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SAIS SOUTHERN AFRICA INNOVATION SUPPORT

THE SAIS CHALLENGE COMPETITION GUIDE

GUIDELINES AND ADVICE FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Developed by
Viridian and the SAIS PMO, as a knowledge publication associated with the Re:Innovation challenge competition.

GENERAL INFORMATION

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THE SAIS CHALLENGE

COMPETITION GUIDE

GUIDELINES AND ADVICE FOR INNOVATION SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Plan and run your own challenge competition

with pilot phase

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Why this guide?

Challenge competitions have become a popular way to unearth innovative solutions to complex problems. The innovation ecosystem's imagination has been sparked by huge initiatives such as the McArthur Foundation's 100&Change – "A competition for a $100 million grant to fund a single proposal that promises real and measurable progress in solving a critical problem of our time" and brand-name challenges by corporates like Google and Amazon.

Challenge competitions don't need to be only for big development funds or globally recognised programmes! This guide is aimed at innovation support organisations such as hubs and accelerators, regional funds and corporates who are looking to source innovative solutions, and municipalities looking to encourage and unearth innovation in their area. In addition, challenges are an excellent way to build partnerships and collaborate with start-ups and entrepreneurs in your ecosystem. It's possible to do a challenge competition at a scale that suits your needs and resources. This guide will show you how.

The creator of this guide, SAIS, developed and implemented its own challenge competition and piloting process, Re:Innovation, which ran in late 2020 and through early 2021. Here the SAIS project management office (PMO) team share their lessons and insights from the process, as well as best practice drawn from other challenge competitions run across Africa. As a committed supporter and capacity-builder of innovation ecosystems across Southern Africa, SAIS intends the Challenge Competition Guide to be a useful toolkit for those organisations undertaking innovation-sourcing activities in the region.

Objectives of this guide

This guide is divided into three parts, which will: 1) Discuss the role and value of challenge competitions in innovation processes, 2) Give practical advice and tools for running your own challenge competition, and 3) Share case studies of challenge competitions run in Africa. The three sections have the following objectives:

PART 1

An Introduction to Challenge Competitions

- Identify the value of the challenge competition process and in what circumstances a challenge competition is the most appropriate approach.
- Identify types of challenge competition.
- Present some best practice for challenges and highlight some well-known examples.

PART 2

Running a Challenge Competition and Pilot

- Identify the value of the challenge competition process and in what circumstances a challenge competition is the most appropriate approach.
- Identify types of challenge competition.
- Present some best practice for challenges and highlight some well-known examples.

PART 2

Learn from others: Challenge Competition Case Studies

- Show, through case studies, how challenge competitions can be effective in an African context and at different scales.
- Demonstrate how obstacles and difficulties can be addressed.

The genesis of the SAIS Re:Innovation Challenge

The second phase of the Southern Africa Innovation Support Programme (SAIS 2) is a regional initiative set up by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland in cooperation with the Governments of Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, and Zambia, as well as the Secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The programme's objective is to foster entrepreneurship and to enhance cooperation amongst innovators and actors through strengthened innovation ecosystems. Implemented from 2017 to 2021, the programme continues to build on the achievements of the first phase (2010-2015) with a more targeted focus on supporting entrepreneurship, inclusive innovation and innovation ecosystems at local and transnational level.

The regional dimension allows SAIS 2 beneficiaries to share experiences and collaborate to address common challenges through increased interaction.

SAIS 2's implementation focuses on concrete and practical innovation activities delivered in a programmatic manner with a basic set of common modalities. The SAIS 2 Innovation Fund is the programme's main delivery instrument and provides grant funding to local projects aiming to validate or replicate new or improved products, services, or processes (innovations) in SADC markets. SAIS 2 Innovation Fund financing is allocated on a competitive basis as grants, with calls for proposals (CfP) organised by the SAIS 2 PMO. As of 2020, the programme has closed two calls for proposals, which were run in 2018 and 2019. From these calls, a total of 21 projects were funded, of which a total of 89 organisations have benefited from the Fund with over 15 countries across the SADC region represented.

Choosing a challenge competition

Ilari Lindy, Lead Expert for SAIS, explains the rationale for pursuing a challenge competition approach for SAIS's third call.

NOTE: Throughout this guide you will find reflections from the SAIS Project Management Office (PMO) team on the running of their own challenge, Re:Innovation, which took place in late 2020.

SAIS had already launched two calls for proposals with good success. The number and quality of applicants topped our initial assumptions. We were already well on our way to monitor the progress of all 21 projects selected for implementation. The two first calls were designed more as opportunities for project holders to present their products and services for validation within the relatively broad scope offered by three thematic windows.

The team at PMO felt that we could now try something new that would provide solutions to more specific problems identified. In line with this tighter scope we were also interested to see what can be achieved with a smaller budget and shorter time reserved for implementation.

The approach to support practical, locally implemented solutions is very much in the core focus of SAIS as a programme. Aside from technicalities, we were also interested to see if a challenge format would make it easier to find a sponsor for the solutions piloted either before, during or after the results are available. A definite advantage of a challenge is that it is designed to match the needs at grass-root level.

The SAIS Supervisory Board is the decision-making authority of the programme including representatives of line ministries from all sponsoring countries: Finland, Botswana, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zambia. Having discussed with their advisors from parastatals supporting innovation and entrepreneurship at national level, the board was interested to try the challenge as well.

The smaller purse meant there was less risk but, more importantly, the focused challenge aiming to support solutions that strengthen the resilience of startup ecosystems against unpredictable events was a fit proposal at the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

Moreover, the board noted that a similar challenge organised in parallel in five different countries would provide not only an opportunity for cross-border transfer of knowledge but also a number of solutions with potential fit for the implementation in all partner countries. Technical execution of the challenge process was also of interest. All SAIS Focal Points host innovation and/or research funds and they were keen to learn more about how to organise a Challenge Competition along more traditional Call for Proposals.

SAIS 2 issued its third call for proposals on the 26th of August 2020 under the title RE:innovation, Rethink the System. RE:innovation differed from the other two SAIS 2 calls for proposals in terms of its structure: the third call was organised as a challenge fund.

The first stage of the call for proposals application submissions closed on the 4th of October 2020 with 54 applications, of which 30 were deemed eligible for technical evaluation following the administrative and legal evaluation by the SAIS 2 PMO and SAIS 2 FPs.

The 30 applications were evaluated by a team of 15 independent technical experts, which resulted in the recommendation of a final list of five projects to be considered for support by the SAIS 2 Innovation Fund. The challenge was focused on the project manager or lead being from a SAIS partner country, however the project proposed could have partners across the SADC region and internationally.

PART 1:

AN INTRODUCTION TO CHALLENGE COMPETITIONS

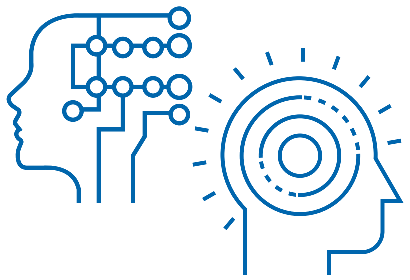
AN INTRODUCTION TO CHALLENGE COMPETITIONS

What is innovation?

The Oslo Manual for measuring innovation by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) defines four types of innovation: product innovation, process innovation, marketing innovation and organisational innovation.

- **Product innovation:** A good or service that is new or significantly improved. This includes significant improvements in technical specifications, components and materials, software in the product, user friendliness or other functional characteristics.
- **Process innovation:** A new or significantly improved production or delivery method. This includes significant changes in techniques, equipment and/or software.
- **Marketing innovation:** A new marketing method involving significant changes in product design or packaging, product placement, product promotion or pricing.
- **Organisational innovation:** A new organisational method in business practices, workplace organisation or external relations.

Innovation, the Manual continues, "goes far beyond the confines of research labs to users, suppliers and consumers everywhere – in government, business and non-profit organisations, across borders, across sectors, and across institutions".

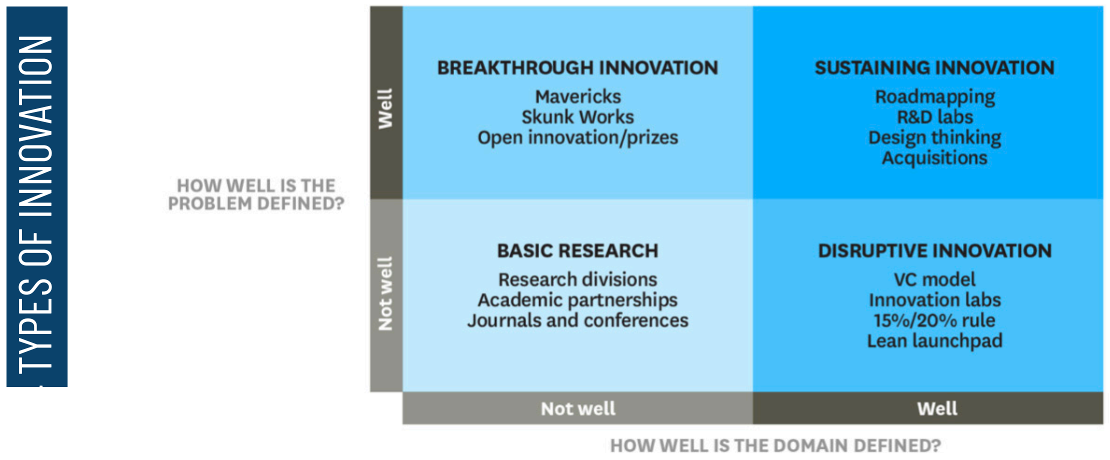


Innovation:

The value of a challenge

In an influential Harvard Business Review article, Four Types of Innovation and the Problems They Solve, author Greg Satell says, "Great innovation almost never occurs within one field of expertise, but is almost invariably the product of synthesis across domains... most [organisations] will find that solving their most important problems will require skills and expertise they don't have. That means that, at some point, they will need to utilise partners and platforms to go beyond their own internal capabilities of technology and talent." He continues, with a point that is very relevant to open challenge competitions: "In a networked world, the surest path to success is not acquiring and controlling assets, but widening and deepening connections."

Satell's Innovation Framework (below) is a useful tool for deciding whether you need to open up a challenge to people with different skills and perspectives.



According to Satell, there are four ways to approach innovation, depending on how well you understand the problem [vertical axis], and the skills and resources it will take to solve it [horizontal axis]:

Basic research [bottom left]: When you can't define the problem and don't know what type of skills will solve it, you need to do more research.

Disruptive innovation [bottom right]: Sometimes you're not sure how to articulate the problem or the challenge is not yet a pressing one. However, it's strategic to dedicate your people and resources to scanning for opportunities. So you get your teams working on the issue with initiatives such as internal innovation labs and dedicated time for problem-solving (e.g. 15%/20% rule).

Sustaining innovation [top right]: When you understand the problem and what it will take to solve it, then you develop your own solutions through R&D and implementing new design processes in-house, or you identify and then acquire solutions.

Breakthrough innovation [top left]: Then there are times when you have clarity on the problem, but not on what or who it would take to solve it. Perhaps there is a need for people to work on the issue from across multiple sectors and skillsets. This is when an open innovation prize or challenge competition can give you a breakthrough or an innovative solution.

Any organisation that takes innovation seriously can consider challenge competitions as one of its innovation strategies, particularly when you're faced with a well-defined problem but not the resources to solve it.

Is a challenge competition right for you?

As a municipality or business you often have a pretty good idea of what challenges you are facing: you're dealing with them on a daily basis. But if you knew what it would take to solve it, you'd have done it!

