

Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) Request for Applications: Funding for local Indian entities to address the gender digital divide

This WiDEF request for applications invites local Indian entities to apply for funding to scale solutions that help close the gender digital divide. Successful applicants will receive funding to accelerate solutions addressing the barriers women face to using the internet including availability and affordability, relevant products and tools, literacy and digital skills, and safety and security.

We welcome applications from small or medium for-profit enterprises working in different sectors, digital and other, as well as non-profits, who have the potential to significantly increase digital inclusion for women in India. These could include those working in the digital sector (e.g. local internet providers, OTT (Over the Top) service providers or fintech etc.) or those working in specific sectors where they are addressing or aspire to address key barriers to digital inclusion for women (e.g. sectors such as education, agriculture, health, financial inclusion, micro-finance etc.). The fund is open to for-profits and non-profits (e.g. cooperatives, community-based organizations, rural development organizations etc.) with a valid FCRA.



Introduction

Globally, digital inclusion has been recognized as central to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Accessing and using the internet can enable women to participate meaningfully in the digital economy, strengthening their livelihoods and resilience. Yet, one third of the world's population – mostly women – remain offline.

India has experienced substantial growth over the last few years in mobile ownership (including smartphone ownership), mobile internet adoption, and financial inclusion. From 2022 to 2023, the rate of mobile internet adoption among women increased from 30% to 37%.¹ India's flourishing digital ecosystem presents a huge commercial and social opportunity for further increasing digital inclusion of marginalized groups, especially women.

Although India boasts nearly ubiquitous 4G coverage and extensive 5G deployment, only 53% of men and 37% of women are using mobile internet. This suggests that there are other barriers besides infrastructure that are preventing many women from getting online. GSMA data highlights barriers related to affordability, literacy and digital skills, perceived relevance, awareness, safety and security concerns and social norms which prevent many women and marginalized groups from connecting.²

1. [GSMA Mobile Gender Gap Report 2024](#).

2. See [GSMA Mobile Gender Gap 2024](#) for more detail on the barriers women face to both adopting and using mobile internet in India.

→||← Closing the Gender Digital Divide: Guide to Effective Practices

The gender digital divide³ has a direct and negative impact on global development and the goal of creating inclusive global societies and economies. It emphasizes the need to recommit and strengthen efforts that bring together two powerful forces for global change: women and digital technology. At the same time, as more women are brought online, we must ensure that women's inclusion in the digital ecosystem is safe, secure, accessible, and equitable – or we risk amplifying a different kind of digital divide that reinforces offline power imbalances in online spaces.

This shared vision led to the establishment of the Women in the Digital Economy Fund (WiDEF) which was officially announced by the White House in March 2023. WiDEF in India is a joint effort between USAID, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Reliance Foundation to accelerate progress on closing the gender digital divide. WiDEF identifies, directly funds, and advances investment in proven solutions to close the gender digital divide, improving women's livelihoods, economic security, and resilience. WiDEF in India is managed by the GSMA Foundation with support from the global WiDEF managing consortium.

WiDEF is committed to closing the gender digital divide by scaling evidence-based solutions⁴ that improve women's livelihoods, economic security and resilience. Current evidence on some of the effective practices for addressing the gender digital divide is outlined in this [WiDEF report on effective practices](#). These, and other approaches have the potential to shift the trajectory of digital ecosystems so that women and marginalized populations, including scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, youth, disabled, LGBTQI+, and rural women, have equitable access to safe, affordable, and meaningful online participation.

It is well-accepted that women's empowerment is critical to sustainable development. Yet, the gender digital divide continues to erode progress in women's equality and economic security as digital advances leave over a billion women, girls, and marginalized populations on the far side of digital inclusion, including digital financial inclusion. Without a major shift in how the gender digital divide is conceptualized and addressed, the gap will persist and grow, resulting in women lacking access to critical information, services, and opportunities, further exacerbating existing gender inequalities. When women thrive, societies, businesses and economies thrive. As such, realizing the full potential of digital inclusion for women in India is crucial.

3. The digital divide is the distinction between those who have Internet and/or mobile access and are able to make use of digital communications services, and those who are excluded from these services. The gender digital divide reflects the inequalities between men and women in terms of digital technology access and use.

4. Examples of some of the existing solutions which show promises of helping to address the gender digital divide can be found here widedf.global/gddreport.

