



STEM Women

ONE YEAR IN WOMEN IN STEM DECADAL PLAN CHAMPIONS

AUGUST 2020

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The Women in STEM Decadal Plan encourages all in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) sector to create a thriving, diverse and gender-balanced STEM workforce that is fit for the future. Since 2019, 29 decadal plan [Champions](#) have formally pledged their support of this goal, adding their voices to this initiative led by the Australian Academy of Science.

Each Champion has demonstrated its commitment to the vision of the decadal plan and through its Champion's response aligned its gender equity actions to the six opportunities identified in the plan.

This report brings together the actions highlighted by Champions and key stakeholders which have progressed gender equity in STEM in Australia over the past year. The actions are submitted by Champions and hosted on the [STEM Women](#) website. The report provides us with an insight into which equity actions organisations are prioritising, and where further action is needed to meet the vision of the decadal plan—we thank all Champions for their contribution.

When the Academy launched the decadal plan Champions in August 2019, no one could have imagined where the STEM sector, Australia or the world would stand now, battling the social and economic impacts of COVID-19.

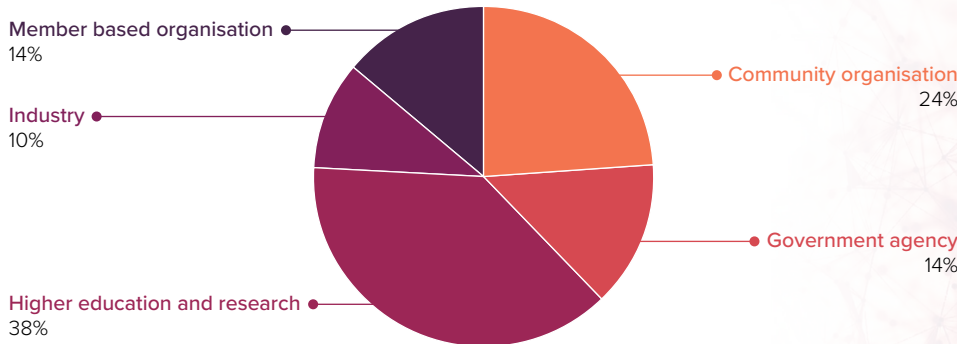
Earlier this year, the Hon Karen Andrews MP, Minister for Industry, Science and Technology, asked the [Rapid Research Information Forum: What impact is the COVID-19 pandemic having on women in the STEM workforce?](#) [The response](#) finds that the hard-won gains to increase participation of women in STEM in recent years are at risk as women face disproportionate increases in caring responsibilities, disruption to working hours and job insecurity. Another recent [report](#) highlights the significant effects on the mental health and productivity of early- and mid-career researchers, including gendered impacts. If the STEM sector fails to monitor and mitigate these impacts, we will be left with a homogenous STEM workforce that under-utilises all available talent.

Action is needed by government and employers across the STEM sector, and an ongoing commitment to the vision of the decadal plan has never been more critical. As authors of the plan, together with the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering, the Academy will continue to provide updates on [progress](#) against its recommendations, create opportunities to bring the sector together to learn from each other, and identify best practice responses in the COVID-19 era through the Champions initiative.

The Academy continues to welcome new Champion responses and encourages all STEM organisations to share their actions and learnings to show their support for a fair and equitable STEM sector.

WHO ARE THE WOMEN IN STEM DECADAL PLAN CHAMPIONS?

29 STEM organisations from across the sector:



RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Analysis of the decadal plan Champion responses and actions within them shows varied levels of action for each of the focus areas:

- **High activity**—Majority of Champions have actions that address these priorities.
- **More action needed**—Champions are acting in these areas, but further support and focus is required.
- **Minimal focus**—minimal activity identified in these areas, high priority for further work.

HIGH ACTIVITY

Leadership

All Champions have visible leadership from their executive teams, with many recognised as Male Champions of Change, CEOs for Gender Equity or WGEA Pay Equity Ambassadors. 10 Champions have been awarded Athena SWAN bronze accreditation.

Analysis of Champions’ responses identified that all organisations regularly involved in recognising the achievements of others had reviewed their selection processes and adopted best practice.

