

FOURTH GLOBAL INNOVATION CHALLENGE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS PREPARING YOUTH FOR AI

SUMMARY & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Last Updated: September 9, 2026

The Citi Foundation (the Foundation) is launching its fourth Global Innovation Challenge, committing \$25 million to organizations developing innovative solutions that prepare low-income youth for success in today's rapidly evolving, artificial intelligence (AI)-driven workplace. This year's Challenge builds on the Foundation's longstanding commitment to investing in youth economic opportunity, including through its decade-long Pathways to Progress initiative and the 2025 Global Innovation Challenge focused on accelerating youth employment.

The rapid advancement of AI is profoundly reshaping the global work landscape. For example, [approximately 66% intend to recruit for specialized AI proficiencies¹](#). This technological adoption and transformation is quickly changing the labor market and creating unprecedented economic challenges and opportunities for low-income youth. New avenues are emerging for young people to secure employment, with growing demand for AI and digital capabilities. At the same time, young people continue to face persistent barriers, including the lack of digital access and a mismatch between current training and the AI-centric skills needed in this new economy. UNICEF estimates that [approximately 2.2 billion young people globally lack internet access at home²](#), hindering economic participation and mobility.

In addition, the workforce skills youth need today extend beyond technical AI proficiency. Research from the World Economic Forum identifies [significant shortages in human-centric skills¹](#), including critical thinking, creativity, resilience, adaptability and problem-solving. Intentionally integrating human-centric capabilities into AI skills programs helps young people strengthen their overall employability and enables them to effectively guide, interpret and apply AI tools. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), the Foundation seeks to identify innovative solutions that strengthen the skills of low-income youth, primarily between the ages of 15 and 24, and support them in securing employment opportunities in economies increasingly focused on AI and digital transformations.

¹ World Economic Forum, *The Future of Jobs Report 2025* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2025), <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2025/>

² UNICEF, "Closing the Digital Skills Gap: How UNICEF and partners are empowering youth worldwide" (UNICEF USA, 2025) <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/closing-digital-skills-gap-how-unicef-and-partners-are-empowering-youth-worldwide>

FOCUS AREAS:

These innovative solutions may include, but are not limited to, the following focus areas:

Cultivating AI and Human-Centric Skills for Youth Employment

Support for training in AI (e.g., AI fundamentals, ethical considerations, prompt engineering, digital content creation or AI-enabled tools) complemented by human-centric skills (e.g., problem-solving, critical thinking, advanced reasoning or creativity) to help low-income youth build relevant skills for employment.

Expanding Digital Access

Support for improving access to digital resources (e.g. community hubs with shared devices, open-source AI, low-connectivity and offline digital tools) to accelerate AI and digital literacy and/or enhance connectivity to work opportunities.

Building Support for NGO Capacity and Networks

Support for strengthening NGOs' existing youth employability programs by integrating AI-enabled tools, training and resources, as well as support for building or expanding networks across sectors (e.g., education, nonprofits, tech and businesses) to develop best practices and promote continuous adaptation.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITY:

The Foundation plans to award up to 50 \$500,000 grants, totaling \$25 million, to nonprofit organizations working in select countries where Citi has a presence.

The grants will be restricted and are anticipated to be disbursed in two equal and annual payments in 2027 and 2028. The grant terms will be 24 months, starting no sooner than June 1, 2027.

Grants are meant to be catalytic in nature, supporting the piloting or expansion of ideas and projects that prepare young people for employment in the AI-driven economy.

In addition to grant funds, the Foundation will seek ways to support the selected grantees through volunteerism as well as a learning community to promote shared lessons and best practices.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA:

- Organizations must be able to demonstrate that their mission and/or strategic priorities have a specific focus on serving low-income individuals.
- Organizations proposed program must impact one or more of the Foundation's target geographies. See Q3 for more details.
- Organizations must be registered as nonprofit entities under local law. For example, for U.S. entities, applicants must be tax-exempt public charities as per Section 501(c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Please note that organizations that require the use of fiscal sponsorship are not eligible for this funding opportunity.
- Organizations invited to the full application stage must be able to submit externally audited financial statements covering some part of calendar year 2024 or a subsequent year by the application deadline, which is anticipated to be in early December 2026.

