

WDN | WDN ACTION

STRATEGIC PATH

2024-2028

CONNECT ✦ GROW ✦ FUND ✦ MOBILIZE

Dear friends,

There is a season for everything.

Here at Women Donors Network, our early members built growth into our DNA. They knew that to create change, we must embrace it. Though our network has taken several forms over the decades, we have always been rooted in community and fueled by an audacious vision for a just and sustainable future.



Every season of our growth has led to the next. We began as a home for progressive women to claim agency over their resources. With time, we grew into a learning space where women built skills as philanthropists. Next came a transformational focus on multiplying our impact through collective giving. As the political landscape shifted nationwide, we created WDN Action to power new political possibilities.

Then, 2020 changed everything. And we met the moment once again. In the pivotal years that followed, this network evolved to move funds faster and farther than ever before — in partnerships with movements and in pursuit of justice.

We also made space to reflect on the path ahead. In the process of creating this strategic path, we sought out the collective brilliance of over 200 members, grantees, and peers in the field. What we heard was a call to action: **the time has come to fully step into our power as a network.**

We are a growing multiracial and multigenerational community of donors organizing through a gender and racial justice lens. Together, we move mountains. We combine long-term strategic investments with responsive funding to meet the moment. From climate, to reproductive justice, to democracy, to human rights, our approach is the same. We fight for the freedom, safety, and dignity of all people.

Our impact is felt not just in *what* we do — moving millions in funding every year to organizations helmed by BIPOC leaders, women, and gender-expansive people — but *how* we do it — by collaborating together, trusting movement expertise, committing to personal and cultural transformation, and building towards liberation for all.

Today, members are ready for the next challenge. Grantees are encouraging us to amplify our voice and share our principled practices and learnings to influence the field. Our movement-aligned peers and partners are keen to deepen our work, collaboration and partnership together. Members are eager to grow their capacity to meet the moment in ways they never thought possible. The political moment demands that we dig deep and get bold. We've heard the call to action loud and clear. Let's answer it.

Onwards,

Leena Barakat
President & CEO





Every moment is an organizing opportunity, every person a potential activist, **every minute a chance to change the world.**”

-Dolores Huerta

THE WORK AHEAD

ANSWERING THE CALL

As changemakers, our work is to build a home at the edge of what is possible. We need to be equal parts persistence and imagination. Rooted in the space between the limits of today and the limitless tomorrow. Together, we are wide awake to the realities of this moment — and we leave the door open to the dream state.

By 2028, we aspire to:

- ✦ **Grow** into one of the most trusted multigenerational, multiracial donor communities organizing for justice
- ✦ **Mobilize** abundant resources to movements that defend against emerging threats and advance solutions toward a liberated future for all
- ✦ **Harness** the power of our network by leveraging the full range of our resources — across our financial, social, and political capital
- ✦ **Provide** the necessary tools and educational resources so that every member is equipped to sharpen their skills as organizers, advocates, and influencers
- ✦ **Amplify** our voice, presence, and collaboration in the field to strategically advance our shared vision
- ✦ **Strengthen** our organizational culture, policies, and practices to embody our values in every aspect of our work



A NEW LANDSCAPE



*I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.
I am changing the things I cannot accept.*

—Angela Davis

WOMEN DONORS NETWORK AND

WOMEN DONORS NETWORK ACTION

The challenges of this moment are profound. We face a sharp rise in global fascism and a systematic removal of hard-fought gains in racial and gender equity. Combined with historic levels of economic inequality and a deepening climate crisis, the context we live in is increasingly clear. We need to turn toward one another, and mobilize like never before, to build a world we've never seen before.

In this shifting landscape, we are elevating WDN Action and weaving it into every pillar of our work.

As WDN and WDN Action, we are:

One network — with a single North Star vision, shared aspirations and core beliefs, a shared set of strategic pillars, and shared infrastructure.

One community — where everyone has the chance to come as they are, engage as they wish and drive impact through both WDN and WDN Action.

Two organizations — with two complementary missions, differentiated capabilities and strategies to drive change, and separate resourcing that reflects our distinct funding vehicles and legal requirements.





Without community, there is no liberation ... but community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist.”

