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## BWGC Strategic Plan

BWGC leadership has been working with strategic plan consultants Patty Prasada Rao and Wendy Jeffries over the past several months to prepare the materials and structure for a three-year plan. Prasada Rao addressed the Circle Steering Committee as well as the May Full Circle Annual Meeting to describe the process and invite questions.

The need for a strategic plan emerged as a key priority from membership surveys. The three-year strategic plan will serve as a roadmap, helping to prioritize efforts, effectively allocate resources, and align members with the Circle's mission and goals.

An important result of this planning is the appointment of a member-driven strategic planning committee (SPC); the SPC held its first meeting with Prasada Rao and Jeffries on June 5. The 20 Circle members serving on the SPC represent the membership and include long-time members, newer members, former officers and co-chairs along with other members active in the Circle. The SPC and the Steering Committee will play a key role in the process, and communications will be available to all Circle members on a regular basis.

Data gathering and analysis, individual interviews, surveys, and stakeholder focus group discussions will take place over the coming months. All Circle members will have an opportunity to be heard.

Circle Co-Chairs will update members regularly on the project. Feel free to reach out to them with any questions by emailing [bwgccoachair@thebwgc.org](mailto:bwgccoachair@thebwgc.org).

## Did You Know?

- In 2025, the BWGC funded seven of the eight recommended housing programs for a total of \$160,000, accounting for 34% of total funding. That is the most given to a single category in one year in Circle history.
- The next-highest funding to a single category was in 2013, when \$139,995 of a total \$409,995 in grant awards (or 34%) also went to housing.
- Education tops the list for the number of years in which category funding exceeded \$100,000. That happened six times in the nine-year stretch from 2013-2021. However, this year, only two education programs were funded for a total of \$37,500.



## Co-Chairs Message

Thank you to our Circle members for a great year! You are the source of our grant funds, participants in the unique process of determining our grant recipients each year, and the reason for the solid reputation the Circle has maintained in our community through the years. This spring, the Circle awarded \$521,625 to 23 grantees, 11 of which are first-time grantees, using a new, streamlined process.

Thanks also to the Steering Committee, who maintained our focus throughout the year, guided the priorities identified by the most recent member surveys (priorities which we termed the Pillars). They are:

- The all-important Membership Pillar showed 28 new members—and fewer non-renewals by almost half from last year.
- The Strategic Plan Pillar resulted in the Strategic Plan initiative, launched in May, that will continue as a priority in the coming year.
- From the PR/visibility Pillar came the new Monthly Member Memo to keep members informed, participation in the Baltimore Magazine special section on nonprofits, and increased involvement with local agencies, which will continue.
- And finally, continued development and identification of leaders to fulfill our Leadership Pillar, also a work in progress.

We would be remiss if we did not mention the awesome video of the Circle's work, just completed by our small team working on how to celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

We wish you a wonderful summer, and an energetic return in the fall as we continue the important work of the Circle together!

Thanks to all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Renee &amp; Barbara". The script is elegant and cursive.

Renee Gordon and Barbara Epke

# Introducing New Circle Leadership

Every year, the Nominating and Leadership Development Committee (NLDC) is responsible for selecting new officers and new committee co-chairs to serve two-year terms. This year’s slate of officers was ratified by the full Circle via electronic vote with unanimous support.

**Many thanks to the members of the NLDC:**

Susan Perl and Bonnie Stainman (NLDC co-chairs), Dawna Cobb, Liz Dausch, Dana Foley, Jeannie Gildee, Georgia King, Suzanne Levin-Lapidus, Sally Neustadt, and Sue Talbott.

