



THE FREEDOM TO EXPLORE AND ENJOY A NEW CAREER: INSIGHTS FROM MLICCI AND MCH WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION'S 2024 "EARN AND LEARN" PARTNERSHIP

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INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Low-Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI) partnered with Moore Community House Women in Construction (MCH WinC) to pilot a Women in Construction General Industry class in May 2024, in which participants earned an hourly wage during training for the first time.

For low-income women and particularly for single moms, pursuing training & education is next to impossible without support services. Without program supports like child care and transportation assistance, a single mom's ability to participate in training is severely diminished.

MLICCI is a non-profit policy advocacy organization working since 1998 to make child care more affordable, to improve single moms' outcomes in the state labor market and to make the public safety net work for women and families. MLICCI launched Employment Equity for Single Moms (EESM) in 2020

to create a service model for single moms that brings together the resources offered by Mississippi’s workforce development systems and Mississippi’s federal child care subsidy system. EESM has established a case management team, working with many partners across the state to connect single moms to child care and to pathways to employment in higher-wage work. From this work, MLICCI has learned many lessons, including single moms’ need to earn higher wages to afford child care and to achieve economic security.

Most commonly, single moms are unable to quit low-wage work because they cannot afford the loss of wages to enter training & education. This is a significant barrier that leaves countless low-income women and single moms in Mississippi unable to take advantage of training opportunities for jobs that pay higher wages in industries that need greater representation of women workers. MLICCI and MCH WinC’s Earn & Learn partnership is designed to provide a workable solution to this systemic problem.

MCH WinC is a Department of Labor grantee and a nationally recognized best practice pre-apprenticeship model, preparing women for jobs in general construction, skilled craft trades and advanced manufacturing. The program’s focus on moving women into non-traditional, yet high-paying career pathways proactively disrupts patterns of occupational gender segregation, which is a driver of the overall gender wage gap between prime working-age women and men.ⁱ MCH WinC is creating opportunities for women to enter jobs that are traditionally male-dominated. Gender occupational segregation exists when one gender group is over- or underrepresented across occupations. Jobs in skilled craft trades, for instance, are typically dominated by men. While many of these jobs require certifications and specialized training, a large portion of jobs do not require a 2- or 4-year degree, yet they represent high-wage opportunities in Mississippi. MCH WinC provides these certifications and training, *and*, critically, MCH WinC provides wrap-around support services, including child care and transportation assistance, and case management services designed to reduce any barriers that participants face as they enter and complete training and move into additional training, apprenticeship or employment.

“Because of these programs and my support system, I was able to finish my class and build a better future for me and my children.” - 2024 MCH WinC Graduate

The combination of strategies utilized by MCH WinC in the 2024 Earn & Learn class— a focus on high-wage, non-traditional employment for women, child care assistance, transportation assistance and an hourly wage during training – is an effective and holistic strategy designed to help women and single mother-headed families achieve sustainable economic security.

OVERVIEW OF REPORT FINDINGS

This report offers findings and insights from an MCH WinC participant survey, data about women and single moms in Mississippi’s labor force and supporting evidence for an “Earn while you Learn” model as a solution for single moms stuck in low-wage work unable to enter training or education without wage replacement in the form of earnings or flexible and adequate stipends.

While a significant number of participants indicate that child care, transportation assistance and the hourly wage each made it possible to participate, a higher concentration view their program participation as primarily contingent on the hourly wage they received. Among single mom participants only, more than 56% indicated they could not participate without the hourly wage, nearly 44% said they could not participate without child care assistance and 50% of single mom participants indicated they could not participate without transportation assistance. Notably, a significant portion of participants who were employed prior to participation were able to quit low-wage work to participate. Approximately 60% of participants employed prior to enrolling were able to quit low-wage employment to attend MCH WinC training.

WOMEN AND SINGLE MOMS THROUGHOUT MISSISSIPPI NEED PATHWAYS TO LIVING WAGE EMPLOYMENT



In 2022, Mississippi’s labor force participation rate for women ages 20-64 with children below 18 was higher than national and surrounding states’ averagesⁱⁱ. Labor force participation for all women ages 20 to 64 with children below 18 was 75.9%.ⁱⁱⁱ Of the 97,264 single mom-headed families with children below 18, an estimated 78,713 were in the labor force, or 80.9%, in 2022.^{iv} Despite Mississippi mothers’ labor force participation rate exceeding national and neighboring-state averages, Mississippi women working full-time in 2022 earned less in weekly wages than women in any other state^v. But the reality is that women’s wages are typically lower than men’s nationally and in most occupational categories because women are concentrated in low-wage work and face gender wage discrimination in the workforce.

