

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION – GENDER EQUITY

Kent County/Grand Rapids
October 15, 2019

Statistics PowerPoint by GVSU

WOMEN
WAGE GAP
GENDER INCLUSIVE
EMPOWERMENT
GENDER JUSTICE
RIGHTS
SEXUAL ABUSE
EQUALITY JUSTICE
METOO MOVEMENT

GENDER EQUITY DEFINITION: Behavior, contributions, aspirations and needs of any/all genders are considered and valued equally. Access, rights, benefits and opportunities are equal for all genders. Economic, political and social equality of the sexes. Fairness of treatment for people regardless of their gender identity.

CARD QUESTION: What is the greatest challenge women of Kent County face related to Gender Equity?

- Equity in pay, opportunities, power & access (42)
- Expectations, beliefs & views of women (18)
- Intersectionality/Diversity considerations (14)
- Male dynamic and impact (14)
- Support for work/career and education (12)

DIALOGUE Q1: What would be different if gender equity was achieved in Kent County?
(Vision for the future)

- Societal/Cultural improvements
- Business/Organizations grow
- Women in leadership – balance of power
- Gains in perceptions, identities and views
- Political representation & policy strength



95% of Evals Satisfied

117

Participants

Rating:

4.3 Stars



DIALOGUE Q2: What are the critical elements needed to achieve gender equity within Kent County?

- Changing norms, mindsets, expectations & conversations
- Shared power, leadership & resources
- Policy changes & advocacy in public office
- Awareness, education & case and plan for change
- Focus on equity for “all” people
- Workplace understanding & changes

DIALOGUE Q3: Actions for greatest impact in the movement for gender equity in Kent County?

- Pay & workplace equity legislation/enforcement (26)
- Workplace wrap-around services (21)
- Start with most marginalized (21)
- Education as a society on gender and inequity (20)
- Childcare/Support in raising children (19)
- Unconscious bias training in all institutions (18)
- Breakdown binary gender assignments (16)
- Strategy for gender equity in every policy conversation (14)
- Women leading inclusion – honest conversations (14)
- Stop talking and start working! (11)

REFLECTION:

What actions will you personally take within your spheres of influence to make Gender Equity a reality?

“We all have a responsibility to break barriers and level the playing field for women in our state”

Governor Gretchen Whitmer



Prepared by Karla J Kretschmer, Lumency Group



Gender equality is not a *woman's* issue. It is a *human* issue that effects us all.

Community Conversation/Kent County Gender Equity, October 15, 2019 Event Output Report - Detail

A community conversation on gender equity was held in Grand Rapids/Kent County. The event, a gathering of over 100 women, took place for the purpose of sharing experiences, insights and ideas on a topic important to the lives and contributions of women, their families and society overall.

Objectives:

1. Explore the state of gender equity within Kent County – take a pulse
2. Identify the change desired and vision for the future
3. Facilitate meaningful dialogue for the collaborative identification of key issues and opportunities for taking constructive and positive action for long-term impact
4. Prioritize actions for greatest impact in moving gender equity forward within Kent County
5. Understand the Governor’s experience, perspective and commitment to gender equity and supporting the women and families of Michigan
6. Provide opportunity for connections to form among participants
7. Inspire attendees to action within their spheres of influence

Planning Team: Noreen Myers (Owner, Noreen K. Myers PLC; Trustee, GVSU Foundation: PPAM Board; Co-Chair Hauenstein Center’s Common Ground Initiative), Andrea Forsyth (Partner, Plunkett Cooney), Cheryl Bergman (Executive Director, Michigan Women’s Commission), & Karla J. Kretzschmer (Facilitator, Principal Consultant/CEO of Lumency Group)

Summary by Event Segment

Arrival – Gender Equity Question Card

Gender Equity Definition: Behavior, contributions, aspirations and needs of any/all genders are considered and valued equally. Access, rights, benefits and opportunities are equal for all genders. Economic, political and social equality of the sexes. Fairness of treatment for people regardless of their gender identity.

Card Question: What is the greatest challenge women of Kent County face related to Gender Equity?