WIDEF invites local⁵ Indian entities to apply for funding to scale a solution that can have a substantial impact on the digital inclusion of women, improving their livelihoods, economic security, and resilience. Applicants will be expected to clearly articulate how their solution⁶ accelerates the digital inclusion of women to close the gender digital divide, enabling equitable access and usage of the internet by women, girls and marginalized populations including disabled, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, LGBTQI+, and rural women.

This funding aims to scale solutions that have demonstrated, through credible evidence, that the solution:

1. Drives digital inclusion for women through meaningful access to and use⁷ of accessible digital technology, particularly smartphones and the internet.
2. Significantly closes the gender digital divide in their context.
3. Is economically sustainable and scalable.

The gender digital divide – and the digital exclusion of marginalized populations – is a function of complex, inter-related factors. Eligible applications need to articulate the most prominent barriers facing the communities they aim to support and how they will address **at least two of the four core WIDEF priority areas:**

1. Improved access to affordable devices and online experiences	Increase women’s access to the internet and internet-enabled devices, and ensure that devices, digitally enabled services, including digital finance, ⁸ and data are affordable, reliable, secure, and accessible, including for users with disabilities.
2. Increased availability of relevant products and tools	Design, develop, and provide access to relevant products and tools (interfaces, voice technologies, applications, digitally enabled services) that meet women’s needs and facilitate women’s demand for and use of mobile devices and applications, particularly smartphones, internet, and other technologies, especially for income-generation purposes.
3. Elevating digital literacy and skills	Strengthen women’s digital skills and literacy, including media literacy, so that they can fully and safely access digital services, and participate and lead in digital spaces, including the digital economy.
4. Enhancing safety and security	Address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, including gender-based online harassment and abuse, and strengthen safeguards for digital user protection, including on consumer financial protection, data protection, cyber security, fraud, and risk mitigation. <i>There is currently a lack of evidence on the types of solutions that enhance safety and security. We encourage applications that seek to address this barrier to digital inclusion, even where the solutions represent promising practices instead of being based on a more robust evidence-base.</i>

Additionally, **all** applications need to commit to **generating data and insights:** Expand collection and responsible use of required sex-disaggregated data, research, and gender analysis (a) to better understand and address social norms and systems that influence gender disparities in technology adoption; (b) as a precursor to inform gender-equitable design of and activities related to digital policies, protocols, platforms, products, and services; and (c) to track and benchmark change.

5. Local Entity: An individual or organization that:
 - Is legally organized under the laws of a country that is receiving assistance from USAID;
 - Has its principal place of business or operations in a country receiving assistance from USAID;
 - Is majority-owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country receiving assistance from USAID; and
 - Is managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of a country receiving assistance from USAID.
6. A solution can be a product, service or approach that enables women’s access to and use of the internet, for which there is credible evidence that it can increase women’s digital inclusion.
7. The United Nations defines meaningful access as “UN definition of meaningful connectivity: a level of connectivity that allows users to have a safe, satisfying, enriching and productive online experience at an affordable cost.” For more information about meaningful access and use visit United Nations Universal Meaningful Digital Connectivity Targets.
8. Digital finance solutions should focus on increasing women’s access to and usage of the internet e.g. beyond increasing their customer acquisition. Applicants should present a solution that can reach new or marginal internet users, rather than more convenient solutions for women who are already regular internet users.



Invitation continued

Proven Solutions

A proven solution is one where there is evidence that it can increase women's adoption of, or meaningful use of, the internet and internet enabled products or services. Evidence can include results from a pilot, evaluation or research. This evidence may be either from the applicant's own solution or from another entity or location.

WiDEF has published a report highlighting examples of effective solutions to addressing the gender digital divide widedef.global/gddreport. This includes case studies and links to existing digital skills materials that can be adapted for different contexts and segments. There are currently fewer proven solutions to improving women's online safety and security; solutions that represent promising practice, rather than proven, solutions to addressing this challenge to women's digital inclusion are welcomed.



