



To encourage and facilitate mutual support, peer enrichment, awareness and collaboration among states and territories administering STOP Violence Against Women Act Formula Grant Program.

AVA Board President's Annual Report

June 2026

As I reflect on the past year, I am grateful to be part of an organization like AVA—both as a member and as a board member. AVA has remained steadfast in its mission to encourage and facilitate mutual support, peer enrichment, awareness, and collaboration among the states and territories administering the STOP Formula Grant Program. This commitment is clear through the services and programs AVA continues to offer.

Guided by our strategic plan, AVA made a deliberate effort in FY26 to build on our existing services. A perfect example of this was the Peer 2 Peer meeting in Washington, D.C., where participants experienced the traditional benefits of a Peer 2 Peer gathering along with the expanded programming that included ALSO STARR's on-site technical assistance. We see this as just the beginning of offering even more value to our members.

FY26 also marked the launch of new services. With the introduction of the Peer Support and Mentoring Program and our quarterly newsletter, AVA members now have access to more resources than ever.

Much of this progress can be attributed to our Executive Director, Arlene Vassel. As she completes her first full fiscal year with AVA, she continues to bring passion, dedication, and expertise to her work each day. Her leadership and support were instrumental in updating our strategic plan to include a multi-year framework through 2027. Arlene is also deeply committed to cultivating and maintaining meaningful partnerships with OVW and TA providers. These relationships strengthen our ability to support members in their daily work of administering STOP funding. On behalf of the board, we extend our sincere appreciation for Arlene's exceptional work and dedication.

I have also been fortunate to work with so many remarkable professionals on the AVA Board of Directors. Their encouragement and motivation have enriched my own work as a STOP Administrator. This year, we will say goodbye to several board members whose terms are ending. Laura Quasney, Jackie Hoover, and Leanna Liska have each generously contributed their time, energy, and expertise. Please accept my heartfelt thanks for your outstanding service.

Looking ahead to FY27, I am excited about what's to come. AVA will soon announce a fall Peer 2 Peer session, and we will embark on a brand identity and rebranding process—all with the goal of better serving you, our members. I look forward to continuing this work alongside all of you.

Thank you,
Amy Baynes
AVA Board President



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Executive Director's Report

AVA Annual Membership Meeting (June 4, 2026)

As we reflect on this reporting period, I am deeply grateful for the continued partnership, engagement, and leadership of our Board of Directors, membership, and collaborative partners. This year created meaningful opportunities to strengthen relationships, deepen existing partnerships, and continue building a responsive, sustainable, and values-aligned organization grounded in AVA's mission and core values.

Building on the momentum of AVA's strategic planning process completed in 2024, AVA continued implementation of its 2025–2027 Strategic Plan while remaining responsive to emerging opportunities and the evolving needs of the field, our members, and strategic partners.

In October 2025, AVA leadership convened for a strategic planning session to reflect on progress to date, assess current activities and priorities, and explore opportunities to strengthen the organization's impact and sustainability. During this process, leadership revisited AVA's mission, vision, and core values to ensure continued alignment with organizational goals and future direction. Following thoughtful discussion and reflection, no changes were recommended to the mission, vision, or core values at this time, reaffirming the continued relevance of the strategic direction established in the previous strategic planning conversations.

The strategic planning discussion also included a review of the 2025–2027 Strategic Priorities and resulted in an intentional decision to focus less on introducing new initiatives and more on strengthening and refining existing efforts. Leadership emphasized the importance of assessing current activities, identifying what is working well, and investing in opportunities to deepen impact, improve member experience, and identify focused areas for growth. Based on these reflections, AVA identified **branding and enhanced member services** as priorities in the upcoming year to strengthen visibility, increase value to members, and support long-term organizational growth and sustainability.

The accomplishments and updates outlined below reflect progress made across AVA's strategic priorities and continued efforts to build a strong, responsive, values-aligned, and member-centered organization.

