

New: Women's Initiative

Initiative Title:	Women's Initiative
City Council Sponsor(s):	Mayor D. Iveson / Councillor B. Esslinger
Supporting Department and Lead Staff:	Community Services, Lyall Brenneis / Kate Gunn

BACKGROUND:

- In 2012, women made up 49.5% of Edmonton's population and yet community and civic leadership positions do not reflect this profile; aboriginal women, immigrant women, women with disabilities, women with multiple experiences are not reflected publicly as participants in decision making.
- Through its establishment of the Women's Initiative, the City of Edmonton affirms its commitment to municipal leadership on women's issues, engagement and leadership.
- Several key City initiatives are currently examining and addressing this broad vision:
 - Office of City Clerk – a mentorship program for women interested in municipal politics where they are connected with sitting councillors.
 - Office of Public Engagement – ongoing tools and strategies are being assessed and implemented to involve and engage the broadly diverse voice of Edmontonians.
 - Engagement Opportunities – the City hosted three events involving over 700 women to share information, network, collaborate and discuss how women could participate more actively in civic life.
 - Diversity and Inclusion Policy – Corporate Human Resources is addressing the need for women to have equal access to employment possibilities within the corporation.
- Edmonton Women's Initiative will explore the issues and opportunities for enhanced leadership roles and involved in civic and community life and on an array of gender based issues important to Edmonton women.
- Critical approaches may:
 - harness the wisdom of powerful community women leaders through mentorship of younger women in all forms of community and civic leadership; and
 - provide opportunities, both formal and informal, to seek input from Edmonton women about a wide range of gender issues, barriers and opportunities.

DESIRED OUTCOMES:

- The desired impact of Edmonton's Women's Initiative will be measured on two levels: for the individual citizen and for the corporation. This work will provide women a voice in civic issues, have the potential to impact the daily lives of Edmonton women and bring recognition to the City of Edmonton as a leader in this endeavor.
- The City of Edmonton will continue to spearhead a broad array of innovative approaches to this issue across the corporation and in the community.
- The scope of Edmonton's Women's Initiative will evolve and be articulated more precisely in the year ahead. Key themes or areas of action for this overall initiative and its scope will include:
 - Engagement – facilitating enhanced engagement for women in civic government, and the work of the Office of Public Engagement, networking, connection, annual symposium and focused gatherings.
 - Encouragement – encouraging women to be actively engaged in civic and political life and/or run for office through mentoring opportunities. Be a leader as a City, in issues relating to women.
 - Best Practice – research and identification of opportunities to exercise a gender lens, review of practices in other municipalities, demographic/psychographic profiles of women, and identification of issues and opportunities.
- One new mechanism in this work will be the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton (WAVE) Committee; an advisory committee of City Council created through bylaw by Edmonton City Council in February 2014.
- This Committee is just one element of the Women's Initiative and will provide Council with advice on affairs relevant to municipal jurisdiction. It will:
 - build upon a legacy of women's actions in Edmonton and the past 2 years of engaging over 700 women around women's issues;
 - reach out to engage and empower women in leadership of all kinds in the community; and
 - act as a central resource hub and coordinating centre that bridges many efforts in the community and corporation to engage women without duplicating efforts.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC DIRECTION:

- *The Way Ahead*
 - Improving Edmonton's Livability - Citizens are connected to their diverse communities and have pride in their city
 - Diversify Edmonton's Economy - The City attracts talent and investment making it nationally and internationally competitive

- *The Way We Live*
 - Edmonton is a Vibrant, Connected, Engaged and Welcoming City
 - 1.4 The City of Edmonton connects individual, families, groups, cultures and communities to services they need to thrive and realize their potential.
 - 1.6 The City of Edmonton builds strong local government by connecting Edmontonians to their local leadership.
 - Edmonton is a Safe City
 - 4.1 Edmontonians enjoy safety and security of person, plan and community.
 - Edmonton is a Sustainable City
 - 6.1 The City of Edmonton is a socially sustainable society.

START-UP BUDGET REQUIREMENTS:

- Work to date has been done within existing budgets. In 2013, approximately \$85,000 was funded from existing Community Services resources.
- In 2014, staff resources will be provided by Community Services Department, along with needed resources from existing budget.
- A service package may be developed in December 2014 for Council deliberation.

TARGET DATE FOR COMPLETION OF PROJECT PLAN:

- A detailed project plan for the Edmonton's Women's Initiative, including WAVE, will be developed by Administration by Spring 2014. This will outline timelines, goals and activities for this work and include such key actions as:
 - Plan and conduct research on the demographic profile of Edmontonian women and on mentorship opportunities throughout Edmonton.
 - Collect best practices from municipalities to inform the Edmonton Women's Initiative
 - Begin to explore opportunities to bring a gender lens to City projects, policies and procedures.
 - Recruitment and formation of the WAVE Committee, as well as hosting a Women's Symposium in 2014 and seeking other opportunities to support women in Edmonton.