

The following are questions and answers from a webinar the WIN Challenge team hosted on November 19. Please review these and the FAQ on each pillar site for more information, and email questions@winchallenge.org with more questions or need technical support.

To ensure fairness for all our applicants, we are not able to provide guidance or feedback that is very specific to proposed solutions or team structures. That said, we welcome a wide range of approaches, solutions, barriers addressed, audiences, beneficiaries, types of impact and success, and more.

And we encourage you to review the **About** pages, **application requirements**, and **scoring rubrics** on each pillar site to learn more about the priorities for the WIN Challenge.

ELIGIBILITY

Q1: How do we decide which challenge is the best fit for our solution?

A: If you haven't already, we recommend taking the readiness tool on each pillar site. This is a quick and confidential quiz to help determine your organization's eligibility and fit for each challenge.

Please also view the About pages to learn more details on the focus on each challenge. We have also described the specific barriers we aim to address through each pillar. As mentioned, please also review the scoring rubric on each site to better understand how we have defined a strong application.

Q2: Is it better to apply to all or focus on the best fit, and how do reviewers view multiple applications from the same group?

A: Please submit an application that you have determined is the best fit for your proposed solution. For those who submit distinct and separate proposals for more than one challenge: each application will be evaluated by fellow applicants within that same challenge using the specific scoring rubric for that pillar.

Similarly, those who move on to the Evaluation Panel will be reviewed by judges assigned to that specific pillar.

Once all evaluation results are in, the WIN Challenge team will review the normalized rank order and confirm who will move on to the WIN Council. Multiple applications from the same Lead organization could be considered, but would not necessarily be counted against the applicant.

Q3: Are we allowed to apply to more than one WIN Challenge?

A: Yes, you may apply to one or more of the three WIN Challenge pillars. Some important notes:

- Please do not submit the same application for all three pillars—each application should be distinct and separate, and should demonstrate why the solution is a strong fit for the focus of each challenge.
- An organization may only serve as a Lead Organization on one application per pillar, for a total of three separate and distinct applications.
- For applicants under a single pillar, such as the WIN AI Challenge: An organization may be a partner with a coalition or partners on more than one application if each one proposes a separate and distinct solution. And each application must be submitted by a different, eligible Lead Organization.
- Teams are encouraged to select a single project that best represents its organization's ability to deliver a solution that meets the scoring criteria for each pillar.

Q4: What if I haven't decided on which pillar to apply to yet?

A: If you are unsure of which pillar to select, please go ahead and register for all three pillars as soon as possible and no later than the registration deadline of **5pm Eastern Time on Thursday, December 11**. Registration by this deadline is required to be able to submit an application by the January deadlines. You can find each challenge registration page by clicking the countdown button at the top right or bottom of every page on each site.

Q5: We have multiple departments within our university who are interested in applying. Are each of them eligible to submit their own applications as a lead?

A: Yes, regional or location-specific branches of larger organizations, as well as departments, schools, and programs within or based in a college or university, may each submit separate applications naming their parent organization as the Lead Organization on their applications.

On the registration form, it asks for the Lead Organization name – applicants may include a specific branch or department along with the parent organization name as a response in this field.

Q6: Does a large nonprofit with multiple units also qualify as the type of org that can submit multiple proposals by department with their parent org as the lead org?

A: A large umbrella organization with different offices located throughout the US could each submit separate and distinct solutions. Be sure each applicant team registers a separate account to submit an application. Please review the FAQ on each pillar site for more details.

Q7: Can a fiscally sponsored project under a 501(c)(3) serve as the Lead Organization if a for-profit performs the core technical work?

A: Fiscally-sponsored nonprofit organizations based in the US and/or U.S. territories are eligible to apply as a lead. For-profit entities are only eligible to participate as part of a team on an application submitted by an eligible lead. Please see the rules Section 1 and the FAQ on each pillar site for information on the use of funds, such as to support non-charitable purposes.

Q8: What's the ideal profile of an applying organization?

A: We recommend you take the readiness quiz to help determine if you are a strong fit for the WIN Challenge.

Q9: Because our organization and programs are open to people nationwide, how do we best answer the questions about our geographic location?

A: Questions about the lead organization's geographic location should be based on where the organization is located. On the application under **Section F. Beneficiaries & Impact**, please answer based on where the proposed solution will be implemented during the two-year project period.

Note: Nationwide and national are included under the list of options to select. Applicants also have the opportunity to narratively describe geographies and communities you aim to serve.

