continued to struggle and fall further down the economic ladder, as more resilient and well-resourced areas of the city regained stability. Using this perspective as a guidepost, NYWF developed focus areas that supported the short-term relief and long-term recovery needs of women while also addressing the systemic context in which inequities are perpetuated.

The first year of funding focused on meeting immediate relief needs and strengthening the

capacity of community partners. Moving into the second year, grantee partners pivoted priorities

to further address the systemic obstacles that compromise women's capacity to live healthy, safe, and economically viable lives. Community-based recovery strategies have a long-term impact on the stability and the future livelihood of marginalized populations. The strategies have been effective because grantees collaborated with community members to (1) better understand the spectrum of

continued needs and (2) include their voices in decision-making processes regarding recovery and rebuilding issues.



THINK COFFEE AND KELLY FROM GRAND STREET SETTLEMENT.

04 | EXPLORING PATHWAYS TO RELIEF AND RECOVERY WITHIN COMMUNITIES

The process of evolving services from relief to recovery requires accounting for short and long-term needs contextualized to local communities. In addition to exacerbating barriers, Sandy revealed previously uncovered areas of individual need, and created new challenges for local neighborhoods. Concurrently, the community-based organizations called upon for help were themselves facing infrastructural damages as well as staff trauma and personal loss. This context forced them to immediately adapt and triage needs in order to function while also supporting their clients. While challenges were significant, the period following the storm demonstrated innovation, focused determination, and the resilience of local communities

During Year One, fifteen (15) grantee partners in The Hurricane Sandy Response and Recovery Fund reached residents in the hardest hit areas of New York City immediately following the storm. In the second year of the initiative, four grantees continued to serve in impacted areas and within specific neighborhoods to transition to contextualized recovery strategies. In 2014, targeted supports included mental health counseling, access to benefits, job readiness and training, legal advocacy, and coalition building. The map highlights the different geographic regions of NYC engaged by the grantee partners* and the associated strategies implemented relative to the depth of challenge Sandy created.

GEOGRAPHIC COMMUNITIES SERVED

**DIASPORA
IMMIGRANT
POPULATION**

**HAITIAN WOMEN
FOR HAITIAN REFUGEES**

Immigration clinics and emergency support services

**LEGAL
SUPPORT**

**CENTER FOR NEW YORK CITY
NEIGHBORHOODS**

Housing counseling and legal services for homeowners

**NEW YORK LEGAL
ASSISTANCE GROUP**

Legal clinics and mobile legal help center

**LGBTQ/
GENDER
FLUID**

**NY GAY & LESBIAN
ANTI-VIOLENCE PROJECT**

Outreach and emergency support of LGBTQ and HIV affected people

HETRICK-MARTIN INSTITUTE

Recovery of HIV test kits, referral to counseling, and mental screenings for LGBTQ homeless youth

QUEERS FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Outreach to homeless LGBTQ and organized hurricane relief resource fair

YOUTH

YEAR UP NEW YORK

Cash assistance to students for basic needs, transportation, and childcare

NEW YORK CITY HURRICANE EVACUATION ZONES



LOWER EAST SIDE

Grand Street Settlement
mental health supports and case management for seniors

Good Old Lower East Side*
disaster preparedness, community advocacy, local reconstruction program

CHINATOWN

CAAAV
emergency relief, multilingual assistance, legal clinics

Chinese Staff & Workers' Association
access to benefits, translation services, community advocacy



SOUTHERN STATEN ISLAND

Make the Road New York*
legal services, workforce development, job training/ placement, food distribution

NORTHERN STATEN ISLAND

Community Health Action of Staten Island*
medical, mental health, and social service triage, emergency services, linkage to care



