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ZONEBEAT

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE east london idz



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FROM AFRICA TO PARIS

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Izihlwele Zivumile, “the ancestors have approved,” speaks to the deep connection between MaXhosa Africa contemporary design and the heritage from which it draws inspiration.

What makes this achievement particularly special is the journey behind it. Years of hard work, consistency and a strong belief that African creativity belongs on the world stage have brought MAXHOSA AFRICA to this moment.

With its manufacturing operations based at the East London IDZ, and its designs deeply rooted in African heritage, MAXHOSA AFRICA continues to show how local craftsmanship, culture and innovation can connect with audiences around the world.

From manufacturing in East London to showcasing in Paris, the MAXHOSA AFRICA story is one of proudly African identity, creativity and excellence. It is also a reminder of what can be achieved when local talent is given the opportunity to grow and compete globally.

We celebrate Laduma Ngxokolo and the entire MAXHOSA AFRICA team as they continue to share African creativity, culture and craftsmanship with the world.

As ELIDZ, we are immensely proud to see one of our investors carrying the spirit of the Eastern Cape and South Africa onto one of fashion’s most prestigious platforms.

From East London to Paris. The Eastern Cape is watching with pride.







MAXHOSA AFRICA

FROM THE PARIS RUNWAY TO EASTERN CAPE INDUSTRY: *TURNING AFRICAN CREATIVITY INTO ECONOMIC POWER*

From East London to Paris, MaXhosa Africa's journey is a source of immense pride for the Eastern Cape and South Africa.Watching the brand take its place on the official Paris Fashion Week runway with its 2026 collection, Izihlwele Zivumile, was not only exhilarating. It was a global affirmation of South African creativity, African heritage and Laduma Ngxokolo's extraordinary vision.



By Ayanda Ramncwana
Chief Operations Officer, East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ)

Meaning "the ancestors have approved," the collection's name speak to the deep connection between Maxhosa Africa's contemporary design and the heritage from which it draws inspiration. For me, the pride was also deeply personal: pride as a Xhosa woman from the Eastern Cape and pride in knowing that the factory behind this celebrated brand is located in the East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ).

That pride began well before Paris. When Laduma opened his East London store in November 2025, he announced that he would establish a factory in the ELIDZ, moving beyond retail to build a productive base in the province that shaped his identity and creative vision. He has fulfilled that commitment with precision: through clear purpose, disciplined investment and a sustained focus on manufacturing capability.

For the ELIDZ, the applause in Paris therefore carried the weight of a promise made at home and honoured through execution. Behind the runway were machines operating in East London, skills being built, livelihoods being sustained and a local enterprise growing.

From manufacturing in East London to showcasing in Paris, the show was the visible result of years of hard work, consistency and belief in the place of African creativity on world stage. It also demonstrated what becomes possible when local talent is given the opportunity to grow, manufacture and compete global. It showed, in a way that audiences could immediately recognise, how local craftsmanship, culture and innovation can connect with the world without losing its roots.

Vision, Discipline and Industrial Ambition

Laduma's journey shows what it takes to turn vision into industrial reality. He built a distinctive design language rooted in African heritage, then made the decisive leap from creative success to manufacturing investment. By choosing the ELIDZ, committing capital and establishing production capacity, he proved that enduring brands require both imagination and disciplined execution.

This is the entrepreneurship South Africa must nurture: globally ambitious, commercially astute and rooted in the productive potential of our people. MaXhosa is not only creating beautiful garments and carrying African identity to global audiences; it is owning assets, building capability, developing skills and creating jobs. It shows how culture, craftmanship and innovation can become productive industrial capacity. It is where the runway meets the real economy.

Textiles and Fashion as a Force for Economic Development

The Eastern Cape knows both the value of clothing and textile manufacturing and the cost of its decline. The sector once sustained livelihoods, built specialised skills and connected thousands of people to the economy. When factories closed under the pressure of imports and changing markets, the consequences endured in households and communities.

Against that history, MaXhosa is more than a fashion success; it is an industrial proposition capable of broadening and localising an entire value chain, connecting rural wool producers and processors to textile manufacturers, designers and skilled garment workers.

Each stronger link can create another opportunity: a market for a farmer, an order for a supplier, an apprenticeship for a young person and an income for a household. The true measure of this achievement is not visibility alone, but the lasting economic value created and retained in the province. The opportunity before us is to convert the pride generated by moments such as Paris Fashion Week into sustained demand, stronger local supply chains and more enterprises capable of reaching global markets.

ELIDZ Vision 2030: Building Local Industrialists for Global Markets

Realising and retaining that economic value is precisely what the ELIDZ Vision 2030 Strategy seeks to achieve. While foreign direct investment remains essential, our mandate goes further: we must deliberately build and empower local industrialists by enabling home-grown entrepreneurs to turn ideas into productive enterprises, strengthen their capabilities and compete in domestic and export markets. In this way, the ELIDZ becomes both an investment destination and a springboard from which South African enterprises can scale globally.

Supporting MaXhosa therefore means more than providing a conducive

operating environment. It means helping a home-grown enterprise deepen its manufacturing capability, connect with local suppliers and compete internationally while creating the conditions for many more businesses to follow. Global recognition matters most when it opens a wider path for local talent to grow into productive, competitive and enduring enterprises.

Our ambition is clear: attract investment into the Eastern Cape while developing South African enterprises capable of investing beyond our borders. That is how an industrial zone becomes more than a place of production; it becomes an engine of enterprise development and economic transformation.

The Choices That Will Shape Our Industrial Future: Government's Imperative: Enable Enterprise and Protect Original Work

As part of government, the ELIDZ helps translate economic policy into enterprise and employment. MaXhosa demonstrates why this work matters: local entrepreneurs, particularly in fashion and the creative industries, can convert South African culture, talent and intellectual capital into sustainable businesses, skilled jobs, stronger value chains and exports.

We must create the conditions for that potential to flourish by improving access to finance, modern machinery, production skills and markets; strengthening links between designers, manufacturers and suppliers; and adopting policies that help creative enterprises industrialise and scale.

Most urgently, we must lead stronger enforcement of intellectual property rights and coordinated action against counterfeiting. When original designs are copied without consequence, creators lose revenue, legitimate businesses lose markets, and the country loses jobs, investment and export potential. Protecting creative work is not only a legal or cultural duty; it is a strategic industrial intervention essential to transformation.

We must also advocate procurement practices that strengthen domestic production. Public institutions can use their purchasing power to expand opportunities for local craftspeople, designers and manufacturers. Our support is credible only when policy, programmes, procurement and institutional behaviour align behind one objective: building local enterprises that compete at home and abroad.

Citizens' Choice: Buy Authentic, Protect Livelihoods

Citizens also face a choice. During Heritage Month, we celebrate African identity and design, yet imported imitations and counterfeits increasingly occupy the same space. When a copy becomes the reference point for our culture, the loss is borne by the beadworker, dressmaker, factory employee, supplier and rural producer whose livelihood depends on authentic local production.

Our foremothers were both creators and entrepreneurs. Through garments, beadwork and jewellery, they carried knowledge, expressed belonging and earned livelihoods. We owe that legacy more than admiration; we owe it markets, protection and the opportunity to endure.

Every citizen has a stake in local employment, domestic industry and South African creativity. A counterfeit may appear cheaper today, but its hidden cost may be tomorrow's factory job, apprenticeship, supplier contract or farming opportunity. Our consumer choices either strengthen the productive economy we want or quietly weaken it.

From Global Applause to Lasting Transformation

We have a compelling opportunity to re-build our own textiles industry, anchored by domestic industrialists and designed from the outset to serve both local and global markets. The Eastern Cape has the raw-material potential, creative talent and emerging manufacturing capability to develop a stronger local value chain, from wool and other inputs through processing, design, production and distribution.

As government, we must lead the partnerships and interventions that turn this potential into a globally competitive industry. This requires supporting local producers, protecting original work, strengthening supplier linkages and enabling creative enterprises to industrialise, scale and reach larger markets. Our ambition must extend beyond celebrated brands to the dressmakers, beadworkers and creators whose skills can anchor sustainable enterprises and preserve knowledge across generations.

For me, this responsibility is both institutional and personal. As a Xhosa woman, I feel immense pride in MaXhosa's achievement; as an executive within government working in industrial development, I must help convert that pride into lasting economic value. Paris has shown the world the power of Laduma's vision. Our task now is to build the ecosystem in which his vision and many others like it, can endure, expand and transform our industrial base.

That is the lasting transformation we must pursue: rural producers connected to sustainable markets, skilled workers building careers, young people seeing a future in manufacturing, and local entrepreneurs becoming industrialists who compete at home and across the world.

