



## Alliance for Girls' First Members Meeting

### Highlights & Lessons Learned

On Wednesday, December 2, 2015, Alliance for Girls hosted its first members-only meeting, convening 70 members at the Women's Building in San Francisco. It was an exciting and dynamic day full of inspiring stories, presentations on pressing issues affecting girls and young women, community announcements, and collective priority-setting on Alliance for Girls' advocacy agenda.

In this document we will reflect on the highlights of the meeting as well as lessons learned. (The agenda, PowerPoint slides, photos, and roster of attendees are accessible on Alliance for Girls' website at: <http://www.alliance4girls.org/notes-from-past-events> )

Here is a list of our top five highlights and lessons:

**1. We need to host a members meeting at least once per year.** Based on member's positive feedback, the energy in the room, and the number of members in attendance, it was made clear to us how important hosting a general meeting is. Not only did the meeting allow members to connect, but it provided an effective platform for members and Alliance for Girls staff to share announcements, learn from one another, and get a better sense of the trends and initiatives currently affecting the girls' service sector.

In the evaluation survey, feedback was generally very positive and provided insight on what we did well. Specifically:

- 95% of members thought that the content was useful and relevant.
- 95% felt renewed and motivated as a result of the meeting.
- 95% thought that the meeting made them feel connected to a broader movement that is supporting and advocating for Bay Area girls.
- Members expressed how informative and valuable it was to hear about other members' work and about current advocacy and funding initiatives.

**2. There is room for Alliance for Girls to improve on the format of the meeting.** If we could do it all over again, the first thing we would focus on is timing. Given that this was the first members meeting, we wanted to be able to spotlight a broad range of members and topics. However, four hours simply wasn't enough time, and we had to rush through the breakout discussion and some of the presentations. Moving forward, we will make these member meetings longer or more frequent and simplify the agenda.



Here are some additional thoughts from members:

- Members expressed wanting more time to interact with each other, particularly during the breakout discussions where they determined their collective advocacy priorities. Related to that, we'll make sure to provide more direction in future discussions, including allowing members to group by area of interest (e.g. Health, Media, Education).
- Members asked for more frequent member meetings so organizations and individuals can work as a collective to create greater impact.

**3. Our members are incredible!** Throughout the meeting, members shared stories about how they got started, the work they're doing now, and lessons they've learned. Their presentations reinforced how incredible our members are and shed light on what it takes to build an impactful organization. In particular, Linda Calhoun of Career Girls, Silvia Vasquez-Lavado of Courageous Girls, and Beth Hossfeld of One Circle Foundation imparted the following:

- If you are passionate and lead with integrity, people will want to participate and help.
- Ideas are going to change over time. Be comfortable with experimenting and continue to improve your program/approach.
- As leaders, our personal stories and experiences compel us to do this work, and guide program development. This is a good thing! Tell your story and let your passion be your guide. Recognize that we need multiple solutions in order to address girls' needs, and what you're offering may not be for everyone.
- Storytelling is a powerful tool. Storytelling coupled with data creates an even stronger case for others to support your program.
- Advocacy works with a dedicated, motivated, united effort.

**4. Members provided clarity on the advocacy issues that matter most to them.**

Together, Alliance for Girls members reviewed the results of the Building a Girls' Agenda session at its 3rd Annual Conference, which identified (1) Leadership; (2) Health; (3) Education & (4) Media as the community's top 4 priorities.

Through the breakout discussions and survey results, members further narrowed the scope of these priorities as follows:

**(1) Leadership → Mentorship & Community:** Ensuring every girl has positive relationships with adults and peers who are helping her thrive and achieve her dreams



(2) **Health → Mental Health:** Recognizing and addressing girls' mental health needs by prioritizing her social and emotional development

(3) **Education:** Giving girls equal access to high quality educational opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom

(4) **Media → Visibility:** Making sure girls are seen, heard and valued in our society

**5. We're at a critical juncture in the girls' and women's movement, and our collective efforts are more important than ever.** From the White House's commitment to supporting girls and women of color, to California's passing of the Fair Pay Act, we have the opportunity now to leverage our collective voice and shape what it means to be a girl. This includes putting together a **proactive** advocacy strategy that demands the prioritization of the issues that **we** believe matter as well as supporting the campaigns of our members.

Campaigns presented by our members at the meeting included:

- **Marilyn Fowler with the Women's Intercultural Network:** Pressure the United States to ratify CEDAW.
- **Lupe Rodriguez with Planned Parenthood Mar Monte:** Protect girls' and women's access to reproductive health services.
  - Help Planned Parenthood regain funding.
  - Advocate for access to an abortion provider in the 50%+ counties in California that lack one.
  - Fight the ballot initiative that would force disclosure to parents/guardians of abortion by young women.
- **Falilah Aisha Bilal with MISSEY:** Educate everyone on the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).
  - Call the National Human Trafficking Hotline (888-373-7888) if you see anything.
  - Advocate for policy and legislation that recognize CSEC youth as victims in need of services, not jail sentences.
  - Join in collaboration with CSEC-serving agencies to strengthen the support network.
- **Mary Ann Ellison with Flowering Hope:** Invite survivors of violence to fill out Flowering Hope's survey at <http://www.floweringhope.org/survey-results.html>
- **Jane Segal with Turning Heads: Sewing & Fashion Design and Ophelia Williams with the Young Women's Freedom Center:** Join the Girls In Crisis movement to allocate resources to the growing number of women and girls trapped below the poverty line, particularly in San Francisco.
  - Collect and/or send stories about girls and young women who have fallen through the cracks to Alliance for Girls: [kailin@alliance4girls.org](mailto:kailin@alliance4girls.org)