INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE-BASED TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION INVESTMENT SUMMIT

Briefing Pack

1. Background

In 2021, the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) co-organised the 1st National indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Job Summit together with the North-West University and the University of Venda. An expert panel led by Minister Prof. B Nzimande recommended that future Job Summits should focus on entrepreneurship to facilitate job creation for students and youth. In 2024, the DSTI's Extended Executive Committee (EXCO) recommended that the Summit be elevated to **IK-Base Technology Innovation Investment Summit** to leverage investment for innovation infrastructure, youth employment, industrialisation and enterprise development. In 2025, the DSTI approved the hosting of an inaugural yet annual IK-Based Technology Innovation Investment Summit.

2. Strategic Policy Imperatives

The Summit is predicated upon the White Paper and the Decadal Plan that seek to leverage all knowledge systems, including African sciences for poverty reduction, job creation, and redress inequalities. The DSTI aims at strengthening IK innovation capability by building dedicated research and product development hubs that should be linked to world class manufacturing industries in African natural medicines, cosmeceuticals, nutraceuticals and health infusions.

3. Core Structure of the Summit

The IK-Based Technology Innovation Investment Summit will focus on four major programmes, all seeking investment of scaling of current investments – and these are:

- IK-Based RDI Interface Symposium
- Youth-Students' Jobs Programme
- Bio-Natural Products-MSME Expo
- IK-Labs Soft-Launch and Awards

The central message upon which the above-mentioned four areas of IK-Based Technology Innovation Investment Summit will be programmed as follows:

- The **IK-Based RDI Interface** initiative will showcase key DSTI's innovation capability that require co-investment for sovereign and frontier product development.

- **Youth-Students' Jobs Programme** will introduce South Africa's talent in IK through pitching of innovative concepts generated for angel investment and incubation to assist in job creation.
- **Bio-Natural Product-MSME Expo** is designed to showcase safe, scientifically developed and quality bio-natural products owned by DSTI-supported enterprises.
- **IK-Labs Soft-Launch and Awards** will reveal (through audio-videos) several of DSTI funded laboratories and product development facilities around the country.

The four core programming areas will include **Awards** aimed at recognising the wisdom keepers, enterprising youth and outstanding scientists. The above will be the core **Investment Plenaries**, where investors will be invited to support innovation facilities and youth as future entrepreneurs. They will have an opportunity to co-invest manufacturing and commercialisation – thus contributing towards inclusive growth for thriving societies.

4. Value-Proposition

The DSTI's affirmation is 'Putting Science at the Centre of Government, Education, Society and Business. Therefore, the Summit invite **Investors, Industry Captain, Incubators and Development Experts** to be part of valorising the potential of African Knowledge Systems for youth, and students including Indigenous Knowledge Communities of Practice and STI sector for the following reasons:

- Strengthen institutionalisation of the IK-Based Technology Innovation sector, while encouraging public-private-partnership for blended financing of research infrastructure.
- Increase research and innovation co-investment percentage by channelling private sector capital to enterprises, including an uptake of South African bio-natural products.
- Enhance the potential of innovation and commercial value-chains for local manufacturing capability and industrialisation.
- Support youth with incubation and mentorship for them to be job creators. Priority should be given to young rural woman and people living with disabilities as they carry the brant of poverty, marginalisation and unemployment.
- Create venture capital investment opportunities for IK-owned enterprises to upscale, industrialise and have access to larger markets for commercialisation.

- Contribute towards inclusive economic growth by generating foreign and domestic investments that will expand national and regional economies.
- Enhance investors-government confidence and demonstrate commitment in economic potential of the National System of Innovation to creating jobs, alleviate poverty and promote equality.

5. Core Programming

The core programming of the Summit is organised into four key areas introduced above as IK-Based RDI Interface Symposium, Youth-Students' Jobs Programme, Bio-Natural Product-MSME Expo and IK-Labs Soft-Launch and Awards. These will be spread out over three days to be programmed as follows:

5.1 We shall revive the IK-Based Technology Innovation Interface Conferences, which in the current format will take a form of different conferences primarily organised and hosted by universities. These will culminate into the Interface Symposium embedded into the Investment Summit as a plenary and breakaways to be held as follows:

- The Programme will be dedicated RDI-intensive aspects of the DSTI's IK-Based Bio-Innovation Programme, i.e. African natural medicines, cosmeceutical, nutraceuticals and health infusions.
- The programme will demonstrate South African research and innovation capabilities in functional bio-natural products development including discussions on how to pivot the system for industrialisation of the sector.
- Innovation and industrialisation knowledge sharing programmes will focus on best practices exchange through symposia, workshops, etc.

