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| Gender equality action plan (GEAP) further how-to guides |
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# Further guides on preparing your GEAP

## Create a working group

A working group helps distribute responsibilities, so they do not all fall on one person or team. You can also use existing networks to build your working group.

The working group guides the development and implementation of your GEAP.

It can also help fulfill other obligations under the Gender Equality Act.

This includes conducting workplace gender audits, doing gender impact assessments and promoting gender equality.

Other benefits a working group include:

* **boosting engagement** – a working group can boost employee involvement in your GEAP
* **demonstrating commitment and accountability** – supporting a working group is a commitment to gender equality. It also ensures accountability for progress
* **providing a platform for consultation** – the group is a resource for consultation. It can also support implementation
* **adding credibility and community support** – a diverse working group that reflects the makeup of your organisation adds credibility to your GEAP. It also fosters a sense of ownership among employees. This will ensure support for the GEAP even after the group is no longer active
* **bringing diverse skills and perspectives** – a working group brings together skills, experiences and viewpoints. This contributes to innovative ideas and effective problem-solving. Although it can be hard to manage different opinions, decisions made by a group are often more creative and effective
* **offering mutual support** – group members can support each other. This is important because the work can be challenging and require significant resources. The group can also celebrate achievements together as a team
* **sharing knowledge in the sector** –a working group can share knowledge, ideas and resources with other organisations. Check out the [communities of practice](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/communities-practice) available for some of the different industries on the Commission’s website.

### Factors to consider

Some of the things to consider when creating the group include:

* **diverse membership** – include diverse employees in the group. This includes First Nations staff, people of different ages, people with disability, people of difference genders, races, religions and LGBTQIA+ people. Include staff from different departments and levels of seniority. Diversity ensures your GEAP development will meet the needs and experiences of all employees
* **leadership representation** – involve members of the executive team. This shows your organisation's commitment to intersectional gender equality. Senior leaders can help prioritise the GEAP in budgeting and work planning
* **existing groups –** use existing employee groups. This includes networks or staff groups, such as inclusion and diversity committees. This can save time, effort and resources. It also provides established procedures for consulting and communicating with employees
* **workload and resourcing** – assess the time and resources your organisation has. Smaller organisations might find a smaller, focused group more manageable. Larger organisations might benefit from having multiple groups, like a steering committee and a working group
* **cross-organisational representation** – ensure representation from different departments and functions. This helps distribute the workload evenly and prevents it from falling on a single person or department.

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| **Using external experts**  Some organisations use external experts to develop their GEAP.  This can be helpful if you have the resources.  However, your organisation will need to take ownership of the process and outcomes.  Having an inclusive and diverse group working on the GEAP can help with this. |

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| **Communities of practice**  The Commission’s website has [information about communities of practice](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/communities-practice). This includes industry-specific communities of practice. |

## Use multiple data sources

Collecting and using multiple data sources will help you to understand the gender inequality issues.

Each data source has strengths and limitations.

Your GEAP must be informed by your workplace gender audit. This audit includes workforce data and employee experience data.

Other sources of data could include:

* public data, such as national or state surveys and census data
* peer-reviewed published literature, such as research and resources from credible organisations
* sector reports, such as organisational reports, local research and interviews, and recommendations from relevant employee networks
* primary data, such as previous consultation findings, surveys, and research projects.

These data sources will help you understand your audit. You can use them to compare your organisation with similar organisations. You can also cross-check what your audit data is telling you. Other data sources can help you identify strategies to try in your workplace.

The consultation process is also an important step in data analysis. It provides a space for audit findings to be shared, tested and analysed.

This includes staff with lived experience as well as leaders in your organisation, the board and employee networks and unions.

We recommend that you outline any other information or data sources you considered as part of developing your GEAP.

This shows the evidence that supports your GEAP. It also sets out steps you took to understand your audit data.

Consider whether you need to collect additional data on specific groups or levels of the workplace to understand your workforce more fully.

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| **Additional resources**  The Commission has a list of [useful data sources](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/data-sources-conducting-gender-impact-assessment) that offer national and Victorian data on a range of topics.  These include data on workforce, income, housing, education and employment, and more.  In addition, the Commission also has [leading practice resources](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/leading-practice-resources) for each workplace gender equality indicator.  You may also want to share information, resources and data with other organisations in your industry group. |

## Highlight data gaps

You may find you do not have enough data to develop evidence-based strategies or measures for a particular indicator.

In this case, your GEAP should highlight where these data gaps exist.

It should identify how you will establish a more robust dataset or internal reporting system for these measures.

## Consider intersectionality

The Act requires you to consider intersectionality where possible to inform your GEAP strategies and measures.

If you lack data to do an intersectional analysis, acknowledge this in your GEAP. You can identify strategies to address this data gap.[[1]](#footnote-2)

An intersectional analysis of the data can reveal different experiences of gender inequality by different people. You can then focus GEAP strategies on the barriers for these groups.

Doing intersectional analysis may result in small sample sizes. This is why you should supplement quantitative data with qualitative data analysis.

You can gather qualitative data during the consultation process from people with lived experience. You will need to ensure participants feel safe in sharing their experiences.

### Undertake an intersectional analysis

First, develop a plan to collect experiences from current employees.

Focus on employees with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences.

Make sure people feel comfortable sharing their experiences. For example, explain how you will collect, use and report the data they share with you. The ‘Consultation and engagement’ section has more about this.

