

Request for Proposal: Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation

Communications and Engagement Consultancy

www.raeng.org.uk/africaprize

Deadline for submissions: 18 September 2024

Interviews held: Week beginning 30 September

Period of engagement: November 2024 – October 2025

Allocated budget: £120,000 (inclusive of VAT)

All queries and submissions to be sent to Catriona MacArthur, Senior Manager, Africa Programmes
catriona.macarthur@raeng.org.uk

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Summary of invitation

The Royal Academy of Engineering is looking to engage a communications agency to provide communications support for the Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation (Africa Prize) programme, with a focus on the Cycle 11 cohort.

The Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation, founded by the Royal Academy of Engineering, is Africa's biggest prize dedicated to engineering innovation. Running since 2014, it awards crucial commercialisation support to ambitious African innovators developing scalable engineering solutions to local challenges, demonstrating the importance of engineering as an enabler of improved quality of life and economic development.

Sixteen entrepreneurs, 'the shortlist', participate in an eight-month, hybrid, business training and mentoring programme. Towards the end of the training, the shortlisted entrepreneurs are asked to submit a second application, enabling them to demonstrate how they have implemented their learnings into their businesses. The judging panel review the second stage applications and select four finalists from the sixteen, who go on to pitch at the final event and be in with a chance of winning £25,000. All 16 entrepreneurs go on to become part of an engaged and thriving alumni community.

Over the last ten years, the programme has supported almost 150 entrepreneurs from across sub-Saharan Africa. The businesses supported have gone on to create over 28,000 jobs, raise \$39 million in funding, and bring 470 products and services to market, with a reach of over 10 million beneficiaries.

The Prize is currently funded by the UK Government's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology's (DSIT) Official Development Assistance funding, as well as charitable trusts and foundations, individual donors and corporate partners.

We are inviting a communications agency to shape and implement the communications and engagement for the 11th cohort and ensure that the Africa Prize is widely promoted to targeted audiences; support the entrepreneurs to continue to promote their innovations and that the Africa Prize is positioned as a pre-eminent and critical award in the engineering and innovation sector.

We look forward to receiving your application.

About our organisation

The Royal Academy of Engineering (the Academy) harnesses the power of engineering to [build a sustainable society and an inclusive economy that works for everyone](#) in line with our strategy. In collaboration with our Fellows and

partners, we're growing talent and developing skills for the future, driving innovation and building global partnerships, and influencing policy and engaging the public.

As a charity, we deliver public benefit from engineering excellence and technology innovation. As a national academy, we provide progressive leadership for engineering and technology, and independent expert advice to government in the UK and beyond. As a Fellowship, we bring together an unrivalled community of leading business people, entrepreneurs, innovators and academics from every part of engineering and technology.

As an Academy we proactively seek to procure services from diverse teams and diverse suppliers. We expect the project to be delivered in line with our values of inclusion and diversity and to the highest ethical standards. Diverse perspectives should be considered in the development of proposals and outputs should be inclusive.

Statement of requirements

Objectives

We are looking for an innovative and dynamic organisation to:

1. Expand the diversity of applications, in terms of underrepresented groups, through the promotion of call for applications for Cycle 12 only.
2. Promote announcements and engage with media at key points in the Africa Prize cycle in top tier publications with high audience reach in sub-Saharan Africa and in the UK.
3. Profile the current shortlist and alumni businesses to ensure ongoing and sustained communications of the Africa Prize and its impact.
4. Position the Africa Prize as a pre-eminent prize in sub-Saharan Africa and showcase the importance of engineering innovation for sustainable development.
5. Provide media training for the Cycle 11 shortlist to ensure they are equipped and able to promote themselves and their innovations beyond the Africa Prize duration.

Duration

This engagement begins in November 2024 with onboarding and preparation for the shortlist announcement and ends in October 2025 with the announcement of the winner and finalists and the end of the recruitment drive for Cycle 12.

The timeline for key dates in Cycle 11 is detailed below – please note, all dates are subject to change.

Date	Cycle 11	Cycle 12
13 June 2024	Applications open	

15 October 2024	Applications close	
October - January 2024	Review of applications	
January 2025	Shortlist decided	
February 2025	Training begins	
17-21 March 2025	Shortlist come to London	
19/20 March 2025	Shortlist press release	
July 2025	Deadline for submission of stage 2 applications	Applications open
September 2025	Judges meet and determine finalists (1-5 Sep) Finalists press release (8-12 Sep)	
October 2025 (Working date: 16 October)	Training and final event Winner press release	Applications close

Further context

There are several stakeholders that the nominated agency will need to engage with as part of this contract:

- Prospective applicants
- The shortlist
- Alumni
- Judging panel

Beyond these groups, the agency will also need to engage diverse audiences which will be identified through the communications planning process. Further information about the key stakeholders can be found in Annex 1.

