

African Innovation Foundation (AIF)

2017 Innovation Prize for Africa (IPA) Call for Applications

Deadline for Applications: 03 January 2017, 23.59h GMT

The African Innovation Foundation (AIF) is delighted to announce the call for its 2016 Innovation Prize for Africa (IPA) applications. The IPA honours and encourages innovative achievements that contribute toward developing new products, increasing efficiency or saving cost in Africa. The prize also promotes among young African men and women the pursuit of science, technology and engineering careers as well as business opportunities with potential of contributing to sustainable development in Africa.

It is important to note that:

The IPA is not just another award; the comparative advantage of IPA is that:

- IPA assesses both hi-tech and low-tech innovations, and these include tangible products and intangible social processes on the same plane;
- This process provides an opportunity for innovators from a wide spectrum of educational and social backgrounds to compete at the same level;
- We are looking for practical solutions addressing African challenges. The only determining success factor in all instances is how the innovations are assessed according to the key indicators set out in Section 3 of the Selection Criteria below;
- AIF ensures the strict protection of Intellectual Property (IP) rights and sensitive details of your innovation will be kept confidential. Everyone involved in IPA selection process is bound by an AIF/IPA Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), requiring them to keep all information confidential.

The IPA is focused on:

- Mobilize African innovators and entrepreneurs who deliver innovative market-oriented solutions to African challenges and support them through the IPA awards and post-prize activities;
- Strengthen African innovation ecosystems by mobilizing innovation enablers from all sectors to join hands and create a conducive environment to fuel innovation across Africa.

The IPA anticipates contributing to the following outcomes:

- Increased commercialization of research and development (R&D) outputs in Africa
- Increased funding of start-ups, adoption of new and emerging technologies and accelerated growth of an innovative and dynamic private sector; and

Increased economic activity and African-led development that results in lasting impact.

- A strong African innovation ecosystem.

1. IPA 2017 PRIORITY AREAS

The IPA 2017 recognizes innovative breakthroughs that unlock new African potential in the following five priority areas: *agriculture and agribusiness; environment, energy and water; health and well-being; ICTs; manufacturing and service industry*. Details are provided below:

Innovations that fit into a thematic area not identified above are also welcome. However, the IPA Secretariat must be notified about this submission, with full details.

- **Agriculture/agribusiness**

Innovations that have demonstrated a lead in the agricultural sector, particularly value added at specific points of the agricultural value-chain. It is about providing new ways to ensure a food-secure future for the African continent and the world. The innovation could be about commercial and market-oriented farming as well as small-scale and subsistence farming.

- **Environment, Energy and Water**

Innovations that have demonstrated a lead in developing or applying cost-effective, smart renewable energy generation processes, cleaner water supply systems etc. It is about the way we adapt to climate challenges and steward our natural resources to impact the inheritance we leave to the future generations of Africans.

- **Health and Well-being**

Innovations that have demonstrated high impact or potential in improving the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals or communities through prevention, treatment etc. It is about finding new treatments, cures and approaches that ensure longer, happier and healthier lives. This might include the development and use of traditional and modern medicines, improved sanitation, hygiene and treating or preventing the major diseases faced by the continent.

- **Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs)**

Innovative ICTs applications that have demonstrated their potential in addressing key development challenges in African societies (e.g. in communities) or economy, including: software, mobile/wireless technologies and local language software. It is about developing new solutions that address everyday challenges that help Africans live and work more successfully.

- **Manufacturing and Service Industry**

Innovations that have demonstrated a lead on addressing the key pillars of innovation in production technology/industry: creating high added-value, greener, more customer focused

and/or high quality products; manufacturing more with less input materials, using the lowest energy and creating less or zero waste. It is about helping people across the continent literally build better lives.

2. APPLICATION GUIDELINES

Are you **an African** entrepreneur, academic or inventor with an innovation that could potentially provide an African solution to some of the continent's every day challenges? If your answer is "yes", then you should apply for IPA 2017.

