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AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (ACDE)
STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2030

“Reimagining African Distance Education: Leadership, Inclusion and Innovation”

v 1.0

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Executive Summary

The African Council for Distance Education (ACDE) enters the 2026–2030 strategic cycle at a pivotal moment for African higher education. Digital transformation, the rapid acceleration of AI, renewed demand for flexible learning, and persistent inequalities in infrastructure and educational access shape both the challenges and opportunities ahead. Building on the foundations of the 2021–2025 Strategic Plan, ACDE now seeks to reposition itself as a **continental leader in AI-enabled, inclusive, and quality-assured Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODEL)**.

The 2026–2030 Strategy reaffirms ACDE’s mandate while sharpening its response to emerging trends. It sets out **six strategic goals** that collectively aim to strengthen digital innovation, quality assurance, research leadership, inclusivity, partnerships, and institutional sustainability. For each goal, measurable objectives, key performance indicators (KPIs), and baseline values are identified to promote accountability and results-oriented implementation. This strategy will guide ACDE’s work in supporting member institutions, strengthening continental collaboration, influencing policy, and shaping the future of ODeL in Africa.



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ACDE STRATEGIC GOALS & OBJECTIVES (2026-2030)

Reimagining African Open, Distance and eLearning

GOAL 1	GOAL 2	GOAL 3	GOAL 4	GOAL 5	GOAL 6
Digital Transformation & Innovation 	Quality Assurance & Accreditation 	Access, Inclusion & Student Success 	Research, Data & Policy Leadership 	Membership & Partnerships 	Sustainability & Organisational Capacity
- AI-enabled & low-bandwidth - African ODeL Digital Transformation Framework (2027) - Digital competencies for staff & students - ACDE ODeL Innovation Hub - OER, virtual labs & micro-credentials	- AI-enabled ACDE-QA Toolkit - Continental accreditation system - QA capacity building - Regional quality resource centres - Digital QA dashboard	- Inclusive rural & marginalised models - ACDE-wide student support standards - Regional quality resource centres - Digital QA dashboard	- Policy & Research Observatory 'State of ODeL in Africa' report - Research capacity development - Continental ODeL data systems - Policy influence	- Enhanced membership value - Subscription compliance - Strategic global & continental partnerships - Member Digital Portal - Conferences, learning events	- Diversified funding - Strengthened Secretariat - Costed Operational Plan (2026-2030) - Governance, M&E & risk management - In-kind contributions

Vision To be a major player in the promotion of and advocacy for Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) in Africa.

Mission To promote collaboration amongst actors in ODeL, advocate for policy, research and quality assurance in open and distance e-learning with the aim of increasing access to inclusive equitable quality education and training in Africa.

Core Values Transparency | Accountability | Ethics | Collaboration | Equity | Responsiveness | Innovativeness | Results



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1. Introduction

Since its founding in 2005, ACDE has served as the continental voice for Open, Distance and e-Learning. Over the past 20 years, the organisation has supported collaboration among universities, promoted quality assurance systems, strengthened research, and influenced ODeL policies across Africa. The 2021–2025 Strategic Plan strengthened ACDE's operational foundation, but also highlighted areas requiring deeper transformation: funding, membership participation, data systems, digital readiness, and QA standardisation.

The new strategic period recognises that Africa is entering an era defined by AI-powered teaching and learning, digital ecosystems, micro-credentials, cross-border mobility, and demand for inclusive, lifelong learning opportunities. ACDE must therefore evolve from an institution-building phase to a continent-shaping role, helping to harmonise digital quality standards, strengthen research capacity, and accelerate institutional transformation.

This Strategic Plan outlines ACDE's priorities for 2026–2030, positioning the organisation as the leading force driving equity, innovation and excellence in distance education.

2. Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision

To be a major player in the promotion of and advocacy for Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) in Africa.

Mission

To promote collaboration amongst actors in ODeL, advocate for policy, research and quality assurance in open and distance e-learning with the aim of increasing access to inclusive equitable quality education and training in Africa.



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Core Values

Transparency | Accountability | Ethics | Collaboration | Equity | Responsiveness | Innovativeness | Results-oriented | Sustainability | Reliability | Efficiency

3. Strategic Context

3.1 Background

The demand for higher education in Africa continues to rise, driven by population growth, urbanisation, and labour market shifts. ODeL has become central to meeting this demand, offering scalable, flexible and cost-effective learning models. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, but also exposed deep divides in infrastructure, digital literacy and institutional readiness.

Simultaneously, technological advancements, including artificial intelligence, learning analytics, virtual labs, and micro-credentialing, offer new opportunities for innovation, student support, and quality enhancement. ACDE must lead the continent in harnessing these technologies while addressing persistent barriers such as funding constraints, weak student support systems, inconsistent quality assurance, and inadequate ICT infrastructure.

