



U.S. Chamber of Commerce

2022 AFRICA DIGITAL INNOVATION COMPETITION

Concept Note

1.0 Background Information:

As part of the 2022 Digital Economy Summit, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-Africa Business Center (USAfBC) in conjunction with AmChams across Africa, is hosting its annual Digital Innovation Competition for African Startups. The competition is targeted towards Digital SMEs and startups that are looking to facilitate the delivery of digital, cross-border, interoperable, and cross-domain services, and solutions, while also accelerating their digitally enabled growth.

The Digital Innovation Competition will award innovators, entrepreneurs, and startups for developing solutions through digital products and services while creating a positive impact on African citizens. This competition seeks to promote talent in the African region through social impact, digital initiatives that incorporate cutting-edge technologies, innovation, and creativity in the form of proposals that formulate solutions to different problems and opportunities in the region.

The competition will be focused on three broad thematic areas:

- **Fintech and Cyber Solutions:** – covering data flow solutions, cross border digital platform solutions, mobile technology, intellectual property management, cyber security, and digital movement of creative art (movies, music, art)
- **Sustainability & Supply Chain Solutions:** covering smart manufacturing, e-commerce, management of shared economies, improvement to digital supply chain, logistics solutions to e-commerce businesses, and Agriculture technology (AgTech).
- **Human Development & Social Services Solutions:** covering digital health solutions, e-learning platform

2.0 Eligibility:

Within its strategic vision, the USAfBC is looking for innovative proposals that, through digital solutions, articulate stories of impact and clearly identify the challenges and actions to implement solutions in the digital space. The Digital Innovation Competition is open to entrepreneurs, startups, and independent innovators who have turned ideas into digital innovation to improve living conditions for Africans amid the pandemic.

To be eligible, an applicant (or their startup) must:

- i. Be a startup or innovator with at least 51% African ownership
- ii. Must be incorporated /registered with the appropriate country-based body, e.g., Nigerian Corporate Affairs Commission (CAC)
- iii. Not be a government agency, public administration, political organization, or non-profit of any type

- iv. Startup must be head quartered in one of the African Countries.
- v. Startup must Not be older than five (5) years and not be part of a franchise brand or licensing agreements for distribution in a different country
- vi. Not be a Business engaged in any illegal activity and not listed on the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Sanctions List.

3.0 Application Process:

The application for the Digital Innovation Competition can be accessed at www.uschamber.com/2022-the-africa-digital-innovation-competition. Applications are due on May 31st at 11:59 pm (EST). Questions regarding the competition must be submitted via email to ewalsh@uschamber.com. Questions and answers will be posted to the website for all potential applicants.

Each applicant will need to fill out the online application form and upload or send a two-minute video pitch of their product/innovation on the website www.uschamber.com/2022-the-africa-digital-innovation-competition. The following questions will be required in the application:

- The full name(s) of the startup owner(s)
- Name of startup (must match exactly the name used to register at appropriate in-country registering body.
- Physical address, Website (if any), Email address, Phone number
- Type of Industry /Sector

In addition, applicants will be asked the following narrative questions about their startup:

- What sources of funding have you used to support your startup in the past 12 months?
- Is your startup currently open?
- What is your startup's mission statement and goal?
- What challenges has your startup faced?
- Describe the impact that your startup has on the community during Covid-19?
- How do you anticipate using the prize, if selected as one of the winners?

3.1 Evaluation Criteria:

The participants should provide a relevant, viable, scalable, desirable, and actionable concept proposal through their 2-minute video, for a product/market fit service/solution.

The two-minute pitch should address the following:

- **Value proposition/Problem – What problem are you solving?** Provide a brief story about the issue being considered by your innovation.

- **Solution – What is the solution to the problem?** Explain how your product/service works and how it is unique. Show a picture or video of the prototype or demonstration.
- **Market, Growth, and Revenue Model:** How big is your market? Who are the customers? What is the plan to scale the startup? How do you sustain the business / How is revenue generated? Has the innovation/product been tested? What volume of sales are you generating?
- **Areas of Interest:** Applicant will need to demonstrate critical challenges resolved through digitally enabled innovation solutions in the areas of Fintech & Cyber Solutions, Sustainability & Supply Chain, Human Development & Social Services Solutions.
- Applications will be valid and examined only if the form is fully completed and the video is submitted online by the above due date.
- Each Applicant will certify that the responses to the questions are truthful to the best of their knowledge and that they are prepared to provide supporting documents.

