



Building a better
working world

Equitable sponsorship at the EY organization

Diversity, equity and inclusiveness (DE&I) are core to who we are and how we work. To bring to life a culture of DE&I, we should exhibit inclusive leadership behaviors every day and reward and recognize inclusive leadership on our teams. One important inclusive behavior is to make success possible for all by sponsoring individuals equitably across differences.

Sponsorship is

- ▶ Developing an earned, reciprocal relationship that is necessary for upward career advancement
- ▶ Connecting individuals to other senior leaders in the organization
- ▶ Providing an individual with critical development feedback so they continue to advance
- ▶ Expanding the visibility and opportunities for individuals to demonstrate what they can do and to grow, learn and further build their acumen through new stretch opportunities

Equitable sponsorship means providing equal access to sponsorship. Individual unconscious bias can make us perceive people who are similar to us more positively than those who are different. Equitable sponsorship requires deliberate sponsoring across differences to accelerate progress in normalizing a broader representation of differences at all ranks, in all accounts and in visible leadership roles at the firm.

Research shows:*

Sponsorship boosts progression.

Individuals who are sponsored are 65% more likely to be satisfied with their rate of advancement.

Sponsors boost confidence.

Individuals with sponsors are more likely to seek out stretch opportunities and strive for advancement.

Sponsorship is transformational

- ▶ Sponsors can help build careers by giving people access to meaningful work experiences, high-visibility assignments, and influential relationships and networks and increasing leadership's awareness of an individual's potential, strengths and capabilities.
- ▶ Sponsor relationships should be cultivated early, as they take time to establish.
- ▶ Deliberate sponsorship across differences is critical to provide equitable opportunities for those who are typically under-sponsored and are less likely to seek out sponsors.
- ▶ Inclusive leaders recognize that different types of relationships (e.g., sponsorship, mentoring, counseling, coaching) meet different needs along people's career trajectories.
- ▶ Delivering more transparent, consistent and intentional sponsorship can enable all EY people to thrive.

Mentors or Sponsors?

Equitable sponsorship is one of the highest impact levers to achieve DE&I progress across the global EY organization. It helps accelerate positive impact on recruitment, assignments, promotions and leadership appointments. Research shows that sponsorship drives engagement and retention, fostering workplaces of inclusion, authenticity and innovation.*

Mentors

Help you take responsibility for your career and advancement

Offer valuable advice to help influence you

Provide guidance, practical advice and support

Ask insightful, sometimes tough, questions

Coach and support you in developing your skills and career

Sponsors

Believe in your potential

Expend personal capital to try to support you in what you may need to progress your career and experiences

Influence others on your behalf

Identify opportunities for growth and advancement

Challenge you through critical feedback and stretch opportunities

EY counselors are formally assigned to support a broad experience through career planning and skill development. They play a critical role in the performance feedback process.

Counselors
coach you.

Mentors
guide you.

Sponsors
advocate for you.

Cultivating equitable sponsorship

At the EY organization, **sponsoring across differences** contributes to creating an inclusive environment where people feel they belong. When people feel they belong, they are more open to offering their perspectives and collaborating. Leaders play an important role in cultivating and practicing equitable sponsorship.

1

Analyze the current state

Leaders can assess the current state of local sponsorship efforts to determine if enhancements and/or scope changes are needed.

- ▶ What existing programs or materials exist?
- ▶ What stakeholders do you need to engage?
- ▶ What patterns do you notice in those you sponsor and in how you may support some individuals? How may this limit access for others?
- ▶ Who is currently being sponsored, and who is in need of a sponsor?

2

Consider your context

Leaders can shape culture and influence what inclusive behaviors are expected (or not), and role model so their efforts rapidly multiply.

- ▶ What are the actions you take to model, reinforce and reward sponsorship?
- ▶ How do you help people understand what is expected?
- ▶ Do you know that the benefits of equitable sponsorship circle back to leaders through energized and highly engaged team members, better work products and greater value for clients?
- ▶ How do you reinforce the importance of sponsorship, and how do you develop sponsorship relationships?

3

Create the foundation for sponsorship

Leaders can raise awareness and educate people on what sponsorship is and what role people play in earning sponsorship and developing the relationships. Sponsors can ask:

- ▶ “Who am I helping?” Who are the current and next three people I am sponsoring? Who is different or similar to me?
- ▶ “Who am I not yet helping?” Make it a point to include individuals from underrepresented groups among those you sponsor. Ask other leaders to do the same.
- ▶ “Am I sponsoring someone for a stretch assignment, promotion or appointment, or am I trying to get someone another sponsor with a different sphere of influence?” Recognize that anyone can be a sponsor.

Leaders can help educate all individuals that sponsorship can be sought after at early stages in their careers, and it is an important relationship to nurture at every level of their careers.

4

Deepen relationships

Leaders can set expectations and define the experience, role and associated responsibility of the person being sponsored, differentiating mentorship and sponsorship.

- ▶ Are you building relationships that can turn into sponsorship relationships?
- ▶ Are there any mentoring relationships you can possibly turn into a sponsorship?
- ▶ Are you demonstrating curiosity and empathy and practicing humility and vulnerability? Relationship building best happens when sponsors do so.
- ▶ How do you create trust and psychological safety so those being sponsored feel comfortable opening up and asking for support when needed?


5

Elevate sponsorship

Leaders can help sponsors understand the benefits of sponsorship and sponsor responsibilities and set role expectations when launching specific programs.

- ▶ Are you seeking to sponsor high-potential individuals with career aspirations who have critical skills or experiences that expand your skill set or knowledge base?
- ▶ Are you considering people whose backgrounds, skills and perspectives differ from your own to maximize innovative capacity?
- ▶ How are you providing critical feedback and access to skill development opportunities?
- ▶ How do you recognize, reinforce and reward sponsors who are deliberately providing new opportunities and experiences to those they sponsor, advocating and speaking highly of someone’s capabilities, and connecting individuals to other senior leaders?

Through sponsorship, you can develop a deeper sense of belonging that can form when you feel trust and psychological safety. Belonging enhances productivity, teaming and innovation for all.

A row of colorful hot air balloons is shown in a field at dawn. The balloons are in various colors and patterns, including solid colors and checkered designs. The scene is set against a clear, light blue sky, and the ground is a green field. The balloons are arranged in a line, receding into the distance.

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