

What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



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What Tooele County Leaders and Residents Can Do to Strengthen the Impact of Girls and Women in Their Area

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP
Project

Tooele County is full of engaged, passionate individuals who frequently ask the question, “What can I do to strengthen the impact of girls and women in this area?” To provide specific answers to that question, the **Utah Women & Leadership Project** (UWLP) and Utah State University (USU) Extension hosted a “think tank” gathering to collect ideas for individuals, groups, and organizations interested in supporting and empowering girls and women in their area.

This idea sheet is based on a 2022 gathering of 30 leaders in Tooele County. Girls and women face challenges unique to the area in which they live, and the goal of this gathering was to identify those barriers and determine strategies and initiatives that local leaders and residents can implement to address them. This document includes recommendations in the following areas: education, home and family, health & wellbeing, business & economics, and culture & community engagement.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Tooele County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. Ensuring that women complete high school and obtain college certificates and degrees is critically important to continue a woman's development. Recommendations include:

- Increase extracurricular opportunities and clubs for girls to develop talents, pursue new hobbies, and practice leadership skills.
- Provide opportunities for interactive experiences with physical labor including technical and trade work.
- Incorporate STEM and forensics education, internships, and experiences for girls of all ages.
- Ensure girls leave high school with the life skills they need including financial literacy, auto repair, household chores, basic home maintenance, and time management.
- Invite women from nontraditional careers (e.g., trades, firefighters, farmers) and strong female role models to participate in career days and to share their stories with girls of all ages.
- Reduce the division between students who are high achievers and

those who aren't interested in their future by affirming dreams, aspirations, and ambition; encouraging out-of-the-box thinking; supporting unconventional career and life choices for women; and helping them pursue possibilities outside of their comfort zones.

- Create mentoring, shadowing, cross-training, and interning opportunities for girls to interact with older young women, college students, and professionals so they are exposed to thoughts, ideas, habits, and practices of successful women of all ages in all walks of life.
- Offer more scholarships to promote and facilitate higher education.

HOME & FAMILY

In Tooele County, parents are recognized as the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. This is evident in the way family leadership is structured including the allocation of roles and responsibilities between partners and the division of paid and unpaid labor. The home is the first and primary place where girls and boys are socialized. Recommendations include:

- Encourage girls to dream big, set goals, and create realistic expectations for their futures.
- Reinforce the importance of how boys and men treat girls and women by teaching about inappropriate comments, sexual harassment, conscious and unconscious bias, consent, and sexual violence.
- Provide resources to help parents have honest conversations with girls when they are young, so they are comfortable sharing and discussing personal, sensitive, and important topics such as mental health, body image, sexuality, and consent.

- Educate families and parents about dysfunctional relationships, breaking cycles of abuse, and available resources (e.g., curriculum, support groups, therapy).
- Create support groups for women experiencing a divorce, single mothers, and women in poverty; empower them with knowledge of available resources. Ensure women have the skills they need to act as head of household.
- Communicate to women of all ages that they can pursue many paths in addition to, or instead of, being a wife and mother.
- Encourage women to become entrepreneurs by connecting them to statewide resources and financing options.
- Increase affordable, safe, high-quality, and available childcare options.
- Invite all women, including women of color, to participate in the monthly Women in Business meetings, as well as the Business Expo, Taste of Our County, and other local networking opportunities.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Concern over the mental health and emotional wellbeing of girls and women in Tooele County emerged as a primary theme. Recommendations include:

- Empower girls and women to speak up and advocate for themselves; teach them how to stop bullying.
- Normalize consent by teaching how to set and enforce boundaries.
- Provide resources and support for girls and women who experience pornography addiction.
- Reinforce the value of external social networks, creative outlets, and healthy social media use.
- Eliminate the pressure to be perfect by encouraging girls and women to take risks, to stop defining themselves by their physical appearance, and to reframe failure as an integral component in the growth process.
- Lower barriers to mental health resources and support, with special attention to obstacles experienced by women of color. Increase the number of therapists in Tooele County.
- Teach mental and emotional resiliency so that women and girls can survive and even thrive during hard times. Connect to girls and women where they are and help them shift from a scarcity mindset to one of abundance.
- Ensure aging women have the resources they need to care for their physical and mental wellbeing.
- Create an organization to focus on "Girl Power in Tooele County" to incorporate ideas and address concerns expressed in this document.
- Create leadership positions for young women in county, city, and town government allowing them to shadow a variety of roles and nontraditional opportunities (e.g., law enforcement officers, council members, local government officials).
- Bring awareness of refugees and immigrants to all sectors of the population.
- Gather, create, and share community resources that will support, encourage, and connect girls and women throughout the county.
- Establish a network of successful women to share their stories, teach leadership skills, and demonstrate how women can succeed.
- Invite older and younger women to meet each other, to work together to solve problems, and to support one another. Encourage women of all ages to volunteer together to serve the community through local nonprofit organizations.
- Identify potential women leaders and encourage them to run for office.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Tooele County women struggle with limited opportunities for internal advancement and leadership, as well as with conscious and unconscious bias. Recommendations include:

- Create opportunities for successful businesswomen to engage with the community and mentor individual women helping them identify and overcome roadblocks in business and acquire the skills and abilities required to succeed.
- Strengthen women's presence in the business community by improving their public speaking skills.

CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "think tank" attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Tooele County is heavily influenced by religion. Leaders appreciate the strengths of local women and the power and influence inherent in their lived experiences and stories. Recommendations include:

- Create an organization to focus on "Girl Power in Tooele County" to incorporate ideas and address concerns expressed in this document.
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CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Tooele County, we will be better able to change harmful or ineffective policies and programs, continue effective action, support effective leaders, identify and solve local problems, and create responsive initiatives. The UWLP encourages leaders and residents to use this document to affect change.

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