

By Titus Kakembo

Young Africans working on clean energy and climate solutions have a fresh opportunity to take their ideas to a continental stage, following the opening of applications for the 2026 Future of Energy Conference (FEC) Innovation Challenge.

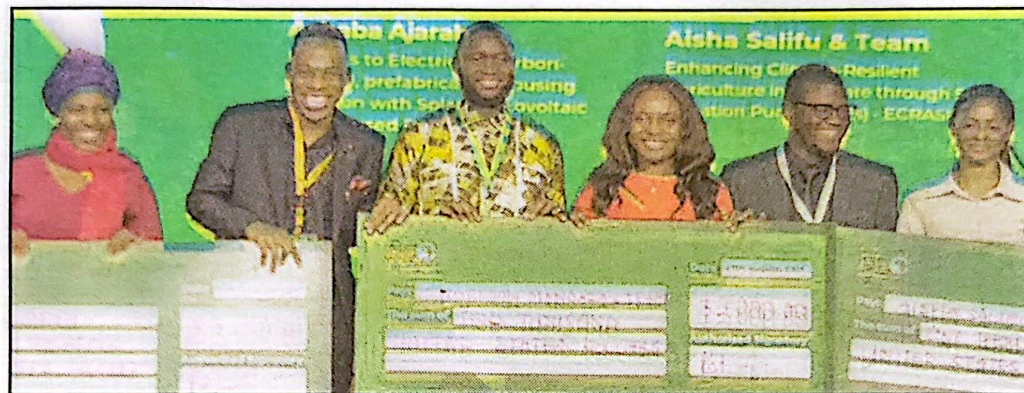
The initiative, organised by the Africa Centre for Energy Policy (ACEP), aims to identify and accelerate practical, low-carbon solutions tailored to Africa's energy needs. Applications close on May 31, 2026.

The call comes at a time when Africa is under pressure to expand energy access while responding to climate change. The challenge targets innovators with ideas in sustainable energy, clean cooking, circular economy systems, and lithium-ion battery technologies.

Successful applicants will advance through a competitive selection process culminating in a final pitch event at the FEC in Accra, Ghana, scheduled for August 25-26, 2026.

According to the organisers, the challenge goes beyond showcasing ideas. It is designed to support solutions that can scale and deliver real impact. Finalists will present their innovations before an audience of more than 1,000 policymakers, investors, and industry leaders — an opportunity that could unlock partnerships and funding.

APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR AFRICA ENERGY CONFERENCE INNOVATION CHALLENGE



Finalists from Uganda, Ghana and Zimbabwe displaying prize cheques at the FEC Innovation Challenge awards ceremony that took place on August 27, last year

Winners will receive cash prizes, mentorship, and incubation support through ACEP's Climate Innovation Hub, whilst retaining full intellectual property rights over their innovations.

The competition is open to African nationals aged 15 to 35, both on the continent and in the diaspora. Applicants may submit projects at different stages of development, from early prototypes

to pilot-tested concepts. This year's edition features two tracks. The Pan-African Low Carbon Innovation Track focuses on scalable solutions in power systems, digital energy, and industrial efficiency. The Afro-Hackathon Track centres on lithium-ion battery innovation, including design, applications, and value chain development.

The Hackathon Track is supported by partners including the African Union Development Agency, the African Minerals Development Centre, Africa Change Lab, and the United Nations Development Programme.

Participants will go through several stages, including application review, virtual interviews, and an Innovathon designed to test the practicality and market relevance of their ideas.

For many young innovators, the greatest challenge is not creativity but access — to funding, mentorship, and markets. The FEC innovation challenge is positioning itself as a platform to bridge that gap. With Africa's energy demand rising, the need for home-grown solutions is becoming increasingly urgent. For Uganda's innovators, this presents a chance to move from ideas to impact.

Applications are open until May 31, 2026. For more information, visit: <https://acep.africa/fec2026-innovation-challenge/>

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