



WITS Crucible

CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP & NEW VENTURE CREATION

Entrepreneurs & Start-ups

P R O S P E C T U S

2026



1. Executive Summary



The **Wits Crucible Centre for Entrepreneurship** is part of the Wits Business School, a vital component of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand's innovation ecosystem. Established within WBS, it aligns with Wits University's commercialisation strategy. The Wits Crucible focuses on high-human-capital entrepreneurship training and offers technology-driven, tech-enabled venture incubation and acceleration services for young entrepreneurs. Start-ups created and incubated benefit from Wits research and the broader innovation network, including the **Wits Innovation Centre (WIC)**, **Tshimologong**, and **Wits Commercial Enterprises (WCE)**, as well as institutional legal, financial, and administrative support. It also facilitates access to pre-seed and seed funding through the Wits Innovation Fund and the wider external investors' ecosystem.

In 2025, the Wits Crucible launched the **Entrepreneurial Capability Development Programme (ECDP)**—a fully funded 16-week intensive course designed for unemployed young graduates with technology-driven business ideas. Social media posts about the call for applications describe the programme as an intensive 16-week course featuring hands-on workshops and simulations, as well as *pathways into incubation, acceleration, funding, and mentorship*. The 2025 cohort consisted of **17 entrepreneurs** (working individually or in teams) who have now completed the programme and are preparing to pitch their ventures for a place in the Crucible incubator and for pre-seed risk funding.

This prospectus has two objectives:

- i. **Demonstrate programme rigour** by describing the ECDP training and the Wits innovation ecosystem, thereby providing assurance to funders that the ventures have undergone a structured programme covering marketing, accounting, product development, lean startup thinking, and business model innovation.
- ii. **Profile the founders and their ventures** — provide concise biographies of each founder and a one-page summary of each start-up to assist potential investors in evaluating opportunities.



Services SETA Accounting Authority, Mr. Lehlogonolo Masoga, marked a landmark achievement at the Crucible, hosted by the Wits Business School (WBS) in celebration of a major skills development initiative co-funded by the Services SETA. This milestone exemplified the power of collaboration within the PSET structures.



2. Programme Overview



The Wits innovation ecosystem

The university's commercialisation guidelines state that Wits offers an enabling environment for innovation, including:

- **Tshimologong incubator** – a facility where start-ups can be nurtured.
- **Wits Crucible** – a centre that offers entrepreneurship training and acceleration, providing start-ups with resources and guidance to grow. Once a business is established, acceleration at the Crucible can be either in exchange for an indicative approximately 10% equity stake or for fees.
- **Wits Innovation Centre (WIC) and Wits Commercial Enterprises (WCE)** are entities that provide IP protection, support for spin outs, governance, legal services, and commercial vehicles to represent Wits' shareholding.
- **Funding** – access to the Wits Innovation Fund, Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), University Technology Fund (UTF), and other funding sources through the WIC.

These resources allow ventures graduating from the

Crucible to access mentorship, legal structuring, IP management, and early-stage funding, while reducing administrative hurdles and speeding up market entry.

Entrepreneurial Capability Development Programme (ECDP)

The ECDP is a **fully funded 16-week intensive course** that combines classroom sessions, simulations, field assignments, and mentorship. Its aim is to equip young entrepreneurs with the skills, mindset, and tools needed to turn a concept into a viable business. The curriculum is delivered in a dual manner – the first part is in partnership with the Wits Business School Executive Education. The second part, running in parallel with the WBS ExeEd modules, is delivered at the Crucible in partnership with industry-expert service providers outside the university. The program covers:

Module	Key learning outcomes	Examples of activities
Entrepreneurial mindset & innovation	Understand the role of entrepreneurship in South Africa's socio-economic landscape; cultivate resilience and opportunity recognition; learn about social sanction risk and the importance of relational readiness in African markets.	Founder storytelling workshops; case studies of African start-ups; MVR mapping exercises.
Market research & customer discovery	Learn how to conduct primary and secondary market research; identify customer segments; size the market; validate assumptions; develop minimum viable products (MVPs).	Field interviews; design-thinking exercises; customer-persona workshops.
Business Model Canvas & Lean Startup	Use the Lean/Business Model Canvas to map out the problem, solution, key metrics, value proposition, channels, customer segments, cost structures and revenue streams; iterate on the model to test hypotheses.	Canvas creation sessions; pivot case studies; peer feedback.
Product development & prototyping	Understand product-market fit, rapid prototyping and iterative testing; use design sprints to build and refine MVPs.	Hackathons; prototyping workshops; feedback loops with mentors.
Financial literacy & accounting	Basics of financial statements, budgeting, cash-flow management and valuation; introduction to funding instruments including SAFE notes.	Building simple financial models; valuations workshops; reading term sheets.
Marketing & growth strategies	Develop marketing plans; explore digital marketing, social media and growth hacking; learn how to tell a compelling story to attract early adopters and investors.	Building pitch decks; digital-campaign simulations; brand storytelling.
Legal & governance	Learn about company registration, regulatory compliance, intellectual-property rights and governance structures; introduction to Simple Agreements for Future Equity (SAFE).	Guest lectures from lawyers; drafting basic contracts; mock negotiations.
Funding readiness & pitching	Craft a concise and persuasive pitch covering problem statement, market size, unique selling proposition, business model, traction and funding needs; understand investor psychology; practise Minimum Viable Relationships (MVR) to build trust.	Pitch-deck bootcamps; investor Q&A simulations; feedback from angel investors.

The programme culminates in a **pitch day** where each venture or team presents to a panel of investors and the Wits Crucible leadership. Successful ventures proceed to the **incubation/acceleration** phase and negotiate a SAFE agreement with the centre and participating investors. Because the ECDP emphasises

lean methodology, many participants use the Lean Canvas to iterate their business model: they define customer segments, identify key problems and solutions, outline value propositions, select channels, and specify revenue and cost structures.

