FEMINIST GOVERNANCE

A practical guide for change
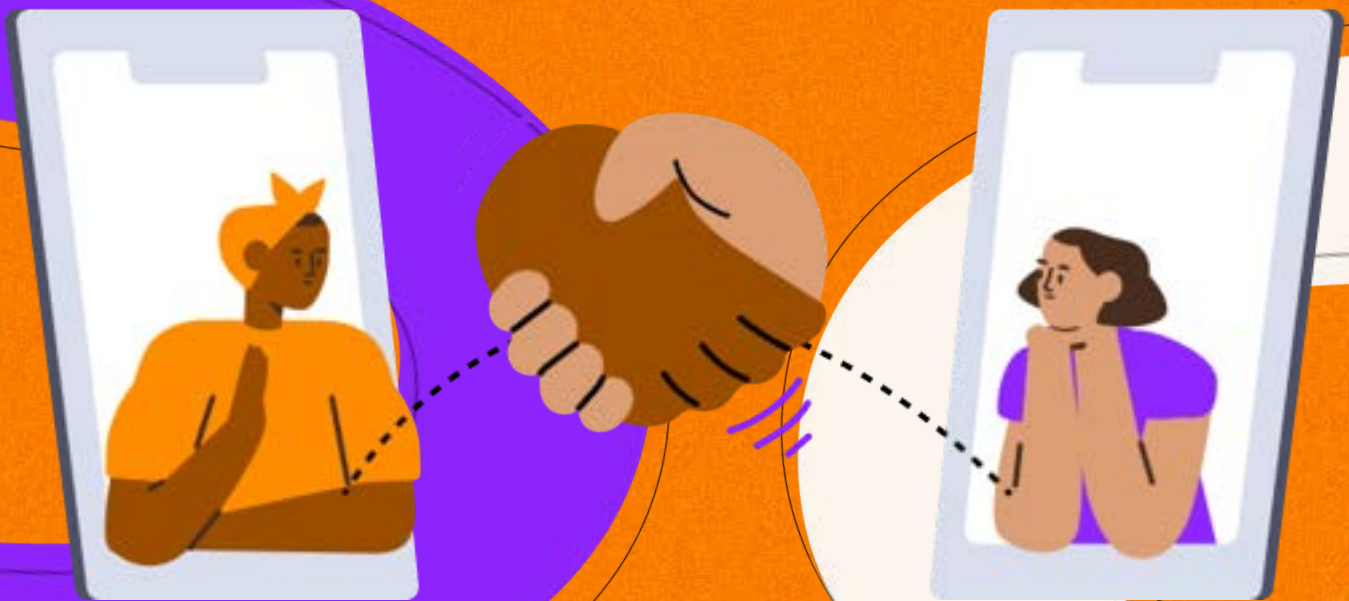
WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

A FEW WORDS FROM THE CREATION TEAM

Welcome to your guide to Feminist Governance!

As consultants, activists, managers, and writers united by the value of feminism, we frequently encounter challenges in decision-making within various groups and organisations. This is a common experience for any professional leading, creating, managing, or interacting with different stakeholders to bring plans and projects to life. However, applying feminist principles adds layers of complexity, fostering more inclusive systems and serving as a powerful tool against patriarchy.

Recognising that Feminist Leadership is crucial but not sufficient on its own, we embarked on a journey to define roadmaps and frameworks for Feminist Governance and collect references of promising practices for those aiming to build feminist and inclusive organisations of any kind and size.

Before we get to the substance of this guide, let's first discuss what we mean by Feminist Governance as it relates to the content contained herein.

The authors of this guide

The authors of this guide are a diverse group of women from around the world involved with or leading civil society organisations, practising and learning about Feminist Leadership through The Feminist Leadership Hub, a collaborative project between **FAIR SHARE of Women Leaders** and **One Future Collective.** This initiative connects feminist practitioners from around the world to learn more about Feminist Leadership and share promising organisational practices that lead us towards a world where social justice is a reality.

Broadly, Feminist Governance describes a feminist approach to how we lead, organise, manage, and conduct our organisations. And by "organisations" we mean any group of individuals coming together within civil society to work towards achieving social justice. These could be grassroots organisations or larger multinational NGOs.
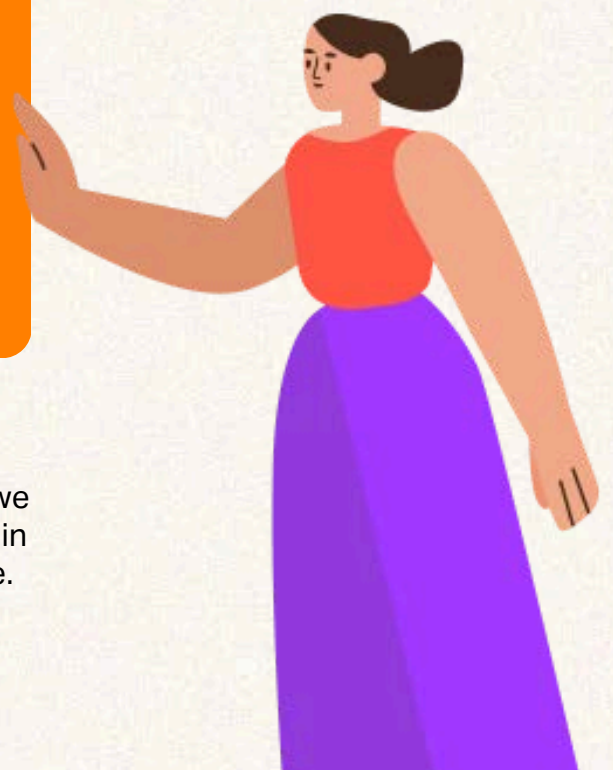
This is not to say that businesses, collectives, cooperatives, or social enterprises could not use this guide to reorganise and govern themselves in a more feminist way; merely, practitioners in civil society organisations are who we had in mind when designing this guide. There are approaches, actions to consider, and ways of doing things in these pages that can be adapted and applied to most contexts.

In the following pages, you will find a comprehensive guide to making a feminist revolution a reality in our sector. This work incorporated voices from diverse races, backgrounds, cultures, and ages and is a testament to decolonial and anti-patriarchal principles, drawing inspiration from a wide range of literature, especially the 7 Cs of Feminist Governance that emerged from the consolidation of key principles for implementing Feminist Governance, developed by the Filipino organisation Angat Bayi.

Angat Bayi focuses on advocacy, innovation, mentorship, and transformative feminist programs, and gathered insights from 70 women around the globe on how to manage power inequality within organisations, by setting structures, and values-based models. It is important to note that inequality here does not only refer to gender-based biases in management and decision-making but also encompasses intersectionalities and decolonial perspectives at its core.

As per Bayi's 7 Cs framework, Feminist Governance must be:

- **Critical**: Understanding inequality among members requires a focus on intersectionality at its core, ensuring that diverse identities and experiences are acknowledged and addressed.
- **Contextual**: Governance must consider the specific contexts in which members operate. There is no one-size-fits-all approach; different contexts require tailored strategies to effectively combat inequality.
- **Connected**: Effective governance is linked to a decision-making process that incorporates supervision and accountability, embedding feminism and inclusion at the heart of decision drivers and organisational processes.
- **Consultative**: Upholding the principles of inclusion, decolonization, and equality means recognising that no single person holds all the knowledge. All expertise should be valued, and all voices heard, challenging historically patriarchal and exclusive systems that perpetuate inequality and oppression.
- **Caring**: Leadership and processes should be rooted in respect, empathy, and compassion, prioritising the well-being of the community. This includes recognizing the need for rest, rejuvenation, and the joy of those involved.
- **Collective and Collaborative**: Feminist governance ensures that no one is left behind, emphasising the empowerment of the entire community rather than a select few individuals or leaders.
- **Creative and Innovative**: Bayi advocates for and supports out-of-the-box solutions to address pressing gender issues, encouraging creativity and innovation in the pursuit of equality.

WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR?

This guide is designed for people working in civil society who want to better understand how they might integrate Feminist Governance (Feminist Governance) in their organisations. It has been created to support consultants, activists, and leaders who are striving to integrate Feminist Governance values into their work. Even if you haven't started yet, these pages provide tools and pathways to achieve a more feminist approach to your endeavours. Whether you're looking to refine your current practices or embark on a new journey, this guide will help you conceptualise and navigate the complexities and opportunities of Feminist Governance.

How can you use it?
This guide can be your companion whether you are restructuring your organisation, or leading smaller organisational projects and tasks. You can use it within your micro context and within your communities, recognising that change often demands varied strategies and that progress happens one step at a time. Keep this guide close when making decisions, revising processes, and especially when you face challenges that tempt you to revert to assumptions rooted in patriarchal ways of doing and being. By doing so, you'll foster a more inclusive and feminist approach to your work with concrete outcomes for the inner teams, but also within our expanded communities.

HOW DID WE WORK ON IT?

This guide is the result of months of dedicated work, initiated during an intensive three-day laboratory at the FAIR SHARE Festival in Berlin, Germany in May 2024. Feminist leaders from Brazil, Canada, Greece, the United Kingdom, and the United States—each bringing diverse intersectional experiences and a long history of practising feminism across various fields and interventions—were selected through an open call for volunteers on the Feminist Leadership Hub. Our mission was to consolidate the learnings, experiences, and concepts around Feminist Governance that have emerged over the years, especially those challenging systems that fail to embody feminist values.

