



# Allyship in the workplace

## Be a catalyst for change

Allyship is a role for everyone. When it is embraced as a shared responsibility, it creates a happier, healthier workplace culture.

When implemented and practised consistently, allyship:

- promotes inclusion, supports diversity and enhances equity.
- builds trust and strengthens working relationships across teams.
- encourages accountability at every level.
- drives organisational performance, productivity and innovation.

This is particularly critical in STEM organisations, where women remain underrepresented across many sectors and at senior levels. Allyship helps ensure responsibility for improving gender equity is a shared, collective effort.

## ➤ What is allyship?

Allyship in the workplace refers to individuals - particularly those in majority groups or who hold leadership, authority, or influence - actively supporting and advocating for colleagues from underrepresented or marginalised groups. Effective allyship involves using your position, influence, platform, or decision-making authority to promote inclusion, challenge discrimination and help create a more equitable workplace for everyone.

### ➤ What is an ally?

There are different types of allies:

**Everyday allies** – colleagues who challenge biased language, amplify voices, ask questions.

**Operational allies** – managers who remove barriers, fix processes, ensure fair opportunities.

**Strategic allies** – senior leaders who allocate budget, sponsor women, set targets, and hold others accountable.

# Why is allyship important?

In the context of WISE's mission to achieve gender equity in STEM, allyship focuses on actively supporting women to succeed, progress and feel included in the workplace. This is not a role reserved for men—women can be, and often are, powerful allies to one another. Allyship is about intentionally creating a culture where women are supported, valued, and able to thrive.

It is a commitment to expanding opportunities—not reinforcing the idea that women are competing for a single "seat at the table."

Allyship is not just a moral obligation - it's a strategic advantage. Employees increasingly expect organisations to create inclusive workplace cultures.



say an organisation's approach to EDI is important to them when considering a new role.<sup>1</sup>

Research shows that women continue to receive less sponsorship and advocacy than men, despite being equally committed to their careers.<sup>2</sup> Allyship helps address these gaps by encouraging colleagues and leaders to actively advocate for others, challenge barriers and create psychologically safe environments where everyone can contribute and thrive.

1 - <https://www.iris.co.uk/news/new-dei-research-by-iris/>

2 - <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/women-in-the-workplace-2024>

It's not about 'us versus them' or placing responsibility on a certain group. It's a shared, collaborative effort in which everyone has a role to play in improving workplace culture.

When colleagues actively support and advocate for women in STEM, they help create environments where women can progress, feel respected and thrive. This strengthens teams, drives innovation and creates a more inclusive culture for all.

Clear communication, evidence-based approaches and visible leadership commitment ensure everyone understands their role in creating an inclusive workplace.



## ➤ How to create successful allyship in the workplace?

In workplaces where there is an overwhelming majority, diverse lived experiences can be misunderstood or unrecognised, and therefore not reflected within workplace culture, initiatives and opportunities. Here are some steps organisations can take to embed meaningful allyship and create an inclusive workplace culture:

### ➤ Educate yourself and the workforce

It may sound simple but a common barrier is often getting employees to understand why diversity matters and why it is important in the workplace.

This can be formalised through mandatory training for all, or can be socialised through educational tools such as articles, podcasts and employee networks sharing their lived experience.

Providing accessible education ensures colleagues understand not only what allyship is, but why it matters.

**Read our resource on why equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) matter.**

### ➤ Be willing to get it wrong, but stay curious

Not knowing where to start or fear of saying the wrong thing can prevent people from engaging at all. It's important as an ally to stay curious and ask questions when you don't understand something.

Be open to feedback, take responsibility when you get it wrong.

Allyship is a practice, not a perfection exercise. The key is a willingness to learn and a genuine intention.

## ➤ Take ongoing action and show accountability

Lack of accountability and token gestures create a disingenuous culture. It's important to prioritise meaningful interactions and impactful outputs, particularly for leadership who should visibly role model good practice.

Allyship helps leaders better understand the experiences of their employees and identify barriers that may be limiting participation, progression or belonging. It also enables leaders to take meaningful action by advocating for others, removing obstacles and creating a more inclusive workplace culture.

## ➤ Ensure consistency and clarity

Allyship is most effective when supported by strong organisational frameworks. This includes:

- clear guidance and expectations for all employees
- training and resources to help colleagues build allyship skills
- robust processes for reporting discrimination, bias, or inappropriate behaviour
- clear communication about responsibilities and channels for support

Consistency builds trust—and trust builds a positive workplace culture.

Passive support is not enough; active engagement is needed. Research found:



This gap suggests that allies' intentions do not always translate into meaningful support for women in the workplace.

3 - <https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbesbusinesscouncil/2023/11/27/carry-as-you-climb-how-to-be-an-ally-to-other-women-in-business/>

# Want to know more? Work with WISE!

WISE offers Allyship in the workplace training. The session covers what allyship means in practice, how to spot and overcome barriers and empowers attendees to use their influence to contribute to a positive cultural change within the workplace. Find out more about in-company training [here](#).

All in company training is tailored to your people, priorities and context, giving your teams the knowledge, confidence and practical tools to act and create meaningful change.

If you're interested in allyship training, or any other WISE products and services, please contact [SineadBarry@theiet.org](mailto:SineadBarry@theiet.org).



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