Forty-two percent of all children below age 18 in Mississippi live with a single parent and more than 80% of those children live with a single female. That’s an estimated 229,504 children (below age 18) living with a single female head of household in 2022.^{vi} Single-mom headed families in our state experienced poverty at an alarming rate of 42.2% in 2022—significantly higher than the overall family poverty rate of 21.7%.^{vii} A 2023 national comparison found that Mississippi’s rate of single mom households was the highest in the nation.^{viii}

Mississippi women are concentrated in low-wage work – our state has the 2nd highest share of women in low-paying jobs in the nation, according to a 2023 report.^{ix} Of 155,492 Mississippians working in the lowest-paying 40 occupations, nearly 70% or about 108,000 of these workers are women. This intractable and low-paying job market for women and single moms makes child care costs even more unaffordable. In 2024, the median center-based child care cost in Mississippi for 1 infant was \$625 per

month and for 1 toddler was \$585 per month for full-time care^x. Single-female headed household median income was \$27,513 in 2022, meaning that child care costs for just one infant take up an immediate 27% of gross earnings and for moms with two young children, more than half of gross earnings go to child care costs, on average (53%)^{xi}. A holistic strategy for women and single moms must include career pathways into higher-paying work that take into account the wages they need to earn to support their family while they learn new skills, the supports they need like affordable child care and transportation to make it all possible, and employer needs in the areas they live so their efforts lead to an available and better job. Women and single moms can be better-supported by enrolling in training & education that offers a pathway out of low-wage work and into a high-wage career in non-traditional occupations.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION IN MISSISSIPPI AND NON-TRADITIONAL WORK AS AN OPPORTUNITY

Women in Mississippi’s labor force are employed overwhelmingly in occupations with median earnings below the MIT Living Wage standard. According to the MIT Living Wage calculator, one parent with 1 child living in Mississippi and working full-time needs to earn \$31.50 per hour to afford costs of living and to avoid hardship (\$65,520 annually) and anything less than \$9.83 per hour is a poverty wage, while the state’s minimum wage remains \$7.25.^{xii} This calculation takes costs like child care, transportation and healthcare into account. By this measure, well over half (55.2%) of all women workers in Mississippi are employed in occupations with median earnings less than the Living Wage for one single adult (\$41,371). **However, an overwhelming 89.8% of all women workers in Mississippi are employed in occupations in which median earnings are lower than a Living Wage for a single parent with one child (occupations in which median earnings are lower than \$65,520 annually).**^{xiii}

Because of the wage and other program supports provided, MCH WinC’s 2024 Earn & Learn pilot allowed some employed women and single moms to leave low-wage jobs to pursue education and certifications in the trades. Common occupations participants exited include personal care and service jobs, janitorial services, food service and delivery jobs and healthcare support occupations. The training and credentials they received through MCH WinC will allow them to get jobs in construction and in the trades – jobs that are traditionally dominated by men, often do not require a college degree, but often pay a higher wage than jobs dominated by women requiring the same level of education.

Statewide Snapshot of Occupations MCH WinC Participants are Exiting to Pursue MCH WinC Training

| Selected Occupations | Median Earnings for All Workers | Percent of Workers who are Women | Number of Workers who are Women |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Food preparation and serving related occupations | \$16,259.00 | 58.30% | 39,621 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|
| Healthcare support occupations | \$25,018.00 | 93.20% | 35,205 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|--------|--------|

MCH WinC participants are women and single moms leaving occupations in which most workers are women, where there are high numbers of women workers and where wages are low compared to the male-dominated occupations in which they are seeking to be employed.

In many instances, women will seek short-term non-degree training to gain credentials needed for traditional occupations, such as healthcare support occupations. However, the explicit goal of the MCH WinC model is to support a participant’s journey from this low-wage, gender-segregated work into higher-wage work, where women are significantly underrepresented yet better-paid. For example, 93% of Mississippi’s workers in healthcare support occupations are women and median earnings are \$25,018. MCH WinC students are pursuing training in non-traditional work to earn more with short-term non-degree training. Workers in construction/extraction occupations in Mississippi earn more than \$40,000 annually, yet only 2.3% of workers are women and only 1,450 women work in construction statewide, compared to more than 35,000 women working in low-paying healthcare support occupations. A pathway to non-traditional work can also be a route to higher earnings and greater economic security.

Statewide Snapshot of Occupations Students Pursue Following MCH WinC Training and Credential Attainment

| Selected Occupations | Median Earnings for All Workers | Percent of Workers who are Women | Number of Workers who are Women |
|--|--|---|--|
| Construction and extraction occupations | \$40,178.00 | 2.30% | 1,450 |
| Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations | \$51,707.00 | 1.60% | 848 |

THE EARN & LEARN MODEL

Earn & learn represents an effective approach to education and training for adults stuck in low-wage work who can benefit from employer and sector-specific training or education for higher-paying work, but who are unable to go without wages during a short- to mid-term training period. This model serves as a particularly effective strategy for upskilling under-employed and unemployed women and single moms. The “Earn” component refers to a wage or a stipend provided to a participant that can be used flexibly, while the “Learn” component refers to the curriculum, the work experience, the training, and credentials that will be gained through participation.

Earn & Learn as an adult learner strategy is supported by a growing body of evidence. Stipends, earnings, wages – whatever it is called and however it is structured – programs that financially support adult learners result in better outcomes. While there are some recent examples of Earn & Learn opportunities in Mississippi and growing interest, they are uncommon and not targeted to single moms with care responsibilities. Some examples of this approach include on-the-job training and stipends for participants in employer-driven sector-based training, but these opportunities are often sporadic and limited. Students in non-degree training or education are not eligible for Pell or other sources of federal financial aid, so adult learners typically have limited options for cost-of-living support for non-degree training & education programs.