Response Themes:

Equity in Pay, Opportunities, Power & Access to Capital (42):

- Representation in C-suite opportunities (2); Opportunities for Board seats; Equal rights, opportunities & equal pay (3); Job growth; Career mobility; Representation, jobs and advancement in all disciplines incl. male-dominated roles and industries (4) (i.e. auto parts supply etc.); Pay inequity exists especially with transitioning back to work after having children; Traditional views and bias about women leaving work to become mothers; Income gap and benefits cliff; Women as main income source for households – hits low income women disproportionately as they try to increase income yet lose benefits; Equal access and opportunity for leadership roles/power positions for women (3); Historic lack of representation in high positions of power equates to a belief we can’t lead; opportunities for “unknown” women without positions of power to break into those spaces; Lack of visibility of women in

leadership roles; Investing in women's leadership development; Access to power – more women in CEO positions, executive directors and in political system (women to represent women); Women of color in positions of power including public office; Political representation; Availability and access to capital & financial leverage (2); Follow the money – economics are at the base of most problems; Economic advancement; Racial wealth gap; Opportunity to start new businesses; Women supporting women to increase business or position; Business, social, economic networks closed to women; Perception women are not as competent as men; Being a migrant woman is a disadvantage to acquire opportunities (*el hecho de ser una mujer migrante hay una desventaja para adquirir oportunidades*)

Expectations, Beliefs & Views of Women (18)

- We don't think we are good enough; Women who do not understand the need for gender equity; Lack of belief or understanding that women are not being treated equitably; Many think things are equitable when they aren't; We are our greatest ally; Lack of unity among women (2); Building a network for action; Difficulty being taken seriously/not taken seriously; Challenge of being taken seriously (i.e. either soccer mom, too bitchy or not given enough credit for what they have done) – men don't face these stereotypes; Cultural perceptions of what women are "worth"; Unconscious bias; Religious beliefs on woman's place in society; Not enough support; Conservative attitudes about women's roles; Being seen as equals – not having to prove we are equal; Limited beliefs based around sexist misperceptions, fear of failure and retaliation; Better integration of women of different backgrounds working together; Lack of tangible goals and projects to move forward

Intersectionality/Diversity Considerations – Race, LGBTQ+: (14)

- Extra challenges for women of color; Double jeopardy of being a woman of color (WOC) where whatever barriers white women face are more challenging for WOC; Understanding, acknowledging, and addressing the advantages/disadvantages of white women and WOC in similar spaces; WOC invited to the women of Kent County table; WOC in positions of power including public office; Intersectional issues and racism (2); Intersections of racism and sexism; WOC and racial justice are not centered in gender equity movement; White women benefit from white supremacy – they need to own that; The weaponization of white women's tears - white fragility; How will transgender women be included in the gender equity discussion in light of current supreme court hearings? White supremacy culture upholds the ways we place value on specific identities – including men, cis-women, white folks, those with titles, money and other privileges; Sexist and racist attitudes; Narrow definition of who is a woman

Male Dynamic and Impact: (14)

- Dealing with Defacto Old Boys Club; Older white man's "old boys club" mentality; Old Boys Club still strongly in place pulling the puppet strings of our community; Sexist attitudes toward women held by men (and some women); General bias of men for CEOs, Managers; Pushback from men who feel gender equity is a threat to their own job security or an indictment of them; Male dominance; Circles of power feel dominated by males and seem impossible to break through; Women themselves support male privilege – women vote and operate against their own interest; Unwillingness of the white men in the community to acknowledge, embrace and welcome the talented group of all women who are positioned to lead their community; Inertia and power of legacy – male leaders staying and leading at the table; Equity is everyone's work and right now the work is mostly being done by the women; Men merely use their positions as the source of authority on issues (they just know) – while women use a referent for their authority such as credentials, experiences or specialized training; Domestic violence

Support for Work/Career and Education (12)

- Affordable/good quality childcare (6); Lack of mandatory work benefits (sick, parental/family leave, etc.); Education; Gender equity/inequity starts in childhood; Lack of comprehensive sex educ that includes consent and sexual assault prevention training; Utilizing talent already

located here (polar extremes – engrained or come from out of state); Discrimination in the workplace

Other (3)

- Awareness of the importance of the issue and impact on business> lack of intentional efforts, Based on research; No one represents these issues in the GR police department; Environmental justice issues underlie all equity issues – climate justice, clean water, ending pollution, etc.

