

TERMS OF REFERENCE

LIVING LABS PROGRAMME: NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The Living Labs Programme is an initiative of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), implemented in partnership with the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA). The programme seeks to expand the geographic reach of innovation in South Africa by supporting Local Economic Development (LED) innovation platforms that strengthen local economies and address socio-economic challenges through community-driven solutions.

living labs are locally embedded, physical innovation spaces that combine infrastructure, skills development, and innovation support programmes. They operate as practical environments where ideas are tested, adapted, and refined in real-world conditions. living labs support local economic development by enabling collaboration between communities, government, academia, and industry.

The living lab model is implemented through two complementary segments of co-creation:

- a) **Individual Innovator:** An individual innovator or enterprise works directly with end users and aligns solutions to local economic priorities, such as Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) and Local Economic Development (LED) strategies. Solutions are shaped by community needs, user feedback, and local market realities.
- b) **Quadruple Helix methodology:** Multiple stakeholders, including researchers, industry, local government, communities, and innovators, collaborate to identify shared systemic challenges and co-create solutions that strengthen local value chains and economic production systems.

2. PURPOSE OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The purpose of this Terms of Reference is to invite proposals from eligible implementing partners to establish and operate a Castor Oil Living Lab in the Frances Baard District Municipality, Northern Cape Province, under the DSTI Living Labs Pilot Programme.

The Frances Baard District Municipality presents a strong strategic case for the establishment of a Castor Oil Living Lab. The district has an established agricultural base, with suitable climatic conditions and available arable land that support the cultivation of oilseed crops, including castor beans. The area also benefits from proximity to existing agricultural infrastructure, transport routes, and regional markets, creating opportunities for aggregation, processing, and value addition.

Despite this potential, the district faces persistent socio-economic challenges, particularly high levels of youth and women unemployment, limited local agro-processing capacity, and low participation of emerging farmers and cooperatives in higher-value segments of agricultural value chains. Agricultural activity in the district remains largely focused on primary production, with minimal local beneficiation and limited access to innovation, technology, and market-ready processing solutions.

The establishment of a Castor Oil Living Lab in the Frances Baard District Municipality responds directly to these challenges by providing a place-based innovation platform that supports skills development, technology transfer, and enterprise development, with a deliberate focus on youth, women, people with disability, and emerging farmers. The living lab model enables hands-on learning, co-creation of solutions, and practical experimentation within a real production environment, lowering barriers to entry for historically marginalised groups.

By anchoring the living lab in Frances Baard, the programme seeks to unlock opportunities for local manufacturing, stimulate participation in the castor oil value chain, and promote innovation-led rural industrialisation. The district has therefore been earmarked as a priority location due to its agricultural potential, unmet innovation needs, and strong alignment with provincial and national priorities on inclusive growth, youth and women empowerment, and green economy development.

3. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

- a) The applicant must be a registered legal entity in South Africa and able to enter into a funding agreement with the TIA.
- b) The organisation must be in good legal standing and compliant with all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.
- c) Implementing partner with a demonstrated track record of working in communities and delivering innovation support programmes.
- d) Implementing partner with experience in castor oil beneficiation or process innovations that create local economic opportunities.
- e) Implementing partner with proven ability to collaborate with local government, communities, academia, industry, and innovators.
- f) Implementing partner with access to basic facilities (habitable building, water, electricity and adequate security) suitable for innovation support and living lab activities.
- g) Applications will only be accepted from organisations with offices or an operational presence in the Northern Cape Province, and where the proposed living lab facility is located within a rural or township community.
- h) Living Labs currently funded under the Living Labs Programme are not eligible to apply.

4. SCOPE OF FUNDING

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

5. INVESTMENT PARAMETERS

- a) Grant funding of up to a maximum of **R4 717 440**; and
- b) The project duration shall not exceed 24 months.

6. FUNDABLE ACTIVITIES

The following is a list of fundable activities:

6.1 Setting up a lab into a creative space

- Enhancement to the existing space in terms of aesthetics, creative and technical functionality (this excludes building construction)

6.2 Innovation Support Programme

- The development of solutions that respond to systemic or sectoral challenges and contributes to the local economy, i.e. development of local value chains, cluster and production systems to benefit economic actors in township and rural areas.
- Capacity building activities for grassroots social innovators (particularly youth) and emerging innovative enterprises, through product development, training, and mentoring and incubation.
- Activation activities, bridging programme for innovation and a dedicated Innovation Support Programme for selected beneficiaries for a 6–12 months duration.
- Beneficiary cohort should be 80% youth, 50% women and 5% people with disabilities.
- Provision of **R1000 monthly stipends** for each beneficiaries participating in the Innovation Support Programme
- Innovation infrastructure
- Market Access and diffusion platforms
- Fundraising platforms

6.3 Living Lab Quadruple Helix Model

Living Labs are to experiment with the second dimension of the co-creation model whereby a group of individuals (i.e. researchers, academics, LED practitioners, users or community members, innovators and or industry) have identified a problem and collectively develop a solution. The solution should address systemic or sectoral challenges, i.e. to unlock

opportunities in township and rural community economic sectors, production clusters and value-chains to advance the inclusion of marginalised communities.

