



WOMENomics® Forum Toolkit

Section I: Introduction & Overview

Welcome to the WOMENomics® Forum Toolkit! We are pleased to share this signature grassroots program that brings together local businesses, government, educational institutions, and civic organizations in your community. Why? To identify, act on, and resolve the everyday issues that challenge working women and their employers. We call it a forum because it is, quite simply, a discussion of what is working, what is not working, and what can be done to improve upon the issues. The format can be as large as a full-scale community-led forum, or as small as a brown-bag discussion at work. This model program is an outgrowth of Business and Professional Women's (BPW) Foundation's extensive experience bringing together key figures from all sectors to create solutions to workplace issues.

This is Section I 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.

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

In this first section, we provide an overview of the forum, including the purpose, benefits, topics, conceptual design, history and role of BPW Foundation, along with other resources and contact information.

A. Purpose: The purpose of the WOMENomics® Forum is to raise awareness of issues impacting working women and to begin community-level problem solving around these issues. We can't address the problems and challenges working women face if we're not talking about them first. The Forum begins the process of finding ways that working women, employers, and others in the community can partner to create successful workplaces and empower our workforce.

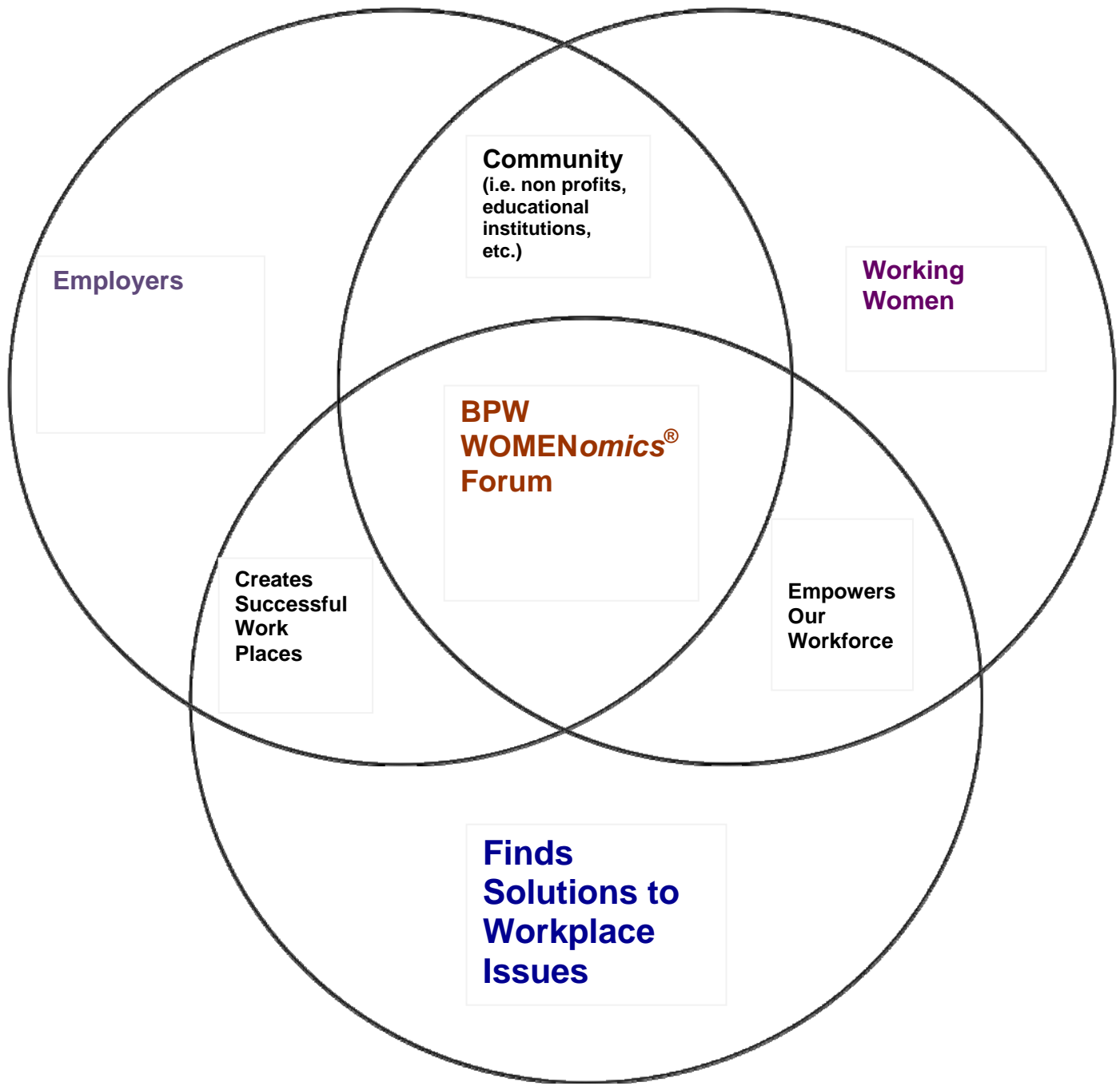
B. Benefits: Working women continue to take on expanding roles in our society, and although many advances have been made, there remain huge opportunities. WOMENomics® creates a forum to focus on day-to-day problems impacting not only working women, but employers as well. Rather than shying away from tough issues such as equal pay, diversity, or work-life balance, employers can take a solution-oriented approach to these topics through our clear-cut discussion guides on these (and other) subjects. Employees can learn about what is happening nationally (and at other companies) on these issues, and share ideas for identifying and implementing solutions locally. Additional resources are provided by topic, for those who desire a more in-depth look at the issues. Community organizations (Chambers of Commerce, social services organizations, employers, institutions of higher learning, etc.) can benefit from participation in a forum by increasing their resource partnerships and taking a leadership role on issues that impact working women in their community.

