



**For Immediate Release**

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## **YWCA Greater Pittsburgh Confirms \$20 Million Grant from Philanthropist MacKenzie Scott for Accelerating Its Mission Expansion**

### **Funds for Phase One Include Seven Initiatives Aimed at Expanding Basic Needs Support, Capacity Building, Strengthening Community Partnerships, and Advancing Racial Justice and Gender Equity**

PITTSBURGH (February 11, 2021) – Less than two months after receiving the news about a multi-million-dollar grant, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh shared that the total grant amount of \$20 million will advance its mission to provide support services for those who are most vulnerable in southwestern Pennsylvania, especially women and girls of color. Its Board of Directors also announced approval of Phase One plans to invest \$10 million over the next three years in mission-critical initiatives aimed at advancing racial justice and gender equity.

YWCA Greater Pittsburgh was among 384 nonprofit organizations in the nation selected to receive unsolicited and unrestricted grants from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. The nonprofits were selected from among 6,500 agencies nationwide that help to “alleviate suffering for those hardest hit by the pandemic” or are “addressing long-term systemic inequities that have been deepened by the crisis,” Ms. Scott wrote on a Medium.com essay post in December 2020 announcing the no-strings attached grants.

“We are extremely grateful to MacKenzie Scott for this momentous gift and for having the vision to trust in the work that we do in tackling gender inequities and systemic racism. We remain humbled by this generous gift that will enable us to increase our COVID-19 relief efforts quickly so we can continue helping the people who need it most,” said Angela Reynolds, Ph.D., CEO of YWCA Greater Pittsburgh. “This unrestricted grant enables us to immediately expand critical and timely initiatives that impact the intersectionality of race and gender. This will be a collaborative process as we work with numerous organizations and social service agencies around the region that share similar goals.”

The grant allows YWCA Greater Pittsburgh to begin implementing recommendations from three pivotal studies on the intersectionality of race and gender, including studies by The Pittsburgh Foundation, City of Pittsburgh Gender Equity Commission, and LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin and YWCA USA. Specifically, YWCA will act on recommendations that came out of these studies in support of economic empowerment for women and girls of color.

“When it comes to racial justice and gender equity, there is a tremendous amount of work that needs to be done,” said Reynolds. “We now have the opportunity to collaborate in ways that we’ve never been able to before. We feel a sense of urgency to move this work forward and invest resources back into our community during the ongoing COVID pandemic.”

### **Seven Mission-Critical Initiatives Bolstered by Phase One Funding**

This capacity-building grant enables the immediate expansion of seven initiatives that involve collaborating with other nonprofit organizations across the region and Pennsylvania to expand YWCA Greater Pittsburgh’s work, including:

1. **RESOURCE CENTER EXPANSION:** The grant immediately enables YWCA Greater Pittsburgh to expand its capacity to meet women and families’ basic needs through an enriched Resource Center, which provides food, housing, transportation, and other urgently needed support services. Prior to the pandemic, many families were living paycheck-to-paycheck and lacked sufficient savings to cover a financial setback. The pandemic has further challenged already financially vulnerable families and greatly increased the demand for support with basic needs.
2. **PAY EQUITY CAMPAIGN:** YWCA Greater Pittsburgh desires to become a model nonprofit workplace for a diverse workforce. The organization will begin by performing a holistic review of its current compensation packages, ensuring that all staff members are paid a living wage and offered competitive benefits, and meaningful opportunities for professional development and career advancement. As part of the strategic pay equity campaign, there will be a \$15/hour or more starting pay rate.
3. **YWCA FELLOWS PROGRAM:** For adults re-entering the workforce or who had to leave due to COVID-19, funds will be used to build partnerships to support women pursuing wage-sustaining careers. In addition, through the creation of a new YWCA Fellows program, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh will offer six- to 12-month paid internships so women can develop professional skills, build networks, and gain tangible work experience.
4. **STATEWIDE ADVOCACY INITIATIVE:** YWCA will advance racial justice and gender equity through advocacy training and a communications strategy aimed at amplifying the voices of women, especially women of color. A collaborative statewide outreach

initiative – through the Pennsylvania Zone of YWCA Associations – will address racial trauma resulting from disparities and injustice.

5. **LIZ PRINE MEMORIAL FUND:** YWCA Greater Pittsburgh’s ongoing effort to empower women will be further supported by expanding the impact of the Liz Prine Memorial Fund, which honors the memory of a former YWCA Board Member by offering one-time grants to women that help them improve their circumstances and move towards financial stability and safety.
6. **COMMUNITY COLLABORATION:** A partnership with POISE Foundation will support organizations focused specifically on the intersectionality of race and gender equity.
7. **WBE & MINORITY WBE RECOVERY:** Funds will be used, in partnership with local organizations, to help women-owned and minority women-owned businesses recovering from the COVID crisis. Supports would include grants to complete employment training, technology enhancements for businesses, and exploring opportunities for shared back-office support. In addition, incubator space will be provided through YWCA Greater Pittsburgh facilities.

“The trust and confidence bestowed upon us through this grant speaks to the progress of our organization, along with the corresponding tremendous need for expanding our work in race and gender equity. We’re absolutely thrilled about the positive impact these measures will have on our community,” said Melanie Gefert-Azur, President of YWCA’s Board. “While we have a track record of creating opportunity for women for more than 100 years, this provides a transcendental opportunity to rapidly move the needle for systemic and culture change and carry our mission to the next level.”

### **About YWCA Greater Pittsburgh**

Founded in 1867, YWCA Greater Pittsburgh is a member of a nationally recognized movement with a mission to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. The non-profit provides direct services, empowerment programming and advocacy to support individuals and families, especially women and girls of color, while working to challenge structural barriers to equity. Its Resource Center supports the most vulnerable in our communities, who are most impacted by COVID-19 and its socioeconomic effects. *For more information on YWCA Greater Pittsburgh and its programs, visit <https://www.ywcapgh.org>. Employment opportunities are currently available at <https://www.ywcapgh.org/about-us/careers/>.*

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