Visibility

A key action for all Champions is the positioning of STEM careers as a viable option for girls and women, this is achieved through many varied initiatives. These include outreach activities, promoting women in STEM through social media, and staff engaging in existing programs such as Superstars of STEM. In addition, one-third of Champions have policies in place that enforce gender equity on panels and for events.

Workplace culture

All Champions provided examples of the adoption of inclusive workplace practices such as flexible work, generous paid parental leave policies, domestic violence leave and unconscious bias training. In the research sector there are fellowships and other processes to support women returning to work after parental leave.

Organisations’ diversity and inclusion policies continue to monitor the effectiveness of these actions.



- 3** Male Champions of Change
- 6** WGEA Pay Equity Ambassadors
- 5** WGEA Employers of Choice
- 10** Athena SWAN Bronze Accreditation



1/3 of Champions have a gender equity policy for panels and events



- 28%** identified unconscious bias training was available
- 41%** identified flexible work was available
- 41%** offered a mentoring or leadership program

MORE ACTION NEEDED

Evaluation

Champion responses confirmed that many organisations are collecting data for reporting changes and progress internally. Only five champions publicly shared findings of their program evaluations.

15 Champions have a formal diversity and inclusion policy or strategy and an oversight committee responsible for regularly reporting against and evaluating action items.

Due to their organisation's size and nature, 11 Champions are required by law to annually report workplace gender data to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.

The Office of the Women in STEM Ambassador developed *A Guide to Evaluating STEM Gender Equity Programs*, which is expected to support a culture of sharing and collaboration. In addition, events such as Catalysing Gender Equity 2020 and the [Equity Action Gallery, held early this year](#), provide a space for diversity and inclusion practitioners to come together and present their evaluation data and findings.

Education

Engaging school children in STEM is an area of interest or action for many Champions. For some it is their core business—running a variety of outreach programs and events, with the impact of these supported by readily available evaluation reports.

Generally, larger organisations' involvement with the education sector was ad hoc, but there was interest in expanding the activity. Moving forward, a mechanism may be required to transform this energy into sustained engagement with measurable reach.

MINIMAL FOCUS

Intersectionality

Intersectionality—understanding how a person's social and political identities may combine to create unique situations of privilege or discrimination—is a growing area of focus in the STEM sector, as well as in the broader Australian context. Identifying measures to appropriately address intersectionality is a key recommendation of the decadal plan.

Intersectionality was only addressed in five Champion responses, perhaps in reflection of the need for greater focus on ways to develop and implement intersectional responses more broadly.

In the past three years, 39 higher education and research sector institutions have been recognised with an Athena SWAN Bronze Institution Award. A component of this application process requires institutes to identify any intersectional practices and include actions to improve in a four-year action plan. Consequently, if diversity and inclusion remain a priority within these institutes, it is expected that they will contribute to a wealth of knowledge around intersectionality across the next 12 months.

The Academy will continue to engage with the STEM sector to share learnings and resources around intersectionality. For example, the Academy has worked alongside the SAGE ACT Regional Network to test and share its action-based intersectionality walk activity.



15 Champions have a formal diversity and inclusion policy or strategy



16 Champions engage in regular education outreach programs



5 Champions addressed intersectionality

Industry action

Industry was the least engaged sector in the Champions process, despite the presence of established inclusion strategies in these organisations. As highlighted in the decadal plan, industry could continue to benefit from drawing on successful existing frameworks which encourage performance improvement through self-assessment and ongoing evaluation. The decadal plan Champions process is one such reflection process.

The decadal plan identified small and medium-sized enterprises as a key gap in the efforts to address gender equity across the STEM sector. Initial work to develop a framework has been undertaken by the Australian Academy of Technology and Engineering (ATSE).

NEXT STEPS

This report demonstrates that actions undertaken and published by decadal plan Champions are important to both maintain and build momentum for equity activities in the STEM sector, and to identify areas requiring greater focus. The Academy commits to continuing the Champions initiative and supporting the growth of the Champions network. All responses will continue to be shared on stemwomen.org.au and we will regularly share best practice and learnings more widely from these responses.

We will reach out and engage with Champions and identify opportunities to share our understandings of gender equity and inclusion and intersectional responses.

Finally, the Academy will advocate for sustained focus on gender equity issues, the preservation of gender equity programs, and evaluation of impacts in the COVID-era.

