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Recent Research Underscores How Residential Construction Industry Leaders Can Reduce the Talent Shortage Through Gender Inclusivity

Building Talent Foundation's Recent Study, *Women Breaking Barriers*, Provides Best Practices for Recruiting, Training, and Retaining Women in the Building Trades

(Washington, DC) January 20, 2022 — The residential construction industry is battling a severe talent shortage. To help the industry win this battle, [Building Talent Foundation](#) (BTF) partnered with two Research Fellows to study the barriers women face when pursuing skilled trades careers. The resulting research paper, [Women Breaking Barriers: A Guide to Recruiting, Training and Retaining Women in the Residential Construction Trades](#), explores how the industry can strengthen the workforce by tapping into an underused source of skill and expertise — women.

The report reveals the construction sector is dominated by males, with women making up just 10.9 percent of its workers,^[1] and representing only 3.4 percent of skilled tradespeople in the industry.^[2] To reduce the talent shortage within the industry, employers need to recruit more women.

Based on insights discovered through the study, BTF has released [The Small Contractor Quick Start Guide to New Talent](#), a set of step-by-step guidelines to help construction employers create welcoming workplaces that are inclusive to women.

In nontraditional occupations such as construction, tradeswomen face several barriers, including gender inequality, wage gaps, occupational segregation, harmful biases, discrimination, sexual harassment, and assault. Through their research, authors [Misty Farrell](#), Director, Business Development, Engineering and Physical Sciences at Boston University's Office of Technology Development, and [Teilachanell Angel](#), MBA, Social Impact Boston University Questrom School of Business, collaborated with BTF to understand the barriers preventing more women from entering construction careers.



Farrell and Angel identified four implementation strategies to tear down these barriers and draw women to the industry:

- developing cross-sectoral partnerships,
- implementing targeted recruiting,
- providing wraparound supports, and
- creating an inclusive organizational culture.

Cross-sectoral Partnerships

The task of recruiting, training, and retaining women into skilled trade careers will take the entire industry to create sustainable change. By working together, cross-sector industry leaders and stakeholders can maximize their efforts to recruit women into the workforce. To fill the gaps within the industry and grow the workforce, backbone organizations such as BTF can unite groups across the public and private sector to align policies, practices, and resources to attract this untapped talent pool.

Targeted Recruiting

Finding skilled female recruits is difficult because most women don't picture themselves in this field. To attract more women to the skilled trades, organizations need to use more inclusive language and images in their recruiting campaigns. To build this workforce segment, industry leaders must be proactive and intentional in finding prospective female recruits and paint a picture that shows how they fit into this field.

Wraparound Supports

In order to sustain women as they grow their skilled trades careers, it's essential to provide wraparound supports such as low-cost childcare, reliable transportation, flexible scheduling, training, and mentoring. Wraparound services keep skilled trade workers healthy, supported, and growing in their careers, which can help employers retain valued workers.

Inclusive Organization Culture

People want workplaces where they feel valued and belong. Creating a holistic safety culture prioritizes physical and psychological protection and offers freedom from harassment, intimidation, gender, racial, and other identity-based harm. A respectful, dignified, and inclusive organizational culture makes workers feel welcomed and appreciated.



The report brings forward best practices grounded in the experiences of organizations and women-leaders and role models that have successfully attracted, hired, and retained women in construction careers. Based on the best practices, *The Small Contractor Quick Start Guide to New Talent* provides a formula that employers can leverage to increase the participation of women in construction.

To read more about the barriers women face when pursuing construction industry careers and the solutions presented in this study, download [Women Breaking Barriers](#). To learn how to create a more gender-inclusive workplace, download [The Small Contractor Quick Start Guide to New Talent](#).

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

[Misty Farrell](#) is a 2021 Social Impact MBA candidate from Boston University with more than 15 years of professional experience in technology innovation, entrepreneurship, and commercialization. Her mission is to help women and underrepresented minorities (URM) create pathways to socioeconomic success through mentoring, coaching, training, and entrepreneurship for marginalized individuals. She seeks to mitigate the effects of the racial wealth and skills gaps that appear throughout the labor economy and manifest as inequities in job placement in the Future of Work through deployment of collaborative educational programs.

[Teilachanell Angel](#) is a 2021 Social Impact MBA graduate from Boston University with a personal mission to advance equity through economic mobility. She is a systems thinker with an affinity for complex problems and a natural enthusiasm for learning, synthesizing trends, and elucidating insights to drive strategic and operational decisions. Teilachanell is refocusing +10 years of progressive business experience towards reducing labor market inequality and building an equitable Future of Work.

ABOUT BUILDING TALENT FOUNDATION

[Building Talent Foundation](#) (BTF) is a non-profit organization founded by the Leading Builders of America, 20 of the largest residential construction companies in the United States. BTF's mission is to advance the education, training, and career progression of young people and people from underrepresented groups, helping them develop into skilled technical workers and business owners in residential construction.

^[1] U.S. Census Bureau; Current Population Survey, Series ID LNS12037918, Sept. 2021, generated by Teilachanell Angel using DataFinder;



^[2] "2020 Annual Averages - Employed Persons by Industry, Sex, Race, and Occupation." U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 22, 2021. *Note metric used is construction and extraction <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat17.htm>.