

Artificial Intelligence and Digitalization for Gender Equality and Inclusion



Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital technologies are transforming the way individuals access services, find employment, make decisions, and engage with institutions. In Latin America and the Caribbean, these tools present significant opportunities to enhance public service delivery, increase productivity, and expand access to education, healthcare, finance, and justice- while also contributing to the reduction of gender and social inequalities.

From AI-driven diagnostics to digital financial platforms and adaptive learning tools, governments and private actors are already applying these innovations across sectors. However, these advances also present risks. Without thoughtful design and oversight, digital systems can reinforce existing patterns of exclusion, including algorithmic bias, lack of access, or unequal benefits. These risks disproportionately affect women and diverse population facing structural barriers to inclusion.¹

To ensure digital transformation is inclusive, it is essential to understand how these technologies and AI systems operate in practice: who benefits, under what conditions, and how to design and govern these tools for more equitable outcomes. This includes identifying ways in which digital technologies can help close long-standing gender and other equity gaps and expand the capabilities and agency of women and diverse population groups in the digital economy.

To strengthen the evidence base on these issues, the IDB Group's [GDLab](#) and [CAF- Development Bank of Latin America and the Caribbean](#) invite proposals for rigorous research studies that assess the real-world impact of AI and digital technologies on gender equity and social inclusion in the region. We are especially interested in studies that generate actionable insights to inform the design, delivery, and oversight of inclusive digital solutions.

¹ Diverse populations include Afro-descendants, Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ populations.



Objectives Of The Call

Through this call, GDLab and CAF seek to fund academic rigorous studies that:

- Evaluate how AI and digital tools can improve access, participation, and outcomes for women and historically excluded groups.
- Identify effective strategies to develop the digital and analytical skills needed by women and historically excluded groups to take advantage of emerging opportunities in the digital and AI-driven economy.

Studies must focus on one or more of the [26 IDB borrowing member countries](#) or [CAF's member countries](#) in Latin America and the Caribbean and apply **quantitative methods capable of estab-**

lishing causal relationships using structural models, experimental, or quasi-experimental evaluations. Proposals including qualitative components will be considered only to the extent that they serve as an input for the implementation of quantitative methods.

Projects that offer concrete, actionable insights for the public institutions, the private sector, and multilateral organizations are especially encouraged. Selected studies will undergo external peer review and may be considered for publication in the working papers series of the IDB and CAF. Publication in academic journals is also encouraged.

Priority Areas

This call seeks research proposals that provide **rigorous quantitative evidence** in one or more of the following areas:

1. DIGITAL CAPABILITIES

Closing the digital divide requires more than connectivity—it demands equipping women and diverse population groups with the skills to meaningfully participate in and shape the digital economy. This area invites research on the impact of digital and AI skills training programs on labor market outcomes, financial inclusion, and intergenerational mobility, especially for women, and diverse populations. Studies that assess the effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability of digital inclusion programs across diverse settings are of interest.

2. DIGITAL PUBLIC SERVICES

Digital platforms have the potential to transform access to public services, but persistent barriers—such as lack of connectivity, limited digital literacy, and affordability—can prevent equitable use and impact. This area seeks research on how digital government services, including digital ID systems, telemedicine, care services, and sexual and reproductive health platforms, affect access and outcomes for women and diverse population groups. It also invites studies on AI-powered targeting in social programs, focusing on fairness, accuracy, and the potential to reduce gender and social inequalities. We are especially



interested in algorithmic adjustments that improve outcomes for women and historically excluded populations and how digital systems support inclusive participation in public decision-making.

3. ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

AI and digital platforms are reshaping economic opportunities. Platform-based work and digital financial tools can expand access to flexible employment and entrepreneurship, particularly for women and other underrepresented groups. However, these opportunities remain unequally distributed. This area invites research on the conditions under which digital platforms foster income growth, financial resilience, and economic inclusion for women and populations facing structural barriers. Topics include platform design features (e.g., algorithms, fee structures), transitions into better-quality jobs, automation, and whether digital work models reduce time spent on unpaid care—disproportionately carried by women.

4. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Technology-based tools—such as mobile apps, online reporting platforms, predictive analytics, and AI-powered agents—are increasingly used to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV). This area invites research on the effectiveness, risks, and institutional implications of these innovations. Key questions include how these tools improve service quality, reduce response times, identify cases earlier, and support frontline workers. Studies may also address digital forms of GBV, such as online harassment and cyberviolence, and evaluate policy approaches for prevention, accountability, and survivor protection.

5. CRIME PREVENTION AND ACCESS TO JUSTICE

AI is being integrated into policing and justice systems through tools like predictive algorithms, facial recognition, risk assessments, and digital case management. While these systems can enhance efficiency, they also risk reinforcing biases and excluding certain groups. This area invites research on how these technologies affect access to justice for women and structurally excluded groups, including the fairness of risk assessment tools in GBV cases, AI's influence on judicial decision-making, and safeguards needed to ensure due process and equity. Studies may also assess how digital systems improve institutional coordination and reduce systemic discrimination.

6. HEALTH SYSTEMS

AI and digital tools are expanding access to health services, particularly in under-resourced settings. This area seeks research on how these technologies influence outcomes in areas such as mental health, chronic disease management, maternal and elderly care, and sexual and reproductive health. Of particular interest are studies that assess whether digital health tools improve access for women and diverse population groups, reduce delays, or generate new biases. Research may also examine gender-specific barriers such as low digital literacy, privacy concerns, or mistrust in digital systems.



7. EQUITABLE LEARNING

EdTech and AI-powered tools offer opportunities to personalize learning and close persistent educational gaps. However, these tools may also reproduce or widen disparities in access and outcomes. This area invites studies on how AI and digital technologies are used in formal and informal learning settings and their impact on learning outcomes, skill development, and institutional adoption, particularly for girls and underrepresented student populations. Attention should be paid to how gender norms, caregiving responsibilities, and structural inequalities affect participation and success. Topics may also include algorithmic bias, mental health effects, and unequal access to educational technologies.

8. ALGORITHMIC DESIGN AND INCLUSIVE DECISION-MAKING

AI systems are increasingly used in decisions related to employment, finance, education, and public service delivery. While they may reduce human bias, poorly designed systems can entrench inequalities. This area invites research on algorithmic fairness, explainability, bias audits, and the representativeness of training data. Studies should explore how these design and governance elements influence outcomes across gender and other dimensions of exclusion and compare AI-based targeting with traditional methods in terms of fairness, effectiveness, and inclusion.

Intersectionality: Proposals that consider intersectionality are strongly encouraged. Women and diverse population groups often face overlapping barriers to access and opportunity. Proposals may consider how to tailor AI tools and digital interventions—through inclusive design, culturally relevant training, or targeted financing—to better meet the needs of specific populations.



Who Can Submit Proposals

Proposals may be submitted by independent researchers or research teams affiliated with public or private entities, universities, or research centers. Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements: they must be citizens of one of the [48 IDB member countries](#) and must not have immediate family members employed by the IDB Group (which includes the IDB, IDB Lab, and IDB Invest) or by CAF² up to the fourth degree of consanguinity or second degree of affinity, including spouses.

Specialists from the IDB Group or CAF may participate in the projects by collaborating with the research teams; however, they must be formally associated with an external team and will not be eligible to receive financial compensation for their contributions. Funding will be transferred exclusively to external institutions or researchers leading the project and not to individuals affiliated with the IDB Group or CAF.

Proposal Content

Proposals must include the following elements:

- **Research Team Composition.** Provide the names of all researchers participating in the project and evidence of their qualifications to conduct the proposed study, including relevant experience and previous work related to the subject matter. A curriculum vitae (CV) must be included for each team member (maximum 3 pages), highlighting their expertise and publications relevant to the thematic focus of this call.

² Pursuant to IDB and CAF's policies, additional ineligibility criteria may apply; for example, certain categories of former IDB Group employees or individuals sanctioned by the United Nations and other international organizations will be ineligible.

evant to the thematic focus of this call. All team members must be citizens of one of the [48 IDB member countries](#) and must not have immediate family members employed by the IDB Group or CAF, up to the fourth degree of consanguinity or second degree of affinity, including spouses.³ Research teams may include specialists from the IDB Group or CAF. Any changes to the composition of the research team after the proposal has been selected must be approved by GDLab and CAF. Unauthorized changes may result in the termination of the funding agreement.

