



BuildHERstudio: From Creativity to Commerce

Youth Entrepreneurship & Workforce Development Initiative
Women of Toledo | Empowered by Girls Hub Builders

Executive Summary

Women of Toledo is launching buildHERstudio, a hands-on youth entrepreneurship initiative designed to cultivate leadership, economic agency, and workforce readiness among young women ages 14–17. Building on a successful pilot led by the Young Women of Toledo Advisory Group, the program moves participants from ideation to product creation to real-world marketplace engagement equipping them with practical business skills while strengthening Toledo’s pipeline of emerging female innovators.

Through a structured cycle of collaborative learning, studio production, and community-based sales experiences, participants develop competencies in financial literacy, branding, manufacturing, customer engagement, and profit analysis. At its core, buildHERstudio reflects Women of Toledo’s commitment to advancing economic equity and expanding access to real-world career pathways for young women across the region.

Organizational Context

Women of Toledo is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating spaces where women and girls gain skills, expand education, and access resources necessary for economic advancement while addressing systemic barriers in the workplace, marketplace, and community. The buildHERstudio initiative represents a strategic extension of this mission at shifting youth programming beyond enrichment toward early-stage enterprise development.

Vision

To cultivate a generation of young women who are empowered, innovative, and economically self-reliant through experiential learning that nurtures entrepreneurial mindsets, leadership capacity, and long-term mobility.

Program Overview

The Youth Entrepreneurship Track is a selective, hands-on initiative designed to spark innovation, build enterprise skills, and foster confidence among Girls Hub alumni exploring pathways into entrepreneurship. Participants engage in a monthly cycle of ideation, creation, and commercialization developing competencies in creativity, production, and financial literacy while participating in a continuous learning loop.

This experience empowers young women to transform their creativity into a real-world enterprise while practicing negotiation, leadership, and venture management skills.



Target Population

The program is open exclusively to Girls Hub alumni who have completed at least two woodworking projects and demonstrated readiness for entrepreneurial engagement and market-based learning.

Participants typically:

- Are ages 14–17
- Have prior technical studio experience
- Are prepared for advanced leadership development
- Seek exposure to workforce and business pathways

This intentional eligibility model ensures the program serves youth positioned to immediately benefit from enterprise-based learning.

Program Structure

buildHERstudio operates through a three-part experiential framework:

1. **Think It Up: Ideation Lab**
Participants brainstorm product ideas aligned with their passions and community needs while learning business model fundamentals, brand storytelling, and goal setting.
2. **BuildHer Studio Experience: Production**
Builders design and produce tangible goods in a supervised studio environment, focusing on prototyping, safe tool usage, packaging, pricing, and collaborative teamwork. Participants are expected to produce at least 10 items per month for marketplace sale.
3. **Sell It Forward: Marketplace**
Youth gain real-world sales experience through pop-up markets and community events, practicing customer service, marketing, and financial tracking.

Revenue & Financial Literacy Model

Following each marketplace experience, participants:

- Calculate revenue
- Deduct program expenses
- Receive a profit share based on participation
- Reflect on performance to improve future cycles

This structure introduces foundational concepts such as budgeting, cost analysis, and return on investment — positioning entrepreneurship as both a creative and economic journey. Notably, the pilot carries no enrollment fee, reinforcing equitable access; however, families are responsible for transportation.



Outcomes & Community Impact

The program is designed to:

- Empower at least 15 young women annually with hands-on business experience
- Foster leadership, confidence, and self-efficacy
- Develop transferable skills including teamwork, communication, marketing, and financial management
- Strengthen Toledo's ecosystem of young female creators and innovators
- Establish a scalable model for broader Girls Hub and HerHub initiatives

Beyond individual outcomes, buildHERstudio contributes to regional workforce development by introducing entrepreneurship as a viable early career pathway.

Long-Term Strategic Vision

This pilot will serve as the foundation for a Youth Entrepreneur Network (YEN) — connecting participants with mentors, micro-funding opportunities, and access to a digital marketplace.

The long-term objective is clear: create a sustainable pipeline from creativity to commerce so every young woman has the tools, networks, and confidence to launch ventures or contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Program Launch

Women of Toledo will host a public kickoff event to introduce the Winter/Spring cohort and invite community stakeholders to witness the next generation of entrepreneurs in action.

Risk Management & Participant Safety

The program incorporates structured safeguards, including:

- Required safety guidelines for tool usage
- Professional conduct expectations
- Dress code aligned with workshop safety
- Liability waivers and emergency authorization
- Health disclosures to support participant needs

These measures reflect operational maturity and readiness for scale.

Strategic Positioning

buildHERstudio is more than a youth program — it is early economic infrastructure.

It sits at the intersection of:

- Workforce readiness
- Entrepreneurship education
- Financial literacy
- Gender equity



- Community economic development

For funders, this initiative represents a high-leverage investment with both immediate and longitudinal return.

Partnership Opportunity

Women of Toledo invites corporate, philanthropic, and civic partners to help expand access to entrepreneurial pathways for young women.

Investment supports:

- Studio materials and equipment
- Instructor and mentor capacity
- Marketplace activation
- Youth stipends / micro-seed capital
- Program evaluation
- Scalable replication

Partners gain visibility while contributing directly to the region's future talent pipeline.

Closing Position

buildHERstudio demonstrates what becomes possible when creativity is paired with structure and when potential is met with opportunity.

By investing in young women at this formative stage, the community is not simply funding a program it is underwriting future founders, innovators, and economic contributors.

*** Currently looking for Funder, Grantors, Partners Collaborators & Supporters for our Youth efforts. Please contact Nina Corder, Executive Director at nina@womenoftoledo.org,*