3. Faculty



McEdward Murimbika
PhD. (Arch.); PhD. (Management)

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Dr Murimbika is an entrepreneur and academic with 30 years of experience as both a practitioner and a scholar in entrepreneurship, new venture creation, strategic management, and archaeology. He is a faculty member at *Wits Business School*. He serves as the Director of the Wits Crucible Centre for Entrepreneurship at Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Dr Murimbika is a multidisciplinary scholar and a strategic entrepreneurship and management professional with expertise in Emerging African Economies (EAE), including Exponential & Emerging Technologies Convergence, Global Entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial leadership, and applied business research. He is a distinguished academic who teaches entrepreneurship and strategic management modules to postgraduate Master's and MBA students at Wits Business School and supervises PhD and master's candidates in business management. Over more than 25 years, he has developed a portfolio of entrepreneurial ventures and held senior executive and founding director roles across multiple ventures and a group of multidisciplinary management consultancy firms. Dr Murimbika has extensively travelled, worked, and studied internationally, including in the USA, South Africa, the UK, Norway, Kenya, Belgium, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Tanzania, Namibia, and other countries. He has established a portfolio of international institutional guest scholarships, including with the World Economic Forum, British Institute in East Africa, the World Bank (Washington, USA), and various African governments' delegations and missions to the EU and the UN, such as UNESCO.



Dr Semukele Hellen Mlotshwa
PhD; MMENVC; PDBM; DOHS; BScEHS

Dr Semukele Hellen Mlotshwa is an entrepreneurship educator, researcher, and development practitioner affiliated with the Wits Business School, University of the Witwatersrand, where she serves as a Sessional Lecturer and Programme Coordinator at the Wits Crucible Centre for Entrepreneurship. Her work focuses on strengthening entrepreneurial capability and supporting the development of early-stage ventures through structured entrepreneurship education, incubation support, and ecosystem engagement.

Dr Mlotshwa has extensive experience in the design and coordination of entrepreneurship and innovation programmes that support unemployed graduates, emerging entrepreneurs, and small businesses. Her work integrates entrepreneurship training, venture development, stakeholder collaboration, and programme implementation aimed at advancing inclusive economic participation.

Her research interests focus on entrepreneurship ecosystems, enterprise support organisations, inclusive innovation, sustainability, and SME development in emerging economies. She contributes to academic research and applied initiatives that advance entrepreneurship education and enterprise development in South Africa.

Adam Craker former chief Executive officer of IQbusiness, founding leader of Jozimy jozi and an industry collaborator with Wits Business School. During the ECDP graduation he emphasised the responsibility of entrepreneurs to build the city, entrepreneurs are problem solvers.



4. Founders' Biographies

The following are brief biographical templates for the 17 entrepreneurs.

No.	Founder	Background & expertise	Role in venture
1	 Reason Chingisa	Bachelor of Laws, with strong research skills, participated in legal modules including law of contract, business law, and law of patent and copyright entrepreneurial law experience in sales and Marketing	CEO and co-Founder of <i>Smart Ching (Pty) Ltd.</i> We are venturing in a sensor space solving the problem of long queues and theft at supermarkets
2	 Siyabonga Hlongwane	BA Archaeology and Political Sciences (Wits), Full-Stack Software Development(HyperionDev). Experience in Software Development,Product Design and SocioTechnical Systems Design.	CEO & Co-Founder of <i>Avant-Garde Solutions</i> , leading Product Development and Technology strategy. Co-Founder & Head of Product Management at <i>Jozigig</i> , leading Customer Discovery and Product Management road-mapping.
3	 Vuyelo Mahlaule	B.com accounting University of Limpopo. Corporate finance, financial Accounting lecturer and educator.	CFO of <i>ApexBridge Consulting Group</i> , overseeing budgets, fundraising and investor relations financial modelling, risk assessments and business strategy
4	 Annastancia Manorake	Diploma in Hospitality management with 7 years in health and safety management and with experience in environmental and health Health & safety. Certificate in start-up business management	CEO & co-founder of <i>Soweto Corporate Group</i> , leading product and business strategy and software development
5	 Cikizwa Mabo	BCom Accounting from Wits University & Management Advancement Program Certificate from WBS. Five years' corporate experience in financial reporting. Five years' experience in community work (volunteering) in Soweto.	Founder & CEO of <i>oDonga Funerals</i> .
6	 Claire Kagiso Mmamodumedi Mogotsi	MMEVNC (Wits), PDBA (Wits), B.A (Hons) Political Science (UP), B.A (Wits). Experience in FMCG, Banking, Public-sector Partnerships, International environments and Research.	CEO & co-founder of <i>BioHydra Technologies</i> , leading company strategic direction, commercialisation and overall venture execution while aligning stakeholder needs with technical feasibility.

7	 <p>Blessing Mdyogolo</p>	<p>Degree/qualification, Commercial Marketing graduate and Post graduate in Finance. Experience in Marketing research, corporate communication, Digital Marketing and Financial planning.</p>	<p>CEO & co-founder of <i>ApexBridge Consulting Group</i>, leading product development, business strategy and marketing activities.</p>
8	 <p>Asiye Abey Nongciya</p>	<p>I am a qualified Internal Auditing professional, holding a Diploma in Internal Auditing from Vaal University of Technology. My training focused on internal controls, risk assessment, governance structures, and compliance processes within both public and private sector environments.</p>	<p>CEO and Founder of <i>Towns And Location</i>.</p>
9	 <p>Pfano Mudau Lillian</p>	<p>Mudau Pfano Lillian holds a Bachelor of Development Studies degree, with a strong academic foundation in community development, social policy, sustainable development, and project-based interventions aimed at inclusive socio-economic growth. Her academic training has equipped her with the ability to analyse development challenges, design community-centred solutions, and contribute meaningfully to impact-driven programmes.</p> <p>She gained practical experience through the YES Youth Programme, where she served as a Youth Assistant supporting youth development projects. In this role, she worked closely with young people, programme coordinators, and community stakeholders to support project implementation, coordination, and monitoring. This experience strengthened her competencies in youth engagement, project support, stakeholder coordination, and grassroots programme delivery.</p>	<p>CEO and Sustainability Manager at <i>NTEX Enterprise</i>, where she is responsible for integrating social impact and sustainability principles across supply and delivery operations.</p> <p>Her role focuses on ensuring that operational activities align with responsible sourcing, ethical practices, and community impact objectives. She contributes to the development and implementation of sustainability strategies that balance operational efficiency with social and environmental responsibility.</p>
10	 <p>Lesedi Iehlakoe</p>	<p>Bcom Management Marketing , with 2 years' experience in UX/ UI design</p>	<p>CEO and Founder of <i>RE: Fill</i>, Leading product development, operations and Business strategy</p>

