

the Nonprofit Leadership

WORKBOOK FOR WOMEN

— SECOND EDITION —



Introduction

As you well know, it's hard to be a woman in the workforce. More than likely, you make less money than men (in and out of the nonprofit sector), and you have not received equal opportunities to reach a position of power. This is especially true if you are a woman of color.

As women, we're used to settling for less than we need and putting others' needs before our own. On top of that, many of us feel the effects of Imposter Syndrome - doubting our skills and accomplishments for fear of being exposed as "frauds" - and may deem ourselves unworthy of greater opportunities. We're often unable to get ahead because we are overlooked, or our leaders don't understand how to support our growth.

We are reaching a crucial chapter where current leadership positions held by Baby Boomers will soon be vacant when they retire. Whether you are at the beginning or end of your career, plan to stay in the nonprofit sector, or leave it, it's time to find what fulfills you and say goodbye to what no longer serves you.



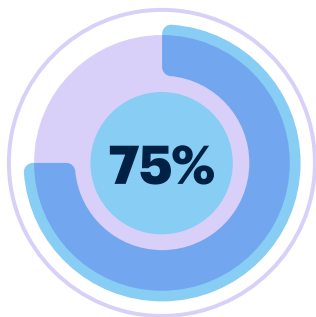
How women are treated in the nonprofit sector today



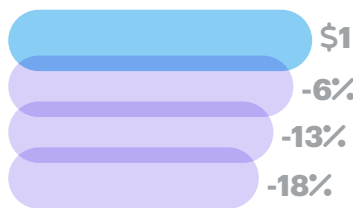
In a list of the world’s 100 most powerful women in 2022, only four are in the Philanthropy category, and only one of those four is a woman of color.¹

4 women in philanthropy } 1 POC

In government agencies and nonprofit organizations, women earn an estimated 85 cents for every dollar earned by men.²



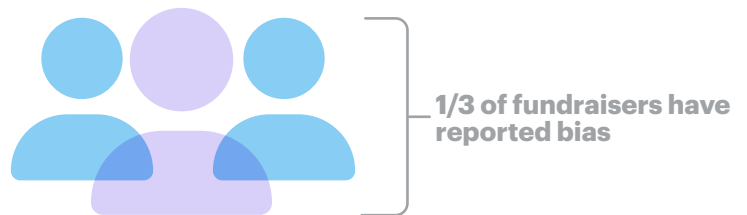
Percent of nonprofit employees that are women in the U.S.



Percentage range of pay gaps that women CEOs face across the sector

Women represent 75% of nonprofit employees in the U.S. Female CEOs at organizations with an annual budget of less than \$1 million experience median pay gaps of 6-13% relative to male CEOs. At the nonprofits with the largest budgets, the gap is larger: female CEOs face a median 18% pay gap.³

One-third of fundraisers have reported bias from co-workers, and 13% say it is because they are a woman.⁴



The result of unfair wages and underrepresentation in leadership

It’s not that women aren’t interested in leading the nonprofit sector, or that women can’t get jobs in other professions that are male-dominated. Due to wage gaps, salary compression, lack of access to benefits, and bias, women in nonprofits are often burnt out or end up leaving the sector to find a better opportunity. Together, we can change that.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: These five steps can be switched up or repeated however you see fit. There is extra writing space in the back of your workbook in case you have more to say in response to each prompt.

Welcome to your leadership workbook

The Nonprofit Leadership Workbook for Women is designed to help you define your vision as a leader and discover how to make it a reality. These exercises will challenge you to reflect on your strengths, provide you with space to record your goals, and offer pieces of expert advice to reach professional and personal success as you define it.

In addition to making the commitment to advocate for yourself, real progress for women requires a daily commitment to supporting diversity, equity, access, and inclusion for all women in the workplace.

What a commitment to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion looks like:

- Embracing an abundance mentality where there's room for everyone to succeed
- Supporting organizations that promote equal access to education and funding
- Speaking up when you see someone being treated unfairly
- Sharing knowledge, resources, and opportunities within in your network
- Having open and difficult conversations at work, home, and in your community
- Understanding that privileges and resources make it easier to be unapologetic



DISCLAIMER: You don't have to be an aspiring manager or director to benefit from this workbook. Know that you are valued no matter where you are on your journey.

Who is this workbook for?

