

Applying a Gender Lens to Economic Resiliency in Los Angeles County

A Women and Girls Initiative Research Report

November 15, 2021

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Overview:

On December 13, 2016, the Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously adopted a motion establishing the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI). The motion tasked the WGI with examining the systemic issues that lead to inequitable gender outcomes and recommending changes to improve the quality of life for women and girls in Los Angeles County (County). Through partnerships with County departments and public partners, the WGI aims to establish Los Angeles County as a leader in gender equity and ensure economic mobility for women and girls at all stages of their lives, by increasing their assets and income, promoting economic wellbeing, and applying a gender lens to the County's policies, programs, and services. This report will examine the extent to which the County applies a gender lens to its efforts to bolster residents from economic downturns and promote economic resiliency. In light of the disproportionately negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, the report will focus on programming and data collection practices with County departments to assess how women fare in accessing the County's social protection system that helps residents to guard against and repair various economic shocks.

Methodology:

The report will also use the County LAEDC report "Pathways to Economic Resiliency: Los Angeles County 2021-2026"¹ to provide gendered data on several indicators of economic progress in the County, and the "Pathways for Economic Resiliency Implementation Plan"² led by the Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) Department to provide insight into the County's identified strategies needed to create long-term economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The methodology for this report was informational interviews with select County departments identified as having the most relevant data collection and programmatic insights on the County's economic resiliency efforts. The WGI conducted informational interviews with nine County Departments³ from June- September 2021. Each department offered personnel to sit for a 1-2 hour guided discussion of their department's programmatic work and each was given a follow-up survey concerning current data collection practices. The goal of this project was to gather qualitative data concerning trends, strengths, limitations, and opportunities to apply a gender lens to County

¹ "Pathways to Economic Resiliency LA County" <https://laedc.org/2021/02/09/pathwaysreport/>

² "Pathways for Economic Resiliency Implementation Plan" BOS Motion Response.

³ Departments included in the qualitative study were (in order of interview): Internal Services Department (ISD), Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services Department (WDACS), Department of Public Health (DPH), Child Support Services Department (CSSD), Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education, and Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO).

economic resiliency efforts. The aim of the WGI in adopting this approach was twofold: to produce recommendations concerning future data collection tools and proxy measure recommendations needed to accurately track economic resiliency and mobility across County residents using a gender lens; and produce programmatic recommendations to promote greater economic mobility for female residents of the County.

The 'Shecession': Economic resiliency for women in the time of COVID-19 recovery

The gendered impact of a recession is not a new phenomenon; the US features an extremely high degree of gendered employment segregation, meaning jobs in some industry categories and/or occupations are overwhelmingly done by men, while jobs in other industry categories and/or occupations are overwhelmingly done by women. While the 1970s marked the start of 'mancession' periods in industries like construction, the current 'shecession' is heavily affecting sectors like hospitality and retail, which disproportionately employ women. Globally, women's job losses due to COVID-19 are 1.8 times greater than men's. In the US, unemployment has intensified the most for the personal care and food service occupations, where women predominate. Women hold 42% of the nation's full-time, year-round jobs designated as essential. Thirty-four million women work in jobs officially classified as essential; and women represent the majority of essential workers among education, health care, personal care, and sales and office occupations. ⁴

Despite high levels of participation in essential employment by women, the economic downturn precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic is predicted to push progress for women in work back at 2017 levels by the end of 2021.⁵ In the US, the female unemployment rate increased sharply from 4% in March 2020 to 16% in April 2020. The female unemployment rate stayed high for the remainder of 2020, ending the year in December 2020 at 6.7%, 3 percentage points higher than in December 2019.⁶ The nation's economy began to rebound in spring 2021. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) March 2021 monthly jobs report shows that the economy gained 916,000 net jobs in March 2021, the largest gain since August 2020. Women accounted for only 34.4% of net job gain. At this pace, women would need nearly 15 straight months of job gains at this level to recover the over 4.6 million net jobs they have lost since February 2020.⁷ Women were encouraged by the August Jobs Report finding that almost 70% of all new jobs created by July 2021 went to women. However, the emergence of the Delta variant

⁴ PWC Women in Work Index. "COVID-19 is reversing the important gains made over the last decade for women in the workforce"

<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/news-room/press-releases/2021/women-in-work-index-2021.html>

⁵ PWC Women in Work Index.

⁶ Bureau of Labor Statistics

⁷ Tucker, Jasmine. "At August's Rate, It Will Take Women 9 Years to Regain the Jobs They Lost in the Pandemic" National Women's Law Center. <https://nwlc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/March-Jobs-Day-2021-v1.pdf>

slowed economic growth to just 11.9% new jobs in August, dashing hopes for a quick recovery of all women lost to the pandemic.⁸

The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are not felt evenly across all groups of women. Women of color have and continue to face the worst of the effect of the pandemic on employment. At their height, unemployment rates for black women swelled to 16.4% and Latinas swelled to 20.2% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics). Even as the nation began to recover, unemployment rates for Black women and Latinas exceeded the unemployment rate for women overall of 5.7% in March 2021. Nearly 1 in 11 Black women ages 20 and over (8.7%) were unemployed in March 2021. In February, Black women's unemployment rate was still nearly 1.8 times higher than their pre-pandemic unemployment rate (4.9% in February 2020).⁹ In some industries where Black women are well or overrepresented, such as social services and healthcare, there were small to no job gains.¹⁰ In March 2021, nearly 1 in 13 Latinas ages 20 and over (7.3%) were unemployed in March 2021. More than 1 in 9 (11.6%) women with disabilities were unemployed in March 2021 – an increase of over 4 percentage points from their pre-pandemic unemployment rate in February 2020 (7.4%). Pandemic-related job losses continue to hit younger women especially hard, with approximately 1 in 11 (9.1%) women between the ages of 20 and 24 unemployed in March 2021. The unemployment rate for Latinas ages 20 to 24 was even higher at 10.6%, and the unemployment rate for Black women ages 20 to 24 was much higher at 17.5%. By comparison, the unemployment rate for white men ages 20 and over was 5.2% in March 2021.¹¹

