

# Winning NPOs: Nedbank Green Economy Competition 2023

The inaugural Nedbank Green Economy Competition, which recognises NPOs that are creating demonstrable impact in agriculture, energy, water management or waste management, saw three non-profit organisations walk away with cash prizes at the Trialogue Business in Society Conference.



Winning NPOs of the inaugural Nedbank Green Economy Competition

The conference, held from 9-10 May 2023, brought together delegates from business, the non-profit sector and government under the overarching theme of inclusive and purposeful business. Each NPO also received a valuable opportunity to exhibit at the conference, enabling them to showcase their work and interact with potential funders.

My Walk, an innovative NPO that recycles medical materials into school shoes, walked away with R100,000 as the overall winner. Letcee (Little elephant training centre for early education), which supports food gardens and nutrition through early childhood development (ECD) educators, was awarded R90,000; and Nature Connect, an initiative that focuses on skills development and job creation in the conservation sector, won R85,000.

The winners were announced by Poovi Pillay, Nedbank's executive head: CSI, at the conference during a session focused on catalysing impact in the green economy. The session unpacked how to identify business opportunities and grow social enterprises in the green economy, and how the circular economy can uplift rural and peri-urban communities.



My Walk initiative turns recycled medical waste into school shoes

5 May 2023



"This competition is part of our commitment to explore new partnerships and we are pleased to provide funding that will help boost the vital work of these organisations," Pillay says. "We congratulate all the winners and we are excited to see your

progress."

## Inside the winning initiatives

Overall winner, My Walk, recycles uncontaminated drip bags, oxygen masks and associated tubing to manufacture durable and fully recyclable school shoes that are distributed to children in the lower LSM schools. Since inception, My Walk has recycled more than 70,000kgs of healthcare waste and donated nearly 100,000 pairs of shoes. The prize money will enable My Walk to provide more than 3,000 learners in South Africa with a pair of brand new, durable and comfortable school shoes. It will also be used to create a website.

"The My Walk partnership is an example of embracing a circular economy," says general manager, Delanie Bezuidenhout. "It shows how a green solution can fulfil a material need for a business while simultaneously benefiting society – in this case by supporting education, job creation and enterprise development."

Letcee runs community development programs that focus on nutrition, food security and income generation to strengthen the families of young children. Food gardens are created and supported on an allotment model. The prize money will be used to send an ECD educator on an accredited agriculture course to equip her to take on the role of the green ECD practitioner. "By incorporating green agriculture practices into ECD education, educators can promote a deeper understanding of the interdependence of humans and the environment," says director of operations, Astrid Gifford.

Through education, training and workplace experience, Nature Connect creates opportunities for South Africa's youth to pursue careers in the green economy. The NPO started a River Ambassadors project in 2020 as a means to upskill youth from low-income communities while addressing the health of Cape Town's river systems. Applicants are selected from low-income communities near the rivers and complete an accredited Nature Conservation NQF4 training programme as well as job-readiness training.

Anthony Roberts, CEO of Nature Connect, says, "We will spend the prize money on job-readiness training for participants of this programme as it is a key component that increases their employability once the programme has completed. The courses offered cover hard and soft skills and help the learners build their self-confidence and sense of value. They also give entrepreneurial-minded learners the skills and the nudge to establish their own small businesses."