

Workplace Policies and Practices

When considering policies and practices to address the wage gap, employers may want to first assess their current workplace for 'family friendly' work practices. By enhancing and implementing policies to address factors that cause the wage gap - family responsibilities, job clustering, and the under-valuation of traditional female occupations - employers are also addressing the looming labour and skills shortage.

The following list of policies, benefits and programs can be used as a guide by employers to improve the workplace and create a healthy and productive workforce.

Please Note: Not all policies and practices listed can be applied to every workplace, nor are they intended to be.

Work-Life Balance Benefits and Programs

The balance between work and family responsibilities is a key contributor to the wage gap. Research has shown that more employees are experiencing moderate to high levels of stress as a result of trying to balance their work and home lives. One of the strategies of the Wage Gap Reduction Initiative is to increase the sharing of family responsibilities.

The following is a listing of policies, benefits and programs that can assist employers and employees to improve their work-life balance while increasing productivity.

<i>Reduced Work Week</i>	A voluntary reduction of work hours. Options may include reducing the number of hours worked per day, or the number of days.
<i>Flexible Work Hours</i>	Employees work a standard work week within assigned core hours but with flexible start and end times. Flexible hours provide an opportunity to create a short term or periodic flexible work arrangement that is tailored to an employee's daily commitments, both at work and at home.
<i>Regular Part-Time</i>	The regular part-time work schedule can be anything from shorter work days, to regular hours for less than five days. Includes regular hours and benefits.
<i>Teleworking</i>	Working from home or an alternate office location on a regular and consistent basis. Employees have access to the regular work site, co-workers and their management team via computer.
<i>Employee and Family Assistance Program</i>	Provides a broad range of counseling services to employees including, among others, marital, parenting and bereavement counseling.
<i>Pro-Rated Salary Leave</i>	Employees may purchase a leave without pay of more than five day duration and up to a maximum of two months, while prorating the 'cost' of this leave over a number of pay periods. (i.e. Summer off leave while children are home from school)
<i>Paid Leave for Personal or Other Reasons</i>	Reasonable leave with pay may be granted where family, personal or other emergencies not directly attributable to the employee prevent the employee from reporting to work. This may include: bereavement leave, birth, adoption, emergency, family, funeral leave, and medical/dental appointments.
<i>Leaves Without Pay</i>	For those leaves that are personal in nature.
<i>Pre-Retirement Work Reduction</i>	Employees within five years of their planned retirement may reduce their work hours by up to 50 per cent without affecting pension contributions or pension benefits. This provides for a knowledge transfer as well.

Pre-Retirement Leave

Employees may use retirement allowance credits as paid leave during the years prior to retirement in lieu of cash payment upon retirement.

Job Sharing

Involves the sharing of one full-time position, between two employees. Arrangements can vary (i.e. work 2.5 days a week, or alternate a 2 day with a 3 day week).

Deferred Salary Leave Plan

Involves employees financing leaves of absence of 6 to 12 months, through “deferring” a portion of their salaries over a specific period of time.

Training and Education Benefits and Programs

Job clustering of women is a key contributor to the wage gap. More than one third of all women in New Brunswick work in only 10 occupations. One of the strategies of the Wage Gap Reduction Initiative is to reduce job clustering.

The following is a listing of policies, benefits and programs that can assist employers and employees reduce job clustering while developing a more skilled and flexible workforce.

In-House Mentorship Program for Female Employees

Historically, wages have been paid on the basis of a job’s perceived value by society.

Cross-training

Train employees in other tasks to expand their skill sets and to create a more flexible workforce.

Training and Educational Opportunities

Encouraging and providing employees with opportunities to take workshops, seminars, lunch and learns, and other training and educational programs is beneficial to both the employee and the workplace.

Compensation and Recognition Benefits and Programs

Non-discriminatory Job Classification and Pay Equity

Historically, wages have been paid on the basis of a job’s perceived value by society.

Most jobs today are still paid on this essentially subjective basis. This has led to a situation where women’s traditional work is paid much less than men’s traditional work. In fact, the under-valuation of women’s work is one of the three key contributors to the wage gap.

As a result, efforts to address the realities of today’s workplace have led to the development of a new way to set wages. Wages are set according to an objective criteria that calculates equal pay for work of equal value. Non-discriminatory job classification systems have been developed from this criterion.

As employers shift to wages based upon objective and equitable criteria, societal attitudes will shift.

To assist employers in making comparisons between female-dominant and male-dominant job classifications, non-discriminatory job evaluations are used.

Non-discriminatory job evaluations, also referred to as gender-sensitive or gender-neutral job evaluations, are objective. They provide a systematic and consistent approach to defining the value of jobs within a workplace. They also provide a basis for a fair and orderly grading structure, regardless of who holds the job.

Most non-discriminatory job evaluations compare jobs done by men and women using comparisons based on four factors: skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions. This assists employers in pinpointing where female-dominant classes may be paid less than male-dominant classes.

Some employers engage in this process by using private firms; while others work on the issue in-house as a joint project between employees and employers.

Employers who want to do non-discriminatory job evaluations in-house, please visit: www.gnb.ca/women

Legislated Benefits

The following is a listing of websites and information on current workplace legislated benefits.

However, more progressive employers are choosing to offer above and beyond the minimum benefits to improve productivity at their workplace and attract and retain employees. By enhancing benefits, some employers have reported increased productivity and retention, and reduced absenteeism and turnover.

Worksafe NB Worksafe NB provides accident prevention services, occupational health and safety assistance and cost-effective disability and liability insurance to workers and employers in New Brunswick.

Visit their website for more information: <http://www.worksafenb.ca/>

New Brunswick Human Rights Commission

The New Brunswick Human Rights Commission focuses on equality, discrimination and harassment in New Brunswick, and what you can do if you are discriminated against. It includes information for employers, educators and the general public.

Visit their website for more information: <http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/>

Employment Standards Act

The *Employment Standards Act* provides working conditions and benefits for all New Brunswick workers, including benefits intended to help workers attend to their family responsibilities. The *Employment Standards Act* entitles employees to the benefits listed below.

Visit their website for more information: <http://www.gnb.ca/0062/acts/acts/e-07-2.htm>

The following are benefits from the *Employment Standards Act*.

Maternity Leave

- Leave of absence without pay of up to 17 weeks
- Can begin no earlier than 11 weeks prior to probable delivery date
- Employee's right to resume work
- Cannot refuse to hire, dismiss, suspend, layoff due to pregnancy

Child Care/Adoption/ Parental Leave

- Leave of absence without pay of up to 37 weeks
- Provide 4 weeks written notice
- Option to share leave between parents
- Maternity Leave + Child Care Leave = 52 weeks or less

Family Responsibility Leave

- Leave of absence without pay up to 3 days per year for matters related to the health, care or education of a person in a 'close family relationship'
- Right to resume work

Sick Leave

- Leave of absence without pay up to 5 days per year (or more with employer's approval)
- Be aware of Human Rights Act regarding persons with a physical or mental disability
- Employed for 90 calendar days
- Medical certificate required for 4 or more consecutive sick days
- Right to resume work (Worker's Compensation Act/ Human Rights Act)

Bereavement Leave

- Leave of absence without pay up to 5 consecutive days in the event of a death of a person in a 'close family relationship'
- Begins no later than the day of the funeral
- Right to resume work

Compassionate Care Leave

- Leave of absence without pay up to 8 weeks to care for someone in a 'close family relationship'
- Right to resume work

Court Leave

- Leave of absence without pay and right to resume work if an employee is:
 - Summoned to serve on a jury
 - Selected to serve on a jury
 - Serviced with a summons to serve as a witness