



County of Los Angeles CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE

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FESIA A. DAVENPORT
Chief Executive Officer

December 17, 2021

To: Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, Chair
Supervisor Hilda L. Solis
Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
Supervisor Janice Hahn
Supervisor Kathryn Barger

From: Fesia A. Davenport
Chief Executive Officer

Board of Supervisors
HILDA L. SOLIS
First District

HOLLY J. MITCHELL
Second District

SHEILA KUEHL
Third District

JANICE HAHN
Fourth District

KATHRYN BARGER
Fifth District

PROGRESS REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY INITIATIVE ON WOMEN AND GIRLS (ITEM NO. 9, AGENDA OF DECEMBER 13, 2016)

On December 13, 2016, the Board of Supervisors (Board) unanimously adopted a motion by Supervisors Kuehl and Solis establishing the Los Angeles County Initiative on Women and Girls (WGI). The WGI is tasked 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).

The motion calls for quarterly progress reports to the Board. This is the fourteenth report and covers the period from September 2021 through November 2021.

Gender Impact Assessment (GIA)

The WGI has begun Phase III of the GIA project, which includes final production of documents for the GIA Toolkit and the creation of a GIA portal on MyLACounty. Both the toolkit and portal are expected to be completed in January 2022. Also, this quarter, the WGI finalized the evaluation process to procure a contractor to produce a series of training videos. The training materials and scripts were developed by equity subject matter expert, Refolda Consulting, and will provide step-by-step instructions for County employees to capture gender-related data and assess policies and programs to discover and address gaps and inequities.

Employee Climate Survey

The results of the *2021 Countywide Anonymous Employee Climate Survey* were analyzed and compared favorably to the results from the 2019 survey. The WGI met with County partners, the Department of Human Resources, and County Counsel to review and craft recommendations. A report is currently in production and is expected to be released in January 2022, detailing the survey findings and the County's planned response.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

This quarter, the WGI supported County Counsel's work in drafting the CEDAW ordinance, *Implementation of the Principles of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. On November 16, 2021, the Board adopted a motion to implement the principles underlying CEDAW and added Division 13 to Title 13 (Public, Peace, Morals and Welfare) of the County Code. To date, the County of Los Angeles is the largest county in the United States to adopt a CEDAW ordinance.

Economic Resiliency and Mobility

The WGI completed the research report, *Applying a Gender Lens to Economic Resiliency in Los Angeles County* (Attachment I), this quarter. This report investigates how the County applies a gender lens and uses intersectional, disaggregated gender data to guide the development and use of programs that build economic capacity and aid in the COVID-19 recovery planning. The report concludes with recommendations on how to apply a gender lens, how to measure the economic mobility of women and girls and suggests continued ways for the County to meet its goal to lead the charge in gender equity. This report was approved, received, and filed by the WGI Governing Council (GC) at the November 15, 2021 meeting. The WGI plans to incorporate key recommendations from this report into the WGI Final Report to the Board slated for submission in March 2022.

Achieving Gender Parity in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD)

On July 21, 2021, the WGI submitted to the Board the Justice & Securities Strategies, Inc. report, *Recruiting, Hiring, and Retaining Women in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department*. On November 2, 2021, the Board brought forth a motion directing County Counsel, in consultation with the Chief Executive Office's Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations Branch and the WGI, to report back in 60 days with an analysis of the Peace Officer Standards and Training requirements and make

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recommendations on legislative and regulatory changes that would promote gender parity within the LASD.

Improving the Justice System for Girls

The graduate students from the University of California, Los Angeles, Luskin School of Public Affairs completed their Applied Policy Project alongside the WGI At-Promise Girls Ad Hoc Committee in June 2021. In September 2021, the WGI GC approved a revised report with a directive to begin outreach to relevant partners and stakeholders. In the coming months, the WGI staff will present the report findings and recommendations to the Commission for Children and Families, the Board of the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and the newly established Youth Commission.

WGI Homeless Ad Hoc Committee

The Homeless Women Ad Hoc Committee developed a set of policy recommendations to assist in finding solutions for the growing problem of women experiencing homelessness. The recommendations, developed after a series of meetings featuring women with lived experience, service providers, and County experts, were presented to the WGI GC at the October 2021 meeting. The recommendations were approved by the WGI GC and subsequently sent to the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Homelessness for input and consideration.

Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee Report

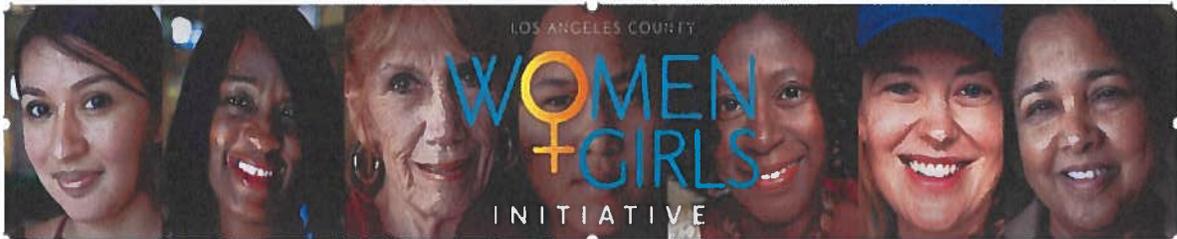
On November 15, 2021, the WGI GC approved the Virtual Town Hall report (Attachment II) containing recommendations from the five community town halls conducted during the summer and fall of 2020. The report includes a companion memo from the WGI GC to the Board of the most salient community recommendations, highlighting and building on the issues most important to the WGI GC for how to better serve women and girls in the County.

Should you have any questions concerning this matter, please contact me or Abbe Land, WGI Executive Director, at (213) 332-4942 or aland@ceo.lacounty.gov.

FAD:JMN:TJM
AL:AW:pp

Attachments

c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
County Counsel



Applying a Gender Lens to Economic Resiliency in Los Angeles County

A Women and Girls Initiative Research Report

November 15, 2021

Applying a Gender Lens to Economic Resiliency in Los Angeles County

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

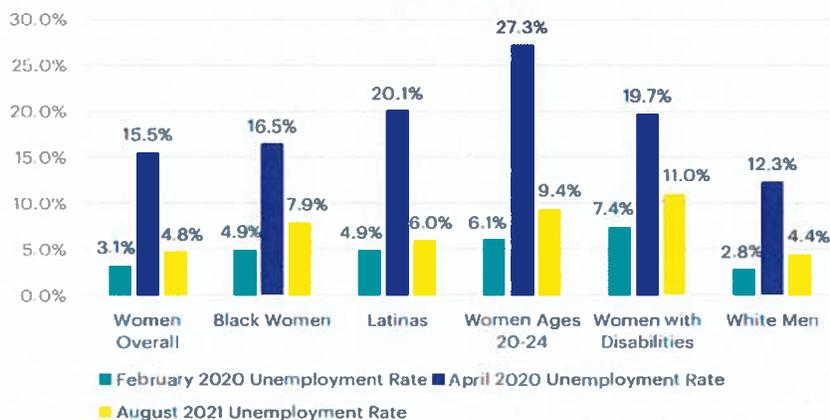
⁸ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/lizeltting/2021/09/09/the-august-jobs-report-shows-exactly-what-she-cession-means/?sh=25b209f07fba>

