

Best practice guide for gender equity in local government



Local Government Victoria

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Message from the Minister



Gender equality is good for everyone.

It's good for organisations because it makes them more efficient and productive. It's good for communities because it makes them stronger. And it's good for men and women, because it creates new opportunities and choices.

Victorian local government has a lot to be proud of in the area of gender equality. The vast majority of councils have backed the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter in word and action – with women accounting for four-in-ten mayors, almost four-in-ten councillors and six-in-ten local government workers.

Much has changed since 1920, the year of Victoria's first female councillor, Mary Rogers. Cr Rogers only served as a councillor for five years but made a difference – helping lead a public inquiry into neglected children, working to improve the living conditions of the poor and campaigning against capital punishment. In the 98 years since the election of Cr Rogers the number of women Victorian councillors has grown from one to 243.

That's progress, but the Andrews Government thinks we can do better. That's why we want 50 per cent of Victoria's councillors to be female by 2025 – the centenary of Mary Rogers departure from local government. To achieve that goal, Victoria needs to elect an additional 75 female councillors.

There's also room for improvement in the local government workforce. Although 60 per cent of the administrative workforce is female, women only account for 34 per cent of director and 39 per cent of manager roles. Only one-in-six – or 16.5 per cent – of the Chief Executive Officers of councils are female.

The low number of female CEOs is a real concern. It's a concern because it suggests that we are squandering talent. It also makes me wonder how many potential CEOs are leaving the local government sector to seek opportunities elsewhere.

This is not a criticism of the men who serve on local councils or work in local government. The point I am making is that local government areas need to reflect the diversity of their communities – and that means striving to increase the proportion of talented women in positions of authority.

That is why we have produced this document.

The Guide to Best Practice Gender Equity in Local Government is designed to help local governments take practical steps to boost gender diversity in their councils and workforces by offering useful information and helpful suggestions.

I want to thank the local government sector for supporting gender equity, and I look forward to seeing the progress that we achieve between now and 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marlene Kairouz'.

HON MARLENE KAIROUZ MP

Minister for Local Government

**'Every council should have at least a majority of women in its make up'
– Cr Mary Rogers, Richmond Council, 1925**

Introduction

‘Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable the community to achieve optimal health and wellbeing. Reducing gender inequity for women is a key strategy in achieving this goal, as it allows for a more just, inclusive and fair society for both women and men’

– *Ten ways local government can advance gender equity*, developed by Gender Equity in Local Government Partnership

Victoria’s local government sector has a defining social and economic part to play in the life of the state.

The state’s 79 municipalities employ more than 45,000 people, invest more than \$2 billion a year on infrastructure and \$8 billion a year in service delivery, and manage more than \$90 billion in public assets.

Given the size and scope of local government it has an obligation to maximise the social and economic benefits of its operations. That’s why it makes sense for local governments to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve – and, in the case of gender, strive for equality.

Many councils have made great strides towards gender equality, however, there is still a long way to go to achieve gender equity in the local government sector.

Implementing gender equity strategies makes it easier for councils to tap into new pools of talent for elected officials and staff, bolster professional development, and retain staff and female councillors. Improving the diversity of elected representatives at the ‘third tier of government’ can also help restore trust in and engagement with grassroots democracy.

This guide helps local communities achieve gender equality in local government – detailing actions individuals and organisations can take to promote gender equity within councils and communities.

A comprehensive companion document to this guide is available at <https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/>

Definitions

Gender equality

The equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women, men and trans and gender-diverse people. Equality does not mean that women, men and trans and gender diverse people will become the same but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on their gender.

Gender equity

Entails the provision of fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities on the basis of gender. The concept recognises that people may have different needs and power related to their gender and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies gender related imbalances.

Chapter 1: Why gender equity matters

‘Companies with more women board directors outperform those with the least in three financial measures: return on equity (53 per cent higher); return on sales (42 per cent higher); and return on invested capital (66 per cent higher). Stronger than average results prevailed at companies with three or more women on their corporate boards’

– Catalyst Information Centre: Why Diversity Matters

Overview

There is cause for optimism about the state of gender equality in Victorian local government, but no room for complacency.

In the 2016 Victorian local government elections, the number of women councillors elected was 38 per cent, up from less than 20 per cent in 2000. At this rate, it will take at least another three election cycles for councils to reach gender equality.

At the 2016 elections, 13 of the 78 councils (the City of Greater Geelong did not hold an election) had only one elected female representative.

In council administrations, women in positions of authority are significantly underrepresented. Between 2000 and 2017, the number of female Chief Executive Officers barely moved – going from 11 to 13 female CEOs.

Statistics in the local government sector are limited to gender breakdown. Statistics around other demographic characteristics such as, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability are not readily available.

Research shows that councils stand to benefit from implementing gender equity actions. Diverse organisations have been shown to be better at meeting regulatory reporting requirements and minimising legal risks. Equity has also been proven to deliver measurable benefits, such as increased productivity across an organisation, and improved performance in financial operations, innovation and safety. From a human resources perspective, taking a proactive approach to gender equity has been shown to reduce staff turnover, boost staff retention and improve access to new talent.