The world is celebrating what Laduma Ngxokolo has created. Our choice, as government, is whether we simply applaud or lead with purpose and turning this moment into a globally competitive textiles industry and a legacy of production, transformation, dignity and opportunity. From the Eastern Cape to Paris, MaXhosa Africa has shown what is possible. Our responsibility is to ensure that this journey becomes a pathway that many more Eastern Cape creators, manufacturers and industrialists can follow.



EASTERN CAPE UNVEILS GREEN HYDROGEN STRATEGY TO DRIVE INDUSTRIALISATION AND INVESTMENT

The Eastern Cape has unveiled its Green Hydrogen Strategy at the African Green Hydrogen Summit (AGHS) 2026 in Cape Town, setting out how the province intends to leverage its renewable-energy and industrial advantages to attract investment, develop new industries, create jobs and strengthen its position in the emerging global green economy.

The Strategy is the product of collaboration between the Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEDEAT), the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), the South African National Energy Development Institute (SANEDI) and Nelson Mandela University (NMU). The partnership brings together government, technical expertise and academic knowledge to support a coordinated approach to green hydrogen development in the province.

Adopted by the Eastern Cape Provincial Executive Council for resourcing and implementation, the Strategy provides the province's roadmap for building a competitive green hydrogen economy while supporting the continued competitiveness of existing industries. The summit brings together government, investors, industry, development partners and researchers to advance collaboration and investment in the sector.

"Green hydrogen production, export and utilisation represent both a substantial economic opportunity and a strategic priority for the Eastern Cape," says Premier Lubabalo Oscar Mabuyane.

"The Strategy is ultimately about using green hydrogen as a catalyst for industrialisation, economic growth and long-term regional competitiveness. It gives us a roadmap to attract investment, deepen value chains, support localisation and skills development, and ensure that our existing automotive, manufacturing and export industries remain competitive as global markets transition to lower-carbon production," adds Mabuyane.

The Eastern Cape's renewable-energy resources, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), deep-water ports, skills base and export manufacturing capability provide a strong platform from which to develop the sector.

"Our SEZs, Coega and East London IDZ, are critical platforms in this process because they bring together industrial infrastructure, logistics, investment support, skills and access to global markets. By connecting these platforms with our renewable-energy resources, ports, infrastructure and regional partners, we can move beyond simply producing green hydrogen to building new industries, new capabilities and new economic opportunities for the Eastern Cape," says Eastern Cape Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism MEC, Ms Nonkqubela Pieters.



East London IDZ Chief Executive Officer, Mr Thembela Zweni, says the province's Green Hydrogen Strategy and its participation in the African Green Hydrogen Summit provide an important platform for the ELIDZ to reinforce its role as a practical industrial partner in translating the Eastern Cape's green hydrogen ambitions into bankable investment opportunities.

"Green hydrogen must be advanced as a catalyst for industrialisation, investment attraction and long-term competitiveness. This is not merely an energy conversation; it is a significant industrial development opportunity. Through our Special Economic Zone / Industrial platform, established manufacturing base, logistics linkages and investor support capabilities, the ELIDZ is well positioned to help anchor and grow the green hydrogen economy", says Zweni.

The Eastern Cape has more than 2.4 Gigawatts of renewable-energy projects operational or under construction and a renewable-energy pipeline exceeding 10 Gigawatts. The ports of Ngqura and East London, Coega SEZ and East London IDZ, together with an established automotive and manufacturing base, provide industrial and export infrastructure close to potential production sites.

These advantages are further strengthened through the Three Capes cooperation with the Western and Northern Cape. Linking renewable-energy resources, ports, industrial platforms, transmission infrastructure and logistics corridors can create greater scale, integrated value chains and a stronger proposition for investors.

The Strategy's focus is now on converting these advantages into viable projects and broad-based economic benefits. Anchor green hydrogen projects at Coega and the East London IDZ have been designated national strategic integrated projects, providing an early platform for investment and commercial development.

Implementation is structured in three phases: establishing the sector and enabling conditions to 2030; scaling production, industry and skills from 2030 to 2040; and developing a mature, internationally competitive green hydrogen economy integrated into global low-carbon value chains from 2040 to 2050.

Five linked priorities will drive delivery.

- ***Infrastructure and logistics*** will connect renewable power to production sites and markets through grid, water, storage, road, rail and port investment.
- ***An enabling environment*** will focus on coordinated institutions, predictable approvals, policy alignment and international certification.
- ***Investment and finance*** will mobilise private capital, development finance, climate finance and strategic partnerships.
- ***Skills and knowledge*** will align universities, TVET colleges, research institutions and industry with emerging technical and operational needs.
- ***Localisation and innovation*** will build local suppliers, enterprises, research capability and downstream industries so that more value is retained in the province.

The Strategy makes clear that government cannot build the sector alone.

The public sector will coordinate infrastructure, spatial and municipal planning, improve the investment environment, build institutional and skills capacity and help reduce project risk.

Commercial projects will depend primarily on private-sector and development-finance investment, technology and market access.

Nelson Mandela Bay and Buffalo City are identified as emerging green industrial hubs. Delivery will require collaboration across government, municipalities, state-owned companies, investors, industry, universities, TVET colleges, labour and communities.

Success will be measured not only by investment and production, but by local skills development, supplier development, enterprise growth and participation by Eastern Cape workers, businesses and communities.

The Strategy therefore positions green hydrogen not simply as a new energy opportunity, but as a potential catalyst for industrial development, investment, localisation and inclusive economic growth. It provides a common framework for aligning the province's infrastructure, institutions, industries and partnerships to position the Eastern Cape for long-term participation in emerging global low-carbon value chains.









FROM GREEN HYDROGEN POTENTIAL TO INDUSTRIAL REALITY: THE EASTERN CAPE'S NEXT MOVE

For me, the ELIDZ vision for green hydrogen has never been simply about attracting investors into a new and promising sector.

By Ayanda Ramncwana
Chief Operations Officer, East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ)

For me, the ELIDZ vision for green hydrogen has never been simply about attracting investors into a new and promising sector. It is about bringing the full impact of this sector to the people of the Eastern Cape. It must shape the qualifications our young people choose to pursue, the innovations and businesses

that are opened, the kinds of jobs that become predominant in our economy, and the economic activities that take root in the Zone and beyond. Green hydrogen must not only power industries; it must power communities.

That is why the Eastern Cape's green hydrogen opportunity matters so deeply. The province has long been described as a province of potential. In sustainable energy, that description is beginning to feel inadequate. The province is no longer merely waiting for the future to arrive; it is actively building some of the platforms through which that future can be industrialised.

That was my overwhelming reflection after the recent African Green Hydrogen Summit 2026, where the Eastern Cape's green hydrogen proposition was visible through two catalytic projects: the Green Hydrogen Solutions Project at the East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ) and the Hive Green Ammonia Project at the Coega SEZ.

These two strategic investments from the Eastern Cape were announced as part of the six first-wave projects included in South Africa's inaugural Green Hydrogen Deal Book. For a province that is often among the first to move in emerging sectors, this recognition matters. It confirms that the Eastern Cape is not only participating in the national green hydrogen conversation; it is helping to define the project pipeline through which South Africa's next industrial frontier will be tested. As someone involved in industrial project development, I know that visibility alone does not make a project viable. What matters is whether that visibility translates into investment decisions and ultimately, into implementation on the ground.

If the Eastern Cape is to remain ahead of the curve, we must now ask a harder and more urgent question: How do we protect this first-mover advantage and become one of the first provinces to move a green hydrogen project from promise to operation?

The answer begins with understanding that these two provincial projects are not stand-alone developments; they are anchor platforms for a future green hydrogen sector. The Green Hydrogen Solutions Project at the ELIDZ and the Hive Green Ammonia Project at Coega should be regarded as early nodes in a wider provincial value chain that connects renewable energy generation, grid and transmission access, water and desalination, electrolysers, storage, transport, port handling, certification, engineering, construction, operations, maintenance, digital monitoring, research, skills and downstream products such as green ammonia, fertiliser, marine fuel and sustainable aviation fuel. If we treat them only as individual investments, we will understate their significance. If we treat them as the foundations of a sector, we begin to see the system that must be planned, financed, enabled and deliberately grown. Too often, discussions about green hydrogen focus only on production. In reality, the greatest economic benefit comes from the industries, services and supplies that develop around a project over time.

After all, the Eastern Cape has an extraordinary competitive advantage in green hydrogen, but advantage only becomes meaningful when it is translated into delivery. The province has strong wind and solar resources, two strategic ports, established industrial platforms in the Coega SEZ and the East London IDZ, an export-oriented manufacturing base, skills and innovation assets, and a growing project pipeline that includes both the Green Hydrogen Solutions Project and the Hive Green Ammonia Project. The challenge is no longer proving that the Eastern Cape has the right ingredients. The challenge is ensuring that these advantages work together in a coordinated and focused way. The opportunity now is to align these assets with purpose: connecting energy resources to industrial land, ports to future export markets, universities and TVET colleges to new skills demand, and public institutions to investors that can build projects, grow industries, create jobs and deepen the economic impact of investment in our province.