Below are specific guidelines on who can apply and how to apply:

- Eligible innovations **MUST** be **by Africans for Africa**. Africans in the Diaspora can also apply if their innovations are of significance for Africa. People who do not hold citizenship of an African country are not eligible to apply. An exception will be made for Africans who hold the citizenship of a non-African country;
- A fully completed application form with a full description of the innovation must accompany each submission; if not, the entry will be disqualified;
- The innovation description should clearly illustrate the social and/or economic outcome and impact with regard to African development and the priority area chosen; it should also be in line with the IPA assessment and selection criteria.
- Application forms and description of the innovation should be in English, French or Portuguese. While the innovations can be conducted in any language including local languages, the submissions should be translated and submitted in English, French or Portuguese;
- Applicants are required to attach a letter of support/endorsement from an institution or an authority with knowledge of their innovation. This will serve as a testimony of how important the innovation is in addressing development challenges faced by Africans.
- Each mandatory question on the application form **MUST** be answered; if not, the application will be deemed incomplete and disqualified.
- There is no application fee and age limit, but the applicant must be in a position to defend their submission at any stage of the process.

3. CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

In the overall assessment of winning applications, the winners are established with reference to:

- The uniqueness of their innovations and superiority to similar or alternative solutions;
- The size and nature of positive social impact that can be attributed to application of their innovation;
- The potential of the innovation to become a commercial success or sustainable (for social innovations).

In arriving at an assessment of the application, the Selection Panel will evaluate a submitted innovation against the following five criteria:

The following are the five criteria to be considered:

1. *Originality*: The uniqueness of the product and its superiority in comparison with similar or alternative products in the market
2. *Marketability*: The extent to which the innovation sufficiently addresses the problem it seeks to solve at a cost or model that is accessible to the target market
3. *Scalability*: The extent to which the solution can be easily applied to other similar markets beyond the applicant's immediate or local environment
4. *Social impact*: The ability of the innovation to create or effect positive or desirable change within the target community and beyond
5. *Scientific/technical aspects*: For tangible technical/scientific products; the extent to which the technical/scientific specifications of the innovation are grounded on established science and sufficiently address anticipated product risks.

The IPA 2017 will consist of three Awards and support to all nominees which will be given following the criteria outlined above:

- **First Prize (US\$100 000)**: The overall winner whose innovation demonstrates the best innovation with clear business potential
- **Second Prize (US\$25 000)**: The innovator who best demonstrates a commercially-driven business innovation. Beyond the aforementioned five criteria, this Award will be carefully assessed on its marketability and commercial potential.
- **Special Prize for Social Impact (US\$25 000)**: The innovation that demonstrates the greatest social impact.
- **Nominees**: The top-10 nominees shall be invited for face-to-face interviews to assess in depth their innovations as potential winners for the IPA competition. All nominees are invited to participate in the awards ceremony and receive certificates. In addition, the AIF will also provide a US\$5 000 voucher to each nominee that must be applied strictly for purposes of furthering their innovation.
- Nominees also benefit from the AIF-IPA brand, receive ongoing local, regional and international media coverage, and support and training opportunities can be mobilized for the nominees.

4. GENERAL TERMS & CONDITIONS

The following are the terms and conditions governing the IPA:

- The selection of the eventual IPA winners entails a rigorous process designed to ensure the integrity of the process and quality participation at each level. By submitting an application for this prize, the applicant fully recognizes this process as described in Clause 5 below and agrees to adhere to this process. No exceptions will

be made to any applicant and failure to participate at any level will lead to disqualification from subsequent levels.