“I was able to attend school and not worry about how will I be able to attend this and complete it. It’s tremendously necessary. I now have a new world of credentials. I have certifications I never thought I’d be capable of. I’m now NCCER [certified]...I’m a forklift operator, scissor lift operator, certified in power tools, certified in hand tools, OSHA 10 construction, I’m OSHA 10 general industry. Great communication skills, material handling, basic safety, employability, construction drawings and even construction math.” – MCH WinC Graduate



Investing in Earn & Learn results not only in better outcomes for adult learners, but also yields a high economic return. In a recent study of the impact of providing cost of living stipends to non-degree seeking adult training participants, the retention rate was double that of participants who did not receive the stipend. Those receiving the stipend had a statistically

significant higher graduation rate, higher certification completion rate and a higher 4-month job attainment rate compared to participants not receiving the cost-of-living stipend.^{xiv} The study calculated that the economic return on investment was five-fold. Researchers estimated that a \$500,000 investment in wage replacement stipends for the study’s learners would result in \$2.28 million *more* in graduate earnings, based on an 80% employment rate. This increased income generated by Earn & Learn participants produces even more direct and indirect economic activity and tax revenue. Some major U.S. cities have invested millions in remaining ARPA funds in Earn & Learn models, and cities like San Antonio are investing hundreds of millions in evidence-based career pathways that incorporate cost-of-living stipends or wages. This kind of investment in career pathways for low-income women and single moms is an investment in Mississippi’s future.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 2024 MCH WINC “EARN & LEARN” CLASS

MCH WinC’s general industry training lasted 8 weeks and led to industry-recognized credentials in general construction, including NCCER curriculum, OSHA safety, equipment operating certifications and a range of certifications needed to enter general construction employment, apprenticeship opportunities with industry partners and additional training with community college and other training partners. The MCH WinC program offers additional supports for job placement with employer and industry partners, such as local ship building and ancillary industries, and support services for pursuing additional credentials and preparation for apprenticeships offered by employers or community colleges.

The MCH WinC program provides payment for child care costs and transportation costs. The program’s support services are designed to provide meaningful support tailored to each student’s needs. The program allows parents to select child care providers of their choice.

“The fact that you guys allowed us to pick our child care center that we [were] comfortable with, and made us feel sure that our children [were] safe is a true blessing. To earn and learn is a relief to a mother that can’t get around or work without her children being situated. I am truly honored to say this experience was one of the best things to ever happen to me.” - MCH WinC Graduate



For the first time, MCH WinC offered wages to participants through a partnership with MLICCI. Twenty-three (23) students earned \$12 per hour for 30 hours of classroom training per week and were paid a one-time lump sum at the conclusion of training that was equivalent to two weeks of earnings.

MCH WinC facilitated a formalized employment arrangement for students with a local employment agency to facilitate wage payment. Because a wage was advertised ahead of class enrollment to potential students living in the community, single mom participants were able to participate and quit low-wage work with the promise of a wage during training. Single moms who would otherwise not be able to take advantage of the training opportunity without wage replacement enrolled and completed training. Program supports also included child care assistance and weekly transportation stipends. Through surveying participants, MLICCI is learning that when MCH WinC participants are informed about and receive an hourly wage in addition to child care and transportation assistance, they are enabled to leave low-wage work to enroll in and complete training for jobs offering higher wages. MCH WinC’s training is aimed at preparing women for these high-wage, non-traditional occupations.

WAGE MATTERS

MLICCI is documenting and studying the design, implementation, and effectiveness of providing a wage to participants during training. Specifically, through years of work engaging with and providing child care services to single mothers and working closely with child care providers who serve them, MLICCI has observed that single moms are unable to quit their current job to enroll in training or education, even when it will result in a higher-wage job upon completion. Women and single moms are disproportionately employed in low-wage work, yet they cannot go without wages. This leaves them at a severe disadvantage in the labor market. They are unable to take advantage of opportunities that are low-cost or free offering short-term, non-degree training or education and they miss out on higher-paying employment opportunities as a result. MLICCI believes this obstacle can be ameliorated if women and single mom participants earn a wage during training.

MLICCI distributed a survey to class participants to gain insights on the importance of support services, participant perceptions of the program supports provided during training, barriers faced by students to entering training and education and experiences with previous postsecondary education or training. Students received information about the survey, confidentiality measures and opportunities to forego participation in the survey. Twenty-three participants completed the survey and provided open-ended responses. Surveys were translated for Spanish speaking students with assistance from the MCH WinC multi-lingual instructional staff. The survey was created with a third-party electronic service (SurveyMonkey) and a link was made available to students.



Most participants (69.5%) are single moms and 75% of students are the primary earner for their family. MCH WinC students associate program supports they received with lower stress and with a sense of relief allowing them to embark on a journey into the skilled craft trades. Through a series of structured questions, survey responses indicate that participants most strongly associate the hourly wage they receive with their ability to participate in the class, but ultimately the hourly wage, child care and transportation assistance are all strongly associated with participants' ability to participate in and complete training.

