



equal voice   
à voix égales

# LEAD.CONNECT. COMPETE. GOVERN.

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A Strategic Plan for Gender Parity  
in Canadian Politics 2025-2030

# INTRODUCTION

*Politics is shifting. Change and uncertainty define this moment, but they also create opportunities. As we look ahead, we ask ourselves: how do we best advance our vision and mission in this evolving landscape?*

Canada ranks 67th globally in gender representation at the federal level. After years of rising women's representation in the House of Commons, progress has now stalled at 30 per cent women Members of Parliament. This reminds us that progress is not linear, nor is it guaranteed. Local, provincial, territorial, and Indigenous governments continue to make gains and show the complexity involved in creating real, meaningful change. Now is the time to challenge assumptions, analyze data, and drive innovative, tangible solutions.

The obstacles are clear. Harassment and threats against elected leaders are rising, disproportionately impacting women and particularly women of visible minorities. Women are opting out of political work for various reasons, ranging from concerns over the impact on their families, to feeling unqualified or unwelcome in politics. Disengagement is growing—Canadians express concerns about institutional trust, misinformation, foreign influence, and declining voter participation. A mental health crisis is affecting every community and workplace, including political leaders and staff. AI and technology are changing the way we interact, communicate, and work at an exponentially rapid pace.

While we don't have all the answers, we know there are ways to support women in politics. Experience has shown that there is no one pathway to public office, with 58 per cent of women being more interested in getting involved at the local level. Further, knowledge, training, and network building serve as critical barrier breakers for women who are interested in politics. Our charitable status and mission reflect this focus.

**This strategic plan pushes Equal Voice to deepen its local and community engagement—meeting women where they are and better understanding where they want to go.**

This work will not be easy, but moments of uncertainty can provide opportunities to shape a better future. We will focus on what is within our control, taking pragmatic steps to drive real, lasting change. We are not waiting for perfect conditions. We know progress outpaces perfection. With this in mind, we are moving forward, learning, and adapting as we go.



Women and gender-diverse individuals don't come to Equal Voice to be judged for their political beliefs—they come to be accepted, to learn, and to connect with others who may not think like them, but who share a common goal of advancing gender parity in Canadian politics.



In 2024 and 2025, we consulted with various stakeholders, volunteers, supporters, and partners, which we expand on in the “What We Heard” section of this plan. While these engagements highlighted our community’s varying understanding of what constitutes multi-partisanship, **the resounding message was clear: multi-partisanship must remain at the heart of Equal Voice’s work.** Women and gender-diverse individuals don’t come to Equal Voice to be judged for their political beliefs—they come to be accepted, to learn, and to connect with others who may not think like them, but who share a common goal of advancing gender parity in Canadian politics.

In 2026, Equal Voice will celebrate 25 years of leadership, connection, and progress. This milestone is an opportunity to recognize the leadership of the people, organizations, donors, and partners who have shaped our journey and inspired the next generation. Thank you to the many who have come before us and to the many who will join our mission in the future.

Fueled by the dedication of volunteers and by grassroots activities, Equal Voice continues to drive progress towards our goal of gender parity and now has expanded our work to having women’s leadership valued, respected and woven into Canadian society. Over the next five years, our goal is to expand our reach—transforming hundreds of supporters into thousands, improving the outcomes of our work and reaching from coast to coast to coast.

In today’s reality, Equal Voice remains steadfast, stable and reliable. **There are many more elections ahead, and we are ready to support more women, in all their diversity, as they step into the political arena.**

We will meet this moment by helping more women lead, connect, compete, and govern. We hope you will join us!