International and local research also shows that gender equality is a precondition for the prevention of family violence and other forms of violence against women and girls. The Victorian Government has made commitments to progressively build the attitudinal and behavioural change required to reduce violence against women and deliver gender equality. These commitments and strategies to tackle the issue are detailed in *Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy and Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women*. Gender equality is also a human right, a precondition for social justice and delivers a range of other social benefits.

Actions

1) Lead and argue the case for the importance of gender equity

Mayors, councillors, CEOs and council officers can each improve gender equity by becoming champions for gender equity. Champions should seek the support of a senior sponsor within the organisation to successfully carry out their agenda.

Champions for gender equity should develop a business case for their councils to address gender inequality, then engage with councillors, council staff and the community to make the case for change.



Resources

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency, The business Case for Gender Equality: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/wgea-business-case-for-gender-equality.pdf>
- Centre for Ethical Leadership, Business Case for Diversity 2012, arguments and evidence: http://genderequity.ahri.com.au/docs/GEP-Building_a_Business_case_for_Diversity.pdf
- Men make a difference; Engaging men on Gender Equality: https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_engaging_men_synopsis_online_final.pdf
- Why Gender matters: Ten ways local government can advance gender equity: <http://mav.clients.squiz.net/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/supporting-research-and-resources#gender>
- Safe and Strong: A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy (please search via): <https://www.vic.gov.au/women>
- Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women: <https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/prevention-strategy.html>
- Our Watch, Change the Story. Framework, research and practice expertise to prevent violence against women by challenging gender inequality: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/0aa0109b-6b03-43f2-85fe-a9f5ec92ae4e/Change-the-story-framework-prevent-violence-women-children-AA-new.pdf.aspx>

2) Measure progress

To measure progress in gender equality, councils need to understand where they currently stand and then set S.M.A.R.T targets i.e. specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

Setting targets is an opportunity for municipalities to raise awareness of the importance of gender equity, as well as encourage collaboration across their council and workforce.

Measuring progress towards targets will enable municipalities to keep focus and to celebrate achievements in positive, meaningful ways.

Resources

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender Strategy Tool Kit: https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Strategy_Toolkit.pdf
- Women's Health in the North, Gender Equity Organisational Assessment Checklist: <http://www.whin.org.au/resources/gender-equity-and-analysis-1.html>
- The Local Government Gender Analysis Toolkit, by Latrobe City Council and Gippsland Women's Health: <http://www.mav.asn.au/policy-services/social-community/gender-equality/Pages/promising-practice-portal.aspx#Latrobe>

Chapter 2: How to promote gender equity through elected councillors

‘It can be hard as a woman. You have to be a bit tough. I was a single mum when I first got onto council and it was a big challenge to juggle parenting a three-year-old with full-time work and council responsibilities ... I’m not sure men have the same barriers to overcome’

– Mayor Anna Speedie, Wodonga City Council, 2017

2.1 Leadership development for councillors

Overview

Victorian councillors come from a diversity of backgrounds.

A 2017 Municipal Association of Victoria survey found a range of educational levels and experience amongst the state’s 646 councillors. The majority of councillors were male and above 46 years of age, with the 56–65 age group the most common.

Most councillors were self-employed or worked for a private company as managers or professionals, and less than a third of councillors had not undertaken education beyond Year 12.

The survey found that female councillors had significantly higher education levels than male councillors, with more than a half of female councillors holding graduate or post-graduate qualifications.

Councillors are often required to make complex decisions that involve significant amounts of public money. They also set the tone for the wider council administration. It therefore makes sense that councillors should have access to leadership development training.

Councils could extend professional development through training to raise awareness of the benefits of gender equity and improve gender equity outcomes in a council.

Training could include:

- gender equity training and respectful relationships workshops,
- mentoring or coaching programs for women councillors,
- training on gendered ideas about leadership,
- unconscious bias training on succession planning and recruitment, and
- bystander training.

In addition, both councillors and council staff could receive organisational training focused on developing gender inclusive workplaces and preventing violence against women.

Councillors can also show leadership by calling out inequality. An example is the Panel Pledge, developed by the Male Champions of Change, Chief Executive Women and Women’s Leadership Institute Australia. The Panel Pledge takes a stand on improving the visibility of women at forums.

The Pledge reads:

“As business leaders, we pledge that whenever we are invited to be involved in or sponsor a panel or conference, we will inquire about organiser efforts to ensure women leaders are represented.”

Actions

1) Build skills and knowledge

Councillors should continue to develop their skills and knowledge of gender equity throughout their term in office. One such way to achieve this is for councillors to attend professional development training.

