



**INNOVATION
SPACE**
The Wisely Center for Excellence

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1

What is the SPARC Innovation Space Entrepreneurship Program?

The SPARC Innovation Space is a business incubation and acceleration program targeting young, impactful and innovative ventures across Malawi and in all industries. SPARC Innovation Space targets both early-stage and post-revenue businesses to assist them to scale up and grow their business ventures with a combination of blended support covering fully furnished office space, corporate-grade business development support, equity-based financing, world-class digital infrastructure, mentorship, and access to international opportunities.

SPARC Innovation Space operates as an institutional co-founder, providing the operational "heavy lifting" required to survive the initial market entry and scale successfully.



The **Wisely**
Center of
Excellence

02

How does SPARC Innovation Space support entrepreneurs?

SPARC supports entrepreneurs with a comprehensive package that includes:



Fully furnished office space

Dedicated desk or private office at the SPARC Systems Complex in Lilongwe, including meeting rooms, high-speed internet, backup power, and 24/7 security



Equity-based financing

Investment ranging from MWK 5 million to over MWK 100 million, depending on venture stage and needs



Corporate-grade business development support

Strategy, marketing, financial modeling, and operations expertise delivered via weekly coaching and monthly masterclasses



World-class digital infrastructure

Enterprise-grade IT, cybersecurity, cloud services, and dedicated technical support



Mentorship

Structured guidance from experienced entrepreneurs and industry professionals



Community of like minds

Daily peer collaboration, networking events, and alumni access



International opportunities

Global demo days, regional conferences, and cross-border partnerships

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Who is eligible to apply for investment from SPARC Innovation Space?

SPARC Innovation Space is not sector-specific. The program looks for innovative and impactful enterprises with a viable business model. The eligibility criteria are outlined below:

- Be registered as a for-profit enterprise in Malawi (or commit to register within 3 months for the Incubation track)
- Founder aged 18–35 (priority given to youth-led ventures)
- Solve a clear local challenge with scalable potential
- Be willing to work from the Innovation Space physical location in Lilongwe (hybrid options available for those outside Lilongwe)
- Demonstrate commitment to social impact (jobs created, youth/women empowered)
- Be open to equity partnership
For the Acceleration track, ventures must additionally:
- Have a live product or service on the market with demonstrated traction
- Have a validated revenue model or unit economics

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Can a new company or a business idea apply for investment under SPARC?

Yes, for the Incubation track. SPARC accepts early-stage startups with a defined concept and a clear problem statement. If you have a prototype or a minimum viable product (MVP), or even just a well-researched business plan, you may apply for the Incubation track.

For the Acceleration track, no. SPARC Innovation Space only supports post-revenue businesses with a product already launched on the market and demonstrated customer traction.

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What specific sectors does the program prioritize?

SPARC Innovation Space is open to all sectors, but priority is given to ventures that address real needs with scalable solutions. Based on our website and investment model, the following sectors are strongly encouraged to apply:

Priority Sector

Why It Matters for Malawi

Agribusiness &
Agro-processing

Critical for national food security and driving export growth

Renewable Energy &
Climate Tech

Addresses infrastructure gaps while promoting environmental sustainability

Manufacturing & Value
Addition

Essential for transitioning the economy away from raw material exports

Technology, Digital,
EdTech & HealthTech

Leverages technology to improve social service delivery and expand access

FinTech & Financial
Inclusion

Enhances access to mobile money, loans, and savings for all Malawian

If you have a clear problem statement addressing real local needs and a commitment to test your hypotheses, you are welcome to apply regardless of sector.

06

What happens after I submit my application on the portal?

Once you submit your application through innovations.sparcsystems.africa, here is what happens step by step:

Step

What Happens

Timeline

1. Confirmation

You receive an automatic email confirming your application has been received

Within 24 hours

2. Initial Screening

The SPARC team checks if your application is complete and meets basic eligibility

1st–7th August

3. Shortlisting

Top 20–30 ventures are selected to proceed to due diligence

8th–12th August

4. Due Diligence

You may be invited for an interview or office visit to verify your information

13th–20th August

5. Pitching

Shortlisted entrepreneurs present to the independent Investment Panel

22nd–25th August

6. Final Selection

10 ventures are selected for the acceleration program
20 ventures are selected for the incubation program

28th–30th August

7. Program Start

Selected ventures move into the SPARC Innovation office space

September 2026

Important: Due to high volumes, we cannot provide individual feedback to all applicants.

