Step-by-Step Process

Step 1 – Define Funding Priorities (Annual Exercise)

At the beginning of each year, develop a one-page Funding Priorities Statement outlining:

- THiNK's core research themes and strategic priorities.
- Priority methodologies, populations, technologies, and systems of interest.
- Geographic scope and eligibility considerations (e.g., citizenship requirements, institutional partnerships, or career-stage restrictions).
- Three to five "anchor funders" with whom THiNK intends to build long-term relationships.
- Ten to fifteen additional funders to monitor for strategic opportunities.

Examples of priority areas include:

- Responsible & Trustworthy AI
- AI Governance and Policy
- AI for Education
- AI for Health
- Digital Public Infrastructure
- Climate and AI
- AI Safety and Ethics
- Data
- AI infrastructure
- Inclusive Innovation and Emerging Technologies

Step 2 – Build and Maintain a Funding Opportunity Tracker

Maintain a continuously updated grants database containing, at minimum:

FIELD
1. Funder
2. Programme Name
3. Award Amount
4. Letter of Intent Deadline
5. Full Proposal Deadline

6. Eligibility Requirements
7. Strategic Fit Score (1–5)
8. Indirect Costs Allowed
9. Cost-Sharing Requirements
10. Programme Officer Contact
11. Website/Link
12. Current Status
13. Assigned Lead
14. Notes

Suggested status categories include:

- Identified
- Under Review
- Eligible
- Go Decision Pending
- Proposal Development
- Submitted
- Shortlisted
- Awarded
- Awaiting Agreement
- Awaiting Disbursement
- Implementation
- Closed

Step 3 – Monitor Strategic Funding Channels

Funding opportunities should be monitored across multiple channels, including:

Government and Public Funders

- National research funding agencies
- Ministries responsible for science, innovation, and digital transformation

International and Multilateral Organizations

- IDRC
- UNESCO
- World Bank
- WHO
- United Nations Agencies
- Regional Development Banks
- UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)

Foundations and Philanthropic Organizations

- Gates Foundation
- Wellcome Trust
- Ford Foundation
- Mastercard Foundation
- Mozilla Foundation

Regional and Pan-African Funders

- African Academy of Sciences (AESA)
- APHRC
- TWAS
- Masakhane Research Foundation
- African Union programmes

Corporate and Industry Research Programmes

- Google Research
- Google.org
- Microsoft Research
- Open-source AI initiatives
- Technology accelerators and innovation programmes

Funding Aggregators

- Pivot-RP
- GrantForward
- Research Professional
- GrantStation
- Candid Foundation Directory
- Grants.gov

Professional Networks

- Funder newsletters
- Professional associations
- Conference announcements
- Academic and practitioner networks

- Collaborator referrals

Step 4 – Establish Passive Monitoring Systems

Funding searches should not depend solely on manual monitoring.

Establish:

- Saved searches across funding databases.
- Google Alerts for strategic keywords.
- Subscriptions to funder newsletters.
- Calendar reminders for recurring annual opportunities.
- Automated deadline notifications where possible.

Examples of useful search terms include:

- Responsible AI grants
- AI Africa call for proposals
- AI governance funding
- Digital transformation research grants
- Emerging technology funding opportunities
- AI policy fellowships

Step 5 – Conduct a 15-Minute Opportunity Triage

Every opportunity should undergo an initial screening process assessing:

1. Eligibility requirements.
2. Deadline feasibility.
3. Budget suitability.
4. Strategic alignment.
5. Institutional capacity.
6. Existing funder relationships.
7. Reporting and compliance obligations.

Applications that fail mandatory eligibility requirements should be immediately removed from consideration.

Step 6 – Make the Go/No-Go Decision

Evaluate each opportunity using the following criteria:

Criterion	Score

Strategic Alignment	1–5
Team Capacity	1–5
Competitiveness	1–5
Budget Adequacy	1–5
Probability of Success	1–5
Existing Relationships	1–5
Expected Impact	1–5

Borderline decisions should be discussed collectively rather than determined by a single individual.

Step 7 – Confirm Timelines and Commitments

Before committing to an application:

- Assign proposal leads.
- Confirm collaborator availability.
- Establish internal deadlines.
- Schedule required reviews and approvals.
- Update the funding tracker accordingly.

Step 8 – Invest in Funder Relationships (Ongoing)

THiNK should actively cultivate relationships with priority funders by:

- Attending webinars and office hours.
- Introducing THiNK's work to programme officers.
- Seeking feedback on unsuccessful applications.
- Sharing publications and project outcomes when appropriate.
- Participating in relevant research and policy communities.

Relationship-building should be viewed as a long-term investment rather than an activity that begins immediately before a funding call.

Revision #2
Created 2026-07-30 08:04:25 UTC by Angela
Updated 2026-07-30 08:06:38 UTC by Angela