To undertake intersectional analysis, you need to:

* **collect data** on demographic/identity attributes
* **break down the data** by gender and other identity demographics. For example, you could look at the promotion rates for women with a disability
* **identify patterns and disparities** –look for differences between groups in the data. For example, compare salaries, promotion, turnover rates and representation in leadership roles between:
  + First Nations women and men and non-Indigenous women and men
  + women and men with disability and women and men without disability
  + LGBTQIA+ people and non-LGBTQIA+ people
* **collect qualitative data** from staff and relevant stakeholders. Use this data to gain insights and validate your findings. Lived experiences add context. They also highlight areas that need more investigation. [See Part 1: consulting on your audit results of the GEAP guidance 2026](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-3-consulting-your-audit-results) for further help.

For more on intersectional analysis, refer to [Applying intersectionality](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/applying-intersectionality/gender-impact-assessments) and the [Intersectionality at work report](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/intersectionality-work).

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| **Privacy**  Keep your data collection, analysis and reporting confidential.  You must have privacy protocols, particularly when using an intersectional approach.  The more attributes you collect in relation to each employee, the easier it becomes to identify individuals. Read more about maintaining employee privacy [on the Commission’s website](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/how-do-i-maintain-my-employees-privacy). |

### Using intersectional data

Your workplace gender audit results may reveal insights about people who experience intersectional gender inequality.

This is when gender inequality is compounded by disadvantage or discrimination. It can be due to other characteristics such as Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Analyse these results to understand how intersectional gender inequality may manifest in your organisation.

Ideally, you should include these insights in your GEAP. You should also include strategies and measures to address any identified trends. Make sure you respect the safety, privacy and interests of people who experience intersectional gender inequality.

Consult with employees who experience intersectional gender inequality or relevant external people or groups. This will help you outline these insights in a safe and constructive way.

## Include other information sources

You may also have other important information sources that can shape your GEAP.

For example:

* employee engagement surveys
* focus groups
* diversity and inclusion surveys
* research
* complaints data
* reports from workplace contact officers
* court proceedings
* anecdotal information from exit interviews
* participation in leadership development programs
* data on length of service at particularly levels.

Data from these sources can inform the strategies in your GEAP.

## Gain commitment from leaders

Create a [case for change](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-5-making-case-change) and [resourcing](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-8-resourcing-your-geap) plan. Next, explain your obligations under the Act and the benefits of your GEAP to your leadership team.

For your GEAP to succeed, you need leadership support and ownership. Their support will shape your organisation's [vision](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-5-making-case-change#52-creating-a-vision-recommended) for gender equality.

Leaders at all levels, including the board, CEO and senior leaders, need to commit to the plan and actively involve all employees.

Leaders who actively support and prioritise gender equality initiatives demonstrate that these efforts are important.

This commitment helps with:

* better implementation of your GEAP
* ensuring [resources](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-8-resourcing-your-geap) are properly allocated
* promoting cultural change in the workplace
* encouraging all employees to participate in the GEAP
* creating a more inclusive environment
* boosting the chance of lasting gender equality outcomes.

Include strategies in your GEAP to ensure leadership focus and commitment. This includes holding leaders accountable with specific strategies and measures.

Finally, your leaders should be the core champions of gender equality in your organisation.

They can help you maintain buy-in within the leadership group, throughout your organisation and with external stakeholders.

Your leadership should:

* clearly communicate your GEAP and your organisation’s commitment to gender equality, both internally and externally
* model behaviour and values that align with the GEAP. This includes [gender equality principles and gender pay equity principles](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-principles-and-gender-pay-equity-principles)
* prioritise gender equality in leadership discussions related to the workplace [gender equality indicators](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/workplace-gender-equality-indicators). This includes recruitment, promotions, pay and organisational changes
* build on their understanding of gender equality and intersectionality, emerging evidence and research, metrics and data. They should communicate this regularly to staff
* explain your organisation’s progress on gender equality compared with similar organisations. You can find how other organisations are doing on the [insights portal](https://insights.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/application-dashboard).

An enabling environment includes the systems, processes and knowledge that leaders need to implement the GEAP.

Remember that your head of organisation (CEO or equivalent) will need to complete the GEAP attestation. This is on the cover page of the [2026 GEAP template.](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-04/2026-GEAP-template.docx)

### Strategies to create a strong leadership environment

The following strategies can help you create this environment for your leadership team.

#### Strengthen knowledge and competency

Provide specific training and guidance tools for senior managers and your executive.

Start by assessing learning and support needs.

Managers may need help understanding gender equality and intersectionality.

They may need targeted support with specific issues or strategies.

Create opportunities for sharing, learning and listening to staff with different lived experiences to help your leadership team understand workplace inequality.

Invite the Public Sector Commissioner for Gender Equality to speak to your board and leadership team about gender equality issues (please [email the Commission](http://enquiries@genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au) if you would like to arrange this).

#### Support regular engagement

Ensure you report regularly to your executive, governing body and senior leaders.

This includes communicating on GEAP implementation, barriers and progress.

#### Include key performance indicators or performance goals

Set performance goals related to GEAP implementation for individuals or teams, especially for the executive and senior managers.

This holds them accountable for the GEAP's success.

#### Assign accountability to leadership

Allocate responsibility for each strategy in the GEAP to a leadership role.

