



Webinar: Supporting Women as First-Time Jobseekers

March 19, 2024, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

Transcript

Introduction

Today's Speakers

Lauren Bowden: Hello and welcome to today's Switchboard webinar on supporting women as first-time job seekers. My name is Lauren Bowden. I work as a training officer here at Switchboard. My expertise is in working with low-income adults from very diverse backgrounds as they're transitioning into the workplace and advancing their careers.

LB: I'm also a Technical Advisor of Economic Empowerment with a specialty in workforce development at the IRC. Some of you may know me in that capacity. In that role, I provide technical assistance to workforce development grantees, those who have microenterprise programs, financial capacity or capability programs. I do this work throughout the United States. I previously served for several years at the IRC Atlanta as a Career Development Coordinator. I'm now going to invite my colleague, Danica, to introduce herself.

Danica Kushner: Hello, my name is Danica Kushner and I'm the Training Officer of Employment with Switchboard. My background is in workforce development and employment integration for refugees. I previously worked in North Carolina and Colorado in employment programming. I have a master's degree in migration and I'm proficient in Arabic. Happy to be with all of you today.

LB: Thank you so much, Danica. Danica is going to be joining us later in this session as we move into our Q&A.

Learning Objectives

LB: For now, let's discuss our learning objectives for today. It is our hope that by the end of today's session, you'll be able to firstly describe the barriers that prevent women in newcomer populations from participating in the workforce. You'll also be able to evaluate strategies to create supportive spaces for women that lower the barriers to participation in your existing workforce preparation and placement programs. Then you'll be able to implement approaches that allow women to articulate their transferable skills and their career goals.

1. Exploring the Barriers: Obstacles that Prevent Women from Participating In the Workplace

LB: Let's get started with this first section on describing the barriers that a lot of this population faces. I should say here that there is a lot of overlap. A lot of the barriers faced by newcomer populations are not unique to



immigrants or newcomers. They're not even necessarily unique to women who've never worked a formal job. They're shared by a lot of low-income workers. However, it's really important for us to spend some time thinking about these various barriers so that we are then able to think about possible solutions.

Disclaimer for Today's Webinar

LB: We do have a few disclaimers for today's webinar on screen here. First and foremost, this is a webinar addressing women who want or need to work, and admitting that oftentimes women need to work because they are in a rapid employment placement programming that necessitates that they work. Maybe they signed a Matching Grant contract, or maybe they need to work because without working, they will not be able to stabilize the family system. However, we do want to be really clear about the fact that this webinar is not addressing family systems in which there is a woman who is not working who has opted to stay at the home. That works really well for the family system. It's important that we respect the individual choices of our clients and have some cultural humility around this.

LB: I also want to say that in discussions of family systems, this webinar in most cases will presume that most dual-income or multi-income households have heterosexual parent couplings or couple pairings. We know that this is not the reality for a lot of the newcomer families. A lot of our clients have intersectional identities as members of the LGBTQIA+ community. The reason that we will have this conversation in some case where we're presuming a heterosexual couple pairing is because that gendered power dynamic does play a role in whether or not a woman joins the workforce.

LB: Then we also want to admit or talk about the fact that many newcomer families vary really widely, and they may not always conform to traditional nuclear family structures. We want to be aware that there's a number of ways that our clients come to us. Some of them arrive as sibling sets. Some of them arrive to us where there are multiple partners or multiple wives. Sometimes clients arrive and they are from matriarchal societies and they have women-led households.

LB: In this conversation, we don't want to erase the reality that our clients have a lot of different ways of structuring their family systems.

Newcomer Women Are Not Participating in the Workforce at the Same Rate as Newcomer Men

LB: Next, we want to talk about the fact that many of you may have joined this webinar today because you are feeling like when you are serving clients, you just feel as though you're not able to really address women in your services. Maybe you're having trouble enrolling women in your employment programming. I talked to a service provider who told me, "I honestly don't see women at all in my office. I feel like we're always serving men. I would love to serve women, but I have a problem where I have trouble initially even getting them into the office."

LB: I want to validate this phenomenon that many of you are feeling is real with some hard numbers. MPI, the Migration Policy Institute, if you're not familiar, reported that prior to the pandemic, 53% of immigrant-origin women participated in the workforce versus 76% of immigrant-origin men. This disparity was there pre-pandemic. After the pandemic, we know that more women than men—not just after, but also concurrent with the pandemic—more women than men left the workforce.



LB: This was because of a variety of factors. Primarily, it was often the case that because women have been socialized into roles where they provide most of the caretaking in the family system, when schools closed, when daycares closed, a lot of women returned into the household to take care of children, and they did not come back at the same numbers or at the same rate as their male counterparts did.

LB: We also have some data that is more particular to the populations we're serving. In FY23, the International Rescue Committee reported that of the 31,963 economic empowerment clients that were enrolled, 47% of them were women. There's almost near gender parity when we look at the numbers. However, only 36% of job placements were with women. We know that we're serving women, but less of them are getting jobs.

LB: I should also say that we know that this phenomenon—you see it more in certain populations than others for a number of reasons. IRC also reported that in the first year of serving Afghan clients, there were thousands of clients that the IRC enrolled. When looking at the employment placements with that population in particular, only 15% of employment placements were with women.

LB: We can hypothesize even further that the rate of placements for women who have never worked a job outside of the home are even lower. We don't know for sure. This is certainly something that we are seeing across the nation right now, is that our job placements are mostly happening with men.

Is this a problem?

LB: Let's talk about whether or not this is a problem. We know that this is a nationwide trend. We know that, more often than not, job placements are happening with men. Before we talk about what it is that we can do about this, we should really think critically about if this is a problem, and if so, why?

LB: I would argue that yes, it is a problem in many cases for a number of reasons. The first is that dual-income households are just more stable. Dual-income households are able to more reliably and readily pursue financial goals like helping clients move into a better neighborhood that has a better school system for the children, helping clients buy a car so they have the freedom that private transportation provides in many of the service areas that we work in that don't have great public transportation, or buying a house. That's much more readily available if more people are working.

LB: Also, particularly when we see that women are enrolling in our programs in the first place, but they're not getting job placements at the end, this could indicate to us that our service delivery is not easily accessible to women, that we haven't done our due diligence of making sure that we have the employers in place that really cater to the kinds of needs of women and also rely on the kinds of skills that many of our ladies arrive with. We may need to change some of our processes and procedures.

LB: We also know that refugees are people who have had their lives really interrupted by war and disaster and conflict and have had opportunities taken away from them. It's really natural to worry about whether or not our female clients have really had the opportunity to dream about a specific career in the first place. We really want to make sure that in our programming, we are not perpetuating the same circumstances that our clients may have had in their home country by not ensuring that they get access to these services.

