Policies, initiatives and tools to promote women’s economic empowerment in the world of work in the United States
Acknowledgements

The WE Empower G7 Programme is funded by the European Union (EU) and implemented by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). WE EMPOWER G7 contributes to advancing women’s economic empowerment and encourages businesses to promote gender equality in the workplace, marketplace and community by signing the Women’s Empowerment Principles and implementing the principles of the ILO Tripartite Declaration of Principles concerning Multinational Enterprises and Social Policies (MNE Declaration) and international labour standards on gender equality at work.

This mapping document has been produced with financial support from the European Union. It was commissioned by the ILO and Mary E. Robbins (consultant) carried out the review in the United States. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the International Labour Organization, and the European Union or their constituents. The author would like to thank the project’s Advisory Group of the United States for the inputs and comments received.

Published in 2019.
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The EU, UN Women and ILO project “Empowering women at work through responsible business in G7 countries” (WE EMPOWER G7) aims at supporting sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth by promoting women’s economic empowerment in public and private sector in G7 countries. WE EMPOWER G7 convenes stakeholder dialogues on gender equality in the changing world of work in Canada, Japan, the United States and the EU to exchange knowledge, experiences, good practices and lessons learned.

The inception phase of the project (January-June 2018), focused on collecting data, information and knowledge on women’s economic empowerment, including policies, guidelines, tools and resources in the target G7 countries, in order to foster exchange of good practices.

As a result of preliminary consultations with the project stakeholders and in line with the thematic areas of the ILO’s Women at Work Centenary Initiative (pay equity, violence and harassment in the world of work and care work and care policies), three themes were selected for the United States: the gender pay gap; women in business, entrepreneurship and trade; and young women and skills for the future.

This mapping document covers legislation, policies and initiatives on women’s economic empowerment undertaken by or of relevance to governments, employers’ and workers’ organizations of the United States. It is intended as an overview rather than as an exhaustive review. It also identifies relevant knowledge products linked to such laws, policies and initiatives. All information in this document is as of August 2018, with specific updates until June 2019.
A. Legislative Framework

1. **Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act, 2009**
   (Public Law No: 111-2, signed into law 29 January 2009)
   
   Full Legislative Text
   The Act amends Civil Rights Act of 1964 and restores longstanding law. It helps to ensure that individuals subjected to unlawful pay discrimination are able to effectively assert their rights under the federal anti-discrimination laws.

   (a) Employers will have a strong incentive to eliminate any discriminatory compensation practices because they will continue to be held accountable for discriminatory pay practices.
   
   (b) The Act enables individuals to challenge continuing pay discrimination, ensuring both that employees are not penalized if they are initially unaware of the discrimination and that they remain able to challenge pay discrimination that is compounded by raises, pensions, and other contributions over time.
   
   (c) Employees will continue to have every incentive to challenge compensation discrimination claims as promptly as possible. Plaintiffs are still subject to Title VII’s two-year limitation on back-pay and, because employees bear the burden of proof in Title VII discrimination cases, they will disproportionately be affected by delayed litigation. But the Act gives employees the time necessary to evaluate and confirm that they have been subject to discrimination without forfeiting their right to file a charge. This will ultimately limit the number of pay discrimination claims that are filed.

2. **Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, 1964**
   (Public Law No. 88-352, signed into law 2 July 1964; amended 2009)
   
   Full Legislative Text
   The Act outlaws discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.

   (a) Title VII’s coverage is much broader than the Equal Pay Act (EPA) of 1963. While the EPA of 1963 only prohibits wage discrimination based on sex, Title VII bars all employment discrimination (including hiring, firing, and promotion as well as wage) in more categories (including race, color, religion, and national origin as well as sex).
   
   (b) Title VII generally applied to employers with 15 or more employees, including federal, state, and local governments.
   
   (c) Title VII also applied to private and public colleges and universities, employment agencies, and labor organizations.
3. **Equal Pay Act, 1963**  
(Public Law No. 88-38, signed into law 10 June 1963)  
*Full Legislative Text*  
A United States labor law passed to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to end wage disparity based on sex.

