



INVITATION TO TENDER

The National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCI) is seeking tenders from qualified individuals or organisations to conduct a research project entitled *"When Women Lead: Evidence from Ireland on Gender-Responsive Policy Outcomes."* This study will examine how increased female representation in Irish politics – particularly following the introduction of legislative gender quotas in 2011 – has influenced the development and adoption of progressive and inclusive public policies. The research will also explore policy debates and outcomes in local chambers with more gender-balanced representation.

The findings will support national and local advocacy to improve mechanisms to increase the representation of women in politics, build-on public policy evidence, and inform public discourse on the benefits of women's political leadership.

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,'*¹ 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.

Following the 2019 NWC *'Women Beyond the Dáil: More Women in Local Government'* report, the NWC produced a follow up report to document the experience of women councillors from

¹ NWC Strategic Plan 2026-2029 will be published later in the year.

2019-2024, to show evidence of the systemic and structural barriers that women face to enter and remain in 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 advocating for the introduction of legislative quotas at local elections². Since the introduction of the legislative gender quota (LGQ) in Ireland, the number of women running for election has increased by 186%, and the number elected has risen by 76%. Despite this progress, women remain underrepresented, holding only 28% of local council and 25% of Dáil seats. We support the international narrative that electing more progressive women leads to policies that positively impact women and girls.

This research will generate concrete, local and national, evidence on how increased representation of women in decision-making roles correlates with the adoption of more progressive and inclusive public policies in Ireland. Focusing on women politicians in the Irish Parliament (Dáil Éireann) and within Parliamentary Committees since the introduction of gender quotas in 2011, the research will identify cases where a stronger female presence in leadership has directly contributed to significant legal and policy advancements. Key policy areas might include 2-3 areas such as: childcare, environmental protection, women's health – reproductive rights, flexible work arrangements, maternity leave, Carers' Allowances, or measures addressing gender-based violence. The research will also explore this dynamic at the local level. By examining 2 urban local authorities in Ireland, where more balanced local chambers exist, we aim to build evidence that councils with 40–50% female representation deliver better policy outcomes. However, it is important to highlight that Ireland has one of the weakest local government systems in Europe, and is among the most centralized, according to a 2023 report by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe³. Therefore, we seek to build evidence at the local level that can illustrate possible

² Cullen, Pauline, and Claire McGing, *Women Beyond the Dáil: Access, Representation and Retention in Irish Local Government – NWC Survey of Irish Women Councillors (2024)*, National Women's Council, 2024.

³ Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, *Monitoring of the Application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Ireland*, CG(2023)45-17final, 25 October 2023.

differences between councils with higher gender balance⁴. The research will potential strengthen our public narrative that voting for women, and for candidates with progressive values, leads to tangible, positive societal outcomes (especially at the national level), and that local government reform is both necessary and urgent.

Aim of this research: To generate concrete, national and local evidence on how increased representation of women in decision-making roles correlates with the adoption of more progressive and inclusive public policies in Ireland and develop recommendations.

Objectives

1. Analyse and assess the impact of increased female representation in national politics since the 2016 introduction of gender quotas, particularly in relation to progressive policy outcomes at a national level⁵.
2. Conduct case studies of two local councils to analyse and assess whether higher female representation leads to more progressive and inclusive local policies.
3. Develop policy recommendations for government and political parties to support increased female political participation from the perspective of the difference it makes to legislation, policy and service delivery.

Project budget

The total budget for the research project, inclusive of VAT and all expenses is €5,950. 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

⁴ The scope might be limited due to the current system of distribution of power between central and local government in Ireland.

⁵ From the introduction of bills to the passing of legislation, to increased debates in Dail Eireann committees or any other relevant mechanisms.

approaches and methods that actively listen to and learn from the experiences and perspectives of women, including;

- Women currently holding public office at National and local level
- Former female politicians (Local, National or European level)
- Parliamentary assistants working with female politicians
- Civil servants
- Women's community leaders, groups and organisations

Output

Production of final research report with a short executive summary.

The draft final report (subject to minor revisions only) is to be delivered by **7th September 2025** 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. The design and publication of the Report is the responsibility of NWC. It is expected that the researchers will participate in the launch of the report.

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
2. 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

3. 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.

4. 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

Time-frame

- Tender to be submitted by 5pm on Monday 23rd June 2025
- Notice of award of tender by 7th July 2025
- Research report to be completed by 7th September 2025.

Conditions of Tender

- NWC reserves the right not to award a contract in the event that no proposal is deemed to be suitable.
- NWC requires that researchers will treat all information provided pursuant to this invitation to tender in strict confidence.
- Information supplied by tenderers will be treated as contractually binding. However, NWC reserves the right to seek clarification of any such information.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- Tenders that are delivered late will not be considered.

- h) 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.
- i) NWC will not be liable for any costs incurred in the preparation of the tender.
- j) 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).
- k) 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.
- l) 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 Liliana Fernandez, Leadership Officer, National Women's Council of Ireland, Lilianaf@nwci.ie to arrive no later than 5pm on **Monday 23rd June 2025**

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

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