**Africa Business School**

The Africa Business School

Innovation & Entrepreneurship

Background: The ABS innovation and entrepreneurship mission is to support the development of “analytical and holistic capabilities, both quantitative and qualitative, both cognitive and emotional,” and be “comfortable with a world where change and uncertainty are the norms.”

Center Vision: To enhance the scope and effectiveness of the ABS/UM6P/OCP innovation and entrepreneurship process through value-added entrepreneurial capacity instruction and development, feedback, and action.

Goals: The goals of the Center are to:

1. Better prepare ecosystem stakeholders for success as new venture creators and innovation and transformation actors.
2. Empower participants with tools for self-measurement, improvement, and future success, both individually and as a team.
3. Enhance the success of the current ecosystem stakeholders, leading to sustained social impact.

**Center for Innovation & Entrepreneurship Knowledge & Research**

**May 2022**

***“The axes of academic education, training, research, and advisory for sustainable entrepreneurship ecosystem impact."***

**Introduction**

The Africa Business School and Mohammed VI Polytechnic University propose developing and launching a Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Knowledge and Research (CIEKR). CIEKR will serve as a bridge between current ecosystem players to build and advance innovation, entrepreneurship, transformation, and sustainable impact in Morocco and throughout Africa. The Center is not an incubator or accelerator; rather, it is a knowledge and research “think tank” and a generator of best practices innovation and entrepreneurship content for use throughout the ecosystem.

From the perspective of academic stakeholders such as the Africa Business School, an evolving critical consideration is the role of universities, and their components can serve as catalysts for driving entrepreneurial ecosystem dynamics and value creation. CIEKR supports the new "third mission" of entrepreneurial universities to attract cutting-edge researchers, educate participants and ecosystem stakeholders, and facilitate knowledge transfer and new venture creation by diffusing and promoting entrepreneurial culture influence and shaping regional entrepreneurial ecosystems (Guerrero et al., 2016; Miller et al., 2018).

CIEKR also fulfills a second vital role of meeting the emerging “entrepreneurial” needs of Moroccan and African citizens and corporations. Consider that large corporations require entrepreneurial (intrapreneurial) skills like those needed in new ventures to launch and sustain innovation efforts. For citizens, global workforce trends require the successful future employee to be skilled in adapting to uncertainty and ambiguity. The Center proposes to meet these needs through “art and science of entrepreneurship” education, research, and advisory. The “art” of entrepreneurship encompasses the mindset of imagination, commitment, and passion associated with innovation,” and the “science” of entrepreneurship concerns the skills, competencies, and knowledge associated with growth and new venture creation (Torrance, 2013, p. 8).

This concept note details the mission, objectives, expected outcomes of the proposed Center, and the resources required to achieve these goals.

**Mission**

The mission of the Center is to provide academic education and training, multi-disciplinary research, and advisory services to catalyze sustainable innovation, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial impact across the ABS/UM6P/OCP, Moroccan, and African ecosystems. CIEKR supports the ABS mission of shaping the societal and business landscape by bridging knowledge, research, and advisory gaps within the current innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem to develop and implement best practices content for ecosystem stakeholders.

The Center will not replace current ecosystem initiatives and activities but will enhance and improve the entrepreneurial ecosystem players' program initiatives and service offerings through its best practices innovation and entrepreneurship knowledge and research.

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**Objectives**

The objective of CIEKR is to become the “integration hub” for:

1. Assessing the needs of ecosystem stakeholders and developing, coordinating, and delivering academic education and learning, research, and advisory services to address the identified gaps.
2. Collaborating and integrating stakeholders and CIEKR contributions to develop, implement, and disseminate innovation, entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurial "best practices" for use across the ecosystem.
3. Supporting the alignment of entrepreneurial ecosystem stakeholder activities to increase the expected value of the network.
4. Contributing to the "New Development Model" goals for "creating a productive and diversified economy that creates value."
5. Being a transformative best practices model used by other academic institutions.

**Targeted Stakeholders**

The Center envisions providing education and learning, research, and advisory services to four different groups of ecosystem participants, 1) entrepreneurs, 2) “entrepreneurials,” 3) ecosystem providers, and 4) coaches/mentors.

1. **Entrepreneurs** – Includes nascent, aspiring entrepreneurs that wish to launch new ventures, those that have already started new experiences but are seeking sustainable growth, and those that want to participate as team members in entrepreneurial ventures. Content targeted to this group includes technical and mindset materials designed to produce high-performing entrepreneurs and teams.
2. **Entrepreneurials** – Participants in this group are those that support the transformation of ideas into sustainable innovation activities in organizations, both private and public. This group includes staff and faculty employees of ABS/UM6P/OCP. These persons drive innovation and change in organizations and society and require a "mindset" to exploit knowledge to create new opportunities. Content targeted to this group includes mindset materials for personal and “high performing” team development and technical tools such as opportunity discovery used to support innovation and transformation efforts.
3. **Entrepreneurial ecosystem “providers/trainers”** – Group includes current program and initiative stakeholders involved in delivering services to the entrepreneurial ecosystems. It is envisioned that CIEKR will provide academic content and training to this group to possess the cohesive “best practices” knowledge to increase learning effectiveness for ecosystem entrepreneurs and entrepreneurials. This group will receive both technical and mindset training for personal development as well as for dissemination to ecosystem customers. Within the ABS/UM6P/OCP ecosystem, targeted programs for CIEKR services include Innov’X, Startgate, the Entrepreneurship Academy, U-Founders, Pcuriosity Lab, Explorer, UM6P Ventures, and the Social Innovation Lab.
4. **Mentors/coaches/entrepreneurs in residence** – Participants who provide mentorship, advice, and guidance to participants of the entrepreneurial ecosystem. CIEKR services (technical, mindset, or both) will be provided on an individual basis, depending on the unique needs of each participant.