Q10: Are there any geographic limits or preferences? Which countries are eligible?

A: As described in the rules under **Section 4. Geographic Eligibility**, only nonprofit organizations based in the U.S. or U.S. territories and U.S. tribal governments are eligible to apply as a Lead Organization. There is no preference for nationwide versus regional location or reach. All proposed solutions must be implemented in the U.S. or U.S. territories. Applicants have the opportunity to select and describe the type of communities, audiences, and/or organizations that will benefit from the proposed solution, see **Section F. Beneficiaries & Impact** on the application.

Q11: I understand for-profit companies, individuals, government agencies, and non-US-based organizations are not eligible to apply as a Lead. Are there opportunities for these types of entities to participate?

A: Yes, for-profit companies, individuals, government agencies, and non-U.S.-based organizations are allowed to serve as part of a team on an application that is submitted by an eligible Lead Organization. Please see the rules **Section 3. Collaborations** for more information.

Applicants are also welcome to [establish nonprofit entities](#) to serve as a lead. However, if an Applicant does not have its tax-exempt status under the IRS by the time grants are awarded under this competition, the organization must have a fiscal sponsor that meets the WIN Challenge [eligibility requirements](#) to receive a grant award. Failure to secure tax-exempt status or secure an eligible fiscal sponsor will render an Applicant ineligible to receive a grant award under this competition.

Q12: Are organizations with fiscal sponsors eligible to apply? If you are creating a nonprofit but it is not yet established, must you have a fiscal sponsor to apply?

A: Projects with fiscal sponsors are eligible to apply. Similar to universities, applicants should list both the fiscal sponsor and the organization name in the Lead Organization field on the registration form, such as *Org Name (Fiscal Sponsor)* or *Fiscal Sponsor – Org Name*.

And yes, if you are not yet a nonprofit organization, you may apply under a fiscal sponsor or serve as part of a team under an eligible lead organization.

Important note: If an Applicant does not have its tax-exempt status under the IRS by the time grants are awarded under this competition, the organization must have a fiscal sponsor that meets the WIN Challenge eligibility requirements to receive a grant award. Failure to secure tax-exempt status or secure an eligible fiscal sponsor will render an Applicant ineligible to receive a grant award under this competition.

Q13: As a lead organization, is there a certain capacity requirement we need to demonstrate? For example, are there restrictions or concerns with a small nonprofit with less than \$50,000 annual revenue serving as the lead on a grant of this size, provided they demonstrate the capacity to manage subawards and fiscal oversight? More broadly, how much emphasis is placed on the capacity of the lead organization versus the collective strength and complementarity of the team or consortium as a whole?

A: There are no requirements for a specific organizational budget range or capacity. Under the rules, **Section 5. Financial & Organizational Capacity**, Applicants must demonstrate financial capacity of any Lead Organization that may receive any Award to carry out any project and to appropriately manage any Award.

You have the opportunity to demonstrate this on the application, for example with your responses under **Section C. The Team** and **Section F. Beneficiaries & Impact** and by providing two years of financials under **Section H. Administrative Information**.

Q14: How could contributing partners with passion for this work connect to form networks/coalitions of a scale suitable for this opportunity? Will there be a teaming event to facilitate connections among interested organizations or an opportunity to connect with other prospective applicants? We'd love to explore opportunities to team up with organizations that share complementary strengths.

A: Collaborations and partnerships are welcome. Once you complete the registration form, you can log in to the application platform and access the feature called, *Forums*. Here, you could post information about the types of partners you are looking for. You are also welcome to research and reach out directly to organizations who look like a good fit.

Q15: Are grantees of Pivotal and Aspen Institute programs eligible to apply?

A: Past and current grantees of Pivotal and the Aspen Institute are eligible to apply. However, current programs of the Aspen Institute are not eligible to apply as a Lead Organization and cannot serve as part of a team submitting the application and/or implementing the proposed solution.

Q16: Is this challenge for women startups only? If an organization serves all genders, are they able to apply and be considered?

A: It is open to a wide range of organizations in different stages/phases. From start-up or early-stage organizations with a new idea, to existing organizations and partnerships with strong proofs of concepts or proven solutions ready to scale.

The registration form includes a question that asks you to identify the phase that best describes your org and solution. Please review the resource page for more information on how we define each stage. EG:

<https://www.ai.winchallenge.org/resources>

The WIN Challenge welcomes proposals with solutions that engage men in creating workplaces where women thrive, while creating better workplaces for everyone and strengthening our economy. Applicants will be asked to describe how their innovative idea supports working women and by extension helps everyone—families, communities, and/or the economy overall—to thrive in a rapidly changing work environment.