**Lindsay Brumwell**  
Interim Executive Director

**Nasha Brownridge**  
Acting Chair, EV Board



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Equal Voice is at a pivotal moment. The landscape of Canadian politics is shifting, and while progress has been made, there is still much to do to advance gender equity in leadership. Canada ranks 67th globally in gender representation at the federal level, with progress now stalling at 30 per cent women Members of Parliament (M.P.). The challenges are real—harassment and threats against elected leaders, especially women, are increasing, voter engagement is declining, AI and technology are changing the way people communicate, and many women and gender-diverse individuals are feeling discouraged from pursuing political office.

For the first time in almost a decade, the 2025 general election saw a decrease in the number of women federal candidates running for any of the major political parties. It is clear that progress is not linear.

With this uncertainty and change comes opportunity. This strategic plan aims to be both a 'North Star' and roadmap for the next five years, built on experience, 'lessons learned', consultation, and an unwavering commitment to advancing gender parity in Canadian politics.

## OUR VISION

A Canada where gender equity in politics is the norm.

## OUR MISSION

To champion democracy and political diversity by creating multi-partisan spaces that advance gender equity in Canadian politics.

# STRATEGIC PILLARS

## Lead. Connect. Compete. Govern.

### **LEAD**

#### **Sharing Knowledge, Building Confidence**

Leadership is more than being elected—it's about lifting others as you rise. Equal Voice will champion diverse forms of leadership by connecting emerging candidates with past and current political leaders, campaign professionals, and mentors from across the political spectrum.

In a crowded and complex communications environment, we aim to be a trusted source that highlights what leadership looks like—today and into the future. Through real stories, cross-partisan mentorship, and training led by experts of all genders, we will demystify political life, build confidence, and equip the next generation with the knowledge, skills, and networks to lead.

### **CONNECT**

#### **Breaking Down Barriers to Entry**

We will expand our outreach, training, and networks to ensure politics is seen as an accessible and viable path for women and gender-diverse individuals. Through formal and informal networking, campaign schools, online resources, and cross-partisan engagement, we will equip emerging leaders with the tools and confidence to take the first step—from local elections to the highest office.

Time and time again, our stakeholders and our network have emphasized that these connections—both formal and informal—are among the most powerful and valued aspects of their involvement with Equal Voice.

## **COMPETE**

### **Ensuring Success at the Ballot Box**

Winning elections takes more than just putting your name on the ballot—it requires preparation, strategy, and support. Equal Voice will continue to enhance our training to reflect evolving political realities, equipping candidates and their teams with the tools, leadership skills, and strategies needed to succeed.

By empowering entire campaign teams, we ensure women and gender-diverse candidates are supported by skilled, resilient networks—shifting the focus from individual burden to collective success. Win or lose, candidates will leave our programs with the knowledge, management skills, and connections needed to compete confidently at any level of government or public office.

## **GOVERN**

### **Winning Is Just the Beginning**

Campaigning is very different from governing. Politicians represent their communities, shape policy, and make decisions that impact every aspect of public life. While governing is essential, it can also be complex, isolating, and deeply demanding—especially for women and gender-diverse leaders.

Equal Voice will continue to deliver research and practical recommendations to advance more equitable, inclusive political environments at all levels of government. We also recognize that sustaining leadership requires strong, ongoing support. We are uniquely positioned to leverage our expertise, national network, and partners to develop targeted resources—providing women in public office with access to trusted, reliable support throughout their time in elected roles.





# 2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

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This strategic plan builds on past successes while addressing emerging challenges and mistakes. From national polling, direct feedback, and community engagement, Equal Voice knows there is support and need for our mission and vision, now more than ever! That is why we have updated our Guiding Principles and set ambitious Strategic Objectives. We believe these Guiding Principles will set up the organization for success. It will also clarify what and how we plan to do our work.



## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Our 2025-2030 strategy builds on our guiding principles and outlines our strategic objectives to achieve Equal Voice's vision and mission. These principles will guide our operational work when delivering the strategic objectives.

### **CHAMPIONING GENDER EQUITY IN POLITICS**

We are committed to closing the gender gap by providing training, research, and advocacy for equitable representation at all levels of government.

