



March 19, 2024

Supporting Women as First-Time Jobseekers

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Here's a quick overview of your settings.

This is a webinar, so you're joining on listen-only mode.





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Chat



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Q&A

Leave Meeting



Due to the large number of learners on today's webinar, we've disabled the chat box.





Though disabled for learners, keep an eye on the chat for messages from Switchboard and links to various resources we'll be mentioning throughout.





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Chat



Raise Hand



Q&A

Leave Meeting



You do have the option to send messages to the speakers and co-facilitators via the Q&A.





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Chat



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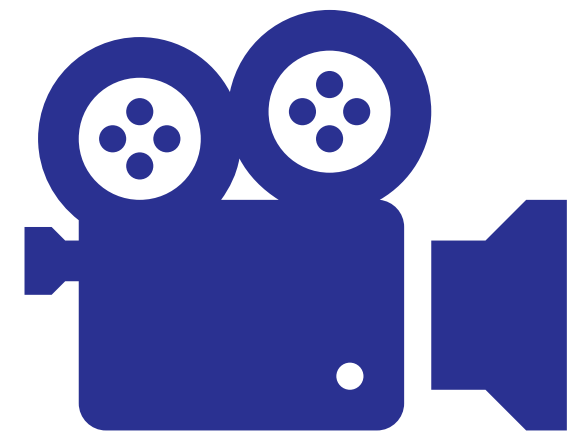


Q&A

Leave Meeting



**Today's webinar will
run for 90 minutes
and is being recorded.**





You'll receive an email with the recording, slides, and recommended resources within 24 hours.

The webinar transcript, along with the recording, will also be posted on the Switchboard website within the following days.





Last, we ask that you kindly complete our webinar satisfaction survey at the conclusion of our session.





This short, 6-question survey helps us here at Switchboard continuously improve our training and technical assistance offerings to you all.





Thank you for joining today's training!

We will begin momentarily.



Today's Speakers



Lauren Bowden

Technical Advisor,
Economic
Empowerment



Danica Kushner

Training Officer,
Employment

Learning Objectives



By the end of this session, you will be able to:

1

Describe

the barriers that prevent women in newcomer populations from participating in the workforce

2

Evaluate

strategies to create supportive spaces for women that lower barriers to participation in workforce preparation and placement programs

3

Implement

approaches that allow women to articulate their transferrable skills and career goals



1

Exploring the Barriers

Obstacles that prevent women from participating in the workplace



Disclaimer for today's webinar



- This webinar addresses supporting first-time job-seeking women who want or need to work.
- This webinar will presume that most dual-income households have heterosexual parent couplings.
- However, many newcomers have intersectional identities as members of the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Newcomer families vary widely and may not conform to traditional nuclear family structures.



Newcomer women are not participating in the workforce at the same rate as newcomer men.



- **Before the pandemic**, only 53% of immigrant-origin women (vs. 76% of men) participated in the workforce
- **During the pandemic**, more women than men left the workforce
- **In FY23**, 47% of ORR-eligible IRC economic empowerment clients were women, but only 36% of job placements were with women

Is this a problem?



Two-income households offer greater economic stability. However, you should...



- Use cultural humility
- Acknowledge that homemaking and caretaking is difficult, skilled work
- Provide workforce readiness resources and education; allow women to make their own choices (provided that grant expectations are met)
- Consider that a parent staying at home is often a logical, economical choice
- Educate clients on program requirements so that clients are able to make choices around participation.

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What do you think are some of the reasons or barriers that make women less likely to participate in the workforce?



Structural and Systemic Barriers that Prevent Women from Working

Unconscious Bias

**Workplace
Discrimination**

**Educational
Inequalities**



**Legal and
Policy Barriers**

**Lack of
Representation
in Leadership**

**Gendered Skills
Undervalued by
the Market**



Socio-Cultural Barriers to Workplace Entry for Women

**Lack of family support;
gendered labor
expectations**

**Competing
Priorities**

**Lack of Self
Confidence**



**Lack of representation
and peer mentorship
of female community
members**

**Work-life balance
challenges**

**Discomfort with
American norms of
professionalism**



Case Scenario: Medina

Medina is a 24-year-old woman from Afghanistan. She arrived in the United States two years ago with her husband and two children under the age of five.

Medina speaks little English because she has not had much opportunity to practice. She has an 8th grade education that was interrupted by conflict, and she has not worked outside the home either in the U.S. or Afghanistan.

Medina's husband works, but they are always stressed about having enough money to pay rent at the end of the month.

