CHAMPIONING CANADIAN MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Employer-Facing Toolkit for Building Culturally Safe and Equitable Workplaces for Canadian Muslim Women

#IBelongYouBelong

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Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)
Le conseil canadien des femmes musulmanes (CCFM)

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Femmes et Égalité des genres Canada

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About CCMW:

The Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) is a national charitable non-profit organization dedicated to the empowerment, equality and equity of all Muslim women in Canada. Our mission is to affirm the identities of Canadian Muslim women and promote their lived experiences through community engagement, public policy, stakeholder engagement and amplified awareness of the social injustices that Muslim women and girls endure in Canada, while advocating for their diverse needs and equipping local CCMW chapters with the necessary resources to maximize national efforts and mobilize local communities to join the movement.

Our Guiding Principles:

- We are guided by the Quranic message of God's mercy and justice, and of the equality of all persons, and that each person is directly answerable to God.
- We value a pluralistic society, and foster for the goals of strength and diversity within a unifying vision and the values of Canada.
- Our identity of being Muslim women and of diverse ethnicity and race is integral to being Canadian.
- As Canadians, we abide by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the law of Canada.
- We believe in the universality of human rights, which means equality and social justice, with no restriction or discrimination based on race, religion, sex, age, and disability.
- We are vigilant in safeguarding and enhancing our identity and our rights to make informed choices amongst a variety of options.
- We acknowledge that CCMW is one voice amongst many who speak on behalf of Muslim women, and that there are others who may represent differing perspectives.
- We aim to be actively inclusive and accepting of diversity among ourselves, as Muslim women.

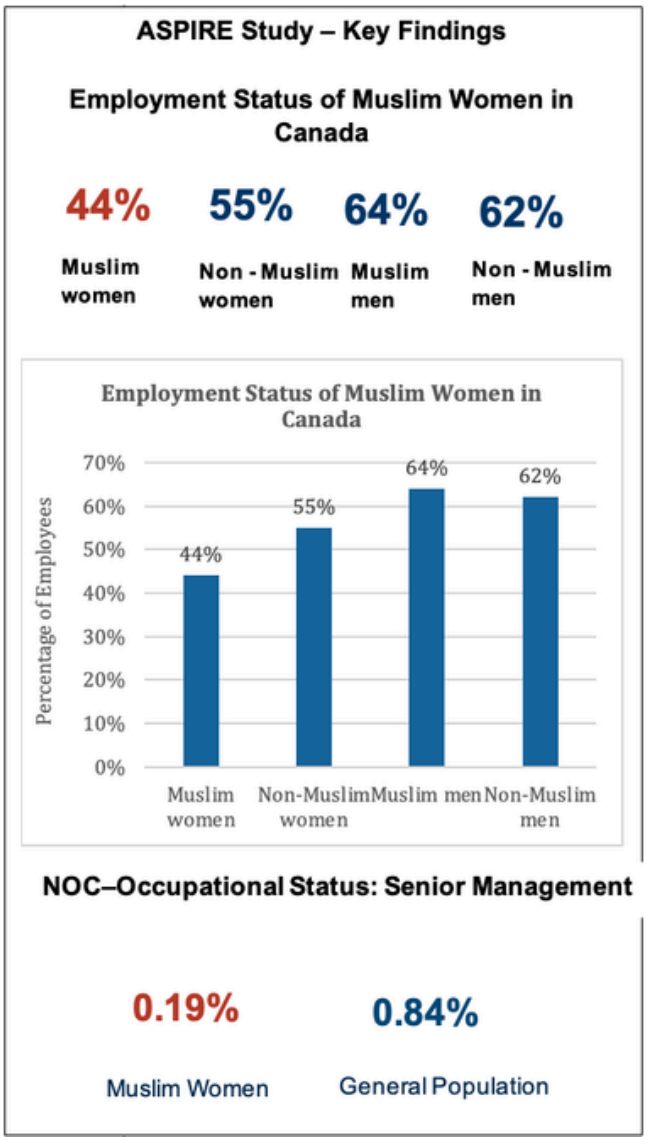
1. Introduction to Championing Canadian Muslim Women in the Workplace (Employer-facing) Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support Canadian employers in creating equitable and inclusive workplaces for Muslim women. It is based on the findings from the study "Addressing Systemic Problems and Inequities in Resolving Employment Issues (**ASPIRE**)," a collaboration between the Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW) and the Muslims in Canada Data Initiative (MiCDI) at the Institute of Islamic Studies, the University of Toronto in 2024. Recognizing the unique challenges and barriers that Muslim women face in employment, this resource provides actionable insights and tools for hiring, retaining, and advancing Muslim women in the workforce.It also includes research on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to support employers in making meaningful change. This toolkit serves as both a starting point for organizations new to DEI efforts and a detailed guide for those looking to deepen their existing practices.

1.1 ASPIRE Study and Key Findings

The **ASPIRE Study** is part of CCMW's ASPIRE Project (Addressing Systemic Problems and Inequities to Resolve Employment Issues) funded by the Department of Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE).

It explores the challenges Muslim women in Canada face in accessing and sustaining employment, as well as advancing in their careers. It aims to inform public policy to address these challenges and provide practical toolkits for both employers and Muslim women to support fair hiring and career advancement. Through a mixed-method approach, the study included diverse voices across Canada and used surveys, interviews, and Census data to show how systemic barriers continue to limit opportunities for Muslim women. The indicators include employment status, National Occupational Classification (NOC) status, socio-economic factors, demographics and workplace experiences.



Key Findings:

- **Muslim women face persistent employment disparities**, with higher rates of unemployment or unemployment compared to the general Canadian population, even when highly educated. These disparities are exacerbated by experiences of **Islamophobia and gendered Islamophobia**, including bias against religious attire such as the hijab, assumptions about capability or cultural fit, and exclusionary hiring practices.
- **Foreign credentials and work experience are often devalued**, with many Muslim women being forced into survival jobs below their skill level.
- **Workplace discrimination and exclusion remain common**, particularly in mid- and senior-level roles, where Muslim women report racial and gender-based barriers, tokenism, and a lack of inclusive practices.
- **Intersectional factors impact employment outcomes** such as immigration status, visible religious identity (e.g., wearing a hijab), age, and caregiving responsibilities, further compound employment challenges.
- **Employment barriers negatively affect mental health**; many Muslim women internalize systemic discrimination, with long-term underemployment contributing to stress, self-doubt, and emotional burnout.

Study Recommendations

1. Strengthen DEI Policies and Workplace Flexibility:

- Move beyond performative diversity efforts by embedding meaningful, measurable DEI practices such as flexible schedules and remote work options, especially to support women with caregiving responsibilities

2. Recognize International Education and Experience

- Create clear, accessible pathways for recognizing foreign credentials and work experience to provide targeted support for refugee and immigrant women navigating the Canadian job market.

3. Expand Mentorship and Networking

- Launch mentorship programs that connect Muslim women with professionals in their industries to support long-term career growth.



4. Improve Childcare and Family Supports

- Increase access to affordable childcare, including before- and after-school care and introduce or expand family-friendly workplace policies, such as parental leave and flexible hours.

5. Address Workplace Discrimination

- Train staff and leadership on anti-racism, unconscious bias, and cultural competency. Ensure clear, safe, and confidential processes are in place for reporting and addressing discrimination.

6. Enhance Technology Training and Career Support

- Provide targeted training in digital tools, online job search strategies, and self-promotion platforms such as LinkedIn. Offer career advising, financial assistance, credential transfer guidance, and in-house networking opportunities to support integration in the Canadian workforce.

7. Ensure Religious Accommodation

- Develop and uphold policies that support religious accommodation in the workplace. Ensure access to clean and private prayer spaces, flexibility for religious observance (e.g. daily prayers and during Ramadan), and inclusive practices that respect religious dress and dietary needs.

1.2. Employment Equity and Human Rights Laws: Progress and Areas to Improvement

Canada has made progress in building more inclusive workplaces through laws and policies like the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms,[1] the Canadian Human Rights Act,[2] and the Employment Equity Act.[3]

- The Charter of Rights and Freedoms protects the right to express one's religion, beliefs, and identity at work and in public life.
- The Canadian Human Rights Act makes it illegal to discriminate based on religion, race, gender, or other identities in federally regulated workplaces.
- Creed protections, included in provincial human rights codes, ensure that employees have the right to religious accommodations like prayer space, time off for religious holidays, and dress that reflects their beliefs.[4]
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) policies help organizations move beyond legal compliance by promoting fairness and creating space for all employees to thrive.[5]
- The Accessible Canada Act (2019) aims to identify, remove, and prevent barriers to accessibility in federally regulated organizations, and promotes full inclusion of people with special needs by ensuring workplaces are physically, technologically, and structurally accessible.

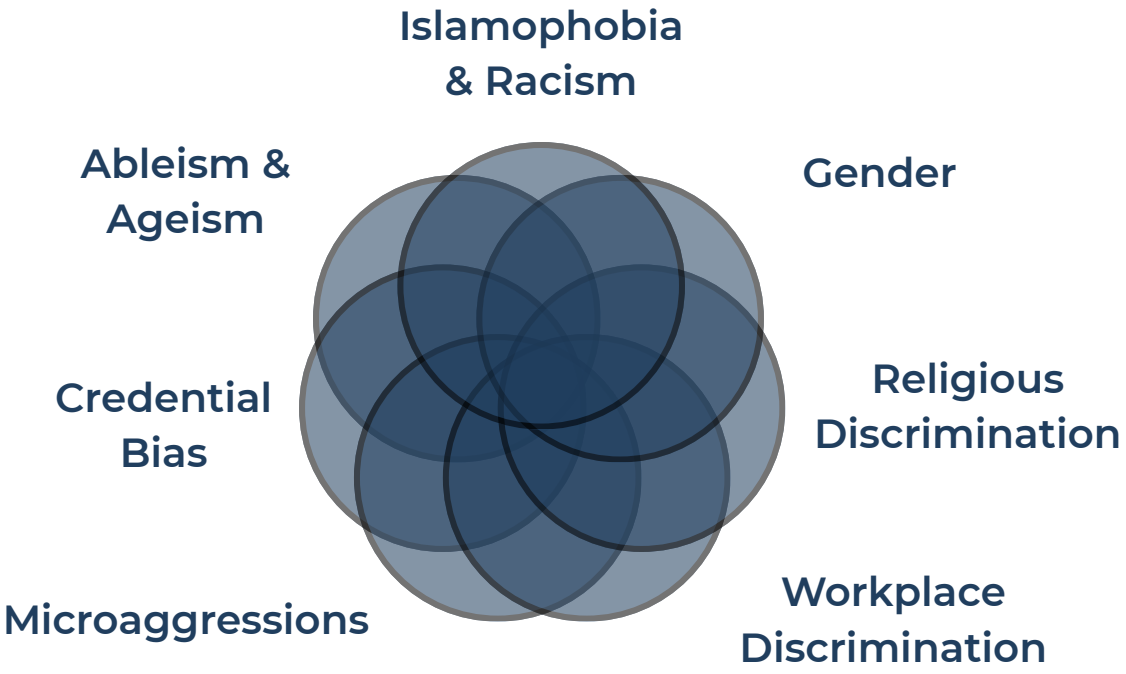
These frameworks have helped improve access to employment and promotions for many non-racialized women. But racialized, Indigenous, and Muslim women still face persistent barriers. Despite being well qualified, they often struggle with hiring discrimination, limited advancement, and exclusion from leadership.[6] The Employment Equity Act was created to fix these gaps, but its results have been uneven. Many Muslim women remain in low-paid, part-time, or precarious work, even when they have advanced education.

Restricted religious freedom and employment for Muslim women in Quebec

Quebec's Bill 21 (An Act respecting the laicity of the State)[7] passed on June 16, 2019. This law bans public service employees from wearing religious symbols, effectively excluding Muslim women from many key sectors, including education, law enforcement, the judiciary and government.[8] By restricting job opportunities and targeting visible religious expression, the law undermines the freedom of religion protected by the Charter and human rights instruments.

In late November 2025, Bill 9[9] was tabled to expand these restrictions, extending the ban on religious symbols to daycares, universities, and subsidized private schools, as well as prohibiting public prayer in CEGEPs, universities, and public spaces, and limiting religious-based food alternatives. Together, these developments illustrate a clear spillover effect: the legal framework first introduced by Bill 21 has created space for increasingly expansive restrictions, heightening the risk of widening institutional discrimination against Muslim women and other religious groups in Quebec.[10]

These realities remind us to move beyond legislative compliance and actively break down systemic barriers. Ensuring inclusive work practices and enforcing rights to religious accommodation are not only legally required, but are fundamental actions toward equity and belonging.



1.3. Understanding Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a critical concept in employment equity. It explains how multiple aspects of a person's identity such as race, gender, religion, disability, immigration status, and age; interact to create distinct and often compounded forms of discrimination.

For Canadian Muslim women, this means they do not face barriers simply because of being women or being Muslim, but because of how these identities intersect in society and the workplace. The **ASPIRE Study** (2024) and recent academic research confirm that Muslim women face layered discrimination based on their gender, race, and religious identity. Some of the intersectional barriers faced by Muslim women and their impact are listed below:

- **Islamophobia & Racism:** Visible markers like the hijab lead to bias, making Muslim women seem less employable.
- **Gender Bias:** Family responsibilities, limited access to childcare, and underlying assumptions about women's competence, especially in senior roles, reduce labour market participation and hinder career advancement.
- **Care Responsibilities:** Muslim women often carry the burden of caregiving, including childcare, elder care, or supporting family members with disabilities, which creates additional employment challenges, especially where workplace flexibility is lacking.
- **Religious Discrimination ('Muslim Penalty'):** Muslim women face worse job outcomes than equally qualified peers due to their religious identity.[11]
- **Credential Devaluation:** Immigrant Muslim women are often forced into survival jobs due to a lack of recognition of foreign credentials.
- **Disability/Special Needs:** Muslim women with visible and invisible disabilities (such as chronic illness, mental health conditions, or neurodivergence) often face exclusion due to inaccessible or non-accommodating workplace environments.
- **Ageism:** Older Muslim women may be overlooked in hiring or promotion decisions due to age-related stereotypes and limited workplace adaptation to generational needs.[12]

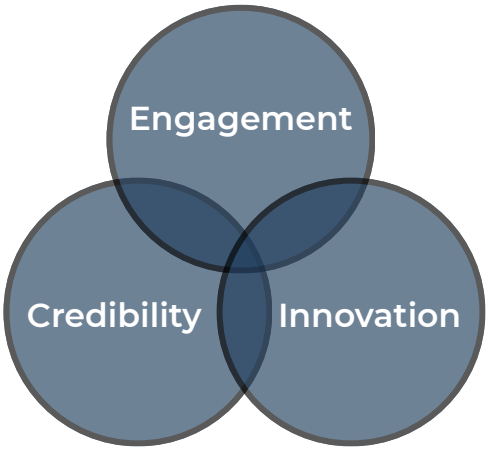
Why Intersectionality Matters for Employers

Intersectionality matters because individuals with multiple marginalized identities face higher risks of discrimination, microaggressions, and stereotyping, which can negatively impact their mental health career advancement, and feelings of safety and belonging in the workplace.[13] They can also face increased risk of workplace sexual

harassment, which often goes unreported due to fear of retaliation, stigma, or lack of culturally safe reporting systems. Recognizing intersectionality helps employers understand the full picture of disadvantage and equity in their workforce. Research shows that inclusive practices which account for intersectionality improve employee well-being, retention, creativity and agility.[14]

Inclusive, intersectional policies improve:

- **Engagement:** Staff who feel respected for their full identity are more engaged.
- **Innovation:** Teams with diverse backgrounds are better at solving complex problems.
- **Credibility:** Organizations that reflect community diversity gain public trust and consumer loyalty.



By addressing intersectional inequities, employers not only fulfill their ethical and legal obligations but also improve performance and competitiveness in a diverse market.

2. Business Case for Employment Equity

Muslim women in Canada are among the most highly educated, multilingual, and globally connected professionals. They bring a wealth of knowledge, lived experience, and cultural fluency to the workplace.

Employers stand to gain significantly by engaging this talent pool. Muslim women:

- Hold advanced degrees across fields like STEM, healthcare, education, and public service
- Have fluency in multiple languages and are connected to a wide range of cultural and community networks
- Offer valuable insights into global markets, diverse consumers, and inclusive service design

With Muslims comprising nearly 5% of Canada's population[15] and close to a quarter of the global population,[16] hiring Muslim women helps organizations expand their reach, strengthen equity commitments, and connect authentically with clients and communities.

They bring not only skills and education, but also unique perspectives and strategic value in today's diverse and competitive workforce. Overlooking this talent represents a missed opportunity, not just for individual career development, but also for employers and Canada's broader economy.[17]

Economic Rationale: Diversity and Profitability

Inclusive workplaces not only promote equity but also enhance financial performance:

- **Profitability:** Companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 25% more likely to have above-average profitability.[18]
- **Cash Flow:** Organizations with inclusive cultures have 2.3x higher cash flow per employee over a three-year period.[19]
- **Economic Growth:** Addressing racial and gender inequities in Canada could add $150 billion to GDP by 2026.[20]

By improving hiring, retention, and advancement of Muslim women, employers can boost innovation, improve decision-making, and tap into new markets and demographics.

Cost of Inaction: Risks and Missed Opportunities

Failing to address employment inequities can lead to:

- **Talent Drain:** Qualified individuals may seek opportunities elsewhere, leading to a loss of potential talent.
- **Legal Risks:** Non-compliance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Canadian Human Rights Act, and the Employment Equity Act can result in legal consequences.
- **Reputational Damage:** Organizations may suffer reputational harm, affecting stakeholder trust and customer loyalty. Customers are seeking companies that align with human rights, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frameworks.
- **High Turnover Costs:** Persistent inequities can lead to increased turnover, incurring significant costs related to recruitment, retraining, and lost productivity.

Inclusion Drives Business and Social Progress

Promoting Muslim women's participation is a concrete way to advance DEI goals and reflect the communities that organizations serve. Employment equity is not only the right thing to do, it is a strategic imperative, as it contributes to innovation, better organizational performance, and a more resilient workforce. It's about making better decisions, building stronger teams, and reflecting the communities we serve. By implementing the recommendations of the **ASPIRE Study** including improving credential recognition, supporting mentorship, addressing discrimination, and offering culturally inclusive supports, employers can lead by example and build workplaces where all individuals, including Muslim women, can thrive.

3. About the Employer Toolkit

Championing Canadian Muslim Women in the Workplace is designed to help employers create inclusive, equitable, and culturally safe work environments. Grounded in the findings of the 2024 **ASPIRE Study**, the toolkit provides practical strategies, real-world examples, and interactive learning tools to support the recruitment, retention, and advancement of Canadian Muslim women and other underrepresented groups. Each module includes a standalone toolkit and a workshop component to build understanding and drive action across various stages of the employee lifecycle.

CCMW defines Muslim women to include cisgender, transgender, non-binary, and other gender-diverse Muslims. This toolkit is intended to address employment barriers experienced by these diverse communities, and is not limited to the experiences of cisgender Muslim women.

This resource is rooted in CCMW's Guiding Principles

These principles form the foundation of the toolkit's approach, one that prioritizes equity, inclusion, and the lived experiences of Muslim women in the workplace.

Each module in the toolkit combines expert-informed content with interactive learning opportunities, enabling employers to build meaningful change within their organizations. Whether used as a starting point or to enhance existing equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) initiatives, the toolkit empowers employers to take informed, values-driven action toward workforce equity.



Modules' Introduction

This toolkit comprises four interactive and practical modules designed to support Canadian employers in creating inclusive and equitable workplaces for Muslim women and other racialized groups. Each module targets a different stage of the employee lifecycle: recruitment, onboarding, promotion, and workplace inclusion, while offering both strategic guidance and hands-on tools. The toolkit offers modular guidance and training for employers who are ready to take action. Whether your organization is just beginning its equity journey or seeking to strengthen existing DEI efforts, each module provides targeted strategies supported by data, research, and lived experiences.

Module 1: Talent Attraction and Recruitment

Offers strategies for inclusive hiring, bias reduction, and culturally safe recruitment practices, along with interactive workshops to build practical skills. This module addresses the systemic issues reported in ASPIRE Study (2024), where Muslim women's foreign credentials and visible religious identity negatively affected job opportunities and hiring outcomes.

Module 2: Onboarding and Early Development

Focuses on creating welcoming, inclusive onboarding experiences using the 5 Cs framework i.e., Clarity, Compliance, Culture, Connection, and Check-ins, to foster belonging from day one. ASPIRE Study (2024) findings show that a culturally safe environment early in the employee journey leads to better retention and morale.

Module 3: Equitable Promotion Processes and Leadership Development

Helps organizations develop transparent promotion pathways and leadership pipelines, addressing systemic barriers such as the "broken rung" and lack of sponsorship opportunities. The ASPIRE Study (2024) revealed that only 0.19% of Muslim women held senior management positions, compared to 0.48% of non-Muslim women—a disparity this module aims to correct.

Module 4: Cultural Safety and Religious Accommodation

Equips employers with tools and training to support religious inclusion, provide accommodations, and create a culturally safe environment through both policy and practice. This is particularly important in light of reports from Muslim women in ASPIRE who experienced discomfort or exclusion due to dress codes, lack of prayer space, or misinterpretation of religious practices.

4. How to Navigate

This toolkit is designed to help you assess and strengthen your organization's policies and practices that impact Canadian Muslim women in the workplace. It serves as a roadmap—from laying a strong foundation to building an exemplary inclusive environment. You'll begin with a self-assessment to understand where your organization currently stands. Based on your results, you'll be guided through the relevant modules to help you take the next steps toward equity and inclusion.

Let's get started and explore how this toolkit can support meaningful change in your workplace.

1. Begin with Self-Assessment

One of the first steps to building a more inclusive workplace is honest self-reflection. Start by completing the Employer Self-Assessment Toolkit in Annex 4. It covers key areas across the employee lifecycle: recruitment, onboarding, inclusion, promotion and well-being.

For each question, rate your organization's current practices as: Yes | Somewhat | No
After scoring, tally the number of "Yes" answers per section to identify where you're doing well and where there's room to grow. See the scoring rubric for more information.

