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Case Studies

2014

# Bridging the Gap: Increasing the Representation of Women in the Electricity Sector

## About Electricity Human Resources Canada

Electricity Human Resources Canada (EHRC) is a national, not-for-profit organization that conducts research focused on the human resource challenges and opportunities impacting the electricity and renewable energy sector, and develops tools to support industry in addressing these challenges and opportunities. We are a hub for research into human resources trends and sector-specific solutions to Canada's skilled-labour shortage. EHRC is committed to developing industry appropriate tools to support a sufficient, safety-focused and skilled workforce. EHRC is governed by an industry-represented Board of Directors and managed by a staff team based in Ottawa. For more information please visit the EHRC website at [www.electricityhr.ca](http://www.electricityhr.ca).

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2197 Riverside Dr., Ottawa, Ontario, K1H 7X3  
Tel: (613) 235-5540 Fax: (613) 235-6922  
[info@electricityhr.ca](mailto:info@electricityhr.ca) [www.electricityhr.ca](http://www.electricityhr.ca)



### **'Bridging the Gap' Project**

Women represent only one quarter of the electricity and renewable energy workforce. For an industry facing significant labour market challenges, engaging this under-represented group is a priority. The objective of the *Bridging the Gap* project is to increase the attraction, recruitment and retention of women as skilled workers in the electricity and renewable energy sector in Ontario and nationally. The long term goal of this initiative is to reach the national average of women working in the Canadian workforce (48%) and develop a robust talent pool of highly skilled workers to meet the electricity industry's human resources requirements in the years ahead.

### **Industry Consultation**

Throughout the course of the primary research phase, a total of 32 representatives from employers, educational institutions, labour/union groups and non-profit organizations were interviewed regarding the programming, services and strategies that they currently offer to support women seeking career opportunities in non-traditional occupations. These interviews provided keen and unique insights (from both within and beyond the electricity sector) regarding effective approaches for supporting the attraction, recruitment and retention of women in non-traditional jobs and fields.

### **Continuum of Support**

Throughout the research, a continuum of required support to enhance the attraction, recruitment and retention of women within the electricity and renewable energy sectors was identified. Specifically, this continuum includes four (4) critical steps that enhance the successful employment and retention of women in non-traditional occupations. While not every woman will require additional supports and resources associated with each level of the continuum, our research indicates that all four (4) elements identified are key factors for success.



### **Case Studies**

The following case studies provide concrete examples of programs and initiatives that are providing women with support in one of the critical areas of the continuum. These case studies are meant to provide a snapshot of the each program/initiative. Readers that are interested in learning about each program in detail are encouraged to contact representatives from each program for more tailored information and support.

## Step 1: Career Awareness

**Career Awareness** is a critical first step in the attraction of women to the electricity and renewable energy sectors. Project research has indicated that many women (of all ages) are simply unaware of many of the trades and occupations within the sector and as such, do not have the opportunity to develop an interest or curiosity in learning more about potential career choices. It is of critical importance that women of all ages, particularly young women who are starting to explore their career options, are made aware of the variety of jobs that the sector has to offer. Piquing the interest of women at a young age helps to direct their career paths and often encourages young women with interests in trades and technology to pursue their studies in math and the physical sciences.

The following case studies provide illustrative examples of programs and initiatives that support and enhance career awareness.

### **Techsploration Nova Scotia**



*Techsploration* is a not-for-profit educational association with the goal to “increase the number of women working in science, trades and technology occupations by assisting young women from diverse backgrounds to explore a wide range of career options.” *Techsploration* holds a number of events that provide young women from grades 9 through 12 with opportunities to learn and develop an awareness of potential science, trades and technology occupations. Occupations of particular focus to the electricity and renewable energy sector include electronics and related technology programs, including power engineering. In addition to the targeted goals, young women benefit as their skills are enhanced in the areas of communication, IT, leadership, teamwork, making presentations and report writing. *Techsploration* positively affects the entire community as it encourages involvement among students, teachers, partners, role models, government and industry.

Learn more about *Techsploration* at [www.techsploration.ca](http://www.techsploration.ca) for information and visit the Women In Action web video series for information on specific careers.

