

## Update: Women's Initiative

**Initiative Title:** Women's Initiative  
**City Council Lead(s):** Mayor D. Iveson / Councillor B. Esslinger  
**Department Lead(s):** Citizen Services, L. Brenneis / K. Gunn

### **Recommendation - Renew for 2017-2021 Council Term**

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#### **Objective**

The City of Edmonton is committed to advocating on behalf of women in municipal life and enhancing its leadership role on gender-based issues. Through this initiative, the City of Edmonton affirms its commitment to municipal leadership on women's issues, engagement and leadership.

#### Key themes

**Leadership:** Through mentorship opportunities, the Women's Initiative will increase leadership within the City by encouraging women to actively engage in civic and political life. This includes addressing the need for equal access to employment possibilities.

**Engagement:** The Women's Initiative will facilitate networking opportunities through an annual symposium, focused gatherings and other opportunities.

**Best Practice:** Research into other municipalities will identify best practices that can be incorporated into the Women's Initiative mandate and activities.

### **Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of May 2017**

#### Leadership

- Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE)
  - Priorities include:
    - reviewing city policies;
    - the 2017 municipal election; and
    - outreach.
  - New Chair, Sandra Woitas, and Vice Chair, Meghana Valupadas, lead the Council Advisory Committee.
  - New working groups: Policy, Engagement and Leadership have started meeting and are working on action plans.
  - There will be six new WAVE members starting in May 2017, replacing members who have completed two and three year terms.
  - April 4, WAVE presented at Council supporting the Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) report.

- Opening the Potential is an initiative which strives to engage more women in municipal politics through mentoring, networking and learning sessions with City Council.
  - The pilot program ran September 2016 to April 2017.
  - Approximately 52 women attended on a monthly basis.
  - Topics included public consultation, media relations, networking, running a campaign, and fundraising.
- The Women's Initiative has been working with Equal Voice North partnering and promoting workshops and events to encourage women to enter politics.
  - Sponsored a one day Election Bootcamp event on February 11, 2017
  - Held information sessions April 22, 2017 to encourage women to run for municipal government. Approximately 35 attended.

### Engagement

- Women@theCity: this group of over 50 women explored the opportunities, issues and experiences of women in the workplace. The focused themes are:
  - Networking (mentoring/information)
  - Research (career planning/policies)
  - Communication
- February 15, 2017, hosted a Brown Bag event on GBA+. Approximately 60 people attended.
- International Women's Day on March 8, 2017, was very successful, with over 200 people in attendance. The first ever Women in Leadership Award went to Liz O'Neil, from the Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area.
- Communications:
  - The Women's Initiative has developed a strategic communications and social media plan.
  - The Women's Initiative website hosts blogs, newsletter distribution, information and resources to help women get involved in the fall municipal election.
  - Social media continues to grow with about 70,000 people reached per month.
  - An increase in the number of social media community members who volunteer and/or attend events has also been seen.
- Outreach: the Women's Initiative continues to reach out and meet with smaller, diverse and harder to reach women's organizations to start a dialogue on the Initiative and women's issues.
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM): City of Edmonton has been selected as one of the municipalities for the two year project on Diverse Voices for Change. On April 6 and 7, 2017, FCM hosted a two-day

- workshop with diverse female leaders.
- Women and Money (WAM): Women's Initiative has partnered with Women and Money, a locally-led volunteer group which grew out of the recognition that all women benefit from financial independence, whatever their income or circumstances. WAM hosted two events: February 7 and April 11, 2017.

#### Best Practices

- Scorecard: The City of Edmonton Women's Initiative 2014 Baseline Research identified key national and global gender-gap measurement tools and ranking scorecards. An inventory of themes and measurement indicators extracted from the census has been developed. The City of Edmonton's goal is to ensure that its scorecard is inclusive of Edmonton's unique needs. The scorecard is complete and was released on January 31, 2017.
- GBA+: On April 4, 2017, Executive Committee approved a motion to investigate how to implement an intersectional gender lens on new policy, program, and budgetary decisions. GBA+ training will be available to City staff starting in 2017.

#### **Future Steps**

WAVE annual report will be going to Community and Public Services Committee in July 2017. The next Women's Symposium is planned for February 2018.

#### **Evaluation**

The Women's Initiative is a newer Council Initiative, launched in 2013. The initiative has just started the work of providing a gender lens to City policy, programs and initiatives. It is recommended that the work of applying an intersectional lens to all city policy continues as well as the above-mentioned current and planned activities of WAVE and Administration. This work does not need to be modified or merged with another Initiative.