

Local NPOs awarded for innovation, resilience during Covid-19

Nedbank Private Wealth held a once-off initiative to recognise innovation and resilience demonstrated by local non-profit organisations (NPOs) during the Covid-19 crisis. The winners of the Nedbank Private Wealth Innovation Awards were recently announced, with two awards presented: a main award and a technology award.



Three independent judges assessed almost 150 entries. The judges looked for organisations that showed financial resilience, strong leadership and effective risk management, as well as the ability to harness technology successfully to continue or even improve their service offerings to beneficiaries.

Collaboration and partnerships

A common theme throughout the entries was heightened collaboration and partnerships that led to extended reach and significant impact. The NPOs that entered demonstrated their ability to be flexible and nimble in serving surging needs in their communities. The judges were encouraged to see the extent to which technology had enabled beneficiary-centred solutions and the extent to which these solutions had been embedded in the NPOs. Instead of these solutions being once-off, a number of NPOs have shifted to new operating models with cost savings and scaled reach and impact.



Local NPO seeks to transform, redevelop Hillbrow's Florence Nightingale House

22 Apr 2021



Award winners

The main award of R600,000 recognised an NPO that demonstrated resilience and an innovative response to the Covid-19 crisis. The technology award of R400,000 was awarded to an NPO that did the same, but through the application of technology.

Main award winner: Book Dash - a social-impact publisher of new African children's books.



A hundred books by the age of five

Book Dash believes that every child should own 100 books by the age of five, and that this will uplift these children and eventually our society as a whole. Its innovative publishing model reduces the costs of publishing by approximately 80%, which means that it can offer books to donors and partners at R10 a copy. At this low price, Book Dash can distribute vast amounts of books to children who previously would not have had the privilege of owning books. Book Dash was not deterred by the challenges amid the coronavirus pandemic – in fact, 2020 marked the distribution of their one millionth book.

Book Dash has meticulously recorded its innovative model for book publishing from the onset so that other organisations can publish their books in the same way. Under the strict lockdown conditions since the start of the pandemic, Book Dash decided to move its book-publishing model online, adapting to a virtual environment that allows volunteers from all over the country and the world to participate. It added this new model to its manual so that others could iterate on this approach, enabling the innovation to have exponential impact. There have been at least 10 instances of organisations using the Book Dash model to publish new books.

In addition to continuing with its innovative content creation methods, Book Dash collaborated with its distribution partners to donate books to families that were receiving food parcels and learning packs through these partners.



The Appliance Bank joins local SRI chapter in tackling e-waste in SA

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Technology award winner: The Feenix Trust - connects communities so they can achieve debt-free education.

Through its online crowdfunding platform, Feenix connects university students with individual and corporate donors who share the belief that access to education should not depend on wealth.

In May 2020, Feenix launched the #CaptheGap Covid-19 Student Relief Fund using and adapting their existing crowdfunding platform to change the focus from student debt to crowdfunding for crisis relief during the pandemic. Within five months, the #CaptheGap fund raised R3.4m to support over 400 students with monthly food vouchers, monthly data packages and laptops.

Feenix's key learnings from its adaptation to the global pandemic centres around collaboration, partnerships, agility and innovation. Feenix's application and evidence contain many valuable lessons for all organisations, especially in the



following:

- Responding to the needs of the target group in the crisis.
- Using existing and available technologies.
- Collaborating and partnering with other services providers, supplier channels and existing distribution networks (for example sending food and data vouchers via text messages).
- A willingness to take risks, be flexible and make decisions quickly, with the help of innovation and supportive partners.

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