

# PATHWAYS 2 PROSPERITY

## 2015-2017 SUMMATIVE REPORT

At the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, we know that when women thrive, so do their families and communities. And when you build pathways to prosperity for women, Minnesota succeeds. **Gender and racial equity is the key.** While women have made major strides towards economic parity, there remain major obstacles that limit women's full economic opportunity. Gender and racial inequality continue to render women the state's poorest, reinforce systemic violence against women and girls, produce substandard health outcomes, and deny women leadership opportunities across all sectors. Although women now make up a majority of the workforce and earn a majority of all post-secondary degrees, these changes have not translated into economic parity. Access to affordable childcare and housing are simply out of reach for many women across Minnesota.

Given these realities, **Pathways 2 Prosperity: Building Women's Economic Opportunity** (P2P) was launched in 2015 to increase access to post-secondary education and high-paying employment for low-income women, women of color, and women in Greater Minnesota. P2P grants specifically focused on addressing root conditions of economic challenges through education, workforce development and job training, employment opportunities, and access to support services. The grantee-partners that were funded offered education and workforce development training with wrap-around services including childcare and eldercare support, transportation assistance, financial education, job readiness preparation, and mentoring/case management.

Grants supported projects to ensure:

- Training and preparation to support women's economic opportunity
- Pathways to assist women's transition to education and employment
- Full and equal access to educational and employment opportunities for women
- Adequate wrap-around support services to ensure women's economic well-being, including childcare, housing, mentoring, educational access, and workforce development

This high-level, summative report describes the key **statistics, stories, and systems** change outcomes that resulted from P2P in 2015-2017.

## STATISTICS

In 2015, three grants were awarded to programs at two community and technical colleges and an economic development agency that create pathways for women to pursue employment in high-demand, middle-skill and high-paying fields through training and certificate programs, and workforce development. A total of **69 women participated in the three programs** focused on increasing access to financial aid; expanding and improving student and financial supports; and providing wraparound services (e.g., childcare, transportation, and others).

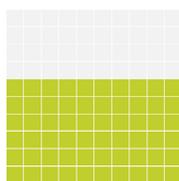
In 2016, six grants were awarded to programs at community and technical colleges and community-based organizations. A total of **8,245 women participated in six programs** that provide training and certificate programs to create pathways for women to pursue employment in high-demand, middle-skill and high-paying fields, in addition to offering wraparound services and mentoring. Prepare + Prosper accounts for a significant growth in the number of 2016 participants, by supporting a total of 7,644 women to increase their financial capability and economic opportunity through free tax preparation, financial services, and coaching.

In 2017, five grants were awarded to programs at community and technical colleges. A total of **162 women participated in five programs** that provide training and academic support programs to create pathways for women to pursue employment in high-demand, middle-skill and high-paying fields, in addition to offering wraparound services, financial literacy training, financial support, and mentoring.

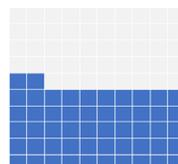
In 2018, eight grants were awarded, five to continue supporting programs at community and technical colleges, and three to community-based organizations whose work is inspired and driven by the vision of communities of color and whose focus is to foster greater economic opportunities for low-income women of color throughout the state using entrepreneurial and other strategies. *It is still too soon to report on their program outputs and outcomes.*



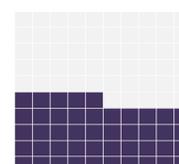
In 2015-2017, P2P participants achieved the following outcomes:



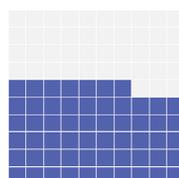
**60%**  
obtained  
a new job



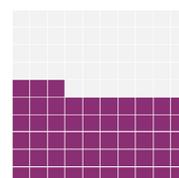
**52%**  
increased  
their  
income



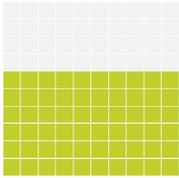
**45%**  
completed  
job training  
program



**57%**  
accessed  
grants or  
scholarships



**53%**  
obtained  
credentials or  
degrees



60% obtained a new job

## STORIES

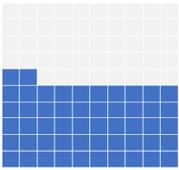
To date, participants across all programs have secured opportunities or promotions, with six in ten participants surveyed saying they got a new job between 2015 and 2017.