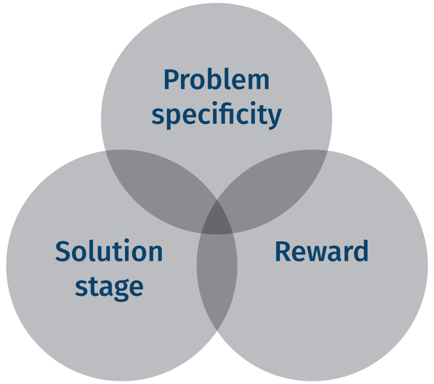
ASK YOURSELF:

- Do you have data on the problem you need solved?
- Do you believe the problem would benefit from a fresh approach?
- Does the solution require a variety of skills that you don't currently have access to?
- Do you have an incentive to offer in exchange for innovative solutions?

Then you should consider running a challenge competition!

To read Greg Satell's useful blog post The Nine Rules of Innovation, visit **https://www.digitaltonto.com/2016/the-9-rules-of-innovation/**

Types of innovation challenge



Challenge competitions come in different shapes and sizes, depending on how specifically you want or are able to define the problem (Problem specificity), whether you're happy with ideas or want to see a solution implemented (Solution stage), and, of course, what type of prizes or incentives you can offer (Reward).

Idea challenge competition: If what you're looking for is an inspirational crowd-sourced brainstorm, then run a challenge competition for ideas! One process for running one is a hackathon – a full day or weekend where small teams develop and pitch rough prototypes. But organisations could also run a well-designed online submission process with rewards in various categories. If hackathon organisers don't ask for too much time or IP, and make the experience fun for participants, then the prizes don't need to be big – hackers will be happy with vouchers and a shout-out on social media. Hackathons typically attract students or recent graduates and you may need to get your team to actively coach or mentor them throughout the process. Hackathons have also been successfully used to recruit new and junior staff for businesses.

Outcomes: Lots of interesting ideas, although not all of them will be feasible or practical. Participants should feel more engaged with and informed on the topic challenge.

- Problem specificity: High (specific challenge statement)
- Solution stage: Idea-stage
- Reward: Nominal

Ecosystem challenge competition: An ecosystem challenge competition is primarily an awareness- raising event or series of challenges. More of a marketing exercise, this approach is useful for mobilising a community of people around an issue and getting them thinking about solutions. It could be a hackathon or design sprint, but it could also be a race or world record attempt or festival. This is the most “emergent” of the challenge approaches – you don’t know what you will get, but participation is a reward in itself!

Outcomes: Raised awareness of an issue and a community mobilised to address it, but few actionable ideas.

- Problem specificity: Medium (general theme)
- Solution stage: Idea-stage
- Reward: Participation

Solution challenge competition: These competitions aim to unearth solutions that are implementation ready, or very close to it. Solution challenge competitions are often run by corporates that are essentially briefing for a product that they need, but cannot find in the market: the enterprise-level contract is the prize. Sometimes a challenge competition is run as a form of “acquire-hire”, where a talented technical start-up team is absorbed into the business (at an acquisition premium), in order to implement their innovative solution.

Municipalities can experiment with more creative ways of briefing request for proposals (RFPs) in order to attract innovative solutions, if procurement policies don’t enable a typical challenge competition approach. Briefs should be less didactic, more open to being designed, and municipalities can consider different channels – such as accelerators or tech ecosystems – to push the RFP through.

Outcomes: More innovative procurement, insight into talent outside of the organisation and links with external stakeholders and ecosystems created. Could discover implementable solutions that solve key challenges.

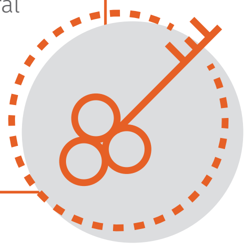
- Problem specificity: High (specific challenge statement)
- Solution stage: Implementation-ready
- Reward: Contract – could be large

Pilot challenge competition: This approach is a way of testing MVPs (minimum viable products) in situ and is popular with grant-making organisations that are interested in tackling complex problems. The process has a more stringent assessment of ideas and teams than a hackathon, as the winner is expected to run a pilot with their prize money, which needs to be relatively significant. A pilot challenge competition attracts entrants that are serious about developing their product – strong teams would treat the competition as a type of early-stage R&D funding.

The benefits of a competition approach that includes a pilot is that the organisation running the challenge can mitigate some of the risks of early-stage innovation through planning and oversight, while learning from the experience of testing a solution together with the winner. The chances of a feasible solution being developed are significantly higher than for an idea-stage only competition.

Outcomes: Well thought-through ideas and prototypes, which can be tested in new contexts or markets for potential implementation and commercialisation.

- Problem specificity: High (specific challenge statement) / Medium (general theme)
- Solution stage: Idea-stage / minimum viable product
- Reward: Grant – could be large



Relevant examples from Africa

Ecosystem challenge: WWF Low carbon mobility City race, building awareness & innovation in transport	https://www.wwf.org.za/our_research/publications/?27421/low- carbon-mobility-challenge-toolkit
Idea-stage challenge: MTN Entrepreneurship Challenge (Solution Space) Pan-African student challenge	https://www.itnewsafrica.com/2016/05/mtn-entrepreneurship- challenge-winner-revealed/ https://mycareer.uct.ac.za/students/news/detail/50/mtn- entrepreneurship-challenge
Idea-stage challenge: Allan Gray Entrepreneurship Pan-African school challenge	http://entrepreneurshipchallenge.co.za/

Solution challenge: REDEFINE (Property Company) R1 million prize to develop an exciting property idea	https://www.innovationchallenge.co.za/
Pilot challenge: SAIS 2 Re:innovation Challenge EUR30000-EUR50000topilot solutions in selected SADC countries	https://www.saisprogramme.org/fund/reinnovati on

PART: 2

RUNNING A PILOT CHALLENGE COMPETITION

RUNNING A PILOT CHALLENGE COMPETITION

This guide gives guidance on one of the more complex types of challenge competition – a selection process that also includes oversight of a pilot. This approach yields the best results if you're looking for workable solutions to complex problems.

While there are several phases to this type of challenge competition, it is completely manageable with enough time and planning. And the results will speak for themselves!

This guide provides a framework, tips and templates that you can adapt to run your own challenge competition.

Running the entry stages of a challenge competition has many similarities with running events and creating innovation networks. Targeted marketing, clear communication, and relevant information- sharing are all important elements in attracting quality entries.

For more detailed information on running events and building information-sharing communities, see the SAIS Connected Hubs publication, *Creating Vibrant Entrepreneurship Ecosystems.*

Innovative ideas are worth nothing without execution, and the pilot is an invaluable learning opportunity. The pilot stage of a challenge competition requires strong planning, stakeholder management and comfort with trouble-shooting.

No two pilots are exactly the same, but there are many blog posts and toolkits available to help you navigate the process. One of the better ones for quick testing, is *The Agile Pilots Cook Book* developed by Finnish smart cities project, Smart Kalasatama.

Challenge competitions with pilots have been successfully run around the world and across Africa. You can find relevant regional case studies in the final section of this guide.

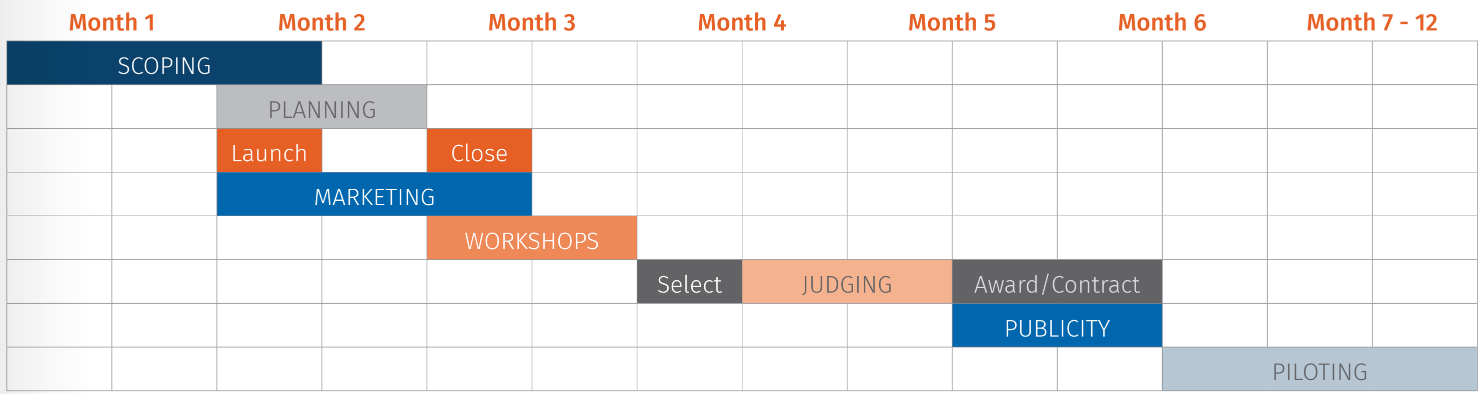
Right, are you ready for the challenge?

LET'S GET TO IT!

Overview

TIMELINE

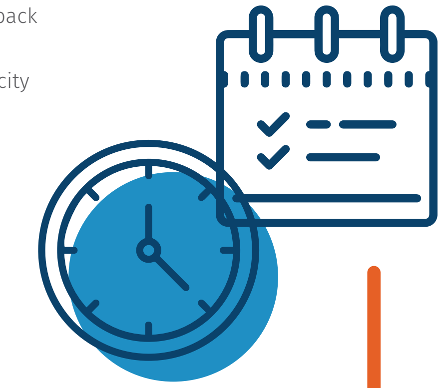
Ideally, scoping and planning for the competition would start at least three months before you want to announce the winner – longer, if you have multiple stakeholders involved. The call for entries should be open for at least six weeks, and then selecting and judging can easily take a month. Piloting, if that's part of your process, requires a further four to six months. That's 12 months, so make your challenge competition a highlight for the year!



The activities that we suggest take place at each stage of the competition all contribute to the quality of entries and an overall successful outcome. We'll give you tips on how to manage all of the phases in the sections that follow.

Key activities in phases

Scoping →	Challenge Statement	Partner onboarding	Entry form, T&Cs, rubric	Rewards
Planning & project management →	Assigning team	Project plan	Reporting	
Marketing & launching →	Marketing plan	Branding	Comms schedule	Events
Selection & judging →	Shortlisting	Judging & validating	Feedback	
Award →	Contracting	Briefing & planning	Publicity	
Piloting →	Framework	Management & support		



Considerations for each phase

SCOPING

Defining the parameters of your challenge, gathering the right resources, and developing the right partnerships well in advance create a strong foundation for a successful competition.

The challenge statement

It is important that the theme of your competition is both inspiring and fairly specific. It needs to be interesting and open enough to attract entrants and yet give enough form to the challenge to be able to draw in the right skills and serve as a framework for implementable solutions.

All this comes together in your challenge statement – see the addendum for an example. Your challenge statement comprises two parts: **1) The problem statement, 2) The brief.**

1. The problem statement should cover:

- What is the current challenge or problem?
- What does it look like when it's fixed?
- Who is experiencing the challenge?
- Why does it matter?
- How did it get this way? Or what factors contributed to this problem?
- What needs to change?

2. The brief should cover:

- Any specific approach you expect to see taken, for example user-centred design or mobile- first tech.
- The composition of the team: Minimum number of team-members, demographic mix etc.
- Whether the solution has to be deployed in a specific geographic area: as wide as Southern Africa or as focussed as Kigamboni District, Tanzania?
- The expected scale of the intervention: is one user group sufficient? How long will the pilot last and how many people should it reach?
- The desired outcomes of the pilot and any other critical factors that will impact the pilot.
- A broad overview of the judging criteria.

Tips for developing a challenge statement

- Involve multiple stakeholders in defining the problem, remembering to consult with the people who are affected by the problem too.
- Use evidence to support your statement -- it makes it even more compelling. Gather these documents into a resources pack, which is made available to potential entrants.
- Use foresight exercises to help your team visualise the desired future state that the challenge statement refers to. The Playbook for Strategic Foresight and Innovation is a free open-source toolkit that can help you.

