ADIA Lab

Digital Economy Program Solicitation (2026)

Key Information

Expression of Interest: ***Required before proposal submission***

Due Date: May 8, 2026, Midnight Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) Link: https://forms.gle/kjH1zSwZpPrkkg4o6

Proposal Submission:

Due Date: May 29, 2026, Midnight Greenwich Mean Time (GMT)

Note: Proposal submission link will be sent to registered PIs via email by May 9, 2026.

Anticipated Type of Award: Cooperative Agreement – anticipated commitment of two years.

Number of Awards: Three awards.

Grant Aim: To support innovative research in AI, digital assets, and digital platforms capable of providing the scientific foundations for resilient, trustworthy, and scalable economic and financial systems.

Anticipated Funding Amount: Three projects will be awarded a share of US$450,000 per year, for two years.

We are looking to fund a range of projects. Applicants may request up to US $300,000 per year, per project, subject to the stated annual limits. The total prize pot will not exceed US $900,000.

Indirect Cost Limit: a maximum of 20% of the budgeted direct costs. This is a limit on the percentage of direct costs that has limited visibility to ADIA Lab. Universities and laboratories applying for grants typically negotiate an overhead rate based on a modified total direct cost that often will exclude equipment purchases or rentals, training, off-site expenses, sub-contract expenses exceeding a certain amount, and other items. However, ADIA Lab's definition of what is covered in 'overhead' is significantly more flexible in this case. Specifically, the 20% overhead costs limit is measured against total direct costs as opposed to modified total direct costs (e.g. US university F&A rates). Expenses, which might be required to be included in an institution's F&A rate can be charged directly to proposals to ADIA Lab. In essence, ADIA Lab needs insight into the total project costs to ensure that they are reasonable. This is standard practice for international programs. Given ADIA Lab's relative flexibility regarding overhead, there should be few, if any, participants subject to institutional policies that cannot accommodate the required maximum rate stated.

ADIA Lab Contact Information:

ADIA Lab website is: www.adialab.ae

For specific questions or technical issues in the submission process, please contact: digital.economy@adialab.ae

Table of Contents

I. INTRODUCTION

The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority Laboratory (ADIA Lab) is an independent, Abu Dhabi-based laboratory dedicated to basic and applied research in data and computational sciences. The goals of ADIA Lab are structured around the following four pillars:

(1) **Leadership:** Position Abu Dhabi as a global leader in computational and AI research by advancing impactful work in climate science, health science and digital economy.
(2) **Workforce:** Develop Abu Dhabi's knowledge economy and skilled workforce by training talent and building capacity for high-value research and innovation.
(3) **Societal Benefits:** Deliver tangible societal benefits through applied research by addressing critical challenges to improve well-being and inform evidence-based policies.
(4) **Innovation:** Drive innovation and commercial impact through translational research by turning research outputs into startups and industry collaborations.

This proposal solicitation document outlines ADIA Lab's 2026 digital economy research thrust areas, submission timeline, award structure, eligibility information, preparation and submission instructions, proposal requirements and submission process, review procedure, and award administration information.

II. PROGRAM SCOPE

A. Research Thrust Areas

Over the past year, ADIA Lab has developed a research plan for the Digital Economy, informed by inputs from our advisory board, research fellows, and external experts. The plan is structured around four key research thrust areas at the intersection of AI and the digital transformation of the economy. These thrusts are designed to stimulate high-impact research that advances scientific foundations, computational architectures, and real-world applications contributing to the development of resilient, fair, and scalable digital economic systems.

The program ultimately aims to improve understanding, prediction, and decision-making in economic and financial systems, supporting more effective policy, investment, and operational strategies. This includes large-scale, data-intensive, and high-performance computing approaches required to support next-generation economic systems. ADIA Lab places particular emphasis on trustworthy AI systems that are transparent, robust, and economically interpretable, particularly in contexts involving economic or financial decision-making.

For this 2026 proposal solicitation, ADIA Lab will focus on the following research thrust areas:

1) ***AI Models for the Economy***. *Research in this area focuses on the application of AI to economic systems*
2) ***Digital Assets***. *Research in this area focuses on digital money, tokenized assets, and decentralized markets*
3) ***The Economics of AI***. *Research in this area focuses on the economic consequences of AI*
4) ***Digital Infrastructure***. *Research in this area focuses on resilient, scalable, and interoperable platforms for the next-generation economy*

Priority application domains include modelling large-scale economic networks and advancing

digital markets, assets and platforms. Other relevant domains are indicated in the following.

Applicants are required to articulate progress toward application readiness in the thrust areas. Successful projects should present a credible path toward validation, prototyping, deployment, or other forms of demonstrated application relevance within the two-year funding period. Purely theoretical proposals without a clear path toward application or validation are unlikely to be competitive. Applications addressing coherently more than one research question and covering more than one area are welcome.

