



SVP Cleveland: The Next Chapter

Winter 2022–2023: Drafted for Discussion

INTRODUCTION

SVP Cleveland is a unique collective giving model with a distinct holistic approach to supporting local nonprofits. Over our 20 years, we have partnered with some of Cleveland’s top nonprofit leaders and engaged with organizations on the frontlines of addressing our city’s deepest social challenges. Woven into SVP’s organizational culture is our belief that change begins both with individuals and in the power of the collective. This culture and commitment to our community have fueled SVP for more than two decades. *Now, SVP is poised and ready for our next bold chapter.*

Building on our foundational elements, organizational strengths, and commitment to equity & justice, SVP is ready to make an intentional, strategic pivot to ***focus our work on advancing gender justice by centering the lives of women and those disproportionately harmed by gender inequities with an emphasis on the intersection of gender, race, and socio-economic status.*** SVP’s next chapter will center and support current leaders and organizations working to advance gender justice and equity for our region; our work will concentrate on the best ways to collaborate, convene, and bolster them.

WHY NOW + WHY SVP

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the deep-seeded disparities experienced by women, especially women of color and low-income women. We have seen this throughout headlines and through personal stories over the past two years: the great resignation (50% of the 5M women who have left the workforce cited caregiving responsibilities as the primary reason), job loss in the hospitality and retail industries disproportionately impacting women, health disparities continue to grow, and the rise in mental and emotional stress and domestic violence—to name just a few. Moreover, Cleveland is rated the worst metropolitan area for Black Women¹ and 46% of Cleveland households are headed by single women², many who lack necessary support such as childcare, healthcare, transportation, fair wages, paid family leave, food and housing security, safe neighborhoods, and more. Also incredibly disturbing, Cleveland is an epicenter of the transgender murder crisis, with 90% of these victims being Black transgender women³. These realities are an alarm bell for us all.

¹ [“Cleveland is the worst metropolitan area for black women, new study shows. Why?”](#)

² [The Center for Community Solutions](#)

³ [How Cleveland Became an Epicenter of Anti-Trans Violence: Part I, Intro](#)

Despite the clear data and multiple studies that Cleveland severely lags in gender justice, our city—unlike Columbus and Cincinnati—does not have a “women’s fund” or a philanthropic organization that centers its work around gender justice and equity. And, while there are many strong organizations addressing the needs of women and advancing gender equity in Greater Cleveland, there is no collective effort or local entity:

- (i) convening organizations and leaders with a shared focus on women and gender justice.
- (ii) supporting women-serving organizations through grant funding and capacity-building support
- (iii) advancing policy and advocacy work to impact systems-level change.
- (iv) continuously elevating these issues for public awareness, engagement, and action.

Additionally, recent national research shows that only 2% of philanthropic giving goes directly toward Women’s and girls’ organizations.

As we seek to respond to the pandemic on the community, local, state, and national levels, we have a real opportunity to demand change. There is more attention now than in any time in recent history on gender injustice. This spotlight combined with recent changes to Cleveland’s local and county leadership offer a pivotal moment to identify, organize, and address some of the systems and policies perpetuating gender injustice and harming women + persons in Greater Cleveland.

POSSIBILITIES for THE NEXT CHAPTER

As we consider what this next chapter could look like, our intention is to create an SVP that supports and elevates the many amazing leaders and organizations already engaged in this work and to knit together their work, knowledge, and power. Below are some initial ideas and questions for consideration and discussion. This is meant to be a conversation starter; we want to co-imagine and co-create this next iteration of SVP with the Cleveland community and welcome your feedback on this following and any other ideas or thoughts that come to mind:

- ***Support the current constellation and next generation of organizations and leaders addressing the immediate needs of women and persons harmed by gender injustice.***
 - What role do general operating funds and capacity-building support play?
 - Is there interest in facilitated space for communal support and collective learning?
- ***Convene and support policy & advocacy work to help bring about long-term, systemic change.***
 - What do you see as the role of local organizing in policy and advocacy work around gender justice?
 - What do you see as the priorities and possibilities?
 - How could SVP most beneficially play a convening role?
 - Are there opportunities to partner on statewide initiatives?
- ***Elevate the voices of those most impacted by gender inequities and increase public discussion of these issues.*** We currently imagine the need to support a multipronged communications approach,

including personal stories, to elevate issues and experiences of those most harmed by gender injustice—“making the invisible, visible.”

- Does this make sense?
- Is it an unmet need?
- How do we support individuals sharing their stories?
- **Continue to educate and engage donors.** SVP Cleveland has historically provided programming and dialogue for individual and collective learning and growth around justice-centered and trust-based philanthropy. This is an invaluable facet of our work, especially as it relates to racial + gender justice and trust-based philanthropy. We are assuming we would continue this important aspect of our work.
 - Does this make sense? What needs/opportunities do you see in this space?
- **Name Change.** We are considering a name change.
 - What do you think? Any ideas for a new name?

CONCLUSION

We are eager and excited to discuss this vision more. It is an organic, evolutionary shift for SVP, guided by our [organizational values](#) and North Star, adopted in 2021. The foundation for this next step is in place; our new chapter would build upon and expand this foundation while working toward meaningful, systemic change in the lives of Cleveland-area women, all persons disproportionately impacted by gender inequity, and everyone whose lives they touch.

We look forward to discussing this further with you and welcome all input, feedback, and questions.