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 functions 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 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)



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November 15, 2021

COMPANION POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY WOMEN AND GIRLS INITIATIVE'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AD HOC COMMITTEE

The Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee (Committee) was formed to facilitate a series of Virtual Town Halls (VTH) on behalf of the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) during the summer and fall months of 2020. The purpose of the VTH was to hear from the community ways to prioritize and center the experiences of women and girls in Los Angeles County. Conducted during the height of the pandemic, these VTH's focused a great deal on the negative impacts to women and girls, especially essential workers, low income individuals, women of color, as well as other populations hit particularly hard during the pandemic. The accompanying VTH Report (attached), discusses the systemic inequities that led to these disparate outcomes during the pandemic and contains recommendations to help mitigate and eliminate future adverse impacts on our most vulnerable populations.

The companion policy recommendations highlighted here are an amalgamation of the community recommendations, personal and professional experiences and align with the WGI Strategic Framework. These recommendations are of critical and urgent importance for ensuring the economic mobility of women, stabilizing the health and mental health of women and girls, particularly women of color, and to better understand the unique needs of women at every stage of their lives by collecting and using disaggregated data to drive decision-making and fund the most appropriate services. It is also important to underscore that while many of these recommendations address the same or similar needs for a variety of women, the impact of services and supports may vary greatly depending on age, race, and socioeconomic status.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

Training, Recruitment, Job Placement/Employment in Traditional and Non-traditional Careers While the community identified a need to further increase the number of women in trade based employment, the Committee felt it equally and/or more so important to embed **comprehensive, on-going, workforce staff development training** in all workforce development efforts to ensure successful programs. This Committee asserts that unconscious bias and stereotyping can influence workforce staff subconsciously when interviewing candidates for potential job training opportunities and position placement, as well as what services are offered, and the support given. Role

models matter, and it is important that workforce development staff and

management/leadership reflect the racial and gender identity of the clients and the communities they serve. It is the position of this Committee that all workforce development programming **first elevates the consciousness of staff** through race and gender bias, and gender equity training to ensure foundational success of any workforce development program.

- ***Ensure gender parity and racial equity in all workforce development and training efforts inclusive of workforce staff and leadership. Embed an on-going comprehensive staff development program to train all staff on race, age, gender implicit bias, and gender equity.***
- ***Focus career development strategies on occupations where women are underrepresented such as IT/Tech, construction, and trades, etc. and develop strategies for marginalized women inclusive of those 55+ to increase employment and economic security. Ensure career development efforts include training, recruitment, job placement, how to maintain employment, and career advancement.***
- ***Provide an annual report of Community Workforce Agreements outcomes by gender. Include corrective actions as enforcement of CWA requirements.***

Increase Resources for Childcare

The community focused on expanding the definition of childcare to include care for school-aged children and teenage girls after school. The idea of broadening existing programming at County facilities inclusive of financial literacy, STEAM, girl sports, and leadership development were all central themes considered instrumental to the success and economic stability of girls later in life while exposing them to new ideas and constructive activities.

The Committee wants to stress the connection between **affordable and accessible childcare and the economic mobility of women.** The childcare predicament of essential workers, many of whom are women, and women of color, was brought to the forefront during the pandemic and exposed how broken the system of childcare is in this country. Moreover, a lack of affordable and accessible childcare for all women makes it more difficult to work non-traditional hours and in non-traditional fields such as construction and the trades. In addition, a lack of childcare can cause a woman to start and stop their career at various critical points disrupting their career trajectory. For girls and teenaged parents, a lack of affordable childcare reduces high school graduation rates and can stagnate economic mobility for years to come. And, equally important to solving this childcare crisis, is **increasing the overall number of childcare workers, and ensuring they make a living wage.**

- ***Increase affordable and accessible childcare resources inclusive of essential workers, teenage parents, and young women. Make programming***

available for school-aged children and teenagers at County owned facilities to include STEAM, sports, leadership development and literacy programs.

DATA AND BUDGET

Establish “Actionable” Policies for Women of Color

This Committee stresses the importance of ensuring that a **gender and race lens always be applied when creating policies that impact women of color**. All women, especially women of color should not be considered an “afterthought” when developing policies rather there should be upfront consideration for the cultural and economic differences experienced by women of color and the disparate outcomes that result from decisions made when these differences are not factored in at the onset of policy discussions.

- ***Prioritize policies that address the needs of women of color as it relates to mental and physical health, and financial stability. When developing future policies, acknowledge and address the different cultural and economic realities that impact women of color.***

Disaggregate Data by Gender

This recommendation has been a recurring theme throughout the work of the WGI. There is a marked absence of data on women and girls. Without data, decision makers are challenged to identify, measure and address equity, bias and parity issues when making funding decisions. This Committee strongly supports **the implementation of systems to capture data by gender within every County department** that offers services and supports to the public. Baseline data should be established to substantiate which programs, services and interventions work to lift women and their families out of poverty and funding should be based on data that supports program efficacy over time.

- ***Data should be disaggregated by gender, age, and race. Make budget policy and decisions using a race and gender lens. Factor in the various stages of a woman’s life when making changes to services for women and girls.***
- ***Establish baseline data on poverty rates and measure the number of women who move out of poverty and become stable as a result of County services and interventions.***

Physical and Mental Health and Domestic Violence

The community focused on the undeniable connection between issues of trauma and abuse, homelessness, and domestic violence, and how these interwoven factors intersect at mental and physical health. The community was adamant in recommending that **services be trauma informed and culturally competent**. The Committee urges an increase in **outreach to women of color and women 55+** who can easily fall into depression from increased isolation. In line with culturally competent services, the Committee feels that **more women of color should be encouraged to enter the mental health field as well as serve as trusted messengers; especially needed are**

those with lived experience.

- ***Fund and increase mental health access to girls, young women, inclusive of women 55+, in neighborhoods with a disproportionate number of women and girls of color, and essential workers. Use data to develop strategies that target services to the most vulnerable and highest risk. Engage school resources and CBO's embedded within the community to provide and promote services more broadly.***



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
**WOMEN
+ GIRLS**
INITIATIVE

WGI Virtual Townhall Report

November 15th, 2021



Background

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors (Board) established the Women and Girls Initiative (WGI) in 2016 and appointed the Governing Council (GC) in 2017. This group of thought leaders were chosen by the Board to represent the issues impacting women and girls in a meaningful way, to make recommendations to enhance Los Angeles County (County) services for this population, and to help find ways to create more equitable outcomes in the areas of education, housing, career advancement, and health, to name a few. Upon establishing the WGI GC, the Board instructed this body to conduct town halls as a platform to engage with communities across Los Angeles County (LA County), draw from lived experience, and produce recommendations for how to better serve women and girls.