APPLICATION PROCESS:

The Global Innovation Challenge: Preparing Youth for AI RFP will follow a competitive process in two rounds:

Round 1: Letter of Inquiry (LOI)

Interested organizations are invited to submit an LOI through the Foundation's grant portal. The deadline to submit an LOI is 12 p.m. (noon) New York Time (Eastern Time) on October 6, 2026. To submit an LOI click [here](#).

The Foundation will review all LOIs submitted by the deadline based on strategic alignment, feasibility and potential for impact.

Round 2: Grant application

By the end of November 2026, the Foundation aims to notify all organizations that submitted an LOI whether they will be invited to submit a grant application. Organizations invited to the grant application phase will receive further instructions on next steps and timelines for their application submission. For organizations invited to participate in the application phase of the RFP, please note that an invitation to submit an application does not constitute an offer, promise or guarantee of funding. Final funding decisions are anticipated to be shared with recipient organizations no later than the end of May 2027.

Please note that application and announcement timelines are subject to change.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the size and structure of the grant award?

Grantees will each receive a restricted award of \$500,000. The anticipated disbursement schedule, subject to change, is as follows: \$250,000 in Year 1 (2027) and \$250,000 in Year 2 (2028).

2. How do I submit an LOI?

Submit your LOI by [clicking here](#). Note that you will not be able to save the online form, so please download the editable PDF version available at the top of the online form and work offline. When you are ready to submit your LOI, you can copy and paste your responses into the online form for submission. Once you submit your LOI, you will not be able to access the content you submitted. Please save the PDF document version of your submission for your records.

3. Does my program have to impact one or more of the Foundation's target geographies to be eligible? What are the target geographies?

Yes, the program for which you request funding must impact one or more of the target geographies listed below to be eligible. The Foundation focuses on funding programs and solutions in select communities where Citi has a presence.

REGION	COUNTRIES
Africa	Algeria, Cameroon, Côte D'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia
Asia Pacific	Australia, Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam
Europe	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and United Kingdom
Middle East	Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, and United Arab Emirates
Latin America & the Caribbean	Argentina, Bahamas, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Trinidad & Tobago and Uruguay
North America	Canada, Mexico and select U.S. regions listed below

Select U.S. geographies:

U.S. STATE/TERRITORY	ELIGIBLE GEOGRAPHIES
California	Alameda, Contra Costa, Fresno, Kern, Kings, Los Angeles, Marin, Merced, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Joaquin, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, Ventura
Connecticut	Western Connecticut Planning Region Greater Bridgeport Planning Region
Florida	Broward, Miami-Dade, Palm Beach
Illinois	Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, Will
Maryland	Montgomery, Prince George
New Jersey	Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Passaic
New York	Bronx, Kings, Nassau, New York, Queens, Richmond, Rockland, Suffolk, Westchester
Nevada	Clark
Puerto Rico	Territory-wide
South Dakota	State-wide
Virginia	Alexandria City, Arlington, Fairfax, Fairfax City, Falls Church City
Washington, D.C.	District of Columbia

4. Does my organization have to be headquartered in one of the geographies listed above (Q3) to be eligible to apply?

No, but your organization's proposed program needs to impact one or more of the target geographies identified in Q3 to be eligible.

5. My organization is based outside the United States, can we apply?

Yes. Organizations based outside the United States that meet our eligibility criteria can apply directly for funding. Grants to organizations based outside the United States will be funded through Charities Aid Foundation America (CAF America). CAF America may require additional information and documentation from an applicant once the Foundation has recommended the grant to them. CAF America will ultimately make the final approval decision for those grants and have oversight responsibility throughout the grant term.

6. Can my organization submit an LOI in a language other than English?

No. All LOIs must be submitted in English. If invited to the application phase, organizations must submit applications in English, with the exception of certain

required documents. Organizations invited to the application phase may refer directly to the online application form for further details.

7. What if my organization is not incorporated as a nonprofit and/or does not have at least one year of externally audited financial statements? May we still submit an LOI?

No. As part of the eligibility criteria for this opportunity, only organizations that are nonprofit entities under local law will be considered for funding. Organizations invited to the full application stage must be able to submit externally audited financial statements covering some part of calendar year 2024 or a subsequent year by the application deadline, which is anticipated to be in early December 2026. The externally audited financial documents must include an auditor's letter with a signature, complete financial statements and auditor's notes.

8. Can my organization apply through a fiscal sponsor?

No. For this specific grant program, organizations working with fiscal sponsors are not eligible to apply.