The Green Hydrogen Solutions Project at the ELIDZ alone could unlock approximately R1,3 billion private-sector investment into the Buffalo City economy and create meaningful employment in the province. These are not abstract figures. They represent productive capital, industrial capability, new technical work and the possibility of building value chains around an industry that South Africa has identified as central to its future industrial development. They also represent a chance to place a new, lower-carbon commodity into the Eastern Cape's export basket and position the province in markets where the carbon intensity of production will increasingly shape competitiveness. In practical terms, this means opportunities for local contractors, engineers, technicians, graduates and small businesses to participate in a growing industrial ecosystem.

The Green Hydrogen Solutions Project has already moved beyond aspiration. Approved by the ELIDZ Board in 2024, the project has advanced into green hydrogen production development, with the front-end engineering study commissioned and the Environmental Impact Assessment completed. The remaining milestones are now clear: funding closure, firm supply and offtake arrangements, and the decisions that will move the project closer to construction and operation.

That progress must be acknowledged. Large industrial projects do not move from announcement to construction by enthusiasm alone. They require technical studies, environmental permissions, land solutions, energy supply arrangements, water planning, customer commitments, financial structuring and credible institutional support. GHS has done important work to move through these early stages. Anyone who has worked on large industrial projects understands that this is often the stage where momentum is either gained or lost. Progress at this stage matters.

This is why the message from the Minister of Electricity and Energy, Honourable Dr Kgosientsho Ramokgopa, at the Summit was so important. His challenge was clear: South Africa's green hydrogen sector must move from ambition to implementation, from PowerPoint to gigawatts. In practical terms, first-wave projects such as Green Hydrogen Solutions must now demonstrate progress on the conditions that unlock investment: funding closure, enabling infrastructure, permitting, credible customers, offtake agreements and construction readiness. For the ELIDZ, the immediate task is therefore not simply to celebrate Green Hydrogen Solutions' inclusion in the national investment deal book, but to help convert that recognition into execution by supporting the investor to secure funding closure, obtain the major hazard installation permit, finalise bankable offtake arrangements and move decisively towards construction and operation.

This is where a provincial green hydrogen enabling delivery network becomes essential. At an executive level, investment facilitation must be understood as more than promotion; it is the practical discipline of converting investment interest into bankable decisions and bankable decisions into economic impact. No single institution can develop a green hydrogen sector on its own. Success will depend on how effectively government, industry, financiers, ports, education institutions and communities can work together. That requires a delivery network able to remove friction from the investor journey by aligning land, port access, power, water, permitting, funding, incentives, customers, skills, localisation and community participation around a clear path to implementation, supported by clear responsibilities, responsive institutions and accountability for progress.

The Eastern Cape Green Hydrogen Strategy already gives us the framework. Its five priorities, namely infrastructure and logistics, an enabling environment, investment and finance, skills and knowledge, and localisation and innovation, are precisely the areas that must now be converted into practical action around the first-wave projects. This means infrastructure planning that follows project timelines; predictable approvals; support for climate and development finance; coordinated skills programmes; and intentional localisation so that local firms, SMMEs and workers participate in the value chain from the beginning.

For the ELIDZ, this also means using existing and future assets more strategically. The Zone offers serviced industrial land, investment facilitation, proximity to the Port of East London, an emerging energy special purpose vehicle, innovation platforms through the Science and Technology Park, a platform for green energy, digital capability, advanced manufacturing, enterprise development and skills. These are not separate initiatives. They are pieces of one industrial proposition.

If we get this right, the benefits will extend beyond one investor. A green hydrogen sector can create demand for engineering, fabrication, electrical installation, water treatment, specialist logistics, safety systems, maintenance, monitoring technologies, professional services, research, incubation and component manufacture. It can help existing industries decarbonise and make the Eastern Cape more attractive to investors whose customers and financiers increasingly demand lower-carbon production. What encouraged me most at the Summit was the growing sense that the conversation has shifted. The focus is increasingly on implementation, timelines and delivery rather than potential alone.

The Summit therefore left me both proud and restless. Proud because the Eastern Cape is not watching the green hydrogen economy from the sidelines. Restless because early movement only creates advantage if it is followed by disciplined execution. Many places can announce projects. Fewer can operationalise them.

Our challenge now is to become one of those places. We must move from strategy to implementation, from deal-book recognition to construction, from investment potential to industrial impact. That is how the Eastern Cape protects its advantage. That is how we turn sustainable energy into a strategic sector.

That is how green hydrogen becomes more than a promise for the future; it becomes the foundation of a new industrial economy that can touch ordinary households and reshape the destiny of the province. In many ways, the decisions taken over the next few years will determine whether the Eastern Cape has become a producer, exporter and beneficiary of the green hydrogen economy or simply an observer of its growth elsewhere.

For me, success will not be measured by investment announcements alone. It will be measured by the factories that are built, the businesses that emerge, the skills that are developed, and the opportunities created for people across the province. Ultimately, the value of green hydrogen will lie not only in what it produces, but in the economic impact it leaves behind.

If we act with urgency, discipline and shared purpose, this sector can become for the Eastern Cape what the automotive sector has been for generations: a platform for skills, enterprises, technical work, entrepreneurship and jobs in ordinary families. That is the opportunity we must now realise.

What inclusion in the Green Hydrogen Deal Book means

- *It identifies the project as part of South Africa's priority first-wave green hydrogen investment pipeline.*
- *It gives the project stronger visibility with investors, financiers and public institutions.*
- *It signals that government will help remove barriers that delay bankable investment decisions.*
- *That support focuses on enabling infrastructure, permits, funding pathways, offtake development, customer mobilisation and institutional problem-solving.*
- *The objective is to help credible projects move faster from announcement to financial close, construction and operation.*

MOLECULES OF CHANGE: WHY GREEN HYDROGEN MAKES SENSE FOR THE EASTERN CAPE

A Thought Leadership rticle by Dr Chris Ettmayr
Sustainable Energy, Digital Economy & Logistics Sector Manager



When most people hear the term green hydrogen, they think about exports, billion-rand investments, and the future of energy. Few thinks about manufacturing jobs in East London.

The focus is no longer simply whether hydrogen has a future. It is where that future will take root first and what tangible economic value it will create.

For South Africa, that question cannot be answered by looking at renewable energy resources alone. The real opportunity lies in understanding how hydrogen can solve practical industrial challenges that already exist today.

The Eastern Cape offers an interesting test case.

This is a province that knows manufacturing. It knows logistics. It understands exporting to demanding international markets. It is home to an automotive industry that competes globally and supports thousands of jobs across complex supplier networks. But like the rest of South African industry, it is also confronting a changing reality.

Energy costs are rising. Carbon compliance requirements are becoming stricter. International customers are asking tougher questions about the emissions embedded in products and supply chains. Competitive advantage is no longer determined solely by quality and price. Increasingly, it is also determined by carbon intensity.

That is where hydrogen enters the conversation.

Not as a silver bullet. Not as a fashionable energy technology. But as a practical industrial input with the potential to help manufacturers remain competitive in a rapidly changing global economy.

The mistake often made in discussions about hydrogen is to view it purely as an energy project. In reality, the most interesting hydrogen developments around the world are industrial development projects.

Hydrogen needs customers.

Without industrial users, a hydrogen plant is simply producing a molecule in search of a market.

Successful hydrogen economies emerge when production sits close to demand. They emerge where manufacturers can use hydrogen to replace diesel, liquefied petroleum gas, heavy fuel oil, or other fossil fuels. They emerge where infrastructure already exists and where logistics costs can be minimised.

This is why industrial development zones matter.

They provide a ready-made ecosystem. They bring together industrial land, infrastructure, investors, regulatory support, and manufacturers facing growing pressure to decarbonise.

In South Africa, that creates a compelling opportunity for Special Economic Zones and Industrial Development Zones to become the foundations of the emerging hydrogen economy.

The East London IDZ (ELIDZ) is a case in point.

What makes the ELIDZ particularly interesting is not that it has a hydrogen project under development. Many regions have projects on paper.

What distinguishes the ELIDZ is the convergence of assets already in place.

It has access to industrial customers. It sits alongside a functioning port. It has available land. It has existing seawater infrastructure that creates opportunities for desalination. It has established investor facilitation mechanisms. And it has built a reputation as South Africa's leading eco-industrial park.
From an investor perspective, this matters.

One of the greatest risks facing any hydrogen project is not technology. Electrolysers work. Renewable energy works. Desalination works.

The challenge is integration.

Can water, electricity, logistics, and customers be brought together in a way that creates a sustainable business case?

That is ultimately the question being tested in industrial/special economic zones around the world.

For the Eastern Cape, hydrogen also presents an opportunity that extends beyond energy.

