

Voices

Organizational Effectiveness is the ability of an organization to fulfill its mission through a blend of sound management, strong governance, and a persistent rededication to achieving results.

At the Nokomis Foundation, we focus on strengthening the capacity of organizations serving women and girls, helping them to become effective organizations — connecting vision to goals, goals to plans, plans to actions, and actions to results.

**Definition provided by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations (GEO), an affinity group of the Council on Foundations.*



The
Nokomis
Foundation

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Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Creating a stronger voice
for women and girls.

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Inside Story



Nokomis announces new change . . .

In the last few months we've been rethinking and retooling how we serve our grantees and how we meet our mission to create stronger voices for women and girls. We will of course continue to offer a variety of grants to support the work of non-profits meeting the needs of women and girls. And we will continue to develop unique initiatives to proactively address related issues. Yet we've decided to strengthen our commitment to building the pathways toward social change . . . what the non-profit world calls *building capacity* for non-profits to do their work.

Building capacity means strengthening the internal operations of an organization—everything from improving board relations and fund development techniques to insuring that an organization has the right technology to do their job well. For years Nokomis has been offering informal technical assistance, that is, working in partnership with grantees to develop effective programs, which lead to stronger proposals for grant dollars. We have begun to formalize capacity building efforts through projects like the Technology Consortium, (also featured in this issue), and have some new vehicles to share with you . . .

To support this refined direction, we have created a new listserv and *Voices* insert, called *Loose Change*. This new section of *Voices* will serve as a resource for past, current and potential grantees. We hope to offer some timeless tools and tips that you can pull-out and save for future reference. This issue features Nokomis grant guidelines. A listserv, *loose change*, will complement this printed guide with event announcements and peer-to-peer dialogue.

So what about Taking Flight? Never fear, Taking Flight will still be with us, though its implementation will be through annual Taking Flight grants, supporting programs that meet girls' needs. This issue explores and summarizes the grantmaking process at Nokomis, including a timeline for 2001 Taking Flight grants. Enjoy!

Kym Mulhern, President/CEO

Erin Trahan, Program Officer



And what they gain . . .

Remember the tortoise and the hare? The mad dash to dot-com-dom leaves non-profits looking like the model of stability --- and certainly the leaders of raising funds to support social change efforts. Funny enough, a shopping cart full of well-intentioned dot-coms are now scurrying about for non-profit status. Some are even trying to *sell* themselves to dot-org-dom. Now we know for certain that the economy is standing on its head! The blurring of lines between the .coms and the .orgs prompted one critic to coin the term “.corg” to describe hybrid Internet projects with a core social component (.org) and a supplemental revenue-generating potential (.com). Heart of West Michigan United Way's homepage links to an on-line shopping mall? You can send letters to your senator when you pay your phone bill?

As always, change brings opportunity. And this is the first information revolution in history that women can help author. So let's do all we can to think about these changes critically, putting those voices with the most need first in line . . . and perhaps first on-line.

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Where is the Web Revolution?

What the dot-orgs lose . . .

By Erin Trahan

Generally speaking, foundations that actually fund technology prefer to fund projects that increase community access. For example, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has donated new computers and training to over 11,000 public libraries across the country --- with the hopes of getting more individuals on-line. Unfortunately, few foundations have been willing to fund the technology of the organizations that serve populations in need, often the same populations most affected by the digital divide. So this digital divide is alive and well --- and nearly as threatening --- to the important services provided by non-profits.

It is not uncommon for non-profits to have eight staff all working on different computer makes and models. Figuring out what grade of software each can handle and sharing files between them can be daunting, if not impossible. And there are many well-intentioned donations that can actually cost the organization for environment-friendly disposal. (Computers contain as much as eight pounds of lead!)

On top of the barriers organizations face, choosing non-profit work can make you less marketable down the road. Employees of non-profits --- a majority of whom are women --- often swallow the opportunity cost of a workplace that cannot utilize up-to-date hardware, software and training. In other words, it may be tougher to find their next job because of low technology skills. So there's a lot to be said about minding the technology gap.

Point to Ponder

It's not enough for nonprofit organizations to develop good programs. They must also build effective organizations that can sustain and improve good programs. Although a variety of forces threaten success in the nonprofit world, one fact remains clear: Programs cannot stand alone. Even innovative programs alone are a weak foundation for large-scale social impact.

