



WAKE INVESTS IN WOMEN
ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY
FISCAL YEAR 2018

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BACKGROUND

In June 2017, the Wake County Task Force for Employment and Wage Issues for Women confirmed the following: 1) a wage gap exists between men and women in Wake County, 2) that gap is higher than peer counties studied across the nation, and 3) the wage gap is higher among women of color. With a rising percentage of families relying on female income, the wage gap directly impacts the health and economic stability of families as well as workforce development in Wake County. Therefore, the Task Force recognizing issues related to gender gaps are complex, recommended a collective impact approach to bring together county partners to develop and implement strategies to close the wage gap. Accordingly, in July 2018, the Wake County Commissioners allocated \$100,000 annually to Wake Technical Community College (WTCC) to fund the initiative. The following summarizes the research and activities completed during fiscal year 2018.

BUSINESS NEED

Significant Projected Employment and Wage Gaps in Wake County

One of Wake County's 2019 goals is to "create job opportunities for all, enhance our business-friendly environment to attract, retain, and support business development and diversify the economic base" (Wake County Board of Commissioners, February, 2019). However, there are significant gaps projected in the supply of workers needed to develop these businesses, especially in Wake County's high growth industries like Professional/Scientific and Technical Services and Healthcare, and Management which employ many workers in STEM-related occupations (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). For example, worker shortfalls in Computer Occupations are projected to hit about 38,000 in Wake County by 2029 (JobsEq, 2019). But, despite these current and projected employment shortfalls, only about 30% of current workers in computer and mathematical occupations are female. Further, when women are represented, they earn significantly less than men. For example, there are almost three times as many women in Health Diagnosing, Treating Practitioners and other Technical Occupations than men, but on average women in these fields earn approximately half the amount that men earn.

Solution: Wake Invests in Women, A Collective Impact Approach to Closing the Gap

These challenges also present Wake County with a tremendous opportunity to both fill the projected workforce shortfalls *and* the gap in women's and men's earnings through the Wake Invests in Women Initiative. Wake Invests in Women is a collective impact initiative that will focus on creating more job opportunities for women while also helping business and industry meet current and future labor market needs. With Wake Tech as the backbone, a Steering Committee will bring together public and private sector partners to sign-on and work together to implement change.

While the initiative will begin by focusing on closing gender representation and income gaps in STEM-related careers in Wake County, it is expected the lessons learned from this work will be applied to other occupations and fields outside of STEM where the participation and/or income gaps in the county are greatest. The work can also be shared with sister counties for state-wide impact.

2018-2019 ACTIVITIES

The first year of Wake Invests in Women was focused on building the infrastructure, recruiting the Steering Committee, developing the common agenda, completing the first round of research and hiring a Director to assist in moving the group forward (Appendix A). The following are some key accomplishments from the past year:

- **Launch May 2018: Backbone Support and Steering Committee:**
 - Appointed Wake Tech as Backbone (Appendix B)
 - Steering Committee: invited initial Task Force members and other partners (Appendix B)
 - Steering Committee co-chairs: elected in March 2019 - Jackie Terry Hughes and Hilda Pinnix-Ragland
- **Hire**
 - FSG Consulting: advised on forming collective impact and helped launch the initiative in 2018-2019.
 - Director: Developed position requirements and conducted interviews Nov 2018 through June 2019. Conducted several rounds of interviews to find a Director to provide maximum impact for Wake County. Hired Kasey Ashton July 2019 (Appendix C).
- **Begin to Form Common Agenda**
 - With the unanimous support of the Steering Committee and backbone, the strategies developed to close the wage gap will be grounded in research on high impact practices. As a result, Wake Tech conducted initial research to identify key areas of focus in Wake County.
 - Developed draft theory of why the wage gap exists in Wake County and possible strategies to close it (Appendix D).
- **Budget and Expenses**
 - Wake County funds were used to retain FSG consultants and support the backbone (Appendix E).

2019-2020 ACTIVITIES

- **Finish second round of research**
- **Recruit Partners**
- **Finalize Common Agenda and Strategies**
- **Agree on key performance indicators (KPIs), metrics for success and continuous communication**
- **Begin Piloting Mutually Reinforcing Strategies**
 - In 2020, we will begin piloting strategies to learn “what works” in Wake County and ensure maximum effectiveness.