



TIA NEWS

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INNOVATING TOMORROW TOGETHER

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TO EXPAND CLEANTECH INITIATIVES

R300 MILLION FUND FOR TECH START-UPS

SA SME Fund, the Technology Innovation Agency, and E Squared announce R300m seed fund of funds investment



P Krappie, K Gordhan, G Leeuw



In a major boost to South Africa's startup technology sector, the SA SME Fund, the DSTI, TIA, and impact investor E Squared Investments have launched a R300 million Seed Fund of Funds aimed at providing critical early-stage capital to startups.

This initiative aims to fund at least 50 technology-driven startups through experienced fund managers, with a focus on innovation and transformation in South Africa.

Ketso Gordhan, CEO of the SA SME Fund, emphasised the role of seed funding as the cornerstone of entrepreneurial success: "Seed capital is the lifeblood of innovation and entrepreneurial growth. Without it, many great ideas would never see the light of day. By injecting capital at this critical early stage, we are not just funding startups – we are cultivating the next generation of industry leaders. South Africa has no shortage of brilliant minds, and this fund will ensure that more of them have the resources they need to succeed. Our goal is to make sure these companies have a fair chance at success and scale in the local and global markets."

The fund addresses a key gap in South Africa's venture capital ecosystem, where later-stage investments, such as Series A and Series B, have historically attracted more funding.

For TIA the partnership with SA SME Funds aims to bolster funds towards Start-ups and SMMEs through a fund of funds approach. This newly formed fund presents an opportunity to play a catalytic role in developing the country's Seed stage funding ecosystem, building the foundations that will deepen investment into the innovation economy and placing the venture capital industry on sustainable footing for the future.

TIA has been pivotal in driving this initiative. Patrick Krappie, acting CEO of TIA, said: "Governments across the globe play a crucial role in fostering innovation ecosystems, and South Africa is no different. The partnership with SA SME Fund aims to bolster funds towards start-ups and SMMEs through a fund of funds approach. We understand that early-stage ventures, especially those grounded in technology, need a supportive environment to thrive."

"The support by the DSTI (through its Innovation Fund) to both TIA and the SA SME Fund has been instrumental in the establishment of this fund, with the view to create a funding platform for seed stage VC funds." Gladwyn Leeuw, CEO of E Squared Investments, highlighted the fund's strategic importance.

"At E Squared, our mission is to empower responsible entrepreneurs driving transformative change. By making strategic capital accessible, we hope to foster innovation and ensure South Africa's tech sector reflects its diversity. This initiative aligns with our vision to be a leading early-stage investor, contributing to entrepreneurial activity and meaningfully impacting millions of lives.

Partnering with experienced fund managers and leveraging synergies with entities like the SA SME Fund, we are confident in driving the success of numerous tech start-ups, paving the way for sustainable economic growth and transformation. By focusing on both innovation and transformation, this fund is ensuring that the future of South Africa's tech sector reflects the diversity and talent of its people."

The partners in this Fund believe that supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses will help create jobs, following the global trend where one in five jobs in the US has been created by tech companies in recent times.

With a focus on high-impact innovation, this investment marks a significant milestone in strengthening South Africa's venture capital landscape. As the fund prepares to allocate capital to at least five skilled fund managers, it is expected to drive the success of dozens of technology startups over the next few years, empowering entrepreneurs to push the boundaries of what's possible.



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS TAKE CENTRE STAGE

The South African Bio-economy Strategy seeks to position the country's bio-based resources as a significant contributor to the country's economy by 2030 through the creation and growth of biotechnology-based industries. As the implementing agent of the Bio-economy strategy, TIA supports the translation of South Africa's knowledge resources into sustainable bio-based solutions for impact.

The Indigenous Knowledge Systems team brought to action its support for the development and commercialisation of IK based innovations in two events in August. These were the IKS Bio Trade Indaba held in Gqeberha and the Indigenous Plant Use Forum (IPUF) held at the !Kha-tu San Culture

and Education Centre in the Western Cape. The two events served to highlight the role of TIA in the IK landscape while creating networking platforms, fostering partnerships and providing market access platforms for IK innovators and knowledge holders.

