

AFRICA DATA GOVERNANCE OPPORTUNITY FUND

CALL FOR PROPOSAL



1. OVERVIEW

“Africa Data Governance” is a broad term that encompasses rules guiding various aspects of digital space including digital rights, internet freedom, cybersecurity policy, artificial intelligence (AI) policy, data protection, responsible AI, data ethics, data markets, and tech policies – among others.

In practice, it is the set of laws, policies, regulatory authorities, and decision-making frameworks that guide how African governments collect, share, and use data (both generated inside and outside government) in the course of policy making and implementation.

We believe there is an urgent need for cross-regional frameworks, research, and evidence led by African researchers and data experts in the African data field. For example:

- Preventing data misuse – whether by private companies, governments or individuals.
- Harnessing the eagerness to create open data government portals while also mitigating the risks they can present, such as politicization of data.
- Creating guidelines that ensure balanced data governance and accountability of how data is collected, used, and shared.
- Developing research that demonstrates the social, economic, or political outcomes of open data in a country or across regions in order to enable African governments to make evidence-informed decisions.

The field requires actors to cross-collaborate, and co-create codes of conduct and multistakeholder governance structures, which allow for ongoing, collaborative, operational decision-making about data use.

In 2021, Niyel led a rapid landscaping of the data governance space to identify some of the shared needs of data governance practitioners in think tanks, research institutions, and policy advocacy organizations. The study revealed that:

- There were limited collaborative work between organizations across regions, languages, and issues.

- An inability for organizations in the field to take advantage of advocacy opportunities that may fall outside their traditional funding.
- Data governance organizations mostly work in silos and rarely cross-learn or do joint research.

While this is a challenge, it was also clear that there was a great desire for organizations to work together on a set of complementary policy issues that affect multiple countries, collaborate on advocacy within and across sectors and regions, as well as learn from each other different ways to engage stakeholders.

With this in mind, Niyel, with support from the Hewlett Foundation, Omidyar Network, and Ford Foundation, is testing the interest of organizations to explore cross-collaboration on research and advocacy and evidence-based policy on important issues in African data governance.

The fund seeks to provide funding, institutional support, or connections that strengthen data governance organizations' ability to engage with national and regional stakeholders including Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union (AU).

This guideline document provides an overview of the Africa Data Governance Opportunity Fund (hereafter the 'Fund') scope, application procedure, selection process, and eligibility criteria.

2. PURPOSE OF THE FUND

The Fund seeks to support organizations with an interest in African data governance with resources to carry out joint research and advocacy initiatives in the advancement of the field that:

- Prioritize cross-country/regional initiatives
- Focus on evidence for policy change and advocacy
- Encourage collaboration between research and advocacy institutions

3. SCOPE

Applications are open to any number of collaborating institutions. However, for each proposal, there must be a lead organization. The lead organization will be legally bound to the funders and will be responsible for managing the relationship with other collaborators.

Depending on the quality, alignment, creativity, and relevance of the proposals received, the fund will consider providing grants for up to **5 projects** ranging from **USD 50,000** to **USD 250,000** over an implementation period of a maximum of **two years**.

Due to the size of the financial support available to each recipient, the Fund will require that the lead organization propose a budget that does not exceed 51% of their annual budget.

4. PRIORITIES

Given the limited resources available for organizations with an interest in data governance to work together on a set of complementary policy issues that affect multiple countries, collaborate on advocacy within and across sectors and regions, learn from each other, and explore different ways to engage stakeholders, the fund is seeking applications that demonstrate:

- Collaboration across skill sets (e.g. research and advocacy/research and litigation).
- Collaboration across interest areas (e.g. digital rights, data governance, tech policy).
- Joint and proactive engagement around the shaping of policies with continent-wide relevance, and blending of tactics (e.g. research and advocacy).
- Learning around how governments collect, share, and make decisions with data; the value of government use of such data; and policy and regulation frameworks.
- Learning around data governance beyond the status quo such as how individuals and communities can have more control and influence over their data.
- The way extracted data can be used for social good.
- The way extracted data can respect ethics and human rights.
- Organizations' ability to advance the African data governance field and how that impact will be measured.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Prospective applicants need to pay close attention to the following eligibility criteria that determine whether they can be considered.

Organization eligibility

- The lead organization must have formal registration in an African country. If the collaboration between organizations involves an African organization and a non-African organization; the lead organization must be the African organization.
- The applicants must demonstrate three years of expertise in any or more of the priority areas above.

Project eligibility

- The project must show a clear linkage to key issue(s) / problems/opportunities in the African data governance field, as described in the list of priorities.
- The activities of the project must generate new knowledge that advances the field.
- The Fund shall not fund projects that do not focus on the African continent.
- The value of the proposed project must not exceed 51% of the organization’s annual budget.
- Projects must present a clear plan of how they will engage decision-makers, as well as track and measure the impact of that engagement.
- The Fund will not support travel to attend conferences or workshops, except in circumstances where such travel is directly linked to an activity that is eligible.
- The Fund shall not provide scholarships.
- The Fund does not promote direct lobbying or electioneering activities.

6. APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

The following provides an overview of the application and selection process from the publication of the call for proposal to the start of implementation.

6.1 SUBMISSION PROCESS

Applications are open from May 23rd, 2022, and will close on June 30th, 2022, 23h59 (Greenwich Mean Time - GMT).

The online application form is available [here](#). Only applications submitted via the online application form will be considered. Submissions can be submitted in English or French.

Upon submission of the application, applicants will receive a confirmation that their application has been received.

If such a confirmation is not received, please get in touch with datagovernancefund@niyel.net

Applicants can send in questions or comments to datagovernancefund@niyel.net up until May 30th. The questions and comments received will be addressed collectively in a public Q&A document accessible on the Niyel’s website by June 2nd.

6.2 SCREENING, INITIAL EVALUATION, AND SHORTLISTING

All applications will go through an administrative review to establish eligibility. Thereafter, the applications will undergo a preliminary shortlisting assessment.

The assessing body will be composed of five individuals with proven expertise in the field from civil society, think tanks/ research institutions, policymaking, and philanthropy.

At this time, unsuccessful applicants will be notified individually and informed that their applications have not been shortlisted. Individual feedback on the reasons why concept notes have been unsuccessful cannot be provided due to the resource implications.

6.3 FULL PROPOSAL

Shortlisted applicants will be notified to submit a full proposal based on a template provided by Niyel. The shortlisted applicants will work with the Niyel team to finalize their proposals.

6.4 INDICATIVE TIMELINE

Publication of call for proposals	May 23rd, 2022
Deadline to Submit Application	June 30th, 2022
Notification of shortlisted organizations and invitation to prepare full proposal	August 12th, 2022
Deadline for submission of full proposal	September 10th, 2022
Finalization and Award	End of September (TBC)