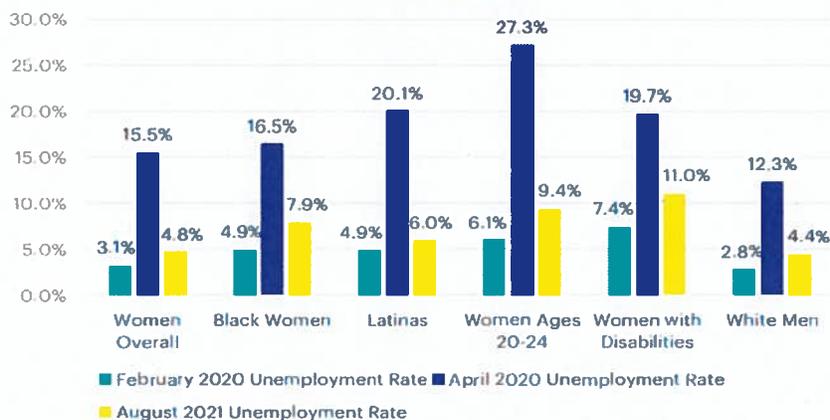
⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizeltting/2021/09/09/the-august-jobs-report-shows-exactly-what-she-cession-means/?sh=25b209f07fba>

⁹ National Women's Law Center.

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/24/us-hiring-jobs-women-shecession>

¹¹ National Women's Law Center. f

Unemployment Rates by Month for Selected Demographics



Source: BLS, Employment Situation Summary Tables A-1, A-2, A-3, A-6, and A-13. Unemployment rates for white men, women overall, Latinas, and Black women are seasonally adjusted and are for people ages 20 and over. The unemployment rate for women ages 20-24 is not seasonally adjusted. The unemployment rate for women with disabilities is not seasonally adjusted and is for women ages 16-64.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the pressure on working mothers, low-wage and otherwise. In a survey from May and June, one out of four women who became unemployed during the pandemic reported the job loss was due to a lack of childcare, twice the rate of men surveyed.¹³ In a McKinsey and *Lean In* survey of North American female employees, one in four women said they were thinking about reducing or leaving paid work due to the pandemic, citing company inflexibility, caring responsibilities and stress. The survey included some comparative data that laid out the gender gap for parents; while 8% of surveyed mothers had thought about going from full- to part-time work, only 2% of fathers had.¹⁴

The pandemic has also created additional uncompensated home labor that has disproportionately fallen on women. Before COVID-19 hit, women on average spent six more hours than men on unpaid childcare every week (according to research by UN Women). During COVID-19, women have taken on an even greater share and now spend 7.7 more hours per week on unpaid childcare than men, this 'second shift' equates to 31.5 hours per week; almost as much an extra full-time job. The impact of the additional home labor has pushed women out of the workforce and many economists predict this drop-out could be permanent for a large portion of these women. One factor driving the potential loss of so many women from the workforce permanently is the prediction that the pandemic could lead to permanent loss of nearly 4.5 million childcare slots across the

¹² Chart produced by National Women's Law Center using BLS data.

¹³ Bateman, Nicole and Martha Ross. October 2020. "Why has COVID-19 been especially harmful for working women?" The Brookings Institute. <https://www.brookings.edu/essay/why-has-covid-19-been-especially-harmful-for-working-women/>

¹⁴ McKinsey and Company. September 27, 2021. "Women in the Workforce 2021." <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace>

US¹⁵, which will disproportionately be filled by mothers, many transitioning from paid positions outside the home to these unpaid in-home childcare positions. Even with schools and childcare facilities re-opening providing a temporary reprieve for working parents to return to work, outbreaks may force children and their families to quarantine, schools or daycares to close temporarily, or more long-term moves to online instruction. The childcare sector gained only 2,100 jobs in March 2021 – leaving the industry still short nearly one in six jobs since the pandemic began.¹⁶

The effects of the 'shecession' are believed to be felt over a longer period of time than the 'mancession' because the impact of the COVID-19 recession has exacerbated several facets of economic gender inequality in addition to the wage gap. Women (particularly women of color) are more likely to work part-time jobs than men; part-time employees were the most prone to layoffs and contraction of COVID-19. Men have more savings in general, and three times as much retirement savings as women¹⁷; giving men more resources to weather the economic downturn and making elderly females more vulnerable than males. Women have higher rates of poverty than men and the gender-poverty gap has been widening the decade leading into the pandemic. Households led by single women with children had a poverty rate of 35.6 percent, more than twice the 17.3 percent rate for households led by single men with children.¹⁸ Younger generations of women in the workforce hold more college debt than their male counterparts across all racial groups, with African Americans holding the most debt averaging \$30,400 in debt compared to \$22,000 for white women and \$19,500 for white men.¹⁹

¹⁵ Kashen, Julie, et. al. October 30, 2020. "How COVID-19 Sent Women's Workforce Progress Backward" Center for American Progress. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/women/reports/2020/10/30/492582/covid-19-sent-womens-workforce-progress-backward/>

¹⁶ Holpuch, Amanda. Apr 24, 2021. "Hiring is rebounding in the US- but the 'shecession' persists" The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/24/us-hiring-jobs-women-shecession>

¹⁷ Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies. "Retirement Security for Women Amid COVID-19 20th Annual Transamerica Retirement Survey of Workers" https://transamericacenter.org/docs/default-source/retirement-survey-of-workers/tcrs2020_sr_women-retirement-security-amid-covid.pdf

¹⁸ National Women's Law Center.

