



9to5 — NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORKING WOMEN

HOW FACT'S CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAMS STRENGTHENED AN ORGANIZATION

9to5, now a \$1.5 million organization, became a FACT grantee in 1998. Over the next 12 years, it received annual general support grants of \$40,000, totaling \$480,000, with a final grant of \$50,000 to be awarded in 2011. “The consistency of the general support was really important for us,” said Linda Meric, executive director of 9to5. “It has allowed us to be flexible in not only putting money where we need it most, but being able to take advantage of opportunities and meet challenges when they arise.” 9to5 has also benefitted from all of FACT’s capacity building programs, an additional investment of \$237,000, which, Meric said, “helped us grow and develop as an organization.”

Founded in 1973, 9to5 is devoted to building a movement that gives low-wage women a voice on issues that directly affect them, including low-wage jobs, family-flexible policies, nonstandard work (part-time, temp or contract jobs), poverty and discrimination. It is a national group, with staffed offices in Milwaukee, Atlanta, Denver, San Jose, and Los Angeles and an activist network that covers all 50 states. 9to5 works on national policy issues as well as at the state and local level, and is grounded in local grassroots organizing. 9to5 has provided policy analysis and grassroots leadership to win federal victories such as the Family and Medical Leave Act, the 1991 improvements in the Civil Rights Act, the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, and greater investments in child care and health care for working families. It has also helped win state and local victories on the same policy issues. 9to5 creates and leads national coalitions to fight for paid sick days and paid family leave. Its toll-free Job Survival Helpline responds to thousands of workers’ questions every year.

The victories are hard-fought, and maintaining them takes strategy, skill and tenacity. In 2008, the 9to5 Milwaukee chapter led a campaign that included organizing, coalition-building and public education to win paid sick days for all private sector workers in the city. The ballot issue was approved by 69 percent of the vote. But after the election, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce filed a lawsuit against the city of Milwaukee, challenging the law and requesting a temporary injunction, which was granted, blocking the city from enforcing the mandate while the court considered its validity. 9to5’s Milwaukee chapter filed for and was granted intervening party defendant status in the case, and it is leading grassroots activity to mobilize voters to speak out and take action to defend the November 2008 vote.

Fact-Funded Capacity Building Work

9to5 used an 18-month Management Assistance Program contract in 2007-08 to work with a consultant to develop a long-term strategic plan. A subsequent three-year, \$90,000 organizational development grant was used to implement the plan’s recommendations. Over the years, 9to5 received several smaller discretionary grants for specific projects, such as developing a business plan for an earned income strategy, an upgrade and expansion of its database, and producing materials for “Election Connection,” its integrated voter engagement project. 9to5 also received a fundraising assistance grant in 2010.

Management Assistance Program

The MAP funds enabled 9to5 to engage in a top to bottom, in-depth look at the organization, and create a strategic plan for its future. "We are a national organization, with five staffed offices and members all over the country, and we have limited resources to bring everyone together to do planning," said Linda Meric. "Through the MAP program, we were able to involve every level of the organization — staff, local and national board members, as well as ally organizations — bringing people together three or four times. We also got feedback from policy makers and media people. Our consultant was a perfect match: she had a huge amount of experience with grassroots organizations, and was familiar with 9to5."

The strategic planning process centered around four working groups that looked at staff retention and development, fundraising, leadership development and base-building, and strategies and campaigns. All the groups considered technology needs and work on combating discrimination at all levels for their areas. The end result of the process was a strategic plan for 2008-11, with goals, action steps and timelines in six areas: fundraising, technology, staff development, organizing model, leadership development, and strategies and campaigns, with priorities established for all. "We have a living document that we can use on an ongoing basis to track our progress and look at areas where we need to place more focus," Meric said.

Organizational Development Grant

Through the organizational development grant, 9to5 implemented some of the key priorities of the strategic plan. Technology and communications were considered crucial: updating the website, integrating new media and improving member communication technology. 9to5 hired its first online organizer, who is responsible for the website, social media, and networking. "We had tools, like a constituent management database, that we didn't have the capacity to use before," Meric said. "Now, we can communicate information to our members through the website and powermails, and engage members through action alerts. We also have someone leading the work of communicating directly with policy makers on national and regional issues. We're on Facebook, Twitter, our blogs and those of third parties. We're getting the word out about issues we work on to audiences we wouldn't otherwise reach, engaging young people in the organization with information about our issues and

campaigns." The online organizer is also working with activists in areas where 9to5 does not have staffed chapters.

Supervisory training for staff had also been identified as a priority. As a result of the organizational development grant, 9to5 now sends all its organizers to a week-long training to ground them in organizing principles and strategies. Additionally, everyone in the organization who is a supervisor goes to training geared for supervisors of organizers. "This is really important, because as in many organizations like ours, 9to5 tries to promote from within," Meric said. "People come in with great organizing skills, but they haven't supervised people before and they don't necessarily have the tools." The organization has also worked on making its policies and processes more systematic, particularly those dealing with staff management issues at all levels of the organization.

"We could not have gone through this process without the FACT money," Meric said. "It is expensive to bring people together, to devote the time and resources, both on planning and implementing the plan you come up with. As a result, we have a stronger, more sustainable organization."

Special Projects

The discretionary funds provided for 9to5's "Election Connection" have also made a difference. "Voter engagement is one of our key strategies, overarching all of the issue work we do," Meric said. "We make the link between issues women face in their lives every day and the decisions they make on ballot issues, or the decisions elected officials will be making. We make sure our members are registered to vote if that's possible. It's also a way we recruit women to join 9to5." The value of integrated voter engagement becomes especially clear on such campaigns as the 2008 Milwaukee ballot issue.

With the 2010 Fundraising Assistance grant, 9to5 is pursuing another of its strategic goals of diversifying and increasing revenue through such activities as board training and developing its base of individual donors. An associate has been hired to work with the development director on these projects. In addition, a group of 9to5 staff, both national and chapter-based, participated in the FACT fundraising webinar.