The Academy has an in-house communications team, and while they do not lead on communications for the Africa Prize, alignment and consultation with them will be required. All graphics, press releases, videos and similar content will need to be approved by our in-house team.

Deliverables and KPIs

Objective 1 deliverables:

- Detailed audience analysis and user profiles
- Phased and resourced communications plan and delivery to reach those audiences (including objectives, key messages, audiences and KPIs)

KPIs:

- Evidenced increase in the diversity of applications, both in terms of the number of countries from which applications have been received and the number of women founders applying.

Please refer to our [interactive map](#) to see which countries have been represented in the Africa Prize.

Objective 2 deliverables:

- Media outreach plan and strategy
- Promotion of the shortlist, finalists and winners, to media outlets in the UK and on the African continent (including press releases announcing the shortlist in February 2025; the winner in October 2025 to both, and a finalist press release in September 2025 to African media only)
- Attendance at and leadership on all press engagement at the Africa Prize final event held in October 2025 at a location yet to be determined on the African continent.

KPIs:

- Sustained media coverage in national publications in sub-Saharan African countries, pan-African publications and UK/international publications to reach relevant audiences.

Examples of past media coverage can be found in Annex 2.

Objective 3 deliverables:

- Accessible and easy to follow profiles for the selected shortlist – based on interviews.*
- Sourcing and management of photography collateral and video content for the selected shortlist. This to include photos of the innovators, their technology, teams, and at their place of work with their technology in situ. Video content of the entrepreneur and technology in action is also requested.*
- Creation of key collateral to promote of the Prize and the shortlist. This could include (list not exhaustive):
 - Social media assets
 - Graphic(s) illustrating the geographical distribution of applications
 - Case studies and stories
 - Assets / toolkit for use by the shortlist and alumni on their own and Academy channels.
- Copy for different channels, including social media, newsletters and audio.

* Profiles need to be written and filming and photography needs to be scheduled, implemented and delivered to the Academy in a 4-week timeframe to allow it to be ready for sharing ahead of the shortlist press release in mid-February 2025.



KPIs:

- Profiles and photography are delivered to specification and delivered on time.
- Social media cards for the shortlist and finalists are delivered to specification and delivered on time.
- Copy creation is created in collaboration with the Academy team and delivered on time.
- Open rate; click-through rate (CTR) for newsletters; social media engagement containing the created copy demonstrate an increase in engagement across channels

All content should be created in alignment with the Academy and Africa Prize brand guidelines.

Objective 4 deliverables:

- Targeted engagement with key stakeholders to build awareness and advocacy of the Africa Prize (both of cohort 11 and future cycles)
- Identified and supported list of spokespeople and ambassadors to raise the profile of the Africa Prize
- Developing thought leadership pieces / op-eds that effectively position the Africa Prize with existing and new audiences

KPIs:

- 5 thought leadership pieces written and pitched are created throughout the cycle, in discussion with the Academy team, and delivered on time.
- Spokespeople and ambassadors supported and prepared to engage and promote the Africa Prize key messages

Objective 5 deliverables:

- Provision of minimum one full day media training session to take place at an agreed time ahead of the shortlist announcement. *Date to be decided in collaboration with the Academy and the training delivery partner, likely to be 18/19 March 2025.*
- Ensure shortlist are prepared for press coverage following the shortlist announcement and for the duration of the cycle.

KPIs:

- Delivery of a high-quality and impactful media training session for the shortlist that is well reviewed.

Experience

We are looking for a provider with:



- At least five years' experience in delivering communications, advocacy and PR for international organisations, corporates or charities. We would like to see evidence of unique insights and lessons learnt through this experience.
- Demonstrable experience of delivering communications, advocacy and PR within emerging and frontier markets, with experience in sub-Saharan Africa considered essential. You will need to showcase where you have delivered similar communication support to organisations involved in the promotion and support of innovation, engineering and/or technology. We would like to understand what you have done in these markets that has worked well and what networks media or otherwise you leveraged to get the right message to the right people.
- Experience of working (and good contacts) with media organisations within our target audience geographies.
- Active, current media relationships with relevant Tier 1 and Tier 2 UK and Africa publications and outlets.
- Demonstrable knowledge of the entrepreneurship ecosystem in sub-Saharan Africa
- Ability to translate technical processes into digestible and meaningful profiles, understood by all audiences.
- Proven ability to produce high quality, creative communications material and proven track record of previous achievements.
- Ideas that can bring to life our entrepreneurs' stories and the societal/environmental impact of their innovations, as well as the wide-ranging impact of the Africa Prize programme.
- Demonstrable experience of creating and planning content for digital communication channels.

