

LEADING BEYOND NOW

THE FIVE COMMITMENTS

CANONICAL STATEMENT

The Leading Beyond Now® Operating Model

Five commitments, four layers, one model for leadership whose consequences outlast the leader.

Ethel Kuuya

Model first published November 2023 in Leading Beyond Now: Five Commitments for Africa to Thrive

Canonical statement Version 1.0 | September 2026

Leading Beyond Now | leadingbeyondnow.com/model

This document is the canonical statement of the Leading Beyond Now operating model. Where any other Leading Beyond Now material differs from it in wording or structure, this document governs.

1. Definition

Leading Beyond Now® is a leadership operating model created by Ethel Kuuya for leaders and institutions whose decisions carry consequences beyond their own tenure. It rests on five commitments — to be a worthy custodian, to be responsible with influence, to be curious, to curate wise counsel, and to be tethered to noble values — and translates each into named practices, institutional systems and measures, so that responsible leadership becomes something an organisation can build, assess and sustain rather than something it hopes for in individuals.

Short form, for biographies and introductions:

Ethel Kuuya is the creator of Leading Beyond Now®, a leadership operating model built on five commitments for decisions that must outlast the decision-maker.

Both forms are fixed. They are reproduced verbatim wherever the model is described and are not paraphrased in Leading Beyond Now materials.

2. Purpose of this document

An operating model is only a model if it can be stated in one place, in one form, and pointed to. This document exists to be that place. It sets out the model in full, fixes its terminology, records its authorship, and gives readers a standard way to cite it.

It is written for three audiences: leaders and boards who want to understand what they are applying; educators, researchers and writers who wish to reference the model accurately; and the Leading Beyond Now team, for whom it is the reference against which every product, page and programme is checked.

3. Why an operating model, not a philosophy

Most leadership frameworks describe qualities. They tell a leader what to be. They rarely say what a leader should do on an ordinary Tuesday, what an institution must build so that the behaviour survives the leader's departure, or how anyone would know whether it is working.

Leading Beyond Now treats leadership the way an operator treats a business: as a system with standards, routines, structures and evidence. The five commitments are the standards. The model then specifies the practices each commitment requires of an individual leader, the systems an institution must put in place for those practices to hold under pressure, and the measures that show whether the commitments are lived rather than declared.

The distinction matters because leadership failure is rarely a failure of knowledge. Leaders generally know what a good custodian would do. They fail when pressure, incentive and isolation make the expedient choice easier than the right one. A philosophy cannot withstand that. A system can.

4. Origin and context

The model was developed by Ethel Kuuya over two decades of work in strategy, culture, governance and institutional transformation across African markets, including practice leadership at KPMG Consulting and PwC, the founding of Advisory Kulture in 2014, service on corporate and institutional boards, and advisory work with public institutions and policy bodies. It was first published in November 2023 in the book *Leading Beyond Now: Five Commitments for Africa to Thrive*, and has since been developed into the assessment, practice tools, programme and organisational engagements through which it is applied.

The model was built in an African context, for leaders operating where institutions are often young, capability is unevenly distributed and the temptation to trade the long term for the short term is constant. It is designed for

that pressure. It is not limited to it. The central question it asks — what should be stronger because you held this position — applies wherever authority is entrusted.

The phrase that names the model is a discipline as well as a title. To lead beyond now is to make decisions whose value is judged by what they leave behind, and to redirect the leader's attention from personal legacy to institutional stewardship.

5. The Five Commitments®

The Five Commitments are the standard against which everything else in the model is measured. They are unranked: a leader is expected to hold all five, and the model's assessment reads strength and weakness across them rather than scoring a single total. Each commitment is stated below as a discipline, paired with the diagnostic question a leader uses to test it. These statements are canonical and do not vary across Leading Beyond Now materials.