The progress steps may include:

1. Fundamental Research (including simulations)
2. Applied Research (including simulations and software/code development)
3. Technology Development and Demonstration (including engineering-scale prototypes and software development)
4. System Demonstrations and Validations
5. Products and Services

In the current funding cycle, projects will be selected based on their potential to advance the program's targeted short-term (2-year) thrust areas, detailed in the following subsections:

Thrust Area 1: AI Models for the Economy

Research in this area focuses on the application of AI to economic systems, including:

- Developing AI models for complex economic environments such as global trade and monetary networks, with the aim of understanding shock propagation and the resilience of economic linkages.
- Leveraging transparent, high-granularity data from decentralized markets by AI tools designed to detect and predict crisis dynamics and recovery patterns in financial markets.
- Building high-quality databases for the digital economy, including data on supply chains, decentralized markets, and smart cities, and developing AI foundation models for time series analysis and other economic applications.
- Developing agentic AI tools tailored to the needs of financial investors and designed to operate in compliance with financial regulations. Use agentic and generative AI for economic data simulation.

Thrust Area 2: Digital Assets

Research in this area focuses on digital money, tokenized assets, and decentralized markets, including:

- Designing market and technical solutions for the tokenization of public and private assets.
- Developing economically sound architectures for digital money, including central bank digital currencies, stablecoins, and tokenized deposits.
- Enhancing risk management, collateral efficiency, and automation in digital financial systems.
- Developing solutions and infrastructure for safe and scalable decentralized finance.

Thrust Area 3: The Economics of AI

Research in this area focuses on the economic consequences of AI developments at different levels, including:

- Analyzing the effects of AI on labor, capital, and economic organization.
- Studying AI as an asset class, including market structure, funding cycles, and the effect of future dynamics in energy cost and high-performance computing on profitability.
- Exploring novel approaches for interpretable and causally informed economic decision-making, including neurally and behaviorally grounded approaches to AI.
- Quantifying uncertainty in AI models for market and economic predictions.

Thrust Area 4: Digital Infrastructure

Research in this area focuses on resilient, scalable, and interoperable platforms for the next-generation economy, including:

- Developing autonomous and adaptive smart-contract ecosystems integrated with compliant AI agents.
- Advancing methods, including cryptographic tools, to enable trusted, verifiable, and private AI applications within decentralized governance frameworks.
- Developing phygital solutions such as digital twins, encompassing proof-based systems for identity, authenticity, and existence of reserves in physical-digital integration.
- Developing quantum-based technologies and computing solutions for finance and AI.

Applications addressing coherently more than one research question and covering more than one area are welcome. Proposed projects should endeavor to generate new knowledge and tools to advance the above research topics toward applications. All proposed projects should describe a clear direction toward application (e.g. from Fundamental Research to Technology Development, or from Prototype to System Demonstration and Validation).

B. Characteristics of a Successful Proposal

Projects should carefully describe the observational, modeling, computational, and data analysis strategies that will be used. The creation and use of comprehensive digital economy related databases are strongly encouraged.

Proposals should emphasize novel ideas with clear application prospects. Proposals must define clear research questions and scientific objectives. The planned progression from the initial ideas to the final objectives should be described and will be considered in the evaluation of proposals. Collaborative projects involving partnerships among academia, institutions, or industry are encouraged. Proposals will be evaluated primarily on scientific merit, innovation, and potential for impact rather than on the scale or complexity of the collaboration itself.
Engagement with UAE-based researchers, institutions, data ecosystems, or capacity-building initiatives is strongly encouraged and will be considered positively in the evaluation process.

Successful proposals in this competition will have the following general characteristics:

- A clear description of how the proposed research will advance one or more of ADIA Lab's digital economy thrust areas.
- Clear specific aims on which the work plan is based.
- Defined deliverables linked to outcomes achievable within the funding period.
- A scope and scale aligned with the exploratory nature of the grant to fully justify the proposed funding request.
- Sufficient expertise and experience of the project team to effectively carry out the proposed research.
- A demonstrated institutional commitment and appropriate resource availability by the lead organization and any partnering institutions.
- Deliverables that may include validated models, prototype systems, deployable tools, or high-quality datasets with demonstrated application relevance.

Additionally, all successful proposals will include the following specific components:

- A knowledge transfer plan outlining how generated data, code, methods, and tools will be shared openly, with a timeline. ADIA Lab expects all code, methods, and tools used to address the research to be made publicly available in a timely manner.
- A management plan that describes sound mechanisms for project oversight, team communications, risk mitigation, and financial monitoring.

III. AWARD TIMELINE

- Expression of interest: Due by May 8, 2026 - Midnight (GMT)
- Proposal submission: Due by May 29, 2026 - Midnight (GMT)
- Shortlisted proposals notified (cooperative agreement negotiation begins): July 10, 2026
- The Awards will be presented during the 2026 edition of the ADIA Lab Symposium

IV. AWARD INFORMATION

All awards will be selected by a rigorous merit review process, and will be presented during the 2026 ADIA Lab Symposium, in Abu Dhabi. In-person attendance by a senior representative of each awarded team is required to present an overview of the awarded proposal at the symposium.

