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### Gaining Ground on Equal Pay: Empowering Boston's Women Through Salary Negotiation Workshops, A Report on Year One of AAUW Work Smart in Boston

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# Gaining Ground on Equal Pay

Empowering Boston's Women Through Salary Negotiation Workshops



A Report on Year One of AAUW *Work Smart in Boston*



## Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement

Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh created the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement in June of 2014 to prioritize advocating for equal opportunity for women and girls in all arenas of the City of Boston. The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement creates specific programming and opportunities that support three priority areas: economic equity, health and safety, and data and research. In 2015, Mayor Walsh, the Office of Women's Advancement, and the American Association of University Women (AAUW) launched a large-scale grassroots initiative called *Work Smart in Boston* to train and empower 85,000 women by 2021 to confidently and successfully evaluate, articulate, and negotiate their worth in the job market. The initiative is aligned with Mayor Walsh's commitment to strategically closing the gender wage gap in Boston. To learn more about the partnership, visit [www.salary.aauw.org/boston](http://www.salary.aauw.org/boston). If you are interested in becoming a facilitator or hosting a workshop, contact Kristina Desir at [desirk@aauw.org](mailto:desirk@aauw.org).

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# Gaining Ground on Equal Pay

Empowering Boston's Women Through Salary Negotiation Workshops

A Report on Year One of AAUW *Work Smart in Boston*

*Prepared for the City of Boston by*

**CENTER FOR WOMEN IN POLITICS AND PUBLIC POLICY**  
JOHN W. MCCORMACK GRADUATE SCHOOL OF POLICY AND GLOBAL STUDIES  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON

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**Rose Corcoran** and **Barbara Hindley**

*September, 2017*



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We thank the workshop facilitators who provided crucial salary negotiation training to nearly 1,800 women in the first year of the program. Their perspectives on the Year One workshops and recommendations for strengthening the workshop experience are essential to the evolution and the impact of this initiative.

*AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops would not have been possible without the participation of many community collaborators in Boston. They provided space and reached out to neighborhood residents and organization members to interest a diverse group of women in the workshops.

We thank Evelyn Murphy, President of *The Wage Project*, for her pioneering research and advocacy on pay equity. Her thoughtful design of the original *Work Smart* and *Start Smart* curricula have shaped the knowledge base and skills of a growing cohort of women fighting to be paid fairly.

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We thank everyone at the *American Association of University Women (AAUW)*, particularly Mark Hopkins, *AAUW's* Chief Strategy Officer, for their long-term commitment to the issue of pay equity and their current efforts to take *AAUW Work Smart* and *AAUW Start Smart* to scale across the United States. We also offer tremendous thanks to Program Manager Kristina Desir, *AAUW's* on-the-ground coordinator in Boston, for her tireless efforts to organize the workshops and ensure their effective delivery to thousands of working women. Kristina was responsive to all data requests made by the research team and always helpful throughout the duration of the data collection process.

We thank Mayor Martin J. Walsh for his leadership in putting a spotlight on the issue of pay equity in Boston. His commitment to making Boston a place where pay equity is available to all is a bold message that speaks volumes about the value of women's paid work across sectors and occupations. *The Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement*, and particularly its Executive Director Megan Costello, has championed the Mayor's goals and made his vision a growing and exciting reality. We acknowledge Megan for her valuable guidance and collaborative spirit in this project.

We thank the research team at the *Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy (CWPPP)*. Their skills and dedication have made the impact of *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* available to a broad public audience. We thank Christa Kelleher, Research and Policy Director of *CWPPP*, for her energetic leadership of the research team, her effective implementation of a labor-intensive research design, and her analytic acuity in teasing out important themes and findings from a rich and complex data set. We thank Jecynta Azong, Research Associate at *CWPPP*, for her dedication to all phases of this project, particularly her ability to refine interview protocols, reach out to prospective study participants, and interview many of the women in our sample. Her sensitive interviewing

skills, careful coding, and insightful analysis, were invaluable in shaping the findings of this report.

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Additional financial support was provided by Dunkin Donuts and Watermark Donut Company and Caffè Nero. Their donation of gift cards for study participants is greatly appreciated.

Ann Bookman, Director, *CWPPP*  
September, 2017

# LETTER

September, 2017

**C**losing the gender wage gap is not only the right thing to do; it is important to the city's economy and to the bottom lines of our businesses. Women make up the majority of our population, but like every city and company in the nation, women, especially women of color, are underrepresented and underpaid in our workforce.

The City of Boston, through the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement, has adopted a multi-pronged approach to closing the wage gap by working with legislators, employers, and individual women. As part of that approach, the City of Boston announced a five-year partnership with the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to offer free salary negotiation workshops to every woman who works or lives in Boston. The Boston Foundation provided seed funding for that program, now called *AAUW Work Smart in Boston*.

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The program is designed to empower workshop participants, help them determine their value in the job market, and provide them with the concrete skills they need at the negotiation table. Eventually, *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* hopes to train 85,000 workshop participants, half of Boston's working women, from every neighborhood of the city.

This report, *Gaining Ground on Equal Pay*, examines the first year of the program, which reached close to 1,800 women. It takes a case study approach to documenting and understanding the impact of the program and is filled with fascinating personal testimonies from the women who participated.

The statistics are also remarkable. Some 87 percent of the workshop participants used the research tools they received to identify the appropriate salaries for their positions. Close to half actually negotiated increased compensation for their existing job or achieved a competitive starting salary for a new job. This report presents valuable insights that will strengthen the workshops going forward as we reach out to the tens of thousands of women who will benefit from them in the coming years.

Boston will only thrive when women and men have an equal playing field. These salary negotiation workshops are one step we can take to provide women with the information and the tools they absolutely need to effectively advocate for themselves and, in the process, make real strides toward closing the wage gap.

This initiative, combined with the work the City of Boston is doing with employers to report wage data anonymously, is going beyond policy to address the cultural and institutional barriers that prevent women from true equity in the workplace and beyond. As such, the City of Boston is uniquely positioned to play a leadership role in achieving pay equity through this model of large-scale, city-wide action.



We want to thank Evelyn Murphy, a key advisor to *AAUW Work Smart in Boston*, whose work through The Wage Project has been an invaluable wealth of knowledge and experience. Thanks to Ann Bookman, Director of the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies at UMass Boston, for conducting this case study and preparing this report. And thank you to our partners at AAUW for bringing this program to Boston, especially to Kristina Desir, the program manager in Boston.

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Research has shown that women either don't negotiate or are not as successful as men when they do negotiate. We know that it is not just up to women to negotiate their salaries to close the gender wage gap, but we do know that providing women with concrete tools to empower them to negotiate in their own authentic way is an important factor in changing the culture and closing the gap.

Boston has always been a pioneer—from equity in education to equal rights for the LGBTQ community to health care. Now we are on a path to lead the way again by showing cities across the country that it is possible to eliminate the wage gap between men and woman and that the benefits of achieving that goal will ultimately extend to everyone.

Martin J. Walsh  
Mayor of Boston

Paul S. Grogan  
President & CEO  
The Boston Foundation



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**F**rom new knowledge to strategic negotiation skills to increased self-confidence, completing an *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshop proved to be a transformative experience for many of the women who attended and completed one. Although each workshop participant knew that ultimately she would need to take what she learned back to her own workplace, the workshop curriculum clearly conveyed the message that the wage gap is systemic—not a personal issue facing individual women. The workshops gave participants connections to other working women and their stories, resulting in the emergence of a well-informed shared understanding about the sources of pay inequality and the strategies for addressing the gender-based pay gap. These women became change agents in what promises to be a dynamic local initiative to achieve pay equity.

### Background

Launched in September of 2015, *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* provides free salary negotiation workshops to working women across the city as part of Mayor Martin J. Walsh's endeavor to eliminate the gender wage gap and make Boston the number one city in the country for working women. Researchers from UMass Boston's Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at the McCormack Graduate School used a case study methodology to examine the impact of the workshops on women during the initial year of the program. Based primarily on an analysis of in-depth interviews with 52 participants, along with secondary data analysis and focus groups, the study examined the actions women took to negotiate more equitable pay and explored the factors that facilitated and constrained their actions.

### Learning about Pay Negotiation

A majority of women (60%) enrolled in the workshop to acquire pay negotiation skills, particularly in anticipation of a new role in their current workplace or a new job. In addition to the value of sharing experiences and tactics with other workshop participants from diverse backgrounds and occupations, many women said that learning how to quantify their worth in the marketplace and present a "good pitch" when asking for increased compensation was extremely beneficial.



**“CLOSING THE GENDER WAGE GAP IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, BUT IT’S ALSO IMPORTANT TO THE ECONOMIC VITALITY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON. WHEN WOMEN SUCCEED, WE ALL SUCCEED.”**

*Martin J. Walsh*  
Mayor, City of Boston

## Taking Action

Nearly half of the women in the study (48%) used their newly gained skills to negotiate a pay raise for their current job or a competitive starting salary in a new position. In addition, the women learned how to discuss promotions and other issues related to their job status, suggesting that the workshops had an impact that went far beyond the primary goal of promoting equal pay for women.

The following are actions taken by women who completed the workshops:

- 87% identified target salaries, using objective market research to develop an appropriate compensation level
- 73% benchmarked their salaries, using market research to compare their pay level to similar positions
- 48% either negotiated increased compensation for their existing job or achieved a competitive starting salary for a new job or position
- 40% started conversations with their supervisors about their work and their value to their employer
- 29% asked for a raise in their current job
- 71% referred co-workers, colleagues and/or friends to *AAUW Work Smart in Boston*

## Identifying the Catalysts for Action

Several factors served as catalysts for the participants. For instance, strong systems of family or peer support proved to be important for many of the women. Understanding and helpful supervisors also played an influential and positive role. In addition, an important and unexpected finding is the degree to which the workshops resulted in an increased sense of confidence and self-esteem, making visible the importance of this factor in facilitating women's actions to improve their pay and employment status.

## Acknowledging Barriers to Action

A number of women described external factors—such as financial constraints, institutional power structures and systems of discrimination where Black and Latina women face a substantially larger pay gap—as major barriers to action, as well as a complex set of internal feelings and challenging interpersonal relationships in the workplace. The financial constraints of employers—particularly related to jobs in the nonprofit sector—were also commonly cited barriers. A number of women said that a lack of transparency in their place of employment about the salary negotiation process was a significant impediment to their quest for equal pay. Finally, women experienced feelings of fear—including anxiety about being turned down for a raise, concerns about possible retaliation for bringing the subject up, and fear of being perceived as too aggressive.

## Empowering Women Across Boston

For the majority of women interviewed, completing an *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshop led to a range of outcomes that reached far beyond the salary negotiation process. These included identifying and utilizing online resources; benchmarking the correct compensation level for various positions; and starting a conversation about equal pay with a supervisor. Women's accounts of the actions they took post-workshop reflected a feeling of increased confidence and empowerment as a result of the knowledge they gained about the issue of pay equity and the new tools they had been given to assess their worth in the marketplace and negotiate for higher pay.

The workshops also generated a sub-cohort of women interested in supporting other women in their own workplaces and beyond through their roles as co-workers, supervisors and mentors. As a result, the impact of *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* extends far beyond the workshops themselves. By advancing a dynamic and ongoing dialogue about how to address the gender wage gap, the workshops are playing a critical role in the way that employers respond to requests for increased compensation and how women think about their value in the workplace. As a result, the workshop completers—both individually and collectively—are making important contributions to Mayor Walsh's goal of transforming Boston into a premier city for working women.

## INTRODUCTION

# PAY EQUITY: KEY TO PROGRESS FOR WORKING WOMEN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

**T**he Equal Pay Act has been the law of the land for more than five decades. Yet, in 2017, there is still a significant pay gap in the United States, with women earning just 80 cents for every dollar a white man earns.<sup>2</sup> There is an even more significant wage gap for women of color, particularly for Black and Latina women, who make 63 cents and 54 cents, respectively, for every dollar a white man makes.<sup>3</sup>

Greater Boston reflects these national statistics. A 2016 report from the Boston Women's Workforce Council, which was based on employer data, showed that women workers in Greater Boston earn just 77 cents for every dollar a man earns.<sup>4</sup>

Attempts to rectify this gender-based wage gap have been made with increasing intensity for well over 50 years. Why is it so persistent, so difficult to change? Some explanations point to workforce patterns: Women are more likely to leave and return to the labor market due to caregiving activities. Others blame the gap on the types of jobs women typically hold.

However, a number of studies have shown that the key factors are systemic, structural, and cultural. This is confirmed by the authors of a 2013 publication, *Fifty Years after the Equal Pay Act*, who concluded that "discrimination is still the primary driver of pay inequality."<sup>5</sup> Cultural stereotypes persist about what women are capable of doing, their qualifications, and their worth.