07

What criteria is used in selecting ventures to receive investment from SPARC?

Applications are evaluated according to a set of selection criteria by an independent Investment Panel. The following criteria apply:



Social impact

What issue(s) and social need(s) does the company address? The venture must demonstrate specific societal challenges to be addressed.



Scalability potential

Ability and potential of the business to grow and scale.



Team capacity

Management capacity of the entrepreneur(s) and team; demonstrate relevant experience, capabilities, and technical expertise.



Innovation

Degree of innovation in the product, service, or business model.



Problem-solution fit

Ability of the application to articulate a clear market need and how the solution addresses it.



Financial profile

For Acceleration track, the venture must have sales traction and sound financial practices such as basic bookkeeping.



Commitment to youth and women

Engagement of youth and women either as staff, consumers, or people impacted along the value chain.



Openness to equity partnership

Willingness to partner with SPARC as an institutional co-founder.

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Who is involved in assessing and selecting the ventures?

The SPARC Innovation Space team puts together local and international experts from the entrepreneurship support ecosystem and relevant sectors to be part of **the Investment Panel**. The SPARC Innovation Space implementation team and their partners are **not involved** in the final selection of the programme participants.

The Investment Panel is comprised of professionals with a collective combination of strong impact, business, investment, and financing background. The Investment Panel is set up to provide an independent review and assessment of the applicants based on the strength of the business case presented, which should demonstrate a combination of social impact, innovation, investment potential, and scalability.

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What does the equity-based financing mean?

Unlike grants or loans, SPARC invests cash into your business in exchange for a percentage of equity (ownership). This means:

- SPARC becomes your partner, not just a funder
- SPARC only makes money if you succeed (aligned incentives)
- You receive ongoing strategic support to protect our shared investment

Under the Venture Studio model, SPARC typically acquires ownership stakes not more than 25%. This is higher than traditional venture capital because SPARC Innovation Space deploys significant internal resources, including office infrastructure, legal expertise, intellectual property, and hands-on co-building services.

For earlier-stage or less-intensive support, equity ranges from 5% to 25% depending on investment amount, venture stage, and mutually agreed valuation.

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What is the Venture Studio model, and how does it benefit me?

In a Venture Studio, SPARC acts as your institutional co-founder. We do not just write a cheque and wait. We provide:

Support Area

Strategic Description

Seed Capital

Early-stage funding for validation and registration

Technical Assistance

Advisory for operations and managerial capabilities

Legal & Accounting

Support for compliance, IP protection, and bookkeeping

Technology Development

Support in prototyping, software, and tech adoption

Market Access

Connections to distribution channels and corporate partners

Investor Readiness

Pitch development, financial modeling, and due diligence preparation

This hands-on approach significantly increases your survival rate and prepares you for subsequent international capital rounds.

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When does the program open and when is the deadline?

Applications open on 25th June 2026 and close on 31st July 2026. Late applications will not be considered. The program itself will start in September 2026 for successful applicants.

Activity

Date

Applications open

25th June 2026

Applications close

31st July 2026

Shortlisting and due diligence

August 2026

Pitching to Investment Panel

Late August 2026

Final selection announced

Early September 2026

Program starts (office move-in)

September 2026

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How do I apply?

All applications must be submitted online through the Sparc Innovation Space application portal.

APPLY HERE: _____

innovations.sparcsystems.africa



Incubation form



Acceleration form

No email applications will be accepted. You must complete the online application form in full through the portal.

Steps to apply:

1. Visit innovations.SPARC Innovation Spacesystems.africa
2. Navigate to the Application Portal
3. Complete all mandatory sections of the application form
4. Upload any required supporting documents
5. **Submit before the deadline: 31st July 2026**



You will receive a confirmation email after successful submission. If you do not receive confirmation, please check your spam folder or contact



apply@sparcsystems.africa.

For more information on the Sparc Innovation Space,
Email



innovations@sparcsystems.africa

visit our website:



www.innovations.sparcsystems.africa

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