

Clean tech SMEs called to enter 2017 GCIP-SA programme

Applications are now open for the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme for SMEs in SA (GCIP-SA).



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The initiative aims to spur local technology innovations in energy efficiency, renewable energy, water efficiency, waste beneficiation, green building and green transportation in support of the country's national priorities.

The programme combines an annual competition and a business accelerator programme where SMEs and startups are continuously trained, mentored and assessed on their business models, investor pitches, communication and financial skills for the development of a more marketable and investor-attractive product and business. Participants are also offered the opportunity to connect with potential partners, clients and investors, participate in showcasing events and a chance to win a cash prize and a trip to San Francisco to compete with the best cleantech innovators from eight other GCIP countries.

Global initiative

The GCIP-SA is part of a global initiative with the goal of promoting clean technology innovation and supporting SMEs and startups. In South Africa, the programme is jointly implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). US-based Cleantech Open serves as the main knowledge partner of the global programme.

"We would like to invite entrepreneurs with new and ground-breaking technology innovations, or who are using existing technologies in unique applications, to submit their entries on our website – www.southafrica.cleantechopen.org," says GCIP-SA national programme manager Gerswynn McKuur. He explains that innovations should be at proof-of-concept stage up to pre-commercialisation, demonstrate a feasible concept and product and have the potential to be commercialised.

GCIP-SA's top performers

Top performers from the GCIP-SA walked away with top honours at the Cleantech Open Global Forum in San Francisco over the past two years. Yolandi Schoeman of Baoberry, the 2016 GCIP-SA winner and owner of the most promising woman-led business, was a runner-up at the Global Forum earlier this month. "The interest we have received through the GCIP-SA experience from other companies, partners, potential clients and investors has been astounding," she says. Her

innovation, a wetland in a box, or aWetbox, is a cost-effective, low-maintenance solution to improve water quality and promote the use and recycling of grey water and water from rainwater harvesting systems.

Fellow 2016 GCIP-SA top performer Martin Ackermann of Thevia explains that the GCIP-SA is more than a business accelerator. “We became part of an international community of like-minded people focused on working together, helping each other to make the world a better place,” he says. Ackermann, a runner-up in the 2016 GCIP-SA programme, was the winner of the global Cleantech award in the Green Building category for the Thevia roof tiles, which are made from 99% waste materials. The tiles are twice as strong and 25% the weight of normal cement tiles, and are produced at a similar manufacturing cost.

The GCIP-SA also produced the overall global Cleantech Open winner in 2015. Dave Lello of Ekasi Energy received the award for his portable appliances for off-grid solutions. Ekasi Energy uses an innovative combustion technique called “micro-gasification” to burn simple biomass fuels, such as wood pellets, cleanly and efficiently by assisting the air supply to the fire with a small electric fan. “The GCIP content and process is worth much more than any prize at the end,” says Lello.

Applications for the 2017 GCIP-SA competition and accelerator programme are open until 26 April 2017, and should be submitted online at www.southafrica.cleantechopen.org.

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