Applicants are encouraged to request budgets below the maximum amount where appropriate to the scope and needs of the proposed work. Proposals requesting funding above the stated maximum for each grant may be deemed non-compliant and may be declined. Collaborative proposals involving multiple institutions are welcome. ADIA Lab may consider aggregated or coordinated proposals covering more research areas by one or more institutions in case synergies emerge, also between the expression of interest and the full proposal stage. In the latter case ADIA Lab may make exceptions to the maximum funding amount per grant, if justified by the integration of different proposals, covering more research areas, into one single proposal.

The awards are likely to be for projects that are technically and/or managerially complex. Therefore, funds will be awarded through a cooperative agreement, which gives ADIA Lab significant oversight engagement with the awardees. The project PI directs the project with the assistance of any Co-PIs. The PI and the PI's sponsoring organization have fiscal responsibility for the award and primary management responsibility for the conduct of the proposed activities. The cooperative agreement, however, will state the nature and extent of ADIA Lab's involvement, such as receipt of periodic reports and undertaking of regular progress evaluations, such that the responsibilities of each party are fully understood.

Support for each year of the Cooperative Agreement for the award will be contingent upon satisfactory outcomes as documented in progress reports submitted bi-annually for review by ADIA Lab and its affiliates. In addition, site visits may be held to evaluate progress and future plans, with an emphasis on the quality of the research and expected ability to meet the project goals and objectives.

Specific Award Conditions are elaborated further in section VIII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION.

V. ELIGIBILITY INFORMATION

Who May Submit Proposals:

Domestic (UAE) and international public or private organizations, both non-profit and for-profit, are eligible. Eligible entities must demonstrate access to facilities and infrastructure necessary for project execution. Additionally, they must comply with ADIA Lab's fiscal requirements for responsible fund management.

Who May Serve as Principal Investigator (PI):

The PI must have substantial research and management experience in the associated field of science and/or engineering to lead the Project. Co-PIs may share in the responsibility of the scientific or technical direction of the project. The first name listed on the application will serve as the primary liaison to ADIA Lab and have responsibility for the project management and the submission of reports.

Limit on Number of Proposals per Organization:

There are no restrictions to the number of proposals that can be submitted to this competition by a single organization.

Limit on Number of Proposals per PI or Co-PI:

There are no restrictions to the number of proposals that can be submitted by a PI or Co-PI, but it should be noted that a PI may only receive one award per competition cycle.

Additional Eligibility Info:

Proposals submitted to the program must not be either awarded or currently under review by

any other entity.

VI. PREPARATION AND SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Expression of Interest: by May 8, 2026

To express their interest, applicants must submit a registration form by May 8, 2026, to facilitate proposal processing and planning for the review process. The Expression of Interest registration form is required and should include:

- **a.** Descriptive Title of Proposed Research.
- **b.** Principal Investigator (PI): Name, title, contact details, and primary institution
- **c.** Brief Project Description: Summarize the research concept, objectives, and specify clearly which of ADIA Lab's foundational digital economy goals the project addresses (3000 character limit).
- **d.** List of 3 to 8 Potential Reviewers: Provide: a) names, and email address of potential reviewers without conflicts of interest (COI), see Appendix A for our COI definition. Each reviewer must have expertise in the proposed area of research.

B. Proposal Submission: by May 29, 2026

Detailed preparation instructions are given with referenced templates in the below subsections 1-9.

Registered applicants will receive instructions with a link to the submission form via email (from digital.economy@adialab.ae) to complete their proposal submission. The files must be uploaded through the submission form no later than Midnight (GMT) on May 29, 2026:

File #1: Proposal (PDF doc named: *PI First_Last_Prop*): **See Section VI (1-9.1)**
File #2: Budget Sheet (XLSX doc named: *PI First_Last_Budget*): **See Section VI (9.2)**

Extensions of the deadlines are not anticipated but may be granted in specific situations Figures and tables must be included within the applicable page limit. Neither the PI nor the PI's sponsoring institution may be changed after proposal submission.

Proposal specifications:

- Written in English
- Paper size when printed: ISO A4
- Margins: 2.5 cm (top, bottom and sides)
- Spacing: single spaced
- Font: no smaller or more condensed than Times New Roman (other acceptable fonts include Arial, Helvetica, Palatino, Linotype or Georgia), 12 point for text and 10 point for figures and tables

We advise the proposal to be structured across the following points:

(1) Cover Page
(2) Executive Summary
(3) Table of Contents
(4) Project Description
(5) Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resources description
(6) Biographical Sketches
(7) References Cited
(8) Letter(s) of Collaboration
(9) Budget Information
(10) Potential Supplementary Documents

Note that the proposal will be reviewed as a standalone document. Links to URLs or other supplementary information not otherwise specifically allowed are discouraged. The proposal shall be composed of the following elements:

(1) Cover Page - use template in **Appendix B**

Consists of project title, PI and Co-PI (if any) information, sponsoring/affiliated organizational information, and list of senior personnel and their institutional affiliations.

