

What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHANS ENGAGE



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What Box Elder County Leaders and Residents Can Do To Strengthen the Impact of Girls and Women in Their Area

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP
Project

Box Elder County is full of engaged, passionate individuals who frequently ask the question, “What can I do to strengthen the impact of girls and women in this area?” To provide specific answers to that question, the **Utah Women & Leadership Project** (UWLP), USU-Brigham City, and the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah hosted a “think tank” gathering to collect ideas for individuals, groups, and organizations interested in supporting and empowering girls and women in their area.

This idea sheet is based on a 2023 gathering of 38 leaders in Box Elder County. Girls and women face challenges unique to the area in which they live, and the goal of this gathering was to identify those barriers and determine strategies and initiatives that local leaders and residents can implement to address them. This document includes recommendations in the following areas: education, home and family, health and wellbeing, business and economics, and culture and community engagement.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Box Elder County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. Ensuring that women complete high school and obtain college certificates and degrees is critically important to continue a woman's development. Recommendations include:

- Develop and teach STEM curriculum for girls, starting in elementary school.
- Encourage high-school and college-aged young women to apply for and accept internships.
- Educate parents on educational funding and opportunities for girls to go to college (e.g., scholarships, dual enrollment).
- Ensure middle- and high-school girls are aware of all their options about available courses, programs, and activities.
- Expose high-school female students to a broad range of subjects and potential career fields such as statistics, STEM, and business.
- Foster creativity through art, music, clubs, classes, and activities.
- Help young women become self-sufficient adults by providing skills that will help them prepare for work in a variety of careers with opportunities to shadow jobs in multiple industries.

- Identify and eliminate instances of separation and segregation between genders in all schools.
- Invite female role models in all fields to share with students their stories; leverage relationships with local women in various industries to participate in this program.
- Provide female-focused scholarships to increase college enrollment and graduation, including STEM-specific scholarships with Bridgerland Technical College (BTC).
- Teach financial literacy to girls in grades six through twelve and show them how to apply these principles to real-life financial situations.
- Train school counselors to look for and address issues discussed in this report.

HOME & FAMILY

In Box Elder County, parents are recognized as the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. The home is the first and primary place where girls and boys are socialized; therefore, it is where they learn about their potential as well as what is expected of them in the future. Recommendations include:

- Build the self-worth of adult women (e.g., mothers, grandmothers, aunts) so that they will be positive role models to the girls in their sphere of influence.
- Help girls develop confidence by encouraging them to speak up, and then listen to them. Make sure they know they have a voice, and that their thoughts, feelings, and opinions are as valid and important as are boys'.
- Hold workshops for families that include breakout sessions for all age-groups. Suggestions include addressing mindsets about

- family roles and responsibilities, holding teen focus groups on empowering each other, sharing available resources in the community to help families meet their needs, identifying critical needs of girls and women, and intentionally designing family structure to support carefully planned goals and values.
- Reinforce that girls do not need to decide at a young age what they want to do, and that their options for the future are not limited to traditional gender roles or careers.
 - Teach daughters to trust themselves, set boundaries, and that it is okay to change their minds.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Concern over the mental health and emotional wellbeing of girls and women in Box Elder County emerged as a primary theme. Recommendations include:

- Create a community campaign to bring awareness to the need to break the cycle of abuse; this can be promoted through social media, podcasts, and webinars. Reinforce the campaign by creating a program to teach and implement needed changes.
- Encourage girls and women to participate in mental health counseling to address issues such as poor body image, low confidence, lack of self-respect, anxiety, stress, and expectations to be perfect.
- Hold classes and dialogues that provide a safe space for community members to discuss and share the answers to questions such as, "Why is it important to address gender discrimination? Why should I/we care? How does it affect me/us? How does it affect my/our future?"
- Provide programs that will help families transition out of poverty and addiction.
- Strengthen a girl's and woman's mental health by teaching them to be assertive, negotiate, advocate for themselves, and not fear rejection.
- Train community members of all genders and ages on sexual consent and sexual assault.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Box Elder County women struggle with limited opportunities for internal advancement and leadership, as well as with conscious and unconscious bias. Recommendations include:

- Advocate for women in our own places of work.
- Create a STEM committee within the Women in Business program of the Chamber of Commerce.
- Evaluate policies on maternity and paternity leave to ensure they are family friendly.
- Help women climb economically by providing job skills training and tuition reimbursement so they can level-up their professional position.
- Improve childcare in Box Elder County by making it affordable and connected with funding from the Department of Workforce Services, creating community-private childcare partnerships, making it available 24/7 to support parents in manufacturing jobs, and ensuring it is in an accessible central location.

- Increase financial wellbeing by exposing women to STEM education available at BTC, internships and scholarships, as well as partnering with various industries.
- Mentor women who are re-entering the workforce after an extended leave and/or those who need help with financial acumen.
- Negate stereotypes that women in leadership professions are bossy, that women should be a stay-at-home mother, that working moms are not good mothers, and that a woman who stays home with her children is "just a mom."
- Provide flexible and affordable housing options.
- Train business leaders on bias, the research behind the state of women's equality in Utah, best practices for equity and inclusion, and that we must shift our mindset from scarcity to abundance.

CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "think tank" attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Box Elder County is heavily influenced by religion. Leaders are also concerned about the lack of diversity and inclusivity in the region. Recommendations include:

- Ask for a county-wide Women's Day Resolution.
- Capitalize on momentum and community support by creating grassroots organizations to address issues in this paper and include like-minded local businesses in the effort.
- Collaborate with nonprofit groups such as the New Hope Crisis Center, the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Utah, the Box Elder Special Interest Group, USU Extension 4H and health programs, and the Children's Justice Center.
- Convene community events, mentoring programs, service projects, and classes for women and men at the community center.
- Create a safe place for girls and young women to be after school where they will be mentored by caring adults.
- Encourage local religions to identify pitfalls where girls and women may be marginalized and where there are opportunities to make positive change.
- Establish relationships with national organizations who have successfully empowered women and expanded diversity.
- Help girls and young women of faith see their potential and their options.
- Initiate groups of women who will mentor and support one another.
- Partner with law enforcement to host a "night out against crime" to draw attention to domestic violence and sexual assault and to create community safety plans.

CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Box Elder County, we will be better able to change harmful or ineffective policies and programs, continue effective action, support effective leaders, identify and solve local problems, and create responsive initiatives. The UWLP encourages leaders and residents to use this document to affect change.

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