FAR ROCKAWAY

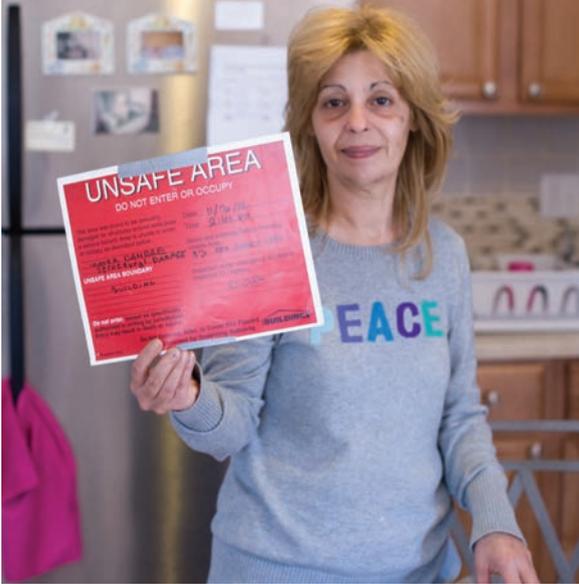
Urban Upbound*
financial counseling, employment services, community advocacy

CONEY ISLAND, BROOKLYN

Amethyst Women's Project
continued volunteer relief efforts, office repairs

*DENOTES GRANTEES DURING BOTH THE RELIEF AND RECOVERY PERIODS.

05 | WHAT MADE THE CRITICAL DIFFERENCE?



MAKE THE ROAD NEW YORK WORKED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF CYNTHIA SCARSELLA AND OTHER IMMIGRANTS HARD-HIT BY HURRICANE SANDY TO ORGANIZE WITH SURVIVORS FOR A JUST REBUILDING. PHOTO CREDIT: KAREN SMUL



LAW STUDENT VOLUNTEERS FROM NYLAG ON THEIR WAY TO SURVEY THE DAMAGE TO A HOME IN BRIGHTON BEACH. PHOTO CREDIT: SYD LONDON

Grantee partners effectively pivoted service models to meet emerging community needs following Sandy. Many organizations had never supported disaster relief and improvised strategies to quickly address local challenges alongside other neighborhood partners. Embedded in their communities, community based organizations have the unique strength of responding flexibly and nimbly to crises, which larger institutions and government agencies are less able to provide. The capacity to evolve service delivery was relevant in the second year of the initiative as relief needs began to wane and the importance of addressing long-term recovery needs became increasingly evident. Grantee partners used learnings gained through relief work to inform planning and to identify priorities for community driven recovery efforts.

The targeted strategies employed by grantee partners include a range of approaches to relief and recovery that improved economic security opportunities for women and families in New York City. Insights have emerged from understanding the strengths and challenges of the strategies that illuminate exactly why and how our investment in grantee organizations makes the critical difference in effectively addressing the needs of local communities during times of crisis. The learnings create a roadmap of best practices for community-based organizations, government institutions, and philanthropies for sustained investment in relief and recovery within a framework that accounts for both chronic and new barriers that inhibit low-income communities from thriving after a natural disaster. Here are the nine critical lessons for how community-based organizations effectively supported and transitioned from relief to recovery are highlighted below.

LESSON ONE

Community organizations are critical ‘first responders’ who remain long after the crisis. When the storm hit, community organizations, including NYWF grantee partners, were first responders. This role propelled grantee organizations through relief work and shaped the character of support as services shifted towards recovery. Having established themselves as first responders in the days immediately following Hurricane Sandy, grantees were better equipped than larger institutions to identify, understand, and address long-term recovery needs in innovative ways. Armed with local trust and deep community knowledge, grantees were able to continue to provide multi-faceted support, including addressing persistent relief needs, developing preparedness training, and serving as international experts sharing best practices for redeveloping under-resourced communities following disasters. These domains were not previously part of the organizations’ core work but have become important factors for understanding the unique needs and solutions of women in communities that continue to face economic security challenges post-Sandy. Local organizations have extended the concept of first responder by diversifying and expanding their work to meet the needs of communities that remain in crisis long-after the storm due to neglect and underlying barriers.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- While providing relief, Community Health Action of Staten Island identified significant underlying chronic health issues in the community that were not being treated, including mental illness and diabetes, and connected community members to health homes.
- Through working to support relief in Far Rockaway, Urban Upbound (UU) identified a lack of resources to adequately address high unemployment needs, especially in job training and placement. UU developed a workforce program to bridge this gap and continues to serve the community to address long-standing unaddressed crises.
- CAAAV served as a relief center for meeting the basic needs of Chinatown residents and connecting them to resources. CAAAV also provided critical translation services to connect Asian residents to relief.