#### **Key Techsploration events include:**

##### **Techsploration Career Research Model – Techsploration Goes to Work**

Each school team, including 6 young women in grade 9 and a teacher, is assigned a female role model from a science, trade or technology occupation. The young women meet with their assigned role model, participate in a worksite tour and begin the research that forms the basis of a presentation they will make at school and the Techsplorer Event later in the spring.

##### **Techsploration Goes To School**

Each school team shares their experiences and research with students at their school in the form of a unique presentation. Their school team role model, along with guest role models, set up stations with props, tools of their trade and information about their career. Small groups of students rotate through the stations to ask questions and participate in hands-on activities.

##### **Techsplorer Events**



During the two-day Techsplorer Event, girls from across the province gather with their teachers, role models and invited guests to participate in exciting and interactive presentations and workshops. This event reinforces and expands upon the information provided in the *Techsploration* team presentations and gives each girl the chance to meet more role models. All of the girls are actively involved in the team presentations. Along with providing information on their assigned career, the students introduce their role model, who responds to questions from the floor.

### **Techsplorer Alumnae Conference/Activities**

This annual one-day event is for young women in grades 10, 11 and 12. It provides *Techsploration* alumnae and guest students with the opportunity to meet numerous role models working in exciting and challenging science, trades and technology careers and to participate in hands-on workshops. Attending this conference is an invaluable way for young women to learn about in-demand careers that they may not otherwise consider as career opportunities.

Now in its 16<sup>th</sup> year, *Techsploration* introduces over 3,000 students each year to the trades, technologies and science. Many role models/mentors participate in the program on an annual basis. *Techsploration* partners include Nova Scotia Community College, Women in Trades and Technology (WiTT) and Advanced Labour and Education -Apprenticeship Training Division. In addition, they are supported financially by over 30 sponsors.

### **Challenges faced and lessons learned**

Program staff indicated that the most significant challenges center on funding and outreach. In order to reach the greatest amount of youth, *Techsploration* staff has gone beyond traditional outreach methods and are creative with their efforts for engagement. For example, they have conducted a pilot webinar and developed a “Women in Action” web video series to highlight various career opportunities for women in science, trades and technology.

Regarding outreach, program representatives noted that it is important to remember that all career awareness activities are just as important for young boys as they are for young girls. If boys are also involved in the awareness activities, all youth will then grow up being used to seeing women working in these roles.

### **Program performance indicators**

Since program inception, *Techsploration* has grown to include over 40 schools across Nova Scotia reaching more than 3,000 students every year. Many role models/mentors participate in the program on an annual basis and are very committed to the program. Program staff recently conducted a survey of past participants in which over 95% of responded that *Techsploration* initiatives made them more aware of careers in science, trades and technology; over 77% of respondents agreed that they were more interested in pursuing a career in these fields; and close to 70% of respondents felt that these initiatives helped them select a career – regardless of whether or not it was in science, trades or technology.

### **Key tips for replicating this initiative:**

- State a clear goal and ensure that all activity is directly related to that goal.
- Ensure you have resources (financial and human) available to deliver the product(s).
- “Do not assume that if something has worked in the past, it can’t be improved.” – Arylene Reycraft, Program Manager

**Women in Science and Engineering (WISE)**  
**‘Go ENG Girl’**



## Province of Ontario

For the past 9 years, the Ontario Network of Women in Engineering (ONWiE) has held a one-day outreach event called 'Go ENG Girl/GÉNiales, les filles' at 14 universities across the province of Ontario (1 offering in French). The event educates and informs female students in grades 7 through 10 (along with their parents) about careers in engineering. The goal for 'Go ENG Girl' 2013, which took place on October 19<sup>th</sup> in most locations, was to reach out to 1,200 girls and their parents. Each day-long event consists of a lecture and several other activities, including an information session for parents and hands-on activities for the young women. A lunch is provided, along with an engineering showcase and a tour of engineering labs. The event is marketed using the language "learn more about the wonderful world of Engineering – A Caring Profession," to appeal to young peoples' social desire to make a difference in the world around them. The ONWiE network at the University of Ottawa was instrumental in setting up Go ENG Girl and its sustained success.

