



## **WOMENomics® Forum Toolkit**

### **Section III: Empowered Workforce Discussion Guide**

Welcome to the WOMENomics® **Empowered Workforce** Discussion Guide. This is Section III of a six-part Toolkit, designed to help you conduct a WOMENomics® Forum at your workplace or in your community. All six sections of the Toolkit are available on our website, [www.bpwfoundation.org](http://www.bpwfoundation.org).

- I. Introduction and Overview
- II. Successful Workplaces Discussion Guide (Equal Pay, Diversity, Work-Life Balance)
- III. Empowered Workforce Discussion Guide** (Empowering all Working Women, with targeted research on sub-populations such as Women Veterans, Young Careerists, Women in the Green Economy)
- IV. Media Guide
- V. Event Planning Guide
- VI. Webchat Guide

#### **How to Use this Discussion Guide**

Whether through a formal WOMENomics® Forum, a small-group conversation at work, or in a local grassroots meeting, we encourage you to utilize this guide as a discussion-starter. Each topic contains:

- a brief summary of the issues
- suggested discussion questions
- resources

In this section, we provide an outline for leading a discussion on the following topics:

- A. Empowering All Working Women (pp. 2-4)
- B. Women Veterans (pp. 4-10)
- C. Young Careerists (pp. 10-17)
- D. Women in the Green Economy (pp. 17-23)

Please note that the sub-populations of working women included here are simply three sub-groups we selected for consideration as part of your empowered workforce discussions. There are other sub-populations you may choose to focus on, and we encourage you to adapt the topics to workforce segments that are applicable to your organization and/or local community.

A separate guide, Section II, focuses on creating successful workplaces, including equal pay, diversity, and work-life balance.

For a public policy update related to topics contained in this discussion guide, please contact BPW Foundation for the latest issue of *Policy Watch*, or visit the BPW Foundation [Public Policy webpage](#) and [Advocacy Center](#).

### **A.) Empowering all Working Women**

What do we know about today's working women? A [March 2011 White House Report on Women in America](#) provides the following data:

- According to the [March 2011 White House Report on Women in America](#), the labor force participation rate for women has held steady in recent years (jumping from 33% in 1950 to 61% in 1999, where it has remained through 2009).
- As the overall number of working women has increased, so too has the number of working mothers with children. From 1975-2000, the number of working mothers (with children under age 18) rose from 47% to a peak of 73%. This rate receded to 71% in 2004, and (as of 2009) has held steady at that level.
- More unmarried mothers work than their married counterparts (76% compared to 70% in 2009). Unfortunately, however, female-headed families have the lowest family earnings among all family types.
- Education pays for both women and men, but the pay gap persists. Earnings for both women and men typically increase with education level. However, the male-female pay gap persists at every education level for full-time workers.
- Women and men continue to work in different occupations. While women are three times more likely to work in administrative support jobs than men, relatively few women have construction, production, or transportation jobs. Women remain concentrated in a small number of traditionally female occupations (secretaries, registered nurses, elementary school teachers, cashiers, and nursing aides).

- In families where both husband and wife are employed, employed wives devote more time to household responsibilities than do employed husbands; Women also participate in more volunteer activities.

Other notable characteristics of today's working women include:

*Unpaid caregiving responsibilities:* [A 2010 Work-Life Balance report](#) by the President's Council on Economic Advisors reports that in 2008, approximately 43.5 million Americans served as unpaid caregivers to a family member over the age of 50. Nearly one-fifth of employed people were caregivers to a person over age 50.

*An increase in the number of mature working women:* From 2008 to 2018, the [Bureau of Labor Statistic's "Women at Work" report](#) projects that the estimated number of working women aged 65 to 74 will increase more than women in any other age group.

### **BPW Foundation's Role in Creating an Empowered Workforce**

Awareness of the statistics on working women is important, but so is understanding and support for workplace policies and practices that empower working women. BPW Foundation's research provides insight to employers and policy makers on the needs and challenges of key groups of working women with a variety of skills and educational attainment. We also provide programming to employers and employees in order to encourage discussion, improve productivity, and create solutions.

We continue to study the prevalence of women in non-traditional occupations as well as how to prepare women for those jobs. Through partnerships with women, employers, and policymakers, we create an empowered workforce that includes targeted sub-populations such as women veterans, young careerists, and women in the green economy. Other examples include small-business owners and mature workers. By studying these sub-populations and their unique differences, we also learn how they align with larger issues that impact all working women. Recent examples include a [Young Careerist Focus Group study](#), and a [Broadband Survey](#) to research the use of high-speed internet (broadband) among four diverse groups of women. As early as the 1960s, BPW scholarships and grants targeted important issues such as research on Latino women and attitudes of disadvantaged African American girls and their perceptions for future employment. [Current scholarships](#) continue to support women's professional advancement.

BPW Foundation works closely with [The White House Council for Women and Girls](#) and the [Women's Bureau at the U.S. Department of Labor](#) on initiatives to empower working women. The Women's Bureau has a series of programs devoted to empowering women in the workforce. These include programs to support awareness and workforce development for women in STEM (science, technology and math) careers and other nontraditional fields. These initiatives are summarized in the [January 2010 report prepared by the Dept. of Labor for the White House Council on Women and Girls](#).

