



PROMISING PRACTICES FOR FORMING A PAY EQUITY COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

This document offers **promising practices** to help employers as they **establish a pay equity committee**.

Under the Pay Equity Act, employers may be required to establish a pay equity committee to establish a pay equity plan.

A pay equity committee is a group of individuals who come together to develop a pay equity plan for their workplace. It is a joint decision-making forum that ensures employee and union involvement in achieving pay equity.

The collective development of a pay equity plan by employees, bargaining agents and employers promotes employee participation, knowledge and confidence in the pay equity process, plan and results.

HOW TO FORM A PAY EQUITY COMMITTEE

The role of pay equity committee members is to participate in the development of a pay equity plan for their workplace.

The benefits of a pay equity committee comprised of employer, union, and non-unionized employee representatives include:

- Legitimizing the process and the results in the eyes of employees;
- Ensuring that decisions are based on better knowledge of the jobs and reducing the risk of errors and discrimination;
- Avoiding the use of external consultants and its related costs; and,
- Improving labour relations when committee members have learned to work towards achieving a common goal and to proceed by consensus.ⁱ

Some **promising practices** for forming a pay equity committee include:

1. Establishing a communication strategy;
2. Promoting diversity amongst membership;
3. Using a model that reflects the workplace; and,
4. Committing to providing resources and training.

1. Establishing a communication strategy

A sound communications strategy is key to the success of the pay equity committee and pay equity exercise. Effective communication will be important throughout the process: when inviting people to participate as pay equity committee members, when notifying employees that a pay equity plan will be developed for the workplace, when sharing the results of the pay equity plan, when instructing employees on how to provide information about their job positions, or when there is a need to increase employee awareness about pay equity generally.

Some key questions and examples to consider when developing a communications strategy for the purpose of forming a pay equity committee include:

Who is the communication for, and who is it from?

- Possible recipients: Employees, unions, supervisors, management.
- Possible deliverers: The president or senior management, human resource personnel, managers, union representatives, supervisors, employee peers, committee members.

What information is to be communicated?

- Notification that a pay equity committee will be established in the workplace.
- Opportunities to participate as a pay equity committee member.
- Promotion of diversity amongst pay equity committee members.
- Support from the employer for forming a pay equity committee, including access to workplace space, equipment and paid time for selecting representatives.
- The role and tasks that pay equity committee members will be responsible for.
- Opportunities for training.

When or **how** often should communication occur?

- Active (preferred): Regularly, to bring employees up to date on process.
- Reactive: Whenever asked about particulars, or when someone requests an information session.

Where are the most effective and comfortable places for communication to take place?

- Meeting room, office, union hall, through email, on a video platform in a work from home setting, or wherever employees will be comfortable.

Why should the organization and unions communicate? To:

- Demonstrate leadership and support for the process;
- Explain the process;
- Clarify objectives;
- Manage expectations;
- Demonstrate accessibility;
- Build trust and support;
- Encourage feedback;
- Prevent unnecessary complaints based on lack of understanding;
- Dispel concerns and fears; and,
- Communicate results.

How should information be communicated? Information should be communicated in an accessible format that could include:

- In writing: notices, memos, pay cheque inserts, newsletters, or emails.
- Verbally: presentations or team meetings.

When designing and implementing a communications strategy, it is essential to consider the perspectives and needs of the diverse groups of individuals that the pay equity exercise will affect.

2. Promoting diversity amongst membership

Key to the success of the pay equity committee will be the diversity, in terms of representation and expertise, of the members. The Pay Equity Act sets out basic composition requirements for the committee in section 19(1). In addition to meeting those requirements, the following elements may be considered:

- Gender balance;
- Representation of the workforce;
- Representation of different organizational levels and varying job positions;
- Representation of the jobs commonly held by women in the workplace;
- Inclusion of management and non-management employees;
- Inclusion of members with varying lengths of service;
- Inclusion of some employees that know the mission and goals of the organization; and,
- Inclusion of some employees well-versed in pay equity requirements, if possible.

Having a diverse pay equity committee will promote the inclusion of different perspectives and a balance of views, and help address any biases.

Diversity amongst the membership of the committee is also a good way to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the tasks and efforts required for each job position. This will help ensure that the characteristics of the jobs to be evaluated are more fully taken into account.ⁱⁱ

Some **practical first steps** for seeking out members for the pay equity committee:

Communicating the requirements of the committee

- Communicating to employees that the pay equity exercise will be launched in their workplace and that a pay equity committee will be established.
- Informing employees of the pay equity committee composition requirements and of the types of supports the employer will provide to members.

Selecting employer representative(s)

The employer selects their own representative(s) on the pay equity committee. The employer may wish to select an employee with a background in human resources (e.g. classification, job evaluation, compensation, etc.).

Enabling bargaining agents to select representative(s)

The employer communicates with bargaining agents that they are to select a committee member for the employees of any bargaining unit that they represent. It is a **promising practice** for bargaining agents to ensure anyone on the pay equity committee is not also at the bargaining table. This is especially important to ensure that any conflicts stemming from labour relations are not imported into the pay equity process.

Enabling non-unionized employees to select representative(s)

The employer communicates with employees that non-unionized employees will be represented in the pay equity committee.

