

# Scoping Study on Digital Rights Funder Strategies & Environmental Justice

Terms of Reference - June 2021

## Executive Summary

Ariadne Network, Mozilla and Ford Foundation are pleased to issue this open call for proposals (CFP) for a consultancy to conduct a Scoping Study on Digital Rights Funder Strategies & Environmental Justice.

This consultancy is intended to help funders in the digital rights field develop better grantmaking strategies that address the intersection of digital rights and climate justice issues.

We recognize that the internet is the world's largest machine, and as funders in the digital rights field, we acknowledge that the internet's environmental impact is important to assess and mitigate. Examples of harms that come to mind are carbon emissions, extractive industries, environments and communities impacted with a lack of accountability. Our hypothesis is that digital rights and environmental justice networks are often siloed from each other, yet they are inextricably linked, and this relationship will only become more and more relevant. As momentum grows around the “twin transitions” – digitalization and sustainability – we see a need for an agenda that connects these transitions from a digital rights and climate justice perspective rather than retrofitting the field years from now.

The outcomes of this consultancy will be to better equip digital rights funders to evaluate what work would be most impactful in affecting systemic change.

This consultancy will create:

- (a) A **landscape analysis** of major existing research at the intersection of digital rights and environmental justice issues;

(b); **A non-exhaustive network mapping** of civic actors, public interest technologists, and individuals working on this intersection;

(c); **A set of needs and capacities** of civic actors within the ecosystem in order to amplify and accelerate work at this intersection;

(d); **An initial analysis** of the most impactful/strategic interventions in the short and medium term defined by the different stakeholders;

(e); **A set of recommendations for funders**, particularly for those focused on digital rights, that supports civic actors working at this intersection

This work will sit within a larger convening effort among funders and practitioners to develop shared understanding and strategies to grow the network and advance this intersection.

The funders involved are US and European based with additional regional and global strategic interests. The consultant and the funders will work together to identify relevant global geographic scope in addition to the US and European context.

The scope of the RFP is not intended to include:

- how climate funders should integrate and engage with digital technology
- an analysis of environmental harms that focuses solely on carbon management
- Tech for good innovations that aim to address environmental and climate issues

But we are open to discussion about re-introducing these or other ideas through discussions with prospective consultants.

The work should be completed by the end of 2021 with preliminary findings shared by September 2021.

Deadline to apply: 9 July 2021.

Application Format: Concept note (max. 2 pages).

Details below.

## Background

**Ariadne** is a network of European social change and human rights funders who work together to strengthen philanthropy, help funders act strategically, and encourage new donors to enter the field with maximum impact. Its vision is of a Europe where a strong philanthropic sector helps protect and promote human rights and social change. Ariadne has more than 600 individual members from 155 member organizations, based in 22 countries. Ariadne currently hosts the [Digital Power Initiative](#), aimed at increasing the capacity of European funders to effectively engage with technology and digitization, and climate justice is also a priority issue area for the network.

**Ford Foundation** is a private foundation that envisions social justice as a world in which all individuals, communities, and peoples work toward the protection and full expression of their human rights; are active participants in the decisions that affect them; share equitably in the knowledge, wealth, and resources of society; and are free to achieve their full potential. Ford Foundation's mission is to reduce poverty and injustice, strengthen democratic values, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement. Across eight decades, the Ford Foundation has invested in innovative ideas, visionary individuals, and frontline institutions advancing human dignity around the world.

The **Technology and Society Program** at Ford Foundation supports an emerging field of organizations with specialized expertise in technology systems, law, and policy, that seek to establish norms, regulations, technical standards, and enforcement of rules for technology that protect the public in the digital landscape. It also invests in the technical skills, intelligence, and capacity of civil society groups working in established social justice fields like human rights, government accountability, and civic engagement.

**The Mozilla Foundation** works to ensure the internet remains a public resource that is open and accessible to us all. In the early 2000s, the Mozilla community built Firefox. We toppled the browser monopoly, gave users choice and control online, and helped create a healthier internet. Twenty years later, Mozilla continues to fight for a healthy internet – one where Big Tech is held accountable and individual users have real agency online.

Mozilla's work is guided by the Mozilla Manifesto. Founded as a community open source project in 1998, Mozilla currently consists of two organizations: the 501(c)3 Mozilla Foundation, which leads our movement building work; and its wholly owned subsidiary, the Mozilla Corporation, which leads our market-based work. The two organizations work in close concert with each other and a global community of tens of thousands of volunteers under the single banner: Mozilla.

In 2019, we identified a new challenge to the health of the internet: artificial intelligence. AI makes decisions for us and about us, but not always with us. It can tell us what news we read, what ads we see, or whether we qualify for a loan. We are interested in exploring the intersection of trustworthy AI and environmental justice, especially as part of our larger mission to ensure the internet remains a force for good.