Please note that this employer self-assessment tool is specific to addressing employment barriers for Muslim women. For a more general DEI self-assessment tool, we recommend Diversity Institute's Diversity Assessment Tool for small and medium-sized enterprises.

2. Use the Modules Strategically

Each module includes:

- A practical toolkit with concrete strategies and templates
- An interactive workshop with training activities
- Real-life examples and customizable templates

You can:

- Read through it from beginning to end
- Focus on the areas where your self-assessment identified the biggest gaps
- Use workshops to train staff and managers
- Adapt materials for your sector, region, or team size

3. Revisit and Reflect

Equity and inclusion are ongoing commitments. Use this toolkit:

- to track progress on a periodic basis (e.g. quarterly, bi-annually or annually),
- during HR planning or policy reviews,
- to train teams or assess organizational culture, and
- to reevaluate and/or build programs and projects that align with DEI and accessibility principles.

This is a roadmap toward lasting, meaningful inclusion. By using this toolkit intentionally, you'll move from intention to action, building a workplace where Muslim women and all employees can truly belong, contribute, and thrive.

Endnotes

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CONTENT MODULE 1

TALENT ATTRACTION AND RECRUITMENT

I. Overview

Recruiting Canadian Muslim women into equitable and meaningful employment is essential for fostering diverse, innovative, and inclusive workplaces. However, systemic barriers such as biases in hiring, limited outreach to diverse networks, and insufficient cultural safety in employer branding hinder their access to opportunities. Addressing these challenges requires targeted strategies that prioritize equity and inclusion at every stage of recruitment.

The ASPIRE Study underscores the urgency of this work, revealing that Canadian Muslim women face disproportionately lower employment rates (44%) compared to the general population in Canada (62% for men, 55% for women). Despite high levels of education and expertise, they encounter systemic exclusions that leave unemployment rates persistently high, particularly in sectors like trades, law, and social sciences, and they have disproportionately less access to permanent and/or senior-level positions.

II. Understanding the Challenge

Reflect on the following recruitment barriers and gaps for Muslim women, and consider whether these challenges are present in your company.

Biased hiring

A recent Canadian Human Rights Commission audit found that half of employers used inequitable hiring practices, stemming from unconscious bias that favoured candidates who share similar ethnicity or background with the hiring manager. 61.1% of employers identified detrimental flaws in their selection processes that enabled biased hiring that disadvantaged racialized candidates[1]. For Muslim women job-seekers, such affinity bias can translate into fewer job offers.

Bias can be embedded throughout the hiring process. Elements such as name, country of origin, international education, and language proficiency frequently trigger compounded biases during resume screening. Even when Muslim women advance to the interview stage, non-diverse hiring panels may

[1] Canadian Human Rights Commission. (2025).Significant barriers remain for racialized people seeking management and executive positions in the federal public service: CHRC audit https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/newsroom/significant-barriers-remain-racialized-people-seeking-management-and-executive

default to candidates who reflect their own image of a "good fit." Racialized Muslim women—particularly those who wear the hijab or niqab, or who have physical or mental disabilities—may encounter additional bias. A 2024 study by Radboud University in the Netherlands found that Muslim women who wear the hijab receive 2–7x fewer positive responses to job applications compared to women with no visible faith markers[2]. This initial bias limits the talent pipeline and leaves many overqualified Muslim women underemployed.

AI-based technologies, including blind screening, can help advance more equitable hiring practices. However, when algorithms are built on biased data or criteria, they risk reinforcing the very biases they aim to eliminate.

Limited outreach to representative professional networks

Muslim women, especially new immigrants, are often not connected to professional networks that could bridge their connections to employers; employers tend to rely on traditional recruitment channels and diversity-blind recruiters that may not reach underrepresented groups. This results in a homogeneous candidate pool that overlooks highly qualified Muslim women.

Insufficient Cultural Safety in Employment Branding

Muslim women may be less inclined to apply to companies that lack a visible and genuine commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. When the selection process provides little to no information or consideration for DEI priorities, including religious and cultural accommodations -this may in turn signal that the workplace is not culturally safe or welcoming, and may even be resistant to change.

Inadequate Metrics

When companies lack data on their recruitment and hiring processes and on their employees' demographics, this can effectively conceal biased practices that have a disproportionate impact on Muslim women. Without disaggregated data, it becomes difficult to identify patterns of exclusion, track progress, or hold the organization accountable to its equity commitments.

"I have been here in Canada for the last 13 years. I came with a degree from back home. I had a Master's degree in [STEM field]. I tried to find a job relevant to my teaching because I was a teacher there, so I tried to find a similar position here, which was really difficult at that time, and I didn't find anything. So, I decided to upgrade my education, and I got admission in university. I completed my doctoral degree in [STEM field]. After that, I did a postdoctoral fellowship for three years, and now after that, I'm still working on a contract. It's not easy to find a secure, permanent position, I don't know why." **- Muslim Woman, 2024 ASPIRE study**

[2] Muslim women face discrimination in the job market (2004). Research news item. Radboud University. https://www.ru.nl/en/research/research-news/muslim-women-face-discrimination-in-the-job-market

Barriers vary across sectors[3]:

STEM: Canadian Muslim women who studied engineering are the most likely to report current employment (65%), the highest among all fields of study. Women in mathematics and computer science report some of the lowest unemployment rates while looking for work (8%).	**Financial Services:** Emphasis on "cultural fit" may unintentionally exclude diverse candidates, limiting sector diversity.
Healthcare: Muslim women who studied health sciences report better employment outcomes compared to those in fields like arts or trades. However, representation in senior management positions within healthcare is strikingly low, with only 0.07% of Canadian Muslim women holding such roles.[4]. Employer branding often overlooks cultural safety, deterring diverse talent and impacting patient care and organizational culture.	**Skilled Trades:** Informal recruitment practices often perpetuate biases, restricting opportunities for Muslim women in male-dominated trades. Muslim women in skilled trades face one of the highest unemployment rates (12%) compared to other fields, reflecting systemic barriers to access and retention[5]. These challenges are compounded by the overreliance on informal recruitment methods and exclusionary workplace cultures.
Public Sector: Bureaucratic recruitment processes often lack flexibility to address religious or cultural needs, deterring Muslim women from applying. As a result of legislation restricting religious expression, such as Quebec's Bill 21, some participants in the ASPIRE study reported changing career directions to avoid being penalized.	**Non-profit/NGO sector:** Muslim women - especially those who wear hijab - face subtle screening and bias during hiring, including being overlooked for donor-facing or public-facing roles. This limits access to meaningful opportunities and signals that leadership and representation are reserved for non-racialized staff.

III. Why It Matters

Focusing on equity from the outset brings several benefits to employers:

✔ **Broadening the talent pool:** Inclusive talent attraction efforts expand candidate pools and allow organizations to tap into the underrepresented talent of highly educated Muslim women who have higher postsecondary education rates than non-Muslim Canadian women[6]. In a competitive labour

[3] ASPIRE Study. (2014). *Canadian Council of Muslim Women*. Canadian Council of Muslim Women. https://www.ccmw.com/aspire-study

[4] Ibid.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

market, failing to include Muslim women narrows your reach and overlooks a valuable segment of the workforce, undermining growth and competitiveness.

- ✔ **Access to markets**[7]**:** Equitably including Muslim women from diverse backgrounds in your hiring practices helps diversify your workforce and increases your organization's connection to new markets and customer bases that Muslim women may understand and engage with more intimately. Firms with diverse teams are said to be up to **70% more likely to capture new markets**, as employees' cultural competencies enable better understanding of varied customer needs[8].

- ✔ **Innovation and creativity:** Diverse teams bring varied perspectives and ideas, fostering creativity and better problem-solving. According to a CloverPop study (2017) of 588 business decisions across 184 teams, diverse teams – in terms of gender, age, and geography - made better decisions 87% of the time[9]. Research shows that innovation and related revenues rise even further when organizations demonstrate diversity across multiple dimensions and employees report strong feelings of inclusion.[10]

IV. Key Inclusive Strategies and Solutions

By leveraging equitable recruitment practices, employers can create a more dynamic and inclusive workforce for Muslim women, and other racialized and underrepresented employees. These strategies are inclusive of employees, volunteers, interns, board members, consultants, and contractors engaged in your company.

Foster a culturally safe workplace that extends to Muslim women

To attract and retain diverse talent, it is essential to foster a safe and inclusive workplace where Muslim women—regardless of their backgrounds—feel welcomed, respected, and able to practice their faith without compromising their dignity or limiting their career advancement. This requires addressing both unconscious biases and explicit forms of discrimination that exist across all levels of the organization—from policies and governance structures to workplace culture and individual attitudes. Crucially, meaningful change must be championed by senior leadership, who hold the power to shape organizational culture, model desired changes, and set DEI priorities. (See Module 4 on Cultural Safety for concrete strategies).

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[7] Berkshire. (2023). *The Importance of DEI: How to Make the Business Case for DEI*. Www.berkshireassociates.com. https://www.berkshireassociates.com/blog/how-to-make-the-busienss-case-for-dei

[8] Zheng, W., Kim, J., Kark, R., & Mascolo, L. (2023). *What Makes an Inclusive Leader?* Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2023/09/what-makes-an-inclusive-leader

[9] Larson, E. (2017). *Infographic: Diversity + inclusion = better decision making at work*. Www.cloverpop.com. https://www.cloverpop.com/blog/infographic-diversity-inclusion-better-decision-making-at-work

[10] Harvard Business Review. (2018). How and Where Diversity Drives Financial Performance
International Labour Organization. (2019).History Women in Business and Management: The business case for change.

Provide adequate training for recruiters and hiring teams to overcome biased hiring practices

Equip all staff involved in recruitment – including HR professionals, hiring managers, and external recruiters - with meaningful training on unconscious biases and cultural safety.

- Avoid performative trainings. Instead, prioritize content that explores deep rooted beliefs and assumptions that shape one's behaviour and decision making in the workplace.
- Highlight what biased hiring looks like in practice and provide equitable alternatives. Ensure training integrates an intersectional lens that accounts for how gender, race, religion, physical and mental ability, age, country of origin, foreign credentials, and other identity markers can intersect to create additional barriers.
- Pursue trainings, such as this toolkit's workshop modules, which address how biased hiring specifically impacts Muslim women, especially in mid- and senior-level hiring. The Canadian Diversity Institute also provides employer trainings on unconscious bias in hiring.

Adopt inclusive employer branding that reflects your DEI commitments and openness to all faiths

Muslim women job seekers often assess a company's workplace culture, demonstrated DEI commitments, and the level of cultural safety and how these extend to Muslim women. To attract this talented labour pool, employers should ensure that their branding genuinely reflects their inclusion values and communicates how these values are lived in practice. Consider the following strategies:

- **Integrate DEI into all recruitment materials.** Use inclusive language, diverse imagery, and authentic testimonials to reflect your company's commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in your workplace. Ensure that all job listings and related marketing materials include clear statements on your employment equity commitments (see Annex 1 for an example). Your external messaging should be a true reflection of your internal culture and practices. For instance, featuring Muslim women in promotional materials without meaningful support for cultural safety can cause harm and undermine your credibility.
- **Communicate your DEI priorities publicly.** Share your company's focus on inclusion to gender, ethnocultural and faith-based diversity, and internationally-trained talent at all levels including senior management. Publish your DEI policies, commitments, and audits on your website, LinkedIn, and other platforms for greater transparency.
- **Share workforce diversity statistics.** Highlight your representation of diverse employees to demonstrate progress and signal your commitment to inclusive hiring.
- **Be explicit about religious, cultural, and accessibility accommodations.** Clearly state your policies on inclusive dress codes, space for prayer, and flexibility during Ramadan, and level of accessibility and accommodations for persons with disabilities. These details help Muslim women assess whether your company can support their needs.

- **Promote your company's Employee Resource Group or similar networks** for diverse talent that would be applicable to Muslim women.
- **Lead with sincerity.** Candidates can recognize performative branding. Ensure that your DEI messaging is backed by real action, or risk reputational damage.

Expand outreach channels to attract highly qualified Muslim women

- **Partner with organizations serving underrepresented professionals.** This includes diversity-focused job boards, professional women's networks with diverse representation, newcomer employment centres, and Muslim professional associations. (see Annex 1a).
- **Engage with community-based organizations**, **networks and platforms** that may not have an explicit focus on employment, yet can be tapped into to reach diverse communities, including talented Muslim women job-seekers (see Annex 1b).
- **Work with inclusive recruiters**. If using external recruiters, select those with a proven commitment to DEI and a track record of connecting employers with internationally trained talent and candidates from ethnocultural and faith-based communities—including for mid- and senior-level roles.
- **Utilize ethnic media**—including newspapers, radio shows, television, and social media platforms—to connect directly with diverse and faith-based talent pools (see Annex1e).
- **Collaborate with provincial, government-run employment service providers** by participating in job fairs, hiring initiatives, and events tailored to connecting with Muslim women and other underrepresented job seekers.
- **Hold inclusive job fairs** in communities with greater Muslim representation with clear messaging that demonstrates your interest in hiring diverse talent.
- **Create paid internship opportunities** that are specifically for or inclusive to Muslim Women, particularly those who are internationally-trained and/or young professionals who are seeking entry into the labour market. Partner with community organizations with ties to the Muslim community for targeted outreach.

Adopt equitable selection processes that gives Muslim women an equal opportunity to succeed

To overcome biased hiring practices for Muslim women with intersecting identities, consider these approaches that have been adopted by a range of small-, mid- and large-sized employers:

- **Value international experience**. To attract highly qualified Muslim women and diversify your talent pool will require an openness to internationally trained professionals. Review your job evaluation criteria and eliminate biases that disadvantage Muslim women with global experience. Focus on their demonstrated skills and capabilities, and recognize the value of

international perspectives, ideas and approaches, their cultural exposure and fluency, and potential access to new markets.

- **Adopt 'blind' resume screening.** Conceal demographic information to focus on skills and experience, to ensure fair evaluations particularly for mid- and senior-level positions. Given the intersectional barriers facing Muslim women, a blind screening process should hide the candidate's name, gender, name and location of educational institutions, and geographic location of past employers. Consider utilizing blind screening software to support this process.
- **Standardize the interview process.** Implement structured interviews with standardized questions, evaluation criteria and scoring rubrics to ensure that all candidates are assessed equitably.
- **Diversify selection committees.** Ensure that hiring panels represent a mix of ethnocultural, faith-based, and gender identities– and aim for consensus decision making - to reduce individual biases in candidate selection.
- **Adopt pay equity policies.** Commit to standardizing salary ranges for each role and level of experience, ensuring that compensation is based solely on skills and qualifications—not on identity factors.

Establish accountability mechanisms

- **Set diversity hiring targets:** If your company is prioritizing diversity hiring in line with affirmative action goals, consider establishing diversity targets to guide hiring practices. Conduct a diversity audit to understand your baseline, then define targets based on your organization's commitment to change.
- **Conduct a pay equity analysis**: Conduct regular pay equity analyses to identify and address disparities related to gender, race, religion, and other intersecting identities.
- **Measure your progress**: Use the self-assessment in this toolkit to monitor your progress.

Key Takeaways: Talent Attraction and Recruitment

The Challenge: Muslim women face systemic barriers to equitable employment due to unconscious bias, exclusionary recruitment practices, and a lack of cultural safety in employer branding.

Why It Matters for Employers: Equitable recruitment improves access to this underrepresented talent, boosts innovation and market reach, and helps organizations build more inclusive and high-performing teams.

What Employers Should Do:

- ✔ **Foster cultural safety** in branding and workplace culture to attract and retain Muslim women.
- ✔ **Train recruiters and hiring teams** on unconscious bias and culturally safe hiring practices.
- ✔ **Expand outreach** to diverse networks, community organizations, and inclusive recruiters.
- ✔ **Use equitable hiring tools** such as blind resume screening, structured interviews, and diverse selection panels.
- ✔ **Establish accountability** through diversity hiring targets, standardized salary ranges, and regular pay equity audits.

V. Employer Case Studies

The following case studies provide promising examples on Talent Attraction and Recruitment. Consider how these strategies can be adopted by your organization to support Muslim women employees' successful recruitment

1. MetLife – Disability Internship Program

MetLife is a global provider of insurance, annuities, and employee benefit programs. Headquartered in the U.S., it employs tens of thousands of people worldwide and has established a strong reputation for prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion.[11]

Case

MetLife observed that students with disabilities were significantly underrepresented in their internship and early career applicant pools. Despite existing outreach, many students with disabilities were unaware of or lacked access to inclusive opportunities. The company recognized that traditional recruitment methods and internal readiness for inclusion might be limiting access to this untapped talent pool.

Initiatives

To close this gap, MetLife partnered with the National Business and Disability Council's Emerging Leaders Program, targeting students with disabilities for meaningful internships. The company trained supervisors in disability inclusion, emphasizing both the legal and cultural aspects of accommodations. Intern onboarding included formal orientation programs and "lunch-and-learn" sessions that introduced workplace norms and built community. Additionally, MetLife facilitated mentorships through Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), ensuring interns had consistent support from colleagues with lived experiences or shared identities.

Results

As a result of these strategies, many interns successfully transitioned into full-time roles or leadership development tracks. By eliminating structural and interpersonal barriers, MetLife created a more inclusive recruitment pipeline. This demonstrates how intentional partnerships and accessible programming can widen access and attract underrepresented talent into early career roles.

2. ICBC – Mentor Connect Program

About the Company

ICBC (Insurance Corporation of British Columbia) is a public auto insurance provider serving a diverse

[11] National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability. (n.d.). MetLife: Recruiting interns with disabilities through community partnership. AskEARN. Retrieved from http://askearn.org/employerprofile/met-life-recruiting-interns-with-disabilities-through-community-partnership

client base across British Columbia, Canada. As a large employer, it supports a wide range of professional, technical, and customer-facing roles.[12]

Case

ICBC realized that internationally trained professionals faced systemic barriers to growth and mobility. One major barrier was the expectation for "Canadian experience," which often sidelined capable newcomers and left them underemployed or isolated from advancement opportunities. This led to the underutilization of global talent and internal disparities in career progression.

Initiatives

To address this issue, ICBC partnered with the Immigrant Employment Council of BC (IEC-BC) to implement the MentorConnect program. This initiative matched skilled immigrant professionals with senior ICBC staff who could offer guidance, feedback, and introductions to workplace culture. Mentors received training on intercultural communication, bias awareness, and coaching strategies. They then worked with mentees on understanding professional norms, navigating implicit expectations, and boosting confidence through regular dialogue and practice.

Results

Mentees gained insight into the Canadian workplace and reported improved self-assurance and integration. Mentors likewise deepened their cultural literacy and leadership skills. By dismantling biased notions of experience and creating peer-based support systems, ICBC strengthened its ability to attract and retain newcomer talent.

3. U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – Summer Transportation Internship for Diverse Groups

About the Company

The FHWA is a major division of the U.S. Department of Transportation responsible for highway policy, safety, and innovation. It serves a national mandate to support equitable access to transportation and workforce diversity.[13]

Case

The agency identified a persistent lack of representation across women, people with disabilities, and racialized individuals within the transportation field. This underrepresentation was traced to both early career pipeline issues and a lack of accessible, supportive internships that could expose marginalized groups to the industry.

Initiatives

[12] Immigrant Employment Council of BC. (2024). MentorConnect Program. Retrieved from http://iecbc.ca/our-work/programs/mentorconnect

[13] Federal Highway Administration. (2025). Summer Transportation Internship Program(STIP). FHWA. https://highways.dot.gov/careers/summer-transportation-internship-program-stip

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established the Summer Transportation Internship Program for Diverse Groups (STIPDG) to recruit and mentor future leaders from underrepresented communities. As part of its proactive outreach, the program conducted college tours, participated in diversity career fairs, and utilized inclusive outreach materials to connect with a diverse talent pool. A core feature of the program is matching interns to projects aligned with their academic focus, ensuring a meaningful learning experience that supports both personal and professional growth. Interns receive comprehensive support, including stipends, housing, and travel accommodations. The FHWA also prioritized assistance for interns with disabilities by ensuring accessible living arrangements and customized workplace accommodations. The internship further includes structured development opportunities such as career seminars, academic workshops, and site visits.

Results

The STIPDG program has become a model for attracting underrepresented talent into the public sector. Participants gain critical exposure to transportation careers and real-world professional experience, helping prepare them for future employment. By removing financial and accessibility barriers and embedding comprehensive support throughout the internship, the FHWA promotes equity from recruitment to placement. Its strategies provide an actionable insight for the framework: organizations can scale inclusive practices by combining outreach, accessibility, and tailored support to build diverse and sustainable talent pipelines.

WORKSHOP MODULE & FACILITATOR GUIDE

Module 1: Talent Attraction and Recruitment

This facilitator guide is based on ***Module 1: Talent Attraction and Recruitment of the Employer Toolkit***. The facilitator guide draws on adult learning pedagogies. Based on the learning objectives listed below – a sample 2-hour workshop agenda will be presented in a tabulated format. Additionally, a 'menu' of activities will be provided where facilitators can pick and choose different activities depending on their target audience. CCMW encourages you to be flexible and to adapt these materials to meet the needs of participants as well as the budget and logistical realities of each workshop setting.

Learning Objectives:

1. **Understand systemic recruitment barriers faced by Muslim women in Canada.**
2. **Examine how bias manifests in job descriptions, outreach, interviews, and branding.**
3. **Explore concrete strategies to create inclusive and equitable recruitment and retention processes.**
4. **Promote accountability and internal culture shift toward inclusive hiring.**

Ideal Participants: HR professionals, recruiters, hiring managers, senior leaders, and DEI officers.

Ideal Space: Medium/Large space with round tables for small group discussions.