In March of 2018, during Women's History Month, the WGI held an initial set of community convenings in each Supervisorial district to hear directly from non-profits, churches, civic leaders, and other community leaders. In an effort to learn more about the most pressing issues negatively impacting women and girls in their communities, these community leaders were asked to elevate the intergenerational needs of this population and bring forth the requisite recommendations to support positive outcomes for the future. These discussions, a foundational component for developing the WGI Strategic Framework, were used to guide the work of the WGI and continue as an integral part of the work of WGI to this day. The insights from the community, panelists and our expert WGI members, have been instrumental in pushing this work forward and have been used as the platform on which the series of Virtual Town Halls, discussed within this report, are based. The initial community convenings were used as the springboard into the next phase of community dialogue and helped us to accelerate our efforts by expanding our reach, and provided the guideposts we needed to host a series of more thorough, topic based town halls that touched a much larger community audience.

During the Summer and Fall of 2020, the WGI was able to meet this goal by convening community representatives and conducting five virtual town hall events (VTH). While the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated these events to become virtual, in many ways this expanded accessibility to community members who would not have previously been able to attend due to work, childcare, or transportation constraints. The town hall themes were as follows:

- Women and Girls of Color
- Women and the Economy
- Women 55+
- Women and Girls and the impact of Domestic-Violence and Homelessness
- The Future of Women and Girls in LA County

While each of the main topic areas were distinct, all these townhalls integrated the realities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, the panel of experts shared their experiences around what was happening in their community in real-time.

For each town hall the WGI secured panelists who are experts in the subject matter, and work closely with the communities they serve. Close attention was paid to balancing the

diversity of panelists to ensure they were reflective of LA County. Each town hall also had several County experts who asked clarifying questions and provided input to the conversations.

The intention for each town hall was to hear directly from the people working closely with their communities, who could share insights on how the County could adapt to better meet the needs of the populations they serve. Specifically, the WGI aimed to use expertise from panelists to then develop detailed policy recommendations. Each town hall began with a presentation sharing contextual data to shed light on challenges women and girls were facing, and how the COVID-19 pandemic had changed or exacerbated those issues. After these presentations, WGI moderators presented questions to the panelists, allowing each of them to share knowledge about the populations they serve, and provide insight on what the County is doing well, or could change.

To identify patterns in a qualitative setting and ensure all participants had the same opportunities to offer critiques of current County practices, the panelists were asked the same three questions related to what the County can do to improve the way it operates:

1. What do women and girls need to reach a better economic and healthy future?
2. What is one action the County should do today to improve the overall quality of life for women and girls?
3. What is one action the County can stop today to improve the overall quality of life for women and girls?

Approach

While each of the five town halls was centered around its own theme, we heard similarities from panelists across all of them. These commonalities reinforced just how intertwined issues like poverty, domestic violence, homelessness, and lack of resource access are; both in their root causes and solutions. Rather than create recommendations divided by the town hall topics, we instead found five common threads among what panelists shared with us: Economic Resiliency, Health and Domestic Violence, Education and Programs, Budget, and Data. These threads encompass what our panelists emphasized as the most critical areas in need of change. In the following report, we describe each of these threads, what town hall participants had to say about them, and the policy recommendations arising from each. Additionally, we consider the intergenerational effects, as well as which recommendations have implications for older women, girls and young women, and women of color. While definitions vary across sources, WGI defines “older women” as those who are 55+, and girls and young women as those in childhood, teenage years, or 20’s.

Many of recommendations found in this report include benefits to all ages from girls to older women and should not be considered as precluding one population or another. It is also important to underscore that while many of these recommendations address the same or similar needs for a variety of women, the impact of services and supports may vary greatly depending on age, race, and socioeconomic status. The recommendations, while calling out specific outcomes for girls, women, women of color and older women,

should be recognized as having intergenerational benefits and have the potential to improve the lives of all women and the whole of society.

Lastly, the WGI received a high volume of valuable feedback from participants that could not feasibly be contained in the body of the report. This feedback is contained in Appendix A as to maintain a comprehensive record of what suggestions were made during the town halls. The WGI also heard suggestions about initiatives currently underway- this ongoing work is described in a following section.

Statistics

Prior to facilitating the town halls, the WGI team conducted a literature review and overview of existing data, to identify what we already know about the most pressing issues facing women in LA County. In this search we focused attention to vulnerable groups, particularly women of color and both young and older women. What participants would later share at the town halls reinforced a glaring lesson from the literature review; that women of color, at all turns, were bearing the worst manifestations of the COVID-19 pandemic, in terms of health outcomes, as well as socioeconomic and intrapersonal ones. The following are some of the data points that make a compelling case for change to the status quo in LA County.

Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an enormous surge in unemployment for LA County residents. While a rise in unemployment hit all groups, people with less than a high school education were hit the hardest.¹ This economic need becomes even more pressing when we consider data from the American Progress Annual Social and Economic Supplement that shows **Hispanic and Black women** are far more likely than white and Asian women to be single heads of households and, therefore, the main source of support for their family.² Large swaths of our population were pushed into poverty, or pushed farther beneath the poverty line as a result of these compounding factors.

The Los Angeles County Health Survey revealed another issue that became even more critical during the COVID-19 pandemic: **women aged 50 and older in LA County experience social isolation at concerning high rates**. Over half of Asian women in this age group reported that they rarely or never receive the social and emotional support needed, while white women reported the highest rates of satisfaction.³

¹ Elise, Gould, and Valerie Wilson. "Black Workers Face Two of the Most Lethal Preexisting Conditions for Coronavirus-racism and Economic Inequality." *Economic Policy Institute*. 1 June 2021

² Frye, Jocelyn. "On the Frontlines at Work and at Home: The Disproportionate Economic Effects of the Coronavirus Pandemic on Women of Color." *Center for American Progress*. 2020. Web.

