

ClF input to B4BB annual report 2025



**CONSTRUCTION
INDUSTRY
FEDERATION**

CIF actions

benefits are influencing career choices, particularly for younger generations.

Introduction

In line with the national **Balance for Better Business (B4BB)** agenda, the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) has taken measurable steps in 2024/2025 to advance gender balance and inclusivity across the construction sector. Through structured engagement, evidence-based data gathering, and collaborative initiatives, CIF is laying the foundation for meaningful cultural and systemic change. This report outlines three cornerstone activities from the past year:

- A B4BB Roundtable – Industry feedback and collaboration
- Inclusio DEI Survey – Evidence-based culture measurement
- STEM Passport for Inclusion – Building the talent pipeline
- International Women's Day 2025 Summit – Accelerating action

1. B4BB–CIF Senior Leadership Roundtable (November 2024)

In November 2024, CIF hosted a strategic **roundtable meeting** with senior industry leaders and the Balance for Better Business Review Group. The session aimed to identify sector-specific barriers to gender balance and provide practical, industry-informed actions to address these.

Key observations from roundtable discussions:

- **Leadership Imbalance:** Female representation in senior leadership and board roles across construction remains low—especially within SMEs.
- **Apprenticeship gap:** Women are critically underrepresented in trade and craft apprenticeships.
- **Cultural and perception barriers:** Construction is still perceived as a male-dominated, physically demanding sector, affecting both attraction and retention.
- **Career guidance mismatch:** Teachers and guidance counsellors often lack up-to-date information about the diversity of career paths in construction.
- **Work-life considerations:** Expectations around flexibility, family-friendly policies, and lifestyle

Agreed Actions:

- Develop a **CIF-branded “School Partnership in a Box”** to equip members with consistent tools for outreach and engagement in schools.
- Expand participation in **mentorship and leadership development programmes**, targeting both technical and non-technical roles.
- Support sector-wide storytelling and campaign efforts, building on initiatives like the *Building Heroes* campaign, to showcase the “cool factor” and societal value of construction careers.
- Promote early-stage engagement through DEIS schools, particularly focusing on Junior Cycle subject selection.
- Establish **standardised gender diversity data collection** mechanisms to support benchmarking and longitudinal analysis.
- Engage government stakeholders to support a **long-term visibility strategy for the sector**, linking to Project Ireland 2040 and the NDP 2025.

The roundtable also emphasised that gender balance is not merely a diversity target but a business imperative. The CIF's visible leadership on this issue has created the conditions for collective action in the year ahead.

2. Inclusio DEI Survey – Building an inclusive future initiative (Launched June 2025)

To inform future actions with empirical evidence, CIF commissioned **inclusio**, an independent diversity data platform, to conduct an industry-wide survey. This initiative is the first of its kind for the construction sector and aligns with recommendations from the B4BB roundtable.

Objectives:

- Establish a baseline for psychological safety, diversity, and inclusion across construction workplaces.
- Inform CIF's development of a long-term **DEI Action Plan** and potential policy supports.
- Encourage companies to assess and improve their internal culture using standardised measures.

Survey Design:

- **Dual-track survey approach:**
 - **Organisational Maturity Assessment** for executive leadership.
 - **General Population Survey** for employees across all levels and roles.

- Voluntary and anonymised participation to ensure data integrity and confidentiality.

Preliminary Outcomes (as of July 2025):

- Significant variation in DEI maturity between large firms and SMEs.
- A demand for **clear, practical guidance** and shared tools to foster inclusion.

Next Steps:

- Final findings to be published in Q4 2025/Q1 2026.
- Launch report at International Women's Day 2026 to showcase results and good practices.
- Development of policies and a roadmap tailored to the sector's specific challenges.

3. STEM Passport for Inclusion – Scaling outreach and participation

CIF is pleased to continue its partnership with the STEM Passport for Inclusion (**STEMP.Inc**), led by Dr Katriona O'Sullivan of Maynooth University. This nationally recognised programme concentrates on engaging young people—particularly girls and underrepresented groups—from DEIS schools, with the goal of establishing a more robust and inclusive STEM pathway into sectors such as construction.

