



Women's Enterprise Skills  
Training of Windsor Inc.



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# NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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Local Strategies to Increase the  
Economic Potential of Young Girls /  
Women in Windsor-Essex Region

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City of Windsor Fire & Rescue Services	Radix Inc.	Windsor Essex Regional Chamber of Commerce
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## GLOSSARY

The following definitions are intended to assist the reader when examining this research document.

**Skills mismatch:** discrepancy between the skills of the current labour force and the skills identified by employers that are needed to perform the jobs in demand.

**STEM:** Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.

**Underrepresented/non-traditional:** Occupations or fields of work where individuals from one gender comprise less than 25% of total individuals employed within the sector.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
METHODOLOGY .....	5
KEY FINDINGS .....	6
STRATEGIES TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS.....	7
COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN .....	7
CALL-2-ACTION.....	7
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>11</b>
ESTABLISHMENT OF PROJECT COUNCILS.....	11
PART A: YOUTH SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP .....	13
focus groups .....	13
community youth survey .....	14
PART B: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY SURVEY .....	15
follow-up survey .....	16
<b>STRENGTH AND LIMITATIONS .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>KEY DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>17</b>
GENDER/AGE.....	17
RACE/ETHNICITY.....	17
IMMIGRANT STATUS.....	17
LEVEL OF EDUCATION.....	17
LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS' PARENTS .....	18
<b>KEY FINDINGS FROM YOUTH SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUP .....</b>	<b>18</b>
THEME 1: KNOWLEDGE .....	19
terminology .....	19
labour market knowledge .....	20
THEME 2: PERCEPTION.....	21
perception of women's skills and abilities .....	22
work environment .....	24
THEME 3: INFLUENCES .....	25
interests .....	25
job satisfaction .....	26
parents.....	26
personal experience .....	27

IDENTIFIED BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING ON COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE .....	29
<b>KEY FINDINGS ON STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION OF BARRIERS .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>KEY FINDINGS STRATEGIES TO BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS.....</b>	<b>32</b>
MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT.....	32
PROMOTING CAREER PATHWAYS.....	32
MENTORSHIP AND EDUCATION .....	32
<b>COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN .....</b>	<b>34</b>
CALL-2-ACTION.....	35
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>36</b>
EDUCATORS.....	36
PARENTS .....	36
EMPLOYERS .....	36
GOVERNMENT .....	37
COMMUNITY .....	37
<b>CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>39</b>

## LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

<b>TABLE 1:</b> FOCUS GROUP DEMOGRAPHICS .....	14
<b>FIGURE 1:</b> REPRESENTATION OF GENDER .....	15
<b>TABLE 2:</b> LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF RESPONDENTS .....	17
<b>TABLE 3:</b> HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF PARENTS .....	18
<b>TABLE 4:</b> YOUTH OCCUPATIONAL PERCEPTIONS .....	21
<b>TABLE 5:</b> TOP 10 WORDS DESCRIBING WOMEN .....	22
<b>TABLE 6:</b> COMPARISON OF PARENTS AND YOUTH'S OCCUPATION CHOICES.....	26
<b>TABLE 7:</b> MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO CAREER DECISION MAKING .....	28
<b>FIGURE 2:</b> BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION IN COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE.....	29
<b>FIGURE 3:</b> IDENTIFIED BARRIERS .....	30
<b>FIGURE 4:</b> IDENTIFIED SOLUTIONS .....	32

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc delivered the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo, a community-based research project dedicated to developing partnerships and collaborations between youth, stakeholders and the community to identify and respond to the specific barriers that girls and women face in fulfilling their economic potential. The project was funded in 2013 through the Status of Women Canada initiative aimed at "Strengthening girls' and young women's economic prosperity." Through a gendered lens, the assessment, conducted in collaboration with Workforce WindsorEssex, was designed to identify the barriers faced by young women participating in underrepresented occupations using data gathered from young girls and local employers in these occupations. This project represents local efforts to share information that can lead to improved economic prosperity and opportunities for young women, while building on Windsor-Essex's existing programs and services.

**The WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo Needs Assessment have three objectives:**

- Address the economic issues impacting girls and young women in the Windsor-Essex community.
- Educate girls and young women on underrepresented career opportunities as a means to improve their economic prospects.
- Encourage community stakeholders to take specific action to improve girls' and young women's fulfillment of their economic potential.

## METHODOLOGY

A gendered based analysis was applied to allow for the examination of specific determinants that might contribute to differential treatment between sexes and develop strategies to address barriers. Such an assessment needs to take into consideration the difference in experiences between men and women to ensure that equitable strategies are developed.

Women are deterred from occupations where there is high employment demand, salaries and compensation, such as the skilled trades and STEM. It is important to develop an understanding of why girls/young women, who represent 47.9% of the workforce in Windsor-Essex County (2011 National Household Survey), are not seeking opportunities in these growing sectors. As well, the results will be used to engage the community, identify innovative solutions, and resulted in the implementation of specific activities for tapping into the large female workforce.

Through pre-surveys, focus groups, and youth surveys, the Youth Leadership Council (ages 14 – 25), in conjunction with the Community Advisory Committee (stakeholders), helped to identify the issues affecting girls'/young women's economic participation, especially in underrepresented occupations, such as skilled trades, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

A Youth Leadership Council consisting of approximately 35 young women from across Windsor-Essex was created to lead the research project. The girls/young women, helped to identify the issues affecting girls' and young women's economic participation, especially in underrepresented fields such as skilled trades. Over 300 surveys were administered to young women in the Windsor-Essex area. Findings from the pre-surveys, focus groups and youth survey were analyzed and incorporated into this Needs Assessment.

A Community Advisory Committee was established representing women in trade, educators (college, high school, and university), and industry professionals, levels of government, local politicians, and Funders. Based on the findings of the youth survey and recommendations from the Youth Leadership Council, stakeholders were asked to commit to action that would lead to young women's economic success. They were asked to look at their own organizations through a gendered-lens to identify barriers within their services or businesses that limit the ability of young women to recognize their economic potential. A "prosperity map" as a Community Action Plan was created to outline barriers girls/young women face when pursuing careers in underrepresented fields of work, as well as identifying innovative solutions.

## KEY FINDINGS

Initial findings indicate the barriers include a lack of knowledge of labour market information and opportunities, misconceptions of job requirements and workplace environment, and influence from family, teachers and media.

**The three themes as identified and defined by members of the Youth Leadership Council in conjunction with project staff are:**

- I. Knowledge
- II. Perception
- III. Influence

### Theme 1: Knowledge

By identifying the level of labour market knowledge of respondents, illuminated points for consideration in understanding where barriers and challenges exist that perpetuate the concentration of women in underrepresented occupations.

- 95% of female respondents and 96% of male respondents in the youth community survey indicated they did not know what the acronym "STEM" stood for.
- 58.6% of female respondents and 46.7% of male respondents indicated they did not know what the skilled trades are.
- 84% of female respondents not born in Canada indicated they did not know what the skilled trades were compared to 54% of Canadian born females.
- 57% of respondents indicated their guidance counselors were helpful when planning a career path
- 27% of respondents indicated their guidance counselor provided them information on a variety of jobs, including STEM and skilled trades.

### Theme 2: Perception

Women are overrepresented in female occupations which personify socially constructed characterizations of their gender, such as teaching, nursing, and related health sciences (Statistics Canada, 2010). In looking at the perception of youth regarding STEM and the skilled trades it was found that:

- 65% of respondents indicated that the media influenced the decisions they make.
- **45% of female respondents indicated that they have been told they should not do a certain job because it is a "man's job".**

- 25% of female respondents believe women are not welcomed in the manufacturing sector.
- 33% of female respondents think there are specific jobs in construction and manufacturing that only men can do.
- 63% of female respondents think that manufacturing is dirty and requires a lot of physical strength.
- 45% of female respondents stated if provided the information and opportunity they would consider a job in the skilled trades, in comparison to 62% of male respondents.

### Theme 3: Influences

In order to gain greater insight as to reasons why young women do not pursue underrepresented occupations, the questions examined social factors; such as, family, media and education as they intersect with gender, age and ethnicity to influence career choice of youth.

- **58% of respondents indicated their parents have a strong influence on their career choices and decisions.**
- 32% newcomer female respondents indicating their cultural background influenced their career decisions, in comparison to 9% of Canadian born female respondents.

## STRATEGIES TO BREAK DOWN BARRIERS

**The most common barrier identified by the Community Advisory Committee was the lack of sector awareness for occupation choices and related education and training, especially in the skilled trades and STEM.** Other barriers identified were lack of guidance and mentorship opportunities, social barriers, workplace environment and outdated harassment policies. These barriers were designated as priorities when responding with solutions and implementing specific actions.

## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The results of the Needs Assessment have been used to engage the community and identify innovative solutions resulting in the implementation of specific activities to increase the representation of young girls in underrepresented occupations.

**The stakeholders committed to the following actions to help further achieve the desired outcomes of the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo project:**

- Marketing of the programs and services available to young women
- Provide information on career pathways to young women
- Engage young women in mentorship opportunities

## CALL-2-ACTION

Six Call-2-Action activities were identified by the youth and stakeholders. These Call-2-Action activities were developed and delivered by sub-committees of stakeholders led by members of the Youth Council.



**Mentorship:** a CALL2ACTION committee was formed to create a formal mentorship model that matched young women with female or male mentors in industry.

**Leadership:** Leadership course curriculum was developed by the University of Windsor and delivered to the Youth Leadership Council by Student peers, current students at the University of Windsor.

City councilors engaged five young women to attend City Council meetings and prepare briefings. This opportunity provided these young women with the understanding of the processes and procedures of municipal politics and encouraged them to become more civically engaged in the community and consider a career in politics or civic life.

**Recruitment:** The members of the Youth Leadership Council that participated in Team Recruitment compiled best practices and innovative recruitment methods by local and national businesses and organizations who successfully recruited women into underrepresented occupations.

