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# ACCELERATING GENDER PARITY: A TOOLKIT



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**At the World Economic Forum**

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This toolkit is intended to be a resource for businesses and other stakeholders interested in accelerating gender parity. For more information, or to get involved, please contact the World Economic Forum's Education, Gender and Work team at [educationgenderwork@weforum.org](mailto:educationgenderwork@weforum.org).

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# Preface

**RICHARD SAMANS**

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**SAADIA ZAHIDI**

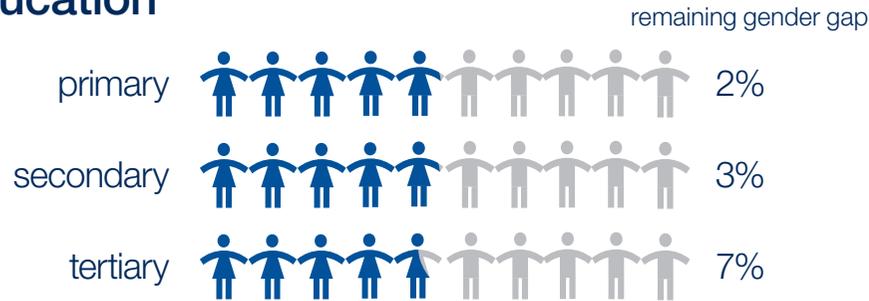
Head of Education, Gender and Work and Member of the Executive Committee

Over the past 10 years, the World Economic Forum has brought together a community of influential leaders committed to addressing the global gender gap with a focus on the economic aspects of gender parity. We have benchmarked national, regional and industry gender gaps and gathered best practices adopted by leading companies in all regions of the world. To accelerate the closing of the global gender gap in employment, companies and governments can benefit from a platform to learn from each other's experience and be inspired by possibilities for further action. To that end, the World Economic Forum has been fostering communities through which leaders can exchange knowledge, discuss adapting models to local circumstances and celebrate impact.

The principles showcased in this toolkit highlight several approaches taken to closing gender gaps in companies across the globe. Each of these practices has a potentially transformative role but is most effective within a consistent company-wide strategy, resting on a strong foundation of labour standards, including health and safety. For such an approach to work, leaders must commit for the long-term and manage some of the short-term barriers and trade-offs. There is an urgent need to accelerate progress towards gender parity, particularly as labour markets face both technological disruption and talent shortages. We hope that the principles for action outlined herein will serve to deepen existing commitments, inspire fresh, impact-focused initiatives to promote gender parity, and further work with geographical and sectoral focus.

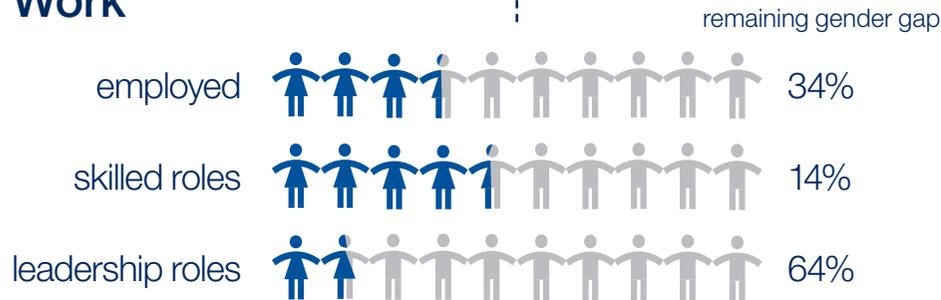
# Key facts on gender

## Education



parity

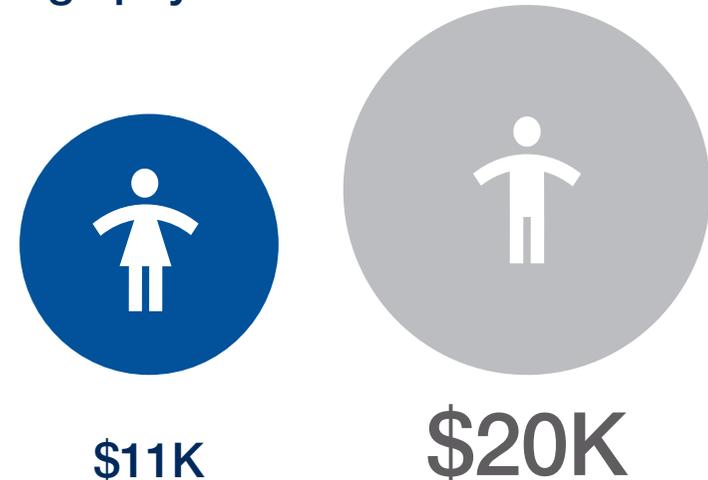
## Work



## An average workday



## Average pay



Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2016, World Economic Forum



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**At the current rate  
of progress,  
the economic  
gender gap will  
close in 170 years.**

**Who wants to  
wait that long?**

Let's *fast forward* to Gender Parity.

