

Women's Economic Security Campaign

Chicago Foundation for Women and Jane Addams Resource Corporation:
Connecting Women to Careers



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ABSTRACT

The Women's Economic Security Campaign (WESC) through the Women's Funding Network "taps the power and resources of women's funds across the U.S. to boost opportunity for low-income women and their families."¹ As a national network, WESC elevates the work of individual women's funds and amplifies the voices of women striving to achieve economic security.

In partnership with WESC, Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) selected JARC from its array of economic security grantees as an example of a program moving women into financial self-sufficiency. While the Foundation privileges a variety of strategies for ensuring economic security, workforce development programs during the economic recession have been an essential way of responding to skill gaps in dynamic regional economies. The direct services of JARC—and the organization's growing work in the advocacy arena—reflect the experiences of a single program, but the challenges and the opportunities for women in manufacturing resonate across the country.

Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC) provides an array of training options to help low-income men and women learn or enhance manufacturing skills. The following analysis will highlight the success of the Women in Manufacturing Program (WMP), providing a direct service model for increasing the number of women workers in non-traditional occupations. The innovative combination of two programmatic frameworks and the strength of wide-ranging partnerships ensure a holistic lens is applied to the development of careers for working women. Women's funds in Chicago and the intentional investment in programs designed to benefit women prove to be catalysts for change.

¹ <http://www.womensfundingnetwork.org/wesc>

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The following descriptions of Chicago Foundation for Women and the Jane Addams Resource Corporation provide general background information as well as an overview of each organization's priorities. Programs at both organizations are highlighted in this analysis.

Chicago Foundation for Women

Established in 1985, Chicago Foundation for Women (CFW) is a grantmaking organization dedicated to increasing resources and opportunities for women and girls in the greater Chicago area. Throughout its history, CFW has been the only organization in the region to take a comprehensive approach to understanding and addressing issues impacting Chicago-area women and girls through every stage of their lives. Whether the issue is poverty, domestic violence, teen pregnancy, childcare, or eldercare, CFW sits in a unique place to connect the often inter-related challenges faced by women and girls—and to meet those challenges head-on with innovative or proven solutions, as well as the money to fund them.

CFW employs a gender lens throughout the grantmaking process, funding programs and organizations intentionally designed to benefit women and girls. In addition to aligning with the Foundation's guiding principles, organizations must work in one (or more) of CFW's three issue areas: economic security, freedom from violence, and health. Within each issue area, the Foundation funds both direct service and advocacy efforts.

The Strategic Alliance

The Eleanor Network, formerly the Eleanor Foundation, joined forces with CFW in August 2012. The Eleanor Foundation's narrow, focused strategy to achieve economic self-sufficiency for female heads of household strengthens the economic security issue area at CFW. The organizations within the Network bring workforce development expertise into the fold of the Foundation's grantee community. In turn, CFW's holistic lens and focus on women in all life stages broadens the Network's work, engaging women who were formerly ineligible for Network support.

The Eleanor Network at Chicago Foundation for Women

The Eleanor Network is focused on helping single female heads-of-households achieve sustained economic independence. Working female heads-of-households have dual responsibilities: they are the primary caregivers for their families and they are also the primary or only wage-earner in their households. To succeed economically, these women need access to programs that help them overcome the barriers to their economic success as well as streamlined access to vitally important support services:

- Job training and career enhancement services, including job placement
- Access to affordable and decent housing
- Childcare
- Financial education/credit repair

The Eleanor Network awards grants to programs and organizations providing training or supportive services to working women.

Jane Addams Resource Corporation

Jane Addams Resource Corporation (JARC) was founded in 1985 as a nonprofit community development organization. Its mission is to build healthy communities through workforce, economic, and human development. JARC is rooted in the North Center, Lakeview, Lincoln Square, and Uptown neighborhoods of Chicago and serves the Chicagoland area through a strategic mix of industrial retention, training, and educational initiatives. JARC provides high-quality skills training and support services to help lower-income and unemployed workers achieve self-sufficiency. The job training and placement programs serve both manufacturing employers and job seekers. From its initial focus on the stamping industry, JARC's scope and expertise have expanded over the past 25 years to include a number of trades within the metal fabricating sector. Programs include Incumbent Worker Training, CNC and Welding Fast Tracks, Manufacturing Bridge, Women in Manufacturing and Financial and Computer Literacy.

