



Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), an entity of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) 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.

CALL FOR PROPOSALS

LIVING LABS PROGRAMME: NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), in partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), hereby invites eligible organisations to submit proposals for funding to establish a Castor Oil Living Lab in the Frances Baard District Municipality, Northern Cape Province, under the DSTI Living Labs Programme.

BACKGROUND

The Living Labs Programme is a DSTI initiative implemented through TIA to expand the geographic reach of innovation in South Africa. The programme supports Local Economic Development (LED) innovation platforms that strengthen local economies and address socio-economic challenges through community-driven and innovation-led solutions. Living Labs are locally embedded physical innovation spaces that integrate infrastructure, skills development, and innovation support programmes. They provide practical environments where solutions are tested, adapted, and refined in real-world conditions. Living Labs promote collaboration between communities, government, academia, and industry to enable inclusive, innovation-driven local economic development. The Living Labs model is implemented through two complementary co-creation approaches:

1. Individual Innovator Model

An individual innovator or enterprise works directly with end users to develop solutions aligned with local economic priorities, including Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and LED strategies.

2. Quadruple Helix Model

Multiple stakeholders, including communities, researchers, academia, industry, innovators, and local government, collaborate to identify systemic challenges and co-create solutions that strengthen local value chains and economic production systems.

PURPOSE OF THE CALL

TIA invites proposals from eligible implementing partners to establish a Castor Oil Living Lab in the Frances Baard District Municipality. The district presents strong potential for castor oil value chain development due to its agricultural base, suitable climatic conditions, available arable land, and proximity to transport routes and regional markets. Despite this potential, the district continues to experience high levels of youth and women unemployment, limited agro-processing capacity, and low participation by emerging farmers and cooperatives in higher-value agricultural activities.

The proposed Living Lab will serve as a place-based innovation platform to support technology development, skills development, technology transfer, and enterprise development, with a deliberate focus on youth, women, persons with disabilities, and emerging farmers. The initiative aims to unlock local beneficiation opportunities, stimulate innovation-led rural industrialisation, and increase participation in the castor oil value chain.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Applications are invited from organisations that meet all the following criteria:

- Be a registered legal entity in South Africa and be able to enter into a funding agreement with TIA
- Be in good legal standing and compliant with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements
- Demonstrated experience working with communities and delivering innovation support programmes
- Experience in castor oil beneficiation or process innovation that creates local economic opportunities
- Ability to collaborate with local government, communities, academia, industry, and innovators
- Access to basic facilities, including a habitable building with water, electricity, and adequate security, suitable for living lab activities
- Offices or an operational presence in the Northern Cape Province
- Proposed living lab facility located in a rural or township community

Note: Living Labs that are currently funded under the Living Labs Programme are not eligible to apply.

SCOPE OF FUNDING

- Repurposing an existing facility into a creative, fully equipped, state-of-the-art Castor Oil Living Lab.
- Implementation of an Innovation Support Programme for a minimum of 30 LED-focused innovations, including stipends for beneficiaries, where:
 - 80% must be youth,
 - 50% must be women, and
 - 5% must be persons with disabilities.
- An Activation Programme supporting at least 150 beneficiaries;
- Application of the quadruple helix methodology to co-create five systemic or spatial local economic development solutions
- linked to the castor oil value chain;
- Targeted Programme for Woman; and
- Targeted Programme for Persons with Disability.

INVESTMENT PARAMETERS

- Grant funding of up to a maximum of R4 717 440; and
- The project duration shall be a maximum of 24 months.

FUNDABLE ACTIVITIES

Fundable activities include, but are not limited to:

Living Lab Setup

- Enhancement of an existing space to improve aesthetic, creative, and technical functionality
- No new building construction will be funded

Innovation Support Programme

- Development of solutions addressing systemic or sectoral challenges
- Capacity building for grassroots innovators and emerging enterprises
- Training, mentoring, incubation, and product development support
- Activation and bridging programmes over a 6–12 month period
- Provision of R1,000 monthly stipend for each Innovation Support Programme beneficiary
- Innovation infrastructure, market access platforms, and fundraising platforms

Quadruple Helix Co-Creation Model

- Identification of priority sectoral challenges
- Co-creation, piloting, and validation of solutions
- Development of business cases and funding proposals for scale

NON-FUNDABLE ACTIVITIES

The following will not be funded:

- General operational costs not linked to innovation activities
- Student bursaries or academic research projects
- General office equipment (unless specialised for innovation)
- Infrastructure development, including buildings and utilities
- Primary agricultural production of castor beans, unless directly linked to innovation or processing activities within the living lab

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Proposals will be assessed on:

- Legal and regulatory compliance
- Eligibility and location
- Experience and track record
- Innovation relevance to the castor oil value chain
- Capacity to implement
- Community and stakeholder engagement
- Beneficiary inclusion (youth, women, persons with disabilities)
- Alignment with Living Labs Programme objectives

HOW TO APPLY

- Interested implementing partners are required to download and complete the official Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) application form and project plan template which are available on the TIA website.
- All proposals must be submitted using the prescribed TIA application form and project plan template.
- Proposals submitted using any other template, format, or documentation will be considered non-compliant and will be automatically disqualified.
- For further information on this call for proposals, applicants should download the Terms of Reference available on the TIA website.

Completed applications must be submitted via email to livinglabsapplications@tia.org.za on or before the closing date.

CLOSING DATE

The completed application form, together with relevant attachments, must be submitted on or before **15 August 2026 at 23:59**. Late applications will not be accepted.

ENQUIRIES

For further information regarding the call for proposals, please contact: livinglabsapplications@tia.org.za