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LEADERSHIP



# Women in Public Office

Supporting more women  
to run and be elected

Evaluation report  
August 2025





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# Executive summary

This report evaluates the effectiveness of initiatives undertaken by Women for Election (WFE) Australia between November 2023 and March 2025 as part of the Women in Public Office Grant (WiPO), including the **EQUIP workshops, online masterclasses, and mentoring program**. It also examines the use of the educational platform, **Campaign in Your Pocket™ (CiYP)**,<sup>1</sup> which was developed as part of the project.

The WiPO program has been successful at attracting women from its key cohorts, with more than 70 per cent of event participants identifying with one or more under-represented communities, including Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM), First Nations, women living in rural, regional, and remote locations, women with disabilities, young women (18-28), and LGBTQIA+ and non-binary individuals.

Nearly a third of WiPO program participants have nominated for election, with 37% per cent being elected. While the nomination and election rates varied considerably across the program's key cohorts, more data is needed to comprehensively evaluate the program's effectiveness in terms of boosting nominations and election outcomes in individual cohorts.

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**more than  
70%**  
of program  
participants  
identify as coming  
from one or more  
under-represented  
communities

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**nearly  
1 in 3**  
program  
participants  
nominated for  
election

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**37%**  
of those nominated  
so far were elected

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wfe.org.au/campaign-in-your-pocket/>

WiPO participants who attended masterclasses and EQUIP/EQUIP/FN were particularly likely to nominate and be elected. Use of CiYP also increased the likelihood of nominations and election, though to a slightly lesser extent. In contrast, attendance in mentoring showed no measurable impact on nominations or election outcomes. More data over a longer timeframe is needed to fully assess the impact of each program element and combination of program elements on nominations and election results. This analysis should consider variables such as participants' prior political experience, intentions to run for office, and the government level they are targeting.

The available evaluation data for EQUIP/EQUIP-FN indicates that it has a positive impact on women's confidence and intentions to run:

- More than 95 per cent of participants indicated that they felt **more confident about running for a political office** after attending the EQUIP training.
- Close to half of the participants indicated they **intended to run for political office at the next election** after attending the EQUIP training, compared to a third before the training.
- Both the **increased confidence and intentions to run** associated with attending EQUIP are also associated with subsequent nominations.

Based on these findings, we provide several recommendations focused on the supplementation of existing data and monitoring individual cohorts to further maximise the program's impact for all participants.

# Overview

The Women's Leadership and Development Program, Women in Public Office (WiPO) Grant was awarded to Women for Election (WFE) Australia over five financial years from 2023 to 2027 to equip and encourage women\* across the political spectrum to run for public office at local, state, and federal levels. Specifically, the grant aims to:

1. Increase the representation and diversity of women ***running for public office.***
2. Increase representation and diversity ***in public office.***
3. Improved gender equality and diversity ***in parliaments.***

\* The WiPO program has an inclusive definition of women, aiming to inspire and equip the diverse experiences of those including **trans, cis and non-binary** individuals.

This report provides the second mid-program evaluation of the effectiveness of the WiPO program between November 2023 and March 2025.

The ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the program's progress by the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL) is designed to enable continuous improvement, effective program delivery, maximise outcomes over the life of the grant, and inform future actions to drive systemic change. Program elements evaluated in this report include:

- In-person and online **EQUIP** and **EQUIP-First Nations (EQUIP-FN)** training sessions held between November 2023 and March 2025;
- The online **MASTERCLASS** series, held between April 2024 and February 2025;
- **Peer Mentoring for Success** program sessions held between January 2024 and February 2025 (led by consortia partner, Australian Local Government Women's Association; ALGWA);
- Usage of the **Campaign in Your Pocket (CiYP)** online platform between April 2024 and March 2025

**EQUIP** is a free training workshop, available in-person and online. It provides tools and techniques, in a politically neutral forum, to enable participants to run for public office or assist other women with their political campaigns.

**EQUIP-FN** is designed for those who identify as First Nations women. It has been delivered as an online workshop and is either a stand-alone half-day addition to EQUIP, or combined with EQUIP into a 1.5-day event.

WFE is progressively offering tailored content for women living in regional/rural locations, women living with disability, young women (18-28), women and non-binary individuals from the queer community, and CARM women, similar to the EQUIP-FN workshop.

**Online Masterclasses** are focused, one-hour sessions designed to deepen participants' understanding of key campaign topics and strengthen core political skills. While the masterclasses are primarily designed for women who have completed EQUIP, they are open to all women, regardless of where they are on their political journey. Participants can register for individual masterclasses based on their interests, needs, and level of experience.

**Campaign in Your Pocket (CiYP)** is a free digital education platform designed by Women for Election. It provides a variety of tools and information to help women run for public office, including step-by-step lessons for self-paced learning covering different aspects of political campaigning, live sessions with experts, stories and resources, and community support and forums.

**Peer Mentoring** is open to all women who are running for public office or supporting another woman on their campaign and who have completed EQUIP/EQUIP-FN. The program is delivered by the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) as a WiPO Consortia Partner.

Each mentoring 'cycle' runs for approximately a month over four sessions, with a commitment of 1.5 hours per week from participants. Each cycle is led by a woman with relevant electoral and government experience, matched with a small cohort of fellow mentees. The session has traditionally been run ahead of local, state and federal elections, and mentors are matched to the level of government interest of the candidate.

This report covers:

- **Attendance** in different WiPO initiatives
- **Demographic characteristics** of WiPO event participants
- A summary of **nominations and electoral outcomes** of WiPO participants
- **Impact of attending** different initiatives within the WiPO program on nominations and electoral outcomes
- EQUIP training's impact on participants' **confidence, intentions and likelihood to run** for public office
- Recommendations for further **evaluation and training**



# Background

In 2023, the Australian Government, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, awarded Women for Election (WFE) a Women in Public Office (WiPO) grant of **\$5 million over five years** to increase the representation and diversity of women in public office.

WFE leads a consortium of gender specialist organisations, including ALGWA, Quantum Impact Group Pty Ltd (QiG), and the Global Institute for Women's Leadership (GIWL), at the Australian National University.<sup>1</sup>

WFE aims to deliver the WiPO grant through a three-pronged incubator program designed to build and support a pipeline of diverse women preparing to enter public office at all levels of government.

