



Strategic Portfolio Assessment & Future Investment Strategy RFP Questions & Answers

The following questions were submitted by prospective respondents during the RFP question period and have been consolidated and edited for clarity where multiple inquiries addressed similar topics. The responses below reflect AAUW's official guidance and apply equally to all prospective respondents.

The formal question period for this RFP closed August 21, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET. AAUW will evaluate proposals based on the requirements of the RFP and the clarifications provided in this document. Respondents should not rely on guidance or interpretations obtained outside the published RFP and this Q&A.

I. Strategic Context & Assessment Scope

- 1. What organizational or strategic considerations prompted AAUW to undertake this assessment at this time, and what key decisions does AAUW expect the engagement to inform? Are there specific leadership or Board decision-making milestones in 2027 that the consultant's findings and recommendations should support, particularly regarding the prioritization or reallocation of the existing portfolio, the continuation or discontinuation of funding areas, the design of fellowship or grant models, the identification of priority fields or educational pathways, or future fundraising opportunities?**

AAUW is undertaking this consultancy as part of a broader effort to strengthen the long-term sustainability and impact of its philanthropic investments. The engagement is intended both to help position AAUW's fellowships and grants portfolio for future fundraising success and to strengthen the organization's ability to articulate the impact of its investments in ways that extend beyond traditional measures such as the number of awards made and total dollars distributed.

AAUW's fellowship and grant programs were established more than a century ago with the aim of expanding women's opportunities and representation within the intellectual, academic, and professional life of society.

This assessment represents an opportunity to carry that founding purpose forward in a contemporary context by establishing more focused and measurable ambitions for AAUW's philanthropic giving.

Within AAUW's broader strategic commitment to champion gender equity—including through expanding pathways to higher education, supporting women in academia and research, and fostering women's leadership—the organization seeks greater clarity about where AAUW is uniquely positioned to make a meaningful and differentiated contribution. This includes understanding where our resources, history, expertise, and institutional strengths can generate the greatest impact; how our investments can respond to current and emerging societal needs; and where those opportunities intersect with donor interests and the potential for sustainable philanthropic support.

The engagement is therefore expected to provide AAUW leadership with an evidence-based foundation for decisions about the future composition and direction of the portfolio. AAUW is open to recommendations that may include prioritizing or reallocating existing investments; refining, redesigning, or potentially discontinuing funding areas; identifying priority professional fields or educational pathways; evolving fellowship and grant models; and identifying opportunities to strengthen or develop fundraising propositions. Recommendations should not assume that the current portfolio structure must be preserved. At the same time, they must account for applicable restrictions governing AAUW's existing funds. Additional information regarding fund restrictions is provided in question 4.

Ideally, the findings and recommendations will be sufficiently actionable to inform planning ahead of AAUW's 2027 application season. The timing of implementation will depend on the nature and scale of the recommendations. More significant changes may require phased implementation to accommodate organizational budgeting, program design and operational planning cycles, as well as applicable funding restrictions.

2. Does AAUW have an existing theory of change, strategic plan, impact-measurement framework, prior portfolio review or evaluation, or other relevant internal materials that will be shared with the selected consultant to inform and serve as a starting point for this work?

AAUW has an organizational strategic plan and related strategic dashboard, which will be made available to the selected consultant to inform the engagement.

AAUW has not previously conducted a comprehensive fellowships and grants portfolio review or evaluation that would serve as a foundation for this work.

3. Does the assessment encompass AAUW's entire fellowships and grants portfolio, including both individual and organizational/institutional grantmaking? Are there particular programs, fields, disciplines, populations, or other areas that AAUW would like emphasized or considers out of scope?

The assessment does not encompass AAUW's entire fellowships and grants portfolio. The assessment includes the American Fellowships, International Fellowships, Career Development Grants and Selected Professions Fellowship programs. Organizational grantmaking is outside the scope of the assessment, as are International Project Grants.

