

Innovation takes centre stage at GovTech conference

Innovation was the unspoken theme at the first day of the 10th annual GovTech conference. During his opening address at the conference, the Minister of Telecommunications and Postal Services, Dr Siyabonga Cwele (MP) highlighted government's efforts to create a digitally-savvy citizenry, to drive South Africa's transition to a knowledge economy.



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The potential of ICTS to drive development

"We have begun implementing the first phase of the SA Connect policy to rollout broadband infrastructure by conducting pilots in eight rural districts. We are finalising plans and funding options for the second phase, which will entail rolling out to all communities and government offices in the rest of the country," he said.

"We are also in discussions with municipalities about sustainable ways to provide free Wi-Fi as a strategy to provide free internet access to all South Africans, especially the youth and the poor, in all of South Africa's public spaces. This commitment is inspired by the huge potential of ICTS to drive socio-economic development," he noted.

Later in the day Cwele officially opened a R400,000 computer lab at the Umlazi Comprehensive Secondary School. The state of the art lab is equipped with 33 computers with a broadband speed of 15 Megabits per second and it's able to connect to other such labs in the country, allowing students and teachers to exchange knowledge and information in real time. This, says Cwele, puts it above the speed mandated by the SA Connect broadband policy, which aims to have all government departments connected by 10Mbps lines by 2020, including schools.

A journey of innovation

In his closing keynote, ex-FNB CEO and founder of MonteGray Capital, Michael Jordaan led delegates through his journey of innovation at FNB, sharing key lessons.

Innovation, he says, is only possible if people are empowered to do things, are empowered to take risks, and are allowed to make clever mistakes without devastating consequences. Innovation, he says, is about recognising that no one person is smarter than the collective, so tap into the collective wisdom to find solutions to problems and then execute them, because ideas alone are no good - they need to be implemented. Have fun, he says, citing fun, coffee and wine as critical to innovation - because they encourage energy and creativity. Take people out of their normal space, apply a little wine and coffee and see what happens, he advises.

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