

ACE Innovate: A Regional Platform for Skills, Research, and Innovation

Call for Proposals — Expression of Interest (Eol)

Guidance and Instructions for Applicants

Phase 1 – Batch A Countries: *The Gambia & Guinea*

Phase 1 – Batch A Eol Submission Deadline: June 26, 2026

1. About ACE Innovate

Western and Central Africa's economies are growing — but not fast enough, and not in ways that are consistently creating good jobs for the millions of young people entering the labor market each year. Closing this gap requires more than training more graduates. It requires institutions capable of producing the right skills, at the right levels, connected to the sectors and firms that are driving economic transformation.

ACE Innovate is a regional platform designed to meet that challenge. Building on a decade of experience with the Africa Centers of Excellence (ACE) program, ACE Innovate brings together two complementary types of institutions — an ACE and a Regional Flagship Training Institute (RFTI) — to form a sector-focused partnership that spans the full skills spectrum: from advanced postgraduate training and applied research to technician and mid-level skills aligned with the needs of employers and value chains.

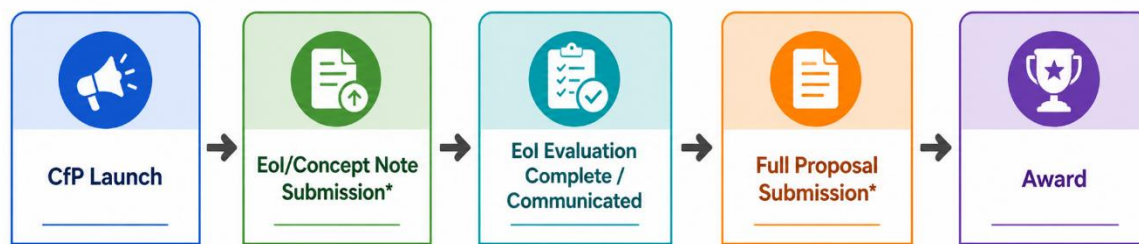
Each ACE-RFTI partnership is anchored in a priority sector — selected based on the government's own development priorities and areas where strategic investments are being made. The aim is not simply to produce more graduates, but to produce graduates with the skills, applied knowledge, and practical experience that firms and sectors need — and to generate research and innovation that helps those sectors grow.

ACE Innovate is designed for institutions that are ready to lead. Applicants are expected to demonstrate excellence — in their academic and research programs, in their industry engagement, and in their ambition for what they can achieve. This is a platform for institutions that are already strong and are ready to become stronger, more connected, and more impactful.

Phase 1 of ACE Innovate is focused on three countries: *The Gambia, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea*. Priority sectors by country will be communicated directly to applicants through their respective national governments.

2. The Two-Stage Process

ACE Innovate uses a two-stage competitive process to identify and support the strongest institutional partnerships. The stages are as follows:



Stage 1 — Expression of Interest. The Eol is a structured concept submission that allows the review team to assess the quality, relevance, and ambition of proposed ACE-RFTI partnerships. The Eol focuses on the essentials: sector alignment, institutional track record and readiness, program design, partnership rationale, and expected results. It is not the place for exhaustive operational details — that comes later.

Following the submission deadline, all Eols will undergo an independent technical review. Applicants will be notified of the outcome, and shortlisted partnerships will receive written feedback to guide their Full Proposal.

Stage 2 — Full Proposal. Shortlisted ACE-RFTI partnerships will be invited to submit a Full Proposal. The Full Proposal will build on the Eol, adding greater depth and detail across the following areas:

- Detailed program and curriculum design, with quality assurance frameworks
- Research and innovation plan, including commercialization pathways
- Financial projections, cost plans, and sustainability strategy

- Procurement and civil works planning
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework

Applicants will have sufficient time between shortlisting notification and the Full Proposal deadline to develop their submissions. The AAU and other resources will be available for clarification during this period.

A note on the process: The two-stage approach is designed to reduce the burden on applicants at the early stage while ensuring the review team has enough information to identify the strongest partnerships. Institutions that invest in a rigorous, honest, and ambitious EoI will be well-positioned for the Full Proposal stage.

