

Addressing the Representation Gap in Bartholomew County Leadership

The Women's Giving Circle
of Bartholomew County

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Vision Statement

In recent years, Heritage Fund's Women's Giving Circle has taken steps to broaden our definition of philanthropy and increase our impact in the community. We believe that to create real positive change requires more than just providing financial resources. Effective philanthropy is bringing all resources to the table including the investment of time, skill, talent, finances, intellect and leadership. We know that the unique perspective and diverse skill set that women possess add value at every level of an organization and that women's voices deserve, and need, to be heard. Our goal through this project was to better understand and document how women are represented in leadership positions throughout our community.

In 2019 women represented 49.7% of the population in Bartholomew County – and as such, we should expect that women constitute 50% of community leadership positions. We want to see women equally represented across all sectors of leadership and not limited to those roles that have been traditionally considered “female” - children/youth serving, caregiving, etc. We believe increasing women's access to leadership roles is core to the mission of the Women's Giving Circle and integral to the continued advancement of the community.

Abstract

We gathered data from 144 broadly based community boards, commissions and committees, as well as elected and appointed government positions in Bartholomew County. Data came from 40 nonprofit boards, 54 city and county boards and 50 individual government positions that are elected or appointed.

Among our findings:

- Women hold 49% of board seats across local nonprofits, 37% of city government board seats and appointments, and 32% of county board seats and appointments.
- When considering both gender and race, only 6 out of 94 nonprofit and government boards are representative of our community's gender and racial demographics.
- Women hold over half of seats on boards that focus on traditionally female issues such as children, basic needs and community appeal/preservation.
- Women are least represented on boards that deal with professional development, city planning, health and environmental concerns.
- The leadership within local boards is also predominantly male.

With this data as a foundation, moving forward, the Women's Giving Circle hopes to work with community partners to increase women's access to local leadership roles.

Problem Statement

In Bartholomew County, we have heard from multiple sources, including the 2018 Welcoming Communities Survey, that women, people of color, young people, and those new to the community feel that leadership opportunities are not obtainable to people who are not already “on the inside.” This results in the perception that there is a lack of diversity in local leadership. This study seeks to document the gender balance on community-based boards.

Background

The Women’s Giving Circle is made up of approximately 120 women in the community who work to educate, connect and inspire women to practice strategic philanthropy. All objectives that the Women’s Giving Circle pursue have the underlying goal of improving the quality of life for women in Bartholomew County.

In 2019, the Women’s Giving Circle began to explore ways to positively impact the lives of women in Bartholomew County beyond the annual grant program. This led to undertaking multiple new initiatives, including the idea of creating a women’s leadership pipeline. Among the Women’s Giving Circle members, there was a shared concern that the number of women in Bartholomew County leadership roles would not be representative of the 49.7% of the Bartholomew County residents that are women.¹ There was also concern that the leadership roles in the community that are held by women are occupied by only a small cluster of women, and are not largely available to a broad range of local women. A Women’s Giving Circle survey was sent out to gather community input on challenges facing women and girls in Bartholomew County and almost 70% of respondents indicated that leadership pathways are an issue in Bartholomew County.²

2018 brought women’s representation in leadership to the forefront of national discourse when a record-breaking number of women ran for public office. Currently, 23% of U.S. representatives are women. Out of 193 countries, the U.S. ranks 75th in women’s representation in government.³ In the private sector women hold only 21% of Fortune 500 board seats.⁴ Across national nonprofits, women hold 48% of board seats⁵ - however when looking only at large nonprofits with a budget of \$10 million or more, the number of seats held by women drops to 41%.⁶

Clearly, women’s representation in national leadership is not proportional given that women make up 50.8% of the U.S. population. These findings at the national level, along with perceptions at the local level, are what sparked the Women’s Giving Circle’s interest in analyzing women’s representation in local leadership roles in Bartholomew County.

Process

In June 2020, the Women’s Giving Circle hired an intern to contact representatives of local boards. We chose to focus on community boards that are broadly based because of their prevalence in our community, and their relative accessibility compared to other leadership opportunities. One hundred thirty-five individuals were contacted and asked about boards they represent. They were asked to explain the responsibilities of their board members, requirements to join the board, desired skills, the selection

¹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Bartholomew County, Indiana*

² Women’s Giving Circle of Bartholomew County. (2019). *Women of Bartholomew County Analysis and Trend Report for 2019*

³ Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2019). *World Classification*

⁴ Catalyst. (2020). *Pyramid: Women in S&P 500 Companies*

⁵ Board Source. (2017). *Leading with Intent: 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*

⁶ Board Source. (2017). *Leading with Intent: 2017 National Index of Nonprofit Board Practices*

process, appropriate contacts to learn more and the demographics of the current board members. We were able to collect demographic data on 94 boards and commissions, and 50 elected positions and appointed individuals. For some boards and commissions, the representatives did not respond, so data was collected based on what was publicly available. All data on the elected individuals, appointed individuals and city department heads was gathered from the city and county government websites.

