



women's rural entrepreneurial network

Women's Work

Pathways to a Stronger Economic Future for Women and Children in Northern NH

Today in northern New Hampshire, just like everywhere else, women have left and are continuing to leave the workforce at a greater rate than men. The lowest-paid industries – restaurant, lodging and childcare – in which women make up the majority of workers have been the hardest hit by pandemic closures, resulting in further economic decline. Additionally, frequent childcare and school closings due to COVID-19 outbreaks have made it nearly impossible for working mothers with young children to continue to juggle work and caring for their children.

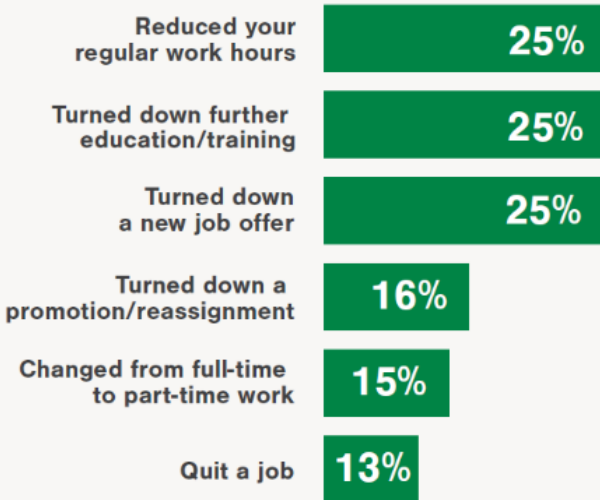
The pandemic only exacerbated the already difficult economic situation for working mothers, especially those with young children. Financially supporting a family while balancing work and childcare is not a new struggle. Even before COVID-19, accessing childcare was a challenge due to severe shortages of infant/toddler care, the cost of full-time care, and non-traditional work hours that don't line up with childcare center hours. Women working in social services, hospitality, tourism, early care and education are among the lowest paid workers, receive few if any benefits, often work only part-time hours and experience annual mud-season closures.

A strong economic future is dependent not only earning a living wage – which covers only the necessities of housing, food, and transportation – but on earning enough to set aside funds for lost work time, inflation of goods and services, and saving for future education and/or retirement.

Traditionally, career advancement is how workers build a solid economic future for themselves and their families. Women's career pathways tend to be interrupted as the need to take care of one's child supersedes the need to work. These interruptions lead to lower salary trajectories than men, as women are perceived as less experienced, less committed, or less reliable. Career advancement is impacted as women choose to reduce hours, forego education, or turn down promotions.¹ This contributes to the gender wage-gap and greatly reduces the long-term earning power for women.

Career pathways

As a result of child care problems have you ever:



¹ [StrongNation.org. Want to Grow the Economy? Fix the Child Care Crisis. \(Ready Nation:2019\)](https://www.strongnation.org/want-to-grow-the-economy-fix-the-child-care-crisis/)

Additionally, work interruptions impact social security earnings and retirement savings, increasing the odds for long-term financial instability and further reducing the probability of a strong economic future for women in the North Country.

Women's Work - Project Description

Capitalizing on WREN's near thirty-year history of supporting women-owned small businesses, ***we seek to better understand the systemic influences*** in rural New Hampshire that perpetuate the wage-gap and lower the earning power for women with children. Once these influences are identified and analyzed, ***our goal is to develop and pilot solutions that eliminate systemic barriers and build new pathways for higher earning and long-term financial success.***

The expected outcomes of this initiative are three-fold: 1) Bring more women with children back into the North Country's workforce. 2) Increase the median income of women with children. 3) Reduce the number of women with children living in poverty.

Our geographic focus will be on upper Grafton and Coos counties and bordering towns in Vermont. The Women's Work initiative will be carried out by a Team of women with lived experiences as mothers, workers and business owners. The Team will include people from a variety of sectors such as early care and education, healthcare, technology, social services, tourism, higher education, and government. The Team will be facilitated and supported by management consultant and WREN Co-Founder, Mollie White.

The following outlines the three phases and timeline for the initiative. The Analyze Phase will culminate in the creation of a comprehensive report of the Team's findings, gathered from a variety of data resources and in-person interviews. The Budget follows.

Tasks / Timeline

- Analyze (Jan – March 2022)
 - Document status of women's work in the North Country
 - Gain perspective on systemic barriers North Country women face
 - Understand what is needed to overcome those challenges
 - Identify target populations with the greatest need and potential for successful impacts
- Plan (April – September 2022)
 - Examine successful and emerging workforce development strategies.
 - Determine the likelihood for success given the needs of the identified populations
 - Craft a solutions model and workplan to pilot.
- Pilot (October 2022 – 2025)
 - Fund and implement a pilot which creates at least one pathway to long-term economic success for women

Budget (January – December 2022)

- Project Consultant: \$26,000
- Workgroup Stipends: \$15,000
- \$1500 per year for up to 10 Team members
- Administrative Support: \$10,000
- Indirect Cost @ 12%: \$6,120

TOTAL BUDGET= \$57,120