

Original URL: <http://www.jsonline.com/bym/news/oct03/175550.asp>

## Women's group gets funding for research

### Study to examine state's largest public firms for gender diversity in leadership

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**Last Updated: Oct. 7, 2003**

Milwaukee Women inc, the year-old professional women's group that aims to spotlight the progress of Wisconsin women in the executive ranks and boardrooms, has gotten funding for research into the status of women at the state's 50 biggest public companies.

Brico Fund will finance more than half of the \$48,000 cost of the study, and 11 local companies will fund much of the rest, said Sharon Canter, Milwaukee Women inc's chairwoman. Brico is a Milwaukee foundation that focuses on women's issues and environmental matters.

The Public Policy Forum, a local research organization that is conducting the research, will share the cost of office services for the project, Canter said.

The research will show how well women, including minority women, are represented on the boards of directors and in the executive suites of the state's biggest companies. Researchers will use the definition of corporate officer developed by Catalyst, a New York City non-profit research and advisory organization that works to advance women in business.

Milwaukee Women inc's report also will include a cost-benefit analysis of gender diversity to determine whether it affects financial outcomes.

The result will be a report Milwaukee Women inc members view as a "blueprint of gender inclusion," Canter said.

An interim report based on Public Policy Forum's research will be available in mid-October. The full report will be available in mid-January, Canter said.

#### Milwaukee Women inc

#### Quotable

“ We're not going away. And more importantly, the business community is recognizing that, and appears to want to do something about it. ”

- Sharon Canter,  
chairwoman of  
Milwaukee Women  
inc

#### Who's Involved

Milwaukee Women inc got off to a slow start in fall 2002 when it presented flawed research in its first attempt to "hold the mirror up" to state companies. The group said its own research showed that nine of the 30 biggest public companies in Wisconsin had no female board members. In fact, two of those companies had female board members.

"We recognize that we needed a third-party, non-partisan, credible research organization to utilize the right kind of research methodology," Canter said.

Milwaukee Women inc initially approached Brico Fund about financing research done by Public Policy Forum. Brico agreed to finance the research but wanted corporate support within the community because it felt that would enhance the impact of the research, Canter said.

Brico Fund was formed in 1989 by Lynde Uihlein, the daughter of local philanthropist Jane Bradley Petit.

After talking with Brico Fund, Milwaukee Women inc approached 11 area companies about helping to fund the research, Canter said. All of the companies agreed to participate.

The 11 are: Associated Banc-Corp; Robert W. Baird & Co.; Cook & Franke; Foley & Lardner; Harley-Davidson Inc.; Journal Communications Inc., publisher of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel; Merchants & Manufacturers Bancorp.; Marshall & Ilsley Corp.; Michael Best & Friedrich; Quad/Graphics Inc.; and Rockwell Automation.

"We are in the process of budgeting and understanding costs for other factors related to the research so other companies can come on board," Canter said.

Milwaukee Women inc and Public Policy Forum will evaluate the effectiveness of their gender inclusion blueprint and update their data yearly, Canter said. They will distribute their findings through the Greater Milwaukee Committee, the Metropolitan Milwaukee Association of Commerce, Tempo, Professional Dimensions and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Workplace Diversity.

Public Policy Forum will moderate a workshop related to the interim report data Oct. 27 at the University of Wisconsin System's Wisconsin Economic Summit at the Midwest Airlines Center in downtown Milwaukee. The workshop panel will include Dennis J. Kuester and Paul Purcell, the top executives at Marshall & Ilsley and Baird, respectively, and other local executives.

"We're not going away," Canter said. "And more importantly, the business community is recognizing that, and appears to want to do something about it."

Eleven local firms have agreed to help finance research into **women's representation** on corporate boards and executive positions at **Wisconsin companies**.

Those firms are:

- ▣ Associated Banc-Corp
- ▣ Robert W. Baird & Co.
- ▣ Cook & Franke
- ▣ Foley & Lardner
- ▣ Harley-Davidson Inc.
- ▣ Journal Communications Inc.
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