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INTERNSHIP TOOLKIT

Developing and Implementing a Gender Responsive Internship Program

Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia | A USAID/RDMA Activity

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ABOUT E4SEA

The Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia (E4SEA) Activity is an activity under the Asia Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy (Asia EDGE) initiative overseen by USAID's Regional Development Mission for Asia (RDMA). Asia EDGE is a key component of the U.S. Government's approach to grow sustainable and secure energy markets throughout the Indo-Pacific region, and the E4SEA Activity aims to contribute to that effort by improving gender equality and inclusion in Southeast Asia's energy sector to strengthen the region's energy institutions and advance women's economic empowerment. Specifically, the E4SEA Activity is working towards three primary outcomes:

1. Increased workplace diversity in Southeast Asia (SEA)
2. Improved inclusive workplace environment
3. Expanded equitable promotion opportunities

Well-planned internship programs that introduce young women to the wide range of career opportunities available in the energy sector and provide them with equal and equitable opportunities for professional development can significantly help to empower and motivate them to pursue careers in the sector. Early investment in female pre-professionals through internship programs can, therefore, serve as a key driver towards increased gender diversity within energy companies and across the industry.

The E4SEA Activity has developed this toolkit to assist energy sector employers in establishing and implementing gender responsive internship programs that will not only generate various positive outcomes for the business but will also provide an inspiring and fulfilling experience for young men and women as they embark on their professional journey in the energy sector.



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ACRONYMS

E4SEA	Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia
EDGE	Enhancing Development and Growth through Energy
ESMAP	Energy Sector Management Assistance Program
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GWNET	Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition
ILO	International Labor Organization
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
RDMA	Regional Development Mission for Asia
SEA	Southeast Asia
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The energy industry remains one of the most male-dominated industries in Southeast Asia as gender norms, stereotypes, and other challenges continue to discourage and impede women in the region from pursuing energy sector careers.

The benefits associated with having a gender diverse workforce are well established. Women bring valuable, unique perspectives and strengths to the workplace and are a key source of competitive advantage for companies.¹ Energy employers in Southeast Asia must endeavor to attract and hire more women, especially given the need for increased innovation to address the challenges associated with the energy transition and the region's rapidly rising energy demand.

Well-planned internship programs that are gender responsive and effective in providing young women with an empowering and

rewarding internship experience can be a key contributor towards increased gender diversity in energy companies in the medium to long run.

Using this toolkit, energy companies can learn about the process for setting up high-quality internship programs, as shown below, and become acquainted with gender responsive measures that can be implemented during each step in the process. Gender responsive approaches are important because they help to ensure that gender-related issues within an organization will be identified and addressed so as to allow for equal and equitable opportunities for all. By making internship programs gender responsive, energy companies can create a positive work environment within which female interns can develop their skills and knowledge and explore career opportunities in the energy industry with confidence.

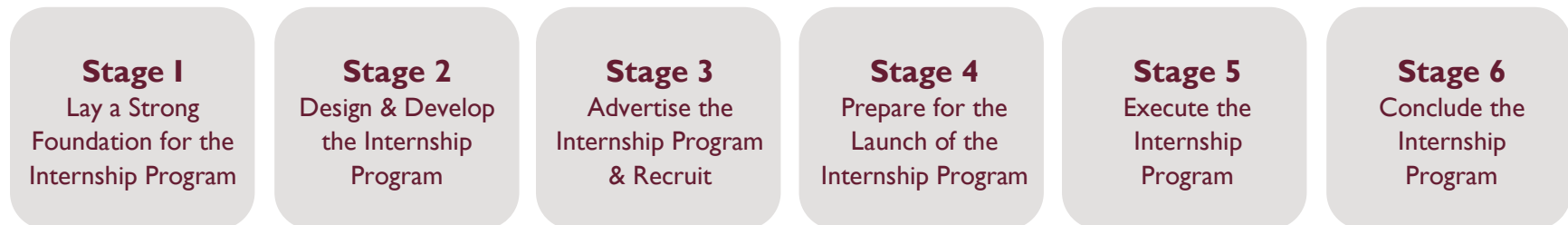


Figure 1: High-level overview of the process for building an effective internship program

1. ILO, Women in Business and Management: The business case for change (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 2019).



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

Women's unique perspectives and strengths can provide energy companies with a competitive edge as they navigate the energy transition.

INTRODUCTION

Southeast Asia's energy sector is undergoing a major transition as it strives to expand and transform to meet rapidly rising energy demand in a sustainable and affordable manner. This energy transition not only holds promise in delivering sustainable economic and environmental outcomes but also presents a unique opportunity for the sector to revisit and reshape existing systems and practices to drive meaningful change towards increased gender equality and inclusion. Nevertheless, much work remains to be done before these goals can be achieved.

Inequitable access to career opportunities in the energy job market continues to be a major challenge throughout Southeast Asia. Energy sector jobs in the region are projected to increase from 4 million to between 5.5 and 7.9 million by 2030, with an increase of up to nearly fivefold in the renewable energy sector.² However, deeply entrenched gender biases, stereotypes, cultural norms, and non-inclusive policies and practices in the sector render it difficult for women to pursue and thrive in energy sector careers, leaving many of them to miss out on valuable economic empowerment prospects and the opportunity to contribute to a critical industry that lies at the heart of the modern economy. Across Southeast Asia, women are notably underrepresented in the energy workforce, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) roles and at the leadership level. Indeed, the energy sector is one of the least gender diverse segments of the global economy, with women accounting for merely 22% of the fossil energy workforce and 32% in the renewables workforce.³

2. IRENA, *Global Renewables Outlook: Energy Transformation 2050* (Abu Dhabi: International Renewable Energy Agency, 2020), 226.

3. IRENA, *Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective* (Abu Dhabi: International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019).