Water security is becoming an increasingly important economic

issue. Manufacturers require certainty of supply to invest and expand. The integration of desalination infrastructure with future hydrogen developments could help support industrial growth while reducing pressure on conventional water resources.

At the same time, hydrogen opens opportunities to stimulate additional renewable energy investment, strengthen energy resilience, and support lower-carbon manufacturing.

These outcomes should not be viewed separately.

They are interconnected.

The debate is therefore not simply about producing green hydrogen. The debate is about creating a more resilient industrial ecosystem.

That is an important distinction.

Sometimes, South Africa approaches emerging sectors as stand-alone industries. The real value comes when new industries strengthen existing ones.

Hydrogen should help the automotive sector become more competitive. It should help manufacturers reduce exposure to future carbon costs. It should help attract investment into industrial infrastructure. It should help create new technical capabilities and skills.

If it achieves those outcomes, then hydrogen becomes more than an energy transition project.

It becomes an industrial development project.

As discussions focus on production targets, investment pipelines, and export opportunities.

How do we ensure hydrogen contributes to local industrial growth?

How do we use it to strengthen manufacturing regions?

How do we translate clean energy into jobs, new investment, and greater competitiveness?

The regions that answer those questions first are likely to lead the next phase of the hydrogen economy.

For the Eastern Cape, and for industrial platforms such as the East London IDZ, that opportunity is already beginning to take shape.

The future hydrogen economy will not be built by producing molecules alone.

It will be built by turning those molecules into industrial growth.

The hydrogen economy will not ultimately be won by those who make the biggest announcements or publish the most ambitious targets. It will be won by regions that can translate opportunity into industrial activity, investment into infrastructure, and innovation into jobs.

For the Eastern Cape, the real opportunity lies not only in exporting a new commodity, but in using green hydrogen to strengthen manufacturing, deepen industrial resilience, and position the province at the centre of South Africa's next chapter of industrial growth. That is the opportunity. The question is no longer whether hydrogen is coming. It is whether we are ready to lead.

ELIDZ PROTOTYPE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME TO ACCELERATE INNOVATION AND SMME GROWTH IN THE EASTERN CAPE

The East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ), through its Science and Technology Park (STP), is inviting innovators, entrepreneurs and emerging enterprises to participate in its Prototype Development Programme, an initiative designed to transform innovative ideas into market-ready products and support the growth of technology-driven businesses in the Eastern Cape.

The programme is being rolled out through a newly launched Expression of Interest (EOI) and seeks to identify promising innovations with the potential to contribute to industrial development, technological advancement and economic growth across the province.

As innovation becomes increasingly central to competitiveness and economic resilience, access to prototype development support remains a critical step in helping entrepreneurs validate their concepts, test solutions and prepare products for commercialisation. Through the Science and Technology



Park (STP), the ELIDZ continues to provide a platform that bridges the gap between ideas and market opportunities while strengthening the province's innovation ecosystem.

The programme targets innovators and SMMEs operating within strategic sectors including automotive, advanced manufacturing, digital economy, sustainable energy, agri-industry, aquaculture and logistics, all of which have been identified as priority growth sectors for regional industrial development.

ELIDZ Chief Executive Officer, Thembela Zweni, said the initiative forms part of the organisation's broader commitment to supporting innovation-led industrialisation and expanding opportunities for local entrepreneurs.

"Innovation is a key driver of economic growth and future industrial competitiveness. Through the Science and Technology Park (STP), the ELIDZ is creating pathways for innovators and entrepreneurs to move beyond concepts and develop solutions that can respond to industry challenges and market demands. By supporting prototype development, we are investing in the next generation of products, technologies and businesses that have the potential to contribute to economic growth, job creation and industrial diversification in the Eastern Cape."

The ELIDZ Science and Technology Park (STP) was established to enhance the competitiveness of the zone and the broader provincial economy through innovation, research and technology development. In addition to supporting entrepreneurs and innovators, the STP contributes to the advancement of Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) capabilities while helping to create an enabling environment for innovation-driven enterprises.

The prototype development programme also supports inclusive economic participation, with particular emphasis on black-owned, women-owned and youth-owned enterprises. By providing access to technical support and innovation development services, the programme seeks to unlock opportunities for emerging businesses that may otherwise face barriers to product development and market entry.

Entrepreneurs, innovators and qualifying SMMEs are encouraged to submit applications and take advantage of the opportunity to refine and develop innovative products that could contribute to the Eastern Cape's growing innovation and industrial landscape.

HEMP AND CANNABIS BENEFICIATION PROGRAMME OPENS NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR EASTERN CAPE ENTERPRISES

The East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ), through its Science and Technology Park (STP) and in partnership with the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), has issued an Expression of Interest (EOI) aimed at supporting Eastern Cape enterprises involved in hemp and cannabis beneficiation through biotechnology.



The programme targets businesses that have already developed product prototypes and require support to advance towards pilot-scale, demonstration-scale and commercial production.

The initiative builds on the work already being undertaken through the ELIDZ STP, which currently supports more than 71 enterprises across a range of innovation, incubation and enterprise development programmes. Through these programmes, the STP continues to support entrepreneurs and innovators in developing products, strengthening their competitiveness and pursuing opportunities for growth.

While the STP supports enterprises across multiple sectors, this particular call focuses specifically on hemp and cannabis beneficiation, with an emphasis on product development and value addition. The programme seeks to identify enterprises that have moved beyond the concept stage and are ready to further develop products with commercial potential.

For Eastern Cape enterprises, the opportunity extends beyond cultivation. A key focus of the programme is the development of products and applications derived from hemp and cannabis, creating greater value through local processing and manufacturing. Potential applications include biofuels, biomaterials, bio-composites, bioplastics and textiles, all of which have the potential to contribute to the growth of value-added industries within the province.

The programme also aligns with broader efforts to strengthen the province's industrial base by supporting innovation-led manufacturing and encouraging greater participation in emerging sectors. By promoting beneficiation and local product development, the initiative aims to create opportunities for enterprise growth while contributing to a more diversified and competitive provincial economy.

As the only Science and Technology Park (STP) in South Africa linked directly to an Industrial Development Zone, the ELIDZ STP plays an important role in supporting innovation, collaboration and industrial competitiveness. The facility provides a platform through which enterprises can access specialised support aimed at advancing products and technologies with commercial potential.

"Through the Science and Technology Park, ELIDZ is already supporting more than 71 enterprises across a range of innovation programmes. This Expression of Interest builds on that work by focusing specifically on hemp and cannabis beneficiation, an area with significant potential for value addition, product development and industrial growth. The initiative is aimed at supporting enterprises that have already developed product prototypes and are ready to advance towards pilot-scale, demonstration-scale and commercial production.

Through this intervention, ELIDZ seeks to support enterprise growth, strengthen local manufacturing capability and contribute to the diversification and inclusivity of the Eastern Cape economy," said ELIDZ Chief Executive Officer, Thembela Zweni.

The EOI is expected to attract applications from innovators, entrepreneurs and enterprises from across the province who are exploring opportunities within the hemp and cannabis value chain. By focusing on beneficiation and product development, the programme seeks to support the growth of locally developed products and industries, while creating new opportunities for economic participation, industrial development and investment in the Eastern Cape.

SOLVING THE EASTERN CAPE SKILLS SHORTAGE THROUGH INNOVATION: CONNECTING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION



By Sipho Masinga
ICT Business Analyst

The growing unemployment crisis in the Eastern Cape and across South Africa demands urgent attention. Yet the challenge is not simply a shortage of jobs. It is a shortage of pathways that connect people to meaningful economic participation. Despite continued investment in education and training, many young people, including graduates and school leavers, remain excluded from employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.

This raises an important question. Are current skills development models sufficiently aligned to the realities of the economy they are intended to serve?

In my experience, many young people are doing what society has asked of them by pursuing education and training, yet too many still struggle to find a meaningful pathway into the economy. This suggests that the challenge extends beyond skills acquisition to how those skills are connected to economic opportunity.

For many years, skills development has largely been viewed through an educational lens. But the real opportunity lies in viewing skills development as an economic development tool. Skills are not only about employability. They are about creating the capabilities required to participate in and contribute to economic growth.

Innovation plays an important role in this process.

The East London Industrial Development Zone occupies a unique position in this regard. As one of the Industrial Development Zones in South Africa to incorporate skills development into its business activities, the ELIDZ has recognised that sustainable industrial growth depends on more than infrastructure and investment. It also depends on capable and skilled people. Through its Innovation Hub, innovators and entrepreneurs are supported in transforming ideas into practical products and solutions that can contribute to industrial development.

What has become increasingly evident is that innovation is not limited to laboratories or technology start-ups. Some of the most promising ideas emerge from ordinary people who understand the challenges within their own communities and industries. The opportunity is to create stronger connections between grassroots innovation, technology development and industrial application so that ideas can be scaled into sustainable economic opportunities.

The challenge is not a shortage of ideas.

