



EXPANDING FUNDING FOR WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY: A MESSAGING GUIDE

The goal of this study is to better understand the motivations and behaviors associated with donor giving and to help organizations formulate more effective messaging to raise money for work on women's inclusion in peace and security decision making.

A qualitative research study conducted by Teal Media, commissioned by Inclusive Security, and made possible by a grant from the Compton Foundation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. SUMMARY	4
II. UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCE	9
Motivations for Giving	10
Approaches to Change	16
Issue Awareness	17
III. REFINING YOUR MESSAGE	21
Messaging Challenges	22
Messaging Opportunities	23
Messaging Recommendations and Framework	24
IV. UTILIZING THE RIGHT CHANNELS	29
Methods of Engagement	30
Outreach Recommendations	31
V. NEXT STEPS	32
APPENDIX 1 - ABOUT THE RESEARCH	35
Methodology and Activities	35
Interviewee Criteria	35
Research Limitations	36
APPENDIX 2 - BEHAVIORS OF GIVING	37
Giving Processes	37
Giving Range and Frequency	38

I. Summary

“We have to get beyond that ‘one extraordinary woman.’ We need to get people to see the communities and movements of women to really understand the potential.”

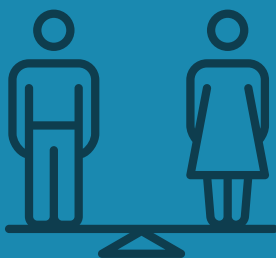
This statement captures a major theme from our research on financial giving to support women’s inclusion in peace and security. Commissioned by Inclusive Security with support from the Compton Foundation, this research sought to learn more about giving: why individuals and organizations give, how they give, and what would make them more or less likely to give in the future. Specifically, this report aims to shed light on how organizations

working to increase women’s inclusion in peace and security decision making (a field sometimes known as “women, peace, and security” or WPS)¹ can expand and diversify their universe of prospective donors and funders.²

The following insights and recommendations are based on community focus groups, key informant interviews, and secondary research, conducted by Teal Media on behalf of Inclusive Security. (For information on the research methodology, see Appendix 1). It is intended for members of the WPS community who are responsible for communicating with current and potential supporters. Whether you manage the organization’s online presence, oversee fundraising efforts, or lead programming, this report is meant to help you shape your donor messaging for maximum impact. The recommendations and framework in this report are guidelines you can customize to further develop your organization’s communications and fundraising strategies.

BY THE NUMBERS: PEACE AND SECURITY FUNDING

According to the 2017 Peace and Security Funding Index,³ **290 FOUNDATIONS** made **2,773 GRANTS** totaling **\$357 MILLION IN FUNDING FOR PEACE AND SECURITY EFFORTS IN 2014**, the most recent year with complete data.



Just **7 PERCENT** of that funding, **OR \$26.5 MILLION**, was committed to gender equality. Only **1 PERCENT**, **OR \$4.3 MILLION**, was committed to gender-based violence.

These were the **ONLY TWO** categories specifically **ACKNOWLEDGING GENDER-FOCUSED FUNDING**.

THE MEDIAN GRANT SIZES FOR THESE CATEGORIES?

\$20,000.

Key Findings

The report is divided into three sections that align with elements of a good communications strategy:

1.

Understanding
your audience

2.

Refining your
message

3.

Utilizing the right
channels to reach
your audience

While each section goes into greater detail, here are some of the key findings.

AUDIENCE INSIGHTS:

Donors and funders have widely varying motivations for giving, approaches to change, and levels of awareness about WPS. Despite these differences, there were some areas of agreement. For instance:

- ▶ **Many donors see the current US political environment as both a cause for concern and a reason for optimism.** “We’re seeing a new wave of citizen activism, led very much by women, coming to the forefront and sparking the minds of the American public,” said one interviewee. “Our issues have been in the national debate in ways we haven’t seen in decades.”
- ▶ **Donor fatigue is among the key factors that inhibit giving more or more often,** especially following a contentious election cycle where individuals were repeatedly solicited for contributions.

- ▶ While different funders have varying ideas of what constitutes success, **it’s clear that organizational reputation matters.** “Convincing personal anecdotes that describe how a grantee has had influence in a decision-making process” mattered to one funder. Another valued the organization’s public profile: “Your work is being read, cited, used in major publications, and used by people making decisions on these issues.”
- ▶ Though many grants operate on short-term timelines, funders are aware of the long-term nature of systemic change. Still, funders are more receptive to organizations and causes that **articulate a clear path forward and can define realistic and digestible indicators of progress** along the way.

MESSAGING INSIGHTS:

The researchers uncovered five persistent—and in some ways overlapping—messaging challenges confronting the WPS field:

1 Lack of awareness and understanding about what WPS is and why it's important.

2 An excess of jargon and unclear terminology.

3 Perception that WPS is a “nice to have” rather than a core part of peace and security.

4 Political uncertainty following the 2016 US presidential election.

5 Tension between framing WPS as a rights-based or outcomes-based agenda.

A messaging framework (see page 24) that focuses on how women's inclusion improves concrete peace and security outcomes is likely to have the broadest appeal among both institutional funders and individual donors. The following are specific insights to incorporate into that messaging framework:

- ▶ Foundations and institutional donors tend to focus more on **results and effectiveness** while individual donors are often convinced by **compelling stories**.
- ▶ **Positive stories of impact** are generally more well received than stories of women in peril or being victimized.
- ▶ Messaging that features a **broader movement of women** building peace and security resonates more than stories of any single representative.
- ▶ Funders who have little to no awareness of WPS (or who take a “gender blind” approach) may be swayed by **evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of women's inclusion** and the tangible consequences of exclusion.
- ▶ Women-focused funders may be receptive to messaging that **links WPS to other gender justice issues** (such as physical safety, economic opportunity, education, and reproductive health).

- ▶ **Building awareness and understanding of WPS with those working on related issue areas** (e.g., human rights, environmental justice) may enable organizations to cultivate additional funding streams.
- ▶ Many funders prefer stories that go beyond community-level work by **highlighting women front and center in the pursuit of broad, structural change.**

CHANNEL INSIGHTS:

The best methods for reaching funders and donors are heavily dependent on personal preference. However, there were two trends:

- ▶ Few, if any, funders like “cold calls.” Instead, there is a **heavy reliance on personal relationships, professional networks, and peer-level information and guidance** when making funding decisions.
- ▶ Organizations should **emphasize digital outreach, social media promotion, and electronic communications** rather than printed annual reports or fancy brochures. Particularly, many funders rely on email newsletters and listservs to track issues and organizations.

II. Understanding Your Audience

Motivations for Giving

Based on interviews conducted for this research, funders and donors are generally motivated to give based on a commitment to one or more dimensions, including but not limited to:

- ▶ A particular mission
- ▶ A specific issue or issue area
- ▶ A set of values
- ▶ A family or personal connection

These reasons are not mutually exclusive; they're typically layered. Most of the participants in this research revealed some combination of these motivations.

Commitment to a particular mission.

