

State Economic Networks for Women Business Owners

The National Women's Business Council, established by the Women's Business Ownership Act of 1988, brings research-based facts to public policy discussions at the Federal level. While there have been efforts to create similar entities at the state level, no systematic attempt at gathering information on such state efforts has taken place. This issue brief serves to fill that gap by investigating the existence of such entities. The positive news is that 43 states have some sort of state or private commission, council, coalition, or economic network focused on women. Of the 56 organizations identified, however, nearly two-thirds (35 organizations) are women's commissions with no stated focus on women's entrepreneurship. The remaining 21 organizations, covering 16 states, have either a total or partial focus on women business owners. It is our hope that learning more about these state-level efforts will spur their further development, and increase their focus on women's enterprise development and public policy advocacy.

Background

While there are many women's membership and non-governmental organizations that have a presence at the state or regional level, there has been no systematic compilation of publicly-funded organizations that promote women's business enterprise development.

This document and its accompanying resource guide seek to add to the body of knowledge with respect to support for women's enterprise development by focusing on state-level organizations that support women's entrepreneurship policy development. While at the outset we focused primarily on publicly-funded organizations, we discovered that several states have equivalently-focused organizations which don't receive state funding. These organizations have been included as well. We do not include membership organizations or those focused strictly on procurement, certification or training and technical assistance. Our goal was to find organizations equivalent to the National Women's Business Council at the state level.

State Women's Business Councils

Just two states have state-funded councils dedicated to women's entrepreneurship policy development – Colorado (Women's Economic Development Council, part of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade) and Illinois (Illinois Women's Business Ownership Council). Both councils have board members who are appointed by the governor, and part of each of their statutes is to make regulatory and policy recommendations to encourage the growth of women-owned businesses.

Five other states (Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Washington) also have state-funded organizations that focus on women's entrepreneurship. These organizations are divisions or offices that reside within a larger department. One of these organizations, the Women's Business Advocate Office in the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development, "encourages the creation, expansion and retention of women-owned businesses as part of Pennsylvania's overall economic development strategy." The other four organizations are offices of Minority and Women's Business Development and appear to be primarily focused certification and procurement, rather than covering a broader range of issues.

Private-Sector Women's Business Councils and Networks

There are six organizations in five states (California, Colorado, two in Georgia, Louisiana, and Ohio) that are privately-funded councils or networks that focus on women's entrepreneurship. Three of these organizations certify women-owned business enterprises in addition to providing other resources, one organization operates as part of a state SBDC program, and two serve as coalitions or clearinghouses of member organizations.

Three states (Colorado, Maine, and New York) have privately-funded organizations that include women's entrepreneurship among their various focus issues. The organizations in Maine and New York include policy development as part of their mandate.

State and Private-Sector Women's Commissions

Thirty-one states have state-funded commissions for women and three states have privately-funded commissions for women, with no stated focus on women's entrepreneurship in any of these organizations. Five states (Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin) have state-funded commissions that list women's entrepreneurship among their focus issues.

Recommendations

While most states have a women's commission in place, there are very few state- or privately-funded councils focused specifically on women business owners and their enterprises. Fewer yet have councils which include the development of policy recommendations as a focus. Of 58 identified organizations, nearly two-thirds are either state or private women's commissions with no stated focus on women's entrepreneurship. We recommend that the organizations that are focused on women's entrepreneurship – especially those in which there is a mandate for policy action – be used as models in the 34 states lacking such organizations. A first step might be to either add a women's entrepreneurship focus to existing women's commissions or to add an office of women's business outreach to existing state purchasing offices. However, we feel that it would ultimately be most beneficial for women's business enterprise development at the state level for there to be a state-funded, citizen-driven entity such as a state women's business council.

Methodology

The leaders of Women's Business Centers and Small Business Development Centers across the country were contacted via e-mail and asked to provide information on the existence of state women's business councils, women's business advocates/ombudsmen in state government, and state economic networks for women business owners within their respective states. The organizations mentioned

were researched via the Internet in order to get contact information, information on their missions and structure, etc. Other Internet searches, independent of the recommendations received, were also undertaken and provided information on other relevant organizations. The National Governors' Association was also contacted.