LB: However, I would really like everyone to acknowledge that housekeeping is really hard work. It's really skilled work. Patricia, do you mind to go back to the last slide? Awesome, thank you so much. It's really difficult work. Many of our clients have not had the same choices offered to them. I would encourage us all to use



cultural humility. By that, I mean really being aware about the fact that we arrive here as people that have certain identities, we have certain worldviews, we have certain ways of understanding what a good life looks like, what a good life looks like as a woman or as a man or as a person of another gender. Really to try not to impose that on clients, but really help them think through what is best for their family. A lot of the times, that is having as many job seekers as possible working, but sometimes it's a really logical economical choice for a woman to not work because child care is so expensive.

Discussion Question

LB: Now we've talked about all of the sort of framing for this issue. Now, let's really dive into some of the causes and barriers. I have a Slido for you on the next slide. Awesome. And I want to put it to you:

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

LB: If you would, go to slido.com and enter this code, 2479382, or scan the QR code with your phone, and let's go ahead and get some reasons here on the screen.

LB: Child care, absolutely. That is a huge one. Cultural norms, absolutely. Intimate partner violence. I did not list this in the coming slides, but I think that's a great point. Language barriers. Having to care for the house. Lack of confidence, yes, absolutely. Not being able to drive. We know that some of the women that we get in our programs have not been afforded the opportunity to learn how to drive. Lack of education, lack of support from their spouse, absolutely.

LB: Yes, I'm seeing, again, concern about confidence in the first place. All of these things can blend together and make it such that a woman can feel as though that her world is not set up for her to be able to move into formal employment. She may have been socialized to feel as though she doesn't have those innate skills. Having to work alongside men, misogynistic workplaces, absolutely. Mental health, gender roles. I'm just going to give us just a few more seconds to get any last reasons in. Religious and cultural beliefs, yes.

LB: As you can see, there are a lot of these reasons. In just a second, we're going to dig into some of these reasons in more detail. As you look at the screen here, I think it's obvious that this is not just one simple, easy fix, right? There's not just one barrier that if we can address it, then we can get clients into the workforce, specifically female clients. Specifically, female clients who have never worked before outside of their home. Our solution is going to have to be pretty multifaceted also.

Structural and Systemic Barriers that Prevent Women from Working

LB: Let's talk now about some of the structural and systemic barriers. You all did a great job naming a lot of these barriers, but let's talk about them with a little bit more detail. When we talk about structural or systemic barriers, what we're talking about are the kinds of obstacles that are really woven into our society as a whole. Oftentimes, they are found within our policies or our practices, procedures of organizations, et cetera. The first barrier I'm going to talk a little bit about are legal and policy barriers.

LB: You all pointed out the fact that oftentimes there is some form of workplace discrimination happening, workplace harassment, et cetera. Yes, we have policies to protect folks from these things, but they're not always well-enforced at the work site. Additionally, we don't have great laws often to protect mothers to provide



maternity leave. That is within the American context. In other contexts, in other countries, there may have been additional legal and policy barriers that prevented women from getting a quality education or prevented them from being able to join the workforce.

LB: As I mentioned, there is workplace discrimination. For immigrant and refugee women, that can manifest in a number of ways. It can look like pay disparity. It can look like limited career progression. It can look like biases in recruitment practices. There's also—not on this slide, but you all are correct—workplace harassment that can happen, and a lot of women have heard stories and are very nervous about what it would mean for them to step into the workplace.

LB: We should also consider educational inequities. We should recognize that our clients have not all had equal opportunity to access quality education. Many of them have been dissuaded from pursuing more lucrative sectors, like something in STEM. That often plays a huge role.

LB: There's often also a lack of representation in leadership. This is sort of a twofold loss. We don't have women who are in decision-making roles. We also have a lack of culturally diverse voices who can really resonate with the experience of many of our job seekers and create the kinds of policy-level changes within a workplace that really make it such that job seekers are more welcomed, feel more comfortable, the job place is more accessible and comfortable for them.

LB: Then also, there's the fact that gendered skills are undervalued by the market. As I said up top, we know that our clients come to us with all kinds of skills and talents. Even if they have worked in the home for a long time or worked in an agricultural setting, those skills are valuable. Sometimes they are undervalued by the market. When we think about a lot of the skills that a lot of women arrive with, skills like caretaking, skills like preparing food, we often see low wages in these sectors in particular.

LB: All of these things both feed and result from unconscious bias, which can shape the assumptions we have about who's prepared for work, who is the best candidate for a role, who should be well compensated, who should be in charge. I should say that women themselves are not exempt from this unconscious bias and may themselves feel as though they should not be in charge, they should not be working, they are not the ones to do this kind of labor.

Socio-cultural Barriers to Workplace Entry for Women

LB: Let's move now and talk about the socio-cultural landscape and impacts to some of these barriers.

LB: You all mentioned this several times, but we often see a lack of family support and some really ingrained gendered expectations about who does which roles in the family. There's often some really deep-seated messaging about what a woman's role looks like, and it often doesn't involve working outside of the home.

LB: Similarly, men get this messaging, too. When you were thinking about re-shifting this dynamic, an additional barrier may be that a male decision-maker in the home might be prepared to step into some of this work, or maybe willing, I should say, but they don't feel prepared. They don't necessarily know how to cook or prepare meals. They don't know sometimes the pickup schedules for their children, these sorts of things. We can talk about the fact that this should not necessarily be the case, but regardless, this is an additional barrier that a lot of jobseekers face.



LB: There is also the fact that these kinds of domestic norms can lead to competing priorities. Women are frequently navigating a tightrope between their personal responsibilities and their professional growth. Later, we're going to talk about the best practice, which is to create a career exploration force for women to really think through a lot of these questions that they have and concerns that can often pull them away from their responsibilities at home.

LB: It was also brought to my attention that another reason that sometimes women don't want to work is that they want to return to school, which I absolutely encourage. I think it's awesome for women to return to school. Sometimes the family system, though, requires more employables working just to make sure the clients can pay their bills.

LB: Also, there's a lack of self-confidence. A lot of you mentioned this. Yes, absolutely. When you are hearing all of these messages from society, from the workplace, from policies, et cetera, that your work is less valuable, you're going to internalize that and have a lack of self-confidence.

LB: The other issue is you may not have a lot of folks to talk to. You might not have a peer network of other female community members who are working that you can ask questions of, that you can talk to and feel as though there is some empathy and that you're in this together. If other women in your community aren't working, there can be a feeling that you are the outcast if it is you that wants to work.

LB: Then also there can be some discomfort with American norms of professionalism. When I talk about that, what I'm talking about is that when you move into the workplace, there is a minefield of all of these unwritten rules. When we think about what it looks like to display respect to a superior in the workplace, in America, that looks like a lot of eye contact, that looks like a firm handshake, that looks like an ability to speak confidently, but also be respectful. There's all of this nuance that needs to be in place. Oftentimes, a lot of our clients, but women in particular, have been socialized such that respect looks like not making eye contact. Respect looks like not shaking hands with anyone from the opposite sex and not bragging, not doing the self-advocacy and the self-promotion that is really required of them in many cases at an interview.