SAIS Re:Innovation problem statement

Startup ecosystems play a critical role in providing an environment in which African startups can thrive and grow. In many countries, these systems are still young and are often vulnerable to unforeseen events such as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Unexpected shocks can interrupt the operation of startups, incubators, universities, and even large firms for a significant time. Therefore, it is vital to strengthen the ecosystems' ability to rapidly recover from negative events. Such resilience is also the key enabling factor to ecosystems' development and growth. For this reason, SAIS 2's RE:innovation challenge is looking for visionaries who can offer technology-enabled solutions that strengthen innovation and startup ecosystems in Southern Africa.

How SAIS did it

Sharon Emvula, Regional Programme Officer, and Misha Gericke, Marketing, of the SAIS PMO team reflect on the importance of getting the challenge statement and target market right, and aligning all communications and documentation with it.

Getting the call right

Re:Innovation was our first time doing a SAIS call as a challenge. The biggest internal challenge was getting ourselves very focussed on what it was we were asking for and then communicating that succinctly. We spent a lot of time and effort getting all documents as clear as possible.

We went back to our experience and tried to anticipate all the questions applicants might ask. We also carefully considered the order in which we presented the data so that applicants could quickly ascertain whether this challenge was right for them. It was also interesting to see how much a clear and attractive layout of the documents helped people to absorb the information they needed.

Covid-19 was a big disrupter of our process. The original challenge brief had been around the clear objective of youth unemployment, but due to Covid it shifted to the more abstract topic of "entrepreneurial resilience". Everyone in the team had their own thoughts on resilience and we had to have a number of internal design meetings to hone in on a common understanding. After all the consultation, we made one person responsible for finalising the documentation and making calls on the messaging to speed up the process.
In the end, we managed to cover all the bases and do it in a very understandable way, which meant that we had much fewer requests for clarification coming through to the office than we'd had in previous calls.

Identifying your target entrants

If you understand who your ideal entrants are and how you will reach them, then you will attract a better quantity and quality of entries, and will be more likely to meet your objectives. For example, if you have an objective of capacitating youth entrepreneurs and a strong implementation support function in your team, then you can call for students via university channels to test early-stage prototypes. If you need the solution to be well developed and want to hand over a large cash prize but with minimum pilot oversight, then you'll want to attract more established organisations with a track record, via entrepreneurial accelerators and ecosystems.

To define your target entrants, ask yourself:

- Who might have a good understanding of the problem your challenge addresses?
- What groups of people are likely to have the skills and experience to develop and deploy workable solutions?
- How mature does the solution need to be?
- How experienced do teams need to be?
- Where are you likely to find high concentrations of these types of entrants?
- Are there likely to be enough high quality finalists if you restrict your call to your ideal target market, or do you need to widen your scope or broaden your criteria to attract potential winners?

The definition of your target entrants can influence the length and cost of the recruitment phase, as you may need to use more and different marketing channels if you want to attract a broader range of entrants. If you are relying on partners to assist you then you also need to provide marketing material for them to use to attract entrants from their communities.

Submission requirements

The challenge statement, target entrants and overall competition objectives will all influence your submission requirements. Together with the entry form you may want to ask for additional information or supporting evidence.

Legitimacy: Will you need entrants to be registered businesses or NPOs? You can ask for relevant documentation at this stage.
Prototype stage: Depending on how advanced you're expecting the piloted prototype to be, you could ask for evidence ranging from a wireframe to a demo video.
Traction: While challenge competitions almost always ask for new solutions, you may ask for usage figures or testimonials from similar products that the entrants have produced previously. Letters of reference from existing customers or partners for similar projects or pilots may be useful to determine traction.
Team suitability: You're going to want short resumes of the key team members, and you may go so far as to require letters of recommendation, university transcripts or professional memberships.
Feasibility: One way to test whether entrants understand their product and what it takes to implement it, is to ask for a high-level budget and pilot plan together with their entry.

Thinking through these at the scoping stage will help you decide how feasible your expectations are and also what type of submission process and tech platform you'll need.

Another consideration is how much friction these requests will add to the process.

- If your goal is to get a lot of entries from a variety of sources, then make the submission process very simple.
- If it's critical that you can assess the feasibility of a prototype in the judging phase and you actively want to filter out entrants that won't meet these criteria, then ask for more product evidence and make the barriers higher.

- If your cash award is particularly large or if the regulatory environment that you're piloting into is rigorous, you're going to want to be sure relevant due diligence, removing "chancers".
- Still, try to keep your submission requirements as simple and relevant as possible, so as not to discourage entrants.

You might also want to consider a two stage application process, where you ask for a basic overview in the first phase, and then a more detailed project proposal with more detailed information from a shortlist of candidates to go through a second assessment phase.

A two-stage application can make the process longer and add costs to the project, but for later-stage challenges or challenges where there is a substantial prize, it's a good filtering exercise.

Your entry form

When designing your entry form, start by writing down everything you need to know about an entrant in order to accept them for the next round. This may include specific requirements from your funders, or relating to your judging criteria.

Your form will likely include the following information:

- Names, addresses, phone numbers, email addresses of primary applicants
- Personal information about applying team - names, gender, race, age, nationality
- Professional experience of applying team (LinkedIn and references)
- Applying organisation information – location, registration, ownership, industry, key activities, number of employees, etc.
- Contact details of primary project manager/ project lead

- Details about the project proposed for the challenge -- how it meets the challenge tatement, target audience, how it works, how it has already been tested, where it will run, etc.
- Questions that relate to your judging criteria **(see page x)**

Remember to ask entrants to agree to the use of their data in line with the relevant privacy protection laws of your country: in the case of South Africa, the POPI Act.

Google forms and **Typeform** are two free tools that are widely used for challenge and competition submissions. Both are free and easy to set up and draw results from. If you are using **Microsoft Teams**, then you can use this platform's survey function.

Terms and conditions

Applicants should agree to terms and conditions when completing a full entry form that will be used for judging. This document should be no longer than three pages and will likely cover the following:

- Information on the competition: who is running it, who has a right to enter (or not), rules, deadlines, etc.
- Information on intellectual property: who will own what is submitted, guarantees that what has been submitted is owned by the entrant, etc.
- Information about judging and prizes, including stating that the judges' decision is final and prizes are non-transferable.
- General legal statements: Disclaimers, force majeure, waivers, liabilities, damages, jurisdiction.

You can adapt an exisiting T&Cs document that you have on file, but have a lawyer check that it covers all the bases for your unique challenge statement

How SAIS did it

Sharon Emvula, Regional Programme Officer, and Misha Gericke, Marketing, of the SAIS PMO team reflect on how a well-designed application form helped smooth their selection and judging processes.

Simplifying the application form

There were aspects of the application form that were simpler than previous calls, because we were only looking for pilots. The projects we are supporting in the challenge are shorter and less complex than what we usually fund, which meant we could make the applications simpler.

But some of the simplifications we had to work hard for. There was a strong technical element; taking questions we'd asked in previous calls and working out how to condense several of them into one question. We learned how to ask for more data in a simpler way. The application form was designed to simplify work that an applicant would need to do down the line – for example, the structure of the proposed project plan would plug into the SAIS workplan required of the winners.

We thought ahead and made sure that the application form would also capture all the information that our donors would need down the line. We were also able to put together a really interesting infographic after the call.

TIP: **Think about the evaluation process when compiling the application form, so that there's a tight alignment between the information gathered and the judging criteria. We did this and it made judging much smoother when we got to it.**

Rewards

Rewards in challenge competitions can be both financial and non-financial. Of course, if you want your winner to conduct a pilot, you must provide sufficient financial support to run it. But you can also offer mentorship, training and access to the market.

Importantly, the size of the prize money package that you are able to offer should inform your expectations of the winning team and the outcomes of the pilot. It's actually quite expensive to develop most tech products, even apps, to a commercially competitive level: if you have a relatively small prize pot, your winner will either be piloting a rough prototype or an existing product into a new market. It is important to consider what your target entrant will consider to be a valuable prize and whether the size of the prize is proportional to the amount of work required.

Non-financial perks in the process can be offered at each stage, and can benefit entrants beyond the winners.

In the lead-up: Well-designed knowledge sessions can be a valuable way for potential entrants to understand more about the market and opportunity, and to network. Knowledge sessions can also include learning a new skill e.g. design thinking skills which will be valuable for any entrant, even if they are not selected.

Semi-finals: Some challenge competitions offer specialised support to semi-finalists to refine their final prototypes and pitches, transferring skills and knowledge in the process.

Pre-pilot: Winners may appreciate further training in user-centred design and evaluation methods. Co-designing the pilot through a workshop can be valuable, especially for less experienced winners: It also gets the competition owners and piloting team on the same page about outcomes. This is also an opportunity for partner organisations to get involved and provide specialist knowledge and expertise. e.g. legal, regulatory, market data etc.

During pilot: Experienced mentors and/or technical support during the pilot can be useful to the winning team, especially if it helps them trouble-shoot specific challenges. At the end of the pilot you may also invite other partners or potential customers to a showcase event, providing additional market access opportunities for the team or final teams.

Sponsors and partners

Bring sponsors and partners on board before you start marketing: they'll derive value through association, so make sure you can offer them the full package. Some partners will appreciate having line of sight of the entrants, as a talent pipeline or acquisition funnel. Other partners -- for example, local municipalities, community groups or sector bodies -- may be critical stakeholder in the running of the pilot.

Sponsors and partners add value in multiple ways:

- Credibility and buzz: respected think tanks, well-known sector players, local municipalities, and brand-name entrepreneurial support organisations.
- Additional recruitment channels: academic institutions, start-up accelerators and media.
- Access to market: government departments and big corporates.
- Contribution: financial and non-financial rewards, mentorship and expertise.

Delivery team

Identify and involve your entire project team from as early in the process as possible. The size and experience levels of your team will vary depending on the complexity of your challenge competition, but will need to cover the following functions: Project management, marketing, eventing and implementation. Depending on the nature of your challenge you may need to involve additional team members or outside partners e.g. legal, technical etc. It's possible for one person to fulfill more than one function, but a minimum team size of three people is recommended.

Project design and management:

- Development of the challenge statement
- Stakeholder liaison, including responding to queries from entrants
- Timelines and deadline chasing
- Deciding on, designing and managing the online application system
- Developing the application form and judges' rubric
- Design and commissioning of training and support
- Oversight of filtering and then shortlisting applications
- Judges selection and briefing
- Contracting and other legal considerations
- Reporting

Marketing

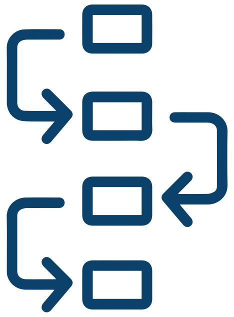
- Securing sponsorship and partnerships
- Overseeing branding, and competition look and feel
- Briefing and managing the designer and content production process
- Developing and managing the marketing plan
- Social media management
- Updating FAQs
- Writing and distributing press releases
- Securing publicity around the award, winner and pilot

Event design and management:

- Deciding on content of knowledge sessions
- Organising and managing online briefings and application system
- Logistics and budget management of events and workshops
- Briefing speakers
- Designing and managing award ceremony

Implementation management:

- Technical support
- Co-design of pilot with winner
- Oversight of implementation by winning team
- Trouble-shooting field challenges with winners



Planning and project management

Plan, plan and plan. Ideally you would have at least three months to plan before you start marketing your challenge. The more time and attention you allocate to the planning phase, the higher the probability of you running a successful challenge will be.

Your project plan

Your project plan should be in a format that is easily accessed and understood by the full project team. There are many free tools available that are easy to use and access.