3. The Joint Submission Requirement

ACE Innovate is built on a partnership model. Each submission must be a joint package — one ACE paired with one RFTI — submitted as a single, integrated application. The ACE-RFTI model is intended to connect advanced skills, applied research, and workforce training across the same sector ecosystem. ACEs contribute advanced training, research, and innovation capacity; RFTIs contribute technician and workforce-oriented training closely connected to operational industry needs. Together, the partnership is expected to strengthen workforce pipelines, accelerate the practical application of knowledge, and improve responsiveness to employers across the value chain.

The joint submission consists of three components:

- A Joint Executive Summary (2 pages), co-authored by both institutions
- Part 1: ACE Expression of Interest
- Part 2: RFTI Expression of Interest

The partnership between the ACE and RFTI is not a formality. Reviewers will assess whether the two institutions together create something more impactful than either could achieve alone — across the skills ladder, across the research-to-application pipeline (often referred to as technology transfer), and in terms of sector reach and employer engagement.

A note on RFTI quality: The RFTI component will be assessed on its own merits. A strong ACE cannot compensate for a weak RFTI proposal. Governments and ACEs are strongly encouraged to be selective about the RFTI pairing — and to anchor it in genuine institutional quality and sector leadership, not proximity or convenience. An RFTI component that does not meet the required standard may result in the partnership not being shortlisted.

Exceptional cases: In exceptional circumstances, an ACE or RFTI may seek to submit independently. Any institution wishing to explore this option must contact the Bank team in advance of submission to discuss eligibility. **Independent submissions will not be accepted without prior written clearance.**

4. Eligibility

Before preparing a submission, applicants should confirm they meet all of the following eligibility requirements.

Country eligibility: Proposals must come from institutions based in one of the three Phase 1 countries: Phase 1 Batch A includes The Gambia and Guinea. Phase 1 – Batch B includes Côte d'Ivoire.

Sector eligibility: Proposals must be aligned with the priority sector identified for the applicant's country. Priority sectors are determined by the national government based on its development priorities and strategic investment agenda, including areas supported by the World Bank and other development partners. Eligible sectors for each Phase 1 country will be communicated through the national government. Proposals that do not align with the designated country-level priority sector will not be considered.

Institutional eligibility — ACE: ACE Innovate primarily targets existing ACEs /Centers (supported under the ACE Impact project). Recognizing that not all eligible centers are at the same stage of development, the program distinguishes between two categories of ACEs — Mature Centers and Emerging Centers — and calibrates expectations accordingly. Both categories are eligible for the same financing envelope.

Mature Centers are those centers that have participated as an Africa Center of Excellence (ACE) in a previous ACE program phase (ACE I or ACE Impact). They are defined by a demonstrated track record across postgraduate training, peer-reviewed research output, industry engagement, and regional reach. Under ACE Innovate, Mature Centers are expected to lead on applied research directly responsive to industry needs, drive commercialization

and technology transfer, and take on a regional mentorship and technical leadership role. In exceptional cases, an institution that has not previously participated in an ACE program may be considered as a Mature Center if it can demonstrate equivalent capacity and a credible agenda for applied training and innovation.

Emerging Centers are either a new center or those that participated in a previous ACE program as an Emerging Center and are at an earlier stage of development than ACEs, or institutions in underserved sectors or geographies where the program is selectively creating new capacity. Emerging Centers are expected to further build their academic and research foundations, strengthen industry engagement, and develop financial sustainability — with innovation defined as finding new and more effective ways to deliver skills, research, and industry collaboration, rather than the commercialization focus expected of Mature Centers.

An important note on Emerging Center designation: The designation of an institution as an Emerging Center will be determined through prior discussion between the World Bank and the relevant national government, before the submission deadline. Institutions that believe they may qualify as an Emerging Center should raise this with their national government counterpart as early as possible. Only institutions that have received prior confirmation of Emerging Center status from the AAU or World Bank will be eligible to apply under this category.