Commitment	Discipline	Diagnostic question
Be a Worthy Custodian	Treat authority, people, resources, capability and opportunity as entrusted, not owned.	What has been entrusted to me, and what should be stronger because I held it?
Be Responsible with Influence	Use status, voice and authority without diminishing dignity, agency or honest challenge.	What is happening to people and decisions because I have influence?
Be Curious	Resist certainty, test assumptions and keep learning before systems become brittle.	What am I not seeing, asking or testing?
Curate Wise Counsel	Build truth-safe channels and seek challenge beyond the comfortable inner circle.	Who helps me see clearly, especially when I may be wrong?
Be Tethered to Noble Values	Hold ethical standards when pressure makes compromise expedient.	What remains non-negotiable when the easier choice would compromise it?

Be a Worthy Custodian

Custodianship begins with the recognition that nothing a leader controls is truly theirs: not the mandate, not the people, not the capital, not the institution's reputation and not the opportunity the position affords. Each was entrusted and each will be handed on. The custodian's standard is simple and demanding: every entrusted thing should be in a stronger condition at hand-over than it was at receipt. This reframes success from what the leader achieved to what the leader left.

Be Responsible with Influence

Influence is the leader's most pervasive and least examined instrument. Every senior position changes how others speak, what they dare to say and how decisions are made in the leader's presence and absence. Responsible influence means using status and authority in proportion to need, protecting the dignity and agency of those affected, and actively guarding the space in which people can disagree. Influence carries obligation in direct proportion to its scale.

Be Curious

Certainty is comfortable and corrosive. Leaders who stop asking questions build organisations that stop learning, and organisations that stop learning become brittle long before they become visibly weak. Curiosity in the model

is a discipline rather than a temperament: the deliberate testing of assumptions before commitment, the structured review of what worked and what did not, and the pursuit of exposure beyond one's own sector, country and circle.

Curate Wise Counsel

The quality of a leader's decisions is bounded by the quality of the counsel that reaches them, and counsel degrades with seniority unless it is deliberately protected. Flattery increases, dissent falls silent and the inner circle narrows. Curating wise counsel means building truth-safe channels, mapping who advises and who is missing, and seeking challenge from people who owe the leader nothing. Good decisions require institutions in which the truth can travel upward.

Be Tethered to Noble Values

Values are not tested in the abstract. They are tested at the moment when the expedient choice is attractive, the pressure is real and the compromise would go unnoticed. Being tethered means having stated in advance what is non-negotiable, examining the human impact of decisions before they are made, and holding the line when holding it costs something. What a leader tolerates under pressure becomes what the institution regards as normal.

6. The four layers of the model

The commitments are the first of four layers. The remaining three are what make Leading Beyond Now an operating model rather than a statement of values.

Layer	Question it answers	What it contains
1. Commitments	What do leaders hold to?	The five standards, stated as disciplines with diagnostic questions.
2. Practices	What do leaders do?	Named, observable disciplines for each commitment, capable of being confirmed by those who work with the leader.
3. Systems	What do institutions build?	Mechanisms embedded in governance, process and culture so that practices hold under pressure and survive a change of leader.
4. Measures	What proves it?	Instruments and indicators that show whether the commitments are lived: individual assessment, 360 feedback, culture data and institutional outcomes.

The layers flow downward in design and upward in evidence. A commitment is specified as practices; practices are protected by systems; systems are verified by measures. Read in reverse, the measures reveal whether the systems exist, the systems reveal whether the practices are real, and the practices reveal whether the commitment is held.

7. The model in full

This section states each commitment across all four layers. It is the operational core of the model and the reference for the assessment, the practice tools, The Leading Beyond Now Program and organisational engagements.

Be a Worthy Custodian

Practices

Practice	What the leader does
Entrustment inventory	Name, explicitly and periodically, what has been entrusted: people, mandate, capital, capability, reputation and opportunity.
Stronger-than-found standard	Define the condition each entrusted asset should be in at hand-over, and manage towards it.
Succession readiness	Develop and name people who could lead without you, and remove dependency on yourself.

Systems

- Hand-over and succession standards written into governance and applied to every senior role.
- Capability investment protected in planning and budget cycles, not treated as discretionary.
- Reporting to the board on the condition of entrusted assets and institutional health, not only on results.

