

Request for Research Proposals: Rethinking Policy and Regulation for the Data-Driven Economy

The IIMA IDEA Telecom Centre of Excellence (IITCOE) has been created as a joint initiative between the Department of Telecom, the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (IIMA) and Vodafone-Idea. Based in Ahmedabad, IITCOE fosters the growth of field of study that addresses pressing questions in the field of telecom and Internet governance policy and regulation.

The IITCOE monitors issues of Internet governance, spectrum management and telecom regulation, and closely works with the institutions accountable for developing regulatory frameworks. Over the years, IITCOE has published academic articles, working papers, monographs and policy advisories with an aim to bring in fresh insights, and works towards prioritizing/defining regulatory issues. IITCOE focuses on understanding, and helping to shape, the policies that promote innovation and development of solutions addressing problems that are unique to India.

The proposed opportunity is in response to the rapidly changing conditions that are shaping evolution of the digital economy and public sector services. Digital technology is increasingly shaping public policy, and in turn public policy greatly influences the way technologies are made available. The emerging evidence suggests that this interplay is transforming governance, society, and emergent business models across numerous interconnected sectors. While the far-reaching impact of such technologies is undeniable, several knowledge gaps inhibit adoption and proliferation of ICTs. IITCOE aims to fill these knowledge gaps by supporting research with a focus on public policy, regulation, marketing and user issues.

Research Priorities

IITCOE seeks to provide substantial support to facilitate new research focused on the regulation and management of public and private socio-technical infrastructures in the data-driven digital landscape. This will be operationalized through two-year awards with funding support upto INR 25-30 lakhs per lead institution for a set of projects* on a competitive basis. We encourage proposals that explore opportunities for cross-disciplinary research and collaboration. Institutions submitting proposals may tie up with other institutions for a joint submission. The research proposals should incorporate insights from various areas of studies including the social science, humanities, computational and data sciences.

IITCOE's research priorities are organized around four pillars:

1. Digital Transformation and Public Goods

2. E-Governance: Models and Frameworks
3. Platforms: Business and Governance
4. Regulating the Digital Economy

Each of the four pillars guide the scope of projects under the grant and research proposals incorporating a combination of the illustrative topics (and more) for study are requested under each pillar.

1. Digital Transformation and Public Goods

This theme investigates the role and the capacity of public and private sector to develop standards for the effective delivery of public goods and services. Our work covers both the technology that support economic growth, and its impact on the socio-economic aspects, especially for the poor.

Illustrative Topics:

- Digital Identity and Transformation
- Identity and Data Management in Banking and Financial Services
- Mobile Ownership and Financial Inclusion
- Public Service Delivery and Role of Technology Platforms
- Trust and Security in Public Service Delivery Solutions
- Public Private Partnership (PPP) for Public Goods
- Public Sector Governance and Data Ownership

2. E-Governance: Models and Frameworks

This theme aims to generate knowledge related to the implementation of national and state level e-government mechanisms in India. Focus here is on improving infrastructure, and regulatory frameworks for the effective provisioning of, and successful adoption of e-government services.

Illustrative Topics:

- Regulation of e-Government Services
- Institutional Arrangements for Effective Delivery
- Employee Level Attributes for Provisioning of Integrated Services
- Human-Computer Interfaces and Organizational Structures
- Cybersecurity, Privacy, Vulnerability for Individuals and Community

3. Platforms: Business and Governance

This theme focuses on the unique opportunities created by platforms for cultural experiences, community life, the economy and future society. Our work investigates the role of social media platforms in shaping public discourse and the media ecosystem and the emerging “public digital commons”.

Illustrative Topics:

- Legal and Regulatory Frameworks for the Platform Economy
- Political Economy of Platforms Content and Infrastructure Policies
- Technology Choice of Platforms and Influence on Social Outcomes
- Negotiating Trust and Identity through Platforms
- Role of Algorithms on Journalism and Broadcasting Media
- Platformization of Public Discourse Impact on Freedom of Expression

4. Regulating the Digital Economy

This theme focuses on the role of global, regional and national institutions in shaping the digital economy. Our work focuses on improving the role of national institutes and structures in the multi-stakeholder community, in order to ensure national agendas and policies evolve in tandem with, and contribute to regulatory frameworks being adopted at the international level. Issues cover broad range of topics addressing the impact of digital technologies on economic and social aspects of the economy.

Illustrative Topics:

- Multi-stakeholder Governance
- Harmonizing Privacy and Identity Regulation
- International Rules and Norms on Digital Trade
- Intellectual Property and Intermediary Liability
- Ecommerce and Digital Markets
- Strengthening Consumer Protection and Antitrust Frameworks
- Regulation of Emerging Technologies
- Cross-border Data Flows and Data Ownership

Request for Proposals

In order to build on the existing work that IITCOE has done both independently and collaboratively with various institutes, we seek research proposals on the above four broad themes.

Guidance for Proposals

This is an initial call for submission from lead institutions outlining the broad scope of the proposed projects and an estimated budget, including the details of the investigating team and time commitment. **Interested researchers should send in initial proposals for review at iitcoe@iima.ac.in by November 30, 2018 at 11:59 pm IST.** Please feel free to reach out to ask questions and discuss key issues in advance of submitting a proposal.

Proposals will be reviewed by December 22, 2018 and more detailed proposals will be solicited from selected finalists by January 15, 2019.

Finalists will be asked to supply a detailed budget and work plans, along with the proposed set of projects. Awards will be determined solely on the basis of satisfactory proposals, plans and resource commitments from applicants. While the review process will include input from external advisors drawn from multiple sectors, IITCOE will make the determination of any awards.

The proposal should cover the following heads -

- ✓ Title of the research projects
- ✓ Broad theme of the research (not more than 3000 words)
- ✓ Scope of different projects to be covered under the selected theme (not more than 1000 words)
- ✓ Proposed research - may include,
 - Illustrative ideas highlighted above or new areas of research may be proposed
 - Objectives of the research, key questions that will be addressed and their significance for field of study
 - Proposed research methodology
 - Project timeline and proposed outputs including plans for dissemination of outputs through conference/workshop
 - A high-level, provisional two-year budget. Funding for foreign travel for data collection purpose should be included only if there is any partner organization/institution willing to facilitate access for doing the research project
- ✓ Evidence of institution's strength in relevant disciplines
- ✓ Current efforts, existing structures for research, data collection and analysis at institution
- ✓ Details of work done, by investigators on the subject of proposed research

*Note:

- a) In deserving cases, higher budget will be considered.
- b) The 2/3 of the total budget will be paid at the time of project award. The remaining budget will be paid on the project completion, on submission of the Utilization Certificates signed and stamped by the respective institutes.
- c) IITCOE may consider giving Rs 2 lakhs per project to the PI as an incentive for the quality work timely submitted.