**African Union Civic Tech Fund (Round 1)**

**Guidelines**

*25 November 2021*

# Table of contents

## 1. Overview

This guideline document provides an overview of the African Union Civic Tech Fund (hereafter the 'Fund') and the type of support it provides. The primary purpose of this document is to allow prospective applicants to understand the Fund's background, its scope, its priorities, its support package, the application and selection process as well as the eligibility criteria. This will allow prospective applicants to write strong proposals that align with the objectives of the Fund.

## 2. Background

There is an acute need for meaningful participation by African citizens in addressing and solving governance and development challenges across the continent.

Civic technologies (or civic tech) are digital tools that make it easier for citizens to engage with those in power. Civic tech can help strengthen democratic processes and promote inclusive decision-making. It is therefore a key vehicle through which citizen participation can be achieved.

The African Union policy context provides several entry points for civic technologies seeking to increase participation. Africa's Agenda 2063 and its powerful vision of Africa as a 'global powerhouse' is an example of such an overarching policy framework. The African Charter for Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) can also serve as a reference for civic tech initiatives. Its focus on democratic governance, but also peace and development, provide several thematic entry points for civic initiatives. The African Youth Charter is another example of a policy document providing useful hooks for civic tech initiatives. Furthermore the African Governance Architecture's (AGA's) Youth Engagement Strategy recognises the youth "are actively undertaking grassroots-based mobilization as well as the using of information and communications technologies (ICT), among other engagement mechanisms, to cast light on their plights".

The organisational structure of the African Union can further amplify those continental alliances between policy-makers and citizens brought about by civic tech, for example through the AGA, the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) and the Regional Economic Communities (RECs).

In this, it is key to involve citizens from all walks of life. Persons with disabilities, diaspora communities, the private sector, civil society, media, academia, and others are asked to support policy-makers by bringing forward their needs and ideas. In particular, the involvement of women and youths is a precondition for successful governance and development processes of the continent. This is self-evident, given that about half of the population is female and that more than a third of the population is under the age of 35.

## 3. Scope

The Fund is a pan-African competition that aims to accelerate innovative civic tech initiatives that have the potential to lead to citizen-led transformative action across the African continent.

The overall budget available under this current call is **EUR 160 750**. The financial support to be awarded to each initiative will range from **EUR 10 000** to **EUR 20 000** – over an implementation period of **six months**. Recipients must be able to enter a service contract agreement (as opposed to a grant agreement). Additional rounds of funding will follow in the future.

Due to the size of financial support available to each recipient, the Fund will pay particular attention to the **upscaling**, **adaptation** or **replication** of pre-existing civic tech initiatives - if they are in accordance with any of the priorities described further below. The financial support may also be used to fund the deployment of civic technology in close partnership with a particular citizen group or civil society organisation that does not have the expertise to do so on its own. While the **ground-up development of original ideas** qualifies for funding as well, such proposals, like all others, need to demonstrate feasibility and probabilities of success within the budget ceilings specified above.

## 4. Support package

Aside from the financial support, the Fund will provide selected initiatives with additional technical support according to their identified needs.

In sum, the support package looks as follows:

1. **Financial support**
   - EUR 10 000 to EUR 20 000 per recipient.
2. **Technical support**
   - Virtual inception/acceleration week (hosted by AfriLabs).
   - Provision of embedded technical expertise through the engagement of civic tech specialists.
3. **Thematic support**
   - Provision of thematic expertise on democracy support, African Union governance & continental policy-making.
4. **Marketing, communication & showcasing support**
   - Facilitation of access to decision-makers at the African Union level as well as the international development community.
5. **Peer-to-peer learning & networking**
   - Facilitation of exchange between recipients and other members of related civic tech ecosystems.

## 5. Priorities

The overarching policy framework for the Fund is Africa's Agenda 2063 as well as other key policy documents associated with the African Union Shared Values agenda, such as the ACDEG or the African Youth Charter.

Initiatives should therefore provide innovative solutions to solve problems of citizen participation, across a number of relevant areas:

- Participation in public space & public discourse;
- Electoral cycles and elections;
- Rule of law & orderly transfers of power between governments;
- Democratic culture and political pluralism;
- Responsive, transparent and accountable governance;
- Peace and security (where it impacts democratic governance);
- Human, economic and sustainable development (where it impacts democratic governance).

For example, initiatives may propose to leverage technology in order to…

- …enable citizens to have a voice on key issues within their constituencies, e.g. by encouraging participation in digital councils, fora, etc.;
- …enable citizens to better understand and interact within political decision-making processes, including electoral or political party processes, e.g. by post-electoral tracking of campaign promises or election observation recommendations.
- …enable citizen journalism in the context of monitoring governance performance and promoting responsiveness, transparency and accountability, e.g. by sourcing, opening and analysing public data;...support citizens' action to prevent violence and conflict, e.g. by combating misinformation or providing digital civic education.

These are only examples. Prospective recipients are free to suggest interventions of their preference, as long as they are linked to the overall thematic categories.

Particular added-value elements are…

- …a decided focus on youth involvement;
- …a clear emphasis on gender equality & women's empowerment;
- …identifiable entry points for African Union policy & programming processes;

- …a clear adoption of a pan-African approach.

