

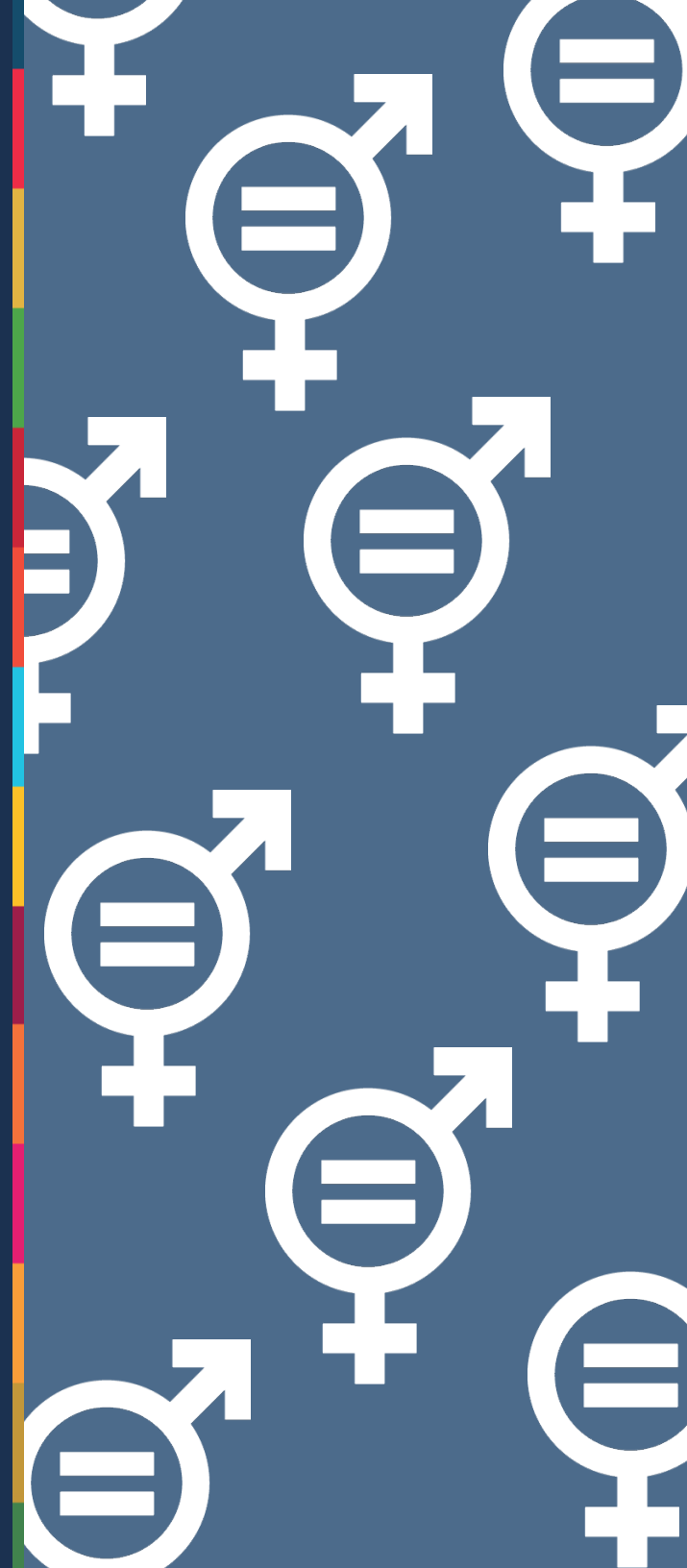


Global Compact
Network Canada

THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE C-SUITE IN CANADA

Gender Equality

— Leadership in the
Canadian Private Sector



THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE C-SUITE IN CANADA

One of the key aspects of the Gender Equality Leadership in the Canadian Private Sector project was deep collaboration with the private sector. Based on the insights resulting from this cooperation as well as our own extensive primary and secondary research, GCNC has developed a number of action-oriented steps that business leaders and the C-suite can take to continue to advance gender equality in the private sector.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIONS FOR GENDER EQUALITY LEADERSHIP

- **Demonstrate your commitment through bold and visible action.** Our company consultations have revealed that consistent involvement and engagement in gender equality initiatives are crucial factors for driving change and motivating others to follow suit.
- **Model the everyday characteristics needed to uphold an inclusive organizational culture.** Spotlight the inclusive actions of others to draw attention to those that are making a difference while also calling out actions that undermine inclusivity.

Inclusive leadership improves organizational performance, decision-making, and collaboration while also reducing employee absenteeism. (Source: [Harvard Business Review](#))

- **Facilitate equitable and inclusive meetings and events.** Ensure that women's voices are heard, encourage the participation of diverse personnel, and give credit where credit is due.
- **Voluntarily become a mentor or sponsor,** and actively seek out protégées with different backgrounds and experiences. If your organization does not have these programs, advocate for their establishment, participate in an informal capacity, or sponsor a pilot project.
- **Make personal use of flexible work arrangements,** especially parental leave, and encourage others to do the same regardless of their reason for using these options. Openly discuss why flexible work is a benefit to the business with managers who have the power to enforce the policies.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Claim ownership for gender equality** at your organization. Executive level commitment to advancing gender equality is an important first step, but the C-suite needs to define what gender equality looks like in the organization and be accountable for progress.
- **Prioritize gender equality as a key business objective for the entire organization** and create specific mechanisms that hold the C-suite accountable as well as ensure that those executing gender equality initiatives are accountable.

