

TRANSPORTATION RESEARCH BOARD

How Women Fare in the Transit Industry

September 2, 2020

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#TRBwebinar

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Learning Objectives

1. Identify barriers that exist for women in transit careers
2. Discuss strategies for supporting women in transit agencies

#TRBwebinar





TRB Webinar: How Women Fare in the Transit Industry

TCRP Synthesis 147: Attracting, Retaining, and Advancing Women in Transit

Presenters:

Dr. Allison Alexander
Dr. Jessica Jenkins
Chelsey Jackson, M.S.

Today's Session

- § Results from TCRP Synthesis 147: Attracting, Retaining, and Advancing Women in Transit
- § Presentation followed by opportunity for questions



Dr. Allison Alexander
Director, Human Capital



Dr. Jessica Jenkins
Director, Human Capital



Chelsey Jackson, M.S.
Manager, Human Capital

Learning Objectives

- § **Understand the representation of women in transit jobs**
- § **Identify barriers that exist for women in transit careers**
- § **Discuss strategies for supporting women in transit agencies**



Poll Question

§ Are you with:

- A. Transit agency/provider
- B. Local MPO
- C. Federal Government
- D. University
- E. Other



Poll Question

§ What is your level of experience related to workforce strategies to support women?

- A. I have implemented them at the agency/organization level.
- B. I have implemented them at the team/unit level.
- C. I have had informal experience with them.
- D. I have not had much experience but am interested in learning more.



TCRP Synthesis 147 Background

§ **Project Objective:** Explore the strategies that have been used to date in transit and related industries to recruit, retain, and develop women

§ **Research activities:**



Literature Review

- Identify the current state of women in the industry, barriers to entry or staying in the industry, and effective strategies to recruit, retain, and develop women



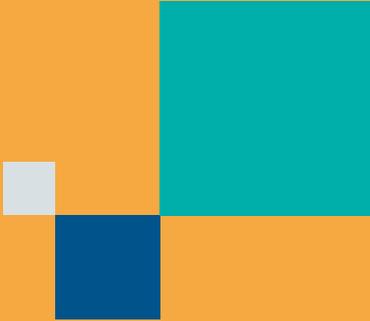
Survey of Transit Agencies

- Gather the current experiences of a variety of transit agencies



Case Story Interviews

- Learn about strategies that are currently working in transit agencies to attract, retain, and/or develop women



Current State of Women in the Transit Industry

Current Representation of Women in Transit

§ **Historically, women have been underrepresented in the transit industry**

- § U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS): 39% of transit and ground transportations
 - 44% of bus operators, 1% of bus and truck mechanics
- § Survey of transit agencies: 35% in agency overall

§ **Diversity is valuable, but it is lacking**

- § Provides a better understanding of customers
- § Increases workforce satisfaction
- § Results in higher organizational performance

Why don't we see more women in transit careers?

Barriers for Women in Transit



Lack of Job Opportunity Outreach

- § Limited advertising to women
- § Unaware of job opportunities
- § Not encouraged or supported by families, schools, or teachers



Social Factors

- § Public and media portrayal of transit employees
- § Lack of visible, female role models
- § Societal role expectations (e.g., women are nurturing)



Masculine Culture

- § Predominately male workforce
- § Perceived lack of fit with “masculine industry”
- § Negative conditions and stress experienced by women

Barriers for Women in Transit



Safety and Health Concerns

- § Aspects of the job may make women feel uncomfortable or unsafe (sexual harassment)
- § Lack of facilities for women
- § Experiences of women using public transportation



Outside (Home) Responsibilities

- § Shiftwork or other job characteristics can make it difficult to accommodate responsibilities from outside of work
- § Lack of consideration of needs by leadership



Additional Barriers

- § Lack of female mentorship
- § Lower pay for women
- § Barriers are not changing or being eliminated