Women in Manufacturing Program at the Jane Addams Resource Corporation

The Women in Manufacturing Program (WMP) was launched in 2009. The program currently offers 235 hours of welding training and operates on an open enrollment/open exit format that allows women to enter at multiple points throughout the year and graduate when they secure full-time employment. The format closely simulates trainees' future work environments; classes are held in the evenings to accommodate the women's work schedules. WMP trains 12 to 14 women per year in Gas Metal Arc Welding, metalworking skills and safety. Students earn certifications through OSHA (forklift and OSHA for General Industry) and the American Welding Society (AWS). Workplace readiness, benefits screening, financial counseling and intensive case management are also built into the curriculum. In addition to these supportive services, JARC also assists trainees with financial support for rent, utilities, groceries and transportation through the Emergency Fund. All graduates will earn a forklift license, be certified in OSHA10 Hour for General Industry and have the option to earn an AWS Certification.

STATEMENT OF NEED

Poverty—particularly during the economic recession—disproportionally affects working women: “Among workers who were in the labor force for at least 27 weeks in 2009, nearly the same number of women and men lived in poverty (5.2 million each). The working-poor rate, however,

continued to be higher for women than for men—7.5 percent, compared with 6.6 percent” (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2011, p. 2).

The Challenges in Illinois

In 2010, over 28% of women who were heads of households in Illinois lived in poverty. The rate was over 38% for Illinois single mothers. (Pollack 2011)

In 2010, women in Illinois made only 76 cents for every dollar paid to a man working full-time. This results in Illinois women making \$11,911 less than men on an annual basis. (Knowles 2012)

Currently, the trades offer an opportunity for women and men to earn almost equivalent wages. However,

the field continues to be male dominated and is very difficult for women to enter: “Construction is one of the most male-dominated sectors in the U.S. Women accounted for 9 percent of the labor force in the industry in 2002, lower than any other sector, and only a fifth of them were employed in the skilled trades” (Berik and Bilginsoy, p. 4). Even with the right skills, working in a male-dominated environment can be frustrating. Facing the challenges of an industry-wide culture, women often self-select out of manufacturing and do not consider the trades as viable employment options.

Programming intentionally designed to benefit women and girls will help ensure women are able to complete training and enter high-paying jobs. Women are in need of apprenticeship and training programs focused on helping women succeed, helping women make connections in an industry that has limited points of entry:

While registered apprenticeship is not the sole route for acquisition of skills, or even the major one in the U.S., it is a more significant port for women. Women who have lesser access to informal networks to establish contacts with the industry in comparison with men are more likely to benefit from the formal structure of apprenticeship training and its obligation to abide by explicit rules, affirmative action requirements, and anti-discrimination regulations. (Berik and Bilginsoy, p. 4)

Direct service investment, however, is linked to the preservation of state and federal legislation that supports workforce development programs. The National Skills Coalition succinctly captures the crisis of the current economic recession: “With 13.9 million Americans currently out of work [...] now is not the time to cut critical training and employment services” (November 2011). While residents in Illinois will undoubtedly suffer—with an estimated 112,406 potential participants denied services—projected cuts in the Workforce Investment Act will mean as many as “6.5 million U.S. jobseekers could lose access to employment and training services in PY 2012 alone, while millions more would lose services in future years” (National Skills Coalition, November 2011).

While philanthropic dollars are often the catalyst for program development, advocating for policies that direct government support are essential to ensuring long-term, substantial investment in workforce development. The reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act—with an increased emphasis on employer needs and an array of support services for vulnerable populations—will prioritize workforce development as a strategy for economic recovery and a strategy for economic self-sufficiency.

Recognizing the need for all women to have access to careers is an important first step. Ensuring women have access to careers, however, demands the implementation of innovative programs like WMP and the continued connection between advocacy work and direct services providers.



Photo Credit: Jane Addams Resource Corporation

WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING PROGRAM

The path to WMP at JARC is a varied one. From limited work experience to expertise in other fields, participants vary in age, economic background, and education levels. The participants in the program all strive, however, to gain economic self-sufficiency. Combining skill-based training with wrap-

around social services provides the programmatic flexibility that meets each client where she is, at any point in the continuum of workforce development. Leveraging individualized case management and group meetings builds a network within the program; an outward gaze to meet employer needs ensures the work in the classroom will be relevant upon graduation.

