# Guidelines

# Advancing civic technology and digital engagement

*Strategic support to the AGA organ: AU-ECOSOCC*

**19 December 2023**

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# 1. Overview

These guidelines provide an overview of the call (hereafter the 'Call') launched by the **Charter Project Africa**, in partnership with the African Union's Economic, Social and Cultural Council (**AU-ECOSOCC**). The primary purpose of this document is to allow prospective applicants to understand the Call's background, its scope, its priorities, 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 Call.

## 2. Background

The **Charter Project Africa** is a pan-African project focused on the commitments contained in the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG) - the central African Union policy document to advance democratic governance in African Union member states.

The project promotes the usage of civic technology to amplify citizen voices. This is achieved by providing financial resources, through grants, as well as technical resources, through know-how, to civic initiatives pursuing democracy, particularly those led by underrepresented groups. This support is delivered in eleven African Union member states - Benin, Botswana, Cabo Verde, Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia - as well as at regional and continental level.

The project also opens spaces of collaboration between citizens, civic initiatives and African Union policy makers, at national, regional and continental levels - with an emphasis on digital formats. A particular focus is given to the role and the mandate of the African Governance Architecture (AGA) - a coordination mechanism that brings together those African Union (AU) organs and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that possess a formal mandate for the promotion and sustenance of democracy, governance and human rights in Africa. Further, the role of the ACDEG in achieving positive change in African Union member states is monitored, analysed and promoted. A dedicated project Secretariat ensures that linkages between pan-African civil society and African Union policy makers are strengthened.

The project is implemented by a consortium of six African and European organisations:

*AfricTivistes* is a pan-African union of bloggers and web-activists across the continent. It promotes democratic values, human rights and good governance through digital media. In the project, it assumes a major role in civic technology and digital engagement activities.

*Code for Africa* (CfA) is the continent's largest federation of data journalism and civic technology laboratories with a presence across Africa. In the project, it leverages its expertise in digital democracy projects as well as its existing digital toolkits and will support the grantees in implementing their initiatives.

The *Democracy Works Foundation* (DWF) is a regional democracy support organisation, with multiple offices across Southern Africa. In the project, it coordinates dialogue and advocacy activities at regional level and supports grantees in the region.

The *Gorée Institute* is a pan-African organisation located on Gorée Island in Dakar, Senegal, supporting peace and democracy in Africa since 1992. In the project, it coordinates dialogue and advocacy activities at regional level and supports grantees in the region.

The *European Centre for Development Policy Management* (ECDPM) is a leading independent think tank on international cooperation, and has a long-standing work stream of policy research on Africa's regional and continental governance initiatives. In the project, ECDPM assumes main responsibility for policy analysis & strategy development.

The *European Partnership for Democracy* (EPD) is a pan-continental network of European democracy support organisations, based in Brussels, Belgium. It supports democratic initiatives across the world. In the project, it is primarily responsible for the engagement vis-à-vis the AGA and acts as the consortium lead.

The **African Union's Economic, Social, and Cultural Council** (**AU-ECOSOCC**), which is a member of the African Governance Architecture (AGA), is a consultative organ that provides a platform for civil society organisations to engage with the African Union. It serves as a forum for dialogue and collaboration between civil society and AU institutions, aiming to promote the continent's economic, social, and cultural development. AU-ECOSOCC facilitates the participation of diverse civil society groups in the decision-making processes of the African Union, fostering inclusive and

sustainable development across Africa.

## 3. Priorities of this Call

In pursuit of its objectives, the Charter Project Africa seeks to collaborate with the AU-ECOSOCC for the scope of this Call, to enhance the adoption and use of civic technology in promoting democratic governance and citizen engagement in continental institutions. To achieve this, the Charter Project Africa conducted a comprehensive needs assessment exercise for the AU-ECOSOCC.

The priorities outlined in these guidelines are informed by the needs assessment, whose findings emphasise the importance of conducting a comprehensive audience analysis and fostering the development and implementation of an audience engagement strategy for AU-ECOSOCC.

