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Institute for Women's Policy Research

Status of Women in the States

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State Advisory Committee Toolkit

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State Advisory Committee Toolkit

Introduction

Welcome! This set of guidelines is intended to introduce you to the Institute for Women's Policy Research and its *Status of Women in the States* project. We look forward to working with you on this project and hope you find these materials useful.

The Institute for Women's Policy Research was founded in 1987 to inform and stimulate the debate on public policy issues of critical importance to women and their families. IWPR focuses on issues of poverty and welfare, employment and earnings, work and family issues, the economic and social aspects of health care and domestic violence, and women's civic and political participation.

The Status of Women in the States project was started in 1995 to address the need for state-level data, especially due to the devolution of public policymaking and implementation to the states. Through the project, IWPR strives to provide state-level partners with the information needed to push for pro-women legislation. In each round (every two years), IWPR publishes one national report and several state-level reports. IWPR published fourteen state-level reports in 1996, ten in 1998, nine in 2000, and will complete a first round of all the states with nine more each in 2002 and 2004. This year, your state is part of the project.

IWPR works closely with our State Advisory Committees and is continually building relationships with our state-level partners. This toolkit outlines the relationship and will provide helpful details on the process of participating as an Advisory Committee member.

Mission of Advisory Committee

Each report on *The Status of Women in the States* is meant to act as a springboard to action on women's issues, and IWPR's state-based Advisory Committees are the primary catalysts for change. IWPR relies on the expertise of leaders on women's issues in each state to ensure that the reports speak to women's experiences in the state. Each committee's contacts and networks make dissemination and publicity of the report more effective, and a committee's knowledge of the issues pertinent in its state make the report a more useful tool for those working in that state. We also rely on committees' expertise to advise us of any misinformation in the draft report.

IWPR views its partnership with the State Advisory Committees as an exciting opportunity to bring together a consortium of collaborators on women's issues within the state and to form long-term partnerships in continuing the efforts to raise the status of women in every state.

Roles of the Advisory Committee Chair

The Chair of the Advisory Committee has the following roles:

- Co-signing a letter inviting representatives of other organizations to serve on the Advisory Committee.
- Serving as the contact point for other state organizations and involving as many organizations as possible in publicizing and distributing the report.
- Taking the lead in organizing a press event to release the report for the state. This involves contacting the media, writing press releases, and gathering an audience -- with support from IWPR.
- Being listed in the report as Chair of the Advisory Committee.
- Coordinating the organization and production of any contributions to the text of the report by the Advisory Committee and of the list of state resources.
- Providing IWPR with help in fundraising for the production of the report.
- Identifying a main distributor or distributors for the report within the state.
- Coordinating the development of a list of up to 150 policymakers and influential leaders in your state to receive complimentary copies of the report (these will be provided by IWPR free of charge).

Each of these roles is discussed in more detail on pages 5-9.

Creating Advisory Committees

When creating Advisory Committees, please keep the following goals in mind:

Diversity

Representing racial, ethnic, geographic, age, and other important differences within the state are all crucial. Also, attempting to include members from all political affiliations helps the report gain a more objective and nonpartisan image.

Expertise

The committee should include women and men with expertise on a variety of women's issues. In particular, researchers and practitioners with experience in the subjects covered by the report should be included.

Balance

The committee should include a balance of researchers, advocates, and policymakers, each of whom contribute something different to the process.

Size

Around 15 to 20 members is generally optimum: enough for relative diversity but not too much to keep track of. Achieving this number usually means inviting approximately 25 to 30 people to serve.

Examples of organizations with representatives on past Advisory Committee members include:

Women's foundations
State and regional health education centers
State and county women's commissions
State women's political caucuses
State and local chapters of the League of Women Voters
State and local Business and Professional Women chapters
Domestic violence treatment centers
State and local YWCA chapters
College and university-based professors and researchers (in particular from social work, women's studies, and economics departments)
State-based advocacy groups and coalitions, such as poverty rights groups

Roles of Advisory Committees

IWPR recommends that the committee hold three meetings, if possible:

- Orientation/planning meeting to discuss what issues to cover in the focus boxes and divide into subcommittees to complete the necessary tasks.
- Review of the draft report (this meeting is necessary, and Jean Sinzduk, IWPR's States Outreach Coordinator, will attend).
- Publicity planning for the final report.