Best free project management tools

Asana: Asana is a tool to manage the overall project and individual tasks. The free version works well for small teams, and allows everyone to easily see what they are responsible for, receiving reminders when tasks are due.
Trello: Trello is a collaboration tool that organises your projects into boards. Your Trello boards provide an overview of what's being worked on, who's working on what, and where something is in a process. The free version allows up to 10 team boards.
Slack: Slack allows you to chat and share documents, organised into different communication channels e.g. "Challenge Marketing" or "Challenge Logistics Planning". Slack is a great alternative to WhatsApp as your team's communication tool, as it keeps all work-related communications in one place and is searchable.
Microsoft Teams: If you have Microsoft Teams installed in your organisation, it has much of the same functionality as Slack and you can invite outside collaborators to join you on the platform. It also allows for video calls on the platform.

Project Communications

Regular and open communications support your project management, and ensure all involved stakeholders remain engaged and informed.

Hold a **kick-off meeting** (in person or a video-conferencing tool) with all project stakeholders to present your project plan and objectives; agree on the key roles everyone will play and key dates; and decide on the project team's meeting schedule and communication channels.

Weekly status meetings with core stakeholders, at least at the beginning, are a good way to maintain momentum, and a chance to raise red flags and make quick decisions. *Even if there is not much to report on that week, still hold it as a quick check-in!*

Planning events and workshops

Events and workshops may be a strong component of your challenge competition, to drive recruitment and for knowledge development of your entrants.

Clear communication and planning is essential to ensure a smooth and valuable experience, and to keep them coming back to the next!

Activities to consider for your events:

- Speaker/ facilitator: confirm availability, brief topic or focus, run through content
- Managing RSVPs: select a tool, set up an RSVP form
- Marketing: messaging, audience, platforms
- Logistics: venue setup, catering, presentation and sound, cleaning service etc.

PLANNING EVENTS AND WORKSHOPS

A strong and consistent marketing drive is critical to maintaining engagement (see the next section), but it takes a bit more effort to build a community around the challenge.

Why build a community? Well, the quality of entries you receive is the single most important factor in whether you will have a successful challenge competition. The more buzz you create, the more information you share and the more talented people you get involved, the more likely you are to receive lots of great applications. Also, you and your stakeholders will likely want to raise awareness about the challenge and potential solutions as one of your objectives. Creating meaningful learning experiences can help your competition create lasting impact in the broader ecosystem.

Think about different formats for connecting people and sharing knowledge. Challenge competitions have used approaches like ideation sessions, open workshops, collaborative design sessions with the target users, skills "speed dating" meet-ups, a mini conference covering all aspects of the problem statement with specialist speakers, or piggybacking on relevant community events.

Further resources

- See below for workshop facilitation tips.
- Look at the SAIS Connected Hubs guide to *Creating Vibrant Entrepreneurship Ecosystems* for event production tips.

Workshop facilitation tips

Workshops can be a real value-add for entrants and finalists in your competition, and a chance for your team to get to know the people interested in tackling the challenge. Make your workshops a great experience for all involved by planning them well.

Set a purpose for the session: What do you want to achieve in the session and will there be any specific outcomes? You will have your own set of objectives and outcomes as the facilitator, but ask for feedback from the group in the beginning and to help set expectations for the session and ways of interacting or participating in the session.

Get the venue setup right: The place you hold your workshop and the way you arrange the furniture can make a huge difference for how people engage.

Visualise or "screenplay" your session: As a facilitator, you need to imagine the flow of the discussion, how long each discussion may take and where it may go.

Mix it up: Group discussion, smaller break-out groups, post-it brainstorms, competitions and games, individual thinking, guest speakers. There are many activities you can use to make your workshop interesting.

Know your room: Spend some time getting to understand who is in the room (ideally before the workshop), so you can ask for their experience where relevant.
Finish on a high: It is most likely that energy starts to dip towards the end of a workshop, so try and plan an energising and collaborative activity that recaps on what was covered in the workshop.

Running virtual sessions

The Covid-19 global pandemic accelerated the world's use of video-conferencing tools to run virtual events, workshops and conferences. Virtual events allow for more participants from different regions and there are many ways that you can create a rich learning and networking experience for participants.

Here are some tips for virtual events:

Speaker/ facilitator briefing is so important: Objectives, length, format/ schedule, anything specific it should cover.
Choose your tools carefully: There are many video-conferencing, webinar, and streaming tools out there. You should understand the objectives of your session and the audience first, before choosing your tools. *Are you running the event for a closed group? Or do you want to reach as wide an audience as possible? Is it to just present information or do you want to facilitate discussion/ collaboration among attendees? Do you want attendees to sign up or apply first? How many attendees do you expect?* Your answer to these questions will help you to select the right tool set to run the webinar.
Communication plan: How and who are you inviting to join the session? Do you need to send reminders? What will you share after the session?
Interesting and good looking slides: No one wants to stare at a person speaking. Slides help to keep people engaged, and allow for better learning and discussion. Don't forget to bring in some humour too!

Audience engagement: Mute participants when they're not speaking, but think through how best to engage them when you need their thoughts and energy. For big groups it can work to run a text chat and then call on people to speak. Quick polls or using break-out groups can be used to change the pace and boost energy levels.
Do a test run, always: You will lose your audience's attention quickly if you have technical issues. Don't assume that any of your speakers and facilitators know what they are doing. A test run is always a good idea.
Record the session: Chances are that you will have a drop-off for people or some people will have missed the session but will want to access or watch it at a later date.

Reporting and evidence

Your funders and sponsors, as well as your own organisation are likely to require reports. Think about what evidence you'll need to collect at the planning stage: decide at which points you need to collect data, create any necessary documents (e.g. workshop registers) or systems (e.g. Google Analytics), and set up your knowledge repository.

Make sure you take photos at workshops, video during the pilot, and written or verbal testimonials from users and participants. It's impossible to go back and collect the information once the moment has passed!

> For more detailed information on designing for and reporting on social impact, consult the SAIS publication *Impact in Networks and Ecosystems,* which includes methodologies, indicators and frameworks for measuring impact outcomes and network effects.

When your competition and pilot have run their course, hold a *post mortem* meeting with all stakeholders to share what worked and what could be improved on. Minute this meeting so that you have a record of lessons learnt when running your next challenge competition.

Marketing and launching

Creating your marketing assets – specifically your brand and website – needs to happen in the same months as you're defining your challenge statement and onboarding partners, and will develop alongside these aspects.

Branding

You will need to decide how your challenge will be branded very early in your planning phase. Depending on how many partners are involved and your longer-term plans for your challenge community, you may want to create an entirely new brand identity to market with. If you do go this route, make sure you have time and budget available for some back and forth to get it right. Whether you are creating an entirely new brand or a sub-brand of your organisation, it is important to have some simple design guidelines so that all your material is consistent and professional.

Key messages and material

It is important that the key information and messaging is consistent across all your material, and also when shared by other organisations. The project team should collaborate with any marketing stakeholders to design this key messaging, and ensure it is understood and approved by all key stakeholders before you start developing material.

Start by creating your marketing copy deck – this is a document that contains the key information about the challenge, written in a style that is appropriate for your challenge audience.

- A headline and tagline - "the hook"
- An introduction - why this challenge, what is aims to achieve, who the partners are
- About the challenge - what is is, who and why someone / an organisation should take part
- Application process and application requirements
- FAQs - questions you anticipate to be asked by potential applicants

Once you have the key messaging right in this document, it can be adapted to suit the format of your different communication material.

Media and partner packs

Prepare a pack of marketing materials that you can share with your partners and key media. By anticipating which images and copy they may require and sending to them in a pack, you can ensure consistent messaging across all platforms.

Partner pack

- Images for social media (sized for Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter)
- Email banner
- Suggested social media posts & schedule
- Press release (doc + accompanying image)
- Email copy for their database

Media pack

- Images for social media (sized for Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter)
- Suggested social media posts
- Press release (doc + accompanying image)

Your communications strategy

Your communications strategy outlines what, who, and when the challenge and relating events/ activities will be communicated; as well as your target audience.

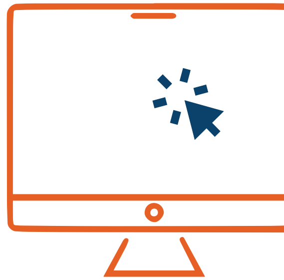
You will probably want to divide your overall marketing activities into four phases.

To whom	What	Who	When	Who
Who do you want to reach?	What are the key activities that need to be supported through your marketing? (launch event, recruitment closes, shortlist announced) What are the key messages that need to be communicated to support each of these?	Who are the organisations and individuals that will be managing the communication?	What are the dates for the key activities? When do communications need to go out in support of these?	Who are the organisations and individuals that will be managing the communication?

Once you have plotted out your broad strategy, create your communications plan.

NOTE:
You can use the communications plan template in the addendum as a starting point.

Website



How will interested businesses find out more about the challenge and apply?

- **You could choose to create a new page on one of the partner organisation's websites (e.g. https://www.saisprogramme.org/innovationchallenge).**
- **Or you could choose to build a new website entirely (e.g. www.innovationchallenge.org).**

Having a dedicated challenge website does require a larger budget and more time to set up, but it may offer more flexibility on how you set up the site and what content you can publish.

Your website should feature the following:

- The challenge brief
- Submission requirements
- FAQs
- Challenge terms and conditions
- Challenge entry form
- Any supporting documents or resources that help entrants to better understand the problem, certain target groups or regions, or how to conduct a successful pilot.
- If you are using a specific online application system or platform that applicants might not be familiar with, include some links to instruction videos as well as information on where they can receive platform support if needed.
- You may also want to include an email address for specific enquiries (with a clear cut-off date three days before applications close) so that FAQs can be captured and circulated.

FAQs management

Make sure you develop and publish a comprehensive set of frequently asked questions (FAQs) for your competition. Run the text past someone who hasn't been involved in the competition planning and design, so that they can give feedback on whether it would make sense to an entrant or if there's anything you've missed.

Once the marketing of the competition has opened, set up a system for capturing questions from participants and entrants. Don't respond on a one-on-one basis, as this may be perceived as giving certain potential entrants an unfair advantage. Formulate an answer and post it to the website immediately -- you can then inform the person with the query that it is available.

If any FAQs arise during webinars or introductory sessions, make sure you add these to the list and circulate them to all participants and/or publish them on the competition site.

Sometimes questions will arise that haven't previously been considered by the competition team: have a standing agenda item in your weekly meetings to formulate responses, or do a quick email round-robin if time is short or the issue is a significant one.

How SAIS did it

Sharon Emvula, Regional Programme Officer, and Misha Gericke, Marketing, of the SAIS PMO team share their SAIS Re:Innovation marketing strategy and its efficacy in driving entries to the competition.

Marketing for recruitment

With Covid there was a lot of "noise" online and a number of new challenge competitions sprung up. This is one of the reasons we went for an eye-popping bright orange and blue brand. It was important to stand out.

We sent information out through our networks at the Finnish embassies, our country focal points and the Connected Hubs network we'd built up. Of course, we also had a social media strategy which leveraged YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. This started out organically, but later we paid for some advertising, which got us those final applications we wanted. More than half of traffic to our site was through social media and SEO, and we had 400 downloads of the application documents.

FACT:

In a five-week application period, SAIS received 54 applications from five countries (the most applications came from South Africa – 23). Twenty-seven of the 54 were passed on to a technical evaluation after an initial assessment.

We used a narrative style in our marketing that spoke directly to the type of person we wanted to attract as an applicant. The messaging was that SAIS needed people with their skills and drive to solve this challenge. Some of the communications were more straightforward and factual, for those who don't respond to that type of "empowerment marketing", but those messages were secondary to the main narrative style.