¹⁹ American Association of University Women (AAUW). May 21, 2018. "Women Hold Majority of College Debt — and Take Longer to Pay It Off" <https://www.aauw.org/resources/news/media/press-releases/analysis-women-hold-two-thirds-of-countrys-1-4-trillion-student-debt/>

Women in the LA County Economic Scorecard 2019-20

For the "Fiscal Year 2019-20 Economic Development Scorecard" the WGI worked with staff to include gender data where available. The report chronicles the disproportionately negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the region, concluding "Women, people who identify as Black or Asian, Gen Z, Millennials and people with a high school education or less have fared for unemployment at disproportionate rates" (p. 8). The report included an accounting of women in workforce development programs from DCBA and Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) by service category and as a comparison among priority populations. The report also tracked County services provided to female entrepreneurs. The report discussed the findings from focus groups conducted to understand why women disproportionately use high-cost lending.

Overall, the scorecard highlighted three findings that will inform the WGI work on economic resiliency: 1. There is little to no data disaggregated by gender in the regional economic data presented in this report, as this is rarely collected at a sub-national level, which paints an incomplete picture of regional economic disparities and opportunities. To get the most complete picture, intersectional gender data must include race and age. 2. Gendered data collection on programmatic County services is uneven and a better understanding of data available and how to increase data collection capacity disaggregated by gender is needed. 3. Women and women owned businesses appear to be the minority of the population served by the County's economic development programming, but in the outcomes documented showed women greatly benefit from the services provided to them.

WGI Townhall Input of Economic Resiliency:

In 2020, in the height of the pandemic, the WGI held a series of townhalls to bring together community-based Non-governmental Organization (NGO) leaders, researchers and representatives from County departments to engage with the community to assess on-the ground needs of County residents struggling to find pathways to resiliency and prosperity during the pandemic-driven recession. In general, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the need for a hyper-investment of resources in some of the most economically vulnerable communities, and the immediate focus needs to be on communities impacted by institutional racism. These town halls produced the following findings concerning the County's ability to bolster the economic resiliency of women and girls across the County:

1. Increase intergovernmental partnerships with state and federal agencies to advocate for policy and legislative language that would support the health and economic mobility of women and girls.
2. Incorporate an intergenerational approach to how the County sets goals and priorities for its service-delivery and partnership models.
 - a. For older and low wage working women the digital shift was an obstacle, either because of the lack of digital literacy or because access was a problem. In contrast, for girls it has been either an opportunity, or a forced

responsibility if they are the only person in their household who is able to navigate the needed technology.

3. Promote engagement and data collection best-practices.
4. Use culturally appropriate prevention, empowerment, and educational tools.
5. Review existing CBO's recommendations on which datasets and indexes would be useful to track the health and economic prosperity of all individuals.²⁰

These findings inform our inquiry concerning County programming and outreach activities in our informational interviews of County departments. These findings also help contextualize the findings from the interviews and data collection efforts of County departments.

The WGI Approach to Economic Resiliency

An overarching goal of the WGI is to help the County meet its gender equity vision to establish the County as a leader in creating opportunities and improving outcomes for persons of all genders by applying a gender lens to the County's work. Using a gender lens when analyzing, planning, and making decisions about County policies, programs, and services means carefully and deliberately examining all the gender implications of our work. A gender-wise program is one that considers the different needs and circumstances of people of all genders within the target beneficiary group. Applying a gender lens to economic resiliency requires an examination of the resources that are the building blocks women can draw on to succeed economically or to exercise power properly. Resources include human capital (education, skills, training), financial capital (loans, savings), social capital (networks, mentors), and physical capital (land, machinery). This also requires applying a gender lens to the norms and institutions that are the "rules of the game" or the organizational and social systems that govern activities and mediate relations between individuals and their social and economic environment. Norms include gender defined roles, taboos, prohibitions, and expectations such as whether it is appropriate for women, women of a certain age, or color, to be in certain spaces, hold certain jobs or manage money. Institutions include legal and policy structures, economic systems, market structures, marriage, inheritance, and education systems.

The US Economic Development Administration defines economic resilience as being inclusive of three primary attributes: 1. the ability to recover quickly from a shock, 2. the ability to withstand a shock, and 3. the ability to avoid the shock altogether.²¹ The WGI Governing Council ad-hoc committee on economic mobility adopted the following definitions to study economic mobility through a gender lens. The WGI defined "economic mobility" as the ability to move up and down the economic ladder during one's lifetime

²⁰ Greater LA committee. "No going Back" <https://nogoingback.la/>

²¹ US Department of Commerce. "Comprehensive Development Strategy (CEDS). <https://www.eda.gov/ceds/content/economic-resilience.htm>.

and across generations.²² Further, a woman is “economically empowered” when she has both the ability to succeed and advance economically and the power to make and act on economic decisions. To succeed and advance economically, women need the skills and resources to compete in markets, as well as fair and equal access to economic institutions. To have the power and agency to benefit from economic activities, women need to have the ability to make and act on decisions and control resources and profits.

