



Mayor
Daniel Lurie

**City and County of San Francisco
Department on the Status of Women**



Date: August 22, 2025

To: President Andary and the Commission on the Status of Women

Through: Acting Director Linda Yeung

From: Denise Heitzenroder, Project Manager for Strategic Initiatives

Subject: Suggestions and guidelines for a community meeting/community engagement

Overview: The Commission on the Status of Women has requested that the Department on the Status of Women outline options for a community convening and general opportunities for community engagement. The Department has provided general options for community engagement and discussion, as well as a more in-depth plan and suggestions for a community meeting. The Department has referred to the Commission's rules and regulations, including the Brown Act and Good Government guide, and consulted with the Deputy City Attorney as well as colleagues in other agencies that hold community events to provide the following suggestions and plans.

Thank you to Commissioner Miry for agreeing to be the Commission liaison to the Department regarding organizing a community meeting. Once we are ready to move forward, the Department will set up regular planning meetings.

General Options for Community Engagement:

The Commission on the Status of Women has a variety of tools at its disposal that permit and foster community engagement and discussion, all within the rules and regulations that govern the Commission.

Agendized Items at regular Commission Meetings

The most straightforward and efficient way for the Commission and the community to discuss matters is through an agenda discussion item at a Commission meeting. This may or may not involve an action and vote. It is the primary tool the Commission uses to engage with the public.

The Commission may craft a discussion that involves other departments or organizations, or consider an item among themselves. Any agendized item permits public comment and Commissioners may respond to comments and ask questions. The Commission has frequently used this approach when inviting other departments or groups to present on specific topics. In

such cases, the Commission would invite the party or parties to present on the topic they wish to discuss, and the Department would conduct outreach and help share any pertinent information the Commission wants covered. All standard rules and regulations are already in place, making this the most efficient and effective way to raise a discussion a topic within the Commission.

A Special Meeting

If the Commission wishes to address a specific topic or pursue work in partnership with the Department, they may organize a special meeting. Unlike a regular meeting, a special meeting is more narrowly focused and generally does not include the Department's or Commission's standard business.

Special meetings must still follow all rules and requirements of a regular meeting. They are best suited for issues or projects that require a substantial time commitment from both the Commission and Department, with the expectation that all or most Commissioners be present.

We recommend calling a special meeting only when other options are insufficient, as it requires additional time and commitments from both Commissioners and Department staff.

A Public Hearing

While there is no specific legal definition of a hearing for the Commission, a Commission Hearing is generally understood to be a special meeting with additional responsibilities and deliverables.

A special meeting would be called and arranged by the Department on the requested topic or issue. To ensure a successful hearing, it is ideal for the Department to have at least two months of planning time. Ideally the President or one Commissioner assigned by the President would liaise with the Department to establish a clear set of goals and objectives for the hearing. The Commissioner, in collaboration with the Department, would draft a list of potential presenters, a format for the meeting. The Department would send invitations, track responses and build out the agenda. Invitations to community participants should be issued at least 2-4 weeks in advance, and all general public posting requirements would still apply.

An in-depth hearing typically lasts about 3-5 hours, representing an essentially full-day commitment for both Commissioners and Department staff.

Deliverables from the hearing would include all standard Commission requirements, along with supplemental reports on the hearing's initial findings, policy proposals and recommended actions, remaining questions, and suggested next steps.

A hearing may also be conducted in partnership with other Commissions or Departments, which increases the complexity of planning and reporting and requires additional planning time. All rules and regulations governing Commissions apply, so invitations and attendee management would require careful attention from the Department.

A Community Meeting-Department Lead

The Department can facilitate a community meeting on behalf of the Commission. We strongly recommend that any community meeting be Department-led, as this allows for greater flexibility; a Commission-led event would require adherence to all Brown Act and Good Governance rules.

The Commission would charge the Department with hosting a meeting on a specific topic and the Department would develop presentations and an agenda. The Department would also manage all logistics, promotions, and invitations to speakers. Commissioners may attend, as this would be a public meeting, but their roles would be limited to ensuring compliance with the rules and regulations governing Commission meetings. These roles would be determined on a case-by-case basis, depending on how involved Commissioners wish to be and how many would attend. A report summarizing the community meeting would be provided at the next Commission meeting.

Other Options:

- Commissioners may attend any public meeting and provide public comment. This is a simple and effective way to explore a potential issue for discussion. The Commissioner(s) in attendance could provide a report back to the full Commission at the next Commission meeting.
- Commissioners may attend community events as long as Commissioners are not conducting Commission business. The Department regularly sends out events in its newsletter and reshapes event content on social channels. They also are putting together a calendar for Commissioners. (More on that later.)

Department Suggestions to Address Previously Mentioned Community Concerns

The Commission has stated that they would like to have a forum to address concerns raised by the Department's former grantees in the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) portfolio. The main issue raised by the grantees and partners was that they did not have an open channel to the Commission where they could express their concerns about the proposal to migrate the GBV portfolio out of the Department. They also cited that they learned about crucial information from sources outside the Department. The Department staff has a strong relationship with partners, and remains in regular contact with current and former grantees, engaging with them in numerous capacities. These connection points include in-person events such as the roundtables with the Mayor's Office, the Family Violence Council meetings, staying in regular communication around events and programs, supporting partners at public hearings, and attending partner and grantee events.

To deepen engagement between the Commission and partners and to better understand the upcoming goals of our partners, the Department offers the following suggestions, all of which can be acted upon quickly:

- Agendize an item at an upcoming Commission meeting and invite the Domestic Violence Consortium, Black Women Revolt Against Domestic Violence and/or other partners to present on their priorities for the coming fiscal year, including any policy efforts.
- Agendize an item at an upcoming Commission meeting and invite the Office of Victim and Witness Rights (OVWR) and a community partner to present on their work supporting survivors and suggest shared policy and legislative priorities.
- Agendize an item at an upcoming Commission meeting and invite Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) and OVWR to present and share their work with the GBV portfolio and offer suggestions where the Commission can support policy and legislative efforts.

Please note, the Department and MOHCD Deputy Director have started working on a presentation for the September Commission meeting.

The Department is also preparing a calendar of community events that will be updated for each meeting that will be shared electronically in advance of the meetings and in print in Commissioner binders. It will focus primarily on events hosted by our partners and Commissioners can attend the events that are of interest. Again, Commissioners are welcome to attend any public events as long as they do not conduct Commission business at them.

Department Suggestions for a Community Meeting

The Department is happy to facilitate a community meeting for the Commission in the coming months. We have outlined three potential plans that we believe meet numerous Commission and Department objectives based on community feedback.

Community Meeting Topics:

- A Joint Department Meeting on Gender-Based Violence
 - Key presenters: the Department, the Office of Victim and Witness Rights and the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
- Building on the Department's Community Needs Assessment
 - The Department would present on the 2024 CNA, determine what the current priorities of the community are and next steps. This event would inform the Department and Commission's strategic plan.
- Joint Department Meeting on the New Agency for Human Rights
 - The Department and Human Rights Commission (Department) would introduce the new agency, review the structure, shared objectives and individual mandates of both Departments and Commissions.