

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

---

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

Introduction .....	2
The Career Planning Process .....	3
Issues Facing Women in Today's Workforce .....	3
Group Dynamics and Group Leadership .....	5
Program Evaluation .....	9
Introductory Session .....	10
The Program Outline .....	10
Session 1 .....	10
Session 2 .....	12
Session 3 .....	14
Session 4 .....	15
Session 5 .....	16
Session 6 .....	17
Session 7 .....	19
Session 8 .....	19
Session 9 .....	20
Session 10 .....	21
Guidelines for Support Groups .....	22
Selected Resources .....	23

## INTRODUCTION

---

### Who This Guide Is For

**T**his guide is for those who wish to facilitate career planning with a group of women. It provides information and suggestions about how to facilitate a 10-session step-by-step process using *Times Change: A Career Planning Workbook for Women*, a companion book designed for women to use either on their own or in groups. It is assumed that you already have skills and experience in leading groups.

The guide includes issues facing women making a change in today's job market. Much of the information provided here is also useful for those doing career counselling on an individual basis.

### Times Change Women's Employment Service

**T**imes Change Women's Employment Service, founded in 1974, is a nonprofit agency providing employment and educational counselling for women in Toronto. We offer group workshops in career planning and job search techniques, as well as individual educational counselling.

Times Change serves all women who experience barriers due to years in the unpaid labour force, age, racial discrimination, lack of Canadian education and experience, disabilities, lack of access to retraining opportunities, technological and economic changes and other factors.

Funding for our services comes from Employment Ontario, the United Way and the Ontario Women's Directorate.

For further information contact:

Times Change Women's Employment Service  
365 Bloor Street East, Suite 1704  
Toronto, Ontario M4W 3L4  
Tel: 416-927-1900  
E-mail: [women@timeschange.org](mailto:women@timeschange.org)  
Website: [www.timeschange.org](http://www.timeschange.org)

### THE CAREER PLANNING PROCESS

---

**T**his booklet is the companion guide to *Times Change: A Career Planning Workbook for Women* which is designed for those who want a more rewarding occupation. The workbook gives women an opportunity to focus on themselves and work through a step-by-step process, either as part of a group or on their own. By dividing the process into a series of small manageable steps, the workbook gives needed structure. Women are encouraged to develop a detailed picture of the kind of work they'd like to do in the future.

By concentrating on strengths and talents, choosing preferences and developing strategies to overcome obstacles, participants develop self-confidence and an increased belief in their value as human beings. Having the opportunity to learn in a climate of acceptance, respect and support enhances one's self-concept.

We are well aware that many different types of women will attend your groups. There are many cultural, educational and lifestyle differences you need to be sensitive to when working with women in your community. We assume that you know your community and will find relevant resources and adapt them as needed. If your community is changing substantially or if some of this information is new to you, updating yourself on the appropriate issues will benefit you and your group. For example, you may be working with First Nations women and may need a more expanded introductory session because self-disclosure is not part of their norm. Or, perhaps there are women in your group who are not used to spending much time and energy on their own needs.

We're also aware that facilitators, as well, have their own style. Work through the material to discover what works best for you and your group. If an exercise suggested in the workbook is not accomplishing its purpose, add one of your

own that does. We encourage you to be experimental with the material to make it your own.

Experience has shown us that women of varying experiences and backgrounds can go through the career planning process together in a most supportive way. Much of the process is based on exploring one's skills, interests, values and feelings. For example, homemakers returning to the paid workforce after many years, women in professional careers wanting a change, women with physical disabilities, women who have been laid off and immigrant women have all worked together successfully. The only suggested screening process is to encourage women who are in the midst of emotional or psychological upheaval or severe health problems to postpone their participation until they feel they have more energy to devote to the process.

### ISSUES FACING WOMEN IN TODAY'S WORKFORCE

---

**Y**our understanding of the following six issues will help you facilitate the career planning process.

#### Women's Traditional Occupations

Historically, women's work has been concentrated in a relatively small number of occupations limited by gender, ethnicity and race. Considerable segregation still exists. Women still encounter open as well as subtle forms of resistance to their presence in certain traditionally male occupations.

You, the facilitator, can play a positive role during career planning by counteracting the stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination women have faced. It is important to acknowledge that many women may feel hesitant about

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

---

exploring an unfamiliar occupation. Encourage them to become aware of the full range of occupations in the labour market, and emphasize that they have the right to work in whatever field they choose. It's helpful to provide resources on nontraditional occupations and arrange for women who have succeeded in traditionally male occupations to describe their experiences to your group.

