

AI & African Music Project Pilot

Application guidelines and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

1. What's this about?

The Wits Innovation Centre (WIC) and the MIND Institute invite proposals for bold, music-led projects that place African creativity at the heart of artificial intelligence. We support initiatives in music-making, archiving, education, and tool development—rooted in African sounds, languages, and innovation.

2. Who Can Apply? Applicants must:

- Be of African heritage and permanently based/living in an African country
- Work professionally in music (e.g. musicians, producers, composers, educators)
- Be available and able to travel to Johannesburg, South Africa in **November 2025** and **April 2026**
- Be willing to be publicly profiled
- Meet financial compliance requirements (see below)

3. Key Dates and Links

- **Expression of Interest (EOI)** Deadline: Sunday 14 September 2025, 17:00 SAST. Link: <https://forms.office.com/r/6iZJz5q8RY> or use QR code →
- **Application Guidance Webinars:** Monday 15 & Tuesday 16 September 2025 (invite-only for those who have submitted an Expression of Interest)
- **Final Application Deadline:** Tuesday 23 September 2025, 17:00 SAST (link will only be provided to those who have both submitted an EOI and attended one of the guidance webinars)



4. What You Need to Submit

- Project Description (max 500 words): Outline your idea, goals, and how it aligns with one or more of the four project themes below, or another important area that highlights an opportunity in music and technology/AI
- Bio, CV and portfolio of past work: Submit credible, publicly accessible online links only (e.g. YouTube, SoundCloud, Bandcamp, Spotify, personal website) *Do not upload files or send downloadable documents, videos or audio files*
- *Note: Applications for the pilot will be accepted in English only*

5. What We're Looking For – Your proposal should ideally align with one or more of these four focus areas:

Theme	Opportunity
Creative Practice & Collaboration: Use AI to co-create, perform, and teach music rooted in African traditions	Artistic creation, performance, teaching, and genre innovation using AI
Record, transcribe, and preserve African musical works—from oral heritage to digital formats	Safeguarding African musical heritage through or with AI
Build and localize AI tools that understand African sounds, languages, and workflow	Developing culturally relevant and technically sound AI tools
Remix and reimagine genres (like Amapiano, Afrobeats, Gqom, heritage genres etc.)	Genre evolution and experimentation with AI

6. Selection Criteria

- Relevant skills for achieving and delivering the proposed project
- Local or regional relevance and transformation potential
- Consideration for human creativity in AI
- Novelty, scalability, and market impact
- Demonstrable experience or exceptional talent in music and relevant area

7. What You'll Receive and Participate In:

- ZAR 30,000/month for 4–6 months (to be determined if selected for award)
- Support from an AI collaborator – you can propose an engineer for our consideration or we will allocate one who can support the project; there is a limited stipend available for engineers to be contracted separately
- Workshop in Johannesburg (November 2025 – incl. travel and limited related costs such as visa support, accommodation, meals and event access)
- Monthly advisor check-ins – a mentor will be allocated to each awarded musician-engineer team and monthly meetings + reporting will be required
- Community of Practice – regular meetings with all awarded musicians/creators and engineers will be scheduled to provide group learning and exchange around progress and challenges, and to assist with ongoing advice and build team and network engagement
- Production support for showcase – limited production support will be provided to help you prepare your project for presentation during the April 2026 workshop and showcase event and for further presentation/promotion
- Final showcase (April 2026 – incl. travel and limited related costs such as visa support, accommodation, meals and event access))

8. Financial Compliance Requirements – If selected, you must:

- Sign a formal agreement with Wits University via Wits Commercial Enterprise (Pty) Ltd, outlining and committing to project deliverables and milestones
- Provide the following documentation:
 - Proof of bank account (official bank letterhead, stamped and signed)
 - Letter of identity and banking details (on official letterhead if contracting via a company)
 - Certified copy of passport and residency/visa documentation
 - Company registration documents (if contracting through a registered entity)

9. Disqualification Criteria – Applications will be excluded if:

- You do not submit an EOI or attend an info session
- Your project does not align with the four themes or clearly demonstrate and describe how it aligns with an alternative thematic area relevant to the project objectives as outlined
- You are not based in Africa
- You cannot travel to South Africa for the project launch and showcase workshops
- Your application is incomplete, late, or submitted via non-approved channels
- You cannot meet financial compliance requirements

10. Enquires

Enquiries for a project of this nature can be many, and varied. To help us manage enquiries effectively, please submit all enquiries via the following enquiry form only:

<https://forms.office.com/r/bNZzvV3Vx0>

We will not be able to respond to individual emails