## **Resources**

Women at Work, a report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 2011

<http://www.bls.gov/spotlight/2011/women/>

White House Report: Women In America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well Being, March 2011 [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/Women\\_in\\_America.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/Women_in_America.pdf)

White House Council on Women and Girls

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/eop/cwg>

Quick Stats on Women Workers 2009, Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor

<http://www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm>

Overview of Department of Labor Programs and Policies that Impact Women and Girls, Prepared for the White House Council on Women and Girls, U.S. Department of Labor, January 2010

[http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/reports/Overview\\_DOL\\_Programs\\_and\\_Policies.htm](http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/reports/Overview_DOL_Programs_and_Policies.htm)

Empowered Workforce resources, BPW Foundation

[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/issues/empowered\\_workforce](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/issues/empowered_workforce)

The Business Case for Hiring Workers Age 50+, by AARP, Successful Workplaces Digest, BPW Foundation,

[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/BPW\\_Foundation\\_Successful\\_Workplaces\\_Digest.pdf](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/BPW_Foundation_Successful_Workplaces_Digest.pdf)

## **B.) Women Veterans – Summary of Issues**

Throughout American history, women have joined our nation's military and served our country valiantly in times of peace, war, and conflict. For far too long, though, women veterans have been invisible. It wasn't until the 1980 Census that women were asked if they had served in the U.S. Armed Forces. When finally asked the question, more than 1.2 million women responded "yes."

***What is the problem?*** When women return home after military service, they often do not receive the recognition or benefits they have earned. Women represent 15% of the military and are the fastest growing veteran population, and yet:

- Tools and programs are still largely designed with men in mind and do not necessarily meet the unique needs of women veterans.

- Women veterans are four times more likely than non-veteran women to experience homelessness. It is unacceptable that there are more than 100,000 homeless veterans on our streets and 13,000 of them are women, many with children.
- Women veterans often find it difficult to translate their military skills into meaningful civilian careers, despite having achieved great success in the military with opportunities to advance into high-ranking positions. In addition to the difficulties of the current economy, women veterans often encounter inconsistent or inaccessible transition resources, misperceptions by employers and co-workers about their skills, along with work readiness and readjustment challenges.

For those who are able to find employment, the prospects are still daunting.. The military expends great resources training its service members to be the most skilled, efficient, disciplined, and adaptable employees possible. Yet when soldiers return home, they are often told their skills do not translate into the civilian world. It is a struggle for women veterans to find the employment services they need to secure meaningful jobs.

To address these concerns, BPW Foundation convened a Summit in October 2010, involving more than 80 leaders from the White House, federal agencies, veterans' community, and the business and nonprofit sectors. A summary report, "[Joining Forces for Women Veterans](#)" outlines the findings of these discussions and plots a course for action. The report builds upon the [first-ever survey of women veterans](#), conducted in 2007 among 1,600 women veterans by the BPW Foundation, which found that many programs and policies designed for veterans were set up to meet the needs of male veterans from a different era. Three key issues were identified by women veterans: [homelessness](#), [reintegration](#), and [post-military employment issues](#).

The findings of BPW Foundation's Summit and research are summarized below.

***There is an economic and moral imperative for addressing the distinct needs of women veterans.*** Supporting women veterans is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. Improving transition outcomes for women and strengthening the nation's economic competitiveness are mutually supportive goals. Facilitating the advancement of women veterans will increase their success along with that of businesses, communities, and families. The wealth of training and experience women veterans bring to the civilian workplace as employees and employers is squandered when women's unique transition needs are ignored.

If more than 80% of military jobs have civilian counterparts, then why do women veterans have difficulty securing meaningful civilian jobs? It's not just a question of how many veterans are employed or unemployed, but also a question of *where* women are employed. When women veterans' military skills and experience are ignored, the labor market is misallocated. To help employers better recognize and support the wealth of experience women veterans bring, BPW Foundation has prepared a list of [Top Ten](#)

[Recommendations for Employers to Support Women Veterans in the Workplace.](#)

Investing in women veterans as employers and business owners is also smart economics. Women in the military possess an entrepreneurial mindset, are proactive and goal-oriented, and get the job done using resources effectively. Women veterans have experience making decisions in the face of significant ambiguity, uncertainty, and danger. They understand the importance of having an alternate plan, and they are willing and able to adapt. Although these traits align with the key characteristics of successful business owners, women veterans are under-represented among business owners.

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, nearly one quarter of veterans indicate they are interested in either starting or buying their own businesses, and that number is even higher among women veterans. The SBA launched a “Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship ([V-WISE](#))” program, focusing on training, networking and mentorship for women veterans. In partnership with Syracuse University, they are also expanding an [Entrepreneurship Boot Camp \(EBV\) for veterans with disabilities](#).

***Women veterans may lack awareness of or access to benefits, services, and programs that address their distinct needs.*** Women veterans return from military service to their families and communities changed by the military culture and their experiences, unsure how or when to express their adjustment concerns or where to access support to sort them out. Women veterans report that they have little guidance or assistance to prepare them for the realities of civilian life beyond the military [Transition Assistance Program \(TAP\)](#), which is designed to provide direction and support prior to discharge. Interestingly, the women veterans in the report all possessed high-quality skills and a breadth of experiences that would benefit companies and communities, but they needed additional help and guidance to recognize and apply these capabilities in the civilian world. Moreover, while programs and services exist for veterans, few are designed specifically for women veterans.

***Efforts to address women veterans’ transition challenges must include dual focus: support for women veterans and capacity-building for organizations.*** Designing tailored tools and resources requires an understanding of the target population. Business, government, and community leaders need a better understanding of the women veterans employed in their organizations and living in their communities. According to data from the pre-summit survey, only five attendees knew how many women veterans their organization employed.

***Actions and solutions that address women veterans’ transition challenges should be informed, holistic, collaborative, and community-based.*** Developing customer-driven programs and services requires in-depth knowledge of the customer. Business, government, and community leaders need to listen to and learn from the stories and experiences of women veterans. Reintegration, housing, and employment challenges are interconnected and have compounding effects. Supporting women veterans requires addressing their economic, social, mental, and physical needs. This type of holistic approach can ensure successful transitions for women veterans.