This ensures there is a management or executive level role with ultimate responsibility.

Accountability for each strategy or measure should not just sit with a work area or committee.

#### Include specific strategies for the governing body

Allocate specific strategies or accountabilities for the governing body in the GEAP to increase their involvement and support.

Involve the governing body with training opportunities where possible.

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| **Effective communication for gender equality**  Consistent communication with leaders about your GEAP is essential for enabling an environment that supports gender equality.  Clearly outline the goals of the GEAP, track progress and identify barriers. Explain why gender equality is crucial for your workplace (through the case for change).  When leaders and staff understand the importance of the GEAP, they are more likely to be committed and allocate necessary resources.  To ensure your message resonates, repeatedly share the vision and case for change outlined in your GEAP. This consistent messaging helps reinforce the significance of gender equality and keeps it at the forefront of your organisation’s priorities. |

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| **The importance of resourcing your GEAP**  The [Laying the Foundation for Gender Equality in the Public Sector](https://figshare.unimelb.edu.au/articles/report/Laying_the_Foundation_for_Gender_Equality_in_the_Public_Sector_in_Victoria_Final_Project_Report/19254539/1) research project by the University of Melbourne found that organisations did not allocate adequate resourcing to developing and implementing their GEAPs.  It found that most of the people doing the work under the Act were women, often employed through insecure short-term contracts at junior levels.  The researchers argue that this can lead to:   * staff burn-out * ineffective implementation * reinforcement of the very inequalities the GEAP is aiming to address.   This highlights the importance of the obligation under the Act to ensure adequate resources are allocated to your GEAP. |

# Further guides on consultation and engagement

## Consultation advice for low-resourced organisations

You are required to consult with your employees, governing body, employee representatives (unions) and any other key stakeholders.

This guide offers a lot of advice on consultation. You are not required to do all of it. How you consult will be specific to your organisation. Do what is feasible in your context.

If you are lower-resourced, key actions are:

* [Define the purpose of your consultation](#_Define_the_purpose) and the timeframes to consult
* Use existing structures so that you’re not starting from scratch. For example, existing working groups, committees and other existing structures
* Make consultations accessible for your stakeholders to engage
* Plan how you will consider feedback. This includes deciding what feedback to action and how. You do not have to action all feedback. Action what is relevant, feasible, evidence-based, and fair.
* Communicate each step along the way.

These are key actions for consulting. More detail on each of these actions can be found below.

## Define the purpose of your consultation

First, define the purpose of your consultation. This will make the process meaningful and productive.

Having a purpose provides a clear reason and objectives for your engagement.

It will ensure you involve the right people, value their input and address concerns.

This purpose-driven approach improves decision-making, promotes inclusivity and ultimately leads to better outcomes.

Answer these questions to help you define your purpose.

* What are our goals and objectives for consulting?
* What will each consultation session achieve and for whom?
* What do I need from consultations with the different stakeholder groups (governing bodies, employees, employee representatives including unions, and other groups)?

You should consult with relevant stakeholders more than once.

Each consultation phase can have a different purpose.

This may include:

* understanding what employees want in achieving intersectional equality in the workplace
* contextualising your audit findings to understand the underlying causes of inequalities
* hearing about the workplace gender inequality issues that affect different employees
* getting employees to help you identify strategies and measures to address gender inequality issues
* creating awareness of gender equality obligations
* developing a vision and organisational case for change
* generating awareness of the goals of the GEAP and support for the GEAP development and implementation process
* developing or reviewing content for a particular part of the GEAP.

Once you have defined the purpose of your consultations, you can consider who needs to be included in the process and how you will do this.

## Identify who you will consult

The next step is to identify stakeholder groups you will engage and consult with.

You should include people who have a vested interest in intersectional gender equality, or who may be able to influence change.

Creating a targeted and effective process that includes a diverse range of perspectives will allow you to:

* gather relevant insights
* address potential concerns
* make informed decisions that are more likely to be accepted and supported by those affected.

Identifying stakeholder groups ensures your consultation is focused, inclusive and leads to meaningful outcomes.

Every workplace is unique. The people you engage with during the consultation process will also vary. Consider these questions to determine who should be involved:

* Who will the GEAP affect?
* Who has an interest in GEAP development?
* Who are the stakeholders who have been traditionally excluded from decision-making?
* Who are the GEAP owners and partners?
* Who will approve the GEAP?
* Who are the stakeholders who will be involved in delivering the GEAP?

Examples of stakeholder groups include:

* stakeholders from different departments and work areas across the workplace
* employees from all levels and across different functions
* employees with diverse lived experiences
* employee representatives and employee networks
* employees who work part-time, flexibly or off-site
* relevant peak bodies
* gender equality organisations, women’s health organisations, community groups or research groups in your local area. These groups can provide specific advice on the issues relating to your internal workforce
* people who have experienced your recruitment processes.

You will need to engage with these groups using different methods depending on their needs, limitations and capacities to engage.

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| **Your working group can help**  If you have set up a working group, they can advise which stakeholders to include and the best way to consult with them.  Engage with employee representatives, networks and employees from diverse groups to plan a consultation process which works for everyone. |

## Consult with union representatives

Under the Act, you must consult with employee representatives. This includes union representatives.

