

# Mapping out a future of innovation

**T**he National Lotteries Commission (NLC) has launched its Digital Innovation Hub – a result of the entity's recently adopted innovation framework and strategy.

Over the years, the NLC has established itself as a pioneering organisation with keen insights into the current and emerging needs of our stakeholder base, and one who's strategies and plans speak to this.

The growing digital needs of stakeholders required the entity to come up with innovative ways of utilizing online platforms for education and awareness.

NLC spokesperson Ndivhuho Mafela said the launch speaks to one of the key organisational values that is social consciousness, addressing issues that affect communities, and constantly evolving to meet the needs of the stakeholders.

"The hub is an enabling digital platform, which together with the newly adopted innovation framework, will create a powerful and collaborative ecosystem that will ignite innovation within the NLC," Mafela said.

"The speed at which NLC responded to the needs of their beneficiaries and stakeholders during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic has solidified its resolve to develop an innovation strategy and foster an innovation culture.

"The growing digital needs of stakeholders and the high level of non-compliant applications require us to come up with innovative ways of utilizing online platforms for education and awareness."

## The NLC's Innovation and Framework Strategy:

Innovation framework is inspired by the NLC's recently adopted organizational value – innovation and agility. It consists of a cohesive set of best practices that inspire cross-functional, multidisciplinary, visionary and imaginative teams to look beyond the obvious, explore a broad range of possibilities, identify significant opportunities, make informed decisions about the most promising paths to pursue and create a shared NLC vision for sustainability, progressive regulation, relevance and impact.

The purpose of the innovation framework is to harness the creative talents of employees while staying in alignment with corporate strategy and the National Development Plan goals. It provides the NLC with a structured and strategic way to act on new ideas.

The innovation framework defines and outlines pragmatic action plans that "bridge from the future back to the present" and align the organization around the requirements for success.

This framework encourages the NLC to take the road less travelled, challenging the organization to look beyond its established business boundaries and mental models, and to participate in an



NLC commissioner Ms Thabang Charlotte Mampane

open-minded, creative exploration of the realm of possibilities.

It is truly a holistic, systematic approach focused on generating beyond incremental, breakthrough or discontinuous innovations. It is an intentional, repeatable process that creates a significant difference in the value delivered to beneficiaries, grant holders, applicants, internal and external stakeholders.

## NLC DIGITAL INNOVATION HUB

The Hub will play a pivotal role in creating a transparent, exciting and fun innovative culture. It will provide the NLC with the digital and collaborative workspace required to observe and learn, effectively raise and vet ideas, evaluate the pros and cons of each business concept, and make educated decisions on how to proceed.

The Hub's shared workspace will consist of a comprehensive set of templates and give teams a place where they can compile, post and share important information on innovation projects. It will be a place where teams can explore new trends and technologies, and discover customer frictions.

"The rewards of seeing ideas grow to prototypes and ultimately to new stakeholder deliverables and business solutions is what we, as NLC, are striving for. The Hub will be the enabling digital platform, which together with the newly adopted innovation framework, will create a powerful and collaborative ecosystem that will ignite innovation within NLC."

## NLC INNOVATION FRAMEWORK

The NLC's innovation framework serves as a bedrock upon which strategy and innovation practices are built on. It consists of five phases.

1. Full steam ahead: You never start a professional expedition unprepared. Phase one illustrates how you can challenge management to start a real inno-

vation project and how you formulate an innovation assignment.

2. Observe and learn: Start viewing things differently by detaching yourself from your own existing thought patterns and habits. Phase two illustrates how you can explore innovation opportunities, trends, technology and customer frictions among target groups.

3. Raise ideas: Phase three consists of a new product brainstorming session (where new ideas are prepared and developed into concepts) and concept improvement workshops (where concepts are further developed).

4. Test ideas: Phase four is where the attractiveness of ideas is tested with customers and then concepts are improved based on customer feedback.

5. Homecoming: Phase five delivers three to five attractive new product or service concepts with enough support to be implemented immediately.

## WHY IS THE NLC INNOVATING?

The nature of the business is dynamic and there is a need to remain relevant, expand our reach to stakeholders, operate efficiently, meet growing demand, reduce cost of operations, keep abreast with international innovation trends, entrench the brand to improve reputation and fund for impact.

The growing digital needs of stakeholders and the high level of non-compliant applications require us to come up with innovative ways of utilizing online platforms for education and awareness.

## WHAT IS THE NLC LOOKING FOR?

We are looking for products, services and solutions directed at divisional realignment and reconfiguration processes that entail relooking into our revenue model, future-fit organizational structure, organizational culture, enterprise resource planning and integrated systems.

These new innovative solutions are al-



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so focused on our brand positioning, service offerings, stakeholder experiences, engagement, service levels, distribution channels (digital, online, self-help, mobile, community-based centres, departmental/government partnerships/collaboration).

## WHO IS THE NLC's TARGET AUDIENCE?

### External stakeholders

The role of stakeholder relations is key in identifying and mobilizing stakeholders that will add value to the innovation journey and creation of innovative solutions. Various channels will be designed to capture stakeholder voices.

### Internal stakeholders

Sustainable innovation solutions are only possible when all the relevant stakeholders co-author the change process and share a stake in the innovation process. You are therefore part of the innovation journey, along with our focus groups, union leaders, grant applicants, beneficiaries, fundraisers, regulated operator/s and lottery participants.

## WHEN WILL THE NLC INTRODUCE THESE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS?

We will be looking for quick wins to bolster confidence, innovation momentum and kickstart our innovation revolution rhythm. The co-creation process should yield new evolutionary innovative solutions within six to eight months and will be followed by an introduction of a few (revolutionary) innovative solutions within 12-24 months. This will surely set a new level of innovation performances and create a sustainable organization for the future.

## WHICH CRITERIA SHOULD NLC's INNOVATIONS COMPLY WITH?

Some of the key success criteria factors revolve around introducing innovation solutions that will make a real difference to beneficiaries and at the same time demonstrate our responsiveness to the needs of applicants by availing user friendly, fast, effective, reliable, digital, and automated solutions that are cost-effective for the National Lotteries, applicants and beneficiaries.

**Step into a world of endless possibilities**  
**Innovation is a Jump**

