

# Gender mainstreaming of the allocation of grants

## **Transfer payments – a matter of democracy**

Swedish government agencies make transfer payments worth hundreds of millions of Swedish kronor to individuals and organisations every year. Gender equality in the distribution of these funds is an important matter of democracy.

The purpose of this text is to discuss and give recommendations on how government agencies can gender mainstream their allocation of transfer payments. More specifically, the text concerns transfer payments in the form of project grants and not entitlements such as welfare benefits. Typical applicants for the grants include researchers, artists and non-profit organisations.

## **Gender equality in the allocation of grants – what does it mean?**

A large number of aspects of the allocation of grants, both quantitative and qualitative, are of interest in a gender equality perspective. Examples include:

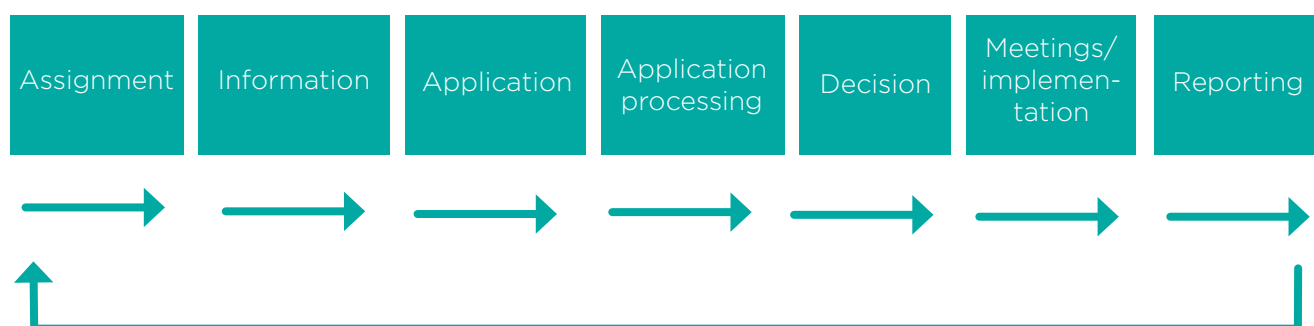
- That an equal number of women and men are represented in the different parts of the allocation process
- That decision makers in the allocation process are sufficiently knowledgeable with respect to gender and gender equality issues
- That women and men have the same power and influence in the different parts of the allocation process
- That an equal number of women and men get to benefit from the allocated grants
- That women and men are allocated equal amounts of money through the grants
- That transfer payments compensate for gender inequalities and target in particular boys or girls, women or men or individuals who do not identify themselves as either woman or man. Funding of organisations supporting girls who need support in various ways is one example of such grants
- That the gender distribution of approved grants is similar to the gender distribution of submitted requests

- That applicants of the under-represented gender are given priority in cases when several applications are of equal quality
- That the target groups of the approved projects consist of equal numbers of women and men
- That the outcome of the projects granted funding contributes to increased gender equality

## The grant allocation process

The exact design of the grant allocation process differs across government agencies, not least in terms of allocated funds and annual number of application rounds. A central assumption in this text, however, is that there are more similarities than differences.

The model below describes the general steps taken in the allocation of government grants. Each step is then described in more detail, including which gender equality aspects to focus on.



## Assignment

- In the first step of the grant allocation process, a government ministry commissions a government agency to allocate grants. The request can be made in the form of an official instruction, a letter of regulation or a special assignment
- A pre-meeting is often held prior to the dialogue between the ministry and the agency
- After the pre-meeting, a dialogue between the ministry and the agency begins regarding how the grant should be designed
- The agency may have internal guidelines specifying how official assignments to allocate grants are to be carried out

## Gender equality perspective on the assignment

- The gender equality perspective should be present already in the assignment document. It should be clearly specified that such a perspective must permeate the entire grant allocation process
- The gender equality aspect should be addressed already at the pre-meeting
- The gender equality aspect should also be considered in the dialogue between the ministry and the agency
- Internal guidelines on how official assignments to allocate grants should be carried out may include sections on preferential treatment of applicants of an under-represented sex in cases where several applications are of equal quality. If so, the guidelines should specify that the agency intends to achieve gender equality in both application approval rates and average grant size

### **Example**

In 2014, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society was commissioned (A2014/2556/DISK) by the Ministry of Employment to provide support to Romani organisations. In the early dialogue between the agency and the ministry, it was specified that: 'The assignment shall be carried out following consultation with Roma representatives.'