Across communities in the Eastern Cape, there are individuals with innovative concepts, practical skills and entrepreneurial ambition. The opportunity lies in creating stronger mechanisms to identify, support and develop these ideas into commercially viable products, businesses and industries. Innovation succeeds when local potential is connected to real economic opportunity.

Over the years, I have encountered many innovators with practical solutions and business concepts, but access to meaningful support, markets and development opportunities often remains the biggest obstacle.

The Eastern Cape already possesses a significant industrial advantage.

As one of South Africa's key automotive manufacturing hubs, the province hosts globally competitive manufacturers and well-established supply chains. These industries create opportunities that extend far beyond direct employment within large factories.

The question is how these opportunities can be leveraged to create broader participation in the economy.

Too often, communities exist alongside industrial development rather than participating meaningfully within it. Yet there is considerable potential to develop small-scale manufacturing hubs within townships and rural communities that can contribute to larger industrial value chains. Local entrepreneurs, cooperatives and small enterprises can become suppliers of components and services that support existing industries, including the automotive sector.

The real opportunity lies in helping smaller enterprises see themselves not as businesses operating on the margins of the economy, but as potential participants within established industrial value chains.

This is not simply about expanding supply chains. It is about expanding economic participation.

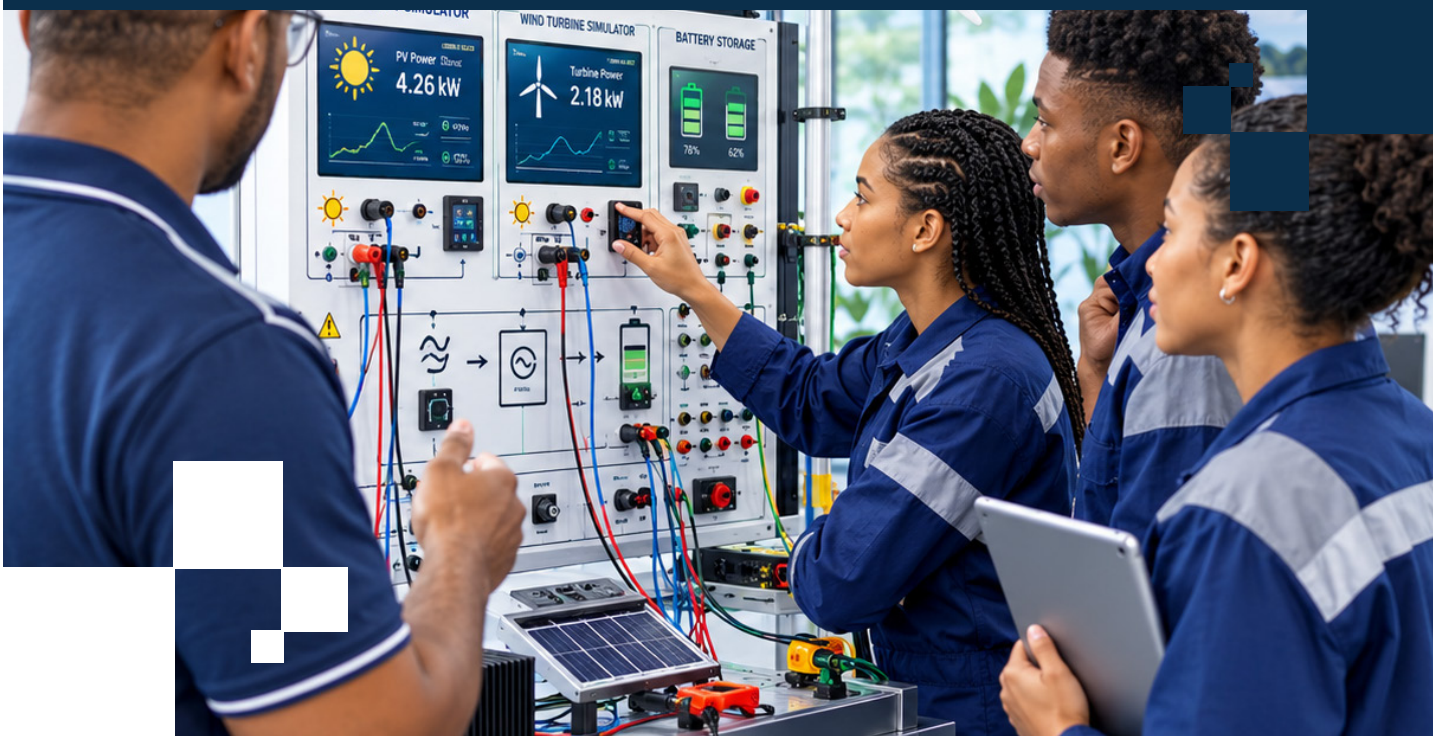
Successful industrialisation is not measured only by the success of large manufacturers. It is also measured by the extent to which communities are integrated into economic activity and able to benefit from industrial growth.

Achieving this requires a different approach to skills development.

South Africa's education system continues to place significant emphasis on academic achievement, yet economic success requires a broader range of capabilities. Not every learner will pursue a university qualification, nor should that be the only recognised pathway to success. Vocational and technical skills must be elevated as equally valuable contributors to economic development. At the same time, the province will continue to require engineers, technicians, researchers, digital specialists and entrepreneurs capable of driving innovation across key sectors of the economy.

Earlier exposure to vocational training can help create alternative pathways into productive economic activity. More importantly, it can help align skills development with the practical needs of industry and communities.

Vocational development should also recognise traditional skills that continue to support livelihoods in many communities. Skills such as beading, weaving and pottery remain important forms of economic activity



and should be given greater consideration within skills development programmes. Recognition of traditional skills should, however, complement ongoing efforts to develop capabilities in areas such as advanced manufacturing, digital technologies, automation and industrial innovation.

At the same time, valuable skills already exist within communities.

Across townships and villages, experienced artisans continue to practice trades such as welding, bricklaying, vehicle repairs, metalwork and other specialised skills. These individuals represent an often-overlooked source of knowledge and expertise.

The real opportunity is not only to preserve these skills, but to transfer them.

An Informal Apprenticeship Subsidy could provide a practical mechanism for encouraging skills transfer between experienced artisans and unemployed youth. Such an approach would recognise the value of informal learning while creating opportunities for young people to acquire practical capabilities that can support self-employment, entrepreneurship and participation in local industries.

Many of these artisans have spent decades developing highly specialised skills. Creating opportunities for them to transfer that knowledge would preserve valuable expertise while helping prepare a new generation of skilled workers.

This conversation extends beyond skills development.

It requires a fundamental shift in how communities are positioned within the economy.

For too long, many townships and rural communities have been viewed primarily as centres of consumption. The goods used and consumed in these communities are often manufactured elsewhere and transported in, creating limited opportunities for local economic participation.

Yet this raises another important question.

Why should communities only consume economic value when they have the potential to create it?

This is a question that should challenge all of us involved in economic development and skills planning.

The future of inclusive industrialisation will depend on the ability to develop local production capacity closer to where goods and services are consumed. Whether through food production, light manufacturing, metal fabrication, component manufacturing or other small-scale industries, there is a significant opportunity to build productive economic activity within communities that have historically been excluded from mainstream industrial development.

Industries such as bakeries provide a practical example. There is no reason why products consumed daily within communities cannot be manufactured closer to the markets they serve.

The principle is simple: where demand exists, there should also be opportunities for local production and local enterprise development. Expanding local production in this way creates opportunities for entrepreneurship, skills development and greater participation in economic activity.

This is not simply about creating more businesses. It is about changing the role communities play in the economy.

Communities that produce become communities that participate. They develop skills, create enterprises, generate income and contribute to broader economic growth. In this way, skills development becomes directly linked to economic empowerment rather than employment alone.

Government and industry both have a role to play in enabling this transition. Local content programmes, targeted incentives and supplier development initiatives can help create pathways for community-based manufacturers to participate in larger value chains. The objective should not only be to attract investment into communities, but to create environments where communities themselves become active contributors to industrial development.

The discussion must also consider how economic participation can be enabled with limited resources.

Manufacturing is often associated with expensive equipment and sophisticated facilities that remain inaccessible to economically disadvantaged communities. Yet many productive activities can begin with basic tools and practical skills. Communities can be empowered to do more with limited resources while building capabilities that support local economic development.

The objective is not to replicate models from elsewhere.

The objective is to adapt lessons that can support local development and create opportunities that reflect the realities of South African communities.

There is value in learning from countries that have successfully embedded practical skills transfer within local economies. International experience demonstrates that practical apprenticeship models can play an important role in transferring skills, strengthening entrepreneurship and improving participation in the economy.

There is value in examining these experiences and identifying lessons that can be adapted to support skills development within South African communities.