AVA At-a-Glance (2025–2026)

A brief overview of accomplishments, areas of focus during this reporting period, and priorities for the year ahead.

Highlights and Accomplishments

Strategic Partnerships

- ◆ Quarterly meetings held with OVW
- ◆ National TA partnerships expanded (ALSO STAAR, Caminar Latino, and NAESV)
- ◆ Continued sharing relevant updates and emerging trends with membership

Member Engagement

- ◆ In-person Peer-to-Peer Meeting (Washington, DC)
- ◆ Members-Only Newsletter launched (April 2026)
- ◆ Monthly Connect Calls continued with consistent participation and engagement
- ◆ AVA's Annual Membership Drive

Peer-to-Peer Support

- ◆ Peer Support & Mentoring Program launched (Phase I)
- ◆ Comprehensive Mentor Guide and Mentoring Framework developed

Communications & Infrastructure

- ◆ Brand identity and rebranding process initiated (Released RFP for Consultant-May 2026)
- ◆ Explored options for AVA's permanent organizational home

Looking Ahead

- ◆ Strengthen strategic partnerships with OVW and National TA providers
- ◆ Increase membership and deepen member engagement
- ◆ Continue implementation of peer support and mentoring initiatives
- ◆ Advance AVA's brand identity and enhance member experience
- ◆ Secure AVA's permanent organizational home
- ◆ Strengthen infrastructure to support long-term sustainability

Highlights and Accomplishments by Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority #1: Strengthening Strategic Partnerships with OVW and National TA Providers

- Organized and facilitated **quarterly meetings with the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)** to strengthen relationship, communication, alignment, and coordination.
- Collaborated with national tribal TA providers to host a conversation with state administrators on meaningful engagement with tribes and tribal coalitions.
- Continued ongoing conversations with national Technical Assistance providers (**ALSO STAAR and Caminar Latino**) to foster collaboration and strengthen collective support for state administrators.
- Expanded engagement with national partners including the **National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) and National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA)**, creating additional opportunities for resource sharing, information exchange, and strategic collaboration.
- Maintained ongoing discussions with advocates and leaders across the field to identify emerging trends, challenges, and opportunities impacting membership and the broader movement.
- Continued sharing relevant updates to help keep membership informed of developments impacting the field.

Strategic Priority #2: Maintain Thriving Relationships with Current Partners

- Continued **regular meetings with NAVAA** to share organizational updates, discuss emerging priorities, and explore opportunities for collaboration.
- Maintained **active membership with NCJA** and disseminated relevant information, resources, and opportunities to AVA membership.
- Continued strategic conversations with key stakeholders to remain responsive to current trends affecting administrators and member organizations.

Strategic Priority #3: Enhance Member Engagement

- Hosted AVA's annual in-person Peer-to-Peer Meeting in Washington, DC, on October 1-2, 2025, bringing together **20 state administrators from across the country**. National TA providers participated in the meeting, on-site TA sessions were provided by Sami Hausserman and Darren Mitchell (ALSO STAAR), and JWI presented a general policy advocacy overview.

- Coordinated and co-facilitated monthly Connect Calls, with attendance ranging from **12-25 members and non-members each call**, creating opportunities for peer connection, shared learning, and resource exchange.
- Successfully launched **The Quarterly Connection**, AVA's Members-Only Newsletter, and disseminated the inaugural issue in April 2026 to strengthen communication and increase member access to timely updates and relevant resources. **The newsletter currently has 107 subscribers**, including *Primary and Secondary contact and individuals listed on each organization's membership form*.
- Coordinated AVA's **annual Membership Drive** to support membership dues renewal, strengthen member engagement, and reinforce the value of AVA's membership. **We currently have 30 active members**.
- Shared announcements and time-sensitive updates through the listserv and email communications (*Note: The listserv includes an expanded audience, while email communications are distributed to Primary and Secondary contacts listed in the Online Directory.*)
- Collaborated with AVA's Website Committee and consultants to support **updates and enhancements to the AVA website** to strengthen communication and member experience.