Welcome by Tami Vandenberg, Owner of Pyramid Scheme & Meanwhile
Gender Equity Stats (Automated PPT) – Grand Valley State University, Division of Inclusion & Equity
Introduction of Governor by Andrea Forsyth, Partner, Plunkett Cooney Grand Rapids

Governor Gretchen Whitmer

Message with Q&A

- As leaders, we all have a responsibility to break barriers and level the playing field for women in our state.
- The work you do directly impacts my work as governor.
- Because of your advocacy and your dedication to identifying the changes we need to make, I’m able to move forward with actions that will actually impact women.



World Café Small Group Dialogue Question 1

What would be different if gender equity was achieved in Kent County? (*Vision for the future*)

Societal/Cultural Improvements:

- Improved economy and greater wealth overall – less poverty (6); Transfer of power & wealth distribution incl philanthropy (3); Better education outcomes K12 & Higher Ed and more educated women/girls (6); More resources toward children; Better physical and mental health outcomes for women and children, reduce mental health crisis (5); Lower numbers of teen births; Safer communities and lower crime (less domestic abuse and less sexual violence/assault) (6); Less gun violence; Less infant mortality (esp. for those of color) (4); Improvements in all basic needs (food, housing, transportation, etc.); Better paid parental/family leave (4); Benefits reflect parity in childcare responsibilities & more options for childcare (3); Gender & race equity with socioeconomic equity for all; Expose and highlight racism and racial inequities (2); Less homelessness; More family-focused services; Improve lives of all people; Less disparity; Attentive and focused on improving lives of those marginalized/most vulnerable (2); Pay equity= better quality of life; Better fathers (2); More opportunities for men and women; Belonging/Inclusion not “old boys club”; Families as constituents; Resetting goals and priorities (culture shift); Different sets of values in society; Stop buying into existing structures and create new structures; Targeted interventions; “Us vs Them” is dismantled and serves as catalyst for change; Dynamic shift in outlook with changing narrative and more options; “So much better” is not good enough (re: Midwest nice); Less need for orgs that provide advocacy for women; Kids will be kids – no gender expectations; Changes in environmental justice issues/address climate issues more aggressively; More vibrant and cohesive county/community

Business/Organizations Grow:

- Business bottom/top lines improve in positive ways; Increased productivity; Demographics in workforce would reflect demographics of our community; Most qualified/make barrier-free so all can access jobs; Women would not “opt out”; More innovations; Pay equality in the workplace; Businesses give back and create jobs; Judge talent vs gender; Investing in women businesses and more women businesses with more capital (2); More start-ups and entrepreneurial opportunities; Flexible employment; Greater diversity effecting decision-making; More time to accomplish goals and not explain what we’re doing; Allow more seats at the table – more voices

Women in Leadership – Balance of Power:

- More women in leadership with influence and power – it’s the norm (no longer “first woman”) (4); More visibility of women in high leadership roles (ex. University level - more equity on higher levels); More equity beyond entry-level such as leadership/middle management; More equity of roles in law firms (especially given 50/50 grad rate); Better representation of women in male-dominated industries, roles and leadership positions; More women on corporate and non-profit boards (2); More women of color and LGBTQ+ in leadership/C-suite (2); More women CEOs (2); Majority of women in leadership (public & private sectors); Women of color (WOC) uplifted; No fear or intimidation to have a “seat at the table”; Greater opportunities

Gains in Perceptions, Identities and Views:

- Girls/Women will have improved sense of their own capabilities; Young women can dream bigger; Women move with confidence/ no more self-doubts and be taken seriously (2); Women thought of as smart and strong; Women stop asking permission; Recognition of multiple roles women play; Gender equity would look different and permeate all areas: home, relationships, religious institutions, business, education, etc.; More truly equal sharing of home duties – not pre-assigned or assumed; More minors/teenage girls and widows empowered; Honest and different conversations; People of all socio-economic status would be in this room including “hookers, barmaids and pregnant people” and being called these things would not be an insult; People would be recognized for what they offer; Gender would be invisible and all real talent would be actualized; Greater awareness of all social identities; No need for reminders of unconscious bias or stereotypes (3); More options for LGBTQ+; Transform systems re: expressions of gender; Higher value of women’s skill sets (men act more like us); People have true “agency” and show up as whole self; Open to change; Asking what barriers need to be removed for access and so successful; Focus on intersectionality (2); More inclusive with different people at the table and different questions being asked; More frequent and open conversations; True sense of belonging; Less maternal guilt; Less pressure to conform to social expectations; More at ease being in the room; Abundance mindset; Collaborative problem solving – get more shit done; Challenges and questions by men and misperceptions are no longer issues; People on stage look more like me

Political Representation & Policy Strength:

- More women appointed/elected to political positions (4); More women dollars to political campaigns; Shift in court/legal system with equitable punishments; More balanced government; Elliot-Larsen expanded; Equal representation in all spheres; Representation of women – intersectionality, color, disabilities; Transparency and accountability; Effective changes around social services; Politics with decisions made for us

World Café Small Group Dialogue Question 2

What are the critical elements needed to achieve gender equity within Kent County?

Changing Norms, Mindsets, Expectations & Conversations

- Changes in attitudes (3); Breaking cultural norms that keep barriers in place; Shift norms and conversation; Redefine gender expectations; Operational definitions and common agenda; Changing the normative narrative; Shifting the narrative of what it is to be a woman > define what it is to be a person; Re-evaluate what it means to be a “successful woman”; Remove polarizing words (ex. gender-specific pronouns); Stop zero-sum thinking; Change from within – challenging your own thoughts, biases and prejudices; Shedding the guilt – acknowledge our own biases; Honest conversations with stakeholders; “Real” conversations that are inclusive and around intersectionality (including women of color and trans women, etc.) (2); Addressing racism, homophobia, classism, ageism, etc.; Change in stereotypes of women; Socialize and recognizing humanity of all; See people as human; Appreciate/acknowledge and understand difference; Create systemic/structural changes; Acknowledge there is a need for change; Create and normalize a culture of equity; People willing to challenge the status quo (men & women); Buy-in by men & women (2); Eliminate/reduce male fragility; “Ally-ship” – male allies (2); Get rid of toxic masculinity; Cultural shifts (conversations, what we are consuming, how we interact); No more “oh, its ok” mentality – call out bad behavior so it doesn’t permeate; Stopping “other than”, “more than”, “better than”; Changing mindset of how we approach social problems; Accepting/embracing change – innovation, divergent thinking, inclusion and belonging; Respecting contributions of others; Confront the role of biology; Reimagining gender roles; Revolution!

Shared Power, Leadership & Resources

- Need people in power to lead; More women in top leadership positions who will bring a voice and lead; Close the gap in leadership; Women-owned businesses/women entrepreneurs (2); Wealth & power to women (2) - distribution of power; Balancing power on all fronts; Women in spaces leading on intersectionality awareness; More women role models – show new ideology; Recognize power as a diverse collective – create power as a group; Changes in faith leadership; Broader participation in influencing use of resources; Increase access to capital and power (3); Confidence to sit at the table; Growth in confidence and learning not to give up; Mentorship/Mentoring (3); Sponsorship; More women on business & nonprofit boards (2); Push past intimidation; Female President – set the tone; Move away from deficit thinking; Messages from the top

Policy Changes & Advocacy in Public Office

- Policy changes/Public laws to support equity (7); Be in a position to change laws; More women in public office; Mandatory paid maternity/paternity/family leave (4); Childcare – more affordable (3); Child support enforcement; Working mothers paying little to no taxes; Pay equity policy (3) & raise minimum wage; Bias-free healthcare coverage; Gender-specific healthcare (free birth control; eliminate pink tax phenomenon); Destigmatize women’s health; Equal access for men/women health insurance (2); Educational level and opportunity (pre-school and beyond); Reduced tuition rates and access to schools; K12 wrap-around services (food & social work); Drivers Licenses for all; Affordable housing; Safety; Elimination of barriers in criminal justice system (both within and in transitioning); Clean water & food; Representation for immigrants; Representation by women and People of Color (POC) to advocate; Deep and diverse representation; Access is overarching to everything; Advocacy to support women – for gender equity by all community members including men (3); Voters take a long view; Changes on micro level; Civic responsibility; Being no-trace environment; Removal (by voting) of those that do not support gender equity; Practices must change; Accountability – connection to policy

