

POWER UP YOUR WORKPLACE

A Playbook for Advancing Gender Equity



WREN

Women's Rights &
Empowerment Network

Introduction

In today's workplaces, new conversations are opening up about diversity, equality, and inclusion that point to an exciting future in which every person is valued and recognized. With both research and experience indicating the advantages of diverse organizations in our increasingly competitive and globalized economy, these dialogues about inclusion are now translating into meaningful action.

This resource is designed to provide employers with strategies to improve workplace culture and support cisgender, transgender, and nonbinary women as full and equal participants and leaders in the economy and workplace. While the guide focuses primarily on gender diversity, many of the recommendations can also improve diversity in different dimensions that include, but are not limited to, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin, and disability status.

DEFINITION OF KEY GENDER IDENTITIES

Cisgender – A person whose gender identity matches the gender they were assigned at birth.

Transgender – An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Non-binary and/or genderqueer – Terms used by some people who experience their gender identity and/or gender expression as falling outside the categories of man and woman.

For more information, visit: GLAAD (<https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>)

DEFINING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Diversity includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups.

Inclusion is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate.

(Source: <https://independentsector.org/resource/why-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-matter/>)

Gender Diversity is Good for Business

At a time when employers in South Carolina are striving to fill their workforce needs, many are discovering that a commitment to diversity and inclusion can greatly improve business performance. Rather than treating gender diversity as a requirement, forward-thinking companies are welcoming it as an opportunity to evolve into more adaptable and resilient organizations. They know that by supporting and advancing inclusion, they are better able to attract the best talent, foster innovation, cultivate a wider array of customers and clients, and contribute positively to a more integrated community and culture at-large.

And, while from an ethical standpoint, a more diverse and inclusive workplace helps address issues of historical discrimination, it also helps employers:

- Attract and retain the best employees
- Address skill shortages
- Reduce the cost of employee turnover
- Improve access to target markets
- Enhance a company's reputation, and
- Promote creativity and innovation.

(Source: Guide to Gender Diversity in Employment, Employers Guide. A Project of the Atlantic Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women.)

FACTS & FIGURES

- South Carolina currently ranks 49th out of 50 states in gender equity².
- Women comprise over two-thirds of the state's low-wage workforce³.
- Two-thirds of South Carolina families have a woman as a primary or co-breadwinner⁴.

In the next decade, it's estimated that our state will need as many as 26,140 additional workers per year. If women were to help meet the workforce shortage in South Carolina across the occupation spectrum and increase their overall presence in the state's workforce from the current level of 48.3 percent to 54.0 percent by 2025, this could generate up to \$5.2 billion in new annual statewide economic activity and reduce the pay gap between men and women from 27 percent to 19 percent¹.

WAGE GAP IN SC



Darla Moore School of Business

¹Joseph Von Nessen. (2017). Solving the South Carolina Labor Shortage: The Economic Impact of Increasing Women's Participation in the Workforce. Darla Moore School of Business. Retrieved from https://www.scwren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/DOR_WREN_P2_FD4.pdf

²McCann, Adam. (2018). Best & Worst States for Women's Equality. WalletHub. Retrieved from <https://wallethub.com/edu/best-and-worst-states-for-women-equality/5835/>

³Entmacher, J., Frohlich, L., Gallagher Robbins, K., Martin, E., & Watson, L. (2016). "Underpaid and Overloaded: Women in Low-Wage Jobs." National Women's Law Center. Retrieved from https://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/final_nwlc_lowwagereport2014.pdf

⁴U.S. Census Bureau. (2017). Employment Characteristics of Families: 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. Retrieved from https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_17_5YR_S2302&prodType=table

Barriers to Gender Equity in the Workplace

LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION

Women are more likely to be out of the labor force than men, regardless of age. Employment levels peak for both women and men between ages 35 and 44, while the smallest difference in gender employment levels is between ages 45 and 54. The effect of differences in experience is cumulative over time⁵.

