



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YR2025

ABSTRACT

The story of Toledo has always been shaped by people who came seeking opportunity and stayed to build a future. From its industrial rise when strong employment pathways attracted workers from across the country and around the world to today's evolving economy, Toledo's strength has been rooted in the skills, work ethic, and entrepreneurial spirit of those who call it home. New residents and long-standing families alike continue to play a vital role in revitalizing the city, contributing innovation, small business growth, and civic leadership that fuel economic momentum and community stability. By recognizing and investing in people as assets, Toledo honors its past while positioning itself for long-term growth.

Established in 2014, Inclusive for Women Inc., Women of Toledo is a 501c3 nonprofit organization serving the Greater Toledo community. Our mission is to educate, engage, and empower women and girls by expanding access to economic opportunity, leadership development, and practical skills. Through targeted programs and services, Women of Toledo addresses real-world barriers women encounter in the workplace, marketplace, family systems, and community life, which equip them with education, mentorship, and networks that support upward mobility and informed decision-making.

With more than 427,000 women and girls across Northwest Ohio, the need for coordinated investment in workforce readiness, mentorship, and economic participation is both timely and essential. By advancing women as contributors, leaders, and problem-solvers, we help build a stronger, more competitive, and future-ready Toledo.

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Established in 2014, Inclusive for Women Inc. dba Women of Toledo (WOT) is a 501c3 not-for-profit formed to create sustainable solutions that elevate the quality of life and improve the economic equity of women and girls. Our mission is to educate, engage, and empower the community through programs and services that support skill development, mentorship, and peer connection. WOT creates structured spaces where women and girls build social capital, exchange ideas, access resources, and develop practical tools to navigate professional, personal, and economic systems with confidence.

WOT is committed to advancing women's economic participation by addressing real-world challenges that affect career growth, entrepreneurship, family stability, and workforce engagement. Through education and mentorship, participants gain strategies to recognize and navigate structural barriers in the workplace, marketplace, community, and household. Since its inception, WOT has delivered measurable outcomes that contribute to improved economic mobility, leadership readiness, and overall community well-being.

At WOT, we believe that investing in women's economic advancement is a proven strategy to strengthen families, stabilize communities, and drive regional prosperity. While progress has been made, gaps in access to opportunity, mentorship, and economic resources persist particularly for individuals who are new to systems, returning to the workforce, or navigating limited networks. WOT works to close these gaps by expanding access to education, career pathways, and supportive relationships that enable long-term success.

In 2018, WOT launched the HeForShe initiative in the Toledo region as part of a global solidarity movement advancing shared responsibility and partnership between women and men. The program engages men and boys as allies in strengthening economic participation, leadership, and caregiving balance across households, workplaces, and communities. HeForShe encourages reflection and action around how responsibilities, leadership, and opportunity can be more effectively shared to benefit families, organizations, and the broader economy. As a result, Women of Toledo's programs intentionally engage both women and men in advancing inclusive economic outcomes.

Grounded in strong community organizing and collaborative leadership, WOT delivers high-impact educational programs, leadership development opportunities, public forums, mentoring relationships, and technical assistance services. These efforts are designed to produce tangible outcomes in workforce readiness, leadership confidence, and civic participation, contributing to positive social and economic progress across the region.

Organizational Focus Areas & Objectives

- **Regional & Global Collaboration:** Partner with women's, youth, and community organizations to strengthen civic participation and economic vitality.
- **Advocacy & Voice:** Provide platforms where women and youth can share experiences, inform policy conversations, and influence systems that affect their lives.
- **Leadership Development:** Facilitate intergenerational leadership growth for women and girls through mentorship and applied learning.



- Education: Deliver programs and activities that expand access to learning, financial literacy, communication skills, and conflict resolution.
- Empowerment: Support women and youth through mentoring and professional development aligned to career and life goals.
- Economic Sustainability: Operate as a connecting hub that aligns women-focused organizations, focus groups, and partners to increase efficiency and collective impact.

