

THUTHUKA

ONLINE GRANT FUNDING SYSTEM

NLC DRIVING TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH THE ONLINE GRANT FUNDING SYSTEM

In a bid to enhance transparency and governance in grant funding, the **National Lotteries Commission (NLC)** has introduced an online grant funding system, a groundbreaking digital platform that has redefined how grant funding is managed and monitored across South Africa. Speaking on the **Mail & Guardian Podcast**, **Ms Poppy Tshabalala**, the **NLC's Chief Information Officer**, highlighted how the system is transforming the organisation's funding ecosystem — from application to disbursement — ensuring that every rand is used for its intended purpose.

"The system was developed to digitise and modernise our funding processes," said Tshabalala. "It allows us to track applications in real time, conduct automated compliance checks, and monitor the full lifecycle of projects funded through the National Lotteries Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF)."

Previously, funding applications were paper-based and manually processed — a time-consuming process prone to delays, inefficiencies and gaps in accountability. With the new digital platform, the NLC has streamlined its workflows and strengthened oversight through technology-driven governance.

How the System Works

The system enables digital applications, automated compliance reviews, and secure data storage, creating a transparent and efficient environment for managing grants. Beneficiaries can now submit applications online, track their status, and report on project progress digitally — reducing the need for physical submissions.

A key innovation lies in the system's audit trail and real-time monitoring features, which give decision-makers clear visibility into each project's progress. This enhances transparency for both internal governance and public accountability.

"Every funding decision, document, and milestone is captured digitally," Tshabalala explained. "This not only supports good governance but also ensures that communities benefit from efficient service delivery."



Looking ahead, Tshabalala revealed plans to enhance the platform through **AI-driven analytics, mobile accessibility, and integration with other government systems** — further strengthening its role in digital governance.

“Technology is at the heart of how we are rebuilding trust and accountability in public institutions,” Tshabalala said. “Through the online system, we’re ensuring that every lottery rand contributes meaningfully to community upliftment, while maintaining transparency at every step,” she concluded.

The NLC’s digital transformation marks a new chapter in how technology can empower institutions to deliver on their mandate — proving that innovation and accountability can go hand in hand in driving development across South Africa.

Aligning with Government’s Digital Transformation

The system aligns with South Africa’s e-government objectives to digitise public services and improve accountability in the management of public resources. By integrating data protection standards and secure encryption, the NLC is safeguarding sensitive beneficiary information throughout the funding process.

Empowering Beneficiaries and Communities

For non-profit organisations and community-based entities, the system represents a major shift towards accessibility and agility. Applications are processed faster, communication is clearer, and compliance reporting is more user-friendly.

The digital platform ensures that funds reach communities quickly — resulting in **faster delivery of social impact projects** in areas such as education, sports, arts, and social development.

Of utmost importance, **this system is zero-rated for users**, meaning that applicants can access it **without incurring data costs**. This ensures inclusivity, removing digital barriers for organisations in remote or low-connectivity areas.

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