The NLDC is pleased to present the following Circle officers and committee co-chairs for 2025-26:

**CIRCLE CO-CHAIRS:**

Barbara Epke and  
Renee Gordan

**SECRETARY:**

Dorie Fain\*

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY:**

Lissa Abrams\*

**TREASURER:**

Christine Schmitz\*

**ASSISTANT TREASURER:**

Anita Pomerantz\*

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Kelly Chew and Sarah Grebow

**EDUCATION**

Sharon Nathanson and Susan  
Anderson (sharing position), and  
Silvia Golombek\*

**GRANTS:**

Jaclyn Vorenkamp and  
Ev Ameral\*

**GRANTEE CONNECT:**

Bobbie Miyasaki, Catherine  
Morris, and Crickett Wolson\*

**MEMBERSHIP:**

Pam Pasqualini and  
Heather Johnson\*

**NLDC:**

Bonnie Stainman and  
Ann Daniels\*

**POST GRANTS:**

Mary “Bruce” Webb and  
Sharon Edlow\*

**RACIAL EQUITY, DIVERSITY,  
AND INCLUSION (REDI):**

Phyllis Kolman and Ida Samet\*

\*new for 2025-26

# 2025-26 Steering Committee

The Circle is led by the Steering Committee (SC), which includes six Circle officers and 18 committee co-chairs this year. The SC oversees the Circle’s management and operations. The 2025-26 Steering Committee is pictured below.





## ANNUAL MEETING

## Full Circle Annual Meeting

More than 100 Circle members attended the May 21 Annual Meeting at Chizuk Amuno, including many of the 28 new members.

After a recap of the BWGC year and Circle committee achievements, the focus turned to grants. Twenty-three grants were awarded for 2025-26 using the new, streamlined application process. Eleven grantees are first-time recipients. Presentations by Rob's Barber Shop and the Violet Project brought to life the work of 2024-25 grantees. Next came the announcement of the new leaders and committee co-chairs. Finally, one of the consultants guiding the BWGC's Strategic Plan Initiative presented a brief summary of the project that will be a major focus in the coming year.

Members who referred new members were entered in a drawing for three newly designed BWGC mugs filled with chocolate.

The program was recorded and will be posted.

# 2025



## New Circle Grants Increase by \$25,000+

Each year, the BWGC awards grants to organizations aligned with the Circle’s Mission, Vision, and Values. The amount is based on funds available in the grants pool, which includes monies from member dues. This year, the Circle awarded \$521,625, an increase of more than \$25,000 from last year.

Eighteen teams of five grant readers reviewed 181 applications (vs. 121 in 2024 and 94 in 2023), conducted site visits with organizations, and recommended organizations for funding. Circle members selected 23 organizations for funding; 11 of them are first-time BWGC grantees. Using the set-aside for small organizations (with budgets up to \$500,000), eight small organizations were funded. Four large organizations (with budgets of \$5 million and up) received grants; the rest were mid-sized organizations.

Below is a list of the 23 grantees for 2025-26:

**HOUSING:**

- Black Women Build, \$25,000
- \*Esi’s House, \$25,000
- \*Garwyn Oaks Northwest Housing Resource Center, \$25,000
- Public Justice Center, \$25,000
- Rebuilding Together Baltimore, \$10,000
- St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center, \$25,000
- Women’s Housing Coalition, \$25,000

**FOOD AND HUNGER SERVICES:**

- \*Student Support Network, \$25,000

**LIFE SKILLS:**

- \*Heaven on Earth NOW, \$25,000
- Girls on the Run of the Greater Chesapeake, \$13,125

**MISCELLANEOUS:**

- \*Baltimore Furniture Bank, \$25,000
- \*Michele’s Haven, CDC, Inc. \$12,500

**CASE MANAGEMENT/REFERRAL:**

- \*Good Trouble Church, \$23,500

**EDUCATION:**

- \*Jeremiah Program, \$25,000
- \*Teachers’ Democracy Project, \$12,500

**DOMESTIC/SEXUAL VIOLENCE:**

- \*Family Crisis Center, \$25,000
- The Tahirih Justice Center, \$25,000

**HEALTH SERVICES:**

- Health Care for the Homeless, \$25,000

**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:**

- Helping Up Mission, \$25,000
- Per Scolas Baltimore, \$25,000
- \*The Family Tree, \$25,000

**LEGAL SERVICES:**

- Women’s Law Center of Maryland, \$25,000

**SERVICES TO SENIORS:**

- Action in Maturity, \$25,000

\*First-time grantee

## New Grant Application

This year, the Grants Committee rolled out a new, simplified grant application asking three main questions:

- What issue did applicants seek to address?
- How did they know their program was working?
- Did they involve beneficiaries in their organization?

