

Women's Task Force Report

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The mission:
To develop a workplace
that provides fair and
equal opportunities for
women to achieve success

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Background

THE DIVERSITY AUDIT

The City of Tempe underwent a year-long employee workforce audit between 2001 and 2002 for the purpose of identifying and understanding the existing personnel issues within the city organization. The City contracted with the consulting firm of Jamieson and Gutierrez, Inc. to conduct an organization-wide diversity audit.

An extensive survey of 1,171 city employees was conducted from November 15, 2001 to February 28, 2002. Both telephone and mail data collection methodologies were used. In addition, 13 one-on-one, in-depth interviews were conducted with workplace leaders: department heads, employee leaders (unions, TEC) and the Human Relations Commission. Building on the findings from the executive interviews, five targeted focus groups were conducted with employees:

- 1) non-management Fire employees
- 2) non-management Police employees
- 3) two groups of non-management, non-public safety employees
- 4) direct supervisors/middle managers.

In August 2002, Jamieson and Gutierrez presented their findings to the Tempe City Council. A presentation of a proposed diversity action plan was made by Jamieson and Gutierrez to the Tempe City Council on December 12, 2002.

Several of the findings of the diversity audit impacted women employees. The diversity audit identified the presence within the city organization of what was called a "Good Old Boy Network," referring to a system where individuals are promoted or receive favoritism in the workplace. This network is the cause of structural inequality as it relates to career advancement. Related to this inequity is the "glass ceiling" effect that creates artificial barriers to promotion among diverse groups such as women and minorities. According to the audit report, a principal way to eliminate these organizational issues is to ensure that equitable hiring, promotion and career development processes are in place.

In addition, the audit found that diverse groups, particularly women and minorities, are often excluded from mainstream organizational operations. They are outside the traditional circle of power and influence. The report concluded that an inclusive workplace, where all employees fully contribute and participate in daily operations and in all levels of the organization, is essential.

According to Jamieson and Gutierrez,

"An inclusive process needs to be in place to identify and resolve issues and to ensure accountability...Employees at all levels have responsibility and must own the change as well. Effective change requires ongoing collaboration between all levels and parts of the organization."

The Diversity Office and Steering Committee were formed by the City to address the findings of the audit. The Diversity Office is responsible for providing a safe haven for employees with diversity related concerns. This office also oversees the diversity initiatives of the City by implementing an action plan in cooperation with the Diversity Steering Committee. The vision of the Diversity Office states in part that, "A continued effort of education and training every employee, regardless of status or position, will focus on achieving an inclusive workplace in which no one person or group is provided special consideration over another."

The Steering Committee is made up of representatives of the Six-Sided Partnership, the Diversity Manager, the City Manager, a representative of the City Attorney's office, the Human Resources Manager, the Finance Department Manager, the Tempe Training Manager, and a Public Works Management representative.

THE WOMEN'S TASK FORCE

Jamieson and Gutierrez recommended that the City convene a task force to study women's issues. According to their report, "gender was the number one workplace diversity issue identified in the audit. The best practices research suggests that forming a women's task force to study issues and make recommendations is one of the most effective ways of making improvements."

The Diversity Office and Steering Committee convened the Women's Task Force to "identify specific needs of women in the City of Tempe workforce." The task force was to consist of nine employees representing the Five-Sided Partnership (prior to the formation of the Public Works Union) and four at-large slots filled by employees who were selected by the Diversity Steering Committee.

The following task force members were selected by December 2003:

Amy Douglass, Tempe Supervisory Council, Community Services/Cultural Services
Andrea Glass/Lisa Stark, IA Fire Fighters
Peggy Goldberg, at large, Community Services/Social Services
Shelley Hearn, at large, Community Relations/Graphic Design
Lisa Kleinpeter, at large, Community Services/Social Services
Carol Martsch, Tempe Employee Council, Public Works/Engineering
Laurie McMahon, Tempe Officers Association
Cecilia Velasco-Robles, Management Team, Financial Services
Ramon Saiz, at large, Public Works/Sanitation.