Learn more about 'GO ENG Girl' at: [http://www.ospe.on.ca/?page=eng\\_comm\\_geg](http://www.ospe.on.ca/?page=eng_comm_geg)

### Challenges faced

Program representatives noted that at the outset, getting the ONWiE group to function as a network presented certain challenges. There were also challenges with more logistical items for the province-wide event, such as agreeing on a date, branding for the event and finding the resources to make the event a success. The support of University deans was instrumental in ensuring that program staff received support in working on the initiative. In 2013, financial support for the branding (the logo, event giveaways, information-filled USB keys for parents) came from corporate donations and administrative efforts were supported by the Council of Ontario Deans of Engineering and the Ontario Society of Professional Engineers.

### Performance/success indicators for the program

Every year after the one-day event, an evaluation is completed by the girls and their parents to measure immediate impact; for example, satisfaction with the program and outlook to the future (i.e. will they take science classes in high school, will they take engineering in university).

In the summer of 2011, a survey was administered for all past participants (years 2005-2010). Indicators on this survey included: the program's impact on girls' decision making (i.e. what courses to take in high school, what university programs to consider and for those who reached university, what their actual choices and influences were), the program's impact on parents with regards to their attitudes towards girls in engineering and general awareness about what engineering involves and its impact on society.

### Key tips for replicating this initiative

- Collaborate with other like-minded organizations to increase your impact. Recognize where you can get help without re-inventing the wheel.
- Do not under-estimate the level of resources needed, even when collaborating with others.
- Make programs engaging so that participants can have fun and learn at the same time.
- Be sure to look at the short-term and the long-term impact(s) of your program.

Key Take-Away Points for 'Career Awareness' Programming



- It is never too early to begin outreach with youth – starting the conversation about opportunities for women in trades and technology can begin in primary and elementary school.
- Career awareness among youth is applicable for both boys and girls; both genders need to be made aware of the fact that there are no ‘male’ or ‘female’ jobs.
- Consider the key audience and develop marketing materials that ‘speak’ to that audience, keeping in mind that a variety of approaches and media may be required to reach differing demographic targets.
- When reaching out to youth, involving parents, teachers and guidance counselors is critical to ensure that all the individuals that serve as role models and lenders of advice are aware of the potential for women in electricity.
- Career awareness initiatives must include information regarding the necessary steps for individuals to follow in order to achieve their career goals. For example, the educational paths and necessary courses that act as “prerequisites” for careers in trades and technology.



## Step 2: Skills Assessment / Training

**Skills Assessment and Training** is a critical second step in the continuum towards a successful career in the electricity sector. Skills assessment, career decision making programming and workplace preparedness resources help women to discover what trades/occupations would best suit their interests and aptitudes and assist in mapping out skills upgrading (if applicable) and training plans (which may include co-op programs, post-secondary education, an apprenticeship or a combination of all).

Training is critical for successful recruitment and retention of women in the sector. Women must be aware of the training path required to secure the careers that they want and in many cases may benefit from subsidies and other forms of support to lessen the financial burden that is often associated with training, particularly for women with children and families to support.

The following case study provides an illustrative example of a program that supports skills assessment and training.

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**Women Unlimited Association  
Women Unlimited Program  
Nova Scotia**



The *Women Unlimited Program* (Nova Scotia) is a comprehensive, women-centred program that supports diverse, unemployed or underemployed women as they explore, prepare for, train and work in the fields of trades or technologies. The Women Unlimited model offers a continuum of services with four components: Gender Diversity Recruitment, Career Decision-Making Program, Supportive Intervention Services during Trades and Technology Training and Employment Access and Retention. The program also works with employers to address the systemic barriers diverse women face and support their successful transition and retention into the trades and technology labour force.

