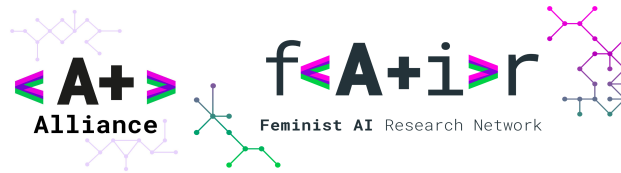# <A+> Alliance:
Incubating Feminist AI

Call for Expression of Interest Q1 2023
Phase 1 : LAC, SE Asia & MENA Regions

Call for Expression of Interest Q1 2023
Phase 1 : LAC, SE Asia & MENA Regions

This call focuses on Algorithmic Decision Making Systems (ADMs) in LAC, SEA and MENA for those whose municipalities and countries currently use ADMs and also for those whose municipalities and countries currently contemplating their use.

Led by the <A+> Alliance, a network of technologists, academics & activists working together to ensure new algorithmic systems do not embed already biased systems into our collective futures, our mission is to explore new models that reach beyond mitigation of bias and correct for historic inequity in order to help ensure a more fair, just and inclusive collective future for all.

Call for Expressions of Interest PAPERS:

Proof of Concept for **NEW models of ADMs delivery that could address:**

- **Social Service Allocation**
  - Housing lotteries
  - School allocation
  - Aid to families with children
  - Pension allocation

- **Sector Specific Innovation**
  - Health
  - Financial credit scoring
  - Energy sharing
  - Commons or collective models of governance

Call for Expression of Interest POLICIES:

Automated Decision Making **Policy based on 21st century social science best practices:**
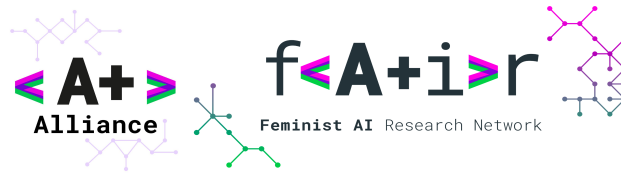
- Procurement processes
- Government transparency laws
- Algorithmic auditing
- Open government and community based co-creation of ADMs,etc.

Call for Expression of Interest PROTOTYPES:

Prototypes: Past the proof of concept phase and ready to be built and deployed These prototypes will provide a **NEW model of ADMs delivery and have a strong interdisciplinary team inclusive of a social scientist, technologist, community organisers, and a collaboration with or proposed with a municipality to test the prototype.**
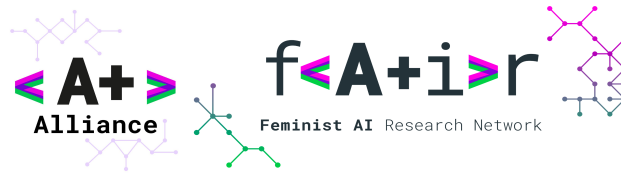
The Call for Expressions of Interest is part of the **f<a+i>r feminist AI research network,** supported by IDRC, a three-year initiative (2021-2024) to research and create new algorithmic and social science models that enhance intersection with core public policy agendas in the Global South. (**See ANNEX 2: Indicative Research Directions and Sectors**)

The project **a) calls for expressions of interest (*current* - Phase 1); b) develop a new model for publication as a research paper (Phase 2); c) prototype the new actionable model described in the paper (Phase 3); and d) pilot (Phase 4)** for applied feminist AI research and solutions to ensure that technology is co-created with problem definition and solution design of affected communities, and meets or exceeds the needs of the historically marginalised and vulnerable, especially women and girls.

In the words of Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights: "The starting point should be on how existing or even expanded welfare budgets could be transformed through technology to ensure a higher standard of living for the vulnerable and disadvantaged, to devise new ways of caring for those who have been left behind, and more effective techniques for addressing the needs of those who are struggling to enter or re-enter the labour market. That would be the real digital welfare state revolution" (Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, 2019).

