



Eswatini Communications Commission National Innovation Initiative 2022

1. BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The Eswatini Communication Commission in keeping with its strategic intent as encapsulated in the Strategic Management Plan (2018-2022) and the ESCCOM Act, 2016 is committed to promoting innovation for the sustainability and continuous development of the Eswatini Communications Industry.

The National Innovation Initiative is a programme that is being coordinated by the Commission to map out the existing innovations across Eswatini with a view of supporting the most promising, disruptive initiatives with the highest potential for social and economic impact. The call is therefore targeted at local innovators, technology-based start-ups and creative innovations that are solving societal challenges particularly those addressing Agriculture, Education, ICT, Climate Change and Health including those brought by the current COVID 19 pandemic. The programme is also aimed at imparting technical and business development knowledge and skills in the targeted groups to enhance their capacity to position themselves for successful commercialization. This programme will

further facilitate attainment of the startup's next milestone by recognizing and awarding financial support to the best innovations in various selected categories.

Pursuant to this, the Commission invites Startups and Tech Hubs as well as Investors in the ICT ecosystem to participate in the inaugural edition of the National Innovation Initiative with the theme "**Promoting Sustainable Digital Services Development in Eswatini**".

The ICT Innovation Initiative will be a medium for showcasing talents and innovations in the entire ICT ecosystem. This is aimed at motivating and encouraging Eswatini youths to engage in innovative developments for the telecoms/ICT industry and other key economic sectors to improve the nation's ability to compete in the global economy.

In addition, the Initiative is designed for the promotion of Digital SMEs with new business delivery breakthroughs.

2. TOPICS

- a. *ICT for Agriculture*: proposals in the development of applications and integrated systems in all fields addressing any agriculture related challenges, i.e. food security, environment, supply chain, waste management, etc.
- b. *ICT for Education*: proposals addressing any challenges in the education sector hindering e-learning uptake especially in the COVID-19 era.
- c. *ICT Related Technologies and Applications*: proposals in any ICT related topic solving a problem of interest in the ICT sector.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Prospective Technology Hubs and Startups entering the competition are required to submit proposals that meet the following criteria for consideration:

- The project should be thoroughly researched and have a clear relevance to ICTs incorporated and solution to problem being addressed from the relative sector specialists.
- Interested participants should be duly registered with the Commission.
- Proof of concept (feasibility of idea with diagram, algorithm, etc.).
- Novelty of the project.
- The pitch idea should demonstrate clear commercial sustainability and profitability framework.
- Team diversity and indigenous capacity to develop and support the solution. (women participation is encouraged, skills diversity)

4. APPLICATION GUIDELINE

- All applications should be made **ONLINE**.
- There is no cost to enter the competition and you will **retain full control and ownership** of your technology.
- Each Team will Register and submit the following documentation:
 - A. 4-page Executive Summary of the project concept
 - B. 5-7 minutes video of the pilot project/prototype
 - C. Names, Age, contact details, passport size photos and profile of all Team members.
 - D. Website (optional)
- Interested and qualified Startups should submit the above documents in a zip folder to: <https://bit.ly/ESCCOMInnoChallenge>
- The subject of the mail should read "Submission from <business name>" and the zipped file named after the business.

5. Application

The National Innovation Initiative 2022 will open for application on the 6th Feb – 17th March 2023. It is free to enter and you can see more on the event below.

For a chosen topic, the following criteria should be followed to address the topic during application:

A. Executive Summary

Applicant should provide an overview of their approach to the Innovation Challenge. Touch upon the challenge in passing, with special attention paid to the description of innovation and observed results.

B. Introduction and Applicant Profile

- Introduce the application
- Include a description of Technology Hub and/or Start-up's, type, size, location and scope of operation.

C. Innovation Challenge topic and background

Provide background information regarding the particular innovation challenge topic selected. Relevant information may include; applicant's history with topic, particular business drivers for selecting the topic, unique operating circumstances related to the topic or the innovation challenge in general, and/or the inspiration or reasoning behind selection of the topic.

D. Description of Innovation

- Describe in detail, the innovation for which the application has been submitted
- Discussion of the innovation planning process
- Resources and/or changes required in planning
- Operationalization of the innovation
- Impact of the innovation

E. Observed results

Describe the observed results of the innovation. Include qualitative as well as quantitative results as appropriate. Make a clear connection between the implantation and the observed results.

6. Review and Selection

The judges will evaluate each submission from the following viewpoints. In some cases, modification may be recommended.

- Functional prototype or turnkey solution
- Proposal concept, significance, quality and efficiency of implementation and the management
- Soundness of concept, significance, and quality of objectives, advantages of proposal compared to similar projects
- Quality and effectiveness of methodology and associated work plan
- Proper allocation and justification of resources to be committed (budget, staff, equipment)
- Potential to generate sustainable practices, business models or industry relevant products with future development.
- Novelty of the concept will be an added advantage
- **Fifteen (15)** Tech hubs/Startups will be shortlisted to showcase their technology to a panel of judges at a venue to be announced by the Commission.
- Those shortlisted will be announced on 30th March, 2023. The Tech hub/Startups with the best three Innovative prototypes will be awarded seed funding or cash Prizes of **E100 000, E75 000 and E55 000** respectively to help commercialize or put their product on the market. The winner will be afforded an opportunity for invitation to global Hackfest and conferences. Note that prototypes must be commercially viable to be on the market in not more than 2 years.

7. Important Dates

Date	Stage
6th Feb - 17th March 2023	Applications open online
30th March 2023	Shortlisted Tech Hubs & Startups announced
6th – 7th April 2023	Shortlisted Tech Hubs & Startups convene for a 2-day pitch/exhibition
	2-day pitch/exhibition and grading of Contestants by the Judges at announced venue
14th April 2023	Award of prizes

Important Information/Notices

- Applying to the National Innovation Initiative counts as a public disclosure of your idea and it is your responsibility to protect it adequately before making an application.
- Before applying, please ensure you are satisfied with the level of protection for any idea or material included in the application, and seek your own legal advice if necessary. Failure to do so may affect your ability to protect it in the future.
- Applicants are not required to provide more details about their ideas than that required in the online application form or as much as they are comfortable disclosing. However, providing insufficient detail may affect the ability of the judges to make a fair assessment of your application.
- Deadline for submission of entries is 17th February, 2023 and shortlisted applicants will be announced on 30th March, 2022.
- Shortlisted applicants are required to be available at the venue to be announced on the 16th March, 2022.

- For more information, please email: innovation@esccom.org.sz
An independent panel of Judges will determine a First and Runner-up entry and the Judges' decisions are final.