STUDENTS EXITING EMPLOYMENT TO ATTEND MCH WINC TRAINING

Program supports allowed some students to leave low-wage employment to pursue the training opportunity. Just over half of the class was employed before enrolling in training and a little less than one-third of students remained employed during the 8-week training. About 60% of students who were employed prior to enrolling in the 8-week training were able to quit employment to pursue training because of the hourly wage provided. Participants who quit work to enroll in training left jobs paying \$11 per hour, on average. Students who were unemployed before entering training had been most commonly unemployed for only a few months, with a small number experiencing long-term

unemployment. Of single mother participants, well over 60% were employed prior to enrolling in WinC. Those moms who remain employed during training were earning \$12.85 per hour, on average. The types of jobs women quit to participate in the MCH WinC Earn & Learn class included primarily janitorial jobs, food service and delivery jobs and healthcare support occupations.

Mississippi Low-Income Childcare Initiative
in partnership with
WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION
A PROGRAM OF MOORE COMMUNITY HOUSE

**WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION
EARN & LEARN
TRAINING**

Unlock your potential! Join us for specialized training in industry practices, safety protocols, and top-notch skills. This isn't just training – it's a pathway to successful and fulfilling careers in construction!
Earn while you learn! This one-time opportunity offers **\$12 on hour and stipends** while enrolled in training, empowering women and mothers to achieve greater financial independence.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Weekly pay - \$12 per hour
- Child care assistance
- Job placement assistance

CLASS DATE & TIME
May 6-June 28
In-person
Monday-Friday
9am-2pm
Participants commit daily to an extra hour for independent study outside scheduled sessions.
Application deadline: March 8, 2024

REGISTER NOW

recruiting.winc@moorecommunityhouse.org 228-207-8285 moorecommunityhouse.org/winc

OBSERVATIONS FROM MCH WINC PROGRAM INSTRUCTORS AND STAFF

MCH WinC staff observed a notable increase in program interest and applications following the promotion of an hourly wage in outreach materials disseminated prior to class enrollment. Although child care assistance and transportation assistance had been advertised in previous classes, this was the first to offer and advertise a wage. Staff observed that more applications were

received for this class and prospective student interest in the class seemed to be noticeably stronger. Staff associated this increased interest with the wage being offered to students. Though, MCH WinC typically receives strong interest in all General Industry classes and generally receives more applications than they can accommodate.

During the Earn & Learn class, staff observed improvements in student retention and attendance. Some staff associated this improved retention and attendance with the wage provided to students. There were 27 participants who entered the program and 23 completed the course of study and graduated with credentials. While MCH WinC staff attribute student success to the remarkable work ethic and commitment of their participants and to their dedicated instructors and staff, they also see the

combination of support services as making it possible for many students to complete and specifically they perceive the hourly wage as both filling a critical financial gap for students as well as providing a positive incentive for maintaining daily class attendance, meaningful participation and successful completion.

PARTICIPANT PERCEPTIONS OF SUPPORT SERVICES AND THEIR IMPACT ON PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

MLICCI’s survey asked participants a series of questions designed to identify perceptions of support services they received and the extent to which those support services influenced their ability to participate and enroll in the MCH WinC training program. It is not this report’s intention to suggest that one support service is more important than another.

In fact, it is clear that all three support services included in questioning – child care assistance, transportation stipend and hourly wage – are viewed by a large percent of participants as essential to their ability to participate in training. Participants found it difficult to prioritize one support service over another and this was clear in responses to multiple questions, which were a mix of structured multiple-choice and Likert Scale.

The Likert Scale question results indicate that participants, and particularly single mother participants, need all three supports to participate in full-time classroom training. While the three program supports included in questions are clearly seen by a significant percentage of students as being essential to their ability to participate, hourly wage as a program support received the highest rate of consensus indicating they “strongly agree” they could not participate in training if the program had not provided the hourly wage.

| Prompt: “I could <u>not</u> attend training if the program did <u>not</u> provide...” | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|
| Hourly Wage | 13.64% | 36.36% |
| Child Care Assistance | 17.39% | 26.09% |
| Transportation Stipend | 21.74% | 34.78% |

It is worth noting that all students received an hourly wage and a transportation stipend, but only single moms with young children, who are 69.5% of students, needed and received child care assistance. Yet, even among only single mom participants, the hourly wage received the highest consensus indicating they “strongly agree” (43.75%) that they could not participate without the hourly wage.

In response to another structured multiple-choice question, the survey results again indicate that the hourly wage provided to participants is viewed as the program support that makes participation possible for a significant proportion of students, with nearly half (48%) of all participants indicating that