## Objectives

This open call for proposals is looking for a consultancy that will create:

(a) **A landscape analysis** of major existing research at the intersection of digital rights and environmental justice issues;

- The major environmental justice issues related to digital rights in addition to carbon emissions
- Identifying a broad range of environmental harms resulting from the lifecycle of technology, taking into consideration how this intersects with social and political inequalities. Who and which environments are disproportionately impacted by these harms?
- A summary of climate commitments from the Big 5 US tech companies and a critical analysis of these commitments from a digital rights perspective. For example, from Apple's and Microsoft's committing for responsible mineral use to the climate pledges of Google and Amazon.
- A summary of relevant intersections between climate and digitization policy

### Examples

Specific topics may include about the true cost of resource and mineral extraction for hardware and batteries, land and water usage from data centers, tech companies' impacts on indigenous communities and land management, carbon emissions from various internet industries such as ad tech, streaming and data storage, energy consumption from training AI models, the use of IoT and AI in other industries like energy and agriculture, AI used to speed up fossil fuel extraction and transportation of minerals, and public health harms to individuals, communities and ecosystems.

(b); **A non-exhaustive network mapping** of civic actors, public interest technologists, and individuals working on this intersection;

### Examples

This may include organizations, individuals or collectives who are working on this intersection from the perspective of technical implementation, policy and advocacy efforts directed at governments and tech companies, or public awareness-raising. This may also include organizations who expose and work to mitigate and seek accountability or reparation for the harm of technology in their communities. Here we are interested in learning the priorities and actions of these different civic actors and their needs to amplify and accelerate their work. This should include actors from impacted and vulnerable communities, and CSO/Networks working with and supporting them.

(c); **A set of needs and capacities** of civic actors within the ecosystem in order to amplify and accelerate work at this intersection;

#### Examples

This may include the role of climate expertise and capacity in digital rights organizations, the role of tech expertise and capacity in environmental justice-focused organizations, means of better connecting organizations to engage in this work, or capacity gaps in the civic ecosystem of individuals and organizations who are positioned to engage.

(d); **An initial analysis** of the most impactful/strategic interventions in the short and medium term defined by the different stakeholders;

#### Examples

This may include identifying target areas of work which have substantial potential for short-term impact and/or amplification, long-term aspirational goals for work at this intersection, efforts that may have smaller global impact but provide significant opportunities for building effective working relationships between siloes. We are interested in identifying tactical and strategic patterns that can be replicated or adapted across fields and sectors.

(e); **A set of recommendations for funders**, especially those invested in digital rights, that supports civic actors working at this intersection;

#### Examples

This may include how funders identify new grantees at this intersection, fund convenings and networking, ways in which funders have exacerbated problems in this space, and opportunities for new cross-funder relationships among climate justice and digital rights ecosystems. We are interested in recommendations that tackle the issues on a systems and infrastructural level, beyond frameworks that rely solely on individual responsibility.

(f); **Produce a report** detailing the findings and providing recommendations and next steps for how funders can develop better grantmaking strategies that address the intersection of digital rights and climate justice issues. This report may also include recommended areas for further inquiry.

## Application Requirements

At this stage we are soliciting **concept notes of no more than two pages**. Following the submission and review of concept notes, we will invite full proposals from finalists. Applications are welcome from individual consultants, consultancy firms, and other organizations. Applicants should meet the following requirements:

- Experience working in partnership with philanthropic organizations and/or civil society organizations in the regions listed in the Executive Summary.
- Expertise or experience related to the fields of digital rights, climate justice, and philanthropy. Deep expertise in all three is not expected, but some experience in engaging with each field is strongly desired.
- Exceptional communication skills, both written and verbal, in English. Additional languages are a plus.
- Proven research and analytical skills.

The application should be written in English, be a maximum of two pages long, and should include the following information:

- **Description of proposed consultancy:** Describe the consultancy, main envisioned processes, activities, approach to conducting surveys and interviews, a proposed methodology, responsibilities, and expected outcomes. Please, be cognizant of the restrictions that COVID-19 may impose on travels and privilege online interaction.

We encourage creativity in approach and offer the following preliminary description of activities as a starting point to be adapted and reshaped as needed:

- Identify and interview relevant digital rights and environmental justice funders
- Conduct desk research
- Conduct a survey among a selected group of organizations
- Interview an agreed selection of individuals whose opinion could inform the work

- Present findings for a round of feedback from the funding partners
- Create a final full report/presentation and accessible summary
- **Researchers' qualifications and track record:** Describe relevant research qualifications and experience of individual researchers or research team.
- **Proposed timeline:** Provide a timeline for the project, which should not exceed 3-4 months. Please include check in points at key milestones.
- **Budget:** Provide a budget (in GBP or USD) describing the expenses of this consultancy. The budget must include applicable salaries and/or honorariums, and local taxes. You may also provide a budget range which may vary with the depth of engagement, to be determined in detail if you are invited to submit a full proposal.
- **Past Work:** We strongly recommend linking to past work that indicates the strength of your work.

Applications and additional documents should be emailed to [jobs@ariadne-network.eu](mailto:jobs@ariadne-network.eu) on or by **9 July 2021** (17.00 pm BST time).

## Review

All concept notes received by the submission deadline and in compliance with the application requirements will be reviewed by a committee that includes professional staff from the involved funders.

This committee will make its decision based on the following criteria:

- Relevant and demonstrated experience including qualifications and previous work undertaken;
- Responsiveness to the objectives (knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the consultancy and deliverables);
- Demonstration of innovation, including suggestions and/or improvements to the objectives;
- Budget feasibility.

No individual feedback will be provided on any concept note.