- **Objective and Research Question.** Clearly state the overall objective and the specific research question(s). Identify the country or countries to be analyzed and the thematic area(s) addressed.
- **Policy Relevance and Innovation.** Describe the knowledge gaps the study seeks to address and the expected contributions of the research to inform public policy and practice. Highlight the study's innovative aspects and potential for real-world application.
- **Scalability and Replicability.** Explain the feasibility of scaling or adapting the intervention or research approach to other contexts. Identify potential barriers and how they might be addressed.
- **Data sources.** Provide a detailed description of the data to be used, including whether it is publicly available or restricted. For restricted data, demonstrate that access is feasible.
- **Methodology.** Present a rigorous research design that applies quantitative methods capable of identifying causal relationships, including experimental, quasi-experimental, or structural models. Proposals that include qualitative com-

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ponents will be considered only if they directly support the quantitative analysis. Clearly outline the identification strategy and tests to validate the robustness of the findings.

- **Work Plan and Timeline.** Provide a work plan detailing the main activities and an estimated completion timeline. Depending on the type of study, research must be completed within 12 to 18 months.
- **Budget.** Present a detailed and justified budget aligned with the research activities, specifying amounts for professional fees, data collection, implementation, and other relevant categories.
- **Ethics Approval.** Indicate the name of the institutional review board (IRB) to which the proposal will be submitted if selected. In line with GDLab policy, all selected proposals must obtain ethics approval.

Note: Proposals must be submitted in **English**.

Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated by a Scientific Committee composed of independent experts—who also serve as external advisors throughout the call—and specialists from the IDB Group and CAF. The evaluation will consider the proposal's thematic relevance, innovation, methodological rigor, scalability, replicability, and the research team's capacity to successfully carry out the project. All decisions made by the Scientific Committee will be final and not subject to appeal.

The Scientific Committee for this call is led by external advisers [Claudia Martínez A.](#) (Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile) and [Hernan Galperin](#) (University of Southern California), and includes internal advisers from both the IDB Group and CAF.

During the selection process, applicants must be prepared to receive and respond to feedback from the Scientific Committee. Once selected, research teams will receive technical feedback from independent advisors and specialists from the IDB Group and CAF throughout the implementation of the study. Participation in discussion seminars and technical exchanges organized during the consultancy period is mandatory.



Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation will be based on the following criteria:

- **Thematic Relevance:** Does the proposal align with the thematic priorities of the call and address issues related to gender gaps and/or the inclusion of diverse groups?

- **Policy Relevance and Innovation.** Does the proposal fill a relevant knowledge gap? How does it contribute to policy or practice? Is the approach innovative and actionable?

- **Methodology Rigor.** Is the research design clear, robust, and appropriate for establishing causal relationships? Are the data sources adequate and accessible? Are the identification strategies well-justified and validated?

- **Team Capacity and Implementation.** Does the team have the necessary expertise to carry out the study? Is the work plan feasible and the budget well-justified?

- **Scalability and Replicability.** Can the findings be adapted or scaled in other settings? Are potential barriers to replication identified and addressed?



Financing Categories

Subject to the decision of the Scientific Committee and the signing of a consulting contract with the IDB or CAF, participants may apply for one of the following funding categories based on the scope of the work proposed:

CATEGORY I – Quantitative Diagnoses that establish causal relationships.

Studies in this category require resources to complement existing funds or to cover research activities without data collection. Proposals in this category can access a maximum of **US\$20 thousand** and have a maximum of **12 months** to complete the study, starting in March 2026.

CATEGORY II – Pilot Interventions.

Studies in this category require resources to rigorously evaluate the impact of an intervention or pilot program. Proposals in this category can access a maximum of **US\$100 thousand** and have a maximum of **18 months** to complete the study, starting in March 2026.

Selected teams must sign a consulting contract with either the IDB or CAF. Disbursements will be contingent on the timely delivery and approval of outputs, as specified in the contract.

The IDB and CAF reserve the right to revoke this call for proposals at any time prior to the signing of the consulting contract..

CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS



Calendar

During the execution of the selected research projects, two closed discussion seminars (conducted in English) will be held to present and discuss preliminary findings and receive structured feedback from external advisors. These seminars are designed to promote coordination and the exchange of ideas among participating researchers and teams.