Resources

See training programs offered by:

- Municipal Association Victoria: <http://www.mav.asn.au/>
- Victorian Local Governance Association: <http://www.vlga.org.au/>
- Australian Local Government Women's Association – mentoring programs: www.algwa.com.au/
- Australian Institute of Company Directors: <http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au>
- The Institute of Community Directors Australia: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/>
- Municipal Association Victoria and Victorian Local Governance Association Now You're a Councillor: <http://nyac.org.au/>

2) Integrate training in gender equity, unconscious bias and bystander training into councillors' professional development

Professional development and training can support councillors to improve gender equality outcomes in a council. Training in gender equity can be integrated into professional development programs for councillors.

Resources

- Diversity Council Australia - tools to create discussion: Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jTt3Vb4FTI&feature=youtu.be>
- #WordsAtWork campaign: https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_wordsatwork_overall_guide.pdf
- Gender Equity - Diversity Australia: <https://www.diversityaustralia.com.au/training/>
- Unconscious bias - Centre for Ethical Leadership: <https://www.cel.edu.au>
- Online self-assessment – test your own unconscious bias with the Harvard Implicit Association Test: <http://www.genderworx.com.au/how-do-i-measure-my-unconscious-bias/>
- 'Don't Walk Past' - taking action in the workplace to end harassment and gendered discrimination (Bystander training) – Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria: https://training.dvrcv.org.au/course-details/?course_id=31881&course_type=w
- Leading change - engaging a workforce in the prevention of violence against women – Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria: https://training.dvrcv.org.au/course-details/?course_id=34891&course_type=w
- Family Violence Sector training - Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria: <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/training/courses>
- Port Phillip e-learning module: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#PortPhillip>

3) Become a 'champion of change' for gender equality

Councillors can show leadership on gender equity in many ways. An example is the development of a 'personal action plan' to address gender inequality in their council and community. This can be achieved by endorsing the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter and making a public commitment to advance gender equity, diversity and active citizenship.

Resources

- Male Champions of Change; Gender Balance at every forum, Panel Pledge: <http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/The-Panel-Pledge.pdf>
- Boards for Balance: Your Leadership Shadow: <http://aicd.companydirectors.com.au/~media/cd2/resources/advocacy/board-diversity/pdf/boards-for-balance-partnering-with-your-ceo-for-gender-balance.ashx>
- Victorian Local Government Women's Charter <http://www.vlga.org.au/Policy-Advocacy/Women-in-local-government/Victorian-Local-Government-Womens-Charter>
- MAV Prevention of Violence Against Women Leadership Statement: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/documents-gender-equality/Prevention-of-violence-against-women-leadership-statement.pdf>

2.2 Candidates

Overview

The Victorian Government Gender Equality Strategy set a target for 50 per cent women councillors and mayors by the year 2025. To achieve these targets actions must continue to be taken to recognise, support and accept women in leadership.

Specific programs aimed at encouraging women to nominate as candidates are needed to address invisible barriers and existing prejudices which sometimes prevent women from stepping up to leadership roles.

A good example of such a program is the GOWomen 2016 project that was delivered by the VLGA with funding from the Victorian Government and support from local councils, community organisations and individuals. The project was based on the three principles of the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter (gender equality, diversity and women's active citizenship). The project aimed to increase the number and diversity of women candidates at the 2016 local government elections. Well over 2000 women across Victoria participated in these activities and the final result gave Victoria a new record of 38 per cent women councillors – the highest in any state.

Since the inception of the Victorian Women's Charter in 1997, there have been systemic efforts to encourage women to stand for council elections. Based on the experience of these programs, the number and diversity of women candidates could be increased if councils:

- Reach out to specific community women leaders, talk about the benefits of being a councillor and encourage those female leaders to run for election;
- Support and reach out to women who may be underrepresented in local government, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, young women or women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women with disabilities and LGBTIQ women;
- Establish an advisory committee to council to seek advice from women about ways to encourage greater participation of women in community and council decision making (see Greater Shepparton Women's Charter Alliance Advisory Committee model);

- Tell women about the support that's available to get elected and carry out the role, such as childcare, office equipment and travel reimbursement; and
- Hold 'Get Elected' seminars and refer women to the many on-line and hard copy resources available for candidates.

In addition, councils can work to lift women's visibility as subject matter experts, leaders and spokespersons through councillor and community gatherings, conference panels and boards.

Women councillors can also be leadership role models for girls, teenagers and young women.

Actions

1) Reach out to and support potential women candidates

Councillors can encourage women to stand for council by providing access to resources and mentoring. Councils are encouraged to provide funding for opportunities such as forums and workshops that bring together future potential women candidates.

Possible events could include:

- Utilising existing events held by community groups such as, WILD in Geelong and VoW in Yarra Ranges.
- Hold *Stand For Council* forums, well before elections.
- Hold specific workshops for culturally and linguistically diverse women.
- Run workshops for Indigenous women leaders, and encourage Aboriginal women to stand.
- Provide pathways for community women to gain experience on council boards and committees, to build their knowledge of local government and build their confidence to stand.