During our three-day lab, we explored and mapped discussions that have emerged in our polarised, digital, and volatile world, while also grounding our conversations in the foundational theories of feminism through a decolonial lens. This approach was crucial for embedding the concept of inclusion within Feminist Governance. After thoroughly discussing and reviewing various perspectives on what Feminist Governance entails, we crafted our methodology, defined the formatting, selected relevant literature, and developed the content.

The second phase involved surveying members of The Feminist Leadership Hub to ensure we created a genuinely useful tool for everyone's lives. As feminists, we believe that listening and collaboration are essential in any process. Based on the survey results, as well as examples and experiences shared by Hub members in story-harvesting calls specifically for this resource, we developed this practical guide to support your journey in implementing Feminist Governance within the collectives, groups, and organisations you are part of. **The guide aims to help you design governance systems that are feminist and rooted in social justice.**

BASIC DEFINITIONS

How do we define Feminist Leadership?

Feminist Leadership is the practice of embodying feminism in our leadership practice, including challenging patriarchal and all other forms of oppression, promoting equity, and making decisions informed by intersectionality and decolonisation, in order to achieve social justice within the civil society sector and grassroots movements.

We want to clarify that we do not believe that leadership is an inherent quality in individuals, but rather that it can be developed and nurtured through practice. Feminist leadership is heavily based on ensuring that we incorporate the practice of nurturing leaders into all our interactions. However, we see Feminist Leadership as a tool that individuals can use to help their communities and organisations achieve social justice.

How do we define Feminist Governance?

Feminist governance concerns the organisational structures, processes and systems that embody feminist values and produce outcomes aligned with the mission of creating a more equitable and just society.

Distinguishing Feminist Leadership and Feminist Governance

Feminist Leadership focuses on an individual's behaviour and capacity to create impact, recognising the role of personal actions in driving change. Feminist Governance, on the other hand, involves designing systems that are shaped by the principles of feminism.

To conceptualise their scope, put simply, Feminist Leadership is about our practices and approaches as leaders; it's about people. Feminist Governance concerns structures, policies, and processes; it's about the organisation. Though this may be oversimplified (because organisations are, after all, made up of people), they are concepts that can help us tease out what might be about leadership and what might be about governance.

Primary Foci of Feminist Leadership & Feminist Governance
- Feminist Leadership: Embeds feminist values into the way leaders interact with and guide their teams.
- Feminist Governance: Ensures that organisational structures, policies and processes reflect a feminist ethic.

Implementation of Feminist Leadership & Feminist Governance
- Feminist Leadership: Focuses on the behaviours, values, and actions of individuals within the organisation.
- Feminist Governance: Involves setting up systems, frameworks, and mechanisms that support feminist principles throughout the organisation.

We hope the following pages prove to be a trusted guide on your feminist journey toward feminist social justice.

EXPLORING FEMINIST GOVERNANCE

We have identified 5 domains of Feminist Governance that we will explore in this guide, building off of <u>work done</u> by the FAIR SHARE Action Circle in November 2022:

01 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE & HIERARCHY

02 POLICIES & PROCESSES

03 DECISION-MAKING

04 RISK

05 FUNDING & FINANCE

Though it could be argued that there are many more domains, we have chosen to focus on the above based on our experience, the questions about Feminist Leadership and Feminist Governance that have arisen in relation to these domains, and as a starting point for discussions about feminist governance.

Feminist governance addresses the root causes of inequality and oppression, rather than just the symptoms. It recognises the importance of:

POWER REDISTRIBUTION

Shifting power dynamics to create a more equitable and participatory organisation.

Example: We can appoint a board member from a marginalised group to increase the diversity of perspectives and centre voices of those most impacted. But, at the same time, we could establish a rotating leadership model where decision-making power is shared among a diverse group of employees, ensuring all voices, especially those from marginalised groups, are heard and influence key decisions.

Example: We can implement diversity training workshops for employees. But, at the same time, we could move to a model of functional hierarchy where collaboration and collective decision-making are prioritised, and embedding feminist principles into every aspect of the company's operations and culture.

TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

Moving beyond surface-level inclusion to fundamentally alter how organisations operate.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Understanding and addressing the multiple, intersecting forms of discrimination and privilege

Example: We can create a women's group to address gender issues within the organisation. Or we could form an intersectional equity committee that includes representatives from various marginalised groups (e.g. women of colour, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and people with disabilities) to ensure policies and practices address the unique and overlapping challenges they face.

As you go through the guide, each section will be divided into one of the domains, with a short introduction on why it is important to practise Feminist Governance in that context and then move onto exploring some practical tips, so that you can use it as more of a guide to action. Before we dive into each domain, we want to give you a roadmap for identifying your organisational values, as a foundation for all the work to come.

REFLECTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

Before you begin, we encourage you to go through the following case studies and hold them close as you go through the rest of the resource. These case studies are designed to be reflective only, and have no right or wrong answers. Think about what you would do in each situation, if you were to apply a lens of Feminist Governance to the case study.

MEET ALEX.

Alex works in an organisation in the development sector, and is going through their work day when they are faced with some challenges.

01

Alex has recently moved into the Executive Director role at an organisation. After a few months of learning about the organisation, she's identified a few areas of concern and she'd like to move the organisation forward with feminist governance at the forefront.

What are some of the first things Alex could do to begin to improve these areas of concern and scaffold some feminist values such as inclusion, collective care, transparency, equity, and ways of organising and relating into the organisation?

1. Hold a town hall amongst all staff members and hear directly from them what their concerns are and how to overcome them.
2. Work with the community being served to create and implement a feedback system in order to learn more about and evaluate the services provided.
3. Establish leadership and mentorship pipelines to grow and expand the feminist leadership capacity of the entire staff team.

Great! Let's move on and see what other challenges Alex is facing in their work day today.

02

Alex is reviewing the organisation's current policies to ensure they align with feminist governance principles. They discover that the parental leave policy is outdated and does not accommodate the diverse family structures of her colleagues. What should Alex do?

1. Propose an immediate review of the policy and invite feedback from the team.
2. Suggest that management handle it without team input to avoid uncomfortable discussions or resistance.
3. Wait until the next scheduled policy review meeting to bring it up, since everyone is so busy at the moment.

03

Alex's organization must decide whether to change its program evaluation methods to better reflect its feminist values. Some team members argue that continuing with the traditional approach risks reinforcing unequal power dynamics by focusing only on measurable outcomes rather than the lived experiences and voices of the communities they serve. Others are hesitant to change the evaluation system, citing concerns about losing funder confidence if they shift away from quantitative measures.

What process might Alex use to best make this decision?

1. Gradient Agreement Process: Utilize the "Fist to Five" gradient agreement tool during meetings to gauge consensus among stakeholders on the proposed changes. There would be facilitated discussions around any dissent and then working toward a decision that everyone can support.
2. Inclusive Decision-Making Team: Form a diverse decision-making team that includes representatives from various stakeholder groups —staff, program participants, and board members. The team will collaboratively review current evaluation methods and proposed changes, ensuring that different perspectives are considered. Once discussions are complete, the team can reach a decision based on a majority vote.
3. Feedback Surveys and Collaborative Decision-Making: Distribute anonymous feedback surveys to gather input on the current evaluation methods and proposed changes from all stakeholders. After analyzing the responses, host a meeting to discuss the findings and collaboratively brainstorm potential solutions. Reach consensus through discussion.

04

Alex's organisation is managing a project funded by an international donor, and she is committed to feminist inclusive governance principles. From the outset, the recruited team reflects intersectionality and was intentionally designed to be inclusive. While organising the required tasks, Alex notices that some team members need extra support—such as faster internet access, more flexibility for balancing family and work, and mental health assistance—in order to contribute equally. These needs will impact the budget, requiring some reallocation of funds to address them.

How should Alex manage this challenge?

1. Alex manages the budget and team tasks on her own to speed up the process, though this might conflict with inclusive governance values.
2. Alex involves her team in decision-making and takes the risk of engaging to support budget reallocations.
3. Alex chooses to follow the original agreement with the donor but will integrate lessons learned into future budgets for improved planning.

05

It's lunchtime, and Alex overhears team members in the canteen talking about current events playing out in international politics. There is disagreement between some team members - including their perspective on how this relates to the organisation's work and values - and things get heated. Alex feels this tension in the team in the coming days, and knows that the conversation is still live. However, they are also aware that the board has a clear stance on this.

How should Alex manage this challenge?

1. Alex sees the risk of addressing the topic head on in the team while not being able to follow through on a stance that differs from their funder's. They take the opportunity in the next team meeting to announce the organisation's stance on this topic, in line with their funder.
2. Alex sees the risk of team members feeling alienated and unheard. They find external support to facilitate team discussions on the topic, while also making the team aware of the risks of taking a stance opposed to their funder.
3. Alex gets input from their team as well as the community the organisation serves on the topic, and presents this to the board, inviting conversation on the topic.

DEFINING VALUES

Before we examine the question of Feminist Governance itself, there is an important step we must take. **The foundation of any governance practice starts with defining the guiding values and behaviours.** To maintain a desired culture, there must be uniform agreement on what the values are that will guide everyday decisions and how the community will interact with each other and the world.

