

# Création Africa

South Africa • Lesotho • Malawi



## Call for Cultural Entrepreneurship Incubators: Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi

Issued by the Embassy of France in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi  
and the French Institute of South Africa

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Applicants should submit all questions related to this call via email to:  
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## 01

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### I. Context

Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi aims to support and scale up cultural entrepreneurs in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi. As part of this project, we are looking for an incubator (or consortium of entities that jointly meet the selection criteria) to support, train, and coach selected cultural entrepreneurs in their innovation and development journeys through an incubation and coaching programme.

The programme will run from November 2025 to October 2026, starting with the selection of 50 entrepreneurs, followed by a coaching phase from February to March 2026, and an incubation phase from April to October 2026 for the 15 selected cultural entrepreneurs.

### II. Project description

Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi is an ambitious initiative by the French government to promote and support the development of cultural entrepreneurship in Africa. As a catalyst for economic growth and job creation, the project aims to strengthen the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in three target countries: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi.

### III. Project coordination

This project is coordinated by the Embassy of France in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi and the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS)—the cultural arm of the Embassy—with the support of the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE).

### IV. Objectives of Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi:

1. Stimulation and support of cultural entrepreneurship.
2. Bolster the CCIs in South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi.
3. Promoting international cooperation and business development.
4. Connect incubated entrepreneurs with their peers in Africa and Europe through an immersion programme.
5. Strengthening the bonds between Southern Africa, France and Europe.
6. Encourage cultural entrepreneurs to adopt sustainable and environmentally friendly practices in their projects and businesses.

Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi is based on a holistic approach that combines mentorship, incubation, training, funding and networking to support cultural entrepreneurs at all stages of their journey, with a focus on early-stage entrepreneurs. The project aims to create a vibrant and sustainable ecosystem for cultural entrepreneurship in Africa by collaborating with local and international incubators and businesses, institutions and partners.

Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi will operate under the oversight of the Embassy of France and IFAS, ensuring effective governance and strategic guidance. The selected incubator will also maintain direct reporting lines to the Project Manager, facilitating seamless communication and collaboration. This structured governance framework will enhance project transparency and efficiency, ultimately contributing to its success.

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## 02

### OBJECTIVES OF THE INCUBATOR

#### I. Goals

To ensure the success of Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi, the French Embassy and IFAS have chosen to partner with an incubator or a consortium of incubators.

The selected incubator(s) will play an essential role in the success of this project by providing holistic support: training, mentoring, resources (facilities such as internet connection, coworking space and any other help relevant to the success of this project), access to investors/investment funds and an environment conducive to the growth and sustainability of entrepreneurs in the CCIs. The aim is to be at the intersection of business and culture and to be able to tackle this duality: economic (generating wealth and employment) and cultural (generating values, meaning and identity).

The incubation phase will be complemented by dedicated funding and a tailor-made immersion programme that stand outside of this call.

#### II. Roles and responsibilities

The incubator for Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi is crucial in supporting and nurturing cultural entrepreneurs as part of this project. The role of the incubator is defined in the provided description and is further outlined as follows:

1. **Sector expertise:** The incubator(s) should have in-depth knowledge of entrepreneurship in the African context and be well-versed in the challenges entrepreneurs face, particularly in the cultural economy. It/they should possess a blend of entrepreneurial and business management skills to ensure the commercial viability of projects, expertise in the CCIs, knowledge of the sector's economic model, and a capacity to assess the quality of a project and its potential.
2. **Preparing and coaching 50 innovative cultural entrepreneurship projects** for presentation in front of a jury, from which 15 projects will be selected to be incubated for four to six months. The incubator should demonstrate a successful track record in supporting early-stage startups (see Annex 1).
3. **Incubating the 15 selected projects:** This phase marks the transition from concept to realisation as the chosen projects embark on a transformative journey towards becoming thriving cultural enterprises. The incubator(s) take(s) on the responsibility of providing these ventures with tailored support, personalised mentorship, and access to a rich network of resources. Through meticulous guidance and continuous feedback, the incubator(s) assist(s) these cultural entrepreneurs in refining their business models, scaling their operations, and navigating the intricacies of the creative industry. The incubation programme will comprise of 2 distinct yet connected cohorts: a major track titled "Creation" will accommodate most (10-12) CCI entrepreneurs with an agenda of supporting their early stage development; while a minor "Digital Creation" track (3-5 innovators) will be specifically tailored for the needs of tech-enabled CCI start-ups with a strong growth potential and increased needs for capital investment. While tracks will differ on some components of the incubation agenda, they will share common branding, a common core curriculum, and a sense of belonging to the programme.
4. **Supporting with professional networks:** Provide a network of startup support professionals and mentors with proven expertise. Encourage entrepreneurs to expand their professional networks and establish strategic partnerships.
5. **Access to investors:** Provide a network of investors/investment funds to possibly explore financial partnerships with the selected cultural entrepreneurs. The incubator would need to have the capacity to financially invest in the selected finalists.
6. **Infrastructure and resources:** Provide necessary facilities, including workspace, communication tools, and reliable internet connection. Facilitate access to materials, markets and financial resources (direct or indirect investment, fundraising and any other financial help entrepreneurs can get).
7. **Impact and monitoring:** Develop and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs) to assess the impact on incubated projects' growth, profitability, and sustainability. Provide the support and tools to aid the projects in measuring their social, economic, and cultural impact in their respective communities.
8. **Timeline and commitment:** Establish a clear and realistic schedule for incubation, coaching, training, and event activities. Commit to meeting deadlines and project-related commitments.

