

ICT INNOVATION DRIVE

INVITATION FOR FUNDING APPLICATIONS

1.0 Background

The Ministry of ICT, Postal and Courier Service and the Postal and Telecommunications Regulatory of Zimbabwe is inviting ICT Innovators, Start-ups and Entrepreneurs to apply for Funding in the form of grants and loans under the Innovation Project.

The Innovation Project is a brainchild of the Government of Zimbabwe and is being implemented by POTRAZ through the Universal Service Fund. The project aims at promoting the culture of creativity and innovation among Zimbabweans with the aim of creating employment by development of local ICT applications and hardware which is rooted in the realities of Zimbabwe.

The ICTs sector is a very important sector, which has the power to transform the fortunes of the Country's economy. Most useful innovations in this sector come from young people and POTRAZ would like to harness this power to promote development and transformation of the Zimbabwean economy.

In order to be considered for funding, POTRAZ requires a detailed brief on the ICT innovation, Business Plan and a budget, which will be used to assess eligibility for funding.

Definition of ICT Innovation

Any ICT based product, service, business model, or process that is new to the market with a unique feature(s) that is successfully implemented to address a current need in a new /better way, or to satisfy a newly created demand when developed and deployed.

2.0 Who can apply?

Any ICT Innovators or start-ups that have brilliant ideas that have the potential to revolutionize its target market and/or drastically change the lives of Zimbabweans and the economy as a whole.

3.0 Application Process

Send a soft copy of the descriptive business plan, projections and budget required clearly indicated “**Application for Innovation Project Funding**” to: innovationdrive@potraz.gov.zw for consideration.

4.0 Proposal Format

The business plan must be brief and concise. It is advisable to use the guidelines and format below in order to make sure that all the necessary information needed for assessment is available in the business plan:

i. Section A (Introduction)

- *this is one of the most important sections of your business plan. It enables evaluators to see how innovative your idea is*
- *Give a description of the innovation or business start-up.*
- *Clearly highlight the goals, objectives, functionality, benefits, and or value proposition of the innovation to Zimbabwe*
- *Brief description of the qualifications, expertise and capabilities of the team members*
- *Ownership of the innovation and or company owning the innovation should be made clear and supporting documentation is required.*

ii. Section B (Market Analysis)

- *Who are your target and current customers*
- *Your target market, and how big the population of the market is*
- *Competitor analysis*
- *Simple SWOT analysis*
- *At what stage is the innovation (development, testing or in service etc)*

iii. Section C (Funding Request Section)

NB: This is the most important section, take time to write it properly as it determines how much funding you will receive. This section determines if you are eligible for funding or not.

- *How much funding is being applied for*
- *What type of funding you are applying for, that is, whether it is a Loan or grant for and the proposed repayment method if any*
- *Disclosure of previous funding received from other funding organisations*
- *Detailed use of the funds being applied for*
 - *Either purchase of fixed assets,*
 - *used as working capital,*
 - *company registration*
 - *payment of salaries*
 - *Any other valid reason(s)*

iv. Section D (Financial Section)

- *Revenue projections of the innovation for a minimum of 2 years*
- *Historical financial data if the Company has been in operation*

- *You can include Income Statements, Balance sheet, etc for already established businesses.*
- *Explain how the new funding would improve your operations, in terms of revenue , cashflow and profitability.*

Adjudication process

There are a number of stages and ways that can take the innovation toward success – provided the proposal fully meets all the necessary criteria.

How successful Innovators will be selected:

The process

- Once the first submission deadline is over the evaluation process will begin.
- To qualify for semi-finals, you must be selected by the adjudication team.
- The Adjudication team, consisting of internal POTRAZ and external experts, will evaluate and rate submissions.
- Adjudicators will work with sector specific Experts e.g. agriculture, manufacturing, health, depending on the specific areas that the innovation focuses on, to further assess feasibility of the innovation, after which successful innovations will be selected and announced.

Adjudication Criteria

The Adjudication Team will evaluate the proposal submissions based on the following criteria:

- Degree of innovation in comparison with solutions already developed and implemented

- Impact of the innovation and potential of the proposed idea to make technological change/digital transformation.
- Sustainability and scale to which the innovation can turn into a project that can be sustained and the potential that the innovation can be scaled up at a national level and beyond.
- How global or local the innovation is; that is, does it solve a problem or improve a situation on a small or large scale?
- Potential revenue or cost reduction for the customer or end user purchasing the innovation. The business case should verify these numbers.
- How easy it is to develop and how fast it can go to market, explained in a constructive and concise manner.
- How easy it is for the potential customers to deploy it, taking into account time, change of behaviour, money. The benefits of the innovation (user or efficiency). What impact does the innovation have?
- Does the solution solve the problem in an innovative way?

Terms and Conditions

- The decision of the Adjudication Team is final.
- Participants must ensure that their Submissions comply with specifications of the definition of an ICT Innovation.
- Attempting to influence decision making process will lead to disqualification.
- Any Participant who does not submit their application by the given deadline will not be considered.
- Current employees, apprentices, trainees, interns, officers or directors in the Ministry of ICT, Postal and Courier Services, POTRAZ and service providers in the Postal and Telecommunications Sector are not eligible to participate.
- Participants must ensure that their innovation belongs to them and that it is not stolen from someone else or they will be asked to return the funding.
- Canvassing will lead to disqualification of the project and Innovator.
- All winners will be required to open a bank account with an identified financial institution for disbursement purposes.
- Documents submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.
- All successful Innovators will be required to attend capacity building training and will be assigned mentors (business, marketing, finance and technical) to ensure business success.
- Fraudulent or negligently misrepresenting information will lead to immediate disqualification.

5.0 Loan Repayment conditions

Successful applicants will require a guarantor to secure the loan which will be offered on 36 month tenure.

Repayments will be done in line with cash flow projections through monthly instalments.

New projects will be granted 6 or 12 month grace periods to commence repayments.

CALL FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

POTRAZ is calling for submission of proposals from 10 May 2017, closing on 30 May 2017 to: innovationdrive@potraz.gov.zw.