Feminist values, particularly in the context of governance, focus on combining power to foster a governance culture capable of overcoming oppression in a variety of ways. Regardless of how this is interpreted in the values, all parties involved must be aware of the values and behaviours they represent. **The process of determining these values is equally important as the values themselves.**

Below, we present one participatory method for determining behaviours and values that is inclusive, can accommodate large or small groups of people, and uses the language of all participants, to get you started on your Feminist Governance journey.

During this process, your team will:
- Reach a consensus on how members participating in the governance process want to treat one another, how they want to feel when they leave this process, how to resolve conflict and more;
- Once the desired behaviours have been identified, categorise them according to their relatedness;
- Lastly, write a description of the behaviours that eventually become values.
- The activities listed below are intended for organisations, but we encourage you to adapt them to any Feminist Governance process that may be appropriate for your needs.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY DESIRED BEHAVIOURS

This process will help participants think about what they expect or notice in the governance process, how they feel about different types of interactions, determine the significance of the interactions, and what the desired behaviours would be.

1. Plan to include all stakeholders of the organisation, including everyone who might be affected by the organisational culture.
2. Decide the format of the information gathering – workshop, survey, or both. Clarify that you are eliciting responses from all organisational stakeholders to shape a feminist culture.
3. Ask the following questions and collect the responses to each question. There will be many responses and each is important to the final result.

Identifying the behaviours we want to see in a feminist organisation involves guiding participants through a structured discussion in four areas:

Mapping Experience
Purpose: Allow participants to express their feelings, reactions, and personal experiences related to the organisation's current (or past experiences in other organisations) culture and behaviours.

1. How do you feel about the current behaviours and practices within our organisation?
2. What personal experiences have you had that reflect either positive or negative aspects of our organisational culture?
3. Are there behaviours that make you feel included or excluded?
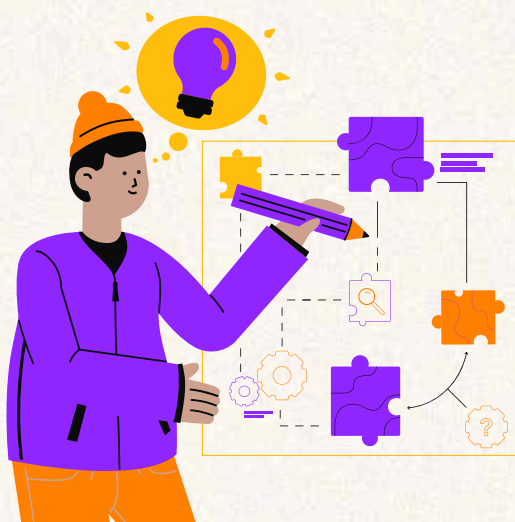
Fact Gathering
Purpose: Start by gathering factual information about the organisation's current state and any existing policies or behaviours related to feminist principles.

1. How would we define feminism? Which values make up feminism?
2. What current behaviours and practices are already in place that align with feminist values?
3. What examples of feminist principles can we observe in our organisation today?
4. Are there any documented policies or practices that reflect feminist values?

Interpret What We Know
Purpose: Analyse the information gathered and reflect on its meaning, identifying gaps between current behaviours and desired feminist principles.

1. What patterns or themes do we see in the behaviours we've discussed?
2. What behaviours are missing that would better reflect feminist values?
3. What does our current organisational culture say about our commitment to feminist principles?

Clarify Behaviours
Purpose: Make decisions about specific actions or behaviours the organisation wants to implement or reinforce to better align with feminist values.

What specific behaviours should we prioritise to foster a feminist organisational culture (3-7 words)? Depending on the group size, use inclusive facilitative techniques to solicit no more than 45 agreed-upon behaviours.

PART TWO: IDENTIFY VALUES

Classify the Behaviours
Purpose: Group the behaviours in categories so that values will become apparent.

1. Each person should have written their ideas for behaviours on individually written on pieces of paper/sticky notes so that they can be moved around while clustering.
2. Take the first 15 behaviours and ask if there are any in common and begin to sort them in columns or clusters of relatedness.
3. Sort the next 15 behaviours in current categories or add categories if necessary. Sort the final 15 behaviours until all the behaviours are in categories.
4. Ask if everyone agrees that the categories are satisfactory or if any of the behaviours should be moved to other categories.

Name the Values
Purpose: To use the desired behaviours of the group to discern the organisational value in each category.

For each category of behaviours:

1. Read all the behaviours in the cluster or column.
2. What words stand out to you?
3. What insights do you see in this collection of behaviours?
4. What value do we want to uphold in this group of behaviours?

After an agreement is achieved with the naming of a category, the organisational values and the defined behaviours that embody those values can be celebrated.

By applying this participatory method, the organisation is guided through a process of reflection, interpretation, and decision-making that leads to clear, actionable steps for defining feminist values within the organisation. This approach ensures participants' perspectives are considered, and the organisation moves forward with a shared understanding and commitment to these values.

EXAMPLES OF VALUES

The following are examples of values and behaviours that were developed with organisations using a feminist participatory process. The language comes directly from teams and every person involved in the implementation of these was included in the development.

Lived experience

Through these behaviours:
- Building Communities of Practice + Learning Sessions for staff
- Thinking of the next generations in decisions we make
- Career development and training team
- Creating and growing an inclusive database of consultants with lived experience of our constituents
- Making sure that people we hire are getting more than just money

Joy & intentionality

Through these behaviours:
- Inclusive guidelines for hiring practices.
- We should all understand why we are doing something assigned to us
- Find time to celebrate wins and find joy in the work and community
- Showing up for our community in their spaces
- Making time for pausing and reflection

Acknowledging dominant culture

Through these behaviours:
- Organic inclusion of Global Majority narratives from an empowering perspective.
- Inclusive of people's access needs (language, timezone, etc)
- Listen with the intent of hearing and being open to changing your mind
- Recognition and acknowledgement of dominant culture
- Flexibility in roles if/when it makes sense
- Employee resource groups (women, Indigenous groups, children, governance, disability)

Belonging

Through these behaviours:
- A decision-making process that ensures participation and value of opinions but isn't stagnated by doing so.
- Having a space/system that clarifies who has what responsibilities or tasks
- Inclusion and collaborative processes
- Master the challenge of keeping everyone informed
- Building out an inclusive infrastructure
- Using tech tools to have large groups of people participate in decisions

Honesty & candour

Through these behaviours:
- A dedicated forum to receive feedback from stakeholders
- Be honest with what you disagree with
- Not being afraid to put out a bad idea in mindmapping
- People should be able to say "That wouldn't work"
- Giving platforms to empower people

Humility & curiosity

Through these behaviours:
- Continuous unlearning and learning
- We don't have to have all the answers
- Exploring partnerships to add expertise
- Creating space for experimenting with new mediums, ideas, and avenues
- Allowing freedom to play

Doing no harm

Through these behaviours:
- Giving platforms to empower people
- Use your social capital for good
- Ask yourself: What is this in service of?
- Creating space for experimenting with new mediums, ideas, and avenues
- Telling and retelling of positive stories to shift narratives (e.g. LGBTQIA+ people in Uganda)
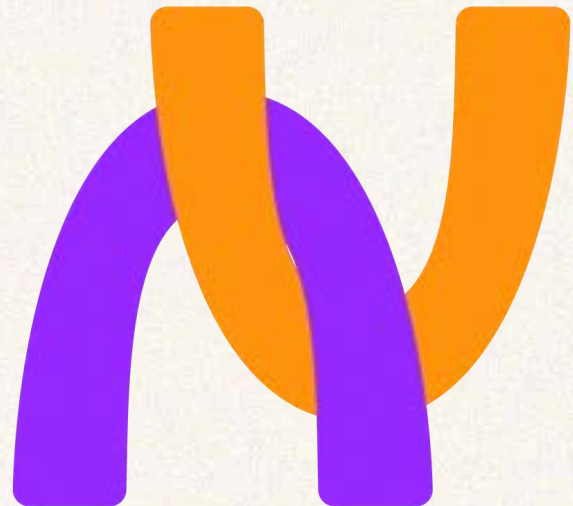
We hope these considerations and the activity outlined above can help your organisation to solidify its shared values and set the parameters and inspiration for your collaborative work.

Now, let's get into the five domains of Feminist Governance, starting with Organisational Structure & Hierarchy.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

& HIERARCHY

In this section, we encourage organisations to explore a context-appropriate assessment and reformation of their organisational structures and hierarchies to support and expand feminist praxis.

Applying a critical feminist lens to how we organise ourselves can help unearth some taken-for-granted patriarchal and traditionally authoritarian structures that in fact, perpetuate oppression and limit our capacity for feminist practice.

Critically examining how we organise ourselves, our responsibilities, and how we are accountable to each other and the communities we serve can produce more equitable, liberatory and ultimately feminist ways of knowing and being. This section will also address accountability from a feminist lens and how a culture of collective care can help support responsibility and collective accountability within an organisation.

Who might be involved and what are the implications for each group?
Identifying the people and groups involved in this process is contextual and can be tailored to the organisation's needs and realities. Many stakeholders in the organisation (board, staff, volunteers, service users/clients/community, partners) may be involved, but at different stages of the process.

For example, the board may not be required to participate in a process that examines the engagement of frontline staff and service users, but it may be involved in a process that investigates the possibility of a shared Executive Directorship. People who are directly impacted by reorganisation should be involved in the process of exploring these new possibilities.

