



Willing and ready to lead

Advancing Women
with Disability in the
Workplace



INFORMATION PACK

About Advancing Women with Disability In the Workplace

Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard 2022 confirms what we all already know – women remain underrepresented in decision making roles.¹ Concerningly, however, the same scorecard makes no reference throughout its 55 pages to the underrepresentation of women with disability not only in the workplace, but in those same leadership roles. Women with disability are yet to even be considered in the nationwide debate on gender – and workplace – equality. The Advancing Women project is here to change that, and place representation of women with disability in decision making roles firmly on the national agenda, creating access and opportunities for a body of women who are, in fact, already willing and ready to lead.

The Advancing Women project is a four year project funded as part of the [Women's Leadership and Development Program: Lead and Succeed](#) grant opportunity and delivered on behalf of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. It will seek to firstly deeply listen to women with lived experience of disability as well as

¹ .Australia's Gender Equality Scorecard Key results from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's Employer Census 2021-22, December 2022

employers to better understand the barriers to access and opportunities in the workplace for women with disability.

The project will go on to deliver an educational program, designed and delivered by those with lived experience, aiming to support organisations to recognise, understand and break down the barriers that prevent access to leadership roles for women with disability – barriers such as discrimination, unconscious bias, caring responsibilities, inflexible working arrangements and gender norms, all of which preclude women with disability from accessing and sustaining workplace participation.

While focusing on creating access and opportunity for decision making roles, this project will also seek to support women with disability through the delivery of an accessible mentoring program, delivered in partnership with participating organisations.

Ultimately, this project is seeking to build a critical mass of allies who, together, will create a more employable Australia for all woman with disability – a group who face *multiple* barriers to inclusion and equity.

Co-Design

Critical to the sustainability and success of the project is the adoption of co-design across all activities.

All project outputs will be co-designed with and led by women with lived experience of disability. It is only through leading by example and by deeply listening to the voices and stories of women with lived experience of workplace inequity that we can build solutions that will support a more employable Australia.

Between March and June 2023, expressions of interest will be open to women with lived experience of disability to take part in the co-design of the project. All women who participate in the co-design of the project will be remunerated for their time.

Project Activities

- Between March and May 2023 research will be undertaken to understand the barriers and enablers to workforce participation and success in leadership roles for women with disability.
- The research will include one-to-one interviews with women with lived experience as well as representatives from employer organisations. The research will be supplemented with nationwide surveys targeting both sets of stakeholders.
- A report on the research will be published in June 2023 that will guide the delivery of:
 - **An educational program** designed to support organisations in understanding and overcoming the barriers to participation in leadership roles for women with disability – these barriers may include discrimination, unconscious bias, caring responsibilities, inflexible working arrangements and gender norms, all of which preclude women with disability from accessing and sustaining workplace participation
 - **A mentoring program** designed to support women with disability to access and sustain decision making / leadership roles. The mentoring program will be delivered in partnership with organisations that have participated in the educational program.
- The educational and mentoring programs will be delivered in a phased approach across Australia between January 2024 and June 2026

The project acknowledges the important work already being undertaken by organisations such as WWDA and the Disability Leadership Institute. This project also acknowledges that women with disability are ready and willing to lead, and is largely, therefore, focused on supporting employer organisations to break down barriers to and create opportunities for meaningful leadership roles for those women.

Expert Advisory Group

The project activities will be supported by an Expert Advisory Group (EAG) – comprising a panel of subject matter experts equipped and willing to guide the

success of the project. Members of the EAG will possess subject matter expertise across disability, leadership and workplace equality.

The EAG will meet quarterly to review and steer the project, and will be engaged asynchronously to review and feedback on materials and other project outputs as required.

During March 2023, an expression of interest will be open to women with subject matter expertise to take part in the Expert Advisory Group.

All women who participate in the Expert Advisory Group will be remunerated for their time.

Project Timeframe and Deliverables

The project will be delivered Australia wide and will conclude in June 2026. The project has been broken into a phased approach to ensure the delivery of sustainable outputs that meet the needs of both women with disability and employer organisations

Phase 1 – Research & Needs Assessment

Between March and June 2023 a needs assessment and gap analysis will be completed, outlining the current state for women with disability in leadership roles and outlining the barriers and enablers for women with disability to access and sustain decision making roles.

The needs assessment will comprise two streams of research that will take place through March and April 2023:

- Research targeting women with lived experience of disability
- Research targeting employer organisations

The research will incorporate one on one interviews, surveys and focus groups with both sets of stakeholders.

The results of the research will be published in June 2023 and will guide the delivery of the educational program and mentoring platform.

Phase 2 – Development of Education and Mentoring Programs

Between July and December 2023, work will begin on the co-design of the education and mentoring programs. During this time, recruitment will also commence to identify organisations wanting to take part in the program in NSW, as well as women with disability wanting to participate in mentoring.

Phase 3 – Program Delivery

The project will be delivered across Australia commencing in January 2024 and taking a staged approach geographically. The programs will commence initially in NSW and ACT in 2024, before rolling out to other states from July 2024.

Opportunities to get involved

There are a number of ways you can be involved in the project between March and June 2023.

Research

We are seeking to interview **women with disability** on their experiences of employment and access to leadership roles.

We are also seeking to interview **representatives from employer organisations** regarding their experiences supporting women with disability in leadership roles and in the workplace.

Expert Advisory Group

We are currently seeking expressions of interest from **women with subject matter expertise** to join our Expert Advisory Group.

If you'd like to be involved in any of these aspects of the project, please email Lizzy Fowler on lizzyf@pwd.org.au or call 0490 120 366.

Accessibility

All accessibility requirements will be accommodated for all research interviews and Advisory Group meetings.

You can request an [Easy Read version of this information by clicking here.](#)