



WAKE Invests in
WOMEN

Strategic Action

FRAMEWORK

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INTRODUCTION

The mission of Wake Invests in Women (WIIW) is to close the gender wage gap for women in Wake County. WIIW aims to use research-based strategies that have the greatest potential for increasing the representation of women and reaching pay parity with men in high-demand, high-growth, and high-wage STEM fields – and for improving women’s career advancement through the management pipeline in Wake County. (Research is detailed in the WIIW Technical Report, Ashton et.al, 2020.) WIIW is currently focused on the widest gaps in Wake County, which are among Black or African American and Hispanic or Latina women. Lessons learned will be applied to all women and to all occupations with wage or representation gaps over time.

BACKGROUND

In a 2017 report to the Wake County Board of Commissioners, the Wake County Task Force on Women’s Wages demonstrated a clear and persistent gender wage gap in Wake County – a gap greater than similar counties in the nation, and one that could not be explained by education differences. The Task Force recommended the creation of a collective impact initiative to enlist community partners in closing that gap, and Wake Invests in Women was launched. With Wake Technical Community College as its backbone organization, Wake Invests in Women became an official initiative of the Wake County Board of Commissioners in 2018.

VISION

WIIW acts as a focal point for innovation by creating an extensive, collaborative network of organizations (private, public, government, and non-profit) working together to close gender wage and representation gaps in Wake County. The initiative supports innovation by researching and sharing best practices with participants, and by highlighting participants’ successes in closing identified gaps.

Priorities and Guiding Principles

PRIORITIES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

At its core, Wake Invests in Women is a workforce development initiative with an equity lens; it therefore prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion for women. Its first priorities are 1) representation gaps within occupations where labor demand is greater than supply – occupations found largely among science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), STEM-related, and skilled technical fields; and 2) representation and wage gaps among the workforce population, which are widest among Black/African American women and Hispanic/Latina women as compared to white men.

With those priorities in mind, Wake Invests in Women structures its work around six guiding principles:

- **Passion:** WIIW is passionate about empowering women to advance in their careers and achieve greater representation and pay equity.
- **Research-Driven:** Decisions are informed by qualitative/quantitative research and data, as well as by practices that have been successful in addressing the gender wage gap.
- **System-Focused:** WIIW will seek out systemic solutions to address gender inequities.
- **Collaborative:** WIIW is committed to working with strategic partners to identify lasting solutions.
- **Equity Lens:** WIIW is committed focusing on equity by disaggregating data by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status to understand needs and targeted solutions.
- **Application and Replication:** WIIW is focused initially on the gender gap in STEM-related fields, with a commitment to the application and replication of lessons for other occupational groups.

Organization

The initiative is grounded by Wake Tech, which serves as an anchor institution for community engagement in Wake County and provides infrastructure and management support for the many partners. Through a democratic organizational structure (Figure 1), Wake Tech has brought together cross-sector partners, including businesses, governments, and non-profits. These partners form a board and work groups to develop and deploy a common agenda, a common measurement system, and a strategic action framework of mutually-reinforcing activities.



WIIW Goals and Strategic Objectives

Research on the gender Wage Gap in Wake County and its underlying causes (Ashton, et.al, 2020) identified three goals or aims, as well as strategic objectives for closing the wage gap in Wake County:

GOAL: WAGE PARITY

Close the gap in occupational wages between males and females.

Strategic Objective: To close the pay gap between women and men in STEM occupations.

Focus Population: Close the gap between Black and Brown women's wages in STEM occupations.

GOAL: CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Increase the proportion of females moving through the management pipeline.

Strategic Objective: To increase the number and rate at which women move from entry level to upper-level positions.

Focus Population: Increase the number and rate at which Black and Brown women move from entry level to upper-level positions.