The need for audience analysis at AU-ECOSOCC is underscored by its ambition to serve as a central knowledge hub for African Union affairs and its role in facilitating public policy dialogue. As a knowledge creator, AU-ECOSOCC produced a significant number of documents in 2023. The objective is to ensure the effective dissemination of these resources to the relevant stakeholders. This goal necessitates a clear understanding of their audience's information-seeking behaviours and preferred access points to tailor the dissemination process. Moreover, as a facilitator of public dialogue, AU-ECOSOCC must navigate the complexities of engaging a broad audience in policy discussions, which requires a nuanced understanding of the various communication channels and methods that resonate with different segments of their audience. Audience analysis will enable AU-ECOSOCC to identify the most effective platforms and formats for dialogue, ensuring meaningful participation in the policy process.

Given the broad and diverse nature of the AU-ECOSOCC constituency, defining and prioritising citizen engagement is crucial. The organ is proactively working on enhancing user engagements on its different platforms and acknowledges the need for more inclusive outreach strategies. The impact of COVID-19 and administrative issues have motivated AU-ECOSOCC to accelerate their engagement efforts, demonstrating resilience in the face of limited resources. With the realisation that many Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) remain unreached, ECOSOCC is driven to close the knowledge gap about the African Union. Audience analysis is critical in

bridging the gap, as it will provide insights into how to prioritise engagement initiatives, optimise outreach methods, and ultimately, ensure that ECOSOCC's efforts in knowledge dissemination and policy dialogue are inclusive and effective.

**This Call therefore seeks to support AU-ECOSOCC to improve and strengthen its digital engagement strategy, by better understanding the audiences and their preferences in digital engagement, as well as to foster effective and inclusive civic engagement and participation in policymaking.**

The call is particularly directed toward African civil society organisations and has been conceived as such as an opportunity for the selected organisation to:

- Lead a participatory process that cuts across civil society and citizens, developing representative outputs;
- Serve as an opportunity to take on a convener role within the AU-ECOSOCC for the period of this engagement;
- Strengthen the AU organ's communications strategy to deepen engagement with its constituents**.**

# 4. Tasks and responsibilities

The selected candidate organisation(s) will undertake a detailed audience analysis to refine and enhance the African Union organ's engagement with their stakeholders (state and non-state actors). The primary goal is to develop a nuanced understanding of the audience's characteristics, preferences, and engagement patterns to facilitate more effective and inclusive civic participation in policymaking processes.

The eligible and suggested activities under this call for proposals are:

1. **Audience research and segmentation**
   a. Design and execute a multi-faceted research plan to identify and segment the target audience for the organ, incorporating demographic, psychographic, and behavioural dimensions;
   b. Employ a mix of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies, including but not limited to surveys with stratified sampling, in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic studies, and digital analytics;

c. Perform a gap analysis of the current engagement practices versus best practices in civic tech engagement;

d. Synthesise research findings into a comprehensive audience segmentation report, detailing actionable insights and strategic implications for engagement.

2. **Message and channel testing**

a. Develop a messaging framework that aligns with the core values and policy goals of the organ, tailored to the nuanced needs of each audience segment;

b. Pilot various communication channels, including digital (social media, email newsletters, webinars) and traditional media (radio broadcasts, print materials), to gauge effectiveness;

c. Implement systematic A/B and multivariate testing to evaluate message resonance and channel efficacy, using robust statistical analysis to ensure validity;

d. Compile findings into an analytical report that outlines optimal messaging and channel strategies for each identified audience segment.

3. **Engagement strategy development**

a. Collaborate with the organs to translate research and testing insights into a comprehensive, multi-channel engagement strategy;

b. The strategy should include specific objectives, engagement tactics, content plans, channel strategies, and feedback mechanisms tailored to each audience segment;

c. Design a pilot program to test the engagement strategy with a subset of the audience, incorporating real-time adjustments based on iterative feedback;

d. Develop a feedback collection and analysis system to continuously improve engagement efforts.

4. **Feedback and reporting:**

a. Implement a robust feedback system to capture audience responses to engagement initiatives systematically;

b. Monitor and assess the effectiveness of the engagement strategy, utilising both qualitative feedback and quantitative metrics;

c. Provide regular progress reports and a final comprehensive report post-pilot, complete with performance analysis, insights gained, and recommendations for sustained engagement.

*Please note that the list above is not exhaustive. Any other activity deemed necessary by the applicant and duly justified in the proposal could be funded if it contributes to the achievement of the objective\*.*

Applicants could propose:

- Innovative audience research methods;
- Technology-driven engagement tools;
- Interactive content creation;
- Community outreach programs;
- Participatory design workshops;
- Real-time feedback mechanisms.

When assessing the proposals, the following methodological considerations will be taken into account:

- *Ethical considerations*: Ensure all research complies with ethical standards, including informed consent and data privacy;
- *Cultural sensitivity*: Adapt research tools and engagement strategies to be culturally relevant and sensitive to the diverse audience of the African Union organs;
- *Inclusivity*: Ensure that research methodologies and engagement strategies are inclusive, providing opportunities for participation from all segments of the audience, including marginalised groups;
- *Validity and reliability*: Employ methodological rigour to ensure that findings are valid, reliable, and can be generalised to the broader audience;
- *Iterative approach*: Utilise an iterative approach to allow for continuous learning and adaptation of strategies based on real-time feedback and data analysis.

## 5. Scope

The overall budget available under this current Call is **EUR 30 000**. The winning proposal will be supported over an implementation period of **approximately five**

**months** (to be confirmed at the time of contracting). The recipient will enter a grant contract agreement with the European Partnership for Democracy.

The selected candidate will work in close cooperation with the AU-ECOSOCC representatives assigned to follow the implementation of the grant, as well as any other tech expert embedded in the organ by other Charter Project Africa consortium partners.

### 5.1 Indicative grant implementation timeline

1.   **Phase 1:** Research Design and Data Collection (Month 1-2)
     a.   Develop research instruments and data collection protocols;
     b.   Conduct audience research through selected methodologies;
     c.   Begin initial data analysis to inform the development of the messaging framework.
2.   **Phase 2:** Message and Channel Testing (Month 2-3)
     a.   Develop and test messages across different channels;
     b.   Collect and analyse data on audience responses;
     c.   Refine messaging and channel strategies based on initial findings.
3.   **Phase 3:** Strategy Development and Pilot (Month 3-4)
     a.   Finalise audience engagement strategy;
     b.   Implement pilot engagement campaign;
     c.   Collect and analyse pilot data, make strategy adjustments.
4.   **Phase 4:** Evaluation and Reporting (Month 5)
     a.   Conduct comprehensive evaluation of the pilot campaign;
     b.   Prepare and deliver final reports with findings and recommendations.

## 6. Application & selection process

The selection process consists of the submission of the **full proposal** by the applicants (see Section 6.3 below).

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 | **19 December 2023** |
| Deadline to submit full proposal | **31 January 2024** |
| Announcement of selected applicant | **29 February 2024** |
| Negotiation, finalisation & award | **March 2024** |
| Implementation | **April – August 2024** |

## 6.2 Proposal submission

The application period is open immediately and will close on **31 January 2024 at 23:59 (East Africa Time)**. This means that prospective applicants will have a period of 43 days to prepare and submit their proposals.

The documents to be filled (see Section 6.3 above) could be downloaded here.

The requested documents need to be sent to info@charter.africa with the subject line "Application | Support to AU-ECOSOCC | ORGANISATION NAME"

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

## 6.3 Proposal submission requirements

The full application package to be submitted through the online application form consists of the following:

1. **Application template** containing:

- a detailed project approach and methodology for each task and responsibility outlined in the scope of work;
- a proposed timeline and work plan with clear milestones and deliverables;
- organisational capacity statement, including staff qualifications and experience relevant to the project;
- references from past similar work which has been performed;
- demonstrated understanding of the African Union's context and needs.

2. **Budget template** with a comprehensive budget that outlines all costs associated with the project.

3. **Legal entity's registration** documents.

## 6.4 Final evaluation, due diligence & award decision

All expressions of interest will undergo an administrative check that establishes whether the information required by the online application form has been provided. Further, applications will be assessed through the eligibility criteria (see Section 7 below).

