

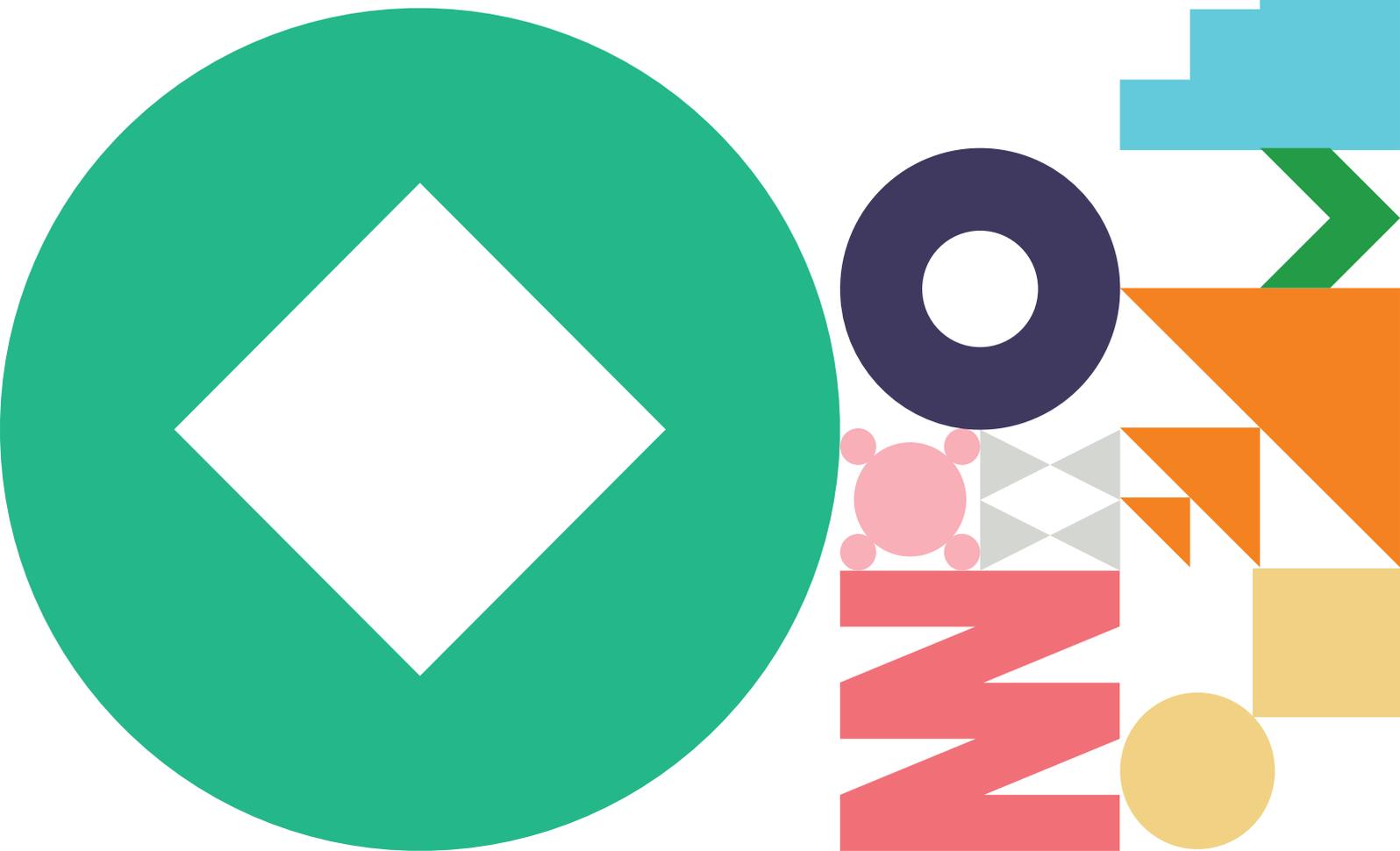


Public Sector
Commission

*We're working for
Western Australia.*

Women

Action Plan to Improve WA Public
Sector Employment Outcomes
2020–2025





We acknowledge the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay respect to their cultures, and to elders past and present.

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August 2020

PSC2064650

ISBN: 978-0-7307-0292-4

From the Minister

The Government has already demonstrated its commitment to gender equity with *Stronger Together: WA's Plan for Gender Equality*.

We have also met our target and achieved parity on government controlled boards and committees.

The focus for this action plan is to get more women in leadership positions across the public sector, with a target of 50% for the Senior Executive Service.

With representation now at 42.5%, despite women making up more than 70% of the workforce, we still need focused effort on this front.

