Innovative Data and Modeling Approaches to Measure Women's Health

Grand Challenges

Request for Proposals

Applications due no later than March 25, 2025, 11:30 a.m. U.S. Pacific Time

Background

Women's health continues to be under-represented and poorly measured in global health frameworks.

Now is the time to address this challenge. Current measurement frameworks, such as the Disability-Adjusted Life Year (DALY), fail to capture the full complexity of women's health outcomes, as they do not account for the multidimensional factors that shape health burdens and progress. These dominant metrics often overlook gendered conditions and social determinants of health, limiting the ability to generate actionable insights. Harmful norms and gender-related discrimination often contribute to poorer health outcomes in women, yet they remain inadequately reflected in existing indicators. Without alternative approaches that incorporate gender-sensitive and multidimensional factors, policies and interventions risk being misaligned with the real needs of women globally. This gap leaves critical gender-related conditions and non-health interventions unmeasured, further hindering progress in advancing women's health.

This Grand Challenge aims to bridge this gap by fostering innovative modeling approaches that rethink how women's health is measured, using available data, or easily obtainable, in new ways to provide a more holistic and actionable understanding of health outcomes. Advances in data science, modeling techniques, technological development, and gender-sensitive approaches present a unique opportunity to innovate; especially when global systems are facing unprecedented shifts that could further increase gaps in equity. This Grand Challenge builds on the *Women's Health Innovation Opportunity Map 2023*, developed collaboratively by over 250 global stakeholders across 50 countries through the *Innovation Equity Forum* (IEF). The *Opportunity Map* identified key gaps and priorities in women's health, emphasizing the need for innovation across multiple areas, including data and modeling, health and economic impact, supply and access to services, and skills, knowledge, and networks. The *Opportunity Map* serves as a roadmap for transformative solutions that address systemic barriers and advance gender-equitable health outcomes for women.

This Grand Challenge on **Innovative Data and Modeling Approaches to Measure Women's Health** seeks to advance innovative ways to measure women's health by either developing new measurement models or adapting existing ones to better capture the full scope of women's health burdens and progress. This Grand Challenge prioritizes solutions that leverage data sources that are existing or under development rather than relying on new, large-scale data collection efforts, ensuring sustainability and feasibility.

Applicants are encouraged to build upon existing work, whether by enhancing ongoing projects with a stronger gender-sensitive approach, refining existing models, or expanding available datasets in ways that align with the challenge's objectives. While this Grand Challenge does not fund broad new data collection efforts, proposals that require small-scale dataset expansion - where such an extension would significantly improve gendered analysis that generate policy-relevant measurement approaches that improve how women's health is understood and addressed globally - may be considered.

The Challenge

We invite applicants to explore bold, innovative approaches. Specifically, the **objectives** of the Challenge will be to:
- Reimagine new ways to understand and measure women's health that extend beyond the limitations of existing composite indicators such as DALY.
- Use existing data sets or easily collectible datasets to quantify women's health outcomes across countries. While this Grand Challenge does not fund large-scale data collection, proposals may include small-scale data expansion where it is feasible, policy-relevant, and significantly enhances gendered analysis.
- Design innovative methodologies that incorporate gendered, socio-cultural, economic, and structural determinants of health, ensuring a comprehensive gender-sensitive approach (A gender-sensitive approach takes into consideration how one's gender impacts access to services, risk and protective factors and barriers that are uniquely experienced because of one's gender in a society).
- Create tools or frameworks that enable cross-cultural or subnational comparative analysis, identifying context-specific gaps and progress.
- Reflect the interconnected dimensions of women's health across the life course
- Incorporate gaps in the measurement of:
  - **Skills, knowledge, and networks**: addressing how gender disparities in education, training, and professional networks impact health access, decision-making, and service delivery.
  - **Supply and access to services**: examining how health systems, financing mechanisms, and gender-based barriers affect the availability, affordability, and accessibility of essential services for women
  - **Health and economic impacts**: capturing the intersection of health outcomes with economic participation, caregiving burdens, workforce inclusion, and financial independence.
- Produce outputs that are:
  - **Methodologically rigorous**: applying sound data science, statistical modeling, or analytical techniques that enhance the validity and reliability of women's health measurements.
  - **Interpretable and actionable**: ensuring results can be understood and applied by policymakers and implementers.
  - **Comparative and scalable**: enabling cross-cultural or subnational analysis to identify patterns, disparities, and opportunities for intervention.
  - **Gender-sensitive and intersectional**: incorporating the social, economic, and structural determinants that affect women's health outcomes.

- o **Policy-relevant and decision-oriented**: providing insights that have the potential to directly inform policies, resource allocation, or program design to improve women's health measurement and action.

Funding Level

We will consider proposals for awards of up to $150,000 USD for each project, with a grant term of 18-24 months. Application budgets should be commensurate with the scope of work proposed. Indirect costs will be considered, and should be included in the budget for the up to $150,000 USD award (subject to the Gates Foundation's indirect cost policy).

Eligibility Criteria

This initiative is open to nonprofit organizations, for-profit companies, international organizations, government agencies and academic institutions. We particularly encourage applications involving projects led by women, early-career researchers and practitioners seeking to innovate in women's health measurement, or from women-led organizations and applications from institutions based in low- and middle-income countries. We also encourage collaborative submissions across disciplines such as economics, public health, and gender studies.

We are looking for proposals that:

- **Demonstrate innovative thinking** in modeling women's health, providing creative methodologies or tools to address gaps in measurement.
- **Leverage existing data sources** and/or explore datasets that are feasible to collect within current capacities.
- Incorporate **intersectional approaches**, addressing disparities (social, economic, and structural determinants of health) that disproportionately impact women.
- Align with the **Opportunity Map dimensions**, focusing on multidimensional indicators beyond traditional composite measures.
- Show potential to **generate actionable insights** for policy and programmatic interventions at a national and/or global scale.
- Enable **cross-country or subnational comparisons**, offering solutions that reveal context-specific gaps and opportunities for progress.
- Present a clear pathway for **real-world impact**, outlining how the outputs can inform resource allocation, policy, or program design.
- Highlight the potential for **scalability and adaptability** of the proposed approach across diverse country contexts.
- Promote interdisciplinary collaboration, combining perspectives from multiple sectors such as public health, data science, economics, and gender studies.

We will not fund proposals that:

- Propose data collection-only efforts without a clear link to the development or testing of novel measurement approaches or without an analytical component that adds value to existing evidence.
- Focus on implementing health interventions without a measurement or modeling component.
- Focus solely on expanding or refining existing composite indicators (e.g., DALY) without demonstrating innovation.

- Rely on proprietary or inaccessible datasets without clear justification or ability to share insights publicly.
- Lack a gender-sensitive lens or fail to consider the intersectional factors affecting women's health outcomes.
- Do not align with the *Opportunity Map* dimensions or fail to address measurable health and economic impacts.
- Propose interventions without a clear focus on modeling and measurement.