Eligibility

Organizational Requirements

The Fund is open to **local Indian entities only**. Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be a small or medium sized for-profit local Indian entity (i.e. an entity with fewer than 250 employees); or
- Be a not-for-profit with a valid FCRA license at the time of application (as of January 2025). Maintaining FCRA accreditation is a condition for ongoing participation
- Be able to deliver the proposed project in target locations across India and / or evidence local partnerships to deliver the solution on the ground.
- Have a demonstrated commitment to supporting gender equality and the inclusion of underserved groups.⁹
- Be fully compliant with relevant business licensing, taxation, employee and other regulations in India.
- Meet USAID Eligibility Requirements:
 - Organizations need to fit the following Local Entity criteria, as defined by USAID i.e.:
 - Be legally organized under the laws of India;
 - Have their principal place of business or operations in India;
 - Be majority-owned by individuals who are citizens or lawful permanent residents of India; and
 - Be managed by a governing body, the majority of whom are citizens or lawful permanent residents of India.
 - Have, or are in the process of obtaining, a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
 - Be familiar with applicable sections in the Mandatory and Required-as-Applicable Standard Provisions for Non- U.S. Non-Governmental Organizations¹⁰ and sign and upload the necessary Recipient and Solicitation Standard Provisions certifications as part of the application.
- Consent to having project data and insights shared among WiDEF learning outcomes and advocacy activities and agree to the Open Access policy¹¹ to ensure prompt and wide dissemination.
- Applicants may only submit **one** application.

9. For example: commitment to gender equality in the enterprise's strategy; efforts to ensure diversity in the workforce; or implementation of existing products or services that seek to reach women.

10. <https://www.usaid.gov/about-us/agency-policy/series-300/references-chapter/303mat>

11. Awardees retain ownership of all intellectual property rights for their research funded by WiDEF. By accepting funding, awardees will agree to publish their research under an Open Access license in accordance with all copyright laws, allowing for unrestricted access, and exchange with other WiDEF-funded awardees. Awardees may seek to commercialize their work while ensuring compliance with the Open Access policy and proper attribution to WiDEF

WiDEF **strongly encourages** applications from firms with female leaders/founders or board members, and a good representation of women at all levels of the company

The following entities are **not eligible** to apply for or receive funding. However, eligible applicants can have partnerships with such entities when it strengthens the value proposition of their application and where such relationships are allowable under FCRA:

- Governments, government-owned agencies (or appointed government agencies)
- UN Agencies and multilateral organizations
- For-profit enterprises with 250 or more employees.
- University or academic organizations
- Other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are not local entities by USAID definitions.
- Not-for-profit organizations without a valid FCRA license.

Please note, as a U.S 501(c)(3) organization, the GSMA Mobile for Development Foundation Inc. is obliged to comply with the sanctions, laws and regulations of the United States and other sanctions regimes as may be applicable. These sanctions and laws and other legal or regulatory regimes may restrict the GSMA from distributing funding to certain entities or regions.

During the selection process, we will also ensure applicants:

- Are registered and have a bank account in India that can receive payments in USD as all disbursements will be in USD.
- Have adequate financial and governance systems.
- Have adequate internal human resource capability to implement the proposed project and comply with WiDEF's reporting requirements within the planned timeframe.
- Applicants may need to demonstrate how they are compliant with all applicable laws and regulations in India.
- Are compliant with all relevant mandatory Standard Provisions for Non-US Organizations and required USAID Certifications, Assurances, Representations, and Other statements.
- Are compliant with USAID and GSMA Safeguarding Policy (on Children and Vulnerable Adults) in India.¹²
- Adhere to all relevant data protection and privacy regimes.

Types of Solutions/Projects

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Propose a solution focused on digital inclusion and closing the gender digital divide in India.
- Clearly articulate how the solution aims to scale a solution to effectively address barriers preventing women from accessing and / or using the internet, while mitigating any potential negative impacts.
- Integrate **at least two** of the four WiDEF priority areas above, in addition to generating gender-disaggregated data and insights. I.e. even if the solution has a primary focus on one of the core areas it must also address at least one of the other areas in its approach, recognizing that the gender digital divide is driven by inter-related factors.¹³
- Provide evidence¹⁴ that the solution can increase women's adoption or increase usage of the internet and internet enabled products and services and help close the gender digital divide.
- Articulate where funding is required and how it will be used to deliver the proposed impact.
- Identify how the solution can be commercially and socially sustainable and scalable.

12. The GSMA Safeguarding Policy will be shared with the shortlisted applicants.

13. For examples of projects that address multiple WiDEF priority areas see [Effective Practices for Closing the Gender Digital Divide](#).

14. For example, results from a pilot or evaluation showing traction of a product or service by women customers; external research or insights from India or from another market that could feasibly be adapted in India.

