

Innovation Equity Forum



Knowledge Hub

Executive Summary, January 2026

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The IEF, established through a collaboration between the Gates Foundation and the National Institutes of Health, brings together a global community of over 250 stakeholders committed to advancing women's health R&D. Our membership includes scientists, innovators, advocates, funders, implementers, and other women's health innovation ecosystem actors. Together, this diverse group is committed to advancing a more equitable, coordinated, and innovation-driven ecosystem for women's health.

From May to October 2025, IEF Working Groups worked across four action concepts—the Innovation Fund, Innovation Accelerator, Data Harmonization Pilot, and Knowledge Hub—to translate opportunities drawn from the Women's Health Innovation Opportunity Map into concrete initiatives. Each concept reflects deep ecosystem engagement, bringing together diverse stakeholders to co-design practical pathways that advance women's health innovation and equity globally.

The Problem

The lack of consistent, globally applicable information on the women's health innovation ecosystem limits the ability of researchers, innovators, advocates, and funders/investors to effectively advance R&D, leading to duplication of effort. Specifically, there are three interconnected knowledge gaps facing these stakeholders:

1. **Ecosystem Navigation:** Extremely limited visibility into existing and emerging women's health ecosystem actors, initiatives, and funding limits the identification of potentially groundbreaking collaboration opportunities both within and across sectors, health conditions, and geographies. This fragmentation siloes actors, slows investment, and undermines the potential for cross-cutting initiatives.
2. **Resource Identification:** The lack of accessible, credible, and consolidated information and resources on and across various conditions affecting the health of women slows the ability of advocates, researchers, and innovators to leverage existing knowledge and good practices at global and local levels. While consolidated resources exist for specific conditions, limited cross-pollination across conditions creates duplication and further fragments ecosystem-level knowledge.
3. **Gap Analysis:** Across both ecosystem and resource insights, the lack of consolidated, aggregated information limits identification of potential missed opportunities in the ecosystem (i.e. opportunity areas that are not adequately addressed through existing initiatives).

While resources exist, stakeholders agree that access to ecosystem information is scattered, sparse, or non-existent, making it difficult to leverage the work and insights that already exist. In turn, these gaps make it difficult for those working to advance progress for women's health globally to access capital, identify synergies, advocate for change, and effectively drive progress. This gap is especially acute in LMICs, where access to funds, information, and context-appropriate resources are especially limited and hard-to-find.

The Opportunity

The IEF has identified an opportunity to fill key ecosystem knowledge gaps and empower women's health ecosystem actors to drive greater impact through a platform that will accelerate collaborative progress and build momentum for women's health R&D—a digital enabling infrastructure for a more united, effective WH R&D ecosystem. The global women's health R&D ecosystem is at an inflection point—while major funding commitments¹ promise to propel this work forward, the fragmented nature of the ecosystem's actors and insights threatens to slow progress and obstruct effective collaboration and synergies. While adjacent fields like digital health² and climate tech³ have created comparable tools, repositories, and collaboration infrastructure, the women's health field has yet to create a singular, consolidated space to propel innovation and advance the field. Where they exist, resources are limited to specific conditions or geographies, limiting cross-pollination, and creating inefficiencies.

The Knowledge Hub—a suite of insights and digital tools to connect the ecosystem—aims to 1) provide a **“big picture” view** of global women's health R&D actors; 2) **reduce duplication** by showing who is working where; 3) **facilitate collaboration** across sectors and geographies; and 4) **highlight gaps, white**

¹ See recent announcements from the [Gates Foundation](#); [Wellcome Leap](#) and [Pivotal Ventures](#); [Milken Institute](#)

² See WHO Digital Health Atlas: digitalhealthatlas.org

³ See Holon IQ Climate Tech Insights Hub: <https://www.holoniq.com/climate-tech>

spaces, and opportunities for researchers, innovators, and funders. With the approach laid out below, minimal upfront investments in a targeted set of tools and platforms present the opportunity for a major multiplier effect and high ROI: by creating the infrastructure to drive alignment across research, innovation, and advocacy, these tools can help maximize the impact of existing funds and help drive increased support for the women's health ecosystem at large.

The Approach

Identified via cross-sector, multi-stakeholder input, this concept outlines a suite of **discrete, modularly fundable opportunities**, all living on the [IEF website](#)—but with the potential for cross-development and co-hosting with partners. These concepts (see Appendix for additional detail) are broken into two discrete categories designed to address the identified problems:

1. **Ecosystem Navigation Tools:** Develop tools to address the fragmentation and lack of ecosystem coordination for women's health researchers/innovators and funders/investors in order to increase transformative investment and partnerships in women's health R&D and action. This includes two connected tools:
 - A. **Ecosystem Map:** Dynamic stakeholder map and companion searchable database of organizations and their initiatives globally working in and funding women's health R&D.
 - B. **Funding Database:** A centralized, continuously updated platform for identifying women's health funding opportunities (for innovators, researchers) and resources.⁴
2. **Innovation Acceleration Resources:** Provide a resource hub for addressing the lack of information in women's health, locating it in one place for the use of women's health advocates, innovators, researchers, and funders. The hub will clearly highlight gaps and elevate existing knowledge, including best practices from around the world and across health conditions. This is made up of the following concept:
 - C. **Women's Health Knowledge Repository:** Consolidated resources and information (e.g., research, best practices, fact sheets) at global and local levels evaluated and approved by advisory board to highlight key information and tools, accessible via both a **searchable database of external documents**, as well as via **Opportunity 'Dashboard' pages**. The latter should contain both consolidated external resources as well as key data for making the economic and societal case for investing in R&D. Resources, data, and information will be sourced, assessed, and selected by an **Advisory Board** of global experts.

