

# **Guide to Best Practices in Gender Analysis**

Spring 2003



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

Ministry of Community, Aboriginal  
and Women's Services

## Message from the Minister of State for Women's Equality

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As British Columbia's Minister of State for Women's Equality, I am pleased to present the Guide to Best Practices in Gender Analysis to ministries across government. This guide outlines the process and value of incorporating gender analysis in policy development, and will assist ministries in ensuring that new policies and programs do not disadvantage women.

Although women and men have more opportunities and choices than they had in the past, statistics show that there are still significant differences in their roles and responsibilities: women earn an average of 72 cents for every dollar a man earns; women continue to carry most of the responsibility for their families; research into women's health issues lags far behind men's; and domestic violence is an issue many women continue to live with.

Because of these differences, government policies and programs do not affect women and men exactly the same way. As a result, policies, programs and legislation that do not take gender into account may not have the desired outcome and can be very costly for government and society.

Gender analysis assists in evaluating the potential impacts of programs and policies on both women and men, and is an integral part of developing government policies and programs.

Gender analysis can:

- heighten analysts' awareness and skills in addressing complex social and economic issues;
- help create a more open and transparent policy process by challenging hidden assumptions;
- help ensure that the abstract goals of a policy consider the people who will be affected;
- help ensure that policies can be effectively implemented;
- inform responsible decision-making; and
- help ensure more efficient and effective use of government resources by improving predictability of outcomes and accuracy of costings and projections.

This guide outlines the steps used in developing policy, and shows how gender analysis can be integrated at each phase of the policy development cycle. It will also help government meet its New Era commitments to accountability, sound fiscal management and openness and transparency in the public policy process.



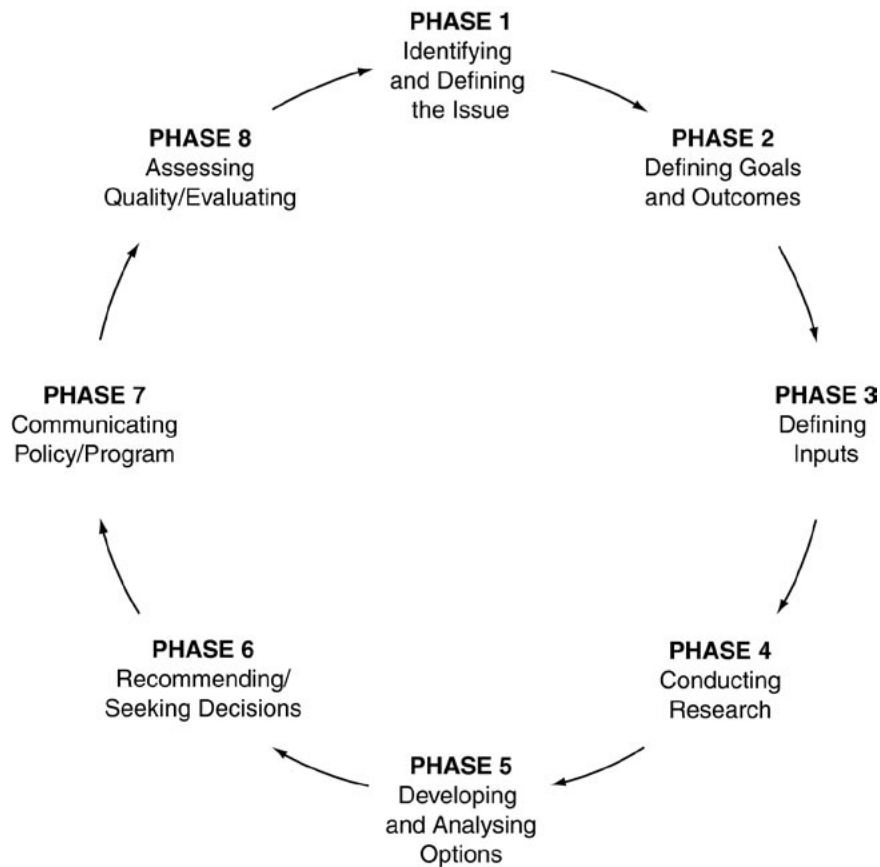
The Honourable Lynn Stephens  
Minister of State for Women's Equality

# The Policy and Program Development Cycle

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Developing policies and programs that benefit both women and men requires an understanding of the factors that affect their lives. Keeping these factors in mind in each phase of the policy/program development cycle can assist ministries in ensuring policies and programs incorporate a broader perspective and benefit everyone.