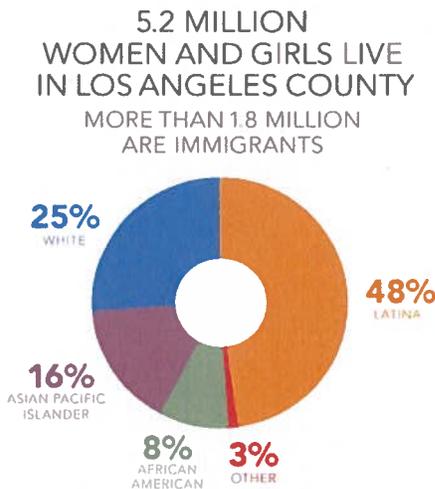
³ Women and Aging in Los Angeles County." *KCET*. USC Sol Price Center for Social Innovation, 19 Jan. 2021. Web

With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic and the digital divide, **white adults in the US currently have significantly higher access to the internet at home, compared to Black or Hispanic adults.**⁴ The pandemic led many non-essential workers to transition to working entirely from home, and students began at-home learning. While in lockdown, this disparity presented challenges for both working from home and at-home learning. Students who did not have access to wi-fi or the fundamental tools to participate in class were oftentimes left behind. Women, who are much more likely than men to be the primary caretakers of children, were presented with additional challenges as mothers trying to work from home and support their children’s education and childcare needs.

As we will detail throughout this report, concurrent issues like homelessness and domestic violence also worsened throughout the pandemic, driven by poverty, isolation, addiction, and lack of support networks and resources. While these issues remain widespread, it is critical that the most impacted or vulnerable groups are included and prioritized in future decision making.

Populations of Interest

The pie chart below illustrates the percentages of women and girls in the County of Los Angeles based on data from 2018. Non-white women and girls make up 75 percent of the total number of women and girls in this County, and more than one third are immigrants.



Age Group	Female	
	Number	Percent
Total Population	5,112,188	100.00%
Age Under 15	895,730	17.50%
Age 15-17	185,868	3.60%
Age 18-24	485,547	9.50%
Age 25-34	795,457	15.60%
Age 35-54	1,373,649	26.90%
Age 55-64	618,044	12.10%
Age 65+	757,893	14.80%

The second image above, generated from the 2019 Population Census, provides population data of LA County female residents, broken down by age groups. The WGI is tasked with the ambitious goal of developing recommendations to better serve this huge population of over 5,000,000.

⁴ "Demographics of Internet and Home Broadband Usage in the United States." *Pew Research Center: Internet, Science & Tech.* Pew Research Center, 26 Apr. 2021. Web

It is important to note that women aged 65 and older are the fastest growing demographic of women within LA County. According to projections by the California Department of Finance, between the 40-year period from 2010-2050, this population will roughly double in size⁵. This group will also become more ethnically and racially diverse than its current composition.⁶

Additionally, women and girls face a myriad of challenges, compared to their male counterparts. While they comprise a roughly equal portion of the population and workforce to men, women are more likely to live in poverty.⁷ Within this group, Latina and African American women face the highest poverty rates, at 23 percent, followed by Asian American and White women. This disparity, along with many others brought to light by virtual town hall participants, helped inform and motivate the policy recommendations to follow.

⁵ "Healthy Aging: A Guide to IMPORTANT HEALTH TOPICS AMONG OLDER WOMEN IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY." LA County Department of Public Health, Oct. 2010, publichealth.lacounty.gov/owh/docs/HealthyAging_2010.pdf.

⁶ <https://www.kcet.org/neighborhood-data-for-social-change/women-and-aging-in-los-angeles-county>

⁷ *Report on the Status of Women in Los Angeles County*. Mount Saint Mary's, 2017, laccw.lacounty.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=NJktwmFfoac%3D&portalid=10.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY

What We Heard from the Women of LA County

Highlights from the Town Hall

True long-term solutions for economic resiliency requires thinking about the needs of girls and women at every stage of their development. As girls develop, exposure to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) is vital to ensure that they will have the opportunity to compete and thrive in emerging fields and technologies. As young women enter the workforce, addressing childcare issues, family leave policies, and financial literacy becomes paramount. As women advance in their careers and begin to reach retirement age, they need to understand how to invest in and build retirement savings and prepare for the future. Panelists felt that addressing these issues is fundamental to jumpstart mobility and buttress economic resiliency.

During these town halls, the link between financial earnings and homelessness was identified as a growing problem. The unfortunate wage gap between men and women, with women earning less on the dollar than their male counterparts, and an even wider gap for women of color, opens the door for the possibility of homelessness at different points in a women's life and could present real obstacles to maintaining economic stability, especially as women age. We learned from experts that older women are currently the fastest growing homeless population, compared to any other group. And, while all of these issues affect women and girls across the board, panelists felt that women of color should be most aggressively targeted for culturally appropriate programming and services that increases knowledge of what career options and resources are available to reach economic independence and to boost overall financial literacy.

The term "Essential Worker", coined during the COVID-19 pandemic revealed the high levels of women who keep the foundation of the economy moving. Essential workers act as connectors to the most critical resources in our society and include grocery clerks, retail salespersons, healthcare workers, teachers, and childcare providers. Panelists felt that going forward it is critical for the County to incorporate them as a specific population whose needs should be prioritized both in short-term and long-term planning of resource allocation and service-delivery.

New economic concepts to consider for essential workers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic include hazard pay, compensation when mandated to quarantine, equitable vaccine access, and mental-health needs given that the risk of danger to essential workers has been elevated to that of public-safety and emergency response personnel. Innovative strategies for economic mobility and career advancement could include establishing community investment programs through partnerships with medical providers, corporations, and other private industry partners. As the County takes a proactive approach to support essential workers and invests in programs and

infrastructure that will support their needs for the future, the underpinnings of the entire economy are too supported.

Implications for the County

The connection between economic resiliency and homelessness establishes an undeniable urgency to focus serious consideration on strategies to shore up safety nets for women and girls. Increased affordable housing and Additional Dwelling Units are one prong of a strategy that will also need to consider systemic barriers to women and women of color, institutional racism, generational poverty, childcare, the digital-technology divide, enhanced intergovernmental cooperation, access to community-based computer labs and workforce development opportunities, and more will need to continue to be a focus of the County to make lasting change. Better economic opportunities and protections for essential workers must be regarded as a priority and the future woman and girl will need to better understand the power of financial independence, the benefits of being financially literate and how economic stability and resiliency are connected to every other outcome in her life.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Identify which communities lack quality childcare and “out of school time” care for school aged children. Assess resources, determine gaps to address childcare and programming needs.

Recommendation Description:

As new models emerge for addressing childcare, a new definition may be warranted. The practice of childcare would therefore be expanded to include what happens to children and teens after school before parents come home from work. One speaker from the Children’s Data Network explained that once a young person is involved in one of our juvenile systems, it is highly likely they will continue to get caught in these systems. If the goal is to reduce the chances of a girl becoming systems involved and increase the chances for economic stability later in life, it is imperative that girls are provided with thoughtful and intentional childcare that increases her exposure to new ideas and constructive activities and helps to shape her mind for the future.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young Women

Increased self-esteem. More direction and focus. Greater exposure to new ideas and career options. Opportunities to establish positive relationships and gain mentors.

Women of Color and Older Women

More support. Greater availability during work hours; possible career advancement. Increased stability. Reduced stress.

