

Artificial Intelligence for Investment Promotion

Turning Potential into Practice

Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) are under growing pressure to deliver high-quality investments, with faster, smarter, and more targeted services to investors. Artificial intelligence (AI) offers transformational opportunities, from automating routine tasks to identifying high-potential investors through machine learning and predictive analytics. Yet AI adoption raises important questions about accessibility and implementation frameworks. This IPA observer presents key findings on how pioneering IPAs are deploying AI, what enables successful adoption, and realistic pathways for IPAs at different stages of digital maturity. IPAs have already begun incorporating AI, from automating tasks to identifying high-potential investors through machine learning and predictive analytics.¹

Understanding AI

AI is “the capability of a machine to engage in cognitive activities typically performed by the human brain”.² For the purposes of this report, three types of AI are particularly relevant to IPAs and their use of AI:

Discriminative AI: The most established type, which focuses on classifying data and identifying patterns. In IPA practice, this includes chatbots, document validation, permit navigation, and workflow routing.

Predictive AI: This system uses historical data to predict outcomes and inform decision-making. When applied to IPA practice, it can be used for lead scoring, modelling investment likelihood, and cost simulation.

Generative AI: The current frontier, capable of producing entirely new content rather than simply classifying or forecasting. Within IPA applications, this includes proposal generation, marketing content, policy intelligence, and SDG-alignment screening.

¹ UNCTAD, in collaboration with the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), conducted research examining AI adoption by IPAs worldwide. The research combined two methodologies: bilateral consultations with IPAs (Invest Estonia and Invest Korea) and information gathered through WAIPA's 2025 Investment Excellence Awards submissions for the ‘AI Trailblazer category’ (see Annex I), and through UNCTAD's review of websites and digital platforms of IPAs in 44 LDCs and 32 SIDS (see Annex II).

² UNCTAD (2025). *2025 Technology and Innovation Report: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tir2025_en.pdf.



AI adoption remains concentrated in IPAs from high-income economies

82 per cent of IPAs reporting on the use of AI are from high-income or upper-middle-income countries and 16 per cent from Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) (see Annex I). Additionally, UNCTAD's research, examining the websites and digital platforms of 44 LDCs and 32 SIDS, identified only 10 IPAs (13 per cent) that have implemented chatbots or visible AI solutions, primarily focused on operational automation through the chatbots.

Meaningful AI integration requires foundational digital capabilities, such as data infrastructure, technical expertise, digitalised processes, and innovation resources, which are not widespread in developing countries.³ On the contrary, developing countries tend to face significant barriers, including limited digital infrastructure, skills gaps, and data governance frameworks, which certainly affect IPAs' capacity to deploy AI.⁴ However, experience from early-adopter IPAs from developing countries suggests that AI adoption does not necessarily require full readiness. The targeted use of proven, transferred AI applications, combined with the gradual strengthening of infrastructure, governance, and skills, can enable institutions to make significant progress in specific service areas. The adoption among LDCs and SIDS demonstrates that accessible AI pathways do exist for experience- and resource-constrained contexts.⁵

AI expansion for IPAs could significantly decrease repetitive work tasks, improve response times to investor inquiries, and enhance overall investor engagement. Rather than discouraging late adopters, the findings clarify that AI adoption requires careful preparation, with tailored pathways for IPAs at different stages of digital maturity.

3 UNCTAD (2025). *2025 Technology and Innovation Report: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development*.

4 IOSCO (2021). Artificial Intelligence in emerging markets: Opportunities, trends, and emerging business models. <https://www.ifc.org/content/dam/ifc/doc/mgrt/ai-report-update-10.pdf>

5 UN Technology Bank for LDCs (2026). *Turning Artificial Intelligence into a Development Asset in Least Developed Countries*. https://www.un.org/technologybank/sites/www.un.org.technologybank/files/policy_brief_ai_15012026.pdf



Four core functions of AI in IPAs

Research analysis of early adopter IPAs (see Annex I) revealed that AI deployment clusters around four distinct functions (Table 1), each with different value propositions and technical requirements. The first three, operational automation, information synthesis, and predictive decision-making, classify, synthesise, or forecast from existing data, progressing in sophistication from pattern recognition to forecasting. The fourth, generative production, goes further, producing entirely new and customised content. These functions are presented in order of increasing complexity, from basic automation that many IPAs can implement to sophisticated content generation that requires significant human oversight.



