



Grantmakers of Western Pennsylvania (GWP) is made up of grantmaking members representing a wide range of funding interests. Both locally and across the country, intentional collaborations among funders have increased the impact of philanthropy by combining members' knowledge and expertise. **Learning Networks** within GWP can meet the needs of specific types of funding organizations, better address certain issues (e.g. education, aging) or provide a forum for peer exchange (i.e. program officers, financial officers, etc.).

The purpose of a Learning Network varies, and so does the frequency with which they convene. No two Networks are the same and needs may fluctuate from year to year. Some common purposes include: educate funders about the community; act on a shared interest; discuss promising practices, lessons learned, and common challenges; increase opportunities for collaborative activity; and react to a critical situation such as an opportunity or crisis.

GWP's Learning Network Guidelines

In general, Learning Networks are most vibrant when they are self-directed. GWP believes that viable Learning Networks have designated volunteer leadership, regular participation of at least 4 GWP members and have activities/programs a minimum of 2 times per year.

- *To establish a Learning Network, the Network should have at least one volunteer leader from GWP membership willing to serve a term of one year as a chair.*
- *At the end of the year, the chair (or chairs) will have the option to continue to lead for another year or step down.*
- *Volunteer leaders can approach GWP staff at any time throughout the year to establish a Learning Network.*
- *GWP will work with volunteer leaders to help frame the establishment of a Learning Network.*

Benefits of a Learning Network

There are numerous benefits of a Learning Network within GWP. Such benefits include opportunities to:

- *Build relationships with other GWP members who have a shared interest.*
- *Share information and ideas.*
- *Hear and learn from experts.*
- *Share successes and challenges with a peer cohort.*
- *Leverage a national network of peers through the Forum of Regional Associations.*
- *Participate in professional and leadership development.*
- *Explore defined collaboration and joint action as appropriate.*

Chairs/co-chairs will:

- Work with the members and GWP staff to identify and articulate the purpose and goals of the Learning Network and to annually assess the Network's success.
- Work with GWP staff to organize members' learning agenda and activities. This may include activities such as inviting speakers, hosting forums and sharing resources.
- Assist in developing and disseminating language and content for program announcements and promotional materials.
- Act as leads/hosts for Network meetings.
- Coordinate with GWP staff on topics, dates, speakers and logistics to ensure that sessions complement, not compete with, other GWP and Learning Network programming.
- Request GWP staff support as needed.

GWP staff will:

- Facilitate initial meeting (annually) to help identify and articulate the purpose and goals of the Learning Network.
- Assist with the planning and implementation of Learning Network programs.
- Provide a presence on the GWP website for Learning Network resource links and materials.
- Create and send program announcements and include information in GWP communications.
- Register attendees and maintain records related to meetings.
- Participate in programs and meetings.
- Act as a liaison between peer networks locally, statewide, and nationally
- Provide modest financial support through GWP programming budget.

GWP networks are intended to be flexible and don't need to last forever; networks will sunset when:

- ~ Members determine that their goals have been met.
- ~ No members choose to lead the network.

If the Network reaches a point when it agrees that it no longer makes sense to continue, chairs are asked to notify GWP staff.