Research has proven the case for gender equality: workplaces advancing gender equality benefit from better business performance, enhanced reputation, greater innovation and resiliency, and also a healthier, safer, and motivated workforce. (Sources: [Catalyst](#), [McKinsey Global Institute](#), and [BCG](#))

- **Encourage greater inclusion and diversity in the C-suite** by evaluating how job appointments, promotions, and layoffs are decided, and, if applicable to your organization, reviewing the terms of its Board of Directors.

A gender balance of 30 to 60 percent in leadership positions has been proven to increase profits and an improve an organization's ability to retain top talent. (Source: [International Labour Organization](#))

- **Participate in the setting and tracking of goals, targets, and key performance indicators (KPIs)** related to gender equality (e.g. recruitment, hiring, promotion, attrition history and rates; use of flexible work options; employee engagement). Request and frequently review disaggregated data related to these goals to measure progress and trouble shoot where necessary.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE WORKPLACE

- **Become an active and effective executive sponsor** for an initiative, program, team, or group related to gender equality. Executive sponsorship demonstrates leadership's commitment to gender equality while at the same time, supports meaningful progress.

In one study, over 80% of program managers stated that support from an executive sponsor made a significant difference to a project's success. (Source: [Project Management Institute](#))

- **Call for the creation of a specific role dedicated to advancing gender equality, diversity, and inclusion with adequate resources.** Assigning human, financial, intellectual, and physical resources builds accountability and helps ensure that gender equality is a priority for the organization.
- **Support and engage in workplace training initiatives** related to gender equality or diversity and inclusion to demonstrate that they are meaningful endeavours supported by leadership.
- **Check-in routinely and work closely with managers who report to you to ensure they know that gender equality is a priority.** Frequent communication with leadership also gives those executing gender equality initiatives an opportunity to bring up challenges or solutions.

GENERATING SYSTEMIC CHANGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- **Shape your organization's response to major shifts, such as COVID-19,** by acknowledging new realities and ensuring that all genders are included in planning and execution. Accurately representing the workforce population in crisis task forces, response teams, and employee support mechanisms can enable your organization's ability to successfully adapt.

COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted women: Canadian women's participation in the labour force has fallen to 55%, the lowest level seen since the 1980s. (Source: [RBC Economics](#))

- **Advocate that your organization identifies its gender wage gap and causes, and then commit to closing it.** Openly addressing potential remuneration gaps within the organization demonstrates that leadership is committed to tackling systemic gender inequality.
- **Support your workforce's wellbeing, health, and safety** by requesting equitable systems and processes, adequate benefits, sustainable work-life balance, and robust occupational health and safety practices and policies, including gender-based violence.

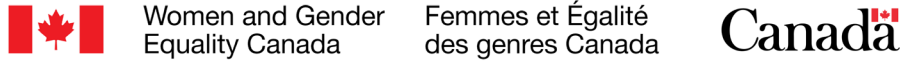
MULTIPLY YOUR ORGANIZATION'S IMPACT

- **Transparently communicate to internal and external audiences your organization's commitment to gender equality as well as information related to progress.** Our company consultations highlighted that reporting, even when there are shortfalls, is key to strong leadership.
- **Request and oversee an internal review of key business relationships** such as partnerships, outreach activities, and supplier through a gender lens. This examination can work towards establishing new relationships with organizations committed to advancing gender equality and empowering women.

Companies with outreach initiatives and partnerships that work to advance gender equality experience a greater sustainable social licence to operate, enhanced reputation, and strengthened investor confidence. (Source: [International Finance Corporation](#))

- **Expand the reach of your support for gender equality** by participating in external events, conferences, panels, industry associations' gatherings, or fundraisers for advancing gender equality and empowering women in Canada.

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The Gender Equality Leadership in the Canadian Private Sector project and the resulting Blueprint was co-authored by the following members of the Global Compact Network Canada (GCNC): Ayman Chowdhury, Project Leader, Sandra Espinosa, Project Manager, and Brittany Gataveckas, Project Associate.

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ABOUT THE GCNC



The GCNC is the Canadian network of the United Nations Global Compact, an organization dedicated to catalyzing business action to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 10 Principles of the UN Global Compact in Canada. GCNC and its many corporate and nonprofit participants unify and build the capacity of the Canadian private sector to embrace sustainable business practices by convening and accelerating opportunities for multistakeholder collaboration. SDG 5 – achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls – is central to the successful realization of all 17 SDGs.

For further information about GCNC and to download the full report, please visit www.globalcompact.ca.