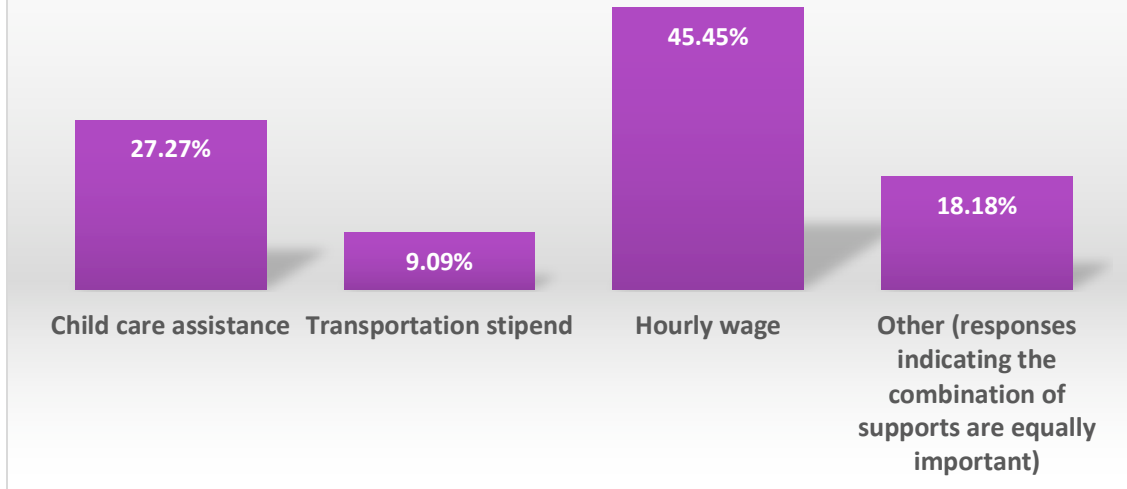
they would not be able to participate without the hourly wage provided. **Among single mom participants only, more than 56% indicated they could not participate without the hourly wage, nearly 44% said they could not participate without child care assistance and 50% of single mom participants indicated they could not participate without transportation assistance.** Based on these survey findings, we can infer that while support services offered through the program enable a significant percentage of all students to participate (about half), a higher rate of single mom participants views their enrollment in training as contingent on receiving these supports. This is evident from the higher rate of single mom participants reporting they would not be able to participate in the program in response to each support service question.

| Question: | Response: | Response: |
|--|----------------------------------|---|
| “Would you be able to participate if the program did <u>not</u> offer...” | NO (All Participants) | NO (Single Mom Participants) |
| Hourly Wage | 47.83% | 56.25% |
| Child Care Assistance | 34.78% | 43.75% |
| Transportation Stipend | 39.13% | 50% |

Finally, in response to a structured multiple choice question asking participants to indicate what support service they perceive as most important to their ability to participate in training, the hourly wage was viewed by the highest concentration of participants as most directly enabling their ability to participate. Different from the other two survey questions that asked the participant to indicate if the support service enabled them to participate, the below question forced participants to select what support they perceived as the *most* important.

Consistent with other responses, nearly half (45%) of total participants perceive the hourly wage as the primary driver of their ability to participate in training when asked to select the most important support service. A significant portion (18%) of students could not decide which support service was most important and instead responded “Other” and provided open-ended feedback most commonly expressing that each support service was equally important. As in other responses, variation was evident between overall responses and single mom responses. Single moms were evenly divided in the percent saying child care assistance and the hourly wage was the most important support they received, with 31.25% citing child care and the same percent citing the hourly wage as the most important, 25% indicating the combination of supports are equally important through “Other” and open-ended responses, and 6% citing transportation assistance as the most important support related to their ability to participate. This response from single mom participants demonstrates the importance of the combination of supports offered by MCH WinC for their ability to participate.

Which Women in Construction program support do you think is the most important for supporting your ability to participate in WinC training?

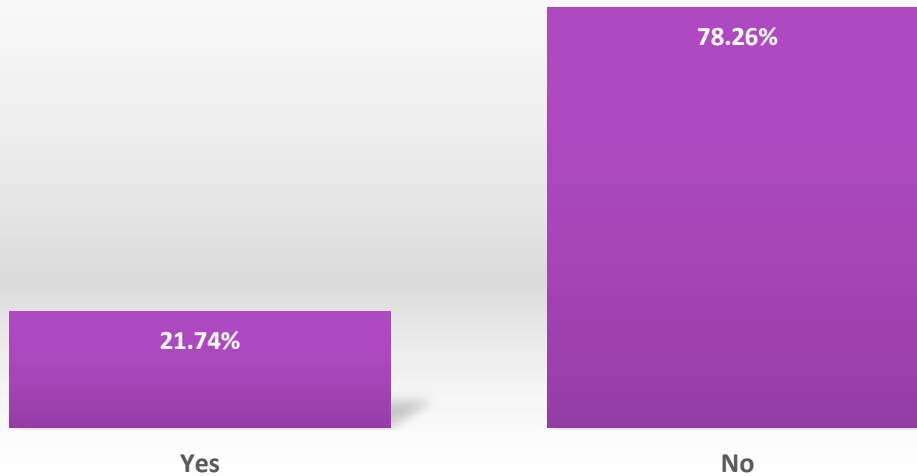


EXPERIENCE IN PREVIOUS EDUCATION & TRAINING

Providing this combination of support services allows women and single mothers to enroll in training opportunities for the first time. **Nearly 80% of participants had never participated in postsecondary training or education prior to their enrollment in MCH WinC.**

“This year has been a difficult year for me. I was in a dark place after having a baby. Then the passing of my mom. Learning about the program was a blessing and it gave me the opportunity to push myself to the next level and to be able to provide and to give my kids a better life. Being able to earn while learning was a lifesaver. Because of these programs and my support system, I was able to finish my class and build a better future for me and my children.” – MCH WinC Graduate

Prior to your participation in Women in Construction, have you participated or enrolled in training or education programs?