Table 1
The four core functions of AI in investment promotion

Category	Core Focus	Investment Promotion Examples
Operational automation	Execution: reducing human effort in repetitive workflows	Chatbots (<i>Suve</i> , Investment Fiji; ANAPI), license processing (Invest Sharjah), automated inquiries (<i>Eia</i> , Estonia)
Information synthesis	Understanding: turning unstructured data into insights	Media monitoring (<i>Emma</i> , Estonia), competitiveness analysis (<i>CompareEST</i> , Estonia), knowledge synthesis (Flanders), multi-source intelligence (Invest India)
Predictive decision-making	Forecasting: using historical data to predict outcomes	Lead scoring (Investment Fiji), investment prediction (Invest KOREA), company profiling (CINDE), cost calculation (Invest Nevis)
Generative production	Creation: producing new original assets	Proposal generation (Invest KOREA, Invest Minas), marketing content (Germany Trade and Invest, Singapore EDB)

Source: UNCTAD.



Operational Automation: Among narrow AI applications, the most accessible use involves automating repetitive tasks, particularly investor inquiries and information provision. Invest in Estonia has deployed multiple AI tools, including an e-advisor for automated inquiries, named Eia, with measurable efficiency gains in staff time and response speed. In the case of Investment Fiji, Invest in Sharjah (UAE), Invest Guyana, Jamaica's JAMPRO, and Belize's Beltraide, the chatbots handle routine inquiries and direct investors to relevant services and incentives. More specifically, Invest in Sharjah applies AI to automate trade licensing, recommend optimal license types, and validate documents in real-time.⁶ More sophisticated operational applications include case routing and workflow automation via customer relationship management (CRM) systems. Investment Fiji's implementation of HubSpot enables automated aftercare follow-ups and monitoring. Moreover, AI-powered translation enables IPAs to serve investors across multiple languages without hiring multilingual staff.

Information Synthesis: More sophisticated AI applications enable knowledge management through AI's ability to process and structure unstructured information. For example, Invest in Estonia's tools *Emma* and *CompareEST*, respectively monitor media to assess investor sentiment in real time, and compare systematic competitiveness using machine learning.⁷ Flanders Investment and Trade⁸ uses AI-powered enterprise search and question-answering systems that help advisors extract insights from institutional knowledge.⁹ Invest India uses AI tools to scan large volumes of data, including news articles and earnings call transcripts, to extract high-value investment insights and support faster, more effective investment promotion decisions. Some IPAs are using AI to derive policy intelligence from investor query analytics: Investment Fiji's CRM analyses issues while Invest Qatar tracks aggregated queries to identify regulatory friction points. Invest Minas uses technical notes (Nota Técnica) for ecosystem and sector mapping across cities and sectors and applies GIS and data synthesis to produce investment briefs. AI also automates routine research tasks, freeing staff to focus on higher-impact work.¹⁰

Predictive Decisioning: AI targeting applications use machine learning to predict investment likelihood, enabling resource concentration on promising opportunities. CINDE from Costa Rica uses predictive analysis tracking over 800,000 companies globally with 150+ data points to identify investment prospects.¹¹ It also uses an AI-based digital employment platform that predicts and recommends personalised learning paths to match knowledge economy job supply with investor demand, strengthening Costa Rica's investment proposition.¹² In addition, St. Kitts and Nevis' IPA developed a digital platform that calculates project costs based on investor inputs, enabling investors to model different scenarios before committing resources.¹³ Investment Fiji employs HubSpot's AI-enabled CRM for lead scoring and qualification, pipeline monitoring, and risk detection.

Generative Production: Generative AI enables rapid production of customised content, though all applications require substantial human oversight. Invest KOREA generates investment proposals incorporating targeted incentives, which specialists refine before presentation. Invest Minas from Brazil auto-generates city and sector technical notes, synthesising infrastructure data and sectoral opportunities. Germany Trade and Invest and Singapore EDB apply AI to optimise marketing campaigns and audience targeting.¹⁴

6 SPCFZ (2025). <https://www.spcfz.ae/blogs/spc-free-zone-launches-worlds-first-ai-generated-business-license/>

7 Kaha (2024). *Leveraging Digital Tools for Enhancing Investment Promotion in Small OECD Economies*. <https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/850263>

8 Nurski (2023). AI adoption in the public sector: a case study. <https://www.bruegel.org/system/files/2023-03/WP%2003.pdf>

9 These solutions were developed in cooperation with *Arinti*, a technology provider. <https://arinti.ai/cases/fit-enterprise-search/>

10 Invest India (2023). <https://www.investindia.gov.in/blogs/indian-future-artificially-intelligent>

11 Since May 2023, the national IPA of Costa Rica is PROCOMER. CINDE continues to provide investment promotion services as a non-profit private sector organisation.