3.2 SWOT Summary

Strengths

- Widely recognised continental ODeL body
- Strong partnerships with UNESCO, COL, AfDB, ICDE
- ACDE-QA Toolkit & capacity-building track record
- Secretariat with dedicated directorates (QA, ICT, Partnerships, Database)

Weaknesses

- Irregular membership payments (only 20 of 30 consistent subscribers)
- Limited financial sustainability



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- Inconsistent data reporting and minimal research output
- Insufficient Secretariat staffing

Opportunities

- AI-driven digital learning transformation
- Growing need for flexible, hybrid and online education
- Continental alignment with SDG4 & AU Agenda 2063
- Increasing interest from donors in digital education
- Expansion of micro-credentials and OER initiatives

Threats

- Digital divide and connectivity barriers
- Poor student support systems and high dropout rates
- Limited QA integration for e-learning
- Funding volatility
- Rapid change outpacing institutional capacity

4. Strategic Direction 2026–2030

The six strategic goals represent ACDE's response to the emerging continental context and its mandate to lead ODeL transformation in Africa.

GOAL 1: Advance Digital Transformation and Innovation in ODeL

ACDE seeks to position African distance education institutions at the forefront of global digital transformation. Over the next five years, ACDE will support institutions to embrace artificial intelligence, emerging learning technologies, and low-bandwidth innovations that enhance teaching, learning, assessment, and student support. This goal responds directly to the uneven digital readiness across the continent and the urgent need to bridge technological divides that constrain quality and access in ODeL.



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This goal directly advances ACDE's Vision of being a major continental leader in ODeL by positioning the Council at the forefront of digital transformation and AI-enabled innovation, areas that are redefining the global educational landscape. It aligns with the Mission by promoting collaboration among institutions and strengthening the quality of digital learning environments, thereby broadening access to equitable and inclusive education. The goal reflects ACDE's core values of *Innovativeness*, *Responsiveness*, *Equity*, *Efficiency*, and *Results-orientation*, as it supports the deployment of transformative technologies, strengthens digital capacity, and ensures that all learners, regardless of bandwidth, geography or socioeconomic background, can participate meaningfully in high-quality ODeL. By embracing cutting-edge tools while promoting accessibility, ACDE demonstrates commitment to both excellence and inclusion.

Objective 1.1: Support member institutions to adopt AI-enabled and low-bandwidth digital solutions.

ACDE will guide institutions in understanding, selecting, and deploying AI-based tools that enhance learning design, assessment integrity, analytics, and student engagement. Recognising affordability and bandwidth constraints, ACDE will prioritise technologies suited to African contexts, ensuring that digital transformation remains equitable and inclusive.

KPIs / Measures:

- % institutions using AI-enabled tools (Baseline 2025: 0%)
- low-data tools piloted annually (Baseline: 0)



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Objective 1.2: Develop an African ODeL Digital Transformation Framework by 2027.

To harmonise digital advancement across institutions, ACDE will develop a comprehensive framework outlining standards, benchmarks, and good practices for digital transformation. This framework will serve as a blueprint for institutional planning, capacity building, infrastructure investment, and monitoring of digital maturity.

KPIs:

- Framework completed and adopted (Baseline: none)
- institutions implementing the framework (Baseline: 0)

Objective 1.3: Strengthen digital competencies of ODeL staff and students.

ACDE will implement capacity-building initiatives that enhance the digital literacy of academics, instructional designers, ICT staff, administrators, and students. Focus areas will include digital pedagogy, online facilitation, AI ethics, cybersecurity, and accessibility, ensuring that institutions can deliver high-quality learning in digitally mediated environments.

KPIs:

- capacity-building programmes/year (Baseline: <3)
- staff/students trained (Baseline: <500 per year)

Objective 1.4: Establish an ACDE ODeL Innovation Hub.

The Innovation Hub will serve as a continental platform for incubating, showcasing, and scaling technology-enabled solutions for distance education. It will facilitate collaboration among innovators, researchers, industry partners, and institutions, accelerating the adoption of emerging technologies tailored to African needs.



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KPIs:

- Hub operational by 2028 (Baseline: none)
- innovations incubated annually (Baseline: 0)

Objective 1.5: Promote OER, virtual labs and micro-credentialing adoption.

ACDE will champion open educational resources, virtual labs, and micro-credentialing as mechanisms to expand access, modernise curricula, and improve workforce relevance. This includes promoting interoperability, affordability, and recognition frameworks that support lifelong learning and digital skills development.

KPIs:

- institutions implementing micro-credentials (Baseline: <5)
- OER repositories supported (Baseline: fragmented)



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GOAL 2: Strengthen Quality Assurance, Accreditation & Standards Harmonisation

Ensuring the integrity and credibility of ODeL provision remains central to ACDE's mandate. This goal focuses on strengthening quality assurance frameworks, enhancing accreditation systems, and promoting the harmonisation of standards across national and regional bodies. ACDE aims to ensure that distance education programmes across Africa meet globally competitive standards while responding to the specificity of African contexts.