11	 <p>Oretlametse Rebone Setshedi</p>	<p>Law graduate specialising in corporate law and corporate governance.</p> <p>Qualifications: BALaw/LLB (Wits)</p> <p>Experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Research & Administrative Assistant (Demarthe & Co.) • Vocational Work Programme (SM&M Attorneys) • Vocational Work Programme (Diale Mogashoa Attorneys) • Student Legal Research Assistant (Wits School of Law) 	<p>CEO & Founder of <i>Avant-Garde Solutions (Pty) Ltd</i>, leading product development and business strategy.</p> <p>Legal & Compliance lead at <i>Avant-Garde Solutions (Pty) Ltd</i>, handling regulatory alignment and contracts.</p>
12	 <p>Uviwe Makiva</p>	<p>Bcom Accounting :Software engineer and entrepreneur previously built mobile apps</p>	<p>CEO of <i>JoziGig</i>, focusing on platform design and technical strategy.</p>
13	 <p>Zikhona Ntshingila</p>	<p>Bachelor of Arts in Media, Communications and Culture, specialising in Public Relations and Corporate Communications, and a Certificate in UI/UX Design, with postgraduate studies in Marketing Management currently paused. This multidisciplinary background enables her to bridge strategic storytelling, user-centred design, and data-driven marketing.</p> <p>With over a decade of experience in marketing and communications, Zikhona has successfully formulated and implemented integrated marketing and communications strategies, plans, and campaigns across both internal and external platforms. Her expertise spans brand positioning, stakeholder engagement, public awareness campaigns, and digital experience design.</p>	<p>At <i>NANO E-waste Solutions</i>, she is responsible for shaping the organisation's brand voice, driving impactful campaigns that promote responsible e-waste management, and fostering strong relationships with communities, partners, and stakeholders. Her work plays a critical role in advancing NANO's mission to build sustainable, inclusive, and technology-driven solutions within South Africa's circular economy.</p>
15	 <p>Olvin Marutha</p>	<p>Diploma Environmental Science -Environmental Scientist with experience in sustainability and ESG reporting</p>	<p>CEO of <i>Smart Trolley</i> resolution retail.</p>

16	 Ndumiso Prosper Mahlangu	<p>My professional background is rooted in media production and broadcasting, where I have worked in live studio environments, public events and mass gatherings as a media practitioner. These spaces require constant awareness of people, equipment and movement, and it was through this exposure that I observed how frequently cellphone theft occurs in real-world settings.</p>	<p>Founder and CEO, <i>Guardian Consulting</i>. I lead the vision and strategic direction of the business. My role includes product development, operations, partnerships and public engagement. I take a hands-on approach in building solutions that are practical, affordable and relevant to South African conditions, with a strong focus on prevention and user awareness.</p>
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5. Venture Profiles

Smart Trolley

Problem Statement	Retail shopping inefficient and inaccessible; long checkout queues, cart abandonment, difficulty managing spending, barriers for visually impaired and disabled customers, retailer revenue losses from shrinkage, theft, high checkout labour costs.
Solution	AI-powered shopping cart scans items with computer vision and weight sensors, displays real-time spending, enables instant in-cart payment, eliminates queues, includes Braille buttons, voice guidance, haptic alerts for visually impaired users.
Market Opportunity	Global smart retail and autonomous checkout market growing; target customers: large grocery chains, urban supermarkets, accessibility-conscious retailers, tech-forward retailers seeking to reduce queues, shrinkage, operational costs.
Business Model	SaaS subscription fees, usage or transaction-based fees, anonymised shopper data analytics sold to retailers and brands, in-cart digital advertising
Traction and Milestones	Functional prototype with automated scanning, accessibility features designed, pilot programs with retail partners planned, phased rollout and ecosystem expansion.
Team	Multidisciplinary founding team with technology, retail innovation, business development expertise, supported by engineering and accessibility-focused partners.
Funding Requirement	Seeking pre-seed funding for 12–18 months for product refinement, manufacturing, AI/software development, pilot deployments, team salaries, operations; funding via SAFE notes with conversion to equity at Series A.
Impact	Enables inclusive shopping for visually impaired users, creates skilled tech jobs, reduces retail losses, improves operational efficiency, aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals: innovation, economic growth, reduced inequalities.

Apexbridge Consulting Group

APEXBRIDGE Consulting Group is building a mobile-first platform that connects events, restaurants, clubs, and consumers to drive attendance, spending, and safer urban movement in Johannesburg's inner city.