Resources

- MAV Stand For Council: <http://www.mav.asn.au/and www.StandforCouncil.com.au>
- VLGA Women in Local Government: <http://www.vlga.org.au/Policy-Advocacy/Women-in-local-government>
- MAV and VLGA A Gender Agenda: http://gowomenlg.org.au/wp-content/uploads/A-Gender-Agenda-5thEdn_web_s.pdf
- VLGA GoWomenLG: www.gowomenlg.org.au
- VLGA Your Community, Country and Council - Aboriginal women run for election – short film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTBYPxmw6HU&t=4s>
- VLGA Diverse candidates 2016; short film - 5050by2025: <https://vimeo.com/224397322>
- VLGA More Women for Local Government Facebook, moderated: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/157485827612771/>
- Our Community; Doing your bit - how you can help get more women on boards: <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/icda/tools/?articleId=1448>
- Maggolee; a resource for local councils to work more closely with Aboriginal communities: <http://www.maggolee.org.au/>
- Victorian Government: *Change Our Game: Guidelines for the recruitment and retention of women in leadership roles*: http://www.changeourgame.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/guidelines_for_the_recruitment_and_retention_of_women_leadership_roles.pdf
- Women's Leadership Program details (please search via): <https://www.vic.gov.au/women>

2) Celebrate women leaders

Councils should look for opportunities to celebrate the success of women throughout the year to encourage greater female participation.

For example, many councils hold annual events, often on or around International Women's Day (March 8), to acknowledge women who have made a difference in their communities.

Celebrating the achievements of women leaders, past and present, creates role models for the next generation of leaders.

Strategies for recognising and celebrating women's achievements include:

- Work with supportive media to run a media campaign and build media profile for women seeking to stand for local government with a focus on stories of women's positive experiences as leaders in local government.
- Organise an International Women's Day Mayors event and invite prominent local women to speak.

Resources

- International Women's Day: <https://www.internationalwomensday.com/>
- Examples of local government celebrations of leading women: Shepparton: <http://greaterhepparton.com.au/whats-happening/news/news-article!/456/post/honouring-our-local-women>
- Hepburn Shire - Honour Roll: <https://www.hepburn.vic.gov.au/womens-honour-roll/>
- Victorian Government website promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls: www.women.vic.gov.au
- Victorian Honour Roll of Women (please search via): <https://www.vic.gov.au/women>

2.3 Culture and policies

Overview

Under the *Local Government Act 1989* (the Act), councillors are entitled to resources and facilities to support them in their duties as a councillor, as well as reimbursement of related expenses.

Policies for councillors' workplace entitlements are different to staff, as councillors are not classified as employees. However, councillors are responsible for approving specific policies for their professional development, childcare reimbursement and travel allowances, which can make it easier for women to participate as councillors.

As community leaders, councillors can work together to create a culture that is inclusive of gender and diversity, as well as addressing inequity in their Councillor Code of Conduct.

There is scope for councillors to place a 'gender lens' over council actions and policies. This includes management of the CEO's employment, budget expenditure, policies such as setting fees for sporting groups or place-naming committees.

Selecting a new CEO is particularly important because a thoughtful selection process can identify and eliminate the kind of unconscious bias that can inadvertently block the recruitment of talented women.

Local government can also apply gender equity strategies to procurement and budgeting as opportunities to drive incremental change through council operations and services.

Actions

1) Emulate best practice support for family friendly cultures

Many councillors have primary carer responsibilities, which can include young children, family members with disabilities or elderly parents. Councils can develop supportive practices and policies that may include:

- Emulating best practice in councillor reimbursement policies for child-care expenses.
- Scheduling meeting times at family-friendly times for councillors and community members.

Resources

- Information Guide; Mayor and Councillor Entitlements reimbursement of expenses: https://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/word_doc/0023/47453/2008_Mayor_Cllrs_Entitlement_-_Info_Guide_-_Nov_08_.doc.
- Fair Work Ombudsman Best Practice Guide Family Friendly Workplaces: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/best-practice-guides/work-and-family>

2) Emulate best practice in CEO recruitment and performance management

Occasionally councillors are required to recruit a new CEO. This is an opportunity for councillors to tackle issues around merit-based recruitment and succession planning. Councillors are encouraged to ensure that recruitment practices meet best practice standards, which include:

- Establishing appointment and promotion processes to reduce the unconscious bias that limits the number of women in CEO roles in local government.
- Setting Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the CEO to meet Gender Equity targets for his/her organisation.

Resources

- Chief Executive Women - In The Eye Of The Beholder Avoiding The Merit Trap: <http://cew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/MCC-CEW-Merit-Paper-FINAL.pdf>
- KPIs for CEO - Guidelines for gender balance performance and reporting Australia: <https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/knowledge-resources/guidance-tools/guidelines-on-gender-balance-performance-and-reporting-australia/>

3) Measure gender equity in council policies.

By casting a gender equity lens over council policies, and evaluating the impact on women and men, councillors can develop insight into the barriers to gender equality that need to be addressed within their council. Some areas for consideration include:

- When establishing or reviewing council committees, councillors can seek to improve women's representation by establishing annual targets for gender equality.
- Review Place Names policies to ensure gender equality is promoted and achieved. For example, set targets that 50 per cent of all new place names be female.
- Review procurement policies and set targets for gender equity in council's purchasing.