ODA compliance

As a government funded project this work must be ODA compliant. The proposal will need to make explicit reference to how the project will adhere to ODA guidance for use of funding. All proposed items should be justified, and the budget must represent value for money, given the nature of the funding. All costs should consider the [ODA eligibility requirements](#).

Working with the Academy

The service provider will be required to:

- Hold monthly meetings with the Africa Prize team to update on progress and discuss future plans.
- Engage as required with the Academy's communications team.
- Provide evaluation reports in an agreed format for the Academy at key milestones.
- Provide a tracker of media coverage gained throughout the cycle.

Optional additions

We would welcome further ideas and associated costs on what the agency can further offer to enhance the communications offering, both directly for stakeholders of the programme, and for the programme itself. These could include:

- Provision of tailored communications support for alumni, depending on individual business needs. In the past, this has included strategy development, online event production, content development, media relations, and website audits.
- Provision of an online refresher communications training workshop for alumni, covering media elements as per the shortlist training, but also introducing new, advanced concepts and an update on current media trends. Topics could include brand development, storytelling, content strategy, digital communications, networking and pitching, and evaluation.
- Development of a communications best practice toolkit which can be shared with Africa Prize alumni. This could include a checklist of good communication practices tailored to the needs of entrepreneurs in Africa, guidelines, templates, and examples of effective content across channels.
- Additional activities that would support the objective of inspiring the next generation of African and UK engineering entrepreneurs, showcasing the work of our alumni and shortlist, and increasing awareness of the Prize, such as through videos and case studies.
- Audit of shortlist/alumni businesses existing communication channels (including website, social media and any other materials), and provision of detailed reports highlighting strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Schedule

Activity	Timeline
Deadline for submissions	18 September, 5pm BST
Interviews	Week beginning 30 September



Award tender	Week beginning 14 October
Contracting	14-25 October
Onboarding	4 November
Commencement of work	2 December
End of contract	November 2025

Please send your clarification questions and submissions to:

Catriona MacArthur, Senior Manager Africa Programmes

catriona.macarthur@raeng.org.uk

Submitting a proposal

Please include the following in your proposal:

- **Company details:** Information about the organisation and links to relevant policies, including registration number, bank details for financial reference purposes, evidence of public and product liability insurance, and written confirmation of willingness to provide audited accounts should they be required.
- **Team capacity:** A short bio of each of the team involved in the project, their roles and responsibilities for the evaluation, and their past experience on similar projects. (Guide: 200 words per person). CV's (max 2 pages per person) can also be submitted as an annex.
- **Company track record:** A description of the track record of the provider in delivering similar communications, advocacy, PR engagement. Please include in this any experience of work conducted: for other international organisations, or charities; in the fields of engineering and technology research and innovation; and working in multiple countries. (Guide: 300 words with links if appropriate)
- **Value fit:** A description of how your approach aligns with Academy values (Guide: 200 words)
- **Budget:** A detailed account of the total cost of designing and delivering the communications and advocacy project. The overall cost for delivery of the support (to include VAT), fee structure if applicable, including cost per day included in the contract, and day-rate for additional ad hoc activities. Reasonable out of pocket travel and accommodation expenses of the Africa

Prize shortlist to take part in any media activity will be covered by the Academy and reimbursed directly. All other related costs should be factored into the proposal, including (but not limited to) travel costs and time spent attending events and time spent on account management.

- **Creative proposal:** Your creative ideas for how to achieve the aims of this communication tender, that are informed by:
 - (a) An analysis of our target audiences and the best ways to reach them.
 - (b) An analysis of other prizes and programmes who compete for market share among potential applicants, and share of voice among our audiences, and how communication activities can help make the Africa Prize stand out.
- **Company details:** Information about the organisation and links to relevant policies, including registration number, bank details for financial reference purposes, evidence of public and product liability insurance, and written confirmation of willingness to provide audited accounts should they be required.
- **Programme management:** A proposed timetable of activities, key deliverables and payment milestones, including a detailed Gantt chart and dependencies, including an outline of what you would need from us in order to succeed.
- **Performance:** The metrics used to capture performance data and how success would be evaluated.
- **Client testimonials:** At least three references with written statements, and links to any available work undertaken (media coverage, links on social media etc.) from clients engaged in the past three years, with full name of the organisation, title and summary of the scope of work undertaken, and contact details.