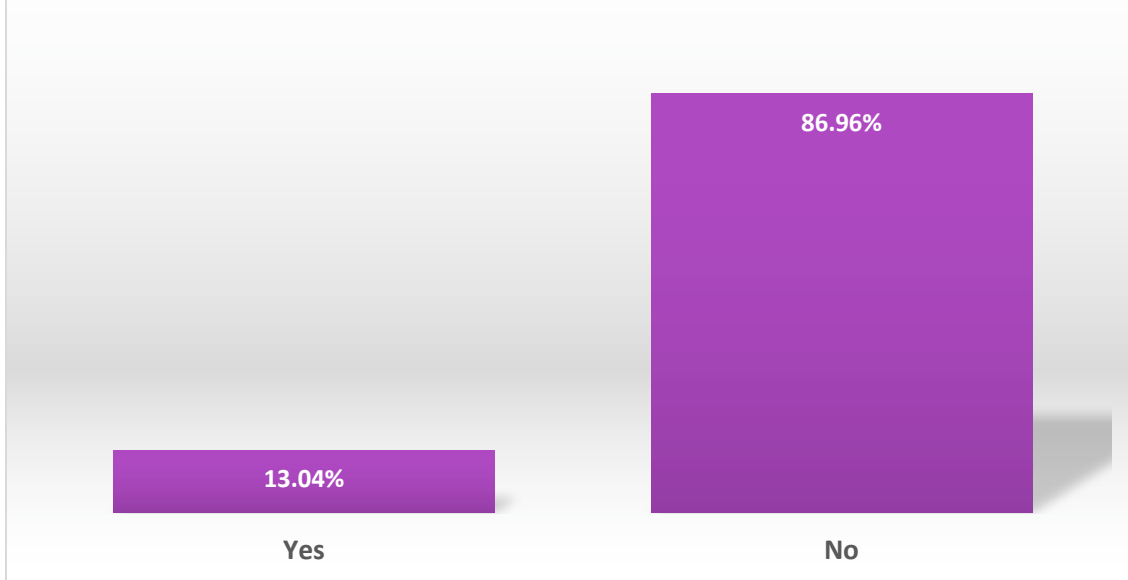


Participants identified multiple reasons they had not entered postsecondary training or education in the past. Most commonly, participants cited personal care responsibilities and the lack of child care, the inability to go without income to attend training, the costs and lack of transportation, obstacles in their personal lives, and a lack of personal time and resources to pursue training and education opportunities. Those students for whom English is not their primary language cited a lack of translated information and materials about opportunities in communities as a reason for not participating in training and education. Some participants cited a lack of information and knowledge about opportunities.

For the small number of participants who had previously enrolled in training and education programs, very few gained employment in the occupations for which they received previous short-term postsecondary training or education.

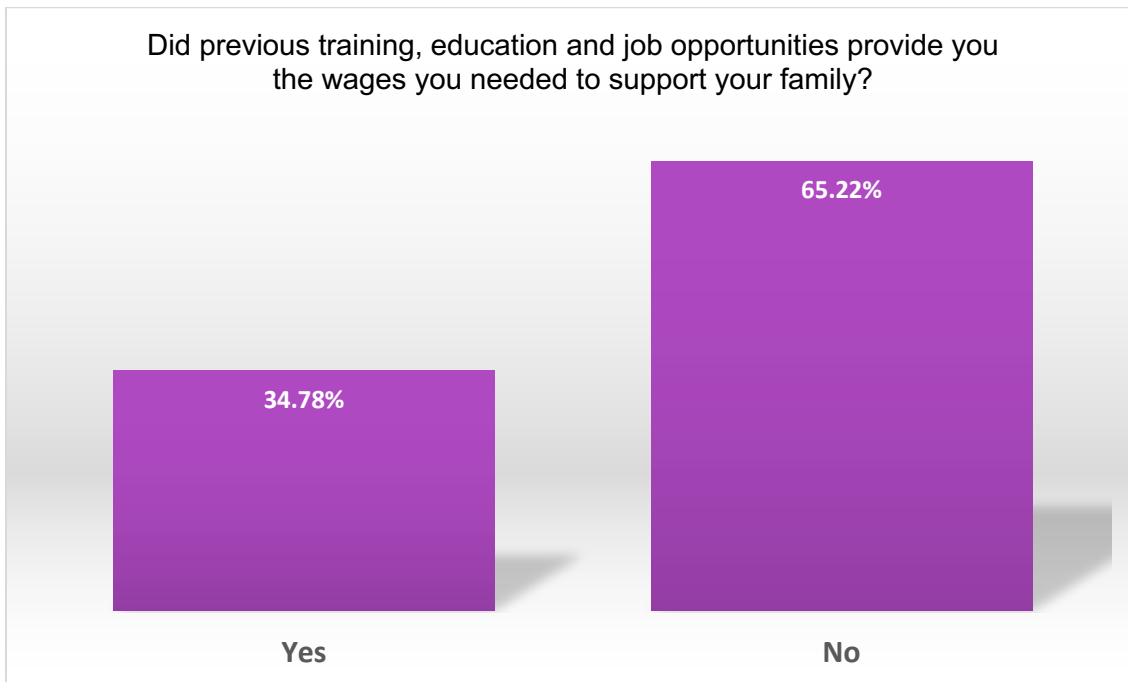


Did you get a job in the occupation you had previously received training or education for?



Nearly two-thirds of WinC participants who had received previous training & education reported that wages they earned after training were inadequate to support their family.

Did previous training, education and job opportunities provide you the wages you needed to support your family?

