

“ BC’s economy needs more women leaders – in business, on boards, in growing industries ”

Women as a Catalyst for Economic Growth:

A British Columbia Action Plan

Presented by the:

The **WEB Alliance**
of women’s business networks

weballiance.ca

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Acknowledgements

Women as a Catalyst for Economic Growth: A BC Action Plan is dedicated to the dynamic women of British Columbia and the many people and organizations who support their economic success.

Thank you to the volunteers, sponsors and organizations that have helped to put this unique *Action Plan* together. A list of the many contributors is included in the appendices of this document.

Message from the Co-Chairs

This *Action Plan* represents an incredible collaboration of people and organizations from across British Columbia who aim to grow the economic impact of women in this province. Never before have so many come together to collectively develop a plan for change. We want to thank the hundreds of people that have shared their expertise, research, knowledge, and time to develop this *Action Plan*.

This *Plan* outlines key steps that government, businesses, and individuals can take to enhance opportunities for women, beginning today. ***The impact comes from every organization and individual taking action now.*** We hope that in this plan, you will find strategies that you can implement in your sphere and encourage your colleagues to do the same. We have tried to include the many ideas and recommendations that were shared. Not all may be representative of the people and organizations that participated, or be appropriate for every organization, but we trust you will find the elements that work for you.

We look forward to bringing together British Columbians from across the province regularly to assess the progress we are making and to determine additional actions to be taken. Together we will grow the economic impact and outcomes for women in BC and contribute to the growth of our provincial economy and beyond.



Co-Chairs Jill Earthy and Lois Nahirney
Courtesy Vancouver Board of Trade and Sara Borck Photography

Executive Summary

Women as a Catalyst for Economic Growth: A BC Action Plan was created to increase the economic growth and impact of women in British Columbia. There is an essential economic need to increase awareness and implement strong actions to shift the dial on this issue in Canada.

This plan is the result of an unprecedented collaboration of people and organizations committed to advancing women. To bring these voices together, the *BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth* was held in October 2014. The Forum was initiated by the WEB Alliance, a collective of 25 women's business networks representing over 10,000 professional and entrepreneurial women in BC.

Over 400 community leaders and influencers from across the province came together at the Forum to generate ideas and actionable recommendations for change.

Women as a Catalyst for Economic Growth: A BC Action Plan represents the collective efforts, ideas, and contributions of these partners to increase the economic impact of women in BC. It outlines key barriers and solutions, and provides recommendations for government, industry and individuals to consider. Further insight was garnered through the extensive research available on this topic as well as discussions with other organizations and individuals committed to shifting the dial on this important issue.

The report provides recommendations in three key areas:

Track 1: Growing Women in Senior Leadership

Track 2: Growing Women Entrepreneurs

Track 3: Growing Women in Non-Traditional Jobs and Emerging Sectors.

In addition to track specific recommendations, common themes arose across the tracks. These themes include the importance of promoting and supporting diversity policies and practices in organizations, the positive impact that champions can have on career advancement for women, support to foster positive and affirming mindsets in women, the need for early education to sustain cultural change, and the role of men in the conversation.

Recommendations arising from these themes that can be implemented by government, industry and individuals include:

1. Promote and advocate diversity.

- a) Implement diversity policies in your organization.
- b) Implement updated talent management systems that positively support the recruitment and development of a pipeline of women.
- c) Develop flexible work practices and policies to support work-life effectiveness for women, families and employees.
- d) Be an advocate for diversity and inclusion.

2. Champion women.

- a) Develop champions, advisors, and sponsors for women seeking to elevate their careers within your organization and community.
- b) Support supplier diversity and invest in women-owned businesses.
- c) Act as a champion, mentor, and role model for women in your life and workplace.
- d) Actively champion your own career and step up to direct your career advancement.

3. Foster positive & self-affirming mindsets.

- a) Support women and girls in building confidence in their skills and capabilities to realize their full career potential.
- b) Encourage family, friends, colleagues and organizations to address self-limiting and societal mindsets that hold many women back.
- c) Adopt a positive mindset and be confident in your abilities.

4. Incorporate a diversity focus in early education.

- a) Enhance the Public Education (K-12) Curriculum to include diversity content that encourages girls to pursue business, entrepreneurship, trades, and STEM.
- b) Act as a sponsor and role model for programs that encourage young girls to pursue leadership and non-traditional roles.

5. Activate men.

- a) Engage men as active participants and critical partners in conversation and action, to collectively shift the dial.

When combined with the detailed action steps outlined in each track within the report, these recommendations form an *Action Plan* to make advances towards realizing the full economic impact of women in our provincial and national economy.

This report will be shared with all levels of government, corporate and non-profit organizations, as well as interested individuals. It is aimed at sparking action across all levels within these organizations and sectors. Progress will be measured on an annual basis through the recurring *BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth* event.

Supporting women in business is an economic opportunity for BC and beyond. Now is the time to take action!

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Introduction

THE ECONOMIC IMPERATIVE FOR ACTION

Supporting the professional advancement of women is an economic imperative. This theme has been building for decades and was highlighted at the September 2011 Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, where then Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton said; *“by increasing women’s participation in the economy and enhancing their efficiency and productivity, we can have a dramatic impact on the competitiveness and growth of our economies.”*

Since 2004, a series of studies conducted by Catalyst, Inc. have shown that companies that achieve diversity in their management and on their corporate boards attain better financial results on average than other companies. According to Catalyst’s *Bottom Line* study, companies with more women board directors outperform those with the fewest by 66 percent return on invested capital, 53 percent return on equity and 42 percent return on sales.¹

Entrepreneurs are one of the largest drivers of economic growth. Women continue to start businesses at a greater rate than men, with women owning over one-third of all small business and 16 percent of businesses with fewer than 100 employees in Canada.² In BC, 37.7 percent of small business owners are women.³ The Canadian Taskforce for Women’s Business Growth found that *“a 20 percent increase in total revenues among majority female-owned enterprises will contribute an additional \$2 billion per annum to the Canadian economy.”*⁴

Labour market projections from both the provincial and federal governments show a pressing skills gap with significant impacts on economic growth. Engaging women in rewarding careers in the trades and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields can meet this skills shortage head on.

The business case is clear. There is an essential economic need to increase awareness and implement strong actions to shift the dial on this issue in Canada. We have an opportunity in BC to be leaders in taking action.

BACKGROUND TO THE ACTION PLAN

This *Action Plan* was developed through an incredible collaboration of people and organizations across British Columbia. To bring these voices together, the *BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth* was held on October 24, 2014. It was the first event of its kind in British Columbia, convening over 400 community leaders and influencers from across BC and Canada and representing a variety of sectors to develop actionable recommendations to support women’s economic growth.

This Forum was initiated by the WEB Alliance, a dynamic collective of over 25 women’s business networks in the lower mainland representing over 10,000 professional and entrepreneurial women in BC.

In February 2013, representatives of the WEB Alliance met with The Honourable Christy Clark, Premier of British Columbia, to discuss recommendations for supporting women to create economic growth in the Province. The recommendations resulted in the Premier establishing the Premier’s Women’s Economic Council (PWEC) with experienced business women representing a range of industries and regions across the Province.⁵ The Council provides the Premier and Ministers with ongoing advisory input on issues, strategies, policies, and actions that can further women’s business opportunities in the province, and in doing so, strengthen BC’s economy.

The WEB Alliance and PWEC resolved to bring together a diverse group of voices to generate recommendations and solutions to support the success of more women in business in BC. In partnership with the Vancouver Board of Trade through the Women’s Leadership Circle, the highly collaborative action focused *BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth* was created.

The Forum and this resulting *Action Plan* represent a truly collaborative, comprehensive, and powerful effort.



BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth October 24, 2014
Courtesy Vancouver Board of Trade and Sara Borck Photography

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACTION PLAN

The *BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth* drew on the expertise of over 400 women and men participants hailing from across the Province and representing a vast array of business and leadership experiences to develop an action plan specific to BC, in three areas or “tracks” of importance:

Track 1: Growing Women in Senior Leadership

Track 2: Growing Women Entrepreneurs

Track 3: Growing Women in Non-Traditional Jobs and Emerging Sectors

Uniquely formatted sessions had participants working in small groups throughout the day to identify:

- **Barriers** preventing women in BC from reaching their full economic and career potential
- **Solutions** to support women to overcome identified barriers; and
- **Recommendations** for specific actions that government, agencies, industry, and individuals can take to support and increase the contributions that women can make and the positive impact they can have on BC's economy.

Hundreds of pages of ideas and recommendations were captured. This report distills these ideas and conversations into an action plan to support change in these three key areas and to generate awareness across the Province of British Columbia, and Canada, of the economic and social imperative for change. It draws on the expertise of the Forum attendees, and an extensive body of reputable research that has been published by both national and international organizations. The Forum and this *Action Plan* validate and integrate this existing knowledge with the current BC context.

FORMAT OF THE ACTION PLAN

The contents of this report follow the tracks of the forum and are organized by – (1) women in senior leadership, (2) women entrepreneurs, and (3) women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors. Each section highlights the current state for each area, top barriers faced by women, solutions for overcoming the identified barriers, and specific recommendations for action by government, industry, and individuals.

In addition to specific recommendations by track, a number of common themes and recommendations emerged across the tracks. These common themes and recommendations are provided at the end and offer a useful summary of key actions that can be taken to make a difference.

At the close of the Forum, individual participants recorded personal commitments they will make going forward that they believe will lead to positive change for our economy and, in turn, to our social fabric in BC. These personal commitments are embedded in the report and common commitments are provided as recommendations that can be taken up by any individual across the province.



BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth Steering Committee and PWEC

Track 1

Women in Senior Leadership

Track 1: Women in Senior Leadership

CURRENT STATE

Women comprise 47 percent of the Canadian labour force; however this workforce participation rate is not reflected in the diversity of senior executives and board directors. The 2013 Catalyst Census showed that women account for 5.3 percent of Canadian CEOs/heads and hold 15.9 percent of board seats in S&P/TSX 60 companies, with 40 percent of companies having no women on their board of directors.⁶ With Crown Corporations removed from the list, the result is even lower.

Representation of women on S&P/TSX 60 boards of directors shifted slightly to 20.8 percent in 2014, however these numbers still remain far from parity.⁷ Catalyst research shows that over the last decade, the pace of change has been slow, despite growing talent pools and research aligning diversity of senior leadership to positive business outcomes.^{8,9} If the rate of change from this past decade is sustained, reaching even 25 percent representation of women as executives and board member will take 15 and 20 years respectively.¹⁰

This imbalance of women in senior leadership roles has a significant impact on the competitiveness and success of Canadian companies across all sectors and industries. The 2011 Global Gender Gap Report from the World Economic Forum emphasized that “diverse leadership is most likely to find innovative solutions to tackle current economic challenges and to build equitable and sustainable growth.”¹¹ A 2010 report by the European Commission noted that bringing women to the table in senior leadership roles is linked with greater economic growth and stability on a macro-level.¹²

Studies have shown that boards with representation from women perform better on a range of success indicators including attracting and retaining top talent, heightened innovation, enhanced client insight, and increased board effectiveness.¹³ Catalyst, Inc.’s *Bottom Line* study, which assessed financial data for Fortune 500 companies over 4 years, found that companies with more women board directors outperformed those with the fewest by 66 percent return on invested capital, 53 percent return on equity and 42 percent return on sales.¹⁴

A short supply of qualified candidates is often cited as a reason for gaps in the representation of women on boards; however research has found that there is no shortage of women who possess the skills and competencies desired in board members.¹⁵ Instead, what these qualified women lack is a sponsor or champion who can vouch and advocate for them.

Momentum is building for a shift in these numbers numerous articles and studies being highlighted in national and international media on the imperative for increasing representation of women in senior leadership. However, good intentions and media coverage alone will not be sufficient to meet this challenge. Transformative and systemic change is needed to realize the full economic potential of the Canadian workforce and the Canadian economy through advancing women at all levels and in all sectors.

BARRIERS

Statistics highlighting the attrition of women in the talent pipeline from entry level to senior leadership positions provide a stark picture of current shortcomings. Embedded within these statistics are barriers that continue to dampen the career advancement of women despite their significant overall increases in workforce participation.

The gender gap in senior leadership is not due to a lack of supply or drive. Women make up nearly half of the Canadian labour force and more women than ever are obtaining undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate qualifications in Canada. A study conducted by McKinsey & Company in 2013 showed that interest in aspiring to senior management roles is strong among women in entry and mid-level positions.¹⁶

The nexus point comes at the actual career advancement beyond middle management into upper management – the leaky talent pipeline.

Research and data point to a range of internal and external barriers that hinder the advancement of women in the talent pipeline, as summarized in Figure 1.

		Women Executives	Women on Boards
Individual Barriers	Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of flexibility for family needs Desire for work-life balance Concern over work and travel commitments Alternative lifestyle opportunities more appealing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of visibility Lack of sponsorship and advocacy Lack of inclusion in networks or ability to utilize them
	Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater hesitancy relating to promotions Need to 'be valued' vs. Need to 'win' Reduced pursuit of advancement when older 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of confidence Lack of self-promotion Lower risk tolerances
Organizational/ Societal Barriers	Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of role models Exclusion from informal networks & mentoring Lack of sponsored opportunities & critical work experience/responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of role models Industry outsiders excluded from opportunities Existing Board Members not retiring to make way for new directors
	Mindset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subtle workplace discrimination Absence of diversity champions Gender norms & gender biases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subtle board discrimination Perceived shortage of qualified candidates

Figure 1 – Snapshot of individual and organizational/societal barriers to increasing the representation of women in executive roles and women on boards.

Building on existing bodies of knowledge and research, Forum participants identified, discussed, and ranked the following as the top barriers to advancing women in senior leadership in British Columbia and Canada. Discussions groups at the Forum focused on (a) women executives or (b) women on boards, however, many of the barriers identified span both, with unique impacts and nuanced challenges within them.

Barriers to Advancing Women in Senior Leadership:

- Lack of Sponsorship, Advocacy, Champions and Role Models
- Less Access to Critical Roles and Experiences
- Outdated Leadership Models
- Self-limiting Mindsets and Societal Gender Biases
- Biased or Lack of Defined Criteria for Recruitment and Advancement
- Lack of Workplace Flexibility

LACK OF SPONSORSHIP, ADVOCACY, CHAMPIONS, AND ROLE MODELS

Networks and sponsors who act as champions are critical to career advancement. A lack of role models, exclusion from informal networks, and absence of a sponsor in upper management create obstacles to women and prevent them from bridging the gap from middle management to senior leadership.

Women are often encouraged to seek out mentoring relationships which provide many positive outcomes, however mentorship alone is not sufficient to accelerate career growth. Mentorship combined with sponsorship is critical.

For business women, sponsors go beyond providing advice and guidance; they act as advocates who will lend their credibility to advancing the career of their protégés. Sponsors within the workplace often connect their protégés to influential networks and assignments, and advocate for them in discussions relating to promotions and pay increases. Research underscores the positive career outcomes associated with pervasive sponsorship. Studies cited by the US-based Center for Talent Innovation found that sponsorship can provide professionals with up to a 30 percent increase of critical assignments and pay.¹⁷

Research from Catalyst, Inc. shows that mentors who are more highly placed in organizations have more impact on career growth as they are better positioned to provide active sponsorship for their mentees.¹⁸ The same Catalyst study found that men were more likely than women to have senior mentors. Findings from in-depth interviews published in the *Harvard Business Review* exploring the root causes behind disparities in promotion statistics between men and women found that high potential women were over mentored, and under sponsored.¹⁹

For women on boards, lack of sponsorship also emerges as the top barrier given current practices for recruitment and appointment of board members. Board recruitment processes tend to focus on the C-Suite and recruiting from within traditional networks. As a result, while many women possess the skills and competencies desired of board members, they lack the sponsors within these networks who can put their names forward, vouch for their skill set, and advocate for them.