### P2P programs supported women to seek and secure new employment by:

1. Increasing quality of life, motivation, and confidence
2. Improving professional and personal skills
3. Connecting women with opportunities and networks in their industries
4. Providing financial support and wraparound services that gave women the freedom and flexibility to pursue better job opportunities

“A favorite success story is of a student in the Electrical Design & Maintenance program. After her first semester at Dunwoody, she became homeless after her family moved to another state. This student happens to be transgender and in addition to losing her housing, she also needed medical insurance to cover ongoing medical expenses. This student could have easily left the college if there weren’t a safety net in place to help her through this life transition. Instead, the Associate Director of Women’s Initiatives collaborated with Student Affairs staff to offer her the WITC scholarship to cover the first-year tuition gap. **We helped her find affordable housing, enroll in the state’s medical insurance program, and get a job as a student worker on campus at \$10 an hour.** This student was very invested as well, taking public transportation from her apartment in the outer suburbs for the next year of college, sometimes riding the bus for 3 hours a day in order to get to and from school. **We connected her with a mentor from her industry, who was very encouraging, helped the student apply for jobs and internships in her field, and introduced her to many people in the industry.** Through these connections, she was able to secure a job at a large, local Construction company where she now earns \$25.50 an hour and loves her job. She has since moved into an apartment that is closer to her work and is saving up to buy a car.”  
*(Dunwoody Grant Report, 2017-2018)*

“One of our construction participants came in with a pretty big gap in her work history. She had children, a 3.5-year-old and a 6-year-old. She had been a stay-at-home mom. Her kids were getting older and she wanted to get back into the workforce.... She was out of the loop on that and wanted to get more into the actual construction-type part of the job. She went through our construction training using the dollars from our scholarship. **She is currently employed at McGough Construction which is a huge construction company in the Twin Cities. She’s making \$21 an hour and doing awesomely.** She’s worked there for almost a year. She was one of the first people that came through. She is excited about this and is one of our major success stories.” *(Goodwill interview, 2017)*



52% increased their income

## STORIES

Of the 60% of women who started new jobs, 15% received a promotion, 52% increased their income, and their average hourly wage increased by 45%, or \$5.78: **the average hourly rate of participants prior to the program was \$12.77 and after the program it increased to \$18.55.** In addition to gaining technical skills that have helped women enhance their market value and increase their income, participants also report gaining soft skills necessary to advance the technical skills gained. Examples of soft skills developed include networking, interviewing, resume building, mentorship, budgeting, financial literacy, confidence building, stress management, and how to succeed as a woman in male-dominated industries.

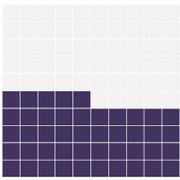
“Without this program I would not have had the confidence to go in for an interview and talk about an hourly wage.”

—Dunwoody Participant

“When one of our program participants started, her expenses were higher than her income. She was over committed to a mortgage and other fixed expenses while operating on a barebones budget. She was doing no regular savings beyond minimal 401(k) contributions. She needed overtime just to make it month to month. Almost all the improvement in her financial situation came from increasing her income. She had been working in an entry-level position for more than two years so was due for a more substantial salary increase. **She was able to establish her value in the market and secure the raise she deserved.**” (Prepare and Prosper 2017 interview)