**Technology:** To encourage young women to consider a career in the technology sector, it was identified that these young women should be able to have hands-on experience with various technologies.

**Education:** To expose grade 9 and 10 young women and their parents to these career opportunities the four school boards collaborated on an event called Build A Dream. On this night the participants heard from successful women in underrepresented occupations and learned about career opportunities directly from employers. Over 150 people attended and over 30 employers participated.

**Community Education:** To increase community awareness, especially to diverse populations, over 10 presentations were made to communication organizations on the underrepresentation of women in the skilled trades and STEM

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations outlined include feedback from the youth, stakeholders which was reinforced by the data assessed through our community needs assessment. These recommendations were further explored through community consultations, and engagement with community advisory council and youth leadership council to outline the priority areas in our community.

Based on the three themes that were identified the following recommendations emerged

### Educators

- Develop targeted awareness programs to educate girls/young women and their parents about the employment opportunities in field underrepresented by women.
- Develop positive messaging that empowers girls to pursue science and math subjects in school.
- Provide training, resources and tools to guidance counselors about the opportunities in the Skilled Trades and STEM.
- Provide updated information about the current labour market trends as well as, information about program enrollments as to better advise students seeking jobs in growing markets.
- Create a taskforce representing young women, teachers and administrators to implement a strategy to increase the number of girls/young women in trade classes.

### Parents

- Engage with educators in order to understand labour market trends, job requirements, and educational pathways.

**Employers**

- Develop promotional strategies that integrate the influencing factors for girls/young women when choosing a career choice.
- Change the reference “Non-Traditional” - it reinforces the negative connotations placed on these occupations.

**Government**

- Develop resources to help employers whose workforce has traditionally been male-dominated allow for better transition of women into the work environment.
- Provide resources to support women who may feel isolated working in a male dominated environment. Improving harassment policies is essential in ensuring women feel safe in the workplace.

**Community**

- Create a community awareness program to educate and raise awareness on the existing stereotypes that perpetuate occupational gender segregation.
- Create a mentorship program that features local role models working in a variety of occupations underrepresented by women.
- Create leadership programs that help improve girls'/young women's self esteem while empowering them to pursue opportunities.
- Develop activities/programs that would encourage girls/young women to explore a variety of skills.
- Develop girl specific programs at an early age to expose them to many different skills.
- Develop programs that encourage and support girls in developing their math skills.

Attracting more women into these occupations requires the commitment from youth and stakeholders to commit to action in order to be a catalyst for change in our community. The project is a preliminary step to identifying community needs and recommending future actions and initiatives, which has been incorporated into the Windsor-Essex Community Prosperity Map.

## INTRODUCTION

Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc. delivered the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo as a community-based research project dedicated to developing partnerships and collaborations between youth, stakeholders and the community to identify and respond to the specific barriers that girls and women face in fulfilling their economic potential. The project was funded in 2013 through the Status of Women Canada initiative aimed at "Strengthening girls' and young women's economic prosperity". Through a gendered lens, the assessment, conducted in collaboration with Workforce Windsor-Essex, was designed to identify the barriers faced by young women in participating in underrepresented occupations using data gathered from young girls and local employers in these occupations. This project represents local efforts to share information that can lead to improved economic prosperity and opportunities for young women, while building on Windsor-Essex's existing programs and services.

### **The WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo Needs Assessment have three objectives:**

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- Encourage community stakeholders to take specific action to improve girls' and young women's fulfillment of their economic potential.

With the youth unemployment rate in Windsor-Essex currently at 24.7% (Statistics Canada, 2013), action is necessary to address this high unemployment rate, considering the high job vacancies within certain sectors. A notable 'gender gap' remains within many occupations in the Skilled Trades and STEM. Indicative is the fact that "female apprentices in non-traditional fields represent an average of 3% of registered apprenticeships with the completion rate of less than 1.6%." These sectors of the economy are displaying growth, yet many of the positions needed to facilitate additional growth continue to be vacant. Opportunities to fulfill economic success should be equally attainable, however in practice 28% percent of individuals living in poverty are single parent families, 26% aboriginals, 21% recent immigrants, and 21% visible minority persons. Poverty results from barriers to social and economic resources that prevent well-being and access to opportunities in the community (Pathway to Potential, 2011). Ensuring girls/ young women are equipped with the 'right' knowledge and skills are important in addressing the skills mismatch within the region.

## METHODOLOGY

The WE \$UCCED: Beyond the Status Quo project took a two-pronged approach to community development to ensure the creation of a strategic alliance among girls/ young women and stakeholders. The first phase of this project focused on identifying priority areas and possible solutions for improving economic prosperity. The second phase focused on the development of a community action plan that represents the Windsor-Essex Prosperity Map.

In order to ensure a gender based approach the research conducted applied mixed methods to examine the ‘intersection of sex and gender with other identity factors’ such as race, class and education. With this in mind, data was collected from key audiences:

1. Youth: Youth Council, Community Consultation with youth
2. Stakeholders: Community Advisory Council

Surveys (Pre-survey, Follow-up Survey and Community Youth Survey) were distributed in multiple stages throughout the project to stakeholders (Community Advisory Committee) and youth (Youth Leadership Council and Community Youth). The Pre-surveys were used to assess the stakeholders’ and youth’s understanding of issues related to the specific barriers preventing girls / young women from fulfilling their economic potential and to identify local barriers, priorities and potential strategies.

Focus groups were conducted to collect qualitative data and to get more in-depth information on youth perceptions, insights, attitudes, experiences and beliefs. This data substantiated the qualitative findings. The focus group discussions were held with youth only and was used to create a community youth survey to capture the youth perspective.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF PROJECT COUNCILS

The first phase of research began with the establishment of the Youth Leadership Council and the Community Advisory Committee. **At this time girls/young women ages 14-25 from diverse backgrounds and education levels from across Windsor-Essex were recruited to participate on the Youth Leadership Council, which consisted initially of 50 girls/young women.** Recruitment methods included: e-mail distribution; high school visits; attending a variety of youth-based events: student success, networking sessions; social media: Facebook, Twitter, Websites, LinkedIn; one-on-one meetings; peer-to-peer recruitment; cold-calls and referrals.

Membership on the Youth Leadership Council was determined on a number of criteria:

- Girls / young women;
- Ages 14-25;
- Residents of the Windsor-Essex County region;
- Various ethnic backgrounds including representation from immigrant communities;
- Varied levels of education;
- No prior knowledge or understanding of what was meant by “non-traditional” work required
- Unemployed and underemployed youth

The Youth Leadership Council has an active membership of 35 individuals, with 4 youth located in the county and 31 youth residing in the city; 12 are university students; 24 are high school students; 26 are immigrants; and 9 are Canadian born.

The Youth Leadership Council lead the project initiatives (including research and presentation of findings) to ensure that the project was conducted through a gendered and anti-racist lens and is a catalyst for systemic change.

Following the establishment of the Youth Leadership Council, the Community Advisory Committee was established representing women in trade, educators (college, high school, university), industry professionals, the City of Windsor, local politicians, MPPs, MPs and Funders. Stakeholders on the Community Advisory Committee were determined based on three criteria:

1. Local employer or in charge of hiring at a local business related to skilled trades and STEM; and/or
2. Provide services to youth, especially girls / young women ages 14 - 25; and/or
3. Have direct impact on career choices of youth, especially girls / young women ages 14 – 25

**The Community Advisory Committee to date is comprised of 18 males and 29 females. The Community Advisory Committee is also made up of 19 employers, 13 representatives from educational institutions, 4 government officials and 11 representatives from community organizations.**

This assembly of individuals is beneficial for multiple reasons:

- Both gender perspectives are represented;
- Female and male stakeholders are being educated;
- The Youth Leadership Council is interacting with successful females working in the skilled trades, STEM and other leadership positions;
- A community initiative is created incorporating multiple stakeholders representing government, industry and education

## PART A: YOUTH SURVEY AND FOCUS GROUP

The Youth Leadership Council members were asked to volunteer to take the survey at the initial meeting of the WE Succeed project. There were 24 participants in total. The survey was administered only once and completed anonymously.

The research method used was chosen for the following reasons:

- Required minimal time commitment;
- Captured general information;
- Helped identify knowledge, perceptions, and interests of participants;
- Gave insight into possible areas where barriers/challenges exist

### FOCUS GROUPS

Focus groups were conducted based on the Participatory Action Research model. Research was carried out by the staff and members of the Youth Leadership Council. Youth Leadership Council members attended focus group facilitation training and were given the opportunity to practice in a peer- to-peer setting. Participants were randomly selected to represent young women from diverse backgrounds and ages 14-25. The focus groups were conducted over a two-month period and carried out in various areas throughout the community, but all were held in environments familiar to the participants. Using a script and supported by the project coordinator, each focus group session ran approximately 45-70 minutes in length.

The purpose of the focus groups was to:

- Gather opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about the career choices young women are make and their influences
- Encourage discussion about how young women make career choices
- Provide an opportunity for youth to learn more about strengthening girls / young women's economic prosperity

Before beginning the focus group, project staff reviewed the consent form with participants, which was then signed by all participants. If participants were younger than the age of 15, a parent/guardian signature was required. As part of giving informed consent and explaining the research study, participants were asked if they had any questions, were told they were going to be recorded, and that their answers would be transcribed and later coded. All participants were given a pseudo name and asked that they address themselves and others by those names. After all questions were answered, consent forms signed, and participants felt ready, the recorders were turned on and the facilitator read from the script.

Eight focus groups were conducted, with a total of 42 participants with varied cultural and educational backgrounds (See Table).

