



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA  
NATIONAL YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AGENCY (NYDA)

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**Executive Chairperson Panel Inputs at HRDC Summit 2026**

Reflections on Living and Working in a Changing World – *The impact of digital technology in different sectors*

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## 1. Positioning: Why Digital Transformation Matters for Youth

- South Africa's youth unemployment crisis remains severe:
  - **59.6% for ages 15–24** and **39.4% for ages 25–34** (Stats SA, Q4 2024).
- Digital transformation is one of the few scalable pathways to:
  - Skills acquisition
  - Youth entrepreneurship
  - Job creation and alternative forms of work.

From the NYDA's perspective, digital technology is not only about efficiency it is about economic access and dignity for young people.

## 2. Education and Digital Skills: What NYDA Is Doing

- NYDA Digital and Employability Skills Interventions
- Targeted Digital Skills Training
- NYDA has expanded future-oriented digital skills programmes, including:
- Data Analytics Training Programme, targeting unemployed youth (18–35).
- Training covers data analysis, digital tools, and workplace-ready digital competencies.
- These programmes align with the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy, shifting from basic ICT to advanced, market-relevant skills.

### Key Panel Insight

“Digital skills are no longer optional add-ons; they are becoming foundational literacy for participation in today's economy.”

## 3. Digital Economy, Work and Youth Employment

Technology has opened new forms of work for youth:

- Platform work
- Remote services
- Freelancing and micro-enterprises.

However, NYDA's work shows:

Many youth in the digital economy operate without protections, training pathways or growth opportunities.

This highlights the importance of:

- Skills progression frameworks
- Co-regulation between government, labour and platforms.

#### **4. Youth Entrepreneurship and Digital Enterprises**

##### **NYDA Grant Programme (Digital & Tech-Enabled Businesses)**

The NYDA Grant Programme provides:

- Thousands of youth-owned enterprises have benefited, including:
- E-commerce ventures
- App development
- Digital marketing services
- ICT and platform-based businesses.

##### **Impact at Scale**

Over 34 200 youth supported through non-financial business development interventions.

The challenge now is scaling and sustainability, not just start-ups.

#### **5. Digital Public Services and Youth Access**

NYDA has accelerated digital access to youth services through:

- Online grant applications
- Digital outreach platforms
- ERP and self-service youth portals.

This has:

- Reduced geographic barriers
- Improved turnaround times
- Increased transparency and reach, especially in rural areas

### **Key Insight**

Digital government works best when young people are engaged not just as users, but as co-designers of solutions.

## **6. Risks the NYDA Continues to Flag**

Persistent digital inequality:

- Data costs
- Device access
- Uneven connectivity.

Skills mismatch:

- Training that does not align with evolving digital labour markets.
- Without coordination, digital transformation risks deepening exclusion, rather than reversing it.

## **7. NYDA's Strategic Message to the HRDC and Social Partners**

- Digital transformation must be inclusive by design
- Human capital development must anticipate future skills
- Youth must be producers, innovators and entrepreneurs not only job seekers
- Partnerships are essential – NYDA cannot do this alone.

## **8. Closing Line for the Panel**

“Digital technology will define how we live and work. The responsibility before us is to ensure that young people are not displaced by this change, but empowered to lead it.”

NYDA remains committed to working with government, business, labour and civil society to ensure a youth-centred, skills-driven and inclusive digital economy.