GENDER PAY GAP

While South Carolina's gender pay gap has declined since 2005, women working full-time still earn lower annual salaries than men—an estimated \$15,861 per year less after controlling for race, occupation, nativity, moving status, and age. Although South Carolina women, on average, are more highly educated than their male counterparts, a 22 percent pay gap persists even within occupations with the highest educational requirements in the state⁶.

DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT

Gender differences vary significantly by occupation and industry. Professions that were male-dominated in 2005 continue to be in 2015. The military is an exception, however, where women's involvement has increased significantly over the last decade⁷.



CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

While all employees have caregiving responsibilities—for themselves, children, or aging parents—women tend to do most of this work as primary caregivers. Inflexible work policies make it difficult for people of all genders to carry out these responsibilities. In addition, the prohibitively high cost of childcare makes center-based care unrealistic for many parents of young children. Many in these caregiver positions must choose between working and caregiving.

⁵Joseph Von Nessen. (2017). Solving the South Carolina Labor Shortage: The Economic Impact of Increasing Women's Participation in the Workforce. Darla Moore School of Business. Retrieved from https://www.scwren.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/DOR_WREN_P2_FD4.pdf

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

Practical Recommendations for a More Diverse Workplace

One of the most effective ways for a company to develop and maintain a gender-diverse workplace is to conduct an internal review of the current state of the organization, including:

- A review of existing policies and procedures to identify any biased or discriminatory practices.
- A pay analysis, reviewing the pay of groups of women and men in different jobs and categories, including bonuses and other benefits, to ensure that pay differentials are based on business-related factors such as skill, effort, and responsibility.
- Third-party audits and compensation reviews.

While not all of the following recommendations are appropriate for every company (for instance, small companies might not have the human power to implement them all), there are a range of options that any employer can consider. Ultimately, by making a meaningful commitment to change and developing a gender diversity action plan that addresses the issues of **recruitment and hiring, retention and workplace culture, and leadership and career advancement**, any company can foster a more inclusive workplace.

HOW LOCAL COMPANIES ARE MAKING IT HAPPEN

At **Abacus Planning Group**, eight weeks maternity and paternity are offered to employees. Time off to study is provided to employees as they prepare to take various professional exams and flexible work week schedules can be accommodated.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

To help develop and diversity and inclusion pipeline:

- Post job opportunities in a variety of platforms to reach a more diverse array of candidates.
- Partner with educational institutions or training programs that can provide access to more diverse intern and employee pipelines.
- Diversify recruitment teams, ensuring that company representatives attending career fairs and sitting on interview boards are more approachable to a wider population.
- Develop interview questions and applicant tests that respect differences and provide a fair opportunity for people with a variety of backgrounds to present their case for employment.
- Review job descriptions to consider if stated educational or other technical requirements are truly necessary for the job.
- Do not request wage or salary history.

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING CONT.

- Provide wage or salary ranges to increase pay transparency.
- During the initial screening process, remove names and identifying information from applications to reduce unconscious bias.
- Base employee pay on business-related factors such as skill, effort, and responsibility.

RETENTION AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

Hiring and orienting new employees is resource-intensive, and retention is critically important. A more supportive and flexible workplace culture can reduce the turnover rate and enhance the morale, loyalty, and engagement of existing employees, which in turn has a positive effect on productivity.

- Familiarize new employees with the job and company culture, helping them envision a long-term future.
- Set up mentoring and leadership programs.
- Ask employees for input on making workplace culture more inclusive.
- Provide equitable and competitive pay and benefits that allow employees to balance commitments on and off the job, including earned sick leave, vacations, parental leave, and other family friendly benefits.
- Adopt and enforce clear harassment and bullying policies.
- Conduct exit interviews to determine why employees leave the company and what can be done to reduce future losses.
- Consider flexible schedules, including compressed work weeks and opportunities to work at home.
- For new parents who have taken leave during the review period, adjust their review period accordingly.
- Provide private accommodations for mothers to express breast milk.
- Provide onsite childcare or childcare subsidies.
- Provide diversity training to management and personnel.
- Assess your team structures and encourage gender diversity.

