2025-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

November 2024

Waffle

VISION

Closing the gender gap in the technology field

Waffle defines the state where gender equality in the technology field is achieved as follows:

- Equal access to technology is secured
- Individuals get a fair evaluation based on their abilities and efforts
- Equal opportunities for growth and career opportunities are provided
- All of the above is achieved regardless of one’s gender

What our society needs to achieve for gender equality & equity:

Equal Opportunities for Education

- An environment where female and non-binary junior high, high school and college students can acquire programming and IT-related skills, meet role models, and as a result, design their own careers in the tech field.
- Education programs are designed to be accessible to all students who are interested in IT, and all the learning materials, lecturers' behavior, and classroom conditions are gender-inclusive.

Eradication of gender stereotypes

- Gender-based prejudices and stereotypes such as "women are not suited for technical jobs" are removed, and individual abilities and motivation are respected regardless of gender.
- Media and companies actively introduce role models of female engineers and leaders to promote gender-neutral career choices.

Work environment with DEIB

- The company provides an environment in which women can build careers in all kinds of positions, including managerial, technical, and research positions.

Fair wages and recognition

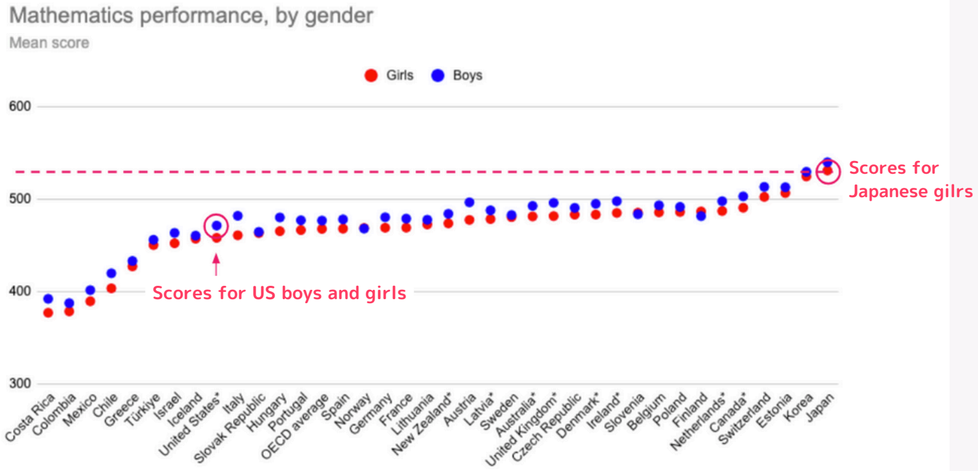
- Equal compensation for the same duties and skill level, regardless of gender.
- Gender bias is eliminated in promotion and evaluation criteria, providing a fair career path.

GIRLS CAPABILITY VS. REALITY IN JAPAN

Despite female students' high level of academic achievements in science and mathematics shown in the Program for International Assessment of Student Achievement (PISA) 2022, the percentage of female students enrolled in universities in engineering is the lowest among OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) member countries.

High capability

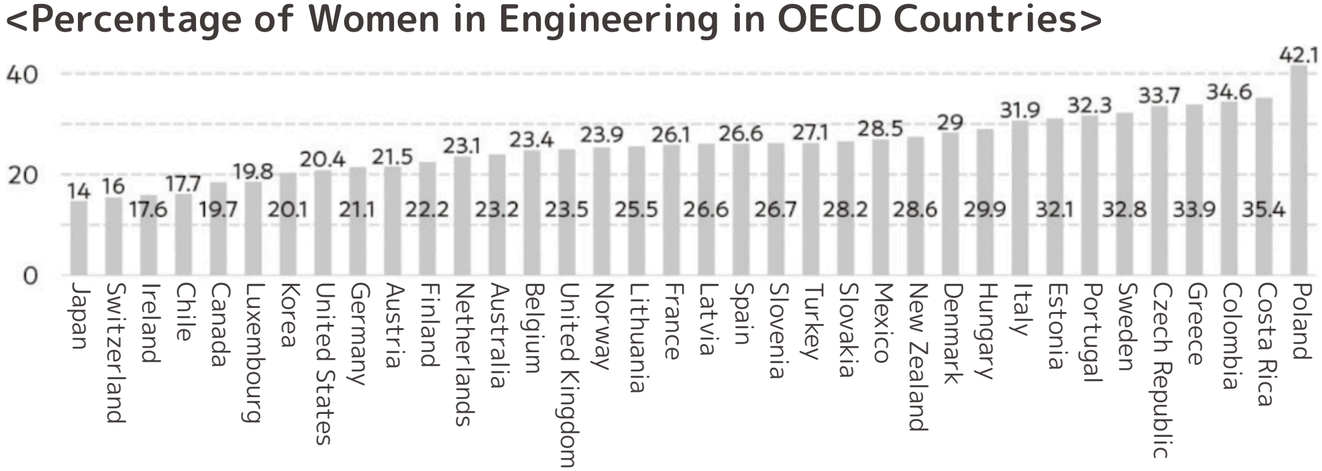
World's top level of academic achievements in science and mathematics