**Table 1: Focus Group Demographics**

Number of participants	Status	Education
6 participants	6 immigrants	5 high school, 1 university
4 participants	2 immigrants	6 university
6 participants	6 immigrants	5 high school, 1 college
8 participants	8 Canadians	8 high school
5 participants	5 Canadians	8 high school
4 participants	4 immigrants	8 high school
2 participants	2 Canadians	1 university, 1 high school
7 participants	7 Canadians	7 high school
<b>Total number of participants= 42 (18 immigrant, 24 Canadian)</b> <b>**Educational Level = 33 high school, 9 post-secondary</b>		

All focus group recordings were downloaded onto a password protected computer. Members of the Youth Leadership Council were invited to help transcribe the recordings, in a secure office setting. The transcriptions were then read and coded according to reoccurring themes. Members were asked to highlight similarities, and identify unexpected results. Comments were recorded on the hard copy of the transcript and findings were shared with the project staff. It is important to note that in the coding results the term “women” is used to reflect the girls / young women who participated in the focus group. Three themes (Knowledge, Perception, and Influence) were identified and defined by consensus from members of the Youth Leadership Council who participated in the coding process. Data was then compiled to create a summary of the findings.

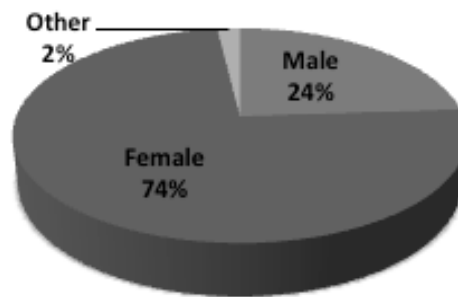
## COMMUNITY YOUTH SURVEY

The Youth Leadership Council developed the survey questions to reflect the focus group discussions and opinions of the young women in our community. Surveys were distributed over a one month period. It is important to note that participants from the focus group sessions were not asked to participate in the survey. The survey was intended to target youth between the ages of 14 and 25 from various backgrounds, levels of education, and experiences across Windsor-Essex. Surveys were distributed to young women and young men in the community by two main methods: online and in person. Online surveys were created via QuestionPro (online survey software), and posted on WE \$UCCEED Twitter and Facebook pages; Women’s Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc.’s website and Workforce Windsor-Essex’s website. An e-mail blast was sent out to community partners and the Community Advisory Committee members to share among their networks. Paper copies were distributed through several community outreach events such as Skills Canada Ontario’s “Skills Work! for Women” Networking Dinner, as well as, local high schools. In addition, Youth Leadership Council members shared the survey amongst their peers.

### Purpose of the Community Youth Survey:

- Identify how young women are being encouraged when considering jobs/careers: (Who is supporting their choices? What supports are lacking when they are trying to make a decision?)
- Identify perceptions: (What do they think /know about these fields? What are the job expectations? What are the educational needs for the job? How do they perceive women in field? How do they think others perceive women in these fields?
- Identify knowledge: (Do you know what jobs are out there? What you know about those jobs? Where have you learned about these jobs and from whom?)
- Identify interests: (Are you interested in learning more? What if you had more opportunities? Are you encouraged to try new things?)

There were a total of 313 respondents who completed the entire survey: 232 female, 75 male, and 6 identified themselves as “other.” Data from 127 respondents who did not fully complete the survey was not used for analysis.



**Figure 1: Representation of Gender**

## PART B: STAKEHOLDER COMMUNITY SURVEY

The pre-survey conducted with the Community Advisory Committee (stakeholders), provided benchmark data on each individual's initial knowledge of barriers that girls / young women face, their reason for committing to be a part of the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo project, and to have them start thinking of and identifying potential solutions.

At the first consultation with the Community Advisory Committee in June 2013, members were given paper copies of the pre-survey. They were asked to take the short pre-survey before the meeting commenced, so they would not be influenced by the information presented at the meeting. This was before there was any interaction with other stakeholders or information and statistics provided. All questions were open answer. There were 26 respondents in total and the survey was administered once.

### The purpose of the survey:

- Identify importance respondents place in participating in project
- Identify existing barriers respondents have observed
- Measure understanding of issues relating to specific barriers preventing girls / young women from fulfilling their economic potential in Canada pre-participation in project

Answers from both employer surveys were coded by looking for the following key words (or similar): awareness/ educate/information/opportunity, guidance / mentorship, workplace environment, policy, social barriers, self-esteem / peer pressure, work disruption, recruitment and retention. Answers that included these key words.



## FOLLOW-UP SURVEY

The follow-up survey was distributed to the Advisory Council members over a 4 month period. Online surveys were created via QuestionPro (online survey software). The survey was sent out via email to the stakeholders after the first consultation. The survey was administered multiple times to those who had not taken it, but participants were asked to only respond once. It was continuously administered through email and approximately ten participants were contacted by phone or in person.

### The purpose of the survey:

- Assess organizations existing barriers that may prevent young women from fulfilling their economic prosperity in your workplace/sector/industry.
- Address local needs and create strategic solutions in our community.
- Share existing resources and best practices enhancing and engaging women's participation in all aspects of the labour.

The follow-up survey provided the respondents an opportunity to reflect on the discussion from the initial consultation, and additional resources provided to better analyze their organizations and how they may impact the barriers facing young women in our community. There were 28 survey responses collected in total.

## STRENGTH AND LIMITATIONS

There are two key strengths of the project that is noteworthy:

1. The project **applied a two-pronged approach to research design**, thus ensuring the creation of a strategic alliance between girls/ young women and stakeholders within the Windsor Essex community. This ensured that the scope of the project meets the needs of the girls/young women and obtains the commitment and support of the stakeholders from the onset.
2. The project development did not take a top-down approach; however, it incorporates **youth voice at all levels of planning**, including: curriculum design, development of project tools, and assessment tools.
3. The project **applied a mixed-methods approach** allowed for rich data gathering through qualitative and quantitative techniques. This method provided an intuitive way of data collection facilitating a holistic examination of youths lived experiences.

There were several limitations that should be considered when reading the findings:

1. The community survey sample should have been a **more culturally diverse representation** of the Windsor-Essex community. Since the surveys were distributed city wide – via personal contacts of the Youth Leadership Council, Community Partners and the online survey- the researchers could not select the participants, nor limit their participation.
2. In order to have a stronger gender based analysis, the **sample should have been more inclusive of males**. Although the project is focused on girls and young women, there should have been an all male focus group conducted to produce information that could have been compared and contrasted in the findings and allowed for the exploration of boys/ young men's inherent gender biases.
3. At the initial stage of conducting the research, during the focus groups, it was discovered that the youth were **unfamiliar with industry specific terminologies** relating to occupation types (non-traditional, blue collar...). In order to address this issue, terms were defined in the survey and the concept of non-traditional changed to 'underrepresentation'.

## KEY DEMOGRAPHIC FINDINGS

### GENDER/AGE

**Out of the 313 completed surveys, the majority, 74% were female (n=232), 24% were male (n=75) and 2% identified themselves as other (n=6).** The largest age group that responded was 15 years old. Many of the surveys were distributed to high school students during career (grade 10) and cooperative education (grades 11 and 12) class presentations; the students attending these classes are typically 14 to 17 years old and account for 67% of the survey respondents. At this age youth begin to start making post-secondary career decisions; therefore, it was an appropriate age to gauge youth understanding of employment opportunities, especially in the skilled trades and STEM. Of the remaining respondents, 20% were between the ages of 18-21, 7% were between the ages of 22 and 26 and 6% did not indicate their age. It is important to note that these age groups will have different perceptions, experiences and knowledge of the workplace and occupations which will be taken into consideration and highlighted as necessary.

### RACE/ETHNICITY

**Of the completed surveys, 62% of female respondents and 61% of male respondents identified themselves to be “White/Caucasian”.** 25% of women identified themselves to be “other,” of this population (n=58), 25% of the respondents identified themselves to be of Asian ethnicity/race; 3% of the female respondents identified themselves to be African-Canada/Black. While the proportion of those identified as “White/Caucasian” was very similar between the male and female cohorts, for the males, the second largest ethnic/race group identified was Middle-Eastern, with 8% of respondents.

### IMMIGRANT STATUS

**83% of the female respondents and 89% of the male respondents were born in Canada.** While the majority of the respondents were born in Canada, **16% of respondents were not born in Canada.** This allowed for identification of possible cultural influences in career choices. Of those young women who were not born in Canada:

- 21% identified themselves to be recent immigrants (less than 5-years);
- 26% of the respondents arrived in Canada between 6 and 10 years ago
- 53% of the respondents arrived in Canada more than 11 years ago

While only 16% of the sample were not born in Canada, it was important to include immigrant status due to the diverse Windsor-Essex community. There are over 81,700 immigrants living in Windsor-Essex, comprising 21% of the total population (Statistics Canada, National Household Survey, 2011). There are also over 110 languages spoken by the residents of Windsor-Essex (Statistics Canada, 2013). The ethnicity/race and immigration variables may be important to consider when examining whether cultural or family influences affect career choices of young people.

### LEVEL OF EDUCATION

The following table reflects the highest level of education completed for the survey sample (n=313).

**Table 2: Level of Education of Respondents**

	% of Females	% of Males
High School	79%	90%
College	7%	1%
University	12%	8%

93% percent of female respondents and 96% of male respondents were currently enrolled in an educational institution. A smaller group, 6% of the female respondents and 4% of male respondents, had completed their education.

The majority of the respondents was currently enrolled in or had completed high school. This was expected as many of the surveys were distributed to local high school students during presentation on local labour market information. This was an ideal representation of ages and educational attainment as it has been uncovered through consultations with the Community Advisory Committee that communicating labour market information and promotion occupations in the STEM related fields and the Skilled Trades should be done in high school, so that students are well-equipped to make informed decisions on their post-secondary education options.

## LEVEL OF EDUCATION OF THE RESPONDENTS' PARENTS

Below is a table that classifies the respondents' parents' levels of education with the further classification of female and male respondents.

**Table 3: Highest Level of Education of Parents**

	% of female respondents	% of male respondents
<b>High School Diploma or less</b>	20%	19%
<b>College Diploma</b>	32%	38%
<b>Bachelors Degree</b>	19%	17%
<b>Master's Degree</b>	17%	11%

The level of education of the child's parents may have an influence on the career and training/education decisions that a young person makes. If the parent has completed college or university they may encourage their children to complete post-secondary education. Overall, it was encouraging to see that over 68% of female respondents and 66% of male respondents had parents that completed a post-secondary education.

