

# WEN

## WAGE EQUITY NOW

CLOSING THE RAW WAGE GAP BY 2030



2020  
YEAR IN  
REVIEW

# OUR STORY



The [Massachusetts Women's Forum](#) (MWF) is a community of prominent women leaders in government, business, and not for profits including hospitals, community organizations, the arts, and higher education. In 2019 the membership used their power and influence to take on a project that would have a large impact on an issue still facing many women in the workforce: the raw wage gap.

Under the leadership of MWF's former President Jackie Jenkins-Scott, a group formed to discuss how they could focus the work to have impact. We are fortunate to have many organizations working to close the wage, leadership and wealth gaps in Massachusetts. MWF did not wish to duplicate their work but rather build on and intensify their impact.

MWF designed a bold initiative with a specific focus: ask employers to publicly report their raw wage gaps by gender and race by percent and close these gaps within the next 10 years. This is a daring proposal in two aspects: timeframe and transparency.

## TIMEFRAME

America has always had gender and racial wage gaps. No federal, state, or municipal entity has ever set out to eliminate these gaps in 10 years.

In recent years, Boston has been at the forefront of activities to reduce the gender wage gap. Through the Boston Women's Workforce Council's (BWWC) 100% Talent Compact, employers commit to eliminate their wage gaps but within no specific time. National projections have always had a 50-100 year horizon for achieving equity, much longer than this 10 year goal.

## TRANSPARENCY

To date, Boston is the only city in the nation reporting on racial and gender wage gaps. Employers voluntarily and anonymously report to the BWWC. MWF intended to be bold, inspired by [an op-ed in the Boston Globe](#) that challenged us to think about a 'moonshot' idea we had for the next decade. For decades we have acknowledged these gaps, yet little progress has been made. MWF knew that if we are going to truly close these wage gaps, we must act with urgency and we must take big, bold steps.

In December 2019, a group of MWF members gathered at Simmons College to discuss what was possible and assemble a leadership team to drive the work. The Boston Foundation granted funding to begin the project and Megan Costello came on board to manage the initiative in February of 2020.

# OUR WORK IN 2020

The group focused on three major accomplishments:

- 1.) Laying the groundwork
- 2.) Outreach and employer recruitment
- 3.) Launching Wage Equity Now (2021)

Phase one and two have been the bulk of the work this year. In March 2020, when the coronavirus pandemic put much of the world in a pause phase, we determined that this work was more important than ever and that we must keep going. Like the rest of the world, we shifted to make it work.

## PHASE 1: THE GROUNDWORK

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Phase one was dedicated to developing the scope of work, identifying coalition partners, naming and branding the project, developing data questions, creating a slide deck and other relevant materials to explain the project, and building a website.

## COALITION PARTNERS

In order to ensure we were being inclusive and not reinventing the wheel, Wage Equity Now connected with a number of organizations who support our goal and mission. The role of these partners is to know about this project, host briefing sessions for their members on this project and make introductions to other employers to participate where appropriate.



## DATA QUESTIONS

The leadership team developed the data questions we are asking employers to report. It's important to note that we have kept this limited and simple for now, but are open to this changing and growing for the future. We were intentional about including both gender and race because we know that the raw wage gaps for women of color are even greater. We are working with employers and our partners to understand if these are the best questions to ask. Below are the data questions we will be asking employers to report:

All Male Employees

All White Employees

All White Male Employees

VERSUS

All Female Employees

All Employees of Color

Black Male & Female Employees

Latinx Male & Female Employees

White Female Employees

## NAMING AND BRANDING

Special thanks to MWF President Judy Habib and her firm KHJ Brand Activation who developed the name, logo, and branding guidelines for this project. We selected Wage Equity Now (WEN) to give a sense of urgency to our mission. The logo and branding can be seen below.



## SUPPORTING MATERIALS

Wage Equity Now created a presentation and supporting materials to simply and easily explain the raw wage gap and why it's important. We also developed a question and answer document and a contract for employers to sign once they've agreed to report their data publicly.

## WEBSITE

Any good project must have a good website. [WageEquityNow.com](http://WageEquityNow.com) was created this summer to explain our project, recruit employers, and raise funds as we head into our next year.



## PHASE 2: RECRUITMENT

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While phase one built a foundation, phase two involved outreach to employers and developing a fundraising strategy. Several key lessons learned during phase two shaped our agenda for 2021.

## EMPLOYER OUTREACH

We learned the most this year from the discussions with employers. We reached out to over 100 employers. Almost half agreed to meet. This outreach to get employers to commit to public reporting was difficult. Yet the exercise gave us good intelligence about employers. We relied heavily on our contacts within the MWF community for employer outreach, and also worked with several major business organizations to identify key targets.

Our conclusions were...

1

**We need to help employers understand what the raw wage gaps are, why they matter, and how this is different from equal pay for equal work.**

Thanks to the great work of many organizations in Massachusetts and in the aftermath of the equal pay law passed in 2016, employers understand and are working more diligently to ensure equal pay for the same and similar jobs. Employers struggled to understand that measuring the raw wage gaps is not about equal pay for equal work, but rather about the difference in average overall pay between groups even though this is the measure reported by the U.S. Department of Labor for over 50 years.

2

**Employers are hesitant to publicly report their wage data.**

They especially do not want to be the first. Some employers may be more inclined to report publicly if others in their industry do, too. Several employers expressed support and interest in our project but wanted to know who else from their industry would also be participating.

3

**Employers worry about bad PR especially with regard to their raw racial wage gaps.**

Several employers shared their data privately with us. The raw gender wage gaps were either on par with the average gender wage gaps from the Boston Women's Workforce Council (gaps of 20 to 30 cents), or in some cases, they were better than the BWWC data. The racial wage gaps were either on par with the average gaps from the BWWC or worse. This confirmed for us that we were right to insist from the beginning to ask for data by both gender and race. From the small private sample we saw, the raw wage gaps for women of color are worse than the gaps for white women.

4

**An insufficient number of employers volunteered to publicly report their gender and racial wage gaps in 2021.**

After contacting 100 employers and holding discussions with half of them, the number of employers that would voluntarily report both wage gaps publicly in 2021 was insufficient to introduce Wage Equity Now in January 2021 as planned.



## SUSTAINABILITY

Closing the raw wage gap is a bold vision that will take time. We're in this for the long haul. We received grants from the Boston Foundation and the EOS Foundation which covered expenses for the first year. We are in the process of pursuing additional long-term funding opportunities in 2021.

## PHASE 3: THE YEAR AHEAD

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The lessons from our discussions with employers led to the following direction in 2021:

- 1.) Filing legislation and building a coalition to support its passage.
- 2.) Continuing to raise funds through grants and our Founders' Circle.
- 3.) Identifying employers in Massachusetts and targeting them for public reporting.
- 4.) Continuing to educate employers and the public on the importance of closing the raw wage gap.

We accomplished a lot in 2020. In 10 months, we moved from an open question to the beginning of a movement. There is more work to do in 2021 and we look forward to working with our partners to make it happen.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## SPECIAL THANKS

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To learn more about Wage Equity Now, become a member of the Founders' Circle, or sign on to publish your wage data, please visit:

**WAGEEQUITYNOW.COM**

