****

**INVITATION TO TENDER**

**Proposal to carry out research as a follow up to the 2019 publication of “Beyond the Dáil”, funded by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. This research will focus on women’s experiences in local government since their elections in 2019 and what factors have affected their decision to run again or not in 2023.**

**Introduction**

Founded in 1973, the National Women’s Council (NWC) is the leading national women’s membership organisation. We represent and derive our mandate from our membership, which includes almost 200 groups and organisations from a diversity of backgrounds, sectors, and locations across Ireland. Guided by our Strategic Plan 2021-2024, ‘*No Woman Left Behind*,’ our mission is to lead and to be a catalyst for change in the achievement of equality for women. Our vision is of an Ireland and of a world where women can achieve their full potential and there is full equality for women.

In 2019, NWC published *‘Women Beyond the Dáil: More Women in Local Government.’* The research reflected the direct experiences of women candidates from the 2019 local elections and highlighted the systemic and structural barriers which suppress women’s candidacy and representation in local political office.

To achieve a critical mass of women’s representation at local government level, NWC developed a series of recommendations for the Government, political parties, and Local Government including the development of women’s caucuses and networks.

Much has changed since 2019, including a greater use of technology in our work, and the ability to work from home or closer to home as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic. Building on the 2019 research, we wish to explore the experiences of women elected to local government and identify the factors informing their decision on whether they choose to run for election again in 2024.

**Aims of this research**

1. To understand the enabling and constraining factors shaping women’s experiences as elected representatives at local level.

2. To increase knowledge and understanding about women’s decision to continue or forgo participation in local government.

3. Make recommendations on how to advance and maintain women’s leadership in local government and establish a pipeline towards national elections, including positive steps to support and encourage women to re-run for elected office in local government.

4. Gather and publish evidence on female participation and representation across local government and identify the deterrents to women rerunning for election.

Objectives

1. A qualitative assessment of the experiences of women who were elected to local government in 2019, including those who plan to run for election in 2024, and those who do not wish to run again, resulting in an analysis of retention rates.

2. To monitor whether recommendations made in Beyond the Dáil 2019 were implemented and if so, what impact, if any they have had in improving the experience of women in local government and those who wish to run for election.

3. To offer an evidence base to address outstanding challenges facing women in local government and provide solutions that can better support a diversity of women in elected office at local level including women from a migrant background, disabled women, young women, and women from the Traveller and Roma communities.

**Policy Context**

Like national politics, local government on this island has historically been male dominated.

Just one-in-four Councillors are women in the south with comparatively similar figures in the north. Across local government, just 26 % of local councillors are women, while only 27% of Local Authority CEOs are women.

Research links low levels of women’s representation in decision-making and poorer outcomes for women’s interests.

Local government provides essential services such as housing, roads, libraries, planning, environment, and economic development as well as being a key part of the functioning of our democratic system.

With its proximity to women’s lives, local government is uniquely positioned to strengthen women’s participation in decision making and improve the representation of their interests. Local political experience is also a key route to national office for women, significantly more so than for men. Over 80% of women TDs have local government experience.

Local Elections

Election year % of candidates who are women

1999 16%

2004 19%

2009 19%

2014 21%

2019 29%

[(Female Representation in Politics in Ireland | Ireland’s Hub for Sustainable Development Goals (geohive.ie))](https://irelandsdg.geohive.ie/apps/female-representation-in-politics-in-ireland/explore)

At local level, only 26% of Councillors are women compared to an EU average of 32%. While this amounts to a small increase from 21% in 2014, the overall figure hides stark regional inequalities in more rural constituencies. At least 69 co-options have occurred since the 2019 local elections and women have filled 37 of these vacancies.

Women made up 29% of the candidates in the 2019 Local elections. This was up from 21.6% in 2014. The two largest political parties failed to run 30% women candidates in 2019. Women candidates accounted for 34.8% of candidates in the urban electoral areas and 22.8% of the total number of candidates in the more rural constituencies. Only 9 Local authorities out of 31 have reached a critical mass of 30% women or more. There are 11 constituencies and 23 local electoral areas with no women elected to represent them.

Lack of equal and diverse representation in our Local Government is a democratic deficit that demands targeted action to overcome. The *Programme for Government – Our Shared Future* identified a need for greater diversity and gender equality in local government, in particular that a more sustained effort is required to increase the representation of women in local government.

With support from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, efforts to increase women’s representation in Ireland is ongoing. This includes measures such as the launch of NWC’s ‘Toolkit for Local Authorities on making Local Government Family Friendly’ and the work of groups such as Women for Election, who are calling for 1,000 women to be supported to run in 2024 and who provide dedicated training for women interested in becoming candidates. See Her Elected have a specific rural focus, provide trainings for women candidates, and have published the See Her Elected Guide to Running in the 2024.

