



Request for Proposals

American Jewish World Service (AJWS) seeks an external evaluator with expertise in [grassrooted, rights-based models of philanthropy](#) to lead a program-wide evaluation. AJWS is committed to an action-oriented evaluation, and we prioritize feminist, participatory approaches that engage multiple stakeholders. This evaluation will supplement our ongoing cycle of evidence gathering, analysis, review and adaptation and inform upcoming programmatic strategy refinement and development.

AJWS has particular interest in understanding the contribution of different pathways to progress and to parse out the factors of ‘what AJWS does’ that contribute to greatest impact and in what conditions. Our goal is to hone and refine, using evaluative evidence, on how AJWS can more systematically make decisions about leveraging parts of our model to increase our impact. The evaluation should be designed based on AJWS’s [theory of change](#). Our theory of change posits that by supporting and strengthening civil society organizations and activist leaders from marginalized communities, they will contribute and strengthen social movements to advance and sustain change toward realization of their rights. Our investment strategies guide our programmatic work toward this change, and include advocacy, education, and communication; grantmaking, capacity building, and accompaniment; research and learning. We take a grassrooted approach that includes a tiered approach to building an ecosystem of support at multiple levels from the local to global. The evaluation purpose is focused on contributing to strategic action to support decisions about investment at different levels in these components alone or in combination: advocacy, education, and communication; grantmaking, capacity building, and accompaniment; research and learning.

The project will be managed by a member of the Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation (SLRE) team and include close consultation with the Programs Leadership Team (PLT) throughout the project. The evaluation is jointly owned and commonly prioritized by the SLRE and PLT. In addition, the evaluation will seek to include opportunities for grantee partners and their communities, as well as other relevant stakeholders to engage.

Background: AJWS

AJWS has a two-pronged strategy for building a more just and equitable world. We provide between \$12-16 million annually to 450 social justice organizations in 18 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. At the same time, we advocate for laws and policies in the United States that will improve the lives of millions of people around the world and resist harmful policies that hamper our partners’ abilities to exercise their rights. We do this by leading campaigns for human rights and by building relationships with Jewish leaders, elected officials and other supporters of human rights to promote justice and equality in developing countries.

We’re a humanitarian and human rights organization. This means that we go beyond short-term solutions and work to overcome the inequalities and injustices that cause poverty and oppression in the

first place. Our grantees address immediate needs like food, shelter, jobs and health care, yet they also go deeper—advocating for human rights and building movements that can bring about lasting change. Our approach is rooted in empowerment—understanding that the people affected by a problem are best positioned to solve it. We work this way because we recognize that even the best tactics to end poverty will fail if human rights are denied and if local people affected by the rights challenges do not have a central role in shaping solutions to the problems they experience. Our partners employ a host of tactics to empower their communities to advance justice, including but not limited to service delivery, community organizing, and advocacy at the community, national and international levels. We commit ourselves to securing human rights that are at the roots of poverty and injustice in the developing world.

Background: SLRE and External Evaluation

To supplement our ongoing cycle of evidence gathering, analysis, review and adaptation, AJWS also commissions external evaluations at key moments. These evaluations provide us with findings and recommendations that complement our regular, internal monitoring, for which program strategies serve as the basis. The current 38 programs strategies (started in 2016) will be included in the evaluation, with the possibility of sampling select strategies or partners for in-depth analysis. Program strategies include a distilled analysis of context and set out anticipated pathways of change towards intended goals and focus both at the country and thematic level:

- See: <https://ajws.org/where-we-work/>
- See: <https://ajws.org/what-we-do/>

Evaluation is a central pillar in our commitment to continuous learning and improvement, which we see as key to helping us maximize our effectiveness and impact. The primary purpose of evaluation for AJWS is to support program staff and grantee partners operating in complex and difficult environments to make the best decisions they can. By understanding whether and how strategies are effective, we can make informed decisions about how to better direct resources and strengthen our strategies in order to meet our desired goals. AJWS sees evaluation as part of our ethical obligation to the marginalized community members our grantees serve to determine whether and how AJWS's investments advance marginalized people's realization of their human rights. AJWS is also dedicated to considering unintended consequences.