This is meant to serve as a first step in gathering information on state economic networks and other similar organizations for women business owners. Despite our intensive research, there may be existing organizations that have not been identified. We welcome information on any such organizations that we may have inadvertently missed.

We are grateful to Jane Park, a student at the University of California, Davis, who interned with the National Women's Business Council and who took the lead in gathering and organizing the information in this project.

Complete information on the organizations outlined in the tables below may be found in a companion resource guide at www.nwbc.gov.

The National Women's Business Council is a bi-partisan Federal government body created to serve as an independent source of advice and policy recommendations to the President, Congress, and the U.S. Small Business Administration on economic issues of importance to women business owners. Members of the Council are prominent women business owners and leaders of women's business organizations. For more information about the Council, its mission and activities, contact: National Women's Business Council, 409 3rd Street, SW, Suite 210, Washington, DC 20024; phone: 202-205-3850; fax: 202-205-6825; e-mail: nwbc@sba.gov, web site: <http://www.nwbc.gov>.

Table 1: Women’s Business Councils, Commissions and Networks in the United States – Sorted By Type	
	State
State Women’s Business Councils – focused on women business owners	
Women’s Economic Development Council - Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade	CO
Illinois Women’s Business Ownership Council	IL
Kansas Department of Commerce – Office of Minority and Women’s Business Development	KS
Empire State Development – Division of Minority-and Women-Owned Business Development	NY
Women’s Business Advocate Office – Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development	PA
Virginia Department of Business Assistance – Minority & Women’s Businesses	VA
Washington State Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises	WA
Private-Sector Women’s Business Councils and Networks – focused on women business owners	
California State Economic Network	CA
Colorado Minority & Women’s Business Council	CO
Georgia Women Entrepreneurs (GWEN)	GA
Georgia Women’s Business Council	GA
Women’s Business Council Gulf Coast	LA
Ohio Women’s Business Development Council, Inc.	OH
State Women’s Business Councils – partially focused on women business owners	
Permanent Commission on the Status of Women	CT
Idaho Women’s Commission	ID
Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women in Illinois	IL
New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women	NH
Wisconsin Women’s Council	WI
Private-Sector Women’s Business Councils and Networks – partially focused on women business owners	
Colorado Women’s Leadership Coalition	CO
Maine Centers for Women, Work & Community	ME
New York Women’s Agenda	NY
State Women’s Commissions – not focused on women business owners	
California Women’s Commission	CA
Delaware Commission for Women	DE
Florida Commission on the Status of Women	FL
Hawaii’s State Commission on the Status of Women	HI
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women	IA
Indiana Commission for Women	IN
Kentucky Commission on Women	KY
Louisiana Women’s Commission	LA
The Governor’s Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues	MA
Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women	MA
Maryland Commission for Women	MD
Michigan Women’s Commission	MI
Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women	MN
Missouri Women’s Council	MO
Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women	MS
North Carolina Council for Women and Domestic Violence Commission	NC
North Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	ND

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	State
Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women	NE
New Jersey Division on Women	NJ
New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women	NM
New York State Division for Women	NY
Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women	OK
Oregon Commission for Women	OR
Pennsylvania Commission for Women	PA
Rhode Island Commission on Women	RI
South Carolina Governor’s Commission on Women*	SC
Tennessee Economic Council on Women	TN
Governor’s Commission for Women	TX
Governor’s Commission for Women and Families	UT
Vermont Commission on Women	VT
West Virginia Women’s Commission	WV
Wyoming Council for Women’s Issues	WY
Private-Sector Women’s Commissions – not focused on women business owners	
The Women’s Union	MA
Minnesota Women’s Consortium	MN
Wisconsin Women’s Network	WI

* Funding for the South Carolina Governor’s Commission on Women was eliminated in 2003. The organization now exists in name only.

