



Metro Atlanta Gender Equality Competence CIFAL Report

Metro Atlanta Gender Equality Self-Assessment Meeting
October 3, 2006, 9AM, Atlanta City Hall

In preparation for the
Gender Equality for State and Local Government 2006
Workshop

Atlanta, USA
November 13-15, 2006

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1. List of Participants:

1. Fulton County- Commissioner Nancy Boxill
2. City of Atlanta- Claire McLeveighn, Director External Affairs & International Relations
3. City of Atlanta- Linda DiSantis, City Attorney
4. City of Atlanta- Luz Borrero, Deputy Chief Operating Officer
5. City of Atlanta- Stephanie Davis, Policy Advisor on Women's Issues
6. Spelman College- Dr. Venita Kelley, Associate Dean, Leadership and Student Development
7. Brenau University- Dr. Heather Gollmar Casey, Coordinator Gender Studies
8. Women in Numbers- Mary Long, Chair
9. 4ERA- Idella Moore, President
10. League of Women Voters in GA- Jennifer Owens, Executive Director
11. Quality Care for Children- Pam Tatum, CEO
12. Partnership Against Domestic Violence- Cathy Willis Spraeetz, CAE and CEO
13. Girl Opportunities for Adventure and Leadership (GOAL)- Gail Rothman, CEO
14. Girl Scouts of NW Georgia- Lucie Rivera O'Ferrall, CFO
15. Atlanta Women's Network- Rochele Hirsch, President
16. Zonta Club of Atlanta- Lorraine Chilvers, Past President
17. Consulate General of Canada- Astrid Pregel, Former Consul General
18. GlobalEXEC Women- Virginia Bradley, Founder
19. Russell Corporation- Rosan Petrillo, Diversity Manager
20. Tourism Development Alliance, Georgia Chamber of Commerce- Joy Walstum
21. Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta- Carol Jackson, Executive Vice President (Ret)
22. Azizah Magazine- Tayyibah Taylor, Publisher & Editor-in-Chief
23. GlobalAtlanta- Nema Etheridge, International Business Reporter
24. CIFAL Atlanta- Alex Mejia, Sebastian Mathews, Francesca Cesa Bianchi, Natasha Ohadi Mathews, Angye Rincon, and Daniela Salas

2. Overview of the Gender Equality for State and Local Governments 2006 Workshop:

CIFAL Atlanta will deliver the first workshop in the *Global Leadership Initiative for Gender Equality in Cities* in Atlanta in November 2006 which will serve as the kick-off of a worldwide dissemination effort in 2007, 2008, and 2009, leveraging other CIFAL Centers around the world to replicate the same program in multiple regions. CIFAL Atlanta will focus on developing its ability to complement and cooperate with existing gender equality networks dedicated to awareness building and advocacy by providing them unique tools, methodologies and workshop formats to further support their mission.

The primary focus of this workshop is to sensitize policy makers to gender equality issues as gender equality can only be achieved if it becomes a core commitment of the highest reaches of society and government. This commitment is demonstrated by action and the aim of this workshop is to outline the actions governments must take to achieve gender equality. Those actions are outlined in the Self Assessment Framework that was developed by gender experts from various academic institutions, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (UN-INSTRAW), CIFAL Atlanta and UNITAR in an endeavor to consolidate the vast array of international best practices into a single tool state and local governments could use to promote gender equality and empower women.

3. The Self-Assessment Process in Metro Atlanta:

Due to the large group of participants for the Self-Assessment Exercise in Metro Atlanta and the time constraints of the participants' availability, the group was divided into three teams. These teams were carefully selected to be representative of the whole community and included a well-rounded group of participants from the private sector, government, NGOs, academia and media. Each team was assigned three to four best practice areas to measure under three broad topics: Government Policies and Political Participation, Women Leaders and the Private Sector, and Women and Education. Then each team reported back to the entire group for consensus. What follows is a synopsis of those discussions.

4. Part I: Self Assessment Framework for Gender Equality Competence

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1=Basic and 5=High, where does the community of Metro Atlanta rank?

