

Gender Mainstreaming in small municipalities



Heritage house in Calixa-Lavallée, Québec (pop. 450 h.)

Guide intended for small rural municipality administrations (5000 persons and less)



Table of contents

Before we begin... - page 3
Furthermore...- page 4
<i>"Gender mainstreaming? What do you mean?"</i> - page 5
<i>"Are we fair?"</i> - page 6
<i>"Who decides?"</i> - page 7
<i>"Who uses our services?"</i> - page 8
<i>"Who works for us?"</i> - page 9
<i>"Who do we promote?"</i> - page 10
<i>"How do we plan?"</i> - page 11
<i>"Ok... now what should we do?"</i> - page 12
Strategic Planning...- page 13
Follow-up - page 14
An example - page 15
A little help from other municipalities – good practices - page 16
Within the town council - page 17
Municipal services- page 18
Municipal jobs- page 19
Municipal heroes- page 20
Land use planning- page 21
<i>Ok, but why should we do this?</i> - page 22
For those who are still sceptical ...- page 23
A final word...- page 24
Credits- page 25
The inspiration for this guide – page 26
Appendix 1- About political capacities- page 27



Before we begin...

In our small municipalities,
mayors and town councillors
were very close to their people.
Way more than in a big city.

It's a bit like a family,
with its nice work and its small complaints
its festivities and seven-day weeks.

Everybody on the same foot to work and play.
Everybody on the same foot.



Furthermore....

Even though their daily life is quite different,
even though they don't use the municipality
the same way,
men and women have the right
to the same municipal services,
in order to answer their own needs and aspirations.

That's okay, since that's the municipality's main role
is to give men and women the same services,
in all fairness.



"Gender equality, gender mainstreaming? What do you mean?"

There is gender equality when a municipality is equally fair to women and men in three main aspects:

- 1. Representation**
2. Human and material **resources**
3. Needs and requests (**reality**)

In order to assess if there is gender equality and to correct the inequalities, gender data must be obtained in all sectors. That is what we call *"gender mainstreaming"*

Here is a list of questions that can help rural municipalities at gathering data.



"Are we fair?"

In order to assess if there is gender equality in the municipality, five main sectors can be studied:

- **Who decides?**
- **Who uses the municipality's services?**
- **Who works for us?**
- **Who do we promote?**
- **How do we plan?**

Let's take each of these questions to find out more about our level of gender equality. By answering these questions, data can be obtained for further analysis.



"Who decides?"

Within the town council:

- What is the ratio of women/men?
- Are the delegation functions to replace the mayor in some of his/her duties offered to both men and women? How is the person chosen?
- How are responsibilities of specific issues allocated to councillors? Are they distributed with respect to personal abilities (see Appendix 1) and interests? Does the mayor decide it alone?
- Are there as much men and women presiding municipal committees? What is the ratio w/m? Are some committees seen as more important than others (finance, urban planning)? If it's the case, who heads them?
- Do both men and women have the same opportunity to go to conferences and training sessions?
- Do meeting schedules take into account family responsibilities?
- Do working sessions within the town council have decorum so each member of the town council can feel at ease to express her/his opinion?



"Who uses the municipality's services?"

- Are there as many women (girls) than men (boys) in sports activities? Cultural activities? Other leisure activities?
- Are activities planned mostly for boys' interests (ex: baseball, hockey, skateboard?)
- What is the ratio girls/boys at the Youth House?
- Are allocations of municipal budget and rooms done in the same proportion for men and women associations?
- Are the administration offices open or services available for citizens working daytime?
- Are you aware that some citizens have transportation problems (ex: parent at home, elderly people, single parents, handicapped people)?



"Who works for us?"

- Are there as many women as men working for the municipality?
- Are part-time and seasonal jobs given primarily to men or women?
- How about internships?
- If the fire squad is mostly male, are there some other municipal services where women are in majority? (ex: library, Youth House, day camps, landscaping or sports services)? Are salaries systematically higher for men than women? Do women and men have the same benefits?
- At election time, are there as many men as women working? Are salaries the same?
- Are there as many women as men in hiring committees?



"Who do we promote?"

- In municipal galas, are women and men equally honoured?
- Do we name as many public buildings, parks and streets with men's names as women's names?
- Do we use a balanced use of women and man images and examples in municipal documents?



"How do we plan?"

- When planning, do we consider gender-specific needs and interests (ex: safety, park locations, access to stores, traffic, etc.) including kids, children and teen needs ?
- Are there as many women as men participating in public consultations?
- Is the urban planning committee mixed? Who heads it?
- Do we consider the impact of decisions on familial duties for men and women, and more specifically single parents?



“Ok, now what should we do?”

You now have a basic portrait of your municipality. In a perfect life, women and men would be treated evenly in those three main fields:

- Decision-taking bodies and political representation;
- Access to municipal resources, jobs and training ;
- Treatment of requests, needs and interests.