This goal embodies ACDE's Vision of being a leading advocate for high-quality ODeL in Africa and upholds the Mission's emphasis on quality assurance, policy influence, and research-driven educational improvement. By modernising the QA Toolkit, establishing continental accreditation, and harmonising standards, ACDE promotes *Transparency, Accountability, Integrity, and Reliability*, all essential values for building trust in distance education systems. Strengthening QA ensures that institutions deliver credible, relevant and ethically sound programmes that meet continental and global benchmarks. This goal also advances *Collaboration and Sustainability*, as ACDE works with national QA agencies, regional partners and member institutions to institutionalise quality structures that endure beyond the strategic cycle.

Objective 2.1: Update the ACDE-QA Toolkit to integrate AI, virtual learning and micro-credentials.

ACDE will modernise its QA Toolkit to reflect emerging pedagogical models, digital modalities, and new forms of certification. The updated toolkit will incorporate AI ethics, online assessment integrity, accessibility, and governance mechanisms for micro-credentials.

KPIs:

- Toolkit 3.0 completed (Baseline: outdated)
- institutions trained (Baseline: 141 trained 2016–2020)



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Objective 2.2: Institutionalise a continental accreditation system for ODeL programmes.

ACDE will operationalise an accreditation system that certifies institutional compliance with ODeL quality standards. This system will support transparency, promote comparability across countries, and reinforce trust in online qualifications.

KPIs:

- institutions accredited (Baseline: 0 formal accreditation)
- Time taken per accreditation cycle (Baseline: N/A)

Objective 2.3: Build capacity of national QA agencies in ODeL quality assurance.

ACDE will engage regulatory bodies through technical training and policy dialogue, encouraging them to adopt ODeL standards aligned with ACDE's framework. This will strengthen regulatory coherence and enhance the quality of digital education systems at national level.

KPIs:

- QA agencies trained/year (Baseline: <3)
- countries adopting ACDE-aligned standards (Baseline: 0)

Objective 2.4: Establish regional quality resource centres.

Regional QA centres will provide decentralised support, training, and advisory services to institutions. These centres will help contextualise standards, enable peer learning, and expand access to QA expertise across Africa's diverse regions.

KPIs:

- 5 regional centres operational by 2030 (Baseline: none)



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Objective 2.5: Launch a digital quality monitoring dashboard.

A continental digital dashboard will facilitate real-time reporting on institutional quality indicators. This system will enhance transparency, support decision-making, and enable ACDE to monitor trends and identify areas requiring intervention.

KPIs:

- Dashboard online by 2028 (Baseline: none)
- institutions reporting annual QA data (Baseline: minimal)



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GOAL 3: Enhance Access, Inclusion & Student Success in ODeL

ACDE is committed to promoting equitable access to education, ensuring that digital transformation does not widen existing inequalities. This goal prioritises inclusion, student support, and improved completion rates, recognising that access alone is insufficient without meaningful participation and success.

This goal is central to ACDE's Mission of increasing access to *inclusive, equitable and high-quality education* across Africa. It advances the Vision by ensuring that ODeL systems do not simply expand enrolment, but also deliver supportive, learner-centred environments where students from diverse backgrounds can succeed. The goal deeply reflects core values of *Equity, Responsiveness, Ethics, Collaboration* and *Results-orientation* by focusing on underserved communities, reducing dropout rates, and addressing barriers related to disability, gender and income. By strengthening student support systems and promoting inclusive digital models, ACDE demonstrates commitment to transforming ODeL into a truly accessible mode of education that empowers learners across the continent.

Objective 3.1: Promote inclusive learning models for rural, low-income and marginalised learners.

ACDE will advocate for and support the implementation of technologies and pedagogies that are affordable, accessible, and designed for low-connectivity environments. Special emphasis will be placed on rural learners, refugees, working adults, and students with disabilities.

KPIs:

- % institutions adopting inclusion guidelines (Baseline: low)
- low-bandwidth/offline solutions deployed (Baseline: minimal)



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Objective 3.2: Establish ACDE-wide student support standards.

Recognising the centrality of student support to academic success, ACDE will define minimum institutional standards for tutoring, advising, counselling, academic development, and response times in digital environments.

KPIs:

- Framework completed by 2027 (Baseline: none)
- institutions implementing it (Baseline: 0)

Objective 3.3: Reduce ODeL dropout rates and strengthen completion outcomes.

ACDE will assist institutions to analyse, monitor and address the structural, pedagogical and socioeconomic factors that contribute to student attrition. This includes promoting early-warning systems, learning analytics, flexible learning options and tailored interventions.

KPIs:

- Baseline dropout rates vary (often >50%)
- 10% reduction across reporting institutions

Objective 3.4: Strengthen gender equity and disability inclusion.