The automotive sector itself presents opportunities for this approach. Not every component within a vehicle requires highly sophisticated manufacturing processes. Products such as suspension springs, basic nuts and bolts, sound-deadening materials and other less complex components offer opportunities for local production and participation within existing value chains. At the same time, opportunities also exist in higher-value activities linked to advanced manufacturing, digital production systems, engineering services and industrial technologies.

The Eastern Cape possesses many of the ingredients required to pioneer this approach, including industrial capability, manufacturing expertise, entrepreneurial potential and communities that are eager to participate more meaningfully in the economy.

The encouraging reality is that many of these ingredients already exist. The task ahead is not necessarily to create entirely new systems, but to strengthen the connections between skills development, innovation, entrepreneurship and industry. The challenge is bringing these elements together. The debate, therefore, is not simply about addressing a skills shortage. It is about building a stronger connection between skills development, innovation, entrepreneurship and industrial growth.

If that connection can be achieved, the outcome will be far greater than the creation of employment alone. It will create producers, innovators, artisans and entrepreneurs capable of contributing to a more inclusive and resilient economy.

In my view, the success of our skills development efforts should ultimately be measured not only by the number of people trained, but by the number who are able to apply those skills in productive economic activity, build sustainable livelihoods and contribute to local economic growth. The future of the Eastern Cape will not be determined solely by the industries it attracts. It will be determined by how effectively it develops its people's capabilities and connects them to economic opportunity, as skills have become a competitive issue for businesses to settle in an investment location.

That is where the real opportunity lies, and it is a conversation that deserves far greater attention.

DRIVING INDUSTRIAL GROWTH THROUGH STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENTS

Industrial development is shaped not only by investment and infrastructure but also by the ability of stakeholders to engage, collaborate and share insights on emerging opportunities. Across industries, strategic engagements continue to play an important role in fostering partnerships, strengthening competitiveness and identifying pathways for sustainable growth.

During the second quarter, the East London Industrial Development Zone participated in and hosted a number of engagements aimed at advancing industrial development, strengthening trade opportunities and fostering collaboration with strategic stakeholders. While each engagement had its own focus, together they reflected a commitment to creating an enabling environment for investment, innovation and economic growth.

MANUFACTURING INDABA 2026: STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A COMPETITIVE MANUFACTURING SECTOR

Throughout history, manufacturing has been one of the strongest indicators of economic development. Countries that have successfully industrialised have often done so through building productive manufacturing sectors capable of creating employment, driving innovation and supporting exports.

Beyond production itself, manufacturing stimulates activity across multiple sectors, creating demand for logistics, infrastructure, technology and professional services while contributing significantly to broader economic growth.

Despite its importance, manufacturers around the world continue to operate within increasingly complex environments. Technological advancement, shifting consumer expectations and global competition are reshaping production systems and the way industries compete. Remaining competitive increasingly depends on the ability to innovate, improve productivity and adapt to changing market conditions.

In South Africa, efforts aimed at driving industrialisation and localisation continue to place manufacturing at the centre of economic growth and development. Strengthening productive sectors has become increasingly important as the country seeks pathways to greater competitiveness, investment attraction and job creation.

It was against this backdrop that industry leaders, policymakers, investors and development practitioners gathered at Manufacturing Indaba 2026, one of South Africa's leading platforms dedicated to advancing industrial growth and manufacturing competitiveness.

The event provided an opportunity for stakeholders to examine the opportunities and challenges facing the sector while exploring practical solutions aimed at building a more resilient manufacturing ecosystem.

Discussions focused on topics ranging from advanced manufacturing and technology adoption to supply chain efficiency, skills development and localisation.

For the Zone, participation in the event aligned with ongoing efforts to support industrial development within the Eastern Cape. The platform created opportunities to engage

with key stakeholders, share perspectives on industrial competitiveness and showcase the province's manufacturing strengths.

The conversations emerging from the event reinforced the importance of collaboration in driving industrial growth. Manufacturers, development institutions, government departments and investors all have a role to play in creating environments capable of supporting sustainable growth and increased competitiveness.

As South Africa continues to pursue industrialisation as a pathway towards economic development, engagements such as Manufacturing Indaba remain important spaces for dialogue, partnership building and knowledge sharing.

STRENGTHENING EXPORT READINESS THROUGH STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

Export development remains an important component of economic growth, providing businesses with opportunities to access new markets, diversify revenue streams and strengthen resilience. In an increasingly connected global economy, the ability to compete beyond domestic borders has become an important measure of competitiveness.

Recognising the importance of export readiness, stakeholders gathered for the 7th Eastern Cape Export Symposium to explore opportunities and challenges relating to international trade. The symposium brought together exporters, business support organisations, government stakeholders and development institutions to engage on matters affecting market access and trade development.

Discussions focused on practical strategies aimed at increasing participation in export markets while equipping businesses with the information and support required to navigate increasingly complex trading environments. The event also created opportunities for engagement between exporters and stakeholders involved in facilitating trade and investment.

A key component of the symposium programme included a visit to the ELIDZ Science and Technology Park (STP), where delegates were introduced to initiatives supporting technology commercialisation, enterprise development, skills development and research-driven growth. The visit highlighted the role innovation plays in strengthening industrial competitiveness and creating opportunities for businesses to expand into new markets.

The symposium also hosted a high-level Africa Investing in Africa delegation comprising representatives from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Zambia, Malawi and Botswana, alongside representatives from the Continental Energy and Infrastructure Investment Forum (CEIIF), Africa Trade and Investment Council (ATIC), Zambia Development Agency and ANSER RDC.

During the visit, delegates gained insight into investment opportunities across the ELIDZ's priority sectors, including Automotive, Sustainable Energy, Digital Economy, Advanced Manufacturing, Logistics, Agri-Industries and Aquaculture. A key highlight was a tour of the Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence, one of the STP's flagship innovation platforms, where discussions focused on renewable energy innovation, green industrialisation, skills development and opportunities emerging from Africa's energy transition.

The engagement further showcased what continues to differentiate the Zone, including its recognition as a UNIDO-recognised Eco-Industrial Park, its status as South Africa's only Special Economic Zone with its own Science and Technology Park, development-ready industrial land and strategic access to port, road and rail infrastructure.

As Africa continues to strengthen regional trade and investment cooperation, engagements such as these create valuable opportunities to showcase innovation, exchange knowledge and strengthen relationships that support industrial growth across the continent.









BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS BEYOND BORDERS

As economies become increasingly interconnected, partnerships continue to play an important role in driving development. Collaboration across institutions and countries creates opportunities for knowledge exchange, investment attraction and shared learning while strengthening relationships capable of supporting long-term growth.

This was reflected through engagements with representatives from Henan Polytechnic Institute and members of the African Network of Parliamentary Budget Offices (AN-PBO) Governing Council.

The visit by representatives from Henan Polytechnic Institute emphasised the value of collaboration and knowledge exchange. As education, research and innovation become increasingly important drivers of development, partnerships between institutions create opportunities to learn from different experiences while exploring avenues for cooperation.

The ELIDZ also welcomed members of the African Network of Parliamentary Budget Offices (AN-PBO) Governing Council as part of the Eastern Cape Legislature's hosting of the AN-PBO programme in the province. The visit formed part of a broader programme that brought together parliamentary budget and oversight practitioners from across Africa to exchange knowledge, share experiences and explore good practices in democratic oversight, governance and public financial management.

During their visit to the Zone, delegates gained first-hand insight into the organisation's infrastructure, operations and contribution to industrialisation and economic development in the Eastern Cape. The engagement also created an opportunity to showcase the Zone's investment ecosystem and facilitate dialogue on the importance of collaboration in advancing sustainable development across the continent.



While distinct in purpose, both engagements highlighted the growing importance of collaboration, learning and relationship-building in addressing shared challenges and creating opportunities for future growth.

ADVANCING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION



The visit by Deputy Minister Zuko Godlimpi underscored the importance of collaboration in advancing economic development and industrialisation objectives.

Development institutions continue to play an important role in creating environments that encourage investment, support industrial expansion and facilitate economic participation. Through stakeholder engagement, these institutions are able to align priorities and strengthen implementation efforts aimed at addressing development challenges.

The engagement provided an opportunity to reflect on progress, discuss priorities and consider how partnerships between government, industry and development institutions can contribute towards sustainable economic growth.

As South Africa continues to pursue inclusive development, ongoing dialogue and collaboration remain essential in creating opportunities that deliver meaningful and lasting impact.

ADVANCING INNOVATION THROUGH SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Innovation has become one of the most powerful drivers of economic competitiveness. Across the world, economies that invest in innovation ecosystems are often better positioned to create new opportunities, support entrepreneurship and adapt to changing market conditions.

Through its Science and Technology Park, the Zone continues to contribute towards building an ecosystem that supports innovators, entrepreneurs and enterprises while fostering collaboration between industry, academia and development institutions.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND BIOTRADE: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH INNOVATION

South Africa's indigenous knowledge systems represent a rich source of insight, culture and innovation. Increasingly, attention is being given to the ways in which indigenous knowledge can contribute to enterprise development and participation in the bioeconomy.