The following materials should be distributed to the audience at the start of the workshop:

1. Executive Summary of the ASPIRE Study
2. Module 1 of the Employer Toolkit
3. **ASPIRE Study Infographic:** Breaking into the labour market

Sample agenda

Here is a sample agenda for a **2-hour** workshop. Remember, you can pick and choose from the different activities provided in this module instead:

Agenda	Time	Resources
Welcome and Icebreaker	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Review Workshop Objectives	5 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Participants share values and ground rules Establish a parking lot	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Module Overview: Introductory slides about ASPIRE Study Key Statistics from study related to Module 1 Overview of Module 1 of Employer Toolkit	10 minutes	PowerPoint slides Handout: ASPIRE Study Infographics: Breaking into the Labour Market

Activity 2 (without additional exercise)	30 minutes	PowerPoint slides, Video clips, Flip Charts
Break	10 minutes	
Activity 3 or 7	30 minutes	Please see activity for handouts details
Workshop Evaluation	5 minutes	
Closing Thoughts and Review Parking Lot	10 minutes	Flip Chart

Ice breakers:

1. Begin by inviting participants to reflect silently on the following prompt: Have you ever been judged by your name, appearance, or background in a professional setting? How did it feel? Ask 1-2 participants to share their reflection.
2. Two truths and a lie: Ask a few participants to share two things about them that are true and one that is a lie. The rest of the group will guess which is the lie.
3. Ask participants to complete either one of the following statements:
   - The worst experience interviewing for a job was….
   - The most culturally blind thing I have read on a job posting was…
   - An encouraging statement I have read on a job posting was…
4. Ask participants: If you are to plan a holiday right now, all expenses paid, where would you go?

Parking Lot:

At the beginning of the workshop, set aside a flipchart or board with the title “Parking Lot”. Use this space throughout the workshop to list questions or topics that do not get addressed during the workshop. After the workshop, the facilitator should provide answers to the questions through an agreed upon form of communication (email, follow-up meeting, communique, etc.).

MENU OF ACTIVITIES:

These are different activities you can choose from, depending on your organization’s priorities.

Activity 1: Opening and Building Common Ground (20 minutes)

Objectives:

- Explore perceptions of equitable recruitment and lived experience.
- Begin identifying systemic issues in talent attraction.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Ask participants to define "equitable recruitment" in their own words. Use a flip chart or whiteboard to record responses. Encourage diverse answers. (10 minutes)
2. Then, introduce two working definitions. (5 minutes)

- *Inclusive Recruitment*: Hiring processes designed to minimize bias and ensure fair evaluation across identities and backgrounds.
- *Equity-Centered Hiring*: Proactively addressing systemic barriers (e.g., name bias, religious discrimination, informal networks) to ensure underrepresented groups can access and thrive in job opportunities.

3. Share Canadian Muslim women's employment statistics from ASPIRE Study on the slide. Emphasize the need to "name the problem to shift the system." (5 minutes)

Activity 2: How to recognize barriers? (30 - 45 minutes)

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of systemic barriers.
- Ground recruitment practices in evidence.
- Challenge assumptions of neutrality in hiring.
- Prepare for practice-based learning in later activities.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Show one or more 2-3 minute clips from the 'Not Without Us' panel video (in PPT) where panelists share about employment inequalities. Follow this up with stats/data from the Aspire Study (in PPT). (10 minutes)
2. In small groups of 3-4 people, reflect on the following questions: (10 minutes)
    a. What surprised you in the data or videos?
    b. Have you seen or participated in hiring processes where these barriers might have occurred?
    c. How do "neutral" policies sometimes create unequal results?
3. Plenary discussion: one spokesperson from each group to share back on their reflection. Facilitators should guide participants to understand that bias isn't always conscious—but its impact is real. (10 minutes)

Additional exercise to lengthen this session:

4. Exercise: Case Study Analysis on Talent Attraction. Present the ICBC MentorConnect Program. (5 minutes)
5. Hold an open discussion: (10 minutes)
    a. What makes mentorship impactful in recruitment?
    b. How could similar programs be adapted across different sectors?

Activities 3 & 4: Bias in Practice – A Deep Dive (30 minutes each)

Objectives:

- Help participants recognize unconscious biases in hiring.
- Practice identifying exclusionary language and assumptions.

- Practice structured interviewing techniques to reduce biases that disproportionately impact Muslim women, as highlighted in the ASPIRE Study.

Activity 3 Instructions for facilitator:

1. Set up the activity (5 minutes):
    - Participants form triads: one interviewer, one candidate and one observer
    - Provide real or mock job descriptions (with names, "fit" language, availability assumptions).
    - Provide candidate profiles that include common details from resumes but are anonymized to the interviewer and observer.
2. 'Interviewer' is given time to prepare interview questions (5 minutes)
3. Conduct a mock interview with the observer noting of potential unconscious bias (10 minutes)
4. Observers share in plenary on whether the interviewer stayed aligned with job criteria or asked bias-inducing questions. The observer is also asked to assess any missing elements. (10 minutes)

Handout for Activity 3:

The following four job descriptions and candidate profile summary should be printed separately for the activity. These scenarios are designed for the structured interview and bias recognition. Each includes a mock job description (with bias-coded/exclusionary language) and a candidate resume (anonymized).

Scenario 1 – Bank: Financial Analyst

Job Description (Excerpt)

- Seeking a dynamic self-starter who is a strong cultural fit for a high-pressure, fast-paced team.
- Must be available to work evenings and weekends as required.
- Looking for someone who can "hit the ground running" and contribute immediately.
- Networking events are frequently held at local restaurants/bars and are a key part of team integration.

Candidate Resume (Anonymized)

Education: B.Comm in Finance, University of Toronto (2018)
Experience:
- 3 years as Junior Analyst, mid-sized investment firm (portfolio analysis, reporting, client presentations).
- Internship at a credit union (risk assessment, financial modeling).
Skills: Excel, Bloomberg, financial forecasting, risk modeling.
Additional Info: Treasurer for a student Muslim association (budgeting, fundraising).

Scenario 2 – School: Elementary Teacher

Job Description (Excerpt)

- Seeking a teacher who is energetic, extroverted, and outgoing.
- Candidates must be willing to participate fully in holiday events (Halloween costume day, Christmas concert).
- Preferred candidates are those who fit in well with Canadian culture and demonstrate flexibility to stay late for extracurriculars.

Candidate Resume (Anonymized)
Education: B.Ed., York University (2020); OCT Certified Teacher
Experience:
- 2 years teaching Grade 5–6, substitute and full-time.
- Volunteer tutor for immigrant children in English and Math.
Skills: Classroom management, differentiated instruction, ESL teaching methods, parent communication.
Additional Info: Fluent in English, Arabic; active in a local interfaith community youth program.

Scenario 3 – NGO: Program Officer

Job Description (Excerpt)
- NGO seeks a flexible team player who can travel at short notice and work evenings/weekends.
- Ideal candidate is comfortable networking at donor cocktail receptions and presenting in a confident, outgoing manner.
- Must be immediately available for deployment.

Candidate Resume (Anonymized)
Education: M.A. in International Development, Carleton University (2021)
Experience:
- 2 years as Program Assistant with a refugee resettlement NGO.
- 6-month internship with UNICEF Canada (monitoring, evaluation, reporting).
Skills: Grant writing, monitoring & evaluation, project cycle management, donor reporting.
Additional Info: Speaks English and Somali; has experience facilitating women's empowerment workshops.

Scenario 4 – Corporate: Marketing Associate

Job Description (Excerpt)
- Corporate firm seeks a "rockstar marketer" who is energetic, enthusiastic, and always available for last-minute deadlines.
- Must be able to fit in with a fun, social, young team culture.
- Networking events (often at pubs) are an important part of the team.

Candidate Resume (Anonymized)
Education: B.A. in Communications, Concordia University (2019)
Experience:
- 3 years as Digital Marketing Coordinator at a retail company (social media campaigns, analytics, SEO).
- Freelance consultant for small businesses (content marketing, branding).
Skills: Adobe Creative Suite, Google Analytics, social media strategy, SEO/SEM.
Additional Info: Volunteer communications lead at a Muslim women's leadership network.

Activity 4 Instructions for facilitator:

1. Ask the group to provide examples of common biases (e.g., assumptions about wearing a hijab, foreign-sounding names, or perceived "culture fit") and list on a flip chart (5 minutes).

2. Conduct a role-play exercise in the small groups where participants review anonymized resumes. Afterward, reveal the resumes' identifying details (e.g., names, cultural affiliations) and discuss how biases influenced their evaluations (10 minutes)
3. Share examples of inclusive rewrites for both job descriptions as handouts. As a collective, produce a checklist of bias-reduction practices for recruitment including identifying principles for inclusive job descriptions. (15 minutes)

Handout for Activity 4:
This handout includes anonymized resumes, problematic job descriptions with inclusive rewrites.

Part A: Anonymized Resumes

Resume 1 – Financial Analyst (Bank)
Education:
- Bachelor of Commerce in Finance, University of Toronto, 2018

Experience:
- Junior Analyst, Investment Firm (2019–2022): Supported portfolio analysis, client presentations, risk assessments.
- Credit Union Intern (2018): Conducted financial modeling, prepared reports.

Skills:
- Financial forecasting, Excel, Bloomberg, risk modeling.

Volunteer:
- Treasurer, student association (managed $20,000 annual budget).

Resume 2 – Elementary Teacher (School)
Education:
- Bachelor of Education, York University, 2020 – OCT Certified

Experience:
- Teacher, Grades 5–6, Toronto District School Board (2021–2023): Lesson planning, classroom management.
- Substitute Teacher (2020–2021): Delivered lessons across multiple grade levels.

Skills:
- ESL teaching strategies, differentiated instruction, classroom management, parent engagement.

Volunteer:
- Community tutoring for newcomer children (English & Math).

Resume 3 – Program Officer (NGO)
Education:
- MA, International Development, Carleton University, 2021

Experience:

- Program Assistant, Refugee NGO (2021–2023): Monitoring and evaluation, donor reports, training facilitation.
- Intern, UNICEF Canada (2020): Assisted with project cycle management.

Skills:
- Grant writing, donor relations, data monitoring, workshop facilitation.

Languages:
- English, Somali.

Resume 4 – Marketing Associate (Corporate)
Education:
- BA, Communications, Concordia University, 2019

Experience:
- Digital Marketing Coordinator, Retail Company (2020–2023): Managed social media campaigns, analytics, branding.
- Freelance Consultant (2019–2020): Supported small businesses with SEO and content marketing.

Skills:
- Adobe Creative Suite, SEO/SEM, Google Analytics, digital strategy.

Volunteer:
- Communications lead, community leadership network.

Part B: Problematic Job Descriptions & Inclusive Rewrites

Scenario 1 – Bank: Financial Analyst

Problematic JD:
- Seeking a “dynamic self-starter” who is a strong cultural fit for a high-pressure, fast-paced team.
- Must be available evenings/weekends.
- Expected to “hit the ground running” and thrive in a fast-paced environment.
- Participation in after-hours networking events at local bars required.

Inclusive Rewrite:
- Seeking a Financial Analyst with strong analytical and problem-solving skills.
- Flexible scheduling may occasionally be needed, with respect for work-life balance.
- Support provided for onboarding and professional development.
- Team integration opportunities will be designed with inclusivity in mind (e.g., varied venues and formats).

Scenario 2 – School: Elementary Teacher

Problematic JD:
- Looking for an energetic, extroverted teacher who will fit well with Canadian culture.
- Must fully participate in holiday activities such as Halloween and Christmas concerts.
- Flexibility to stay late for extracurricular activities required.

Inclusive Rewrite:

- Seeking a dedicated teacher committed to student learning and well-being.
- Encourages inclusive classroom engagement and community involvement.
- Flexibility to support extracurricular activities will be discussed collaboratively.
- Cultural and religious diversity is valued and accommodated.

Scenario 3 – NGO: Program Officer

Problematic JD:

- NGO seeks a flexible team player who can travel at short notice and work evenings/weekends.
- Ideal candidate is comfortable networking at donor cocktail receptions and presenting in a confident, outgoing manner.
- Must be immediately available for deployment.

Inclusive Rewrite:

- Seeking a Program Officer with experience in project management, M&E, and donor engagement.
- Travel may be required and will be planned with reasonable notice.
- Donor engagement may involve a variety of settings, with inclusive participation options.
- Strong communication skills in diverse contexts valued.

Scenario 4 – Corporate: Marketing Associate

Problematic JD:

- Looking for a "rockstar marketer" who can always be available for last-minute deadlines.
- Must fit into a fun, young, social team.
- Networking events, often at pubs, are important for success.

Inclusive Rewrite:

- Seeking a Marketing Associate skilled in digital strategy, branding, and analytics.
- Flexibility for deadlines may be required, balanced with workload planning.
- We welcome diverse working styles and experiences in building a collaborative team culture.
- Networking opportunities will be inclusive and accessible.

Activity 5: 'Culture Fit' vs. 'Culture Add' (30 minutes)

Objectives:

- Understand how shifting from "culture fit" to "culture add" creates more inclusive and innovative teams, particularly for Muslim women.

Background Context from ASPIRE Study:

The study highlights how emphasizing "cultural fit" often leads to the exclusion of candidates who don't align with dominant workplace norms, perpetuating systemic biases against underrepresented groups, including Muslim women.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Set Up (5 minutes)
    - Present examples from the ASPIRE study:
        - Culture Fit: Hiring someone who "fits into the fast-paced, high-energy environment."

        - Culture Add: Hiring someone who brings a unique perspective or skill set that enhances the team.

2. Discussion (15 minutes)
    - Ask participants:
        - What challenges arise from prioritizing culture fit?
        - How could focusing on 'culture add' improve team dynamics and innovation?
        - How can organizations redefine workplace culture to support diverse hires, including Muslim women?

3. Reflection (10 minutes)
    - Participants share one way they could shift their recruitment approach from culture fit to culture add.
    - What are examples of 'culture add' values from underrepresented candidates such as Muslim women?

Activity 6: Re-imagining the Hiring Process (60–75 minutes)

Objectives:

- Support design thinking to build inclusive recruitment systems.
- Explore creative outreach, assessment, and onboarding strategies.

Background context from ASPIRE Study:
Systemic biases in hiring practices disproportionately affect Muslim women, with barriers such as assumptions tied to names, attire, and limited access to professional networks (Pages 5, 24). Implementing equitable systems—like anonymous resume screening and structured interviews—can address these disparities.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Set Up:
    - Split participants into small groups.
    - Provide a prompt: "Design a recruitment system that reduces barriers for Canadian Muslim women while promoting equity."

2. Provide these sample toolkit strategies to inspire:
    - Anonymous screening
    - Cultural safety in branding
    - Inclusive interview panels
    - Mentorship and paid internships for internationally trained women

3. Brainstorm:
    - Each group outlines:
        1. Outreach strategies to diverse networks (e.g., community-based groups, diversity job boards). Refer to Annex 1 of the Employer toolkit.
        2. Tools for reducing bias (e.g., anonymized resumes, structured interviews).

3. Policies to create inclusive workplaces (e.g., religious accommodations, mentorship for underrepresented hires).

4. Share:

- Groups present their recruitment systems, highlighting innovative ideas.

Handout for Activity 6:

This handout provides practical strategies to reduce bias, promote cultural safety, and support equitable hiring and retention of Muslim women and including internationally trained women (immigrants).

1. Anonymous Screening: Minimize unconscious bias during resume review.

Strategies:

- Use HR software that removes names, photos, addresses, and school names from resumes.
- Evaluate candidates based on skills, competencies, and experience only.
- Standardize criteria checklists so every candidate is scored against the same requirements.
- Conduct regular audits of shortlisting data to ensure diverse candidates are advancing.

Example Practice: One financial institution piloted "blind recruitment" and found a 40% increase in interview call-backs for racialized and immigrant women.

2. Cultural Safety in Branding: Ensure job postings, career websites, and recruitment campaigns reflect inclusion and do not reproduce stereotypes.

Strategies:

- Use images in recruitment materials that show visibly diverse staff (including women in hijab, racialized staff, employees with disabilities).
- Replace exclusionary wording ("rockstar," "fit in," "Canadian culture") with competency-based, neutral phrasing.
- Include an explicit DEI statement encouraging applications from Muslim women and equity-deserving groups.
- Showcase employee testimonials from diverse staff, emphasizing equity initiatives.

Example Practice: A school board revised branding materials to highlight diverse cultural holidays and staff stories, leading to higher applications from underrepresented teachers.

3. Inclusive Interview Panels: Reduce bias in evaluation by diversifying perspectives in the interview process.

Strategies:

- Ensure interview panels have gender, racial, and cultural diversity.
- Train all panelists on bias, microaggressions, and culturally safe interviewing.
- Use structured questions aligned with job criteria rather than "fit" or personality-based judgments.
- Rotate panel members regularly to prevent gatekeeping.
- Provide interview accommodations (e.g., breaks, religious timing, alternative formats).

Example Practice: An NGO required at least one panelist from an equity-deserving group on each panel. They trained panelists in anti-bias interviewing, resulting in more equitable candidate scoring.

4. Mentorship and Paid Internships for Internationally Trained Women: Provide pathways for immigrant Muslim women to gain Canadian-recognized experience and access leadership networks.

Strategies:
- Establish mentorship programs pairing internationally trained women with senior staff.
- Offer paid internships (not unpaid roles) to recognize and value contributions.
- Recognize international credentials and provide bridging opportunities rather than forcing requalification.
- Build affinity groups (e.g., Muslim Women in Leadership Network) for peer mentoring and support.
- Celebrate success stories of internationally trained women employees.

Example Practice: A hospital partnered with an immigrant women's organization to create a 6-month paid internship stream. Many participants transitioned into permanent roles, improving retention and leadership diversity.

Activity 7: Community Recruitment Planning (30 minutes)

Objective:

- Equip participants with strategies to connect with underrepresented talent pools.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Brainstorm community organizations, universities, and networks that can help attract Muslim women (e.g., mosques, immigrant support groups, STEM programs) (15 minutes). Refer to Annex 1.
2. Create a recruitment outreach plan, including events, partnerships, and branding initiatives (15 minutes).

CONTENT MODULE 2

ONBOARDING AND EARLY EMPLOYMENT

I. Overview

Onboarding is a critical process that integrates new employees into an organization, providing the foundation for their success. Effective onboarding typically focuses on the 5 Cs:

a. **Clarity** – Providing a clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, and goals.

b. **Compliance** – Covering essential policies, procedures, and legal requirements.

c. **Culture** – Introducing organizational values, norms, and inclusive practices.

d. **Connection** – Building meaningful relationships with colleagues, mentors, and leaders.

e. **Check-Ins** – Offering continuous feedback and support for long-term integration.

This Onboarding module highlights the challenges faced by new Muslim women employees in predominantly Euro-centric workplaces, and how these challenges impact on organizational performance. This toolkit offers a comprehensive resource on how to apply the 5 Cs to your workplace in ways that are inclusive and culturally safe for Muslim women and other underrepresented employees.

II. Understanding the Challenge

Reflect on the following onboarding challenges for Muslim women, and consider whether these barriers are present in your workplace.

Systemic Biases: Muslim women often encounter biases linked to visible religious markers (e.g., hijabs and full-body coverings), compounded by racial prejudices, foreign-sounding names, and pervasive stereotypes portraying them as "oppressed, threatening, or lacking agency[1] ." These biases—both conscious and unconscious—influence how coworkers and management perceive and interact with Muslim women, and lead to their exclusion and 'othering' from the outset.

During early employment, Muslim women may face heightened risks of microaggressions or overt acts of racism, discrimination, and sexual harassment. This risk is particularly acute for Black and visibly minority Muslim women, as well as newcomers facing language barriers. They may be subjected to inappropriate comments regarding their appearance, language proficiency, educational and professional qualifications,

[1] Ali, H. (2022, July 8). *How Leaders Can Better Support Muslim Women at Work*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2022/07/how-leaders-can-better-support-muslim-women-at-work

religious practices like fasting, unfounded associations with terrorism, or intrusive questions about their personal lives. Colleagues and managers may even withhold critical information essential to their successful onboarding.

Inadequate onboarding support: Muslim women who are internationally-trained professionals, newcomers to Canada, and/or have invisible disabilities may require more investment to familiarize themselves with new workplace systems and structures. Without comprehensive onboarding, this comes with a higher risk of poor adjustment, which can impede on their performance and successful integration. This is also the case for Muslim women promoted to senior management, who may face unrealistic expectations around the speed at which they can excel in their new roles.

Lack of diversity in the workplace: When Muslim women enter a workplace with little ethnocultural diversity, limited Muslim representation, and an unfamiliar culture, they may feel isolated and struggle to find a sense of belonging. New hires, particularly first generation, may face more challenges fitting into a Euro-centric culture. They may be paired with onboarding buddies who, being Canadian-born and non-racialized, may not fully grasp their unique experiences and hurdles.

Lack of inclusion and accommodations: Workplace social events and informal networking opportunities can inadvertently exclude Muslim women if they coincide with Ramadan or prayer times, do not provide religiously appropriate food or drink, or are centered on alcohol consumption. These challenges are further compounded when inaccessible venues create additional barriers for employees with physical disabilities. These barriers hinder Muslim women's ability to develop professional relationships, a sense of belonging, and support their career advancement. They may face practical challenges managing religious observance, effectively forced to choose between their job and religious obligations.

Onboarding processes that fail to address these barriers can leave Muslim women feeling unsupported, isolated, and undervalued, leading to higher turnover rates and diminished job satisfaction.

"My generation [first generation immigrants] doesn't have those [social] skills, we cannot make workplace friendships. We're still humans, and we need humans. We need to build that trust and relationships, sincere relationships. We need those. I thought the new generations had the language, they know how to socialize, they know how to talk the small talk, water-cooler talk. But even they still have barriers." - **ASPIRE Study participant**

Sector-Specific Challenges and Impacts[2]

	Challenges	Impact
STEM	Limited attention to cultural diversity in technical fields can make onboarding feel exclusionary for Muslim women.	Poor onboarding experiences result in lower engagement, contributing to higher attrition rates among Muslim women in STEM roles.
Healthcare	Healthcare onboarding can be rigid, often with limited accommodations for religious observance, such as prayer breaks.	Muslim women may struggle with work-life balance, affecting retention and job satisfaction.
Financial Services	Onboarding processes in finance often lack DEI components, which can fail to address cultural and religious needs.	Muslim women may feel isolated or unprepared to succeed in this competitive industry.
Skilled Trades	The male-dominated nature of trades can lead to onboarding processes that overlook or dismiss religious accommodations.	Muslim women may feel uncomfortable or unwelcomed, impacting retention in skilled trades.
Public Sector	Bureaucratic onboarding processes and discriminatory laws/policies, such as Bill 21 in Quebec, may not prioritize cultural safety or individual religious needs.	Muslim women in public sector roles may feel unsupported, reducing engagement and job satisfaction.
Non-profit/NGO Sector	Equity-mandated onboarding processes often result in *performative inclusion*, where Muslim women are welcomed symbolically but excluded from real decision-making spaces.	These experiences create early disillusionment, weaken organizational belonging, and leave structural racism unaddressed.

