



Scalar
Botswana
Innovation
Program

Powered by Botswana Innovation Fund

Application Guide for the SBIP 2026 Cohort

From climate and digital technologies local
innovation in Southern African Development
Community (SADC) to global opportunity

Application Guide for the SBIP 2026 Cohort

The Scalar Botswana Innovation Program (SBIP) for early-stage ventures is a unique multi-year support program that incubates start-ups domiciled in Botswana focusing on key areas within climate action and digital transformation.

Each year, we select a limited number of start-up ventures and provide them with financial support, training on a wide range of topics, an experienced coach, and other benefits.

Are you interested in applying to the SBIP? Carefully review this document by the end of April 2026.

CONTENTS

INDICATIVE SELECTION TIMELINE.....	5
APPLICATION DOCUMENTS.....	6
Expression of Interest.....	6
Draft Application.....	6
Final Application.....	6
Important Guidelines.....	7
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA.....	9
Are you a start-up or early-stage venture?.....	9
... Planning to set up a new company.....	9
... with climate or technology as its primary focus.....	9
... and ready to be accelerated?.....	10
SELECTION CRITERIA.....	11
Innovative Idea.....	11
Business Strategy.....	11
Team.....	11
Business and Financial Plan.....	12
TECHNICAL SELECTION CRITERIA.....	13
Technical Focus & Scope.....	13
Software-first.....	13
Easy Integration & Repeatability.....	13
Clear and Measurable Value.....	13
Technology Readiness Level (TRL).....	13
Compliance & Investment Readiness.....	13
Scalable Data Foundation.....	13
Product Road Map.....	14
Team's Technical Expertise.....	14
Innovation.....	14
Technical Differentiation.....	14
Intellectual Property.....	14
Defensibility.....	14
BIF Funding Alignment.....	14

VERTICALS.....	15
Energy.....	15
Distributed (Renewable) Energy & Micro-grids.....	15
Fintech.....	15
Sectoral AI & SaaS (Mining / Agriculture / Logistics).....	15
Compliance.....	15
Deeptech (AI; Digital Twins, Satellite/LEO).....	15
EXCLUSION POLICY.....	16
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	17
About the SBIP Program.....	17
Eligibility Criteria and Selection Process.....	19
Program Support.....	20

INDICATIVE SELECTION TIMELINE

10-Mar-2026 to 05-Apr-2026	Start-ups express their interest in participating in the SBIP program.
05-Apr-2026	Deadline to submit the Expression of Interest
05-Apr-2026	The SBIP performs a preliminary eligibility assessment and provides feedback on any required adjustments for the Draft Application.
10-Apr-2026	Eligible Applicants will be invited to access the online SBIP Training Hub, which allows for self-paced training on a wide variety of climate and technology opportunities to assist with the preparation of the Draft Application.
24-May-2026	Deadline to submit the Draft Application
15-Jun-2026	The SBIP performs a final eligibility assessment and confirms which Eligible Applicants will have their Draft Application reviewed in-depth.
16-Jun-2026 to 19-Jun-2026	The Reviewers will assess the Draft Applications and all Eligible Applicants will be invited to clarify questions on their start-up project.
22-Jun-2026	The SBIP shortlists the best Draft Applications and provides feedback to all Eligible Applicants. The Shortlisted Applicants can update their Applications, based on the feedback provided and virtual Q&A training workshops with the SBIP Private Partners.
18-Jul-2026	Deadline to submit the Final Application
19-Jul-2026 to 19-Aug-2026	The Selection Committee will assess the Final Applications and some Shortlisted Applicants will be invited to clarify questions on their Start-up project.
20-Aug-2026	Confirmation of Selected Start-Ups
End of Aug-2026	The acceleration program starts with the Selected Start-Ups.

APPLICATION DOCUMENTS

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

As part of the Expression of Interest, Applicants are required to submit the following three documents, by 05 April 2026 23:59 (Cape Town time):

- 1) Teaser presentation (required) (Draft Provided)
- 2) Key team members' CVs (required)
- 3) Innovation fact sheet (required) (Draft Provided)

DRAFT APPLICATION

As part of the Draft Application, Eligible Applicants are required to submit the following five documents, by 24 May 2026 23:59 (Cape Town time):

Application presentation (required)

- 1) Key team members' CVs (required)
- 2) Innovation fact sheet (required)
- 3) Market feasibility study review (required)
- 4) Financial plan (required)

