



Employment Equity for *Women*

*...Still
Matters*



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Women in Canada's federal Public Service have made progress! Today, women represent more than half of the Public Service workforce. Yet, despite this progress, only one third of the executive category are women. Furthermore, women represent two thirds of term employees, and they are concentrated in the administrative support category. Therefore, it is important to note that *Employment Equity for Women Still Matters*, particularly in a representative and inclusive Public Service.

This booklet contains practical suggestions for managers, human resources professionals and employees. It offers ideas for the recruitment, development and advancement of women in the federal public service. It also provides tips for creating a supportive work environment.

I know you will find this publication to be a timely and helpful resource, and I encourage you to share it with your colleagues.

The paper version was signed by
Lucienne Robillard, President of the Treasury Board

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Introduction

Women now make up more than half of the workforce in the Public Service of Canada. Today women are present, to some degree, in virtually every type of job.

However, women make up only a third of the Executive Category; they make up the majority of people hired in term positions; and they are still concentrated in many traditionally female support roles. There is a relatively low proportion of women in the Scientific and Professional Category.

Despite progress in recruitment and retention, employment equity for women still matters. This booklet brings together a number of concrete suggestions designed to improve the participation of women in all groups and at all levels of the federal Public Service.

These suggestions are grouped in four main areas, as follows:

- recruitment and selection;
- career development and advancement;
- organizational culture;
- supportive employment policies and practices.

How to Use this Booklet

The suggestions outlined below are intended for managers, Human Resources professionals, and employees.

Managers can use these suggestions when

- conducting career counselling sessions with employees;
- discussing performance reviews with employees;
- holding team meetings;
- assisting employees in the development of their personal learning plans, human resources plans, or employment equity plans;
- hiring new employees including students and persons being considered for term positions.

Human Resources professionals can use these suggestions when

- holding employee orientation sessions;
- conducting career counselling workshops;
- designing supervisory or management training workshops;
- delivering workshops on employment equity or managing diversity;
- developing organizational learning/training plans, human resources plans, and departmental employment equity plans;
- advising managers on hiring and promotion opportunities.

Employees can use these suggestions when

- participating in their performance reviews;
- identifying professional development aspirations through their personal learning plans;
- having regular discussions with managers;
- participating in team meetings to increase awareness among peers;
- participating in union meetings;
- attending meetings of advisory groups/committees for women;
- attending brown bag lunches and participating in informal discussions.

Recruitment and Selection

Hiring practices can affect whether or not qualified women obtain employment and even whether or not qualified women will be interested in working for a particular organization.

There is a negative impact on career progression for women when they are disproportionately recruited for term, seasonal, or part-time positions.

An equitable working environment ensures that recruitment and selection practices respect the merit principle and are barrier-free.

Here are some suggestions to ensure that women are successfully recruited for positions within the federal Public Service.

Ideas for Managers

- Use summer employment and internship programs as training and work experience mechanisms for women and include those programs as part of a longer-term recruitment strategy.
- Use co-operative programs at high schools, colleges, and universities to attract female candidates, especially those in science and technology.
- Participate in career fairs and job shadowing projects for female high school students.
- Ensure that selection boards are composed of men, women, and designated group members.

Ideas for Human Resources Professionals

- Develop an outreach strategy that includes partnerships with community-based agencies, especially in regional offices, to identify qualified female applicants.
- Contact women's groups and professional associations across the country to ensure that their members are aware of your organization as a potential employer. For instance, reach out to groups involved with Aboriginal women, visible minority women, and women with disabilities.
- Set up scholarship programs for women in scientific and technical fields, and other occupations where there is a low representation of women, in order to increase the number of women available for employment in these fields.
- Consider ways of recruiting women into scientific and technical occupations. For example, establish partnerships with associations, as well as public and private organizations that have women's committees, or with colleges and universities that have women's programs, especially in the scientific and technical fields.
- Organize workshops and information sessions for managers about barrier-free recruitment and selection practices, advising them about questions that should and should not be asked in an interview.

Career Development and Advancement

Creating an equitable working environment for women means ensuring that employers base career development and advancement on merit; that all interested candidates are given equal consideration; and that all employees are aware of the options available to them.

Here are some suggestions on how to promote access to career development and advancement opportunities for women.

Ideas for Managers

- Support continuous learning for women through tuition reimbursement and time off during working hours to prepare for assignments and exams.
- Provide opportunities for women to network with employees at higher levels in the organization, e.g. through coaching and mentoring.
- Encourage women to acquire line management experience.
- Offer women a variety of professional development options such as formal training, conferences, seminars, and on-line self-paced learning.
- Emphasize experiential and on-the-job learning through rotations, assignments, and project work to broaden women's work experience.
- Encourage female employees to think about development and cross-functional career moves to acquire new skills that may lead to more senior positions.
- Sponsor short-term assignments where employees can apply to go on secondment for periods of up to six months (e.g. maternity leave replacements, language training replacements).

- Increase the number of women appointed to key strategic positions in central agencies and to line and operational positions in departments. Encourage women to consider rotational assignments in central agencies.