(2) Executive Summary (Maximum of 500 words, 1 page)

The Executive Summary should include the rationale, vision, and potential for impact of the proposed research project, including how it substantially contributes to advancing one (or more) of ADIA Lab's digital economy research thrust areas. It should provide an overall description of the proposed activity with emphasis on the thrust area(s) addressed, specific aims, methods to be employed, and major partners and their respective integrated contributions. The summary should be targeted towards those working in the same or related fields, but also understandable to a scientific or otherwise technically literate audience.

(3) Table of Contents (TOC)

List proposal sections and corresponding page numbers. The TOC does not count against the page limit.

(4) Project Description (sections A-E outlined below: maximum 12 pages total):

The total maximum page limit for the Project Description is **12 pages**. Within the description, flexibility is given to the PI to adjust the length of sections A-E below as appropriate to the project. However, the description must contain all the sections specified, while conforming to the overall page limit.

A. Research Program (Maximum 7-pages total)

The following elements are expected. Applicants are encouraged to review the guidance available here on writing the Research Plan:

https://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/preparing-your-application/preparing-research-plan

Specific Aims (1-page):

- Briefly describe the problem and research context (1–2 paragraphs).
- Clearly state **2–3 specific aims**. Aims should stand independently; subsequent aims should avoid relying entirely on earlier aims being successful.

Significance and Innovation (approximately 1.5–2 pages):

- Clearly articulate the current state of knowledge.
- State the importance of the problem, referencing key literature.
- Clearly describe how the project is innovative, advances existing methods, or addresses gaps in knowledge or practice.

Approach (4–4.5 pages):

- Clearly link directly to each Specific Aim.
- Include (as appropriate):
    - Experimental design and endpoints
    - Data collection methods
    - Statistical analysis, model development plans, etc.
    - Preliminary data or justification of feasibility
    - Ethical and regulatory considerations and protections for human subjects (if applicable)

B. Capacity Building (200-300 words)

Provide a plan that shows how the research will be integrated with education and training and, where relevant, related disciplines. Include expected regional impacts of planned activities with regard to research infrastructure. Provide the plan for engaging other partners to enhance regional capability and involvement. Proposals are encouraged to prioritize capacity building within the UAE.

C. Knowledge Transfer (200-300 words)

Discuss how the data, code, knowledge, technologies and models generated from the research program will be made available to ADIA Lab and the broader research community. Describe training and educational opportunities that will be created for

researchers or workers in the field, especially within the UAE. Describe mechanisms that may attract new small businesses or enhance their capability to undertake activities in this field and specific thrust area(s).

D. Management Plan (Maximum 1 page)

Provide a clear description of how the overall program will be managed. Detail should include lines of authority, communication among team members, how decisions will be made and who makes them, how partnerships are integrated, how unforeseen pitfalls and mid-course corrections will be handled, how external advice is incorporated, incorporation of outreach to ensure meaningful national and international collaborations, and mechanisms that will be used to integrate and involve various stakeholders.

E. Timeline (Maximum 1 page)

Provide an anticipated timeline, including planned activities, and project deliverables for the two years of the award. A Gantt chart to display milestones and deliverables is required. The expected progression of adoption/technology readiness levels of deliverables should be noted where appropriate.

(5) Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources (no page limit):

Provide a detailed description of institutional and other resources that will be available to the project, including information on the availability of sufficient infrastructure and technical expertise to ensure effective usage of any major equipment or instrumentation, for example specialized data generating machines, or compute cluster.

This section is descriptive only, and not to be used as additional space to elaborate the Research Program description.

(6) References Cited (no page limit):

Each reference must include the full citation. Applicants must be especially careful to follow accepted scholarly practices in providing citations for source materials relied upon when preparing any section of the document. While there is no established page limitation for the references, this section must include bibliographic citations only and must not be used to provide parenthetical information outside of the project description. It is important to be succinct and select only those references pertinent to the proposed research. Reference numbers should be shown in the text of the research proposal. Use of published works should conform to international copyright treaties and the best scholarly practices.

(7) Biographical Sketches (1-page limit per person):

Biographical sketches, including listing of prior or ongoing research projects of relevance to the program, are required for the PI, Co-PIs, and all senior research personnel. Biographical sketches should convey information that demonstrates the individual's expertise as related to the proposed research, and should include:

- Vitae, listing professional and academic essentials and present affiliation.

- A brief description (not more than five sentences) on how stated expertise is relevant to the proposal.
- List of up to 5 publications most closely related to the proposed project and up to 5 other significant publications. Patents, copyrights or software systems developed may be included as well. However, only up to 10 items will be considered in the merit review.

(8) Letter(s) of Collaboration and Potential Supplementary Documents:

- Letters of Collaboration/Support: A support letter must be provided and signed by an authorized senior management representative of the lead institution. Include only other letters from individuals or organizations that are integral to the proposed project, whether or not they are receiving financial support. Ensure that the letters specifically address involvement in some aspect of the project.
- Identification of proprietary or privileged information and/or relevant background intellectual property (if applicable).

(9) **Budget Information**

9.1-Budget Justification – we advise to use template in Appendix C.

