

# National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act 2026;

## Key Innovations and Prospects

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## INTRODUCTION

The National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) announced the signing into law of the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) Act, 2026 on 26 June 2026 by His Excellency, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, GCFR.

The legislation marks a significant step in strengthening Nigeria's legal framework in the bid to achieve a secure, inclusive and digitally empowered identification system.

The NIMC Act, of 2007 provided a single source of truth for identity by ensuring one authoritative National identity database. This made identity compulsory and universal by ending anonymity and multiple identities in official transactions, enabling trust, security and harmony among existing database. This enabled the Federal Government plan better, reduce fraud, protect and penalise abuse by criminalising false enrolment, forgery, multiple NINs and unauthorised data access.

Almost two decades after the 2007 Act laid the foundation for Nigeria's National Identity System, the global digital landscape has changed dramatically. The rapid expansion of digital services, e-governance, electronic commerce, data protection requirements, and evolving cybersecurity threats has created an urgent need for a more robust and contemporary legal framework. This has given rise to the establishment of the New NIMC Act, 2026.

## GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE NIMC ACT, 2026

The NIMC Act 2026 represents the most significant reform of Nigeria's identity management legal framework since the establishment of the Commission.

The new Act repeals and replaces the NIMC Act of 2007. It establishes a modern, forward-looking legal framework that aligns Nigeria's identity ecosystem with global best practices, emerging technologies and digital economy. A defining feature of the new Act is the designation of NIMC as the Root Certification Authority for Nigeria's National Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), thereby establishing the Commission as the nation's trusted authority responsible for underpinning secure digital identity, authentication and electronic trust services across government and private-sector digital platforms. It further empowers NIMC to ensure secure, interoperable and seamless data exchange among all public and private entities, laying the legal and institutional foundation for a trusted digital economy.

The NIMC Act 2026 is more than a policy reform; it is a significant step towards building a digitally connected Nigeria where every citizen has a trusted identity and equal access to opportunities and services. The NIMC Act 2026 responds to these realities by modernising Nigeria's identity management framework, strengthening digital trust, protecting citizens' personal data, enhancing cybersecurity and positioning the country to fully harness the opportunities presented by the global digital economy.

## KEY INNOVATIONS OF THE NIMC ACT, 2026

### (a) Tougher Penalties for Fraud:

The sanctions for identity theft and unauthorized access have been strengthened, with offenders liable to fines of up to ₦20,000,000 (Twenty Million Naira only) and a minimum of five years imprisonment.

### (b) Data Protection and Privacy Enhancement:

Stronger safeguards for personal data aligning with the Nigeria Data Protection Act (NDPA) and international best practices. This seeks to ensure that citizens' personal information is processed, stored and protected in accordance with globally accepted privacy standards, while guaranteeing privacy and consent-based access, ensuring that personal data cannot be accessed or used without an individual's explicit consent, except as otherwise permitted by law.

### (c) National Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):

The Act designates NIMC as the Root Certification Authority for Nigeria's National Public Key Infrastructure and Digital Public Infrastructure, thereby entrusting the commission with the responsibility for the provision and oversight of secure digital identity, authentication and electronic trust services.



**(d) Secure Digital Identity and Interoperability:**

The Act empowers the National Identity Management Commission to facilitate secure, interoperable and seamless data exchange among Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), private organisations and other authorised entities. This is expected to enable trusted digital interactions, improve service delivery, enhance cybersecurity, and underpin the development of Nigeria's Digital Public Infrastructure and digital economy.

**(e) Multiple Identity Formats:**

The Act formally recognises both physical and digital identity credentials, all securely linked to an individual's National Identification Number (NIN), supporting secure digital transactions and efficient delivery services.

**(f) General Multipurpose Card:**

The Act reignites the importance of the NIMC General Multipurpose Card which has been positioned as a versatile identity credential for nationwide identity verification under the theme: "One Card, Multiple Possibilities." The new multipurpose identity card will serve as a single credential for verification and access across various sectors of national life.

**(g) Inclusivity for Vulnerable Groups:**

The Act introduces an innovative Identifier system for vulnerable persons and mandates special measures to facilitate the enrolment of underserved populations, including persons without permanent residences and Nigerians in the Diaspora. The system is intended to promote inclusive access to the national digital ecosystem and ensure that no person is excluded.



## PROSPECTS OF THE NIMC ACT, 2026

The NIMC Act of 2026 seeks to deliver significant benefits that will enable seamless access to services across both the public and private sectors while strengthening electronic trust across Nigeria's digital economy. Some of the benefits of the Enactment includes:

- (a) It seeks to provide a stronger foundation for Nigeria's digital economy, digital governance and long-term national development.
- (b) It will ensure wider, easier and more convenient access to identity services, especially for Nigerians in the Diaspora.
- (c) It seeks to tighten personal data and privacy protection.
- (d) It is set to curb identity theft, impersonation and identity-related fraud.
- (e) It seeks to introduce trusted National Public Key Infrastructure and Digital Public Infrastructure, which will support secure digital identity, authentication and electronic trust services.
- (f) It will enable greater digital and financial inclusivity for the vulnerable and underserved populations.

## CONCLUSION

The NIMC Act 2026 signals Nigeria's intent to move beyond identity management as a basic administrative function and toward identity as critical digital infrastructure. By repositioning NIMC as the nation's Root Certification Authority, the Act effectively transforms a once-singular identification system into the backbone of a much larger digital economy, one where trust, authentication, and secure data exchange become the currency of everyday transactions.

The 2007 Act was primarily concerned solely with the identity of Nigerians. The 2026 Act on the other hand is concerned with what Nigerians can do with that identity, securely, digitally, and across both public and private platforms. This reflects a broader global reality.

The Act emphasizes inclusivity, particularly for the Nigerians in the Diaspora and vulnerable populations. This is a commendable development, given the longstanding challenges these groups have faced in accessing identity registration.

Finally, the NIMC Act 2026 should be understood not as a destination but as an enabling framework. Its success will depend less on the strength of its provisions and more on the institutional capacity, technological readiness, and inter-agency cooperation required to bring its ambitions to life. If implemented effectively, it has the potential to reposition Nigeria as a serious player in the global digital identity space, one where citizenship, security, and digital trust are no longer separate conversations but a single, integrated system.



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