While economic mobility is key to the success of all women and girls, we recognize that opportunity and access to resources essential to attaining economic prosperity are not universally and evenly distributed across all groups of women. The WGI has applied an *intersectional gendered lens* to our economic mobility work that considers and highlights the opportunities, needs, and disproportionate challenges of the following groups of women within the County and will reference any existing programming or data driven findings for the following groups of women when available:

- *Women of Color*
- *Women Entrepreneurs*
- *Wage Working Women*
- *Aging Women*
- *Young Women*
- *LGBTQIA identifying women*

Given the County’s role to develop and implement a safety net for its residents, understanding the gendered dynamics and variations in economic resiliency will enhance programming efficiency and efficacy within the County. We will examine the County’s role and programming to build the economic capacity of its residents in the following areas:

1. Applying a gender lens to County investment in economic recovery efforts for businesses and residents.
2. Applying a gender lens to County led loan, grants, and investment opportunities.
3. Applying a gender lens to County programming, efforts and investments in diversifying industries that employ residents.
4. Applying a gender lens to County investment in the childcare infrastructure within its supervisorial districts and efforts, and partnerships to promote flexibility in post-pandemic work arrangements.

Focus Area 1: Applying a gender lens to County investment in economic recovery efforts for businesses and residents

Relevant Recommendations from the “Pathways for Economic Resiliency: Los Angeles County 2021 – 2026” Report:

Provide incentives for employers in high growth industries to hire recently displaced workers. The County should market available services to employers in high growth

²² World Bank. May 9, 2018. “Fair Progress? Economic Mobility across Generations Around the World” Accessible at: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty/publication/fair-progress-economic-mobility-across-generations-around-the-world>

industries, including the availability of on-the-job training (OJT) funds to reimburse businesses for the cost of training new workers.

Conduct a public campaign to reduce discriminatory job posting practices. This may include, for example, urging the elimination of a college degree requirement in job postings for positions that do not practically need one and in turn, increase job openings to which underserved individuals can apply.

Relevant Strategies from the “Pathways for Economic Resiliency Implementation Plan”:

1. Address unemployment through rapid re-employment and training programs for dislocated workers and investment in technological solutions within the County’s workforce system.

2. Improve long-term economic outcomes for the region’s labor force through investments in well-paying jobs and sectors.

3. Build on existing youth employment programs to reach youth and young adults, especially transitional age youth (TAY) and youth from underserved areas of Los Angeles County.

4. Establish a Worker Equity Fund (WEF) to provide financial, technical, housing, and social service resources to trainees, focusing on those with significant barriers to employment³ and those most impacted by economic losses due to the pandemic. The WEF will aim to ensure the success of participants enrolled in rapid re-training or high road training programs.

5. Expand promotion of County services to certified businesses and beyond.

6. Coordinate efforts to develop a one-stop shop, reopen businesses, facilitate permitting, and promote County contracting opportunities.

7. Develop and implement a County of Los Angeles Business Attraction, Expansion and Retention Program (LAC BAER) within the new Economic and Workforce Development Department.

How County departments apply a gender lens:

The County’s role as the social safety net for residents involves many departments and a great deal of pre-pandemic programmatic infrastructure. The application of a gender lens to this role and this programming is inconsistent across the County. A review of the use of a gendered lens documents both great success in outcomes for female residents and underrepresentation of female residents and female entrepreneurs in many of the County’s programs. For example, in FY 2019/20 female participants of workforce development programs experienced the most success upon exiting workforce development programs among priority populations, with employment rates over 70 percent. At the same time females only represented 0.7% of participants in the Countywide Local and Targeted Worker Hire Policy (LTWHP), which promotes career pathways in the construction industry.²³

The bulk of this work is located in the Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA), which partners internally with CEO, WDACS, WGI, OAECE, LACDA to develop

²³ “Fiscal Year 2019-20 Economic Development Scorecard”

the framework of an Economic Mobility Initiative that supports women in growing and thriving in the economy through a variety of supports, including an entrepreneur academy, loan and grant programs, and incubator opportunities. Though currently being developed by DCBA, this future initiative will be implemented and managed by Office of Small Business (OSB) in the new Economic and Workforce Development Department and will be funded through American Rescue Plan (ARP) funds. Throughout the development of the framework, DCBA has been applying a gender equity lens to existing resources and is taking outcome data into consideration, as it relates to disaggregated gender data, during planning. Below you will find a review of key programming and the extent to which gendered data is collected and how existing gendered data is used:

- **Office of Small Business (OSB)** – DCBA case management system has a demographics component which allows the department to break the type of assistance sought by various categories, including gender. This is true for the Concierge service and the Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC). In FY 2019/20, PTAC, served 135 self-identified women-owned businesses, representing 15% of their clients. Among small business concierge services offered, female entrepreneurs represented 36% of their clients served. Currently Small Business Certification programs do not include demographic questions. When making partnerships and/or programmatic decisions, DCBA considers socioeconomically disadvantaged communities, as well as people of color, women and others who have been disadvantaged in launching or sustaining a viable business, to assist all of these groups. Throughout the year, DCBA will make it a point to partner with organizations holding events with an emphasis of empowering women and girls, through promoting the events, as well as tabling and/or presenting, depending on the ask.
- **Foreclosure Prevention (FP)**- Free services to property owners and landlords, of 15 or fewer units. DCBA's counselors facilitate communication with lenders and work with property owners to explore all foreclosure avoidance options. The unit does not collect gender information to make programmatic decisions. In April 2021, DCBA launched a Mortgage Relief Program to help local property owners at risk of foreclosure pay back arrears with the goal of sustaining homeownership, the department does collect gender for the program.
- **Center for Financial Empowerment (CFE)**- The Center for Financial Empowerment convenes, advocates, and builds capacity to strengthen the financial health of County residents, with a focus on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) to build economic resiliency. The CFE serves as a convener and provide some direct services to County residents. The only program in which the CFE collects gender information is their Financial Navigators program, which was launched in response to the pandemic. Financial Navigators provide structured guidance remotely to help residents prioritize financial concerns and mitigate disruptions to cashflow. In CFE contractual partnerships with other County departments, they dictate the target population that needs our support. For example, the CFE is working with the Department of Public Health's African

American Infant Mortality Initiative (AAIMM) to increase Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) outreach among Black women with young children. The CFE works with AAIMM to help increase awareness of the EITC among African American women. Research has shown that the EITC helps to reduce poverty and as a result, helps to improve birth outcomes. It is important to note that it is not standard practice for the Center to disaggregate data by gender for each initiative they oversee, such data collection is based on the target population identified by the partner department.