LB: All of these barriers can really intertwine, creating a really complex web that women must navigate.

Case Scenario: Medina

LB: I want us now to put all of this together, look at all these barriers in a case study. Awesome. I'm going to read this now, and then I'm going to ask you a question about what you would do if you were Medina's employment specialist.

LB: 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 eighth-grade education that was interrupted by conflict, and she has not worked outside the home, either in the United States or in Afghanistan.

LB: 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 really dangerous, especially for women, and she doesn't know any Dari-speaking women who can talk to her about this. She also knows that her husband is going to feel really uncomfortable to have his wife working. He's going to feel like



he's failing as a provider. Even if he was supportive, who was going to watch the children? Who would cook dinner?

LB: Besides, she doesn't know how to begin a job search or application process. She just doesn't know what she needs to do next. The workplace seems really overwhelming, mysterious, and like a giant complication to her life.

Discussion Question

LB: I want to put it to you in a Slido:

[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?](#)

LB: Go ahead and join the Slido at slido.com and use the code 2479382, or you can scan the QR code with your phone to answer.

LB: Also, I should have said up top that with these Slidos, you can present multiple answers. If you have more than one answer to offer, please do share with us. Okay, so some great suggestions here. Attending a workshop, connecting her with other working Afghan women. Absolutely. Invite folks who have gotten jobs to talk with her. A training program. Introduce her to other young mothers. Absolutely. I love this sort of recurring theme here of peer mentorship. I think that's really important.

LB: ESL classes. Sit down and create a budget together. Connect to child care resources. Absolutely. Present to her an alternate opportunity for employment, like starting her own business. I actually have heard stories of people using that as a successful model of having a woman who has never worked before outside her home start an in-home child care business. That can often be a successful way to do this. I've also heard of hair braiding businesses, these sorts of things.

LB: Marriage therapy, inviting a husband to talk together about the concerns. Job readiness workshop. Absolutely. You all are anticipating a lot of what we're going to talk about for the rest of this hour. Teaching classes on shared income and domestic roles. Present jobs that are flexible and women-dominated. Absolutely. A lot of this work starts with trying to think about what skills our clients bring us and figuring out who in the American workforce really values those skills and is willing to pay our clients for those.

LB: Alternate work schedules. Late shifts. Absolutely. To make sure that there's always child care coverage. I'm going to give us just a few more seconds. I see a few more people typing. Connect with the Afghan community, job developers, visit a workplace to see a typical day at work. Absolutely. Exposure to jobs is really important. Yes. Again, peer mentorship, representation from the community, helping a woman get a driver's license. I think that's a really important complimentary service that can do a lot here. Ask her about her goals.

LB: Awesome. All of these are really great. You might have noticed that the question itself is partially hinting at the answer, right? Which is that Medina feels really overwhelmed. Part of what you are doing when you are trying to help a woman connect with the workplace is really trying to lower that anxiety. One of the best ways to do that is to create a supportive space for women.

LB: Next slide, please. Awesome. Thank you so much. Sorry, y'all.



2. Creating Supportive Spaces for Women: Strategies to Help Women Explore the American Workplace

LB: As I said, part of what we're doing here is really trying to lower the temperature and anxiety around the workplace. To do that, one of the first steps is to create a supportive space, as I said. As researcher, psychologist, and author Brene Brown says,

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

LB: I present this quote to you because I do think that this is a really necessary part of helping our women start to really work through a lot of the fears, concerns, misinformation that they may have.

LB: I think some of you might be listening to this for a suggestion of creating a safe space and rolling your eyes. I have worked in direct service for long enough to know that having time is such a luxury to do anything. There's so many things you probably want to be able to do, but you don't have time to do. Also, I know that there has been a lot of discourse, especially in spaces where we have talked about racial justice, social justice, et cetera, about the fact that sometimes safe spaces are really helpful. Sometimes they often feel to people like fluffy solutions that don't necessarily really address the kinds of barriers that many marginalized communities face when they are trying to survive and thrive in American society.

LB: I say all of that. I also think it's important for us to acknowledge the fact that what we are looking at is a really complex problem wherein there are a lot of structural and societal forces at play, there's a lot of conditioning at play. In order to really change that overarching system, which slots men into jobs outside of the home and slots women into work at home, you really have to have some space for a paradigm shift. We're going to talk a little bit about what that looks like. As a preview, I am going to suggest to you that you think about creating a really structured approach to address a really structured problem.

What does a supportive space look like?

LB: What does a supportive space look like in this context? When we talk about supportive spaces in this context—specifically in the context of something I'm about to talk more about, which is a career exploration course or program—that is a space where women are really able to ask questions about the American workplace and not feel silly that they don't know the answers yet. It's a place where they're able to—as many of you are mentioning—really connect with other women who have similar concerns and provide peer support to one another. It is a place where folks can really share their concerns and their fears.

LB: You all, as service providers, can really try to demystify the workplace. For many people, the workplace feels like this black box. What does it even look like to work in America? What does the building look like? What is it like to talk to a supervisor? You're also going to help women articulate their long-term career goals and also plan some really concrete, realistic steps to help them accomplish those goals.

Note: Rapid Employment Placement Programming

LB: I do want to caution you here on this next slide about the fact that this career exploration programming that I'm proposing here in this section often flies in the face of much of the messaging around rapid employment



placement programs, specifically Matching Grant placement programming. I am not suggesting that you run these programs concurrently because with our matching grant program, which we're going to talk about in a second, the messaging necessarily has to be that employable folks have to work to become self-sufficient.

LB: The best practice with this programming is to work with clients who are self-sufficient, but if another job seeker, particularly if a woman was to start working who has never worked before, that would really help the family start to thrive and be able to do a lot more. Often, this looks more similar to the model of a career program where the family system has already been stabilized, and then one person can go and do some additional professional development work.

LB: If you choose to pair these two things together, in many cases, you have to, sometimes you can get more aversion to working than you want.

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

LB: I do want to give you some tips, particularly for those of you who are trying to encourage women to work in the context of the Match Grant program in particular. When you are supporting women as first-time job seekers within the context of Matching Grant—next slide, please. Awesome, thank you so much. I wanted to suggest a few things.

LB: The first is that I know that you don't have a ton of time. You can't really create a structured program in most cases, but instead to be able to provide women that peer mentorship that is really helpful, as many of you are pointing out, can be very helpful to go ahead and rely on past clients who served as volunteer mentors or immigrant-origin community members or immigrant-origin staff that are able to connect and empathize with women about what it is that they're going through, answer questions, et cetera.