9.2- Budget Spreadsheet (downloadable at: https://adialab.squarespace.com/s/ADIA-Lab-HS-2-year-Budget-Template.XLSX)

Provide a budget for each year of the project and a cumulative budget using the ADIA Lab proposal budget template. The proposed budget should be consistent with the needs and complexity of the proposed activity and explained using the budget justification template.

Note that indirect costs are limited to 20%. The award is restricted to a maximum of 20% overhead for any institution, and budget items related to fees or profits will not be allowed. It is important to note that the 20% overhead may be applied to all direct costs. There are notable differences between the ADIA Lab 20% Overhead Limit and the US-style F&A Rate.

If additional support beyond what is requested from ADIA Lab is necessary and anticipated to complete the proposed project, the PI must identify and provide documentation of the availability of those funds.

Equipment purchased in excess of $5,000 (US) will be exclusively for the use of the project during the duration of the project. Expenditures must meet a “fair and reasonable” standard, and ADIA Lab retains the right to audit awardees to determine acceptable use of funds.

The PI's institution receives the full grant amount partitioned into annual payments. It is the responsibility of the lead institution (and/or PI) to track budgets and make payments to collaborating institutions (if any). A separate budget spreadsheet should be filled in by each collaborating institution's Co-PI. The annual totals from the collaborator budget sheet(s) should be listed in the lead institution's overall project budget spreadsheet under the designated section (Subcontracts, Subawards) for each year.

The ADIA Lab 20% overhead limit is, for international programs, a limit on the percentage of program costs that the sponsor is willing to have little or no insight into. This is a rate based on the total direct costs billed to the program. In the US, universities and laboratories applying for government grants negotiate an F&A rate against *modified* total direct costs. This is ordinarily on the 40-60% range. However, this rate is applied against only some of the direct costs of the project (excludes equipment purchase or rental, training, some offsite expenses, most sub-contract expenses, etc.). The 20% overhead limit set by ADIA Lab is against total direct costs, not *modified* total direct costs (e.g., US university F&A rates).

VII. PROPOSAL PROCESSING AND REVIEW PROCEDURES

A. Merit Review Principles and Criteria

ADIA Lab strives to enhance the level of research and innovation in the field of digital economy and related disciplines. To identify which projects to support, ADIA Lab relies on a merit review process that incorporates consideration of both the technical aspects of a proposed project and its potential to contribute more broadly to advancing the current state of digital economy research and applications. The reviewers will be instructed to base their critique and scores solely on the written materials provided in the application. Therefore, links to URLs or other supplementary information not otherwise specifically allowed for this competition shall not be used as part of the evaluation process.

The reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria: 1) scientific expertise pertinent to the submitted proposals to ensure ability to evaluate competence, significance, and impact of the proposed activity; 2) generalized knowledge of fields related to digital economy, computational science, and AI; and 3) extensive knowledge of the scientific and engineering enterprise, including managing and evaluating large research projects. All reviewers will be instructed in ADIA Lab's confidentiality, conflict of interest, and ethics guidelines, and will be required to sign confidentiality and conflict of interest forms to indicate their agreement to abide by these policies.

ADIA Lab will be responsible for overseeing the proposal submission process, review of conflicts of interests (COIs), panel selection and assignments, and the review and award processes.

B. Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated via an extensive panel review based on predefined review criteria. Each of the major criteria shown below will be given full consideration during the review and decision-making processes and provided a numerical score. Each stated criterion is important but none, by itself, is sufficient for a successful proposal. Therefore, reviewers will address all criteria and also provide an overall score based on their assessment of likelihood of

success in advancing the research thrust area(s). Each of the below criteria will receive a numeric score, and the final score will be calculated based on the percent weight of each criterion.

1) **Scientific Merit & Innovation: 30%**
   - Does the proposed research address important gaps or clearly challenge current scientific or methodological paradigms in digital economy?
   - Are the specific aims clearly defined, logically sound, and well-supported by the proposed methodology and rationale?
   - How are the concepts, approaches, and technologies proposed novel?
   - Is the research distinct from existing or previous projects on this topic?

2) **Alignment with Thrust Area(s), Feasibility and Methodology: 30%**
   - How does the proposed work address one or more aspects of ADIA Lab's digital economy thrust area(s) outlined in this solicitation (Section II.A)?
   - How well conceived and organized is the proposed work?
   - Does the plan incorporate a mechanism to assess success?
   - Does the plan have a clear set of milestones and deliverables with application progressions indicated?
   - If experimental, is the research design and evaluation plan clearly aligned with the stated specific aims and objectives?
   - Are the computational models, laboratory equipment, or experimental equipment and infrastructure supported with commitments, appropriate, and well planned?
   - Is the data plan consistent with the research proposed?
   - Does the application identify risks and, if so, are plans in place to mitigate these risks?
   - Are the proposed computational methods, scalability considerations, and infrastructure requirements appropriate to the problem and clearly articulated?

3) **Translational Research, Impact and Commercialization: 20%**
   - If the aims of the proposal are achieved, how will the outcomes be advanced toward practical impact?
   - What is the planned application progression of the technologies, models and other relevant deliverables?
   - Does the approach identify and account for any potential environmental and social impacts?
   - What are the expected tangible outcomes of the project, including patents, commercialization opportunities, databases, and other resources?
   - To what extent does the proposed work improve understanding, prediction, or decision-making in economic or financial systems?