The Department of Public Social Services' (DPSS) primary function is to be a department of last resort with a goal of meeting residents where they are with benefits that include cash assistance and educational programs. They are also a critical connector for clients not ready to receive traditional social service benefits with County mental and public health services. The department's ability to apply a gender lens to its work is largely qualitative across populations served. They generally do not collect data disaggregated by gender as individual level data is housed by the required case management system owned by the State of California, which does not include gender. Gender data collection is uneven and only collected when mandated by the state, which is rare. An example of where gender data is collected is in welfare to work programs, however analysis of these data must be requested from the state, and if approved there is often a lengthy turn-around time in receiving the report from the state.

Current challenges to applying a gender lens:

The most consistent challenge limiting the County's ability to apply a gender lens to County investment in economic recovery efforts for businesses and residents is the lack of data collection protocols disaggregated by gender. The specific strategies to improve this also vary widely by department; there is no one-size-fits-all solution. This concern was expressed by all departments interviewed on this topic. Regional baseline data lacks gendered analysis that informs planning and decision making. Data management systems owned by the State of California rarely require the collection of gender data and there is no additional County requirement to do so when a state requirement is absent. Most pervasively is the lack of systematic data collection across department programming. DCBA noted, "The challenges we face departmentwide are based on the need for system alignment across the whole department and inconsistencies across multiple programs to capture data. More consistent collection would help create a more accurate picture, holistically and for each program." Internal Services Department (ISD) noted similar limitations of fragmented data collection, observing that while it is not currently impossible to analyze gender and racial data across contracts for services and the purchase of commodities, it would be incredibly time and resource intensive using the current data collection systems.

Finally, some departments were concerned that pandemic response measures could be limited to short term funding sources when the problems the pandemic exposed require long term funding solutions. DCBA reported several potential revenue streams applied

for pandemic relief that would benefit from applying a gender lens to the planning if awarded.

Opportunities to enhance and expand the gender lens:

Pandemic relief and pandemic-specific programming has created opportunities to enhance and expand the gender lens in the County's economic recovery work. DCBA presented leveraging federal funding to establish the Worker Equity Fund as a way to incentivize low wage earners to go through higher paying apprentice programs that produce family sustaining employment. DCBA is also currently engaged in work to support women entrepreneurs. DPSS noted that their "welfare to work partners are working on exciting things," contending that the pandemic reshaped the department work environment and allowed the County to take opportunities to be creative and make changes they otherwise wouldn't have been able to make in meeting people where they were in the pandemic. The most important of these from a gender lens perspective is the recommendation that emergency actions to help working moms should be considered for permanent adoption.

An opportunity that came out of the WGI townhalls was a desire for greater County partnerships with women-centric NGOs and women's affinity groups. Most departments reported conducting their work in partnership with private entities and NGOs and many departments pursued the increased inclusion of women in programming through marketing materials. Greater synergy in County partnerships with women's organizations appears an efficient strategy for enhancing the County's gender equity lens.

Finally, the collection of more data disaggregated by gender is essential to the application of a gender lens to the County's economic recovery work. Every department interviewed in this study expressed a desire to have access to more data disaggregated by gender and many had specific requests concerning which gendered data would be most valuable to their analysis of their operations. The recent Board anti-poverty measures and the creation of the Economic and Workforce Development Department presents potential support for the collection of more demographic data concerning County services.

Focus Area 2: Applying a gender lens to County led loan, grants, and investment opportunities.

Relevant Recommendations from the "Pathways for Economic Resiliency: Los Angeles County 2021 – 2026" Report:

Provide reopening assistance to county businesses most in need with an equity lens. The County should identify and use any available funds (e.g., Care First Community Investment, federal COVID stimulus) to provide grants for rental assistance (and other major business costs) to the most impacted communities and small, minority and female-owned businesses that did not receive funds from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).
Optimize use of public lands to catalyze economic development opportunities. Underutilized, county-owned properties can be converted into manufacturing or technology development centers with an additional focus on worker ownership

development (e.g., co-ops). Dedicated case management to assist with and expedite zoning and permitting processes should be central to these efforts.

Relevant Strategies from the "Pathways for Economic Resiliency Implementation Plan":

1. Connect County grant and loan programs for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises with the workforce system to help businesses find qualified and trained workers. Leverage hiring supports, such as on-the-job training wage reimbursements and tax incentives

How County departments apply a gender lens:

The County's use of a gender lens on County led loan, grant and investment opportunities is also uneven across departments and programs. As one example, DCBA provided a thorough review of their efforts to apply a gender lens to this area. They noted that they reviewed external research reports from UCLA, the Urban Institute and others indicating minority mom and pop landlords were particularly vulnerable to the increased economic struggles caused by the pandemic. That led to an expanded Foreclosure Prevention (FP) service to landlords. The Foreclosure Prevention Program and CFE both launched programs in response to the pandemic. The CFE launched the Financial Navigator's program, and the FP unit expanded its program to provide support to small mom and pop landlords. They launched these services based on the needs of County residents but did place a particular focus on gender. ISD reported being intentional toward equity in its planning although does not specifically focus on gender either. They noted that there are currently some diversity requirements for some construction contracts and Request for Proposals do more consideration for qualified local small business, the working assumption was that Community Based Enterprises (CBEs), and small businesses are more likely to be women and/or minority owned. DCBA listed the following grant/loan categories in their economic recovery portfolio as either disproportionately benefiting women or grant opportunities where recipients were tracked by gender:

Type of Loan/Grant Category	General purpose	Required qualifications of recipients	Amount Available	Frequency of distribution
Recovery Fund (not active)	To provide grants to small businesses impacted by the pandemic	Eligibility requirements have not been determined for upcoming allocation	\$20 million	One-time
Small Dollar Loans and Grants for Domestic Violence Survivors	Provide survivors of domestic violence with small-dollar grants to pay for relocation expenses, medical bills, and other costs necessary for financial independence	Eligibility requirements have not been determined for upcoming allocation	\$1.4 million	One-time
Grant	Mortgage Relief	Residents of LA County	\$20,000	Until funds run out.