Resources

- Guidelines for gender balance performance and reporting Australia: <https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/knowledge-resources/guidance-tools/guidelines-on-gender-balance-performance-and-reporting-australia/>
- Workplace Gender Equality Procurement Principles and User Guide: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/about-legislation/workplace-gender-equality-procurement-principles>
- MAV Promising Practice Portal: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal>

2.4 Advocacy and promotion

Overview

The Municipal Association of Victoria has established a Promising Practice Portal.

The Portal is a collaborative site where councils share examples of practices, projects and plans developed to support and advance gender equality and the prevention of violence against women in their municipalities. The site has links and information on practice-based evidence from councils.

The Victorian Local Government Women's Charter remains a leading tool for advocacy and promotion by councils with many signing up to support the three principles of; gender equity, diversity and active citizenship.

Some councils and industry bodies have also created specific award programs to encourage and support women and celebrate their achievements and promote role models. Many other councils hold or sponsor events to celebrate and support women and raise awareness around gender. Events include: 16 Days of activism, white ribbon, International Women's Day and award nights.

Actions

1) Lead as an organisational and community advocate for gender equity

Drawing on several best practice examples, local governments can lead in advocating for and communicating about gender equity. Examples include:

- Publicly endorse or re-commit to the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter and communicate council's commitment to act to advance gender equity, diversity and active citizenship.
- Creating a gender equity strategy and reporting to the community each year on any achievements.
- Use criteria in council grants programmes, and in setting levies and fees to support council's commitment to inclusion and gender equality.
- Engage with male advocates, to sponsor key messages around preventing violence against women.

- Become an accredited workplace with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Citation, White Ribbon or 50:50 Vision to publicly recognise your workplace efforts and promote accountability.
- Encourage local sporting clubs and grassroots organisations to adopt the Victorian Local Government Women's Charter.

2) Celebrate achievements of women

Promote and recognise women's leadership in, and contributions to, their communities.

- Develop an annual calendar of women's cultural and campaign events.
- Develop a whole-of-organisation communications and marketing strategy to guide communications around gender equity. This may include actions such as awards celebrating women's achievements, media releases on women's achievements (councillors, staff and community), and ensuring images used in multimedia are balanced and inclusive.

Resources

- Monash City Council and VicHealth; Applying a Gender Lens in the Workplace Tool Kit: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/-/media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/PVAW/GEAR-tools/Applying-a-gender-lens-in-the-workplace.pdf?la=en&hash=A70E35DFB1AF85CB7931B939C74FBE296FB6469B>.
- Monash City Council; Children books promoting gender equality challenging gender stereotypes booklist: <http://www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/our-services/violence-against-women/children-books-promoting-gender-equality-challenging-gender-stereotypes-booklist.pdf>
- City of Ballarat Strengthening the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community by Preventing Violence Against Women and Children (Happy Healthy Homes): <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#Ballarat>
- General advocacy: Our Watch; Putting Prevention into Practice: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/a8d9dc3d-2291-48a6-82f8-68f1a955ce24/Putting-prevention-into-practice-AA-web.pdf.aspx> (section 8 Developing a media and communications plan)

Chapter 3: How to promote gender equity in local government administration

‘Men are part of the problem of inequality so they need to be part of the solution. We have to find more effective ways to encourage men to work in partnership with women to create the necessary change. Importantly, men need to understand they will benefit from equality as well as women’

– Diversity Council of Australia CEO Lisa Annese

3.1 Workplace training and education

Overview

Gender equity can be taught.

It can be taught through whole-of-workforce training, information provision, events and communication. It can be taught individually in ways that increase skills and confidence and strengthen advocacy. It can be taught at an organisation level, through programs to create champions and embed knowledge on gender equity in the workplace.

The more organisations, individuals and workforces learn about gender equity the more likely they are to benefit.

Conducting a workplace attitudes survey prior to commencing training can be helpful as it will help identify areas of need. Likewise, conducting evaluation post training is also helpful, as it can identify any shortcomings in training and inform future training programs.

In short, training and education must have a purpose.

Many councils collaborate with other councils and agencies, such as women’s health organisations, for their gender equity training programs. Other councils provide an annual program of events and key messages to support informal learning and capacity building, such as celebrating International Women’s Day, publishing positive stories in weekly newsletters, or taking part in the 16 Days of Activism with White Ribbon (for the elimination of violence against women).

Councils should consider providing training on:

- understanding gender equity,
- addressing unconscious bias, and
- becoming an active bystander i.e. to call out sexist behaviour and gender inequality

Councils can also identify ways to informally educate and inform staff, such as developing a roadshow which presents the benefits of gender equality to council staff.

CEO-led sessions can also provide clear messages about the importance of gender equity in the organisation and the expected behaviours of all staff.

Actions

1) Integrate training in gender equity into professional development

Victoria’s local government sector has several outstanding examples of informal and formal education and programs that focus on awareness raising around gender equality.