This is typical of funders, such as private foundations, community foundations, and, in some cases, smaller family foundations that were formed around a particular expansive mission, such as advancing peace and security or promoting a better world. By definition, staff and board members make funding decisions rooted in, and driven by, the overarching organizational mission, which may be broadly defined.

Commitment to specific issue or issue area.

Many donors, especially individuals and family foundations, are motivated by a specific, more narrow issue, such as nuclear security, environmental protection, or reproductive health. In some cases, donors split their priorities between domestic and international issues. Some issue-based donors focus on near-term approaches to making a difference, while others look at system or structural change that might require a longer time commitment.

Commitment to a set of values.

Values-driven funders and donors within the progressive peace and security funding space primarily view their giving through a social justice or equity frame. These donors and funders believe strongly in human rights for all and for speaking up for those who do not have power, including women and people of color. They may have a sense of responsibility with their giving—that those with privilege and power should support the advancement of those who have been oppressed and disenfranchised. Funders and donors oriented around this kind of worldview often have a strong understanding of the systemic and structural barriers that women face.

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN WOMEN'S GIVING PREFERENCES

According to a Fidelity Charitable report,⁴ which surveyed the giving preferences of 3,200 women, millennials are more motivated to give “in the moment” than women in the Baby Boomer generation (71 percent vs. 48 percent), more likely to give to a wider array of causes (55 percent vs. 33 percent), and more likely to split giving between international and domestic causes (52 percent vs. 38 percent).

By contrast, data from this report suggest that women in the Boomer generation tend to consider and plan out their giving in advance, concentrate their donations among fewer issues, and cluster their support more exclusively around domestic or international causes.

Family or personal connection.

Some funders and donors give based on a commitment to a family legacy or personal connection. This often takes the shape of generational wealth being invested in a cause that a family or particular family patriarch or matriarch has historically championed.

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

Building awareness and understanding of WPS with those working on related issue areas (e.g., human rights, environmental justice) may enable organizations to cultivate additional funding streams. Additionally, diving into funders' motivations for giving—whether driven by mission, issue, values, personal connection, or some combination—can offer entry points for WPS organizations to construct messaging that appeals most directly to those underlying commitments. For example, donors who are motivated by values related to social justice and intersectionality⁵ may be swayed by stories about diverse groups of women uniting to advocate for the rights of marginalized communities in peace agreements.

WHAT EXCITES FUNDERS

Research participants were asked what they are excited and optimistic about related to their philanthropic giving.

Several funders spoke broadly, referring to organizations that are “doing good work” and “moving the needle” on important issues. One interviewee pointed to the importance of seeing “something concrete, when you see it [funding] working,” citing the example of the Iran nuclear deal. Multiple interviewees raised this as a key success

story, wherein organizations were funded to provide analysis, diplomatic support, ongoing tracking and monitoring, and to participate in official talks that ultimately resulted in a signed agreement.

Some donors were enthusiastic about what the younger generation of philanthropic leaders are doing to advance causes like human rights and shift attention to persistent root causes. Several funders and donors pointed to the unprecedented level of activism following the 2016 election—and to women's roles in those efforts—as an encouraging sign. “We're seeing a new wave of citizen activism, led very much by women, coming to the forefront and sparking the minds of the American public,” said one interviewee. “Our issues have been in the national debate in ways we haven't seen in decades.”

Post-election fundraising success for groups like Planned Parenthood is encouraging not just for grantees but also for foundations and donors active in gender equality. Some view it as emboldening their work. Other interviewees noted that growing visibility of gender equality advocacy creates openings for related issues, such as racial and economic justice. One funder noted: “One thing that women's movements have done so well and been trailblazing is in seeing intersectionality.”

WHAT CONCERNS AND FRUSTRATES FUNDERS

While some find new levels of activism encouraging, others worry about backlash. “If you can become a hot issue, you can also become a cold issue once something new comes up to get people's attention,” said one interviewee.

“Where the field is now, I think that ‘women and girls’ is seen as a good thing to fund,” said another interviewee. “When it is not controversial, when it doesn’t threaten the structures of power, funding for women and girls can be depoliticized. That is worrying because the root of the issue is and has to be political.”

Likewise, numerous interviewees identified timing and the pace of change as a consistent frustration. The fights for long-term causes like climate change, human rights, and equality can feel endless. This can leave funders more receptive to organizations and causes that not only articulate a clear path forward but can also define realistic and digestible indicators of progress along the way. “There is progress but still so much work to do and [we’re] far away from where we need to be,” said one funder. “We have to think of other ways to be a catalyst.”

Other interviewees recognized this frustration as a problem, noting that funders are too often impatient and have a “short-termism” mindset. Grants often have too short a timeline, and boards often demand to see concrete outcomes before results manifest. For instance, a foundation working on a generational issue like climate change or a policy campaign that could take a decade or more to succeed may only allow year-long grants. Additionally, within that grant period, the funder may require biannual or even quarterly updates to show progress. Grantees that are better able to provide clear indicators of progress—regardless of

the grant period or time horizon—could be better positioned with program officers who often face this dilemma and have to make the case internally for long-term efforts.

Some donors and funders are concerned about the unintended negative consequences when gender mainstreaming is haphazard. One funder noted an example of a government grant to study gender issues that went to organizations that were not led by women. Similarly, another funder stressed the importance of including race and class considerations in gender mainstreaming, pointing out that “there is still a lot of space where some women are more visible than other women.” Interviewees noted that new approaches and innovative solutions in programs or policy change can sometimes disproportionately affect vulnerable populations. “We are leaving behind more people than ever before,” said one funder.

For most funders, the biggest worry is the new US administration and what it means for their work going forward (for more information, see box on page 13). “With an advocacy focus, the political risk is huge,” said one funder, noting that the change in administration may necessitate rethinking their approach. “We’re really trying to navigate what is something to focus on and what is a distraction,” noted another donor.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Donors and funders see the current US political environment as both a cause for concern and a reason for optimism. WPS organizations may benefit from publicly linking their work to this wave of citizen-led activism to gain new, energetic supporters. But they should also demonstrate a clear, long-term plan for systemic change, regardless of who’s in office.

How the 2016 US Election is Changing the Funding Landscape

“It’s hard to imagine a more disruptive political election,” said one donor, referring to the 2016 US presidential election.

“It’s clear we can’t proceed with business as usual but hard to see what the new approach will be,” added another.

These responses suggest that some funders are rethinking their approaches to grantmaking in the aftermath of the 2016 election, with many progressive funders shifting to a more defensive posture. Some are making wholesale changes to how they engage in policy work, while others are maintaining grantmaking approaches but incorporating greater flexibility and adaptive capacity for grantees.

In a recent survey of 162 foundation CEOs conducted by the Center for Effective Philanthropy (CEP),⁶ 35 percent of respondents said they are modifying or planning to modify their programmatic strategies, while 31 percent said that it’s too soon to decide. Additionally, 14 percent of respondents said their foundation’s grantmaking budget will increase, while another 20 percent said their foundation’s grantmaking budget will not increase but the allocation across program areas will change.

