

ALIGN 2022 Micro-Grant Fund Terms of Reference

The ALIGN Platform is inviting proposals for its fourth round of funding. This funding round aims to support research to understand how gender norms shape women's engagement with, influence over and experiences in governance institutions and decision-making processes, and how they can be transformed. In this round 3-5 small-scale projects will receive funding of up to £20,000 GBP, to initiate or build on existing research and practice, communicate learning and inform future action. Previous winners of rounds of funding on different topic areas can be viewed [here](#).

1. About the ALIGN Platform

ALIGN is a digital knowledge platform (www.alignplatform.org) and programme of work on gender norms. ALIGN supports and informs a community of practice seeking to change harmful norms by developing and sharing high quality knowledge across multiple sectors. We:

- undertake and commission strategic new research;
- convene policymakers, researchers and practitioners to advance learning and practice to challenge patriarchal gender norms; and
- provide a space to share learning throughout our community of practice in accessible and innovative formats.

2. About the ALIGN Fund

2.1 What it is and who will it fund?

The ALIGN micro-granting facility is a responsive research fund. The micro-grants are intended to support the development of new knowledge and learning, and reflection materials on discriminatory and sexist gender norms, to inform policy and practice.

The ALIGN team recognises the particular gap in feminist research funding specifically related to women's participation and leadership in politics and government decision-making processes. The ALIGN Fund aims to expand the evidence base and support collaboration, expanding networks in a research area historically characterised by limited attention to gender norms.

We particularly invite applications from women- or girl-led organisations and movements, based in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs),¹ working on gender and inclusive leadership and decision-making (including gender-transformative policymaking, inclusive governance and women's political representation, voice and leadership).

¹ Regions from which organisations are eligible to apply, are listed in section 3.2.

2.2 Definitions

Gender norms: ALIGN defines gender norms as a sub-set of social norms – the implicit, informal rules that most people accept and follow. Gender norms describe how people of a particular gender are expected to behave, in a given social context, and intersect with norms related to ethnicity, class, disability, age, sexual orientation and gender identity, among other intersectional categories. Gender norms often reflect and reinforce unequal gender relations, usually to the disadvantage of women and girls, and to people of all genders who do not conform to prevailing gender norms.

Governance: A broad, contested term which relates to the institutions of government, and the systems, policies and procedures involved in decision-making about the prioritisation, design, resourcing and delivery of government policy and services.² We recognise that issues of governance are contextual, and their relation to gender is shaped by formal and informal systems everywhere which have long been based on patriarchal power imbalances.

Sub-national government: Refers to locations of government outside of the national level, including, for example, local and regional authorities, provinces and municipalities.

2.3 Background

Gender and other identity-based norms shape women's participation (entry, survival, and progression) in politics and governance, and their scope to operate and influence effectively as leaders. For example, social expectations that women's leadership is not normal or inferior to men's leadership, can make it more difficult and dangerous for women to run for office, join public service roles, as well as shape their ability to be heard once in positions of power.

We are interested in understanding how gender norms can shape gender differences in representation and voice, and how these can in turn engage and impact formal decision-making systems and institutions. The overall framing questions we seek to answer include:

- ***How do the gender norms that underpin misogyny shape women's experiences with respect to different forms or levels of government, including their voice and leadership in government institutions?***
- ***How can gender norms be transformed so these spaces become more gender equal and inclusive?***

Proposals must:

- include a component of primary data collection, alongside other approaches.
- offer some comparative analysis within one country or across countries that examines different contexts, experiences, or levels of government.

We welcome studies that employ qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. We are unable to fund literature reviews or secondary data analysis, unless combined with some empirical primary data collection or other innovative research.

² See, for example <https://blogs.adb.org/blog/what-governance> and <https://gsdrc.org/document-library/making-sense-of-governance-the-need-for-involving-local-stakeholders/>.

2.4 Key themes

Your proposal should address one of the following questions:

1. What are the key gender norms that underpin specific misogynistic attitudes and practices affecting women in different levels of government (i.e. national and sub-national)? What are effective actions for addressing them?
2. What norm-based factors are impacting women's experience and representation in sub-national government, and how does this compare to national government?
 - a. What explains any differences?
 - b. What actions can address the specific norms and challenges facing women in different levels of government?
3. What role(s) do political parties play in reinforcing or transforming gender norms for women in different levels of politics/government?
4. What role do associations of women political actors – both within and/or outside formal political spaces and processes, play in influencing norm change?
5. (How) does feminist activism which aims to increase women's leadership or political voice work to shift norm-based barriers to women's engagement with politics and government?
6. What role does the media play in perpetuating, identifying and possibly changing the norms that underpin misogyny in politics?