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

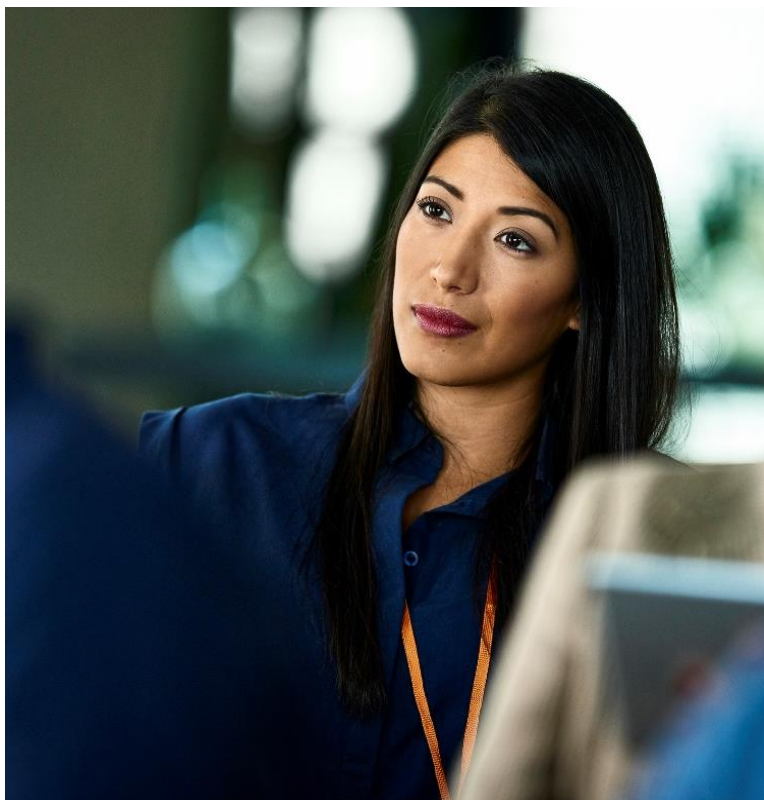


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Concept Highlight: Gender Responsiveness

Gender responsiveness refers to the quality of taking into account gender roles and inequalities and addressing them through the support of equal opportunities and equitable distribution of benefits.

Gender inequality in Southeast Asia's energy sector carries consequences beyond missed economic opportunities for women across the region. Given the multifold benefits of gender diversity in the workforce, energy companies and organizations that do not prioritize closing gender gaps are overlooking a major source of potential competitive advantage for their business. Women's unique perspectives and experiences can serve as key contributions towards innovative solutions for the complex energy challenges and sustainability issues that Southeast Asian countries face today. Companies that can successfully leverage the value of a gender diverse workforce are more likely to achieve improved environmental performance and business outcomes, and those with a higher share of women on their boards have been shown to perform better with respect to their returns on investment, sales and equity, and management in times of crisis and volatility.⁴

Interventions that contribute to a more equitable representation of women within the workforce should, therefore, be an integral component of any energy employer's talent recruitment and retention strategy. Early investment in female pre-professionals through internship programs, in particular, can go a long way towards increasing a company's gender diversity and strengthening its talent pipeline in the medium to long run. Beyond their role as a key gateway for female students to the various career opportunities that the energy sector has to offer, internship programs that are gender responsive can be a crucial turning point for young women in their efforts to overcome challenges and barriers that make it difficult for them to pursue a career and aspire to success in the male-dominated energy industry.

4. ILO, *Women in Business and Management: The business case for change* (Geneva: International Labor Organization, 2019).

TOOLKIT OBJECTIVES

In light of the established importance of internship programs in helping young women pursue energy sector careers, the E4SEA Activity has prepared this toolkit to facilitate energy companies and organizations in building and implementing effective internship programs that can deliver a wide range of benefits for both the employer and the interns and contribute towards women's empowerment and gender equality within the energy sector.

This toolkit will help you to...



Understand the root causes behind the energy sector's persistent gender gaps that should be taken into consideration as you plan and implement internship programs



Recognize the various benefits of a successful internship program



Establish, design, develop, and execute internship programs that are gender responsive



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This internship toolkit is meant to serve as a key initial reference document for energy employers as they plan and develop high-quality internship programs that are gender responsive. Employers can also refer to this guide as they work on strengthening existing internship programs. Recommendations provided in this toolkit should be tailored as appropriate to meet the employer's unique context and goals.



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OVERVIEW OF TOOLKIT

In order to build a gender responsive internship program, one must have a good understanding of the key forces that drive persistent gender gaps in the energy sector. This toolkit lays the foundation for readers by first introducing you to the key barriers and challenges that make it difficult for women to aspire to and thrive in energy sector careers.

The next section of the toolkit presents an overview of the various benefits that well-planned internship programs can offer to employers and their interns. Employers should recognize what these benefits are so that they can design, develop, and implement internship programs in a way that would enable these benefits to be brought to fruition.

The final section of the toolkit guides employers through the process of establishing and implementing an internship program that will not only support business needs and contribute to the company's long-term goals but will also provide interns with a valuable and rewarding experience as they begin their professional journey in the energy sector. Gender responsive approaches that can inspire and motivate young women to pursue energy sector careers and help them navigate the industry's male-dominated work environment are included in each step of the process.

It is E4SEA's hope that this toolkit will serve as one of your main companions in building successful gender responsive internship programs. Keep in mind that this document is neither an exhaustive nor prescriptive guide for building internship programs. Therefore, employers who use this toolkit are highly recommended to modify the steps and details of their internship program as appropriate to suit their unique needs and context.



Throughout Southeast Asia, gender norms and biases continue to undermine women's efforts to pursue careers in the energy sector.

CHALLENGES TO CONSIDER

Barriers and challenges that discourage young women from aspiring to and pursuing careers in the energy sector are present throughout their lives—in their day-to-day interactions with friends and family, in the media, at school, and within their communities.

This toolkit section presents an overview of the root causes behind persistent gender gaps in the energy sector that should be taken into account in the planning and implementation of internship programs to ensure their gender responsiveness.

Gender Norms, Stereotypes, and Biases



Across Southeast Asia, patriarchal societal norms and gender biases continue to undermine women's efforts to pursue careers and professionally advance in the energy sector.⁵ As E4SEA's research shows, the possession of stereotypical masculine traits is still widely considered to be advantageous in the pursuit of career success in the energy industry. A notable number of female energy sector professionals who participated in E4SEA's focus group discussions (FGDs) indicated that they are quite "masculine" when asked why they decided to pursue their current career path, implying the notion that having "masculine" traits makes a person more suitable for work in the energy sector. Studies have shown that job advertisements in male-dominated industries typically gravitate more towards the use of gendered wording that suggests preference for male applicants relative to job postings in industries that are not dominated by men.⁶ Gender biases embedded in an employer's hiring system and practices reduce women's interest in applying for jobs at the organization and also place female applicants at a disadvantage during the recruitment process.