Example: In a scenario where a department or team within an organisation is redistributing power and decision-making authority for budgets to the team members, only that team and its leader need be involved in this process. The team leader may still be accountable to the director for the budget and other targets, but how that power and decision-making is exercised within that team can be decided amongst its members.

10 practical tips to begin the process of reimagining our organisational structure

01 Restructuring organisations is a huge undertaking! Ensure you have the whole organisational strength, resiliency, health, and desire to commit to this process.

02 Honest conversations about how this process might challenge you are crucial. Releasing authority, redistributing power and responsibilities, and hearing constructive feedback can be an emotional undertaking. Preparing ourselves and our teams for this rocky road is critical to getting to the other side! Holding team, department, and organisation-wide meetings to air out concerns or anxieties can help support this process. Encouraging conversation is a healthy way for us to prepare for, undergo, and debrief change.

03 Current leadership can conduct a decision-making or authority audit where they identify the decisions and authority they currently hold that can be redistributed. This may feel extremely uncomfortable because we have been conditioned to believe we have to maintain power to ensure accountability and maintain productivity. However, empowering our staff teams with authority and decision-making responsibilities is a feminist practice that can help our organisations improve their practice of justice and equity.

04 Create a champions committee! Depending on the size of your organisation, these 4-8 folks can be identified from any area of the organisation and are responsible for ensuring the process timeline, checkpoints, and activities. Additionally, they ensure a transparent process by providing regular progress updates on behalf of the organisation.

05 Leadership development is crucial in a feminist organisational structure. Many women, particularly women of colour, queer women, and women with disabilities have historically been ignored and/or overlooked when staff members are identified as having "leadership potential" and as such may not have received extra leadership training, learning and development. Providing the opportunity for everyone in the organisation to engage with Feminist Leadership learning will facilitate a successful transition to a Feminist Governance structure where leadership and power are redistributed and actively practised and held by all.

06 An organisational curriculum or learning series about power and solidarity can help support the transition to an organisational structure where power is no longer centralised and concentrated in the few.

07 Hold regular town halls/organisational meetings where staff and others can ask and answer questions, provide insights, and be part of the process.

08 Though this is a change process, identify where feminist values are truly embodied and brought to life currently in the organisation. Engage the whole organisation in this process either through facilitated discussions or online feedback forms. We want to ensure we capture and amplify rather than lose or diminish our current feminist practices.

09 Through a similar (or within the same) process, we can also identify where there are organisational pinch points, redundancies, or micro-managing taking place within the organisation. Invite staff, leadership, clients and the community to feedback on their experiences with unnecessary bureaucracy, "red tape", or bottlenecks in processes, service delivery or accessibility.

10 Involve the whole organisation in this reimagination! Facilitate a workshop that encourages creative feminist thinking about how we can more equitably organise ourselves.

Accountability

How can our organisations build a culture of collective accountability that embodies a feminist approach? How does this ensure we are able to commit to a feminist governance process?

Below is an activity for application that can be adapted to suit your organisation and address accountability within your team:

01

Set a time that is convenient for all team members and gather in a meeting space; this could be in your workspace or an external space.

02

Start by sharing the goal and objective of this activity. A selected individual or group can take the lead on this. Mention that there will be a discussion on accountability and how collective accountability can be developed and supported in your organisation.

03

Take 15 minutes to reflect and discuss what accountability means to you as a team and how hierarchy and power impact accountability within the team. For example, is there invisible labour within the team? Does work always tend to fall on one person? Can you see the dynamics of 'power over' impacting your team's work when meeting goals and deadlines?
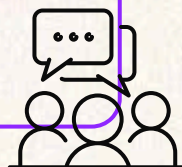
04

After this identify common themes that have arisen from the discussion and feedback to each other as a group.
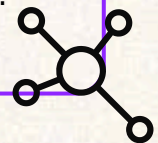
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After the discussion, in smaller groups of four or five, outline ways that accountability can be addressed within a feminist framework. How can collective accountability be supported? Building a culture of collective care and shared accountability can help to support this discussion.

06

Post a definition of collective accountability that your team have co-created from this workshop and a summary of the agreed ways to create accountability within your organisation on a board, canvas or somewhere the team can regularly see it.

07

As described, having strong leadership and organisational culture and addressing coercive power is the backbone of practising mutual trust and accountability. Regularly re-examining definitions and strategies of building collective accountability and addressing power over when it comes to holding each other responsible for work as well as practising collective care can support organisations that aim to build a feminist framework for accountability and addressing hierarchy.

Remember to hold each other accountable in keeping this collective understanding and practices of accountability. You can revisit this activity twice a year, or develop a mechanism that works for your organisation to keep the question of accountability alive.

Now that we have created a shared understanding of accountability, let's explore the possibilities for a more feminist organisational structure.

Activity for application

How can a feminist organisation reimagine their organisational structure to embody Feminist Governance? Try out this workshop facilitation to engage the creativity, intellect, and experience of the whole organisation! You will need a large room with group tables, chart paper, coloured markers, and about 4 hours to facilitate and allow for discussions to organically evolve.

This workshop can be adapted to suit your organisation, and can be conducted virtually using collaborative tools as well. Keep groups to 4 or 5 people, but you can have as many groups as needed to ensure that all stakeholders are involved. NOTE: the makeup of each group must be a mix of positions from the organisation - board member, staff, leader, community member, etc.

01

Ensure each group has some chart paper and differently coloured markers. Ask each group to create a visual depiction of how they see the current organisational structure, considering power and authority.

Have each group present their structure and talk through how and why they drew it as they did. You can even mix up the participants and put them into new groups to talk about how they see the organisation.

02

Put the original groups back together and have them mark on their drawing where and how they see power manifesting within the organisation. Have them also mark where power is hidden or invisible. They can use their imagination here to symbolize where and how power manifests throughout the organisation. Groups can present, then have them adhere their drawings to the walls.

03

On fresh chart paper, have groups discuss and either write or draw where there are pinch points/bottlenecks, conflict/friction, overwork, etc., within the organisation. Present and discuss.

04

Discuss and then distribute the 7 C's of Feminist Governance from Angat Bayi. With these in mind, have groups identify where they see these elements represented in the organisation. They can write or draw on their chart paper. Present and discuss. The facilitator can create a master list of the most common elements.

05

Have the groups redraw an organisational structure, but this time imagine it as an organisation that embodies feminist values and Bayi's 7Cs of Feminist Governance. Make sure to encourage them to use their imaginations! Present and discuss.

06

Using the drawings created, facilitate a conversation about what elements from these drawings could actually be executed? How could we change our organisational structure to better reflect feminist values? What new ideas are generated? Record it all on flip charts as these ideas can inform our restructuring process.

07

Take pictures of the new organisational structures created in the workshop. Email them to everyone, post them publicly semi-permanently as we go through our restructuring process, and continue to foster the conversation. In a few days, send out a form via email so that further feedback can be collected. Sometimes we need more time to process and more thoughts and ideas come to us - be sure to capture those. Throughout the restructuring process and once new structures and processes are in place, incorporate elements from these drawings visually to illustrate the new organisational structure. Showing people how their ideas contributed to the outcome demonstrates respect and value for the people involved in the process.

Key Takeaways

Reimagining Organisational Structures for Feminist Praxis:

Organisations are encouraged to critically assess and reform traditional hierarchies, which often reinforce oppression and patriarchal power. By adopting collaborative leadership and participatory practices, organisations can cultivate more equitable and feminist ways of being and working.

Practical Strategies for Structural Reform:

An approach that engages diverse strategies and practical activities for restructuring, including conducting power audits, redistributing decision-making authority, forming leadership development programs for marginalised groups, and holding town halls to foster collective accountability and inclusivity, can help us to reimagine ways of organising ourselves.

Facilitating Workshops for Feminist Organisational Design:

Engaging a workshop process for reimagining organisational structures supports efforts to not only include but involve organisational stakeholders in the reformations of our organisations. Participants are encouraged to map power dynamics, identify organisational bottlenecks, and collaboratively redesign the structure to reflect Feminist Governance principles, with continued input and feedback from all stakeholders.

POLICIES AND PROCESSES

Policies and procedures are crucial points of reference that provide employees guidance and clarity. They guarantee accountability and consistency by outlining the organisation's goals and expectations. Policies serve as the practical instruments that support Feminist Governance's values in day-to-day operations by instructing employees on how the organisation actively promotes inclusive and equitable practices.

From their inception to their ongoing monitoring and evaluation, organisational policies and processes are opportunities to live out our feminist principles by ensuring they are collaborative, inclusive, transparent, and justice-focused. Policies and processes guide many of the ways in which we interact with each other, resolve conflict, explore solutions, and identify opportunities for us to bring further feminist practices into our organisations.

Who might be involved and what are the implications for each group?

Leadership and management
The implications are that they should be willing or, at least open to, to share power and promote feminist values. Their responsibility is to lead by example and ensure feminist principles are embedded in policies and actually practised.

HR
The implications are that they need to support and prioritise the well-being of all staff, challenging the status quo rather than upholding systems that benefit those already in power. They can develop feminist policies, conduct training, and ensure processes support social justice within the organisation.

Employees
The implications are that they gain from a more equitable and supportive work environment. (who doesn't want that?). Co-workers can encourage each other to actively engage with and contribute to the development and implementation of feminist policies.