-Audre Lorde



**COME AS YOU ARE,
EXPECT TO GROW**

OUR COMMUNITY

As a network, our diversity and our collaborations are our strengths. We embody a range of identities, differences, and approaches to the work. By explicitly naming who we are, this strategy invites us to honor, invest in, and create further space for the richness of our community.

As individuals we are...

- ✦ Women (cis and trans), non-binary, and gender-expansive
- ✦ Committed to channeling resources and power to advance justice
- ✦ Financial contributors to the network’s impact

As a network we are...

- ✦ Multiracial and multi-generational
- ✦ Donor organizers
- ✦ Changemakers with diversified approaches to the work — we are doers, collaborators, delegators, and more

As a culture we embrace...

- ✦ Flexible engagement, providing a range of ways for members to participate
- ✦ Our individual growth journeys
- ✦ Our shared values of courage, curiosity, accountability, resilience, and commitment to the work and to each other

OUR APPROACH

WE RISE TOGETHER



At Women Donors Network, we rise together. We recognize that our struggles, our power and our liberation are intertwined. We are motivated by true change, not charity. We aim beyond equity — because we set our sights on justice.



*If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because **your liberation is bound up with mine**, then let us work together.”*

-Lilla Watson



As a multigenerational and multiracial community of donor organizers, we pledge to:

Center those most impacted

We adopt an intersectional feminist approach — guided by values of solidarity, trust, deep listening — shifting power to those who have been marginalized, honoring and centering their lived experiences.

Seek liberation for all

We recognize that no one is free until we are all free. We are working toward our liberation by eliminating the harmful and extractive structures, systems, and narratives that hold so many of us back, and turning our imagination towards a better world.

Mobilize our collective power

We unlock the full range of our resources — financial, social, and political — for justice. We leverage our power in solidarity, across generations, identities, and lived experiences. This includes discerning the right moments to yield our power, wield our power, and build the power of leaders and communities who have been historically excluded.

Harness the brilliance and power of our dynamic network

We cultivate our interdependence as a community — learning from and valuing the diverse range of lived experiences, expertise, and gifts that we all bring to this work.

Transform ourselves to transform society

We believe that as we work to transform the culture, systems, and structures that enable ongoing harm and oppression, we must come together in community to interrogate and transform our own role in those systems.



I believe that all organizing is science fiction — that **we are shaping the future we long for** and have not yet experienced.”

-adrienne maree brown

OUR VISION

MOBILIZING FOR JUSTICE

Our North Star

We envision a just and sustainable world where everyone can safely and freely determine their own futures.



Our Mission

Together, we protect and advance gender, racial, economic, and climate justice by channeling collective power and resources in solidarity with movements to transform...

WDN

people,
culture, and
systems

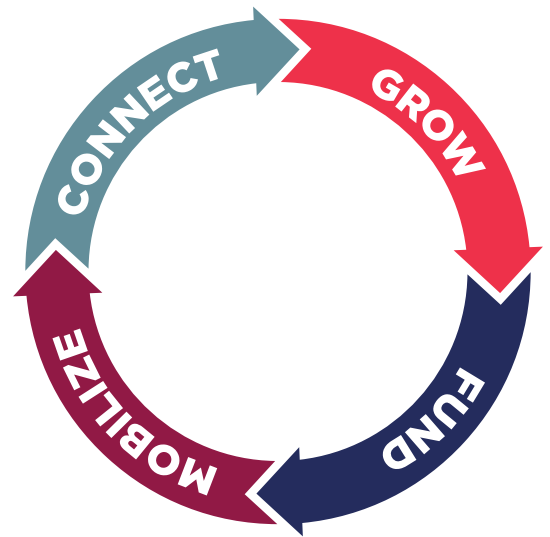
WDNACTION


policies,
political infrastructure, and
political possibilities

Our Pillars of Work

Our pillars build on and increase the ambition of our prior “connect, learn, act” model, emphasizing that all our learning is in service of growth and action.

There is no “one way” to engage with this community — and that’s by design. Each of us brings our own gifts, connections, personal missions, and growth edges to the work. As we explore opportunities to unlock the full range of our power towards justice, we’ll chart diverse paths. Members can engage as doers, collaborators, or delegators, and roles can shift over time.