AAUW has a longstanding and continuing commitment to expanding women's participation and advancement in STEM fields, and STEM should remain meaningfully represented within the future portfolio. At the same time, AAUW is open to examining how that commitment is best expressed, including which STEM fields, disciplines, career pathways, or populations present the strongest opportunities for impact—as well as whether other fields warrant strategic investment based on compelling evidence.

A key purpose of this engagement is therefore to establish a more data-driven and evidence-based approach to identifying and validating priority fields and educational pathways. The assessment should consider factors including the persistence or widening of gender disparities; projected growth, influence, or societal significance of relevant disciplines and professions; the importance of women's participation in addressing emerging societal, technological, or economic challenges; and the potential for strategic philanthropic investment to produce meaningful and measurable change. It should also examine broader higher education and workforce trends, including programs and fields that are expanding, emerging, contracting, being consolidated, or closing, as well as new educational pathways being developed in response to evolving labor-market needs and technological, economic, and societal changes. This is particularly important when making the case for philanthropic investment.

The consultancy should not presume that AAUW's current approach to prioritizing particular STEM or non-STEM fields must remain unchanged. Rather, AAUW seeks recommendations that both preserve a meaningful commitment to advancing women in STEM and identify where the evidence supports refining that approach or extending strategic investment to other fields.

Fields or areas that do not demonstrate sufficient alignment with the considerations above would not be expected to emerge as priorities for future investment.

- 4. Are there Board directives, donor restrictions, endowed-fund terms, legal requirements, protected programs, or other existing parameters that the consultant should consider when evaluating the portfolio and developing recommendations? Where such restrictions exist, should consultants treat the associated programs or funding as fixed, or may they recommend alternative approaches that remain consistent with the applicable restrictions?**

At a high level, the programs within the scope of this consultancy are supported by endowed and restricted funds with varying terms governing their use. American Fellowships, International Fellowships, and Selected Professions Fellowships are primarily supported by funds designated for graduate-level education and research, while Career Development Grants are supported by funding that generally provides greater flexibility for career advancement and educational pathways.

These restrictions represent important parameters for the engagement but should not be interpreted as requiring AAUW to preserve its current program structures or funding models in their existing form. AAUW welcomes recommendations for alternative programmatic approaches, funding structures, or portfolio configurations that could strengthen strategic impact while remaining aligned with the broader purposes of the applicable funding.

Consultants will not be expected to review or interpret individual endowment agreements or fund restrictions as part of this engagement. As recommendations are developed, AAUW will identify where applicable fund restrictions may affect the feasibility or implementation of particular recommendations and will undertake any necessary legal or governance review. Consultants should therefore develop recommendations based on the strategic and programmatic objectives of the engagement, with the understanding that AAUW will assess and advise on applicable funding constraints as the work progresses.

- 5. The RFP frames the objective as increasing women's representation in underrepresented fields. Does AAUW consider retention and advancement post-award, the point at which women disproportionately exit STEM and related fields after entering within the scope of representation, or is this assessment scoped specifically to entry-point investment? If retention is in the scope, should recommendations address program design elements such as multi-year support or alumnae infrastructure aim at reducing attrition, not only expanding initial access?**

AAUW's programs within the scope of this assessment are primarily designed to strengthen the pipeline of women pursuing education and careers in fields in which they are underrepresented, with a significant emphasis on STEM. Historically, these investments have focused largely on supporting educational access, progression, and entry into relevant fields. Career Development Grants, for example, explicitly addresses career transition and advancement by supporting women seeking to enter or advance within underrepresented fields.

While retention and post-entry advancement were not identified as a distinct area of analysis in the RFP, AAUW recognizes that they may be relevant to understanding women's sustained representation in particular fields. Consultants are therefore welcome to incorporate retention and advancement considerations where they are supported by the research and materially relevant to the assessment and resulting recommendations; however, AAUW is not establishing this as a separate required component of the scope.

Where the evidence supports such recommendations, AAUW is open to considering programmatic approaches that address barriers beyond initial access or entry, subject to the funding parameters and restrictions described in question 4.

