




Re: Referral: BOS File NO. 101155   
Laura Marshall to: LaTonia Stokes  
Cc: Emily Murase

09/22/2010 09:22 AM

Ms. Stokes,

Thank you for providing the Department on the Status of Women with the opportunity to offer comments and feedback about the City's Open Data Policy (File number 101155).

The Department supports the Mayor's and the Board's efforts to increase the collection of and access to data about City services. The Department has done significant work around enhancing the data collection practices of departments, and considers this ordinance to be one facet of a larger process. In 2009, the Department, in partnership with the Mayor's Budget Office, administered a survey of City departments to assess the degree to which departments collect demographic data about clients served, as well as the degree this demographic data is used in crafting policy and budget decisions. This was the first step in a larger initiative to institute gender responsive budgeting in the City's budget process.

A budget is the most comprehensive statement of a government's priorities and plans. It tracks where money comes from and where it goes and provides information on who pays for, and who benefits from, government spending. Gender responsive budgeting examines funding allocations and their impact on men and women. Gender responsive budgeting does *not create* separate budgets for women or men, nor does it mean that budget allocations are divided equally between the two. Instead, it determines where the needs of men and women are the same, and where they differ. Where the needs are different, budget allocations should reflect these differences. Government programs can be held accountable not only by administrative and political leaders, but by those not being served equitably. In this way, gender responsive budgeting expands transparency and accountability, and facilitates performance-based budgeting (budgeting based on measurable outcomes). Generally, gender responsive budgeting initiatives reflect a transition to more open, participatory, and responsive systems of governance.

For a number of years, San Francisco, like many other City governments worldwide, has been moving toward a performance-based budgeting system which uses performance information to inform decision-making and resource allocation. Performance-based budgeting shifts assessments of the success of government programs and policies away from the raising and spending of money (budgetary inputs), and instead focuses on achieving results by measuring both *outputs*, or the products and services delivered by agencies, as well as *outcomes*, or the impacts of government policies. These measures are then incorporated into budgetary decision-making. Since the availability of demographic data facilitates implementing performance-based budgeting, as well as efforts to more fully assess gender impacts of budget decisions, this study looks at what data is available. A lack of appropriate demographic data constitutes a major constraint to assessing the impact of government spending.

In February 2010, the Department and the Mayor's Budget Office issued the report, "Gender Responsive Budgeting: Path to Accountability and Data-Based Decision-Making." The report outlines the findings of the City-wide survey of demographic data collection practices, and offers recommendations for the implementation of a comprehensive gender responsive budgeting program. Find the report in the "Resources" section of the Department's website: [www.sfgov.org/dosw](http://www.sfgov.org/dosw).

As noted above, the City's Open Data Policy is one step toward a truly transparent and accountable government. The Department also asks for the Board to further increase transparency and accountability by 1) providing departments with the resources they need to expand data collection practices, especially demographic data collection, including training, technology, and staff time, and 2) using data collected to make policy and budgeting decisions that are equitable, efficacious, and appropriate to the needs of City residents. The Department is actively partnering with the Mayor's Budget Office on this process, and hopes the Board can be a partner as well.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation. Please contact me with any questions.

Laura

\*\*\*\*\*

Laūra Marshall, MSW  
Department on the Status of Women  
25 Van Ness Avenue, Suite 130  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
p. (415) 252-2578  
f. (415) 252-2575

\*\*\*\*\*