FINAL APPLICATION

As part of the Final Application, Shortlisted Applicants are required to submit the following five documents, updated with the feedback given from the previous phase as well as the advanced training, by 18 July 2026 23:59 (Cape Town time):

- 1) Application presentation (required)
- 2) Key team members' CVs (required)
- 3) Innovation fact sheet (required)
- 4) Market feasibility study review (required)
- 5) Financial plan (required)

IMPORTANT GUIDELINES

Guidelines for all Application Documents

- Please limit each document to a maximum of 20 MB.
- All documents must be properly named as per the following structure:
 - o *Name of the start-up project - Number (from 1 to 6) - Name of the document*
 - o *For example: “Aspiring Climate Solutions - 5 - Financial plan.xlsx”*
- Please upload a single file for each application document.

Guidelines for the Teaser Presentation

- Please submit this as a presentation (landscape), as a PDF.
- Please strictly follow the sequence and numbering of the sections and sub-sections following the
“SBIP – Teaser Presentation - Structure and Key Topics”, as provided by the SBIP.
- A typical application presentation would be between 10 and 20 pages.

Guidelines for the Application Presentation

- Please submit this as a presentation (landscape), as a PDF.
- Please strictly follow the sequence and numbering of the sections and sub-sections per the *“SBIP – Application Presentation - Structure and Key Topics”*, as provided by the SBIP.
- A typical application presentation would be between 40 and 80 pages.

Guidelines for the Key Team Members’ CVs

- Please submit this as a single document that includes all CVs, as a PDF.
- Please focus mainly on the key persons; please feel free to include the entire team in the presentation.

Guidelines for the Start-Up Fact Sheet

- Please submit this as a document, as a PDF.
- Please strictly follow the template *“SBIP - Innovation Fact Sheet - Template”* as provided by the SBIP.
- A typical Start-Up fact sheet would be between 1 and 4 pages.

Guidelines for the Market Feasibility Study Review

- Please submit this as a document, as a PDF.
- Please see the appendix of this Application Guide for an example outline.
- A typical market feasibility study review would be between 10 and 30 pages. This would be a geographic/sectoral assessment of your target markets but also an assessment of the feasibility of your business strategy considering the market readiness of your innovation, the probability of your go to market to plan with the innovation you are looking to deploy, and the depth of the market to identify sufficient market base.

Guidelines for the Financial Plan

- Please submit a fully functional spreadsheet of a start-up budget with plausible operation and innovation costs for a Minimum Viable Product (MVP).
- The financial plan must include a comprehensive set of assumptions from the start-up phase to MVP.
- Our reviewers want to understand the causal links between the start-up Project and the Applicant. Please do not submit a values-only spreadsheet or a PDF.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Based on their Expression of Interest, Applicants will be assessed on and need to comply with the following Eligibility Criteria:

ARE YOU AN EARLY-STAGE START-UP OR VENTURE...

- The applicant is a first- or second-time start-up or venture (the “Applicant”) and intends to set up a company in Botswana (“Domicile”) before the Final Application deadline.
- The Applicant will uphold best market practices.
- **Botswana domiciliation is mandatory**, including:
 - Company registration in Botswana.
 - IP registration and regulatory compliance in Botswana.
 - Operations structured to scale *from Botswana* into the region and globally.
 - The prototype or MVP must be physically based in Botswana, or readily accessible in-country.

... PLANNING TO SET UP A Start-Up...

- The start-up Project will develop an integrated process in place to identify, manage, monitor, and measure the environmental and social impacts, risks, and opportunities of investments, while also reporting on expected and realized results through pre-defined indicators on an annual basis.
- The IFC Exclusion Policy will apply to 100% of the start-up Project

... WITH CLIMATE OR TECHNOLOGY AS ITS PRIMARY FOCUS...

- The Start-Up Project will have digital technology or climate change mitigation and/or adaptation as its sustainable innovation objectives.
- The Start-Up Project has an innovation with a clear and direct link, to digital technology mitigation and/or adaptation of climate change or cross-cutting activities

... AND READY TO BE ACCELERATED?

- The Start-Up Project has a viable climate or digital business strategy, backed up by a market feasibility study provided and a well-developed MVP business plan.
- The Start-Up Project has a plausible innovation strategy, supported by best-practice and management methodologies.
- The Applicant has a strong commitment to creating a positive impact and the team members have proven track records in developing and managing climate or digital business.
- The Applicant has a realistic MVP or Prototype Idea and the capacity to launch the Start-Up Project, which is attractive in terms of financial and non-financial returns.