According to the CEP survey, roughly two-thirds of CEOs are planning to increase their emphasis on certain kinds of approaches, including 46 percent who say their foundation will increase its focus on collaborating with other funders, 42 percent who say they’ll focus more on convening grantees,

28 percent who say they’ll put more emphasis on advocacy and public policy at the national level, and 23 percent who say they’ll increase efforts to get input from a foundation’s ultimate beneficiaries.

The election has prompted at least a few foundations to consider spending down their endowments on what they see as urgent issues. Interviewees noted that some funders are becoming more open to flexible funding, rapid-response grants, and general operating support.

Other funders and donors are taking more of a wait-and-see approach with the sense that gender equality work has always been a challenge and will continue to be a challenge. At the time this research was conducted, the Trump administration’s proposed 2018 budget aimed to cut US State Department funding by 29 percent, fold USAID into the State Department, and zero out funding for some women-specific programs. The president has already signed an executive order that reinstated a block on federal funds going toward international aid organizations that also provide reproductive health services. Given these proposed cuts, many funders are doubling down on their commitment to core work and not getting “knocked off course” by political debates.

“We aren’t going to be scared and run away from what we believe in,” said one funder. “But let’s stick with what we know and the fields we support.”

Across a range of issues, numerous high-profile nonprofit organizations are seeing increased giving from individual donors. In some cases, perceived threats to fundamental rights and democratic norms have unleashed normally risk-averse organizations to pursue their work with renewed urgency. “With some groups, I’ve noticed a greater readiness to kick ass,” said an individual donor.

WHAT DISSUADES FUNDERS

Donor fatigue is a key factor that inhibits giving more or more often, especially following an election cycle where individuals were repeatedly solicited for contributions.

Some individual donors indicated they dislike receiving presents or member benefits, because they want “money spent on the cause, not the donor.”

At least one donor mentioned that “victimology”—portraying women as victims or in need of saving—is an approach that does not resonate.

Foundations pointed to internal organizational problems, managerial challenges, and poor leadership as factors that would dissuade them from funding an organization. Groups that do not have competent leadership that sets clear goals and expectations, do not understand which decision makers need to be convinced, or routinely “spin their wheels” to create and share information to the wrong audiences were examples of discouraging indicators for funders. Overly ambitious organizations with no clear goals or realistic paths to change do not fare well with funders.

Throughout the interviews, funders and donors were unimpressed by organizations that can only say what they are going to do rather than show demonstrable success, such as clear policy wins, concrete programmatic accomplishments, or evidence that they influenced decision making on a high-profile issue—what some called “passing the eye test” or “walking the walk.” Likewise, some funders and donors are deterred by organizations disconnected from what peers and competitors in their field are doing or less aware of the influencers and stakeholders they need to reach to advance their work.

“One challenge in the field is so many things need to fall into place for the desired outcomes to happen,” said one funder. “Things can’t happen by just having a good idea. You need people, politics, and policies to align, and that happens rarely.”

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

While different funders have varying ideas of what constitutes “organizational problems” or “poor leadership,” it’s clear that reputation matters. WPS organizations should strive to build credibility with potential supporters by being transparent about their theory of change, showcasing tangible results, and staying accountable to goals and indicators on their website and other public channels.

WHAT CONVINCES FUNDERS

Unsurprisingly, much of what funders and donors find convincing comes down to an organization’s effectiveness, whether perceived or actual. Success seems to beget success. This may be incremental progress that an organization is able to demonstrate, such as helping elevate a nascent issue into the forefront of a policy debate or mobilizing constituencies around an advocacy effort. Some prefer supporting groups that excel at policy change and legislative wins while others prioritize efforts to directly support affected communities. In other instances, an organization’s involvement in a key, high-profile success story can cement a reputation of effectiveness.

Interviewees said they are often persuaded by “ideas that make sense” (i.e., not just a lofty goal but a clear pathway to change). One foundation board member said “groups that are not trying to do everything, but have a clear message of change” are often convincing.

Several interviewees mentioned access to decision makers and/or proximity to a decision-making process as a convincing factor in funding decisions. These examples could include close connections

and influence with policymakers, participation in diplomatic processes, or deep on-the-ground ties in a particular community for grassroots engagement. Funders and donors want to know that organizations have the necessary linkages to deliver on their promises. “If you can show there is a real-world demand for what grantees are trying to produce,” said one funder about what is persuasive. “If you can show you will have an audience with the [decision makers].”

Stories, data, and metrics are compelling in different ways depending on the audience. “I’m less interested in the metrics because it is so much of a longer-term thing,” said one funder. “If you are only looking at things you can measure, you are not looking at what needs to be changed. My giving is based on a philosophy of ‘this is important’ and a theory of change about how we get here. It totals up to a larger movement.”

One funder with extensive experience in WPS noted the importance of evidence but also the testimony of experts on the ground. “If [women] are not included, you are never going to improve the situation...not only do we see the data and metrics, but those on the ground in the countries say it is important.”

Another funder found personal stories more persuasive. “Convincing personal anecdotes that describe how a grantee has had influence in a decision-making process,” said one funder about what’s valued. “Your work is being read, cited, used in major publications, and used by people making decisions on these issues.” Before spending time and resources on collecting metrics for potential funders, WPS organizations should first gauge the importance of these to their specific audience. Asking funders to describe the success of their other grantees may help you judge this; if they reference metrics or personal anecdotes, try employing the same in your messaging back to them.

WHAT DO DONORS CONSIDER A SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATION?

“They really understand and get how to build a grassroots base and move people to mobilize when there are trigger moments in certain issues,” said one funder about MoveOn.org.

“Global Fund for Women doesn’t pull punches and doesn’t pander to donors with cheerleading events about how great girls are,” said another.

Friends Committee on National Legislation was another group mentioned as effectively connecting grassroots work with legislative advocacy in Congress.

One interviewee mentioned “Name It. Change It.,” a nonpartisan project of She Should Run and the Women’s Media Center, as an effective rapid response to help address sexism and misogyny in media coverage of female candidates for political office.

ACLU, Planned Parenthood, Human Rights Watch, Inclusive Security, and women’s rights campaigns via Amnesty International were all mentioned as effective organizations that consistently demonstrate the importance and impact of their work.

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

Some interviewees suggested that foundations and institutional donors tend to focus more on results and effectiveness while individual donors were often convinced by compelling stories. In both cases, WPS organizations should concentrate on positive stories of impact and/or of need, as these are generally better received than stories of women as victims.

Approaches to Change

Funders' and donors' preferences for specific approaches also shape their giving. Some take a long-term view; some prefer instant—and sometimes unrealistic—results. Some only see value in policy wins and systemic change while others prefer direct service delivery and programmatic work. Some see the value in the full spectrum of interventions.

Some look to seed new or innovative approaches to an existing problem, such as investing in film or entertainment to raise visibility for an issue or convening unlikely coalition partners around a specific cause. Others are strongly committed to a specific type of approach, such as tightly-focused funding on policy research or legislative advocacy. Another donor stressed a preference “to invest [in an organization or cause] early when others may not look at it, and see it take off from there.”

There is ongoing tension between how funders acknowledge the importance of funding upstream, structural interventions, and the prevailing tendency to support shorter-term efforts that get the “low-hanging fruit” and “produce clear wins.”

