


# REPORT OF THE CHIEF LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

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DATE: August 19, 2021

TO: Honorable Members of the City Council

FROM: Sharon M. Tso   
Chief Legislative Analyst

Council File No. 20-1578  
Assignment No. 21-04-0332

## Follow Up Activity COVID-19 Impact on Working Women

### SUMMARY

On April 20, 2021, the City Council adopted a Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA) report concerning the pandemic's impact on working women with respect to childcare issues, paid leave policies, and the potential long-term consequences of women leaving the workplace for an extended period (C.F. 20-1578).

This report provides the status of the recommendations approved by the Council including 1) the development of a survey to assess the impact of COVID-19 on women in the City's workforce; 2) the development of a Management Academy to increase gender equity within the City's management classifications; 3) updating the City's remote work policies; 4) a progress update on "The Status of Women and Girls in Los Angeles" report by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW); 5) recommendations to address the impact of COVID-19 on women in the private sector; and, 6) the development of an Equity Fund for Women Entrepreneurs to support women starting their own businesses within the City.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

That the City Council:

1. Instruct the Personnel Department to report to Council on the survey findings relative to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the City's workforce.
2. Authorize the Personnel Department to release a Request for Proposals to initiate a Women's Management Academy as outlined in this report, and coordinate with the Chief Legislative Analyst to identify a funding source for Council consideration and approval.
3. Instruct the Economic and Workforce Development Department to assess, share, and promote family-friendly workplace policies and business tools on its website and Business Source Centers to encourage adoption by local businesses.

### FISCAL IMPACT

There is no impact to the General Fund.

## **BACKGROUND**

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the labor force nationwide and underscores the particular challenge women face in balancing family and work responsibilities. Before the pandemic, women accounted for more than half of the nation's workforce, reflecting their importance in the economy. A number of recent reports demonstrate that women have been significantly impacted during the economic downturn. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were 2.2 million fewer women in the labor force in October 2020 than there were in October 2019. Women are highly represented in many of the hardest-hit employment sectors, such as education, hospitality and leisure, healthcare, and service industry. The closure of childcare centers and the shift to remote learning for students have also caused many mothers to make the difficult decision between working and caring for their young children. A recent survey by the U.S. Census Bureau noted that one in five women became unemployed during the pandemic due to the lack of childcare.<sup>1</sup>

According to a report by the American Sociological Association, the long term impacts of the pandemic will likely result in greater inequality between men and women in occupational attainment, lifetime earnings, and economic independence.<sup>2</sup> Leaving the workplace diminishes an individual's ability to gain new knowledge and experience, establish tenure, and develop professional relationships, all of which are critical to earning promotion and an increase in pay.

## **DISCUSSION**

In response to the Council's actions to address the impact of COVID-19 on working women, our Office coordinated with various City departments to assist with program and policy implementation. The points below reflect the status of the recommendations as approved by Council.

### Survey of Working Women

- Instruct the Personnel Department to initiate a survey to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on women in the City's workforce and report to the Council on the findings.

To learn more about the challenges faced by City employees, our Office collaborated with the Personnel Department – Office of Workplace Equity to develop a survey to assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey will focus on the experience of the City workforce during the last 18 months. The information may assist the Personnel Department and Council when considering work policies and programs as the pandemic continues to alter work and family routines. The survey and results will be anonymous and will delve into issues such as, challenges with childcare, eldercare, or other dependents; job assignment modifications; experiences with remote working; and, wellbeing and stress levels during the pandemic. The Personnel Department will be releasing the survey to all City employees in August/September 2021. Our Office will continue to work with the Personnel Department to report to the Council on the survey findings.

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<sup>1</sup> "The Choices Working Mothers Make." United States Census Bureau, May 8, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> "Early Signs Indicate that COVID-19 is Exacerbating Gender Inequality in the Labor Force." Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World, American Sociological Association, 2020.

### Training and Workforce Development

- Instruct the Personnel Department, in partnership with a local university, to explore the development of a Management Academy, which would be designed to increase knowledge of contracting procedures, negotiations, budgeting, program development, project management and other skills with the goal of increasing gender equity within the City's management classifications.

Our Office met with the Personnel Department to develop options to implement a Women's Management Academy with the goal of increasing gender equity within the City's management classifications. Applications will be open to all City staff, regardless of gender or sexual identity. However, the courses will emphasize leadership and civic issues through a gender perspective.

The original concept for the training program focused on in-person courses. However, as COVID-19 cases continue to persist within Los Angeles County, courses may also include virtual sessions depending on future health and safety protocols. The number of courses, students, and other incidentals, such as written materials, lunch, and refreshments will determine the funding needed to execute the program. In addition, the Personnel Department noted that professional coaching for a period of three to six months following the program's completion would enhance the learning and application of skills gained through this initiative. The Personnel Department offered the following information as a general outline for consideration:

Potential Partners: California State University, Los Angeles  
California State University, Northridge  
Coro Southern California

Class Size: Approximately 30 participants

Work Experience: 3 to 10 years of employment with the City (new to mid-level employees)

Projected Start: 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2022

Our Office recommends that the Personnel Department be authorized to release a Request for Proposals to initiate a program as outlined in this report and negotiate and execute an agreement with the selected provider. Our Office will coordinate with the Personnel Department to identify a funding source prior to contract execution and report to Council for approval.

