



WE ARE TRADES



Creating Safe and Inclusive Workplaces for Women

A CCWESTT PROJECT



Canadian Coalition of
Women in Engineering, Science,
Trades and Technology

This project has been funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada



Women and Gender
Equality Canada

Femmes et Égalité
des genres Canada





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➤ Background



We Are Trades was developed by the Canadian Coalition for Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology (CCWESTT) and is funded by Women and Gender Equality Canada. The development process included conversations with many tradeswomen and employers across Canada, as well as research into existing and emerging practices. It also included a pilot program involving employers and skilled trades workers.

The term "**women**" as it appears in *We Are Trades* refers to anyone who identifies as a woman including anyone who identifies as non-binary, nonconforming and/or gender fluid; and anyone, irrespective of assigned gender at birth, gender identity and gender expression, who has experienced or is subject to experiencing workplace discrimination based on identifying as a woman and/or being identified by others as a woman. This applies to all gendered expressions found in *We Are Trades* including women, tradeswomen, etc.

Introduction

Canada's workforce demographics are changing rapidly, notably in skilled trades. In the next decade, Canada could have 40% of its labour force over the age of 55, the highest proportion on its record (1). Baby boomers will be retiring en masse, and for the first time in history there will be up to four generations of Canadians in the workforce (2). These changes are swift, and present employers with the challenge of filling significant shortages of skilled trades workers (3). One obvious and necessary solution is to focus recruitment efforts on traditionally underrepresented groups such as women, Indigenous peoples, new Canadians, LGBTQ2+ and people with disabilities.

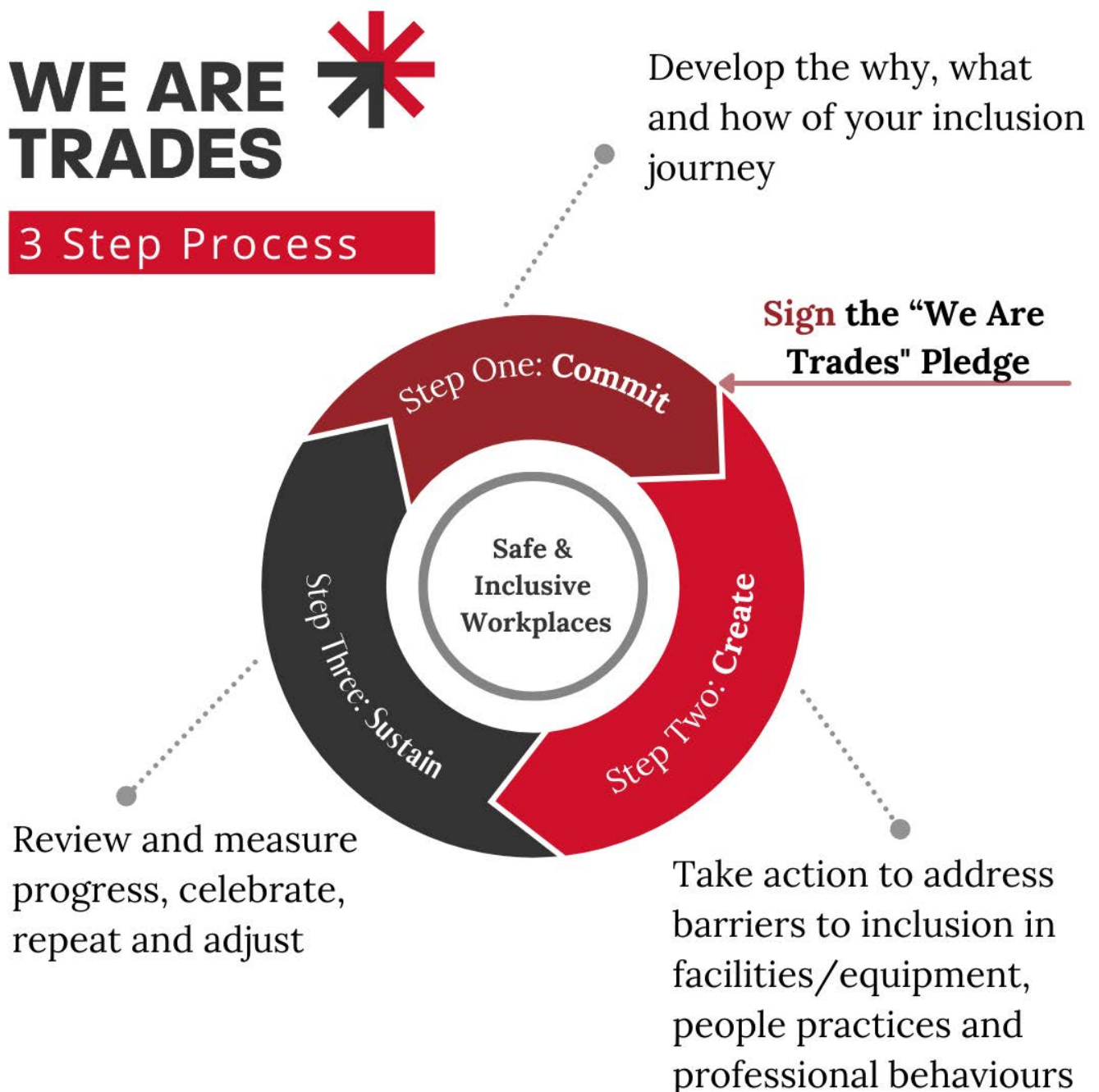
There are many educated and capable women ready and willing to fill the gap! According to 2019 Statistics Canada reports, 50.4% of Canada's population are women and over 66% of them are aged 25-64 with education beyond high school (4). Attracting diverse employees, and retaining their talent by providing safe and inclusive work environments, has proven to have a positive effect on the workplace and on the company's bottom line. There is ample evidence that shows diverse teams are better equipped to foster innovation and will drive company performance and profitability (5).



