



FIPWiSE

Advancing women in science
and education worldwide

The FIPWiSE toolkit in action: Short learning resources to support positive work environments for women in science and education

Factor 2: Work-life balance

Cultivating work-life balance requires a multi-dimensional approach uniting institutions, organisations, leaders, and individuals. This overview outlines key actions that can foster well-being, from institutional frameworks and policy implementation to leadership engagement, outcome measurement, and the essential role individuals play in creating lasting change.

Key actions that institutions can take to ensure sustained progress towards better work-life balance

- Institutions should promote gender-sensitive, inclusive work environments that address intersecting forms of discrimination.
- They can encourage employees to take their full leave entitlements, offering flexible hours, supporting responsibilities outside of work such as childcare, elder care and other caring responsibilities, and encouraging well-being, is key.
- They can implement child-friendly policies and wellness programmes to further enable work-life balance and help create equitable, supportive workplaces for all.

Effectively translating policies around equal incentives for better work-life balance

Policies around work-life balance can be effectively translated into everyday workplace practices by:

- Offering flexible schedules, deadlines, and remote working options where possible;
- Establishing Employee Assistance Programmes as a staff resource during challenging times;
- Introducing targeted initiatives to support women scientists, including equitable access to grants, mobility opportunities (e.g., research, education, and professional development), and leadership roles that take into account gender-based responsibilities such as pregnancy, maternity, and caregiving to ensure genuine work-life balance.

Best ways to engage leadership and stakeholders in the implementation of better work-life balance

The best ways to engage leadership and stakeholders in implementing better work-life balance include:

- Involving both employees and leadership to embed work-life balance into organisational culture and strategic planning;
- Encouraging executive-level discussions on work-life balance, for example during performance reviews, focus groups, or one-to-one meetings with leaders;

- Establishing national or regional certification schemes for work-life balance initiatives, based on clear criteria such as flexible working policies and parental leave support, to increase visibility and encourage stakeholder engagement;
- Decentralising decision-making on flexible hours and remote working, linking them to deliverables to empower teams and reinforce accountability.

Measuring success and tracking improvement

- Success can be measured by both quantitative and qualitative methods including employee satisfaction surveys, retention rates, and career progression data.
- Organisations should encourage data collection to highlight the financial and productivity benefits of work-life balance measures.
- In addition, targeted enquiries into the experiences of women in pharmacy science and education, and women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) can offer critical insight into perceived impact and areas for improvement.

Strategies, tools, frameworks, or resources that can support the implementation of better work-life balance

- Effective implementation of work-life balance strategies should be inclusive of all employees, including parents and caregivers.
- Organisations should create positive working conditions by addressing non-work-related stressors such as financial well-being, adequate workspace, and access to transportation.
- Ensuring sufficient staffing, including trained support staff, helps reduce overload. Regular reviews of best practices and curated resources (e.g., dedicated websites) can guide employers, leaders, and stakeholders in sustaining supportive environments.

The role of individuals in enabling change

- Individuals at all levels can enable change by maintaining and communicating clear boundaries between work and personal life.
- They can advocate for support with responsibilities outside of work, such as childcare and mental health, and consistently take their entitled time off.
- Engaging in open dialogue with leadership around flexibility, task prioritisation, and time management is key.
- Being supportive and adaptable with colleagues, especially during unexpected circumstances, also strengthens a culture of positive work-life balance.