II. Team Structure, Consultant Eligibility & Contracting Requirements

- 6. May proposals be submitted by individual consultants, sole proprietors, or teams of independent consultants, including joint proposals or teams composed of subcontractors or partner consultants? If so, are there any restrictions or preferences regarding team size or structure and should subcontractors and partner consultants be identified and documented in the same manner as other key project team members?**

Yes. AAUW welcomes proposals from individual consultants, sole proprietors, consulting firms, and teams that include subcontractors, independent consultants, or partner consultants. AAUW does not impose restrictions on the size or structure of the proposed project team. However, AAUW prefers a streamlined team structure that minimizes reliance on multiple subcontractors where feasible.

All subcontractors, partner consultants, and other individuals who will play a significant role in the engagement should be identified and documented in the proposal in the same manner as other key project team members. Proposals should clearly describe each individual's role and responsibilities, relevant qualifications, and relationship to the lead consultant or prime contractor. The lead consultant or prime contractor will be responsible for overall project management, coordination, and delivery of the engagement.

7. Must every proposed team member be confirmed at submission or may specialized advisors be added after award with AAUW's approval?

All proposed team members, including any specialized advisors, subcontractors, partner consultants, or other individuals expected to contribute to the engagement, must be identified at the time of proposal submission. AAUW does not anticipate permitting consultants to add specialized advisors or other team members after contract award. Proposals should therefore reflect the complete team and range of expertise the applicant believes will be necessary to successfully execute the proposed methodology and scope of work.

8. Are individual consultants or consulting teams based outside the United States eligible to submit a proposal and contract with AAUW? If so, are there any geographic or contracting restrictions that applicants should be aware of?

Yes. AAUW welcomes proposals from qualified consultants and consulting teams based in the United States or internationally, including teams that include individual consultants, subcontractors, or partners located outside the United States. While AAUW has a preference for a U.S.-based lead or prime consultant given the administrative and contracting considerations associated with international engagements, an international lead or prime consultant will not be excluded from consideration solely on the basis of location.

All applicants should be prepared to meet AAUW's operational and contract requirements.

Because AAUW staff operate primarily on Eastern Time from our Washington, D.C. office, the successful consultant or team must be able to accommodate onboarding, project meetings and other periodic engagements during reasonable Eastern Time business hours, regardless of where individual team members are located.

International applicants should be aware that AAUW must comply with applicable U.S. laws and regulations governing transactions with foreign individuals and entities, including applicable U.S. sanctions and restrictions. AAUW may therefore conduct additional compliance and contracting review before entering into an agreement with an internationally based consultant or firm. Eligibility to submit a proposal should not be understood as a guarantee that AAUW will be able to contract with a particular individual or entity in every jurisdiction. In addition, if the lead or prime consultant is based outside the United States, they must also be able to receive payment from AAUW via wire transfer or credit card.

Consulting teams that include internationally based members are likewise welcome to apply, provided the proposed team structure allows the lead or prime consultant to effectively manage the engagement and meet AAUW's contracting, payment, communication, and project-management requirements.

III. Data Availability, Research Resources & Information Governance

9. What are AAUW's expectations for the use of external datasets and research referenced in the RFP? Should consultants conduct original analysis of sources such as IPEDS, NSF, and BLS, synthesize existing published research, or propose an appropriate combination of both based on their methodology?

AAUW does not wish to prescribe a specific approach regarding original analysis of federal or other datasets versus synthesis of existing published research. The sources and methodological approaches identified in the RFP are illustrative, and consultants should propose the combination of quantitative analysis, existing research, benchmarking, and other evidence that they believe will most effectively address the objectives of the engagement.

Where original analysis of datasets such as IPEDS, NSF, BLS, or other relevant sources would materially strengthen the assessment, AAUW welcomes its inclusion.

Similarly, consultants may draw upon credible existing analyses and published research, including data and reports from professional associations, accrediting bodies, and industry or workforce organizations, philanthropic funding databases, provided that the sources are sufficiently current and relevant and clearly document their data sources, limitations and methodology.

10. Does AAUW have access to proprietary philanthropic, higher education, labor market, or other research databases that will be made available to the selected consultant? If not, should consultants include any necessary data acquisition, subscription, or licensing costs in their proposed budget?