Recommendation 2: Support efforts to bring more women into trade-based occupations and the healthcare field.

Recommendation Description:

Careers not traditionally held by women can usually be traced back to a barrier preventing women from entering the field. For instance, positions traditionally categorized as “trade jobs” may have lessor tolerance for unexpected childcare issues or may have been widely considered “man’s work”. One panelist from Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER) explained that compared to other states, California does not invest much at all in training for women entering new workforces. Advancing this recommendation widens opportunities for community economic development overall and levels the playing field for women and girls specifically.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Young Women/Women of Color and Older Women

Increased options and reduced barriers. Higher earning potential. Occupy a non-traditional space. Offered a different perspective. Learn to think differently. Broadened outlook.

Recommendation 3: Enforce Community Workforce and Project Labor Agreements and ensure that construction jobs are inclusive and support women and girls.

Recommendation Description:

As construction jobs return following the COVID-19 pandemic and the housing crisis creates opportunities to build more affordable housing, so do opportunities to enforce Community Workforce and Project Labor Agreements. These agreements call for recruitment and hiring of lower income workers into construction careers. It is important that women and girls be considered for these non-traditional careers and this recommendation looks to consider them into strong job quality standards on publicly funded or subsidized construction projects. As one panelist explained, these agreements are often instrumental as they provide incentives for companies to allocate contracts to women.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young
Women

Increased options and reduced barriers. Higher earning potential.

Women of Color

The potential for higher earnings. Occupy a non-traditional space. Offered a different perspective. Learn to think differently. Broadened outlook.

HEALTH AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

What We Heard from the Women of LA County

Highlights from the Town Hall

In many instances, women and girls with poor health outcomes are uninformed about what will lead to positive health outcomes. During the town halls, the community voiced the need for an increased focus on educating women and girls on how to make healthy lifestyle and relationship choices.

The community's recommendation aligned with the County's practice to treat domestic violence as a public health need and that both domestic violence (DV) and mental health require community-based advocates who can administer services in a culturally appropriate format by Community Based Organizations (CBOs) that have an established and direct relationship with the community.

Not surprisingly, the intersection of domestic violence, mental health, health, and public health became palpable during these discussions. Anecdotal evidence began to surface that DV, health concerns and poor outcomes were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. Isolation and a lack of available outlets to address the frustration and mental health fallout resulted in more suspected domestic violence incidences being pushed under the surface and a reported increased mental breakdowns and suicides. Older adults fell into depression and experienced related mental health needs due to the pandemic and require greater supports overall, unrelated to the pandemic. These supports include job and technology training, and increased integration into society to reduce loneliness and provide purpose.

Implications for the County

While health, mental health and public health impact women and girls differently than men, the differences are more disparate in communities of color. Women of color are more likely than the general population of women to experience and discuss domestic violence with their healthcare provider.ⁱ And, domestic violence advocates from the town halls reminded attendees that DV plays a role in the life of over 90 percent of people who become systems involved. These factors and more make it crucial that future generations view domestic violence through a public health lens and treat it from a mental health perspective, rather than a punitive one.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Work with CBOs to offer culturally competent mental-health and domestic violence education and programming in neighborhoods with a disproportion number of women of color and essential workers.

Recommendation Description:

The recommendation to work with CBOs that offer culturally competent programs and services was a theme across all the town halls for most issues. Mental health and domestic violence were called out in relationship to homelessness and were particularly concerning to town hall participants who felt that “speaking the language” of those most impacted by these issues can be the distinction between making a real difference in the lives of women of color and essential workers, or simply “scratching the surface”.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young Women	Witness/access to positive role models, less likely to repeat a cycle of violence. More likely to normalize mental health support. More likely to make healthy lifestyle/relationship choices. More likely to identify with providers, hear relevant messaging, set healthy goals, and generate overall life successes.
Women of Color and Older Women	Positive modeling for children, healthier, safer lifestyle. More likely to recognize patterns and stop repeated behaviors. Recognition of toxic and abusive behavior. More likely to break cycle, increase personal empowerment/self-esteem and become self-sufficient. Lessen disproportionate impacts on women of color. Nurture a community of women that may lack the level of support provided to other communities. Move the community from a focus on “survival” to active participation and healthy choices.

Recommendation 2: Work with community-based organizations and senior centers to support the aging community from falling into depression or experiencing other mental health related issues due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Recommendation Description:

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted seniors and older women different from any other subset of the population. This group was hit particularly hard due to financial stressors, lack of resources and isolation. While younger women had many of the same public health mandated restrictions, older women were at greater risk for serious complications and

death due to COVID-19 and therefore became more isolated than ever from family, friends, and social circles. Isolation, loneliness, and depression were a reality for many seniors before the pandemic and were only exacerbated by this challenging time. Increased mental health programming and services for older women continue to be necessary to keep them engaged, connected, and thriving, and supports the whole family.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Young Women	Ease older women's reliance on young mothers. Ease worry and fear. Potential for increased focus on nuclear family. Additional familial supports.
Older Women	Increased emotional/mental wellness. Social engagement to buoy spirits. Healthy contributions to the family and increased value to society at large. Heightened visibility of CBO community supports, increased connection to the community.

¹ Usha Ranji, Amrutha Ramaswamy, and Alina Salganicoff. "Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) Screening and Counseling Services in Clinical Settings - Issue Brief." *KFF*. 02 Dec. 2019. Web.

EDUCATION AND PROGRAMS

What We Heard from the Women of LA County

Highlights from the Town Hall

The community pushed strongly for an interdepartmental lens when discussing education and programs. Resources and assets like the libraries, recreation centers, community centers, beaches and other spaces allow for a plethora of options when building and implementing extra-curricular programs and services, mental health programming, financial and computer literacy, and restorative programs. The community pointed out that a single governmental agency, in this case, a school board, cannot provide all of these services alone, whereas the County has the authority to play a leadership role connecting and integrating services where residents lack the resources to thrive.

While education was an overall concern, the community keyed in the County's power to influence the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). The idea that rooting out racism through educational programming and incorporating an anti-racism curriculum resonated as well as making changes in how to look at and build programs. The discussion centered around building programming that seriously considers and addresses the structural and underlying issues that contribute to racism, gender inequality and homophobia upfront in order to prevent the inadvertent harms that create the need for the safety net in the first place. In addition, programming should address the school-to-prison pipeline which disproportionately impacts youth and mothers of color most.

Implications for the County

By increasing intentional, integrated, interdepartmental, intergenerational education and programming, the County has the power to fortify residents that are falling behind, and eliminate many of the systemic barriers that stymie the ability of individuals to reach their full potential. With the provision of financial and computer literacy education, girls and women will be positioned to compete in emerging fields, stand confidently on their own and contribute talent and resources to society. Ensuring that programs are built with a restorative, anti-"ism" lens opens the door to healing, helping to create a healthier society and stronger community.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Close the digital-technology divide. This includes immigrant communities, older adults and women and girls of color.