## KEY FINDINGS FROM YOUTH SURVEYS AND FOCUS GROUP

Findings were drawn from the data collected through pre-surveys, focus groups and youth survey. The focus group and pre-survey provided a preliminary category that was implemented in the youth community survey. Broad categories were then created according to the questions used in the pre-survey, focus group and youth community survey. Specific contributors were identified under these categories. These contributors were then closely examined for commonalities and emerging themes were identified.

**The three themes identified and defined by consensus of Members of the Youth Leadership Council in conjunction with project staff are:**

- I. Knowledge
- II. Perception
- III. Influence

Over the years women have surpassed men in educational attainment with the percentage of women earning professional degrees increasing substantially (Statistics Canada, 2011). Among high school students, large gender gaps in mathematics and science performance have decreased, and in some cases, have been eliminated (Eccles, 2005), as is case in the medical profession. While strides have been made there continues to exist gaps in educational achievement and occupational attainment between genders. The higher educational achievement of women is somewhat of a paradox since high educational attainment often does not translate into high occupational outcomes, such as prestige and incomes, to the same extent for women as for men (Feliciano and Rumbaut, 2005). Women continue to concentrate within industries socially construed as women's work.

## THEME 1: KNOWLEDGE

By identifying the level of labour market knowledge of respondents, illuminated points for consideration in understanding where barriers and challenges exist that perpetuate the concentration of women in femaleness occupations.

*“I think if they (girls) realized there are more stuff put out there (jobs), opportunities out are there in those industries. A lot of people don’t realize they are going to school and they are not going to have a job later because so many people are going into the same thing.” ~ Alice*

## TERMINOLOGY

Many participants struggled with some of the terminology used in the pre-survey. To not influence participants' answers, extra explanations were not given during the administration of the pre-survey. Upon completion of the survey, through conversation with the participants, project staff identified that “non-traditional” is not a common word in their vocabulary. The respondents identified that work was never explained to them in terms of “traditional and non-traditional.” Other questions not commonly understood by participants were: “What is STEM? What are the Trades? What does the term ‘blue collar’ mean?” In collaboration with the youth, the project staff decided that the terminology “fields where women are under represented” was more appropriate.

**95% of female respondents and 96% of male respondents in the youth community survey indicated they did not know what the acronym “STEM” stood for.** This correlated with 100% of focus group respondents indicating they did not know what the acronym STEM stood for and 89% of female respondents, who indicated their highest education level was greater than secondary school, did not know what the acronym “STEM” stood for. This is an interesting finding as many of the occupations that are in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) are currently in demand and they are projected to continue to be in high-demand in the future. **This speaks to the need of the community to increase promotion of STEM occupations and available opportunities in this sector.** These findings are re-enforced by the survey results from the Community Advisory Committee and focus groups; both stated that there is a need for increased information sharing regarding opportunities in STEM-related occupations.

Contrastingly, **58.6% of female respondents and 46.7% of male respondents indicated they did not know what the skilled trades were. This demonstrated that amongst all youth there is a lack of understanding of what the skilled trades are.** Bearing in mind that the majority of skilled trade occupations require an apprenticeship, it was not surprising to find that 61.2% of female respondents and 53% of male respondents indicated they knew what an apprenticeship is. The lower number of males indicating they know what an apprenticeship is may be reflective in the low number of male respondents.

84% of female respondents not born in Canada indicated they did not know what the skilled trades were compared to 54% of Canadian born females. This indicates that there may be limitations on the options available to immigrants due to cultural and social barriers. Additionally, information regarding opportunities in the skilled trades is not being communicated to this group of women. It is important to note that 32% of this sample of female respondents indicated their cultural background influenced their career decisions, while 14% stated that they were unsure if it influenced their decisions.

*“... when you are from a different country they (parents) tell you that the women has to stay in the kitchen and do the work.” ~ Mary*

## LABOUR MARKET KNOWLEDGE

“The Labour Market Information (LMI) service helps Canadians find information about occupations and labour market trends and outlooks, including skill or labour shortages and surpluses, and statistics on unemployment rates and the working-age population.”

*“I think if they realized there’s are more stuff put out there, opportunities out there in those industries, a lot of people don’t realize that they are going to school and they may not have a job later, because there are so many people going into the same thing- social worker- teachers- and stuff like that, way too many people already in those industries, and they are clearly not retiring, and they have those jobs still, you can be a teacher and you are like 300 years old , nobody is going to kick you out of there, saying you’re like too old...” ~ Alpha*

Out of the 42.4% of female respondents who were aware of what were the skilled trades, 66% indicated they would not consider a job in the skilled trades. Conversely, 53.5% of male respondents who knew what the skilled trades are, 62% indicated that they would consider a job in the skilled trades. These findings indicate that there is a gender gap in terms of knowledge of the skilled trades as well as considering the skilled trades for potential employment opportunities

While high school respondents represented 67% of the sample, of the female respondents who indicated their highest education was greater than high school, only 38% did not know what the skilled trades were. This speaks to the need to communicate what the skilled trades are to high school students. 72% of the respondents who had completed high school stated to not have considered employment in the skilled trades. This indicates that the skilled trades are not promoted to those in secondary and post-secondary education.

It is also interesting that while 62% of males indicated they would be interested in working in the skilled trades, only 53% knew what an apprentice was, which the entry point for many skilled trades. Another gender gap in information is revealed through the knowledge of the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). 52% of female respondents indicated they knew what OYAP was compared to 65% of male respondents. While such a difference can be explained partially by the smaller male respondent sample size, it also is highlighted that males are more aware of the OYAP program than their female counterparts. This may be because marketing materials currently speak more to males or that perhaps this information is shared amongst young men, discussing the program with their friends and colleagues.

*“well he didn’t really mention it to us (girls)...we have trades you can take after education or during your education that you will be paid for, mostly guys go into this, mostly this is provided for guys...how it was worded, so that I processed in my head as “okay, the guys are gonna be taking this while the girls are going to be taking this type of job.” ~ Bella*

**57% of respondents indicated their guidance counselors were helpful when planning a career path, however only 27% of respondents indicated their guidance counselor provided them information on a variety of jobs, including science, technology, engineering, math and skilled trades.** While, 80% of the respondents indicated that more information on various education and training opportunities will help them with career choices, only 57% of respondents felt that they are aware of the job opportunities in the labour force within the next 10 years. This would speak to a need in the Windsor-Essex community that perhaps targeted messaging and marketing to both genders is needed regarding employment opportunities and expectations in the skilled trades and STEM.

## THEME 2: PERCEPTION

Women are overrepresented in female occupations which personify socially constructed characterizations of their gender, such as teaching, nursing, and related health sciences (Statistics Canada, 2010). **Occupations such as medicine have seen an increase of women from 43.1% in 1987 to 55.2% in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2010), while occupations such as skilled trades (5.2%) continue to have a low representation of women.** The shift in gender composition within the medical field is attributed to initial construction of the medical profession as a “helping” profession and as a result may be associated with nurturer characteristics archetypical of women more so than men (McLean and Kalest, 1994). This illustrates that there may be a congruence of the attributes between self-image and occupational image that determines occupational choice.

To fully understand perceptions and attitudes towards women in certain occupations, there were three questions asked to identify occupations they rarely see women working in; occupations they sometimes see women working in and; occupations they see women often working in (Table 4). Overall, both women and men respondents identified similar occupations within each of the categories signaling similar perceptions and attitudes to occupations that are deemed to be directed toward women and those more directed towards men. Below are the top responses from male and female respondents.

**Table 4: Youth Occupational Perceptions**

<b>I NEVER see women working as</b>	<b>I see SOME women working as:</b>	<b>I see MANY women working as:</b>
Construction Worker Mechanic Plumber Prime Minister/President Firefighter Garbage Collector	Chefs Construction Worker Doctors Electricians Engineers Firefighters Mechanic	Nurses Hairdressers Teachers Secretaries Waitress Cashiers



As demonstrated in Table 4, there are several occupations listed in the centre and left column that respondents indicated they did not see a lot of women working within. Many of these occupations are in the skilled trades. A few of the occupations also fall within STEM (i.e. engineers and doctors). These findings are surprising considering that in 2011; more than 36% of Canada's physicians were women (Canadian Health Institute, 2011). This represents an increase of 23% from 2007. In comparison, over the same time period, the number of male doctors increased by only 9%. For Windsor-Essex, there was mirrored growth; however, female doctors, practicing as general practitioners, grew by 53% (Workforce Windsor-Essex, 2011).

These messages are further reinforced by the media, **65% of respondents indicated that the media influenced the decisions they make**. This was a reoccurring discussion in the focus groups, highlighting the limited portrayal of women in diverse occupations within the media that continue to perpetuate stereotypical roles for women. **Similarly, 53.4 % of respondents in the survey indicated that media influenced some of the choices they make.**

It is interesting to observe that a few respondents from both genders identified they have never seen a female President or Prime Minister. This may speak to the lack of women in key leadership positions. Occupations identified in the "never see" and "see some" columns may also indicate a lack of knowledge from the female respondents when asking about jobs in the fields of STEM and the skilled trades, due to the fact they may not see women working or pursuing jobs within this sector.

When examining the column marked "see many", both male and female respondents identified a number of positions in the education and support service industries where most often women are seen working. The majority of respondents also identified nursing to be an occupation where they have seen a lot of women working.

## PERCEPTION OF WOMEN'S SKILLS AND ABILITIES

Table 5 below represents the top 10 words indicated by female and male respondents to be associated with their personal opinions of women, as well as how they think women are portrayed in society.

