



WE'RE SO BACK!

THE AWiM PITCH ZONE ACCELERATOR PROGRAM

Program Details

AWiM's Pitch Zone Accelerator (PZA) Virtual Program is a multifaceted, cohort-based, entrepreneurial program designed for **early-stage** entrepreneurs in the **Cultural and Creative Sectors and Industries (CCSIs)** who are looking to establish, grow, and scale their existing businesses or startup ventures. Founders accepted into the 2026 Virtual Cohort will participate in all virtual sessions taking place throughout the month of September, including peer-to-peer connections and tailored curriculum designed for early-stage entrepreneurs and business owners.

The PZA Program will culminate in the Virtual Pitch Competition Semi-Final Round, in which founders will compete for a chance to pitch at the **AWiM Global Forum in Windhoek, Namibia from 3-4 December 2026**. While at the Global Forum, founders comprising the In-Person Cohort will connect with their PZA mentors, engage in meaningful professional networking opportunities, showcase their ventures in a dedicated booth on the expo floor, and will compete in the AWiM26 Pitch Competition Final Round for a chance to win equity free prize money.

Key components of the program are as follows:

1. Recruitment & selection of ventures
2. Tailored mentoring and coaching
3. Investor readiness and engagement activities
4. Final pitch events and networking

The 2026 beta program will target 10 (ten) ventures actively planning to raise capital over the next 18-24 months. These include companies at various stages of development (Pre-seed and Seed stages) that share the common need for dedicated support to achieve investor attractiveness and successful fundraising outcomes. The program provides focused support covering strategy development, investor materials preparation, pitch training, and direct investor exposure.

Core Principles of the Pitch Zone Accelerator Program

1. Investment-Focused: The programme is structured around three integrated support streams, all designed to help ventures prepare for fundraising and scaling:



- Growth Strategy Development: Online workshops and virtual coaching.
 - Technical Validation: Remote access to expertise and virtual testing protocols.
 - Business Development Support: Practical tools and guidance to strengthen market positioning.
2. Adaptive Delivery: Content and support are tailored to the unique needs, stage, and timeline of each participating venture.
 3. Investor-Connected: Participants gain access to and are connected with broader investment and stakeholder networks.
 4. Sector-Specialized: All activities are deeply rooted in addressing specific challenges and opportunities within the CCSI.
 5. Outcome-Driven: The program is designed around clear milestones that demonstrate progress toward successful fundraising.
 6. Inclusively Accessible: Delivered entirely online to ensure broad participation across geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds.

***Pre-seed:** This is the earliest stage of startup funding, often from founders, friends, family, or angel investors to validate an idea and build a MVP (minimum viable product). It typically covers initial research, team formation, and product development. **Seed:** Seed funding helps startups develop their product further, gain early traction, and find product-market fit. Investors at this stage are usually angel investors or early-stage venture capital firms.

Programme Overview The 8-week cycle includes:

1. Weekly Workshops/Roundtables: Peer learning and collaborative discussions
2. Progress Reviews: Regular check-ins to assess development
3. Expert Clinics (Venture Academies): In-depth sessions with subject matter experts
4. Tailored, one-on-one guidance
5. Online Pitching Sessions: Opportunities to present to potential investors
6. Resource Library: Access to digital templates, guides, and support materials
7. Community membership

Important Dates

Applications open: May 6, 2026

Deadline to apply: June 30, 2026

Selected ventures notified by: July 15, 2026

Programme runs: September 1- October 30, 2026



Who Should Apply?

The program is open to early-stage startups led and/or owned by women in media and other cultural and creative industry in Africa. Applicants must demonstrate a strong commitment to entrepreneurship and innovation, value peer learning, and be eager to expand their professional networks. Applicants must be willing and able to participate fully in all program activities.

