

Opportunities for Women in Nontraditional Employment (OWNE)

BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR WOMEN INTO NONTRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS



For more than 45 years, **Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW)** has worked to improve policies and programs that promote equality of opportunity for women and girls. WOW helps women learn to earn, with programs that emphasize career awareness, work readiness, technical and nontraditional skills, and career development. WOW supports strategies that promote economic security for women, girls and working families such as ensuring women's access to non-traditional employment; equal employment opportunity and affirmative action; increasing access to work supports such as child care, health care and transportation assistance; a flexible work place that supports work and family; and disseminating promising practices in workforce development.

Women in the Nontraditional Employment

Although women are more than half of the American workforce, they remain significantly underrepresented in many high-paying, high-demand occupations, especially in blue-collar and technical fields. Occupational segregation by gender continues to be a pervasive and persistent feature of the American workforce, and is a major reason for the wage gap between male and female workers. The majority of women – nearly 80% - still work in fewer than 20 of more than 400 occupations. Expanding women's access to nontraditional jobs, defined as those in which women are less than 25% of the workforce, in manufacturing, skilled trades and transportation can increase their earnings by at least 30%. For example, a certified nursing assistant cashier who earns \$9.52 an hour can make \$24.91 if she becomes an electrician. The earnings differential over a lifetime can be as much as \$1.5 million dollars. Sex stereotypes, lack of outreach and information, limited pre-vocational skill training, disparate impact of selection criteria and the challenge of being a pioneer in a male-dominated environment are all contributing factors to women's occupational segregation.

Ensuring that women are aware of and supported when entering green jobs is critical for achieving economic equity for women and their families.

Addressing each of these barriers requires a range of programmatic and policy solutions. WOW offers technical assistance and program support on how to instill a gender lens and equal employment opportunity policy and practices for the workforce development system, community-based agencies, educational institutions and industry stakeholders. In concert with programmatic opportunities, WOW advocates for improved streams of funding for preparing women and girls to be competitive candidates in jobs in traditionally male-dominated fields, strong equal employment opportunity and affirmative action policy and goals, and gender equity policy and practice in workforce development and career and technical education.

WOW is partnering with community organizations in eighteen cities nationwide on the **OWNE Initiative**, a project funded by the Wal-Mart Foundation. The Initiative is designed to build pathways into nontraditional employment, and WOW is providing a range of technical assistance to support increased participation and success of women in the nontraditional job training programs.

As part of the **OWNE Initiative, Wider Opportunities for Women** offers:

Technical Assistance:

- Best practices for recruiting and retaining women into non-traditional occupations
- Gender targeted and inclusive curriculum
- Case management and supportive services geared to address the unique needs, wrap around and support services required for women to be successful in nontraditional fields
- Gender-focused work readiness training
- Strategic approaches to job placement and retention for women



Photo courtesy of Dawn Jones, Oregon Tradeswomen Network

Program-Wide Support:

- Professional Development Workshops and Webinars
- Convenings and Peer-Learning Conferences
- On-Site Technical Assistance
- Customized Technical Assistance
- Resources, Materials and Guides

Pink-to-Green Toolkit

WOW developed **an extensive and easy-to-use toolkit and curriculum in order** to help training programs best serve women and confront the barriers of occupational segregation. The toolkit's presentations, trainings, webinars, curriculum modules, briefs, templates, tip sheets, and planning documents are designed to:

- Help workforce development providers assess their capacity for recruiting, assessing, preparing, supporting and placing women in nontraditional occupations;
- Assist training providers in developing plans, processes for recruiting and preparing women for green nontraditional occupations;
- Develop and add training curriculum that is gender neutral, inclusive and targeted;
- Assist training programs in understanding and linking to organized labor, apprenticeships, and major employers.

The toolkit can be used by program planners, managers, and frontline staff in their work conducting outreach and assessment, training, case management, and job development. The toolkit's resources help to ensure that each stage of the job training and employment process—from recruitment through retention—can be responsive to women and improve systems to better address the barriers women face. The materials build the capacity of organizations to attract women to programs and support their success, and offer tips on helping industry partners incorporate policies and practices supporting equity and diversity. The resources also can be used to build on and strengthen existing activities, customize strategies, establish new practices and policies, and deepen effectiveness at serving all participants in an equitable manner.