2021-2024			
Phase 1 ***CURRENT CALL***	**Phase 2** *Phase 1 teams eligible for additional funding	**Phase 3** *Phase 2 teams eligible for additional funding	**Phase 4** *Up to 1 pilot from Phase 3 teams selected to launch
Expressions of Interest: Discuss model	**Develop: Paper** (6 months)	**Build: Prototype** (6 months)	**Launch:Pilot**
Selected projects will receive funding, mentorship and support (f<a+i>r bi-monthly cohort meetings) to propel research and share South-South knowledge and network			
Support **innovative interdisciplinary research teams to create new AI methodologies or models for inclusive social policy, and delivery of equitable systems and algorithmic decision-making** (economic, social, legal, technical) that redress historical inequalities.	The selected P.I.s or organisations in Phase 2 will **produce:** **a full research paper** between 7,000 to 12,000 words outlining their new model with	Up to **3 papers or fully realised concepts will be awarded funds to prototype** (build, test or draft) their new model of allocation or governance. During which time they will create partnerships to strengthen	Prototypes will be submitted to the Scientific Advisory Committee where up to 1 pilot will be selected to launch with boundary partners to create and test

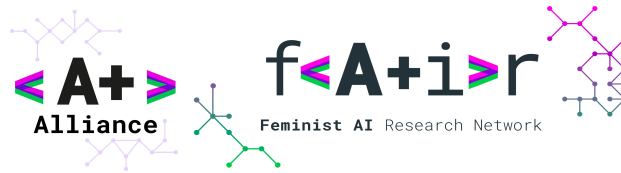| Select groups from Phase 1 will be invited as semi-finalists to attend an online co-creation workshop, and will be invited to Phase 2.	actionable recommendations. at least **one media piece** for broader democratisation and dissemination of the new models. Attend f<a+i>r bi-monthly regional and/or global network meetings, including the full team attending a Feminist AI training before research begins.	community stakeholder participation (civil society, municipalities, academia, private sector) over a six-month period.	a pilot with a sustainable working proof of concept.

The **current Phase 1 Call for Expressions of Interest (Deadline: 7 February 2023)** will support a maximum of 9 grants in 2023 (to propose and research a model → Paper, or to go straight to → Prototype), that will subsequently be selected to participate in further phases (Prototype and/or Pilot) through 2024.

Background

What is Feminist AI?
Feminist AI is Artificial Intelligence harnessed to deliver equality outcomes, designed with inclusion at the core, creating new opportunities for the proactive, innovative correction of inequities in economic and social allocation, and building from feminist data collection and deployment.

A **proactive agenda** is needed to create the technology that ensures no one is left behind, and that we all thrive. What would that future look like if feminist principles of dismantling bias, intersectionality, accountability, and inclusive, responsible, transparent
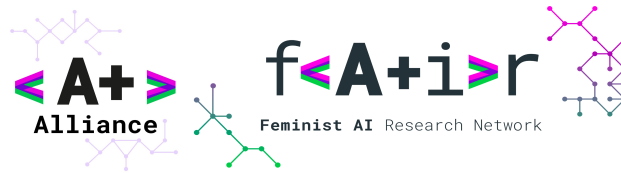
use of power in social systems and algorithms were brought to bear in algorithmic **research designed to be actionable and correct for bias**, not only describe or mitigate bias? We propose a proactive research agenda during this time of unparalleled acceleration conceived to **leverage technology's full power to positively transform lives at scale.**

Expressions of Interest should demonstrate a necessary, innovative, and achievable new model, or a new way of conceiving AI that corrects for historic inequities and brings social programs and policies fit for the twenty-first century.