There is also increasing international effort to improve and sustain women’s representation. For example, the EU Strategy for Gender Equality has specifically called for improvements in the balance between women and men at all levels of politics. The Commission calls on all member states to “develop and implement strategies to increase the number of women in decision making positions in politics and policy-making.[[3]](https://euc-word-edit.officeapps.live.com/we/wordeditorframe.aspx?ui=en%2DUS&rs=en%2DUS&wopisrc=https%3A%2F%2Fnwcireland.sharepoint.com%2F_vti_bin%2Fwopi.ashx%2Ffiles%2F9f94e148f6bf47aab52f4695ca75afdc&wdlor=c3D73E22B-F1C3-4C20-AD89-6FB04AC0ADBC&wdenableroaming=1&mscc=1&hid=9794C23A-252B-47B8-B974-62E475021610&wdorigin=Outlook-Body.Sharing.ServerTransfer&wdhostclicktime=1701702365834&jsapi=1&jsapiver=v1&newsession=1&corrid=89bb52e2-7452-470b-a6ef-035241259cac&usid=89bb52e2-7452-470b-a6ef-035241259cac&sftc=1&cac=1&mtf=1&sfp=1&instantedit=1&wopicomplete=1&wdredirectionreason=Unified_SingleFlush&rct=Normal&ctp=LeastProtected" \l "_ftn3)

Similarly, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 2017, while commending the progress made in some areas of women’s participation in public life, registers concern that:

*‘The Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act of 2012 does not extend to local government elections;*

and

 *The low level of participation of Traveller, Roma and migrant women in political and public life.’*

The Committee recommends that the State party:

*(b) Introduce temporary special measures, including quotas, which should be used in conjunction with such other policy measures as civic education programmes, mentoring and training programmes, childcare and eldercare, and financial support to women who aspire to decision-making positions, so as to ensure de facto change;*

*(c) Consider extending the Electoral (Amendment) (Political Funding) Act of 2012 to local government elections;*

*(d) Take concrete measures, including temporary special measures, to promote the participation of Traveller, Roma and migrant women in political and public life.’*

International recommendations clearly indicate that there is an onus to take measures such as gender quotas, training, and support with caring responsibilities to improve and sustain women’s representation in local government. CEDAW clearly states that the lack of progress in supporting and increasing women’s representation in local government is an equality deficit which must be remedied.

While efforts made to increase women’s representation is necessary and commendable, we must also ensure that this is sustained and that women entering local government will continue to remain there. In conjunction with these aforementioned measures, it is important to identify the factors influencing whether or not women will run again so that the barriers identified can be eradicated thus ensuring that women are represented.

# Project budget

The total budget for the research project, inclusive of VAT and all expenses is €8,516. This fee will include the preparation of a final report.

**Research methodology and outputs**

The elements of the research will be desk research, analysis of existing data and qualitative research with key stakeholders as required. The methodology is expected to include qualitative and quantitative approaches, information-gathering and analysis. It should include approaches and methods that actively listen to, learn from, and involve women. The primary audience for the report is decision-makers, public/civil servants, and politicians working in local government policy and delivery.

**Proposed Methodology**

The research project can combine complementary research elements but ideally would include:

-Desk research on barriers to women’s representation and international best practices to address these.

-A survey of women Councillors in local government on whether they plan to run for election again in 2024.

-Focus groups and semi-structured interviews with relevant stakeholders including perspectives from Migrant, Traveller, Roma, and disabled women.

This project is interested in the experiences and perspectives of

* Women currently holding public office at local level.
* Unelected women selected as candidates for upcoming local election.
* Women community leaders that were asked to run for election but chose not to (identify through political parties).

Overarching questions

1. What are the experiences of women elected to office at local level?

2. What obstacles and supports exist for women in elected office at the local level?

3. What roles and functions do women occupy in nominated and elected positions at the local level?

4. The relative power of and capacity of women to participate and influence decision making at local level and how women are positioned with local government to exercise influence?

5. What are the factors influencing the decision to run/ re-run for elected office in 2024?

**Output**

1. Publish and disseminate the findings.

The final output will be a report drawing on evidence gathered.

The report is expected to include:

• Findings and analysis relating to each specified research element

• Conclusions and recommendations to support a diversity of women’s access and participation to elected office at local level, including women from a migrant background, women with disabilities, young women, women from the Traveller or Roma communities, and women from working class backgrounds.