While it is necessary to hold the review meeting, the Chair can determine the ability of the committee to hold the orientation or publicity planning meetings. If the committee is unable to hold all three meetings, the Chair should consider conducting one of the other meetings via conference call. Jean Sinzduk, the States Outreach Coordinator, will work with the Chairs to determine the best course of action.

1. Contributions to the Report

✓ **Preface and Conclusion**

The Chair of the Advisory Committee has the option of writing a preface to the state report, which can highlight certain findings, draw attention to important policy ramifications, and/or contribute additional insights. It should be limited to one to two pages of text. It is often useful for the Chair to gather input from the Advisory Committee about what to include.

Advisory Committees can also add to and revise the list of state-level policy suggestions for the report's conclusion. IWPR drafts a set of generic national and state level recommendations, which can be used as a reference point for the committee's own ideas for improving state policy (national recommendations will stay the same for all reports). The committee's suggestions should flow from the data and issues raised by the report as much as possible, and the list of recommendations should be no longer than two pages.

IWPR will, of course, review all the Advisory Committee contributions to ensure compatibility with IWPR editorial standards.

✓ **List of State Resources**

Advisory Committees are responsible for generating a list of state resources included in the state's report. This resource lists contact information for state-based groups, institutes, government agencies, advocates, and other

organizations that are useful contacts on women's issues. Any organizations represented on the Advisory Committee will be listed, in addition to other state resources. IWPR will list only organizations that want to be listed, and Advisory Committees need to verify all contact information for the groups.

✓ **Focus Boxes**

If they wish, committees can contribute short sections of text and/or charts fleshing out some of the issues described in the reports, adding information about other issues, or highlighting specific problems in your state. To do this, one or more committee members need to write the text, including all necessary reference information. These focus boxes are limited to six per report, and we recommend only one focus box per chapter of the report. IWPR will review each focus box to ensure conformity to our standards.

We have found that these are very important additions to the report in most states, especially when the whole committee has an opportunity to contribute to writing them. We will help in the process of choosing topics, finding people to write the text, and identifying good data sources. See Appendix II for guidelines for focus boxes.

IWPR is the main author of the *Status of Women in the States* reports, and all editorial decisions and responsibilities are ultimately ours. Due to budgetary and staff constraints, as well as a need for state by state comparability, we seek to keep the reports fairly consistent from state to state. However, we recognize that the reports do not cover all of the issues important within a given state. The contributions outlined above can help fill these gaps and make the report more representative of your state.

2. Evaluation of the Draft Report

The Advisory Committee evaluates the draft report on its state. This includes reviewing the draft report, making clarifications, highlighting important issues, and advising IWPR on its accuracy before publication. The committee meets at least once to discuss the draft report collectively. The committee will be asked to submit written comments on the draft report to IWPR.

3. Fundraising

Your involvement in a collaborative fundraising process is vital to helping IWPR cover the costs of producing and printing the reports. It can also help raise the report's visibility through wider dissemination. While IWPR will seek funding from foundations and other funders in your state independently, the Advisory Committee is expected to take an active role in the fundraising process. **Action items** include:

- Identifying institutional funders and individual donors in your state.
- Seeking donations from individuals, in conjunction with IWPR.
- Directly contacting funders and donors where necessary.
- Adding specific language to funding proposals regarding your proposed activities (for grant proposals that are submitted as a joint project that includes funding for both IWPR research and operating costs and Advisory Committee activities).

IWPR's Director of Development, Noris Weiss Malvey, will discuss the specifics with you and assist with your fundraising plan. Noris can provide you with technical assistance about the fundraising process and can strategize with you about potential funders.