In addition, we know that occupational segregation plays a role. Women's unpaid work in the home is devalued and jobs that mirror domestic work, such as service and caregiving occupations, are similarly devalued. This results in predominantly female-held occupations that are not well-compensated. Deeply ingrained cultural norms, such as a traditionally gendered division of labor in which men's primary role is to serve as breadwinner and

**“IF YOU’RE RELUCTANT TO ASK FOR MORE MONEY, IT’S NOT YOUR FAULT. YOU’VE BEEN PRESSURED NOT TO ASK. GENDER STEREOTYPES AREN’T JUST OUTSIDE OF US...THEY’RE ALSO INSIDE US... BUT IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO BUCK THOSE PRESSURES— AND TO STAND UP FOR YOURSELF... WE’RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER... WHEN YOU LEARN TO ASK FOR FAIR PAY, IT’S NOT JUST FOR YOURSELF: YOU’RE DOING YOUR PART TO GET ALL WOMEN PAID FAIRLY.”**

*Evelyn Murphy, Founder and President, The WAGE Project, Inc.<sup>1</sup>*

women's primary role is in the home as wife and mother, exacerbate the situation. Another cultural stereotype is that "women work for pin money," meaning that women's wages are not essential to household income. However, there are many female-headed households in which the only income is earned by a woman, and currently women are the primary breadwinners in 40% of all households with children living at home.<sup>6</sup>

Attaining pay equity is important to women workers for multiple reasons. It affects their economic status and their ability to make a livable wage in order to meet essential needs such as food, housing, and transportation. Over time, making an equitable wage or salary affects their ability to pay off college loans, save for their children's education, purchase a home, and accrue funds for their retirement. Women's compensation levels also affect their sense of whether they are truly valued. Pay equity has a financial impact on women, but also a deep psychological impact on their sense of self-worth and the value of their paid work. In an economy in which most women must work to support themselves and/or their families, ensuring pay equity is profoundly important not only to the overarching goal of gender equality, but also to strengthening families and communities.

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### What Is AAUW Work Smart in Boston?

*AAUW Work Smart in Boston* was launched by Mayor Martin J. Walsh in the fall of 2015 as a citywide effort to close the gender wage gap. It is a five-year initiative built on a partnership between the municipal government of Boston and the American Association of University Women (AAUW), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the empowerment of women in the workforce. With the strength of these joined forces, the initiative's aim is to make measurable progress on combating pay inequity. Its approach is based on the premise that if working women have more information about wage inequality, know how to determine their value, and have the knowledge and tools to conduct effective salary negotiations with their employer, then they will be emboldened and take steps to achieve fair compensation for their work.

This is an experiment intended to empower working women all across Boston. However, the model of change

guiding this initiative does *not* assume that solving the problem of wage inequity facing working women is only theirs to solve—far from it.<sup>7</sup> In fact, the Mayor and his administration are taking a three-pronged approach to creating change based on partnerships and innovation:

1. **EMPLOYERS:** Through the Boston Women's Workforce Council, a public-partnership between the City of Boston and Boston University, the Mayor's Office of Women's Advancement has engaged both the private and nonprofit sectors in prioritizing pay equity. Established in 2013 with the mission of making Greater Boston the premier place for working women in America, the Council manages the *100% Talent Compact*, a voluntary pledge that companies can sign to take concrete, measurable steps toward closing their gender gaps in wage and representation. To date, 215 companies and nonprofit organizations have signed the Compact. In 2016, the signers of the *100% Talent Compact* contributed anonymous, aggregate wage data to measure the Greater Boston wage gap and found that on average, women working full time in Boston are making \$0.77 to a man's \$1.00. This employer-led, data-driven approach is the first of its kind, and over two dozen cities across the country are now trying to replicate the model.
2. **LEGISLATION:** The Mayor has also supported Massachusetts legislation to ensure the practice of pay equity as a matter of public policy. A comprehensive pay equity bill became law in 2016 and goes into effect in 2018. Among other provisions, the law prohibits employers from asking about an applicant's salary history before making a job offer. It also offers protections to employers who are making decisive moves toward transparency and closing the gender wage gap in their organization.
3. **INDIVIDUAL WOMEN:** MOWA is also the lead city agency on the AAUW Work Smart in Boston initiative, and has set a goal of training 85,000 women—half of Boston's working women—over the next five years. By providing two hour workshops that include skill building and practice sessions at no cost to the participants, MOWA is empowering women with the knowledge and skills they need to advocate for themselves and, in many cases, their families.

It is important to underscore that this three-pronged strategy for change and gender equality is an asset-based approach. Mayor Walsh sees women as one of the City of Boston's greatest assets in ensuring that Massachusetts businesses maintain a competitive edge and that working families have access to the economic opportunities and security they deserve. This requires that women have good jobs that provide livable wages and benefits and are treated with the same respect and financial rewards as men.

*AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops are based on a curriculum originally designed by The Wage Project, a grassroots, national organization dedicated to ending wage discrimination. Founded by Former Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor Evelyn Murphy, The Wage Project developed two training workshops: *AAUW Start Smart* has been offered at colleges and universities across the country to assist college-educated women with negotiating compensation for their first job after graduation; and *AAUW Work Smart* was designed for women already in the workforce to either improve their current pay, and/or become fairly compensated when they secure their next job.

When Former Lieutenant Governor Murphy determined that it was important to reach and enroll greater numbers of women in these workshops, she reached out to the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to bring The Wage Project to scale. Since the AAUW has led the operation of these two workshops, their scope and impact have increased dramatically. *AAUW Start Smart* has a presence in 45 states and the AAUW has partnerships with 238 colleges and universities to train future classes of new graduates.<sup>8</sup> *Work Smart* has expanded to other cities since it was first launched in Boston, including Washington, D.C.; Tempe, Arizona; and Long Beach, California.<sup>9</sup>

Boston is the first city to take this program directly to working women. The city has led the way in forming partnerships designed to reach women across the entire city. Since the launch of *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* in 2015, Mayor Walsh has emphasized the importance of community outreach and business partnerships in reaching out to the broadest cross-section of working women in Boston. "Boston thrives when women and men

have an equal playing field," he has said. "These salary negotiations are one step we can take to provide women with the information and tools to advocate for themselves and work towards closing the wage gap."<sup>10</sup>

Staff of the AAUW and MOWA have systematically sought out nonprofit organizations and city-funded programs to host workshops in the diverse communities of Boston, in addition to reaching out to business and community partners. In Year One of the initiative, 25 "community collaborators" were recruited to host 77 *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops in many neighborhoods across the city. Simultaneously, AAUW and MOWA staff recruited 62 workshop trainers called "facilitators." Facilitators are volunteers who completed training to implement the research-based curriculum in a workshop setting. In Year One, 44 facilitators were recruited from private sector businesses such as Morgan Stanley; 11 facilitators came from local nonprofits, including academic institutions; and seven came from public sector agencies and programs. In its first year, a total of 2,718 women registered for the workshops and 1,782 completed a workshop.

## The Purpose of This Report

This report is a case study, not an evaluation. Its focus is on a particular program, *AAUW Work Smart in Boston*, over a defined period of time (September 2015 – October 2016) in order to understand the program's impact on the women who participated in it. This report explores several key questions:

- In what ways do *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops have an impact on the women who complete them?
- What are the main barriers that prevent women from addressing their compensation level and/or achieving pay equity?
- What are primary factors that facilitate women's capacity to achieve successful salary negotiation and ultimately pay equity?
- What types of learning and, importantly, what kinds of actions are taken as a result of completing the workshop and how do the women perceive their own worth and value?

## INTRODUCTION

The analysis presented in this report is based primarily on in-depth interviews with 52 women who completed workshops. Thirty-one percent of the interviews were held one to three months after the workshop, 40% occurred four to six months later, while 29% of the interviews were held seven to twelve months following the workshop. Second-stage interviews were conducted with a subsample of eight women to determine whether additional actions were taken after more time had passed. After eight interviews were completed, it was determined that second-stage interviews with more workshop participants would not provide additional insights into the longer-term impact of the workshops.

Supplemental data were collected to understand the perspectives and experiences of individuals involved in workshop implementation. One focus group and two interviews were conducted with workshop facilitators, one interview was conducted with a community collaborator, and interviews with two individuals overseeing the program were completed. Finally, program data were accessed to compare the subsample of workshop completers interviewed for this report with all Year One workshop participants. A full and detailed methodology may be found in Appendix A: Research Methods.

While the research questions were focused on understanding the impact of the workshops, including whether participants were able to ask for and/or secure a pay increase following the workshop, the case study method allows for the development of a deeper analysis of the experiences women had during and following the workshop. This includes their relationships with their coworkers, their employer and—perhaps most importantly—their perception and beliefs about their own worth in the workplace and their future career plans.

Each workshop can be viewed as a laboratory for planting the seeds of knowledge and empowerment for individual working women. By interviewing a subsample of workshop completers, it's possible to learn how their experiences shape their understanding of the phenomenon of gender-based pay inequity and discrimination. This analysis also allows for a detailed examination of “micro-interventions” the women engaged in after the workshop, including interactions and conversations with their coworkers and supervisors, with their friends and family members, and with others in their community.

By analyzing the range and prevalence of these micro-interventions—or the lack of them—it is possible to understand the power and potential of *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* to increase the capacity of women to take steps to address their compensation level and achieve pay equity. Finally, this study provides a significant opportunity to analyze the collective impact of the actions of all workshop completers on the overall goal of attaining pay equity in private companies and nonprofit organizations and—eventually—closing the wage gap in Boston.

# WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS: DEMOGRAPHICS

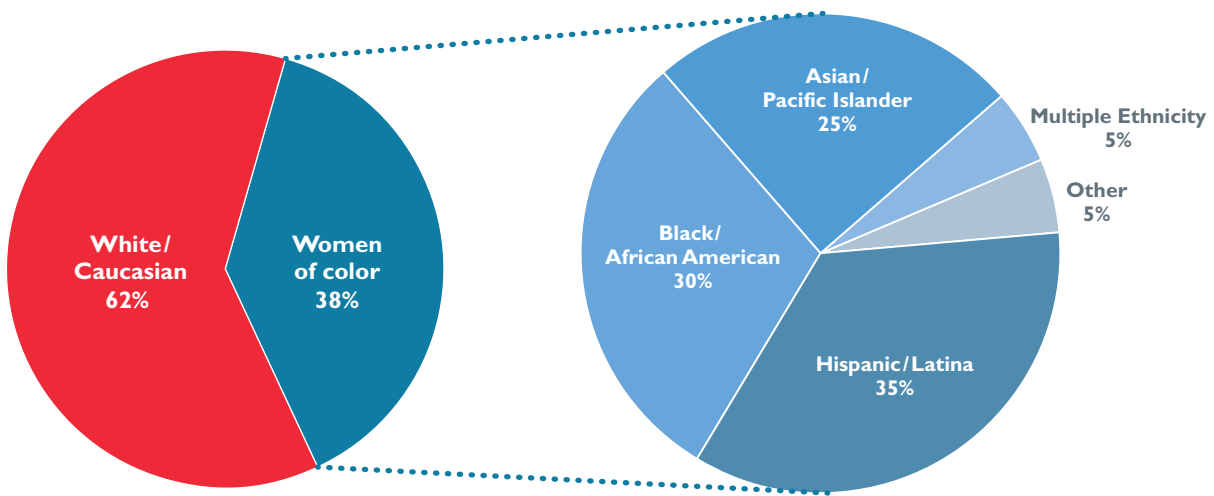
In its first year of operation, *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops were attended by 1,782 diverse participants who live and/or work in Boston and its surrounding cities and towns. Demographic data were collected directly from the women interviewed to analyze key characteristics of study participants and for comparison between this subsample to all Year One workshop completers. In order to compare the subsample to the broader population of working women in Boston, data were collected from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2011-2015 sample. The ACS data were restricted to female workers over the age of 18 in the Boston/Metro North area, as defined by the New England Public Policy Center at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.<sup>11</sup>

As shown in **Figure 1**, nearly 40% of the women in the study sample were women of color. Figure 1 also shows the diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds of the women of color in the study sample.



FIGURE 1:

## Racial/Ethnic Breakdown of Women of Color in Study Sample





DEMOGRAPHICS

As demonstrated in **Figure 2**, the study sample closely mirrors the racial/ethnic composition of all Year One participants: 62% White/Caucasian, 13% Hispanic/Latina, 12% Black or African American, and 10% Asian or Pacific Islander.<sup>12</sup> The composition of the study sample and all Year One completers is generally representative of all Boston/Metro North female workers in terms of racial and ethnic background.<sup>13</sup>

As **Figure 3** shows, both the women in the study sample and Year One workshop completers are more highly educated than the Boston/Metro North female workers in general. Just over half of Year One completers (51%) have a college degree, 36% have a master’s degree and only 5% have high school alone or some college-level

studies. Women in the study sample have more graduate education than Year One workshop completers, with about 40% having master’s degrees and nearly 8% having a PhD or terminal professional degree. Nearly half (44%) have a college education and about 8% have a high school or some college education.

