2026 Young African Space Professionals Award

The Young African Space Professionals Award is a curated, merit-based recognition programme jointly led by Space in Africa and the African Space Agency (AfSA). The award provides funding for Africa's young talent aged 35 and below, making the most impact on ecosystem development, to participate in the upcoming NewSpace Africa Conference 2026 scheduled to take place in Libreville, Gabon, from 20th to 23rd April 2026.

Designed intentionally as both a recognition and leadership-visibility pipeline, the programme enables AfSA and Space in Africa to spotlight students and emerging professionals whose work or research aligns with space governance and policy, sustainability, industrialisation, innovation, capacity development, and socio-economic impact. In line with the African Union Commission's mandate on gender equality, diversity, and geographic equity, the award will deliberately recognise ten outstanding professionals from across the African Union Member States.

Benefits

The African Space Agency will cover the end-to-end costs associated with awardees' participation in the NewSpace Africa Conference 2026, including

1. **Registration**: Selected awardees will be registered for all sessions and networking events at the conference.
2. **Logistics and accommodation**: Booking and paying for the flight tickets and accommodation in Libreville, Gabon, from 19th to 23rd April 2026. Local transport from the airport to the hotel and the conference venue will also be provided.
3. **Visibility**: Awardees will be recognised during the conference and featured in the conference Final Programme and reports, newsletter, website, and the African Space Agency communication platforms.
4. **Networking events and tourism**: Awardees will automatically be registered for networking events and mixers, including the VIP dinner and Welcome Cocktail, as well as scheduled tourism activities during the conference.
5. **Daily subsistence allowance**: AfSA will provide all awardees with DSAs to cover their accommodation, feeding, and other incidental expenses throughout their stay, starting on the day of arrival in Libreville, Gabon.

Eligibility

We encourage applications from candidates across all African countries, whether or not they are already space-faring nations. The Young African Space Professionals Award is open to young Africans who meet all of the following criteria:

- **African:** Be an African national and demonstrate a sustained, substantive contribution to the space ecosystem.
- **Demonstrated Impact:** Have clear evidence of outcomes, leadership, or innovation influencing the space sector.
- **Professional Standing:** Students must be attending a recognised university, and young professionals must be employed in a space-related field and have recognised credibility within their professional community and within the industry segment in which they operate.
- **Active Contribution:** Currently engaged in space-related work or policy.
- **Age**: 35 and below as of the conference start date.

Application process

All submissions must be made via the official award application form on the conference website by 28th February 2026 at 11:59 pm WAT. Only complete submissions will be considered. Submissions sent by email will not be considered.

Applicants will share the following information via the application form

- Name
- Email address
- Country of residence
- Nationality
- Date of birth
- Passport information in PDF, JPG, or PNG format
- Detailed resume
- 1,000-word motivation letter submitted in PDF format.
- Two reference/recommendation letters submitted in PDF format.

Motivation Letter

Applicants are required to submit one 2-paged motivation as part of their application. The motivation should clearly address the applicant's work, contributions, and impact within the African space ecosystem, and must cover the following areas:

- **Contributions to date:** A concise overview of your academic, professional, or technical contributions as a student, researcher, or young space professional.
- **Motivation for the award:** Why you are applying for this award and how it aligns with your professional goals and trajectory within the space sector.
- **Objectives of participation:** What you hope to learn, achieve, or contribute during the event.
- **Relevance of the NewSpace Africa Conference 2026:** How participation in the NewSpace Africa Conference 2026 will support your research, career development, and networking opportunities.
- **Expected career impact:** The anticipated influence of this opportunity on your short- and long-term career within the African space ecosystem.

Essays that exceed the word limit or fail to address these areas in the exact format stated above will not be considered

Reference letter

Applicants are required to submit two one-page reference letters as part of their application. Referees can be a professor, employer, supervisor, or responsible official at the applicant's university who is familiar with the applicant and can endorse their work and impact.

- Download the reference letter template from the application platform.
- The referee must complete and sign the letter.
- Upload the signed letter in PDF format.

Timeline

1. **Opens**: 30th January, 2026
2. **Deadline**: 28th February, 2026
3. **Winners Announcement: 9th March, 2026**

To apply, visit here. For more information or enquiries, please contact info@spaceinafrica.com