LESSON TWO

Community organizations grounded communities’ unique definitions of recovery in knowledge of systemic barriers. In concert with infrastructural damages to housing and transportation, the antagonistic relationship between culturally marginalized populations and the systems administering relief during Hurricane Sandy contributed to the displacement and isolation of LGBTQ, immigrant, street based, and senior communities amongst others. Previous experiences of violence and a lack of available language translation caused shelters to be underutilized for these individuals before and after the storm. Lacking accommodations as a result, residents sheltered in place or left storm vulnerable neighborhoods to find alternate forms of shelter wherever possible. This led to increased isolation from resources as relief providers could not reach everyone immediately and deepened fragmentation as social support networks were disrupted by storm damage or because the character of rebuilding strategically impeded reentry. Smaller nonprofit organizations worked to overcome systemic barriers by providing appropriately nuanced supports that accounted for the diverse and interrelated challenges communities face.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- The Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA) shared that Chinatown was largely isolated from external aid resources. The government was not aware of the neighborhood's needs nor of the diversity of Asian communities. CSWA consequently had to provide language competent assistance and translation of resource documents for their communities and also organized press conferences with Chinese media on the Lower East Side to spread information and resources to a broader audience.
- LGBTQ communities felt unsafe utilizing public shelters because of previous experiences of discrimination and violence due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. Many members of these communities opted to stay elsewhere, including in unknown apartment stairwells and sleeping on trains. The New York City Anti-Violence Project supported clients through safety planning to help LGBTQ persons determine safe options for shelter despite challenging and unstable environments.

LESSON THREE

Community organizations utilized social networks to learn of and address needs in their communities and beyond. Working with community members to informally map needs allowed local organizations to uniquely identify and fill in the gaps of broader relief efforts and to do so through the most relevant and community oriented services possible. Grantees were able to effectively leverage existing social networks because of their longstanding investment in and trusted relationship with communities. Many grantee partners expanded reach to provide relief in underserved areas, particularly where cultural competency for isolated communities was lacking. Targeted expansion of services to new areas created a broader partnership network and organizational presence in previously unfamiliar neighborhoods. While these partnerships have been considered beneficial by the organizations and the communities served, continued development will soon be suspended due to funding ending.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- Based in Manhattan, The New York City Anti-Violence Project discovered that LGBTQ individuals in Red Hook, Brooklyn were in dire need of support after speaking to their clients who shared that their friends and family were struggling outside of the city.
- In the months following Hurricane Sandy, The Hetrick-Martin Institute (HMI) struggled to locate the LGBTQ homeless youth who they served and were unaware of which of their youth had survived the storm. To piece together information, HMI employed a chain outreach strategy by engaging the clients they were in touch with to discern the whereabouts of missing youth, including those who may still be in the city and in need of support.
- Based in Chinatown, CAAAV sent supplies and volunteers with language competencies for Asian communities to Far Rockaway and the New York Legal Assistance Group implemented its Storm Response Unit in Long Island and Canarsie, areas where neither organization had previously focused service provision.

LESSON FOUR

Local communities must author definitions of success. Success in the initiative was largely defined by the community members directly impacted by Hurricane Sandy, as grantee partners amplified local voices to inform and shape relief and recovery processes. Through focus groups, community forums, door-to-door surveying, canvassing, and development of community partnerships, grantee organizations listened to the needs of residents. Attention to local priorities is essential to ensure that the transition between relief and recovery meaningfully confronts the persistent challenges that were exacerbated following Sandy without ignoring lingering relief needs. Understanding of community needs informed grantee partners' ability to guide the best use of resources and allow utilization to shift over time, rather than having direction imposed from outside the community. Further, ensuring that funding does not impose narrow restrictions of use or laborious data collection and reporting is critical to ensuring that organizations can maximize the value and use of funding for those with the greatest need.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- Community Health Action of Staten Island engaged residents using direct healthcare outreach to understand their needs and concerns. Findings lead to the mobile health unit shifting focus from immediate crisis needs to long-term health challenges.
- Center for New York City Neighborhoods facilitated learning communities with their partners in order to stay abreast of local needs and lead advocacy efforts that were informed by a depth of knowledge grounded in the experiences of community based organizations.

