

Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme

Africa Business Innovation
Lab (ABIL)

ABIL EXPLORE Open Call

The Africa Business Innovation Lab (ABIL) is an initiative under the Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme (AESPP) funded by the European Union (represented by European Commission's DG-INTPA) within the Global Gateway initiative and delegated to European Space Agency (ESA) for the implementation in close collaboration with the Kenya Space Agency (KSA).

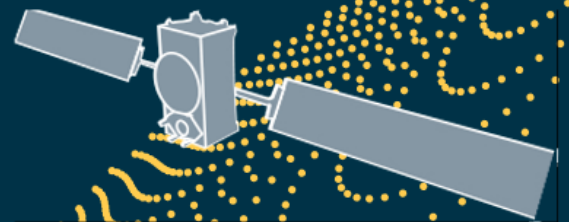
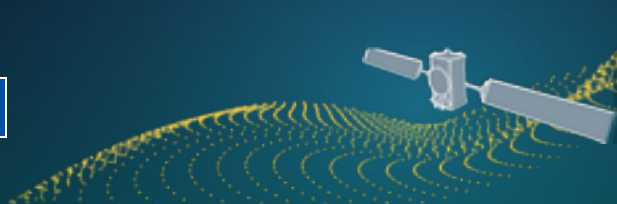


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Invitation to Apply to ABIL EXPLORE Kenya

Reference: ABIL EXPLORE Kenya Open Call

The purpose and objective of ABIL EXPLORE Open Call is to support early-stage Earth Observation innovation, technology transfer and feasibility activities that can help create, validate or accelerate promising upstream and downstream EO technologies, methods, applications, products and services in Kenya.

ABIL EXPLORE is part of the Africa Business Innovation Lab (ABIL), an initiative under the Africa-EU Space Partnership Programme aimed at accelerating space-based innovation and entrepreneurship in Africa. Building on the ESA Phi-lab model, ABIL promotes Earth Observation-based innovation by identifying and nurturing high-potential African start-ups, SMEs and research performing entities by fostering collaboration and technology transfer between Europe and Africa.

For ABIL EXPLORE Kenya, the ABIL Office, ESA and the Kenya Space Agency (KSA) welcome applications addressing upstream and/or downstream Earth Observation innovation and technology transfer able to explore innovative technologies to revolutionise and accelerate the future of EO.

The EXPLORE call specifically fosters upstream and downstream technology transfer through innovation funding, covering topics such as AI technology, edge computing, specific downstream applications, thermal and hyperspectral solutions, and other EO-related enabling technologies or space-data exploitation approaches.

The scope of activity of the Explore Open Call covers the definition of a minimal viable product/service as well as a Business Case able to validate the technical and critical functions and the business perspectives of the proposed solutions.

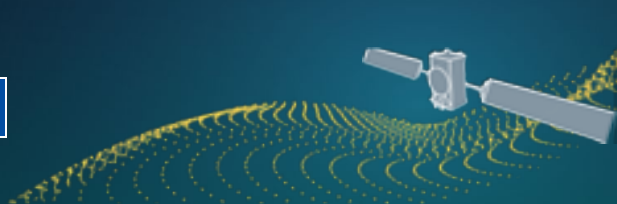
The specific objectives of the Call are:

- to determine the suitability of the solution to meet the needs and conditions of relevant users, customers, and relevant stakeholders in the target application (space or non-space), and to assess the business viability of the undertaking; and
- to secure the involvement of market representative customers, users and other stakeholders and validate the traction of the solution by the market; and
- to prepare the implementation of sustainable product(s)/service(s) by elaboration of a roadmap.

More in detail, ABIL EXPLORE includes:

- Feasibility proof, proof-of-concept, minimum viable product, algorithmic validation, data exploitation validation or early demonstration of an EO-related technology, application or service.
- Upstream and downstream technology transfer and innovation activities that can become EO-related products, services, technologies, methods or capabilities.
- Pre-commercial validation and ecosystem-building activities, including stakeholder/user discovery, validation of needs and constraints, and definition of a credible next-step roadmap.

The expected output is not a fully commercial product. However, each funded project shall produce sufficient evidence to support an informed decision on whether and how the idea should move towards further development and market perspectives.