1. Place-based training events
2. Online training forums
3. A tech-based training platform, 'Campaign in Your Pocket' (CiYP), containing candidate resources and support forums.

Peer-led mentoring is offered as additional support after attending EQUIP or Masterclasses, and to any women who have completed campaign training with other organisations.

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<sup>1</sup> Initial consortia partners included also Ruth McGowan Pty Ltd, whose engagement concluded in 2024.

The target cohorts for the WiPO project include:

- Culturally and Racially Marginalised (CARM) women;
- First Nations women;
- Women with disabilities;
- Women from the LGBTQIA+ community;
- Women living in rural, regional, and remote locations; and
- Young women (18-28 y.o.).

The WiPO program is designed for women at different levels of political engagement including those ready to run for political office, those who want to increase their knowledge of the political process, those who already have knowledge and experience but need to be prompted to run (potential future candidates), and those interested in providing support to other women running for office (allies/supporters).



# Scope of this report

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more than  
**1,100**

attendees have  
taken part in  
WiPO initiatives,  
including...

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**627**

individual women,  
and...

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**206**

women attending  
multiple events

Program elements evaluated in this report include:

- n = 46 in-person and online EQUIP and EQUIP-FN training sessions held between November 2023 and March 2025 [both attendance and detailed evaluation data]
- n = 26 online masterclasses held between April 2024 and February 2025 [only attendance data]
- n = 15 mentoring sessions held between May 2024 and February 2025 [only attendance data]
- Number of Campaign in Your Pocket platform accesses between April 2024 and March 2025

As of March 2025, there have been 1,172 attendees at WiPO initiatives. This includes 627 individual women participating to date, with 206 participants who have attended multiple events. The term ‘participant’ in this report refers to a person who engaged in at least one WiPO initiative across the reporting period. The overall number of participants is lower than the number of attendees, as some participants engaged in multiple WiPO initiatives and/or events.

Table 1 shows the number of women who attended each WiPO event series and type. Throughout the evaluated period, online masterclasses attracted the most attendees (n = 564), followed by in-person (n = 302) and online (n = 144) EQUIP workshops and mentoring (n = 55<sup>2</sup>). A total of 85 participants accessed Campaign in Your Pocket.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Among those, n = 43 attended the full mentoring cycle and n = 12 attended some parts of the mentoring cycle.

3 This number includes anyone who accessed CiYP at least three times during the reporting period.

**Table 1. Number of WiPO attendees for the reporting period  
November 23-March 25**

Event series	Event type	Number of attendees*
EQUIP	In-person	302
EQUIP	Online	144
EQUIP First Nations	In-person	22
Masterclass	Online	564
Mentoring	Online	55
Campaign in Your Pocket	Digital platform	85
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,172</b>

\*206 participants attended more than one event.

Attendance at EQUIP ranged between 1-4 times, with most participants attending it once. All participants attending EQUIP-FN attended it only once, however n = 13 participants attended both EQUIP-FN and EQUIP.

Attendance in Masterclasses ranged between 1-15 times, with participants attending on average 2.2 events. Attendance in mentoring sessions ranged between 1-2 times, with most participants attending one mentoring cycle. Campaign in Your Pocket login frequencies ranged from 3 to 25 times, with participants accessing the platform on average 6.3 times.

Most participants (n = 479) attended only one event type. Among those who attended more than one event type, n = 67 attended EQUIP and Masterclasses, n = 20 attended EQUIP and Mentoring, and n = 20 attended a combination of EQUIP, Masterclasses, and Mentoring.

Other event combinations were less popular. Among those who accessed CiYP,  $n = 14$  also attended EQUIP,  $n = 9$  attended Masterclasses, and  $n = 23$  attended both EQUIP and Masterclasses. Other combinations were less popular, and  $n = 22$  did not attend any event.

Table 2 shows the number of event participants who provided survey responses before and after the training. Across all events, 528 out of 627 participants (84%) provided pre-training data.

These pre-training responses were used to describe participant characteristics and inform baseline comparisons for the EQUIP training presented in the sections below. Post-training data were provided by 194 EQUIP and EQUIP-FN participants, representing 42% of all EQUIP participants. The response rate varied by event type from 32% to 55%.



**Table 2. Number of WiPO participants who provided their before/ after survey responses**

Event series	Event type	Number of participants	Pre-training/	Post-training data
EQUIP	In-person	296	278	162
EQUIP	Online	139	130	57
EQUIP First Nations	In-person	22	20	7
Master-classes	Online	260	207	*
Mentoring	In-person	53	51	**
CiYP	Digital platform	85	65	n/a
<b>Total</b>		<b>627</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>194</b>

\*Numbers in the table reflect the number of unique participants per event category (defined by event series and event type). If a participant attended events across different categories (e.g., both an in-person EQUIP and an online Masterclass), they are counted separately in each relevant category.

\*\* At the time of preparing the report, Masterclass and Mentoring evaluation data were not available to the research team.

# Who participated in WiPO events?

Table 3 shows the number of WiPO participants from each under-represented community targeted by the program.<sup>4</sup> Overall, the WiPO program has been largely successful at attracting women from its target cohorts, with more than 70 per cent of participants identifying with one or more under-represented communities.

**Table 3. Number of WiPO participants by community**

Program cohort	Number of WiPO participants	%*
Women living in rural, regional and remote locations	245	39%
Young women (18-28 y.o.)	174	28%
CARM women	122	20%
Women with disabilities	119	19%
First Nations women	113	18%
LGBTIQA+/non-binary	53	8%
None of the above	155	25%
I'd rather not say	31	5%

\*Numbers do not sum up to 100% as a large percentage of participants (41%; n = 258 out of 627) identified with more than one underrepresented community. The largest intersectional group comprised young women residing in rural, regional, or remote areas (n = 150). Other considerably large intersectional groups (n = 81 each) included women living in rural, regional, or remote areas who identified as First Nations women, women with disabilities and CARM women, respectively.

4 The following analyses are limited to WiPO participants who filled out a registration survey and provided their background information.