Medina has thought about working, but she's heard that workplaces are dangerous for women, and she doesn't know any Dari-speaking working women to talk to about this.

She also knows her husband will feel uncomfortable to have his wife working and will feel like he's failing as a provider. Even if he supported her, who would watch the children? Who would cook dinner?

Besides, she doesn't know how to begin a job search or application process. The workplace seems overwhelming, mysterious, and like a giant complication to her life.

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As Medina's employment specialist, what are some strategies you might use to help her feel less overwhelmed and more empowered to participate in the workforce?



2

Creating Supportive Spaces for Women

Strategies to help women explore the American workplace



“We can’t be brave in the big world without at least one small safe space to work through our fears and falls.”

Brené Brown

Rising Strong

What does a supportive space look like?

A place where women can...

- Ask questions about the American workplace
- Share their concerns or fears about working
- Demystify the workplace
- Articulate their career goals
- Plan their next steps



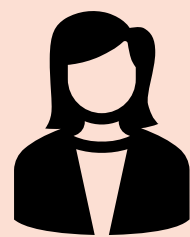


Note: Rapid Employment Placement Programming



- Shifting a worldview about gendered division of labor and demystifying the workplace takes time
- Pairing career exploration programming with expectation of rapid employment programming often intensifies anxiety and aversion to working

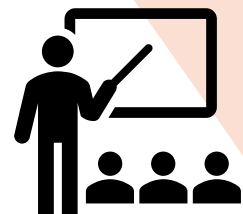
Matching Grant: Tips for Supporting Women as First- Time Job Seekers



- Rely on peer mentorship from past clients or immigrant-origin staff
- Enrollment in programming and cash assistance pick up must be attended by all employable adults
- Create budget templates to easily demonstrate the benefit of added income
- Schedule recurring facility tours with friendly employer partners
- Reiterate that the first jobs are not “forever” jobs



Best Practices: Career Exploration and Preparation Courses



- Small cohorts
- Short intensives (1 week) or part-time schedule (4+ weeks)
- Topics related to demystifying the workplace, learning workplace rights, identifying transferrable skills, and articulating goals
- Integration of vocational ESL, digital literacy, and behavioral health support

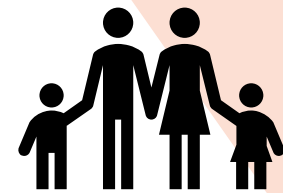
Tips: Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment in Career Exploration Programming



- Establish a small cohort as a peer support network
- Set norms
- Provide interpretation; translate written materials
- Use strength-based approaches



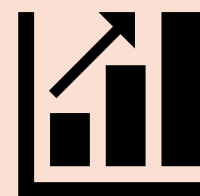
Tips: Creating a Supportive Family Culture to Improve Participation



- Meet with all family decision-makers prior to career exploration
- Invite them to sit with a financial coach to consider long- and short-term budgets
- Prepare to help couples think through logistical concerns and redivision of labor

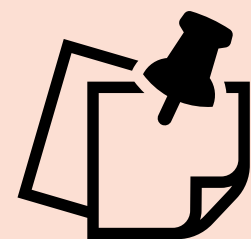


Best Practices: Increasing Capacity for this Programming



- Pursue funding for an instructor and child care staff person. Alternatively, locate a dedicated volunteer.
- Consider partnering with a community center, ECBO, or organization focused on empowering women
- For pilot programs, decide on the desired outcomes and track progress to pursue funding as needed

Advertising Women's Job Exploration Courses



- Create printed and digital flyers in target language
- Detail supportive services in advertising materials
- Message job exploration over expectation
- Post in the community and around your office

Tips: Making Programming Accessible



- Think through a child care plan for both course participants and working clients
- Address hesitancy women may have about relying on outside child care. Consider the support of a peer mentor.
- Provide interpretation and transportation
- Offer courses part time or for a short, intensive period to avoid disrupting family's typical schedule



Woman in Action

Program

- Created by IRC Elizabeth
- Cohorts of 5–10 women meet for 12 weeks
- In-person instruction, guest speakers, field trips, monthly follow-ups
- ✓ 90% reported a high motivation to learn English
- ✓ 60% of participants now employed
- ✓ 20% of participants enrolled in college



3

Goal Articulation and Planning

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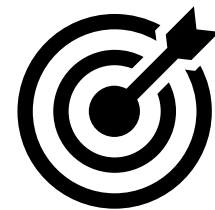


What approaches have you used in your work to help first-time women jobseekers identify their career goals?