[2] Masri, A. (2025). Muslim Women's Workplace Equity in Canada: A Literature Review. *Prepared for CCMW.*

III. Why It Matters

A well-designed onboarding process is essential for fostering equity, belonging, and engagement in the workplace for Muslim women. Beyond promoting inclusivity, such practices offer important benefits for employers:

- ✔ **Employee retention**: An onboarding process that signals respect for Muslim identities helps Muslim women hires feel valued and welcome from day one, increasing their likelihood of long-term commitment. According to one study, 69% of employees were more likely to stay with a company for 3+ years after a positive onboarding experience[3]. This can improve staff retention, thereby reducing turnover costs associated with separation, recruitment, and retraining.

- ✔ **Performance and productivity**: When managers and new employees can build trust and understanding from onset, this contributes to higher performance overall. With inclusive onboarding, Muslim women can confidently and safely contribute from the onset, accelerating their integration and productivity. According to a study by the Karolinska Institute (2023), effective onboarding can increase revenue growth by 2.5x and profit margins by 1.5x[4].

- ✔ **Organization reputation**: Effective and inclusive onboarding and workplace culture that respects cultural and religious diversity will reduce the likelihood of HR conflicts, human rights grievances, or misunderstandings down the line, which are often costly and damaging to a company's reputation. Additionally, when Muslim women employees feel confident, safe, and respected in the workplace, they are far more likely to become company Ambassadors, attract more diverse talent, and enhance the organization's public image.

IV. Key Inclusive Strategies and Solutions

By transforming workplace culture, investing in inclusive onboarding processes, and improving HR policies and practices, employers can champion Muslim women as equal contributors to the workplace from day one. The following strategies integrate the 5Cs of onboarding, with greatest emphasis on culture. Many of these strategies are equally relevant to other racialized and underrepresented employees facing onboarding barriers.

Enhance onboarding processes to support the successful integration of Muslim women

[3] Hirsch, A. (2017, August 10). *Don't Underestimate the Importance of Good Onboarding*. SHRM. https://www.shrm.org/topics-tools/news/talent-acquisition/dont-underestimate-importance-good-onboarding

[4] Fro¨ge´li E, Jenner B, Gustavsson P (2023) Effectiveness of formal onboarding for facilitating organizational socialization: A systematic review. PLoS ONE 18(2): e0281823. https://doi.org/ 10.1371/journal.pone.0281823

Access to resources and employee networks: Provide new hires with comprehensive resources, including an office tour, organizational charts, key contacts, HR policies, governance structures, documentation on workplace culture, social calendars, and information on workplace committees and working groups.

Tailored technical support: Engage with new hires before their start date to understand their specific needs. For example, a Muslim woman trained outside Canada may benefit from a detailed introduction to industry-specific systems and practices. She may require additional time and language assistance to review onboarding materials.

Accessible work environment: Ensure all common areas and essential workplace spaces—such as entrances, washrooms, meeting rooms, and kitchen/cafeterias—are physically accessible for new hires with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, automatic doors, accessible washrooms, and clearly marked signage. Proactively confirm that any accommodations needed, whether for visible or invisible disabilities (e.g. assistive technologies, ergonomic equipment, text-to-speech devices, seating arrangements, flexible work schedule) are in place before the employee's first day.

Provide a Cultural Safety Orientation:

- Provide an orientation on cultural safety and your workplace's DEI commitments and policies. Some organizations have dedicated DEI onboarding modules, helping new hires feel included and informed from the beginning.
- Clearly communicate religious accommodations and associated policies in the workplace, such as prayer times and dedicated spaces, dress codes, any dietary accommodations. This signals respect for religious practices.
- Educate new hires on workplace harassment policies, emphasizing that Islamophobia, xenophobia, misogynistic slurs, and microaggressions are unacceptable. Provide clear reporting mechanisms for victims of harassment.

Introduce new hires to any existing affinity groups and networks or Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), to facilitate connections with Muslim and/or ethno-culturally diverse coworkers.

Designate onboarding support staff:

Depending on the size of your company, consider one or all of these options. Whether a new hire is entry- or senior-level, the more guidance they receive in their onboarding process, the more quickly they can thrive in their new role.

- ***Onboarding Buddy*****:** Assign a peer to introduce new hires to daily practices, norms, and resources, offering peer support throughout their transition.
- ***Onboarding Sponsor*****:** Appoint a leader at least two levels above the new hire, ideally outside their direct department, to serve as a long-term champion that helps build cross-departmental relationships and navigate organizational culture.

- ***Onboarding Committee*:** Create a dedicated onboarding committee comprising employees, HR representatives, and managers to identify and address gaps, ensuring that onboarding processes are equitable, culturally safe, and aligned with organizational goals.
- ***Mentorship and Sponsorship Programs*:** Develop structured programs that assign new hires both an onboarding buddy and a sponsor, offering layered support, connection, and guidance.

Develop DEI policies that foster an inclusive workplace for Muslim women staff involved in onboarding processes

Create concrete policies that outline your company's DEI commitments, and cultural and religious accommodations. See Module 4 on Cultural Safety for specific ideas on what accommodations can be included in such policies.

Provide workplace trainings on culturally safe onboarding and employee engagement

Ensure that all staff involved in onboarding complete cultural safety training. The training should focus on the early employment experiences of culturally and religiously diverse employees—particularly Muslim women—and address common barriers they face, and provide concrete strategies for fostering an inclusive and welcoming onboarding experience. Start with the workshop module in this toolkit. Advanced training on talent development from an equity lens is recommended for sponsors, management, and HR personnel.

- ***For new employees*:** Include DEI and cultural safety training in onboarding for all employees, including new hires to foster a respectful and understanding environment.
- ***Organization-Wide Training*:** Implement training programs that address unconscious biases and underlying discrimination, demystify Islam, correct misinformation about Muslims and Muslim women, highlight the diversity within Muslim populations, and provide an overview of key Islamic traditions. In addition, address intersectional barriers (e.g. invisible and visible disabilities, immigration status, language proficiency) that can increase vulnerability to discrimination.

See Module 4 on Cultural Safety for more information. Consider partnering with DEI consultants to develop cultural safety training for onboarding (see Annex 2).

Create Employee Resource Groups for cultural support

Establish Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) or other types of employee affinity groups based on shared religious or cultural identities to provide a sense of belonging, community and peer support for new Muslim women hires. ERGs are more formal structures with alignment to DEI strategies that require

executive sponsorship and institutional support to succeed (ie. funding, buy-in, clear mandates), while affinity groups are more informal bodies. ERGs can act as consultative bodies, offering feedback on policies, marketing, product design, or services with a DEI lens. According to a Deloitte report (2020), organizations with active ERGs that are properly supported tend to correlate with higher employee satisfaction, trust, and retention[5]. Refer to the Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion's toolkit on how to set up and sustain ERGs.

Set up feedback channels for accountability and continuous improvement

- Use surveys, staff consultations, or other feedback tools to gather insights on the onboarding process. Provide feedback channels that give the option for anonymity. Go beyond questions regarding role clarity to encompass experiences related to cultural safety, religious accommodations, and workplace culture.
- Promptly address concerns highlighted in the feedback related to workplace safety, treatment, and accommodations. Adapt onboarding and DEI practices to rectify the gaps, reflect best practices, and respond to the evolving needs of a diverse workforce.
- Use the organizational assessment in this toolkit to monitor your progress.

Key Takeaways: Onboarding and Early Employment

The Challenge: Muslim women entering predominantly Eurocentric workplaces often face systemic bias, exclusion from informal networks, and a lack of cultural and religious accommodations—leading to isolation, reduced performance, and early attrition.

Why It Matters for Employers: Inclusive onboarding improves employee retention, job satisfaction, and organizational performance—while also reducing reputational and HR risks.

What Employers Should Do:

- ✓ Enhance the **onboarding process** with access to resources and networks, technical support, and clear communication on accommodation policies.
- ✓ Assign **onboarding buddies or sponsors** to support integration and connection.
- ✓ Ensure **staff conducting onboarding receive training** on unconscious bias, Islamophobia, and inclusion.
- ✓ Create **Employee Resource Groups** for peer support and as consultative body.
- ✓ Establish **feedback mechanisms** to evaluate and improve onboarding experiences for diverse hires.

[5] Deloitte. (2020). *Human Capital Trends 2020*. Deloitte. https://www.deloitte.com/ke/en/Industries/financial-services/about/ea-human-capital-trends-2020.html

V. Employer Case Studies

The following case studies provide promising examples on Onboarding and Early Employment. Consider how these strategies can be adapted and applied in your organization to support Muslim women employees:

1. EY - AccessAbilities and Specialized Networks

EY is a global professional services firm providing audit, consulting, tax, and advisory services. As a large organization, it is known for its leadership in diversity, especially disability inclusion.

Case

EY recognized that new hires with disabilities, neurodivergent conditions, or caregiving responsibilities often lacked early visibility into support systems available within the organization. Traditional onboarding processes didn't always highlight key resources or address diverse accessibility needs, leaving some employees feeling isolated or unsupported during their transition. EY identified the need for visibility and awareness of support networks, particularly its Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), as a proactive step toward fostering inclusion from day one.[6]

Initiatives

To strengthen early engagement and belonging, EY embedded its AccessAbilities Network directly into the onboarding process. The network, along with other specialized networks for caregivers and parents, was formally introduced during orientation to ensure immediate access to the community and resources. These groups provide customized support by promoting education, advocacy, and accommodations tailored to individual needs. They also offer leadership, skill-building, and relationship development opportunities. In collaboration with HR, AccessAbilities supports workplace adjustments and aligns inclusion efforts with the broader business strategy. Through internal events, training sessions, and communications, the ERG promotes understanding and helps create an inclusive workplace culture.

Results

New hires reported increased confidence, stronger engagement, and a sense of belonging from their earliest days at EY. Employees with disabilities & caregiving responsibilities benefited from peer support and workplace flexibility that met their specific needs. By prioritizing early access to customized support & promoting ERG visibility, EY created a welcoming & inclusive onboarding experience for all talent.

2. Iversoft – Inclusive Onboarding for Newcomers

Iversoft is a small software development firm based in Ottawa, known for its innovative digital solutions and inclusive culture. It has positioned itself as an agile, people-first employer.

Case

[6] EY Lane4. (2021).Harnessing the Power of Diversity. Ernst & Young LLP. London. Retrieved August 21, 2025, from https://www.ey.com/content/dam/ey-unified-site/ey-com/en-uk/insights/workforce/documents/harnessing-the-power-of-diversity.pdf

Iversoft recognized that standard onboarding and job description practices were unintentionally excluding highly skilled newcomer candidates. The emphasis on “Canadian experience” and formal academic credentials prevented capable applicants from being hired and thriving in the company. Once hired, newcomers also lacked structured support to navigate cultural norms and build internal networks.

Initiatives

Iversoft revamped its hiring and onboarding process by focusing on competencies and potential rather than local credentials. The company collaborated with immigrant-serving organizations to source diverse candidates. Each new hire was matched with a peer “buddy” who supported their integration, while a structured 90-day onboarding plan offered regular feedback and development checkpoints. Iversoft also maintained anonymous feedback loops to refine its approach based on employee experience.[7]

Results

Newcomers adapted more quickly & reported high satisfaction with their entry experience. The company’s inclusive onboarding practices built a reputation for equity & innovation. By breaking down systemic hiring norms & offering human-centered support, Iversoft created a workplace where newcomer talent could succeed.

[7] Iversoft. (2021). Iversoft Recognized by Hire Immigrants Ottawa For Employer Excellence. (2021). Iversoft. https://www.iversoft.ca/iversoft-employer-excellence-award

WORKSHOP MODULE & FACILITATOR GUIDE

Module 2: Onboarding and Early Employment

This facilitator guide is based on ***Module 2: Onboarding and Early Employment of the Employer Toolkit.*** The facilitator guide draws on adult learning pedagogies. Based on the learning objectives listed below – a sample 2-hour workshop agenda is presented in a tabulated format. Additionally, a 'menu' of activities is provided where facilitators can pick and choose different activities depending on their target audience. CCMW encourages you to be flexible and to adapt these materials to meet the needs of participants as well as the budget and logistical realities of each workshop setting.

Learning Objectives:

- **Deepen understanding of the importance of equitable and culturally-safe onboarding practices.**
- **Identify barriers in traditional onboarding that contribute to exclusion and attrition.**
- **Explore inclusive strategies and equip participants with tools to foster a sense of belonging and inclusivity from the first day of employment.**
- **Co-develop practical onboarding solutions that reflect the lived experiences of Muslim women and ensure successful integration.**

Ideal Participants: HR professionals, DEI leaders, supervisors, managers, team leads, and onboarding specialists.

Ideal Space: Medium/Large space with round tables for small group discussions.

The following materials should be distributed to the audience at the start of the workshop:

1. **Executive Summary of the ASPIRE Study**
2. **Module 2 of the Employer Toolkit**
3. **ASPIRE Study Infographic: Barriers for staying on the job**
4. **ASPIRE Study Infographic: Workplace Environment**

Sample agenda

Here is a sample agenda for a **2-hour** workshop. Remember, you can pick and choose from the different activities provided in this module instead:

Agenda	Time	Resources
Welcome and Icebreaker	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Review Workshop Objectives	5 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Participants share values and ground rules	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart

Establish a parking lot		
Module Overview: Introductory slides about ASPIRE Study Key Statistics from study related to Module 2 Overview of Module 2 of Employer Toolkit	10 minutes	PowerPoint slides Handout: ASPIRE Study Infographics (Barriers to staying on the job & Workplace harassment)
Activity 3	30 minutes	PowerPoint slides, Flip Charts
Break	10 minutes	
Activity 3 Continues with additional Exercise	30 minutes	Flip charts
Workshop Evaluation	5 minutes	
Closing Thoughts and Review Parking Lot	10 minutes	Flip Chart

Ice breakers:

1. Begin by inviting participants to reflect silently on the following prompt: Think about your first week in a new job. What made you feel included? What made you feel like an outsider? Ask 1-2 participants to share their reflection.
2. Two truths and a lie: Ask a few participants to share two things about them that are true and one that is a lie. The rest of the group will guess which is the lie.
3. Ask participants to complete either one of the following statements:
   - The worst experience as a new hire was….
   - The most culturally blind thing that happened in my first week at work…
   - An inclusive practice that I appreciate at my workplace…
4. Ask participants: If you are to plan a holiday right now, all expenses paid, where would you go?

Parking Lot:

At the beginning of the workshop, set aside a flipchart or board with the title “Parking Lot”. Use this space throughout the workshop to list questions or topics that do not get addressed during the workshop. After the workshop, the facilitator should provide answers to the questions through an agreed upon form of communication (email, follow-up meeting, communique, etc.).

MENU OF ACTIVITIES:

These are four different activities you can choose from, depending on your organization’s priorities.

Activity 1: Onboarding Realities (40 minutes)

Objective:

- Introduce participants to lived realities on Muslim women’s onboarding experiences.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Facilitator Framing (10 minutes):
    - Present findings from Aspire Study related to onboarding experiences (in PPT slides)
    - Optional: Find a speaker or ask a participant to come and speak about their own onboarding experiences.
2. Table Discussion (20 minutes):
   In groups of 3–4, discuss:
    - Optional post live-speaker/participant speaker: what stuck out to you as problematic (if any) and what you felt was an example of an effective and inclusive onboarding strategy (if any)?
    - What does effective onboarding look like?
    - What are some risks when onboarding fails to be inclusive?
3. Debrief (10 minutes): Use a flipchart to compile ideas under two headings: "Effective Onboarding" vs. "Harmful Onboarding."

Activity 2: Understanding Barriers Muslim Women Face (40 minutes)

Objective:

- Expose participants to onboarding challenges grounded in data and lived experience.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Introduce the 5 Cs of Onboarding (Clarity, Compliance, Culture, Connection and Check-ins). (5 minutes)
2. Share key ASPIRE findings on early employment experiences (5 minutes)
3. Activity: Small Group Reflection (10 minutes):
    a. Each group is assigned a challenge (e.g., lack of prayer space, unable to take days off for religious observances, limited or no dietary options at social events (e.g. no halal food or social event focused on 'alcohol/drinking', mostly white in management). Discussion questions:
        i. How would this impact an employee's self-worth and perception?
        ii. How would this impact an employee's connection to their co-workers?
        iii. How would this impact an employee's desire to remain employed?
    b. Share back in plenary discussion findings. (10 minutes)
4. Facilitator Commentary (10 minutes): Connect back to the 5Cs and emphasize how onboarding that lacks cultural safety leads to talent attrition and unmet potential.

Activity 3: Deep Dive – Designing Culturally Safe Onboarding Model (30 minutes)

Objective:

- Equip participants with practical tools to embed equity and cultural safety into onboarding systems.

Instructions for facilitator:

1. Start the session with a role-playing activity in a fishbowl. (5 minutes to set up and explain the rules). Participants are given cards: either they are a manager, a HR officer or a new hire (use the Aspire Study profiles for the new hires). All participants sit in a circle (observer) with three people sitting in the middle – these three would be the new hire, the manager of the new hire and HR officer. Using the sample materials (handouts) provided, start the role-playing exercise. After 5 minutes, three new people enter the fishbowl and those who were in the fishbowl join the circle. Let this go on for 15 minutes. After 15 minutes, ask the new hires: (10 minutes)
    a. What messages were being sent to you about belonging?
    b. Where did you feel excluded or invisible?
    c. What did you wish were provided or said to you as part of your onboarding process?

    The facilitator will now summarize the key challenges faced by the new hires from the exercise and will initiate a discussion on what a culturally safe onboarding process entails. Present strategies from the Module 2 document like: buddy/sponsor model, affinity groups, DEI policies etc. (10 minutes)

2. ***Additional exercise (30 minutes):***
    In small groups, participants start to design a culturally safe on-boarding checklist using anti-racism, justice, equity, diversity and inclusion principles. (20 minutes). Each group designs one component (e.g., Day 1 schedule or Welcome Package). Share ideas with the wider group and document best practices (10 minutes)

Handout for Activity 3: These are based on the ASPIRE Study profiles. Additional details have been added to these profiles for the purposes of this activity.

Amina:
Ageing immigrant refugee Canadian Muslim woman, living in poverty, with official language skills and post grad degree. She holds a degree in engineering from Morocco. She has extensive experience in Morocco as an electrical engineer.

Fatima:
Second generation South Asian Canadian Muslim woman (wears a hijab) graduating from university and entering the labour market. She graduated with a bachelors in business and was active in the student union.

Hodan:
Black Canadian Muslim woman navigating careers in healthcare. She is in her mid-40s and is juggling between being a full-time nurse looking for a part-time job as a medical transcription officer.

Nargis:
Queer Canadian Muslim woman pursuing employment at a community organization. She is in her mid-30s with a background in IT. She has been working at a start-up and looking to join a community organization to support their digital content management.

Tanzil:
Canadian Muslim (wears hijab) single mother in the 'sandwich generation' juggling responsibilities. She is returning to work in the banking sector after taking time off of work for 5 years after having her child. Prior to taking time off - she worked as a senior analyst, has a degree in finance, and had 7 years experience before taking time off work.

Handout for Activity 3 (Additional Exercise):

These case study examples illustrate culturally blind onboarding practices. Participants should identify the exclusionary elements and redesign them into inclusive policies. Use ASPIRE Study profiles of Fatima, Hodan and Tanzil (see ASPIRE Study website) to pair with the different case study scenarios below. Each study profile should be printed as a separate handout, and each case study below should be printed out separately. Then each study profile should be paired with a case study for the triad exercise described under Activity 3.

Case Study 1 – Bank: New Hire Orientation

Policy Excerpt:
"All new employees are expected to attend a mandatory orientation dinner at a downtown steakhouse. The dinner is a chance for new hires to bond with senior managers and demonstrate enthusiasm for the company culture. Attendance is strongly encouraged as a key part of performance impression."

Case Study 2 – School: Teacher Induction Program
Policy Excerpt:
"All new teachers must attend after-school team-building activities scheduled on Fridays once a month until 6:30 pm, including social events like trivia nights at local pubs. Participation demonstrates school spirit. Teachers are also expected to be available to chaperone holiday events, including Halloween costume parties and Christmas concerts."

Case Study 3 – Pharmaceutical Company: Lab Induction
Policy Excerpt:
"New scientists must wear company-issued lab coats and uniforms without modification. Religious attire (such as headscarves, turbans,) is not permitted under the safety policy. New hires are also expected to attend an overnight team retreat at a rural camp with shared cabins."

Activity 4: Designing a feedback mechanism for continuous improvement (30 minutes)

Learning objective:

- Co-design a visualized practical feedback mechanism that captures new hires' onboarding experiences – especially for Muslim women of intersecting identities.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Participatory Visual Activity – Feedback System Mapping (20 minutes). Participants work in pairs or trios to create a visual prototype of a feedback system for new hires. Each team receives a poster-sized template divided into the following five zones:
    a. Input – How will the organization collect feedback? (e.g., digital form, verbal debrief, anonymous survey)
    b. Timing – When will feedback be gathered? (e.g., Day 3, Week 2, End of Month 1)
    c. Accessibility – How will cultural safety and anonymity be ensured?
    d. Action – Who will receive the feedback and how will it be acted on?
    e. Communication Loop – How will new hires know their voices are heard and changes are made?

    Visual Method: Use colored sticky notes to fill in each zone:
    - Green = Feedback collection methods
    - Blue = Timing & access strategies
    - Orange = Action & accountability processes
    - Purple = Follow-up and improvement ideas

    Encourage participants to draw icons, symbols, or flow arrows to show how information moves.
    Optional Prompts:
    - "How do we ensure Muslim women feel safe to speak up?"
    - "What builds trust without placing extra burden on new hires?"