12 OECD (2021). *Investment Insights Investment Promotion Digital Economy OECD*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5c840788-en>.

13 Invest Nevis. <https://www.investnevis.org/en/Our-services/nia-digital-platform>

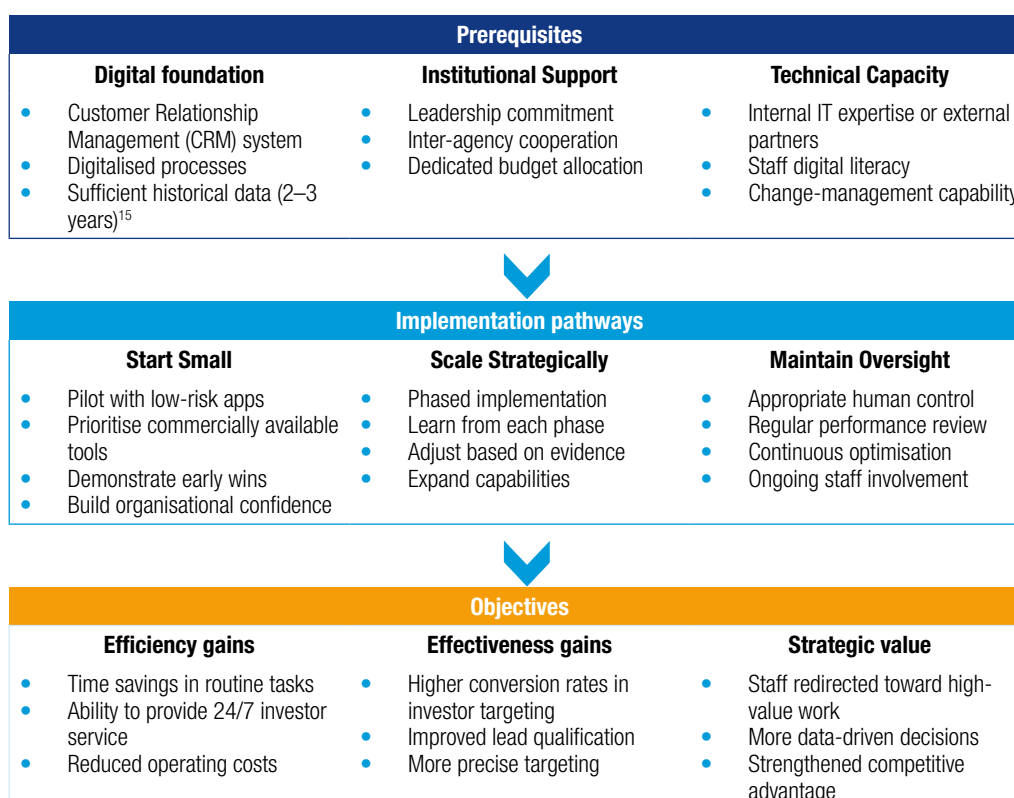
14 Gültekin et al. (2024). *AI for AI: Using Artificial Intelligence to Accelerate Investment*. <https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/master-phd-programmes/ai-ai-using-artificial-intelligence-accelerate-investment>



A framework for effective AI adoption by IPAs

While AI applications differ in function and complexity, successful adoption depends on a set of common prerequisites, implementation practices, and success factors, summarised in Figure 1. First, a set of foundational prerequisites must be in place, including a digital foundation, institutional support, and technical capacity. Second, effective implementation depends on best practices that guide deployment, such as starting with low-risk applications, scaling strategically, and maintaining appropriate human oversight. Third, AI adoption must generate measurable success factors to demonstrate value, including efficiency gains, improved effectiveness in investor targeting, and longer-term strategic benefits.

Figure 1
AI adoption framework



Source: UNCTAD (2025) analysis based on early adopter experiences (see Annex I).

¹⁵ Several years of reliable historical data to support trend analysis and model training (e.g., 2–3 years as a practical minimum).

This framework can help IPAs to assess their readiness, identify gaps, and plan AI adoption pathways aligned with their existing capabilities. The following case examples of Invest in Estonia and Invest KOREA (see Box 1 and 2) demonstrate how these three sets, as summarised in Figure 1, interact in practice.