It is important to recognize that gender norms and stereotypes not only work against women externally but also from within—they can erode women's sense of belonging in male-dominated environments and lower their self-efficacy. The internalization of these gender stereotypes can, therefore, induce women to dismiss their interests in energy sector-related topics and the possibility of a rewarding career in the industry despite promising prospects.

5. OECD, *Social Institutions and Gender Index: SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Southeast Asia* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021).

6. Danielle Gaucher, Justin Friesen, and Aaron C. Kay, "Evidence that gendered wording in job advertisements exists and sustains gender inequality," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 1 (2011): 109-128.

Misconceptions & Insufficient Information about Energy Sector Careers



Limited access to career information and insights relating to the energy sector can cause young men and women, particularly those with non-STEM backgrounds, to overlook internship opportunities at energy organizations.

Young adults often have a limited understanding and awareness of energy sector job opportunities. Even though the energy industry offers career opportunities for people from a wide range of backgrounds, many students generally regard energy sector careers primarily as a domain for STEM graduates.⁷ In addition, school curricula across Southeast Asia often fail to connect lessons to real-world problems and the critical work carried out by energy businesses that drives the modern world. The failure to do so can make energy sector jobs less attractive to pre-professionals, especially to women, who tend to gravitate towards careers that are generally regarded as communally beneficial and altruistic given the influence of traditional gendered expectations.⁸

Misconceptions surrounding the work of energy sector professionals are common. Despite the sector's high safety standards and technological advances that have led to the automation of many physically demanding tasks, many people still associate the work of the average engineer in the industry with a substantial amount of danger and physical labor.⁹ This widespread misconception, along with gender stereotypes, fuels the misguided belief that women are not as suitable as men for technical occupations within the energy industry.



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

7. IRENA, *Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective* (Abu Dhabi: International Renewable Energy Agency, 2019).

8. Nilanjana Dasgupta and Jane G. Stout, "Girls and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: STEMing the Tide and Broadening Participation in STEM Careers," *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2014): 21-29.

9. Inka Schomer and Alicia Hammond, *Stepping Up Women's STEM Careers in Infrastructure: An Overview* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2020).

Lack of Role Models and Mentors



The scarcity of female role models in the energy industry reinforces the gender stereotype that women are not as competent or as suitable as men for work in the energy sector. In addition, young women who have not been introduced or have had limited exposure to female energy sector professionals whom they can identify with and learn from are likely to struggle to envision themselves working and flourishing in the industry.¹⁰ Consequently, the lack of role models may very well lead them to abandon any ambition they may have for a career in the sector.

Mentors can significantly help to boost women's confidence, self-esteem, and sense of belonging in male-dominated work environments.¹¹ Without their guidance, it can be particularly challenging for young women to find their way in a field where the odds are against them.

Unfriendly & Unaccommodating Work Environment for Women



Patriarchal social norms and gender discriminatory laws and regulations permeate Southeast Asian societies and perpetuate traditional gender roles and gender biased work cultures and policies across the region.¹² These circumstances adversely impact women's professional experience and opportunities to succeed in their careers. Sexual harassment, unaccommodating work arrangements, non-inclusive workplace policies, and patriarchal social networks—both formal and informal—are some of the key challenges that women have to endure or cope with in their professional lives on a regular basis.

These problems are particularly pronounced in male-dominated fields like the energy sector,¹³ and the consequences are profound. For example, a workplace environment where men frequently make seemingly harmless sexual jokes or openly engage in 'guy talk' can leave women feeling intimidated or humiliated, and field sites without dedicated bathrooms or secure sleeping accommodations for women can render them feeling vulnerable and unsafe. Female interns who experience or witness these hostile and unaccommodating work environments for women are unlikely to want to return for full-time employment in the future.

10. GWNET, *Women for Sustainable Energy: Strategies to Foster Women's Talent for Transformational Change* (Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition, 2019).

11. Nilanjana Dasgupta, "Ingroup experts and peers as social vaccines who inoculate the self-concept: The stereotype inoculation model," *Psychological Inquiry* 22, no. 4 (2011): 231-246.

12. OECD, *Social Institutions and Gender Index: SIGI 2021 Regional Report for Southeast Asia* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2021); World Bank, *Women, Business and the Law 2021* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2021).

13. Inka Schomer and Alicia Hammond, *Stepping Up Women's STEM Careers in Infrastructure: An Overview* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2020).

BENEFITS OF INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

Internship programs should be designed, developed, and implemented in a manner that would ensure that the full range of their potential benefits can be brought to fruition. Recognizing what these benefits are should therefore be compulsory for anyone looking to implement a gender responsive internship program.

This toolkit section introduces you to the various benefits that well-designed internship programs can offer to energy sector employers and interns, especially female interns.

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

✓ **Fresh perspectives and increased innovation from a highly motivated talent pool**

Well-planned internship programs can provide employers with access to a large and diverse pool of pre-professionals who typically bring a lot of energy and vigor to the workplace. Young interns are often eager to learn and contribute and can offer a fresh take on old problems, which is becoming increasingly essential as companies strive to navigate today's complex and highly competitive energy landscape.

✓ **Competitive advantage for permanent positions recruitment down the line**

Internship programs offer employers a risk-free, low-cost opportunity to assess and evaluate potential future hires. In addition, young adults who have had a great internship experience at a company are more likely to apply to and consider permanent positions there going forward.



These opportunities can give an employer a significant head start over its competitors in future recruitment efforts for qualified candidates, especially as the gap between the energy sector's talent demand and supply continues to widen.

✓ **Enhanced visibility and improved reputation as an employer of choice**

Successful internship programs can greatly contribute to a company's reputation and visibility among the new generation of potential recruits. Energy employers that commit to gender diversity and inclusion and are able to demonstrate these values to their interns are likely to find themselves with a wider pool of applicants from more diverse backgrounds.

✓ **Increased retention rates and reduced turnover costs in the long run**

At any given company, the retention rate of employees who had previously interned there is generally higher than that of hires who had interned elsewhere or possess no internship experience.¹⁴ Therefore, companies that host successful internship programs and are able to increase the hiring of their former interns for full-time roles can usually expect a more loyal workforce and reduced turnover costs.

