

Women of Steel Working for Equality

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USW Guide for Women's Committees





A few words about words

Like the rest of society, USW is learning and changing its language and approaches to issues of gender. We know that “women” and “men,” or “sisters” and “brothers,” can suggest that there are only two possible gender identities. In reality, gender is a spectrum, but Canada’s official languages don’t give us much flexibility. Please note that we use “women” and “sisters” to include all Steelworkers who identify as such.

And we acknowledge that women are a very diverse group, too. One woman’s experience of life and work can be very different from another’s because of her race, age, presence of a physical or mental disability, sexual orientation and many other factors. We intend to refer to Women of Steel in all our diversity and have tried to make this document reflect that reality.

Dear Sisters and allies:

USW is committed to achieving full equality for women.

One of the ways we work for full equality is by empowering women to be active in our union and in the wider community. Women's Committees are places where empowerment and activism grow. This step-by-step guide will help develop and support an active USW network of local, area, regional and district Women's Committees.

Women of Steel reflect the diversity of Canada. You work in mines and in universities, in call centres and in manufacturing plants, everywhere in the economy. You come from all ethnic backgrounds and speak a rich variety of languages. Your ancestors are Canada's First Peoples, and you are the first generation of your family to live in this country. Your families, loved ones and communities are also diverse. And your connection to our union may be recent or long-standing.

Because of this diversity, USW Women's Committees can be active on a wide range of issues depending on what's important to your members and your community. But what all Women's Committees have in common is the USW commitment to achieving full equality for women and to encouraging women to be active in our union.

USW wants to make sure that women's activism and leadership are welcome. We have strong policies and programs against harassment inside our union and in the workplace. We are proud of our education courses for women – Women of Steel: Developing Leadership and USW Women's Committees: Leading Together – and we ensure that women are active participants throughout the Steelworker education program. We take action on key political, economic and social issues affecting women's lives, issues like violence against women and girls, affordable childcare and job creation. And we build alliances with other unions and organizations around the globe who also work to advance women's equality.

Of course the road to full equality is a hard one. Canadian women didn't fully have the right to vote until 1960, when Aboriginal women (and men) were allowed the ballot. In the 1980s, women had to go to court to win the right to be hired into steel-mill production jobs. And still today, Canadian women earn only about 75 cents for every dollar a man earns.

No one walks the road to equality alone. That's the good news! Activists in past generations have built bridges over the canyons and we walk on those bridges today. USW Women's Committees are building that road to equality. Our union values that work because women's rights are workers' rights.

We hope this guide will help strengthen your local, area, regional or district Women's Committee. We encourage you to use the guide and share it with a sister or a brother. Together we are strong.

In solidarity,



Ken Neumann,
National Director



Stephen Hunt
Director, District 3

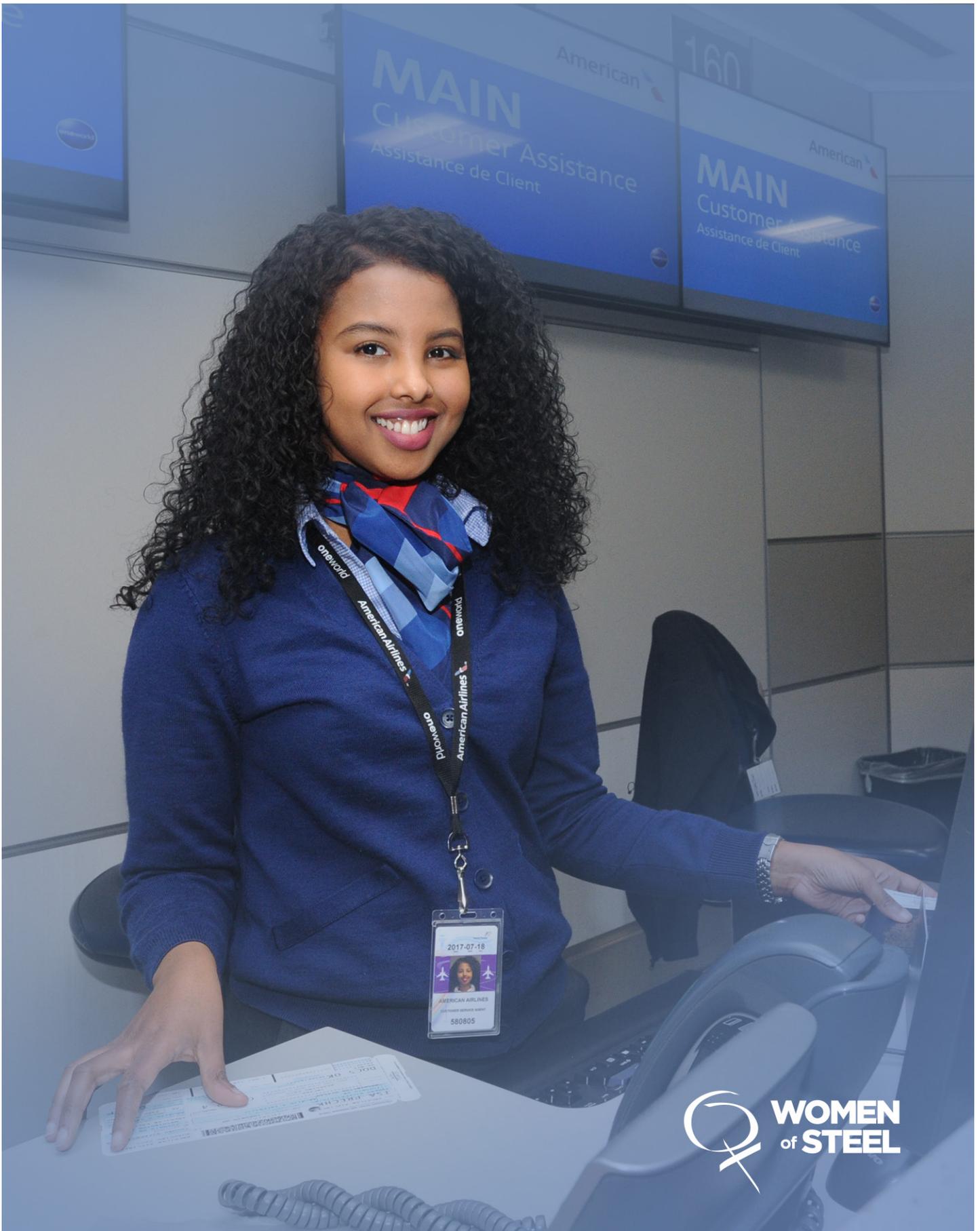


Alain Croteau
Director, District 5



Marty Warren
Director, District 6

2017



How To Use This Guide

This guide will be useful if you are:

- ▶ Setting up a Women's Committee for the first time
- ▶ Revitalizing an existing Women's Committee
- ▶ Looking for new and creative ways of reaching members
- ▶ Looking for ways to represent women in the workplace, through collective bargaining and on public policy issues

The USW Guide for Women's Committees outlines what Women's Committees can do, how they are set up, who participates and what role they can play at all levels in our union. The guide includes *Getting Down to Work* sheets which focus on specific planning activities or tools.

Review the guide with other sisters and discuss which ideas and tools might work best in your context.

Use it together with the Women of Steel Action Calendar. Besides highlighting some important dates and women's contributions in the labour movement, the action calendar helps you apply ideas from the guide to create a plan of activities for your Women's Committee.

Because they are the most common kind of Women's Committee in our union, the guide refers to local Women's Committees. But you can apply the ideas and processes to committees at the regional, area council and district level, too.

These resources were produced as a result of sisters' requests for advice on setting up and running Women's Committees. Please send us any suggestions for additions or changes. Your feedback will help other Women's Committees in the future. (You can send your comments and suggestions to: National Women's Committee, c/o USW Canadian National Office, 800 - 234 Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto, Ont., M4P 1K7, or email info@usw.ca.)

Good luck and good work!

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A Brief History

Since the early days of our union in 1936, there have been women Steelworkers. But the work world wasn't a friendly place for women. Many jobs – usually the better-paid ones – were closed to us. We faced sexual harassment and bullying.

There were barriers inside the union, too. Plants with mostly female workforces had only men on the local executives. Bargaining and job-evaluation systems left women at the bottom end of the pay scale. And not all fellow union members were “open-minded.” Some refused to mentor women apprentices or harassed women co-workers.

But women stuck with it. On our own, or with the support of other sisters, progressive union leaders and staff, women kept demanding decent work and a place in the union.

The first USW local Women's Committee was created in 1981 in USW Local 2900 (Inglis) in Toronto. Its objectives included encouraging women to take an active role in the union by attending meetings and running for union office, mobilizing to get women to courses and conferences and providing a secure place where women could come with complaints of harassment.

By the 1980s, the world was changing. Women were fighting back. Feminists campaigned for abortion access, protection from violence and harassment, for maternity leave and equal pay. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms became law in 1982, giving a powerful tool to change discriminatory legislation.

And in 1982, the Women's Action Committee of the Steelworkers' Toronto Area Council was formed. It began offering women's-only courses on harassment and pay equity.

With more women entering the workforce and the union, District 6 Director Leo Gerard was caught by the feminist wave. Strikes at female-dominated USW locals at Radio Shack and Fotomat brought women's leadership to the forefront. In 1985, a high-profile sexual harassment complaint at the Stelco steel mill in Hamilton led the district, and then the national union, to develop a policy against harassment.

In 1987, District 6 created a district Women's Committee and started what would become the Women of Steel program. The first Women of Steel leadership course was designed by women, facilitated by women, for only women participants. Over the years, it has been responsible for linking hundreds of individual Women of Steel with leadership roles inside the union and beyond.

In 2005, delegates to the USW 32nd International Constitutional Convention voted unanimously to amend the constitution by adding:

“To further our commitment to encourage activism, leadership development and greater understanding of gender issues in our Local Unions with female membership, a Women's Committee, under the direction of the International Union or its designated representative, shall be established by such Local Unions.” (Article VII, Section 13)

Today, in addition to a National Women's Committee, each of the Canadian District Directors has established a structure to encourage women's participation across our union.

Why USW Needs Women's Committees

Besides the obvious – the USW Constitution requires it – Women's Committees offer a way for women to raise issues, press for change and get our issues onto the negotiating table and the convention floor.

The USW is stronger when policies and collective agreements reflect the needs of our sisters as well as our brothers. But the work environment – from its physical layout, to the way women's work is undervalued and underpaid, to harassment and discrimination – creates barriers to women's employment. Lack of affordable childcare limits many women's access to job security and decent wages.

Women's Committees ensure our union takes action on issues that are important to women and that advance women's equality. They also help to build solidarity and mutual respect among our membership and potential membership. The Women's Committees do this by providing support to stewards, elected officers, negotiating team members and organizers, as well as by working with groups in the wider community.

Unionized women fare better; and unionized women working together fare much better. Simply put: women need unions and unions need women.