4. **Fair Labor Standards Act, 1938**  
(Public Law No. 29 U.S.C. § 203, signed into law 25 June 1938; amended 2011)  
*Full Legislative Text*  
The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and child labor standards affecting full-time and part-time workers in the private sector and in federal, state, and local governments.

5. **Other related laws: Family and Medical Leave Act, 1993**  
(Public Law No. 103-3, signed into law 5 February 1993; amended 2015)  
The Act entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons.

B. Policies and Initiatives taken by Government

No federal policies or initiatives on the gender pay gap were identified. Former policies and initiatives have been canceled or remain un-renewed.

1. **The State of New York**  
*Implementor: NY Department of Labor and Division of Human Rights*  
**Achieve Pay Equity Act (APEA) S. 1/A. 6075 - 21 October 2015.**  

   (a) The bill eliminates a loophole in the current law that allows employers to prohibit employees from discussing their salaries under threat of termination or suspension. Specifically, the bill allows employees to discuss their wages with each other.  
   (b) Further, the bill increases the amount of damages available to an employee if an employer willfully violates the law.

2. **The State of California**  
*Implementor: California Secretary of State*  
**SB-826 Corporations: boards of directors. – 30 September 2018.**  

   (a) By the end of 2019, publicly traded corporations headquartered in CA must have at least 1 woman director on their board of directors. By the end of 2021, public companies will have to increase the proportion of women on the board dependent on the size of the board.  
   (b) Companies in violation of the law will face monetary penalties.

C. Policies and Initiatives taken by Employers’ Organizations

1. **Women’s Economic Empowerment Initiative**  
*Implementor: US Chamber of Commerce Foundation*  
**Objective:** To build relationships and connections to strengthen economic
empowerment opportunities to women in markets globally.

**Scope:** The Initiative focuses on: (i) creating cross sector partnerships among stakeholders; (ii) working with local and international chambers of commerce abroad to promote women’s economic empowerment on a local level; (iii) engage women strategically in core business operations, governance structures, and corporate value chains; (iv) enable women and girls to build their capacity, human capital, and economic assets; and (v) advocate for women’s rights and opportunities through evidence-based corporate research, communications, and policy platforms.

**Impact:** The Initiative has published multiple reports, hosts an annual forum with the United Nations Office for Partnerships for relevant stakeholders, and their website contains multiple international resources and reports on WEE.

### KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

**US Chamber of Commerce Foundation**

- **Fact Sheet: “Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Program”**
  **Scope:** The fact sheet consists of: (i) goals of the WEE program; (ii) different events and ongoing initiatives; and (iii) a list of current private sector stakeholders involved in program.
  **Intended Impact:** Inform private sector actors and other actors on the business case for WEE and corporate social responsibility for supporting women in business.
  **Target Audience:** Leaders across industries but focusing on those in the private sector.
  *(PDF)*

  **Scope:** This report offers a framework for those in corporate leadership on women’s economic empowerment and includes an *Agenda for Action* for companies, public sector, NGO, and civil society partners moving forward with a WEE agenda.
  **Intended Impact:** Inform business leaders on the business case and corporate social responsibility for supporting women in business.
  **Target Audience:** Business sector leaders.
  *(Full Report) (Executive Summary)*

### Gender Policy

**Implementing Actor: International Organization of Employers (IOE)**

**Objective:** Collaborate with partners to develop strategies, share networks and promote intercultural understanding to encourage workplace diversity, gender equality, and women’s empowerment across the business community.

**Scope:** The IOE works in partnership with (i) the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW International) to develop strategies, share networks and promote gender equality; (ii) the ILO Bureau for Employers'
Activities (ACT/EMP) to provide first hand support and guidance at the country level; (iii) and the Business and Industry Advisory Committee to the OECD, BIAC (The Business and Industry Advisory Committee) to jointly advance the business case for gender diversity and women’s economic empowerment through global policy framework discussions. The IOE supports the ratification of the ILO Convention on Discrimination (Employment and Occupation), 1958 (No. 111), and promotes the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, which includes non-discrimination with respect to employment and occupation and informs the labor principles of the UN Global Compact.

