INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to provide U.S. mayors a “toolkit” of readily accessible resources, tangible solutions and existing programs that accelerate the advancement of women and girls in local communities. We hope it is widely shared with elected officials and key influencers at every level.

Despite many gains for women over the past century, there is still significant gender disparity in society. Women are still grossly underrepresented at the top levels of government, business, media and academia. Women still earn less than men and face different economic, social and political challenges.

Mayors have significant opportunities to affect the lives of women and girls by how they govern. For example, our cities train police officers to respond to domestic violence; address workplace conditions and pay; hire staff to run the city; and provide opportunities for civic engagement, such as appointing residents to boards and commissions. With specific attention paid to gender equality within each of these functions (and more), mayors can ensure that women and girls are fairly treated and represented.

This guide is designed to support mayors who want to govern with a gender lens to determine how all decisions, municipal policies and programs—including budgeting, training and hiring—affect women and girls. With that awareness, mayors can improve the lives of women and girls, strengthen families, and create stronger, healthier and more prosperous communities for all.

According to the U.S. Labor Department, women represent nearly half of all workers in the U.S., but women working full-time year-round earn just 78% of men’s annual median earnings, and 44% percent more adult women live in poverty than adult men. In 2012, The New York Times reported that women in the U.S. spend approximately 100 more minutes per day on household chores, childcare and community activities than men. According to the Institute for Women’s Policy Research, millennial women experience 4.9 days per month of poor mental health on average compared to 3.6 days for millennial men. Shockingly, nearly 1/3 of American women experience physical violence by an intimate partner in her lifetime.
It’s Time Network sponsored a Mayors Roundtable on June 18, 2015 that was co-hosted with the San Francisco Department on the Status of Women. The event took place a day before the semi-annual U.S. Conference of Mayors in the host city of San Francisco to engage mayors and 150 local civil society leaders in discussions about actions and policies to improve the lives of women and girls. As a specific outcome, everyone’s expertise would be compiled by It’s Time Network in this first ever Mayors Guide: Accelerating Gender Equality.

The event began with an opening plenary session and a panel of mayors sharing their challenges and success stories, before the table discussions began. Eleven issues vital to women and girls were discussed by the mayors and the civil society leaders who were seated at tables according to their expertise. Each table was asked to create a list of recommendations and resources for its topic. The discussions proceeded with a basic understanding of the interdependence of all of the issues: policies in the workplace affect a woman’s economic security and a woman’s economic security impacts her health—which is interrelated with environmental health in her community and workplace conditions—along with domestic and other forms of violence a woman might face. Additionally, women of color and/or poor or working class women often experience the intersectionality of multiple and compound forms of race, class, age, religious and gender discrimination.

The energy in the room at the roundtable event was palpable and participants engaged in robust conversations. They were eager to share their expertise and recommendations with mayors throughout the U.S. via this guide. The mayors appreciated hearing the ideas for action as they participated in the roundtable discussions. They also affirmed the usefulness of a guide that compiles recommendations and resources.
THE MAYORS GUIDE

This guide is a summary of those roundtable discussions, with additional content and resources added from subsequent interviews with experts and consultants. The recommendations from participants at the roundtables have not been subject to independent research to validate their effectiveness; all information is provided as a starting point for the reader’s further investigation and to provide inspiration.

civil society leaders to refine this set of recommendations and resources. It will be a living document that will be ever-improving to share best practices based on feedback from experts, advocates, policy makers, mayors and others. If you have suggestions for edits or additions, please submit them online at info@itstimenetwork.org.

THE OPPORTUNITY

It is a unique time in our history, and the call for women’s leadership and gender equality is rising everywhere. Mayors across the country have been answering that call and leading the way for decades. Many outstanding mayors have provided a path of success for others to follow. When women and girls thrive, the entire community benefits and improves.

Women leaders are an untapped resource for helping mayors to build strong, compassionate and resilient communities. It’s time to build on past successes, to share best practices and to accelerate women’s advancement and gender equality in our cities.