Nuts and Bolts of a Women's Committee

This guide can be useful, no matter which of these situations you are in:

- ▶ **When the local has taken steps to form a Women's Committee for the first time:** Perhaps some women have asked for a committee; perhaps the local executive understands having a committee would help it engage with more members. The executive has approached one or two sisters to get things started. Maybe one sister has been named as the chairperson. Now what? See steps one-to-seven below.
 - ▶ **When individual women need to take steps to form a Women's Committee for the first time:** Using the reasons above, *Why USW Needs Women's Committees*, speak to the local president or speak at a local membership meeting. Make a case for starting a committee. Be prepared to offer to do some work! Follow steps one-to-seven below.
 - ▶ **When an existing committee has run out of steam:** Use steps one-to-seven to get started again. Or choose from the activities or processes described in this guide to try things that will re-energize women members.
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- ▶ **STEP ONE:** Recruit committee members
 - ▶ **STEP TWO:** Call a first meeting
 - ▶ **STEP THREE:** What's our mission?
 - ▶ **STEP FOUR:** Create an action plan
 - ▶ **STEP FIVE:** How do we make it happen?
 - ▶ **STEP SIX:** Keep it happening!
 - ▶ **STEP SEVEN:** Is it working?

When there aren't enough women in the local, or not enough women interested in forming a committee:

If you live in a community with a labour council or a USW area council, see if one of these bodies has a Women's Committee you can join. Or find a women's organization in your home community and work with them. This guide can still help you figure out how to connect with your local, keep them updated on what you're doing and make bargaining proposals or other motions in support of women's issues.

Whether you are starting a Women’s Committee or re-energizing an existing one, it’s important to know what the mandate of a USW Women’s Committee can include.

A Women’s Committee can:

- ▶ Provide a safe environment for women to discuss current workplace, community or personal issues and strategies for change
- ▶ Educate women on our rights, obligations and responsibilities to ourselves and other women
- ▶ Educate brothers to understand and support action on women’s issues
- ▶ Provide advice and guidance to union leaders, including bargaining committees, on issues important to women
- ▶ Network and communicate with Women’s Committees in other local unions and at the area, regional, district and national level
- ▶ Reach out to and work with women’s organizations in the community
- ▶ Research and present action proposals and policies
- ▶ Lobby for legislative improvements and change
- ▶ Encourage the development of more Women’s Committees
- ▶ Act as mentors to young, newly active and newly organized women
- ▶ Organize informal educational and social events with community and local committees
- ▶ Assist in the planning and organization of conferences and local courses to ensure the content, speakers and participants reflect the diversity of our union’s membership
- ▶ Identify women’s education and training needs to ensure union courses and programs are accessible and applicable
- ▶ Assist USW organizers in organizing and educating new members

Your Women’s Committee could even write a mission statement, like this one:

“The Local Women’s Committee will work in solidarity with sisters and brothers to take action at the bargaining table on women’s issues; increase the involvement and leadership of women in our union; support organizing and other USW campaigns for equality and progressive political change.”

STEP 1

Recruit committee members

Find out more about the women in your local (how many, in what jobs and work locations, ages, racial/ethnic/cultural backgrounds, languages, etc.). It’s hard to build a Women’s Committee that will engage women and respond to their priorities if the committee doesn’t reflect who they are. And it’s hard to

reach out to them if you don’t know where to find them in the workplace.

Women’s Committees can help set an example of how inclusive union structures can be when steps are taken to break down barriers to those who have been traditionally disadvantaged in the workplace, our union and the community.

Getting Down to Work: Where Are the Women? suggests one way to systematically learn about the women in your local.

Once you know who and where the women are, you can start to recruit volunteers for the committee. *Getting Down to Work: Recruiting Women to Join Your Women’s Committee* gives you some how-to ideas.



Should men sit on a Women's Committee? No. Instead, encourage brothers to act on their interest and concern by being good allies. Some ways they can do this are:

- ▶ Voting in favour of motions that the Women's Committee brings to local membership meetings
- ▶ Stepping aside to let women attend educational courses, conferences and conventions or serve on bargaining committees or the local executive
- ▶ When they sit on committees of the local, being open to working with the Women's Committee on issues of common interest

Some local Women's Committees have set up subcommittees to look at specific areas of concern. In these cases, men may be asked to join a subcommittee to help identify solutions to problems that affect all members, like access to affordable childcare.

Getting Down to Work: Where Are the Women?

If you are in a large local, or a local spread over several sites or shifts, here is one way to help you figure out where sisters work and some basic information about them. Knowing this will help you figure out how to recruit for your Women's Committee and how to connect them to the committee's work.

Suggested supplies:

1. A large sheet of paper, like flipchart paper or brown wrapping paper
2. Several markers of different colours
3. A highlighter to indicate questions or areas that need more research
4. A membership list

On a large sheet of blank paper, map out your workplace:

1. Draw **large boxes** for each work location. If a particular location has different floors or sub-units, make sure your drawing reflects this. Label what each location is.
2. Write in what you know and highlight or keep a list of anything you don't know but need to find out:
 - a. The approximate **number of employees** in each work location who self-identify as women
 - b. Their **job classifications** and their **job status** (permanent, temporary, contract, etc.)
 - c. How many are in the **age ranges** of 35 or younger; 35-50; 50+?
 - d. Which **languages** are commonly spoken by the women?
 - e. How many are **racialized women** and how many are self-identifying **Aboriginal women**?
Note: Racialized persons include but are not limited to people who identify as South Asian, East Asian, South-east Asian, African, Caribbean, South and Central American, West Asian (e.g. Iranian, Afghani). Aboriginal persons include those who identify as Métis, Inuit or First Nations.
 - f. How many women self-identify as **lesbian, bisexual, transgender or two-spirited**?
 - g. How many are women **with disabilities or with accommodations for disability**?

Take a look at the picture you've made of women in your local. Use it to think about how to make sure your Women's Committee represents all the women. For example, if women are evenly spread over all three age ranges and a large number speak Urdu, then your committee shouldn't be made up of only English-speaking 45-year-olds. Or if women are evenly split between permanent and temporary workers, your committee shouldn't be made up of only permanent workers. Try your best to have your committee mirror the women in the membership.

If you find you have a lot of highlighted areas or questions on your list, do more research first, before recruiting or making other decisions.

Getting Down to Work: Recruiting Women to Join Your Women's Committee

It's great when women volunteer to serve on the Women's Committee. But if you want to make sure that the committee reflects the workplace, you may need to recruit women from specific classifications, work sites, shifts, age groups and racial/ethnic groups to make sure key voices are heard.

It's not enough to put a notice in the local newsletter or on the website; you need to ask in person!

Identify potential recruits → Talk to them → Ask them to join.

To prepare for these conversations, think ahead:

List three good reasons to join the Women's Committee:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Thinking of each individual woman you'd like to recruit, list one quality or ability that she has that will help the Women's Committee:

1. _____

List three good questions or doubts a woman may express when asked to join:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

How will you respond to those questions or doubts:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

STEP 2**Call a first meeting**

Decide when and where to meet. Make sure it's convenient for as many women as possible.

Set an agenda that's realistic for the available time. Make sure to include introductions so everyone feels welcome.

Run the meeting in a way that allows everyone to participate. Encourage new and quiet sisters to speak, no matter how briefly.

Ask for ideas and for help. Make sure no one ends up taking on all the tasks; it's better to do less than burn someone out.

Agree on the time and place for a next meeting. Make sure to collect everyone's contact information so you can send out a reminder, notes from this meeting, etc.

Have fun! Simple things like having coffee and cookies help make meetings more sociable and enjoyable.

End on or ahead of time.

**STEP 3****What's our mission?**

Find out what issues are important to women in the local by doing a simple survey, such as the example in *Getting Down to Work: Doing a Survey to Find Out What Women Think*. Use the results to guide your committee's mission and to build an action plan.

Getting Down to Work: Doing a Survey to Find Out What Women Think

This is an example of a paper survey that committee members could hand out to women in the local. You could also create an online survey, using SurveyMonkey or other free programs, or distribute an email survey if you have addresses for all women in the local. Whatever method you use, the key is to involve women by consulting them and to include every woman.

Women's Committee Survey

Name: _____ Dept./Unit: _____

Position: _____ Job Status (Perm./Temp.): _____

What are the two most pressing issues for you?

a. Inside the workplace: _____

b. Outside the workplace: _____

How do you hope the Women's Committee and your local could support you?

How can we reach you?

First language:

English French Other Other languages you speak: _____

I need an interpreter

Talk in person Best times of day: _____

Phone Your phone number(s): _____

Information meetings **before work?** **at lunch?** **after work?**

Information meetings at _____ time

Email Your email address(es): _____

Local website How often do you check it? More than once a day Once a day

Once every week Other _____

Flyer Newsletter Bulletin Board

Facebook Twitter Other app _____

Thanks for your time. Please return this to _____

STEP 4**Create an action plan**

A Women's Committee will make a difference and will engage women's participation if it does things. In other words, it takes more than holding meetings to put your mandate into action.

Your committee's action plan should include activities related to at least some of the issues women in the local told you were important to them. Your action plan should also include communications with members, input into collective bargaining, sending women to courses, conferences and conventions, writing and moving motions and resolutions for union meetings at all levels, and political action. In other words, donating money and supplies to good causes is important, but it shouldn't be the only focus of your committee's work.

A good action plan will address the root causes of a problem, as well as trying to meet immediate needs for help. Act "upstream" as well as "downstream":

Upstream

Where you find the root or cause of the problem (laws, policies, institutions, society's beliefs) and the organizations that advocate/educate for change, such as increased government funding for services, front-line staff and facilities; new laws; provincial/federal action plans; inquiries; etc.

Downstream

Where you find the people in need and the organizations that help them: providing shelter, food, clothing and other life-sustaining supports; raising money to keep their services going or to expand them; raising awareness about needs in the community and countering discrimination against people in need

You can use *Getting Down to Work: Creating an Action Plan* to organize your work. For ideas on activities, see *10 Ways a Women's Committee Can Build an Inclusive Local* on pages 27–28 and the section of this guide called *Key Issues for Women of Steel*, starting on page 43. *Brainstorming: A Technique for Generating New Ideas* on page 31 suggests one creative way to choose goals and activities.

Also, consider the following when you put your plan together:

- ▶ How does it act on issues of importance to women in the local?
- ▶ Who has the power to do something about the issues of concern to women in your local?
- ▶ Can you mobilize the women in your local to get involved in this plan?
- ▶ Do you have allies in our union and in the community who can help?
- ▶ Is it doable?
- ▶ Is it fun?
- ▶ If we can't do it all at once, what are the priorities?

Getting Down to Work: Creating an Action Plan

An action plan is a way to take action on the issues important to women.

For each key issue your Women’s Committee decides to work on, identify the following information:

- ▶ What **success** would look like (i.e., how you would know you are making a difference)
- ▶ Any **challenges** you anticipate
- ▶ What **activities or actions** must take place
- ▶ **Who** will do what
- ▶ **When** they should take place (either by a specific date or during a timeframe)
- ▶ What **resources** (i.e., money, materials) are needed to carry them out
- ▶ **Communication** (who should know what?)