Benefits of a WOMENomics® Forum:

- Find collaborative solutions to workplace issues through a community forum or brown-bag discussion.
- Use our research and resources to create a successful workplace that supports working women, improves productivity, and improves your company's bottom line.
- Connect with targeted segments of employees (women veterans, young careerists etc.) and help address specific challenges/concerns they face.
- Become a leader in the community on key women's issues.
- Partner with other employers and organizations to learn and utilize best practices that benefit your organization.
- Showcase your organization's policies and best practices.
- Access tools/resources that support female employee retention and job satisfaction.
- Honor leaders in your organization or community by introducing an "Employee of the Year" award and/or "Employer of the Year" award.
- Improve community and employee perception of the organization's commitment to working women.
- Gain access to and credibility with the women's community/the female customer.
- Position the company or organization as an attentive and responsive participant in the community.
- Access a local BPW Foundation network and gain valuable insight to opinions and information that will benefit the partner.
- Gain visibility through local (and potentially national) media coverage.

C. WOMENomics® Forum: Conceptual Design

The WOMENomics® Forum brings together employers, working women, and the community to find solutions to workplace issues. Discussion centers on creating successful workplaces (through pay equity, diversity and work-life balance) and empowering all working women in our workforce, including targeted research on sub-populations (such as women veterans, women in the green economy, and young careerists).



D. Topics of Discussion

We offer two WOMENomics® Forum Discussion Guides. Section II of the Toolkit covers key issues in developing *Successful Workplaces: Equal Pay, Diversity, and Work-Life Balance*. Section III focuses on *Empowering our Workforce* by empowering all working women. It also includes discussion of three targeted sub-populations: Women Veterans, Young Careerists, and Women in the Green Economy. Please note that these are just three examples of sub-populations of working women that can be considered as part of your empowered workforce discussions. There are others that 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.

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

E. History and Role of BPW Foundation

BPW Foundation is the first foundation to focus its [research](#) and programs on **working** women; we continue to study the prevalence of women in non-traditional occupations as well as how to prepare women for those jobs. Our origins date back to 1919, when the U.S. government officially recognized the need for an organization to identify the available skills and experience of America's women. The Women's War Council (with a grant from the War Department) founded The National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs, later known as BPW/USA. In 1956, BPW/USA incorporated BPW Foundation as the organization's research entity. BPW Foundation was one of the first organizations to begin a [research library](#) devoted to the interests of business and professional women. In the 1960s, BPW Foundation grants targeted important issues such as research on Latino women and the attitudes of disadvantaged African American girls along with their perceptions for future employment. Scholarships were provided to women to advance their skills in a changing workplace, and continue to be [awarded](#) today. From our [early history to today](#), we continue to advance successful workplace principles (pay equity, diversity, work-life balance) and untapped populations such as women in the green economy, young careerists, innovative employers, and women veterans.

In our leadership role on behalf of working women, in 2003 and 2004, the BPW Foundation, in partnership with its local networks, implemented [50 WOMENomics® Forums](#) across the country that engaged over 1,700 women and business leaders. In celebration of our 50th Anniversary in 2006, BPW Foundation published a discussion guide to support the efforts of grassroots members, other interested working women, and employers looking to conduct workplace discussions and WOMENomics® Forums. Five years later, in 2011, BPW Foundation is pleased to launch a new series of WOMENomics® Forums to address current workplace challenges, and continue these important discussions with BPW Foundation supporters in communities across the country.

BPW Foundation's role in WOMENomics® is a natural extension of the organization's 100+ years of leadership on working women's issues. Both employees and employers benefit from BPW Foundation's experience and unique role as a neutral convener of employers and employees. Rather than just focusing on challenges and problems that employees face, our balanced approach includes an examination of issues impacting employers, as well. By including community and educational organizations in the discussions, all of the relevant stakeholders come together to create collaborative solutions to the day-to-day problems working women are still struggling to solve.

F. How to Use This Toolkit

Whether through a formal WOMENomics® Forum, a small-group discussion at work, or in a local BPW meeting, we encourage you to use this Toolkit to get started, and throughout the planning and implementation of your event. Each topic contained within the discussion guides (Sections II and III, described above) provides a brief summary of the issues, suggested discussion questions, and resources. Section IV is a comprehensive guide to working with the media, to help raise awareness of the issues working women face and help promote your Forum. Section V is a nuts and bolts "how to" event planning guide, covering everything from obtaining sponsors to prepping speakers ahead of the Forum. Lastly, Section VI provides step-by-step instructions for hosting a webchat. Depending on the type of event you choose to conduct (large or small), you may need all or just some portions of the information contained in this toolkit. Regardless, we hope it serves as a useful resource, and one that can be shared with all those who are interested in supporting working women. For more information about WOMENomics® Forums or other BPW Foundation programs, please contact us at:

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