Q17: If multiple suborganizations of a larger organization are applying, can there be some personnel who overlap on both applications or does the team need to be entirely different?

A: There can be some reasonable overlap in some personnel, and we leave it up to each applicant to decide the best team to successfully implement their proposed solution. We encourage organizations to focus their efforts on submitting an application that is a strong fit for the WIN Challenge.

Q18: Are partners required?

A: No, partners are not required.

Q19: Can you provide clarity and guidance for how best to choose / distinguish between the WIN Culture & Practice and WIN Narrative Challenges?

A: Yes! **Culture & Practices** is focused on policies, practices, and culture within the workplace. **Narrative** is focused on public awareness, shaping new narratives, and changing perceptions and attitudes as they relate to how women are seen in the workplace. More information can be found on About pages of each pillar site.

REGISTRATION & APPLICATION, APPLICATION & TECHNICAL QUESTIONS**Q20: How do I confirm that I'm registered properly?**

A: Once you complete the registration form, you will be able to access the online application form and the feature called *Forums* on the platform.

Remember: The deadline to register for all WIN Challenges is **5:00 PM U.S. Eastern Time on Thursday, December 11**. Registration does not require you to submit an application, but it is required by the December 11 deadline if you'd like the opportunity to submit an application by the January deadlines.

Q21: Will the registration information be evaluated and then people will be invited to apply?

A: No, once you complete the registration form you may proceed to the online application form.

Please do not wait until the last minute to submit your application. The deadline to submit for WIN Culture & Practices Challenge is **Tuesday, January 27 at 5pm Eastern Time**, for WIN AI Challenge it is **Wednesday, January 28 at 5pm Eastern Time**, and WIN Narrative Challenge applications are due no later than **5pm Eastern Time on Thursday, January 29**.

Q22: If a lead organization changes after registration – for example, due to internal administrative or governance constraints, is there flexibility to update the lead applicant prior to final submission?

A: Yes, applicants can update registration information up until the application deadline in January. If you need to edit your registration information, log in to the platform, click on *Submissions* at the top right of the dashboard then select *Registration Form* to update. Reach out to questions@winchallenge.org with any issues or questions.

Q23: Is the same individual who registers an organization then also required to submit the proposal?

A: Applicants may collaborate as a team to complete the application offline and/or on the platform. You may share login credentials with one another as needed. It does help to designate one person responsible for entering your responses into the online application.

Also: Please do not wait until the last minute to begin your work on the platform, and plan for ample time to ensure all fields and uploads are complete in order to submit by the deadline.

Q24: I serve in an administrative role for a registered team. Would I be able to attend the January webinar, or is that only for the lead PI or researchers, for example?

A: The next webinar we host on January 14 is open to those who have registered for the challenge, and more than one person from each registrant team may participate. You're welcome to include other team members as you prefer.

Q25: If we are planning on submitting different ideas for multiple tracks, do we need to have someone different complete the registration or can one person create multiple registrations?

A: Each lead organization may submit one separate and distinct solution for each pillar, and the same person may register on behalf of this organization on each pillar site. So your grant-writer, for example, could register using the same name and email on both the WIN AI and WIN Narrative sites.

Another example to help clarify: If you are a university that will have applications from several departments within your university for the WIN AI Challenge, then each department should register separately with a unique email address on the WIN AI Challenge platform.

Reach out with any specific questions to questions@winchallenge.org.

Q26: Can we register under more than one pillar, and then decide later? What if more than one person from an organization registered? Are we limited to one registration per organization?

A: Please be sure you register for all the pillars of interest to your organization, and if needed, you can update the information at any time leading up to the submission deadline. More than one person registering from the same organization is okay – please just be sure to choose one registrant account to submit your final application.

Please note: Regional or location-specific branches of larger organizations, as well as departments, schools, and programs within or based in a college/university, may each submit separate applications naming their parent organization as the Lead Organization on their applications. Similarly, applicants may include a specific branch or department along with the parent organization in the Lead Organization field on the registration form.

In all these circumstances, the proposed solutions must be separate and distinct. The intent is to ensure that teams are concentrating their best effort into one application. Teams are encouraged to select a single project that best represents its organization's ability to deliver a solution that meets the scoring criteria. The FAQ on each pillar's site provides more details.

Q27: Can you please share any requirements for the video?