Consider the following:

* **engage early in the process** – this supports communication with union members and gives you time to consult in different ways
* **organise standalone consultation sessions** rather than participating in regular union forums – this allows you to focus specifically on the GEAP. It will provide dedicated time for discussion
* **offer consultation sessions at different times** using different methods – this responds to the needs of diverse groups
* **hold several meetings** with union representatives and staff during the GEAP creation process – solicit their feedback on audit data and involve them in drafting the GEAP. Provide union representatives with a copy of your GEAP when you submit it
* **be open to feedback** from staff and union representatives. If you cannot include parts of their feedback, explain why
* **continue to hold consultation sessions** after you submit the GEAP. You can do this through the union group or a gender equality working group. This helps to maintain union support for your GEAP. It will provide a forum for feedback as you implement the GEAP.

## Consult with your governing body

You organisation’s governing body is responsible for monitoring compliance with the Act.

This should be part of your organisation’s risk register and risk management plan.

Provide regular updates to your board (if your organisation has one). Your chair will receive your compliance feedback.

The Act also requires you to consult with your governing body as part of the consultation process.

Your board or other governing body will also approve or endorse the final GEAP. Involve them early in the process.

For example, you could:

* share the audit findings
* undertake consultation with the board
* invite input at each stage of the process.

Involving your governing body boosts their interest and buy-in in gender equality initiatives.

## Involve senior leaders in your consultations

Involve senior leaders early in the consultation process.

Leaders who prioritise the GEAP and its implementation will ensure staff understand gender equality. This helps garner support for GEAP strategies.

You can also involve leaders by including a statement of commitment from them in your GEAP.

Senior leaders can promote consultation sessions, attend sessions and ask for feedback on the process.

It is also good practice to include senior leaders in the GEAP working group.

Senior leaders can:

* champion the GEAP
* prioritise the GEAP in work planning and budgets
* use their power in the organisation to influence change
* create partnerships in the organisation and with external partners
* manage any resistance to gender equality within the organisation.

## Ensure effective consultation and engagement

Effective consultation relies on being open to listening and clear communication.

You will likely receive a lot of feedback during the process.

Some feedback may be contradictory or not helpful. However, you should acknowledge all of it.

You cannot act on all feedback, but you can explain why you made some changes and not others.

This makes the process inclusive and transparent.

It helps participants feel their input is valued.

The Victorian Government’s *Intersectional policy guide* sets out additional suggestions that are also included here.[[2]](#footnote-3) Although the guide is not specifically for developing GEAPs, many of the same principles apply.

### Consultation methods

#### Use multiple consultation methods

This can include online surveys, feedback forms, online or in-person focus groups, workshops, small in-depth sessions and written feedback on drafts. Some employees prefer anonymous forms or surveys for confidentiality and safety.

#### Consult with staff to identify consultation methods

This will help you find the best consultation methods for your workplace.

Consider using different spaces for specific groups.

For example, employees might participate more freely if leaders are not present.

Ensure targeted sessions that address diverse experiences maintain safety and privacy. Allowing employees to contribute anonymously helps ensure everyone feels safe.

#### Ensure accessibility

Make sure physical locations are accessible, including for people using public transport.

#### Provide innovative and creative ways for people to contribute

For example, this may be through drawing or other visual means.

### Budget and timeframe

Ensure you have **budget** for your consultation methods.

This may include paying a facilitator or community participants, printing materials or providing refreshments.

Also, include budget for accessibility adjustments, such as translation or Auslan interpretation.

#### Allow time for engagement

Keep surveys open for a reasonable period.

Offer consultation sessions on different days and times to allow for religious/cultural days and parenting/caring commitments.

Provide multiple ways for people to participate.

#### Share audit results

Share your workplace gender audit results with the people you are consulting. These results should guide the proposed strategies and measures in your GEAP.

#### Consider different working situations

Online sessions may be necessary for employees working from home. Scheduling consultations before, during and after working hours can make it easier for some employees to participate.

#### Reimburse expenses

Provide sitting fees and cover transport costs for external experts.

This includes lived experience experts.

#### Consider resourcing implications

Consider resourcing needs if you are partnering with community organisations.

#### Use accessible electronic platforms

Avoid platforms that require specific software programs or high levels of bandwidth when conducting online or hybrid consultations.

### Communication methods

#### Set out the purpose

Communicate the importance of the consultation process and its purpose to all employees.

You could make a special announcement, provide email and meeting updates, or plan a launch event.

Share key messages with staff, including the importance of the consultation and your willingness to listen to all employees.

#### Consider confidentiality and privacy

Explain confidentiality and how you will protect privacy.

#### Acknowledge past consultation experiences

Address any poor consultation experiences people have experienced in the past.

Explaining how this consultation builds on previous work.

#### Communicate regularly

Regular communication helps people understand how the consultation contributes to the GEAP.

#### Ensure accessibility

Provide Auslan interpreters and live captioning. This allows Deaf and hard-of-hearing stakeholders to participate.

#### Communicate clearly

Avoid using technical language or jargon.

#### Ask participants what they need

This allows you to facilitate greater participation.

### Choosing who will lead the consultation

Think about who is communicating and leading the consultation for your GEAP. This can affect how open and transparent people are in giving feedback.

For example, you could consider inviting staff to lead discussions, rather a senior leader.

#### Use existing consultation committees or forums

This includes forums associated with enterprise agreements or work health and safety.

#### Co-facilitation with someone with lived experience

Consider whether consultation can be co-facilitated with someone who has lived expertise relating to the issue you are addressing.