Reference Based on PISA(2022) I.B1.4.17

Reality

Lowest representation of women in engineering among OECD member countries

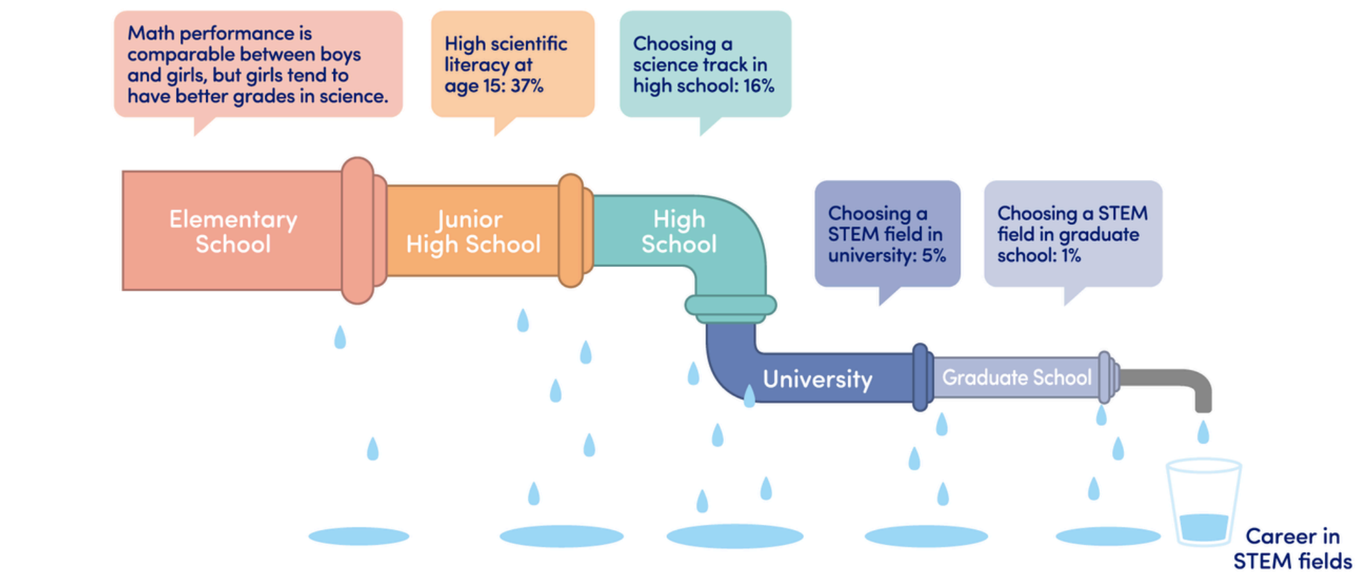


UNESCO SOENCE REPORT (2021). Table 3.1: Share of female tertiary graduates by field.2018 (%), extracted from OECD countries

CHALLENGE

The "leaky pipeline" theory highlights the progressive decline in the number of women pursuing careers in science and technology at every stage of education and career development. Recognizing this as a critical challenge, we have been actively advocating for comprehensive strategies to address it.

This persistent issue stems from deeply ingrained societal structures, including gender stereotypes, unequal access to educational resources, and persistent gender wage gaps. In Japan, science-related university programs are already significantly male-dominated, which can let students avoid choosing those programs. Consequently, we stress the need for early intervention, particularly during middle school and the early years of high school, when students begin to shape their academic and career aspirations.



Reference: Based on PISA (2018), TIMSS (2019), and materials from the Cabinet Office

STATEMENT

JOIN the movement to change the technology landscape

Now is the time for JAPAN to close the gender gap in the technology sector, when each stakeholder is reaching the starting line.

