

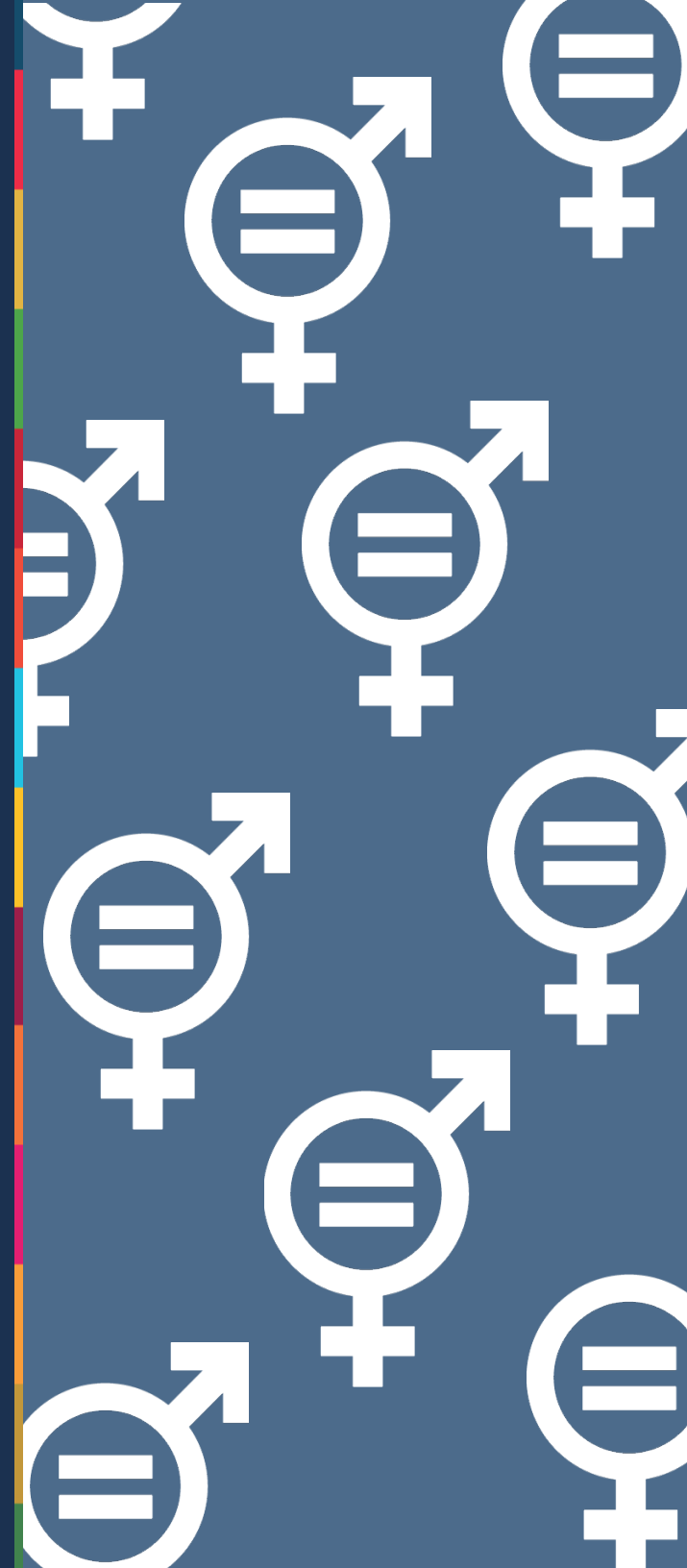


Global Compact
Network Canada

THE WAY FORWARD FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMES) IN CANADA

Gender Equality

— Leadership in the
Canadian Private Sector



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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 extensive research, GCNC has developed a number of action-oriented steps that SMEs can take to advance gender equality in their workplaces.