- > A mix of informal and formal training can be successful in exposing all staff to the underlying factors and impacts of gender inequality.
- > Council executives, senior managers and human resource managers participating in specialised professional development can assist them in leading the organisation on gender equitable processes and strategies.

- > Prior to introducing training, councils should consider conducting a survey to understand attitudes of council staff and use the results to plan organisational training, education and workforce development.
- > A program of staff events and key messages can support informal learning and build awareness across the organisation.

Resources

- Past the Stereotypes videos – a series of three clips that challenge entrenched gender stereotype – Yarra Ranges Council, Maroondah City Council and Knox City Council: <https://www.yarraranges.vic.gov.au/Community/Gender-equity>
- Horsham Rural City Council with Women’s Health Grampians, Wimmera Councils Act@ Work, includes bystander training and awareness raising: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#Horsham>
- Latrobe City Council with Gippsland Women’s Health - Local Government Gender Analysis Toolkit: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#Latrobe>
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency, on line course What is workplace Gender Equality?: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/elearning-modules/what-workplace-gender-equality>
- Understanding workplace flexibility, Fair Work Ombudsman online training course: <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/flexibility-in-the-workplace>
- Make the Link Campaign: <https://makethelink.org.au/>
- Know the Line: <https://knowtheline.humanrights.gov.au/downloads>
- Port Phillip e-learning module: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#PortPhillip>
- Respect Women: Call It Out. Resources and tips on how to safely call out sexism, harassment or abuse: <https://www.vic.gov.au/familyviolence/family-violence-support.html>

3.2 Recruitment in local government

Overview

The number of women in senior positions in local government is disproportionately low.

While women account for the majority of council staff (60.9 per cent), this is not reflected in senior management roles. Of the 277 directors in local government, only 34 per cent of women hold director level positions, with most in community service type roles. Of even greater concern is that, as at August 2017, only 16.5 per cent of council CEOs in Victorian councils were female.

When developing an organisational-wide strategy on gender equity, it is important to consider internal employment practices. This includes applying a gender equity lens to organisational policies such as the way a council recruits talent, allocates work to staff and the way staff can access Award and Enterprise Agreement conditions on issues such as work flexibility and leave entitlements.

Barriers can include ‘unconscious bias’, or implicit social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside their own conscious awareness.

Barriers for women can include the content of job advertisements, unconscious biases in merit based assessment, the perspective and/or bias of recruiters, or the brief provided to recruitment agencies.

Other significant barriers include the lack of mentoring for women, as well as access to informal networks, existing gender stereotypes, differences between the performance evaluation of women and men, and the inflexibility of workplaces.

All these gender related barriers and attrition adds up to reduce the potential female CEO candidate pool, which is then further disadvantaged by gendered CEO recruitment practices.



Actions

1) Integrate gender equity into recruitment practices, set targets and measure progress

There are a number of suggested actions councils can take to improve gender balance in recruitment. These include:

- Reviewing council's recruitment policy to ensure the organisation's gender equity position is articulated and clear.
- Set targets and applicant quotas of 50/50 for all stages of recruitment of staff. Consider establishing this as a key performance indicator (KPI) in the organisation's work plans and as KPIs in the CEOs' and senior staff work plans.
- Ensure HR and recruitment staff are trained in gender equity and unconscious bias.
- If employing recruitment agencies, review agreements to ensure best practice in gender based recruitment is adhered to.
- Write position descriptions and job advertisements using language that is gender neutral and inclusive.
- Use best practice job interview processes and selection that are aware of gender equity.
- Ensure council's marketing and advertising is attractive to a diverse audience. This includes websites, social media and other material such as a diverse and inclusive annual report, in imagery and language.
- Develop data-gathering mechanisms to track gender composition of each key recruitment stage and ensure data is used to continually inform and improve practice.
- Establish work placements, secondments, sponsoring and mentoring programs to connect the workplace and senior staff with support to a pipeline of talent and the recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.

Resources

- Gender Equity Employment Analysis Tool, Nillumbik Shire Council and Banyule City Council; a user-friendly equity tool that helps to identify barriers to achieving gender equity within the workplace and to audit employment practices and systems: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#Nillumbik>
- The Business Council of Australia 10 checklists - Increasing the Number of Women in Senior Executive Positions: Improving Recruitment, Selection and Retention Practices: <http://www.bca.com.au/publications/increasing-the-number-of-women-in-senior-executive-positions>
- Victorian Government Recruit Smarter: <http://www.vic.gov.au/recruit-smarter.html>
- Words at Work – Diversity Council of Australia: https://www.dca.org.au/sites/default/files/dca_wordsatwork_overall_guide_0.pdf
- Gender De-coder: <http://gender-decoder.katmatfield.com/>
- Office for Women South Australia – Guidelines for Gender Neutral Recruitment: <http://www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/womens-policy/womens-employment-and-economic-status/gender-neutral-recruitment-guidelines>
- Workplace Gender Equity Agency – guidelines and tools for setting targets: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/lead/setting-gender-targets>
- Human Rights Commission Recruitment Guidelines: <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/home/our-resources-and-publications/eoa-practice-guidelines/item/515-guideline-for-the-recruitment-industry-and-employers-complying-with-the-equal-opportunity-act-2010-in-recruitment>
- Change our Game. Guidelines for the recruitment & retention of women in leadership roles: http://www.changeourgame.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/guidelines_for_the_recruitment_and_retention_of_women_leadership_roles.pdf
- Victorian Government Gender Equality and Prevention Programs and Initiatives at (please search via): <https://www.vic.gov.au/women>

3.3 Organisation culture and policies

Overview

Policies developed with gender equity considerations in mind can have a significant impact on workplace culture. For example, flexible employment policies can support parents, carers and those experiencing family violence.