HOW LOCAL COMPANIES ARE MAKING IT HAPPEN

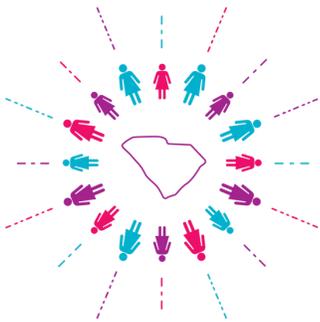
Central Carolina Community Foundation provides a respite room, flex time, childcare reimbursement, and allows staff to bring children to work on a limited and as needed basis.

Richland Library encourages work/life balance by offering employees many unique benefits including one hour of play each week and an hour for hour match of time off for employees who volunteer in the community. They encourage continual learning through employee participation in public library programming and up to \$2,000 tuition reimbursement. They also offer minimum wage of \$13, compared to the state requirement of \$7.25.

Willis HR values employees' need for work/life integration and demonstrates their commitment by providing unlimited vacation time, flexible work arrangements, and collaborative communication tools.

PROFITABLE CHANGES

A study by the McKinsey Institute showed that companies with greater gender diversity in management are 21% more likely to see above-average profits. In a survey of businesses and non-profits in South Carolina, most of the respondents stated that diversity is a priority and lack of resources and practical knowledge is their greatest barrier.



LEADERSHIP AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Having more gender diversity in leadership positions can lead to greater innovation, better decision making, higher productivity, and higher employee retention and satisfaction. Establishing an equal distribution of opportunities for career advancement is critical to developing and supporting a more gender diverse workplace.

- Commit to diversity at all levels of the company, including executive and board leadership.
- Assess current company data on compensation and promotions.
- Communicate career pathways and opportunities for advancement.
- Ensure that there is no retaliation for discussing compensation.
- Base employee compensation on business-related factors such as skill, effort, and responsibility.
- Provide opportunities for professional development for all staff.
- Provide professional development opportunities, including training or tuition assistance.
- Provide employees at all levels with exposure to leadership meetings and settings.
- Improve opportunities for career development through both internal and external mentorship programs.

HOW LOCAL COMPANIES ARE MAKING IT HAPPEN

Parents at the **South Carolina Department of Insurance** can bring infants younger than six months to work. The department has set aside a private space as a “quiet room” if parents need to calm their infant or attend to other needs.

Lourie Life and Health provides full-time employees with paid time off for sick and vacation use, health care coverage, bereavement leave, military leave, voting time leave, and provides flexibility for family and medical leave.

Conclusion

Increasing gender diversity in South Carolina's labor force is critical to economic growth for our state. There is a significant, projected workforce shortage in South Carolina over the next decade. By addressing this workforce need, we have the opportunity to create a net gain in economic activity for our state and simultaneously make strides in reducing the gender wage gap. These gender gaps in South Carolina's workforce are profound, but by working together, we can close them, driving powerful economic growth and positive change.

WREN is a statewide organization building a movement to advance the health, economic well-being, and rights of women, girls, and their families.

Acknowledgements

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The WREN Summit is held each year in April, on or around Equal Pay Day, in Columbia, S.C. The Summit offers participants resources, skills, and dialogue to advance gender equity. Let's no longer talk about change; let's work together to make the change happen – now. Learn more about the WREN Summit at <https://scwren.org/projects/wren-annual-summit/>.



If you would like to learn more about incorporating practices and policies to advance gender diversity, equity, and inclusion in your workplace, WREN can help! Reach out to our team at powerup@scwren.org to learn more.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS & RESOURCES

- [Women's Rights and Empowerment Network](#)
- [Together SC](#)
- [Columbia Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Mercer](#)
- [Welcome Table SC](#)
- [Richland Library](#)
- [Riley Institute Diversity Leaders Initiative](#)
- [Race Equity and Inclusion Partnership](#)