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**more than  
70%**

of participants  
identify as  
belonging to at  
least one under-  
represented  
community

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**39%**

of participants are  
women living in  
rural, regional and  
remote locations

---

**28%**

are young women  
(aged 18-28)

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**20%**

are Culturally  
and Regionally  
Marginalised  
(CARM) women

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**19%**

are women with  
disabilities

---

**18%**

are First Nations  
women

---

**8%**

are LGBTQIA+/non-  
binary

Women living in rural, regional and remote locations have been the largest participant cohort (39%), followed by young women (28%), CARM women (20%), women with disabilities (19%), First Nations Women (18%), and LGBTQIA+/non-binary participants (8%). A small proportion of participants (5%) preferred not to disclose their identity, and a quarter did not identify with any of the target cohorts.

A breakdown of the cohort data by different event types indicated that women living in regional, rural and remote locations were the largest cohort in both in-person (46%) and online EQUIP training (38%), and online masterclasses (39%), and had a notably high representation in mentoring events (60%). First Nations women and young women were more likely to attend in-person EQUIP (27% and 35%, respectively) rather than online EQUIP (17% and 28%, respectively) or online masterclasses (11% and 26%, respectively). Young women were also relatively more likely to attend mentoring (40%). Conversely, women with disabilities and CARM women were relatively more likely to attend mentoring sessions (26% each), online EQUIP (27% and 24%, respectively) and in-person EQUIP (22% and 23%, respectively), rather than online EQUIP or online masterclasses (17% and 15%, respectively). No noticeable differences in attendance were observed for LGBTQIA+/non-binary individuals across different event types, with representation ranging from 8% to 10%.

Most participants (52%) were interested in the local government, followed by federal (20%) and state government (17%). This interest was largely driven by the election cycle, with most electable positions being in the local government across the reporting period.

Interest in local government was highest among CARM women (55%) and women living in regional, rural, and remote areas (52%) and lowest among LGBTQIA+/non-



binary participants (41%), young women (46%) and First Nations women (47%). Women with disabilities (12%) and CARM women (12%) expressed relatively little interest in state government.

**Table 4. Number of WiPO participants by the government level of interest**

Demographic	Local	State	Federal	Unsure
All WiPO participants*	52% (n = 256)	17% (n = 84)	20% (n = 98)	22% (n = 107)
Women living in rural, regional and remote locations	52% (n = 120)	17% (n = 40)	21% (n = 48)	23% (n = 52)
Young women (18-28 y.o.)	46% (n = 76)	17% (n = 28)	22% (n = 36)	25% (n = 41)
CARM women	55% (n = 66)	12% (n = 14)	19% (n = 23)	28% (n = 33)
Women with disabilities	50% (n = 57)	12% (n = 14)	24% (n = 27)	28% (n = 32)
First Nations women	47% (n = 43)	16% (n = 15)	22% (n = 20)	32% (n = 29)
LGBTIQ+/non-binary	41% (n = 20)	16% (n = 8)	29% (n = 14)	27% (n = 13)

\*n=45 (out of 488) WiPO participants indicated their interest in more than one government level. Participants from underrepresented communities could identify with more than one program cohort and express their interest in more than one government level; thus, both the row and column totals may exceed 100%.

Conversely, LGBTIQ+/non-binary participants (29%) and women with disabilities (24%) showed relatively strong interest in the federal government. A relatively high proportion of participants in some key cohorts (32% of First Nations women, 28% of CARM women and women with disabilities, compared to 22% among all

WiPO participants) were unsure about their preferred level of government.

We also examined the political affiliation of WiPO participants. Table 5 shows that, from the available data, a large proportion of participants identified either as independent (45%) or were unsure about their party alignment (15%). However, an important qualification to these findings is that most of these participants were interested in local government, where party politics still plays a relatively smaller role than in the state or federal government. A considerable number of those who were unsure about their political affiliation were also unsure about the level of government they would consider running for, indicating that these women might be at the very beginning of their engagement with electoral politics.

Among the remaining participants, 16% aligned with the Australian Labour Party, 13% with the Australian Greens, 5% with the Coalition parties, and 5% with other parties. The low numbers of participants affiliated with the Coalition parties could indicate a broader pattern of low support for these parties among women, and a systematic barrier outside of the control of WiPO.

**Table 5. Party affiliation of WiPO participants**

Political party	N	%
Australian Labor Party	60	16%
Coalition parties	20	5%
Australian Greens	50	13%
Independent	171	45%
Other	19	5%
Unsure	58	15%
Total	378	100%

# Nominations and elections

Among the 627 individual WiPO participants included in this report, 33% have already nominated for election, and 12% have been elected. This means that 37% of those who nominated were elected.

Table 6 shows the percentage of WiPO participants who nominated and were elected, by program cohort. While more time and data are needed to assess the program's full impact on nomination rates over multiple election cycles, the data so far suggest that the program is effective in encouraging diverse women to run for election. 36% LGBTIQA+/non-binary participants, 36% women living in rural, regional, and remote locations and 34% young women have nominated to date. However, the available data indicate that the program may be slightly less effective in encouraging nominations from CARM women (31%), First Nations women (31%), and women with disabilities (25%).

More data are needed to assess over a longer term what barriers might be discouraging these women from running, including a closer examination of the time between attending WiPO and the nomination period and relevant election cycle for either local, state, or federal government.

While 47% of women living in rural, regional and remote areas who nominated have been elected, the election-to-nomination rate was considerably lower among First Nations women (23%), CARM women (24%), and LGBTIQA+/non-binary participants (26%). This variation suggests that while WiPO initiatives may support nomination among under-represented cohorts, different structural or contextual barriers might influence election outcomes, and these require further investigation.

We acknowledge, however, that a considerable variation in the proportion of nominations and electoral outcomes could be attributable to small numbers within some categories and the government-level participants nominated for, and thus should be interpreted with caution and require further longitudinal monitoring and analysis.