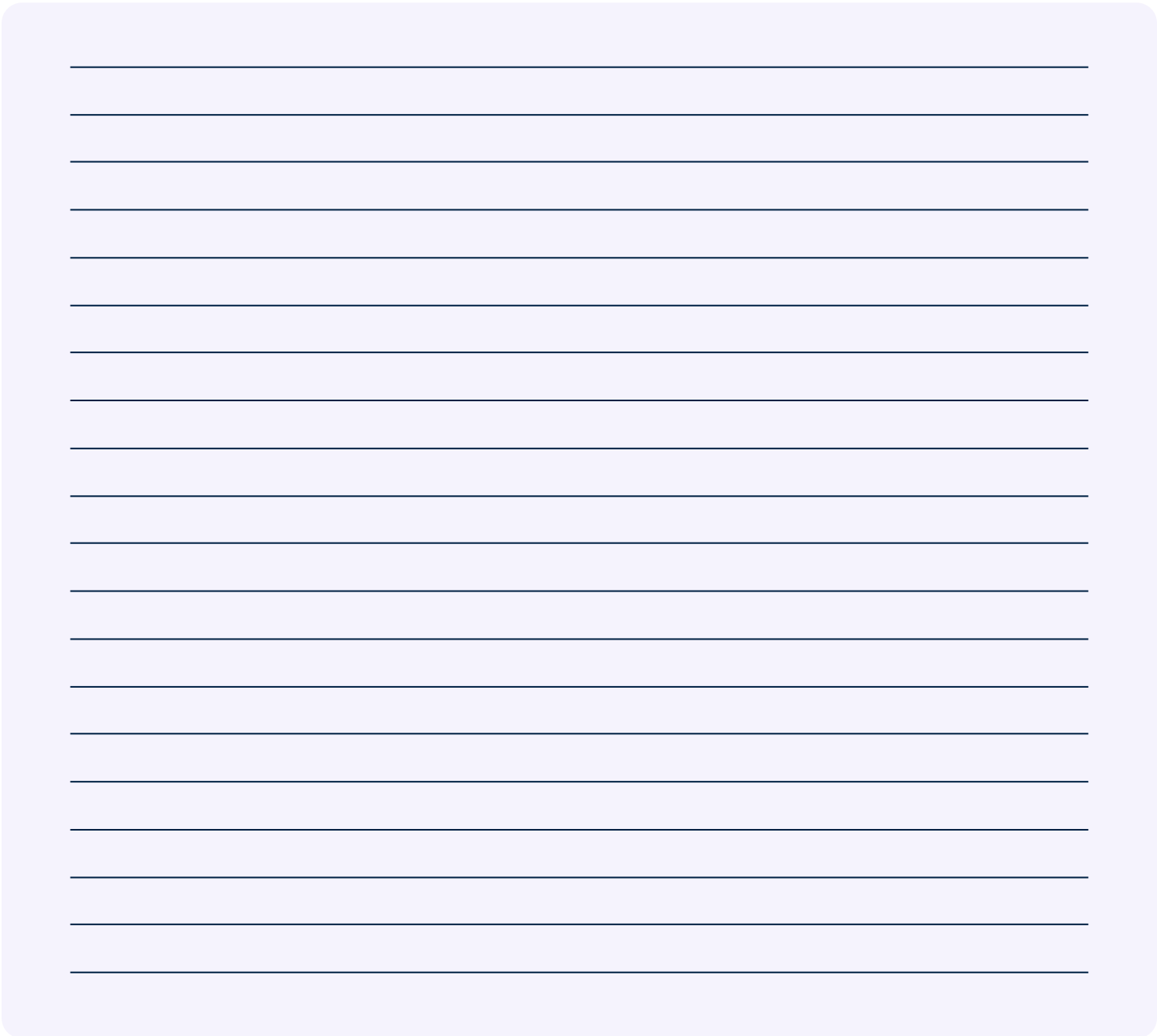
If you are at the **beginning of your career**, this workbook will help you define what drives your ambition and develop your personal brand to achieve new opportunities.

If you are in the **middle or late stages of your career**, this workbook will help you reframe your assumptions about leadership and mentorship to lift others as you climb.

If you are **entering the nonprofit sector**, this workbook will help you hone your passion and skills to deliver what your mission deserves.

