

Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme

Africa Business Innovation
Lab (ABIL)

ABIL INVEST

The African 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).

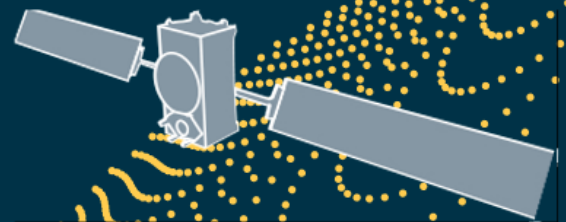


Table of contents

Dear Startup company/Small and Medium Size Enterprise (SME),	1
Introduction.....	2
Who can Apply	3
How to Apply.....	4
Evaluation Procedure	5
Information.....	6
Annex 1 – Earth Observation Connection	7
Criterion 1. “We need EO”	7
Criterion 2. “We need <i>more</i> ...”	7
Criterion 3. EO is <i>available</i>	8

Dear Startup company/Small and Medium Size Enterprise (SME),

Thank you for your interest in the Africa Business Innovation Lab (ABIL). The African 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).

Through ABIL INVEST, the European Union (EU), European Space Agency (ESA)¹ and hosted by the Kenya Space Agency (KSA)², aim to support high-potential, Earth Observation (EO) ventures in bridging the critical gap between technological innovation and market deployment. The programme is specifically designed for early-stage startup companies or SMEs with validated concepts that are ready to transition towards commercialisation, scale their operations, and engage with investors.

ABIL INVEST provides a structured incubation and venture-building pathway, combining targeted non-dilutive funding, hands-on technical and business support, access to EO data, expertise and infrastructure, and direct exposure to African and European investor networks.

The objective is not only to support product development, but to prepare startups and SMEs for market entry, traction, and follow-on investment, enabling them to become sustainable and scalable businesses within the emerging African space economy.

The ABIL offers a comprehensive package of support to startups and SMEs selected for incubation, including office accommodation, incentive funding, technical support and business coaching. Selected companies will participate in a 9-month incubation programme, culminating in investor-facing opportunities such as pitch sessions, matchmaking events and Demo Day, where they will be connected with relevant private investors, industry partners and institutional stakeholders, including the possibility to benefit from the EU stakeholder network.

ABIL INVEST therefore acts as a gateway from innovation to investment, accelerating the creation of commercially viable ventures that leverage space technologies to address real-world challenges.

The ABIL hereby invites you to submit your application for business incubation. This document introduces the application and evaluation process and contains references to the templates that should be used when applying.

Find enclosed hereto the following files, which provide information and templates to assist you in completing the documents required for your application: 1) Draft Incubation Contract, 2) Cover Letter and Requirements Checklist, 3) Business Plan Template, 4) Incubation Proposal Template, and 5) Tables Template.

The documents required for submission by aspiring incubatees are 2, 3, and 4.

Contact the ABIL for any further questions.

Yours faithfully,

The Africa Business Innovation Lab – ABIL

¹ The European Space Agency is an intergovernmental organisation established to provide for and promote, for exclusively peaceful purposes, cooperation among European states in space research and technology and their space applications. As of March 2026, it is constituted of 23 Member States.

² The Kenya Space Agency is a national governmental body established to promote, coordinate, and regulate space-related activities in Kenya, and to enhance the utilization of space science and technology for peaceful and socioeconomic development. As of March 2026, it operates as a state corporation under the Ministry of Defence, mandated to coordinate all civil and military space-related activities within the country.



Introduction

The purpose of this document is to inform about the opportunity for EO startups and SMEs to be incubated in the ABIL and to provide the material and guidance needed to apply for incubation.

Selection and evaluation of applications are scheduled periodically, see <https://abil.ksa.go.ke/> for details.

The Call is permanently open, with periodic cut-off dates for evaluation.

Who can Apply

In general, any EO startups/SMEs registered and with demonstrable business activities in Kenya are welcome to apply for this opportunity.. More specifically, the ABIL INVEST Call targets companies that are ready to enter an incubation programme and receive tailored support.

However, some further criteria apply. These can be found in the Cover Letter Template of the application documents. In particular, note the following:

- The application needs to have a valid *Earth Observation connection* (refer to Annex 1 of this document). You can contact the ABIL for further guidance.
- Applicants need to run their company at their own risk. In practice this means that more than half of the shares must be owned by the entrepreneur(s).
- An incubation contract can only be signed with a legal entity registered and active in Kenya.

How to Apply

Make sure you have received the following documents, which are part of the Call documentation: (a) Cover Letter including Requirement Checklists, (b) Business Plan, (c) Incubation Proposal, and (d) Draft Incubation Contract.