AJWS adheres to five guiding principles underpinning all its learning, research, and evaluation work:

1. Embody Integrity
2. Uphold Feminist Approaches to SLRE
3. Emphasize Strategic Learning
4. Be Collaborative
5. Prioritize Action

These principles are the criteria for all decision-making throughout an evaluation. <https://ajws.org/our-impact/measuring-success/>

Evaluation scope and aims

AJWS is committed to an action-oriented evaluation and we prioritize feminist, participatory approaches that engage multiple stakeholders. In prioritizing the focus of the evaluation, we are dedicated to focusing on answering questions that are most likely to result in strategic decision-making. To that end,

the PLT is interested in understanding when it is most beneficial to leverage which parts of our social change model.

Our learning question, which will be supported by this evaluation, is: *Why, how, under what conditions and to what extent are AJWS's combination of approaches contributing to the progress sought by our theory of change?*

At the end of the evaluation, we will refine our efforts of [‘what AJWS does’](#) based on which approaches (or combination) have contributed most significantly to stronger social movements, reframed discourse, and policy change over the past 3 years relative to the level of investment. Across our work in 18 countries, we have varying levels of investment in AJWS's work to advance human rights above and beyond our grantmaking, capacity building, and accompaniment. For example, in some portfolios staff also conduct advocacy and digital engagement in the U.S. and globally in order to call attention to human rights abuses, amplify the voices of our grantees, grow our community and educate and mobilize our supporters. AJWS also conducts targeted research to evaluate and strengthen our own work and advance the broader field of human rights.

- *Examples of related hypothesis that we are interested in proving or challenging that can then inform decisions about what action is needed based on what we observe (These are intended to provide clarification on the evaluation focus. There may be other variables of interest, and the evaluator will work with the team to scope appropriately, based on the desired evaluation utilization actions):*
 - If we invest in advocacy, education, and communications (and/or research and learning) in addition to grantmaking, capacity building, and accompaniment, then the return on the investment will be justified by the relative increase in sustainable social change compared to when we invest in only grantmaking, capacity building, and accompaniment.
 - If we want to invest in advocacy, education, and communications (and/or research and learning) in addition to grantmaking, capacity building, and accompaniment, then there is a minimal level of investment needed before we see a substantially greater effect on stronger social movements, reframed discourse, and policy change.
 - If grassroots partners are connected to one another and national and global organizations, then we will see an increase in social movement strength.

The evaluation purpose is focused on strategic action. Ideally, the evaluation findings will be used to create an investment tool/ decision-tree that will inform strategy design and decision-making. The tool will articulate guidelines for what to invest in, when, and why. In summary, our goal is to hone and refine, using evaluative evidence, on how AJWS can more systematically make decisions about leveraging parts of our model to increase our impact.

Evaluation questions will be refined, and methodology selected with the consultant. The first step after hire will be working with AJWS staff in a learning and planning phase before finalizing the evaluation workplan. We expect that the design may include mixed methods, leveraging existing sources of data, both external and internal, as well as primary data collection with partners and staff. We look forward to the expertise of the evaluation consultant in aligning the most appropriate methodology and data

sources with the evaluation questions and goals (and budget). Overall, we expect the evaluation planning and process to be highly collaborative and iterative.

Deliverables and Timeline

It is anticipated that this assignment will cover a **6-8-month period with approximately 40 days of work estimated**. The evaluation is expected to begin in **March 2021 and be finalized by August 2021**. The final timeline will be determined by the methodology but should not extend past 2021.