Trainee Perspectives

The following three excerpts from trainee experiences highlight the arc of the WMP: initial contact and appeal of the program, supportive services in addition to skill development, and follow-up care while searching for the right career path.

Jessica*

After spending half a lifetime in the workforce, Jessica lost a lucrative job in film. She found herself unemployed as a result of technological advances and the financial downturn—and she wanted a career opportunity with the possibility of advancement, not just an entry-level job. Jessica learned about WMP at a job fair and discovered that her expertise from the film industry could be easily transferred to



Photo Credit: Jane Addams Resource Corporation

manufacturing; skills used for color correction and editing in film printing applied to welding. The program appealed to Jessica's strengths, resonating with her previous success: **"I like making things and using my hands,"** explained Jessica.

Jessica also appreciated the simple fact that programming like JARC is available. Manufacturing may seem intimidating to some, but Jessica immediately connected with the JARC representative. Because she also qualified financially, Jessica saw JARC as an invaluable option that she couldn't turn down. Jessica's advice to other women transitioning from one career to another career—or facing the challenges of unemployment—is to keep learning: **"If you enjoy [your work], you're going to want to put effort into it."** The promise of stability and financial security, the opportunity to learn and to grow, transformed Jessica's future from one of uncertainty to one of economic self-sufficiency.

Monica

While in JARC, Monica remembers more than the welding station and noisy exhaust fans, more than learning new skills and developing her expertise. Monica remembers the supportive services offered to trainees—and, for Monica and many other women in the program, it is these additional services that ensure success during the program and employment upon graduation.

* All participant and employer names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

At the time of her entry into WMP, Monica was living, under mandate, in a halfway house. When the time came to move out, finding affordable housing was difficult and passing the criminal background check to become a renter nearly impossible. JARC stepped in and helped Monica find an apartment she could afford, working with the landlord to complete the required paperwork. The transition into stable, independent living did more than provide Monica another place to stay. Housing allowed Monica to reunite with her son, eventually re-gaining custody.



Photo Credit: Jane Adams Resource Corporation

Three months after enrolling in WMP, Monica interviewed with Rogers & Smith. Interview facilitation and networking are important pieces of the JARC program and commonplace in many workforce development organizations. What JARC and WMP provide, however, is the seamless connection between the classroom and employment. The open enrollment and exit design of the program focuses on number of completed hours without constraining participants by rigid, inconvenient schedules. Trainees can work toward the target number of hours while simultaneously searching for a job. WMP integrates employment with the program so completely that graduation itself is defined as securing a job. With just three months of training, Monica could take advantage of an opportunity to meet with an employer and put her skills into practice.

Monica's interview captures more than just a candidate's individual moment of success. WMP often becomes an example of programmatic possibilities to other industry stakeholders. Monica's competency shifted the culture of the company, even the perspectives of other women employees. As the Director of Training Services Regan Brewer notes, Monica not only changed her future, but also the future of other WMP participants:

Monica was the first female welder the company had. The women in the office were confused and blown away when Monica came in for the interview. She went into the shop to show them what she could do. Monica said that everyone in the office was looking at

her confused – this is the welder? The next time they needed an employee they hired another woman from [WMP].

Since her job placement, Monica has received multiple raises and has discussed possibilities for supervisory positions. She cites the helpful instructors of WMP and supportive staff along with her own “warrior spirit” as the keys to her success and achievement in this new career.

Sarah

After completing her training at JARC, Sarah has been on several interviews but has not yet found a placement that has worked for her. Although she has completed her primary training, Sarah has not met JARC’s definition of graduation and continues to learn new skills as she pursues employment. Supportive services also extend beyond the completion of the



Photo Credit: Jane Addams Resource Corporation

core curriculum, paralleling the flexibility of the skill-based training. Sarah continues to receive transportation assistance and financial counseling as she searches for a job that meets her needs.