#### Consider power dynamics

Address overt racism, sexism, ableism and homophobia.

Create a safer space for more marginalised voices within the group to speak out.

Run separate workshops with specific groups if these dynamics are hard to manage.

#### Foster a safe space

Engage peer support workers to provide support to participants.

This is particularly important for distressing topics or issues.

Have at least one additional person available to provide support to anyone distressed by the conversation.

### Supporting participants to feel safe

Participants in any consultation need to feel supported and safe.

Discussing gender inequality and issues like preventing sexual harassment can be distressing.

Participants may share their own negative experiences.

Facilitators and note-takers must know how to respond appropriately if someone discloses trauma, harassment, abuse or other sensitive issues.

Provide information during each consultation session about how employees can get support.

This includes the employee assistance program, local service providers and hotlines.

You must also protect people’s privacy during and after consultation sessions.

#### Understand lived expertise

Recognising communities and individuals as experts in their own lives is an important step in creating a safe and trusting environment.

Lived expertise offers rich insights into the experience of individuals and communities, along with the effects of policy in practice.

Communities are also internally diverse – so one or two individuals cannot represent the whole community. You must seek out the nuances in people’s experiences and perspectives.

#### Encourage cultural safety

This means creating an environment where members of marginalised communities feel safe to participate freely, in a self-determined way that values identity and experience.

#### Use trauma-informed approaches

This recognises that trauma is common and that people accessing services and people delivering services may be affected by trauma.

#### Consider power dynamics

Some dynamics reinforce privilege or perpetuate exclusion and inequality.

Reflect on the power imbalances between government and community.

Consider the power dynamics within communities as well.

Make sure you understand internal tensions within a community before setting up workshops.

Consider the power imbalances between the facilitator and community.

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| **Accessible engagement and consultation checklist**   * Have you considered and addressed the accessibility-related needs of participants for different consultation methods? * Have you engaged with employee networks to understand participants’ needs? * Have you considered different working patterns that may affect availability? * What are the power dynamics in each session? Will participants feel comfortable sharing? * Have you discussed what is needed to create a safe, accessible, and respectful space? * For in-person consultations, is the venue comfortable, welcoming, and well-lit? * How will you inform participants about the available support and how to access it? * How will you ensure participants understand their obligations regarding confidentiality and respecting others' safety? |

### Consultation materials

Developing consultation materials ensures a smooth and effective consultation process.

Materials can help facilitators guide discussions and keep them on track.

They also give participants the information they need to engage.

Providing information before the consultation supports participation.

Consider:

* what information might help employees feel prepared – for example, an information pack with a summary of the audit data, or draft strategies and measures, and discussion questions
* providing pre-session information to introduce concepts like gender and intersectional inequality
* developing materials to support facilitation, such as a presentation, a summary of key information, or discussion questions.

### Documenting and sharing consultation feedback

Documenting and sharing consultation feedback with participants ensures transparency. It also shows participants that their input is valued.

It helps build trust and encourages ongoing engagement by showing that the organisation is committed to acting on the feedback received.

Consider:

* how you will record and analyse discussions and findings
* how you will store the data, while considering privacy requirements
* how and when you will provide feedback to participants
* how you will provide workplace updates on the consultation outcomes in an inclusive and transparent way.

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| **Create a consultation plan**  Creating a consultation plan allows you to map out timing and resources.  It provides stakeholders with the information they need to engage.  Consulting on this plan with employee representatives and networks ensures it reflects their advice.  A plan also helps identify how other processes and events can support GEAP consultation. |

## Gather feedback and reflections

Allow for reflection during and after your consultation process.

Reflection helps you consider what works and what does not. This allows you to adapt the process as needed.

Use feedback to improve the process for your next GEAP.

For example, you could ask participants to complete a short survey after the consultation session. You could also hold a reflection session with employee networks at the end of the consultation phase. Checking in with employees during team meetings can also be useful.

Ask participants the following questions:

* Were consultations useful?
* Did you have an opportunity to provide input?
* How could we make consultations more inclusive, useful and relevant?
* Did you feel safe to provide frank feedback?
* Did you feel heard?
* Was your feedback valued?
* Was the consultation inclusive and collaborative?

# Further guides on developing a case for change

## Acknowledge existing efforts on gender equality

Your GEAP can provide a summary of the work your organisation has already done on gender equality.

This may include specific programs, policies, involvement in networks, events and campaigns, and key milestones in the sector.

You could present this information in different ways, such as a timeline, visual representation or a written description.

Documenting your organisation’s gender equality journey in the GEAP can:

* provide a base to build upon and a context for ongoing efforts
* create a space to celebrate efforts to date
* demonstrate change of focus and learning over time.

With each iteration of the GEAP, you can describe the learning, progress, any change of focus over time and how this history has shaped the current approach.

## Align with other equality commitments

Your GEAP should complement other strategies or measures relating to other factors. These include Aboriginality, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and any other attribute.

Aligning these strategies with your GEAP will provide a consistent and coordinated approach across your organisation.

This includes:

* summarising existing strategies, plans and policies that contain gender equality commitments. For example, strategic plans, plans for diversity and inclusion, health and wellbeing, marketing, and actions to prevent gender-based violence
* any related programs in the workplace, such as those on working arrangements, complaint processes or leave
* strategies focused on Aboriginal employment and employees, age, disability, ethnicity, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation and other attributes. For instance, consider your accessibility action plan and reconciliation action plan. Consider any existing workplace targets relating to gender equality.