Examples could be:

1. The development of a relevant dataset that is intended for a specific machine learning use case articulated in the call (e.g. Provide datasets with data from a region previously excluded from research that can be used in modelling some of the most useful and highly beneficial AI models such as, but not limited to, those for medical services allocation, housing lotteries, school and university allocation and voting turnout patterns);
2. The development of an AI proof-of-concept that aims to enhance inclusion and/or resolve historic inequities in social programs, policies, or service delivery OR that seeks to use AI to model social inequities to inform policies (e.x. Produce a model that showcases how greater financial support for students from poorer areas leads to better academic performance, or one that reveals the link between lack of healthcare services in a given area with lower productivity levels in a particular sector in comparison to an area with available health services and the increased performance in that space so as to encourage public and private sector health providers to offer their services across a country);
3. To advance research on impact assessments or understanding the implications of AI being used in social policy contexts, with the intention of proposing relevant shifts in AI methodologies and understandings (e.g. Measure the benefits and weaknesses of allocating health services based on prior medical history, including the hidden implication that people with medical histories on file have easier access to healthcare
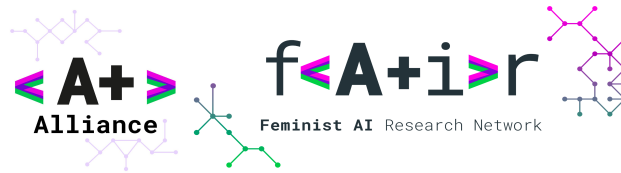
due to geographic (live in cities) or financial (earn more money) advantages. Calibrate how to mitigate that bias, and suggest how to improve the use of AI in this scenario);
4. To propose a paper that explores new ways of conceiving AI to realise a more inclusive and equitable future (e.x. An investigative paper on the potential advantages of using mechanised processes in a given field such as in education in remote areas or potential solutions on how to diversify medical research experiments).

*The above examples are simply to show the different kinds of projects out there, applicants are encouraged to be innovative and bring forth proposals for previously untackled projects in their regions.

For more information on Feminist AI, Automatic Decision Making and AI for Social Good, please read the following articles and reports:

- [Montréal Declaration for a Responsible Development of Artificial Intelligence](#)
- [Towards Meaningful Oversight of Automated Decision Making](#), *Digital Future Societies*
- [AI Localism in Practice: Examining How Cities Govern AI](#),*The GovLab*
- [From Bias to Feminist AI](#), *<A+> Alliance*
- [Artificial Intelligence for Social Good](#), *Ellis Alicante Foundation*
- [Unlocking AI's Potential for Social Good](#), *Harvard Business Review*
- [Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Report (Digital Technologies)](#), *UN Human Rights Council/ Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights*
- [Fairness in Algorithmic Decision Making](#), *Brookings Institution*
- For inspiration, check out this list of projects for [Google AI for Good](#).

Who Is Eligible to Apply? [1]

The call for Expressions of Interest is open only to inter-disciplinary teams. Interdisciplinary teams refer to collaborating investigators from different fields or disciplines including social, technical, feminist/community organisations, academics, researchers, activists, and/or innovators (independently or in larger teams).

Principal investigator(s) **in South East Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Middle East and North Africa** to co-create the positive potential of AI in policy, practice and innovation to advance gender equality and advance the quality of life for all.

➢ Each team must be Interdisciplinary i.e., have **at least two disciplines represented as primary investigators**
  ○ (e.g. a local community / feminist group and or an economist, social scientist, social protection or gender expert, an individual working on education, health, trade unions collaborating with a computer scientist, data scientist, machine learning expert, or an engineer).
➢ All primary authors must be **domiciled in the Global South**.
  ○ At least one partner is domiciled in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) or South East Asia (SE Asia).
  ○ Allied partners (team members but not leads) may be in outside regions.
➢ **Ongoing projects are encouraged to apply for additional funding to further explore or scale ideas, particularly those wishing to prototype;**
➢ IDRC & A+ Alliance will enter a contractual agreement with the lead member only. The other members will be considered subcontractors.

We are aware some applicants may have strong social model concepts but less technological expertise, and vice versa. We are dedicated to helping non-traditional academic teams or community groups find partners, and will support teams with capacity building or technical assistance where appropriate.

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[1] **This call is not open to individuals employed by or government ministries and agencies,** but it is open to public research institutes and public university centres, labs and departments and organisations. It is also open to private sector actors.