Additionally, women face unconscious and overt biases when it comes to benefiting from active sponsorship. Studies on sponsorship highlight that individuals who sponsor are most likely to select protégés who are most similar to themselves. As a result, male professionals are up to 46 percent more likely to have sponsors.²⁰ Research also shows that women are often evaluated for promotions based on performance while men are often evaluated on potential, further emphasising the need for women to have sponsors who can advocate on their behalf.²¹

LESS ACCESS TO CRITICAL ROLES AND EXPERIENCES

Visible projects and experiences are critical to career advancement and to demonstrate capacity and capability to take on senior leadership roles. A longitudinal study following men and women MBA graduates published by Catalyst, Inc. in 2012 showed that training alone does not account for the gender gap in senior leadership. It is on-the-job experience, and by extension workplace practices and assignments, that is more influential.²²

The study found that women receive fewer “high visibility, mission-critical roles and international experience that are integral to career advancement”, pointing towards unequal access as a cause for this gap. The study found that women were less likely to be offered international experiences, even though they were equally as likely as their male counterparts to accept such positions when they were offered them.

OUTDATED LEADERSHIP MODELS

Cultural and workplace norms have not evolved with the changing workforce demographics and increased diversity within the workforce. This has resulted in a one-dimensional view of leadership that associates successful leadership with men and masculine characteristics and traits, such as more directive and driving approaches. This engrained culture harbours overt and unconscious discrimination towards women leaders.

It is widely accepted that there are different styles of leadership such as those that are more collaborative and consultative, and that these different styles can achieve similar, if not better outcomes than traditionally valued styles. Countless studies have pinpointed unfavourable gender biases surrounding leadership spanning the career trajectory from hiring through to promotions.²³ However, in practice, leadership models continue to build on traditional, male-centric notions of management and leadership and as a result these notions serve as the metric by which career advancement is determined and leadership potential is assessed.

SELF-LIMITING MINDSETS AND SOCIETAL GENDER BIASES

In addition to the structural and organizational barriers that women face, there are also internal barriers that continue to hold women back, including a highly researched “confidence gap” between men and women. This research shows that women tend to be less confident in themselves and their abilities, and by extension unnecessarily count themselves out of potential promotions or opportunities in the workplace.

Women are less likely to apply for positions where they feel they do not “tick all the boxes”.²⁴ Women also seek to feel valued, and as a result will often take on work that they perceive will add value to the organization or team, rather than work that will add value to their own careers, which, in turn, can lead to accepting less visible projects or roles.

There have been many studies conducted on the origins and systemic societal notions that, from a young age, spark and reinforce this confidence gap. A recent feature article in *The Atlantic* which summarized these societal influences aptly noted that in order to succeed, “confidence matters as much as competence.”²⁵ While this confidence gap persists, it has an impact on the ability of women to advance their own career trajectories, further reinforcing the importance of sponsors and champions.

While mentorship and sponsorship are critical to overcoming self-limiting mindsets, many of these internal barriers are developed by girls and women from a young age and can be difficult to overcome once they have been imbedded in personal and social norms.

Additionally, both men and women hold overt and unconscious gender biases relating to the role of women in society, the workplace, and the household. These biases when left unchecked can have powerful negative consequences on career advancement.

BIASED OR LACK OF DEFINED CRITERIA FOR RECRUITMENT AND ADVANCEMENT

Recruitment and appointment processes including job descriptions, job postings, interview criteria and interviews, often use a traditional ‘best person for the job’ approach of decision making. They tend to focus on hard skills versus soft skills, when often it is the soft skills that determine success in the position. Women tend to bring many of the critical soft skills needed for jobs in the form of teamwork, collaboration, and engagement. Women also bring a different and valuable perspective to teams or organizations with high ratios of men. These attributes and contributions are often not sought or evaluated in the recruitment process.

In order to demonstrate readiness and ability to take on senior leadership roles, it is critical to understand the criteria for advancement. In most organizations, there is a lack of defined requirements, expectations, qualifications and competencies for advancement to senior positions. This becomes an even larger issue when it is coupled with the fact that women are more often judged on performance, while men are more often judged for promotions on potential.²⁶

A widely referenced internal Hewett Packard report found that women were most likely to apply for positions where they felt they met 100 percent of the qualification, whereas men, on average, were more likely to apply for positions if they felt they met 60 percent of the desired qualifications.²⁷

Further insights into this topic published in the *Harvard Business Review* showed that internal thinking behind the decision to not apply for a position is linked most closely to perceptions relating to the hiring process. These perceptions are rooted in a misconception that “advocacy, relationships, or a creative approach to framing one’s expertise”²⁸ are not sufficient to overcome a perceived lack of defined qualifications.

With respect to board appointments, recruitment is often targeted at C-Suite level professionals, rather than recruitment based on the competencies required for board effectiveness. These recruitment practices then reinforce myths that there is a lack of qualified women to serve on boards and create unrealistic profiles of who board members can and should be, rather than what skills and competencies potential board members should bring to the table.

LACK OF WORKPLACE FLEXIBILITY

Despite higher than ever workforce participation rates among women in Canada, societal expectations and norms continue to fall on women to be the primary caretakers and take on the lion’s share of household tasks. While both men and women have a desire to achieve for work-life effectiveness, these social norms make attaining this effectiveness a greater necessity for women. In order to achieve work-life effectiveness, workplace flexibility related to family needs is critical. Such flexibility must be enacted as a genuine tool to enable greater engagement and work-life integration for all employees, not just women.

Flexibility must also be offered without strings attached. Too often, when women accept flexible work options and family benefits they tend to be viewed as stepping back from or deprioritizing their careers. This results in further biases against women for promotions and critical roles and projects.

SOLUTIONS

Forum participants identified and prioritized the following solutions to address the barriers discussed above. From these discussions, participants generated recommendations for specific actions that government, industry, and individuals can take to support and increase the advancement of women in senior leadership in BC and Canada. These are detailed in the next section.

The solutions discussed in this section do not correspond directly with the specific barriers identified above. Rather the following solutions may address multiple barriers identified at the Forum and in other research.

Solutions for Advancing Women in Senior Leadership:

- Embed Diversity Strategies across the Talent Pipeline
- Implement Policies Supporting Work-Life Effectiveness
- Develop and Recognize Champions, Mentors and Sponsors
- Increase Awareness
- Modernize Leadership Models through Education and Training

EMBED DIVERSITY STRATEGIES THROUGHOUT THE TALENT PIPELINE

Women face internal and external barriers to career advancement starting from entry level throughout the entire talent pipeline. Initiatives or strategies targeted at individual points of the talent pipeline or employee development trajectory can help but they are not as effective as a strategic approach that holistically targets known barriers throughout the career trajectory. When building such strategies, organizations should also account for ‘on’ and ‘off ramps’ to engage talent who may be considering alternative career pathways or reintegrating into industry after gaining experience from different paths such as the non-profit sector, entrepreneurial endeavours, or taking time off.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: RBC

RBC utilizes a multipronged approach to recruiting diverse candidates, with strategies including leveraging technology, key partnerships, a highly trained team of recruiters, and a diversity-specific recruitment department.

A diversity scorecard is used to monitor progress, showing recruitment and human resources activities such as hires, promotions, terminations, and representation of women and minorities by organizational level.

Strategies implemented at all stages of recruitment, human resources, and talent development processes, as noted in Figure 2, must articulate and embody a value for diversity and invest in the development of high potential women within organizations. These strategies embedded throughout the talent pipeline are critical to identify and address the barriers that result in women exiting the pipeline for alternative paths that provide more compelling options to realize their work-life effectiveness priorities and career growth goals.

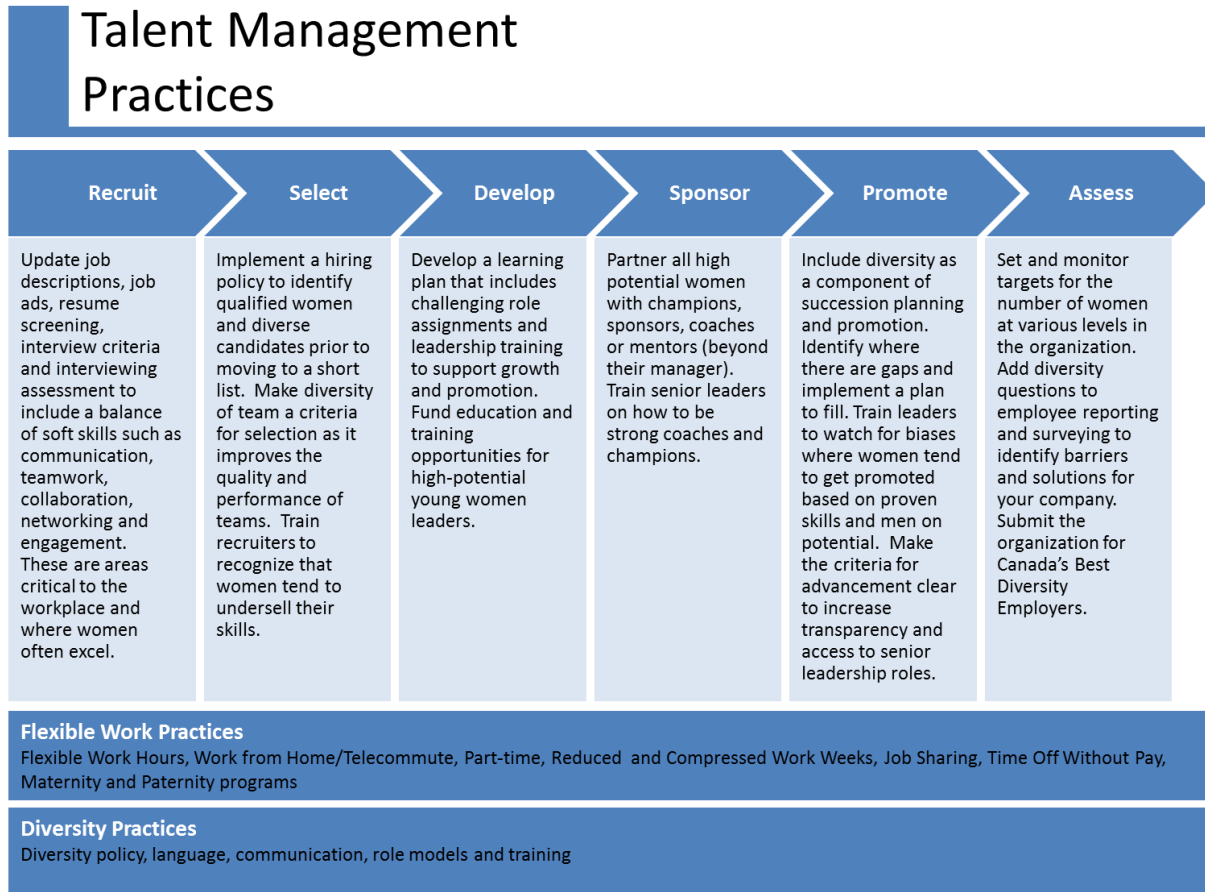


Figure 2 – Snapshot of effective and inclusive talent management practices throughout the talent pipeline.

While some women may opt out of the talent pipeline between entry levels and senior leadership, there are many women who seek to reintegrate into the talent pipeline after building skills and advancing through alternative career pathways or taking time off. Developing strategies to reintegrate and recognize the skills and competencies that these women bring to the talent pool is essential to advancing top talent into senior leadership roles.

In addition to implementing strategies throughout the talent pipeline, it is critical to embed mechanisms to monitor progress, highlight successes, and better target and refine strategies. Many organizations have achieved this through implementing ‘diversity scorecards’ that set out key metrics for the organization and facilitate annual reporting.

IMPLEMENT POLICIES SUPPORTING WORK-LIFE EFFECTIVENESS

Policies and practices that recognize the necessity of work-life effectiveness for all employees, and particularly women, are essential for sustaining the positive flow of the talent pipeline. Flexible work arrangement options and policies relating to maternity and paternity leaves and access to child care are important for both men and women who seek to balance a rewarding career with their family priorities.

BEST PRACTICE EXAMPLE: MCCARTHY TÉTRAULT LLP

McCarthy Tétrault offers a comprehensive parental leave program that includes paid leave, support resources, and flexibility options. For employees taking parental leave, the firm offers a formal buddy system – connecting new parents to parents within the firm to gain advice and mentorship. The relationship involves supporting with (a) preparation for leave; (b) maintaining contact during the leave; and (c) supporting reintegration and work-life balance.

Source: Catalyst Inc., Knowledge Centre

Flexible work arrangements, when designed around business needs, can not only help to retain talent, but can also increase job satisfaction among employees. Examples of such arrangements vary across organizations depending on the nature of the business. Common examples include flexible work hours, telecommuting, compressed work week options, job sharing, and access to time off without pay.

As challenges surrounding transition back to work following parental leave persist, it is necessary to provide specific strategies to support employees, and particularly women, beyond paid leave. Effective strategies include policies such as gradual return to work options that provide flexibility for employees as they return from a leave, or initiatives that keep employees engaged and informed while on leave and provide support during the transition back to work.

DEVELOP AND RECOGNIZE CHAMPIONS, MENTORS AND SPONSORS

Sponsors and mentors can help to address some of the internal and external barriers women face in career advancement. However, equitable and pervasive sponsorship and mentorship within organizations has not and will not emerge organically. Individual organizations must make a concerted effort to create a culture of sponsorship through education, training, and organized programs. Organizations also have the ability to set expectations of their senior leadership to support and embody values of diversity and inclusion.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: TELUS EXCELLENCE AWARDS

In 2011, TELUS launched the Connections Honours Leader of Excellence Awards to recognize leaders within the company, including those who have made significant contributions to the advancement of women in the organization. There are 5 categories; 4 specifically open to females and one called Champion of Women recognizes a male or female team member who has made a distinct difference to the advancement of women at TELUS.

Recognizing and profiling individuals and organizations who exemplify a commitment to investing in diverse talent not only reinforces positive action, but can also act as a mechanism to increase the visibility of role models and best practices. Embedding recognition for individuals who actively champion diversity within existing organizational reward structures highlights the integral link between advancing diversity and achieving business outcomes.

On a broader level, a critical champion for advancing diversity is the government. Strong leadership from government is required to not only set expectations for industry, but also articulate and promote the business case for change, and embody the principles that enable the advancement of women. Government has a leadership role to play to set conditions and policies that facilitate a supportive and flexible environment for professional women, such as parental leave and accessible child care. Broader access to and promotion of such policies and arrangements can also help to shift cultural norms relating to gender roles.

INCREASE AWARENESS

In order to bring about change, a strong understanding of the current state and case for action is necessary. Many individuals and organizations are not aware of the stark gender gap in senior leadership across Canada, and even more so many organizations are unaware of how they can act on this issue in a meaningful way. The business case for change and the resources available for individuals and organizations to draw from to facilitate change must be publicized and made readily available.

Role modelling and recognition are two important elements of culture change. On an individual level, women of all ages in BC will benefit from increased public recognition and profiling of women in senior leadership roles. On a broader level, building awareness of companies and individuals who are “getting it right” can help to catalyze action by others. Mechanisms for recognizing and profiling these champions are essential to increase awareness, role models, and to highlight that positive change is achievable.

Initiatives that highlight commitments made by businesses towards achieving more diverse leadership teams and boards help to increase awareness. Public commitments such as the Catalyst Accord, which numerous Canadian companies have signed, or the Diversity50 Awards have a critical role to increase public visibility by linking diversity objectives to business objectives.

In order to break the myth of a lack of supply of qualified women to fill senior leadership roles and board appointments, greater awareness and visibility of capable and qualified women is needed. Visibility will not only increase public awareness and role models, it will also provide a ready pool of qualified candidates for industry to draw upon when considering future board appointments.

