LAUNCH of
THE NATIONAL ROLL OUT OF THE MUNICIPAL INNOVATION MATURITY INDEX (MIMI)
A tool to measure innovation in municipalities
(As part of the Innovation for Inclusive Development (IID) Seminar Series)

Concept Note

BACKGROUND
As cities strive for sustainability, we have to take cognisance of the impact of climate change and urbanisation on ageing municipal infrastructure, shortages of water and energy, as well as the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on household income and reduced municipal revenues. This places immense pressure on local government to ensure that cities and municipalities become digitally, physically, and economically smart to respond to these challenges. Municipalities have to deploy information communication technologies and innovation to stimulate citizen action, combat crime, stimulate economic recovery by supporting new sources of growth, deliver quality basic services, employ carbon-neutral energy generation methods and explore innovative finance to fund smart infrastructure in cities. To confront these challenges, amongst other things, municipalities have to adapt and manage innovation and technology. However, this raises a need for municipal decision-makers to understand the innovation landscape in municipalities and how this can be managed.

To achieve the objective of assessing the innovation landscape in municipalities, the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) supported the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN) to develop and pilot the Municipal Innovation Maturity Index (MIMI). The MIMI is a decision support tool designed to measure the innovation capabilities, practices and the innovation readiness of the municipalities to adopt innovations to improve service delivery. The MIMI measures the capabilities of individual employees and municipalities to learn, adopt, implement, and institutionalise innovations that can improve the functioning and performance of municipalities. The tool assesses how a municipality, as an organisation, responds to Science, Technology and Innovations (STIs) linked to service delivery, benchmarks the STI readiness level of the municipalities and determines innovation maturity levels of a municipality. The tool is also designed to recommend areas of improvement in adopting innovative practices and to provide insights for municipalities to plan for innovation and to migrate to higher levels of innovation maturity.

The national rollout of this tool will increase the coverage of the municipalities participation in the MIMI to over 50% over the MTSF. A national municipal innovation practices report will be released periodically to inform municipal managers and the local government sector stakeholders of the state of innovation uptake by the South African municipalities. The piloting of the MIMI has demonstrated that the index has benefits to deliver to municipalities and this presented a business case for scaling-up and rolling out of this instrument nationally. The MIMI has been developed through several phases since its inception. The results of piloting the innovation measurement index in cities/municipalities show exciting results and present challenges the South African cities and municipalities should confront.
The national roll out of this index as a transformative policy instrument further supports the objectives of South Africa’s urban development policies such as the Integrated Urban Development Framework (IUDF), the government’s agenda for smart cities, the country’s response to the New Urban Agenda commitments. The New Urban Agenda of the UN-Habitat is about ensuring that cities can use innovation and technology to respond to the New Urban Agenda’s transformative commitments. Similarly, innovation in municipalities is a part of the broader Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda; in particular, Goal 11 of the SDG states that investing in innovative projects is one of the ways countries can build resilient cities and achieve sustainable development. Moreover, a capable state, as envisaged in the National Development Plan (NDP), can only be realised through innovation management skills and development programme for officials in government and municipalities in particular.

Instilling a culture of innovation in municipalities will require their involvement and participation. The ultimate goal is to improve service delivery, accelerate social transformation, and alleviate poverty in keeping with the ideals of a developmental state that South Africa aspires to achieve.

OBJECTIVES AND TARGETED AUDIENCE
The overarching objective of the launch event is to introduce MIMI to the wider local government stakeholders as a self-assessment and a reflective tool that assesses innovation performance, practices and the maturity levels of municipalities. The event will also share the preliminary report of the municipal innovation measurements based on the insight emerging from the pilot phase of this index. Municipal and local government policy and decision-makers, administrators, planners and innovation practitioners, city managers, universities, research institutions and private sector partners supporting innovation and innovative programmes in municipalities are encouraged to participate in the webinar.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
The national rollout of the MIMI launch will enhance the capacity of municipalities and officials to plan, integrate, embed innovation and technology in their daily operations and will create an enabling environment for innovation uptake in municipalities. The event will also create innovation awareness amongst municipalities and in cities. The webinar creates a platform to recognise innovative municipalities, encourage municipalities to participate in the national roll out of innovation measurements through the MIMI. Furthermore, it is envisaged that the webinar will create a space to understand enabling factors for innovation adoption in municipalities, share experiences and facilitate a dialogue for the benchmarking of municipal innovative practices in South African cities. It will also encourage municipalities to plan for innovation and identify areas that require investment support, capacity building and business process improvements necessary for smart and innovative future municipalities.

FOCUS OF THE WEBINAR
The MIMI Webinar will address the following topics:
1. Preliminary report on the state of innovation practices in South African municipalities;
2. A case for awarding and recognising innovative practices in municipalities;
3. International experience in innovation performance assessment and measurements in municipalities and public sectors; and
4. Plan for the national rollout of the MIMI.