9. **Ethics and integrity:** Act ethically, responsibly, and with integrity, in all interactions with contractors, partners, and stakeholders. Understand the value of culture and the importance of meaning and identity when operating in this sphere.
10. **Communication (internal and external) and event management:** Maintain transparent and regular communication regarding incubated projects, share their successes and challenges, facilitate networking opportunities, and celebrate achievements. Organise selection and pitch events for entrepreneurs, creating a supportive and friendly environment. Promote the visibility and recognition of incubated entrepreneurs through events, conferences, and other networking opportunities.

### III. Budget

The total budget allocated for the incubator(s) selected for Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi stands at €250 000 to €305 000. The budget allocation will be based on the offer and the expertise needed; consortiums may apply to work together on this project. If one entity cannot fulfil the requirements, the project coordinators may decide to work with two incubators and split the roles.

### IV. Expected results

The expected results from Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi include a range of positive outcomes for cultural entrepreneurship, economic development, and international cooperation in the respective countries. Here are the anticipated results:

1. **Stimulation and support of cultural entrepreneurship:**
  - Growth in the number of successful cultural entrepreneurs and startups in the region.
  - Growth in the number of investment funds/private partners involved in the creative industries.
  - Increased entrepreneurial skills and knowledge within the CCI.
2. **Strengthening the CCIs in South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi:**
  - Enhanced competitiveness and sustainability of cultural and creative businesses.
  - Job creation and economic growth within the CCIs.
  - Improved infrastructure and resources for the development of the CCIs.
3. **Promotion of international cooperation:**
  - Strengthened cultural and economic ties between the project countries, France and Europe.
  - Facilitated cross-border collaboration and trade within the CCIs.
4. **Strengthening the bonds between South Africa, Lesotho, Malawi and Europe:**
  - Improved cultural and economic exchanges between South Africa and Europe.
  - Increased visibility and recognition of France as an economic partner through the project.

## 5. Project impact and monitoring:

- Measurement of KPIs to assess the project's impact on the growth, profitability, and sustainability of incubated projects.
- Evaluation of the social, economic, and cultural impact of projects in their respective communities.

## 6. Incubator success:

- Demonstrated success in incubating innovative and sustainable startups, with progress tracked beyond the incubation period (at six months, one year, and three years' post-incubation).
- A thriving ecosystem of cultural and creative startups and businesses.

## 7. Event management and visibility:

- Successful organisation of selection and pitch events, fostering engagement and collaboration between cultural entrepreneurs.
- Enhanced visibility and recognition of incubated entrepreneurs through events, conferences, and networking opportunities.

## 8. Long-term sustainability:

- Development of sustainable and viable cultural and creative businesses that continue to thrive beyond the project's duration.
- Strengthened cultural and creative sectors, contributing to long-term economic growth.

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## 03

## INCUBATOR REQUIREMENTS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

To be considered for the incubator, or team of incubators, for Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi, applicants must meet stringent requirements. These requirements are essential to ensure that the selected incubator(s) has the capacity, commitment, and expertise to successfully run the project, promptly meet all project milestones, provide comprehensive support to entrepreneurs, implement a structured incubation programme, and positively impact startups/businesses. Below are the key requirements:

### 1. Capacity and resources:

- The incubator must have the physical infrastructure, including workspace, communication tools, and reliable internet connection, to support the needs of entrepreneurs throughout the incubation period.

## 2. Experienced team:

- The incubator's team should comprise experienced professionals with a proven track record in incubating and supporting startups.
- A dedicated project team with expertise in business development (SMEs) and entrepreneurship is necessary to ensure project success.
- The team must also be sufficiently staffed to provide consistent follow-up and hands-on support for the selected entrepreneurs.

## 3. Effective project management:

- The incubator must demonstrate an ability to meet project timelines promptly and efficiently. Delays could hinder the progress of startups or businesses and impact project outcomes negatively.