You can inform participants of special assistance available and encourage them to call the Employment Ontario Hotline at 1-800-387-5656 for more information about apprenticeship. Encouraging women to look at new growth areas in the economy is another way to help them broaden their choices.

Frank discussion of the reality of persistent gender and racial discrimination and sexual harassment is also advisable. It has often required organized collective effort to broaden women's real economic choices and break down the concentration of women in poorly paid jobs.

## Women's Work Life Balance

Although the number of men caring for children and other family members is rising, it is still much more common for women to shoulder these responsibilities in addition to their paid work. If their caregiving responsibilities are too heavy, women may be unable to choose certain occupations. As the facilitator, you can help women to recognize that family responsibilities can ideally be shared with others.

Some progressive employers are beginning to recognize that adjustments are required. Workplace daycare, flex hours, paid and unpaid leave, information and referral services for childcare and care of the elderly and respite services are just a few ways to reduce stress. You can encourage participants to examine the demands on themselves and discuss how to achieve a more satisfying balance. Hearing how other women find solutions for balancing work and family can be very helpful and empowering.

It is important to acknowledge that no matter what choices a person makes, some stress in life is inevitable. The challenge is to develop positive and varied coping strategies. This can be done through group sharing or by providing resources. Become aware of support programs and community resources women can use.

## Pay Equity

Even now, women have not completely closed the gap between their salaries and those of men. Recent Statistics Canada data shows that women earn, on average, about 81% of what men earn. Some of that gap is because society undervalues the work women have traditionally done, such as childcare. Men tend to be paid more for looking after animals than women are paid for looking after children. To correct this, pay equity legislation was passed in Ontario in 1987. It requires employers to carefully compare wages for men's and women's work. Where inequities are found, employers must make wage adjustments within a given time period to eliminate pay discrimination.

You can help group members become more knowledgeable about this issue by providing information on pay equity. In addition to the material in the workbook (Section 3), information is available from the Pay Equity Commission at:

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 300  
Toronto, Ontario M7A 2S6

General Pay Equity information:  
Toll free 1-800-387-8813  
[www.payequity.gov.on.ca](http://www.payequity.gov.on.ca)

## Workforce Re-entry

If women in the group are re-entering the paid labour force, they may encounter employers who devalue and disregard the skills and experience they have acquired working without pay in their

homes and communities. It is important for you to actively acknowledge skills and experience gained in this way and to help participants approach employers assertively.

It's helpful to provide resources that enable women to learn about the changes that have occurred in the paid labour force during their absence. The information in Section 3 of the workbook, the Labour Market, will help in this area.

Immigrant women trying to find employment may find themselves in a similar position to that of women re-entering the workforce. Acknowledging their skills and experience gained abroad, and providing pertinent information on the labour market are practical ways to help. The Training and Education section (Section 7) includes information on Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, which may be relevant to some group members.

## Self-Esteem

Going through the career planning process helps build self-confidence as each woman discovers her strengths, skills, interests, needs and values. You can help by talking about factors that lower and raise self-esteem, and by allowing participants enough time to talk.

Reassuring women about their right to pay attention to themselves can be helpful. Encouraging group members to help one another, by giving feedback and offering information and suggestions, usually has a positive impact on their self-esteem. Looking back periodically at different stages of the career planning process can also help women to see their progress more effectively.

Of course, more serious issues may be affecting a woman's self-esteem. A history of sexual abuse or a recent divorce or separation can have a devastating, long-term impact on a person's self-esteem. Supportive personal counselling is frequently required in such circumstances. It is important to have on hand a list of available counselling resources in your community.

## GROUP DYNAMICS AND GROUP LEADERSHIP

### Advantages of Group Counselling

Groups offer distinct advantages over individual counselling.

- The women in the group bring unique perspectives, ideas and knowledge from a variety of backgrounds and experiences that contribute to the learning of all group members.
- Group exercises, such as brainstorming, generate many creative ideas.
- The group helps break down isolation ("I thought I was the only one with this problem") as women share their feelings in a safe, supportive atmosphere.
- Members see the most positive aspects of themselves.
- The group offers contrast, as each woman is different, which allows her to see her special talents more clearly.
- During the exercises that assess values, women begin to recognize that others have different values and all values are acceptable.
- Women can experiment with new ways of behaving, new ways of expressing themselves and new ideas in a setting where they can get honest feedback.
- Sometimes a woman knows what she wants but is afraid to pursue it. The group, by encouraging her, gives her the permission she needs to take action.
- Often members realize that many problems are not caused by an individual, but are systemic.