Funding envelope and schedule

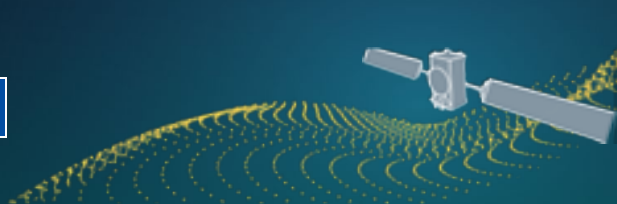
Funding envelope	Rule for ABIL EXPLORE Kenya
Budget per call	Up to EUR 150,000 per EXPLORE call.
Number of funded activities per call	Up to 3 activities, depending on proposal quality, budget availability
Cut-Off date	The cut-off date for each call will be published on https://abil.ksa.go.ke/
Maximum ABIL funding per activity	Up to EUR 50,000 depending on proposal quality
Indicative activity duration	Up to 9 months
Allocation principle	Funding may be allocated case by case according to the number and quality of proposals received, the maturity of the idea and the maturity of the applicant, including early-stage start-ups, more mature start-ups and SMEs.
Technical mentoring and business coaching	In addition to the funding, the awarded entities will also receive technical mentoring and business coaching.

STAM s.r.l., as manager of ABIL, hereby invites you to submit your application for ESA EXPLORE Open Calls. This document provides an introduction to the application and evaluation process and contains references to the templates that should be used when applying.

Please contact ABIL Office for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

STAM responsible for the ABIL
ESA EXPLORE Open call Manager



Who may apply?

ABIL EXPLORE is primarily targeted at **Kenyan start-ups and SMEs, as well as Universities and Research organisations, developing or validating innovative EO-related technologies, applications or services.**

The applicant is expected to be the Developer of the Innovative Product or enabling Technology within the proposed activity.

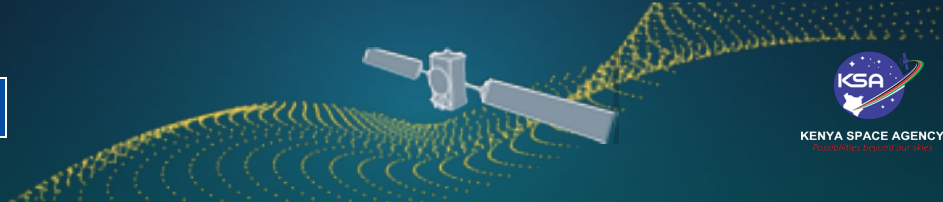
In this framework, the target applicant:

- is the entity where the value-added product, service, technology, method or capability will be created;
- has the connection to the relevant technology, data, users, customers, beneficiaries or stakeholders;
- may collaborate with other technology providers, data providers, research organisations, customers, pilot users or other partners.

To be eligible for contract award, applicants must fulfil all requirements below:

- be a legal entity registered (or in the process to be registered) under the laws of Kenya;
- be headquartered in Kenya;
- qualify as a start-up, SME, University or Research Centre under the criteria stated in the call notice;
- be fully compliant with applicable Kenyan tax, statutory and social security obligations;
- observe the remaining requirements stated in this document;
- when acting in collaboration with other national or foreign entities, the applicant will be the sole contractor and will be fully responsible for managing the funding;
- declare that the activities proposed under the submitted EXPLORE project are not being funded through other means for the same scope of work.

Large companies, public bodies and foreign entities may participate as advisors, pilot users, other technology providers or subcontractors where relevant. However, the contractual lead and funding recipient shall be the eligible Kenyan start-up, SME, University or Research Center.



How to apply

Please ensure you use the applicable ABIL EXPLORE Application Template, which is part of the Open Call documentation:

ABIL EXPLORE Application Template;

All sections of the application template must be completed, including:

- Executive Summary;
- Technical Proposal and Exploitation pathway/Initial Business Case
- Activity Proposal;
- Management Proposal;
- Curricula Vitae of the Project Team

Pay particular attention to the following:

- Instructions inside the documents shall be followed in order to fulfil all pre-conditions of the Open Call and for the application to be accepted.
- Please read the application template as well as the Draft Funding Agreement / Contract carefully. The Cover Letter shall include a clear, explicit, and unambiguous statement declaring that the applicant has read, understood, and accepted the terms and conditions contained in the contractual documentation.
- Ensure the Cover Letter and the Requirement Checklist are signed by an authorised representative of the entity applying.
- As part of the application template, an Activity Proposal section must be submitted. This should include details on how you intend to spend the ABIL EXPLORE funding. Details on eligible costs can be found below.

Please submit the completed ABIL EXPLORE Application Template in electronic form as a single PDF document to abil-explore@ksa.go.ke with subject "ABIL EXPLORE Kenya Open Call - [Applicant Name]".

Any questions related to submission of proposals should be sent to the same e-mail address.

Each ABIL EXPLORE call will have a published opening date and closing date. Applications received after the stated deadline may be rejected unless the call notice explicitly allows late submission or rolling evaluation.



Funding Rules

The maximum ABIL EXPLORE contribution is EUR 50,000 per funded activity. The final awarded amount may be lower depending on the proposed scope, maturity, budget justification, available budget and ESA/KSA approval.

Because ABIL EXPLORE targets lower-maturity feasibility and innovation activities, the co-funding of the cost is not mandatory. Applicants are encouraged to identify in-kind support, partner contributions, access to facilities, data, compute, user testing environments or other leveraged resources.