At the current rate of growth, parity for women in the SES will be achieved in 2022. This is an incredible turnaround as just two years ago we were not looking at parity until 2035.

The evidence is clear: gender equality makes for strong economies and communities and women have much to contribute to business and government.

I want the public sector to lead by example and ensure we have women around the decision making table and empowered at all levels to fulfil their potential.

With a clear set of actions for agencies to pursue, along with actions for the Public Sector Commission to implement, there is support across the sector as a whole.

I am confident we can progress gender equality in the public sector and better serve the people of Western Australia.



Simone McGurk MLA
Minister for Women's Interests

From the Commissioner

Workforce diversity is not only about everyone being treated with dignity and respect, it's key to improving productivity and innovation in organisations.

It's also important for our workforce – our people – to have diversity of thought. This means different and more expansive thinking beyond our worldviews.

To shift the focus of diversity from compliance to workforce imperative, we have to change gears. We must move from a singular focus on awareness raising to deliberate action and intervention – and see this move as both a personal and a collective responsibility.



This action plan is part of the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for WA Public Sector Employment 2020–2025. The twin goals of the strategy are to increase the representation of people from different backgrounds at all levels across our sector, and to ensure all staff in the sector experience a sense of belonging and inclusion in the work environment.

Like this action plan that focuses on women, there are also action plans for youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, culturally and linguistically diverse people, people with disability and people of diverse sexualities and genders.

There is no suggestion that achieving greater workforce diversity and inclusion is easy. However, we must do more to take full advantage of the opportunities that having more women in senior leadership positions across the sector represent in our work to deliver services to the community of Western Australia.

Sharyn O'Neill
Public Sector Commissioner

Aspirational target for women in senior leadership

This plan aims to increase the representation of women in the Senior Executive Service (SES) to 50% and support inclusive work environments.

While this target is aspirational – and ambitious – progress is achievable over time if it is driven from the top.

Representation of women in leadership has been a government policy focus in the last couple of years, with a target set of 50% women on government boards and committees.

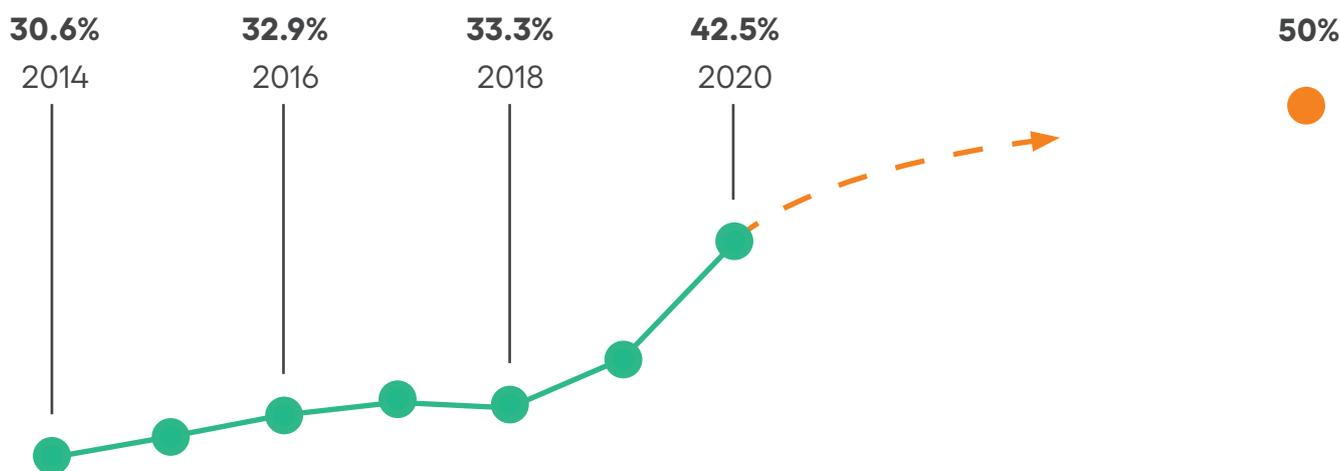
It makes sense for the sector to set a similar target for women employed in the SES so representation of women in senior leadership in the public sector reaches parity.

Representation of women employed in the SES has been increasing slowly over the years, with a marked increase in the growth rate since July 2018. Current representation is at 42.5% and is moving steadily in the right direction.

If this more recent growth rate continues, the proposed target could be reached as early as 2022. This requires continued focus and effort.

Data reform work across the sector (see the Workforce Diversification and Inclusion Strategy for more details) includes reviewing collection, definitions and methods applied to diversity groups. This work will be used for the ongoing refinement and implementation of the strategy.