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS**
International Organization of Employers (IOE)

  **Scope:** In order to contribute to the ILO Director-General’s “Women at Work” Centenary Initiative, the IOE in collaboration with ILO ACT/EMP (Bureau of Employers’ Activities) conducted a survey of employers’ organizations and IOE partner companies. The survey aimed to better understand their experiences in promoting women’s economic empowerment and build a knowledge base of good practices.
  **Target Audience:** Private companies and industries considering gender equality in the workplace.
  *(Full Report)*

- **Summary: “Key Takeaways and Good Practices from a joint IOE and ACT/EMP Survey” (2018)**
  **Scope:** A survey to better understand women’s economic empowerment as an enabler for growth and building a knowledge base of good practices for representative employers and companies around the world.
  **Conclusions:** Corporate culture needs to adapt and become more inclusive and flexible to accommodate women’s needs and to ensure they can access the same employment opportunities as men through (i) have in place gender equality, diversity and inclusion, and anti-harassment policies; (ii) offer staff flexible working arrangements; (iii) offer training, mentoring, advice to female employees; and (iv) have transparent remuneration policies.
  **Target Audience:** Business sector leaders
  *(Full Summary)*

**D. Policies and Initiatives taken by Workers’ Organizations**

1. **AFL-CIO Women’s Initiative: Shared Values, Shared Leadership, Shared Prosperity (2013)**
   **Implementing Actor:** The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
   *(Initiative Website)*
Objective: In 2013, the labor movement defined its agenda and strategy for women’s equality.
Scope: At the national, state and local levels, labor federations are integrating women’s issues in every key strategy to grow the movement, develop leadership, build community partnerships and improve the lives of working people.

2. The Women’s Global Leadership Program (WGLP)
Implementing Actor: The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
(Program Website)
Objective: A four-day program in New York City held yearly during U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which brings together governments and human rights advocates from around the world to discuss key issues affecting women’s empowerment.
Scope: The WGLP brings together women union and labor movement leaders and activists from across the United States to learn about the global economy and strengthen organizing and advocacy skills. This work focuses on pay equity, benefits of unionized women and labor rights.

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS**

**AFL-CIO**

- **Infographic: “Women Deserve a Raise” (2018)**
  Scope: The fact sheet consists of: (i) present day gender gap wages; (ii) causes of the gap; (iii) individual state legislation leading the way on salary range requirements
  **Target Audience:** policymakers; local and federal government officials
  ([Fact Sheet])

- **Video: “Equal Pay Day” (2018)**
  Scope: Facebook video to target general population on facts regarding the gender pay gap.
  **Target Audience:** US citizens
  ([Full Video])

  Scope: This briefing paper is informed by experts across advocacy and academia who participated in a convened group between AFL-CIO, Rutgers University Center for Women’s Global Leadership and the Solidarity Center and includes policy recommendations.
  **Target Audience:** policymakers; activists; union workers; and local and federal government officials.
  ([Full Report])
E. Initiatives by other Actors

1. **Equal Pay Counts Initiative**  
   *Implementing Actor: The Lean In Foundation*  
   (Initiative Website)  
   **Objective:** Close gender wage gaps and empower women.  
   **Scope:** Equal Pay Counts Initiative works in three areas (i) peer support groups; (ii) public awareness; (iii) and online education tools.  
   **Impact:** (i) Annual campaigns on women and work and (ii) the Women in the Workplace Survey and Report in conjunction with McKinsey & Company.

   **KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS**  
   The Lean In Foundation  
   - Report: “Women in the Workplace 2017 Study”  
     **Scope:** Women in the Workplace 2017 is a comprehensive study of the state of women in corporate America. This research is part of a long-term partnership with LeanIn.Org and McKinsey & Company to give organizations the information they need to promote women’s leadership and foster gender equality.  
     **Intended Impact:** Supporting women in corporate work.  
     **Target Audience:** Companies and governments working to promote gender equality and women in the workplace.  
     (Full Report)  
   - Interactive Tools Online  
     - “How to be a Workplace Ally”  
     - “Tips for Managers”  
     - “How to support your coworkers”  
     - “How to support your partner”  
     **Scope:** Interactive website allows visitors to sign up for texts and emails on subjects related to supporting women in their professional and personal lives.  
     **Intended Impact:** Transforming gender norms at home and the workplace.  
     **Target Audience:** Managers, employees, and general audience working in the corporate sector.