You could use a chart like this:

Key Issue 1:

What would success on this issue look like?

What challenges might we face?

Activities	Who does what	By when	Resources	Communication

Key Issue 2:

What would success on this issue look like?

What challenges might we face?

Activities	Who does what	By when	Resources	Communication

Key Issue 3:

What would success on this issue look like?

What challenges might we face?

Activities	Who does what	By when	Resources	Communication

An example might look like:

Key Issue 1: Affordable childcare

What would success on this issue look like? More women able to take on full-time jobs; working parents spend less on childcare, feel less stressed; more women/parents attending union events; more quality childcare spaces for more kids in our community.

What challenges might we face? Not everyone thinks women should work outside the home; not everyone supports making the big investment in provincial/national childcare programs; some members may not support spending local money on a new initiative.

Activities	Who does what	By when	Resources	Communication
Join provincial/national organizations working for better childcare and take part in their events	Marina will research which organizations, cost of membership and report to our next meeting Tracey will write a motion and move it at the next membership meeting	Try to join within two months from now	Money to pay membership fee and to support events (rallies, lobbying politicians, etc.)	Share fact sheets with local members, post to local web page or Facebook and reference in committee report to membership meetings Notices of any upcoming events to encourage participation
Bargain a childcare subsidy into our collective agreement	Amina will talk to district WoS coordinator to find sample language Once the committee has reviewed the options, Amina and Sandy will meet with the local president to learn dates of next bargaining round	Over the next three months to develop the proposal By the next round of collective bargaining try to get the proposal into the local's demands	Some telephone calls, research on the internet about language, local childcare fees and typical subsidy amounts	Discussion and information-sharing inside Women's Committee, with local president and executive. Also mention in committee report to membership meeting

Activities	Who does what	By when	Resources	Communication
Amend local bylaws to cover childcare expenses for members attending approved union events	Stephanie will find examples of wording in USW Guide for Women's Committees, from district WoS coordinator Stephanie and Tracey will prepare speaking notes and a motion for presentation at a local meeting	Within the next six months	Some telephone calls to research sample language	Each committee member will discuss the idea with 2-3 other members with school-age children, seeking their support Committee chair will discuss with local president, presenting rationale





STEP 5

How do we make it happen?

Now that you have an action plan, your Women's Committee needs to know where to find the necessary resources.

The Women's Committee will often rely on its members to volunteer their time. But local committees can also request funding from the local to make its action

plan a reality. That funding can cover things like lost time, travel, childcare, meals, room rental and donations.

Make it a practice every year to develop a budget, based on your action plan, and submit it to the local's executive for consideration. The Women's Committee will look organized and credible to the rest of the local. A budget with an action plan helps you explain to others what the committee's focus is and why you need the money. And they will also help you allocate your time well and stay focussed!

Here are some tips for developing a Women's Committee budget:

1. Develop a calendar for the local's budgeting cycle and key events

- ▶ Know the fiscal year of your local and when things are approved.
- ▶ Find out when and how money is approved in your local and when the Women's Committee budget would be considered.

2. Review previous local annual financial statements for spending patterns

- ▶ Note when large amounts are spent on key/favourite items so you will know when NOT to ask for money. Ask a few months before or after.
- ▶ Pay attention to big events coming up in the life of the local – for example, international conventions, conferences, etc. Make sure the local is sending women to these events.
- ▶ Figure out ways to explain your committee's work in ways that connect to priorities of the local.

3. Use the template in *Getting Down to Work: Making a Committee Budget as a guide*

- ▶ Distinguish between administrative costs – the costs of getting people to meetings – and program costs – the activities you want your committee to organize and carry out.
- ▶ This helps people see that the committee's work is not just sending people to meetings, but that those meetings produce something that benefits all local women.

4. Look for other sources of revenue and resources

- ▶ Think about joint work with other committees, such as Health and Safety or Human Rights, where you could work together to maximize impact and resources.
- ▶ Talk with your district Women's Committee to find out if they know of any pockets of money you can access inside our union or from any government grant programs.
- ▶ Find out if your local contributes to the USW Family and Community Education Fund. If it does, you might consider accessing funding from it.

5. Link your fundraising efforts to your programming

- ▶ If you're holding a fund-raising event, organize it so that it helps you with the committee's recruitment goals, lobbying efforts or education aims.
- ▶ Consider donating some or all of the proceeds to a campaign or organization working to advance women's equality in the community.

Getting Down to Work: Making a Committee Budget

Use this as a template for creating your Women’s Committee budget:

Program costs	
	\$
	\$
	\$

Administrative costs	
	\$
	\$
	\$

Expected Fundraising Revenue	
Event(s):	
Expected Revenue	
Minus	
Expected Cost	\$

Total Projected Budget	
Expenses	\$
Minus	
Expected Revenue	\$
Total Estimated Cost	\$

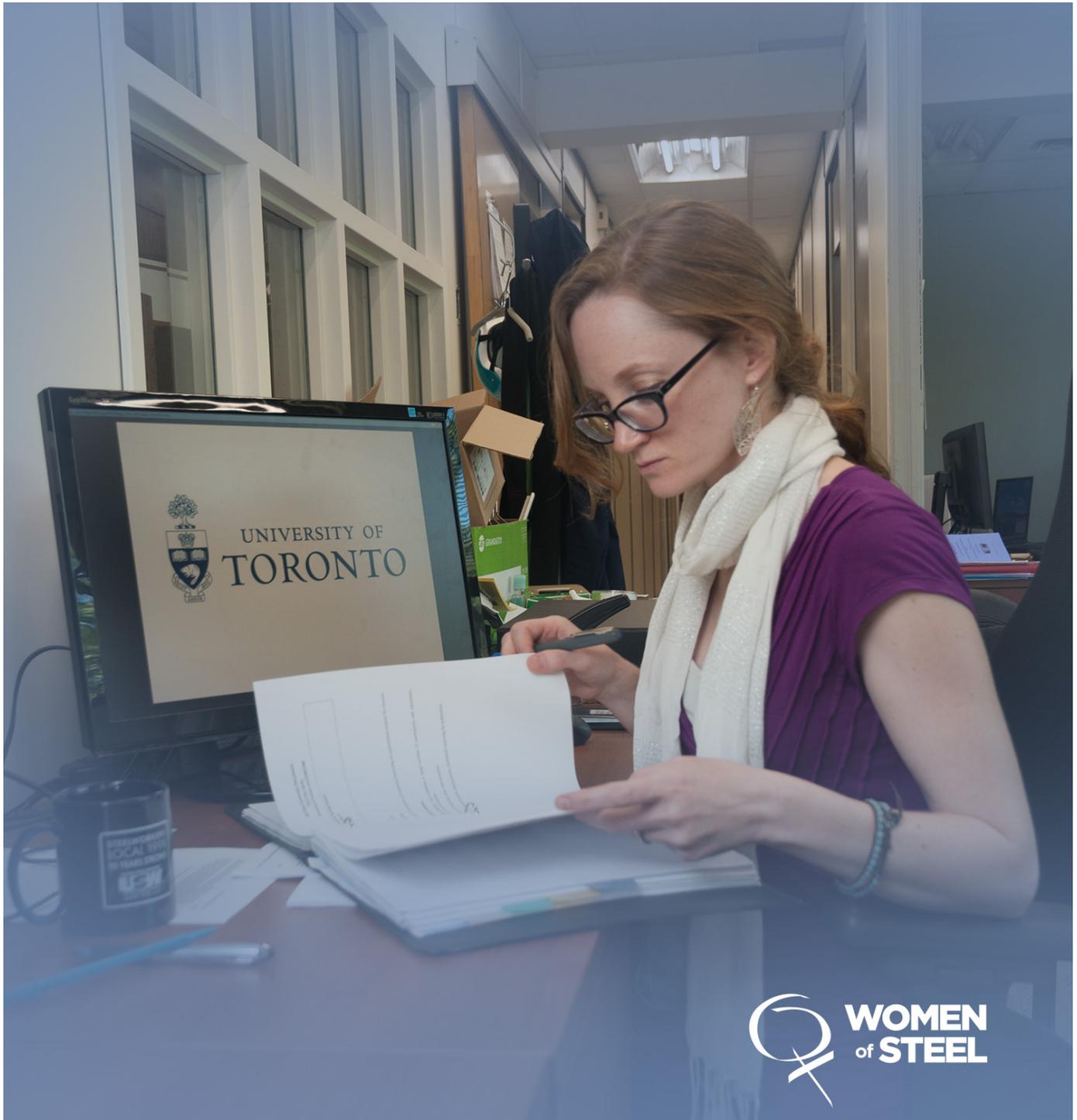
It’s okay to fundraise for special or non-core items, but Women’s Committees should not have to hold raffles, sales or other events for core programming such as sending members to courses and conferences, holding meetings, and working with members and community partners.

Reporting Expenses

Consult with your local's financial secretary to find out how to properly document and report expenses as well as any monies raised.

Keep track of your expenses and stay on budget. (If there are legitimate reasons why committee activities may exceed the budget approved by the local, make sure to consult with and get the okay from the local executive before spending more than has been approved.)

Be prepared to report on Women's Committee activities at local membership meetings. Reporting shows that the committee is responsible and accountable, and it also generates awareness and support.



STEP 6**Keep it happening!**

Money isn't the only thing a Women's Committee needs to function smoothly. You will also need to:

- ▶ Divide up the responsibilities among the committee to share the work
- ▶ Communicate with women in the workplace
- ▶ Make the committee visible and accessible
- ▶ Make committee involvement fun rather than a drain on energy

Sharing responsibilities

Elect or ask for a volunteer to act as the chairperson of your Women's Committee. This person should preside over meetings, keep order and make sure the agenda is followed. If shift work prevents a chairperson from presiding at every committee meeting, rotate the responsibility or elect co-chairs. This will also give others the chance to learn how to conduct a meeting.

Since the committee is accountable to all members, elect a recording secretary or ask for a volunteer to take minutes of the meeting. Record all motions passed and actions to be taken. Pass on information to other committees and to the local union executive. Volunteer to give a verbal report at each local membership meeting.

Decide how you will conduct committee meetings. Will you follow parliamentary procedure or Roberts' Rules of Order? Choose what works for your committee. Make sure a number of committee members learn how to chair a meeting using your preferred process.

Ask for volunteers and share the workload among committee members. A committee where a few do all the work is on the road to burnout for some and apathy for the many.

Making it fun

Besides sharing the workload, there are other ways to make sure Women's Committee meetings are a pleasure to attend.

- ▶ Alternate the purpose of your meetings. Devote one meeting to education (watch a video on any topic related to women's rights, invite a speaker from a women's campaign or organization), devote the next to fun and wellness (go out for supper, meet for tea or wine and cheese, hold a family potluck) and devote the third to regular business. Repeat the rotation.
- ▶ Show appreciation for each other. Say thank you and congratulate each other on achievements. Celebrate your successes!

