

Women for Housing (WFH)

Providing a platform for career and business development within the housing and construction sectors

Empowerment Policies – Important Tools to Have in Your Toolbox

Elizabeth O’Leary (August 2007)

Those of us involved in the housing and construction industries should pause for a moment and reflect on the times we are living in. We are experiencing growth and change all around us and must take full advantage of opportunities to promote Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) and transformation in terms of gender in our industry. Economists continue to speak favourably of the national economy and the construction industry in particular. The construction industry is experiencing strong growth and opportunities for transformation are supported by government’s promotion of women at all levels of the economy and society.

The construction industry is by no means a dream world and all of us know there are enough challenges and frustrations for all. However, there are also enough opportunities for all! I am the first to say that construction is not for everyone. It is a difficult and often unwelcoming sector. But if this is where you have found your passion and you are up to the challenge there is no doubt that doors are beginning to open for women!

In any industry you must be equipped with the appropriate skills, tools and equipment. Many women entering the construction sector are looking to fast-track their business and career development. It *is* possible and we see it happening. Where there’s a will there’s a way! With the right attitude and determination anything is possible and you can increase your propensity to succeed by taking advantage of BEE empowerment policies and opportunities.

The DTI BEE Codes of Good Practice and the Construction Charter are important tools for anyone in the industry, but can be extremely valuable for women in particular. Over the next year I will focus this column on sharing advice and ideas on how to make BEE work for you! If you are proactive about it – whether big or small business, black or white – black economic empowerment policies and associated opportunities can work to your benefit. Socio-economic transformation is good for the country.

Many of you know that WFH was involved in the development of the Construction Charter and Scorecard. The Charter is currently going through the necessary legal process. An independent review has just been completed and the Integrated Management Committee that developed the Charter will now consider changes based on that review and the changes in the DTI’s BEE Codes of Good Practice. We will likely decide to align the Charter more closely with the DTI Codes – which is good for women!

Between now and the next edition of Building Women please visit www.thedti.gov.za/bee/beecodes.htm and familiarise yourself with the Codes. We’ll then get into more detail on the elements of the scorecard and look at how you can maximise your development in the sector by using these tools.