Box 1

Invest in Estonia's integrated AI ecosystem

Rather than deploying standalone AI tools, *Invest in Estonia* built an integrated ecosystem, with a strong digital foundation, where multiple AI applications work together. This systems-level approach differentiates Estonia from other early adopters.

Four AI tools feed into each other, as chatbot conversations reveal content gaps, media monitoring identifies emerging concerns, competitiveness data informs chatbot responses, and *Eia*, the e-advisor, draws on all three to create specific offers for individual investors. *Eia* operates as a hybrid tool, providing immediate personalised responses while routing investors to human advisors for more complex queries, effectively functioning as a screening and personalisation layer rather than a replacement for specialist engagement.

Estonia's approach succeeded because of decades of e-Government development enabling inter-agency data access, a sophisticated CRM providing quality data foundation, strategic phased implementation: first, basic digitalisation; second, simple chatbots; third, sophisticated capabilities, and continuous human oversight to review and refine AI performance. Further, the agency tracks time saved by automation as an internal KPI, shared with staff via a dashboard, which makes efficiency gains visible and building organisational buy-in.

Thus, the ecosystem approach enabled a small IPA to operate at scale across multiple languages and time zones. More significantly, depositing all codes in the government's open-source repository allowed other agencies to leverage these innovations, multiplying returns beyond the IPA.

Note: Invest in Estonia has won several awards for its digitalisation strategy, including UN Investment Promotion Award 2021.

Source: Invest Estonia, Kaha (2024).





Box 2

Invest KOREA's predictive targeting system

Since 2022, Invest KOREA has developed an AI Investor Targeting System to identify which foreign-invested companies are most likely to make incremental investments. The system analyses management data, including revenue trends, operating profit, employee numbers, and export volumes, to detect patterns that historically precede reinvestment decisions. It draws on inter-agency data, which covers customs records, financial statements, and employment statistics. The model was developed by an in-house task force combining KOTRA's Digital Transformation Team with FDI specialists, ensuring technical capability was grounded in operational investment promotion knowledge.

FDI specialists thoroughly review all AI-identified leads before engagement. Human experts actively adjust model coefficients based on market intelligence. Finally, all proposals undergo manual validation before investor contact. However, technical expertise in machine learning, years of quality historical data, inter-agency cooperation, and dedicated maintenance resources are required.

As a result, among 109 companies identified between 2023–2025, 38.5 per cent proceeded with incremental investments which is more than double the 17.7 per cent baseline. The system saved over 1'000 staff hours annually by streamlining event recruitment.

The system has since been extended to aftercare, automating investment monitoring and generating policy-relevant data on investor needs.

Note: Invest Korea won the WAIPA Investment Promotion Award 2025 in the AI category.

Source: Invest KOREA.





A phased implementation pathway

AI adoption requires deliberate preparation, and the pathway differs significantly based on an IPA's starting point. Before technical implementation begins, strategic alignment and leadership commitment are crucial as AI initiatives must align with the IPA's core mission and long-term strategy for promoting investment and not be technology for its own sake.¹⁶ For high-income country IPAs, this strategic foundation often exists, but for developing country IPAs, building awareness and securing executive buy-in may be a critical first step.

High-income country IPAs can rapidly advance toward sophisticated applications because, in most cases, prerequisites are already met, while others must first build foundational digital capabilities. The four phases are sequential, but what constitutes each phase looks different depending on context, as what represents "initial AI" for one IPA may be an advanced milestone for another.



Table 2
Illustrative pathways of AI adoption

Phase	High-income economies	Middle-income economies	LDCs/limited infrastructure
I. Foundation	Strong foundation (usually) already established	Strengthen core systems; implement or upgrade CRM; improve data quality and interoperability	Prioritise basic digitalisation and data collection; establish CRM and core registries before AI deployment
II. AI initialisation	Progress to more advanced applications, including customised solutions	Begin with commercially available, off-the-shelf AI tools; low-risk pilots	When foundational systems are in place, use simple AI applications such as chatbots and basic generative tools
III. Scaling	Expand into predictive analytics, automation and integration across systems	Scale proven tools; explore regional cooperation and shared infrastructure; focus on measurable return on investment	Leverage regional platforms, cloud services and development-partner support to reduce costs and capacity constraints
IV. Maturity	Share knowledge, standards and practices with developing-country IPAs; contribute to international learning	Gradually develop custom solutions where commercial tools are insufficient	Prioritise South–South learning, peer exchanges and progressive capability building

Note: Based on analysis of early adopters, illustrative pathways for IPAs at different starting points.