Indigenous knowledge systems refer to the network of ideas, customs, and information that aims to transmit, maintain, and contextualise indigenous people's long-term relationships with their environment and culture. Events such as these provide a platform to harness this knowledge to create products that promote health, cultural and environmental preservation, and economic growth.



IKS BIO TRADE INDABA

The Indigenous Knowledge and Bio-Trade Indaba is an intervention that aims to stimulate bio-entrepreneurship, which includes the provision of access to expertise and high-end infrastructure. The 2024 Indaba was a collaboration between TIA and the Nelson Mandela University under the theme: Mainstream development & commercialisation of Indigenous Knowledge-based innovation: a catalyst for women empowerment. The Indaba was a vital thought leadership platform curated to provide stakeholder interaction and networking for the indigenous knowledge community and related industries.

The event showcased the investments by TIA towards enabling mainstream commercialisation of indigenous knowledge-based bio-innovations. The IKS Indaba was attended by delegates including indigenous knowledge holders, traditional health practitioners; academia involved in IK-based innovative research, policy makers, and industry at the interface of IK based health, agriculture cosmetics and personal care.

The IKS Indaba kicked off with a school's outreach at the Collegiate Girls' High School, which served as a precursor to the event. The Value of Indigenous Medicinal Plants and Indigenous Knowledge in Developing Solutions For Today's Health Challenges was the theme of the presentation. Following the engaging and interactive presentation, the learners were introduced to Intellectual Property rights and the protection thereof.

Vuyisile Hobololo, Head: IKS at TIA delivered an inspiring opening address that set the tone for the conference, drawing interest of all delegates. He highlighted that it was no coincidence that the IKS Indaba happened in August, a month dedicated to women. Hobololo brought to light the role women



have played over centuries as knowledge holders, healers, nurturers and carers in indigenous societies. As policies and initiatives seek to raise the profile of indigenous knowledge and benefit from its economic value, it is important that the knowledge holders are afforded a meaningful role in the IKS value chain.

The collaboration among stakeholders in innovation, research, and knowledge holders encourages ethical research, product development and entrepreneurship in indigenous knowledge which has the potential to uplift marginalised populations while unlocking powerful new solutions that blend cultural heritage with cutting-edge science and technology. Through this, South Africa can develop various products that can solve various socio-economic challenges such as health, food security, and poverty. Incisive topics featured in the programme of the IKS Indaba made for robust and beneficial interactions from panellists, speakers and delegates. Topics ranged from health - focusing on key diseases such

as cancer, diabetes, and HIV/AIDS; financial and non-financial support for Indigenous Knowledge-Based innovations.

In the quest to innovate and commercialise indigenous knowledge, it is important that knowledge holders and other stakeholders are aware of and respect the intellectual property rights and policies that govern this sector. The Masterclass on Intellectual Property and Indigenous Knowledge session shed light on the intricacies of developing and commercialising indigenous knowledge-based products. The session also explored the new WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge and the implications for the indigenous knowledge systems sector in South Africa.

IKS BIO TRADE INDABA (continued)

One of the sessions that stood out for the delegates was the *International Perspectives on The Impact of Indigenous Knowledge in Human Health*. Panelists were from various countries such as Lesotho, Zambia, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and India, each sharing knowledge and experience in how IKS can have positive impact in developing societies. Head of the Knowledge Digital Library in, Dr Viswajanani Sattigeri shared insights on the documentation and digitisation of ancient indigenous knowledge for the benefit of current and future generations. A vital discussion in the context of most indigenous knowledge being passed from generation to generation via oral tradition.

Innovators, SMEs and entrepreneurs with IK based products also showcased their innovations at the IKS Indaba exhibition. The exhibition hosted 35 innovators and SMEs, twenty of whom are funded and supported by TIA.

The IKS Indaba concluded with an excursion to the Labat Cannabis Facility, a SAHPRA approved medicinal cannabis cultivation facility in Kenton-on-Sea in the Eastern Cape.



INDIGENOUS PLANT USE FORUM (IPUF)

TIA was a sponsor of the annual Indigenous Plant Use Forum (IPUF) which aims to promote the cultural, socio-economic and scientific benefits derived from the sustainable use of the southern African flora.