Communicating

All committee members should take responsibility for keeping in touch with other women members in the workplace, talking to them face-to-face about current issues and events.

Your Women's Committee can also use social media (a Facebook page, for example), email and text messages to communicate within your committee and with women in your local. These forms of new media can be used to:

- ▶ Share success stories
- ▶ Keep members informed about what the Women's Committee is doing
- ▶ Recruit new volunteers for committee activities
- ▶ Get RSVPs for meetings
- ▶ Remind members of upcoming events
- ▶ Mobilize members to show up at meetings where key votes are taking place

Connect your committee sites with official USW accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and Instagram. Encourage members to do the same.

Encourage conversation and healthy debate. That means: be respectful of others and their opinions, and delete inappropriate or disrespectful comments.

A “Basic New Media Guide” and training are available from USW’s New Media department. For the guide, to talk about training, or for more in-depth information, contact newmedia@usw.ca.

Making committee events accessible

Hold meetings in places that are safe, have an elevator or no stairs, and at times that are convenient. Local union halls and district offices are often used for meetings, but make sure that women feel comfortable entering and leaving at night.

Provide childcare and transportation when necessary. Start and end meetings on time.

Other ideas are:

- ▶ Ask for time to meet at conferences and conventions.
- ▶ Arrange to meet in the lunchroom at work.
- ▶ Organize a potluck lunch or dinner at someone’s home.

Sometimes it’s hard to find a regular meeting time because of shift work or women’s family responsibilities. And some locals are spread out over a very large geographic area, so face-to-face meetings are special events that need to be organized and budgeted for. In these cases, using technologies like conference calls, Skype, GoToMeeting or other digital tools can be an effective alternative.



STEP 7

Is it working?

From time to time, evaluate how your committee is doing.

Look at your action plan and see if you are achieving your goals. For example, are new women coming out to your activities and meetings? Are you gaining co-operation from other local committees in acting on key issues? Did your motion get approved by the membership meeting?

Have a frank discussion among Women's Committee members. Ask each of them to say what they think the committee should:

▶ **Start doing**

▶ **Stop doing**

▶ **Continue doing**

Invite feedback from others, too. Talk with or survey women in the local for their opinion on the committee's work. If you are stuck, remember that you can always turn to the Women of Steel support structure (see page 31) and call someone for advice and assistance.



10 Ways a Women's Committee Can Build an Inclusive Local

1. Start conversations, one-on-one, with women you don't know.

- ▶ Speak to one member a week that you've never talked to before or rarely speak to. The next time you see them, greet them by name.
- ▶ Practise asking questions to start conversations and really listen to the answers.
- ▶ Invite a woman to have coffee or come to a union meeting with you.

2. Welcome new women to the workplace and to the local union.

- ▶ Introduce yourself and our union.
- ▶ Invite her to coffee and to meet others in the local union.
- ▶ If your local has a new-hire or new-member orientation program, ensure it includes information on the Women's Committee.

3. Hold a half-hour lunch-and-learn or after-shift education session on a workplace issue that is important to women in your local.

4. Create a regular time each week/every two weeks where women members can come and talk about workplace and other issues. Provide coffee and tea.

5. Get women elected to local positions.

- ▶ Support women activists to join the bargaining committee, the grievance committee, other local committees and the local executive.
- ▶ Support women to attend training about being a steward, health and safety rep, or local officer, and about bargaining.
- ▶ Arrange for mentoring and other support, especially if training is not available at the start of the new role.
- ▶ Get women together to identify the diversity of issues that most affect us. Share these with the local executive and bargaining committee to ensure that these become bargaining priorities.

6. Connect with the community.

- ▶ Find out what your members are already doing outside the workplace to promote justice. Think of how the Women's Committee or local could support these activities.
- ▶ Learn which First Nations and/or Métis group's traditional land you live and work on. Build connections between these communities and our union. Start union events by acknowledging their traditional territory.
- ▶ Find out who is organizing and supporting migrant and immigrant workers in your area, and volunteer, learn and build connections between them and your local.
- ▶ Connect your local union to support minimum wage campaigns, anti-poverty initiatives, Aboriginal justice initiatives, affordable housing and other organizing that's happening in your area.

- ▶ Invite a speaker from a community organizing initiative and provide an honorarium or donation to the group.
- ▶ Organize volunteers from the local union to attend or help out at events run by social justice advocates in the community.
- ▶ Ask the local women's shelter what items it most needs (clothing? children's toys? toiletries?) and then organize a collection drive among the membership.

7. Connect with national women's issues.

- ▶ "Like" USW's Women of Steel Canada Facebook page or your district Women's Committee page.
- ▶ Visit www.usw.ca/WomenofSteel to learn more about how our union is involved in national issues.
- ▶ Childcare, ending violence against women, justice for missing and murdered Indigenous women, and pay equity are all national as well as local issues. Invite speakers in from an organization working on one of these issues.

8. Get involved in electoral politics.

- ▶ Consider running for school-board trustee, city councillor, member of the provincial or territorial legislature or for federal Parliament.
- ▶ Back the campaigns of other women candidates who are committed to social justice.
- ▶ Develop questions about women's equality to ask candidates in upcoming elections.
- ▶ Get involved with the NDP in your area.
- ▶ Encourage women to vote and be politically active in their ridings to elect progressive candidates.

9. Think Global.

- ▶ Find out about the Steelworkers Humanity Fund, and raise money for an initiative run by women in another country. Go to www.usw.ca/humanity.

10. Help organize events in the community to mark key dates for women, such as:

- ▶ March 8 (International Women's Day)
- ▶ April (Equal Pay Day; date can vary, depending on province/territory)
- ▶ October 4 (National Day to Honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women)
- ▶ December 6 (National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women)

Creating a Welcoming Cross-Cultural Environment

- ▶ If offering food at your meetings, provide real options for people who are vegetarian, have health conditions such as diabetes or avoid certain foods for religious reasons.
- ▶ Ensure food at your events is clearly labelled so people can make informed choices about what they are eating.
- ▶ If in doubt, do not assume. Ask questions in a respectful and open manner and know that most people welcome an environment where they can talk about their backgrounds.
- ▶ Take the time to learn how to pronounce and spell your members' names accurately.
- ▶ When people do not get involved in union activities, don't assume it is because they are not interested. Ask questions about what might interest them or how they could see themselves getting more involved.
- ▶ Avoid swearing and the use of aggressive language. People who are new to our union or to their jobs may not be accustomed to this language and may feel intimidated about getting involved.
- ▶ When others are speaking, allow them time to express their opinions and try to respectfully answer their questions.
- ▶ Make efforts to discourage cliques at your meetings. Build activities into meetings that provide opportunities for everyone to get to know each other and ensure there are roles for everyone to get involved.
- ▶ When planning a large gathering, send out a questionnaire in advance to members asking about accommodation of mobility needs, food needs, childcare, etc.
- ▶ Don't make negative comments or jokes about people's clothing, food, accent, way of speaking, etc.
- ▶ Hold events in places where washrooms are gender neutral and accessible to all bodies, whether walking or in a wheelchair.

Adapted from OPSEU Cross Cultural Communication course

Each local union sets its own expense policy. As long as locals comply with the USW Constitution, locals can make policy to address particular needs. Some locals have taken steps to ensure that members with children are not excluded from participation in union events. Childcare expense coverage benefits parents/guardians whether they are male or female. But given that women still bear most of the load for family responsibilities, childcare expense coverage really helps Women of Steel!

Here are two examples of policy language from USW locals:

"When an elected or appointed delegate is attending a convention, conference or course, the local will pay up to a maximum of \$75.00 per child per day provided receipts are submitted confirming the expense. Childcare costs that would normally occur had the delegate been at his/her workplace or childcare provided by a spouse or companion will not be reimbursed. Any request for childcare other than those covered by this bylaw must be submitted in advance to the Executive Committee for their approval." (USW Local 1998 (University of Toronto) Bylaws Section 6(b))

"That members on official [local] sanctioned business, unit general or executive meetings or to [local] approved labour courses, be reimbursed for additional costs incurred for childcare. The additional costs shall be determined by the differences between normal working day costs and the actual costs incurred. Any exceptional childcare expenses shall require prior approval of the Secretary-Treasurer." (TWU USW 1944 Financial Policy 5.07)



Brainstorming: A Technique for Generating New Ideas

If your Women's Committee is in a rut or is just looking for new and creative ideas for what to do, try brainstorming. Invite committee members and some other women who aren't on the committee. A room full of like-minded people won't generate as many creative ideas as a diverse group!

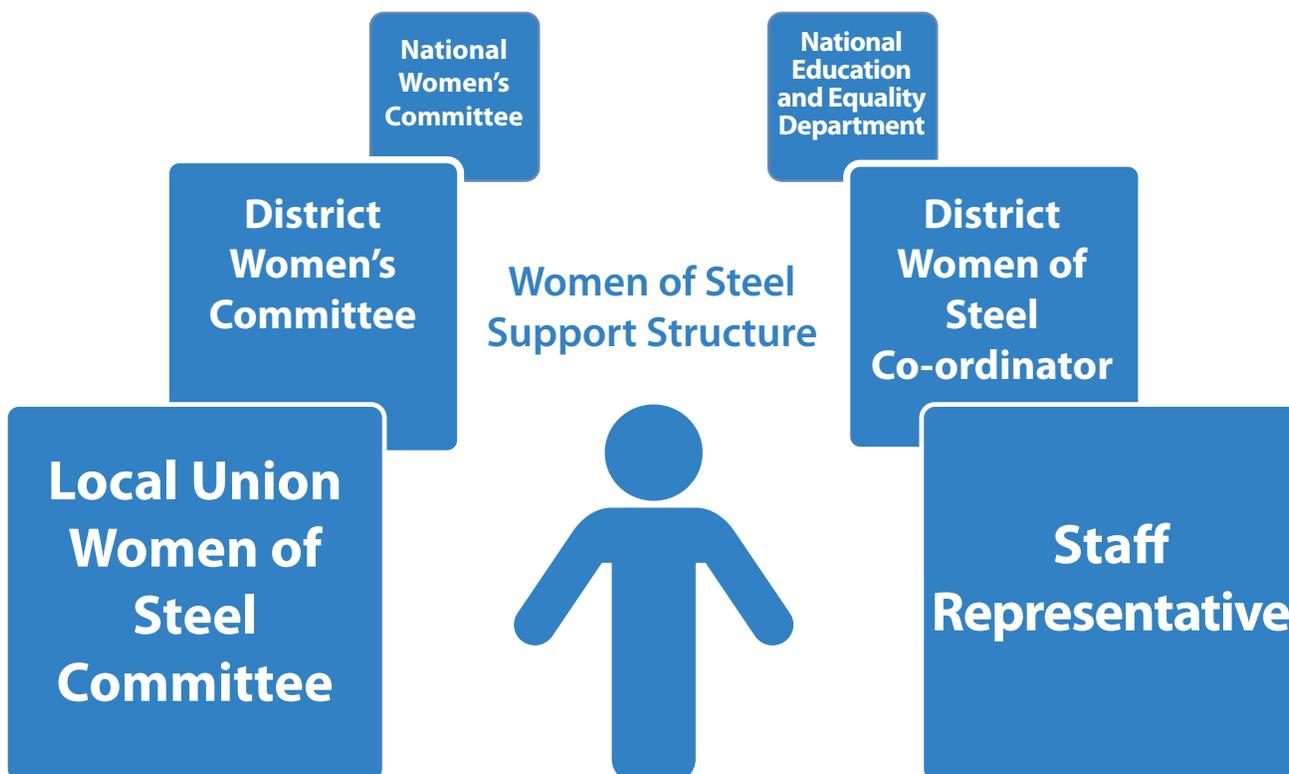
You will need a flipchart stand, paper, masking tape and a marker. Make sure everyone can sit comfortably and see the flipchart.