1. Gender Sensitivity/Awareness / Consensus = 4 (Team C)

Key points of discussion:

- Good support for gender sensitivity and awareness from various women's organizations in the community and also at the municipal level from the Mayor's round table
- However, data collection and funding for this best practice are minimal
- Also, cultural attitudes that serve as a barrier to women's social, political and economic inclusion still prevail in South
- Lack specific strategies and systems to change beliefs about gender issues- could use more training

Observation- This level of competency may reflect a 3 rather than a 4. Although Metro Atlanta may have several women's organizations that are very proactive about raising awareness of women's issues and educating the community, the community as a whole seems to lack training and sensitivity to gender issues and on how to address disparities as demonstrated by prevailing cultural attitudes noted by participants and by a lack of specific strategies and initiatives for gender equality by the community as a whole. There seems to be a need within Metro Atlanta not only for awareness campaigns, but specifically for gender training.

2. Participation in Electoral Politics / Consensus = 3 (Team A)

Key points of discussion:

- There are two issues covered here- enabling women to have a greater voice in the political arena and representation in office
- In terms of voice- Metro Atlanta doing well as women vote more than men, there is a round table set up by the Mayor for women to voice concerns, also a position within the municipality "Policy Advisor to the Mayor on Women's Issues"
- In terms of representation- women less represented in office than men especially at the municipal level, but there is representation in some areas
- There are cases that the public and the city have supported some changes, but the state legislature did not approve them

3. **Employment and Appointments by Local Government/ Consensus = 2** (Team A)

Key points of discussion:

- There is a recognition of the importance of this best practice area, in fact the Mayor has spoken openly about her support of this initiative
- However there is no system, policy, or formal process to secure it

4. **Collaboration, Partnerships with Civil Society Organizations and Institutions of Higher Education / Consensus = 2** (Team C)

Key points of discussion:

- Although there are many organizations and institutions of higher learning that are very progressive on gender issues, these organizations do not tend to partner or collaborate
- A lot of independent efforts, but not a lot of cross coordination of efforts as demonstrated by the numerous, small women's organizations within the community – many of whom did not have a relationship with one another prior to this meeting although they do similar work
- Sense that there is a need for more collaboration, coalition for everyone to meet each other

Observation: This group, and other members of the community, may want to regularly convene to review progress and share best practices and action plans for improvement.

5. **Establishment of a Gender Policy / Consensus = 1** (Team A)

Key points of discussion:

- There seems to be no formal gender policy and no initiatives identified by the group in support of a general, overarching policy or mandate on gender issues

Observation: Metro Atlanta may consider formalizing their commitment to gender equality in a written local policy or legislature as this will add force and system to all subsequent gender initiatives.

6. **Mentoring for Women Leaders/ Consensus = 3** (Team B)

Key points of discussion:

- Strong, influential role models in Metro Atlanta i.e. Mayor Franklin, head of CDC, President of CARE, etc.
- Mentoring programs and education through women's organizations
- However, lack a formal system within corporations and the municipality

7. **Gender Budgeting/ Consensus = 1** (Team A)

Key points of discussion:

- Some groups have access to a small budget
- Some initiatives are set up for failure because their budget is very limited
- However there is funding for gender and women's issues from corporations and women's organizations

Observation: Metro Atlanta may want to quantify what percentage of the municipality's budget is dedicated specifically to gender and/or women's issues. There is some financial support from the city and from the county as demonstrated by their contributions to this workshop and to other women's groups and gender equality campaigns. Depending on how significant a percentage of their budgets this contribution is, may want to consider raising this competency level from a 1 to a 3.

