

BACKGROUND

ATU-AFRICA INNOVATION CHALLENGE 2021

In partnership with ITU



Theme: Best ecosystem practices in Africa enabling youth ICT innovation
Rallying call: Are you an organization which promotes good practices that encourage youth ICT innovation across Africa?

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Background

Recognizing the importance of digital innovation and the need for an enabling environment to tackle challenges facing the youth in Africa, the African Telecommunications Union (ATU) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) have partnered to run the second edition of the annual ATU Africa Innovation Challenge under the banner, “Best ecosystem practices in Africa enabling youth ICT innovation”.

This year’s challenge comes at a time when the impact of COVID-19 on communities is becoming more and more visible. Youth are among the most vulnerable to this impact, facing challenges such as socioeconomic and workforce inclusion. According to the International Labour Organization, “Africa is home to nearly 363 million young people, and this is expected to double by 2050. The full potential of young Africans remains unrealized as unemployment, working poverty, informal employment and gender inequalities continue to be significant obstacles to young people accessing decent jobs.”¹

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/--africa/--ro-abidjan/documents/genericdocument/wcms_758665.pdf

It is expected that 15 to 20 million educated youth will join the African workforce every year for the next three decades, compounding the existing problem. COVID-19 has disproportionately affected young people, with many finding themselves out of school, and excluded from economic and social life.

Many innovators — including young innovators — are looking to tackle these issues, but often, the problem owners, solution owners and resource owners do not come together to scale up and share their success stories or good practices. Digital technologies can offer tremendous opportunities to address inequalities, but they need the support of an ecosystem and its stakeholders to achieve impact.

Challenge objectives

The challenge aims to:

1. Recognize the impact of partnerships between young innovators and ecosystem stakeholders
2. Build a network of champions to develop a youth resilient ecosystem in Africa by sharing their best practices
3. Provide information on access to resources from expert communities and build entrepreneurship capability for young innovators
4. Amplify and replicate best practices that support youth resilience
5. Create an enabling environment to promote inclusivity in the information society to leverage the current innovation impetus and bring innovative digital solutions into community development
6. Accelerate the development of telecommunication/ICTs to achieve digital economies in partnership with the ITU.

Challenge scope and eligibility

This competition is open to ALL ecosystem stakeholders such as regulatory authorities, entrepreneurial support organizations, incubators, accelerators, or any institution such as schools/colleges/universities from AFRICA, with programmes and policies that focus on creating an enabling environment for youth to develop ICT innovations.

The ecosystem stakeholder will be required to submit:

- i. A unique practice that enables opportunities for youth to innovate and create. The practice **MUST** be an ORIGINAL idea/concept developed by the ecosystem stakeholders and **MUST** have been successfully implemented (and running) for a minimum of one year. It can be in the form of a policy, an initiative/programme supporting youth in technology; and

- ii. Information about two innovators (who MUST be below 35 years old) that have benefitted from this practice.

The practice submitted alongside the innovations' story (as provided for in the submission form) should reflect ANY of the following topical issues:

1. Policies and regulations: Policies or regulatory guidance that creates an enabling environment for technology-driven youth innovation.
2. Socioeconomic empowerment: Initiatives, platforms, or programmes that enable access to jobs and opportunities, mitigate community and social vulnerabilities among youth, and empower youth to be problem solvers in their communities.
3. Lifelong skills readiness: Initiatives, platforms, or programmes building lifelong skills to unlock young people's potential to innovate and thrive in the digital economy.



Note:

All submissions will be made ONLY by the ecosystem stakeholders, on behalf of the innovator, and NOT individually by the innovator.

The word “ORIGINAL” as used in the context of all documents related to the ATU Africa Innovation Challenge 2021 is applied to mean, novelty/newness/uniqueness/distinctiveness of the referred idea/concept.