✓ **Favorable opportunity to prime pre-professionals for future full-time employment**

Employers who can influence their interns' work attitude and mindset so that they align with their organization's values and culture can reduce training time and costs as well as increase productivity for these young adults if and when they return for full-time employment in the future. Moreover, internship programs offer an excellent opportunity for the company to guide the development paths of young individuals towards the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and other qualifications that are in line with the company's future hiring needs.

✓ **Growth experience and workload support for current employees**

Current employees can develop and hone their leadership and management skills when assigned to supervise or mentor interns. Such an opportunity can also help senior management in identifying the organization's future managers and leaders.

Furthermore, during an internship program, full-time employees can focus more on essential tasks and assignments that cannot be delegated to others as interns take the less critical work off their hands.

14. Kevin Gray, "Trends in One-Year, Five-Year Intern Retention Rates," National Association of Colleges and Employers, June 9, 2021, <https://www.nacweb.org/talent-acquisition/trends-and-predictions/trends-in-one-year-five-year-intern-retention-rates/>.

BENEFITS FOR INTERNS

✓ Enhanced understanding and awareness of energy sector career opportunities

Firsthand experience of work in the energy sector can help interns rectify any misconception they may have about the industry and gain a clearer idea of the variety of career options available to them—both STEM and non-STEM. As they come to a better understanding of contemporary energy industry challenges and energy companies' important work for society, girls are likely to feel more compelled to pursue careers in the sector.¹⁵ In addition, once girls recognize the value of non-technical skills for energy sector professions, such as communication and organizational skills, they may find it easier to envision a successful career in the sector as they cope with stereotypes and biases relating to women's capabilities in technical areas.

✓ Opportunity to explore career interests and gain hands-on work experience

Internship programs that provide young adults with exposure to real work projects can help them evaluate their career interests through a practical lens and facilitate informed decision-making regarding their professional future. Hands-on work experiences offered through internship programs are also meaningful learning opportunities for students to apply theoretical knowledge and concepts and enhance their existing skills. Furthermore, learning activities beyond the conventional classroom can function as a safe space for women to explore their interests in areas that are traditionally male domains.

15. Nilanjana Dasgupta and Jane G. Stout, "Girls and Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics: STEMing the Tide and Broadening Participation in STEM Careers," *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, no. 1 (2014): 21-29.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

✓ **Exposure to role models, mentors, and professional networking opportunities**

Internship programs can be a golden opportunity for interns to network with experts and peers in their fields of interest as well as interact with and learn from successful industry professionals and leaders.

Research shows that mentorship is strongly associated with long-term career success.¹⁶ Mentors can provide young adults with valuable insights to energy sector careers and offer helpful guidance on development pathways towards a fulfilling and rewarding career in the sector.

Having female role models is key to helping young women overcome negative stereotypes and feel inspired and motivated to carve out their own success.¹⁷ In addition, exposure to high-achieving women can help both male and female interns recognize

women's talents, capabilities, and contributions and regard the energy industry as a place for not only men but also women.

✓ **Skills upgrade and increased employability**

Internship programs present pre-professionals with a great opportunity to develop employability skills that can give them a significant edge over their peers once they start looking for a full-time position down the line. Well-planned internship programs can bolster the professional confidence of young men and women and support them in developing not only hard skills but also soft skills such as collaboration, problem solving, persuasion, critical thinking, and interpersonal skills.

✓ **Fulfillment of degree requirements**

An internship can count towards college credit for some students or help them fulfill other degree requirements.

Exposure to female role models can significantly boost young women's confidence in pursuing energy sector careers.

16. Tammy D. Allen, Lillian T. Eby, Mark L. Poteet, Elizabeth Lentz, and Lizzette Lima, "Career Benefits Associated With Mentoring for Proteges: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89, no. 1 (2004): 127-136.

17. Nilanjana Dasgupta and Shaki Asgari, "Seeing is believing: Exposure to counterstereotypic women leaders and its effect on the malleability of automatic gender stereotyping," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 40, no. 5 (2004): 642-658.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

A well-planned internship program can empower women and contribute towards gender equality within an organization.

KEY STEPS FOR BUILDING A GENDER RESPONSIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Building an effective internship program that can deliver a wide range of benefits for both the employer and the interns as well as contribute towards women's empowerment and gender equality requires careful planning and preparation.

This toolkit section aims to guide energy employers through the process of establishing and executing internship programs that provide young men and women with equal and equitable opportunities to begin their professional journey in the energy sector. In view of pervasive gender inequality in the energy industry across Southeast Asia, suggestions for gender responsive measures are featured prominently throughout the process. The key stages for establishing a high-quality internship program are depicted below.

REMINDER



This toolkit section is neither an exhaustive nor prescriptive guide for establishing internship programs, and it is important to bear in mind that the guidelines presented here place special emphasis on gender responsiveness. Employers who use this toolkit are highly recommended to make adjustments to the steps and details of their internship program as appropriate to suit their unique needs and context.



Figure 2: Overview of the process for building a high-quality internship program

Stage I: Lay a Strong Foundation for the Internship Program

➔ Identify the lead coordinator(s)

Assigning someone to lead the planning and implementation of the program and coordinate from start to finish can help to ensure it stays on track, remains consistent throughout, and delivers results as expected. If the internship program is expected to be large in scale or scope, you may want to consider assembling a team of coordinators. Selected coordinators should not only possess excellent planning and organizational skills but should also be knowledgeable and passionate about diversity, inclusion, and gender equality.

➔ Obtain leadership support and guidance

Leadership buy-in is critical to the success of any internship program. Senior management can provide critical guidance on the direction of the internship program to make sure it aligns with and contributes to the company's long-term goals and strategies. In addition, leadership support sends a strong signal to employees that the internship program is of high priority and helps to ensure that adequate resources and time will be allocated to the program.

If appropriate, the internship coordinator can discuss and plan with the company's leaders at this stage their involvement in the internship program's milestone events and activities. Their active and visible participation can significantly help to boost enthusiasm among interns and make them feel valued. Extra effort should be made to involve female managers and executives. Their strong presence throughout the internship program can serve as a major source of inspiration for the incoming female interns.

