



Australian Government

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Women
in Leadership

Women in Leadership Strategy

Promoting equality and dismantling barriers

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Use of the Coat of Arms

The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed on the 'It's an Honour' website itsanhonour.gov.au/coat-arms/index.cfm.

Website

dfat.gov.au

Introduction

The Women in Leadership initiative was announced by the Secretary, Peter N Varghese AO, in December 2014 to look into the reasons why women's career progression in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) is not equal to that of men. The department can only perform at its best if all staff have the opportunity to reach their full potential. Unequal representation of men and women at our senior levels suggests we are not maximising our capability.

An external consultant, Deborah May, was engaged in February 2015 to look into the barriers to women reaching leadership positions in the department and make recommendations. At the same time, internal data analysis was undertaken to examine gender trends across the department's operations.

The actions set out in this strategy have been developed from the findings and recommendations of the May Review, the "Women in DFAT" data paper and staff feedback and suggestions. The strategy should be read in conjunction with the DFAT Strategic Workforce Planning Framework 2015-17.



“ This process goes to the heart of our work on leadership and values. It is about ensuring all staff have the opportunity to reach their full potential. If we can achieve this, DFAT will also perform at its best. ”

- Secretary, Peter Varghese AO.

Purpose and Context

Over 57 per cent of the department's staff are women, yet women make up fewer than 34 per cent of our Senior Executive Service (SES) and only 27 per cent of our heads of missions and posts. Women are applying for senior leadership roles at proportionally lower rates than men, despite performance data showing that women are performing as well as or better than men at all levels across the department. This suggests that the department's culture constrains women's choices and it is not applying the merit principle fully or making the most of its talent.

Over **57%**
of the department's
staff are women

The May Review has identified a number of factors which disadvantage women in DFAT, including fundamental aspects of our culture and organisational norms and practices. This strategy aims to address the barriers to women reaching their full potential in their DFAT careers, including by addressing subtle and underlying issues which may hold women back.

Fewer than **34%**
of our Senior
Executive Service
are women

This strategy is about strengthening our capability by enabling all of our staff to reach their full potential. Workforce flexibility is not just a gender issue. It is ultimately about productivity. That said, the strategy is also about promoting gender equality and ensuring our culture and practices are non-discriminatory. Change will require not just new policy approaches, but committed and accountable leadership.

27%
of our heads of
missions and posts
are women

There is a strong business case for improving gender diversity. Empirical evidence shows that diverse teams produce stronger outcomes. Various research studies have demonstrated that organisations with a critical mass of women in senior management perform better across a range of performance markers than organisations with less gender diversity in senior management.

Improving the diversity of our Senior Executive Service will broaden the range of views and ideas we bring to our work and improve our ability to understand and respond to a fast-changing world. A more diverse department will also reflect better the community we represent and the global environment in which we operate.

Workforce flexibility is not just a gender issue. It is ultimately about productivity.

The Women in Leadership initiative is about shaping the department to achieve the best outcomes under the Strategic Framework and bringing to life our Values Statement. It sits alongside the Leadership Charter and the department's broader commitment to workplace diversity in setting out our expectations of the values and qualities which all staff will incorporate into their daily work practices.

A more diverse department will also reflect better the community we represent and the global environment in which we operate.

The actions identified in this strategy are not exhaustive. Achieving genuine gender equality and effecting cultural change will be an iterative process and work areas should take the initiative to explore additional and new ideas.

We should seek to be a leader in modelling gender equality wherever we are located. Posts should consider how best to apply this strategy in their local circumstances and are

encouraged to develop post-specific strategies to address gender equality and career progression for locally engaged staff (LES). This should draw on feedback from LES and the actions outlined here and take into account the local cultural context, work practices and post structure. The WIL Secretariat is available to assist posts as required.

