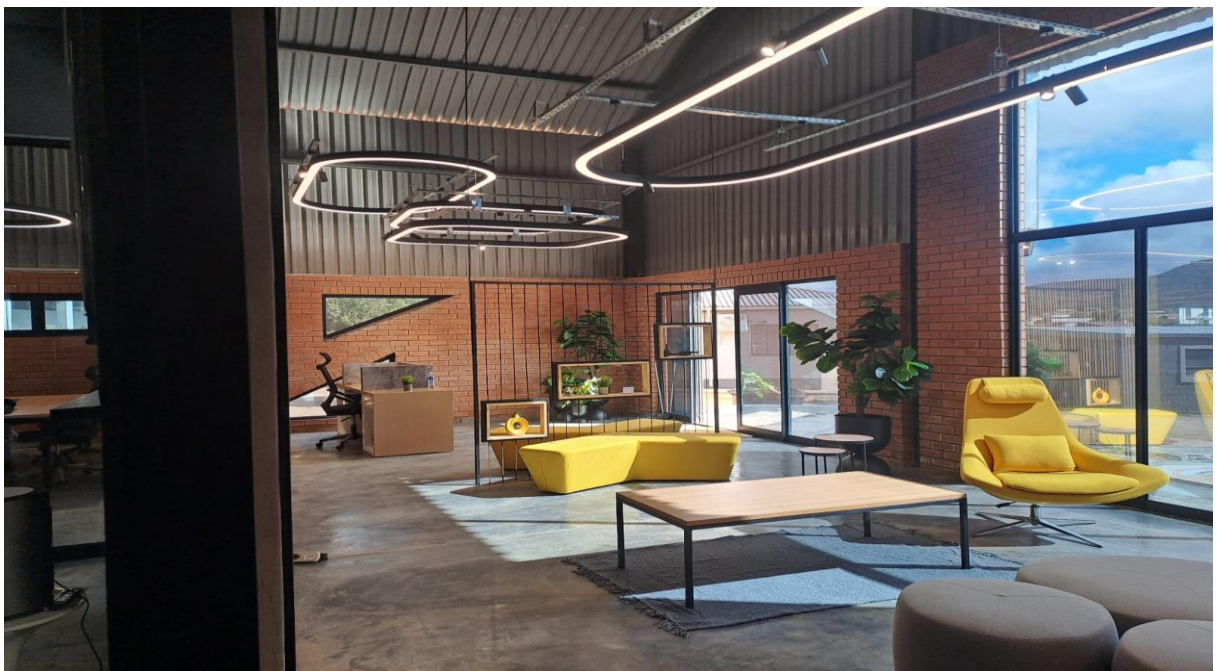


## Unlocking the Future: Northern Cape's New Digital 4IR Hubs Set to Transform Entrepreneurship and Drive Socio-Economic Growth



The New Namakwa Digital Hub, Okiep Township

The Northern Cape is on the cusp of a digital revolution that promises to redefine the future of entrepreneurship, skills development, and local economic growth. The newly established Digital 4IR Hubs, strategically located on the campuses of Northern Cape Rural TVET College in Upington and Namaqualand, are more than just spaces—they are catalysts for a just digital transition, offering an innovative pathway to bridge the digital divide and build future-ready skills. These hubs are poised to transform vocational and occupational qualifications into new frontier artisanal enterprises, ushering in a new era of economic development in the province.



## Reimagining Education and Entrepreneurship through Digital Innovation

At the heart of this initiative is a commitment to modernize how we think about education, entrepreneurship, and socio-economic development. The Digital 4IR Hubs are game changers designed to foster a dynamic and inclusive digital economy by providing dedicated support spaces tailored to the needs of aspiring entrepreneurs, innovators, and local enterprises. These spaces include:



- **Innovation Centers:** Creative ecosystems where students, entrepreneurs, and innovators can collaborate, experiment, and bring their ideas to life.
- **Co-Make, Co-Created, and Co-Market Makers Spaces:** These collaborative spaces empower local talent to co-create and co-market innovative products and services, encouraging a culture of entrepreneurship and market-readiness.
- **Rapid Prototyping Labs:** Equipped with the latest technology, these labs enable rapid prototyping and iterative testing, crucial for developing viable and scalable solutions.