A: You are required to submit two short videos that capture your team and project, and describe why you should be supported through this challenge. These videos are an opportunity to pitch your proposed solution in a succinct format, and share your vision in a way that is different from the written proposal. This DOES NOT need to be a professionally produced video – a video shot on a smartphone is acceptable.

Once the videos are ready, you will upload them to YouTube and follow the guidelines outlined under Section B. of the application form, including settings for captions, embedding and privacy.

The first *Team Video* can be up to one minute total and will focus on your organization and team. Be sure to reflect on the experience of your team and the connection to the community you aim to serve.

The second *Solution Video* can be up to 90 seconds and should focus on the proposed project.

Again, please review the application requirements for more information and email us at questions@winchallenge.org if you need technical support.

Q28: In the application form, is it possible to invite more people in to help work on the application? For example, we have a team that will be working on the application.

A: Yes! As mentioned earlier: Applicants may collaborate as a team to complete the application offline and/or on the platform. You may share login credentials with one another as needed. It does help to designate one person responsible for entering your responses into the online application.

And again: Please do not wait until the last minute to begin your work on the platform, and plan for ample time to ensure all fields and uploads are complete in order to submit by the deadline.

Each pillar also has a community forum, where you can discuss opportunities to partner with fellow applicants.

Q29: Will there be an option to download a PDF version of the application prior to submission to review the application for internal compliance?

A: Yes, you will have the option to download a PDF version of the completed application.

Q30: With AI being such a changing topic, are changes to the proposal allowed based on these changes once you are awarded the grant?

A: Awardees will have the opportunity to discuss any material changes and updates to their solutions at the time of the award. Reach out to questions@winchallenge.org with any specific questions on the organization's financial reports.

Q31: Can applications include links?

A: While applicants may include links in their responses, reviewers will be instructed to evaluate based on the content provided within the application form. We recommend including as much information as possible within your application responses.

Q32: Are application materials confidential?

A: Your submission may be shared with five of your fellow applicants as part of Peer-to-Peer Review, five Evaluation Panel members, designated members of the WIN Council, and the WIN Challenge team during the evaluation process.

All peer reviewers and Evaluation Panel judges will be required to commit to keeping all application materials they review confidential, given the proprietary nature of solutions being presented.

Also, portions of your applications may be published online and may be shared by the WIN Challenge team with the general public to promote your proposal or to highlight results. Those portions may include, but are not limited to: *Lead Organization, Website, Project Title, Project Statement, Executive Summary, Video Presentation, and Project Description.*

Q33: If we are peer reviewing, how can we be sure that other applicants won't take our idea and use it to apply to a different opportunity? Basically, how do we know our IP is protected?

A: It's a great question. As mentioned earlier, by participating in the WIN Challenge, you agree to share your application content with five fellow applicants, five Evaluation Panel members, the WIN Council and the WIN Challenge team.

We recommend providing as much relevant information as necessary for reviewers to evaluate..

During a mandatory training before each evaluation phase, reviewers will be required to commit to keeping the materials and information they review confidential.

TEAM & PROJECT-RELATED QUESTIONS

Q34: Could you share more information about what stages the projects should be in, such as pilot, ready to scale, etc. for each challenge, as well as the scope?

A: Please visit the *Resources* page on each pillar's site and scroll down to ***Solution Stage*** to learn more about how we describe the eligible solution stages for the WIN Challenges.

Q35: What do you consider in terms of presenting a proposal as a prototype that can potentially scale? Can the submission be a novice idea or does it need to have market traction?

A: The WIN Challenge recognizes that innovation emerges from novel, original ideas or a new application of an existing method. Applications should demonstrate how the proposed solution can be scaled. Scale may mean expanding to new geographies, or it may mean how you intend to amplify your impact more deeply in one geography or context. If appropriate, explain whether and how you will need to tailor and adapt your solution for scaling and/or amplifying impact.

Additionally, proposals from organizations operating in a range of stages will be encouraged to apply. From early-stage organizations with a new idea, to existing organizations and partnerships with strong proofs of concepts or proven solutions ready to scale.

Review the *FAQ* on each pillar's site to explore more, as well as the scoring rubric to review the guidance for how to approach innovation and scale.

Q36: Is there a preference for solutions that seek to change workplaces systemically, rather than solutions that provide tools or resources for individual women at work? Are funds to support micro, mezo, or macro level initiatives?

A: The WIN Challenge is open to a wide range of solutions. Please review the application questions and scoring rubric to learn more about the requirements and how a strong solution is defined for each pillar.