	CONNECT	GROW	FUND	MOBILIZE
	<p>We are a home for values-aligned people to create relationships that last a lifetime. We connect and build a multigenerational, multiracial community of donor organizers inspired to transform their power into collective action.</p>	<p>We equip members to deepen their learning, grow their skills, and unlock the full range of their financial, social, and political capital in solidarity with movements.</p>	<p>We boldly move collective resources to meet emerging needs and build the long-term power, capacity, and infrastructure of movements that shift culture, policies, and systems.</p>	<p>We multiply our impact by organizing and influencing our members, networks, and the philanthropic field in alignment with our North Star.</p> 
WDNACTION	<p>We connect political changemakers across and within our membership and our broader community.</p>	<p>We inspire and educate political changemakers to channel collective power in solidarity with movements.</p>	<p>We invest in infrastructure to build political power and shore up against emerging threats, in service of gender and racial justice and a healthy, reflective democracy.</p>	<p>We multiply our impact by supporting political activism in solidarity with movements.</p>



Transform yourself, in order to transform the world.”

-Grace Lee Boggs

OUR PATH FORWARD

GROWTH FOR IMPACT



The four pillars are powered by refreshed activities that bring our strategy to life as we build towards our north star. Across every pillar, our work at WDN and WDN Action is intentionally designed to create fertile ground and a home for individual and collective transformation.

CONNECT



- ★ Curated experiences that strengthen connection and belonging across our ecosystem of members, staff, grantee partners, and movement-aligned peers
- ★ Peer communities that facilitate member-led organizing around shared interests and identities
- ★ Network-wide gatherings and regional hubs that cultivate relationships across our membership

GROW



- ★ Foundational learning series that create shared understanding in how we approach progressive donor-activism
- ★ Experiential learning journeys that nurture our varied interests and deepen our issue-area expertise
- ★ Events with grantees, movement leaders, and experts that build our knowledge on the tools and strategies needed to advance our work

FUND



- ★ Bold and liberatory grantmaking practices that center those closest to the work
- ★ Holistic strategies that resource our grantees with robust funding, connections, and support
- ★ Incubated initiatives that are catalytic in their potential to transform systems, culture, and policy

MOBILIZE



- ★ Communications and strategic partnerships that influence the larger funding landscape and allow us to drive abundant resources to movements
- ★ Member advocacy that fuels progressive policy and political transformation at the local, state, and national level
- ★ Power mapping that clarifies our points of leverage and amplifies our collective impact

OUR[★] COLLECTIVE IMPACT

MEETING THE MOMENT



Our community has long practiced collective giving. We know that when we pool our funds, we multiply our impact exponentially.

In this new season of our work, we're digging deeper.

We're committing to collective resourcing — unlocking the full power of the many social and political resources we hold. When we pool our resources in deep partnership with movements, the future we dream of becomes inevitable.



We are a leaderful community. We radically push boundaries — from filling critical gaps in abortion care, to funding Black-led movements for reparations, to changing how we talk about healthy democracy nationwide, to creating lasting narrative change through film and storytelling. Our impact through efforts like the Reflective Democracy Campaign, UltraViolet, and the Abortion Bridge Collaborative Fund is a critical precedent for what we can achieve when we rise together to meet the moment.



When we identify where our privilege intersects with somebody else's oppression, **we'll find our opportunities to make real change.**"

-Ijeoma Oluo

We aim to build toward a world we've never experienced before. Over the next five years, WDN and WDN Action will operationalize our missions toward that transformation. Join us as we partner with movements to shift:

WDN

People — Our community will be more fluent and effective in the work of social justice, and better positioned to influence others in their networks.

Philanthropy — We, and the peer funders we partner with, will increase the amount and quality of resourcing we provide movements and communities; and shift control over decisions for how those funds are used.

Power over resources, narratives, policy, and laws will be shifted to communities that have been historically excluded, manifesting in well-resourced movements for justice and the next generation of progressive leaders who will have the holistic support they need to drive change and thrive.

Narratives in the media, culture and beyond that enable and reinforce harmful power dynamics will be challenged and shifted. Communities will be able to shape narratives about their own stories, histories, and legacies.

Systems will no longer produce, enable or reinforce inequities, but instead will protect, serve, and advance the interests of all people.

WDN ACTION

People — Our members will be equipped and activated to be political change agents in their own networks and communities.

Power — Political infrastructure and emerging leadership will enable historically excluded communities to build and exercise their political and civic power for a more reflective democracy.

