



YWCA
M O N C T O N

A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN

UN POINT TOURNANT
POUR LES FEMMES

STATUS OF WOMEN CANADA PROJECT
**YW BREAKTHROUGH: INCREASING
ECONOMIC OPTIONS FOR WOMEN IN
GREATER MONCTON**

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

NOVEMBER 2015

INTRODUCTION

In partnership with Status of Women Canada, YWCA Moncton's *Breakthrough* project focuses on supporting the development of community-level strategies to address institutional barriers that limit women's access to employment in the Greater Moncton area. *The Competitive Advantage: A Business Case for Hiring Women in Skilled Trades and Technical Professions*, presented by Status of Women highlights reasons that support why businesses should consider hiring women as part of their competitive advantage:

- A diverse workplace that mirrors the community enhances a company's reputation. This is a key benefit for organizations seeking community buy-in.
- Women's perspectives support successful business strategies. Women are customers, influencing up to 80% of buying decisions.
- Greater attention to detail and precision in female-dominated teams ensures that equipment runs more efficiently, causing fewer delays and maximizing productivity.
- Women are often committed to staying in their communities over the long term, making them a loyal and stable workforce.

Multiple stakeholders (women with lived experience in unemployment, precarious employment, and/or under-employment) and partners (local businesses) participated in Art of Hosting trainings, lunch and learns, and a community mobilization event; all designed with a gender-based analysis lens. Through these community collaboration activities, *Breakthrough* has identified four strategies to reduce barriers to women's employment

YW BREAKTHROUGH STRATEGIES

- Implement and encourage use of human resource policies, such as **flexibility** and **job sharing practices**
- Encourage **carpool** or **alternate transportation** options
- Ensure **networking opportunities** are both accessible and conducive to the full participation of women in all their diversity
- Embrace **diversity** as a competitive advantage and implement **GBA+** approach to internal human resource policies and systems

This project has been funded by Status of Women Canada

YW BREAKTHROUGH STRATEGIES

IMPLEMENT AND ENCOURAGE THE USE OF EXISTING HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES

Flexibility in negotiating work start and end dates to accommodate responsibilities at home, address emergent family crisis, or allow for use of public transportation was identified as a need by women in the stakeholder group.

Having flexible hours can increase the quality of employees lives, particularly employees who are caregivers to dependants (children, parents, etc.), lead to increased productivity and increase workplace satisfaction. Flexibility can also have positive economic benefits by alleviating costs incurred by employees, such as childcare costs (for example, if a parent gets off work at the same time as her children get off school, she can care for them instead of incurring child care costs).

A single mother explained, “*Flex time was one of the best things when I was working for a community organization, they understand. It meant, ‘I have to stay home today, I will lose 5 hours, I will make up 5 hours.’ Having the freedom and the trust, it’s about relationships, I think it made a huge difference because I had a personal relationship with the people I worked with, it’s a small organization, there is a trust factor. It takes off that stress needing a sick day for a child.*”

There are many great tools available to assist managers in making flex time a profitable reality for both the company and its employees:

- <http://www.catalyst.org/knowledge/managing-flex-how-guides-organizations-managers-and-individuals>
- <http://www.workforce.com/articles/sample-flextime-policy>

Job sharing can be a great option for people balancing professional and personal responsibilities. Job sharing is when two people create a team to perform one job. Effectively, the two employees each work part-time, but they do not hold part-time positions; rather, they share a full-time position and the benefits that accompany it. People who are well-suited to do this are reported to be hyper-productive in their job-sharing functions.

Here are some thoughts on how to operationalize job-sharing:

- <http://weinrebgroupp.com/blog/job-sharing>

YW BREAKTHROUGH STRATEGIES

ENCOURGAGE CARPOOL OR ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

Many women rely on public transportation; they may not drive themselves or may not have access to their own vehicle. Because public transportation is only available on certain hours and in certain areas, jobs out of the city and night shifts aren't available for these women. Many say using cabs is too expensive. In some cases, women could walk home, but late-night shifts were problematic from a safety perspective.

Given the realities outlined above, it can be helpful for employers to offer options such as carpooling incentives, or flexible hours to accommodate the public transit schedule.

ENSURE NETWORKING ACTIVITIES ARE BOTH ACCESSIBLE AND CONDUCIVE TO THE FULL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY

Networking events and opportunities are an important part of creating a positive team dynamic and culture of collaboration in an organization. Organizations who include a gender based approach to planning these activities ensure women aren't unintentionally excluded from participating.

Consider:

- **Time of event:** Are networking activities scheduled at various times and days throughout the year? Do you consider child care availability when selecting times and dates?
- **Location:** Does the location create an environment conducive to the full participation of women in all their diversities? Do you consider how the venue will foster a culture of respect and inclusivity?

Hosting a women's engagement committee can help create strategies that ensure women's full participation is a priority in the workplace.

YW BREAKTHROUGH STRATEGIES

EMBRACE DIVERSITY AS A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE AND IMPLEMENT GBA+ APPROACHES TO INTERNAL POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

Diversity can benefit companies in the areas of better decision making, improved problem solving, greater creativity and innovation – providing organizations with the ability to compete in global markets. Marginalized groups bring an organizations a different perspective that challenges the status quo since their socially constructed world view will differ from that of the dominant group. From this perspective, these unique and varying standpoints help to eradicate “groupthink” which can develop within a homogenous group.

Gender-Based Analysis+ (GBA+) is a tool organizations, including the federal government use to advance gender equality in Canada. It represents an enhanced and modernized approach to gender-based analysis that is practical and engaging. GBA + is used to assess the impacts of policies, programs or initiatives on diverse groups of women and men, girls and boys. GBA+ helps recognize and respond to the different situations and needs of the Canadian population.

Gender is a major factor in GBA+, but we must also take into consideration factors such as age, education, language, geography, culture and income. Analysis that incorporates gender and these other diverse, intersecting factors is called GBA+.

Gender-based analysis (GBA) assesses the differential impacts on women and men by considering their different life situations - their different socio-economic realities. GBA recognizes that the realities of women's and men's lives are different and that equal opportunity does not necessarily mean equal results.

Unconscious bias is an important concept to consider when applying GBA+. Internet giant Google is tackling diversity using this concept.

“Unconscious biases are created and reinforced by our environments and experiences. Our mind is constantly processing information, often times without our conscious awareness. When we are moving fast or lack all the data, our unconscious biases fill in the gaps, influencing everything from product decisions to our interactions with coworkers. There is a growing body of research – led by scientists at Google – surrounding unconscious bias and how we can prevent it from negatively impacting our decision making. The goal is to teach ourselves how unconscious bias can affect our perceptions, decisions, and interactions. It is aimed at raising awareness, sparking conversation, and initiating action. We’re hopeful that this will help us to create workplaces that are not only fun and innovative, but allow each of us, no matter our background, to achieve more than we could anywhere else.” — Brian Welle, Director of People Analytics at Google

Among other things, Google is trying to create a culture change where everyone is encouraged to call out unconscious bias. This fosters open conversations about gender, race and other aspects of diversity, a crucial step in effecting change within an organization.