- Through this communication, the employer seeks out non-unionized employee(s) to volunteer to set up a voting procedure to select the non-unionized representative(s) for the pay equity committee.
- The employer must help support the selection of the non-unionized employee representative(s) by providing access to workplace space and equipment, and by providing paid time for this process.ⁱⁱⁱ

There are several free online tools that can help employees conduct a survey poll or vote in the workplace.

The non-unionized employee volunteer(s) should be responsible for the process of selecting a non-unionized employee representative from start to finish. They should conduct the vote, tally results, and inform the workplace of the selected representative(s).^{iv}

3. Using a model that reflects the workplace

The number and purpose of the committees created to conduct the pay equity exercise will likely depend on the organization's size and resources.

In small organizations, the pay equity committee may operate in an informal manner, and members may be responsible for most of the tasks associated with the pay equity plan. Larger organizations, on the other hand, may decide to put in place more than one pay equity committee or sub-committees.

A large organization may wish to establish a **steering committee** that would oversee and approve the various components of the pay equity process. Its members may be a combination of management, union and non-unionized employee representatives.

Forming a steering committee early may be particularly helpful to provide leadership and make key decisions to launch the pay equity process. For example, the steering committee could make decisions such as whether to apply for multiple pay equity plans. They could oversee the establishment of the pay equity committee or committees and any sub-committees.



Examples of the **different types of sub-committees** that could make up a pay equity committee include:

Job evaluation system sub-committee: this committee makes decisions about buying, adapting or creating a job evaluation system for the organization’s pay equity exercise. It could consist of pay equity committee members who understand the values and culture of the organization and the purpose of the job evaluation system.

Job evaluation sub-committee: This sub-committee rates the jobs using the system chosen. Its usefulness is increased if it includes employer, union and non-unionized employee representatives.

Communications sub-committee: This sub-committee designs and delivers information and educational materials. Often it includes human resources personnel members of the job evaluation sub-committee, and possibly senior employer and employee representatives.

Review sub-committee: This subcommittee hears any challenges or questions about the rating process

or results. Often it includes members of the job evaluation sub-committee along with new representatives who bring an important, fresh perspective and can ask questions of both the person challenging the job evaluation process and the job evaluation rating committee members.

A **promising practice** is to ensure stability of membership throughout the entire pay equity exercise. This will help:

- Ensure that the knowledge and skills acquired by these individuals are not lost;
- Promote consistency in the process;
- Develop in-house expertise in the areas of equality and job evaluation; and,
- Reduce delays caused when committee members change between steps of the pay equity process.

A **promising practice** is to ensure that the sub-committees are:

- Gender-balanced;
- Inclusive of employee representation; and,
- Diverse.

This will help:

- Include members who have as direct as possible knowledge of the main jobs to be evaluated;
- Include members who are willing to recognize and eliminate any gender bias that might affect the process or the evaluation tools; and,
- Allow diverse groups of female workers to play a role in a process that concerns them directly.^v

4. Commit to providing resources and training

Training is essential to the success of the pay equity committee and the pay equity exercise.

Pay equity committee members will require training to build up their technical knowledge and awareness about discrimination, stereotypes and prejudice with regard to women's work and the causes of inequality based on sex.^{vi}

Technical training

Key areas to consider for the technical training needed by the pay equity committee members include:

- The data collection procedures;
- The evaluation method(s);
- The components of total compensation; and,
- The comparison of compensation.^{vii}

Training about wage discrimination

Key areas to consider for training about wage discrimination needed by the pay equity members include:

- The factors which account for wage discrimination; and,
- The influence of prejudices and stereotypes on perceptions of a job's worth, evaluation methods and compensation systems.^{viii}

Training on how to **work collaboratively** and on how to **build consensus** are also valuable as it will save time and help avoid lengthy disputes.

It is a **promising practice** to provide training on an ongoing basis to empower committee members to effectively conduct their work and fulfill their responsibilities.

Resources

For more in-depth **information on promising practices** for forming a joint pay equity committee, please explore the following resources.

- Chicha, M.-T. Promoting equity. Gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay: A step-by-step guide. International Labour Organization. 2008, retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmstp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_122372.pdf
- (French only) Recensement des bonnes pratiques en équité salariale. 2008, CNESST, retrieved from <https://www.cnesst.gouv.qc.ca/sites/default/files/publications/bonnes-pratiques-en-equite-salariale.pdf>
- (English only) Workplace Safety and Prevention Services. 2013, “The Effective JHSC”, retrieved from: <https://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/The-Effective-JHSC.pdf?ext=.pdf>

ⁱ Chicha, M.-T. Promoting equity: Gender-neutral job evaluation for equal pay: A step-by-step guide. International Labour Organization. 2008, p. 13. , retrieved from: https://www.ilo.org/wcmstp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---declaration/documents/publication/wcms_122372.pdf

ⁱⁱ Chicha, M.-T. Ibid., p. 10.

ⁱⁱⁱ See pay Equity Act sections 22(1) and 22(3).

^{iv} Workplace Safety and Prevention Services. 2013 “The Effective JHSC”, p.5, retrieved from: <https://www.wsps.ca/WSPS/media/Site/Resources/Downloads/The-Effective-JHSC.pdf?ext=.pdf>

^v Chicha, M.-T. Ibid., p. 10.

^{vi} Ibid., p. 7.

^{vii} Ibid., p. 11.

^{viii} Ibid.