Key Dates

12 January	Launch of the call for Expression of Interest
24 January	Deadline for questions
2 February	Answers to questions posted
7 February	Deadline for Expressions of Interest
7- 14 February	Regional Hubs read and shorten list of applicants
14-21 February	Narrow down the long list of applicants and begin meetings with potential groups
21-28 February	Second week of meetings with applicants and discussions with Global Leadership team
28 February - 06 March	Short list proposals to the Scientific Advisory Committee (max 6 per region)
6 March	Scientific Advisory Committee meets to discuss and select applicants
7 March	Provisional meeting if needed
10 March	Eligible teams will be notified
14 and 15 March	**Select groups from Phase 1, both selected and semi-finalists, will be invited** to attend an online co-creation workshop dates, to be determined in January and to be held between 20-25 March. Workshops will be mandatory for CO PIs and teams for selected groups.

Apply now Deadline for Expression of Interest : **7 February 2023**

How To Apply:

Please email all the following application materials (see Annex 2) in one folder labelled with the project name, with the subject line of the email written as: Expression of Interest: 'Project Name' to info@aplusalliance.org

☐ 2 Co-Principal Investigators with Terms & Conditions statement
☐ Full Call For Expression of Interest application
☐ Relevant attachments
☐ Team Information

Should you have any questions, please contact: info@aplusalliance.org until 24 January 2023 when the deadline for questions closes. 7 February 2023 is the deadline for Expressions of Interest.
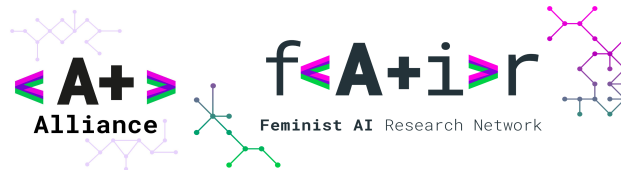
ANNEX 1: INDICATIVE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS AND SECTORS

Incubating Feminist AI aims to **catalyse the creation of Feminist AI, Artificial Intelligence harnessed to deliver equality outcomes, designed with inclusion at the core, creating new opportunities for the proactive, innovative correction of inequities in economic and social allocation, building from feminist data collection and deployment**.

We seek **multi-disciplinary work** that creates or iterates new framework models and designs for example :

Economic and Social Allocation

➢ **Articulating models of allocation and distribution that are made more possible or more equitable through the creation and/or innovative use of new or big data in Algorithmic Decision-Making systems** (ADMs). e.g., redesign of a housing

lottery, taking the social situation of female headed households into account; conditional cash transfer incorporating nuanced social science research and new data collection, or ground up design of a feminist Digital ID incorporating consent, privacy, efficacy and priority, according to feminist principles (some new models may require new datasets to be created in order to deploy a more just machine learning system; the creation of new datasets could be part of the research for a potential prototype to deploy later in a model pilot).

➢ Some indicative areas: Social Policy and Protection Design (p.ex., social assistance and safety nets: social insurance, subsidies, digital ID, land tenure and use, pensions, conditional cash transfer, lotteries), health applications, housing, justice and education services, labour activation policies, geospatial mapping, and climate change.

➢ **New algorithmic applications that take advantage of new diverse data collection and use nuance for enlarging the scale of indigenous, decolonial, or traditional models that work for smaller populations** (p.ex., "analysis of economic governance, especially the commons, and how local property can be successfully managed by local commons without any regulation by central authorities or privatisation." h/t Elinor Ostrom), work on the care economy, new theories models for household surveys using feminist principles and technologies to implement, etc.