The majority of women in the study sample are younger than 44: 50% are between the ages of 18 and 29 and 36% are between the ages of 30 and 44. The rest are between the ages of 45 and 59 with one woman older than 59. More women in the study sample are single (61%) compared to all women working in the Boston/Metro North area (40%). Only 33% of the workshop participants in the study sample are married or in a domestic partnership, whereas

FIGURE 2:

**Racial/Ethnic Background of Study Sample, Year One Workshop Participants**

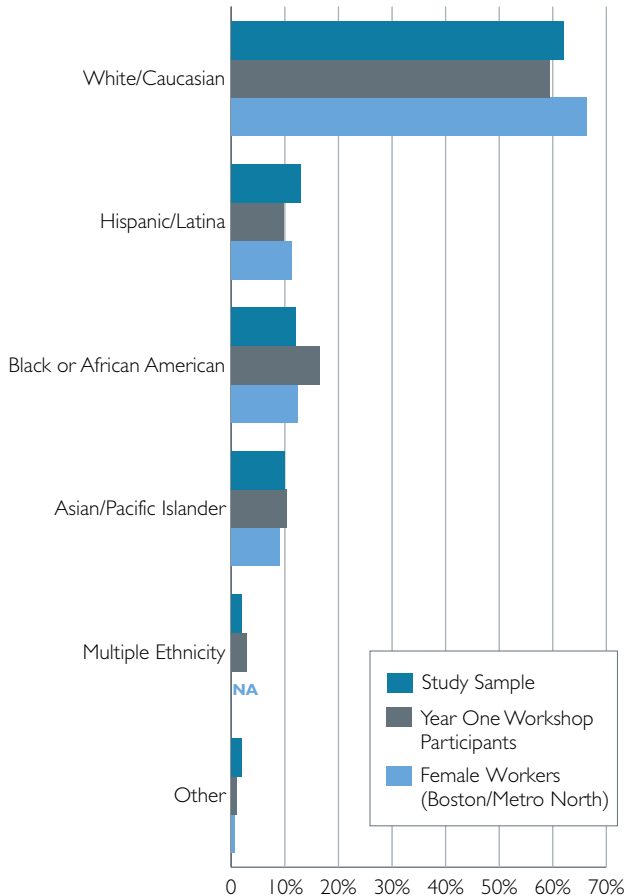
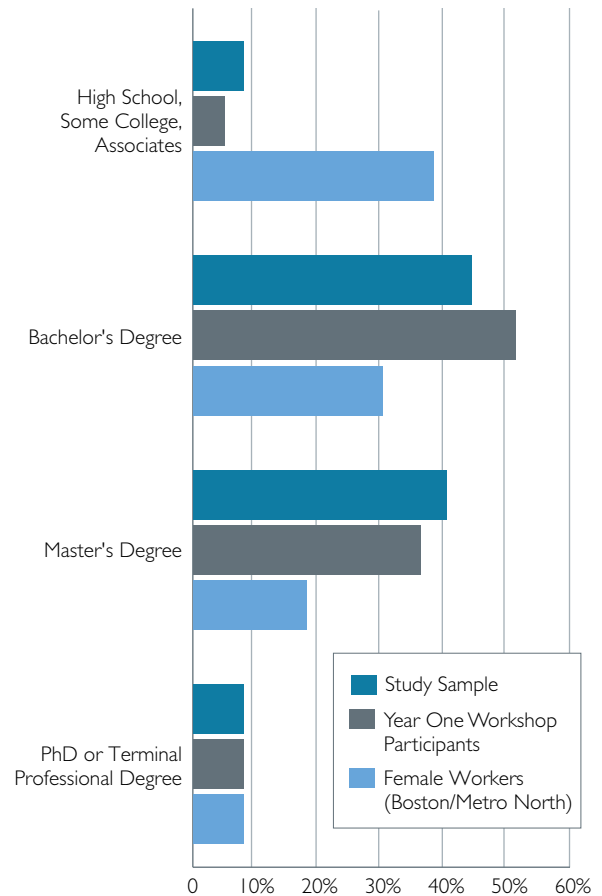


FIGURE 3:

**Education Level of Study Sample, Year One Workshop Participants, Female Workforce Boston/Metro North (2015)**



46% of women workers in the Boston/Metro North region are married. In addition to the high rate of single women in the study sample, the vast majority of these women have no children under the age of 18 (83%), as shown in **Table 1**.

Focusing on the employment status of women interviewed, 88.5% work for an employer and the rest are self-employed or looking for work. Nearly 83% of those in the sample are working full-time, 11% part-time, and 4% are unemployed and looking for work. Of those employed, just over 73% are salaried workers and 23% are waged workers.

Close to half of the women in the study sample, 48%, work in the nonprofit sector,<sup>14</sup> 30% work in the private sector and 12% work in the public sector. This contrasts with female workers in Boston/Metro North in general, the majority of whom work in the private sector.

Additionally, some women in our sample are new to their jobs, having worked with their current employer less than three months (13%) while others have been at the same job less than a year (15%). The largest segment (48%) have worked for their employer between one and five years, 10% more than five years, and another 10% more than 10 years.

While the women in the study sample were not limited to those working in Boston, a strong majority (67%) do work in the city, while the remaining 33% work outside of the city. Just under half (48%) of the women in the sample reside in the City of Boston.

TABLE 1:

**Comparison of Women with Children in Study Sample and Female Workers in Boston/Metro North**

Women in Study Sample (N=52)	%	Female Workers in Boston Metro (2015)	%
Children*	17%	Children**	43%
No Children	83%	No Children	57%
Total	100%	Total	100%
*Children under 18		**Children under 17	

Source for female workforce data: Calculations by authors based on the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year sample (2011-2015)

TABLE 2:

**Comparison of Employment Sector of Study Sample and of Female Workers in Boston/Metro North**

Women in Study Sample (N=52)	%	Female Workers in Boston Metro (2015)	%
Private	30%	Private For-Profit	61%
Nonprofit	48%	Private Nonprofit	20%
Public Sector	12%	Public Sector	12%
N/a	10%	Self-Employed	7%
Total	100%	Total	100%

Source for female workforce data: Calculations by authors based on the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year sample (2011-2015)

# WORKSHOP MOTIVATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS



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**W**omen participated in the workshops for a wide variety of reasons. More than half (60%) expressed an interest in acquiring negotiation skills, especially in anticipation of obtaining a new job or advancing to a new position at their current workplace. A number of women were drawn to the workshop to receive information about the wage gap and others wanted the opportunity to interact with other working women to share experiences and stories. Several participants said that the fact that the workshop was hosted by the City of Boston validated the importance of the issue of pay equity for them.

Approximately 29% of the women decided to participate after hearing about the workshop through empowerment groups for young professionals and women, such as BeVisible, Young Education Professionals, and the National Association for Professional Women. Some were encouraged by their current employer or colleagues to take the workshop (about 17%) while a high percentage of participants learned about the workshop through social networks outside of work (about 58%).<sup>15</sup>

Women's expectations—in terms of what they anticipated learning or gaining from the workshop—differed only slightly from their original motivations for participating. They indicated that they expected to learn current statistics and information about the wage gap, acquire general negotiation techniques, and/or gain specific negotiation skills to address their current work situation. More precisely, 42% of the participants were drawn to the workshop to refresh their knowledge of pay inequity and 14% expected to learn from other participants or share their own experiences and foster a sense of solidarity with other workshop participants.

Four out of every ten women (40%) expressed a clear interest in learning new or effective language to use in the salary negotiation process.<sup>16</sup> For example, a woman employed by a medical center for more than a decade explained, "I didn't think I was [going to] learn anything more about ... the theory of it, but it was ... the phrasing, the wording ... how to say things." This desire to learn the right language appeared to be connected to the need to feel empowered enough to begin a conversation about pay, a topic that is often taboo, if not forbidden, in some workplaces. One participant who was in her 20s and worked for a corporation expressed the desire to feel more confident and "assured of myself [when] having that conversation."

Hillary was working in a job she did not particularly like, and suspected she was being underpaid given her years of experience. She made a decision to go on the job market and try to find a better position. It was at that point that she heard about the *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops from a coworker and thought it would be timely to sign up and attend before she started her job search in earnest.

Like other young, unmarried women with no children in our study, Hillary, who is Caucasian, did have some knowledge about the wage gap prior to taking the workshop, and she also knew that “women are less likely to negotiate” than men. In fact, she was one of those women who had not negotiated with previous employers. As she explained it, “At my first job, my offer was, ‘This is the offer, and there is no negotiation allowed.’”

The workshop significantly changed Hillary’s perspective about the possibility and outcome of pay negotiation: “I learned that no matter what folks say ... you can definitely still negotiate if you are confident in your skill set.” Hillary explained that she gained a number of skills through the workshop, particularly how to conduct research and benchmark a salary by using online tools suggested by the facilitator.

After the workshop, Hillary started her job search and eventually was offered a position at a private sector firm. Using what she learned in the workshop, she garnered a salary that she estimated was “20% better than what she anticipated.” Asked how she managed to do this, she immediately credited what she learned in the workshop. She explained, “I went for an interview for a new job and, in negotiating my offer, I used a lot of tactics I learned in the workshop. I learned to negotiate for my comparable rate using salary.com. I brought that to the table.” She said that the last time she got a new job she stopped negotiating after she secured one item she wanted, whereas “this time I really went through, line by line, what I thought I deserved and got everything that I asked for, which was awesome.”

Typical of many workshop participants, the workshop produced ripple effects beyond Hillary’s own job and salary. She said she had informal conversations with her coworkers about pay equity, and felt that attending the workshop together “helped open that conversation between us ... so that was really, really helpful.” She has also spoken with other women outside her workplace who want to take the workshop. She even talked to friends in New York City about it and they were disappointed to learn that the AAUW workshop is only offered in Boston right now. When asked if she had done any community organizing or engaged in activism outside of work about pay equity, Hillary remarked, “Yeah, I participated in the Women’s March in D.C. with a group of friends.”

Hillary is also considering becoming a workshop facilitator in the future. This metric of success shows how deeply the workshop affected Hillary as an individual: It has encouraged her to engage in further work around pay equity. She explained that as she shares information from the workshop with friends in similar situations, she tells them, “Hey, I did this workshop, and this is what I learned: You can negotiate anything.” She added, “I feel I can do that because it worked well for me so I built up some confidence ... I think that’s been a really nice thing to share with my friends. So I’m definitely encouraged.”

# WHAT WOMEN KNEW BEFORE TAKING THE WORKSHOP



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**D**uring their interviews, women were asked about their prior knowledge of the wage gap and salary negotiation as a strategy to achieve wage equity, and any previous negotiation experience. Researchers were particularly interested in learning how many of the women were aware of the salary negotiation techniques that are key not only to a woman’s personal compensation level, but also as a strategy for collectively addressing the wage gap. As stated in the *AAUW Work Smart in Boston Workbook*, “One of the reasons we talk about the wage gap is that it motivates each of us to do something about it.”<sup>17</sup>

## The Wage Gap

Prior to attending the workshop, all but two women interviewed had some knowledge that the gender wage gap existed. When one nonprofit worker was asked how she might describe the wage gap, she offered a response that was fairly common among those interviewed. “Because of the way our society has been structured,” she said, “men make more money than women [for] doing the same type of work.”

As shown in **Table 3**, a strong majority of the women interviewed (77%) had prior knowledge about salary negotiation as a strategy for reducing the wage gap while the others indicated that they had no knowledge. Among the respondents with no prior knowledge, eight explained that they knew about salary negotiation but had not been aware of it as a strategy for bridging the gender wage gap.

Those who reported knowing about salary negotiation as a strategy mentioned colleagues and mentors, negotiation trainings, courses in Women’s Studies at college, and personal research as sources of information. In this group, about a quarter reported that, even though they knew about the strategy, they had not known how to effectively use it until they attended the workshop. For instance, a woman who worked in higher education explained, “I had never received ... [information about strategies] that ... [was] as specific and detailed as [the AAUW strategies], so that was very helpful.”

TABLE 3:

### Awareness of Wage Gap and Negotiation Experience Prior to Workshop

Type of Knowledge, Experience	Yes		No		Total	
Had awareness of wage gap	50	96%	2	4%	52	100%
Reported knowledge of salary negotiation as a wage gap strategy	40	77%	12	23%	52	100%
Negotiated compensation and/or benefits	33	63%	19	37%	52	100%

N=52

## Experience with Salary Negotiation

Women were also asked directly about prior experience of salary negotiation. The vast majority (63%) stated that before taking the workshop, they had negotiated compensation and/or benefits (see Table 3). The rest had not engaged in any kind of pay negotiation. More than half of those who had never negotiated their compensation and/or benefits named one or more of the following as reasons: lack of comfort, confidence, supportive work environment, or opportunity for negotiation.

Almost one-third (32%) of those who reported no previous negotiating experiences were in their first jobs and did not know how to go about it and/or did not feel comfortable negotiating. As indicated in **Table 4**, one woman, although not in her first job, did not know that negotiating for salary at a job was even a possibility.

TABLE 4:

### Reasons for Non-Negotiation Prior to Workshop

Reasons for Non-Negotiation	Percent of Workshop Participants
Didn't know how or didn't feel comfortable, in first job	32%
Lack of confidence, feeling of discomfort/unsupportive environment, or lack of opportunity, not in first job	58%
Didn't know negotiation was possible, not in first job	5%
No reason offered	5%

N=19

## “DEFINITELY MADE UP THE GAP”

SOPHIA:

For Sophia, a young Latina professional with a master’s degree, attending the *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshop not only made her look more deeply at the extent of the pay gap, but also helped her to recognize the value of her work and its worth to her organization. “I didn’t realize just how broad the inequity was,” she explained. “Not only if you’re female, but even more if you’re Latina, even more if you’re African American, even more if you are from any other diverse group.”