Policies will be passed that advance our shared values and make our systems more just, and emerging threats to people's right to self-determination will be thwarted.

Political possibilities — Our entire political system will ultimately be reflective of and accountable to the will of the people and therefore protect, serve, and advance the interests of all people.



Meet the moment with us at womendonors.org and wdnaction.org.



OUR EVOLUTION

GROWTH IN MOTION

The strategic path represents an ambitious shift in how the network operates today. Specifically, we seek to move:

- ✦ From a one-size-fits-all model to an **intentional community design** that honors and creates spaces for members of multiple identities and experiences, fosters cohesion and belonging, deepens learning experiences, and facilitates mobilizing opportunities between members and partners.
- ✦ From engaging members as philanthropists to **activating them holistically, enabling them to bring the full weight of their personal, professional, philanthropic, and political power** to bear in service of our North Star.
- ✦ From supporting members in acknowledging and grappling with the source of their wealth to **challenging and inspiring members to commit to using their power and resources** to change systems in alignment with our values — including systems that may benefit us as individuals.
- ✦ From operating in a less visible way to **stepping into our power** and sharing our point of view and best practices to multiply our impact.
- ✦ From operating in a silo to **working more strategically and collaboratively with peers and movement-aligned partners** to amplify our shared vision and collective impact.
- ✦ From functionally viewing the c4 as an add-on to the c3, with a primary focus on funding, to **including both c3 and c4 components in every pillar of our work, and formalizing c4 exposure, programming and education** across the membership.
- ✦ From centering the individual to **centering our shared North Star and impact**, deepening opportunities for members to engage actively and meaningfully.
- ✦ From unclear roles of members and staff to more clearly **defined roles across different spaces** that value and leverage the respective expertise, experiences, and gifts we bring to this work.

GLOSSARY

WHAT WE MEAN WHEN WE SAY...

Culture: Our collective creative expressions and their influence on how we perceive the world — including art, design, dance, film, music, mythology, political narratives, sport, and stories.

Equity: The pursuit of fairness and justice — characterized by meeting communities where they are and using differentiated strategies to ensure that everyone has what they need to succeed and thrive.

Gender-expansive: An umbrella term for those who do not follow gender stereotypes, or who expand ideas of gender expression or gender identity.¹

Gender justice: The creation of a world where everyone — regardless of sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation — is free and has what they need to live a healthy, thriving, self-actualized life.

Intersectionality: The term intersectionality was introduced in 1989 by professor Kimberlé Crenshaw (and former WDN consultant) to describe how different social categories interact, resulting in compounding effects and differentiated experiences of oppression.²

Intersectional feminism: A feminism recognizing that barriers to gender equality vary according to multiple aspects of a person's identity — including age, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. A feminism centering the voices of people who experience overlapping forms of oppression and striving to address a diverse spectrum of issues.

Justice: The creation of new systems that produce freedom and dignity rather than harm. The pursuit of a society in which we are in right relationship with ourselves, each other, and the world.

Participatory grantmaking: An approach to grantmaking that empowers impacted communities to decide who and what gets funded.³

Solidarity with movements: We believe deeply in the power of grassroots movements and grassroots strategies to effect social change. We are committed to centering leaders and communities most directly impacted by the issues we work on — especially women, gender-expansive, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) leaders. We support movements that operate at and across local, state, regional, national, and international levels, as well as in digital spaces, and that seek changes in cultures, systems, policies, and political possibilities to create the conditions for justice. We combine support for grassroots movements with grassroots influence and advocacy in alignment with our North Star.

Trust-based philanthropy: Trust-based philanthropy is a charitable approach that reimagines the relationships between donors, nonprofits, and communities to rebalance power and decision-making. At its core, it is a partnership model between funders, nonprofit organizations, practitioners, and communities that acknowledges the unique needs and capacities of all stakeholders.⁴

¹ PFLAG, pflag.org

² Encyclopaedia Britannica, www.britannica.com

³ Stanford Social Innovation Review, www.ssir.org

⁴ National Philanthropic Trust, www.nptrust.org

This Strategic Path is a joint product of Women Donors Network (WDN) and Women Donors Network Action (WDN Action). WDN and WDN Action are separate organizations. WDN is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. WDN Action is a 501(c)(4) social welfare organization that primarily supports the civic engagement of underrepresented communities.