

[\[REPORT\]](#) Read the Young Women's Initiative *Blueprint for Action* [here](#).

[\[COMPANION REPORT\]](#) Read the complete YWI MN Action Research Engagement Process report, a companion to the *Blueprint for Action* [here](#).



STATE OF MINNESOTA
L'Étoile du Nord

Office of Governor Mark Dayton
& Lt. Governor Tina Smith



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 14, 2017

Governor Dayton, Lt. Governor Smith, and the Women's Foundation of Minnesota Release Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota's Blueprint for Action

Action plan offers 20 key recommendations to build a Minnesota where every girl thrives and is the champion of her own life

Plan will engage cross-sector partners from nonprofits, businesses, government, universities, philanthropies, and young women in strategies to eliminate disparities in outcomes for young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ youth, young women with disabilities, and young women from Greater Minnesota

ST. PAUL, MN – The [Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota](#), a statewide partnership between the office of Governor Mark Dayton and Lt. Governor Tina Smith and the Women's Foundation of Minnesota, today released an action plan aimed at improving the lives of girls and young women in Minnesota, ages 12 to 24. The Initiative's [Blueprint for Action](#) offers 20 key recommendations to achieve equity in outcomes, access to equal opportunity, and ensure safe, prosperous lives for all young women in the state.

"This Blueprint for Action sheds light on the challenges facing young women and girls in Minnesota," said Governor Dayton. **"And it provides a path forward to expand opportunities for young women and girls throughout our state. I thank the Young Women's Initiative for their excellent work, and the Minnesota Women's Foundation for their strong commitment to making these recommendations a reality. Together, we can build a state where all Minnesotans have equal opportunities to succeed."**

The Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota concurrently released the Young Women's Initiative Action Research Engagement Process, an extended companion report to *Blueprint for Action*. The companion report is the result of a community action engagement research process conducted by the University of Minnesota, funded by the Women's Foundation, and centered on young women (ages 16-24) from eight communities who experience the state's greatest disparities in outcomes: African American, African Immigrant, American Indian, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latina, LGBTQ, Disabilities, and Greater Minnesota young women. Twenty-five of these young women, who sit on the Governor-appointed Young Women's Cabinet, guided the framework and content for the *Blueprint*. Collectively, 500 cross-sector leaders – young women and youth (ages 16-24), nonprofits, and elected officials – provided input resulting in the [Blueprint for Action](#).

“Young women of color, American Indian young women, those with disabilities, young women from Greater Minnesota, and youth who identify as LGBTQ face opportunity gaps far too often,” said Lt. Governor Smith. **“Our Administration is committed to working with the Young Women's Initiative and Minnesota Women's Foundation to put this Blueprint into action. We can't afford to waste any of the talent and potential of Minnesota's young women and girls.”**

According to the American Community Survey, there are approximately 452,819 young women aged 12-24 in Minnesota, with just over half residing in the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Together, the Women's Foundation and Governor's Office is engaging the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota Council – 70 cross-sector leaders from corporations, government, philanthropy, universities, and nonprofits – to craft the implementation plan to move the recommendations forward across all sectors. Three members of the Young Women's Cabinet – 25 young women (ages 16-24) from the eight communities at the center of the Initiative – sit as equal leaders and partners with the Council to implement the *Blueprint* recommendations. McKinsey & Company is a pro-bono partner developing an engagement and tactical plan for the Council.

“As a statewide community foundation committed to gender and racial equity, we created the Young Women's Initiative of Minnesota to ensure that every young woman has access to equal opportunity and is able to create and lead a safe and prosperous life,” said Lee Roper-Batker, Women's Foundation president and CEO. **“Now is the time for change. In the media, we continue to hear women's stories. This is our opportunity to act together with young women. We believe the *Blueprint for Action* is a clear call to change culture and policies so that all young women can experience Minnesota as a place of safety and opportunity.”**

Key Recommendations

The Initiative's *Blueprint for Action* makes 20 key recommendations across six main areas: financial stability and prosperity; safety and violence prevention; education and lifelong learning; cultural and self-identity; health and wellness; family and caregiving. *Sample key recommendations include:*

- 1. Reframe Harmful Narratives** – Promote messages that ensure young women can experience the world without limitations.
- 2. Enhance Career Pathways** – Ensure young women have opportunities and pathways to high-skill, high-wage careers and jobs; increase participation in STEM fields and technical careers; and increase opportunities for young women in female-dominated sectors.
- 3. Develop Young Women Leaders** – Develop the capacity of young women for civic and political leadership.
- 4. Change Gender Norms and Generational Roles** – Ensure social norms are expanded beyond traditional gender roles.