ACDE will support institutions to develop gender-responsive ODeL policies and strengthen accessibility for students with disabilities. This includes digital content accessibility standards, inclusive instructional design, and targeted scholarship opportunities.

KPIs:

- institutions adopting guidelines (Baseline: <10)
- % increase in enrolment of women & students with disabilities



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Objective 3.5: Launch ODeL scholarship and mentorship networks.

ACDE will create continental scholarship and mentorship structures to empower underrepresented learners, foster peer support, and enhance academic persistence and career readiness.

KPIs:

- scholarships awarded/year (Baseline: 0)
- mentorship arrangements (Baseline: 0)

GOAL 4: Strengthen Research, Data Systems & Policy Leadership

ACDE aspires to become the leading continental authority on ODeL research and data-driven policymaking. Strengthening the evidence base supporting ODeL is essential for influencing policy, enhancing institutional performance, and driving innovation.

This goal directly supports ACDE's Mission to advocate for policy and promote research that advances ODeL quality and relevance. A strong research and data ecosystem enables evidence-based decision-making, strengthens institutional performance, and positions ACDE as a continental thought leader, consistent with the Vision of being a major player in ODeL advocacy and development. It upholds values of *Transparency*, *Accountability*, *Integrity*, *Reliability*, and *Innovation*, as robust data systems and research outputs ensure credibility, continuous learning, and adaptive improvement. By championing research collaboration and producing authoritative continental reports, ACDE enables institutions and policymakers to respond effectively to emerging trends, challenges and opportunities.

Objective 4.1: Establish an ACDE Policy and Research Observatory.

The Observatory will coordinate research efforts across member institutions, consolidate continental data, and serve as a repository of evidence and best practices. It will play a catalytic role in shaping policy discourse and guiding institutional transformation.



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KPIs:

- Observatory operational by 2027 (Baseline: none)
- research publications per year

Objective 4.2: Publish an annual “State of ODeL in Africa” report.

This flagship publication will provide continental insights on enrolment patterns, emerging trends, policy alignment, quality assurance, technology adoption and equity in distance education. It will serve as a critical reference for governments, institutions and partners.

KPIs:

- Report published each year from 2027 (Baseline: none)

Objective 4.3: Build research capacity across ODeL institutions.

ACDE will implement structured training programmes that enhance research skills in digital pedagogy, quality assurance, AI in education, and learning analytics. Collaborative research grants and multi-country studies will be encouraged.

KPIs:

- research workshops (Baseline: ≤1 annually)
- institutions submitting peer-reviewed studies

Objective 4.4: Improve availability and quality of continental ODeL data.

ACDE will promote uniform data collection standards and support institutions to build data management systems. This will enable benchmarking, continuous improvement, and shared learning across the network.

KPIs:

- institutions submitting annual data (Baseline: minimal)
- Data repository launched by 2028



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Objective 4.5: Influence national and regional ODeL policy.

Through advocacy, technical support and policy dialogue, ACDE will shape the regulatory and strategic environments governing ODeL. The goal is to embed ODeL as a central pillar of educational transformation within national development frameworks.

KPIs:

- policy dialogues per year
- countries adopting ACDE-recommended policies



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GOAL 5: Expand Membership, Partnerships and Continental Collaboration

A strong, engaged membership base and strategic partnerships are essential for ACDE's relevance and sustainability. This goal focuses on strengthening member participation, building strategic alliances, and improving the value proposition offered to institutions.

This goal reinforces the Vision's emphasis on positioning ACDE as a major continental body by expanding its network, strengthening its institutional voice, and deepening regional influence. It operationalises the Mission through the promotion of collaboration among ODeL actors and the strengthening of continental platforms for knowledge exchange, policy dialogue and joint capacity building. The goal reflects ACDE's values of *Collaboration, Sustainability, Efficiency, and Responsiveness* by ensuring that member institutions receive clear value, engage actively, and contribute to a stronger, unified ODeL community. Strategic partnerships further advance innovation, resource mobilisation, and continental integration, key enablers for long-term impact.

Objective 5.1: Strengthen membership value proposition.

ACDE will enhance the range and quality of services offered to members, including access to QA support, research outputs, digital tools, training, and exclusive partnership opportunities. This will deepen engagement and increase active membership.

KPIs:

- Active members increased from 29 → 50 by 2030
- ≥80% participation in annual activities

Objective 5.2: Improve membership subscription compliance.

Through clearer communication, strengthened accountability mechanisms, and enhanced benefits, ACDE will work to significantly increase the proportion of institutions contributing financially to the organisation.



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KPIs:

- Consistent subscribers increased from 15 → 40
- Subscription collection ≥75% annually

Objective 5.3: Build strategic partnerships with continental and global bodies.