No, AAUW does not have access to proprietary philanthropic, higher education, labor market, or other research databases that will be made available to the selected consultant. Consultants should include any necessary data acquisition, subscription or licensing costs in their proposed budget.

11. Does AAUW expect the philanthropic market analysis to rely primarily on external research and benchmarking, or should consultants incorporate analysis of AAUW's internal donor and fundraising data? Does AAUW expect primary donor research, such as interviews or surveys, or should consultants propose the appropriate combination of internal analysis, external market research, benchmarking, and stakeholder engagement based on their methodology?

The philanthropic market analysis is expected to rely primarily on external research and benchmarking, rather than AAUW's historical donor trends. AAUW is interested in capturing potential new philanthropic funding opportunities.

Consultants should propose the appropriate combination of external market research, benchmarking, and stakeholder engagement, including any primary donor research they believe would strengthen the analysis, based on their proposed methodology.

- 12. What internal donor, prospect, and fundraising information will AAUW make available to support the philanthropic market analysis? For example, will the selected consultant have access to historical giving and campaign performance, donor segments and giving patterns, restricted versus unrestricted giving, prospect or donor research, expressed areas of donor interest, surveys, or other relevant internal analysis? Will the consultant also have access to AAUW development staff and other relevant internal stakeholders?**

AAUW will provide high-level donor, prospect and fundraising information relevant to the assessment, including historical giving, donor segments, giving patterns, and other relevant analysis. The selected consultant will have access to AAUW's Senior Director of Institutional Advancement, who leads fundraising and membership at AAUW.

- 13. What existing internal or external research and documentation related to AAUW's fellowships and grants portfolio will be made available to the selected consultant? For example, has AAUW previously conducted or commissioned program evaluations, impact assessments, landscape studies, or other research that may inform the portfolio assessment and AAUW's current investment areas?**

AAUW has not previously conducted or commissioned program evaluations, impact assessments, landscape studies or other research related to its fellowships and grants programming that can inform this consultancy.

- 14. What information and data will AAUW make available to the consultant regarding its current fellowships and grants portfolio, including program objectives, eligibility requirements, award structures and funding levels, application and selection data, and existing impact or outcome data?**

In addition to the data referenced in question 13, AAUW will make available relevant information regarding current program-specific objectives, eligibility requirements, award structures, funding levels, and application and selection data for the programs relevant to the scope of the assessment, as appropriate to support the successful consultant's proposed methodology. Applicants should note that AAUW currently has limited historical impact and outcome data available for its fellowship and grant programs.

15. What historical program and portfolio data does AAUW anticipate making available to the selected consultant, and over approximately what time period? Will available data include information such as applications and awards, funding and award amounts, selection rates, fields or programs of study, institution type, geography, career stage, participant demographics, program completion or retention, and available post-award, career outcome, or alumnae data? In what general formats and at what level of disaggregation will these data be available? Where data must be de-identified or aggregated, are there minimum cell-size or other privacy restrictions respondents should anticipate?

AAUW is prepared to share historical program and portfolio data with the selected consultant, as needed based on the proposed methodology. The availability, completeness, and level of detail of historical data vary considerably by time period, program, and type of information, and applicants should not assume that all variables will be consistently available.

At a high level, AAUW maintains digital records for approximately 16,000 alumnae, with basic award information for some recipients dating to the early 1900s. These records generally include award program and award year, with more detailed information available for recent decades. Depending on the year and program, available data may include race and ethnicity, field or area of study or expertise, geography, application and selection information, institution type, and award amounts. Field or area of expertise data are generally available beginning in the late 1980s, while more detailed recipient information is most consistently available for recent cohorts.

More robust application and selection data are available for recent program cycles, including applications, awards, award amounts, selection rates, fields or programs of study, institution type, and available participant demographic information.

AAUW does not maintain systematic longitudinal data on program completion, retention, career advancement, or post-award outcomes at standardized intervals. Career and professional outcomes are primarily captured through AAUW's periodic alumnae survey, with results available from 2023 and 2025. Participation is voluntary, and this data should not be considered comprehensive longitudinal records of award recipient outcomes.