We simplified each piece of messaging right down and sent out regular comms, so that the campaign was like a set of puzzle pieces that altogether painted the full picture. This allowed us to have each communication give specifically useful information, rather than bombarding people with too much information at once.

TIP: **It's ok not to have all the information about the challenge in every message you put out, as long as you can direct people to a well-designed website and supporting documents.**

Marketing launch

After all your planning, you will be excited to start marketing the challenge and seeing the applications roll in!

The launch of your challenge is your biggest opportunity to generate interest and create excitement.

Leveraging key media, partners

While planning your challenge marketing campaign, you should make a list of all the key organisations and media that have relevant audiences during your planning phase. You may have existing relationships with these organisations or individuals, or you could ask your contacts for introductions to them.

- If your budget allows, you can engage the services of a PR agency to access more media opportunities and a greater audience.
- Research which channels each partner uses before approaching them, and which might be available for you to leverage
- Connect with these organisations a few weeks before you launch, so they know it is coming up and can factor it into their content planning
- One week before launch, you should send the partner or media pack to everyone on their list, with a cover letting introducing the challenge and why it is valuable for their audience.
- On the day of the launch, send an email announcing the launch, including any relevant links, and reminding them to please share.

Channels

When deciding on your channel-mix for marketing the challenge, you need to understand which you have available to you.

Social media

- You may choose to set up unique social media pages for the challenge if it is a long campaign, and your goals are to grow a community that lasts beyond the challenge. Only set up dedicated social media channels if you have the time and content to keep them active, and a fairly sizable budget for social advertising. Audiences do not build themselves.
- Alternatively, you may choose to just use the partners' existing social pages.
- Pick two or three main social media platforms that you focus on for challenge marketing based on a) where your audience spends the most time and b) what kind of content you have to share.
- You should have a clear social media plan for your challenge communications, and also a social media plan that you have shared with partners in the partner pack.
- Use visually appealing images, and change them up regularly.
- Always ensure that posts are concise, intriguing, and it is clear who the challenge is aimed at.
- Also include a clear call to action (share or apply), and a link to the challenge website.

Which social media channels are right for your challenge marketing?

You should select your social media channels based on who your challenge audience is, where they are comfortable engaging with this type of content, and also what size and type of community your partners have on these channels for you to leverage.

Instagram works well if you are able to create a lot of visual content, and you are targeting a young audience. Also, if you plan to leverage influencers to promote the campaign.

Facebook is great for marketing events, and it is likely the channel where your partners have a large existing audience for you to leverage. Facebook advertising allows you to reach a broad audience.

Use Twitter if you already have experience with and a following on the platform. It's a "noisy" platform, but if you are able to generate a lot of content and have time for engagement, it is an option. Understand whether your audience is active on Twitter and who the influential accounts are that you would engage with for the campaign.

LinkedIn works well for leveraging individual stakeholder's professional networks. If businesses are your target audience, don't neglect LinkedIn!

Events and spaces

- What relevant events are taking part in your target ecosystem(s) that can be leveraged for your marketing? For example, entrepreneur meet-ups or conferences.
- What spaces are available to you to generate awareness with your target audience? For example, innovation centres or campus lunch areas.

Email

Direct emails are powerful, and your partners should have databases that you can leverage.

- In your partner pack, you should include some suggested email copy and an email banner to make it quick and easy for partners to share. Remember to include a strong call to action for people to share with their databases.
- If you choose to run events and workshops during your marketing campaign, use these as opportunities to build your challenge database by enabling participants to opt in to receive communication from you.

Your campaign flow

Your challenge marketing campaign may be a couple of months, and you will want to send out slightly different messages at each point to maintain interest and engagement.

Example applications campaign

1 **TEASER CAMPAIGN**
Coming soon messaging, building excitement and intrigue. Announce key partners and the challenge "why".

2 **LAUNCH**
Applications are open! This is our biggest breaking news opportunity, make sure that all partners and key media are ready to announce the launch simultaneously for max impact.

3 **SUSTAIN INTEREST**
Applications may be open for a while so you will want to share content about the challenge opportunity, and reminders as to key dates.

4 **FINAL PUSH**
"Only x more days to enter!" Re-engage with all audiences and apply time pressure to get your last batch of application.

Launch and briefing event or webinar

A launch event – whether in person or online – is an opportunity to gather partner organisations, media and potential applicants to formally introduce the problem that you are tackling and the challenge opportunity.

A launch event allows you to:

- Create some buzz and get people excited about the kick-off
- Introduce the challenge partners and thank sponsors
- Allow for networking -- some attendees may want to collaborate on their entry
- Position the problem -- provide key information about the problem addressed, and the challenge statement. You may want to invite subject experts to add depth and background to the problem statement.
- Unpack the brief and answer questions about the challenge and entry requirements
- Let people know where to find additional resources and provide information about how to contact the team or get help with online platforms.

Get your ducks in a row in the lead-up to the launch.

- If you're running a live event, make it celebratory with exciting decor and catering, and work hard to get a large and interesting audience there. For a virtual event you may want to make it more festive by creating special backgrounds for speakers, for example.

- The challenge brief should be made available on your website on the day of the launch, if not a day or two before.
- By pre-preparing FAQs that you anticipate will arise, you will not only be helping your entrants but will be primed to answer questions at the launch. Any new questions that are asked regarding the challenge brief at the launch should be added to the FAQs section of the challenge website.

Selection and judging

Selecting judges

Judges should be relatively senior individuals, preferably ones who have had the chance to assess products and teams before through judging or procurement. This is also an opportunity to convince decision makers and stakeholders of the value of engaging with innovation methodologies.

Judges might include: technical experts, people experienced in implementation, entrepreneurs, representatives of the user community and business modelling experts. Depending on the number of entries you're expecting, five to seven judges is a good number. Make sure you have judges from a variety of backgrounds as well as some that are independant and not directly involved in the pilot process.

Diversity of judges is critical in terms of gender, sector experience, background etc as it adds to the credibility of the process and drives inclusivity, and can negatively impact a challenge and the project's credibility if it is not achieved.

If you have a large number of entries you may need to involve more judges in the initial assessment process and then a select few who can assist you in making a final selection.

Briefing judges

It is really important that you brief your judges well to ensure that all applications are fairly assessed. First of all you need to determine whether or not you are compensating your evaluators or judges for their time and assistance in the challenge. Good judges are often busy people so you need to ensure that you don't take too much of their time in the judging process.

When briefing the judges make sure that you cover the following points:

- Background to the challenge and the challenge statement
- Application requirements and target entrants
- Assessment criteria and pilot criteria
- Number of applications to assess as well as an estimated amount of time in total
- Assessment expectations (will you require a detailed assessment and recommendations or a simple score sheet to be completed)
- Process to declare a (potential) conflict of interest and recuse oneself
- Any required agreements e.g. confidentiality etc.
- Information required from the judges for marketing materials, announcements or media releases.

The more information you can provide to the judges, then the smoother your assessment process will be.

Many of the points covered above would also be included in the schedule of the service level agreement that you should sign with your judges before they commence any work on your challenge.

How SAIS did it

Ilari Lindy, Lead Expert for SAIS, talks through how qualified judges were carefully selected in line with the knowledge and skills required to assess the Re:Innovation challenge.

Prepare to judge

Filtering, judging and selecting the winners is the most critical part of any funding process. From the start, SAIS innovation fund has considered the openness of the process and fit of the solutions for the beneficiary needs as critical elements. All this requires careful design of the process and the possibility for tighter scoping allowed by the challenge format helped us. We already had a fairly good understanding of the needs amongst primary beneficiaries – innovation support organisations and startups – as well as the common gaps in the local ecosystems. SAIS Focal Points, grantees from previous calls as well as networks like Connected Hubs provided valuable information to the assessment of user needs. This helped us to calibrate the challenge text and in particular to calibrate the description of the target applicant (innovation support organisation).

Part of the preparation was of course sourcing a group of qualified local and international experts who were aware of the needs and gaps in the system. For this purpose, SAIS has developed a pool of local and international evaluators who possess a different type of knowledge and experience of innovation, startup and ecosystem management. Selecting impartial, skilled evaluators to work 'ad personum' for the technical evaluation is an important part of an open and transparent process.

Entry submission and judging

Make sure you have a clearly stated cut-off date for entries and that you explicitly state that no late entries will be considered. Once you have received all of the entries then you can start the assessment and judging process.

If you get a large number of entries you may need to filter them first as there may be many entrants who don't meet the basic criteria of the challenge: They may only have an idea when they are required to have a working prototype, or are based in a region outside of the target country. Someone from the project management team will need to manage this process as you only want your judges to look at eligible entries.

As judges have different skills and expertise when it comes to assessment, you may want to have each entry scored by more than one judge and then to take an average or combined total of the various assessments. This ensures that each entrant is fairly judged and considered. Once you have gone through this process, you may then need to rescore your top candidates by all judges to determine who your winner or finalists are. This final judging round can take place online by assessing only the information presented, or it could take place as a pitch event, closed meeting or video interview with the team.

Setting judging criteria

Challenge entries should be judged by a panel of judges, and therefore you need to develop some standardised criteria to assist this process. These could include:

- Sustainability of the solution: Match funding, economic viability, business model
- Scalability of the solution: Ease of adoption, potential to replicate, ability to grow
- How well the solution meets the target market needs
- Quantifiable social impact or contribution to SDGs
- Innovativeness or uniqueness of the solution
- Skills and experience of the team
- Product / market traction, if relevant

If you are asking judges to score a set of criteria, then make sure you provide them with a scale and you determine the corresponding factors for that scale.

For example, if you were scoring the experience of the team on a scale of 1 - 5:
1 = no relevant industry experience , 2 = limited industry experience, 3 = some industry experience, 4 = good industry experience, 5 = many years of relevant industry experience.

See the judge's rubric example in the addendum for an adaptable template.

Running the judging

If you are providing score sheets for the judges make sure that they contact all the relevant information for the entrant (or space to complete this), the scoring criteria and scale as well as an area for judges to make notes and comments. If you are using an electronic template or system (e.g. Google sheets), pre-populate your judging sheets with as much project information as possible to save your judges time.

If you are hosting a public pitching event, make sure that the judges can see the participants but that their scoring sheets can be covered and kept confidential. Ensure that you have the venue set-up appropriately and that you include time for the judges to ask questions if this is part of the assessment process.

You will need to predetermine how many rounds of judging your challenge will require and whether you will provide feedback to the entrants based on the judge's assessment. If you do provide feedback, make sure it is constructive and that you keep it anonymous.

Auditing judging

It is important that there is a record of the judging and scoring process so that if anyone questions the decision at a later stage, then these records can be used as evidence to support the final decision. Once the score sheets are complete, make sure that the judges each sign their sheets (even if you are using an online system), before the final scores are calculated and the winner chosen. These scoring sheets should then be saved or captured but remain confidential.

If there is a tie between finalists you may need to discuss the results with the judges as a group to determine who the winner is or pre-elect someone to have the deciding vote in case this occurs. Make sure that if the judges do need to deliberate that you have a private venue that they can use to do this, or that you schedule an online call before the winner is announced.

Gathering learnings

If you intend to run more challenge competitions, run a short survey with your judges before or immediately after they submit their votes. Gather feedback on the process and how it could be improved, what additional information would have been useful to receive from the entrants, and anything else material to your iteration and improvement of your challenge competition approach.

Thanking judges

Remember to thank your judges once the judging process has been completed, as often judges will have spent significant time assisting you with the assessment process. The project manager should make sure that the key challenge representative should thank the judges personally at the final event and should also send a formal letter or email of thanks.

You may wish to give the judges a small token of appreciation. A gift is a lovely gesture but it needs to be something relevant, culturally sensitive and preferably gender neutral.

How SAIS did it

Ilari Lindy, Lead Expert for SAIS, explains how the Re:Innovation selection and judging process took place, resulting in a clear and quick decision-making process for SAIS.

