



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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ABSTRACT

When the story of Toledo is told, it's always a tale of diversity. Industrialization made employment here easy to find, and thousands who came to America from around the world traveled to Toledo to work at our breweries and glass, furniture, and wheel manufacturers. In understanding how its diversity of residents has indelibly shaped Toledo throughout its past, we can gain a profound appreciation of how newcomers continue to breathe new life into the city, revitalizing it with their energy, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit. By continuing to celebrate diversity, we not only honor our heritage but also pave the way for a bright and dynamic future.

Established in 2014, Inclusive for Women Inc., Women of Toledo is a 501c3 nonprofit organization serving the Greater Toledo community. We advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion with a focus on women's economic empowerment. Our leadership is composed of very diverse women committed to bringing women together to learn from and about one another.

Our mission is to educate, engage, and empower. We offer programs and services that help tackle issues critical to women's economic advancement and help women interrupt various biases in the marketplace, workplace, family, and community through the gift of education and empowerment.

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

Author: **Nina Corder**

Managing Director

Email: nina@womenoftoledo.org

Phone: 419.377.5457



Inclusive for Women Inc. dba [Women of Toledo](#) (EIN 47-303 5322) is a 501c3 non-profit organization, serving the Greater Toledo community. Our mission is to educate, engage, and empower our community through our programs and services that teach women and girls to lean in with the organization, connect with other women, and build new skills and resources while creating a mentorship and peer networking circle to share ideas, offer support, or seek advice. We believe in providing a space for women and girls to tackle issues critical to women's economic advancement and learn ways to interrupt various biases in the workplace, marketplace, community, and family. Since its inception, Women of Toledo has provided education, engagement, and empowerment in our community with a 100% diversity-driven, positive impact on the quality of life, transformational economic change, and social progress of our community.

At Women of Toledo (WOT), we believe that investing in minority and women's economic empowerment can help eradicate extreme poverty, build vibrant economies, and unlock human potential on a transformational scale. Despite progress, wide gaps in minority economic development services remain, and factoring lack of access to opportunities for people of color, immigrants, refugees, and global newcomers is more prevalent in our society. We aim to support these efforts while continuing to advocate for equity and inclusion in all areas of the marketplace and workplace in our ecosystem.

In 2018, we launched the [HeForShe](#) campaign, a United Nations Women's solidarity movement for gender equality in the Toledo region. HeforShe program invites men and boys to build on the work of the women's movement as equal partners, crafting and implementing a shared vision of gender equality that will benefit all of humanity. Men play a critical role in supporting and enabling women's economic empowerment. HeForShe engages men to examine how their own personal and professional lives can better recognize, reduce, and redistribute care and responsibilities between the market and the state, between the household and the workplace, and between women and men. Therefore, our program and services are not limited only to serving women, but we also engage minority BIPOC (*black, indigenous, people of color*) men through our HeForShe outreach and program efforts.

With strength in community organizing by its leadership, today the organization effectively offers meaningful, women-focused educational programs, advocacy forums, intergenerational leadership development, dialogue, and direct general or technical assistance services, as well as mentoring and peer-networking services that are proven to have a high impact in positive social progress.

The organization's work is centered on the following cause and objectives:

- **Global Impact:** To collaborate with area women's and youth organizations to build a strong society of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.
- **Advocacy:** To provide a platform where women and youth can find their voices, and choices and share their stories.



- **Positive Living:** To facilitate intergenerational leadership development for women and girls.
- **Education:** To provide programs, activities, and services that advance social opportunities for learning, promote literacy, and advance conflict resolution.
- **Empowerment:** To mentor women and youth in need of personal and professional development.
- **Economic Sustainability:** To develop a connecting HUB for women's focus groups and organizations.