You can indicate in the GEAP whether strategies are new or existing commitments.

You can also cross-reference to actions in other strategies and plans.

This shows the relationship between the GEAP and other policies, plans and programs. It can also make the GEAP feel more manageable.

You may also want to explain the relationship between your GEAP and other commitments at the industry and state level.

For example:

* industry initiatives or stakeholder projects
* relevant national or international commitments that may support your GEAP.

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| **GIAs can strengthen gender equality in your organisation**  Gender impact assessments (GIAs) are not required for internal-facing policies that do not have a direct and significant impact on the public.  However, undertaking GIAs across all policies and processes (external- and internal-facing) is good practice and will strengthen your organisation’s approach to gender equality. |

# Further guides on developing your strategies

## Use a comprehensive approach

Real and lasting change relies on a comprehensive approach.

Your strategies should look at gender inequality as a whole.

Consider all parts of your organisation, including its structure, culture, policies and practices.

A comprehensive approach considers how different factors are connected.

Gender inequality may affect many parts of an organisation.

It is influenced by things like organisational culture, leaders, policies, work practices, communication and employee attitudes.

Intersectional gender equality is a complex issue that needs multiple solutions. A comprehensive approach embeds intersectional gender equality into every part of your organisation.

This includes strategies on:

* policies and processes
* communication and engagement
* education
* leadership and accountability
* data gaps and measuring change
* pay equity principles.

Your workplace gender audit and staff consultation will identify barriers to gender equality. Your strategies should focus on these key areas.

Strategies can overlap and address multiple areas at once. They should aim to drive progress on the 7 workplace gender equality indicators.

However, it may be more effective to use different strategies for different problems.

For example, introducing a flexible work policy without other actions might not change employee attitudes or behaviour. You might also need to work on the workplace culture around flexible work. You can do this by:

* promoting its benefits
* gathering feedback on employee attitudes
* training managers to understand the benefits of flexible work and to lead by example
* addressing any barriers that specific groups of employees might face.

Keep communicating with staff. This ensures everyone understands and supports the changes.

It also allows staff to provide you with real-time feedback for improvements.

Finally, regularly monitoring and evaluating your strategies will tell you if you are successful so you can adjust your approach.

### Policies and processes

Updating, changing or introducing policies and processes can effect change in your workplace. They can be powerful tools in advancing gender equality.

They can play a role in addressing the issues and barriers identified by your audit and consultation.

Strategies on policies and processes could involve the following

#### Introduce new policies and processes

You may need new policies to support organisational change.

These can include new ways of working or changes to recruitment or promotion practices.

New policies, such as targeted action plans, can also focus on gendered barriers faced by certain groups of employees.

The Victorian Government’s [Recruit Smarter guide](https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Recruit-Smarter-Best-Practice-Guidelines-for-Inclusive-Recruitment.pdf) has sets out how to achieve fairer recruitment processes.

#### Review existing policies and processes

Review your organisation’s existing gender equality plans and processes.

Determine whether they promote intersectional gender equality and support the aims of the GEAP.

This process may show some changes are needed.

Conducting a GIA can be useful to assess your existing policies and processes. However, note that conducting a GIA is not a requirement for internal initiatives.

#### Act on existing recommendations

Include recommendations from external reviews, research reports and employee or industry advisory networks.

Also, consider insights from internal audits, employee feedback and best practices from other organisations.

#### Use existing systems and processes

There may be existing reporting processes, monitoring and reflection tools, training or communication processes you can use in your GEAP.

You can include measures that integrate the GEAP into these existing processes and systems.

This avoids duplication and saves resources.

### Strategies for communication and engagement

Communication helps employees engage with the GEAP. It can contribute to behaviour change.

Communicating progress also increases staff engagement and motivation.

Your communication strategies will depend on the resourcing available, the size of your organisation and employees’ understanding of intersectional gender equality.

You could develop a communication plan as part of your GEAP.

This provides a framework for consistent and coordinated messaging.

Strategies on communication and engagement could involve the following.

#### Change staff behaviour

Motivate employees to act differently.

Encourage everyone to express their ideas.

Take their input seriously.

Train and empower staff to lead change.

Use different ways to communicate and engage.

Share examples from your workplace.

#### Change organisational culture

Share the goals of the GEAP to help everyone understand its purpose.

Provide information about the impact of gender inequality and what needs to change.

Make employees aware of relevant workplace policies, processes, resources and support.

#### Communicate the benefits of gender equality

All employees should understand the benefits of workplace gender equality.

Regularly communicate these benefits with supporting evidence.

Use your [case for change](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-5-making-case-change) messages to support your communication.

Celebrate progress and stories of positive change.

#### Demonstrate leadership commitment to the GEAP

Leaders should communicate their support for the GEAP.

This could include statements from leaders at events, meetings and in organisational communications. This reinforces the importance of workplace gender equality and the role of the GEAP.

Include a statement of commitment from leaders in the GEAP.

#### **Tools to support inclusive communication**

**I**nternal and external communications should promote inclusion and gender equality.

Introduce tools and resources to support employees with this.