Findings

Across Bartholomew County nonprofits, city government and county government groups analyzed, women hold 42% of board seats and elected or appointed positions. Overall, this implies that the representation is close to being proportional to the population. However, once disaggregated by sector and area of focus, there are notable differences. For example, groups that focus on children, basic needs and community appeal/preservation have the highest female representation of 58% to 64% women (children - 64%, basic needs - 59%, community appeal/preservation - 58%). Whereas groups focused on city planning, health, and environmental concerns have board composition that is 21% to 28% female (city planning - 28%, health - 27%, environmental concerns - 21%). Also, across the three sectors, there are seven boards that have no female representation, but only one board that has no male representation.

Bartholomew County Nonprofits

Across the three sectors analyzed, the nonprofit boards have the highest level of female representation. Women hold 49% of nonprofit board seats.

Columbus City Government

Thirty-seven percent of city government positions analyzed are held by women. For city boards, commissions and committees, 36% of the seats are held by women. When looking at city department heads, 37.5% are women.

Bartholomew County Government

Women hold 32% of board, commission and committee seats in county government. They also hold 35% of elected county positions, but only 16% of individual appointed positions.

Leadership

We also wanted to analyze the leadership across the nonprofit, city and county boards. Seventy-four out of 94 multi-person boards across nonprofit and local government have the chairman or president of their boards publicly listed. Of the 74 boards, 31% of the board chairs are women.

Looking exclusively at Bartholomew County nonprofits, 85% of organizations have their executive committees publicly posted (i.e. board president, vice president, treasurer and secretary).

Women hold 51% of the executive committee positions across the nonprofit boards. Once broken down, the data indicates that women hold 40% of board president seats, 50% of vice president seats, 54% of treasurer seats and 71% of secretary seats.

The data also indicates that boards with a female chair have more female board members than boards with a male lead.

It is also interesting to note that one-fifth of the executive committees analyzed have only one woman on their committees. Of the executive committees that have only one woman, 67% have the woman serving as the board secretary. Conversely, one-fourth of boards have only one man on their executive committees, and 75% of those men serve as the president or vice president.

Race and Ethnicity

While gathering demographics on gender representation, we also asked each board about their racial and ethnic representation at the request of community partners. One-third of Bartholomew County groups surveyed have no people of color on their board. According to census data, Bartholomew County is 18.6% people of color.⁷

Given what was reported, we found that nonprofit boards are 10% people of color. (8 nonprofit boards were not considered due to racial/ethnic information not being tracked and/or available.) For the 104 city and county boards, commissions, appointments and elected positions analyzed; data on racial/ethnic representation could be gathered on 66% of the positions. This data indicates that 7.5% of local government positions are held by people of color (The Human Rights Commission accounts for 2.5 of those percentage points.)

Racial and ethnic representation in leadership was not the original focus of the Women's Giving Circle's leadership pipeline project. We will be sharing the data on race and ethnicity with groups in the community that specifically deal with racial equity so they can use the data in the way that they deem most beneficial and effective.

As mentioned, according to census data, Bartholomew County is 49.7% women and 18.6% people of color. Among the 94 multi-person boards analyzed, only 6 boards meet the criteria of having both 50% women and at least 18% people of color. This indicates that when considering both gender and race, only 6 local boards are truly representative of our community.

Solutions:

Given what we now know, the Women's Giving Circle hopes to serve as a connection point between groups looking for new board or committee members, and women engaged in the community looking to get involved in local leadership.

Due to the nationwide gap in leadership representation, there is already research that exists on how to increase leadership diversity. The findings indicate that an awareness of representation issues, leadership training and networking are all key components in increasing diversity in leadership.

To increase women's access to leadership opportunities in Bartholomew County, the Women's Giving Circle plans to:

- Partner with organizations, including Community Education Coalition/Leadership Bartholomew County and United Way Board Boot Camp, to develop a shared resource of available leadership positions and the requirements to serve. We will also develop a database of potential candidates, their interests, skill sets, etc. that can be shared with organizations seeking qualified board or committee members.
- Increase outreach to community leaders and promote the Women's Giving Circle as a resource and connection point for women interested in local leadership roles.
- Increase networking opportunities for women across the community to connect with community leaders, leadership development resources and opportunities to serve. We will work to identify potential partners such as the Columbus Area Chamber of Commerce, Columbus Young Professionals, CAMEO, etc. to partner with on networking events and to grow the network of diverse candidates.

⁷ U.S. Census Bureau. (2019). *U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Bartholomew County, Indiana*

- Provide annual funding for local women interested in developing their leadership skills for the purpose of serving in the community. Plans include the development of a “scholarship” program including an application process for local women to seek funding for leadership courses, programs, etc.
- Use our communication channels to highlight and promote women serving in community leadership roles.

Conclusion

Since 2004, Heritage Fund – the Community Foundation of Bartholomew County has been working to highlight the importance of diversity and inclusion in making a better community. The community has embraced diversity and broad community participation, and we hope that the findings of this study will provide new opportunities to evaluate our representation in leadership. Our goal is that you consider this work when you look around your next board meeting, council meeting or even staff meeting – and consider how the room represents the men and women living in our community.

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