Strategic Priority #4: Expand Peer-to-Peer Support

- Responded to requests for support from state administrators in a timely and responsive manner.
- Provided **onboarding and orientation for state administrators** joining AVA's Board of Directors.
- Successfully launched Phase I of **AVA's Peer Support and Mentoring Program** designed to connect new and seasoned administrators. **The inaugural cohort includes 4 mentees and 3 mentors**.
- Developed a comprehensive Mentor Guide to support consistency, structure, and meaningful engagement across mentoring relationships.

Strategic Priority #5 (Updated language in 2026): Strengthen Organizational Sustainability and Long-Term Stability

- Continued assessing partnership opportunities aligned with AVA's strategic priorities and long-term vision.
- Explored several options to secure a **permanent organizational home for AVA** to support current operational needs and future growth.

Strategic Priority #6 (New in 2026): Strengthen Organizational Identity and Visibility

- Convened **AVA's Communications Subcommittee** and supported implementation of Communications Plan.
- Launched an **RFP process to recruit a branding consultant** to lead a comprehensive brand identity and rebranding initiative.
- Continued strengthening communication practices to improve consistency, clarity, and member engagement.

Looking Ahead

Strategic Priority #1:

- Continue quarterly meetings with OVW to strengthen collaboration, communication, and alignment.
- Continue expanding and deepening relationships with national TA providers and key stakeholders to identify emerging trends, opportunities, and shared priorities that support AVA membership.
- Continue sharing timely resources, policy advocacy updates, and emerging trends with AVA membership.

Strategic Priority #2:

- Continue regular engagement with current partners to strengthen relationships, exchange information, and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- Maintain active participation in partner networks and continue sharing relevant opportunities and resources with AVA membership.
- Assess opportunities to deepen existing partnerships in ways that increase value and support for AVA membership.

Strategic Priority #3:

- Host AVA in-person Peer-to-Peer meeting (Location and dates TBA)
- Develop and disseminate the Member Survey to gather insights and input regarding member needs, barriers for engagement, desired support, etc.
- Use survey finding to inform member services, engagement strategies, and future strategic planning priorities.
- Increase organizational membership through outreach, relationship-building, and enhanced member value.

Strategic Priority #4:

- Continue Year One implementation of Peer Support & Mentoring Program.

- Establish a feedback and evaluation process to assess program's effectiveness and make adjustments to improve the mentors and mentees experience.

Strategic Priority #5:

- Continue exploring and securing a permanent organizational home for AVA.
- Continue to assess and identify strategies to diversify funding.
- Strengthen infrastructure and operational efforts to support AVA's current goals and long-term growth.

Strategic Priority #6:

- In collaboration with the AVA's Communications Subcommittee, hire a consultant and launch AVA's brand identity and re-branding process.
- Update the website based on recommendations from consultant and identified member needs.
- Revisit current Communications Plan to support rollout and adoption of branding and messaging recommendations.

Overall Looking Ahead

AVA will continue prioritizing strategic partnerships, strengthening member engagement, advancing peer support opportunities, enhancing communications infrastructure, and exploring sustainable pathways to support long-term organizational growth and impact.

In closing, as I continue to learn, grow, and lead in this role, I remain deeply committed to AVA's mission and core values. I am equally committed to creating welcoming and inclusive spaces for collective care, meaningful communication, shared learning, and strong relationships across our membership and partnerships.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to AVA.

Arlene Vassell



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AVA Board Committee Reports

Annual Membership Meeting (June 4, 2026)

Website Committee Report

The AVA Website Committee is dedicated to ensuring the agency's website remains accurate, accessible, and user-friendly. The committee collaborates to review content, streamline navigation, and support consistent updates so that stakeholders can easily find the information and resources they need to successfully administer STOP formula funds.