2. Group Gallery Walk and Share-Out (5 minutes)
    - Each group posts their design on the wall.
    - Participants walk around, view each system, and leave 1–2 comments or affirmations on sticky notes.
3. Facilitator leads a brief debrief (5 minutes)
    a. What creative ideas stood out?
    b. What patterns emerged around safety, trust, and accountability?

CONTENT MODULE 3

Equitable Promotion Processes and Leadership Development

I. Overview

Inequitable promotion processes and limited leadership development support create significant barriers for Muslim women striving to reach leadership positions. Known as the "Broken Rung," the disparity in promotion rates from entry-level to management reflects biases in promotion criteria, a lack of transparency, and inadequate representation in leadership development programs.

The ASPIRE Study[1] highlights that only **0.19% of Canadian Muslim women** occupy senior or legislative management roles, compared to **0.48% of non-Muslim Canadian women**. Even at the middle management level, Muslim women remain underrepresented, with only **13%** in such roles compared to **18%** of non-Muslim Canadian women. Proactively addressing barriers to advancement for Muslim women ensures fair access to opportunities and promotes equity across the workforce.

This module provides strategies to enable Canadian Muslim women and other underrepresented groups to advance into leadership roles, with a specific emphasis on creating equitable promotion processes and tailored leadership development support.

II. Understanding the Challenge

Reflect on the following leadership challenges for Muslim women, and consider whether these barriers are present in your workplace.

Bias in promotion processes[2]

Research from the ASPIRE project and other studies has shown that intersecting identity factors, such as gender, race, and religion, can compound bias in promotion decisions, especially when hiring and

[1] ASPIRE Study. (2014). *Canadian Council of Muslim Women*. Canadian Council of Muslim Women. https://www.ccmw.com/aspire-study

[2] Ibid

Bi, S. (2020, February 26). *Empowered Employment: Unlocking the Workplace for Muslim Women*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341575370_Empowered_Employment_Unlocking_the_Workplace_for_Muslim_Women

Sajid, K. (2024). *Canadian Experiences with Hiring & Workplace Discrimination The Financial Services Inclusion Sessions 2024: Session 1: Equitable and Inclusive Hiring: Reflections from the Frontlines (Nov 18)*. Retrieved August 20, 2025, from https://www.pollara.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Pollara-FinInclSummit-EmpDiscrimRptF.pdf

promotion committees lack diversity. In many cases, decision-makers - consciously or unconsciously - seek to maintain the status quo. Many participants in the ASPIRE study described facing growing hostility as they advanced into leadership roles, including being blocked from promotions or subjected to discriminatory behaviour. Visible religious symbols and dress, such as the hijab or niqab, often trigger additional bias against Muslim women. For internationally trained professionals, the devaluation of non-Western credentials adds another layer of exclusion, and reflects a form of systemic discrimination that has become normalized in the Canadian workforce. Even when promoted, salary differentials between Muslim women and their counterparts in similar roles may reflect biases as well.

Bias in performance evaluations[3]

Performance evaluations are also vulnerable to bias when managers hold harmful assumptions—conscious or unconscious—about employees based on their gender, religion, ethno-cultural identity, sexual orientation, or language proficiency amongst other factors. If a manager perceives a Muslim woman as not being a "fit", they may (even unintentionally) undermine her career progression.

The 'Glass Cliff' phenomenon[4]

The glass cliff refers to the tendency of organizations to elevate women and other underrepresented employees into leadership roles during times of crisis, often with limited support. This sets them up for failure and reinforces negative stereotypes about their leadership capabilities. Muslim women have documented experiencing this dynamic in their own professional journeys.

Lack of sponsorship and networking opportunities[5]

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[3] Syndio.(2023).*Workplace Equity Trends Report*. (2023). Syndio. https://synd.io/workplace-equity-trends-report-2023/
Wilson, J. (2023, December). *Employees see bias in performance reviews: Report*. Hrreporter.com; Canadian HR Reporter. https://www.hrreporter.com/focus-areas/diversity/employees-see-bias-in-performance-reviews-report/381898?
Dalhousie University, & Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. (2019, February). *National diversity and inclusion benchmarking study: Senior leaders and diversity personnel*. https://ccdi.ca/media/1864/20190222-research-national-diversity-and-inclusion-benchmarking-study.pdf

[4] Ryan, M. K., & Haslam, S. A. (2005). The Glass Cliff: Evidence That Women Are Over-Represented in Precarious Leadership Positions. *British Journal of Management*, *16*(2), 81–90. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2005.00433.x
Morgenroth, T., Kirby, T. A., Ryan, M. K., & Sudkamper, A. (2020). The Who, When, and Why of the Glass Cliff Phenomenon: A Meta-Analysis of Appointments to Precarious Leadership Positions. Psychological Bulletin, 146(9), 797-829. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000234

[5] Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (2018), Navigating Race in Canadian Workplaces: https://ccdi.ca/media/1849/20180731-toolkit-navigating-race-in-canadian-workplaces.pdf?
ASPIRE Study. (2014). *Canadian Council of Muslim Women*. Canadian Council of Muslim Women. https://www.ccmw.com/aspire-study

In workplaces with little diversity in leadership, racialized, Muslim, and other under-represented employees may be systematically excluded from informal networks and sponsorship opportunities. Managers often groom employees for promotion who resemble themselves – a reflection of unconscious bias - leading to inequitable access to mentorship and advancement. Muslim employees may also be excluded from social events that conflict with religious observances, isolating them further. With so few Muslim women in management, the absence of role models or allies compounds the barriers to leadership development.

Unwelcoming work culture

In more homogenous workplaces with limited diversity, there may be resistance to making cultural and religious accommodations or addressing unconscious bias, microaggressions, and other symptoms of systemic racism and discrimination. Muslim women and other underrepresented groups are expected to conform to the Euro-centric norms and culture, or risk reinforcing beliefs that they do not belong.

Without targeted efforts, these systemic barriers will continue to prevent equitable representation in leadership.

"When I was applying for my current position, I remember talking to the girl who I was supposed to replace, and she shared how much she was making at the time. However, when I got offered the job, the amount was significantly below what she was getting, and what I was previously told I would get. And I'm thinking because I was interviewed by an old white man and when he saw me, he probably thought he should reduce the amount. Because I'm Black, Somali and Muslim. And to be honest after that interview, I couldn't look at him the same way, and I have been working for him for over a year now. To be honest, I knew it in my heart, when I got the phone call from the employer about the interview and the girl was telling me about the position and the salary I should expect, I knew as soon as they saw me they would change that."

- Muslim Woman, ASPIRE Study participant

Sector-Specific Challenges and Impacts[6]

	Challenges	Impact
STEM	Leadership pathways in STEM fields often lack diversity, reinforcing homogeneity in senior roles.	Without equitable promotion and development, Muslim women in STEM miss critical opportunities to demonstrate leadership.

[6] Masri, A. (2025). Muslim Women's Workplace Equity in Canada: A Literature Review. *Prepared for CCMW.*

Healthcare	Limited promotion pathways and high turnover rates create barriers for Muslim women seeking leadership in healthcare.	The absence of equitable promotion criteria leads to underrepresentation of Muslim women in healthcare leadership roles, affecting patient care inclusivity.
Financial services	Promotion processes in financial services are often based on informal networks and visibility, disadvantaging Muslim women who may lack access to these networks.	These biases reduce the advancement of high-potential immigrant women.
Skilled trades	Predominantly male work environments limit leadership opportunities for women, especially racialized Muslim women.	A lack of equitable promotion limits retention and diversity in the trades, preventing Muslim women from breaking into leadership roles.
Public sector	Bureaucratic constraints and limited reform in promotion practices stymie the career growth of racialized employees.	Public sector diversity targets remain unmet, affecting decision-making at the policy level and reinforcing systemic inequities.
Non-profit/ NGO sector	Implicit biases and long-held assumptions about who is seen as "leadership material" can limit Muslim women's access to senior roles or high-visibility assignments, even when they are fully qualified.	When persistently overlooked in these ways, this leads to stalled career growth, wage gaps, and a lack of representation of Muslim women in leadership positions.

"We were just left on our own, like we didn't have mentorship. There was no sponsor in the same way that other white people were being groomed for more success. It was just like you should just fend for yourself. It was just very insidious, and then we would hear more and more about other Muslims, who were also confronting the exact same thing, or different forms [of] discrimination. So it is very systemic, it is very entrenched."

- Muslim Woman, ASPIRE Study participant

III. Why It Matters

When equitable promotion and leadership development is a priority for employers, this has profound benefits in terms of performance, innovation, and employee retention.

- ✔ **Improved financial performance**: Companies that embrace diversity at leadership levels also tend to see stronger financial performance; According to McKinsey's 2023 annual report, organizations in the top quartile for gender or ethnically diverse executive teams are 39% more

likely to achieve higher profitability, and 9% more likely when their teams are both gender and ethnically diverse[7]. There were similar positive trends for diverse Boards of Directors, where DEI

- ✔ **Innovation and growth**: Diverse leadership contributes to innovation and improved decision-making, particularly when this is coupled with an inclusive workplace culture in which underrepresented employees feel more psychologically safe to present their ideas. When employees see themselves represented by leadership, this boosts their confidence and sense of belonging, and can unlock greater creativity and innovation[8]. Muslim women in leadership are also in a better position to tap into underserved markets and customer bases, thereby growing the business.

- ✔ **Retaining diverse talent:** Studies show a position correlation between more inclusive leadership teams and employee retention. Diverse leadership is more likely to prioritize cultural safety in the workplace, which ultimately leads to improved employee engagement and retention for underrepresented groups. [9]

IV. Key Inclusive Strategies and Solutions

Equitable promotion and leadership development are essential for advancing Muslim women and other underrepresented groups. Employers are encouraged to foster these pathways for advancement, championing equitable representation in leadership for Muslim women in Canadian workplaces. These promotion strategies are equally relevant for other racialized and underrepresented employees as well.

Provide inclusive leadership development opportunities

Commit to providing equitable opportunities for employees, regardless of background, to develop leadership skills and capacity. If under-represented employees have made their career advancement goals known, whether in performance reviews, goal-setting exercises, by applying for leadership

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[7] Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle, Hunt, D. V., Huber, C., Mar, del, Prince, S., & Thomas, A. (2023, December 5). *Diversity matters even more: The case for holistic impact*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-matters-even-more-the-case-for-holistic-impact

[8] Lakshmi Kalyani, & Lakshmi Kalyani Chinthala. (2021). *Diversity and inclusion: The business case for building more equitable organizations*. *11*(4), 91–93. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391669804_Diversity_and_inclusion_The_business_case_for_building_more_equitable_organizations

[9] Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle, Hunt, D. V., Huber, C., Mar, del, Prince, S., & Thomas, A. (2023, December 5). *Diversity matters even more: The case for holistic impact*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-matters-even-more-the-case-for-holistic-impact,

positions, or in conversation with managers, this is a signal to support their growth and visibility for upcoming opportunities. Consider these strategies:

- **Offer tailored professional development**: Provide access to a professional development budget for each employee that aligns with their individual growth goals. If employees seek training outside the organization, especially in small companies that don't offer training in house, managers should actively support staff in finding suitable opportunities to build their capacity for career advancement.
- **Ensure equitable access to internal leadership training:** If your organization provides in-house leadership training with limited capacity, apply a fair and transparent selection process to ensure that diverse staff, including Muslim women, are not being disproportionately excluded. These opportunities should be available at various levels – junior, mid, and senior management– and aligned with diversity targets to counteract unconscious biases.
- **Broaden access to informal networking opportunities:** When informal or exclusive networking events arise (e.g. dinners, forums, roundtables), intentionally invite underrepresented employees who would not typically have access to these spaces.
- **Plan inclusive social and networking events**: When hosting social events and networking meetings, be mindful of timing and format. Avoid scheduling during Ramadan. Also, consider care responsibilities and religious observances (e.g. time, venue, food, drink options), and physical accessibility of the venue. This will ensure that all staff, including diverse Muslim women, can participate fully.
- **Support language development**: If your organization requires advanced language proficiency in English and/or French for leadership positions, consider offering language courses in-house or providing stipends for employees who commit to language learning. This helps to remove language as a structural barrier to advancement.

Mentorship and Sponsorship for Career Advancement

Leadership opportunities and training are essential, but they are not enough on their own to ensure equitable advancement. Muslim women also need access to networks, visibility, and advocacy within the organization. Mentorship and sponsorship are two distinct approaches that support this.

A. ***Mentorship focuses on development*****.** Mentors provide guidance, feedback, and encouragement to help employees grow in their roles and prepare for future opportunities.

- **Formalize mentorship processes.** Avoid ad hoc or informal systems that advantage only those who are already connected or familiar. Establish a structured matching process so all interested employees — including Muslim women — can access mentorship. Mentorship is equally important for Muslim women promoted to leadership roles to help them execute in their new roles effectively. Review YWCA Metro Vancouver's mentorship toolkit for guidance.
- **Support transitions and newcomer integration.** Pair newcomers or recently promoted leaders with mentors to help them adapt to organizational culture, expectations, and networks.
- **Ensure cultural safety.** Provide cultural safety and unconscious bias training for mentors to support respectful interactions and build trust.
- **Leverage external programs when needed.** If internal capacity is limited, connect employees to external mentorship programs designed for underrepresented women (e.g., Fix The Broken Rung's Jump the Rung Accelerator; Accelerate Her Future; TRIEC Mentoring Partnership), The Rosie Mentorship Program, etc.

B. ***Sponsorship focuses on advancement*****.** Sponsors are senior leaders who use their influence to open doors, advocate for visibility, and recommend high-performing employees for opportunities. Sponsorship is especially impactful for Muslim women whose skills and contributions may be undervalued or invisible due to systemic bias.

- **Create intentional sponsorship pathways.** Encourage leaders to intentionally champion underrepresented employees and adopt clear criteria for sponsorship selection to avoid affinity bias.
- **Advocate for visibility.** Sponsors should recommend protégés for stretch assignments, key committees, high-profile projects, promotions, and leadership programs — and publicly endorse their contributions.
- **Prepare sponsors to act.** Train sponsors to recognize systemic barriers faced by Muslim women and to use their positional power to create openings and expand networks.

Develop equitable promotion policies and processes

Transparent, bias-free promotion processes ensure fairness and align with diversity goals, creating a workplace where all employees can thrive.

- **Set clear diversity goals**: Establish representation targets at the middle management, senior leadership, executive, and board levels.
- **Define transparent promotion criteria**: Use a standardized selection process with clear and measurable promotion criteria. Ensure that all selection committee members use the same evaluation rubric to review applications and conduct interviews.
- **Establish internal hiring standards**: When hiring internally, consider setting lower thresholds for qualifications compared to external candidates. This supports internal hires with career progression and improves staff retention. Internal employees hold institutional knowledge and are familiar with ways of working and the organizational culture. Promoting them is a win-win.
- **Implement pay range caps**: To mitigate biased salary negotiations that frequently result in unequal pay for comparable roles and levels of experience, set maximum pay limits for each position type. A standardized compensation rubric should be applied uniformly across all departments and leadership roles.
- **Value diverse experiences**: Broaden qualification criteria to recognize and value international education and experience. Internationally trained professionals have familiarity with global markets, other languages, and cultures that can be an asset to your organization.

Train hiring and leadership teams on equitable promotion and onboarding

Hiring teams involved in leadership recruitment – including HR professionals, hiring managers, and external recruiters – should receive training on the updated promotion policies, with clear explanations of what has been changed for greater equity in selection processes.

- **Provide training on unconscious biases, favoritism, and microaggressions**, with emphasis on how these behaviours disadvantage diverse candidates. Explain how Muslim women may experience compounding bias due to intersecting identities, such as gender, race, religion, and immigration status. Start by using this toolkit's workshop module on Equitable Promotion.
- Train leadership teams on equitable onboarding that sets Muslim women up for success in their new roles. See the onboarding strategies in Module 2, many of which are applicable to internal promotions. Use this toolkit's Onboarding workshop module, and seek DEI consultants to support with training as needed (see Annex 2).

Foster an inclusive, and cultural safe workplace

For Muslim women to thrive in management and other leadership roles, the workplace culture should provide psychological safety and actively embrace racial, cultural, and religious diversity.

This includes making accommodations to respect cultural practices and religious observances, and moving away from Euro-centric approaches to social engagement, communication, and leadership style. Leadership teams should model these desired behaviours by embracing new ideas, ways of working, and approaches that diverse leaders will bring. See Module 4 for more on cultural safety.

Promote equitable and non-preferential employee recognition, support and performance evaluation processes

Recognition: Meaningful and timely recognition of strong performance helps build employee confidence, motivation, and leadership potential. Managers should consistently acknowledge good work across all team members in a *non-preferential* manner and not wait for annual reviews to do so. Ensure recognition is performance-based and not based on cultural familiarity or personal closeness.

Performance review processes: Performance evaluations should be restructured to minimize bias and support equitable professional development. To that end:

- ***Reassess the performance review process through an anti-bias lens*.** Limit the influence of managers' subjective judgments and unconscious bias.
- ***Focus primarily on work performance and alignment with organizational values***, and less emphasis on personality traits, which are more prone to biased interpretation.
- ***Use standardized evaluation criteria*** across roles or teams to support consistency and fairness in assessments.
- ***Include concrete examples*** of strengths, accomplishments, challenges, and growth areas in written feedback.
- ***Incorporate 360-degree feedback and/or self-assessments***, where appropriate, to reduce over-reliance on the manager's perspective.
- ***Ensure performance reviews are not the only feedback mechanism*.** Managers should hold regular (e.g., monthly) check-ins to provide support, discuss goals, and follow up on identified development areas. Frame challenges as growth opportunities**.**

Equitable management training: All managers should be trained in inclusive leadership, equitable staff support, and anti-bias performance assessment. Training must include how unconscious bias can shape evaluations and influence perceptions of competence, professionalism, and leadership potential.

Dispute resolution mechanisms: Establish a clear and confidential process through which employees can raise concerns about perceived bias in their performance evaluations—without fear of reprisal.

Improve data and accountability mechanisms

Conduct intersectional pay equity audits at management and executive levels to identify disparities based on gender, race, religion, and other identity factors. Use this data as a baseline to create standardized pay rubrics with narrow, role-specific ranges that reduce subjectivity in compensation decisions.

Monitor and report on leadership diversity targets, and for bigger companies, disaggregate data on Muslim women in management positions. Track progress over time and implement targeted strategies to address identified gaps in representation and workplace culture.

Analyze recruitment and advancement data to assess who applies for leadership roles compared to who is selected. Identify patterns of underrepresentation or bias at each stage of the process.

Collect anonymous employee feedback to understand barriers to applying for promotion, including perceived fairness, psychological safety, and cultural fit. Analyze demographic trends in the feedback to inform inclusive promotion practices and leadership development supports.

Key Takeaways: Equitable promotion and leadership development

The Challenge: Muslim women face systemic barriers to promotion and leadership—including bias in evaluations, lack of mentorship and sponsorship, exclusion from networks, and workplace cultures that fail to support cultural and religious inclusion.

Why It Matters for Employers: When promotion processes are equitable and inclusive, organizations benefit from stronger financial performance, greater innovation, and improved retention.

What Employers Should Do:

- Establish **transparent, bias-free promotion criteria** and standard evaluation rubrics.
- Set and monitor **leadership diversity targets** for greater accountability.
- Provide **equitable access to leadership development**, networking, and mentorship opportunities.
- Train hiring and leadership teams on **anti-bias promotion practices**.
- Design **inclusive workplace cultures modeled by leadership** that support cultural and religious accommodations and embrace new ideas and ways of working.
- Conduct **pay equity audits** and analyze promotion data to identify disparities.

V. Employer Case Studies

The following case studies provide promising examples of equitable promotion and leadership development strategies. Consider how these strategies can be adapted by your organization to support Muslim women employees' career advancement:

1. BC Hydro - Women's Network

BC Hydro is a provincial Crown corporation in British Columbia responsible for generating and distributing electricity. It employs thousands of workers across engineering, technical, and frontline fields.[10]

Case

Women, especially in STEM and trades, remained significantly underrepresented in leadership and technical roles at BC Hydro. Many women lacked access to mentorship, internal networks, and growth-focused resources that could help them transition into senior positions.

Initiatives

BC Hydro launched the Women's Network as a platform to promote leadership readiness and peer support for women across the company. The network delivered Lean In Circles that facilitated regular discussions, "Taking the Stage" communication workshops, and an annual Power Summit that featured executive speakers and skill-building sessions. It also cultivated regional chapters to ensure the inclusion of remote or field-based employees.

[10] Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion. (2016). *BC Hydro: A Canadian success story in diversity and inclusion*. https://ccdi.ca/media/1305/ccdi-success-stories-bchydro.pdf

Results
The network expanded to over 500 members and contributed to a rise in women taking on leadership and high-visibility roles. By creating intentional space for visibility, mentorship, and skills-building, BC Hydro improves equitable promotion across gender lines.

2. Deloitte - Equitable Leadership strategies

Deloitte is one of the world's largest professional services firms. With operations in over 150 countries, it employs hundreds of thousands of professionals and is recognized as a global leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion.[11]

Case
Deloitte recognized that traditional DEI efforts, such as awareness workshops and inclusion events, were not effectively translating into equitable promotion outcomes, especially for women of colour. These surface-level activities, while well-intentioned, failed to disrupt systemic barriers within the talent lifecycle. To address this, Deloitte shifted its focus from activity-based inclusion to systemic, leader-led, and measurable equity strategies designed to ensure that underrepresented groups are not only hired but also equitably advanced into leadership roles.

Initiatives
Deloitte moved from surface-level DEI activities to a systemic equity approach rooted in data and leadership accountability. By disaggregating promotion and retention data by race and gender, the firm identified gaps affecting women of colour. Equity was embedded into recruitment, performance evaluations, promotions, and succession planning. The Equity Activation Model held leaders accountable for measurable progress, requiring them to analyze data, adjust practices, and model inclusive behaviors. Deloitte also published regular diversity reports to promote transparency and expanded access to non-traditional executive roles—such as Chief Digital Officer and Chief Diversity Officer—to create new leadership pathways for underrepresented groups.