Institutional eligibility — RFTI: The RFTI must be a recognized post-secondary TVET institute, or recognized/accredited polytechnic, or equivalent institution with demonstrable sector relevance and the capacity — or credible potential — to develop into a Regional Flagship. Importantly, ACE Innovate is investing in sector-aligned programs only, not in the institution broadly. Applicants should clearly identify the specific programs and specializations within their institution that are relevant to the priority sector. Where these programs are dispersed across departments, applicants should explain how they will be organized or consolidated to form a coherent, sector-focused RFTI. If, for example, the sector is healthcare, then ACE Innovate is not investing in auto mechanic programs. Excellence within this focused scope — not average institutional performance — is the standard against which RFTI proposals will be assessed.

Sector Engagement Panel: Each center and/or RFTI must establish a Sector Engagement Panel which must be convened prior to submission. The Panel must include a majority of private sector members — including, where applicable, firms supported by the International Finance Corporation (IFC) or other development finance institutions — as well as a representative from the relevant line ministry. The Panel should be chaired by a private sector member. The Panel's role is active, not ceremonial: it is expected to validate the sector priorities, assess the labor market demand underpinning the proposal, and remain engaged throughout program implementation. **A validation statement from the Sector Engagement Panel must be included with the submission.** Guidance on the Panel's composition, terms of reference, and validation statement is provided in the Sector Engagement Panel Guidance Note [see Annex 3].

5. Financing Parameters

Each selected ACE-RFTI partnership will budget two separate grants — one per institution. **The indicative financing envelope will be communicated separately via country-specific guidance.** Proposals should be calibrated to this envelope, with activities and targets reflecting what is achievable and ambitious within this level of investment.

Civil works ceiling: Financing for civil works and construction — including renovation, rehabilitation, and new construction — is capped at 25% of the total grant per institution. This ceiling applies to both the ACE and RFTI grants independently. Proposals should prioritize investments in programs, people, research, and industry engagement. Where civil works are proposed, applicants should demonstrate clearly that the investment is necessary to support program delivery and proportionate to the overall proposal. Proposals that approach or exceed this ceiling without compelling justification will be viewed unfavorably.

6. What We Are Looking For

ACE Innovate is a competitive platform for excellence. The review process will assess the overall quality and ambition of the joint submission, as well as the individual strength of each institution's proposal. The following criteria will guide the evaluation.

Sector Alignment and Demand-Side Credibility: The strongest proposals will address a genuine, well-evidenced gap in the priority sector and value chain, grounded in real employer and industry demand — not just institutional interest. Proposals should draw on labor market evidence, employer engagement, and Sector

Engagement Panel findings. Proposals that connect to existing sectoral investments — including World Bank-financed programs in the relevant sector — will be viewed favorably, as they demonstrate embeddedness in the broader development agenda rather than independent institutional ambition.

Excellence and Track Record: For ACEs, reviewers will look for evidence of strong postgraduate programs, peer-reviewed research output, and established industry linkages. ACE Innovate funding should accelerate and deepen demonstrated excellence — not create it from scratch. For RFTIs, reviewers will assess the quality of the sector-aligned programs being proposed, the caliber of instructors and facilities, and the institution's existing relationships with employers. Excellence within the RFTI's focused scope is the standard. The classification of an ACE as Mature or Emerging will inform expectations, but both are held to high standards of quality and ambition relative to their stage of development.

Scale and Ambition: Strong proposals will be ambitious in their reach — in the number of students, researchers, and practitioners served, and in the breadth of industry engagement. Applicants should be aware that the scale of impact expected under ACE Innovate is higher than what was achieved under the ACE Impact program (the previous phase of the ACE initiative). Reviewers will assess whether proposed targets are both ambitious and credible given the institutional context and available financing. A reference table showing outputs per center under ACE Impact by center and country is provided in Annex 1 for reference and as a benchmark.

Research, Innovation, and Practical Application: Strong proposals will demonstrate a dual commitment: to rigorous, peer-reviewed research that builds the institution's academic standing, and to applied research and innovation that addresses real challenges facing firms, employers, and sectors. Publications matter — but so does the practical relevance of the research agenda. Proposals should show how research outputs will reach and benefit firms, practitioners, and value chain actors, not just academic audiences. For Mature Centers, evidence and plans for commercialization pathways, technology transfer, and firm-level engagement are expected. Illustrative examples of research to innovation pathways in select sectors are included as Annex 2. For Emerging Centers, a credible and well-structured applied research agenda — even if early-stage — is a strong signal.