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| **Communication products to support your GEAP**  Here are some ways to communicate about the GEAP and gender equality in your workplace.  **Support employees to understand gender equality and the purpose of your GEAP using**:   * short accessible briefs. These could include an introduction to gender equality and intersectional gender inequality, a summary of your organisation’s approach to GEAP development, and a summary of the GEAP’s vision and strategies * an e-learning module introducing staff to the GEAP, including the benefits of workplace gender equality * a series of profiles of staff with lived experiences who are using flexible working arrangements, parental leave, part-time work or working in non-traditional roles * a quick guide to bringing a gender lens to budgeting decisions.   **Communicate commitment to gender equality using:**   * an organisational statement that sets out your commitment to gender equality, including the GEAP * the [case for change](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-5-making-case-change) for gender equality to influence resourcing decisions.   **Keep employees updated on the GEAP process with:**   * regular updates or newsletters that set out progress on the GEAP and upcoming opportunities for engagement * regular agenda items to discuss the GEAP in team meetings, all-staff meetings, and executive and board meetings. |

### Strategies on education

Meaningful and sustainable workplace change requires ongoing employee involvement, training and education.

Education helps everyone understand the importance of gender equality, recognise unconscious biases, and learn inclusive behaviours.

One-off training may provide initial support to employees. However, more will be needed to sustain long-term organisational change.

Strategies on education could involve the following.

#### Engage with your employees

Ask staff about the training, guidance and support they need to make changes.

Seek feedback to ensure tools and training meet different employees' needs.

Consider the workload impact on employees who actively engage.

Include strategies in the GEAP to support them and share the load.

#### Update existing training and development processes

Your organisation likely already uses training providers and online platforms.

Consider if these existing processes can be used to train staff to implement the GEAP and provide ongoing guidance.

If you do not have suitable processes, develop new ones and explore training options.

#### Develop new training programs

When creating a new training program, involve employees with diverse lived experiences to develop the content.

Ensure the program is evidence-based.

#### Share employees’ lived experiences

Besides formal training, sharing the experiences of willing employees can raise awareness.

This could include opportunities for senior leaders to listen to staff experiences or creating blogs or videos with individual stories.

Encourage leaders with lived experience to tell their stories. This will help employees feel safe to share.

Peer mentoring programs can also help share experiences and advice.

#### Use external resources and tools

There are many networks, peak bodies and programs to support your work on inclusion and diversity, including gender equality.

These can provide external technical support and online resources. This may be especially useful for smaller organisations with limited human resources.

#### Consider resourcing for training resources and tools

Include this in your resourcing plan and specify where the budget will come from.

Consider the costs of ongoing subscriptions, membership fees and other expenses.

### Strategies on data gaps and measuring change

Data is crucial to understand workplace gender equality issues. Your GEAP should include strategies to address any data gaps and to improve your data collection processes if needed.

Strategies on data gaps and measuring change could involve the following.

#### Understand the gaps in your data collection

Identify and understand the gaps in your data and what you need to do to address them.

#### Improve your data collection

Include specific actions to improve data collection. This can be throughout the GEAP or as a specific focus area.

#### Make a plan to improve data collection

A plan can help you identify and coordinate all the steps needed to achieve change.

#### Introduce interim measures to collect data

Improving existing data collection processes or implementing new ones can take time.

You may need an interim measure to support data collection.

#### Support psychological safety

Ensure employees to feel psychologically safe to provide personal information.

Consider actions that focus on creating a culture that supports data collection.

#### Undertake further data collection

Conduct further research and data collection to understand intersectional gender inequality issues in your workplace.

#### Collect qualitative data

Gather qualitative data to understand more about experiences of gender inequality in the workplace.

#### Establish protocols for using and storing data

Consider how data is stored, who has access to it, and how it is used.

Being transparent about data storage and use can help build staff trust. [Read the Commission’s privacy policy](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/privacy-policy-commission-gender-equality-public-sector).

### Strategies on pay equity principles

GEAPs need to take into account the pay equity principles.

The best way to do this is to include relevant strategies in your GEAP.

The table below provides some examples of strategies for each of the pay equity principles.

| **Pay equity principle** | **Examples** |
| --- | --- |
| Equal pay for work of equal or comparable value | * Conduct an annual gender pay-equity audit. This should help find unequal pay and analyse the causes of gender pay gaps. * Identify actions and set targets to address pay gaps. * Allocate the annual budget to correct any pay discrepancies. |
| Freedom from bias and discrimination | * Review pay policies and practices and consult with employees to find improvements. * Apply an intersectional lens to your pay gap review. * Educate managers about bias in hiring. * Include a prompt in recruitment guidelines to negotiate pay. This should be aimed especially at women, trans and gender-diverse staff. * Analyse starting salaries at the commencement of employment by gender. If possible, consider how gender inequality may be compounded by other forms of discrimination and disadvantage. * Review your promotion and flexible work policies. Check for any impact on pay inequity and if changes are needed. |
| Transparency and accessibility | * Internally publish pay gap data annually. * Increase awareness of pay and promotion policies. * Expand pay reporting to all classifications. * Provide education on superannuation management. |
| Relationship between paid and unpaid work | * Analyse pay gaps for employee groups such as carers and people who work part-time. * Review superannuation policies for equal superannuation rates regardless of FTE. * Link with your policies on leave and flexible work. * Address gendered unpaid work in your organisation. For example, which staff clean up after meetings or organise workplace social events. * Encourage parental leave uptake, particularly from fathers. * Practice gender-equitable job design. For example, consider job requirements, position descriptions and workspaces with a gender lens. |
| Collective and sustainable solutions | * Establish a group focused on pay equity for ongoing consultation during GEAP implementation. * Support feedback from staff and employee representatives after publishing pay gap data. * Engage with the broader sector, such as industry networks, to test ideas and share learning. |

## Applying an intersectional lens

In addition to a comprehensive approach, your strategies should address intersectional inequality.