		Residents of the City of Los Angeles are ineligible Property must be owner occupied Up to 80% Area Median Income for 1-unit property owners Up to 150% Area Median Income for 2-4 units' property owners		
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Current challenges to applying a gender lens:

Few departments interviewed reported administering County grant or loan programs to residents or entrepreneurs. The primary limitations in applying a gender lens to the activities reported were similar to those reported above in economic recovery programming were limitations of creating women-specific loan/grant products due to difficulty with collecting gender-based data. The lack of gendered data collection is also a function of the funding source data collection requirements that often do not include gender as a required field.

Opportunities to enhance and expand the gender lens:

Related to lending, prior to the pandemic, in August 2019, DCBA in partnership with New Economics for Women (NEW) and the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) and consultant, Goodwin Simon Strategic Research (GSSR), commissioned five consumer focus groups. The focus groups allowed DCBA to obtain insight from a diverse group of County residents who live in zip codes identified by DCBA as having a high density of short-term lending storefronts. All of the focus group participants had experience using at least one type of high-cost loan in the past year. Their findings summarize the audience mindsets, as well as key dimensions of how each is “hardwired”—that is, the emotions, identity, values, lived experiences, and personal beliefs impact how they experience and respond to this topic. This information is being used to develop a forthcoming campaign that will help County residents avoid high-cost predatory lending.²⁴

In response to the pandemic, ARP funds often included the collection of recipient data disaggregated by gender. For example, of individuals awarded Recovery Fund grants, approximately 4000 were males, 3000 were females, 18 were non-binary, and nearly 400 preferred not to state their gender or marked other.²⁵ Recipients were equally awarded \$15,000. Concerning applications for mortgage relief grants 48% of applicants were women, which 51% were men.²⁶ The inclusion of gender data collection will allow us to analyze the County’s lending through a gender lens and track progress of groups of

²⁴ “Fiscal Year 2019-20 Economic Development Scorecard”

²⁵ Transgender residents were not represented in this data.

²⁶ There were no non-binary applicants and transgender residents were not represented in this data. Data on grant awardees was not available at the time of writing this report.

women to emerge from the pandemic with their assets intact, as well as track gendered investment and repayment rates. These data collection protocols may also offer models for increased gender data collection in other County programming.

Focus Area 3: Applying a gender lens to County programming, efforts and investments in diversifying industries that employ residents.

Relevant Recommendations from the “Pathways for Economic Resiliency: Los Angeles County 2021 – 2026” Report:

Allocate resources to train workers for high growth industries and develop a comprehensive business attraction strategy. There is an opportunity to retrain workers to re-enter the workforce in occupations likely to pay a living wage today and remain a viable occupation in the long-term. The County should implement a comprehensive sector-specific training strategy commencing with advanced manufacturing and healthcare.
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Relevant Strategies from the “Pathways for Economic Resiliency Implementation Plan”:

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| 1. Improve access to the County hiring process for underserved populations, especially youth through the Countywide Youth Bridges Program (CYBP). |
| 2. Through the Fair Chance campaign, engage businesses to educate them about and encourage them to hire justice-involved individuals. |
| 3. Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in County worker protection services. |
| 4. Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in County contract language. |

How County departments apply a gender lens:

The County has a robust infrastructure concerning job creation and job placement for County residents. WDACS is the first line response to economic shock caused by job loss. In WDACS, “the goal is to take dislocated and displaced workers into jobs rapidly”. WDACS also has layoff prevention and workforce retraining programs. Their workforce training model focuses on moving more of the workforce into family supporting jobs through targeted population services. Gendered data collection protocols are largely absent in the economic programming we examined.

While the benefits of family sustaining work are gender neutral, the pandemic revealed the gender disparities that are worsened for women in households absent a family sustaining jobs. It is generally difficult to assess the impact of such programming on women vs. other genders as there is very little gender data collection across programs. WDACS notes that gendered data is only collected if required by the program funding source and that their ability to apply a gender lens to their work currently primarily relies on qualitative assessments.

For ISD its focus on small businesses and CBE’s is an important workforce diversity enhancement tool, as the working assumption is these types of businesses are more likely to be women and/or minority owned. WDACS and ISD both report external partnership as a key component to this programming. ISD also reports that the County is

often the market partner in this approach, for example the County is the market partner with the Los Angeles Area Chamber in the One LA Regional Collaborative. ISD also engages in a great deal of technical assistance, which the department sees as an important diversity measure in County programming to increase access to County programming and access to County contracting.

Current challenges to applying a gender lens:

Departments cited a lack of programming in this section due to perceived legal restrictions, as well as a lack of data collection to create accountability when looking at racial/gendered hiring policies or reviewing the contracting process.

Opportunities to enhance and expand the gender lens:

Opportunities exist to enhance the gender lens applied to workforce development that address perceived legal limitations and the lack of data collected disaggregated by gender. Departments can conduct deeper dives into increased gendered data collection possibilities and program examination in order to conduct analyses inclusive of gender and other demographic variables as desired. ISD has raised the possibility of inclusion of the importance of diversity messaging woven into the technical assistance provided by the County.