It's just SMART business!

➤ About *We Are Trades*

We Are Trades provides employers with actionable steps to establish a safe and inclusive workplace for women. This is a journey and a process that takes time and dedication. *We Are Trades* is designed to guide successful workplace change in three steps: Commit, Create and Sustain. The journey may not look the same for every workplace, but the goal is shared: to build a work environment where each person is valued and respected for their contributions.






Step 1: Commit

Meaningful change begins when you take a close look at current practices. Start by taking into consideration existing hiring, training and management practices, and then develop your strategy to hire and retain more women.



DETERMINE



Why are you doing this?

What will you do?

How will you do it?

Step 1: Commit

WHY: The Business Case

Successful workplace change starts with commitment from leaders at the highest level. At the beginning of your journey it's important to determine your WHY.

- Make your business case: Why does your organization need to focus on diversity and inclusion? What does it mean for your bottom line (staffing, spending, training, profits, etc.)?
- Do an honest assessment of your current practices and behaviours related to equity, safety, and inclusion. Identify and record what needs to change and why.
- Assess the language of your organization. How are you communicating your values to the public, such as on your website and in your marketing?

WHAT: Baseline Measurement

You need to know where you're starting from. Record baseline measurements so you can track changes over time and note trends. Ask questions about who is represented in your workplace at all levels, including leadership. Suggested indicators of a safe and inclusive workplace include:

- Percentage of women in trades workforce*
- Percentage of women in leadership positions*
- Formal Assessments (Workplace Culture or Inclusion Surveys)
- Attrition rates (by gender)
- Number of complaints/grievances
- Absenteeism