Collaboration with AU, SADC, ECOWAS, EAC, UNESCO, COL, AfDB and ICDE will allow ACDE to leverage technical expertise, mobilise resources, and enhance the visibility and impact of ODeL across Africa.

KPIs:

- partnership agreements (Baseline: several but unstructured)
- joint projects delivered

Objective 5.4: Launch a Member Digital Portal.

The portal will enhance information sharing, resource distribution, networking and collaboration. It will also serve as a central access point for QA tools, research outputs, training schedules and membership services.

KPIs:

- Portal live by 2027 (Baseline: none)
- active monthly users

Objective 5.5: Expand conferences, webinars and learning events.

ACDE will continue to convene the continent's leading ODeL conferences while increasing the frequency of webinars and thematic workshops to ensure ongoing professional development and exchange. Objective 5.1: Strengthen membership value proposition.

KPIs:

- Biennial conferences held (Baseline: consistent)
- ≥4 webinars annually



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GOAL 6: Strengthen Institutional Sustainability, Funding & Organisational Capacity

Sustaining ACDE's growth and impact requires a robust organisational foundation, diversified funding sources and strong governance systems. This goal ensures that ACDE remains financially sound, operationally efficient and strategically agile.

Institutional sustainability is essential for ACDE to fulfil its Vision and Mission over the long term. This goal strengthens the organisational foundation needed to deliver high-impact programmes, advocate effectively for ODeL, and support member institutions consistently. It aligns with core values of *Sustainability, Accountability, Efficiency, Reliability, and Results-orientation*, as it promotes responsible governance, diversified financing, skilled human resources, and robust M&E systems. By reinforcing internal structures and ensuring financial stability, ACDE can continuously champion quality ODeL, collaborate meaningfully with stakeholders, and remain responsive to emerging educational needs across Africa.

Objective 6.1: Diversify ACDE funding sources.

ACDE will explore donor partnerships, fee-based services, consultancy offerings, research grants and conference revenues to reduce reliance on membership subscriptions and broaden its financial base.

KPIs:

- Annual revenue increases from USD 292,360 → USD 1 million by 2030
- ≥50% of income from grants & services

Objective 6.2: Strengthen Secretariat staffing and capacity.

The Secretariat will be expanded and professionalised to ensure adequate administrative, technical and strategic support for ACDE's growing programmes. Targeted training will build competencies in research, digital learning, M&E and fundraising.

KPIs:



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- Secretariat grows from ~3 → 6 staff by 2028
- Annual professional development plans implemented

Objective 6.3: Develop a costed Operational Plan for 2026–2030.

The Operational Plan will translate strategic priorities into actionable annual programmes, budgets and timelines, providing clarity and accountability in implementation.

KPIs:

- Plan completed in 2026 (Baseline: none)
- Annual implementation reviews completed

Objective 6.4: Improve internal governance, M&E and risk management.

ACDE will enhance its internal systems to improve transparency, efficiency and oversight. This includes strengthening financial management, audit processes, monitoring frameworks and risk management tools.

KPIs:

- M&E framework operational by 2027
- Annual audits completed and published

Objective 6.5: Increase in-kind contributions from member institutions.

By encouraging secondments, shared resources and institutional hosting arrangements, ACDE will expand its operational capacity while promoting shared ownership and sustainability.

KPIs:

- Supporting institutions increased from 4 → 15
- seconded staff annually

6. Implementation Framework

Implementation will be guided by:

- Annual Operational Plans



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- Result-based performance dashboards
- Regional coordination through ACDE representatives
- Digital platforms for reporting, monitoring and capacity building

Each strategic goal will be assigned to a responsible ACDE Directorate (QA, ICT, Partnerships, Research, Secretariat).

7. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The following M&E instruments will be applied:

- Annual performance reviews
- Mid-term evaluation (2028)
- Final evaluation (2030)
- KPI dashboard updates twice a year
- Quarterly Secretariat reporting
- Learning briefs shared with members

8. Risk Management Framework

Key risks include:

- Insufficient funding
- Declining member engagement
- Technological disruption outpacing capacity
- Policy changes at national levels
- Limited infrastructure in member institutions

Mitigation measures:

- Funding diversification
- Strengthened value proposition



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- Continuous capacity building
- Advocacy and policy engagement
- Strategic technology partnerships

9. Conclusion

The 2026–2030 ACDE Strategic Plan positions the Council as the leading continental body enabling innovation, inclusion and quality in digital and distance education. This strategy builds on ACDE’s 20-year legacy while driving the transformation required to meet Africa’s growing demand for flexible, technology-enabled, high-quality learning.

Through collaboration, leadership, and bold innovation, ACDE will shape a future where every African learner has access to digital, inclusive and globally competitive education.