Eligibility continued

The funding round **will not** support the following activities/ initiatives:

- Projects at a proof-of-concept stage for which there is no evidence that they can drive increased digital inclusion of women at scale.
- Projects that are affiliated with a political party or engaged in any political activity.
- Projects that are focused on religious activities.
- Projects that focus solely on products and solutions for high-end devices (including iOS) not associated with low-income users.
- Projects that focus solely on the development of ICT centers.
- Projects that are not intentionally focused on reaching marginalized women who have no or low internet use (i.e. will mainly reach existing regular internet users with similar services to what they are likely already using)
- The purchase & distribution of mobile phones, tablets or other communication devices to target populations/end-users.
- The development of any new hardware solutions, manufacturing or infrastructure.
- Non-commercially sustainable distribution of assets directly to target populations.
- Projects solely with a research focus.

Measuring Impact

Through the process, applicants must ensure that their proposal clearly links to the WiDEF priority areas and would contribute to bridging the gender digital divide in India. Each applicant must indicate that they are able to report against WiDEF core indicators (see below) as well as how they are going to track the results of the solution and measure the impact. During application and before being awarded funding, applicants will set and agree targets and indicators in collaboration with WiDEF.

Successful awardees will be expected to track WiDEF indicators relevant to the project. These will be agreed in collaboration with the WiDEF team. Progress monitoring metrics will be tracked and reported periodically, while outcome indicators will be measured every six or twelve months (depending on the indicator selected and the proposed methodology). All data should be disaggregated by gender. Some indicators will be tracked for up to two years after the funding ends. A comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan will be co-created with successful awardees. Each awardee must adhere to the reporting requirements as set out by the funder.

WiDEF indicators: All awardees will be required to measure the following two indicators:

1. Number of individuals participating in WiDEF supported activities (every 12 months)
2. Number of individuals with increased internet use through WiDEF supported activities (every six months)

In addition, all awardees will be required to measure at least one WiDEF indicator per core results area selected in the proposal. For example, if the solution addresses *Elevating literacy and digital skills* and *Enhancing safety and security* as core results areas, awardees must select one WiDEF outcome indicator on *Elevating literacy and digital skills* and one on *Enhancing safety and security*. Please note, there could be additional project-related key performance indicators included in the MEL plan, co-created by funders and awardees. The full list of WiDEF indicators is available [here](#).



Types of support available

The following support will be provided to awardees (including technical assistance):

- Funding of \$100,000 - \$500,000 over the course of 15-18 months.
- Knowledge, expertise or best practices on addressing the gender digital divide.
- Bootcamps (a program of expert-led sessions and targeted networking) on key issues faced by awardees.
- Learning exchange opportunities with other WiDEF awardees (in India and globally).
- Advisory support on monitoring, evaluation and learning.
- Opportunity to increase visibility to potential investors and partners through profiling in WiDEF publications, WiDEF events and social media.



Funding available

The funding will be in the form of a **Fixed Amount Award**¹⁵ which should be exclusively used for the proposed project. During the proposal design stage, applicants will need to demonstrate that proposed projects will have measurable goals and objectives, as well as adequate cost, historical, or unit pricing data available to establish fixed payment amounts.

Milestone-based payments will be dependent on the awardee delivering proof that mutually-agreed milestones/targets have been completed/achieved. Awardees should be prepared at times to receive reimbursement in arrears of spend occurring, especially the final milestone payment which will be made at project closure.

Project budgets cannot contain any profit element. Indirect costs or overheads should not exceed 10% of funds requested. Applicants are expected to submit and justify their budget for the project to be funded, as well as their reasons for the funding amount requested. The amount requested can be any amount between USD \$100,000 and USD \$500,000. The duration of the grant-funded projects can be between 15 and 18 months.

Budgets should only include costs that the applicant entity will incur directly during the course of the award period. No sub-grants are permitted due to funding rules and regulations. For further details, please see Downstream Partner Guidelines.

15. For more information see <https://www.usaid.gov/india/document/implementing-partners-guide-types-assistance-instruments> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzvcztBiAhc>



Commitment from successful applicants

If selected, awardees must be committed to:

- Executing the funder(s) Agreement without material modifications which sets out the terms of the grant and the project to be delivered.
- Complying with due diligence requests.
- Adhering to mandatory budgetary compliance,
- Complying with safeguarding requirements as outlined in Section 3.
- Sharing project data with the GSMA and WiDEF. The GSMA will work with awardees to agree on confidential data that can be shared to inform broader sector insights. This will be done in compliance with privacy and data protection requirements.
- Reporting regularly on project impact figures and other mutually agreed Key Performance Indicators (including gender disaggregated data where relevant/appropriate).
- Submitting a monthly progress report at the beginning of each month.
- Designing and implementing a MEL framework, that will be agreed on with the WiDEF team. Part of the funding will be allocated specifically to cover MEL.
- Adhering to branding and communications guidelines provided by WiDEF, including the requirement to visibly display the approved branding on all programs, projects, activities, publications, public communications, and commodities and/or services provided or supported through this program.

