

CHECKLIST

BUILDING FEMINIST FRAMEWORKS

Equal Futures
NETWORK



RÉSEAU
Avenir égalitaire



Building Feminist Frameworks



As an organization engaged in the pursuit of gender equality and social justice in communities across Canada and around the world, the [Equal Futures Network](#) has considered itself a feminist organization since our inception and has striven to embed participatory and collaborative approaches to our work as a part of our organizational feminist principles and values system. These principles and values have played a central, if not defining, role in the development of the Equal Futures Network's internal practices, program priorities and long-term collaborations and partnerships. As a result, our approach has enabled us to play a leadership role in building and sustaining coalitions with a range of partners on a wide spectrum of issues that fall under the gender equality umbrella. By listening to grassroots movements, bringing women's, in all their diversity, voices to the forefront, connecting the local to the global we have been able to work in deep partnership to shape and influence the landscape to drive progress for gender equality from coast-to-coast-to-coast.

Whether you are just starting your work to become a more feminist organization and incorporate more feminist values into your work or you are well into your journey, this checklist will provide you with some tangible, concrete next steps and examples to support you on your way! There is no universal definition of feminism and it is a uniquely individual and personal understanding. This resource is intended to be a starting point for your work, providing concrete examples about how we as an organization are unpacking feminist principles in our work and creating a framework to support our organizational and programmatic pursuits. All the items we share below are steps that we took or are currently taking in order to ensure that we continue to build and prioritize feminism as a key framework laying the foundation for the future of the Equal Futures Network.

POWER

 ○ EXAMINE EXISTING POWER STRUCTURES
 (BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL)

Inherent in this work are different power systems and structural barriers that create a multitude of inequities within our gender equality. Engaging in gender equality work is challenged by the everyday and structural realities in which our work as an organization and our experiences as individuals are embedded. As a result, it is imperative to take a deep dive internally to understand where your power lies, what space you take up in this work and determine how you are going to move forward in a way that maximizes your work but does not further marginalize or negatively impact others.

In particular, interrogating the way that racism, sexism, colonialism, ableism, classism (amongst others), impacts interactions both within an organization and through programmatic work is important to ensure that there is work being done to dismantle systemic structures that impact internal organizational building practices as well as external program choices, decisions and relationships/partnerships.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Do you have an understanding of your own power over, power within and power with as an organization?
- ▶ Have you considered the ways in which you could better grapple with your own power over?
- ▶ Have you considered the ways on which you could better build your own and others' power?
- ▶ Are there structures in place to make decisions, lead and actively engage in the process of integrating a feminist perspective within your organization?
 - ▶ If not, what do you need to implement to begin this process?
- ▶ Do you have mechanisms in place across the organization to ensure participation, accountability and transparency as you integrate a feminist perspective?
 - ▶ If not, what do you need to implement to begin this process?

○ DEFINE FEMINISM AND ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES

There is no set answer to the question “*what is feminism*” but you will be able to look at your own work, define your priorities and lay out how this relates to your work and what you want to achieve.

Setting out a clear definition of your organizational values and working towards developing an understanding of how feminist thought and practice influence your work across the organization will be helpful to define how you intersect with this space, define what you want to achieve and how you will approach this through your programmatic efforts.

It is important to note that everyone's definition of feminism will be different and this exercise is intended to outline how you see and define your own particular feminism and how it has manifested itself in your work.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Is there a policy review plan in place to integrate a feminist perspective in all existing policies and draft new policies as needed?
- ▶ How will you integrate a feminist perspective across all internal human resource processes including your hiring, retention and leadership strategies?
- ▶ How will you listen to staff and integrate their perspectives as a core part of your organizational feminist journey?

RESOURCE

- ▶ Check out the [Equal Futures Network Values](#) which outline our own understanding of feminism and how we embed this throughout our work!

POWER

ORGANIZATIONAL BUY-IN: LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT AND SUPPORT

In order to build a feminist organization there needs to be a consensus-based decision making and collaboration across all levels and areas of the organization. Engaging with all staff in this process in a transparent manner ensures that there is buy-in across all levels and that as a collective you are working together to create real, positive organizational change.

Readiness for building a feminist framework involves building consensus not only with your governing body but also, amongst staff with an important focus on engaging with and incorporating the views and lived experiences of women, Indigenous, racialized, 2SLGBTQIA+, disabled and other equity-deserving groups and exploring the costs, benefits and the potential risks that this shift may present for them.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Is the governing body (board for ex.) and senior management on board and ready to lead and support this process?

- ▶ Are they open to learning and leading as they do so?
- ▶ Are they aware of and grappling with their own fear and resistance to this change process?

- ▶ Are there any individuals on the Board or among the staff who can champion this work, based on their passion and experience in feminist analysis and
 - ▶ Among these individuals, are there diverse voices ready and willing to co-lead and co-create?

- ▶ Do you have a list of technical resources, assets and administrative tools and resources needed to ensure the process will be facilitated efficiently?


