

Local entrepreneurs get a kickstart through RE:SOLVE Challenge

Ten innovative South African entrepreneurs have received kick-start funding of up to R20,000 each for their big ideas, enabling them to fast-track early-stage development and take one step closer to having viable products in the market.



This was an outcome of the RE:SOLVE Challenge, a project funded by the City of Cape Town and run by the Craft and Design Institute (CDI), a non-profit company with 20 years of success in developing creative people and small businesses. Facilitated by digital transformation practice DY/DX, the Challenge's sponsors also include Uber, Red & Yellow and Smollan and the Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship.

The RE:SOLVE Challenge is a fast-paced four-month design thinking challenge to unlock the creative and entrepreneurial spirit of SA to rebuild our Covid-19 hit economy. It has provided local entrepreneurs with the necessary skills and tools to test their ideas in the market. Innovative solutions that were presented covered a number of critical sectors such as transport, hygiene, food security, education, medical care, retail and micro-enterprises.



Branson Centre of Entrepreneurship sponsors RE:Solve Challenge

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"The City is a proud funder of this programme. We are continuously looking for innovative ways of solving challenges that ultimately result in new ideas and products. The pandemic has increased the need for companies to pivot from their usual approaches and design innovative products and services. Developing new products and services will lead to scalable offerings whilst enhancing the competitiveness of our local products. Well done to all the participants and special congratulations to all the winners. We will continue working towards ensuring that Cape Town retains the status of the innovation hub of Africa", said Alderman James Vos, Mayoral Committee Member for Economic Opportunities and Asset Management, City of Cape Town.

The Challenge, which launched in October 2020, saw just under 200 applicants from all walks of life, and 107 made it through to the first round. The programme provided a very practical deep dive into the importance of user research and tools, and methodologies to really understand the problem/s they are trying to solve for.

“The impact of Covid-19 on South Africa has been well documented, in many ways laying bare the vulnerabilities that were already present. This programme and the way in which we supported the entrepreneurs has been designed to face up to this impact, and to bring forward bright ideas,” says Erica Elk, Group CEO at the CDI.

“The ten ideas funded represent the ingenuity of South Africans, showcasing that there are many great ideas at home that can re-look at old ways of doing things. Giving local entrepreneurs the right support, and an opportunity to fast-track their innovations toward market-readiness is going to be a big part of how we recover as a country and build resilience.”

Says Teri Kruger, RE:SOLVE Challenge finalist, of the experience: “The discussions and templates helped shape the ideas in a way that acknowledged the experience I bring to the party and led the journey towards a [service] that serves my business and others, profitably. Continually engaging in discussions of these ideas with the facilitators, potential investors and project contributors has helped me shape a service model that can be rapidly commercialised.”

10 big ideas supported:

Hazel Suttill | Disaster Care Kits

Coming from a background in interior and graphic design, Hazel's idea involves a box that holds disaster relief goods and care packages that are converted into furniture once the goods have been used.

Jessica Murphy | Food Gardens

Jessica is a teacher with an agricultural passion to create a simple, sustainable, innovative product that can transform any arid site into an abundant food garden.

Matshidiso Mabe | Educational Development Tools & Programs

This project hopes to put our children at the centre of learning and create a learning triangle between the educator, learner and school community. The idea is to help capacitate schools through professional development tools and strategic programmes.

Mcebo Shange | Road Condition Monitoring Platform

This idea involves an AI mobile and web app that makes the collection of deteriorating road condition data faster, cheaper, and easier; creating a crowd economy platform that enables anyone with a vehicle and a smartphone to become a road condition data capturer.

“Being part of the RE:SOLVE Challenge grew my understanding of design thinking and I also got to understand my idea a whole lot better than I previously did... I believe the RE:SOLVE Challenge is much needed to support and bring up innovators, and more importantly, it helps one understand the necessary support and steps that are needed to turn an idea into a product” says Mcebo Shange.

Nomtandazo Sicolo | Affordable Smart Housing Through Stokvel

A passionate student working in a call centre, Nomtandazo is venturing into the world of low-cost housing and modern banking to provide access to warm and affordable smart housing paid for using Stokvel savings.

Ross Eyre and team | Affordable, Self-Provisioned Internet Networks

Leveraging entrepreneurial experience and a background in design, Ross and his team are producing a digital wallet with peer-savings account and digital currency.

Sandile Mtshiki for | Foldable & Portable Vehicle Tables

Sandile has innovated a versatile, robust, foldable and portable accessory that can be hooked onto the outside parts of vehicles - for catering/dining purposes.

Suzanne Smit | Urban Farming

Abandoned and empty warehouse spaces will be utilised to set up an indoor growing facility close to an informal settlement in Suzanne's vision. Urban farming makes locally grown products available without the costly expense of transport and packaging.

Teri Kruger and team | Hybrid Grid System for Self-sufficient Electrical Power

With a background in energy research, Teri's idea involves purpose-built containerised options for solar power-generation and storage units that could be sealed, shipped and operated in remote areas.

Zamani Manqele | Smart Grocery Bag Handles

With Zamani's background in catering and manufacturing came the idea for a smart grocery bag handle that not only addresses the hand strain from carrying heavier grocery bags, but also has a GPS distress button for emergencies.

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