5. **Prevent Violence Through Healthy Relationships** – Educate young women and men about healthy relationships, harmful narratives and norms, and promoting positive self-identities to reduce violence.
6. **Facilitate Holistic Mentorship** – Support community-based, multigenerational mentoring and life coaching for young women.
7. **Disaggregate Key Data** – Make it a standard practice for institutions to disaggregate data by gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, income, sexuality, disability, and place.
8. **Build Gender- and Community-Oriented Financial Literacy and Life Skills** – Ensure young women have access to community-specific opportunities for training and education on financial literacy, life skills, and entrepreneurialism tailored to young women, which are built on cultural, linguistic, community, and geographic assets.

What Young Women Are Saying About Life in Minnesota

The Young Women’s Initiative of Minnesota’s *Blueprint for Action* was created through community-driven research centered on young women’s leadership and voices. Below are sample survey and community conversation responses from members who participated in the Initiative’s community action engagement research. Read additional responses from young women across Minnesota in the YWI MN Action Research Engagement Process, a companion report to the *Blueprint for Action*, available [here](#).

“Many young women have faced sexual victimization and as a result of greater society’s lack of acknowledgement of their abuse and lack of trauma treatment options are unable to reach their potential. We live in a rape culture where women are viewed differently than men and judged rather than seen as a victim of domestic violence and/or sexual exploitation. They have to justify why it happened to them rather than going after the perpetrator.”

– YWI MN Community Wisdom Conversation Participant

“It is important for women to get together and mobilize, whether that is through social media, organizations, or protests. Even one voice is enough to be a leader of change.”

– YWI MN Community Wisdom Conversation Participant

[We need to] “create culturally-relevant educational experiences rich with teachers, administrators, mentors who reflect the ethnicity and life experiences of students and their families.”

– YWI MN Survey Participant

“Look into our social structure and how young women function inside our society; and how young women function in their lives...you can see the negativity and negative effects on them.”

– YWI MN Community Wisdom Conversation Participant

“Access to transportation is a factor in education and safety, because if women with disabilities can’t even make it to class, then transportation is clearly a systemic barrier to financial stability and education.”

– YWI MN Disabilities Working Group Participant

“The biggest barriers of young African American women aged 12-24 in my community are institutional or systemic barriers located in schools and the criminal justice system. The impact of these barriers involved loss of capital for them and the communities in which they live and work. In fact, government, schools, and the criminal justice systems all work to basically maximize profit before maximizing the life outcomes of young women.”

– YWI MN Survey Participant

Implementing the *Blueprint for Action*

Over the next six years, the Women’s Foundation will invest \$9 million in research, grantmaking, policy, field-building, and strategic communications to drive the Young Women’s Initiative of Minnesota and implementation of the *Blueprint* recommendations.

In 2018, the Women’s Foundation will invest more than \$1 million to resource and drive the *Blueprint for Action* recommendations, including microgrants to fund young women’s ideas for action, and **larger grants to nonprofits (link to RFP at WFMN.ORG)** across the state. The Foundation will also fund a statewide community mapping process to identify existing assets and resources within communities already focused on creating equity in outcomes for young women.

About the Young Women’s Initiative of Minnesota

[Launched last year](#), the [Young Women’s Initiative of Minnesota](#) is a first-of-its-kind partnership between the Office of the Governor and Lt. Governor and the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota to build a Minnesota where every girl has the opportunity to thrive and is the champion of her own life. The Initiative brings together young women, nonprofits, businesses, government, universities, and philanthropies to achieve equity in opportunities and to improve the lives of young women of color, American Indian young women, LGBTQ youth, young women with disabilities, and young women from Greater Minnesota. More at [WFMN.ORG](#).

About the Women’s Foundation of Minnesota

The Women’s Foundation of Minnesota is a statewide community foundation investing in innovation to drive gender equity. The Foundation envisions a world of equal opportunity where women and girls – *and all people* – hold the power to create and lead safe, prosperous lives. Founded in 1983, it is the first and largest statewide women’s foundation in the country. More at [WFMN.ORG](#).

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