LB: If you don't even have capacity for doing this, creating a peer mentorship situation, you might want to think about pre-recording some in-language videos where you have staff who have that language capacity talking through some frequently asked questions. At the very least, having that delivered by a messenger who speaks the same language, maybe has a lot of the same cultural understandings or underpinnings, can really go a long way. I also want to recommend that you think about changing some of your policies or internal policies around Matching Grant program to encourage women participation.

LB: When I first started this conversation, I told you about a service provider I spoke to who said, "I don't even see women in the office." That, to me, points to the fact that there might be a policy issue in place that is preventing women or not encouraging women to join in on some really important conversations. I really recommend that you only enroll people into programs that affect their whole family if all decision-makers of the family members are there and present.

LB: Similarly, something that I have seen work well is that, particularly if you were having trouble encouraging women working and they are receiving some cash assistance, that both members of the family system need to be present in order to pick up that cash assistance so that you're able to message to the entire family at the same time and really start to seed the idea that this family unit needs to be having conversations with all decision-makers, not just one head of household who is often male.

LB: I also want to recommend that you create some quick budget templates that will allow you to easily compare monthly budgets. What I've seen work well is a template where you could easily change the number



of clients working and the number of dependables, and it quickly fills out what clients can anticipate their monthly expenses looking like. You can quickly show them, "This is how much more you would have left over at the month to be able to accomplish additional financial goals if you were all on board with more family members working."

LB: The other thing is a lot of you who are implementing Matching Grant programs are relying on a few key employer partners who are placing the majority of your clients. You often have pretty good relationships with those employer partners because you are de facto acting to staff their entire facility. Often what I see, which I think is great, is recurring interview times or recurring facility tours that ended in interview. Having a conversation with those employer partners and asking them, "Hey, we'd like to be able to bring some folks who are a little bit more concerned about working, specifically women, to walk on that facility tour." They may or may not interview, but we want to be able to expose them to the workplace and maybe they will interview now, but maybe in a few months they will opt to, and we want to give them that opportunity."

LB: Then as always, we want to reiterate that first jobs are not forever jobs. This is the case with all Matching Grant programming. We want to validate the concerns of our clients and also let them know that this job is one of many jobs they will likely have in their lifetimes in America.

Best Practices: Career Exploration and Preparation Courses

LB: As a best practice, I do want to recommend that your organization think about creating something a little bit more structured, in particular career exploration and preparation courses. What this looks like is having a small cohort, often 5 to 10 people, and specifically 5 to 10 women who are considering working, and specifically those who have never worked outside the home and have a lot of questions about doing so. Offices will set up a structured course that takes place either in an intensive model or on a part-time model. Either one can work, but what you want to think about is not doing too much disruption to the family system so that people can realistically attend.

LB: You're going to talk to them in this course about the workplace. You're going to demystify what that looks like. You're going to talk to them about their workplace rights. You'll talk to them about what are the skills that they have and how to articulate what kinds of goals they have. We have some more content on this later. You're also going to integrate some supportive wraparound services that can make women more successful in the workplace. For example, vocational ESL—they're able to do things like interview, they're able to do things like talk about what their goals are, how to ask off work, these kinds of things. Then also some digital literacy, financial literacy, and behavioral health support topics.

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

LB: In this career exploration course, you really want to create a safe and supportive environment for these kinds of classes to be really successful. When you create this class, it is important, as I said, to create that small cohort, a peer support network. Next slide, please. Also, you're going to want to set some norms so that you are able to really encourage things like open discussions. You need to explicitly tell people, "Your questions are welcome. We're not going to make fun of each other for not knowing the answer to questions."

LB: It's also helpful to explicitly state that in this course, we are intentionally celebrating women of many different cultural traditions and religions and all of the various choices that folks may make after this class. We're not here to judge anyone's particular choices. If a client works after the class, which often happens—I'll



give you some numbers later—great. If they instead, their goals look more like becoming really proficient in English, for whatever reason, that's also great.

LB: You also want to provide interpretation and have materials translated. This is a must. This is something that I heard over and over again. By the way, I should say that this model of career exploration is a model that I was referred to again and again when doing some real research on what is working best in the field right now. People who are doing this work and getting women placed in jobs at higher numbers are being really intentional in creating this model.

LB: What they had told me over and over again is that working with your interpreter is really key, not just to make sure that people understand the content because the information is interpreted and translated, but also because an interpreter can help you also think through how to talk about some of these more difficult conversations around gender dynamics, around the household, and provide you some of that context. It's best practice to provide a lot of these materials in advance so you can talk with the interpreter about these conversations and think about different ways of framing things.

LB: I also want to recommend that you use a strength-based approach in this course. If you yourself are not prepared to talk about the strengths and talents that women arrive with, regardless of whether or not they've ever worked in a formal job setting, you're not prepared to have this course. Part of this course, one of the norms to set is this is about empowering women to feel like they can accomplish their goals. If it's difficult for you because our culture has really celebrated some skills over others, I encourage you to take a look at a blog post that we did about creating resumes for folks who have never worked in formal settings outside of the home to verse yourself in the ways that you can frame this for your clients and also for potential employer partners.

Tips: Creating a Supportive Family Culture to Improve Participation

LB: I also want to suggest that you spend time creating a supportive family culture to improve participation. That looks like making sure that all family members are in on this decision prior to the career exploration classes. I'd also recommend that you have them meet with a financial coach to think about a long- and short-term budget, potentially do a combined financial assessment, or a CFA, with clients, and then also be prepared to help couples think through all these logistical concerns and redivision of labor without judgment.

LB: A barrier mentioned again and again and again when I asked you all what the barriers were is child care. I want to point you to yet another Switchboard blog post about accessing child care so that you have a place to point clients to when they are talking to you about this particular barrier. Awesome.

Best Practices: Increasing Capacity for this Programming

LB: Another consideration when creating this supportive space is that it's helpful to ensure that you have the capacity. I know that in many cases you do not. This can work really well if you already have some adult education programming, specifically if you have an ESL course already or vocational ESL, and you talk with the instructor about making this class specific to women job seekers.

LB: It's really important to have a dedicated instructor. It's best if you have money to actually pay this person to ensure that they're able to keep this course running. In lieu of that, I have seen this work with a really, really dedicated volunteer. I'm talking about somebody who probably does not work themselves, is retired, and can



really essentially work for your organization on a volunteer basis. If you don't have that, partnering with an ECBO, an ethnic-based community organization, working with a community center, an organization focused on empowering women can be a great way to have that added capacity.

LB: I also—if you want to get this programming funded, coming up with some metrics to track, maybe that looks like having women fill out a survey before and after the course so that you can track the progress that you're making, it's really going to be instrumental when you go to seek funding later. Having something like a measurable skill-gain metric or a survey where you measure how comfortable women are navigating the workplace is going to be really key.

Advertising Women's Job Exploration Courses

LB: To advertise for these job exploration courses, I want to recommend that you create and print digital flyers in target languages so that folks can see that this exists in the first place. You also want to detail on the flyer any supportive service. It's not enough to just say, "Come to this career exploration." People are going to naturally feel the same way about attending this course as they do about joining a job. "What am I going to do about the fact that I have child care responsibilities?" If you're providing child care on-site, let people know, or if children are allowed to join the class, which I think is also a great practice, let people know.