Identifying the existing pool of candidates, tapping high potential future candidates and introducing them to a board trajectory, as well as increasing awareness of the skills and competencies required for effective board governance are important strategies that address current and future needs in connecting businesses to diverse talent.

MODERNIZE LEADERSHIP MODELS THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Within Organizations

Understanding diversity and the benefits of different models and approaches to leadership is essential to normalize and value the skills that women can bring to senior leadership roles and teams. Education must go beyond awareness, and integrate skills to address unconscious biases in hiring, promotion, and role assignment processes. This is critical to initiating change.

Education and training on diversity is applicable to all levels of an organization, from entry level to senior management, however, visible participation and investment from senior leaders is essential to role modelling and culture change.

Beyond diversity training for all employees, investing in education and training for high potential leaders is critical to building and retaining top talent to take on senior leadership roles. By funding such opportunities for women and tapping high potential women on the shoulder to take on these training opportunities can be a powerful tool to build the talent pipeline, and to build confidence and self-determination for women.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: HAWKAIR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Hawkair provides an open enrolment executive development program for women in leadership roles or those being considered for leadership roles within the organization. The program consists of: leadership rotations; industry participation; mentoring; and education.

Education from K-12

Many of the biases and mindsets that continue to hold women back are developed and reinforced early on. Leadership from the public education sector is critical. Evolution of early education is required to address the prevalence of outdated leadership models and imbedded individual mindsets and biases.

Enhancement of the public education curriculum from an early age with business competencies and leadership training will result in a change to cultural, social, and internalized definitions of leadership among the next generation of leaders. Examples of effective learning tools that can be leveraged to achieve such outcomes include content from the MIT Leadership Training Institute²⁹, the Goldie Hawn Foundation's 'Mind Up' program³⁰, West Vancouver's Mulgrave School's 'How to Run Your Own Business' course³¹, and Junior Achievement's 'Business Literacy for Kids' programs, to name a few.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From barriers and solutions, specific recommendations were developed for government, industry, and individuals to support and increase the advancement of women in senior leadership in BC and Canada. When taken together, these recommendations form an *Action Plan* to shift the dial towards systemic and sustained change to advance BC's economy.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOMEN IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP

Government

1. Increase transparency of board diversity representation and policies by endorsing comply or explain diversity targets and reporting for TSX-listed companies.
2. Publicize and promote the business case for diversity, flexibility, visible role models and diversity champions.
3. Continue to hire and appoint qualified women to middle and senior leadership levels and to board ranks within government and crown corporations.
4. Leverage the Board Resourcing Development Office to facilitate connections among candidates and boards and support recruitment and appointment of women to boards.
5. Incorporate business and diversity content into the BC Public Education Curriculum.

Industry

1. Develop and promote a diversity policy, utilize inclusive language, profile role models and implement diversity training to establish a culture that values and brings visibility to diversity.
2. Implement updated talent management systems, practices and policies to support a pipeline of women leaders and diversity in business.
3. Implement flexible work practices and policies to support employees in balancing family needs, and increase work satisfaction.
4. Implement enhanced maternity and paternity programs, graduated parental return-to-work, child care, and reintegration programs.
5. Promote diversity in the company's executive and on the company's board of directors – target at least 30 percent women on the company's executive and board of directors.

Individuals

1. Commit to mentoring and sponsoring a promising young female leader.
2. Continue this conversation with friends, families, colleagues, and especially with men.
3. Identify and champion solutions and actions that can be implemented in organizations you are a part of.
4. Take up opportunities to challenge and re-frame ingrained practices towards greater inclusion of women.
5. Nominate your female colleagues and women you admire for prestigious awards and recognition for their contributions.
6. Focus your personal investment and consumer power on companies with diverse boards and diverse senior leadership teams.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

Government

- 1. Increase transparency of board diversity representation and policies by endorsing comply or explain diversity targets and reporting for TSX-listed companies.**
 - a) Support transparent firm level reporting of information for TSX-listed companies on:
 - Number of women serving on the board and filling executive positions.
 - Mechanisms for identifying and selecting woman for board and executive selection processes.
 - Policies relating to recruitment and representation of women on the board and executive positions.
 - Targets for representation of women on the board and in executive positions.
 - b) Promote female board diversity targets of 30 percent for all companies in BC, including crown and public corporations.
 - c) Encourage voluntary diversity targets and reporting for TSX Venture and private companies.
- 2. Publicize and promote the business case for diversity, flexibility, visible role models and diversity champions.**
 - a) Embed diversity links to research and information within government and agency websites, publications, and strategies.
 - b) Collect and promote best practices that industry and individuals can readily access and implement.
- 3. Continue to hire and appoint qualified women to middle and senior leadership levels and to board ranks within government and crown corporations.**
 - b) Continue to be a leader in hiring and appointing women at above 30 percent.
 - c) Highlight women with public sector experience for private sector boards.
 - d) Share best practices as an example for the private sector and other jurisdictions to follow.
- 4. Leverage the Board Resourcing Development Office to facilitate connections between candidates and boards and support recruitment and appointment of women to boards.**
 - a) Develop or assist with the development of a BC database/list of female board-ready candidates for the public and private sectors.
 - b) Offer names to corporations looking for women board members.

5. Incorporate business and diversity content into the BC Public Education Curriculum.

- a) Add more business, entrepreneurship, STEM and trades content to the curriculum.
- b) Incorporate greater leadership training and soft skills development into the curriculum.
- c) Leverage women and diverse role models in the classroom.
- d) Include these elements in the BC Education Innovation Strategy and curriculum review.

Industry

1. Develop and promote a diversity policy, utilize inclusive language, profile role models and implement diversity training to establish a culture that values and brings visibility to diversity.

- a) **Diversity Policy** – Develop a published diversity policy for the organization.
- b) **Diversity Language** – Ensure inclusive language is used in all organizational communications.
- c) **Diversity Communications** – Develop diverse stories for internal and external websites.
- d) **Role Models** – Highlight female and diverse role models within the organization. Nominate outstanding women for internal or external awards programs.
- e) **Diversity Training** – Offer diversity training for both men and women at all levels of the organization, particularly in areas where there may be limited awareness of the issue of unconscious bias, related to the value of diversity on teams and business objectives.

2. Implement updated talent management systems, practices and policies to support a pipeline of women leaders and diversity in business.

- a) **Recruitment** – Update job descriptions, job ads, resume screening, interview criteria and interview assessment to include a balance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, collaboration, networking and engagement. These are areas critical to the workplace.
- b) **Selection** – Implement hiring policies to identify qualified women and diverse candidates prior to moving to a short list. Make team diversity a criterion for selection as it improves the quality and performance of teams. Train recruiters to recognize that women tend to undersell their skills.
- c) **Development** – Develop a learning plan that includes challenging assignments and leadership training to support growth and promotion. Fund education and training opportunities for high-potential young women leaders.
- d) **Sponsorship** - Partner all high potential women with champions, sponsors, coaches or mentors (beyond their manager). Train senior leaders to be strong coaches and champions.
- e) **Promotion** – Include diversity as a component of succession planning and promotion. Identify gaps and implement a plan to address them. Train leaders to watch for biases such as where women tend to get promoted based on proven skills and men on

potential. Make the criteria for advancement clear to increase transparency and access to senior leadership roles.

- f) **Assessment** – Set and monitor targets for the number of women at various levels in the organization. Add diversity questions to employee reporting and survey to identify barriers and solutions for your company. Submit the organization for Canada’s Best Diversity Employers to highlight the diversity practices of your company and attract further strong female candidates.ⁱ
- 3. Implement flexible work practices and policies to support employees in balancing family needs, and increase work satisfaction.**

Where business requirements can be met, flexible work policies may include –

- a) **Flexible Work Hours** – Enable employees to flex their hours over the course of a week or month provided they meet their required work hours and tasks. Define ‘core hours’ or ‘coverage requirements’ and support a schedule to ensure that these are met.
 - b) **Work From Home/Telecommute** – Support employees to work from home on a regular or *ad hoc* basis depending on business needs.
 - c) **Part-Time, Reduced Work Day or Reduced Work Week** – Accommodate 60-80 percent work days or weeks, or part-time schedules, particularly for families with young children or people with health issues.
 - d) **Compressed Work Week** – Allow employees to extend work days in order to reduce work hours on other days.
 - e) **Job Sharing** – Enable employees to propose job-sharing arrangements on a 50/50 or 60/40 basis.
 - f) **Time Off Without Pay** – Allow employees to take a week off without pay at any time, and up to 1 to 3 months off without pay based on business needs.
- 4. Implement enhanced maternity and paternity programs, graduated parental return-to-work, child care, and reintegration programs.**
- a) **Maternity** – Provide a period of topped up benefits for women in addition to legally mandated maternity leave pay.
 - b) **Paternity** – Offer a matching time off and top-up program for men. Men who stay at home build stronger family relationships, better empathy for working parents, and support their partners’ careers.

ⁱ Canada's Best Diversity Employers recognizes employers across Canada that demonstrate exceptional workplace diversity and inclusiveness programs: <http://www.canadastop100.com/diversity/>

- c) **Graduated Return-To-Work** – Support a graduated return-to-work program. Such programs support employees in finding an appropriate balance between work and home following a leave.
 - d) **Child Care** – Offer child care benefits as a distinct benefit or part of a flex benefit program. Negotiate preferred rates for employees at local daycares. On Pro-D days, set up a meeting room for parents to bring in their children. Where possible, encourage parents to bring their children to visit their workplace signalling that the workplace is a family-friendly environment.
 - e) **Reintegration** – Implement policies and programs to recruit and support women transitioning back into industry from small businesses, non-profit organizations, entrepreneurial endeavours, or time off from work.
- 5. Promote diversity in the company's executive and on the company's board of directors – target at least 30 percent women on the company's executive and board of directors.**
- a) Identify and develop high potential woman candidates for succession planning for executive roles. Go to market for female executives when recruiting for vacancies where there are no female succession candidates.
 - b) Leverage networks to identify qualified woman candidates for board of directors positions (e.g. Board Resourcing Development Office, Diversity 50, WEB Alliance, WXN).

Individuals

Forum participants in Track 1 made strong personal commitments towards immediate actions that they and all British Columbians can take to advance women to senior leadership. Below are their commitment quotes and some steps that you can take today that to shift the dial within your own community:

1. Commit to mentoring and sponsoring a promising young female leader.

“Continue to mentor younger women through their careers and move that mentorship relationship into a sponsor/champion role for those women by developing, supporting and putting forward those individuals for opportunities to help further their careers.”

“I commit to being much more focused on sponsoring/championing individuals in my firm who support diversity. In my mentorship role, share my experiences with others and encourage some strong leaders to also consider doing this.”

2. Continue this conversation with friends, families, colleagues, and especially with men.

“Have sometimes difficult conversations with my peers and leaders about issues of diversity and gender inequity in the workplace.”

"I commit to being a champion for change within my organization, to keep the conversation alive regardless of the pace (or lack thereof) of culture change that will ensure the growth of women in leadership positions."

"I will organize an International Women's Day Event (inclusive of men) to highlight women's current position and a future vision."

"Actively participate in all dialogues on the issue of growing women's participation in the economy."

3. Identify and champion solutions and actions that can be implemented in organizations you are a part of.

"I will leverage my position as VP to develop flexible work schedules."

"Implement a 'champion of diversity corporate program'."

"Ensure our leadership development program nurtures and supports growing women in leadership roles as a priority focus."

"As a member of board nominating committees (or even if not on the committee), I will champion women's appointments and year round seek potential candidates."

4. Take up opportunities to challenge and re-frame ingrained practices towards greater inclusion of women.

"Challenge my organization's succession planning to ensure that women are given meaningful consideration and training for leadership roles."

"Consider and evaluate how my own biases can shift to better support the advancement of women."

"I will acknowledge the skills and the competencies at the board tables that I sit on. This will educate and reinforce and highlight the specific skills and competencies that women bring to the table."

5. Nominate your female colleagues and women you admire for prestigious awards and recognition for their contributions.

"I will actively nominate at least 2 women for awards programs each year."

6. Focus your personal investment and consumer power on companies with diverse boards and diverse senior leadership teams.

"I will look up female-run firms and target female representatives for future purchasing decisions."



Track 2

Women Entrepreneurs

Track 2: Women Entrepreneurs

CURRENT STATE

A strong entrepreneurial sector is essential to a thriving economy. Currently in North America, small and medium enterprises are creating new jobs at a rapid rate. As of 2014, there were 382,200 small businesses operating in British Columbia.³² Economic development initiatives, particularly those aimed at women, help increase the number of businesses being started and assist new businesses to grow, create new jobs, and stimulate the economy.

Woman-owned businesses represent \$117 billion of annual economic activity in Canada.³³ A 2010 report by the Canadian Taskforce for Women's Business Growth highlighted that investing in women entrepreneurs presents a significant opportunity for enhancing the Canadian economy. The taskforce noted that *"a 20 percent increase in total revenues among majority female-owned enterprises will contribute an additional \$2 billion per annum to the Canadian economy."*³⁴

Statistics show that Canadian women start businesses at a greater rate than men, yet they are less likely to scale up their businesses.³⁵ Women own over one-third of all small businesses (fewer than 50 employees) and 16 percent of all businesses with fewer than 100 employees in Canada; however their sales and employment levels fall below the provincial and national averages.³⁶ Businesses owned by men are more than 3.5 times more likely to reach the threshold of \$1M in revenues.³⁷

Woman-owned firms are disproportionately represented in the retail and service sectors, where firms generally face higher competition and have lower profit margins.³⁸ Knowledge-based industries and manufacturing sector businesses tend to be higher-wage industries with greater profitability. In Canada, only 6 percent of woman owned firms are operating in these sectors.³⁹ Woman-owned firms are also less likely to participate in high potential export markets, with less than 10 percent of Canadian women entrepreneurs exporting internationally.⁴⁰

Woman-owned businesses generate half of the revenue of comparable male-owned businesses; however their net profits are 89 percent of that of male-owned firms.⁴¹ This higher profitability indicates a strong untapped economic opportunity for scaling.

Within British Columbia, there is a strong existing ecosystem for entrepreneurial women with organizations dedicated to supporting women entrepreneurs. The challenge lies in ensuring adequate support to these organizations and to promote these existing services and to build partnerships to enable ease of access to and visibility of these resources, which can be difficult to navigate for entrepreneurs.

BARRIERS

Women entrepreneurs face unique challenges and constraints that differ from their male counterparts. A combination of personal, firm related, and external barriers inhibit women from starting, growing and succeeding in entrepreneurship to their full potential, as summarized in Figure 3.