## 6. Application & selection process

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

### 6.1. Indicative timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| Publication of guidelines | **25 November 2021** |
| Formal launch & information session | **25 November 2021** |
| Deadline to submit proposals | **16 January 2022** |
| Preliminary award decision by Selection Committee | **February 2022** |
| Negotiation, finalisation & award | **March 2022** |
| Implementation | **April - September 2022** |

### 6.2. Call for proposals

The application period is open immediately and will close on Sunday, 16 January 2022, 23h59 (East Africa Time). This means that prospective applicants will have a period of roughly 7 weeks to prepare and submit their proposals.

The online application form is available on https://civictechfund.africa/auctf. Only applications submitted via the online application form will be considered.

Upon submission of the proposals, applicants will receive a confirmation that their proposal has been received. If such a confirmation is not received, please get in touch with info@civictechfund.africa.

### 6.3. Screening, initial evaluation and shortlisting

All proposals will undergo an administrative check that establishes whether the information required by the application form has been provided. Further, applications will be assessed through the eligibility criteria (see Section 6 below).

Upon passing this administrative check, the applications will undergo a first assessment against a set of evaluation criteria of the call. It is important to mention that the *technical viability* of the initiative is a primary consideration at this stage (aside from management capacities). Applicants may nevertheless be asked to provide supporting documents for some of the information included in the applications.

The list of evaluation criteria is as follows:

- Relevance to the priorities (as described in these present guidelines);
- Technical viability of the suggested civic tech initiative & operational capacity of the implementing organisation;
- Added-value elements (as described in these present guidelines);
- Expected impact on proposed target groups;
- Sustainability;
- Cost-effectiveness.

This process will ensure that only a shortlist of those proposals that have passed the administrative check and have been deemed fit-for-purpose will be forwarded to the Selection Committee (see below) for consideration.

### 6.4. Preliminary award decision

The Selection Committee will likely be composed of five voting members. Three voting members will represent civil society (each with a proven experience in driving civic tech engagement on the continent), two voting members will represent other development partners including at least one voting member from the African Union. It will be chaired by the African Union.

The Selection Committee will review the shortlist of applicants – on the basis of the above-mentioned evaluation criteria. In line with the available budget, the Selection Committee can either…

- … preliminarily approve the proposed initiative and suggest further negotiation and finalisation of the proposal documents; or
- … reject the proposal.

On this basis, a selected number of proposals will be preliminarily selected for an award. At this time, unsuccessful applicants will be notified individually and informed that their

proposal has not been shortlisted. However, individual feedback on the reasons on why proposals have been unsuccessful cannot be provided due to the resource implications.

### 6.5. Negotiation, due diligence, finalisation and award

The management team will engage with all applicants and provide comments and requests in relation to the pre-selected proposals. A number of additional documents will have to be completed by the applicants. Applicants will also be asked to provide additional financial documents, such as the most recent organisational business plan, audited annual financial statements, and recent financial statements, including organisational performance indicators, if available.

Once all comments have been addressed and additional information and documents have been provided, a service contract will be signed between the applicants and the management team.

## 7. Eligibility criteria

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

### 7.1.1. Recipients

The Fund will focus on the provision of support to not-for-profit and for-profit organisations (e.g. social enterprises) acting within the civic space & the civic tech ecosystem Particular attention will be paid to digital solutions that benefit women and youths as target groups..

In short, the following eligibility criteria exists for recipients:

- The organisation must be a legal entity;

- The organisation must be registered in an African Union Member State;

- The organisation must be able to sign a service contract agreement (as opposed to a grant contract agreement);

- The organisation must not be bankrupt or being wound up nor having its affairs administered by the courts;

- The organisation must not have received an adverse audit opinion, either by its own auditors or its donors' auditors;

- The organisation must have policies in place and/or practices in place to guarantee the ethical management of personal identifiable information;

- The organisation must not have been the subject of a judgment for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity.

In addition, recipients of the Fund must adhere to several (but not necessarily all) of the following high-level guiding principles:

- The organisation's activity is positioned to effect innovation, sustainable growth, and/or large-scale policy, behaviour, and systems change;

- The organisation has an approach that fundamentally adopts a sustainable equilibrium to solve social and/or economic problems;

- The organisation has local, regional and/or national partnerships in place to optimise its model and execute its mission on a larger scale;

- The organisation has the capacity to expand in terms of ability to manage additional resources and the work associated with the expansion;

- The organisation can already show evidence of the impact of their work and can indicate how additional resources will increase their impact;

- The organisation can demonstrate how the intervention supported through the Fund will be sustained.

### 7.2. Geographic focus

The Fund will seek to provide funding and support in any African Union Member State within the limits of its capacity.

The Fund will not provide funding in any country which is under sanctions by the African Union at the time of investment.

### 7.3. Costs

The Fund will cover a global amount for each service contract, broken down in the necessary costs to deliver the agreed results. Such eligible types of costs include:

- Staff costs and expert fees;

- Travel and subsistence costs;

- Purchase costs for equipment and/or software applications;

- Costs of consumables;

- Costs of service & supply contracts;

Ineligible costs include:

- Debts and service charges;

- Provisions for losses, debts or potential future liabilities;

- Purchases of land or buildings;

- Currency exchange losses.

## Further information

For any further questions, please feel free to write an email to info@civictechfund.africa.