With reference to its gender equality work, the agency suggested that the instruction be changed to: 'The assignment shall be carried out following consultation with Roma representatives. The agency must consult both women and men.'

The finalised instruction was written as: 'The assignment shall be carried out following dialogue with Roma women and men.'

### **Information**

- Application assessors are appointed in the next step of the process. Assessors can be selected both internally and externally
- The appointed assessors usually receive training on the assessment process
- The assessment process is usually discussed in detail at the first meeting of the assessment group
- At this stage, grant information (the existence of the grant, its purpose, target group and application criteria) is communicated to potential applicants. The information can be disseminated in printed form, online and at information meetings
- Digital application tools and/or application forms are updated and customised at this stage to ensure they are readily available and easy to complete once the application period begins

### **Example**

The Swedish Arts Grants Committee has worked actively to develop its use of the concept of quality in the grant allocation process. Its annual report for 2013 gives a good example of this:

'The letter of regulation concerning the grant allocation process provides that the grants shall reach qualified artists, and Section 12 of ordinance (1976:528) on the allocation of grants to artists provides that artistic quality must be taken into account in the allocation of arts grants. The assessment of quality must also be understood in a gender perspective as women and men have different access to the arenas that confirm an artist's status in relation to quality.' (Own translation)

## **Gender equality perspective on information**

- Gender and gender equality competence may be an important selection criterion when appointing assessors
- Assessment groups should consist of equally many women and men
- Gender and gender equality considerations should be discussed in the training of assessors to enable them to apply a gender equality perspective in their work
- A concept that can be problematised during the training is 'quality', since some government agencies have experienced that this concept is male coded
- Gender equality should be addressed in the review of the assessment process at the assessment group's first meeting to enable the assessors to apply a gender equality perspective in their work
- High quality of all information (text and pictures, whether disseminated digitally, on paper or via meetings) must be ensured so that it rather challenges than reinforces gender stereotypes. In addition, the information should clearly indicate in which way the grant is meant to contribute to increased gender equality (if applicable) and which information the government agency needs to obtain from the applicant in order to fulfil its gender equality assignment, for example regarding the applicant's gender. One purpose of the agency's information can be to encourage individuals who usually do not apply for the grant (for example the under-represented sex)
- If the information is disseminated via information meetings, the choice of time and venue for the meetings must be carefully considered. Women generally have stronger security concerns (for example when walking home alone at night) than men and also generally face more caring responsibilities (children etc.). Consequently, when planning an information meeting, it is important that safety/security aspects and for example parents' opportunities to drop off and pick up children at preschool are considered.
- Many government agencies own and administer their own application tools. This implies good opportunities to make necessary changes. When updating application tools or application templates, it may be a good idea to define the meaning of gender equality in the particular context at hand. It may be relevant to ask applicants and co-applicants about their gender. It may also be relevant to ask about the gender distribution of their project's target group (for example audience or visitors), board, steering committee, reference group and other participants. If possible, ask about salaries and other forms of compensation in relation to gender. When applicable, the government agency should be able to motivate why it asks applicants gender questions. The answer is that it is meant to improve the applicants' work in a gender equality perspective.

## **Application**

People thinking about applying for a grant often contact the agency via email, telephone or a meeting to ask questions.

### **Gender equality perspective on the application process**

- All responses to potential applicants contacting the agency should be of high quality in a gender perspective. Who is contacting the agency (gender)? Who is responding (gender)? What is the quality of the response, in terms of the contacting person's overall satisfaction, the agency representative's explanations and the time it took to get the questions answered?
- How is the time spent on applicants distributed between women and men? What do applicants ask about? Are there any gender differences in this respect?

## **Example**

The Sami Parliament's action plan for gender mainstreaming (2014) provides that it 'wants to promote active gender equality work among all associations, organisations and individuals applying for operating and project grants from the Sami Parliament' (own translation). The Sami Parliament's gender equality programme lays down that '[s]ex-disaggregated statistics of granted project funding shall be produced in order to show the amount of money granted to women and men, respectively. The number of approved and denied project applications, as well as the gender distribution of these, shall also be reported' (own translation).