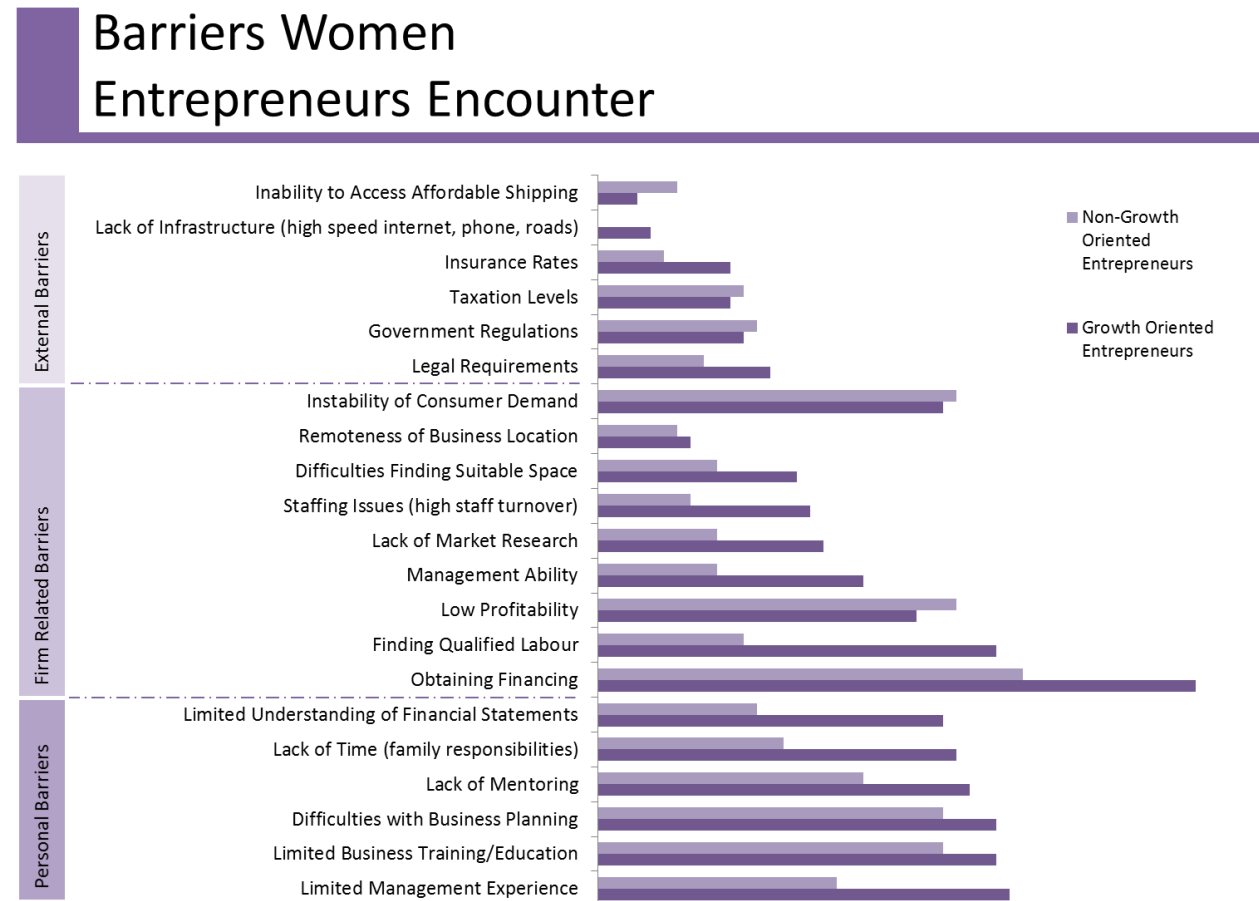


Figure 3 – Personal, firm related, and external barriers faced by women entrepreneurs in start-up and growth oriented stages of business development. Source: Women’s Enterprise Centre.

In the early stages, common barriers include access to the right networks, access to capital, and business training. For larger, more established companies focusing on scaling, barriers include access to markets, access to growth capital, and finding qualified labour. Regardless of the stage or size of a business, lack of time, and challenges with work-life effectiveness remain overarching impediments for many women entrepreneurs.

Building on this existing body of knowledge, Track 2 Forum participants identified, discussed, and ranked the following as the top barriers to advancing women entrepreneurs and woman-owned businesses in BC and Canada.

Barriers for Women Entrepreneurs:

- Knowledge of and Access to Resources
- Finances and Access to Capital
- Self-Limiting Mindset
- Societal Norms and Structural Barriers

KNOWLEDGE OF AND ACCESS TO RESOURCES

Entering into entrepreneurial endeavours often can be perceived as an isolated or highly independent experience. While many resources, networks, and knowledge bases exist to support entrepreneurs, and specifically women entrepreneurs through key support organizations like Women’s Enterprise Centre and associations such as the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, they can be challenging to find and navigate. For entrepreneurs, it can be difficult to identify which resources are most relevant at different stages during business development and growth.

Lack of knowledge of the available resources was the second most commonly cited barrier. Women entrepreneurs face challenges in identifying where to go for advice, and being comfortable reaching out for help. While this is closely linked with having mentors and champions, more could be done by resource providers to make their content more accessible.

The skill set needed to scale a business differs from that needed to start one. Many of the existing resources focus on start-up stage businesses. Targeted training and accelerator support for women entrepreneurs to introduce them to concepts of and benefits related to growth planning. In addition, many women find it difficult to navigate between publicly-funded resources and private sector services. Pathfinding assistance to identify and select the right growth resources at the right time would help women entrepreneurs significantly.

FINANCES AND ACCESS TO CAPITAL

Barriers, including difficulty obtaining financing, low profitability, and cash flow problems emerge as top concerns for women entrepreneurs in many studies. In a 2013 study on women’s entrepreneurship led by BMO, it was noted that among those who would start a business if given the opportunity, 42 percent of Canadian women (40 percent of BC women) surveyed consider access to capital to be their biggest challenge.⁴²

Another study by RBC Economics echoed these findings, indicating that financial barriers for woman-led businesses include impediments to obtaining funds and lack of collateral.⁴³ This study also found that historical issues of a lack of credit history continue to persist for women today. Research by the BC Women’s Enterprise Centre shows that credit histories and collateral levels have a significant impact on whether women entrepreneurs choose to pursue growth strategies.⁴⁴

Access to capital is challenging for business whether they are in start-up mode or looking to scale up; the challenge is both one of access and knowing where to look for available financing. Additionally, financial literacy and financial management challenges and lack of comfort with financial risk compound these barriers for women.

Barriers to Accessing Capital - Issues Faced by Women in Comparison to Men

Based on WEC and Industry Canada research published from 2010 – 2012, the following are the main issues face by women entrepreneurs in comparison to their male counterparts.



Women are more likely to invest their own personal saving into their business, rather than turn to financial institutions or other funding sources.⁴⁵ For women entrepreneurs who do seek funding from traditional sources, they often face higher documentation requirements than their male counterparts. Data cited in a discussion paper on women entrepreneurs financing and growth by the Women's Enterprise Centre indicated that women were asked more often for cash flow projections (37 percent, women vs 23 percent, men), appraisals of assets (46 percent vs 29 percent), and personal financial statements (57 percent vs 31 percent) by lenders.

Research by Industry Canada shows that women entrepreneurs are also less comfortable with carrying debt, and borrow significantly less than their male counterparts.⁴⁶ According to the 2013 Industry Canada Credit Condition Survey, the average male business owner borrowed \$350,000 while the average female business owner borrowed only \$65,000.⁴⁷ This significant difference of capitalization highlights how important it is to increase access to and willingness to seek and accept growth capital by women entrepreneurs in order to support their enterprise's growth.

SELF-LIMITING MINDSET

While self-limiting challenges are faced by all entrepreneurs, they are further exacerbated in women. Studies show that women are more likely to feel “impostor syndrome”, a heightened fear of failure, and lower self-confidence in their skills despite higher levels of education and self-preparation.

Self-advocacy and promotion play a significant role in building and marketing a new business. Entrepreneurs must advocate for themselves and their business in order to reach higher stages of growth and expansion as well as set prices, negotiate for their business, and achieve sales.

As mentioned in the Track 1 section of this report, a recent article published in *The Atlantic* highlighted the difference of confidence levels between men and women and the impact of this confidence gap on women’s success. It notes that “evidence shows that women are less self-assured than men—and that to succeed, confidence matters as much as competence”.⁴⁸

Women entrepreneurs are highly motivated and many have a high degree of confidence in their abilities and business. However, for women considering and engaged in entrepreneurial endeavours, a self-limiting mindset can often manifest through turning down opportunities, second guessing themselves, negotiation challenges, lack of willingness or knowledge of how to promote themselves and the value of their business, pricing mistakes and fear of judgement or failure.

SOCIETAL NORMS AND STRUCTURAL BARRIERS

Women entrepreneurs continue to be held back by societal perceptions of gender or biases related to women in leadership and business. These views are held by both women and men and tend to prevent or discourage women from participating in entrepreneurial activities.

In a study of BC women entrepreneurs conducted by the Women’s Enterprise Centre in partnership with the Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, high importance was placed by women on managing both career and family priorities.⁴⁹ A lack or perceived lack of work-life effectiveness for entrepreneurs can serve as a barrier as women contemplate scaling up their business. Societal expectations of women as primary care-givers exacerbate personal feelings of guilt when balancing business needs and family commitments.

In terms of breaking into markets, gender-related biases and structural obstacles continue to exist. Women entrepreneurs find it hard to break into markets that are traditionally male dominated, including manufacturing and knowledge-based industries that are sectors with higher growth and higher profitability. Male clients, suppliers, and leaders are reluctant to change, and many women feel that the ‘old boys’ network’ is difficult to penetrate. Supplier diversity initiatives aimed at opening Canadian and BC corporate and government supply chains are needed to address these unconscious biases, entrenched relationship, and procurement behaviours.

SOLUTIONS

Forum participants identified and prioritized the following solutions to support women entrepreneurs in overcoming the barriers discussed in the previous section. From these discussions, participants generated recommendations for specific actions that government, agencies, industry, and individuals can take to support and increase the advancement of women entrepreneurs in BC and Canada.

The solutions discussed in this section do not directly correspond with specific barriers; rather solutions and associated recommendations may span multiple barriers. Together, these actions taken on a provincial, organizational and individual level begin to move the dial towards systemic and sustained change to realize the potential of woman-owned enterprises in BC's economy.

Solutions for Women Entrepreneurs:

- Increase Education and Awareness of Entrepreneurial Pathways
- Provide Early Training to Increase Self-Confidence
- Streamline Access to High Quality Resources
- Introduce and Support Pathways to Increased Growth and Scaling
- Identify Champions, Mentors and Role Models
- Increase Access to and Uptake of Capital

INCREASE EDUCATION AND AWARENESS OF ENTREPRENEURIAL PATHWAYS

K-12 Education

Education for students in the K-12 public school system curriculum is important to ensure that students, and in particular young girls, see entrepreneurial activities as an option for their careers and have the basic skill sets to be able to pursue these activities. Entrepreneurial skills can be included in curriculum as core learning objectives within other disciplines such as accounting, math and English.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: Junior Achievement

Junior Achievement offers programs for elementary, middle and high school students such as 'Our Business World', 'Economics of Success', 'A Business of Our Own', 'Dollars with Sense' and the 'Company Venture Program' to teach financial, entrepreneurial and business skills to students. Its previous 'World of Choices' program offered girls the chance to explore non-traditional occupations, including entrepreneurship, through working sessions with volunteers.

In addition to introducing these topics theoretically, providing hands-on opportunities for testing out ideas and skills through initiatives such as scholarship programs for young entrepreneurs, student clubs, intramural entrepreneurship programs, and job shadowing programs with entrepreneurs could be piloted, building upon existing programming such as those offered by Junior Achievement.

There are many existing resources that have entrepreneurship focused educational content tailored to K-12; the challenge lies in effectively and widely integrating this high quality content into the school system. Examples of such resources include content developed by the BC Women’s Enterprise Centre⁵⁰, Kidpreneur⁵¹, and Biz Kids.⁵² This content can be leveraged to create a train-the-trainer program for teachers, volunteers and facilitators.

Broader Awareness Building

Education and awareness related to entrepreneurship should go beyond K-12 education. Public campaigns to showcase stories of women entrepreneurs that provide accessible role models can help women see their potential as successful entrepreneurs and see entrepreneurship as a viable path.

Making entrepreneurship more accessible can be achieved through broadening the definition of entrepreneurial work, what constitutes a successful business, or what could become a successful business. Research shows that individuals who know an entrepreneur are more likely to consider it as a career option. There are currently very few visible role models and leaders encouraging women to see themselves as entrepreneurs and demonstrate that women can attain their desired work-life effectiveness as entrepreneurs. Seeking out prominent champions for women entrepreneurs who can help spark wide conversations and encourage individuals to consider some of the challenges and opportunities for women entrepreneurs can help increase visibility.

PROVIDE EARLY TRAINING TO INCREASE SELF-CONFIDENCE

As stated in the solutions section of Track 1 above, many of the biases and mindsets that continue to hold women back are developed and reinforced early on. The mindset and skills needed to approach life’s challenges and failures from a confident perspective can be taught. These skills and approaches need to be provided to educators in K-12 classrooms to help equip all young people to overcome the self-limiting beliefs and impostor syndrome that both male and female entrepreneurs experience (but is more prevalent in women).

Helping imbue students with a ‘growth mindset’ can be promoted in BC by teaching and parenting techniques. The work by Dr. Carol Dweck of Stanford University, in her book *‘Mindset’* defines and offers approaches to increase the ‘growth mindset’ of people of all ages.

For women entrepreneurs, there are many resources and training opportunities that can help overcome the ‘impostor syndrome’ and instill a growth mindset. These include the Mindset book and Mindsetonline.com offered by Dr. Carol Dweck, programs offered by Dr. Valerie Young based on her book, *‘The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women: Why Capable People Suffer from the Impostor Syndrome and How to Thrive in Spite of It’*, and Taking the Stage®.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: Taking the Stage®

Taking the Stage® is a powerful program developed by The Humphrey Group Inc. to help women achieve a confident leadership presence – from boardrooms to meeting rooms, from town halls to phone calls. While the program is normally only available to women in large corporations, thanks to The Humphrey Group’s generous support, Women’s Enterprise Centre is able to offer this program to women entrepreneurs in BC.

STREAMLINE ACCESS TO HIGH QUALITY RESOURCES

While many resources exist for entrepreneurs through organizations such as Small Business BC, further centralizing of resources for businesses at all stages is important to increase the accessibility of resources. Any investments in this area should focus on identifying where the best resources, sources of information, and programs reside, and promoting and enhancing these successful tools rather than allocating funds for new programs.

In addition to listing resources, it is also important to identify the specific pieces of information that entrepreneurs may need. For entrepreneurs, it can be difficult to self-identify gaps in knowledge, thus developing resources that can assist with this self-reflection should be a core component of any centralized resource directory.

According to a 2011 survey conducted by Women’s Enterprise Centre, women entrepreneurs’ areas of highest interest for information and services were financial management training, marketing training, market research for industry, assessment/evaluation of entrepreneurial skills, management training, and leadership training.

For entrepreneurs based in rural areas or outside of the lower mainland, location and level of connection becomes a greater barrier to accessing resources. Service providers must go to rural communities to deliver resources throughout BC and make access to programs easier for these communities. Rural dialogues must be customized to the specific context, cultures, and needs of these business owners. As a follow up to the Forum and this action plan, four regional consultations will be taking place across British Columbia in May 2015 to generate regionally tailored recommendations.

INTRODUCE AND SUPPORT PATHWAYS TO INCREASED GROWTH AND SCALING

Opportunities for government leadership to help to increase the number of woman-owned business in BC exist through initiatives aimed at expanding customer bases through export and supplier diversity initiatives, and encouraging women to enter higher growth sectors.

Export markets are a significant economic driver. However currently, few entrepreneurs are exporters, and less than 10 percent of Canadian women entrepreneurs export internationally. Training programs and organizations such as the International Organization for Women in International Trade can help to facilitate greater participation in the economic opportunities of export and international business.

Providing specific training and funding to help entrepreneurs gain the skills and to offset the costs associated with investigating export options is a strategy commonly used in other jurisdictions resulting in high uptake and positive outcomes for participants.

Leveraging the supplier diversity initiatives of large corporations and governments presents another significant opportunity for women entrepreneurs to increase sales and growth. Government has a leadership role to play in the implementation of supplier diversity initiatives and increasing awareness of supplier diversity procurement policies among businesses.

Additionally, government is well positioned to provide programs and initiatives that encourage women to enter and establish businesses in high growth industries including knowledge based industries and the manufacturing sectors where businesses tend to have greater profitability.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: Nova Scotia Business Inc.

