



April 15, 2019

Dear Member,

Next week, we will be inviting our members who renew their annual financial commitment to Washington Women's Foundation each spring to make that commitment. The funds our members contribute this year create our collective grantmaking pool for next year, which marks the 25th Anniversary of Washington Women's Foundation.

When our co-founders created the Foundation 24 years ago, they adopted a vision of changing the course of women's philanthropy through the power of collective giving. They also sought to motivate women to give, in their own names, at the major donor level - thus, the Individual Grant of \$1,000 that you have had the opportunity to make through the Foundation each year. \$1,000 was and is the starting point for "major donor" giving to most organizations. Our members stepped boldly into this space, and women are now recognized as major donors in their own rights.

As we approach our 25th Anniversary, the Board of Directors of the Foundation is asking you to help us make a bolder statement together - to increase our collective grantmaking capacity. From the start, our co-founders set a high bar for us, and for the past six years, we have consistently granted \$500,000 from our Pooled Fund. We will do so again at our 2019 Grant Award Celebration on June 11. However, we believe 2020 is time to leverage our collective giving to the greatest extent we can.

Therefore, when you renew your commitment this year to create our grantmaking pool for 2020, we are asking you to go "all in" by putting all of your \$2,500 annual contribution into our collective work. Almost one-fifth of our members have already been doing this for a number of years by choosing to designate their IGRs to our Endowment, Annual Fund, Pooled Fund, and Partner Grant Funds. Other members do not actively designate their IGRs, thereby allowing the undesignated funds to also benefit the Foundation.

By asking you to stretch your giving in this way, we are not asking you to pay a larger share of the Foundation's operating expenses this year or next. We have budgeted to cover our operating expenses the same way we have for many years - through a combination of our Annual Fund, earnings from the Endowment and other investments, corporate sponsorships, and a portion of members' annual contributions. If all of our current members renew this year and we succeed in encouraging more women to join the Foundation, our hope is to have significantly more funds to grant in 2020. **So depending upon you, we could have a 2020 collective grantmaking pool twice the size of this year's.**

Giving up your Individual Grant may feel like a big ask. We understand. Our Board of Directors did not make this decision lightly and took our members' thoughts into consideration.

The Board spent more than a year in its deliberations and considered the results of numerous member surveys as well as the results of questions posed to focus groups and individual members in the course



of our rebranding and strategic planning processes. Two strategic planning task forces independently delivered recommendations to the Board to “retire” IGRs to increase our potential collective impact. It’s not giving up, it’s giving bolder. **I am personally asking you to stick with Washington Women’s Foundation this year to help us see what we can achieve when hundreds of motivated women leverage maximum resources together. I also invite you to let me know your thoughts before you renew in 2020. If our greater collective grantmaking gives you less satisfaction than your Individual Grant has given you in the past, we can change course.** At Washington Women’s Foundation, we can write our own rules.

We first announced this change at our Annual Meeting last fall and it has been the subject of more than one post on the Foundation’s blog. However, I know this letter may be the first time you have heard this news. As you consider your 2019 financial commitment to Washington Women’s Foundation, I invite you to keep in mind the following story, which I shared at the Annual Meeting:

There was a raging fire in the forest and all the animals watched it in horror and fear - except for a hummingbird, who was flying back and forth between the river and the fire. Each time she brought water in her tiny beak and dropped it on the flames before returning to the river. An elephant said to her, “What do you think you’re doing? You can’t possibly think you are going to put the fire out with that tiny bit of water!” She responded, “I’m doing all that I can do.” After this, the elephants and other animals began to help her and eventually they put out the fire.¹

This story reminded me of how, together, we have already influenced how other foundations and individual philanthropists invest in our communities. It also challenges us to do more - to do all we can. We know which of our neighbors are facing the fire today, so we are asking you to do all that you can through Washington Women’s Foundation.

Please renew and invite other women to join us. Together, we are influencing transformation in communities throughout our state, and the larger our influence, the stronger women’s voices will be in framing - and fixing - the critical issues of our time.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Beth".

N. Elizabeth McCaw
President & CEO

¹ From an adapted version of the *Hummingbird and the Forest Fire*, originally told by Dr. Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan environmentalist and 2004 Nobel Prize laureate for peace, who had heard the story line while she was traveling in Japan.