FWI Funding Statement

Name: Karen Bird
Faculty/Area: Social Sciences/Political Science
Project title: Vision 20/20: Achieving Gender Equity at McMaster

Please summarize how the FWI funds have been spent:
A summary by broad category is sufficient, line by line accounting of individual expenditures is not required unless specifically requested. Alternatively, please provide a copy of your FAS for the accounts that have been used for the FWI funds.

Salaries and benefits: $5000
Equipment: $0
Event Costs: $0
Travel: $0
Other (please specify):

Balance remaining:
Please indicate how the balance will be spent and when you anticipate that the funds will be exhausted.

Please submit separately a maximum 2-page summary of the results of the project with particular attention to:
1. How the activity enhanced the competence and effectiveness of this individual (or others) with respect to teaching, research, service and/or leadership;
2. How the activity contributed to the goals of a course/program/department/Faculty;
3. The results of your evaluation of the quality of the expected development and its potential impact;
4. How you have (or plan to) communicate and disseminate the insights gained with peers and broader McMaster communities.
5. How the outcomes of the project will be sustained or expanded.
6. Please outline any barriers or challenges that may have prevented you from achieving some of your project goals.

The financial and project reports can be submitted to fwi@mcmaster.ca.
Through funding from Forward with Integrity, and in collaboration with the YWCA Hamilton, I was able to undertake a major new initiative: The Women & Diversity EXCLerator Project. This project resulted in the publication of an important report on WOMEN IN EXECUTIVE AND COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN HAMILTON AND HALTON 2014. The report presents the first of its kind comprehensive overview of women’s representation in senior leadership positions in Hamilton and Halton’s most prominent organizations. This report analyzes women in leadership across nine sectors (elected officials; agencies, boards and commissions; education; health; public; corporate; voluntary; unions; legal), and provides an essential first benchmark against which future progress may be measured. An executive summary, as well as the full report (43 pp) are available here: http://ywcahamilton.org/initiatives/women-diversity-the-exclerator-project

This project contributed to multiple research, teaching, leadership and community/service objectives. First, through this funding, I was able to hire three student research assistants who collected data, conducted data analysis, and helped to produce the final report. The student RAs gained new research skills, became more familiar with substantive issues related to gender equity and women’s leadership, and gained new insights into the role of community organizations such as the YWCA in fostering women’s success.

The project was based on an existing, if informal, collaborative relationship between McMaster and the YWCA. We are especially proud of our ability to channel this relationship into impactful, evidence-based research on the status of women in leadership positions in our local communities. The involvement of scholars at McMaster was crucial for the development of a rich and robust literature review, and implementation of sound methodology to ensure eventual replicability of the data collection and analysis. The involvement of the YWCA was crucial for planning and executing a well-attended public launch of the report, for developing and disseminating press releases, and for generating broad interest in the study findings throughout the community. Indeed, the findings of our report have reverberated beyond the walls of the university, with broad media coverage and on-going interest amongst public officials, community organizers, and local leaders.

We have continued to speak about and disseminate the findings of the report following the launch in September 2014. In October 2015, we led a workshop on “Accelerating Women Leaders” as part of the Hamilton Leadership Summit for Women.¹ We have also distributed approximately 500 copies of the Executive Summary through various events sponsored by the Academic Women’s Success and Mentorship (AWSM) committee.

The EXCLerator Report presents the first essential benchmark on gender equity in Hamilton and Halton’s top organizational and leadership positions. Our intent is to continue to collect and analyze data over time. Dependent on future funding opportunities, we plan to produce an updated report every five years, and to continue to challenge the community to push for gains in women’s leadership.