Anticipated steps and estimated days of work (to be finalized with the consultant):

- Review of AJWS documents and learning conversations to support evaluator understanding of the AJWS approach (4 days)
- Participatory spaces facilitated by the evaluator to support refining the evaluation questions and aligning appropriate methodologies (3 days)
- Evaluation inception report with a detailed evaluation design, workplan and timeline (2 days)*
- IRB-approval—must be secured for any data collection that engages stakeholders outside of AJWS staff and partners (1 day)
- Evaluation implementation—data collection and analysis (20 days)
- Ongoing meetings with AJWS staff to support an iterative process, provide updates, and develop an ongoing learning space to ensure the evaluation meets institutional needs (3 days)
- Final report, including an executive summary and presentation (5 days)*
- Utilization/ meaning making space/ interpretation session to facilitate staff understanding of key findings and strategic implications (2 days)*

*denotes hard deliverables that will be expected to be finalized through a review process with AJWS staff that may include up to 3 reviews of drafts before approval. Deliverables must be submitted in English.

Support for this Consultancy will be provided by Margo Mullinax, Director, Strategic Learning, Research and Evaluation (SLRE). The consultant and the SLRE Director will have regular weekly check-ins, a work plan with regular review and approvals along the way, in addition to the deliverables. The consultant should prepare and send weekly agendas for the check-ins. Engagement with AJWS may occur through zoom and will not require in-person travel to NY or globally.

Budget is based on 3-phases and is expected to fall within a range of 50,000 to 60,000 USD. The budget will be finalized based on the evaluation design, which should be tailored to maximize learning within this budget. No additional costs will be covered outside of the budget, and all expenses should be accounted for during budgeting and planning (e.g., consultant rate, translation, subcontracting, travel).

1. Preparation for evaluation, including engagement with AJWS, securing IRB, as needed, literature reviews, instrument design, and coordination for data collection
2. Implementation/conducting of the evaluation, including data collection and analysis, convening, subcontracting of local consultants, as needed, and ongoing consultation with AJWS staff
3. Report writing, including engagement with AJWS, and final presentations/ space to support utilization

Interested applicants

Consultant Qualifications

- Demonstrable and extensive experience producing high-quality, credible evaluations focused on philanthropy and/or human rights social change (minimum of 10 years)
- Demonstrable and extensive experience producing high-quality, credible evaluations of work that focuses on root cause change, addressing structural and systemic barriers to social justice, and that is responsive to context
- Background in international human rights, and familiarity with any one of AJWS's thematic areas (civil and political rights, sexual health and rights, land and water rights and climate justice), advocacy, social movements, grassroots grantmaking
- Demonstrable and extensive expertise in feminist and/or culturally responsive approaches to learning, research, and evaluation
- Experience working with grassroots organizations in the Global South and demonstrated sensitivity to power and power dynamics
- Experience supporting learning and its implementation with a focus on translating research and/or evaluation findings into action
- Proven meeting and participatory process facilitation skills, including online spaces
- Demonstrated capacity to manage and organize all relevant logistics and activities to effectively carry out the assignment, producing deliverables on time and on budget
- Excellent verbal / written communication skills and strong reporting skills for non-technical audiences
- Ability to work effectively and efficiently in a highly consultative environment
- Fluency in English is required

Black, Indigenous and People of Color; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Intersex, Trans and Gender non-conforming people; women; and differently abled people are encouraged to apply. We also encourage applications from people of diverse religious, spiritual and cultural backgrounds.

Interested applicants should submit the following:

- Cover letter explaining your interest and ideas related to this assignment and how you meet the qualifications, including relevant work experience (**no more than 2 pages**)
 - While we have our own thoughts to share, we are seeking your suggestions and expertise. We are seeking a thought partner in this work and would like to understand how you would approach this project.
 - The workplan should include engagement with staff in diverse locations (facilitate work virtually).
 - As relevant, please list the member(s) of the project team and describe their roles and qualifications.
 - Please provide your expected daily rate and any other relevant budget information.
- Curriculum Vitae(s)
- Contact details for two references
- Sample of work that is most relevant to this assignment

Please submit these documents via email to Margo Mullinax, with 'AJWS Program Evaluation' in the email subject. **The deadline for applications is 26 Jan 2021**, and applications will be accepted on a rolling basis. Shortlisted consultants will be interviewed via Zoom, with anticipated start date in Feb or March 2021.