Feminist Data Collection & Deployment

➢ Methodology for inclusive data collection for broader representation, that adheres to feminist principles.
➢ Community-driven data stewardship models.
➢ Protocol documenting AI-relevant characteristics of datasets.
➢ Methodology for how small a dataset could be and still be effectively used in machine learning.
➢ Intersectional fairness for multiple sensitive attributes (e.g. more than 2, race and gender and class, disability, indigenous, ethnicity etc) mathematical models.
➢ Design of a feminist digital ID

ANNEX 2: FULL CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST APPLICATION

Please email your concept note as a PDF following the requirements and answering all the sections below. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

Limit: 3500 words
Chicago Style; readable font; 12 points; double spaced
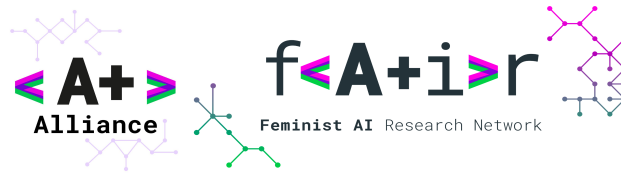Additional Relevant documents to be attached in a separate PDF.

1. Project Overview:

    a. Title:
    b. Abstract (200 - 300):
    c. Five Keywords Relevant to Project:
    d. Overview:
        i. Research statement: What is the problem? How is it significant? What are your research questions? What are your research objectives? What is the outcome you are trying to achieve?
        ii. How does your proposal advance the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs)? To which SDG other than SDG 5, *Gender Equality*, is your project aligned? Is there any practical project, community practice or initiative inspiring your application?
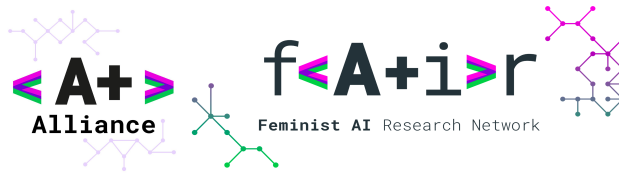
2. **Research methods:**
    How are you combining disciplines to make a new approach or model for AI? How are you designing your interdisciplinary approach to generate new insights? Which disciplines and what impact do you expect from the collaboration?

3. Applied Research:
    a. How will your research seed technological and social innovations and develop local capacities?
    b. How could the impact be adopted and implemented in the region and in the Global South?

c. List the key entities, groups, communities, or persons that will make your project successful.
d. List the key entities, groups, communities, or persons that will benefit from the project.
e. Is there any social, political, ethical or technical obstacle or risk for the viability of your proposal in the near future? If so, how will this affect the project and/or participants involved? What are the ethical considerations/processes taken in this project?
f. What is your mitigation plan to manage the risk?
  i. Specifically, how will the team maintain ethical processes to guarantee transparency, consent and safety in data practices for all individuals involved (team members and the community that will benefit from the innovation) ?
    1. If you are a research team within an educational institution, are you mandated to submit to your Ethical Review Board before accepting or beginning research? If so, would your college or university accept our <A+> Alliance Ethical Review Board approval as means to begin research ?

Team Information

Please attach a single PDF including all the information below
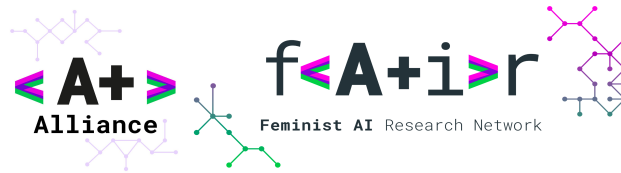
1. Team Overview
   a. Team or project name
   b. Team or main contact email address:
   c. Team description: (>250 words description) What makes your team unique? Where are your team members located? Have you worked together before?
   d. Which disciplines are included in the team? (at least two disciplines are represented as authors).
   e. Academic and/or organisational affiliations and endorsements. For example, if you are already working with communities, NGOs or collectives and they support your idea, you can add a formal letter of support from them. If faculty members or research centres are supporting your research project, you can also add a formal letter of support from them. When doing so, please make sure that you add their contact information.