History

Women of Toledo's origins trace back to March 2013, when eighteen women serving in leadership roles across Greater Toledo convened as part of a research-based focus group examining how women engage with professional networks and community organizations. The goal of this initial initiative was to explore how a shared platform could strengthen connection, collaboration, and access for women whose professional and personal experiences were not always reflected in traditional networking spaces. Rather than positioning women outside of existing organizations, the group sought to enhance participation by creating complementary opportunities such as networking activities, community service projects, educational programs, and leadership initiatives that aligned with women's lived experiences and aspirations. The intention was to create new pathways for women from different life circumstances to identify shared goals, build trust, and work constructively together. Participants represented a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures, professions, ages, and life stages, offering a rich exchange of perspectives, skills, and strategies that strengthened collective learning.

Findings from the focus group revealed that while many existing organizations were formally open to all, women often gravitated toward groups where they felt a sense of familiarity and belonging. Additional research highlighted that established organizational cultures can unintentionally create barriers for women who are new to those spaces (Klein, 2008). What emerged from the focus group, however, was a distinctly different environment that were one rooted in openness, mutual respect, and shared storytelling. The group evolved beyond its original research purpose into an ongoing educational forum where participants shared success stories, challenges, and insights related to leadership, family life, creative expression, and professional growth.

These conversations underscored a clear need for an organization intentionally designed to foster connection, learning, and shared growth. In response, Women of Toledo was formed with a commitment to creating programs that are welcoming, accessible, and responsive to the realities women face. At its core, WOT serves as a connecting hub—bringing individuals and organizations together to build capacity, amplify strengths, and increase collective effectiveness. Through story-sharing, active listening, and peer exchange, mentorship emerged organically as women supported one another through advice, encouragement, and accountability. This foundation gave rise to WOT's guiding framework: educate, engage, and empower.

WOT's programs and services are open to all, with a particular focus on individuals and families navigating limited resources or access to opportunity. The organization is intentional



about creating supportive and respectful spaces where young people ages 12–24, including those exploring identity and leadership development, can learn, grow, and feel valued.

In 2014, WOT formally adopted an inclusion and non-discrimination policy affirming that all programs and services are open and accessible, without discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability. This commitment remains central to WOT's operations and partnerships, ensuring that everyone who engages with the organization is treated with dignity and respect.

Our services are open to all participants, with a focused commitment to serving individuals and families with low to moderate incomes who face limited access to opportunity and supportive resources. Women of Toledo prioritizes creating respectful, supportive learning environments for youth ages 12–24 and adults across life stages, ensuring participants feel safe to learn, grow, and develop leadership and life skills.

In 2014, Women of Toledo adopted a formal non-discrimination and access statement affirming that all programs and services are provided without exclusion or unequal treatment. Participation is open regardless of race, color, ethnicity, sex, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or disability. This commitment guides all organizational policies, partnerships, and program delivery to ensure fairness, dignity, and equal access for every individual served.

NEW Strategic Priorities (Year 2025–2027)

Advancing women's and girls' equity through education, empowerment, and connection

Our purpose continues as Women of Toledo marks 10 years of impact in 2025, we are committed to deepening and expanding our work to meet the evolving needs of women and girls across our region. Guided by our 3E Model—Educate, Engage, Empower, our strategic priorities are designed to create inclusive, sustainable pathways that elevate quality of life and advance economic equity. Through this approach, Women of Toledo builds solutions that strengthen leadership pipelines, remove systemic barriers, and foster connection ensuring women and girls can thrive in the communities where we live, work, play, and raise families.

In 2025 alone, this strategy translated into measurable impact, serving **1,487 participants**, **activating 79 mentors**, **delivering 44 program sessions**, and advancing youth leadership, economic mobility, and community collaboration across Northwest Ohio.

Strategic Priorities #1: Invest in Youth Development.

The Vision

Empower the next generation of women with the skills, confidence, and networks to lead unapologetically.

Objectives



- Expand Girls Hub and LeadHerWay to reach more middle school, high school, and college-aged young women.
- Broaden mentorship access through intergenerational connections and peer-to-peer learning.
- Integrate STEAM education, financial literacy, and civic engagement into all youth programs.
- Establish a Young Women’s Advisory Board to elevate youth voices in program design and leadership.