The conference was a collaboration between TIA and key stakeholders, the University of Johannesburg and the National Research Foundation. A vital element to the success of TIA's strategy to deliver on its mandate is continuous engagement with various stakeholders in the National System of Innovation.

IPUF conference is a multidisciplinary platform that serves as a nexus for diverse interest groups. Academics, traditional healers, anthropologists, businesspeople, resource managers, conservationists, policymakers, and enthusiasts converge to explore the sustainable utilisation of the southern African flora. The conference explores the ways in which ancient plant use knowledge can inspire new innovations and socio-economic development. Exceptional students were recognised at the conference and awarded certificates and prize money for their posters and presentations.



IKS TEAM IN THE SPOTLIGHT

While it is a relatively new area of focus for TIA, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and the commercialisation of IK based technologies and products is vital to South Africa delivering on the Bio-economy Strategy of the country.

As the world's third most biologically diverse country, South Africa has a major comparative advantage. The country is home to almost 10% of the world's known plant species and 15% of all known coastal marine species. The country's rich biodiversity and indigenous knowledge systems provide significant resources for bioprospecting unique offerings. Innovation and the commercialisation of IK Based products and processes can lead to significant socio-economic value for the country.



VUYISILE HOBOLOLO: HEAD INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS (IKS).

Vuyisile completed a Master of Science (Entomology) degree at the University of Stellenbosch, and Master of Intellectual Property Law and Management (Centre for International Intellectual Property Studies (CEIPI) at the University of Strasbourg, France.

He has extensive experience in both scientific and commercialisation having worked at the ARC, CSIR and served Commercialisation Manager at the Armaments Corporation of South Africa (Armscor) where he led commercialisation of intellectual property from defence-related technologies.



ZIMKHITHA SOTENJWA: PORTFOLIO MANAGER IKS

Zimkhitha is an experienced Scientist with having worked in the mining and pharmaceutical industries, specialising in Quality Control, and Traditional medicine R&D. She holds a MTech in Pharm Science and is currently pursuing an PhD in the same area. For Zimkhitha, IKS is perfectly aligned with her passion for Traditional medicine.

"It is fulfilling to work in IKS as it is aligned with my passion for Traditional Medicine. I want to see traditional medicine well positioned and improved to a level where it is standardised and can compete on an equal footing with other pharmaceuticals."



MONDELI MNGOMA: PORTFOLIO MANAGER IKS

Having qualified with an MTech in Chemistry from the Nelson Mandela University, Mondeli joined TIA as Portfolio Manager for IKS in October 2023, having previously been a teacher.

For Mondeli, joining TIA and working in the IKS focus area has been an eye opener. In his own words, "It is exciting to be a part of the drive to recognise and commercialise South African indigenous knowledge and bring it to the fore. South Africa has a wealth of knowledge and practices that can help us deal with various challenges in health, food security and general well-being."



ATHANDILE QWAQWA: INTERN IKS

Athandile joined TIA in May 2024 and is an intern in the IKS Unit armed with a BComm Finance and a post graduate degree in Risk Management.

While the scientific terms were confusing at first, she now finds the area of IKS fascinating. "It is a good thing that the IKS Unit was established at TIA, as people can now commercialise and make money from their knowledge. Bringing IK based knowledge into the mainstream will encourage South Africans to know more about their roots and better appreciate the value of ancient knowledge"



ZANDISIWE MLOTSHWA: INTERN IKS

Zandisiwe joined the IKS Team as an intern in August 2024. With a BSc In Botany and Microbiology,

"My university project was in IK based plants. Collecting data from traditional healers. Landing in this Unit is the beginning of an exciting journey for me. I am excited to see that we can realise economic benefit from knowledge that our communities have held for centuries."

SA INNOVATION SUMMIT

TIA partnered with the South African Innovation Summit (SAIS 2024) as headline sponsor. The 2024 iteration of SAIS was themed, 'Catalysing Capital: Accelerating Africa's Innovation Ecosystem'. The event was held at the Cape Town International Convention Centre in September.