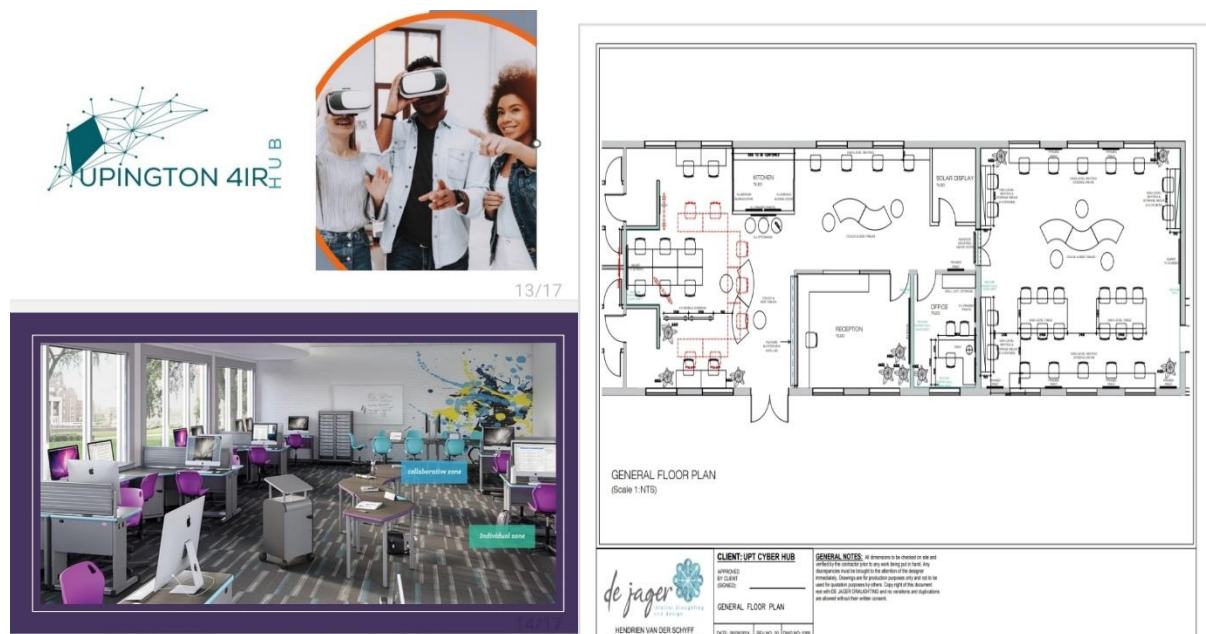


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- **Coding Labs and Robotics Labs:** These specialized labs are focused on equipping participants with essential digital skills in coding and robotics, building a workforce that is ready for the demands of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

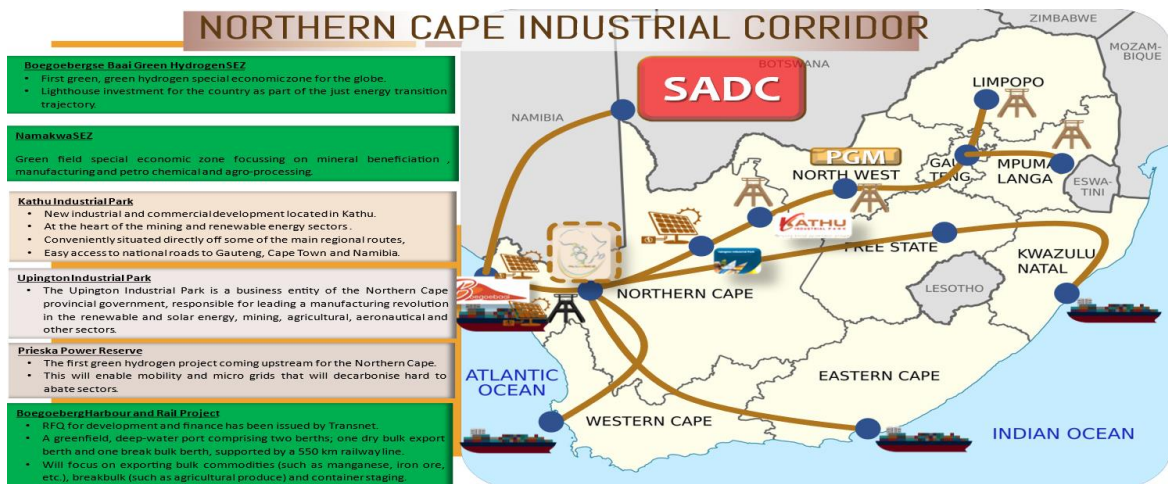
- **Virtual Reality Learning Lab:** An immersive environment where learners can explore new realities, understand complex concepts, and develop critical skills in a cutting-edge format.
- **Cloud Data Center:** A state-of-the-art facility providing cloud computing resources, data storage, and access to high-performance computing. This center will enable local businesses and innovators to leverage big data analytics, AI, and other advanced digital tools, driving efficiencies and fostering innovation across various sectors.
- **Renewable Energy Simulation and Demonstration Labs:** These labs provide practical learning opportunities in the rapidly growing field of renewable energy, aligning with global trends and local needs for sustainable development.