(2); Prioritizing gender equity on the agenda (higher than worrying about the rapids for example)

Awareness, Education & Case & Plan for Change

- Awareness – acknowledge gender equity is an issue (4); Education on topic & issues (4) and space to listen designed to include others; Early education (2); Begins with our children (ex. gender marketing); Messages we send to our children (equity, positivity, no stereotypes); Mothers raising children (it starts at home); Re-educating our early education influencers/actors (parents and teachers); Create incentives to change; Identify the benefits to change; Recognize shifting demographics; Quantitative equity data; Shared vision with definition of gender equity; Strategic plan with measurable goals; Realistic view of what it takes to change; Understand barriers to achieve gender equity; Branding and communication plan for Grand Rapids – considering history and evolution; Visual elements in communication need to change; Structure conversations to include all (at events like this); Create a good framework for these conversations; Conversations between gender identification and sexuality; Global education on social identity – removal of potential identify biases and binary concept of gender; May require sacrifices to achieve gender equity; We need to lead in this space and not wait for others; Strategies to handle resistance

Focus on Equity for “All” People

- Equity among all women; Eliminate racism among women; Create sense of belonging for all; Women supporting each other (2); Close the rift between white women and women of color; Sharing power among ourselves; Outrage about inequity from white women; Eliminate poverty and ensure access to basic needs for all; Leverage privilege for each other; Invest in the “community”; Communal effort; Center on most vulnerable first; Reduce “mother as sole caregiver” mentality; Candid discussion re: race – all must be represented; Addressing intentionally the White supremacy culture in Grand Rapids; Changing the narrative of white, Christian, conservative; Include and humanize all; Human equity – “gender” is limiting because we need to include non-binary – don’t exclude transgender; Broadening definition of “woman” – immigrant, disability, black, brown; Serious examination of sexism and ageism (both implicit and explicit); Talk about why we value business owners over sex workers - hear all voices; Not erasing difference – I need you to see me; Need to be “seen and heard” as yourself – creating safety in systems; Intentionality by all at all levels, all institutions – conscious effort; Shift from inclusion to belonging as authentic selves; Sharing gifts; Radical self-reliance and self-expression; Working together for common causes (i.e. Flint water crisis, environmental justice, etc.); More conversations with consideration to who is missing; Equity is not the same as equality (need to define both); Compassion/empathy/vulnerability

Workplace Understanding & Changes

- Understanding how biases impact decisions that are made as it relates to pay, position, promotion, status and who are traditionally making these decisions; Blind hiring practices; Role equality – stigma elimination; Need equity to achieve quality; Cross-sectional teams; Redefining how work is done; Redefining work-life balance – flexible schedules

World Café Small Group Dialogue Question 3 & Voting w/ Dots

What are the top 5 actions that would create the greatest impact in the movement for gender equity in Kent County?

Top Prioritized Actions! *(Highest dot votes with double digits)*

1. **Pay Equity & Workplace Equity - Legislation and Enforcement (26)** – including compensation, promotion, maternity leave, wage transparency, raise minimum wage, etc.
2. **Workplace wrap-around services (21)**: Transportation, Childcare, etc.
3. **Start with most marginalized (21)**
4. **Education as a society on gender and inequity (20)** – multi-prong: community conversations, comprehensive curriculum in schools, implicit bias and social/emotional education
5. **Childcare/Support in raising children (19)** – affordable, accessible, quality, employer-based or supported, paid leave, etc.
6. **Incorporate unconscious bias training in all institutions (18)** – never will change otherwise
7. **Breakdown the cultural structure of binary gender assignments – we all become human (16)**
8. **Develop a strategy to ensure gender equity is a part of every policy conversation (14)**
9. **Women leading inclusion – honest conversations (14)**
10. **Stop talking and start working! (11)**

Numbers indicate votes/dots given for actions of highest impact for movement forward. Each participant was given four dots to place/vote.