The model begins with a comprehensive recruitment and assessment process. Since 2006, almost 500 women have been selected to participate. Once selected, women enter a 14-week Career Decision-Making Program (CDMP) that allows them to explore more than 50 careers through such portals as hands-on workshops in trades and technology, labour market research, employability skills, personal development skills, essential math, first voice information sessions with women and employers working in trades and technologies, as well as field trips to a wide variety of worksites. The program continues to support the women as they apply for, enter and study in trades or technology training in their chosen fields and finally, as they seek and secure employment. Approximately 95% of the women complete the 14-week program and more than 80% enter trades and technology training programs, the majority at the Nova Scotia Community College. *Women Unlimited* also works to engage employers and help them to recognize the benefits of a diverse work force and to create a welcoming environment for women to enter.

The *Women Unlimited* model was built through collaborative partnerships with employers, unions, sector councils, industry associations, apprenticeship, governments, educational institutions and community organizations.

Learn more about the *Women Unlimited Program* at: [www.womenunlimitedns.ca](http://www.womenunlimitedns.ca)





## **Challenges faced and lessons learned**

The women who are selected for this program are diverse. They are New Canadians, African Nova Scotians, Aboriginal women, women living with disabilities and youth. Many have multiple, intersecting challenges that range from unemployment or underemployment, living in poverty, single parenthood, insecure and/or inadequate housing, racism, few support systems and limited knowledge of opportunities in trades or technologies. In Nova Scotia, approximately 4% of those working in the trades are women. *Women Unlimited* staff work diligently to build their support systems, their confidence and self-esteem, recognizing that these are as important factors in work-readiness as are other technical skills they will acquire.

Another challenge faced by *Women Unlimited* women, who seek to study and work in the trades or technology sectors, are the systems that are slow to change how things have always been done. Stereotypes and attitudes about what constitutes women's work and men's work still exist. *Women Unlimited* works with the college and employers to address the systemic issues women face and help to build respectful training and workplace policies. *Women Unlimited* works with employers to demonstrate how, by increasing the diversity of their workforce; productivity, creativity and problem solving increase and workplace accidents decrease.

*Women Unlimited's* partnership with the Nova Scotia Community College is ground-breaking. The partnership works to increase opportunities for women who are historically underrepresented in trades and technology programs. The *Women Unlimited Program* is housed in four campuses across the province. Obtaining a seat in a course at the College can be very competitive and there are often waitlists. *Women Unlimited* has secured guaranteed seats in these programs for their participants who meet the prerequisite skills. This partnership has increased the diversity of students in the School of Trades and Technology from a low of 8% when the *Women Unlimited program* started in 2006 to a current enrolment of 15%.

Because many of *Women Unlimited's* participants are single mothers, they are often searching for stable, predictable employment. *Women Unlimited* works with each woman to help her secure a suitable position that offers stable employment with benefits or to develop the flexibility to adapt to a situation that presents itself.

## **Performance/success indicators for the program**

The evaluation process at *Women Unlimited* is comprehensive in scope. Each workshop and activity is evaluated by the participants to determine its effectiveness and to identify ways in which it can be improved. Every week the women complete both individual and group assessments about the program components to help identify challenges and address them right away. The program measures completion rates of the Career Decision-Making Program, and this has been about 95% every year. They also track which participants go on to trades and technology training and those who enter into direct trades or technology employment.

Because *Women Unlimited* staff support each participant throughout her journey from the CDMP to her one to two-year studies in her trades or technology training and through her job search and her initial term of employment and finally through her apprenticeship, they develop deep connections and pride of accomplishment. Each woman's journey is unique onto itself, each challenge she overcomes is a victory, and each victory is a victory for a whole community.

## **Key tips for replicating this initiative**

- *Women Unlimited* recruits for diversity. If you don't actively seek out diversity, you will not get diversity.



- Having a portfolio of funders allows for greater flexibility in removing barriers for women living in poverty. Where one funder might close a door, another can open it.
- Creating buy-in means letting others in. By bringing others into a collaborative process of building the model, you cement their commitment to its precepts.
- Be flexible in your responses as suggestions and proposals are put on the table. If a door opens, walk through and see where it takes you. Look creatively at the gifts people and organizations bring.
- A successful program depends on the support and input of the local community. Work to demonstrate how the program could be of benefit to strategic members of the community and seek out and implement their ideas.
- You may be the “expert” in what you do, but recognize you need the expertise of others to accomplish your goals. Respect different ways of knowing, being and doing.
- The viability of a program correlates directly to the thoroughness of the assessment process.
- Start in an employer’s comfort zone and grow your relationship from there.
- Build your program on a foundation of respect.