Nova Scotia Business Inc. offers a range of programs to support businesses in tapping into export opportunities including:

- Export Prospectors Program to help businesses identify leads through customized trade missions and trade show assistance.
- Go-Ahead Program to cover up to 50 percent of costs associated with follow up market visits for businesses that have participated in trade initiatives and identified export market potential.
- ExportAbility Program to cover up to 75 percent of costs associated with export related training such as courses and course materials, workshop and exam fees, for current and potential exporters.

IDENTIFY CHAMPIONS, MENTORS AND ROLE MODELS

Mentors and champions are critical for entrepreneurs to break into key networks for business success and can play an important role in helping women entrepreneurs overcome their perceived challenges and self-limiting mindsets. Specifically supporting women in accessing mentors and champions within their industry is important to enable women who are interested to scale up their business. Industry associations have a critical role to play in this area by developing and facilitating such industry-specific, sustainable mentorship networks.

Established entrepreneurs are an untapped resource for the development of mentoring and championing relationships. Development resources to support entrepreneurs to serve in these capacities for their peers can be a helpful first step. Connecting this pool of potential mentors and champions with organizations facilitating these relationships, such as MentorshipBC, is a strong first step towards bringing resources together.

INCREASE ACCESS TO AND UPTAKE OF CAPITAL

Increasing access to and uptake of capital requires investment in education and awareness for both the women entrepreneurs themselves and the business investment community. In order to feel sufficiently confident to access debt financing and capital, resources to support financial literacy and management for women entrepreneurs must be made available to set a foundation of comfort and investment readiness. Establishing a woman focused incubator in BC that enables women to collaborate, access mentorship, knowledge and resources can help support this.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: Collaborative Funding Model (SheEO Incubator – Vicki Saunders)

In this model, 10 successful women investing \$5,000 each create a fund of \$50,000 to be distributed to a cohort of 10 early stage female entrepreneurs. Cohorts act as pods in a networked organization, deciding how to distribute the funds among them and to provide the necessary support (including exchange or sharing of resources) to one another.

Pods are interconnected around the world, but distinct, learning the same principles and applying them with their unique feel resulting in a strong, collaborative, and sustainable model.

Data on woman-owned businesses in Canada highlights that they are a strong untapped investment opportunity. Woman-owned firms are on average more profitable as a percent of sales and 44 percent of women entrepreneurs have growth intentions.⁵³ Highlighting the business case for investing in woman-owned businesses can serve as a strong signal to investment networks that have traditionally been inaccessible to women.

Research shows that people are most likely to invest in individuals who are most similar to themselves.⁵⁴ Having more women involved in finance and providing access to capital, such as women employed in Venture Capital companies or financial institutions, or establishing a Women's Angel Network that focuses on woman-led businesses are other mechanisms that lower the barrier to access and uptake of capital.

BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT: BMO

BMO recently announced an additional \$2 billion of credit over the next 3 years for woman-owned businesses. In addition to supplying more capital, this announcement by a major bank endorses woman-owned businesses as an attractive growth and investment opportunity.

BMO Newsroom: November 27, 2014.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the barriers and solutions, specific recommendations were developed for government, industry and individuals to support and increase the advancement of women entrepreneurs in BC and Canada. To get a full picture of all that needs to be done, the summary recommendations should be read in conjunction with the solutions above.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS

Government

1. Streamline access to high quality resources for entrepreneurs at all stages of business development & growth (provincially and nationally).
2. Facilitate increased participation of woman-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs in high growth industries and untapped expansion opportunities through supplier diversity initiatives and access to export markets.
3. Enable, incentivize and promote greater investment in women-owned businesses.
4. Increase the loan funds and lending limit available for current publicly-funded women's business lending programs to help provide additional growth capital for woman-led businesses.
5. Augment the BC Public Education Curriculum to incorporate entrepreneurship and 'growth mindset' content.

Industry

1. Develop champions, advisors, and sponsors for women entrepreneurs.
2. Develop and provide training to individuals interested in investing in woman-led ventures.
3. Provide funding to and invest in woman-led ventures.

Individuals

1. Mentor/champion daughters, nieces, other young women in your lives.
2. Become a mentor and/or champion for a woman through joining an existing program such as Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, Women's Enterprise Centre mentorship or starting a mentorship/championing program in one of the associations you belong to.
3. Engage with youth through your local high schools to provide mentorship or support for learning about entrepreneurship/business.
4. Promote women owned business and continue the conversation in your community.
5. Invest in and purchase from woman-owned businesses.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS

Government

- 1. Streamline access to high quality resources for entrepreneurs at all stages of business development & growth (provincially and nationally).**
 - a) Invest in supporting existing government-funded third party women-serving organizations that provide pathfinding services.
 - b) Identify unique challenges faced by rural and immigrant entrepreneurs in order to expand offerings for these target groups through existing partners, in a customized and culturally appropriate manner.

- 2. Facilitate increased participation of woman-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs in high growth industries and untapped expansion opportunities through supplier diversity initiatives and access to export markets.**
 - a) **Export Markets** – Develop and implement training programs with existing women-focused agencies to encourage women entrepreneurs to engage in export markets and to facilitate establishment of necessary support and mentorship initiatives (such as a BC chapter of the Organization for Women in International Trade (OWIT)).
 - b) **Supplier Diversity** – Actively help create supplier diversity opportunities in BC (both government and corporate), and help women entrepreneurs leverage international supplier diversity opportunities through support for trade missions and funding to offset associated costs such as travel and certification. Promote best practices for supplier diversity initiatives, and recognize and profile organizations that support supplier diversity objectives. Consider setting a target of 5 percent of provincial government purchases to go to woman-owned suppliers, similar to the US Small Business Administration.

- 3. Enable, incentivize and promote greater investment in women-owned businesses.**
 - a) Incentivize investing in woman-owned businesses fund through options such as expanding the VCC tax credit structure, which gives a 30 percent tax credit to investors in eligible companies, to include woman-owned businesses.

- 4. Increase the loan funds and lending limit available for current publicly-funded women's business lending programs to help provide additional growth capital for woman-led businesses.**

- 5. Augment the BC Public Education Curriculum to incorporate entrepreneurship and 'growth mindset' content.**
 - a) Add business and entrepreneurship content to the K-12 curriculum.
 - b) Incorporate curriculum activities that encourage students to build businesses as projects.

- c) Incorporate approaches and methodologies in the K-12 curriculum which increase the 'growth mindset' of students to ensure that confidence levels are developed and nurtured early on.
- d) Include these elements in the BC Education Innovation Strategy and curriculum review.

Industry

1. Develop champions, advisors, and sponsors for women entrepreneurs.

- a) Develop industry-specific advisory networks for entrepreneurs that offer programming for mentorship and sponsorship. Use the current industry associations to share the need for more champions and also the Tool Kit being developed by Status of Women in Canada to champion women.
- b) In partnership with WEC, FWE or other women entrepreneur-focused groups, develop industry-specific advisory networks for entrepreneurs who offer programming for mentorship and sponsorship, leveraging the knowledge base that already exists through established mentorship programs.
- c) Encourage commercial lenders to employ methods of working with female business clients that create a more supportive and welcoming environment.

2. Develop and provide training to individuals interested in investing in woman-led ventures.

- a) Utilize existing resources from organizations such as the Angel Resources Institutes Women First Enterprises.⁵⁵

3. Provide funding to and invest in woman-led ventures.

- a) Develop a funding program for woman-led ventures and target a percent of loans for women entrepreneurs.
- b) Make a direct investment in woman-led businesses.

Individuals

Forum participants in Track 2 made strong personal commitments towards immediate actions that they and other British Columbians can take towards advancing women in entrepreneurship and realizing the maximum economic growth potential of entrepreneurial ventures in BC.

Below are some actions and commitments you can make today that will play a critical role in shifting the dial within your own community:

1. Mentor/champion daughters, nieces, other young women in your lives.

"Identify a young woman whom I can champion; help create ongoing awareness of women in business and entrepreneurs as leaders to my sons and his friends."

- 2. Become a mentor and/or champion for a woman through joining an existing program such as Forum for Women Entrepreneurs, Women’s Enterprise Centre mentorship or starting a mentorship/championing program in one of the associations you belong to.**

“Organize a women’s support group at our office; recommend that our professional association create a champions network for new entrepreneurs.”

“As a tech CEO, I realize I need to commit to being a mentor to women/girls in tech. This forum has opened my eyes to how needed, rare, and necessary mentorship/champions is to growing the economy and the development of women.”

- 3. Engage with youth through your local high schools to provide mentorship or support for learning about entrepreneurship/business.**

“Work with the PAC [Parents Advisory Council] at my daughter’s school to launch a financial literacy module at the elementary level.”

“Reach out to my high school and university and offer to become a mentor to young students, (specifically) young girls to consider and guide them in opportunities in technology and business.”

- 4. Promote women owned business and continue the conversation in your community.**

“Use my skills as a writer, speaker, and storyteller to promote and talk about women owned businesses – Telling stories of success.”

Invite two men along each time I attend a ‘women’s’ event; encourage the women’s organizations I am involved with to recruit more male members, board members; invite my own network to ‘share in the common economic agenda’.

- 5. Invest in and purchase from woman-owned businesses.**



Track 3

Women in Non-Traditional Jobs & Emerging Sectors

Track 3: Women in Non-Traditional Jobs and Emerging Sectors

CURRENT STATE

Over the past three decades, the percentage of women participating in Canada's labour force has steadily increased, however the types and diversity of employment in which women are engaged has been mostly stagnant.

The Catalyst Centre for Knowledge defines any industry with less than 25 percent female representation as non-traditional.⁵⁶ In Canada, such industries include Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields, leadership in professions such as law and accounting, skilled trades, and a number of key growth sectors such as construction (11 percent women), forestry (14.8 percent), utilities (24.7 percent), and mining (19 percent).⁵⁷

According to the most recent Statistics Canada report on women in the workforce, 67 percent of all employed women are working in traditional occupations – down only slightly from 71.8 percent in 1987.⁵⁸ These include teaching, nursing and related health fields, clerical or other administrative positions or sales and service industries. Less than half as many working men are similarly employed in these occupations.

The Government of Canada has emphasized that STEM fields are increasing at twice the rate of other jobs in Canada. Despite earning undergraduate and postgraduate degrees at higher than ever rates, women remain in the minority among professionals in the natural sciences, engineering and in the mathematical fields. In 2009, Statistics Canada reported 22.3 percent female representation in these professions, representing minimal growth from 19.5 percent in 1987.⁵⁹ Statistics also show that many women who obtain degrees in STEM disciplines do not pursue careers in these fields after graduation or do not return to STEM careers after obtaining MBAs.⁶⁰

While job opportunities in skilled trades are booming in BC as a result of our heavily emphasis on resource development in this province, women are participating in apprenticeship programs at a much lower rate than men. In 2014, only 14 percent of registrants in apprenticeship programs in Canada were women.⁶¹

The BC economy is poised to experience significant growth in key sectors including agrifoods, forestry, mining, oil and natural gas, technology and transportation. Recent provincial and federal labour force projections signal a gap of skilled workers to fill positions in these sectors.

One of the province's biggest challenges, currently and for the future, is to attract and retain enough good talent to serve in these sectors. One such example is mining, where projections show a need to find 81,000 new workers over the next decade.⁶² It has been estimated that if only two of the proposed Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) projects proceed, or if even a portion of the Provincial Government's plans

for 20 new and expanded mines by the year 2020 proceeds, there would be a significant shortage of skilled labour in British Columbia to support these projects.

While women in general are under-represented in the trades and disciplines required to support resource development projects, Aboriginal women face unique barriers that have an impact on their participation in these sectors. Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal women in particular across the province could provide a significant body of skilled workers and business people who could support the development of resource projects, including in the energy, mining, and forestry sectors.

The inclusion of Aboriginal women in a dialogue about the barriers, solutions and recommendations for growing women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors is viewed to be of critical value, particularly in relation to these discussions. These voices are included in this section and more of their voices should be included in future discussions across the province.

Overall, governments have identified an increased demand for skilled workers in trades and STEM fields in Canada. Meeting this demand will require attracting more individuals to pursue careers and training in these fields. Women present a largely untapped demographic of Canadians with the capacity to not only meet these gaps, but also fuel greater economic growth.

BARRIERS

Women face a range of organizational and societal barriers in pursuing careers in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors that span across the career development trajectory including K-12 curriculum, university and college recruitment, and the hiring, retention and advancement of women in these sectors.

In general, the barriers identified by participants in certain professions such as law, accounting, the actuarial field, and other financial disciplines related mainly to overcoming challenges associated with career advancement. The percentage of women studying and entering these fields has been relatively equal to men, however the retention of women in these professions is significantly lacking, as is the representation of women in more senior roles and leadership positions within these professions.⁶³

While Track 3 attracted female participants working in these types of professions, the issues they raised were very similar to the issues arising from Track 1 discussions on women in senior leadership. Salient discussion points that are common to women in these professions are captured in the Track 1 portion of this report.

The remainder of participants who participated in Track 3 at the Forum emerged mainly from those working in the trades, or in STEM professions where their roles and career advancement ultimately depended on working in the field. This portion of the report focuses on the under-representation of women in the trades.

Participants were representative of a diverse population from across BC and from across disciplines, genders, and professions. A brief snapshot of participant demographics includes representation from

Aboriginal Chiefs and community members; leadership of trades associations; trades union leadership and team membersⁱⁱ; and female apprentices and journeymen from many trades including carpenters, electricians, equipment operators, mechanics, welders, painting and drywalling, and elevator mechanics.

Forum participants included men and women with experience in a diverse range of industry sectors including: transportation, agrifoods and food services, forestry, mining, natural gas, energy, technology and biotech, manufacturing and distribution, infrastructure, and government.

Building on existing bodies of knowledge and personal experiences, participants identified, discussed, and ranked the following as the top barriers to advancing women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors in BC and Canada.

Barriers for Women in Non-Traditional Jobs and Emerging Sectors

- Stereotypes and Cultural Norms Against the Inclusion of Women
- Lack of Flexibility and Work-Life Effectiveness
- Lack of Male Mentors and Supportive Senior Male Leadership
- Lack of Awareness and Education about Opportunities for Women
- Gender Bias in Workplace Cultures

STEREOTYPES AND CULTURAL NORMS AGAINST THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN

Societal stereotypes and ingrained gender norms often discourage women from seeing themselves as having opportunities in certain industries. This is especially true for skilled trades. These unconscious biases lead individuals to believe that jobs in trades are not available for women or that they cannot provide rewarding careers for women.

Similarly, societal norms and persistent gender gaps in STEM fields discourage many women from entering these sectors. Myths around women being less capable in mathematical or scientific fields can deter women from pursuing further education in STEM fields and related professional disciplines. The male dominated culture in these fields presents a further barrier to women entering, persisting and succeeding in STEM careers and in leadership roles within these fields.

Parents are often unaware of opportunities for their children in these disciplines and, as a result, they do not actively encourage their daughters to pursue careers in the trades on the basis of these cultural norms. There are widespread perceptions that trades careers are not open to women, or would prove too risky or difficult physically for women.

ⁱⁱ Trade union leadership and members from the BC Building Trades in attendance at Forum: Operating Engineers (IUOE LOC 115); Painters and Allied Trades (IUPA DC38); Electricians (IBEW LOC213); Labourers (iLUNA LOC1611).

Women in traditionally male dominated industries who have experienced gender-based challenges are reluctant to promote their trade or profession to other women and girls, as they are concerned about setting others up for failure. Women recognize that it is very difficult to break into and succeed in these occupations and doing so requires facing many personal challenges and sacrifices which may negatively impact their personal wellbeing and families.

LACK OF FLEXIBILITY AND WORK-LIFE EFFECTIVENESS

Flexibility in managing work and family commitments poses a significant challenge for women across all fields; however, this challenge is heightened for women in non-traditional fields where there are even fewer women in senior leadership roles who can drive change from the top down. Such a commitment from senior leaders is necessary to make careers in these fields more accessible to women, to encourage an open and safe discussion on the challenges for women, and to ensure an effective and appropriate corporate, trade union, government, or other response to articulated challenges.