This is not an exhaustive list. ALIGN welcomes other ideas that respond to the thematic focus of the key questions. Proposals may focus within these framing questions based on relevant areas of expertise and interest. Initiatives should demonstrate an intersectional perspective which considers contextually relevant forms of distinct experiences of marginalisation and inequality. These could include experiences of women and girls of different ages, race, ethnicity, social class, caste, disability status, religion or sexual orientation, or other issues as relevant.

2.5 How will the ALIGN micro-grant fund work in practice?

For this round, we expect to award 3-5 organisations for up to 9 months in duration. Successful applicants will be selected in June 2022, with activities and funding expected to begin from July 2022.

Winners will be expected to develop an initial workplan to be approved by the ALIGN team. The ALIGN team will offer technical research support, as needed, throughout the duration of the grant process. ALIGN will also facilitate virtual linkages between grantees and may arrange periodic meetings to share emerging insights on process and findings.

Outputs must include:

- A 15-20-page briefing paper based on learning from the funded work in English. These briefings will be in the ALIGN format (we will provide publications and editing support). Previous examples can be found at: <https://www.alignplatform.org/funding-round-1>.
- A presentation of learning at an ALIGN knowledge sharing event, webinar or virtual conference.

We encourage grantees to produce additional outputs, which will be considered for dissemination by ALIGN across our global network. These could include:

1. Policy, practice and knowledge products such as: blogs, case studies, videos, toolkits.
Examples of formats can be found on the ALIGN website, [here](#).
2. Any outputs in languages other than English.

Editing and publication costs for additional outputs must be included in the budget.

3. Application process

3.1 Timeline of key dates

The deadline for submitting applications is 22nd May 2022 at 23:59 GMT (UK).

Any applications received after this time will not be eligible for consideration.

The application form consists of two documents: **a technical proposal** and **a financial proposal**.

Both technical and financial proposals can be downloaded from the ALIGN website at:

www.alignplatform.org/funding

Please make sure you submit **both forms** with your application, otherwise we will not be able to accept your submission. Completed application forms must be submitted to the email address:

align@odi.org.uk.

Please use the subject for your email as: 'ALIGN 2022 micro-grant application [*your organisation name*]

We expect to notify applicants of the preliminary outcome of their full proposal submission by **mid-June 2022**. Any funding offers will be made subject to any clarifications and requested modifications.

Only eligible applications (see Section 3.2) will be evaluated by a Review Panel according to the evaluation criteria set in Section 3.3.

Successful awards are expected to start their research projects within two weeks of the specific statement of work being issued. Please note, if requested by the grantee, ALIGN will pay an up-front instalment for funding upon agreement, however this is not guaranteed. Successful applicants should therefore be able to finance their work from the expected start of the project (July 2022), until a first payment can be made.

3.2 Eligibility criteria

The following eligibility requirements need to be met to enable assessment by the Review Panel.

Failure to meet any of the criteria below will result in your application not being considered and being excluded for further consideration.

Requirements:

- **Eligible organisations and individuals:** Organisations (corporate or non-profit) based in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean. Individuals

may apply only if they hold a long term affiliation with an organisation or institution from these regions. In any other case, individual applications will not be considered.³

- **Funding restrictions:** No portion of any payment received through this ALIGN funding may be used for any political campaign of any candidate for public office or any lobby activity.
- **Duration and commencement:** Awards are to be carried out and completed within a maximum 9-month period, anticipated to start within 2 weeks of the contracting arrangements being in place.
- **Budget size:** The maximum budget is £20,000.
- **Language of proposals:** Applications must be completed in English.
- **Format of application:** Only fully completed ALIGN application forms will be accepted:

Technical proposal

- Only ALIGN technical proposals in .doc or .docx format will be accepted – applications in any other format or template will be rejected.
- Word limits as set out in the application form will be strictly enforced. Any text over the word limit specified for each section will be deleted and will not be made available to reviewers, which may compromise your application.

Financial proposal

- Only the completed ALIGN excel template will be accepted. Any change to the format will not be accepted.
 - Please ensure all your costs in the budget are inclusive of VAT (where applicable) and overheads.
- **Number of applications permitted:** Organisations may submit more than one proposal either as the lead organisation or in partnership with another organisation, provided these are substantively different. If proposals are not substantively different, the chairs reserve the right to disqualify a proposal for review.
 - **Application standards:**
 - Applications should be original and ensure that the proposed work does not already exist.
 - Grantees will be required to agree to adhere to standards which will be outlined in guidance documents shared with successful applicants.
 - Prospective awards must be related to understanding and addressing gender norms as a barrier to women's engagement with, influence over and experiences in relation to governance institutions and decision-making processes.