(Other) Stakeholder groups
The implications are that they benefit from a partnership with an organisation committed to Feminist Governance which aligns with broader social justice goals and enhances the credibility and ethical standing of all involved. They can become informed and potentially involved in policy feedback and development.

What are the feminist options for this?

01 Ensure transparency in how policies are developed, implemented, and reviewed.

What does this mean exactly? Publish a detailed timeline and progress updates for new policy development on the company intranet, and hold town hall meetings to discuss changes and gather input.

02 Ensure policies are co-created with input from a diverse range of voices, especially those from marginalised groups.

What does this mean exactly? Form a policy advisory committee that includes representatives from various employee groups such as women, LGBTQIA+, and people of color, to co-develop new workplace policies.

03 Use intersectional analysis to assess the impact of policies on different groups.

What does this mean exactly? Before implementing a new parental leave policy, conduct focus groups with employees of different genders, races, and family structures to understand how the policy will affect them differently.

04 Create clear, accessible channels for decision-making and feedback. (More on decision-making later)

What does this mean exactly? Develop an online platform where employees can easily access information about ongoing decision-making processes and submit their feedback.

05 Develop robust support systems such as employee resource groups, mental health resources, and safe reporting mechanisms.

What does this mean exactly? Establish Employee Resource Groups with regular meeting times and provide funding for their activities. Offer access to confidential counselling services and create a clear, confidential reporting system for grievances or concerns, ensuring that all employees feel safe to speak up without fear of retaliation.

This all sounds difficult and maybe more relevant to a medium to large-scale organisation. We are a team of 5 people. Can we still try?

Yes, you definitely can!

- Make sure everyone is included in policy-making to ensure all voices are heard.
- Discuss how policies affect different people to understand diverse impacts.
- Use shared documents and regular meetings for transparent decision-making.
- Support each other with accessible mental health resources and clear ways to address concerns.
- As far as possible, try fair hiring, promotion, and pay practices, and offer flexible work options.
- Regularly review salaries for fairness and use an anonymous feedback form for suggestions.

You can do this!

10 PRACTICAL TIPS

(AND A STARTING POINT!)

01 Include women, people of colour, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other marginalised groups in your policy-making team to ensure diverse perspectives.

02 Host monthly workshops on topics such as intersectionality, unconscious bias, and inclusive leadership.

03 Create a detailed anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policy, ensure all employees understand it, and have a clear reporting process in place.

04 Send regular email updates and hold open meetings where policy changes are discussed and questions can be answered.

05 Set a schedule to review key policies every six months and make adjustments based on feedback and changing needs.

06 Establish groups for different identities (e.g., women's group, LGBTQIA+ group) and pair new employees with mentors.

07 Use anonymous recruitment techniques, diverse hiring panels, and standardised interview questions to minimise bias.

08 Offer flexible start and end times, remote work options, and equal parental leave for all genders.

09 Perform annual salary reviews to identify and address any pay disparities between different demographics.

10 Create an anonymous online feedback form and hold quarterly feedback sessions to discuss and act on employee suggestions, intended for gathering feedback on specific areas, such as workplace culture, policies, or processes.

Activity for application

Whatever the size of your team, if you want to implement tip #10 above, here are the steps you would take:

01

DESIGN A FEEDBACK FORM

Create an anonymous feedback form, using tools like Google Forms or Typeform. Ensure the form is accessible and user-friendly and structure it to gather feedback on specific topics each quarter (for example!), such as wellbeing, compensation packages, or strategy. This approach allows you to collect focused and actionable insights on key areas, ensuring that employees feel heard and that their concerns are addressed in a timely manner. You can keep this form open throughout the year and commit to checking it once every quarter.

02

COMMUNICATE THE LAUNCH

Announce the introduction of the feedback form to your team. Send an email or hold a meeting to explain the purpose, and how to access it and emphasise the importance of honest and constructive feedback. Ideally, you do both: send a pre-launch email preparing the team for the initiative and go into more detail in a live meeting or call.

03

SET UP FEEDBACK SESSIONS

Make sure you have set up feedback session(s) where all team members are openly and equally invited to discuss the feedback collected from the anonymous form. It would be great if you could get an external facilitator for these sessions - if resources are limited, perhaps put out a call for experienced volunteers in your networks. In case you are stretched for capacity, you can commit to holding this once every year only.

04

ANALYSE FEEDBACK

Analyse the feedback collected once every quarter or according to a timeline that suits you and identify common themes, issues, and concerns. If needed, you can prepare a summary of key findings and any urgent concerns that need immediate attention, or park it for the next feedback session.

Here, you can also handover responsibility to review feedback to different members of the team rotationally, ensuring buy-in and reimagining feminist organisational structures in the process.

05

ACT ON FEEDBACK
_____

Outline actions that will be taken based on the suggestions made through the form and feedback session, as well as a realistic timeline to avoid overloading yourselves or setting false expectations. Send a follow-up email or hold a brief meeting to update everyone on how their feedback is being addressed and any changes implemented.

06

REVIEW, ADJUST, REVIEW...
_____

Make sure you review the feedback process over and over again. Ask for feedback on the feedback system itself and refine the process to better match your organisation's needs.

Key Takeaways

We have highlighted three key takeaways to ensure clarity on how feminist principles can be integrated into policy development processes:

Shared leadership & inclusion

Feminist governance requires leadership to share power and involve diverse voices, particularly marginalised groups, in policy creation and decision-making.

Transparent policy development

Policies should be developed transparently, with clear communication and collaboration, ensuring all stakeholders understand and contribute to the process.

Supporting workplace structures

Establish employee resource groups, mental health resources, and feedback channels to support a feminist, inclusive workplace environment.
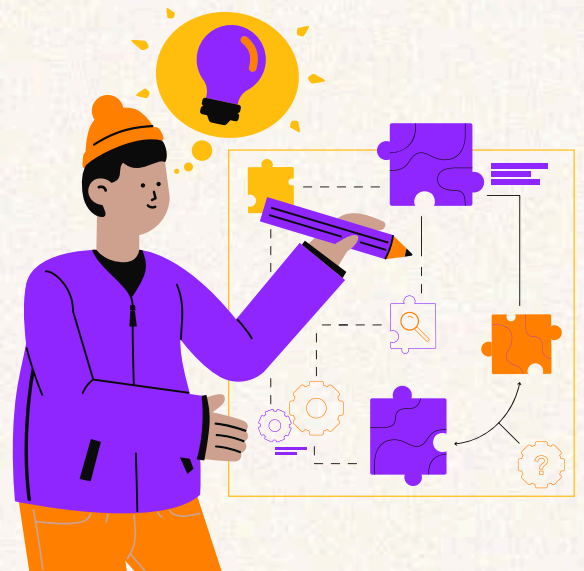
DECISION-MAKING

Feminist decision-making acknowledges the influence systemic oppression has on many of our traditional mechanisms for making decisions and emphasises resilience, critical connections, and transformative justice. By creating space for multiple possibilities, **feminist decision-making cultivates environments where individuals and groups can learn, grow, and move towards shared goals without sacrificing feminist principles.**

In practice, this means beginning with deep listening, releasing perfectionism and judgement, and allowing time to bend and adapt to the needs of the collective. It also involves taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions, seeking deeper understanding, and engaging in principled struggle to solidify collective understanding and unity.

Feminist decision-making is about creating spaces where everyone belongs, where the small shifts in behaviour and perspective are recognized as essential to larger transformations. By focusing on trust, mutual respect, and continuous learning, this approach helps build the resilient, inclusive, and just communities that are necessary for lasting change.

In this section, we'll explore feminist decision-making methods. **We often labour under the belief that a direct democratic vote is the most inclusive, feminist way we can make decisions, but that is not necessarily the case.**

 Here, we'll share methods that offer greater nuance and opportunities for learning and compromise than a simple vote can provide.

## HOW TO CHOOSE A DECISION-MAKING METHOD

Who Is Impacted?
Before deciding on a method of decision-making, it's important to decide who should be part of the process. This depends on the organisational values and structure and who will be impacted. Applying the axiom "nothing about us without us" is a good place to start for feminist organisations.

What Kind of Decision Is This?

Applying awareness to the type of decision being made will also inform the method. Whether the decision will have a big or small impact, whether the complexity is high or low, or whether the decision is urgent or not can impact.

1. When the situation is stable and the solution is obvious, perhaps fewer people and a simple decision method would be necessary – something that doesn't require much consultation or creativity.
2. When the solution is not immediately obvious, you may need people with specialised knowledge for the analysis and more time for discussion.
3. For dynamic and unpredictable questions, there might not be a clear cause-and-effect relationship. Outcomes may need to emerge over time with iterative experiments. Using emergent practices to probe the systems to collect feedback will allow a solution to emerge.
4. Sometimes the situation is chaotic and immediate action is needed to restore order. This situation might require fewer people due to time and more hierarchical decision-making.