This should be guided by your [audit](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/audit-guidance-2025/analysing-your-audit-results) and [consultation](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/gender-equality-action-plan-guidance-2026/step-3-consulting-your-audit-results) findings.

### Strategies for intersectionality

Strategies may include the following.

#### Develop targeted strategies for specific marginalised groups

Create strategies that support marginalised groups in your workplace.

Research what other organisations have done, read reports and frameworks.

Consult with marginalised groups on strategies that affect them. A good way to do this is to work with existing employee networks or formalised structures.

This is essential to ensure strategies are fit for purpose.

#### Regularly review and update policies

Ensure that your policies are regularly reviewed and updated.

They should reflect current best practices in intersectionality and inclusion.

#### Increase understanding of intersectionality

An intersectional approach is new for many workplaces.

You may need strategies to help employees understand and apply this concept in their work.

#### Provide training and education

Offer continuous training and education on intersectionality and related topics. This will keep all employees informed and engaged.

#### Applying an intersectional lens to all your work

Apply an intersectional lens to existing policies and practices.

Conducting an intersectional [gender impact assessment](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/2026-progress-report-guidance/part-1-reporting-gender-impact-assessments) (GIA) on internal policies and programs can support this.[[3]](#footnote-4)

For instance, on enterprise agreement negotiations, leave provisions, corporate values refresh.

Recognise the cultural load on staff that contribute to this work.

This refers to the unpaid labour often expected of First Nations employees and staff from diverse backgrounds to educate organisations about racism and inclusion.

[The Diversity Council](https://www.dca.org.au/topics/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/leading-practice-principles#:~:text=Cultural%20load%20is%20the%20(often,small%20number%20of%20Indigenous%20people.) recommends recognising and remunerating staff for this role if they choose to undertake it.

#### Create safe spaces for dialogue

Establish safe spaces where employees can discuss intersectional issues and share their experiences without fear of retribution.

#### Measure and report progress

Develop metrics to measure the effectiveness of your intersectional strategies.

Regularly report on progress to maintain transparency and accountability.

## Prioritising your strategies

Transformative change takes time.

Prioritise things you can achieve within the timeframe of your GEAP.

Set clear timelines so that actions are spread over the lifetime of the GEAP.

If you are a small organisation with limited resources, be realistic about the time some actions may take.

The Act requires duty holders to provide adequate resources to GEAP strategies. Consider practical and reasonable things you can achieve.

### Ideas for implementing your GEAP

The following ideas can help you implement your GEAP in a small, resource-constrained environment.

#### Focus on high-impact strategies

Identify and prioritise strategies that will have the greatest impact on indicators.

Use data from the audit and consultations to determine the most effective initiatives.

#### Phased or pilot approach

Use a phased approach to implementing gender equality strategies.

Start with pilot projects in specific areas.

This allows you to test and refine approaches before scaling up.

#### Collaborate and partner

Partner with other organisations (duty holders), community groups, or industry bodies to share learnings, resources and expertise.

Collaboration can help amplify efforts and achieve greater impact with limited resources.

Check out the [communities of practice](https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/communities-practice) available in some industries on the Commission’s website.

#### Empower champions

Identify and empower gender equality champions within your organisation.

These people can advocate for gender equality, lead initiatives and inspire others. They help to drive change from within.

#### Use free or low-cost training

Take advantage of free or low-cost training and resources available online.

Many organisations and institutions offer webinars, workshops and toolkits about gender equality and diversity.

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| **Collect and analyse data**  If you are using a phased or pilot approach to implement your strategies, collect and analyse data before and after implementation.  Start by creating a plan for what you are testing and how you will measure it.  Collect baseline data, then collect the same data again after implementation.  Compare the results to see if your strategies made a difference.  Use the data to adapt, build, and learn before scaling up. |

### Considerations in prioritising

* Consider what you can realistically achieve within the timeframe.
* Identify your starting point and desired end point, and outline the steps needed to bridge the gap. Include strategies to support staff development, especially if employees are new to understanding gender equality and intersectional analysis.
* Determine which strategies will help achieve the change needed in your workplace. Consider what employees of different genders, or who may experience compounded gender inequality, suggested during consultation.
* Assess if you need more information. You may need to focus on understanding the problem better before you can proceed.
* Evaluate the resources. Increasing resources for gender equality work and including the GEAP in budgeting processes may be an important first step for leaders and governing body members to consider.

1. The Commissioner acknowledges that using intersectional analysis may be challenging for small-sized organisations (duty holders). We encourage organisations to undertake intersectional analysis where possible. This might mean working towards building capacity in the future to undertake intersectional analysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. State Government of Victoria (2024) *Intersectional policy guide*,Melbourne. Victorian public sector employees can access this guide through the Innovation Network. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Note that conducting GIAs on **internal** policies, programs and services is not a requirement and does not fulfil your obligations under the Gender Equality Act. However conducting GIAs on **external** policies, programs and services that have a direct and significant impact on the public is a requirement under the Act. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)