



Wider Opportunities for Women
EMPOWERMENT | EQUITY | ECONOMIC SECURITY

Women remain underrepresented in the construction industry. Ensuring that more women are aware of and supported in entering construction careers is critical not only for achieving economic equity for women and their families, but also for building a competitive workforce.

To adequately open their training and career pathways to women, pre-apprenticeship programs must be attuned to and address a range of barriers women face when entering these fields. Barriers, such as lack of awareness, sex stereotypes, limited training and work experience, women's perception of construction careers, myths and stereotypes about women's work, sex discrimination, and institutional practices directed to men, can be overcome by adding a gender lens on pre-apprenticeship curriculum.

PUTTING A GENDER LENS ON PRE- APPRENTICESHIP CURRICULUM

Strategic Approaches and Curriculum for Women's Success in Building Trade Apprenticeships

This document reviews some of the best practices for properly addressing these obstacles and supporting women's success, including:

- Gender Targeted Policies and Practices to Address Differences in Learning and Communication
- Effective Education for Women in the Classroom/Workshop
- Core Competencies for Work Readiness
- Gender Targeted Lesson Plans
- Ensuring an Equitable Pre-Apprenticeship Program

Support groups, gender-neutral language, and materials that address hidden gender biases are ways to add a gender-lens to your pre-apprenticeship program!

Gender Targeted Policies and Planning

- Set goals for the number of women applicants, participants, graduates and placements
- Design outreach and recruitment plans to employ practices that will attract and engage women applicants.
- Train staff on the impact of gender stereotypes and hidden biases.
- Establish policies and professional development practices to build staff capacity to support and serve traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Address the need for gender and culturally sensitive teaching practices.

Program Practices

- Examples of underrepresented groups are evident in materials and throughout the training facility.
- Examine assumptions
- Promote and enforce civil rights and sexual harassment policies and practices.
- Engage a diverse teaching and support staff.
- Facilitate informal support groups, mentoring, peer counseling and networking activities.
- Avoid isolating individuals from underrepresented groups: safety and support in numbers!

What Do Women Need in the Classroom and Workshop?

- Exposure to multiple trades
- Tool Identification
- Strategies to reduce test-taking anxiety
- Spatial and mechanical aptitude
- Physical fitness support for the construction industry: aerobics, strength training, agility exercises
- Technical skill practice opportunities

Core Competencies for a Gender Lens in Work Readiness

- Self-esteem
- Rights in the workplace
- Developing support systems
- Maintaining healthy habits
- Interviewing and application guidance and tips
- Balancing work/ family
- Surviving and thriving in a male-dominated environment



Gender Inclusive Instruction and Communication

- Curriculum additions to reflect diverse experiences
- Guidelines for teaching in an inclusive manner:
 - Sensitivity
 - Neutrality
 - Inclusivity
- Females prefer learning experiences that:
 - They help design
 - Are learner-centered
 - Engage them in a group
 - Include structured opportunities for feedback on drafts rather than just the final product
 - Focus on the process and de-emphasize competition.

Ensuring an Equitable Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program

- Role models and mentors
- A safe and supportive place for:
 - Breaking through stereotypes
 - Overcoming fear of the unknown
 - Practicing new things
 - Peer networking and support
- Integration of topics into curriculum that address sex-role stereotypes, sexual harassment, and gender and race discrimination

Sample Curriculum Modules

Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

- Legally define sexual harassment and the evolution of laws pertaining to sexual harassment
- Outline various forms and examples of sexual harassment
- Describe the role of employers, unions and workers in preventing or addressing sexual harassment
- Demonstrate the action steps to take in response to witnessing or experiencing sexual harassment
- Offer support for surviving and thriving in a male dominated workplace

Interviewing To Be a Competitive Candidate

- Understand the importance of interviews in the apprenticeship application process
- Know how to prepare for an interview and anticipate and answer interview questions
- Identify body language and other non-verbal behaviors that impact an interviewer's assessment and judgment
- Assess and revise communication styles related to gender that may get in the way of making a strong impression in an interview

Building Cultural Competence

- Emphasizing the importance of a diverse workforce in the construction industry
- Highlighting the historical and social roots of under-representation of women and minorities in the trades
- Eradicating barriers and disproving myths to building a diverse workforce
- Creating an equitable work environment
- Promoting gender and race sensitivity and inclusivity in the apprenticeship program and on the job site
- Balancing work and family

Health and Safety of Women in Construction

- Describe why gender matters in safety and health issues in the construction industry
- Describe how safety and health issues are impacted by gender, and how issues that are specific to gender can be safety concerns
- Demonstrate what individuals can do to protect themselves and their co-workers
- Promote equitable safety and health practices and policies in the workplace

Wider Opportunities for Women

For nearly half a century, Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) has worked throughout the country and in its home community of Washington, DC to fight for programs and resources to prepare women and girls for jobs that will support them and their families. Recognized nationally for its skills training models, technical assistance, and advocacy for women workers, WOW is redefining social and economic domestic policy from one that focuses on poverty to one that addresses what women and families need to be economically secure throughout their lifetimes.

The Gender Lens Curriculum was developed for on the GreenWays Initiative, in partnership with Jobs For the Future and funded by the Employment and Training Administration of the U.S. Department of Labor, and in collaboration with the Committee on Women in the Trades of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, of which WOW is a member.

For more information on the Gender Lens curriculum and women in nontraditional occupations, please contact: Lauren Sugerman, Women and Work Project Director, ph/202-464-1596 x 114 or lsugerman@wowonline.org