For example, the WIN Culture and Practices Challenge's rubric for "transformative" will gauge: "Is the solution bold, ambitious, and designed to transform workplace policies, practices, and culture? Is there evidence the solution will result in systemic change with long-term impact that supports everyone, especially women, in the workplace?"

Q37: Are "workplace" and "workforce" interchangeable in regard to these challenges?

A: To help ensure fairness, we are not able to provide guidance that is very specific to your proposed solution.

We are open to a wide range of solutions so long as the application is submitted by an eligible Lead Organization (section 1 of rules), and that the proposed project serves and impacts communities, audiences, and/or organizations located within the U.S. and U.S. territories (section 4 of rules).

Please review the *About* page for more information on specific barriers to address, the application to view requirements, and the scoring rubric to learn more about how we have defined a strong application

Q38: Does the solution need to apply to the workplace rather than society at large?

A: We are open to a wide range of solutions so long as the application is submitted by an eligible Lead Organization (section 1 of rules), and that the proposed project serves and impacts communities, audiences, and/or organizations located within the U.S. and U.S. territories (section 4 of rules).

We recommend reviewing Sect D and E to hone the focus of your application. For example, Section E asks, “How does the solution offer a novel or breakthrough approach to support everyone, especially women, in a rapidly changing workplace? For example, how will this solution help women, families, communities, and/or the economy overall — to thrive?”

Q39: Given the size of the prize, I am curious if you expect one initiative per application or if a multi-initiative proposal is acceptable?

A: We understand a proposed solution could cover all three pillars. We leave it up to each applicant to determine whether you’ll submit an application in one or more pillars. Moreover, it’s up to the applicant to decide if the solution will be a single or multi-initiative proposal.

Please do not submit the same proposal for all three pillars – please focus on a single project that best represents your organization's ability to deliver a solution that meets the scoring criteria for each pillar you intend to apply.

We recommend reviewing the “feasibility” requirements on the scoring rubric when determining if you’ll submit a multi-initiative proposal.

Q40: Are funds focused on supporting new or ongoing initiatives? And should funds be used for direct services to people in need?

Proposals from organizations operating in a range of stages are encouraged to apply – from early-stage organizations with a new idea, to existing organizations and partnerships with strong proofs of concepts or proven solutions ready to scale.

Award funds must be used for the project detailed in the application and may be disbursed to partners for project-related purposes as detailed in the budget.

Also, be sure to review the “Innovative” trait under the scoring rubric, the rules, and the About page on each site for more helpful information.

Q41: Do we need to have the team all ready to go or can we just pitch the idea?

A: We leave the amount of detail up to each applicant to decide and recommend you provide sufficient information for evaluators to apply the scoring rubric. For example, describing key members of the team could help determine the score for the “Feasible” trait. You can review the scoring rubric on each pillar site for more details.

Q42: Do lead team members have to identify as women?

A: This grant competition is open to everyone.

The WIN Challenge welcomes proposals with teams and solutions that engage men in creating workplaces where women thrive, while creating better workplaces for everyone and strengthening our economy.

Applicants will be asked to describe how their innovative idea supports women at work and by extension helps everyone—families, communities, and/or the economy overall—to thrive in a rapidly changing work environment. Applicants should propose tools, strategies, and resources that are nondiscriminatory, and that help support women in the workplace without discriminating against men or members of protected categories.

We also encourage you to review the scoring rubric trait called “Aligned.” The evaluation process will consider whether the proposal is rooted in an understanding and analysis of the barriers many people—especially women—face, as well as the broader context and on-the-ground conditions for success.

Q43: Can you please expand on what you mean by a team’s track record?

A: Specific prompts as they relate to track record can be found on the application under **Section C. The Team**. Please review the application requirements in detail for more information.

Also on the scoring rubric, a team’s track record could be considered under feasibility. Please review the scoring rubric for each pillar to learn more about how we define a strong application.

Q44: Are specific industries or occupational sectors prioritized as part of the selection criteria? Will you accept applications focused on a specific industry that is predominantly comprised of immigrant and refugee women?

A: Proposals from organizations operating in a range of stages, sectors, and within a range of workplaces may apply. Review the About pages as well as “The Challenge” section in the read-only application to determine which barrier your application will address.

Note: Please review the rules to understand eligibility requirements. Solutions will not be eligible that exclude employees from jobs, promotions, contracts, or other specific employment opportunities based on their sex, race, or other protected characteristics.