The pitches will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance** – A comprehensive understanding of the purpose of the Competition.
 - The product/ service/solution proposed must be digitally innovative
 - The proposed service/solution must address a clear and compelling vision and ambition.
 - The proposed service/solution must address clearly defined target clients and markets.
 - Services/solutions that integrate a cross-border approach in the service/solution will be considered a plus.
- **Viability and scalability** – A viable, impactful, and scalable business rationale.
 - The proposed service/solution must show that it is economically viable.
 - The proposed service/solution technology should be clearly described.
 - The proposed service/solution must have the potential to realize benefits (direct and indirect) for the company (e.g. increased business opportunities, expansion into new markets, development of the company's offering).
 - The proposed service/solution must be scalable.
- **Desirability** – A clear and tested demand or desirability for the service/solution.
 - The proposed service/solution must show a value proposition that meets the needs of the targeted clients and markets.
 - The proposed service/solution should clearly explain how the service will be delivered to the customers/clients.
- **Actionability** - the ability of the company to deliver the service/solution.
 - The proposed service/solution must demonstrate to be actionable within a 1-year timeframe and be supported by a consistent action plan.
 - The proposal must determine a capable team of professionals with the relevant expertise

- able to implement the proposed service/solution.
- The proposed service/solution must present a compelling communication and dissemination plan.
- For the 10 Finalists, the applicants will further be evaluated according to the quality of the pitch delivered to the panel of judges (pitch can be supported by PPT and/or videos).

4.0 Evaluation/Selection Process

The evaluation process will be carried out in two phases:

- **PHASE 1** [all applicants]: Following their online submission, the applications will go through a first review round. This review will be carried out by appointed experts. This review starts with an eligibility and exclusion screening. The applicants that do not comply with these criteria (cf. section “2.0. Eligibility criteria”) will not be further evaluated. The experts will evaluate the eligible applications based on the evaluation criteria (cf. section “3.1. Evaluation criteria”) and shortlist the 10 best-ranked applications, including regional champions for each of the sub-regions of Africa (North, West, Central, East and Southern Africa). The 10 shortlisted applicants will be notified about their qualification and invited to submit an executive summary (3-5 pages maximum) of their innovation and participate in Phase 2.
- **PHASE 2** [10 shortlisted finalists]: The 10 shortlisted finalists will be invited to pitch their idea in front of a panel of experts, including selected AmCham Representatives in Africa and Industry Leaders with experience and knowledge in the fields of digital transformation, digital services, and business strategies. The panel will carry out the evaluations, select the top 3 finalists for Phase 3.
- **PHASE 3** [top 3 finalists]: The top 3 winners will be featured at the U.S.-Africa 2022 Africa Digital Economy Summit in December 2022, where the first, second, and third place winners will also be announced following a live voting by participants of the Summit. The two-minute video pitch of their product/innovation will also be featured. Results will be certified by an external accreditor.

5.0 Important Dates

March 31	Launch of the 2022 Africa Digital Innovation Competition
May 31	Applications submission closes
Aug 15	Selection and notification of the top ten finalists.

Sept. 5	Executive summaries due for top ten finalists.
Oct. 5-15	Interview of top ten finalists.
Nov. 7-8	Selection and notification of the top 3 finalists.
Dec. 7-8	Announcement of 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd place winners live at the U.S.-Africa Digital Economy Summit.

6.0 Prize Structure

The Digital Innovation Competition will award cash prizes and in-kind services to be provided to the top three winners. The in-kind services may include laptops, annual subscriptions to digital platforms, mentoring and digital marketing/advertising services for the top three winners of the competition. The top three winners will also be offered a virtual platform to engage with mentors and participants during the Digital Economy Summit on December 07, 2022.