2. **Parental Leave Policy**  
   *Implementing Actor: Google, LLC*  
   **Objective:** Maintain women employees after having children.  
   **Scope:** To solve Google’s “woman problem,” in 2007 Google extended the industry standard of 12 weeks paid salary to five months off at full pay and full benefits, and mothers were allowed to split up that time however they wished, including taking some of that time off just before their due date. A new mother can take a couple months off after birth, return part time for a while, and then take the balance of her time off when her baby is older.  
   **Impact:** As of 2017, Google’s Diversity Report workforce data shows that
women make up 31% of all employees at Google. Twenty percent of Google tech workers are women, up from 17% three years ago. In addition, women hold one in four leadership roles at the company.

Policies and Initiatives on Women in Business, Entrepreneurship, and Trade

A. Legislative Framework

1. **Promoting Women in Entrepreneurship Act, 2017**
   (Public Law No. 115-6, signed into law 28 February 2017)
   [Full Legislative Text]
   The Act amends the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act (Pub.L. 96–516) to authorize the National Science Foundation to encourage its entrepreneurial programs to recruit and support women to extend their focus beyond the laboratory and into the commercial world.

2. **Women’s Entrepreneurship and Economic Empowerment Act, 2018 (WEEE)**
   (Public Law No: 115-428.S.3247, signed into law 9 January 2019)
   [Full Legislative Text]
   (a) WEEE requires that 50% of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)’s small- and medium-sized enterprise (SME) resources be targeted to reach enterprises owned, managed and controlled by women.
   (b) The Act codifies gender mainstreaming into USAID’s developmental assistance to advance women’s economic empowerment.

3. **Women’s Business Centers Improvements Act**
   (HR 1680 passed the House on May 8, 2018 and now goes to the Senate for approval)
   [Full Legislative Text]
   To amend the Small Business Act to improve the women’s business center program:
   (a) The bill revises the duties of the Office of Women’s Business Ownership and declares it is the Office's mission to assist women entrepreneurs to start, grow, and compete in global markets by providing quality support with access to capital, access to markets, job creation, growth, and counseling.
   (b) The Small Business Administration (SBA) will establish standards for a program to accredit eligible entities receiving a grant to operate one or more women’s business centers.

4. **Women’s Business Ownership Act, 1988**
   (Public Law No. 88-352, signed into law 25 October 1988)
   [Legislative Summary]
   The Act was drafted in response to the Small Business Committee's series of six hearings on problems facing women entrepreneurs and follows the recommendations outlined in the Committee report "New Economic Realities: The Rise of Women Entrepreneurs." The Act accomplished two things:
   (a) The bill provided seed funding for Women's Business Centers through an
annual grant process by the Small Business Administration.

(b) The bill created the National Women's Business Council, a non-partisan federal advisory board created to present policy advice about women small business issues to the President and Congress.

B. Policies and Initiatives taken by Government

1. Women’s Business Centers (WBCs)
   Implementing Agency: Small Business Administration
   (1) WBCs (established in 1998) represent a national network of over 100 educational centers throughout the United States and its territories. Current HR 1680 legislation seeks to increase funding and resources for WBCs.
   Objective: WBCs are designed to assist women in starting and growing small businesses and seek to "level the playing field" for women entrepreneurs, who still face unique obstacles in the business world.
   Scope: Each WBC tailors its services to the needs of its individual community. WBCs provide training in finance, management, marketing, and the Internet, as well as offering access to all of the SBA's financial and procurement assistance programs. WBCs provide entrepreneurs (especially women who are economically or socially disadvantaged) comprehensive training and counseling on a variety of topics in several languages.
   Impact: Since inception in 1988, WBCs have counseled 145,000 women a year at more than 100 WBCs across the country.
   (WBCs Website)

   KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS
   U.S. Small Business Administration