“One student who was enrolled in Heating, Ventilation & Air Conditioning Service & Repair (HVAC) just completed the first year of her two-year degree. Her WITC\* mentor was a Dunwoody alumnus who got her an interview with a local company for a summer job. She got the job and is now working full-time until school starts again in August. She is the single mother to a 3-year-old daughter. She previously worked at McDonald's, where she earned \$10/hour, and thought that was a pretty good wage. This summer, she's earning \$20/hour, and gaining valuable work experience, and enjoying it, and she can't believe it. **This financial gain will positively impact her daughter's health and education outcomes, as these are correlated to family income.**” (Dunwoody 2015-16 Final Grant Report)

\*WITC = Women in Technical Careers Program



45% completed job training program

## STORIES

Through P2P-funded programs, women can access pathways to high-demand, middle-skill, high-paying fields and support services that make it easier for them to remain in their training and certificate programs, gain better understanding of the positive economic choices they can make, and become change agents in their lives and communities.

**Women persisted in job training initiatives.** Persistence is the essential key to program completion, credentialing, increasing job opportunities, and securing higher wages. A total of 76 participants persisted in job training/sector initiatives. Women were also placed in internships or apprenticeships, a strategy proven to be crucial for women in non-traditional fields to provide hands-on experience and mentoring. For example, 89% of Northwest Technical College participants were placed in internships or apprenticeships.

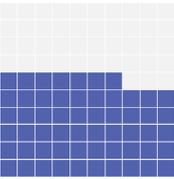
**“Not only did the class itself help me build the skills necessary to obtain my job, but the support I received after obtaining the job helped me get promoted within the first six months.” —Goodwill Easter Seals Participant**

**“It was a GREAT class! I now have the tools to make a great business plan and have a much better chance of success for starting my business.”**

**—AEOA Participant**

“As an African American woman in the Automotive Service Technician program, Carole is confronted often with stereotypes, but does not let that get in the way of meeting her goals. Carole completed a cosmetology degree several years ago and worked in that industry for some time. **Along the way she got her CDL\* and made the decision to enroll in the Automotive Service Technician program. Her dream is to combine her love for cosmetology and auto repair and to open a combined shop.** While a customer’s car is being serviced they could get a haircut, massage, or their nails done. Carole is very grateful for the financial assistance she receives to offset the cost of pursuing her degree. She uses her CDL to provide income while attending school and works for Shamrock Trucking, an employer who is flexible and willing to work around Carole’s class schedule.” *(St. Paul Grant Report, 2017-18)*

\* CDL = commercial driver’s license



57% accessed grants or scholarships

## STORIES

Access to financial support has proven to be a key tool to support women returning to school. For example, 302 participants accessed grants or scholarships for education or training. Of those, 115 received a total of **\$431,856 in grant and scholarship funds**. Scholarships made it possible for women to attend school and pursue vocational training programs by covering tuition, supplies, and necessities. Financial support also allowed participants to focus their energy on school, training programs, and their careers rather than worrying about money and living paycheck to paycheck. With increased financial resources, participants learned how to budget, save, pay bills, and plan for their futures. **Investments in participants allowed them to invest in themselves and their families.**

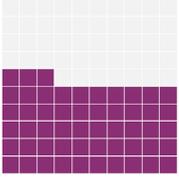
“The scholarship money has allowed me to focus more on my schoolwork and less on figuring out how I am going to pay for it. We have monthly meetings with topics that are beneficial as well. We have learned about budgeting tips, scholarships, career planning, etc.”

—Dunwoody Participant

The Women’s Foundation has awarded me scholarship money. This money helped me purchase tools and work boots I otherwise would still be saving up to buy. The monthly meetings were informative and helpful, meeting new employers and other women in the trades. —St. Paul Participant

“Sherry dreams of becoming a professional welder. As a second semester Saint Paul College student in the Welding Diploma program, she is on her way to achieve that goal. Sherry is a thriving trade student supported by scholarships, a network of peer trade students who are women, mentors, and college faculty. Sherry shared:

‘So... there I am on my first day thinking in my head, *‘You barely scraped by in high school, can you really do this? Are you capable?’* I then met with a counselor here at this school who made sure I received my books in audio version to help with my learning disability. The first day came and I was a nervous wreck, the second day was better, and it kept getting better. I saw my grades and I was receiving A’s. **I also received a scholarship specifically for Women in Trades and I realized that I had people who believed in me. With the moral support of Saint Paul College staff and the financial support of the scholarships, I felt transformed.** This experience has directly impacted the lives of my boys. They see their little five-foot mom who is headed into a career that is still considered a ‘man’s career’ and they couldn’t be prouder.” (St. Paul 2017 Final Report)



**53% obtained credentials or degrees**

## STORIES

Previous research indicated a continued decrease in women's pursuit of technical college training and education, which often lead to middle-skill, higher-paying jobs and greater economic opportunity. P2P enables women to see themselves and the economic opportunities available in non-traditional jobs. At the same time, P2P incentivizes institutions to become more welcoming of women into traditionally male-dominated fields. With P2P support and programming, **more than half of participants enrolled in education or job training programs obtained credentials or degrees in 2015-2017**, with even more continuing to pursue post-secondary degrees.

***“Thank you for the opportunity to earn my degree.”  
—Northwest Technical College graduate***

**“The medical coding profession has rapidly increased in popularity over the past five years due to increased demand for workers in the field. Medical coding jobs in Minnesota are predicted to increase by 17% by 2020. Professionals earn between \$40,000 and \$56,000 per year, are offered flexible hours, and have the option to work from home, which will help ensure economic security for our targeted population.” —Northwest Technical College**

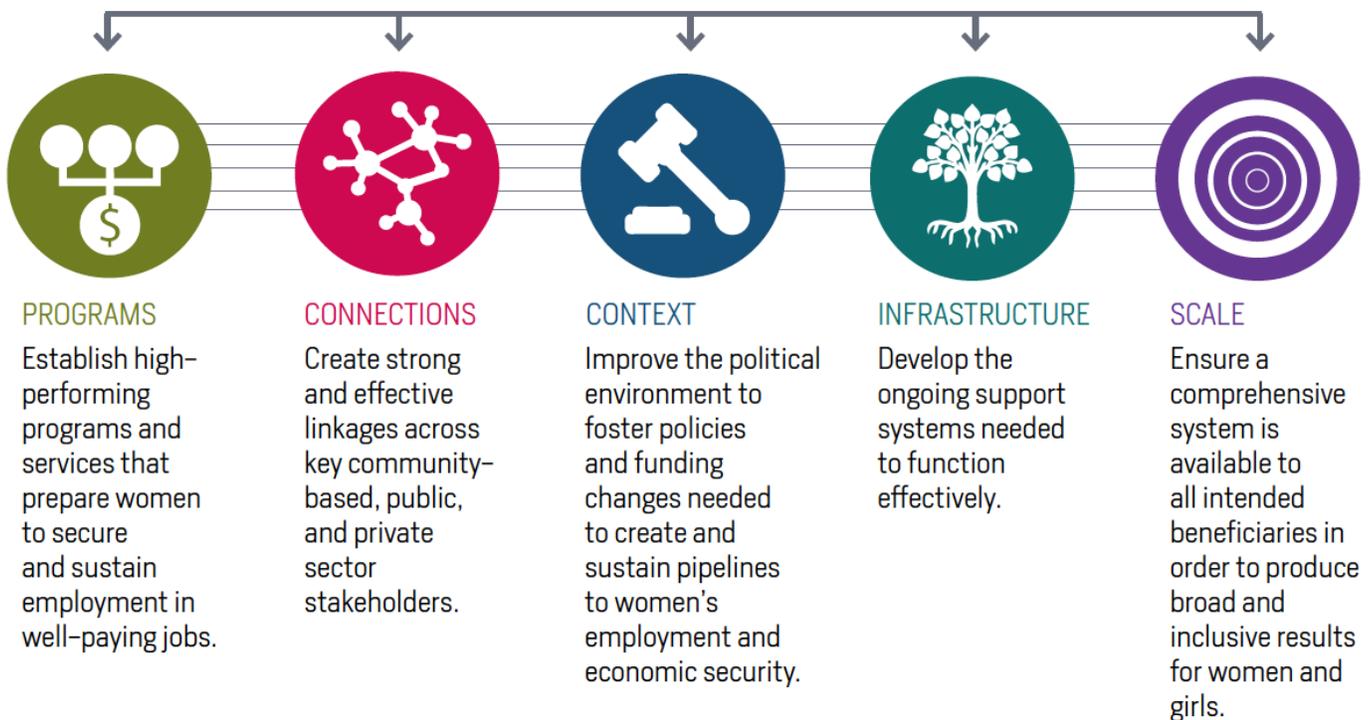
**“Graduates of the welding program usually have the choice of many immediate employment opportunities in a variety of settings; welding is widely used in the aircraft, automobile, trucking, shipbuilding, pipefitting, plumbing, and sheet metal industries. In addition, skilled welders may become layout specialists, engineers, technicians, supervisors, Certified Welding Inspectors, or private shop owners.” —St. Paul College**