Our Goal

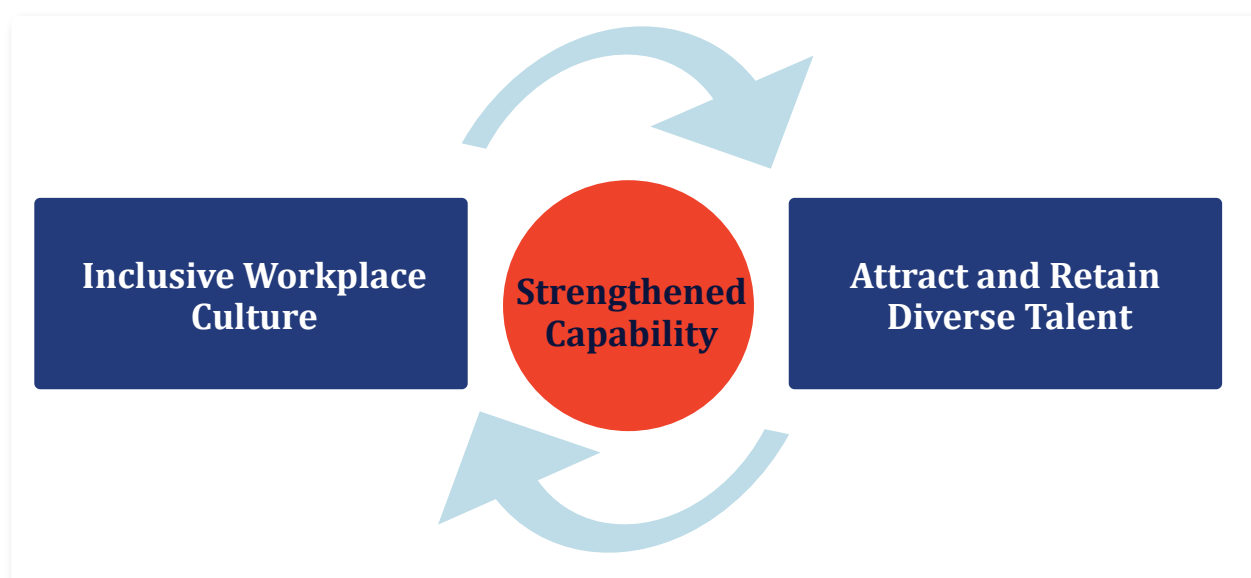
Our goal is a workplace which maximises performance and capability by enabling all women and men to thrive equally. All staff should be able to participate and progress commensurate with their talent and aspirations and feel valued and inspired to do their best.

Inclusive Leadership

What is inclusive leadership?

Inclusive leadership involves fostering, seeking out and listening to diverse perspectives to strengthen work practices, policy development and decision making. Staff who feel included as valuable team members in their workplace are more likely to be motivated and to feel trusted and empowered to perform well.

Fostering an inclusive workplace culture can set in motion a virtuous cycle: inclusive cultures attract and retain diverse talent while diverse talent drives a more inclusive culture. This virtuous cycle is correlated with strengthened capability.



Achieving inclusive leadership

Change for gender equality requires a commitment from all staff. Managers in particular need to understand the case for gender diversity and how their actions contribute. Executive level staff play a particular role as 'keepers of the culture' and future leaders. In accordance with the Leadership Charter, all managers are expected to lead by example and to be aware of their power as role models in embedding change.

Inclusive Leadership Guiding Principles

All staff are expected to practice inclusive leadership in the workplace. All managers will be assessed on whether they:

- 1** Lead by example to build a more inclusive culture and make gender diversity a business priority. Understand their impact as managers and consider: what I say; how I act; what I prioritise; what I measure. Seek feedback.
- 2** Take responsibility and demonstrate trust. Are creative, ambitious and 'can-do' in identifying strategies to promote diversity, including relating to flexible and part-time work for men and women.
- 3** Recognise and reward behaviour that is inclusive and challenge behaviour that is not. Take issues up the line where needed.
- 4** Find opportunities to talk about gender diversity with teams.
- 5** Share career-enhancing opportunities equally among staff and are accountable for doing so.
- 6** Discuss career aspirations and planning with staff. Ensure part-time and flexible workers and staff returning from maternity/parental leave are not penalised or assumptions made about their interest in development opportunities or availability for short-term missions.
- 7** Identify high-potential female staff and support their career progression, with particular strategies for those with flexible or part-time work arrangements, or returning from maternity/parental leave.
- 8** Manage meetings to accommodate different styles and ensure diverse voices are heard. For example, rotate chair responsibilities where appropriate, seek out women's voices, introduce a 'no interruptions' rule.
- 9** Aim for gender balance on departmental committees and among speakers for panels and conferences.
- 10** Showcase female and male role models who work part time or flexibly. Foster a culture which recognises and celebrates the contribution of women.