When Waffle was founded in 2019, the gender gap in the IT field was not considered a major social issue.

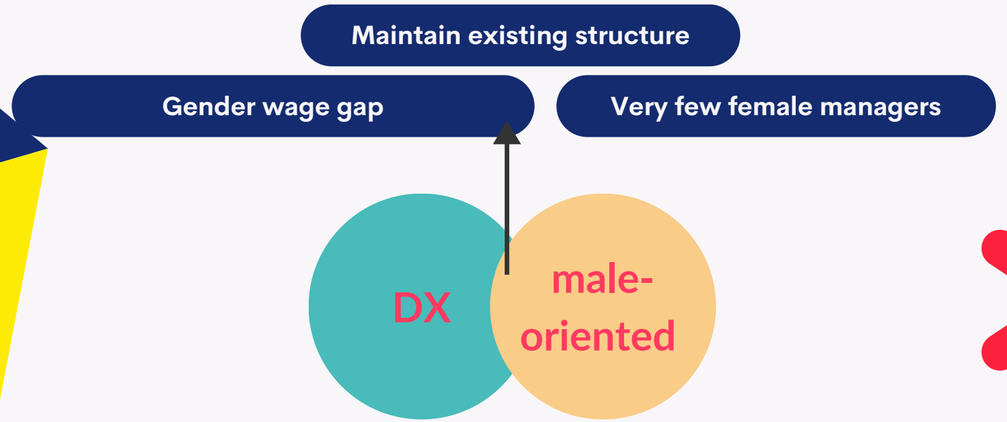
Now, five years after its establishment, it is transforming the world of work: women's quotas have been introduced in the science and engineering departments of multiple universities, and the budget for the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology's *Program for Female Junior and Senior High School Students for Their Science Career Paths* has increased. Additionally, one of Japan's most privileged economic magazines, *Forbes JAPAN*, has published a special feature on *Women In Tech 30*. Many stakeholders are now paying great attention to this matter, and it is reflected in the ever-accelerating efforts by universities, governments, media, and companies.

How should the world look like in 2030, and how can we approach it?
The following section will break them down, and together with our stakeholders, we will take action to make it happen.

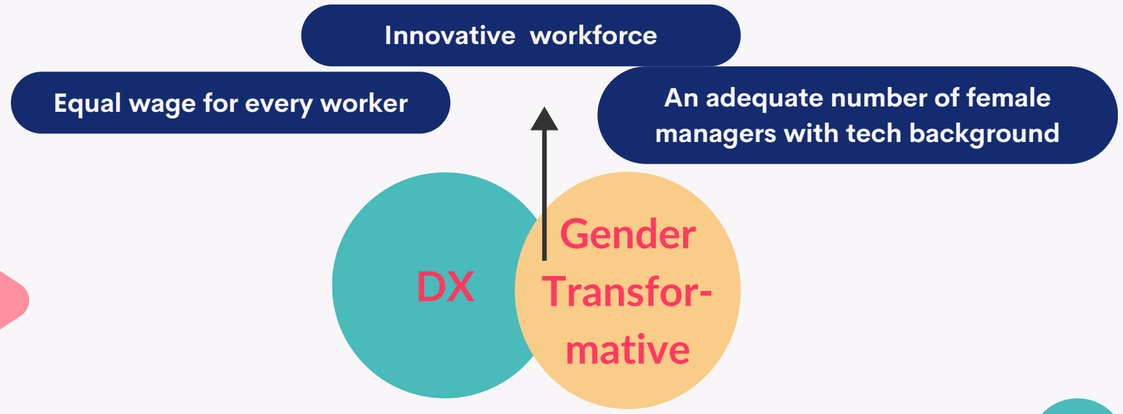
HERE IS WHAT WE WANT TO ACHIEVE

Creating an Environment for Women / Non-binary students to Thrive as Tech Leaders

In Japanese society, pathways and opportunities for women to advance into managerial or executive roles remain limited. The structural issue of having a small number of women involved in decision-making perpetuates problems such as the gender pay gap and a disregard for challenges unique to women. When digital transformation continues without addressing these inequities, existing disparities might continue to be exacerbated.
We aim to drive structural change by fostering innovation in the technology sector through the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences from women and non-binary people in the workforce.