The **Pink-to-Green Toolkit** <http://greenways.jff.org/toolkit/pinktogreen> is organized into five categories:

1. Outreach and Recruitment of Women
2. Assessment and Case Management for Women
3. Building Critical Skills of Job Readiness
4. Training Design to Facilitate Women's Success in Building Trade Apprenticeships
5. Job Development for Underrepresented Populations

Section 1: Outreach and Recruitment of Women

Increasing women's participation in a green job training program must be approached in a strategic and targeted manner, beginning with an outreach and recruitment process that speaks directly to women. This section offers tools to create a good outreach and recruitment plan, including goals and activities.

Section 2: Building Critical Job-Readiness Skills

Both employers and the administrators of job training programs cite soft skills as more important than job-related skills in determining whether a person succeeds in a job. Gender inequity and gender differences create distinct job-readiness issues for women. Ensure that your program builds participants' work-readiness skills alongside vocational training. Resources in this section offer suggestions for incorporating gender-related topics and a "gender lens" on work readiness into a training program.

Section 3: Assessment and Case Management

Sometimes the skills, processes, or criteria used in assessments for selecting green job training program participants have a negative impact on women. The impact of sex stereotypes and learned biases of program intake staff or the assessment teams may limit their ability to see women as competitive candidates for jobs dominated by men. Sometimes assessment questions and internalized stereotypes may lead women to screen themselves out of consideration. Proper assessment is critical for evaluating clients' core competencies for work readiness. This section offers suggestions for reviewing assessment practices with a gender lens and ensuring that assessment helps to identify supportive service needs of clients.

Section 4: Putting a Gender Lens on Pre-Apprenticeship and Building Trade Apprenticeships Training

Women face particular issues in preparing to be competitive candidates for skilled trade apprenticeships. This section offers a set of four curriculum modules, which address diversity and equity in the workplace, gender related health and safety concerns and communication and presentation skills. Each module offers a trainers guide, student manual, presentation slides, handouts and exercises that can be incorporated into existing curriculum or used as stand-alone modules. This section also includes guidelines and recommendations for gender and racial inclusive program design, as well as instructor training on incorporating gender neutral teaching methods. Included in this section are resources for:

Planning, Instruction and Policy

- Goal Setting
- Guidelines for teaching in an inclusive manner
- Professional development for gender and culturally sensitive teaching practices
- Promote and enforce civil rights and sexual harassment policies and practices
- Gender differences in learning and communication styles
- Facilitate informal support groups, mentoring, peer counseling and networking activities.

Work Readiness

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

Sample Curriculum Modules

- Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment
- Building Cultural Competence
- Health and Safety of Women in Construction
- Communication and Interviewing To Be a Competitive Candidate

Section 5: Job Development for Placing Underrepresented Populations in Green Jobs

Ensuring equal opportunity for women may require more than preparing well-qualified candidates. It may also require overcoming the perceptions and potential reluctance of industry partners — employers, unions, and apprenticeship programs — to hire outside their standard employee base. Challenges and barriers on the industry side can be overcome with targeted information, preparation and support, customized approaches, and strategic engagement. Proactive job developers — using thoughtful, well-planned, and well-executed approaches — can mitigate myths, stereotypes, and related barriers that women face in entering nontraditional fields. Section 5 emphasizes ways to utilize federal, state, and local equal employment and affirmative action policies and regulations to increase the participation of women in job training programs and in the green economy's workforce.

Wider Opportunities for Women

Wider Opportunities for Women (WOW) builds on its vision and mission of economic independence and security for women and girls by working nationally and in its home community of Washington, D.C. WOW engages in organizing, research, technical assistance and policy development to design, implement, and advocate for programs and policies that move low-income families toward economic security. WOW leads a number of efforts including:

- The National Coalition on Women and Job Training, which is comprised of organizations, committed to increasing women and girls access to well-paid work.
- The Family Economic Security Project (FES) that provides resources and technical assistance to state and local organizations to implement policies and programs that help low-income families achieve economic self-sufficiency. The FES project operates in 36 states, reaching more than 2000 community-based organizations;
- The Task Force on Tradeswomen Issues and the Committee on Women in the Trades of the Building and Construction Trades Department of the AFL-CIO to promote public education, policy, institutional change and advocacy on a national level to advance legislative and administrative reforms.

For more information on the GreenWays Initiative and Women's Employment Equity, please contact:
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