2. **Team Member** (for each member of your team.)
   a. Full Name
   b. Email address
   c. Organization(s) (option to list multiple organisations)
   d. Discipline(s)
   e. Current domicile
   f. Gender
   g. Full CV
   h. Links (related to the proposal to help us imagine your work and ideas. P.ex, GitHub, paper repositories, profiles on social media, blog posts, opinion pieces, unpublished papers, links to projects relevant but perhaps not included in the CV.)
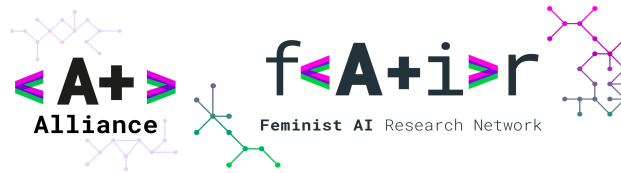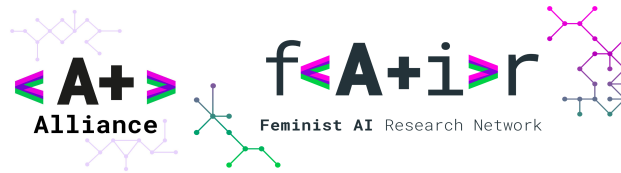
ANNEX 3: EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. The call for concept notes overview, objectives and design (15%):	
Well-thought-out problem statement and research questions, objectives that are relevant in the local or regional context and can make lasting contributions to the field.	5
Approach ensures inclusion and equity of both genders and other vulnerable groups. Alignment to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on gender (SDG 5), and at least one other SDG.	5
Informed by a feminist framework or systems change by design	5
2. Literature review and theoretical framework: knowledge and expertise on gender equality and inclusion, AI innovations, and research (15%):	
Social science and algorithmic model intersects with core community or public policy agendas from a feminist perspective	5
Connections with research and policy communities relating to gender and inclusion, governance, and AI (as well as relevant cross communities who might be included in the research process)	5
Thoughtful approach to building knowledge in the field, to experimenting, and approaches to developing new innovations and/or models in a way that minimises potential harms and explores how data, AI, machine learning can be made fairer and more inclusive in the future, as well as address key barriers to research in the field of gender equality and inclusion.	5
3. Research methodology: knowledge and expertise in research and/or innovation (15%):	
Demonstrated experience running collaborative research activities and/or networks.	5

Proven ability to lead AI research, deploy new methodologies, and support gender and inclusion research areas (can be throughout the team or consortia). Ability to implement research to successfully develop and deploy AI and/or data or social science models and innovations at the intersection of gender equality and AI innovation, and with participatory research methods.	5
Ability to conceptualise combining disciplines to make a new approach or model to generate new insights for AI.	5
4. Applied research: expertise in synthesis and knowledge mobilisation (20%):	
Significant consideration for how the research will seed high-impact technological and social innovations and develop local capacities.	5
Demonstrated consideration for how the impact can be scaled in the region and in the Global South. Additionally, experience in designing and developing products that support knowledge sharing and use such as high-quality practitioner or policy-maker oriented outputs, toolkits, and rapid knowledge syntheses.	5
Experience in knowledge mobilisation for policy and practice improvement. Evidence of assessing and documenting with a duty of care on the key entities, groups, communities, or persons that will make the project successful and will benefit from the project.	5

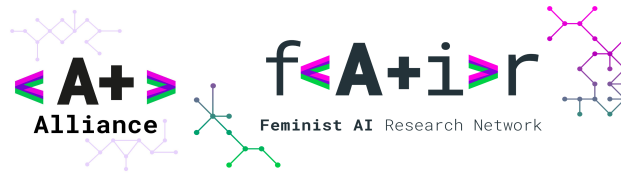|	
Significant and robust analysis of the risks and ethical considerations of the project including a) documentation of any social, political or technical obstacle or risk to any or all individuals (including the public, project participants and team members involved), and how the team will maintain safe, transparent and ethical processes, b) assessment of risks for the viability of the project in the near future; c) note specifically the ethical processes to guarantee transparency and consent in data practices. A clear mitigation strategy for documented risk scenarios and ethical considerations that may arise throughout the duration of the project.	5
5. Overall Concept Note (35%)	
Creative: offers new and innovative contributions for new models/ frameworks that can transform ethical and social dimensions of AI from a feminist framework.	5
Impactful: inspires action across the global south.	5
Interdisciplinary: at least two disciplines are represented as Principal Investigators.	5
Community-centred: Addresses a social issue within a local, national or regional community.	5
Actionable: Proposes a model that is actionable and tangible but also innovative.	5
Feasible: Timeline and goals are realistic for developing a project from paper, to prototype and later eligible to apply for external funding by the end of the pilot grant funding.	5
Equity: Demonstrated plan to ensure women's research leadership (at least 50%) in both the research team and across the scope of the project	5
	100