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.



Setting SMART Goals



- **Introduce SMART goals:** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound
- **Set language-learning milestones**
- **Celebrate small wins**



Why are goal articulation and goal setting so important?



- Many newcomers have not had the opportunity to dream about the future
- Women are often socialized to think of others' goals before their own
- Goals facilitate navigation of the job market
- Creating SMART goals can build self-efficacy and confidence

Goal Articulation and Goal Setting Process



1

Encourage women to articulate their existing skills, talents, and interests.

2

Broaden job opportunity exposure.

3

Assist with identifying skills and talents needed for various job opportunities.

4

Identify which jobs are a match for the transferrable skills, talents, and interests.

5

Assist women with articulating workforce or professional development goals.

6

Identify the steps required to pursue these goals, including a household responsibilities plan.



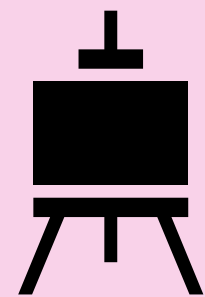
Activities to Promote Articulating Skills, Talents, and Interests



- **Skill Workshops:** interactive sessions to uncover existing strengths
- **Interest Surveys:** simple questionnaires to reveal passions
- **Talent Showcases:** opportunities for creative expression



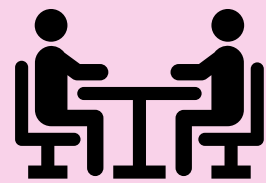
Activities to Assist with Goal Articulation



- **Vocabulary Lessons:** Participants learn English words for various skills, talents, and interests
- **Picture Stories:** Participants create vision boards/visual representations of their goals
- **My Day:** Participants draw a picture of an ideal workday in their dream job
- **Small Group Discussions:** Participants share their dreams and skills in a supportive setting



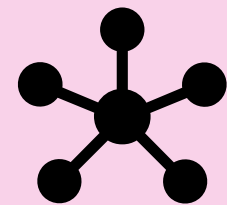
How to Broaden Job Exposure



- Guest speakers
- Company visits
- Job shadowing
- Career panels
- Mentorship programs



Matching Skills with Job Opportunities



- **Job Analysis:** Break down jobs into skill sets required
- **Skills Audit:** Compare personal skills against job needs
- **Transferable Skills:** Highlight adaptable skills across fields



Prepare Job Opportunities for Common Transferrable Skills

- Clusters of skills can point to specific job development needs
- Uncover existing opportunities that appeal to the needs of women



Questions?

Type your question in the **Q&A**

Click **thumbs-up**  to vote for others' questions

Q&A Panel



Lauren Bowden
Technical Advisor,
Economic Empowerment



Danica Kushner
Training Officer,
Employment



Help us help you!

Scan the QR code or click the link in the chat to access our feedback survey!

- Six questions
- 60 seconds
- Helps us improve future training and technical assistance



Learning Objectives



Now you are able to:

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Recommended Resources

- Evidence Summary: [What Strategies Improve the Outcomes of Refugee Women in Employment Programs?](#)
- Podcast: [Empowering Refugee Women Through Workforce Development](#)
- Guide: [Fundamentals of Gender-Based Violence \(GBV\) for Refugee Service Providers: What Does a Culturally Responsive Approach Mean?](#)
- YouTube Video: [Adjusting to Life and Work in the U.S. – Perspectives from Refugee Women](#)
- Blog Post: [Resume Building for First Time Job Seekers](#)
- Blog Post: [Childcare Resources for Refugee Service Providers](#)



Fundamentals of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) for Refugee Service Providers

What Does a Culturally Responsive Approach Mean?

This guide reviews the basics of gender-based violence (including domestic violence and sexual violence) within refugee and immigrant communities. It explores what a culturally responsive approach to GBV services can look like.

What is Gender-Based Violence?

The term **gender-based violence (GBV)** refers to any form of violence that is rooted in gender inequality and is inflicted on particular people because of normative understandings of gender roles. Though gendered violence can happen to anyone, across the world and across cultures, it is overwhelmingly experienced by women and girls.

The root of GBV is inequality, which manifests in structural, social and cultural institutions. It is important to recognize **intersectionality**. This term refers to the interconnected nature of social identities such as race, class, and gender. Remember that GBV is often experienced alongside other forms of oppression (e.g., based on race, age, class, disability, education, immigration, or refugee status).



The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women considers **gender-based violence** "a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women."



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