



Status as of September 2020

Mission

Positive Paths exists to support East Valley women in need by providing a life-bridge to economic stability, personal growth and professional achievement. We do this through scholarship and mentoring programs, and supportive services. We encourage others to invest in the future of East Valley women in need, and to support East Valley women to be resilient and positive contributors to their communities.

Summarize the problem or need the organization is seeking to address

Positive Paths serves low-income women that live in the East Valley of Phoenix, Arizona, who have faced challenges that inhibit their success, including poverty, violence, substance abuse, and economic dependency, among others. Women are poorer than men in all racial and ethnic groups, and the gap is higher in the United States than in any other Western country in the world. In Arizona, more women are living in poverty than the national average and women of color are far more likely to live in poverty. Additionally, women are over-represented in low-wage jobs and occupations. Positive Paths provides scholarships and mentoring to East Valley women to ensure they become economically independent, enjoy increased job prospects and stability, and increase resiliency through educational attainment and mentoring relationships. We believe that when you help women you support entire families and strengthen our community.

What data exists about the problem?

About women

This supporting data is from the Status of Women in Arizona in 2016, published by the Arizona Foundation for Women (<https://www.azfw.org/status-of-women-report-top>).

- In Arizona, 16.5% of women live in poverty, compared to 13.4% nationally. Women of color in Arizona are far more likely to live in poverty (Blacks at 22.8%, Latinas at 24.8%, Native Americans at 33.5%). [p.42, 52]
- In Arizona, a woman earns only 84 cents for every dollar a man earns. [p.5, 13]
- In Arizona, only 16.8% of women at age 25 have attained at least a bachelor's degree, compared to 18.3% nationally. [p.68]
- The graduation rate for first-generation college students is 24% compared to 68% for college students with parents who had earned a bachelor's or advanced degree. [p. 71]
- Arizona ranks 43rd among the states for women in professional and related careers. Roughly 23% of Arizona women work in the service industry (cooks, beauticians, cashiers, retail clerks, travel

attendants, and childcare workers), while another 21% work in office and administrative support (secretaries, general office clerks, and bank tellers). [p.44]

- Only 27% of all STEM workers in Arizona were women. Nationally, women employed in STEM jobs earn 33% more than their female peers in other jobs. [p. 4, 41]

The Status of Women in Arizona 2020 report is currently underway. Here are some early statistics published on their Arizona Foundation for Women website (<https://www.azfw.org/2020-status-of-women-report>).

- 41% of women in Arizona have been a victim of sexual violence.
- In Arizona, 21% of low income women lack health insurance.

About educational attainment

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics maintains a career outlook website which provides data that shows “learn more, earn more: education leads to higher wages, lower unemployment” (<https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2020/data-on-display/education-pays.htm>).

- In 2019, workers with at least a bachelor’s degree had median weekly earnings of \$1248, more than the \$887 median weekly earnings for those with associate’s degrees, and 40% more than the \$746 median weekly earnings for those with a high school diploma.
- Further, those with only a high school diploma had an average unemployment rate of 3.7%, roughly 60% higher than those with a bachelor’s degree (2.2%).

Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States is a historical trend report focused on educational attainment by family income (<https://www.aacu.org/aacu-news/newsletter/higher-education-attainment-family-income-current-data-show-persistent-gaps>). Some key data points are:

- In 2012-13, the maximum Pell Grant covered 27% of the average cost of college—40 percentage points less than in 1975-76, when the maximum Pell grant covered 67% of college costs.
- Among students in the bottom socioeconomic quartile, 15% had earned a bachelor’s degree within eight years of their expected high school graduation, compared with 22% in the second quartile, 37% in the third quartile, and 60% in the top quartile.
- While white students are overrepresented as bachelor’s degree recipients relative to their representation in the general population, Black and Hispanic students are underrepresented among bachelor’s degree recipients relative to their representation in the general population.
- Ranked second globally in attainment of bachelor’s degrees in 2000, the United States had fallen to a rank of 19 by 2014.

About mentoring

Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership website (<https://www.mentoring.org/>) states that “Young adults who were at-risk for falling off track but had a mentor are:

- 55% more likely to enroll in college,
- 78% more likely to volunteer regularly, and
- 130% more likely to hold leadership positions.”

Further a study showed that “the strongest benefit from mentoring, and most consistent across risk groups, was a reduction in depressive symptoms (The Role of Risk, 2013).”

Related to careers, one study estimates that “the human potential lost as a result of the educational achievement gap is the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession (Mentoring: At the crossroads of education, business and community, 2015).” That same report states, “Mentors can also prepare their mentees for professional careers and assist with their workplace skills by:

- Helping set career goals and taking the steps to realize them.
- Using personal contacts to help young people network with industry professionals, find internships, and locate possible jobs.
- Introduce young people to resources and organizations they may not be familiar with.
- Develop skills for seeking a job, interviewing for a job, and keeping a job.”

What measurable goals will your organization accomplish?