### Key Take-Away Points for 'Skills Assessment and Training' Programming

- Programs that provide direct linkages to employers through work placements and co-op terms not only give female trainees valuable work-based experience within the sector, but also introduce employers to groups of highly skilled and motivated future workers from which they can hire.
- To be effective, all training programs should provide trainees with realistic job previews and job descriptions to ensure a correct fit based on skills and interests and to identify a clear pathway for training and employment attainment.
- Effective programming should be linked to employer demand by making good use of labour market information and workforce projections.
- Financial sharing arrangements between employers, educational institutions and students (e.g., student bursaries, sponsorships, etc.) can help to lift the financial burden felt by many students.



### Step 3: Employment Support

**Employment Support** is critical for women who have received the necessary education and training required for employment and who are ready to secure employment in their fields. Employment support can take on many forms and may include support in preparing their resumes, assistance in approaching employers, interviewing skills and communication skills development to effectively market their skills to employers.

The following case study provides an illustrative example of programming that provides employment support to female workers:

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#### **Office to Advance Women Apprentices (OAWA) Province of Newfoundland and Labrador**



The *Office to Advance Women Apprentices (OAWA)* is a non-profit organization fully-funded by the government of Newfoundland and Labrador. The mandate of the *OAWA* is to work with women after they have received their trades training to assist them in finding employment in their trade which will enable them to log their hours for their apprenticeship. They currently have 865 women in their registry database and are actively helping 18 female electrical apprentices with ongoing job searches.

The Industrial Training Division of the provincial government tracks apprenticeship within the province and *OAWA* works closely with this division in tracking the women's apprenticeship and journey person status. They also reach out to women still in college and encourage them to register with their office before they complete their trades program so that they can capture them in the database and start the job search for them.

The *OAWA* has forged highly effective working relationships with a total of 16 trades unions across the province to promote female apprentices in various trades. They also work closely with community colleges in the area and make regular presentations and participate in outreach activities to promote women in the trades.

Learn more about the *Office to Advance Women Apprentices (OAWA)* at:

<http://www.womenapprentices.ca/>

#### **Challenges faced**

Program staff indicated that many challenges were overcome simply by creating the *Office to Advance Women Apprentices!* A major challenge is the geography of Newfoundland and Labrador. The office is located on the Avalon Peninsula, but NL is a large province. Staff often struggle with getting out and performing as much outreach as they would like. In order to overcome this barrier, the *OAWA* has relied heavily on partnerships with organizations, including colleges, unions and other women-focused organizations, across the province. The industrial training and apprenticeship division has program officers that monitor apprenticeships – e.g., making sure logbooks are filled out correctly – and they now have an officer dedicated to women in trades. This officer speaks directly to employers and women looking to enter the trades and greatly assists with and enriches the outreach that the *OAWA* conducts.



The OAWA also indicated that staying in touch with women can be challenging. For example, once women have completed their apprenticeship and become employed, it can be easy to lose touch with them. The OAWA counteracts this issue by breaking down all of their apprentices by occupational category (i.e., carpenters, welders, etc.). Week-long spans are dedicated to making contact with women from each occupational group to follow-up. If a woman has not replied to contact efforts after 2 or 3 attempts, an OAWA representative will follow-up with a personal phone call. Program staff noted that this contact is critical to the success of the program and getting feedback on how women are doing.

Program representatives noted that once women find work, they can often lack the confidence to ask for what they require, such as personal protective equipment (PPE). This is where the mentors from the program can be very helpful. In addition, women may also initially have issues with regards to doctor's appointments for their children; however, once employers realize that it is possible for the women to do their job and manage their personal responsibilities, these issues no longer exist. Having women mentors within workplaces is extremely beneficial for orienting the new female worker into her role.