LB: You want to message job exploration over expectation, if possible. You want to post in the community around your office. If you have relationships with local religious centers, local mosques, having religious leaders echo this as a great opportunity can really make a lot of headway with clients who may be feeling wary about whether or not their religious commitments allows them to really start working outside the home. This is all going to make your programming findable.

Tips: Making Programming Accessible

LB: To make it accessible, it's also important that you think through a child care plan for your participants. Danica went ahead and put that link in the chat. Thank you so much, Danica, to help people access child care.

LB: You're also going to want to address any hesitancy women may have about relying on outside child care. Sometimes it's not that women can't find child care, but they feel really guilty about relying on it. They feel as though their children would be much better served if they were able to provide that care themselves.

LB: As I mentioned, providing interpretation or transportation is going to be really key. Also, making sure that these courses don't disrupt the family's typical schedule too much.

Women in Action Program

LB: I want to give you a real-world example, and that is the Women in Action program that was created by IRC Elizabeth in Elizabeth, New Jersey, that used this exact model of creating a career exploration class. They have cohorts of 5 to 10 women. They often group them by language group, but not always. This program meets for 12 weeks. In the course, all of the topics that I've mentioned throughout this webinar are addressed. There is in-person instruction. Women come on-site. There's a lot of field trips also. Pictured here is a cohort of women who were going to the library to get their library cards, enroll in some very basic digital literacy courses in Jersey City, and also be able to access English classes at that site.



LB: Then there's also monthly individual follow-ups with each woman to see how she's doing, and help her articulate her individual goals. As a result of this program, they have seen great success. I cannot remember the exact number of how many clients were highly motivated to learn English prior to the class, it was something like 20 to 30 percent versus 90 percent at the end of class, because they spent a lot of time helping women articulate their goals. Often they realize that in order to meet those goals, they would need to be in English class.

LB: Sixty percent of participants who have participated are now employed. This is actually resulting in real-world employment. Twenty percent of the participants they've served are now enrolled in college, which I think is awesome.

3. Goal Articulation and Planning

LB: Much of this strategy that is espoused by the Women in Action Program, particularly by Maryam Kardoush, who is the career specialist who runs this program here, involves goal articulation and goal planning. That's often a very necessary part of that.

Discussion Question

LB: I have a Slido for you all coming up here:

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

LB: What is working?

[pause]

LB: "Your mentors." Absolutely. [silence] "Focus on short-term goals." Absolutely. We're going to talk, in a second, about the importance of making goals really achievable, because we know when people are able to achieve smaller goals, it really helps them with their confidence as they work towards those larger goals.

LB: "Ask them what their dreams are." "Thinking about their interests and their skills and transferring those to various jobs." [silence] "Inviting them to attend job fairs and job tours." Absolutely. What you're doing there is really broadening their exposure to various career opportunities.

LB: A lot of the time when we ask women, "What is it that you want to do?" they'll just look at us blankly. It's not because they lack the capacity to think about these kinds of things. It's often that they just have not been exposed to the kinds of careers that are really available to them. "Ask them what they used to do before coming to the United States." "Explore how to monetize, within their community, the domestic tasks that they're already doing as a start." I love this suggestion.

[pause]

LB: I like, "Their service plans are living documents, so their goals can grow as you work together." Yes, absolutely. Some of the time, the way someone feels about working when you first start working with them is



not the way that they feel weeks or months or years later. "Talk about those barriers. Talk about fears and worries." Yes, address them head-on.

LB: Best practice when you are working in case management is to validate concerns rather than try to tell folks that the concerns that they have are not real for whatever reason. It doesn't work, and it makes people feel like you don't understand their context. Right.

Setting SMART Goals

LB: Well, in the interest of time, I am going to move on. I think these are all really great strategies, but I want to suggest to you that you not just set any goals with your clients, but specifically you work with women to set SMART goals. When we talk about SMART goals, though, that is just an acronym that stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound goals.

LB: The idea here with a SMART goal is that you not just say something overarching and sweeping, because that can just create more anxiety. For example, if a woman has a goal of learning English, "Learn English," is a daunting suggestion. English is a really difficult language. But instead, as one of our participants in this webinar mentioned, really breaking it down into more meaningful steps is important. Maybe instead of that overarching goal, a SMART goal would look like, "Attend English class at least twice per week from now until March 2025 and advance by two levels," something that you can really measure and see whether or not that happened.

LB: You want to really celebrate small wins. Something I suggest in this course is setting a SMART goal from one class that somebody could complete by the time they come to another class to really improve confidence.

Why are goal articulation and goal setting so important?

LB: Why is it that goal articulation and goal setting [are] so important? When I talk about "goal articulation," if you're not familiar with that phrase, it just means the process of communicating your goals so that somebody else can understand it and can check in to see whether or not you are making progress towards those goals. There is a kind of magic in being able to actually say these things aloud or write them down.

LB: We know that there is research that tells us that when a person is able to be aware of their goals and their purposes, it increases their sense of well-being, it increases their sense of confidence, but also it really improves the rate at which people are able to make progress towards whatever those goals are.

LB: The other thing is that many newcomers have not been afforded the opportunity to dream or think about the future. As I was talking about earlier, a lot of the time, you will sit with someone and you'll say, "What is it that you're interested in doing?" And they may not know, or they may say, "You know better than me."

LB: That is often the response of someone who has been traumatized and has lived in a situation for a really long time where the future was not a guarantee. It was very dangerous to think about future plans. That was a luxury that they did not have. Oftentimes, the goal is peace or the goal is to simply survive, and so you have to work with women to help them get more granular about what that would mean for them, and SMART goals can be a great way to do that.



LB: I should also say that women in particular are socialized to think of others' goals before their own, and so it's especially important to work with them on this particular topic. Goals really facilitate navigation of the job market. If we know where somebody is going, it's easier to point them to the kinds of jobs that could make whatever dreams they have come true, so to speak.

LB: Also, we know that part of the interview process often involves goal articulation. When you get that classic interview question, "Tell me about yourself," yes, you are talking about your experience and how it fits for the role, but you're also talking about what it is that you want to do, and how working with this organization really aligns with your particular goal. This can really build a sense of some efficacy and confidence that is really necessary when folks are seeking a job.

Goal Articulation and Goal Setting Process

LB: We put all this together and think about the process of setting goals to help women become more comfortable with working. What we're first doing is encouraging women to articulate their skills, talents, and interests. I have some suggestions of how to do that here in a second. We're going to broaden their job opportunity exposure. We're going to assist with identifying the skills and talents needed for job opportunities, identify where there is a match, and you could put these things together.

