

Women in Leadership Action Guide

Free Resource from Mission-Driven Momentum Podcast

Practical tools for women building leadership careers and organizations building equitable pathways—in nonprofits and small businesses alike.

LEADERSHIP STRENGTHS SELF-ASSESSMENT

Before you build a strategy, take stock of what you already bring to the table. Rate yourself honestly on each strength. This isn't about perfection—it's about seeing clearly where you're strong and where there's room to grow.

Rate each area: 1 = Developing | 2 = Competent | 3 = Strong | 4 = Exceptional

Leadership Strength	What This Looks Like	Rating
Collaborative Leadership	Building consensus, creating space for diverse perspectives, inclusive decision-making	_____
Emotional Intelligence	Reading a room, sensing morale shifts, catching early warning signs	_____
Resilience & Adaptability	Creative problem-solving when paths are blocked, pivoting under pressure	_____
Mentorship	Reaching back to pull others forward, building leadership pipelines	_____
Authenticity	Leading as yourself, building trust through genuine engagement	_____
Strategic Communication	Making your case with evidence, framing value clearly	_____
Network Building	Intentional connections across sectors, seeking out diverse perspectives	_____
Self-Advocacy	Documenting achievements, negotiating for what you're worth	_____

My Top 3 Strengths:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

One Area I Want to Develop:

ACHIEVEMENT DOCUMENTATION TEMPLATE

Women tend to attribute success to the team or to luck. When it's time for promotions, funding, or new clients, you need evidence. Use this template to track your wins consistently. It takes two minutes after each success—and when review time or a pitch meeting comes, you're ready.

Project / Initiative	Your Role	Outcome	Measurable Impact	Date
<i>EXAMPLE: Strategic planning process for youth services org</i>	<i>Lead facilitator</i>	<i>Completed 3-year plan adopted by board</i>	<i>30% enrollment increase in Year 1</i>	<i>March 2025</i>

Tip: Update this after every win—large or small. When someone questions your worth, this document is your best answer.

NEGOTIATION PREPARATION WORKSHEET

Whether you're negotiating a salary, setting a consulting rate, or pitching for a contract, preparation is what gives you composure. Fill this out before any negotiation conversation.

Know Your Value

What results have I delivered? (Use specifics from your Achievement Documentation)

What is the market rate for this role or service?

What unique expertise or experience do I bring?

Set Your Numbers

My ideal rate/salary:

My minimum acceptable rate/salary:

My walk-away point:

Prepare Your Framing

The formula: "Based on [my experience / my track record / the market value for this role], here's what I should be compensated."

Write your version:

Anticipate Pushback

If They Say...	You Can Respond...
<i>"That seems high."</i>	"Based on what I deliver, this reflects the value of the work. Here are the results I've produced..."
<i>"The budget is tight."</i>	"I understand. Can we discuss what scope adjustments would work at this rate, or explore phased pricing?"
<i>"Other candidates are asking for less."</i>	"I can't speak to other candidates, but I can speak to my track record and the outcomes I bring."
<i>"Are you sure you're worth that?"</i>	"Based on what I deliver, I'm worth more. But I like your organization, so this is what I charge."

NETWORK-BUILDING ACTION PLAN

Intentional networking is a strategy, not a personality trait. This plan helps you build a support system of women leaders who understand your challenges and will sharpen your leadership.

Your Current Network Audit

List 3–5 women leaders you already know and trust:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Where are the gaps?

- Women in my same sector
- Women outside my sector (fresh perspectives)
- Women in senior leadership roles
- Women who could serve as sponsors (not just mentors)
- Women running their own businesses

30-Day Network-Building Challenge

1. **Week 1:** Reach out to one woman leader you admire but haven't connected with recently. Coffee, phone call, or a genuine message.
2. **Week 2:** Attend one event (virtual or in-person) where women leaders gather. Introduce yourself to at least two new people.
3. **Week 3:** Make an introduction. Connect two women in your network who should know each other.
4. **Week 4:** Propose a regular check-in. Quarterly coffee, monthly call, or a small group that meets to share challenges and wins.