Strategies to Attract Women to Transit



Conduct outreach
out transit careers in
schools



Focus on recruiting
women

Communicate about
transit careers in the
community



Review current hiring
practices for gender-
based stereotypes



Improve the image
of transit as a career

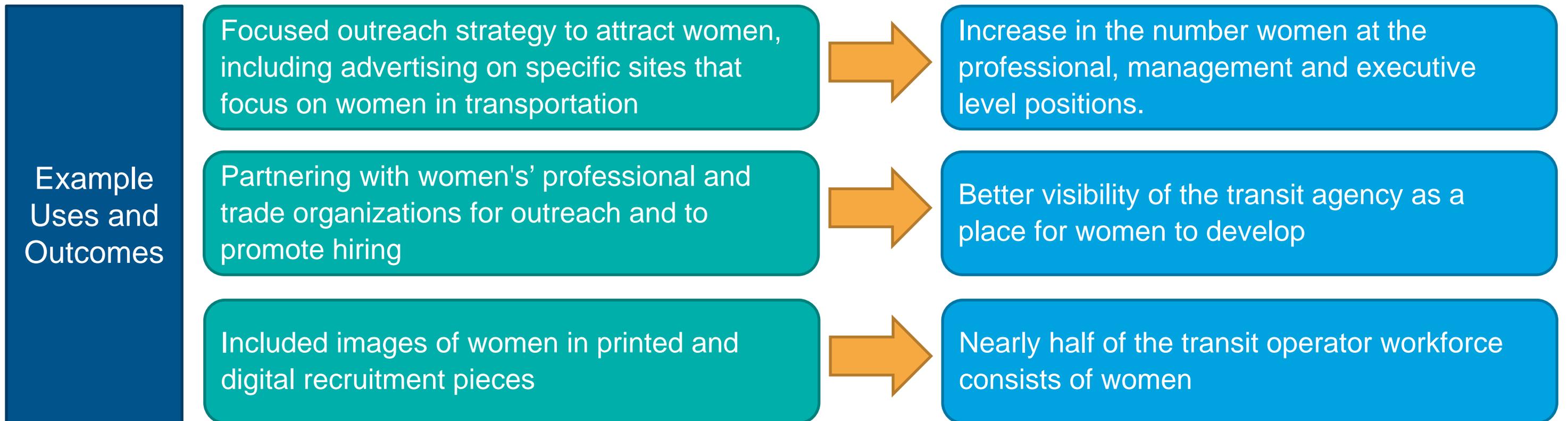


Outline goals for
recruiting women

Strategies to Attract Women to Transit

§ Focus on Recruiting Women

- § Tailor recruitment efforts to make sure women see, are aware, and feel qualified
- § Remove bias from job postings, applications, and reviews
- § Host career days that will appeal to women



Strategies to Retain Women in Transit



Address culture change



Initiative networking opportunities

Improve organizational policies for addressing safety and health concerns



Improve accommodations for responsibilities outside of work

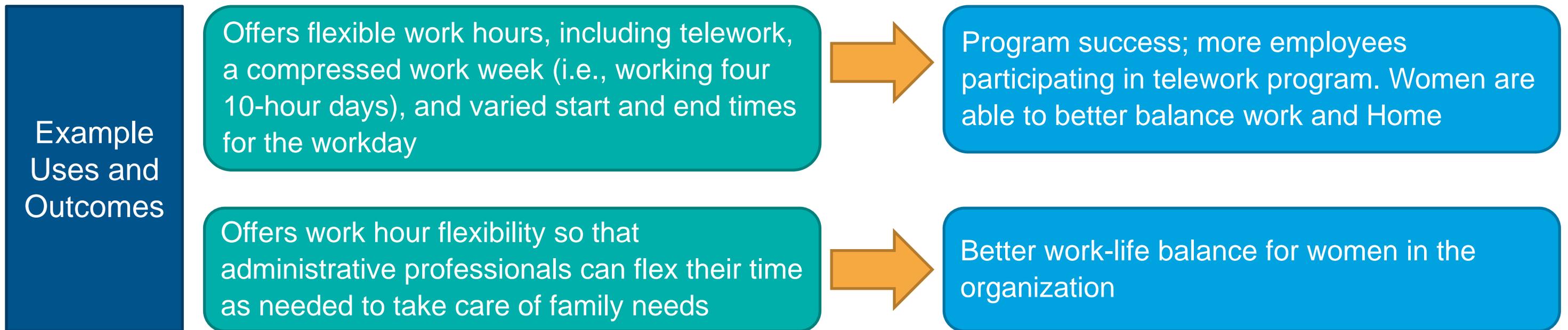


Provide training and developmental support

Strategies to Retain Women in Transit

§ Improve accommodations for responsibilities outside of work

- § Identify needs of employees and how they can be addressed
- § Provide flexible work schedules or part-time opportunities
- § Promote a culture that values work-life balance