Goal 1: Positive Paths women will receive financial support to finish post-secondary training or education.

Objective 1.1: By June 2022, at least 100 low-income East Valley women who have experienced challenges will enroll at a public Arizona community college or university with financial scholarship support from Positive Paths.

Objective 1.2: At least 75% of Positive Paths scholars-mentees will complete their post-secondary program (a certificate, an associate’s degree, or a bachelor’s degree).

Goal 2: Positive Paths women will benefit from mentoring relationships with professionals in our community.

Objective 2.1: All Positive Paths scholars-mentees will participate in a mentoring relationship that provides professional guidance and social support.

Objective 2.2: At least 75% of Positive Paths' mentors will report monthly contact with their mentees.

Objective 2.3: At least 75% of scholar-mentees will report that their mentoring relationship increased their likelihood of retention from semester-to-semester and enhanced their opportunities for career success.

Goal 3: Positive Paths women will obtain employment and become economically independent.

Objective 3.1: At least 75% of Positive Paths scholars-mentees will have a secured stable employment or secure a job promotion within 6 months of completing the program.

Objective 3.2: At least 75% of scholar-mentees will report greater access to professional development opportunities and career prospects as a result of their education and mentoring.

Goal 4: Positive Paths will implement best practices for accountability and transparency in a non-profit organization.

Objective 4.1: At least 75% of revenues will be spent directly on scholarship and mentoring programs to benefit our women.

Objective 4.2: Board of directors and employee names will be visible on the website.

Objective 4.3: Bylaws, conflict of interest policies, and financial statements will demonstrate compliance with laws for tax-exempt organizations and commitment to public accountability and transparency.

Objective 4.5: Multiple sources of revenue will ensure financial sustainability over time.

What are your strategies for making this happen?

Strategy #1: Increase and diversify funding. We will continue to exercise wise and accountable stewardship of the financial resources while devoting more effort to fundraising, donor programs, and grants to ensure the long-term stability of the organization.

Strategy #2: Expand partnerships within the educational, business and non-profit community to directly support our women, market our programs and services to organizations that serve similar populations, and enhance our ability to leverage our strength.

Strategy #3: Expand the number of volunteers available on our board, as well as support our scholarship and mentoring programs, our committees, and our events. Promote community involvement in attending to the needs of women and children in the East Valley.

Strategy #4: Implement appropriate administrative systems to track outcomes and to measure and evaluate impact.

Strategy #5: Increase public awareness of Positive Paths and its impact on the community. Develop marketing and communications about the organization, including consistent social media and other forms of messaging to donors, volunteers and the community at large.

Strategy #6: Monitor best practices for non-profit organizations, including recruiting and retaining a diverse board of directors with broad expertise to ensure we are practicing accountability and transparency in our operations and that we are complying with all legal and financial requirements.

What are your organization's capabilities for doing this?

Positive Paths is in the early stages of development as a non-profit organization. As of spring 2020, the organization consists of a committed board of directors, volunteers, and one part-time employee. Foundational administrative and financial management systems are in place. We have, for example, developed bylaws, committee structures, and operating procedures; secured an office location; launched a website; created a budget and secured sources of revenue; filed appropriate legal and financial documents; and implemented a well-regarded annual fundraising and recognition event.

Our focus has been on being able to serve more women through our scholarship and mentoring programs. In 2014, we were able to support 5 scholar-mentees, and in 2020, we are supporting 31 scholar-mentees. Non-profit and educational partners help us make women aware of the program. There is a process for applying, interviewing and being selected, and subsequently for tracking progress.

These women receive financial support for the fall and spring semesters and they receive assistance navigating the educational environment. Each woman has a one-to-one mentoring relationship with a professional in the community. Annual events such as a mentoring breakfast and imaging workshops are shared experiences that bond our women with one another, their mentors, and the board.

We are fortunate to have (a) collaboration with other non-profit organizations such as Assistance League of the East Valley, East Valley Women, A New Leaf, Homeward Bound's Destination Diploma program, College Bound AZ, and Sunshine Acres; (b) involvement from our public educational institutions such as the Maricopa Community Colleges, Central Arizona College, East Valley Institute of Technology, Northern Arizona University, and Arizona State University; (c) support from key businesses such as Dignity Health, TrustBank, Intel, SRP, TTG Advisors, and others, and (d) commitment from an energetic and devoted board of directors. We believe that with these alliances, we can achieve collective impact that will meaningfully change the life trajectory of the women we serve, while supporting their families and improving the community at large.

How will your organization know if it is making progress?

Evaluation 1: How many of the women selected as scholars-mentees are graduating with a post-secondary credential?

At least 75% of the women in Positive Paths scholarship and mentoring program will earn a certification, degree, or job promotion within four years of participation as indicated on college transcripts provided at the end of each semester.

Evaluation 2: How many of the scholars-mentees are able to find employment?

At least 75% of the scholars-mentees will be able to secure a job promotion or a new job within 6 months of completion of our program.