The Indigenous Knowledge and Biotrade Indaba provided a platform for stakeholders to explore opportunities associated with indigenous knowledge while engaging on issues relating to sustainability, innovation and economic participation.

The discussions highlighted the importance of protecting and preserving traditional knowledge while creating opportunities for communities to derive meaningful benefits from its application and commercialisation.

As interest in the bioeconomy continues to grow, indigenous knowledge systems are increasingly being recognised as valuable contributors to innovation and inclusive development.

BUILDING SKILLS FOR TOMORROW'S ECONOMY

As technology continues to influence the way people work, learn and engage with the economy, access to practical digital skills is becoming increasingly important. Creating opportunities for young people to engage with emerging technologies not only broadens their knowledge but also exposes them to fields that continue to shape the future of industry and innovation.

Throughout the quarter, the East London IDZ Science and Technology Park (ELIDZ-STP) hosted a series of skills development programmes focused on Game Development and Animation, Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and Additive Manufacturing (3D Printing).

The training was delivered to unemployed youth, students and artisans from different parts of the province, including participants from Mdantsane and the Sarah Baartman District. Hosted in partnership with the Sarah Baartman District Municipality, Makana Local Municipality and Eastcape Midlands College, the programmes provided participants with hands-on exposure to technologies that continue to gain relevance within the digital and innovation economy.

While participants came from different backgrounds, they shared a common goal: to learn new skills, expand their knowledge and make the most of the opportunities presented through the training. Upon successful completion of the programmes, participants received certificates recognising their participation.

Through initiatives such as these, the ELIDZ-STP continues to create opportunities that nurture talent, support skills development and expose participants to technologies that are increasingly shaping the modern world.

STRENGTHENING GLOBAL INNOVATION NETWORKS

Innovation thrives when ideas, experience and expertise are allowed to flow across networks and institutions. Partnerships that connect local ecosystems to international platforms create opportunities for learning, collaboration and growth.

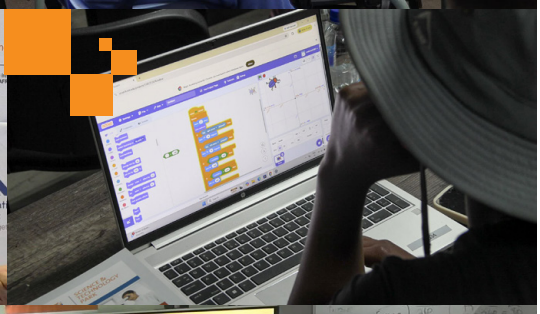
The visit by the President of the International Association of Science Parks and Areas of Innovation (IASP) provided such an opportunity, enabling engagement around innovation ecosystem development and opportunities for future collaboration.

The engagement reinforced the importance of connecting local initiatives to broader international networks while highlighting how collaboration can support innovation-driven development.



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How many investors does ELIDZ have?

BUILDING THE TALENT PIPELINE FOR FUTURE INDUSTRIES

Connecting Young People to Opportunities in the Automotive Sector

As industries continue to evolve, the development of future talent remains critical to long-term competitiveness and growth. Creating opportunities for young people to engage with industry allows them to better understand career pathways and emerging opportunities within key sectors of the economy.

The NYDA Automotive Expo provided a platform for learners, graduates and young entrepreneurs to engage directly with industry stakeholders while gaining exposure to opportunities within the automotive sector.

As one of South Africa's most significant manufacturing sectors, the automotive industry continues to create opportunities across a range of fields, from engineering and production to logistics, technology and entrepreneurship.

The engagement served as a reminder of the importance of connecting young people to industries that will help shape the future economy while fostering awareness of opportunities available within the manufacturing landscape.



CREATING IMPACT THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Development is often measured through infrastructure, investment and economic growth. Equally important, however, are the partnerships that support communities, strengthen local organisations and create opportunities for people to make a difference where they live and work.

Through partnerships with community structures, cooperatives and local organisations, the East organisation, through its Corporate Social Investment (CSI) Programme, continues to support initiatives that recognise local efforts and contribute to community development across the Eastern Cape.



EMPOWERING WOMEN, STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES

Women's Month provided an opportunity to recognise the contribution of women and celebrate the role they continue to play within communities across the province.

As part of the month's programme, the organisation partnered with the Ward 46 Women's Structure in an initiative aimed at supporting women within the community. The programme brought together beneficiaries and community representatives while highlighting the importance of working alongside local structures that continue to respond to community needs.

Support was also extended to Ukuphuhla Kukamama Primary Co-operative, a women-led cooperative operating within the clothing and textile sector. The handover recognised the work undertaken by the cooperative and the contribution it continues to make within the community.

Together, these engagements reflected the value of supporting women-led structures and organisations that continue to create opportunities and contribute positively to community life.

HONOURING HERITAGE THROUGH COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The ELIDZ joined communities from across the Eastern Cape at the 2026 Provincial Heritage Day celebrations held at Kroza Great Place in Qumbu.

The celebration brought together residents, community leaders and stakeholders to recognise the cultures, traditions and values that continue to connect communities across the province. It also provided an opportunity to acknowledge the people and organisations whose work contributes to the strength and development of local communities.

As part of the occasion, the organisation supported Ngcamlanathi Cooperative, a women-led farming cooperative based in Qumbu, through the donation of farming equipment to support its work.
The handover formed part of the day's activities and recognised the contribution the cooperative continues to make within its community.

The occasion served as a reminder that heritage is reflected not only in the traditions that communities carry forward, but also in the people and initiatives that continue to shape and strengthen them.

GROWING LOCAL FARMING, TOGETHER

Agriculture remains an important part of life in many rural communities across the Eastern Cape.

The organisation supported the Kuwane Foundation in Entsimekweni Village, Sterkspruit, through the donation of farming equipment to assist its agricultural activities.

The equipment will provide practical support for the foundation's day-to-day farming work and help it expand its farming activities over time.

The support recognised the work being undertaken by the foundation and its commitment to agricultural activities within the community.

Farming continues to play an important role in sustaining rural livelihoods, improving food security and creating opportunities for local economic participation. By investing in community-led organisations such as the Kuwane Foundation, communities are able to build on their own ideas, skills and determination.

Through partnerships such as these, the Zone continues to support initiatives that contribute towards stronger and more resilient communities across the Eastern Cape.



WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Closing the Gender Gap in Senior Leadership

Creating pathways for women to participate meaningfully in leadership remains an important aspect of inclusive growth and organisational transformation.

During Women's Month, ELIDZ Chief Operations Officer Ayanda Ramncwana participated in the BMF Women Empowerment Desk dialogue, contributing to discussions focused on leadership, representation and professional advancement.

The engagement provided an opportunity to reflect on the importance of inclusive leadership while encouraging conversations that support the advancement of women across different sectors.

PEOPLE BEHIND THE IMPACT

When people talk about industrial development, the conversation is often centred on infrastructure, investment figures and production outputs. While these indicators remain important measures of growth, they tell only part of the story.

Behind every new product, emerging industry and technological breakthrough are individuals whose ideas, determination and willingness to challenge convention help turn possibilities into reality.

One such individual is Mzingisi Mangqukela.

Based at the ELIDZ Manufacturing Incubator, Mzingisi is developing electric mobility solutions designed for African realities while pursuing a vision of creating technology and manufacturing innovations from the Eastern Cape that can compete on a global stage.

Through his company, Style E-Mobility, he has developed smart electric bicycles and electric delivery bikes aimed at promoting sustainable mobility solutions. Yet his journey extends beyond the products themselves. It is equally rooted in a belief that innovation can emerge from places that are too often overlooked.

"We are not just farmers. We can innovate."

In those few words, Mzingisi captures the spirit of a province rich in talent, creativity and entrepreneurial ambition. His story reflects the growing potential of local innovators who are not only adopting technology but actively creating solutions that respond to local challenges while opening doors to broader opportunities.

Industrial development is often measured through investment values, infrastructure projects and employment figures. These metrics are important. Yet behind every industry is an idea, behind every innovation is an entrepreneur, and behind every success story is someone willing to take the first step.





