



**SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS
WOMEN'S FUND**

FACT SHEET

About SOS

- The Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund (SOS) is the premier women's collective giving grant-making organization in the metropolitan area, with over **200 active members**.
- Since 2007, SOS has invested more than **\$2.2 million** in the St. Louis community, benefitting **78 agencies**.
- SOS is committed to **all members being equal** -- everyone gives the same, everyone has the same vote.
- There are no fundraisers, no galas, no asking your friends for money – **we fund our grants solely through member dues**.
- The Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund is an all-volunteer organization. **All of the work of the granting process is done by members.**
- According to donor studies, only ¼ of non-profit investors actually visit the organization they are funding in person. **SOS visits 100% of the organizations we fund.** We believe there is no better way to understand the impact of an organization than by experiencing their work up close.
- SOS **acts as an incubator** for promising programs that help the most vulnerable among us and supports efforts to sustain and beautify our natural environments.
- **Why focus on smaller non-profits?** According to an article in the Harvard Business Review titled, "Disruptive Innovation for Social Change", investments in early-stage social entrepreneurs are essential to creating profound and lasting community change. They create change in three important ways. One, they bring new energy to solve old problems. They ask "what is possible," and then work to

accomplish it. Two, they are flexible and unencumbered by the expectations that can weigh down larger institutions. Small non-profits are willing to try new ideas and experiment. And three, and perhaps most importantly, they shine a light on what's not working. These small groups uncover individuals or groups who might otherwise be overlooked.

- The strict standards of a granting process created by a **highly motivated and informed membership** not only ensures that dollars are well spent, but also opens doors for our grantees with other funders.
- **Many agencies credit early funding from SOS as a critical component of their long-term success** including St. Louis HELP, The Little Bit Foundation, Mildred Brady Eye and Rena Martin Charitable Eye Foundation, Home Sweet Home and CHADS Coalition.
- The vast majority of our grantees over the past ten years have been working in the area now designated as the **St. Louis Promise Zone**.
- **Ours is a hands-on approach to learning.** The experienced philanthropists among us pass down their learning, while our active network of committees organize learning programs that are open to members and non-members alike.
- SOS works to **inform and educate** people about the issues facing our city. Past topics have included immigration, sex trafficking, food deserts, and the impact of parental incarceration on children. We know that **inspiring women to become an informed source of real social change** is the best way to strengthen our community.
- **The Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund is a component fund of the Saint Louis Community Foundation and a member of Catalist – formerly known as the Women's Collective Giving Grantmakers Network**, a growing national movement of women-powered philanthropy.

Why SOS

- In a time when much of our country is divided, **SOS brings us together**, reminding us of what we have in common instead of what sets us apart.
- It fills the spaces between us and **gives us common purpose**.
- **"I have the audacity to think we can make St. Louis a better place for everyone to live."**
- No one member is more important than another. We have rotating leadership – our president and committee chairs only serve a two-

year term – so it never becomes about one leader. It's about **all of us leading and growing together.**

- Because our funding comes solely from membership dues, instead of cultivating donors, **all of our collective energy is spent on cultivating a stronger community.**
- Giving away almost everything we collect every year is, in and of itself, **an act of faith** in the power of collective giving.
- Because we fund smaller organizations, we're typically talking to the founders during our site visits. While the specifics may vary, in one way their stories are all the same: Someone saw a need and made a decision to help. And then **they never, ever give up.**
- Experiencing this kind of commitment up close and personal changes us – individual and as an organization.
- **We give people a voice.** It's powerful and it's important – and it **recognizes that we are all connected.**
- **SOS has had a transformational impact both on the community and on our members,** many of whom go on to support our agencies and the people they serve in other ways, using their individual time, money and expertise. In truth, the impact of the Spirit of St. Louis Women's Fund extends well beyond the grants we give in building a stronger community.
- **"When sleeping women wake, mountains move."** This is about moving mountains. And while no one of us may be able to do it on our own, together we have the strength, smarts and the power to move a mountain or tunnel right through it.
- **Turning good into greater good. It's why we give together.**

Dispelling Myths About Women's Giving

Women now control 51% of American personal wealth

- Women have always been involved in community building, but now women also have the wealth and power to make significant change

There are societal perceptions that:

- Women are viewed as less philanthropic than men.
- Women defer to their husbands in household charitable decision-making.
- Women do not make big gifts.

All of these statements are not true!

Here are the facts:

- Female-headed households give more than male-headed households in almost every income group and across marital status.

- For nearly 90% of wealthy households, women are either the sole decision-maker or at least an equal partner in charitable decision-making.
- When only one spouse decides, the wife decides twice as often as the husband.
- 78% of wealthy women versus 63% of wealthy men are charitably motivated because of a desire to give back to the community.
- For 46% of wealthy women and 32% of wealthy men, an organization's ability to communicate the impact of its work influences their charitable decision-making.
- Baby Boomer and older women are more likely to give than their male counterparts in all giving levels.
- Boomer and older women in the top 25 percent of combined income and assets give 156% more to charity than men.

Collective Giving: A Growing Movement That's Changing Philanthropy

"Collective Giving and Giving Circle organizations are changing the face of community philanthropy across the United States." This is the finding of a two-year study by a research team funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

- The research team found that since 2007 (the year SOS awarded our first grant), Collective Giving organizations have **tripled** in the United States.
- Collective Giving groups have granted up to **\$1.29 billion to their communities** nationwide since inception.
- **Women make up the majority of Collective Giving organizations.**
- Donated **funds remain largely in the local community.**
- Collective Giving groups rate themselves as **more connected** to each other and to the philanthropic sector.

Giving Circles members are investors in community building:

- **Donors in giving circles give more, give more strategically, and are more engaged** in their communities.
- **Giving circle participants gain greater knowledge of philanthropy and a better understanding of the nonprofits operating in their communities** as well as an understanding of the issues these nonprofits face in serving their constituencies.
- **Giving circle members are more likely to believe in the positive impact of giving on the health of a community**, that government should do something to reduce income differences, and

that government should ensure that everyone has a decent standard of living. Circle members described themselves as feeling “more capable to participate in community change,” that an individual can have more of an impact, and that they were having a bigger impact than they would individually.

- **Giving circles also serve as a path to developing women as leaders** offering members more meaningful work in a democratically-run organization **Giving circles prioritize member equality** through equal monetary giving, equal voting on funding decisions, and cycling on and off various committees, which can make a leadership role seem less intimidating due to the absence of an entrenched hierarchy
- **Giving circles are increasing in number**, with studies documenting at least 225 giving circles in 2005, growing to more than 500 today which distribute more than \$200 million annually. Over half of the giving circles in the U.S. have been identified as women-only groups.
- **Women who participate in a philanthropic network** are four times more likely than women who do not participate in a network to volunteer or offer other involvement with a nonprofit.

Catalist - Women’s Collective Giving Grantmaking Network

- SOS is a proud member of the Catalist (formerly known as the Women’s Collective Giving Grantmakers Network) - a national network of independent collective giving groups.
- Catalist supports the creation, development and expansion of women’s collective giving grantmaking nationwide.
- Catalist fosters women-powered philanthropy:
 - 14,000 women strong
 - 48 organizations in 24 states & 2 countries
 - Has given over \$100 million to non-profits throughout the U.S.