Interviewees suggested broad recognition of the value of supporting long-term solutions. “We have to mobilize now but also look beyond...the long term,” said one funder. “So much now is going toward the short term.” Yet many foundation boards and some individual donors still regularly demand proof of impact at quarterly or bimonthly meetings. This often puts unrealistic pressure on foundation staff and grantees to track short-term metrics and show impact. “We look at short-term policy to see where we can make policy wins and see policy component as a main element of change where we can make an impact,” said one funder.

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

The breadth of approaches that funders and donors may prioritize can offer different windows of opportunity to cultivate their financial support. For example, highlight policy wins to funders who have a demonstrated interest in policy advocacy.

Issue Awareness

A WPS community focus group in March 2017 (see Appendix 1 for more details) helped identify key audiences for this research. An additional workshop defined potential participants for interviews, prioritizing in-depth and diverse perspectives to understand the motivations and preferences of funders and donors across issues related to WPS work. Participants were selected from the following categories:

- ▶ Previous WPS funders
- ▶ Women-focused funders
- ▶ Peace and security funders
- ▶ Human rights funders
- ▶ Climate change funders

These categories helped shape what was asked of funders from different backgrounds. However, in the course of the research, it became apparent that this audience breakdown is not always indicative of a funder's frame of reference.

For example, one interviewee who works almost exclusively on environmental and climate change grants conveyed a very strong understanding of the importance of a WPS-specific lens. Another interviewee who works on peace and security initiatives had little awareness of the importance of women's inclusion in those issues. One individual donor had a strong understanding of gender equality but little awareness of how it applies to peace and security.



KEY TAKEAWAY

Awareness and understanding of gender equality and WPS-specific issues is potentially a much stronger indicator of what might resonate with different audiences than their job title or even demographic factors. Considering audiences on a spectrum of awareness and understanding may be more useful in identifying, cultivating, and appealing to a broader universe of funders and donors.

An awareness-based spectrum could classify prospective donors and funders on a scale of understanding, such as:

- ▶ **Low Awareness** (e.g., "hard security" funder who doesn't see gender role in peace and security issues)

- ▶ **Sound Understanding** (e.g., women-focused donor who doesn't automatically apply that frame to international or security causes)

- ▶ **High Conviction** (e.g., human rights-focused funder who believes women are essential to peace and security)

This kind of awareness-based spectrum can provide a more nuanced approach to audience targeting, allowing fundraisers to focus on engaging personal networks, affinity groups, related causes, funder groups, and other clusters indicative of donor awareness.

LOW AWARENESS: GENDER BLINDNESS

As was highlighted in a recent New America report and panel discussion on gender mainstreaming, how US audiences think about gender equality and articulate the role of gender in their own work can indicate how they prefer to receive messages about these issues.

For example, according to the New America report, male policymakers expressed the notion of “gender blindness”⁷—that gender is not something they see—as a way to show that they see women and men on equal footing. But because it does nothing to undo existing structural or systemic barriers, “gender blindness” perpetuates gender inequality.

Low awareness of WPS may stem from this pernicious concept of gender blindness, particularly among traditional security institutions. For example, after supporting the negotiation of the 1994 Lusaka Protocol in an attempt to end Angola’s civil war, Special Assistant for African Affairs Don Steinberg proudly declared that the agreement was “gender neutral”—it didn’t discriminate between men and women but instead treated them exactly the same. It was only after several weeks of implementing the agreement that Ambassador Steinberg realized that gender neutrality/blindness is inherently discriminatory against women. The agreement ignored how men and women are affected differently by a range of issues, such as reconciliation, displacement, and the proliferation of small arms,⁸ to the detriment of the agreement’s implementation.

In other cases, low awareness of WPS may simply be a case of little to no exposure to the data, stories, and evidence of how women’s inclusion improves peace and security outcomes. When asked about the role of inclusion in security, one

interviewee responded: “I’ve heard that statement. I would be interested in social science that backs it up. It sounds intuitively right to me, but I haven’t seen evidence of it. But I would be interested in seeing what the research shows.”

**KEY TAKEAWAY**

To appeal to low awareness funders, WPS organizations should utilize evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of women’s inclusion and the consequences of so-called “gender blindness” (e.g., ex-combatant programs that aren’t designed with both men and women in mind will overlook things like on-site childcare that enable female soldiers to participate). It’s not just a question of reaching them but showing evidence to support the value of women’s inclusions in these areas.

SOUND UNDERSTANDING: GENDER EQUALITY

Some funders are highly aware of the importance of gender equality but may not apply a gender lens—in other words, assess how an action might differently affect men, women, boys, and girls—directly to their work nor consider its relationship to peace and security.

Even those with a sound understanding of gender often think about it only as it relates to their own organization’s representation, process, leadership, and culture—and how addressing gender inequalities in those may lead to better organizational outcomes. Many interviewees presented this way of thinking:

- ▶ “Gender is front and center in everything we do. It comes up in how grantmaking groups are organized and staffed. It comes up when we ask about governance and dynamics of groups that are being supported.”
- ▶ “If there were more women in leadership at the most powerful institutions, I would bet that the organization would be really different in their approach.”
- ▶ “The big green organizations are all run by men, and by white men. You can ask the question of what have they achieved. You can then look at environmental justice and see that those run by racially diverse women and how much [more] they have achieved in the past fifteen years.”

In some, but not all, cases this audience will also apply a gender lens when considering how various national policies and systems affect genders in different ways. For example, one interviewee explained that climate change policies are typically thought of as being gender neutral. However, in regions or cultures where violence against women is more prevalent and their safety consistently at risk in public spaces, policies that encourage people to use more public transit can have very different implications for different genders.

But a strong understanding of gender equality does not always extend to its role in peace and security. Some interviewees discussed how peace and security issues are typically considered through a military, male-dominated lens where the role of the state is paramount.⁹ Inclusivity, on the other hand, is more often thought about in community-level or organizational terms.

Echoing a point of view that doesn't clearly see a role for women in peace and security, one donor asked: “Why would women be at the table? They aren't the ones fighting.”


KEY TAKEAWAY

Funder audiences that have a sound understanding of gender equality, with little to no knowledge of how it applies to peace and security issues, are ripe for engagement that moves them into the “high conviction” end of the spectrum. WPS organizations can, for example, make a direct connection between their support for more equal representation in other spaces (e.g., organizations, politics, board rooms) and the positive effects of women's inclusion on peace and security outcomes. This audience may also be open to messaging that links WPS to other gender justice issues, such as physical safety, economic opportunity, education, reproductive health, and more. For example, one could note evidence that women, when included in negotiations, tend to broaden discussions.¹⁰

HIGH CONVICTION: GENDER AND WPS

Clearly, the audience that needs the least convincing about the importance of gender equality and WPS is those who are already engaged in it. They see the connection, they understand the value, and they are committed to sustaining support for it.

The main barrier to increased funding from this audience seems to rest at the mission or vision level. High-conviction funders in related issue areas must be convinced to make WPS a more central part of grantmaking portfolios rather than a “women’s project” to be added on.