Throughout the year, significant progress was made in strengthening the accuracy, accessibility, and effectiveness of AVA's website. Our contracted staff completed comprehensive updates to state contact information based on newly submitted membership registration forms and ongoing correspondence with Administrators and the Executive Director. This work included detailed multi-step updates for both primary and secondary contacts, removal of outdated entries, and full synchronization of member information within Electric Embers. In cases requiring clarification, staff conducted direct outreach to Administrators to ensure high-quality, current records.

To further support organizational transparency and tracking, a new system was jointly developed with the Executive Director to monitor updated Membership Registration Forms for states and territories that are currently in receipt of AVA correspondence. This process enhanced AVA's ability to maintain up-to-date data and improve engagement with both members and non-members.

Several key communications initiatives were also completed to include posting updated information on federal events and announcements, AVA's Peer Mentoring and Support Program, AVA Monthly Connect Calls, and the Save-the-Date announcement for AVA's Annual Meeting. In addition, the front-page website graphics were refreshed to improve usability and visual appeal.

Ongoing maintenance of Electric Embers continued throughout the year as well to include routine checks and resolution of participant email “bounce” issues to ensure reliable delivery of AVA communications.

This work was supported through consistent collaboration with the Executive Director, Board members, and BDG Web Design, helping ensure seamless operations and strong communication across the organization.

Communications Committee Report

The Communications Committee was formed to implement the formal communications plan that was developed to streamline communications between AVA, OVW, key stakeholders, and state administrators. A final version of the plan was presented at the June 2025 Annual Membership Meeting. The committee reviewed the plan, and so far, the implementation of the plan has focused on the following action items.

Membership Survey

Create a brief new survey for both members and non-members.

- For our current members, the survey will focus on better understanding member engagement, identifying the services and resources members value most, and gathering feedback on opportunities for growth and meaningful connection.
- For non-members, the survey will explore the value of current benefits and what potential members need from AVA including barriers to membership, and opportunities to strengthen engagement.

Overall, the survey is intended to help us better understand what is working well, what people want more of, and how individuals prefer to engage with AVA. Findings will help inform future decision-making and strategic planning related to member engagement, communication, and membership growth.

Our immediate priority is strengthening engagement with both current members and non-members to support long-term membership growth.

RFP for Brand Identity and Rebranding Consultant

The Committee developed the project timeline and released an RFP for a Brand Identity and Rebranding Consultant.

The engagement will support AVA in conducting a full brand identity and rebranding process. The main goals are to strengthen AVA’s visual identity, messaging, and overall

brand presence to ensure clarity, accessibility, and alignment with our mission, values and strategic priorities. Scope area includes, but are not limited to:

- Brand identity and positioning
- Logo refinement/development
- Color palette and visual guide
- Brand guidelines and supporting materials

The announcement is gaining some traction online and we've had a few promising inquiries. The deadline for submitting proposals is **5:00pm (ET) on June 26, 2026**.

Proposals will be reviewed by AVA Leadership and Board Communications Committee. Finalists may be invited to a brief exploratory conversation to discuss alignment and approach.

To support an inclusive, fair, and equitable selection process, AVA will develop and utilize a standardized rubric to guide proposal evaluation.

The selected Consultant is expected to be **notified by August 31, 2026**

Quarterly Newsletter

The Quarterly Connection, as its formally called, is an AVA member-only newsletter.

The inaugural issue was distributed to **106 subscribers** through Mailchimp on April 28, 2026. It was sent to primary and secondary contacts and all staff listed on the organization's current membership form. Please take a look at it if you haven't seen it.

The purpose of the newsletter is to highlight upcoming events, helpful tools and resources, policy updates, member spotlights, and ways to get more involved.

AVA's goal is for the newsletter to reflect the voices, needs, and interests of our members, so please feel free to share feedback, ideas, or content suggestions for future issues.

Please be on the lookout for a brief Google form that will allow members to recommend themselves or others to be featured in future issues. AVA has established a Story Bank and will collect submissions on an ongoing basis.

The first newsletter featured a member spotlight highlighting Bri Talbot from Utah.