Our Strategy

Promoting equality and dismantling barriers

A range of interconnected actions are required to address the barriers to women's career progression and create a culture in which all staff can thrive. Action areas under this strategy have been divided into four headings:

- **Leadership and culture**
- **Accountability and inclusion**
- **Embedding substantive equality**
- **Mainstreaming flexible work and dismantling barriers for carers**

Through strengthening our leadership culture, reinforcing the DFAT values and mainstreaming flexible work practices, the actions proposed are expected to bring benefits to men and women alike.

This strategy refers to substantive equality: while policies and procedures may provide equal opportunity at face value, they do not always deliver intended outcomes due to other subtle and complex dynamics which can indirectly discriminate. Substantive equality means our focus is on achieving equitable outcomes anchored in the merit principle.

Leadership and Culture

Inclusive, accountable leadership from the top down sets the tone and creates momentum for change. Signals of cultural change empower staff. All staff take responsibility for implementing change.

Actions

- i. The Secretary and senior leadership take responsibility as visible lead advocates and role models for change.
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing
- ii. Inclusive leadership to be reflected in performance agreements and assessments at all levels and become a tested criterion in EL2 and SES postings and promotion/recruitment rounds.
Responsible Area: All managers and Corporate Management Division (CMD)
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing
- iii. Reward inclusive leadership through the Secretary's annual Leadership Award and other departmental Australia Day citations.
Responsible Area: Secretary, CMD, Protocol Branch
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing
- iv. Rename appropriate DFAT meeting rooms after inspirational women in Australian diplomacy, trade and development cooperation. Consider new ways to promote female and male role models and champions and inspire staff, for example, by profiling senior staff, holding seminars and using appropriate opportunities to highlight the achievements of women in the department.
Responsible Area: CMD, Parliamentary Communications Division
Timeline: 6 months
- v. Designate the WIL Secretariat to advise staff and managers on implementation of this strategy, to be the go to point when difficulties arise and to advocate for staff as required. Appoint an SES Band 3 advocate to promote implementation of the strategy and respond to issues where necessary.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: Immediate

Accountability and Inclusion

Gender data is routinely collected and made available. Changes are based on fact-based processes and monitored to understand progress. Gender diversity objectives are integrated into business processes and managers held to account.

Actions

- i. Sex-disaggregated data to be reported more systematically to staff annually and measured against previous years to track progress (data to include staff composition by gender and level, staff distribution by area/region, promotions, postings – including HOM/HOPs, flexible/part-time work, graduate intakes, performance management).
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: ongoing
- ii. Sex-disaggregated data to be published systematically for all recruitment/promotion rounds, graduate intakes, postings processes and HOM/HOP appointments, showing gender breakdown for applications, interviews and outcomes.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing
- iii. Targets are set for the representation of women at the SES Band 1 and Band 2 levels, with the goal of achieving 40-40-20 gender balance at these levels by 2020. That is, 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men and 20 per cent either. Evidence indicates that workplace culture becomes more gender inclusive in organisations with over 40 per cent women in senior leadership positions.

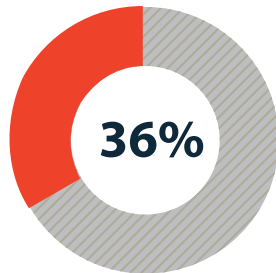
The targets are based on workforce planning data and are designed to be ambitious but achievable. They take into account a number of variable factors which will impact on our ability to meet them. These include: the anticipated attrition rate of SES Band 1 and 2 men and women; the anticipated number of positions available; and the need to replace women who are promoted from SES Band 1 before percentages increase at that level. For the sake of projections, the targets assume overall 50-50 outcomes by gender in aggregate promotion/recruitment rounds to SES Band 1 and 2. The targets will be reviewed and reported on annually.

Responsible Area: CMD

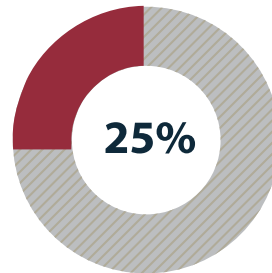
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing

2015 Representation

SES Band 1
Currently
36 per cent

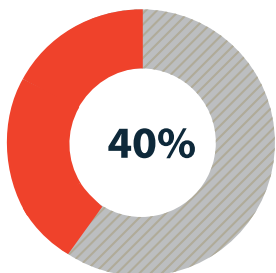


SES Band 2
Currently
25 per cent

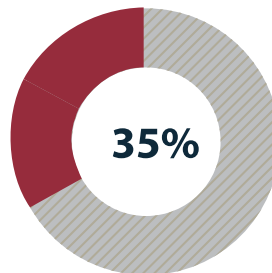


2018 Target

SES Band 1
40 per cent
by end 2018

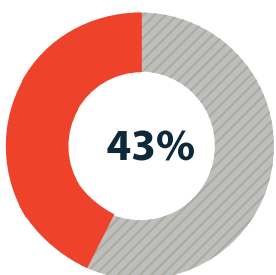


SES Band 2
35 per cent
by end 2018

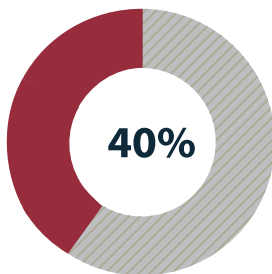


2020 Target

SES Band 1
43 per cent
by end 2020



SES Band 2
40 per cent
by end 2020



- iv. With CMD, divisions to work towards an internal gender balance within a 40 to 60 per cent bandwidth (ie. within each division) where this is not already the case.
Responsible Area: All divisions and CMD
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing
- v. Questions relevant to the successful implementation of this strategy to be included in DFAT corporate surveys and/or the APS Census, for example, on the link between career progression and flexible work and/or inclusive leadership in practice
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: From the launch of the next survey

Embedding Substantive Equality

The barriers to gender equality are understood and specific measures introduced to address unconscious bias and ensure women are getting the right experience and support to develop and advance their careers. Policies and practices around workforce planning and promotions and postings are reviewed and adjusted to support substantive equality.

Actions

- i. Ask '50/50 if not, why not?' for gender balance in all shortlisting processes and include female candidates in all HOM/HOP fields. Take a long view of experience to evaluate the suitability of candidates so that those returning from maternity/parental or other long leave are not disadvantaged.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: Immediate and ongoing
- ii. Introduce a briefing on unconscious bias for all selection panels and committees, including placements, postings, promotions /recruitment, before the panel meets. Consider ways to strengthen the application of the merit principle in recruitment/promotion processes and take unconscious bias into account.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: By mid-2016
- iii. Introduce mandatory unconscious bias training for all managers, as well as key human resources staff.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: Roll-out from second quarter 2016
- iv. CMD to review options for sponsorship, talent management programs and/or career coaching to support career development, including of high-potential staff.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: First quarter 2016

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- v. Initiate a DFAT Women's Network and encourage and leverage other collegial networks (such as the EL2 Network, Families Network, Disability Network, LGBTI Network and Indigenous Employees Network) to support an inclusive workplace environment
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: Take steps to initiate a Women's Network by end 2015
 - vi. Review options for career development which accommodates non-linear career paths and provides increased opportunities for Canberra-based career paths and gaining deep expertise, including for part-time staff.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: Discussion paper first quarter 2016
 - vii. Ensure HOM/HOPs and senior managers properly mentor staff proceeding on their first posting to provide support, help identify and resolve issues and reduce potential feelings of isolation.
Responsible Area: HOM/HOPs, CMD
Timeline: Immediate

Mainstreaming Flexible Work and Dismantling Barriers for Carers

Promote flexibility and work-life balance from the top down and explore and enable flexible work formats. Measure take-up and outcomes. Ensure flexible workers are not penalised and that workloads are fairly balanced, including for non-flexible workers.

Have clear policies around maternity/parental leave and help make it a positive experience. Remove barriers to workforce participation. Encourage and support men to take up flexible work opportunities and use parental leave.

Actions

- i. As a six-month trial across six or more Canberra divisions, adopt an 'if not why not?' approach to flexible work when a request for flexible work arrangements is made. When a request is made, a position will be presumed suitable for flexible work, including flexible, part-time, work from home or job-sharing, unless it is demonstrated why it is not suitable for sound operational reasons. Build on experience and roll out the policy for all Canberra and STO positions by mid-2016. Posts to consider ways to improve access to flexible working arrangements where possible. CMD to trial a job share register and develop guidance for divisions and managers on managing staff in flexible work arrangements. Further consideration to be given to the role of technology/portable devices in enabling flexible work.
Responsible Area: CMD to coordinate
Timeline: Trial to commence in fourth quarter 2015
- ii. Require divisions to report quarterly to CMD on the take up of flexible work arrangements, including numbers of male and female staff working part-time, remotely from a post or STO, from home or in job sharing arrangements, and include data in annual gender reporting.
Responsible Area: All divisions, CMD
Timeline: From fourth quarter 2015
- iii. Further explore and strengthen creative options to provide ongoing employment, including remote working opportunities, for DFAT spouses accompanying a partner to post or other remote work location and create a register of interested staff to ensure equal opportunity.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: First quarter 2016