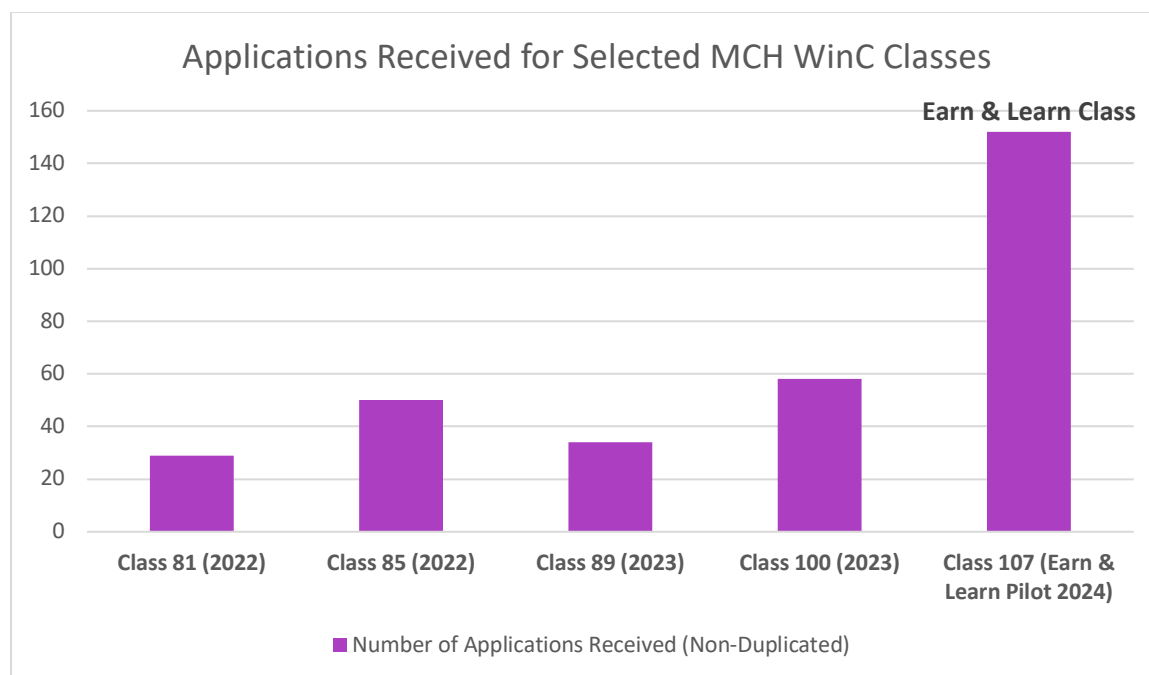


EARN & LEARN APPLICATION AND RETENTION RATES COMPARED TO PREVIOUS MCH WINC CLASSES

Data collected during MCH WinC’s “Earn & Learn” class suggests a notable uptick in program interest as measured by the number of applications received following marketing and outreach efforts that included advertising an hourly wage as a new program support, as well as child care assistance and job placement assistance upon training completion.

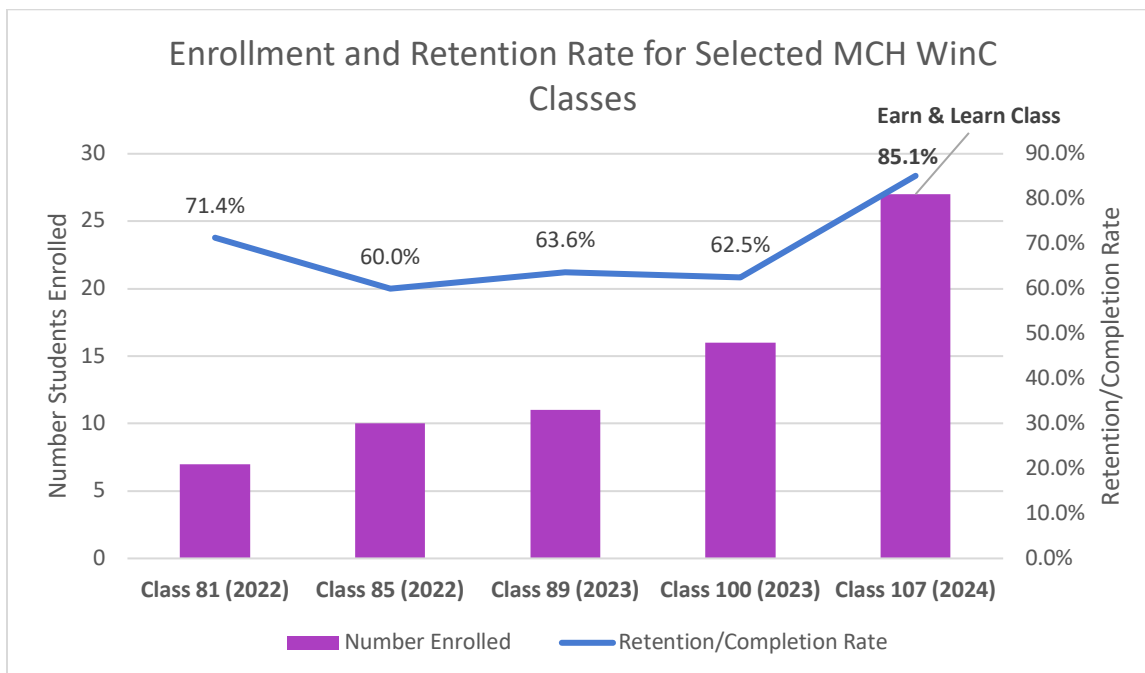
MCH WinC staff provided recent class data to compare the number of applications received for the 2024 Earn & Learn Pilot class to previous recent classes deemed comparable in terms of training offered, target class size, wraparound supports including child care assistance, job placement and other services the program typically offers like transportation stipends. The difference in outreach material promoting enrollment in the 2024 General Industry class was specifically the addition of the words “Earn & Learn training” and “Weekly pay - \$12 per hour”. The material stated, “This one-time opportunity offers \$12 an hour and stipends while enrolled in training, empowering women and mothers to achieve greater financial independence.”