### **BPW Foundation’s Role in Supporting Women Veterans**

BPW Foundation’s action steps to support women veterans include:

- A new, national campaign, [Joining Forces for Women Veterans](#), to support women veterans in their transition from military to civilian life. The [campaign](#) includes an online [Career Center](#), which provides recruiting tips for employers and information about the benefits of hiring women veterans. Job seekers can also post their profiles and resumes for free. [Connect-a-Vet](#) includes a list of resources especially designed for veterans, from financial help for small business owners to housing services and facilities. A national fund has been established for women veteran initiatives.
- [Scholarships](#) to help women veterans receive the specialized training or certification they need to obtain meaningful civilian jobs.
- [A joint mentoring program](#) with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. This program was highlighted as part of the new national “Joining Forces” initiative led by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden ([www.JoiningForces.gov](http://www.JoiningForces.gov)) to educate, challenge, and spark action from all sectors of our society and ensure military families have the support they have earned. The BPW Foundation mentoring program will help women veterans and military wives receive tools and training join to secure meaningful jobs as members of the nation’s workforce. The goal is to connect 10,000 women mentors with women veterans and military wives by the end of 2012.
- **Career Development Workshops:** The BPW Foundation is also establishing partnerships with organizations around the country to provide career development opportunities for women veterans. For example, working with the Philadelphia Veterans Multi-Service and Education Center, BPW Foundation is conducting a series of career and self-development workshops for women veterans in transitional housing at the Coatsville Veterans Center in Chester County, Pennsylvania.

### How to Support Women Veterans

As BPW Foundation launches activities inspired by the [Joining Forces for Women Veterans](#) initiative, businesses, organizations, and women veterans are encouraged to take steps as well. The chart below lists many possible ideas.

Employers	Organizations	Individuals, including Veterans
<p><b>Identify</b> the women veterans on your staff. How many are there? Who are they? What types of positions do they hold?</p> <p><b>Organize</b> brown bag lunches for women veterans where they can share their transition experiences.</p> <p><b>Host</b> roundtables with diversity officers to discuss best practices for recruiting and retaining women veterans.</p> <p><b>Create</b> a women veterans’ affinity group.</p> <p><b>Develop</b> mentoring programs and career coaching tools specifically for women veterans.</p> <p><b>Support</b> the National Fund for Women Veterans to ensure coordination and expansion of quality programs.</p> <p><b>Participate</b> in local public-private partnerships to ensure coordination and access to service for women veterans.</p>	<p><b>Identify</b> women veterans in your community and your state. Initiate networking and mentoring activities.</p> <p><b>Examine</b> your local and state women veterans’ support services and resources. How accessible are they in location, hours, and scope to meet needs?</p> <p><b>Advocate</b> through tracking and providing input on policies affecting women veterans and supports tailored to their needs.</p> <p><b>Encourage and engage in collaboration</b> among service providers to address all aspects of needs directly or through referrals.</p>	<p><b>Volunteer</b> at local American Legion or other veterans service organizations. Find out what they are doing to support women veterans and how you can help.</p> <p><b>Seek out</b> other women veterans for networking and awareness through veteran businesswomen- related organizations.</p> <p><b>Report</b> concerns and problems using any of the VA-related systems.</p> <p><b>Educate</b> yourself and others about the distinct issues affecting women veterans.</p> <p><b>Consider donating</b> resources to women veteran-related causes.</p>

### Suggested Discussion Questions

[Questions for Employers:]

- 1.) Can you identify the women (and men) veterans on your staff? How many are there? Who are they? What types of positions do they hold?
- 2.) Do you have (or can you initiate) mentoring and networking activities for women veteran employees and their co-workers?

- 3.) Does your human resources department have training to deal with veteran-related issues? Practical examples include leveraging military benefits with employer benefits; other examples include policies that recognize and support post-traumatic stress syndrome.
- 4.) Have you taken steps among all employees (not just leadership), to increase awareness of the importance and value veterans bring to your workplace?

[Questions for Employees:]

- 5.) As an employee and a woman veteran, have you self-identified as a woman veteran? If not, why?
- 6.) As a woman veteran, have you accessed any transition assistance programs? If not, why? If yes, what was your experience? What needs to be improved?
- 7.) As a woman veteran, what have your experiences been transitioning from a military to a civilian career? What can you share (good or bad) with other women veterans that might help their transitions?
- 8.) Do you own (or have you considered owning) your own business? What types of assistance were helpful to you in becoming an entrepreneur?
- 9.) Can you identify women veterans in your community and in your state? Have you reached out to a local American Legion Post (or other veteran service organization) to find out what they are doing to support women veterans? (See resources below for examples of veteran support.)

### **Resources**

Jobs and Economic Security for America's Women, White House/National Economic Council Report, October 2010.

[http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/women\\_economy\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/women_economy_report_final.pdf)

Joining Forces for Women Veterans Inaugural Summit Report, BPW Foundation, February 2011

[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/JFWV\\_Final\\_Summit\\_Report.pdf](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/JFWV_Final_Summit_Report.pdf)

America's Heroes at Work – Hiring Veterans Toolkit, U.S. Department of Labor

<http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit>

Top Ten Recommendations for Employers to Support Women in the Workplace

<http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/EmployerTop10RecommendationsWV.pdf>

Joining Forces for Women Veterans (Business and Professional Women's Foundation initiative) – [www.womenjoiningforces.org](http://www.womenjoiningforces.org)

Joining Forces.gov (U.S. Government Initiative)  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces/>

United We Serve – Support for Veterans Toolkit  
<http://www.serve.gov/toolkits/veterans/index.asp>

Create the Good – AARP Toolkit for helping Military Families  
<http://createthegood.org/toolkit/help-military-families>

Center for Women Veterans, U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs  
<http://www.va.gov/womenvet/>

