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Women's group Impact100 will give funds to nonprofits

Philadelphia Business Journal - by [Peter Key](#) Staff Writer

A group of women that raises \$1,000 apiece from its members and gives the total to area nonprofits will be able to award \$139,000 this June, a 25 percent increase from its first award of \$111,000 last June.

Impact100 Philadelphia will award one nonprofit \$100,000 to fund a project. Two other nonprofits will get awards of \$15,000 and \$14,000 to support their operations.

The group last year awarded the entire amount it raised to the Philadelphia Committee to End Homelessness, which used the money to provide homes for 25 families that were homeless or at risk of becoming homeless as part of its SafeHome Philadelphia initiative.

"We felt that giving the \$100,000 grant, the \$19,000 grant and the \$20,000 grant would have a far greater impact than one grant of \$139,000," said Mary Broach, who founded Impact100 Philadelphia with Beth Dahle.

Nonprofits in Philadelphia, its four surrounding Pennsylvania counties and Camden are eligible for the grants if they've been in existence 36 months and have an annual operating budget of \$400,000 to \$5 million.

To apply for the grants, nonprofits should send a letter of inquiry to Impact100 Philadelphia by Jan. 15. Applications can be downloaded from Impact100philly.org, but must be submitted by mail to Impact100 Philadelphia at PO Box 275, Wynnewood, Pa. 19096.

Dahle got the idea for Impact100 Philadelphia from Impact100, which does the same thing in Cincinnati, where she spent Christmas with her husband's family in 2007.

When she returned to the area, she talked about it to Broach, who, like her, had volunteered and worked on both the asking and giving side of the nonprofit sector.

“What grabbed us from the beginning was the idea of leveraging our individual donations into something large,” Broach said. “A \$1,000 donation for me is very large, but to see it go into a \$100,000 grant was very motivating.”

In May 2008, Dahle said, the two women sent out a “testing the waters letter” to see if other women would be interested in an Impact100 organization in Philadelphia.

They received an enthusiastic response, some of which came from women who hadn’t received their letter but had heard of it on the Internet.

Impact100 Philadelphia started taking donations in September 2008. By the end of the year, 111 women had given \$1,000 apiece to it.

The organization starts evaluating letters of inquiry by putting them into one of the five focus areas for its grants — arts and culture, education, environment, family, and health and wellness.

Its members break into groups, each of which reads the letters of inquiry for a particular focus area. The nonprofits that submitted the letters that the groups deem most promising are asked to submit full proposals and the nonprofits with the most promising proposals get site visits from the groups.

Finally, each group selects one finalist, the five finalists present and all the members of Impact100 Philadelphia vote to see which finalist will have its project funded.

Last year, the organization received 121 letters of inquiry, asked for 36 full proposals and made 14 site visits before selecting the five finalists.

Although only one nonprofit received a grant, Dahle and Broach said others benefited from going through Impact100 Philadelphia’s review process.

“We know that some members went home [after the presentations] and wrote checks to nonwinners,” Broach said.

One nonprofit that didn’t make it to the finalist stage wrote to Impact100 Philadelphia and said receiving a site visit from the organization boosted its morale.

“I hope at some point that organizations look at Impact100 and if they’ve gotten to the site-visit stage or to the finalist stage, they ... see that as a feather in their cap,” Dahle said.

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