Feminist values can be applied to all of these situations to determine the best approach. Applying a deep awareness of the type of decision can be considered feminist in and of itself.
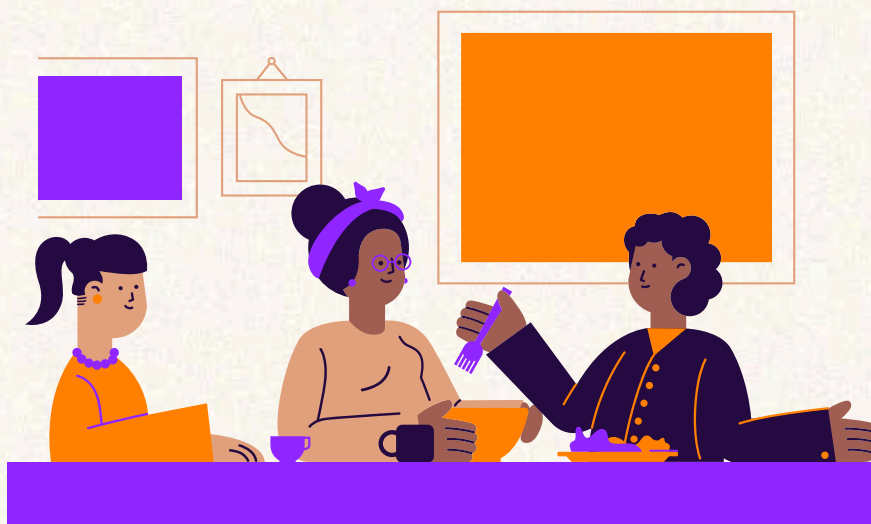
Risks of Making Decisions Without Decision Guidelines

There are always risks that exist if we try to make decisions without specific guidelines. Some of those may include:

- The meeting ends without agreement. The real decision is made outside the meeting with fewer people.
- The person in charge asks if everyone is satisfied with an idea and assumes silence is agreement.
- People assume that a decision was made because the issue was discussed.
- The meeting goes over time and the meeting drags on and on.
- "No decision" becomes a decision not to act.

How can we change this? A good place to start is by creating a shared understanding of the benefits and risks of various decision-making approaches, and setting some common guidelines around which to use when (see next page).

Major decision rule	Benefits	Risks
Unanimous agreement	- Mutual understanding - Empathy for other perspectives - Sustainable agreements when stakes are high - Prevents decisions that are terrible for a minority	- Hard for people to search for inclusive solutions - Group pushes for a fast decision - Takes a lot of time - Participants tolerate decisions just to make a decision - Can be unclear if the group is really owning the decision
Majority rule	Useful in urgent situations	- Win/lose solution - People don't always vote for the collective or their own interest, but rather in line with interpersonal relationships and dynamics - Lack of deliberation - Ownership of the decision is limited to those who voted for the proposal
Person in charge decides after discussion	- Useful when the stakes are high - Encourages group discussion. Groups can use methods to identify the risks of the situation for better input	- Power imbalance: Group members may say what they think the person in charge wants to hear - Ownership for the person in charge only

Striving for Consensus Through Gradients of Agreement

There is power in a unanimous agreement – an agreement in which everyone is acting from one spirit – as the decision speaks for everyone. Unfortunately, the process of reaching unanimity means that every participant has a veto and the decision requires that everyone is committed to staying in the community until all are in agreement. This can take an inordinate amount of time.

Consensus is a process where the group engages collectively, sharing thoughts and emotions on the path to a decision. In contrast, unanimity occurs when the group finally achieves complete agreement and finality. It is possible to use the process of consensus without unanimity through gradients of agreement.
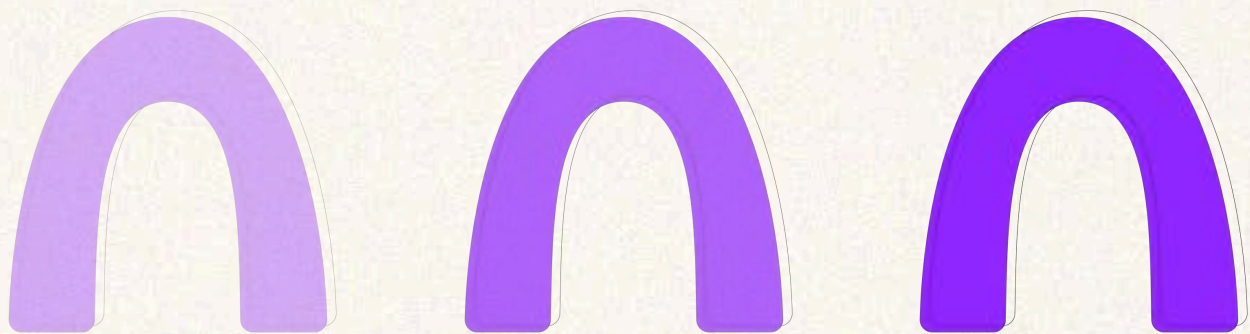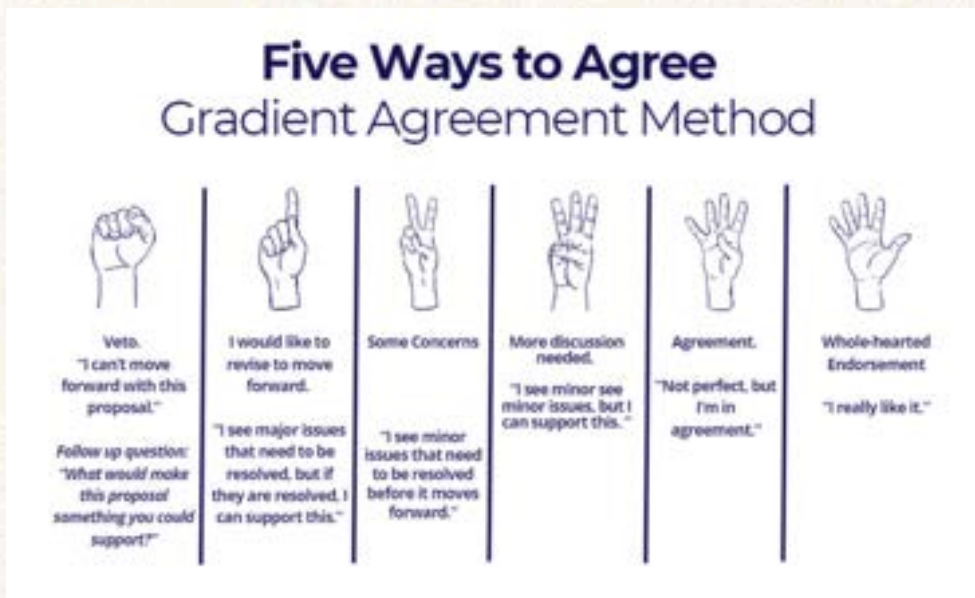
How To Use Gradient Agreement

Commonly known as "Fist to Five", gradient agreement is a way to encourage conversation about dissent. Before a vote or a determination of unanimity, gradients of agreement can be used to gauge the level of agreement in the room. There are numerous ways to use it, here is one:

Before the discussion on the issue or proposal, seek an understanding as to what constitutes agreement using the gradient agreement tool (see next page). Does everyone have to reach a 5? Or is everyone in favour of moving forward if all participants are at 4s and 5s?

1. Facilitate discussion of the issue at hand. Come to a point of a proposal.
2. Gauge the level of agreement in the community by selecting a number on the "fist to five" (see below) continuum that best describes their current thinking on the proposal or issue at hand.
3. Ask participants to elaborate on their aspirations, assumptions, and fears.
4. Ask for clarification on any data for the proposal, supply relevant information, and dispel misunderstandings.
5. Call for another gauging of agreement.
6. Ask those participants who are below the desired level of agreement what it will take for them to reach the desired level of agreement.
7. Facilitate further conversation and clarification.
8. Repeat until the proposal is developed enough for all to come to the desired level of agreement.

Five Ways to Agree
Gradient Agreement Method

Veto.	I would like to revise to move forward.	Some Concerns	More discussion needed.	Agreement.	Whole-hearted Endorsement
"I can't move forward with this proposal."	"I see major issues that need to be resolved, but if they are resolved, I can support this."	"I see minor issues that need to be resolved before it moves forward."	"I see minor see minor issues, but I can support this."	"Not perfect, but I'm in agreement."	"I really like it."
Follow up question: "What would make this proposal something you could support?"					

Kaner, Sam. "Facilitators Guide to Participatory Decision-Making." 2014.

Key Takeaways

We have highlighted three key takeaways to ensure clarity on how feminist principles can be integrated into the decision making process:

Tailoring Decision-Making Methods to Context

Feminist decision-making begins by considering who will be impacted and the type of decision at hand. Different approaches are recommended depending on the complexity and urgency of the decision, with feminist principles applied to ensure inclusivity and collaboration.

Consensus and Gradients of Agreement

Consensus aims for collective decision-making without requiring full unanimity. The "fist to five" gradient agreement method helps gauge levels of agreement, encourages discussion of dissent, and refines proposals until a satisfactory consensus is reached.

Risks of Unstructured Decision-Making

Without clear decision-making guidelines, meetings can end without resolution, leaving decisions to be made informally or with limited input. This can result in a lack of ownership, miscommunication, and inefficiency.

RISK

The desired outcome for this domain is to introduce and explore a Feminist Governance framework that manages risks in a way that is intersectional, and equitable and seeks to redistribute power structures in organisations.

Addressing risk within a Feminist Governance framework involves rethinking traditional approaches to risk management; it is grounded in inclusivity and focuses on the redistribution of power.