If you wish to join us, submit a Women in STEM Decadal Plan Champion response today.

PROGRESS AND ACTION BY THE STEM SECTOR

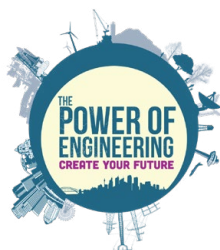
The decadal plan kickstarted considerable work across the STEM sector including reports and reporting mechanisms. Since the decadal plan’s launch, the Australian Government has further encouraged conversations about STEM gender equity by publishing the national STEM Equity Monitor and 2020 Action Plan.

Progress is being made to maximise the impact of this work.

The Academy keeps regular track of progress and action by the STEM sector. Visit stemwomen.org.au/champions for more information.

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| 2020 | AUGUST | EVALUATION | Professional Scientists Australia and Science & Technology Australia release <i>The Initial Employment Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Australia’s Science Workforce</i> report |
| | | EVALUATION | EMCR Forum releases <i>Impacts of COVID-19 for EMCRs</i> survey. |
| | | LEADERSHIP | Male Champions of Change Microsoft Partner Group launched to achieve gender equity in the tech sector |
| | JULY | WORKPLACE CULTURE | Male Champions of Change releases new resource <i>Accelerating change on flexible ways of working</i> |
| | JUNE | EVALUATION | Workplace Gender Equality Agency releases <i>Gender Equity Insights 2020</i> report highlighting positive economic impact of women leaders |
| | | LEADERSHIP | Higher education sector commits to preserving gender equity during and after COVID-19 |
| | MAY | VISIBILITY | Australian Academy of Science Council takes Panel Pledge to encourage gender diversity |
| | | LEADERSHIP | Rapid Research Information Forum publishes <i>The impact of COVID-19 on women in the STEM workforce</i> |
| | | EVALUATION | <i>A Guide to Evaluating STEM Gender Equity Programs</i> launched by the Office of the Women in STEM Ambassador |
| | APRIL | VISIBILITY | Academy launches two new career awards for 2021 honouring two pioneering women scientists |
| MARCH | LEADERSHIP | Australian Government releases 2020 Action Plan and STEM Equity Monitor to advance women and girls in STEM | |
| | WORKPLACE CULTURE | Australian Human Rights Commission publishes <i>Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report</i> | |
| FEBRUARY | LEADERSHIP | Eleven institutions recognised with an Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze Award as part of the Science in Australia Gender Equity (SAGE) initiative | |
| | LEADERSHIP | Catalysing Gender Equity 2020 national conference brings the sector together to progress the decadal plan | |
| JANUARY | EVALUATION | Engineering for Australia Taskforce publishes <i>Barriers to participation in engineering and the value of interventions to improve diversity</i> report | |
| 2019 | NOVEMBER | EVALUATION | Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) publishes key findings from its reporting data in the <i>WGEA Gender Equality Scorecard</i> |
| | | LEADERSHIP | EMCR Forum releases <i>Increasing diversity in prizes and awards best practice guide</i> |
| | OCTOBER | LEADERSHIP | Australian Research Council publishes <i>Gender and the Research Workforce</i> report |
| | | VISIBILITY | Professor Cheryl Praeger AM FAA wins Prime Minister’s Prize for Science |
| | SEPTEMBER | LEADERSHIP | APEC develops <i>Women in STEM Principles and Actions</i> |
| | | EDUCATION | Education Services Australia launches the <i>Girls in STEM Toolkit</i> , the GiST, to inspire girls, schools and families in STEM |
| | | EDUCATION | Academy for Enterprising Girls launches a fun online program and a national series of workshops for girls aged 10 to 18 years |
| | AUGUST | LEADERSHIP | Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute launches Women in STEM Pledge for STEM leaders |
| | | VISIBILITY | Major diversity in technology event AnitaB.org Grace Hopper Celebration, is brought to the Asia-Pacific as Hopper Down Under |
| | | VISIBILITY | The Academy launches STEM Women, a database of women working in STEM in Australia |
| | | VISIBILITY | Dr Collette Burke appointed as Victoria’s first Chief Engineer |

WE THANK ALL WOMEN IN STEM DECADAL PLAN CHAMPIONS:



Australian Government
Department of Defence

