**YOUTH TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION PROGRAMME**

**BACKGROUND**

Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), an entity of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) was established in terms of the TIA Act, 2008 (Act No. 26 of 2008), with the objective to stimulate, intensify and exploit technological innovation to improve economic growth and the quality of life of all South Africans.

TIA has established the Youth Technology and Innovation Programme (YTIP) to advance several critical policy intents of the 2019 White Paper on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as well as transformation and inclusivity within the National System of Innovation (NSI). YTIP is TIA’s dedicated innovation programme to *primarily address systemic failures by creating supportive and enabling environment essential for contributing to an integrated and well-coordinated innovation-entrepreneurship ecosystem for young innovators*.

**YOUTH ECONOMIC CHALLENGES**

The number of young people aged between 15 and 35 constitute an estimated 36% of the South African population (Integrated Youth Strategy, 2021); however, young people continue to be disadvantaged in the labour market with an unemployment rate higher than the national average. Analysis of unemployment among the youth continues to be a burden irrespective of educational attainment.

South Africa has a growing entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem that includes multiple actors contributing towards creating an efficient ecosystem for the country’s economic growth and creation of new industries. An integrated and efficient ecosystem is essential to create more opportunities for the youth to be actively involved in the economy. However, the biggest challenge in South Africa is a fragmented ecosystem where there exists much duplication of resources and efforts to support the growth and sustainability of technology-enterprises. Furthermore, South Africa is experiencing a systematic failure in the innovation and entrepreneurship system, resulting in low participation of the youth in technology entrepreneurship and innovation activities.

**PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES**

To respond to the unemployment challenges faced by youth, the YTIP is created to deliver a sustainable ecosystem capable of including youth innovators in the economy of South Africa and increasing participation of youth in South African economic activities through techno-entrepreneurship for self-employment, job creation, income generation and improved livelihood of youth in South Africa.

The objective of YTIP is to achieve the following outcomes:

* well-coordinated, integrated, and responsive innovation-entrepreneurship ecosystem to address the needs of youth innovators.
* sufficiently funded and resourced innovation-entrepreneurship ecosystem.
* mobilisation of stakeholders, partners and role-players to support the ecosystem.
* to produce trained, skilled, and capable youth entrepreneurs who can:
	+ develop and commercialise competitive innovative products, and
	+ establish and manage sustainable tech-enterprises.

**TARGETED YOUTH SEGMENT**

YTIP is targeted at four specific segments within the youth stakeholder grouping (18-35 years), these are:

* **Students at universities** particularly undergraduates and post-graduates who have innovative tech-based ideas, *but their technology is not linked to the* **universities’** *research work*.
* **Learners at TVET** colleges who have innovative tech-based ideas.
* **Unemployed graduates** and **youth** outside of formal systems of research and innovation who have innovative tech-based ideas *but do not meet the requirements of being a Grassroots Innovator*.

**YTIP DELIVERY MODEL**

The YTIP is a competition-based programme focusing on identifying, supporting, and funding the development and commercialisation of innovative technology-based solutions from youth innovators, as well as mobilising partners and resources. The YTIP is offering youth innovators access to support and funding for progressing development of innovative solutions to the market through a coordinated support system delivered along the innovation value chain with delivery partners.

The YTIP will be delivered through an Implementation Delivery Partner Model and adopt a decentralised approach in the delivery and execution of the programme in partnership with implementing partners. The figure below depicts the YTIP Implementation Delivery Partner Model.

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