Table 2: Women’s Business Councils, Commissions and Networks in the United States – Sorted by State		
	Type	Focus on Women Business Owners?
<u>Alabama</u> No organizations found		
<u>Alaska</u> No organizations found		
<u>Arizona</u> No organizations found		
<u>Arkansas</u> No organizations found		
<u>California</u> California State Economic Network California Women’s Commission	Private State	Yes No
<u>Colorado</u> Women’s Economic Development Council - Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade Colorado Minority & Women’s Business Council Colorado Women’s Leadership Coalition	State Private Private	Yes Yes Partial
<u>Connecticut</u> Permanent Commission on the Status of Women	State	Partial
<u>Delaware</u> Delaware Commission for Women	State	No
<u>District of Columbia</u> No organizations found		
<u>Florida</u> Florida Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Georgia</u> Georgia Women Entrepreneurs (GWEN) Georgia Women’s Business Council	Private Private	Yes Yes
<u>Hawaii</u> Hawaii’s State Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Idaho</u> Idaho Women’s Commission	State	Partial
<u>Illinois</u> Illinois Women’s Business Ownership Council Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women in Illinois	State State	Yes Partial
<u>Indiana</u> Indiana Commission for Women	State	No
<u>Iowa</u> Iowa Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Kansas</u> Kansas Department of Commerce – Office of Minority and Women’s Business Development	State	Yes
<u>Kentucky</u> Kentucky Commission on Women	State	No
<u>Louisiana</u> Women’s Business Council Gulf Coast Louisiana Women’s Commission	Private State	Yes No

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	Type	Focus on Women Business Owners?
<u>Maine</u> Maine Centers for Women, Work & Community	Private	Partial
<u>Maryland</u> Maryland Commission for Women	State	No
<u>Massachusetts</u> The Governor’s Advisory Committee on Women’s Issues Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women The Women’s Union	State State Private	No No No
<u>Michigan</u> Michigan Women’s Commission	State	No
<u>Minnesota</u> Legislative Commission on the Economic Status of Women Minnesota Women’s Consortium	State Private	No No
<u>Mississippi</u> Mississippi Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Missouri</u> Missouri Women’s Council	State	No
<u>Montana</u> No organizations found		
<u>Nebraska</u> Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Nevada</u> No organizations found		
<u>New Hampshire</u> New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women	State	Partial
<u>New Jersey</u> New Jersey Division on Women	State	No
<u>New Mexico</u> New Mexico Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>New York</u> Empire State Development – Division of Minority-and Women-Owned Business Development New York Women’s Agenda New York State Division for Women	State Private State	Yes Partial No
<u>North Carolina</u> North Carolina Council for Women and Domestic Violence Commission	State	No
<u>North Dakota</u> North Dakota Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Ohio</u> Ohio Women’s Business Development Council, Inc.	Private	Yes
<u>Oklahoma</u> Oklahoma Commission on the Status of Women	State	No
<u>Oregon</u> Oregon Commission for Women	State	No

Table 2: Women’s Business Councils, Commissions and Networks in the United States – Sorted by State		
	Type	Focus on Women Business Owners?
<u>Pennsylvania</u> Women’s Business Advocate Office – Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development Pennsylvania Commission for Women	State State	Yes No
<u>Rhode Island</u> Rhode Island Commission on Women	State	No
<u>South Carolina</u> South Carolina Governor’s Commission on Women*	State	No
<u>South Dakota</u> No organizations found		
<u>Tennessee</u> Tennessee Economic Council on Women	State	No
<u>Texas</u> Governor’s Commission for Women	State	No
<u>Utah</u> Governor’s Commission for Women and Families	State	No
<u>Vermont</u> Vermont Commission on Women	State	No
<u>Virginia</u> Virginia Department of Business Assistance – Minority & Women’s Businesses	State	Yes
<u>Washington</u> Washington State Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises	State	Yes
<u>West Virginia</u> West Virginia Women’s Commission	State	No
<u>Wisconsin</u> Wisconsin Women’s Council Wisconsin Women’s Network	State Private	Partial No
<u>Wyoming</u> Wyoming Council for Women’s Issues	State	No

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