Problem Statement	Despite ±800,000 daily commuters and 1,800–4,000 events annually, most inner-city events operate at under 50% occupancy. Venues struggle with visibility and affordable marketing, while consumers face safety concerns and fragmented discovery, leading to economic leakage and SME closures.
Solution	Event + Eat + Move is a location-aware digital marketplace that enables users to discover real-time events, nearby dining, bundled offers, and safer mobility. Venues and organisers gain customer acquisition, cross-promotion, and performance analytics.
Market	Target users are 18–35-year-olds in Johannesburg Inner City and Melville, launching in Braamfontein, Maboneng, and Melville. Annual event attendance is approximately 625,000. TAM (GTV) is ZAR 75M, platform revenue TAM ZAR 5.25M, SAM ZAR 2.6M, and SOM in year one is ZAR 390K–525K.
Business Model	Revenue is generated through ticket sales and transaction fees, venue onboarded contracts, and featured listings with bundled experience promotions.
Go-to-Market	Event-led entry with three pilot events, focused launch in high-density inner-city zones, and acquisition via social media, ground agents, and live activations. Core metrics include active users, onboarded venues, revenue per venue, and cross-venue footfall.
Team	Blessing Mdyogolo (Founder & CEO) Academic background in Marketing AND Finance and has experience in Marketing communications, commercial marketing, Digital marketing ,Sales and finance, Vuyelo Mahlaule (CFO) BCOM Accounting degree and holds experience in Teaching, Lecturing and Finance, Olwethu Mlotshwa (COO)BA Journalism Degree(UJ) and is a x2 SAFTA award winner, Executive director for big reality TV in SA and 10+ years' experience in Event management and performer(DJ), and Amandla Zweni (Tech Advisor).Post graduate Dip Artificial intelligence and data science, MSC financial engineering and data Science. Has experience data analytics and Software development.
Funding Ask	Seeking approximately R521,000 in pre-seed funding to support MVP development and maintenance, pilot events, marketing, and operations. The proposed instrument is a SAFE note converting at a future priced round.
Why Now	Urban regeneration, experiential spending growth, and unmet demand for safe, coordinated inner-city experiences position APEXBRIDGE to become the digital infrastructure layer for urban events and hospitality in South Africa.

NANO E-Waste Solutions



At NANO E-Waste Solutions, we make EPR compliance auditable, defensible, and valuable by providing an end-to-end digital tracking platform for electronic manufacturers, producers and municipalities to track their obsolete electronics, in order to adhere to the Extended Producers Regulation in South Africa.

Problem	South Africa generates more than 360,000 tonnes of e-waste annually, yet only 10% is formally recycled. The remaining 90% is either landfilled or processed through informal channels, resulting in significant environmental harm. Hazardous substances such as lead and mercury leach into soil and water systems, posing long-term risks to ecosystems and public health.
Solution	An end-to-end digital tracking platform that enables electronic manufacturers, producers, and municipalities to monitor and manage obsolete electronics, ensuring compliance with South Africa's Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations. The platform is designed to expand, in future, into an on-demand collection service for households, incentivising responsible e-waste disposal through a rewards-based system.
Market Opportunity	B2B: Organisations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public sector municipalities • Private sector companies with large-scale equipment • E-waste management companies • Electronic manufacturers who want to trace the lifecycle of their products in the market
	Pain Points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipalities, private sector companies • Electronic manufacturers • E-waste management companies
	B2C: Households <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Middle to high-income earners • Age group: 30–75 years old • Frequent upgraders of electronics • Owners of faulty devices <p>Pain Point: "Separation anxiety" and guilt over disposal; little to no access to convenient drop off points to dispose of their obsolete electronics.</p>

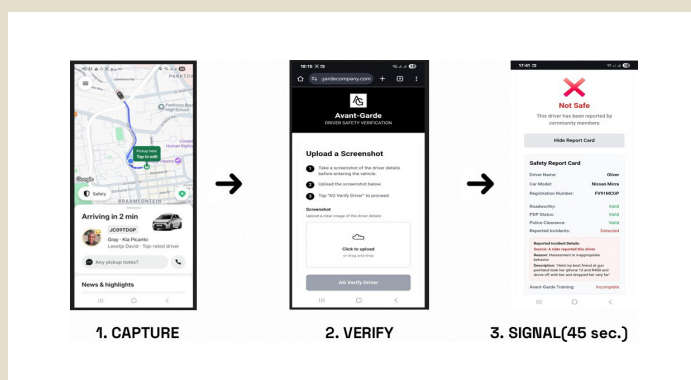
Traction	<p>Key proof points: KwaZulu Natal Provincial Government has expressed interest in piloting the project</p> <p>Partnerships:</p> <p>Collaboration with the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) to obtain operational permits and submissions of waste management plans Register with the EPR Waste Association of South Africa (EWASA) and Institute of Waste Management of Southern Africa, a Producers Responsibility Organisations which will assist with obligations set in place by the extended Producers Regulation (EPR) such as ISO certifications.</p>
Business Model	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model with Municipalities to co-deploy the platform citywide for EPR data capture, waste tracking, and public reporting. 2. Subscription as a service (SaaS) Platform that collects, tracks, and reports EPR data automatically for producers and municipalities, ensuring compliance with the South African EPR framework. 3. A data exchange and service marketplace that connects producers with certified recyclers, transporters, auditors, and municipalities. 4. Extended Producers Regulation (EPR) and Environment Sustainability and Government (ESG) Reporting, a service that transforms compliance data into strategic ESG insights and sustainability benchmarking.
Competitive Advantage	<p>Differentiation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NANO is regulator ready, not just audit ready: Most platforms are built for companies. Very few are built with regulators and municipalities in mind. • Our platform is the regulatory-grade digital infrastructure for Extended Producer Responsibility in South Africa. Unlike generic ESG or compliance tools, we provide end-to-end product traceability, regulator-aligned reporting, and verified proof of recovery across the full product lifecycle. By acting as a trusted data bridge between producers, municipalities, and recyclers, we turn EPR from a fragmented reporting exercise into defensible, auditable, and enforceable environmental performance. This reduces regulatory risk for producers, strengthens municipal oversight, and builds ESG credibility that investors and regulators can trust.
Impact	<p>NANO E-Waste Solutions creates scalable local and global impact by aligning with the SDGs and national policies to drive economic empowerment through the green economy.</p>

BioHydra Technologies Pty (ltd)