**Table 6. Nominations and electoral outcomes by WiPO participant cohort**

Demographic	Number of WiPO participants*	% (n) nominated	% (n) elected	% elected/nominated
All WiPO participants*	627	34% (n=211)	12% (n=77)	36%
Women living in rural, regional and remote locations	245	36% (n=88)	17% (n=41)	47%
Young women (18-28 y.o.)	174	34% (n=59)	14% (n=25)	42%
CARM women	122	31% (n=38)	7% (n=9)	24%
Women with disabilities	119	25% (n=30)	8% (n=9)	30%
First Nations women	113	31% (n=35)	7% (n=8)	23%
LGBTIQA+/non-binary	53	36% (n=19)	9% (n=5)	26%
None of the above	155	45% (n=70)	14% (n=22)	31%
I'd rather not say	31	35% (n=11)	26% (n=8)	73%

\*The total N for underrepresented communities is higher than the total number of participants, as most identified with more than one underrepresented group.

# Nominations and election outcomes from attending different WiPO elements

To assess the relative contribution of different WiPO initiatives, including EQUIP/EQUIP-FN, Masterclasses, Mentoring and CiYP, to participants nominating for election and their electoral outcomes, we conducted a series of logistic regression models. In the models, we tested the binary outcomes of whether or not a participant 1. nominated for election or not and 2. were elected or not.

Attendance in each program element was tested both as an individual predictor (individual models) and controlling for attendance in other program elements (full models). We also assessed how different program elements worked together (e.g., if those who attended both EQUIP and Masterclasses were more likely to nominate and be elected than those who attended only one event series).

For WiPO events (EQUIP/EQUIP-FN, Masterclasses and Mentoring), we also explored the average time between event attendance and subsequent nominations.

## Nominations

Attendance in EQUIP/EQUIP-FN was positively associated with the likelihood of subsequent nominations in an individual model ( $B = 0.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 1.94$ ). Those who attended EQUIP had a 32% probability of nominating, compared to a 20% probability among non-attendees. However, in a model additionally controlling for the number of attended

events, those who attended more than one EQUIP/ EQUIP-FN were not more likely to nominate than those who attended EQUIP only once ( $B = 0.13$ ,  $p = .72$ ). These results may suggest that attending EQUIP multiple times offers limited additional benefit in increasing nomination rates. However, we note that only a small proportion of participants attended EQUIP more than once, and further data collected over a longer period is needed to draw more definitive conclusions.

Attendance in online Masterclasses ( $B = 0.86$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 2.36$ ) and the number of attended masterclasses ( $B = 0.19$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $OR = 1.20$ ) were both positively associated with subsequent nominations in an individual model. Those who attended at least one masterclass had a 39% probability of nominating, compared to 19% among those who did not attend any masterclasses. The probability of nomination increased with each masterclass attended. For example, those who attended two masterclasses had a 44% probability of nominating and those who attended three had a 49% probability of nominating.

Similarly, attendance in mentoring sessions was positively associated with subsequent nominations in an individual model ( $B = 1.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 3.15$ ). Those who attended mentoring had a 49% probability of nominating compared to 23% for non-attenders. Given that almost all participants attended only one mentoring cycle, we did not include the number of attended sessions as a predictor in the analysis.

Usage of the CiYP platform, measured as the number of logins, was positively associated with the subsequent nomination in an individual model ( $B = 0.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 1.25$ ), with each additional login increasing the probability of nomination. For example, those who accessed CiYP 3 times had a 34% probability of nominating, those who accessed it 4 times had a 40%

probability of nominating, and those who accessed it 5 times had a 45% probability of nominating, compared to a 21% probability of nominating among those who did not use CiYP.

In a full model controlling for attendance in all WiPO program elements (EQUIP/EQUIP-FN, Masterclasses, Mentoring) and CiYP login times:

- Attendance in masterclasses was the strongest predictor of subsequent nominations ( $B = 1.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 2.99$ ): those who attended at least one masterclass had a 32% probability of nominating.
- EQUIP/FN attendance was the second strongest predictor of nominations ( $B = 0.62$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 1.86$ ): those who attended at least one EQUIP/EQUIP-FN had a 23% probability of nominating.
- CiYP usage was the third strongest predictor of nominations ( $B = 0.11$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $OR = 1.12$ ): those who accessed CiYP at least three times had a 15% probability of nominating.
- Mentoring attendance had no significant impact on the probability of subsequent nominations ( $B = 0.41$ ,  $p = .213$ ,  $OR = 1.50$ ), although we observed a positive trend with those who attended at least part of the mentoring cycle having a 19% probability of nominating.
- When added to this model, the number of attended masterclasses did not predict nominations ( $B = 0.05$ ,  $p > .05$ ,  $OR = 1.05$ ).

Additional models examining how different elements of the WiPO program work together to boost nomination rates did not point to any significant positive interactions between program elements.<sup>5</sup> This is likely

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<sup>5</sup> We found a significant negative interaction between attendance in EQUIP/EQUIP-FN and CiYP usage ( $B = -1.00$ ,  $p = .002$ ). Those who attended both EQUIP/EQUIP-FN and accessed CiYP had a lower probability of

since relatively few WiPO program participants to date have attended more than one program element. More data collected over a longer time frame is needed to better assess the added benefit of attending different combinations of WiPO initiatives.

Table 7 summarises the available data about the time between engaging with WiPO and subsequent nominations. Most WiPO participants nominated within a few months of attending their last event. However, we also found a considerable variance in the time leading to nominations, which ranged from a few days to more than a year, depending on the event type. This substantial variance in nomination times underscores the need for a longer-term assessment of the program’s effectiveness.

**Table 7. Time to nomination by WiPO event series**

Event series	Average number of days to nomination	Range (days)
EQUIP/EQUIP FN	132	3-478
Masterclass	113	23-290
Mentoring	92	30-133

### Elections

Attendance in EQUIP/EQUIP-FN was positively associated with the election status in an individual model ( $B = 0.73$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 2.07$ ). Those who attended EQUIP/EQUIP-FN had a 13% probability of being elected compared to 6% of non-attenders.

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nominating (27%) than those who only accessed CiYP (30%). However, more data are needed to assess the robustness and underlying reasons for this pattern of results.



However, the number of attended EQUIP/EQUIP-FN workshops had no impact on the election outcomes ( $p = .36$ ).