Such reforms are critical to develop a complete picture of the workforce and changes over time to better shape workforce strategy, policy and practice.



Key actions to achieve the target

Increasing the representation of women in senior leadership positions, and providing women with advancement and support in the workplace require sustained effort, a different way of doing things and stronger accountability.

All agencies are responsible for working towards the aspirational target. Actions taken also require collaboration with women whose ideas and participation are essential in making our sector as inclusive as possible.

Actions for the Public Sector Commission are described in this plan, together with a suite of actions for agencies to implement.

Most value can be gained by considering actions across the four improvement areas, rather than actions in just one or two areas.

As agencies have differing needs and contexts, they should adopt those actions appropriate to their circumstances in ways best suited to their needs.

This action plan has four key areas for improvement that flow across the strategy and other action plans:

1

Educate and empower

A knowledge and capability uplift is a priority consideration in workforce planning for women.

2

Attract and develop

Recruitment and development practices proactively identify and support the talent of women.

3

Lead and build

There is deliberate leadership to build organisation cultures where all people are treated fairly and respectfully.

4

Account and celebrate

Responsibility is taken for improving the representation and inclusion of women in senior leadership positions.

1 Educate and empower

Actions for the Commission

Provide tools

- 1.1 Develop a tool for agencies to conduct and compare gender pay gap results annually.
- 1.2 Develop a guide to ensure managers and staff are aware of and promote the use of flexible working opportunities.
- 1.3 Host leadership events to increase visibility of senior women across the sector.

Recruit for diversity

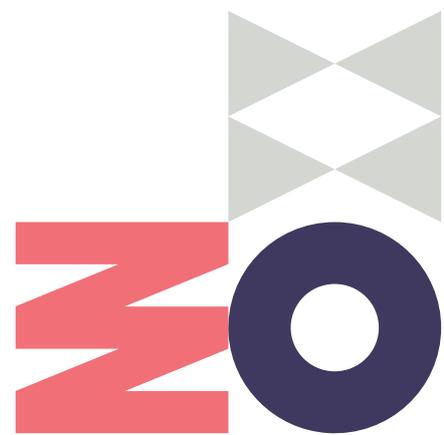
- 1.4 Provide guidance on the use of provisions in the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* to specifically target employment of women to senior leadership positions.

Use data analytics

- 1.5 Provide agencies with comparative data to support greater insight into performance and workforce planning.
- 1.6 Explore participation in a pilot data reporting project with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency to benchmark progress against national performance.

Partner for greater impact

- 1.7 Contribute to the development and implementation of government initiatives including Stronger Together to improve outcomes for women.



1 Educate and empower

Actions for agencies

Understand the pay gap

- 1.1 Conduct an annual gender pay gap audit and compare performance to sector-wide results.

Make better use of data

- 1.2 Use public sector workforce and community representation data relating to women to set specific agency targets, and to inform recruitment and workforce planning.

Sponsor

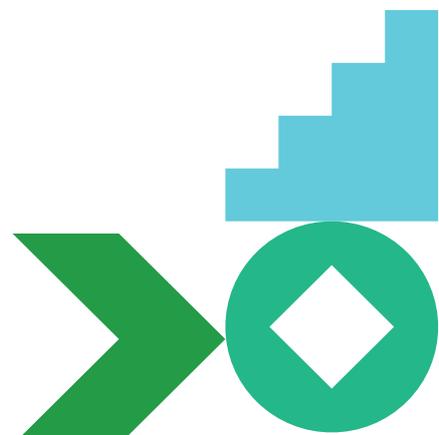
- 1.3 Appoint executive champions to sponsor emerging female talent.

Learn to target

- 1.4 Trial the implementation of section 31 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* to increase the representation and progression of women in senior leadership positions.

Partner for greater impact

- 1.5 Join other agencies to establish a network to support the development and progression of women in public sector leadership.





2 Attract and develop

Actions for the Commission

Strengthen the rules

- 2.1 Remove opportunity for discriminatory practices to occur when reviewing recruitment, selection and appointment legislation, instruments and policies.

Partner to extend reach

- 2.2 Research the feasibility of agencies supporting cost neutral child care and vacation care programs for workplaces.
- 2.3 Promote the use of specialist employment service providers and networks to attract female job seekers.

Work towards removing bias

- 2.4 Work with agencies to provide guidance on initiatives that name and remove bias such as de-identified job applications.

Set targets for talent pools

- 2.5 Ensure new sector-wide talent pools include women.
- 2.6 Set the expectation for agencies to increase the number of women shortlisted for positions at Level 6 (and equivalent) and above.

