

Infrastructure projects

Gender Impact Assessment Guidance

December 2024



This guidance is intended to be general in nature.
For more specific advice, please reach out to your Treasury Relationship Lead to discuss how to approach the gender impact assessment.

Purpose of this guidance

If the budget proposal is seeking funding for a long-term, large scale investment project, it may be challenging initially to see how this could impact women, men and gender diverse people differently. However, infrastructure projects can support gender equality and address gender inequality in important ways.

This guidance provides advice on how to complete a gender impact assessment on an infrastructure project. You may also find it useful to look at the example gender impact assessments available on the [NSW Gender Impact Assessment Resource Hub](#).

Question 1: How does the issue you are seeking to address affect women, men or gender diverse people differently?

To answer this question we recommend you think about the impacts for women, men and gender diverse people in two ways:

1) The infrastructure project itself

- There is a common misconception that infrastructure projects, including the development of housing, transport infrastructure, service infrastructure and infrastructure for new suburbs, are gender neutral and will impact everyone in the same way. In reality, infrastructure projects can have a significant impact on women's access to resources, well-being and agency.¹
- For example, road upgrades may benefit men more, given men are disproportionately represented in road fatalities and tend to undertake longer commutes by car.² However, if a road project also considers bicycle and pedestrian safety and access to public transport, the investment is likely to have greater benefits for people of all genders, and other cohorts.³

2) The workforce involved in designing, planning and implementing the infrastructure project

- The gender composition of the workforce has implications for how responsive projects are to the needs of people of different genders, as well as who is benefitting from the jobs created by the infrastructure project.⁴

¹ Hill E, Cooper R, Lee T, and Seetahul S, 2024, *Building a more equitable future of work for women in NSW: Opportunities for government action*, JMI Policy Insights Paper, James Martin Institute for Public Policy.

² See National Road Safety Partnership Program 2018, *Q&A: Road Trauma and Young Drivers – Does Gender Make a Difference* p.1 and Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016, *Commuting Distance by Personal Characteristic*.

³ Transport NSW 2024, NSW Guide to gender-inclusive placemaking: Ideas and opportunities for inclusive places. Also Goel R. et al. 2021, *Gender differences in active travel in major cities across the world*, Transportation, 50.

⁴ NSW Treasury 2024, *Workforce Gender Segregation in Australia*, A technical paper prepared by the interjurisdictional Women's Economic Outcomes Senior Officials Working Group of the Council on Federal Financial Relations; and UNOPS, 2020, *Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women*, and OECD 2021, *Selected stocktaking of good practices for inclusion of women in infrastructure*.

- Evidence also demonstrates that women’s inclusion in infrastructure sectors can boost financial performance, strengthen workforce talent, and improve organisational culture, safety, and community relations.⁵

To answer Question 1, you will need to collect data and evidence to understand the gendered impacts specific to the proposal. The tables below outline some areas to consider.

Table 1 | Collecting data and evidence to understand the gendered impacts of the infrastructure project

| Collect data and evidence | Example |
|--|---|
| To understand how people might have different needs and use infrastructure differently due to their gender. | <p>Research demonstrates that women, men and gender diverse people have different needs and experiences when it comes to public spaces, facilities and transport, including perceptions of safety.⁶</p> <p>For example, factors such as lighting, wide paths, clear signage and landscaping which allows for clear sightlines are important design features to increase feelings of safety for women, girls and gender diverse people.⁷</p> |
| To understand the ways in which the type of infrastructure may have long-term benefits or disadvantages for people of different genders. | For example, investment in the national broadband network has helped to drive greater female entrepreneurship, enabling remote work and flexibility, part-time work and greater opportunity for female entrepreneurs in regional areas. ⁸ |

Table 2 | Collecting data and evidence to understand the workforce involved in the infrastructure project

| Collect data and evidence | Example |
|--|--|
| To understand the gender composition of the workforce in the relevant infrastructure sector, including at management levels. | <p>For example, if the project relates to health infrastructure, a large proportion of the workforce in Health Care and Social Assistance sector in NSW is female (74.8 per cent of the workforce as at August 2024).⁹ This has implications for how infrastructure design takes into account the needs of female employees.</p> <p>Or if the project relates to clean energy infrastructure, women make up only 32 per cent of leadership roles and only 19 per cent of board positions.¹⁰ This has implications for who may be making decisions about the project.</p> |

⁵ International Finance Corporation 2023, *Gender and Infrastructure toolkit: Tool Suite 1*.

⁶ Transport for NSW 2023, *Safer Cities Survey Report*.

⁷ Transport for NSW 2024, *NSW Guide to gender-inclusive placemaking: Ideas and opportunities for inclusive places*.

⁸ NBN 2018, *Fast broadband helping to drive greater female entrepreneurship*. Media Release.

⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics 2024, *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*, Table EQ06, released August 2024.

¹⁰ Clean Energy Council, 2021, *Empowering Everyone: Diversity in the Australian Clean Energy Sector*.

| Collect data and evidence | Example |
|---|--|
| To understand the gender composition of the construction or other industry supporting the project delivery, including roles and levels. | A very high proportion of technicians and trades workers are male in NSW (84.8 per cent as at August 2024). ¹¹ These positions tend to be more highly paid and offer greater opportunity for skill development. |
| To identify the potential barriers for women and gender diverse people to enter and remain in the construction or other industries supporting project delivery. | Evidence shows that sexual harassment and feeling unsafe in the workplace, as well as a lack of flexibility and undervaluing the skills of female employees, impacts women's recruitment and retention within male-dominated industries, including construction. ¹² |

Tip

You will also find data sources and example gender impact assessments on the [NSW Gender Impact Assessment Resource Hub](#). The [NSW Gender Equality Dashboard](#), [ABS Labour Force](#) data and the [WGEA Data Explorer](#) also have useful data on the gender representation across industries and occupations.

¹¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024, *Labour Force, Australia, Detailed*, Table EQ08, released August 2024.

¹² NSW Treasury 2024, *Workforce Gender Segregation in Australia*, A technical paper prepared by the interjurisdictional Women's Economic Outcomes Senior Officials Working Group of the Council on Federal Financial Relations. See also Building Commission NSW, 2024, *Women in Construction Report*.

Question 2: What are the expected positive impacts of the proposal on women, men or gender diverse people?

To address this question, look back at the potential gendered impacts you uncovered in Question 1. Can you identify any ways the proposal may have a positive impact?

Tip

There are a number of initiatives in New South Wales focusing on gender diversity and building an inclusive culture in the construction industry such as the [NSW Women in Construction Program](#) and the [Construction Industry Culture Taskforce](#). There has also been research on women in construction conducted by Building Commission NSW and the NSW Women in Construction Program.¹³ This may give you some ideas as to how the proposal can have a positive impact.

The [NSW Government Principles for Partnership with the Construction Industry](#) declares enhancing construction industry culture and diversity as a key priority of the NSW Government. This document includes specific actions for NSW Government agencies and industry partners to promote gender diversity and improved culture in construction.

When you are thinking about positive impacts, consider both the infrastructure project and the project delivery workforce (internal and external to Government). This could include any of the following:

- ✓ Supports engagement of women and gender diverse people in the planning and design of the project.
- ✓ Encourages suppliers to commit to employing women in traditionally male-dominated industries and to actively promoting and supporting diversity in their workforce.
- ✓ Supports initiatives to increase the participation and retention of women in trade and non-traditional roles in the infrastructure sector.
- ✓ Supports the aims of the [NSW Women in Construction Program](#).
- ✓ Encourages contractors and suppliers to implement flexible work practices, employment and promotion opportunities for female employees, and steps to prevent violence and harassment in the workplace.
- ✓ Takes into account in the scope of the project the needs and uses of the planned infrastructure for people of all genders.
- ✓ Encourages contractors and suppliers to integrate gender responsive design.
- ✓ The project outcomes are likely to advance gender equality, such as by creating economic or health benefits for women and gender diverse people.

Tip

The NSW Women in Construction Program website includes [resources for employers](#) to help attract and retain women in on-site roles. For more information, contact the NSW Women in Construction team at: industry@infrastructure.nsw.gov.au

¹³ See [Building Commission NSW 2024 research](#) and the [2024 Women in Construction Industry Survey Report 2024](#).

Question 3: How will you mitigate any risks, barriers or limitations of the proposal on women, men or gender diverse people?

To answer this question, you will be identifying any risks, barriers or limitations in relation to the proposal. The evidence you collected in Question 1 will help you to do this.

For each risk or barrier, you will then identify a mitigating strategy or action. There are some examples in the table below:

| Risk, barrier or limitation | Examples of mitigating strategies and actions |
|--|--|
| Perceptions of safety and societal expectations may limit use of the infrastructure by women and gender diverse people. | <p>A targeted communications campaign addressing gender stereotypes will help to encourage use of the infrastructure.</p> <p>A participatory approach, such as a safety walk, will support an understanding of women and gender diverse people's needs in relating to safety and barriers to use.</p> |
| Gender inclusive design of infrastructure and public spaces will not in itself prevent sexual harassment and discrimination or challenge the harmful gender norms that lead to violence against women in public places and workplaces. | Collaborate with other NSW Government initiatives to prevent sexual harassment and gender-based violence, including the NSW Government's <i>Safer Cities Program</i> and <i>The Pathways to Prevention: NSW Strategy for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence 2024-2027</i> . |
| The supplier and any sub-contractors may not implement actions to support gender equality and gender inclusive design. | Integrate gender-responsive procurement processes (see box below). |
| Women are under-represented in infrastructure planning, design and implementation of the proposal. | <p>Create an advisory group for the project, with representation from diverse groups, to guide design and implementation.</p> <p>Collaborate with the NSW Women in Construction Program.</p> |
| There may be resistance to additional costs required for gender responsive design and meaningful consultation. | Develop communications to highlight that designing projects to promote gender equality, leads to outcomes which are more responsive to the needs of everyone in the community. This mitigates potential unforeseen need to change approach part-way through implementation, resulting in more accurate costings and projections. |
| Retention and recruitment of the project workforce falls outside the scope of the project. | Collaborate with programs in the education and skills sector to support the education and training for women in trade and non-traditional roles. |