Having experienced pay inequity in previous jobs, Sophia noted that she had negotiated her compensation only in minor ways in the past fearing that she might be negatively perceived by her employer. She did not want to be seen as greedy or aggressive by her employer when negotiating her pay. She explained how the workshop changed that as she experienced, “... being in the room with other women, kind of hearing, you know, why they didn’t push for a higher salary. They didn’t want to appear aggressive ... it just sort of validated for me a lot of what I felt...” She added that women feel compelled to prove themselves on the job before asking to renegotiate their pay. Overall, Sophia saw the most significant barrier to achieving pay equity as “self-doubt.” She maintained that “it’s an internal barrier” that makes it hard for women to believe in their personal and professional worth.

Sophia decided to attend for two reasons: It was designed specifically for women and her annual review was coming up. She elaborated that, unlike other traditional salary negotiation workshops she had previously attended, *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* tackled salary negotiation from a female perspective and offered what she deemed “true tactics” and strategies for setting up “an agenda for a negotiation.” She came away from the workshop convinced that she could advocate for herself using salary negotiation.

Less than a year into her managerial job at an academic institution, she asked for a meeting with her boss. As she explained: “...I brought a list of the highlights of my nine months so far, so I came really prepared ... I talked about how much I loved my job.” She also brought a list of 10 achievements and discussed what she thought the fair market value of her job was. At first, her boss said that she hadn’t worked there for a year yet and that promotions generally happened on an annual basis. She responded, “...clearly you agree that I’m deserving of this so ... what’s the plan?” Her boss said that he wanted to talk it over with the organization’s leadership. A couple of days later, he came back to her. In her words: “He said, ‘we want to promote you midyear and that would be a wage gain of \$10,000 on top of the kind of the raise that everyone gets.’ So for me it was a net \$14,000 raise....”

Sophia attributes her success to the lessons she learned in the workshop. Although she had negotiated in the past, she explained that it was “...not to the extent that I did afterwards,” and “... I think I definitely made up the gap.” Sophia also engaged in a range of activities in her workplace. She had informal conversations with coworkers about pay equity and organized a “lunch and learn” session with a group of women after attending the workshop. She intends to continue advocating for herself while “encouraging women to advocate for themselves.”

# WHAT WOMEN LEARNED

**T**he majority of workshop participants were quick to identify what they learned from the workshop, and many noted that their understanding of pay inequity was enhanced. In addition to increased knowledge, women expressed several other major takeaways.

## Learning from Difference: Diverse Women, Diverse Experiences

One of the greatest impacts of the workshop experience derived from women engaging with other women. Several participants said how valuable it was to learn from other women with different backgrounds, employment sectors, industries, positions and demographics. One woman employed by a nonprofit agency remarked that what was “really useful was hearing from different participants and [their] situations ... [and learning about] some strategies that [could] be applied ... to all of them....” A woman working for an insurance company said, “Many of us work in such different industries, in such different positions ... I took away the most from just having discussions with different people about how different all of our experiences had been in negotiating salary and ... what all of our thought processes were.”

## Quantifying “Your Value”: Reliable Pay Data

Many women talked about the importance of learning how to determine and document their value in monetary terms. As a woman who worked at a nonprofit said, “It can be really hard to quantify your value as an employees.... I don’t know if there’s one right answer to that question, but it certainly came up in our workshop.” She went on to say that she learned how important it was to come prepared to a meeting with a boss and be prepared to say, “This is why ... I’m a value to the company.” A woman who was employed by a public agency left the workshop with a new understanding of the ways to research salary data online and assess one’s current compensation level. She realized that it is possible to present “a quantitative argument.” Now, she is prepared to say more than, “I deserve more money.” Now she can say, “This is the range and this is where I fall in the range.”



Being able to quantify the value of one’s job using reliable tools was also useful to the women. In the words of a private sector worker, “I really think that whether I look to advance in my organization, or the next time I look to change employers ... I am going to ... be aware of what my value in the marketplace is.” While several women discussed in broad terms the usefulness of objective data for assessing one’s compensation level, others spoke about the value of learning which of the many online resources were best to use. A woman working in the health care industry said, “There’s way too much information out there ... it just takes so long to figure out who’s got really good information.”

## Acknowledging Strengths: Criteria and Qualifications

Workshop participants also learned to recognize the fact that women, more than men, tend to consider themselves unqualified or unworthy for a particular opportunity, job or promotion. Several women discussed the importance of taking an assets-based perspective, as in the case of a public sector worker who explained that workshop participants were encouraged to “think about our strengths,” adding that often “women just assume that they’re not fully qualified if they don’t meet all the criteria.” A woman employed by a small nonprofit said that what stood out most for her was related to women’s sense of competency and professional value. In her words, “[Women] tend to feel like we need 100% knowledge



and comfort level with a subject and so we are less likely to take on new projects or challenges.” Not having that feeling of competency, she explained, could ultimately affect promotions and job titles.

## Being on the Job Market

Given that 23 of the 52 women interviewed were actively seeking new employment or experiencing some kind of job or position transition after the workshop, information related to job searches and compensation was particularly welcome. Women learned how to combine the process of making a job transition with addressing one’s worth on the job market. A woman from an educational nonprofit remarked that it was helpful to discuss “the appropriate time and way to talk [about] salary during job interviews.” A few women also specifically mentioned learning about salary deflection, including how to respond to questions about one’s salary history or current compensation level as well as not taking initial offers.<sup>18</sup> One woman employed in the higher education field said she learned how to manage questions that arose during job interviews. She explained that the workshop entailed “really great dialog,” during which “they showed you how to give responses to every kind of annoying interview question.” She confirmed that “even months later, I still remember that.”

## Learning That If “You Never Ask, You Won’t Ever Get It”

The importance of actually asking for a pay increase was a clear takeaway for many workshop completers. In the words of a state government worker, it’s “definitely better to over-ask than under-ask.” A female worker in a private company said, “The knowledge that I gained was [not to] be afraid to ask because if you never ask, you won’t ever get it.” Further, some women said they learned that it was okay to raise the topic of a pay increase outside of set cycles or periods of time, such as review dates. A woman employed in the nonprofit sector said that after the workshop, she was “feeling more empowered to have the conversation on [her] own terms whenever it was appropriate in [her] workplace, but also whenever [she] felt that it was.” In addition, a few women noted the value of knowing that there could be a possibility of negotiating

benefits separately from salary. As indicated by an individual employed by a small nonprofit, “Negotiating salary and benefits separately was totally new to me. I had never even thought about that as an option.”

## Presenting “A Good Pitch”

Several individuals explained that the workshop taught them how to best approach taking action regarding their pay. From a broad framework to particular steps to concrete tools, women appreciated knowing how to develop a plan. One woman from the private sector said the workshop taught her “how you need to do the research, how you can ... phrase things, how you can even ... make the approach to whoever is setting the salary.” Another public sector employee mentioned that pay inequity is “such a hard topic to bring up with your boss. I think you definitely need to have ... all the tools in your toolbox to make that argument.” A nonprofit employee remarked that the workshop covered “different things we can do in order to ... present a good ‘pitch.’”

## Having the Language: Building the Foundation for Action

Many women referenced that “having the language” or knowing “the phrases” to use when negotiating with an employer was critical. Several thought that knowing what to say and how to say it through examples and practice went a long way to helping them feel more confident and prepared to take action to improve their pay. One woman from a corporation said the workshop gave her a “conversation strategy ... actual phrases and words that I could say, because it’s something that gives me a lot of anxiety.... So just having the opportunity to practice those things and say those things out loud was really, really helpful.” Concrete examples were also considered beneficial. One person employed by a private firm appreciated the suggestions about what to do if the initial employer response is negative. “What are you going to say if they say flat out ‘no’? What happens ... if they’re open to it? They had very detailed instructions.” She added that it gave her a “great springboard” for preparing for her conversation.

# FAIR PAY? WOMEN CONSIDER THEIR OWN COMPENSATION

In order to examine whether the workshop had an impact on participants' assessment of their salary or hourly wage, women were asked directly how they thought about their pay, whether or not they thought their salary or wage was fair, and if they felt they were being paid less than men who were doing the same or comparable work.

## “I Don't Know”

More than one-third of the women (39%) said they did not know whether they were currently facing gender-based pay inequity in their workplace. Of this group, several women speculated that they were likely being paid less than men due to gender, but were not sure. Among the women who said they just “didn't know,” three stated very directly that they didn't have male colleagues with whom they could compare their compensation level.

Many women mentioned the lack of pay transparency as an impediment. As one woman in her 20s put it, “I don't know what men make in my role.” Another working as a municipal employee commented that she had “no idea what my peers are making.” A woman in a for-profit company thought that there was a tendency for women to speak to each other about pay, but not to men, which left women in the dark about the compensation level of their male counterparts. She explained, “Women often tend to talk to other women, so they compare salaries amongst women....”

Even for those women who did not know whether they faced gender-based pay inequity, several expressed their motivation to increase their own compensation level. This was the case for a woman employed in a higher education position who said, “Regardless of how much the men are making in this role, I know that I haven't advocated enough for better, higher wages and benefits for myself.” In many other cases, the workshop left women thinking they should pay more attention to compensation and benefits and take appropriate action to address them whether or not they could verify a personal gender wage gap.



## “It's Not Fair”

More than a third of the women (35%) believed their salary or wage level was unfair, but held differing views about why. Some were clear that their pay was not fair due to their gender. In these cases, they knew they were being paid less than men in comparable positions. For example, a participant from the corporate sector stated, “[I] actually know that I make less than my male colleague.”

Others who believed their compensation was unfair but did not have evidence of gender disparity, believed that it was unfair. Some of these women—even if they didn't know if they personally faced gender-based pay inequality—offered reflections about the structural context of unequal pay, such as the gender-based dimensions of their field. A worker at a higher education institution explicitly discussed the reality that female-dominated fields “are also chronically underpaid.” Another woman who was partly self-employed stated, “Ever since [secretarial] work became a pink collar job, it became okay to pay less.” A woman working for a small nonprofit said that her pay was not fair because “education professionals have always been viewed as women's roles.” Other women addressed the issue of nonprofits and compensation levels. An employee of an educational nonprofit suggested that some people feel

anxious about negotiating for their salary if they “work in the nonprofit space and it’s really mission-driven, [because] you feel like you’re operating counter to the mission by taking resources away from who you’re trying to serve.”

## Fair Pay

One quarter (25%)<sup>19</sup> of the women characterized their compensation level as fair, as in the case of a nonprofit sector employee who commented, “I’m probably being paid at the maximum based [on] my qualifications.” However, even these women remarked that they needed to be more attentive to ways they could advocate for themselves in the workplace on issues of compensation. As a woman from a higher education entity stated, “I assume it’s [male counterparts’ salaries] around the same, perhaps a little bit higher, but ... I know that I haven’t advocated enough for myself.”

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Whether workshop participants faced gender-based pay inequality in their particular employment situation, most believed they are affected by the wage gap and want to take action. This overall finding is captured in the words of one woman in her 20s from the nonprofit field who did not have male peers with whom to compare her pay but remained concerned about how she was affected by the wage gap and the socialization of women in society. She explained that hearing the problems women face generally in terms of pay equity has led to her “falling into a lot of the same traps that other women do in terms of not necessarily ... pushing for a higher salary.”

Many women were clearly motivated to take steps to address their pay levels both because of what they learned during the workshop and what they felt after participating.

# ACTION!

One of the strongest findings from this case study is that a large majority of the participants took some form of action after attending the workshop. Some women took formal action, such as requesting a meeting with a supervisor or asking for a raise. Other actions were informal, including conversations with peers and coworkers about pay equity. Some actions were for personal benefit, such as getting fair pay for themselves. Others were for the benefit of peers, colleagues, friends, family members, or society in general. While many women took action in their current work setting within months of completing the workshop, others planned to do so in the future, such as during an upcoming performance review. A number of women cited actions related to a job or career change. Some deemed their actions successful, while others said they did not meet with success.

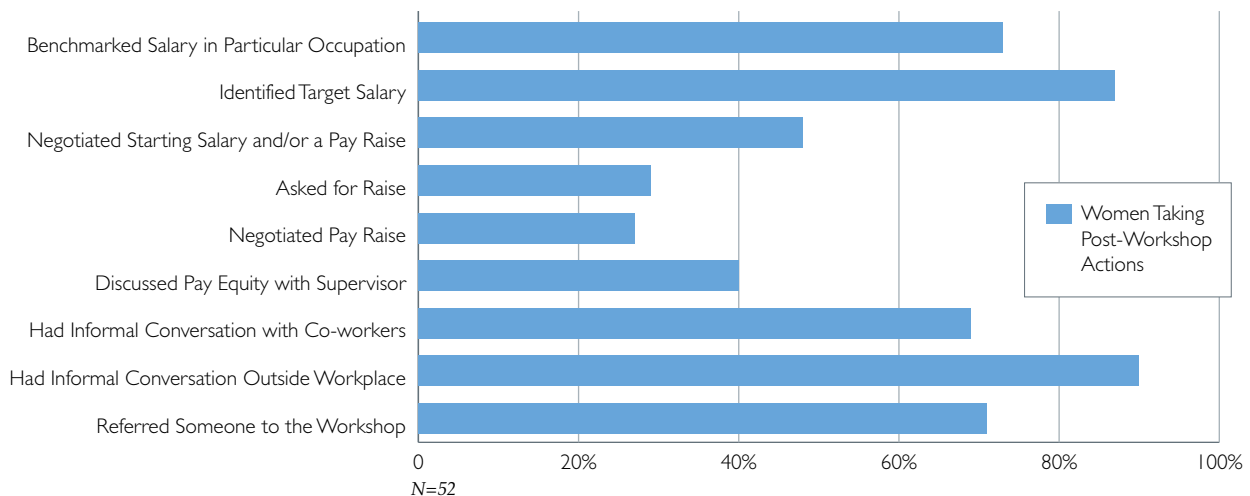
The following analysis explores how women applied what they learned in the workshop to their own employment setting or, in several cases, to their job search. It is important to emphasize that action does not simply mean asking for a raise and/or getting a raise. Many women discussed myriad other actions that were meaningful to them and represented individual steps to remedy the wage gap facing Boston women and working women everywhere.