LESSON FIVE

Working through relief and recovery provoked new ideas and solutions. While experts at serving low-income communities in NYC, grantee partners were not previously experienced in instituting disaster relief and recovery. As challenges intensified in their communities, grantees employed diverse strategies that built upon their expertise, but also experimented with untested models and developed new skills to increase their effectiveness in serving dynamic needs. They leveraged their community knowledge and applied grassroots approaches to the design and implementation of relief and recovery strategies. When new or previously unidentified needs were unearthed, grantee partners reshaped strategies to account for the deeper understanding that was gained over the course of work. The ability to evolve services to specifically address local challenges was a demonstrated strength of community based organizations implementing relief and recovery. Attunement to constituent needs also provided a platform of service supports for grantee partners to organically foster community networks. All organizations utilized new ways to address persistent problems exacerbated by Sandy. The tragedy of the storm, combined with flexible funding, enabled grantees to reframe their approach and to identify and address issues from a new angles.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- While advocating for affordable housing, Make the Road New York recognized a relationship between housing issues and environmental justice and the value of working across multiple issues to create effective, long-term change.
- The New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) adjusted their regular service model to be better equipped to provide supports that could account for the unique contexts of Sandy. NYLAG created a specific Storm Response Unit, as well as a storm hotline. They shifted from focusing geographically to working through teams of specialties with issue expertise to increase effectiveness in addressing needs. Although storm related programming was expected to end following the immediate relief period, the Storm Response Unit not only continues three years later, but has also grown in size.
- Year Up (YU) recognized the need to deepen holistic support services for their students after witnessing the depth of challenges following Sandy. YU consequently expanded its student services to increase housing counseling and access to benefits supports, added an online platform for students to manage their learning called Schoolology, and deepened strategic thinking about how to integrate a gender lens in their work.

LESSON SIX

Organizations bolstered community resilience. Low-income communities typically struggle to build resiliency in the face of other overwhelming challenges such as economic barriers and waning governmental support.¹ Local organizations play an essential role in developing resiliency due to their intimate knowledge of the inherent assets and strengths of their communities. In the process of addressing relief needs following Hurricane Sandy, community organizations recognized the necessity of strengthening resiliency both in their organizational networks as well as their neighborhoods. Grantee partners' common alignment of strategies towards identifying persistent needs, deepening community engagement, and developing community infrastructure, all underpinned a broader goal of building local resiliency. Rather than concluding Sandy services due to diminishing disaster funding or because recovery work did not directly align with core services, grantees pivoted resources and interventions to account for the shifts in community needs. The continued relevance of disaster services often stretched the capacity of grantee organizations committed to supporting community members in crisis. Concurrently, it shaped a lens in which the needs of women and families impacted by Hurricane Sandy could not be isolated. Instead, the necessity of grantees valuing recovery services illustrates how the storm highlighted the intersection of exacerbated systemic challenges and emergent barriers in underserved communities.

¹ "Resilience is defined as the ability to spring back, overcome adversity, and cope in the aftermath of a disaster or catastrophe" (North Star Fund, 2014).

LESSON IN ACTION:

- The Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) bolstered geographic and social ties of the community, especially among residents living in public housing. The organization held neighborhood preparedness days with a community strength focus, bringing diverse groups together in partnership and incorporating distribution of emergency disaster kits and preparedness training. GOLES used these days to build rapport between community members and to better understand the strengths and needs of the community by providing a critical outlet for discussion and sharing of common experiences.
- Make the Road New York mobilized community members to engage in a renters' campaign to address the challenges of the affordable housing system. The organization and members— many of whom are undocumented and have reduced opportunities to access public benefits – worked closely to fight for safe and authorized housing throughout Staten Island where low-income housing is not readily available or accessible to community and economic resources.
- The Hetrick-Martin Institute created the weekly In the Clear program to create a space for homeless LGBTQ youth to discuss the effects of weather in their lives, opening a door for the organization to engage young people in deeper conversations about emergency preparedness.