Workplace flexibility is a key enabler of gender equality and can include job redesign, hours of work and job location. It's important to note that workplace flexibility benefits both male and female employees.

The gap between male and female pay is a major concern. Among full-time workers, a woman earns 84 per cent of a man's pay on average (ABS 2017).

Actions

1) Emulate best practice in organisational culture

There are several pathways councils can take to advance a gender equity culture in their organisation. These are:

- Develop a Gender Equity Strategy including quotas and targets that are included as KPIs in senior managers' position descriptions and work plans.
- Establish a Gender Equity Committee, or appoint a key person responsible for gender, to oversee the advancement of workplace gender equity.
- Place a gender lens over all areas of council business including recruitment, budgets, policies, procurement and service delivery to understand current practice and outcomes for women and men, and look for opportunities to transform council's business to remove barriers to full participation.
- Ensure workplace policies that support gender equity, diversity, flexible-working arrangements and encourage shared caring responsibilities for men and women.
- Examine how an Enterprise Agreement can be expanded to ensure greater workplace equity and flexibility including parental and carers leave and addressing the gender pay gap in like-for-like work.

Resources

- City of Monash. Gender Equity and Respect – Supporting Gender Equity in the Workplace Tool: <https://www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/our-services/health-and-safety/gender-equity/supporting-gender-equity-in-the-workplace.pdf>
- Workplace Gender Equity Agency resources, including a Strategic Approach to Flexibility Resources, Strategy Toolkit and Procurement Principles: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/lead/strategic-approach-flexibility>, https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Strategy_Toolkit.pdf https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Workplace-Gender-Equality-Procurement-Principles%20and%20U..._0.pdf
- Port Phillip City Council - E Learning portal, developed with Women's Health in the South East, the City of Bayside, the City of Kingston, the City of Stonnington, the City of Monash, the City of Glen Eira and the Southern Metropolitan Primary Care Partnership: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#PortPhillip>
- Our Watch Workplace Equality and Respect Program (funded by Office of Prevention and Women's Equality) as cited in Recommendation 192 from the Royal Commission into Family Violence.: <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/getmedia/5d67c6a4-bc42-425e-85a9-e5c2c1ca71c5/Promising-Practices-Workplace-Organisational-Approaches-PVAW.pdf.aspx>
- Victorian Women's Charter Checklist and Action Plan: <http://www.vlga.org.au/Policy-Advocacy/Women-in-local-government/Victorian-Local-Government-Womens-Charter>
- 50:50 Vision Accreditation: <http://www.5050vision.com.au/>
- White Ribbon Accreditation: <https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/stop-violence-against-women/what-white-ribbon-does/workplace-accreditation/>
- Whittlesea Council; Gender equity design guidelines for community facilities: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/promising-practice-portal#Whittlesea>
- MAV Emergency Management Gender Policies: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/emergency-management/gender-and-emergency-management>

- An example of flexible family leave employees is provided in the 2016 City of Melbourne Enterprise Agreement (see Companion document to this Guide, Appendix 3, Case Study 1)
- Closing the Gender Pay Gap – Male Champions of Change: http://malechampionsofchange.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/MCC-Closing-The-Pay-Gap_Report_2017_FINAL-1.pdf
- Victorian Government Gender Equality and Prevention Programs and Initiatives (please search via): <https://www.vic.gov.au/women>

3.4 Leadership development

Overview

An important way to improve the leadership capacity of women is to increase access to professional and leadership development opportunities.

Local government peak bodies and agencies regularly run training and development programs and offer annual scholarships and awards with a focus on women in the sector. Individual councils also provide leadership development opportunities such as mentoring programs, sponsorships, secondments, reward and recognition programs and encourage conference attendance.

Local Government Professionals, the peak body for Victorian council staff, offers programs that aim to provide opportunities for women.

The Municipal Association of Victoria Prevention of Violence Against Women Network supports local government officers working together to promote gender equality and prevent violence against women. The Network promotes local government as a leader in this area, provides skill development and mentoring opportunities and encourages local government partnerships with communities, organisations and other levels of government.

Senior female staff within councils are also encouraged to mentor and support women colleagues and encourage them to grow, develop and prosper. Both male and female leaders can nominate women officers for awards, thereby acknowledging women's skills and/or contribution to their organisation and wider sector.