The Advisory Committee receives 25 percent of all funds raised jointly to help cover your expenses and dissemination costs. Depending on the amount of money you are able to help IWPR raise, we also offer the following as an acknowledgement of your efforts:

<i>Minimum raised</i>	<i>Benefits received</i>
\$2,500 - 7,499	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complimentary year-long IWPR Organizational Membership for the lead organization (includes receiving the IWPR quarterly newsletter and discounts on conferences and publications) - One free registration at the IWPR 2003 Conference
\$7,500 - 14,999	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complimentary year-long IWPR Organizational Membership for the lead organization (see above for details) - Two free registrations at the IWPR 2003 Conference - Fifty free reports (state or national)
\$15,000 and above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complimentary year-long IWPR Organizational Membership for the lead organization (see above for details) - Four free registrations at the IWPR 2003 Conference - One hundred free reports (state or national)

4. Dissemination and Publicity

✓ **Identifying Distributors**

To help distribute the report throughout the state, IWPR seeks state-level distributors. The lead distributing organization commits to buying 500 copies of the state report at our cost (approximately \$7.50 per report) in order to be the main contact for parties within the state who are interested in purchasing it. The distributor can then sell them at the IWPR cover price (approximately \$15.00 per report) or distribute them for free.

Several options exist for arranging distribution:

- The Chair's own organization or an organization identified by her can serve as lead distributor.
- If one organization cannot purchase the total amount, several organizations can arrange to do so together.

Distributing organizations are recognized in the report as follows:

Co-publisher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A lead organization agreeing to purchase and distribute 500 copies at cost (approximately \$7.50 per report) will be listed as a co-publisher on the report. • Foundations or other organizations that provide grants for the publication of the state-level report in lieu of purchasing copies will also be listed as co-publishers of the report.
Co-sponsor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any organization donating \$250 will be listed as a co-sponsor of the report. In return for their donation, the organization receives 25 copies of the report. Co-sponsoring organizations will see the final report before it goes to press to determine if they can endorse it.

✓ **Coordinating the Dissemination of Report**

The Advisory Committee members can help with the dissemination of the report in the following ways:

- Distributing information to members of their respective organizations.
- Identifying policymakers and media members who should receive complimentary copies of the report. The list will be provided to IWPR. The mailing will include either a local or IWPR cover letter co-signed by the Chair of the state Advisory Committee and IWPR. IWPR will provide approximately 150 copies of the report to be distributed to state policymakers (about 100 copies) and the media (about 50 copies).

✓ **Coordinating Publicity**

The Chair is responsible for coordinating press/publicity in the state. All members of the committee can help with some of the key **action items**, including:

- Writing press releases.
- Coordinating press conferences/events.
- Doing presentations to key groups.
- Conducting media outreach to radio, television, and newspapers.
- Creating briefing papers on your state's report with IWPR's assistance.

IWPR's Director of Communications, Linda Silberg, will provide support and technical assistance on all of these items.

5. Travel

IWPR does not wish to place undue burden on committee members, but unfortunately we do not have money for committee members' travel. However, the Advisory Committee will receive 25 percent of all money raised jointly for the report for its own use on expenses, including travel.

Subcommittees

It is recommended that Advisory Committee Chairs create subcommittees to help delegate the work of the committee and make the tasks more manageable. Subcommittees can include (as the committee feels necessary):

- **Publicity**
The publicity subcommittee helps coordinate the publicity plan. In the past, having a committee member with expertise on publicity matters take the lead has been very helpful.
- **Focus Boxes**
This subcommittee works on identifying topics for the focus boxes, gathering the data, and writing the text. While it is important for all committee members to have an opportunity to contribute if they wish, having a subcommittee to coordinate these efforts is highly beneficial.
- **Advocacy**
This subcommittee manages coalition-building, policy advocacy, and outreach to other state-based advocacy groups and organizations. Ideally, the *States* report and the Advisory Committee will be a tool for building new relationships among state-based individuals and groups and for advancing the committee's policy priorities. Thus the advocacy subcommittee has the potential to be an ongoing alliance after the report is published.
- **Fundraising**
The fundraising subcommittee will help coordinate and track the overall fundraising effort on behalf of the committee.

Tracking Impacts / Follow-up to the Report

As noted earlier, each report on *The Status of Women in the States* is meant to be a tool for future action around women's issues in the states. Ideally, the state Advisory Committee will be able to use the report to enlist support and instigate change. It is important to keep track of impacts of the reports and share these impacts with other states.

- **Tracking Impacts**
IWPR tracks the impacts of the *Status of Women in the States* reports and the Advisory Committees. Jean Sinzdak, the States Outreach Coordinator, will work with state Advisory Committees to track the impacts of the report in their states and to provide technical assistance.