### **FOSTERING CROSS-PARTISAN COLLABORATION**

We create inclusive spaces where diverse political perspectives unite to advance democracy, civic participation, and gender balanced leadership, ensuring a stronger, representative system.

### **EMPOWERING LEADERS THROUGH EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT**

We equip women and gender-diverse individuals with the training, knowledge, networks, and skills needed to run for office, win elections, and thrive as political leaders.

### **DRIVING CHANGE THROUGH RESEARCH & AWARENESS**

We leverage data-driven insights, policy consultations, and public engagement to modernize political workplaces and eliminate barriers to political participation.

### **STRENGTHENING OUR NATIONAL NETWORK & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

We invest in our volunteer-led chapters, build partnerships and relationships with diverse communities to expand our reach, amplify women's leadership, and foster lasting, tangible impact.

### **COMMITMENT TO BILINGUALISM**

We work bilingually as much as possible and respect our relationships with our French counterparts.

### **INDIGENOUS ENGAGEMENT**

Strive to incorporate Indigenous languages and cultural considerations into our work.

### **CONTINUOUS LEARNING**

We remain open to continuous learning, exploring both data and lived experiences to innovate and refine our approach.

### **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY & CHARITABLE INTEGRITY**

As a registered charity, we uphold responsible fiscal management and compliance, ensuring our work remains cross-partisan, ethical, transparent and mission driven.



# Overarching Goal

## **BY 2030:**

Achieve 40 per cent representation of women and gender-diverse people elected at the federal level,

See all provinces and territories achieve at least 30 per cent consistently.

See 30 per cent representation on a 100 per cent of municipal and local councils by 2030

• According to Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) research in 2023, women represent 31 per cent of all municipal elected representatives in Canada. But, 16 per cent of municipal councils have no women on council. <https://fcm.ca/en/resources/women-in-local-government/women-representation-in-municipal-elected-positions-2023-report>



# STRATEGIC PILLARS AND DELIVERABLES

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We recognize that our strategic objectives are intentionally interconnected. This overlap reflects our commitment to a holistic, coordinated approach—one that is essential to truly move the needle on representation. Our deliverables are designed not only to track progress, but to demonstrate Equal Voice’s accountability and transparency in all that we do.



# LEAD

## Sharing Knowledge, Building Confidence

Equal Voice will spotlight diverse leadership in politics—past and present—to inspire the next generation. By amplifying real stories and celebrating successes, we'll foster civic participation, build confidence, and ensure all women and gender-diverse individuals see a place for themselves in public life.

### Our Approach

**Foster Intergenerational Engagement:** Partner with educational institutions and youth organizations to bring political stories and civic education to classrooms, ensuring that young people see a place for themselves in Canada's political future.

**Grow Our Digital Presence:** Increase social media followers across all channels to 25,000 by 2030, using digital platforms to showcase our programs, initiatives, events, partners, and the achievements of Canadian women and gender-diverse leaders.

**Inspire Through Storytelling:** Launch storytelling initiatives that celebrate and inspire all generations about the role and value of women and gender-diverse people in political leadership.

**National Event Series:** Expand Equal Voice's signature events into a national series that celebrates diverse political leadership while promoting leadership pathways to inspire and connect future changemakers.

**Reconnect Our National Community:** Grow our newsletter distribution to 100,000 monthly subscribers by 2030, ensuring Canadians from every region receive timely information, inspiring stories, and critical resources that connect them to our mission and to each other.

**Strengthen and Expand Chapters:** Secure funding to enhance administrative support and resources for Chapters, helping them to grow their impact, and thrive. Establish 13 active Chapters—one in every province and territory—as local hubs for engagement, mentorship, and connection, all aligned with Equal Voice's mission, principles and objectives.

