

**YWCA HAMILTON
BUILDING OPPORTUNITIES:
ADVANCING WOMEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS
EVALUATION**

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Funded by



**Status of Women
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**Condition féminine
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Introduction

Program Background and Objectives

Funded by the Status of Women Canada, Building Opportunities: Advancing Women in Non-Traditional Occupations is a three year project led by YWCA Hamilton in partnership with Workforce Planning Hamilton (WPH). The project is centred on two goals: increasing opportunities for industry sectors and communities in Hamilton to advance women in non-traditional occupations and the creation and implementation of a Sector Action Plan, with tested tools, practices and strategies to support the sustainable retention and promotion of local women in the skilled trades. The project was designed to research, understand, and communicate the barriers and opportunities for women in Hamilton, Ontario who are working towards, or established in, non-traditional occupations.

In order to develop and implement a Sector Action Plan that would effectively support the retention and upward mobility of women in the skilled trades, YWCA Hamilton and WPH took the opportunity to learn about the needs, priorities and potential strategies identified by local women and community stakeholders. To gather this information, the project team completed a literature review on gendered barriers, employer best practices and international success stories for women in the trades in June 2014. The team also developed and carried out an online needs assessment survey between September and November 2014; held focus groups in December 2014; and conducted interviews with stakeholders between September and December 2014.

The project began in 2014 and launched a survey that was developed by WPH with input from the advisory committee, and was administered to a focus group. The purpose of the survey was to learn more about the experiences of female apprentices and journeypersons in the construction and industrial trades.

About the Collaborating Organizations

YWCA Hamilton offers a variety of employment programs and collaborates with non-traditional industries and experts. YWCAs across the country are experts and leaders in women's equity rights and understand the barriers to women achieving economic equality in our communities. YWCAs' programming and services are based on an inclusive and participatory approach aimed at empowering and facilitating access for marginalized and isolated groups, with a focus on assisting women and girls to achieve the rights, resources and opportunities to shape their own lives and define their communities. The programs and services are developed, implemented and evaluated from a framework which reflects their core values: Equity, Self-Determination, Inclusion, Community Partnership and Accountability. YWCA Hamilton works toward the improved status of women locally and through their affiliation with YWCA Canada and World YWCA.

Workforce Planning Hamilton offers significant research expertise using a variety of primary and secondary research strategies: focus groups, surveys and case studies. They have over 16 years of labour market research, employer engagement and community development experience working in a broad range of employment and industry sectors. For ten years Workforce Planning Hamilton hosted an event promoting career opportunities for women in skilled trades and engaging women mentors to work with young women and women in career

transition to explore these opportunities. WPH has done extensive research and reported on the experience of women in the labour market looking at their barriers and challenges.

YWCA Hamilton and Workforce Planning Hamilton collaborated on the Building Opportunities: Advancing Women in Non-Traditional Occupations project. They share similar organizational visions, missions, and goals. Along with community and industry partners, they created a Sector Action Plan to help employers recruit, retain, and advance women in Hamilton's construction and industrial trades. This Sector Action Plan can be replicated in other cities in the province of Ontario and Canada wide.

Evaluation Objectives

YWCA Hamilton has engaged the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to conduct an evaluation of this project by (1) reviewing relevant data, reports, and program summaries; by (2) assessing practices that facilitated inter-agency collaboration through focus groups; and by (3) assessing overall project strengths, opportunities for improvement, and the role of partnerships.

Methods

In order to learn about the experiences with inter-agency collaboration and the project's process, the SPRC met separately with YWCA Hamilton and Workforce Planning Hamilton staff who worked on this project. Discussion in these meetings focused on the experiences of collaboration, what supported it, and what could be done in the future to foster more effective collaboration.

To learn more from the stakeholder advisory members, a focus group was held in June of 2016 for members to share their experiences with the project. Six members attended, while one member participated via an online survey. Questions focused around collaboration amongst advisory members as well as with both organizations.

A web survey was made available on the toolkit's website that automatically appeared as users navigated through the site. SPRC supported YWCA and WPH in the development of this survey. The survey asked users how they heard of the website, what sector their organization/company falls under, the size of the organization, how many women employees work in their company, as well as how many women work in skilled-trades positions within their company. The survey garnered four responses. The survey can be found in Appendix A.

Impact of Sector Action Plan toolkit

Website Visits

Table 1: Website visits by month

Month, 2016	Visits	Page Views	Unique Visitors
January	15	26	15
February	16	98	10
March	51	192	31
April	69	277	34
May	43	99	26
June	19	57	9
July	39	80	32
August	164	577	96
September	60	263	50
Total	476	1,669	303

As of September 2016, the website drew a total of 303 unique visitors and had a total of 1,669 page views. August 2016 saw the most traffic with 32% of the total unique visitors and 35% of total page views. An invitation to the website launch event with the link to the website was sent out by WPH and YWCA Hamilton in August, and should explain the spike in visitors. It is unknown how many times, if at all, resources and policies of the toolkit had been downloaded; this information is not accessible.

Website Survey

Table 2: Website Survey Responses

How did you hear about this site?	What sector is your company in?	How many people work in your organization?	How many women work in your organization?	How many women in skilled trades positions in your organization?
Word of mouth	Manufacturing (machinery)	50	3	1
Other: E-mail from YWCA Hamilton	Motive	9	1	1
Other: (not available)	Other: (not available)	7	1	0
Other: E-mail from Workforce Planning	Other: (Employment and Construction Skills Workshops)	6	2	0

As visitors accessed the website, they were prompted with an optional survey that asked about the company in which they are employed. Visitors had the option to dismiss the survey and continue navigating through the website and sector action plan/toolkit. Although there were 303 unique visitors, only four (4) responses were submitted. These 4 responses may not be reflective of the 303 unique visitors, and therefore analysis of this data is not considered representative of all visitors.

The purpose of this website survey was to learn about who is accessing the website, whether the website is reaching the target population of small to mid-sized enterprises and to learn about the proportion of women in skilled-trade positions versus women employed in the company and comparing that to the size of the company. As per one of the submitted surveys, only one (1) woman worked in a skilled-trades position while three (3) women worked in the manufacturing company that had a total of fifty (50) employees. One other company had only one (1) woman working in skilled trades and she was the only woman of a total of nine (9) employees that made up the company that self-identified as 'motive'. Two companies had zero women working in skilled trades, however one of the companies is not in trades and the sector of the other company is not known.

The survey will continue to be available as an option on the website, and so more data may be available in the future.

Inter-agency Collaboration

Collaboration can provide many benefits for community organisations in providing integrated solutions to the complex problems facing society. YWCA Hamilton has experience and expertise in providing service to women including employment training services while being a strong advocate for women's role in the economy. Workforce Planning Hamilton has conducted primary and secondary research on the labour market and its trends. The collaboration of these two agencies has proven to be a fitting partnership for this project.

The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC) outlines some factors for the success of collaboration (2012) that is reflected in this project. Creating a shared vision with common goals, and having all members' perspectives and interests recognized early in this project are markers for success as outlined by the OHCC. As the project's timeline ran over a period of three (3) years, collaborating partners did not have to give in to pressures of speed and action, which OHCC outlines as another factor for success.

Communication with stakeholders

A stakeholder advisory committee was established for the project and members of the committee were consulted with on the process and improvement of the toolkit through regular communication. Stakeholder members valued the partnership between YWCA Hamilton and Workforce Planning Hamilton by recognizing the strengths of shared expertise. Stakeholder members shared that they felt their feedback and input were desired, heard, and discussed thoroughly by the agencies. They felt that meetings focused on the process and the quality of the toolkit, as opposed to solely focusing on the outcome. Stakeholders shared that although the project saw many staff changes and also saw additional stakeholder membership, there was a consistent vision and focus throughout the project as well as a clear understanding of which phase the project was in at any given time.

Stakeholder membership

Members joined the stakeholder advisory committee intermittently throughout the course of the project. One stakeholder who joined the committee in its early stages shared that they were formally introduced to the project; there was a discussion about the group, its purpose, and how a stakeholder can contribute. Stakeholder members who joined after the initial stage shared that they were not formally introduced to the committee, project, and that their roles and responsibilities to the committee and project were not clearly outlined. Nevertheless, stakeholders did not find this to be entirely problematic as they were able to learn through the course of their involvement. Stakeholders who were consulted unanimously agreed that their experience with the committee, the project, with YWCA and WPH were positive.

Stakeholders shared that there was a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and expertise on the committee. They also shared that there was a gap in overall membership skills where they felt that members were not versed in employment law. As per YWCA Hamilton staff, there was one stakeholder member with HR Management experience who may have been knowledgeable on employment law. Some members shared that a labour union perspective was missing but would

have benefited the discussions. As per YWCA Hamilton staff, there was a member from the labour union on the stakeholder advisory committee. Stakeholders empathized that recruitment for any committee can be difficult with consideration to who is invited, who is willing and able to put in the time commitment, and who sees the value of this work.

Staff changes

It is crucial that how decisions are made is a process that is agreed upon at the start of any partnership, as well as the establishment of roles and responsibilities. This would make communication more effective and productive, particularly as new staff and committee members join the project.

As described by both YWCA and WPH, there were staff changes throughout the course of the project. This natural occurrence in any work environment could have posed challenges to the direction and timeline of the project, but instead YWCA and WPH were required multiple times to explain the project and details to new staff members. This process of informing and updating new staff strengthened the existing staff's knowledge and focus of the project. This also subsequently created an ongoing awareness of the stage of the project.

Initially, the implementation of the project was not steady. This was due to delays in hiring staff and staff changes within both agencies. Consistent staff was found in WPH with the manager and worker who joined after the initial phase of the project. There were two consistent senior management staff from YWCA who worked on the project. Staff changes also meant new leadership, and with that came different leadership styles. Staffing delays sometimes meant that one agency was working on the project. Also, because of staffing delays, work often fell onto one consistent staff person throughout the project. However, staff changes and delays did not impact the timeline of the project nor did it impact the quality of the toolkit.

Inter-agency communication

There were some strengths and challenges to the communication process between both agencies related to feedback and decision-making. There was a line of communication informally established, where communication was passed from management to the frontline contact person of the project for each agency.

Although formal meetings were held between agencies, most of the inter-agency communication transpired between the two frontline worker staff. They would share and discuss ideas and challenges of their own and those brought forward by their managers. These two staff members met on a weekly basis. After this communication exchange, the information would then be communicated back to managers for approval and/or further feedback. At times, other parties were involved in this line of communication, such as the advisory committee and the designer of the toolkit. Decision making was often a prolonged process, as described by both agencies, because of many staff persons involved. Although this did not negatively impact the timeline of the project, it became a source of frustration as they all had to wait to hear from a variety of people and also because roles and responsibilities were not always clear to some project members.

Roles and responsibilities

Both agencies expressed that many problem areas encountered could have been prevented with the existence of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). Roles and responsibilities were at times unclear for each participating member, especially when new staff members held different organizational roles than the previous staff person involved in the project. Both agencies were committed to the project and believed in the work that they were contributing; visions and goals were established early. Although YWCA Hamilton states that the funding proposal was clear about roles and responsibilities, not all parties were clear in regards to which agency was taking lead on the project. Although both agencies had a slightly different understanding of roles and responsibilities in relation to the project, as the project went on it became clear that there was a leading agency which also held the ultimate decision making power. This presented challenges to both agencies. Some of these challenges were resolved by the communication and compromise of the two workers who met regularly. Their commitment and ability to adapt played a crucial role in the success of this project.

Overall project strengths

Overall, the collaboration between YWCA Hamilton and WPH as well as with stakeholders impacted the development of this toolkit positively, increasing the level of capacity, expertise, and insight. Collaboration benefits the community, creates more well-rounded perspectives and adds value to the overall process and outcome.

Stakeholders shared that this toolkit is especially important for small to medium sized enterprises. Staff at these enterprises may not have the time nor the administrative support to put effort into researching resources. This website offers readily available tools that can be easily copied and pasted into a company's policies and procedures. Stakeholders shared that online resources accessed in the past were difficult to search and often led to dead links. Companies that employ tradespeople will find easy-to-use resources in this toolkit that cover stages from pre-hiring, retention, and advancement opportunities.

Although there were some challenges around communication, roles and responsibilities between YWCA and WPH, overall both organizations were committed to and believed in the project. They both appreciated each other's unique expertise and lens regarding the social issue and calls to action. Both agencies shared that they learned more about challenges and factors to successful collaboration. Based on their experience with the project, both agencies would collaborate again in future opportunities.

Opportunities for Improvements

The following list has been developed through consideration of feedback from both organizations and stakeholder members.

1. A collaborative process in the development and agreement of an MOU is vital in establishing relationships within the partnership. A clear establishment of roles and responsibilities that states the lead organization and who has ultimate decision making power is helpful in guiding the course of the project.
2. Review and adjust agreements as necessary with every new staff person involved in the project so that all previous and additional members are formally introduced to the project and that there is room to accommodate staff and role changes.
3. It would be helpful to develop a skills matrix for stakeholder members after they have joined the committee. It is important to learn the strengths and gaps in knowledge and experience of members in relation to project needs. Considering that membership recruitment is a challenging process, it would be helpful for those members committed to the project to build their capacity through learning opportunities in order to help close gaps in skills, knowledge, and expertise. A learning opportunity may look like a guest speaker presenting to the committee, a training workshop, access to resources, and/or a combination of these and other opportunities.

Next Phase: Suggestions from Stakeholders

Stakeholders see the value in the toolkit, and also recognize that there are many people and companies that do not see the importance of this work. The task of getting those companies onboard is challenging. Stakeholders have suggested the following:

1. Create a certificate, stamp or logo to offer a company that they can advertise on their own website and within their building to highlight the company's commitment to the inclusivity of women in skilled trades after having implemented some of the tools available on the Advancing Women in the Skilled Trades website.
2. Have the federal government support the toolkit by advertising to companies and recommending that they implement the resources available.
3. The government can include this toolkit as part of a 'small business starter kit'.
4. Having policies from the toolkit and staff training made mandatory by the government.
5. Advertise the toolkit through media. Producing an advertisement that illustrates some of the struggles women face in a male dominated environment with an employer proudly stating that these barriers do not exist in their company as result of implementation of the resources available through Advancing Women in the Skilled Trades website.
6. Have existing companies who are in support of the project share it with their networks.

Appendix A - Website Survey

Quick Survey

Please help us improve our content with some feedback!

How did you hear about this site?

Facebook Twitter Online search Word of mouth

Other (please specify below)

Please specify

What sector is your company in?

Construction Manufacturing Electrical Motive

Plumbing Industrial Other (Please specify below)

Please specify

General Questions (use your best estimate):

How many people work in your organization?

How many women work in your organization?

How many women work in skilled trades in your organization?