Similarly, attendance in masterclasses (yes/no) was positively associated with the election status in an individual model ( $B = 1.01$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 2.76$ ). Those who attended at least one masterclass had a 16% probability of being elected compared to 6% of non-attenders. In a model accounting for both attendance (yes/no) and the number of attended masterclasses, each additional masterclass increased the probability of being elected ( $B = 0.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 1.34$ ). For example, the probability of being elected was 11% among those who attended one masterclass, 14% among those who attended two masterclasses, and 18% among those who attended three masterclasses.

Attendance in mentoring was also positively associated with the election status in an individual model ( $B = 1.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 3.04$ ). Those who attended at least part of the mentoring cycle had a 21% probability of being elected compared to 8% of those who did not participate in mentoring.

Similarly, CiYP usage, measured as the number of times participants logged into CiYP was positively associated with electoral outcome in an individual model ( $B = 0.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 1.18$ ). For example, those who accessed CiYP three times had an 11% probability of being elected, those who accessed it five times had a 15% of being elected, and those who accessed it ten times had a 29% probability of being elected, compared to 7% among those who did not access CiYP.

In a full model controlling for attendance in all WiPO program elements (EQUIP/EQUIP-FN, Masterclasses, Mentoring) and CiYP login times:

- Attendance in masterclasses was the strongest predictor of being elected ( $B = 0.83$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $OR = 2.29$ ). Those who attended at least one masterclass had a 10% probability of being elected.
- Attendance in EQUIP/EQUIP-FN was the second biggest predictor of being elected ( $B = 0.55$ ,  $p = .017$ ,  $OR = 1.73$ ). Those who attended EQUIP/EQUIP-FN had an 8% probability of being elected.
- CiYP usage was the third strongest predictor of being elected ( $B = 0.11$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $OR = 1.12$ ). Those who accessed CiYP at least three times had a 5% probability of being elected.
- Attendance in mentoring had no significant impact on being elected ( $B = 0.26$ ,  $p = 0.53$ ,  $OR = 1.30$ ). Those who attended at least part of the mentoring cycle had a 6% probability of being elected.

Additional models examining how different elements of the WiPO program work together to boost participants' electoral outcomes did not point to any significant interactions between program elements. As with the nomination data, this is likely due to a relatively small overlap in participation in different program elements to date.

# EQUIP's impact beyond nominations



EQUIP seems to have a positive impact on participants' confidence to run for political office, regardless of the mode of delivery and pre-event confidence”

In this section, we present more detailed analyses examining the overall impact of the EQUIP training beyond nominations and elections. Note that for a small number of participants who attended more than one EQUIP or EQUIP-FN training ( $n = 40$ ), we only included data from the first event they attended in our analysis.

We also look in more detail at how participation in EQUIP/EQUIP-FN training impacts women from the under-represented communities targeted by the WiPO program. A limitation of this analysis is that, due to the small number of attendees with intersecting identities who provided their data, we have evaluated the program's effectiveness separately for each cohort, without being able to consider that some participants belonged to more than one under-represented community (intersectionality).

## Confidence to run for public office

As a background to this analysis, the existing academic literature demonstrates that women are less likely than men to consider themselves to be qualified for public office, even when they have the same experience, skills and credentials as their male counterparts (Lawless & Fox, 2008, 2013; Majumdar, 2021), leading to the gendered 'ambition gap' in politics. This gap remains present among elected politicians, with women seemingly expressing less parliamentary ambitions than men (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). This is a particularly strong barrier for young women, and even more so for those from rural areas, who very rarely see politics as a viable career (Plan International, 2022).

Evidence from the literature suggests that the ambition gap reflects the **systemic bias and gender stereotypes** discouraging women from running rather than actual gender differences in women's abilities, motivations or qualifications to lead (Fawcett Society, 2017; Piscopo & Kenny, 2020). Consequently, many women with a longstanding interest in politics need to be 'tapped on the shoulder' to consider running (Fawcett Society, 2017) or suffer from low confidence and imposter syndrome - feeling that they do not belong in positions of power. Evidence shows that this lack of self-belief is particularly pronounced among women with disabilities (Evans & Reher, 2023) and those living in rural areas (Maiolo, 2000).

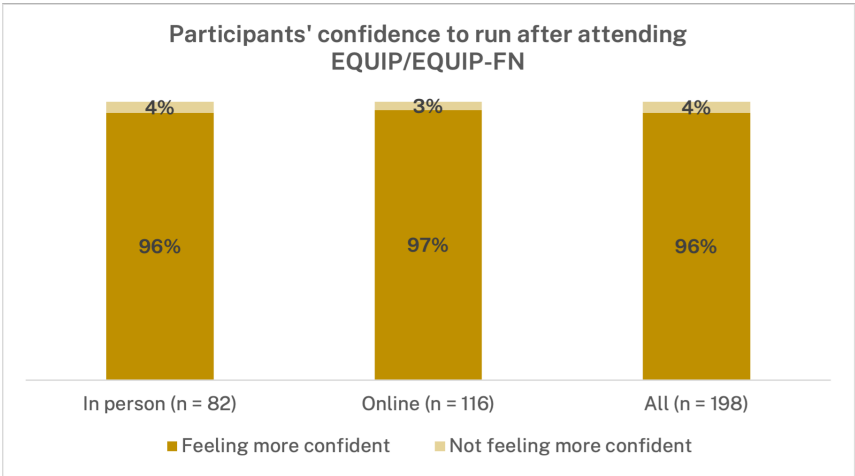


The ambition gap reflects the systemic bias and gender stereotypes discouraging women from running rather than actual gender differences in women's abilities, motivations or qualifications to lead"

