What is gender equity?

Gender equity is the process of allocating resources, programs and decision-making fairly to allow everyone, regardless of gender, access to the full range of opportunities and benefits that come from participating and leading in society. Gender equity is not possible absent a commitment to inclusion, as no one is ever just a woman, but we have multiple identities (racial/ethnic, sexual orientation, and others) for which we also need to feel included if our workplaces are to be as thriving and productive as possible.

Successful efforts to achieve gender equity have been shown to:

- Reduce levels of poverty
- Promote the health, education, protection and the well-being of girls and boys
- Boost organizational performance and profit

And if the goals for gender equity in Colorado workplaces were achieved, the Institute for Women's Policy Research estimates that:

- The poverty rate for all working women in the state would be cut in half.
- The state economy would grow by an additional $9.2 billion or 3% of the state’s GDP.

While there has been progress over the years, Colorado still has a way to go to achieve genuine gender equity.

What is the situation women face in Colorado and across the nation?

Women face significant challenges in achieving gender equity in Colorado. Here are some vital statistics:

- Women currently make up 46% of the Colorado labor force.
- 63.7% of all Colorado women and 65% of the 10-county metro-Denver area women were in the labor force in 2015.6

Even though women constitute nearly half of the workforce, there are significant disparities:

- Women’s earning ratio in Colorado is 74% of men’s.5
- The median annual earnings for full-time year-round employed women in 2015 was $41,690, compared to the $51,268 median earnings of Colorado men; and the pay gap is significantly larger for women of color in Colorado.5
- The average lifetime loss in earnings for Colorado women due to the wage gap is $397,520. Women need to work until age 70 to match the career earnings of a 60-year-old man.7
- Earning less across their lifetime means that women receive lower Social Security payments (Social Security makes up half or more of the income for 58% of older Coloradans and it is the only source of income for three in ten Coloradans aged 65 and older.8
- Women also experience fewer opportunities to save for retirement, meaning that they retire with less money; they are also less likely to participate in employer-sponsored retirement plans.9

Even after controlling for factors known to impact pay equity (including hours worked, occupation, college major, employment sector and other factors associated with pay), there is still a 7% wage difference.10

Education also does not seem to be a major offsetting factor in establishing pay equity. In Colorado, and across the nation, women are paid less than similarly educated men at every level of education. And the wage gap tends to rise as women acquire more education.11

Also, women are still much more likely to enter lower-paying occupations where most workers are female. Men in Colorado, for example, are more than twice as likely as women to work in higher-paying STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) occupations.12

What is the situation for female caregivers?

Nationally mothers are paid 4.6% less on an hourly basis than women who are not mothers. Fathers, by contrast, are often paid a premium.13 Child care costs are high and too often unaffordable.
In Colorado, the cost of center care for two children is nearly 2.5 times higher than the annual cost of college tuition at a four-year college.

Colorado ranks among the top 10 most expensive states in the country for center-based childcare.14

Caring for elders, such as parents, also presents challenges. Nationally, more than one-third of caregivers providing care to older adults leave the workforce or reduce their work hours.15 Also, there is limited access to affordable elder care.

Are concerns about personal safety a significant barrier?

The lack of personal safety may deter many women from pursuing educational or job opportunities. Unfortunately, too many women are living in environments that are not safe, including living with domestic violence, stalking, bullying, trafficking and sexual harassment at work.

In a related issue, many women rely on public transit to get to their places of employment, but are wary of using it, particularly for safety reasons.16 Concerns about transit were raised often in the Denver Women’s Commission listening sessions about barriers to women’s advancement.

What is the bottom line?

The goal of achieving gender equity in the workplace carries powerful imperatives for achieving fairness and financial well-being for women and families, as well as contributing to the productivity and economic prosperity of our state.

However, achieving gender equity in the workplace also contributes to other critical issues,* including:

- Reducing violence towards women and girls
- Advancing human rights, including those in the LGBTQ community
- Fostering greater civic engagement
- Fostering leadership of women and involvement in STEM careers
- Women’s health
- Addressing societal problems such as environmental issues

*For more information about these issues, see the Mayor’s Guide at www.itstimenetwork.org

The Denver Gender Equity Summit will explore three key topics that underlie this issue:

1. Career Advancement
2. Family-Friendly Policies
3. Organizational Culture

If Colorado can make significant progress on each of these issues, we will have gone a long way toward achieving the goal of gender equity in the workplace.

