

# Silicon Cape launches innovation support model

Silicon Cape launches their new Africa-first strategic membership plan to enable the accelerated inclusion of tech startups and grow the dynamism of the ecosystem.



*Image supplied. L to R: James Milne, Silicon Cape board member, Wesgro; Joslyn Links, Silicon Cape project administrator; Kerry Petrie, Silicon Cape, general manager; Boitumelo Menyatswe, Silicon Cape ecosystem manager; Sumarie Roodt, Silicon Cape chairperson, UCT and Zimkhita Buwa Silicon Cape treasurer, Britehouse*

Silicon Cape, the organisation for supporting technology innovation and entrepreneurship in South Africa, launched their Africa-first 2021 Strategic Plan alongside a new membership model for those seeking to connect to the local and global tech scene.

The strategy aims to connect stakeholders, amplify the stories of the continent's tech innovators, advocate on behalf of the ecosystem as a collective and build bridges with other hubs in order to grow the continent.

"It is great to see the energy in what is developing here in this ecosystem in the Southern tip of Africa, the kind of entrepreneurs that are using this space to not only develop solutions and innovations for our region in Africa but using this region to develop innovations and solutions for the world," shares Alan Winde, the western cape minister of economic opportunities.

## Growing connections

Included in the strategy is a new membership model that aims to grow connections within the ecosystem, aligning tightly to the latest research from Endeavor Insight, which revealed the broader Cape Town as Africa's Tech Hub. The report emphasised this success was directly linked to how well networked the ecosystem is and highlighted the critical role that continued connections between stakeholders plays in maintaining vibrancy.



Is Cape Town Africa's tech capital?

2 Aug 2018



"What we have seen from the Endeavour Report is that our ecosystem's strength comes from our connections between the various stakeholders. Our community works hard to keep talking to each other, supporting each other and trying to leverage

collective resources where possible. This speaks to Silicon Cape's success historically, but also, critically, informs our new membership model. The model is how we plan to grow and strengthen those connections to maintain the dynamism of the ecosystem,” shares Kerry Petrie, general manager of the Silicon Cape Initiative.

The new membership model offers different paid-for plans that provide local and global innovation stakeholders curated access to the ecosystem, access to resources and marketing opportunities on the Silicon Cape platform. Plans start at only R500.

Membership also incorporates bespoke tech tours to highlight what key startups and innovation spaces are doing for visitors to the ecosystem. There is also a strong focus on building the networks for student entrepreneurship to capitalise on and accelerate the rising number of student ventures.

“I’m very excited about the launch of the Silicon Cape membership model,” states Xabiso Lombo, CEO and co-founder of Guardian Gabriel, “As an aspiring entrepreneur and as a student entrepreneur I urge them to target entrepreneurs in universities because that’s where the passion lies, that’s where the spirit is, and this is the space I believe student entrepreneurs should be in. The network that is being created is of great value to student entrepreneurial spirit and can help them propel their entrepreneurial ventures into the world.”

## **Financial independence and sustainability**

As an NPO, Silicon Cape has created a model that benchmarks itself against international best practice that has been effectively used to achieve financial independence and sustainability.

The shift away from a single source of corporate or government donor funding aligns to the strategic goal to stimulate inclusivity and ensures long-term financial sustainability for the same reason.

Critically, the new model allows Silicon Cape to hold a closer working relationship with a wider range of stakeholders through clearly articulated relationships.

“Silicon Cape’s new Africa-first membership model launch gave them an opportunity to update their members on what they are doing in helping us create this amazing ecosystem, this tech innovative space, where we can do things in Africa for Africa,” comments Winde.

“What stood out for me from the launch is how they’ve come up with an innovative model where no one member can take an overbearing role in the organisation and I believe that in itself will be an innovative way in which business chambers and other sector bodies are going to look at the way they fund themselves. This is the most amazing way for government to become a member of an organisation like Silicon Cape.”

The 2021 Silicon Cape Strategy incorporates the inputs of ecosystem clusters post a series of “Courageous Conversations” to gain insights from innovation incubators, accelerators, enablers, service providers, funders and

entrepreneurs.

“ *“The focus of the strategic review that we’ve undergone was really about what is the ‘more’ that we can do. And how can we do things better and how can we add more value. We have come so far as an organisation and as an ecosystem but there is always more that can be done – and that is a very exciting space to be in. The development of the strategy required a rigorous process, including an extensive amount of consultation and research within the innovation ecosystem,” states Dr. Sumarie Roodt, Silicon Cape chairperson.* ”

“Undertaking such a review process requires a certain amount of boldness which we did not shy away from as an organisation – these review processes are critical for any organisation such as ourselves in order to ensure relevancy and to add high impact value to the vibrant community we serve. We are showing the world that Cape Town in itself, and also as a gateway to Africa, is where you want to be!” indicates Roodt.

[Sign up](#) to Silicon Cape's membership network to indicate your interest.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>