Thus, the Sami Parliament's grant application template for cultural projects includes a question about the number of women and men involved in the project. It also asks for a description of the applicant's gender equality work and also encourages the applicant to submit a gender equality plan.

The Sami Parliament's application template for operating grants has questions about the gender distribution of the applicant organisation's board as well as a request for a description of the organisation's gender equality work.

## **Application processing**

- Supporting documents are generally available to assist the assessors in their assessment of applications. Such documents may include checklists and specifications of assessment criteria
- External assessment groups are led by a chairperson
- External groups may include an agency official who serves as a sounding board and ensures quality of the decisions
- In order to ensure consistent and high quality of the assessments, external observers may attend the assessment group's meetings

### **Gender equality perspective on the processing of applications**

- Gender equality should be integrated in supporting documents; checklists should remind the assessors of the gender equality perspective and that gender equality is an important assessment criterion
- The chairperson must ensure that women and men can voice their opinions to equal extents at the assessment meetings
- It is important that the agency official ensures that a gender equality perspective is applied.
- Gender and gender equality observers can be used in the assessment groups. The observers may comprise agency officials, but gender students or a person who is already part of the group may also be suitable for the task. The observers can monitor the distribution of speaking time and interpretation privileges among the members of the assessment group, but also how they discuss and assess the applications based on gender. There is a free app for mobile phones that can be used to measure speaking time by gender: Genderapp
- It is possible to anonymise applications in the assessment group in order to ensure that the assessments are not influenced by preconceptions about gender. Making applications anonymous is a debated practice as there is a risk that preconceptions about gender are projected also onto anonymised applications.

## Checklist/template for gender observations in the processing of applications

Here is an example of a checklist and assessment template that a gender observer can use when making gender observations during the processing of applications.

	<b>Woman</b>	<b>Man</b>	<b>Other/None</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Is given permission to speak				
Speaks spontaneously without permission				
Gives opinion about applications he/she has not read				
Changes his/her initial assessment				
Gains support for his/her views				
Downplays his/her competence				
Brings attention to his/her competence				
Discusses private relations between individuals named in the application				
Addresses a female applicant's parenthood				
Addresses a male applicant's parenthood				
Addresses the parenthood of an applicant with another/no gender				
Refers to other information about the applicant than that provided in the application				
Uses emotional arguments for or against the application				
Makes remark about male applicant's age				
Makes remark about female applicant's age				
Interrupts woman				
Interrupts man				
Uses domination techniques against woman				
Use domination techniques against man				

Here are some other thing to keep in mind when it comes to the processing of applications:

- Always measure speaking time by gender. Does the gender ratio change over the course of the meeting?
- Note how women and men are placed, voluntarily and involuntarily, in relation to each other in the room. Do you notice any gender clusters?
- Are there any differences in the way female and male applicants are described? Are certain value words used more or less frequently for women and for men?
- How are the applicants referred to? By first name, family name or whole name? Are there any gender differences in this respect?
- Are there any cases where women or men are reduced to representatives of their gender and their qualifications are ignored?

## **Example**

The Swedish Research Council uses external groups for the assessment of research grant applications. To ensure consistent and high quality of the assessment process, this agency has had observers conduct observational studies in assessment groups.

The purpose has been to identify general patterns, and a basic premise has been that gender differences in the processing of applications are best prevented by directing attention to the issue.

The observations have been divided into three areas:

1. Group dynamics and interaction during the assessment meetings.
2. Process and approach
3. Assessment of application and the applicant.

The council identified gender patterns in all three areas.

## **Decision**

- Once the applications have been assessed, it is time to decide whether to approve or deny them. Applications not meeting the formal criteria are removed from further consideration. When the assessment is carried out by an external expert group, it is customary that agency officials make the formal decision.