SAIS is the largest start-up event in Africa and provides various platforms for developing and showcasing African innovation while facilitating thought-leadership. The event brings together top entrepreneurs, investors, corporates, policy makers and thought leaders to support start-ups and inspire sustained economic growth across Africa. SAIS exists to catalyse innovation in the economy by facilitating deals, decisions, and discussions for advancing the tech-entrepreneur, start-up, and innovation ecosystem.

In his remarks at the opening ceremony of the Summit, the Acting CEO of TIA Mr Patrick Krappie, reflected on how the partnership between TIA and the SA Innovation Summit and other stakeholders has had an impact in the start-up economy.

"The importance of a platform such as SAIS goes beyond just the event but creates opportunities for start-ups to gain traction in the market. The government through entities like TIA provides funding and initiatives for innovators to develop technology solutions. A potential area of growth is government procurement of locally developed technologies to enhance service delivery. To tap into this market, start-up enterprises need to focus on developing technologies geared towards key government priorities," he said.



Mr Vuyisile Hobololo, Head: IKS moderated the session on Accelerating DeepTech Innovations through collaborations- Perspective from the ecosystem players. The session highlighted the value of collaboration among organisations in the innovation space to maximise opportunities for innovators and entrepreneurs.

Ms Sebenzile Matsebula, TIA Board Member facilitated the session on Innovating for inclusivity focusing on people with disabilities. The informative session shed light on how innovation can benefit from the inclusion of people with disability as innovators and beneficiaries of technologies.

Nine TIA funded innovations were given the platform to showcase their technologies at the TIA pavilion which was part of the SAIS 2024 exhibition. To further support these TIA investees, their profiles were featured in the Match and Invest Platform to assist them with leveraging further funding and market access. Business to Business meetings were some of the features of SAIS2024, these provided a platform for innovators, funders and customers to directly interact and find areas of mutual benefit.

The success of the SAIS2024 is testimony to TIA's commitment to enriching the innovation landscape to create an enabling environment for start-ups and SMME's.



The TIA delegation, led by acting CEO, Mr Patrick Krappie included board members, Executives, heads of unit and portfolio managers. SAIS offered opportunities for thought leadership in sessions where the TIA delegation was involved either as facilitators or panellists. The Empowering Grassroots Innovation moderated by Teboho Seseng, Manager Stakeholder Relations explored inclusivity of innovation, to include innovators outside of formal institutions.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS APPOINTED TO TIA BOARD

TIA welcomes the appointment of two additional members to the TIA Board by Dr Blade Nzimande, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation. The appointment of additional members will provide the agency with a full board compliment. The additional members of the TIA Board are Prof Keolebogile Motaung and Mr Loyiso Tyira.

The Board plays a pivotal oversight role, helping to guide the strategic direction of the Agency. This Board brings with it a wealth of experience and expertise from various areas in the innovation ecosystem. These include venture capital, techno-entrepreneurship, intellectual property management, technology transfer and governance.

"The addition of the two members will bolster our efforts to deliver on the TIA mandate with the expertise they bring. Their mix of skills will complement our current board and further strengthen TIA's position in the National System of Innovation," says Mr Patrick Krappie, Acting Chief Executive Officer of TIA.



Mr Loyiso Tyira

Mr Loyiso Tyira's background is in IT with a computer science qualification from the University of Cape Town, higher certificates from UNISA Business School and GIBS, a Postgraduate Diploma in the field of Digital Business from the University of Witwatersrand. Loyiso was also awarded Postgraduate Diploma in Management (Digital Business) from the Wits Business School.. His dedication to the ICT industry earned him a Lifetime

Achievement Award at the EPF Tech Awards hosted by the Empire Foundation and the DSI. He is a business owner and, in the past, has been employed as a Network Engineer, Software Developer, and Information Systems Manager.

He is the founder and Managing Director of Future Business Consulting, a member of the Executive Committee of MICT SETA and the Chair of its ICT Steering Committee, and he is on the Board of Broadband Infraco SCO, where he sits in various investment, and ICT related committees.

Prof Keolebogile Motaung

Prof Motaung started her career as a Qualified Medical Technologist in 1992, progressed as a lecturer at the Technikon Pretoria and later, as the Assistant Dean: Research, Innovation and Engagement at the Tshwane University of



Technology. She is currently the Director Technology Transfer & Innovation at the Durban University of Technology.