Here's what to do:

1. Ask one person to record the ideas on flipchart paper
2. Clearly define the question (for example, "What activities will fire up women in our local about demanding affordable childcare in our community?")
3. Make it clear that your goal is to generate as many ideas as possible. No idea is too impractical to go on the list
4. Ask women to call out their ideas
5. Write down every idea, without any judgement or criticism
6. When one flipchart sheet is three-quarters full, tape it to a wall and use a fresh sheet
7. Don't be afraid of silence; wait for more ideas to come!
8. Only once everyone is really out of ideas, thank them for their contribution

Now the group can start to evaluate the ideas. Start by eliminating the ones that the group agrees are illegal or too expensive or too risky. Don't be surprised if someone suggests a new idea or a way to modify one of the ideas already on the list. Keep going until you are left with a reasonable number.

If you want to rank the ideas, ask each woman to indicate the top two or three that she would take part in by making a checkmark beside those ideas on the flipchart list.



Getting Things Done

Where Do We Fit In?

To run an effective Women’s Committee, it is important to understand the structure of our union. This will allow the committee to direct questions, suggestions and requests to the appropriate person or place.

If you are unsure of who or where to turn to, use the Women of Steel Support Structure (p.31). Your local union executive, staff representative, district Women’s Committee chair and district Women of Steel co-ordinator are your first lines of support.

Taking Part in Your Local Union

Local unions, and individual units within an amalgamated local, are the foundation of the United Steelworkers. They are administered by an executive, which is made up of officers – president, vice-president, recording secretary, financial secretary and treasurer – elected by the membership every three years.

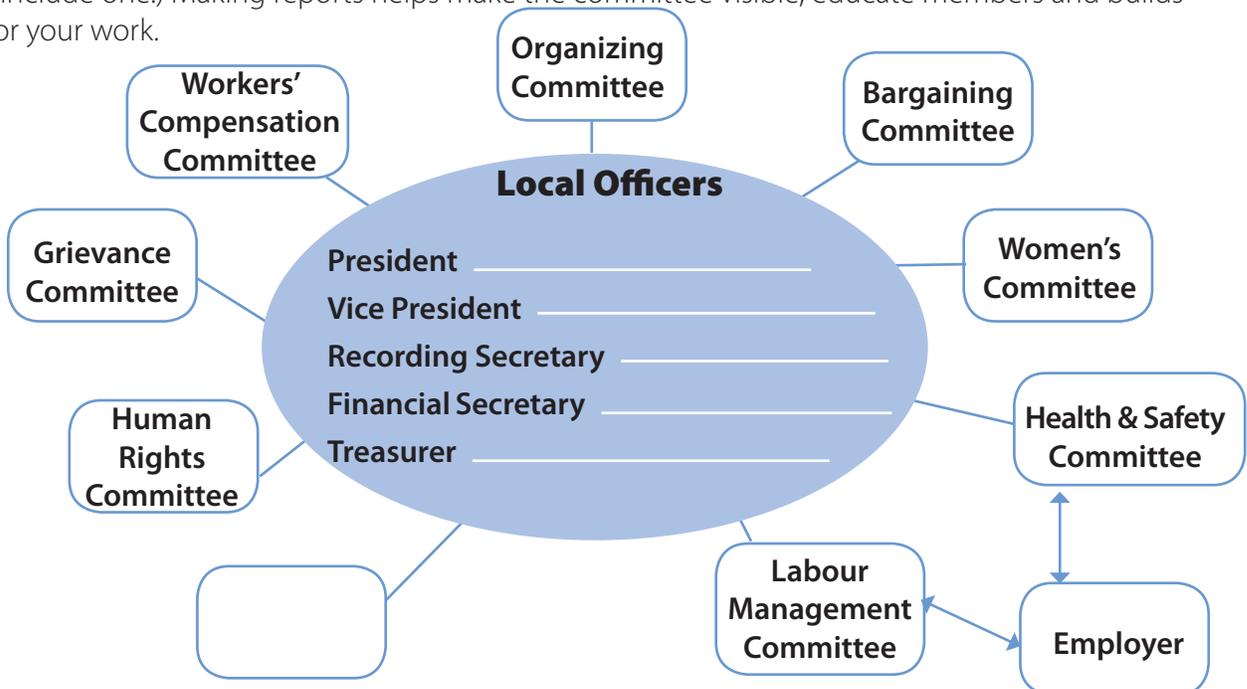
The main rules for how the local union operates are set out in the local’s bylaws. Your local may use the standard USW Bylaws for Local Unions or USW Bylaws for Amalgamated Local Unions. Or it may have a separate, approved set of bylaws.

Locals can add to or amend bylaws to meet specific needs of their membership, as long as those changes are in keeping with our union’s constitution. (For example, meetings held at 7 p.m. may be impossible for people to attend if they have child or elder-care responsibilities. You can propose changing meeting times and the location to be more accessible.)

A lot of decision-making about local business takes place at general membership meetings. There, members can make and vote on motions. Motions address things like sending members to courses and conferences, spending money on projects, changing the local’s bylaws, and supporting campaigns launched by our union or by community organizations.

Women’s Committee members need to know how to write and move motions, how to speak about why local members should vote in favour of motions, and how to mobilize supporters to attend meetings and vote.

And the committee is accountable to the local union. The chair or a member should report to each general membership meeting, even briefly. (If a Women’s Committee report is not on the agenda, ask to amend the agenda to include one.) Making reports helps make the committee visible, educate members and builds solidarity for your work.



Getting Down to Work: How to Contact your Local Executive and Committees

Use a tool like this so members of your Women’s Committee know which people in the local to contact for information and support.

USW local #: _____ Stand Alone Amalgamated

Units in your local (if amalgamated) _____

District Office _____ Staff Rep _____

Date of election of officers (General Membership Meeting) _____

Officers’ Names	Mailing Address	Email	Telephone
President			
Vice-President			
Recording Secretary			
Financial Secretary			
Treasurer			
Chief Steward			
Women’s Committee Chair			
Grievance Committee Chair			
Health and Safety Committee Chair			
Bargaining Committee Chair			
Human Rights Committee Chair			
Other Committee Chair			

Getting Down to Work: Connecting with Human Rights Committees

The USW Constitution asks each local union to have a Human Rights Committee. If your local has one, your Women's Committee should think about how each committee can support the other's work.

Women are more than "only" women! We have a race, an ethnic identity, a sexual orientation, and different physical and mental abilities, to name just a few. So the issues that the Human Rights Committee chooses to work on can be important for racialized women, Aboriginal women, women with disabilities and LGBTQ2S+ women.

Here are some things your Women's Committee can do:

- ▶ Plan to hold a joint meeting to identify areas of common concern
- ▶ Reach out to any women who sit on the Human Rights Committee and invite their input
- ▶ Work together with the Human Rights Committee to plan events for Black History Month, National Aboriginal Day, Pride month, October 4 (national day to honour missing and murdered Indigenous women), etc.
- ▶ When recruiting women to join the committee or attend courses and conferences, look for and support women from a range of races, languages, sexual orientations, ages and abilities.
- ▶ When working on issues of concern to women, think how the issue affects women differently depending on race or ability or other characteristics so that committee actions are relevant to all members

Working with Other Committees

Our union's constitution requires local unions to have these committees: Grievance, Safety and Health, Workers' Compensation, Human Rights, Organizing, and Women's. Local unions may also create other committees, based on the needs of the local, such as an Education Committee, a Pay Equity Committee, a Political Action Committee, an Entertainment Committee, a Building Committee, a Trades Committee or a Labour-Management Committee.

There may also be committees on some of these same issues at the area, regional, district and national level.

It is useful for your Women's Committee to know which committees exist in your local (and beyond) and who sits on them. Depending on what your committee's action plan includes, you may want to work together with another committee, share information or seek a committee's support.

Your Women's Committee should also encourage sisters to seek election or appointment to committees, especially in your local union.

Bargaining

Women's Committees should support and engage with the bargaining process, by, for example:

- ▶ Surveying women members' needs
- ▶ Helping the negotiating committee better understand the impact of workplace problems on women and women's equality
- ▶ Letting the negotiating committee know that the Women's Committee is willing to back them up if negotiations get difficult.
- ▶ Getting women elected or appointed to the negotiating committee

USW Local 1-207 was trying to bargain leave-of-absence language for members experiencing domestic violence, but the employer's committee was unconvinced. So at the bargaining table, the union's spokesperson showed a PowerPoint/video presentation, designed by USW's National Women's Committee as part of an anti-violence campaign. And the employer agreed to the leave language.

Winning a provision in a collective agreement does not only happen at the bargaining table. Build alliances and partners in your work for change. Talk to other members about your ideas and why you think adding to the collective agreement will make workers' lives better. Their reactions might help you to further define the proposal and identify possible solutions or strategies for change. The Women's Committee can also help design resource materials to encourage other members to support a proposal that seems new or outside-of-the-norm for the sector.

Many issues may also be addressed during the life of the collective agreement. Keep track of the issues and complaints raised by your committee. Work with the local executive and other local committees to design a strategy to address these issues, for example, at labour-management meetings or other joint processes.

Contact your staff representative or check our union's website for USW bargaining policies, bargaining guides and recommended collective agreement language on a variety of issues.

Conferences and Conventions

The USW holds conventions and conferences to develop policies and build activism on labour and community issues:

- ▶ The International Constitutional Convention (held every 3 years)
- ▶ The Canadian National Policy Conference (held every 3 years)
- ▶ District conferences (frequency decided by each district)

Delegates to these policy-making meetings are elected by the local union membership. Your Women's Committee can take steps to nominate and vote for women to be sent to these important events.

Locals can also submit resolutions to the International Constitutional Convention and the National Policy Conference. Resolutions are an important way for your Women's Committee to draw attention to and get action on issues important to women in your local. Use *Getting Down to Work: Writing Motions and Resolutions* to help put your ideas into proper shape. Remember: you must first pass any resolutions at a membership meeting and build support to have them approved!