There is a lack of understanding and appreciation in the workplace of the criticality of work-life effectiveness and flexibility for women and their families. Employers, unions and trades associations need to listen to women and work in partnership with one another and with women on the ground to address these concerns. Challenges related to accessing affordable child care options were particularly emphasized by Forum participants.

LACK OF MALE MENTORS AND SUPPORTIVE SENIOR MALE LEADERSHIP

Men within these industries have a critical leadership role to play in initiating and driving change. Catalyst, Inc. research has found that talent management systems are frequently vulnerable to pro-male biases that result in less diverse employee pools. In many non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors, the percentage of women in senior management roles is significantly less than the percentage of women engaged in the industries, which is already significantly low. Senior leadership teams and trades unions often set the tone for talent management norms which can result in masculine stereotypes becoming embedded into Human Resources tools and practices.

A lack of understanding and championship of the challenges for women by their male colleagues and senior leaders in these areas can result in a lack of necessary support to carry out work in the field. Examples of this include the presence of appropriate facilities and work equipment for women, appropriately flexible work hours and scheduling options, implementation of workplace, safety and harassment policies that adequately respond to and mitigate on the job harassment and gender-specific safety concerns.

It is widely acknowledged that advancement and retention of women in these sectors requires support, mentorship and sponsorship from senior colleagues and leaders. A lack of mentorship and sponsorship for women not only hinders their advancement, but also reinforces, validates and perpetuates inequalities in the workplace.

LACK OF AWARENESS AND EDUCATION ABOUT OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN

Building a skilled workforce in the trades and STEM fields takes time and requires investment in tools, programs and initiatives that will make young people, parents, and educators aware of the opportunities and benefits of a career in these fields. Offering an early education in disciplines and areas related to these fields is essential, including education about the correlation between math, science, computer science, technology and other disciplines with a career in the trades and STEM disciplines.

Currently, elementary and secondary educational institutions lack the programs and supports for young students and their parents to support such awareness. Because of this, there is now a significant shortfall of women in these sectors of the workforce.

GENDER BIAS IN WORKPLACE CULTURES

The lack of respectful and inclusive workplaces is a critical barrier to attracting and retaining women in non-traditional jobs, skilled trades and related professions. A recent Catalyst, Inc. report highlighted that women in STEM fields feel like outsiders from the onset of their careers in tech-intensive industries, with 73 percent of women surveyed citing these sentiments.⁶⁴

Through Track 3 Forum discussions, many women reported having been subjected to blatant sexual harassment and disrespect on the job, through their unions, in their training programs, particularly from their peers, and sometimes from their superiors.

Several who hadn't experienced blatant forms of harassment reported instances of more subtle harassment in the form of repeated inappropriate joking; the presence on site, in equipment and in workplace facilities of inappropriate material of a sexual nature; general commentary made in their presence about the appropriateness of a particular job for women; lack of promotion or opportunities for advancement; and lack of mentorship and sponsorship opportunities in the face of similar opportunities being given to their peers. Some younger or earlier stage participants, students, apprentice level women and early stage professionals reported being fearful of workplace harassment.

All recognized this as a significant and prevalent barrier to the advancement of women. Several male participants, including the leadership of various trades and trades associations expressed serious concern and, in several cases, surprise on hearing the stories of the women who shared this information.

Track 3 discussions also gave rise to a sharing of examples of how, within workplaces, men also align with current social norms that cause them to see these roles as being for men and not for women. Discussions included how this perspective results in a negative attitude towards women that gets played out in various forms, whether intentionally or non-intentionally in the workplace.

These significant challenges are compounded by physical workplace barriers in the skilled trades, as reported by participating delegates, including a lack of appropriate facilities, work clothes, amenities, and gear fit for women.

LACK OF INVESTMENT IN RETENTION

Across all sectors in STEM, trades, and professional service firms that support these industries, women who pursue careers in these fields are leaving them before they have the opportunity to be promoted or to receive advanced training.

Statistics also show that many women who obtain degrees in STEM and other disciplines relevant to careers in infrastructure and resource development do not pursue careers in these fields after graduation. There are a range of identified reasons for this lack of retention including:

- Experiences of gender-based workplace disrespect and harassment and the lack of adequate policies and programs to address and prevent such occurrences;
- Lack of mentorship and sponsorship for a career advancement;
- Lack of human resource supports that would allow women, particularly in more remote areas, to balance work with other obligations;
- Lack of affordable or flexible childcare;
- Lack of workplace supports related to ensuring female on the job safety; and
- Lack of supports within trade unions and in collective agreements.

This retention issue is a symptom of many other barriers highlighted above, however the lack of investment and attention to systemically addressing these retention concerns presents a significant barrier to advancing the full participation of women in these sectors.

SOLUTIONS

Forum participants identified and prioritized the following solutions to support women in overcoming the barriers discussed above. From these discussions, participants generated recommendations for specific actions that government, associations, unions, industry, and individuals can take to support and increase the participation and advancement of women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors in BC and Canada, which are detailed below.

The solutions discussed in this section do not directly correspond with the specific barriers identified above. Rather the following solutions and associated recommendations may concurrently address or span two or more of the above noted barriers.

Solutions for Women in Non-Traditional Jobs and Emerging Sectors

- Build and Foster the Talent Pipeline
- Invest in Training and Retention of Women
- Integrate Flexibility and Respect into Culture and Practice
- Promote Leadership, Accountability and Responsibility at All Levels
- Identify Visible Role Models, Mentors, and Champions

BUILD AND FOSTER THE TALENT PIPELINE

Increased outreach and awareness building is a critical pre-requisite to effectively communicating that women are welcome, wanted, and successful in the skilled trades and STEM fields. Building the talent pipeline starts with building awareness of the potential for careers in these areas within the K-12 years in both public and private education systems, and with parents of students.

The BC government and school educators have a strong role to play in supporting the development of effective curricula and programs that achieve this result, and in fostering partnerships between trade organizations and companies that will effectively communicate and promote career opportunities, benefits and trajectories for women and girls in these fields.

The government has an important role to play in implementing programs, developing and sharing best practices that will strongly encourage the development, hiring, retention and promotion of diverse talent in these fields.

Beyond raising awareness and developing effective educational programs, there is a need to create accessible pathways for young women to begin to explore these careers as apprentices on the job and in the field. Early access to mentorship, sponsorship and championing by other women and men working in these areas is essential for recruitment and retention across the talent pipeline.

In addition to increasing awareness and exposure for students in K-12, normalizing women's participation and leadership in non-traditional jobs is necessary to facilitate uptake of these opportunities by women.

Aboriginal women are particularly under-represented and are a high potential demographic among British Columbians who should be included in the talent pipeline for emerging sectors and skilled trades. With our reliance in Canada on resource development throughout Aboriginal traditional territories in BC as a key economic driver for the province, it is imperative that Aboriginal communities and women within these communities in particular, be encouraged and sponsored to take advantage of opportunities in the sectors and professions which service such development.

Specific outreach and training that is culturally sensitive and appropriate and geared to supporting Aboriginal women to move into and thrive in these roles is critical, particularly for the Government of British Columbia and industry given the current state of Aboriginal law in the areas of consultation, accommodation, and the progression of the law in relation to Aboriginal rights and title.

INVEST IN TRAINING AND RETENTION OF WOMEN

A shift in mindset around investing in training for women is needed and can be championed by government and industry. Employers often view training women as a potential loss if the woman leaves the workplace, rather than an investment in future retention. As a result, there is a strong role for government to play in incenting companies to hire and train women, as well as providing the business case for making such investments. More work can be done by the government to promote to the public and to industry the training and funding programs that are already offered by government for skilled workers and create accessible online resources to learn about and apply for such funding.

Government can also incent industry to recruit and attract women who are ready to re-enter the workplace through tax incentives, designations for inclusive workplaces, and government contract requirements that support such initiatives.

On an organizational level, human resources practices that include women - from recruiting, hiring and training onwards - create a culture that is respectful and inclusive from the onset. Government can lead the design and development of the tools to facilitate inclusive recruiting and training processes, making it easy for companies to implement. Such initiatives can build upon existing programs such as WorkSafe BC, anti-harassment and anti-bullying legislation.

INTEGRATE FLEXIBILITY AND RESPECT INTO CULTURE AND PRACTICE

Frank and earnest discussions among industry, unions, workers, and government with respect to families and work-life effectiveness are necessary to develop policies and programs to enable the integration of flexibility into culture and practice in workplaces. Normalizing flexible work schedules means acknowledging that work-life effectiveness is a necessity for women, and ultimately shifting the issue from a gender-based concern to a concern for all workers, their families, and all communities. A shift in cultural norms is necessary to ensure that the expression by women or other workers about the need for flexibility is viewed as an acceptable and legitimate discussion, rather than as a sign of a low commitment levels or laziness.

Flexible working arrangements such as job-share programs and forming temporary job pools of highly trained workers that employers can draw from can be valuable programs that can meet worker and employer needs, particularly in the trades.

The government also has a role to play in piloting, profiling and championing innovative practices developed for providing flexibility and inclusivity for women in the workplace. Such profiling can serve as a tool to shift culture across industries and provide examples of tangible steps that other businesses can adopt.

PROMOTE LEADERSHIP, ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESPONSIBILITY AT ALL LEVELS

Widespread messaging that highlights the role of all individual workers in creating a respectful workplace environment is important to creating a day-to-day environment that is positive for women.

Helping men understand their leadership and gaining their buy-in will help move solutions forward quickly. This can be achieved through focusing on both personal and business impacts of inclusivity, framing discussions around skills shortages and the need to expand the workforce to meet pressing business needs for skilled workers.

Outreach programs targeted at senior male managers on how to respond to and be aware of issues in the workplace is essential for creating a culture where concerns are acted on when they are raised.

Government has an important role to play in designing and distributing tools for businesses, and in promoting accountability and progress tracking. The creation of incentives and reporting programs to measure company success and reward action can create culture change within entire sectors.

IDENTIFY VISIBLE ROLE MODELS, MENTORS, AND CHAMPIONS

Visible role modelling and mentorship is necessary at all stages of the talent pipeline for women in skilled trades and STEM fields. Not only do young women need visible role models to introduce them to the possibilities of careers in these fields, young women who are training in these fields need mentors to build confidence and help ease their transition into the workplace upon completing their necessary training programs.

Once women are in the workplace, mentors who can serve as champions play an important role in ensuring career advancement and retention of women in the field. Championing the advancement of women in these fields will create more visible role models and continue to improve the culture of the industry for women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the barriers and solutions, specific recommendations were developed for government, industry, trade associations, unions and individuals to support and increase the advancement of women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors in BC and Canada. The emphasis is on skilled trades and STEM fields – two areas with tremendous job growth and strong career opportunities in the province.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL JOBS AND EMERGING SECTORS

Government

- a) Work collaboratively with government, industry and trade associations to utilize and make accessible existing best practices, toolkits and strategies to engage women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors.
- b) Use WorkSafeBC policies, legislation, and assessment processes to raise awareness of bullying, harassment and bias in the workplace that limit women from meaningful participation in non-traditional jobs.
- c) Create a government supplier diversity policy and program to promote and increase diversity and inclusion within government suppliers.
- d) Promote the economic benefits of employing a diverse workforce in the trades and STEM industries and provide corporate incentives to encourage businesses to hire and retain diverse talent.
- e) Implement an effective curriculum within the K-12 public education system to build the talent pipeline and raise awareness among students and parents of career opportunities in the trades and STEM professions.

Industry

1. Work with educational institutions to educate all students and teachers about opportunities and benefits of careers in STEM and trades for women and mentor them in these areas.
2. Develop policies and practices to increase participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and immigrant women in these areas.
3. Integrate flexibility and respect into workplace culture, policies, and practices.
4. Identify and support role models, mentors, and champions for women.
5. Consider the collection of data on workforce diversity and encourage disclosure of workforce diversity data from suppliers and contractors.

Trade Associations and Unions

1. Set targets for attraction of women into various trades and into the leadership of trade associations and unions.

2. Develop and implement diversity policies and practices to ensure that a diverse workforce is available to businesses that are unionized.
3. Work with female tradespersons and male members to develop and implement best diversity practices and policies.
4. Continue using social and other media to develop media pieces to educate and attract women and shift cultural biases.
5. Create a certification standard and process to certify demonstrably diverse organizations as such (e.g. similar to LEED or WBE Canada).

Individuals

1. Mentor a young worker.
2. Speak at elementary and secondary schools about your experiences, career, and opportunities in STEM and skilled trades.
3. Approach your own companies and unions to develop programs and solutions to open doors for women.
4. Engage male colleagues in the conversation.
5. Reach out to, join, or form industry associations to support women.
6. Be a leader in creating a respectful workplace.

DETAILED RECOMMENDATIONS WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL AND EMERGING SECTORS

Government

1. **Work collaboratively with industry and trade associations to utilize and make accessible existing best practices, toolkits, and strategies to engage women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors.**
 - a) Make existing resources and information about the economic imperative to include women visible and available to the public through government and agency websites and publications.
 - b) Develop and maintain an accessible and workable online database of government training and skills development resources that women (including Aboriginal and immigrant women) can use to launch careers in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors.
 - c) Share best practices and resources for employers to recruit, retain, and advance women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors where participation and retention of women is low.
 - d) Profile companies who find innovative solutions to support, train and mentor women (including Aboriginal women) such as those who provide flexible workplace hours, job-sharing, and child-care opportunities.

2. Expand the application of existing WorkSafeBC policies, legislation, and assessment processes to raise awareness of and correct subtle forms of bias in the workplace that limit women from meaningful participation in non-traditional jobs.

- a) Utilize the WorksafeBC's Certification of Recognition (COR)ⁱⁱⁱ to financially incentivize businesses to raise awareness and enforce company bully and harassment policies and procedures.
- b) Ensure the verifier is trained to focus on the more subtle forms of gender discrimination and unconscious bias in the workplace.
- c) Enhance existing OHS guidelines or policies, to raise awareness on more subtle forms of discrimination and encourage initiatives to deter such barriers that may limit equal access of women to workplace opportunities in these areas.

3. Create a government supplier diversity policy and program to promote and increase diversity and inclusion within government suppliers.

- a) Encourage diversity and inclusion reporting in job tender documents and supply chain contracts when government is procuring goods and services.
- b) Encourage suppliers to track data on the representation of women in their ownership, workforce, senior ranks and boards.
- c) Consider setting a target for government spend to come from diverse suppliers.

4. Promote the economic benefits of employing a diverse workforce in the trades and STEM industries and provide corporate incentives to encourage businesses to hire and retain diverse talent.

- a) Continue to hire, retain, and support the development of women and model this for the business community and the public.
- b) Within Crown corporations, develop formal mentorship, apprenticeship and leadership programs for women wanting to pursue a career in the skilled trades.
- c) Encourage non-Aboriginal businesses to hire Aboriginal women and to partner and do business with women-run Aboriginal trades and contractors and the businesses that support the trades and development projects.

ⁱⁱⁱ WorksafeBC's Certificate of Recognition (COR) recognizes and rewards employers who go beyond the legal requirements of the Workers Compensation Act and the Occupation Health and Safety Regulation by taking a best practices approach to implementing health, safety and return-to work management systems. The program promotes equally the concept of managing health and safety with other components necessary for a successful business, such as profitability and productivity.

Employers participating in the COR program are eligible to receive financial incentives if all the ts of the program have been met for the incentive year in question in recognition of a commitment to raising the standard of worker health and safety in British Columbia.