Women Veterans Igniting the Spirit of Entrepreneurship (V-WISE), U.S. Small Business Administration and Syracuse University program <http://www.whitman.syr.edu/vwise/>

Entrepreneurship Boot Camp for Veterans with Disabilities (EBV), U.S. Small Business Administration and Syracuse University program, <http://whitman.syr.edu/ebv/>

[The War for Talent](#): Articles on Hiring Veterans, Special Advertising Supplement to Forbes Magazine, June 2011

## **B) Young Careerists - Summary of Issues**

Young careerists, as defined by BPW Foundation, include individuals between the ages of 21-35. By 2025, Generation Y (born 1978-1994) will comprise nearly 75% of the world's workforce. Their familiarity and expertise with technology, coupled with their multicultural perspectives and their insatiable desire for making a difference, poise Gen Y to revolutionize the workplace. Whether you are a young careerist, an employee with colleagues from Generations X or Y, or an employer striving to capitalize on the strengths of younger employees, the following summary and resources will help you to learn more about the opportunities and challenges this group of workers face.

### **BPW Foundation's Role in Supporting Young Careerists**

BPW Foundation supports workplace policy and workforce development programs that bridge the generations for young careerists and their colleagues to ensure that:

- Employers have tools to include and engage this unique group of workers, thus enhancing the workplace;
- Young careerists have resources to navigate the workplace and advance in their careers;
- Employers, young careerists and their colleagues understand the value of a multi-generational workplace; and
- Employers implement innovative workplace policies to support women early in their careers.

The [Young Careerist research project](#), funded by the Virginia Allan Endowment, provides a framework through which to view the career choices and challenges of Generation Y women. This primary research gives voice to a distinct group of working women who are vital to developing a diverse and skilled workforce. BPW Foundation seeks to understand what Gen Y women need in order to be successful in the workplace and then translate that knowledge into tools that improve how employers recruit, support, and retain young women. In 2011, BPW Foundation critically engaged Gen Y stereotypes through a series of employer-based focus groups, resulting in the newly released [Gen Y Women in the Workplace: Focus Group Summary Report](#).

### **Changing Views about the Characteristics of a Young Careerist**

Today's workplace is a mosaic of workers: different generations, cultures, genders, and experiences, each at a different point in the career life-cycle. Out of this mix, many viewpoints have emerged regarding young careerists – including negative stereotypes about their commitment to the workplace. But, fortunately, rhetoric on the 80 million strong Generation Y is softening. Last year, Gen Y was often labeled lazy slackers with unrealistic work expectations. In 2011, they are more favorably considered slow starters who have been humbled by the current economic environment. Is Gen Y changing or are our perceptions of Gen Y changing—or both? The more we explore the beliefs and attitudes of this generation, the better we will understand and appreciate their decisions and priorities. The following is a general summary of the characteristics often applied to Gen Y.

- ***Entrepreneurship is a valuable skill they bring to the workplace:*** Raised in an environment where they were urged to find and follow their passions, young careerists tend to be more confident and willing to take risks to pursue their interests in an entrepreneurial manner.
- ***Intrinsic rewards*** (sense of job satisfaction, overall workplace experience/environment) ***are more highly valued*** than extrinsic rewards (money, title).
- ***Commitment and loyalty is to their work, not to the employer:*** Young Careerists have observed massive layoffs. They question why they should be loyal to an employer who most likely will not be loyal to them. They understand they will not stay in their first job forever. Career moves/changes in employers are not the result of a lack of direction or loyalty, but rather strategically motivated by a desire to pursue a passion and/or a commitment to their work.
- ***Emphasis is on outputs not inputs:*** They want to be evaluated on what they produce, and not how many hours they are sitting at their desks. Gen Y women are not the only ones questioning the efficacy of the traditional 9-5 “work is where you go” mentality. Paying people for the results they produce rather than the number of hours they work is the heart of a [Results-Only Work Environment \(ROWE\)](#).

- **Pursuing Life, not Work/Life:** Gen Y challenges the traditional approach to work/life balance. They believe they have one life and work is an integral part of that life. They want to have a successful and meaningful career without compromising other areas (e.g. family, friends, hobbies, spirituality, etc.). This can lead to dissatisfaction with current work-life balance programs. They aren't looking for a stellar concierge program or a "fun" work environment, but for an overhaul of the workplace structure.
- **Last hired, first fired:** According to a 2010 study by the Pew Center for Research, the recession has hurt all Americans but has taken a particularly tough toll on the younger generation. As jobs vanished and businesses closed, America's newest entrants into the labor force found themselves among the last hired and the first to lose their jobs.
- **Many still live with mom and dad, but this can build character:** For many young careerists who have suffered career setbacks during the recession, parents or other family members help ease the sting of a skimpy paycheck or a financial setback. A [February 2010 report by the Pew Research Center](#) found 13% of parents with grown children say an adult son or daughter has moved back home over the past year for various reasons, including the recession. Although it is unclear whether the cause is financial or emotional, the so-called "boomerangers" are mostly individuals ages 18-34. While it's easy to pass judgment and write them off as not having their act together, [new studies](#) indicate that parental assistance in early adulthood isn't such a bad thing. In fact, it can lead to autonomy and resiliency -- qualities that are valuable to employers.
- **Majority of Gen Y believe that being a good parent is of the utmost importance:** [A 2010 Pew Research survey](#) found that 52% of Gen Y respondents say being a good parent is "one of the most important things" in life. This has important ramifications for employers, as Gen Y employees will continue to reject the false choice of career over family.