* Minimally recommended

Step 1: Commit

HOW: The Plan

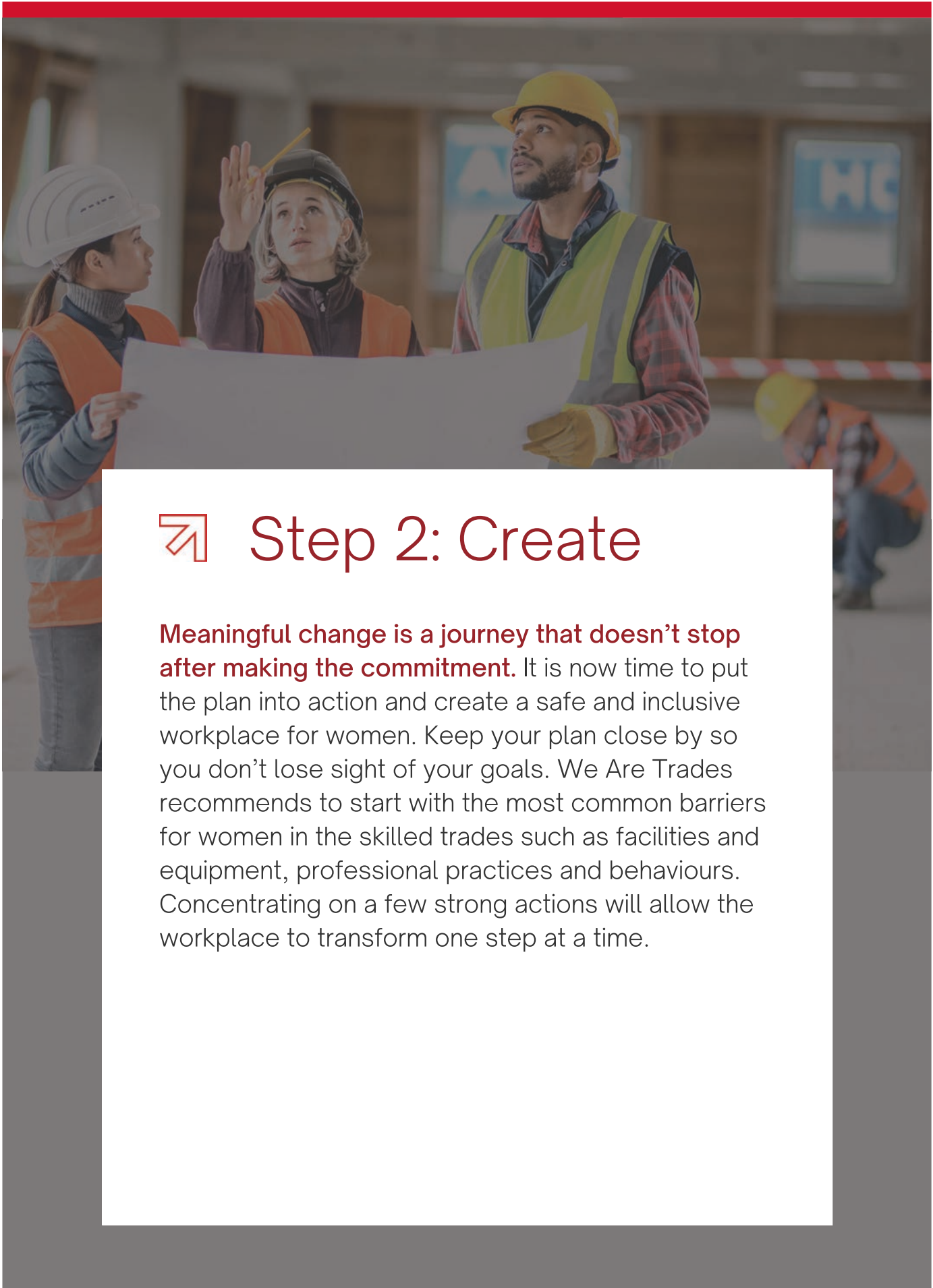
An effective strategy for change is driven by an employee-led team and is supported by management and senior leadership. Develop an effective workplace inclusion strategy including:

- Senior leadership support through words and actions
- Strong employee and union involvement
- Clearly defined targets for improvement
- Consistent language
- Short-term and long-term goals
- Keep it simple!

EDUCATE AND ENGAGE

All levels of the organization must be engaged in the journey. Leadership and individuals within an organization must take responsibility for the role they play in making change happen within the organization. Some ways to increase awareness and understanding of safe and inclusive workplaces include:

- Share ***We Are Trades*** across the entire organization
- Make a formal commitment. The ***We Are Trades Pledges*** are a powerful symbol of commitment and sends the right message -- that you are ready to create a safe and inclusive environment where everyone can thrive. Get your printable version of the pledges [here!](#)
- Provide inclusivity training for all employees and contractors. Key areas of education are bullying and harassment, allyship, unconscious bias and microaggressions.
- Share your strategic plan with all employees and contractors.