Results
With these efforts, women now hold about 32% of Deloitte's C-suite roles, with notable increases in leadership representation among women of colour. Between 2018 and 2021, representation grew by 10% for Black women, 12% for Latinx women, and 24% for multiracial women. Deloitte also observed a multiplier effect, where each promotion of a woman to the C-suite corresponded with three more women advancing to senior leadership. These outcomes, coupled with transparent reporting, have enhanced trust and positioned Deloitte as a leader in equity-driven advancement.

3. MetLife – Mentorship During Internships

[11] Hazuria, S., Shemluck, N., & Danielecki, P. (2023, June 8). *Women leaders in the financial services industry: 2023 update*. Deloitte Insights.
https://www.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/financial-services/women-leaders-financial-services.html

MetLife is a multinational insurance and financial services company headquartered in the United States. As a large employer, it is committed to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace, especially through early-career programming.[12]

Case

MetLife recognized that interns from underrepresented groups—particularly students with disabilities, women, and racialized youth—often lacked the confidence, informal networks, and career navigation support that are critical to long-term success. Without this scaffolding, many interns found it difficult to envision a path to leadership within the company.

Initiatives

To address this, MetLife implemented a structured mentorship program within its internship offerings. Interns were paired with mentors, including ERG members and team leaders, who provided tailored support in setting goals, building relationships, and accessing internal opportunities. Mentors hosted one-on-one meetings and introduced interns to diverse professional networks. In one case, a mentor helped an intern connect with 80+ colleagues, ultimately helping the intern secure a second internship.

Results

Interns reported increased self-confidence, deeper engagement, and a clearer sense of their long-term potential at MetLife. Many transitioned into full-time roles or future internships. By embedding mentorship into the foundation of early-career experiences, MetLife successfully cultivates leadership pipelines among underrepresented groups.

[12] National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability. (n.d.). *MetLife: Recruiting interns with disabilities through community partnerships*. AskEARN. Retrieved from http://askearn.org/employerprofile/met-life-recruiting-interns-with-disabilities-through-community-partnership

WORKSHOP MODULE & FACILITATOR GUIDE

Module 3: Equitable Promotion Processes and Leadership Development

This facilitator guide is based on ***Module 3: Equitable Promotion Processes and Leadership Development of the Employer Toolkit***. The facilitator guide draws on adult learning pedagogies. Based on the learning objectives listed below – a sample 2-hour workshop agenda will be presented in a tabulated format. Additionally, a 'menu' of activities will be provided where facilitators can pick and choose different activities depending on their target audience. CCMW encourages you to be flexible and to adapt these materials to meet the needs of participants as well as the budget and logistical realities of each workshop setting.

Learning Objectives:

- **Understand the systemic and cultural barriers to equitable promotion and leadership development faced by Muslim women.**
- **Reflect on biases in performance evaluation, leadership identification, and mentorship access.**
- **Equip participants with actionable tools to establish transparent and fair promotion pathways.**
- **Co-create leadership development initiatives using participatory tools and lived experiences.**

Ideal participants: HR leaders, mid-level and senior managers, equity officers, employee resource groups (ERGs), and mentorship program leads.

The following materials should be distributed to the audience at the start of the workshop:

1. Executive Summary of the ASPIRE Study
2. Module 3 of the Employer Toolkit
3. ASPIRE Study Infographic: Workplace Hierarchy

Sample agenda

Here is a sample agenda for a **2-hour** workshop. Remember, you can pick and choose from the different activities provided in this module instead:

Agenda	Time	Resources
Welcome and Icebreaker	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Review Workshop Objectives	5 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Establish shared values and rules for the workshop Participants share values and ground rules Establish a parking lot	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Module Overview: Introductory slides about ASPIRE Study	10 minutes	PowerPoint slides

Key Statistics from study related to Module 3 Overview of Module 3 of Employer Toolkit		Handout: ASPIRE Study Infographics: Workplace Hierarchy
Activity 1	30 minutes	Testimonies, sticky notes
Break	10 minutes	
Activity 5	30 minutes	Template for Co-design Sprint
Workshop Evaluation	5 minutes	
Closing Thoughts and Review Parking Lot	10 minutes	Flip Chart

Ice breakers:

1. Participants share one word or image that represents "leadership" to them.
2. Two truths and a lie: Ask a few participants to share two things about them that are true and one that is a lie. The rest of the group will guess which is the lie.
3. Have a roll of knitting yarn and gather participants in a circle. Throw the yarn to one participant and request them to answer one of the questions below. Once that person has answered a question, she/he/they will toss the yarn to another, who will answer the question and so on, until everyone has answered one question. In the entangled web will remain, representing connectedness established and built through listening. Questions you could ask:
    - What's one thing you love about yourself?
    - If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
    - If you could only eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
    - If you were an animal, what would you be and why?
    - What is your guilty pleasure TV show?
    - What is something about your culture you would like to share with others?

Parking Lot:

At the beginning of the workshop, set aside a flipchart or board with the title "Parking Lot". Use this space throughout the workshop to list questions or topics that do not get addressed during the workshop. After the workshop, the facilitator should provide answers to the questions through an agreed upon form of communication (email, follow-up meeting, communique, etc.).

MENU OF ACTIVITIES:

Activity 1: Lived Experience Spotlight: Barriers to Promotion (30 minutes)

Objective:

- To engage participants with real-world testimonies from the ASPIRE Study to uncover how Muslim women and other equity-deserving staff experience exclusion, bias, and invisibility in promotion systems.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Activity: Testimony Wall (15 minutes). Print and display real quotes from Muslim women about discrimination in promotions and leadership (e.g., "No matter how much I worked, they saw someone who didn't fit.") Participants walk around, silently read, and annotate the wall:
    a. What biases are embedded in these stories?

   b. What systems (e.g., sponsorship, “fit”) reinforce this?
2. Debrief Discussion (15 minutes)
   a. How are these issues present in (y)our organization?
   b. What systems might we be reproducing?

Handout for Activity 1:
Quotes from the ASPIRE Study report for the Testimony Wall.

1. “No matter how much I worked, they saw someone who didn’t fit.” (p. 31)
2. “They do the training initiatives, but people who have privilege, well they don’t want to let it go. So then, the trainings aren’t very effective.” (p. 99)
3. “Both my bachelor’s and master’s degrees have been recognized in Canada… However, the lady on the phone asked for my age, and when I shared it, she said they don’t consider applicants over 35 due to their policy. I felt discouraged.” (p. 85)
4. “If employers don’t call us back, it might be because of our age and language skills, not necessarily because they’re racist… Once, I joined a work training program with 35 people, and I was the only one who wasn’t [of the same ethnic group as the rest]. Later, they all moved on to the next round, but I didn’t.” (p. 86)
5. “I was not permitted to take my meal break at sunset while fasting. Instead, I had to take it earlier in the day when I was still fasting and was only allowed to eat after my shift was over.” (p. 31)
6. “Despite being overqualified, I was told I should volunteer instead of being hired.” (p. 85)
7. “Diversity training doesn’t change the way managers act — they still see us as outsiders.” (p. 99)

Activity 2: Understanding Bias in Evaluation and Leadership Selection (40 minutes)

Objectives:
- To examine how bias manifests in performance evaluation and informal leadership selection processes.
- To equip participants with tools to identify and interrupt exclusionary feedback practices.

Instruction for facilitators:
1. Based on the module toolkit and ASPIRE study, the facilitator presents how bias creeps into (10 minutes):
   - Performance evaluations
   - Informal leadership nominations
   - “Cultural fit” standards
   - Sponsorship and visibility

Use ASPIRE findings (present in slide) that Muslim women are often not considered for leadership due to assumptions about assertiveness, communication styles, or availability.

2. Activity – Red Pen, Green Pen (20 minutes). Give participants anonymized sample performance reviews with coded bias (e.g., “She’s quiet” or “needs to show more leadership”).
   - Red Pen: Mark coded language that might disadvantage Muslim or racialized women.
   - Green Pen: Rewrite using equity-informed, evidence-based language.

   Present back in plenary (10 minutes)

Handout for Activity 2:
Red Pen/Green Pen: Review these sample feedback statements. Mark biased language (Red Pen). Then rewrite for fairness and equity (Green Pen).

Sample 1:
"Because she wears a hijab and tends to be soft-spoken, she doesn’t come across as leadership material. Our leaders need to be more outspoken and Western in style."

Sample 2:
"For a Muslim woman, she is confident and takes charge—clearly a strong leader."

Sample 3:
"Her communication style seems very reserved and traditional, probably because of her cultural and religious background. She needs to adapt more. Needs to be more like the rest of the team."

Sample 4:
" As a Muslim woman, she prioritizes family and religious obligations over work, which makes her unreliable for demanding roles. It’s not realistic to expect her to handle leadership positions with those priorities—this role may not be a good fit."

Activity 3: Mapping the Promotion Gap (45 minutes)

Objective:
- To visually analyze the current promotion and leadership pathway within participants' organizations, identify structural points of exclusion, and propose equitable intervention strategies using participatory visual methods.

Instructions for facilitators:
1. In groups of 3-4, ask participants to map out a “Leadership Pathway” in their organization for different Canadian Muslim women using the ASPIRE Study profiles. (10 minutes to review profiles)
2. Mark points where: (10 minutes)
   - Bias is most likely (e.g., promotion committees, nominations)
   - Exclusion occurs (e.g., lack of sponsorship, opaque criteria)
   - Inclusion levers can be added (e.g., leadership coaching, transparent rubrics)’
3. Generate an organizational ladder with “barriers” and “bridges.” (15 minutes)
4. De-brief in plenary to showcase an equitable leadership development for a Muslim woman of intersecting identity. (10 minutes)

Handout for Activity 3:
To visualize promotion pathways in organizations, identify where barriers occur for Canadian Muslim women, and co-develop strategies to build equitable leadership pipelines.

Instructions for Groups (3–4 participants):
1. Review the provided ASPIRE Study profiles of Canadian Muslim women.
2. Map out a typical leadership pathway in your organization (Entry-level → Mid-level → Senior-level → Executive/Leadership).
3. Mark on the pathway:
- Bias Points (e.g., performance evaluations, leadership nominations, sponsorship access).
- Exclusion Barriers (e.g., "cultural fit" requirements, lack of mentorship, opaque promotion criteria).
- Inclusion Bridges (e.g., equitable mentorship programs, transparent promotion rubrics, leadership coaching, sponsorship initiatives).
4. Use the table below to record your group's discussion.

Leadership Pathway Mapping Template

Stage	Bias Points / Barriers	Bridges / Inclusive Strategies
Entry-Level → Mid-Level		
Mid-Level → Senior-Level		
Senior-Level → Executive Role		

Activity 4: Real-World Inclusive Promotion Practices (45 minutes)

Objective:

- To explore four real-world examples of inclusive promotion practices, extract transferable strategies, and reflect on their potential application within participants' organizational contexts.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Set up a World Café (5 minutes). There will be 4 stations and 4 people at each station. The groups will rotate every 10 minutes with one person remaining behind from the previous group to explain to the new group what their group discussed before joining their group at the new station. The stations would be as follows:
    - Metlife's Mentorship During Internship
    - BC Hydro's Women Network
    - Deloitte Equitable Leadership strategies
2. Discuss at each station:
    - What is the practice?
    - Who benefits?

- How could this be adapted to promote equitable promotion of Muslim women in our workplace?

Activity 5: Co-Design Sprint: Inclusive Leadership Initiative (30 minutes)

Objective:

- To collaboratively design a pilot initiative that addresses promotion inequities within the participants' organizations, drawing on case studies, visual mapping, and identified gaps.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. In teams of 2-3, participants co-design a pilot intervention to improve equity in promotion practices (10 minutes)
    - Leadership coaching or peer mentoring for Muslim and racialized women
    - Sponsorship frameworks
    - Equitable performance metrics
    - Secondments to senior roles
2. Teams present their ideas in 2-minute elevator pitches to a 'board of directors' for a fictional organization (10 minutes). The BOD will select '2 pitches' to move forward
3. The participants now will be split into two teams to co-create a workplan for the implementation of their pilot. (10 minutes)

CONTENT MODULE 4

CULTURAL SAFETY AND RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

I. Overview

This Cultural Safety and Religious Accommodation Module is designed as a versatile resource to support employers in fostering an equitable, culturally safe workplace where Muslim women—and all employees—can thrive.

Cultural safety is a workplace approach that goes beyond *cultural sensitivity* (awareness of differences) and *cultural competence* (skills to adapt to these differences). It focuses on creating environments where employees feel respected, valued, and empowered to express their identities without fear of bias, discrimination, or exclusion. Cultural safety requires ongoing reflection on power imbalances in the workplace, and the systemic barriers that shape organizational practices that often privilege some groups over others. Importantly, cultural safety is defined by those most affected and not by those in positions of power.

A lack of cultural safety creates significant barriers for Muslim women in the workplace, particularly those who wear visible religious symbols or observe specific practices. These challenges can lead to exclusion, discomfort, undermine confidence, and limited career advancement, which negatively impact job retention and job satisfaction. Without adequate support, Muslim women may feel pressured to hide or change aspects of their identity, conform to Euro-centric norms to fit in and succeed, avoid promotions, or leave organizations altogether.

This module provides a roadmap for organizations to create culturally safe environments where all employees, particularly Muslim women, can thrive.

II. Understanding the Challenge

Reflect on the following cultural safety barriers for Muslim women, and consider whether these challenges may be present in your company.

Representation Gaps

The ASPIRE Study (2024) found that Muslim women still remain severely underrepresented in leadership roles, with only 0.19% in senior management positions. This is often linked to workplaces lacking DEI

policies and cultural safety[1]. When there is a lack of representation at senior levels, this can make Muslim women feel tokenized or being seen as a 'diversity hire,' rather than being recognized for their merit.

Compounding biases

Visible markers of faith, such as the hijab, can trigger both overt and unconscious biases. They may result in assumptions about a person's competence, professionalism, or "fit" within the organizational culture. For example, women who wear the hijab may be overlooked for client-facing roles, excluded from informal networking opportunities, or face biased performance evaluations. In Quebec, Bill 21 explicitly targets and limits career opportunities for those wearing religious symbols, including the hijab or niqab. Black Muslim women, others with racialized identities and new Canadians can face layered discrimination or "hidden blocks" based on gender, race, religion, and immigrant status. Those with visible and invisible disabilities are also a risk of further psychological harm.

Client-based discrimination

In client-facing roles, Muslim employees may face a heightened risk of harassment or bias from clients, which is often not sufficiently addressed by existing employer policies. For instance, one Muslim woman physician shared how many patients assume that the non-racialized medical students that shadow her in the hospital are the physician. With these continuous experiences, she says, "…*every shift, I feel like I have to prove myself*."

Inadequate Religious Accommodations

When workplaces discourage or fail to accommodate religious practices—such as modified break times for Ramadan fasting, access to prayer space, or time off for religious holidays—Muslim women may feel unsupported and excluded. Being forced to forgo religious observance to maintain employment can lead to spiritual distress and a sense of disconnection from the workplace.

Exclusion from Informal Networks

Informal workplace cultures can unintentionally exclude Muslim women. A common example is socializing or networking events centered around drinking that Muslim women may avoid for religious reasons. By missing out, this affects critical relationship-building opportunities.

Sector-Specific Challenges and Impacts[2]

1. **STEM**: Few STEM workplaces offer culturally safe environments, and flexible schedules may not support daily prayers. This isolation can hinder career growth for Muslim women.
2. **Healthcare**: Strict schedules and high demands often don't accommodate religious observances, leading to strain for Muslim women observing prayer or fasting.

[1] ASPIRE Study. (2014). *Canadian Council of Muslim Women*. Canadian Council of Muslim Women. https://www.ccmw.com/aspire-study, 23

[2] Masri, A. (2025). Muslim Women's Workplace Equity in Canada: A Literature Review. *Prepared for CCMW.*

3. **Financial Services**: High-stress environments may overlook religious accommodations, making it challenging for Muslim women to feel fully supported.
4. **Skilled Trades**: Predominantly male and non-diverse environments often lack awareness of cultural safety, leading to hostility or harassment that discourages Muslim women.
5. **Public Sector**: Bureaucratic structures limit flexibility for religious practices, especially in regions with restrictive policies, like Quebec's Bill 21 that forbid religious symbols and dress.

6. **Non-profit/NGO Sector:** Racialized NGO employees report some of the highest rates of race-based discrimination across sectors[3]. Muslim women are often expected to 'represent their communities', adding emotional labour to already demanding roles and contributing to burnout, poorer mental health, and higher turnover.

"I thought the new generations [of Muslims] had the language, they know how to socialize, they know how to talk the small talk, water cooler talk. But even they still have barriers. My generation doesn't have those skills, we cannot make workplace friendships. We're still humans, and we need humans. We need to build that trust and relationships. Well, maybe through our work we build trust. But the relationships, sincere relationships. We need those." **- Muslim woman, First generation Canadian, ASPIRE study participant**

III. Why It Matters

Prioritizing cultural safety in the workplace for Muslim women will benefit employers in numerous ways:

Higher employee productivity: Employees at high-trust companies report being 50% more productive than those at low-trust firms, and Gallup likewise finds that highly engaged teams experience an average of 17% higher productivity.[4] Further, diverse teams that felt psychological safety outperformed diverse teams that did not feel this safety in the workplace[5]. This improved productivity boosts the company's bottom line.

Employee well-being and retention: The same studies found that culturally safe workplaces lead to stronger employee loyalty, 27% less turnover and 74% less employee stress. When employees feel their

[3] Cukier, W et al (2024). *Gender, Diversity, and Discrimination in the Workplace*. The Diversity Institute, The Future Skills Centre, and Environics Institute for Survey Research.
[4] Zak, P. J. (2017, January–February). *The neuroscience of trust*. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2017/01/the-neuroscience-of-trust
Gallup. (2020). *State of the American workplace*. Gallup. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspxhttps://www.gallup.com/workplace/238085/state-american-workplace-report-2017.aspx
[5] Bresman, H., & Edmondson, A. C. (2022, February 8). *Exploring the Relationship Between Team Diversity, Psychological Safety and Team Performance: Evidence from pharmaceutical drug development* [Working paper]. Harvard Business School. https://www.hbs.edu/ris/Publication%20Files/Psychological%20Safety%20in%20Diverse%20Teams_V3_8d2783c5-113b-4184-95b9-d180f63452f7.pdf

identity is valued and that they "belong" in the organization, they are far more engaged and likely to stay. Another Limeade Institute study found employees in highly inclusive workplaces are 43% more committed to stay with the company. while 72% would consider leaving their current job for an organization with a more inclusive culture.[6]

Innovation: A Harvard Business Review analysis noted that companies with inclusive cultures saw a 57% increase in employee innovation compared to less inclusive companies. [7] By respecting cultural and religious needs, this fosters a sense of belonging and employees are more likely to contribute ideas freely, leading to product and service improvements.

Organizational reputation and brand: Organizations that prioritize cultural safety and religious accommodation not only avoid reputational harm but also build a positive employer brand that resonates with both job seekers and consumers. Inclusive companies often receive positive publicity, such as diversity awards, and are more likely to be recommended by former or current employees, and sought after by prospective employees.[8] Highly qualified yet underrepresented Muslim women can become ambassadors and recruiters for the organization.

Legal and Ethical Imperatives: Religious accommodation is a legal requirement under human rights legislation in Canada. Employers who fail to meet these obligations risk reputational damage and legal consequences. Proactive measures not only comply with the law but also demonstrate a commitment to ethical and equitable practices, enhancing employee wellbeing and retention.

"*At my previous workplace, they didn't want to give breaks for prayer. But then, when I joined here, on the first day I went to my manager, because prayer is a huge priority for me. I always prioritize that. So, I want to pray on time. And I remember when I mentioned this, she was like, 'Oh, no problem!' And the workplace that I went to was mostly white, but... she was like, 'It's fine if you want to pray, you can just use one of the quiet rooms—we have quiet rooms where we can take a mental break to decompress. And it was not a big deal. She said, 'you wanna pray, you can go and pray even outside [at a masjid] if you like, during your break time.' So that was a huge thing for me Alhumdulillah [praise God]. I was very happy with that. "* **- Muslim woman, ASPIRE Study participant**

IV. Key Inclusive Strategies and Solutions

By cultivating a workplace that genuinely values diversity and employee wellbeing regardless of background, Muslim women will be able to thrive alongside their peers and contribute to the workplace

[6] Lyra Health.(2023). How to Create an Inclusive Workplace. https://www.lyrahealth.com/blog/inclusive-workplace/
[7] Bourke, J., & Dillon, B. (2018). The diversity and inclusion revolution: Eight powerful truths. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved from Harvard Business Review

[8] Bourke, J., & Dillon, B. (2018). The diversity and inclusion revolution Eight powerful truths. *January*, *22*.https://www.odenetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/DI_Diversity-and-inclusion-revolution.pdf

in a more meaningful way. The following strategies will help your organization go beyond performative gestures to foster an equitable culture. Many of these strategies are also applicable to fostering cultural safety for other racialized and underrepresented employees.

Center employee voices

Cultural safety works best when it is centered on the needs of employees. This means actively engaging with Muslim women to understand what they need to be effective and successful in their work. Employers should foster a culture of open communication, where employees feel comfortable expressing their needs without fear of reprisal or judgment. Asking directly, "What support or accommodations would help you thrive?" fosters trust and demonstrates respect for individual experiences.

Organizations that support faith-based employee groups provide platforms for cultural understanding and addressing accommodation needs. **Employee Resource Groups (**ERGs) are invaluable resources for organizations seeking to understand and address the needs of underrepresented groups to help them thrive in their roles. **Affinity groups** provide safe spaces for employees from similar ethno-cultural, faith-based or other backgrounds to connect, support one another and cultivate belonging in the workplace. For instance, Toronto Metropolitan University has a Muslim Employee Support Network, that "supports Muslim employees by providing content and connections relevant to the unique challenges Muslims face and advocating for resources that can help offer solutions."