If you are **exiting the nonprofit sector**, this workbook will help you unlearn any internalized biases you may have about being a successful woman in leadership.

Write down what you hope to get out of this workbook:



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Step 1: Define your core values



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Leadership is deeply soulful and personal. Regardless of where we are in our journey, we have to start with ourselves first. There is an endless number of frameworks and philosophies, but we have to be able to pause and slow down and really connect with our core values - what drives us, what we're anchored in - so we can show up for our people and our communities in a way that feels authentic, purposeful, steady, and clear.

- Unique Brathwaite

Chief External Affairs Officer, Community Resource Exchange

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What makes you unique?

Get in touch with your core values, or **fundamental beliefs that shape your behavior** (e.g. integrity, gratitude, accountability, etc.), and the circumstances outside of your professional life that influence the way you show up as a woman:

- Women who are **mothers**
- Women who are **caregivers**
- Women who are **immigrants**
- Women who are **LGBTQ+**
- Women who are **BIPOC**
- Women who have **experienced trauma**

These factors make up your **intersectionality**, which Brathwaite describes as a person's relationship between identity, power, and privilege. As a leader, she shows up in a way that allows others to see themselves in that power.

Chantal Bonitto – Inclusive Philanthropy Strategist & Fundraiser at **UNICEF USA** – was born to a Latina mother who triumphed over an intersection of traumatic experiences, including being undocumented, teenage pregnancy, and homelessness. Due to her circumstances, she imbedded values of resiliency and grit in Chantal. As a practice, Chantal’s mother asked, “Can you go to the store and buy a pound of ambition? Or ask how much for two pounds of self-esteem?” and Chantal’s response was always, “No, they have to be inside of me!” Chantal inherited an understanding of values that were priceless.

Chantal also received messages of accountability and responsibility from her mother, such as “paying her dues” and a realization that “the world would never feel sorry for her – so she should never feel sorry for herself.” Chantal took away the need to nurture themselves from the inside out to feed their ambitions in life. Since then, Chantal has held almost a dozen leadership positions in her native New York City, reaching women like her young self.

Who you are and what you’ve experienced usually have an influence on your professional values and your vision of success. This vision can be something concrete, like serving on a nonprofit board, or something more abstract, like making sexual assault victims feel safe again. If you’re passionate about your area of work - past, present, or future - feeling successful can simply mean feeling fulfilled by your daily tasks.

List your core values. What makes you unique?

What is your vision or definition of “success”?

What actions make you feel fulfilled? What do you feel called to do?

Do you feel fulfilled in your current sector or role? Why or why not?

Write a short bio about your future self. Ten years from now, how do you want to be described as a leader?

Have more to say? There's extra space in the back of your workbook!

Step 2: Set goals with intention

When setting goals for yourself, be intentional - create checkpoints and map out actions that resonate with your core values. Think of your work as a shared experience leading to an intentional impact. For example, if empathy is one of your core values, you might set a goal to make a personal connection with your donors or colleagues whenever possible.

GROWING YOUR LEADERSHIP SKILL SET

If you research common traits of successful leaders, you will likely see communication skills, attention to detail, transparency, flexibility, and a knack for strategic planning. In the nonprofit sector, specifically, you might read that successful fundraisers are “self-starters” who are excellent at analyzing financial reports and motivating a diverse constituency.

Of course, you can read up on nonprofit leadership to sharpen your skills, but you should also sit back and think about the practices that feel authentic to your values. Maybe you feel icky about certain aspects of “climbing the corporate ladder,” and that’s okay. Maybe you want to incorporate your own spirituality into your current or future management style. For Brathwaite, being strategic and result-oriented is just as important as tapping into her energy work as a Reiki practitioner or setting an example for her children.

Think about the “softer” skills that you wish to possess, such as cultural competency or mental health advocacy, and how you can sharpen those, too.

Leadership skills for success in and out of the nonprofit sector:

As told by Tycely Williams, *Fundraising & Leadership Instructor; Chief Development Officer for Bipartisan Policy Center*

- Form connections with awareness of bias
- Value your experiences day in and day out
- Understand the outcome vs. the technical output
- Make sure you leave people feeling good

6 ways to build your leadership skill set:

1. Advocate for the professional development of a peer
2. Have honest, difficult conversations about your career
3. Shadow a colleague who can teach you something new
4. Explore learning opportunities within your network
5. Join webinars, focus groups, and panel discussions
6. Save helpful articles and studies for quick reference

What do you consider to be your strengths?