Source: UNCTAD's analysis and discussion with IPAs (2025).

16 CDAO (NA). <https://www.ai.mil/About/Resources/Pathway-to-AI-Readiness/>

Phase I. Foundation: AI readiness begins with strengthening core digital infrastructure, such as CRM systems, data quality standards, digitalised workflows, and systematic tracking of investor engagement. UNCTAD's guidance on IPA digitalisation emphasises four key steps: assessing digital needs, taking stock of in-house digital skills and technologies, defining goals of digital processes and tools, and adopting agile processes with regular feedback mechanisms.¹⁷ Inter-agency collaboration is equally critical, as investment facilitation often extends beyond IPA mandates and requires a whole-of-government coordination.¹⁸ Invest KOREA's system relies on data sharing with the Republic of Korea Customs Service, while Estonia's approach operates as an integral part of national e-Government structures that enable interoperable systems and shared code repositories.

Phase II. AI initialisation: Rather than attempting comprehensive transformation, IPAs can work with low-risk applications where AI can deliver measurable value. Common entry points include commercial chatbots for investor inquiries (Investment Fiji's chatbot Nova), generative tools for content creation, or AI-enabled features embedded in existing CRM systems (see Annex III). This phase should be preceded by readiness assessments and followed by phased implementation roadmaps with realistic timelines. Flanders Investment and Trade exemplifies this approach as in 2018, they began with a comprehensive readiness assessment before developing their AI strategy, encompassing both technical requirements and staff upskilling needs (see Box 3).¹⁹



Box 3

Flanders Investment and Trade's AI journey

The four-year AI adoption journey (2017–2021) of Flanders Investment and Trade illustrates how these phases work in practice:

- Started with focused proof-of-concepts (Phase II), prioritising a “quick win” question-answering system
- Conducted formal AI maturity assessment before scaling (Phase II → III transition)
- Built comprehensive data infrastructure only after proving value (Phase III)
- Achieved 62 per cent accuracy through iterative staff feedback (Phase IV)

This timeline demonstrates that AI adoption is a multi-year journey requiring sustained commitment, iterative learning, and phased implementation and is not a single technology deployment.

Source: Nurski (2023).



Box 4

DR Congo ANAPI's accessible AI adoption

DR Congo ANAPI demonstrates how resource-constrained IPAs can successfully deploy AI through commercially available solutions. Partnering with external AI experts, ANAPI integrated an intelligent chatbot into their Sarbacane platform to address challenges in communication and information availability for investors.

ANAPI followed a structured implementation process that included needs assessment, partner selection, solution customisation, and staff training, all accomplished without requiring specialised in-house AI expertise.

Among the key functions is the system that supports investor segmentation through a mini-CRM, provides instant personalised information via an intelligent chatbot, enables data analysis to identify investor trends and preferences, and automates targeted communication campaigns.

Since implementation, ANAPI achieved a 30 per cent increase in qualified contacts, a 50 per cent reduction in response time to investor inquiries, a 20 per cent improvement in prospect-to-investment conversion rates, and enhanced engagement across communication campaigns. However, its long-term vision includes extending AI across the full investment lifecycle, from prospect identification to post-investment relationship management.

Source: ANAPI (2025).

17 UNCTAD (2023). *The IPA Observer: The Digital Transformation of Investment Promotion Agencies*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/diaepcbinf2022d9_en.pdf

18 OECD (2018). *Towards an international framework for investment facilitation*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/b82771dc-en>.

19 StratejAI (2022). *The Blueprint for Artificial Intelligence at Flanders Investment & Trade*. <https://www.stratejai.com/blueprints/>



Phase III. Scaling: As AI use expands, IPAs must secure appropriate technical expertise through pathways aligned with available resources. This may involve building internal digital capacity, partnering with national IT agencies or universities, or relying on external consultants and commercial solutions. Investment Fiji demonstrates how off-the-shelf AI tools, supported by external expertise, can enable meaningful AI adoption in resource-constrained settings.

Phase IV. Maturity: At maturity, AI deployment requires robust data governance frameworks, clear accountability, and proportional human oversight. Lower-risk applications require periodic monitoring, while higher-risk functions demand mandatory human review. Invest KOREA exemplifies this approach, with FDI specialists validating all AI-identified leads before investor engagement.