## 4. Comprehensive support:

- A commitment to providing comprehensive support, including personalised coaching, mentoring, and access to a network of mentors and experts, is essential.
- The incubator should be able to offer additional support beyond incubation, including guidance on scaling, marketing, and access to funding.
- Understanding the CCI ecosystem in Southern Africa and access to a network of accomplished professionals in the CCIs.

## 5. Structured incubation programme:

- A clearly defined and structured incubation programme is necessary to ensure startups receive consistent and valuable guidance throughout their journey.
- The programme should cover key aspects such as entrepreneurship skills development, project management, marketing, and communication.

## 6. Positive impact on startups:

- The incubator must demonstrate its ability to positively impact startups by fostering their growth, profitability, and long-term sustainability.
- A history of successful incubation programmes with measurable outcomes is critical in evaluating impact.
- The incubator must demonstrate its ability to raise private interest/funds from other partners.

## 7. Ethical and responsible practices:

- Ethical conduct, integrity, and responsibility are paramount. The incubator should uphold the highest ethical standards in all interactions with entrepreneurs, partners, and stakeholders.

## 8. Cultural and Creative Industries expertise:

- While not mandatory, an understanding of the CCIs and experience working with cultural and creative startups is a significant advantage.



## 9. Commitment to diversity and inclusion:

- A commitment to diversity and inclusion, ensuring equal access and opportunities for entrepreneurs from various backgrounds, is highly valued.

## 10. Flexibility and adaptability:

- The incubator should demonstrate flexibility and adaptability to tailor their programme to the specific needs and objectives of Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi.

## 11. Transparent reporting and monitoring:

- The incubator should have mechanisms for transparent and effective communication with the project coordination team.
- Regular reporting on project progress and performance, including measurable impact on startups, is required.

These requirements ensure that the selected incubator is well-prepared and committed to successfully executing Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi. Meeting these criteria will be a key factor in the selection process to identify the best incubator to support cultural entrepreneurs in each country.

## 04

### PROJECT TIMELINE

- **Contract signing and start of incubator's mission (13 October 2025)**
- **Call for applications (10 November 2025 – 14 December 2025) – 5 weeks:**
  - Launch the call for applications for cultural entrepreneurs.
  - Promote the call through various channels to attract applications.
  - The application submission period closes on December 2025.
- **Cultural entrepreneurs' selection and shortlisting (19 January 2026 – 23 January 2026) – 1 week:**
  - Review and evaluate project applications.
  - Shortlist the top 50 projects based on selection criteria.
  - Notify shortlisted entrepreneurs.
- **Coaching period (2 February 2026 – 20 March 2026) – 7 weeks:**
  - Start the coaching programme for the selected 50 projects.
  - Assign mentors and coaches to work with the entrepreneurs.
  - Focus on skills development, refining project ideas, and preparing for pitch presentations.

- **Pitch presentations and finalist selection (24 March 2026 – 26 March 2026) – 3 days:**
  - Organise pitch presentations for the 50 projects.
  - Select and organise the jury to identify the top 15 projects.
  - Notify the 15 selected projects and entrepreneurs.
- **Incubation programme (6 April 2026 – 9 October 2026) – 7 months:**
  - Conceive the incubation programme for the 15 selected projects.
  - Implement the structured incubation programme, including mentorship, training, and resources.
  - Provide workspace and access to resources as needed.
- **Regular progress monitoring (throughout incubation):**
  - Regularly monitor the progress of incubated projects.
  - Collect and analyse data on project development, achievements, and challenges.
  - Address any issues or provide additional support as required.
- **Direct funding (2026 – to be confirmed):**
  - Organise a selection panel event for the 15 incubated projects.
  - Allow entrepreneurs to present their progress to a jury.
  - Evaluate the projects' readiness for the next phase.
  - Grant allocation and definition of the amounts awarded.
- **Post-incubation (Immersion) period (1 November 2026 – 1 May 2027):**
  - For projects that complete the incubation programme, continue to provide support as needed.
  - Facilitate access to funding, exposure to new markets, international investors, and mentorship for scaling and growth.
  - Monitor the long-term impact of the incubated startups in their respective communities.
  - The incubator will not be responsible for running the post-incubation period (immersion programme).
- **Project evaluation and reporting (every month):**
  - Continuously assess the project's impact on cultural entrepreneurship, economic growth, and international cooperation.
  - Collect data and metrics to measure the success of the project and the startups incubated.
  - Prepare and submit regular progress reports to stakeholders.
- **Création Africa Days (October 2026) – 2 days:**
  - Host a closing event to celebrate the achievements of Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi.
  - Recognise the contributions of entrepreneurs, mentors, partners, and stakeholders.
  - Share success stories and lessons learned from the project.