Recommendation Description:

The County currently has several initiatives underway to address the digital divide. One County employee described how the expansion of public wi-fi to the edges of County Library parking lots helped many students during remote learning. Another notable

initiative is Delete the Divide. Delete the Divide is aimed at empowering youth and small businesses in underserved communities who are adversely impacted by the digital divide with computer literacy skills as a pathway to well-paying careers. This is an exceptional undertaking and this recommendation contemplates how to include older adults who lack computer literacy and are at a greater risk for fraud, and the immigrant communities who oftentimes go unnoticed. The goal would be to increase technology use and knowability through programs and courses delivered in a culturally and age appropriate format by CBOs.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young Women	Prepares girls and young women for future jobs. Provides increased access to critical resources and infrastructure.
Women of Color and Older Women	Provides access to critical resources. Keeps skills sharp to compete in the labor market. Increases awareness of available opportunities and services.

Recommendation 2: Encourage and educate women and girls to begin saving and learning about ways to become financially stable and independent. Implement specific actions to widely promote existing programs and training on financial literacy. Use intergovernmental partnerships and influence to push the use of tools such as CalSave, a state program, to help build a nest egg for retirement.

Recommendation Description:

While financial literacy programs and tools exist to educate women and girls on the virtues of saving and investing, societal messaging and educational programming do not always place enough importance on these life strategies. One panelist brought to attention that 7 million working Californians currently have no access to a savings program through their employer. Where possible, promoting existing programs and training on financial literacy through County department websites and other platforms increases reach to the target population. Using intergovernmental partnerships to broaden the local outreach of state and federal programs are a fundamental approach to increase awareness and access.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young Women	Gained exposure to what is available. Increased personal power. Decreased potential to make poor financial choices with lifelong consequences. Potential to develop a healthy relationship with money.
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Women of Color	Greater chance of avoiding poverty and/or moving out of poverty.
Older Women	Better provisions for families. The potential for wiser use of resources. Less reliance on safety net funding. Increased independence and stability. Self-empowering and motivating.

Recommendation 3: Train young women on how to use existing County based tools that list resources, 211, social media pages, department pages and directories, health systems and institutions. Increase access to and awareness of resources to the public including child abuse reporting lines and other critical resources during crisis times when children are less visible and less able to access support.

Recommendation Description:

One simple life strategy that separates those who have adequate resources from those who do not may be in knowing how and where to get needs met. First, knowing what is available, then having the confidence to find and access what one needs can make a world a of difference to an individual who lacks exposure. Having the tools to navigate systems can be pivotal to moving an individual out of dangerous situations and/or into economic stability.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Young Women	Increased level of engagement. Better health and life outcomes. Exponential increase in familial exposure to programs and services through information sharing. Can provide additional safety when needed. Decreased isolation.
Women of Color and Older Women	Increased self-sufficiency and self-reliance. Increased access to services for the entire family.

BUDGET

What We Heard from the Women of LA County

Highlights from the Town Hall

Throughout the course of the town halls the topics of funding and budgets came up often, and panelists frequently addressed the need for a larger allocation of resources to address domestic violence, homelessness and housing, and a number of other issues that impact women in LA County. Several panelists also spoke up on the need to adapt the budgeting process to ensure that members of the community have an opportunity to influence where County dollars are spent. For example, a representative from the Native American Indian Commission emphasized that the County should speak with its dollars about where priorities are, and specifically brought the up the 'need for a gender-based budget and to think about how to dive deeper into how data is collected'.

Implications for the County

The importance of hearing directly from community and integrating feedback based on lived experience was woven into the purpose and structure of the WGI, and, these town halls. A part of the WGI legacy should be creating the structures for continued community engagement and ensuring that going forward women and girls have a stronger voice in how the County operates. While there are immediate changes to budget allocation that the WGI can recommend, we must look further down the road and ensure that women and girls for generations to come have proper avenues to influence how dollars are spent.

Recommendation

Recommendation 1: Establish ways to allow service providers and CBOs the flexibility to utilize funding in ways that best serve individual client needs.

Recommendation Description:

The need for flexible funding was brought up by multiple providers, due to how many funding restrictions hinder their work. Providers and community groups felt there is a critical need to access flexible spending accounts to fund individualized solutions to clients. For example, a woman experiencing domestic violence may need funds for transportation, or to purchase a home washer to avoid seeing her former abuser at the local laundromat. Financial needs for domestic violence survivors and community members in general come in all forms, and resources must reflect this. Any new funding that can be identified or created should be designed with input from CBOs and be as flexible as possible.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young Women	More economic needs met. Access to rapid response resources during crises.
Women of Color	Access to funding for immigrant communities, which may have unique needs. Provide funding for parents to support their children, through costs like books for schools.
Older Women	Provide funds appropriate for women in retirement. Meet additional healthcare needs for older women.

DATA

What We Heard from the Women of LA County

Highlights from the Town Hall

Town Hall panelists repeatedly mentioned the need for more data, as well as better disaggregated data. One panelist, from the organization Black Women for Wellness, made the point that the County should identify the structural underlying issues that contribute to racism, and then ensure its data points are set to evaluate those issues. For example, the County should ensure health outcome data for women is being tracked and analyzed with race as a disaggregate, to monitor changes in health inequity. Another panelist, from Khmer Girls in Action brought up that many South East Asian organizations and individuals have been encouraging the County to disaggregate data related to Asian Americans, since all groups are currently lumped together despite significantly different socioeconomic outcomes.

Implications for the County

As the WGI has noted in its work with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, LA County does in fact collect significant amounts of data, though it needs to refine data storage and dissemination strategies. It is critical that the County put more emphasis on the user experience as well as obtaining and analyzing data, to ensure that what is collected and published has real value for clients, departments, and other stakeholders.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Support legislation that would identify methods to collect and disaggregate data by gender in State mandated workforce and programmatic service reports.

Recommendation Description:

It is important to advocate for the increased collection of gender in demographic data collection, as well as improvement in data collection and dissemination where collection of gender identifiers is already happening. Rather than relying solely on new systems and processes for data collection, the production of a resolution outlining desired data disaggregation would be helpful to request from County partners at the State level. In addition to the collection of gendered data at the state level, advocating for departments to have greater access to State managed program recipient data would be beneficial in their ability to identify and address gender inequities in program administration and outreach efforts.

Anticipated Outcomes for Most Impacted Populations

Girls and Young Women	Increased representation. Stronger understanding of which sectors have growing female workforces.
Women of Color and Older Women	Increased representation. Greater opportunities to avoiding poverty and/or moving out of poverty.

Recommendation 2: The Chief Executive Office should direct all County departments to make a concerted effort to initiate data collection at the onset of a new program or during policy change. Data should be continually reviewed on no less than a bi-annual basis.

