

African Innovation Foundation (AIF)

2018 Innovation Prize for Africa (IPA) Call for Applications

Deadline for Applications: **10 January 2018, 23.59h GMT**

The African Innovation Foundation (AIF) is delighted to announce the call for its 2018 Innovation Prize for Africa (IPA) applications. The IPA main purpose is *to strengthen African innovation ecosystems through supporting a culture of innovation and competitiveness, whilst spurring growth of innovative, market-driven African solutions to African challenges.*

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
- IPA 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.
- Beyond the lucrative cash Awards, AIF provides post-prize support to all nominees and other selected innovators which helps move their innovation to the next levels

The IPA is focused on:

- Honouring and encouraging innovative achievements that contribute toward developing new products, increasing efficiency or saving cost in Africa.
- Providing unique platforms for entrepreneurs, innovators, funding bodies and business development service providers to network, exchange ideas and explore innovative business opportunities.
- Promoting innovation across Africa in key sectors through the competition
- Mobilizing leaders from all sectors to fuel African innovation and strengthen the African innovation ecosystems
- Promoting science, technology and engineering as a rewarding career path among African youth and women

The IPA anticipates contributing to the following outcomes:

- Increased acceleration and scaling of home grown innovations across Africa and beyond
- Increased funding of local innovations and investment in start-ups which leads to job creation and inclusive growth
- Increased number of women and young African focusing on creating innovative solutions to African challenges
- Strong and inclusive African innovation ecosystems.

1. IPA 2018 PRIORITY AREAS

The IPA 2018 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 and sanitation 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, diagnosis and treatment. It is about finding new, cheaper, accessible and faster ways to detect and treat to 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. Whereas ICT remains a

cross-cutting issue and a tool applicable in many sectors, the focus here is on solutions where the primary and greatest investment in development, use and deployment of the solution is with focus to ICTs.

- **Manufacturing and Service Industry**

Innovations that have demonstrated a lead on addressing the key pillars of innovation in production and service /industry: creating high added-value, greener, more customer focused and/or high-quality products and services; manufacturing more with less input materials, using the lowest energy and creating less or zero waste; introducing effective and efficient process in a production value chain. It is also about new business processes that generate value within a given industry.

2. GENERAL 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 the IPA. This Prize is intended to benefit Africans who have devised outstanding innovative solutions to real African challenges.

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. Our working definition of Africans is persons who:
 - a) Hold the passport of an African country, OR
 - b) if they hold the passport of a non-African country, they are able to demonstrate that they are either recently naturalized in their new country or at most they are a first-generation African of their new nationality.
- 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

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 and can generate profits or is self-sustainable
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 and desirable benefit beyond profit within the target community and other stakeholders
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.

There will be a maximum of ten nominees invited to the Awards ceremony in the host country. Out of these ten, three will be selected after face-to-face interviews for the top 3 prizes while the remaining seven shall receive recognition prizes. See details below:

- **First Prize (US\$ 100 000)**: The overall winner who represents the best of the applicants in terms of innovativeness of their solution, the commercial and scalability potential and social impact.
- **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.
- **Recognition Prizes (US\$ 5,000)**: the remaining seven shall receive a voucher in recognition of advancement of their innovation to the finalist stage.

All financial cash support by AIF to prize winners must be applied exclusively towards the further development of their innovation. The recipients shall commit in writing to use the funds exclusively for this purpose. The recipients will also be obliged to report to AIF at mutually agreeable intervals on how they have deployed their funds and progress they have made.

Additionally, nominees and winners shall also benefit from the AIF-IPA brand, receive ongoing local, regional and international media coverage, and support and training opportunities can be mobilized for them.

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 6 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.
- Part of the selection and awards process will require the applicants selected as nominees to be present in the country hosting the awards during the interviews leading to the selection of the winners and to participate in various events organized on the side-lines of the Awards. Any applicant that is unable or unwilling to avail themselves during the entire duration of this period (approximately 7 days) shall not be eligible for consideration as a nominee.
- No applicant shall be selected as a nominee if they implicitly or explicitly express an unwillingness to become an IPA ambassador which entails participation in various promotional activities that AIF may reasonably request of them. Their participation in promotional activities that requires physical time out of their schedules will be mutually agreed by both AIF and the nominee.
- 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, 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.
- 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 above notwithstanding, applicants selected to be nominees to the Prize shall be expected to discuss their innovation including in wide media coverage that is a part of the IPA. Whereas they are NOT expected to disclose protected or confidential information, they may be requested to provide sufficient information to enlighten the public about their innovation. Any applicant who is not prepared to discuss their innovation or be subject to wide media coverage shall not be selected as a nominee to the IPA. Similarly, any applicant who is unable or unwilling to have their profile or

their innovation shared in our promotional activities shall not be eligible for consideration as a nominee.