Strategies to Advance Women in Transit



Provide mentoring opportunities or networking guidance

Outline steps to career development

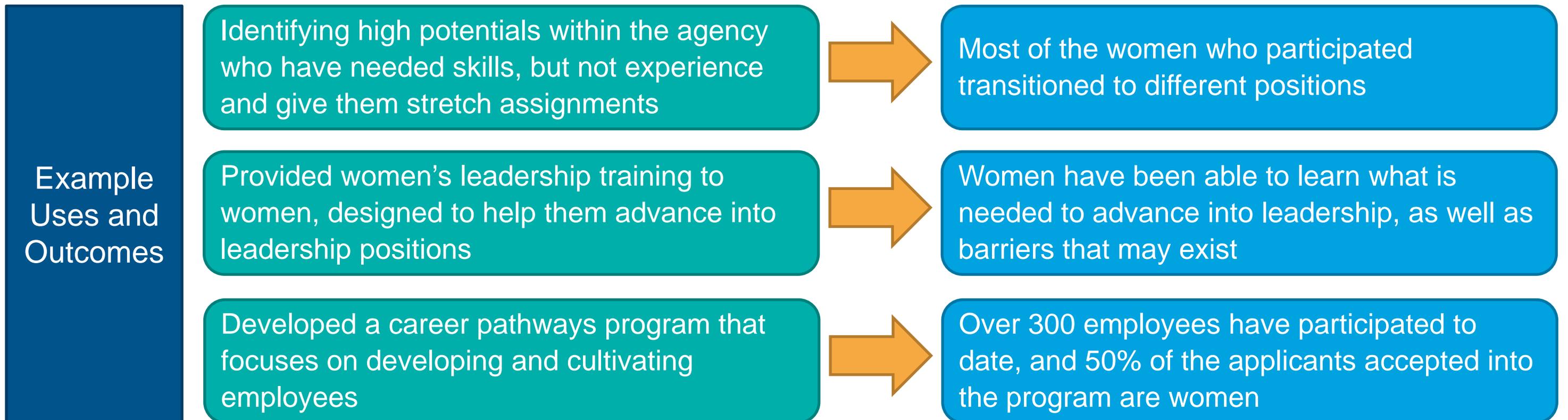


Consider work assignment equity

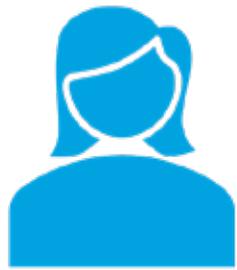
Strategies to Advance Women to Transit

§ Outline steps to career development

- § Clearly communicate and outline steps needed for promotions
- § Focus on goal setting aligned with advancement
- § Supervisors support and guide employees



Overarching Strategies to Support Women



Incorporate imagery and messaging of women in transit



Acknowledge women's contributions to the transit industry

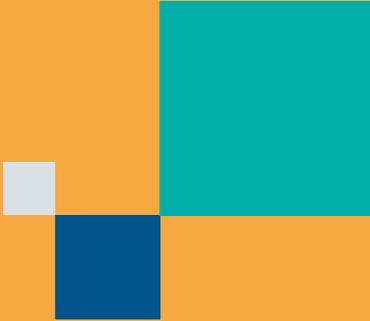
Develop internships and apprenticeships focusing on women



Reduce safety and health concerns



Establish a transit Women's Action Council



Case Examples of Effective Strategies to Support Women

Strategy in Action: Recruit Hiring and Pay Initiatives



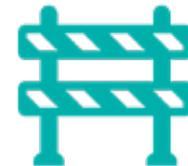
Overview

- Only **30% of LA Metro's employees were women**
- Reviewing job specifications and qualifications to **remove gender bias**
- Implementing **blind screening** of applicants
- Conducting pay equity studies



Implementation

- **Steering committees** to guide rollout of strategies
- **Pilot study** to determine biases in hiring and impact of blind review
- **Formal pay equity** studies conducted