A copy of the Agreement, compliance policies, report templates etc. mentioned above, will be provided to all shortlisted applicants at the start of the Proposal Stage.



Application process and timeline

All applications to the Fund **MUST** be submitted in English

Stage	Timeline	Description
Stage 1 Application	November to February 2025	<p>Complete an online application for the project and describe how you meet the funding criteria.</p> <p>The deadline for submitting proposals is Monday, 13 January 2025 by 6pm IST (India Standard Time).</p> <p>The WiDEF team will aim to review and confirm the shortlisted applicants 5-6 weeks after the deadline for submitting applications.</p>
Stage 2 Proposal	March to June 2025	<p>The highest scoring applicants (shortlist) that meet the objectives of the Fund will be invited to develop a detailed proposal, setting out the full business case for the project. The proposal will include a detailed project proposal, detailed budget, workplan and project milestones.</p> <p>Applicants will receive guidance in developing their proposal; this support may include a field visit (where possible) to the applicant to conduct due diligence on the project. Applicants may be asked to reduce or modify the requested funding amount and allocation during the application process.</p> <p>WiDEF will conduct a due diligence assessment of all shortlisted applicants with particular focus on governance and internal controls, safeguarding, ability to deliver, financial management and management of downstream partners.</p>
Stage 3 Fund Panel	July 2025	<p>An independent panel of experts ('Fund Panel') will appraise proposals based on the submitted material as well as recommendations from the WiDEF consortium.</p> <p>We expect the final decision from the Fund Panel to be communicated to applicants in August 2025.</p>
Stage 4 Contracting	August to October 2025	<p>Successful awardees will be invited to the contracting stage to finalize the Agreement.</p> <p>WiDEF will work with applicants to finalize a schedule of incremental milestone-based payments. These payments will be dependent on the awardee demonstrating and delivering proof that the mutually agreed milestones have been achieved.</p>
Stage 5 Project Launch	October 2025 onwards	<p>Project implementation will commence following contract execution.</p>

How to apply

To submit an application, please review and respond to the questions below **in the WiDEF India Round submission form available on widedf.global/WiDEFinIndia**. Please submit your application before **January 13, 2025, at 6pm India Standard Time**. We will only accept submissions in English. We are not able to accept incomplete proposals, proposals submitted after the deadline, or to offer direct feedback on proposals prior to or after submission.

Eligible applications will be scored against the following criteria:

Scoring Criteria	Weightage
1. Impact: Solution and Approach	16%
2. Quality of Evidence	16%
3. Request for Support: Clarity and Justification	16%
4. Organization Track Record	16%
5. Organizational Capacity	16%
6. Sustainability & Scale	16%
7. Diversity in the Workforce	4%

We look forward to receiving your submission.

Application Form Preview

The following information will be requested on the **WiDEF Round 3 submission form**:

Section 1: Eligibility checks

1. Are you a local Indian organization? Yes No

2. Is your organization incorporated/registered in India? Yes No

a. Please list the name and country of location of the parent company or subsidiaries.

Name of company	Country registered

b. When did your organization begin operating in India?

c. Please upload your registration certificate for India.

3. Is your organization a For-profit OR a Not-for-profit For-profit organization

Not-for-profit organization

a. If for-profit, does your organization have less than 250 employees? Yes No

b. If not-for-profit, is your organization FCRA accredited? Yes No

c. If yes, provide the FCRA license number & validity (valid till MM/YYYY). (30 words)

Section 1: Eligibility checks

4.	Does your organization have active users or beneficiaries from a solution offered in India?	Yes	No
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5.	Does your organization have a bank account in India that can receive funding in USD?	Yes	No
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6.	If you are selected to proceed, will you be able to provide unqualified audited financial statements / accounts before July 2025?	Yes	No
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a. If no, please explain briefly, including your company's accounting approach and audit policies. (100 words)

b. If yes, please briefly explain your company's accounting approach and audit policy and schedule, including the date of your most recent audit. (100 words)

