



Open Window: Research & Innovation on Human Agency

About Us. The Agency Fund is a multi-donor partnership focused on innovations and organizations that support people in the navigation of difficult lives. Our open window calls for research and innovation concepts within the general scope of [our approach](#), without further thematic or geographic restrictions.

Background for our Open Window. Recent advances in experimental social science indicate that even people who live in extremely difficult conditions, and who appear to have very limited options, can derive major benefits from insights that engage their consciousness, affirm their dignity, and support them in charting a path forward. Remarkable impacts can follow – not only on people’s sense of control over their lives, but also on objective development outcomes like income, health, and educational attainment.¹

The expansion of mobile technology, along with the falling cost of data in low-income settings, has opened new opportunities to bring support to people who experience poverty and social disadvantage.² A number of organizations are already pioneering this approach. For example:

- [ConsiliumBots](#) helps Latin American students and their families navigate the public education options that are available to them.
- [MomConnect](#) offers women across South Africa access to messaging services and helpdesks that support them on matters of safe pregnancy and delivery.
- [Precision Development](#) provides smallholder farmers in India and Africa with agricultural advisory services that are tailored to local agronomic conditions.
- [Rocket Learning](#) links parents across India to childcare centers and government schools, engaging them in the early education of their children.
- [Shujaaz](#) builds digital tools that help East African micro-entrepreneurs seek and share advice on informal street hustles.

We are interested in these and similar approaches that give people access to localized, actionable insights to support them as they navigate their lives with purpose and deliberation.

What and How We Plan to Fund. We seek to make grants to time-limited research and innovation projects that pilot, design, and test concrete solutions. The strongest applications will score well on the following:

- *Relevance to Human Agency:* Is this approach aligned with ours? Does it engage people's consciousness and embrace their dignity? Does it unearth situationally relevant insights about people's options, capabilities, or future? Does the context realistically afford people alternative choices?
- *Leverage & Synergy:* Does the idea elegantly leverage technology to engage people in a customized, interactive, and scalable manner? Alternatively, does it build on an existing user base, case worker network, or policy mechanism? Is there potential for cross-fertilization with other approaches that the Agency Fund is involved with?
- *Data & Learning:* Is this approach idea grounded in scientific evidence (e.g., from development economics or social psychology?) Does the applicant organization use data to for precision and rapid adaptation? Is there a path to exceptional cost-effectiveness?
- *Team & Management:* Does the team come with ample local context as well as a track record of rigorous and open research? Are the timelines ambitious?

Submissions are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

For FAQs and to apply, visit www.agency.fund

Readings.

1. The Agency Fund (2021): Putting Data, Media, and Technology in the Service of Human Agency. White Paper
2. Fabregas, R., Kremer, M., Schilbach, F. (2019). *Realizing the Potential of Digital Development: The Case of Agricultural Advice*. Science 366(6471)