

## **Tradeswomen TOOLS: Training, Outreach, Opportunity, Leadership and Support**

A project of Hard Hatted Women

Hard Hatted Women (HHW) is a non-profit organization with 30 years of experience empowering women to achieve economic independence in trade and technical careers. To advance its mission, HHW embraces a sector strategy approach, using industry-based, demand-driven programming to connect job seekers to employers. HHW is proud to launch **Tradeswomen TOOLS (Training, Outreach, Opportunity, Leadership and Support)**. The program is a natural outgrowth of the experience HHW has gained over the past thirty years and HHW's knowledge of national best practice.

Tradeswomen TOOLS builds from the expertise of women already working in nontraditional fields to advance diversity initiatives within the **building trades, heavy highway, utility industry, emerging green sectors, advanced manufacturing and other sectors** that offer family-supporting careers.

HHW meets the needs of low-income women seeking entry into high wage jobs, and of employers who are seeking to widen their pool of qualified, skilled workforce. Occupational segregation by gender remains a significant factor in the high percentage of women and families living in poverty. HHW offers a unique collection of strategies and services that meet our region's employment and poverty needs. Tradeswomen TOOLS helps place women into jobs where they remain severely underrepresented, particularly in sectors which are poised to receive significant public investments through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (e.g. roads, bridges, and infrastructure).

For employers, HHW provides customized technical assistance throughout Ohio to assist in recruiting and retaining women. Demonstrating strong plans for achieving workforce goals can provide an important edge for employers and contractors who bid on work with public entities. Tradeswomen TOOLS builds on HHW's nearly two-year partnership with the Ohio Department of Transportation and numerous statewide partners to support 200 women to enter and succeed in heavy highway and building trade careers, a project entitled the Women in Ohio Roadways Construction Consortium, supported by a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor.

HHW is currently pursuing funds to support the **Tradeswomen TOOLS** project in Cuyahoga County and replicate it in the Mahoning/Trumbull Counties region and in Lorain County, Ohio, with a goal of serving at least 600 women. The Raymond John Wean Foundation in Warren, and Leadership Lorain County in Elyria, have each agreed to help incubate the Tradeswomen TOOLS program within their region by providing office space and strategic counsel to the project. Within each of the Regional Offices, our project partners will help to establish a local Advisory Council.

Occupational segregation by gender remains a significant factor in the high percentage of families headed by a single woman who live in poverty (40% in Ohio). The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Ohio 2008 highlights nontraditional employment for women as an "underutilized but effective strategy by which women can access higher-wage jobs."

A 2008 study entitled *Creating Gender Parity in Sector Initiatives* by the national organization Women Work documents that 80% of working women remain clustered in just 20 out of 420 occupations, many characterized by low wages and few opportunities to advance. The report highlights the need for targeted strategies and funding to increase women's representation in high wage, high growth sectors. Hard Hatted Women and its project partners offer a strong vision and viable strategies for ensuring that all Ohioans, regardless of gender, benefit from investments in economic and workforce development and have equal opportunity to establish a career that supports a high quality of life