7.	Is your organization fully compliant with all relevant business licensing, taxation, employee, and other regulations in India?	Yes	No
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8.	Are you willing to share data and insights with respect to the proposed project with WiDEF for up to two years after the funding ends? All data should be disaggregated by gender.	Yes	No
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Section 1: Eligibility checks

9. Which of the following WiDEF core results areas will be addressed by the solution that funding is requested for? **Select at least two.**
- a. Improved access to affordable devices and online experiences:**
Increasing internet and device access for women, ensuring affordability, reliability, security, and accessibility for users with disabilities.
 - b. Increased availability of relevant products and tools:**
Designing and providing tools that meet women's needs and facilitate their use of technology.
 - c. Elevating digital literacy and skills:**
Strengthening women's digital skills and literacy, including media literacy.
 - d. Enhancing safety and security:**
Addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence and strengthening user protection.
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10. Please provide a short summary of your project. (50 words)

Applicants to provide more details on the proposed project in Section 4 of the form.

Section 2: Company information

2.1 What is the name of your organisation?

a. Link to website

b. Links to social media handles (LinkedIn, Instagram or YouTube) (optional)

2.2 Name, job title, email address and link to LinkedIn profile of the Point of Contact (optional)

2.3 Has your organization received a grant directly from the GSMA, USAID, Gates Foundation, Reliance Foundation or from a program that is funded by USAID or Gates Foundation or Reliance Foundation before?

Yes

No

If yes, please ensure you provide details of the grant(s) in section 3 of this application.

2.4 Please select the option that best describes your current operating model

Organization operating in a sole country

International organization operating in more than one country

2.5 Is your organization female-founded or female – led?
Add an explanation (50 words)

Yes

No

*By female-founded, at least 50% of the organization's founders should identify as female.
By female-led, at least 50% senior leadership positions are held by those who identify as female.*

Section 2: Company information

2.6 How many **salaried** employees are there in your organization?
Please select one. This should not include your distribution agents.

0-5 6-10 11-20 21-50 51-100 101-249 250 and over

2.7 Describe your project team's skills based on the following criteria:

- Area of expertise
- Knowledge of the local context,
- Experiences that uniquely position you and your team to deliver the solution and solve the problem

In the application portal you will have the option to provide information on more members of your team if required.

Name	Area of Expertise	Knowledge of Local Context and Experience

Name	Area of Expertise	Knowledge of Local Context and Experience

Name	Area of Expertise	Knowledge of Local Context and Experience

Name	Area of Expertise	Knowledge of Local Context and Experience

Name	Area of Expertise	Knowledge of Local Context and Experience

Name	Area of Expertise	Knowledge of Local Context and Experience

Section 3: Your core business

In this section we are interested to learn about your organization and its core business. In Section 4 ('Proposed Project'), you will have the opportunity to tell us about the specific project or solution that will receive WiDEF funding if selected.

3.1 Briefly describe the main purpose and vision of your organization. (200 words)

3.2 Please describe the sector in which your organization operates, its overall operating model. Please include a description of who your users/ beneficiaries are and your impact and/or revenue model. (200 words)

3.3 What type of company are you? Select below.

For-profit company

Not-for-profit company

Section 3: Your core business

Follow-on questions for for-profit companies

3.3.1 Identify what stage of maturity your company is at? Select below.

If you are uncertain about the stage of maturity your company is at, please refer to [this link](#).

Pre-seed

Seed

Series A

Series B

Series C

Other (150 characters)

3.3.2 Provide details of your user base in the table below:

	2022	2023	2024 (to date)
Total number of registered users, across all products or services that your organization offers in India			
Out of the total number of registered users (above row), provide the number of Female registered users/ across all products or services in India (if available)			

Section 3: Your core business

Follow-on questions for for-profit companies

3.3.3 Explain how your organization defines **total users** and **female users**. What assumptions are used to calculate the total number of users and total number of female users?

For example, 50% of total user base (assumption based) or number of female users based on gender selected during user registration (based on actuals) (50 words)

3.3.4 How much commercial revenue (in USD and excluding funding from non-commercial sources such as grants, prize money etc.) has your organization generated in the last 3 years?