³ **Applicant compliance with Anti-Terrorism Laws.**

By applying for this call, the applicant confirms that they or their organisation are not part of those countries, entities, or individuals subject to economic sanctions administered by the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control. The applicant is aware that a list of countries subject to such sanctions, a list of Specially Designated Nationals and Blocked Persons subject to such sanctions, and overviews and guidelines for each such sanctions program can be found at <http://www.treas.gov/ofac>.

- We expect the highest standards in research ethics. We expect that institutions will have their own standards and requirements regarding research ethical considerations, incorporating principles regarding concern for the welfare of participants, respect for people and the environment, and an obligation to treat people fairly, equitably and with dignity. Furthermore, the ALIGN team will support a due diligence check on the proposed research ethics approaches to be used during the project by the successful grantees; passing the check is a condition for the grantee to be funded by ALIGN.
- Applications must demonstrate how the safety and security of all research participants will be prioritised throughout the research process and publication/dissemination of findings/outputs.
- All written outputs must be peer-reviewed by technical experts for quality assurance purposes, and **this should be within the proposal budget**. The ALIGN team will review and sign off final outputs.
- All outputs will need to be available as open access.
- Prospective awards must demonstrate value for money. This is defined as demonstrating economy, efficiency and effectiveness within the proposed budget. Any in-kind or matching funding will also be positively assessed.

Recommendations:

- **Financial and non-financial contributions:** Contributions to the proposals in the form of financial resources or in-kind contributions are encouraged but are not a requirement.
- **Eligible organisations/individuals:** In addition to their primary purposes for generating knowledge, awards can be used to facilitate and promote collaboration, knowledge sharing and encourage partnerships among organisations working on gender norms in the Global South.
- **Contribution to researcher and practitioner communities:** Proposals that demonstrate how research design and/or collaborative approaches will contribute to local/regional and global knowledge creation and learning processes (new or existing) specifically relating to women's participation and leadership will be positively assessed.

3.3 Evaluation criteria

The Review Panel will evaluate eligible applications as per the evaluation criteria cited below. The highest scoring proposals will be shortlisted (there is no minimum score threshold for shortlisting).

Each shortlisted proposal will be individually assessed by experts representing relevant thematic and geographic expertise. Final selection of winners will take into account the need for a regionally and/ or thematically balanced portfolio.

Review criteria	Percentage weighting
1) Policy, programme and knowledge development relevance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Is the proposal fully focused on the subject of gender norms and governance? b) Is there a clearly stated rationale for the proposed work? c) Does the application demonstrate a clear pathway for how it will enhance knowledge, policy influence or practice? 	30%
2) Technical merit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Is the proposal well thought-out and clearly articulated? b) Is the methodology clear and achievable within the proposed timeframe? c) Is the methodology fit for purpose? 	30%
3) Strength of personnel and partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Does the proposed composition and experience of the team demonstrate the required expertise to carry out this award successfully? b) Does the approach to organising and managing the proposed work show a good understanding of the necessary timeframes, organisation of budget and delivery process? c) How appropriate and strong are the partnerships to execute the proposed activities? 	30%
4) Logistical Viability and Value for money <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Are there risks that could compromise the implementation of proposal? If so, does the proposal sufficiently address those threats? b) How do the proposed research activities provide value for money (demonstrating economy, efficiency and effectiveness)? 	10%

4. Our engagement with funded research awards

The Review Panel: The ALIGN team will review the applications against the criteria outlined above. Independent thematic advisors may be included in this process depending on the level of technicality within shortlisted applications.

Grant management: In coordination with the research partners, the ALIGN team will provide technical support and encourage relevant connections among research partners – as well as financial and risk monitoring of successful awards.

Sign-off of outputs: Final outputs will be signed-off by the ALIGN team. For more information on the ALIGN team please see here: <https://www.alignplatform.org/meet-team>

Publication: The ALIGN team will also provide guidance to research partners regarding the co-branding of outputs and may advise on research uptake. ALIGN will provide copy-editing, publication production and design support. All outputs will be published on the ALIGN platform (and thus open access).

Reporting: A simple financial and narrative reporting framework will be agreed at contracting. Research partners will also be expected to participate in regular check-in meetings with the ALIGN team.

5. Contact

For any queries, please contact align@odi.org.uk.