There was also an optional question for anything else. Only key financial data was requested. All other supporting documents were eliminated.

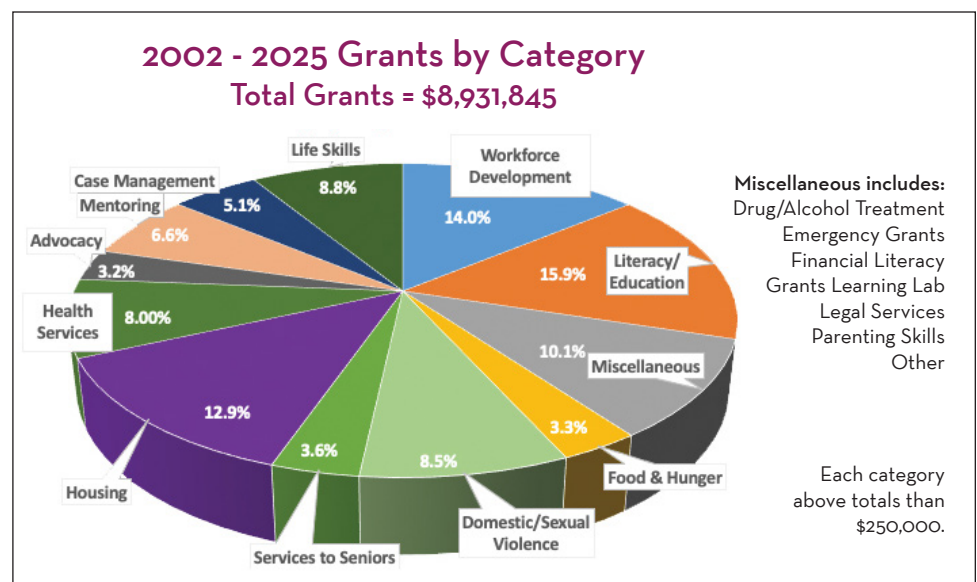
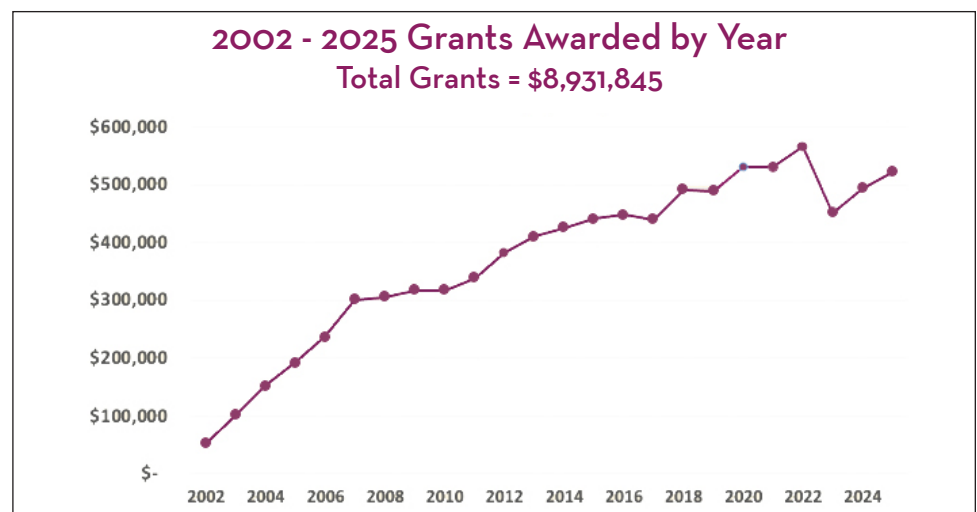
Grantee focus groups were enthusiastic about the ease of use of the new questionnaire and for the chance to have their voices heard.