Embrace cultural and religious accommodations

Policies that accommodate Muslim women's needs demonstrate commitment to cultural safety, and foster an environment where all employees feel respected in their practices and beliefs. Develop clear policies supporting religious practices. For Muslim employees including those in senior positions, this includes :

Prayer observance: Flexibility to accommodate daily prayer schedules and designating a private space in the workplace for prayer. If space is limited, this could be a quiet, private space open to all employees for spiritual practice or reflection.

Fasting observances: Offering flexible working hours during Ramadan demonstrates solidarity with Muslim employees observing the fast. Some may prefer to adjust their schedules to start earlier or work later in the day to align with their energy levels and religious practices.

Religious holidays: Respect the religious significance of certain holidays for Muslim and accommodate leaves during these time periods. Consider having float days available for all employees that Muslim employees could use towards their religious days of significance.

Dress codes: Ensure that any corporate dress codes are inclusive of religious clothing and symbols, including the hijab and niqab for Muslim women[9].

Dietary needs: For catered events, whether internal or public-facing, include halal food options for Muslim employees, clients and other stakeholders. If halal catering is unavailable, provide nourishing vegetarian options.

Event scheduling: Avoid scheduling social events during Ramadan, particularly those involving food and drink. To foster cultural safety and inclusive engagement, ensure that some social events are alcohol-free and held during work hours. This is especially important for Muslim employees—particularly women—who may feel excluded or unsafe in settings where alcohol is present and inhibitions are lowered.

Accommodations for wide-ranging abilities: Ensure all common areas and essential workplace spaces—such as entrances, washrooms, meeting rooms, and kitchen/cafeterias—are physically accessible for new hires with disabilities. This includes ramps, elevators, automatic doors, accessible washrooms, and clearly marked signage. Address any accommodations needed, whether for visible or invisible disabilities (e.g. assistive technologies, ergonomic equipment, text-to-speech devices, seating arrangements, flexible work schedule).

Enhance anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies

Review and strengthen existing HR policies to ensure that there are comprehensive policies in place to protect employees from mistreatment, whether by peers, management, clients, subcontractors, or customers. Policies should explicitly address the harm caused by microaggressions and acknowledge gendered Islamophobia, xenophobia, and misogynistic slurs as forms of harassment. The policy should also consider the increased risks faced by individuals with compounding identities (e.g. race, religion, gender, immigration status, disabilities). Embedding this language into policy ensures that all employees—including Muslim women—are protected and supported.

Build awareness on cultural safety, bias, and Islamophobia

Cultural safety is not a one-time training. Consider how your organization can adopt these learning modalities on an ongoing basis to enable transformative shifts in the workplace culture. Use the Cultural Safety workshop module in this toolkit as a starting point.

Cultural Safety and Religious Diversity Training

- Offer mandatory foundational training to all staff—including managers—on cultural safety and what this looks like for a diversity of people. These sessions should highlight the importance of creating an environment where Muslim employees, particularly women, feel safe, included, and respected.

[9] Dress code accommodations are not applicable to Quebec-based employers, public service employers who must adhere to Bill 21 (An Act respecting the laicity of the State), which prohibits certain public servants from wearing religious symbols, including the hijab and niqab.

- Provide an overview of all cultural and religious accommodations in the workplace, along with anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies.

Intersectionality and Gendered Islamophobia

- Go beyond general DEI training by addressing the intersecting experiences of Muslim women—especially those who are racialized, immigrants, or visibly religious. Regular, mandatory training on unconscious bias, microaggressions, and overlapping systems of discrimination, including gendered Islamophobia, is key to building nuanced understanding on how this manifests in the workplace.
- Avoid monolithic portrayals of Muslim identity. Educate employees on the diversity of Muslim practices, cultures, and backgrounds—just as we recognize variation among other faith groups. This reduces stereotyping and supports more culturally competent engagement.

Leadership Commitment

Senior management must lead by example to influence meaningful changes in workplace culture.

- Leadership should participate in all trainings and actively model inclusive behavior and adoption of cultural safety policies and practices. This signals an organizational commitment and is more likely to influence behavioural change in others.
- Managers should be equipped and expected to uphold these policies and respond proactively to accommodation requests from Muslim employees.
- The Board of Directors play an instrumental role in championing cultural safety in the workplace. Appoint at least one Board representative with a strong DEI background who can provide strategic guidance towards transformative changes in the workplace.

Address representation and leadership gaps

Cultural safety means not only making space for Muslim women's voices but also valuing their expertise and ensuring their meaningful inclusion in decision-making and leadership. If senior leadership is homogenous, the first step is to recognize and address the systemic biases and discriminatory norms that may be reinforcing these patterns. Existing leadership teams should participate in a series of trainings as noted above, and ensure that cultural and religious accommodations are in place before diversifying. This is essential to demonstrate its commitment to welcome diverse leaders—including Muslim women—and to avoid causing harm through performative efforts.

Once leadership demonstrates its readiness for an inclusive workplace culture at all levels, the following strategies are encouraged:

- **Inclusive leadership**
  Elevate qualified Muslim women into leadership roles to reward merit and embrace their diverse ideas and perspectives. This will boost the confidence of Muslim employees who will feel better represented and psychologically safe, and enable better access to diverse markets and client bases. See Module 3 on Equitable Promotion.
- **Meaningful participation in policy development**

As you revisit policies to foster a culturally safe workplace, involve Muslim women and other equity-deserving groups in shaping workplace policies to be inclusive of diverse needs.

- **Recognized technical expertise**
  Value Muslim women's contributions for their knowledge and professional skills—not solely as representatives of diverse perspectives. Their expertise is as vital and credible as that of any colleague.

Establish feedback and accountability mechanisms

- **Measurable goals:** Cultural safety is a practice that evolves over time. Set achievable, measurable, and time-bound goals (e.g. 2-3 years), and monitor progress using KPIs on employee well-being, retention, diversity, and sense of belonging.

- **Safe feedback channels**: Provide open and confidential channels for employees to share feedback and report concerns without fear, especially regarding psychological safety, exclusion or discrimination. Review feedback on a regular basis and address critical gaps and issues.

- **Clear grievance procedures:** A transparent, well-communicated reporting process empowers all employees to report harassment and discrimination safely - especially Muslim women and other groups facing higher risks of harassment. Work with HR and external consultants to ensure options for confidential, third-party reporting are available. The organization must commit to consider all grievances seriously, including - and especially - those against executive leadership or other management. Failing to do so will result in employees losing trust in the organization's commitment to cultural safety.

- **Regular DEI audits**: Use audits to evaluate cultural safety policies through an intersectional lens, identify gaps, and make concrete improvements to workplace practices. You can use various methods, including anonymous surveys, staff consultations, meetings with ERGs, and an organizational policy review conducted with support from DEI consultants (see Annex 2).

V. Employer Case Studies

The following case studies provide promising examples on cultural safety and religious accommodations. Consider how these strategies can be adapted for your workplace:

Key Takeaways : Cultural Safety and Religious Accommodations

The Challenge: Muslim women often experience exclusion, bias, and spiritual distress in workplaces that lack cultural safety, religious accommodations, and inclusive leadership practices.
Why It Matters for Employers: Culturally safe workplaces improve employee retention, wellbeing, and innovation—and are legally required to accommodate religious practices under Canadian human rights law.
What Employers Should Do:

- Create and implement clear policies on **religious accommodations**
- Provide **ongoing training on cultural safety, unconscious bias, and gendered Islamophobia** to employees, management, and Board members.
- **Support ERGs** and actively engage with Muslim women to inform inclusive policies.
- **Diversify leadership and find champions** within management and the Board to provide strategic guidance and model inclusive work culture
- Establish **safe and confidential feedback channels**, **grievance mechanisms**, and conduct **regular DEI audits** to ensure accountability.

1. SAP Canada – Ramadan Support Initiative

SAP is a global software company with a major Canadian presence. It is known for integrating employee feedback into workplace culture.[10]

Case
SAP recognized that Muslim employees felt unseen during Ramadan and other religious observances. There were few prayer accommodations, and many managers lacked understanding of fasting, scheduling preferences, and inclusive allyship practices.

Initiatives
SAP Canada launched an internal education campaign supported by its Muslim Employee Network. They created a Ramadan Allyship Guide for non-Muslim colleagues, built prayer and foot-washing facilities in key offices, and integrated awareness events into staff communications. Leadership also emphasized support during team check-ins and client-facing meetings.

Results
Muslim employees reported higher morale, and SAP's inclusive practices received external recognition. By embedding faith-inclusive support and listening to lived experiences, SAP created a safer, more culturally responsive workplace.

2. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) – Dress Code Inclusion

The RCMP is Canada's national police force and a major public-sector employer. It has a long history of uniform tradition.[11]

Case
The standard dress code policy did not allow Muslim women to wear the hijab, creating a significant barrier to recruitment and retention. This exclusion discouraged applicants and conflicted with Canada's broader values of religious freedom.

Initiatives
In 2016, the RCMP formally amended its uniform policy to permit the hijab as part of official attire. This followed earlier efforts to accommodate turbans for Sikh officers and came after sustained consultation with communities and legal experts.

Results
The change made the RCMP more accessible to Muslim women and sent a strong message about

[10] Seramount. (2023). *How SAP supports Muslim employees during Ramadan*. Retrieved from https://seramount.com/resources/navigating-ramadan-and-eid-al-fitr-in-the-workplace/

[11] Guardian staff reporter. (2016, August 24). *Royal Canadian Mounted Police allows Muslim officers to wear hijab*. The Guardian; The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/aug/24/canada-mounted-police-muslim-women-hijab

inclusion in public service. By modernizing its policies, the RCMP promoted cultural safety through structural reform.

3. Intuit Canada – Religious Accommodations

Intuit is a financial software company with offices in Toronto and across North America. It employs a diverse workforce, including many practicing Muslims.[12]

Case
The company previously lacked appropriate prayer facilities and broader awareness of Muslim employee needs, particularly during Ramadan and Eid. Employees expressed concerns about feeling invisible and unsupported in managing their religious practices at work.

Initiatives
Intuit partnered with its Intuit Muslim Awareness Network (IMAN) to improve inclusion. It built gender-specific prayer rooms with ablution stations and launched educational sessions to help colleagues understand fasting, prayer times, and allyship behaviors. These initiatives were reinforced by visible leadership support and employee storytelling.

Results
Muslim employees reported higher satisfaction, and Intuit earned recognition for inclusive workplace design. By combining infrastructure, policy, and culture change, Intuit advanced religious equity and cultural safety.

[12] Intuit Blog Team. (2023). *Building inclusion: Empowering confidence through religious accommodations*. https://www.intuit.com/blog/life-at-intuit/building-inclusion-empowering-confidence-through-religious-accommodations

WORKSHOP MODULE & FACILITATOR GUIDE

Module 4: Cultural Safety and Religious Accommodation

This facilitator guide is based on ***Module 4: Cultural Safety and Religious Accommodation***. The facilitator guide draws on adult learning pedagogies. Based on the learning objectives listed below – a sample 2-hour workshop agenda will be presented in a tabulated format. Additionally, a 'menu' of activities will be provided where facilitators can pick and choose different activities depending on their target audience. CCMW encourages you to be flexible and to adapt these materials to meet the needs of participants as well as the budget and logistical realities of each workshop setting.

Learning Objectives:

- **Define cultural safety and religious accommodation through an intersectional equity lens.**
- **Analyze barriers faced by Muslim women in workplace inclusion and career progression.**
- **Apply strategies that transform performative inclusion into transformative cultural safety.**
- **Design policies and practices using participatory visual tools to map change pathways.**
- **Build empathy, feedback channels, and commitment to continuous improvement.**

Time: 6-7 hours including a 1-hour lunch break

Ideal Participants: HR leaders, senior managers, DEI professionals, team leaders, and frontline supervisors.

The following materials should be distributed to the audience at the start of the workshop:

1. **Executive Summary of the ASPIRE Study**
2. **Module 4 of the Employer Toolkit**
3. **ASPIRE Study Infographic: Mental Health Consequences of Poor Working Conditions on Canadian Muslim Women**
4. **ASPIRE Study Infographic: Everyday Experiences on the Job**

Sample agenda

Here is a sample agenda for a **2-hour** workshop. Remember, you can pick and choose from the different activities provided in this module instead:

Agenda	Time	Resources
Welcome and Icebreaker	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Review Workshop Objectives	5 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Participants share values and ground rules Establish a parking lot	10 minutes	PowerPoint slide or flip chart
Module Overview:	10 minutes	PowerPoint slides

Introductory slides about ASPIRE Study Key Statistics from study related to Module 1 Overview of Module 1 of Employer Toolkit		Handout: ASPIRE Study Infographics (Mental Health and Everyday Experiences)
Activity 2: Workplace mapping	30 minutes	PowerPoint slides, flip charts, markers Handout: blank floorplans Handout: Key strategy
Break	10 minutes	
Activity 2 (continues): Group presentations	30 minutes	
Workshop Evaluation	5 minutes	
Closing Thoughts and Review Parking Lot	10 minutes	Flip Chart

Ice breakers:

1. Begin by inviting participants to draw a quick image or symbol that represents a 'safe space' for them within their workplaces. If a participant cannot think of a safe space within their workplace, ask them to draw an 'x'. Ask 1-2 participants to share their reflection about their visual metaphor. Ask at least one person who drew an 'x' to share about their reflection.
2. Two truths and a lie: Ask a few participants to share two things about them that are true and one that is a lie. The rest of the group will guess which is the lie.
3. Ask participants to complete either one of the following statements: 'The workplace policy I would like to update as a Muslim woman would be…."
4. Ask participants: If you could change something about yourself or your appearance that you feel hinders you at the workplace, what would it be? Elaborate.

Parking Lot:

At the beginning of the workshop, set aside a flipchart or board with the title "Parking Lot". Use this space throughout the workshop to list questions or topics that do not get addressed during the workshop. After the workshop, the facilitator should provide answers to the questions through an agreed upon form of communication (email, follow-up meeting, communique, etc.).

MENU OF ACTIVITIES:

These are different activities you can choose from, depending on your organization's priorities.

Activity 1: Understanding the Barriers – Lived Realities of Muslim Women (40 minutes)

Objective:

- Deepen understanding of cultural barriers in the workplace by grounding the conversation in data and testimony.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Share ASPIRE Study data on underemployment, exclusion from networks, inadequate accommodations, and sectoral challenges (in PPT and infographics). (10 minutes)
2. Activity: Testimony Tapestry (10 minutes):
    - Post 4–5 quotes from the ASPIRE Study around the room.
    - Participants rotate and annotate with sticky notes:
        - "What emotion does this evoke?"
        - "How might your workplace contribute to this dynamic?"
    - Group debrief: what themes emerged? (20 minutes)

Handout for Activity 1
Quotes from the ASPIRE Study report for the Testimony Tapestry.

1. "No matter how much I worked, they saw someone who didn't fit." (p. 31)
2. "I was not permitted to take my meal break at sunset while fasting… Instead, I had to eat after my shift was over." (p. 31)
3. "Despite being overqualified, I was told I should volunteer instead of being hired." (p. 85)
4. "They do the training initiatives, but people who have privilege, well they don't want to let it go. So then, the trainings aren't very effective." (p. 99)
5. "Once, I joined a work training program with 35 people, and I was the only one who wasn't [of the same ethnic group as the rest]. Later, they all moved on to the next round, but I didn't." (p. 86)

Activity 2: Mapping Cultural Safety Gaps (60 minutes)

Objectives:

- Analyze current workplace environments using participatory visual tools.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Activity – Workplace Mapping (30 minutes)
    - Split participants into groups of 3-4
    - Provide blank floor plans[1] or symbolic workplace layouts for each group.
    - Groups map where inclusion is felt vs. where exclusion happens for Muslim women (e.g., no prayer space, social events with alcohol, inaccessible quiet rooms).
    - Use different colored markers to mark unsafe vs. inclusive zones.
    - Present the 'key inclusive strategies and solutions' discussed in module 4 of the employer toolkit. Each group is then provided with one 'key inclusive strategy or solution.'
2. Group Presentations: Teams share findings and brainstorm (30 minutes)

[1] There are many blank floor plan templates available online through web search. Any 3-4 different types can be downloaded and printed for this exercise.

- What are 3 quick wins?
- What are 2 systemic changes needed?
- How have you applied your 'key inclusive strategy or solution'?

Activity 3: Case Study Carousel – From Policy to Practice (60 minutes)

Objectives:

- Learn from real-world scenarios and generate practical recommendations.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. World Café: Set up 3 stations (3 case studies, 10 minutes each)
    a. SAP Canada: Ramadan Support Initiative
    b. Intuit Canada: Religious Accommodations
    c. Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP): Dress Code Inclusion
2. Each group rotates through each station every 10 minutes and jots down group reflections answering these 3 questions:
    - What was done well?
    - What could be improved?
    - How would you adapt this to your context to improve cultural safety for Muslim women employees?
3. At the end, each group presents their reflection on each of the case studies (20 minutes)

Activity 4: Role-Play – Navigating Accommodation Requests (45 minutes)

Objective:

- Practice respectful engagement and policy application.

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Scenario: A Muslim woman requests flexibility during Ramadan and a private prayer space.
   In triads: One plays the employee, one the manager, and one the observer.
    - Round 1: No preparation—react naturally.
    - Round 2: Apply inclusive strategies (from toolkit and previous sessions).
2. Debrief:
    - What assumptions came up?
    - How did empathy shift response?
    - What support is needed to improve reactions?

Activity 5: Feedback system design (40 minutes)

Objective: Apply learning to design a core HR practice – a feedback system for cultural accommodation and anti-racism and DEI standards

Instructions for facilitators:

1. Activity: Feedback blueprint pairs. In pairs, participants quickly sketch a basic feedback system on a sticky note or worksheet. (15 minutes)
2. They must address five essential questions:
    - How will feedback be collected confidentially?
    - Who will oversee the system and ensure follow-up?
    - What improvements or actions should result from the feedback?
    - What would make a Muslim woman feel safe enough to speak up?
    - How can leadership signal that feedback will lead to action—not punishment?

Encourage participants to visualize their system with boxes/arrows (e.g., a flowchart from input to action).

3. Debrief (25 minutes). Invite 2–3 pairs to share their design highlights. Emphasize:
    - The importance of confidentiality and cultural sensitivity in feedback collection.
    - Building in follow-through and communication loops to reinforce trust.

Glossary of Key Terms

Accessibility
Designing inclusive environments, systems, and services to be usable by all individuals, proactively removing barriers to ensure that people are not excluded.

Accommodation
Modifying workplace policies, rules, or environments to support employees' religious, health, or caregiving needs, such as providing prayer spaces or flexible hours.

Anti-racism
Taking deliberate steps to challenge and eliminate racism in all forms, including policies, behaviors, and institutional practices.

Bias (Unconscious/Implicit)
Unintentional attitudes or stereotypes that influence decisions and behaviors without the individual's awareness, often affecting perceptions of others unfairly.

Creed
A system of religious belief and practice that may include spiritual observances and rituals, which are protected under human rights legislation.

Cultural Safety
Creating a respectful, discrimination-free space where individuals' cultural identities and rights are acknowledged and protected.

Disability
A condition, physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory that, when interacting with barriers, limits full participation in society. Disabilities can be visible or invisible, permanent or temporary. Also called special needs.

Diversity
The presence of a wide range of identities, including culture, race, gender, age, religion, ability, and more, within a group or society.

Discrimination
Unfair or unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, religion, gender, or disability. It can be intentional or unintentional and often results from biased rules or practices.

Employment Equity
Policies and practices that remove barriers and improve workplace representation for groups historically excluded from employment, such as women, Indigenous Peoples, racialized individuals, and persons with disabilities.

Equity
Providing fair treatment by recognizing that different individuals may need different resources and supports to succeed, due to systemic barriers.

Glass Ceiling
An invisible barrier that prevents women or marginalized individuals from advancing to higher positions in their careers, despite qualifications.

Glass Cliff
The tendency to place women or marginalized leaders in high-risk leadership roles during periods of crisis, where failure is more likely.

Hijab
Arabic word, means “curtain” or “veil”. It is used for a headscarf, worn by many Muslim women that covers the hair and neck, symbolizing modesty and religious identity.

Islamophobia
Prejudice, fear, or hostility directed toward individual Muslims or followers of Islam in general. It can manifest through stereotyping, profiling, or discriminatory policies at both individual and institutional levels.

Inclusion
Creating an environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and able to fully participate. Inclusion goes beyond diversity by ensuring real engagement and belonging.

Inclusive Workplace
A workplace where all employees are treated with dignity, have equitable access to opportunities, and feel empowered to contribute fully without barriers.

Inclusive Recruitment
Hiring practices that actively eliminate bias and attract diverse applicants by making every stage of the recruitment process fair and accessible.

Intersectionality
A framework for understanding how multiple aspects of a person’s identity—such as race, gender, class, and religion—interact to create unique experiences of discrimination and privilege. Crenshaw, K. (1989). Coined the term.

Mentorship
Mentoring is a supportive relationship where a more experienced person guides someone less experienced in their personal and professional growth. It can be formal or informal and often includes career advice, skill-building, networking, and navigating workplace culture.

Niqab or Naqab
Arabic word, A veil worn by some Muslim women in public, covering all of the face apart from the eyes.

Racism
Unjust treatment or prejudice based on race or ethnicity. It can be expressed individually or through systemic policies and practices that disadvantage racialized groups.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is when a senior person actively uses their influence and connections to support an employee's career advancement. Sponsors recommend them for promotions, key projects, and leadership opportunities, and speak about their strengths in decision-making spaces.