4) **Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer: 10%**
   - How is capacity building integrated within the research plan and how does it impact the field of digital economy globally and in the UAE (if applicable)?
   - Are there educational and experiential opportunities for graduate students, new researchers, and/or technical workforce?
   - If early-stage researchers are involved, how adequate is their current/expected

training and experience?

- Will important new research infrastructure be established?

5) **Investigator/Team: 5%**
   - How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project?
   - Does the team include complementary expertise suitable for successfully conducting the proposed activities?
   - To what extent are the UAE-based personnel expected to be involved in the proposed research?
   - For established researchers, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have significantly advanced the thrust area(s) of the proposed research?
   - Is the leadership approach, governance and management structure appropriate for success of the project?

6) **Resources and Budget: 5%**
   - If needed, have additional sponsors or means of support been identified to complement the proposed project budget?
   - Does the research team have access to adequate facilities and infrastructure to conduct the proposed research, and has the team demonstrated the necessary institutional commitment to be successful?
   - Does the research team exhibit the ability to manage a complex project?
   - Are the project costs complete and fully documented?
   - Is the budget fully justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed research?
   - Are additional resources and in-kind contributions stated in the proposal logical, justified, and providing clear contribution to the proposed project impact?

C. Review and Selection Process

Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation will be evaluated by a review panel, augmented by ad hoc reviews. The reviewers will be required to base their comments on the review criteria described above. Each application will be evaluated by at least three expert reviewers. The applications will be scored based on the below rating system.

Criteria Scores for Proposals		
Criterion	**Score**	**Description**
High	5	Outstanding/Exceptional
	4	Excellent
Medium	3	Very Good
	2	Good/Satisfactory
Low	1	Fair/Marginal
	0	Poor/Non-compliant

A limited number of scored proposals will be reviewed for final ranking during the review panel. All applicants will be notified of the outcomes of their proposals by 10 July 2026. Each applicant with an eligible proposal (that is sent to the reviewers) will subsequently be provided with the reviewer comments on the proposal's merits. In all cases, reviews are treated as confidential documents. Copies of reviews and a panel summary, excluding the names of the reviewers or any reviewer-identifying information, are sent to the PI by ADIA Lab.

Shortlisted applicants will be asked to address reviewer comments before a final selection decision.

Proposers are cautioned that no commitment should be inferred until the cooperative agreement is officially signed by both ADIA Lab, as funder, and the PI's institution.

VIII. AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

A. Notification of the Award

Awards will be notified by 10 July 2026.

B. Award Conditions

The awards are made in the form of Cooperative Agreements issued by ADIA Lab (the funder). The Cooperative Agreements will have an extensive section of negotiated conditions relating to the period of performance, statement of work, awardee responsibilities, ADIA Lab responsibilities, joint ADIA Lab-awardee responsibilities, funding and funding schedule, reporting requirements, management and performance indicators, key personnel, and other conditions. ADIA Lab has responsibility for providing general oversight and monitoring to help assure effective performance and administration. Although individual awards are negotiated, and thus will vary depending on the requirements of the project and performers, all will comply with the following basic agreement policies:

Roles and Responsibilities

The agreement will elaborate the roles and responsibilities between the funder and the awardee and among awardee partners, including who has final managerial and decision authority within the project if disputes arise, how decisions are made, how and when funds are distributed, and under what conditions, and how disagreements are handled.

Data Policy

Data generated are expected, except in rare circumstances, to be available for open dissemination and use after validation and initial analysis.

Intellectual Property (IP) and Property Rights

Terms for tangible and intellectual property generated are specified in the Cooperative Agreements. However, no funds will be awarded until the funder is convinced that the project partners have negotiated and agreed on divisions of roles and funding, and on IP ownership matters. Timely notification of discoveries and inventions will be required.

Allowable Uses of Award Funds

The award should be restricted to a maximum of 20% overhead for any institution, and budget items related to fees or profits will not be allowed. It is important to note that the 20% overhead may be applied to all direct costs. Equipment purchased in excess of $5,000 (US) will be exclusively for the use of the project during the duration of the award. Expenditures must meet a "fair and reasonable" standard, and ADIA Lab retains the right to audit awardees to determine acceptable use of funds.

Settlement of Disputes

The award must stipulate how disputes and disagreements between performers will be settled. Between awardee and funder, appeals will be allowed on decisions made relevant to evaluations, but the funder may limit the number of such appeals and retains ultimate decision authority.

Changes to Personnel

The PI and Co-PIs cannot be changed without prior approval from ADIA Lab. ADIA Lab must also be notified in a period of 30 calendar days of any changes to senior personnel or partner roles.

Reporting Requirements and Evaluations of Performance

Discussed separately below but detailed as elements of the cooperative agreements.