Current society's system



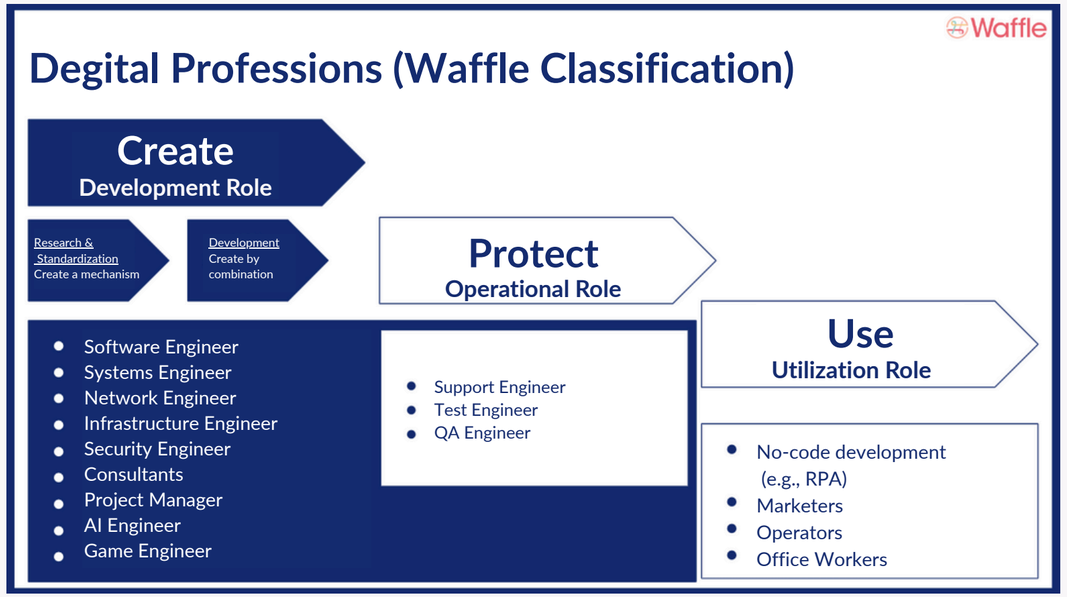
Target society's system

How we create an environment for women / non-binary students to thrive as tech leaders

Equipping students with tech skills to develop solutions

Waffle is dedicated to fostering Tech Leaders who can apply digital technologies to drive societal transformation. Through its programs, Waffle offers opportunities for students to create projects using tech while exploring diverse career paths, including those with higher earning potential.
Our focus on a gender-transformative approach* aims to economically empower girls and non-binary individuals. In Japan, female workers face stagnant wages despite years of experience and a severe Child Penalty. However, statistics show that the IT field offers a relatively equitable evaluation and salary system that rewards experience and skills regardless of gender.

*Gender-Transformative Approach: A strategy aimed at structurally addressing and transforming existing gender norms and inequalities.



What is needed to where girls and non-binary tech leaders are born.

Provide a space where learning meets challenges

Building a society where female tech leaders thrive starts with providing students the chance to explore technology creatively and develop leadership skills. With input from past participants, we continually enhance our programs to empower students and strengthen their tech skills. We also create a network of support by connecting students with mentors, teachers, and role models who inspire them to take on new challenges.

Encouraging a “first step”

Free loan of PC/Wi-Fi
Implementation of 1-day lectures, etc.

“ I’ve never had chance to do programming. I appreciated that I could borrow a PC as I didn’t have one at home that I could use anytime, and it was really good that I could join the program for free. It’s great that you offered an opportunity to those who’ve never thought of learning IT without your help. “
(Past participant of Technovation Girls)

Stereotype-free learning space

Girls/non-binary-only programs
Gender lectures, etc.

“ To be honest, I was wondering why Technovation Girls is offered only for girls before starting the program. But I found out that I would’ve had Imposter Syndrome, thinking, "I don’t deserve this opportunity" in comparison with boys if they were there. I might have relied on other people who *seemed to be* experienced or more ‘suitable.’ “
(Past participant of Technovation Girls)

Experience for careers

Office tours to tech companies
Career courses, etc.

“ Waffle College gave me a desire to become an IT engineer. Variety of female role models who studied CS are working as an engineer made it even clearer. I couldn’t have a chance to meet those people without Waffle’s program. “
(Waffle College graduate)

HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

Expanding the gender-inclusive learning space throughout Japan

There is a significant opportunity gap between Tokyo and remote areas in Japan. Female and non-binary students in such areas face intersectionality (a doubled layer of marginalization), making them more disadvantaged. It is not enough to promote privileged populations in Tokyo; we must also empower students living outside the metropolitan areas, providing them with more opportunities and ensuring sustained support. We are strengthening regional response to the gender gap by offering a variety of online courses that bring together organizations and individuals sharing the same awareness to collaboratively promote gender inclusiveness in the tech field.