She holds a D Tech Biomedical Technology from Tshwane University in conjunction with University of California, Davis. She has many other qualifications obtained during a career of more than 30 years in the fields of scientific research, education, leadership and financial management.

She is affiliated with the Health Professions Council of South Africa, South African Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, South African Medical Technology of South Africa, and American Society of Cell Biology and Molecular Biology.

LOCALLY DEVELOPED NANO BUBBLE TECHNOLOGY INCREASES AQUAPONIC YIELD BY 50%



The agricultural sector is central to sustaining employment opportunities, fostering economic growth, reducing poverty and improving food security in South Africa.

TIA in collaboration with Fine Bubble Technologies (Pty) Ltd launched a nano bubble aquaponics pilot plant, an integration of aquaculture (fish farming) and hydroponics, at De Grendel School of Skills in Cape Town in August. The pilot plant is to demonstrate the use of nano bubble technology to enhance the efficiency of water, oxygen uptake and nutrient delivery in aquaponics, thus reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.

Fine Bubble Technologies (Pty) Ltd are pioneers in natural water treatment. Through their locally developed and patented nano bubble generators, they have developed unique aquaponics systems that exemplify the integration of advanced science and indigenous knowledge to promote economic growth and social development. The patented nanotechnology is revolutionising the aquaponics industry with a natural cleaning process that aerates water at a rate of 222 million bubbles per 1ml of water, a first in the water treatment industry. The wide range of applications of the nano bubble technology include agriculture, aquaculture/aquaponics, medical cleaning and water purification.

The development of the technology was also co-funded by DSTI through the Agriculture Bioeconomy Innovation Partnership Programme (ABIPP).

ABIPP is an instrument of the DSTI, established to support the agricultural bioeconomy. It facilitates, coordinates and funds multi-institutional, multi-stakeholder and co-funded agricultural bioeconomy initiatives contributing to increased productivity, food security and rural economic development.

The pilot plant is at a larger scale than the Phase I funded by DSTI, where it was demonstrated that the nanobubble technology increased productivity by up to 50% in both the aquaculture and hydroponic operations. This was a great achievement because which hamper productivity. Additionally, systems currently available for introduction of ambient air/oxygen within aquaculture and aquaponics in the market are costly and remain inefficient. These high costs present the challenge of high start-up capital creating a barrier to entry for small, upcoming and subsistence farmers.



The current phase of the project (aquaponics pilot plant), located at De Grendel School of Skills, seeks to demonstrate an aquaponics system that lead to viable and franchisable business model when operated with nanobubble technology. The benefit for this technology diffusion to the school is that the produce from the pilot will be used for school meals and the surplus sold to the local community.

"The installation at De Grendel School of Skills stands as a testament to the potential of bio-innovation to drive economic growth, improve human health, and create sustainable, prosperous communities. TIA supports innovations geared at harnessing the wealth of natural and intellectual resources in alignment with the DSTI Bioeconomy strategy. Additionally, Fine Bubble Technologies (Pty) Ltd is a shining example of how innovative solutions can address the multifaceted goals of the Bio-economy Strategy.

"By involving local communities in the development and maintenance of the aquaponics system at De Grendel School of Skills, Fine Bubble Technologies is enabling access to the technology, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment," said Mr Sibusiso Manana, Head of Agriculture at TIA.



OPENING OF **ONEBIO** INNOVATION CENTRE

TIA's most recently established platform, the **OneBio Innovation Centre (OBIC)** was officially opened in **Salt River, Cape Town – September.**

OBIC has been established to support South African biotech start-ups by offering access to fully equipped, world class, biotech laboratory and office space. The equipment in the Centre will cater for research in the omics field such as genomics, proteomics, metabolomics.

OBIC's main offering is providing access to a co-working laboratory to directly support, concentrate and enable current and future biotech startups, especially for OMICS related research. OBIC will be an incubator and accelerator. Local biotech startups will have the ability to conduct their research and technology validation work at the Centre.