C. Reporting and Evaluation Requirements

The Principal Investigator must submit a bi-annual progress report to ADIA Lab, at least 60 days prior to the end of each year's current budget period. The report must include details of both progress and future plans as the information provided will serve as the basis for annual performance assessment and a decision for continued funding. To augment this review, during the course of the two-year cooperative agreement members of ADIA Lab may choose to conduct site visits that may also involve other external experts. This team of visitors will prepare site visit reports, evaluate progress and highlight any concerns. The PI will be asked to provide written responses to questions raised by the ADIA Lab site visit delegation. Within 60 days following expiration of the award, the PI also is required to submit a final project report and a project outcomes report for the general public, which is intended to be made available on the ADIA Lab website.

APPENDIX A: CONFLICT OF INTEREST DEFINITION

For this proposal review process, a conflict of interest (COI) between the reviewer and the application is defined by financial, employment and professional association.

When a conflict is identified, ADIA Lab will determine how the matter should be handled and will advise the reviewer as to further steps, if any, to take. Any reviewer with a real COI will be recused from the review of that application. In addition, ADIA Lab may determine that a particular situation involves a COI not previously noted and require that the potential reviewer not participate in the review of the application in question.

For the purpose of this review competition, a real COI will be defined such that the reviewer (or a close relative or close professional associate of the reviewer) has a financial or other interest in an application that is known to the reviewer and is likely to bias the reviewer's evaluation as determined by ADIA Lab. A reviewer shall have a real conflict of interest if they or a close relative or close professional associate of the reviewer:

1. Has received or could receive a direct financial benefit of any amount deriving from the review;
2. While apart from the application itself, has received or could receive a financial benefit from the applicant(s) or affiliated institution(s) that exceeds $15,000 per year. This could include honoraria, fees, stocks or other financial holdings and additionally includes the current value of the reviewer's already existing stock holdings;
3. Has any other interest in the application that is likely to bias the reviewer's evaluation. This can include personal relationship with the applicant(s), or other key professionals listed on the application such as family relationship, business or professional partnership or past or present association as thesis advisor or thesis student. The reviewer cannot be employed by the organization or affiliated as an officer, director, trustee or partner nor have any arrangements for pending or future employment or have been employed within the past year.

The definition of an appearance of a COI is that a reviewer (or close relative or close professional associate of the reviewer) has a financial or other interest in the application that is known to the reviewer or ADIA Lab that would cause a reasonable person to question the reviewer's impartiality of participating in the review. Other items to consider within this category of "appearance" are major collaborations, especially within the last 24 months and/or close personal friendship that you think might tend to affect the reviewer's judgment or seen as doing so by a reasonable person familiar with the relationship. ADIA Lab will evaluate the appearance of a COI and determine whether the interest would likely bias the reviewer's evaluation. This decision will be documented for the file.

Clarifications on potential COIs are provided as follows:

- **Close Relative**: A parent, sibling, spouse, domestic partner.
- **Close Personnel Associate**: A colleague in a direct supervisory or subordinate relationship, or a frequent and close same-level professional work collaborator.
- **Direct Financial Benefit**: Compensation, payment or other monetary advantage that an individual would receive if an application is awarded.

- **Indirect Financial Benefit**: A financial benefit from the applicant(s) or affiliated institution(s), including honoraria, fees, stock or other financial benefit, as well as the current value of the reviewer's already existing stock holdings.
- **Offeror**: An individual or firm responding to the solicitation, including proposed subcontractors and consultants.

APPENDIX B: COVER PAGE TEMPLATE

Submission date: DD/MM/YYYY

1. **Project Title:**

2. **Principal Investigator:**	
Full name (First, Middle, Last)	
Degree(s) / Qualification(s)	
Position	
Institution	
Organization Type	Government / Industry / University
Organization Address	
Country	
Office number	
Mobile number	
Email address	

3. **Co-Principal Investigator: (Add multiple tables for Co-PIs as needed)**	
Full name (First, Middle, Last)	
Degree(s) / Qualification(s)	
Position	
Institution	
Organization Address	
Country	
Office number	
Mobile number	
Email address	

4. **Key personnel engaged: (Add multiple tables for key personnel as needed)**	
Full name (First, Middle, Last)	

Degree(s) / Qualification(s)	
Position	
Institution	
Organization Address	
Country	
Office number	
Mobile number	
Email address	

5. **Head of PI Institution / Organization:**	
Full name (Last, First, Middle)	
Position	
Address	
Office number	
Email address	

APPENDIX C: BUDGET JUSTIFICATION TEMPLATE

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLES.

A. Key Personnel *(includes PI and Co-PIs)*

For each person, it is recommended that the following be included for clarity.

1. *Role, position, and suitability to project*

Professor X will serve as PI on this project. A Professor of [Y] at the University [X], he has researched weather extensively.

