Innovators and transformers awarded at the annual Public ICT Awards

The winners of the first annual Public ICT Awards, designed and launched by State Information Technology Agency (Sita), were announced at a gala dinner in Durban on 25 October 2015. The awards provide a platform to promote and profile innovation and transformation through solutions, products, and service delivery.

In his keynote address at the Awards dinner, Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Dr Siyabonga Cwele (MP) said that he is confident that, ten years' from now, looking back on this day, "these awards will have provided a platform to recognise government institutions in all spheres using technology, improving the lives of all citizens."

Nominations were accepted in seven categories: ICT Service Delivery Transformation Award - National Government, Provincial Government and Local Government; ICT Provider Innovation and Service Transformation Award - start-ups and SMMEs up to R10m and companies over R10m; Women in ICT Award; and Youth in ICT Award, Every third placed entrant received R30,000 towards their entered project, second place entrants received R50,000 and winners received R100,000.

The ICT Service Delivery Transformation Award - National Government recognises and rewards the most outstanding service delivery, or a product or service, and/or transformation at a national government level.

Third place went to the CSIR's Lwazi II, a three-year project funded by the Department of Arts and Culture and aimed at further developing multilingual speech technologies and implementing these in applications that will have a positive impact

on the lives of South Africans. The specific focus is on speech technology development for resource-scarce languages - mainly the official languages of South Africa.

Second place went to National Treasury for its Central Supplier Database. Public procurement represents approximately R500 billion per year with approximately 700,000 suppliers. All state institutions are required to keep and maintain a database of prospective suppliers. The office of the Chief Procurement Officer of National Treasury has the ambition to consolidate the supplier databases with the Central Supplier Database Project.

The winner was the Department of Home Affairs' Live Capture Smart Cards System. The Department has re-engineered and automated the processes for issuing IDs and passports. A process that used to take 54 days to issue green ID books has been reduced to seven days to issue a secure and digital smart ID card to citizens. The times frames for issuing a machine readable passport has also been reduced drastically and is comparable to international standards.

The ICT Service Delivery Transformation Award - Provincial Government recognises and rewards the most outstanding service delivery, or a product or service, and/or transformation at a provincial government level.

Third place went to the Limpopo Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs for a project to set up a Systems Development 'Engine'. The system uses open source tools such as PHP, Postgres, which run from a Redhat Linux Server, for developing and hosting multiple departmental systems that enhance and support the business and administrative functions of the department in a way that is resource and time-effective.

Second place went to the CSIR's Broadband 4 All Project, which enables rural communities to experience ICT. This benefits rural entrepreneurs to build businesses, and schools to access educational resources and improve on their administration. In addition, it assists local industry to develop and manufacture technology appropriate for the South African market.

The winner was the Gauteng Department of Roads and Transport for its Revenue Information Management System. Government is under pressure to deliver services, but cannot deliver without first generating/collecting revenue. It is therefore crucial to have proper systems in place to allow for efficient and effective revenue management, hence the requirement for the Revenue Information Management System.

The ICT Service Delivery Transformation Award - Local Government recognises and rewards the most outstanding service delivery, or a product or service, and/or transformation at a local government level.

Third place went to Nyanda Technologies and Development, established in 2008 and strategically positioned to change the sustainability, growth and competitiveness patterns of both the company, its clients and partners.

Second placed went to Durban Technology t/a SmartXchange Hub, the brainchild of a multiparty consortium led by the Ethekwini Municipality. Based in Durban, SmartXchange is an innovation node and a dynamic incubator whose core function is to provide enterprise development services to small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs).

The winner in this category was the CSIR's Broadband 4 All Project, which makes use of the Wireless Mesh Network research outputs. These include a technology prototype of a wireless router, to conceptualise a possible solution to demonstrate how affordable broadband connectivity can be achieved in rural communities using low-cost infrastructure which can be supported by people from the local community to create socio-economic and commercial opportunities. This project was implemented by means of a wireless mesh large scale demonstrator to test the technology, operational support requirements, economic viability and potential socio-economic impact. The project is the first of its kind to be rolled out in rural areas on such a large scale.