**Services Provided**

CIEKR will provide research, an academic knowledge and learning repository, advisory, and domain expertise for the above participants on the following levels:

1. **Technical knowledge and training** – “Best practice” content (the “science” part of innovation and entrepreneurship or being entrepreneurial) will be developed and implemented for opportunity assessment, business launch, and innovation venture sustainability. Entrepreneur topics will include customer discovery/design thinking, opportunity assessment, business modeling, cash flow/financial forecasting and management, intellectual property protection and management, venture brand development and awareness, market and industry analysis, marketing and promotions, operations, and customer service.
2. **Mindset knowledge and training** - A growth mindset is “a specific set of beliefs, knowledge, and thought processes that drive entrepreneurial behavior. This mindset (also referred to as an “entrepreneurial mindset”) exposes opportunity, ignites ambition, and fosters innovation. It shifts everyday thinking into a new framework, empowering people to identify problems, deploy solutions, and make connections using creative and critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. It is asserted that developed and implemented CIEKR mindset content will increase the likelihood of entrepreneur and entrepreneurial success for all targeted groups.
3. **Domain expertise knowledge and training** – CIEKR will develop and make available specialized expertise and research in the following five critical areas of importance to Morocco and Africa: a) green/renewable energy, b) agriculture, c) industry 4.0, d) digital transformation, and e) social innovation. This expertise will be available on an "as needed" basis as specialized support for entrepreneurial ecosystem stakeholders.

CIEKR envisions that its knowledge and “best practices” content repository will be continuously updated and enhanced through research and collaboration with ecosystem participants. Effectiveness criteria will be established and implemented to track individual, program, and societal impact and adjusted accordingly based on this data.

**Expected Outcomes**

The Center aims to contribute to the dynamics of the Moroccan and African entrepreneurial ecosystems, mindset, and innovation culture, by providing “best practice” knowledge tools, learning content, advisory, domain expertise, and a contextualized assessment framework for entrepreneurs, entrepreneurials, and entrepreneurship stakeholders in the Moroccan and African context, and ultimately positively impact its coordination and effectiveness.

Specifically, CIEKR activities will result in:

1. The development and implementation of an innovation and entrepreneurship learning and educational content repository for dissemination and use across the ABS/UM6P/OCP, Moroccan, and African networks. This content will include technical and mindset tools and domain expert knowledge.
2. Ecosystem players trained in the best practices of innovation and entrepreneurship.
3. Entrepreneurs trained in the best practices of innovation and entrepreneurship.
4. Engaged and empowered entrepreneurial corporate employees and citizens that:
   1. Understand the nature of and can contribute to future innovation and entrepreneurial success,
   2. Have developed growth mindset attitudes, behaviors, and skills,
   3. Understand the concept of individual & team skills & how to develop & use them to advance entrepreneur, entrepreneurial, and innovation strategy,
   4. Understand the concept of mindsets & their impact,
   5. Interact with others who provide critical guidance and ongoing support.
5. An improved impact and effectiveness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem over time, one that promotes and drives collaborative innovation through knowledge, research, and advisory to solve business and societal challenges.
6. Ultimately, increased success in creating sustainable Moroccan and African-based companies and in innovation and transformation activities undertaken by Moroccan and African citizens.

It is proposed that measurements be developed to assess the performance of the entrepreneurial ecosystem / value network based on a national KPI dashboard. It is also recommended that Project Eureka (an APRA-funded, three-year effort) be incorporated into CIEKR and that the result of Eureka, the development of a national dashboard, become the basis of outcomes monitoring.

**Timeframe**

It is estimated that the organization, development, and implementation of CIEKR can begin immediately, pending funding approval. CIEKR will be fully operational within three years. During the first 18 months, the goals of the Center are to recruit staff and faculty, establish the physical location of the Center, and assess, develop, and implement knowledge modules for ecosystem providers (“train the trainer”). CIEKR will work on innovation, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial knowledge content, and domain expertise information in parallel. Domain expertise content will be developed and made available. CIEKR will create a national dashboard system to report on the performance of the entrepreneurial ecosystem as a means of determining the impact of its services to develop and disseminate best practices across the network.

**Resources Required**

The Center will require human, physical, and financial resources to achieve its mission and objectives:

1. Human resources – Includes academic researchers and practitioners, domain experts, and advisors. At a minimum, the Center requires research and academic content and training specialists in innovation (both corporate and general) entrepreneurship (technical expertise), and mindset (individual and team preparation). CIEKR also requires domain experts in green/renewable energy, b) agriculture, c) industry 4.0, d) digital transformation, and e) social innovation. Lastly, the Center needs support researchers and staff to fulfill its mission.
2. Physical resources – It is proposed that the Center will reside in a central physical location, but that a hybrid model for its activities will be used. So, staff and faculty may be located at the Center or in remote areas.
3. Financial resources – The needed financial requirements for the Center will be determined based on the finalization and approval of CIEKR activities and the timing of human and physical needs.

**Proposed Center Location**

Because CIEKR will impact the entire Moroccan (and ultimately African) ecosystem, the Center is recommended to be established in a centralized location for all of Morocco. For this reason, Casablanca is recommended for the site of the Center.

**Final Thoughts**

It is asserted that the Center of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Knowledge and Research will result in significant advantages to ABS/UM6P/OCP, Moroccan, and African ecosystem stakeholders, both in entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial effectiveness impact and the development of innovation capacity for future success. The Center illustrates the commitment of Africa Business School to lead in developing and providing academic research and services to best meet the needs of private and public sector innovation and entrepreneurship stakeholders.