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Annexure: Rationale for 2026-2030 Strategic Plan

AFRICAN COUNCIL FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION (ACDE)

STRATEGIC PLAN 2026–2030

“Reimagining African Distance Education: Leadership, Inclusion and Innovation”

The purpose of this annexure is to articulate the rationale underpinning the structure and content of the ACDE 2026–2030 Strategy. It demonstrates the clear alignment between the Vision, Mission, and Core Values of ACDE and the strategic goals and objectives outlined herein. The document must be read in conjunction with the ACDE Draft 2026-2030 Strategy v1.0. This integrated framework establishes the foundation upon which appropriate and measurable targets can be set, ensuring coherence, strategic relevance, and institutional consistency in the implementation of the Strategy.

Vision

To be a major player in the promotion of and advocacy for Open, Distance and e-Learning (ODeL) in Africa.

Mission

To promote collaboration amongst actors in ODeL, advocate for policy, research and quality assurance in open and distance e-learning with the aim of increasing access to inclusive equitable quality education and training in Africa.

Core Values

Transparency | Accountability | Ethics | Collaboration | Equity | Responsiveness | Innovativeness
| Results-oriented | Sustainability | Reliability | Efficiency



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Justification of Goals and Objectives Alignment to Vision, Mission, and Values

Goal 1: Advance Digital Transformation & Innovation in ODeL

This goal directly advances ACDE's Vision of being a major continental leader in ODeL by positioning the Council at the forefront of digital transformation and AI-enabled innovation areas that are redefining the global educational landscape. It aligns with the Mission by promoting collaboration among institutions and strengthening the quality of digital learning environments that broaden access to equitable, inclusive education. The goal reflects ACDE's core values of *Innovativeness, Responsiveness, Equity, Efficiency, and Results-orientation*, as it supports the deployment of transformative technologies, strengthens digital capacity, and ensures that all learners regardless of bandwidth, geography, or socioeconomic background can participate meaningfully in high-quality ODeL. By embracing cutting-edge tools while promoting accessibility, ACDE demonstrates commitment to both excellence and inclusion.

Objective 1.1: Support member institutions to adopt AI-enabled and low-bandwidth digital solutions.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

This objective drives the core aim of digital transformation by enabling institutions to integrate advanced yet context-appropriate technologies that improve the efficiency and quality of teaching and learning. AI tools can personalise learning, strengthen assessment integrity, and enhance administrative processes, while low-bandwidth options ensure that innovation is inclusive.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

By facilitating AI adoption across African ODeL institutions, ACDE strengthens its leadership role in shaping the future of digital learning on the continent and ensures that digital transformation benefits all institutions regardless of their technological constraints.

Objective 1.2: Develop an African ODeL Digital Transformation Framework.



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Rationale and Link to Goal:

A structured framework provides coherence, direction and benchmarks for digital transformation across the continent. It aligns institutions to a common vision for AI integration, digital pedagogy, data governance and infrastructure development.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

As the architect of this framework, ACDE positions itself as the authoritative continental leader on digital ODeL strategy, thereby strengthening its credibility, value proposition, and influence with governments, regulators and partners.

Objective 1.3: Strengthen digital competencies of ODeL staff and students.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Digital transformation cannot be realised without human capability. This objective ensures that lecturers, instructional designers, ICT teams and students can effectively use digital tools and AI systems.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Capacity building increases institutional performance, improves learner outcomes, and enhances ACDE's relevance as a provider of expertise, professional development and support services.

Objective 1.4: Establish an ACDE ODeL Innovation Hub.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

The Innovation Hub becomes the engine room of Goal 1 by providing a continental platform for ideation, experimentation, solution development and collaboration.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

This positions ACDE as the central catalyst of ODeL innovation in Africa and creates opportunities for partnerships, funding, research, and technology pilots that enhance ACDE's sustainability and visibility.



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Objective 1.5: Promote OER, virtual laboratories and micro-credentialing.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

These innovations expand access, modernise curricula, and strengthen alignment with labour-market needs, directly supporting digital transformation.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Championing these cutting-edge practices enhances ACDE's leadership profile and supports member institutions in meeting global standards of relevance, flexibility and academic quality.

Goal 2: Strengthen Quality Assurance, Accreditation & Standards Harmonisation

This goal embodies ACDE's Vision of being a leading advocate for high-quality ODeL in Africa and upholds the Mission's emphasis on quality assurance, policy influence, and research-driven educational improvement. By modernising the QA Toolkit, establishing continental accreditation, and harmonising standards, ACDE promotes *Transparency, Accountability, Integrity, and Reliability* – all essential values for building trust in distance education systems. Strengthening QA ensures that institutions deliver credible, relevant and ethically sound programmes that meet continental and global benchmarks. This goal also advances *Collaboration and Sustainability*, as ACDE works with national QA agencies, regional partners and member institutions to institutionalise quality structures that endure beyond the strategic cycle.

