

COMPETITION GUIDELINES

Le Shift Lab

Green+Digital Transformation Incubation Programme

Programme Name:	Le Shift Lab
Organiser:	French Embassy in South Africa
Implementing Partner:	Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (WITS University)
Document Version:	2.1 — With Exact Dates
Date of Issue:	April 2026
Call Opens:	Monday, 13 April 2026
Application Deadline:	Wednesday, 20 May 2026 (23:59 SAST)

PART A: PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

Le Shift Lab is a partnership between the French Embassy in South Africa and Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct (WITS University). The programme supports early-stage entrepreneurs developing innovative solutions at the intersection of green technology and digital innovation across South Africa, Lesotho, and Malawi.

SMME-Friendly Design: Le Shift Lab requires only **8-12 hours per month** — designed for entrepreneurs running businesses, not attending school.

2. What We Offer

Structured Curriculum	5 modules over 9 months: Foundation, Green Tech, Market Access, Investment Readiness, Pitch Perfection — with French expert sessions throughout
Expert Mentorship	Monthly 1:1 mentor calls (7 calls: July 2026 - February 2027)
WITS Research Access	Virtual consultations with WITS research units
Investor Exposure	Demo Day showcase: Thursday, 18 March 2027 (Johannesburg)
French Ecosystem	4 French expert sessions + potential France field visit (ChangeNow or VivaTech 2027)
No Programme Fees	Fully funded. Travel support for Demo Day provided.

3. Key Dates

Milestone	Date
Call for Applications Opens	Monday, 13 April 2026
Information Webinar (with BPI France)	Thursday, 23 April 2026 @ 14:00 SAST
Application Deadline	Wednesday, 20 May 2026 (23:59 SAST)
Virtual Pitch Sessions	25-27 May 2026
Cohort Announced	Friday, 29 May 2026
Incubation Begins (Module 1, Session 1)	Thursday, 4 June 2026
Mid-Programme Review	Thursday, 15 October 2026
<i>December Holiday Break</i>	<i>14 December 2026 - 3 January 2027</i>
Incubation Ends (Module 5, Session 18)	Thursday, 25 February 2027

Demo Day (In-Person, Johannesburg)	Thursday, 18 March 2027
France Field Visit (Option A: ChangeNow)	Late April 2027 (TBC)
France Field Visit (Option B: VivaTech)	Mid-June 2027 (TBC)

PART B: ELIGIBILITY & APPLICATION

4. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants **MUST** meet **ALL** of the following:

Criterion	Requirement
Venture Focus	Green/climate technology AND digital innovation intersection
Stage	Early-stage: Pre-revenue with prototype/MVP OR post-revenue <2 years
Geography	Registered in South Africa, Lesotho, or Malawi
Ownership	51%+ owned by SA/Lesotho/Malawi citizens/residents
Commitment	One founder working full-time on venture
SDG Alignment	Address SDGs 7, 9, 11, 12, or 13
Availability	8-12 hours/month + Demo Day attendance (Thu 18 March 2027)
Language	English proficiency

5. Target Sectors

Sector	Examples
Renewable Energy	Solar, mini-grids, energy storage, smart metering
Circular Economy	Waste-to-value, recycling tech, sustainable packaging
Climate-Smart Agriculture	Precision farming, water efficiency, soil monitoring
Water & Sanitation	Water purification, leak detection, smart water management
Sustainable Mobility	EVs, charging infrastructure, logistics optimisation
Green Buildings	Energy-efficient construction, smart buildings
Climate Adaptation	Early warning systems, climate risk analytics

6. Digital Technology Categories

Applicants must indicate which digital technologies their venture uses. This helps us match you with appropriate mentors and expert panels. **Select all that apply:**

Technology Category	Examples / Description
Artificial Intelligence / ML	Predictive analytics, computer vision, NLP, recommendation systems

Internet of Things (IoT) & Sensors	Smart sensors, connected devices, environmental monitoring
Cloud Platforms & SaaS	Cloud computing, software-as-a-service, platform solutions
Mobile Applications	iOS/Android apps, mobile-first solutions, USSD/SMS platforms
Satellite / Remote Sensing	Earth observation, GIS mapping, drone imagery, GPS tracking
Blockchain / Distributed Ledger	Traceability, carbon credits, supply chain transparency
Data Analytics & Visualisation	Dashboards, business intelligence, data pipelines
Robotics & Automation	Industrial automation, drones, autonomous systems
Digital Twins & Simulation	Virtual models, scenario modelling, system simulation
Hardware / Embedded Systems	Custom electronics, firmware, smart devices, wearables

7. Application Requirements

Required Documents (PDF, max 10MB each):

Document	Required?	Notes
Company Registration	Mandatory	Or equivalent
Founder ID Documents	Mandatory	All founders
Pitch Deck (max 15 slides)	Mandatory	PDF format
2-Minute Video Pitch	Mandatory	Link or upload
Proof of Traction	<i>If applicable</i>	Revenue, LOIs
Financial Statements	<i>If post-revenue</i>	Last 12 months

How to Apply: Visit application portal → Create account → Complete form → Upload documents → Submit before **Wednesday, 20 May 2026 at 23:59 SAST**.