 **KEY TAKEAWAY**

WPS organizations should draw on high-conviction funders to act as “champions” for this work, particularly among peer funding groups. For example, engaging with donor networks and foundations that are women-led and have women in decision making positions could provide opportunities to move “sound understanding” funders up the awareness spectrum, ultimately convincing them to give.

III. Refining Your Message

Messaging Challenges

Insights from the WPS community focus group, key informant interviews, and additional secondary research show there are five persistent—and in some ways overlapping—messaging challenges confronting the WPS field.

1. LACK OF AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

The interviews made clear there is a lack of understanding among donors about WPS and its importance. “People don’t know who this community is because it is easy to ignore it exists,” said a staff person at a WPS organization.

Conventional thinking about peace and security is often through a governmental or military lens, whereas WPS is often placed in the “softer” gender and development categories. Security funders and those working on related issues are less interested in—and easily turned away from—inclusion-related work.

“One of the key challenges is a lack of visibility of women and oversimplification of gender,” said one funder with WPS experience. “The way in which conflicts are presented and the militarization—it’s a man’s world.”

2. TOO MUCH JARGON

In a field that many believe is already too insular and fraught with silos, using jargon only compounds lack of awareness and understanding.

Research conducted by New America¹¹ revealed a jargon problem in the WPS field. From the WPS moniker itself to ubiquitous references to UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the terminology is unclear and a barrier to understanding for some of the most important audiences.

As Heather Hurlburt noted in the New America panel discussion about their survey of national security policymakers: “Nobody knew that WPS was a field...none of the words registered at all.”

3. A NICHE PIECE OF A SMALL PIE

Overall funding of peace and security initiatives is relatively minimal; gender-specific funding in this space, often deemed as a “nice to have,” is de-emphasized even further.

In particular, interviewees stressed the difficulty of fundraising for “upstream” activities, such as research, advocacy, and leadership training—all of which are critical needs in the WPS field. The sticking point seems to be that these approaches are often more long-term in nature, with outcomes and results that are more difficult to quantify, measure, and evaluate (compared to traditional programming work). While such upstream interventions appear to be increasingly appealing to funders, they’re still not the norm.

4. POLITICAL UNCERTAINTY

The results of the 2016 US presidential election upended not just the policy environment but the entire funding landscape. According to some in the WPS field, a general timidity emerged in the aftermath of the election throughout the progressive funding community. Donors were burned out. Many foundations were paralyzed trying to figure out their next steps. (*For more information, see page 13*).

Many funders and donors have since regrouped, sparking new investments in causes like civil rights and near-term fights like health care. This puts the WPS field—which to some seems like a luxury investment by comparison—in a difficult situation.

Massive anticipated cuts to federal funding for international affairs, along with other reductions in related government programs, further complicate this picture. As advocates work to prevent a rollback of women’s basic rights and fight other core policy battles, WPS organizations and causes can easily be sidelined by funders and donors.

5. DIFFERENT FRAMEWORKS OF WHY IT MATTERS

Another major messaging challenge long faced by the WPS field is how best to frame the argument for *why* women's inclusion in peace and security matters. Some argue that inclusion is a basic right given that women are half the population. This rights-based framing notes that exclusion is a problem that must be remedied in the name of fairness and equality. A potential danger with this approach is that it can lead to tokenism—the notion that *any* female representation corrects the injustice—rather than a focus on meaningful inclusion.

Another common frame is a more outcomes-based approach that focuses on how women's inclusion makes peace agreements stronger and longer-lasting. Drawing on qualitative examples and statistical evidence, this message demonstrates concrete ways that women improve process and outcomes when they have meaningful representation at the table. One risk of this approach is that women's inclusion may only be valued when their “usefulness” is readily apparent (with “usefulness” often being narrowly defined).

There is anecdotal evidence that rights-based messaging that resonates strongly with some audiences can have the opposite effect with other audiences who may write off WPS as a women's rights issue. Additionally, even within the outcomes-based approach, there's anecdotal evidence that certain frames can activate barriers. For example, the message that women's inclusion leads to better outcomes can sometimes be perceived as an argument that “women are better.” WPS organizations need to better understand which frames are effective with different audiences and tailor their communications accordingly.

Messaging Opportunities

The opportunities that emerge from this research consist largely of how the field talks about its work. These approaches include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Framing around the effectiveness and durability of WPS work.
- ▶ Better articulating data that shows direct correlation between women's inclusion and more lasting peace and security outcomes.
- ▶ Emphasizing positive, personal, compelling stories that go beyond community-level work, by highlighting women front and center in the pursuit of broad, structural change.
- ▶ Featuring a broader movement of women engaging and participating in peace and security work, beyond any single representative.
- ▶ Connecting the WPS agenda to related fields, such as human rights, security, and environmental justice.
- ▶ Identifying, testing, and developing simpler ways of saying things that are more accessible than current jargon and that cut through conventional gendered reactions to terms like “conflict” and “security.”
- ▶ Shifting the imagery of peace and security to go beyond the familiar trope of men sitting around a table or the military-centered cliché.

(Additional opportunities and areas for further research can be found in the “Next Steps” section beginning on page 32.)

Messaging Recommendations and Framework

The framework below is based on and adapted from the “building public will” concept¹² and applied to funder and donor audiences. This approach focuses on meeting audiences where they are, appealing to commonly held values, and helping move them from awareness to understanding to action.

This framework provides a great deal of flexibility in different venues, from a quick conversation to a funder meeting, a donor appeal letter, or a grant application. Additionally, this framework allows for any number of entry points, dependent on audience readiness—it isn’t a strictly linear approach in every setting. It also provides an easy way to incorporate supporting facts, data, stories, or policy proposals that can add to the depth of the appeal.

This is not intended to be a script to follow verbatim but rather a guide to help integrate the right messages and intent for different audiences.

Additionally, the message framework developed from this research is not necessarily intended to appeal to or impress experts who regularly work at or with WPS organizations. Rather, the aim is to connect with funder audiences for whom WPS issues are likely one part of a larger grant portfolio or broad donor interest.

These recommendations were developed by analyzing the community focus group and key informant interview findings to identify consistent themes likely to appeal to funders and donors and connect them to the audiences most likely to be receptive.