Colorado’s economy would grow by an additional $9.2B or 3.0 percent of the state’s GDP if the goals for gender equity in Colorado workplaces were achieved


A Message from the Summit Organizers

As you approach your work today, we ask that you consider the meaning of the terms, equality, equity and inclusion. Equality is treating everyone the same regardless of their specific requirements. Equity provides people with tailor-made tools to accomplish a given goal. Inclusion is an action, it is how we set the stage for everyone to contribute and participate in an authentic and intentional manner.

To reach our goals of an equitable workplace requires that we are mindful of Intersectionality, a term that recognizes the interconnected dimensions of our identity and how exclusion, discrimination, and disadvantage based on race, ethnicity, sex, class, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ability compound and overlap.

Why is it important to use an intersectional lens as we pursue equity?

- It can help to identify people who are left out in the margins in our pursuit of equity.
- It can expose gaps in policies and practices that might be working for a few, but not all.
- It can generate opportunities for new cross community partnerships in the pursuit of more equitable workplaces.

Intersectionality also allows us to see how equity at work is influenced by where we live, thrive, and learn and our ability to access systems like transportation, affordable housing, quality education, and public safety. When we lead through an intersectional lens, we can capture the richness of our community’s diversity and build a better future for all.

It’s Time 2017 Gender Equity Summit Focus Areas

“Using a gender lens reveals the ways in which content and approaches are gendered – informed by, shaped by, or biased toward men’s or women’s perspectives or experiences”

1http://tag.rutgers.edu/teaching-toolbox/gender-lens/
What is career advancement?

Career advancement is the ability of an employee to ascend to higher levels of responsibility and compensation. This is commonly achieved through training and development and access to opportunities, both before and after one secures employment.

There are many pathways for advancement in any organization, and they may depend on the type of work you do. To move ahead, it is important to develop a mix of hard skills (core academic, foundation and/or technical training) and soft skills (communication, personal integrity, work ethic and teamwork, among others). Some studies show that it is actually the soft skills that contribute most to one’s career success.

Moving ahead also requires access to the right kind of job experiences and to the pipelines for higher paying, more prestigious and more satisfying jobs. The relationships that are fostered through networking, mentoring and coaching, along with some mapping of career pathways, are important to traversing the landscape of opportunities.

Why does it matter?

The ability to advance in one’s position and profession is clearly a matter of concern financially. However, beyond that, fair compensation and career advancement is an important contributor to one’s self-esteem and sense of satisfaction at work.

For younger workers (men and women), even when salary or other financial benefits are removed from the equation, work/life balance and opportunities to progress or take on leadership roles stand out as important. In fact, 71% of those likely to leave their organizations in the next two years report being unhappy with how their leadership skills are being developed.

Women are clearly impacted when there are limits to career advancement. However, organizations and communities also bear the costs when workforce talent is not used to its fullest potential. Organizations pay the price in terms of retention challenges, as well as not getting the best use of the workers they recruit. When women thrive, communities thrive.

What is the situation that women face?

Labor analysts project that by 2020 in Colorado the share of jobs that require only a high school diploma will shrink significantly; 74% of jobs will require some additional postsecondary training. While more women (61%) enroll in college than men (52%) in Colorado, nationally, women are underrepresented in education and workforce training programs that provide pathways to higher paying jobs.

When they arrive in the workforce, women continue to face challenges in advancing their careers at both higher and lower levels of organizations.

For example, an analysis of 132 companies revealed two broad themes:

- On average, women were promoted and hired at lower rates than men, so far fewer women became senior leaders.
- At more senior levels, women are more likely to shift from line to staff roles that take them off the most natural path to becoming a CEO.

In Colorado in 2015, women accounted for only 7.4% of the S&P Global Market Intelligence. And only one woman was a CEO.

If the past is any indicator, correcting this imbalance will require more than just the passage of time.

What are some of the known barriers?

Recognizing that the deliberate exclusion of women does not explain much of women’s failure to advance, research has turned to the more subtle and arguably more powerful barriers for women that arise from organizational structures, practices and patterns of interaction that inadvertently benefit men while putting women at a disadvantage. Some examples of how these factors can become embedded in our routine operations include the following:

1. Assignments
Women may not receive “choice” work assignments that typically lead to advancement. This is probably true for the variety of jobs and places where women work; for example, women may not receive the desirable shifts at “big box” retail establishments that would allow them to demonstrate their potential. However, most research focuses on the barriers women face reaching more senior management positions.
In their study of access to the “hot jobs” that lead to advancement, Catalyst found that:12

- The budgets of the projects men reported working on were more than twice the size of the budgets of projects women worked on.
- Men’s project teams had more than three times as many employees staffed to them as women’s.
- Significantly more men than women reported getting C-suite visibility to a very great extent while working on projects (35% of men, 26% of women).