• A short executive summary

The draft final report (subject to minor revisions only) is to be delivered by 30th March 2024 to the satisfaction of NWCI. The editing and proofing work for the research report is the responsibility of the researcher and the document must be submitted print-ready. This report should be written in clear and accessible language, suitable for wide use as an information and advocacy resource by NWC.

2. Public launch of research.

3. Roundtable or seminar with key stakeholders.

**Tender requirements**

The contract will be awarded from the qualifying tenders on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender applying the following award criteria, not necessarily in this order:

1. Understanding of the project and demonstrated ability to carry out the research
* A statement demonstrating understanding of the research aim and goals
* An outline of skills, qualifications and experience in the area
* A work plan identifying the approaches and methodologies to be used in carrying out the project
1. Cost effectiveness

All costs must be inclusive of VAT and expenses

* Demonstrate value for money
* Breakdown of costs showing the number of days required to complete the task, the number of days each person, if there is more than one person involved, will be employed on the task, the cost per day.
* The fee quoted should include travel and subsistence costs
1. Relevant experience of the designated personnel
* A demonstrated understanding and track record in the research area
* A list of recent clients who you carried out relevant work for may be contracted for references in relation to this tender.
1. Timeframe for completion
* A demonstrated understanding and awareness of the requirements of the project and confirmation of the ability to meet the timeframe of the project

Only those tenders, who meet the qualifying criteria, will be eligible for inclusion in the award process. Tenderers are advised that they may be required to make a formal presentation of their proposal.

**Evaluation of Tenders**

Tenders will be evaluated initially with reference to the following qualification criteria:

* Completeness of tender documentation
* Stated ability of tenderer to meet the requirements of the Invitation to Tender

Only those tenders, who meet both qualifying criteria, will be eligible for inclusion in the award process.

The contract will be awarded from the qualifying tenders based on the most economically advantageous tender applying the following award criteria, not necessarily in this order:

* Understanding of the project
* Cost Effectiveness
* Relevant experience of the designated personnel
* Timeframe for completion

Tenderers are advised that they may be required to make a formal presentation of their proposal.

# Time-frame

* Tender to be submitted by 5pm on Monday 15th January 2024
* Notice of award of tender by 1st February 2024
* Research report to be completed by 30th March 2024

# Conditions of Tender

1. NWC reserves the right not to award a contract in the event that no proposal is deemed to be suitable.
2. NWC requires that researchers will treat all information provided pursuant to this invitation to tender in strict confidence.
3. Information supplied by tenderers will be treated as contractually binding. However, NWC reserves the right to seek clarification of any such information.
4. All material gathered and all outputs arising out of the proposed contract will remain the sole property of the NWC. **Tenderers must agree to this condition in their proposals.** All information and knowledge acquired in the course of the research will be treated as confidential and should not be divulged to any unauthorised person or used for any purpose whatsoever without the prior approval of the NWC.
5. NWC will ensure that the final report gives due credit to the consultant(s) for research, textual and editorial work undertaken in its preparation. Any subsequent use of the material shall also give due credit.
6. It will be a condition for the award of a contract that the successful contractor(s) (and agent, where appropriate) will be promptly required to produce a Tax Clearance Certificate from the Irish Revenue Commissioners. In addition, contractor(s) must retain records of tax reference numbers for any sub-contractor(s), whose payments exceed €5,000, including VAT. All payments under the contract will be conditional on the contractors being in possession of valid certificates at all times.
7. Tenders that are delivered late will not be considered.
8. Any conflicts of interest involving a contractor (or contractors in the event of a group or consortium bid) must be fully disclosed to NWC, particularly where there is a conflict of interest in relation to any recommendations or proposals put forward by the tenderer.
9. NWC will not be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of the tender.
10. Payment for all services covered by this Invitation to tender will be on foot of appropriate invoices. Invoicing arrangements will be agreed with the successful supplier(s), subject to the terms of the Prompt Payment of Accounts Act (27 of 1997).
11. Payment of all services covered by this invitation to tender will be on the basis of the agreed contract price, completion of agreed stages of the work plan and upon the submission of the appropriate invoices.
12. NWC will own the completed research and will retain copyright. NWC will retain the right to publish as deemed appropriate. The researcher(s) will be acknowledged in the inside cover of the publication.

# Submitting an application

Proposals should be submitted for the attention of Rachel Coyle, Head of Campaigns & Mobilisation, National Women’s Council of Ireland, rachelc@nwci.ie **to arrive no later than 5pm on Monday 15th January 2024.**

*All information provided to NWCI in response to this request will be treated in strict confidence.*

This work is kindly supported by the Department of Housing, Heritage and Local Government.