From the book *High Performance Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Upstream for Greater Impact (1999)*, page 3, by *Christine W. Letts, William P. Ryan, and Allen Grossman*.

Nokomis Announces: Taking Flight Grants

In order to deepen our support of young women and girls, the Nokomis Foundation announces a new funding opportunity: Taking Flight grants.

For its first year the Taking Flight grants will be available to programs impacting the lives of girls in Kent, Ottawa and Allegan counties. We will be looking specifically for programs that address gender related issues as they impact youth. Youth input on the program design and evaluation is required. This year we will allocate \$100,000 with an average request size of \$10,000. Requests for Proposals (RFPs) will be available the week of May 1, 2001. Proposals are due to Nokomis on July 9, 2001. For more information please contact the Nokomis Program Officer, Erin Trahan, at (616) 451.0267..

Technology Consortium:

A Nokomis Foundation Project Update

By Erin Trahan

What do you think about the Digital Divide? Have you been thinking much about it? Probably depends on your job and the resources and priorities of your workplace --- or the resources you have at home.

For many Nokomis grantees, and for the boards and donors of those organizations, providing direct service to women and girls in need, often in crisis, far outweighs, say, waiting outside the doors of Best Buy to be the first to purchase a Pentium 4. In other words, who needs a lot of RAM when there are more pressing issues at hand, like raising enough money to pay the rent?

That RAM can make a surprising difference.

In early 2000, Nokomis invited a group of area non-profits that serve women's and girls' issues to join a collaborative effort to respond to technology needs. The Women & Girls Technology Consortium is in its second of a two-year initiative. For both years Nokomis has committed \$75,000 towards funding the technology needs of the consortium members. In 2000, grants averaged \$5000 and covered everything from web page development to the purchase of a customized database program to be shared among multiple organizations.

At the heart of the Consortium were the goals of sharing information and resources amongst women's organizations --- beyond issues of technology --- and the possible leveraging of resources to implement more efficient use of hardware, software, training, and what we call "everything e."

During the first year the group met bi-monthly and discussed a range of issues important to them like web page design and e-philanthropy. Members even received training on some basic skills such as effective email use. The consortium also brainstormed some possible group solutions to some overarching needs.

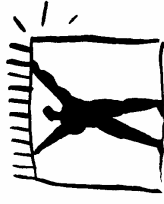
In fact, the work of the Prostitution Round Table has supported -- and sometimes served as a stimulus for -- a number of exciting new efforts in our community to help women and girls engaged in street prostitution make positive choices in their lives:

- The Grand Rapids and Wyoming Police Departments are partnering with the Grand Valley State University School of Social Work and a broad range of community organizations to address prostitution issues. The Social Work and Police Partnership (SWAPP) is a problem-solving collaboration to address chronic community problems by placing a clinical social worker in a neighborhood problem area. Working side-by-side with community police officers, social workers will help provide immediate response and basic needs to stabilize a woman's situation, as well as advocacy and support services to enable her to make healthier choices in the future.
- Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan is exploring ways to provide sexuality and health education opportunities for women engaged in street prostitution.
- Grand Valley State University senior social work students are interviewing representatives from nearly 80 health and social services organizations in Grand Rapids to gain a better understanding of both the extent to which prostitution experience is considered as part of the intake, assessment, treatment and/or referral process; and whether these organizations would be interested in training on issues related to prostitution.

In the months ahead, we will be synthesizing the learnings of the Prostitution Round Table, reviewing best practices here and in other communities, mapping the present system of support for women engaged in street prostitution in Grand Rapids and identifying opportunities to strengthen the local system.

For more information about the Prostitution Round Table, contact Dotti Clune (616-454-5445), Jeannie Hosey (616-956-8013), or Kym Mulhern (616-451-0267).

Project Update



The New Voices Initiative

The Prostitution Round Table: A Community Learning Venture

By *Dotti Clune and Jeannie Hosey*

The Prostitution Round Table has completed nine months of learning about the issues of women and girls engaged in street prostitution in Grand Rapids. Through research, interviews, presentations and site visits, the group has explored a variety of prostitution-related issues and potential community responses, including:

- Myths and realities – members considered the personal messages, images, and stereotypes they have encountered related to prostitution and gained real-life insights by hearing in-depth live and video presentations by women with prostitution experience.
- Prostitution in Grand Rapids – panelists representing local outreach services, treatment and education programs, neighborhood associations and law enforcement shared their insights about the nature and scope of prostitution in Grand Rapids, and described what happens when women engaged in prostitution encounter the criminal justice system.
- Understanding connections – in a series of meetings, the group gained a better understanding of the relationships among addiction, childhood sexual abuse, domestic violence and prostitution.
- What about the men? – The group gained insights into what drives some men to pay for sex and possible approaches to addressing the role of men as customers in prostitution.