   • Tool: “8(a) Business Development Program Website”
     Scope: 8(a) targets small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and groups. On the 8(a) website you can: (i) compete for contracts; (ii) compete for contracts; (iii) get a Business Opportunity Specialist to help navigate federal contracting; (iv) form joint ventures with established businesses through the SBA's mentor-protégé program; and (v) receive management and technical assistance, including business training, counseling, marketing assistance, and high-level executive development.
     Target Audience: Women small business owners.
     (Full Website)

   • Online Training: “Dreambuilder: online training”
     Scope: This course introduces participants to all areas of business ownership through a carefully crafted and engaging curriculum, featured in English and Spanish. At the conclusion of the program, women leave with a business plan to start their own business or develop an existing one.
     Target Audience: Women small business owners.
     (Training)
2. Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE)
   *Implementing Agency: Department of State (DoS) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)*
   (1) The Women’s Entrepreneurship in APEC (WE-APEC) Initiative (2014)
   - **Objective:** WE-APEC examines each economy's efforts with respect to business networks, private-sector initiatives, and government services in support of women’s entrepreneurship.
   - **Scope:** Summaries of all 21 economies include details about respective networks, initiatives and services, and can be accessed and enhanced to strengthen eco-systems that support women's entrepreneurship. The WE-APEC online platform is a dynamic directory of service providers for women-owned businesses across APEC and provides a way for governments, the private sector, business networks and entrepreneurs to connect. To strengthen implementation and reach, capacity building activities will be implemented and the WE-APEC platform will include a mobile platform for use with mobile devices.
   (Full Initiative)

C. Policies and Initiatives taken by Employers’ Organizations

1. **Women’s Business Loans Program**
   *Implementing Agency: U.S. Women’s Chamber of Commerce (USWCC)*
   - **Objective:** USWCC in partnership with the Lending Club offers an online marketplace that connects borrowers and investors. Lending rates start at 5.9% and the platform aims to provide financing as quickly as possible.
   - **Scope:** In partnership with LendingClub, Women’s Business Loans offers: (i) quick, easy, low cost term loans for firms with $75,000 annual business revenue, ownership of 2+ years and FICO (credit score) of 620+ with an ability to repay; (ii) assistance and consultation: for those firms who don't qualify, assistance and consultation is provided; and (iii) education, training, and mentoring to prepare your business plan.
   (Full Program Information)

2. **OECD Gender Initiative**
   *Implementing Agency: United States Council for International Business (USCIB)*
   - **Objective:** USCIB partners with BIAC (The Business and Industry Advisory Committee) to support the Organization for Cooperation and Development (OECD) on global advancement of women and girls in the economy.
   - **Scope:** USCIB has contributed to two workshops and three reports on women’s empowerment published and organized by BIAC
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS
USCIB and BIAC

- Report: “Preparing all our minds for work: girls, women, and learning over a lifetime” (2017)
  **Scope:** This report focuses on education (school, university and vocational) by applying a gender lens to address the ways in which the digital economy and the technologies underpinning it are affecting the future of work. It highlights the importance of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education and training, and identified a number of issues and challenges facing women in STEM and information and computer technology (ICT) careers.
  **Target Audience:** OECD business leaders.
  *(Full Report)*

- Report: “Putting all our minds to work: harnessing the gender dividend” (2012)
  **Scope:** This report provides a toolkit and public policy recommendations for advancing women’s economic empowerment in the workplace and was widely disseminated and positively received by business, government and in regional intergovernmental forums making commitments to action in this field.
  **Target Audience:** OECD business leaders.
  *(Full Report)*

D. Policies and Initiatives taken by Workers’ Organizations

1. **Stop Gender-Based Violence at Work Campaign**
   **Implementing Actor:** International Trade Union Confederation
   **Objective:** End gender based violence at work.
   **Scope:** The campaign aims to: (i) build critical support for the adoption of an ILO Convention, accompanied by a Recommendation, on “Violence and harassment against women and men in the world of work”, with a strong focus on the gender dimension of violence; and (ii) mobilize and strengthen trade union action in eradicating gender based-violence from the world of work.
   **Target Audience:** Trade union workers and leaders.
   *(Full Campaign Information)*
KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTS

ITUC

- **Campaign Toolkit: “Stop gender-based violence at work - support an ILO Convention” (April 2018)**

  **Scope:** This toolkit aims to support unions and their allies in order to: (i) understand the ILO process; (ii) lobby governments and employers to support the adoption of a comprehensive ILO Convention and Recommendation on violence and harassment in the world of work; (iii) develop key actions in campaigning for an ILO Convention; and (iv) build a broad cross-movement alliance to eradicate gender-based violence from the world of work.