Finally, USW belongs to labour councils, provincial/territorial federations of labour and the Canadian Labour Congress. These bodies all hold regular conventions, to which USW locals can send delegates and resolutions. These venues are good places to develop skills, learn more about the labour movement and take action on



Getting Down to Work: Writing Motions and Resolutions

important issues. Women's Committees can also work to elect delegates and send resolutions to these events.

A **motion** is a proposal on the floor of a local meeting. It requires a seconder and can be debated before the vote is called. Sometimes the recording secretary will ask you for a written copy to ensure accuracy in the minutes.

Examples:

- ▶ *I move adoption of the proposed budget for this year's Women's Committee program.*
- ▶ *I move that the local send two women members to the next Women of Steel: Developing Leadership course and cover all associated costs.*
- ▶ *I move that the local adopt the following policy: Members on official USW-sanctioned business; unit, general or executive meetings; and USW approved courses be reimbursed for additional costs incurred for childcare. The additional costs should be determined by the differences between normal working day costs and the actual costs incurred. Any exceptional childcare expenses shall require prior approval of the local executive.*

A **resolution** is a proposal presented to larger bodies like the USW National Policy Conference or your provincial or territorial federation of labour. Because resolutions are always circulated in advance of debate, they are structured to include a reason for the proposal.

Examples:

Bargaining Childcare Clauses

Whereas high childcare costs and poor service availability negatively affect USW members who are parents, preventing their full participation in their workplaces and our union; and

Whereas quality, affordable, universal childcare not only enhances the equality of women, but also has a positive impact on the overall economy.

Therefore Be It Resolved that the United Steelworkers encourage local unions to bargain collective agreement language regarding the provision of childcare and/or resources for childcare for members; and

Be It Further Resolved that staff and activists be trained and provided with resources necessary to successfully negotiate and enforce the childcare provisions in collective agreements and workplace policies; and

Be It Further Resolved that the United Steelworkers engage with and support organizations at the provincial and national levels which lobby governments to implement affordable, quality public childcare programs.

(Passed at the 2016 National Policy Conference)

Income Disparity

Whereas our employers are earning record profits while the wages of working families stagnate; and

Whereas the disparity between production, 74% growth, and hourly compensation, 9% growth, has continued to expand since 1973; and

Whereas precarious work conditions and associated numbers of working poor are on the rise; and

Whereas women continue to earn, on average, 30% less than men for work of equal value; and

Whereas racial income disparity means that in the U.S., the median non-racialized family income is 16 times that of a racialized family income; and for Canada, the median income for racialized persons in 2005 was \$19,100 compared to \$27,100 for non-racialized persons; and

Whereas the union stands for living wages for all.

Therefore Be It Resolved that:

- 1.** Our union will support full pay equity in all collective agreements and workplaces.
- 2.** Our union will support increasing the minimum wage to a living wage.
- 3.** Our union will promote a campaign about the socioeconomic impact of income disparity.
- 4.** Our union will support and resource a Job Evaluation System that accurately reflects worker skills, responsibilities, effort and working conditions.

(Submitted to the 2017 USW International Convention)

Organizing Your Motion Form

Use this form to organize your thoughts and support before you put a motion on the floor of your local meeting.

Motion moved by _____

Motion seconded by _____

Names of other members who say they will support and/or speak to this motion:

I move that:

Reasons for the motion: *Unlike a resolution, the rationale is not formally part of the motion, but may form part of the speaking notes of the mover of the motion, once the motion is on the floor. It may also be part of the written record of the meeting.*

Meeting date, time and location: _____

Conferences

District conferences are informative union events as well as very useful tools for all local union activists:

- ▶ You meet and share union stories with other members
- ▶ You learn how to present an idea, thought or strategy to large groups of your peers
- ▶ You participate in panel discussions and breakout groups
- ▶ You meet face to face with the leaders of our union and have the opportunity to chat with them about what's on your mind

How We Get There

Local unions may send as many delegates as they would like (within their financial capabilities) to district conferences. The local makes this decision at a General Membership Meeting, so make sure you are there for the discussion, decision making, nominations and voting. You may nominate yourself to attend the conference.

It is important to have support at the meeting. Brothers and sisters may speak in favour of your nomination; they will also provide votes for you. Be prepared to explain why your local would benefit from sending you as a delegate to the conference.

Written by the District 3 Women's Committee

Elections

The United Steelworkers is a democratic union because local officers (president, vice president, recording secretary, financial secretary, treasurer, guard, guides and trustees) and the grievance committee are elected by local union members every three years. And international officers, the Canadian director and district directors are elected by direct vote of members every four years.

Women's Committees help ensure resources and support are available to women who are interested in seeking an elected position. A Steelworker's Guide to Running for Union Office provides activists with descriptions of each elected position and tips on how to run a successful campaign. Copies are available on our web page at

www.usw.ca/WomenofSteel or from your staff representative or the Canadian National Office.

The following resolution was drafted by Local 9288 to ensure the local union executive would reflect the membership. The resolution, passed by two-thirds of the members at the regular local union meeting, amended the local's bylaws.

WHEREAS, there is a need and a desire for affirmative action at the executive level; and

WHEREAS, the constitution of the workplace is approximately 50 per cent women.

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the United Steelworkers Local 9288 adopt a policy ensuring that at all times either the president or the vice president of the local will be a woman.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the above policy become a bylaw of Local Union 9288.

Steelworkers Education

The more members who are trained and active, the better we are at meeting the needs of our members, reaching out to the unorganized and working for political change to benefit our families and communities.

Steelworker courses are developed by our union's Education Department and are taught by Steelworkers. Courses include USW Women's Committees: Leading Together and Women of Steel: Developing Leadership. There are also courses for stewards, bargaining committee members, human rights activists, health and safety activists, local officers and more. (Contact your district education co-ordinator for more information, or visit www.usw.ca/education.)

When USW members attend education courses, all costs (course fee, travel, accommodation, per diems and lost wages) are covered by the local. As well, scholarships are distributed by the district office to staff representatives for use by local unions to offset some of the costs.

Your Women's Committee can support women to attend USW courses in several ways:

- ▶ Some districts have a calendar of upcoming courses. If you see (or hear about) a course that sisters should attend, make a motion at a general membership meeting to send them.
- ▶ If a course women want is not on the calendar, speak with your local executive or your staff representative.
- ▶ Get involved in your area council's or region's education committee, if there is one, that requests Steelworker courses. You can help to ensure courses are offered that are of interest to and meet the needs of women members.
- ▶ Survey members about their needs and when courses are best held.

Women can do more than attend courses. We can also facilitate them. Facilitator-training courses are offered periodically in each district. Sisters who are interested in this union role should let their local leadership and staff representative know.

Our union also has other educational opportunities, including:

- ▶ **Rudychuk Scholarship Placement Program:** There is one Rudychuk placement annually in each district in Canada. Placements are approved by the director and last for one to two months.
- ▶ **Leadership Development Scholarship Program:** Over a four-year period, participants attend four one-week-long training sessions that aim to expand their strategic planning and leadership abilities. District directors nominate activists to the program. Each district is allotted seats based on membership numbers.

Your Women’s Committee can educate women members about these opportunities. Interested members should let their local president and staff representative know about their desire to take part.

Many sisters who have taken Women of Steel courses have become leaders in their local unions and beyond. Here are some of the things you’ll learn in the two courses:

Women of Steel: Developing Leadership

- ▶ Know key struggles for diverse women’s equality
- ▶ Discuss how discrimination and privilege shape our experience at work and in the union
- ▶ Learn about the different positions and committees in the local and how to access them
- ▶ Know how the local connects to USW and the global union and social movements
- ▶ Become more familiar with the USW constitution and basic rules of order for a meeting
- ▶ Identify your own strengths and areas for improvement as a leader
- ▶ Feel more confident to speak up when something is unfair
- ▶ Analyze systemic barriers to diverse women’s participation in the local
- ▶ Strategize actions women can take to reduce harassment and other barriers to women
- ▶ Organize a problem-solving meeting
- ▶ Speak at a meeting using rules of order

USW Women’s Committees: Leading Together

- ▶ Develop some indicators of an effective local Women’s Committee
- ▶ Identify gaps in our knowledge about women and their issues in our locals
- ▶ Identify opportunities to talk to women members
- ▶ Connect the work of the Women’s Committee to the priorities of the local
- ▶ Draft a budget for the Women’s Committee’s work
- ▶ Develop motions that advance equality in the local
- ▶ Practise holding a focused conversation with a group of women
- ▶ Develop a year’s plan for your local Women’s Committee
- ▶ Practise presenting and winning support for Women’s Committee work back in the local

Online Resources

You will find useful tools and information in the Women of Steel section of the USW website under the heading Get Involved or at www.usw.ca/womenofsteel.

Check out your district’s website for additional Women of Steel information.

Ask your local union, area council or staff representative for copies of the local bylaws and the USW Constitution.



Getting Down to Work: Connecting with NextGen

Next Generation (NextGen) is a program to inspire and educate union members who are 35 and younger. It provides opportunities for mentoring and leadership development, along with union and community activism.

NextGen honours our union's strong past, protects our present and aims to make our union vibrant and relevant for the future by sparking a lifetime of union and community activism.

Activating NextGen members is a good thing for your local. Canadians between 18 and 35 approve of unions, more so than other generations. It increases union participation, letting the local tap into the energy and experience of more members. When young workers are active in our union, we all learn to better understand the challenges they face.

Here are some things your Women's Committee can do:

- ▶ Try to ensure that at least one member of your committee is a NextGen member.
- ▶ Support motions at local membership meetings to send NextGen members to courses and other union events.
- ▶ When working on issues of concern to women, think whether the issue affects women differently depending on their age, so that committee actions are relevant to all members.

To find out more information about USW's NextGen program, visit www.usw.ca/nextgen.

Getting Down to Work: Connecting with SOAR

SOAR: the Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees, is a terrific resource for members looking for advice, guidance and inspiration from retired Women of Steel who have faced similar struggles and appreciate the opportunity to share their stories and experiences. And members are active and interested in helping you!

Here are some things you could do:

- ▶ With the help of your staff representative, contact active retirees to join your committee, speak on a specific issue or help you in a particular campaign.
- ▶ Many women workers are concerned about planning for their retirement. Members of SOAR can help people plan and prepare as well as provide a network of support.
- ▶ Grandparents are also facing a childcare crunch if they help provide care for grandchildren or as they see their adult children try to cope. SOAR members could be interested in working with the Women's Committee on a childcare campaign.
- ▶ Find out the name and number of the contact person for SOAR in your area, for future reference.

Key Issues for Women of Steel

Pay Equity

Regardless of where you work in Canada, there is a clear gender wage gap. In other words, women earn less on average than men. And the wage gap is much higher for women of colour, Indigenous women, women with disabilities, LGBTQ women and immigrant women.