In addition, European Union initiatives such as the support provided to Flanders Investment and Trade through the Structural Reform Support Programme demonstrate how AI deployment is accompanied by strengthened data governance, risk management and human-oversight structures (see Box 3).²⁰ Regional peer learning also provides valuable pathways: Cambodia's CDC, inspired by Singapore's intelligence-led government model, launched its CDC IPM platform in 2024 to provide AI-integrated investment guidance, automated fee calculation, and real-time project tracking throughout the investment lifecycle. This digitalisation of manual processes shows how LDCs can improve transparency and reduce processing times by adapting the approaches of their regional peers.²¹

Accessible AI options for resource-constrained IPAs

While the above pathway applies across all stages of AI maturity, a critical consideration for many IPAs, particularly those in LDCs and SIDS, is where to begin. The phases presuppose a degree of digital readiness that not all IPAs currently possess. Research across LDC and SIDS IPAs identifies three systems that require minimal technical infrastructure and can deliver value from early implementation stages: AI chatbots for investor inquiries, generative AI tools for content creation, and AI agents embedded in existing CRM systems. Estimated annual costs range from zero to a few thousand dollars per user, making these options accessible without specialised AI staff or dedicated procurement budgets. Chatbots range from simple rule-based systems, such as Togo APIZF's chatbot, which follows predetermined scripts to AI-powered systems that learn from interactions, like DR Congo ANAPI's intelligent chatbot. These solutions rely on commercially available tools and require minimal technical infrastructure, making them appropriate for IPAs in early digitalisation stages.²²

20 European Commission (2019). https://reform-support.ec.europa.eu/what-we-do/digital-transition/blue-print-artificial-intelligence-adoption-flanders_en

21 CDC (NA). <https://ipm.cdc.gov.kh/landing/en>; UNCTAD (2024). *Investment Policy Monitor*. <https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/investment-policy-monitor/measures/4945/cambodia-launches-investment-project-management-system>

22 Recent research confirms the accessibility and impact of these tools. Stanford's 2025 AI Index Report finds that generative AI now outperforms humans in specific programming and content tasks, even within limited budgets. Capgemini (2023) reports that organisations using generative AI for marketing achieve a 57 per cent gain in creativity and efficiency. For CRM applications, the OECD (2025) notes that customer-facing services are among the most frequent areas for AI adoption, with nearly half of AI-active firms in some regions prioritising these functions to drive efficiency and relationship building.





Table 3
AI applications accessible to most IPAs

Application	Estimated yearly costs	Expected impact
AI chatbots for investor inquiries (smaller entities) ²³	\$2,000–6,000 ²⁴	Reduction in routine inquiry time; 24/7 availability
Generative AI for content creation (ChatGPT, Claude or Microsoft Copilot)	\$300–2000 per user ²⁵	Faster content production (requires human review)
AI agents for an existing CRM software	\$0–1,000 ²⁶	Improved lead generation prioritisation; resource allocation

Note: Costs are estimated for small-to-medium-sized IPAs and vary significantly by country context, wage levels, and procurement arrangements. Actual costs depend on conversation volume, number of users, and platform features.

Source: UNCTAD estimations.

Other SIDS and LDC IPAs also used this approach without specialised AI staff: Guyana's *AskHenry* recorded 1,000+ interactions since its 2025 launch, Senegal's APIX uses *Botpress* chatbots, and multiple Caribbean IPAs (Belize, Dominica, Jamaica) deployed *tawk.to* AI Assistants. Investment Fiji uses HubSpot CRM, demonstrating that commercially available tools enable 24/7 service while allowing staff to focus on complex inquiries and relationship building.

Key implementation challenges

While the examples above demonstrate AI's potential, implementation challenges are substantial. Research on AI adoption in public sector organisations and developing economies identifies several barriers that are particularly relevant for IPAs when using AI as a practice in investment promotion.

Data quality and protection: AI systems require substantial volumes of high-quality, structured data, yet many IPAs discover their data are insufficient, inconsistent, or poorly organised. Machine learning trained on incomplete or inaccurate data generates unreliable predictions that can damage investor relationship.²⁷ Additionally, AI systems process sensitive information, creating data protection obligations and cybersecurity risks, particularly with cloud-based tools that raise data sovereignty concerns. Smaller developing economies face particular challenges due to limited data governance frameworks.²⁸ Thorough data assessment before AI investment, systematic data quality improvement programs, and starting with less data-intensive applications can address these gaps. Lastly, comprehensive data governance frameworks, technical safeguards (encryption, access controls), and vendor compliance verification are essential.