Actions

1) Develop opportunities for women to lead and speak

There are several actions local government can take to encourage leadership development of female staff such as:

- Identify leadership and professional development opportunities available and establish an annual program for female staff to participate.
- Develop a pathway for women to access leadership and professional development opportunities through proactive selection processes.
- Establish leadership and professional development budgets with targets, to ensure women have access to high quality programs.
- Review and promote mentoring, sponsorship and secondment opportunities for women.
- Provide regular opportunities for women to present at executive and council meetings to raise their visibility as subject matter experts. Provide mentoring and support to build these skills.
- CEO and senior staff commit to the Panel Pledge as a way of ensuring women are equally represented at speaking events, conferences and councillor briefings.
- Promote opportunities for women staff to be leaders and spokespersons such as involvement on committees, boards and networks, submitting papers to conferences and publications and nominating them for awards.
- Establish quotas/targets for women in leadership positions, promote them widely through council communications and the council's annual report. This could be addressed as a KPI for the CEO as well as executive staff and senior managers.

Resources

- Guidelines for gender balance performance and reporting: <https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/knowledge-resources/guidance-tools/guidelines-on-gender-balance-performance-and-reporting-australia/>
- LGPro leadership programs and events: <http://lgpro.com/programs> http://lgpro.com/events-activites/forums/womens_professional_development_forum
- MAV Preventing Violence Against Women Network: <http://www.mav.asn.au/what-we-do/policy-advocacy/social-community/gender-equality/pvaw-network>

Awards and scholarships

- Sally Isaac Memorial Scholarship: <http://lgpro.com/awards/sally-isaac-memorial-scholarship-fund-award>
- Top 50 Public Sector Women, Davidson awards: <http://www.davidsonwp.com/resources/top-50-public-sector-women-victoria/>
- Rural Women's Professional Development Scholarship: http://lgpro.com/events-activites/forums/womens_professional_development_forum/secret-women-s-business
- LGPro, Awards of Excellence: <http://lgpro.com/awards/awards-for-excellence>
- Women's Honour Roll: <http://www.vic.gov.au/women/women-s-leadership/victorian-honour-roll-of-women.html>
- Mentoring - LGPro program: <http://www.lgpromentoring.com.au/>



3.5 Internal reporting on gender equity

Overview

The 2016 Victorian Gender Equality Strategy introduced a gender-reporting framework for the public sector. This proposed reporting framework provides a consistent starting point for local government internal reporting.

The five focus areas proposed to assess gender equality and report on progress are:

- gender pay gap
- uptake of flexible work and parental leave
- gender equality in recruitment and promotion
- leadership representation and access to development opportunities
- a target of 50 per cent women in executive roles
- gender desegregation of the workforce and organisational culture.

Collecting and reporting on workforce data by gender enables an organisation to identify gender equality barriers and opportunities, and provides the chance to reflect on performance.

Currently, there are a range of gender reporting resources and tools available to support organisational advancement in gender equity in local government.

Actions

1) Set targets and measure progress

The following is an overview of approaches for councils in setting targets and measuring progress:

- Use toolkits that provide a strategic and systematic approach to addressing gender equity in the workplace, including a reporting framework.
- Set organisational targets and embed the responsibilities to achieve targets across all areas of council.
- Be open and transparent about the organisation's progress on gender equity and communicate progress through existing communication mechanisms.
- Reflect on progress and discuss with key staff across the organisation. Use data and feedback (both negative and positive) to continuously improve efforts.

2) Report on progress

Develop a council web page dedicated to gender equity, council's actions, progress and promotion of events.

- Include gender reporting in council's annual report.
- Consider assessing the organisation's suitability for acceptance into the Workplace Gender Equality Agency Employer of Choice Gender Equality Citation or Australian Local Government Women's Association 50:50 Vision program as an acknowledgement of your council's leadership on gender equity.

Resources

- Workplace Gender Equality Agency Setting Gender Targets: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/SETTING-GENDER-TARGETS-Online-accessible.pdf>
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency Citation eligibility assessment guide: <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2017-EOCGE-Guide-to-citation.pdf>
- Governance Institute of Australia. Guidelines for gender balance performance and reporting Australia: <https://www.governanceinstitute.com.au/knowledge-resources/guidance-tools/guidelines-on-gender-balance-performance-and-reporting-australia/>
- Workplace Gender Equality Agency. Gender Strategy Toolkit: https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Strategy_Toolkit.pdf
- Northern Region Organisational Assessment Tool: <http://www.whin.org.au/resources/gender-equity-and-analysis-1.html>
- Gender Equity and Respect Toolkit: <https://www.monash.vic.gov.au/files/assets/public/our-services/health-and-safety/gender-equity/supporting-gender-equity-in-the-workplace.pdf>
- Safe and Strong, A Victorian Gender Equality Strategy: https://www.vic.gov.au/system/user_files/Documents/women/161108_Victorian_Gender_Equality_Strategy_ONLINE.pdf
- Victorian Government programs and initiatives, including Gender Equality and Prevention in the Workplace tools (please search more information at): <https://www.vic.gov.au/women>