Figure 4 reflects two main findings. First, that a strong majority of the women took some form of action after the workshop and, second, that these actions were not just for themselves. Some were geared toward coworkers as well as others outside of their workplaces. A composite percentage was calculated to represent how many women either negotiated a starting salary and/or pay raise after completing the workshop. This composite percentage (48%) demonstrates the scope of the workshop's impact: Nearly half of the women indicated taking at least one of these actions.

FIGURE 4:

## Percentage of Women in Study Sample Taking Post-Workshop Actions



## Planning and Being Prepared

Following the workshop, many women planned to take action when the time was right and/or when the next opportunity emerged. Therefore, they expected to apply what they learned from the workshop in the future—either in the immediate future or at some point.

Several women anticipated that transitioning to a new job would be the most relevant and/or possible time to act on workshop lessons. One woman said that the workshop helped prepare for the moment when “the ask” would take place. She said, “When I actually go to negotiate for my nursing salary, then I’ll be asking, ‘What do you typically pay new grad nurses?’ and then size them up.”

The capacity the women had to take action on their own behalf was frequently connected to their particular employment situation, including the length of time in their current position, whether it was their first job, the timing of their review, and anticipated or desired career transitions. A woman from the corporate sector explained that she hadn’t taken actions since the workshop because “there hasn’t been an opportunity for that ... I’m at the point where I’m thinking about ... the next step of my growth.” She continued to say that the workshop helped her understand when the timing might be right to advocate for herself: “I think the workshop did a great job ... [of] recognizing the appropriate time and place to advocate for yourself.” Timing figured into her action plan as it did in the case of many other women, although sometimes timing was experienced as a barrier.

While second-stage, follow-up interviews were conducted with eight of the 52 women interviewed, the passage of additional time didn’t translate into additional action or progress on pay issues by workshop participants. It is notable that several women interviewed a second time did discuss the persistence of barriers, explaining that they felt hindered in their capacity to improve their compensation level, such as sexism in society and in the workplace, lack of pay transparency, the financial status of nonprofit organizations, and the role of recruiters in the hiring process.

## DOCUMENTATION OF ACCOMPLISHMENT

Some women started a list of accomplishments immediately after the workshop as a way to prepare for building their case at a later point. A woman who worked at a medical institution said, “Right after the workshop, I started a page in my notebook.” She explained that she had a notebook in which she listed things she has “accomplished,” things she is “good at,” and “innovative” things she has done.” An employee of a private firm said the workshop “made me be more aware of keeping track ... [of] all of the milestones that I [achieved] throughout the year or on a particular project” to bring up during her yearly review.

## COMPENSATION DATA: A TABOO OR A MUST?

The most common preparatory step mentioned was collecting compensation data that would help determine whether a wage/salary was at the level it should be. Women also considered such information vital for generating a “target salary”<sup>20</sup> or range to be used during the hiring process.

As demonstrated in Figure 4, a large majority of the women (73%) cited that, after the workshop, they had benchmarked their salaries<sup>21</sup> and 87% indicated that they identified target salaries. Among those women who reported accessing online compensation data to compare to their own pay and, in some cases, to identify a target salary, several found that they used the data to their benefit to secure an increase in pay. A woman from the private sector said that she took compilation data from all three of her jobs and realized that she needed a 15-20% raise. “So that was very tangible,” she explained. “I went on those websites that they told me [about] to figure out my market value...” A corporate worker remarked on the tools she had acquired from the workshop. “I am ... looking for a better job opportunity,” she said, “[and] I have now this skill set in my arsenal so I can use it ... when I’m negotiating.”

## Actions: On the Job

While a substantial number of women described steps they were preparing to take to address their pay or their jobs more broadly in the future, others reported on the actions they had taken in their workplaces since the workshop.

### CONVERSATIONS WITH SUPERVISORS

Figure 4 shows that 40% of the women approached their supervisors to discuss their work, including their value to the organization and their pay. Right after the workshop, one person from the corporate sector asked for a “meeting with my boss, just like a quick thirty minutes to talk about how I was doing and then ... based on that conversation, which went really well, we talked about ... adjusting my salary to reflect [my] awesomeness.... So it was a really good, productive conversation. It hasn’t produced anything yet, but I feel like at least I’m starting to take the steps....” She added that she felt she was “taking ownership” of her job.

One woman employed by a nonprofit organization said that she advocated for employee reviews which were not taking place in her workplace. “We have a lot of turnover in my organization,” she explained. “I’m the only one who’s been there for the full year, so we weren’t actually going to get our annual reviews and we weren’t going to get considered for even cost of living increases.... And so I’ve now advocated [and] I get a review with a discussion of a salary increase.” In this case, as reflected in other women’s accounts of post-workshop action, the workshop participant was motivated to make a change that benefited others as well as themselves.

### ASKING FOR A RAISE

As noted in Figure 4, 29% of the women interviewed asked for a raise at some point following the workshop. A few of these women brought up the topic of pay with their supervisors sooner than they had expected to as a result of the workshop. One woman employed in the health care field said, “...I had expected to wait a couple months to ask for a pay raise but while I was meeting with her, the conversation was going so well that I looked

her in the eyes and said, ‘I merit a pay raise and I will tell you why.’ And she looked at me and she said you’re absolutely right and I am going to take this to the people who make these decisions,’ ... a male CEO. And it took about three months. And then I was actually [given] my raise. And I hadn’t expected to ask on that day. I think it was [that], one, I felt empowered, but two, I also had a woman executive sitting across the table from me and I felt very open and comfortable with her and so I just did it.” When asked if she “felt empowered as a result of the [workshop]” the woman replied, “Yeah. I felt like I knew my worth. And I had a voice. It gave me a voice.”

While this case resulted in an unanticipated, but successful, pay raise, several other women were clear that the workshop spurred other actions. For instance, a few women indicated that they had asked for a promotion since the workshop and others explained that they sought a title change. One woman from a private company said she got a “kick in the pants” to ask her manager for a raise, which she did immediately after completing the workshop. As she explained, “I think I brought it up that Friday after the workshop because it had been on my mind for so long.”

### IMPROVED BENEFITS

Some women started negotiating for improved benefits after the workshop—which were defined broadly and ranged from financial (such as health insurance and paid leave) to non-financial (including flexible schedules and working from home). As a woman from the private sector remarked, “One of the things that I took to heart was [that the] gender wage gap is not necessarily just salary. You can negotiate for benefits. So one of the things I negotiated for was [to] work from home ... once a week....” Fifteen percent of the women in the study negotiated benefits at some point following the workshop<sup>22</sup>—a solid number given that, in so many cases, benefits are set by the employer with little if any opportunity to negotiate.

A woman who worked in a nonprofit organization explained that she had used many leave days to tend to a sick parent and worried about what would happen if any other need arose. She recalled thinking, “I’ll have

**ACTION!**

barely any paid time. So during my salary negotiation, I did bring up paid family medical leave...“ That negotiation led to other people in her office backing her up and realizing that they needed the same benefit. This is another example of women negotiating for themselves and helping others.

**Transitions:  
From Job Searches to Starting Salaries**

Several women recalled the role the workshop played in prompting a job transition to improve their employment situation. In some cases, women felt that a new job was the route to securing better compensation.

For example, a private sector worker was motivated to seek other job prospects when she realized that a pay raise in her current position was unlikely: “When I wasn’t as hopeful that I would get what I was asking for at my current job, my first thought was [that] I should probably start looking for something else.” It also prompted her to talk with her current boss about a pay increase.

Some women used particular tactics learned in the workshop for a job search and/or hiring process. Of the 52 women in the study, 23 of them (44%) were in a position at some point post-workshop to use skills related to the hiring process or a job transition, such as deflecting salary questions<sup>23</sup> or negotiating a starting

salary. Of the 23 women who had an opportunity to put into practice the deflection and/or negotiation skills gained at the workshop, 61% of them tried to deflect salary questions and 52% negotiated a starting salary, as shown in **Figure 5**.

The workshop clearly helped several women deflect questions about desired compensation levels during the hiring process. One woman working in the nonprofit sector commented, “...They asked me what I was looking to be paid and the answer I gave was that there were a lot of other reasons I was interested in this particular job that ... were important to me beyond the hourly wage, and I’d like to hear what you have to say first. So I absolutely did deflect.”

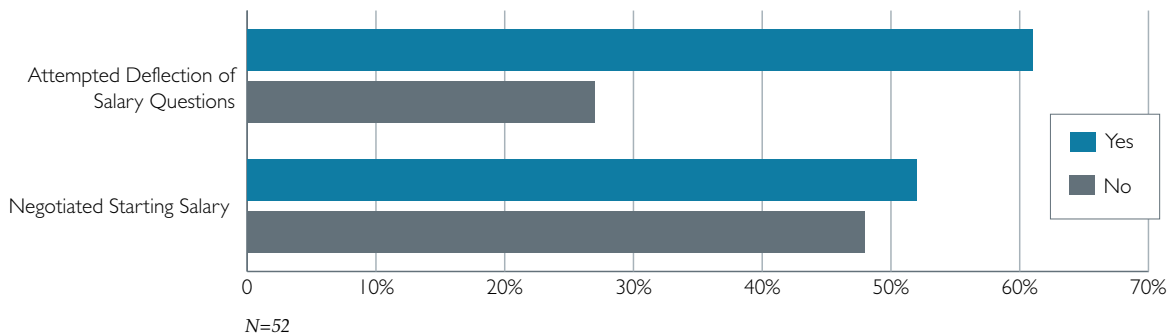
**As an Advocate, Mentor, Supervisor**

One unanticipated finding was that while women may have taken the workshop to address their own pay level, some came away with a sense of responsibility to act on behalf of others. Several noted how they considered future roles that would involve authority and responsibility regarding the compensation and benefits of others.

For instance, one woman in the nonprofit field mentioned serving as an advocate for her team and ensuring that others’ voices are heard: “I think I’ve become much more of a proponent for my team ... I really do advocate for my

FIGURE 5:

**Women in the Study Sample Who Attempted Deflection of Salary Questions, Negotiated Starting Salary**



team on all different levels. Whether or not they see it ... I do, making sure that their voices are heard and that they get promotions from within....”

A private sector employee spoke about how the workshop left her feeling that she should encourage and support others in taking action for themselves. She said she had gained a “sense of awareness” about the fact that colleagues should develop skills to address pay and that she had a role to play, particularly in helping those working under her; especially when they faced workplace challenges related to pay and value. She spoke about “encouraging people to be aware that these conversations should be happening and that ... wage equity is a real issue.” She added that she helped people be aware that “they should be really advocating for themselves as employees.” Similarly, a medical center employee explained to coworkers whom she either mentors or supervises that, “If you don’t ask for it, you won’t get it and ... men are better at asking for these things than women, so that’s part of the pay equity problem. We’re not asking and they are!”

## Spreading the Word, Sharing Knowledge

In addition to contemplating the roles and responsibilities of a supervisor or mentor, a number of women shared workshop information with their coworkers. Over two-thirds of those interviewed (69%) indicated that they have had informal conversations about pay equity with colleagues. One woman realized that she and some of her co-workers were Hispanic and might be underpaid for the work they were doing.

Participants also shared the *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workbook with others. One woman from an academic institution explained, “The workbook had a lot of really great ideas so I actually took extra copies and gave them to my friends.”

Another participant hosted a workshop in her employment setting and a majority of women (71%) referred colleagues and/or friends to *AAUW Work Smart in Boston*. The sharing of information went well beyond the workplaces of completers. Figure 4 (page 25) shows that 90% of workshop participants had informal conversations about pay equity with individuals who are friends or part of their broader social network.



## “OFF THE CHARTS”

MARYANNE:

Maryanne, a married mother of two, felt unsure about how to prepare for her upcoming annual review in a nonprofit media technology organization. Then she received an email about the AAUW *Work Smart in Boston* workshop and signed up immediately. While she expected to gain confidence through the workshop, she didn't anticipate leaving with a sense of urgency about changing her compensation level. She recalled that, over her lifetime, there were “points where I had learned that I was making less than a male counterpart doing the same job and had more experience.” Yet she felt that the biggest “ah-ha” moment was realizing “the cumulative effect of the wage gap on the future, my future self.” She said that it was “kind of eye opening, also a bit depressing, but in a way motivating.” And motivating it was.