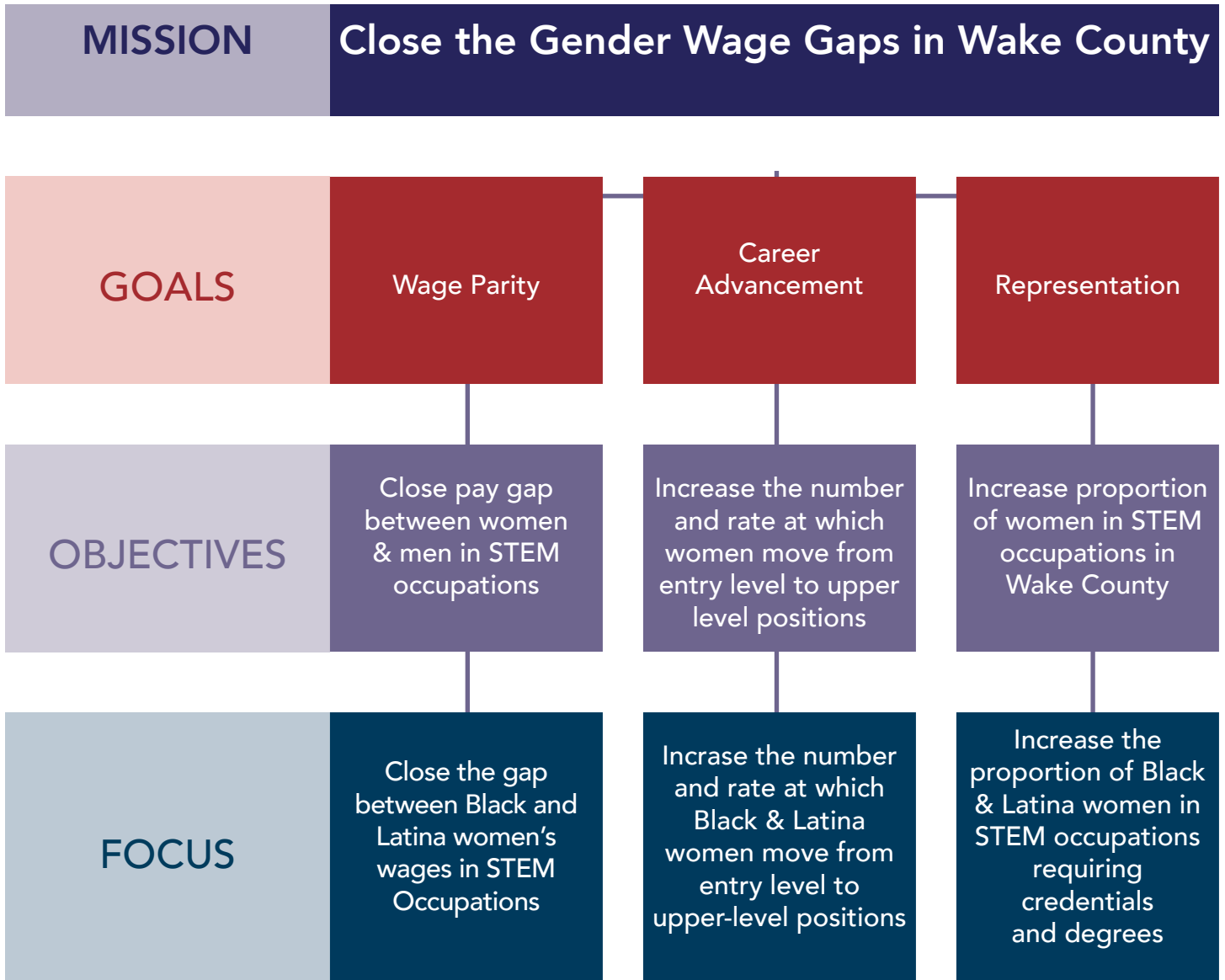
GOAL: REPRESENTATION

Increase the proportion of females in high-demand, high-wage fields in Wake County.

Strategic Objective: To increase the proportion of women in STEM occupations in Wake County.

Focus: Increase the proportion of Black and Brown Women in STEM occupations requiring post-secondary credentials and degrees.

Figure 2: Goals and Objectives, Wake Invests in Women



Strategic Issues and Levers of Change

In collaboration with the WIIW Board, strategic issues were identified around WIIW objectives to facilitate the development of a strategic action framework:

- How can WIIW facilitate an increase in female representation in higher-earning, higher-growth occupations?
- How can WIIW facilitate an increase in representation of women in educational majors and apprenticeships leading to higher-earning, higher-growth occupations?
- How can WIIW facilitate pay transparency, and therefore, parity, within occupations?
- How can WIIW facilitate female-male parity in vertical movement from entry-level to leadership positions throughout the career-advancement pipeline within organizations?
- How can WIIW advocate for work-, life-, and family-friendly policies to strengthen recruitment and retention of women?

In addition, three key levers of change were identified as necessary to address these issues, achieve a long-term, systemic end to the gender wage gap, and form the basis of the strategies developed for the initiative:

- Culture Change to norms and beliefs, whereby girls and women are valued and encouraged to pursue education and career opportunities in higher-wage occupations;
- Policies and Practices that ensure representation and retention in higher-wage occupations;
- Organizational Supports that work to advance women through the career pipeline in the same way as men.



Strategic Action Framework

Based on the strategic issues and levers of change, WIIW has developed strategies and actions focused on 1) increasing the number of Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women entering STEM and STEM-adjacent fields, 2) supporting those working in those fields who want to move into management, and 3) closing the wage disparities within those occupations (Representation, Career Advancement, Wage Parity). Partners in the WIIW work groups will oversee and implement these strategies and actions (see Figure 1).

