

Government needs innovation for service delivery

Public Service and Administration Minister Collins Chabane says the public sector must challenge itself to be creative and embrace innovation as a new way of doing government business more smartly and delivering its services.



Public Service and Administration Minister, Collins Chabane has urged all public servants to find innovative ways to deal with service delivery and improve efficiencies. Image: GCIS

Speaking at the Centre for Public Service Conference at the Westin Hotel in Cape Town, the Minister said this was because the public service needed to deliver government services for education, health and the provision of water and sanitation, among others. He said service deliver needs to be quick, efficient and effective.

Chabane said government must also change its mindset and move away from daily routines and try to rid itself of the "fear" of new ideas because it was this that remained an obstacle that hindered public servants from improving service delivery.

"Innovation enables us to stretch ourselves, and to think beyond the borders of our mandates to find integrated innovative solutions - be they prototypes, processes, improving management systems, better organisational structures, or even the use of electronic devices," said the Chabane.

He said the theme of "Building an innovative state machinery for maximised service delivery impact", for this conference was aimed at helping government serve its citizens with diligence and resolve the challenges standing in the way of excellence.

Leverage innovation for efficiency

Currently, the public service employs about 1.3m people in South Africa.

"Around the world, other governments are leveraging information, communications and technology to excel in service delivery. While we understand that this is complex and diverse, its potential must be used as a tool to build, empower and benefit the country," he said.

Science and Technology Minister Naledi Pandor said public servants needed to be challenged and to use analytical thinking to break down barriers for innovation.

Pandor said performance agreements for all public servants need to be changed to include innovation a part of their performance evaluations.

"What we think is service needs to change. I often look at our performance agreements and what they have in them and it seems the only performance agreement that requires innovation is the one in place for the Director-General of Science and Technology," she said.

Pandor said some public servants often blocked innovation in fear that they would lose their jobs. She gave an example of how the most frequently asked question when she was the Minister for Home Affairs, was how the introduction of smart ID cards would affect people's jobs or result in job losses.

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