2. ***Optional but Recommended****: List specific role in project, e.g., directing the project, contributing a specific expertise, showing how this is the best person to lead the project.*

3. *Commitment of effort to project*

Dr. X is committed to the project for 3 calendar months per year. *Commitment listed in academic (9 month), summer, or calendar months. Personnel with no salary request may not be listed in the budget; their expertise may be listed in the Facilities section.*

4. *You may choose to list 1st year salary, or multiply annual salary with commitment effort. It is optional, but in general, an explanation of your salary should be made. If you are committing 1 person month of your total academic time, you should include an explanation that says you are requesting one academic month of your base salary be funded by this proposal, should it be awarded.*

Example:

John Q, Co-PI of the project, is Associate Professor of the Department of Sciences at The University at [X]. He has been funded for several NSF education initiatives integrating mathematics, computer science and engineering for college and pre-college students, and is noted for his work in xxx. (*You may include area of expertise, notable accomplishments, especially those that are relevant to the project.*) His expertise in weather modification will assist in the project goal of [X].

He and his collaborator, Professor [X] of University [X] (subcontractor), are both committed for 0.5 summer months, respectively. An escalation rate of 3% per year for Professor [X]'s salary has been calculated for the period.

B. Other Personnel *(includes non-key personnel, that is, members who will not be playing a leadership role, but will contribute through their labor, such as graduate students, postdocs, technicians, and administrative staff)*

Example:

Computer Science graduate student: Dr. X requests one graduate research assistant for the project (biosketch enclosed under Supplementary Documents). His current research work is in

algorithms for self assembly, and he will devote 100% of his research time to the project. His stipend is $24,960* for the first academic year and summer, with an escalation of 3% in following years.

**You should check NSF websites for salary minimums for predoctoral and postdoctoral students.*

Postdoctoral fellow and technical support: Dr. [X] requests one postdoctoral associate and one technician to assist in the building of wind turbines. The postdoc will be recruited to commit 100% of his or her time at the salary of $40,000 in the first year. A technician is also requested at 50% time. The postdoc will be responsible for performing and for directing the technician to perform the experiments, including all turbine setup steps, data collection and data analysis. Salary is escalated by 3% for both individuals in following years.

C. Fringe Benefits

Fringe benefit rate basis.

D. Equipment *(items of durable value exceeding $5,000)*

List the equipment you are requesting for the project. Include model no. and price quotes from a reputable source, listing name of source. Explain the necessity of the equipment to the project, and how this item will be used by the different parties in the proposal.

E. Travel

List total amount requested in first year, with breakdown of expenses, e.g., airfare, hotel, per diem, and mileage reimbursement. If you know which conferences you will be attending, providing this detail would be helpful, as this is one gauge of the breadth of work you will be doing, presenting results and participating in academic exchange. Please specify domestic or international travel, and include reasonable amounts.

Example:

The total estimated amount of $5,000 is budgeted for travel expenses to attend relevant conferences and workshops and present findings. This includes $2,000 for Dr. [X] and his postdoc to travel to 1 conference per year, such as the American Society for Weather Modification or the Weather Research Society in the United States, to present research results. It would cover airfare, hotel, and per diem. Dr. [X] requests $3,000 total per year for both domestic and foreign travel with her graduate student. Domestic travel is budgeted at $1,000 to cover airfare, hotel, and per diem, and foreign travel at $2,000. Total requested for all three years is $20,000. Possible conferences include the ACM Symposium on Weather, International Conference on Weather, Winter Workshop on Weather, and the Canadian Conference on Weather.

G. Other Direct Costs

1. Supplies: *Expenditures budgeted for this proposal are costs that can be identified specifically with this particular sponsored project and are required in the direct performance of the research. These expenses include applicable laboratory supplies.*

2. Publication Costs: *Many journals require a per-page or per-article publication cost, and these fees should be paid for through your grant. Other publication costs, including posters for meetings, should also be included.*

3. Consultant Services: *Please make sure that consultants are well justified and that you have also included a letter of support for all consultants, with a scope of work.*

Example:

The PI will employ an outside source to provide evaluation and input into his work with weather modification. Dr. [X], is CEO of Weather Research, and will devote 5 hours per year to the project. His rate is $200 per hour, for a yearly budget of $1,000.

4. Computer Services: *Make certain that the need for any computer-related expenses are justified by the project, and make sure that you remember to include the cost of any software necessary for the project.*

Example:

The Computer Science Department maintains a full-service computing environment to support research and instruction. For hardware, computing facilities have available four Sun Enterprise-250 servers (1-2 gb of main memory each), 3 Sun 240s (2 GBs of memory each), a NetApp file server (1 Terabytes), 45 linux servers dedicated to course support, and about 400 workstations. The cost for each Computer Science faculty member is $620 and for each graduate research assistant is $310, for a total of $930 per year. For Dr. [X], basic computer services are included in the overhead of the School of Science.

5. Subawards: *If you have a subcontractor, request these items and ensure they submit a detailed budget and justification.*

Example:

A subcontract to University X Laboratory of Weather in the amount of $400,000 for two years as described in the proposal is included. The PI of this subcontract is Mr. [X].

6. Other: *The "Other" category includes tuition expenses that will be covered by the grant.*

Example:

Tuition for graduate students is budgeted using the tuition rates for the School of X. Both graduate students will be taking 3 credit hours per semester. Each credit hour is $765 with a 10% increase in future years.

H. Indirect Costs *(Facilities and Administrative Costs)*

Indirect cost rate basis