LESSON SEVEN

Activating women as leaders builds stronger communities. Community-authored recovery strategies created opportunities for the voice and leadership of women from within impacted communities to guide the direction of service provision. Women both within the community and within grantee partner organizations, developed a vast range of skills, including community outreach, advocacy, public speaking, peer leadership, and crisis intervention. Grantee partners leveraged local women to support broader community engagement as these women's leadership increased the trust and buy-in of neighborhood residents. Beyond developing their skills and voice, women gained opportunities to be recognized as inherent leaders and knowledge holders rather than victims and lead the charge on shaping partnerships and solutions that were right for their communities. Women have continued in the recovery period as leaders and community advocates speaking at tables of influence to help shape policy reform and provide access to much needed resources for themselves, their families, and neighbors.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- Community Health Action of Staten Island (CHASI) invested in the valuable knowledge of residents who understood the deep needs and nuances of their local communities. Through hiring and training women from Sandy affected neighborhoods to become outreach peers, CHASI empowered these women to become champions within their communities and also to gain employment.
- In the aftermath of Sandy, Make the Road New York increased its engagement of women and empowered them to be leaders advocating for change. Through public speaking and sharing of their stories, these women influenced policy change for just affordable housing and raised awareness of marginalized communities' needs, especially as government support waned.
- The New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP) hired two community members as staff who had previously been in homeless shelters supported by AVP's services and who grew to become relief volunteers and leaders in the LGBTQ community as a result of their development during relief.

LESSON EIGHT

Cultivating local partnerships made the work of organizations more effective. Active investment in the development of community networks allowed grantee partners to increase reach and cultural competency throughout impacted neighborhoods and to develop long-term recovery strategies that reflect the needs and values of diverse communities. Organizations with different strengths and programmatic expertise effectively collaborated in order to better equip grantee partners to address the chronic barriers facing women in tandem with Sandy-specific challenges. While existing partnerships were expanded through relief and recovery work, many new and unexpected partnerships developed that would most likely not have emerged outside of the context of Sandy but will continue to benefit underserved communities for years to come.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- The Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) led the disaster recovery coalition LES Ready!, a cross-sectoral coalition and disaster recovery group comprised of 39 member organizations. LES Ready! has identified and mapped local resources on the Lower East Side to increase collaborative impact in future disasters. The partnership has resulted in outcomes far beyond the intentional goals, including development and release of influential reports, application and award of a federal redevelopment grant, and international recognition of GOLES and its partners as experts in how to effectively address disasters in low-income marginalized communities.
- Year Up recognized the importance of increased support services for their students because of relief and consequently formed ongoing partnerships with organizations with a range of expertise, including around gender violence, LGBTQ sensitivity, and nutrition. Partnership with Youth Represent, a youth defense and advocacy organization, has supported Year Up's students to address minor criminal justice issues, consequently increasing students' employability and expanding opportunities for them to gain substantive internships.
- The New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP) partnered with the Red Hook Initiative to provide relief in the previously unfamiliar community of Red Hook, Brooklyn. Resultantly, AVP gained a presence in that neighborhood and an opportunity to engage with residents and shift their attitudes about the LGBTQ community. AVP continues to cultivate these relationships by returning annually.

LESSON NINE

Multi-level approaches to change create ripple effects for sustained community benefits. Structural inequity disproportionately impacts low-income individuals and people of color and reinforces a framework for economically unstable living. Approaching recovery, grantees advocated for policies that ensured just rebuilding to ensure that rebuilding would not merely reinforce preexisting inequities, but would create sustainable pathways to opportunity for low-income communities. Engaging a range of intersecting avenues to develop recovery strategies allowed grantees to cultivate resiliency on the individual, community, and policy level.

LESSON IN ACTION:

- CHASI worked to connect women with insurance to address underlying chronic health needs that were uncovered through outreach post-Sandy. These efforts lead the team to identify deep needs within the community for mental health and substance abuse services. CHASI worked tirelessly with city council members to pass legislation making advanced medical treatment available for heroin overdoses across New York City (The New Yorker, 2014).
- The Chinese Staff and Workers' Association efforts to secure language access led to New York City translating relief forms into appropriate languages for Asian communities.