Ideas for Human Resources Professionals

- Keep managers informed about career opportunities so that they can provide career counselling to women interested in advancement and/or enrichment.
- Establish job bridging programs to enable women who have demonstrated potential, but who may lack the necessary qualifications and/or experience to move to higher-level jobs (e.g. support staff to transition to junior officer-level positions, or officer-level women to supervisory and management positions).
- Offer coaching and mentoring opportunities to women.
- Provide managers with training on how to mentor and coach employees effectively.
- Participate in or establish an interdepartmental assignment program for women.
- Establish an inventory of individuals who wish to be considered for interdepartmental assignments.
- Use the performance review process as a mechanism for creating inventories of women who have demonstrated potential and who are interested in advancement.
- Establish an accelerated management trainee program for high-potential women at different levels.
- Ensure that women located in the regions have equal access to information on training and development programs.

Ideas for Employees

- Prepare your personal learning plan and share your career aspirations with your supervisor.
- Suggest opportunities for on-the-job training, including job rotation or job enhancement.
- Establish informal networks and support systems in your workplace.
- Seek out a mentor or a coach.
- Demonstrate interest in developmental assignments, including participation in task forces, working groups, special project teams, and stretch assignments.

Organizational Culture

Organizational cultures that include policies and programs that deal with the attitudes and behaviour of employees are favourable to women. They offer and address specific practical issues of concern such as alternative work arrangements, family leave arrangements, childcare, eldercare, and the physical work environment.

Other factors critical to an equitable work environment for women include a discrimination and harassment free environment.

The following are steps that can be taken to foster a favourable organizational culture for women.

Ideas for Managers

- Enlist the active support of managers and supervisors in the organization (EE Champion) to promote women's issues.
- Brief employees about what is and is not appropriate behaviour in the workplace, as well as the unspoken norms and customs.

- On a regular basis, offer diversity awareness and anti-harassment training sessions to existing employees before designated group members are hired.
- Ensure that all employees are consulted equally about work issues.
- Ensure that women and men are heard and given recognition for their ideas.

Ideas for Human Resources Professionals

- Remind managers and supervisors in the organization of the importance of respecting work-life balance issues.
- Encourage suggestions from women on improving the effectiveness of the organization and the quality of their work life.
- Use exit interviews to determine why women are leaving the organization.
- Communicate policies on the prevention of harassment and discrimination, along with clear procedures for developing complaints, and provide support mechanisms for complainants.
- Provide managers with training on employment equity issues, cultural diversity, and specific issues important to women.
- Provide support to the EE Advisory Committee.

Ideas for Employees

- Join departmental or interdepartmental working groups to exchange information about policies and practices that benefit women.
- Communicate with your bargaining agents as required.
- Participate in brainstorming sessions about ways to improve the organizational culture for women and then forward ideas to your supervisor or human resources section.

Supportive Employment Policies and Practices

Studies have shown that employers who recognize the benefits of employment equity for women also, in general, recognize that certain supportive policies and programs are required to assist in creating an equitable work environment for all.

A 1999 study conducted by the Centre for Research and Education on Women and Work at Carleton University in Ottawa reported that career success and life success are closely intertwined for public service employees and that certain issues were more problematic for women in the Public Service than for men. This finding underlines the importance of access to alternative work arrangements and other issues related to balance between work and family responsibilities, such as childcare and eldercare.

Here are examples of supportive employment policies and practices.

Ideas for Managers

- Provide the option of flexible hours and modified job duties as required.
- Offer the opportunity to work reduced hours, telework, or share a job.
- Arrange for formal and informal communications channels to elicit feedback.

Ideas for Human Resources Professionals

- Remind managers to apply the human resources policies in a manner that fairly recognizes the family-related responsibilities of all employees.
- Consider the following when planning out-of-town conferences or training: accessibility to transportation; safety; availability of telephones for people with family responsibilities; on-site childcare; and childcare or other family care expense allowances for those with family responsibilities.

Ideas for Employees

- Share information about departmental policies with other women through discussion groups and brown bag lunches.
- Contribute articles to departmental newsletters highlighting success stories as examples of supportive employment policies and practices.
- Tell your manager or human resources section about the need for new or revised supportive measures for women.
- Give your manager ideas on how supportive measures can be balanced with operational requirements.
- Tell your managers and colleagues about women's success stories.

Conclusion

As women move into today's workforce, the expectations are greater for a Public Service that values increased flexibility in working conditions to allow them to start a family and cope with demands of both working in a dual-career situation and having time for family and leisure.

Studies indicate that women increasingly face responsibilities for eldercare as the workforce ages. The "sandwich generation" refers to the baby boomers who have families of their own, but who are still responsible for eldercare and thus have difficulty managing both work and family responsibilities.

We should continue to work towards creating an environment where work-life balance is the norm, where cultural and systemic barriers are addressed and eliminated, where career development opportunities exist, and where coaching and mentoring programs are offered.

Both men and women working together to achieve this goal will lead to a great improvement in women's progress to ensure a truly representative and inclusive Public Service of Canada.

Other Resources

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You may also contact your departmental Employment Equity Office if you need more information.