5. **Implement an effective curriculum within the K-12 public education system to build the talent pipeline and raise awareness among students and parents of career opportunities in the trades and STEM professions.**
 - a) Enhance the existing school curricula by suggesting the inclusion of field trips, expert speakers in classrooms and other effective means of communicating BC opportunities in these areas for women to all students.
 - b) Work with trade associations and industry to develop accessible databases of ambassadors who can work with schools and students to educate on the opportunities and benefits of careers in the trades and emerging sectors.

Industry

1. **Work with educational institutions to educate all students and teachers about opportunities and benefits of careers in STEM and trades for women and mentor them in these areas.**
 - a) Provide workplace shadow-a-parent opportunities; encourage or require workers to go into local classrooms, particularly in remote and aboriginal communities.
2. **Develop policies and practices to increase participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and immigrant women in these areas.**
 - a) Implement or revise diverse hiring policies.
 - b) Implement or revise contracting policies to encourage suppliers to hire aboriginal women run businesses.
 - c) Implement skills building and leadership training programs for Aboriginal women in the local and remote communities in which the business operates.
3. **Integrate flexibility and respect into workplace culture, policies, and practices.**
 - a) Examine and seek to better understand the specific working realities for women in your industry.
 - b) Design flexible working schedules and employment supports to respond and positively address the working realities identified that limit women's participation (e.g. transportation to and from work site at odd hours; on-site childcare facilities where practical).
 - c) Ensure recommended industry best practices for providing a respectful and inclusive workplace are being implemented and encourage leadership to address harassment including the more subtle forms that limit the meaningful participation of women.
 - d) Encourage or require action and accountability for these initiatives from corporate leaders (including managers, HR consultants and C-Suite).

4. Identify and support role models, mentors, and champions for women.

- a) Develop formal mentorship programs to support women in navigating the workplace and facilitating career advancement.
- b) Encourage corporate leaders to identify women with potential for career advancement within the organization at every level and to commit to championing them to the next level.

5. Consider the collection of data on workforce diversity and encourage disclosure of workforce diversity data from suppliers and contractors.

- a) Consider that a specific portion of any tender documents seek information on diversity.^{iv}

Trade Associations and Unions

- 1. Set targets for attraction of women into various trades and into the leadership of trade associations and unions.**
- 2. Develop and implement diversity policies and practices to ensure that a diverse workforce is available to businesses that are unionized.**
- 3. Work with female tradespersons and male members to develop and implement best diversity practices and policies.**
- 4. Continue using social and other media to develop media pieces to educate and attract women and shift cultural biases.**
- 5. Create a certification standard and process to certify demonstrably diverse organizations as such (e.g. similar to LEED or WBE Canada).^v**
 - a) Use a scorecard or point system for requiring mandatory prerequisites and voluntary credits creating a system of Silver, Gold or Platinum certified employers.

Individuals

Forum participants made strong personal and organizational commitments towards immediate actions that they and all British Columbians can take towards advancing women in non-traditional and emerging sectors.

These personal commitments are included with the actions you can make today that will play a critical role in shifting the dial within your own community:

^{iv} Example, the City of Burnaby uses a Schedule B Contractor Wage Compliance, ensuring companies are paying a “fair wage” to their workers. The Provincial and Federal government have similar aboriginal declarations.

^v www.cag

1. Mentor a young worker.

“Mentor future female apprentices. Will make a plan to approach my union regarding our main issues and come up with solutions/programs that the women in my trade experience to open doors for future females entering my field!”

2. Speak at elementary and secondary schools about your experiences, career, and opportunities in STEM and skilled trades.

“I will approach my children’s school to speak about my experience in a non-traditional job.”

3. Approach your own companies and unions to develop programs and solutions to open doors for women.

“In my current role - uncover more job placements of female trainees, communicate broadly about success of the trainees/job placements, and mentor more intently current managers.”

“In my volunteer/board roles, ask for evidence of policies, implementation and enforcement related to female hiring.”

4. Engage male colleagues in the conversation.

“Seek out and promote opportunities for more men to participate in dialogue/development or evolution of culture and society around women in trades/professions.”

“Mentor Men - Studies show that men who benefit from female mentors are more likely to be aware of gender issues and champion women, mentor and sponsor someone who does not look like me.”

5. Reach out to, join, or form industry associations to support women.

“Form and nurture a women's committee to offer support and direction to women.”

6. Be a leader in creating a respectful workplace.

“Speak out when I see incidents where women are not being supported and ask why this is happening. Work to find a solution.”



Common Themes, Key Recommendations & Next Steps

Common Themes and Key Recommendations

Many common themes and recommendations appear throughout the report. These five areas provide a summary of ideas and actions that can be used as takeaways from the report. A discussion of the themes is included followed by a summary of recommendations.

COMMON THEMES

1. PROMOTE AND ADVOCATE DIVERSITY

Employers and government can take strong proactive steps to promote and embed diversity policies in their organizations. Updated talent management systems are needed for recruitment and development to support a continuous pipeline of women. The development and implementation of flexible work practices and policies to support women, families and employees provides an important step in this direction. While cultural norms are beginning to slowly shift towards more equal gender roles in households, in this current state women continue to be primary care givers and continue to face career and personal trade-offs that are not as pervasive for men.

Recognizing and accounting for these realities in policies throughout the talent pipeline is essential. Flexibility is not in opposition with business objectives, but rather it can enable work outcomes and lead to greater employee satisfaction overall. Implementing flexibility without stigma or assumptions about deprioritizing work is critical.

Women have exceptional power and capability to be a dynamic catalyst for economic growth in BC. We can each play a part in making this happen by being advocates for diversity and inclusion.

2. CHAMPION WOMEN

Women need champions who will advocate for their success and connect them to the right opportunities and networks. The pool of talented women in British Columbia and Canada is extensive, and champions play a critical role in spotlighting and advancing talented individuals both within and outside firms. In a culture where championing women is pervasive – champions will recommend women for board positions, they will connect women to high visibility projects in the workplace, they will introduce women entrepreneurs to business expansion opportunities, and they will ensure that high potential women in trades and STEM are connected to leadership development initiatives. A champion looks forward on behalf of a young woman and encourages them to access opportunities they may not have on their own.

Championing is powerful not only for the outcomes that it brings, but because everyone has the ability to be a champion for at least one woman in their life or workplace. Championing is a natural and

rewarding role, and with increased awareness of the need for greater champions for women and sharing of best practices for champions – significant strides can be made immediately for thousands of women in our Province.

Encouraging supplier diversity by purchasing from women-owned businesses, and investing in women-owned businesses are additional forms of championship.

Each of us, as individuals, must also actively champion our own careers by stepping up and taking responsibility for our personal career advancement.

3. FOSTER POSITIVE AND SELF-AFFIRMING MINDSETS

In order to serve as their own best champions, women and girls must be encouraged and assisted in building confidence in their skills and capabilities, and to adopt self-affirming and ‘growth’ mindsets. The ‘Confidence Gap’ was mentioned in multiple tracks. While societal norms and gender biases can be slow to change, women can proactively encourage themselves, their friends, and their colleagues to shift internal self-limiting mindsets and notions towards self-affirming mindsets that enable them to actively champion their own careers.

Employers and colleagues in turn should recognize the impact that such internal mindsets can have on career progression for women and actively seek to support women in recognizing and championing their own potential. Individuals must also adopt a positive mindset and be confident in one’s own abilities. Governments can help by ensuring that resources like those outlined in this report, are made available to women who aspire to leadership, entrepreneurship, or opportunities in non-traditional roles and emerging sectors.

4. INCORPORATE A DIVERSITY FOCUS IN EARLY EDUCATION

Sustained cultural change requires a deep investment in education and awareness building. The breadth of research and progress that has been made on recognizing the importance of reversing ingrained notions of gender norms and gender roles points towards a significant opportunity to educate the next generation of British Columbians through integrating these topics meaningfully into K-12 education.

The ideas and framing of careers in early education also play an important role in the degree to which young boys and girls view certain occupations or career trajectories. Investing in curriculum changes that introduce a diverse range of professions and pathways in a non-hierarchical and gender neutral manner will benefit both genders. Acting as a sponsor and role model for programs that encourage young girls to pursue leadership and non-traditional roles is also important.

5. ACTIVATE MEN

Engaging men as active participants in moving the dial on this issue is essential to facilitating sustained and systemic change. This point was clearly made by participants in the final session of the Forum. As

the best practices contained in this report highlight, men and women senior leaders within organizations play an important role in signaling cultural change, and individuals play an even more important role in taking the necessary steps to shift and sustain these changes of practice.

Men play important roles as mentors, supporters, and champions within their workplaces and homes. Additionally, the unique perspective that men bring to this conversation enables the development of recommendations that are collaborative and engage both men and women equally. Increased inclusion and advancement of women benefits all British Columbians, achieving this level of change will require the active participation of all.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations arising from these themes that can be implemented by government, industry and individuals include:

1. Promote and advocate diversity.

- a) Implement diversity policies in your organization.
- b) Implement updated talent management systems that positively support the recruitment and development of a pipeline of women.
- c) Develop flexible work practices and policies to support work-life effectiveness for women, families and employees.
- d) Be an advocate for diversity and inclusion.

2. Champion women.

- a) Develop champions, advisors, and sponsors for women seeking to elevate their careers within your organization and community.
- b) Support supplier diversity and invest in women-owned businesses.
- c) Act as a champion, mentor, and role model for women in your life and workplace.
- d) Actively champion your own career and step up to direct your career advancement.

3. Foster positive & self-affirming mindsets.

- a) Support women and girls in building confidence in their skills and capabilities to realize their full career potential.
- b) Encourage family, friends, colleagues and organizations to address self-limiting and societal mindsets that hold many women back.
- c) Adopt a positive mindset and be confident in your abilities.

4. Incorporate a diversity focus in early education.

- a) Enhance the Public Education (K-12) Curriculum to include diversity content that encourages girls to pursue business, entrepreneurship, trades, and STEM.
- b) Act as a sponsor and role model for programs that encourage young girls to pursue leadership and non-traditional roles.

5. Activate men.

- a) Engage men as active participants and critical partners in conversation and action, to collectively shift the dial.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

While there is much work to be done to realize the full economic potential of women, we are on the upswing of the next wave of significant momentum. The collaboration and commitment of so many people, who attended the Forum and contributed to the development of this *Action Plan*, and champion diversity in their own spheres demonstrates that we are on our way.

As participants of the Forum identified, addressing many of the barriers that women face will require systemic cultural change and the re-orientation of societal values related to leadership, gender roles, and work/life effectiveness. Effecting such change can be a daunting task to take on when viewed as a holistic goal.

This *Action Plan* and the Forum provide a foundation and outline next steps for conversations and actions that must occur at the government, organizational, and personal level across our communities, province and eventually across our country. These alone and together can contribute significantly to achieving measurable positive change.

Within British Columbia and Canada, the time to act on this opportunity is now. The recommendations generated from the Forum by leaders from across British Columbia are aligned with future economic growth priorities and opportunities for the Province, and Canada. We can be leaders for this change.

Together we can shift the dial and increase economic opportunities for all.

Next Steps

This *Action Plan* is a call-to-action to begin change now. We hope the recommendations will provide ideas for government, industry and individuals to take immediate action to support women in business throughout BC for economic growth.

To continue the momentum from this work, there will be public communication on the outcome of the Forum and the content of this report, presentations on the results, regional consultations to solicit input and support from around the province, and a future forum event to measure progress on the recommended solutions.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

A public relations campaign is being created to share the Action Plan through social and traditional media channels across BC and Canada. The Report and its resource links will be available on the website of the WEB Alliance (www.weballiance.ca) as well as the Vancouver Board of Trade (www.boardoftrade.com). This report will be circulated directly to:

- Representatives within all levels of government
- Key industry associations and women's business networks
- Corporations including members of Catalyst Canada
- Attendees of the 2014 BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth event
- Vancouver Board of Trade members
- Individuals upon request.

PRESENTATIONS

Various speaking events and presentations will take place around the province to share the learnings from this report. The Vancouver Board of Trade will take the lead with an event where the results of the *Action Plan* will be highlighted. The WEB Alliance members will invite speakers to the events. Other groups will be invited to host a presentation on the highlights of the Action Plan.

REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS

In December 2014, Status of Women Canada provided Women's Enterprise Centre (WEC) with project funding to conduct regional consultations in Kelowna, Victoria, Prince George and Prince Rupert, British Columbia. This report will be shared as a foundation for discussion at each of the sessions in May 2015. Following the consultations, WEC will identify the supports needed for implementation, support and evaluation of Regional Action Plans. Women's Enterprise Centre will work closely with the Forum Steering Committee to ensure strategic direction for this project's service delivery methods and implementation plans.

SECOND FORUM EVENT

The second *BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth* event will take place on Friday, October 23rd, 2015. This half day Forum will serve as a follow-up to measure progress and accountability and to further the actions outlined in this report. Sustainable change comes as a result of consistent pressure and progressive actions.

TRACK ACCOUNTABILITY AND PROGRESS

The Vancouver Board of Trade's Women's Leadership Circle is launching the "Leadership Challenge" which will encourage organizations and individuals to take action by completing a Leadership Diversity Survey. This survey will track progress to provide leadership, accountability and oversight for the follow up to the BC Action Plan *Women as a Catalyst for Economic Growth*. Results will be shared annually.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

This current wave of momentum for supporting women in business is significant. It is gaining power by building on a strong foundation of research outlining the business case, increased awareness and a high level of collaboration in BC and beyond. The time is now to commit to take action for change. Be the change!



BC Economic Forum: Women as a Catalyst for Growth October 24, 2014 - Michelle Pockey, Kirsten Wilson, Renee Wasylyk, Carolyn Cross, Lois Nahirney
Courtesy Vancouver Board of Trade and Sara Borck Photography

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THANK YOU TO BC ECONOMIC FORUM CONTRIBUTORS

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WEB ALLIANCE PARTICIPANTS

Association of Women in Finance (AWF)
BC Women in Energy (BCWE)
Be Your Own Best Friend (BYOBF)
Canadian Construction Women's Association (CCWA)
Forum for Women Entrepreneurs (FEW)
Futurpreneur Canada
GroYourBiz
Minerva
Premier's Women's Economic Council (PWEC)
Professional Women's Network (PWN)
Society for Canadian Women in Science & Technology (SCWIST)
The Connected Woman
University Women's Club of Vancouver (UWCV)
WEB Alliance
Women's Economic Business Advisory Council (WEBAC)
Women's Leadership Circle
Women of Whistler (WOW)
Women's Enterprise Centre (WEC)
WEC Project 2015
Women's Executive Network (WXN)
Young Women in Business (YWIB)

www.weballiance.ca for a full listing of the WEB Alliance organizations

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Special thanks to the 80 fantastic Forum table facilitators and note-takers who helped to gather the valuable information discussed at the Forum event.