Participants, like Sarah, from the past three years continue to engage with the JARC community through Empowerment Evenings. Women currently working in manufacturing speak about their experiences in the workforce. Empowerment Evenings provide a safe space for women to discuss their feelings about their new careers or share stories about the challenges—and successes—they face as women in a traditionally male-dominated industry: “These nights are helpful because the stories that come out are shocking in terms of what some of the women have faced in the past. It helps to prepare people for what may happen once they are placed in a job setting. Some stories are also positive and uplifting (Regan Brewer, Director of Training Services). Relationships—women as friends, mentors, sources of support—are formed during these evenings through thought-provoking discussions as well as through games or community-building activities. At the last

Why settle for a job when I can go for a career? – Sarah

session, the group even tried a little yoga together. As Brewer notes, “There’s a lot of camaraderie in our program.” JARC’s on-going role in the lives of program participants reflects the lasting network of support.

From staffing a job fair table to negotiating terms with landlords to encouraging a participant to find the right employer for her, the individual acts of WMP and JARC staff members coalesce to keep women at the center of programming. Utilizing two complementary frameworks, WMP balances the complexities of skill-based training with the realities of women and their families, the realities of women in context.

Framework: Wraparound Services and Skill-based Training

As the depictions of Jessica, Monica, and Sarah have demonstrated, JARC builds relationships with trainees—relationships that go beyond the training sessions, beyond the classroom environment. It is this holistic, comprehensive vision of WMP that distinguishes JARC. Not only does the program achieve a high rate of completion and placement, but also glowing accolades from each cycle of graduates: 68% of women are placed with 72% of women retaining their jobs and an average wage increase of 12% over three years.

According to *Women Employed* (2011), schools and training programs often have a difficult time understanding what supports would best serve their students: “Services that help single-parent students and other non-traditional students surmount barriers to graduation could drastically improve the standard of living for students.” JARC strives to provide wrap-around services to students, meeting potential barriers head-on and serving this often overlooked population with pro-active strategies.

Program Design

Incorporating the context of both the future employer and prospective employee, WMP has engineered a program based on the integration of two best practice frameworks: the Sector Model of Workforce

Sector Model of Workforce Development targets a particular field, with an emphasis on employer needs and job placement for participants.

Center for Working Families Model is designed with a “three-pronged approach that combines employment services, financial education, and public benefits screening.”

Development and the Center for Working Families Model of bundled services.

Identifying Demand

WMP staff members seek out employer needs, identify job availability, and cultivate an understanding of the local economic demand. As the recession has demonstrated, economic stability relies on a well-trained workforce prepared to meet the ever-evolving demands of the manufacturing industry. Despite high unemployment rates, employers struggle to find qualified workers. WMP has become a bridge between women seeking the stability of a manufacturing career and employers demanding a reliable, specialized workforce.

Identifying Supply

WMP, however, is equally proactive on the supply side of program design: women are capable workers, but workers living in challenging economic and social situations. Recognizing the obstacles to program completion, JARC utilizes internal program supports as well as referrals to social service agencies to ensure each trainee’s needs are met. Creating a realistic classroom setting is an essential element of the training program. The classroom and the instructor, however, represent only one of many points of contact for participants. As the Director of Training Services Regan Brewer explains:

WMP trainees receive intensive case management. Trainees meet with the Program Coordinator and the Financial Coach at least once a week. The Program Coordinator has played a key role in providing counseling, support, and referrals for childcare, housing, domestic violence and income supports. The Financial Coach is able to monitor household budgets on a weekly basis and distribute emergency funds as needed.

Connecting women to resources throughout the training process complements skill development in the classroom.

Partnerships

JARC utilizes partnerships extensively. As an essential element of both foundational models of WMP, partnerships help women overcome barriers to success. From interviewing at potential places of employment to securing housing through community partners, collaboration fills gaps that JARC simply cannot meet on site—and connects each participant to resources in the broader environment.

Women's Funds

Chicago Foundation for Women and the Eleanor Network at Chicago Foundation for Women have provided financial support to WMP. Beyond awarding grants, women's funds in Chicago have provided referrals and have built connections to help WMP

grow and develop. JARC recognized the sex-segregation and low expectations for women in manufacturing, but did not have the resources—or the incentive—to develop programming specifically designed to meet the needs of women and girls. As the Executive Director of JARC, Guy Loudon, notes, foundations can often be “the mortar for programs.” With the ability to financially invest in organizations and to provide a comprehensive view of the nonprofit sector, foundations open the door for emerging programs and connect new ideas to seasoned providers.