“One program participant came to Jeremiah and she wanted a degree in cosmetology. She wanted to cut hair. After about a semester of with us, she did some career interest inventories that we set up. She ended up having an injury to her hand which made it so that she couldn't continue to do that type of work. She had to rethink her path. She decided she wanted to pursue human services instead because of the help she had received. **She reached her goal. She graduated from Century College in June 2015 with an Associate's degree. She is now pursuing her Bachelor's degree at Bethel College.**” (Jeremiah 2017 Interview)

## SYSTEMS CHANGE OUTCOMES

Compelling evidence shows that when women are economically secure, their families are economically secure; when families are economically secure, entire communities are secure. However, many organizations lack the infrastructure and resources to accommodate the number of unemployed or underemployed women, let alone the additional capacity to identify promising practices and strategies at the local, regional, or state levels. To address this multi-faceted challenge with holistic solutions, P2P goes beyond a single sector approach of supporting women’s economic opportunity and prosperity. The Foundation recognizes that a **systems change approach** is needed to support the collective impact of grantee-partners. As such, P2P employs a Systems Change Framework, originally developed by Julia Coffman in 2007, which is composed of five interconnected, overarching strategies to advance long-term change:

### **programs, connections, context, infrastructure, and scale.**





## PROGRAMS

Through P2P, the Foundation supports innovative programs with best practices that include targeted program recruitment; job and education readiness; mentoring, case management, and intensive advising; a cohort approach with a gender lens; community partnerships; a multi-generational approach; a bridge between high school and post-secondary; and customized wrap-around services (childcare, eldercare, transportation assistance, financial literacy, etc.).

### TOP SERVICES ACCESSED

- Education and Job Training (accessed by 531 women)
- Financial Literacy Services (accessed by 660 women)
- Mentoring/Advising (accessed by 601 women)
- Earned Income Tax Credit (accessed by 199 women)
- Childcare (accessed by 124 childcare)

### TOP FINANCIAL SERVICES ACCESSED

- Financial Products (2,783 women accessed financial products including pre-paid debit cards, savings accounts, savings bonds, retirement accounts, and credit reports)
- Financial Coaching/Assistance (accessed by 269 women)
- Scholarships/Grants (accessed by 302 women)

As demonstrated in this report through statistics and stories, key programmatic outcomes include:

1. Women received financial support
2. Women persisted in job training initiatives
3. Women were placed in internships or apprenticeships
4. Women reported gaining both technical and soft skills
5. Women completed certificates and degrees
6. Women obtained new jobs or promotions

**“The number one thing is the holistic wraparound service and support. It’s simultaneous; it’s not sequential. So many things say, get an education; then, you can get housing; then, you can get a job. We say, no, we’re going to do it all right here, right now. You’re going to have coaching, empowerment, life skills, and go to college, and your children will be in early childhood development. It is the holistic wraparound.” —Jeremiah Interview, 2017**