The ICT Provider Innovation and Service Transformation Award - startups and SMMEs recognises a start-up or SMME, with a turnover of no more than R10million per annum, which has improved service delivery to citizens.

Third place went to Jaen Jacques Nell, a 16-year old inventor from a school in Tshwane who patented an invention called Smart Plate. A world first, the Smart Plate invention is based on a number plate that has a microchip imbedded in it. It sends a signal to your vehicle and mobile device when you transgress the speed limit.

Second place went to CommutaX, a commuter convenience platform that provides commuters access to a portfolio of convenient services through relationships with established service providers.

The winner in this category, Funzi, is an open educational content publishing system that gives learners access to CAPS aligned study support content. Funzi also provides a platform that enables third parties such as schools, educators, NGOs and other interested parties to author and publish content to learners either for free or at a small cost.

The ICT Provider Innovation and Service Transformation Award - larger companies, awards larger organisations which have improved service delivery to citizens.

Third place went to Gijima Holdings, which has developed the IntelliDispatch solution and the South African Police Station Finder App. Gijima Call coordinators, armed with the IntelliDispatch system, can see the real-time location and status of all field engineers in relation to the specific department's sites where service is required. Gijima's South African Police station finder app enables citizens to quickly and easily locate police stations in their area.

Second place was awarded to Praxis Computing, which designed, developed and successfully implemented a customised back-office application as well as an access front-end mobile interface for the Department of Public Works to assist with facilities management tracking via a contact centre application.

The winner, Edit Microsystems, developed the eBraille Project, which is revolutionising the quality of teaching and learning for visually impaired learners, promoting inclusive education and special needs education for the blind in South Africa.

The Women in ICT Award - recognises the contribution that women make to the sector and the future of the profession.

Third placed went to Puleng Kwele,CEO of Broadband Infraco, a position she has held for the past three years. She has over 16 years' experience in the ICT sector and currently manages a total staff contingency of 197 employees. Puleng was awarded the CEO Magazine Africa's Most Influential Woman in Business and Government Award, which received over 5,000 nominations from across the continent. She won top spot in the Public Enterprises category as the country winner for South Africa as well as the SADC regional winner announced at an awards ceremony held in July 2015.

Second place went to Lindelwa Nzimande, from Words and All. In 2008, at the age of 24, Lindelwa started her own business, a digital agency that specialised in political parties' social media tools management, inspired by the USA's Obama campaign. Lindelwa strongly believes in employing women and youth. She continues to work with her global counterparts like mig33 and other organisations to use the internet to better fulfill government services like e-ducation, e-health, e-commerce, etc.

The winner was Ann Kleynhans, who founded CEOS Technologies in 1998, one of the leading professional project management firms in the South African ICT sector. Ann believes training and providing people with skills is going to become increasingly important in the future. She has been part of the HPBI development program in South Africa for the last six years, developing young talent in South Africa within the workplace whereby they will graduate with either a NQF4 or NQF5.

The Youth in ICT Award - Recognises the contribution of young ICT professionals make to the sector and to the growth and development of the sector as a whole.

Third place went to Joel Seabi, a young, motivated ICT professional within the Limpopo Department of Cooperative Governance, Human Settlements and Traditional Affairs. He is committed to propelling service delivery through ICT enablement and innovation as part of the Government Information Technology Office.

Second place went to Qiniso Mazubane, the founder and Managing Director of Ndiza Information Systems, an ICT company based in Durban that operates nationally. He is an Executive Member of the Black IT Forum, Youth In Action and has a number of other responsibilities in the community.

Winning the award was Lindelwa Nzimande from Words and All, a pioneer in the online communications space and former recipient of the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Scholarship for her Bachelor of Social Science degree. In addition to her business ventures, she is the youngest member to be appointed by Minister Faith Muthambi to the Department of Communications' National Communications Task Team (NCTT), where she chairs the country's Digital Work-stream.

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