



**Terms of References**  
**for an Implementing Agency to Design and Conduct a Youth Innovation Challenge on**  
**Digital Inclusion**

**I. BACKGROUND**

**UNFPA**

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. UNFPA works in more than 150 countries and territories that are home to the vast majority of the world's people.

UNFPA works to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled. Guided by the 1994 Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), UNFPA partners with governments, civil society and other agencies to advance its mission. The work of UNFPA focuses on five key areas: policy dialogue, capacity building, data collection, research and advocacy.

UNFPA started working with the Chinese Government in 1979. For more than forty years, UNFPA has helped strengthen China's capacity to conduct population censuses and demographic analyses, to make the most of quality data for policy planning, and, crucially, has consistently championed women's empowerment and gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights for all.

UNFPA is now implementing the ninth Country Programme (2021-2025), which complements the Chinese government's development vision, including those set out in China's 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2035, and is consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the same period.

**Global challenge: Digital exclusion for older persons**

The rapid advancement of new digital technology continuously transforms our societies and the world we live in. For most people, including older persons, this means having to embrace technology as a core part of everyday life and to continuously adapt to and integrate new digital technologies into daily routines and living environments<sup>1</sup>.

However, older persons—and particularly older women—risk being left behind in the world's digital transformation. Recent reports by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

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<sup>1</sup> UNECE. (2021). Innovation for Ageing in the UNECE Region: Good Practices and Policy Recommendations. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/PB26-ECE-WG.1-38\\_0.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/PB26-ECE-WG.1-38_0.pdf).

indicate that women and older persons experience digital inequity to a greater extent than other groups in society<sup>2</sup>.

For examples, data from the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) indicates that in Europe, only 67 per cent of individuals aged 55 to 74 use the Internet weekly, compared to more than 90 per cent of those aged 16 to 54. Only half as many women aged 55 to 74 have basic or above basic digital skills when compared to men and women in younger age groups<sup>3</sup>. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) presents that in Asia-Pacific, there is a strong digital divide by age. Digital skills are limited among older persons, in particular older women<sup>4</sup>.

Older persons, especially women, tend to either lack access to technologies or are often not benefitting fully from the opportunities increasingly provided by technological progress. Specially, the challenges may include<sup>5</sup>:

- **Lacking digital skills:** Older persons may experience difficulties in accessing and utilizing digital services, which can result in social exclusion and reduced opportunities for learning, entertainment, and communication.
- **Disempowering social environment and ageism:** Stereotypes and prejudice about older persons' ability and willingness to use digital technologies are widespread, often disregarding their diversity of skills and experiences.
- **Unfriendly design of digital technology or lacking relevance for older persons:** Designs of interfaces often do not address the needs of diverse users and may fail to meet the criteria for accessibility and inclusivity, especially for those with disabilities.
- **Physical and cognitive impairments:** Physical and cognitive impairments in later life can hinder older persons from using digital technologies or cause their disengagement even if they had regularly used digital technologies before.

### **Key approaches for reducing challenges on digital exclusion for older persons:**

With much to gain, older women and men should not be forgotten in efforts towards inclusive digitalization. Technology is a tool to enhance economic opportunities, promote gender equality, and improve participation at all ages, but only if digitalization benefits everyone<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), "Study on gender-responsive climate policy and the promotion of women's leadership in climate change decision-making," UNECE News, October 22, 2020, accessed June 30, 2021, <https://unece.org/media/Gender/news/376424>.

<sup>3</sup> UNECE. (2021). Innovation for Ageing in the UNECE Region: Good Practices and Policy Recommendations. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from [https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/PB26-ECE-WG.1-38\\_0.pdf](https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-07/PB26-ECE-WG.1-38_0.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. Retrieved from [https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Channarith%20and%20Channe\\_Digital%20Divide%20and%20vulnerable%20groups\\_20200804%20-final.pdf](https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Channarith%20and%20Channe_Digital%20Divide%20and%20vulnerable%20groups_20200804%20-final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.* 3

<sup>6</sup> UNECE. (2020). Women and men in the information society: Measuring digital development in the 21st century. Retrieved from <https://unece.org/media/Gender/news/376424>

To effectively address digital exclusion among aging populations, a comprehensive strategy is required. This includes not only providing access to digital technologies and improving digital literacy, but also designing digital services that are age-friendly and relevant to the needs of older persons. In addition, it is essential to create ethical and secure digital environments that are free of ageism and that embrace the diversity of aging populations.

The world is home to 1.8 billion young people aged 10 to 24. Many of them are considered “digital natives” by virtue of their age and early experience with technology. They in general have higher access to digital technologies and digital skills compared to other age groups. It is crucial to establish partnerships with younger individuals and leverage their passion, expertise, and creativity to devise solutions that address the unique challenges faced by older adults in the digital world.

### **The Youth Innovation Challenge:**

In 2023, UNFPA China office and partners will launch a youth innovation challenge to reduce digital exclusion for older persons. It is devoted to inspiring young people in contributing their innovative ideas and actions to promote digital inclusion and intergenerational solidarity. Specifically, the youth innovation challenge aims to:

- Build a network for young innovators, older persons, innovation stakeholders, the private sector, government and UNFPA to create an enabling environment for people of all ages in the digital world, and to ensure that no one is left behind.
- Work with innovative young people to unit them and build their capacity to address development challenges through innovative thinking and effective actions.
- Reduce digital exclusion for older persons, especially vulnerable groups such as women and people with disabilities, to ensure that they receive the full benefits of the digital age.

