

UK government creates pipeline of growth for tech SMEs in Nigeria

Designed to empower early-stage Nigerian start-ups that are solving challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK government, in January through the [UK-Nigeria Tech Hub](#) launched its iNOVO Accelerator Programme. This programme is for 10 early stage start-ups building innovative solutions to tackle the challenges caused by COVID-19 across the Education, Agriculture and Health sector in Nigeria.

In partnership with StartupBootcamp Afritech and Ventures Platform as implementing partners, this 3-month virtual programme afforded the top 10 selected start-ups an opportunity to receive capacity building and learn start-up training, mentorship and support to scale, their products and business models rapidly.

The top 10 start-ups across EdTech, AgriTech and HealthTech also received an opportunity to validate their solutions with pilots and proof of concept engagements and use their newfound insights to rapidly pivot and scale. All of this was done with the help of dedicated Entrepreneurs, mentors, investors, and industry experts. To wrap up the programme, these start-ups also got the opportunity to pitch in front of an audience comprising investors, corporate and government partners at the virtual demo day event.

The second pronged strategy of the programme was to also provide a great learning experience for selected start-ups that couldn't make a cut into the programme. Of a total of 750 applications received, the UK-Nigeria Tech Hub also sponsored 100 start-ups from the pool of applications received to gain life-time access to the Accelerator Squared platform where they are provided with the necessary insights and modules to help them build products and companies to scale impact.

Founders were very impressed by the Accelerator Squared platform-the interactive playbook that provides start-up founders with more than a dozen graduated modules to progress through every stage of the start-up journey. It is a valuable asset that assisted in helping them fine-tune their business models.

The Interim Country Director of the UK-Nigeria Tech Hub, Lamide Johnson said:

Seeing the incredible impact this programme has been for the participating start-ups is a testament to the fact that if we want to give room for innovation to solve some of the arduous problems faced in Nigeria, more interventions such as this are needed to provide the needed information, network and support for early-stage start-ups building innovative solutions.

Through this programme, we readily saw the need to support and

provide more spring-boards for early-stage start-ups seeking to scale their impact.

Speaking on the programme experience, some of the top 10 start-ups gave remarkable feedback on how the iNOVO Accelerator programme had an impact on their start-ups.

The CEO of [Schoola](#) Abdul Bature, stated:

It has been an incredible 3 months of hard work. With the help of StartupBootcamp AfriTech and Ventures Platform, our gamified learning solutions for secondary and primary schools has managed to get the attention of corporate partners and key stakeholders, which has led to a partnership with the Nigerian Turkish International Colleges and an onboarding of 25 other partners.

Further to this, Damilola Olaopa, CEO of [Foodbank.ng](#), a food loan service start-up, stated that through the programme, his team has managed to leverage the partnerships made to get the required support. He said:

The partnerships we have made will help us to scale our operations rapidly. Our partnership with First Bank reduces our exposure to risk as the bank takes on the responsibility of providing the funds, creditworthiness assessment, recollection and reconciliation of loans. This will not only help us scale our operations rapidly but will also lead to more revenue for the bank and for us too.

During the course of this programme, cloud-based hospital management start-up [Medipal](#), secured 2 major partnerships with notable Insurtech Company, Curacel (Startupbootcamp Afritech alumni) as well as eTranzact- an African finance giant. Medipal's client numbers have increased and they have been ranked as Lagos' number 1 Electronic Medical Record Company by the governing body of hospitals, the Association of General and Private Medical Practitioners of Nigeria.

Further information

- UK Tech Hub Nigeria: an initiative by the UK government's Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sports (DCMS) to support the growth of the Technology ecosystem in Nigeria. The UK-Nigeria Tech Hub works to stimulate local digital economies, support inclusive and sustainable economic growth and jobs, build high-end digital skills, and forge innovation partnerships between Nigerian tech sectors and international businesses which will inadvertently lead to more trade and investment in the longer term, thereby driving increased productivity and growth. Visit their [Instagram page](#) for more information on programmes of the Hub
- Ventures Platform Hub: a catalyst for innovation & entrepreneurship across Africa. For more information on Ventures Platform Foundation,

visit [their website](#)

- Startupbootcamp AfriTech: launched in 2017 as the first multi corporate-backed pan-African start-up accelerator. For more information visit [their website](#)