An excerpt from [Time Magazine's 2007 article on "What Gen Y Really Wants"](#) explains:

"The first challenge for the companies that want to hire the best young workers is getting them in the door. They are in high demand--the baby boomers are retiring, and many Gen X workers are opting out of long hours--and they have high expectations for personal growth, even in entry-level jobs. More than half of Generation Y's new graduates move back to their parents' homes after collecting their degrees, and that cushion of support gives them the time to pick the job they really want. Taking time off to travel used to be a résumé red flag; today it's a learning experience. And entrepreneurship now functions as a safety net for this generation. They grew up on the Internet, and they know how to launch a viable online business. Facebook, for example, began in a college dorm room."

## **Impact on the Workplace**

### ***Four generations have very different needs and goals in the workplace.***

This is the first time in American history that we have had *four* different generations working side-by-side in the workplace. If we take a look at the generations that exist in the workplace, we can see that: *Generation Y* (20s, early 30s) are at the beginning of their career life-cycles, typically either working towards post-graduate degrees and/or working in their first jobs in their chosen field. *Generation X* (ages 30s – 40s) is firmly established in the middle of their career life-cycles, and they are beginning to take on greater personal and familial responsibilities outside the workplace. *Baby Boomers* are on the brink of moving from mid- to upper-level management or are beginning to retire, and they invented the 60-hour work week. They are often responsible for raising children and caring for aging parents, as well. As managers and employers, Baby Boomers are important to consider in relation to young careerists because they are instrumental in mentoring younger employees, making decisions about workplace flexibility options and shaping workplace environments. *Veterans* or *Traditionalists* (born before 1946) are well-entrenched in their careers (or retired), have most likely served in the military, and place a great deal of emphasis on seniority in the workplace. Each generation has different needs in the workplace coinciding with where they are in their career life-cycles. Generational differences can impact recruiting, building teams, dealing with change, motivating, managing, and maintaining and increasing productivity. It is critical for employees and employers to understand the value of a multi-generational workplace, and to seek solutions and strategies for creating a supportive and inclusive environment.

***Research suggests that workplaces are not addressing these specific generational needs, offering only a “one size fits all” approach in the form of work-life effectiveness initiatives.*** Workplaces must equip themselves with policies and programs that will both attract and retain highly skilled young careerists, accommodating their diverse roles as individuals and caregivers outside the workplace. In addition, American public policy must shift to acknowledge and advocate for these changes, facilitating widespread recognition of biases, inequalities, and systemic issues, thereby pressuring organizations to actively bring about change. This will subsequently heighten the personal and professional satisfaction of both young careerists and more seasoned employees, thereby enhancing the overarching productivity and success of their workplaces and organizations.

***Why can't we all just get along?*** At one end of the spectrum, recent college graduates are entering the workplace with dramatically different work perspectives than their older colleagues. They anticipate their careers will be a threshold through which to pursue personal passions, but this expectation often diminishes as they experience the reality of the job marketplace. These young careerists encounter tensions between career dreams and the reality of daily life, including the cost of living, lifestyle changes such as marriage, or major commitments such as purchasing a first home. Employers should recognize the divergent issues faced by different generations within the workplace; while

young employees may be most concerned about personal work-life effectiveness and establishing a firm grounding for their careers, Baby Boomers are coping with a different set of issues, including care-giving responsibilities for elderly parents as well as children and preparing for retirement, on top of the strain of their managerial responsibilities. By hosting a multi-generational roundtable, employers can bring together young careerists and workers representing other generational cohorts to explore how each group can better leverage the unique skills and experiences they bring to the workplace.

### **Issues specific to female young careerists**

#### ***Women still pursue work predominantly in traditional female professions.***

While young careerists may feel that they have greater control over their career choices and advancement, a [White House Report on Women in America \(March 2011\)](#) reports that women continue to be concentrated in a small number of traditionally female occupations. In 2009, nearly one-fifth of all women were employed in just five occupations: secretaries, registered nurses, elementary school teachers, cashiers, and nursing aides. While women are three times more likely to work in administrative support jobs than men, relatively few women choose construction, production, or transportation jobs.

***Wage disparity is still rampant among young careerists.*** Even when women and men work in the same fields, wage disparities exist. And although earnings for both women and men typically increase with higher levels of education, the 2011 White House Report on Women in America found the male-female pay gap persists at all levels of education for full-time workers. Across all levels of education, women earned about 75% of their male counterparts in 2009. (For more background see Section II of the Toolkit – Successful Workplaces Discussion Guide, Pay Equity section).

***More women are in management, but this has not translated into similar growth at the upper management level.*** A report from the White House states that the proportion of women working in management, business, and finance jobs has increased from 9%-14% since 1983. While women hold increasingly more managerial positions, this has failed to translate into similar growth within the upper levels of management. From a YC perspective, this could be a challenge as they advance in their careers.

***Prove it again:*** While Gen Y Women do not believe that gender hinders their access to positions, they do acknowledge that their experiences within those positions differ from that of their male counterparts. One key area of gender difference that was reported repeatedly during a recent [BPW Foundation Focus Group study](#) was performance pressure. Gen Y women feel that they have to establish and prove themselves consistently more than their male counterparts. One study described the workplace as having a “glass escalator” in which women advance slowly in fields dominated by men while men get promoted more rapidly.

***Cautiously Optimistic.*** Gen Y women are often portrayed as optimistic about their workplace prospects and more likely than any other generational cohort to [believe](#) that deliberate discrimination is declining. Yet, there is a disconnect between workplace expectations and workplace experiences. While participants in a recent [focus group](#) study did not believe that gender hinders their access to positions, they did acknowledge that their experiences within positions differ from those of their male counterparts. From pressure to be a "rock star" to anticipation of the maternal wall, Gen Y women recognize that the workplace is still not gender neutral. As one Gen Yer stated, "We've been welcomed into the workplace, but the structure hasn't changed. The rules haven't changed."

