Best Practices: Gender Equity Program

Submitted by the City of Coquitlam
June 20, 2005
SUMMARY

The City of Coquitlam has implemented a Gender Equity Program dedicated to increasing the number of women and girls who participate in sport and fitness activities. In general, women and girls do not participate as fully in sport and fitness programs, and Coquitlam is striving to increase their participating by both raising awareness of opportunities and the value of physical fitness and by supporting those programs through grants. The Gender Equity Program emanated from the City of Coquitlam’s Gender Equity Policy adopted in 1999. The goal of the Program is to achieve gender equity in sport and physical activity.

COQUITLAM’S GENDER EQUITY PROGRAM

In 1999, the City of Coquitlam responded to a complaint by entering into a mediated agreement with the BC Human Rights Commission. The agreement included a commitment by the City to establish policy and a program that specifically addressed the goal of gender equity in sport and physical activity.

INCREASING EFFECTIVENESS

Many changes and new initiatives have occurred since the City of Coquitlam adopted the Gender Equity Program. The scope of the Program has touched on every component in Leisure and Parks services as well as many organizations outside of the City. The Program is not just about how many sport programs are offered to females; rather, it addresses Coquitlam’s values and philosophy related to doing business with internal and external customers.

Participation & Subsidy Analysis

The Gender Equity Database, prepared in consultation with KPMG Consultants LP, compiles reliable statistics on usage patterns of all Leisure and Parks Services sport and physical activity facilities. The data gathered includes:

- Gender, age and residency of all participants in registered sport and physical activity programs;
- Gender, age and residency of participants in non-profit sport rental groups using City subsidized facilities;
- Gender, and age group of all General Admissions (pools, arenas, and gyms);
- Gender and age group of all casual users of outdoor sport and physical activity facilities; and
- Gender, age and residency of all grant recipients related to the Gender Equity Special Fund.

Using the collected data, department staff have been able to generate a variety of reports that evaluate subsidy ratios related to age and gender as well as the participation rates of both genders by age category. While many Parks and Recreation Departments are able to do this with their basic program registration systems, Coquitlam’s Leisure and Parks Services Department now has reliable user data from both rental groups and casual users (park survey system). The information generated from this data provides a clearer insight into the community and the people being served. Data collection, once a tedious task, has now become a dependable and a much sought after tool for all areas of the department.
The data gathered in the first year set a base point to work from, and in each subsequent year staff have been able to track both successes and setbacks. Now, the Leisure and Parks Services Department is using the data to look for trends in sport participation. As a result of increased monitoring of sport field usage, several baseball fields have had their infields skinned to create appropriate playing surfaces for softball teams and to balance the quality of fields being allocated to both baseball and softball. Historically, softball had been allocated mostly to school district fields that were often poorly developed and maintained. In the new system both softball and baseball have a balanced range of field qualities and amenities.

**Policy Review & Changes**

To encourage and support the changes required by the Gender Equity Program, the cross-divisional work teams conducted reviews of policy and practices within Leisure & Parks Services with two specific objectives to be met:

a) Develop a series of policy guidelines and processes to remove systemic barriers to equity within Leisure & Parks Services; and

b) Create evaluation and performance measurement tools to document changes within Leisure & Parks Services.

Policy development is underway in five main areas:

1. Program Analysis & Program Development
2. Facility Allocation
3. Capital Planning
4. Fees & Charges
5. Partnerships & Proposals

While formal policy review was underway, some informal changes to processes related to facility allocation also occurred. A collegial model was developed for the ice and field allocation processes. Staff now emphasize criteria-based decision making with renter groups rather than allocations based on historical use. Staff also encourage renter groups to participate in the development of creative solutions to resolve allocation issues; a tactic which has fostered greater cooperation amongst the parties. When a change to historical allocation is negative, staff uses the information gathered through our data collection system to analyze and support any controversial decisions.

**Programming**

One of the greatest assets in successfully improving gender equity in Coquitlam sport and fitness programs is staff commitment. Leisure & Parks Services staff have gained vast experience with the issues related to gender equity in sport and have shown terrific attitudes and flexibility in attempting to increase female participation in sport within their areas of influence. The result of their experiences has been the introduction of new and exciting program opportunities for young girls and women. One such controversial yet positive programming change has been introductory weight training programs and “women only” weight room hours at pools and community centres. Additional new women’s programming includes Women’s Outdoor Soccer, Women’s Walking Clubs, Introduction to Netball, Women’s Powerskating, and Women’s Drop-in Basketball. New programs for
younger girls include *Girls Only Sport Camps, GirlPower Daycamps, Hip Hop Dance, Self Defense & Martial Arts* classes, *Puck, Ring & Stick* lessons, and *Ringette Camps*. The success of all these programs is recognizing “social activity” as a starting point and having the instructor/leader maintain a relationship with participants on an ongoing basis.

