

## Commissions for Women Virtual Roundtable Meeting

June 10, 2021

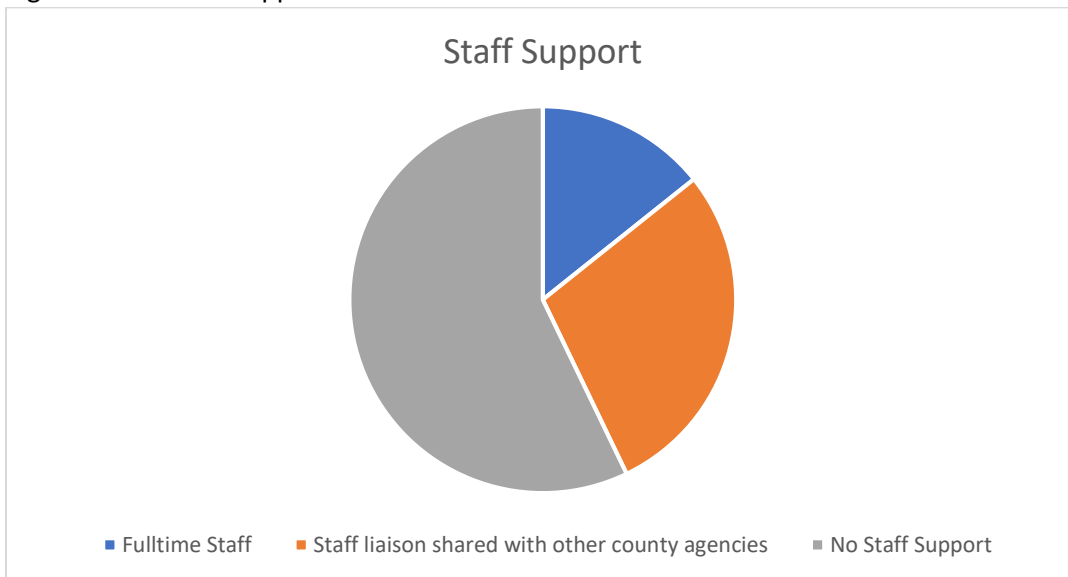
**Coordinator:** Maxine Somerville, Commissioner  
**Maryland Commission for Women**

For several years, the MCW has convened an annual meeting of the county and city Commissions for Women (CFWs) in the state. Due to the restrictions on in-person gatherings, the MCW had not convened the Commissions for Women Roundtable Meeting since November 2019. Finally, on June 10, 2021 the MCW conducted, for the first time, a virtual meeting of these organizations.

There are 14 active county CFWs in Maryland and one city CFW (Baltimore). They range geographically from the far-western panhandle in Garrett County to the southern eastern shore in Worcester County, the only currently active CFW east of the Chesapeake Bay. Historically, when the Roundtable Meeting was held in person, even when combined with another conference, 9 – 10 CFWs would be able to participate, each sending one or two representatives.

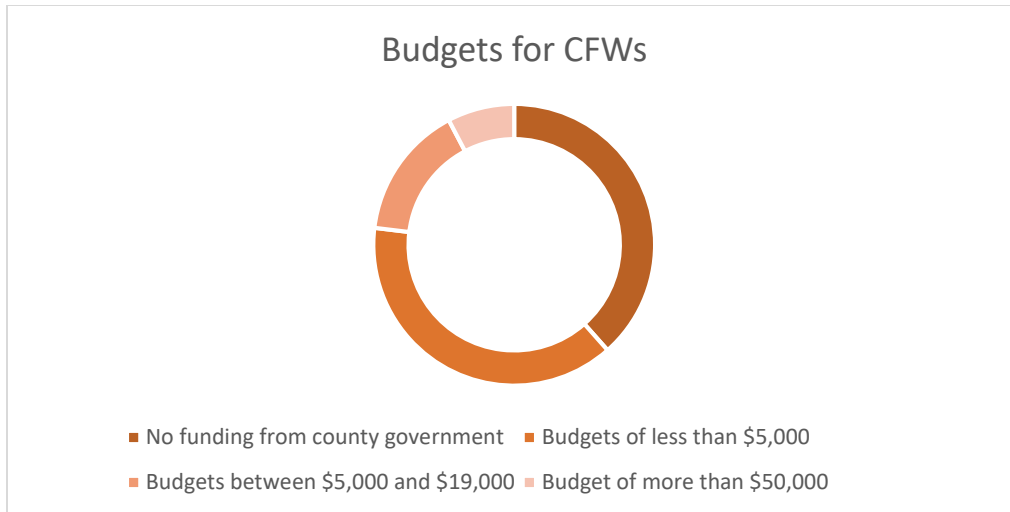
This year, with the meeting held virtually, all 14 county CFWs registered to attend, sending a total of 70 participants. After the meeting, all 14 CFWs were offered the opportunity to complete a survey. From the thirteen who submitted the questionnaire, we learned that:

- Two have at least one fulltime staff support
- Four share a staff liaison with other county agencies
- Eight have no staff support at all



Not including employee salaries,

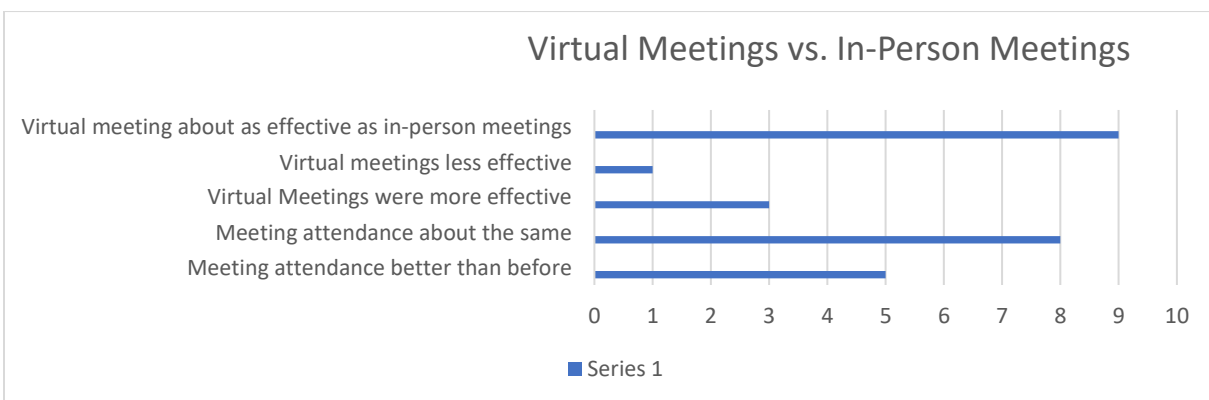
- Five have no funding from the county government
- Five have budgets of less than \$5000
- Two have budgets between \$5000 and \$19,000
- One has a budget of more than \$50,000



- **Seven have no other source of funding**
- **Four obtain sponsorships to fund programs**
- **Three charge fees to support programs**
- **Three use private donations to support programs**
- **One has a non-profit foundation to support programs**
- **One receives donations from members**
- **One reported partnering with other organizations**
- **One uses only fees and sponsorships to support programs**
- **Seven report using none of these fund-raising vehicles**

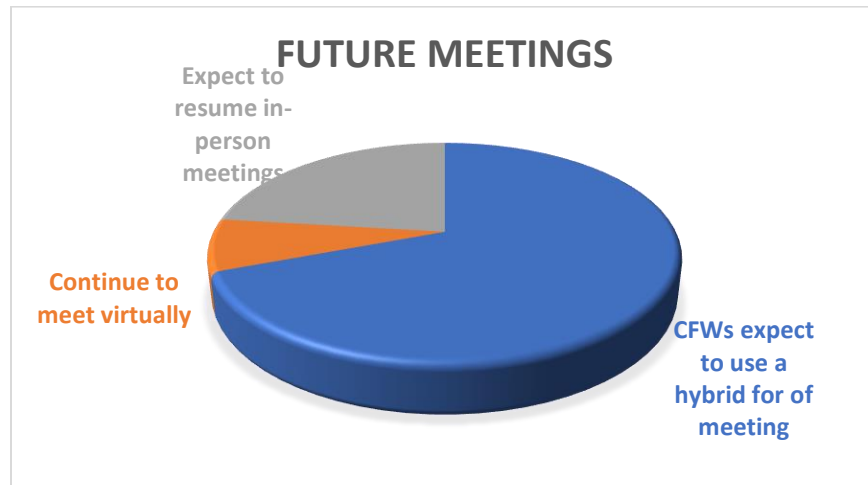
During the pandemic, all CFWs continued meeting regularly using virtual meeting platforms.