Other Top Actions (with votes):

- Advocacy and sponsorship vs. mentorship (6): *Leverage your power to help women; every woman in this room bring three more women to the table*
- Shift power/ally member journey (6)
- Center on the people who are deeply affected and provide support for them (6)
- Financial stipends for the marginalized (6)
- Address toxic masculinity (6) – *Why does it happen? Debunk expectations – gender – internalization; drives perception and behavior*
- Accountability at county level for gender equity (plan and policies) (5)
- Healthcare equity (5) – *raising/prioritizing access to women's/human healthcare*
- Educational opportunities for girls/women (4) – *budget allocations for girls' spots*
- Supporting women for and in elected/political office (3)
- Build an effective gender equity campaign (3): *Data supported, Stories shared and include men/sons (belonging)*
- Start at home (3)
- Investment of resources (2) > *Time, money, health care, etc.; get business to invest in women leadership – show them what ROI will be – benefit it doing it*
- Electing effective leaders – who focus on equity (2)
- Resolution in Michigan to promote diversity on corporate boards (both public and private) (2)
- Get beyond “choir” with equity/echo chamber (2)
- Mentoring (2)
- Expanding Elliott-Larsen protections for LGBTQ+ (1)
- Strategies to change the gender narrative in the media (1)
- Let go of expectations of ourselves and other women (1)
- Eradicating the culture of white supremacy (1)
- Salary negotiation training (1)

- Universal access to contraceptives (1)
- Eliminating rape culture (1)

Numbers indicate votes/dots given for actions of highest impact for movement forward. Each participant was given four dots to place/vote.

Other Suggested Actions (no votes):

- Educate and inform women that there is inequality in Kent County – empathy
- Everyone in this room is committed to shifting the narrative
- Influx of women into spheres of power (boards, leadership roles)
- Development of ways to increase confidence of and in women
- Embody the changes we want to see
- Common agenda
- Heal/eliminate the fear of losing superiority
- Education – conversations with children
- More female leadership > President! No demoralizing leadership
- Comprehensive plan and timeline to elevate issues of WOC > to act on equity (vs. equality); alignment of county systems to make this happen (e.g. health care system, education system)
- Access to money – education, board rooms, network, social capital, political process
- Financial investment
- Shift consciousness about how we spend money – capitalism, consumer conscious
- Create laws to enforce child support payments
- Critical consciousness about equity gatekeepers; Who can have this how? (Limited to men of color)
- People leading conversations need to be intentional to amplify all voices to ensure true inclusivity
- Eventual generational shifts
- Create a new wheel
- Ending toxic femininity
- Resist the urge to oversimplify complex issues

Last Question for Table Reflection (not shared out):

What actions can you personally take within your spheres of influence to make gender equity a reality?

- Keep eyes and heart open to notice inequity; being more intentional; speak up and out; challenging others to action; sharing data
- Raise up diverse voices to be sure they are all heard; convene diversity of thought and opinion; more individual conversations; more inclusive in language
- Help two women in this room get elected; tell everyone we have a Governor who supports gender equity; vote for women
- Recognize if I am part of the problem; more honest personal reflection
- Building more wrap-around services where I work; publish the wrap-around services available through my company; in my own work – education + action; during hiring process, remain mindful of this conversation and action steps
- Frequent more women-owned businesses; support women, people of color, the uniquely-abled, etc with my money; Michigan Women Forward – microloans for women, camps for youth
- Raise a conscious, inclusive black man/son

Closing Remarks – Diana Sieger, President of Grand Rapids Community Foundation

- Commented on the importance of all the recommendations -- we need to move them forward!
- It is important that all voices are heard and that we draw strength from the group and beyond.
- Quoted Serena Williams “. . . *don't wait to be given power. Because here's what they won't tell you – we already have it.*”

Next steps – Other opportunities

- This summary will be shared with Governor Gretchen Whitmer and her team
- Participants are encouraged to move their agenda forward within Kent County

Thank you to all participants for your active engagement!