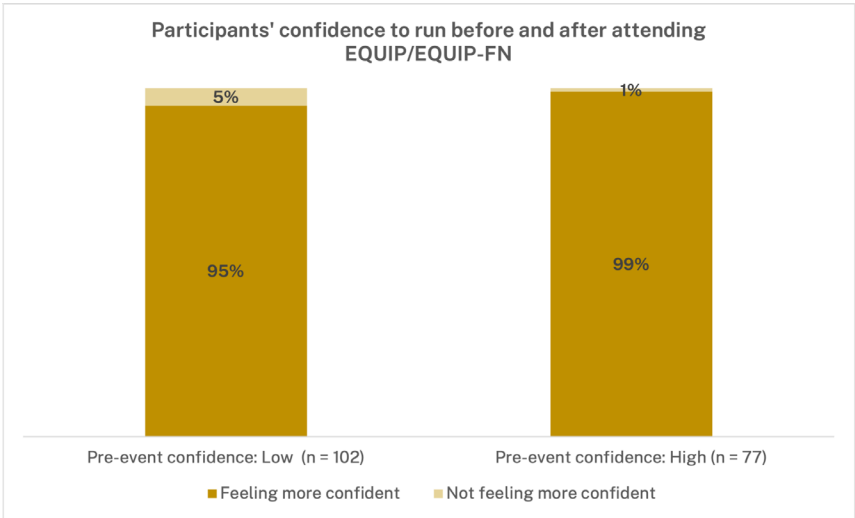
Figure 1 shows participants' confidence in running for a political office. After attending an EQUIP/EQUIP-FN training, 31% of all participants (n = 198) were asked whether they felt more confident about running for public office using a Yes/No response format. Almost all surveyed participants who were asked this question (96%) indicated they were more confident to run for public office after attending EQUIP/EQUIP-FN.

EQUIP seems to have a positive impact on participants' confidence to run for political office, regardless of the mode of delivery and pre-event confidence (see Figures 1 & 2). 96% of those who attended in-person EQUIP/EQUIP-FN and 97% of those who attended online felt more confident about running. Similarly, 95% of those with low confidence and 99% of those with high confidence before attending EQUIP/EQUIP-FN felt more confident about running after the training.

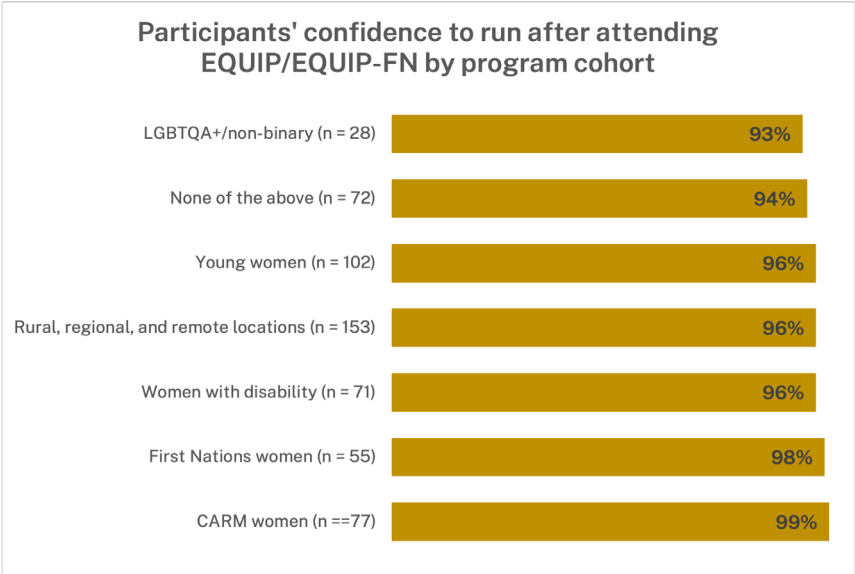
**Figure 1. Participants' confidence to run for a political office after attending EQUIP/EQUIP-FN.**



**Figure 2. Participants' confidence to run for a political office before and after attending EQUIP/EQUIP-FN.**



**Figure 3. Confidence to run for a political office after EQUIP/ EQUIP-FN by program cohort.**



Similar to the general pattern observed among all participants, the vast majority of participants from under-represented communities reported feeling more confident to run for public office after attending an EQUIP/EQUIP-FN training (see Figure 3).

That percentage was the highest among CARM women (99%) and First Nations women (98%), and the lowest among LGBTQIA+/non-binary participants (93%) and those not identifying with any of the under-represented communities. It might be therefore useful to assess what factors might increase the program’s impact among participants in these two groups.

**Overcoming barriers**

In the post-training surveys, participants were additionally asked about what would make them



(even) more confident. This question was open-ended to allow participants to elaborate on their responses. Participants indicated a range of factors that would make them more confident to run. These included:

- Time for reflection and opportunities to apply the skills
- Access to more training and resources
- Access to mentoring and support
- Community and networking
- Campaign financing



The number one issue holding women back from running for office [according to our earlier report] was a lack of funding for campaigning”

These answers echo findings from our earlier report on barriers to women’s participation in politics (Mikołajczak et al., 2024), in which the number one issue holding women back from running for office (as indicated by more than 7 in 10 survey participants) was a **lack of funding for campaigning**. Other resourcing concerns, mentioned by EQUIP participants above, such as a **lack of campaign training or networking opportunities**, also emerged in our earlier research, with more than 4 in 10 participants naming these as issues (44% and 43%, respectively), and 15% highlighting them as major barriers.

These barriers are also reflected in prior research showing that the **financial cost** of entering politics poses a considerable obstacle for many women (Rosenbluth et al., 2015) and is particularly pertinent for diverse candidates, as gender, age and race and disability all influence candidates’ access to resources and funding (Milione, 2019). As some donors and political parties remain sceptical about investing resources in women’s campaigns (Sanbonmatsu, 2015), women more often than men rely on external campaign financing (Rosenbluth et al., 2015). The financial obstacles continue post-election in local politics, where low levels of economic compensation are often an

# What would make participants feel *even more confident*?

## Access to more training & resources

"Campaign material and advice"

"More events like this, and more materials"

"Additional samples of previous successful campaigns"

"Attending more similar workshops/trainings"

"More specific knowledge about electoral rules and legislation"

"I think more discussion about the risks related to running to current roles"

## Access to mentoring & support

"Definitely mentorship... someone or a resource to be able to ask questions"

"Fortnightly catch up 1 hour sessions to sustain the passion to run"

"Continued conversations"

"Your help and encouragement ongoing :)"

"One-on-one sessions"

## Community & networking

"Connecting with other women who are standing for elections"

"It would be good to have contact list of people who attended"

"I would like to see someone else doing what they do"

## Time for reflection & opportunities to apply the skills

"More time to implement all I have learnt"

"I need more time and clarity. Probably to attend further classes"

"More time to organise my campaign"

"Experience and time. Hard to give this in a classroom"

"More practise chances with speaking"

## Campaign financing

"Help with funding a campaign"

"Stability around financing not only a campaign but ongoing work"



impediment to women seeking public office (Carson et al., 2021).