CIF 2025 Call to Action:

Ahead of the new school year, CIF has issued an appeal to all members for companies to actively support the programme by:

- **Mentoring for Equality:**
 - Employees from all roles (technical or otherwise) are encouraged to register as mentors.
 - Full training is provided, with materials and support to help mentors connect meaningfully with students.
- **Transition Year Work Experience:**
 - Firms are invited to offer structured or flexible placements for students during their TY year.
 - Opportunities can be hosted over a single week or spread across multiple weeks.
- **Workplace Visits:**
 - Companies can host DEIS students for onsite visits to demystify the built environment and introduce real-world roles across construction.

Programme Reach:

- Targeting **5,000 Transition Year students** nationally over the next two academic cycles.
- Focused on **4,000 girls and 1,000 boys** from socio-economically disadvantaged schools.

CIF's Ongoing Role:

- Supporting coordination through direct engagement with Maynooth University.
- Tracking and highlighting member participation throughout the academic year.
- Integrating the STEM Passport initiative into the broader **Careers in Construction** strategy.

4. International Women's Day 2025 – CIF Summit

On **March 7, 2025**, CIF hosted its flagship **International Women's Day Summit** at the Johnstown Estate, Enfield, County Meath. Themed "**Accelerate Action**," the summit brought together over **650 industry professionals**, marking one of the largest gatherings in the sector focused on gender diversity and inclusion.

Programme Highlights:

- **Keynote Address – Susan McGarry, Ecocem Ireland:**
McGarry spoke passionately about the intersection of **sustainability and inclusion**, urging industry leaders to lead by example in the adoption of **green technologies**. She stressed that environmental responsibility is essential to industry resilience, and that sustainability can be a powerful catalyst for innovation and attracting new talent. Following her address, McGarry acknowledged the summit as a critical forum for shaping an inclusive, forward-looking construction industry.
- **Panel Discussions:**
 - **Financial Health & Well-being:** Addressed the importance of resilience, stability, and personal finance management in a high-pressure industry.
 - **Infrastructure Innovation:** Explored emerging technologies and modern methods of construction.
 - **Health and Safety:** *Sinéad Gaines* (PJ Hegarty) underscored the importance of inclusive safety cultures and gender-specific considerations on sites.
 - **Student Engagement:** CIF celebrated the presence of students and emerging professionals, reinforcing the role of mentorship and visibility in supporting career development.

Media & Digital Engagement:

- **RTÉ Coverage:** Ireland's national broadcaster spotlighted the summit's impact, amplifying CIF's message to a national audience and reinforcing the importance of encouraging women into construction careers.
- **Social Media Campaign:** CIF's live content across LinkedIn and Instagram helped extend the summit's reach, stimulate public conversation, and build momentum within member firms.

Outcomes:

- Positioned CIF as a national leader in diversity advocacy within the built environment.
- Strengthened links between member firms, students, and role models.
- Reinforced the sector's commitment to long-term, measurable progress on gender equity.

Conclusion and Future Focus

The 2024/2025 period signals a shift from discussion to implementation in the CIF's efforts to promote gender balance and broader diversity. Through the B4BB collaboration, evidence-based actions like the inclusio survey, and outreach programmes such as the STEM Passport for Inclusion, the CIF is dedicated to removing structural barriers, changing perceptions, and fostering a more inclusive and representative workforce.

Strategic Priorities for 2025/2026:

- Expand member participation in early years and secondary school outreach.
- Publish findings from the inclusio DEI survey and benchmark progress
- Expand member participation in STEM Passport initiatives
- Scale outreach events, including IWD 2026, to support sector-wide mobilisation

CIF recognises that enhancing gender balance is a long-term challenge that demands ongoing effort, cultural shifts, and strategic leadership. These 2024/2025 initiatives establish the groundwork for industry-wide transformation.