**Table 5: Top 10 Words Describing Women**

Top 10 Words Associated with Women (personally)		Top 10 Words Associated with how Women are Portrayed	
Females	Males	Females	Males
smart	intelligent	feminine	feminine
intelligent	caring	weak	gentle
caring	smart	gentle	pushy
confident	feminine	bossy	bossy
responsible	gentle	pushy	weak
hardworking	responsible	caring	caring
capable	creative	sentimental	smart
dedicated	helpful	dainty	loud
creative	successful	loud	intelligent
strong	educated	helpful	helpful

**When identifying words associated with the personal qualities of women, personal opinions (Table 5) from the respondents and how they think women are portrayed in society are vastly different.** Both females and males chose positive words such as smart, caring, creative, etc. for their personal opinion of women; whereas the terms associated with how women are portrayed in society contained more negative words, such as weak, push, bossy, loud, etc.

The female respondents chose words (intelligent, confident, responsible, hardworking, capable, and dedicated) that are qualities correlated with those leadership positions. Females may have responded this way because of the women they have personally observed in their life or have relationships with, women who possess or model these qualities they hope to attain/refine in themselves. However, there are also some negative stereotypes sometimes associated with women in leadership positions.

Most girls and young women start out with an understanding and a feeling that both genders can do anything. With age and increased socialization many begin to experience various levels of oppression that starts with their gender; they are told they can't do things or it's implied or assumed. People in their lives who had told them they could be anything, suddenly becoming complacent, and encourage them, to fall in line with more traditional gender normative roles.

In Table 5, most of the words listed are associated with qualities of those working in traditionally female-dominated occupations such as the service sector, healthcare, and education. Occupations participants have indicated they have seen many women working in. A word such as “weak” may give young women the perception that they are not suited for jobs in the skilled trades, which they *incorrectly* associate with heavy lifting.

- 45% of female respondents indicated that they have been told they should not do a certain job because it is a “man’s job”
- 25% of female respondents believe women are not welcomed in the manufacturing sector
- 33% of female respondents think there are specific jobs in construction and manufacturing that only men can do
- 30% of female respondents think there are some jobs that women should not be doing

There are many overt and covert ways girls and young women are being put into situations where they feel as if there are actually making a conscious choice. In the focus groups, respondents were asked if they felt their gender influenced their career decision. Although many of the respondents indicated that they didn't feel their gender played a role in their career choices, follow-up questions on why they feel these positions don't appeal to women, yield responses that suggested characteristics which were stereotypically associated with women. Responses such as “weak”, “too sensitive”, the job not being “feminine” were reasons listed as to why they don't pursue these occupations. Similarly, “strength and hard work” were continuously associated with men. According to the respondents in the focus groups, men are considered to be strong, and it is through this strength, that they are hard working.

*“...I was interested in it but I didn't think I would actually go for it, because I didn't think it was feminine. I wanna do jobs where I come home to my husband and still look somewhat attractive. Girls might think that there is a lot of lifting, but they might feel as if there is more than what there is, they think I am too weak for the job”. ~ Anabella*



## WORK ENVIRONMENT

Most girls and young women are not encouraged to consider a job in the fields of STEM and the skilled trades. Therefore, there are many assumptions about jobs within the field; the physical work environment, job requirements, how the skills are transferable to other jobs, what is required to do the job, hours of work, salaries, benefits and opportunities for growth. Although some of these assumptions can be made by both genders, the way in which skills and abilities are perceived differs.

For example, 63% of female respondents indicated that manufacturing is dirty and requires a lot of physical strength and 45% of female respondents indicated that they have been told they should not do a certain job because it is a “man’s job”. Therefore, misconception of the workplace environment, coupled with the belief that there are certain jobs they cannot do based on their gender, will limit young women’s consideration of jobs within these fields. Furthermore, many respondents perceiving society to still believe that women’s main role is to become a homemaker, wife and mother. Some of these notions originated more commonly from specific cultures but is a standard assumption that impacts the way girls and young women look at work. These thoughts are further ingrained in society through media and advertising.

*“... my boyfriend, he just started to be a gel-tech. I thought it was going to be so hard, it says on the thing you have to pick up like 100-150 lbs and when he told me what he was actually doing, he doesn’t pick up anything....he picks it up for maybe 2 seconds and lifts it off the ground this much and puts it on something, then pushes a button and it lifts. When I was thinking that, I thought “I could never apply to be a gel-tech”, but really he’s not lifting that much. I feel if more people were educated on what you actually have to do at those kinds of jobs...” ~ Sarah*

Even though harassment laws and police exist in the workplace, girls and young women are concerned about boundaries in male-dominated environments. For this reason female respondents indicated they were not willing to put themselves in these situations. 66% of female respondents indicated, “To feel safe (physically and from discrimination) in your workplace” is extremely important when making a career decision.

*“that’s probably like intimidation and not being taken seriously or getting hit on, and I wouldn’t want to work in a place so I think that is an influence (not to work in male dominated fields) ...” ~ Cathy*

*“My boyfriend’s mom has worked in a factory pretty much her whole life and like she is in high seniority, but sometimes she comes home crying because of the way men treat her. Because she is a women, but you know what, they is just the way they are going to talk to the guys too, it s not just because you’re a women you know what I mean? Its only becoming more normal I guess....” ~ Sue*

**45% of female respondents stated if provided the information and opportunity they would consider a job in the skilled trades, in comparison to 62% of male respondents.**

*“...its typically associated with all those stereotypes that are in existing about the different jobs a lot of women think the trades are man’s job, working with your hands are a man’s job, working in a car in is man’s job because that’s what they see on TV, in movies in a lot of setting, like in mechanic jobs it’s all males in construction setting it’s a lot of males so they don’t really think that oh yea I can do that... I’m just going to do cosmetology because that’s just what girls do right...” ~ Dora*

Many respondents in the focus groups suggested that if there were more female role models in STEM and the skilled trades they would be more likely to consider a job in those fields. At present, many respondents stated that they had not seen, nor heard about women who were working in the field and doing it successfully. **Correspondingly, 33% of female respondents think there are specific jobs in construction and manufacturing that only man can do. In view of the fact that 90% of respondents indicated you have to be self-confident to be successful in any field;** stereotypes need to be broken down so that women are encouraged to pursue a variety of positions.

*“If you have a strong female role model it’s easier to want to model yourself after them like Belle said if she can do it, then I can do it. I think if more women jumped on the bandwagon more of us will get close to breaking the gender roles ... other women would see that and be more inspired to do that... I think we underestimate ourselves.” ~ Lavine*

## THEME 3: INFLUENCES

In order to gain greater insight as to reasons why young women do not pursue underrepresented occupations, analysis of the survey considered social structures; such as, family, media, and education intersect with gender, age and ethnicity to influence career choice. It’s important to highlight the factors outlined above influence men and women differently.

Using a Likert Scale (1-most to 7-least), the question “how much the following influences the type of job you would like to do in the future?” was posed to survey participants. Of the completed surveys, there were 190 female respondents and 75 male respondents who ranked the influences listed.

### The top three influences identified by both female and male respondents:

1. Interests
2. Parents
3. Personal Experience

## INTERESTS

Throughout the focus groups, participants identified their level of interest as important when considering their future career choices. The respondents **attributed their interest to strengths in their personal skills and social factors** such as “wants to help people/ likes working with people”, grades and their relationships. In a study on women’s occupational goals, (Frome et al, 2006) found that a key challenge for increased

representation of women in underrepresented occupations is women's concerns with balancing career and family. For many women, occupational choice involves weighing the perceived costs and benefits to family life. The research found that a higher desire for family work flexibility influenced women's aspirations away from male-dominated occupational fields. The most consistently strong, significant predictor was a desire for a job that allowed for the flexibility for them to have a family.

## JOB SATISFACTION

In addition to a high level of interest, many felt that if the respondents could not perform the job well, they would not pursue a job in the field. Job satisfaction and a sense of possible accomplishment were important to them. It is important to note, that although female respondents indicated interest as being the number one influencer when making a career choice, the workplace environment had a greater influence. Of the female respondents 66% identified feeling safe to be really important. In many cases, participants felt that even though they might possess the ability to do a job, they would not pursue it, because they are unwilling to put themselves in that situation. Even though there are existing laws and policies, girls and young women still feel that workplace environments may not be accepting of females. **45% of female respondents indicated that they have been told they should not do a certain job because it is a "man's job".**

*"I think it would be cool to work in a factory or something like that, but I don't want to have to put up with jerk guys who are just being stupid. Making dumb remarks, comments, I just wouldn't want to deal with that. Now days there are more barriers put in place to stop that from happening, but I still don't think it's enough." ~ Anique*

## PARENTS

58% of respondents indicated their parents have a strong influence on their career choices and decisions. Similarly, in the focus groups, respondents referred to support and motivation from their parents playing a factor in the job they pursued.

When a comparison is made in the youth community survey, between the female respondents' top 10 career choices and their parents' occupations, there is a strong correlation between the mother's occupation and that career interests of female respondents. The mother's occupations were predominantly in service, health, professional services and education which were all included in the top 5 career choices of the female respondents -social worker, nurse/doctor, lawyer, teacher, respectively (Table 2).

**Table 6: Comparison of Parents & Youth's Occupation Choices**

Father	Mother	Occupation	Female Top T10 Career Choices
20	49	Service	1. Teacher
6	35	Health	2. Nurse
28	32	Professional Services	3. Lawyer
8	27	Education	4. Doctor
0	25	Stay-at-Home	5. Social Worker
69	17	Manufacturing	6. Engineer
9	10	Not working	7. Veterinarian
17	5	Leadership/Management	8. Actress
9	3	STEM	9. Artist
24	0	Construction	10. Physiotherapist

It is also important to note that the career choices selected by the female respondents, with the exception of engineering, are overrepresented in female occupations, which personify socially constructed characterizations of their gender, such as teaching, nursing, and related health sciences (Statistics Canada, 2010).

Of the respondents in the focus groups who did consider a job in the skilled trades, being raised in single father household or being taught practical hands on skills, played a factor in their decision. Interestingly, these individuals tend to also label themselves as ‘tomboys’, reinforcing gender role stereotypes. Similarly, in looking at the field of Information Technology (IT), Adya and Kaiser (2005) found that parents, specifically fathers are the key influencers of whether or not girls chose IT careers. Teachers and counselors were found to provide little to no guidance.