5.2 Youth-Students' Jobs Programme is designed to develop enterprising IK students and youth - some of which attended the CoachLab Entrepreneurship Programme facilitated by the Innovation Hub. These pitching programme will offer an opportunity for young talent to demonstrate their potential in proving solutions to joblessness and poverty through the following:

- Idea development and innovation support sessions through pitching with experts motivating young entrepreneurs with knowledge of how to refine their business ideas into bankable business plans and viable technological products or services.
- Entrepreneur selection, coaching and capacity development sessions designed to provide selected youth businesses for mentorship, sponsorship, and skills for scaling their business concepts.
- Match-making sessions for business incubation and acceleration for students and youth MSMEs, structured to receive investment and support for commercialisation and access to markets.

5.3 The Bio-Natural Product-MSME Expo will be presented in a pavilion to showcase IK-based businesses enterprises and their science-based natural products primarily for investors to assist with scaling and industrialisation. Reason is for:

- Market access sections will be designed to provide opportunities for MSMEs to meet potential large-scale partners for local and global markets.
- Investor linkages spaces will be created to connect entrepreneurs with venture capitalists, investors, and financial institutions for scaling up.
- Investor matchmaking for linking scientific research organisations and IK-based enterprises with angel investors or crowdfunding platforms.
- Commercialisation potential for products and services that have been developed over a decade, for distribution, co-investment and global markets.

5.4. IK-Labs Soft-Launch and Awards will be central to the event, particularly during the Ministerial Gala Dinners Events where Investment Linkage with angel investors, investment banks, venture capitalists, etc, will be engaged for:

- Technology innovation investment programme for leveraging support for institutionalisation, scientific research infrastructure and product development initiatives.
- Additional pitching and demonstration sessions for providing platforms for enterprises to present their business ideas and needs to potential co-investors.
- Networking and market linkages for connecting MSMEs to local and international markets and supply chains that inspire confidence in the sector.
- Partnership facilitation for building collaborations among businesses developers, financial institutions, communities of practice, academia and government.
- Awards and Recognition especially of IK-Holders, students, youth, outstanding scientists, women, emerging scientists or teams will be part of the Investment Gala to offer incentives for their contribution in the science system, thus rendering the NSI inclusive, participatory and transformative.

6. Guest of the Summit

The event will invite youth and students, IK-Holders and Practitioners. Invited will be international partners such as the African Union (AU) and its related organisations like, AU Development Agency, SADC Partners, etc. Various South African Banks that have social responsibility funds will also be guests, in addition to development institutions like the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the Industrial Development Cooperation (IDC), Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA), etc.

In addition to local and international organisations on bio-natural product manufacturing, and multinational organisations like the BRICS, World Health Organisation, and UNESCO, etc will also be given opportunities to support. The DSTI will in addition to the abovementioned also extend an invitation to leaders Higher Education Institutions, government and research funding such as the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA), etc.

Draft Programme

Day 1 and Day 2

09:00 – 10:30	Morning Plenary	
10:30-11:00	Break	
11:00 -12:00	RDI Interface 1a - RDI Interface 1b	
12:00 – 13:00	RDI Interface 2a - RDI Interface 2b	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:00	Break Away – Round Tables Day 1 – Day 2	
15:00 – 15:30	Break	
15:30 – 17:30	Youth-Student Pitching Programme Day 1 – Day 2	
19:00 – 21:30	Gala 1 – Gala 2 – Launch and Award	

Day 3

09:00 – 10:30	Morning Plenary	
10:30-11:00	Break	
11:00 -12:00	AKS-Based Innovation Fund Launch	
12:00 – 13:00	Reports on Total Investments	
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 – 15:00	Closing Ceremony – Vote of Thanks	