Upon passing this administrative check, the applications will undergo the assessment. The following three evaluation criteria will be assessed:

- Relevance to the priorities (see Section 3 above);
- Technical viability of the proposal;
- Experience and operational capacity of the implementing organisation;
- Added-value elements (see Section 7.1 below);
- Cost-effectiveness.

The evaluation of the full proposals will be conducted by an Evaluation Committee made of Charter Project Africa and AU-ECOSOCC representatives.

Based on the evaluation, the selection will be made. All applicants will receive an official response with the outcome of their proposal by **29 February 2024.** However,

individual feedback on the reasons why the proposals submitted have been unsuccessful cannot be provided due to the resource implications.

At this stage, a due diligence process will be conducted: the selected applicant will 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.

## 6.5 Negotiation, finalisation and contracting

The responsible EPD staff (hereafter the 'Management Team') will engage with the selected applicant and provide comments and requests in relation to the proposed initiative. A number of additional documents may have to be completed by the applicant. Once all comments have been addressed and additional information and documents have been provided, a grant agreement will be signed between each applicant 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 Recipients

The Call 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.

In short, the following **eligibility criteria** exists for recipients:

- The organisation must be a legal entity;
- The organisation must be a non-governmental, independent of local, regional and central government, political parties and religious institutions;

- The organisation can be a not-for-profit organisation or a for profit organisation, but must - in both cases- be strongly committed to advancing civic participation;

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

- The organisation must be able to sign a grant 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 judgement for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation or any other illegal activity.


In addition, recipients of the Call must have several (but not necessarily all) of the following **qualifications**:

- Extensive experience in audience research and engagement strategy within civic technology and policymaking contexts;

- Minimum of 5-7 years experience in conducting audience research, message development, and engagement strategy within the context of civic participation and policy making;

- Demonstrated ability to conduct mixed-methods research, including surveys, focus groups, interviews, and synthesise findings into strategic recommendations;

- Expertise in data analysis, statistical testing, and the ability to synthesise large datasets into actionable insights;

- Proven track record in developing and executing engagement strategies that yield measurable results;

- A proven track record of successful engagement or communication projects, preferably with governmental or intergovernmental agencies;

- Expertise in developing communication strategies and content that resonate with diverse audiences;

- Proficiency in the use of analytics tools and platforms for measuring engagement;

- Experience with A/B testing and other testing methodologies to refine messaging and channel strategies;

- Ability to utilise current digital communication platforms and adapt to emerging technologies;

- Strong project management skills, with the ability to manage timelines, resources, and stakeholder expectations effectively;

- Proven experience in conducting large-scale audience research and segmentation;

- Ability to perform demographic, psychographic, and behavioural analysis;

- Experience in developing and implementing audience engagement strategies;

- Ability to work collaboratively with multiple stakeholders to create tailored strategies;

- Competence in creating inclusive strategies that cater to diverse audiences;

- Experience in piloting and refining engagement strategies based on feedback;

- Established methods for setting up and managing feedback loops;

- Ability to monitor, evaluate, and report on strategy effectiveness;

- Experience in providing clear and insightful progress reports.

Particular **added-value elements** are:

- The organisation possesses a comprehensive understanding of African Union policies, especially those related to democratic governance, citizen engagement, and digital technology;

- A team with diverse skills, including research, analytics, strategy development, and communications.

- The organisation has local, regional and/or national partnerships in place to optimise and pilot the strategy on a larger scale;

- The organisation demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the landscape of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), as this knowledge allows to attract and facilitate collaboration with other CSOs in joint initiatives with AU-ECOSOCC;

- Ability to work in multiple languages prevalent within the African Union is an advantage (English and French are required. Any other language will be valued positively);

- The organisation can showcase a history of successful engagements with various AU organs and an understanding of the institutional dynamics within the AU, particularly in relation to bodies like the AU-ECOSOCC;

- 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.

## 7.2 Costs

Recipients will be asked to submit a budget with necessary costs to deliver the agreed results. Such eligible types of costs could include:

- Staff costs and expert fees;

- 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.

## 8. Further information

For any further questions, please feel free to write an email to info@charter.africa, mentioning the title of this call.