Measures

- Custodianship dimension of the LBN assessment and LBN 360.
- Succession coverage for critical roles.
- Condition of entrusted assets across the leader's tenure, measured against the stronger-than-found standard.

Be Responsible with Influence

Practices

Practice	What the leader does
Decision-impact review	Before a consequential decision, identify who is affected, how, and whether their agency is preserved.
Dissent protection	Ensure people can disagree with you without cost, and act visibly when disagreement is punished.
Proportionate authority	Match the force of intervention to the need; do not use seniority where reasoning would do.

Systems

- Structured challenge in decision forums: designated dissent, red-team review or equivalent.
- Voice and grievance channels that are used, trusted and reported on.
- Stakeholder impact assessment built into major-decision governance.

Measures

- Influence dimension of the LBN assessment and LBN 360.

- Voice and safety indicators in culture data.
- Speak-up and escalation activity and how it is resolved.

Be Curious

Practices

Practice	What the leader does
Assumption testing	State and test the assumptions beneath a major commitment before making it.
Learning cycles	Review consequential decisions after the fact for what worked, what did not and why.
Deliberate exposure	Seek perspective outside your own sector, country and circle on a scheduled basis.

Systems

- Post-decision reviews as a standing governance routine.
- Protected budget and permission for experimentation.
- A learning architecture for leaders at every level, including structured development pathways.

Measures

- Curiosity dimension of the LBN assessment, LBN 360 and culture data.
- Proportion of consequential decisions formally reviewed.
- Learning investment per leader and its use.

Curate Wise Counsel

Practices

Practice	What the leader does
Counsel map	Record who advises you, on what, and where the gaps and the flattery risks sit.
Truth-safe channels	Maintain relationships in which you can be told what you do not want to hear.
Challenge from outside	Seek counsel from people beyond the inner circle who owe you nothing.

Systems

- Genuinely independent voices on boards and advisory bodies.
- Formal challenge roles in strategy and risk processes.
- Periodic review at governance level of the quality and diversity of counsel reaching senior leaders.

Measures

- Counsel dimension of the LBN assessment and LBN 360, including whether others say they can tell the leader the truth.
- Diversity of counsel sources by role, background and independence.

- Frequency with which positions change after counsel is taken.

Be Tethered to Noble Values

Practices

Practice	What the leader does
Stated non-negotiables	Write down in advance what you will not do, whatever the pressure.
Pressure-point review	Examine decisions made under pressure for what was compromised and why.
Human-impact test	Assess the effect on people before efficiency, profit or convenience.

Systems

- Values written into performance, promotion and reward criteria.
- Ethics escalation routes that senior people are seen to use.
- Consequence management applied consistently at the top, not only below it.

Measures

- Values dimension of the LBN assessment, LBN 360 and culture data.
- Integrity under pressure as reported by others.
- Consistency of consequence management across levels.

8. How the model is applied

Leading Beyond Now is applied in four contexts of increasing scope: the organisation, the wider system in which it operates, the community it affects, and the leader's own way of life. Within those contexts, the practice tools address seven recurring situations: team, organisation, personal, community, change, stakeholders and governance.

There are four routes into the model, in increasing depth:

Route	Purpose	Instruments
Understand	Learn the philosophy and language of the model.	The book; Africa Leads Beyond Now public analysis; The Leadership Question.
Practise	Apply the commitments continuously in one's own leadership.	The LBN Baseline Self-Assessment; the LBN app; conversation cards; Individual, Team and Board Practice.
Develop	Build deep and systemic application capability, assessed and certified.	The Leading Beyond Now Program, an internationally accredited programme [accrediting body to be stated]; individual certification on successful completion.
Embed	Install the model in an institution's systems and culture.	Organisational engagements: closed cohorts, LBN 360, diagnostics, board and executive sessions, facilitation capability and implementation support.

Africa Leads Beyond Now, the model's public channel, applies the five commitments to consequential events on the continent so that the model can be seen working on real decisions rather than only taught. Each analysis

states what happened, interprets it through the most relevant commitment and leaves one leadership question. The channel is editorially independent of client and political agendas.

