



In Large and Small Ways, Philanthropy is Helping Our Communities

The recent big news in philanthropy was that in late 2020 Mackenzie Scott donated \$1.7 billion to 116 nonprofit organizations, followed four months later with an additional \$4.2 billion given to another 384 organizations. Each of the recipients received a carefully researched gift – many of which were the largest they had ever received. Scott’s extraordinary generosity, coupled with the increased need caused by the pandemic, raised the question: Does a philanthropic gift have to be large to have impact?

On January 12, the Philanos monthly webinar was *The Power of Thinking Small: Smaller Grants Can Have Big Impact*. It had the largest-ever registered audience. The two presenting affiliates were **Spirit of St. Louis**, a founding organization of the then-WCGN network, and **Impact 100 Seattle**, founded just a year ago. You can view the webinar [here](#).

For both of these affiliates, identifying smaller non-profit organizations and giving grants of \$25,000 or less, represented their approach to philanthropy. But that is not true of all the affiliates who have recently begun looking at smaller grants. There are intriguing examples of how other Philanos organizations have deviated from long-standing practices to supplement their granting with what each refers to as “small grants”. These are two of them.

Womenade Boston

In a city of many women’s giving circles, Womenade Boston has carved out a special mission: to improve the lives of underserved women and teen girls. Their approach has been to make four grants (two supporting women and two for teens) each year in the \$20,000 - \$25,000 range to non-profits around \$1.5 million in size. Their vetting process was for their Evaluation Committee to reduce the number of requests to sixteen semifinalists (eight for each), all of which would receive site visits. Following the visits, the committee would identify eight finalists. From this group, the entire membership would select the grantees.

But 2020 was a different year. Like so many affiliates, they were right in the middle of their selection process when Covid-19 restrictions hit. The Committee met to discuss the situation in a group that included leaders of some of the local nonprofits. They realized there was no time to finish the formal process, including site visits, they had used previously. And they knew many in their group of sixteen urgently needed the money.

In a radical move, they decided to give all sixteen semi-finalists grants of \$5,000 to use immediately as they saw fit, an idea immediately embraced by members and recipients. Did it work? Anecdotally, yes – but final reports are not due for another month. What they do know, according to Jennifer Flanagan, President, and Sara Lavoie, VP and Chair of Evaluation, is that all sixteen organizations are still open and serving their constituencies – a significant accomplishment in these times.

Girls Rock Campaign



Impact 100 RVA

To honor their tenth anniversary and in response to community leaders' request for accessible funds, the women of Impact 100 in Richmond VA created the Neighborhood Catalyst Grant. This four-year, place-based grant will fund up to \$25,000 each year utilizing the trust-based philanthropic model.

In 2019, the members selected the Fulton neighborhood with a focus on food security in the community. A true partnership, Impact 100 members work closely with a panel of neighborhood leaders – Neighborhood Advisory Committee (NAC) – identified with the assistance of people living in Fulton who were already focused on marshalling community resources. The NAC has the responsibility to highlight very specific needs and concrete solutions for improvement. Throughout the program's three years, the NAC has played a key role in encouraging grant applications and collaborative projects among the neighborhood's important support organizations.

The Neighborhood Catalyst Grant is a complementary undertaking to the annual awarding of at least one \$100,000 grant Impact 100 RVA has done historically (there have been two grants in recent years). It has different committee members and the money is raised separately from the annual membership fee. A big benefit to members has been the opportunity to work closely with the women neighborhood leaders in the Fulton community. According to Talley Baratka, Impact 100 RVA founder and Catalyst Grant Initiative co-founder, "Trusting women is what

women's collective giving is all about. This approach is about trusting women in their own neighborhoods to know what needs to happen. It is that simple."



"We are standing on some good ground here." Ms. Linda Sutton says of the Fulton community. The Impact 100 Fulton-based Catalyst Grant Committee continues important work during their second virtual meeting to review invited proposals. More work continues next month by these dedicated volunteers. This is the third year of a four-year commitment by Impact 100 Richmond in partnership with the women-led committee.

As these innovative programs show, a gift can be impactful if it is large or small. It just needs to be the right size for its purpose. To learn more, go to www.womenadeboston.org and www.impact100va.org



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