Throughout Japan

The concentration of tech and digital-related industries in Tokyo has significantly limited opportunities for students outside the city to connect with engineers and participate in educational programs. To bridge this regional gap, we offer both local in-person programs and online initiatives.

Create a gender-inclusive learning space

An environment free from discrimination is essential for fostering psychological safety. We pay close attention to biases, particularly in the words and expressions used in the classroom, and strive to empower all participants in a bias-free setting.

Expand

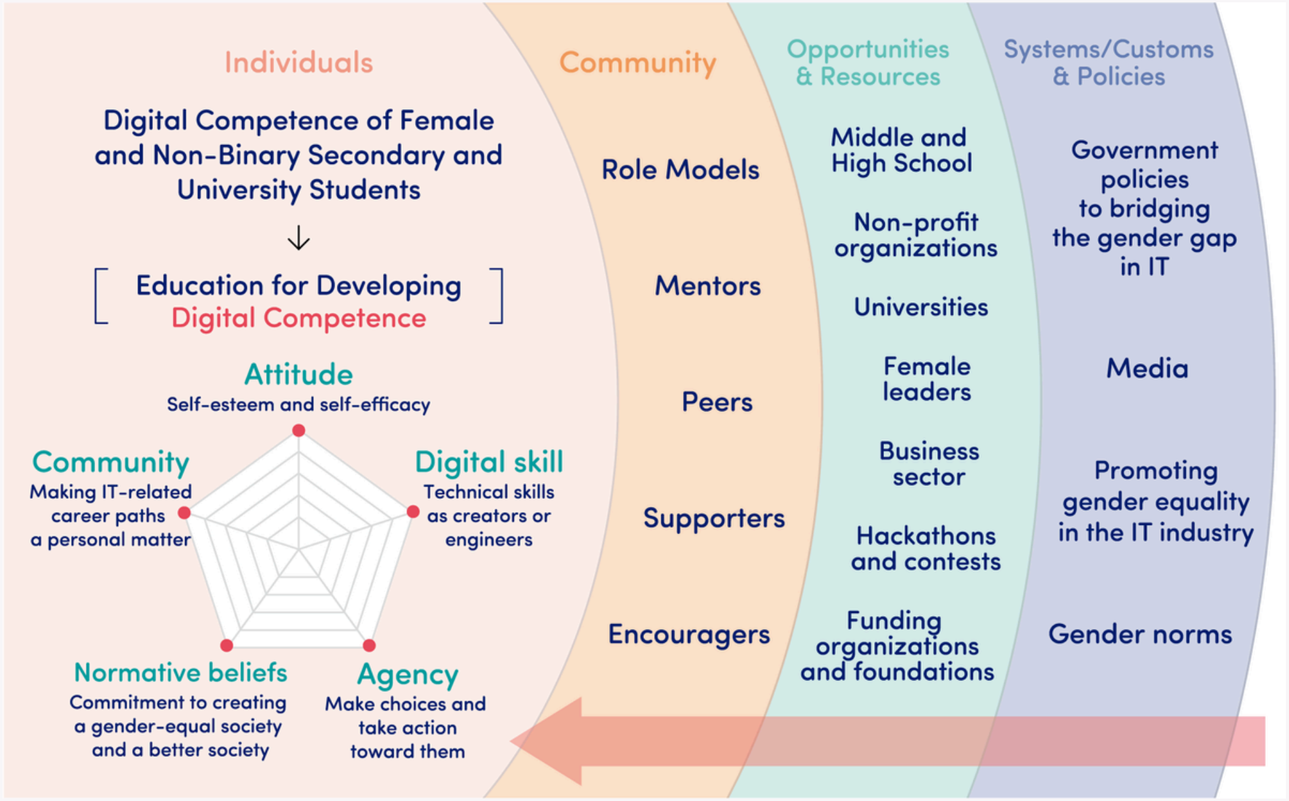
To consistently provide meaningful opportunities in multiple locations, having sustainable resources and systems is crucial, rather than depending solely on volunteer work. We aim to establish a model city and scale its approach.

HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

OUR STRATEGY

Waffle aims to expand a system for girls and non-binary students to learn IT in a gender-inclusive environment throughout Japan by 2030.
This cannot be achieved without collaboration with all the stakeholders indicated below, especially by equipping students with Digital Competency*, attracting more mentors in the community, supporting institutions and schools, and informing policymakers.

*Waffle defines Digital Competency as the five abilities and mindsets that assist minorities to perform at their best in the IT field. The five components include: attitude (self-efficacy and self-esteem), skills as a developer, agency (the ability to make decisions independently and confidently), normative beliefs (aspirations for gender equality and fairness), and sense of community (being aware of their supporters and available resources).



HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

OUR STRATEGY

Individuals / Students

Teaching Tech Skils + *Digital Competency*

Waffle provides immersive tech programs alongside an education that focuses on *digital competency*, which combines five essential elements to empower minorities to succeed in this field (see previous page).

Community / Mentors

Creating a community to support students holisticallly

Waffle creates mentorship programs for girls and non-binary students, providing support and opportunities to connect with inspiring role models. We also assist parents and teachers in understanding the benefits of tech education for girls and non-binary students.

Resources / Institutions

Encouraging business organizations and schools to provide gender-inclusive environments

Waffle collaborates with tech companies and schools to promote gender inclusivity in education, training, opportunities, and resources.

Culture / Policymakers

Promoting policy change and public engagement

Waffle leads grassroots campaigns to increase government funding for women's career opportunities in science and engineering. These efforts focus on informing policymakers and shaping public opinion to recognize the gender gap in STEM as a national issue that must be addressed.

HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

OUR STRATEGY: Individuals

Individuals (students)

Teaching Tech Skils + *Digital Competency**

Waffle provides immersive tech programs alongside an education that focuses on digital competency, which combines five essential elements to empower minorities to succeed in this field.

Goals

- Bring opportunities to students across Japan (especially in regional areas) and to develop tech leaders who have both programming skills and leadership

Success measures

- Defining Digital Competency and tracking both quantitative short-term outcomes and qualitative changes.
- Aligning the ratio of participants from outside Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba, and Saitama with the population distribution of these regions, aiming for 70% of participants to come from outside these metropolitan areas.

*Waffle defines Digital Competency, which refers to the ability and mindset that assist minorities to perform at their best in the IT field. See page 12.

HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

OUR STRATEGY

Goals

- (For students) Create an empowering community for girls and non-binary students interested in tech at the largest scale in Japan.
- (For supporters and mentors) Create a gender-inclusive local community with adult mentors and supporters by attracting more women teachers in each area

Success measures

- Approximately 30% of past Waffle program participants become active as mentors or supporters, and more than 80% of them continue to participate in regular programs and workshops.
- Five model cities for local communities have been created across the country by 2030, and opportunities continue to be provided and are spreading to other cities.

Community / Mentors

Creating a community to support students holistically

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HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

OUR STRATEGY

Resources / Institutions

Encouraging business organizations and schools to provide gender-inclusive environments

Waffle collaborates with IT companies and schools to promote gender inclusivity in education, training, opportunities, and resources.

Goals

- Enable organizations beyond Waffle to establish sustainable mechanisms for acquiring the resources (human, material, and financial) needed to provide gender-inclusive programming education nationwide, particularly in regional areas, for a duration of three years or more.
- Define gender-inclusive environments and learning frameworks and ensure their widespread adoption among local mentors.

Success measures

- Partner organizations are independently operating in five cities across the country, funded by sources other than Waffle or local governments, and have been providing opportunities for over three years.

HERE'S HOW WE'RE CHANGING IT

OUR STRATEGY

Goals

- Ensure that government officials, local authorities, and policymakers have a clear understanding of the gender gap in the technology sector.
- Apply gender mainstreaming to all digital-related policies.

Success measures

- Policymakers and government officials demonstrate an understanding of the issues in this field, and gender perspectives are explicitly included in digital and related education policies.
- Policies that support and empower a workforce that utilizes technology to solve the gender gap in regional areas.
- Networking in STEM education for girls in Asian countries will be established to create best practices in Asian countries and Japan.

Culture / Policymakers

Promoting policy change and public engagement

Waffle leads grassroots campaigns to increase government funding for women's career opportunities in science and engineering. These efforts focus on informing policymakers and shaping public opinion to recognize the gender gap in STEM as a national issue that must be addressed.

Contact

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JOIN US IN MAKING THIS BOLD VISION A REALITY