By delivering on this pillar, Equal Voice will lead the way in redefining political leadership in Canada—one that reflects the full talent and opportunity of gender parity in political decision making. Through storytelling, education, and connection, we will not only inspire participation, but continue to build a resilient, national movement that positions Equal Voice as the leading voice for gender parity in public life.





# CONNECT

## Breaking Down Barriers to Entry

We will expand our outreach, training, networks, and mentorship programs to ensure women and gender-diverse individuals from all backgrounds see politics as an accessible and viable path. Through campaign schools, online resources, and cross-partisan engagement, we will equip emerging leaders and their teams with the tools they need to take the first step—from grassroots committees to the nomination process to the highest offices in Canada.

The 2025 Equal Voice–Abacus Data survey found that 83 per cent of Canadian women do not know where to start if they want to run for office, and 81 per cent want more information about the process. A lack of civic literacy, limited access to campaign training, and insufficient support networks are key obstacles, particularly for those in rural, remote, or underrepresented communities.

## Our Approach

### **Re-launch Equal Voice’s Signature “Ask Her”**

**Campaign:** Develop and implement a multi-faceted campaign based on research and lived experience, addressing the reality that women often need to be asked at least five to seven times before considering a run for office. This is a first hurdle.

**Foundational Civics Course:** Design and deliver a welcoming, judgment-free civics course—online and in-person—that demystifies Canada’s political systems, counters misinformation, and sparks early engagement. Focused on accessibility and relevance, the course will empower women to confidently engage with politics, meeting them where they are and how they learn best.

**Formal Mentorship Program:** Develop and launch a one-year mentorship program pairing political veterans with potential candidates.

**Expand “She/They Govern” Programs Across Canada:** Double the number of municipal mock-government programs each year for five years, reaching a total of 12 municipalities per year by 2030.

**Strategic Partnerships:** Partner with stakeholders—like the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and other provincial and territorial associations—to increase our reach and secure funding from municipal, provincial, and territorial governments,

allowing us to encourage, support and train more women and diverse candidates in local leadership.

**Increase Training Participation:** Grow participation in campaign training programs approximately 600 per year by 2030.

**Increase Indigenous Participation:** Boost Indigenous participation in both Indigenous-specific and general campaign schools by 200 per cent by 2028 (from 45 to 225 per year by 2030). This should be done by building meaningful relationships and incorporating more Indigenous roles, systems and knowledge into our programming and support systems.

**Strengthen Indigenous Partnerships:** Deepen collaboration with Indigenous leadership and training organizations to tailor outreach and content to Indigenous governance structures.

**Expand Outreach to Underrepresented Communities:** Increase participation from underrepresented communities by 200 per cent over five years—from 50 to 250 per year by 2030.

**Reconnect with Donors and Partners:** Strengthen financial sustainability by re-engaging donors and partners, building a committed community invested in gender parity, and fostering transparency through regular impact updates.



# COMPETE

## Ensuring Success at the Ballot Box

The ballot box comes in many forms, formats, and places—from local councils to Parliament Hill, from band offices to school boards. Winning elections is about more than just putting your name forward; it's about preparation, strategy, and the strength of your team.

Research and consultations confirm that winning is a collective effort: success at the ballot box depends on strong, resilient teams—not just strong candidates. Canadians, especially women and gender-diverse individuals, want more opportunities to learn, volunteer, and build skills in all aspects of campaigning, including campaign management, communications, data analysis, and digital safety—not just candidacy.

Equal Voice is committed to evolving our approach to reflect the diversity of ballot boxes and the unique paths women and gender-diverse individuals take to reach them. We will refine and expand our training to include campaign managers, official agents, and support staff. By empowering entire campaign teams, we will ensure that women and gender-diverse candidates are surrounded by skilled, resilient support networks, and shift the paradigm from individual burden to collective success.

## Our Approach

### **Refine and expand campaign-specific training:**

Deliver comprehensive modules for candidates, campaign managers, data managers, and get out the vote (GOTV) teams, covering strategy, communications, fundraising, budgeting, and digital safety. Training will be available in-person and online, with hybrid and self-paced options to maximize accessibility for all regions and schedules.