**“My life has benefited from this program by being better prepared to go to college and be successful while going to work and school during the same time. It was a big learning experience and I could not have done it without this program.”**

**— Dunwoody College of Technology Participant**

## CONNECTIONS

In addition to funding and implementing programs, the Foundation — through its P2P initiative — sustained strong and effective relationships across sectors and grantee-partners to provide comprehensive support for women. For instance, the Foundation applied targeted outreach strategies to identify relevant organizations that had not yet been funded by the initiative, in addition to strengthening on-going relationships with familiar organizations. Recruiting partners, including schools, girl- and women-serving nonprofits, workforce development agencies, and cultural community nonprofits have been key to raising awareness about the program and promoting enrollment. Without these partnerships, the program would not attract a diverse cohort of women, including women from communities that experience the greatest disparity in outcomes.

**“We are definitely committed to doing what we do well and partnering with those who do things well that our families need. For example, we do not accept clothes donated for our moms so that they can have a business suit for interviewing. We direct all those donations to Dress for Success. Then, our moms go to Dress for Success and get that. We partner with *pro bono* legal services. They do legal clinics for our moms and help them with legal issues. We don’t do it, but we partner with law firms that will do it. Partners are critical.” —Jeremiah Interview, 2017**

Through P2P, the Foundation developed partnerships with:

- Workforce development programs
- Vocational programs
- Community/technical colleges
- Nonprofit organizations

**Women also made connections with fellow participants, faculty, and staff. Interpersonal connection is another effective strategy to ensure holistic, long-term change.**

**“If a student is struggling, there is a safety net of those checking in (other participants & faculty/staff). Therefore, there is less likelihood of students falling through the cracks.”**

**—M State Grant Report, 2017-2018**

The Foundation’s P2P initiative also benefitted from connections within the Partnership for Women’s Prosperity (PWP) learning community — a partnership of six women’s foundations throughout the country implementing gender-based economic opportunity programming. As a partner, Foundation staff participated in convenings, conference calls, and webinars to share learnings with the larger PWP collaborative and inform program models. Through these learning opportunities, the Foundation gained an understanding of the work of other women’s foundations’ economic opportunity funding strategies and impact measures.



## CONTEXT

Building the capacity of individual women has its limits if the policy environment and systemic institutions are not supportive of women's economic opportunity. To this end, the Foundation works to affect policy and funding changes needed to create and sustain an environment that actively supports women's economic opportunity. The Foundation integrates policy, research, and grantmaking strategies to educate policy makers about the systemic issues women face. These efforts led to the successful passage of the Women's Economic Security Act of 2014, which includes 14 separate laws covering job protections for pregnant and nursing women, an increase in the minimum-wage, increased state funding for the Department of Education and Economic Development, and more. This Act is now used as a model for other states and even Federal legislation.

The Foundation also supports grantee-partners that strive to affect policy changes that actively support women's economic opportunity. For instance, Prepare and Prosper, an organization that provides financial counseling and free tax preparation services, is working to expand the Minnesota Working Family Credit to include more low-income women. They have also proposed a Tax Time Savings bill, which would increase funding for free tax programs in Minnesota.

**"[Prepare and Prosper has] an initiative that we call our FAIR initiative. It [stands for] Financial Access In Reach. That is an effort to offer new products that are available to the financially underserved to help people transact safely and affordably to build savings and to build or repair credit."**

**—Prepare and Prosper Interview, 2017**

Educational institutions, such as Dunwoody and Saint Paul College, have made progress in changing policies and practices on their college campuses. For example, Dunwoody eliminated the application and enrollment fees to alleviate barriers to low-income applicants. Saint Paul College realized that WITC is a helpful recruitment and retention strategy. Employers started identifying women to attend Advisory Council meetings and WITC peer/mentor networking events. The Foundation recognizes that changing institutional norms is an essential strategy for effective programming. Institutions and program staff require thoughtful engagement and training to create welcoming environments for women in traditionally male-dominated programs. Support for the program needs to come from across the organization — from the mission of the institution to administrative staff and instructors. **Gender and cultural-sensitivity trainings provide necessary tools to support teachers and create new attitudes across institutions.**