Incubating Feminist AI: Expression of Interests
Terms and Conditions

Submitting an application under this Call for Expression of Interests will involve the collection, use and processing of your personal data. Collecting and processing this data is necessary for evaluating each Expression of Interest. Below, you will find more details on how your data is used.

We will retain a copy of your data for our records. The legal basis for this is in preparation to enter into a contractual agreement with you for the provision of a contract. In some circumstances, we may share your application and details with our advisors, partners, and other funders in our network.

We collect some data that might be sensitive, this is called "special category data," under the General Data Protection Regulation in Europe and other legislations.
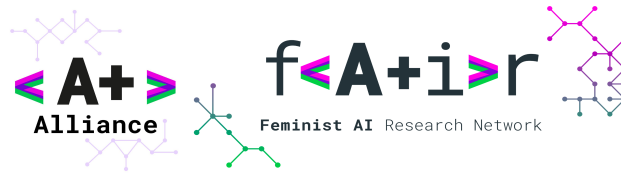
When you make an application on behalf of an organisation, we ask for information about the gender(s) of the leadership of your organisation. This is optional. To apply for our support through your expression of interest, it must include your background, your goals, and the impact you hope to make through our support. We may use this information to understand and assess your application and to award grants which align with our values and mission. We also collect some personal contact details including your name, email address and the country you are based.

The information you submit will be assessed by our Scientific Advisory Committee, shared within our organisation, and stored on a safe cloud, under a GDPR jurisdiction. We will use your contact details to get in touch with you and to inform you of the outcome of your application.

We will only collect this information based on your explicit consent. Since we want to reach an international and diverse applicant audience, we collect this information in accordance with this purpose.

Once you apply, we will retain the information for different time periods, depending on how it is categorised:

- We will retain unsuccessful applications that we deem outside the scope of our Call for Expression of Interest for 1 year after the application process has closed. We do so on the basis of our legitimate interest in maintaining a record of the application process and reviewing our assessment practices.

- We retain unsuccessful applications that we deem to be relevant to our work for 3 years on the basis of our legitimate interest in maintaining a record of the application process, in case the applicant's idea is relevant in the future and to invite the applicant to submit a further application, and maintain a record of applications to understand how the ideas and projects of applicants who applied multiple times have grown and developed over time.

- If your application is successful, we will retain it for at least as long as the award agreement is active and for a period of 10 years thereafter.

- We may also retain some non-personal information from all application categories for statistical purposes, including your country of residence, age demographic, and other information. We retain this information on the basis of our legitimate interests in developing an understanding of the size and demographics of the audience we are reaching overtime. This is processed in accordance with GDPR Article 89.

We will share your application data with our funders and advisors for the purpose of evaluating the merits of your application and determining whether an application has been made with other funders, in some cases. We do so on the basis of our legitimate interests in fulfilling our mission. At our discretion, we will also share application data with other, third-party funders in our network in order to understand how work is being funded in the area of our interests to ensure our resources are being well spent and to accomplish our goal of being a trusted knowledge exchange.

We share this information based on our legitimate interests, primarily in ensuring that we are funding unique and relevant projects and ideas.

When you apply to our Call for Expression of Interests, you give us a non-exclusive, perpetual, irrevocable, royalty-free worldwide licence to use, host, and store submitted content in whole or in part as outlined in this policy. The rights you grant in this licence are for the limited purpose outlined in these terms.