***Maternal Profiling issues are being raised:*** According to Forbes.com, [The New York Times](#) defines "maternal profiling" as "Employment discrimination against a woman who has, or will have, children," and the term has been popularized by members of [MomsRising](#), an advocacy group promoting the rights of mothers in the workplace. There is currently no federal law that prohibits questions about an applicant's marital and family status during job interviews.

### **Recommendations for Employers**

BPW Foundation's preliminary research suggests several opportunities for employers to engage Gen Y women employees. The following suggestions are aimed at helping organizations collect data about Gen Y women and organizational practices that can be used to stimulate dialogue and develop practical strategies around areas of great importance to Gen Y women. The recommended activities include illustrative questions and are not complete research tools. For more details on these recommendations please view [the full report](#).

- 1) Conduct an Autonomy Audit
- 2) Host a multi-generational roundtable
- 3) Host a work-life balance roundtable
- 4) Develop a work-life compatibility inventory
- 5) Develop a career advancement questionnaire

### **Discussion Questions**

[Questions for Employers:]

- 1) How would you describe the career track of young careerists—workers aged 21-35—in your organization? To what extent does the organization foster an enabling work environment for Gen Y (policies, practices and beliefs)?
- 2) Mentoring is an effective tool to retain skilled young careerists and help women and minorities connect to the internal network of an organization. How do you see young careerists benefiting from mentoring programs? Are there formal mentoring programs in your workplace? Are young women getting access to

senior managers? How would you describe mentoring across generational lines? What, if any, improvements to your program would you recommend?

- 3) How do women's workplace challenges and opportunities differ by generational segment (i.e. Gen Y vs. Baby Boomer etc.)?
- 4) Have you considered hosting a multi-generational roundtable, to explore how each group can better leverage the unique skills and experiences they bring to the workplace?
- 5) Where are women and men located (disaggregate by department and position) within the organization? What factors shape outcomes for young women within the organization (i.e. beliefs/perceptions, practices, human capital)?

**Questions for Employees:**

- 6) How do you interact with (and benefit from) colleagues from different generations? How can older colleagues benefit from Gen Y women (and vice versa)?
- 7) What gender differences do you observe in the workplace? How is work different for men than women?
- 8) How is work-life balance defined in your organization, and who benefits from those policies and tools? As a young careerist, do you perceive a double standard? Are your organization's programs and policies geared toward families? Can you identify strategies to make work-life balance a greater reality for all employees?

**Resources**

Young Careerist: Gen Y Women in the Workplace, Focus Group Summary Report, BPW Foundation, April 2011,

[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/YC\\_SummaryReport\\_Final.pdf](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/YC_SummaryReport_Final.pdf)

Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next. Confident, Connected, Open to Change. Feb. 2010, Pew Research Center. <http://pewresearch.org/millennials/>

White House Report: Women In America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well Being, March 2011 [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss\\_viewer/Women\\_in\\_America.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/Women_in_America.pdf)

Critical Career Junctures that Direct the Career Life-Cycle of Young Careerists, BPW Foundation, 2008

<http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/YoungCareeristIssuePaper.pdf>

Young Careerist Research Project, BPW Foundation.

[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/issues/young\\_careerists](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/issues/young_careerists)

How Maternal Profiling is Hurting Women, by Lisa Quast, Forbes, 12/27/10, Forbes.com, <http://blogs.forbes.com/work-in-progress/2010/12/27/how-maternal-profiling-is-hurting-women/>.

U of M Study Examines the New Adulthood: Extended Parental Support as the New Safety Net, Health Canal.com, March 15, 2011 <http://www.healthcanal.com/life-style-fitness/15286-study-examines-the-new-adulthood-Extended-parental-support-safety-net.html>

For Millennial, Parenthood Trumps Marriage, by Wendy Wang and Paul Taylor, Pew Research Center, March 9, 2011, <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/03/09/for-millennials-parenthood-trumps-marriage/>

“What Gen Y Really Wants.” By Penelope Trunk, Time Magazine, July 5, 2007. <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1640395,00.html>

Family Responsive Policies and Employee Retention Following Childbirth  
J.L. Glass & L. Riley, *Social Forces*, 76(4), 1401–1436, 1998

The Business Case for a Results-Only Work Environment  
<http://gorowe.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/ROWE-Business-Case.pdf>

Four Generations in the Workplace: Who are they, and What do they Want? CPA Trendlines, Ira S. Wolfe, August 30, 2010, <http://cpatrendlines.com/2010/08/30/four-generations-in-the-workplace-who-are-they/>

C-Change? Generation Y and the glass ceiling, by Susan P. Eisner, Mary Ellen O'Grady Harvey, Winter 2009, CBS News B-Net, [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb6698/is\\_1\\_74/ai\\_n31505339/#](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb6698/is_1_74/ai_n31505339/#)

Helping Young Careerists Navigate the Challenges of Work-Life Balance, The Balanced Worker Project, Successful Workplaces Digest, 2006, BPW Foundation  
[http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/BPW\\_Foundation\\_Successful\\_Workplaces\\_Digest.pdf](http://www.bpwfoundation.org/documents/uploads/BPW_Foundation_Successful_Workplaces_Digest.pdf)

Well behaved Women Rarely Make History, Young Women Misbehavin' blog, BPW Foundation, <http://youngwomenmisbehavin.com/> and Twitter @WomenMisbehavin

### **C.) Women in the Green Economy – Summary of Issues**

The green economy will offer new and sustainable opportunities for consumers, workers and business owners. In order to understand the potential for working women in this important and growing segment of the economy, we must first examine the definition of a green job.