23 IOSCO (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Capital Markets: Use Cases, Risks, and Challenges. <https://www.iosco.org/library/pubdocs/pdf/IOSCOPD788.pdf>

24 An example of an AI platform that collaborated with Invest KOREA <https://www.nice.com/websites/pricing>

25 Microsoft Copilot is often included at no additional cost with Microsoft 365 business subscriptions; standalone subscriptions for ChatGPT Plus or Claude Pro range from \$20–\$25/month per user. <https://hai.stanford.edu/ai-index/2025-ai-index-report>

26 Subscriptions to CRM platforms (HubSpot, Salesforce, Microsoft Dynamics) already include AI-powered features such as lead scoring, predictive analytics, and automated workflows in their standard packages. These capabilities are often underutilised. The cost range reflects: \$0 for activating existing features, up to \$1,000 for upgrading to premium tiers if advanced AI capabilities are needed.

27 UNCTAD (2025). *2025 Technology and Innovation Report: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tir2025_en.pdf

28 World Bank (2021). *Artificial Intelligence in Emerging Markets: Opportunities, Trends, and Emerging Business Models*. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/993711613713486658>



Technical capacity and sustainability: AI systems require ongoing maintenance as machine learning models lose accuracy when economic conditions, investor behaviours, or market dynamics shift from the patterns in their training data.²⁹ The OECD (2021) notes that public sector AI adoption often struggles with limited technical expertise and difficulties maintaining systems over time, including associated costs.³⁰ Training large AI models and running continuous predictions consume significant energy, contributing to carbon emissions.³¹ Moreover, over-reliance on AI for routine tasks can lead to deskilling of staff and loss of institutional knowledge. Therefore, sustained and responsible performance requires continuous monitoring, regular optimisation, maintained expertise, thorough documentation, planning for technology evolution, balancing efficiency gains against environmental impact, and maintaining human expertise alongside automation.

Organisational readiness and responsible use: Staff may perceive AI as threatening jobs or questioning their expertise, leading to resistance without effective change management. Additionally, biases in training data can perpetuate inequalities in AI outputs.³² To ensure success, it is essential to involve staff early on, communicate clearly about the role of AI, provide comprehensive training, demonstrate quick wins, recognise adaptation efforts and regularly audit systems for unintended biases.

Ensuring responsible AI use

As IPAs move forward with AI adoption, two fundamental principles should guide implementation: meaningful evaluation and proportional human oversight. Successful AI adoption depends not on technological complexity, but on how well it serves investors and advances strategic objectives. Common evaluation indicators include efficiency gains, conversion rates, and investor satisfaction, complemented by systematic feedback from staff and investors to drive continuous improvement.

Early adopters have predominantly deployed AI for lower-risk activities where errors are manageable. Consistent with the United Nations as well as the OECD AI Principles,³³ human oversight should be proportional to risk and potential impact. General information chatbots with appropriate disclaimers require periodic spot-checks. Lead prioritisation and targeting demand systematic validation before resource allocation. High-stakes decisions, including due diligence assessments, investment incentive commitments, and regulatory determinations, must undergo mandatory human review with clear accountability.³⁴

29 OECD (2021). *Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Big Data in Finance: Opportunities, Challenges and Implications for Policy Makers*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/98e761e7-en>

30 OECD (2021). *Investment Insights: Investment Promotion in the Digital Economy*. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5c840788-en>

31 UNCTAD (2025). *Technology and Innovation Report 2025: Inclusive Artificial Intelligence for Development*. <https://unctad.org/publication/technology-and-innovation-report-2025>

32 Ibid.

33 United Nations (2022) Principles on the Ethical use of AI <https://unsceb.org/topics/artificial-intelligence> and OECD (2019). OECD AI Principles. <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/sub-issues/ai-principles.html>

34 For European countries, the EU AI Act provides specific requirements under Articles 6 and 14 regarding classification of high-risk systems and human oversight obligations. <https://artificialintelligenceact.eu/>





Takeaway

IPAs from across the board, including from LDCs and SIDS, have demonstrated that accessible, commercially available solutions can deliver measurable efficiency gains without complex infrastructure, at least as a starting point. The successful use of AI depends less on technological sophistication than on strategic alignment, phased implementation starting with low-risk applications, and the gradual development of foundational digital capabilities. The framework presented in this IPA Observer therefore provides IPAs at all stages of digital maturity with realistic, context-appropriate pathways. It emphasises that AI should be treated as an ongoing strategic capability requiring investment and learning, rather than as a one-time technology solution.