- Five reported that meeting attendance was better than before
- Eight reported that meeting attendance was about the same.
- Three found that the virtual meetings were more effective than in-person meetings had been
- One found virtual meetings to be less effective and
- Nine CFWs found virtual meetings to be about as effective as in-person meetings



Now that things are beginning to open up again and in-person meetings may be possible:

- Nine CFWs expect to use a hybrid form of meeting (in-person and virtual)
- One expects to continue meeting virtually, and
- Three expect to resume in-person meetings



With regard to programs and initiatives during the past 24 months:

- **Eight of the CFWS sponsor an award program for young women or girls**
- **Eight sponsor an annual Women’s History Month event**
- **Three sponsor an annual Women’s Legislative Briefing or Women’s Summit**
- **Two sponsor a county Women’s Hall of Fame**
- **Seven have offered seminars**
- **Two have offered classes**
- **Two have offered mentoring for young women**
- **Four have conducted a survey on the needs of women in their county**
- **Three have conducted a listening tour**

With regard to social media and other networking devices used during the past 24 months:

- **Twelve of the CFWs maintain a Facebook Page**
- **Nine maintain a website**
- **Three use Twitter**
- **Three use Instagram**
- **One has used YouTube**
- **Seven publish an annual report of their activities**
- **And one publishes a quarterly newsletter**

During the Roundtable Meeting, and in the survey, the attendees were invited to discuss how their Commissions had been impacted by the pandemic, and to discuss their most successful projects and activities of the past year along with their priorities for the coming year.

## **Allegany County CFW**

### **Priorities:**

- Resume listening tour
- Develop and implement mentoring project
- Award funds to women to reach academic and employment goals

### **Challenges:**

- No funding
- Political climate

### **Accomplishments:**

- Awarding of funding to women with money solely raised by Commission.

## **Anne Arundel County CFW**

### **Priorities:**

- Expand our social media reach
- Conduct teen girl career panel
- Enhance outreach to local women's shelters & support groups

### **Challenges:**

- 50% member turnover
- Inability to see or serve our mission in person
- We needed to realign our mission based on changing priorities/needs affecting women due to COVID

### **Accomplishments:**

- A fully remote (yet robust) recruitment effort
- 100% attendance at all virtual meetings
- Ability to pivot to focus on social media as our primary outreach platform

## **Baltimore County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

We are having our retreat next month to determine.

### **Challenges:**

- Late start due to not receiving approval from the County Administration
- Not reaching out intended goal of participants at our virtual events

### **Accomplishments:**

- Voices of Baltimore Virtual tour

## **Calvert County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Continuing to increase our social media presence for all ages
- Offering a hybrid of in-person and virtual programming
- Generating new approaches to ongoing programs and introducing several new programs

### **Challenges:**

- Planning programs during the pandemic
- Upping our abilities on Zoom
- Being more proactive on social media

### **Accomplishments:**

- Holding several successful programs including 4 in-person programs in 3 county parks and outside the County Courthouse for the Red Sand Project to raise awareness about human trafficking in collaboration with the Dept of Parks and Recreation, County State's Attorney and Sheriff's offices and another community group
- Leading and coordinating the 18th Annual Women of the World Recognition Celebration held virtually for first time, with 6 community partner organizations including Calvert's Historical Society, Mediation Center, NAACP, Concerned Black Women, Minority Business Alliance, and League of Women Voters, along with Chair of MD CFW, Yun Jung Yang as Keynote Speaker
- Continuing leading effort to honor Harriet Elizabeth Brown by supporting the development of a public community center in Prince Frederick.
- Increased visibility of the CCCW led to an increase in membership of the CCCW during this pandemic year.

## **Charles County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Increase Social Media presence
- Fill vacant positions on the Commission
- Fundraising opportunities

### **Challenges:**

- Losing members at the beginning of the pandemic
- Expanding our social media presence beyond Facebook & Twitter

### **Accomplishments:**

- Hosting our 1st More than enough Virtual Women's Summit
- Launching our Podcast
- 31 Women of the County - Women's History Month Event
- 100 Purses for a Purpose Campaign

## **Frederick County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- We will be having our planning meeting on July 28 and discussion our priorities, which may include specific legislation at the county level.
- Final updates to our handbook and By-laws
- Earlier recruitment for our SheLEADS Program for high school young women

### **Challenges:**

- Webex, not meeting in person, which was difficult because there are many rural areas without great internet bandwidth.
- Less organic conversations during our meetings.
- New initiatives put on hold until 2021-22 year.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Female-headed household work with Asian American Center of Frederick
- SheLeads Program with the girls creating a YouTube Channel with videos for other high school girls focused on Mindfulness and Art Therapy during the pandemic
- RAW Awards in March
- Legislative support for MLAW.

## **Garrett County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Expanding women's voices in the community
- Increased participation by women in local politics
- Improved communication of women's issues/concerns to the decision-makers.

