

R16m UK-SA Water Innovation Lead Customer Programme fund launches

The R16m UK-SA Water Innovation Lead Customer Programme fund is being launched at a time when South Africa and the UK are facing a raft of water security challenges.



Image supplied. An R16m UK-SA Water Innovation Lead Customer Programme fund has launched

This includes water shortages, capacity constraints on investing in new infrastructure, and maintenance of existing facilities. It also comes as countries across the globe work to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal 6 (“Clean Water and Sanitation for All”).

Established by the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) and Innovate UK, the UK Government’s national innovation agency, the fund will support collaborative research, development and commercial partnerships between South African and British water utilities and innovations in water management, distribution and treatment.

The fund aims to forge partnerships between South African and British water utilities and innovators with proven solutions to enable greater access to clean water and sanitation.

SA and UK share common issues

“South Africa and the UK share common issues such as droughts, ageing infrastructure, and the ever-growing needs of expanding populaces,” says Dr Nee-Joo Teh, head of Global Alliance at Innovate UK.

“This initiative is an opportunity for us to build stronger linkages between our two countries.” It is an opportunity for innovators to engage with their global counterparts, explore new environments, and create value for both markets and their communities.

“By combining the resources, talent, expertise and experiences of our respective water sectors, we can work together to solve our collective challenges,” explains Teh.

Dayanandan Naidoo, head of the Natural Resources and Energy business unit at TIA says the partnership with Innovate UK ties in with TIA's mandate and mission to harness technological innovation and knowledge for the betterment of all South Africans.

“By stimulating and supporting collaborative water innovation, we can promote economic growth and improve our citizens’ quality of life,” says Naidoo.

Eligible entries

Eligible entries must propose a partnership between at least one South African and one UK-based organisation.

Of the R16m in funding available, R5m is being provided by TIA for South African organisations, while Innovate UK is providing €500,000 (approx. R11.4m at the current exchange rate) for their UK partners.

Innovate UK’s Global Alliance Africa project will manage the fund, which is divided into two streams based on Technology Readiness Levels (TRL). South African organisations with projects at TRL 4 to 6 can receive grants up to R500,000 and their UK partners up to €25,000.

For projects at TRL 6 to 8, South African entities are awarded up to R1m, with UK partners eligible for up to €100,000. Additionally, Global Alliance Africa and TIA will offer technical support and assist in finding and connecting South African and UK partners.

Tested proof-of-concept solutions

Applicants with innovative, tested proof-of-concept solutions that address key challenges will be prioritised.

These challenges fall into two thematic areas:

1. Digitalisation, focusing on water resource management, leak detection and reduction, data-driven decision making, improved water quality monitoring, enhanced water treatment, better water distribution and access, water billing and revenue management, and remote monitoring of rural water infrastructure.
2. Effective waste management in the fields of wastewater treatment efficiency, water reuse and recycling, energy recovery, and nutrient recovery.

South African start-ups, small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs), large businesses, and research and technology institutions are invited to apply.