The women's task force was given a year to identify the needs, areas of opportunity and challenges faced by women in the work force. A report was to be made to the Diversity Steering Committee on a quarterly basis by the task force chair. During the first meeting on January 13, 2004 the task force members selected Shelley Hearn as chair and Cecilia Velasco-Robles as vice chair. The task force developed a mission statement and goals at the February 10, 2004 meeting.

The mission of the Women's Task Force was to develop a workplace that provides fair and equal opportunities for women to achieve success. Three major goals were identified:

1. To identify the needs and challenges faced by women in the workplace, and the opportunities for success.
2. To research and assess solutions to address the needs and challenges faced by women in the workforce, and to promote the opportunities for success.
3. To make recommendations concerning the most feasible and effective solutions to address the needs and challenges faced by women in the workforce, and to promote the opportunities for success.

Research

Goal 1 *To identify the needs and challenges faced by women in the workplace, and the opportunities for success.*

The task force decided to conduct focus groups with women employees to address the first goal of identifying needs, challenges and opportunities for success. Four focus groups made up of approximately 12 participants were put together. It was the opinion of the task force that 12 would be an ideal number since it would provide the opportunity to hear varying perspectives and points of view without making the group too large for informal discussion.

Participants were randomly selected from the population of City of Tempe women employees. Great care was taken to ensure that supervisors and direct reports were not in the same focus group. A total of 57 women employees were selected for participation in the focus groups. Employees who were selected through the randomized process were contacted via email and asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group. If an employee opted not to participate, another employee was randomly selected and contacted.

Initially it was decided that department managers and deputy managers would be excluded from the sampled population. The task force was of the opinion that the presence of upper management in the focus groups would adversely affect the candor of the discussions by non-management participants. However, the task force received input from several individuals that expressed concerns about excluding upper management from the fact-finding process. As a result, a fifth focus group was added that was composed of all the women department managers and deputy managers that were able to attend. Because of the small number of women managers, the whole group was invited to participate.

The task force developed five questions that served as the basis for the discussions in the focus group (see Appendix A). The questions addressed the issues identified through the diversity audit and research into both public and private organizations conducted by task force members.

The focus groups were conducted on July 20 and 27, August 3 and 10, and September 21, 2004. They were offered in several locations at the start of the day to make participation as convenient as possible. The City Manager gave permission for employees to attend the focus groups during work hours, with supervisor approval.

At the beginning of each focus group, the participants were asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. This agreement was provided by/developed in consultation with the City Attorney's Office. It was emphasized to all the participants that they had a responsibility to keep the focus group discussions strictly confidential to ensure that all participants had the opportunity to provide honest, candid input.

Each focus group had a moderator and at least two note-takers from the Women's Task Force. The focus groups lasted about two hours. The moderators asked the same five questions, in the same order, of all five focus groups. Each participant was given an opportunity to answer each question to ensure that all opinions were voiced. Once everyone had given an answer to a particular question, any additional comments were allowed for a brief period before moving on to the next question.

Each participant's name and years of service were recorded. However, names were not directly linked to the statements made by the participants, as recorded in the notes. A number code was given to each participant to maintain anonymity.