Nearly 40 years old, Maryanne realized that if she and her husband were going to achieve any real economic security for their family, she had to get herself into “another bracket.” She needed to “make up for this time in my life that I've been getting paid less” particularly after taking time off for pregnancy. She found that the most significant takeaway from the workshop was that it changed how she thought about her pay and what this meant for her future. As she puts it, “The result is a dramatic difference in net worth at the end of your life.” Maryanne explained that it was “in and of itself a major motivator to be more aggressive and assertive about what I'm actually worth. So I could make up for some lost time.”

Going into her annual review with a salary of \$53,000, and having done “a lot of salary research of what my kind of position would be paid in Boston,” Maryanne determined that she was “worth at least \$20,000 more per year.” During the meeting with her boss, she used the research she had done on her pay level and outlined her accomplishments. She also emphasized the revenue she had brought in to the organization to make her case: “I did a lot of research and presented that to her. I think I had a pretty solid strategy and she appreciated that.”

Maryanne also told her boss that she needed to “set expectations for my family and my future” and explained that it wasn't sustainable for her to stay in her current pay range. She remembered being “super nervous” about the ask since it was a “huge increase and percentage-wise it was kind of off the charts.” And she described “a kind of irrational fear that she [my boss] was going to all of a sudden think differently about me as a human.”

Maryanne's ask resulted in a \$22,000 raise and, as she put it, “I do feel like if I had not gone to the workshop, I probably wouldn't have been as aggressive. I think I probably would have asked for maybe \$60K. I went in and I got \$75K.” Making the request for a raise a few months after completing the workshop, Maryanne remarked that she “definitely felt like I got way more out of it [workshop] than I thought I would. So I was very grateful.”

Maryanne's resolve to take action did not end with her request for herself. From mentoring a few younger women just out of college to trying to influence her niece and sister-in-law, she is actively supporting women to take action for themselves. She's working to “educate them on the long-term effects of the wage inequality.”

# CATALYZING FACTORS

**W**hat was it about the workshop that led a majority of the women who participated in it to address their pay and implement what they learned?

## Systems of Support: Supervisors, Coworkers, and Kin

The positive role played by supervisors was significant for several women who made efforts to adjust their compensation level. Specifically, these women found their supervisors approachable, supportive and/or amenable to addressing pay. A woman working for a higher education institution explained that her manager actively advocated on her behalf: “[I] didn’t really have to do much negotiating because my manager was on board.”

Another woman who worked in an academic setting explained that her supervisor understood her need for a pay increase because he had previously held a similar position. She said, “He was an account manager before ... [so] I think he’s likely comparing his salary to mine.” He offered her a \$10,000 raise, which was “far higher than what I would have asked for. I think my target was \$7K.” A few women described how their support systems, both inside and outside of work, were important to them. One woman from a private company explained that “having a system of support in your workplace, or even outside of your workplace, is very helpful.”

## Information and Knowledge

The importance of having increased knowledge about one’s worth was mentioned directly and indirectly by a number of women. In the words of a woman in a public sector job, establishing a “stretch goal” was significant since it led to her negotiating “the offer that they gave me to increase the salary bump” that came with added responsibility in her position. A woman employed by a global technology company explained that she left the workshop with “effective language that you can use to get what you want and what you deserve.”

Sometimes increased knowledge also meant knowing the financial status of one’s employer. One woman explained that she was aware that the client for whom she was



working could pay a higher rate due to available funds. This knowledge prompted her to take action and increase her rate as a self-employed contract worker.

Several women who did take action cited how a heightened sense of confidence often related to increased knowledge spurred them on. For instance, a woman in her 20s said that she left the workshop feeling “definitely a lot more confident to ... come to the table with better data to back that up” as she negotiated a starting salary for her new position in a nonprofit organization.

Aside from specific references to how confidence played a role in the accounts of women who asked for a pay raise and/or negotiated a starting salary, it’s important to note that the vast majority (62%) of the 52 women interviewed noted an increased sense of confidence following the workshop.

## Timing and a Sense of Urgency

As mentioned earlier, some women explained that timing was a factor in taking steps to address pay. One woman from the nonprofit sector said, “I was at a point with my current employer where I had started interning with them and then I was working in [something like a] contract position. I knew that they were going to offer me something else, so it ... actually worked out perfectly. I think I probably negotiated my salary ... a couple [of] weeks after I went to the workshop.”

This analysis of catalyzing factors is important for several reasons. First, it underscores one of the report's overall findings that there is no "one size fits all" path toward getting a pay increase and achieving pay equity. Although women who complete the workshop come away with a common set of skills and knowledge base, the information is only one factor that emboldens them to ask for a pay raise. Second, self-confidence emerges as a critical component. It is internal and personal, yet the stories of workshop completers are full of references to it. Many women are taught while growing up that they are inferior to men and that their value is low, but these ideas are not immutable. Third, it is important to recognize that individuals other than the workshop completers themselves can play significant facilitating roles in the weeks and months after the workshop in moving women toward action. It is noteworthy that some of these individuals are supervisors and coworkers of workshop participants, while others are members of their families and communities. In this sense, the workshops are not only about what individual women can achieve by being trained in salary negotiation, but about the role women's social and professional networks can play. Support for pay equity from one's "community"—however that is defined—is also a key catalyzing factor that should not be underestimated.

# BARRIERS

**W**hen asked about the most significant barriers to implementing the knowledge and strategies gained through the workshop, women often mentioned more than one. In fact, there were a combination of external factors—such as financial constraints, institutional power structures and systems of discrimination—and a complex set of internal feelings and interpersonal relationships. These two broad categories of factors—external and internal—interact since systems of oppression and institutional power dynamics influence relationships on the micro level and vice versa.



## Workplace-Based Financial Constraints

Constraints on the financial resources of their company or organization emerged as one of the most frequently identified barriers. Women spoke directly about how limited resources made it challenging to address their pay in their workplace. Some discussed finances in broad terms, as in the case of one woman employed at a private company for less than a year who responded, “The barrier is our money flow situation at work.” In another case, the context of an acquisition complicated a participant’s ability to address the topic of pay.

Most women who identified financial constraints as a barrier referred specifically to the limited resources of nonprofits. Several speculated that working for a nonprofit meant that a lack of financial resources makes it nearly impossible to raise their compensation level. As a woman working for a historical association put it, “I feel like for people who run nonprofits, the pat answer is we just don’t have the money...” She explained further, “I could imagine easily my boss just saying ... ‘It’s not that I don’t want to pay you more, it’s that we have X amount of money in our budget for salaries every year.’” One woman who had previously worked for a small nonprofit organization noted a conflict between trying to increase one’s pay rate and ensuring that those served by the organization wouldn’t be impacted negatively.

One woman was critical of the existing “mindset” that one just won’t be able to make a lot in the nonprofit sector

compared to other sectors. She said, “We put our own glass ceilings on our salaries and it takes a long time to work your way up to a decent salary.” This sentiment was echoed by a public agency employee who remarked, “There’s a lot of push back from administration just regarding the amount of money that they feel ... they can pay people ... there’s just this kind of cultural roadblock when it comes to the nonprofits, when it comes to spending any more money than they have to.”

A number of women spoke about how their field or profession was generally underpaid due to its gendered dimensions or feminization. In the words of a woman with a master’s degree, “I think the position of administrative assistant is, you know, a nicer way to say secretary and secretaries are women and the profession is just not paid enough.”

## “The House Always Wins”

There was another commonly identified barrier related to the power dynamics in employment settings as well as institutional structures and processes. In discussing her experience within a large higher educational institution, one woman remarked that salaries and ranges were set by her employer and there was little, if any, possibility of negotiating starting salaries as a result. A woman from a nonprofit educational organization further explained that “individuals don’t feel empowered to overcome”

established processes and expectations regarding salary level. She asked, “Why is that range so non-negotiable ... right off the bat?” A similar comment came from a woman in the education field who explained that the budget seemed set and that it was unclear how or who can help an employee achieve a higher level of compensation. She said, “Supervisors have to maintain that [budget] and they don’t have a lot of leeway.”

The lack of clarity and/or transparency of processes related to salary negotiations surfaced in other interviews in which women said the decision-making process was simply not clear. A woman employed by an architecture firm said that there was no HR department with which to negotiate. A woman working in the health care field said that “everything is siloed” in her workplace. She continued, “You ... have HR. You ... have Finance. It’s not like I know the owner of the company and I can directly negotiate with somebody who has the power to make the decisions to move the money where it needs to be.”

34 A woman from the for-profit sector discussing how power differentials served as a barrier came up with a powerful metaphor—“the house always wins”—explaining, “Your employer is in such a better position to win the negotiation than you are because of the job market. They know the playing field a lot better than you do and you can only see where you fit into the company’s larger scheme.” She added, “They are sort of relying on your nervousness and your insecurity around that to negotiate you down.”

### Cultural Beliefs and Norms

Several women spoke about how ideas and practices related to gender shaped women’s capacity to take action to address pay. As one individual who was self-employed framed it, “We still have major issues around gender and inequity...” She explained that those issues exist not only in the workplace “but in all aspects of life.” A woman working for more than a decade in a higher education institution referred to how “traditional thinking” influenced her work environment and reflected “a caste system approach.” She added that there was an underlying belief that “the man is the breadwinner.”

Another woman spoke more concretely about how cultural beliefs, based on structures of privilege in particular, had an impact on the culture of her organization and made it challenging for some in her workplace to understand the situations of particular employees and their compensation needs. A woman employed in the nonprofit sector referred to “people’s mentalities” and explained that she worked “with a group of people that are ... upper middle class white” and “don’t understand” what it’s like to live in Boston with “the student debt that we have.”

### Not Just About Gender

As discussed in the Introduction, the pay gap facing women of color, particularly Black and Latina woman, is a systemic issue and far larger than the pay gap facing white women. Two women said that the most significant barrier facing them was that they were women of color. A Black woman referred to her “racial/ethnic background” in her response but also made a clear connection between how women of color may be less knowledgeable and/or skilled in salary negotiation. She explained, “For women of color specifically, maybe just not knowing that ... you could negotiate for your salary and not having ... the skills to navigate through that” present serious barriers.

### Lack of Comparables

As indicated previously, a large majority of workshop participants cited the importance of learning how to benchmark one’s salary and identifying a target compensation level. However, a few raised the issue of not knowing their worth and/or not having information about the pay level of others when discussing barriers to using what they took from the workshop. As an individual from a private company explained, there was a “lack of person-specific salary information.” Another woman who was self-employed said that a lack of wage information served as a barrier for her. As a consultant, she added that “just getting comparables on freelance projects is, I think, a much harder pursuit in some ways than around salaries.” A salaried physician explained that not knowing her worth in the job market made it a guessing game when it came to securing the best and fairest pay. In referring to how she and friends “pretty

much feel in the dark about what we're actually asking for," she said that she has to rely on offers and not on her actual worth.

## Interpersonal Dynamics

In explaining what made it hard for her to address her pay rate, a private-sector worker spoke about the difficulty of "establishing those lines of communication from employees to their employers." She said that her boss was "very up and down" and that there were "personality conflicts" that make it hard to address compensation. A woman who worked in a nonprofit organization said, "When I have asked [my boss] for raises and cost of living [increases], he has said 'no'. And since I don't have anywhere to go, I can't say, 'well I'm leaving'...."

Challenging interpersonal dynamics with coworkers emerged in several interviews. A woman who works in academia said, "We talk past each other because this is really an issue that gets personal. It starts to get at value, worth ... how you ... perceive those things for yourself and how you attach value and worth to others, whether they're your peers or your managers. So that's ... hard stuff." Just how sensitive the topic of pay can be in work settings was made clear by an individual from a higher education institution who explained, "I think it's not something that the workplace in general encourages discussion about. I don't know if they would penalize us if they heard ... us talking about it, but yeah, we don't really talk about it."

## Fighting Fear, Building Courage

A number of women expressed fear that they would be turned down for a raise, experience a backlash as a result of asking for a raise—or be perceived as "aggressive" for asking for a raise. For a woman in a corporate job, it was about "having the courage essentially to realize and recognize for yourself how much you've accomplished" when negotiating for a raise. "If it doesn't work ... in your favor," she added, "it's okay ... try again." Another participant referred to having to get "over what we talked about in the workshop, of the fear if the conversation goes poorly." This sentiment was echoed by another woman who specifically referenced gender socialization in her response: "I think it's personal. I think it's me. It's just like a really hard conversation to have when you're socialized as a woman to feel like you should never ask for more."

# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS



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## Motivations and New Knowledge

As highlighted at the beginning of this report, a majority of women (60%) decided to enroll in an *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshop to acquire negotiation skills, particularly in anticipation of a new job or new role in their current workplace. This supports one of the report's overall findings that many working women in Boston are eager to participate in the workshops to present a "good pitch" when they enter into a pay negotiation process with their employer or prospective employer.