MCH WinC experienced a 162% increase in applications received for the Earn & Learn pilot class, compared to their previous comparable class. MCH WinC outreach and recruitment staff attribute a significant portion of this increased application rate to the hourly wage advertised as part of training participation. Staff reported that some students who were previously interested in the class and eligible, but unable to participate, enrolled after learning about the wage offered because they were unable to go without wages during prior training opportunities. Staff reported continued prospective student interest in future Earn & Learn opportunities following the pilot class. WinC staff observed that the wage offered during training “brought more people to the table.”



WinC staff observed that some students expressed a sense of relief during training participation that they attributed to the wage they were receiving. While class enrollment had increased in number over the last several 8-week General Industry classes during and following the Pandemic, data collected during the Earn & Learn class indicates a significant increase in enrollment and in student retention/completion rates. **Earn & Learn class participants experienced a retention rate of 85%, compared to an average of 64.4% over the last four comparable classes offering the same curriculum and support services except for the hourly wage during training.**

According to WinC instructional staff feedback, the hourly wage offered during training directly improved student daily attendance and retention and completion. Staff reported that the hourly wage attracted a wider range of women and some who had not been interested in construction careers in the past were drawn to a new career option.



CONCLUSION

MLICCI and MCH WinC's partnership provided a combination of services that resulted in a high training completion rate. The model enabled low-wage working single mothers to quit work while not worrying about the immediate loss of wages, child care and transportation costs, and to focus on training for non-traditional occupations that provide higher wages and an opportunity for a better future.

During the occasion of MCH WinC's graduation ceremony for the Earn & Learn class, one MCH WinC student reflected on her experience and shared her feelings of optimism, transformational change, personal agency, and the "freedom" that this model gave her:



"Although I have a great support system, my nana and my momma would not be able to watch my 3 children...had they [MCH WinC] not made it as easy as it was as far as getting options without limitations, I couldn't be here much less finish as of today. They allowed the freedom of not only me, but my children to explore and enjoy. I hope moving forward, the Women in Construction classes become larger than what it already is because we as women can achieve and conquer. Without these wonderful women, I wouldn't be as proud and comfortable with not only myself but what I truly want to do...and I will encourage other women to further their wants in the trades world. What a great time to be a woman in construction." – MCH WinC Graduate

The freedom to explore and enjoy a new career pathway, as this participant observed, depends on how a program is designed. When the totality of a woman's and a single mom's needs are addressed and built into job training program designs, she can achieve economic freedom. For women and single moms, that means providing a wage, child care assistance, transportation assistance, case management and training for occupations that pay a living wage.



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ENDNOTES

ⁱ Kim A. Weeden, "Occupational Segregation," *State of the Union 2019*, Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality, <https://inequality.stanford.edu/publications/pathway/state-union-2019>.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Labor, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/wb/data/womens-labor-force-participation-rate-presence-age-of-children>. The data referenced is for all females ages 20-64 with children below age 18.

ⁱⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S2301, females ages 20-64 with own children below 18 years of age in Mississippi.

^{iv} U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates, Table S2302, female head of family with own children below age 18 and no spouse present in Mississippi.

^v "Women's Earnings in 2022," *Bureau of Labor Statistics* (2022), https://www.bls.gov/regions/southeast/news-release/womensearnings_mississippi.htm.

^{vi} U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-year estimates, Table S0901, Children under 18 years in households.

vii U.S. Census Bureau, 2022 American Community Survey 1-year estimate, Families with Related Children under 18, Table S1702.

viii “States with the Most Single Parent Households,” (July 23, 2023), *WGNO*, <https://wgno.com/news/louisiana/states-with-the-most-single-parent-households/>. (Accessed July 23, 2024).

ix “Hard Work is Not Enough,” National Women’s Law Center (July 2023), <https://nwlc.org/resource/when-hard-work-is-not-enough-women-in-low-paid-jobs/>.

x “2024 Mississippi Child Care Market Rate Survey: Final Report”, *Mississippi Department of Human Services*, June 2024, pg. 29, <https://www.mdhs.ms.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Mississippi-Child-Care-Market-Rate-Survey-2024.pdf>

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xiii MLICCI’s calculations of 2022 American Community Survey Data on all workers in major occupational categories by sex and median earnings using the MIT Living Wage standard.

xiv “Stipends and Skills Training: A Winning Combination,” (December 2022), *Per Scholas and SkillUp*, <https://perscholas.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/POLICY-BRIEF-Stipends-and-Skills-Training-A-Winning-Combination-12.6.22.pdf>.