LB: I'm going to help women really articulate the goals that they have and then see which of these professional development opportunities, which of these jobs is really in alignment with these goals, and build a plan to be able to make sure that all of the household responsibilities still get done at the end of the day. A lot of steps here. You can see why a whole course is often needed here to promote the ability to articulate your skills. Often women, like we said, do not have the confidence and don't feel like they have skills, unfortunately.

Activities to Promote Articulating Skills, Talents, and Interests

LB: There are a few things that you can do. As an instructor, it can be helpful for people who don't know what to say what their skills and talents are to go ahead and pre-generate a list of skills and talents that you often see folks arriving with and then do simple exercises. For example, you could have women raise their hand after you ask them a series of questions to indicate that this applies to them. You could ask questions like, "Who here is taking care of someone when they're sick? Who has cooked a meal? Who has done farming work? Who has raised a child?" You can also pre-generate a list of interests and have women go through and circle words in their native language, if possible, that apply to their interests, their skills, and talents.

LB: Then a great class exercise could be teaching women the digital literacy to use Google Translate and be able to translate those words into English words. Then, often, I have heard stories about talent showcases. Something that our friends at IRC Elizabeth do is that they have women alternate bringing in food for the course to showcase the kinds of foods women know how to make. You can also have women bring in crafts that they make if they do some kind of art, as somebody was suggesting that sometimes people can monetize the kinds of work that they do at home, and I think that's absolutely the case. This can be a way to show it off.

How to Broaden Job Exposure

LB: In order to broaden our job exposure, we talked about many of these options—the next slide, please—you can have guest speakers come in. The other thing that you can do is—I think I'm on the wrong slide here. "Job exposure" is what we're looking for. Awesome. Guest speakers come in. You could have company visits. You



could have job shadowing opportunities where clients are able to walk around with someone who's working and really see what that looks like.

LB: You could have a career panel. The guest speakers can be people from the company; they can also be former clients. They can be folks who represent community-serving organizations. When I was working in Atlanta, there was a group who specifically was interested in empowering Afghans, and we had someone from that group who was really helpful in coming to talk to the ladies that we were serving. You can also have various mentorship programs that we've discussed earlier in this presentation. Next slide, please.

Matching Skills with Job Opportunities

LB: The other thing that we want to do is match our skills with various job opportunities. That looks like a few different things. One thing that can be really helpful is to do a kind of analysis where you break down a job description into its component parts and really look at the skills that it's requiring, and then you do an audit where you compare those skills against the kinds of skills that women have, what things can be transferred. Of course, you first have to do that work of articulating skills to begin with, but then you start to apply it to the actual needs of the job market. Next slide, please.

Prepare Job Opportunities for Common Transferrable Skills

LB: Then, finally, it can be really, really helpful to prepare job opportunities for common transferrable skills. All of this work that we have talked about today is really work that helps you be able to prepare women for regularly occurring employment programming that you have. Women should be able to participate in that programming after they have been empowered to do so, and given the skills and the resources and the tools to do so.

LB: It's really up to you all, as employment specialists and job developers, to do the work to really think through, "What are the clusters of skills that we keep seeing our ladies arrive with? Do we see a lot of folks who have skills in preparing food? Do we have employer partners who need people to prepare food? Do we have a lot of people arriving who know how to sew? Great. Let's reach out to various manufacturers who require that skill," et cetera.

LB: Then, the other thing I would really suggest that you do is that you look into the places women are working. Even in the example I gave you where only 16% of Afghan women are working, that's still a lot of folks to talk to and interview and figure out, "Where are you working and why?"

LB: Our clients do a great job of finding things that work for them all on their own, and sometimes it's a matter of going out and finding what it is that's already working and really trying to broaden the number of clients who are able to access those kinds of opportunities, and doing the work to develop the job so you can set up additional interviews.

Q&A Panel

LB: Awesome. That was the end of our structured content, but we want to now move into our Q&A section. I'm going to invite Danica to come back on screen and unmute herself and talk to us about any questions that we're receiving throughout this webinar.



DK: Yes. Thank you, Lauren. That was excellent. One question that I received in the Q&A is,

How can we equip men to take on a greater share of the household management responsibilities? It seems like a really daunting task for employment specialists to ensure that women aren't overlooked with extra work when they do find a job, but also crucial in preventing these women from burnout.

LB: That's a really great question. I think that developing that plan for who is going to do what is really critical. I think that sometimes there does need to be some education that happens for male decision-makers in the home, and sometimes that education can look like a female family member teaching her husband or whatever role this person plays in the home, this male person, some of these responsibilities.

LB: I also think that just as we can set up a network of peers to support our female job seekers, we can do the same for men who are going to take on additional responsibilities and have them talk to someone who has stepped into that role and help them think through how to learn these things and talk about any challenges or any kind of gripes they have. Let them talk to another male person about this and work through those challenges with that person. Danica, do you have any other additional suggestions?

DK: I love that answer. I think that the communication piece and really taking the time to talk ahead of time and to establish peer mentorship, even for the men, is really good, so I think you answered that great. Another question we have come in is,

Can you talk about refugee women with disabilities who face significant challenges accessing the workforce? Through my research, I see multi-faceted challenges that they will face.

DK: Absolutely. I'll let you start with that.

LB: Yes, that is really tricky. I think that when you have a refugee woman who's never worked before who has a disability, there are so many identities that make it difficult often to participate in the workplace. Sometimes it is the case that it makes a lot of sense for that family system to rely on SSI as an income stream if a woman will qualify for disability. In cases where she does not qualify, I think that that is going to look like a lot of really targeted job development work.

LB: Something that I have seen, if there are mobility issues, is there are some employer partners that allow people to sit down during the work day. I'm thinking, right now, of an employer like ALDI that allows for folks to sit during the workday. I've seen people work with folks who have some limited mobility but maybe they can't stand all day, helping connect folks to jobs where they are driving, so able to sit. Yes, it's really tricky. Danica, I'm going to pull you in to help me with this. What have you seen work?

DK: Yes. What I was thinking, in addition to everything that you shared that's really important, is the employer partners that we are able to make as employment specialists. One example comes to mind. While I was working in Employment Services in North Carolina, we were able to establish a really amazing employment partnership with Goodwill that had a whole program for visually impaired individuals, and all of the jobs were sitting.

DK: They were willing to do the training that was required and they were willing to extend their approach to people who had disabilities even outside of visual impairment. I think really establishing those employer



partnerships can be crucial, and finding those partners that are willing to work with really diverse populations and have the patience that is required to help people onboard and things like that.

DK: Just to plug, we are having a webinar for employer partnerships coming up in May, so that might be something interesting to think about.

LB: It's such a good point, yes. In case there's anyone on this webinar who doesn't know, Goodwill does more than help you access low-cost household items. They also do a lot of employment services work. I think that that's such a great suggestion, Danica, is to look for the helpers who specialize in this kind of work. Who is doing a lot of job placement work with the disability community in your area? Rely on them to be your mentor as you look to do this work and potentially partner with them.

