

Central Banking Awards 2024: fourth round announced

BIS wins Green initiative award; other awards go for currency, CBDC and AML systems



Central Banking Newsdesk

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Central Banking revealed the fourth group of winners in its annual awards today (March 21), with the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) winning the Green initiative award.

Now in their eleventh year, the **Central Banking Awards** recognise the best of the central banking community, from central banks themselves and their commercial partners. *Central Banking* has been reviewing submissions and contacting references for the past few months, as the editorial team and advisers narrowed down a fiercely competitive field.

The fourth group of awards recognises the BIS's broad efforts to support green finance, from training and conferences to the launch of green funds. Other awards highlight breakthroughs in central bank digital currency (CBDC) and printed currency, as well as systems helping in the fight against money laundering.

Green initiative: The **Green initiative award** reflects the BIS's leading role in climate risk research, as well as its efforts to foster discussion between scientists, economists and financial professionals, and its array of green funds for central banks.

The global institution rolled out its first green bond fund in September 2019, which pooled central bank assets to buy dollar-denominated green assets. It has since launched a euro-denominated fund and an Asia fund.

Peter Zöllner, the BIS's banking department head, says the aim is to aggregate the investment power of central banks to influence market participants' behaviour and "have some impact on how green investment standards develop".

The BIS also used its position as a hub for central banks to bring together experts in the fight against climate change. Through its 'Green Swan' conferences it has encouraged path-breaking research into the intersection of climate science and central banking.

"Our diverse portfolio of climate risk-related work reflects both the ingenuity of our staff and the trust that the central banking community places in us," says BIS general manager Agustín Carstens. "We are proud to support central banks and supervisory authorities in their work to address the policy implications of climate change and other environmental challenges."

Currency initiative: Indonesia faces unique challenges in securing access to cash across more than 14,000 islands that make up the country's archipelago.

Bank Indonesia (BI) wins this year's [Currency initiative award](#) for the 'sovereign rupiah' scheme, which saw central bank officials join up with the Indonesian navy to bring banknotes to remote areas. By using naval vessels, rather than chartering its own, the central bank estimates it saves more than 400,000 kilograms of CO₂ annually.

"Throughout 2023, this expedition reached more than 100 remote islands, providing currency fit for circulation to countless individuals," says Doni Primanto, deputy governor at BI.

Currency manager: The Central Bank of the UAE launched major plans to upgrade its banknote series in 2019, resulting in the issuance of five new denominations on polymer to date. For its cutting-edge banknote designs, the central bank wins the 2024 [Currency manager award](#).

The new 1,000 dirham polymer banknote includes Spark Flow Dimension optical features developed by Koenig & Bauer. In addition, the United Arab Emirates notes have the largest surface-applied, multi-colour Kinegram aluminium stripe in the Middle East and north Africa region. The 14mm wide strip includes non-holographic visual security effects to improve counterfeit resistance.

Polymer notes last longer than cotton paper varieties, and the UAE's new banknote series is expected to have a lower carbon footprint than past series.

"The Central Bank of the UAE's new polymer series includes exceptional design and security, and should cut the overall environmental footprint of its currency issuance," says Christopher Jeffery, editor-in-chief of *Central Banking* and chairman of the awards committee.

Digital currency services: Accenture, winner of the award for [Digital currency services](#), has supported many central banks with real-world CBDC pilots.

The firm's services range from strategic design through to facilitating the technical development of CBDC based on both public and private distributed ledger technology.

John Lee, managing director of the capital markets industry group at Accenture, says: "Starting with our first engagements in 2016 and through ongoing projects and initiatives, we have built unique global expertise in central bank digital currencies and digital assets, helping to transform and modernise financial markets."

Digital currency initiative: eCurrency Mint's DSC³ wins this year's Digital currency initiative award. DSC³, which stands for digital symmetric core currency cryptography, aims to make CBDC impossible to counterfeit, even by quantum computers.

The technology has been deployed as part of Jamaica's digital currency, Jam-Dex. Bank of Jamaica governor Richard Byles says the central bank put DSC³ through "rigorous" testing before the nationwide rollout of the CBDC.

Jonathan Dharmapalan, chief executive of eCurrency, says: "We believe that digital currency is not only a technological innovation, but also a social and economic one. It has the potential to enhance financial inclusion, efficiency and stability for billions of people around the world."

Risk management initiative: UK tech firm AML Analytics wins the award for **Risk management initiative**, after developing a platform to help supervisors see at a glance which institutions are living up to expected anti-money laundering (AML) rules.

The system, known as Orbs, gives institutions a risk-weighting based on a set of pre-determined criteria and responses the entity has given to questions from the supervisor. The Bank of Jamaica has been using Orbs as part of efforts to overcome its "grey-listing" by the Financial Action Task Force.

“Orbs provides the detection, analysis and remediation of risks across supervised entities and designated non-financial businesses and professions through a single intuitive interface, driving up performance of AML/CFT [counter the financing of terrorism] standards,” says Justin Holder, group chief executive of AML Analytics.

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