History

The first WOT diversity strategy initiatives began in March 2013, when a group of eighteen diverse women with active roles as community leaders in Greater Toledo met for a research dissertation focus group discussion surrounding diversity in networking organizations. The objective of this initiative was to build a connecting hub for a diverse group of women. The approach is to NOT preclude multicultural women or women of color from their involvement in Toledo's existing networking or organizations, but instead to enhance their experiences by providing an opportunity to participate in networking events, community service projects, educational programs, and leadership initiatives that would be tailored to their professional and personal aspirations. This objective seeks to fulfill WOT's goals by creating new ways for people, especially women, from different cultures to identify common goals and work towards co-existing constructively. This brings together people and groups with highly varied backgrounds in terms of socio-economic levels, race, culture, education, demographics, age, and profession while examining commonalities among passions and interests. In addition, they serve to learn from each other's strengths based on attitudes, skills, knowledge, coping strategies, support, and power.

A finding from the focus group is that most existing networking groups do not exclude multicultural women, and women of color or avoid diversity within their members. However, women often choose to participate in a group because of cultural, racial, and other similarities to coexist. Another study shows that women with diverse backgrounds have issues adapting to existing groups because of the organizational culture that already exists within their members (Klein, 2008). The culture and energy that evolved from the original focus group were something the researcher never experienced before. You discover that many of the stories shared, life lessons, and experiences should not be ignored, and the exploration should continue. The group evolved and stretched from its capacity as a focus group and turned into an educational forum of success stories. Ordinary and extraordinary stories were told, unpacking the reality of being a woman, a wife, a mother, a sister, a leader, an artist, and other barriers or biases, we women encounter every day in our lives within this community, and globally.

Hence, a new organization with a new culture to promote diversity among its members is not only needed but necessary. From this point forward, WOT is dedicated to creating programs specifically designed to be inclusive, diverse, and inviting to everyone. We seek to provide a forum--the connecting hub--in which individuals and groups can become more effective in their



own right and by building upon the strengths of others. When a woman shares her story, we all learn to respectfully listen, learn to relearn, and suddenly, become aware. Organically, mentorship grew as we offered and sought advice from one another. We educate, engage, and empower one another.

Our program and services are **open to all** to participate with a focus on serving the low moderate-income (LMI) individuals and families, that are identified as intersectional, and BIPOC and also working to provide a welcoming 'brave space' for non-binary and gender-expansive youth ages 12-24. We define BIPOC as people of color, we include Black/African American, African, Indigenous, Latinx, multi-racial, Asian, Asian American, Caribbean, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, North African, and Arab girls and their communities.

In 2014, we established our diversity and equity statement stating that all our programs and services are non-discrimination and inclusive that ensuring do not discriminate based on race, ethnicity, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, or disability.

Overall Programs & Services

The organization's initiatives fall into three distinct categories: **Economic Empowerment and Workforce Diversity, Mentorship, and Advocacy**. Each category is spearheaded by a chairperson alongside the standing committee, facilitators, and task force team. Programs are required to utilize the 3E organizational model: Educating, Engaging, and Empowering. The model ensures that every program sponsored by the organization will incorporate activities to educate participants, advance in social learning, engage them in a life improvement activity, and empower them to act within their circles of influence.

Economic Empowerment and Workforce Diversity focuses on the economic development, advancement, and empowerment of women and young women through entrepreneurship, job creation, workforce, networking opportunities, and collaboration with other organizations to promote inclusive economic growth. The vision of this initiative is to provide support and resources for Toledo-area minorities, especially BIPOC women to succeed in entrepreneurship, small businesses, and leadership. Programs and services under this effort include Business Development Opportunities (BDO), Roundtables and Circle groups, leadership, and workplace development.

Two additional initiatives (dba) under this initiative are:

- [HerHub's](#) mission is to connect women, resources, and organizations through an online HUB that will expand HER potential. We believe HerHub can provide visibility, which is one of the most powerful tools for educating and empowering the community and business owners about all the amazing options that exist in Greater Toledo.
- The [Northwest Ohio Women's Business Council](#) (WBC) is dedicated to recognizing a diverse group of female entrepreneurs whose women-owned businesses have achieved success and contribute to the economic well-being of our community. We celebrate their accomplishments and support them by telling their encouraging stories.