Finding a Mentor vs. Finding a Sponsor

Mentor	Sponsor
Gives you advice and guidance	Advocates for you behind closed doors
Shares experience and wisdom	Puts your name forward for opportunities
You seek them out	You earn their trust through performance
Relationship is private	Impact happens in rooms you're not in
Ask: "Would you mentor me?"	Ask: "Would you recommend me for opportunities?"

ORGANIZATIONAL EQUITY AUDIT CONVERSATION GUIDE

This section is for organizations and businesses that want to move beyond good intentions. Use these questions and frameworks to evaluate where you stand and identify concrete steps forward.

Compensation & Promotion Equity

- Have we compared compensation across gender for equivalent roles?
- Are promotion rates comparable for men and women with similar tenure and performance?
- Are the criteria for advancement written down and accessible to everyone?
- Do we have any unwritten rules about what it takes to advance?

Leadership Pipeline

- What percentage of our leadership team is women?
- Do we have a formal mentorship or sponsorship program?
- Are women represented in succession planning?
- Does informal mentoring favor people who already have access?

Culture & Practices

- Do we use structured interviews with explicit evaluation criteria?
- Are women regularly interrupted in meetings? Is anyone tracking this?
- Does leadership model healthy work-life boundaries?
- Are caretaking assumptions (about availability, travel, commitment) affecting decisions about women?
- Do we evaluate against “culture fit” or against explicit, measurable criteria?

After the Audit: Action Steps

1. Identify the three biggest gaps from the audit above
2. Assign ownership for each gap (who is responsible for change?)
3. Set a 90-day timeline for at least one concrete improvement
4. Schedule a follow-up review to measure progress
5. Remember: Data without action is just documentation of a problem

BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPOWERING WOMEN LEADERS

DO:

- ✓ Document your achievements consistently—facts carry weight
- ✓ Build intentional networks across sectors and seniority levels
- ✓ Negotiate for what you’re worth using evidence, not apology
- ✓ Seek both mentors (advice) and sponsors (advocacy)
- ✓ Lead authentically—stop trying to fit someone else’s mold
- ✓ Support other women—recommend, nominate, introduce, celebrate
- ✓ Make promotion criteria explicit and accessible
- ✓ Model healthy boundaries from leadership

DON’T:

- ✗ Wait until you feel 100% ready to step into leadership
- ✗ Discount your own expertise when setting rates or applying for roles
- ✗ Rely on informal mentoring—it favors people who already have access
- ✗ Compete when collaboration would serve everyone better
- ✗ Use vague “culture fit” instead of measurable criteria for hiring and promotions
- ✗ Send midnight emails if you want your team to have work-life balance
- ✗ Skip the bias conversation because it’s uncomfortable
- ✗ Wait for perfect conditions before leading—the mission needs you now

QUICK REFERENCE: KEY STRATEGIES AT A GLANCE

Strategy	For Women Leaders	For Organizations
Network Building	Join or create a women leaders group across sectors	Create cross-departmental mentoring opportunities
Documentation	Track achievements with measurable impact after every win	Make promotion criteria explicit and accessible
Negotiation	Frame compensation around evidence and value delivered	Conduct regular compensation equity reviews
Mentorship	Find both mentors (advice) and sponsors (advocacy)	Formalize mentorship programs with accountability
Bias Awareness	Name barriers and navigate them without waiting for change	Use structured interviews; call out bias when you see it
Authenticity	Lead as yourself—the most effective style is yours	Create culture where diverse leadership styles thrive

NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Podcast: Listen to Episode 10 at missiondrivenpod.com

Blog: Read the companion post for deeper examples and stories

Consulting: Need leadership coaching, equity audits, or help building mentorship programs? Contact The Scanland Group at contact@thescanlandgroup.com or visit thescanlandgroup.com

From The Scanland Group:

*Keep leading with heart, keep showing up with purpose,
and keep creating a world where everyone belongs.*