



TransformHER Campaign



When Dress for Success Cincinnati celebrated our 20th anniversary in 2019, we used this momentous occasion to convene a joint committee of staff and board members over three full days working with a consultant, thanks to funding from the Harold C. Schott Foundation, to reflect on where we have been and where we want to go. Collectively we developed a campaign to fight poverty in our region for the next 20 years. The campaign's three-pronged transformation plan includes a new location, a *Fund for the Future*, and a major gifts program.

But, then COVID-19 hit and millions of people across the country lost their jobs.

We braced ourselves for a dramatic increase in demand, as more and more women in our community were furloughed or became unemployed. We also paused to reflect and evaluate whether the transformation plan was still appropriate in this new context.

We've been watching the economic trends. We've been responding to growth in our virtual service offerings. And we've been paying attention to economic impact studies that are calling the current crisis a "she-cession" because of the disproportionate impact it's having on women. 2.3 million women have left the workforce since February 2020. That brought women's labor participation rate to levels not seen since 1988, according to the National Women's Law Center. In December 2020 alone, women accounted for 100% of the jobs lost. And we remember what we saw during the 2008 recession, when the demand for our services doubled.

Taking all of this into consideration, we asked ourselves: "Should we move forward?"

Our answer was a resounding: "Yes, our community needs us more than ever!"

Our goal of \$1,200,000 includes:

- New Location
- Fund for the Future
- Major Gifts Program



Make a tax-deductible donation on our website dfscincy.org. Or mail a check, transfer stock, or make an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution gift.



Your financial contribution will be restricted and allocated to all areas of this campaign. Should excess funds be raised, they will be applied to the mission and operation of Dress for Success.

Why Now?

Today, more women than ever are being pulled into poverty, forced into looking for work in an environment of tough competition, or both. In March 2020, we created virtual service offerings to continue being able to support our clients, without disruption. Our focus has remained, and will always be, fully supporting unemployed and under-employed women and their families because we believe each woman deserves the chance to dream and reach her potential because when she does, her impact on her family and the community will be profound.

When women arrive at Dress for Success they are given space and encouragement to dream big, often for the first time. Many times, the women are responsible for so many people and things that they rarely have time for themselves. We ask each woman we work with to dare to dream so that she can transform her life. We ask that not only of our clients, but of our entire organization. Now is the time for us to dream big together and ensure that the women of our community recover and experience increased opportunity for years to come!

Our vision is a world where women do not live in poverty, are treated with dignity and respect and are strengthening their families and shaping their communities.

Our History

The mission of Dress for Success is to empower women to achieve economic independence by providing a network of support, professional attire, and development tools to help them thrive in work and in life. We are one of the few programs in the Greater Cincinnati area focused specifically on the needs of unemployed and under-employed women and their families.

Our successful programs empower women first to secure employment and ultimately to thrive in their careers, their lives, and their communities.


Dress for Success Cincinnati was founded by Mary Ivers in 1999. Since the very beginning, it's been our vision not only to provide assistance to women in need of appropriate clothing to interview for a job, but also to provide a stable, safe, and caring environment for women as they reclaim their lives. In our very first year, we suited 89 clients. Today, that number has exceeded 19,000.



For questions and pledges, contact Lisa Nolan, Executive Director
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Dress for Success Cincinnati 



Transformation Plan

First, our current location downtown has provided us with many opportunities, memories, and moments of celebration, but the building has been sold and will be converted to residential property. As we look ahead to the next 20 years we need a new location that will allow for strategic growth.

We have secured a ten-year lease in Norwood in an office space located in the same complex as the Hamilton County Board of Elections. This space provides ample free parking and convenient bus routes for clients (approximately 30% of whom ride the bus), volunteers, staff, and guests, making it accessible for all. Additionally, this space will allow all of our staff offices, volunteer areas, programs, and donation areas to be on one floor, which will promote connection and inclusion.

Second, we will set up a *Fund for the Future*. This fund, which can only be distributed at the Board of Directors' discretion, will be used for new opportunities, programs, and important growth. The *Fund for the Future* will provide us with space to think bigger and further the transformational mindset we embody as an organization and that we encourage our clients to embrace. Every day we ask our clients to dream big, and this *Fund for the Future* will make that happen.

“
When I put that suit on, I felt really important, and I looked like a million bucks!

I came in stressed and depressed, but these lovely women took me and I did a whole 180 degrees turnaround.

I walked in with tears of frustration and I left with tears of joy.”

The third, and final, prong of our plan is to establish a Major Gifts program and to recruit and retain a development director. Our strategic plan clearly outlines the need for a specific person focused on raising pivotal funds. The position of development director will provide a more effectual way of managing funds and relationships, while allowing other staff to focus on their specific area of expertise. Just as we hire key staff to build and support relationships with our clients, we also need to build and support relationships with our donors.

Essential Components

Our three-pronged plan provides the foundation necessary to further help women out of poverty and achieve economic independence. Our new location will be thoughtfully built-out to provide each client with a sense of pride and increased confidence. We are committed to strengthening families and shaping their communities with strategic financial planning.

Dress for Success conducted a survey of key stakeholders to determine which locations people felt were safe and accessible, and those surveyed all stated they would feel safe traveling to Norwood. The new location not only provides a more connected layout, but also provides the following advantages:

1. *Warehouse space to store out of season merchandise until women need those items,*
2. *A larger donation center that can be accessed by the public, which opens the possibility of hosting warehouse sales to generate additional funds, and*
3. *Small and large meeting spaces that will allow multiple program groups to utilize the space at the same time and further foster community. Currently, our Professional Women's Group (PWG) has to meet off-site.*

We will move to our new location in June 2021. During the move we are dedicated to ensure that our relocation process has very few disruptions to our clients. To that end, we are developing a marketing campaign to amplify our message and brand to our partners so each is aware of the move and any disruption to client services.

The new space will be designed to foster community, provide opportunities for innovative discussions, and promote the generation of new ideas. The *Fund for the Future* will provide the resources needed for those new ideas, per the Board of Directors' discretion.

This campaign will begin our Major Gifts program. Under the leadership of a newly recruited development director, the program will focus on the value of our generous donors and further cultivate those relationships. Previously, other staff members have stepped in to build those relationships, but with this new role we will provide our donors with a point person who can listen to and address their needs. The development director will also focus on the strategic direction of the Major Gifts program, as identified in the strategic plan.