These concepts are meant to be both phased and interconnected and can be funded via different streams and in collaboration with different partners across the ecosystem. In aggregate, they are designed to build a flexible architecture of insights serving to accelerate field-wide progress by creating a shared evidence base, supporting collaboration, and amplifying under-researched conditions.

⁴ Please note that this is different from the IEF Fund Working Group's concept, which is working to establish a new funding and investment vehicle.

Risks & Mitigation

Like all knowledge platforms, the Hub will face challenges around credibility, adoption, and sustainability. These risks can be mitigated by:

- **Credibility:** Relying on a diverse, globally-representative Advisory Board to establish vetting process; establishing clear inclusion criteria and human validation of all automated updates.
- **Adoption & Reach:** Co-creating with end users from the start; ensuring that partnerships and collaborations are effectively and proactively leveraged where relevant.
- **Funding:** Prioritizing partnerships and alliances and utilizing the decentralized nature of IEF to pull funding from multiple partners for different components.
- **Sustainability:** Leveraging technology (such as AI-enabled agents, web scrapers, etc.) to semi-automate recurring updates. We recognize where many platforms have not been maximized can be due to the lack of funding for staffing. Emphasizing funding for those who manage the website and content is key.

Design Principles

All concepts outlined in this White Paper were designed with the following parameters in mind:

- **Globally applicable, geographically representative** content; embedding decolonizing knowledge to ensure equity and contextual relevance
- **Focusing on our core audiences**, rather than the general public or direct care providers
- **Emphasizing content & quality standards** to ensure relevance and applicability
- **Continuing to evolve and respond to women's health ecosystem gaps and opportunities**

Detailed Overview: Core Concepts

A. Ecosystem Map

Problem Statement	The women's health R&D ecosystem is fragmented, with researchers, funders, initiatives, and innovators often working in silos. This lack of visibility slows collaboration, limits innovation, and makes it harder for ecosystem actors to secure partnerships, funding, or valuable research insights. Those seeking to understand major players, funders, and initiatives in the ecosystem could leverage the Ecosystem Map to help navigate and identify collaborations and partnerships for their work and initiatives.
Concept Description	The Ecosystem Map will provide an interactive, dynamic visual map and companion searchable database of organizations and initiatives globally working in women's health R&D. Users will be able to filter by geography, stakeholder type, institution size, and opportunity map topic/health condition focus, as well as see existing connections (e.g. partnerships and funding ties).
Primary Audiences	Researchers, Innovators, Funders/Investors

Unique Value Add for WHI Ecosystem	Provides a “big picture” view of global women’s health R&D actors; reduces duplication by showing who is working where; enables collaboration across sectors and geographies; and highlights gaps, white spaces and opportunities for funders, researchers, and innovators.
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B. Funding Database

Problem Statement	Researchers and innovators often struggle to find timely, relevant funding opportunities. The ecosystem of smart, high-potential innovators and researchers is slowed down by a lack of funding, caused by fragmentation and inefficiency, tight funding cycle timelines, and inequity in access, particularly for LMIC researchers and innovators. A centralized dashboard of funding opportunities will help researchers and innovators navigate and identify opportunities, while providing strategic insights and directions for funders: By mapping funding flows, the dashboard also provides visibility into gaps (e.g., underfunded geographies or themes), shaping smarter investment.
Concept Description	A centralized, continuously updated dashboard of women’s health funding opportunities across philanthropy, government, multilaterals, and private sector sources. Searchable by geography, focus area, and funding type. Long-term, this resource could also incorporate MOUs with key publishers, investors, or funders to include enhanced / early access to funding opportunities for IEF members, as well as open-access resources for grant/funding applications best practices for researchers and start-ups, particularly in LMICs.
Primary Audiences	Researchers, Innovators, Funders/Investors
Unique Value Add for WHI Ecosystem	Increases access to capital by democratizing visibility into funding pipelines, particularly benefiting underrepresented innovators.

C. Women’s Health Knowledge Repository

Problem Statement	Disaggregation and fragmentation of knowledge and information on the health conditions affecting women creates barriers for the researchers, innovators, and advocates who are independently working to fill critical innovation gaps in women’s health and increase investment in women’s health research and innovation globally. Specifically, these audiences face three challenges: 1) Lack of access to existing knowledge (especially in LMICs); 2) lack of visibility into research that exists—and doesn’t; and 3) lack of advocacy resources to make the case for investment in innovations and R&D. A suite of reviewed, consolidated, and globally-applicable insights and can help aggregate information and efficiently identify areas where more research is needed. In doing so, these resources would lower barriers to entry for innovators and advocates, strengthen evidence-based proposals and advocacy, and highlight under-researched areas—helping guide funding priorities and innovation.
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Concept Description	<p>The knowledge repository will have two structural components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Resource Library: A searchable database aggregating and categorizing select WH research and resources. Filterable by geography, document type, opportunity map/topic/condition. 2. Opportunity Dashboards: Condition-specific pages that house resources and key datapoints making the economic and societal case for investing in women's health, to create a one-stop-shop for those seeking to better understand and navigate current information landscape. <p>To support the development, validation, and maintenance of these resources, the Working Group also recommends the establishment of a globally-representative Advisory Board to identify and review both the criteria and selection process of resources, data points, etc.</p>
Primary Audiences	<p>Researchers, Innovators, Funders/Investors, Advocates</p>
Unique Value Add for WHI Ecosystem	<p>Lowers the barrier to entry for new innovators, researchers, and advocates by providing centralized, trusted information on health conditions affecting women, in turn driving effective innovation globally; and creates a shared fact base for the field, filling a major gap in transparency and coordination, particularly around gaps, opportunities, and key messaging for advocates.</p>