

Women's Empowerment:
Challenges & Opportunities in Utah

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

Dr. Susan R. Madsen
Inaugural Karen Haight Huntsman Endowed Professor of Leadership
Jon M. Huntsman School of Business, Utah State University

Financial Executives International | Utah Chapter | March 18, 2025

1

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP PROJECT

The mission of the Utah Women & Leadership Project is to strengthen the impact of Utah girls and women.

We serve Utah and its residents by:

- Producing relevant, trustworthy, and applicable research
- Creating and gathering valuable resources
- Convening trainings and events that inform, inspire, and ignite growth and change for all Utahns.

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project **UTWOMEN.ORG**

A BOLDER WAY FORWARD FOR UTAH **ABOLDERWAYFORWARD.ORG**

Utah State University
Jon M. Huntsman School of Business • Extension

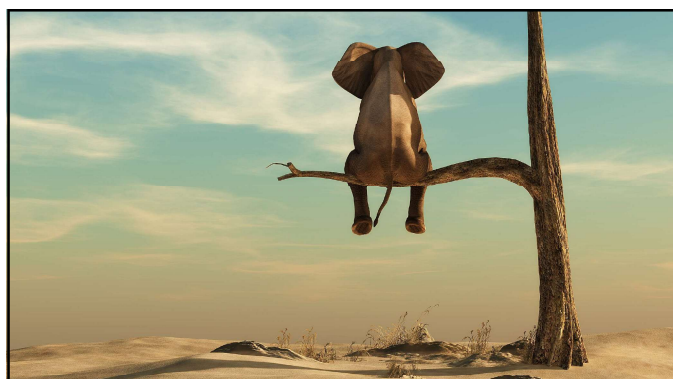
2

Grid of book covers including: 'ON REDEMING A WOMAN'S GIFT', 'developing LEADERSHIP', 'Women & Leadership in Higher Education', 'A future only God can see for you', 'Handbook of Research on Gender and Leadership', 'Women and Leadership Around the World', 'Women as Global Leaders', and 'A future only God can see for you'.

3



4



5


Utah's Accolades

- Best State to Start a Business: 3rd
- Top 10 Friendly States for Entrepreneurs: 3rd
- Best-Performing Cities (2 in top 3)
- Best States for Small Business: 2nd
- Best Business Climate: 1st
- Best States to Move to: 1st
- Best Employment: 2nd
- Best State Economy: 2nd
- Best State: 1st
- Best Small Cities for Starting a Business: 3 of the Top 5
- Best Economy Outlook: 1st
- Best State for Social Mobility: 1st
- Best Growth: 3rd
- Best State for the Middle Class: 1st

6

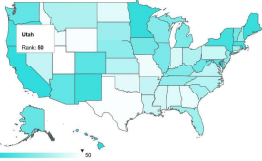
Best & Worst States for Women's Equality (2025)

Arden McCann, WallerHub Financial Writer • Aug 10, 2024



Main Findings

45	Georgia	47.81	38	43	42
46	Missouri	45.58	43	45	48
47	Idaho	45.24	44	44	45
48	Wyoming	44.86	49	47	19
49	Texas	39.75	23	49	40
50	Utah	23.04	50	50	41

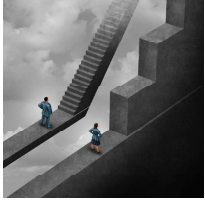


7

17 Key Indicators

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT (40 Points)

1. Income Disparity (50)
2. Higher Income Disparity (50)
3. Disparity in Share of Executive Positions (48)
4. Disparity in Share of Minimum-Wage Workers (1)
5. Unemployment Rate Disparity (43)
6. Entrepreneurship Rate Disparity (34)
7. Disparity in Average Number of Work Hours (50)
8. Job Security Disparity (50)
9. Economic Security Disparity (3)
10. Disparity in Poverty Rate (5)



8

40 Points

Workplace Environment



Utah: 50th

9


17 Key Indicators

EDUCATION & HEALTH (40 Points)

11. Disparity in Advanced Educational Attainment (50)
12. Disparity in Math Test Scores (50)
13. Disparity in Doctor Visit Affordability (37)

POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT (20 Points)


14. Disparity in Share of Lawmakers in U.S. Senate (22, Lowest)
15. Disparity in Share of Lawmakers in U.S. House of Representatives (23, Lowest)
16. Disparity in Share of Lawmakers in State Legislature (39)
17. Disparity in Share of State-Elected Executives (38)