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Annex 1

Diversity-Focused Recruitment Channels

A. Diversity-Focused Recruitment Channels

Name	Website	Contact
Charity Village	https://charityvillage.com/ CharityVillage® is a career resource to over 170,000 charitable and nonprofit organizations across Canada. We offer paid job postings and free volunteer listings as well as nonprofit & charitable sector resources and eLearning courses.	Through the Contact Us page on the website. https://charityvillage.com/contact-us/ help@charityvillage.com 1-800-610-8134
Eluta.ca Diversity Employers	https://www.eluta.ca Eluta.ca is a job search engine that specializes in finding new jobs directly from employer websites. Our site is managed by the Canada's Top 100 Employers project and indexes more direct-employer jobs than any other search engine in Canada. Our site launched on June 8, 2006 and is used by over 7 million unique visitors from Canada each year.	Mediacorp Canada Inc. 7 St. Thomas Street Suite 501 Toronto, ON, Canada M5S 2B7 Tel. 416-964-6069 Fax 647-436-7186 https://www.eluta.ca/contact
Equitek Employment Equity Posting Service	https://www.equitek.ca **Equitek Employment Equity Solutions** has over 2 decades of experience connecting diverse job seekers with professional opportunities. While we help hiring organizations enhance their Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Outreach Strategy to meet their hiring needs, we also have a National proactive Outreach Network of community-based job counsellors, job coaches and mentors working on behalf of diverse talent in these underrepresented demographics.	508 – 639 Dupont Street Toronto, Ontario, M6G 1Z4 416 651-4904 https://equitek.ca/about-us/ William Stewart william.stewart@equitek.ca

	We offer an effective way to liaise job seekers directly with employers who want to hire.	
Glassdoor	https://www.glassdoor.com Wherever you are on your career journey, Glassdoor makes it easier for workers and companies to find the perfect match.	Through Contact Us page on website
HireDiverse.ca	https://www.hirediverse.ca/ Reach diverse candidates across Canada through intentional outreach and inclusive messaging. Posting jobs with HireDiverse highlights your organization's ongoing commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion.	337 Rothesay Avenue, Suite 125 Saint John, NB E2J 2C3 hi@hirediverse.ca https://www.hirediverse.ca/contact
Indeed.com	https://ca.indeed.com/ At Indeed, we are committed to making a positive impact on society by connecting people to better work to create better lives. With the power of our platform and our people, and in partnership with organizations that share our values, we aim to bring about a future of work that is equitable and inclusive.	Contact Support page on website
Indigenous Careers	https://indigenouscareers.org Indigenous Careers is a tool to connect Indigenous jobseekers and inclusive employers. With increasing numbers of employers engaging in Indigenous inclusion and the business case to advance First Nations, Métis and Inuit employees, the Indigenous Careers platform is a growing online community for employers to connect with Canada's future workforce.	1-866-711-5091 1-306-956-5360 contact.us@indigenousworks.ca
Jobs for New Canadians	https://www.workopolis.com/ Workopolis is a job board that was founded in 1999 and provides job services to Canadians in both French and English. For over 15 years, Workopolis has toiled to connect millions of Canadians with their dream job.	https://workopolis.zendesk.com/hc/en-us/requests/new
Leading Talent	Canada's first dedicated career portal for women. Our mission is to advance	

	women into management, leadership, and strategic positions to make a positive impact in women's lives and help employers that are committed to diversity.	https://leadingtalent.ca/
Pride at Work Canada	https://prideatwork.ca Through dialogue, education and thought leadership, Pride at Work Canada/Fierté au travail Canada empowers Canadian employers to build workplaces that celebrate all employees regardless of gender expression, gender identity, and sexual orientation. Our learning, networking and community events happen across the country, advising, celebrating and connecting the most inclusive Canadian employers	**Address:** 192 Spadina Ave, Suite 312 Toronto, ON M5T 2C2 416-309-8410 info@prideatwork.ca
WorkInNonProfits.ca	https://workinnonprofits.ca WorkInNonProfits.ca is committed to help build and strengthen Canada's non-profit sector by connecting non-profits across the country with job seekers and volunteers. WorkInNonProfits.ca is based in Vancouver, BC and has always operated 100% virtually.	Vancouver, BC Phone: Not listed By contact us page.

B. Muslim Association/Community-Based Outreach Platforms

Name	Website & Province(s) / City	Contact Details
Muslim Association of Canada (MAC)	https://macnet.ca They have Newsletters through which jobs can be shared.	2380 Speakman Drive, Mississauga, Canada, L5K 1B4 (905)822-2626 mac@macnet.ca
SacredHand Canada (SHC)	Ontario (Mississauga) https://sacredhandcanada.com/	5004 Timberlea Blvd, Units 26–29, Mississauga, ON L4W 2S6 (905) 624-0333 Info@SacredHandCanada.com2
ISNA Canada	Ontario (Mississauga) https://www.isnacanada.com/	2200 South Sheridan Way, Mississauga, ON L5J 2M4 905-403-8406

Muslim Advisory Council of Canada	Ontario (Oakville) https://www.muslimadvisory.ca/	407 Iroquois Shore Rd, Unit 8, Suite 7, Oakville, ON L6H 1M3 info@muslimadvisory.ca
Islamic Foundation of Toronto	Ontario (Scarborough) https://www.islamicfoundation.ca/	441 Nugget Ave, Scarborough, ON M1S 5E1 416-321-0909 / 416-321-1995 info@islamicfoundation.ca
The BC Muslim Association – Women's Chapter	British Columbia (Vancouver) https://thebcma.com/Women.aspx	12300 Blundell Rd Richmond, BC, V6W 1B3 (604)270-2522 womeninfo@thebcma.com fax:604-244-9750
Muslim Community of Quebec (MCQ)	Quebec (Saint-Laurent) https://muslimcommunityofquebec.ca/	7445 Chester Avenue. Montreal, Quebec, Canada, H4V 1M4 Tel.:514-484-2967 Fax:514-486 -3802 Info@MuslimCommunityOfQuebec.ca
Muslim Community of Edmonton (MCE) Mosque	Alberta (Edmonton) https://www.mcemosque.com/	10721 86 Ave NW, Edmonton, AB T6E 2M8 (780) 432-0208 mce@mcemosque.com
Al Rashid Mosque	Alberta (Edmonton) https://alrashidmosque.ca/	5 57 St NW, Edmonton, AB T5A 3W6 (780) 451-6694
Calgary Islamic Centre (CICSW)	Alberta (Calgary) https://cicsw.ca/	5615 14 Ave SW, Calgary, AB T3H 2E8 (403) 242-1637 info@cicsw.ca
Islamic Information Society of Calgary (IISC)	Alberta (Calgary) https://www.iisc.ca/	PO Box 64295, Thorncliffe PO, Calgary, AB T2K 6J7 (403) 261-7601 info@iisc.ca
Islamic Association of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon)	Saskatchewan (Saskatoon) https://islamiccenter.sk.ca/	222 Copland Crescent, Saskatoon, SK, S7H 2Z5, Canada. +1 306-665-6424 info@islamiccenter.sk.ca

C. Women's Associations

Name	Website	Contact Details
Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)	https://ccmw.com	P.O. Box 73509, RPO Wychwood Toronto, ON M6C 4A7 Canada 416-999-6059 info@ccmw.com
Women's Executive Network (WXN)	https://wxnetwork.com	WXN - Women's Executive Network 150 King Street West Toronto, ON, M5H 1J9 1-416-361-1475 Contact Us page on the website.
Canadian Women's Foundation	https://canadianwomen.org	National Office: 1920 Yonge St., Suite 302, Toronto, Ontario M4S 3E2 1-866-293-4483 info@canadianwomen.org

Afghan Women's Network	https://afghanwomen.org/	150 Consumers Road, unit 203 North York, ON M2J 1P9 (416) 588-3585 receptionhd@afghanwomen.org
South Asian Women's Community Centre	https://sawcc-ccfsa.ca	1035 Rachel St East, 3rd Floor Montreal, QC H2J 2J5 +1 514-528-8812 sawcc@sawcc-ccfsa.ca
Montreal Council of Women	https://montrealcouncilofwomen.ca/	Montreal Council of Women P.O. Box 77706, BP St-Mathieu Montréal, QC H3H 0A4 mcwInformation@gmail.com
Fédération des Femmes du Québec (FFQ)	https://ffq.qc.ca	469, Rue Jean-Talon Ouest, bureau 319 Montréal, Québec H3N1R4 514-876-0166 info@ffq.qc.ca
NISA Foundation	https://www.nisafoundation.ca/	1 - 10318 Whalley Blvd Surrey, BC V3T 4H4 Canada +1 888 711 6472 (NISA) info@nisafoundation.ca

D. Newcomers Employment Centres

Regional/Provincial Organizations

Name	Services Provided	Muslim Women Support	Website and Contact Details
Alberta'			
Centre for Newcomers	Settlement, employment, EAL, childcare	Multicultural, trauma-aware	https://centrefornewcomers.ca 403-569-3325
CIWA	Immigrant women's settlement & employment	Dedicated to women, culturally responsive	https://ciwa-online.com 403-444-1758
Trellis Society	Legal aid, housing, and employment	Trauma-informed	https://growwithtrellis.ca 403-930-3370
ISFFA (Islamic Family & Social Services Association)	Settlement support, casework, food security, and newcomer aid.	Culturally competent, supports Muslim women and families	https://www.islamicfamily.ca 780-900-2777
MCN (Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers)	Language, employment, settlement, youth, women's programs.	Inclusive programs with some cultural-linguistic matching	https://newcomercentre.com 780-424-7709 780-424-7736
British Columbia			
MOSAIC	Settlement, employment, counselling	Multi-ethnic, gender-sensitive	https://mosaicbc.org 604-254-9626

DIVERSEcity	Trauma counselling, housing, and employment	Arabic/Punjabi interpreters	https://www.dcrs.ca 604-547-1202
ISSofBC	Settlement, language, employment, peer support, and Newcomer women's support	Inclusive and accessible	https://issbc.org 604-684-2561
Collingwood NH	Community settlement services	Inclusive and accessible	https://www.cnh.bc.ca 604-435-0323
S.U.C.C.E.S.S.	Language, family support, housing, employment, counselling	Cultural and language-matched programs available	https://successbc.ca 604-684-1628 info@success.bc.ca
Manitoba			
MANSO	Support for orgs, language/employment services	Coordinates culturally competent services	https://mansomanitoba.ca (204) 272-0872
Westman Immigrant Services	Employment, language, settlement services	Multi-language	https://westmanimmigrantservices.ca/ 204-727-6031 info@westmanimmigrantservices.ca
New Brunswick			
MCAF	Employment, language, and settlement services	Community inclusive	https://mcaf.nb.ca/en/ (506) 454-8292
Saint John Newcomers Centre	Orientation, planning, and conversation circles	Community inclusive	https://sjnewcomers.ca 506-642-4242
Newfoundland and Labrador			
Association of New Canadians (ANC)	Settlement, employment, wellness, language	Diverse newcomer support	https://ancnl.ca/ (709) 722-9680 information@ancnl.ca
Nova Scotia			
ISANS	Settlement, employment, wellness	Multilingual, newcomer-sensitive	https://isans.ca 902-423-3607
Halifax Refugee Clinic	Legal & refugee services	Muslim refugee women supported	https://halifaxrefugeeclinic.org 902-422-6736
YMCA-YWCA Halifax	Settlement, EAL, employment	Family-centred	https://ymcahfx.ca Web form
Ontario			
Newcomer Women's Services	ESL, legal help, citizenship, employment	Women-focused	https://newcomerwomen.org 647-224-1371
Settlement.Org (OCASI)	Ontario-based multilingual guides & webinars for newcomers.	Multilingual, inclusive	https://settlement.org Web form
COSTI Immigrant Services	Settlement, employment, housing, and counselling services.	Includes programs for Muslim women, Islamophobia response	https://costi.org 416-244-7714 info@costi.org
CICS	Settlement, family & youth programs	Inclusive, multilingual	https://www.cicscanada.com41 6-293-4565

Arab Community Centre	Settlement, youth, women's programming	Arab & Muslim newcomers	https://acctonline.ca 416-750-9600
TNO – The Neighbourhood Organization	Services: Settlement, employment, housing, youth and women-focused counselling	Multilingual, culturally relevant programming for Muslim communities	https://tno-toronto.org 1-855-421-3054 info@tno-toronto.org
Immigrant Women Services Ottawa	Settlement, crisis counselling, legal advocacy for immigrant women	Designed for women; Muslim clients welcome and supported	https://immigrantwomenservices.com 613-729-3145 F:613-729-9308 infomail@iwso.ca
Prince Edward Island			
IRSA PEI	Translation, pre/post arrival support	Supports newcomers	https://irsapei.ca 902-628-6009
Quebec			
Women's Centre of Montréal	Settlement, French courses, workshops	Inclusive of Muslim women	https://centredesfemmesdemtl.org 514 842-6652 514 842-4780
Amal – Centre for Women	Counselling and services for Muslim women	Specific to Muslim women	https://www.amalwomencenter.ca/ (514) 855-0330
Saskatchewan			
Sask Intercultural Association	Free settlement support	Inclusive	https://saskintercultural.org (306) 978-1818
Newcomer Gateways	Orientation, referrals	Rural newcomer support	https://battlefordsimmigration.ca 306-446-0622 1-877-494-0622
Northwest Territories			
CDETNO	Needs assessment, translation	Bilingual support	https://cdetno.com/en/ 867-873-5962 1-866-849-9139
Nunavut			
Carrefour Nunavut	Integration, referrals	Inuktitut & English	https://carrefournunavut.ca/en 867-979-2800
Yukon			
Multicultural Centre Yukon	Employment, housing, and orientation	Supports Muslim/diverse groups	https://mcyukon.com 1-867-667-6205

E. Ethnic Media & Faith-Based Channels for Employment Messaging

Media Type	Channel	Website	Reach / Focus
Newsprint	Salam Toronto	https://salamtoronto.ca	Persian/English weekly in GTA
Classifieds	MuslimLink.ca	https://muslimlink.ca	Employment board for Muslim professionals

TV	Natyf TV	https://natyf.com/	French-language multicultural programming in Quebec
Online TV	Abu Dhabi TV (Canada)	http://ethnicchannels.com/channels/abudhabi.php	An Arabic-language channel, available nationally
Radio – Ontario	Canadian Islamic Broadcasting Network	https://www.radioislam.ca/	National online Islamic radio show
Radio – Montreal	Middle East Radio - Montreal, QC	https://meradio.ca/	Arabic/Multilingual station in the Montreal region
Radio – Windsor/Detroit	CINA-FM	https://cinafm.com	Multilingual station with Arabic programming
Online Ad Network	Muslim Ad Network	https://www.linkedin.com/company/muslim-ad-network	Digital ads targeting Muslim consumers
South Asian Radio – GTA	Radio Humsafar	http://radiohumsafar.com	AM station with multilingual South Asian programming

F. Sample of an Employment Equity Statement to be included in job postings

- Adapted from Oxfam Canada's employment equity statement
- Consider making your DEI and related policies and frameworks publicly available and linking to them.

As an organization and as individuals, we stand against all systems of oppression, violence, and hate. We stand for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within our organization and society at large, guided by our DEI policy, Strategic Framework, and Anti-Harassment Policy.

We prioritize creating a compassionate, inclusive workplace where everyone feels valued and connected. We are especially eager to hear from women and gender non-conforming individuals, Indigenous peoples, Black and racialized communities, 2SLGBTQI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, people of all faiths, immigrants to Canada, and others from underrepresented groups.

If you require adaptive measures during any stage of the recruitment process, please notify us at XXXX. We are committed to providing accommodations to meet your needs, according to our accommodation policy for persons with disabilities. The job posting is available in alternate formats.

Annex 2
DEI & Cultural Safety Trainers – Canada

Name	Services Provided	Website	Contact Details
All Things Equitable Inc.	DEI strategy, inclusive leadership coaching, policy development	https://allthingsequitable.ca	contact via form janelle@allthingsequitable.ca
Bhasin Consulting Inc.	Empathy, belonging & psychological safety training; webinars	https://bhasinconsulting.com	https://bhasinconsulting.com/contact-us/
Canadian Council of Muslim Women (CCMW)	Anti-Islamophobia & anti-racism workshops; WISH Project; cultural sensitivity training; legal-services coordination	https://ccmw.com	P.O. Box 73509, RPO Wychwood, Toronto, ON M6C 4A7 Phone: 416-999-6059 Email: info@ccmw.com
Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)	National DEI training, toolkits, equity audits, webinars	https://ccdi.ca	2 Carlton St, Suite 820, Toronto, ON M5B 1J3 Phone: 1-866-814-6111
Canadian Diversity Initiative	DEI trainings offered – Reducing Unconscious Bias, including in hiring; Respect and Inclusion in the Workplace	https://candiversity.com/resources/	Book a meeting: https://candiversity.com/contact/ Or email: admin@candiversity.com
Canadian Equality Consulting	Equity & inclusion strategy; live workshops; micro-learning; speaking engagements	https://canadianequality.ca	Canadian Equality Consulting Calgary, Edmonton Vancouver, Toronto Montréal hello@canadianequality.ca 780-399-8989
CultureAlly	Custom DEI training, ERG support, culture-strategy development	https://cultureally.com	https://www.cultureally.com/contact
Diversity Institute (TMU)	Provide tailored training in synchronous and asynchronous formats, Evidence-based diversity research, customized DEI strategies, newcomer entrepreneurship, and Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub	https://torontomu.ca/diversity	350 Victoria St, Toronto, ON M5B 2K3 Phone: 416-979-5000 Email: diversityinstitute@torontomu.ca
MT Consulting Group (Basecamp DEI)	DEI training, fractional Chief DEI Officer services, Diversity Calendar and tools	https://mtconsultinggroup.ca	Edmonton, AB, Canada hello@mtconsultinggroup.ca (780) 710-5511

Annex 3

Additional Employer DEI Toolkits and Resources

Diversity Institute

Organizational Diversity Assessment Tool

Gender, Diversity and Discrimination in the Workplace

Industry-specific reports (published in 2024):

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Banking Sector

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in the Communications Sector

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the Transportation Sector

Best Practices for Advancing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in Manufacturing

Toolkits by Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion (CCDI)

Creating a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy : English | French

Diversity, equity, and inclusion councils and committees : English | French

Employee resource groups – A toolkit for creating and sustaining effective ERGs

- English | French

Inclusive hiring practices: Toolkit for transforming hiring practices to attract and retain diverse talent : English | French

Making the case for diversity, equity, and inclusion : English | French

Employer Success Stories

CDI – Visit this webpage

UN Global Compact Network Canada: Leading the Way – Portraits of Inclusive Leadership – here

Courses

The interactive modules on the IRIPI website cover several DEI topics

Annex 4

ASPIRE ORGANIZATIONAL SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL

Work individually or with your group members. Let each member read and answer.

Yes | Somewhat | No for each question.

Modules	Statement	Yes	Somewhat	No
M1: Talent Attraction	We use standardized selection processes that promote fair, equitable, bias-free hiring.			
	Our hiring team is trained to reduce bias in recruitment processes.			
	Our branding and job descriptions reflect our DEI commitments and how we value diverse talent.			
	We recognize and value international education and experience.			
	We have partnerships with newcomer or Muslim-led employment orgs, inclusive recruiters and other platforms that reach diverse communities.			
M2: Onboarding	We hold workplace trainings on cultural safety with staff leading onboarding processes and new hires.			
	New hires are introduced to Employee Resource Groups, mentors, and/or other support networks.			
	We provide orientation on religious accommodations and cultural safety, including DEI commitments and expectations.			
	We designate onboarding support staff for new hires.			
	We have feedback channels to evaluate onboarding processes and make improvements.			
M3: Equitable Promotion	We have promotion criteria and policies that are transparent and applied equitably to reduce subjective biases and encourage career advancement for all employees.			

	We train hiring teams in bias-free promotion strategies and educate them on unconscious bias and how to overcome it.			
	We facilitate employee access to mentorship, sponsorship, and leadership programs.			
	We have adopted performance evaluation processes that mitigate subjective biases and trained managers accordingly.			
	We conduct diversity audits to monitor and track progress on diversity targets, and improve strategies to address gaps.			
M4: Cultural Safety	We offer prayer spaces, flexible scheduling, and dress codes for religious observances.			
	All staff and management receive anti-racism, unconscious bias, and cultural safety training and socialized on related policies.			
	Muslim women and other diverse employees have access to Employee Resource Groups or other affinity groups for support.			
	We ensure that important meetings and social networks accommodate Muslim employees (e.g. halal food, sober events, not during Ramadan)			
	We have a clear, confidential system for reporting discrimination that protects employees from reprisal.			

Scoring:

For each question, assign a score:

- **0 = No**
- **1 = Partial**
- **2 = Yes**

Give scores and calculate	**Yes (2)**	**Somewhat (1)**	**No (0)**
M1			
M2			
M3			
M4			
Overall			

How to interpret your results?

Overall Assessment:

Total Score (out of 40)	Assessment Level	What This Means
0–15	Foundational	You're just beginning. Start with Module 1 and work through each stage in sequence.
15–28	Developing	You have strong intentions—use this toolkit to close gaps and systematize practices.
28–40	Advanced	Great progress! Continue reinforcing efforts and revisit modules to grow further.

Module-Wise Score Interpretation

Module	Max Score	Score Range	Assessment Level	What This Means
Module 1: Talent Attraction & Recruitment	10	0–4	Foundational	Begin embedding inclusive recruitment strategies and community outreach practices.
		5–7	Developing	Some inclusive practices are in place, review tools for bias reduction and outreach.
		8–10	Advanced	Strong practices, focus on consistency and continuous improvement.
Module 2: Onboarding & Integration	10	0–4	Foundational	Enhance onboarding to support belonging and cultural safety from day one.

		5–7	Developing	Foundations exist, deepen support structures and employee feedback processes.
		8–10	Advanced	Onboarding is inclusive, continue to refine and check for gaps.
Module 3: Equitable Promotion & Leadership Development	10	0–4	Foundational	Transparent promotions and sponsorship are needed to retain Muslim women.
		5-7	Developing	Efforts exist, make them more consistent and data-informed.
		8-10	Advanced	Inclusive leadership development is underway, expand and evaluate impact.
Module 4: Cultural Safety & Religious Accommodation	10	0–4	Foundational	Build awareness and policy support for cultural and religious needs.
		5–7	Developing	Good start, prioritize practical accommodations and DEI training.
		8–10	Advanced	Your workplace supports inclusion—review and adjust as needed.

What to Do Next

Based on your evaluation, identify which modules align with your lowest scores or most urgent needs. This toolkit is not linear—return to modules as your organization evolves. Let your self-assessment guide an ongoing commitment to equity, inclusion, and culturally safe workplaces for Muslim women.

All the best.

CHAMPIONING CANADIAN MUSLIM WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

Employer-Facing Toolkit for Building Culturally Safe and Equitable Workplaces for Canadian Muslim Women

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