9. What the model is not

Precision about scope protects the model from dilution. Leading Beyond Now is not:

- A personality or style model. It does not classify leaders by type. It asks what they hold to, do, build and can prove.
- A competency framework. Competencies describe skills. The commitments describe obligations that apply regardless of skill.
- A values statement. Values statements declare. The model specifies the practices, systems and measures that make a value operational.
- A political programme. It examines how entrusted power is used. It takes no party position and is applied across sectors and jurisdictions.
- A subscription, a product or a course. Those are routes into the model. The model is the intellectual property they apply.

10. Authorship, marks and governance of the canon

The Leading Beyond Now operating model was created by Ethel Kuuya. Leading Beyond Now® and the Five Commitments® are registered marks [registration numbers and jurisdictions to be stated].

This document is maintained under version control. Any change to the definition, the commitment names or statements, or the four-layer structure requires a new version number, a dated entry in the version history and a re-issued citation. Minor corrections that do not alter meaning may be made within a version and recorded in the history. All other Leading Beyond Now materials are required to conform to the current version.

The diagram of the model and the definition paragraph may be reproduced without permission provided that the model is named in full, attributed to Ethel Kuuya and cited as below.

11. How to cite this model

To cite the model as defined:

Kuuya, E. (2026). The Leading Beyond Now Operating Model (Version 1.0). Leading Beyond Now.
<https://leadingbeyondbeyondnow.com/model>

To cite the origin of the model:

Kuuya, E. (2023). Leading Beyond Now: Five Commitments for Africa to Thrive. [Publisher]. ISBN [to be stated].

Use the book when the claim concerns when and by whom the model was created. Use the canonical statement when the claim concerns what the model is. The two may be cited together: the Leading Beyond Now operating model (Kuuya, 2023; 2026).

In-text reference: the Leading Beyond Now operating model (Kuuya, 2026). Use the full name on first reference and “LBN” thereafter. When a persistent identifier (DOI) is issued for this document, it should be appended to the citation and used in preference to the URL.

Appendix A. Terminology sheet

These terms are used exactly as written in every Leading Beyond Now material.

Term	Correct form	Do not use
The model	Leading Beyond Now® operating model (first reference); LBN operating model or the model thereafter	Leading Beyond Now operating system; LBN framework; LBN philosophy; Lead Beyond
The standard	The Five Commitments® (capitalised; ® on first reference)	the 5 commitments; the pillars; the principles
Commitment names	Be a Worthy Custodian; Be Responsible with Influence; Be Curious; Curate Wise Counsel; Be Tethered to Noble Values	Any abbreviation, reordering or synonym
The layers	Commitments, Practices, Systems, Measures (in this order)	Pillars, levels, stages
The author	Ethel Kuuya, creator of Leading Beyond Now	visionary; thought leader; guru; author of a leadership philosophy
The programme	The Leading Beyond Now Program (exact title); internationally accredited; certification on successful completion	LBN course; LBN certification programme; any implied professional designation
The channel	Africa Leads Beyond Now	Africa Leads; ALBN on first reference
The newsletter	The Leadership Question	the LBN newsletter
The subscriptions	Individual Practice; Team Practice; Board Practice	Organisation plan; membership
The book	Leading Beyond Now: Five Commitments for Africa to Thrive (2023)	the novel; the LBN book without the subtitle on first reference

Appendix B. Version history

Version	Date	Change
Origin	November 2023	Model first published in Leading Beyond Now: Five Commitments for Africa to Thrive.
1.0	September 2026	First canonical statement of the model as an operating model.

Appendix C

Fields to confirm before publication

Remove this appendix before publishing. Each bracketed field in the body must be resolved, and the practices, systems and measures in Section 7 must be confirmed as consistent with the Program and app content.

- Name and scope of the body accrediting The Leading Beyond Now Program.
- Publisher and ISBN of the book, for the origin citation in Section 11.
- Registration numbers and jurisdictions for Leading Beyond Now® and the Five Commitments®.
- Confirmation that the practice, system and measure statements in Section 7 match what the Program teaches and what the assessment and 360 actually measure.
- DOI, once issued, to be appended to the citation in Section 11.