AI for Entrepreneurship Challenge Call

Inventing a sustainable future for Africa today

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Background

The Alliance of Entrepreneurial Universities in Africa (AEUA) proudly announces its fourth annual flagship conference from 7-10 of October 2025 at the University of South Africa (UNISA) Pretoria Campus, Pretoria, South Africa. The Forum is co-organized by [United Nations Economic Commission for Africa](#) (ECA) and [Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education](#) (EDHE) and is hosted by University of South Africa. The Forum of the Alliance will be held in a hybrid format to maximize continental reach and collaboration that bridges geographical divides, connecting innovators, investors, policymakers, and researchers across Africa and beyond.

Why Artificial Intelligence for Entrepreneurship?

Africa is a young and extremely entrepreneurial driven content, partly due to low level of formal employment and a fast growing young population in a world whose labour market is undergoing profound changes. Artificial intelligence (AI) presents many opportunities for both institutions, firms and individuals to run their business affairs in a smart and data informed decision making. There are numerous AI tools that businesses already use in the design of innovative products and business models. For instance, one can use AI to recommend cost-effective and energy efficient solar energy storage solutions; ingredients for a given recipe, texture of a textile or medical device etc. The innovators can test the few recommendations to quickly arrive at a desired product.

This challenge call is primarily looking for innovators and researchers that are embracing AI in design of entrepreneurship promotion, support and management tools (e.g. in business ideation, planning, viability assessment, efficiency and financial management etc). These may be tools you are designing or wish to design to support young people develop their own businesses, informal firms, public institutions, incubators, innovation hubs and tech centres or to large sectors such as health, education, finance, energy etc.

About the Innovation Challenge Call

The Innovation Challenge Call brings together a large pool of global scientists, experts, innovators and entrepreneurs to propose feasible solutions to scientific, technological and industrial challenges faced by public and private entities. Public and private entities may range from firms, government and civil societies agencies, research institutions, universities, independent teams and individuals etc.

For this call, your solution must be unique, original and radical (not a copy of existing ones) with applications beyond your entity. The solutions should preferably be scalable, sustainable (i.e. not donor or government dependent) and environmentally friendly. Therefore, how to use ChatGPT in business is not an acceptable innovative solution as it is not unique and radical (i.e. very different

from an existing solution) while your own solution that is powered by ChatGPT may qualify. More importantly, it should help others to start and run their businesses easily. As such, how you use AI in your own business will not qualify, unless you are offering the same tool as a service to others.

The challenges may be related to efforts for:
   a) *Developing tools that incubators can use to test startup readiness and development for fund*
   b) bringing down the costs of starting a business, easy of starting a business or assessing the viability a business concept or business model,
   c) Designing a cost-effective production (e.g. manufacturing a product etc), piloting or testing, marketing or financing the venture
   d) improving research and development (R&D), innovation performance and outcomes,
   e) overcoming regulatory requirements such as safety standards, energy, water, contaminants, among others.
   f) Improving the quality and appeal of the product to customers, tracking customer sentiments and improving customer relations,

This is an Innovation Challenge Call.
Please <u>do not</u> submit research ideas.

The Process
All challenges received will be reviewed to ensure they are clear, related to the subjects of focus, and could be understood by third parties. This is an important step to enable others to provide useful and relevant ideas and suggestions to the challenge. The Forum and its partners will work with innovation owners to improve clarity and information will be shared with the assessment teams. The challenges will then be registered in the ECA database and that of partner organizations.

Innovations that may be picked will be presented at Forum in South Africa in October; and solution owners may be invited to the Origin Research and Innovation Hackathon that will take place a week before the Forum. Here, different teams will work towards refining solutions to societal challenges using AI.

Advantages:
You are in charge: you define the innovation, and you choose the team to work with. More importantly, you will get free advice and possibly support from leading entrepreneurs, innovators and researchers. The Alliance and its partners will support you as firms, institutions, communities or individuals to source new ideas and solutions from some of the smartest and brightest minds in Africa and beyond to improve your innovation if you can clearly define the challenge needed to help you scale up.

Eligibility criteria

All legal entities – individual entrepreneurs and innovators, firms, institutions and public entities in Africa – except UN entities and those linked to STI Forum - may submit one challenge. Beyond these generalities, the following criteria need to be met:

1. The entity submitting the challenge must be the challenge owner and the one seeking solutions (e.g. a firm) or directly facing the challenge (e.g. startup).
2. For this call, only technological solutions and challenges will be accepted. Non-technological challenges (e.g. organizational, institutional and managerial arrangements)

are outside the current scope of this innovation call.

3. You should be actively developing a solutions or looking for a solution to your innovation now.

All are encouraged to apply, especially women and youths.

Your Application Template
A) Required information

➢ Your Name: ➢ Name of Your Entity: ➢ Address: ➢ Email: ➢ Mobile number: ➢ Website link:
➢ Describe the business of your entity (**250 words**)
Annual Revenue, Sales: $ Annual budget (choose the one that applies)
➢ Number of workers team members:
➢ Number of customers/users/clients:

B) Support documents

1. **Cover letter & letter of support from your entity is enquired**
2. **A support letter from at least one partner is required**

C) Closing date: 20 August 2025

Complete and s**end your applications** to: Mr. Asfaw Yitna – yitna@un.org