06 | THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S FOUNDATION'S VISION FOR MOVING RECOVERY FORWARD

NYWF's flexible and continued funding strategy allowed for progressive investment according to the evolving needs of impacted NYC communities. As the Hurricane Sandy Response and Recovery Fund continues to invest in community-guided recovery strategies, the work will deepen learning regarding how communities are understood differently through crisis. Impacted neighborhoods continue to struggle simultaneously with chronic and emergent needs that have converged into a new state of living, particularly in under-resourced and low-income neighborhoods. While obstacles to economic security became increasingly layered after the storm, grantee partners have demonstrated the unique leadership of community organizations to support complex needs while also uplifting the voices of community members through grassroots partnership. Relief and recovery work allowed grantee partners to cultivate new muscles for supporting communities that they will continue to leverage to create sustainable economic justice for women, families, and communities throughout New York City.

Intentionally supporting community-authored recovery was unique in the philanthropic landscape. Our long-term and flexible investment approach has enabled grantees to see strong gains in developing greater community resiliency. Resources are at work today supporting grantee partners' ability to support community authored recovery in diverse areas of Manhattan, Queens, and Staten Island. As community cultures experienced inequity before and after Sandy in different ways, recovery is defined differently across local areas and necessitates tailored strategies to address the needs of women and families. Sustained funding will enable grantee partners to continue developing neighborhood resiliency and leveraging community

voices as vital stakeholders throughout the rebuilding process.

Based on the aforementioned learnings generated by work in The Fund to date, we have gained key takeaways for philanthropic investment during times of disaster that we act from and invite other funders to reflect upon.

- Particularly during times of crisis, **community based organizations should be prioritized as leaders** in responding to local needs. Larger institutions and government agencies rarely have the nuanced knowledge and flexibility in approach to quickly understand and address the range of intersecting challenges that afflict low-income communities. Oftentimes, those challenges arise as a result of the actions of institutions and agencies, which impose solutions that are out of touch with the lived realities of underserved groups. Community organizations are not only well positioned to address challenges, but to do so through innovative and sustainable strategies that make a critical difference in advancing resiliency in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods.
- **Sustained funding for recovery is critical** for addressing the needs of marginalized communities. Rather than providing only short-term funding to support relief following a disaster, The New York Regional Association of Grantmakers (now Philanthropy New York), recommends the importance of identifying gaps as relief needs wane, to assess where medium and long-term opportunities exist for continued investment (NYRAG, Best Practices in Disaster Grantmaking, 2014). A recent report on philanthropic and corporate response to Hurricane Sandy reflects that the philanthropic community

did not consistently recognize the significance of recovery time required following a disaster and overall, did not concertededly defer portions of grant dispersals for emerging gaps in need areas (Philanthropy NY, Philanthropy & Hurricane Sandy, 2014). Two years later, divestment in Sandy funding predominates. Many community based organizations are struggling to maintain resources to serve adequately the ongoing survival, infrastructural, and long-term needs of storm impacted New Yorkers. Divestment of philanthropic support negatively affects the capacity of local organizations to address intersecting challenges that constrain low-income women's advancement.

- **Employing a gender lens provides a richer understanding for shaping the character of investment** in communities where historically compounded and

intersecting barriers must be confronted. Funders have the privilege and responsibility to consider how to address challenges faced by communities with greatest need. As a funder we must understand the barriers that women and gender fluid individuals face because of the barriers that often constrict their lives. We must strategically invest

funds not only to support under-resourced communities, but to ultimately influence and shift the systemic structures that perpetuate the cycle of vulnerability. Investment grounded in a gender lens advances our capacity to look differently at chronic social problems, particularly those that disproportionately affect women and gender fluid individuals.



NYLAG ATTORNEYS REVIEW CASES TAKEN DURING THEIR DAY ON THE MOBILE LEGAL HELP CENTER, A LEGAL SERVICES OFFICE AND COURTROOM ON WHEELS. PHOTO CREDIT: NYLAG

NYWF and fellow philanthropists can ensure that disasters do not permanently entrench low-income women and families in poverty by funding long-term investment in recovery work. Doing so will shift the needle of economic stability not only in the aftermath of extreme events, but throughout the lifespan of girls and women. The character of recovery efforts will directly influence the quality of future community development. In

turn, investments that are guided by the expertise of communities and that can embrace the evolving, dynamic nature of local needs, have the power to disrupt inequity and create a cultural, political, and economic resiliency capable of transforming the systemic status quo.