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- iv. Review policies to improve conditions for families at post, including: consideration of childcare arrangements and costs, particularly for children aged under three; setting out post expectations for out of hours representation requirements in post reports and position descriptions; and support for spouses, including to find employment.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: 2016
 - v. Review and clarify policies around maternity/adoption/parental leave to make the experience as positive as possible, including for staff at post. Capture all relevant information in an easy to access and understand format. Wherever feasible, give positive consideration to requests to backfill maternity/adoption leave at posts.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: First quarter 2016
 - vi. Take steps to engage staff on long-term leave, including maternity/adoption/parental, by facilitating remote IT access as possible. Encourage line areas to stay in touch and extend invitations to work place events and functions.
Responsible Area: CMD, PCD, IMD
Timeline: First quarter 2016
 - vii. Clarify policies around workplace support for breastfeeding mothers, including to undertake work-related travel. Review breastfeeding facilities in DFAT offices in Canberra and enhance to maintain Australian Breastfeeding Association accreditation. For all other DFAT offices improve breastfeeding facilities as required.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: First quarter 2016
 - viii. Review the emergency childcare provisions to give broader scope to funding childcare requirements arising from peak work periods.
Responsible Area: CMD
Timeline: First quarter 2016

Actions for Consideration by Divisions, Posts and State and Territory Offices

Divisions, posts and STOs are encouraged to discuss this strategy as a work unit and identify ways in which they can implement and embed the change it envisages.

Actions for work areas to consider are listed below. This is not intended to be an exhaustive list and work areas should be creative in identifying new approaches to promote gender equality and work-life balance for all staff.

- Review leadership messaging and role modelling to reflect the Guiding Principles.
- Review flexible work arrangements and identify new and creative approaches. Discuss ways to manage flexible work arrangements as a team and balance workloads fairly.
- Hold regular meetings or events at times which enable the participation of flexible workers.
- Identify career enhancing opportunities in the work unit. Measure and report on how these are distributed between staff.
- Consider strategies for achieving a 40 to 60 per cent gender diversity bandwidth in divisions/posts/STOs, where this is not the case.
- Identify high-potential women. Discuss and map out career aspirations and development opportunities, including training. Encourage them to apply for promotion.
- Review performance assessments of part-time and flexible workers and identify any discrepancies between ratings for full time and part time/flexible workers. Where discrepancies exist, take steps to understand why and address if necessary.
- Ensure events are gender balanced wherever feasible.
- Take the Secretary's lead and adopt the Panel Pledge: malechampionsofchange.com/commit-to-the-panel-pledge/
- Identify successful flexible work practices and replicate them.
- Showcase female and male role models.
- Consider how technology, such as blackberries, access tokens and iPads, can support your flexible workers and allocate accordingly.
- Meet to discuss and review progress twice a year.

Governance

This initiative is overseen by the Women in Leadership Steering Group, which was established in February 2015 and is chaired by the Secretary. The Steering Group will review progress under the strategy twice a year and provide an annual progress report to staff. Reviews will include updates to the strategy as required.

The Steering Group is supported by the Women in Leadership Secretariat, based in the Corporate Management Division. The Secretariat will work with line areas to identify potential issues and risks associated with action items and to monitor progress, measure outcomes and make suggestions. It will report biannually to the Steering Group.



DFAT Secretary Peter Varghese with Women in Leadership Steering Group member and former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick.

Queries, suggestions and requests for further information regarding this strategy should be directed to the Women in Leadership Secretariat: wilsecretariat@dfat.gov.au

Women in Leadership Steering Group Membership

Chair

Peter Varghese, Secretary

External Members

Elizabeth Broderick, former Sex Discrimination Commissioner
Simon Rothery, CEO Goldman Sachs, Australia & New Zealand

Ex Officio Members

John Fisher, FAS CMD
Greg Ralph, WRC Representative
Samantha Keech-Marx, DFAT Families Network

Staff Representatives

Katrina Cooper
Minoli Perera
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Claire Ripley

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