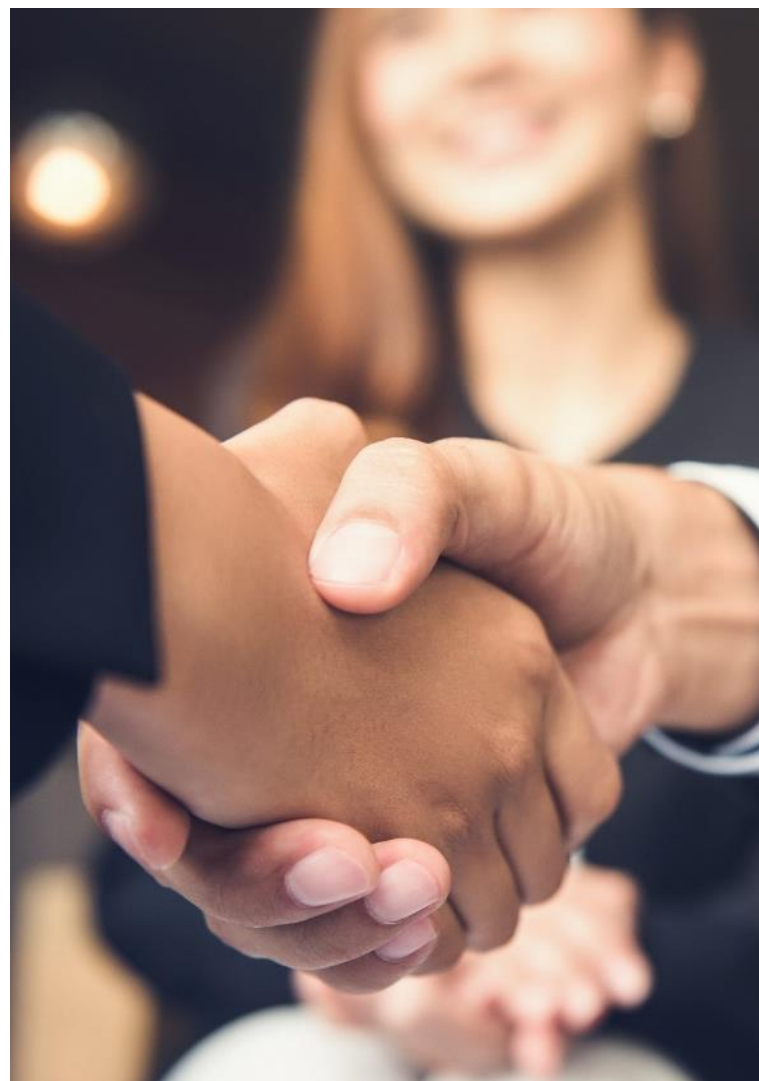


Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

Stage I: Lay a Strong Foundation for the Internship Program



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

→ Outline SMART program goals

To set the internship program up for success, articulate program goals that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-Bound). Examples of such goals for energy employers looking to boost their company's gender equality and diversity include increased intern to full-time conversion rate for female interns, improved reputation as an employer of choice for women, and enhanced leadership skills among full-time female employees who will supervise and mentor interns.

Outlining specific goals for the program gives everyone involved a clear idea of what they should work towards, improves cooperation, and enables coherent formulations of internship program activities and effective program evaluation.

→ Consider available resources and financial matters

The internship coordinator should confer with management and relevant departments to determine the amount of budget and resources which can be set aside for the internship program. If the approved funding and resources appear to be inadequate, the team should establish priorities and allocate available time and money accordingly.

To attract the best interns, employers may want to consider offering paid internships. Unpaid opportunities can deter young men and women with financial needs, who would otherwise be interested in the program, from applying. Where circumstances do not allow for the remuneration of interns, you may wish to explore other options that could help to alleviate potential financial burdens on interns, such as meal coupons or shuttle bus rides to train stations.

Stage I: Lay a Strong Foundation for the Internship Program

→ Understand legal implications

The internship coordinator should consult the organization's legal experts to ensure that all internship program arrangements will be in compliance with relevant laws and regulations. The consultation can serve as a good opportunity to discover any existing laws and regulations that are discriminatory towards women and to discuss how best the internship program can accommodate the needs and aspirations of women within the boundaries of the current legal framework.

→ Assess the work environment and address issues

Reexamining the workplace through a gender lens to identify gaps and shortcomings in its potential to provide a friendly and accommodating work experience for female interns is crucial in paving the way towards a gender responsive internship program.

The internship coordinator should collaborate with the human resource department and other relevant parties to identify issues and areas of improvement. Interviews with employees as well as surveys can be conducted to obtain a greater understanding of women's experiences in the workplace and to gather ideas on how the company could better support women.

Solutions should be shared with management for their endorsement so that necessary actions can be properly undertaken to address the issues. For example, training can be rolled out to employees where knowledge gaps on gender equity and non-discriminatory practices remain.



Assessment of the company's readiness to provide a friendly and accommodating work experience for female interns can be carried out as part of the larger gender audit in the organization.



Companies that do not have gender audits in place may wish to take this opportunity to launch them. The following resources offer valuable advice and guidelines on gender audits:

- [Guide on Gender Audit,](#)
European Institute for Gender Equality
- [Gender Equality in Social Auditing](#)
[Guidance,](#)
BSR & Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Stage I: Lay a Strong Foundation for the Internship Program



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

→ Conduct early outreach to educational institutions

Taking the time to establish partnerships with universities, vocational schools, and other educational institutions early on in the internship planning process can be extremely beneficial towards the success of your recruitment efforts down the road.

In addition, educational institutions can provide valuable insights into the career and development interests of their current group of pupils as well as their attitudes towards energy sector careers. These insights can eventually be factored into the recruitment strategy and the design of the internship program to increase its appeal to potential applicants, especially women.

A legal partnership contract is rarely necessary. However, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or other types of non-legally binding agreement may be useful as it can help to align expectations and facilitate ongoing communication and effective cooperation between the two parties as the preparation for the internship program progresses.

Start the planning process early and take the time to build a strong foundation for the internship program to set it up for success.

Stage 2: Design and Develop the Internship Program

➔ Determine the program's scope and placement quotas

The internship coordinator should work with managers to identify departments for interns to be assigned to. This decision should primarily be based on business needs as well as each department's capacity to host interns and provide them with an empowering and rewarding professional experience. In addition to deciding on the number of potential intern placements for each department, consider setting relatively high target ratios for female to male interns for divisions and sections where women are underrepresented.