### **Gender equality perspective on the final decisions**

When making the final decisions, it may be important to reflect on:

- Who (which gender) is granted funding?
- What factors not explicitly addressed in the application are deemed to affect the decision (linked to gender).
- On which grounds are applications denied?
- In cases of unequal gender distribution (among applicants, in the target group or in the project implementation group), the agency can write for example 'we would have preferred a more equal gender distribution'.
- How does the male/female applicant ratio compare to the male/female approval ratio?
- If the agency grants funding to projects that vary in duration, is there a gender pattern in this respect?

## **Meetings/implementation**

- During the project implementation period, the agency sometimes invites project representatives to talk about the progress made, share information and provide training.
- Some agencies may provide support for example in the form of a template for a project or communication plan.
- During the implementation period, project representatives may contact the agency to have minor or major changes to the project approved.

## **Gender equality perspective on meetings/implementation**

- The gender equality aspect can be addressed at a meeting during the implementation period, for example by the agency offering a concrete method for gender equality work or an inspiring lecture/seminar
- If the agency provides a planning tool, for example a template for a project or communication plan, it may be a good idea to include a heading that reads 'gender equality' plus a supporting text with examples of things that can be included under this heading
- In cases of major project revisions, include gender as a criterion for approval. Has the gender distribution of the working group or the target group changed? Has the distribution of resources to women and men changed?

## **Reporting**

- In the last step of the grant allocation process, the grant recipients must report the results achieved and how the funds have been used. The report must reflect the application and any deviations must be explained
- The results of the funded projects should be disseminated in various forums, such as conferences, articles, trainings and films
- An internal evaluation of the grant allocation process should be undertaken
- A dialogue with the ministry regarding the results of the grant allocation process should also be arranged
- A final report on the grant allocation process should be submitted to the ministry. This report should inform the design of subsequent assignments

## **Gender equality perspective on the reporting**

- In order for the agency to assess the outcome of a project (for example regarding participation, target group and project group), the reporting requirements should include questions about gender that reflect the information in the application. Differences linked to the project plan and implementation related to gender must be explained
- Gender representation (how many women and men are represented at conferences?) and how material is designed in a gender equality perspective (text and pictures should challenge rather than reinforce gender stereotypes) must be considered in the planning of dissemination activities
- Include the gender aspect in internal evaluations
- In the dialogue with the ministry, explain how a gender equality perspective has been ensured throughout the grant allocation process
- Ensure that the gender equality aspect is included in the final report to the ministry. Experiences and lessons learned from the grant allocation process with respect to gender equality aspects should inform both the design of subsequent assignments and possible revisions of grant allocation regulations

## **The overall grant allocation process**

Documentation is key to systematic quality-development work. It is important that the entire grant allocation process is properly documented. If an agency uses different processes for different types of grants, it is important that all processes are documented.

It is important to focus the analysis of the overall grant allocation process on both quantitative



## Example

The Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society are using two questions to see who are being benefited by the authority's grants for NGO:s. The agency is a so-called LGBT strategic government agency and has introduced a third gender alternative – 'other gender' – to make it easier for individuals who do not identify themselves as a women or a man:

Estimate how many people have volunteered in the project. Remember to include also those who have made very small contributions.

	Number
Women	_____
Men	_____
Other gender	_____
Information missing	_____
Total number	_____

We don't ask for this information in order to evaluate individual projects, but to be able to follow up the effect of project grants. The agency reports the information to the government.

Indicate the number of individuals who at some point have performed paid work within the project. Only include those who have been paid using funds from the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society. Remember to also include those who have made only minor contributions.

	Number
Women	_____
Men	_____
Other gender	_____
Information missing	_____
Total number	_____

and qualitative gender equality aspects. Quantitative aspects include approval rate and grant amounts in a gender perspective, whereas qualitative aspects concern for example interpretation privileges and the interpretation of the quality concept at assessment meetings.

The analysis work includes analysis of all contacts with the target group, with the applicants and those who decide not to apply, with those whose applications are approved and with those whose applications are denied, as well as identification of recurring applicants, who they are (gender) and why they keep applying.

Analyses of documentation should be used for learning and development, with respect to for example trainings and recruitment of assessors.

### About this material

This material was developed within the framework of the Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies project. It is based on two meetings arranged in 2014 on gender mainstreaming of allocation of grants. Mikael Almén from Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research led the process and has developed the material.