



2026 #YOUTHSTARTCT ENTREPRENEURIAL CHALLENGE

FAQs

An annual 'Entrepreneurial Challenge' in this context is understood as:

An annual competition targeting young entrepreneurs, aged 18-35 years old, who have business ideas or existing start-up businesses (the existing start up should not be older than three years) o. The business idea or start-up business should be creating employment opportunities for youth, or the business idea should plan to include employment opportunities for youth.

The competition applicants must be from within the Cape Town Metro and proposals should focus on creating sustainable employment opportunities for youth. The annual #YouthStartCT Entrepreneurial Challenge runs in partnership with the City of Cape Town's Community Services and Health Directorate, and other internal and external partners.

What is the #YouthStartCT Challenge?

- The competition is an accelerator programme for start-up entrepreneurs. The aim is to contribute to skills development, innovation and development of entrepreneurship in Cape Town.
- It supports youth capacity development and job creation.
- It provides an opportunity for individuals to highlight a specific problem and develop innovative ideas that will benefit customers and their communities.
- It provides a further benefit by offering support to the entrepreneurs in commercialising, expanding and monetising their solutions/businesses.
- The level of support will vary, but will be focused on developing both the entrepreneur and the idea/ business through a robust training and mentorship programme.

Why was it started?

Cape Town is a hub for start-ups and entrepreneurial activity - entrepreneurial challenges help to solve local problems for Cape Town.

The competition provides the City with knowledge of specific requirements and trends in Cape Town – which is a fast, and practical way to do research customer problems and possible solutions.

The competition has three objectives:

1. *Open up channels for new ideas and businesses*
2. *Seed fund a handful of ideas or businesses, one or two of which might be game-changers in dealing with unemployment among youth in Cape Town*

3. *Start momentum on social development projects right away, leveraging private sector activity and ideas that are already in the pipeline.*

Who can apply?

Youth aged 18 - 35 years old (as per the National Youth Policy, the youth age category ends at 35 years old)

The competition is open to South African youth and teams, provided that the principal team member, and the bulk of activities of the solution, take place within Cape Town.

Entry requirement for a business entity: please note that all business directors/members/partners must be aged between 18- 35 years and produce proof thereof.

Generational businesses are not allowed to enter the challenge as they give the entrant an unfair advantage and the representative might not be the primary owner of the business.

What training is offered?

The training offered through the competition will ensure that each entrepreneur has:

- an idea that's been translated into a business model (target customer, value proposition, delivery, revenue and costs);
- a validated business model through iterations of experimentation and piloting where needed;
- a series of minimum viable products (MVPs) that have been tested with the target customer;
- a financial model and approach to raise capital;
- a marketing strategy;
- a business plan that's investor ready; and
- personal, entrepreneurial and pitching skills.

How does the competition work?

1. A call for applications is made annually, in which the entrepreneur is able to articulate their idea/ business and demonstrate their emerging entrepreneurial skills.
2. All ideas/ businesses and entrepreneurs will be reviewed according to criteria that will be included in the call for application.
3. Initially, the top participants will be selected from the entries adjudicated.
4. The top participants will be offered training and mentoring in Cape Town.
5. The winners will be announced at a gala event.

Is equity taken in any of the businesses?

The City does not take any equity in any of the businesses. Any intellectual property generated will be owned by the individual, team or business that came up with the idea.

How can youth apply?

All applications must be submitted online. To apply, visit www.capetown.gov.za/youthstart and complete the appropriate application form.

Prizes:

Various prizes as well as business support are on offer every year. For more details, visit www.capetown.gov.za/youthstart.

A network of partners provides the winners with business support and mentoring.

What will happen to youth entrepreneurs that do not make the top 100 list?

Following the competition those entrants are taken through further training to strengthen their business or idea.

They are also added to our youth development database and are sent information on business support opportunities, including the City vendor opportunities.