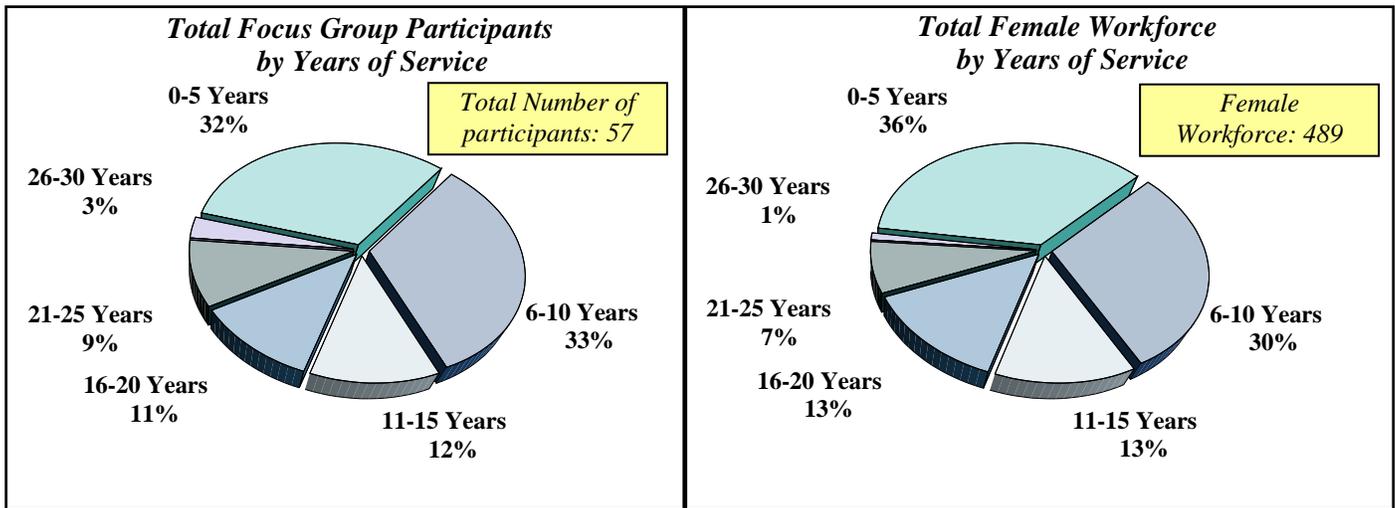
Some of the focus groups were audio taped. However, the poor quality of the tapes and the time needed to transcribe them made the tapes impractical as a primary source for data collection. The data presented in this report were compiled from the written notes. At the conclusion of the focus group, the notes and tapes were kept in a secured location. The tapes were retained in the event that a question arose during the analysis phase concerning any of the statements made by the focus group participants.

A matrix was developed to record the responses to the questions (following page). The various responses to each question were categorized by years of service. This classification was used to determine if the experiences and perceptions of the participants varied according to how many years they had worked for the City of Tempe.

Goal 2 *To research and assess solutions to address the needs and challenges faced by women in the workforce, and to promote the opportunities for success.*

Task force members researched women's issues and best practices in both public and private sector organizations, including businesses, government agencies and government employee unions, to address the second goal. Observations from this research helped the task force to formulate questions for the focus groups as well as recommendations based on the focus group results.

Focus Group Data



Women's Focus Group Matrix							
Question/Category	0-5 Years	6-10 Years	11-15 Years	16-20 Years	21-25 Years	26-30 Years	Average
1. Are you aware of alternate work schedules? (% of group responding <i>yes</i>)	89%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	97%
1a. % of group that uses:							
-Flex Time	44%	21%	29%	67%	40%	100%	39%
-Job Share	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
-Telecommuting	11%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	9%
1b. % of group not utilizing alternate work schedules (N/A or no response):	45%	63%	71%	33%	60%	0%	52%
<i>Comments why not using: not compatible w/nature of job; not permitted/not an option for them in that work group/department; Flextime cancelled, taken away due to work constraints; staffing levels, downsizing; In some departments/workgroups flextime, job share and telecommuting are not an option; in some departments/work groups these were available but taken away due to staffing levels,</i>							
2. How can the City assist you to manage work/life responsibilities?							
-Flexibility in Leave	11%	11%	14%	0%	20%	0%	11%
-Flexible Work Schedules	3%	16%	0%	0%	0%	100%	11%
-Childcare	17%	21%	29%	33%	20%	0%	21%
-N/A or no response	69%	52%	57%	67%	60%	0%	57%