### **Challenges:**

- Continuing with programs that required contact with other populations that were not accessible
- Members without access to adequate internet service

### **Accomplishments:**

- Awarding the annual Hall of Fame
- Woman of Tomorrow and scholarships with multiple publicity platforms

## **Harford County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Results from the Benchmarking Study - produce the Best Practices Report and prioritize our goals based on the findings of the report
- Hold a successful Women of Tomorrow Awards Event, in person, in FY 2022
- Continue with timely and pertinent Community Conversations

### **Challenges:**

- We were not able to hold the 2021 Women of Tomorrow Awards in person (however, we did get to keep the funds to use for FY 2022 - for the vendor and refreshments)
- We could not hold the 2020 Women of Tomorrow Awards in person, due to lockdown. We were able to send all the winner their cash prizes, honors and recognition from our elected officials. We posted about each nominee on the Women's Commission Facebook page.
- Getting used to the virtual format - it took some members some time. However, some greatly improved their Web Ex skills through training.

### **Accomplishments:**

- The Benchmarking Study/Best Practices project – Draft has been submitted for review to Chair Mary Hastler
- 2 Community conversations that we held virtually - Coping with COVID-19: A Woman's Perspective (December 2020) & Caregiving – Preparing to Care (February 2021)
- Posted quotes from powerful Harford County women throughout Women's History Month on the Commission's Facebook page.
- Joined the National Association of Commissions for Women and members of the Commission are speaking at the event on July 19, 2021.
- Became more active with the MD Commission (Kristi Halford)

**Also:** As a group of hardworking volunteers, we persevered and meet virtually – not missing a beat, in a challenging environment. We managed to stay on schedule (knowing it was not easy for everyone), met our goals, and ending up having a successful year! We had a quorum at every meeting and added new members to the Commission. Once our returning commissioners and new commissioners are approved/confirmed by the County Council (next week), we will be up to a full slate of 15 commissioners; a feat we have not accomplished in years. We actually had one of our best, most well attended, productive years to date.

## **Howard County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Mitigating the effects of COVID on women
- Women 65+
- Political awareness of women

### **Challenges:**

- Our Commissioners felt stretched thin; had too much on their plates
- Our County only allows us to have a website and a Facebook page so we cannot use other forms of social media to spread the word about our events and services.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Maintaining the engagement of our Commissioners during the pandemic.

## **Montgomery County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Women in Leadership
- Health, Safety and Security
- Economic Justice

### **Challenges:**

- Moving to a virtual platform efficiently

### **Accomplishments:**

- Moving to a virtual platform for our legislative briefing and all of our seminars and classes
- Onboarded a fulltime staff person in December
- Published a weekly newsletter to over 17,000, changed the format of our NL to include COVID information, also included county social service resources and a health and wellness section so our readers could find virtual things to do within the county and beyond.



## **Prince George's County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Enhance social media presence;
- Establish Youth Ambassador/Young Leaders Program;
- Mental Health Awareness

### **Challenges:**

- Implementation of planned programs, events and activities due to COVID; limited visibility/access to the community; cumbersome administrative procedures create delays and inefficiencies.

### **Accomplishments:**

- Women's Legislative Briefing

**Also:** Despite challenges and limitation imposed by the pandemic, we were forced to become more creative and found ways to fulfill our mission and with webinars, zoom psas, virtual trainings and food distribution events. In all, 2021 was a very successful year!

## **St. Mary's County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Dating Violence prevention
- Women's History and Volunteer Recognition
- We will meet in July to decide additional priorities

### **Challenges:**

- Not being able to meet in person
- Not being allowed to meet by zoom
- Bureaucracy

### **Accomplishments:**

- We developed, distributed and analyzed Interpersonal Relationships in Youth survey with St. Mary's County residents. It confirmed the rate of local incidents of dating violence mirrored the national statistics.

## **Washington County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- Improving internal organization
- Small business financial empowerment
- Health and wellness
- Outreach to surrounding communities

### **Challenges:**

- Maintaining connections

### **Accomplishments:**

- Pivoting to social media
- Improving website

## **Worcester County CFW:**

### **Priorities:**

- To support women entrepreneurs in our county
- To make our presence stronger in the community
- To mentor more young ladies in the community

### **Challenges:**

- Not being able to do our Women's Annual Luncheon
- Not being able to give out scholarships to high school graduates and college students
- Not being able to be hands on in the community last year

### **Accomplishments:**

- Starting one of our new initiatives Warriors for Domestic Violence: We were able to collect over 2,000 items to donate to Life Crisis Center.