

# 2023 Annual Meeting Recap - Project Redwood

October 11, 2023

## Project Redwood 2023 Annual Meeting Palo Alto, September 30 – October 1, 2023



We welcomed both in-person and virtual attendees to Project Redwood’s (“PRW”) 2023 Annual Meeting in Palo Alto. The Annual Meeting drew 64 attendees, including participants from 23 GSB classes, and 4 participants from organizations other than PRW. Thanks to all who participated in the Annual Meeting and its lively discussions.

Our meeting place for this day-and-a-half was generously provided by the law firm Morrison and Foerster at its large and fully-technologically-equipped offices. Many thanks also to PRW Board Member Gail Schulze, who hosted a “Pizza and Pinot” party on the evening of September 29 at her beautiful home, including attendees, their partners, and representatives of three of PRW’s grantee organizations.



**PRW Co-Chairs Ken Inadomi and Claudia Lindsey opened the meeting with an overview of the current mission and activities of Project Redwood.**

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Amy Minella and Rick Agresta continued with an informal survey of GSB classes represented and participants shared narratives of how they became engaged with philanthropy.



**Matt Nash, Director of the GSB's Center for Social Innovation** (successor to the Public Management Program), engaged in a conversation with PRW's **Carla Williams**. He hoped that PRW and the Center for Social Innovation ("CSI") will find ways to partner in programs with common philanthropic purposes. Matt also expressed hope that PRW can be a route for PMP and CSI alumni to deepen continuing relationships with the GSB. Matt described new initiatives

undertaken by the GSB to encourage students and alumni to build careers with social impact, including when those careers are less remunerative. One such initiative is financial assistance in repaying their student loans. Matt is currently surveying the many centers of social impact throughout Stanford, learning what they are doing, and considering how they and the GSB can complement each other. The full conversation between Matt and Carla can be seen [here](#). At this point, thirteen members of the **GSB's Northern California Alumni Association** and their guests joined us to participate in the panel session and lunch. As a result, Rick Agresta gave a quick introductory overview of PRW and our impact on poverty. Rick's overview included a [viewing of the PRW video](#).

## The Grantee Panel

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A highlight of the meeting was the panel of three charismatic representatives of PRW grantee organizations:

**Jackie Reed, CEO of WISE** (Women Initiating Success Envisioned Inc.);  
**Stephen Murphy, CEO of Cristo Rey De La Salle East Bay High School**;  
and **Jackie Frazier, Executive Director of The Hope Project**.

PRW's Jorian Wilkins moderated the panel.



- Jackie Reed movingly described challenges faced by women upon release from prison and the work of **WISE** to provide them with guidance and resources to complete their probationary periods successfully and find employment and/or educational opportunities. She shared some of her own experiences after release from prison and how she met the challenges of reintegrating productively into society.
- Stephen Murphy shared his surprise on his first day at **Cristo Rey East Bay**, on being informed by the school's accountant that the school would run out of funds in two weeks. He described his own journey from the practice of law to Cristo Rey East Bay's success in bringing every student through high school, work placements, and finally college admission.

- **The Hope Project**, as Jackie Frazier explained, provides high school education emphasizing vocational skills to students in Liberia. Jackie noted that Liberia, after devastation by civil war, has an 80% unemployment rate. The work of The Hope Project is to give youth the skills to find employment or to make a living by setting up their own businesses.

The full panel discussion can be seen [HERE](#).

## Saturday Afternoon Session

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Beth Charlesworth kicked off the afternoon session, reviewing the upcoming agenda and drawing Ken Inadomi up to update attendees on the progress of PRW's anti-poverty mission. He opened the following presentations on Grantee Analysis, Sponsor Experience, Leadership Circles, and the Grantmaking Task Force, and moderated the energetic discussions these subjects generated.

Ann McStay reviewed the results of the **Grantee Analysis** initiated this past summer to look at how PRW grants have helped grantee organizations scale over time. The team conducting the analysis looked at 25 past grantees to assess the longer-term impact of PRW grants following the project/grant period. Findings were that eight grantees had experienced "significant" increase in revenue following PRW involvement, ten had achieved "moderate" increase in revenue, two have had "steady" and two "variable" revenue, and three either consolidated with other organizations, went out of existence, or changed missions. The team concluded that PRW's infusions of catalytic capital have been successful in the great majority of grants.

Ray King provided a candid and insightful perspective on his experience as a **PRW sponsor** of a grantee organization.

Gail Schulze and Kirk Renaud reported on the **Leadership Circles**, which are part of the work of the Committee of Grantees and Sponsors ("COGS"). A Leadership Circle is a group of leaders of PRW grantee organizations, meeting regularly to share in confidence issues they and their organizations are facing. Three Leadership Circles are defined by geography: US, Central and South America, and Africa. Leadership Circle meetings are facilitated by COGS members. Participants in the Circle support each other and their missions by listening, encouraging, and often offering advice.

Linda Lazor updated participants on the work of the **Grantmaking Task Force**, including internal interviews with PRW members and funders who have substantial experience in philanthropy. The Task Force also interviewed external leaders in philanthropy, including the CEO of Echoing Green, the COO of the Skoll Foundation, and Matt Nash of CSI, among others. Findings of the Task Force include but are not limited to the following best practices: include in grants multi-year unrestricted funding, simplify interaction with and reporting by grantees, solicit and act on grantee

feedback, and offer grantees support beyond the check. The task force is now working on the extent to which these best practices might be implemented in PRW grantmaking in an evolutionary way over time.

Our journey from fiscal sponsorship to independent **501(c)3 status** this year, was described by PRW's Operations Director Rachel Merrell. Rachel thanked each PRW team member who contributed to this major effort. Rachel also noted the benefits to be realized from 501(c)3 status, including streamlined and efficient grant distribution to grantees, more direct communication between grantees and PRW, simpler methods of donation accommodating more flexible means of donating, and faster processing of donations.

Outgoing PRW Board Members, Committee Co-Chairs, and Executive Committee members were thanked by **Bill Westwood, Chair of the Board's People Committee**. Bill also announced the PRW members newly undertaking these leadership roles.

## **Sunday Morning Session**

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Brad Smith opened the meeting session on Sunday, October 1, which focused primarily on the **Report of the Growth Task Force**. Carol Head and Claudia Lindsey presented the work of the Growth Task Force and led the discussion of changes to PRW's structure and activities. PRW's Board adopted the recommendations of the Growth Task Force at its meeting on September 29. In early 2023, the Growth Task Force was charged with developing a growth plan to expand PRW membership and volunteer participation across GSB classes and degrees so that PRW's work and leadership will continue as the founding class of 1980 gradually steps away. The heart of the growth plan is a new volunteer committee structure that includes reducing the number of committees and including new functions in the Welcome and Engagement committee ("WE") and Communication, Marketing and Technology committee. The revised WE Committee's purposes are: (1) recruitment – accelerate the rate at which GSB alumni are brought into PRW; (2) cultivation – intentionally cultivate volunteers and volunteer leaders; (3) strengthen culture – expand organizational sensitivity to welcome volunteers from all classes. The presentation on the growth plan can be viewed [HERE](#).

The Annual Meeting's final activity was to break into small discussion groups, each of which was asked to create a list of two or three things which: (1) PRW should continue to do; and (2) PRW should start to do. The results of this activity are being compiled.

Thanks to all the PRW members, presenters, and attendees from other organizations who together made our 2023 Annual Meeting a success.



**[Click on the image above to view more pictures from the 2023 Annual Meeting.](#)**

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