This proposed timeline outlines the key milestones and activities for Création Africa: South Africa, Lesotho and Malawi, covering the call for projects, coaching, incubation, and immersion phases. It also includes regular monitoring, reporting, and evaluation to ensure the project's success and its positive impact on cultural entrepreneurship in South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi. Specific dates for certain events, such as the selection panel event and closing event, will be confirmed as the project progresses.

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## 05

### HOW TO APPLY AND SELECTION TIMELINE

#### Steps to apply as an incubator:

##### 1. Review project requirements and guidelines:

Review the project's specifications, objectives, and selection criteria outlined in the description to understand the expectations and eligibility requirements.

##### 2. Assess your incubator's eligibility:

Evaluate whether your incubator meets the requirements and criteria outlined in the project description. Ensure you have the capacity, expertise, and resources necessary for the project.

##### 3. Prepare required documentation:

Gather all necessary documentation and send it via the following Google Form: <https://forms.gle/otpwkwhwFoNR9f8eA>. Your documentation should include:

- Your incubator's profile and history (max. 5 pages);
- Details of your team, including qualifications and experience (max. 5 pages);
- A clear and structured incubation programme outline;
- A list of mentors and experts in your network;
- Information on your available facilities, resources, and infrastructure;
- A letter outlining your incubator's ability to invest in the selected companies;
- A financial breakdown of costs associated with collaborating on the project;
- A presentation of your incubator's KPIs. The indicators listed in *Annex 1* are provided as a helpful reference (max. 10 pages);
- A technical proposal (max. 15 pages).

##### 4. Budget considerations:

Provide a transparent budget breakdown that outlines the financial implications of collaborating with your incubator. Be clear about costs and the allocation of resources.

## 5. Timeline and deadline:

Be aware of the application deadline and ensure that the tender is submitted on time.

## 6. Interview and assessment:

Be prepared for potential interviews or further assessments if shortlisted. Respond promptly to any requests for additional information or interviews.

## 7. Notification and collaboration:

If your incubator is selected ; you will receive a notification. From then on, collaborate closely with the project coordination team to ensure a smooth transition and the successful implementation of the project.

## Selection timeline

- Launch of the call for proposals from incubators (7 August 2025)
- Submission deadline for incubator proposals (7 September 2025)
- Review of applications (9 – 16 September 2025)
- Interviews with incubators (22 September 2025)
- Contract signing and start of incubator's missions (13 October 2025)

## Annex 1: Measuring the success of an incubator

Measuring the success of an incubator is crucial for evaluating its effectiveness and impact. Here are key performance indicators (KPIs) and metrics to consider:

1. Survival rate: The percentage of incubated startups that continue to operate after a specific period, typically measured at one year, three years, and five years post-incubation.
2. Revenue growth: The increase in annual revenue of incubated startups compared to their pre-incubation period.
3. Job creation: The number of jobs startups create during and after incubation.
4. Fundraising success: The amount of external funding (investment, grants, loans) secured by startups during and after incubation.
5. Time to market: The average time it takes for startups to launch their products or services from the beginning of incubation.
6. Market penetration: The percentage of startups successfully entering and capturing market share in their target industry or sector.
7. Customer acquisition: The rate at which startups acquire and retain customers or users.
8. Product development: The number of new products or features startups launch during incubation.
9. Mentorship effectiveness: Feedback from incubated startups on the quality and impact of mentorship provided.
10. Graduation rate: The percentage of startups that complete the incubation programme.
11. Post-incubation support: The extent to which startups receive ongoing support and guidance after graduating from the incubator.
12. Investor and partner engagement: The number of investors, partners, or collaborators engaged with incubated startups.
13. Diversity and inclusion: Tracking the inclusion of underrepresented groups among incubated startups.
14. Economic impact: The overall economic contribution of incubated startups to the local or national economy.
15. Sustainability: The percentage of startups that continue to operate and thrive several years after incubation.
16. Exit strategy: The successful exits (e.g. mergers, acquisitions, IPOs) of startups incubated by the programme.
17. Client or customer feedback: Gathering feedback from clients or customers of startups to assess their satisfaction and product quality.
18. Intellectual property: The number of patents, trademarks, or copyrights filed or granted to incubated startups.
19. Community engagement: Assessing the involvement of startups in community initiatives or outreach.

20. Success stories: Documenting and showcasing incubated startups' achievements and business success stories.
21. Goals and objectives: An incubator must define its specific goals and objectives and tailor its success metrics accordingly. These indicators help the incubator and its stakeholders gauge the impact and value it brings to the startups and the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem.