

# SAB FOUNDATION SOCIAL INNOVATION AND DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT AWARDS 2026

The SAB Foundation supports and invests in entrepreneurs and social innovation with a priority in benefitting women and youth, people in rural areas and persons with disabilities.



[www.sabfoundation.co.za](http://www.sabfoundation.co.za)



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## THE SOCIAL INNOVATION AWARDS

are aimed at innovators/ social entrepreneurs/ institutions/ social enterprises with prototypes or early-stage businesses that can solve a social problem.

## THE DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT AWARDS

are aimed at innovators/ social entrepreneurs/ institutions/ social enterprises whose innovations focus on empowering and enabling persons with disabilities access economic opportunities.

These solutions can include, but are not limited to, training and skills development that lead to job placements; assistive technologies and devices; income generation opportunities for parents of children with disabilities; protective workshops/ sheltered employment; job creation.

## AWARDS CAN RANGE FROM

# R300 000 – R1 300 000

Along with business development support to assist with venture growth.

In addition to the prize money detailed above, the awardees are assessed on a case-by-case basis and placed on a tailored mentorship programme. This programme is flexible and adjusted to the needs of each awardee, as mutually agreed by both awardee and mentor.

## ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- If you have previously received assistance from the SAB Foundation through the Tholoana Enterprise Programme, you are not eligible to apply.
- The SAB Foundation Social Innovation and Disability Empowerment Awards are open to any innovation solution that offers a credible prospect of meeting a demonstrable social and/ or economic need evidenced by the SAB Foundation's target low-income beneficiary groups (with a particular emphasis on innovation that benefits women, youth, persons with disabilities and people living in rural areas), as well as demonstrating potential as sustainable businesses.
- Entries are welcomed from South African individuals, innovators, entrepreneurs, social enterprises and university departments. Entrants may enter as individuals on their own, or as members of a team, in which case one individual team leader shall complete the online application form.
- The innovation entered must be the original work of the applicant and a true innovation and/ or a significant improvement on an existing technology, product, service, and production method or business model.
- Product innovation covers innovations in both goods and services, which can be divided into new or improved products. A new product has different characteristics and intended uses than existing products. It may use new technologies, knowledge and products or a combination of these. An improved product is an existing product whose performance is significantly increased; in terms of either increased output or a reduction in cost.
- Process innovation is the adaption or creation of improved ways to deliver a product or service. It could come from changes in knowledge, perception and understanding. For poverty reduction, process innovations can increase the level of service delivery to beneficiaries, or enable practitioners to reach previously untouched groups or individuals.
- Applications are open to all South African citizens, 18 years or older. All participants must submit a certified copy of their South African identity document with their online applications.
- The innovation/solution must have progressed past the "blue-sky" thinking stage: there must be some evidence of investment by the applicant. This means that applicants must be able to show proof that prior to applying, they have spent time and/or money developing the innovation: planning, developing and testing prototypes, market and industry research, developing a business plan.
- Please see the "Participation Rules" on the online application forms for Terms and Conditions.

## HOW TO APPLY

1. Online applications open on **10 February 2026** and close on **16 March 2026** at **midday**.
2. Read through this brochure to check if your organisation or idea would be a good fit for the Social Innovation and Disability Empowerment Awards based on its impact on at least one of the four focus areas (women, youth, persons with disabilities or people living in rural areas).
3. **Select** the programme you are applying for: **SOCIAL INNOVATION AWARD** or **THE DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT AWARD**
4. Read through the [online application guidance document](#).
5. Complete the online application form. The link is available on the SAB Foundation website ([sabfoundation.co.za/social-innovation-awards](https://sabfoundation.co.za/social-innovation-awards)) or [click here](#) to go through to the application page.
6. Make sure you **complete and submit** your application before the deadline.
7. **Early** submissions are strongly encouraged.
8. The SAB Foundation Social Innovation and Disability Empowerment Awards seek the best ideas to enhance the lives of previously disadvantaged South Africans. Specific consideration will be given during the judging process to the race, gender, age and disability status of applicants.

## JUDGING CRITERIA



Originality: How innovative is the solution? Is it a significantly new business model, product, service or production method?



Social impact: Can the innovation solve a serious social problem which affects the SAB Foundation target groups?



Viability: To what extent is the innovation/solution commercially viable, to ensure its sustainability?



Applicability to SAB Foundation's target groups: Which of SAB Foundation's target groups are able to use this social innovation to bring significant increase to their overall quality of life?



Job creation: Is there potential for the creation of direct and indirect sustainable jobs currently or in the future?

Target groups are women, youth, persons with disabilities and those in rural areas.

# SAB FOUNDATION SOCIAL INNOVATION AND DISABILITY EMPOWERMENT AWARDS 2026 TIMELINE



10 February 2026 – 16 March 2026

Online application must be completed and submitted by **16 March 2026 at midday**.



April – May 2026

Applications will be screened against the eligibility criteria, and qualifying applications will then be assessed by a panel of judges for the impact and viability of the innovation solution.



June – August 2026

A maximum of 25 of the best innovations will be selected and visited by a member of the SAB Foundation team.



September 2026

Successful shortlisted businesses will be invited to attend a two-day workshop. At the end of the workshop the applicants will pitch their innovation/solution to a panel of judges.



October 2026

The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in Johannesburg.

**ALL DATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTIFICATION**