

The Investec Early-Stage Entrepreneur of the Year Awards spotlight Africa's brightest startups alongside global peers, with access to funding, mentorship, and the OPUS Delegation to Davos.

Rwandan entrepreneurs now have a unique opportunity to showcase their ideas on the global stage with the launch of the Investec Early-Stage Entrepreneur of the Year Awards (The Investec Easies), powered by OPUS. The awards are designed specifically to celebrate founders at the very beginning of their journey, offering recognition for companies under four years old and pre-Series A.

While the competition is global, African founders, including those from Rwanda, are encouraged to apply and compete alongside peers from Europe, Asia, and the Americas.

Globally, an estimated 305 million new businesses are created each year, yet only a small fraction reach significant scale. The Investec Easies aim to uncover the boldest ideas before founders achieve large-scale growth or market exit, giving early-stage entrepreneurs access to resources, mentorship, and visibility rarely available at this stage. For Rwandan startups emerging from hubs such as Kigali Innovation City and local incubators, this award offers a chance to connect with global networks and investors, accelerating growth beyond the local market.

The awards are supported by Investec Wealth & Investment International and Endava, a publicly listed technology services company. Winners will be recognized across four categories: Impact, Consumer, Technology, and Female Founder. Prizes include a £10,000 cash award, membership in the OPUS founder ecosystem, global media exposure, and a seat at the World Economic Forum in Davos with the OPUS Delegation. For Rwandan and African founders, this represents a unique chance to meet investors, mentors, and innovators from across the world.

Winners will be selected through a combination of public votes and guidance from an international panel of judges. The panel includes distinguished leaders such as Imtiaz Patel, former CEO of MultiChoice Group; Maxine Gray, Head of Strategy and Implementation at Investec Wealth & Investment International; Lyndon Subroyen, Group Chief Digital & Technology Officer at Investec; Alastair Lukies CBE, Chief Engagement Officer at Endava; Kristen McLeod CBE, Chief Strategy Officer at British Business Bank; Erin Platts, CEO of Octopus Ventures; and Marc Porat, founder of General Magic.

"Founders at this stage often work in the shadows," said Sam Tidswell-Norrish, Founder and Chair of OPUS. "The Investec Easies reward the audacity to begin, not just the ability to scale. Every story starts with a leap of courage—the idea scribbled on a napkin, the risky quit from a stable job, the first late-night coding session. Those sparks of possibility are rarely recognized, yet they are the beating heart of entrepreneurship. With The Investec Easies, we want to celebrate those sparks because they are where the future is born."

Applications are now open at www.theeasies.com. Founders leading companies under four years old and pre-Series A are invited to apply before 5 November 2025. The process is quick and simple, ensuring that entrepreneurs at the very start of their journey anywhere in the world, including Rwanda, can put themselves forward and gain global recognition for their work.