### Remote Work Policies / Hybrid Home and Office Work Schedules

- Instruct the City Administrative Officer (CAO) and the Personnel Department to report to the Executive Employee Relations Committee (EERC) regarding the post-pandemic phase of employee telecommuting that may allow for more flexible hybrid home and office work schedules.

According to the CAO, the EERC is expected to consider a revised telecommute policy at its next scheduled meeting.

### Status of Women and Girls in Los Angeles

- Request the CSW to present the updated “Report on the Status of Women and Girls in Los Angeles” to Council when completed.

In October 2020, the CSW appropriated \$15,000 to partner with a local university to update the report. The proposed work plan is to research, collect, and analyze data on the City’s female population with a special emphasis on indicators concerning COVID-19. The CSW reports that they are continuing their fundraising efforts to secure a total of approximately \$30,000 to complete this study.

### Recommendations to Address the Impact of COVID-19 in the Private Sector

- Instruct the Chief Legislative Analyst, to report on policy recommendations to address the impact COVID-19 has had on women in the private sector.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented as it has reached every part of the world. International supply chains, travel restrictions, and stay at home orders have led to widespread business disruption. For families and children, the loss of employment, as well as school and childcare closures, have shaken the financial and emotional stability of households, leading to increased stress and a rise in cases of domestic violence.

Recent studies have emphasized that businesses should adapt their workplace policies to the continuing health threat and social disruption posed by the pandemic.<sup>3</sup> By providing working parents the time, information, services, and resources they need to cope with the crisis, family-friendly policies and practices can make an important difference in people’s lives.<sup>4</sup> Advocacy from the private sector, government, and non-profit organizations have highlighted workplace practices, such as:

- Assess whether current workplace policies provide sufficient support to workers and families.
- Protect the workplace against discrimination and social stigma.
- Implement flexible work arrangements.
- Support workers coping with stress and personal safety during the COVID-19 outbreak.

A more inclusive list of family-friendly workplace practices from the organization Marshall Plan for Moms are provided in Attachment A. To promote these type of practices by local business, our Office recommends that EWDD assess, share, and publicize family-friendly workplace policies and business tools on its website and Business Source Centers. EWDD currently has a listing of partnerships, resources, and business development tools available to the public. Further educating local businesses of family-friendly workplace practices will increase awareness and potential adoption.

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<sup>3</sup> *Women in the Workplace*; McKinsey & Company and Lean, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> *Family Friendly Policies and Other Good Workplace Practices in the Context of COVID-19: Key Steps Employers Can Take*; UNICEF, International Labour Organization, with contributions by United Nations Women, March 27, 2020.

- Instruct the CLA, with the assistance of the CAO, in consultation with the EWDD, be directed to report on the steps necessary to establish a “Equity Fund for Women Entrepreneurs,” a three-year revolving fund to support women starting their own businesses with the City.

In response to Council action, our Office coordinated with EWDD to initiate the Equity Fund Grant Program, which will target business assistance and grants to women-owned microenterprises within the City. Microenterprises are classified as businesses with five (5) or fewer employees. According to EWDD, there are approximately 87,000 businesses classified as microenterprises, which amount to over 70 percent of the businesses in the City. The Program Year 47 Consolidated Plan provides \$1 million in funding for this effort (C.F. 20-1433). According to EWDD, the Equity Fund Grant Program will operate in coordination with the recently approved Small Business Grant program, which was funded with supplemental Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (Cares Act) Community Development Block Grant funds (CDBG-CV) in the amount of \$8.5 million (C.F. 20-1374). EWDD reports that these programs remain in the development stage and should be ready for implementation in late 2021.



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Christopher P. Espinosa  
Analyst

Attachment A:            Marshall Plan for Moms  
                                  *Building a Mom-Friendly Workplace for the Post-Pandemic Future; 2021*



## Attachment A

### Marshall Plan for Moms

#### *Building a Mom-Friendly Workplace for the Post-Pandemic Future; 2021*

1. Giving mothers control of their schedules.
  - a. Give options like flextime, a compressed work week, shift work, part-time schedules or job-sharing to promote hourly flexibility.
2. Support for childcare.
  - a. Provide free or subsidized on-site care, in-site care, center-based care, and/or backup care.
  - b. Negotiate discounts on behalf of employees at local childcare centers.
3. Workplace policies that promote gender equality at home.
  - a. Not only provide paid leave for mothers and fathers, but also encourage its use without negative professional consequences.
4. Paid time off and support for mental health and well-being.
  - a. Establish an annual time-off minimum to encourage employees to use their vacation days.
5. Fair pay / living wage.
  - a. Audit salaries to identify disparities.
6. No mother penalties.
  - a. Reducing and eliminating discrimination that mothers face in the workplace.
  - b. Require unconscious bias training for employees.
7. Adequate time to recover from childbirth and bond with their babies.
  - a. Give moms maximum time off - 12 weeks minimum.
  - b. Offer bereavement leave for mothers and their partners who have experienced pregnancy loss.
8. Developing on-ramps back into the workforce.
  - a. Being flexible with mothers as they return from maternity leave - this could include lactation rooms and offering career “reboots.”
9. Time off for self-care and care for loved ones when they are sick.
  - a. Offering paid sick leave.
10. An employer that advocates for mothers publicly.
  - a. Lobby for policies that benefit mothers.