A validated process

Before entering into technical evaluation all the proposals sent to SAIS via electronic system went through an eligibility screening. First SAIS PMO checked that all proposals fulfilled the nominal requirements i.e. that they were submitted in time, included all supporting documents needed and matched with the scope and requirements of the call.

Afterwards the proposals were submitted to Focal Points who each assessed proposals where the coordinator was a registered entity in their country. This 2nd phase of screening also included novel due diligence, a reputation check as well as an assessment of alignment with national strategies supporting entrepreneurship and innovation.

We had nine experts evaluate the technical features of the proposals that qualified through two-phase eligibility screening. The evaluation was done completely online due to restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic on travelling (although we have found that in-person evaluation can be valuable, especially in follow-on rounds, as groups of evaluators can lean on each others' expertise and understanding to clarify trickier elements of the proposal).

After online briefing and guidelines provided for evaluators, each was asked to evaluate four to seven proposals independently, providing their scoring of the four categories used in the evaluation grid. As a cross-check measure, groups of three evaluators were each given the same proposal to evaluate individually. This allowed us to better evaluate a reasonable consensus.

Once individual evaluations were posted online in the system, the SAIS project management office (PMO) assessed the quality of scoring and comments. We paid particular attention to whether the evaluation of the shared proposal was consistently done by each group of three evaluators. Thanks to the thorough briefing provided for evaluators, there was no significant discrepancy in the scoring of the proposal.

As a result, the PMO was able to put together a final scoring sheet with comments of each proposal as well as the final ranking list of proposals to be submitted for the approval of the Supervisory Board. Together the evaluation took only four weeks from start to Board's approval of the five projects to be funded from SAIS 2 Innovation Fund.

Awards

Once you have selected the winner(s) for a challenge you need to communicate this effectively with all participants, partners and stakeholders as well as complete any agreements required.

Winner(s) announcement and internal communication

All applicants, whether successful or unsuccessful, should receive written notification of the results of the challenge. It is important to close off the relationship with applicants in a positive manner as they may participate in future projects and you want them to be left with a professional impression of your organisation and team. In addition, ensure that key partners and stakeholders receive information about the results of the challenge as well as information about the winning solution and next steps relating to the prize and pilot.

What's next for non-winners?

- Make sure you communicate the results of the challenge to all participants.
- Give constructive feedback to the finalists if possible on how they could have improved their proposal or pitch.
- Refer non-winners to other sources of funding or similar opportunities or programmes where they could receive support.
- Consider providing non-financial support for finalists who have promising solutions to assist them with technical development and commercialisation.

Contracting

Most challenges will require an agreement between the winner and sponsor of the challenge but the complexity of this contract really depends on the nature of the prize, the number of partners, the required impact and the amount awarded. It is best to brief a lawyer before contracting begins so you can anticipate what aspects you should consider.

Typically you would want a contract to deal with the following issues if they are relevant to the challenge:

- Contracting parties, roles and responsibilities
- Jurisdiction and governing law
- Scope of the pilot and details of the award
- Financial prizes and limitations on spending
- Relevant policies and procedures specific to the award organisation - travel, daily allowances, consulting rates, data protection etc.
- Intellectual property ownership and commercialisation
- Right of first refusal (investment, commercialisation etc).
- Marketing and publicity
- Breach of contract & termination
- Milestones and reporting

Make sure that the contract is proportional to the challenge and the rewards. An overly complex contract or process can delay the project, cost both parties in terms of legal fees, and if too burdensome on a start-up or SMME then they could refuse to sign the contract and would rather walk away from the pilot, jeopardising the whole project.

Publicity

Use the announcement of the winners and finalists as an opportunity for additional publicity. The marketing team should ensure that they draft a press release as soon as the announcement is made including the following:

- Information about the challenge: What the brief was, key application stats and sponsors or partners
- Details about the winning solution(s) or application(s): a brief description, contact details and possibly a quote from the judges as to why they were selected or the quality of the competition. Quotes from the winning team on the impact of winning the challenge for their business.
- Next steps and details of the prize and support that they will receive going forward.

Once the press release is completed, send it out with high quality images to the media as well as to your challenge partners for them to promote on their social media channels. If the prize includes a pilot project, then additional press releases after the pilot is completed, the impact achieved and possibly a case study may be useful.

How SAIS did it

Ilari Lindy, Lead Expert for SAIS, explains how the Re:Innovation selection and judging process took place, resulting in a clear and quick decision-making process for SAIS.

Welcoming the winners

SAIS 2 PMO informed winners and other applicants through its digital application platform. All applicants received a summary commentary of their application in case they would like to try again in another SAIS call or to submit the same, but improved proposal in a different call of another organisation. As SAIS 2 is a capacity building programme, we feel that applicants are not only entitled for proper feedback but would also benefit from learning what could be improved in their application. Simple “Sorry – close but no grant this time”, would not be enough.

Once informed about the grant, the five winning project consortiums were invited to the training provided by SAIS 2 and Viridian on the preparation of a project work plan and budget. The purpose of the training is to transform project proposals into more workable work plans with an appropriate budget.

All five projects were invited into two common training sessions organised online. Not only were they advised on how to prepare the necessary project documents but also familiarised with concepts such as the results framework, results chain, deliverables, work packages and milestones. All these are essential components of the SAIS project work plan. It is of interest for both project teams and SAIS PMO that concepts are understood well and work plans are adjusted accordingly to present the activities in the best possible manner. Viridian had developed an onboarding package which allowed project teams to prepare their documents jointly in a shared digital platform called Miro, which was well-received.

The training also served another important purpose which was to introduce projects and project coordinators to each other. As we expected, meeting and greeting fellow peers was not only appreciated as a networking opportunity but also as a possibility to learn and to establish a new business relationship foreseeing the future.

Piloting

And now the real work (for the winners, at least) starts!
Once the contracting has been completed and the funding has been awarded, finalise and share the pilot implementation plan with all mentors and other piloting partners so that they understand the process, timelines, order of events and deliverables of the project.

LEVELS OF PILOT INVOLVEMENT

You will want to choose the level of your involvement with the pilot depending on your resources and objectives.

Scenario 1: Award prize and close.
This is the most hands-off approach and the implementation and execution of the pilot is left up to the winning team, with no support or involvement from the challenge sponsors. This approach is particularly appropriate if you are providing small grants to many winners and your core focus is to enable the challenge entrants.

Scenario 2: Award prize and monitor progress.
With this approach, it is still up to the winning team to implement and execute on delivering the pilot but sponsors have an interest in the results and impact of the pilot, and monitor progress to gather information. This is a good approach if you are only providing financial assistance, if you need to break-up the total reward into milestone payments or if you are interested in the impact of the pilot programme.

Scenario 3: Supporting prototype development & go-to-market.
This is the most hands-on approach and involves both financial and non-financial involvement in the project. This approach allows for mentors and technical experts to be actively involved in running the pilot and supporting the team. This is a good option if you have partners and a team member who have the capacity to support the team, if you are providing support for the project beyond just funding and if you have a relatively inexperienced team who need assistance to implement their solution. This will also allow you to collect more information and learnings from the pilot, as well as develop a case study as an outcome.

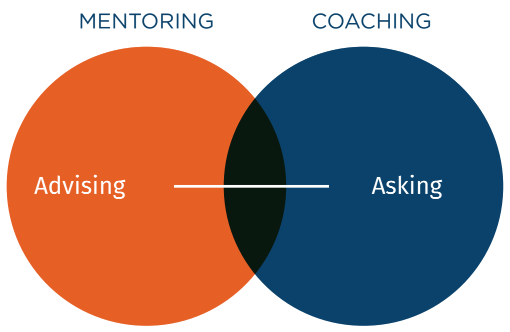
Supporting the piloting teams

It is also advisable at this point to confirm the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved and, if budget allows, to assign both technical and commercialisation mentors to the team, setting up expectations in terms of availability, frequency and ways of working. If you require regular feedback or reports from mentors, ensure that you brief them on the frequency and format to manage expectations.

Remember that the type of support that the team needs might differ throughout the pilot process, so allow for more technical support during the product development process and more commercial support during the go-to-market phase.

Mentorship and coaching

Many people think that mentorship and coaching are the same thing but they do differ!



Mentorship: Tends to be an unstructured relationship where the mentor supports an individual or team by sharing their expertise and experiences which can assist the mentee to apply this knowledge to their own situation.
Coaching: Tends to be more structured, where a coach provides assistance in a specific area and uses questions to get the individual or team to reach an answer or resolve a specific problem.

Workshops: During the pilot process it may be necessary to hold a number of workshops with the winning team/s to transfer skills, resolve issues or come up with a joint solution. Workshops can be run by mentors, business or technical experts with the winning team to assist them in working on a specific aspect of the pilot e.g. a business model workshop to define the commercial model of the solution.

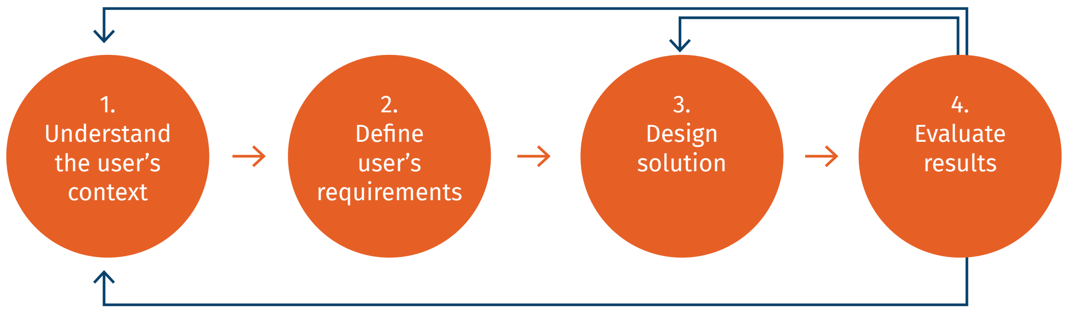
Workshops can also be run by the winning team/s with users to work through a specific issue or gather information from users in a group manner. Again, inexperienced teams may need a technical expert to guide them on how to run these focus groups effectively and ethically.

Even if you cannot provide such hands-on coaching or mentorship, you will need to communicate a piloting framework and expectations to your winning team(s) upfront.

Pilot approach: User-centred design

The most successful pilots adopt a user-centered design (UCD) approach. UCD is an iterative design process where the users or customers and their needs are considered at each stage of the design process. Users or customers are involved in the process, through either generative methods e.g. workshops, focus groups, brain-storming sessions, or investigative methods e.g. surveys, feedback forms, or interviews. Feedback from users and customers is constantly used to update and improve the product so that it meets the needs of the users.

UCD typically has four phases:



1. Understand the user's context, what factors influence their environment and how this will impact on your proposed solution (refer to the consideration for pilot participants box below for more tips on understanding context).
2. Define the users requirements in terms of the problem that you are solving and what they need from a solution.
3. Taking into account the users' context and requirements, design the solution or modify your proposed solution.
4. Evaluate the results and use this feedback to better understand the users' context and requirements, as well as make modifications to the design of the solution. Remember it might not be just the product or service that's modified, but also the proposed business model or cost!

Choosing a pilot user group and site

One of the most important aspects of any pilot project is the choice of pilot user group and site. A pilot group should be big enough to test and meet the deliverables of the project, but should not be too big that it is unmanageable and will overwhelm the project team and resources available.

