

Applications open for Beyond Tourism in Africa innovation challenge

The Luc Hoffmann Institute, the African Leadership University's School of Wildlife Conservation and WWF Regional Office for Africa are delighted to announce that applications are now open for the Beyond Tourism in Africa innovation challenge.



Image Supplied: Photo by WWF-US/ ©James Morgan

Beyond Tourism in Africa is a global innovation challenge seeking new revenue models that enable communities in Africa to derive income from wildlife conservation beyond the tourism sector. Participants have the chance to win a place in the African Leadership University's incubation programme and access to seed money.

Over the past 30 years, conservation in Africa has become heavily dependent on tourism for revenue – especially photographic tourism and trophy hunting. Before Covid-19, wildlife tourism directly contributed US\$ 29.3bn in GDP to the economy in Africa and directly provided 3.6 million jobs across the continent, over one-third of all jobs in tourism (36.3%).

However, tourism is vulnerable to social, economic or political instability, as well as health shocks. The global shutdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has further highlighted the vulnerability of a conservation model based solely on tourism.

With the prospect of very few tourist arrivals in the short-term, protected areas and other conserved lands have had problems paying the salaries of rangers and other staff, who must find other ways of sustaining their families. As people lose their jobs and livelihoods, there are growing fears of a surge in illegal hunting for both subsistence and to feed the commercial trade due to the decreased patrolling of parks and conservation areas in an Africa that is in 'lockdown'.

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While the prospects for recovery in the tourism sector are a matter of intense speculation, it is possible, and indeed likely, that it will take years to see a return to pre-pandemic levels of economic activity. Even when economic activity restarts, more resilient and sustainable wildlife economies are needed to diversify risks for communities, governments and the private sector.

There is now an accelerated need for diverse revenue streams that allow for the protection of wildlife while also providing livelihoods and economic resilience to the communities who manage land or live in close proximity to wildlife.

Beyond Tourism in Africa is calling on anyone with bold ideas, no matter what sector they come from, to submit ideas that support African wildlife conservation while providing sustainable revenue for local communities. Innovators from around the world are welcome, especially people from non-traditional conservation and alternative sectors and those with strong ties to rural communities in Africa.

Ideas must meet the following criteria for consideration:

- Generates value (economic, social and cultural) for local community(ies) in Africa from wildlife or natural resources
- Does not rely on tourism to generate revenue
- Empowers communities with decision-making power and ensures their rights, dignity and livelihoods are a priority
- Demonstrates to be feasible, financially sustainable and potentially scalable
- Aims to improve the conditions for wildlife and natural resources.

Dr Sue Snyman, who heads up the research department at the African Leadership University’s School of Wildlife Conservation has been analysing the wildlife economies of Africa, with a focus on selected case study countries: Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Seychelles and South Africa to determine which activities bring the greatest value to the wildlife economies.

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The founding goal of the African Leadership University’s School of Wildlife Conservation is to ensure that one of Africa’s greatest assets - her wildlife - directly benefits her people. Director of operations, Elizabeth Tojo adds: "Beyond development of entrepreneurial and leadership skills, conservation can become an African economic pillar by incubating radical ideas with potential to boost economic outcomes at all levels. Given SoWC's commitment to developing those crucial business skills, this competition and incubation program are a logical next step towards fulfillment of our mission."

[Applications](#) close on 15 October. Between five and 15 successful ideas will be chosen, and all of these will receive a place on the African Leadership University’s incubation programme and access to seed money.

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