

What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



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

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

Grand 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)** and USU Blanding 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 20 leaders in Grand 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 Grand County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. They recognize the essential role graduating from college plays in a woman’s life. Recommendations include:

- Advocate for a STEM program for girls of all ages so they are prepared for the future and quality careers.
- Change the language and messaging used to speak about girls’ sports (dance vs sport), and emphasize the leadership skills girls develop through sports.
- Create a more robust sex education program by collaborating with other states that do this successfully; make sure it starts at an earlier age and focuses on empowering girls.
- Develop a peer-mentorship program for young women to mentor each other.
- Emphasize academic prep courses for college.
- Encourage girls to take risks.
- Ensure schools are safe spaces for girls to learn, grow, act, think, and share.
- Equalize the funding, resources, opportunities, and programming available for girls’ sports so that they match that of boys’ sports.
- Fund extracurricular activities for girls.
- Improve the public education options, programming, curriculum, and offerings for girls and young women.
- Increase engagement and participation of under-represented groups of girls (e.g., Hispanic, Native American).

- Invite businesses to support girls’ sports at the same level that they support boys’ sports.
- Normalize graduating from college by asking what degree someone is earning rather than whether they are going to college.
- Partner with national youth organizations to bring opportunities to small and rural communities.
- Protect boys and girls when they are at school.
- Stop young women from dropping out of high school due to conflict.
- Teach school administrators, staff, and faculty how to talk to girls and young women so they can better earn their trust.
- Teach trades to all genders in all languages relevant to Grand County; emphasize the importance of programs like Women in Welding at USU Moab.

HOME & FAMILY

In Grand County, parents are recognized as the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. Recommendations include:

- Create, promote, and share parenting resources.
- Ensure that women receive proper and complete care when pregnant; provide awareness and resources to help women through the gestational and childbirth process, especially women of color, as too many women lose their lives when this isn’t a priority.
- Give girls a voice by inviting them to talk and listening to them.
- Hold parenting classes to mentor parents on how to support their daughters and champion their successes.
- Provide access for all women to affordable and high-quality family planning so that women are aware and informed as they make reproductive decisions.
- Show children that traditional gender roles can be shared and demonstrate healthy relationships.
- Teach girls and young women that the age at which she becomes a parent dramatically impacts her income and career potential for the rest of her life.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

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

- Assure girls and women that thinking critically is right and good, and that they can and should speak up and share their thoughts, ideas, and opinions.
- Be willing to participate in hard conversations around sensitive, important, and potentially controversial topics (e.g., how men and women think, the importance of intersectionality).
- Capitalize on the high numbers of female athletes by inviting them to share messages and examples of body positivity.
- Ensure that there are sufficient mental health professionals to meet mental health needs.
- Intervene at early ages to help girls maintain confidence during middle school as the onset of puberty is happening younger (sometimes as early as age 7).
- Negate body image issues stemming from social media by replacing it with whole, healthy, and realistic expectations and visualizations.
- Promote mental health and wellbeing of girls and women by ensuring they have control over their decisions and that they have the same options as boys and men to improve their lives.
- Protect and empower girls and women by acknowledging and punishing injustices perpetrated on women, regardless of where it comes from (e.g., home, school, society).
- Start early to teach boys and girls to reject a scarcity mindset (e.g., male vs female, us vs them, gender roles) with one of abundance (e.g., when we lift one group, we lift everyone).
- Teach consent to boys and girls, as well as to men and women.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

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

- Acknowledge that nontraditional families need nontraditional childcare options and that the current childcare options in Grand County favor traditional (9a-5p) needs. Further, accommodations need to be made for children with special needs.
- Address the changes that have occurred in the business landscape due to the pandemic, specifically the number of women-owned business that have closed in its aftermath.
- Advocate for stronger salaries for women.
- Fund an internship program for young women to intern with women business owners.
- Invite diverse perspectives to the decision-making table.
- Participate in the Women Business Owners of Moab program.
- Recognize male allies who support nontraditional families with family-friendly policies and provide affordable and accessible childcare.

- Reframe childcare as an economic issue and acknowledge that it represents a market failure regarding the gap between needs, expenses, and funds; emphasize that it is a public issue, not a private one as both sectors must work together to address and resolve it.
- Support working mothers and fathers by developing and implementing family-friendly policies and a workplace culture that allows for a shorter work week and more paid time off.

CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The “think tank” attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Grand County is heavily influenced by religion. Leaders are concerned about the limitations and decreased value culture has placed on women and girls. Recommendations include:

- Address the theocratic and democratic challenges in the county.
- Bring together local women who are long-timers and newcomers in Grand County to through community mentoring groups and extracurricular activities; create ones specifically for underserved populations.
- Celebrate the women that currently lead major organizations in Grand County (e.g., mayor, school district superintendent, CEO of the hospital). Recognize women in any leadership positions so that aspiring girls and young women can see and hear examples of what they can become and the impact they can have.
- Consider the needs of senior women, especially those without family (e.g., yard care, transportation, healthcare, fixed income).
- Develop community mentoring programs for underserved populations.
- Elect and appoint more women to positions of power and influence and encourage them to actively participate in the political process.
- Ensure women are listened to in all settings and that their voices are not minimized nor silenced.
- Evaluate opportunities and activities in all sectors for equity and diversity.
- Listen to the voices of Native American women and create a platform for them to share more of their thoughts, ideas, and opinions.
- Make Moab Area Transit (MAT) a more robust service to allow women and girls more access to community-based events they are currently unable to access due to a transportation barrier.
- Reach out to minority girls and women to make sure they are receiving the same help and training as others so that they can become leaders.

CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Grand 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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