**Team-based approach:** Shift from individual to collective training by including campaign managers, official agents, and support staff, ensuring every candidate is backed by a skilled, resilient team.

**Develop outreach and training for rural, remote, and northern communities:** Offer tailored training and provide bursaries and travel support to ensure equitable access, with a focus on Indigenous, northern, and underrepresented groups.

### **Partnerships for modern campaigning and data management:**

Collaborate with technology and data experts to deliver up-to-date training on data management, digital campaigning, and digital safety, sharing best practices, research, and tools.

**Educational series on public office:** Develop and deliver a new “How to Run for Public Office” educational series in partnership with stakeholders, experts, and influencers, with a special focus on local government pathways—the most common entry point for new candidates.

**Expand volunteer pathways through Equal Voice programming and initiatives:** Create more opportunities for volunteers to plan events, attend networking sessions, hear from leaders, and access self-learning resources and webinars, leveraging Equal Voice's alumni and grassroots chapters for ongoing mentorship and engagement.



By 2030, Equal Voice will have built a robust, accessible, and modern campaign training ecosystem that empowers women and gender-diverse leaders of all backgrounds, and equips their teams with the tools, knowledge, and networks required to succeed at any ballot box in Canada.

## Key Performance Indicators

Create, implement, and refine “report cards” or a data hub assessing workplace inclusivity and equity for each province, territory, and the federal government.

Expand and enhance leadership training to support transitions into political work life, including new partnerships and tailored content for diverse leaders.

Launch and scale mental health and resilience initiatives for elected officials, staff, and campaign teams, with measurable participation and satisfaction targets.

Increase the number of political workplaces adopting inclusive governance reforms (e.g., flexible work, family-friendly policies, anti-harassment measures).

Grow participation in mentorship and peer support programs for women and gender-diverse leaders in office and in political staff roles.



# GOVERN

## Advancing Inclusive & Equitable Governance

Winning an election is just the beginning of the leadership journey. For too many women and gender-diverse leaders, the reality of serving in public office is shaped by unwelcoming, inequitable, and even unsafe workplaces. National research and consultations reveal that concerns about harassment, exclusion, mental health, and work-life balance remain significant barriers to both entering and remaining in political life.

### Our Approach

Through research, sharing of data and information, enhancing communications, and collaborating with stakeholders, experts, and decision-makers, we will work to develop reforms that retain and support women in leadership and political work.

**Leadership Transition and Development:** We will refine and expand our leadership training—including through partnerships with strategic organizations and by developing consultation forums—to prepare individuals for the unique realities of political work. Our training will emphasize inclusive leadership, resilience, and strategies for navigating complex political environments.

**Support Mental Health and Wellbeing:** Recognizing the unique mental health challenges in political life, we will develop thought leadership and partnerships to address mental health, and help women in politics build resilience and manage stress.

**Promote Inclusive Governance Practices:** We will share research, data, and stories that highlight the value and impact of diverse leadership. By collaborating with stakeholders, experts, and decision-makers, we will advocate for reforms such as flexible work arrangements, family-friendly policies, and recognition of diversity and inclusion work.

**Foster Networks and Mentorship:** We will leverage Equal Voice's alumni, chapters, and cross-partisan networks to provide ongoing mentorship, peer support, and opportunities for knowledge exchange, particularly for those in underrepresented groups and regions.



## Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- Create, implement, and refine “report cards” or a data hub for each province, territory, and the federal government. These tools will spotlight best practices and gaps, creating a baseline and enabling comparison between jurisdictions.
- Expand and enhance leadership training to support transitions into political work life, including new partnerships and tailored content for diverse leaders.
- Partner with and pilot mental health and resilience initiatives for elected officials, staff, candidates, and campaign teams, with measurable participation and satisfaction targets.
- Develop mentorship and peer support programs for women and gender-diverse leaders in office and in political staff roles.