Q45: For the Narrative Challenge, the desired solutions “offer a game-changing approach to shape new narratives” but it’s unclear who the desired core audience for these narratives are? Is it for business owners/employers, or policymakers, or a general public audience?

A: We leave it up to each applicant to define their audiences and beneficiaries. Applicants have the opportunity to describe these audiences throughout the application, including under **Section F. Beneficiaries & Impact**. Though please note the WIN Challenge is not focused on government policy change, and lobbying is not an eligible use of funds.

Q46: Would our proposal be strengthened by having committed organizations on board that would want our program in-house?

A: Securing partnerships and commitments could be considered under the Feasible trait in the scoring rubric. Please review the rubric on each pillar site to learn more about how we have defined a strong proposal and provide as much information as you can while following the application requirements to make the case for your solution.

Q47: Can you explain what "Caregiving Responsibilities" are?

A: On the About page of each pillar's site, all of the barriers such as "Caregiving Responsibilities" are described. Under "Caregiving Responsibilities," solutions would address how the systems and workplaces in this country are not set up to support households responsible for caregiving such as childcare or elder care.

Q48: How broadly do you define leadership? Do roles that are often undervalued or invisible in the economy—such as caregiving or other forms of frontline leadership—fit within WIN's core focus on women, work, and leadership?

A: Yes, absolutely. We understand that leadership can look different depending on settings and workplaces and recommend that your application makes the strongest case for defining that. We encourage potential applicants to review the About page, as well as the Resource page to learn more about the research that has informed the WIN Challenge.

Q49: Does the WIN Challenge provide mentorship or networking opportunities to strengthen women-led collaborations in technology and research?

A: Additional programming will be announced in 2026. Aspen Digital will host a summit in the fall 2026 to uplift the solutions and changemakers sourced through the WIN Challenge. The knowledge curated will be shared widely across industries, the philanthropic community, and decision-makers committed to reshaping workplaces with forward-looking ideas so everyone can thrive. In the final year of the WIN Challenge initiative, Aspen Digital will focus on providing programming for the awardees and supporting their journeys.

BUDGET, FINANCIALS & TIMELINE**Q50: Are indirect costs allowed? For colleges and universities, is there guidance regarding what would be considered a reasonable allocation for indirect expenses?**

A: Yes, the budget may include a reasonable allocation for indirect expenses associated with the overall operations of the team that are shared across the organization's activities. We reserve the right to review and adjust amounts allocated for indirect expenses.

We understand many universities have set indirect cost rates. Please describe any such indirect cost requirements in your Budget Narrative and ensure that any indirect costs are accounted for in your budget in the application.

Q51: Per the application, we see the budget request should be \$5 million for a project over 2-3 years. Are there any other specific limitations for the budget request?

A: For the budget, we leave it up to each participant to best describe their budget as they see fit. Expenses identified in the table should reflect and clarify your general explanations provided in the Budget Narrative section and include more detailed cost categories that support your plans and intended outcomes.

Please be sure to follow the guidance listed in the prompts:

- Your timeline and budget must detail in which project year the activity or cost will be incurred: Y1, Y2, and/or Y3.
- Specify what portion of the budget is expected to fund monitoring, evaluation and learning, if applicable.
- You may include any explanations of existing resources you have already secured.

Q52: With regard to the "annual operating budget" of an organization, if we are a department within a university, should we enter the operating budget of the department, or the university?

A: You may enter the operating budget of the department.

Q53: Use of funds: Are funds permitted to be used to incentivize participation in a pilot program? Can you please detail allowable vs. unallowable costs? Are consultants, stipends and overhead allowed?

A: We leave it up to each participant to best determine and describe their budget as they see fit. More information is available on our FAQ on each pillar's site and be sure to review the rules **Section 6. Prohibited Use of Award Funds** for a list of ineligible expenses.

Q54: Can funds be applied flexibly across the pillars, or will allocations be divided by category or pillar?

Funds will be disbursed by pillar. Each of the three WIN Challenge pillars has \$20 million to support up to eight applicants who will receive a grant of either \$2.5 million or \$5 million each. For example, for the WIN AI Challenge – we will grant up to eight awards of \$2.5 million or \$5 million each – and that funding will be used toward the solution proposed to the WIN AI Challenge.

If you have one proposed solution that could fit across all three pillars, please register and submit one application to the pillar you think is the strongest fit with your solution.

While a single lead organization could submit one application for each separate and distinct solution to each pillar, please do not submit the same solution or application to all three pillars.