➔ Select the right supervisors and mentors

High quality supervision and mentorship are essential enablers of a rewarding and fulfilling internship experience. Supervisors and mentors who will work closely with interns should be individuals who enjoy working with people and are willing to set aside the time needed to help interns succeed. Furthermore, selected supervisors and mentors should have a strong awareness of any gender inequality issues present within the organization and must be capable of helping interns, especially women, navigate and overcome these challenges.

Training should be offered to supervisors and mentors as appropriate to increase their capacity to

- promote inclusion, diversity, and gender equality;
- create an empowering work experience for female interns; and
- recognize and address issues such as gender-based violence, sexual harassment, biases, and discrimination in the workplace.



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images



Consider allocating a relatively large proportion of supervisory and mentorship positions in the internship program to women as these roles are excellent opportunities for full-time employees to develop their leadership and management skills.

Stage 2: Design and Develop the Internship Program



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

➔ Define position details and roles & responsibilities

Following the selection of host departments and supervisors, the internship coordinator can proceed to collaborate with supervisors on defining the learning objectives, learning outcomes, and work activities for the program. These components should be brought together for the development of the job description for each internship position in the program. It is highly recommended that a fair amount of hands-on work assignments related to real projects be included when designing the internship. They are not only more engaging but will also provide interns with a greater sense of purpose and increase their awareness of the importance of the energy industry to the modern world. In addition, work activities should be designed in a way that would support students in connecting their lessons from class to real, meaningful work in the sector.

Job descriptions that are deliberately written with well-defined and purposeful learning objectives, learning outcomes, and work activities increase the chances that interns will have a rewarding and fulfilling experience with the company. Moreover, they also reduce the probability that female interns will be relegated to work on basic, uninspiring tasks that most employees try to avoid for themselves—a situation that is too often the case in patriarchal workplaces.

At this stage, it can also be a great idea to seek inputs from partner educational institutions. The additional perspective from them on the perceived learning needs and career preferences of the new generation of potential candidates, especially female candidates, can be particularly valuable in helping you design and develop an internship program that will attract a greater number of applicants.

Stage 3: Advertise the Internship Program & Recruit

→ Create the job posting

The job posting often serves as the introduction for many prospective interns to your internship program. It should provide the necessary information in a concise manner and reflect the learning objectives and learning outcomes that have been defined.

To increase the chances of attracting more female applicants, be sure to adopt gender-neutral language when writing up the job posting and include a statement that presents your organization's commitment to diversity and equal employment opportunities. Given that the energy sector is commonly known as a male-dominated field, you may also wish to explicitly state your encouragement of applications from women. In addition, given that women are less likely than men to apply for jobs for which they believe they are underqualified for based on stated criteria,¹⁸ consider including only absolutely critical qualifications requirements in the internship posting.

→ Advertise the internship opening

Start advertising the internship opening early, preferably 3-4 months before the start date, to increase the probability of finding the best candidates. Key channels through which you can advertise the internship opening include job boards, social media, career fairs, the company website, and the career services offices at educational institutions.

18. Tara Sophia Mohr, "Why Women Don't Apply for Jobs Unless They're 100% Qualified," Harvard Business Review, August 25, 2014, <https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified?trk=BU-pros-ebook-2019-genderreport>.



While the terms “job description” and “job posting” are sometimes used interchangeably, a distinction between the two is to be made here. The job description, as the name suggests, describes the roles and responsibilities of a position and should generally be used for internal purposes. On the other hand, the job posting is effectively the advertisement for the position and therefore should be prepared in a way that aims to capture the interest of potential applicants.

BOX 1: Components of the Job Posting

- Overview of the organization, including its goals, mission, and values
- Internship position title
- Roles & responsibilities
- Potential assignments
- Key learning outcomes
- Qualifications required (e.g., education, experience, skills, knowledge)
- Evaluation criteria
- Employment conditions and work arrangements (e.g., internship duration, work location, work hours, pay & benefits)
- Description of application process and timeline
- List of required application documents
- Equal employment opportunity statement
- Contact details

Stage 3: Advertise the Internship Program & Recruit

➔ Advertise the internship opening (continued...)

Partner educational institutions, in particular, can provide invaluable support in your efforts to advertise the internship program and attract great candidates given their proximity to potential applicants. In addition to helping in the dissemination of promotional materials to their pupils, career counselors and other staff at the partner institution may be able to directly encourage students whom they know to be a great fit to apply. It can be especially helpful at this point for the internship coordinator to reemphasize to partner institutions the company's commitment to gender equality and equal employment opportunities as well as its intention to hire more women. Doing so can increase the likelihood that the internship opening will be recommended and advertised to a wider range of potential applicants, especially women.

Getting female role models from your organization to speak on campus or at relevant events about their energy sector work experience and the internship program is also an important strategy to consider for boosting the number of female applicants.

➔ Assess candidates and select interns

Once the application deadline has passed, the internship coordinator should work with selected supervisors and other relevant staff to review applications, interview shortlisted candidates, and select interns. For consistency and fairness, standardized forms and interview questions to assess applicants against the criteria outlined in the job posting should be used in the evaluation process. In addition, the interviews should be carried out by a diverse panel of interviewers. Such an arrangement can help to increase the sense of belonging among women and make them feel more at ease during the interview process.

All applicants should be notified of the outcome of their application. Where possible, offer feedback to unsuccessful applicants. Constructive feedback will not only help them better recognize their strengths and areas of improvement but will also leave them with a more positive impression of your organization, which can go a long way towards boosting your company's brand as an employer of choice.



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Stage 4: Prepare for the Launch of the Internship Program

➔ Align internally and with partner educational institutions

The internship coordinator should seek support from managers in communicating about the forthcoming rollout of the internship program to all relevant employees. The communication should be framed in a way that would allow employees to realize the wide range of benefits associated with having interns and the fact that interns are not merely extra help to lighten the workload. The goals of the internship program and the emphasis on gender responsiveness should be conveyed in an appropriate manner to encourage employees' support in fostering a positive work experience for all incoming interns, especially women. All employees who are directly connected to the internship program should also be made aware of their expected contributions so that they can prepare accordingly.

At this stage, the internship coordinator may want to provide partner educational institutions with updates about the latest program developments as necessary and also discuss with them to identify any specific degree requirements that can be met through the program. Any such information should be shared with the assigned supervisors and mentors, who can then plan to guide the interns as needed.

