



Call for Concepts: Research and Innovation on Digital Coaching and Mentorship

About the Agency Fund

We make philanthropic investments in ideas and organizations that leverage data, science, and technology to support people in the navigation of economic and life choices. Our research & innovation investments focus on time-limited projects that pilot, experimentally test, scale, or iteratively improve specific innovations that advance human agency. We welcome concepts that fall within the general scope of [our approach](#). We also issue calls for concepts (such as this one) to discover opportunities in selected thematic areas that are a strategic priority for specific affiliate funders, and where the agency lens appears to have strong relevance.

Background for this Call for Concepts

Many of life's pressing questions are some variant of "*what should I do?*" The answers will often be localized and fleeting; we cannot hope to find them in an encyclopedia. To build the mental models that we need to navigate our life paths, we have little choice but to build on our experiences and our social environment.

But these can be disempowering – especially for people who were born into adverse circumstances: people who have few opportunities also often have few support structures. This may explain the evidence that [coaching](#) and [mentorship](#) can play an important role in poverty alleviation.

One difficulty is that the personalized nature of coaching and mentorship tends to make them impractical and costly in remote low-income settings. But the dramatic expansion of mobile technology, along with the falling cost of data, are lowering this hurdle. There are pioneering demonstrations of ICT being deployed in ways that may make coaching and mentorship more scalable. For example:

- [BetterUp](#) provides (higher-income) users with remote access to a wide range of coaches.
- [Taroworks](#) develops software that helps microenterprise coaches manage their cases.

- [CareerVillage](#) has built a platform on which anybody can seek, or share, personalized career advice.

We are interested ideas that bring coaching and mentorship closer for people who cannot usually access them.

What and How We Fund

This call supports research and innovation projects.

- A Pilot round is suitable for untested ideas. The expected output is a proof-of-concept. The maximum contribution is \$180k.
- Advanced funding rounds are suitable for ideas with a degree of existing evidence or scale. The expected outcomes are greater evidence and greater scale. There are no defined contribution limits.

The strongest applications will demonstrate:

- A compelling hypothesis about a specific informational or psychosocial barrier that can keep people from realizing their full potential.
- A concept for a digital tool that may help overcome this barrier.
- A team that works at the cutting edge of social or technological innovation, follows an evidence-based approach, and has a deep understanding of the context it operates in.
- A path to scale, a framework for measuring cost and benefits at scale, and ambitious timelines.

This call is open-ended. Submissions will be reviewed on a quarterly basis.

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