9. Are current or former Foundation grantees eligible to submit an LOI?

Yes, current and former Foundation grantees that meet the criteria outlined in this document are eligible to submit an LOI. If you are a current grantee of the Foundation, please be sure to address how this proposed program differs from or advances the previously funded program.

10. Can we submit an LOI in partnership with another organization?

Organizations are welcome to work with partners. However, a single organization should submit an LOI on behalf of all partners. Please note that if your program advances to the grant application phase (Round 2) and is ultimately selected for funding, the lead organization would be awarded the grant and would be responsible for the full grant award, deliverables and ensuring the partners' compliance with the Foundation's terms of award.

11. Can my organization submit more than one LOI?

No. Eligible nonprofit organizations should only submit one LOI. Note that separate organizations should not submit LOIs for the same program. Local affiliates of global nonprofits that are separate legal entities and meet the eligibility requirements are considered separate organizations and may apply directly for funding.

12. Can a global, regional or national organization apply for a program that would be delivered by its local affiliate organization(s)?

Yes, an organization working at the global, regional or national level can apply for a program delivered by its local affiliate(s). However, if the local affiliate(s) meets the eligibility requirements on its own, we recommend that the affiliate apply directly.

Please note only one LOI per program will be accepted. For example, if a regional organization submits an LOI on behalf of a local affiliate, the local affiliate should not submit another LOI for the same program. If organizations are collaborating on a program, the partners should determine the lead organization and work together to submit one LOI for consideration.

13. What types of expenses are eligible for this funding opportunity?

The grants awarded through this RFP will be restricted to the specific program and expenses for which funding is defined and sought in your application. Eligible programs may seek funding to cover a range of items, including but not limited to, salaries, technology, program materials, trainings, events, research, communications, marketing, evaluation, convenings and overhead.

14. Can my organization regrant funding through this grant? Are there specific requirements or parameters around regranting?

Organizations may include regranting as part of their proposed program budget, and the Foundation will assess the programmatic rationale and plan for redistribution. Regranting to organizations pertains to cases in which Foundation funds are redistributed as grants to another organization, including local affiliates. Vendor payments for specific goods or services are not considered regrants.

15. Can any portion of the funds be used for political or lobbying purposes?

No. The grants awarded through this RFP will be restricted. All organizations invited to submit full applications (Round 2) should read carefully all the terms in the application form, including that grant funds cannot be used, directly or indirectly, for political or lobbying purposes, including, without limitation: participating or intervening in any political campaign on behalf of, or in opposition to, any candidate for elective public office; voter registration or get-out-the-vote activities; making independent expenditures in support of, or in opposition to, any political party or candidate for elective public office; or attempting to influence legislation or any act of a legislative body at the federal, state or local levels.

16. Is there a minimum or maximum organizational budget size that is required for an organization to apply?

No. However, before applying, organizations should consider how a \$500,000 grant, payable over two calendar years, would impact their legal and/or operational status.

17. What type of organizations will not be considered?

The types of organizations and programs that will not be considered for funding include, but are not limited to:

- Private foundations, including operating and nonoperating foundations
- Organizations that unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, sex, gender identity or expression, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, veteran's status, or other legally protected personal characteristic or status
- Lobbying, political causes, campaigns, or candidates
- Memorials
- Gift matching
- Organizations that require the use of a fiscal sponsor
- Organizations that do not meet the eligibility criteria noted in this document
- Individuals or sole proprietorships

18. Will every organization that submits an LOI be contacted?

Upon submission of your LOI, you will receive an automated email confirmation. Additionally, we may contact your organization for more information at any point during the LOI review process. The Foundation aims to notify all organizations that submitted an LOI whether they will be invited to advance to the grant application phase (Round 2) in November 2026.

19. What are the reporting requirements?

Grant recipients will be required to submit interim reports over the course of the grant term and one final report via the Foundation's online grant portal.

20. If my organization is not invited to submit a grant application (Round 2), will the Foundation provide us with individual feedback on our LOI upon request?

No. Given the volume of LOIs likely to be submitted, the Foundation will not be in the position to provide individualized feedback to organizations that do not advance in the process.

21. Where can I find more information about this opportunity?

If you have questions not addressed in this document, please email citifoundationRFP@citi.com.

22. Can I provide feedback to the Foundation on this RFP?

We welcome your thoughts and feedback. Please submit your feedback directly to citifoundationRFP@citi.com. The Foundation team endeavors to learn from applicants and stakeholders and use those lessons to continue to iterate and improve our approach for the future.