2021 (\$)	2022 (\$)	2023 (\$)

Follow-on questions for not-for-profit companies

3.3.1 Provide details of your user/ beneficiary base in the table below:

	2021	2021	2023
Total beneficiaries identified across all projects in India			
Of the total number of beneficiaries (above row), provide the number of female beneficiaries			

3.3.2 Explain how your organization defines total beneficiaries and female beneficiaries. What assumptions are used calculate this? (50 words)

For example, 50% of total beneficiaries (assumption based) or number of female beneficiaries based on gender selected during user registration (based on actuals)

Section 3: Your core business

Follow-on questions for not-for-profit companies

3.3.3 What are the general/unrestricted reserve of your organization (in USD)?

Unrestricted reserves refer to the financial resources of an organization which are not subject to contractual commitment

3.3.4 What was your organization's income from all sources over the last three years?

	2021	2022	2023
Total income			

3.3.5 What are your sources of funding or income over the past 12 months?

Organization	Funding Type: Investment, Loan, Grant etc.	Date	Amount (USD)

Section 3: Your core business

3.4 What is your organization's current runway (number of months)?

"Runway" refers to how long your organization can survive if your current income and expenses were to stay constant. # of Months runway = [Cash holdings + value of other current assets] / [Monthly Expenses – Monthly Income] **For not-for-profit applicants, please include any unrestricted reserves in "cash holdings" and secured pledges or grants in "value of assets held". "Monthly income" should include any additional sources of revenue such as program fees or revenue from commercial activities.*

Months

Please provide further details below

Cash holdings (\$)	Value of assets held (\$)	Monthly expenses (\$)	Monthly income (\$)

Section 4: Proposed project

The questions in this section are focused on the proposed solution or project that would be implemented if your organization is successfully awarded WiDEF funding & assistance. Funding must go towards a specific 15-18-month project that will scale solutions that can make measurable progress toward closing the gender digital divide and contribute to digital inclusion for women. WiDEF funding aims to scale solutions that have demonstrated, through credible evidence, that the solution:

- 1. Drives digital inclusion for women through meaningful access to and use of accessible digital technology, particularly smartphones and the internet.*
- 2. Significantly closes the gender digital divide in their context.*
- 3. Is economically sustainable and scalable.*

Alignment to the Fund is critical to your application's success. Many applications are poorly rated by reviewers because they either do not align to the Fund or they fail to convincingly describe how they do. Use this section to explain how the problem, solution, and target population you describe are well-aligned to the criteria of the Fund, and can deliver impact.

Section 4: Proposed project

- 4.1** Please describe the specific project that you want WiDEF to fund, including high-level activities that you plan to undertake during the grant period (250 words)

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- 4.2** Define the problem. What is the specific challenge to women's digital inclusion in India that your solution is seeking to address? (150 words maximum)

Please include the following:

- What are the specific barriers women face to adopting and using the internet in your project geography? Why are you focusing on addressing certain barriers?
 - Are certain women or population groups more excluded than others, and if so, why?
-

Section 4: Proposed project

4.3 How does your solution (product, service or approach) address this challenge? (250 words maximum)

Please include the following:

- Describe your solution, including what it is, where it will be delivered, who it will target (e.g. which segment of the female population is it targeting), what stage is it at, how it will be scaled and how it advances the goals of WiDEF.
- What are you seeking to achieve?
- How will the solution support women and/or marginalized populations (if so, which ones and how)?
- How does this solution align with your organization's strategic goals?

4.4 What evidence do you have that this solution is effective in addressing the gender digital divide? This can be evidence from your own research or data as well as from elsewhere (*see for example Effective Practices for closing the digital gender divide – widedf.global/gddreport*) (250 words maximum)

Please include the following:

- What measurable results have you achieved to date with this or a similar solution or approach?
- What evidence do you have that this solution can drive digital inclusion of underserved populations, especially women? This can be from your own data and insights or from another source.
- How will this evidence be applied to the specific context where your solution will be operating (e.g. specific location, target segment of the population etc)?
- Have the intended users/participants informed your solution or program design (and if so how)?