The topic of the innovation challenge will be **promoting “age-friendly design” for digital products and services**. Designs of interfaces often do not address the needs of the diverse users and may fail to meet the criteria for accessibility and inclusivity. This can negatively affect older persons, in particular those with physical or cognitive disabilities. The topic aims to help improve “digital access for all,” in particular to improve older persons’ access to goods and services that involve digital technology.

## **II. OBJECTIVE AND SCOPE OF WORK**

An implementing agency will be contracted to conduct the following activities in collaboration with UNFPA and its partners:

- 1) Design and development of the youth innovation challenge:
  - Design the youth innovation challenge, including but not limited to confirming the topic, budget, location, modality, timeline, and the target audience in discussion with UNFPA and its partners.
  - Develop a youth innovation challenge plan with relevant materials, including but not limited to a call for proposal, participants selection criteria, tentative innovation challenge training agenda, a list of potential speakers, facilitators and mentors, as well as plans for mentorship/connections.

- 2) Conduct of the youth innovation challenge:
  - Upon agreement by UNFPA and its partners, launch and promote the call for proposals to the public, collect applications and monitor the progress.
  - Select participants with panel members including UNFPA and its partners with agreed criteria.
  - Confirm with the selected participants and coordinate their participation in the youth innovation challenge training.
  - Organize the youth innovation challenge training, both technically and operationally, based on finalized agenda, topic, and modality; coordination with facilitators, mentors, speakers and participants.
  - Select and award the winning teams in collaboration with UNFPA and other partners.
- 3) Mentorship for the winning teams:
  - Provide mentorship/connection support for the winning teams based on the finalized mentorship plan. It shall include but not limited to providing technical and coordination support between teams, mentors, UNFPA and other partners, synergizing various resources, and providing tailored opportunities to winning teams if applicable.
- 4) Reporting:
  - Provide timely updates to UNFPA and its partners on the progress.
  - Submit deliverable reports in English up to the standards of UNFPA

**III. DELIVERABLES**

- 1) A work plan for the design and development of the youth innovation challenge. The plan shall include but not limited to the innovation challenge background, objective, topic, modality, timeline, tentative training agenda, tentative list of facilitators, speakers, and mentors, budget. Relevant materials shall include but not limited to a call for proposal article, participants selection criteria, and a tentative mentorship/connection plan.
- 2) A mid-term report. It shall include but not limited to the list of participants, the finalized innovation training agenda, the finalized list of trainers, speakers, panel members, mentors, pictures, and a finalized mentorship plan.
- 3) Completion of the youth innovation challenge and a final report for all activities conducted in 2023. It shall include but not limited to a summary of the entire process and results, participants’ feedback, pictures, expenditure, challenges and lessons learned, and any other materials required by UNFPA.

\*Above documents should be submitted in English and be accepted by UNFPA.

**IV. TIMELINE**

The contract period is from the date of contract signing to 30 November 2023.

The tentative timeline is as follows, and the actual and detailed timeline will be discussed and agreed upon with the selected agency during the contracting process.

Tentative timeline	Deliverables
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Late July	Deliverable 1 submitted
Late September	Deliverable 2 submitted
Mid-November	Deliverable 3 submitted
July-November	Communications and updates conducted at the working level

## V. QUALIFICATIONS

- 1) Proven experience in running youth innovation challenges and bootcamp workshops on topics such as youth development, employment and entrepreneurship, innovation and technology, ageing, gender equality, etc.
- 2) Capacity and network in providing design-thinking workshops, human-centered design workshops, entrepreneurship and innovation training, and incubation.
- 3) In-depth understanding of the SDGs and the UN's missions;
- 4) Well-connected with resourceful experts and facilitators in China;
- 5) Core team members be able to communicate in fluent Chinese and English and submit the required deliverables in English;
- 6) Previous working experience with the UN, especially in youth activities is an asset;
- 7) Innovative, efficient, can-do attitude, and detail-oriented;

## I. PAYMENT PLAN

The payment plan will be agreed upon with the selected agency during the contracting process.

## II. PROPOSAL SELECTION

Interested agencies are requested to submit their technical and financial proposals by 30 June 2023.

Each proposal will be evaluated against a weight allocation of 70 for the technical proposal and 30 for the financial proposal. The total maximum obtainable points are 100.

### ● Technical Proposal, including:

- (20 points) Portfolio of the organization/institution/agency with examples of previous work on similar projects and clients in the last 5 years.
- (20 points) Title/Designation of each team member on the project and their CVs, experience in working on similar projects and assignment.
- (30 points) A tentative work plan for the design of the youth innovation challenge, such as the topic, timeframe, a list of facilitators and mentors, modality.

### ● Financial Proposal (Budget) including:

- (30 points) An estimated budget by deliverables, including personnel cost, and other costs if applicable.

The recommendation for award of the contract will be based on the best combination of technical and financial scores.

Please submit the above required documents in English to [china.office@unfpa.org](mailto:china.office@unfpa.org) by 30 June 2023 COB Beijing time, with an email subject title: “Submission for the UNFPA Innovation Challenge Implementation: your agency’s name.”

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