**Citizen Participation**

Another key asset to Coquitlam’s Gender Equity Program has been the Gender Equity Committee, comprised of eight citizen representatives and two City Councillors. This committee monitors the progress of the Program and delivers their perspective of gender equity issues from a broad spectrum of the community. The Gender Equity Committee’s responsibilities also include awarding $50,000 in grant money each year to predominately female sport organizations. The recipients of the grant are organizations that receive no other subsidy from the City of Coquitlam, such as field or facility use. The major recipients of the grant over the past three years have been gymnastic organizations.

**APPLICABILITY TO OTHER MUNICIPALITIES**

Gender equity and promoting increased participation in sports for women and girls is a challenge shared by all municipalities. It is identified as a key initiative for the Spirit of BC legacies program, and continues to be a priority for most sport and recreation program coordinators. The tremendous amount of data, program experience and training stemming from Coquitlam’s Gender Equity Program offers both value and relevance for all municipalities. To date, many jurisdictions, throughout BC and across Canada have sought and obtained information from the City regarding this progressive and responsive initiative.

**PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND AWARENESS**

In 1999, the City of Coquitlam was faced with a challenge regarding its commitment to gender equity. The City responded in an extremely positive and responsible manner, demonstrating to its commitment to public accountability and direct action. City Council acknowledged its responsibilities; recognized the opportunity to provide leadership; and acted. The legacy is a better community, and best practices for other municipalities to consider.

**ADDRESSING THE CITY’S CORPORATE OBJECTIVES**

The Gender Equity Program is consistent with City Council’s vision for Coquitlam as “a community where people choose to live, work, and play.”

The project specifically addresses the following Corporate Objectives:

- **Foster Live Work and Play Opportunities**
  Identify, develop, sustain and promote choices for living, working and playing which are of value to our stakeholders.
• **Be fair and Responsive**  
  Respond effectively to the day-to-day needs of internal and external customers with the flexibility to accommodate extraordinary circumstances and shifting priorities.

• **Meet Changing Needs**  
  Anticipate demands and develop creative solutions to meet emerging needs and turn opportunities into reality to support a sustainable community.

• **Understand Current and Future Needs**  
  Identify and prioritize customers’ current and future needs, and inform the community through communication and customer relationships to promote mutual understanding.

• **Deal with Changing Imperatives**  
  Adapt and respond to changes in the social, physical, economic and regulatory environment.
May 27, 2005  
Our File: 10-4710-01/000/2005-1  
Doc #: 333783.v1  

To: Mayor and Council  
From: City Manager  

Subject: Application to 2005 Community Excellence Awards through the UBCM  

For: Closed Council  

Recommendation:  
That staff be authorized to make application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for the 2005 Community Excellence Awards in the categories of Best Practices; Leadership & Innovation; and Partnerships: Local Government-School Board Collaboration.

Background:  
The Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) adjudicates the Community Excellence Awards each year to highlight the activities of its members.

It is suggested that the City of Coquitlam will submit application for the following projects:

- Annual Report
- Website
- Branding/Visual Identity Project
- Gender Equity Program
- Eagle Mountain/Crown Park Development
- Rochester Avenue Road Reconstruction
- Centennial Community Gym

City staff look forward to the opportunity to submit these applications and receive formal feedback from an objective third-party on these initiatives. Previous submissions have been made to the UBCM, American Public Works Association, Government Finance Officers’ Association, Planning Institute of British Columbia, Economic Development Association of Canada, International Association of Business Communicators and other organizations who provide invaluable feedback on how to improve the programs as well as recognition for the work which has been completed.
In most instances, applications for the above-noted projects have already been submitted to other organizations so work in preparing the materials for the UBCM will be minimized. It should be noted there is no application for these submissions.

A council resolution is required in order to make application to the UBCM for the 2005 Community Excellence Awards.

Warren Jones
COMMUNITY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
APPLICATION FORM

Name of Local Government: City of Coquitlam
Project or Program Title: Gender Equity Program

SELECT THE CATEGORY YOU ARE ENTERING:
- Use ONE application form per project
- Choose only ONE category below

BEST PRACTICES
☑ Best Practices
☐ Best Practices - Website (Address: www.__________________________)
☐ Best Practices - Best Annual Reporting

LEADERSHIP & INNOVATION
☐ Small Community (population under 5,000)
☐ Mid-Size Community (population between 5,000 - 20,000)
☐ Large Community (population over 20,000)
☐ Regional District

☑ PARTNERSHIPS: Local Government and School Board Collaboration

Application Check-list:
My submission contains:
☑ 8 copies of the completed application form
☑ 8 copies of the one-paragraph summary of the project/program being submitted
☑ 8 copies of the five-page summary report
☑ 8 copies of the resolution supporting the application from council/RD board
☑ 1 CD/electronic copy of my entire submission
☑ 1 copy of annual report (if applicable)

Contact Person: Therese Mickelson
Contact Title: Manager Corporate Communications Email: tmickelson@coquitlam.ca
Phone: 604-927-3019 Fax: 604-927-3015

By making this application, I understand that all materials will be kept by UBCM and are available for viewing by other UBCM members through the UBCM Community Excellence Awards library.

Signature: [Signature] Name (print): Therese Mickelson Date: June 20, 2005

DEADLINE: JUNE 20, 2005
Questions? Call Joslyn at 604-270-8226, Ext. 103