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The Rochester Women's Giving Circle (<https://www.racf.org/collaborations/rochester-womens-giving-circle/>) has made the largest annual grant distribution in its 19-year history, awarding \$265,000 to 12 local nonprofit (<https://rbj.net/tag/nonprofit/>) organizations working to help women and girls achieve economic self-sufficiency.

(<https://rbj.net/files/2023/06/womens-giving-circle.png>) The record-breaking investment brings the Giving Circle's total grantmaking to nearly \$3 million since its founding. Since 2020 alone, programs supported by the group have served more than 3,200 women and girls and helped roughly 1,000 women secure employment.



The Giving Circle, which consists of 170 members, pools charitable contributions to support initiatives that provide education, job training, mentorship (<https://rbj.net/tag/mentorship/>), career advancement opportunities and other services aimed at helping women build financial independence.

This year's grant cycle underscored the growing challenges facing nonprofits and the communities they serve. Nearly 75% of applicants requested grants (<https://rbj.net/tag/grants/>) of \$20,000 or more, and total funding requests exceeded \$800,000.

Organizations reported increasing demand for services as women and families grapple with rising housing costs, economic uncertainty and mental health challenges. At the same time, many nonprofits are navigating reductions in funding from other sources.

"Nonprofits are dealing with the loss of other funding sources at the same time they are trying to meet surging demand for services," said Dawn Perry, collective giving officer at Rochester Area Community Foundation (<https://rbj.net/tag/rochester-area-community-foundation/>). "The size of this grant round now, made possible by people who refuse to let this work falter, is incredibly meaningful."

Beyond financial support, the Giving Circle emphasizes long-term engagement with its nonprofit partners. Each funded organization is paired with a member who serves as a liaison and advocate throughout the year, attending events, providing support, and helping raise awareness about the

organization's mission.

Membership in the Rochester Women's Giving Circle is open to anyone who contributes at least \$450 annually. This year, 16 members participated in a six-week review process to evaluate grant applications and determine funding awards.

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