07 | APPENDIX I: GRANTEE PARTNERS ENGAGED

Report Methodology. The information provided in this report is based on grantee partner reported data regarding funded activities and the outcomes of the work for the period of January to December 2014. Data includes both quantitative and qualitative information. Qualitative information was provided through written narrative reports, in-person interviews, and site visits with grantee partners. Quantitative information was provided by grantee partner reports and through publically available reports. The analysis employed a themes based qualitative approach to identify shared and divergent themes of grantee partners.

***DENOTES DURING BOTH THE RELIEF AND RECOVERY PERIODS.**

Amethyst Women's Project. Received funds to restore office operations by making repairs and replacing lost equipment and furniture. Amethyst also met the needs of those displaced by Hurricane Sandy by organizing volunteer relief efforts in the south shore area of Brooklyn.

The Hetrick-Martin Institute. Employed funds to support the recovery of HIV testing, spoiled food, HIV testing control kits, and referral to counseling and mental screenings.

Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence (CAAAV) Organizing Asian Communities. Received support for its ongoing work responding to the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Chinese immigrant communities in Chinatown and the Lower East Side, collaborating with the Urban Justice Center.

Center for New York City Neighborhoods (CNYCN). Received funding to coordinate a comprehensive housing counseling and legal services response for distressed homeowners affected by the storm.

Community Health Action of Staten Island (CHASI).* Employed funds to continue the medical, mental health and social service triage, provision of emergency services, and linkage to care.

Chinese Staff and Worker's Association (CSWA). Received funds to continue to serve the community and members impacted by Hurricane Sandy through their relief clinics and outreach efforts.

Urban Upbound (UU) formerly East River Development Alliance..* Employed funds to lead a coordinated volunteer recovery response to the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy in public housing neighborhoods in Far Rockaway, Queens. UU will provide financial counseling to residents, as well as advocate on their behalf, to ensure that they can effectively navigate New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) policies regarding critical repair issues.

Good Old Lower East Side, Inc. (GOLES).* Received funding to restore the organization's property damaged due to flooding caused by Hurricane Sandy. GOLES also utilized funding to implement recovery operations for Lower East Side public housing residents, many of whom are low-income, elderly, and/or disabled women.

Grand Street Settlement (GSS). Employed funding to address the increased need for mental health support and case management services for senior citizens impacted by Hurricane Sandy in the Lower East Side.

Haitian Women for Haitian Refugees (HWHR). Received funding to support the additional services that have been provided in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy. Specifically, the grant supported the facilitation of additional immigration clinics, case management, and provision of emergency services.

Make the Road New York (MRNY).* Provided funding to integrate their expert services operation to handle legal services, workforce development and job training/placement, and the distribution of food with a door-to-door canvass operation.

New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project (AVP). Received funding to reach, connect with, inform, and provide services for LGBTQ and HIV-affected people in the most devastated areas.

New York Legal Assistance Group: LegalHealth (NYLAG). Received funding for its storm response project, which is designed to stabilize the lives of storm victims, particularly low-income women. NYLAG set up temporary clinics staffed with volunteer attorneys at various disaster relief centers throughout New York and deployed its mobile legal help center that made stops in the hardest-hit parts of the region, such as Red Hook, the Rockaways, parts of Long Island, and Staten Island.

Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ). Received funding to conduct intensified outreach to the LGBTQ homeless population in NYC, increase support group resources available to them in the shelter system, and hold a hurricane resource relief fair with organizations that can link hurricane evacuees to hurricane relief resources.

Year Up New York. Provided funding to continue providing cash assistance to students impacted by Hurricane Sandy. This funding was employed to cover costs of basic necessities such as food, housing, clothing, transportation, and childcare.

08 | APPENDIX II: SNAPSHOT OF RECOVERY EFFORTS

The snapshots below provide an overview of the work completed by grantee partners to date and details the ways in which grantee organizations have successfully integrated relief and recovery efforts to meet ongoing needs within a context of broader systemic change.