Appendix A: Track Specific Recommendations

Track 1 Women in Senior Leadership

Barriers	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of Sponsorship, Advocacy, Champions and Role Models • Less Access to Critical Roles and Experiences • Outdated Leadership Models • Self-Limiting Mindsets and Societal Gender Biases • Biased or Lack of Defined Criteria for Recruitment and Advancement • Lack of Workplace Flexibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed Diversity Strategies Across the Talent Pipeline • Implement Policies Supporting Work-Life Balance • Develop and Recognize Champions, Mentors and Sponsors • Increase Awareness • Modernize Leadership Models through Education and Training
Recommendations	
Government	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase transparency of board diversity representation and policies by endorsing comply or explain diversity targets and reporting for TSX-listed companies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support transparent firm level reporting of information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of women serving on the board and filling executive positions. • Mechanisms for identifying and selecting woman for board and executive selection processes. • Policies relating to recruitment and representation of women on the board and executive positions. • Targets for representation of women on the board and in executive positions. b. Promote female board diversity targets of 30 percent for all companies in BC, including crown and public corporations. c. Encourage voluntary diversity targets and reporting for TSX-Venture and private

	companies.
2. Publicize and promote the business case for diversity, flexibility, visible role models and diversity champions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Embed diversity links to research and information within government and agency websites, publications, and strategies. b. Collect and promote best practices that industry and individuals can readily access and implement.
3. Continue to hire and appoint qualified women to middle and senior leadership levels and to board ranks within government and crown corporations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to be a leader in hiring and appointing women at above 30 percent. b. Highlight women with public sector experience for private sector boards. c. Share best practices as an example for the private sector and other jurisdictions to follow.
4. Leverage the Board Resourcing Development Office to facilitate connections between candidates and boards and support recruitment and appointment of women to boards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop or assist with the development of a BC database/list of female board-ready candidates for the public and private sectors. b. Offer names to corporations looking for women board members.
5. Incorporate business and diversity content into the BC Public Education Curriculum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Add more business, entrepreneurship, STEM and trades content to the curriculum. b. Incorporate greater leadership training and soft skills development into the curriculum. c. Leverage women and diverse role models in the classroom. d. Include these elements in the BC Education Innovation Strategy and curriculum review.
Industry	
1. Develop and promote a diversity policy, utilize inclusive language, profile role models and implement diversity training to establish a culture that values and brings visibility to diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Diversity Policy – Develop a published diversity policy for the organization. b. Diversity Language – Ensure inclusive language is used in all organization communications. c. Diversity Communications – Develop diverse stories for internal and external websites. d. Role Models – Highlight female and diverse role models within the organization.

	<p>Nominate outstanding women for internal or external awards programs.</p> <p>e. Diversity Training – Offer diversity training for both men and women at all levels of the organization, particularly in areas where there may be limited awareness to the issues, related to the value of diversity on teams and business objectives and unconscious bias.</p>
<p>2. Implement updated talent management systems, practices and policies to support a pipeline of women leaders and diversity in business.</p>	<p>a. Recruitment – Update job descriptions, job ads, resume screening, interview criteria and interview assessment to include a balance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, collaboration, networking and engagement. These are areas critical to the workplace.</p> <p>b. Selection – Implement hiring policies to identify qualified women and diverse candidates prior to moving to a short list. Make team diversity a criterion for selection as it improves the quality and performance of teams. Train recruiters to recognize that women tend to undersell their skills.</p> <p>c. Development – Develop a learning plan that includes challenging assignments and leadership training to support growth and promotion. Fund education and training opportunities for high-potential young women leaders.</p> <p>d. Sponsorship – Partner all high potential women with champions, sponsors, coaches or mentors (beyond their manager). Train senior leaders to be strong coaches and champions.</p> <p>e. Promotion – Include diversity as a component of succession planning and promotion. Identify gaps and implement a plan to address them. Train leaders to watch for biases such as where women tend</p>

	<p>to get promoted based on proven skills and men on potential. Make the criteria for advancement clear to increase transparency and access to senior leadership roles.</p> <p>f. Assessment – Set and monitor targets for the number of women at various levels in the organization. Add diversity questions to employee reporting and survey to identify barriers and solutions for your company. Submit the organization for Canada’s Best Diversity Employers to highlight the diversity practices of your company and attract further strong female candidates.</p>
<p>3. Implement flexible work practices and policies to support employees in balancing family needs, and increase work satisfaction.</p>	<p>a. Flexible Work Hours – Enable employees to flex their hours over the course of a week or month provided they meet their required work hours and tasks. Define ‘core hours’ or ‘coverage requirements’ and support a schedule to ensure that these are met.</p> <p>b. Work From Home/Telecommute – Support employees to work from home on a regular or ad hoc basis depending on business needs.</p> <p>c. Part-Time, Reduced Work Day or Reduced Work Week – Accommodate 60-80 percent work days or weeks, or part-time schedules, particularly for families with young children or people with health issues.</p> <p>d. Compressed Work Week – Allow employees to extend work days in order to reduce work hours on other days.</p> <p>e. Job Sharing – Enable employees to propose job-sharing arrangements on a 50/50 or 60/40 basis.</p> <p>f. Time Off Without Pay – Allow employees to take a week off without pay at any time, and up to 1 to 3 months off without pay based on business needs.</p>

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| <p>4. Implement enhanced maternity and paternity programs, graduated parental return-to-work, child care, and reintegration programs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Maternity – Provide a period of topped up benefits for women in addition to legally mandated maternity leave pay. b. Paternity – Offer a matching time off and top-up program for men. Men who stay at home build stronger family relationships, better empathy for working parents, and support their partners’ careers. c. Graduated Return-To-Work – Support a graduated return-to-work program. Such programs support employees in finding an appropriate balance between work and home following a leave. d. Child Care – Offer child care benefits as a distinct benefit or part of a flex benefit program. Negotiate preferred rates for employees at local daycares. On Pro-D days, set up a meeting room for parents to bring in their children. Where possible, encourage parents to bring their children to visit their workplace signalling that the workplace is a family-friendly environment. e. Reintegration – Implement policies and programs to recruit and support women transitioning back into industry from small businesses, non-profit organizations, entrepreneurial endeavours, or time off from work. |
| <p>5. Promote diversity in the company’s executive and on the company’s board of directors – target at least 30 percent women on the company’s executive and board of directors.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify and develop high potential woman candidates for succession planning for executive roles. Go to market for female executives when recruiting for vacancies where there are no female succession candidates. b. Leverage networks to identify qualified woman candidates for board of directors positions (e.g. Board Resourcing Development Office, Diversity 50, WEB Alliance, WXN). |

Individuals

1. Commit to mentoring and sponsoring a promising young female leader.
2. Continue this conversation with friends, families, colleagues, and especially with men.
3. Identify and champion solutions and actions that can be implemented in organizations you are a part of.
4. Take up opportunities to challenge and re-frame ingrained practices towards greater inclusion of women.
5. Nominate your female colleagues and women you admire for prestigious awards and recognition for their contributions.
6. Focus your personal investment and consumer power on companies with diverse boards and diverse senior leadership teams.

Track 2

Women Entrepreneurs

Barriers	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of and Access to Resources • Finances and Access to Capital • Self-Limiting Mindset • Societal Norms and Structural Barriers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase Education and Awareness of Entrepreneurial Pathways • Streamline Access to High Quality Resources • Introduce and Support Pathways to Increased Growth and Scaling • Identify Champions, Mentors and Role Models • Increase Access to and Uptake of Capital
Recommendations	
Government	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Streamline access to high quality resources for entrepreneurs at all stages of business development & growth (provincially and nationally). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Invest in supporting existing government-funded third party women-serving organizations that provide pathfinding services. b. Identify unique challenges faced by rural and immigrant entrepreneurs in order to expand offerings for these target groups through existing partners, in a customized and culturally appropriate manner.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Facilitate increased participation of woman-owned businesses and women entrepreneurs in high growth industries and untapped expansion opportunities through supplier diversity initiatives and access to export markets. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Export Markets – Develop and implement training programs with existing women-focused agencies to encourage women entrepreneurs to engage in export markets and to facilitate establishment of necessary support and mentorship initiatives (such as a BC chapter of the Organization for Women in International Trade (OWIT)). b. Supplier Diversity – Actively help create supplier diversity opportunities in BC (both government and corporate), and help women entrepreneurs leverage international supplier diversity

	<p>opportunities through support for trade missions and funding to offset associated costs such as travel and certification. Promote best practices for supplier diversity initiatives, and recognize and profile organizations that support supplier diversity objectives. Consider setting a target of 5 percent of provincial government purchases to go to woman-owned suppliers, similar to the US Small Business Administration.</p>
<p>3. Enable, incentivize and promote greater investment in women-owned businesses.</p>	<p>a. Incentivize investing in woman-owned businesses fund through options such as expanding the VCC tax credit structure, which gives a 30 percent tax credit to investors in eligible companies, to include woman-owned businesses.</p> <p>b. Make a direct investment in woman-led businesses.</p>
<p>4. Increase the loan funds and lending limit available for current publicly-funded women’s business lending programs to help provide additional growth capital for woman-led businesses.</p>	
<p>5. Augment the BC Public Education Curriculum to incorporate entrepreneurship and ‘growth mindset’ content.</p>	<p>a. Add business and entrepreneurship content to the K-12 curriculum.</p> <p>b. Incorporate curriculum activities that encourage students to build businesses as projects.</p> <p>c. Incorporate approaches and methodologies in the K-12 curriculum which increase the ‘growth mindset’ of students to ensure that confidence levels are developed and nurtured early on.</p> <p>d. Include these elements in the BC Education</p>
<p>Industry</p>	
<p>1. Develop champions, advisors, and sponsors for women entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>a. Develop industry specific advisory networks for entrepreneurs that offer programming for mentorship and sponsorship. Use the</p>

	<p>current industry associations to share the need for more champions and also the Tool Kit being developed by Status of Women in Canada on championing women.</p> <p>b. In partnership with Women’s Enterprise Centre (WEC), FEW or other women entrepreneur-focused groups, develop industry specific advisory networks for entrepreneurs who offer programming for mentorship and sponsorship, leveraging the knowledge base that already exists through established mentorship programs.</p> <p>c. Encourage commercial lenders to employ methods of working with female business clients that create a more supportive and welcoming environment.</p>
2. Develop and provide training to women interested in investing in women-led ventures.	a. Utilize existing resources from organizations such as the Angel Resources Institutes Women First Enterprises.
3. Provide funding to and invest in women-led ventures.	a. Develop a funding program for woman-led ventures and target a percent of loans for women entrepreneurs.

Individuals

1. Mentor/champion daughters, nieces, other young women in your lives.
2. Become a mentor and/or champion for a woman through joining existing programs such as Women’s Enterprise Centre mentorship or starting a mentorship/championing program in one of the associations you belong to.
3. Engage with youth through your local high schools to provide mentorship or support for learning about entrepreneurship/business.
4. Promote women owned business and continue the conversation in your community.
5. Invest in and purchase from women-owned businesses.

Track 3

Women in Non-Traditional Jobs & Emerging Sectors

Barriers	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stereotypes and Cultural Norms Against the Inclusion of Women • Lack of Flexibility and Work-Life Effectiveness • Lack of Male Mentors and Supportive Senior Male Leadership • Lack of Awareness and Education about Opportunities for Women • Gender Bias in Workplace Cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and Foster the Talent Pipeline • Invest in Training and Retention of Women • Integrate Flexibility and Respect into Culture and Practice • Promote Leadership, Accountability and Responsibility at All Levels • Identify Visible Role Models, Mentors, and Champions

Recommendations

Government

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work collaboratively with industry and trade associations to utilize and make accessible existing best practices, toolkits, and strategies to engage women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Make existing resources and information about the economic imperative to include women visible and available to the public through government and agency websites and publications. b. Develop and maintain an accessible and workable online database of government training and skills development resources that women (including Aboriginal and immigrant women) can use to launch careers in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors. c. Share best practices and resources for employers to recruit, retain, and advance women in non-traditional jobs and emerging sectors where participation and retention of women is low. d. Profile companies who find innovative solutions to support, train and mentor women (including Aboriginal women) such as those who provide flexible workplace |
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	hours, job-sharing, and child-care opportunities.
2. Create a government supplier diversity policy and program to promote and increase diversity and inclusion within government suppliers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage diversity and inclusion reporting in job tender documents and supply chain contracts when government is procuring goods and services. b. Encourage suppliers to track data on the representation of women in their ownership, workforce, senior ranks and boards. c. Consider setting a target for government spend to come from diverse suppliers.
3. Expand the application of existing WorkSafeBC policies, legislation, and assessment processes to raise awareness of and correct subtle forms of bias in the workplace that limit women from meaningful participation in non-traditional jobs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Utilize the WorkSafeBC's Certification of Recognition (COR) to financially incentivize businesses to raise awareness and enforce company bully and harassment policies and procedures. b. Ensure the verifier is trained to focus on the more subtle forms of gender discrimination and unconscious bias in the workplace. c. Enhance existing OHS guidelines or policies, to raise awareness on more subtle forms of discrimination and encourage initiatives to deter such barriers that may limit equal access of women to workplace opportunities in these areas.
4. Promote the economic benefits of employing a diverse workforce in the trades and STEM industries and provide corporate incentives to encourage businesses to hire and retain diverse talent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continue to hire, retain, and support the development of women and model this for the business community and the public. b. Within Crown corporations, develop formal mentorship, apprenticeship and leadership programs for women wanting to pursue a career in the skilled trades. c. Encourage non-Aboriginal businesses to hire Aboriginal women and to partner and do business with women-run Aboriginal trades and contractors and the businesses that support the trades and development

	projects.
5. Implement an effective curriculum within the K-12 public education system to build the talent pipeline and raise awareness among students and parents of career opportunities in the trades and STEM professions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Enhance the existing school curricula by suggesting the inclusion of field trips, expert speakers in classrooms and other effective means of communicating BC opportunities in these areas for women to all students. b. Work with trade associations and industry to develop accessible databases of ambassadors who can work with schools and students to educate on the opportunities and benefits of careers in the trades and emerging sectors.
Industry	
1. Work with educational institutions to educate all students and teachers about opportunities and benefits of careers in STEM and trades for women and mentor them in these areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Provide workplace shadow-a-parent opportunities; encourage or require workers to go into local classrooms, particularly in remote and aboriginal communities.
2. Develop policies and practices to increase participation and inclusion of Aboriginal and immigrant women in these areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Implement or revise diverse hiring policies. b. Implement or revise contracting policies to encourage suppliers to hire aboriginal women run businesses. c. Implement skills building and leadership training programs for Aboriginal women in the local and remote communities in which the business operates.
3. Integrate flexibility and respect into workplace culture, policies, and practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Examine and seek to better understand the specific working realities for women in your industry. b. Design flexible working schedules and employment supports to respond and positively address the working realities identified that limit women's participation (e.g. transportation to and from work site at odd hours; on-site childcare facilities where practical). c. Ensure recommended industry best

	<p>practices for providing a respectful and inclusive workplace are being implemented and encourage leadership to address harassment including the more subtle forms that limit the meaningful participation of women.</p> <p>d. Encourage or require action and accountability for these initiatives from corporate leaders (including managers, HR consultants and C-Suite).</p>
<p>4. Identify and support role models, mentors, and champions for women.</p>	<p>a. Develop formal mentorship programs to support women in navigating the workplace and facilitating career advancement.</p> <p>b. Encourage corporate leaders to identify women with potential for career advancement within the organization at every level and to commit to championing them to the next level.</p>
<p>5. Consider the collection of data on workforce diversity and encourage disclosure of workforce diversity data from suppliers and contractors.</p>	<p>a. Consider that a specific portion of any tender documents seek information on diversity.</p>
<p>Trade Associations</p>	
<p>1. Set targets for attraction of women into various trades and into the leadership of trades associations and unions.</p>	
<p>2. Develop and implement diversity policies and practices to ensure that a diverse workforce is available to businesses that are unionized.</p>	
<p>3. Work with female tradespersons and male members to develop and implement best diversity practices and policies.</p>	
<p>4. Continue using social and other media to develop media pieces to educate and attract women, and shift cultural bias.</p>	

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| 5. Create a certification standard and process to certify demonstrably diverse organizations as such (e.g. similar to LEED or WBE Canada). | a. Use a scorecard or point system for requiring mandatory prerequisites and voluntary credits creating a system of Silver, Gold or Platinum certified employers. |
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Individuals

1. Mentor a young worker.
2. Speak at elementary and secondary schools about your experiences, career, and opportunities in STEM and skilled trades.
3. Approach your own companies and unions to develop programs and solutions to open doors for women.
4. Engage male colleagues in the conversation.
5. Reach out to, join, or form industry associations to support women.
6. Be a leader in creating a respectful workplace.

Appendix B: Citations

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