

Principles of an Equitable Workplace for Women

Creating a culture of equity in your workplace will foster a more dynamic, productive, and successful business with employees who are enthusiastic about their work. This is critical for women, especially Women of Color, as they are leaving jobs, and some the workforce entirely, to prioritize their well-being and families' care.

To build a culture of equity at the intersection of gender and race in your workplace, proactive steps are required to ensure you create and implement inclusive policies, principles, and practices for women at all levels—from your entry level positions to the C-suite. Read on for a checklist of key principles to prioritize.

Ensure the Jobs You Provide are Quality Jobs

At a basic level, all people should have access to a quality job that provides an employee with economic security and stability in a safe working environment. This means:

- Paying a livable wage and offering opportunities for advancement.** Ensure all your employees—at all levels—are paid a living wage and have access to promotion opportunities. Invest in ongoing training and development for your employees, including incentivizing employees to seek additional training that may help advance their careers and earning potential.
- Providing safe working conditions, including freedom from harassment.** Provide your workforce with protections for their physical safety—including social distancing, adequate PPE, safety precautions to manage combative customers, and reasonable accommodations for physical demands that can put them at risk, especially when they are pregnant. Require regular anti-harassment training that incorporates bystander intervention, provide trauma-informed resources, implement policies to support employees experiencing harassment at work, and hold those committing harassment accountable. And provide support for employees facing intimate partner violence.
- Ensuring your employees have predictable and stable schedules, and paying them for the number of hours they are scheduled to work.** Provide adequate notice of work schedules, avoid last minute schedule changes, and keep employee schedules as regular and reliable, and as responsive to their needs as possible. Provide employees with a set minimum number of hours, and pay them for those hours when you change their schedule unexpectedly.
- Providing benefits that allow all workers to stay healthy and care for their families.** Ensure you properly classify your workforce, and provide both full- and part-time employees with family-friendly benefits. That includes things like health insurance, paid sick days for short-term needs, paid family and medical leave for longer-term caregiving, and child care assistance.
- Providing your workers with opportunities to share input around working conditions.** Provide your workers with multiple avenues for providing input and feedback, and ensure they are protected against retaliation for speaking up, and recognized for offering solutions.



Prioritize Equity and Inclusion

Once you have implemented the basics of quality jobs, go further to create equitable workplaces that enable women and People of Color to thrive. This means:

- Ensuring equal pay.** Conduct regular pay equity audits to identify any pay gaps that may exist, and take steps to address any gaps. Provide transparency around compensation—including being up front about pay in job announcements and recruitment.
- Providing equal opportunities for growth and advancement.** Look critically to see who is in leadership positions at your company or organization, and evaluate your recruitment, promotion, and talent management systems. Ensure you are providing women the same opportunities and promotional pathways as men for prime work assignments, professional development, mentoring, and leadership development.
- Allowing flexible work arrangements.** Whenever possible, provide women with the option for flexibility in both work hours and locations (i.e. hybrid and remote work). Provide resources to facilitate success, like laptop computers, financial support for cell phone and internet service, and reimbursements for equipping a home office. Ensure you don't disadvantage women who work from home for their lack of "face time," and make sure they still have chances for informal mentorship and access to prime assignments and promotions.

Ensure Equitable Access and Impact

For many women, particularly Women of Color, work cultures perpetuate stereotypes and marginalization that keep them from succeeding and advancing in their careers. And many working moms face a "motherhood penalty" which results in lowered salaries and opportunities. Equitable companies must examine whether all women truly have equal opportunity and access, and if the work culture affords women a sense of belonging. This means:

- Proactively committing to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion.** Invest in ongoing cultural competence training. Put dollars into resources, personnel, and strategies to make sure hiring, promotion, and work environments facilitate everyone's success. Hold every member of management accountable for fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion—this cannot be delegated to junior managers, or women and People of Color.
- Building a work culture where employees can be who they are and don't need to change to fit.** Create Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or affinity groups based on social identities to provide structures of support.
- Ensuring work policies and practices are accessible and inclusive.** Use an inclusive family definition for policies like paid leave and bereavement. Continually assess the use and impact of policies and practices for access and equity to ensure all women are benefiting from them.

Women Employed (WE) can help you become a more equitable employer.

For nearly 50 years, Women Employed has been a leading advocate for fair, inclusive workplaces for women, including women in low-paid jobs and Black and Latina/x women. We are committed to using our decades of expertise to support and work with employers to build equitable workplace practices with a particular focus at the intersection of gender and race.

WE will enable you to take paper to practice, and practice to culture, by providing a tailored approach to address your unique needs—including trainings, workshops, and more consultative custom services.

For more information on our workshop offerings and our consultancy, or to schedule a training, contact [Ibie Hart](mailto:ihart@womenemployed.org), Director of Business Development, at ihart@womenemployed.org.

To learn more about the importance of these principles, download our white paper, "[Building Workplaces Where Women Can Thrive: Centering Equity at the Intersection of Gender and Race.](#)"