2025 Impact

- 140 mentees supported through structured youth mentorship pathways
- 120 youth and mentors engaged in LeadHerWay Reality Town simulations focused on financial literacy and career readiness
- 42 Girls Hub leadership projects delivered, including A Seat at the Table and Toolbox initiatives

Expected Outcomes

- 80% of youth participants report increased confidence in leadership and decision-making.
- At least 150 youth annually access mentorship and skill-building opportunities.
- A sustainable pipeline of empowered young women prepared to shape Toledo’s future.

Strategic Priorities #2: Remove Barriers to Economic Equity.

The Vision

Ensure that women, especially those from underrepresented communities, can fully participate in and benefit from the economy.

Objectives

- Scale Economic Empowerment efforts through collaboration with business partners and agencies.
- Strengthen workforce readiness and access for newcomers, international professionals (Global Talents), and women in transition.
- Advocate for inclusive policies and practices that dismantle systemic barriers to women’s economic participation.
- Expand mentorship access for women in business, entrepreneurship, and the workplace.

2025 Impact

- 79 mentors activated across business, workforce, and community sectors
- 44 program sessions and activities advancing entrepreneurship, financial capability, and career navigation
- 8 Advocacy and awareness programs elevating systems change and economic inclusion



Expected Outcomes

- 50% increase in women entrepreneurs accessing mentoring and capital support.
- 100+ small businesses annually benefit from collaboration and networking opportunities.
- Measurable growth in women’s household income and financial stability across targeted neighborhoods.

Strategic Priorities #3: Strengthen Women of Toledo Partnerships Through Collaboration.

The Vision

Build a connected ecosystem of allies, institutions, and partners united in advancing equity.

Objectives

- Expand the Circle of Supporters and grow corporate, foundation, and individual giving.
- Deepen collaborations with educational institutions, local government, and global partners.
- Leverage Signature Forums—International Women’s Day, Women’s Equality Day, and HeForShe—to broaden community engagement.
- Develop a Partnership Innovation Lab to co-create solutions addressing emerging challenges
- (Anchor organization for the Northwest Ohio Business Mentoring Program).

2025 Impact

- 3 citywide initiatives led and managed by 18 women leaders and HeForShe volunteers
- Expanded cross-sector partnerships strengthening alignment and reducing duplication
- Increased visibility and engagement through signature convenings and collaborative action

Expected Outcomes

- \$500,000 in annual philanthropic and partnership support secured by 2030.
- Partnerships expanded to 75+ institutions, businesses, and civic organizations.
- Increased collective impact through cross-sector initiatives advancing equity at systemic levels.

By focusing on youth development, economic equity, and collaboration, Women of Toledo is scaling its impact from a local hub into a regional force for inclusion and empowerment. These strategic priorities renew our commitment, guide our investments, and shape the next chapter of our work.

Logic Model & Theory of Change

Theory of Change

If women, youth, and families particularly those with limited access to opportunity are provided



with structured education, mentorship, and practical supports, and if those services are delivered through a responsive, data-driven framework that adapts to participant needs, then participants will increase their skills, confidence, economic participation, and decision-making capacity. Over time, these individual gains translate into improved quality of life, stronger workforce and entrepreneurial outcomes, and more engaged, resilient communities.

Women of Toledo's model assumes that long-term economic and social progress is achieved when individuals are supported not only through programs, but through sustained relationships, accountability, and access to networks that reinforce learning and opportunity.

Logic Model

Inputs

- Experienced staff, facilitators, and program coordinators
- Volunteer mentors and subject-matter experts
- Community, employer, and institutional partners
- Curriculum, training tools, and technical assistance resources
- Intake, assessment, and data-tracking systems
- Physical and virtual program spaces
- Public, philanthropic, and private funding

Activities

- Participant intake and baseline assessments
- Pre- and post-program surveys and goal setting
- Education and skill-building workshops
- Mentorship and peer-learning sessions
- Workforce readiness, entrepreneurship, and leadership training
- General and technical assistance sessions
- Resource referrals and connection-building
- Ongoing evaluation and program refinement

Outputs (Process Measures)

- Number of participants enrolled and served
- Number of program sessions delivered
- Number of assessments completed
- Number of mentorship matches and interactions
- Number of trainings, workshops, or assistance sessions provided
- Participant engagement and completion rates
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Short-Term Outcomes

