

Setting Our Course for 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is DFW setting a new course at this time?

Together, we have accomplished a great deal over the past 12 years. We have awarded 231 grants to 153 organizations that have impacted tens of thousands of women and girls. Thanks to our members and donors, we have proven that we have a successful model and that we excel at collective action. We are investing more than ever to empower and transform the lives of women and girls in developing countries. We have a professional, well-respected grant making process, more than 430 chapters with over 8,000 members world-wide, and a highly-qualified staff. It is the right time to take the next step toward achieving our vision. We are ready and poised to move forward in a big and bold way so that we can help even more women and girls in the developing world.

2. Why does DFW need to grow? Aren't we already making a big impact with the programs we fund?

Through our funded programs, DFW has helped tens of thousands of women and girls living in extreme poverty. But there are millions more who are still struggling and suffering and need our help. For example, 62 million girls around the world are not in school, and barriers to adolescent girls completing school are particularly significant. Yet we know that investments in women and girls have a positive impact that goes beyond the individual, benefiting her family, her community and the world.

To achieve our vision of gender equity, we need to make a much bigger and broader impact, not just in the lives of individuals, but in the way the world works for women and girls in developing countries. In order to do so, DFW needs to grow.

3. What do you mean by “changing the way the world works for women and girls”?

We want to find ways to address the *root causes* of extreme poverty. Girls' education is an excellent example. If a girl stays in school, she is less likely to marry young which will then help reduce the likelihood that she will die in childbirth. If she gets an education, she is able to improve her own family's economic situation and to contribute in a positive way to the economic and political system of her community and her country.

4. What's in it for me as an individual member?

We believe that we are all aligned with the common goal – to change the world by investing in women and girls. With this new direction, your support will help even more women and girls and will truly change the world!

At the same time, your personal Dining for Women experience at your chapter meetings will remain the same. The core of Dining for Women – our basic chapter structure and our featured program funding -- is not going to change. We hold these fundamentals sacred and will cherish and protect them as we grow.

5. How are we going to achieve this significant growth? What are our marketing plans?

We will develop specific action plans in the coming months, and will share these plans when they are available. At this point, we expect our plans to include increased marketing efforts as well as partnering with other like-minded organizations. We will also be asking all our members to participate in our grassroots marketing efforts and help spread the word about DFW! As we move forward, we want to recruit and retain an increasingly diverse membership.

6. Will DFW be growing in the U.S. only, or will we open up to more international chapters?

While we do envision a truly global organization, we believe that there is still significant potential for growth within the United States so we will be focusing our recruitment efforts here initially.

7. With all this growth, is DFW going to lose its intimate, grassroots culture? Are we going to become a big, corporate-like charity?

We are deeply committed to growing and expanding our reach through grassroots efforts. We will remain a collective giving circle and continue to encourage intimate, grassroots and fun chapters. Although the number of chapters will increase, individual chapters will continue to be intimate gatherings of people coming together to learn, collaborate and transform themselves and the women and girls they support.

8. Will our grants program be changing? Will the types of organizations we fund change? Will we still fund grassroots organizations?

The goal of our grants program will remain the same. We are committed to supporting grassroots programs that empower women and girls in the developing world.

9. Will we still have monthly featured programs and sustained programs?

A monthly featured program is one of the foundations of our collective giving model, and we will continue to fund these types of grants. We will also honor all our sustained funding commitments through 2018.

In addition to funding a monthly featured program, we will be proactively identifying and funding new collaborations and partnerships that will help to bring about broad, lasting change for women and girls.

10. How will you identify these new collaborations/partnerships? How will they be funded?

We are establishing a Panel of Experts to help us identify the most pressing issues affecting women and girls and to ensure that we are funding areas where we can have the greatest impact in creating broad, lasting change. These projects will be subject to DFW's rigorous screening and vetting through a grassroots model similar to our current program selection process.

Funding for these new collaborations and partnerships will come from DFW's reserve fund. When donations exceed the grant for our monthly featured program, the additional funds go into a program reserve fund. Any new collaborations or partnerships will be funded from this reserve account to go directly toward programs.

11. If DFW grows significantly, will we be increasing the grant sizes once again?

It is too early to say whether we would increase the grant sizes. It may be something that we will look at in the future based on monthly chapter donations.

12. Can our infrastructure really handle this type of significant growth?

This is a five-year plan – we will not grow to 20,000 members overnight. We recognize that we are going to need more membership support and we are committed to having these resources in place before we embark on this significant growth. Our goal is that, as we grow, we will continue to provide accessibility and support to all our volunteer leaders so that our chapters remain simple, and fun!

13. How will the infrastructure (office space, staff, etc.) need to change in order to support this growth?

Capacity building is critical as we move forward. Our priority is to develop the most effective infrastructure we can in order to achieve our vision of gender equity and empowerment for women and girls living in extreme poverty. Now that we have our big, bold goals, we will be developing the business plans that will allow us to accomplish these goals over the five-year period.

14. How will we fund this growth in infrastructure as well as the additional marketing efforts? How will we get buy-in from our members and donors in order to fund this growth?

As we do now, we will fundraise in order to support Dining for Women as an organization. That's why it is so important for you to invest in DFW now ... so we can truly achieve our vision of changing the world through gender equity for all women and girls in developing countries.

We know that our members and donors want to fund this new direction because they can now see where our organization is headed and will want to help us make a difference in the world.

15. What types of grassroots advocacy efforts will we be doing?

We want to provide opportunities for our members to use their collective voices in grassroots advocacy. Grassroots advocacy could include such as things as letter writing campaigns, petitions, phone calls, or speaking engagements. We know that, by using the collective voices of our members, we can influence American policy and legislation (such as the International Violence Against Women Act or the Maternal Health Care Act) so that it benefits women and girls in the developing world.

16. As a 501(c)3 organization, is DFW allowed to do advocacy work?

Yes, non-profits are able to do advocacy work without jeopardizing their 501(c)3 status. This is a common misconception. It is now considered best practice for non-profits to engage their constituents in efforts to positively influence policies that affect their mission.

The restrictions of the 501(c)3 status pertain only to formal lobbying expenses. Under the 501(c)3 status, non-profits are allowed to spend up to 20% of its budget on formal lobbying efforts.

Please review the [“What is Advocacy?” document](#) from BoardSource about nonprofits and our obligation to advocate on behalf on our mission. BoardSource is a well-respected organization dedicated to excellent nonprofit governance.

17. Will DFW be spending money on advocacy? Will we be hiring lobbyists?

We have no intention to hire lobbyists. Our efforts will involve grassroots advocacy, such as letter writing or phone call campaigns, petitions, or speaking opportunities. We want our members to use their own collective voices, as well as their collective donations, to impact broad, lasting changing for women and girls.