## BWGC Grant Giving Over the Years

Since the BWGC gave its first grants in 2002, a total of \$8,931,845 has been awarded through 481 grants to 224 distinct organizations to support women and their families in the Baltimore area.

Those grants have covered a wide range of categories, with Education and Workforce Development receiving the highest percentage of grant dollars over the years.

*These two charts outline the trends of grants awarded from 2002 - 2025.*





## Committee Reports

### Communications

The new Monthly Member Memo contains updates on events and Circle news and has received positive feedback from members. Communications has posted to all BWGC social media platforms and is working on quarterly newsletters and the Year In Review.

### Education

The Education Committee and other Circle members met on April 9 to hear Krish Vignarajah, president and CEO of Global Refuge, speak about the agency's work in helping immigrants rebuild their lives in the United States. Global Refuge is a major player in refugee settlement, a legal pathway for people who are leaving their home countries and seeking safety and a new life in the U.S.

### Grantee Connect

Twenty-one representatives of 20 organizations funded by the Circle over the years gathered at the May 6 Grantee Spring Forum to network and learn how to engage the next generation of donors. Given women's rising wealth and philanthropic interests, speaker Barb Van Winkle of the Women's Giving Circle of Howard County focused on reaching young female donors. Her tips: "Offer easy, informative, and transparent online giving options. Younger donors want to be involved in your mission and your cause, so provide them opportunities to gain in-depth knowledge about your impact and involve them in your programming before requesting donations."

### Post Grants Subcommittee Circle Works

On May 12, Circle Works held a day of service at first-time grantee ShareBaby's headquarters and warehouse in the Clipper Mill complex. Working in two shifts, 31 Circle participants packaged diapers, verified formula dates, and sorted and bundled children's clothing for distribution to clients in ShareBaby's network of more than 70 area organizations. In addition, the BWGC donated diapers, baby wipes, and other items.



Grantee Connect



Post Grants Subcommittee Circle Works

## Committee Reports cont.

### Membership

Twelve prospective members heard Pat Jones from Immigration Outreach Service Center (IOSC) speak at the April 30 Prospective Member Event. The IOSC has been serving immigrants since 2000 as they rebuild their lives. The committee sponsored a hike on May 3. At the end of May, membership was 404.

### Nominating and Leadership Development

The Circle is looking for members with tech skills to help with website updates, assist members in managing Zoom meetings online, and to run an online grants management program; training will be offered. Contact [nominating@thebwgc.org](mailto:nominating@thebwgc.org).

### Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI)

REDI members continued to research how advocacy might work for the BWGC, gathering information about local advocacy groups, researching other giving circles, and clarifying regulations defining advocacy. A subcommittee drafted a sample framework for a future Ad Hoc Committee, including a robust folder of resources for any future work in Advocacy.

#### New Members

Holly Belkot  
Alison Brown  
Renee Fox  
Nia Garrett  
Ronna Grossman  
Marie Lilly  
Martha Lockwood  
Fiona Newton  
Amanda Owens

#### Contributors

Kelly Chew	Bobbie Miyasaki
Ellen Cooper	Catherine Morris
Barbara Epke	Sharon Nathanson
Lisa Field	Pam Pasqualini
Silvia Golombek	Susan Payne
Renee Gordon	Susan Perl
Sarah Grebow	Mary-Ann Pinkard
Phyliss Kolman	Jackie Vorenkamp
Jane Meyer	Bruce Webb

## UPCOMING EVENTS

9/4 Prospective Member Event

9/17 Full Circle Meeting