Unions are usually successful at ensuring equal pay for equal work. But that alone does not eliminate the gender pay gap. Pay equity, or equal pay for work of equal value, means eliminating the systemic undervaluing of female-dominated jobs or professions. Even with a union, women workers can still be concentrated in lower-paying job classifications because the work is still seen as less important or easier (caring for the elderly, for example). Even with a union, women are more likely to work part-time and to take time off (often unpaid) for family responsibilities, resulting in lower pensions and benefits.

Some provinces in Canada have formal pay-equity legislation with (relatively) clear processes for employers and unions to follow. In those places, our union can still play an active role through involvement in job evaluation and ensuring that the employer is living up to their pay-equity obligations.

But in jurisdictions with no pay-equity legislation, nothing will happen without an active push from women and our union.

Even without good laws, we have the power to reduce the gender wage gap through collective bargaining. Women can use the bargaining table to win gender-neutral job evaluation systems, training opportunities to enter higher paying jobs, fewer steps in wage grids, top-ups while on leave, pension improvements and better benefits for part-time workers, to name just a few.

Visit www.usw.ca/WomenofSteel to find the complete guide, Closing the Gender Wage Gap – We Can Do it Through Collective Bargaining.

Women's Health and Safety

All workers are concerned about the effects work might be having on their health. Our union is a leader in health and safety activism.

But we're realizing that, in many cases, workplaces, machines, personal protective equipment and safety programs have been designed to suit male workers. After all, it's only since the 1980s that women have entered the workforce in significant numbers.

Your Women's Committee can advocate for women's health and safety and work with the local's health and safety committee because:

- ▶ Even when a workplace hazard affects both women and men, women may be at greater or different risk because of differences between men's and women's bodies.
- ▶ Women face different risks depending on where we are at in our reproductive cycle (for example, when pregnant, when menstruating, while going through menopause).
- ▶ Protective clothing and equipment can be inadequate or even dangerous if it does not properly fit women's bodies or if it cannot be easily removed to go to the bathroom.
- ▶ Lack of adequate, accessible toilet facilities can result in urinary tract infections and unsanitary conditions.

- ▶ Poorly designed shower and other facilities can put women at risk of harassment and violence.
- ▶ An unsafe workplace culture can put women at risk of violence and of sexual and racial harassment.
- ▶ Abusive boyfriends, husbands and partners
- ▶ know the workplace location and may harass or attack in or near work.
- ▶ If a workplace is not prepared to properly accommodate workers who are transitioning gender, they can experience harassment, violence and mental stress.

Here are some things your Women's Committee can do:

- ▶ Create a survey for women to get them thinking and talking about their health.
- ▶ Arrange a presentation on USW's Domestic Violence at Work initiative or another women's health issue for your next committee meeting.
- ▶ Investigate creating a system of domestic violence first-responders in your local to support members experiencing domestic violence.
- ▶ Ask your local's health and safety committee to do a workplace health and safety audit, paying particular attention to the design of the workplace and the job to see how the work can be modified to reduce identified accident and health risks for women.
- ▶ Find out how many days of work have been lost due to illness and how many lost-time accidents have been reported in the past year in your workplace. Compare statistics for men and women, to see if there are any significant differences.

Harassment

Harassment is wrong. It devalues workers and it destroys their self-worth and confidence inside and outside the workplace.

Harassment can be based on factors including gender, race, age, physical or mental ability, sexual orientation or personal dislike. No matter what its guise, it is one person's attempt to demonstrate power over another person.

Our goal is to achieve harassment-free workplaces, union courses and conferences. We know that harassment destroys union solidarity. And it can poison the work environment, affecting work performance and endangering the safety of the worker and their co-workers. Undermining someone's personal dignity and pride, harassment, if unchallenged, can lead to accidents and prolonged illness.

USW has a wide range of resources to combat harassment, including the United Steelworkers Guide to Preventing and Dealing with Harassment. Visit our website and click on Human Rights and Equity under the Get Involved tab.

Childcare

Having affordable, quality childcare enables parents to hold down full-time or steady work without breaking the family budget. For lower-income or single parents (who are mostly women), it's even more important. And all working parents can better balance work and family if they know their children are safe, thriving and happy.

Almost 70 per cent of mothers with children under five are working. But Canada lacks a national childcare system. There are only enough regulated spaces for about 19 per cent of children aged 12 and under. It's even harder to find spaces for infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, Aboriginal and rural children.

For many families, childcare is the second highest expense after housing. In most of Canada, childcare subsidies are hard to come by or are designed so that even low-income parents have to cover high out-of-pocket costs.

Getting Down to Work: Women's Mental Health

It is very difficult to define stress. But we know that it can harm our physical and mental health. Sexual harassment, domestic violence, discrimination, lack of pay equity, job and family responsibility demands, lack of childcare and its high costs, caring for elderly or sick or disabled relatives, the design of the job (ergonomics), electronic monitoring and too much supervision, job insecurity, and fear of layoffs and unemployment all contribute to stress.

Here are some things your Women's Committee can do:

- ▶ Survey members about sources of stress.
- ▶ Think about how the organization of work (schedules, job duties) and the physical structure of the workplace could be changed to better accommodate the needs of workers and reduce stress.
- ▶ Negotiate a childcare allowance or flex time to help relieve some of the stress parents feel in juggling family responsibilities.
- ▶ Negotiate paid leaves of absence for workers experiencing domestic violence and train members to help them access support at work and in the community.
- ▶ Negotiate a joint anti-harassment policy and an education program for all workers and supervisors on discrimination and harassment in the workplace.
- ▶ Ensure union events are harassment-free and accessible to all workers.
- ▶ Negotiate strong job-security provisions: restrictions on contracting out, limits on part-time work, enhanced severance and retirement provisions.
- ▶ Negotiate benefit coverage that includes all workers.
- ▶ Negotiate a job evaluation system to implement equal pay for work of equal value.
- ▶ Identify community programs and agencies that provide counselling and support to victims of harassment or violence; many local unions have negotiated Employee Assistance Plans.
- ▶ Attend USW's multi-day course on mental health and/or arrange for a short presentation in your workplace or at a union event.
- ▶ Organize social events and opportunities inside and outside of the workplace to help build solidarity and support within the bargaining unit.

WOMEN OF STEEL: WORKING FOR EQUALITY

Quebec's childcare program increased the number of women in the workforce. Research has shown that Quebec's investment in its \$7-a-day childcare program has more than paid for itself through mothers' annual income and consumption taxes.

Along with other unions and childcare organizations, USW is lobbying for a national childcare program developed collaboratively with the provinces and Indigenous communities. We want stable funding to build a public childcare system that is accessible and affordable for all families regardless of where they live in Canada or whether they work non-standard hours. The national program must also include culturally appropriate Indigenous early childhood education, and provide a living wage and decent working conditions to those providing the care.



Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence at Work

Violence against women and girls is a huge problem in Canada. One in three Canadian women over the age of 16 experiences sexual assault in her lifetime. Aboriginal women, women of colour and transgender women face greater risks of violence.

Because Aboriginal women are four-to-five times more likely to be victims of homicide, USW continues to demand an effective national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and fast, meaningful implementation of its recommendations. And Women's Committees, as well as local unions, are educating men on the key role they play in ending violence against women. It starts with refusing to join in conversations or jokes that demean women and telling other men that such behaviour is not okay.

One in three workers have experienced domestic violence, according to a survey done in 2014 by the Canadian Labour Congress. The vast majority of the victims are women. Just over half said the violence followed them to work, in the form of abusive email messages and telephone calls, being followed to work or right into the workplace, and abusive calls and messages to co-workers, supervisors and managers.

Over 80% of domestic violence victims report that their work performance was negatively affected. Absenteeism and poor work performance can leave victims vulnerable to discipline. Almost 10% said they had lost a job because of domestic violence.

Women with a history of domestic violence have to change jobs more often, are more likely to work in casual and part-time jobs, and therefore have lower personal incomes than women without experiences of violence. The financial security of a job can allow women to escape abusive relationships and maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their children.

USW can play an important role in ending violence against women and girls. At the bargaining table, we can negotiate leave-of-absence language and other supports for members experiencing domestic violence. And we can train members to provide peer support through a system of domestic violence first responders. For sample bargaining language and convincing arguments to use with the employer, check out Bargaining Guide: Addressing Domestic Violence in USW Collective Agreements on our website at www.usw.ca/anti-violence.

Your Women's Committee can also engage in political action to end violence. Lobby provincial and territorial politicians to improve funding to women's shelters and to include domestic violence leave of absence provisions in employment standards legislation. Lobby federal politicians to create a national action plan on violence against women.

Organizing: Spread the Word

The future of our union depends on our ability to attract and encourage new members to build a union in all workplaces.

We need to find ways of connecting with workers in non-unionized workplaces. We need to spread the word.

The advantages of being part of a union are clear:

- ▶ Better wages and benefits
- ▶ Fair working conditions
- ▶ Respect and a voice at work
- ▶ Job security
- ▶ Safer workplaces
- ▶ Access to a grievance and arbitration procedure

Reach out to non-unionized women. Help them organize and continue to build a stronger union!



Getting Down to Work: Building Solidarity and a Stronger Union: Organizing New Members

A majority of women work in non-unionized workplaces across our economy. These workplaces are often small, wages are low and working conditions are poor with little job security. Working together with other member-organizers, USW women are often best able to reach these unorganized women to talk about the benefits of joining a union and negotiating a collective agreement. Women activists and organizers provide important role models to new and potential members as they develop leadership skills, self-esteem and confidence in our union.

Here are some things your Women's Committee can do:

- ▶ Invite your staff representative or organizer to a committee meeting to talk about organizing.
- ▶ Identify three workplaces in your community that are unorganized.
- ▶ Ask neighbours and acquaintances (potential new members) about their working conditions and mention the benefits of forming a union at their workplace. Speak about how you personally benefit from being a member of USW.
- ▶ Work within the local and our union to ensure that women's issues (e.g., pay equity, ending violence, balancing work and family, women's health and safety) are a priority for our union.
- ▶ Work with community groups on various issues (e.g., violence, harassment, pay equity, employment equity, human rights).
- ▶ Promote solidarity among women by participating in demonstrations or events on International Women's Day or December 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women.
- ▶ Talk about and share social media posts about what our union has done for all women, for workers of colour, for Aboriginal workers and for other workers seeking full equality.
- ▶ Talk about our union and its membership with neighbours, friends and acquaintances in stores, restaurants, childcare centres, etc.
- ▶ Share resources with other women's groups (e.g., USW policy statements, research, posters).
- ▶ Develop a local newsletter to educate and promote awareness about women's issues.
- ▶ Participate in school visits and set up an information kiosk at college and university job fairs.
- ▶ Visit the USW website to learn more at www.usw.ca/join.

Political Action: Changing the Power Structure Over Our Jobs

Most aspects of our jobs and our human rights are determined by government regulations and legislation. Government policies set the limits of how we are treated on the job and what changes we can make: from health and safety laws to maternity leave provisions, overtime rules, pension structures and bargaining power.