(Technical skills like analyzing data and writing emails, and softer skills like empathy)

How can you build your skills in a way that's authentic to you?

(Ex. Navigating difficult conversations, writing down daily affirmations, taking a class or online course, examining your implicit biases, etc.)

What are some qualities that you haven't demonstrated just yet?

(Ex. Making people feel seen and heard, creating designs in Canva, organizing data, etc.)

What are some actions you can take in the next 30, 60, or 90 days?

(Ex. Have coffee with your director to discuss your career development options, attend a webinar taught by someone you admire, seek training in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, etc.)

30 DAYS: _____

60 DAYS: _____

90 DAYS: _____

What independent learning can you do?

Step 3: Build your personal brand

The core values that you have defined based on your personal identity and experiences will become your brand - a vehicle to elevate you in your career pursuits more quickly. Brand-building is a self-reflective process that shapes the way people perceive you as a person and a professional. It tells your story and allows people to identify with you.

To have a brand means to stand out by speaking, writing, and presenting in a way that's authentically you. Like an artists' statement, many professionals **summarize their brand into a few sentences that explain what they do, why they do it, and what makes them unique to others in the field.** Especially in the nonprofit space, you can embrace your passion for what you do, and have a deeper purpose and meaning to your work.

4 benefits of a personal brand:

- Make a lasting impression
- Inspire others to collaborate with you
- Highlight your expertise and originality
- Network online and in person

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When you're starting [to build your own brand], you can take pieces and parts of other people that resonate with you - how they pitched things, how they showed up to a meeting, etc. Don't assume those identities as your own, but find out what you share with them that is authentically you, and figure out how that is an asset to your team and your community.

- Lenora Oeters

Vice President, Ohio/West Virginia, American Cancer Society

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Many of the nonprofit professionals we interviewed for this workbook expressed that they often had a person in their periphery who exemplified what they wanted to be, or excelled at the work they wanted to be doing. This helped them envision themselves on that path or in that role, and take away what resonated most to influence their own brand.

One of Oeters' mentors once told her that she could learn just as much from the people who failed her as those who inspire her. For example, when her superior was a poor leader, she learned who she was in terms of showing empathy, building trust, work-life balance, and the compromises she wouldn't make.

For BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and gender nonconforming women, especially, representation is extremely important - seeing someone who looks like you doing the work that you want to be doing.

As Chantal Bonitto puts it, **"To see it is to believe it - there is a path for me."**

She recalls meeting a fellow dark-skinned black woman who previously held two positions above hers. In that person, Chantal saw what was possible in the world of philanthropy for someone that shared her lived experience. She immediately sought her mentorship. She chased her out the door, introduced herself and kept in touch. Eventually, her mentor moved on to UNICEF, and asked Chantal to join her. Today, Chantal is Senior Managing Director of Principal Giving at UNICEF USA.

Once you've built your brand, it's time to rehearse and refine it. **Macy Vintson, Director of Development at the Women's Foundation of Alabama**, believes interviews are the best place to do so.

"Every time you're presented with an opportunity to interview, if you're even halfway interested, or even if you don't think you'll get it, do it. It will hone your skillset and solidify your non-negotiables in a professional setting. It will make you organize your thoughts, come up with your pitch, and refine your pitch every time you do it."

What skills and traits do you admire most in others?

How do you want others to perceive and identify you?

What lessons have you learned from people who failed you?

What values will you NOT compromise?

Summarize your personal brand in a few sentences.

Step 4: Invest in partnerships

Women remain at a disadvantage when it comes to mentors, networks, and sponsors.⁵ In fact, 63% of women say they've never had a mentor⁶ which often leaves them relying on their friends for professional support. Research shows that this lack of mentorship is also a generational problem - people over 40 can often name a professional mentor, but younger people often cannot.⁷

Leadership competencies are universal. Pairing yourself with someone in a different nonprofit, sector, or field could give you new ways to approach challenges and different perspectives on how your skills can contribute to the overall success of your mission.

Collaboration leads to strength in numbers

When we think about teaming up with others in a professional setting, we often think of mentorship, but the reality is that not all professional relationships fit that mold. Let's unpack mentor-mentee relationships and reframe them as strategic, mutually-beneficial partnerships, with less emphasis on power dynamics.

