



Nigeria Launches ₦12 Billion Digital Research Programme Under Project BRIDGE

What's the News?

Nigeria's Federal Government has taken a further step in linking digital policy to research and institutional knowledge. On 30 March 2026, the Honourable Minister of Communications, Innovation and Digital Economy, Bosun Tijani, announced the launch of the National Digital Economy Research Clusters — a ₦12 billion initiative aimed at placing research at the centre of the country's digital transformation agenda.

The programme points to a policy direction in which regulation, infrastructure planning, and digital economy reform are likely to be shaped more directly by structured research and evidence-led input.

What the Programme Proposes

The initiative is funded under Project BRIDGE, the government's flagship programme for deploying 90,000 kilometres of fibre optic backbone infrastructure nationwide. Under the new framework, the Research Clusters will operate across six thematic areas:

- Connectivity and Access
- Digital Public Infrastructure and Government
- Digital Skills and Human Capital
- Digital Economy and Jobs
- Trust and Online Safety
- Artificial Intelligence and Emerging Technologies



Each cluster will be led by senior academics from Nigerian universities, working with international academic partners. The programme is expected to engage more than 200 researchers, including postdoctoral fellows and PhD candidates, with a focus on policy-relevant outputs.

Applications have been opened to academic and research institutions across Nigeria.

Legal and Regulatory Implications

A. For academic and research institutions:

Universities and research bodies seeking to participate should review the programme terms carefully and ensure proposals are submitted through the prescribed process. Key legal considerations include:

- Procurement compliance: alignment with public procurement rules and eligibility requirements
- Intellectual property: ownership, licensing, and commercialisation of research outputs
- Grant administration: compliance with funding conditions, reporting obligations, and audit requirements
- Data governance: handling of research data, privacy, and cross-border data collaboration
- Collaboration structures: clear allocation of roles, responsibilities, and rights in multi-institution partnerships

B. For the private sector and investors:

The programme points to a regulatory environment that is becoming more research driven. Businesses operating in digital infrastructure, telecommunications, fintech, and emerging technology sectors should monitor developments closely, particularly:

- how research outputs may shape future regulatory reforms
- potential changes to licensing frameworks and market entry conditions
- evolving compliance expectations in data, infrastructure, and digital services

C. For digital economy stakeholders more broadly:

The inclusion of artificial intelligence, trust, and online safety as core pillars suggests that regulatory activity in these areas will intensify.

Businesses should anticipate:

- increased focus on AI governance and accountability frameworks
- stricter expectations around online safety and platform responsibility
- evolving rules on data use, transparency, and digital trust standards

The Road Forward

The National Digital Economy Research Clusters represent a long-term institutional investment, but their implications are not only long term. The research produced under this programme is likely to influence how Nigeria approaches digital governance, infrastructure policy, technology regulation, and innovation oversight.

For businesses, investors, and institutions, the practical takeaway is clear: this is a policy development worth tracking early, particularly where future regulation may affect licensing, compliance, investment planning, or public-private engagement.

For guidance on digital economy regulation, technology law, public sector-led innovation frameworks, and regulatory compliance, contact info@scp-law.com or visit www.scp-law.com.