The Eleanor Network at Chicago Foundation for Women

The Eleanor Network, formerly the Eleanor Foundation, has been a significant funder and founding partner of the WMP. Recognizing the potential of JARC's programming for working women, the Eleanor Network brought JARC into the existing grantee community and assisted in the development of the WMP. The Network's intentional focus on putting working women on the path to economic security includes both workforce training grantees and supportive service grantees.



Mirroring the WMP program itself, the Network recognizes the importance of pairing skill-based training with additional resources.

As a significant partner in the WMP's environment, the Network maintains the importance of direct service programming for women. The Network grantee meetings every quarter provide an opportunity for face-to-face relationship building among organizations facing many of the same challenges and opportunities. With time for both informal information sharing and formal program referrals, the Network is invested in each individual workforce development program as well as the collective impact of redefining industry standards and achieving economic security for working women throughout Chicago.

Chicago Foundation for Women

CFW began supporting the WMP at JARC in the fall of 2011. The Foundation's emphasis on

economic security for a broader range of women in the greater Chicago area complemented the Network's focus on working heads of households within the bounds of the city of Chicago.

In addition to allowing more women to be included in the program, CFW's expansive grantee community and focus on advocacy will continue to build JARC's toolkit. JARC's recent update to the organization's strategic plan emphasizes the importance of advocacy, as the recession has demonstrated the need to preserve workforce development policies. JARC will continue to partner with the Alliance for Illinois Manufacturing, Chicago Jobs Council, and Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance Council, bringing JARC's unique programmatic expertise to the table. Linking the power of advocacy to direct service, however—utilizing the experiences of women like Jessica and Monica and Sarah to ensure informed, comprehensive policy development—is also an essential step toward systemic change and industry-wide reform.

In the first year of the program, the Eleanor Foundation linked JARC to the Emergency Fund. Since then, the Emergency Fund has provided WMP trainees with assistance for transportation, rent, utilities, and groceries. This assistance has had a significant impact on the students.

—Regan Brewer, Director of Training Services

Conclusion

WMP is a proactive program. WMP is a skill-based program. WMP is designed to launch careers for mothers, for heads of households—for women—in the Chicago area. Combining the needs of the program participants and the demands of the industry, JARC empowers women to break barriers, to build careers, and to reach economic self-sufficiency. The experiences of Jessica, Monica, and Sarah demonstrate the range of success stories, reflecting the range of participant needs and the range of possibilities for working women.

I couldn't ask for a better Job. My mom wants me to come back to Indiana, but it's not very often you find a job that you love. —Monica

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations summarize Chicago Foundation for Women's vision for economic security initiatives. During JARC's recently completed strategic planning process, the organization identified next steps for policy change and increased environmental engagement². Using JARC's work as a template, the Foundation has included benchmarks and outcomes for advocacy efforts within the broadly defined recommendations:

1) Women in Context

Grantmaking with a gender lens considers women in context, designing programs and services to meet the challenges facing women and girls. The integration of supportive services and skill-based training ensures women—and their needs—stay at the center of programming.

- a) The combination of the Center for Working Families Model and the Sector Model of Workforce Development sets an industry standard. The completion of a “best practices” statement will facilitate in the communication of a results-oriented, data-driven program that also meet the unique needs of individual participants.

2) Collaboration

² The action steps, benchmarks, and measureable outcomes included in the recommendations section are from JARC's recently completed strategic plan. The entire plan is available at: <http://www.jane-addams.org/jarc-documents/>

Partnerships at all stages of programming and at all points of entry increase the likelihood of program completion and sustained success.

b) Strong connections to peer organizations—and issue-based coalitions—ensure the voices of the nonprofit providers are heard. Participating in discussions with government and foundation partners, developing a policy committee within the organization, and building relationships with legislators provide opportunities to shape relevant policies.

3) Advocacy Informed by Direct Service

Combining the success of direct service skill development with advocacy efforts will preserve workforce development as a tool for economic security.

c) Identifying advocacy as an area for growth and as a separate initiative within an organization ensures that advocacy efforts are prioritized. Nonprofit providers are best equipped to capture the challenges and the successes of the populations they serve. Allowing staff members and participants the opportunity to tell their own stories strengthens the general understanding of effective programming and informs policy creation.

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Additional information for this study came from participant interviews conducted in May 2012 and program/staff interviews conducted in August 2012; program descriptions have also been taken from materials submitted to Chicago Foundation for Women as well as organizations' websites.