By advancing inclusive and equitable governance, Equal Voice will help ensure that women and gender-diverse leaders not only win elections, but also thrive, lead, and drive meaningful change in every corner of Canadian politics.

## Reflection: 2020-2024 Progress & Lessons Learned

From 2020 to 2024, we took on big challenges—confronting sexual harassment in the political workplace, pushing for systemic change, and championing the idea that politics should be treated as a safe and equitable workplace for staff, stakeholders, and politicians alike.

Legislative modernization accelerated, with Members of Parliament now able to vote remotely, and hybrid workplaces becoming a reality. In both the House of Commons and various provincial legislatures, babies and children are seen—and sometimes heard—regularly. Equal Voice remains committed to ensuring these changes continue to create more inclusive political environments and better governing for all.

Since 2017, we have conducted national polling to track how Canadians and women perceive political life and our democracy. This ongoing research helps us identify trends, gaps, and opportunities, shaping our advocacy and programming. Over the years, our findings have been both motivating and urgent—and the 2025 results are no different. The data helps keep us focused on the pertinent issues while also taking a long-term view, informed by clear insights on trends and early indicators.

Even amid the disruption of a global pandemic, we stayed focused on our mission: achieving gender parity in Canadian politics. We expanded our signature Campaign School, offering in-person and virtual training nationwide, and launched the first Indigenous Women's Campaign School, with thanks and gratitude to the Hillary and Galen Weston Foundation (HGWF).

We successfully delivered the third Daughters of the Vote conference virtually in 2022. Our She/They Governs program engaged young women in municipal governance, introducing students in grades 9 through 12 to the workings of city councils across the country.

We celebrated 100 years of women in federal politics!

We streamlined our structure by merging the Equal Voice Foundation with our non-profit entity under one banner while keeping the name Equal Voice. One in five Canadians are familiar with Equal Voice's brand. This achievement was made possible by the dedication of our volunteer boards—past and present—whose commitment helped create a stronger, unified organization to advance our mission across Canada as a nationally registered charity.

Listening to our community, we dissolved our membership model to remove financial barriers and increase access, ensuring that more voices can engage with our work. We also expanded our funding sources, building partnerships with new organizations, corporations, and foundations. Signature events like the Annual Year-End Gala in Ottawa and the Equal Voice Calgary Stampede event have grown into important cross-partisan gatherings of decision-makers and advocates from across the country.

There is much to be proud of and still much to do. As we enter this next phase, Equal Voice remains steadfast in its mission.



## Consultations What We Heard (2024 – 2025)

Leading up to this plan, we engaged with our national chapter chair advisory committee, launched surveys (2024), and consulted supporters, partners, political officials, and sponsors to understand how Equal Voice can drive real change and increase the representation of women and gender-diverse individuals in Canadian politics. The feedback we received, along with research and data-based insights, shaped this strategic plan.

Our 2025 research with Abacus Data revealed critical insights: 83per cent of Canadian women do not know where to start if they want to run for office, and 81per cent want more information about the process. Politics is perceived as unwelcoming by 80per cent of Canadians, with women more likely than men to feel unqualified (81per cent vs. 69per cent) and express concerns about online harassment (71per cent) and physical safety (66per cent). These findings highlight the urgent need for more accessible entry points into politics, more civics education, and enhanced education and training by Equal Voice.

We consistently heard a desire for both formal and informal networking opportunities—spaces that connect aspiring candidates with experienced mentors and foster communities of support. These connections help build confidence, political literacy, and the practical know-how needed to enter public life. Equal Voice's active general inbox reflects the number of women reaching out to find a local chapter, learn more, get involved, and meet other women leaders.