Eligible costs

In order to be eligible, all project costs must be:

- Necessary to the execution of the project;
- Incurred by the beneficiary and recorded in its accounts;
- Incurred during the contract term;
- Indicated in the cost planning in the proposal;
- Without VAT, interest owned, or duties.

The funding should primarily be spent in Kenya. However, where a Kenyan applicant requires a technology, data, infrastructure or specialist service provider from another African country, up to 50% of the ABIL EXPLORE funding may be spent with such provider, subject to a sound justification in the proposal, including value for money considerations.

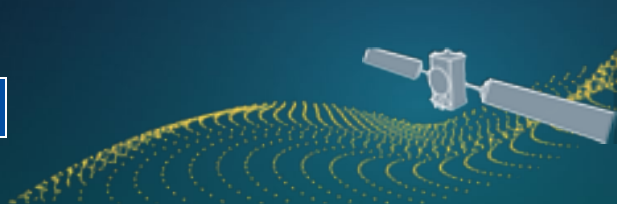
Furthermore, any external expenditure should be incurred in Africa. Where this is not possible, an appropriate justification must be provided in the proposal, and this will be carefully assessed during the evaluation process.

Eligible costs may include personnel directly working on the activity, justified subcontracting, EO data acquisition where not otherwise available, cloud or computing resources, software tools, laboratory or test costs, prototyping materials, field validation, travel required for implementation in Kenya (to be fully justified), and reasonable costs linked to IP, data or technology access where approved.

Expenses incurred in the preparation and dispatch of the proposal will not be reimbursed.

Expenses for business development and promotion (data sheets, flyers, attendance to trade shows etc.) should be agreed in advance with the ABIL responsible for implementing the EXPLORE Open Call.

Payout of the ESA funding: 30% at the beginning of the project and 40% after accepted Mid-Term and 30% after accepted final report (final payment).



The evaluation procedure

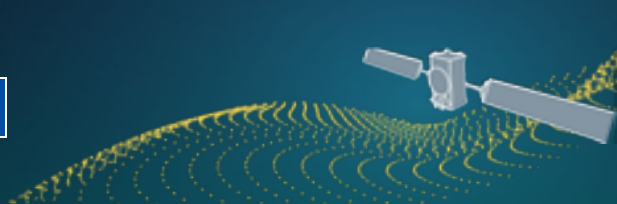
The evaluation of all received applications is managed locally by ABIL under the responsibility of STAM and follows procedures agreed with ESA and KSA.

Once a published submission deadline has passed, the ABIL Office first assesses the formal aspects of applications received before the submission deadline. If a non-compliance of a minor nature is found, the applicant may be asked to address this in an updated proposal within 48 hours. If the proposal is found non-admissible, the applicant will be informed and the reason will be explained. In such a case, an applicant may be eligible to submit a revised proposal to a later ABIL EXPLORE call, if another evaluation round is scheduled.

If the application is compliant with the formal requirements, applicants may be invited to hold a presentation to the ABIL EXPLORE Kenya evaluation board. The evaluation will typically take place a few weeks after the submission deadline. The Tender Evaluation Board (TEB) consists of representatives of the ABIL Office, ESA, KSA, and other experts. There will also be an opportunity for the evaluation board to ask questions to the applicant.

The application and, where applicable, the presentation will be marked against the criteria in Table 1, taking weighting factors into account.

Evaluation Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weighting Factor
Background and Experience	Team Composition Partnerships Vision	20%
Exploitation Pathway/Business Case	Targeted Market Segment & Access to the targeted Market Segment Targeted Product/Service Target Customers/Users Customer/User Needs or Pains Value Proposition	20%
Technology and Relevance to ABIL EXPLORE and EO innovation	Technology Definition Alignment with the ABIL EXPLORE objectives; relevance to Earth Observation upstream and/or downstream innovation; fit with the call topic(s) agreed with ESA and KSA; relevance to Kenyan and African needs. Degree of Innovation Suitability, and credibility of transfer	40%



	Access to technology Maturity and feasibility Expected maturity increase during the activity.	
Activity Proposal	Work Breakdown Resources and Facilities Milestones and Cost Planning Management	20%

Table 1: ESA EXPLORE Open Call evaluation criteria and weighting factors.

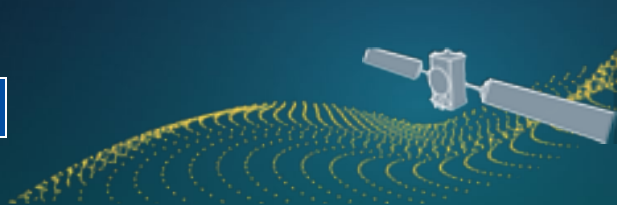
The outcome of the evaluation will be communicated via email shortly after the Tender Evaluation Board, indicating whether the proposal has been selected for the next contract negotiation phase.

