



# A BOLDER WAY FORWARD FOR UTAH

## **PROBLEM**

National and statewide studies continue to show that women and girls in Utah are not thriving in critical areas. Year after year, Utah shows high levels of domestic violence, sexual assault, child sexual abuse, and gender-based discrimination, while also ranking as the worst state for women's equality and having low levels of women's leadership representation in nearly all domains, including business and politics. Although the needle has moved slightly in a few areas, with its current trajectory it will take two, three, or even four decades to make notable progress. It is time for Utah to embrace a *Bolder Way Forward* (BWF).

## **SYSTEMS THINKING**

To do this we need to utilize systems thinking, which is that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts." In Utah, we have been working hard on related efforts using the "parts" strategy, but not fully moving together as a system. Systems are made of interrelated, interdependent parts, but they cannot be understood as a function of isolated components. Although each part needs to be working well, a systems approach focuses on the relationships among the parts so that all work together in more powerful ways. *This is the key to more boldly advancing a common cause.*

## **BOLD MISSION**

The overarching mission of the BWF is to make Utah a place where more girls and women can thrive in any setting (e.g., home, workplace, congregation, and community). If we are serious about ensuring that Utah women and girls thrive, we need to create change by 2030, with a check point in 2026. This includes a shift from *outputs* to *outcomes*.

## **LEADERSHIP**

Movement leaders act as part of a larger network and position themselves to enable the parts of the system around them to succeed. While the Utah Women & Leadership Project (UWLP) is coordinating this effort, hundreds of organizations and individuals are also leading by bringing together entities and individuals who are already doing related work or who want to get involved. This systems approach is based on "networked leadership" where strategic partnerships and alliances across sectors are critical for change. The relationship among leaders is important, as is bringing together all who want to engage and work together for the "common good."

Using the metaphor of a wheel moving up a paved road (see page 3 for visual), the work of the BWF is to be a vehicle of change for Utah women and girls:

## FRAMEWORK

**ROAD** The road is uphill, and there are currently lots of potholes. Many individuals and groups provide programs, efforts, and initiatives that assist in making the road smoother.

**WHEEL** The wheel is the BWF “system” or vehicle of change.

**HUB** The hub is the overarching BWF mission.

**SPOKE** There are 18 BWF areas of focus (spokes), which fall into five broader categories. Each spoke, a key topic area where change needs to occur, is also a movement with a coalition that functions to make the whole greater than the sum of its parts. Effective work within the spokes is needed to create more expansive and cohesive change overall. Each spoke will create bold goals for 2026 and 2030 based on outcomes.

**RIM** There are issues that permeate across and influence each spoke that will need deeper research and resources, and the UWLP will provide insights on these that can be used to continue the work going on in the spokes: sexism, identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, disability, age, socioeconomic, religion), culture, and male allyship.

The UWLP works from the middle and helps coordinate efforts led by various spoke teams, research groups, action communities, and other working entities to stay in alignment with the mission. This includes, among other elements, sharing the vision, convening strategic gatherings, locating metrics, accessing tools and resources, maintaining the focus on bold goals, and driving change forward. To succeed in creating change, everyone needs to succeed.

## INSPIRATION

The inspiration for the BWF framework came from [How Change Happens: Why Some Social Movements Succeed While Others Don't](#), [Believe in People](#) and [Leading Change](#).

## TOOLS

To implement spoke and action community goals and strategies, a mix of tools are needed, including research, resources, public policy, advocacy, training and development, communication and messaging shifts, mentoring/sponsorship initiatives, networking, and philanthropy. In addition, grassroot involvement across the state is foundational to societal change.

## GOALS & OUTCOMES

Although there is not one metric that can assess and measure the overarching BWF mission, all spoke leaders are crafting 2026 and 2030 goals for each of their areas, with all being linked to measurable outcomes. The UWLP team has upscaled work in locating and tracking national and state data that can be regularly updated in visual dashboards. Showing progress toward goals and tracking changes over time is crucial for success. Because this comprehensive, in-depth examination is not currently being done in any other state, Utah can become a national leader in how to implement positive change for girls, women, and families.

## CONCLUSION

Utah must do better to ensure everyone thrives. Melinda Gates once stated, “If you want to lift up humanity, empower women. It is the most comprehensive, pervasive, high-leverage investment you can make in human beings.” Our vision is not to lift girls and women at the expense of boys and men—that is the *scarcity* mentality. Instead, we believe that there is enough for everyone through cooperation and collaboration, which is the *abundance* mentality. When we strengthen the impact of Utah girls and women, we can strengthen everyone!

# A BOLDER WAY FORWARD - FRAMEWORK

*Helping More Utah Women and Girls Thrive*

## EDUCATION

- Finance
- Higher Education Attainment
- K-12 Initiatives

## HEALTH & WELLBEING

- Health Across the Lifespan
- Home & Family

## SAFETY & SECURITY

- Child Sexual Abuse
- Domestic Violence
- Poverty/Homelessness
- Sexual Assault
- Sexual Harassment & Gender-Based Discrimination

## WORKPLACE

- Childcare/Pre-K Programs
- Entrepreneurship
- Gender Pay Gap
- Leadership Development
- Organizational Strategies & Workplace Culture
- STEM Fields
- Workforce Development

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Political Representation, Boards & Commissions, & Civic Engagement/Advocacy



POTHOLE

PROGRAMS,  
EFFORTS, &  
INITIATIVES

UPHILL ROAD