10

40 Points

Education & Health



Utah: 50th

11

20 Points

Political Empowerment



Utah: 41st

12

The Challenges Are Complex

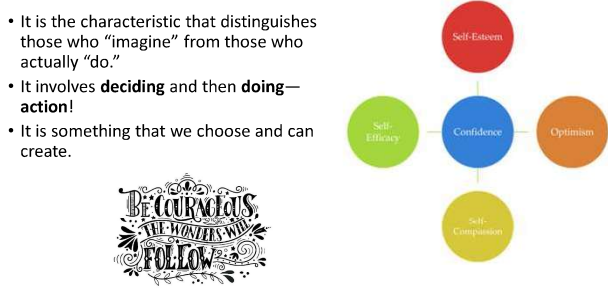


Socialization is incredibly powerful!


13

Confidence

- It is the characteristic that distinguishes those who “imagine” from those who actually “do.”
- It involves **deciding** and then **doing—action!**
- It is something that we choose and can create.



14




15

Disclaimers

Women often start their remarks with some sort of apology or disclaimer:

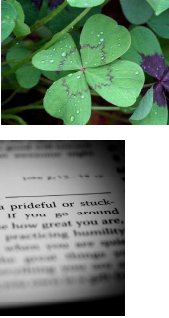
- “I just have one point to make.”
- “I really don’t know whether this is accurate, but…”
- “I don’t know a lot, but I do want to say something.”
- “No big deal if you don’t, but I would like a raise.”
- “You probably won’t agree, but I do think the event I organized went well.”
- “I’m sorry for bugging you, but I just wanted to ask if I can have a few minutes of your time.”
- “I know you have more important things to do, but I wanted to see if I could talk to you.”



16

Deflecting Praise

- “Oh, it just happened. It was luck.”
- “It wasn’t me. Everyone else did the work.”
- “I was just in the right place at the right time.”



If we refuse to take credit for achievements, we don't get the confidence to move forward to next steps.

17

Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism consists of seemingly courteous attitudes and comments to women that undermine their professional capacity.



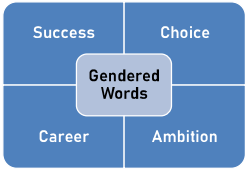



Ambivalent Sexism

- Hostile Sexism
- Benevolent Sexism

18

Masculine Language
In a male-privileged culture, people may use masculine terms that don't connect with all employees.

19

Women's Leadership - Importance

1. To Improve Financial Performance
2. To Strengthen Organizational Climate
3. To Leverage Talent
4. To Increase CSR & Reputation
5. To Enhance Innovation & Collective Intelligence






20



21

How Utah's Male Allies Advance Women

1. Developmental relationships
2. Recognition
3. Challenging gender discrimination and treating women as equals
4. Leadership/professional development
5. HR processes







22

New Courses

Male Allyship - A New Conversation
A UWLP Discussion Series

Exploring Your Purpose: Talents, Callings, and Influence
A UWLP Discussion Series