2. Advocacy

While studies show the importance of self-advocacy and negotiation in getting a job and career advancement, stereotypes about women’s proper roles and demeanor affect not only women’s willingness to self-advocate and negotiate for compensation and promotion, but also the outcomes of negotiation when they do. It is very important to learn how to articulate one’s skills through examples of past experiences or activities. Being able to self-advocate is critical to acing a job interview and to advancement within an organization.13 Nevertheless, evidence shows that women do not receive the same payoffs for negotiation as men. Despite lobbying for promotions at similar rates, women are on average less likely to be promoted than men.14

Another major factor concerns time and expense. The high cost of childcare, limited workplace flexibility and nonstandard work schedules (discussed in the section on Family-Friendly Policies) are serious barriers to women’s ability to gain access to skills training or take advantage of other opportunities that lead to advancement, and this is particularly true for low-income women. The costs of postsecondary training can be out of reach for low-wage workers without the assumption of debt and, then, the necessity of devoting significant portions of their earnings to loan repayment.15

However, an even greater challenge for many is in trying to translate the training and experience they have had into gainful and sustainable employment through mentoring and coaching.16 Fortunately, many women can overcome this challenge when there is sufficient support—either through pre-employment training programs or help from within organizations to assist lower-income workers in making these translations.

What can be done to help?

Organizations can utilize four key practices to help women in their efforts to advance in their careers:

Training and education:
Providing women with opportunities to develop skills to qualify for higher-level positions is an important part of assisting with career advancement. While formal programs play a part, studies show that only 10% of an employee’s development happens in formal programs, with 20% coming through networking, mentoring, coaching and other influential relationships, and as much as 70% from on-the-job experiences.17

Mentoring and networking:
Mentors can help women build their networks, improve their leadership skills and find new opportunities. However, in one study of 318 businesswomen from 19 countries, 63% of the women never had a mentor.18

It’s Time 2017: Denver Gender Equity Summit

While networking can generate important links to opportunity, it must be strategic. Networking is successful only if members gain contact with powerful individuals who can enhance their careers.

Transparency:
There is value in making organizations more transparent by sharing the mechanics and philosophy around compensation and advancement. This includes the data used to benchmark employees’ positions, salary structures and where employees fall along those ranges.19 When criteria for assessing employees for promotion are not clear, or when promotion processes are hidden, women are less likely to be promoted.20 When career paths are clear, however, women are shown to be more motivated to achieve tangible goals. Also, providing employees with information about their productivity and pay relative to others increases individual productivity.21

In fact, one of the top predictors of positive employee engagement is when organizations communicate more clearly about pay. This is shown to be more important to employee satisfaction than career advancement opportunities, employer appreciation and enthusiasm for the company’s future.22

Accountability:
A fourth key organizational practice is ensuring that leaders are accountable for how their decisions and actions affect equity in the workplace. Accountability policies can provide a platform to identify good practices and obstacles to achieving them.

Lynn Utter, former COO of Knoll, says “Most organizations are afraid of their own track records for seeing women excel. We all have to be much braver. It’s not about indicting anybody. It’s about learning.” 23

Helpful data include salaries in comparable positions by gender. In addition, it is important to show gender representation by level, promotion round, the pool of external candidates for promotion, and attrition.

This kind of accountability could have a major impact in making organizations more gender-equitable. However, only 40% of companies report that they hold their senior leaders accountable for performance against gender diversity metrics, and employees are even less likely to see this in practice. In fact, only 32% of employees report that senior leaders are regularly held accountable, and only 9% report that managers are recognized for progress on gender diversity.24
Family-Friendly Workplaces

What is the issue?

Gender equity in the workplace is largely influenced by the extent to which workplace policies and practices are perceived as family-friendly and inclusive of the many ways that families are created. The need to ensure that our workplaces are compatible with raising healthy families has always been important. However, this need has only grown over time:

- 50 years ago, more than half of American children grew up with married parents—a father employed full-time and a mother who was not in the workforce; today only 20% of children live in such a family.
- Over the last 50 years, households in which both parents work outside the home has increased from 40% to 60%.

A fundamental concern for women—who are the primary caregivers in many families—either seeking employment or deciding whether to stay at their current place of employment is the ability to mesh the demands of work with the demands and interests in caring for family members.

Therefore, there is a clear correlation between family-friendly policies and women’s ability to engage actively and productively in the workplace. And this ability has a clear impact on women achieving gender equity in a variety of dimensions.

What makes for a family-friendly workplace?

Workplace policies that support healthy families and communities include a range of supports, from flexibility to paid leave to programs that focus on worker well-being.