There must be an understanding of multiple layers of risk by applying an intersectional lens to identify how different social identities including gender, race, class, caste, ability, sexual orientation etc. interact with and contribute to varying levels of risk. **This helps to not only understand the differential impacts of risk on different groups but to understand how risk is situational, varying, complex, and compounded based on identity, gender, race, class and other socio-determinants.**

8 PRACTICAL TIPS

01

Tailored risk responses and the development of risk management strategies that address the specific needs of diverse groups within the organisation, ensuring that solutions are not one-size-fits-all but are adaptable and responsive to varied lived experiences and identities.

02

Using an ethical risk assessment with a focus on social justice: evaluate risks not just in terms of financial or operational impact, but also in terms of their social and ethical implications. This includes assessing how risk management decisions might affect different communities and working to mitigate negative outcomes.

03 **Using a care-centred approach:** prioritising collective care, especially those in vulnerable positions, when managing risks. This includes recognising the emotional and psychological dimensions of risk and co-creating support mechanisms grounded in collective care.

04 **Challenging power dynamics and redistributing power:** actively work to redistribute power within the organisation to ensure that risk management processes do not reinforce existing hierarchies.

05 **Cross-sector collaboration:** partner with other organisations and sectors to share knowledge, resources, and strategies for managing risk, particularly those that impact gender equity and social justice.

06 **Being responsive to change and changing political situations:** develop risk management strategies that are flexible and adaptive to changing circumstances, particularly in response to the needs of marginalised groups who may be disproportionately affected by certain risks.

07 **Participatory approaches to risk management and engagement with external communities** to understand broader risks and collaboratively develop solutions. This helps the organisation remain connected to the social context in which it operates.

08 **Monitoring and evaluation and regular review:** regularly review and assess risk management practices from a feminist perspective, ensuring that they continue to align with the organisation's values of intersectionality and inclusivity.

Intersectional Risk Mapping

Using the Activity below, you can begin to identify and understand how different groups within the organisation are impacted by risks.

01

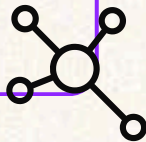**Form Groups:** Divide participants into different groups of 2 or 3.
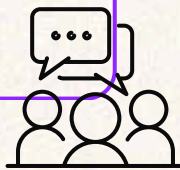
02

Identify Risks: Each group lists potential risks the organisation faces.
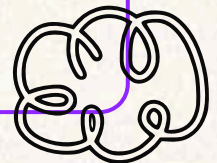
03

Intersectional Analysis: Analyse how these risks affect different groups (based on gender, race, class etc).

04

Share and Discuss: Each group presents their discussions and maps, followed by a discussion on how to address the identified risks.
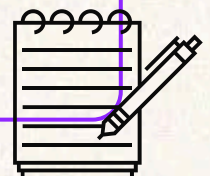
05

Develop Action Plans: Collaboratively create action plans that incorporate the insights gained, focusing on mitigating risks inclusively and intersectionally.

06

Reflection: Reflect on how this process can be integrated into regular risk management practices.

Key Takeaways

Inclusive and Participatory Risk Management

Involving diverse internal and external stakeholders, especially marginalised groups, is crucial for developing risk management strategies that address varied experiences and identities. This inclusivity ensures that power is redistributed and risk management becomes more representative and responsive.

Ethical and Care-Centred Risk Approaches

Risk assessments should go beyond financial impacts, focusing on social justice, ethical implications, and collective care. Prioritising the needs of vulnerable groups and being adaptable to political and social changes are key feminist principles in risk management.

Collaboration and Continuous Evaluation

Cross-sector collaboration with external partners enhances shared learning and solutions for broader societal risks. Regular monitoring and evaluation from a feminist perspective ensure that risk management practices remain aligned with the organisation's values of intersectionality and inclusivity.

FEMINIST FUNDING & FINANCE

Striving for social justice within a capitalist framework presents significant challenges. How far are we willing to stretch our values for money? What are trade-offs we are willing to make? How do ensure we are paying our staff equitably while upholding our mission?

Creating a budget in line with Feminist Governance requires listening to diverse voices from different departments and ensuring that the budget reflects the core values of the organisation. It also involves identifying and partnering with funders whose values align with our own, which requires research, flexibility, relationship-building, and strategic communications.

This section seeks to address the complexities and emotional tension that arise from navigating this dichotomy and how we can strive to remain aligned with the core values of feminism despite these pressures. Rather than compromising on principles, Feminist Governance emphasises the importance of leveraging existing structures to drive meaningful change, ensuring that the pursuit of equality and justice remains at the forefront.

NAVIGATING FUNDRAISING PRESSURES WHILE UPHOLDING FEMINIST GOVERNANCE

Funders often exert pressure on organisations to conform to specific patterns of action, reflecting the pervasive influence of the patriarchal system within funding processes as well. This pressure can interfere with how organisations set priorities, involve individuals in decision-making, and implement policies of care and equality. For organisations committed to Feminist Governance, it is crucial to define drivers, map out points of friction, and navigate agendas and conflicts to honour their core values while addressing fundraising challenges. Below, we explore strategies to maintain an inclusive decision-making process and ensure outcomes and outputs align with feminist values without compromising governance principles.
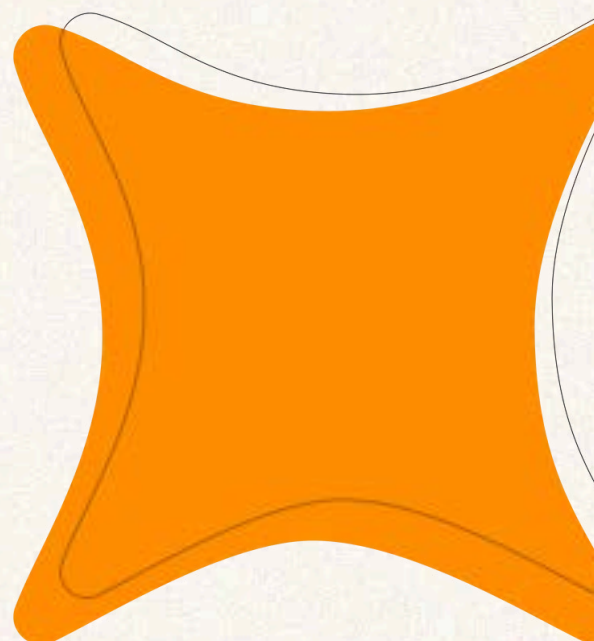
01

Understanding the Influence of Funders

Funders play a significant role in shaping the actions and priorities of organisations. However, their expectations can often mirror patriarchal values, impacting:

- **Priority Setting**: Organisations may feel compelled to prioritise projects and initiatives that align with funders' interests rather than their mission and values.
- **Decision-Making:** The influence of funders can centralise decision-making power, marginalising voices within the organisation, particularly those from underrepresented groups.
- **Policies of Care and Equality:** Funders' pressures can undermine policies aimed at promoting care, equality, and inclusivity, leading to compromises that do not reflect Feminist Governance values.

02

Defining Drivers and Mapping Points of Friction

To navigate these pressures, organisations can clearly define their drivers and map out points of friction. This involves:

- **Articulating Core Values:** Clearly state the organisation's core values. Ensure that these values are non-negotiable and form the foundation of all actions and decisions.
- **Identifying Points of Friction:** Map out areas where funders' expectations clash with these values. This could include specific project requirements, reporting demands, or governance structures that do not support inclusive practices.
- **Developing Strategies for Alignment:** Create strategies to align funders' interests with the organisation's values. This might involve educating funders about Feminist Governance principles, negotiating terms that support inclusive governance, or seeking alternative funding sources.

03

Navigating Agendas and Conflicts

Organisations navigate various agendas and conflicts to maintain their commitment to Feminist Governance. Key steps include:

- **Transparent Communication:** Maintain open and transparent communication with all stakeholders, including funders, staff, and community members. Clearly articulate the organisation's values, goals, and the importance of maintaining Feminist Governance principles.
- **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensure that decision-making processes are inclusive and democratic. This can be achieved through participatory budgeting, regular consultations with all members, and creating platforms for marginalised voices to be heard.
- **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Establish mechanisms for resolving conflicts that arise from competing agendas. This could include mediation, facilitated discussions, or the involvement of external advisors who align with Feminist Governance values.

04

Fundraising Strategies that Honor Feminist Governance Values

To address fundraising challenges while upholding Feminist Governance principles, organisations can adopt the following strategies:

- **Ethical Fundraising:** Seek out funders and partners who share the organisation's commitment to Feminist Governance. Avoid sources of funding that require compromising core values.
- **Diversified Funding Streams:** Develop a diverse range of funding sources to reduce reliance on any single funder. This can include grants, individual donations, social enterprises, and community-based fundraising efforts.
- **Community Engagement:** Engage the community in fundraising initiatives, ensuring that the process is participatory and inclusive. This fosters a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for the organisation's success.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Be transparent with funders and the community about how funds are used and the impact they have. Regularly report on the alignment of outcomes and outputs with Feminist Governance values, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to its core principles.

Balancing the pressures of funders with the commitment to Feminist Governance is a complex but essential task. By defining drivers, mapping points of friction, and navigating agendas and conflicts, organisations can uphold their core values while addressing fundraising challenges. Through ethical fundraising, diversified funding streams, community engagement, and transparent communication, organisations can support their communities sustainably and ensure that their decision-making processes and outcomes align with Feminist Governance values. This approach not only preserves the integrity of the organisation but also fosters meaningful and inclusive social change.

WHO MIGHT BE INVOLVED AND WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR EACH GROUP?

