A Collaborative Study by:

Iowa Women Lead Change (IWLC)

Nexus Executive Women's Alliance

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Iowa Women in Leadership

Phase II
June 2016

Recap of Phase I Results

In 2014, we completed Phase I of the Iowa Women in Leadership study, gathering data about the percentage of women in executive leadership roles in Iowa organizations. We found that 22% of executives in publicly-traded companies and 25% of executives in private for-profit companies in Iowa were women. The percentage of women business executives in Iowa is similar to the national average, but is significantly lower than that in many areas worldwide. A complete report of the results of Iowa Women in Leadership – Phase I can be found at www.iwlcleads.org/research.

Purpose of Phase II

In fall 2015, we surveyed human resource executives in Iowa companies to learn more about the gender-focused development practices, general development practices, and valued leader characteristics that are associated with having higher percentages of women in managerial and executive roles.

Responses were received from 93 organizations.

- Size ranged from **5 – 159,000 employees**. Nearly half of the companies had 100-500 employees.
- **The majority of respondents were from private for-profit organizations** (56%), but public (11%), nonprofit (20%), and government (13%) organizations were also represented.
- The responding organizations had an average of **43% women managers and 37% women executives**.

Conclusions

The percentage of women business executives in Iowa is similar to the national average, but is significantly lower than that in many areas worldwide.

Companies with gender-focused development practices generally have more women in executive and managerial roles.

A formal or informal women's network is the practice most strongly associated with having more women in managerial and executive roles.

Companies with general development practices also generally have more women in executive and managerial roles.

Flex-time arrangements are associated with having more women in both managerial and executive roles, while formal job rotation is associated with having more women in executive roles.

Companies that value assertive leaders have fewer women in managerial roles.

Companies that value communicative, inspiring, compassionate, and sensitive leaders have more women in executive roles.

To fully understand how practices impact the percentage of women in leadership roles and how women leaders impact practices, we need periodic data collection to track these issues over time.

Gender-Focused Development Practices

We asked survey respondents whether their organizations use nine gender-focused development practices. We then examined which of these practices was associated with having higher percentages of women in managerial and executive roles.

Having a formal or informal women's network was the practice most strongly associated with having women in managerial and executive roles. Organizations with women's networks reported more women managers and executives than organizations without women's networks.

Only 32% of the responding organizations have formal or informal women's networks.

Given the association of this practice with having women in leadership roles, this practice should be encouraged.

Only 15% of organizations reported having a defined strategy for the development of women into leadership roles, and only 14% of organizations reported having specific goals for the advancement of women into leadership roles.

These also represent opportunities for improvement.

Other gender-focused development practices that were associated with having more women in leadership roles were:

- Diversity or inclusion initiatives with a focus on gender

- Defined strategy for the development of women into leadership roles

- Policy of presenting a gender-balanced slate of candidates for executive leadership positions

- Paid maternity leave of absence

- Paid paternity leave of absence

General Development Practices

We asked survey respondents how important 12 general development practices are in their organizations. We then examined which of these practices was associated with having higher percentages of women in managerial and executive roles.

Flexible work arrangements were most strongly associated with having women in managerial and executive roles. Organizations in which flexible work arrangements were rated as more important have more women managers and executives than organizations in which flexible work arrangements were less important.

On average, respondents rated flexible work arrangements as moderately important to their organizations *(average = 3.0 on a 5-point scale).*

Placing more importance on flexible work arrangements may be one strategy to increase the percentage of women in leadership roles.
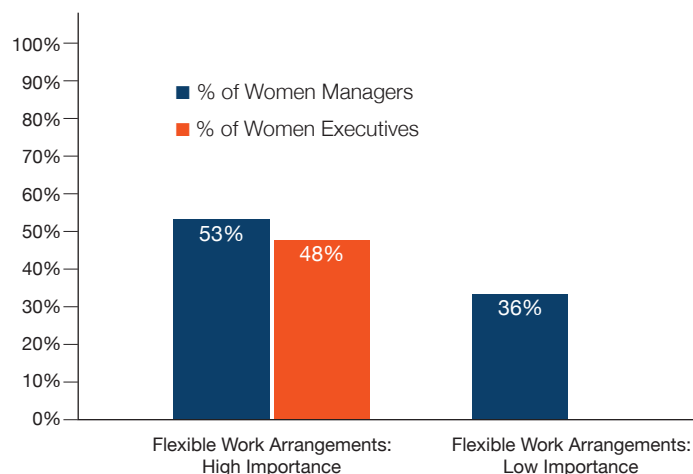
Formal job rotation programs were also significantly associated with having more women in executive roles. Organizations in which formal job rotation programs were rated as more important had, on average, 54% women executives while organizations in which formal job rotation programs were less important had 36% women executives.