*“...when I was younger I wanted to be an architect because my dad wanted to be that originally, and he was my only role model as a parent ... my dad influenced me a lot, because he always told me it doesn’t matter that you’re a girl or a boy you can do anything, and my tech teacher influenced me because he’s the one who showed me the opportunities that there are for girls in the fields like that, I was interested in it but I didn’t think I would actually go for it, cause I didn’t think it was feminine...” ~ Adjowa*

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Social conditioning begins at an early stage in life, influencing gender stereotypes on appropriate roles women and men should play in society. Gender concentrations can be attributed to beliefs about what constitutes gender-appropriate work (McLean and Kallest, 1994). Females endorse family and altruistic values significantly more than males, and males endorse money values more than females (Weisgram, Dinella, and Fulcher, 2011). The gender segregation of occupations may also be impacted in that masculine jobs that are dominated by men may afford the values that are endorsed more by men than by women (and vice versa). These are reinforced through cultural expectations, social environments, and socialization impacting individual’s personal experience. Men and women’s personal experience can be attributed to different factors and therefore will shape their future economic decisions differently.

*“Well, it just seems as though, women have just been conditioned to care about others before ourselves. And you can kind of see with like how we’ve decided on our career choices it does determine our relationships or it’s determined by our relationships right? But it seems as though men will just do what they want...correct? I’m over generalizing maybe.” ~ Antoinette*

When considering a job/career the female and male respondents answered that being respected, liking the job and doing it well were all very important to them. Females also indicated safety (physically and from discrimination) and work that matches their values as very important; whereas, males though money and the opportunity for promotion were important.

**Table 7: Most Important Factors Contributing to Career Decision Making**

MOST IMPORTANT	
Females	Males
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That you are respected at your job</li> <li>That you like the work you are doing</li> <li>That you do your job well</li> <li>To feel safe (physically &amp; from discrimination) in your workplace</li> <li>That your job falls in line with your values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>That you do your job well</li> <li>Money (when considering a job)</li> <li>That you are respected at your job</li> <li>That you like the work you are doing</li> <li>That you can move up in your job (promotion)</li> </ul>

Culture is a critical factor in how women's work is perceived in and outside of the home. Girls and young women from diverse populations indicated their cultural or religious background playing a role in their education and workplace aspirations. Traditional roles and expectations limit the ability of women to participate in the workforce and structure how they participate. During the focus group discussions newcomer youth identified culture expectations and traditional roles having a significant influence on their choice. This was reinforced in the youth community survey by **32% newcomer female respondents indicating their cultural background influenced their career decisions, in comparison to 9% of Canadian born.**

*"It's like a background thing. As (in) my country girls like house, taking care of house, and boys always act like in charge and stuff..." ~ Mary*

*"...her parents they are making her go into science and she doesn't even want to go into it, but I think it's like cultural reasons too but she has no passion for it...it's sad cause she is being pressured into taking something she is not even interested in..." ~ Cathy*

In high school this can be seen with different classes. Specific electives such as woodshop, metal shop, mechanics, and even some computer based classes, have been identified as areas that seem to be saturated with males. For girls and young women this can create an environment where they feel unwelcomed or intimidated.

*"... it's like almost intimidating to go take a class there because you knew it was going to be all guys in there and you didn't want to be the only girl, so it's like most girls didn't consider it..." ~ Nala*

These environments reinforce harmful stereotypes and deny opportunities for both genders. When students don't feel they can participate in a variety of classes, they limit their opportunities to improve their knowledge and skills. Both genders outlined that doing your job well was extremely important therefore the need to provide additional supports and encouragement to students is necessary to assist individuals in expanding their skills.

*“...if we did make it mandatory, not as an option, we made women and men go into those field, but at a very, very, young age, so like at school, give them a choice to try both because I have seen a lot of boys who want to do cooking or painting and they are laughed at by other guys, and the same thing goes for girls who are interested in other things and girls just think they are weird or different and don’t really talk to them, so making it mandatory, putting everyone in because even girls may not know what their talents are or what their interests are so when they actually try doing things, they realize and know themselves...” ~ Bella*

## KEY FINDINGS ON BENEFITS TO STAKEHOLDERS

The pre-survey given to the Community Advisory Committee was focused on identifying the benefit of being part of the committee, the initial knowledge of the stakeholders regarding barriers girls and young women face, as well as initiating suggestions for potential solutions. The follow-up survey focused more on the individual and the barriers they are able to identify within their own workplace, as well as how they can contribute with specific actions to the solutions. Furthermore, both these surveys will be used to assess the stakeholders have increased their awareness of barriers impacting girls/young women.

The pre-survey was conducted with the Community Advisory Committee to determine:

1. What initial knowledge they had of barriers that girls and young women face when considering careers in underrepresented fields;
2. Their perceived benefits of being part of the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo Community Advisory Committee; and
3. To identify potential solutions to some of the barriers. Respondents were able to choose multiple answers for each question.

## IDENTIFIED BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATING ON COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- 31% of respondents stated the benefit of participating in the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo Community Advisory Committee was to create new partnerships with other community stakeholders.
- 23% stated that they would benefit from being more aware of the opportunities available for the youth they interact with.
- 19% of respondents stated participating was a benefit to addressing the skills gap.
- 15% stated that sharing best practices was a benefit.
- 12% considered participating in mentorship opportunities for youth a benefit.

**Figure 2: Benefits of Participation in Community Advisory Committee**



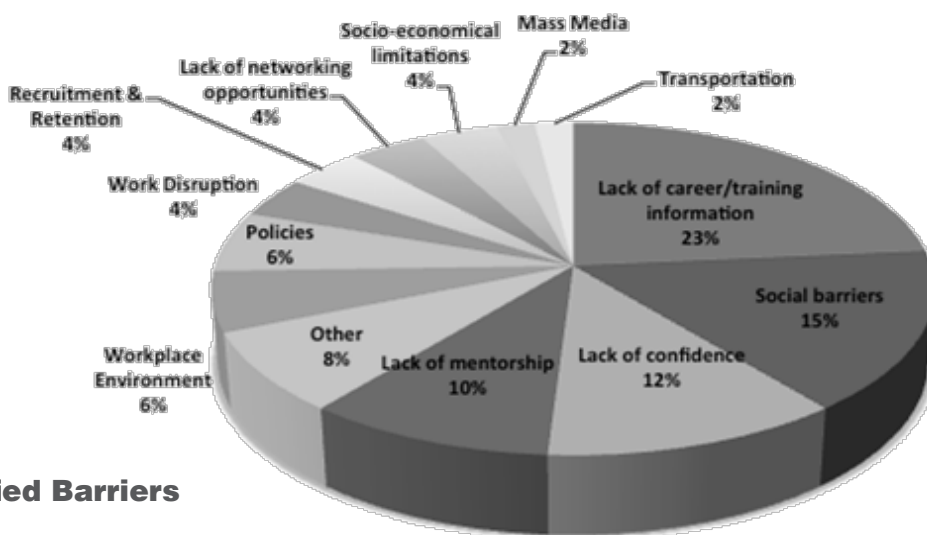
**31% of respondents stated that the benefit of participating in the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo Community Advisory Committee was an opportunity to collaborate with other community stakeholders.** The consultations provided committee members with an opportunity to learn about other organizations and their work, as well as network with individuals outside of their profession. These consultations allowed for partnerships to be established between organizations working on mutual goals. It was also stated by 15% of respondents that sharing best practices was a benefit of being part of the committee, reinforcing the importance of creating new partnerships and collaboration.

**23% of the Community Advisory Committee respondents recognized that if they were to inform and educate youth/young women on opportunities in skilled trades and STEM, they should be well informed of the opportunities themselves.** They identified that a benefit to sitting on the committee was a chance to learn and have a greater understanding of the skills in demand, sectors, and job opportunities within underrepresented occupations. This was achieved through discussion and presentations at various stakeholder meetings, as well as social media channels created and managed by those involved with the project.

**19% of the Community Advisory Committee identified that a benefit of participating in the committee was being able to directly address existing skills gap** by identifying and implementing strategies to engage youth, especially young women, to consider. A key local policy focus is on the mismatch of existing labour market skills with emerging labour market needs. This is of particular concern given that many of the jobs that are unfilled are in occupations that have been traditionally male-dominated.

## KEY FINDINGS ON STAKEHOLDER PERCEPTION OF BARRIERS

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was asked to look at specific barriers that girls and young women face when considering underrepresented occupations that their organization may contribute to directly or indirectly. They were also asked to identify potential solutions with specific actions or best practices that their organization can take or has taken. The results generated were expounded upon at future stakeholder meetings and led to innovative and responsive solutions based on the barriers identified.



**Figure 3: Identified Barriers**



Barriers girls and young women face when fulfilling their economic prosperity in the skilled trades and STEM-related occupations identified by the Community Advisory Committee.

- 46% of respondents stated the lack of information regarding career opportunities and related education/training is a barrier to young women choosing careers in the skilled trades and STEM
- 31% of respondents stated that social barriers play a role in young women fulfilling their economic potential in underrepresented occupations
- 23% of respondents state that young women lack the self-esteem, confidence, or were influenced by peer pressure when considering occupations in the skilled trades and STEM and this may lead to them not considering/pursuing an occupation in this field
- 19% of respondents stated that lack of guidance, such as role models, mentors and guidance counselors contributes to the barriers
- 12% of respondents identified workplace environment, and that policies, such as harassment policies created barriers (12%)
- 8% of respondents identified work disruptions, such as maternity leave, recruitment and retention not focusing on females (8%), and lack of networking opportunities for young women and socio-economical limitations was a barrier for girls and young women contributing to their personal experiences (8%).
- 4% of respondents stated mass media contributes to the barriers, and transportation (4%).

The most common answer from the pre-surveys collected and analyzed, was that girls and young women are not given enough information regarding the training, education and opportunities for employment in the skilled trades and STEM. It is difficult to encourage individuals to pursue certain occupations if they are not aware that they exist or they do not know what the jobs entail (Conroy, 1997). A possible cause of this was identified in the results of the previous question; as educators are not aware of the training, education and opportunities in these fields themselves.