Scoring matrix

0	No Answer/Unacceptable Response
1	Very Poor Response
2	Poor Response
3	Acceptable Response
4	Good Response
5	Excellent Response

To score well (i.e. 3 and above) the evaluation panel will look for clear evidence. The scores will be weighted to give an overall score. The tables below indicate the weightings which will be applied to each section. The three highest scoring proposals will be invited to the Academy to present their proposal.

At interview, we will consider all criteria. The scores given before the interview may be amended following new information provided at interview.

Selection criteria

Your response will be evaluated using the following:

Section: <i>Proposed project plan and delivery of the project</i>			
Description of criteria	Score	Weighting	Max Points
Creativity, quality and appropriateness of the proposed communications plan	0-5	5	25
All deliverables covered	Yes / No	Pass / Fail	
Total			25

Section: <i>Track Record</i>			
Description of criteria	Score	Weighting	Max Points
Experience in successful delivery of high impact communications and advocacy projects	0-5	1	5
Total			5

Section: <i>Budget</i>			
Description of criteria	Score	Weighting	Max Points
Is competitively priced and offers value for money	Yes / No	Pass / Fail	
Has accounted for all costs to deliver proposal	0-5	1	5
Expenditure broken down and pricing clear	0-5	1	5
Total			10

Section: <i>Organisation</i>			
Description of criteria	Score	Weighting	Max Points
Experience and competency of the team dedicated to deliver the communications plan	0-5	2	10
Leverages local expertise in sub-Saharan Africa to undertake and deliver key aspects of the work, demonstration of African media hub partners or regional offices included in the delivery of the work	Yes / No	Pass / Fail	

Client References - suitability of nominated references	Yes / No	Pass / Fail	
Client References - quality of reference received back	Yes / No	Pass / Fail	
Total			10

If you wish to receive any additional or updated information, please ensure that you register interest prior to submitting the proposal. All proposals must remain valid for a period of **90 days** from the date of submission by the vendor. This RFP and the information contained within it are deemed to be confidential information. Proposals must include information about costs and state whether these do or do not include VAT or any other levies. By submission of a proposal, the vendor warrants that the prices in the proposal have been arrived at independently, without consultation or agreement with any other potential vendor.*

Annex 1 – Key stakeholders

(i) Prospective applicants

Applicants should have developed, and be in the early stages of commercialising, an engineering innovation that:

- will bring social and/or environmental benefits to a country or countries in sub-Saharan Africa
- has strong potential to be replicated and scaled-up
- is accompanied by an ambitious but realistic business plan that has strong commercial viability.

The innovation can be any new product, technology or service, based on research in engineering defined in its broadest sense to encompass a wide range of fields. This includes but is not limited to: agricultural technology, biotechnology, chemical engineering, civil engineering, computer science, design engineering, electrical and electronic engineering, ICT, materials science, mechanical engineering, and medical engineering.

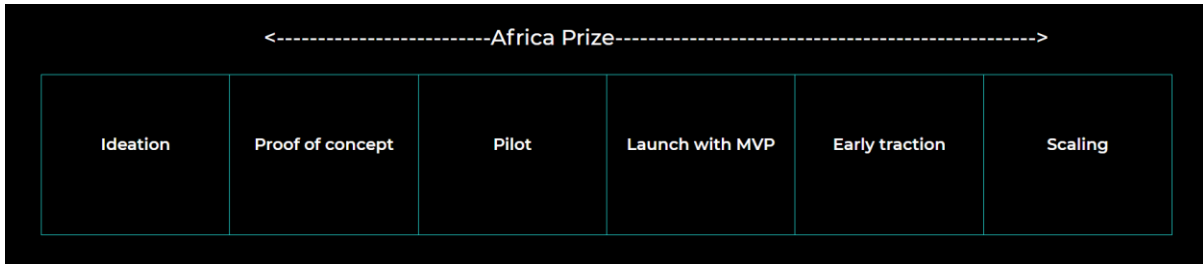
If the business is focused on **developing hardware**, then applicants should:

- have built one or more working prototypes that prove the technical concept and performance
- have evolved the design ready for initial commercial production
- have realistic cost and schedule estimates for manufacturing
- have clear evidence that an early version of their innovation is generating traction with a sufficient number of prospective customers to underpin forecasts for initial revenues and profitability

If the business is primarily **software/app based**, then applicants should:



- have developed a minimum viable product with demonstrable functionality
- have clear evidence that the minimum viable product is generating traction with a sufficient number of prospective customers to underpin forecasts for initial revenues and profitability



Please note, the lead applicant must have an engineering innovation, although they are not required to be an engineering graduate or student to apply.