For many, particularly those new to politics, Equal Voice chapters have offered a valuable entry point. Volunteers shared that networking and community-building were key motivators for their involvement, regardless of whether they intended to run. There is strong interest—both locally and nationally—in contributing to Equal Voice's mission, learning about politics, and gaining leadership experience in a cross-partisan setting. This interest is particularly strong among those who don't currently work in politics or who have had limited exposure to political environments. Creating more volunteer opportunities, and providing greater support to volunteers and local chapters were repetitive themes in our consultations.

This echoes findings from our annual surveys, which highlight the importance of creating diverse and accessible volunteer opportunities that go beyond running for office. While only 30per cent of women (compared to 42per cent of men) report having considered political volunteer roles, young women in particular show greater interest in civic and community engagement. This presents a critical opportunity to invest in the leadership pipeline by offering meaningful early experiences that build toward candidacy. At the same time, our campaign school participation shows that political ambition spans generations, with women up to their early 60s engaging actively in training and support programs.

We heard calls for expanded and more in-depth professional training offerings that address the full spectrum of political participation:

- Media relations and communications training
- Op-ed writing and public speaking workshops
- Social media safety and digital literacy programs
- Financial management and political fundraising skills development
- Campaign management
- Canadian civics and governance fundamentals

A critical insight was the need to shift from individual-focused to team-based campaign training. Rather than placing the burden solely on candidates, Equal Voice can help create stronger candidates by equipping entire teams with specialized knowledge and training. There are calls for more experts in their fields to share practical solutions to common challenges, and for more insights from women and leaders who have successfully won and governed. There was a quiet but common theme that women want to learn how to compete and win in the realities of the environment.

Accessibility also emerged as a consistent theme, with strong demand for webinars, self-paced learning resources, and hybrid delivery models that accommodate diverse schedules, communities and geographic locations.

The research highlighted a particular interest in local government training. Municipal politics remains the most accessible entry point, with 59 per cent of those considering running preferring to start at the local level. Expanding our She/They Govern programs and creating specialized municipal campaign training responds directly to this opportunity.



We heard that people are most likely to trust information—and sometimes feel more comfortable—when it comes through their own networks and communities. This trust is critical for breaking down barriers and ensuring accurate, relevant information reaches those who need it most. Whether it's basic civics education or demystifying how political parties, nominations, and elections function in Canada, the need for clear, practical, and community-anchored information remains strong.

Many of our partners, sponsors, and supporters expressed appreciation for Equal Voice's commitment to fostering informed, safe, and politically diverse spaces. At the same time, we recognize that our multi-partisan approach can invite a wide range of perspectives—and criticism. Understandings of what constitutes meaningful or acceptable multi-partisanship vary, but the resounding message is clear: multi-partisanship must remain at the heart of Equal Voice's work. Women and gender-diverse individuals don't come to Equal Voice to be judged for their political beliefs—they come to be accepted, to learn, and to connect with others who may not think like them but share a common goal of advancing inclusive leadership.

We know that women's leadership makes a profound difference. Research in the private sector has long shown that a critical mass of women on corporate boards improves profitability, resilience, and governance. However, the benefits of women's leadership in public office and the political sector remain under-documented. It's time to bridge that gap and define the impact of women's leadership—not just on 'women's issues'—but throughout Canadian government and governance. In our consultations, we were reminded that all issues are women's issues.

The voices we heard reinforced our mission: to point out barriers, bring people together, create inclusive pathways, train, educate, and inspire. Women want to know how to get involved, support others, and strengthen their communities. This has renewed our focus on expanding and energizing our volunteer and chapter network, and ensuring we reach people where they are—whether in urban centers, rural areas, or northern communities.

Thank you for the feedback and input. We heard you. This plan reflects those priorities and our unwavering commitment to building a more representative democracy, where gender equity in political leadership is the norm no matter where you live in Canada.



