



Meet the judges for the Innovation Challenge “The Forge”

Ms Alesimo Mwanga, Consultant – Community and Communication: Founders Factory Africa



Alesimo has over seven years' experience in the start-up ecosystem space in Africa. She has previously worked in management consulting and has contributed in one of the largest global entrepreneurship reports before 30. Alesimo is passionate about the local economic development in rural and urban communities across Africa. She was recently listed as 100 South Africa Shining Stars in 2020.

Alesimo is a strategist and currently a Community & Communications Consultant at Founders Factory Africa, Director at PAWA Africa, and Advisory Board Chairperson for the Business & Information Administration Department at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. She has played many roles in the development and entrepreneurship sector in South Africa and various African countries.

She was the youngest contributor to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Report for South Africa in 2017. Her contribution focused on the impact of African migration and entrepreneurship activity in the United States of America and the United Kingdom. This report was also presented at the Global Entrepreneurship Congress hosted in Johannesburg in 2017.

Alesimo has a master's in commerce specializing in Development Economics from the University of Johannesburg. She has presented and moderated at various global and regional platforms on entrepreneurship, policy reforms, the role of private and public sector partnerships, women and youth empowerment, local economic stimulation and participation in the mainstream economy.

Ms Mahlatse Tolamo, Managing Director: Global Entrepreneurship Network and Ecosystem Enabler at 22 ON SLOANE

Mahlatse is the managing director of the Global Entrepreneurship Network and Ecosystem Enabler at 22 ON SLOANE. Her role requires her to help the organisation grow, create awareness of the entrepreneurial community and the startups within the local ecosystem and beyond. The most important aspect of her role is bringing together like-minded startups who understand the value of collaboration and can positively contribute to each other's development.



She is currently the Startup Huddle Johannesburg Organiser, a programme designed to build and strengthen local entrepreneurship ecosystems — by helping one entrepreneur at a time and to educate, engage and connect entrepreneurs and the Entrepreneurship World Cup South Africa Organiser, a programme that helps entrepreneurs at all stages maximise their potential. It combines a broad-reaching pitch competition, aimed at ventures ranging from the idea stage to the growth stage, with a virtual accelerator programme to help all participants launch, strengthen, and scale their enterprises

Mr Brian Mphahlele, Executive Commercialisation at Technology Innovation Agency



Brian is an *au fait* Intellectual property management, commercialisation and business development executive. In the period that he has been in this field, he has done the following, among others (in both the private and public sector):

- Negotiated and concluded a number of royalty-bearing patent and know-how license deals across various industrial sectors with local and international companies (covering legal/technological/financial dimensions)
- Spun out a few companies
- Negotiated patent pooling/collaboration agreements for joint exploitation with international organisations
- Raised investment for technology development and commercialisation initiatives
- Founding CEO for a pharmaceutical company capitalised by a large institutional investor with assets in infectious diseases, skin therapy and women health
- Advised and negotiated intellectual property rights in collaborative research and development (both national & international),
- Conference participations including invitations to give talks (titled: 'IP commercialisation, practical approach' and 'alternative sources of capital for technology ventures') at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) Summer School on IP held in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, "The future of nuclear medicine" at Skolkovo Business School, Moscow, Russia, 2018.

He graduated in science (microbiology and biotechnology) and law (LLB) from Wits University and University of South Africa respectively. Mr Mphahlele also completed an accelerated executive education programme from the University of Emory Goizueta Business School.

Among others, Brian serves on the UWC Innovations Pty Ltd and Innovolve Pty Ltd boards as a non-executive director. He previously served on Eyeborn (Pty) Ltd, Technifin Pty Ltd, UVIRCO (Pty) Ltd (Chairman), NTP Radioisotopes SOC, Ketlaphela SOC and Free Radical

Process Design (Pty) Ltd. In his role as TIA commercialisation executive, he is responsible for the full investment life cycle spanning deal origination, consummation and ultimate exit across various industrial sectors.

Mr Isaac Nthako, Head: Growth Corp Africa

Isaac Nthako has over 20 years of experience in strategy, innovation, change management, project management, international trade and development, early-stage project development and investment promotion. In addition, Isaac has over 10 years of in-depth business and strategy experience in developing markets, particularly Africa. He started his career with a stint in the pharmaceutical industry in 2002 in India, as a management trainee.

In 2004, Isaac joined FNB as a business analyst for an internal strategy and innovation department and was soon promoted to be an innovation project manager. He has been judging innovations and running pilots since 2004.



As a certified Prince 2 Project Manager, Isaac has delivered a plethora of projects for the leading financial services companies in South Africa. He is the head of Growth Corp Africa and assists small/start-up to large companies to develop strategies and new projects/new ventures, focusing on early-stage development and pre-transaction activities, in Africa.

Isaac leads a team that develops methodologies for managing and developing partnerships, designing and deploying early-stage projects/ventures, and structuring organisations and systems to minimise risk and maximise opportunities while building sustainable enterprises. Isaac holds an undergraduate degree in Marketing and several post-graduate business administration qualifications.