



# Strategies at Work

## Enhancing opportunities for women in management

The articles below outline programs and strategies that have been developed by Western Australian public sector agencies to enhance employment opportunities for women in management.

### Department of Agriculture and Food

The Department of Agriculture and Food places importance on the personal and professional development of women, particularly for women in senior positions.

The department takes a positive approach to the development of staff through a three-level management development program, as described below.

- The Professional Effectiveness Program targets staff at Levels 1 to 4 and provides a participants with a Certificate III in Business upon completion.
- The Management Development Program is for staff at Levels 5 to 7 and is designed particularly for front-line managers. Participants receive a Diploma in Business. At least 50 percent of the participants in this program must be women.
- The Executive Springboard Program is aimed at senior management. The program is designed around contemporary leadership and management practice and participants are required to undertake a work-related project.

The department recognises the importance of networking events for women and is a List Leader with the Lunchbox List Network. Women in senior and leadership positions are provided with opportunities to network with colleagues and women from across Perth at events and functions which feature high profile speakers.

The Diversity Speaks Program is another networking tool developed at the department. As part of this program, clients from diversity groups are invited to share their experiences and perspectives with staff. Through this program, Janet Holmes à Court was invited to give a presentation on International Women's Day in 2009. Ms Holmes à Court gave an inspirational insight into her life's journey, lessons learnt and provided some sound advice for women aspiring to be leaders at the department.

A Future Leaders Program is currently being developed at the department to encourage and sponsor talented women to undertake executive and leadership development.

These are effective strategies to improve the development and retention of women in senior management at the Department of Agriculture and Food and are a key part of the agency's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.



## Public Transport Authority

The Public Transport Authority engages selected staff in their Accelerated Leadership Development Program (ALD Program) as part of their initiative to create career opportunities for women in senior management.

Suitable individuals are identified for critical roles and future leadership positions and they are invited to participate in the ALD Program. Participants receive tailored training and development which facilitates competitiveness when applying for leadership positions that may become available.

Key features of the ALD Program are:

- a 360 degree feedback survey;
- individual coaching;
- an individual development plan;
- networking sessions; and
- a mentoring program.

A pilot Women in Leadership Program was delivered in-house at the Public Transport Authority by the Australian Institute of Management. Twenty women from the authority, including ALD Program participants, were offered the opportunity to participate in the pilot.

Eighteen women from the authority are currently participating in the Women Moving Forward Program (WMF Program) administered by the Australian Logistics Council. This is an innovative mentoring program which targets the retention and development of women in the transport and logistics industry. It utilises the Emberin My Mentor – Challenging Women to Step-Up Program, which is the only one of its kind globally. My Mentor is based on global research that has identified mentoring as a critical component in assisting women to obtain senior positions and retaining them within organisations.

The Public Transport Authority continues to optimise career opportunities for women in management through these initiatives and others included in the authority's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan.

## Curtin University of Technology

Curtin University is an active participant in the Australian Technology Network Women's Executive Development Network (ATN WEXDEV).

The ATN WEXDEV is a powerful consortium of five leading Australian universities, including Curtin University. It is a dynamic and strategic career development program designed for women in senior positions (both academic and general staff) in the participating universities.

The program has the following four key aims.

1. To enhance personal professional development opportunities for senior women to gain appropriate skills and experience for emerging management opportunities.
2. To support the growth of organisational cultures that value diversity and encourage improved representation of women in senior executive positions.
3. To build on the tangible benefits of the collaborative network between ATN WEXDEV universities by providing significant cross-institutional activities for senior women.
4. To strengthen strategic alliances with other organisations, nationally and internationally.

The ATN WEXDEV model of senior executive development for women provides development programs and industry placements for participants and emphasises the following.

- Cross-institutional collaboration: The program works to break down individual, institutional and geographic isolation.
- Cross-sectoral collaboration: The strong links that the ATN universities have established have generated opportunities for senior executive development.

Curtin University's Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan has a number of strategies in place to encourage equal representation at all levels of employment.

## Challenger TAFE

Over the past three years, the gender balance of the upper three tiers of management (the managing director, executive team and organisational directors) at Challenger TAFE has moved from an 80:20 male ratio to a balanced 50:50 ratio. This has been achieved by encouraging and nurturing leadership across the organisation, which has consequently created a greater number of female role-models.

In 2008, Challenger TAFE established the People Development Framework, which benchmarked the college as an organisation with a strong commitment to continuous learning and career development for all employees.

Central to the framework is a focus on the leadership potential of individuals. For the first time, a six-month in-house leadership program was offered by the college, with the aim of developing leadership in alignment with strategic objectives. Four of the five selected participants were women in middle-management roles and the program was tailored to their individual leadership needs and goals, including striking a work-life balance.

The successful program was expanded in 2009 to incorporate Level 3 to 5 employees and extended to 12 months, again with tailored leadership plans running concurrent to the college context. Five of the six participants selected to undertake the program were women.

While the People Development Framework is a whole-of-organisation strategy and not focused on issues of gender, by making learning and career development a priority at Challenger TAFE and embedding these values in core business at the college, more women are aspiring to leadership roles and feeling supported to take them on. The result is that in recent years many more women have been appointed to senior positions. Three of the four general managers are women, as are 50 percent of the directors.

This successful strategy was developed to implement and promote career opportunities throughout Challenger TAFE and forms a key part of the Equal Employment Opportunity Management Plan at the college.

## More information

If you would like further information on strategies for enhancing employing opportunities for women in management contact a senior consultant at the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity by phone on (08) 9219 6000 or email at [deope@opssc.wa.gov.au](mailto:deope@opssc.wa.gov.au)



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