Community Health Action of Staten Island

(CHASI)* provided medical, mental health, and social service triage in Staten Island. Recognizing that vulnerable residents were socially or geographically isolated, CHASI employed a mobile health bus to increase reach. By building recovery approaches upon an established core repertoire of services, CHASI expertly supported comprehensive health care as a trusted community partner. That position created a space for CHASI to identify critical gaps in care needs and further revealed the dearth of health resources and access. *In pivoting from relief to recovery, CHASI:*

- Targeted outreach to unreached immigrant communities through leveraging community champions.
- Increased identification and service access for substance abuse and mental health.
- Identified cultural stigma as a primary barrier preventing individuals from seeking medical care.
- Established medical homes and connections between previously uncoordinated providers.

Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES)* led development and coordination of a new partnership network to ensure maximum engagement of strategic resources and community reach through-

out lower Manhattan. LES Ready! was formed as a cross-sectoral, long-term recovery coalition to promote community advocacy and disaster preparedness. GOLES made strides in the recovery and rebuilding process, including when the Lower East Side was selected as a Rebuild by Design winner, which brought the community \$335 million to fund a storm-surge protection project. *In pivoting from relief to recovery, GOLES:*

- Hosted disaster preparedness training and community social events to distribute emergency kits.
- Surveyed the community to inform a report on future disaster planning policy recommendations.
- Grew the LES Ready! coalition and the partnership network of lower Manhattan.
- Advocated for affordable housing residents in rebuilding discussions with the city.

Make the Road New York (MRNY)* provided legal advocacy and community organizing in Staten Island, with particular focus on immigrant communities with housing and tenant issues. MRNY engaged culturally competent strategies, which allowed the grantee to learn and respond quickly to the needs of Latino communities. MRNY's transition towards recovery prioritized affordable housing as a policy issue. *In pivoting from relief to recovery, MRNY:*

- Provided legal support to individuals while shifting legal advocacy focus to high-need groups.

- Prioritized core issue to maximize impact—advocating for increased rental and affordable housing in rebuilding construction plans.
- Fostered awareness that short-term needs persist and necessitated policy change and greater investment.

Urban Upbound* began working in Far Rockaway to reach affordable housing residents and assembled a critical response team in partnership with the NYPD and NYCHA. Lacking experience in this community, they embraced a “community saturation approach” to embed as a trusted partner while scaling a workforce development program that addressed deep challenges that historically prevented women from sustaining economic security and intensified after Sandy. *In pivoting from relief to recovery, Urban Upbound:*

- Shifted focus to provide employment services by expanding its job placement model.
- Built supplementary programs with integrated support services to ensure community needs were met, especially for women who needed job readiness before placement.
- Worked to cultivate the community’s broader capacity to support struggling populations by developing local leadership and referral partnerships.

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ABOUT THE NEW YORK WOMEN'S FOUNDATION

The New York Women's Foundation (NYWF) was launched in 1987 as an alliance of women of diverse means and backgrounds leveraging their collective resources to promote broad-based economic progress and social justice. The Foundation works on a range of interrelated fronts (workforce development, violence prevention, reproductive health and choice) to advance the economic security of low-income women and girls, and – thereby – the economic strength of the city as a whole.

All NYWF's efforts reflect the conviction that women are the best experts on their own positions, situations, and goals. Its programs are carried out in close partnership with grass-roots, women-centered organizations possessing firsthand, authentic knowledge of their constituents' issues. Its events and publications highlight the challenges and celebrate the triumphs of the women leaders who are the bedrock of communities across the city – and the world.

Since its founding, NYWF has built a track record of impressive influence and impact. It is currently the seventh-largest philanthropic leader in New York City's tightly-packed workforce development field. In 2015, it will raise and invest \$6 million into best-practice programs reaching over 350,000 individual low-income women, moving them and their families measurably closer to safety, health, and financial stability.

MISSION

The New York Women's Foundation is a voice for women and a force for change. We are a cross-cultural alliance of women catalyzing partnerships and leveraging human and financial capital to achieve sustained economic security and justice for women and girls. With fierce determination, we mobilize hearts, minds and resources to create an equitable and just future for women, families and communities in New York City.

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