Women's lack of **access to information, training, mentors, and networks** has been shown in the literature to be another major obstacle to their entry into politics and ability to further their political careers (Culhane & Olchawski, 2018). While men tend to support and promote other men, women MPs report feeling like 'an outsider' or 'blocked [from] ... being able to stand' by insular networks controlled by men (Culhane & Olchawski, 2018). Female politicians also often miss after-hours networking opportunities due to caring responsibilities (McKay, 2011). Access to information and support is particularly challenging for CARM women, with a lack of access to influential networks and sponsors, and difficulties in understanding the complexities of the Australian electoral system seen as a significant barrier, particularly to those born overseas (Diversity Council Australia, 2023; Milione, 2019).

The WiPO project can overcome some of these barriers by providing more training (including experience-informed training on ways of securing campaign funding), mentoring, and access to support networks. However, there are significant systemic barriers that are beyond the scope of the program, such as campaign funding models, candidate selection processes, competing time and caring demands, in-person and online harassment from the public, and working culture in parliaments (Mikołajczak et al., 2024). Thus, it is important to continue to monitor the key barriers to political engagement faced by participants, particularly those from politically under-represented groups, and assess whether there are any adaptations or adjustments to the training provided by WFE that could contribute to overcoming any of these.

## Intentions to run for public office

Both before and after the EQUIP training, participants who attended EQUIP between April 2024 and March 2025 were asked whether they intended to run in the next election (n = 212, 50% of all participants indicated their intentions to run before attending EQUIP; and n = 98, 23% after attending EQUIP). Participants could reply ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘unsure’ to this question.

Figure 4 shows the percentage of EQUIP participants who indicated they had intended to run for political office at the next election.

Before the training, 25% indicated they did not intend to run and 39% were yet unsure whether they would run. Notably, 35% participants indicated they would run for public office in the next election before participating in the training, indicating that EQUIP also attracts women who already know they want to run but might want to prepare themselves better for that journey.



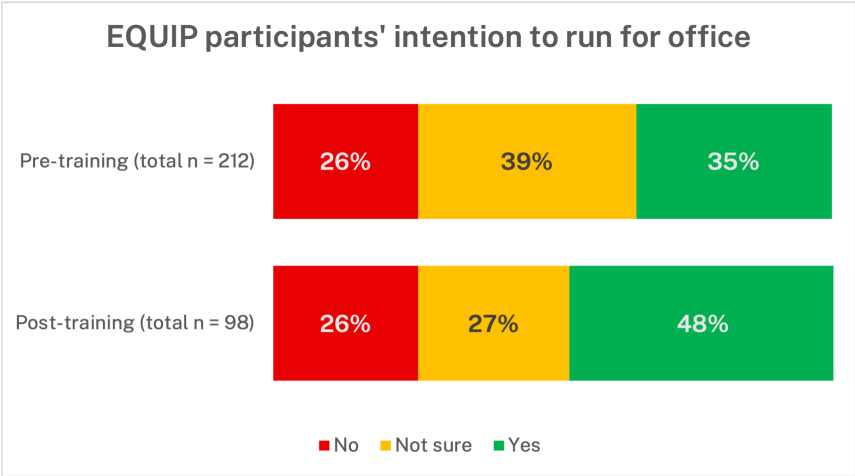
One-time participation in an EQUIP might be enough to convince some undecided participants to put their hand up for election, but is insufficient to persuade those not intending to run”

The available data demonstrates that EQUIP has had a positive impact on participants’ intentions to run, with 48% participants indicating they intend to run after the training ( $X^2(1, N = 310) = 4.27, p = .039$ ). The positive trend in ‘yes’ responses was accompanied by a decrease in the proportion of those who were unsure whether they would run for political office at the next election (39% pre-training vs 27% post-training), while the proportion of those who indicated they were not going to run remained unchanged (26% pre-training vs 26% post-training). This suggests that one-time

participation in an EQUIP might be enough to convince some undecided participants to put their hand up for election, but is insufficient to persuade those not intending to run (who might have various reasons not to do so, or attend EQUIP to support other women candidates rather than run themselves).

Sample sizes for individual program cohorts for this question, particularly the available post-training data, were too small to be meaningfully analysed. Increasing response rates to the surveys at future events would allow for providing more nuance to the current findings in terms of the socio-demographic backgrounds of women intending to run.

**Figure 4. EQUIP participants’ intentions to run for political office.**



Participants attending some of the earlier EQUIP events were asked to indicate their intentions to run using a 1-‘very unlikely’ to 7-‘very likely’ response scale (rather than the yes/no/unsure response options). The pre-training data for this question was available for n = 119



After the training, 78% rated their likelihood of running for election as high... compared to 60% before the training”

(28%) EQUIP participants, and post-training data was available for n = 69 (16%) EQUIP participants.

After the training, 78% rated their likelihood of running for election as high (as indicated by 5-7 responses on a 1-7 scale), compared to 60% before the training, indicating that the training had a positive impact on participants’ declared likelihood of running for office.<sup>6</sup>

## Confidence to run and nominations

We additionally examined whether EQUIP participants’ post-training confidence to run is associated with subsequent nominations. For participants who both nominated and attended EQUIP more than once, we considered their confidence scores after the training session closest to their nomination date. For those who have not yet nominated, we considered the confidence responses after their most recent training session. We also controlled for the pre-training confidence. Results of a logistic regression indicated that higher post-training confidence was positively associated with subsequent nomination ( $B = 0.72$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $OR = 2.06$ ).