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

---

## Role Of The Facilitator

The role of the group facilitator is to provide structure and support so that group members can assess their own strengths and weaknesses, explore different options and make their own decisions. To do this effectively, the facilitator requires a combination of group-facilitating, problem-solving and counselling skills. You also need to:

- be aware of your own values and biases and their effect on your facilitation;
- take part in external professional development activities to sensitize yourself further; and
- use inclusive language that's as free as possible of gender, racial, ethnic or disability bias.

As the facilitator, you need to keep an open and nonjudgmental attitude to the different needs, motivation and pace of each participant. Each woman's experience, values and goals will be unique and must be respected. You have to take time for and pay attention to the feelings participants experience as they reflect on their lives. Making significant life changes can be frightening and stressful. Be aware of this and create a safe environment so that participants are able to express their emotions.

Career planning groups are not therapy groups, and do not offer in-depth exploration of childhood or other experiences. Know the resources available in your community for referral if any participant requires individual counselling.

Having a thorough understanding of the career planning process is essential. Doing all the exercises in the workbook yourself before starting the group is advised. Nevertheless, you do not function as an expert or strong authority figure but rather as a facilitator, sharing your own experiences when appropriate, and being open to group suggestions.

Clarify your role as a facilitator; you will

give direction but not make decisions. Encourage members to share their skills and knowledge and help them to develop their own expertise.

Another function of the group facilitator is to help members creatively solve problems. For example, women in remote areas may have difficulties arranging childcare or transportation. Your role is to help them brainstorm all possible alternatives and choose the best solutions. Be familiar with supports and resources in your community.

## Cultural Concerns

Career planning encourages women to concentrate on themselves, and ask what they really want. It's an introspective process, and women from some cultures or backgrounds are less comfortable with this emphasis on self. It is important to be aware of cultural differences and the potential implications of this in a career planning group. For example, when values are discussed in the My Dream Day exercise, many of them may be culturally based. The concept of self-actualization is not part of many cultures, particularly for women. It is important to know that in some cultures, the needs of the family, group or community may take precedence over those of the individual. This can influence the choices women make. Openly commenting on the diversity of cultures and values of group members may help them feel more comfortable with one another.

Also in career planning, women are encouraged to share information about themselves in the group. As the facilitator, you need to be sensitive to the fact that women from some cultures are not comfortable sharing personal information with people outside of their family or community. Cross-cultural sensitivity training will help you to become more aware of these cultural differences.

When in doubt, ask each woman what is comfortable for her and make yourself available to speak privately with individual participants.

# FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

## Group Dynamics

Promoting participation and support of group members is an important part of the facilitator's role. Some groups bond quickly while others have strong individuals who tend to dominate the group. For the smooth functioning of the group, establish guidelines during the first session that everyone agrees to abide by.

### Suggested Guidelines

- Listen to each other and give honest feedback.
- Respect each other's right to confidentiality; what is shared in the group should stay in the group.
- Everyone's contribution is valuable to the group.
- Accept others for who they are.
- Respect differences and be supportive rather than judgmental.
- Each person proceeds at her own pace.
- Accept yourself and trust your own judgment.
- Give yourself permission to concentrate on yourself and freedom to plan for the future.
- You get out of the process what you put into it.
- Take one step at a time.
- Everyone has the right to decide what she will share with the group and what she won't.
- Be on time.
- Stay on topic.
- Let the facilitator know if you are unable to attend a session.

Since each group is unique, be flexible about the time spent on different activities and the order in which they're done. Flexibility allows members to feel ownership and control of the group. This

is particularly important for those women who come to the group believing they have no control over their lives.

Some women are reserved about participating in a large group. To encourage them to share ideas, provide opportunities for members to talk in small groups or pairs. Many of the exercises in the workbook are designed with this in mind. However, respect the judgment of each member about what she shares or doesn't share with others.

## Literacy

Working with *Times Change: A Career Planning Workbook for Women*, as with any self-help manual, requires a proficiency in English. The facilitator, however, may develop ways to help those who are struggling with the language. You may adapt some written activities to verbal ones. You can also use clear simple vocabulary on flip charts, and be available to explain activities and provide encouragement when needed.

## Learning Styles

One of your challenges is to plan your sessions to acknowledge members' different learning styles. Research on the way people learn has shown that there are four predominant methods of learning. This is the easiest way to describe what they are. Think about the last time you had to figure out how something worked, such as a computer, sewing machine, microwave oven or DVD player. What was the first step you took?

- Did you read the instruction booklet?  
*You learn by **thinking** about things.*
- Did you remember a similar situation and do the same thing as before (for example, push buttons, turn knobs and so on)?  
*You learn by **doing**.*
- Did you watch someone else first?  
*You learn by **observing**.*
- Did you ask someone to guide you through it?