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# Why?

**It's the right thing to do and it pays off for business, society, women and men.**

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## Building 21st-century talent

In more than 100 countries, more women than men take part in higher education, yet do not equally participate in the labour market. When they do, they are less likely to work in skilled and senior roles than their male colleagues. This points to sizable wastage of talent globally.

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## The diversity dividend

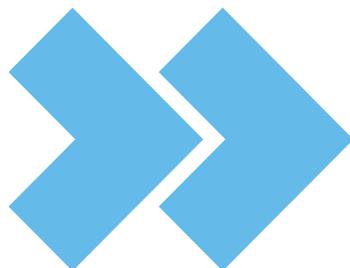
Diversity in companies has been proven to enhance innovation and the quality of decision-making – key drivers of competitiveness in a world where change is accelerating. By 2018, women are likely to control two-thirds of global household spending: a \$40 trillion prize.<sup>1</sup> It pays to know your customers.

<sup>1</sup> Catalyst, Buying Power: Global Women

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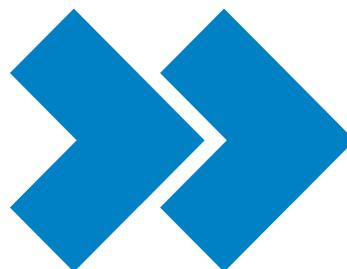
# How to Fast Forward?

**COMMIT**



Build the case among senior management, understand current gaps, acknowledge bias, set targets and communicate the benefits of promoting gender parity across the organization.

**EMBED**



Embed change by creating programmes that address your company's core concerns, inclusive of efforts to address pay gaps, parental leave, performance reviews, hiring processes, mentoring, sponsoring, and safety and management training.

**SCALE**



Scale your initiative beyond your company and promote change in your industry, community, value chains and wider society.

# COMMIT

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## Ensure buy-in at the top

Leadership buy-in is a key component in the success of any initiative aiming to increase female representation. Both male and female leaders should become champions of gender parity in their organizations, setting the tone for the whole organization and demonstrating their commitment.

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## Understand gender gaps in your company

If you don't understand a problem, you can't fix it. Benchmark gender parity across the full pipeline of roles: junior, middle, senior and c-suite. Understand the specificity of wage gaps, the discrepancies between line and staff roles and the gender balance in different departments. Understand the gender outcomes for different generations and family situations.

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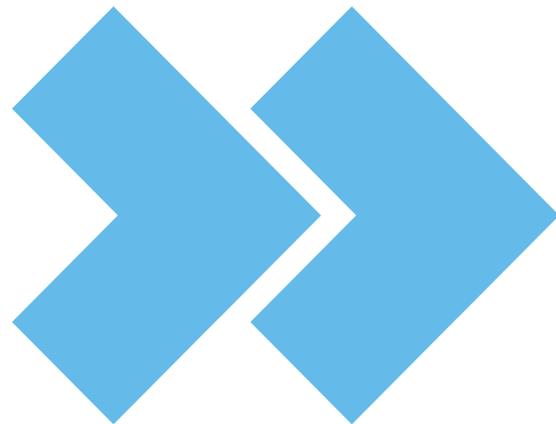
## Communicate your rationale

Among advocates of gender parity, the business rationale is well established. A key first step in company commitments to gender parity is for leaders to share and embed this understanding within their wider business.

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## Acknowledge bias

Multiple robust studies highlight the prevalence of gender bias across the workplace, mostly in favour of men: from instinctive reactions to tone of voice, to the way we interpret negotiation and leadership by women as more abrasive. The road to addressing these biases starts with acknowledging their existence.





