

Email Newsletter from Mayor of Okayama (81) March 27, 2017 Issue

【Aiming for a society in which women can play an active role】

Hello, I'm Mr. Omori, Mayor of Okayama.

The personnel changes of Okayama City Government in 2017 fiscal year were announced on March 24.

In this newsletter, I would like to focus on the personnel changes in terms of women's active participation as I recently attended a symposium, “the Male Leaders’ Meeting for Promotion of Women’s Active Participation” conducted by the heads of corporations and local governments around Japan.

When I took office as the mayor, the proportion of women in management positions in Okayama City Government was 6.5% and the proportion of men in those positions was excessively high considering the ratio of men and women in the whole organization (roughly 6:4 respectively).

Okayama City Government has a role of supporting and improving the citizens’ life which should have almost equal opportunities for men and women; therefore, we face many situations where a women’s perspective is helpful.

For instance, in April last year, we modified the definition of children on waiting lists for nursery schools to match the sense of ordinary people. It was because many women questioned the definition.

Furthermore, we heard an opinion that female staff are easy to talk to for women who consult about matters deeply relating to the privacy at Welfare Office.

Regarding the role of the city government, I think it is a matter of course that the female staff plays a more important role in the organization and takes a leadership in

many situations. So far, we have modified the promotion system so that the period of childcare leave would not affect promotion, and the rate of the male staff's taking paid days off for childcare has reached 100%. With these various supports, we have encouraged the female staff to play a more active role.

In April this year, the proportion of women in management positions is prospected to reach to 10.6% with these efforts, and I feel that the atmosphere in the city hall has changed.

At the meeting at the Mayer's Office, the female staff rarely gave their opinions before. However, the atmosphere that the female staff can actively participate in discussions has been created due to the fact that the number of women in management positions has gradually increased.

I think that this is because not only the number has increased but also we have adopted the policy to increase the proportion of women in management positions to 30% in the future. Also, the existing role model for the female staff has stimulated them to have a perspective that "I would be in management positions in the future".

At the symposium, I was very impressed by the approaches that Sanshu Seika Co. Ltd. and Ernst & Young ShinNihon LLC take. Sanshu Seika Co. Ltd. dares to arrange a meeting of the female staff only and hears opinions from them because women's opinions tend not to stand out when men and women are together. Ernst & Young ShinNihon LLC tries not to make a decision on business referring to a conversation at a drinking party that only the male staff join. I keenly feel that considerations of a head of an organization changes in the way of thinking by women and improvement of a working environment in many ways (a work-life balance and a good environment to raise children) are important for promotion of women's active participation.

In Okayama City Government, we will continue to make efforts and take an initiative to create a better working environment that women can work without the difficulties and play an active role while referring to the approaches mentioned above.