



OUR BODIES OURSELVES

A Member Agency
of Community Works

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To whom it may concern:

I am writing in my capacity as Program Manager and co-founder of Our Bodies Ourselves – a leading women’s organization for almost four decades in the United States and internationally – to recommend with pleasure the grant application of Women and Their Bodies to the Levi Lassen Foundation. For 30 years I have worked with countless organizations and individuals who are pioneering change in their communities, and Women and Their Bodies (WTB) stands out among these as an exceptional organization, one with notable accomplishments as well as great vision and promise.

The Our Bodies Ourselves Global Initiative, which I currently direct, works in partnership with 22 women’s organizations around the world to promote women’s rights, health, and empowerment, and builds capacity in these organizations as they assess and address their communities’ greatest needs. Our program team has worked closely with Women and Their Bodies for six years, from its founding to its development as a well-established women’s organization highly regarded throughout Israel. While our collaborative work has focused on women’s rights and health, WTB’s work has gained broader stature and impact as a peace-building initiative between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian communities.

In its early years, before WTB’s credibility was established and funds could be secured for its programs, the organization’s success depended in part on its tremendous ability to engage a wide network of volunteers and pro bono support. Program leaders worked closely with the Shatil training center on organizational development, volunteer recruitment and retention, and coalition building. This early capacity has grown into an ongoing volunteer training program, drawing support from across the country and expanding WTB’s efficiency, reach, and impact.

Women and Their Bodies have developed a cost-effective and exemplary program model that we have shared with other partners in our Global Initiative. It is an innovative and inclusive project

Focusing on rights and advocacy issues for women and girls of all ages, socio-economic, and ethnic groups (Muslim and Christian Arabs, Bedouin Arabs, and Jews). Project leaders have pulled together a team of stakeholders from various sectors – grassroots and institutional, local and national, academic and political, to plan and implement their outreach programs. The program’s strategy capitalizes local knowledge, promotes discussion, and builds consensus on women’s rights issues. Through a *bottom-up* democratic process, in-country network partners identify sustainable solutions to local issues – from multi-media resources uniquely adapted to local language, need, and context to innovative outreach that brings these culturally unique resources to women, girls, and men across the country.

Like entrepreneurs changing the face of business, leaders at Women and Their Bodies are social entrepreneurs building knowledge capital and catalyzing individual and institutional change. It does not seem an overstatement that the Israel Venture Network calls WTB’s director one of “Israel’s New Leaders.” Support from the Levi Lassen Foundation will allow her to lead the team at Women and Their Bodies in the coming year as it continues to build bridges between Israel’s various social sectors and serve as a critical ally to international agencies trying to meet Millennium Development Goals through programs that directly touch women, girls, and men *on the ground*.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sally Whelan". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the text "Best regards,".

Sally Whelan
Program Manager
Our Bodies Ourselves Global Initiative