### **Performance indicators**

The OAWA currently has a database that allows them to track women who are entering the trades, the number of female apprentices across occupational categories, and the number of female journeypersons. Staff can extract the numbers from this database at any time to determine how women are progressing through the program. The database currently includes 865 women who are in the process of completing their apprenticeship in a non-traditional trade. Close to 100 of these apprentices are within the carpentry trade, approximately 90 who have completed the heavy equipment program, and just over 90 are completing the electrician program. In regard to electricians, 46 have found employment in Newfoundland and Labrador, 6 have found work outside of the province, and they are actively helping 18 female electrical apprentices with ongoing job searches.

In their first year of operation, the goal for the OAWA was to help 10 women and they helped 37. Over the next 4 years, they registered over 800 women in their database. Since program inception, they have assisted 463 women in finding employment opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador. The Industrial Training Division tracks the hours of the apprentices who are working and there are currently 52 female journeypersons of whom they currently keep track. Before a woman finishes her training program, the OAWA is notified so they can reach out to her and help her with her job search.

In April 2013, the OAWA held a "skilled trades" conference for students as well as women working in the trades which was attended by 1,343 people over 2 days. They have recently implemented a presentation series, delivering 5 presentations across the province throughout the year. These presentations are attended by government representatives, unions, industry, and women looking to enter the trades. Word has gotten out about the popularity of these events and within 3 weeks of putting out their sponsorship package, they received more than half of what they were seeking for sponsorship. Government buy-in has helped to make all OAWA events a success.

### **Key tips for replicating this initiative**

- Don't re-invent the wheel. This program is highly successful in Newfoundland and Labrador. As a public service, their door is always open to provide assistance or advice.



- “Always focus on the positive.” While program staff recognizes that there can be struggles at times, they feel it is more important to focus on what is going right for the program. This does not mean that challenges are ignored, but it allows people to focus on the change they are creating rather than getting wrapped up in the difficulties. They tell the women that they work with to always be “professional and positive.”
- “Partnership, Partnership, Partnership! Partnerships are critical to the success of any program such as this – especially with regard to outreach and creating buy-in. Acknowledging partnerships is also very important so that partners understand the difference that their support makes.” – Karen Walsh, Executive Director

### Key Take-Away Points for 'Employment Support' Programming

- It can be very challenging for trained women to connect with employers. Programs that provide support to create linkages between skilled job seekers and employers that are hiring employees or apprentices greatly enhance employment rates within the sector.
- In addition to technical skills, training programs should also focus on other practical skills such as interviewing, communication and resume writing to enhance job readiness.
- To enhance successful adaptation into the workforce, programs should have components to prepare women for the challenges that they may face and the stereotypes that they may encounter and provide strategies for successfully managing conflict, diffusing situations and exhibiting confidence.
- Programs that foster sustainable relationships and supportive environments among female cohorts enhance the experiences and confidence level of female workers.
- It is effective to engage women in mentorship programs before they take their training to help women determine where the jobs will be when they graduate and are seeking employment.



## Step 4: Mentoring

**Mentoring** is critical to assist women to overcome the learning curve experienced by all new hires, to transition into the workplace and to receive guidance and support from trusted advisors (male and female) who have the employees' best interests in mind and want them to succeed. Mentorship is critical for women at all stages of their employment journey and can continue throughout a woman's career as an ongoing source of support.

The following case study provides an illustrative example of programming that provides mentorship to females in non-traditional trades and occupations:

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### **Hydro One Province of Ontario**



Hydro One initiated a "Women in Engineering" partnership with four universities: Western, Waterloo, Ryerson and the University of Ontario: Institute of Technology (UOIT) with the aim of encouraging more women to go into electrical and mechanical engineering. The four year program is focusing on attracting young women in engineering, supporting and mentoring undergraduates and providing early career support. The five partners, including Hydro One work jointly on projects. The company provides financial support to the universities, as well as offering women engineers who work at Hydro One as mentors to the university students.

Hydro One participates in the 'Women in Energy Program,' a networking program from more senior women, in conjunction with Union Gas and Enbridge Gas Distribution. Hydro One has also just embarked upon the first Women in Trades, Technology and Engineering Network Forum for Hydro One employees that will be open to female participants and male supporters. A SharePoint site has been developed for the forum and the first meeting was held in the fall of 2013.