WDACS noted that while traditional programming rarely features gender data, new programs relying less on entitlement program funding are more likely to adopt equity frameworks that are more intentional and require increased demographic data collection. Even more encouraging is that CARES Act funding requires more demographic data collection as well. Some departments also advocate for the use of proxy measures where data on gender and race is currently non-existent. For example, the Equity Index produced by the Department of Regional Planning²⁷ could be used as a proxy measure for demographic data not currently being collected, which provides web-based mapping tool that displays socioeconomic, demographic and other information to identify areas that are experiencing greater degrees of challenges, however its use would need to be approved by the Board. Departments were also hopeful the new Board anti-poverty measures and the creation of the Economic and Workforce Development Department would incorporate more data collection protocols that allow for the collection of more demographic variables, particularly gender.

Focus Area 4: Applying a gender lens to County investment in the childcare infrastructure within its supervisorial districts and efforts, and partnerships to promote flexibility in post-pandemic work arrangements.

Relevant Recommendations from the "Pathways for Economic Resiliency: Los Angeles County 2021 – 2026" Report:

²⁷ "Equity Index" <https://planning.lacounty.gov/equity>

Support the Hardest Hit, Least-Resourced Workers by Providing Additional Subsidies for Childcare Services. The County should expand childcare access through existing voucher programs so that workers have additional time and capacity to focus on upward mobility.

Address the digital divide and expand access to technology. Collaborate with community-based organizations and education partners to provide digital literacy training, while providing subsidies for internet access and information technology tools to workers in communities with limited access to reliable internet. This would enable workers to access virtual workforce training and remote work opportunities. In addition, the County should streamline the permitting process for development of regional broadband infrastructure.

Relevant Strategies from the "Pathways for Economic Resiliency Implementation Plan":

1. Provide childcare vouchers to the least resourced workers and low-income families.

2. Provide childcare stabilization grants and technical assistance support to family childcare providers and centers.

3. Expand early care and education (ECE) facilities by supporting providers in navigating licensing, zoning, permitting, and other regulatory processes that pose barriers.

4. Improve the compensation and qualifications of the workforce so there is a sufficient supply of qualified early educators by continuing to advocate for increased compensation through restructuring of the state subsidy reimbursement system.

5. Reduce barriers to professional development opportunities.

6. Provide equitable access to broadband services to all by increasing accessibility to the internet, providing digital devices, and empowering individuals through digital literacy, with a key focus on equity, inclusion, sustainability, and security.

How County departments apply a gender lens:

The pandemic laid bare the fact that access to affordable childcare is disproportionately a women's issue in every household type across the nation. All models of pandemic economic recovery models that are gender inclusive emphasize the importance of addressing the lack of childcare infrastructure in communities across the nation. In the WGI townhalls there were calls for the expansion of County run childcare facilities and supports to expand existing facilities. Our discussion with the Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE) stressed that the County is not a childcare provider. Rather, the County provides and maintains facilities for private childcare operators at subsidized rates.

The Child Support Services Department (CSSD) extensively applies a gender lens to its work, as they serve custodial parents who are primarily women. They are the largest anti-poverty program the County currently has for female service recipients, 47% of the income for female headed households in the County comes from the establishment and enforcement of support orders. The goal in this work is to transition clients off of assistance and the majority of clients do transition off of assistance. This process has a long lead time from the opening of case to 1st payment, which can range from 140-150

days if it's a simple support order, longer if it's a contested order. If the custodial parent (parent with primary physical custody of the child), receives a \$0 dollar order of support, meaning the obligated parent is deemed unable to provide financial support for the child (children), CSSD refers the client to other support programming in the County.

The pandemic also provided opportunities for more family friendly work environments, as well as exposed gaps in access to high-speed internet across the County that impacted work and obtaining services. From the WGI townhalls, we heard particular concern that the pandemic exposed an enormous digital divide that disproportionately impacted older women. The County took the view that building out internet access and digital programming was an equity issue and concerning economic recovery, ISD and DCBA worked to tackle the digital divide experienced by local and small businesses with an assumption that small businesses are more likely to be women and/or minority owned. These efforts will include an E-procurement system designed to simplify and standardize the procurement process increasing ease of access for small businesses. The "Delete the Divide" program was a pandemic product created to eliminate technical gaps for local and small business.

Current challenges to applying a gender lens:

The pandemic had a profound impact on childcare providers around the County. The Director of the OAECE summarized effect of the pandemic in the following way: "Over the course of the pandemic, ECE providers have had to operate under public health restrictions that limited the number of children that could be enrolled. This, coupled with families' concerns about potential exposure to the virus as well as their own loss of income from the pandemic, has resulted in a dramatic loss of income for ECE providers. While income has been reduced by half, on average, expenses have also increased because of public health requirements (e.g., cleaning/sanitation, personal protective equipment). For many providers, particularly family childcare home businesses, this has meant cutting their own salaries, taking on personal credit card debt, and temporarily or permanently closing their doors."²⁸

The County focused on stabilizing existing ECEs. In Fall 2020, LA County DCBA, LACDA, and OAECE, in partnership with the LA County ECE COVID-19 Response Team provided \$10 million of CARES Act funding through operations grants to 113 ECE centers and 349 family childcare providers to help ECE programs re-open or have the ability to remain open. On July 27, 2021, LA County appropriated an additional \$10 million to LACDA through the American Rescue Plan Act to launch in Fall 2021 a second round of stabilization grants to support ECE programs to remain open and help re-open more programs. At the time of writing this report 75% of centers have re-opened, however the profession has lost 25% of its workforce creating strains on an already taxed system moving forward. One concern that we heard from stakeholders is that while the state continues to increase the qualifications for childcare workers there are no commensurate

²⁸ "PLAN AND FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNMET NEEDS FOR THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE" BOS Motion Response.

increases in the pay associated with these positions. This compounds problems for women who are the primary seekers of childcare services and are overrepresented in the childcare services industry.

