



**Moses Kotane
Research Institute**

Research · Innovation · Excellence

CALL FOR APPLICATION

UMKHANYAKUDE INNOVATOR'S HACKATHON 2026

CLOSING DATE: 16 FEBRUARY 2026

Visit our website to apply

   @moseskotanereseearchinstitute
www.moseskotaneinstitute.com

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1. Background

The Moses Kotane Research Institute (MKRI), through its Commercialising Innovation and Research (CIR) Programme, in partnership with local municipalities, invites youth, SMMEs, cooperatives, schools, and informal traders from the uMkhanyakude District to participate in the upcoming Grassroots Hackathon. This dynamic grassroots innovation challenge offers a platform for community-led problem solving and idea development, focusing on practical, affordable, and locally driven solutions.

2. Objectives

- Identify and showcase grassroots innovations addressing local challenges.
- Discover and develop homegrown solutions to local challenges.
- Promote inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship in rural areas.
- Strengthen collaboration between youth, SMMEs, academia and government.
- Align innovation efforts with district development goals.
- Develop local solutions to address socioeconomic challenges.

3. Theme

“uMkhanyakude Innovates – Low-Cost Tech - High Impact” is the hackathon theme that encourages community-driven innovations in agriculture, tourism and other relevant sectors. It focuses on low-tech, indigenous, economical and service based solutions.

4. Hackathon Focus Areas

- Agriculture and Food Security: Manual or solar-powered tools, frugal irrigation systems, composting solutions
- Tourism and Cultural Preservation: Indigenous artefacts, rural hospitality models
- SMMEs and Manufacturing: Product/process innovations, low-cost vending systems
- Sustainability and Waste-to-Value: Recycled material tools, clean energy devices
- Youth and Community Services: Mobile community services, rural training models

5. Eligible Participants

- Local youth and community
- Local inventors, creatives and makers
- Informal traders, schools, cooperatives, and SMMEs
- Elders and traditional knowledge holders from the following municipalities: uMhlabuyalingana, Jozini, Big 5 Hlabisa and Mtubatuba

6. Judging Criteria

- Relevance to local problems
- Cost-effectiveness and simplicity.
- Use of local/recycled materials
- Scalability and replication potential
- Community benefit and inclusivity

7. Prizes and Post-Hack Support

- In-kind support (equipment, tools, training) and any other relevant support to the solution/idea.
- Access to MKRI's CIR and other Innovation Programme
- Mentorship and pilot project opportunities

8. Submission Details

- Interested participants must submit application form and their proposal topic ideas, which should include:
- A brief background,
- A clear problem statement, and
- A proposed solution.

Submissions must not exceed three (3) pages in total.

Applications should be submitted by **16 February 2026** to hackathons@moseskotane.com

For queries, please contact Ms Asebenzile Mkunyana at hackathons@moseskotane.com