The following diagram outlines the basic phases of the policy/program development cycle. How to incorporate gender analysis into each phase will be described in the following pages.



# The Policy and Program Development Cycle: Steps in Integrating Gender Analysis

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## **Phase 1 – Identifying and Defining the Issue**

- Step 1. Identify and define the issue so that key factors affecting women and men are taken into account, e.g. income levels, family responsibilities, diversity. Consider what researchers and analysts with expertise in women's issues have to say about the issue.

## **Phase 2 - Defining Goals and Outcomes**

- Step 1. Determine the gender composition of the people who will or may be affected by the policy/program and take that into account in all phases of policy/program development.
- Step 2. Determine the anticipated outcomes and goals of the policy/program for women and men, and whether they could be modified to assist women to address barriers that limit women's access to opportunities.
- Step 3. Recognise that multiple outcomes may be necessary to take into account the effects of gender and/or other aspects of diversity on policy/program implementation. In order to capture the different circumstances of women and men, you may also need to develop different outcome indicators.
- Step 4. Consider which gender-specific factors could affect the desired outcomes of the policy/program. For example, pregnancy, workplace harassment and difficulty with child- and elder-care arrangements are all variables that can limit positive outcomes for women.
- Step 5. Review any evaluations that have been conducted on policies/programs whose goals and target populations are similar to yours, and build evaluation measures into your policy/program design. It may be more helpful to have information that enables you to improve a policy/program while it is in effect, rather than waiting until its completion to determine whether it met its goals or intended outcomes.

## **Phase 3 - Defining Inputs (Information/Consultation Needs)**

- Step 1. Determine whether the relevant information is available by gender and, if not, how such information could be obtained, e.g. from community-based organisations, from case experience or administrative data.
- Step 2. When consultations are held in planning, developing, implementing and/or evaluating legislation, policies and programs, include women and men (groups and individuals).

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## Phase 4 - Conducting Research

- Step 1. Consult with both women and men as you determine research questions, create the research design and select research methodologies. Build enough time into policy/program development to ensure gender analysis is included.
- Step 2. Design the research so that gender-specific data can be collected.
- Step 3. Design research questions that make specific references to women and men to ensure the research addresses their particular circumstances.
- Step 4. Collect both quantitative and qualitative data to help identify gender issues. Allowing women and men to describe experiences in their own words could help to identify gender differences that might otherwise go unnoticed.

## Phase 5 - Developing and Analysing Options

- Step 1. Consider the impacts of the policy/program on both women and men as a key element in weighing and recommending options -- not as an "add-on."
- Step 2. Consider how each option may affect women and men. Identify whether it reinforces, challenges or addresses stereotypes or other factors that impact women and men.
- Step 3. Consider how each option will be monitored and evaluated to determine the impact of this policy/program on women and men.

## Phase 6 - Recommending/Seeking Decisions

- Step 1. Ensure the identified impacts on both women and men are articulated in decision-seeking documents, e.g. briefing notes, treasury board and cabinet submissions, legislation.
- Step 2. Review the recommended option in light of legal, economic, social or cultural constraints to full participation of women and men in society. For instance, does it meet the requirements established in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms?
- Step 3. Explain the consequences of the recommended option for both women and men.
- Step 4. Outline methods to ensure the recommended policy/program is implemented in a manner that considers gender.

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## **Phase 7 - Communicating Policy/Program**

- Step 1. Use language, symbols and examples that include both women and men in all materials developed to communicate policies/programs.
- Step 2. Use communication strategies that will reach women and men, including women and men from diverse groups. Consider involving community and diverse organisations in the communication of policies/programs.
- Step 3. Highlight the impacts to women and men of the policy/program in communications materials.

## **Phase 8 – Assessing Quality/Evaluating**

- Step 1. Design, implement and interpret evaluations that assess the impacts of policies/ programs on both women and men.
- Step 2. Ensure that the data you collect, interpret and disseminate is separated by gender.