

Gov-X Innovation Challenge: What it is and why it's important for SA's cybersecurity

About a week ago it was announced that the University of the Western Cape: Future-Innovation Lab (UWC Fil) partnered with KnowBe4 to host a cyber-themed learning programme and hackathon called 'Gov-X Innovation Challenge'. UWC Fil is also reportedly working with the CyberSecurity Hub and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies for this challenge. So what exactly is Gov-X?



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The Gov-X Innovation Challenge, which will take place between February and May 2021, aims to drive innovation towards a more digitised and cyber-safe South Africa. Data breaches rose by an alarming 500% during the pandemic and this has put immense pressure on businesses to protect data and individuals. There's also increased awareness around the lack of support for victims of online gender-based violence in Africa, with a significant percentage of women concerned about their safety online.

Participants in the challenge will work on ideas designed to tackle the cybersecurity issues facing businesses and critical infrastructure providers, and ultimately, to provide secure spaces in which vulnerable end users can live, work and transact online.

Proposed ideas and solutions will be presented to judges from businesses, government officials and industry leaders. Participants will also receive hands-on training, tutorials and advice from security specialists throughout the process.

The themes that are set to be tackled at the challenge include:

- Provide a national competency via the National Computer Security Incident Response team (CSIRT).
- To prevent and curb online gender-based violence and provide assistance to victims.
- Raise awareness initiatives for citizens and creating general cybersecurity awareness within communities and raising the profile of cybersecurity issues.

Prizes include R100,000 for first place, R30,000 for second place and R10,000 for the third runner-up. Additional prizes include bursaries for cybersecurity qualifications. Entrants will also have the opportunity to earn internships at sponsorship organisations and mentorships with industry leaders.

Words from José Frantz, Anna Collard, and Pinky Kekana

UWC's Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Innovation, José Frantz, says: "The need for improved cybersecurity is real for everyone. Also, raising the awareness of cyberbullying which is used as a way of controlling, threatening and bullying others is essential. As we aim to engage in this topic of cybersecurity, let's use our talents and creativity to help improve cybersecurity for all. This innovation challenge is open to staff and students - if you have experienced online bullying before, be part of the solution - find an innovative way to combat cyberbullying."

Anna Collard, SVP of content strategy and evangelist for KnowBe4 Africa, says: "There is a lack of cybersecurity skills in Africa, with only 10,000 professionals on the continent today. Our goal is to work together to find innovative approaches to meet the urgent need for strong cybersecurity response capacities to protect citizens as well as enhance security skills development."

Deputy minister of communications, Pinky Kekana, says: "Protecting South Africa's vulnerable end-users and finding solutions for the scourge of gender-based violence is a priority for us, as is finding solutions for the myriad problems in the cyber domain, and it is crucial we have the skills to do this now, and in the future."

To participate in the innovation challenge, register [here](#).

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