➤ Step 2: Create

Meaningful change is a journey that doesn't stop after making the commitment. It is now time to put the plan into action and create a safe and inclusive workplace for women. Keep your plan close by so you don't lose sight of your goals. We Are Trades recommends to start with the most common barriers for women in the skilled trades such as facilities and equipment, professional practices and behaviours. Concentrating on a few strong actions will allow the workplace to transform one step at a time.

Step 2: Create

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Everyone works best when their workspace, gear, and equipment are safe. Take a close look at your equipment and facilities, and ask what's safe and what's not. Safe and inclusive workplaces include:

- A supply of PPE, workwear and equipment that fits all workers properly and safely (e.g. fit the body)
- Equipment and tools that are in good repair
- Washroom and change room facilities that are close to the worksite and appropriate for all genders (e.g. soap, garbage disposal and consideration for hygiene products)
- A clean and organized work environment following workspace standards
- Proper workplace risk assessments including pregnancy risk assessments

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOURS

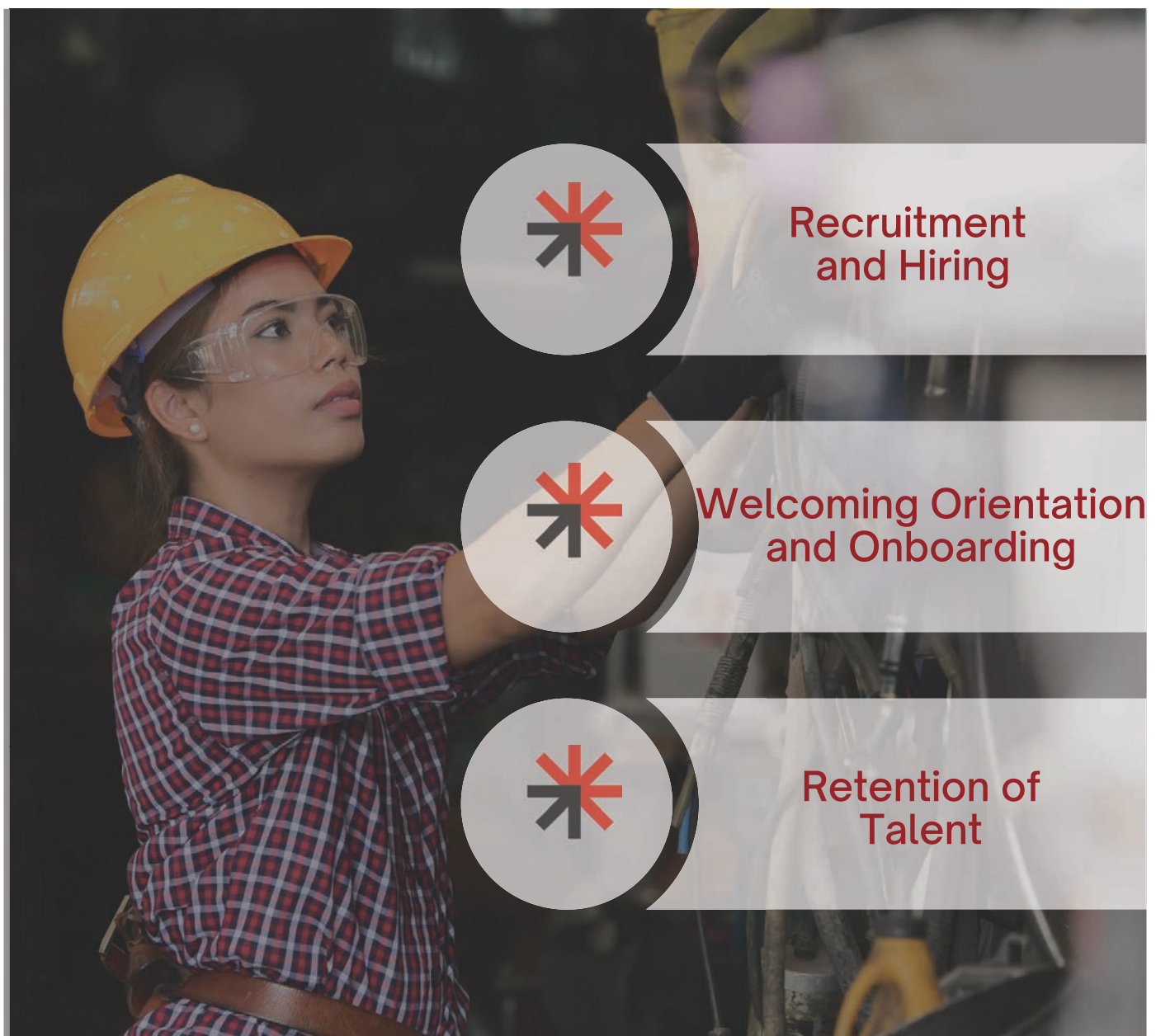
A safe and inclusive skilled trades workplace is free of all types of psychological harm, including harassment, bullying, and microaggressions. In order to create this environment, everyone at every level of the organization must be responsible for their own behaviour as part of a professional team. Acceptable and professional behaviour as outlined in the We Are Trades individual pledge includes:

- Stay up-to-date with and practice anti-harassment and respectful workplace policies
- Share knowledge with new team members
- Recognize the skills of colleagues
- Give supportive, open-minded and positive encouragement
- Value the differences that people bring to the workplace
- Speak up when hearing or seeing unacceptable or unsafe behaviour
- Speak to others respectfully
- Listen to and support others
- Don't make assumptions about others
- Collaborate with others to help improve the workplace

Step 2: Create

INCLUSIVE PEOPLE PRACTICES

Diversity is part of the path to inclusion, but hiring diverse talent does not automatically create an inclusive workplace. The danger in focusing exclusively on the hiring process is that it does not prepare the workplace to appropriately include underrepresented groups like women, once they are brought onto the team. Safe and inclusive practices must be implemented at every stage of the employee experience. Policies and practices that include everyone are crucial for successful retention of the best possible talent.



➤ Step 2: Create

RECRUITMENT AND HIRING

Having diverse job applicants means that you are recruiting from the largest possible talent pool. If you don't see diversity in those applying to fill vacant roles, there is opportunity to improve your processes. Review and update your recruitment and hiring processes to include:

- The good work you're already doing, such as existing inclusive language and photos
- Gender inclusive language and equal opportunity employer statement in job postings
- Job postings that include only skills applicable to the job
- New opportunities for hiring talent (e.g. colleges, women in trades programs, associations, etc.)
- Unbiased selection practices (e.g. masked resumes, diverse hiring panels, etc.)



➤ Step 2: Create

WELCOMING ORIENTATION AND ONBOARDING

The purpose of orientation is to make new team members feel comfortable and competent as soon as possible. A new employee's onboarding experience should reflect the level of attention, care and consideration attributed to people and productivity. An inclusive and welcoming orientation and onboarding includes:

- A detailed site tour which outlines all important facilities, safety and reporting information, and an overview of all company policies
- Consistent training and the opportunity for feedback
- Assigning a mentor to each new employee
- Clear expectations are provided by a supervisor at the beginning with regular follow up
- An opportunity for each new employee to provide feedback about the orientation and onboarding process after 1-2 months
- Procedures, policies and collective agreements that contain gender inclusive language