Only applicants deemed Eligible will be considered during the next phase of the selection process. The SBIP reserves the right to update the eligibility criteria at any time.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants deemed Eligible will be expected to submit an Application during the 2nd phase of the selection process, which will be assessed on the following Selection Criteria (in addition to your continued compliance with the Eligibility Criteria).

INNOVATIVE IDEA

- Innovative thematic strategy
- Potential to be replicated and scaled
- Identified Market Channels

BUSINESS STRATEGY

- Triple bottom-line innovation strategy with integrated best-practice impact framework
- Credible climate impact measurement, targeting environmental objectives and management methodology over the Start-Up life
- Innovative Start-Up concept combining public/private sources of Clients.

TEAM

- First- or second-time start-up founders or ventures
- Focus on innovation, a vision for growth, and the drive to scale their business
- Strong commitment to creating a positive impact in the targeted geographies and sectors
 - Skills, track record and innovation experience in climate or technology by team and individual members
 - Leadership and management experience, with a clear structure and roles
 - Alignment as a team with a credible plan to commit full-time toward launching the start-up
 - Adequate financial commitment by the team and individual team members.
 - Local (Botswana) representation, through citizenship, shareholding, or active operational engagement.
 - A locally based individual or team member who is actively involved in the product and project, and with whom BIF can engage directly.

BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL PLAN

- Project concept supported by an advanced financial plan with attractive financial and non-financial returns
- Credible financial budgets
- Ability to communicate and convince investors
- Traction with other stakeholders
- Commitment, persistence, and resources to complete the SBIP. The SBIP reserves the right to update the selection criteria at any time

TECHNICAL SELECTION CRITERIA

Technical Focus & Scope

Early-stage ventures focused on **innovative, scalable technologies** within climate action and digital transformation. The technology must improve or optimize these sectors.

Software-first

Solutions where **software is the primary driver of value** across multiple sites.

Easy Integration & Repeatability

Solutions that can be **deployed repeatedly through existing channels**, integrating with limited effort.

Clear and Measurable Value

The value proposition must be **clear and resilient to changes to external circumstances** (e.g. policy, licensing, settlement rules, or utility behavior), ensuring the benefit is standalone and the outcome is measurable.

Technology Readiness Level (TRL)

Projects that have already reached a **minimal TRL of 4 or 5**, with prototypes showing stable performance either at laboratory level or in the relevant working environment.

Compliance & Investment Readiness

Innovation strategies that fit with integrated best-practice **impact frameworks, export requirements, and lender covenants**.

Scalable Data Foundation

Low-CAPEX entry points that can scale as **B2B products**, while continuously **collecting data in favour of future capabilities** in the forecasting, automation, and more advanced AI domains.

Product Road Map

Solutions with a **well-structured product development plan** for the SBIP (12 months, from prototype to Minimum Viable Product) and after the incubation (2-3 years, from MVP to long-term vision).

Team's Technical Expertise

Teams with **scientific or engineering skills** in the chosen core technology, that are critical to the development of the scaling strategy.

Innovation

Innovation refers to the development of **new and unique products or processes** that are functionally advanced, efficient, and cost-effective, resulting predominantly from **technical development**.

Technical Differentiation

Significant improvements to existing products are eligible only where they demonstrably surpass current alternatives **in terms of features, functions, parameters, or performance**.

Intellectual Property

Clear ownership structure and consideration of freedom-to-operate, ensuring sustainable competitive positioning and long-term commercialization viability.

Defensibility

Solutions that demonstrate **defensible technological advantage** through patentable elements, proprietary systems, protected algorithms, trade secrets, or other forms of intellectual property.

BIF Funding Alignment

Projects that **align with Botswana Innovation Fund Funding Guidelines**, meeting minimum eligibility thresholds outlined in the official [BIF Funding Guidelines](#).

VERTICALS

Energy

Digital tools that make **power systems easier to see, manage, and bill**. This includes metering and sub-metering, energy-flow and outage monitoring, data cleaning/MDM, and software that turns telemetry into decisions, invoices, or settlement for utilities, municipalities, and private networks.

Distributed (Renewable) Energy & Micro-grids

Software and services around **decentralised energy generation and storage**: C&I solar and batteries, campus and industrial micro-grids, community and farm systems, hybrid diesel-renewable setups. The focus is on monitoring, control, operations, billing, and coordination of **many small assets and sites**, not on building the physical power plants, or utility-scale grids themselves.