Industry: Water Technology and renewable water resources

Problem	In rural and remote communities, families depend on municipal water systems where 36% of supply is unreliable and 46% is unsafe to drink. To survive, households are forced to spend scarce income and time each day on expensive alternatives such as bottled water, boreholes, water tanks, and unreliable water trucks and emergency storage solutions. This daily struggle to secure clean water robs families of time, income, and dignity highlighting a deep, unmet need for affordable and reliable access to safe water that is independent of municipal infrastructure.
Solution	We want to deliver reliable, decentralized drinking water to rural and remote communities through atmospheric water generation technology, powered by renewable energy sources (biomass/biogas) and designed to operate independently of municipal water infrastructure and the electricity grid.
Market opportunity	<p>Scaling 1000L/day-5000 L/day model @0.75-R1</p> <p>Total addressable market: With significant unmet demand in South African rural and remote areas. An estimated 8–10 million people lack reliable access to safe drinking water. At scale, assuming an average consumption of 3 liters per person per day and aggregate production of 24–30 million liters per day, the total addressable market represents a potential annual revenue opportunity of approximately R6.6–R8.3 billion.</p> <p>Serviceable Addressable Market (SAM): Focusing on mining towns and surrounding communities within the Bafokeng Nation, an estimated 120,000–300,000 people experience unsafe or no access to drinking water. This translates to an annual revenue opportunity of approximately R9.8 million to R246 million, depending on penetration and pricing.</p> <p>Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM): Assuming a conservative 1–5% market capture, equivalent to 10–50 deployed units, the business could generate R1.6 million to R12 million in annual revenue, producing approximately 4.9–6.6 million liters of water per year.</p>
Business model	The company will generate revenue primarily through BOOT (Build–Own–Operate–Transfer) contracts, partnering with corporates and mining companies to support the delivery of their ESG objectives.
Traction and milestones	Problem & MVP Readiness: The challenge has been validated through extensive engagement with remote and rural communities. The MVP is fully scoped and costed, and we are actively engaging potential pilot hosts, including community leaders, mining sector partners, and aligned funding sources.
Funding Requirement	This project requires R1, 307, 680 in total.

Avant-Garde Solutions (Pty) Ltd



Avant-Garde has built an independent safety-verification tool that gives ride-hailing users real control over their safety before a trip.

Problem	Ride-hailing users face escalating safety risks, with women disproportionately affected and consistently reporting higher levels of vulnerability.
Solution	The Avant-Garde Driver Safety Verification System (DSVS) is an independent digital safety platform that enables users to proactively assess driver risk before or during a ride. The system allows users to upload key driver and vehicle details, which are then cross-checked against a centralised, community-informed database of drivers with reported safety incidents.
Market Opportunity	<p>Target Audience: Our primary customers are urban ride-hailing users, initially focusing on students and young professionals within the Gauteng province.</p> <p>Market Dynamics: The South African ride-hailing sector is experiencing rapid expansion. However, this growth is accompanied by escalating public concern and an increase in safety-related incidents. A critical gap in the market is the absence of an independent, centralised verification infrastructure.</p> <p>Market Potential (High Level):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Total Available Market (TAM) 2. Serviceable Available Market (SAM) 3. Serviceable Obtainable Market (SOM) <p>The Opportunity (Why Now):</p> <p>Safety concerns are already causing users to modify their ride-hailing behaviour. Avant-Garde provides a formal, scalable, and commercially viable solution to what users are currently attempting to manage informally, addressing this growing safety anxiety head-on.</p>
Business Model	Revenue Model: Avant-Garde operates a usage-based verification model. Users can perform a limited number of safety verifications for free each month to encourage adoption and habitual use. Additional verification checks are offered via low-cost micro-transactions (e.g., R25 per verification). This approach lowers the barrier to entry while monetising high-intent safety usage.

oDONGA Funerals

Problem	Our customer is a family that has recently lost a loved one that is burdened with the financial and administrative stress of planning a funeral.
Solution	We are a funeral services company that helps you give your loved one a dignified send off without the stress or burden of planning it yourself. We offer our customers peace of mind and the time to mourn their loved ones.
Market Opportunity	The South African funeral industry is estimated to be generating R10 – 12 billion annually. Majority of the operators are small and informal businesses primarily based in townships and rural areas. According to the South Africa Law Reform Commission's 2020 Report, the exact number of funeral parlours operating in the country is unknown, however it's projected that over 20 000 are operating informally without a Certificate of Compliance.
Business Model	Our venture intends on making money by charging customers a fee for our services. Our services will include coordinating all the administrative tasks, facilitating various funeral service providers and final execution on the day. Our services will be packaged at two price points – standard and premium point in order to test the market willingness to pay for convenience of our services.
Impact	The venture attempts to work with young people in order to help alleviate youth unemployment in the townships. Our staff will be targeted to young people in the township who understand their local community and are able to deliver the impact around the community value that we aim for. Partnering up with local funeral service providers will promote economic activity through local SMEs. This will increase the local ecosystem of local suppliers in the community and drive up the sense of community and trust that is essential around black funerals in South Africa.



Soweto Corporate Grid (SCG)



Building the Living Infrastructure of Township Professionalism: One-Line Value Proposition We provide high-tier, standalone "Bio-Build" office ecosystems for Soweto-based professionals to bridge the credibility gap and eliminate operational downtime.

Problem	4,000+ professional service firms (consultants, lawyers, accountants) face a "Credibility Ceiling." Current retail centers lack standalone office space, forcing professionals into noisy food courts or long commutes to Sandton.
Solution	The SCG xPod is a double-story, modular "Bio-Build" office unit. It is a standalone, solar-hybrid powered environment that offers Tier-1 executive suites on township soil. Unlike traditional construction, our vertical modularity doubles the rental yield per square meter, providing zero-downtime infrastructure (Power/Fiber) that is faster to deploy and more sustainable than brick-and-mortar.
Market Opportunity	Target: 50,000+ township-based SMEs in Gauteng; specifically "Scaling Professionals" (5–20 employees). Why Now? Post-pandemic shifts have decentralized work, but infrastructure hasn't followed. With the rise of the "Kasi Economy," professionals are desperate for local executive spaces that match the prestige of northern suburb CBDs.
Business Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leasing: Monthly fixed rentals for anchor double-story executive suites (R8,500 – R17,000/unit). • Scalability: Low CAPEX (R379k/unit) vs. high yield (60% EBITDA margin).
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic: 10+ professional jobs sustained per pod; keeping capital within Soweto. • Social: Youth & Women empowerment via "Professional Identity" workshops. • SDGs: Goal 8 (Decent Work & Economic Growth) and Goal 9 (Industry & Infrastructure).

