“Strategy is not the consequence of planning, but the opposite: its starting point.” Henry Mintzberg

In 2020, new 5-year strategic plans were approved for WFF programs and departments. These plans are designed to guide WFF’s grantmaking and other efforts to achieve our impact goals. 2025 Strategy plans are thoughtful, robust, designed to be durable for 5 years, and offer a North Star for strategic intent. No good strategy, however, is set in stone. Success will require nimbleness and adaptation to navigate changes in our external and internal environments and ongoing integration of learnings about the most effective pathways and levers for success.

What are micro-shifts?

Micro-shifts are relatively small but meaningful adjustments or refinements that are made in the course of implementing a strategy, based on new insights and lessons learned along the way. These micro-shifts are often important developments that affect grantmaking and other actions, but they are not so significant that they rise to the level of requiring Committee or Board approval, or a formal modification of the 2025 Strategy plan itself.

A “living” strategy should evolve over time, and is the result of adjustments we make to our intended strategy that occurs as we let go of unrealized strategy that didn’t work out, and embrace new emergent strategy that was not initially foreseen.

Micro-shifts are a signal that these adaptations are taking place as we learn more and develop insights about the best path forward.

Why is it important to identify micro-shifts?

Often, micro-shifts are made organically as WFF associates adapt their decisions and actions to changing contexts and new information.

Identifying micro-shifts is the process of making these implicit adaptations explicit – capturing them in documents such as theories of change, annual plans, or learning agendas – so they can be made visible to others to enhance communication and coordination. Keeping track of micro-shifts and the reasons that informed them provides a rich information base to support ongoing reflection and learning within and across teams, as well as with external stakeholders.
What are some types of micro-shifts?

Below are a few illustrative categories of micro-shifts; while not comprehensive, these hypothetical examples highlight common areas where micro-shifts may occur. Of note, what constitutes a micro-shift may differ by program area or strategy depending on the context. One distinguishing feature could be whether a proposed shift would require formal approval from WFF leadership.

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<th>Type of Micro-Shift</th>
<th>Description</th>
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| Activities          | Shifting focus regarding the most promising WFF or grantee activities to advance specific goals.  
*Example: Increasing the focus of a grant on developing new programs versus scaling up existing interventions.* |
| Partners            | Shifting focus regarding the roles or the kinds of grantees or other partners that are best situated for advancing our goals.  
*Example: Seeking to include more local intermediaries in a particular grant portfolio that has been focused on direct service providers.* |
| Issue area          | Shifting focus to or from an aligned issue area. This may be based on a shift in contextual factors or represent emerging insights about more effective pathways and levers for success.  
*Example: Increasing the focus on an issue aligned with an existing strategy because significant public funding becomes available.* |
| Geography           | Shifting focus to or from a geography based on a shift in contextual factors that would support or hinder our efforts there.  
*Example: Adjusting geographic focus based on the current capacity levels of local coalition partners.* |
| Miscellaneous       | Other shifts you may encounter in your work. |

What is Strategic Learning?

Strategic learning is the use of data and insights to inform decision-making about strategy. It results in nimble strategies that evolve to reflect what we know to maximize the impact and accelerate the pace of WFF and our partners.

By infusing strategic learning at all levels, WFF can use every grant and strategy—successful or not—to continuously improve and make progress toward our 2025 Strategy goals. Strategic learning can take many forms, but in every instance, strategic learning turns insight into action—tightening the links between reflection and decision-making.

Strategic learning at WFF is the responsibility of all associates.