



Nigeria Circular Economy Week

Young Scholars Prize

Call for Applications

Application Deadline: 27th January, 2026.

1. About the Prize

The Nigeria Circular Economy Week Young Scholars Prize is awarded to early-career researchers affiliated with Nigerian knowledge institutions. The award includes a cash prize for creativity and rigour in applied research that addresses business and policy approaches to enable the growth of circular business models in Nigeria.

The prize is administered by the Circular Business Platform and supported by the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. An inter-disciplinary sub-committee, made up of representatives from industry, research and policy communities, is responsible for developing the research agenda and for the selection of winning proposals.

2. Themes

Applicants may submit research proposals addressing any one of the following themes:

a) Improving data collection and analysis on material disposal and recycling rates

While it is reported that Lagos generates 13,000 tons of trash each day, there is not yet reliable or consistent data that is available to the public that provides details about collection and recycling rates of different materials such as Polyethylene terephthalate (PET), aluminum and polystyrene. Without this information, investment in technologies to enable recycling is much more difficult. Proposals in this thematic area can explore cost-effective ways to build a more reliable, shared evidence base on waste collection and recycling practices in Lagos, addressing questions such as: *what practical, low-cost data collection, monitoring, and coordination approaches can generate an accurate picture of waste flows and recycling activities that is trusted and usable by all participants across the sector?*

b) Evaluating technologies for product design, production efficiency and recycling in the textiles sector

There is growing interest in supporting the sustainability of Nigeria's fashion industry. The fashion sector in Nigeria is unique in many ways. Importantly, it is dominated by small and medium enterprises (SMEs), who are often vertically integrated and not large designers or manufacturers

who specialize. This means that gathering information about the approaches used by Nigerian's fashion business, and the companies that extend or manage textiles at the end of life, is more challenging. It is also more challenging to compare the use of different technologies to improve the sustainability of the fashion sector. However, by making these evaluations we are better able to plan to invest in new technologies. In this thematic area, submissions are encouraged to identify and test innovative yet practical mechanisms for gathering and benchmarking data on emerging technologies, addressing questions such as: *how can comparable, decision-relevant evidence be generated to support firms in making confident and well-timed investments in new technologies?*

c) Application of fly ash to improve soil fertility

Fly ash, a by-product of coal based and other industrial processes, presents significant opportunities for waste valorisation within a circular economy. While its use in construction is well established, its potential application in agriculture, particularly as a soil amendment or fertiliser input, remains underexplored. For rice farmers, fly ash could offer a cost effective alternative to conventional inputs, with possible benefits for soil structure, nutrient availability, and crop productivity. At the same time, uncertainties remain around effectiveness, environmental safety, and long term impacts on soil and water systems. Proposals exploring this thematic category are invited to assess whether and under what conditions fly ash can deliver tangible, sustainable benefits for rice cultivation.

d) Application of waste-to-energy technologies to reduce waste in landfills and costs of electricity

Waste-to-energy describes a range of activities to convert waste into fuel. In principle, the use of waste-to-energy technologies is a win-win because Nigerians face both waste management and access to energy challenges. However, there are many things to consider when making decisions about waste-to-energy such as the costs of technology, logistics and the environmental impact of the solution. Proposals in this theme should address the question: What criteria should project developers be thinking about when developing waste-to-energy solutions and what are the most promising avenues to develop waste-to-energy solutions that can serve industry and communities at a large-scale based on those criteria?

e) Improving policy decision-making through evidence

The Federal Ministry of Environment has recently released a Plastics Management Policy. This is complemented by a Circular Economy Roadmap and the development of a policy for off-grid energy equipment. Applications in this area should engage the questions: How can an evidence-based approach support implementation of one of these policies. What specific components of the policy can be centred on evidence-based decision-making and how should this be designed in partnership with research institutions?

These themes have been developed and endorsed by the following organizations:



3. Eligibility

To apply for the prize you must meet the following criteria:

- a) 35 years or younger;
- b) Enrolled in a Masters or PhD programme or graduated from a Masters or PhD programme no more than two (2) years ago.
- c) Affiliated with a Nigerian Research Institution (registered student, teaching or research fellow)
- d) Have support from a supervisor to carry out and complete the research;
- e) Willing and able to participate in research bootcamp in Lagos from 16th -19th February 2026.
- f) Complete the online application, which includes a draft research proposal. Your proposal should include the following information (3000 words maximum):
 - i. Selection of theme
 - ii. Your specific research question and motivation for selection
 - iii. Very short literature review/contextualization of the question
 - iv. Methodology – the analytical framework you plan to develop or use and the data sources needed
 - v. Technical or advisory support you may need to complete the research

4. How to Apply and Timelines

Please apply to the link [here](#). Applications are open from January 10th -January 27th, 2026.

5. Marking Rubric

1. Originality - the proposal is novel/interesting
2. Approach and methodology
3. Relevance and impact- the proposal has an applied relevance
4. Dissemination plan - academic outputs and public engagement plan
5. Institutional Support- the applicant has sufficient support from the university and from the Secretariat to complete the research