

WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

Utah Women's Organizations Network (UWON)

Friday, September 17, 2021

Breakout Session Summary

This document summarizes the facilitated discussions of the various groups at the Utah Women's Organizations Network (UWON) event hosted by the Utah Women & Leadership Project, Younique Foundation, and the One Utah Roadmap (Equality and Opportunity). Thanks to Kylie Downs and Marin Christensen for their compilation and analysis, and to the facilitators of each of the 8 breakout groups.

Question 1: Considering all that has and is happening, what are your greatest concerns for the women in your networks, groups, and organizations?

1. **Inequity in recovery:** hiring, recruiting, retaining, losing their businesses, and leaving the workforce and not coming back. Sacrificing their pre-COVID careers for jobs with more flexibility. Leadership pipeline momentum lost. Intersectional inequity in recovery; essential jobs, particular industries affected.
2. **Working parent supports:** Childcare, accommodating school schedules, etc.
3. **Unlivable wages:** The high cost of living, compounded for women of color. Others include English as a second language, women experiencing poverty, and single moms.
4. **Isolation:** Leads to mental health issues, lack of confidence. Not asking for help, though we can't do this alone, we need each other, we need to network and build relationships, remove silos, lift each other up. Some women pull up ladder behind them.
5. **Bias and sexism:** These include internalized sexism (cultural expectations), tokenism, and intersectional bias. One comment: "Sexism as a barrier, experienced it just last week. Women were called out as being "too emotional" while the male talking about it was being quite loud and emotional. Those explicit displays discount the women in the room. Forces some women to try to act more like 'one of the boys.'"
6. **Lack of women in leadership:** Includes lack of role models in all professions.
7. **Financial literacy:** The need to start young.
8. **System, power, and representation:** Women are rarely in pivotal leadership roles. Generational conditioning and systemic complacency. Learned helplessness due to closed doors. Women feel like a liability to employer. Feels like there is a backlash movement of #metoo.
9. **Sexual and domestic violence:** Lack of education and discussion regarding consent and violence, perpetuates the issue. Vulnerability compounded for immigrant survivors who may face restrictions to resources.

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Question 2: What are the gaps and needs in Utah that current organizations or initiatives are not addressing? What are the overlaps?

Work-specific:

- Career re-entry services
 - Not enough entry level roles.
Why not hire and train?
- Pipelines to leadership, but also pipeline to enter profession at all
 - Rural/remote staffing
- Childcare
- Effective networking
 - Lifting each other up rather than cannibalization
- Employers know benefit of diversity, but don't know how to find talent.

General:

- Financial resources and literacy
- Lack of participation/membership in groups and organizations
- Seeing other women succeed
- Alliances between men and women
- School outreach
 - Both a gap and overlap as multiple organizations do it that can join forces
- Overlap in substance abuse, suicidality, eating disorders, mental health.
 - We are led by grants; prevents collaboration.

Question 3: Overall, what needs to be done to strengthen the impact of Utah girls and women (e.g., public policy, programs, initiatives)?

1. **Family-friendly businesses:** Women can be easy to recruit if you offer flexible or remote options. Their KPI's are higher, and COVID has proven telecommuting productivity and has cut overhead. Offer tax incentives for employers that offer these policies, and especially childcare support.
2. **Bias accountability in companies:** More diversity and implicit bias training in companies. Sexism is still commonplace, especially in male-dominated industries. Need for these trainings to be women-led.
3. **Support those with compounding barriers:** Rural women, native women, undocumented women, women of color, single moms, moms experiencing poverty. Longitudinal services from basic needs into education and career help. Technological and language barriers. Essential jobs are low paid and exploited.
4. **Support each other:** As one person said, "Surrounding myself with powerful women makes me feel powerful."
 - a. For Latinas: There are a ton of jobs, but 90% are found networking, so it's about having the right conversations with the right people.
 - b. Connect schools to UWON partner organizations so that they can bring in speakers, assemblies, etc. and use the organizations as resources to better serve their female student populations.

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- c. Help more women get into politics. Get caucus night on school calendars, give money to women candidates, get candidates to recruit women delegates.
 - d. Resource sharing: networking for women in need
- 5. **Expect more from allies:** Wage negotiation is put on us. Where are our allies? Need for sponsorship and mentorship by males.
- 6. **Start young:** Invest in youth services to build leaders, better guidance counseling starting in junior high, train girls in civics. Consent training for parents of girls and boys.