NTEX Enterprise

Problem	Johannesburg CBD faces significant parking challenges, with vehicles often parked on streets, contributing to congestion, safety concerns, and decreased productivity. This issue affects commuters, local businesses, and the overall urban environment.
Solution	NTEX Enterprise aims to provide a secure, affordable, and tech-enabled parking facility in the heart of Johannesburg CBD. Our solution includes real-time availability tracking, mobile payments, and enhanced security measures to address the current parking woes.
Market Opportunity	With over 10,000 vehicles entering the CBD daily, the demand for parking is high. Our target segments include daily commuters, businesses, and visitors. Early adopters will likely be companies looking to offer parking benefits to employees and CBD shoppers.
Business Model	Revenue will be generated through transactional fees (parking charges) and potential partnerships with local businesses for discounted parking offers. We'll leverage digital marketing and partnerships to reach customers.
Traction & Milestones	We've identified a suitable location and are in discussions with local authorities for necessary permits. Positive feedback from potential users highlights the demand for a reliable parking solution.
Team	Pfano Mudau Director, brings a development studies background, focusing on urban solutions. We'll complement this with expertise in operations and tech partnerships.
Funding Requirement	We're seeking R500000 in pre-seed funding for site development, tech integration, and initial operations over the next 12-18 months. This will support conversion into equity at Series A, offering investors a stake in a growing urban solutions venture.
Impact	By reducing street parking, we'll improve CBD traffic flow, enhance safety, and create jobs. Our project aligns with urban development goals, contributing to a more livable Johannesburg.

Towns And Locations

Towns and Locations is a service provider Located in East Rand of Gauteng in Boksburg. Towns and Locations is an online platform which connects the landlords and Young Professionals who needs to relocate to different cities for employment purposes and they need backyard rooms which are more affordable.

Problem	<p>The problem faced by the young professionals is that they are unable to find suitable affordable and safe accommodation. This occurs when they are relocating to the new province where they know no one to assist them to find a suitable and affordable accommodation with convenient transportation to their workplace.</p> <p>Most of the online platforms excluded the township market, such as Trivago, Property 24, Air B'B.</p>
Solution	<p>Towns and Location online platform will register all the Landlords backyard rooms in the platform to make them more accessible to every young professional within the country. During the registration process the landlord must be honest about the location of the rooms and the pictures uploaded must not be filtered. The amount posted on the platform must not change when the tenant is making the deposits. Additional information must be included, specify if your house is far away from transport services or it's located in a noisy place or near a tavern. That information will assist the tenant to choose wisely.</p>
Market Opportunity	<p>We have two target market. These two-target market are inter-dependent. Landlords and Tenants.</p>
Business model	<p>The company will earn revenue through commission paid directly by the tenants when they obtain the room to rent.</p> <p>The pricing is a fixed R500 paid once, when the landlord charges R1 500.00 for a room the R500 will be included and the tenant will pay once off R2 000.00.</p>
Competitive advantage	<p>Towns and Locations it's an online platform which offers unique features from the existing platforms. Unlike AmaRoom platform, Towns and locations also includes the co-ordinates of the Room locations making it easy to view the location through satellite and verify if the information found in our platform is true.</p>
Impact	<p>As we all know that the backyard rooms is a booming township business. Some of these businesses find it difficult to obtain tenants based on the fact that they are excluded in the online platforms. A team of young professionals will be employed to maintain the platform. The landlords will never face the issue of the vacant rooms when they are listed on the platform. By doing so we reduce unemployment rate and also increase revenue for the landlords.</p>
Team	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asipe Abey Nongciya (Internal Auditor) founder and CEO of Towns and Location (Pty) Ltd 2. Uviwe Mkiva (Bcm Accounting and Soft-ware programmer) Co-founder 3. Yonela Lubaxa (Financial Accountant team leader) Co-founder <p>The team is able to communicate effectively and openly with the members of the team. Each member have good Interpersonal skills which are useful.</p>

Funding Ask	<p>We are asking R150 000.00</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build the platform. • To maintain the overload of data in the platform. • To pay the temporal employees, who will be going house to house to teach landlords who are old on how to use the platform.
12-24 Month outcomes	<p>In the first 6 month our main target is to onboard more then 2500 rooms in the platform only in Gauteng province. Out of 2500 rooms we expected 1000 early adopters.</p> <p>Which contributes to a revenue of $1000 \times R500 = R500\,000$ in 1 year 6 months Then we use the funds to expand to other big cities like Durban and Cape town</p>

Guardian Consulting Services

Guardian Consulting Services designs preventative mobile security systems that protect smartphones in public spaces and reduce the chain of financial and identity crime that follows phone theft.

Problem	<p>Mobile phone theft in South Africa is not an isolated incident. It is the starting point of a broader crime chain. Once a device is stolen, victims are often exposed to digital banking fraud, SIM-swap abuse and identity theft. Industry and crime data cons</p> <p>South Africa experiences widespread and repeatable phone theft in taxis, shopping centres, campuses, events and other high-density public environments. Existing responses focus on tracking, blacklisting or insurance after the theft has occurred. These measures do not prevent the initial crime and do not protect users at the moment of highest risk.</p> <p>The failure is structural. The market lacks practical, preventative solutions designed for real public behaviour and local conditions.</p>
Solution	<p>Guardian Consulting Services has developed a preventative mobile security system designed to intervene at the point of theft, not after loss.</p> <p>The system focuses on physical deterrence, user awareness and tamper resistance. It is designed to secure a phone without obstructing normal use and to withstand forceful attempts to remove it. The solution is universal, discreet and compatible with existing devices and phone cases.</p> <p>By addressing both distraction-based theft and forceful snatching, the system removes the two advantages thieves rely on: stealth and time.</p>
Market Opportunity	<p>South Africa has one of the highest mobile penetration rates in the region, with more active mobile connections than people. Smartphones are central to banking, work, communication and access to services.</p> <p>This creates a large addressable market of users who regularly carry valuable, data-rich devices in public spaces. The primary target market includes urban commuters, students, event attendees, gig workers and mobile professionals.</p> <p>As mobile dependence increases and financial crime linked to stolen devices continues to rise, demand for preventative security is no longer optional. It is becoming essential infrastructure for everyday digital life.</p>
Traction	<p>The solution is informed by direct exposure to high-risk environments including mass gatherings, public events and commuter spaces where theft patterns are consistent and observable.</p> <p>Early validation has come through user feedback and problem confirmation rather than assumptions. Pilot deployment is planned to confirm adoption, durability and pricing before commercial scale.</p>
Business Model	<p>Revenue will be generated through direct-to-consumer product sales, supported by bulk sales to institutions, campuses, event organisers and security-conscious organisations.</p>