UNCTAD will continue monitoring the use of AI in investment promotion and facilitation. IPAs are invited to share their experiences, including the main challenges, with ips@unctad.org.

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Annex Table I

Examples of AI use by IPAs

(alphabetically by country)

IPA	Core AI Focus	Application	Description
Flanders I&T (Belgium)	Information synthesis	Enterprise search and Q&A	AI-assisted search and context-aware knowledge extraction
Invest Minas (Brazil)	Predictive decision-making and generative production	Big data analysis	Analysed over 20 million companies, cross-border ownership, and supply chain
ANAPI (DR Congo)	Operational automation	Intelligent chatbot	AI chatbot provided 30% more qualified contacts, 50% faster responses, 20% higher conversion, and improved engagement
CINDE (Costa Rica)	Predictive decision-making	Company profiling	150+ data points tracking 800,000+ companies globally
Invest in Estonia	All four functions	Suve chatbot	Multi-lingual chatbot handling routine inquiries with cost savings
Investment Fiji	Operational automation and predictive decisioning	AI chatbot (Nova)	Handles inquiries, directs to incentives with time savings on routine questions
Germany Trade & Invest	Generative production	Marketing optimisation	AI-optimised campaigns with automated audience targeting and performance analysis
Invest India	Information synthesis	Intelligence platform	Consolidates insights from validated sources using LLMs to score FDI opportunities
Invest KOREA	Predictive decision-making and generative production	Investor targeting system	Machine learning predicting reinvestment likelihood
Invest Qatar	Operational automation	Multi-function chatbot	Real-time responses on incentives, setup procedures, routing
Singapore EDB	Generative production	Marketing analytics	Machine learning for campaign optimisation, market forecasting, and audience segmentation
Invest in Sharjah (UAE)	Operational automation	License automation	Automates issuance, recommends license types, validated documents

Note: This table shows the primary AI function for each IPA. Several IPAs use multiple AI functions across their operations.

Source: UNCTAD (2025) in cooperation with WAIPA.





Annex Table II

AI use by IPAs in LDCs and SIDS

(alphabetically by country)

IPA	Core AI Focus	Application	Description
Bahamas Investment Authority	Information synthesis	BahamasGPT.ai	AI-powered knowledge system providing information resources
Belize (Beltraide)	Operational automation	<i>tawk.to</i> chatbot	<i>tawk.to</i> AI Assistant for investor inquiries
Cambodia (CDC)	Operational automation and predictive decisioning	cdcIPM platform	Dynamic investment guidance, automated fee calculation, real-time project traceability throughout investment lifecycle
Invest Dominica Authority	Operational automation	<i>tawk.to</i> chatbot	AI Assistant for investor support and inquiry management
Dominican Republic (ProDomicana)	Operational automation and information synthesis	<i>tawk.to</i> chatbot and <i>ProInteligencia</i>	AI Assistant combined with AI-driven data dashboard for market intelligence and investment alerts
Guyana Office for Investment	Operational automation	<i>AskHenry</i> chatbot	Interactive chatbot that recorded 1,000+ interactions since 2025
Jamaica (JAMPRO)	Operational automation	AI chatbot	Handles investor inquiries and information provision
Senegal (APIX)	Operational automation	<i>Botpress</i> chatbot	AI-powered chatbot for investor inquiries
St. Kitts and Nevis (Invest Nevis)	Operational automation	<i>NIA</i> digital platform	Check incentives, calculate costs, submit applications electronically
Togo (APIZF)	Operational automation	Rule-based chatbot	Rule-based chatbot (non-AI) for basic investor inquiries

Note: This table presents IPAs from LDCs and SIDS that have implemented chatbots or AI solutions, identified through UNCTAD's 2025 research examining IPA websites and digital platforms. Among 76 IPAs surveyed (44 LDCs and 32 SIDS), 10 have visibly implemented such solutions (13 per cent), all focusing primarily on operational automation. These are in addition to Investment Fiji and DR Congo ANAPI, which reported their AI implementations through WAIPA (see Annex I).

Source: UNCTAD (2025) based on review of IPA websites and digital platforms.





The IPA Observer

Investment promotion and
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