Fintech

Financial infrastructure tied directly to **energy and ICT**: payments, billing, collections, receivables, and embedded finance that helps deploy or use assets. Typical examples are meter-to-cash flows, PAYG/PAYU logic, settlement and reconciliation tools, and stablecoin/digital-money initiatives that simplify real energy cashflows.

Sectoral AI & SaaS (Mining / Agriculture / Logistics)

Vertical software and data products for mines, farms, logistics and transport, with a clear operational metric (e.g. yield, uptime, fuel, losses). These solutions improve how assets and resources are used and can naturally **extend into energy use, reliability, or demand optimization** in those sectors.

Compliance

Digital tools that turn operational data into **trusted evidence for regulators, lenders, and buyers**. This includes MRV for emissions and energy use, environmental and social tracking, digital product passports, and audit trails for billing, settlement, and data access.

Deeptech (AI, Digital Twins, Satellite/LEO)

Advanced technology applied to the **DDEI stack**: operational digital twins, forecasting and optimisation models, and satellite/LEO-based connectivity or sensing. The emphasis is on deeptech that starts from **a specific, useful application** and has the potential to grow from these beginnings; rather than on capital-heavy or purely speculative platforms.

EXCLUSION POLICY

Innovations must exclude:

- New constructions of electric and thermal coal-fired power plants and modernization of such operating and decommissioned stations with or without long-term carbon capture and storage.
- Innovations attached to Nuclear projects.
- Innovations attached to Hydro-electricity
- Innovation attached to large geothermal plants located in protected forest areas and ecosystems and/or which release substantial amounts of greenhouse gasses through the improper treatment of the geothermal fluids.
- Innovations attached to Biofuel projects (biodiesel and ethanol), and certain biomass and organic waste projects (e.g., from the production of palm oil) unless it can be demonstrated that these projects meet the aspects of sustainable development after a detailed study and that they apply robust environmental and social safeguards (e.g., no threat to food security, to deforestation, forest degradation, wetland drainage through an indirect land use change).
- Industrial gas projects (HFC, N₂O, PFC, SF₆) only if they are related to carbon market activities.
- Oil production entails major local pollution problems, e.g., from oil sands.
- Certain types of mining activities in which waste handling involves special risk.
- Unlawful logging and other particularly damaging logging.
- Unlawful fishing and other particularly damaging fishing activities.
- Dam projects which may cause serious environmental damage.
- Projects and activities with severe and irreversible consequences for particularly valuable and/or protected areas.
- Innovations associated with Mining and power companies that derive more than 30% of income from thermal coal or base more than 30% of their operations on thermal coal.
- Innovations associated with companies that have more than 30% of income from oil exploration or base more than 30% of their operations on oil exploration.

The SBIP reserves the right to update the exclusion policy at any time.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE SBIP PROGRAM

What is the Scalar Botswana Innovation program for climate and digital technologies?

The SBIP program is a public-private initiative that incubates startups that have innovation projects in climate and digital technology and have a strong focus on innovative strategies.

What are the benefits of joining the SBIP program?

The Selected Founders who will be joining the SBIP program will receive access to technical and financial support. The technical support is provided for free to the Start-Ups, while the financial support is an investment upon start-up registration (for the pre-seed) and after 6 months (for the working capital facility).

What is the timeline for application review and selection?

The call to submit an expression of interest (EOI) typically is open from 10th March until 5th April 2026. The SBIP team will perform a preliminary eligibility assessment, based on the EOI, and provide feedback on any required adjustment for the Draft Applications.

The deadline to submit Draft Applications will be on 24th May 2026. The SBIP team will perform a final eligibility assessment and review all Draft Applications. Eligible Applicants will be invited to an online interview to clarify questions about their Start-Up projects.

Based on the Draft Applications, the SBIP team will shortlist the top applicants and confirm this to all applicants by 22nd June 2026. Shortlisted Applicants will be allowed to update their applications, based on the feedback and the training workshops provided by the SBIP partners.

Final Applications will need to be submitted by 18th July 2026. The SBIP Selection Committee will review all Final Applications and invite some Shortlisted Applicants to an online interview to clarify questions about their Innovation projects.

Final confirmation of the Selected Start-Ups will be by 20th August 2026. A public announcement will follow in the weeks after.

What is the duration of the program?