Jobs Agenda and Graduate Outcomes: ACE Innovate is focused on the jobs agenda. Proposals should demonstrate a clear, credible pathway from training and research to employment outcomes — for postgraduates, for technicians, and for the broader workforce. This includes evidence of employer co-design, work-based learning, and mechanisms for tracking graduate employment and earnings.

Partnership Quality: The ACE-RFTI pairing should reflect genuine complementarity — across the skills ladder, across the research-to-application pipeline, where meaningful, and in terms of sector reach and employer engagement. The Joint Executive Summary must make a compelling, integrated case for why these two institutions together will deliver more than either could achieve alone.

Feasibility and Risk Awareness: Proposed activities should be realistic within the program timeframe and the available financing envelope. Risks should be identified honestly, with credible and proportionate mitigation measures.

7. Submission Instructions

Format and file naming: A single, consolidated document should be submitted in PDF format. Please use the following file naming convention:

[Country Code]_[Sector]_[Institutions]_EoI_2026

Example: **GMB_Health_USET>HI_EoI_2026**

How to submit: Submissions should be made to AAU via the proposal submission platform by June 26, 2026 at 11:59 PM GMT. Late submissions will not be accepted. Incomplete packages — missing any of the required components — will not be reviewed.

Queries: For questions about eligibility, submission requirements, or the Sector Engagement Panel, please contact [Dr. Sylvia Mkandawire- smkandawire@aau.org]. Queries should be submitted no later than June 19, 2026 to allow sufficient time for responses and proposal modification as needed before the deadline.

Annex 1: Reference Outputs achieved under ACE Impact by Country and Center

This table is intended to provide countries with a reference benchmark for the scale of ambition expected under ACE Innovate.

Indicator	Cote d'Ivoire				Guinea		The Gambia
	CCBAD	CEA-MEM	ENSEA	VALOPRO	PCMT	CEMS	STEE
Total enrolled — PhD	56	51	18	85	33	20	N/A
Total enrolled — Master's	216	199	403	190	145	181	N/A
Total enrolled — Undergraduate (where applicable)*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	327	327
Short course / professional trainees	90	55	73	165	392	432	1,748
Female students	194	111	169	295	237	161	540
Regional / non-national students	258	90	323	152	222	143	163
Peer-reviewed publications	96	62	92	54	61	16	
Newly accredited programs	0	0	1	0	1	0	
No. of students and faculty participating in internships	93	215	410	99	102	234	113
Externally generated revenue (USD)	2,689,277	673,070	1,700,036	1,407,549	1,297,074	224,461	527,909

Annex 2: Illustrative Example of Research to Innovation Pathways

Innovation under ACE Innovate refers broadly to the practical application of research, technical expertise, and industry collaboration to address real sector and value-chain challenges. Innovation pathways may differ across sectors and institutions, but typically involve identifying sector challenges, translating them into applied research and innovation activities, developing and testing practical solutions, and supporting their adoption, workforce application, technology transfer, or commercialization where appropriate.

The illustration below presents one example of how research, innovation, and industry engagement may connect under ACE Innovate. Institutions are not expected to follow a single model. Different sectors, institutions, and stages of maturity will require different approaches.

Step	Objective	Illustrative Activities	Illustrative Output
1	Identify priority sector challenges and innovation needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations with MoH, hospitals, and laboratories • Regional public health reviews and feedback from regional technical body • Sector workshops with researchers, clinicians, and health technology firms • Analysis of disease burden and health system gaps 	Need for rapid, low-cost diagnostics to detect infectious diseases in rural clinics.
2	Translate sector challenges into applied research and innovation projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation workshops to translate sector challenges into research questions • Joint problem-definition sessions between clinicians and researchers • Development of a portfolio of applied research topics vetted/validated by regional technical body 	Research proposal launched to develop portable diagnostic devices for early detection of malaria, Lassa fever, and other emerging diseases.
3	Develop and test solutions through applied research and pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applied research conducted by ACEs • Prototype development and laboratory validation • Field testing of diagnostic tools in hospitals and clinics • Collaboration with health agencies and medical device firms 	Prototype rapid diagnostic device successfully tested in clinical settings.
4	Facilitate technology transfer and commercialization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech licensing agreements with medical device firms • Partnerships with MoH to deploy diagnostic tools • Training for clinicians/laboratories on new tech • Support for start-ups or commercialization pathways 	Rapid diagnostic tool integrated into national disease surveillance programs.