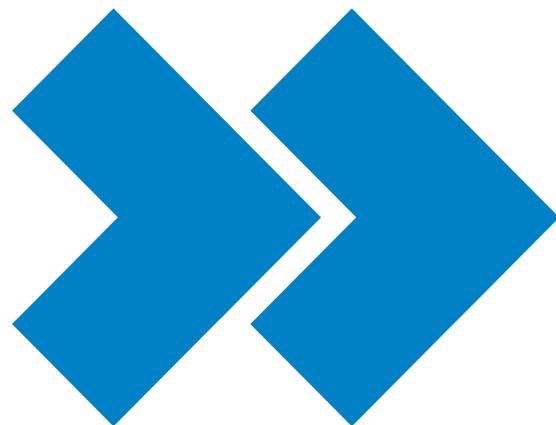
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## Set targets and monitor change

Outline the diversity goals of your company in quantifiable terms. Set specific, measurable objectives for achieving greater parity and assign responsibility for driving these targets to leaders and working groups. Targets must be developed for line roles and senior leadership roles. In addition, targets should address gaps in technical roles that face particular gender gaps and are increasingly important for mastering the Fourth Industrial Revolution. Communicate current figures and targets internally and consider communicating them externally. Consider taking the transparent approach by sharing your figures publicly and outlining your goals to the wider community.



# EMBED



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## Address the pay gap

Most workplaces suffer from gender pay gaps. Not only are women negotiating for a pay rise considered less likeable, but they are also statistically less likely to succeed when they do ask. Existing approaches to addressing pay gaps include companies that have established pay bands and systems of checks and balances for reviewing compensation.

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## Evolve performance reviews

Assessments of performance reviews analysed by gender have shown that women are more likely to receive biased reviews, including non-constructive criticism. Eliminate bias through feedback training and distribute business-critical stretch goals proportionally between high-potential women and men. Be mindful of the implicit career paths within your company and industry, reflecting on the potential gender biases within them.

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## Empower parents

A generous, balanced parental leave allowance available to and used equally by men and women is foundational to narrowing gender gaps, within the context of broader work-life balance and career support policies. Critical success factors for effective policies include a company culture where systems and processes dominate over on-the-fly judgement. Some companies have also successfully expanded their leave policies to all employees, rather than just parents, to incentivize a balanced culture.

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## Sponsor women

To succeed, both male and female employees need not only mentors, but also sponsors – people who will advise and promote their participation in high-visibility projects and networks – actively planning for their progression. Studies show that sponsorship opportunities often go to men, so a conscious approach is needed by senior management to sponsor both high-potential women and men.

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## Consider blind recruitment

Traditional recruitment is riddled with biases, leading to asymmetries in hiring men and women. Blind recruitment is increasingly seen as a way to increase the diversity of new recruits. A variety of new tech solutions are empowering managers to tackle biases by screening candidates using objective methods.

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## Close the confidence gap

Even when there are no differences in ability between men and women, studies have shown that women consistently under-rate their abilities, demonstrating a significant confidence gap. Appropriate leadership training and strong mentors can help build a strong foundation of confidence.

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## Set an example with your board

Companies with diverse boards exhibit better performance figures. Companies must expand their networks when looking for new candidates and ensure they consider a gender-balanced pool for every board seat.

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## Lead with gender awareness

Organizations are dynamic, and constantly changing. New strategies, budgets and organizational structures hold the potential of damaging hard-won parity achievements. Leaders should consider new policies and programmes through a gender lens, assess the impact of automation and redundancies on gender balance and introduce gender impact assessment and gender-responsible budgeting mechanisms into core decision-making procedures.

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## Train managers to lead diverse teams

Managers in workplace 4.0 should be skilled at managing employees with larger variations in personalities and cultural backgrounds, at times cross-nationally and in virtual teams. This can introduce new lenses on gender. Managers should be supported in developing strong capabilities in managing and aligning such diverse teams.

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## Eliminate sexual harassment

Companies must set a clear message that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. Establish effective procedures for reporting and dealing with inappropriate behaviour.



# SCALE

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## Campaign to shape public opinion

Proactively embrace opportunities to shape the way your wider community perceives gender by promoting gender-positive narratives through all your external communications, including advertising. Consider sharing and celebrating your company's efforts in promoting gender parity to set an example for others.

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## Partner with civil society

Recognize the role of civil society for identifying issues in the broader community and partner with civil society organizations on philanthropic and social responsibility efforts for gender parity.

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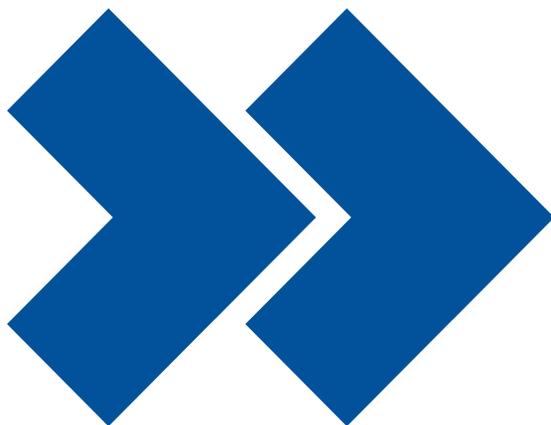
## Collaborate with government

There is much that businesses can do to promote beneficial parental leave arrangements. Yet to make such policies truly viable, businesses should engage government in a productive dialogue on their shared responsibility for the workforce.