Is it the case in your municipality? Partly? Absolutely not? Here as some ideas that have been collected from municipalities, big and small, and that were proven effective. We're convinced that you've got your own solutions, so feel free to innovate.



Strategic Planning

If some town council will prefer to have a gender equality policy prior to an action plan, other will prefer to use public consultations with community groups and civil servants, in order to assess which should be the priorities.

The strategic plan includes the various fields such as described in the first section of this guide, the proposed solutions, a schedule and a budget. Allocating funds might not always be necessary because, as you will see in the examples in the next pages, most of the time, solutions are a question of re-organization, easy modifications to some habits and the will of the council to act fair. But allocating funds to gender equality sends a very strong message to the local population and will be seen as quite positive by most, women and men.

See an example of an action plan, page 15.



Follow-up to the action plan

Once the action plan is done (see next page), it is important to have a civil servant or a town councillor to be responsible for gender equality and gender mainstreaming issues. By including a schedule in the plan, that person will be able to follow the evolution and make reports to the town council. See the example next page.



Example of an action plan for a small municipality

ACTION PLAN FOR A GENDER-EQUAL MUNICIPALITY

Project manager: TOWN COUNCILLOR, DISTRICT NUMBER 1
 Assistant: Director of human resources

Sector	Action	Schedule	Person in charge	Other	\$\$
Who decides?	Rotate the role of pro-mayor every six months to allow for everybody to try it	Now	Town council		NO
	Allocate a budget for training sessions so that everybody can benefit from it	Next budget planning	Town council	General Director	To define
Who works for us ?	Adopt a fair policy for civil servants and city workers	Next 18 months	Director of human resources	Town council	250 hours/printing and marketing costs
Who do we promote?	Ask each community group to present both a man and a woman for volunteer's gala	July each year	Director of sports and leisure	Community groups	NO
	Create a women names' bank for buildings, parks and streets	Next 18 months	Urban planning committee	Historical Society	Student internship fees
How do we plan?	Inform both men and women's groups	While there are public consultations	Communication director	All community groups	NO



A little help from other municipalities – good practices

Here are some successful practices that are already in use in municipalities. Your own town council probably has already some good practices also, so choose those that suit you better to complement what you already do.



Within the town council

Your town council is composed mostly of men?

- Allocate together the main municipal responsibilities, using the MAMR¹ division: road and transport, water treatment, sewers and environment, administration, urban planning, recreation and safety. When discussing who'll be in charge of which issue, evaluate in a realistic way the workload involved, taking into account familial duties of each town council member. Tip: dual sharing of each responsibility within town councillors makes issues easier to manage and each can profit from the other's expertise and share their interest.
- Use a regular schedule for the role of pro-mayor (ex: every six months).
- Encourage co-presidency (women/men) in all municipals committees (urban planning, recreation, etc.).
- Every member of the town council should have the chance to participate to congress and training sessions. Going together as a town council is also a great idea!
- Encourage women to seek a seat when there are some elections; publicly announce training sessions available for women.
- In collaboration with the local school(s), organize the "One-day town council", as offered by the Minister of Education. Prioritize gender equality in representation.

Your town council is composed mostly of women?

Use the same practices to get more men!!

¹ Ministère des Affaires municipales et des Régions. Québec Ministry responsible for municipalities.



The municipal services

- Use gender-specific inscription sheets for gender mainstreaming; include also the age, size of family, etc.
- Hire a recreation expert; have that person trained in gender-specific awareness to make sure that recreation activities respond to girls (women) and boys (men)'s choices.
- When charging fees, take into account the impact on low-income or single parent families. Most of the time, general taxes are more just than fees. Municipal activities should be available for those who can't afford private activities.
- Offer free activities and happenings.
- Plan the administration services' schedule so that the town hall is opened at least one night during the week (or half a day in the week-end).
- Organize a public consultation on citizens, needs and interests regarding recreation, town planning, park locations and community services, etc. Don't forget to invite man and women's community groups, kindergarten employees, school kids and teens. Take into account the hours and accessibility of the public meetings and make specific invitations to community group presidents.
- Plan a session with Youth Center's employees and volunteers to increase the awareness on gendered issues. While planning activities, encourage them to think about popular activities for boys (i.e. skateboard) and girls (i.e. theatre, journalism). Encourage boys to try "girl" activities and vice-versa.



Municipal jobs

- Analyse the situation of municipal servants but also all municipal workers: salaries, social benefits, allocations during public consultations, access to training, etc.
- Put up job offers ads for help that include salary and work conditions. If possible, alternate between men and women help. Cleaning, mowing the lawn or painting is not gender-specific.
- Hire students for internships in urban planning, recreation, transport, environment, etc. Alternate between women and men.
- Make sure the hiring committee is composed of men and women. All job titles should be written in neutral language and not only with the man as the norm.
- If the president of election is a woman, the assistant job should be filled by a man. And vice-versa.