Recommendation Description:

Some County departments gather data for 2 to 3 years before assessing the outcomes and successes of a program or policy change. Implementing a practice of assessing data, even while a program is very young and in development, allows an opportunity to make on-the-spot changes to things that are not working. Regularly conducting data meetings as a department or team can be incredibly valuable to help shape programs and ensure services have the intended impact on clients and the community. By including feedback from providers and the community based on what the data show, the County can do its part to ensure that data are relevant and useful for stakeholders; and, can provide the necessary information to help guide changes the County needs to make to existing programs, services and policy.

Community Recommendations Currently Underway

In some instances, the community made recommendations for problems the County is actively applying solutions. This was an encouraging development both confirming that the County is moving in the right direction and exemplifying the County's alignment with the needs and desires of the community. The recommendations listed below have a nexus to programs and services described in this section. Through focused advocacy, the community should continue in its efforts to shape how these programs and services develop and provide feedback on what is working, what is not working, and the changes needed to make them better.

Recommendation 1: Identify ways to recruit more women and girls into the healthcare profession as the COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the demand for healthcare workers.

Initiatives Underway:

On February 9, 2021, the Los Angeles County Department of Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) in partnership with the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC), released a new report entitled, Pathways for Economic Resiliency. The report outlines an increase in demand for healthcare workers as there is a clear shortage of labor. Further, the report recommends that workers interested in securing jobs in the healthcare and social services industries would benefit in developing specialized skills in Patient Care, scheduling, and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). The County is in the planning stages, developing milestones and metrics for this initiative. A strong focus will center on greater recruitment of women in this high growth industry as well as others identified in the report.

Recommendation 2: Utilize community public health councils to connect essential workers with employers and County health officials to improve County Public Health Officer Orders. Implement processes to ensure that women and girls' needs are met when implementing future Orders for industries where women and girls are highly represented.

Initiatives Underway:

The Board of Supervisors (Board) directed the Department of Public Health to implement the Public Health Councils initiative to protect workers that have been highly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative supports workers from "Public Health Councils" to help ensure that employees in hard hit industries are protected by Los Angeles County Health Officer Orders and do not experience retaliation. Public Health Councils are comprised of workers that conduct peer-to-peer education with their co-workers regarding required safety and worksite compliance. The initiative also includes educational outreach to employers in these sectors regarding required infection control measures issued through Health Officer Orders.

Recommendation 3: Continue to support efforts to bring more women into trade-based occupations.

Initiatives Underway:

In November 2019, the Board approved the Community Workforce Agreement (CWA). The CWA is an agreement between Los Angeles County and the Los Angeles/Orange Counties Building and Construction Trades Council (LA/OC BCTC), its affiliated local unions, and the Southwest Regional Council of Carpenters. The CWA promotes Fair Labor practices and a supply of skilled and trained craft workers.

The Women in Trades Advisory Council is required by CWA Section 19.2 and has been established as a forum to engage in dialogue and recommendation development that defines and implements strategies to increase female recruitment, training, placement, and retention. The Inaugural Women in Trades Advisory Council meeting occurred on Wednesday, January 27, 2021.

Recommendation 4: Involve creative arts departments to help reduce the impacts of mental-health and DV across all County communities.

Initiatives Underway:

On May 1, 2021, the County kicked off Mental Health Awareness Month with the WE RISE campaign. WE RISE is an ongoing project the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health uses to educate residents and provides prevention programs to offer connection, hope, recovery, and wellbeing.

By leveraging art, performance, and creative expression, WE RISE events are calls to action to join a movement to breakthrough barriers and defy old assumptions about mental health and the many related social conditions, which compound problems and hurt our communities.

In November of 2017, the County also demonstrated that it views domestic violence as a public health issue by approving a motion relocating the Domestic Violence Council to the Department of Public Health. The Council is a coalition of community organizations, members of the public, and staff members who meet regularly and advise the Board and County Departments on intimate partner violence issues. This change also provided permanent funding and dedicated staff to the Council, ensuring domestic violence is treated as a critical priority.

Recommendation 5: Better organize and breakdown failure-to-protect data into specific, descriptive categories; properly detail and create a just and equitable method of determining why and when family separation procedures are applied.

Initiatives Underway:

The Office of the Domestic Violence Council currently has an ongoing committee that is co-chaired by the Domestic Violence Council, Department of Children and Family

Services (DCFS), and the Inter-Agency Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (ICAN). This committee is also working in conjunction with the UCLA Pritzker Center, which produced a white paper outlining the scope of the issue, as well as an overview of recommendations to create an equitable and effective system around child welfare investigations. This committee is addressing data, training, and policies related to failure to protect issues, and will be releasing a report in the latter part of 2021.

This concern arose from panelists who spoke about working with women at risk of having their children removed from their care. Women experiencing crises like domestic violence or homelessness are often reluctant to use County services for fear of losing guardianship over their own children. Advocates feel the data points and collection methods behind this process need more clarity and specificity. The lack of data related to tracking indices makes it difficult to understand the story for why the drastic occurrence of family separation is needed. To ensure a just and equitable method for determining when family separation should occur, the collection of the proper data is the appropriate first step.

Recommendation 6: Working in partnership with cities, related government agencies, private partners, labor groups and others develop a plan that improves the utility grid of the County so that updated broadband technologies can be installed. The plan should prioritize communities that have been disproportionately impacted by a lack of reliable internet access.

Initiatives Underway:

On August 31, 2021, the Board adopted a motion to assess viable options for the County to facilitate residential access to reliable broadband service in low-income communities where greater than 20 percent of households lack internet service. While the challenge of universal broadband is complex, the Internal Services Department engaged a consultant to evaluate methods to provide residential internet access to disadvantaged households and submitted a report to the Board on September 30, 2021, of three options to meet this objective. This initiative is in the early stages of development and will require action from the Board on next steps for implementation.

Recommendation 7: The definition of childcare should be expanded to include school-aged children and teenagers. The future of childcare should include what can be done to support school-aged children and teenagers by exposing them to sports, leadership development, STEAM, arts, literacy programs, and providing access to computers and technology.

Initiatives Underway:

The Department of Parks & Recreation hosts an annual Girls Empowerment Conference each year, a tradition that began in 2014. The Conference is aimed at encouraging girls in LA County to learn the power of using their voices and build pathways to college and careers. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, the 2020 Conference was conducted virtually, with a full month of virtual workshops, speakers, and interactive

sessions. The most recent conference focused on women leaders in LA County, as well as women in sports, business, entertainment, and social change.

In 2019, The Board approved the Women in Tech Initiative to recruit and train women for county information technology jobs. The Board then created a Youth at Work cohort for the first time in 2021, specifically for girls and women aged 16-24. The program provides personal enrichment training, paid work experience, and opportunities for internships aimed at helping women join the Information Technology field. This new cohort will ensure that education and training geared toward technology careers will be accessible for teenagers and young women who are making important career choices.