Objective 2.1: Update the ACDE-QA Toolkit to integrate AI, virtual learning and micro-credentials.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Modernising the QA Toolkit ensures that ACDE's quality standards remain current and responsive to the realities of digital and AI-enhanced learning.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

As the custodian of continental ODeL QA, ACDE must lead this update to maintain the credibility and relevance of its accreditation and capacity-building mandate.



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Objective 2.2: Institutionalise a continental accreditation system for ODeL programmes.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Accreditation strengthens trust in distance education by ensuring comparability of standards and enhancing institutional accountability. It directly advances ACDE's quality assurance mandate.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

A formal accreditation system elevates ACDE's authority, enhances its influence with national regulators, and creates new avenues for service-based revenue.

Objective 2.3: Build capacity of national QA agencies to integrate ODeL standards.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Harmonised standards cannot be realised unless regulators understand and adopt ODeL evaluation criteria. Strengthening QA agencies enhances continental coherence.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

This objective expands ACDE's strategic footprint, ensures alignment between national systems and ACDE standards, and increases its relevance in policy circles.

Objective 2.4: Establish regional quality resource centres.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Regional centres decentralise quality assurance support, ensuring wide reach, context-specific assistance, and sustainable capacity-building ecosystems.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

They enhance ACDE's operational presence, enable stronger member engagement, and increase opportunities for donor partnerships.

Objective 2.5: Launch a digital quality monitoring dashboard.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Digital dashboards enhance transparency, accountability and evidence-based quality management – core aspects of Goal 2.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:



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Owning the continental ODeL benchmarking database strengthens ACDE's authority, enables real-time insights, and supports continental policy advocacy.

Goal 3: Enhance Access, Inclusion & Student Success in ODeL

This goal is central to ACDE's Mission of increasing access to *inclusive, equitable and high-quality education* across Africa. It advances the Vision by ensuring that ODeL systems do not simply expand enrolment, but also deliver supportive, learner-centred environments where students from diverse backgrounds can succeed. The goal deeply reflects core values of *Equity, Responsiveness, Ethics, Collaboration* and *Results-orientation* by focusing on underserved communities, reducing dropout rates, and addressing barriers related to disability, gender and income. By strengthening student support systems and promoting inclusive digital models, ACDE demonstrates commitment to transforming ODeL into a truly accessible mode of education that empowers learners across the continent.

Objective 3.1: Promote inclusive learning models for rural, low-income and marginalised learners.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Enhancing accessibility directly supports the core goal of improving equity and expanding participation in ODeL systems.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

This reinforces ACDE's mission of advancing inclusive learning, enhancing its reputation as a champion for social justice and educational equity.

Objective 3.2: Establish ACDE-wide student support standards.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Student support is the strongest predictor of academic success, yet widely inconsistent across institutions. Establishing standards improves quality and outcomes.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:



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This objective positions ACDE as a leader in learner-centred ODeL design, boosting the credibility of member institutions and improving student retention continent-wide.

Objective 3.3: Reduce ODeL dropout rates and strengthen completion outcomes.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

High dropout rates undermine the promise of ODeL. Addressing this issue is central to improving student success and institutional credibility.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Measurable improvements in completion rates demonstrate the tangible value of ACDE's interventions and strengthen donor confidence.

Objective 3.4: Strengthen gender equity and disability inclusion.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Equity in access cannot be achieved without targeted support for women and learners with disabilities, groups traditionally most excluded from digital learning.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Promoting gender and disability inclusion enhances ACDE's alignment with SDG4 and AU Agenda 2063, strengthening its legitimacy as a transformation-driven organisation.

Objective 3.5: Launch ODeL scholarship and mentorship networks.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Financial and mentorship support are critical enablers of persistence and success, especially for first-generation and vulnerable learners.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

These networks enhance ACDE's visibility, support fundraising, and strengthen its identity as a student-focused continental body.



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Goal 4: Strengthen Research, Data Systems & Evidence-Based Policy Leadership

This goal directly supports ACDE's Mission to advocate for policy and promote research that advances ODeL quality and relevance. A strong research and data ecosystem enables evidence-based decision-making, strengthens institutional performance, and positions ACDE as a continental thought leader, consistent with the Vision of being a major player in ODeL advocacy and development. It upholds values of *Transparency, Accountability, Integrity, Reliability, and Innovation*, as robust data systems and research outputs ensure credibility, continuous learning, and adaptive improvement. By championing research collaboration and producing authoritative continental reports, ACDE enables institutions and policymakers to respond effectively to emerging trends, challenges and opportunities.

Objective 4.1: Establish an ACDE Policy and Research Observatory.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

A central Observatory consolidates research and data efforts, enabling ACDE to drive evidence-based decision-making across the sector.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

It positions ACDE as the authoritative continental knowledge hub and strengthens donor trust through measurable impact.

Objective 4.2: Publish an annual "State of ODeL in Africa" report.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Regular reporting enhances transparency, offers insight into trends and challenges, and supports continental policy dialogue.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

The report elevates ACDE's voice, strengthens its policy influence, and establishes it as a reference point in ODeL discourse.

