



Create a network of sponsors in your organisation to support colleagues undertaking the Women in Leadership programme reach their goals and build diversity into your leadership and succession pipeline.

Pioneering research undertaken by our faculty highlights the significance of sponsors in career advancement for women leaders. Too few women are moving beyond the middle of 'the pyramid' – middle management. The chief reason for this, according to Herminia Ibarra, the Charles Handy Professor of Organisational Behaviour at London Business School and distinguished authority on leadership and career progression, is because women are much less likely than men to get access to the stepping-stone assignments and mission-critical roles they need to have a shot at the top roles. They are not getting these roles because they lack sponsorship for them.

Our Women in Leadership programme is unique in putting the sponsor relationship at the heart of its curriculum. Become a Women in Leadership programme sponsor and equip your female talent with the capabilities, tools and mindset to lead in your organisation.

What is a sponsor?

A sponsor is a suitable senior executive who has organisational power and will use it to support a participant or 'sponsee' on the programme to achieve her career goals. Sponsors will seek to understand what it will take for participants to reach their goals, open doors for them and believe in them. They must be willing to raise their profile and support their case with decision-makers. Sponsors must commit to being available and willing to be a sounding board if participants hit an impasse. Sponsors must know the participant and her work.

Why does the programme incorporate a sponsor?

Participants get the most out of a leadership programme when they have a chance to put what they have learned into practice when they return to work, and when they are promoted into big mission-critical jobs and assignments after their leadership training.

Getting those jobs and that chance to practice what one has learned requires a special kind of relationship – called sponsorship, in which a mentor goes beyond giving feedback and advice, and uses his or her influence with senior executives to advocate for the sponsee and to ensure that she has enough exposure and visibility with other top decision-makers to be considered for those key next roles.

Our research suggests that high-potential women are over mentored and under sponsored relative to their male peers; and, without sponsorship, not only are they less likely than men to be appointed to top roles, but may also be more reluctant to go for them.

What does the role of a sponsor entail?

Sponsors should be able and prepared to identify and advise on career-changing and career-defining opportunities and to actively advocate for sponsees promotions or stretch assignments. They need to provide sponsees exposure to and visibility with other key decision-makers and to actively support the promotion of these individuals.

How does LBS support sponsors?

Sponsors will receive a Sponsorship Toolkit curated by Professor Herminia Ibarra, who has designed and delivers the programme. The Toolkit provides information and guidance on how to select and nurture an effective sponsor/sponsee relationship. The sponsor will get access to it once the sponsee has joined the programme.

We'll also meet virtually with sponsors after the programme to review their experience.

What time investment is involved?

Approximately five hours around the programme dates, please see the table below for more information.

PRE PROGRAMME	DURING PROGRAMME	POST PROGRAMME
1-6 weeks pre programme	5 days on campus	1-10 weeks post programme
Estimated time 2 hours	Estimated time 0 hours	Estimated time 3 hours

- LBS connects with the sponsor to share a faculty introduction video and the Sponsorship Toolkit, and to explain next steps.
- Participants hold an initial career crucial conversation with their sponsor, ideally in person.

- No structured engagement with sponsor scheduled.

- Participants hold a second career crucial conversation with their sponsor, ideally in person.
- Sponsor attends a virtual masterclass with LBS faculty.
- Participants hold a further conversation with their sponsor.