The event was hosted at the OneBio Centre which will offer more than laboratory space, but includes, office space and a recreational area. State of the art equipment to the value of R5million Eppendorf South Africa. Through this, Eppendorf SA becomes OBIC's private funder

that will complement the public funding from TIA. Eppendorf is a leading life sciences company that develops and sells instruments, consumables and services for liquid, sample and cell handling in laboratories worldwide. Eppendorf's product portfolio includes pipettes, pipette tips, centrifuges, mixers and ultra-low temperature equipment and well as a wide range of high-quality consumables. These products have been made available to OBIC through the R5million worth of equipment funding.

Attendees included representatives from Eppendorf SA, the DSTI, and various Biotechnology practitioners. As part of OneBio's commitment to building skills capacity in the biotechnology and omics sector, students were also invited to the event. TIA was represented by Acting Executive: Bioeconomy, Mr Mohohlo Molatudi and the Technology Platforms Team.



TIA MOU WITH NETWORK FOR

GLOBAL INNOVATION TO EXPAND CLEANTECH INITIATIVES

TIA has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Network for Global Innovation (NGIN), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP). The MoU signed in October served as a soft launch of the Just Transition to the Future, a global series focused on the critical energy technologies needed to achieve a just transition to a carbon-free future.



This initiative is an additional and valuable pillar to TIA's partnership with its international partners under the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP) and seeks to support 30 early-stage companies that demonstrate innovative energy technologies and business models.

The partnership with NGIN will also facilitate the implementation of innovation activities under the second phase of the Global Cleantech Innovation Programme (GCIP-SA) implemented by TIA, in South Africa. This new phase of GCIP-SA seeks to expand cleantech centres across five South African provinces thus creating a "hub and spoke" model to strengthen capacity in national institutions and organisations, ensuring broader support for innovators across the country, specifically in universities and rural areas.

NGIN's mission is to slow climate change and build economic wealth at the same time – globally, in real time, and at scale. Fred Walti, CEO of NGIN is an expert in creating innovation ecosystems that drive economic development, in his remarks he said, "Our mission as NGIN is to slow climate change by empowering cleantech entrepreneurs to succeed globally. The future of the world depends on the success of cleantech to achieve a non-carbon economy in every industry. Cleantech can be a great source of employment and wealth."



Through this partnership, TIA seeks to address the gaps and barriers in South Africa's Cleantech innovation system. As an execution partner, NGIN will provide support and training to regional hubs in South Africa to expand GCIP reach and network.

"Going forward, TIA seeks to intensify the role of implementing partners in strengthening innovation ecosystem. This partnership with NGIN will assist us with a diagnosis of the system, guide and support incubator hubs in underserved provinces. With the number of projects in our portfolio, partnerships are a vital element to TIA delivering on its mandate. The result we hope to see is an increase in the number of SMMEs receiving technology support, skills and enterprise development support. By strengthening the hub and spoke model throughout South Africa, our partners will be able to support innovations informed by local needs and challenges," said Patrick Krappie, Acting CEO of TIA.

Following the signing of the MoU, Fred Walti held meetings with various stakeholders of Regional Hubs to ascertain the scope and gaps in the different regions. Part of the agreement in the MoU is the training and upskilling of the regional hubs based on their needs to formulate provincial and regional challenges informed by the strengths and needs in their local economies to drive cleantech innovation.

HAVE YOUR SAY!

Whether you have a **compliment / complaint / need more information** about our **services or your application**, get in touch with us and we'll get back to you as soon as we can.

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Our Vision

To be a leading technology innovation agency that stimulates and supports technological innovation to improve the quality of life for all South Africans



Our Mission

To facilitate the translation of South Africa's knowledge resource into sustainable socio-economic opportunities.

Our Values



Teamwork

Together we can do more. Fostering teamwork creates a TIA work culture that values collaboration and co-operation.



Integrity

We strive to do what we said we would, when we said we would do it.



Professionalism

We apply the most appropriate skills, competencies, experience and knowledge of best practices cohesively in conducting our work.



Transparency

We engage in inclusive open communication, and hold each other accountable for our performance and conduct.



Excellence

We will be accountable to all stakeholders to deliver exceptionally high standards of work and performance.



Innovation

We foster a culture where we continually nurture and implement new ideas from our staff and stakeholders that enhance how we do things and deliver services.