The pilot user group ideally should:

- Have a well defined set of characteristics
- Be as close to the ideal target market as possible
- Be as homogenous or similar as possible
- Be in a geographically defined area
- Consider the issue you are addressing important to them
- Be willing to engage in the process
- Trust the project partners and project sponsors
- Indicate that they can be involved for the whole pilot project

CONSIDERATIONS FOR PILOT PARTICIPANTS

It is important to consider your users' context and abilities when designing a pilot programme.
Some aspects to consider include:

- Level of digital literacy
- Connectivity and cost of data or airtime
- Ability and availability to participate in the pilot Literacy levels and home language
- Access to devices
- Cultural or religious norms
- Protection of their privacy and data

If you use a UCD approach then you will ensure that you take the context of the user into consideration and get feedback from them on your proposed pilot early on in the process. Sometimes you may even need to provide users with stipends, to cover the cost of data or transport so that you can gather insights and feedback from them.

Budgeting

Budgeting for a pilot can be a tricky exercise as there are often unanticipated costs that arise due to the nature of a pilot project. If you have a budget template or specific format that your organisation prefers then share that with the project team as early as possible.

Some organisations also have restrictions or policies governing how funds can be used and it is important to make sure that the applicants are aware of these restrictions upfront. If you are also expecting the project budget to cover certain essential items e.g. project review or audit, then make sure that these are also mentioned upfront. Where possible, it is critical that the assumptions that have been used for the budget have been listed to check that these are reasonable e.g. travel, daily rates for staff, subsistence and can be justified as necessary. Typically a team will spend money on what they think is most important. If you have a team

that is mainly technical, they will spend most of the money and time on product development and neglect the go-to-market and commercialisation aspects, while a more commercial team may not spend enough time and money on product development and testing and may want to launch the product prematurely. Mentors can be useful in providing feedback on the actual costs of developing and launching a new product or service.

Typically the following should be included in a pilot budget:

- Salaries and wages
- Travel costs
- Product development and testing
- Telecommunications and data
- Equipment
- Research and user engagement
- Launch material
- Training
- Marketing
- Project management, administration and reporting

It is possible to also include a percentage of the total budget as a contingency for unexpected costs but this should typically be between 5-10% of the total budget.

Project management

The teams selected for piloting should have an allocated project manager or lead, and should have demonstrated project management capability in their entry. The expectation is that they can draw up their own project plan. As the challenge organiser, your role should be to set the broad framework of the piloting project, manage communications with the teams, and measure progress against proposed plan and budget.

Set key milestones and dates for piloting phase
e.g. 1. Pilot user group and site selected and secured. 2. Outcomes/ Key metrics confirmed. 3. Full Project Plan submitted. 4. Testing Starts 5. Mid-pilot assessment.

Support teams to create a realistic project plan
You may want them to use Google Sheets or a project management tool so that you have sight of the plan.

Schedule bi-weekly project status meetings with teams
To track project progress, and identify any areas where they require additional support.

Hold a mid-pilot meeting
For a full progress update, and again identify any further interventions (workshops, mentorship, technical support) that may support the team in achieving better results.

How SAIS did it

Ilari Lindy, Lead Expert for SAIS, explains how the PMO team guided the project teams to deliver their pilots, while giving them the autonomy to execute.

Good communication and space to implement
Once kicked-off to implement the project, we at SAIS 2 PMO trust the project teams to do as planned. PMO does not provide detailed day-to-day supervision over the implementation of the project. We will do the normal review checks at the times when Milestones are achieved.

The Milestone submission of documents includes periodic progress report, financial report and deliverables agreed to be achieved by the Milestone. Progress made is analysed against

the GANTT chart and budget. SAIS PMO also encourages the project coordinator to be in contact informally and outside of the Milestones. The PMO will gladly take part and contribute to a different type of events where/if needed. Most importantly, regular communication allows PMO to be informed in advance if progress is disrupted or otherwise deviated from the agreed plan.

However, usually once the project work plan and budget are well planned it will be straightforward to implement. Therefore SAIS 2 put in more time getting the work plan right before the pilot launch, in order to avoid confusion and unnecessary amendments going forward.

KPIs and reporting

You are likely to have outcomes that you will want to report against, either for your own objectives or for your funders'. At the same time, you don't want to overload an implementing team with reporting, especially in a short pilot phase.

It's recommended that there be a baseline-setting report and a close-out report that explains the progress and change across the intervention. A short mid-project report can be useful for identifying challenges.

See the market validation report in the addendum for an adaptable template.

Defining what to measure
Before you begin the pilot process you need to define what success looks like for all stakeholders - the implementing team, project managers, mentors and sponsors. Ensure that this is well

documented and that you are all aware of each other's expectations before you start. Flag any conflicting expectations (e.g. proving the business model by focusing on sales and making a profit vs. reaching as many users as possible and measuring impact even if no commercial model is found) before you begin and negotiate around what aspects of the project are critical for success and which are nice to have.

If you have a monitoring and evaluation framework or theory of change that you as a sponsor would like to see used by the project participants, then make sure you run a workshop with everyone so they understand the framework and why it is important for them to measure or track certain things.

Once you have defined what success looks like for the project, break this down into key performance indicators (KPIs) and provide a detailed description of what needs to be measured, so that teams are able to comply. Ideally this should comprise no more than four or five well-chosen indicators.

> A theory of change is a logical model of how an organisation or project aims to make change happen for their end users: it starts with the intended outcome and works backwards through outcomes to define activities that will result in the end impact.

The winning team(s) may have indicators of their own that they will be measuring, which they could add to your framework. You will also need to ask teams to consider how (interviews, user data, surveys) and where they will get the data or evidence to prove this KPI, and how frequently it will be measured to contribute to this metric.

Collecting data and measurements in a pilot project should not be an afterthought and should be built into the overall project management plan. Often baseline measurements or data needs to be collected from the users before engagement on the project begins, at intervals throughout the project, and again at the end.

Data from pilot projects can be extremely valuable as it can be used to demonstrate the success of the solution to a challenge which is critical if a project needs additional funding, partners or support to be scaled and rolled out to a wider community or target market.

FINAL REFLECTIONS FROM THE SAIS PMO

The value of challenge competitions and pilots for innovation support organisations.

- A challenge competition is different from a typical sourcing initiative: you get less applications with a more defined brief. It's also more obvious which projects are really not up to scratch and which are the strongest, although you do miss out on some projects which could have been good with some work.
- A competition's rigorous approach to paring down and refining documentation and communication makes back-end processes such as judging go much smoother and quicker.
- Giving finalists some project management and budgeting training, particularly if these need to align with internal processes, is very valuable.
- Time constrained pilots can give an organisation an understanding of how feasible it is to fast-track implementation. However, too short is questionable - you don't get the opportunity to measure the impact of a project.

> To find out more about the pilots funded through the SAIS Re:Innovation challenge competition visit the website: https://www.saisprogramme.org/

PART: 3

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDIES

While running a challenge competition with a pilot may seem daunting, it has been done in southern Africa many times before! Here we have chosen three examples, run at different regional scales and in different sectors. These illustrate the various ways challenge competitions can contribute to organisational goals and the wide range of problems that can be addressed. We also share some key implementation lessons.

1 Serious About Games

Where? Western Province, South Africa

Who? Funded by the Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT) in the Western Cape Provincial Government in partnership with the Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative (CiTi), the Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI), and Interactive Entertainment South Africa (IESA), with additional assistance provided by the 67games initiative.

The challenge

The Serious About Games challenge was subtitled “Games to reimagine how communities work” and invited game developers and digital creatives to collaborate with urbanists and civil society, and design a game that gathered feedback from people in the Western Cape’s poor communities about how they would improve their economic reality.

Taking an ecosystem-building and human-centred design approach, the challenge had two outcomes: to grow the Western Cape’s digital content community, while gathering data and sourcing new solutions to socio-economic challenges experienced by Western Cape communities.

The competition

The Serious About Games challenge was launched in late 2016 with an open call for interested parties to attend free workshops hosted by the partnership to learn more about the intention behind the competition and find suitable collaborative working partners. These events included game jams attended by local youth and game designers in three townships: Khayelitsha, Philippi and Langa.

Teams submitted their entries and four finalists were each given R50 000 to develop a prototype, which was user-tested in Khayelitsha as well as being assessed by game design experts. Then a winning team, ReBlok, was selected to receive R1 million to develop its project for a 2018 launch.

Piloting: Overcoming challenges

ReBlok was a collaboration between development house RenderHeads, which makes interactive museum installations and games, and NGO iKhayalami, which develops low cost methods to upgrade informal settlement infrastructure. The game that was developed, called Vukuzenzele, used drones to map informal settlements -- which are notoriously difficult to map -- into CAD files. These files were then turned into digital game levels, designed to be played collaboratively by four players on a tabletop screen.

Vukuzenzele was launched at AT Section, Site B, Khayelitsha in April 2018. This site was chosen after a thorough site selection process and the game was then promoted to the

community through local committees. A dozen teams played the game as a participatory planning process, with three teams receiving cash prizes for the most fair and viable lay-outs. Eight months later, after negotiations with the City of Cape Town were concluded, re-blocking commenced in AT Section, largely based on the layout design created by the community through gameplay.

Sustainability: What happened next?

The Serious About Games initiative continued through the piloting of Vukuzenzele, with more ecosystem engagements, serious games case studies, and user-focused and demand-side research taking place. SAG wound up in early 2019.

The Vukuzenzele project was the subject of several articles and research papers both locally and internationally, as an innovative, tech-enabled approach to participatory planning.

ReBlok was set up as a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) between the two parties, who then pursued market opportunities. Vukuzenzele needed more development investment to become commercially viable and unfortunately the business case was not strong enough to attract further financing.

www.reblok.co.za

Lesson Learned

- One can greatly improve the calibre of entries that require both technical and community know-how by deliberately encouraging cross-sector collaboration, and providing opportunities, such as design-thinking workshops, for different actors to interact and network.
- On the other hand, it is unreasonable to expect these collaborations to continue beyond the life of the project, especially if the pilot reveals that the commercial opportunities are not as viable as envisaged.
- With a good budget and a strong winning team, a challenge competition can pilot a truly innovative solution.

2 Innovation Edge & Grow Great: Made to Measure stunting challenge

Where? South Africa
Who? Innovation Edge and the Grow Great Campaign, funded by DG Murray Trust.

The challenge

More than a quarter of South African children under five are stunted, yet stunting is preventable by good nutrition. One of the barriers to managing childhood stunting is that community health workers (CHWs) find the tools difficult to use, leading to incorrect and inconsistent measurement. Therefore caregivers may not even be aware that their child's nutrition isn't sufficient for healthy growth.

Innovation Edge and the Grow Great Campaign were looking for an error-proof tool for community health workers to accurately measure, record and monitor the length of children aged birth to 2.

The competition

As a reward, "The successful idea or proven concept will receive up to R1 million in funding, join the Innovation Edge portfolio of investments and get connected to an international community of changemakers and investors."

Launched in early 2019, this challenge call initially remained open for eight weeks, although this was extended. As an active venture philanthropy fund, Innovation Edge has the staff and systems to run an ongoing challenge, while overseeing several pilots.

The competition was promoted through the extensive networks that the partners have built up throughout the early childhood development space.

The challenge competition surfaced several interesting ideas that spoke to the problem statement, one of which was the Slide Guide. While the Slide Guide isn't a measurement tool, it does speak to the problem of capacitating community Health Workers to communicate growth issues with children's parents.

Every child in South Africa receives a health tracking booklet at birth, called the Road to Health. The Slide Guide is a simple paper-based device that helps healthcare workers accurately interpret a child's growth trend on the Road to Health booklet's growth chart. It also contains prompts and messages that help the healthcare worker to discuss the growth trend with the caregiver in a way that makes sense to them and is encouraging. This tool is innovative in that it drives behaviour change and is cost effective and scalable in the most resource-constrained settings.

Piloting: Overcoming challenges

Innovation Edge has a relatively hands-off approach to managing pilots: investees develop their own project plans and will submit a quarterly report, with ad hoc phone calls or site visits in-between. An early-stage pilot usually runs over 4-6 months.