Winner Prizes

1st Prize

- Total package of \$ 25,000
- Including \$15,000 in prize money
- 6-month mentorship with a Fortune 500 Tech Company
- 1-year subscription to digital tools/platforms

2nd Prize

- Total package of \$ 15,000
- Including \$10,000 in prize money
- 6-month mentorship with a Tech Company
- 6-months subscription to digital tools/platforms

3rd Prize

- Total package of \$ 10,000
- Including \$5,000 in prize money
- 3-month mentorship with a Tech Company
- 3-months subscription to digital tools/platforms

5 Regional Champions

- \$5,000 in prize money
- Plaque of Recognition
- 3-month mentorship with Company within their thematic area

7.0 Evaluation Criteria

Each applicant will be evaluated by a panel of judges based on the pertinence of the idea being resolved, the quality of the innovation/service response, the business model, its scalability, the size of the market, and the clarity and persuasiveness of the two-minute video pitch. The selection and evaluation process of submissions shall be reviewed and accredited by an external certified reviewer. The winners of the competition will be determined by the judges' ranking of the applicants based on a set of pre-determined criteria:

8.0 General Rules & Disclaimer

- All applications must be submitted online and completed by May 31. The top three finalists' supplementary narrative must be submitted within three days of finalist notification.
- Only those applications submitted on time through the online application processes will be accepted. Applications received by any other means will not be considered.
- Applicants are responsible for ensuring proper contact information has been submitted and is maintained throughout the Digital Innovation Competition Process to allow communications about the Digital Innovation Award.
- Erroneous or false information provided in the application will result in immediate disqualification of the Applicant. USAfBC otherwise retains the right to disqualify any Applicant in their sole discretion.
- If for any reason, the Digital Innovation Competition is not capable of running as planned USAfBC and AmCham network reserve the right in their sole discretion to cancel, terminate, modify or suspend the Digital Innovation Award Program at any time.
- By submitting an application or by being an Applicant, you understand that there is no joint venture, partnership, employment, or an agency relationship between you and USAfBC & AmCham network, or Partner Organization/ Companies arising from any application or Innovation Award.
- Once notified about having a finalist application approved and receiving an Award, a Recipient has three weeks to submit information for processing the Award payment. Not meeting that deadline will result in a forfeiture of the Award.
- Award Recipients grant permission to USAfBC & AmCham network, and its Partners to use the name, logo, statements, including city and state of primary physical location, and the submitted Application information in perpetuity, worldwide, royalty-free in any and all media now known, or which may be developed in the future to promote the Digital Entrepreneurship Competition Program and its objectives.
- The decisions of the Digital Innovation Competition are final, and Applicants specifically agree that the decision of the Program and any decision of USAfBC & AmCham network is not subject to review or appeal in any form whatsoever, including courts of law.
- By submitting your email address and/or an application, you consent to our processing of the included personal data in order to take action on the Application and to contact you about other programs you may be interested in.
- No warranty of any type is provided for any award. No Award may be transferred to any other party.
- By completing an Application or being an Applicant, you agree on behalf of yourself and each of your respective heirs, executors, administrators, legal representatives, agents, successors and assigns ("Releasing Party") to the Digital Innovation Competition General Rules and the decisions of the competition, as applicable, and any affiliated entities or persons, and by completing an Application or being an Applicant, you release USAfBC & AmCham network, and their affiliates, advisors, agents, licensees, and any social or other media used for the Competition, and any of their respective officers, directors and employees as applicable ("Released Parties"), from any and all causes of action, suits, debts, dues, sums of money, accounts, reckonings, bonds, bills, covenants, contracts, controversies, promises, lost profits, indirect or direct damages, consequential damage, incidental damages, punitive or exemplary damages, judgments, claims and demands whosoever, in law, or equity, whether known or

unknown, foreseen or unforeseen, which any Releasing Party has or may ever had, now or hereafter, arising from or related to the Digital Innovation Competition, these General Rules, any Application materials, including but not limited to any use or non-use of any application materials, delivery, misdelivery, acceptance, possession, attendance at, travel related to, misuse, and/or use of or inability to use, any Award, or technical or other failures of any kind.