

Organization Name: Mujer Al Volante

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Organization Interviewees: Jacqueline Garcia Castillo, Ana Lisa Lazaro

Impact 100 GRT Interviewers: Anne Malmo, Heidi Narayan

Application Link: <https://impact100seattle.community/application-details-semi-2023?recordId=recvmSA1LKNYbbTVJ>

Organization Mission: The mission of Mujer al Volante (MAV) is to empower low-income immigrant and refugee women and mothers to achieve independence while promoting financial sustainability, community engagement, and leadership.

What are the compelling reasons for Impact 100 to partner with this organization?

Mujer al Volante was founded to help Latinx immigrant women get their driver’s license. Because their work is driven by the voices of the community one of the impressive things they’ve done is expand beyond the Latinx community to support immigrant women from all over the world when they met other women outside the Latinx community and heard they have the same need.

MAV is the first organization in the state of Washington, and from what they know, one of the only organizations in the country that supports women by teaching them how to obtain their driver’s license. Their approach to this empowerment identifies financial, social, and family hurdles and sets up strategies and resources to successfully assist mothers and women to realize their potential while gaining mobility, self-respect, skills, and confidence to self-advocate.

The name “Mujer al Volante” challenges a sexist Latinx American saying – “mujer al volante, peligro constante” – which translates to “woman driving, constant risk.” MAV Founder and Executive Director said: “I absolutely wanted to reverse that saying, so I called the organization ‘Mujer al Volante, Superación Constante,’ which translates to ‘woman driving, woman advancing’.”

What, if any, reservations do you have about this organization as a potential grantee partner for Impact 100? No reservations.

What does the organization do? The heart of MAV is, Taking the Steering Wheel of My Life, a four-week intensive, no-cost workshop series that prepares participants to pass the driving knowledge test and receive a scholarship for 10 hours of driving lessons with a certified driving instructor (women instructors). This program is designed to serve mothers, prioritizing those who have low incomes and who are isolated geographically and/or from their communities. The intensive series covers the driver’s license knowledge test as well as providing information and resources about other life topics that range from domestic violence to civic engagement. They provide childcare for all the programs to remove the barrier of women not being able to participate. They serve 45-65 people each quarter with a total of 800 women having completed the program. Having a driver’s license creates independence, better access to healthcare and the opportunity to participate in their community more fully. Women not only move on with

confidence in driving, but improved self-esteem and gain skills and knowledge to become leaders – from starting a business to civic engagement.

In addition to the core program, MAV also offers the following programs for women to learn life skills and more fully engage in their community:

- Driving the computer (Computer literacy for women)
- Vote (Civic Engagement) Candidate forums, voting rights info sessions
- Taking the Steering Wheel of my Health (Health Educational program)

Who does the organization serve? The organization focuses on low-income immigrant mothers as these are the most marginalized members of the community.

MAV serves is Federal Way community - home to the most diverse population in WA state with over 120 languages spoken. Women from other locations in the Puget Sound are traveling to this office for classes. MAV saw immigrants from other parts of the world also struggling with mobility and independence (many from countries that marginalize or limit women's rights) and in response expanded from their initial focus on the LatinX community to include all immigrant women.

Many women who graduate from the program return to volunteer in helping others achieve the same life changing skills they were taught.

How does the organization reflect, maintain proximity to and stay accountable to the community it serves? MAV's founder and Executive Director, Jacqueline Garcia Castillo, is an immigrant herself and has created a community of women immigrants who share needs and desires.

MAV takes feedback from the women they serve to continuously enhance and expand its programs to meet the needs of the community. A great example is expanding the program to 5 languages (Spanish, Dari, Arabic, French, and English) so they can serve a broader group of women.

The team at MAV consists of twelve women of color, some are immigrants and refugees, some are first generation Latinx women and many are mothers. The board of MAV is made up of women with diverse backgrounds.

How is the organization addressing the root causes of social issues? Immigrant and refugee women with children are frequently the victims of gender violence. Learning life skills helps them escape this behavior. The skills and self-confidence learned while driving help counter diminishing, demeaning attitudes. By providing childcare and snacks, the mothers are able to connect with others in their situation while learning.

How is the organization collaborating with other community-based organizations? MAV's first collaboration was with the King County Library system in Federal Way. They gave her space for her first meetings, and eventually MAV won a grant from the Library Foundation. MAV also has ongoing conversations with: Washington State Afghan Women, Mother Africa, and Highland

College. They are continuously working to connect with other non-profits in the community and thinking about building a partnership with a credit union to enable women to get loans for vehicles.

What is the vision for the organization in 5 years? Jaqueline's goal is to be the best educational program in the country and to be a model for other states to follow.

This year MAV would like to open a 2nd office in the North end of Seattle as women are traveling great distances to Federal Way for classes. MAV will also continue advocating for change with the Department of Licensing as well as expanding to more languages, especially those where the women's country of origin has prohibited driving.

What is the organization's area of greatest need? Interpreters are the greatest need. They need to share their language knowledge and teach the teachers. They can help translate the writing and be on hand for verbal interpretations.

Highlight a story of impact. A young woman from Eritrea got her license after completing the program. Her motivation was that she has a son with autism, and she wanted to challenge her own fear of driving. She now has her own business and continues with MAV as a volunteer.