Section 4: Proposed project

- 4.5** Which of the following WiDEF core priorities will be addressed by the solution that this funding will support? (tick all that apply – **minimum of two**). How does your solution address the selected priority areas? (150 words maximum)
- a.** Improved access to affordable devices and online experiences: Increasing internet and device access for women, ensuring affordability, reliability, security, and accessibility for users with disabilities.
 - b.** Increased availability of relevant products and tools: Designing and providing tools that meet women's needs and facilitate their use of technology.
 - c.** Elevating digital literacy and skills: Strengthening women's digital skills and literacy, including media literacy.
 - d.** Enhancing safety and security: Addressing technology-facilitated gender-based violence and strengthening user protection.
-

- 4.6** Who are you specifically targeting with your solution and why? (150 words)
- In simple non-technical language, outline who will use and/or benefit from your solution. Why are the targeted users particularly relevant? How does your solution meet the targeted users' needs?*
-

- 4.7** In which state, cities, towns or districts do you plan to implement the project? (150 words)

Section 4: Proposed project

4.8 How will this project be financially sustained beyond the period of the project? (150 words)

4.9 Enabling environment: Please describe the geographic, social and regulatory environment of the proposed program, including available infrastructure. Which external factors pose the biggest risk to success? How will you overcome them? (150 words)

4.10 Are you planning to leverage existing initiatives or partnerships? If so, how? (150 words)
These could be existing initiatives or partnerships that are focus on addressing one of the priority areas (e.g. an existing digital skills initiative) or that can help extend the reach of the project (e.g. existing collective).

Section 4: Proposed project

4.11 How much funding are you requesting? *(Amounts should be between \$100,000-\$500,000)*

4.12 Using the table provided, please provide an indicative breakdown supporting the requested amount.
Note: If you are selected for the next stage, you will be asked for a more detailed budget as part of the detailed proposal.

Budget Category	Briefly describe the nature of costs included	Estimate Amount (USD)
Human resources		
Travel		
Marketing		
Project Operations/ Development		
Project assets		
Overheads & Administrative		
Total		

Section 5: Impact

5.1 What does the success of this solution look like? How will you track progress? (250 words maximum).

Please include the following:

- How will you know that your solution is driving the digital inclusion of women to improve their livelihoods, economic security, and resilience?
- Please list 3-5 key performance indicators and any specific tools (digital and/or offline) you plan to use to track interim progress and results of the solution and its commercial viability/ sustainability. Outline your impact measurement methodology.

5.2 What would be the impact of the funded solution? Please add the project targets in the table below

	June 2027 (end of WiDEF project)	June 2029
Total number of users or beneficiaries reached through the WiDEF project		
Of the total number of users or beneficiaries, provide the number of female users or beneficiaries reached		

5.3 WiDEF has two indicators that all awardees must measure:

- Number of individuals participating in WiDEF funded activities (gender disaggregated)
- Number of individuals with increased internet use through WiDEF supported activities (gender disaggregated)

Will you be able to track and share this required data over the course of the project? Yes No

Note: In addition, all awardees will be required to measure at least one WiDEF indicator per core priority area selected in the proposal. For example, if the solution will address Elevating literacy and digital skills and Enhancing safety and security as the core priority areas, awardees will need to select one WiDEF outcome indicator on Elevating literacy and digital skills and one on Enhancing safety and security. Please note that additional key performance indicators will also be tracked throughout the project cycle which will be mutually agreed upon if selected. A comprehensive monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) plan will be co-created with successful awardees.

Sharing your Information

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | I agree that my personal information may be shared with the WiDEF network
Please refer to the following GDPR statement:
https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr | Yes | No |
| 2. | I agree for this pitch to be shared internally within the WiDEF consortium | Yes | No |

Additional Information

Where do I apply?

Please visit the [WiDEF website](#) and complete the online application form.

What is a small and medium for-profit enterprise?

For this round small and medium enterprises refer to a for profit entity with fewer than 250 employees. This definition is not based on investment and turnover of the entity.

How can I learn more?

WiDEF will conduct informational webinars on the WiDEF website to answer any open questions about the RFA and to assist applications with USAID guidelines. A recording of the webinar will be available on the [widedf.global](#)

- Webinar on November 26, 2024, at 3pm to 4pm India Time
- Open House on January 7, 2025, at 3pm to 4pm India Time

Who can I contact for support?

- WiDEF staff will not be able to respond to individual questions about the RFA and process.
- Questions may be sent in advance to questions@widedf.global before Dec 15, 2025, at 11:59pm IST. Questions and responses will be published online by Dec 23, 2024, 11:59pm IST.
- Webinars will be recorded and posted with frequently asked questions on the [WiDEF website](#).

What is the expected award amount per grant?

Funding between \$100,000 and \$500,000 will be awarded to each project. Please specify the total requested budget in the application form.

What is the expected funding duration of awards?

15-18 months.

How many proposals can one organization submit?

Entities may only submit one proposal.