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For Immediate Release

The Women's Foundation of Colorado and Its STEM Coalition Release *Gender Equity in Colorado's STEM Industries: The Case for Focused Workforce Investment* for Companies that Want to Improve Their Bottom Lines

DENVER (Nov. 15, 2016) — **The Women's Foundation of Colorado** (WFCO) and its STEM Coalition, a group of leading Colorado employers and individuals committed to increasing STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) opportunities for Colorado women and girls, today released the report, *Gender Equity in Colorado's STEM Industries: The Case for Focused Workforce Investment*, to help companies that want to improve their bottom lines.

Research over the past decade has demonstrated consistently that companies that hire and retain a more inclusive workforce benefit in many ways, including improved operational and financial performance and increased innovation. Yet, while women make up 46 percent of the total Colorado workforce, they comprise less than a third of STEM workers.

"STEM-related occupations are projected to grow twice as fast as non-STEM occupations. Additionally, STEM jobs – across all occupations and levels of educational attainment – pay nearly double compared with the average salary, but not enough women are encouraged or prepared to pursue these careers," said Louise Myrland, Vice President of Community Initiatives and Investments at WFCO. "By providing this report, our hope is that Colorado STEM employers will understand the advantages of a diverse workforce and work to eliminate the barriers that keep women from entering and staying in STEM careers."

Not only do women enter STEM less often than men, they leave STEM careers more often. The report is a roadmap to help companies recruit, retain, and advance women in STEM. It lays out the advantages for companies that create a more inclusive environment, provides a framework for companies to lead change from within, and includes a comprehensive list of resources (ranging from case studies to policies to facilitators that companies can use to accelerate progress toward gender equity and inclusion.)

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WFCO and two founding co-chairs, Arrow Electronics and MWH Global, now part of Stantec, started the STEM Coalition in 2015 to establish opportunities for peer-to-peer learning related to gender equity in STEM.

“Gender equity is important to our company, and we trusted that this coalition would be a catalyst for the needed change in our industry and the business community. Partnering with other companies to share what we have learned and to learn from their experiences has been a valuable experience for our business – and we hope for them as well. This is a long-term journey and we congratulate WFCO for the work they have accomplished to date,” said Alan Krause, President, MWH, now part of Stantec, global operations.

The Coalition, which meets quarterly, has since grown to include CH2M, Goodbee & Associates, Lockheed Martin, QEP Resources, SSG MEP, Suncor Energy, Zayo Group, and Stephanie Copeland (former president with Zayo Group). In their efforts to support one another, the members identified the need for a guide that would help employees make the case for gender equity in their workplaces, and outline the steps to make it happen. They commissioned KP Advisors to prepare the report.

“It can be challenging for companies to navigate the complexities of inclusive hiring and professional development practices,” said Donna Tikkanen-Davis, Vice President of Human Resources at Arrow Electronics. “Arrow Electronics, along with the entire STEM Coalition, seeks best practices to ensure that women can thrive in our sector. We know that all Colorado companies can benefit from the indispensable resources we’ve identified, along with our own experiences and learnings, and so we packaged them in an easily accessible way.”

The report is available at wfco.org/STEM.

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Since 1987, The Women’s Foundation of Colorado has been and continues to be the only community foundation in our state dedicated to the economic self-sufficiency of women, girls, and their families. We harness collective passions and resources to leverage tools for systemic change, including research, advocacy, grantmaking, and leadership development.