Applicants should also be aware that AAUW's programs have evolved over time, including changes to eligibility requirements, award amounts, program structures, and fields of emphasis. AAUW does not maintain a single comprehensive historical record documenting all programmatic changes over the life of each program.

AAUW and the selected consultant will determine the specific datasets, time periods, variables, formats, and levels of disaggregation needed based on the final methodology. AAUW will apply appropriate privacy and confidentiality protections to any data provided, including de-identification or aggregation where appropriate.

16. The scope asks for an intersectional framework across race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geography, and disability. Do AAUW's own applicant and recipient records carry those fields? If not, should the consultant expect to build the intersectional layer from national datasets and use AAUW data for portfolio composition only?

AAUW's applicant and recipient records capture race and ethnicity, and geographic information. For the two most recent award cohorts, AAUW also has data identifying whether recipients are first-generation college students and/or caregiving students. AAUW's historical records do not consistently capture the full range of demographic characteristics identified in the RFP, including disability status.

Accordingly, the intersectional framework contemplated in the scope of work should be applied primarily to the consultant's external research and analysis, drawing on relevant national and other reputable datasets to examine how disparities, barriers, opportunities, and emerging needs may differ across and within populations. AAUW's applicant and recipient data should be used primarily to understand the composition of the existing portfolio and provide organizational context for the broader analysis. Based on this analysis, the consultant may also recommend specific fields, educational pathways, program models, or forms of support that could most effectively benefit particular underserved communities.

17. What internal metrics does AAUW currently use to assess fellowship and grant program effectiveness?

AAUW is in the early stages of developing a more robust framework for assessing the effectiveness and impact of its fellowship and grant programs.

Historically, portfolio-level reporting has focused primarily on measures of reach and investment, such as the number and value of awards made, rather than a standardized set of longer-term outcome or impact measures.

More recently, AAUW has begun developing interim program-level metrics intended to strengthen measurement while the organization undertakes this broader portfolio assessment. To date, these metrics have been finalized for one program, with additional frameworks remaining in development. Relevant materials can be shared with the selected consultant as helpful context.

These interim measures should not be treated as fixed parameters for the engagement. Rather, they are intended to serve as a bridge while AAUW establishes greater clarity regarding the future direction, intended outcomes, and strategic priorities of its portfolio. The findings of this assessment are expected to help inform the organization's longer-term approach to defining and measuring program effectiveness and impact.

18. Beyond initial placement and program completion, does AAUW currently collect data on fellows' retention, career advancement, and leadership trajectory at 3, 5, and 10 years post-award? If so, would that data be made available to the consultant?

AAUW does not currently maintain systematic longitudinal data tracking fellows' retention, career advancement, or leadership trajectories at standardized intervals such as 3, 5, and 10 years post-award.

AAUW does conduct an annual survey of its broader alumnae community that collects information from respondents regarding their current professional and career status. The survey is distributed broadly to alumnae rather than to defined award cohorts at specific post-award intervals, and response rates vary from year to year. As a result, the data should not be considered a comprehensive longitudinal dataset of recipient outcomes.

Relevant available alumnae survey data may be made available to the selected consultant where useful to the assessment.

19. What data-security and confidentiality requirements will govern AAUW-provided data? Does AAUW have any policies, requirements, or restrictions regarding the use of AI or AI-assisted tools for research and analysis, including requirements related to disclosure of methods, data privacy and storage, validation, confidentiality, or human oversight?

AAUW requires that any nonpublic data or information provided by AAUW in connection with this engagement be protected from disclosure to or processing through AI tools or AI agents. AAUW-provided nonpublic data and information may not be entered into, uploaded to, exposed to, or otherwise processed through an AI tool or AI agent. Applicable privacy, confidentiality, data-security, and intellectual property protections will be reflected in the resulting contract.