Make sure to fill all required sections in the application templates and pay particular attention to the following:

- Instructions inside the documents (**highlighted in blue in each template**) shall be followed in order to fulfil all pre-conditions of the Call and for the application to be accepted.
- Read the Draft Incubation Contract carefully. The Cover Letter must 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 (this is part of the Cover Letter template). Modifications or amendments to the Incubation Contract may only be done in exceptional cases. You can contact The ABIL for further guidance.
- Make sure the Cover Letter and the Requirement Checklists are signed by either the majority shareholder or by shareholders with a combined ownership in excess of 50%.
- The incubation proposal should include details on how the incentive funding is meant to be spent. Note that, as a general rule, the ABIL INVEST programme provides a total of €100,000 for the five selected startups/SMEs in each campaign, with the specific budget per funded company being directly linked to the proposal quality, idea maturity, and company profile (expected funding per company €20,000).
- Limit the Business Plan to a maximum of 25 pages, including any annexes. Read the entire template before editing to ensure content is placed correctly and to prevent redundancy.
- The Incubation Proposal should not exceed 10 pages, including any annexes.
- Fill in the Tables that facilitate the processing of financial and other data and include them in the Incubation Proposal and Business Plan.

Review the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) at <https://abil.ksa.go.ke/>. Consult Annex 1 within the present document. Express Interest at abil-invest@ksa.go.ke and request a pre-evaluation of your business idea or seek clarifications related to the scope and structure of the application and incubation.

The following steps should be followed for a complete application:

- **Step 1: Download the Call Package**, which outlines the application and evaluation procedures, the incubation contract, and other modalities, and includes all necessary templates that must be used by the applicants.
- **Step 2: Complete the Application Final Documents** using the corresponding Application Template Documents while considering the Application Supporting Documents and produce a single.rar or.zip file with all documents.
- **Step 3: Submit your Application:** send the .rar or .zip file to abil-invest@ksa.go.ke via email with the subject line *"ABIL Application – [Startup Name]"*.

The ABIL will verify the identity of applicants. You are requested to send digital copies of a passport or other ID documents in a separate file together with your application.

Evaluation Procedure

The evaluation of all received applications is managed locally by the ABIL and follows common ESA procedures, supported by a dedicated Selection Board. This board is co-chaired by representatives from ESA and KSA, with key stakeholders from the AESPP partnership, as well as representatives from DG INTPA and relevant ABIL partners, who are required to sign a Declaration of Secrecy and Non-Interest.

Once a published cut-off date has passed, the ABIL first assesses the formal aspects of the applications received. 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 is eligible to submit a revised proposal at a next campaign.

If the application is compliant with the formal requirements, applicants will be invited to hold a presentation to the ABIL Selection Board. The evaluation will typically take place a few weeks after the cut-off date.

The evaluation will be based on the Criteria presented in the next table. Each application and presentation will be scored against these criteria, and all applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome.

Criteria	Topics to be covered	Weighting factor
Background and Experience	Experience and team composition, Support entities, Vision	25%
Technology/Service	Earth Observation Connection, Technical feasibility of the product/service to be developed, Product development strategy, Intellectual Property strategy	20%
Value proposition & Market	Value Proposition, Market, Competition	20%
Business Modelling and Risk	Revenue model, Finance, Risk	15%
Activity proposal	Quality of the Business Application Proposal, Milestones/cost planning, Work break down, Alignment with ABIL goals	20%

All applicants will be notified in writing about the outcome of the evaluation. The applicant may require, within 10 calendar days from the receipt of the notification, an oral debriefing explaining the reason why the application was successful or not.

The ABIL will enter into contract discussions with successful applicants, taking the comments of the Selection Board into account. 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, three months after the notification to a successful applicant, no contract has been signed, and this is because of a reason for which the applicant can be held accountable.

Your attention is drawn to the following

Note that applications will be treated as confidential. However, the applicant's idea may through this application fall into the public domain (e.g. if local laws require so). Therefore, we strongly recommend that the applicant discusses the protection of their 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).

As far as allowed by law, any title held by the applicant to their idea shall remain vested in them. An application to the ABIL will not result in the acquisition of any title whatsoever to the idea. However, ESA and KSA retain a right to use the Intellectual Property in specific cases, generally related to publicity and promotion. Read the detailed conditions described under the section "Use of Intellectual Property Rights" in the Draft Incubation Contract.

By the end of incubation, the ABIL will request one or several deliverables. The purpose of these is both to verify the correct use of the incentive and for promotional purposes. The application should specify suitable deliverables.

No expenses incurred in either stage of the application procedure will be reimbursed to the applicant by ABIL, ESA, KSA, and/or any third party.

This Call does not impose any obligation upon the ABIL to enter into negotiations with any applicant.

Information

You may address any queries relevant to the submission of proposals to abil-invest@ksa.go.ke

You may find more information or express interest in the ABIL at <https://abil.ksa.go.ke/>

You may contact the ABIL for any further questions.

Annex 1 – Earth Observation Connection

To be accepted for incubation at the ABIL, the applicant must present a business idea with a valid **Earth Observation Connection**. This document provides a guideline to help assess the connection of a business idea.

The principle for assessment should work for the majority of business ideas expected to be proposed in the context of the ABIL. However, as innovations tend to lead to new types of technologies and applications that fall outside the range of commonly proposed ideas, it may happen that this assessment may not cover all potential cases.

It may also happen that an EO connection found valid now may turn out to be invalid at a later stage if the initial assumptions do not hold anymore.

In case the EO connection is not clear to the applicant, it is possible to contact the ABIL staff to discuss it in advance of applying through the corresponding form.

Below are the main criteria against which the EO connection can be identified. These criteria and the corresponding questions can be used as an initial guideline and key arguments to successfully present the EO connection of your idea in your application.

The ABIL is able to advise whether the EO connection is sufficient. Note, however, that the ABIL Selection Board may still reject an application if it deems the EO connection to be insufficient.

Criterion 1. “We need EO”

Firstly, the reviewers of your application need to understand that “EO” is actually needed. In other words, they must be convinced that:

- EO provides a feasible solution to solve the problem, and
- EO offers a technical, cost, or other advantage compared to other non-EO solutions.

When analysing the need for EO, you must understand the requirements for the product/service that you plan to bring to the market and to what degree both your own and any existing alternatives meet these requirements.

Criterion 2. “We need *more*...”

Furthermore, the EO-based solution must be more than what is obvious or already commonly in use. Generally, it is expected that some innovative step is taken, for example, that data are analysed or combined with other sources to generate new information, or that software or hardware is integrated to provide a new technical solution.

There are some EO connections that are normally not considered sufficient. Such cases appear:

- If the business idea builds on “re-packaging” of EO-related data, software, or hardware.
- In case the business idea is related to re-using a technology/product/service that has been commercialised by another entity.
- In the case of the development of applications using Earth Observation data merely as background maps or similarly, with no or only little additional processing taking place.

Cases where the technical solution is standard, but the novelty is rather in the business model, or where a market segment is addressed in which EO is still not used in a way that may be standard elsewhere, may still be acceptable.

Criterion 3. EO is *available*

In order for the ABIL to be able to support your startup/SMEs, you also need to make sure that the EO systems/data you need are available in practice. Data, services, or products are often commercially available or even available for free; however, especially for IPR including technologies, it happens that licenses need to be negotiated.

In some cases, the price for using EO technology or data can be a limiting factor for a business idea. The price is not assessed as part of the EO connection, but instead when evaluating your business case. However, you are advised to consider early whether the price could substantially impact your business. For example, while you may use Earth Observation data provided by any party, raw or in a processed form, the price difference may be significant.

In any case, incubation may not start before access to the data, services, IPR or technology you need is granted.

If you intend to use an ESA patent or other IPR/technology with EO origin, you need to investigate and confirm in advance that the IPR/technology provides advantages with respect to the state-of-art. For ESA patents, contact the ESA patent office at patent@esa.int which will provide assistance. A positive statement from the ESA patent office is required with the proposal if you plan to use an ESA patent, although it is not sufficient on its own for your company to be accepted to the incubation programme.

The following table can be used to identify the status of availability:

☐	Available for free		
☐	Commercially available	☐	Price is known
		☐	Price is unknown or needs to be negotiated
☐	Availability is unknown or needs to be negotiated		
☐	In case of IPR including technologies, the owner has been contacted and a positive statement has been received regarding access to IPR		

Applicants should consider providing a Letter of Interest from a potential customer or user together with the proposal (this Letter of Interest will not count towards the page limit of the applications). This letter could:

- Confirm the usefulness of the proposed technology, service, etc., in an EO context.
- Declare the customer's/user's intention to participate in trials during the incubation.
- Preferably contain a statement of becoming a customer if the development of the idea is successful.

If in doubt, contact the ABIL to understand whether a Letter of Interest is necessary. Note that such a letter is always useful and that it is never too early to engage potential customers.

Africa–EU Space Partnership Programme

Africa Business Innovation Lab (ABIL)

WEB <https://abil.ksa.go.ke/>
TAGS #GlobalGateway #AESPP #ABIL