- 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. SUBMISSION PROCESS

Participation and submission of an application to the IPA will follow a number of steps as set out below. Please pay close attention to these steps to ensure successful submission of your application:

1. **Accessing applications:** All applications will be via our online application portal: (www.ipa.africaninnovation.org). You can also access the application portal via our IPA website: (<http://innovationprizeforafrica.org/>). On the top right-hand corner, you will see a button (Apply Now). Click on this link and it will lead you to the application portal. We will NOT consider any applications which are submitted outside the portal. This includes applications sent by post or email. Please note that our application portal is powered by Salesforce.com and you may be directed to their pages.
2. **Registration:** Applicants will register with their details on the landing page of the application portal. Once registered, you will receive a confirmation email with a link to create your account. It will contain your username and you will be invited to create your own password. You can recreate your password at any given time using the "forgot password" link. Applicants who participated in previous editions of the IPA may be able to access their past applications.
3. **Profile Information:** Upon successful registration and creation of your account, you will be requested to complete your Profile Information. Among other things, your profile information will contain details of your country of origin. Once you complete and submit your Profile Information, you will not be able to alter it and can only access it as a read-only page. If from the submitted information you are found NOT to be an African national as defined in Clause 2 above, you will not be eligible to proceed and your application process will terminate here. You will not be able to access any other parts of the application and shall be notified via email.
4. **Innovation Summary:** Applicants who are found eligible at the Profile stage will then be able access the next stage of the application which will entail presenting a summary description of the innovation. At this stage, we shall evaluate the ownership of the innovation, the current progress status of the innovation and whether the innovation meets our minimum threshold for innovativeness and originality. Once the Innovation Summary has been submitted, you will not be able

to edit this information and will only access it as a read-only page. Applications that are found unable to meet our criteria in these three respects will not be eligible to proceed. Your application process will terminate here. You will not be able to access any other parts of the application and shall be notified via email.

5. **Full Submission.** Applicants who are found to meet the set criteria for the Innovation Summary will have their access extended to the full application. They will then be able to complete their full application and respond to all the five IPA criteria. Once the Full Application has been submitted, you will not be able to edit this information and will only access it as a read-only page. You will also be able to login and download a PDF version of your submitted application. Once the full application has been submitted, it will then be escalated to the formal selection process. All applicants at this stage will be required to submit a short video not exceeding three minutes describing themselves and their innovation.

It is very important to bear the above steps in mind and remember that you will not be able to submit your full application in one single instance. The application has to go through different approval processes before you can access the next stage of the application. All questions are mandatory unless indicated otherwise. Making reference to attachments is not sufficient and you must answer all questions. Starting your application too close to the deadline or on the deadline may compromise your ability to receive all approvals in time to meet the deadline. Plan your submission timing well.

6. 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 2017 - January 2018):** Pre-screening commences immediately applications are received and continues on an ongoing basis until the competition closing date. The IPA secretariat assesses that the received applications meet the minimum requirements: that the applicant is a person of African citizenship or origin; that all the mandatory fields are completed and the innovation is developed beyond being just an idea.
2. **Screening (December 2017 – January 2018):** We engage partners from reputable institutions of higher learning to evaluate submitted applications. They assess and recommend an application for advancement based on the satisfactory consideration of the following factors: 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 evaluation, a shortlist is prepared and submitted to the Selection Panel of Judges.

3. **Preliminary Assessment by Judges (January 2018):** 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; whether the solution is better than globally existing solutions addressing the same problem; whether the solution is commercially viable or self-sustaining and if the solution is likely to have wide social impact.
4. **Reconciliation and shortlisting (February – March 2018):** Where two or more judges reviewing the same application reach different conclusions on whether the recommendation will be promoted or not, the judges will reconcile their positions in a virtual tripartite session organized by AIF. At the end of this reconciliation process, a maximum of 25 applications will be selected for onward advancement to the next level. Part of this shortlisting exercise will entail questions by judges referred to technical validators to assess the validity of some of the technical claims made by the applicant.
5. **Technical Validation (Feb- March 2018):** Technical experts from reputable institutions of research and higher learning will carry out validation on the 25 selected applications. Their research will be focused largely on the issues referred to them by judges of the Selection Panel. They will be seeking to assess the validity of any claims made by the applicant. The validators are also invited to make any observations that they think impinge on the innovation and also provide any other information they may find useful. At the end of this exercise, only applications which pass the validation test will be selected for the next level.
6. **Selection Panel meeting and Selection of IPA 2018 Nominees (April 2018):** The applications shortlisted from the technical validation stage will be invited for an interview via Video Conferencing to pitch their innovation to the judges. All the IPA judges will be assembled at a selected location and the selected candidates will check-in via a video conferencing facility. This will represent the first time the judges get to see the applicants and also give the applicants an opportunity to respond to any issues raised by validators. At the end of this session, the Selection Panel will identify maximum 10 nominees to be invited for face-to-face interviews.
7. **Face-to-Face interviews (June/July 2018 - exact dates and place TBA):** The selection panel will conduct face-to-face interviews with the selected nominees. 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 (June/July 2018 and exact date and place TBA):** IPA 2018 winners will be announced and awarded at a special ceremony. Venue and exact date will be announced by April 2018 and will be posted on IPA website and other social media channels.
9. AIF reserves the right to share reasons for any decision made during the selection process but is not obliged to under law. Where AIF indicates that a decision communicated to an applicant is final and the decision is communicated by the responsible officer, such decision shall not be liable to challenge or appeal to any

authority and AIF is not obliged to enter into any further correspondence with regard to such decision.

7. CLOSING DATE

The closing date for the IPA 2018 competition is Tuesday, **10 January 2018 at 23:59 GMT**. Any application sent after this deadline will not be accepted

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

Email: ipaapplications@africaninnovation.org

Telephone: +41 44 515 54 60