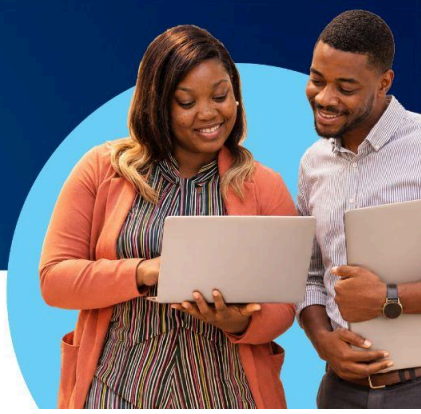
POSITIONING LABS

HELP SHAPE THE FUTURE OF AI GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA



INNOVATION FOR POLICY FOUNDATION

giz Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Terms of Reference

Positioning Labs | AI Advocacy from CSOs to CSOs

1. Background and Rationale

AI governance is at a decisive moment for Africa. In July 2024, the African Union adopted its Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy, a continent-wide commitment to harnessing AI for inclusive growth and development. Turning that commitment into something that genuinely reflects African realities will depend on civil society having a sustained, structured role in shaping it, a role that has too often been missing from AI policy processes across the continent.

2. About Positioning Labs

Positioning Labs is a six-month programme built to fill that gap. It brings together civil society organisations from across Africa to co-create joint regional positions on AI governance, positions with enough weight to feed into national and regional AI strategies and policies, and enough durability to sustain a network of CSOs that keeps collaborating and advocating together long after the programme ends.

The programme works towards two outcomes:

1) African civil society's positions on AI governance are visible and reflected in national and regional AI strategies and policies;
2) The network of organisations built through the programme continues to collaborate and advocate together well beyond its lifespan, linking into other longer-term initiatives in the space.

3. Programme Timeline

The programme runs in three phases, each corresponding to a stage of the cohorts' work:

- **Phase 1: Context and Power Analysis** (Current): understanding the policy landscape and the actors shaping AI governance across the continent.
- **Phase 2: Advocacy Programme Co-Creation** (December 2026 to February 2027): co-creating joint regional positions within each cohort.
- **Phase 3: Advocacy Programme Delivery** (May 2027): advocating for those positions with national and regional policymakers.

4. Cohorts and Priority Topics

Applications are now open for two cohorts, each built around one priority topic.

Cohort 1: AI Regulation and Accountability asks how AI should be governed, covering regulatory and ethical frameworks, transparency and explainability, accountability and redress, risk and impact assessments, and institutional readiness.

Cohort 2: Minimizing AI Risks asks what harms and risks AI governance should address, covering AI safety and misinformation, employment and just transitions, environmental risks and sustainability, gender and inclusion, indigenous knowledge, and privacy and data-related harms.

5. What Participation Involves

Participation spans 6 months and involves approximately 19 hours across 9 facilitated sessions, divided into two main stages:

- **Co-Creation Phase (7 sessions):** Includes 3 shared capacity-building sessions, 3 cohort-specific sessions to refine shared positions and strategy, and 1 joint session presenting to the Advisory Board.
- **Delivery Phase (2 sessions):** Focuses on policy process engagement, supported by ongoing guidance for representing cohort positions at key fora according to your organization's capacity.

i4Policy and the Advisory Board handle initial desk research and stakeholder mapping prior to cohort formation. Each cohort ultimately receives a shared Policy Brief and dedicated advocacy materials to support their ongoing work.

6. Who Should Apply

Please note: that this programme is open to organisational representatives acting on behalf of civil society organisations, not unaffiliated individuals.

AI governance extends well beyond AI policy itself. It intersects with digital rights, labour, the environment, language and culture, and data and infrastructure, and a credible regional position depends on bringing all of these perspectives into the same room. While we welcome organisations already working on AI governance, AI safety, responsible AI, or digital rights, we are equally looking for organisations whose work sits in sectors significantly shaped by AI, such as labour rights, environmental justice, language and cultural preservation, or data governance, even where AI is not yet named in their mission.

7. Benefits of Participation

By joining a cohort, your organisation will:

- Build a deeper understanding of AI governance issues and how they connect to your own area of work.
- Work with other CSOs to define shared priorities, develop common positions, and turn them into concrete advocacy strategies.
- Access practical advocacy materials and strengthen your connections to relevant organisations, networks, and regional and global policy spaces.
- Certificate of participation and a chance to represent your cohort in regional and global fora.

8. Implementing and Collaborating Partners

Positioning Labs is implemented by i4Policy (Innovation for Policy Foundation) in partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and in collaboration with the Global Center on AI Governance, Research ICT Africa, Connected by Data (Citizens' Track on AI), and the Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG).

9. Application Process

See below application process, link and deadlines.

We encourage applicants to share this call with other organisations in their networks that may be interested.

Required Application Information:

- Organisational and contact information
- How your work relates to AI governance or an adjacent sector

- Cohort selection and the reasoning behind it
- Motivation for joining and the perspective you would bring to a joint regional position
- Confirmation of commitment to the full 6-month timeline (December 2026 - May 2027)

Application form and Dates:

- Application Link: https://forms.gle/SVCtQWdVwkJseFSZ9
- Application Deadline: **25 November 2026, 17:00 SAST**