



Ten ways local government can advance gender equity

Gender analysis

The fact sheets, *Ten ways local government can advance gender equity*, are part of a resource package designed to build the capacity for local governments to consider gender equity in their planning, policy and service delivery.

Local government plays an important role in creating and supporting environments that enable 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. The fact sheets include practical information and practice examples of ways local government can advance gender equity for women.

The ten fact sheets are:

1. Why gender matters
2. Gender analysis
3. Infrastructure
4. Land use planning and design
5. Promoting women in leadership
6. Workplaces
7. Sports and recreation
8. Access to services
9. Key concepts and definitions
10. Further resources

What is gender analysis?

Gender analysis, also known as gender reporting, is a method of assessing difference in the lives of women and men and the impacts that policies, programs and services have on particular groups of women and men. A gender analysis takes into account the diversity among women and men by considering variables such as socio-economic status, age, family structure, ability and cultural and linguistic background. The World Health Organisation defines gender analysis as

... a dynamic process that assesses the impact a policy, program or project has on diverse women and men and informs actions to address inequalities that arise from the different roles of women and men or the unequal power relations between them¹

Gender analysis is a key tool that enables us to consider whether or not a policy, program or project is producing equitable outcomes for diverse groups of women and men.

Why is a gender analysis important for local government?

Evidence shows that when it comes to health and wellbeing gender does matter. The World Health Organisation recognises gender as a social determinant of health. Women's health is therefore an important matter for council to take action on.² Gender analysis is now recognised at all levels of Australian government as part of comprehensive policy, programs and service planning and delivery. It can be undertaken by an organisation at a point in time for a specific project or more globally for strategic, service and operational matters.

Gender analysis is important as it ensures that policies, programs and services are not unfairly disadvantaging women or men. It is necessary to undertake a gender analysis in order to:

- Prompt the thorough examination of an issue
- Achieve better health outcomes for women and men
- Identify and redress inequity and disadvantage
- Develop targeted programs and policies that assess and reduce barriers and negative impacts and increase participation and engagement of all community members including women
- Ensure local government services are relevant to the needs of the community through the provision of measurable, evidence-based data for women and men.

Gender analysis provides a mechanism to support officers to analyse, research, evaluate and understand the different needs, capacities and experiences of women and men in their municipality and therefore support sound decision-making. Councils that are informed by a strong, accurate evidence base can ensure positive outcomes for their community.

¹ World Health Organisation, 2002, *Gender analysis in Health, A review of selected tools*, Department of Gender and Women's Health, WHO, Switzerland.

² Women's Health Matters: From Policy to Practice, *10 Point Plan for Victorian Women's Health 2006–2010*, Women's Health Association of Victoria: Melbourne, 2006.

³ S. Dyson, *Gender and Diversity: A Workbook for an Equity Approach to Practice*. Women's Health in the South East: Frankston, 2001.

How can local government undertake a gender analysis?

The following five questions are important to consider when looking at how gender relates to a policy, program or service.

- 1. How does it affect women? How does it affect men?**
To help build this picture, use sex-disaggregated data and consult with women's groups and organisations.
- 2. How will you ensure that the specific needs of women and men are considered?**
Examine whether specific policies or programs are required and look at modifying existing practice to ensure it is gender equitable.
- 3. How will diverse groups of women and men be included?**
Gather data, research and feedback from community members who identify as having a disability, being gay, lesbian, transgender or intersex, from a culturally and linguistically diverse background or from a lower socio-economic background.
- 4. How might your own values, biases and assumptions affect the process?**
Consider whether you have specific beliefs about women and men's role in society and how this could impact on your decision-making.
- 5. How does the policy, program or service perpetuate or overcome existing stereotypes and gender inequities?**
Reflect on whether there are measures in place to rectify gender inequities to ensure that women and men have equal opportunities, and are equally valued and respected.