**31% of respondents stated that social barriers play a role** impeding girls and young women from considering underrepresented occupations. This can be anything from gender occupational segregation to the understanding of cultural norms or religious beliefs. It was stated by a respondent that there is limited promotions internally for women in their profession. Explanations for low representations of women within these positions range from gender-based stereotypes to tokenism or simply their management styles and socialization (Oakley J., 2000.) Similarly, Hoobler, Wayne, and Lemmon (2009) interviewed managers and employees from a Midwestern-U.S. division of a global Fortune 100 transportation company to examine the persistence of the glass ceiling as a result of managers' perceptions of their subordinates' family and work intersections. The study found that women were rated lower on job and organizational fit and performance due to their managers' perceptions of their family-work conflict. In keeping with research on stereotypical attributes ascribed to women, it seems that women are less likely than men to be perceived as good "fits" and high performers because they are viewed as being responsible for family, which may be seen as incompatible with holding leadership or managerial positions. The study also found that managers tended to view women as being less promotable, being poorer performers, and having a poorer fit with their job and organization because the managers perceived women as experiencing greater family-work conflict than men.

**23% of respondents also stated that girls and young women lack the self-esteem/confidence to pursue a career that is mostly male dominated.** It was identified that girls/ young women may feel alienated, or holds the belief that because other females are not undertaking these careers, they cannot either. This is in line with the 19% of respondents that stated lack of guidance from role models, mentors and guidance counselors contribute to the barriers. Stakeholders stated there are not enough or not well-advertised opportunities for guidance-type programs aimed at those who interact with youth on career



decision-making. It was also stated that as representation of women in the skilled trades and STEM increases it is essential that they mentor other women to continue to break down the barriers. However, many of the mentorship opportunities are availed once there was a decision to enter the skilled trades or STEM-related occupations. In addition, girls and young women may be subjected to peer-pressure when considering, for example, technology-based careers; they may be deterred by the stereotypical characterization of individuals in this field as nerds or geeks, etc.

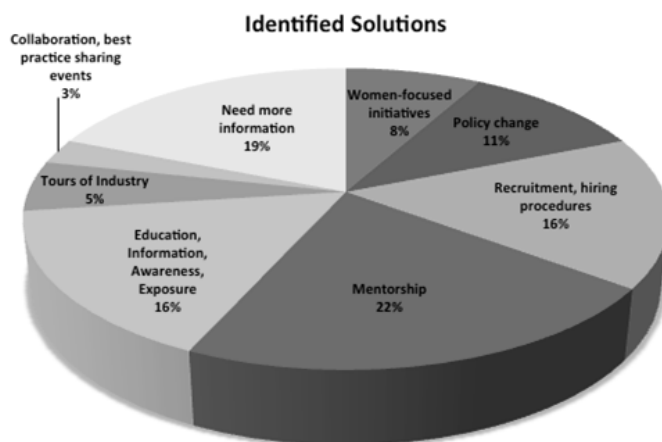
Having a physically and emotionally safe workplace is a priority for all individuals, not only females. Unsafe or unwelcoming workplace environments and out of date policies contribute to barriers as was stated by 12% of respondents. Many females who pursue employment in underrepresented occupations are at risk of workplace harassment with little refuge. This may be a large factor in retaining female employees in male-dominated work environments. Harassment policies may be out-of-date or may not be enforced, further creating a barrier. Additionally, having facilities without certain amenities, such as female washrooms, could contribute to these barriers as well.

## KEY FINDINGS STRATEGIES TO BREAKING DOWN BARRIERS

The most common barrier identified by the Community Advisory Committee was the lack of sector awareness for occupation choices and related education and training, especially in the skilled trades and STEM. Other barriers that were lack of guidance and mentorship opportunities, social barriers, workplace environment and outdated harassment policies. These barriers were designated as priorities when responding with solutions and implementing specific actions.

The stakeholders identified the following community strategies as being critical to removing the barriers that limit the economic potential of young women and girls in the Windsor-Essex community:

1. Marketing of the programs and services available to young women
2. Provide information on career pathways to young women;
3. Engage in mentorship opportunities with young women.



**Figure 4: Identified Solutions**

## MARKETING AND RECRUITMENT

21% of respondents stated that improving their recruitment and hiring procedures of business was a solution that could increase the number of females in underrepresented occupations. Pursuing female-focused recruitment may significantly increase the number of girls and young women applying to and becoming hired in occupations in the skilled trades and STEM. Some stakeholders stated that they hire the best candidate no matter the gender; however they do not have as many females as males applying to the positions. Their recruitment strategies may not directly be a cause of this, there may be a number of the other factors that have been identified through this survey; however, it is important to acknowledge the recruitment and hiring process.

Stakeholders' identified that community members should be actively engaging young women in the local workforce and community. It was determined that a pro-active approach to recruitment is necessary to further increase the hiring of women into underrepresented occupations. **11% of respondents stated women-focused initiatives would increase awareness of opportunities in the skilled trades and STEM.** A more in-depth understanding is needed of potential structural barriers that organizations may directly or indirectly have that would prevent women from being employed in certain occupations and industries.

## PROMOTING CAREER PATHWAYS

**35% of respondents said education is another solution they deem important and will commit to implementing.** This involves educating girls and young women about the details of the occupations: education required tasks and responsibilities of the job, the workplace environment, finances, opportunities to move up in certain field, etc. It was discussed that reaching girls and young women at all age levels, especially in elementary school is a solution that can everyone can contribute to, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, employers, etc. Educating parents was also noted since many girls and young women are greatly influenced by their families when considering certain career paths. A specific initiative identified by stakeholders was to facilitate school workshops for parents to promote and expose them to opportunities for their children, especially girls and young women in the skilled trades and STEM.

**35% of respondents stated that collaboration was something they would be willing to commit to.** All stakeholders have something to gain from creating new partnerships with other community members and working together for a common goal. Whether they are in direct contact with youth, hiring youth as their future workforce or creating programs and services for youth avoiding →duplication and collaborating will increase the impact of the initiative. Opportunities for collaboration may be for example, educational institutions partnering with industry. Allowing students to take tours of facilities or have individuals from the industry speak to students in the classroom and demonstrate how the subject matter they are currently learning is related to the occupation directly.

## MENTORSHIP AND EDUCATION

**82% of respondents stated that lack of sector awareness for career choices is a barrier for girls and young women when considering employment options.** This is reinforced by 68% of respondents stating that the absence of programs that increase awareness of the skilled trades and STEM intensifies the barriers when considering these fields. It was identified that not only girls and young women, but all youth need to be educated in all the employment options available to them, including the skilled trades and STEM, so that they are able to make informed choices.

The purpose of guidance counselors in high schools, mentors, parents, educators, and other role models, are to help youth make informed choices; however, it was stated by 68% of respondents that lack of guidance from these individuals and availability of role models contributes to the barriers when considering employment in the skilled trades and STEM. It was identified that individuals in these roles have a significant impact on influencing the training/education and career decisions of young women. If these people are well informed of the possibilities and opportunities, they can pass that information along to the youth. **61% of respondents stated there was a lack of information regarding training and education opportunities for the skilled trades and STEM-related occupations.** It is important for these people in guidance roles to be aware of all this information to pass on to the younger generation.

- 29% of respondents stated mentorship is an important component of overcoming barriers that girls and young women face in achieving their economic prosperity

- 21% of respondents stated recruitment and hiring procedures need to be improved to allow equal opportunity for girls and young women
- 21% of respondents stated educating girls, young women and their parents and making them more aware of the opportunities is a solution
- 14% of respondents stated improving harassment policies is a solution
- 11% of respondent stated women-focused initiatives would increase awareness of opportunities in the skilled trades and STEM
- 7% of respondents stated that tours of industry facilities for girls and young women, would increase awareness
- 4% of respondents stated a solutions is collaboration and continuous opportunities to share best practices

Another 35% of respondents stated that they would be able to mentor young women, either one-on-one, speaking at an event, giving tours of their facility, allowing youth to participate in a meeting, sit on a committee or mentor in some other way. The Community Advisory Committee stated that lack of mentorship was a barrier many girls and young women face; therefore, they are directly addressing the barrier by committing themselves to action as mentors.

## COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN

The knowledge of the Community Advisory Committee is progressing as they collaborate with other community stakeholders and begin to specifically address the barriers with innovative, specific actions, some of which are already underway. It was encouraging to see the stakeholders commit to specific actions and further commit to collaborating with other community organizations. Through the WE \$UCCEED: Beyond the Status Quo project, a real and meaningful dialogued has been fueled in the Windsor-Essex region as more organizations are becoming aware of the importance of engaging young women in underrepresented occupations. Several organizations that are represented on the Community Advisory Committee have created and implemented initiatives specifically targeting engaging young women in the underrepresented occupations. For example, local school boards have received funding to promote the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program specifically to young women.

- 38% of respondents stated that they would commit to communicating and promoting opportunities in the skilled trades and STEM to girls and young women
- 35% of respondents stated that they would collaborate with other community partners on initiatives involved with opportunities for girls and young women in underrepresented fields
- 35% of respondents stated they would directly educate girls and young women, as well as their parents of the opportunities in the skilled trades and STEM
- 35% of respondents stated they would commit to some form of mentorship for girls and young women
- 12% of respondents stated they would improve their recruitment strategy to included a focus on women
- 8% of respondents stated they would commit to tours of their facilities
- 4% of respondents stated they would seek funding opportunities for initiatives focused on girls and young women

At this point, half of the stakeholders sitting on the Community Advisory Committee have committed to at least one mentorship opportunity for the young women on the Youth Leadership Council or to other young women in the community. One-on-one mentorship, tours of facilities, guest speakers and participation for young women to participate in community meetings and committees, provide opportunities for the girls and young women and for the outcomes of the project to be met. These individuals have identified the barriers and solutions and are actively pursuing them through these actions.