Challenges Encountered

- **Difficult to change and gain buy-in** and employees may be resistant
- **Difficult to understand change** can enhance talent



Impacts to Transit Agency

- **Significant increases in the number of women hired**
- Will **address any evidence of bias** in hiring

Strategy in Action: **Recruit**

Women Building SEPTA – Trades and Technical Career Fair



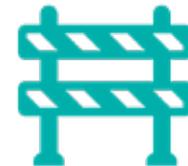
Overview

- Women represent only **2% of staff**
- **Career fair** designed to attract women to the trade and technical industry
- Current SEPTA **employees speak to attendees**



Implementation

- Participants (women and men) **register online to attend** and can view current job openings
- **Relationships** with local schools used to promote event



Challenges Encountered

- **Lack of knowledge** of the event and careers at SEPTA
- **Lower attendance** than anticipated



Impacts to Transit Agency

- Previously unaware women **learned of transit careers**
- **Increased student applications** to technical and trade schools that feed into the agency

Strategy in Action: Retain

Women Empowering Sound Transit Employee Resource Group (WEST ERG)



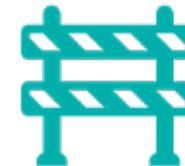
Overview

- Developed to **overcome systematic barriers** women have experienced
- Plans and facilitates **events for women**



Implementation

- Identified as a **focus area** by the EEO office
- **Volunteers** took on leadership roles in the ERG to promote and offer activities
- **Executive sponsors** support the ERG



Challenges Encountered

- **Aligning the role of the ERG** with the agency strategy and goals
- Word of mouth **communication was hard** to spread



Impacts to Transit Agency

- **Relationships built** between members to support one another
- **Informal mentorships** have formed and provide guidance to members

Strategy in Action: Retain, Advance Go Driver Program



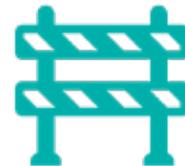
Overview

- **Decreasing proportion** of women bus operators
- **Lack of support** for women
- **Financially supports** students' daily expenses (e.g., rent, childcare) until they secure a bus operator job



Implementation

- **Collaborated** with the city and local community college Workforce Development department
- Eight weeks of **unpaid training**
- Includes resources to **help participants pay** for personal needs



Challenges Encountered

- **Resentment** between people who got a job in the “traditional” way and who completed the program



Impacts to Transit Agency

- **Addressed childcare** issues that prevented women from applying
- Showed **women they can be successful** in transit careers

Strategy in Action: **Advance** Leadership Academy



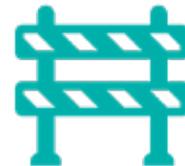
Overview

- Identified **need to better develop** future leaders
- **Women well represented** in the program (although not specifically for women)



Implementation

- Developed **curriculum and collaborated** with local faculty
- **Learning** through classrooms, team building exercises, networking, coaching, etc.
- **Presented** to leaders on current agency problems



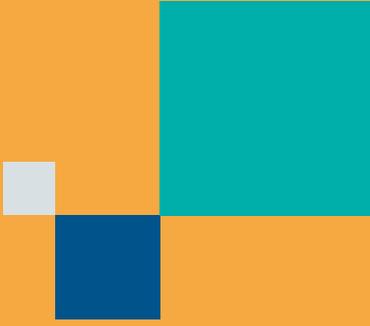
Challenges Encountered

- No significant challenges experienced



Impacts to Transit Agency

- Participants **engaged with executive leaders**
- **Increased visibility** of women in the agency
- Women in the Leadership academy were able to **connect with other women**



Where Can Transit Go from Here?

How Do We Better Support Women?

- § Recognize that barriers exist and address them
- § Build on existing strategies
- § Collaborate with other agencies or organizations to build efficiencies



Poll Question

§ What have you seen as the biggest barrier for women in the transit industry?

- A. Lack of job opportunity outreach
- B. Social factors
- C. Masculine culture
- D. Safety concerns
- E. Inflexibility to accommodate personal responsibilities



Poll Question

§ In what area do you think your organization most needs to focus to better support women and increase their representation in the workforce?

- A. Recruiting or attracting
- B. Retaining
- C. Advancing or developing
- D. Other



Q&A Session



**Thank you for your
time today!**

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Today's Panelists

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