

CALL FOR INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

Opening of the Call: **26 August 2020**

Deadline for Submissions: **28 September 2020**



A. Scope

The Royal Science and Technology Park (RSTP) together with the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology (MICT), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Eswatini Communications Commission and Standard Bank Eswatini aim to:-

- (i) Increase the proportion of locally generated innovations in the economy.
- (ii) Nurture local start-ups so that they survive and grow through the vulnerable early stages of development and become bankable and competitive businesses.
- (iii) Remove barriers to entrepreneurship, market access and innovation.

This initiative will enable Government and the organisations to bring together their expertise and resources to facilitate the attainment of the above objectives. Furthermore, they will support the prototyping, experimentation and early adoption of the solutions so that the start-ups can create a good track record and scale-up in Eswatini and globally.

The Ministry of Information, Communication and Technology is guided by the vision of transforming the Kingdom to “a knowledge-based and digitally inclusive society” and thus contribute to the country’s Vision 2022. Notwithstanding the pivotal role of ICT in the advancement of the economy, the Ministry and RSTP also facilitate research and development and innovation in other sectors such as agriculture and food, biotechnology, health, green solutions and indigenous knowledge systems. Therefore, solutions that solve problems in any of the abovementioned sectors are welcome in this Call.

B. Eligibility

Individuals, teams, and early-stage enterprises are invited to apply to join the community of innovators in Eswatini.

1. The applicant must be: -

(i) An individual or team with each person aged 18 years or above.

(ii) A start-up (incorporated or not) that is either at formation or market validation or scale-up phase. RSTP assists with company registration because the incubation services support start-ups (businesses) instead of individuals. If the inventor or innovator is not interested in being an entrepreneur, we advise them to register a company in order to separate the funds for the innovation process from personal funds and manage the technology transfer process in a transparent way. Therefore, RSTP provides company registration services to winners.

(iii) Founder(s) and teams must have a long-term vision for the business, a strong work ethic, be teachable and willing to improve the technical and business know-how. They must provide evidence of skills to develop the solution or availability of finances or clear fundraising plan to hire experts. At least one of the founders must work for the start-up on a full-time basis.

2. The solution must be: -

(i) Either at idea or prototype or mature stage which can be commercialized through any technology transfer method or entrepreneurship.

(ii) Innovative and solve a significant problem that is faced by the population or businesses or both in Eswatini and/or globally.

(iii) Between Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) 2 to 9. TRL 2 represents an idea that is supported with adequate technical research and a feasible methodology that will lead to an experimental proof of concept. TRL 9 represents a 'qualified' or 'certified' technology.

(iv) New or unique or an improvement of an existing solution. Its development and preferred commercialization method should generate some kind of competitive advantage and intellectual property.

(v) Technically feasible to test and deploy or scale-up within 6 months of admission into the incubator. A longer period will be acceptable for deep technologies.

(vi) Financially attractive.

One of the current problems that applicants can aim to solve is the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 affects the health of individuals that encounter the virus. It has caused the exclusion of some people from the formal economy and left them unemployed, economically poor, and vulnerable. The pandemic has also resulted in the closure of some businesses and inspired other businesses to re-engineer their processes and supply chains. Government service delivery has been adversely affected too as the public has had little access to public services since the pronouncement of the partial lockdown and COVID-19 prevention measures.

The expected solutions include, but are not limited to, those addressing challenges in:

- Fintech – redesigning savings, credit, insurance, and transactions for banked or unbanked population or both
- Municipality services - Smart cities
- Education technologies and digital workplace
- Telecommunications
- Transport
- Logistics & Value Chains
- Protecting the Vulnerable
- Healthcare
- Economic Transformation
- Tourism & entertainment
- Government services

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submissions in response to this call for proposals will be made via email and must include the following sections in the order listed:

1. Application form containing the following content:

- Team information;
- Technical specifications of solution or product(s) or service(s) with pictures, videos, etc;
- Feasibility and market attractiveness/opportunity;
- Action plan and milestones for the next three years.

2. Any other relevant documentation as an additional value proposition.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applicants will be evaluated on the following judging criteria:

1. Relevance: A demonstration that the proposed solution addresses a real problem faced by the people of Eswatini.

2. Innovation/Originality: A demonstration that the proposed solution is new or is an improvement of an existing solution.

3. Proof of concept or prototype : Idea that is supported by adequate technical research and a feasible methodology that will lead to an experimental proof of concept or prototype of the solution which can be used to demonstrate the features to the customer or mature stage solutions.

4. Proof of market attractiveness and product opportunity (market research): A clear description of the market characteristics and customers and research that confirms that the product or service will fill a gap and evidence of understanding of competitor positions, advantages, disadvantages and potential response of competitors to the proposed product or service.

5. Founder(s) or team strength: Evidence that founders have skills to develop the product or service and have a long-term vision for the business, a strong work ethic, are teachable and willing to acquire technical and business knowledge.

6. Commercialization and financial evaluation: Clear business model, startup costs and projected profit and loss statement (income & expense statement) for the next 3 financial years.

APPLICATION PROCESS

STAGE ONE – APPLICATION AND SCREENING

- Download Application Form at www.rstp.org.sz/businessincubator and email the complete form to applications@itbi.org.sz before or on – **28th September 2020**
- Development of prototype or model development (by invitation only) up to **-16th October 2020**
- Entrepreneurship and Innovation Training Workshop (by invitation only) on- **1st October 2020**

STAGE TWO – COACHING AND SELECTION

- Submission of revised application and images, videos, etc before or on **-23rd October 2020**
- Shortlisting of applicants before or on **28th October 2020**
- Notice to shortlisted and non-shortlisted applicants on – **28th October 2020**

STAGE THREE - PITCHING AND SELECTION

- Pitching of shortlisted applicants to the Selection Committee on - **29th & 30th October 2020**
- Notice to selected and non-selected applicants on – **3rd November 2020**
- Admission into the incubator on – **5th November 2020**

BENEFITS

Incubation program for one year (renewable subject to the maturity of the solution and strength of the enterprise as well as adherence to incubation terms and conditions) with the following benefits: -

- Co-working space & amenities at Songcondvongcondvo Wemaswati House.
- Capacity building & access to networks.
- Business facilitation.
- Intellectual property protection services.
- Legal services.
- Fundraising support. Admission into the incubator does not automatically lead to access to funding from RSTP or partners. Once selected or admitted into the incubator, start-ups will be notified about available funding opportunities and a funding proposal will be required to access such opportunities.
- Amazon Web Services (AWS) Activate offers startups free AWS credits, tools, resources, and more to quickly get started on AWS.

CONTACT US

Request for clarifications shall be sent to applications@itbi.org.sz. RSTP will respond via email to any request for clarification, provided that such requests are received five (5) days prior to the deadline for submission of proposals.

COLLABORATOR