Opportunities to enhance and expand the gender lens:

In the Report “PLAN AND FRAMEWORK FOR IMPLEMENTING A COMPREHENSIVE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR UNMET NEEDS FOR THE EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE” OAECE and partner departments provide a detailed blueprint for a more sustainable early childcare system across the County. Essential to the implementation of this plan is an understanding that the entire system is interconnected, meaning changing one component of early childhood care changes every component of care. Further recent debates at all levels of government are more supportive of considering childcare part of the nation’s and individual communities’ infrastructure development and there is more discussion about how to fund childcare infrastructure than at any other point in modern history.

The pandemic has led a shift in more positive evaluation of the value of teleworking, with departments reporting that women are leading this culture shift in perception that will have important ramifications given the size of the County as an employer. Several County departments are also moving into more shared/ sanitized spaces that is more compatible with trends in private sector environments. Departments have commented that this move can serve as a model for other County departments and external governments to reconsider their working environments as a productive and cost cutting measure. This reexamination also creates space to consider the feasibility of increasing more family friendly policies in working arrangements. While family friendly policies are gender neutral, the benefits disproportionately help women in the workforce succeed. There was a great deal of enthusiasm across departments in leveraging and promotion of these County changes to influence workforce decision makers in the private sector.

Telework is an equity issue inside and outside the County and there is a sense the County as an employer will adopt more liberal telework policies post-pandemic, as these policies are more family friendly. The often-overlooked issue in this discussion is that telework options are not available to lower paid jobs and lower income families who do not have high-speed internet access at home. The County has looked to partner with schools on the digital divide, but the County should also focus these efforts on partnering with employers to make telework an option for more low wage workers. Many administrative, clerical, and service-based professions can be evaluated for conversion to telework and would overwhelmingly benefit lower income women.

Recommendations:

The purpose of this project was to gather qualitative data concerning trends, strengths, limitations, and opportunities to apply a gender lens to County economic resiliency efforts. This study is in line with the County's mission to establish itself as a leader in gender equity and ensure economic mobility for women and girls by increasing their assets and income, promoting economic wellbeing, and applying a gender lens to the County's policies, programs, and services. In light of the disproportionately negative economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women, the report will focus on programming and data collection practices with County departments to assess how women fare at all stages of their lives in accessing the County's social protection system that helps residents to guard against and repair various economic shocks. After consideration of County reports, WGI townhalls and the WGI informational interviews and survey of departments we arrive at the following programmatic and data collection recommendations to promote greater economic mobility for female identifying residents of the County:

1. **Task departments with creating a gender-related data inventory of programs and services with the goal of increasing gendered data collection capacity.** Many data management systems used in the County's economic, health and social services programming are owned by the State of California and do not require or allow the collection of data disaggregated by gender. One department noted that there is very little sexual orientation and gender identity, and expression (SOGIE) data collected, and the County should consider more options in capturing gender identity. An assessment of how these systems can be merged with one another is also crucial to fully applying a gender lens to the County's vast body of work.
2. **Continue to assist departments in improving their data collection practices, with an eye toward preparing them to have the capacity to conduct a baseline economic census of residents by Supervisorial district every 10 years disaggregated by gender, race, and age.** There is very little sub-national economic data disaggregated by gender in existence, which leave us with a gendered blind spot in our understanding of the region's economic mobility and resiliency needs. This lack of data also leaves departments without key baseline information about the targeted populations their programming seeks to serve.
3. **Evaluate more opportunities to award resources with an equity lens.** The use of more data-driven decision making (particularly concerning anti-poverty programming) will support an economic needs-based funding model.
4. **Work with counsel to develop legal guidelines and/or trainings for departments about their legal abilities to incorporate a gender lens into their work.** Lack of understanding of the legal landscape makes departments hesitant to try to address inequity and many believe it prevents the County from engaging in data collection or any programming for target groups. Helping to clarify these concerns will allow departments the freedom to think creatively about how to address inequity within a legally permissible framework.

5. **Pursue legislative advocacy at the state and federal levels to amend data collection policies to include gender.** Based on recommendation number one, the County should pursue strategies that would allow for the collection of disaggregated gender data. Adding gender data collection protocols enhances the County's ability to apply a gender lens to its work and will enable to the state to apply a gender lens to its policies.
6. **Include childcare infrastructure in regional land use economic development planning, particularly in the analysis of County buildings and County-held land.** Considering how to incorporate childcare into regional planning at the district and individual building level is key to ensuring an adequate supply of childcare facilities.
7. **Continue to support use of the Gender Impact Assessment tool to assist departments in applying a gender lens to their internal and external operations.** The WGI has been working in partnership with the OCIO and a departmental workgroup to establish a custom Gender Impact Assessment, which is a best practice for setting and tracking gender equity goals in internal and external government operations.
8. **Departments should explore the use of interim proxy measures for data disaggregated by gender and other pertinent demographic data until greater data management capacity can be built within the County.** Departments should work with OCIO and CEO to identify proxy measures that may be used to assist them in applying a gender lens to their work and work to build greater gendered data collection capacity.

Departments included in the qualitative study were (in order of interview):
Internal Services Department (ISD)
Department of Public Social Services (DPSS)
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services Department (WDACS)
Department of Public Health (DPH)
Child Support Services Department (CSSD)
Department of Consumer and Business Affairs (DCBA)
Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education (OAECE)
Office of Chief Information Officer (OCIO)