

Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts Leadership Institute for Political Impact

The Women's Fund Leadership Institute for Political Impact is designed to address the civic interests and skills requested by women from the counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire, Massachusetts. After conducting three annual discussion forums in each of the four western MA counties, participating in dialogues initiated by other organizations, and exploring best practices among women's funds both nationally and globally, the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts has designed an institute with a unique scope of material and structural design.

When asked why they haven't attempted to run for public office a majority of women will first cite a perceived lack of skill or preparedness; women very often underestimate their abilities. Therefore, in addition to skills, the institute will provide women with increased confidence and awareness of their political leadership potential and ability.

The Institute advisory committee comprised of six women leaders, together with staff will select eight to ten participants from each county based on their level of skills, commitment and ability to participate as described in their application. The Women's Fund is committed to composing a diverse and committed body among institute participants.

The goals of the Women's Leadership Institute are as follows:

Process Goals (Immediate)

- Help participants develop political literacy and competencies
- Provide participants with knowledge and information about Massachusetts' legislative processes
- Help participants overcome perceived barriers and increase their confidence in participating in legislative processes
- Provide an opportunity to develop cohort relationships among county representatives

Outcome Goals (Short-term)

- Facilitate the production of state policy that reflects the needs of Massachusetts' women, girls, and their families and communities
- Increase community-based participation in policy formation and implementation
- Build the capacity of participants to share their expertise as a means to build community capacity to use policy and legislative processes to address problems
- Strengthen relationships and collaboration among social justice organizations and women's groups in western Massachusetts

Impact Goals (Long-term)

- Improve the lives of all people in western Massachusetts communities
- Create cadres of women in the four counties with expertise in the legislative process
- Increase the numbers of women across western Massachusetts running for public office at all levels

WFWM's institute will include four primary focus areas that will build a cumulative portfolio of knowledge and skills. These include personal leadership, community organizing, legislative process and policy, board participation, financial reports and raising funds, and running for political office.

All full group sessions will also include presentations by women currently holding public office and/or those who are former public officials. The sessions focusing on policy will also include presentations by women from various community groups who have worked on moving policy forward.

2011-2012 Sessions

MEETING DATE	LOCATION	TOPIC
SEPTEMBER 17	HCC Kittredge Center, Room 303	Leadership Analysis – Who We Are Building Connections
OCTOBER 22	HCC Kittredge Center, Room 303	Women in Politics in Massachusetts Government 101
NOVEMBER 19	HCC Picknelly Dining Room	Public Speaking
DECEMBER		Break
JANUARY 7, 2012	HCC Kittredge Center, Room 303	Citizen Activism Policy 101 How to Speak with Elected Officials
FEBRUARY 11, 2012	HCC Picknelly Dining Room	Effective Board Participation Understanding and Creating Financial Reports
MARCH 10, 2012	HCC Picknelly Dining Room	Getting Out the Vote Social Media
APRIL 28, 2012	HCC Kittredge Center, Room 303	Nuts and Bolts of Campaigning Raising Funds
MAY 19, 2012	HCC Kittredge Center, Room 303	LIPPI Wrap Up
MAY 31, 2012	TBA	Graduation