Illustrative Sector Examples

Agriculture Example

An ACE working in climate-smart agriculture collaborates with agribusiness firms and irrigation providers to address low productivity among smallholder farmers. Researchers and students test low-cost irrigation monitoring and advisory tools adapted to local farming systems, while the RFTI develops technician training modules for installation and maintenance.

Possible outputs:

- field-tested prototypes,
- revised training programs,
- extension partnerships,
- firm-supported deployment,
- workforce certification pathways.

Energy Example

An ACE in energy and infrastructure collaborates with mini-grid operators to address maintenance and workforce shortages. Applied research supports improved remote monitoring and maintenance practices, while the RFTI develops short-cycle technician certification programs aligned with employer requirements.

Possible outputs:

- industry-certified training modules,
- operational pilots,
- technician upskilling,
- firm partnerships,
- reduced downtime/service interruptions.

Annex 3: Sector Engagement Panel

The Sector Engagement Panel (SEP) is a mandatory body that applicants must establish to support the preparation of their Expression of Interest and validate its responsiveness to private sector needs and priorities. The SEP's role is to ensure that the proposed skills, research, and innovation activities are grounded in real employer demand and aligned with the direction of the sector in the applicant country.

One SEP Per Application Package

Each application package — whether a joint ACE/RFTI submission or a independent submission — must be supported by a **single shared SEP**. Where a joint submission is made, both the ACE/Emerging Center and the RFTI should draw on the same panel. This ensures that the advice informing the proposal is consistent and that both institutions are aligned around the same sector intelligence and employer expectations.

Composition

While there is no explicit requirement limit, the SEP may comprise between **5 and 9 members**. The goal is a focused, high-quality panel — not an all-inclusive one. Members should be selected for their relevance to the specific value chain and their ability to provide substantive input on skills gaps, research needs, and employer demand.

The following composition requirements apply:

- **More than 50% of members must be private sector representatives.** In sectors such as health, the relevant "private sector" should be understood broadly to include employers — such as hospitals, clinics, and health management organizations — that hire graduates and drive workforce demand in the sector, regardless of their ownership structure.
- **At least one representative from the relevant line ministry** must be included to ensure connection with national sectoral investments, policies, and priorities.
- Applicants are encouraged to engage **International Finance Corporation (IFC) investees** operating in the relevant sector as SEP members, given their demonstrated investment presence and direct stake in a skilled and productive workforce.

Relationship to Existing Advisory Structures

Applicants are encouraged to draw on existing advisory board or industry council relationships where these exist. The SEP may be the same body as an existing advisory board or a relevant subset of it. At the same time, applicants are encouraged to use the CFP process as an opportunity to broaden their private sector networks and include new firm relationships — particularly in value chain segments or geographic areas not yet well served by the institution.

Sustaining Engagement

Applicants should recognize that private sector participation carries a genuine transaction cost for firms. To sustain meaningful engagement, institutions should ensure that SEP involvement is purposeful and time-efficient, with clear expectations communicated upfront. The panel's role should be framed around mutual benefit: the private sector's participation directly shapes the design of programs that will produce the skilled workers and applied research outputs their businesses need.

Where appropriate, institutions may consider modest non-financial incentives to keep members engaged and motivated, such as:

- Co-design and/or co-branding of training programs or research outputs
- Preferential access to interns, graduates and recruitment pipelines
- Early engagement in applied research partnerships relevant to the firm's operations

Quality of Engagement

The quality and seniority of SEP membership matters, as does the depth of the panel's engagement during proposal preparation. The validation statement submitted with the EoI should reflect genuine involvement in shaping the proposal — not a pro forma endorsement. Evaluators will consider both the composition of the panel and the nature and level of its engagement when assessing the credibility of the application's sector alignment.