Consultants may use AI or AI-assisted tools for other aspects of the engagement, provided such use does not expose AAUW-provided nonpublic data or information and otherwise complies with the requirements of the engagement. Any anticipated substantive use of AI or AI-assisted tools in performing the research, analysis, synthesis, or development of deliverables should be disclosed in the proposal's methodology narrative, including the nature and purpose of the proposed use. Consultants remain responsible for appropriate validation and human oversight of all work products and deliverables.

Because the AI disclosure expectation was not expressly stated in the original RFP, respondents who submitted proposals prior to publication of this clarification will not be disadvantaged for having omitted this information. Those respondents may submit a brief addendum addressing any anticipated use of AI or AI-assisted tools by the proposal deadline; no other revision or resubmission of the proposal is required. Respondents submitting proposals after publication of this clarification should address anticipated AI use within their methodology narrative.

IV. Methodology & Analytical Expectations

20. What are AAUW's expectations for the scope and volume of stakeholder engagement as part of this assessment? Does AAUW expect interviews and/or focus groups to be a core component of the methodology, and does it have an anticipated or preferred number, mix, or type of participants—such as staff, Board members, current fellows and grantees, alumnae, members, donors/philanthropic stakeholders, or external subject-matter experts—or should consultants propose an appropriate approach based on their methodology?

AAUW has not established a required number, format, or prescribed mix of stakeholder interviews, focus groups, or other qualitative engagement activities. Consultants should propose a stakeholder engagement approach that is appropriate to their methodology and sufficient to support the objectives, analysis, and deliverables outlined in the RFP.

Two AAUW teams will be particularly involved in this engagement. AAUW's Fellowships & Grants Team is responsible for the administration, strategy, and ongoing development of the fellowship and grant programs within the scope of the assessment, including applicant and awardee experience, program operations, selection processes, and program data and outcomes.

AAUW's Advancement Team leads the organization's fundraising and philanthropic engagement efforts, including donor strategy and stewardship, and will be an important partner in considering the philanthropic market, donor alignment, and fundraising potential of future investment opportunities. Other AAUW staff and organizational stakeholders may also be relevant depending on the consultant's proposed methodology and the areas explored through the assessment.

Proposals should identify the stakeholder groups the consultant believes are most important to engage, the proposed method and approximate scale of engagement, and how stakeholder perspectives will inform the assessment and resulting recommendations. AAUW welcomes consultants' expertise in determining the appropriate balance of stakeholder engagement alongside other research and analytical methods.

21. What role will AAUW play in facilitating stakeholder engagement? Will AAUW identify, recruit, communicate with, and/or schedule participants and provide consultants with access to relevant stakeholder groups, or should consultants plan and budget to manage some or all of these activities independently, including any participant recruitment or incentives?

AAUW will identify, recruit, and communicate with participants, as well as coordinate consultant access to relevant stakeholder groups. AAUW will also assume responsibility for participant incentives.

22. For the targeted policy and access landscape scan, does AAUW envision primarily a national/federal assessment supplemented by targeted state-level analysis for identified priority fields, or should consultants anticipate a broader systematic state-level analysis?

AAUW is not seeking a comprehensive federal or state-by-state policy analysis. Rather, the policy, higher education and access landscape scan should remain directly tied to the fields and educational pathways identified through the assessment, with a focus on current and emerging policy conditions that may affect women's ability to enter, finance, persist in, and complete relevant educational pathways and advance within associated fields.

Consultants should consider the policy and regulatory environment as well as relevant developments in the higher education landscape where it is material to assessing these opportunities and reflect relevant implications in their findings and recommendations. AAUW is not prescribing a particular structure or geographic scope for this analysis; consultants should propose an approach appropriate to their methodology and explain how it will support the broader assessment.

The intent of this component is to inform—and, where appropriate, refine or contextualize—the engagement's investment and programmatic recommendations, rather than to produce a standalone or comprehensive policy analysis.

23. The Methodology Expectations reference “scenario modeling for funding allocation impact.” Could AAUW clarify the intended scope and level of sophistication of this modeling (e.g., example funding scenarios and projected impacts or an interactive tool)?

The methodologies identified in Section 7 of the RFP are illustrative rather than prescriptive. AAUW has not established a required format or level of sophistication for scenario modeling, nor does AAUW require development of an interactive modeling tool.