Additionally, the LA County Library provides several programs aimed at engaging young girls and teenagers. Throughout the Summer of 2021 the department is continuing Outdoor programming around Arts, Crafts, and Performances for children aged 3 to 17. As the County begins to return to normal operations, the LA County Library will likely continue their past in-person programming designed to engage children and teens. For example, they host many teens as volunteers as part of their Teen Advisory Boards, who work with Teen Librarians, design programs for younger kids, and advise the LA County Library on materials to purchase.

CONCLUSION

The Virtual Town halls (VTH) offered a new way of hearing many of the challenges facing women and girls during this unprecedented time. While not all these challenges are new, they were undoubtedly heightened due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the world embraces a new normal, and moves back to a fully functioning society, it is critical to remember how systemic barriers, racism, sexism, and a lack of available resources have exposed a great divide in this Country; one that left school aged children behind, spiraled some families and individuals further into poverty, and left our most vulnerable essential workers without proper protections or supports.

The stories on how and why residents fall into the care of the County are complex and require a personalized approach to service delivery. Going forward, panelists recommended that a client be fully heard and understood, that their entire narrative be considered so that customized services can be better used to help lift girls and women out of poverty and into safe, healthy spaces. The community felt it important that the County apply an intersectional lens and take a more interdepartmental and intergovernmental approach to its service models. While understanding the limits of jurisdictions, panelist stressed that the County is the institution that can seriously leverage culture change and push other entities like the State and Federal government to better fund services and address needs that would close the gender equity-gap, improve health outcomes for women and girls, fund initiatives that make a difference to older women, collect better data, and shore up education and programmatic outcomes.

A recurring theme that emerged during these discussions was to apply an intergenerational lens when planning investments. One question when developing new

programs and services for women and girls should be the impact to all age groups through each decade. The outcomes for daughters are inextricably tied to how well their mothers navigate the world and their mother's earning potential. The economic and emotional well-being for older women can depend on the level of self-sufficiency of their adult children, or the level of retirement planning they did in early adulthood. It is therefore critical to ensure that funding is strategically allocated to consider these linkages throughout the course of a women's life.

How the County captures, uses and interprets data was also woven throughout these discussions. Data can be used to drive every common thread listed within this report from economic resiliency to health, education, and budgeting. Data, appropriately analyzed, can tell the story of equity, service delivery outcomes, prosperity and even racism. Panelists pointed out the nexus between knowing the outcome of programs and services, their intended or unintended consequences and the power of the County's influence to change the things that are not working. Panelists felt that it is one thing to review data after a program has been functioning for 2 to 3 years and another to make it a practice of regularly conducting data meetings and making on-the-spot changes to policies and practices based on what the data show.

Overall, the VTH were met with a sense of excitement, authentic respect, and hope that the County could be a service provider and partner working to improve the lives of all women and girls. The WGI has harnessed this enthusiasm and great hope to present these recommendations to the Board. This report will live beyond this series of town halls and will help inform the future work of the WGI and the Los Angeles County. These recommendations encompass a considerable part of the County's work on behalf of women and girls and can be used to shape future policy and budget decisions.

What we heard during the VTH was that the community feels (felt) that the County can make real and lasting change. The community felt that hearing community voices and incorporating lessons learned through ground truths and observations exponentially increases the County's ability to provide the services that women and girls need versus what is available. It is the hope of the community, that going forward, the County prioritize intersectionality understanding, intergovernmental approaches and intergenerational perspectives, and allocates funding in a way that supports this renewed approach to servicing women and girls.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report would not have been possible without the generosity and openness of the many organizations and individuals who participated as panelists and contributed their time and expertise to our virtual town halls. The organizations listed below were critical and informed the recommendations in this report that accurately reflect the needs and priorities of communities across Los Angeles County. In addition, the WGI would like to thank the County employees who volunteered their expertise to pose thoughtful questions and offer insights.

Black Women for Wellness	Khmer Girls in Action	LA Native American Indian Commission
Vision Y Compromise	Women in Non-Traditional Employment Roles (WINTER)	YWCA of Greater LA
CA Work & Family Coalition	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)	California Commission on Aging
Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority	ONEgeneration	AARP California
Watts Labor Community Action Center	Jenesse Center	Peace Over Violence
East Los Angeles Women's Center	Center for the Pacific Asian Family	Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office
Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation	Committee for a Greater LA	Children's Data Network

The WGI would also like to recognize the Governing Council Community Engagement Ad Hoc Committee for their contributions and guidance throughout the town halls. The names of the Ad Hoc Committee Chairs are listed in bold.

Araceli Campos	Carmen Estrada-Schaye	Alice Petrossian
Sharon Shelton	Bea Olvera-Stotzer	Jane Templin

APPENDIX A

The WGI considers all feedback from the Community to be valuable. The recommendations contained in this Appendix are items that were very specific to the time that this feedback was captured, e.g., early coordination of the COVID-19 pandemic efforts, or a recommendation to conduct an assessment that would extend beyond the timeframe prescribed by the Board for the WGI to complete its work, or was outside of the scope of the County's jurisdiction. They have been included here for future consideration when appropriate.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCY:

- Conduct focus-groups consisting of girls and clients from across County service areas to better understand the economic mobility and health-services girls need to prosper in a post COVID-19 world.
- Assess how many women are currently facing housing insecurity and what are the future projections due to the high cost of living in Los Angeles, especially when they enter retirement.

HEALTH:

- Require all businesses who have essential-workers to collaborate with the County to make sure employees have access to PPE, access to COVID-19 testing, clear and fair policies related to mandated quarantine leave, and equitable access and understanding to what the vaccine distribution plan is for the County.
- County departments that focus on reproductive health should work with reproductive-justice health-based organizations and related stakeholders to identify new methods of childbearing emerging in a post COVID-19 world that are equally safe to having a child in a medical facility.
- In order to fully understand the obstacles women and girls are facing in health access, it is critical for the County to consider research committees or projects to analyze the status of the insured, uninsured, health-literacy and related topics of women and girls.

EDUCATION/PROGRAMS:

- Together with community organizations, related government agencies, private partnerships, labor groups and others develop a plan that helps identify and supply a personal computer to County residents that do not have computer access in their household.
- The County should request that the Los Angeles County Office of Education work with school districts to develop uniform protocols that allow CBOs to partner with a school district, campus, or related educational spaces. CBOs are usually funded to reach large audiences of young adults and parents on several leadership and extra-curricular opportunities, but the lack of shared policies and/or protocols makes it difficult to partner.
- Identify ways that the County and related restorative justice stakeholders can focus on best practices for DV victims and perpetrators.

DATA:

- Identify data-indexes that could help measure the well-being of essential workers to best direct resources to support them, including those that are undocumented or have immigrant status.
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