



USAID's Engendering Industries Best Practices Framework for Advancing Gender Equality in Male-Dominated Industries:

4.5 Create working conditions that allow both men and women to reconcile the demands of work and family life

About Your Gender Equality Plan

The following Gender Equality Plan was generated using Engendering Industries' online tool: [The Best Practices Framework for Advancing Gender Equality in Male-Dominated Industries](#). The best practices listed in this plan were identified and included to fill gender equality gaps at your organization. The information included in your plan provides an overview of how to implement best practices, challenges to implementation, and markers of success. More information and resources for advancing gender equality at your company are available at EngenderingIndustries.org.

Description

Create benefits that promote work-life balance such as flexible working days/hours, including work from home and support mechanisms for employees (women and men) with childcare or other care duties

Allow for paid time off options that may be used instead of sick leave or other kinds of leave, without the need to monitor the reasons for its use

Company-sponsored leisure or family activities can encourage time away from work

Limit expectations on both the company and employee side regarding extra work hours or days

Conduct a company-wide survey that identifies what work issues most affect employee work-life balance and health or happiness factors, and design solutions that address these

Establish a work culture where productivity is prioritized over physical presence

Ensure senior leadership and managers, including men, are modeling work-life balance

Provide leave options, which meet or exceed the legal framework for parental leave^[1], maternity leave^[2], paternity leave^[3], and family leave^[4]

Make “leave management” a managers’ duty and clearly define responsibilities for managers and employees to ensure women and men who are using parental leave options can hand over duties in a structured way and can return after leave without impediment or negative impact on their careers

Inform employees and managers about legal and policy framework related to flexible working arrangements, leave options, work from home, and other benefits the company offers to better reconcile work life and family life

Challenges to Implementation

Mistrust from managers and other employees when women or men use flexible working or leave options

Lack of acceptance by managers due to limited focus on related change management efforts to be undertaken, when introducing new work schemes

Flexible work options can backfire, when departments are understaffed, or managers have weaknesses in delegating tasks in an unconscious manner

Employees using flexible work options or leave arrangements can get stigmatized and left out (e.g., through non-assignment of important tasks or those that create visibility for the employee) if the corporate cultures are not supportive

Terms not clearly defined or communicated

More advanced options may require more planning and resources for external support or for implementing IT systems to manage flexible working, work from home and leave options

Telecommuting options appear limited in tech or other resource-constrained companies

What Success Looks Like

The company benefits from providing more flexibility and increased work-life balance through higher productivity of employees working with focus, reduced absenteeism during work hours, higher satisfaction rate of employees, better retention and motivation of qualified staff and reduced costs for replacement of employees, who do not return with full capacity after taking leave

Employees are more satisfied and exercise some of company's work-life balance provisions, increasing retention and work quality or productivity

More women are attracted to and stay with companies with work-life balance options

Resources and Tools

Guide: [Building a Workplace Flexibility Strategy](#) (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Australian Government)

Tool: [Sample Employee Flexible Working Questionnaire](#) (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Australian Government)

Report/Study: [Flexible working time arrangements and gender equality](#) (European Commission)

Report/Study: [The Smart Working Handbook](#) (Flexibility.co.uk)

Report/Study: [Leveraging Workplace Flexibility for Engagement and Productivity](#) (Society for Human Resource Management)

Report/Study: [The Benefits of a Remote Workforce and Virtual Collaboration](#) (Aperian Global)

Report/Study: [Developing A Flexible Working Arrangements Policy](#) (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Australian Government)

Report/Study: [The Great Debate: Flexibility Vs. Face Time](#) (Catalyst)

Article: [Inflexible Working Hours Could Be Making The Gender Gap Worse](#) (World Economic Forum)

Article: [How to Encourage Work-Life Balance for Employees](#) (The Balance Careers)

Article: [Creating a "Human-Friendly" Workplace](#) (Allen Communications Learning Services)

Article: [From Employee Experience To Human Experience: Putting Meaning Back into Work](#) (Deloitte)

Article: [The Pros and Cons of a Flexible Work Schedule](#) (The Balance Careers)

Article: [A Blueprint for Remote Working: Lessons from China](#) (McKinsey & Company)

Article: [4 Policies that Encourage a Family-Friendly Company Culture](#) (Justworks)

Article: [5 Ways Managers Can Support Pregnant Employees](#) (Harvard Business Review)

Example: [Work-Life Balance: OECD Better Life Index](#) (OECD)

[1] **PARENTAL LEAVE.** A benefit designed to provide employees with approved paid or unpaid time off following the birth or adoption of a child. (Source: [Society for Human Resource Management, Glossary of Human Resources Management Terms](#))

[2] **MATERNITY LEAVE.** Maternity leave is the period of time in which women are legally allowed to be absent from work in the weeks before and after birth. Some companies also

grant a limited number of days in case of adoption of a child.

[3] **PATERNITY LEAVE.** A benefit designed to provide fathers of newborn children with paid or unpaid time off from work following the birth of the child. Some companies grant a limited number of days in case of adoption of a child. (Source: [Society for Human Resource Management, Glossary of Human Resources Management Terms](#))

[4] **FAMILY LEAVE.** Benefit for employees to take paid or unpaid leave for serious family issues. Such reasons may among others include adoption, pregnancy, foster care placement, family or personal illness, death of a family member, childcare needs, and support for administrative procedures for close family members. The reasons covered under this benefit vary depending on national laws and/or company agreements.