1. A mix of flexibility and stability in work schedules

The issue of flexibility is one of the most important aspects of a family-friendly workplace to women and men. The ability to adjust work hours allows the person to attend to their family requirements (e.g., doctor appointments, parent-teacher conferences, caring for sick children).

2. Paid time off from work

The ability to take leave without endangering one’s earnings or even one’s employment is a critical factor for many women. And this is also an arena where there is tremendous variation across organizations and levels in organizations; it also disproportionately affects different demographic groups. There are several facets of paid leave to consider:

Paid Sick Leave:

In Colorado, 42.6% of workers earn no paid sick leave. This means that when they must stay home because they or a family member is sick, they lose income, and in some circumstances lose their jobs. It also means that they are more likely to work when sick; and if they are contagious, this puts other employees and customers at risk of getting infected. However, if employees get paid sick days, they are more likely to take the time to recover and not spread any illness at the workplace.

Paid Vacation:

The opportunity to relax and recreate is an essential requirement for most women’s mental health, as well as providing opportunities for family bonding. In fact, the well-being benefits are seen as leading to increased productivity—to the point that in some companies, employees are required to take vacation time.

Paid Family Leave:

Most women need time off at some point to attend to family needs, such as caring for a sick child, spouse, or parent. The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) requires employers (50 or more employees) to offer employees job-protected, unpaid leave to care for themselves or family members. However, even with the FMLA, 88% of Coloradans don’t have paid family leave. Employer-sponsored family leave programs cover only 14% of the US workforce. Higher income workers are almost four times more likely to have access to paid family leave than those in the lowest income quartile. And women of color are even less likely to have paid leave options.

3. Providing supportive services

There are three types of supportive services that have been found to be important to women:

Employee assistance programs:

Otherwise known as EAPs, these services provide mental health support to deal with stresses.
associated with relationships, life circumstances, financial problems and other forms of distress. These programs are usually offered either in-house with trained specialists or through a referral to a trusted provider.

Childcare:
Finding good-quality, affordable and convenient childcare is one of the most critical concerns for working mothers. Many organizations have established childcare programs on-site or nearby; others have created resources to help women locate childcare through referral networks or other avenues.

Lactation support:
Federal law and Colorado law both require employers to accommodate nursing mothers in expressing breast milk at work as often as needed. While the federal and state requirements are slightly different, employers must comply with the requirements that are more protective of employees. Briefly, an employer must provide reasonable break time and a private location, other than a toilet stall, for an employee to use in expressing milk for up to two years after the child is born. Employees may use paid or unpaid leave or break time to take advantage of this.

What is the impact of creating family-friendly workplaces?
Many employers rightly view their employees with appreciation and empathy. However, as businesses, they may also look at the components of a family-friendly workplace with concerns about the financial or productivity impact of providing these policies and practices.

Fortunately, there have been numerous studies to assess the financial impacts of family-friendly policies. Employers in jurisdictions that have implemented paid sick day laws or paid family insurance programs have found little to no negative effect on profits. Some have even credited the new laws with increased productivity, higher quality new hires and/or reduced turnover.9

Other research shows that providing paid leave for women:9

- Increases employee retention, which spares companies the costs and disruptions of replacing valued employees
- Increases the ability to attract the best talent, which is widely recognized as the most important comparative advantage for the majority of organizations
- Improves employee engagement, which is also widely understood to be a major contributing factor to productivity
- Enhances brand equity, the value of which can be underscored by the number of organizations that seek to be known as an “Employer of Choice”

How do family-friendly policies affect happiness?
Researchers examined comparative data from 22 European and also English-speaking countries, utilizing two well-respected surveys to look at whether there was a “happiness penalty” for parents.10 It turns out that in some countries parents are happier than nonparents, and in some countries parents are unhappier. The amount of happiness that is due to parenting varied by country. In some countries, parenting made no difference to whether people reported being happy; in some countries, parenting made people happier. There was no country, however, where parenting made people less happy than in the United States.

Further analysis showed that the negative effects of parenthood on happiness were entirely explained by the presence or absence of social policies allowing parents to better combine paid work with family obligations. And this was true for both mothers and fathers. Countries with better family policy “packages” had no happiness gap between parents and nonparents.

Furthermore, the positive effects of good family support policies for parents were not achieved at the expense of non-parents, as some commentators have claimed might be the case. The policies that helped parents the most were policies that also improved the happiness of everyone in that country, whether they had children or not.

Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment through Essentials for Childhood in partnership with Executives Partnering to Invest in Children (EPIC) developed the Family-Friendly Workplace Toolkit to highlights best practices and the components of a family-friendly workplace. Check out this toolkit for relevant examples of corporate best practices as more and more employers are adding family-friendly policies.11
Organizational Culture / Culture of Inclusion

Organizational Culture

Every organization has its own culture—the workplace culture represents the organization’s values, ethics, attitudes and ways of doing things. Many leaders attribute much of the success of their organization to their culture. But culture can also have unintended consequences that limit the success of the organization by limiting the satisfaction and productivity of those who work there.

Often, these unintended consequences are a result of unconscious biases—either in favor of or against certain groups or types of individuals. Bias can be built into what is most valued and how things get done. A fundamental element of organizational culture has to do with which groups are routinely included in the organization; this is reflected in behaviors such as who gets invited to meetings, who is included in the formal and informal communication networks that make organizations hum and who gets recognized and listened to. In many organizations, and perhaps especially as they move up in these organizations, women find themselves more on the outside. In these cases, the organizational culture may well be operating against its own best interests by not getting the advantage of full engagement by all its employees.*

*The dynamics of gender-based bias can also overlap and intersect social processes that exclude and discriminate on the basis of other factors, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and ability.

Although our laws do not permit discrimination based on gender, many women find that the culture of an organization can enable the persistence of more covert forms of bias and sometimes outright discriminatory behavior that limits the opportunities for them. Thousands of pregnancy discrimination cases are filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission each year; and three out of ten claims are filed by Black women. Family responsibility discrimination cases have been increasing over the last decade. Women at all levels in organizations can find themselves subject to these forms of blatant or unconscious forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment, that have an impact on their job satisfaction, productivity and advancement.

What are the benefits of inclusion?

An organizational culture of inclusivity is one that welcomes the contributions and participation of people from a wide variety of perspectives, talents and attributes. Many leadership experts agree that a culture of inclusion is often the key to an innovative, energetic and sustainable enterprise.

- Increased respect and mutual understanding
- Increased creativity in problem solving through new perspectives, ideas, and strategies
- Decreased unwanted surprises that slow progress
- Increased trust, cooperation and teamwork
- Greater innovation through risk-taking
- Greater sense of fairness, engagement and higher morale
How can cultures become more inclusive?

Bias often operates below the surface and without intent. Therefore, organizations committed to rooting out bias need to Police their own cultures to surface how it negatively impacts women and other groups that may be disadvantaged. The path to a more inclusive organization usually begins when leaders acknowledge that there may be a problem that needs to be solved. Once this is acknowledged, the next step is usually for an organization to understand how its culture is perceived by women (and other groups that may feel excluded). Often, the culture that people see on the surface represents only the tip of the iceberg, and may not reveal the exact nature and depth of the culture that is less visible. Therefore, organizations often use anonymous surveys or other assessments to help reveal the underlying culture. Once an organization recognizes that its culture is not experienced as inclusive, the effort to change the culture will require leaders who are dedicated and persistent in following a change strategy.

Some common strategies to create an organizational culture of inclusion include:

- **Create managerial accountability and transparency, where managers are required to justify their decisions and actions, especially around recruitment, selection, promotion and efforts to develop their employees.**
- **Train leaders to correct peers when they’ve made gender assumptions about women workers.** They can challenge their management teams to revisit performance reviews and assessments to determine if they have rated female staff unfairly. Most importantly, refraining from talking about a female coworker’s appearance is crucial.
- **Conduct trainings (such as “bias acquaintance sessions”) with managers and other staff who have a significant impact on creating a culture of inclusion.** This can include coaching for managers and executives to help them understand the results of cultural assessments, personally reflect on how their own behavior contributes to the culture and create a plan to lead the shift in culture.

**Audit the range of organizational communications (formal and informal) to ensure the appropriateness of images, language and other messaging.**

**Assess ways the physical environment encourages women and others to feel welcome, safe and included.**

**Formalize processes to capitalize on dialogue about inclusion, and facilitate follow-up action.**

Changing cultures is not for the faint-hearted; efforts need to be sincere and sustained over time. “Despite such concerted efforts, change won’t be sudden,” warns Gerard J. Holder, the author of Hidden Bias: How Unconscious Attitudes on Diversity Undermine Organizations and What to Do about It. “We didn’t get conditioned overnight,” says Holder, who works with companies to help re-educate employees on their learned behaviors. “It’s a learning process that has to be done over a period of time, not a training that can be done in three hours.”

However, the benefits of creating a culture of inclusion for women, through an intersectional lens, which includes multiple layers of diversity has been shown to be of immense value not only to those who have suffered from discrimination, but also for those who seem to have benefitted from it. And ultimately, organizations are the beneficiaries in terms of increased loyalty, productivity, and engagement that is the product of a culture.
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Gender Equity in the Workplace—Overview


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