### **What is a Green Job? (Depends on Who You Ask!)**

The question is almost cliché at this point: What is a green job? The Bureau of Labor Statistics explains that, in attempting to define the green economy, several categories of green economic activity are nearly universally cited: renewable energy, energy efficiency, pollution prevention and clean-up, and natural resources conservation. However broader categories are being considered, as well. Questions have been raised about whether the definition of a green job is being watered down. For example, is the administrative assistant employed at a business that produces a green product working in a green job? What about the server at a sustainable catering company, and the truck driver moving green goods?

For purposes of a WOMENomics® Forum, we recommend both technical and laymen's terms be considered when discussing the green economy. To start, the definition of "sustainability" is best captured in the 1987 United Nations conference which suggests individuals should "meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs." In this case, a green job is one that reduces the negatives (e.g. carbon footprint) of a job so that future employees (and citizens) will have a healthier work environment. Other groups define green by sector and relative to the evolution of green, calling a job:

- *Existing green* – jobs that have been in existence for generations and often have already embedded "green" practices and processes such as agricultural or water management industries
- *Transitioning green* – jobs that have been in existence but are now changing their products (e.g. the construction site that starts using water-based versus oil-based paints) and processes (e.g. the manufacturing site that incorporates lean manufacturing processes to reduce the number of cuts on a piece of metal reducing scrap which would go to a landfill)
- *Emerging green* – jobs that are fairly new to the public and have not had as many (if any) visible pathways in previous generations. These jobs include the solar panel installers, wind turbine technicians, Brownfield cleanup managers and home energy inspectors.

At the federal level, agencies have differing "green" definitions because they focus on different areas. One of the most commonly used definitions comes from the U.S. Department of Labor, since they share language with the Bureau of Labor Statistics and are a major funding distributor for green jobs money to local communities. Their definition of green jobs includes:

- Jobs in businesses that produce goods or provide services that benefit the environment or conserve natural resources.
- Jobs in which workers' duties involve making their establishment's production processes more environmentally friendly or use fewer natural resources.

### **Challenge of Tracking Green Labor Statistics**

As industry experts, nonprofits, and government agencies continue to sort out what a green job is (and isn't), another area for concern has arisen. Currently the tracking of labor statistics for the green economy is incomplete (e.g. no gender tracking). To ensure access and equity in these newly created or newly updated-positions, the government must make it a priority to monitor who is employed in this emerging sector. Beyond this, we must develop an opportunity to move underserved populations from unemployment or under-employment to sustainable jobs, providing them with the skills and support they need for fulfilling and enduring careers.

In response to the challenge of defining green jobs, last year, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics requested public comments on the definition of a green job. BPW Foundation responded by urging consideration of the following three critical points:

- 1.) It is important to obtain and monitor demographic information on the green worker, including gender, race/ethnicity, age, prior income level, and employment status at time of hire.
- 2.) While an all encompassing view on what jobs are deemed green can improve awareness of the dangerous situation that climate change presents, there may be unintended consequences toward a continuation of occupational segregation.
- 3.) With the creation of new jobs in the green economy, there is the opportunity to improve equity and access for all who seek those positions.

Green jobs are only as powerful as the workers who fill those slots. While it is imperative that the federal government officially define green jobs and the total number of these opportunities, BPW Foundation asserts that the country must not lose sight of the Americans who will be performing the work. If the government does not track gender (and other demographics), then the promise of green jobs to move under-represented populations into higher-paying, career-track employment may be lost. The green economy is ripe with potential to move women into the sustainable careers of the future, namely non-traditional jobs. As a country, Americans must track who has been and who will be hired. If this is not made a priority, many of the most vulnerable will be left behind.

### **The Green Economy – What's in it for Women?**

Why should women consider working in the green economy? In [“A Woman's Guide to Green Jobs”](#) the U.S. Department of Labor provides seven reasons to consider a green job.

1. A green job can offer the chance to earn more
2. Women can begin with any skill level
3. Green jobs appeal to workers with a diversity of skills and interests.
4. There are multiple ways to get started in a green job
5. Green job opportunities are available for workers of any age
6. Green jobs can offer women greater satisfaction
7. Green employers are looking to hire

***The green economy also offers opportunities for mature working women.*** Savvy workforce managers and local economic developers know that expanding green employment opportunities for mature women is a forward-thinking and rationale solution for this target population. Not all green jobs require extensive training or even highly physical demands. Mature women workers can be a part of the green economy without climbing wind turbines and installing solar power panels. By understanding the range of green jobs and the trending futures of each sector that is “greening,” a number of highly viable, appropriate and environmentally relevant opportunities for mature women workers surface.

**How do we ensure access to green jobs and advancement opportunities for women of all income, education and skill levels?** The good news is that the green economy opens doors to women across all skill levels. Many “green-collar jobs” focus on low-skill, entry-level positions that do not require previous experience or education. Many of these jobs are accessible to men and women who have barriers to employment and can provide an entry for them into the workforce. The concern, however, is that without explicit measures for advancement, these workers will likely remain at the bottom of the career ladder. The key is to provide continued training, education, and advancement opportunities for people who have employment barriers so they are able to advance within their workplace or their chosen professions.

The Applied Research Center created a [Green Equity Toolkit](#), designed to help employers and community organizations consciously strive, and concretely plan, to achieve racial, gender and economic equity in the green economy.

#### **Inclusion is the Answer**

The majority of women (80%) are clustered in 20 of 420 Department of Labor-identified occupational fields, most of which are low-wage positions. The greening of the economy is an exciting opportunity to move women into higher-paying, non-traditional fields (where 25% or less of the workforce are women) such as energy efficiency. Non-traditional jobs pay 20-30% more than those defined as “traditionally female,” and these jobs typically offer better benefits, greater career and training opportunities, and higher job satisfaction.