Many of the gains we've won in USW collective agreements (including those crucially important to women) are now shared by all workers, because they've been written into law. Unions, feminists and community activists over the years worked hard to elect politicians who have supported strong labour laws, health and safety provisions, and social legislation to protect workers, women and our families. We, trade unionists, can be proud of these accomplishments.

It is also true that many of the changes we still need to make – from domestic violence leave, Indigenous rights, safety enforcement and childcare – require government action.

Making political change needs to be done both during elections (through campaigns) and between elections (by lobbying). USW is strongly committed to achieving change for our members, our families and our community through election campaigning and political lobbying.

Political action should be an important element of your Women's Committee action plan.

Direct support and participation by locals and Women's Committees in community building and charity work – like local women's shelters and programs for disadvantaged kids – can help with immediate needs. We also need to take action on the root causes of problems, like ending violence against women and eliminating poverty. Acting on the big issues means getting political.



Getting Down to Work: Lobbying for Change

One of the best ways to take political action between elections is to lobby politicians, whether at the municipal, provincial/territorial, or federal level. Our USW Guide to Effective Lobbying is a great resource. It can be found on our website in the For Members section, under the Local Union Resources and Training subsection.

Here are a few tips for organizing a successful lobbying effort:

- ▶ **Know your issue:** Before you contact the politician, go over the points you want to make and the action you would like the politician to take. Be prepared to educate the politician.
- ▶ **Know your objectives:** Be clear about what you want them to do: speak in support of your position? Vote a certain way? Each politician lobbied should be asked to satisfy a specific request.
- ▶ **Prepare to tell a personal story:** Personal stories are powerful tools for change. Think of a way to tell the politician how the issue affects you, your family and your community.
- ▶ **Organize a lobby team:** Conversation flows more easily when lobbyists can fill in each other's gaps. Having others with you can boost confidence and comfort.
- ▶ **Set up a meeting:** Call the politician's local constituency office. Tell them the purpose of the meeting, how many people are coming, and that the meeting will be brief (15-20 minutes).
- ▶ **Once you're there:**
 - ▶ Be friendly, polite and patient.
 - ▶ Listen carefully and don't argue.
 - ▶ Take notes.
 - ▶ Make the visit memorable by taking a photo with the politician and leaving a USW pin or button.
 - ▶ Leave information about the issue and your position.
- ▶ **Thank them for the visit,** regardless of the outcome. After the meeting, send a thank you note, reminding them of what you asked them to do.
- ▶ **Debrief.** Talk over the experience with your group. Compare impressions. Was it a positive meeting? What did you learn about the politician's views? Did you learn something that could improve future presentations?
- ▶ **Follow up.** If you don't hear anything in a week or so, phone or write. If you have a picture of you or your lobby group with the politician, send it along with a note reminding them of any commitment that they made to you.
- ▶ **Spread the word!** You worked hard. Even if the lawmaker didn't make a commitment to support our issues, you took a step toward making change to improve our workplaces, families and communities. Report back to your Women's Committee and to the local executive about the lobby and encourage them to join you next time.

Getting Down to Work: Become Active in Elections and the NDP

One of the important things your Women’s Committee can do for our union and your community is to get politically active. Elections are your best opportunity to have an impact on who has power and what issues are on the agenda.

Our union encourages our members to be politically engaged. We encourage critical thought and active involvement. Fighting for women’s equality and human rights are central to our political involvement.

Our union specifically supports the New Democratic Party (NDP) because of its democratic principles and its long-standing support for feminist and pro-labour policies.

Together, the labour movement and the NDP have made a difference in Canada. Together, labour and the party have successfully campaigned for universal health care, government training, unemployment insurance, pay equity, expanded maternity leave and the protection of social programs.

For women, the NDP is the true party of gender equality and women’s rights, a consistent advocate for universal affordable childcare, fighting for equal pay and eliminating violence against women and girls.

Steelworkers helped form the NDP and we’re proud of our continued partnership today. Working together with the NDP, Steelworkers are at the forefront of important campaigns for fairness and justice for workers and for women. From improved pension security and protecting public health care, to fighting for women’s equality, the NDP is our partner in politics.

What can your Women’s Committee do?

- ▶ Encourage committee members to become members of the New Democratic Party.
- ▶ Get active in your local NDP riding association.
- ▶ Make a motion at a local meeting to have your local union affiliate to the New Democratic Party.
- ▶ Make connections with elected NDP women and the Women’s Issues critic provincially and federally and support their events and initiatives.
- ▶ Invite a speaker from the NDP to come to your next Women’s Committee meeting.
- ▶ Encourage women to become candidates in municipal, provincial and federal elections and mobilize other women and men to support their campaigns.
- ▶ During election campaigns, organize members of your Women’s Committee to volunteer in the local NDP campaign.
- ▶ Attend NDP meetings and conventions to make sure your concerns are reflected in the party’s policies and resolutions.
- ▶ Get involved in NDP women’s organizations as a way to meet other women activists and find out about important campaigns that you and your Women’s Committee can join.

In Summary: You're Not Alone!

We hope this guide will help your Women's Committee. After reading it, you should be able to pinpoint some of the areas in which you feel your Women's Committee has been successful or is experiencing growing pains.

Don't feel that you are alone in these struggles. Often, a problem you think is unique to your committee simply is not. It's the same one that many other Women's Committees have experienced or are experiencing in the process of development. That's why Women's Committees should network, share, attend conferences, lobby and look to each other for support and ideas.

Don't give up! Try not to isolate your committee. Support comes when the committee reflects the priorities of its members and everyone recognizes the committee's function.

Have fun! Enjoy being creative and watching one another grow as activists and leaders.

Women's Committees are leaders in the USW. We are a stronger union when our policies, actions, and collective agreements reflect the needs and dreams of our sisters, as well as our brothers.



Glossary

Ableism: Harassment, exclusion, economic exploitation and oppression based on the presence or perceived presence of a physical or mental disability.

Aboriginal Peoples: Canada's first peoples, who include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples. (The term "Indigenous peoples" has a similar meaning and is preferred by some because it is not a label created and applied by government.)

Activism: Positive and direct action taken to achieve a particular goal (e.g., women's equality).

Advocacy: Supporting a cause or individual(s), through a wide variety of means, including conversations, speeches, letters to the editor, motions and resolutions at meetings, marches, rallies, and electoral politics.

Caucus: A gathering by individuals sharing the same characteristics or experience. Examples include a women's caucus, an Aboriginal workers' caucus and a call-centre workers' caucus. A caucus can provide education and information about issues, as well as a power base from which to take action. A women's caucus can formulate policy, make recommendations, lobby and provide representation on union executives.

Cisgender: A person who, for the most part, identifies as the gender they were designated at birth; not transgender. Often shortened to "cis."

Coalition: A group of individuals with a common purpose to initiate action, usually through lobbying, with the objective of reaching out and building campaigns, raising awareness, and achieving legislative change (e.g., pay equity).

Equality: Equal access and opportunity to pay, jobs, promotions, pensions and other workplace benefits and to leadership opportunities in our union.

Employment Equity: Hiring policies and other workplace practices that remove barriers to and encourage fair workplace representation of women, Aboriginal people, racialized people and other people who suffer discrimination.

Empowerment: The process of democratizing power and authority so groups in society can make their own decisions and give their own voice to issues that affect them (e.g., a Women's Committee can empower women).

Feminism: The movement of women, led by women, to gain political, economic and social rights equal to those of men and to eliminate racism, homophobia and ableism.

Gender: Gender is one of those things everyone thinks they understand, but don't. It used to be defined as "the classification of male and female according to sex groupings, i.e., men or women." It is now understood as being much more than an either/or dichotomy, but more of a spectrum influenced by these four things:

Biological Sex: The physical sex characteristics each of us is born with and develop.

Gender Identity: How each person defines their gender. Gender identity does not necessarily "match up with" how a person expresses their gender.

Gender Expression: How each person presents their gender through clothing or behaviour, as shaped as these are by social expectations. Gender expression does not necessarily "match up with" how a person identifies their gender.

Sexual Orientation: The gender of the people we are sexually and/or romantically attracted to.

Gender Wage Gap: The difference between the average wage of men and of women that is based only on gender, not on different levels of education, skill or experience.

Harassment: An expression of perceived power and superiority by the harasser over another person or group,

usually for reasons of sex, race, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, family or marital status, social or economic class, political or religious affiliation, or language.

Homophobia: Harassment, exclusion, economic exploitation and oppression based on sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation.

Indigenous Peoples: Canada's first peoples, who include First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. (The term "Aboriginal peoples" has a similar meaning but is falling out of use because it is a label created and applied by government.)

Lobby: Acting for a special interest group to influence changes or improvements in legislation, policies, programs and government decisions.

LGBTQ2S+: The acronym meaning Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirited and other categories of people who do not identify as heterosexual or cisgender.

Minority: A group of people in society who, because of their racial origin, religion, sexuality, or physical and mental challenges, are politically and socially controlled by a larger group.

Networking: Building alliances and support throughout the union structure. Communication, contact, developing links, meeting new people and keeping in touch with other women are all part of networking.

Pay Equity: Equal pay for work of equal value, whether it is done by women or men or both. (Not to be confused with "equal pay for equal work" which does not address the problem that entire fields of work done by women have been traditionally seen as less valuable than work done by men.)

Racial Harassment: Words or actions that show disregard or cause humiliation to another person because of race, colour, religion, language, creed, ancestry, place of origin, or ethnic origin.

Racialized Persons: Includes but are not limited to people who identify as South Asian, East Asian, South-east Asian, African, Caribbean, South and Central American and West Asian (e.g., Iranian, Afghani).

Racism: Harassment, exclusion, economic exploitation and oppression based on skin colour.

Resolution: A formal statement of opinion adopted by a group that leads to a specific action.

Sexism: Harassment, exclusion, economic exploitation and oppression based on sex or gender. Many women experience the compound effect of discrimination based on race and gender.

Sexual Harassment: Unwanted, implied or sexually oriented remarks, behaviour and actions, that are perceived to create a negative psychological and emotional environment. It can include remarks about appearance or personal life, offensive graffiti or degrading pictures, physical contact of any kind or sexual demand.

Solidarity: Expressing group unity and agreement of ideas and principles, which creates an atmosphere of mutual understanding and helps achieve goals.

Strategy: A broad plan that explains where you are at present, where you want to be in the future (goal) and how to get there. It can be a list of ideas or methods needed to attain objectives.

Transgender: A person who, either fully or in part, does not identify with the gender they were designated at birth. Often used as an umbrella term for a wide range of gender identities. Often shortened to "trans."

Transphobia: Harassment, exclusion, economic exploitation and oppression against trans people.

Women's Committee: A committee of our union established to mobilize the activities of women members. The committee can lobby, advocate, research and develop policy, report, advise, campaign, and make recommendations to the local union executive about issues important to women.



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