



THE CHICAGO NETWORK

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THE CHICAGO NETWORK'S KATE BENSEN TO STEP DOWN IN 2020

President and CEO transformed Chicago's preeminent organization of women leaders over a decade of leadership

CHICAGO, IL, Oct.1, 2019 – Kate Bensen, President and CEO of [The Chicago Network](#), who has expanded the awareness, reach, and impact of Chicago's foremost organization of women business leaders, will step down in the Spring of 2020 after a decade of leadership. The Network will conduct a national search for Bensen's successor.

Under Bensen's leadership, The Network - representing more than 500 women at the forefront of Chicago's business, professional, cultural, nonprofit and educational communities – has elevated the importance of achieving gender equity across all levels of management and in board rooms, while opening pathways for the next generation of future women leaders. She strategically expanded The Network's mission from connecting Chicago's women leaders to more broadly empowering women to lead, and increased the diversity of the membership.

"Kate has brought gender equity as both the right thing to do and as an economic imperative to the center of discussions among Chicago business and nonprofit organizations," said Diane Offereins, chair of The Chicago Network and Executive Vice President, President, Payment Services at Discover Financial Services. "Thanks to her leadership, The Chicago Network is playing a key role in advancing opportunities for women in senior leadership and for young women early in their careers. We will miss Kate, and wish her well as she pursues her next chapter. She leaves us well-positioned for the future."

Bensen introduced significant leadership initiatives to cultivate the next generation of women leaders, including informing high school girls about careers in STEM; providing career exposure to mostly first-generation college students through the Future Leaders Program; and, assisting younger women navigating their careers with professional development. A signature achievement in 2019, marking The Network's 40th anniversary, was the launch of the Equity Principles Campaign. Nearly 80 leading organizations, from public and private companies to nonprofits, have signed The Chicago Network Equity Principles Pledge, which is central to the Campaign, and pledge signatories to aim to achieve 50% representation of women in senior leadership by 2030.

“It’s a privilege and labor of love to lead The Chicago Network,” said Bensen, “and I’m incredibly proud of the organization’s significant achievements during my tenure. I’m excited about pursuing another interesting opportunity next spring, and welcoming a new leader for the organization who will take the elevator up another 30 floors.”

Bensen will be leaving The Network in strong financial and strategic shape. She has grown topline revenue by 89%. Looking ahead, The Network plans to become the go-to resource for meaningful career advice for women at all stages of their career, offering online content, public programming, and a virtual mentoring platform to expand current work.

Prior to joining the Network in 2010, Bensen led the nonprofit capacity-building practice for Conlon Public Strategies. She chaired the University of Chicago Women’s Board from 2004 to 2007, and practiced law at Schiff Hardin LLP, serving as a partner in the firm’s Finance and Public Finance Groups. Among her nonprofit activities, Bensen is a director of the Arts Club of Chicago and the Chicago Club. She is also a member of the Commercial Club, The Economic Club of Chicago, and the Advisory Board of Chicago Innovation.

The search for Bensen’s successor will be carried out by Koya Leadership Partners.

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ABOUT THE CHICAGO NETWORK: We are an organization of Chicago’s most influential women leaders. Our 500+ members are leaders at the forefront of our city’s business, professional, cultural, nonprofit and educational communities. The Chicago Network’s purpose is to empower women to lead. Our mission is to connect with each other for personal and professional growth, advance our civic, business & philanthropic communities, and inspire and support the next generation. Our vision is Gender Equity. At all Levels. Everywhere.