- By accepting Innovation Prize for Africa (IPA) Awards, the winners will be requested to play an active role in promoting their innovations and IPA in general. By accepting the Prize, the winners would also be accepting to dedicate some time to be an ambassador for IPA. Each nominee will be requested to sign a note confirming his/her commitment as IPA Ambassador. Failure to sign it might lead to the disqualification from the competition.
- AIF has the right to cancel the Prize at any time, if a selected applicant is found ineligible or does not fulfil the conditions laid down for the Prize. Any misrepresentation of any kind will lead to the removal from the competition.
- All applicants are required to declare who is the owner of the innovation and failure to disclose ownership may lead to disqualification. In case the innovation has been undertaken in collaboration with others, the names and contacts of the other collaborators need to be specified. Also, in this case, all collaborators need to specify in writing that they agree that the applicant will be the recipient of the prize in case their innovation is declared as the winner of either one of the three Prizes.
- The decision of the IPA selection panel shall be final.
- Any monetary awards received will be strictly applied for purposes of furthering the innovation.
- To avoid conflict of interest, IPA selection panel members, technical validation experts, members of the sponsoring institutions and their family members shall not be eligible to submit an entry.
- The IPA secretariat will ensure the strict protection of Intellectual Property rights, and everyone involved in the IPA selection process will be required to sign an IPA Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA).
- The IPA Secretariat reserves the right to compile and analyse the data collected during the course of the competition in furtherance of the objectives of the organization. No such use however shall entail the disclosure of personal or confidential information.
- The IPA secretariat might contact the applicants after the competition to propose various options including networking and business opportunities.

5. SELECTION PROCESS

All received applications are subjected to a rigorous multi-tier assessment/evaluation process based on the IPA five weighted criteria. Below is a summary of steps involved in the IPA selection process with the timeline:

1. **Pre-screening (October 2016 – January 2017):** Pre-screening commences immediately applications are received and continues on an ongoing basis until the competition is closed. The IPA secretariat assesses that the received applications meet the minimum requirements: that the applicant is a person of African citizenship or origin, is the owner of the innovation and the innovation is more than just an idea. Additionally all the mandatory fields are completed.
2. **Screening (November 2016 – January 2017):** PhD students from reputable institutions evaluate the applications to assess and assign scores based on the following considerations; has the applicant identified a clear problem they are solving; does the solution they are proposing to address the problem sound plausible; can the solution be deemed innovative when assessed against similar solutions existing in the market globally. Based on the scores received, a shortlist is prepared and submitted to the judges.
3. **Preliminary Assessment by Judges (February – March 2017):** Each application is independently reviewed by at least two judges who are members of the Selection Panel. The key issues being assessed are: whether the problem being addressed is a major challenge on the continent; is the solution better than globally existing solutions; is the solution commercially viable or self-sustaining.
4. **Selection Panel Reconciliation Sessions (March 2017):** Where two judges reviewed a single application, they will have conference call sessions to reconcile the evaluations they assigned to the application and come to a common position. Subsequently, all Selection Panel members will review via conference call all the applications received at this stage and create a shortlist of top 25 applications.
5. **Technical Validation (March - April 2017):** Technical experts from reputable institutions and with deep domain experience will carry out validation on selected applications. They seek to determine whether the innovation works as is claimed and whether this represents something new in that specific industry.
6. **Phone Interviews (May 2017):** The Selection Panel will conduct phone interviews with the applicant to review the comments from the validator. The call may include where necessary the validator. The Selection Panel will select 10 nominees after the phone interviews and the names will be announced shortly thereafter.
7. **Face-to-Face interviews (July 2017; exact dates and place TBA):** The selection panel will conduct face-to-face interviews with the nominees. The nominees have to appear personally before the judges. The interviews will be conducted just

before the awards ceremony. The winners would be chosen after the interviews and announced during the awards ceremony.

8. **Awards Ceremony (July 2017; exact date and place TBA):** IPA 2017 winners will be announced and awarded at a special ceremony. Venue and exact date will be announced by mid-April 2017 and will be posted on IPA website and other social media channels.

6. SUBMISSION OF ENTRIES

A duly completed form with a full description of the innovation must accompany each submission; otherwise the entry will be disqualified. Each mandatory question must be answered fully and making a reference to the attachments does not replace answering the question and would lead to disqualification.

Submitting your application:

All applications must ONLY be submitted through our online portal for the competition at:

<https://ipa.africaninnovation.org/s/login/>

Applications must be submitted in English, French or Portuguese. You can select your preferred language when you land at the link above.

For any questions regarding the IPA application process, please check first the website and if you still have questions then contact the IPA Secretariat: ipainfo@africaninnovation.org

7. CLOSING DATE

The closing date for the IPA 2017 competition is **Tuesday, 03 January 2017 at 23:59 GMT.**