Many women said that they knew how important it was to know how to quantify one's worth before asking for increased compensation. The interview data show that more than a third (39%) did not know whether they were currently facing gender-based pay inequity; 35% spoke about how their compensation level was unfair; and only one quarter characterized their pay as fair. Regardless of whether or not women deemed their pay level fair, most women interviewed were highly motivated to take steps to address their compensation following the workshop. While some took immediate steps, others discussed plans to take action at some point in the future.

In addition to acquiring knowledge about how to benchmark their salary and negotiate for equal pay, many women commented on the value of sharing experiences and tactics with other workshop participants from diverse backgrounds. They may have expected to learn from the trained facilitators, but often they did not expect to learn from other participants. They found this type of knowledge particularly compelling and noted the importance of learning that:

- Pay discrimination is a cross-sector, cross-industry reality faced by diverse women in many different kinds of jobs;
- The feeling of being afraid to ask for increased pay is common among women;
- The sentiment that they are not valued at work is prevalent among women; and
- Stories of success offered by one woman in one workplace can be a catalyst for many women in a variety of workplaces.

## Women Taking Action

One of the most striking findings from this case study is the extent to which workshop completers took some kind of action in the days and months after the workshop. It is important to note that this report defines "action" broadly and includes, but is not confined to, receiving a pay raise. Among the actions taken post-workshop:

- 87% identified target salaries (using objective market research to identify appropriate compensation level);
- 73% benchmarked their salaries (using market research to assess own salary in the context of existing compensation levels for similar position);
- 48% either negotiated a starting salary and/or a pay raise;
- 40% started conversations with their supervisors about their work and value;
- 29% asked for a raise; and
- 71% referred colleagues and/or friends to *AAUW Work Smart in Boston*.

A substantial percentage of women (44%) were in a position to negotiate a starting salary or deflect questions about pay during a hiring and/or promotion process during some kind of employment transition. A majority of them (61%) worked to deflect salary questions—an action that is often very hard to accomplish—and 52% negotiated a starting salary.

## Catalysts and Barriers to Action

Systems of support proved important for many of the women who asked for a raise. Supervisors and coworkers played an influential role and a number of workshop completers mentioned their families, friends, and others in their social networks outside of work as critical to their ability to take action at work.

Women discussed various barriers that included both external factors—such as financial constraints, institutional power structures and systems of discrimination—and a complex set of internal feelings and interpersonal relationships. Constraints on the financial resources—particularly in the context of nonprofit entities—emerged as one of the most commonly cited barriers. In addition, a number of women perceived the lack of clarity and/or transparency of processes related to salary negotiation at their workplaces to be challenging. Finally, women spoke of experiencing feelings of fear—including fear of being refused a raise, of possible backlash, or of being perceived as aggressive—as barriers to addressing their pay.

Notably, while targeted to employees, the workshop also influenced some women to consider how to best support other women in their workplaces and ensure pay equity given their current and future roles as supervisors and/or mentors.

## Pathways to Empowerment

At the core of this report is a story of women's empowerment. Many researchers define empowerment as a process of change in which those who have been denied the ability to make choices due to structural constraints, formal/informal norms, or rules—or a combination of these—acquire the ability to take action that will improve their circumstances.<sup>24</sup> Empowerment can have multiple

outcomes; it can alter patterns of access to and control over resources; it can transform the institutions and structures that reinforce and sustain economic inequality; and it can change ideologies that justify hierarchal power relationships and social inequality. Empowerment can occur in multiple ways and in multiple locations—from household and family, to the workplace, the labor market and government.

Both workshop completers and facilitators described significant changes produced by participation in *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops. Most participants interviewed for this study became women of action, and their actions reflect increasing personal, interpersonal and socio-economic power in the workplace and beyond. One of the most important findings is that the workshops produced many actions beyond salary negotiation—from utilizing online resources to benchmarking compensation levels for a position to having informal conversations with coworkers—and these are well-documented in the report.

Overall, the research findings suggest that empowerment occurs on three interrelated levels: the individual, the group/collective, and the institutional. The attainment of empowerment cannot be portrayed as static or absolute. That is, one action taken at a given time may or may not be perceived as or experienced as empowering. Rather, the data depict a multi-month process in which small actions and interactions regarding new information and new skills produce larger actions and changes in financial and power relationships.

## INDIVIDUAL EMPOWERMENT: CONFIDENCE IS KEY

In the context of the *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshops, individual empowerment is directly linked to increased confidence to take action inside the workplace, and sometimes outside the workplace. This confidence has multiple sources, such as acquiring new knowledge, increasing knowledge of professional worth, accessing salary negotiation resources, tools and techniques, and learning skills for self-advocacy.

For some women, prior to the workshop, their inability to take action to attain equal pay primarily stemmed from a lack of awareness of the right to negotiate compensation.



In addition, they lacked knowledge about how to negotiate, including what language to use, what questions to deflect and how to deflect them, what questions to answer, and generally how to advance toward their target salary.

Women's descriptions of empowerment include a process of lifting a significant taboo. They do have the right to discuss their pay and negotiate for an increase. This produces a sense of possibility, and possibility becomes agency. Agency develops because women acquire the knowledge and methods to conduct a successful negotiation process. Agency means rejecting the fear of asking for a raise and implementing a decision to advocate for oneself.

For some women, empowerment meant an increased sense of their own value, an ability to actually quantify the value of their job and the way in which their work contributes to the value of their employer. As demonstrated, a number of women also mentioned that the workshop prompted them to turn attention to their own financial needs—short-term and long-term—something they had not done before, even though they understood that the wage gap affected women in general.

### GROUP AND COLLECTIVE EMPOWERMENT: “YOU'RE WORTH IT”

Many women spoke about the insights they gained from the experiences of other workshop participants and this laid the foundation for moving from individual to collective empowerment. The workshop experience provided encouragement and a sense that, although they would have to approach and speak to their supervisors one-to-one, they were not actually acting alone. It developed in them a strong sense of shared experience that in turn amplified their feelings of empowerment.

A number of women discussed the role the workshops played in creating and/or strengthening a feeling of community, of taking steps not just for oneself but working to address a persistent problem faced by many women. In this way, some women were able to confront their own lack of self-confidence and see that other women had similar nagging doubts about their worth. Through collective discussion, women identified the

roots of these feelings as cultural and the ways in which women are socialized from a young age. In short, there was an acknowledgment that women are often taught from an early age “not to rock the boat,” but as adults they have the power to be change agents.

The discussions between workshop participants not only boosted the confidence of many women, but also generated a very positive and supportive environment for risk taking and making change. Interviews included phrases they took from group discussion such as, “You can do it,” and “You have to be your own advocate,” and “You're worth it!”

The extent and range of actions taken back to the workplace provide evidence that this affirmation of every woman's worth and value persisted beyond the few hours the women spent together. It continued in the days and months after the workshop, encouraging women to translate the idea of salary negotiation into action and helping turn individuals into their own advocates as well as advocates for other women.

Evidence of workshop participants consciously acting on behalf of others included giving out *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* Workbooks to family members and friends, sharing newly found websites, encouraging other women to attend workshops, sharing negotiation strategies and language with others, and in two cases, becoming a workshop facilitator. These actions embody a shift in consciousness; after the workshops women felt it was valid to tackle and to advocate for pay equity for other women.

Another aspect of collective empowerment centers on the role of the workshop facilitators. A number of women identified the facilitators as important role models and resources. The facilitators themselves reported that delivering workshops and strategies for salary negotiation was fulfilling and served as a significant platform for advocacy on issues of pay inequity. The facilitators aided the process of collective empowerment by practicing a model of shared leadership inside the workshop, encouraging the women in the workshop to expand their social networks, and generally building a sense of belonging and community in each session. In sum, the workshops not only produced individual

women of action, but a cohort of women activated towards empowering other women economically.

### **INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL: BOSTON IS A CITY WHERE WORKING WOMEN COUNT**

Workshop participants often stated that they felt empowered by the fact that the workshops are supported and provided by the City of Boston and the Mayor's office. This reinforced and validated their quest to take personal action, as well as their understanding that pay inequity is a structural and systemic issue that should be tackled at multiple levels by various stakeholders. Several women noted that they came away from the workshop with the understanding that pay inequity is well-documented and embedded in our economic system. One woman said she appreciated the role the city has taken to address the wage gap and that the involvement of municipal government makes her feel more confident to take action. The fact that the city as an employer is actively advancing efforts to address pay inequity made many women feel that they had the support of a key institution in Boston.

Furthermore, the provision of workshops by the Mayor of the City of Boston reflected a further endorsement of current shifts in thinking and attention paid to pay equity in the media, as well as by celebrities and others. The experiences women shared in the workshops validate the need for women—and all employees—to have greater pay transparency from their employers. This is key to making claims to the financial resources of their employers, a change that will likely have a significant impact on workplace institutions throughout Boston.

Women demonstrated a shift in perception about the urgency for systemic action on pay inequity. They challenged the foundations of underlying personal and structural barriers to pay equity by maintaining that pay equity deserved attention more immediately than they might have previously acknowledged. One woman utilized the term “wake-up call” to capture this aspect of empowerment.

Linked to this shift in perception about the urgency of addressing pay inequity is another aspect of institutional change that could be termed “reframing the conversation.” Simply put, women reframed the achievement of pay equity through salary negotiation as related to a broader and multi-level strategy for attaining greater fairness and equality for all women in the workplace and in the economy.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS



## Recommendations: Reflecting on the Lessons of AAUW Work Smart in Boston, Year One

This section outlines recommendations for the *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* program going forward. It is based on a synthesis of data and ideas from workshop completers and facilitators, as well as suggestions from the authors and contributors.

Overall, participants found the workshops very informative and helpful in terms of giving them new resources and training in salary negotiation. It is important to note the kind of impact a short-term training can have. These workshops are a one-time intervention of two hours. They are addressing major external forces of gender discrimination and inequality in society while also trying to improve women's feelings of self-worth and self-confidence in a society in which gender socialization devalues women and girls in educational institutions, the workplace, and the media, to name just a few of the external influences in women's lives. It is a large set of issues and skills to address in a short period of time.

## Workshop Content

The following suggestions are offered in the spirit of improving the workshop curriculum and set of exercises that are already quite successful.

- Help women to better distinguish between the challenges of external economic realities that they cannot control and the opportunity to build feelings of self-confidence/agency in a safe space over which they do have some control;
- Spend less time on the history and background of the wage gap, as most participants interviewed seemed to have a basic grasp of the topic;
- Ask women directly about whether they have experienced pay inequality or know of a coworker who has;
- Ensure ample structured time for women to share and discuss each other's stories, with input from facilitators about themes that emerge;

**F**or women in cities across America, *AAUW Work Smart* workshops are becoming an important cornerstone of the ongoing movement to close the persistent gender wage gap.

But these workshops represent just one part of a three-pronged strategy to make pay equity for all women in Boston a reality. The strategy includes voluntary action by employers, legislation on the state and municipal levels, and the training of women to be effective champions for themselves and for other women.

The impact of the workshops on individual women is profound, as documented in this case study. From gaining new knowledge to learning strategic negotiation skills to increasing self-confidence, completing an *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* workshop can be a powerful experience. It is imperative, however, to consider the experiences, actions and achievements of workshop participants in the broader context of the ongoing need for systemic and structural change. Only the commitment and action of numerous stakeholders from multiple sectors will lead to transformative change for all women.

- Allow more time for women to share fears about salary negotiation and analyze the reasons for unsuccessful negotiation strategies;
- Prioritize role-playing in the workshop so that women can practice and engage in negotiation before actually trying to implement it in their workplaces;
- Provide more time to reflect on career paths, not just current jobs; and
- *AAUW Work Smart* to develop online resources.

In the interviews with workshop participants, a quarter of the women indicated that they want to learn more about how they can individually and collectively drive change at the state and/or federal level. One new area of content for the curriculum could be “Women and Pay Equity Activism.” This could be focused on during or after the workshop, as follows:

- Create Facebook groups or other social media platforms for sharing news about legislation, hearings, and other resources among workshop completers;
- Discuss legislation that affects pay equity at the federal level, and strategies for passage; and
- Increase women’s political participation and leadership at the policymaking table through public forums about the new Pay Equity Act and other policy issues related to advancing women’s economic security.

### Post-Workshop Connections: Coaching, Mentoring and Peer Support

There was strong consensus among workshop completers about wanting the Mayor’s Office of Women’s Advancement to organize post-workshop connections and continued skill-building opportunities. Follow-up to the workshops was mentioned by nearly half (48%) of the women interviewed. The suggestions they made along with recommendations from facilitators include:

- Develop an online network of workshop completers, through LinkedIn, Facebook, Google groups, and/or other social media;

- Provide contact information for trained career counselors;
- Ask facilitators about their interest in being mentors after the workshop and provide contact information for those willing to do so;
- Share stories of successful salary negotiation strategies through message boards or other safe platforms;
- Provide coaching and/or mentoring sessions with a focus on negotiation practice sessions with facilitators or others;
- Provide a 30 to 60 minute webinar for workshop completers that could be accessed during a break or lunch period to provide a refresher course;
- Provide online industry sector support for women who work in specific fields, such as biotech;
- Develop specific exercises and/or workshops for women at different stages of their careers; particularly for Millennials;
- Provide advice for women who are relocating, either within the U.S. or overseas and provide model “relocation contracts,” and
- Develop specific follow-up workshops for nonprofit organizations, since the financial realities of these organizations can require different approaches than those of for-profit companies.