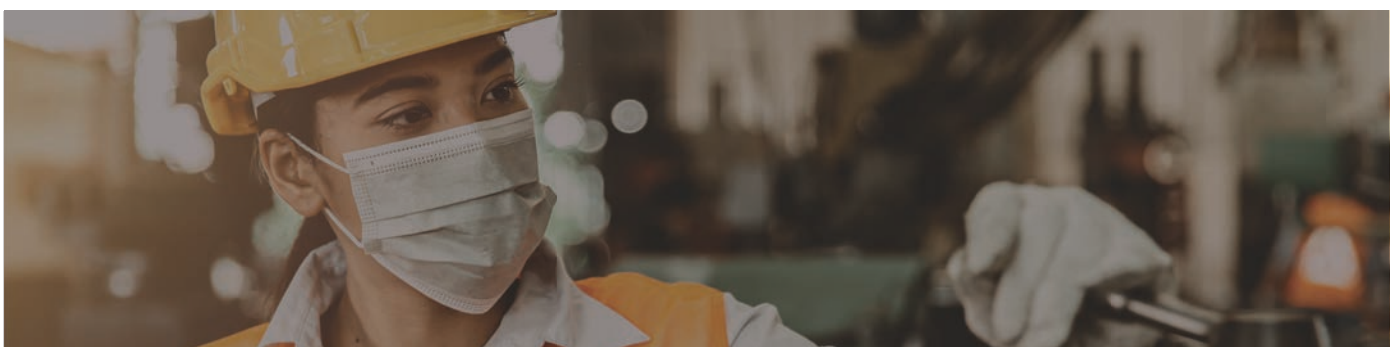
➤ Step 2: Create

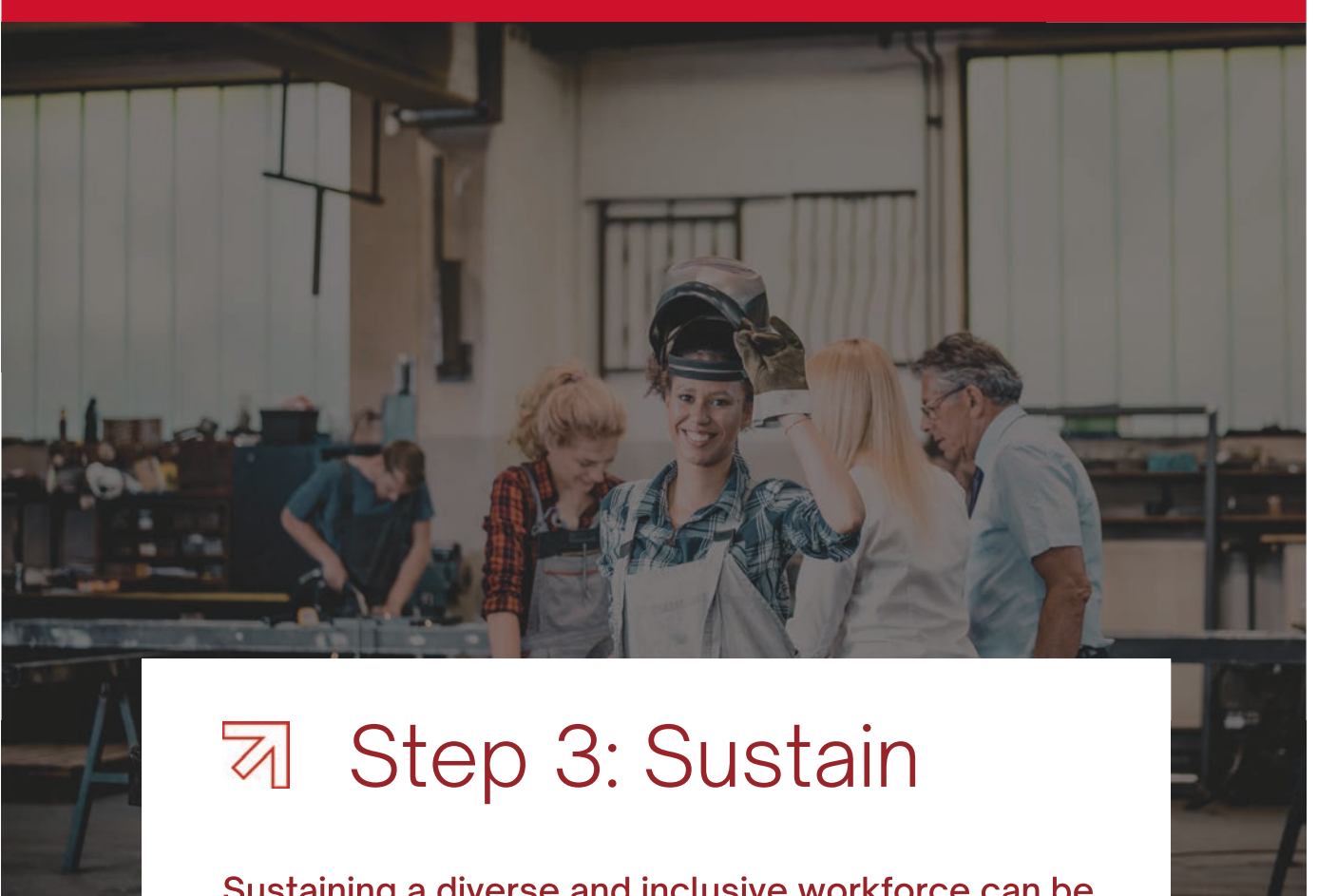
RETENTION OF TALENT

Workers are more likely to stay if they feel safe and included.