- Increased knowledge and skills related to employment, leadership, and financial stability
- Clearer personal and professional goals
- Increased confidence and readiness to pursue opportunities
- Improved access to information, resources, and networks



Intermediate Outcomes

- Job placement, career advancement, or improved employability
- Increased income, revenue generation, or financial stability
- Strengthened professional and peer networks
- Improved ability to navigate workplace, economic, and community systems
- Greater use of referrals and support services

Long-Term Impact

- Improved quality of life for participants and their families
- Increased economic participation and stability
- Stronger workforce and entrepreneurial pipelines
- Greater civic awareness and community engagement
- More resilient local communities supported by informed, capable leaders

Key Assumptions

- Access to education and mentorship increases economic readiness
- Sustained relationships amplify program effectiveness
- Data-informed programming improves outcomes over time
- Participants are experts in their own goals when given proper support

External Factors

- Local and regional economic conditions
- Workforce demand and employer engagement
- Policy and funding environment
- Family and caregiving responsibilities
- Access to transportation, childcare, and technology

Evaluation & Measurement Alignment

Level	Measurement Focus	Tools
Process	Participation, engagement, service delivery	Intake forms, attendance logs, session tracking
Outcomes	Skills gained, income changes, job or business outcomes	Pre/post surveys, follow-ups, milestone reviews
Impact	Quality of life, economic stability, civic participation	Longitudinal surveys, participant self-reporting

Sustainability and Partnerships

The primary funding source for the organizational general operating support to cover expenses is funded by Tides Foundation totaling \$35,000.00 annually. Our Economic Development and Mentorship are made possible through the City of Toledo CDBG, Toledo LISC and KeyBank Foundation totaling \$100,000. The City of Toledo Parks and Youth Services, and Youth Programming grants supported our Youth Initiative for the school year program and summer camp



totaling \$44,000.00. In 2025, we successfully raised \$280,000 in grants and corporate foundation efforts.

We recognize the fact that most philanthropic gifts are made by individuals. In 2017, we introduced our Circle of Supporters program as part of our organization's expansion and development. The Circle of Supporters consists of a Circle of Community Partners (local businesses and corporate giving) and a Circle of Friends (individuals) that support through monetary giving or in-kind support. We successfully raised an average of \$70,000 on an annual basis through our Circle of Supporters.

Another revenue source for the organization will be earned-income activities: revenue-generating programs from attendees' fees for services rendered through our power-hour program or forum which generates an average of \$25,000 annually. In summary, through our Circle of Supporters and Fundraising efforts, our annual goal is to raise an additional \$150,000 in funds.

Leadership Involvement

The organization has a well-developed organizational structure with a dedicated Governing Body of the Board of Directors and Chairpersons, and a small staff team known as a Task Force to run daily operations. The organization leverages its limited resources to deliver exceptional programs and services by using an engaged and empowered volunteer pool of area professional women and leaders in the community.

We also maintain an Advisory Member position for the [Welcome Toledo-Lucas County](#) (Welcome TLC), an initiative that works to build a more welcoming and inclusive community for immigrants and people of diverse cultures that supports a vibrant civic, economic, and social fabric for all. Welcome TLC is a collaboration of community partners housed in the Toledo Lucas County Public Library in partnership with the Board of Lucas County Commissioners and the City of Toledo, Human Relations Commission. Through collective efforts between the Welcome TLC team and city-county local government, the City of Toledo and Lucas County received the certification as Welcoming City and County by Welcoming America, which is the first in the nation.

Our Executive Director also serves as a Mayoral-appointed Commissioner Member of the City of Toledo, Human Relations Commission. Other involvement included joining the University of Toledo [ADVANCE Catalyst team](#) as an External Evaluator, a grant project funded by the [National Science Foundation](#) (NSF), Division of Equity for Excellence in STEM. The University of Toledo will undertake an institutional self-assessment to identify potential organizational inequities (unjust or unfair) policies and practices that result in differential professional outcomes for some STEM faculty. The ADVANCE Catalyst project will result in a five-year STEM faculty equity plan tailored to the University of Toledo context and institutional data that will guide institutional actions to address any issues identified during the grant. This project aligns with the organization's objective of tackling issues critical to women's economic



advancement and interrupting various biases in the workplace and community in the STEM field.