Q55: Can a proposal integrate multiple components under a single project framework? Or should these be separated into distinct proposals or phases?

A: Similar to the previous question, if you do not have a separate and distinct solution to propose for each of the three pillars, please choose the pillar that is the strongest fit for your proposed solution. We leave this up to each team to decide and note: each lead organization may only submit one application for each pillar.

Q56: Could you please remind us how long the grant period is? How flexible is the timeframe for implementation and evaluation? And is there an estimated start date?

A: This information is available on the application form, under **Section G. Project Plan and Budget**. The grant period can be up to three years total and we expect to announce awards in the Fall of 2026 with projects starting shortly after once award agreements are fully executed.

Q57: How should we determine project scope at the \$2.5 vs. \$5 million level?

A: All applications should provide a budget, timeline, impact, metrics, scope, etc. based on an award at the \$5 million level. Then under Section G. there's a **Contingency** question where applicants then have the opportunity to share how the plan and impact would change at the \$2.5 million level.

Q58: Is there a requirement to serve a minimum number of people/groups or a limit to how much funding we can apply for based on how many served people/groups there are?

A: No, we are open to a wide range of solution types and beneficiaries. Again, please review the scoring rubric to learn more about how applications will be evaluated.

Q59: I understand each department within a university can submit one application for each of the pillars. Is it okay to submit audited financials for the university, or do you need them for each department?

A: If audited financial reports are not available for the department, you may upload 990s or certified financials for the past two (2) years or submit audited financials for the university. You may submit the two years of financial records in any standard format.

Q60: If a nonprofit is less than two-years old and does not have two years of financial reports, audited financials, or 990s, is that organization still eligible? What could be submitted as an alternative?

A: If an organization is newly established and does not have audited financials or a 990 yet, please submit financial reports your organization has to date. You may submit financial records in any standard format.

However, if an Applicant does not have its tax-exempt status under the IRS by the time grants are awarded under this competition, the organization must have a fiscal sponsor that meets the WIN Challenge [eligibility requirements](#) to receive a grant award. Failure to secure tax-exempt status or secure an eligible fiscal sponsor will render an Applicant ineligible to receive a grant award under this competition.

If you have additional questions, please contact questions@winchallenge.org.

Q61: What if our organization doesn't have audited financials – can we still apply?

A: We require information necessary to understand the financial health of the Lead Organization. The application will request audited financial reports from the past two (2) years for the Lead Organization. If audited financial reports are not available, upload 990s or certified financials for the past two (2) years for the Lead Organization. You may submit the two years of financial records in any standard format.

EVALUATION & AWARD SELECTION

Q62: What criteria are you using to determine between a \$2.5M and \$5M award? Could you please share more about the evaluation process?

A: Yes! And be sure to visit the FAQ and Evaluation pages of each site for more information. Applications will go through several stages of review, which includes a peer review process and evaluation panel. The WIN Council will review top finalists and advise the selection of awardees to the Aspen Institute. Review the FAQ on each pillar's site to understand more of the steps in the evaluation process.

Once the submission deadline passes, the WIN Challenge team will conduct an administrative review to confirm each submission meets the rules and application requirements.

Valid applications will then advance to Peer-to-Peer Review where they will be scored by five fellow applicants, resulting in a rank order of all valid submissions.

Based on the rank order of scores, a selection of top-scoring applications will move forward to the Evaluation Panel. Applicants that advance to the Evaluation panel will be reviewed by five judges.

Peer reviewers and the Evaluation Panel will use the scoring rubric to provide scores and valuable feedback on their assigned submissions, and all scores will be statistically normalized to ensure fairness.

Finally, the WIN Challenge team will review the top-scoring submissions resulting from Evaluation Panel to select top-scoring applications for consideration by designated members of the WIN Council. Based on

considerations that may include, but are not limited to, Evaluation Panel resulting rank order, organizational capacity, geographic impact, and demonstrated potential, the WIN Council will recommend up to eight awardees to receive grants of either \$2.5 million or \$5 million each.

Final decisions and selection of awardees will be made by Aspen Digital. You can learn more about the timing of these evaluation phases on each site's Timeline page.

Q63: Could you please share more information on the award notification process?

A: Awardees will be selected and notified by the Fall of 2026. Agreements will be signed and in place by the time awards are announced in Fall of next year.

Q64: How do you define scale for this initiative? How will you measure success?

