



School Package

Women in Resource Development Corporation
Educational Resource Centre

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Women in Resource Development Corporation

Women in Resource Development Corporation (WRDC) is a provincial non-profit organization committed to **increasing women's participation in trades and technology**. With private and public funding, WRDC offers a variety of programs and services to address the challenges surrounding the **attraction, recruitment, retention, and advancement of women** in these fields.

Our key activities include:

- **career exploration** programs (STEMforGIRLS);
- **career development and employment programs and services;**
- **equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)** consultation services and training for workplaces; and
- **research and collaboration with key stakeholders** such as training institutions, employers, unions, government departments, and community groups to identify solutions to issues commonly identified by women and gender-diverse individuals in trades and technology.

Educational Resource Centre

WRDC's charitable arm, the Educational Resource Centre (ERC) was created in 2002 to provide hands-on learning and career exploration opportunities for girls and gender-diverse youth in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). ERC programs have provided opportunities to thousands of girls in urban, rural, and remote communities, giving them valuable knowledge and experiences that shape their education pathways and future careers.

The objectives of WRDC's ERC are to:

- increase the understanding of STEM as a foundation for all careers,
- improve gender-balance in STEM post-secondary programs and careers, and
- increase creativity and innovation in STEM fields through the creation of a diverse, inclusive, and gender-balanced workforce.

Those who identify as women and gender diverse are critically underrepresented in STEM-related fields. When given the opportunity, girls first become interested in pursuing STEM subjects and careers, around the age of 11, but this interest can soon wane due to a lack of role models, a perception of gender inequality in the workplace for women in STEM professions, and a general lack of awareness of the relevance of STEM professions. STEMforGIRLS can help.

**NOTE: "Women" refers to anyone who identifies as a woman and explicitly includes not only cis women but also trans women, anyone who identifies as non-binary, nonconforming and/or gender fluid; and anyone, irrespective of assigned gender at birth, gender identity and gender expression, who has experienced or is subject to experiencing discrimination based on identifying as a woman and/or being identified by others as a woman.*

TOGETHER WE WILL #MakeTomorrowBetter

Barrier: Lack of Visible Role Models

Youth are most likely to be drawn toward occupations that they associate with their own gender, occupations in which 'people like me' are visibly employed. Since women are concentrated in a much narrower range of occupations than men, this puts girls at a disadvantage. Girls automatically exclude a much larger number of career possibilities than boys do, based solely on this gendered association. Their perception of what these careers entail also suffers.

Solution: Real-World Examples and Experiences

STEMforGIRLS breaks through this barrier by connecting students with real-world examples of women succeeding in and enjoying STEM professions and gives the participants hands-on experience in STEM and Skilled Trades. When girls and gender-diverse youth are given examples of real-world STEM-professions, their perception changes and they begin to choose STEM courses in high school and consider careers in a wider variety of areas.

Barrier: Lack of Confidence and Unconscious Bias

Due to bias and discrimination, girls and gender diverse youth often lack confidence to pursue STEM/Skilled Trades activities and classes. Without ongoing support, interest, and engagement in STEM-related education, participation in traditional mixed-gender career exploration programs tend to produce stereotypical results in girls' career choices.

Solution: Girls-Only Programs

As an all-girl program, STEMforGIRLS specifically focuses on attracting women to a wide spectrum of fulfilling careers in areas they may otherwise not consider.

Hands-on activities and experiences including worksite tours, activity days, and a virtual classroom, ensure our participants' confidence and engagement.

Barrier: Access to Career Guidance and Resources

When girls lack connection and confidence to engage with the world of STEM, they are left unaware of the multitude of potential pathways. Girls in small towns and rural communities are at a greater disadvantage at every stage as they are even less likely to have access to and participate in STEM clubs and activities, feel supported by teachers and classmates in STEM classes, and ultimately lack the guidance and resources necessary to pursue a STEM education and career.

Solution: Career Development Programming and Virtual Resources

Virtual programming and support provided to teachers for school chapters, help address this gap. Career specialists are able to provide resources, connections to role models and information about how to pursue a career in STEM or the Skilled Trades. The ongoing connectivity provided virtually and through school chapters helps girls in rural areas to have a sense of community and support between in-person events with our career development staff.

GET INVOLVED

School Visits

Working with the schools identified, girls and gender-diverse youth in grades 7 through 12 can participate in STEMforGIRLS sessions throughout a day or afternoon. These may include introductions to STEM skills, career development activities, and presentations by real-world role-models. Students selected to attend worksite tours or conferences, will have specific required sessions to attend.

Worksite Tours and Conferences

When available through our partner organizations, a selection of students are invited to tour a worksite or attend a professional industry conference, where they will get a deeper appreciation for STEM-careers directly from the role models.

School Chapters

Schools involved are invited to start their own STEMforGIRLS chapters. As a chapter, the school would receive further resources, hands-on activities, and curriculum guides to engage girls and gender diverse youth throughout the school year with the confidence building experiences, career information, and community connections needed for successful futures in STEM. Each chapter does vary based upon the capacity of the teacher champions and the students involved. Reach out to our career development coordinators to discuss what a chapter at your school might entail.



School Registration

Your school has been selected to participate in STEMforGIRLS programming. To confirm your participation, please reply by email to stemforgirls@wrdc.ca at your earliest convenience.

All STEMforGIRLS programming is intended to engage junior high or high school girls or gender-diverse youth. We encourage educators to select students from a range of grades, who demonstrate enthusiasm about learning more about career opportunities.

Your school has been selected to run in-school sessions. Expenses covered include up to 7 hours combined of substitute teacher time. Where expenses are to be reimbursed, a PO number will be provided by WRDC.

In-school sessions can be customized based on your school's interest and capacity to host the career development coordinator(s). Sessions are 1-2 hour blocks of time where different girls and gender-diverse youth can attend career development and STEM skills sessions with our coordinator(s). Where possible sessions should be grouped by grade (i.e. one session for grades 7-9, a second session for grades 10-12).

We are at times also available to host information sessions after school hours for grade 12 students, guardians and other community members interested in the career guidance supports offered to women of all ages.

Student Selection

We recommend for the inclusion of all girls and gender-diverse youth in targeted classes or entire grade levels to participate in our career exploration workshops, as opposed to optional or self-registration. Making these workshops mandatory eliminates the stereotypical pattern of low participation in STEM-related activities among girls, resulting from a misunderstanding of STEM careers or a lack of confidence in pursuing them.