Objective 4.3: Build research capacity across ODeL institutions.



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Rationale and Link to Goal:

Strengthening research skills enhances institutional ability to innovate, evaluate performance, and address local ODeL challenges.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

A stronger research culture increases the flow of knowledge, enhances institutional relevance, and creates opportunities for collaborative grants.

Objective 4.4: Improve availability and quality of continental ODeL data.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

High-quality data is essential for research, benchmarking, quality assurance, and policy development.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Owning and curating continental data strengthens ACDE's leadership, supports advocacy, and provides evidence for strategic funding engagement.

Objective 4.5: Influence national and regional ODeL policy.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Policy alignment ensures systemic sustainability and harmonisation of ODeL standards across countries.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

This expands ACDE's strategic footprint, enhances institutional credibility, and consolidates its role as the continental authority on ODeL.

Goal 5: Expand Membership, Partnerships & Continental Collaboration

This goal reinforces the Vision's emphasis on positioning ACDE as a major continental body by expanding its network, strengthening its institutional voice, and deepening regional influence. It operationalises the Mission through the promotion of collaboration among ODeL actors and the strengthening of continental platforms for knowledge exchange, policy dialogue and joint capacity



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building. The goal reflects ACDE's values of *Collaboration, Sustainability, Efficiency, and Responsiveness* by ensuring that member institutions receive clear value, engage actively, and contribute to a stronger, unified ODeL community. Strategic partnerships further advance innovation, resource mobilisation, and continental integration, key enablers for long-term impact.

Objective 5.1: Strengthen membership value proposition.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Improving service offerings enhances engagement, satisfaction and loyalty among member institutions, central to expanding the ACDE network.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

A strong value proposition increases active membership, revenue stability and continental influence.

Objective 5.2: Improve membership subscription compliance.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Financial contributions from members are essential for sustainable operations and delivery of strategic programmes.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Higher subscription compliance reduces financial vulnerability and increases ACDE's operational independence.

Objective 5.3: Build strategic partnerships with regional and global bodies.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Partnerships amplify ACDE's reach, strengthen capability and mobilise new resources, directly supporting the expansion objective.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

These alliances strengthen ACDE's legitimacy, unlock funding opportunities, and broaden its access to global expertise.



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Objective 5.4: Launch a Member Digital Portal.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

A centralized digital platform facilitates communication, resource sharing and collaboration, key aspects of member engagement.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

The portal increases member satisfaction, enhances institutional engagement and strengthens ACDE's digital brand.

Objective 5.5: Expand conferences, webinars and learning events.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

Regular events sustain engagement, facilitate knowledge exchange, and strengthen ACDE's continental community.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

These forums build visibility, attract new members, and position ACDE as the leading convenor of ODeL expertise in Africa.

Goal 6: Strengthen Institutional Sustainability, Funding & Organisational Capacity

Institutional sustainability is essential for ACDE to fulfil its Vision and Mission over the long term. This goal strengthens the organisational foundation needed to deliver high-impact programmes, advocate effectively for ODeL, and support member institutions consistently. It aligns with core values of *Sustainability, Accountability, Efficiency, Reliability, and Results-orientation*, as it promotes responsible governance, diversified financing, skilled human resources, and robust M&E systems. By reinforcing internal structures and ensuring financial stability, ACDE can continuously champion quality ODeL, collaborate meaningfully with stakeholders, and remain responsive to emerging educational needs across Africa.



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Objective 6.1: Diversify ACDE funding sources.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

A diversified funding model ensures financial resilience, enabling ACDE to implement long-term strategic initiatives.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

This reduces dependency on inconsistent membership fees and enhances organisational stability.

Objective 6.2: Strengthen Secretariat staffing and capacity.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

A capable Secretariat is essential for effective coordination, programme delivery and implementation of the strategic plan.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Professionalised staffing enhances credibility, improves delivery quality and ensures consistent support to members.

Objective 6.3: Develop a costed Operational Plan for 2026–2030.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

A detailed operational plan ensures coherence, efficiency and accountability in implementing strategic goals.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

It provides clarity for donors, partners and members, strengthening confidence in ACDE's governance.

Objective 6.4: Improve internal governance, M&E and risk management.



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Rationale and Link to Goal:

Robust governance structures enhance transparency, accountability and operational integrity, core organisational capacity indicators.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Improved governance strengthens donor confidence, reduces institutional risk and supports long-term organisational effectiveness.

Objective 6.5: Increase in-kind contributions from member institutions.

Rationale and Link to Goal:

In-kind contributions strengthen ACDE's operational assets without increasing financial burden.

Why It Is in ACDE's Best Interest:

Leveraging shared resources enhances sustainability, deepens ownership and strengthens the ACDE community.