## Intentions to run and nominations

We then looked at whether participants’ post-training intentions to run (yes/unsure/no) were associated with subsequent nominations. Similar to the previous analysis, for participants who both nominated and attended EQUIP more than once, we considered their intentions after the training session closest to their nomination date. For those who have not yet nominated, we considered intentions after their most

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<sup>6</sup> A Wilcoxon rank-sum test confirmed that the average post-training scores ( $M = 5.9$ ) were significantly higher than the average pre-training scores ( $M = 4.7$ ),  $W = 5026.5$ ,  $p = .004$ .

recent training session. We also controlled for the total number of EQUIP/EQUIP-FN events each participant attended. The results showed that post-training intention was positively associated with subsequent nominations ( $OR = 2.08, p < .001$ ).<sup>7</sup>

We also assessed whether participants' post-training intentions of running for office, rated on a 1-very unlikely to 7-very likely to run scale, predicted election nomination. As in previous models, participants were matched to the event closest to their nomination date, or their most recent attended event if they did not nominate. The results showed that post-training likelihood was positively associated with subsequent nominations ( $OR = 3.16, p < .001$ ). In a model that additionally controlled for pre-training likelihood, post-training likelihood remained a stronger predictor of subsequent nominations.

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7 We also run a separate model examining the association of pre-EQUIP intentions and subsequent nominations. Results indicated a similar positive association as for post-training intentions ( $OR = 2.52, p < .001$ ).



# Summary and recommendations

Available data suggests that the WiPO program has been largely effective, with nearly one-third of participants nominating and more than one-third of those elected to various levels of government. WiPO participants who attended masterclasses and EQUIP/EQUIP/FN

were particularly likely to nominate and be elected. Use of CiYP also increased the likelihood of nominations and election, though to a slightly lesser extent. In contrast, attendance in mentoring showed no measurable impact on nominations or election outcomes. This may be partially due to the low registration numbers, attrition and response rates to mentoring so far, which rendered the corresponding effect for nominations non-significant, despite its similarity in size to the one observed for EQUIP/EQUIP-FN.

Additional data over a longer timeframe is needed to fully assess the effectiveness of each program element and how different program elements of the WiPO program build upon each other, leading to subsequent nominations and election outcomes.

For example, based on the available data, it remains unclear which types of women are drawn to each program element, particularly in terms of their prior political experience and intentions to run for office (beyond data collected from EQUIP/EQUIP-FN participants). This uncertainty may be influencing



The WiPO program has been largely effective, with nearly one-third of participants nominating and more than one-third of those elected to various levels of government”



The WiPO program has been broadly successful in attracting women from under-represented communities — with more than 70% of participants identifying with one or more key cohort”

the observed results. We recommend that these two variables be systematically included in the registration surveys for all new WiPO participants. Additionally, to better understand the root causes of low registration and attrition in the mentoring component, we suggest gathering more qualitative feedback — such as through email — from eligible participants and those who attended only the initial sessions without completing the full mentoring cycle.

While the WiPO program has been broadly successful in attracting women from under-represented communities — with more than 70% of participants identifying with one or more key cohorts — the available data indicates that certain groups, including women with disabilities, First Nations women, CARM women, and LGBTIQ+/non-binary participants, may require ongoing monitoring and additional support. In particular, their decisions to nominate (or not), as well as their relatively low electoral success rates, may be influenced by factors such as election timing, level of government, constituency characteristics, prior political experience, and systemic barriers that disproportionately affect these groups. We recommend that all of these variables be incorporated into the ongoing monitoring of the program’s effectiveness.

A closer examination of the available evidence for EQUIP training suggests that it has had a positive impact on participants’ confidence and intentions to run for office — both of which are linked to subsequent nominations. This points to confidence-building as one of the most critical mechanisms through which the WiPO program supports women in their political journeys, particularly in encouraging and preparing them to run. Future research could explore which aspects of the EQUIP training and other WiPO initiatives — such as increased knowledge of the



The training has had a positive impact on participants' confidence, regardless of the mode of delivery ...and for all under-represented cohorts”

political process, access to peer networks and mentoring, or exposure to role models — are most effective in boosting participants' confidence.

Notably, the training has had a positive impact on participants' confidence, regardless of the mode of delivery (in person vs online), and for all under-represented cohorts targeted by the program. This suggests that rolling out online training could reach a broader pool of interested women who might not have the capacity to attend in-person events (for example, due to the remoteness of their location, accessibility requirements or caring responsibilities) without compromising the program's effectiveness.

To get more nuance into the EQUIP's impact on participant's confidence, we recommend that the current response options in the post-event surveys (feeling more versus less confident to run after attending the event) be replaced with either a 1-7 or 1-5 Likert-type scale (e.g., 1-definitely less confident, 2-less confident, 3-slightly less confident, 4-equally confident, 5-slightly more confident, 6-more confident, 7-definitely more confident).

More longitudinal data are needed to evaluate whether the confidence boost from EQUIP/EQUIP-FN attendance can be sustained over a longer time and whether it can increase intentions to run and the chances of nominations. EQUIP/EQUIP-FN has had a positive impact on participants' intentions to run. The training seems to be particularly effective at persuading those who are initially unsure about their decision to run, but more data are needed to establish for whom and when intentions to run translate into nomination.



More data are also needed to establish the reasons more than half of the EQUIP participants indicated that they would not run in the next election or remained undecided, including the need for:

- More time to upskill, prepare, and reflect on the decision to run
- Better support and training
- Recognising systematic barriers outside of the scope of the WiPO project, such as hostile workplace culture and caring demands
- Recognising different ways women want to engage in politics, such as supporting other women candidates and non-electoral forms of political participation

Some of these reasons could be assessed in subsequent reports based on nomination data and participation rates in different elements of the WiPO program tracked over a longer time.

While the WiPO project can overcome some of the barriers by providing more training (including experience-informed training on ways to secure campaign funding), mentoring, and access to support networks, the effectiveness of the program among some key cohorts can be limited by the presence of more systemic barriers beyond the program's control, such as the limitations of the current campaign funding models, candidate selection process, online and in-person harassment, and a lack of corresponding mechanisms or measures addressing them (Mikołajczak et al., 2024). Thus, it is important to continue monitoring the key barriers faced by participants, particularly those from politically under-represented groups, along with their political engagement. Finally, future evaluations of the program could be further enhanced by incorporating measures that assess broader forms of active citizenship beyond just electoral participation.

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