Traditionally, mentorship refers to a senior or high-level person guiding someone who is in an earlier stage of their career, but different generations and roles have different strengths. You can learn from anyone, and anyone can learn from you - in fact, both can happen concurrently. And it doesn't have to be formal.



“Mentors are like accent pillows - you need more than one, and you want different sizes, colors, and shapes. You need diverse perspectives to see through different lenses and bring more expertise and opportunities. It's all about relationships - formal or informal. Being in fundraising for 27 years doesn't make me the expert, it means I'm still learning.”

- Kathy Rabon

Chief Philanthropy Officer, Empath Health
Global Board Member, Association of Fundraising Professionals



Reframing mentorship: What is Shine Theory?

According to its creators, Ann Friedman and Aminatou Sow, “Shine Theory⁸ is an investment, over the long term, in helping someone be their best self - and relying on their help in return. It is a conscious decision to bring your full self to your friendships, and to not let insecurity or envy ravage them.”

“[It’s] not about trying to help everyone you meet along the way in your career, because if you’re doing it right, it’s simply not possible to invest deeply in that many people. Shine Theory is intentional. It is accountable. It is personal.”

Successful leaders aren’t threatened by others’ talents. They celebrate them and leverage them in ways that benefit the progress of their organization. Allow leaders to emerge alongside you by publicly applauding their successes and making strides to contribute to their personal and professional growth, even as you navigate your own growth path.

What qualities do you celebrate in others? Who can you invest in?

WHAT PRACTICING SHINE THEORY LOOKS LIKE

Shine Theory has been practiced by CNN anchors, U.S. Congresswomen, and Olympians.⁸ Together, they amplify each other’s voices, bring light to unfair treatment, and combat Imposter Syndrome caused by institutional barriers.

In perhaps the most well-known example of Shine Theory, the women of the Obama Administration resolved to amplify each other’s voices in the male-dominated White House.⁹ In meetings, they would repeat and credit each other’s ideas to encourage the men of the administration to acknowledge their contributions.

How to approach a potential partner

- Oeters says asking for mentorship can seem intimidating to both parties. Instead, “small asks can add up,” leading to a partnership that forms more naturally. She recommends approaching or following up with someone for a short phone call to understand their process.
- Rabon keeps it simple, too. “Ask if you can have time with them, explain why you respect them, and ask for help with a specific goal.”
- Vintson opts for lunch, wine, or coffee with her partners and collaborators once a quarter. She recommends opening with something like, “I’m struggling with this; can I pick your brain?” or “How can I pitch this and how would your CEO react?”

How to advocate for women in your network

Earlier in her career, Bonitto was asked by her organization to speak at conferences, providing visibility for young black women on the public stage – but was also relegated to daily salad fetching for leadership. A coworker, a white woman ally, pulled her aside and encouraged her to advocate for herself, in her duties and compensation. Chantal built up the courage and legitimate reasons for a promotion and salary increase. She also clarified that leadership should get their own salads. After she was promoted to Associate Director, she remained in contact with her encouraging coworker, recommending her for positions throughout her career.

Inspire others by advocating for yourself

1. If you see a chance to contribute positively to your organization, speak up. Reach out to the relevant stakeholders, pitch your idea, and take on a new challenge.
2. As you take on more responsibilities or perform the duties of someone else, don’t be afraid to inquire about a promotion that aligns with your contributions.
3. Do your research to see what title your job responsibilities line up with so you can determine how much people with that expertise make in your area.
4. Prepare a document that lists the job responsibilities with the title you are pursuing and pair them with specific examples of how you perform them now.
5. Create a script for negotiating your new salary and practice it.

List a potential partnership:

How this partnership will benefit you:

How it will benefit your partner:

Step 5: Take care of you

In the nonprofit sector, many workers don't have access to paid parental or medical leave. These missing benefits impact women more than men because the majority of at-home caregivers are women - an inequity that became even starker during the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁰ In 2023, women are actually 5 to 8 times more likely than men to have their employment affected by caregiver responsibilities.¹¹ This is why women in this sector are burning out at alarming rates - about half of them will seek new employment by 2025.¹²

Aside from caring for others and our careers, we need time and energy for ourselves. We all know someone who says "yes" to every task that's asked of them or appears to have no problem working extra hours - many of us are that someone - but we can't be everything to everyone, and we shouldn't try. What we can do is communicate our needs and our boundaries.