# CONCLUSION: THE NEXT 25 YEARS

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By 2030, Equal Voice envisions a political landscape where gender equity is the norm, diverse leadership thrives, and systemic or societal barriers no longer prevent women and gender-diverse individuals from fully participating in Canadian public life. Through collaboration, innovation, and grassroots engagement, we will continue to transform politics—one leader at a time. We look forward to reporting back on our progress, challenges, opportunities, and findings. We hope you will continue to engage with us throughout the journey.

# Appendix A: Definitions

## **WOMAN**

For the purposes of this plan, “woman” refers to anyone who identifies as a woman, including cis women (those whose gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth), trans women (those whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned at birth), and gender-diverse individuals whose experiences and identities align with those of women. This inclusive definition recognizes the diversity of womanhood and ensures that all individuals impacted by gender-based inequities are represented in our work.

## **GENDER EQUITY**

For the purposes of this plan, “gender equity” refers to the recognition that women, trans women, and gender-diverse individuals whose experiences align with those of women face historical and systemic barriers to full participation in political life. Gender equity involves intentionally addressing and correcting these barriers through targeted policies, practices, and supports to ensure fair access to opportunities, resources, and power. An equity-based approach acknowledges that different people require different supports to achieve comparable outcomes.

## **GENDER PARITY**

For the purposes of this plan, “gender parity” refers to the fair and proportional representation of women, trans women, and gender-diverse individuals whose experiences align with those of women in political and decision-making spaces. Gender parity is achieved when representation reflects the diversity of the population and women hold meaningful, influential roles across all levels of governance. Parity is both a measurable outcome and a democratic standard, strengthened through sustained equity-based efforts.

## **CROSS-PARTISAN**

For the purposes of this plan, “cross-partisan” refers to the creation of spaces, initiatives, or dialogues that actively include and engage individuals or groups from different political parties or perspectives. Cross-partisan efforts emphasize open and respectful communication, aiming to bridge divides, foster understanding, and collaboratively seek common ground despite ideological differences. This approach is distinct from non-partisan (which avoids party affiliation altogether) and multi-partisan (which involves multiple parties but may not require direct dialogue or collaboration).

## **MULTI-PARTISAN**

For the purposes of this plan, “multi-partisan” refers to the involvement, cooperation, or support of multiple

political parties across the Canadian political spectrum. In Canada’s multi-party system, this typically includes, but is not limited to, the major federal parties—such as the Liberal Party, Conservative Party, New Democratic Party (NDP), Bloc Québécois, and Green Party—as well as other registered parties. Multi-partisan initiatives are distinct from bipartisan efforts (which involve only two parties) and are intended to foster collaboration and consensus among a broader range of political perspectives, reflecting the diversity of Canada’s political landscape.

## **NON-PARTISAN**

For the purposes of this plan, “non-partisan” refers to individuals, activities, or organizations that are impartial and do not support or endorse any political party or ideology. In the Canadian context, many levels of government—including most municipal councils, school boards, and Indigenous governments such as band and tribal councils—operate on a non-partisan basis because there are no political parties involved in their electoral processes or governance structures. This approach emphasizes decision-making and representation based on community needs and consensus rather than party affiliation, fostering inclusive and unbiased governance. Non-partisan entities strive to ensure fairness, objectivity, and broad representation without the influence of party politics.

This definition is grounded in the reality that, outside of a few exceptions (such as Vancouver and Montreal), Canadian municipal politics are overwhelmingly non-partisan, and Indigenous governance structures like band and tribal councils similarly do not operate within a party system. School boards also maintain non-partisan governance to ensure education decisions are made in the best interests of students and communities, free from party influence.

## **PARTISAN**

For the purposes of this plan, “partisan” refers to a committed member or supporter of a political party or political movement. A partisan individual or organization strongly supports the policies and interests of a specific political party, often exhibiting reluctance to compromise with political opponents. In a multi-party system, partisanship can manifest as a strong alignment with one party’s ideology, sometimes to the exclusion or detriment of cross-party collaboration.