A: We leave it up to each applicant to define scale and measurements of success for their proposed solutions. Please review the Resources page and scroll down to **Scalability** and **Solution Stage** for some additional information.

Q65: How are you defining evidence-based?

A: We understand that innovative solutions can reference a wide range of evidence-based practices. Applications should highlight track record, internal data, lived experience, and/or formal evidence that the proposed solution will effectively support women and help everyone thrive in the workplace.

If you do not have evidence of impact of your own solution, you should be able to point to research-backed practices on which your solution is based, or analogous solutions achieving meaningful impact that you think your solution may similarly achieve.

Q66: Will the award agreement with the grantee be with Pivotal Ventures or the Aspen Institute? What will be the expectations or required actions of the individuals or organizations selected?

A: The Lead Organization will enter into a direct and separate award agreement with the Aspen Institute. Each grant/award agreement governing the use of Awards may vary, depending on the nature of the project, the organization receiving the Award, and the Award amount.

Any Awardee who enters into a separate agreement to receive funding will report progress towards milestones and other goals. While requirements may vary based on the organization and the project, it is likely that at least one narrative report per year will be required.

Q67: Are we allowed to reach out to the submission committee if we have pre-existing relationships?

A: No, we do not recommend contacting any evaluators during the competition period.

Q68: Will applicants receive feedback on their submissions?

A: Unfortunately, due to the anticipated high volume of submissions, we will not have the capacity to provide reviewer feedback to applicants.

Q69: How does the WIN Challenge evaluate initiatives that intentionally bridge AI, policy reform, and narrative change rather than fitting into one pillar?

A: Applications will be evaluated using the scoring rubric for that pillar. As mentioned earlier, applications that bridge all three pillars are welcome, and we leave it up to your team to decide which pillar is the strongest fit for your application.

Please note, policy reform is not a focus of this grant competition.

Q70: How does your evaluation process account for the different ways private-sector, nonprofit, and university applicants measure impact?

A: We understand that applicants represent a wide variety of approaches and capacity for measuring impact. Therefore, we anticipate receiving a broad spectrum of evidence-based practices.

To the best of their ability, applications should highlight track record, internal data, lived experience, and/or formal evidence that the proposed solution will effectively support women and help everyone thrive in the workplace.

If you do not have evidence of impact of your own solution, you should be able to point to research-backed practices on which your solution is based, or analogous solutions achieving meaningful impact that you think your solution may similarly achieve. While the grant competition is focused on solutions implemented in the US, applicants may cite global practices, research, or case studies. Please review Section F in the application to understand the specific information to provide about measuring impact.

Q71: We'll be applying with a fiscal sponsor and want to be sure our submission aligns with your evidence and feasibility rubric. Could you clarify how reviewers weigh the fiscal sponsor's branding or identity versus the merits and research basis of the proposed solution itself?

A: We recommend focusing the application's answers on the proposed solution itself. If you'd like to share more about the dynamics of your fiscal sponsorship, Sect F provides space for additional considerations. Here, you may emphasize or expand upon a previous point or provide new information, as necessary.

Q72: What should we use as the earliest start date for budget purposes? I see that awards will be announced in fall 2026—how long after that announcement would funds be available?

A: The first anticipated payment to awardees will be in 2026. This is subject to change if additional time is required for the evaluation phases.

Q73: What is the rationale for having applicants have access to competing proposals and to rate them?

A: Peer Review aligns with our broader goal of fostering a culture of collaboration and helping to ensure the process includes input from those closest to the work. We often find reviewers benefit from learning about other efforts, and that peer review results in new collaboration opportunities and amplified impact. Peer review also ensures that the overall evaluation process is shaped by the participants themselves.

Q74: Does your 'fairness' process apply to both the peer-to-peer reviews as well as the Evaluation Panel?

A: Peer reviewers and the Evaluation Panel will use the scoring rubric to provide scores and feedback on their assigned submissions, and all scores will be statistically normalized to ensure fairness. See more on the normalization process [here](#).

Q75: When selecting awards, will reviewers aim to ensure a diversity of organizations—such as universities and small, mid-size, and large nonprofits? We want to understand whether the process accounts for differences in organizational capacity, as smaller organizations may be at a disadvantage when competing with more highly resourced institutions.

A: Yes, the process does account for a variety of organizations in different stages. It is open to a wide range of organizations in different phases.

The registration form includes a question that asks you to identify the phase that best describes your organization and solution. Please review the resource page for more information on how we define each stage. EG: <https://www.ai.winchallenge.org/resources>