Validation Statement

The SEP Validation Statement is a mandatory component of every Eol submission. It must:

- Describe the SEP's membership and engagement
- Confirm that the panel reviewed and discussed the proposed sector focus, value chain, and program design
- Attest to the responsiveness of the proposal to employer demand and sector priorities
- Be signed by the **SEP Chair and Vice Chair**
- Not exceed **one page**

No template is provided for the validation statement. Applicants should draft it in their own words, ensuring it is specific to the proposed program and reflects the panel's genuine assessment.

Annex 4: Solutions Platforms

SOLUTION PLATFORMS OF THE AGRICULTURE KEY PRIORITY SECTOR

The philosophy behind this Key Priority Sector is threefold: (1) meet the needs of now to guarantee food self-sufficiency, (2) build the base for the future to support population, economic and industrial growth, and (3) establish a sound pipeline of fit for purpose solutions. Niches for interdisciplinary research/projects generating new knowledge, products, services, and jobs creation_in Agriculture and Agribusiness will be particularly sought after.

SP-AGRI-1: Crops science and technology

- ✓ *Breeding, pest control & management, nutrition & fertilization, water management*

SP-AGRI-2: Sustainability and resilience

- ✓ *Water, soil, carbon, biodiversity, resilience, frameworks and certification schemes, sustainable agriculture entrepreneurship and finance*

SP-AGRI-3: Technology and digital transformation in agriculture

- ✓ *Software, hardware, robotics, smart tech, AI, data management*

SP-AGRI-4: Agrifood and agribusiness value chains

- ✓ *Processing, storage, conservation, packaging, transportation, logistics, traceability.*

SOLUTION PLATFORMS OF THE HEALTH KEY PRIORITY SECTOR

The philosophy behind this Key Priority Sector is threefold: (1) meet the healthcare needs of now, (2) build the workforce and the base for the future to support population, economic and industrial growth while standing resilient to threats, and (3) establish a pipeline of fit for purpose solutions. Niches for interdisciplinary research/projects generating new knowledge, products, services, and jobs creation_in the Health sector will be particularly sought after.

SP-HEALTH-1: Health Workforce of the future:

- ✓ *Clinical Lab technicians, Radiology Technicians, Ultrasound, Nutrition.*
- ✓ *Nursing Clinical Specialty (ICU, Oncology, NCD, etc.)*
- ✓ *Emergency & Critical Care (trauma, cancer, NCDs)*
- ✓ *Quality Outcomes Focused Healthcare management/operations of the future*

SP-HEALTH-2: Biotech & Biomed Solutions:

- ✓ *Biomedical science and engineering (implants, tissue engineering, stem cells, etc.)*
- ✓ *Diagnostic Development (Biophysics, biochemistry, etc.)*
- ✓ *Drug/Vaccine discovery & Delivery (Biopharma, Biotech, Molecular, Genomic, Protein, Radio/Nuclear)*

SP-HEALTH-3: Digital & Health Engineering

- ✓ *Digital health and advanced tools for monitoring, prediction, fast operations, (AI, etc.)*
- ✓ *Climate Resilient hospital infrastructure, operations & management*
- ✓ *Fast-deployable medical infrastructures & facilities*
- ✓ *Healthcare logistics and supply chains*

SOLUTION PLATFORMS OF THE ENERGY KEY PRIORITY SECTOR

The philosophy behind this Key Priority Sector is threefold: (1) meet the needs of now, (2) build the base of the future to support economic and industrial growth, and (3) establish a pipeline of fit for purpose

solutions. Niches for interdisciplinary research/projects generating new knowledge, products, services, and jobs creation in Energy and related infrastructure will be particularly sought after.