Ask for help at work and at home

As women, asking for help can make us feel weakness or failure - since we have long shouldered the responsibility of caring for others - but one of the keys to success is rallying people with different talents so that each aspect of a project is completed by its expert.

Be forthcoming about your capacity to complete the work you've been assigned and any projects or tasks that come your way. You are entitled to tell someone "that's not my job," or you can explain that your capacity will not allow you to execute the task at the caliber that the project deserves or that you are comfortable with.

"If the issue of extra work persists, try doubling down. Explain that you were hired for a specific set of skills that require 90% of your dedicated time, and that in order to do [TASK] well, the organization may need to hire someone who is strong in that area," says Macy Vintson, Women's Foundation of Alabama.



Be forthcoming about your responsibilities outside of work if you feel comfortable sharing them, especially life events, and let your team know if you have a hard stop at the end of your shift. The same goes for your responsibilities at home. If you are super engaged in a project at work that will temporarily take up more of your time, explain that it is important to you and you may need help completing household tasks, errands, and routines.

In what areas can you challenge yourself to ask for help?

Fight the scarcity mindset

“The erroneous belief that there are too few resources to go around is reinforced by our lived experiences and the growing concentration of wealth at the top,” says nonprofit leader and fundraising professional April Walker, citing the \$1.4 trillion increase in billionaire wealth during the same period in which poverty rates doubled for women and people of color.¹³

Instead, an **abundance mindset** tells us that there is enough room for everyone to succeed. Helping the woman next to you get ahead will not make fewer opportunities for you - it will likely do the opposite. At a certain point, scaling your impact requires more human power. For organizations, raising more capital requires hiring more fundraisers with varying expertise.

Vintson cautions that the scarcity mindset often leads to staff turnover and burnout. When job opportunities seem scarce, young professionals can be drawn in by an attractive salary that combines two or more vacant positions in one pretty package, signing them up for a workload that will burn them out before too long.

She encourages leaders to build foundational trust. “Extend trust that fundraisers will deliver their skill set. To make yourself a more attractive employer, offer better workplace support for your people - this will decrease stress and build revenue.”

In what areas can you challenge yourself to practice an abundance mindset or build foundational trust?

Challenge the norm

“As you align your individual choices and actions with your beliefs, you can help improve larger social systems that hold women back,” says Dr. Pooja Lakshmin, a psychiatrist who specializes in women’s health.¹⁴ “Asking for a flexible work arrangement or parental leave could inspire an employer to rethink its policies, for example.”

If you see something, say something. Vintson recalls a time when she noticed that people were quitting every six months or not returning to work after having children. She advocated for her coworkers by suggesting a group health insurance plan provided under Alabama law that would relieve hundreds of dollars of employees’ burden. Her board was nervous, but eventually saw the organization’s revenue go through the roof.

List your non-negotiables

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It could be the most amazing organization, but if your #1 and #2 conditions are not met, it’s not the right fit for you. Women are constantly contouring themselves to fit in certain boxes, but when you become very clear about your #1 and #2 and find the confidence to [communicate that], you won’t compromise.

- Unique Brathwaite

Chief External Affairs Officer, Community Resource Exchange

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Thinking back to your core values and your personal brand, remember that only you will be able to dictate your must-haves and non-negotiables. Deciding on the compromises you will not make is a crucial part of setting healthy boundaries.

When Unique Brathwaite was leaving a job after having her first child, a friend encouraged her to make a list of ten things she wanted in her next position, without thinking about the mission of the organization.

We are going to have you do the same thing.

In this exercise, numbers 6-10 are nice-to-haves (but not dealbreakers); 3-5 are worth negotiating (if the job seems like a good fit); and 1-2 are your non-negotiables.

Your non-negotiables:

01. _____

02. _____

03. _____

04. _____

05. _____

06. _____

07. _____

08. _____

09. _____

10. _____

Closing affirmations

Women have been doubted, put in a box, and burdened with responsibility for far too long. With self-reflection that leads to intentional self-investment, we learn our worth and become able to fight for it unapologetically. We can show ourselves care by creating a set of intentional practices that allow us to pause in difficult situations and check in with ourselves.

We are never alone, and we never stop learning. We become better people and leaders by surrounding each other with strength. How we show up reinforces our identity and inspires others with similar values.




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Writing Space

Step 1: Define your core values



A large, light purple rounded rectangle occupies the central portion of the page. It contains 25 horizontal lines, evenly spaced, providing a writing area for the user to define their core values.

Step 2: Set goals with intention

A large, light purple rounded rectangle occupies the central portion of the page. It contains 25 horizontal lines, evenly spaced, intended for writing notes or goals.

Step 4: Invest in partnerships

Lined writing area for notes.

Step 5: Take care of you

A large, light purple rounded rectangle occupies the central portion of the page. It contains 25 horizontal lines, evenly spaced, providing a space for writing or notes.

Workbook Contributors

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Unique Brathwaite is the Chief External Affairs Officer at CRE where she is responsible for fundraising and development, and the thought leadership, communications, and marketing efforts of CRE. She graduated from Barnard College and earned her M.A. degree at Rutgers University. Most importantly, Unique is a proud momma to two little boys.



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Senior Managing Director, Principal Gifts, [UNICEF](#) • Senior Consultant, [The Inclusion Firm](#)

Chantal Bonitto is an organizational leader in the space of diversity, equity, and inclusion and a seasoned fund development expert in the nonprofit sector. Her career has been dedicated to identifying and creating resources for institutions that benefit the most marginalized communities in our society.



Mallory Erickson (she/her)

CEO and Founder of the Power Partners Formula™, [Mallory Erickson Coaching](#)

Mallory Erickson is an executive coach, fundraising consultant, and host of the podcast What the Fundraising, aimed at supporting nonprofit leaders to fundamentally change the way they lead and fundraise. Through her signature framework, the Power Partners Formula™, Mallory provides unique tools to help nonprofits fundraise more from foundations, corporate partners, and individuals.



Lenora Oeters (she/her)

Vice President - Ohio/West Virginia, [American Cancer Society](#)

Lenora Oeters has spent over a decade in the nonprofit development arena working to match a donor's passions & interests with the mission of an organization. She currently serves as a Vice President for the American Cancer Society. She is passionate about serving others, mentorship, and creating team cultures filled with passion and collaboration.





Kathy Rabon (she/her)

Chief Philanthropy Officer, [Empath Health](#) • Global Board member, [Association of Fundraising Professionals](#)

Kathy Rabon, CFRE, CFRM has served the Tampa Bay community as a not-for-profit fundraising professional for over 25 years. She is currently Chief Philanthropy Officer for Empath Health, where she serves as a member of the Senior Leadership Team. She is currently serving on the Global Board of Directors for the Association of Fundraising Professionals, is chair of the AFP's Women's Impact Initiative, and is serving as president of AFP Tampa Bay.



Macy Vintson (she/her)

Director Of Development, [Women's Foundation of Alabama](#)

Macy Vintson, CFRE, began her fundraising career at her alma mater, the University of Alabama, where she specialized in major gifts and annual funds, eventually serving as the Director of College Support Boards. A native of Oxford, Alabama, Vintson earned her bachelor's degree in Psychology and a master's degree in Educational Psychology from the university. She now serves as Director of Development for Women's Foundation of Alabama.



Tycely Williams (she/her)

Chief Development Officer, [Bipartisan Policy Center](#)

Tycely Williams, CFRE, an award-winning C-Suite executive, leads inclusive, innovative, and high-performing happy teams. She has raised & managed more than \$600 million dollars in her twenty-six-year career. As Chief Development Officer for The Bipartisan Policy Center, she crafts strategies to fuel common sense solutions that promote health, security, and opportunity for all Americans.

STRATEGIC ADVISOR



DonorPerfect provides the tools you need to engage, inspire, and retain your donors. Its core system expands to support your strategic initiatives like online fundraising, events, donor engagement, and donor retention. From integrated payment processing to email marketing tools, DonorPerfect empowers your team to work better together on a single platform, learn what motivates your donors, and most importantly, cultivate the relationships that make your mission a reality.

“

We're an employee-owned business that is focused on work-life harmony, community outreach, and innovation - keeping talented people happy about what they do and providing them with opportunities to reach their professional goals.

- Lauren Sheehan
President, DonorPerfect

”