8. **Economic Inclusion/ Consensus = 4** (Team B)

Key points of discussion:

- Not level 5 because need to measure progress and there is a lack of structural support for women to work outside the home
- Also there are still some cultural issues/barriers to inclusion in the South as far as what women are expected to do
- However there is entrepreneurial support from corporations and diversity programs
- Also city outreach- the Atlanta Commission on Women
- Metro Atlanta is in compliance with labor laws and there was even an attempt to pass a living wage by the city, though this was turned down by the state

9. **Provision of Gender Sensitive Services/ Consensus = 2** (Team B)

Key points of discussion:

- Power structure impedes action in this area as does lack of funding
- Issues of safety

Observation: Metro Atlanta has a strong network of women's organizations that could certainly be leveraged to address this weakness. Women's organizations, particularly those concerned with working women, may want to collaborate with urban planners, the municipal government and private corporations to build understanding and tangible support for the provision of gender sensitive services, especially as these provisions are important for increasing productivity of corporations and government. Is there an organization within the Metro Atlanta community already committed to this endeavor? If so, how can it be made more effective?

10. **Access to Equitable Education/ Consensus = 4** (Team C)

Key points of discussion:

- Three gender specific academies within Metro Atlanta area: Brenau, Spelman and Agnes Scott
- More women enrolled in college than men – a 2 year phenomenon
- Spelman College is ranked in top 10 across the country for placing women in the sciences
- Girl Scouts strong on teaching girls math and science
- However, lack outreach programs on dropout rates that are gender specific
- Also need funding and support for discussion of other gender issues such as child sexual abuse, which tends to affect girls overwhelmingly much more, dating violence programs, etc.

11. **Monitoring and Evaluation/ Consensus = 3** (Team B)

Key points of discussion:

- government collecting versus special interest groups
- collect data, but question on use of data in policy decisions

Observation: How is the data being collected? Ideally should be set up by a nonpartisan body and not by a special interest group to ensure that it is unbiased. Also, it would be beneficial if that body has funding and a mandate to collect gender data and sex disaggregated data regularly and if that body is encouraged to set up tools (checklists, guidelines, recommendations) based on that data for the municipality or organization to use in making policy decisions.

5. Part II: Strengths and Weaknesses:

In which 3 areas does Metro Atlanta have something to share, and in which 3 areas does Metro Atlanta want to improve?

Strengths:

(Recommendations from Team A)

1. Role modeling- Mayor Franklin
2. High concentration of women's organizations
3. Prominent women's colleges

(Recommendations from Team B)

1. # of not-for-profit initiatives, women making a difference
2. Role modeling of women in leadership
3. Economic development support for women- government, education, corporate diversity

(Recommendations from Team C)

1. Lot of independent activity
2. Political support especially at city level
3. Strong women's community
4. Sensitivity to inclusion

Weaknesses:

(Recommendations from Team A)

1. Lack specific strategies and initiatives
2. Women's issues confused with family issues
3. Lack support from corporations and larger government

(Recommendations from Team B)

1. Lack gender sensitive services- childcare, transport, etc.
2. Prevailing culture of what women deserve still steeped in old Southern tradition
3. Lack of systems to change beliefs about gender issues

(Recommendations from Team C)

1. Need more collaboration- a conference or summit for leaders of various organizations within the community to meet
2. Heritage issue
3. Political constraints by state and national level
4. Lack of family-friendly policies

6. Part III - Conclusions:

See attached Framework for Metro Atlanta's competency levels (highlighted) in each best practice area as identified by participants in the meeting.

Synopsis of major strengths and weaknesses within Metro Atlanta community based on participants' discussion:

Strengths:

1. **Mentoring of women leaders-** as have strong role models and influential women in leadership
2. **Access to Equitable Education-** as have three strong, prominent women's colleges within Atlanta and various groups that address girl's education (especially in math and science)
3. **Economic Inclusion-** as had a high level of competency in this area and as there seems to be economic development support for women at all levels in the community

Weaknesses:

1. **Gender Sensitivity and Awareness-** as participants felt there was still a prevailing attitude in the South that prevented the full inclusion of women and as there seems to be a lack of training on the government and corporate side on concrete systems and initiatives to change beliefs and to achieve gender equality
2. **Collaboration and Partnerships-** as there are various organizations, but little cooperation between
3. **Gender Sensitive Services-** as the majority of participants identified a lack of family-friendly policies and gender sensitive services as a major weakness in Metro Atlanta
4. **Gender Policy-** as Metro Atlanta does not have one and as it is crucial to establishing political will and specific criteria and initiatives for addressing all of the aforementioned issues