

Inside Philanthropy

Inside Philanthropy

Who's Funding What & Why

Six Local and Regional Women's Funds to Know

Martha Ramirez | January 30, 2025



CREDIT: GROUND PICTURE/SHUTTERSTOCK

Philanthropy for [women and girls'](#) causes is spread across a range of vehicles, from powerhouse institutional grantmakers channeling billionaire fortunes — like the [Susan Thompson Buffett Foundation](#) or the [Gates Foundation](#), to name a couple — to national funders like the [Ms. Foundation for Women](#), and individual giving through LLCs like MacKenzie Scott's [Yield Giving](#) and Melinda French Gates' [Pivotal Ventures](#). Nevertheless, under 2% of all philanthropic

giving in the U.S. is earmarked for women and girls, according to the Women's Philanthropy Institute's [Women & Girls Index](#).

Earlier this year, we looked at some of the [top regional women's foundations](#) in the U.S., including the New York Women's Foundation and Women's Foundation California. Now, we're turning our attention to women's funds.

While “women's foundations” and “women's funds” are often used interchangeably, there is a distinction, as another [report](#) from the Women's Philanthropy Institute discusses. Women's foundations are typically standalone, independent organizations. Women's funds, on the other hand, tend to be affiliated with a larger foundation — often, though not exclusively, a community foundation.

Women's funds are typically much smaller than women's foundations and do not have the same grantmaking power, yet they still provide much-needed support for women and girls' causes within their communities. Like many women's foundations, they often draw on relatively small gifts from local donors and are good examples of the kind of philanthropic work everyday people can do. To that end, here are some women's funds housed within community foundations across the country.

The Women's Fund at the Austin Community Foundation

Founded in 2004, the [Women's Fund](#) housed at the [Austin Community Foundation](#) works to bridge gaps around addressing the needs of women and children in Central Texas and the lack of comprehensive data tracking of their wellbeing.

The fund's grantmaking is concentrated within five key areas: child care, education, housing, unintended pregnancy prevention and women's health. Since its launch, it has noted that the most urgent issues in the community are related to the racial wealth and health divide that women of color face.

To date, the fund has awarded more than \$3 million to more than 100 nonprofit organizations in the area. In 2024 alone, the Women's Fund awarded \$500,000 in general operating grants to 15 organizations supporting women in Central Texas. [Grantees](#) include Texas Advocacy Project, Planned Parenthood of Greater Texas, Saint Louise House, Truth Be Told, Mainspring Schools, Con Mi MADRE, Ladies Let's Talk and Hand to Hold.

The Women's Endowment Fund at the Akron Community Foundation

The [Women's Endowment Fund](#) housed at the [Akron Community Foundation](#) in Ohio was established in 1993 when a group of 100 women came together, giving \$1,000 each to fund

support programs to empower and make a difference in the lives of Akron's women and girls. More than 30 years later, the fund has grown to encompass almost \$5 million in charitable assets and has awarded \$2.3 million in grants to organizations and programs that "uplift, empower and educate" women and girls in Akron and Summit County. Its funding priorities include health and wellness, safety from violence and economic empowerment.

In 2024, the fund awarded a total of \$203,000 to 34 organizations in the Akron region. [Grantees](#) include ACCESS, Inc., which provides women and children experiencing homelessness with safe shelter, food, clothing and hygiene items, as well as Battered Women's Shelter, which serves women and children impacted by domestic violence. Another grantee is Girls on the Run Northeast Ohio, an exercise-based program that combines physical activity with conversations about self-confidence, stress management and healthy relationships. Other recent grantees include North Hill Community Development Corporation, Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, Proyecto Raices and VANTAGE Aging.

Maine Women's Fund

The [Maine Women's Fund](#) is housed at the [Maine Community Foundation](#), where it was originally started in 1988 thanks to the work of New York Women's Foundation founder and board member Gloria W. Milliken. The Maine Women's Fund separated from MaineCF to become its own established organization, making more than 525 investments totaling more than \$3 million to "transform the lives of women and girls" in the Pine Tree state. In 2022, the Maine Women's Fund [transferred its \\$3 million](#) in assets back to the Maine Community Foundation, where its work will continue alongside another fund, the Karen Morgan Leadership Fund.

In 2024, the Maine Women's Fund awarded a total of \$120,000 to organizations that support women and girls in the state. Grantees include: Hardy Girls, In Her Presence, MaineTransNet, Maine Women's Lobby Education Fund and Wabanaki Public Health and Wellness.

The Women's Fund of Winston-Salem

The Women's Fund of Winston-Salem in North Carolina was [established in 2005](#) as an advised fund of the Winston-Salem Foundation thanks to [five women](#) who wanted to work alongside other local women to make a difference in the lives of women and girls in their community. It now comprises almost 600 members from all walks of life, including corporate and nonprofit leaders, activists, community leaders, educators, entrepreneurs, students and volunteers.

To date, the fund has awarded more than \$2.28 million in grants to organizations and programs that seek to support women in Forsyth County, North Carolina. In addition to its grantmaking, the fund also promotes the collective economic impact of women's philanthropy in the community and engages in advocacy on issues that affect the economic security of Forsyth County's women and girls.

Since 2020, the fund has [prioritized](#) organizations that have an annual revenue of \$250,000 or less, are led by women of color, and actively engage women or girls in either the implementation or design of their work. Some of its 2024 grantees include Hogar Del Inmigrante, Lead Girls NC, Living is Finally Enjoyable Winston-Salem, New Start Homes Program, Shelter at St. Timothy's and the Wells Center for Women in Transition.

Women & Girls Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation

Established in 2001, the Women & Girls Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation supports programs and initiatives serving women and girls in six Connecticut cities and towns — Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington and Wolcott.

To date, the fund has awarded a total of \$850,000 to more than 80 organizations. In 2024, the fund awarded \$60,000 to 14 organizations, including the Bristol Family Resource Centers, Plainville Youth Services, the Agape House, Prudence Crandall Center, and Girl Scouts of Connecticut.

The Women's Fund Endowment of Stark Community Foundation

The [Women's Fund Endowment of Stark Community Foundation](#) was established in 2006 by 12 women, each of whom donated \$10,000 to create the fund to address increasing poverty among women and children in Stark County, Ohio. The fund has since grown to more than \$800,000 and has awarded almost \$250,000 to 50 nonprofit organizations that support women and children in the area.

The fund has three areas of focus at the moment. The first is economic stability and advancement, which includes providing job training, career planning, financial and digital literacy, and helping women obtain and maintain employment. The second is mental and emotional health support, including expanding mental health services to women living at or below the federal poverty line. Finally, the fund's neighborhood-based programming involves collaborating with service providers, churches, businesses and residents to provide key services in neighborhoods with high-risk populations. [Recent grantees](#) include Akron Children's Hospital, Alliance Area Domestic Violence Shelter, Feed Kids First, Stark County Black Nurses Association and YMCA of Central Stark County.