Evaluation 3: Does the combination of education and mentoring make a difference for these women?

Utilizing self-reports via survey methodology, at least 75% percent of Positive Paths scholars-mentees will report an increase in their:

- (a) likelihood of being retained in their educational program from semester-to-semester,
- (b) opportunities for professional development and career success, and
- (c) confidence that they can reach their goals.

Evaluation 4: Based upon the data about Arizona women, are our scholars-mentees reflective of the demographics of women most in need, who are ready to enter post-secondary education programs?

Demographic information will be recorded and tracked in the Innovative Mentoring Software (IMS) database and reports will be generated and reviewed for evaluation a minimum of twice per year to ensure we are serving our target population of women.

Evaluation 5: Are we meeting the standards of excellence for a non-profit organization?

At least 75% of expenses will be spent directly on scholarship and mentoring programs for the women, as reflected in financial statements.

Financial statements will show multiple sources of revenue, ensuring sustainability over time.

The organization will have active status with the Arizona Corporation Commission and hold at least a Gold rating on GuideStar.

Evaluation 6: Are we serving enough women to make an impact in our East Valley communities?

At least 30 women each year are provided with financial support and one-to-one mentors.

At least another 75 women each year are supported through mentoring events and activities.

What have you accomplished so far and what is next?

Positive Paths has grown from a concept to a structured non-profit organization with appropriate policies, procedures, and systems. Accomplishments in the first six years of operation include:

- Forming a board of directors that includes representatives from many of the significant businesses and organizations that operate in the East Valley.
- Writing the Articles of Incorporation and initial Bylaws.
- Establishing bank accounts and financial processes that includes a system of checks and balances.
- Creating an annual friendraising and fundraising event, called the East Valley Night of Heroes, that raises a significant amount of the annual operating revenue. In addition to raising money and awareness of the needs of our women, the program recognizes an East Valley Man and Woman of the Year, who have made significant contributions to women and their families.
- Diversifying funding sources including programs related to Benevity, SmileAmazon, United Way, SRP Dollars for Doers, Network for Good, Kendra Scott, Savers, and Arizona Gives Day.
- Receiving grants from General Motors and PayPal to support career development and imaging events.
- Securing a physical office in Mesa, monthly rent payments for which are partially donated by TrustBank.
- Hiring a part-time staff member, who supports our administrative functions.
- Developing a website, social media accounts (FaceBook, Instagram, Twitter), and mailing list.
- Developing and implementing a scholarship application and selection process, and subsequent monitoring and tracking of progress.
- Developing and implementing a mentor recruitment system, mentor-matching process, orientation program with a handbook, and monitoring process.
- Holding an annual Mentoring Breakfast to have our scholars-mentees meet their mentors, meet each other and exchange contact information, and be recognized for their courage and resilience in creating a better life for themselves and their families.
- Establishing a private FaceBook site where the women can converse with one another.
- Recruiting dozens of volunteers to serve as mentors, and assist on committees and at events.
- Producing multiple videos that tell the story of some of our women, their challenges and successes.

Within the past 12-24 months, key accomplishments include:

- Creating a planned giving program called Rudge's Wishes, initially funded by the Rudge Foundation, which encourages monthly giving to support our women.
- Establishing a Scholarship Advisory Board that includes an administrative representative from each of the public East Valley colleges and universities. Thus when our women are struggling with any aspect of their education, these representatives can help them quickly connect with appropriate resources. We have representatives from the East Valley Institute of Technology, all Maricopa Community Colleges located in the East Valley, Central Arizona College, Arizona State University, and Northern Arizona University.
- Forming a new partnership with Assistance League of the East Valley has provided a location and support for offering our women access to professional clothing and household goods.
- Forming communication channels with Homeward Bound's Destination Diploma program and Sunshine Acres whereby young women who are homeless or in foster care become aware of Positive Paths and the help they could obtain with completion of post-secondary education.
- Being named the Philanthropy Partner of the Year with East Valley Women, which provides us with donated items for our women as well as exposure to many potential volunteers and supporters.
- Purchasing database software and doing the initial data entry to track the women and their mentors.
- Creation and implementation of a demographic form, collected after the women have been accepted into the program, to help us collect additional data about our women and better understand their needs.

Within the coming 12-24 months, the following strategic priorities have been identified:

- Creating mentoring events that will allow many more women to interact and receive guidance and advice from women leaders in our community.
- Establishing an auxiliary group to assist with fundraising and community awareness.
- Initiating a Marketing and Communications Committee, comprised of board members and other volunteers, to help develop a more concerted marketing plan for the organization, and to increase community awareness and understanding of the issues our women are facing.
- Restating the Bylaws to include significant revisions to board terms of service, a new emeritus status designation, committee descriptions, changes to the conflict of interest policy, and more.
- Expanding membership on the board of directors with at least four more experienced individuals to fill gaps identified on the board attributes matrix.
- Use the new Innovative Mentoring System (IMS) data tracking system to create standardized reports on demographics and success.