The central messaging tenets that run through this framework are:

- 1 **Everyone deserves to live in a peaceful and secure world.**

- 2 **The most effective way to make that happen is for everyone, especially women, to be included and have a role in peace, conflict, and security issues.**

- 3 **If women don’t have a say in these issue areas, the same cycles of violence and conflict will continue, and that’s why funder support for this work is essential.**

AUDIENCE	CREATE AWARENESS	BUILD UNDERSTANDING	MOVE TO ACTION (i.e., give)
<p>Low Awareness (e.g., “hard security” funder who doesn’t see gender role in peace and security issues)</p>	<p>1. Establish Common Ground:</p> <p>“We all want to live in a peaceful and secure world.”</p> <p>“You understand this, as you are currently working on _____.”</p> <p>2. Define and Frame the Problem:</p> <p>“We’ve made tremendous progress, including the program you and others worked on in _____, but conflict and violence still persist.”</p> <p>“There’s a better, more effective way to reduce violence and conflicts.”</p>	<p>3. Share What Can Be Changed:</p> <p>“Peace is more lasting when everyone is involved in creating it.”</p> <p>“Research shows that when women play leading roles in programs like _____ and issues of peace, conflict, and security in general, the outcomes are more effective and more durable.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting evidence of claim (anecdotes, facts, data, imagery).</i> <p>4. Show Risk of Inaction</p> <p>“Even though we know it’s more effective to include everyone in these processes, the status quo ends up sidelining important stakeholders, and that leaves any outcome vulnerable.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting evidence of claim (anecdotes, facts, data, imagery).</i> 	<p>5. Make the Ask:</p> <p>“That’s why we need your support to help make sure this work is part of the approach to longer lasting stability.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Link specifically to how effective and necessary your approach to WPS is.</i> <p>“With your help, we will:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State specific program/ activity funds will be used for.</i> <p>“This program/activity will help us achieve/work toward:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State specific goal.</i>

AUDIENCE	CREATE AWARENESS	BUILD UNDERSTANDING	MOVE TO ACTION (i.e., give)
<p>Sound Understanding</p> <p>(e.g., women-focused donor who doesn't automatically apply a gender lens to international or security causes)</p>	<p>1. Establish Common Ground:</p> <p>"We all know the importance of ensuring that women have influential positions and decision-making power in _____. You understand this, as you are currently working on _____."</p> <p>2. Define and Frame the Problem:</p> <p>"Though you and numerous others are working on incredible programs in _____, we know that women are consistently left out of these roles. One of the places where this is really problematic is conflict prevention and resolution."</p> <p>"That's why we're working to bring more women into those roles, to have more of a say in the peace and stability of their communities."</p>	<p>3. Share What Can Be Changed:</p> <p>"Not enough women have a role in these issues even though we know it's the most effective way to advance peace."</p> <p>"The same way that gender equality and women's inclusion is important in the workplace, policymaking, and other spaces, it's essential to peace and stability. And that's why we're working to bring more women into those roles."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting evidence of claim (anecdotes, facts, data, imagery).</i> <p>4. Show Risk of Inaction</p> <p>"Unless we continue to demonstrate the importance of this work, the status quo will continue to leave women out and lead to a greater risk of war and conflict."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting evidence of claim (anecdotes, facts, data, imagery).</i> 	<p>5. Make the Ask:</p> <p>"That's why we need your support to continue this important work, and to make sure women have a role in our peace and security."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Link specifically to how effective and necessary your approach to WPS is.</i> <p>"With your help, we will:"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State specific program/ activity funds will be used for.</i> <p>"This program/activity will help us achieve/work toward:"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State specific goal.</i>

AUDIENCE	CREATE AWARENESS	BUILD UNDERSTANDING	MOVE TO ACTION (i.e., give)
<p>High Conviction</p> <p>(e.g., human rights-focused funder who believes role of women is essential to peace and security)</p>	<p>1. Establish Common Ground:</p> <p>“We know you understand that women are essential to peace and security.”</p> <p>2. Define and Frame the Problem:</p> <p>“But as you know, despite all of the evidence, important programs are being cut back and a lot of the progress we’ve made is being undone. These setbacks make our work even more critical.”</p>	<p>3. Share What Can Be Changed:</p> <p>“Though our work is being dismissed and pushed aside by some, we know what works and we know what we have to do to get past the barriers and bring more women into these roles.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting evidence of claim (anecdotes, facts, data, imagery).</i> <p>4. Show Risk of Inaction</p> <p>“If we don’t continue this work, we know the status quo will revert back to leaving women out and leaving peace more at risk.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Supporting evidence of claim (anecdotes, facts, data, imagery).</i> 	<p>5. Make the Ask:</p> <p>“That’s why we need your support to continue this important work, and to make sure women have a role in our peace and security.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Link specifically to how effective and necessary your approach to WPS is.</i> <p>“With your help, we will:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State specific program/ activity funds will be used for.</i> <p>“This program/activity will help us achieve/work toward:”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State specific goal.</i>

OTHER MESSAGING CONSIDERATIONS

When considering how to apply this framework and what kinds of supporting facts, data, stories, and imagery to highlight, keep in mind the following themes that funders and donors consistently identified as compelling and convincing:

- ▶ Why the stated approach will be effective and how it will address the problem.
- ▶ Why funding is needed and what data and stories will help demonstrate that need.
- ▶ How funding will make a difference, and what track record of success an organization can demonstrate.
- ▶ What concrete outcomes are possible or likely to result.

Funders and donors are drawn to organizations that are perceived as effective, but where their support can still help make a difference. It's critical to keep this in mind as the message framework is further developed, tested, and applied in different contexts. It's important to understand audience context and motivations, establish and re-establish common ground, and tailor messaging to build donor will.

IV. Utilizing the Right Channels

Preferred Methods of Engagement

If there can be one takeaway about funder and donor preferences for engaging with issues and causes they might support, it's that few, if any, like "cold calls." Instead, they rely heavily on personal relationships, professional networks, and peer-level information and guidance.

Most interviewees indicated a preference for email communications as a way to stay engaged and updated. They rely strongly on email newsletters and listservs to track issues and organizations. Fewer prefer to stay informed and engaged through social media, though those who are active social media users tend to rely on it more. There is a significant—and somewhat predictable—generational divide in social media, with far less usage among older generations, particularly on platforms other than Facebook.¹³

At least one person interviewed admitted to being overwhelmed with the flow of information, especially with newsletters.

Though interviewees were asked about their social media preferences, no clear trends emerged. Some avoid social media altogether, while others rely on it as a news source. Twitter was mentioned several times as a good way to stay up to speed, and at least one interviewee mentioned Instagram as a way to reach and engage with younger audiences, specifically referencing what the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons¹⁴ does on that platform.

WHERE DO DONORS GET THEIR NEWS?

Interviewees referenced numerous publications that they rely on to stay up to speed on issues in the field, including but not limited to:

THE DAILY
BEAST

THE
HILL

The New York Times

THE
Nation.

The Washington Post

The Boston Globe

POLITICO Slate

FP

SALON

Other sites and venues that funder and donors pointed to include:

- ▶ Arms Control Wonk
- ▶ Bulletin of Atomic Scientists
- ▶ Partnership for Global Security
- ▶ Rethink Media
- ▶ Women for Women International
- ▶ Women Moving Millions

Dinners, film screenings, site visits, and study tours were all mentioned as effective ways to engage in person. “Events are exhausting, but when an event is good there is no better way to create a sense of loyalty and sense of passion,” said one donor. Though at least one interviewee cautioned against fancy events, saying: “I’m not expecting to be taken to a huge gala. I’m expecting the outcomes they say they will do are happening.”

Funders and donors also indicated that the messenger matters. Some respond well to subject matter experts or NGO leaders, while others tend to be more persuaded by those they know personally. “I learn a huge amount from other women in the field,” said one funder, underscoring the value of relational approaches.

Several interviewees stressed the importance of personal contact with donors and funders. “Nothing can replace talking with grantees, learning what they are facing, and being a connector,” said one.