## CALL-2-ACTION

Six Call-2-Action activities were identified by the youth and stakeholders.

**Mentorship:** Many survey respondents indicated that having a mentor would influence their career decisions. Many of the participants in the focus groups also identified mentorship opportunities as being important to their career decisions. As a result of this research, **a CALL2ACTION committee was formed to create a formal mentorship model that matched young women with female or male mentors in industry.** Over 20 stakeholders on the Community Advisory Committee indicated their willingness to serve as mentors. This pilot mentorship model should be continued to provide ongoing support to young women as they consider occupations in the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering and math.

**Leadership:** Developing leadership abilities of the young women was identified to be important from the surveys and focus groups conducted. There were several initiatives that were implemented to further develop leadership skills for young women in the Windsor-Essex community. The first initiative was **leadership course curriculum developed by the University of Windsor. This course curriculum was delivered to the Youth Leadership Council,** this provides a mutually-beneficial relationship for the Youth Leadership Council as well as the Student peers that were delivering the curriculum.

**City councilors engaged five young women to attend City Council meetings and prepare briefings.** This opportunity provided these young women with the understanding of the processes and procedures of municipal politics and encouraged them to become more civically engaged in the community and consider a career in politics or civic life.

**Recruitment:** Both the young women surveyed and some stakeholders on the Community Advisory Committee identified challenges in recruiting women to specific industries and occupations because of social stigmas and perceptions held by young women. **The members of the Youth Leadership Council that participated in Team Recruitment compiled best practices and innovative recruitment methods by local and national businesses and organizations who successfully recruited women into underrepresented occupations.** Examples of stakeholders who were involved in this activity include: Windsor Fire Department, Windsor Police Services, Ontario Provincial Police, Canadian Armed Forces, Reko International Group, and BASF.

**Technology:** Experiential, hands-on learning was identified to be a factor in young women deciding on a career path. To encourage young women to consider a career in the technology sector, it was identified that these young women should be able to have hands-on experience with various technologies. **As a result of this, a one-day workshop for young females was held during National Science and Technology Week.** Young women were able to try 3D printing, computer programming, design, etc.

**Education:** Both youth and stakeholders identified educating youth, parents, teachers and guidance counselors on the opportunities in the skilled trades and STEM-related occupations to be a high priority. **To expose grade 9 and 10 young women and their parents to these career opportunities the four school boards collaborated on an event called “Build A Dream”. On this night the participants heard from successful women in underrepresented occupations and learned about career opportunities directly from employers.** Over 150 people attended and over 30 employers participated.

**Community Education:** Youth survey respondents stated that newcomers to Canada have additional barriers when considering non-traditional occupations. **To increase community awareness, especially to diverse populations, over 10 presentations were made to communication organizations on the underrepresentation of women in the skilled trades and STEM.** A presentation was also made to the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership, which reached over 75 community stakeholders who all represent or work with diverse populations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Improving economic opportunities for girls and young women in our community will require a multi-level approach. In considering factors that influenced the career choices made by girls/ young women three themes were identified were Knowledge, Perception, and Influence. The recommendations outlined include recommendations made by the youth, stakeholders and reinforced by the data collected. These recommendations will be further explored through community consultations, and engagement with community advisory council and youth leadership council to outline the priority areas in our community.

### EDUCATORS

**Develop targeted awareness programs to educate girls/young women and their parents about the employment opportunities in field underrepresented by women.** Educators need to consider cultural differences and English speaking abilities when working with newcomers. Also, it is important to show the range and diverse jobs available within the field and the job requirements to attract diverse populations.

**Provide training, resources and tools to guidance counselors about the opportunities** in the Skilled Trades and STEM. Provide updated information about the current labour market trends as well as, information about program enrollments as to better advise students seeking jobs in growing markets.

**Educate young women about OYAP and Co-op programs.** These programs need to be promoted equitably among students in the high school system. Opportunities should be presented in a manner that is non-gendered, promotional material should be highlighted showing both genders engaged in various jobs, particularly in fields where women are underrepresented. Ensure that there is equitable representation in placements, offer diverse placements opportunities and support girls/young women who express an interest in pursuing underrepresented careers.

**Assess specific electives such as wood shop, metal shop, mechanics, and computer classes that have a high representation of male students.** Create a taskforce representing young women, teachers and administrators to implement a strategy to increase the number of girls/young women in the classes. For example, girls/young women are intimidated to take a course when there is a majority of men in the class.

### PARENTS

Parent's perceptions about these occupations play a significant factor in not encouraging their daughters in pursuing certain occupations. Therefore, **engaging parents in the process will help support their daughter's choices.** For example create opportunities for parents to attend information sessions about careers and hold public events (jobs fairs) where representatives from various sectors can speak with girls/ young women and their parents.

### EMPLOYERS

**Developing promotional strategies that integrate the influencing factors girls/young women make when choosing a career choice.** Girls/young women consider safety in the workplace as an important factor when making a career choice. Therefore, it's recommended promotional information highlighting local employers that provide a safe and inclusive environment.



Engage employers in raising awareness about the opportunities in their workplace. Employers can provide industry tours, participate on community councils, and develop partnerships with local schools. This would enhance visibility in the workplace, while reaching out to diverse demographics in the community.

## GOVERNMENT

**Develop resources to help employers whose workforce has traditionally been male-dominated allow for better transition of women into their work environment.** Provide resources to support women who may feel isolated working in a male dominated environment. Improving harassment policies is essential in ensuring women feel safe in the workplace. Girls/young women consider having a family one day when choosing a career. Therefore, the importance of workplace policies that is inclusive and respectful is essential, while being aware of interview questions that can deter a woman from feeling accepted in the workplace. Featuring employers, on a community website to discuss the strategies implemented in their workplace.

**Changing the reference “Non-Traditional”- it reinforces the negative notion placed on these occupations.** In order to make gender equity inclusive to all, one recommendation is to eliminate terminology, which reinforces gender segregation in the labour market. The term “non-traditional” implies jobs not normally associated with women. Therefore, if this generation of girls/young women doesn’t associate with this term, why perpetuate and create further perceptions associated with jobs that have normally been considered male dominated.

## COMMUNITY

**Create a community awareness program to educate and raise awareness on the existing stereotypes that continue to exist resulting in gender segregation.** In recognizing media plays a significant factor in the decision youth make, developing workshops targeted at girls/young women to help break down stereotypical messages.

**Providing diversity training to stakeholders in our community and provide them feedback and tips on how to apply a ‘gendered-lens’ when promoting, engaging and recruiting girls/young women in participating in activities where they traditionally have never been exposed.** Although local employers are committed to diversifying their workplace, many have indicated “women don’t apply”. Therefore by applying a gendered lens in assessing their workplace environment and marketing strategies would help identify improvements that can be made to make it more “accessible for young women”.

**Create a mentorship program that features local role models working in a variety of occupations underrepresented by women.** Establishing a network of professionals dedicated to the empowerment of young women leaders in our community.

**Creating leadership programs that help improve girls/young women self esteem while empowering them to pursue opportunities.** Featuring employers who have implemented initiatives in their workplace to ensure women are provided opportunity for advancement.

**Develop activities/programs that would encourage girls/young women to explore a variety of skills.** Women-focused initiatives would provide participants an opportunity to learn new skills, explore their interests in a safe environment. Move girls and young women out of their comfort zone, and challenge them by providing activities that they may have never tried before. For example, take items such as a washing machine and instead of teaching them about washing teach them about parts of the machine and their function

**Develop girl specific programs at an early age to expose them to many different skills.**

This includes creating an environment that encourages class participation and opportunities to engage the material learned. Be aware of different learning styles so that information can be presented in various ways to support learning. For example use a computer to show 3-d images of equations.

**Develop positive messaging that empowers girls to pursue science and math subjects in school.**

## CONCLUSION

With the youth unemployment rate in Windsor-Essex currently at 24.7% (Statistics Canada, 2013), action is necessary to address this high unemployment rate, considering the high job vacancies within certain sectors. A notable 'gender gap' remains within many occupations in the Skilled Trades and STEM. Indicative is the fact that "female apprentices in non-traditional fields represent an average of 3% of registered apprenticeships with the completion rate of less than 1.6%." These sectors of the economy are displaying growth, yet many of the positions needed to facilitate additional growth continue to be vacant. Opportunities to fulfill economic success should be equally attainable, however in practice 28% percent of individuals living in poverty are single parent families, 26% aboriginals, 21% recent immigrants, and 21% visible minority persons. Poverty results from barriers to social and economic resources that prevent well-being and access to opportunities in the community (Potential, 2011). Ensuring girls/ young women are equipped with the 'right' knowledge and skills are important in addressing the skills mismatch within the region.

The findings support the need for our community to address the existing skilled shortage gap through a gendered lens perspective. Women continue to make up less than 3% of the skilled trade occupations, 25% of jobs in technology and 9% of those in engineering. These results suggest that despite the women's movement and more efforts in society to open occupational doors to traditional male-jobs for women, girls/young women are steered away from these occupations at an early stage in life (<http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/initiatives/wesp-sepf/fs-fi/wnto-fetm-eng.html>). Socially constructed gender roles continue to significantly impact the decisions made by young women hindering future economic success.

All these social factors come into play structuring youth's perception of self, educational choices and interests. The assessment further validates the critical role that parents play in shaping career choices. The findings indicated that the broader context of culture and family environment has an influence on career decision-making and youth identity. It is essential to engage youth in breaking down the barriers impacting their economic success. This increases their awareness, commitment and leadership when looking at potential strategies and solutions. It also provides the youths perspective in all levels of decision making and implementation, while working with committed stakeholders representing education, employers, government officials and community representatives.

Attracting more women into underrepresented occupations requires the youth and stakeholders to commit to actions that will allow them to be a catalyst for change in our community. The project is a preliminary step to identifying community needs and recommending future actions and initiatives, which can be incorporated into the Windsor-Essex Community Prosperity Map.

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