The SBIP program will provide support for the Selected Start-Ups for a period of up to one (1) year. This excludes the selection period, which precedes the contractual support period.

How often will the SBIP program accept applications?

The interested founders will get the chance to send their Expression of Interest during March, 2026. This is the only time when the SBIP admits interested start-ups into the program, as the program is not set up for admission on a rolling basis.

If a Start-Up was not selected during a previous selection process or the start-up is unclear whether they would still be eligible at the next Call for Expression of Interest, the SBIP encourages you to (re)submit your application.

The only exception would be for Shortlisted Applicants who were not selected during a previous selection process. Unless they meaningfully change their start-up project, they will be deemed ineligible in the future.

What type of climate areas does the SBIP program target?

The SBIP program targets and supports Start-Ups innovating in one of these areas:

- Climate Change Mitigation: efforts to reduce or limit GHG emissions or enhance GHG sequestration.
- Climate Change Adaptation: activities that address current and expected effects of Climate Change.

Does it impact the application if the Start-Up is already launched?

The SBIP program is geared towards supporting the Start-Up to launch their innovation (i.e., achieve MVP). The value of our program is therefore highest for founders who are in the process of structuring and Start-Upraising for their first or second Innovative project.

Does it impact the application if the Founders are (intended to be) domiciled outside of Botswana?

It is a requirement for the founder to be based in Botswana and for the team to be domiciled in Botswana.

Having said that, the program is open to hybrid teams. This means:

- Local (Botswana) representation, through citizenship, shareholding, or active operational engagement.
- A locally based individual or team member who is actively involved in the product and project, and with whom BIF can engage directly.

Is there any financial commitment or cost associated with participating?

No, there is no financial commitment or cost associated with participating. However, once the Start-Ups are selected, it is expected that the team will commit full-time to complete the process.

What happens if one of the Selected Start-Ups fails to reach the MVP during the program?

If the Selected Start-Up fails to reach the MVP during the program, the SBIP and the Selected Start-Up will agree on the terms and conditions of the termination of the cooperation agreement and the Financial Support Agreement, as well as the liquidation of the Selected Start-Up.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND SELECTION PROCESS

Who is eligible to apply for this incubator program?

To be eligible for the SBIP program, the applicants must meet certain criteria, which you can find in this document.

Which start-ups qualify as “Start-Ups”?

The SBIP requires a company or venture to be created. The team should consist of multiple team members with relevant experience. This company should be targeting to launch its MVP.

Who can submit a proposal? Can I submit a proposal as an individual?

Proposals are only accepted from legal entities (to be formed), or consortiums of legal entities. Individuals are not eligible to apply.

Can Start-Ups from international locations apply?

No, our program is not international. The start-up vehicle has to be domiciled in Botswana, with IP registration and regulatory compliance in Botswana. Operations are meant to be structured to scale *from Botswana* into the region and globally.

Which sectors and/or themes will be prioritized?

The SBIP focuses on supporting the emergence of innovative and high-impact climate and digital solutions. The SBIP will provide the applicants with Market-related studies.

Do the founders and team need to have a track record in climate or technology to apply?

A shared track record in climate or technology is not a prerequisite, but relevant personal track records are recommended.

What is the geographic scope of the program?

The SBIP program is regional and intended to support Start-UPs and Founders with domiciliation in Botswana.

Is local stakeholder engagement a prerequisite to applying to the SBIP program?

No, having a local stakeholder engagement is not a prerequisite to applying. However, it will give the founders an advantage and significantly boost the chances of selection.

Do I need to adopt a gender lens and gender equality policy to apply/ Do I need to adopt a diversity, equity, and inclusion policy to apply?

No, this is not a requirement for applying. However, it will give the Start-Up manager an advantage and significantly boost the chances of selection.

The SBIP encourages founders to adopt an inclusive understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and acknowledges that the intersection of gender, race, class, and other factors creates overlapping biases and systems that disadvantage and discriminate. DEI means having equal status, rights, and opportunities.

Have you ever supported (and would you consider) a single-founder start-up?

Yes, the SBIP would support a single-founder start-up. It should be noted that institutional investors will not be keen to invest in one founder start-ups due to concentration risk. It is advisable to consider a team approach to spread the work and risk in your innovation strategy.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

How does the SBIP provide technical support to Start-Up managers?

The SBIP organizes training workshops with our private sector partners, matches Selected Start-Ups with expert coaches, guides on the MVP and launch journey, and creates opportunities to Start-Upraise.