

Solving SA's urgent challenges using cleantech

 By [Sindy Peters](#)

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With the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme for SMEs in SA (GCIP-SA) now [open for applications](#), we interviewed Gerswynn McKuur, national project manager of GCIP-SA, to find out more about the programme, and to get some insight on how clean technologies could address some of South Africa's most urgent challenges.

What kind of support does the business accelerator programme entail for participants?

GCIP-SA assists entrepreneurs in turning their smart cleantech innovations into successful businesses.

What participants can expect:

- A ground-breaking mentoring and training programme,
- Ongoing expert mentoring,
- Showcasing opportunities (locally and internationally), and
- Access to potential investors, partners and customers.



The winner will also receive a cash prize and a fully paid trip to the Cleantech Open Global Forum in San Francisco.

What are the most urgent challenges in South Africa that could be addressed by clean technology?

There are very specific issues in specific sectors that people can identify with:

- Water – we often experience drought conditions, because we have a water-scarce country. Therefore, there is an urgent need for conservation, water research and sustainability.
- Energy – energy security depends on alternative solutions and more efficient technologies allowing us to reduce energy use.
- Waste – this is growing problem and we need more solutions that beneficiate waste, avoid landfill and prevent health

issues, such as toxicity.

- Green building and green transportation solutions – this will be beneficial to the environment and there is greater pressure to address this.

■ **How does South Africa fare in the global shift to a greener economy?**

We have the same challenges currently faced by all developing countries. They are all trying to move to a green economy because of clear universal issues of energy and water security, environmental degradation and pollution.



Gerswynn McKuur, national project manager of GCIP-SA

South Africa has been proactive in its efforts to try and address these challenges – doing a lot in that the country has programmes that are trying to address these issues proactively. Examples of this include GCIP-SA, various energy projects, UNIDO-initiated projects (such as IEE, the Industrial Energy Efficiency Project at the NCPC-SA), the Low-Carbon Transport Project, the CSIR's project on the development of a waste RDI roadmap, the Water Research Commission on the development of a water RDI roadmap and various other projects undertaken and/or supported by the DEA.

How do we ensure that clean, green technologies are competitive in the market?

Clean, green products must be price competitive and do what other similar solutions do, but better.

The GCIP-SA enables participants to position their products competitively in the market through a rigorous validation process to ensure that they understand their marketplace better and are therefore able to make better decisions around technologies and markets to address.

The competitive nature of products depends on whether they have validated the need for the product, i.e. the “pain” experienced in the market. You need to be confident that your product provides a solution for that pain – and that people are willing to pay a premium for your solution.

Clean and green are an inevitable trend.

Applications for the 2017 GCIP-SA competition and accelerator programme are open until 26 April 2017; submissions can be made online at www.southafrica.cleantechopen.org.

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

Sindy Peters (@sindy_hullaba_lou) is a group editor at Bizcommunity.com on the Construction & Engineering, Energy & Mining, and Property portals. She can be reached at sindy@bizcommunity.com

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