Strengthen talent pipeline

- 2.7 Establish a women's executive development program to develop and upskill emerging female leaders.
- 2.8 Expand the number of women in sector leadership programs.

2 Attract and develop

Actions for agencies

Identify barriers and develop solutions

- 2.1 Examine agency job applicant data and information to identify and address any barriers to the recruitment and progression of women, including into senior leadership positions.
- 2.2 Consider additional barriers to recruitment and development experienced by women from under-represented groups (eg Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, women with disability, culturally and linguistically diverse women).
- 2.3 Partner with specialist employment service providers and networks to attract female job seekers.

Work towards removing bias

- 2.4 Develop initiatives to remove unconscious bias in recruitment, training and workforce practices.

Target development opportunities

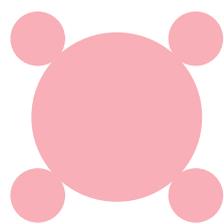
- 2.5 Identify leadership development opportunities for women.
- 2.6 Explore rotational programs for women in senior leadership to work in traditionally male dominated professions/industries.

Broaden skills and increase visibility

- 2.7 Proactively target women for mobility programs such as secondments.
- 2.8 Strengthen mentoring support for women to encourage advancement.

Support working families

- 2.9 Establish re-entry programs for women who have taken career breaks.



3 Lead and build

Actions for the Commission

Lead from the top

- 3.1 Conduct an annual review for the Public Sector Leadership Council to consider progress against the aspirational target.
- 3.2 Ensure new sector-wide talent identification and management approaches promote the inclusion of women in leadership.

Target executive decision making

- 3.3 Increase the representation of women on boards, committees and other decision making forums.

Create incentives

- 3.4 Introduce an initiative where an agency can create an additional 12 month executive position to specifically recruit a woman.

Improve culture

- 3.5 Crowdfund innovative ideas for improving employment outcomes for women.

Build diversity into planning

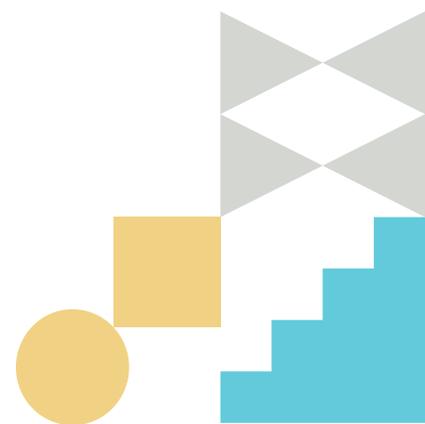
- 3.6 Provide model workforce and diversity plans for agency use that feature strong measures for increasing employment and progression of women in senior leadership.

Promote awareness

- 3.7 Support initiatives to eliminate family and domestic violence and support staff experiencing it (eg 16 Days in WA: Stop Violence Against Women campaign).

Promote respect

- 3.8 Explore the development of a respectful relationships program to support the sector.



3 Lead and build

Actions for agencies

Lead change

- 3.1. Deliberately undertake succession planning by identifying high performing women internally and externally for senior leadership positions.
- 3.2 Reinforce zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment, and provide a clear complaints pathway for staff to feel confident in raising issues.

Challenge inappropriate behaviours

- 3.3 Ensure senior leaders act as role models, demonstrating respectful behaviour, and challenging inappropriate language and attitudes.

Target executive decision making

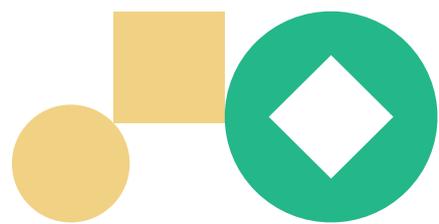
- 3.4 Increase the representation of women on boards, committees and other decision making forums.

Review policies and practices

- 3.5 Ensure policies and practices do not discriminate against women, and published materials are inclusive.
- 3.6 Support and manage staff ergonomic requirements during pregnancy.

Support staff

- 3.7 Implement actions in the Safe Spaces guide for staff who may be experiencing family violence, and ensure an adequate number of staff are trained as contact officers.
- 3.8 Maintain connections with staff away on parental leave to promote inclusion and awareness of employment opportunities for advancement.
- 3.9 Ensure equal access to flexible work arrangements for all staff, including those returning to work and those with family and carer responsibilities.
- 3.10 Support managers to have the capability and confidence to manage flexible work arrangements.