It is expected that the following activities will be carried out:

- Provide a description of the project, the mechanism of co-definition of the problem and co-creation of the potential solution;
- The potential technology solution that will be adopted;
- A description of the co-creation process to be followed from inception to completion of the project;
- A detailed cost breakdown of all elements of the project;
- The potential impact of the project on local production systems, value chains and economic clusters;
- Validation and piloting of solutions; and
- Business case or funding proposal for full implementation of the project.

The following are the expected deliverables for the project:

- Detailed business case on the co-created project containing:
 - Co-created project technology description;
 - Co-created and piloted solution
 - Report outlining results of the piloting of the solution
 - Co-created project innovation roadmap;
 - Co-created project scaling plan for impact;
 - Technology adoption plan;
 - Stakeholder reports that capture multi-stakeholder engagement and the key points during the various engagement sessions; commons model of engagement;
 - IP sharing arrangements; IP management strategy including freedom to operate;
 - Production, distribution and marketing value chain;
 - Commercialisation Plan/strategy or a plan stating how a technology will be made available to users, where a commercial benefit may not be derived;
 - Market and industry analysis; competitive landscape and industry penetration strategy or community needs analysis;
 - Economic and Social returns; and

- Co-created project funding map.

6.4 Targeted Programme for Women

TIA will support research that will seek to understand the low participation of women in the innovation space and targeted interventions that addresses these challenges.

Activities to be funded include:

- Primary research collected through reliable methods (survey, focus group, interviews);
- Design of targeted interventions that addresses concerns raised by women;
- The development and commercialisation/diffusion of solutions by women that respond to community economic challenges and contributes to the local economy;
- Capacity building activities for women innovators with emerging innovative enterprises, through product development, training, mentoring and incubation;
- Activation activities, bridging programme for innovation and a dedicated Innovation Support Programme for selected beneficiaries for a 6-12 months duration;
- Market Access/diffusion platforms for women innovators;
- Fundraising platforms that target women from disadvantaged communities;
- Showcasing and celebrating women innovators from disadvantaged communities; and
- Development of clear go-to-market plans for women innovators.

6.5 Targeted Programmes for Persons with Disabilities

TIA will support research that will seek to understand the low participation people with disabilities in the innovation space and targeted interventions that addresses these challenges.

Activities to be funded include:

- Primary research collected through reliable methods (survey, focus group, interviews);
- Design of targeted interventions that addresses concerns raised by person with disabilities (PWD);
- The development and commercialisation/diffusion of solutions by PWD that respond to community economic challenges and contributes to the local economy;
- Capacity building activities for PWD innovators with emerging innovative enterprises, through product development, training, mentoring and incubation;
- Activation activities, bridging programme for innovation and a dedicated Innovation Support Programme for selected beneficiaries for a 6-12 months duration;
- Market Access/diffusion platforms for PWD innovators;
- Fundraising platforms that target PWD from disadvantaged communities;
- Showcasing and celebrating PWD innovators from disadvantaged communities; and
- Development of clear go-to-market plans for PWD innovators.

7. NON-FUNDABLE ACTIVITIES

The following is a list of non-fundable activities:

- Operational activities not directly related to innovation or value-add activities;
- Student bursaries, academic research projects, or extended work placements;
- Office equipment such as printers, furniture, and general office supplies, except for specialised equipment essential for innovation activities;
- Infrastructure development, including buildings, ICT networks, power supply, ablution facilities, and security; and
- Primary agricultural production of castor beans or raw crop cultivation, unless it is part of an integrated innovation activity within the living lab (e.g., demonstration plots directly linked to processing, product development, or technology testing).



8. ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Criterion	Description	Weight (%)
Eligibility, Legal Status & Compliance	• Applicant has offices or operational presence in Northern Cape • Proposed facility in rural or township area • Not a current Living Lab Programme grantee • Applicant is a registered legal entity in South Africa • Able to enter into a funding agreement with TIA • In good legal standing; compliant with all statutory and regulatory requirements	15%
Experience & Track Record	• Experience in innovation support, enterprise development, or agro-processing • Working with communities, youth, women, and emerging farmers	15%
Innovation & Relevance	• Proposal clearly addresses castor oil value chain innovation and local economic needs	20%
Capacity to Implement	• Adequate facilities, human resources, technical capacity, governance, and financial systems	15%
Community & Stakeholder Engagement	• Plans for multi-stakeholder collaboration (community, government, industry, academia)	10%
Beneficiary Inclusion	• Strategies for including youth, women, and persons with disabilities in living lab activities	10%
Alignment with Programme Objectives	• Alignment with living labs goals: skills transfer, localisation, green economy, rural industrialisation	15%
		100%

9. HOW TO APPLY

- Interested implementing partners are required to download and complete the official Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) application form, which is available on the TIA website.
- All proposals must be submitted using the prescribed TIA application form.
- Proposals submitted using any other template, format, or documentation will be considered non-compliant and will be automatically disqualified.

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

10. CLOSING DATE

The completed application form together with relevant attachments must be submitted on or before **15 August 2026** at 23.59pm. Late applications will not be accepted.

11. ENQUIRIES

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

12. EXPECTED TIMELINES

Activity	Timeline
Release Call for Proposals	15 July 2026
Call for Proposal closes	15 August 2026 (23:59)
Screening	17 – 21 August 2026
Assessment & Shortlisting	24 - 31 August 2026
Pitching Sessions	September 2026
Approval	September 2026
Contracting	October 2026