



FREE STATE PROVINCE



FREE STATE INDUSTRY 4.0 SUMMIT

LEVERAGING YOUTH DIVIDEND AND 4IR FOR ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT OF THE FREE STATE

1.0. OVERVIEW

The globe is moving towards an era of intensified artificial intelligence. The public and private sector need to collaborate on systems that would equip the youth and adults for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR/industry 4.0 and the 4th IR). The 4IR is an array of new technologies that link physical and cyber networks as one unit. The three components of 4IR have been categorised as: Industrial Internet of Things (machines and other technologies that collect, share and act on data between themselves); the Big Data that refers to the capture of data on everything and real time analysis of that data by machines and systems; and secure and reliable digital infrastructure that connects everything together.

In 1760-1830, the First Industrial Revolution used water and steam to mechanize agricultural production. In 1870, the Second Revolution used electric power to create mass production. During the early 20th century, the Third Revolution introduced electronics and information technology to automate production. During these first three industrial revolutions Africa in general and South Africa in particular, did not take part as it remained a spectator. The 4IR is said to be moving at an exponential speed rather than a linear one due to the velocity, scope and systems impact. The speed of the current breakthrough has no historical precedent.

In the 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), His Excellency President Ramaphosa emphatically highlighted the need for our country to fully exploit the benefits of this revolution without leaving anyone behind. In his address, the President said, “As a young nation, only 25 years into our democracy, we are faced with a stark choice. It is a choice between being overtaken by technological change or harnessing it to serve our developmental aspirations. It is a choice between entrenching inequality or creating shared prosperity through innovation. Unless we adapt, unless we understand the nature of the profound change that is reshaping our world, and unless we readily embrace the opportunities it presents, the promise of our nation’s birth will forever remain unfulfilled. Today, we choose to be a nation that is reaching into the future.”

To give concrete meaning to a nation that is reaching into the future, President Ramaphosa announced the appointment of the Presidential Commission on the 4th Industrial Revolution to ensure that South Africa harnesses technological advances in pursuit of equitable growth and inclusive development, and does not remain a spectator like during the first three industrial revolutions. The Commission has been tasked to recommend policies, strategies and plans that will position South Africa as a global competitive player within the digital revolution space, and it is currently pursuing its mandate.

2.0. RATIONALE FOR THE EVENT

In the Free State Province, these technological developments are taking place in the backdrop of our vision 2030 that states “By 2030 (Free State Growth and Development

Strategy), the Free State shall have a resilient, thriving and competitive economy that is inclusive with immense prospects for human development anchored on the principles of unity, dignity, diversity, equality and prosperity for all” Despite this noble vision, the province is currently facing increasing unemployment, particularly among the youth; low quality of education, skills shortage and mismatches; and poverty, income inequality and low income, among other social ills.

As we review vision 2030 to take on board the current realities, we cannot avoid the use of the emerging technologies in our quest to use resources more effectively and efficiently and to ensure that our impact on the environment, such as our carbon footprint is minimized as much as possible in spite of the resulting disruptions.

These technological disruptions are threatening traditional jobs and may exacerbate the unemployment problem. However, we should be resolute in innovating to create the future of our dreams that is fair and humane. Whatever it is called: gig economy, automation, digitalisation, robotics, artificial intelligence, internet of things or big data – it must all be underpinned by social justice, social inclusion, as well as youth and women empowerment.

It is against this background that all stakeholders, including senior representatives of government, leaders of business and labour, and eminent scholars and members of community must find one another and agree on a common programme of action because we have to choose to be a province that is ‘reaching into the future’. The planned 4IR summit is a vehicle through which the common programme and action will be determined.

3.0. TARGET AUDIENCE / PARTICIPATION

The Free State 4IR Summit 2019 is organised in partnership with the Central University of Technology (CUT) and the University of the Free State (UFS). The event is expected to attract **1000** delegates from all over South Africa, as well as global partners. The Summit will bring together Government, top executives, academia, renowned and stakeholders who share the same passion on harnessing the Free State youth dividend to create economic opportunities, especially in the Digital Economy.

- Government (departments and institutions)
- Academia
- Industries (professional bodies, key players)
- Small business and entrepreneurs
- Futurists
- Business Formations (BUSA/BLSA/BMF/BITF/PGBIT)
- State Information Technology Agency (SITA)
- Civil Society
- Students
- The media

4.0. STRUCTURE AND SESSIONS

The Free State 4IR Summit 2019 will be a 2-day event taking place on 28 – 29 November 2019 at The Performing Arts Centre of the Free State (PACOFS). The overarching theme is “*Leveraging the Youth Dividend for the Socio-Economic Advancement of the Free State*”. The event will have the following activities:

- Welcome reception

- Keynote speeches
- Panel discussions and Plenary sessions
- Research and Academic Paper Presentations
- Industry and technology briefings and discussions
- Consultations meetings, focus groups and roundtables
- Business match making
- Exhibitions stalls

5.0. SUB-THEMES

- Competitiveness, concentration and Inequality
- Employment and the future of work
- Society, State and Citizen
- Opportunities
- Regulatory Environment

EXPECTED DELIVERABLES

It is expected that the Summit will engender the attainment of the following deliverables:

- Increasing awareness of the utility and impact of 4IR technologies in stimulating economic growth in the Province
- Showcasing various 4IR-related technologies and investment opportunities in the Province
- Enabling an interactive platform for various stakeholders, particularly youth in the province to engage with 4IR-solution providers and other service providers operating in the province
- Deploy 4IR technologies to enhance a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship among youth