

Expanding the Workforce for Women

The Expanding the Workforce Model (ETW) is a labour market intervention that aims to improve access to employment opportunities for women who have been out of the workforce for long periods of time or who have never worked. In addition it also provides a service to employers through expansion and development of the available workforce.

Since the Partnerships establishment in 1991, it has been engaged in developing and delivering a range of services designed to tackle long-term unemployment and social exclusion. It was in the context of a changed labour force, characterised by labour shortages, skills shortages and persistent unemployment among certain parts of the Northside Partnership catchment area, that the Partnership decided to co-ordinate and pilot an ETW Model with a group of women returners.

From a skills perspective, the Expanding the Workforce Model is designed to address two issues. Firstly, it has the potential to improve labour shortages by bringing women on home duties and unemployed women into the workforce, thereby providing participating companies with additional potential staff. Secondly, through ongoing intervention that is tailored to meet the needs of target groups, the model improves the employability prospects for women who have no previous employment history or who have been out of the workforce for long periods of time.

The success of this approach was acknowledged by the establishment by FAS of a national programme called Gateway Programme for Women, which is modeled on the Partnership's experiences of developing and implementing the ETW model for Women.