LEADERSHIP AND THE BUSINESS OF GENDER EQUALITY

- **Make gender equality a strategic business priority and an integral element of your organizational culture.** A visible senior leader who [prioritizes gender equality](#) and has an open-door approach can make a real difference in raising awareness, bringing others on board, and accelerating change.
- **Seek to collaborate or create a small closed task force with other SMEs** where your organization can freely share experiences, best practices, resources, and lessons learned. Define the parameters of this collaboration as well as key objectives to ensure all participants are on the same page.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Develop formal policies, codes, or guidelines** to advance gender equality throughout the organization and enforce them in meaningful ways. First, ensure your organization is meeting [federal and provincial or territorial requirements](#), and then address [policies, codes, or guidelines](#) that are most relevant to your workplace or industry.
- **Review your organization's current systems, processes, and informal practices** to [identify any bias](#) or inequalities that may be preventing the advancement of gender equality. Start by focusing on priority areas and once necessary changes have been implemented, keep moving forward.

- **Assign responsibility for key functions related to gender equality**, even if your organization is too small to have human resources or diversity and inclusion departments. Take advantage of your employees' ability to wear multiple hats which can build the capacity for gender equality initiatives across the organization while increasing accountability for their progress.
- **Design communication and advertising materials, as well as any social media posts with inclusivity in mind.** Focus on [language](#) and [images](#) that actively work against gender stereotypes and bias, portray equal capabilities and roles for all genders, and avoid [cultural appropriation](#).

DATA COLLECTION AND GOAL SETTING

- **Collect or use readily available data** as a way to establish a foundation of your organization's gender equality status. Focus on [qualitative and quantitative data](#) from different segments or units within the business as well as across the organization as a whole.
- **Use insights gained from data collection to develop key short- and long-term goals** for advancing gender equality and diversity and inclusion. Remember that [goals](#) and [targets](#) should make sense in the context of your organization (e.g. a small organization in a male-dominated industry will likely need to set different goals than a medium-sized enterprise in a female-dominated industry).
- **Identify your organization's gender wage gap and its causes** to develop a plan for eliminating the gap. SMEs that do not fall under pay equity legislation can demonstrate leadership by proactively [advancing equal remuneration](#).

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- **Consider creating a status update** about your organization's gender equality data, progress, and lessons that can be shared [internally](#) and, eventually, [externally](#). Circulating internal reports increases transparency and keeps employees in the loop on key gender equality initiatives and progress, which builds capacity and ownership amongst the workforce.
- **Lean into workplace flexibility.** Determine the arrangements that work for your business but also [focus on solutions](#) that empower women and allow for the participation of diverse groups.
- **Share resources on psychological and physical health, safety, and wellbeing.** When sharing information and developing new practices or policies, recognize that [different genders experience or face different challenges](#) related to overall wellbeing.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

- **Prioritize continuous learning about gender equality** throughout the organization by incorporating it into all offered training and development programs. Your organization's training programs and practices should reflect that gender equality is relevant to all aspects of business.
- **Ensure that gender equality is a frequent topic of conversation** during meetings, presentations, performance reviews, etc. Your staff and all those associated with your business will not know that gender equality is a priority unless you [discuss it regularly and meaningfully](#).
- **Develop meaningful external relationships that explicitly advance gender equality.** Examples include supporting [diverse suppliers](#); participating in outreach opportunities with [local organizations](#) that empower women; developing strategic [cross-sector partnerships](#) with women-owned SMEs.
- **Establish mentorship and/or sponsorship practices.** These [activities](#) can be informal ways to improve employee recruitment, retention, and promotion especially when they target high potential individuals or are offered to new hires.

SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS

- **Promote the exchange of different experiences, ideas, and knowledge.** [Bring together employees](#) from diverse backgrounds, and from different business lines, teams, and hierarchical levels. Create a [safe space](#) for these employees to share their lived experiences and use this feedback to address any inequality within the organization.

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Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
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ABOUT THE GCNC



Global Compact
Network Canada

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.