Key Milestones

Date	Activity
15 th June 2021 11:00 – 12:30 EAT	Challenge's Launch
15th June 2021-31 July 2021	Submission of entries/applications
31 July 2021	Application deadline
15 August 2021	Publication of shortlisted candidates
15 September 2021	Selection of Winners
28th September	Award Ceremony
1-15 October 2021	Winner Bootcamp

Evaluation criteria

A jury of experts from ITU, ATU and supporting organizations will use the following criteria to shortlist the best 25 submissions:

- **Originality:** the concept of both the innovation (by the innovator) and the practice (developed and promoted by the ecosystem stakeholder to support innovation) must be original/unique.
- **Creativity:** the concept of both the innovation (by the innovator) and the practice (developed and promoted by the ecosystem stakeholder to support innovation) must be innovative and exceptional.
- **Sustainability:** the submission must clearly elaborate ways in which the innovator in relation to his/her innovation and the practice will be able to adapt to the future.
- **Viability:** the innovation (by the innovator), and the practice (developed and promoted by the ecosystem stakeholders to support innovation) must be realistic and logical.

- **Impact:** the submission must fall within the scope of the challenge and have crosscutting impact and relevant solutions.
- **Relevance:** submissions must co-relate with the challenge objectives, topic and scope.



Based on overall performance, the jury will then select the 10 winning practices. All 10 will be awarded according to the following scheme:

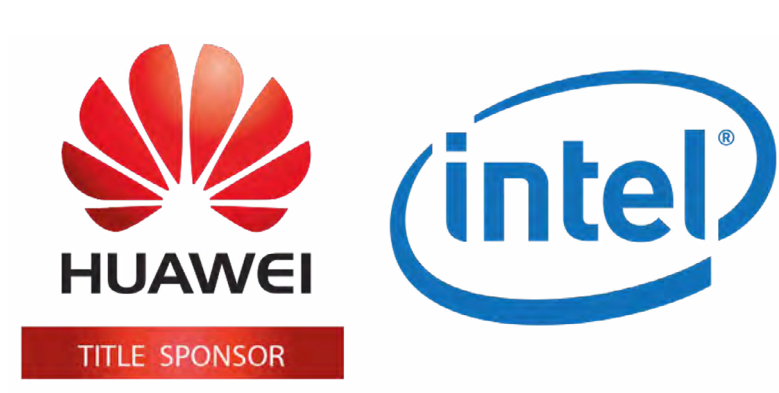
Ranking	Cash award	ATU, Ecosystem stakeholders Recognition Award	In-kind Award
Position 1	USD 10,000 disbursed as USD 5000 cash shared equally to the two innovators whose innovations were submitted by the ecosystem, and USD 5,000 in promoting the best practice	ATU best youth supporting ecosystem stakeholders of the year-Africa (Branded trophy and certificate)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Attend a boot camp organized by ITU to scale up and amplify their practices; Have their practices recognized by ITU and ATU as an “Ecosystem stakeholders Best Practice” that can be scaled and amplified across Africa to foster youth resilience;
Position 2	USD 5,000 disbursed as USD 2,500 cash shared equally to the two innovators whose innovations were submitted by the ecosystem and USD 2,500 in promoting the best practice	1 st Runners Up, ATU best youth supporting ecosystem stakeholders of the year-Africa (Branded trophy and certificate)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Showcase their best practices in a personalized virtual booth at the Global Innovation Forum, and connect to a community of practice with like-minded stakeholders;
Position 3	USD 2500 disbursed as USD 1250 cash shared equally to the two innovators whose innovations were submitted by the ecosystem and USD 1250 in promoting the best practice	2 nd Runners Up, ATU best youth supporting ecosystem stakeholders of the year-Africa (Branded trophy and certificate)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to ITU’s Regional Good Practice Report; and
Position 4-10		Certificate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Benefit from any specified support extended by support and partner organizations.

NOTE

Additional terms and conditions may apply as documented in the application form.



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