	The model is designed for scale through affordable pricing, simple distribution and low user friction. Additional long-term revenue opportunities include security partnerships and service integrations.
Competitive Advantage	<p>Guardian Consulting Services competes on prevention, not recovery.</p> <p>The system is designed specifically for South African conditions, user behaviour and crime patterns. It avoids over-reliance on software, network availability or post-theft response. Physical durability, universality and deterrence create clear barriers to easy imitation.</p>
Impact	<p>The solution reduces personal financial loss, limits secondary crime linked to stolen devices and improves user confidence in public digital participation.</p> <p>By offering accessible preventative security, Guardian Consulting Services supports safer use of digital banking and mobile services, contributing to broader economic inclusion and public safety outcomes.</p>
Team	<p>Founder and CEO: Prosper Mahlangu</p> <p>I am a media practitioner and entrepreneur with experience in live broadcasting, public events and mass gatherings. I am completing a Bachelor of Arts in Communication and hold a Higher Certificate in Economic and Management Sciences, an NQF Level 5 qualification in Radio Production and an Artificial Intelligence Engineer Certificate.</p> <p>My background across media, banking and public-facing environments provides a grounded understanding of risk exposure, human behaviour and solution adoption in real-world conditions.</p>
Funding Ask	<p>Amount sought: R750 000</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use of funds: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Final product development and pilot production ii. Testing, refinement and certification iii. Market entry and early distribution 2. 12 to 24-month outcomes: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Pilot completed and validated ii. Commercial sales launched iii. Strategic partnerships secured

JoziGig



Reclaiming South African tech talent for local innovation through a secure "Trust Layer" that protects IP and automates the future of work.

Problem	<p>The Brain Drain Paradox: 40% of South Africa's top software developers have "virtually emigrated," building code for foreign firms in hard currency while local innovation starves.</p> <p>Hiring Failure: Local SMEs face 90-day hiring cycles and R1M annual costs per senior developer. Non-technical founders avoid freelancers due to a Trust Deficit—the fear of losing control over their IP and code repositories.</p>
Solution	<p>JoziGig is an Execution Layer that makes it safe to build local products with local talent.</p> <p>We move trust from a contract to the codebase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure-as-Trust: Automated repository control (GitHub API) where clients maintain absolute ownership and developer access is revocable instantly. • Scientific Vetting: Automated coding challenges (HackerRank) ensure talent is "Day-1" productive. • Instant ZAR Liquidity: Payouts via PayShap clear in <10 seconds, beating the 30- day waits of foreign contracts.
MARKET OPPORTUNITY	<p>TAM: R9.0B (Total SA outsourced custom software market).</p> <p>SAM: R4.5B (High-demand SMEs and 50,000 tech-enabled startups in major metros). Why Now? E-commerce surged 66% recently, and 84% of large SA firms report sourcing challenges.</p> <p>JoziGig unlocks the "Senior Gap" by offering fractional expertise that local startups can actually afford.</p>
Traction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waitlist: 20+ vetted developers and 5+ SMEs registered. • Concierge Proof: Successfully managed a R10,000 web build using manual repository control. • Pipeline: 3+ "Pilot Gigs" ready for matching upon fund disbursement.

Business Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15% Net Take-Rate: Transaction commission on every milestone payout. • Unit Economics: Avg. Project (R40,000) = JoziGig Fee (R6,000). • Scalability: High LTV due to the iterative nature of software; shipping an MVP leads to years of recurring maintenance and feature builds.
Competitive Advantage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech-Only Focus: Higher quality matching than generalist gig sites (Upwork/Fiverr). • IP-Protection-by-Design: Unlike introduction-only sites (OfferZen), we manage the execution environment. • Deeply Localized: Built for SA Labor Law and local instant payment rails (PayShap).
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital Sovereignty: Preserving South African IP and talent for domestic business growth. • Economic Empowerment: Facilitating local employment for junior bootcamp grads under senior mentorship loops.
Team	Founder-Market Fit: Two founders with 5+ years each as freelance tech contractors in the SA ecosystem. We have built systems for dozens of SA startups and lived the trust and payment failures we are now solving.
Funding Ask	<p>Amount Sought: R200,000 (12-Month Runway)</p> <p>Use of Funds (Validation Only):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pilot Subsidies (R80k): Subsidizing 15 builds to prove the 15% take-rate and SME "Willingness to Co-Invest." 2. Vetting/Security Engine (R60k): Biometric ID and scientific coding assessment licenses. 3. MVP Infrastructure (R40k): Portal licenses and secure GitHub API integration. 4. 12-Month Outcome: 15 validated builds; proven CAC; "Recipe for Success" ready for Seed scaling.