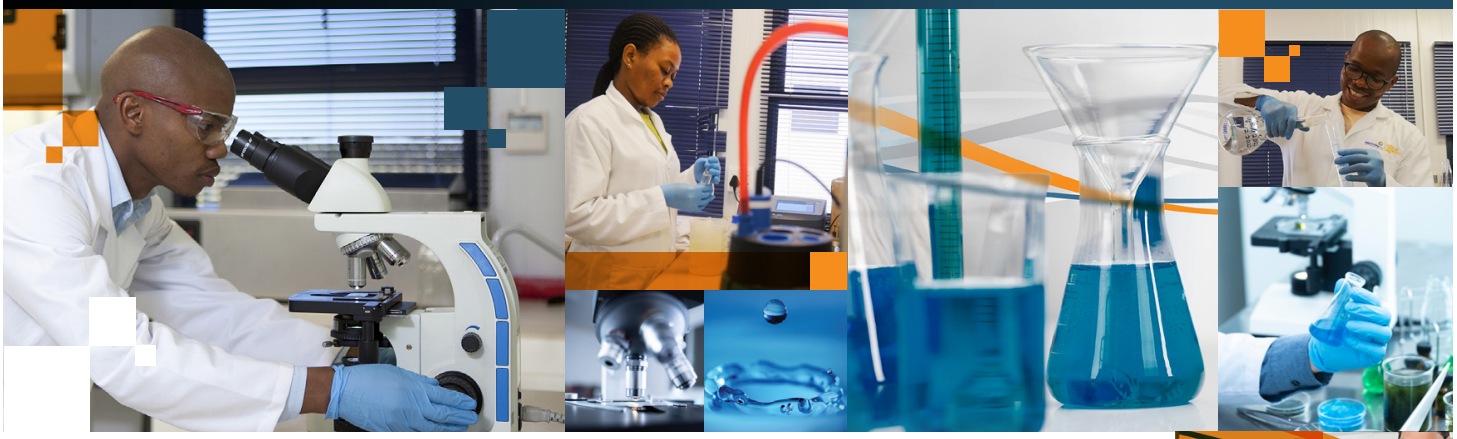


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THE ELIDZ - WHERE INNOVATION MEETS OPPORTUNITIES TAILORED FOR ENHANCED EFFICIENCY AND GROWTH

The East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ) is a standing model of business excellence, providing cutting-edge, compelling, and comprehensive services carefully designed to foster growth and empower your business.

The Digital Economy delivers outstanding services and offers businesses the opportunity to flourish in this rapidly expanding industry. Having been awarded three International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) certificates for ICT standards: ISO 27001, ISO 27017 and ISO 27018 – the ELIDZ demonstrates its steadfast commitment to proactively maintain the highest security standards. With offerings ranging from cybersecurity to software development, the ELIDZ is dedicated to supporting the growth of companies across digital niches.

Our Digital Economy offering is as follows:

Infrastructure Solutions: *Optimising your digital infrastructure to ensure seamless connectivity and enhanced data security.*

Software Solutions: *We deliver reliable and scalable solutions that drive digital transformation.*

Baas & DRaaS: *We've got your off-site backup and disaster recovery compliance needs covered.*

IT Support and Managed Services: *With our tech-savvy specialists and managed services, you can focus on your core business while we take care of your digital needs.*

We also offer the following ICT services:

• Cloud Services	• Fibre Connectivity
• Data Centre Colocation	• Telephony & Internet Services

Leading the way in digital transformation, the ELIDZ Digital Economy Sector continues to innovate, offering compelling services for businesses pursuing growth and opportunity. The ELIDZ represents an ideal starting point to unleash their full potential and shape the promising future of technology. Equipped with skilled, hands-on tech-savvy professionals, this industrial development zone is ready to drive innovation and meet the industry's ever-evolving demands.

Strategically positioned on key trade routes, ELIDZ provides exceptional advantages to tech companies with its proximity to major trade markets. Accessibility to transportation hubs such as Port of East London and King Phalo Airport ensures seamless connectivity, enabling efficient logistics and distribution networks. This optimal prime location not only boosts market reach but also encourages partnerships on a global scale.

The ELIDZ offers investment incentives and tailored support, making it an attractive choice for companies seeking to establish themselves in the zone. Furthermore, efficient regulatory processes and support services enhance the ease of doing business.

Explore the benefits our organisation offers today and experience how our bespoke tailored digital services revolutionise your business operations.

With robust infrastructure and adaptable solutions, join ELIDZ where innovation thrives without limits – offering boundless opportunities.

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Host Your Next Event at the ELIDZ

CONFERENCE CENTRE

*The **State-of-the-Art** Conference Facility for Every Occasion*

Experience world-class conferencing at the East London Industrial Development Zone (ELIDZ) Conference Centre, where cutting-edge technology and exceptional service come together to create seamless events. Whether you are looking to host large functions, mid-size conferences, award ceremonies, intimate board meetings, the ELIDZ conference centre is the place for you. We tailor make our solution to your specific requirements.

Our venue features:

- ***Advanced audio-visual equipment*** – roving & lapel microphones, large, automated projector screens, overhead projectors, and DVD equipment.
- ***Free Wi-Fi connection*** available to conference attendees
- ***Versatile event spaces*** – four rooms that can be transformed into a grand venue, accommodating over 200 guests.
- ***Custom seating arrangements*** – perfect for conferences, banquets, workshops, and boardroom meetings.
- ***Universal Accessibility*** – The ELIDZ conference centre is designed to cater for the disabled.
- ***Secured parking*** is available within the facility including dedicated parking bays for the disabled.

Convenient Location
– Just 2km from the Airport!

Easily accessible and designed for efficiency, comfort, and sophistication, the ELIDZ Conference Centre is the ideal venue for your next gathering.

Venue Capacity

Our venue offers flexible seating arrangements, accommodating up to 230 guests in cinema style, 150 for banqueting, 140 in classroom style, 142 in U-shape/horse shoe, and customizable boardroom setups for smaller groups.

Exceptional Catering to Keep Your Guests Energized

Our scrumptious meals leave you with a memorable experience. We offer breakfast menus, cocktail menus, and full buffet menu. Special Dietary requirements such as Halaal, Vegetarian and Vegan are available on request.

Standard conference catering package includes:

- *Arrival tea, coffee & juice*
- *Mid-morning tea with savory snacks*
- *Hearty lunch with a soft drink*
- *Afternoon tea with biscuits*

Book Now
& Elevate Your Event Experience!

Call us: +27 43 702 8200 / 49
Email: elidzconference@elidz.co.za
www.elidz.co.za

ELIDZ Conference Centre: Zone 1A, Lower Chester Road, Sunnyridge, East London
Co-ordinates: ***33°03'23.4"S, 27°50'57.1"E***

SECURED ONSITE **PARKING** & FREE WI-FI

TAILOR-MADE **CATERING** SERVICES

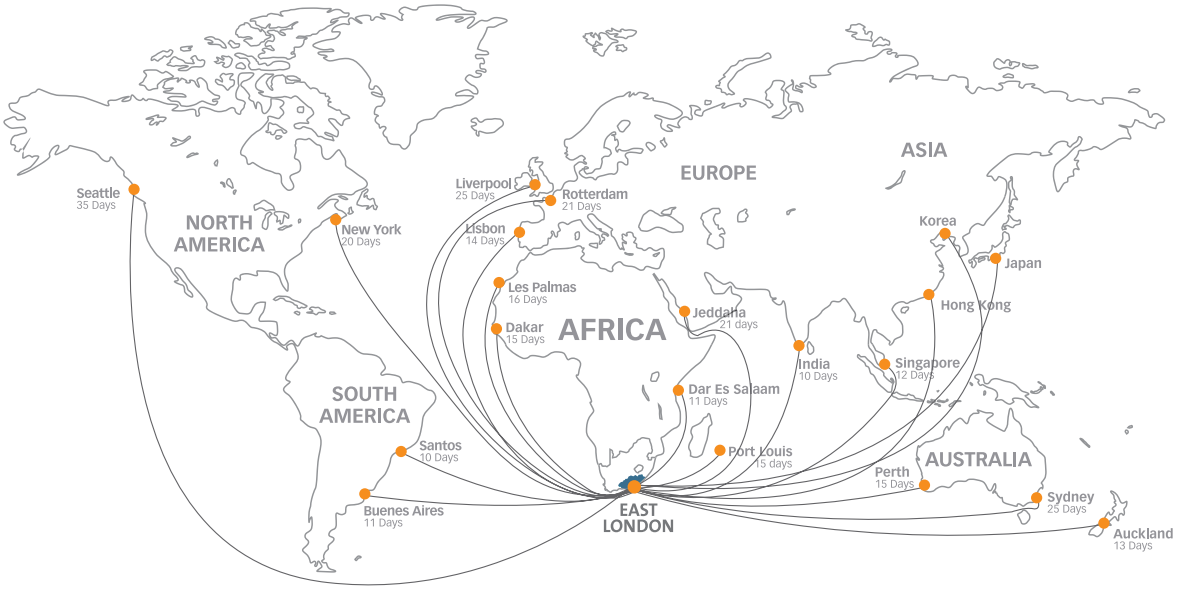
STATE-OF-THE-ART **EQUIPMENT**

ONLY **2KM** FROM AIRPORT

VERSATILE EVENT SPACES ACCOMMODATING UP TO **230 GUESTS** WITH UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY

ACCESSING **GLOBAL MARKETS**

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