➔ Attend to the important details

The internship coordinator should reach out to relevant company employees to organize applicable work arrangements and resources for interns, such as workspace, computer, email account, mobile phone, access cards, equipment, safety gear, and workwear. Essential pre-internship documents and materials should also be sent out to interns.

BOX 2: Documents and Details to be Shared with Interns Before the Internship

- Contract for interns to sign (can be sent along with the offer letter or after)
- Placement details
- Company rules and regulations
- Code of conduct
- Dress code
- First day meeting time and location
- Relevant logistical details
- Contact details



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images



Ensure that there will be enough tools, equipment, workwear, and safety gear that meet women's needs and are suitable for the female body. Ill-fitting harnesses and gloves, for example, can increase likelihood of workplace injury.

Stage 5: Execute the Internship Program

➔ Administer the internship orientation

The first few days of the internship program should include an orientation to provide interns with an overview of the organization and its businesses and to give them a clear idea of what they can expect from the program. A good internship orientation should help interns acclimate to the workplace and feel comfortable in their new professional work environment.

During the orientation, make sure to highlight policies, initiatives, and mechanisms in place to support women. The importance of diversity, inclusion, and gender equality to the company and how these values are promoted and embedded within the organization should also be emphasized.

Getting representatives from senior management to attend the orientation and personally welcome the interns can send a strong message to interns that they are highly valued additions to the workforce and leave them with a great first impression of your organization. In addition, having a gender equal representation of managers and staff at the orientation to greet interns can help to project the company's commitment to ensuring equal opportunities for all and increase female interns' sense of belonging and confidence to pursue a career in the energy sector.



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock

BOX 3: Orientation Topics to Cover

- Organizational background
 - History
 - Mission
 - Values
- Overview of the industry and the company's businesses
- Rules, policies, code of conduct, workplace etiquette, and grievance mechanisms
- Safety protocol
- Introduction to key staff, supervisors, and mentors
- Internship program structure and timeline
 - Internship roles and responsibilities
 - Learning objectives and learning outcomes
 - Evaluation process and criteria
 - Important milestones and events
- Guidance on formulating personal goals for the internship
- Professional development opportunities

BOX 4: Other Orientation Activities to Include

- Icebreaker and other activities for interns to get to know each other
- Training on software and equipment use
- Tour of company facilities

Stage 5: Execute the Internship Program

➔ Supervise and mentor interns

Supervisors and mentors have an important role to play in introducing interns to real work in the industry, providing them with direction and support, and motivating them to aspire to energy sector careers. For female interns, supervisors and mentors can offer critical guidance on navigating a male-dominated work environment and overcoming biases and challenges that women often face in the energy industry.

Both supervisors and mentors should take the time to get to know the interns assigned to them and to learn about their personal goals, needs, and concerns. Supervisors should arrange an introductory meeting to walk each of their interns through their respective learning objectives, learning outcomes, and work activities to align expectations and understanding. Together, they should plan and adjust assignments, as appropriate, to accommodate the intern's personal goals and identified learning needs. Supervisors are responsible for overseeing the interns' performance on their assigned tasks and for providing interns with regular feedback throughout the internship. On the other hand, mentors should take a broader view and counsel interns on development opportunities beyond their assignments. For example, mentors can advise interns on how to network professionally or plan their careers in a way that would support the interns' long-term goals.

Supervisors and mentors should schedule regular one-on-one meetings with interns to ensure that they are having a pleasant work experience and are getting all the support they need. Dedicated catch-up sessions provide a great opportunity for open and honest conversations, during which interns can speak out about any challenges they foresee or have encountered, including gender-related concerns and issues.

NOTE



Mentoring and supervisory responsibilities for interns need not be distributed between two individuals. However, having two employees assigned to guide each intern can be extremely beneficial; interns can be sure to receive dedicated support and gain insights from more than one role model, and mentors and supervisors can also focus on their respective duties.

TIP



The internship coordinator should check in with supervisors and mentors on a periodic basis to ensure that all is progressing as planned. Mid-program evaluation forms should also be sent out to supervisors and interns so that areas of improvement can be identified and addressed before the end of the program. Results of the mid-program evaluation can be shared with partner educational institutions if appropriate.



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

Stage 5: Execute the Internship Program



Photo Credit: Adobe Stock

➔ Organize professional networking opportunities

Networking opportunities are crucial for helping interns build relationships with senior managers and other professionals beyond their immediate circles within the company. Being a part of a professional network can provide interns with valuable insights and resources for their learning and development and pay huge dividends for their energy sector careers.

Networking strategies that work well for women do not mirror those that work well for men. Research has shown that, in addition to being a part of a broad network, successful women tend to have a close circle of professional female contacts with whom they can discuss challenges that are unique to women and exchange information that can help them overcome gender-related obstacles and thrive at work.¹⁹ On the other hand, in terms of professional networking, men do not necessarily need to try to maintain close relationships with others of the same gender and can simply focus on networking broadly in order to get ahead in their careers.²⁰

Therefore, employers should aim to host not only conventional networking events for all interns but also arrange sessions where female interns would be able to form meaningful connections with inspiring female energy sector professionals.

19. Yang Yang, Nitesh V. Chawla, and Brian Uzzi, "A network's gender composition and communication pattern predict women's leadership success," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, no. 14 (2019): 2033-2038.

20. Yang Yang, Nitesh V. Chawla, and Brian Uzzi, "A network's gender composition and communication pattern predict women's leadership success," 2033-2038.

Stage 6: Conclude the Internship Program

→ Celebrate the interns' achievements

It is a good idea to wrap up the internship program with a final event where interns are given the opportunity to present and showcase what they have accomplished during the program.

Senior management and other employees who worked with the interns are highly recommended to join the event to celebrate and congratulate interns on their successes. A well-organized final event is likely to be highly memorable for the interns, which increases the chances that they will consider returning to your company once they start looking for full-time employment.

Take note of the interns' achievements and positive experiences and publish them on the company's website and social media accounts. Reach out to partner educational institutions and ask them to do the same. Such recognition can provide a major boost of confidence for the interns and induce them to consider beginning their careers at your organization down the line. In addition, great reviews about the internship program can help to increase the number of applicants for future job openings.