Goal	Focused Objective	Strategies	Actions (Tactics)
Wage Parity – Close the gap in occupational wages between males & females	Close the gap in average annual wages between women and men, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women’s wages in STEM occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIIW Challenge: develop and launch a corporate challenge, adaptable to an organization’s unique needs, to address wage and representation gaps in STEM occupations in Wake County by a) tracking equity metrics and b) sharing progress on shared metrics anonymously. • Policy: Advocate for gender equity policies as related to wage parity at the state and local levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to organizations and community partners to communicate and educate regarding the WIIW Challenge • Provide organizations with Equity Scorecard <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Provide information as needed to track, analyze, and evaluate the extent to which women are represented in STEM fields, are advancing, and are receiving pay that is equal to men in the same occupation.
Career Advancement: Increase the movement of women from entry-level positions to upper-level careers	The proportion of women, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, who are being promoted at the same rate as men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WIIW Challenge: develop and launch a corporate challenge, adaptable to an organization’s unique needs, to address wage and representation gaps in STEM occupations in Wake County by a) tracking equity metrics and b) sharing progress on shared metrics anonymously. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide research-based, high-impact practices for organizations to consider implementing to work on identified gaps • Produce yearly report based on survey data provided anonymously by Challenge participants in aggregate on common measures all participants will be tracking on equity card • Policy: Develop and recommend policy that includes research-based practices such as removing wage history from job applications, adding salary range to job postings, and removing pay secrecy policies

Strategic Action Framework

Goal	Focused Objective	Strategies	Actions (Tactics)
<p>Representation: Increase the proportion of females in high-demand, high-wage fields in Wake County</p>	<p>Increase the proportion of women, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, in STEM occupations requiring post-secondary credentials and degrees</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career & Credential Pipeline: Partner with organizations to increase the number of women entering and earning credentials in STEM majors/programs among specific sectors including: WakeWorks® Propel/Apprenticeships, • Finish First NC, myFutureNC, NC Business Committee for Education, and other existing organizations to increase outreach to women, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, who have no or some credit without degrees/credentials and are not connected to STEM pipeline. • Policy: Advocate for gender equity policies as related to recruitment and retention at the state and local levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outreach to organizations and community partners to communicate and educate regarding the WIIW Challenge • Career Connections Pilot Proposal: Develop career coaching program to identify target populations and provide focused coaching <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partnership: FinishFirstNC, Career & Employment Resources – Intrusive coaching utilizing FinishFirstNC data analytics to identify Black/Latina female students for career coaching exploration or connection to employers based on educational timeline • Career Guides Network Pilot: Develop professional mentoring network program connecting students with professionals for support and career leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Partnership: WakeWorks® Propel and Apprenticeship, NC Business Committee for Education, Girl Scouts • Partner with state and local organizations to make recommendations on policy around paid parental leave, flexible work schedules, caregiver support

Outcomes and Metrics

Goal	Strategic Objective	Metric	Baseline Period	Baseline	Target
Wage Parity: Close the gap in occupational wages between males & females	Close the gap in average annual wages between women and men, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women's wages in STEM occupations	% that females make in computer/mathematical STEM occupations	2019 American Community Survey	75% (74.6%)	85% (5-year target) 100% (10-year target)
Career Advancement: Increase the movement of women from entry-level positions to upper-level careers	The proportion of women, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, who are being promoted at the same rate as men	% that women in management occupations increases	2019-2020 EMSI labor market data	40% (n=12725)	45% (5-year target) 50% (10-year target)
Representation: Increase the proportion of females in high-demand, high-wage fields in Wake County	Increase the proportion of women, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, in STEM occupations requiring post-secondary credentials and degrees	% that women in STEM and STEM-related occupations increases	2019-2020 EMSI labor market data	28%	33% (5-year target) 38% (10-year target)
	Increase the proportion of women, with a focus on Black/African American and Hispanic/Latina women, in STEM occupations requiring post-secondary credentials and degrees	Number of women enrolled/participating in STEM-related apprenticeships via WakeWorks	WakeWorks apprenticeships enrollment data	Current #	TBD

REFERENCES

Ashton, K., Bartek, C., Madsen R., Sumithran, S., DeSantis, A., Williamson, M., Arbeit, C., & Hintz, S. (2020). Wake Invests in Women Technical Report, Wake Technical Community College. Retrieved from <https://www.waketech.edu/about-wake-tech/administrative-offices/effectiveness-and-innovation/initiatives/wiiv>