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Hunting for innovation talents

Daily Express (KK), Malaysia



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Jeremy S Zabala

KOTA KINABALU: Solid relationship between the Malaysian Innovation Foundation (YIM) and institutes of higher learning is required in identifying innovation talents to display their abilities at the national stage.



YIM Chief Executive Officer Dr Sharmila Mohamed Salleh (pic) said there are hidden talents among locals, particularly Sabahans, who are researchers or innovators waiting to be "displayed" at the national level.

By collaborating with universities, she said such talents could be detected and assistance channelled to them to ensure that their research products and innovations is brought to a higher productive stage.

She also said existing collaboration with Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) has been a key strategy for YIM to channel grants to researchers and innovators to boost their works.

With positive impact, Sharmila said

these talents receive the necessary assistance, especially funding, to further their research and eventually commercialise it.

"YIM and UMS have been engaged quite a while now. Through the collaboration, we have a number of projects given grants under MyIS (Malaysia Social Innovation).

"The grant is normally channelled for the research (purpose) that has succeeded or on their way to commercialisation.

"Researchers will request for (this) grant that is under the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry (Mosti) in which YIM will act as the implementing agent of channelling the grant. So that particular innovation can be diffused to the community," she told *Daily Express*.

She said this after the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing between YIM and UMS, recently.

Sharmila shared that there were products that have reached the main objective through the collaboration in which have benefited the community and respective industry players such as the solar dryer.

She said the solar dryer was a product created by a researcher from UMS that is designed to help the community with the

drying process for food.

"This product was invented due to the issues faced by the community who were having trouble delivering their products fresh.

"So alternatively, they opted to dry their food products which was a time-consuming process. With this research, they are able to dry their products through solar energy.

"This is among the innovations that are being developed at UMS and to reach the community, grants or funding is required and this is YIM's responsibility to act as the bridge between innovations and the community," she added.

YIM, established in 2008, has been helping researchers obtain patents for their products aside from channelling aid to lessen them (researchers or innovators) in their product development.

Aside from researchers in UMS, Sharmila said YIM has been working with relevant agencies and departments in identifying innovators from the community itself at grassroots level.

"The aid is not exclusively or necessarily for researchers in UMS. The grant can also be channelled to the grassroots level

in which most of these innovations (produced by the community) is created based on the issues they face on a daily basis.

"For example, the paddy thresher that we have helped innovator Sitio Akang from Tambunan. When we were there, the product needed improvement with a little scientific knowledge as well as its usage," she added.

In this regard, she also said YIM's responsibility is not limited in channelling grants to boost product development but also to create network with relevant departments or agencies for innovators.

Through YIM, she said an ecosystem was created to help innovators outside of UMS to be introduced with experts in that particular field as well as supplying the proper tools or equipment for the betterment of the products.

For the MoU, Sharmila said the relationship between UMS and YIM has existed for a long time but has yet to be formalised.

"Through this signing, it is a way to formalise our existing relationship in which is aimed to trigger innovation development and help the community," she added.



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SUMMARIES

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