**Best Programs and the ''Five-Star'' Criteria Summary**

In principle, the ladies who attended ''Best Programs and the Five Star Criteria'' made a wise choice for their breakout session! They were familiar with the 5-Star Criteria, and most were working on the Five-Star Recognition Program.

Our attendees got started by evaluating and updating their branch programs to include the requirements for the ''Programs Star''. Some shared their best mission-based programs that support AAUW's priority issues. We were discussing creating a strategic plan and involving members when our breakouts ended. For those who attended our session and other members, we offer our notes and takeaways:

* Using the 5-Star Program is a great guide to use when planning programs. To qualify for the Program Star, a branch plans 4 mission-based programs. Two of those programs must include a diversity, equity, inclusion focus. One program should be a held in collaboration with 1 or more branches in your state.

<https://www.aauw.org/resources/member/initiatives/5-star-program/>

* The AAUW Strategic Plan 2.0 is another good resource for topics for branch programs. The Strategic Plan lists objective estimates developed to advance equity for women and girls.

<https://www.aauw.org/strategic-plan-2-0/>

* When planning mission-based programs, partner with local agencies that support AAUW's issues and goals. NOW and League of Women Voters are great choices, but branches have found partners and resources for interesting programs in their local government (Elgin), a Women’s Crisis Center (Tinley/Palos.) and the local college (Naperville.)
* Another benefit of mission-based programs is visibility. People who want to get involved in AAUW's issues will be attracted to relevant branch programs. You need to promote these programs in your community! This is a good resource for doing promotions.

[https:ww3.aauw.org/resource/leader-essentials-marketing-and-visibility/](https://ww3.aauw.org/resource/leader-essentials-marketing-and-visibility/)

* Most members found they'd already met some of the 5-Star requirements. Since branch programs drive AAUW's mission, most looked first at their programming and the ''Program Star''.
* Appoint a Diversity Officer! It is vital to be inclusive in our organization and relevant in our pursuit of positive change in society. Identify branch members who are passionate about diversity and inclusion, social reforms, and civil rights.
* Create or update your branch strategic plan in sync with National's Strategic Plan 2.0. Set long-term goals and monitor your progress often.
* Collaborate with other branches to sponsor mission-focused programs in your community. Share the work and the fun! Gain new perspectives and make new friends. Present a larger group of united and committed AAUW members to your community and potential members.
* Include branch members in the decision to pursue the 5-Star Program. Involve them in choosing the priority issues for programs and assign responsibilities. Success stories note the 5-Star Program provided focus and brought their branch members together as a team.
* Suggestions for the CHALLENGE in Governance & Sustainability to address a succession plan for leadership: Some branch boards included an outline of each officer's responsibilities and necessary information for future leader in their governance plan. Including, involving, and mentoring branch members may go a long way in developing leaders who will step up.

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