BUDGETING

A gender-responsive budget is a budget that works for everyone (women and men, girls and boys) by ensuring gender-equitable distribution of resources and by contributing to equal opportunities for all. Gender-responsive budgeting is essential both for gender justice and for fiscal justice. It involves analyzing government budgets for their effect on genders and the norms and roles associated with them. It also involves transforming these budgets to ensure that gender equality commitments are realized.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Have you established a budget to incorporate this work into your internal and external programming?
 - ▶ What priorities have you determined that will help you budget to support your work?

- ▶ Have you established an organizational best practice and have a focus on building capacity for gender-responsive budgeting?

LEARNING AND REFLECTION

ENGAGE IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA) WORK

As an organization creating opportunities for learning and reflection are important for organizational growth as well as to gap-spot areas for improvement. For a variety of reasons engaging in DEIA work is important for deepening feminist practice as all inequality is

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Have you taken an internal look and assessed where you are currently at with your DEIA journey?
 - ▶ Have you done the work and found the gaps where you need additional support before you engage with outside expertise?

LEARNING AND REFLECTION

 ○ **ENGAGE IN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND ACCESSIBILITY (DEIA) WORK**

not created equal. In fact, people's social identities can overlap, creating compounding experiences of discrimination which is why developing an internal culture that recognizes intersectional inequalities and seeks ways, through learning and reflection, to subvert structures that uphold them, deepen knowledge on best practices to create systemic change and broaden partnerships with like-minded organization to support a culture shift will overall be supported throughout the feminist framework building process.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Do you make time for and invest in learning about various feminist methods, ideas and practices, and the lived realities of women and 2SLGBTIA+ persons?
- ▶ Have you considered what cultural competencies may be required in your organization to advance DEIA work and where you are lacking?
 - ▶ Have you considered where you will integrate existing DEIA best practices/perspectives and where you will create stand-alone commitments/policies?

 ○ **ENGAGE IN RECONCILIATION AND DECOLONIZATION PRACTICES**

Similar to above, acknowledging the systemic imbalances that disproportionately impact Indigenous communities is imperative to creating an organization that is anti-colonial and engaged proactively in reconciliation. All non-Indigenous-led organizations benefit from colonization and it is our job to unpack these advantages and determine the best practices to create an organizational culture that does not continue to uphold these power imbalances.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Do you make time for and invest in learning about various feminist methods, ideas and practices, and the lived realities of the Indigenous community and Elders?
- ▶ How have you connected with the Indigenous community in your area?
 - ▶ Have you thought about how to integrate their teachings and knowledge into your practice and what does this look like as an organizational practice?

 ○ **ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING**

Engaging in reflective learning exercises and capacity strengthening opportunities that show that you are investing in your people and their work is another important aspect of feminist organization building. In particular, creating a culture of learning that brings people together to share experiences in a non-hierarchical environment (participant-led), with an open agenda that prioritizes dialogue and a focus on action supports a positive culture that is invested in building solidarity and community as an organization.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Do you create and set aside time for personal reflection on your feminist practice related to your way of being in the world?
 - ▶ How does this impact your organizational culture of learning, knowledge sharing and capacity strengthening?
- ▶ How are you tracking performance in this area?
- ▶ How are you assessing impact and reflecting on areas for improvement?

LEARNING AND REFLECTION


INTEGRATE A GENDERED ANALYSIS INTO PROGRAMS

Work towards building an understanding of issues that highlight the gendered experiences and impacts and how to bring women's leadership and agency to the centre of your programmatic endeavors. In particular, listen to women's stories and take direction from these experiences to shape program interventions, while ensuring that you are being responsive to the real needs of partners. Consider developing a gender policy for your organization and prioritize using gender analysis front and centre in all your internal and external engagements.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Has the organization acted to listen and map these realities, and has it considered how power relations in society create and sustain these struggles?
- ▶ How are you bringing other people in your Network along your journey?
 - ▶ How are you creating safe spaces and opportunities for growth?

SOLIDARITY, COMMUNITY AND COLLECTIVE ACTION


BUILD AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Engage with other organizations and individuals with common cause to your own work in order and focus on creating mutual beneficial and reciprocal partnerships. True allyship is built on a foundation of mutual trust with reciprocal accountability and is a paramount process of building feminist spaces. Take the time to look at what you bring to the relationship and recognize the limits of what you know and can offer. This is an act of solidarity as it cedes space for partners to take up the space that is rightfully theirs. There is too much competition and rivalry in this space as a result of a scarcity of funding. We need to focus on building each other up and creating a cohesive partnership to drive our work forward instead of being divided and acting in silos.

KEY QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ Are you connected to feminist networks, communities and collectives to create friendship and relationships based on diversity and a shared condition?
- ▶ Do you work towards building spaces and opportunities for feminist community-building and solidarity?
- ▶ Do you proactively and responsively work with other feminists and allies to embark on smaller or bigger joint actions based on friendship, community and solidarity?
- ▶ Are you actively engaged in a process to identify needs and trends in collective organizing?
- ▶ Are you an active contributor to feminist agenda-setting in your own political, geographic, identity-

RESOURCE

- ▶ [Power of Coalitions Report](#)
- ▶ [All resources and tools](#)