On average, respondents rated formal job rotation programs as slightly important to their organizations *(average = 1.9 on a 5-point scale).*

Placing more importance on formal job rotation programs may be one strategy to increase the percentage of women in executive roles.

Other general development practices that were associated with having more women in leadership roles were:

- Work-at-home/telework
- Reduced workload/part-time work
- Formal mentoring
- Day care facility or financial support for child care
- Formal support for partner placement

Chart legend:
- % of Women Managers
- % of Women Executives

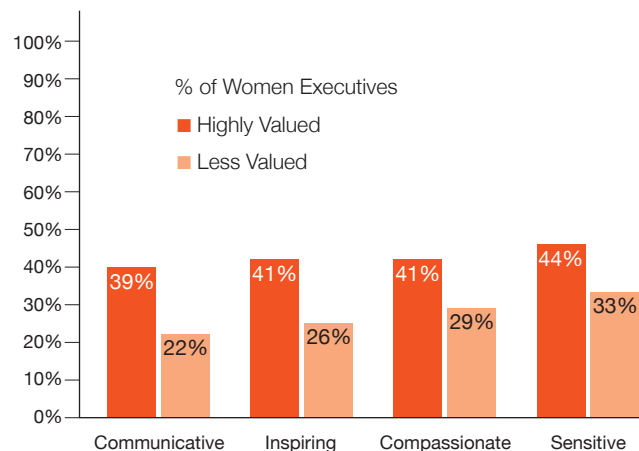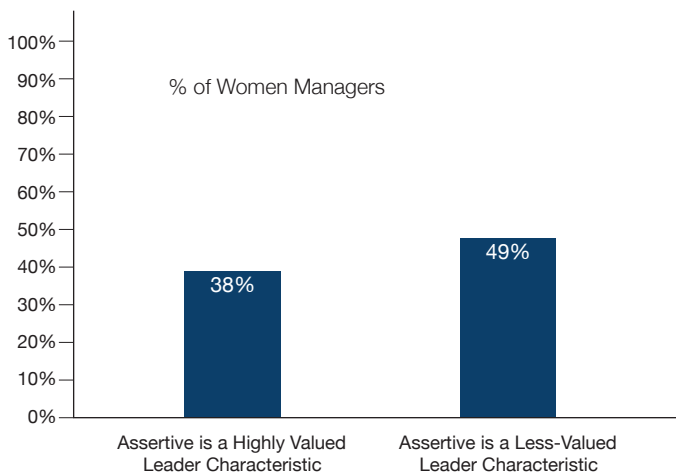|	Flexible Work Arrangements: High Importance	Flexible Work Arrangements: Low Importance
% of Women Managers	53%	36%
% of Women Executives	48%	

Valued Leader Characteristics

We asked survey respondents how much their organizations value 13 leadership characteristics. We then examined which of these characteristics was associated with having higher percentages of women in managerial and executive roles.

Companies that value assertive leaders have fewer women in managerial roles.

Companies that value communicative, inspiring, compassionate, and sensitive leaders have more women in executive roles.

% of Women Managers

	%
Assertive is a Highly Valued Leader Characteristic	38%
Assertive is a Less-Valued Leader Characteristic	49%

% of Women Executives

	Highly Valued	Less Valued
Communicative	39%	22%
Inspiring	41%	26%
Compassionate	41%	29%
Sensitive	44%	33%

IWLC and its partners are committed to advancing the cause of women's leadership. As part of that charge, IWLC takes seriously the importance of collecting reliable data about the state of women in Iowa.

For more information, visit www.IWLCLeads.org/Research.

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