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## Promote gender parity in education

While gender gaps are often the result of hiring, retention and progression within companies, they can also emerge due to education asymmetries between men and women. Take a proactive approach to shaping your future talent pool, with a particular focus on skills which will remain integral in the future landscape of work. Promote female role models to schools and engage in closing skills-based gender gaps.



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## Promote gender parity in your industry

Share your success story with the wider industry, highlighting best practices and the benefits to the company of focusing on gender parity.

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## Incentivize gender parity in your supply chain

Take a broader focus on diversity by targeting parity among suppliers and distributors. Develop principles on diversity for your wider value chain and prioritize business with those who meet these requirements.

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## Invest in female entrepreneurs

In a fast-paced, innovation-driven global economy, gender parity in the future workforce will also depend on greater gender parity among entrepreneurs. In addition to promoting female entrepreneurship through your value chain, support former employees, women and men, who set out on their own venture; support and promote the work of a new crop of firms dedicated to funding female start-ups.

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## Leverage new platforms

Female employees are networking, sharing and comparing their experiences at companies, particularly the most technologically savvy millennial generation. Companies can use these platforms to understand their employees' experience of the company and potentially engage proactively in the dialogues underway to exchange views on new solutions.

# Evaluation

Review the landscape of possible interventions. What are you already doing and what should you take on next to drive forward your initiative?

		Considering	Planning	Implementing	Driving change	
COMMIT	1.1	Ensure buy-in at the top				
	1.2	Communicate your rationale				
	1.3	Understand gender gaps in your company				
	1.4	Acknowledge bias				
	1.5	Set targets and monitor change				
EMBED	2.1	Address the pay gap				
	2.2	Empower parents				
	2.3	Evolve performance reviews				
	2.4	Sponsor women				
	2.5	Consider blind recruitment				
	2.6	Lead with gender awareness				
	2.7	Close the confidence gap				
	2.8	Train managers to lead diverse teams				
	2.9	Set an example with your board				
	2.10	Eliminate sexual harassment				
SCALE	3.1	Campaign to shape public opinion				
	3.2	Collaborate with government				
	3.3	Partner with civil society				
	3.4	Promote gender parity in education				
	3.5	Promote gender parity in your industry				
	3.6	Incentivize gender parity in your supply chain				
	3.7	Invest in female entrepreneurs				
	3.8	Leverage new platforms				



Over the past 10 years, we have heard many examples of successful practice in accelerating gender parity.

As we create a platform to discuss deepening impact, be in touch, tell us about what works, and join our network of collaborators.

Contact us at  
[educationgenderwork@weforum.org](mailto:educationgenderwork@weforum.org)

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# System Initiative Partners

The World Economic Forum would like to thank the Partners of the System Initiative on Education, Gender and Work for their guidance and invaluable support of the System Initiative.

Accenture	Egon Zehnder	Nestlé
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Alghanim Industries	Google	Ooredoo
AlixPartners	GSK	Pearson
Arconic	Heidrick & Struggles	Procter & Gamble
A.T. Kearney	Home Instead	PwC
Bahrain Economic Development Board	Infosys	Renault Nissan
Bank of America	Intel	The Rockefeller Foundation
Barclays	JLL	Saudi Aramco
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation	Johnson Controls	Tata Consultancy Services
Bloomberg	Lego Foundation	Tupperware Brands Corporation
Boston Consulting Group	Limak Holding	Turkcell
Burda Media	LinkedIn	Unilever
Centene	ManpowerGroup	Workday
Chobani	Mercer (MMC)	WPP
Dogan Broadcasting	Microsoft Corporation	

To learn more about the commitment of our System Initiative Partners to addressing gender parity and talent issues globally, please refer to the System Initiative website, <https://www.weforum.org/system-initiatives/education-gender-and-work>.



WORLD  
ECONOMIC  
FORUM

The logo for the World Economic Forum, featuring the words "WORLD", "ECONOMIC", and "FORUM" stacked vertically in a grey, sans-serif font. A blue arc is positioned behind the text, starting from the left side of the word "WORLD", curving around the "E" and "F", and ending at the bottom right of the word "FORUM".

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COMMITTED TO  
IMPROVING THE STATE  
OF THE WORLD