Outreach Recommendations

Key informant interviews and the community focus group showed that outreach preferences vary widely from person to person. A program officer at one foundation may be a heavy Twitter user while a peer at another foundation may have never engaged in that platform. Similarly, funders and donors have very diverse opinions about events and other in-person engagement.

However, interviewees generally expressed a preference for direct, personalized engagement. Strategies to tap into this could include:

- ▶ Focus on network-based outreach and personal appeals, building off current waves of interest and activism around gender equality and civil rights. If domestic funders are employing an equity frame, try pursuing that in the international space.
- ▶ Cultivate donors and funders with in-person or virtual events that may not have an explicit ask but are intended to inform and educate. Consider innovative approaches that may have a different generational appeal, including opportunities for real-time giving, matching programs, giving circles, or other interactive approaches that could help spark some personal interest and conviction.
- ▶ Emphasize digital outreach, social media promotion, and electronic communications. Nobody is clamoring for printed annual reports or fancy brochures. While the need for some printed publications isn’t likely to disappear entirely, digital appeals and direct engagement with donors and funders would be a better use of time and resources. Prioritizing email outreach and Twitter may make sense given that funding audiences already expect to be engaged that way. Differentiation can be achieved through a strong, creative content strategy.

V. Next Steps

Recommendations for What's Next

Given the breadth of the information provided in this report, below are potential next steps for staff at WPS organizations, including suggestions for further message development and testing, additional data gathering and story collecting, and ways to address branding and naming conventions.

► Message Development and Testing

- Craft key messages using the message framework outlined above for each of the target audience types (low awareness, sound understanding, high conviction) and test with select representatives of those target audiences.
- Refine message framework and underlying themes based on testing feedback from target audiences.
- After initial feedback, conduct short-term pilot fundraising campaigns to further test and fine-tune message framework.

► Data and Story-Gathering

- Augment existing trove of evidence by gathering positive data points, studies, case studies, and examples of successful WPS work to support message themes, including:
 - Positive quantitative and/or qualitative outcomes when women are involved in matters of peace, conflict, and security

- Negative quantitative and/or qualitative outcomes when women are NOT involved in matters of peace, conflict, and security
- How women are disproportionately affected by conflict
- Highlight stories and examples that portray peace, conflict, and security beyond or outside of the conventional military lens.

► Content Development

- Develop a regular protocol for collecting and organizing the type of content described above to build a library of facts, studies, stories, imagery, and other information to support messaging themes.
- Categorize content library in ways that allow for each data point or story to be used with a correlating target audience group likely to find it compelling or appealing.
- Consider how to articulate messaging content both in terms of the importance of the issue itself *and* how funding is needed to support and advance the work.

- Use actions and current events—like federal budget cuts or the US withdrawal from the Paris Agreement—as pegs to proactively engage current donors and target new donors in adjacent issues.
- Connect WPS causes to related and adjacent progressive causes (such as environmental advocacy) and, in doing so, tap into current donor activism.

► Terminology and Language

- Test different language to figure out what is most easily understood by “low awareness” and “sound understanding” audiences. Be aware of the pitfalls of jargon and, where possible, avoid acronyms.

► Evaluation and Reinforcement

- Track progress and resonance of message themes.
- Incorporate ongoing or discreet audience feedback into refining future messaging decisions.

Appendix 1 - About the Research

Methodology and Activities

The goals of this research are to better understand why funders give, how they give, what would make them give more, and what insights and recommendations WPS organizations should consider to better position themselves with funders and donors.

The methodology consisted primarily of qualitative research, with considerable input and guidance from Inclusive Security and other WPS organizations, including via a community focus group in March 2017. The focus group provided the opportunity to shape and inform the ensuing research. Participants discussed funding challenges and opportunities, assessed current and potential key donors, and identified possible approaches to broaden the appeal of WPS issues to funders. Focus group participants also helped identify specific audience profiles that further informed the research activities.

After a follow-up workshop that solidified research participants and the qualitative methodology, a series of 12 interviews were conducted in April and May 2017 with representatives from large foundations, small family funders, individual donors, foundation board members, and philanthropic advisors, all of whom had varied familiarity with WPS.

Our research findings are primarily based on the key informant interviews with relevant insights from the focus group and secondary research incorporated where applicable. Secondary

research helped inform and supplement this work, including resources from the Center for Effective Philanthropy, New America, Fidelity Charitable, Foundation Center, and the Peace and Security Funders Group.

The March 2017 community focus group included representatives from the following organizations:

- Center for New American Security
- Council on Foreign Relations
- Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security
- Inclusive Security
- International Center for Research on Women
- Our Secure Future
- Truman Center/Truman National Security Project
- Women Stats Project

Interviewee Criteria

This research largely relied on organizational, sector, or demographic factors to help identify potential interviewees. Participants in the community focus groups identified individual donors and entrepreneurs, foundations, and corporations as the three priority audiences. Despite a history of funding WPS work, US government entities were not included because the study was conducted too soon after the election for the new administration's policy and funding priorities to be established.

The selection criteria for key informant interviews also incorporated factors about funder type and history, including:

- ▶ Previous WPS funders
- ▶ Women-focused funders
- ▶ Peace and security funders
- ▶ Human rights funders
- ▶ Climate change funders

The focus group also underscored the importance of exploring funding from communities and individuals of color, affluent men, and individual donors in tangential areas, such as poverty reduction, economic equality, and human rights work, to help expand the WPS funding model. Interviewees thus reflected a diversity of funding types, mission/vision/issue focus, gender, etc.

Additionally, we limited the research to funders and donors who had given \$100,000 or more as a one-time gift in the past and who have funded some type of “upstream” work (e.g., long-term systems change related to human rights, nuclear disarmament, climate change, economic empowerment, poverty alleviation, or international development).

Research Limitations

A qualitative approach is well-suited for research like this where the aim is to better understand the context and insights for different types of motivations and behaviors¹⁵ rather than measuring them, which a quantitative survey would allow. For this report, the qualitative approach provided the opportunity to dig deeper into the insights, opinions, and perspectives of the research participants.

However, qualitative research—like any methodology—does have limitations. Findings from the key informant interviews are not wholly representative of the funding community nor wholly representative of the participating organizations. Rather, these findings illustrate a sample of the experiences, insights, motivations, and behaviors of individuals and organizations from across this community.

Appendix 2 - Behaviors of Giving

We spoke with donors and funders about their giving processes and general behaviors. While those who lead fundraising at WPS organizations will likely be familiar with this already, staff who are newer to resource development may find it to be a useful introduction.

Giving Processes

Foundation grantmaking tends to come in two forms.

The primary one is a formalized process, described online, often in great detail, with specific timing and instructions for what to provide, when to provide it, and how to apply. This typically takes the shape of a request for proposal (RFP) initiated by a foundation or a responsive funding cycle where foundations accept proposals at regular intervals, such as quarterly or annually. Information is often easy to find on foundation websites or other resources, such as the Foundation Center online directory.

The formal procedures are usually hierarchical. Regardless of whether it's an RFP, a responsive funding cycle, or some other formal process, grant applicants almost always first interact with a program officer or a program associate of some kind.