Where scenario modeling is incorporated into the proposed methodology, AAUW is primarily interested in its ability to illuminate the potential implications and trade-offs associated with different investment or funding allocation strategies and to support actionable recommendations regarding the future portfolio.

Consultants should propose the analytical approach and level of sophistication they believe is appropriate to the objectives of the engagement and explain how it will contribute to the resulting strategic recommendations.

24. Does AAUW have an expected range for the number of graduate disciplines, educational pathways, or professional fields that should be included in the initial landscape analysis before narrowing to the 3–5 priority opportunity areas?

AAUW has not established an expected range for the number of graduate disciplines, educational pathways, or professional fields to be included in the initial landscape analysis. Consultants should propose an appropriate breadth of analysis based on their methodology and the objectives of the engagement, sufficient to support a rigorous and evidence-based process for identifying and ultimately recommending 3–5 priority opportunity areas.

The analysis should include consideration of STEM fields and pathways, although AAUW does not assume that all STEM fields or programs should be prioritized. AAUW is also open to recommendations involving other disciplines, educational pathways, or professional fields where available data, research, and relevant philanthropic trends demonstrate a compelling need, a meaningful opportunity to advance women’s equity, and strong potential for impact.

AAUW is interested in understanding the rationale and criteria consultants will use to determine the appropriate universe of fields and pathways for consideration and to progressively narrow that landscape to the recommended priority areas. The rationale should explain how evidence including gender disparities, workforce and higher education trends, societal and economic relevance, underserved populations’ needs, philanthropic activity and funding gaps, and the potential for measurable impact will inform the prioritization process.

V. Deliverables, Review Process & Organizational Engagement

25. Who are the primary audiences for the Final Recommendations Report, and does AAUW envision a Board-facing strategic document, a more detailed staff-oriented implementation document, or a deliverable designed to serve both audiences?

The primary audiences for the Final Recommendations Report will be AAUW’s Senior Leadership Team and its Fellowships & Grants Team. The findings and recommendations may also be shared with AAUW’s Board of Directors or other organizational stakeholders.

AAUW envisions a final deliverable that can effectively serve both strategic decision-making and implementation planning. The report should present findings, strategic implications, and recommendations at a level appropriate for senior leadership and potential Board consideration, while providing sufficient detail, rationale, prioritization, and implementation considerations to support the Fellowships & Grants Team in translating approved recommendations into programmatic and operational planning.

26. What review and feedback process should consultants anticipate for the Interim Findings Deck, Draft Strategic Framework, and Final Recommendations Report? Which AAUW staff, leadership, committees, or Board bodies are expected to review each deliverable, how many formal rounds of feedback should be assumed, and what turnaround time should consultants build into the project schedule?

AAUW's Fellowships & Grants staff and the Senior Director of Institutional Advancement will be closely involved in the review and feedback process throughout the engagement, with other Senior Leadership also participating in the review of key deliverables. Additional organizational stakeholders may be engaged as appropriate.

For proposal and planning purposes, consultants may assume up to two rounds of consolidated feedback on major deliverables, recognizing that the specific review process may be refined with the selected consultant during project kickoff. AAUW anticipates approximately 5–7 business days to review and provide feedback on the Interim Findings Deck and Draft Strategic Framework and approximately 10 business days for review of the Final Recommendations Report.

AAUW will work to consolidate internal feedback and communicate it to the consultant through the designated project lead to support an efficient review process.

27. Will AAUW accept supporting analytical tools developed as part of the engagement—such as an evidence register or opportunity/prioritization model—in a maintainable digital format that AAUW staff can update following completion of the engagement?

AAUW welcomes supporting analytical tools or resources that strengthen the usability and sustainability of the engagement's findings and recommendations. Where consultants propose such tools as part of their methodology or deliverables, AAUW would prefer that they be provided in an accessible, maintainable format that allows appropriate AAUW staff to use and update them following the engagement. Consultants should describe any such proposed tools in their proposal.

