



MINISTRY
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JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT

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Final call for public service health innovations as the GEMS Health Award deadline approaches

Public service teams with proven solutions that improve healthcare are urged to submit their entries before Friday, 30 October 2026, for consideration for the 2026/27 GEMS Health Award. The award funding serves to support the further development and replication of health innovations.

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), the Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) and the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) are making the final call as entries close this week for the National Batho Pele Service Excellence and Innovation Awards.

There is no separate application for the GEMS Health Award. Teams must enter the Innovation category through CPSI at <https://cpsiregistrations.co.za/>. All health-related finalists are automatically considered for the GEMS Health Award.

The call is directed at public service teams whose implemented projects address healthcare challenges and demonstrate measurable improvements for patients or staff. Teams in clinics, hospitals, district offices and health units are encouraged to showcase solutions that use resources effectively and could be replicated elsewhere. Full eligibility requirements and submission details are available through the entry portal.

The 2025 Gold winner, Transforming Oral Health Services in the Knysna and Bitou Sub-district in the Western Cape, brought dental care closer to rural communities by repurposing unused dental chairs into mobile units serving five rural clinics. Waiting times fell from six months to two weeks, while treatment capacity increased by 30%.

The Silver winner, Greytown Hospital's Remote Learning Channel for Pharmacy Assistants and Ward-Based Nurses, used WhatsApp, short videos and visual posters to bring training directly to healthcare workers. The project supported better medicine management, reduced expiry-related wastage and safer patient care.

These projects show how practical changes in everyday service delivery can benefit communities and provide models for other facilities. Teams with similar evidence of impact are encouraged to enter before the deadline.

The Minister for the Public Service and Administration, Inkosi Mzamo Buthelezi, MP, said: “The best solutions in the public service often come from the people closest to the problem. Repurposed dental chairs are bringing care to five rural clinics. A WhatsApp group is making medicine safer. That is Batho Pele in action. We want to find more of these ideas, reward them and see them spread.”

The Chief Operations Officer of GEMS, Dr Vuyo Gqola, said: “As the largest restricted medical scheme for public servants, GEMS has a vested interest in a health system that delivers meaningful outcomes. This award is more than a trophy for the shelf; it is an investment in advancing proven innovations so that more patients, across more communities, can benefit from the ingenuity and innovative solutions developed by public servants.”

The Centre for Public Service Innovation (CPSI) manages the Innovation category, overseeing the assessment and adjudication of public sector innovations. GEMS is represented on the Innovation Adjudication Panel, where a representative, in consultation with fellow panel members, contributes to the selection of the winning project or projects in alignment with the Scheme’s mandate and social investment priorities.

Enter your proven health innovation

Submit your project through the Innovation category at <https://cpsiregistrations.co.za/> by Friday, 30 October 2026. Media are encouraged to share this call with public service audiences to help eligible teams submit their entries in time.

ENDS

Notes to editors

About the National Batho Pele Service Excellence and Innovation Awards: The awards recognise public servants and institutions that deliver excellent, innovative and people-centred service in line with the Batho Pele principles. The 2026/27 ceremony takes place in February 2027.

About CPSI: The Centre for Public Service Innovation is a government component in the Public Service and Administration portfolio. Its mandate is to entrench a culture and practice of innovation in the public sector, unearthing, rewarding and replicating solutions that improve service delivery.

About GEMS: The Government Employees Medical Scheme is a restricted medical scheme established to provide affordable healthcare cover to public service employees and their families.

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