Enterprises under the cultural and creative industries include:

- Digital Content & Publishing
- Audiovisual & Broadcast Media
- Marketing, PR & Strategic Communications
- Creative Technology & Design
- Events & Experiential Media
- Information & Research Services

What You'll Experience

Over an intensive 8-week journey, you'll receive direct support from leading experts in the CCSI, experienced entrepreneurs, and specialized CCSI economy investors. What You'll Gain:

1. **Tailored Business Strategy Support-** Work through structured group sessions and one-on-one mentoring to sharpen your value proposition, refine your business model, and develop a robust go-to-market strategy.
2. **Investor Readiness Toolkit-** Build a compelling investor narrative, backed by:
 - Validated technical roadmaps
 - Strong financial models
 - Investment materials that resonate with capital providers in the creative and cultural industries sector.
3. **Deep Expertise and Mentoring-** Learn from a network of innovators, successful founders, and investors who understand the unique challenges of media ventures.
4. **Direct Investor Connections-** Access curated investor databases and engage in pitching sessions and networking events that connect you with the right investors and partners.

All delivered **virtually to fit around your schedule without** compromising on intensity or results.

By the end of the programme, you'll leave with:

- A clear investment strategy.
- Refined and investor-ready materials



- Credible technical validation
- Strong connections with sector-specific investors and industry stakeholders

Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicant must be an owner, founder, or controlling shareholder of participating venture / company; one (1) founder will be accepted per business venture / company.
2. Applicant's business venture/company must have been in operation for at least six (6) months but does not have to be revenue generating.
3. The startup must have a viable business model
4. Startups should demonstrate a clear market need for their product or service.
5. A committed founding team with relevant experience is essential.
6. Applicant/s must be available and committed to attending all Accelerator program dates listed above including the virtual dates, as well as the in-person dates if chosen to advance to the In-Person Cohort. Inability to attend or participate in the entire program will result in ineligibility and a void application.

Selection Process

We use a streamlined, one-step application process reviewed by experts with deep knowledge of media innovation and venture development. Our selection committee of experts and investors will evaluate applications based on:

1. Sector relevance- innovations that address real challenges in the creative and cultural industries sectors.
2. Team strength- founders with technical expertise, market understanding, and determination
3. Scalability potential- ventures that can achieve meaningful market impact
4. Funding readiness- the ability to attract investment from strategic partners or specialized funds.
5. Programme fit- whether our specific expertise and network can accelerate your progress meaningfully.

Programme Format

The AWiM Pitch Zone Accelerator will run as a fully virtual 8-week programme, designed to fit around your existing commitments while delivering intensive, focused support. We've structured sessions to accommodate teams across different time zones, with both live interactions and flexible learning components. We take no equity in your company and provide no direct funding. Instead, we focus entirely on preparing you to succeed in your next fundraising round and



accelerating your path to market. Our value lies in expertise, connections, and proven frameworks for CCSI venture development. Each week combines expert-led sessions, one-on-one mentoring, peer learning opportunities, and structured work time to apply new insights to your specific venture.

Programme Delivery Infrastructure

The AWiM Pitch Zone Accelerator will use a shared Zoom/ Microsoft Teams space as the main platform for communication, coordination, and resource sharing with the selected beneficiaries.

1. Workshops and Mentoring: The Zoom/ Teams space will host joint sessions and can be used for ad hoc collaboration between ventures and mentors.
2. Communication: Coordination and internal communication will be managed centrally through Microsoft Teams.
3. Resource Sharing: All programme materials (templates, guides, recordings, tools) will be stored and shared in the Teams environment.
4. Collaboration Tools: Hosting entities may use tools such as Miro or Google Jamboard during interactive sessions as needed.
5. Progress Tracking: The Accelerator will be tracked on a regular reporting process to monitor venture progress and key performance indicators (KPIs).
6. All programme templates (e.g. pitch decks, financial models, reports) will be shared in the Microsoft Teams space. Additional materials may be added during implementation, based on the needs of each cohort.

Apply Here- [Pitch Zone Accelerator Application Form – Fill in form](#)