- 28. Does AAUW have a predetermined number or cadence of meetings, working sessions, or presentations with AAUW leadership and/or the Board between the interim and final deliverables, or should consultants propose an appropriate engagement cadence as part of their methodology and budget?**

AAUW has not established a predetermined number or cadence of meetings, working sessions, or presentations with Senior Leadership, the Board and/or other staff. Consultants are encouraged to propose an engagement cadence appropriate to their methodology, including any leadership or Board touchpoints they believe would meaningfully support the assessment, decision-making process, and development of final recommendations.

VI. Proposal Submission, Budget, Timeline & Engagement Logistics

- 29. Are there overall proposal page or formatting requirements beyond the section-specific limits identified in the RFP?**

No. AAUW has not established additional overall proposal page or formatting limits beyond the section-specific requirements identified in the RFP. Applicants should follow the instructions and page limitations provided for each applicable proposal section.

- 30. Does the page limit for Relevant Experience and Expertise include the three project examples, or should work samples submitted as an attachment outside the page limit?**

Yes. The three-page limit for the Relevant Experience & Expertise section includes any project examples applicants elect to provide.

- 31. Is there a page limit for the cost proposal? The RFP specifies limits for the other three sections but not this one.**

No, there is not a page limit for the cost proposal.

- 32. Given the invitation to propose phased or reduced-scope alternatives, does AAUW have a preference for a single fixed-fee proposal versus a "core scope + optional add-ons" structure with separate pricing?**

AAUW prefers a single fixed-fee proposal for the consultant's recommended approach to completing the full engagement. Consultants may also identify separately priced optional services, enhancements, phased approaches, or reduced-scope alternatives where they believe doing so would provide AAUW with meaningful choices or opportunities to maximize value.

Any such alternatives should be clearly distinguished from the consultant's primary proposed approach and should identify the associated cost and relevant trade-offs.

33. How detailed does AAUW expect the implementation considerations to be? High level sequencing and considerations or a full-blow roadmap?

AAUW does not expect a fully developed implementation roadmap as part of the proposal. Within the five-page Technical Approach limit, consultants should provide sufficient detail to demonstrate the overall sequencing and feasibility of their proposed approach, including major phases, milestones, stakeholder engagement activities, review periods, and anticipated deliverable dates.

The work plan should allow AAUW to understand how the consultant intends to structure and manage the engagement through completion by March 31, 2027, while recognizing that more detailed project planning and implementation considerations may be refined in partnership with AAUW following selection and during the course of the engagement.

34. What are AAUW's anticipated contract award and project start dates?

AAUW anticipates issuing a contract no later than November 6, 2026, with the engagement expected to begin as soon as practicable thereafter.

35. Does AAUW expect the engagement to be conducted primarily virtually, or should consultants anticipate in-person meetings, presentations, or working sessions? If in-person engagement or travel is anticipated, approximately how many such engagements should consultants plan for, and where would they be expected to occur?

AAUW expects this engagement to be conducted virtually. No in-person meetings, presentations or working sessions are envisioned at this time.

36. Is the overall timeframe of the project (~five months) flexible? Is there an internal priority date by which the final recommendations report needs to be ready?

AAUW's goal is to complete the engagement and receive final recommendations no later than March 31, 2027, as stated in the RFP.

This timeline is intended to provide the organization with sufficient opportunity to evaluate the recommendations and, where feasible, begin incorporating them into planning for the application cycle anticipated to open in August 2027.

Consultants should develop their proposed work plans with the March 31 completion date in mind. Proposals that identify opportunities to complete the work earlier are welcome where an accelerated timeline is appropriate to the consultant's proposed methodology and can be achieved without compromising the quality or rigor of the assessment. AAUW recognizes, however, that the appropriate timeline may be influenced by the methodology and scope of work proposed, and will consider reasonable timeline considerations identified by applicants.

AAUW also recognizes it may not be possible for all resulting recommendations to be implemented in advance of the 2027 application cycle. The timing and sequencing of implementation will depend on the nature and scale of the recommendations, as well as budgeting, operational planning, funding restrictions, and organizational decision-making processes.