

## Gender Inclusion: Effective Strategies for Systemic Change in SETT Workplaces

Alicia D. Bjamason PGeol., FGC, MA, CCIP™

Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering Science Trades and Technology (CCWESTT)

### Summary

The Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology (CCWESTT) is a national volunteer coalition of organizations and individuals who champion for a gender equitable, diverse, and inclusive Canadian science, engineering, trades and technology (SETT) sector. Through the project “Gender Inclusion in SETT: Effective Strategies for Systemic Change,” funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada, CCWESTT aimed to help advance women and gender-diverse people’s recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by increasing their economic security through systemic change in the workplace. Specifically, the project was designed to address systemic barriers within workplace policies, practices, and attitudes that limit women and gender-diverse people’s participation in SETT. A key output of this work was a Gap Analysis Report which identified the most effective strategies currently being used to make real change in SETT workplaces toward gender inclusion considering the systemic nature of the change required. This presentation will explore gaps in public policy and implementation of gender inclusion efforts in both the not-for-profit and employer ecosystems.

### Theory / Method / Workflow

CCWESTT built their research on a systemic change theory. CCWESTT defines systemic change as modifying components or combinations of components within a system to address and remove fundamental societal, environmental, and cultural elements that prevent gender equity. Through the systems-change pathway it has chosen, CCWESTT seeks to alter and adapt systems to achieve gender equity, rather than seeking to change women, non-binary, gender non-conforming, and gender-diverse people. CCWESTT’s approach to systemic change recognizes that transformations and alterations need to be made at all levels including, but not limited to: legislation, policies, practices, social norms, cultural expectations, employment & retention barriers, and fair hiring practices.

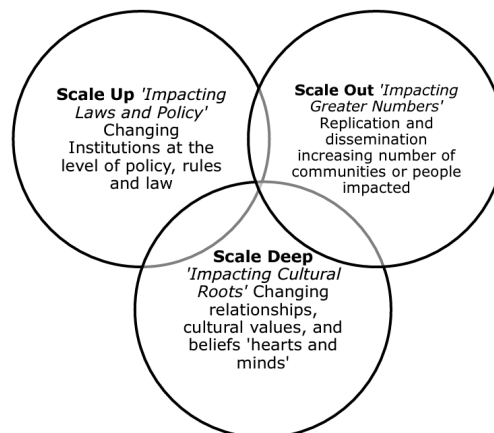


Figure 1: Scaling out, scaling up and scaling deep for social innovation.

CCWESTT adopted the systems-change pathway as outlined in “Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Strategies of Non-profits in Advancing Systemic Social Innovation,” authored by Michele-Lee Moore, Darcy Riddell, and Dana Vocisano. Published in June 2015 in the Journal of Corporate Citizenship (Figure 1).

The project research and report were constructed using a mixed-method approach. First, a literary review and inventory were conducted to identify how Canada and the Canadian SETT sector stack up on the topics of gender equity and equality versus other jurisdictions around the world. Special consideration was given to jurisdictions which have legislative and implementation frameworks to achieve gender equality, with attention to workplace obligations and accountability, such as Iceland and Lithuania.

Next, CCWESTT used its extensive national network to gather information on performative allyship and performative equity within SETT working environments by hosting a national Policy Forum attended by over 90 SETT participants. This was paired with data gathered through conducting semi-structured focus groups with senior women in SETT from across Canada who have experience in SETT working environments and within gender equality advocacy. The research also included a voluntary survey with key SETT companies that have established equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) policies to better understand which EDI-structured polices have had success within the SETT working environment.

## Results, Observations, Conclusions

To reach gender equity and equality in SETT, CCWESTT suggests a systems change approach of scaling out, up, and deep for all stakeholders - not-for-profits, employers, organizations, institutions, and governments.

*“It takes a system to change a system.” – focus group participant.*

### Scaling Out

Barrier:

Shift focus away from ‘fixing women’ to fit into current unwelcoming SETT cultures.

Solutions:

- Programming to recruit/train male allies to champion gender inclusion.
- Humanizing and decolonizing SETT fields through education including curricula, addressing outdated social norms of gendered roles within SETT and domestic spheres.
- Acknowledging an intersectional approach to knowledge production and dissemination.

### Scaling Up

Barrier:

Lack of legal obligations and accountability.

Solutions:

- Work with governments at all levels to create strategic plans and legal frameworks to advance gender equality using examples such as countries like Iceland and Lithuania.
- Build and track Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for equity, diversity, and inclusion within organizations, including actionable items such as collecting disaggregated data, transparency, and consequences for not meeting goals.

## Scaling Deep

### Barriers:

Performative allyship and performative equity.

### Solutions:

- Learn from the lived experiences of SETT students/professionals of all intersectional backgrounds.
- Going beyond gestures and words to meaningful action.
- Gender equity work IS work and must not rely on unpaid labour to move change forward.
- Programming such as mentorship and Equity Resource Groups (ERGs) need to be examined for effectiveness and their reliance on marginalized members.

## Acknowledgements

Project funder - Women and Gender Equality Canada

Co-researchers - Rosheeka Parahoo, M.A.; Bonnie Douglas, B.Sc., PMP; Lorraine Hewlett, B.A., M.A., B.Ed; Janet Dyson, BJ(Hons), LIT, Dipl.PR

## References

Parahoo, R., Douglas, B., Bjarnason, A., Hewlett, L., & Dyson, J. (2023). Gap Analysis Report – Gender Inclusion in SETT: Effective Strategies for Systemic Change.

<https://ccwestt-ccfsimt.org/resource-hub/gap-analysis-report/>

Moore, M.-L., Riddell, D., & Vocisano, D. (2015). Scaling Out, Scaling Up, Scaling Deep: Strategies of Non-profits in Advancing Systemic Social Innovation. *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship*, 58, 67–84.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/jcorpciti.58.67>