For a full list of eligibility criteria, please visit the [Africa Prize website](#).

Though participation of women founders has been growing over the last decade of the programme, this is still an area of focus for the programme, and efforts to promote the programme and encourage applications from women will be looked upon favourably.

To date, there have been applications for the Africa Prize from 37 countries in sub-Saharan Africa and entrepreneurs from more than 20 countries have been selected to participate in the programme. The Africa Prize seeks to support entrepreneurs from countries that have less developed entrepreneurship ecosystems and increasing applications from such countries remains a priority. Further details on the relevant countries can be provided to the selected supplier.

(ii) Shortlist

As mentioned above, 16 entrepreneurs are selected to participate every year in the programme; this group is known as the 'shortlist'. The shortlist are the faces of the respective innovations/businesses that have been selected for participation in the programme. They participate in the majority of trainings, online and in person, and in media interviews. Co-founders sometimes participate in trainings if the shortlist member is unable to attend. The shortlist member will travel to London for the in-person final, as well as to the final where they will pitch their businesses to a live audience.

As stated previously, the shortlist member does not need to be an engineer themselves; however, they do need to be able to speak to the engineering components of their innovation.



(iii) Alumni

There are just under 150 alumni who have participated in the Africa Prize programme over the last ten years. Though some participants are no longer in contact with the Academy, the majority of entrepreneurs are still very engaged and actively participate in the network. As the network grows, and the alumni businesses progress, the Academy is keen to strengthen its offering through tailored support. This could take on the guise of business-specific activities such as pitch-deck and website support, or network-wide initiatives to bring entrepreneurs in similar regions or sectors together. We are interested to hear creative ideas on how to continue effectively supporting this community.

(iv) Judging panel

The judging panel consists of five to six business and engineering experts who play a hugely important role in selecting the most promising innovations, and innovators, to join the programme. They are involved at three points in the Africa Prize cycle: first to discuss the applicants and choose the Africa Prize shortlist. Again, after reviewing the shortlisted entrepreneurs' updated applications and business plans, to select four finalists who will pitch at the final event (and win at least £10,000). Finally, they attend the final to judge the finalists' pitches and choose the winner of the first prize of £25,000.

Annex 2 – Past media coverage

Over the last ten years, the Africa Prize has secured extensive coverage in a number of highly regarded African, UK and international media outlets. For example, following the Africa Prize Final in Nairobi in June 2024, over 240 pieces of online, broadcast and print coverage were secured in pan-African, country-specific national and specialist science and business publications. A summary of some of these can be found below:

- *BBC's People Fixing the Word* – [Africa's best innovators](#)
- *BBC World Service* – [Newsday 14 June 2024 \(radio, from 48:45\)](#)
- *Business Insider Africa* – [Here's the amazing Kenyan lady recognized as the top engineering innovator in Africa](#)
- *The African Review* – [Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation awarded in Nairobi](#) (print and online)
- *The Star Kenya* - [Kenyan woman wins top prize for AI innovation dealing with pests and diseases](#) (print and online)
- *Channel Africa* – [HYPERLINK "https://omny.fm/shows/africa-rise-shine/winner-of-the-royal-academy-of-engineerings-africa"](https://omny.fm/shows/africa-rise-shine/winner-of-the-royal-academy-of-engineerings-africa)[Winner of the](#)



[Royal Academy of Engineering's Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation named](#)

- NTV Kenya - [Kenyan Esther Kimani wins Sh8.1 million for her pest-detecting innovation](#) (broadcast and online)
 - Also on [X](#), with 35,700 views, and [Facebook](#)
- NBS Uganda – [Tech Connect 26 June 2024](#) (broadcast)

Our recent tenth anniversary milestone was also featured in over 80 pieces of coverage, with highlights including [CNN International](#), BBC World Service's [The Happy Pod](#), [Africa.com](#) and [Business Hallmark](#).