Our leadership is also an active member of the Toledo Rotary, maintains membership to various locals of the Chamber of Commerce, the National Exchange Club, and engages in multiple Board positions with other nonprofit organizations. We also maintained program partnerships with the American Association of University Women, the University of Toledo Center of International Studies & Programs, the Eberly Center for Women, the Toledo Public Library, the Toledo Museum of Arts, the Imagination Station, Harbor Behavioral Youth Enhancement Services, the Achieve Career Preparatory Academy, the City of Toledo and many more. Such partnerships and collaborations help WOT's goal and mission to reach more people than before.

Outcomes

With over 427,000 women and girls in Northwest Ohio, providing critical support while advocating for a better quality of life, economic success, and mentorship is more important than ever.

The organization was founded in 2013, and when we first opened our doors in 2015, we started with a simple yet bold vision: to create a place where women and youth could learn, thrive, and lead. We did not begin with vast resources. We began with heart. We began with community. And year after year, that shared belief has carried us forward. Since inception, our programs have welcomed and served **25,344 people** across our city, region, and international partnerships. This number represents far more than attendance; it represents stories, breakthroughs, and lives changed.

We served over **2,500 youth** who discovered their potential through workforce labs, financial literacy simulations, hands-on **STEAM** and trades projects, tutoring, and career pathway exploration. Many came to us searching for direction. They left with new skills, new confidence, and a sense that their future was possible.

We supported more than **10,000 women through entrepreneurship programs, economic empowerment workshops, mentoring circles, and leadership coaching**. These women built businesses, pursued promotions, uncovered new opportunities, and learned to take up space in rooms not designed for them.

We guided more than **4,500 leaders** through vision planning sessions, professional coaching, circles of accountability, and moments of deep self-discovery. They learned to lead not just with strength, but with clarity, empathy, and purpose.

We engaged **3,000 community members** in healing and advocacy conversation spaces where people came together to bridge differences, build understanding, and practice emotional intelligence in a world that desperately needs it.

And through our global partnerships, we have welcomed international fellows, collaborated with



women entrepreneurs from around the world, and positioned **Toledo as a hub for cross-cultural learning, innovation, and economic diplomacy.**

Moving Forward

What has defined this past decade is not growth alone, but the humanity at the center of every interaction.

It is reflected in the mother who shared, *“For the first time, I feel seen.”*

In the young woman who built her first chair and quietly said, *“I didn’t know I could do this.”*

In the small business owner who secured her first client because someone believed in her potential.

In the father who attended a HeForShe forum and reflected, *“I understand my daughter better now.”*

And in the global fellow who left Toledo saying, *“Your community feels like home.”*

These moments represent ten years of showing up, ten years of redefining what empowerment looks like through lived experience, trust, and shared responsibility.

As Women of Toledo moves toward 2026, we do so with renewed focus and clear priorities:

- Scaling **Girls Hub** and **LeadHerWay** to build a sustainable pipeline of confident, skilled young women prepared to contribute to Toledo’s future workforce and civic life.
- Expanding **buildHERstudio**, where creativity and entrepreneurship intersect, and young women learn to design, build, and bring ideas to market.
- Strengthening mentorship, civic engagement, and community-driven initiatives that support economic mobility and long-term, generational progress.

At Women of Toledo, we believe that investing in women’s economic participation and leadership is one of the most effective ways to strengthen families, stabilize communities, and grow resilient local economies. Our work focuses on expanding access to education, mentorship, and networks that help women and youth move from potential to opportunity closing gaps that exist in both resources and relationships across the workplace and marketplace.

From the beginning, our organization has been guided by a simple truth: meaningful progress requires addressing both the personal challenges individuals face and the systems that shape opportunity. As we witness the momentum of this work today, continued partnership is more important than ever. Your support helps sustain a roadmap for progress, one that amplifies women’s voices across generations and ensures that opportunity is not limited by circumstance, but strengthened through community.

Together, we move forward committed, connected, and ready to build what comes next.