Some funders rely on grant committees at a staff level, and usually there are approvals that also include a director and/or vice president. Larger grants or grant initiatives typically require additional reviews by executive and board-level decision makers.

No foundations interviewed noted any recurring sticking points or problems with getting grants approved. However, there was a clear acknowledgement that both peers and supervisors must be brought on board with the final decision.

“The program officer needs to convince the director and VP that a grant is worth pursuing,” said one foundation staff person. “To do that, I look at the track record of the applicant, how what they are proposing fits into our strategy.”

Much of the due diligence on grant proposals is done at the staff level, and that is generally “the hardest step to get through,” said another funder. “Almost always, anything that gets to the board is approved.”

Generally, the larger the grant, the more levels of approval it will have to move through. Likewise, larger foundations with multiple staff levels often have more decision making layers to work through, while smaller funders like family foundations—even those with large endowments—often have a lighter-touch process.

The second form of grantmaking is usually less publicized or transparent. Instead of a formal, public process, this manner of grantmaking is discretionary and can exist at the CEO, vice president, or program officer level. Obtaining funding through these discretionary processes relies on cultivating relationships with foundation staff and, in some cases, board members, to stay top of mind and uphold a strong reputation. These more informal grant types are usually under a certain dollar threshold. For example, some foundations allow program officers to make discretionary grants up to \$10,000, while a CEO of a large foundation might have authority to award a grant of up to \$500,000, as one interviewee referenced.

Individual donor giving is less formalized and much less transparent. Some high-dollar donors allocate a certain budget on an annual basis, often coinciding with the tax year, and have a more regimented approach to apportioning donations to each cause they support. But not all individual donors operate with this kind of rigor. Interviews indicate some donors make their giving decisions on an ongoing basis, sometimes in response to current events, new campaigns or causes, or a particularly compelling appeal. This approach comes from the desire to remain nimble.

Interview discussions indicated that some family foundations operate in somewhat of a hybrid approach in between the formality of foundations and the less layered process of individual donors. Family foundations often have a smaller staff, fewer decision makers, and can move more quickly in response to grantee or applicant requests.

Giving Range and Frequency

The research conducted for this project did not include a quantitative study of giving ranges, but interviewees referenced gifts from \$1,000 individual donations to multimillion dollar, multi-year investments. More specifically, foundation grants tend to be between \$10,000 and \$250,000. The transactional costs of smaller grants can sometimes dissuade funders. This may provide an opening to appeal for higher allocations.

The range of individual donations is trickier to nail down. Low- and mid-dollar donors constitute a substantial portion of the giving community. However, interviews indicated that high-level individual donors tend to fall within the range of \$10,000 to \$100,000.

Foundation giving occurs at different intervals. Some funders have a quarterly or annual grant cycle, while others rely on board meeting frequency to dictate grant approval processes. One foundation that we interviewed awards grants three times per year; another does it quarterly but is moving to an annual cycle.

Some foundations do not have a formal funding cycle and either rely on their own issuance of RFPs or make funding decisions on an ongoing basis. Typically, information about these funding cycles and frequencies is either available online or can be provided by foundation program staff.

Few, if any, funders or donors indicated a reliance on one-time gifts. Rather, most of those interviewed prefer investing in organizations over the long term, particularly in issue areas that require structural or system change. While many donors and funders remain open to supporting new causes, and organizations certainly can fall in or out of favor, there appears to be a tendency towards renewable, ongoing gifts unless or until something substantial changes, such as an organizational leadership transition or a new strategic direction.

Some funders and donors use services like Charity Navigator or GuideStar to help assess organizations. Though these services are data rich, they sometimes overemphasize factors like overhead costs and ratio of program-to-administrative expenses, even though these kinds of criteria are considered outdated and ineffective measures.¹⁶

ENDNOTES

1. It's worth acknowledging that the term "women, peace, and security" (WPS) is itself a barrier to awareness and understanding about the importance of this work, a finding that is explored in more detail within this report. However, for simplicity and consistency with this project and other recent research, WPS is used as a descriptor throughout this report.
2. For this report, the term "fundors" generally refers to grantmaking foundations and other institutional funding organizations while the term "donors" generally refers to individual donors and/or smaller family foundations where decision making is more unilateral in nature.
3. *Peace and Security Funding Index: An analysis of global foundation grant making* (Washington, DC: Peace and Security Funders Group and Foundation Center, 2017). <http://peaceandsecurityindex.org>
4. *Women and Giving: The impact of generation and gender on philanthropy* (Boston, MA: Fidelity Charitable, 2017). <https://www.fidelitycharitable.org/docs/women-and-giving.pdf>
5. "Intersectionality," coined by Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw, refers to the ways in which discriminatory power structures—whether based on gender, sexuality, race, class, ability, or other identities—combine, overlap, and intersect.
6. Phil Buchanan and Ellie Buteau, *Shifting Winds: Foundations Respond to a New Political Context* (Cambridge, MA: Center for Effective Philanthropy, April 2017). <http://research.effectivephilanthropy.org/shifting-winds-foundations-respond-to-new-political-context>
7. Panel participants: Elizabeth Weingarten, Heather Hurlburt, Rebecca Heslin Haller, and Dr. Chantal de Jong Oudratt, "Breaking Up the Boys Club: A Workshop on Gender Mainstreaming in National Security," New America, Washington, DC, April 27, 2017.
8. Donald Steinberg, "Looking Through the Gender Lens: More Stable Peace Through Empowering," in *Women On the Frontlines of Peace and Security* (Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2015).
9. Decades of research bear this out. See, for instance, Marie O'Reilly, *Why Women? Inclusive Security and Peaceful Societies* (Washington, DC: Inclusive Security, October 2015).
10. O'Reilly, *Why Women?*
11. Heather Hurlburt, Elizabeth Weingarten, and Carolina Marques de Mesquita, *A Guide to Talking Women, Peace, and Security Inside the U.S. Security Establishment* (Washington, DC: New America, February 2017).
12. *Building Public Will: Five-Phase Communication Approach to Sustainable Change* (Portland, OR: Metropolitan Group, 2009).
13. Shannon Greenwood, Andrew Perrin, and Maeve Duggan, *Social Media Update 2016* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, November 2016).
14. International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Instagram feed: <https://www.instagram.com/goodbyenukes/>.
15. John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 2nd Edition (University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 2003).
16. Nell Edgington, "How Funders Can Help Overcome the Overhead Myth," Center for Effective Philanthropy, February 7, 2017. <http://effectivephilanthropy.org/funders-can-help-overcome-overhead-myth/>



INCLUSIVE SECURITY was founded on the belief that a more secure world is possible if policymakers and conflict-affected populations work together. Women’s meaningful participation, in particular, can make the difference between failure and success. Since 1999, Inclusive Security has equipped decision makers with knowledge, tools, and connections that strengthen their ability to develop inclusive policies and approaches. We have also bolstered the skills and influence of women leaders around the world. Together with these allies, we’re making inclusion the rule, not the exception.

For more information contact

Shereen Hall | shall@inclusivesecurity.org

1615 M Street NW, Suite 850 | Washington, DC 20036 | 202.403.2000 | inclusivesecurity.org