P2P grantee-partners recognize that influencing systematic change requires strong, effective leadership at the helm. As one staff member from Jeremiah noted, **"Our president and CEO has also been involved at the national level in trying to impact changes. She's meeting before Congress to let them know the cost of trying to break the cycle of poverty and that the programs there to support us don't necessarily work together."**



## INFRASTRUCTURE

One of the primary goals of P2P is to support the infrastructure of the system by building grantee-partner capacity in program operations and evaluation to enhance grantee-partners' abilities to build pathways to prosperity with a gender lens.

Grant activities related to systems change at the infrastructure level included:

- Continuous development of program models to implement best practices
- Tracking program implementation, graduating rates, and job placement and retention rates to inform future program development and replicable models
- Utilization of evaluation to ensure notable practices are integrated and shared with others through a learning community, to ensure women achieve economic success
- Increase grantee-partner capacity and field learning in evaluation, leadership development, resource development, and collaboration in efforts to ensure long-term sustainability

The infrastructure of P2P and its grantee-partners also include internal staff, volunteers, and leaders.

**“The program would not be in the place it is if the dedicated staff person couldn’t devote her entire time to it. This person needs to have the ability to build relationships with all different kinds of people. Work closely with students, meet with board of trustees, with grantmakers.” —Dunwoody Interview, 2016**

**“WITC at Saint Paul College continues to be successful due to the overwhelming support from executive leadership, administration, faculty and staff throughout the college. Our president, Dr. Rassoul Dastmozd, continues to provide the staff and resources necessary to support our students through their programs at the college.” —St. Paul Grant Report, 2017-2018**

**“There is no way we could ever do this work without all the volunteers. We’re lucky that way. That has kept us afloat and allows us to continue to do a lot of the work we’re doing.”**

**—Jeremiah Interview, 2017**



P2P is evidence that concerted collaboration is more than a sum of its parts. Through the efforts described above, the Foundation works to ensure that a comprehensive system is available to support women’s economic opportunity throughout the state of Minnesota. P2P grantee-partners create unrestricted pathways to prosperity through education, employment, and wealth creation for low-income women, women of color, American Indian women, and women in Greater Minnesota.

With P2P funding, grantee-partners have been able to scale their solutions to achieve more impact for more women. As St. Paul mentioned in their grantee report: “The WFM Pathways to Prosperity grant has made it possible to broaden our WITC efforts to impact virtually all women enrolled in for-credit and non-credit trade programs at Saint Paul College. The depth and breadth of the services that are now available is drawing the attention of faculty, student support services staff, and employer partners. **Because we can offer consistent services to so many students and maintain regular contact with women through the peer/mentor networking events, the WITC is gaining momentum and the campus community is more informed.** The number of women applying for WITC scholarships has doubled over the past year. For the first time, dedicated emergency funds have been available to women. The faculty are more engaged in support of female recruitment initiatives. Also, the camaraderie has increased among female students. Peer support greatly enhances support available through the college’s limited staff resources.”

**“This initiative continues to grow, and participation from current female trade/technical students on campus is nearly 100%.” —St. Paul Grant Report, 2017-2018**

**Through P2P, the Foundation leverages partnerships and increased visibility with grantee-partners to expand funding around economic opportunity and scale up its impact.**

P2P’s systems change framework ignites a ripple effect in communities that continues to scale over time. By investing in women and girls now, communities benefit from the intellectual and social capital brought by these women in the future. These women are entrepreneurs, job creators, mentors, and social change agents that communities need to thrive. Women given the opportunity to succeed become highly-motivated to give back to their community to ensure that other girls and women have this same chance. Women’s education, training, and their voices are valued in their community, thus communities grow economically, socially, and politically.