People who feel respected and accommodated at work are some of the most dedicated and loyal employees. Be proactive and don't wait for a loss of talent you can't afford. Strong retention practices include:

- Go-to people that are available for concerns/complaints on all shifts. They should be trained and supported by a clear conflict resolution process
- Pay equity processes and equal opportunity for training and promotion
- Confidential harassment policies and processes are followed properly
- Regular and agile employee review or feedback processes at all levels
- A recognition process that appeals to your workers (e.g. formal reward program or informal positive and open feedback)
- Support systems for women in the workforce (ask them!)
- Appropriate and consistent parental leave and pregnancy policies (e.g. fetal protection)
- Appropriate accommodation around benefits including family, childcare, and/or personal responsibility
- Consideration and options for flexible work and/or transportation needs





Step 3: Sustain

Sustaining a diverse and inclusive workforce can be the hardest part of the process. When it comes to making meaningful change, you get out of it what you put in. If you are committed to creating a workplace where each person feels safe, included and successful, your investment of time and dedication can expect big rewards.

Step 3: Sustain

SUSTAIN

Your effort matters, and it is crucial to measure your progress.

Repeat the Commit and Create steps of the process to correct the course if necessary. How you review your progress, and measure success and shortfalls has to be done within an appropriate context for your organization, and should be part of your inclusion strategy. At a minimum, the following should be done on a regular basis:

- Review and revise your “why” (business case), including your short and long-term goals
- Re-measure your important “what” and adjust targets accordingly
- Review your “how” and make adjustments to the plan as needed
- Refresh inclusivity training for leadership and all employees*
- Keep talking about it! Celebrate your successes and communicate your progress

***A great way to keep the momentum going is to review and re-sign the We Are Trades Pledge on a yearly basis.**

Measuring progress once per year is best practice. The measurements can be simple or complex. Common measurement practices include:

- Formal Assessments (Workplace Culture or Inclusion Surveys)
- Exit Interviews
- Formal feedback (In-house surveys, discussion groups, or suggestion boxes)
- Informal feedback (check-in discussions)
- Informal work site visits (ask workers what they need to do their job better. Are people smiling? Do you see positive interactions between workers?)

➤ Step 3: Sustain

IMPORTANT NOTE

Creating a safe and inclusive workplace is challenging and can result in individual and/or organizational fatigue. In “Birds of All Feathers,” 2020, Michael Bach advises that progress and change take time, and it’s often difficult to see the progress you have made. Some causes of fatigue include not recognizing or receiving recognition of the work being done, being overwhelmed with other organizational priorities, and forgetting to celebrate all wins, large and small. When an individual or organization experiences fatigue it is important to acknowledge that it’s happening, identify the source(s), and work together with patience and understanding in order to overcome it (6).



Support for Employers

We Are Trades can be your guide through navigating change. However, we recognize that for many organizations, this work can be overwhelming. Please contact CCWESTT to explore ways in which we can support you and connect you with a network of employers doing this same transformational work. Thank you for being a leader in creating and sustaining a workplace that is safe and inclusive of women.



Contact Us

www.cwestt.org

info@ccwestt.org

About

The Canadian Coalition of Women in Engineering, Science, Trades and Technology (CCWESTT) is a leader for and a voice of a national community for women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology (SETT). We are proud to promote girls and women studying and working in these fields, and celebrate the contributions of women in all spheres of SETT.

As a national organization made up of individuals, groups, institutions and industries, CCWESTT builds alliances and partnerships which support and celebrate a diverse SETT workforce. From education, to retention and leadership, our goal is to empower and support women who study and work in these fields through conferences, professional development opportunities, building networks and mentorship relationships, and being a voice for women in SETT in Canada.

➤ Acknowledgements

Project Partners



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