



# FROM AWARENESS TO ACTION:

ALLYSHIP FOR A GENDER-  
EQUITABLE FINANCE SECTOR

## SEC.2 EXPLORING DIFFERENT TYPES OF ALLIES

Allyship in the workplace can take a variety of forms that can be adopted regardless of your position or level of seniority. Mentors, advocates, champions, and sponsors each contribute uniquely to fostering a supportive and inclusive environment which can further strengthen structured programs. Explore the strategies below to put your allyship into action.

**Note:** Quotes and data throughout this document are from participants who have successfully engaged in these best practices as part of our Inclusive Leadership research study. [Full study here.](#)

### » A LOOK AT DIFFERENT ALLYSHIP MODELS

#### MENTOR

Mentors offer guidance, advice and support, which is typically based on their own experience or expertise, helping individuals navigate careers paths, develop skills, and build their confidence. Pairing more experienced senior employees with newer employees or those seeking support for career development can be beneficial, but it's crucial to consider who is mentoring whom, to minimize power dynamics and implicit bias. Leaders and managers can integrate mentorship into their daily routines through simple actions like providing clear, constructive feedback that fosters employee growth. Organizations can further offer support by implementing structured programs that encourage these practices.

#### ADVOCATE

Advocates actively support and speak up for their colleagues from equity-deserving groups. They can do this by creating space to amplify diverse voices and ensure that all contributions are respected and valued. Examples include highlighting the achievements of your colleagues during meetings or speaking out when you see their contributions being overlooked.

#### CHAMPION

Champions advocate for others both publicly and behind the scenes, using their influence to create opportunities and remove barriers. This can include connecting colleagues with speaking engagements, expanding their professional visibility, recommending them for growth opportunities, and ensuring they receive credit for their contributions.

#### SPONSOR

Sponsorship is a dynamic partnership between a leader and an employee, where the sponsor takes a proactive approach to championing the employee's success and development, by using their influence, expertise, position, and networks. They recommend employees for key assignments, promotions, and advancement opportunities. Sponsors also provide support during critical discussions, such as promotion deliberations and performance evaluations. To ensure sponsorship is equitable, it's crucial to address unconscious biases, such as affinity bias, by seeking resources and tools to increase awareness and fairness in decision-making.

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**I have actively tried to assist younger people with diverse backgrounds to break into a career in finance.**

**[The] biggest improvement I've noticed is in larger group settings where I've ensured everyone of all backgrounds and levels in the organization are heard, and participate.**

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# »» RECOGNIZE AND REWARD ALLIES

Recognize and reward employees who advocate, champion, mentor, and sponsor others within your organization. Formal incentives like recognition and reward programs or highlighting efforts in company communications can showcase these efforts, while informal strategies such as recognizing the efforts of others through email or during team meetings are equally valuable. These actions help reinforce inclusive behaviours in the workplace.

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**[I now] view sponsorship and mentoring as mission critical functions for the bank to succeed in attracting and retaining top talent.**

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## SCENARIO

Despite having all the necessary qualifications, your colleague Colleen has been repeatedly overlooked for project opportunities, partly because she remains relatively unknown to the senior leaders who influence career advancement.

In a meeting, you learn about an upcoming high-profile project that aligns with Colleen's skills and career goals. In the meeting, another colleague mentions *“what about Colleen?”*. Your manager says *“I don't know, I'm not very familiar with Colleen so I'm not sure I can trust her.”*

### How will you approach this situation?

☞ How can advocacy, championing, mentoring, and sponsoring help you address this scenario? Which of these approaches would you take?



## POSSIBLE APPROACH



### Champion:

You proactively recommend Colleen for the project, and highlight her qualifications and capabilities in front of decision-makers.

### Mentor:

Beyond recommending Colleen, you offer support through mentorship, meeting with her to discuss the position, offering guidance on how to showcase her strengths and helping her navigate potential barriers.

### Sponsor:

You actively advocate for Colleen in leadership meetings, ensuring decision-makers recognize her qualifications. This may include directly endorsing her for the role, and celebrating her successes as the project develops. This helps to solidify her visibility and credibility within the organization.

# REFLECT AND TAKE ACTION

Which form of allyship feels appropriate for you at this time? What are some ways you can support your colleagues or employees within that role? How might you stretch and grow into other forms of allyship and what resources might you need to begin your journey?

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Allyship can take on many forms, each with specific supporting actions.
2. Advocates, champions, mentors, and sponsors all have active roles to play that can significantly impact your colleagues' careers and contribute to an inclusive workplace.
3. Mentorship benefits from robust programming and measures on the part of the organization to be successful.
4. Sponsorship is critical to women's growth in the workplace — it is about actively advocating for someone by ensuring their name is spoken in rooms of opportunity, identifying promotion pathways and securing high-impact assignments that accelerate their growth.

## CITATIONS

1. [Mentors and sponsors make the difference, Gallup](#)
2. [The Roles Of Allies, Mentors And Sponsors In Employee Development, Forbes](#)
3. [Don't just mentor women and people of color. Sponsor them, Harvard Business Review](#)
4. [Asked to be a sponsor or mentor? 5 tips for a lasting impact, Rotman](#)
5. [Sponsors need to stop acting like mentors, Harvard Business Review](#)

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