Municipal heroes

- Organize a gala or publish articles in newspapers to honour your volunteers. Alternate women and men nominations or as a couple.
- With the help of the historical society or some women's organizations, set up a name bank to be used when streets, public parks and buildings are designated. You can also use neutral names: Swallow Road, Oak Tree Library.
- Make sure that all municipal publications are neutral and show both men and women representation. Considering women as men is outdated and not effective.
- Present your volunteers' projects in municipal contests: environment prizes, volunteer prizes, hero's nominations, etc.



Land use planning

- Make sure the urban planning is composed evenly of women and men. Alternate the presidency between man and woman or encourage co-presidency.
- In public consultations, invite specifically men and women's groups, elderly people associations, Youth Center and kindergarten employees. Try to evaluate transportation needs. Support public and handicapped transport programs
- Plan land use in order to offer affordable housing. All municipalities should have low-rent housing or subsidized rents for low-income or single-parent families.
- Address safety concerns; it's well documented that feeling unsafe, regardless if it's really dangerous or not, has a strong negative impact on one's freedom and welfare.
- Support horticultural and heritage groups; an attractive municipality reinforces the feeling of belonging, increases citizen's health and their quality of life while reducing vandalism and loneliness.



Ok, but what's in it for the town council?

- A broader political representation with an increased and more inclusive vision;
- Activities planned to answer more precisely gender-specific tastes and needs can lead to more citizens' participation in activities, thus a more efficient administration;
- A better recognition of the human potential: (town council members, volunteers, public servants, students in internships, etc.) will be useful to promote the municipality;

All this should lead to a higher level of citizens' satisfaction towards the town council, thus increasing the chances to be re-elected.

Working on gender issues are good news, promote your actions (once you've done something!) Present your strategic plan to your citizens and keep them inform on the progress. Talk about it in municipal seminars and to neighbouring municipalities, because good practices are contagious!



For those who are still sceptical ...

You still believe that women and men are basically the same?

Please visit Stat Can website and enter your municipality's name in *Community profiles*². You will find a lot of gender-specific free data on your municipality:

- Age characteristics
- Legal marital status
- Mobility status
- Educational attainment
- Major fields of study
- Labor force of study
- Mode of transportation to work
- Unpaid work, earnings, salaries, etc.

² <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census06/data/profiles/community/Index.cfm?Lang=E>



A final word...

In our small **municipalities**,
we're a lot to work a lot
to do wonders with not a lot
always improving
little step by little step
and those little steps
one after the other
make such big, huge differences.

Everybody on the same foot.



Credits

Text, original idea and translation: **Kim Cornelissen**

- Ex-town councillor Saint-Marc-sur-Richelieu 2000 h. 1998-2005)
- Resource person for the Regional Network of Women Mayors and Town Councillors in Montérégie Est (RÉMME)
- Regional and International Consultant (Bebop et cie)

External expertise: **Lise Moisan** Consultant in gender mainstreaming (2003)

Revision (2003):

Anne Michaud: City of Montréal

Annie Morin: Regional Development Council, Montérégie (CRDM)

Daniel Drouin: Regional Environment Council, Montérégie (CREM)

Élaine Hémond: Group Women and democracy

Georgette Tremblay: CRDM

Julie Lévesque: Québec Network of Health Cities and Villages

Members of Sorel-Tracy Women and City committee

Nicole Brais: City of Québec

Graphics: **Anne-Marie Boucher**

Published: (October 2003 ; updated and translated July 2008)

- Publisher (2003): Regional Network of Women Mayors and Town Councillors, Montérégie (RÉMM) in collaboration with the Resource person for the Regional Network of Women Mayors and Town Councillors, Montérégie Est (RÉMME)
- Publisher (2008): Regional Network of Women Mayors and Town Councillors in Montérégie Est (RÉMME) www.eluesmonteregie.qc.ca

This publication has been made possible thanks to a grant from the program « A égalité pour décider » from Québec, Secrétariat à la Condition féminine.



This guide was greatly inspired by the 3-R method

This gender-equity guide for small and middle size municipalities was inspired by the Swedish 3-R method, following a 10-day mission in Skåne Region, Sweden, in May 2003.

Excerpt from « Just Progress » published by Sweden's Ministry of Industry, Employment and Communications (ISBN-91-38-31896-2):

«The 3R method was developed by Gertrud Åström and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities. It has primarily been used by local authorities to review and analyse the degree of influence women and men have in the municipal operation, their contact with it and the prevailing norms in it.

The 3R method has also been used by other organisations in Sweden and abroad. The method involves developing quantitative data, figures and information, which then provide the basis for a qualitative analysis of the operation».



Appendix 1 About political abilities

Town councils are decision-making bodies; the political abilities required are based on fundamental qualities possessed by leaders in all decision-making organizations:

- Ability to listen and empathy
- Availability
- Honesty and fairness
- Logic
- Global or holistic vision

Those qualities can be found both in women and men.

Thus men can be as competent as women in town councils.

