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## Top tips to encourage diversity of voice at conferences

### *Facilitators and chairs*

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#### **1. Signal**

Say at the start of the session that you are looking for a diversity of voice when it comes to the questions, so ask audience to think about questions as the session proceeds, and be aware that diversity of voice is desired.

#### **2. Prime**

Before the session just ask a woman you know to help you out by asking the first question. We know that if a woman asks the first question, other women are more likely to follow her.

#### **3. Positive**

If you do have a choice, go to a woman for the first question, again because if a woman asks the first question other women are more likely to follow her. Similarly, be prepared to direct audience questions firstly to a female or minority panel member.

#### **4. Consider**

Think about how you phrase your invitation for questions. You can ask people to share their own lived experience of a subject. Or you could ask the audience how does the subject affect their day-to-day work. Or maybe how do they feel when this subject is discussed.

#### **5. Ask**

Just say you would like to hear a question from different perspectives and invite questions from women or other people in the audience that feel underrepresented in the room.

### *If you are in the audience*

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#### **6. Curiosity**

Adopt a curious mindset. Maybe ask what has been left unsaid that could be interesting. You could ask a question through saying, for instance “I am curious could you expand on this topic that you were covering?”

#### **7. My closest work colleague**

Ask a question for a friend. Sometimes we are much more willing to help others than do things for ourselves. It may be easier to ask a question if you think you are doing it for



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someone else. Think what would your (absent) colleague be really interested to know and ask the question for them.

### **8. Observation**

You could ask a question through an observation. I have notice that this tends to happen or that this is a recurring issue, is that something you recognise or are there other issues that seem to come back time and again?

### **9. Encourage**

If you are at a conference with other women agree one of you will ask a question and encourage each other.

### **10. You don't need to be the expert**

The experts are on the panel so you don't need to be one to ask a question. You don't need to demonstrate how clever you are, so help everyone in the audience that are not experts and ask your question without judgement.

### **11. Hold back**

As a member of the audience, if you are a frequent or experienced questioner, be prepared to hold back in favour of others who may be a little slower in coming forward.

## ***If you are the organiser***

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### **12. The panel**

Ensure you have a diverse panel, in terms of gender and other attributes. The more diverse your panel, the more likely you are to encourage diversity of voice when it comes to questions.

### **13. Awareness**

Brief the panel before the session that you are seeking diversity of voice when it comes to questions. That will facilitate a more interesting conversation and a sense of inclusiveness.

### **14. Walk the walk**

Lead by example by ensuring women and minorities are fairly represented when it comes to the role of facilitator or chair.

### **15. Network**

Seek new voices to ensure you are not asking the same speakers into panels. Often organisers go for the tried and tested. One way you could bring new female voices to the



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stage is to ask senior executives or previous speakers what women in their organisation would be happy to speak at an event.

*This top tips document was created by Tracey McEachran to support her 2023 presidential campaign #HearHerVoice.*

*It is with gratitude that we say, please feel free to share the wisdom and mention WISH when you do so...*