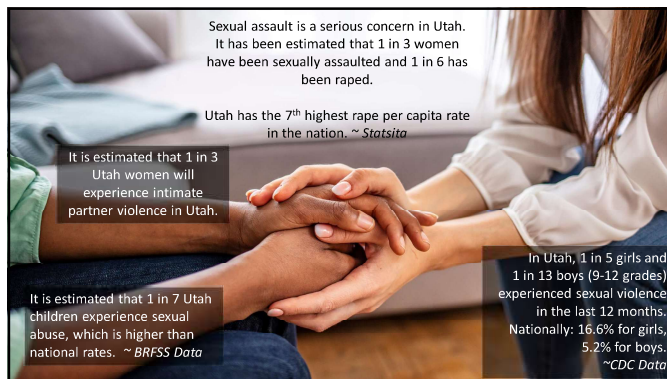
23



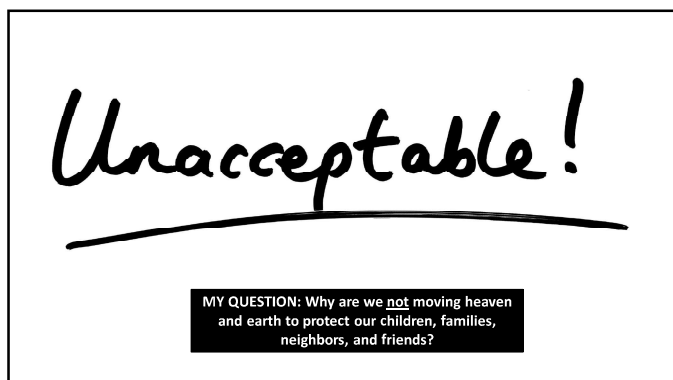
24



25



26



27



28





29



30

Bold Change

- If we are serious about ensuring that Utah women and girls thrive, we need to create change by 2030, with a check point in 2026.
- This includes a shift from *outputs* to *outcomes*.
- Inspiration:** Crutchfield, L. R. (2018). *How Change Happens: Why Some Social Movements Succeed While Others Don't*. Wiley.

31

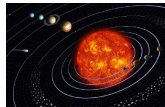
Systems Thinking

“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

Systems are made of interrelated, interdependent parts, but they cannot be understood as a function of isolated components.

The relationships between the parts is critical—this is the key to more boldly advancing a common cause.

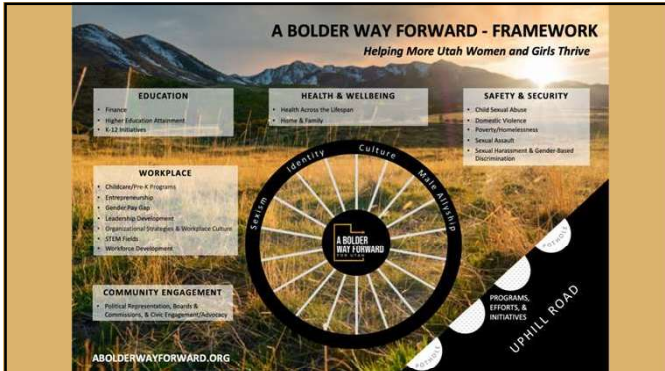
We are great at parts—but now we need to move together as a system (networked leadership).



32

A BOLDER WAY FORWARD - FRAMEWORK

Helping More Utah Women and Girls Thrive



33

WE ARE NOT starting over



34

Goals & Outcomes

- The overarching goal of a BWF is to make Utah a place where more girls and women can thrive in any setting.
- Although there is not one metric that can assess and measure this overarching goal, the UWLP has worked with all spoke leaders to craft powerful 2026 and 2030 goals for each of their areas (linked to measurable outcomes).
- We continue to locate and track national and state data on all aspects and have create visual dashboards so progress can be tracked.


POTENTIAL TOOLS

- Advocacy
- Communication
- Grassroots Involvement
- Mentoring
- Messaging Shifts
- Networking
- Philanthropy
- Public Policy
- Research
- Resources
- Sponsorship
- Training & Development
- More


35

Conclusion

- Utah must do better to ensure everyone thrives.
- Our vision is not to lift girls and women at the expense of boys and men—that is the *scarcity mentality*. Instead, we believe that there is enough for everyone through cooperation and collaboration—the *abundance mentality*.
- When we strengthen the impact of Utah girls and women, we can strengthen everyone!



36




WAYS TO PARTNER

Companies, nonprofits, colleges/universities, public or private schools, cities/towns, counties, churches, or any other entity can become a Change Partner with A Bolder Way Forward (BWF) by choosing three (or more), new actions that will promote environments and opportunities for Utah women, girls, and their families to thrive. Here are some examples:

CHANGE PARTNERS

1 Do Good For Your Employees

- a. Adopt family-friendly and flexible workplace policies, conduct pay disparity analyses, and engage in equitable recruiting, hiring, and promotion practices.
- b. Set goals and implement strategies to increase or strengthen the representation of women in leadership at all levels.
- c. Create a women's employee resource group (ERG) and other working groups (women and men) to consider strategies/interventions that can strengthen the impact of women in your workplace.
- d. Measure the impact of these changes on your workplace culture, employee satisfaction, and overall performance.



37



38



39



CREATING CHANGE SO UTAH WOMEN & GIRLS CAN THRIVE

Utah can become the national leader in how to implement positive change for girls, women, and families.

Dr. Susan R. Madsen
 Karen Haight Huntsman Endowed Professor of Leadership
 Jon M. Huntsman School of Business
 Utah State University
 susan.madsen@usu.edu

SOCIAL MEDIA: BWFUTAH

40