❑ **SP-ENERG-1: Energy Production Infrastructure and Technologies**

- ✓ *Renewable energy systems: solar, wind, hydro, biomass, geothermal*
- ✓ *New segments: SMRs (Small Modular Reactors) — particularly for data centers*
- ✓ *Portable generators and rapidly deployable energy solutions*
- ✓ *Resilient infrastructure: cybersecurity and climate resilience*

❑ **SP-ENERG-2: Networks, Mini-grids, and Electrification (Rural, Peri-urban)**

- ✓ *Solar mini-grids + /PV hybridation*
- ✓ *Smart grids, smart metering, SCADA*
- ✓ *Rural and peri-urban electrification*
- ✓ *Resilient infrastructure: cybersecurity and climate resilience*

❑ **SP-ENERG-3: Energy Storage and Hybrid Solutions**

- ✓ *Storage systems for mini-grids, businesses, and public buildings*
- ✓ *Hybrid energy solutions for strategic sectors:*
 - *Agriculture (solar pumping, solar refrigeration, agribusiness)*
 - *Healthcare (continuous power for hospitals)*
 - *Education (energy for digital schools)*
- ✓ *Autonomous microsystems for pumping, irrigation, desalination, cold chain, etc.*
- ✓ *Energy storage integration (stationary batteries, small-scale green hydrogen)*

❑ **SP-ENERG-4: Digitalization, Data Engineering & Artificial Intelligence for Energy**

- ✓ *Data engineering for multi-source data collection*
- ✓ *Preprocessing, cleaning, and enrichment of energy data*
- ✓ *Modeling platforms for energy optimization, forecasting production and consumption, integration of renewables*
- ✓ *Smart metering, IoT monitoring, digital asset management*
- ✓ *Cybersecurity applied to energy systems*
- ✓ *The new “Energy Data Mining” economy*
- ✓ *New services: national energy platforms, digital twins for infrastructure, network modeling and optimization*

❑ **SP-ENERG-5: Energy Efficiency, Performance & Employment-Intensive Services**

- ✓ *Energy performance in buildings, industries, and transportation*
- ✓ *Energy audits, retrofits, and certifications*
- ✓ *New green jobs: Certified installers, Auditors and inspectors, Energy officers in communities/collectivities*
- ✓ *Development of low-cost, high-impact products: home solar kits, solutions for SMEs, energy-efficient equipment (pumps, high-efficiency motors, etc.)*

SOLUTION PLATFORMS OF THE TOURISM KEY PRIORITY SECTOR

The philosophy behind this Key Priority Sector is to develop the skills and competencies (from basic to the highest qualifications) needed to support Sub-Saharan African Tourism Industry (in the broadest sense)

sustainable growth, competitiveness, innovation, resilience, to establish a pipeline of fit for purpose solutions and to facilitate the creation of numerous jobs across the tourism value chain and beyond.

The intention is to boost African tourism potential and makes it possible to attract and sustain new audiences and markets within the continent and in other countries. The successful case of South Korea in that regard is a very good example that can inspire a different, well contextualized, but successful approach.

Skills targeted are within the tourism sector itself or from sectors directly linked to its potential growth such as:

- Hospitality industry infrastructures, operations and management
- MICE (meetings, incentives, congresses and large events)
- Heritage restoration, safeguard and promotion
- Gastronomy, destination planning, tours and tours operations, etc.¹

Beyond the positive impact on jobs creation (new, reskilling, upskilling), medium and long-term other impacts are²:

- enabling African players to seize the opportunities of the digital age and globalization,
- emergence of new value creative business models, products, and services,
- accessible and inclusive transnational creation and circulation,
- safeguarding and marketing the rich cultural, patrimonial, and linguistic diversity,
- strengthening cross-sectoral initiatives and social cohesion.

Potential areas of Solution Platforms for the African Tourism Industry (in the broadest sense) where there are niches for interdisciplinary projects generating quick wins new knowledge, products, services, and jobs creation are:

- SP-TOURH-1: Hospitality industry infrastructures, operations and management**
- SP-TOURH-2: Heritage restoration, safeguard and promotion**
- SP-TOURH-3: Destination planning, gastronomy, tours and tours operations, MICE (meetings, incentives, congresses and large events)**

¹ Black & Platinum International Labs, Priority Matrix for Subsaharan Africa's Accelerated Growth, Concept Note, BxPI – DART, 2022

² Ibidem