Hydro One's College Consortium, initially focused on graduating more electrical engineering technicians and technologists, now has a stream focusing on more women in the program. The partners are: Algonquin College, Georgian College, Mohawk College, and Northern College. Algonquin College is operating a pilot program for women that compresses the three year technology program into two. Currently 22 women are enrolled in the program, with the majority spending summer work-terms with Hydro One.

Hydro One also supports Skills Canada-Ontario and have also worked with the Canadian Women's Foundation. Hydro One also works with partners to support First Nations and Métis programs.

Learn more about Hydro One at: [www.hydroone.com](http://www.hydroone.com)

### **Challenges faced**

Program representatives indicated that one of the biggest challenges for getting young women into the energy sector is that there is not a good understanding of what types of jobs are available or even what engineering or the trades are all about. Most of the positions at Hydro One are unionized, and the pay and benefits are very competitive. This is certainly attractive to women; however, the lack of awareness of the opportunities is the biggest barrier to attracting women. Besides the lack of



awareness, there is often a misconception about what the trades really involve. In addition, women often want to know what the social impact of their jobs will be. Hydro One supports a number of energy education initiatives externally to assist in engaging a science-literate future workforce.

Hydro One's work with the universities is demonstrating that there is a lack of female role models for younger women. As such, girls do not see themselves doing the work because they are not used to seeing women in these roles.

It was also noted that, overall, the energy sector has made improvements with regards to gender differences – although there is always room for improvement. Some women feel isolated because of this and may not stay in the industry because of a lack of other women. Program staff indicated that this is especially true in more remote communities where there are fewer women working in the sector versus the head office, for example. Shift work can also be a challenge for women with families in terms of childcare. For example, there can be issues such as unexpected over time because of a storm. Staff indicated that the women with supportive partners are more likely to succeed as a result.

### **Performance Indicators**

Success indicators for the university program are currently under development. As a start, they plan to track the number of women applicants, graduates and hires at Hydro One and to do the same at the colleges. Although they do not have any formal performance indicators, program staff indicated that at the "10,000 foot" view, they do have statistics with regards to how many women come to universities, how many women go into engineering, how many women graduate and how many engineers are still practicing 10 years after graduating. Although these numbers do not capture the influence their program has had directly, they use these numbers to get a big picture view of what the situation is like.

### **Key tips for replicating this initiative**

- Streamline operations. Staff at Hydro One initially planned to work with 4 colleges but realized that they did not have the resources to deal with 4 separate projects. They convinced the colleges that the program would be stronger if they worked together. The University partnership was modeled on the same formula. Communicate to stakeholders that diversity makes the workplace stronger.
- Ensure the role of the mentors is clearly defined so that all participants in the initiative understand their role and what is expected of them.
- "The key to success is collaboration."- Sheelagh Lawrance, Manager, CSR & Community Investment

### **Key Take-Away Points for 'Mentoring' Programming**

- Mentoring is important for all stages of one's career, not simply upon initiation into a new job.
- The gender of the mentor has no bearing on the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship; the only true requirement of a mentor is a willingness to positively support and guide a mentee through a healthy and mutually beneficial relationship rooted in trust and respect.
- Formalized processes (such as regular networking activities, conversations and check-ins) add to the effectiveness of mentoring by developing effective, long-lasting working relationships.
- Mentoring is a mutually-beneficial relationship. While mentees receive the guidance and support needed to gain confidence in their careers, mentors also learn new perspectives from their



mentees and often develop a heightened sense of pride for their work as they pass on their knowledge to others.

- The power of mentoring should never be underestimated; many women currently working within the sector credited the support of mentors (both male and female) to their success in their careers.

## Conclusion

The organizations profiled in these case studies all serve as excellent examples of how to increase the attraction, recruitment and retention of women as skilled workers in the electricity and renewable energy sector. Considering the factors identified in the “continuum of support” as well as the tips that program representatives have given for success, can be an effective first step in the development of additional initiatives towards this goal.

In addition to these best practice case studies, EHRC has developed a research report and a number of videos that highlight occupations and women in the industry. The report and videos, along with our tools and resources developed as part of the Bridging the Gap project can be found on the EHRC website: [www.electricityhr.ca](http://www.electricityhr.ca).







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