DK: We have some really good questions coming in, so thank you, all. I will say this one:

Hi, Lauren. You highlighted, at a few points, that our time and bandwidth can be limited when it comes to implementing some of these great recommendations. What are ways in which we can help navigate that challenge that may have also helped you in your experience within the direct service space?

LB: Yes, that's a good question. I recognize that that is the reality. Man, there is not a lot of time when you're working in rapid employment. It is rapid. You often have a huge caseload, and so you want to be able to do everything under the sun for each client and there's just not the time.

LB: What I recommend is, firstly, exactly what we're talking about, which is to set up a network of partners that are really helpful to help you do some of this work. If you just do not have the capacity, figuring out who the helpers are in your community who are doing similar work and working with them to enroll clients into their programming, maybe ask them if they'd be willing to adapt some of their curriculum, using your population level expertise to really make that programming more accessible and cover all the things we talked about today, I think that can be really key.

LB: I also think that, as much as possible, trying to make your programming more efficient. Setting in policies and procedures in place so that you can reduce the number of individual conversations. If you create this kind of exploration course, having a system for when you are doing checkout at Matching Grant, closing a case, maybe you put that flyer there so it reminds you to always have that conversation.

LB: Maybe you spend some specific time in your job development work where you are specifically looking for jobs for women so that when a woman is sitting in front of you and you are talking about what kind of opportunities might work really well for her, you have a place already in mind versus every single time there's a new job seeker, trying to find a new job. These are all things that I recommend. What would you say, Danica, about trying to do this work when you have such limited capacity?

DK: Yes, I agree with everything you said. I think that the partnership reach can really help, like you mentioned. I think the work that I was able to see happen and be a part of that was broader than just the rapid employment placement, all that we're talking about related to supporting first-time female job seekers and the time that it takes to really help people do that goal articulation, I think we really had to rely heavily on our volunteer network and also maybe volunteers that were working directly with families and depending on your



organization and what kind of process you have there. I think that's the only thing I have to add, is really relying on the volunteer network.

LB: Such a good suggestion. I think that a lot of volunteers really like to have face-time with clients. I will say this work, I think, feels really meaningful to a lot of people, so it is often a good place to engage volunteers because it's something that they—it's the kind of experience they often hope to have versus sorting donations or something like this.

LB: Also, as you were talking, Danica, I was thinking about one place to look is if you have a college system that has some classes around gender studies or in some way has to do with this kind of topic, you can often find interns who would be particularly motivated to providing some support here for college credit, these kinds of things.

DK: Great. I'm adding in just a few shareouts from participants that I think are really great related to the question about women with disabilities. I will share another question that we have. Let's see,

I wonder if you can speak a little bit to how to help women learn how to drive. That is often a big barrier and there's a lot of issues. I'm wondering if you have anything you can share there.

LB: A lot of insight into this. I have not directly overseen a driving program, but definitely I'm working in an office that was running this kind of program. My number one tip here is that if you can find a driving instruction service that is run by someone who is themselves an immigrant-origin adult, that can be really helpful especially because they can provide some in-language instruction. If you have a microenterprise program, this is a great place. If there is a client who already is interested in driving, encouraging someone who may be interested in starting their own driving instruction school can be a great way to make sure that that person has the capacity.

LB: I've also seen volunteers serve in this capacity, some very brave volunteers who are willing to work with clients to help them learn how to drive. These are the only real suggestions and things that I have seen work. Now, Danica, have you seen anything that you want to share that you think is really helpful?

DK: Yes. I think, again, that volunteer network, and then I think the other thing that came to mind for me is not really addressing the driving issue, but more really enhancing the network of drivers that are maybe required in order to help people get to work. I'm sure so many of you have had to work through this issue for all people seeking employment, and I think that there's some nuance and some complexities when we're talking about assisting first-time female job seekers and what that would mean for rideshares and things like that.

DK: I think maybe where we can think about this is, how do we expand potentially the rideshare networks that address maybe specific needs that women have? I know I didn't answer that question specifically, but that's what came to my mind as I thought back to my time in direct services and thinking about maybe, at this point, the barrier is so high for driving, but the barrier isn't as high for setting up some really good driving networks of maybe all women so that people feel comfortable and things like that.

LB: I think that's a great idea, and you could potentially, in this kind of women's exploration class, connect women to potential instructors and encourage them to maybe take classes at the same time to have that peer support. As you were speaking, one other thing came to mind, which is that I have seen offices who use VR, virtual reality, to help people do driving simulator work. Obviously, they have to be able to purchase that.



LB: I have heard that getting this kind of technology from universities is often pretty relatively accessible. They often have a lot of this technology. They bought it. They're like, "Somebody will need this, but we don't really know why," and sometimes you can borrow some of that. These sorts of driving simulator things do exist and can help expose women to what it would look like to drive in a safe way.

DK: I love that. That's a really interesting and new and exciting thing that I'm glad you shared. Another question to share with you is,

What are some recommendations for handling a difficult conversation with a client who is resistant to the idea of working?

LB: Resistance to the idea of working. I think that one of the things that you need to be able to do is understand why it is that they're resisting working and validate whatever that concern is. It may be that there is a really strong underlying fear there that you're just not aware of that needs to be addressed. It depends on what the reason is. I think that specifically with Matching Grant programming, it's often important to reiterate expectations from the very beginning so that you don't get situations where people feel like they're bamboozled.

LB: That's when you get a lot of resistance, which is like, "Nobody told me this is going to happen. I thought that I would be able to participate in this program and now, all of a sudden, you're telling me I have to work in this environment that I feel is dangerous or doesn't suit my needs for some reason." If the reason has to do with identity, particularly if it has something to do with the client's religious identity, I think is something you often see a lot, sometimes you need to spend some time self-reflecting on whether or not you're the best person to deliver that message.

LB: If you yourself are not a person who belongs to that person's race or religious identity, et cetera, sometimes folks can feel as though you don't understand, and it can be better to rely on some other staff person who does have the authority to say, from this context, "I still have a family system where I, as a wife or my partner who's-- or I myself or my partner is working and that is allowed. There is a way to think about this in a way where everyone is allowed to work," if that makes sense. Yes, what other things would you suggest?

DK: I think what comes to mind for me is, and it's maybe not as practical or tangible, I loved your thoughts, but really practicing active listening so that we can really hear the concerns. I think that the populations that we're serving, many of them have come on such long journeys where maybe they haven't felt totally heard or seen or understood, and they come from so many different paths and traumas and things like that.

DK: I think work is such an integral part of who we are sometimes, as humans, and there's a lot of really understandable concerns there, and so I think practicing that active listening, really hearing somebody out so that we can then respond with really good ideas of how to maybe bring some reassurance there and know, "Is this a situation where actually maybe--," like we talked about at the beginning, this cultural humility, maybe this is not the right pathway for them. Obviously, that's very complex and nuanced, or maybe we can address some of those specific concerns that they're having and that's why they're being resistant.

DK: Then I think that through that active listening, it builds trust, and I think that that trust building can help open up space for people to potentially grow that confidence that we're asking them to grow, because working in a new country is scary and comes with a lot of challenges. Those are my thoughts there.



LB: I think that's right, Danica. Yes, understanding the issue really fully is really key to being able to present potential solutions. Yes, you have to know what's going on there and really validate those fears before somebody will really listen to you.

DK: Yes, absolutely. Okay, let's see. I'm just looking through a couple of questions. Let's see,

[Related to the problem of people not being able to afford child care, how can we help with this? Is there a program that you can support?](#)

DK: I know this has come up quite a bit and we've touched on it a little bit, but any other extra thoughts that you have for that, Lauren?

LB: I think that the most affordable kind of child care is often offered by the community. A lot of the time, what I have seen work really well, given the fact that there is a limited suite of options, is setting up a system where folks are alternating watching each other's children to save everybody money. Something that you can do to facilitate that is to really ask questions about who is already doing this work, encourage other community members to participate in this work to make some additional money for the family system, or if not money, at least have a way to be able to work in the first place to indirectly bring in more money. That is what I would suggest, is really like lighting a fire on something that is existing, working, which is this network of informal child care that's happening.

LB: Yes, and I would also really take a look at that blog post. There's a number of resources embedded there for finding more affordable child care services or daycare services. It is very difficult to find that kind of service for anyone, much less someone who is immigrant-origin who is speaking English as a second or third language. The other thing I would say is, in addition to having added capacity to do all of this work, having added capacity to help people fill out these applications is often really key. Just giving it to them often is not going to be enough, because [there is] a lot of paperwork to get through in many cases.

LB: Yes, do you have any other suggestions, Danica?

DK: I don't think so. Just I second that it's complicated. I think when you're able to find that network of people helping one another, that's incredible and it can be really challenging. I hope that the blog post is helpful with some tangible tips for the question-asker there.

LB: Oh, Danica, I do actually have one more suggestion. I have seen, in limited cases, employer partners who are willing to allow women to bring their children to the job site. This is rare, but I do want you to know that it exists so that you don't feel like absolutely out of pocket asking an employer partner about this, particularly in sectors where the work is related to child care or is child care, rather. In some limited instances, a child care provider will allow a woman to work at that center, get her CDA or Child Development Associate Certificate, and also bring her children to work. That can be a great solution where all else fails. Hard to set up, but worth trying if you can. Sorry, go ahead.

DK: That's really interesting. Thank you for sharing that. I think this is a really interesting question:

[Are there any pre-mentorship programs for men to help their spouse or daughter to support them with employment?](#)



DK: Maybe just examples or things that you've heard or seen work.

LB: I'm sure this kind of thing exists, but I can't give you any names right off the top of my head. I'm familiar with things like The Good Men Project, et cetera, that are really intended to help men think about how they can be more supportive partners in heterosexual relationships and also do what they can to create gender parity, support the women in their lives. Yes, but I'm not familiar with an existing program. I think it's a great idea, I would love for someone to get some pilot funding to see how this works. Yes, Danica, I put it to you. Have you heard about any of this kind of program existing in the wild?

DK: I have not in formality. As you were talking, I was racking my brain thinking, "What have I seen work?" And I think one example that comes to mind is not an existing program, but it's more of an organic experience of peer mentorship that just happens through relationships.

DK: One example is a Kurdish-Syrian family that I worked with in North Carolina, and they grew a really sweet relationship with a family that lived in North Carolina that was from this country, and as they established that friendship, the husband of this family was able to learn a lot from the friend husband that was involved with them and hear just a lot about what it was like for him to have a working wife.

DK: Even though they came from different places and backgrounds, I really saw the—it felt like a support for the new arrival. I know today, his wife is working and they're doing really well. It's a bit of a clunky answer and example, but I think the idea here is just that those relationships and seeing it happen in the wild, and even if their situation is varying, I think that can be really helpful for the long run. But I agree, I think this would be really interesting to try to implement and maybe even just on a very small scale.

LB: Absolutely. Yes, I think you're so right, that having modeling is key. To be able to see someone else do it, it helps you figure out how you yourself could do it.

DK: Yes. We have more questions, but I think we're right at time. Right, Lauren?

LB: Yes, I think so. Thank you so much, Danica. I appreciate it so much. Thank you all for all of your questions.

Conclusion

Feedback Survey

LB: As we spoke about before, you are going to receive a recording of this webinar within 24 hours with the recommended resources that we've been talking about. Before we share those recommended resources, we'd like to first ask you to help us help you. We'd like for you to take this survey. It's extremely important to help us improve our future trainings.

LB: It's six-questions long. It only takes 60 seconds to complete, so please take 60 seconds now to complete it. You can either use your phone to scan this QR code or Patricia was nice enough to put this link in the chat so you could click it. We're going to just take a second here and just sit here so you all can do that.

[pause]



LB: Hey, Patricia, keep me honest here. I feel like it's been a minute. We can move on to our learning objectives. Awesome, thanks so much.

Reviewing Learning Objectives

LB: Okay, so we really hope that now, at the end of our session today, you were able to do the following. The first is to be able to describe the barriers that prevent women in newcomer populations from participating in the workforce. Secondly, to evaluate strategies to create supportive spaces for women, spaces that really lower barriers to participation in workforce preparation placement programs. Then, finally, to implement approaches that allow women to articulate their transferable skills and career goals.

Recommended Resources

LB: Let's talk about some recommended supplementary resources. We have an evidence summary linked up top about strategies to improve outcomes for refugee women and employment programs, obviously very relevant to our topic today. We have a podcast on *Empowering Refugee Women for Workforce Development*. We also have a guide, *Fundamentals of Gender-Based Violence for Refugee Service Providers*. We didn't talk much about gender-based violence today, but that certainly plays a role in whether or not women are able to participate in the workforce.

LB: We have some suggestions here about, *what does a culturally responsive approach really mean?* in that guide. There's also a YouTube video on *Adjusting to Life and Work in the United States, Perspectives from Refugee Women*. Then two blog posts that were linked in this presentation, but just to review them again, the first is *Resume Building for First-Time Job Seekers* and the second is a blog post on *Child Care Resources for Refugee Service Providers*.

Stay Connected

LB: We ask you to stay connected. For more training and technical assistance, stay connected with Switchboard. Email us at switchboard@rescue.org, or visit us at www.SwitchboardTA.org, or follow us on social media @switchboardta. On behalf of all of us at Switchboard, thank you for learning with us, and we hope that we see you again soon.

The IRC received competitive funding through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Grant #90RB0052 and Grant #90RB0053. The project is 100% financed by federal funds. The contents of this document are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families.