- **Follow-up to the Report/ Examples of State Activities**

The Advisory Committee and the report provide an excellent opportunity for future collaboration and can be catalysts for change. For example, some of the state committees have used the report to mobilize around an issue that is pressing in their state. Please note that IWPR will provide ongoing support and technical assistance to Advisory Committees in their future activities around the report.

The following is a short list of some of the impacts of the past state reports and Advisory Committees:

Arizona	The Southern Arizona Women's Fund is working with the State Attorney General Janet Napolitano's office to create a statewide lobby, the Women's Action Alliance, to address the needs of women in the state.
Delaware	The Delaware Advisory Committee held a conference in May 2001 to address a range of issues, with a special focus on women's health, due to Delaware's low grade in that area of the report.
Hawai'i	In response to Hawai'i's rank of 49th out of 50 in women's voter registration and 50th out of 50 in voter turnout, the Honolulu County Committee on the Status of Women has started a campaign to increase voter participation and registration. The Committee is forming a coalition of several different women's groups to examine the causes and solutions to this problem.
Mississippi	The Governor in Mississippi signed a bill in April 2001 that created a Women's Commission. Inspired in part by the <i>Status of Women in Mississippi</i> report, the Mississippi Coalition of Women pulled together information on what has and hasn't worked across the country for the draft of the legislation--appointees (13) are to include a current or former food stamps recipient, a health care profession, a lawyer or law professor, and a college educator. There will be an interagency government council which will report annually to the Women's Commission on the work of their agencies for women. The Commission can recommend and advocate for policies it finds are needed.
New Hampshire	The state Advisory Committee became an official state-wide coalition and has worked together extensively, creating the first-ever New Hampshire Women's Agenda. The new coalition has agreed to speak, lobby, and track legislation. One bill inspired directly by the <i>Status of Women in New Hampshire</i> report requested that all possible state data be disaggregated by sex and age.

Contacts

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact us!

Main Contact:

Jean Sinzdak, States Outreach Coordinator, sinzdak@iwpr.org

Fundraising Questions:

Noris Weiss Malvey, Director of Development, noris@iwpr.org

Communications and Public Relations Questions:

Linda Silberg, Director of Communications, linda@iwpr.org

Project Director:

Amy Caiazza, Study Director, caiazza@iwpr.org

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APPENDIX I

Status of Women in the States Project Timeline

[Please note: This is a general timeline for reference only. Jean Sinzdak, IWPR States Outreach Coordinator, will work with the Advisory Committee Chairs to create a more detailed timeline for the committee's activities.]

- July 1 - September 1, 2001: All Advisory Committee members confirmed.
- June 2001 through January 2002: Advisory Committees meet to discuss content and organize activities.
- December 2001 through January 2002: Draft focus boxes are due.
- February 2002 through March 2002: IWPR sends draft copies of the state report to the Advisory Committee for review.
- March 2002 through April 2002: Advisory Committee holds a review meeting to discuss draft report and begin planning publicity and dissemination strategy. Jean Sinzdak will attend this meeting to help with technical assistance and serve as a contact.
- May 2002: Written comments from the Advisory Committee are due. After this time it will be difficult to incorporate any changes or additions.
- June 2002: Preface and conclusion are due. Revised focus boxes and list of state resources are also due.
- July 2002: Reports go into final production and printing phase (all changes finalized).
- August 2002: List of state policymakers to receive the report (up to 150) is due.
- November 15, 2002 through December 15, 2002: Press events. (There will be one or more per state to release the state report, timing to be coordinated with IWPR and release of the national report -- all reports are released on the same day.)

APPENDIX II

Guidelines for the Focus Boxes

The focus box:

- will appear in the subsection of the chapter where it is most appropriate
- can be up to two full pages
- can be shorter than one full page
- can be included in one or all chapters of the report, but should appear no more than once in any chapter
- can be a different size in each section
- can fit approximately 500 words on one page without charts or figures
- can include charts or figures (keep in mind that including these will reduce the number of words that can fit in the page)
- will be reviewed by IWPR to ensure compatibility with IWPR production and editorial standards

Examples of information to highlight in a focus box are:

- urban/rural differences
- race/ethnic breakdowns
- data on domestic violence
- data on women's participation in community activities
- regional economic disparities in the state
- a statewide legislative scorecard
- any state-specific issue not covered in the report
- any in-depth data on an issue covered briefly in the report