One exciting discovery of the PRT has been the wealth of expertise in the Grand Rapids area which can be leveraged to address these issues. Whether it's criminal justice or treatment strategies; sexuality education or domestic violence programs; outreach or long-term case management approaches – the Prostitution Round Table has been able to turn to people and organizations here in the community to provide valuable information, research and presentations to the group.



This year sub-committees have been exploring the option of a collective, single-entry web page for women's organizations, a "travel package" of a laptop and projector to share among the group, and purchasing applications training for the staff of all groups in one lump sum. The group will allocate part of its \$75,000 toward one or more of the group projects.

What we knew going in, but what took some time to really sink in, was the need for each organization to create and maintain a technology plan. Similar to a fund development plan, a technology plan evaluates existing strengths, identifies current and future weaknesses, and details what needs to happen within a 1-3 year period to effectively budget for technology needs. A technology plan must work in concert with the overall strategic plan for the organization, including --- of course --- the mission. So, in addition to the 2001 grants, Nokomis has created an opportunity for all consortium members to have in-kind consulting to create a technology plan. With a plan in hand, and a required match for their individual grants, Nokomis hopes to attract other funders to the support of technology at these organizations.

The impact of the project has been far-reaching, and sometimes a bit of a surprise. One organization's representative is pursuing a degree in e-business because the consortium piqued her interest and increased her confidence around technology. Other organizations are now able to have multiple staff simultaneously connect to the web, to individual email accounts, and to shared files because of networking implemented by last year's grant. A few members have added features to their web sites that enable on-line donations, attracting new audiences to their work. And perhaps the most important? Every other month or so, a group of women who really care about changing the lives of women and girls come together to do just that.



Recent Grants

The Nokomis Foundation has recently awarded the following grants:

Capacity Building

Grand Rapids Opportunities for Women, Grand Rapids, Michigan,

\$101,500 over 3 years for organizational capacity building

Grand Valley State University, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$5,000 for program

development and grantwriting for the Social Work and Police Partnership program (SWAPP)

West Michigan Academy of Music for Girls, Grand Rapids, Michigan,

\$1,200 for fund development staff training

Celebrating Women

WomenQuest, Lansing, Michigan, \$5,000 in support of Polar Trek 2001

Wealthy Street Theatre, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$1,000 in support of "Truth:

The Testimonial of Sojourner Truth"

Dudley House Film & Theatre Society (Harvard University), Cambridge,

Massachusetts, \$2,000 for "Dance by Design"

Girls

YWCA, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$95,000 over 3 years for the YWCA Girls Program

Community Media Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$3,000 for the Young

Women's Media Project

Michigan State University Extension/4-H, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$550

for the Girls Quilt Project

Kenowa Hills Middle School, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$980 for the Girls

Only Leadership Development (GOLD) program

Health

Catherine's Care Center, Grand Rapids, Michigan, \$10,400 for "What About

Me?" health care coverage program

Migrant Health Promotion, Saline, Michigan, \$50,000 over 3 years for the

Migrant Farmworker Doula Project

Listserv Change

- We have changed the name and expanded the focus of the former "Taking Flight" listserv. Now known as "eVoices," this listserv will be open to persons with a general interest in women's and girls' issues in West Michigan, similar to the readership of this newsletter. This change reflects the program shift of *Taking Flight* from resource referral to grantmaking.
- We have created a new listserv for current Nokomis grantees called "loose change." This listserv will offer relevant news, tips, and tools to help our grantees communicate with each other and run effective programs. The new *Loose Change* section of the *Voices* newsletter will complement the listserv and offer additional resources to Nokomis grantees.

If you are interested in subscribing to either listserv, please contact Erin Trahan at etrahan@nokomisfoundation.org.

Reach Us

Need to contact us? Our office hours are from 9:00 - 3:00 each Monday through Thursday.

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Grantees

If you are a past or present grantee of the Nokomis Foundation, please feel free to share your announcements with us. We will include them on a space-available basis in the next issue of *Voices*.