Advocacy Initiative provides educational forums and awareness opportunities while sharing resources and material on structural/systemic racism, economic injustice, and gender inequality. We established a special Responsive Advocacy Committee to help lead, support, and assist in educating, engaging, and empowering our female community (and HeForShe) pertaining to our current political, economic, and social issues. Activities and services under this effort include signature educational forums such as International Women's Day, Women's Equality Day, HeForShe, #HerStory campaigns, connecting circle, and Heritage Month celebrations.

Mentorship programs help establish a connection between Mentors and Mentees to fully capitalize on the opportunity to connect, communicate, and collaborate with more women and leaders in our community. This program encourages women and youth to embrace change, improve performance, raise awareness, and assist in personal and professional development. We also offer the Discovery Speed Mentoring and [Northwest Ohio Business Mentoring](#) program under this initiative.

- **Youth Initiative** - Our [Young Women](#) circle initiative offers an opportunity for intersectional and young women ages 12 to 26 to share, discuss, and debate constructively to help build empowerment. Through our youth efforts, we have created spaces where intersectional and marginalized young women can interact while supported by our mentor's circle and women leaders in the community. Our Youth program and services include a monthly circle, Human Rights Education, Girls Hub, and BIG IDEA forum.

Metrics and Assessments

For evaluation, all our program sessions and services will include multilayer survey-type questionnaires that can be moderated during intake or pre-session which is designed to capture expectations and goals before the session and post-session assessments whether those expectations and goals were met after intervention.

Program descriptions or information will be generated during intake and interaction with our program participants. **Process metrics** can be collected during intake but also can be generated during the discovery session or the general/technical assistance to identify the next milestone, or training to fill any gaps or improve our participant's skill set. **Outcomes metrics** will be generated as a result of the program being delivered. These outcome metrics will include referrals or sharing resources, jobs created, or connections, revenue or income accumulated, quality of training, program deliverables, and any performance relative to achieving the key performance measure.

Finally, the **impact metrics** to measure our work beyond the program. Our impact measurement also evaluates self-awareness and advocacy by understanding if our participants successfully develop a greater sensitivity to the challenges and opportunities to be responsible citizens in the community and increase their awareness of how to become dynamic, global, and diverse. Also, we measure economic empowerment by asking did our participants improved their quality of life and capacity to bring about economic change for



themselves, by overcoming poverty, discrimination, and exploitation. The program framework helps our participants reflect on their role as individuals in creating an innovation community where they work, live, and raise families toward positive goals.

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 SBA Community Navigator through Toledo LISC Small Business Network Builder totaling \$100,000 from December 2021 to December 2023. The City of Toledo Parks and Youth Services, Youth Programming grants supported our Youth Initiative for the school year program and summer camp totaling \$44,000.00. We also received a total grant of \$37,500 as a local champion for the Toledo market offering the Verizon Small Business Digital Ready program. In 2023, we successfully raised \$287,000 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 \$35,000 on an annual basis through our Circle of Supporters.

In addition, our HerHub program has a social enterprise model with annual support and renewal subscriptions for sustainability and income streams. Currently, as of December 2023, we maintain 197 local women-owned businesses and leaders as directory contributors with a total of \$23,900 in revenue to the organization. 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 Managing Director also serves as a Commissioner Member of the [CEDAW Gender Equity Commission](#) under the new Diversity and Inclusion division for the City of Toledo. As a Cities for CEDAW, it will support our effort to encourage local governments to become more gender equitable. 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 and Rotaract Club, maintains membership to various local of the Chamber of Commerce, the National Exchange Club, the Business Networking International (BNI), 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. Since our inception, we have organized over **407 program activities and sessions** which include Educational Initiatives Forums and Dialogues, Advocacy Campaign programs, Coaching and Mentoring sessions, and Youth initiatives. We served **9,443 participants** with more than **83%** of our participants having access to our programs and services for FREE.

Every year, we successfully impacted **an average of 120 women** in transition by increasing their access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, skills development, and connection with our peer-network support group. And, empowered **an average of 65 young women** how to build and lead their seats at any table unapologetically.