

Our History

Over the past five years, Leeway’s donor family, its Board of Directors, staff, and Advisory Council worked to transform the Foundation in several remarkable ways. They engaged people of color in positions of influence, and committed to a process of dismantling racism in organizational relationships, practices, policies, and programs. They moved decision-making power from a single-family member structure to a board comprised of people from the community, and committed to an active framework of personal and political transformation. They expanded Leeway’s mission to support both women and transgender people who make art as a means for transforming individuals and communities.

This work did not happen overnight, nor with ease. The changes required the vision and hard work of dozens of committed board and Advisory Council members, staff, artists, activists, and community supporters.

Those in Leeway’s community had to examine their commitment to its goals, face challenges to their perceptions, and consider new perspectives on the inequities that mark our world. Leeway’s board and staff moved forward with the hope that other funders, organizations and communities might be inspired to take their own paths to personal and political transformation.



Social justice movements have taught us that individuals mobilized for change can alter the conditions, values, and norms of a community. We believe that art has always been a part of effective movement building and are therefore committed to using the resources of the Foundation to amplify the voices of the vibrant community of artists whose work represents the intersection of art and change.

Denise M. Brown

In the summer of 2007, Leeway turned its focus to an intensive planning process to deepen and concretize its renewed vision. Over forty interviews with Leeway stakeholders—past and current staff, past and current board members, grant applicants, awardees and grantees, review panelists, and community partners—were conducted by an independent consulting team. These interviews were distilled, edited, and published in December 2007, outlining a broad set of perspectives on Leeway’s strengths, challenges, and opportunities for moving forward.

As we continue to refine the vision and strengthen relationships, Leeway's board continues to actively pursue ways to explore money and class in its program and operations.



Mission, Values, Vision

The Leeway Foundation is committed to art making as an integral part of social change, to movement building, and anti-oppression work where Leeway is accountable, accessible, part of and governed by, the communities Leeway's programs support.

Leeway is guided by the values of fearlessness in action, speech, and self-examination and commits to breaking down boundaries and barriers with creativity, respect, and openness to the process.