When sharing success stories with the public, consider accentuating the accomplishments of female interns. Doing so can help to project your company as a champion of gender equality and set it apart from competitors in the male-dominated energy industry, which can encourage more applications from women and lead to increased gender diversity within your company in the medium to long run.



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

Stage 6: Conclude the Internship Program



Photo Credit: Microsoft Stock Images

➔ Conduct the final evaluation and build on success

A final evaluation at the end of the internship program must be undertaken to determine its impacts and successes. Success should be measured not only in terms of the quality of the internship program experience for interns, supervisors, mentors, and other relevant individuals but also in terms of its ability to fulfill the SMART goals that had been set out.

Evaluation forms should be sent out to the interns and all employees who were heavily involved in the internship program to collect data and feedback. Exit surveys and interviews with interns should also be conducted to gain additional insights that evaluation forms cannot offer.

While some data can be immediately collected and analyzed, others, such as the gender-disaggregated intern to full-time conversion rate, will have to be monitored over a longer period of time. Make sure mechanisms are in place so that long-run success indicators for the internship program will continue to be tracked even if the individuals in charge resign or are moved elsewhere within the company.

Identified best practices, lessons learned, and other key takeaways must be properly documented so that they may be used to enhance subsequent internship programs.

Relationships with the interns should continue beyond the end of the program to maximize the chances of their return to your company as full-time employees once they graduate. Find ways to stay connected, such as monthly newsletters, networking events, and holiday cards.

RECAP: BUILDING A GENDER RESPONSIVE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

Steps for Building the Internship Program	Gender Responsive Measures
Stage I: Lay a Strong Foundation for the Internship Program	
Identify the lead coordinators(s)	✓ Get someone who is knowledgeable and passionate about diversity, inclusion, and gender equality to lead the planning and implementation of the internship program.
Obtain leadership support and guidance	✓ Make efforts to involve the company's women leaders early on to ensure their strong presence and active participation throughout the internship program.
Outline SMART program goals	✓ Set SMART goals for the internship program that will contribute towards gender equality within the company.
Consider available resources and financial matters	✓ Offer paid internships or financial support to make it possible for women (and men) with financial needs and concerns to apply.
Understand legal implications	✓ Consult the legal department to identify laws and regulations that are discriminatory towards women and find ways to support their aspirations and professional development as best possible within the boundaries of the current legal framework.
Assess the work environment and address issues	✓ Conduct an assessment of the workplace using a gender lens, possibly as part of a company-wide gender audit, to identify gaps and shortcomings in the company's potential to provide a friendly and accommodating work experience for female interns. ✓ Roll out training and other measures, such as new policies and upgraded facilities, to address gender-related gaps and issues that were identified.

Steps for Building the Internship Program	Gender Responsive Measures
Conduct early outreach to educational institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Reach out to tertiary educational institutions early on to build relationships that will strengthen your efforts down the line in attracting and recruiting women for the internship program.
Stage 2: Design and Develop the Internship Program	
Determine the program's scope and placement quotas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Select host departments that have the capacity to provide female interns with an empowering and rewarding professional experience. ✓ Set high target ratios for female to male interns for divisions, sections, and departments where women are underrepresented.
Select the right supervisors and mentors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Give female employees the opportunity to develop and enhance their leadership and managerial capabilities by assigning them to supervisory and mentorship roles in the internship program. ✓ Ensure that selected supervisors and mentors have a strong awareness of gender-related challenges and are capable of helping interns navigate and overcome them. ✓ Provide training to supervisors and mentors to increase their capacity to support gender equality in the workplace.
Define position details and roles & responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Define learning objectives, learning outcomes and work activities that will help to create a meaningful and inspiring internship experience for female (and male) interns. ✓ Seek advice from partner educational institutions on how the internship positions can be designed to appeal to the new generation of young women.
Stage 3: Advertise the Internship Program & Recruit	
Create the job posting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use gender neutral language ✓ Explicitly encourage applications from women ✓ Include an equal employment opportunity statement ✓ List out only qualifications that are absolutely necessary for the role

Steps for Building the Internship Program	Gender Responsive Measures
Advertise the internship opening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Emphasize to partner educational institutions the company's intention to hire more women and encourage them to advertise the internship opening to female students ✓ Get inspiring women from your organization to promote the internship program on campus and at other events
Assess candidates and select interns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use standardized forms and interview questions for assessing applicants to reduce room for bias and to ensure consistency and fairness. ✓ Make sure that women are well-represented among the panel of interviewers to help female candidates feel an increased sense of belonging during the interview.
Stage 4: Prepare for the Launch of the Internship Program	
Align internally and with partner educational institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Ask the management team to reiterate to employees the importance of women's empowerment and gender equality prior to the launch of the internship program to seek their cooperation in fostering a women-friendly work environment for interns (and for all employees).
Attend to the important details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Procure and prepare enough tools, equipment, workwear, and safety gear that meet women's needs and are designed for the female body to reduce chances of workplace injuries.
Stage 5: Execute the Internship Program	
Administer the internship orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Highlight the company's commitment to diversity, inclusion, and gender equality during the orientation session and describe to interns how these values are reflected in company policies and practices. ✓ Solicit help from the company's women leaders to speak or participate in other ways at the orientation event so as to inspire and motivate female interns and to help the newcomers recognize women's talents, capabilities, and contributions to the energy industry.

Steps for Building the Internship Program	Gender Responsive Measures
Supervise and mentor interns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Help female interns learn about ways to navigate a male-dominated work environment, including strategies for overcoming gender biases and challenges that women often face in the energy industry. ✓ Encourage interns to speak up about gender-related concerns and issues they have encountered and take appropriate measures to address them.
Organize professional networking opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Arrange networking opportunities that will help female interns build meaningful relationships with professional female contacts who can support them in pursuing fulfilling careers in the energy sector.
Stage 6: Conclude the Internship Program	
Celebrate the interns' achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Highlight women's achievements when publishing about the internship program and its success stories on the company's website and social media accounts. ✓ Ask partner educational institutions to also share women's success stories from the internship program via the different communication channels available to them.
Conduct the final evaluation and build on success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Evaluate the program's impacts and outcomes with respect to the internship program's gender-related SMART goals. ✓ Enhance subsequent internship programs' gender responsiveness by taking into account identified best practices, lessons learned, and other key takeaways from the program that was wrapped up.

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