### Strategic Location to Support Core Economic Nodes



### New Upington Digital Hub

The selection of Upington and Namaqualand campuses as locations for these Digital 4IR Hubs is intentional and highly strategic. These hubs are uniquely positioned to support the emerging core economic nodes in the Northern Cape, including the Upington Industrial Park, the Namakwa Special Economic Zone (SEZ), the Boegoeberg se Baai Rail and Port, and the Green Hydrogen SEZ. By aligning with these major economic initiatives, the Digital 4IR Hubs will play a crucial role in building local capacity, developing relevant skills, and fostering innovation to support these new economic growth drivers.



The Upington Industrial Park, with its focus on logistics and manufacturing, stands to benefit immensely from the new hub's capabilities in digital innovation and rapid prototyping. Similarly, the Namakwa SEZ, a key driver of mining and renewable energy development, will find a strong ally in the hubs' renewable energy simulation and demonstration labs. The Boegoeberg se Baai Rail and Port and the ambitious Green Hydrogen SEZ project will also leverage the hubs' advanced digital skills development and business readiness programs to build a workforce and entrepreneurial base that can support these large-scale infrastructure projects and contribute to the province's broader economic strategy.

### Incubation and Acceleration Models Driving Sustainable Growth

The Digital 4IR Hubs are underpinned by an innovative Incubation Model that spans a three-year continuum, providing dedicated support to local enterprises from ideation to commercialization. This bespoke model nurtures high-growth enterprises by offering tailored mentorship, technical assistance, and access to market and funding opportunities. Through this continuum, entrepreneurs are better positioned to develop their technological, business, market, and funding readiness, ensuring they are well-equipped to succeed in an increasingly competitive digital landscape.

Complementing the Incubation Model is a high-impact Accelerator and Venture Studio model that serves as a launchpad for scaling innovative businesses. This model focuses on providing intensive, hands-on support to entrepreneurs and businesses in key areas such as technology development, market expansion, and investment readiness. By leveraging these robust support systems, the hubs aim to produce a pipeline of innovative and sustainable enterprises capable of driving local economic growth and creating jobs.

### A Testament to Effective Public-Private Partnership

The Digital 4IR Hubs represent a powerful testimony to what can be achieved when public and private sectors unite towards a common developmental goal. This initiative is the result of a strategic partnership involving key stakeholders such as the Northern Cape Rural TVET College, the National Department of Small Business Development, Seda Technology, ETDP SETA, the Namakwa District Municipality, and the Asher Group, the lead designer of the new Digital Hub model and programmes. These partners have combined their expertise, resources, and vision to create an ecosystem that fosters innovation, entrepreneurship, and inclusive growth. We would like to appeal to the private sector to join the existing partners on this growth journey.

## Driving Smart Districts and Local Economic Development

The impact of the Digital 4IR Hubs extends beyond entrepreneurship and skills development. They are central to the creation of "Smart Districts"—a concept that leverages modern 21st-century methodologies to solve complex socio-economic challenges at a local level. By focusing on digital innovation, these hubs will play a pivotal role in driving local economic development, improving service delivery, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents in the Northern Cape.

## Leveraging International Partnerships for Global Impact

To maximise their impact, the Digital 4IR Hubs are also focused on leveraging local, regional and international partnerships to drive best practice exchange, soft-landing, internationalization, and venture funding. These local and global collaborations will enable local entrepreneurs and technology startups to tap into a broader network of expertise, markets, and investment opportunities.

## A Vision for the Future



The establishment of the Digital 4IR Hubs in Upington and Namaqualand marks a significant step forward in the Northern Cape's journey towards a more inclusive, innovative, and sustainable future. These hubs are not just about technology; they are about empowering people, communities, and enterprises to thrive in the digital age. They embody a vision where digital transformation is accessible to all, where skills development is aligned with market needs, and where local talent is harnessed to drive economic growth and social progress.

As we look ahead, the Northern Cape's new Digital 4IR Hubs serve as a beacon of what is possible when we come together to reimagine and reinvent our future. With the support of dedicated partners and a clear commitment to innovation and inclusivity, these hubs are set to become a cornerstone of the Northern Cape Province digital economy, paving the way for a brighter and more prosperous future for all leaving no one behind. **Mr Percy Sago, Principle and CEO, Northern Cape Rural TVET College.**

## **Join Us in Building the Future**

For potential partners or sponsors interested in contributing to the success of these groundbreaking Digital 4IR Hubs, whether through cash donations or in-kind support for technology and infrastructure needs, we welcome your collaboration. Together, we can make a lasting impact on the socio-economic landscape of the Northern Cape. For more information or to explore partnership opportunities, please contact us at:

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