  **Target Audience:** Trade union workers and leaders.

  *(Full Toolkit)*

E. Initiatives taken by other Actors

1. **Launch with Goldman Sachs Initiative, 19 June 2018**

   **Implementing Actor:** Goldman Sachs Group Inc.

   **Objective:** Launch with GS aims to close the gender investing gap. In the U.S., only 2% of US venture capital in 2017 went to companies with all-women founding teams and less than 2% of US private equity firms are female-owned.

   **Scope:** This initiative will invest $500 million of GS firm’s and clients’ capital in private, late-stage, women-founded, women-owned or women-led companies. This includes directly funding companies as well as seeding women investment managers who are starting their own funds.

Policies and Initiatives on Young Women and Skills for the Future

A. Legislative Framework

1. **The INSPIRE Women Act**

   *(Public Law No. 115-7, signed into law 28 February 2017)*

   **(Full Legislative Text)**

   Inspiring the Next Space Pioneers, Innovators, Researchers, and Explorers (INSPIRE) Women Act. The Act requires NASA to develop a plan for facilitating and supporting retired astronauts, scientists, engineers, and innovators to engage with K-12 female STEM students in an attempt to inspire young women to consider participating in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics and to pursue careers in aerospace.

   (a) Develop NASA GIRLS and NASA BOYS initiatives, which are virtual mentoring
programs that pair NASA mentors with young students.
(b) Aspire to Inspire, a program that tasks young girls to investigate STEM career opportunities by providing information about the lives and jobs of early career women at NASA.
(c) Summer Institute in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Research. This program is designed to increase awareness of nontraditional career opportunities with the Goddard Space Flight Center among middle school students.
(d) Lastly, the act requires the NASA administrator to present a report to the House Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on how NASA can best engage current and retired astronauts, scientists, engineers, and other personnel to work with K-12 female STEM students to inspire the next generation of women to consider studying STEM fields and pursue careers in aerospace.

B. Policies and Initiatives taken by Government

1. **Women@Energy Initiative**  
   *Implementing Agency: Department of Energy*  
   *(Initiative Website)*  
   **Objective:** The Women@Energy series showcases profiles and videos of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) careers at the DOE.  
   **Scope:** The profiles and videos highlight what inspired these women to work in STEM, what they do day-to-day in their jobs, their ideas for engaging others in STEM, tips, and more. Soon, the site will also include sample classroom lessons to engage middle school girls.

2. **Girls of Energy Initiative**  
   *Implementing Agency: Department of Energy*  
   **Objective:** Engage young girls in STEM  
   **Scope:** Website hosts science experiments that can be used to explore sciences and to learn more about research and development activities going on in the 17 National Laboratories.

3. **STEM Rising Initiative**  
   *Implementing Agency: Department of Energy*  
   *(Initiative Website)*  
   **Objective:** A new a Secretarial priority initiative to showcase DOE as a leader in preparing and inspiring students, teachers, and the nation’s current workforce to pursue energy-related education and careers.  
   **Scope:** Website hosts STEM resources for students and teachers, student contests, events, internships, and career opportunities.

   *Implementing Agency: Department of State (DoS) and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)*  
   **Objective:** The STEM initiative involves a range of activities aimed to strengthen the presence of women in STEM educational programs and careers.
**Scope:** To help APEC economies tackle the issue of women in STEM, a framework was developed and endorsed with four key pillars: (i) Enabling environment (ii) Education; (iii) Employment; and (iv) Entrepreneurship. As well, capacity-building workshops are being implemented along with identifying private-sector partners and building a partnership with APEC Policy Partnership on Science, Technology, and Innovation (PPSTI).

**Bibliography**


EMPOWERING WOMEN AT WORK IN G7 COUNTRIES