

Establishing a women's caucus - Guidelines for Local Authorities

What is a Caucus

Women's caucuses or parliamentary groups are structures that have been created within political assemblies in many countries to strengthen cooperation between women in political life across party and ideological lines and which strengthens their capacity to effect change. They can help build the capacity of women councillors; especially newly elected councillors, through formal and informal mentoring and promote women's equality in Local Government.

There are different models and types of caucus formal or informal, local regional or national.

A women's caucus in your local authority should develop according to the specific histories, experiences, needs and resources in relation to women's participation and representation. Local authorities can assist with the establishment of such caucuses.

Guidelines for establishing a Caucus:

The following are suggested guidelines for establishing a Caucus in a local authority – or where there are limited women councillors, among two or more local authorities - if there is an interest or desire among elected members.

Step 1 – Assess the environment

- Have women councillors expressed an interest and requested support?
- What resources financial and human can be provided?
- Contact active caucuses in other Local Authority areas for example Limerick City and County and Dublin City Council.
- Examine if local or regional civil society organisations have begun the process of developing a caucus and link with them to create a cohesive plan or additional supports you can provide.

Step 2 – Lay the foundations

- Invite and support all women councillors to take part in its formation.
- Where possible, provide support for women councillors to engage an independent facilitator to work with the members to define and agree the name, structure, format, vision and objectives.
- Discuss what practical and technical support can be offered for meetings times, space, IT and administrative support including an official email address provision or an official page on the Council website.

Step 3 – Getting up and running

- Will the secretariat role be undertaken by officials? If so, clearly define their role and limitations.
- Alternatively, explore how you the local authority can support engagement with civil society for example women's groups in your area to provide for an independent secretariat (based on the Limerick model).
- Consider how will the caucus be renewed following an election and how can the Local Authority ensure institutional memory and the political experience of women? Will the secretariat role be undertaken by officials? If so, clearly define their role and limitations.
- Alternatively, explore how you the local authority can support engagement with civil society for example women's groups in your area to provide for an independent secretariat (based on the Limerick model).
- Consider how will the caucus be renewed following an election and how can the Local Authority ensure institutional memory and the political experience of women?

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Step 4 – In action

- Consider writing the existence of the caucus into your corporate plan.
- Decisions on activities should be based on the collective objectives of the caucus as determined by the members and could include the following;
 - Raise the visibility of the caucus by organising press conferences, media interviews and events.
 - Work with the caucus to sign up to the [European Charter for Equality between Women and Men in Local Life](#).
 - Funding allocations should be based on the expressed needs of the caucus members.
- Review funding to ensure successful functioning.
- Document and celebrate in official local authority communications, the achievements of the caucus.
- Ensure that the local caucus is maintained in the run-up to future general and local elections, where members may be running against each other and/or will be supporting their own party's candidates.

Further resources

[Inter-Parliamentary Union – Guidelines for Womens Caucus](#)

[Irish Womens Parliamentary Caucus](#)

[NWC & NCCWN - Establishing Local Caucus for women councillors](#)

[Womens Democracy Network Uganda Chapter – Guide for creating and sustaining successful women local councilor's caucuses at district and sub-county levels in Uganda](#)