The Slide Guide was developed by designers and mimicked the look and feel of the Road to Health booklet, with extensive input from healthcare professionals. Acceptance by the community health workers was therefore not an issue. However, access to CHWs beyond the small initial user-test group was a challenge, requiring protracted discussions with the provincial health department.

Sustainability: What happened next?

The Slide Guide project has stayed small, but Innovation Edge learned good lessons about the role of challenge competitions in their innovation and sourcing strategies.

The Innovation Edge team has seen that putting out problem statements can be an effective way to attract more targeted solutions, and will continue to use them alongside a general open submissions strategy. Rather than a specific challenge, these problem statements may be shared with a broader audience in the form of thought leadership pieces or events, such as their sector-crossing Think Future conference.

Lesson Learned

- If your organisation has extensive networks in one sector, don't become complacent by marketing only to them: you are unlikely to find breakthrough new approaches this way. Try to broaden your marketing to adjacent sectors or encourage entrants to collaborate with new partners with complementary skills in order to uncover more innovative solutions.
- For longevity, it's important to not only select a good idea, but a focused and resilient entrepreneur to drive projects.
- If the solution requires the buy-in of critical stakeholders, involve them in the process as early as possible. Understand their KPIs and processes, to help design a win-win for all parties. In some cases, this may mean a stakeholder simply agrees to not block a process (rather than actively participating).

3 FinMark Trust: #SADCInnovation Fintech Challenge

Where? Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia
Who? Finmark Trust, with SADC, Cenfri, Mastercard Foundation, fsdZambia, UNDP, working with hubs / accelerators BongoHive, Sahara Ventures, mHub, Simodisa StartUp, Standard Bank, Botswana Innovation Hub, NUL Innovation Hub..

The challenge

The broad umbrella of this challenge was around encouraging data-driven financial inclusion innovation and investment in southern Africa. Within this, FinMark Trust identified four problem areas: 1. SMME access to finance, specifically targeting agro-businesses, 2. Use cases for a regional digital financial identity for electronic payments, 3. Peer-to-peer lending and credit scoring for women, 4. Improving access to basic services such as water, energy and education through accessible digital payment systems.

The competition

The challenge was designed to be implemented over a 16-week period starting in February 2020, with 8-10 teams to be selected per country for in-person training.

All participants were rewarded with skills development opportunities in data science and entrepreneurial skills, including an online design thinking course from IBM. Semi-finalists would participate in four webinars and a three-day bootcamp.

The COVID-19 crisis interrupted the challenge timeline, so the organisers introduced additional virtual engagements for entrants, including webinars on product and business model development, and online sessions with thematic experts and mentors. They also used a Slack channel to keep entrants up-to-date with developments during that volatile time. In the end, the competition was able to support 170 shortlisted teams (from more than 550 entries) on its digital platforms.

Four winners were selected from each country, one for each thematic challenge. Each country finalist was given a cash prize and the chance to participate in the finals, to win further incubation and commercialisation support. A look book, profiling these semi-finalists' teams and fintech solutions, was published on the #SADCInnovation website.

In February 2021 three overall winners were selected, coming from Botswana and Tanzania:

- Digital Diamond: a tech identity solution that works on smartphones and feature phones
- MoneyChaps: a mobile-based, data-driven financial management and education tool
- PhemaAgri: facilitating access for smallholder farmers to financing and insurance

http://sadcinnovation.org/index.html

Lesson Learned

- Consider what formats and languages your target entrants may require information in: FinMark translated their materials into Portuguese for Mozambicans.
- As well as formal funding and delivery partnerships, leverage more informal collaborations – #SADCInnovation had at least 9 of these – to broaden your recruiting and expert pools.
- Including virtual support elements in your challenge competition can enable more people from different areas to participate, if they are connected.
- Set aside time and budget to profile your shortlist and winners. It's a value-add for entrepreneurs who enter and can also lead to better longer-term outcomes for your participants, who will gain credibility and coverage.

ADDENDUM: EXAMPLES AND TEMPLATES

TEMPLATE 1: CHALLENGE STATEMENT

To develop your challenge statement, you must first understand the problem. The SAIS Re:Innovation Strategic Foresight course, available through the SAIS website, can help you explore this concept in more depth. These examples are taken from that course.

A problem statement is a **concise description** of a condition to be **improved upon.** Together with a challenge statement, it identifies the **gap** between the current state and **desired state.**

A problem statement should be short (2-3 sentences long), and should answer the following questions.
1. **What** is the problem?
2. **Why** is it a problem?
3. **Where** is the problem observed?
4. **Who** is impacted?

You can also ask:

5. **When** was the problem first observed?
6. **How** and how often is the problem observed

A challenge statement turns a problem statement into a short sentence that helps to focus our thinking about solutions.

The sentence starts with the words **"How might we...?"** "How might we" is a phrase that suggests that change is possible and invites us to be creative in exploring solutions.

Problem and challenge statement: Example

Young children across Southern Africa don't have books in their homes. Books are too expensive. This means that children are not learning to read effectively, affecting national literacy levels. In addition, any books they do have access to do not feature black children or familiar scenes, which affects their ability to relate to the books and to enjoy reading. *[The problem statement.]*

We want children to own books featuring children who look like them so that they will learn to read and to love reading. *[The gap.]*

How might we produce high quality, representative African children's books that can be easily and cheaply printed and distributed to children who have none? *[The challenge statement.]*

The solution that was developed is called Book Dash (www.bookdash.org).

When developing a challenge statement for a competition brief, remember to flesh out any further requirements for the entrants, such as the need to utilise a particular technology or methodology.

TEMPLATE 2: BASIC COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

This is a simple communications plan template, with sample text from an idea-stage programme called Launch League. You can use this to plan to plot out your activities during your call for entries and during-competition communications. You may also choose to create a communications plan for your partners or funders, to enable them to easily share the programme with their audiences.

Here is a quick guide for social media image sizes: https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media- image-sizes-guide/.

Date	Communica-tion Type	Communi Cation Objective	Audience	Tags / Hash Tags	Copy	Image	Image Size
20 February	Instagram Post	RECRUITMENT – Announce programm e	{Hub name} Instagram community	#launch league {Tag ecosystem partners}	Have you got a great business idea? Apply for the Launch League program me, and we will help you grow your idea and get started. Find out more and apply here {link to website} before 21 March.	Copy: Are you ready to Launch? APPLY NOW. Brand: {Hub Logo} {Launch League Logo} Look and feel: Launch League background pattern + rocket illustration	1080 x 1080

Date	Communica-tion Type	Communi Cation Objective	Audience	Tags / Hash Tags	Copy	Image	Image Size
	Facebook Post	RECRUITMENT – Announce programm e	{Hub name} Facebook community	#launch league {Tag ecosy stem partn ers}	We're looking for talented young people with great business ideas that can create opportun ity in their communi ties! Apply for the Launch League program me, and we will help you grow your idea and get started. The program me consists of an intense 2-day bootcam p, and a series of meet-ups to receive support and guidance from other entrepen eurs. Find out more and apply here {link to website} before 21 March.	Copy: Are you ready to Launch? APPLY NOW. Brand: {Hub Logo} {Launch League Logo} Look and feel: Launch League background pattern + rocket illustration	1200 x 630
	Email	RECRUITMENT – Announce programm e	{Hub name} Partner database		{Link to folder with email copy}	Launch League email banner	600 x 421 (Mailchimp)
	Email – entrepreneur database	RECRUITMENT – Announce programm e	{Hub name} Entreprene ur database		{Link to folder with email copy}	Launch League email banner	600 x 421 (Mailchimp)

TEMPLATE 3: JUDGING RUBRIC

A rubric should align with the theme and concerns of the competition: the criteria and template below are for a technology solution prototype with a strong user-centred design component, for example. This can be adapted to your needs and you may add criteria (not too many!) to measure certain objectives you have.

Judging criteria and clarifications

- ***The problem is relevant and well defined, and the technology or methodology addresses it:*** A range of research has been done resulting in relevant issues being addressed: these issues are prevalent in the [region]. The issues are particularly well-suited to being addressed through the technology or methodology proposed. The design of the solution logically addresses the issues.
- ***The target market has been engaged and their feedback incorporated:*** This is a real problem that communities face, communities have choices they can make around this problem, primary research and testing has been done.
- ***The distribution plan is well-conceived to reach the target market:*** The devices used and roll- out proposed seem feasible and could be scaled over time.
- ***There is a plan to sustain and scale the product over time:*** The product could still be supported in two years' time and could reach 5000 users (or greatly & measurably impact a smaller group) in this period.
- ***The budget and team are realistic to complete the release-ready product in the given timeframe:*** The team has the skills to fully develop and deploy this product. The budget breakdown proposed will be effective in delivering the product in six months.

Please give each criterion a score out of 10, following this scale:

- **0-3:** Very little evidence of consideration.
- **4-5:** Some evidence, but not convincing.
- **6-7:** Some evidence of consideration of the criterion, somewhat convincing, but some issues remain.
- **8-9:** Convincing evidence of engagement with the criterion, remaining issues easily addressed.
- **10:** Criterion well addressed, with no obvious issues.

For a live pitching and judging scenario, this rubric could simply be printed on sheets, as follows, and placed in front of each judge:

TEAM [NAME]

Criteria	Comments	Score out of 10
The problem is relevant and well defined, and the product or methodology addresses it.		
The target market has been engaged and their feedback incorporated.		
The distribution plan is well-conceived to reach the target market.		
There is a plan to sustain and scale the product over time.		
The budget and team are realistic to complete the product in the given timeframe.		
TOTAL		/60

TEMPLATE 4: PILOT REPORT TEMPLATE

The template below is similar to the report winners in the SAIS Re:Innovation competition were asked to complete mid-way through their pilot, which was focussed on validating the market for their proposed product or service. The same length and depth is advised, but adapt the question fields to your needs and objectives.

I INTRODUCTION TO THE MARKET VALIDATION REPORT

Market validation is the process of presenting a prototype for a product or a service to its real target market and learn from those prospective buyers/users/consumers whether the validated component (e.g. business model, user acceptance, technical function, viability under different legal systems etc.) is worth pursuing to deployment.

1. Key Assumptions (100 words)

- State the top 2 -3 assumptions you set out to test i.e. what is to be validated under real market conditions (e.g. business model, user acceptance, viability under different legal systems etc.)?

Assumption 1	
Assumption 2	
Assumption 3	

2. Process (300 words)

- Describe the testing site and the process used to test these assumptions with your customers, users, or beneficiaries. Testing site includes all locations where the validation takes place and explains where/if applicable which aspects of the service are validated in which location and why.
- Provide a clear quantification of how many customers in each test site are participating in the validation trials.

	Description and number of customers / users / beneficiaries	Description of engagement	Feedback from customers / users / beneficiaries	Description of testing site
Assumption 1				
Assumption 2				
Assumption 3				

3. Key Lessons and Impact (350 words)

- Describe the testing site and the process used to test these assumptions with your customers, users, or beneficiaries. Testing site includes all locations where the validation takes place and explains where/if applicable which aspects of the service are validated in which location and why.
- Provide a clear quantification of how many customers in each test site are participating in the validation trials.

4. Partnerships (100 words)

- Assess the operation of the project consortium within the operation of the project. Detail any successes and challenges that were encountered with the partners.
- Detail whether having a consortium was a hindrance or a benefit to the project overall.

5. Next Steps (300 words)

- Describe the next steps based on the lessons learned, link each step to one of your initial assumptions.

6. Business Model (300 words)/Include Business Model Canvas Attachment

- Describe how you have revised or updated your business model now that you have conducted market validation.
- Describe how these learnings have impacted on your target market, revenue model, value proposition and ability to scale.
- Provide as an annex a completed and updated business model canvas as part of your market validation report, which includes how your business model has changed due to this engagement. Describe these changes briefly below, linking them to the above questions.

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