The ABIL will only enter contract negotiations with applicants that scored above the threshold of 60 points, taking into account the comments of the Tender Evaluation Board as well as the budgetary resources available for the call. In the event the number of selected proposals would result in exceeding the available budget for the call, the proposals with the highest overall weighted mark will be selected to enter into negotiations.

The ABIL has the right not to place a contract if, after three months following the notification to a successful applicant, no contract has been signed for a reason for which the applicant can be held accountable.

Furthermore, we kindly ask you to pay attention to the following:

- Please note that applications will be treated as confidential. However, despite the efforts undertaken by ABIL to ensure full confidentiality, the applicant's idea may through this application fall into the public domain. Therefore, we strongly recommend that the applicant discusses the protection of his/her idea with a dedicated expert in this field prior to application, and – if relevant – takes appropriate steps to protect the idea (e.g. by applying for a patent).
- No expenses incurred in either stage of the application procedure will be reimbursed to the applicant by ABIL, ESA, and/or any third party.
- This Open Call does not impose any obligation upon ABIL represented by STAM to enter into negotiations with any applicant or to enter into any other specific arrangement.



ANNEX A – DETAILS ON DELIVERABLES

Under an ABIL EXPLORE activity, the Contractor will be undertaking technical, feasibility, technology transfer, EO data exploitation and preliminary business case/exploitation activities. The Deliverables reflect this.

D1 and D2 are standalone Deliverables.

D2, D3, and D4 should be combined into a single document for final delivery to ABIL.

D1 Proof of Achievement for outreach and communication purposes to be delivered to ABIL

For the use in public communication and promotion, outreach and dissemination, public display or presentation by ABIL or ESA, the Contractor shall deliver a **slide deck** in ppt-Format and a suitable demonstration item, to present the activity in a nutshell.

The slide deck is composed of two slides covering the following elements:

- The technology (with meaningful, high-definition, illustrative images/tables/diagrams);
- Achievements, outcomes of the activity and next steps (with meaningful, high-definition, illustrative images/tables/diagrams);

The suitable **demonstration item**, including a short description of the product/service along with any instructions required for operation, shall be delivered to ABIL. This can manifest in an item such as:

- A prototype or demonstrator;
- A suitable mock-up or breadboard showcasing the use/functionalities and application;
- A high-definition video showcasing the use/functionalities and application, including live demonstration;

Other demonstrations items may be proposed but are subject to approval prior to contract signature.

The deliverable D1 is intended for general audience and publication. Therefore, it shall not contain any sensitive or proprietary information.

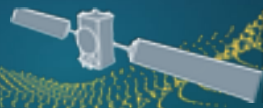
D2 Final Data Package

The Final Data Package is comprised of the final deliverable documents arising from the ESA EXPLORE Contract, in particular:

1) Mid Term Report (if applicable, standalone document)

The mid-term report includes the following sections:

- Executive summary of the activity, objectives, partners and main results
- Description of technical and exploitation development
- Challenges
- Updated Milestone Planning
- Description of the progress in the different Work-packages
- Updated Cost Breakdown
- Deliverables



- D1 Proof of Achievement (Draft)
- D2 Data Package (Draft)
- Content as defined in the ESA EXPLORE Contract

2) Final Report (standalone document)

The Mid term and Final reports will be based on the same template.

The following main contents are expected in the reports:

- Executive summary of the activity, objectives, partners and main results;
- Description of the EO-related challenge, Kenyan/African context and target users, customers, beneficiaries or stakeholders;
- Innovative solutions developed;
- Description of the heritage technology, EO data, algorithm, software, hardware, infrastructure or non-space technology being transferred or exploited;
- Technical work performed, including architecture, data sources, models, prototypes, tests, validation approach and results;
- Evidence of feasibility, key performance indicators, limitations, failures, lessons learned and technical risks;
- Stakeholder or user feedback and validation of needs, constraints and preliminary value proposition;
- TRL/maturity assessment at start and end of the activity, including rationale;
- Impact and exploitation pathway, including next development steps, roadmap to market, customer pilots, private investment, public-sector uptake or follow-on funding;

Data, software, model, IP and technology rights summary, including open-source/open-data licences where applicable;

At Mid Term, the Report sections above will be evaluated taking into account the actual progress of the project activities, while a full extensive review will be done on the Final Report.

As part of the final Data Package, the Contractor is required to provide an executive summary of (maximum 3 pages) summarising the developments and outcomes of the project not including sensitive information, to be shared internally within ESA or KSA.

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Africa Business Innovation Lab (ABIL)

WEB

<https://abil.ksa.go.ke/>

TAGS

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