Contact: greendigital@tshimologong.joburg

PART C: SELECTION PROCESS

8. Selection Timeline

Stage	Dates	Activity	Outcome
Stage 1	21-22 May 2026	Application Screening	~30-40 advance
Stage 2	22-24 May 2026	Expert Review	~15-20 advance
Stage 3	25-27 May 2026	Virtual Pitch Sessions	8-15 selected
Final	Fri 29 May 2026	Cohort Announced	Public announcement

9. Scoring Criteria

Dimension	Weight	What We Assess
Problem & Solution	30%	Problem significance, solution quality, unique value proposition
Impact & Sustainability	25%	Environmental impact, SDG alignment, twin transition integration
Market & Traction	25%	Market understanding, business model, traction evidence
Team & Execution	20%	Founder capability, coachability, programme fit
TOTAL	100%	+ Inclusivity Bonuses (up to +15 points)

10. Inclusivity Bonuses

Category	Points	Criteria
Women-Led Venture	+5	Woman founder/CEO with 51%+ ownership OR majority women team
Youth-Led Venture	+5	Majority of founders aged 18-35
Regional (Lesotho/Malawi)	+5	Headquartered in Lesotho or Malawi
Township/Rural Focus	+3	Primary operations in townships or rural areas
Maximum Bonus	+15	Cumulative, capped at 15 points

Target Composition: 60%+ women; 40%+ Lesotho/Malawi; 60%+ youth (18-35)

PART D: PROGRAMME PARTICIPATION

11. Participant Commitments (SMME-Friendly)

Le Shift Lab uses an **alternating week model** to minimise disruption to your business:

Week Type	What Happens	Your Time
WEEK A: Learning	Live session (Thu 10:00 SAST, 2 hrs) + self-paced content	3-4 hours
WEEK B: Applying	No scheduled sessions. Apply learnings to your business.	0-1 hours (optional)

Monthly Total: 8-12 hours

9-Month Total: ~75-110 hours

12. Programme Structure (5 Modules)

Module	Dates	Sessions	Focus
Module 1: Foundation	4 Jun-16 Jul	3	BMC, validation, impact + French Expert #1
Module 2: Green Tech	23 Jul-10 Sep	4	Sector deep-dives, AI/IoT, WITS consultations
Module 3: Market Access	17 Sep-5 Nov	4	Customer discovery, PMF, sales + French Expert #2
Module 4: Investment	12 Nov-14 Jan	4	Financial modelling, pitch deck + French Expert #3
Module 5: Pitch Perfection	21 Jan-25 Feb	3	Final pitch coaching + French Expert #4
TOTAL	9 months	18	+ 7 mentor calls + Demo Day (18 Mar 2027)

Note: December holiday break: 14 December 2026 - 3 January 2027 (no sessions).

PART E: GOVERNANCE & CONTACT

13. Governance

French Embassy	Programme Sponsor. Strategic direction, governance, funding.
Tshimologong (WITS)	Implementing Partner. Operations, curriculum, mentors, M&E.
Steering Committee	Joint oversight. Meets: March 2026 (SC1), 15 Oct 2026 (SC2), 25 Mar 2027 (SC3).

14. Data Protection

Data handling complies with POPIA (South Africa). Personal data used only for programme administration. Explicit consent obtained for publicity.

15. Appeals Process

Grounds: Procedural irregularity; evidence of bias. Disagreement with panel judgment is NOT grounds for appeal.

Process: Submit written appeal to greendigital@tshimologong.joburg within 14 days of decision. Response within 10 business days.

16. Contact Information

General Enquiries	greendigital@tshimologong.joburg
Application Portal	https://web.miniextensions.com/k5tm9l9WtOoAS7Jw3nUv
Physical Address	Tshimologong, 41 Juta Street, Braamfontein, Johannesburg

Response Commitment: 48 business hours during application period (8 Apr - 20 May 2026).

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