Creating an inclusive budget that aligns with Feminist Governance requires the involvement of various stakeholders within an organisation. Each group brings unique perspectives, asks, challenges, and priorities, influencing the design of projects and program goals. Below, we explore who should be involved in the budgeting process and the implications for each group.

Department Representatives

Involvement

- Every department, regardless of team size, can have a representative in the budgeting process.
- In consultation with their teams, these representatives present the specific needs, challenges, and priorities of their teams.

Implications

- **Inclusivity:** Ensures that all departments have a voice, promoting a comprehensive understanding of organisational needs.
- **Alignment:** Helps align departmental goals with the organisation's overarching mission and values.
- **Responsiveness:** Enhances the ability to respond to diverse needs, leading to more effective resource allocation.

Internal Policy Makers

Involvement

- Internal policymakers act as guardians of the organisation's well-being premises.
- They define non-negotiable principles, such as equality based on intersectionality and a decolonial approach.

Implications

- **Policy Framework:** Establishes a clear framework for budgeting that prioritises diversity, inclusion, and equal access to resources.
- **Consistency:** Ensures that all budget decisions align with the organisation's core values and ethical standards.
- **Safeguarding:** Protects the integrity of the organisation's mission, preventing deviations that could undermine its principles.

Human Resources

Involvement

- Human Resources (HR) should be involved in budgeting to address fair pay, proactive recruitment, and social justice.

Implications

- **Equitable Compensation:** Ensures fair pay practices that reflect the value of all roles and promote equality.
- **Diverse Workforce:** Supports the recruitment of a diverse workforce, enhancing the organisation's ability to meet its inclusive goals.
- **Social Justice:** Aligns HR practices with social justice principles, fostering a more equitable and just workplace.

Finance and Budgeting Team

Involvement

- The finance and budgeting team plays a critical role in allocating resources and managing the overall budget.

Implications

- **Resource Allocation:** Ensures that resources are distributed equitably and effectively across departments.
- **Transparency:** Promotes transparency in budgeting processes, building trust within the organisation.
- **Accountability:** Maintains accountability for financial decisions, ensuring that they support the organisation's values and goals.

Community Stakeholders

Involvement

- Engage community stakeholders to provide input and feedback on budgeting priorities.

Implications

- **Community Engagement:** Fosters a sense of ownership and collaboration with the community.
- **Relevance:** Ensures that the organisation's projects and programs are relevant and beneficial to the community.
- **Sustainability:** Supports the long-term sustainability of initiatives by aligning them with community needs and expectations.

After successfully designing a feminist inclusive budget, the next crucial step is to identify and shortlist donors who align closely with your organisation's core values. While it is unlikely that all potential donors will be a perfect match, it is possible to find common ground by emphasising shared values. Additionally, maintaining accountability, transparency, and effective monitoring will be essential in fostering social justice and demonstrating the positive impact of your budgeting process.

01 **Research Donor Profiles:** Examine the reports and public statements of potential donors to identify those who share similar values with your organisation.

02 **Assess Value Alignment:** Evaluate how closely their stated values align with the organisation's core values.

03 **Leverage Donor Reports:** During pitches or application processes, highlight examples from donor reports that demonstrate their commitment to values similar to yours.

04 **Showcase Budgeting Practices:** Explain how your budgeting process aligns with these shared values, providing concrete examples of how these principles have been applied.

05 **Plan Ahead:** Develop a clear strategy for how you will report on the outcomes of implementing a feminist budget within your team.

06 **Document Impact:** Regularly document and share the positive impacts and contributions to social justice resulting from your budgeting practices.

07 **Donor Communication:** Maintain open lines of communication with donors, providing regular updates on how funds are being used and the resulting impact.

08 **Impact Reports:** Create comprehensive impact reports that highlight key achievements and how they align with the organisation's core values.

09 **Develop Relevant KPIs:** Establish key performance indicators (KPIs) that accurately reflect the impact of your feminist inclusive budgeting policies. Ensure that these KPIs are in line with donor expectations, making it easier for them to track progress and understand the positive outcomes.

10 **Regular Updates:** Provide regular updates to donors, demonstrating ongoing commitment to the core values of Feminist Governance.

Activity for Application

To design your budget for the next year, begin by creating focus groups for active listening to understand what "caring" means to different stakeholders, and to gather feedback on how they perceive being heard during the project negotiation process with donors. These groups will help you capture valuable insights on expectations, concerns, and relational dynamics, ensuring that your budget aligns with the needs and values of those involved, fostering trust and mutual respect in negotiations.

On the diversity and inclusion front, assess each department to determine whether the complexity of intersectionality is adequately addressed. If it is, equity becomes essential, making it crucial to understand the resources available to ensure everyone can participate on an equal footing. If gaps are identified, budget lines should account for these necessary resources and communicate their importance to donors, ensuring they are preserved during any negotiations.

Document the process and gather evidence of the impact of these practices to demonstrate to donors the relevance of Feminist Governance in achieving equitable governance systems and organisational processes.

Real Life Example

We have an example from the Membership Advisory Group (MAG) of Civicus Global Alliance for Citizen Participation (in which the author of this section took part), an NGO committed to promoting democracy and supporting civil society. The advisory group consists of activists and volunteers representing diverse global regions.

Within the MAG, an internal experiment with Feminist Governance was undertaken, operating within a broader context that was not inherently inclusive, particularly in the selection process for grassroots funding recipients.

There was initially no defined approach to gender or inclusion when evaluating the applications. As part of the experiment, we established metrics that went beyond female leadership to include a questionnaire sent to grantees, asking about the gender distribution of their staff, decision-making roles, and criteria for defining territories and priorities. Ultimately, the board made funding decisions based on metrics that reflected equality and governance best practices. While this approach did not fully achieve a 100% Feminist Governance system, it demonstrates how to influence and adapt rigid, pre-defined systems, even when there is no opportunity to design them from the ground up.

Designing a feminist budget is only the first step in creating a more equitable and just organisation. Finding and cultivating donors who align with your core values, even if not perfectly, requires careful research and strategic communication. By highlighting shared values and demonstrating how these principles are applied in your budgeting process, you can build stronger relationships with donors.

Key Takeaways

Assessment and Alignment of Funders' Influence

The organisation begins by evaluating funders' requirements and internal priorities to identify where they align or conflict with feminist values, creating a clear understanding of potential friction points.

Establishment of Core Values and Governance Framework

The organisation articulates its core feminist values and formalises them into a governance charter, which serves as a guiding principle for financial decision-making.

Strategic Conflict Navigation and Continuous Adaptation

Strategies are developed to manage conflicts, including educating funders, negotiating terms, and diversifying funding sources. Ongoing review mechanisms ensure flexibility and adherence to feminist values despite funder pressures.

CONCLUSION

Feminist governance provides a framework for reimagining leadership, decision-making, and organisational structure in ways that challenge traditional power dynamics and foster inclusivity. By applying feminist principles across various domains such as organisational structure, policies, decision-making, risk management, and finance, organisations can create environments that are equitable, just, and sustainable.

The reformation of organisational structures is critical to dismantling oppressive hierarchies. Through collaborative leadership, power redistribution, and the involvement of diverse voices, organisations can foster a culture of collective accountability. Practical strategies like power audits, leadership development for marginalised groups, and participatory workshops ensure these principles are lived within the organisational structure.

In the realm of policies and processes, Feminist Governance seeks to dismantle patriarchal systems by ensuring transparency, inclusivity, and ongoing evaluation. Policies must be co-created with input from marginalised voices and regularly reviewed to ensure alignment with feminist values. Establishing supportive structures such as employee resource groups and mental health resources helps maintain a healthy, inclusive workplace.

Feminist decision-making moves beyond simple voting and encourages processes that consider the impact of decisions on marginalised groups. By applying methods like the "fist to five" gradient agreement, organisations can engage in deeper conversations and foster consensus without requiring unanimity. This approach ensures that decision-making is inclusive, collaborative, and mindful of the complexity of each decision.

Effective risk management within a Feminist Governance framework involves engaging internal and external stakeholders in the process. Acknowledging the varied experiences of marginalized groups helps create tailored risk management strategies that prioritize collective care and social justice. Regular monitoring, cross-sector collaboration, and ethical risk assessment ensure that risks are managed equitably and responsively.

Lastly, Feminist Governance in funding and finance requires organisations to balance fundraising pressures with their core values. By aligning with funders who support feminist principles, engaging diverse voices in the budgeting process, and maintaining transparency, organisations can ensure that their financial strategies uphold their commitment to equity and inclusion.

In summary, Feminist Governance offers a transformative approach to leadership and organisational management. It reimagines power structures, fosters inclusive decision-making, and creates environments where social justice and equity are at the forefront of all actions. By implementing these principles, organisations can achieve both internal resilience and external impact, advancing feminist values in every aspect of our work.

Thank you for embarking on this journey with us toward more equitable and inclusive leadership. We hope that this resource serves as both a guide and a catalyst for the important work we have ahead. By adopting Feminist Governance practices, we can transform our organisations into spaces of true equity and collective empowerment.

May our efforts not only transform our organisations but also contribute to the broader pursuit of social justice, where feminist values become the foundation of our communities.

With gratitude and solidarity,
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This resource and the Feminist Leadership Hub are supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation - Global Unit for Feminism And Gender Democracy. The Hub is also in partnership with the Alliance for Gender Equality in Europe.

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