

The Agency Fund Spring 2026 Open Call is Now Live!

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At The Agency Fund, we support innovations that expand human agency - people's ability to navigate life challenges, update their beliefs, and shape their own futures. We invite non-profits, social enterprises, and research teams across all geographies and domains of work to apply for this program.

Recent advances in the social sciences suggest that even people who live in extremely difficult conditions, and who appear to have very limited options, can derive major benefits from insights and experiences that engage their consciousness, affirm their dignity, and support them in charting a path forward. Remarkable impacts can follow – not only on people's sense of control over their lives, but also on objective development outcomes like income, health, and educational attainment. The expansion of mobile connectivity and technology, along with the falling cost of data in low-income settings, has opened new opportunities to scale support for communities navigating difficult circumstances.

What We Fund: Innovations must meet the following criteria:

- **Relevance to Human Agency:** All proposed projects should expand human agency. For us - this means approaches that help people update their beliefs, perspectives, or mental models in ways that strengthen their ability to make decisions and shape their own lives. Approaches should align with our mission by engaging people's consciousness, respecting their dignity and supporting better decision-making. Solutions must unearth relevant insights about people's options, capabilities, or future within contexts that realistically afford them alternative choices.
- **Scale & Cost-Effectiveness:** Organizations should already be working with at least 1,000 users and demonstrate a credible path to reaching more than 1 million people by 2030. Solutions should leverage technology, existing networks and/or government policy to engage people in a scalable manner. Solutions should also demonstrate a clear path to cost-effectiveness.
- **Data & Learning:** Ideas must be grounded in, or must generate, scientific evidence of impact. This typically means a randomized controlled trial or iterative A/B testing. Also, applicant organizations should capture and analyze data for continuous performance management, evaluation of program impacts, and iterative adaptation.
- **Team & Management:** Teams should possess ample local context alongside a proven track record of successful partnerships, organizational stability, and rigorous and open research.

Winning organizations will receive catalytic, flexible funding and access to a global network of practitioners exploring agency-based approaches to development.

With the help of our co-funders and partners, we have a total corpus of \$2 million USD available for this open call. Based on data from last year, open call grants typically range from \$75,000 to \$500,000, with an average grant size of \$230,400.

Examples from our Network: A number of organizations are already pioneering an agency-centered approach to global development.

- **Propel, Inc. (Citizen Services):** Builds and evaluates AI co-pilots designed to help citizens successfully navigate government social safety nets, empowering individuals to make informed life decisions.
- **Digital Green (Agriculture):** Scales AI-powered advisory services for smallholder farmers in Kenya, Ethiopia, India, and other countries, giving them the localized insights needed to actively improve their livelihoods.
- **Rocket Learning (Early Childhood Education):** Links parents and daycare providers to science-based, effective learning activities for preschoolers - engaging them as active agents in the early education of children.
- **Noora Health (Maternal & Family Health):** Equips patients and their families with actionable health information and maternal mental health support, shifting marginalized caregivers into active drivers of their family's recovery and wellbeing.
- **Shamiri Institute (Mental Health):** Delivers positive psychology programs to youth through the public school system in Kenya, helping young people update their beliefs, recover from mental distress, and build resilience.

☀ **Special Focus: AI-Forward Mental Health Innovations** Alongside our Open Call, we invite submissions to a Thematic Window on AI-powered mental health innovations. Mental health receives less than 2% of health budgets in most low- and middle-income countries. Yet there is evidence from randomized controlled trials (RCTs) indicating that AI interventions can significantly improve mental health outcomes and expand access to care for marginalized and vulnerable populations.

- Recent clinical RCTs have shown that AI chatbots can effectively reduce psychological distress (Li et al, 2023) including for vulnerable groups like healthcare workers (Taylor et al., 2022) and students (Klos et al., 2021; Liu et al, 2022).
- Furthermore, AI holds immense promise as a navigation tool; early results from an ongoing RCT with low-income women in Mexico suggests an AI wellness chatbot can improve take-up of therapy referrals.

We are seeking safe, effective, scalable mental health interventions in low-resource settings, particularly those working through existing community systems and outside of clinical settings. We are most interested in services that involve a human in the loop of care, rather than purely digital therapeutic interactions. Priority areas include early childhood prevention, coaching and feedback for lay counselors, school and workplace-based programs, and community-rooted models that foster trust and social connection.

How to Apply: Two-Stage Process Our application process is split into two stages:

- **Stage 1: Expression of Interest (Deadline: 4th May 2026):** Interested organizations will submit answers to a few introductory questions and a brief prompt to evaluate their theory of change.
- **Stage 2: Full Application (11th May – 25th May):** Shortlisted candidates will be invited to submit a full application. You will be given two weeks to complete this step, and we provide the topics in advance to allow for adequate preparation.

If your organization is building or scaling tools that help people take greater control over their present and future, we would love to hear from you. Please reach out to hawa@agency.fund for any questions.

References

Klos, M. C., Escoredo, M., Joerin, A., Lemos, V. N., Rauws, M., & Bunge, E. L. (2021). Artificial intelligence–based chatbot for anxiety and depression in university students: pilot randomized controlled trial. *JMIR formative research*, *5*(8), e20678.

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