



Are you Chairing a Committee?

Gender bias is widespread and has a major effect on the careers of women. You can combat gender bias with effective planning.

Leaders at ESF want to overcome gender biases to ensure all women have equal opportunity. Please do your part to support women when chairing a committee.

Have you?



Ensured that everyone can speak without interruption

Men are more likely to interrupt or talk over women speaking in a meeting. Setting and enforcing around rules about giving others 'the floor' when they are speaking can be helpful.

Evaluated ideas regardless of who proposes them

Research shows that the same idea contributed by a man is more likely to be considered and implemented, and women making novel suggestions are perceived as less loyal and less helpful and their ideas are more likely to be discounted. Have a system for considering and evaluating all ideas based on their merit, such as anonymous written suggestions.

Noted who should receive credit for suggestions

Men sometimes build on ideas of others and may be credited for an idea originally proposed by a woman. Refer to detailed meeting notes if necessary to be sure that ideas are credited appropriately.

Distributed work evenly

Women in the workplace often end up with 'housekeeping' tasks such as taking notes, keeping time, sending reminders, and men often volunteer first for tasks garnering high visibility or credit such as presenting a group proposal. Instead of soliciting volunteers, assign these tasks ahead of time to make sure they are evenly distributed.

Organized the meeting location with 'space at the table'

Physical space can influence participation in a meeting, and women tend to seat themselves 'in the back'. If you request a meeting space with enough space for everyone to have 'front row access' and seat yourself in the middle of the area, everyone can feel equally valued and participatory.

Good practices to counterbalance the effects of inherent bias include:

1. Learning about research on biases and assumptions and striving to minimize their influence on the evaluation of candidates.
2. Developing criteria for evaluating candidates and applying them consistently to all applicants.
3. Spending sufficient time evaluating each applicant.
4. Evaluating each candidate's entire application and not depending too heavily on only one element, such as the prestige of the degree-granting institution or post-doctoral program or the letters of recommendation.
5. Explaining the decision for rejecting or retaining a candidate based on evidence in the candidate's file as related to the qualifications.
6. Periodically evaluating the committee's decisions to consider whether qualified women and underrepresented groups are included and whether evaluation biases and assumptions are influencing decisions.