### Improving Outreach and Workshop Diversity

The Mayor’s Office of Women’s Advancement has expressed a strong interest in having a more diverse cross-section of working women in Boston attend the workshops in the future. Efforts to advance this goal are ongoing. Demographic data on workshop participants interviewed shows that a majority of them have been white. Targeting women of color needs to be an intentional part of program delivery. Many women indicated that they learned about the workshop through professional networking groups that may not be as accessible to women of color.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations about how to improve outreach and marketing:

- Customize ads to diverse cultural and linguistic communities in Boston by translating them into Spanish, Haitian Creole, and other languages;
- Ensure that ads make it clear that the workshops are free;
- Highlight the fact that the workshops are sponsored by the City of Boston, since many women were motivated to sign up because they felt supported by the Mayor and the City;
- Expand community partners to include more organizations that serve communities with large populations of people of color, such as Dorchester, Mattapan, and Roxbury; and
- Diversify the range and types of organizations that engage in outreach, such as faith-based organizations, child care centers, after-school programs, community health centers, etc.

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### Facilitator Training

While some of the facilitators had been trainers in other settings, not all of them had experience and none had ever taught the content of the *AAUW Work Smart* curriculum. They found the training helpful overall, but thought the Facilitator's Guide could be designed more effectively. The following suggestions come from both facilitators themselves and workshop completers:

- Institute an in-person “train the trainer” session in place of phone-based training;
- Convene facilitators periodically so they can share experiences and become a “learning community;”
- Encourage facilitators to observe a workshop before they facilitate one themselves;
- Train the facilitators to allow adequate time for—and prioritize—the role-playing salary negotiation exercise;
- Train facilitators in building community in the classroom; and
- Equip facilitators with skills and tools to work with “combative people” in the workshop.

## APPENDIX A.

# RESEARCH METHODS

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

In order to ensure protections for all human subjects in this study, the study—including all documents utilized in the research—received approval from UMass Boston’s Institutional Review Board. The five members of the research team were certified through the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI Program) for human subjects research.

### DATA COLLECTION

As explained in “The Purpose of This Report” (see page 11), this report is based primarily on in-depth interviews with a subsample of workshop completers from Year One of the program (N=60) and supplemental data were collected from stakeholders including MOWA and AAUW program staff (N=2), workshop facilitators (N=2), and a community collaborator (N=1). Therefore, a total of 65 interviews were completed, and, additionally, one facilitator focus group was conducted.

#### *Interviews with Workshop Completers*

Initial notice of the study and associated request for participation was submitted through email correspondence from AAUW *Work Smart in Boston* to several hundred women who completed the workshop beginning in April 2016. For workshop participants from late summer/early fall workshops, hard copy solicitation letters were given to workshop completers and email correspondence from AAUW *Work Smart in Boston* followed the letters. Interested individuals were asked to indicate interest in participating by providing contact information through an online survey tool or by contacting Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy researchers directly. Researchers followed up on the initial AAUW *Work Smart in Boston* Workshop correspondence through email and phone calls (up to three phone calls in some cases). Through this process, a total of 70 workshop completers indicated interest in participating in the study.

Initial semi-structured interviews with 52 workshop completers were conducted between August 2016 and March 2017 to gather baseline data. The average

number of days between the workshop and baseline interview was 140 days with a standard deviation of 80 days. Follow-up interviews were conducted with a subsample of eight workshop completers between February and April 2017. Researchers conducted the vast majority of interviews at a downtown location or at UMass Boston while some interviews—including all follow-up interviews—were conducted over the phone. Demographic data were collected from each workshop completer at the time of the interview or via email through a standard form. Participants completed consent forms (with separate sections for participation in the study and for recording of the interview) and they received signed copies. Workshop completers received donated Dunkin Donuts gift cards and Caffè Nero gift cards (\$10 value) for participating as interview respondents. Only pseudonyms are used in the report.

#### *Community Collaborators*

All community collaborators from Year One were contacted for interviews and initial outreach email was sent in August 2016 by AAUW *Work Smart in Boston* with follow-up done by researchers. While researchers engaged in extensive solicitation efforts to develop a subsample of community collaborators, only one interview was completed as a number of community collaborators responded that they saw their role as hosts and providing space for workshops and not able to contribute additional information through an interview.

#### *Program Stakeholders*

Separate semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals associated with overseeing the program, including the Program Manager of AAUW *Work Smart in Boston* and the Executive Director of the City of Boston’s Mayor’s Office of Women’s Advancement. Interviews were completed with both individuals during the fall of 2016.

#### *Workshop Facilitators*

One focus group of four workshop facilitators that lasted approximately two hours was held in September 2016 at a downtown Boston location. Additionally, interviews were conducted with two facilitators in March 2017.

### AAUW WORK SMART IN BOSTON YEAR ONE PROGRAM DATA

A data request was made to *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* in December 2016 for the following Year One data: age, racial/ethnic background, and highest education level of workshop completers. In addition, the request included: Year One start and end dates, total number of workshops held, total number of women who registered for workshops, total number of women who registered and completed workshops, ZIP code breakdown for workshop locations, total number of community collaborators, total number of facilitators, and sector breakdown of facilitators. Data were received in January 2017 and used for the analysis of Year One program workshop implementation and participant demographics. It is important to note that program data were limited as there was a large number of missing data due to non-response by workshop participants who did not complete an AAUW-administered pre-workshop survey prior to the workshop and/or did not respond to particular questions posed in the brief survey. 682 of 1769 responses were missing for racial/ethnic background and 574 of 1770 responses were missing for highest level of education.

### AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY DATA

American Community Survey (ACS) data were utilized in order to compare the study subsample with the population of women in the Boston area to determine representativeness of the subsample. ACS data were restricted to women living in the Boston/Metro North Area over the age of 18 who had positive annual earnings. The Boston/Metro North area is one of eight regional labor market areas (Workforce Investment Areas) defined by the New England Public Policy Center (NEPPC) at the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston. It includes Boston, Somerville, Everett, Cambridge, and additional cities and towns north of Boston to the most northern towns of Wilmington/North Reading. Although the 2015 5-year sample was used, only data from the most recent year (2015) were utilized.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Interview and focus group recordings were transcribed by an independent transcriptionist. NVivo, a qualitative software program, was used for coding of all transcripts. Primary coding was used to generate data related to topics addressed in the interviews and focus group. Second-level coding was developed for the examination of emergent themes and findings across data sources. Additional coding techniques were developed and applied for the identification of specific actions discussed and/or taken by workshop completers and to allow for analysis of frequencies.

#### *Quantitative Analysis of Workshop Participant Data*

**DEMOGRAPHICS.** It is important to note the following: In instances where a woman checked more than one racial/ethnic category, researchers recoded this as multiple ethnicity. Some women simultaneously working two part-time jobs reported “working full-time.” Therefore, women in these situations were considered “full-time” in terms of their employment status. While not reported in the body of the report, three women of the 52 in the study sample indicated union membership. In terms of sector categories, N/A refers to five cases in which three women are self-employed and two others provided employers that could not be specified in terms of sector.

**ACTION MEASUREMENT.** The frequencies of most action items were calculated by dividing the number of interviewees who took that action by the total number of interviewees (52), and converting the resulting fraction into a percentage value. Except for the items “Benchmarked a Salary,” “Identified a Target Salary,” and “Negotiated Pay Raise,” all action items have between one and three entries that are missing values or not applicable for that item. The missing values arose either because the participant did not answer the corresponding question, or in some cases, the researcher did not ask the question. The “Not Applicable” status was assigned to an entry if an action item did not apply to the interviewee’s situation. For example, for a workshop completer who had just started her first job around the time of the interview, action items such

as “Discussed Pay Equity with Supervisor” and “Had Informal Conversation with Coworkers” were not applicable. In addition, the item “Negotiated Pay Raise” contains 10 Not Applicable entries because workshop completers responded with a negative answer to the preceding question about asking for a pay raise.

It should be noted that two action items, “Attempted to Deflect a Salary Question during Hiring Process” and “Negotiated a Starting Salary during Hiring Process,” are pertinent only for those workshop completers who were actively seeking employment or in another kind of job transition during the period between the workshop and the interview. As indicated in “Action!” 23 of 52 workshop completers were in a position in which they had an opportunity to deflect compensation questions and/or negotiate a starting salary. Therefore, action data on these two items are presented both for all workshop completers (N=52) and also for those experiencing some type of job transition (N=23).

## DATA LIMITATIONS

One of the most significant limitations of this study is the self-selected nature of study participation. Program staff of *AAUW Work Smart in Boston* and Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy researchers engaged in extensive efforts to publicize the study to all workshop participants during specified periods of time and to reach out systematically to a large number of workshop completers during the follow-up process in order to ensure the collection of data from a diverse subsample of completers. However, it must be noted that women interested in being part of the study may have been motivated by their own experiences of the workshop and what transpired for them as they tried to implement learnings in their workplace and/or in their employment search. That is, women may have wanted to participate on account of having had either a positive reaction to the workshop or a negative one—and there are a number of cases for which this was made clear by workshop participants who explained to the researcher that they wanted to make sure that their story was documented and part of the study.





## ENDNOTES

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7. There have been some critiques of teaching individual women to negotiate. See H.R. Bowles, “Why Women Don’t Negotiate Their Job Offers,” *Harvard Business Review*, June 19, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/06/why-women-dont-negotiate-their-job-offers>; M. Konnikova, “Lean Out: The Dangers for Women Who Negotiate,” *The New Yorker*, June 10, 2014, [www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/lean-out-the-dangers-for-women-who-negotiate](http://www.newyorker.com/science/maria-konnikova/lean-out-the-dangers-for-women-who-negotiate); and L.J.Kray, “The Best Way to Eliminate the Gender Pay Gap? Ban Salary Negotiations,” *Washington Post*, May 21, 2015, [www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/05/21/the-best-way-to-way-to-eliminate-the-gender-pay-gap-ban-salary-negotiations/?utm\\_term=.46d96eb951f2](http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/05/21/the-best-way-to-way-to-eliminate-the-gender-pay-gap-ban-salary-negotiations/?utm_term=.46d96eb951f2).
8. For information on *AAUW Start Smart*, please see <https://salary.aauw.org/resource/start-smart>.
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11. “Massachusetts Regional Labor Market Profiles: Geographic Definition Appendix” from “Labor Market Trends in Massachusetts Regions: Central Mass.” A joint project of Commonwealth Corporation and the New England Public Policy Center of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, 2012. Accessed April 10, 2017, <https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/labor-market-trends-in-massachusetts-regions/labor-market-trends-massachusetts-regions-central-mass.aspx#collapse2>
12. Racial/ethnic composition of all Year One participants: 59.5% White/Caucasian, 9.8% Hispanic/Latina, 16.5% Black or African American, and 10.3% Asian or Pacific Islander, according to available data.
13. The breakdown is as follows for Boston/Metro North female workers: 66.3% are white, 12.4% are black, 0.2% are Native American, 9.1% are Asian, 11.2% are Hispanic, with 0.7% as other. Calculations are based on the ACS 2011-2015 sample.

14. The nonprofit category captures a wide range of not-for-profit organizations, including higher education institutions and medical/health-care organizations, as well as smaller nonprofit organizations.
15. Some women heard about the workshop offering through multiple sources so that the percentages provided here total more than 100%.
16. Several women cited more than one expectation so that the percentage total is more than 100%.
17. American Association of University Women, *AAUW WORK SMART Salary Negotiation for Women Attendee Workbook*, p. 6.
18. In many job interviews, women are asked about their compensation history. This has the potential of linking a salary offer to a past salary level. When women were asked whether they deflected salary questions at some point after the workshop, the term *deflection* used by researchers was utilized to capture both attempts to deflect and successful deflection efforts. Given the complexities of women's experiences of deflection and the accounts they offered, it wasn't possible to distinguish with analytical precision the range of deflection efforts and outcomes.
19. This and the previous two categories equal 99%; 1% were Not Applicable.
20. While not explicitly defined in the *AAUW WORK SMART Salary Negotiation Women Attendee Workbook*, "target salary" is referred to in the Workbook as the compensation level for a position that is commensurate with a person's qualifications, education, skills, and experience in a particular geographic location based on an online market assessment. p. 10.
21. Benchmarking is understood for the purposes of this case study as using market research to assess one's own pay level in the context of existing compensation levels for similar positions.
22. In responding to the question of whether workshop completers had negotiated improved benefits after attending the workshop, eight (15.4%) of the 52 women responded that they negotiated and obtained improved benefits, two (3.8%) attempted but were unsuccessful and 38 (73.1%) did not negotiate improved benefits. However, four women (7.7%) reported that this question was not applicable to them for the following reasons: per diem work status, unemployed status, union status, and situation of a new job offer.
23. As indicated earlier, the term *deflection* in this study includes attempts to deflect and successful deflection.
24. Naila Kabeer, "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal," *Gender and Development*, March 2005, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp. 13-24.



**“WHEN WOMEN SUCCEED, OUR BUSINESSES,  
OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR CITY SUCCEEDS.”**

*– Mayor Martin J. Walsh, City of Boston*