4 Account and celebrate

Actions for the Commission

Listen and respond

- 4.1 Introduce a requirement for agencies to include staff perceptions of workplace inclusiveness in annual reports.

Set targets

- 4.2. Establish targets to increase the representation of women in the SES and monitor sector and agency progress.

Aim higher

- 4.3. Require agencies to set goals to shift the equity index for female staff to ensure they are increasingly represented in mid to high salary groupings.

Account for progress

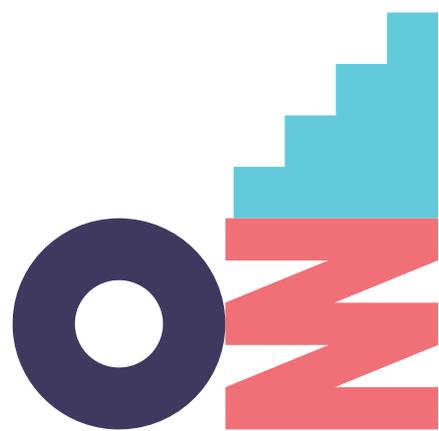
- 4.4. Add diversity targets for women in the SES into the CEO Delivery and Performance Agreement and annual reporting guidelines.
- 4.5. Identify opportunities for agencies to report on innovative initiatives that promote the inclusion of women such as the use of flexible working arrangements.

Improve use of data

- 4.6 Review qualitative and quantitative data collection strategies to ensure the best information about the employment of women is gathered and used to inform improvement.

Share good stories

- 4.7 Publish stories and share initiatives about better employment and inclusion outcomes across a range of communications channels.



4 Account and celebrate

Actions for agencies

Work towards targets

- 4.1. Set explicit expectations across the agency to work towards the aspirational target for women in the SES.
- 4.2. Set a target to improve the equity index, ensuring female staff are increasingly represented in mid to high level salary groupings.

Report progress

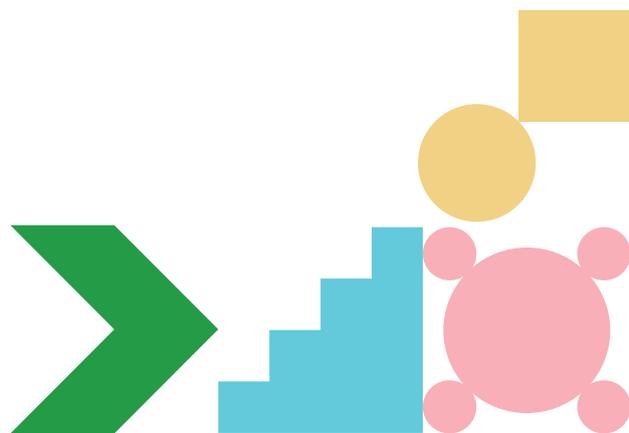
- 4.3. Monitor and report progress against the employment target for women in the SES, including in the CEO Delivery and Performance Agreement.

Celebrate

- 4.4. Host an event for International Women's Day or join with other agencies.
- 4.5. Commit to proactively seeking nominations for State and national awards to acknowledge the achievements of female staff.

Share success

- 4.6. Highlight positive stories and achievements of female staff through internal and external communications, including annual and other reports.



Principles, monitoring performance, data and definitions

Principles

Sustainable improvement in workforce diversification is driven by four principles guiding agency actions.

Leadership

Public sector leaders are visible advocates who take strong and deliberate action to drive improvements in workforce diversification, and lead a zero tolerance approach to discrimination and harassment.

Collaboration

Public sector agencies work together to improve diversity employment outcomes and share best practice.

Accountability

The head of each public sector agency is accountable for improving workforce diversification.

Cultural inclusion

The public sector has culturally inclusive workplaces where staff are supported and valued for their contribution, and where managers are diversity aware.

Monitoring performance

Equal employment opportunity and diversity related information collected by the Commission will continue to be used to monitor progress against the targets and action plans. Outcomes will be reported through the state of the sector report and other workforce reporting.

Under the strategy, the Commission will work with key stakeholders to identify and refine reporting obligations currently required across multiple agencies for identified diversity groups.

Data

All public sector data used in this strategy and the supporting action plans are based on the March point in time series.

There are further [data definitions and methods](#) on our website.

Definitions

The terms used in this strategy and the action plans are defined below.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

People who identify as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

Culturally and linguistically diverse people

People who are born in identified countries which are not mainly English speaking.

People of diverse sexualities and genders

People of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics.

People with disability

People who have a mild or moderate core activity limitation.

Women in the SES

Women who are part of the Senior Executive Service.

Youth

People who are aged 24 years and under.