[Pennsylvania State University Professor Kevin Abbey in “Pennsylvania Green Jobs: Status Report”](#) identified five characteristics of green jobs: efficient, energy, environment, economy, and equity. Abbey defines equity as “jobs that provide a pathway to prosperity for individuals frequently not engaged in skilled trades or the construction industry,” such as women, women veterans, and people of color. BPW Foundation agrees that no job can truly be green unless the position is available to all Americans. For the green economy to be fully realized there must be an emphasis on access and equity for those performing the work of energy efficiency and waste reduction.

BPW Foundation wants to level the playing field to ensure women get in on the ground floor of sustainable employment opportunities. If the Bureau of Labor Statistics tracks

demographics for green jobs as it currently does for other industries, the greening of the workplace will include a new range of opportunities for women to compete and contribute. The resulting diversity in the broader labor market will support a stronger economy and success for businesses and communities.

### **BPW Foundation role in Supporting Women in the Green Economy**

BPW Foundation is in ensuring that women are part of the workforce that is meeting America's clean energy needs. The [Foundation's women in the green economy website](#) provides valuable resources and information to:

- learn more about the green economy;
- learn about the skills needed to participate in the green economy;
- find green jobs;
- learn to green your workplace.

BPW launched the *Moving from Red to Green: Working Women in the Green Economy* initiative to connect women with green jobs and increase their participation in the emerging green economy. With generous support from the Wal-Mart Foundation, BPW Foundation established a pilot program and awarded grants to four organizations to expand their capacity to engage and train women for green jobs. This pilot project explored women's interest in green jobs and strategies to ensure that they are recruited, trained, and retained in sustainable jobs. The Red to Green project supports opportunities for women with specific needs and challenges, including low and moderate income women, displaced women workers, under-represented populations, and women veterans. The [green micro site](#), created under this grant, continues to serve as a critical resource for women currently employed or looking for jobs in the green economy.

BPW Foundation is also partnering with AARP to provide a Toolkit to expand access to green jobs for mature women. To support opportunities for mature women in the green economy, the BPW Foundation/AARP Toolkit will:

- Quickly familiarize mature women with "green" career, job training, and placement pathways and language;
- Accelerate and increase mature women with limited skills and work history and historically low-incomes into green job training and/or jobs; and
- Promote workforce policies and practices with local employers to engage older women into talent development programs.

### **In Pursuit of a Greener Future**

Climate change and the threat to humans are real. As climate writer and Senior Fellow at the [Center for American Progress Dr. Joseph Romm](#) noted in an Earth Day speaking engagement, "Future generations will not judge us on Afghanistan or even health care, but on how we deal with climate change." As a country, we are faced with the tremendous goal of creating sustainable jobs that will contribute to a healthy planet. In this pursuit, we must collectively ensure that everyone has access to green and greener job options and women are equipped with the skills and the support they need to

succeed. BPW Foundation is hopeful we can find ways to work together to ensure that the green economy is inclusive.

### **Discussion Questions**

[Questions for Employers/Community Leaders:]

- 1.) Are you a green employer looking to hire women? Have you had any challenges? Can you share any best practices?
- 2.) What are your company's/organization's/community's environmental goals? What are the local and regional opportunities for achieving those goals?
- 3.) What policies and programs can be enacted to drive investment in targeted green economic activity and increase demand for local green-collar workers?
- 4.) What green-collar job training partnerships exist within your company/organization/community? Do these include recruitment, job readiness, job training, and job placement for workers of all genders, skill and income levels? Do they provide entry points for a range of workers, from those who have been laid off to underemployed workers struggling to make ends meet?
- 5.) Can you leverage your program's success to build political support for new and bolder green job policies and initiatives?

[Questions for Employees:]

- 6.) Are you a woman in a green job? Can you tell us about your experiences?
- 7.) What type of training did you receive to enable you to transition your skills to a green job?
- 8.) Have you had advancement opportunities?
- 9.) How did you learn about employment opportunities in the green economy?

### **Resources**

BPW Foundation Women in the Green Economy

<http://www.bpwfoundation.org/index.php/issues/green/C38>

Expanding Green Job Access for Mature Women: A Toolkit for AARP Senior Community Service Employment Programs, April 2011, BPW Foundation.

Green Equity Toolkit, Applied Research Center,

[http://www.arc.org/downloads/Green\\_Toolkit\\_112009.pdf](http://www.arc.org/downloads/Green_Toolkit_112009.pdf)

Green Jobs for Women, Webpage of resources from U.S. Department of Labor

<http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/greenhome.htm>

Why is Green Good for Women? Fact Sheet, March 2010, Women's Bureau, U.S. Department of Labor

[http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/reports/Whypercent20Greenpercent20ispercent20Goodpercent20forpercent20Women\\_factpercent20sheet\\_revised032310\\_2.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/wb/media/reports/Whypercent20Greenpercent20ispercent20Goodpercent20forpercent20Women_factpercent20sheet_revised032310_2.pdf)

Green Collar Jobs in America's Cities, a report by Apollo Alliance, Green For All, Center for American Progress, and Center on Wisconsin Strategy

<http://www.apolloalliance.org/downloads/greencollarjobs.pdf>

"Diversity Helps Your Business—But Not The Way You Think," Katherine Phillips, Forbes.com; June 2009. <http://www.forbes.com/2009/06/02/diversity-collaboration-teams-leadership-managing-creativity.html>

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition, <http://www.bls.gov/oco/>

\*\*\*\*\*

**Contact Us:**

BPW Foundation

1718 M Street, NW, #148

Washington, DC 20036

tel: 202.293.1100; fax: 202.861.0298

[foundation@bpwfoundation.org](mailto:foundation@bpwfoundation.org)

[www.bpwfoundation.org](http://www.bpwfoundation.org)

Copyright June 2011 BPW Foundation, All Rights Reserved