Research activities must begin in March 2026. Depending on the funding category, projects will have a maximum duration of 12 months (Category I) or 18 months (Category II) to deliver the final draft of the working paper. Intermediate and final drafts will undergo peer review by external advisors associated with this call.

The final deliverable will be a **high-quality, publishable version of the working paper**, accompanied by a detailed response letter addressing all peer review comments. The working paper should meet the standards of academic publications and be suitable for dissemination through the IDB or CAF's working paper series, and potentially in peer-reviewed academic journals.

All research outputs must be submitted in English.

Timeline:

October 7, 2025	Deadline for proposal submissions
December 2025	Announcement of selected proposals
March 2026	Participation in the first (virtual) discussion seminar, marking the start of research activities
April 2026	Submission of revised proposals and responses to feedback received during the first seminar
November 2026	Submission of the first draft of the working paper for peer review by external advisors
January 2027	Submission of the revised first draft of the working paper and responses to advisors' feedback
March 2027	Participation in the second (virtual) discussion seminar
Category I studies (12 months): March 2027 Category II studies (18 months): September 2027	Submission of the final draft of the working paper and responses to advisors' feedback
Category I studies: April – August 2027 Category II studies: October 2027 – January 2028	Peer review, revisions, and submission of the publishable version of the working paper



Use of Funding

Funding must be used exclusively for research-related activities, including primary data collection, access to secondary data, and Institutional Review Board (IRB) certification. The proposed budget must be clearly justified. Funds may not be used for dissemination costs (as dissemination will be managed by the IDB and CAF), travel, or acquisition of goods and services—unless such expenses are essential to achieving the research objectives. Overhead costs may not exceed 15% of the direct project costs. .

Payment Schedule:

CATEGORY I

- **30%** 30 days after participation in the first seminar and submission/approval of the revised proposal and response to feedback.
- **25%** upon IRB submission and submission and approval of the revised first draft of the working paper and response to peer review.
- **25%** upon participation in the second seminar and submission and approval of the revised final draft of the working paper and response to the peer review.
- **20%** upon submission and approval of the publishable version of the working paper and final response letter.

CATEGORY II

- **30%** 30 days after participation in the first seminar and submission/approval of the revised proposal and response to feedback.
- **20%** upon submission of an IRB, pre-analysis plan (PAP), and submission and approval of the revised first draft of the working paper and response to peer review.
- **20%** upon participation in the second seminar and submission of written response to peer comments.
- **15%** upon submission and approval of the revised final draft of the working paper and response to peer review.
- **15%** upon submission and approval of the publishable version of the working paper and final response letter.

CALL FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS



Deadline for Submitting Proposals

Proposals must be submitted by **October 7, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. ET**. To avoid technical issues, applicants are strongly encouraged to submit proposals well in advance. GDLab is not responsible for the difficulties encountered close to the submission deadline.

Announcement of Results

Shortlisted teams will be invited to participate in a revise-and-resubmit phase in **November 2025**. The final results will be announced in **December 2025**.

Due to the high volume of submissions, GDLab will only provide feedback to teams selected as finalists.

How to Apply

To apply, teams must download and complete the application form (**in English**) and submit it through [GDLab's call for proposals' website](#). **Applications submitted via email or outside the required format will not be accepted.**

For questions regarding the call, please contact the GDLab team at gdlab@iadb.org gdlab@iadb.org

Arbitration, applicable law, and privileges and immunities of the IDB

All questions, matters, or disputes related to this call for proposals shall be governed by the laws of the District of Columbia, although no part of this clause or the conditions and rules of the call for proposals may restrict, limit, or impede any right, privilege, or immunity granted to the Bank or Bank personnel under any national or international treaty or law.

Should any dispute arise related to the call for proposals that cannot be resolved through a friendly settlement, then once one of the parties gives notice of the disagreement or dispute to the other, it shall be submitted for arbitration and final resolution before a single arbiter. The arbitration will be administered by the American Arbitration Association, in accordance with the Commercial Arbitration Rules of the American Arbitration Association. The location of the arbitration proceeding shall be Washington, D.C. The costs of any arbitration proceeding shall be borne by the Participant and the Bank in equal parts.

 www.iadb.org/gdlab

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