neXpay™ – a digital escrow startup

Problem	Everyday trade in the consumer and SME economy carries high counterparty risk (non-delivery, delayed payment and fraud). Most payment rails move money but do not embed conditional release, verification, and dispute controls.
Solution	<p>neXpay is a mobile-first digital escrow platform. Funds are held in partner-bank controlled trust accounts and released only when pre-agreed milestones are verified.</p> <p>Milestone rules, digital contracting and evidence capture for conditional release, automated funds release when all trading conditions are met.</p> <p>Dispute workflow with escalation stages and auditable digital trails.</p> <p>API-enabled Escrow-as-a-Service for banks, insurers, property agents and platforms.</p>
Market opportunity	<p>South Africa TAM ~ZAR 1.85T; SAM ~ZAR 554B; SOM ~ZAR 55.4B (escrow-eligible flow, not platform revenue).</p> <p>Target segments: Formal SMEs and contractors, mass-market consumers (LSM 7–10+), and institutions embedding escrow via APIs.</p> <p>Early adopters: Rental deposits, construction milestones, professional services retainers, and higher-trust online commerce.</p>
Business model (Lean Canvas)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Customer segments: SMEs, freelancers and consumers; plus banks, insurers, property agents and marketplaces embedding escrow. Problem: trust gap and counterparty risk in milestone-based trade where recourse is slow or costly. Value proposition: purpose-locked payments with bank-grade trust accounts, verification, and dispute controls. Channels: partner banks and insurers, property agents, contractor platforms, professional bodies and marketplaces, plus direct app/web. Revenue streams: transaction and guarantee fees; escrow-float interest share; referral commissions (finance, insurance); select advertising. Cost structure: product build, security and compliance (KYC/AML, POPIA), integration, support and dispute operations, GTM spend.
Traction & milestones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Execution-ready MVP plan: defined 6-month roadmap with staged testing and dispute controls. Partner traction: 2 Big-4 banks have expressed interest in partnering for MVP launch (in writing). Month 1–6 targets: ~250 waiting-list users and ~100 live transactions in a controlled pilot, plus 3–5 channel partnerships. Regulatory and operational readiness: compliance-first design (KYC/AML, POPIA-aligned data handling) and bank trust-account governance.

Funding requirement (SAFE)	Raising ZAR 34,500,000 in two tranches over 18 months via a South Africa-adapted SAFE, intended to convert into 20% fully diluted equity on conversion. Conversion is at the next priced round (targeting a Series A after launch traction), with an investor exit horizon typically 5–7 years.		
	Step	Timing	Capital and use
	1	M1–M6	ZAR 10.5m (Pre-seed): MVP build and soft launch (Dev, QA, baseline security, compliance, early GTM).
	2	M7–M18	ZAR 24.0m (Seed): Recruit and train staff, commercial launch, infrastructure, salaries, marketing, platform upgrades.
Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ronald Busani Bango (Founder, MD): strategy, governance, partner-bank engagement, MVP to launch delivery, lead commercial operations. • Thabo Thobejane (Co-founder, intended NED): institutional finance depth, investment banking and governance support, partner networks. 		
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces fraud and non-performance losses; • Strengthens SME liquidity via trusted, milestone-based settlement when trading at consumer level and corporates • Creates jobs and skills through planned recruitment and training, with a focus on youth learnership pathways. • Improves integrity and social sanction risk mitigation via purpose-locked payments, traceability and digital audit trails (SDGs 8, 9, 16). 		

5. Funding Context and Investor Landscape



Simple Agreement for Future Equity (SAFE)

A **SAFE** is an investment agreement that allows start-ups to raise funds without an immediate valuation. It originated in Silicon Valley and is becoming increasingly popular in South Africa. Under a SAFE, an investor provides a start-up with capital in exchange for a **future contingent right to acquire equity** upon a conversion event (such as a priced equity round). The investor does not acquire equity or debt until the conversion, and there is no maturity date. Conversion events include:

- **Equity event** – when the start-up raises a priced round of preferred shares, the SAFE automatically converts into a number of preference shares based on a negotiated valuation cap and/or discount.
- **Liquidity event** – during an IPO or sale, the investor may opt to be repaid or convert their SAFE into shares.
- **Dissolution event** – if the company dissolves, the investor is repaid before ordinary shareholders.

SAFes are appealing because they minimise complex negotiations, maintain founders' control in early stages, and postpone valuation discussions to a later funding round. However, investors must account for the absence of a repayment date and the possible ambiguity in classifying them as equity or debt.

Investor landscape

South Africa's early-stage funding ecosystem comprises a mixture of angel investors, venture-capital (VC) funds, corporate funds, development agencies, and government programmes. An online database updated in January 2026 lists the **top 50 enterprise start-up investors in South Africa**, ranked by the number of investments. Leading names include **54 Collective, Kalon Venture Partners, AngelHub Ventures, Musha Ventures, 4Di Capital, Knife Capital, HAYAIC, LoftyInc Capital, Investec**, and the **Technology Innovation Agency**. Other notable investors encompass the Industrial Development Corporation, Vumela Fund, Future Africa, Naspers Foundry, Newtown Partners, Enygma Ventures, Launch Africa, and Jozi Angels. Many of these funds tend to invest at the seed or Series A stage, but some—such as 54 Collective, Kalon Venture Partners, and AngelHub Ventures—offer **pre-seed and seed capital**, and assist portfolio companies through mentorship and network access.

Besides VC funds, there are **government and development programmes** (e.g., Technology Innovation Agency seed fund, Industrial Development Corporation financing, Small Enterprise Development Agency grants) and **pan-African seed programmes** such as the Tony Elumelu Foundation and Seedstars Africa Ventures. CSI initiatives by large corporates (e.g., banks and telecoms) often run accelerators or innovation challenges; these can provide non-dilutive grants or co-invest in pre-seed rounds.

6. Conclusion



The Wits Crucible 2025 cohort represents a new generation of South African entrepreneurs who have completed a comprehensive 16-week training programme and launched ventures that address real economic and social challenges. The use of **SAFE agreements** will allow early investors to participate with minimal complexity, while the Wits innovation ecosystem offers the structure and support needed for ventures to progress to Series A and beyond.

With strong mentorship, clear execution, and a focus on relational readiness, the Wits Crucible cohort has the potential to make a lasting impact—generating employment, introducing innovative solutions, and

contributing to South Africa's economic growth. Potential investors are encouraged to review the venture profiles in this prospectus and engage with the Wits Crucible team to learn more.



7. Success Lies in Strategic Partnerships



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