Tip: Use procurement processes to promote gender equality

Procurement processes can support supplier organisations to adopt gender equitable practices and support women in their workforces.¹⁴ For example, procurement processes have the potential to influence suppliers to promote women's leadership, pay equity, secure flexible jobs, and safe respectful workplaces which can all impact on gender inequality.¹⁵ It can also guide suppliers to consider gender inclusive design in infrastructure projects, where practical.

Integrating gender equality into procurement processes can also increase the visibility of gender-equitable suppliers and women-owned businesses in the supply chain. Verified gender-equitable suppliers are tagged on buy.nsw so government buyers can search, identify, and purchase from suppliers that meet gender-equality workplace standards.¹⁶

There are a number of best practice measures which you may wish to consider. Examples include:

- Requiring suppliers to:
 - provide information about female representation in their organisations and teams working on contracts
 - meet gender equality targets to address potential areas of gender inequality, such as inflexible work practices, lack of training and skills development for female employees and creating a respectful workplace
 - regularly report on gender equality workplace practices and progress against gender equality targets set by suppliers.¹⁷
- Adding questions in tender documents which require suppliers to:
 - indicate whether their organisation holds the WGEA Employer of Choice for Gender Equality Citation
 - outline gender equality related policies, strategies and/or plans that their organisation currently has in place, and efforts to support sub-contractors with gender equality outcomes.¹⁸
- Including a separate section in Request for Tender documents where suppliers can separately cost new and innovative ways to improve gender equality.¹⁹
- Stipulating in the contract that suppliers must provide education and training on gender equality for subcontractors.²⁰

Examples

1. A construction company tendered for a NSW Health project. As part of the tender they proposed two options: one based on a five-day working week with a possible extra ten weeks allowed to complete the job; the other, the usual six days worked by construction workers around Australia. The tender was won on the five-day week option and NSW Health also funded research into the impact of the initiative.²¹

This research found that the five-day working week improved well-being and work-life balance for construction workers and enabled workers to play a greater role in child care and household tasks on the weekend. A significant impact for female next-of-kin was also noted, including increased well-being and time for paid work. Further research was recommended to examine the effects of working hours on the retention of women in construction.²²

2. Melbourne Water's Gender Equality Action Plan (section 9.5) includes actions to embed gender equality in procurement processes. This includes requiring every tender over \$20 million to include mandatory questions and actions relevant to gender equality and intersectionality.

Question 4: Does the proposal support any gender equality indicators?

Indicators which may be relevant include:

- Increases gender diversity in under-represented industries and sectors
- Increases safety in workplaces and / or public spaces
- Increases the skills and education levels of women and girls
- Promotes financial and economic equality of women and gender diverse people

Question 5: What are the knowledge gaps about the gendered impacts of this issue?

Ask yourself: As you answered Question 1, were there any data or evidence gaps in relation to the impacts of the infrastructure project and/or issues facing the workforce?

There is limited academic research on gender equitable procurement and supply chain processes.²³ There may be an opportunity to test a new approach or initiative as part of the proposal and to track the impacts of this. You should note this in the template.

Question 6: How will you collect data to monitor and/or evaluate the gendered impacts of the proposal?

You may wish to include under 'other' in Question 6 any monitoring tools the proposal will use to hold suppliers accountable. For example, you could consider requiring suppliers to report regularly on the gender composition of teams and leaders or access to and uptake of flexible work arrangements and parental leave, during the delivery of the contract.²⁴

Summary of the gender impact assessment

The final step in the gender impact assessment template asks you to summarise the outcomes of the gender impact assessment.

We recommend you briefly outline the nature of the infrastructure project at the start of the summary. Then summarise the expected impact of the infrastructure project on gender equality and any changes you made to the proposal as a result of the gender impact assessment.

²³ Oxenbridge, S and Galea, N. 2020. *Gender equitable procurement: Insight paper and guide*, WGEA Commissioned Research Paper.

²⁴ See for example Culture in Construction, 2021, *A Culture Standard for the Construction Industry: A consultation paper*.

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