



higher education
& training
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Programme Overview

8TH Annual EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba empowered by Absa

Thursday, 10 – Friday 11 September 2026

Birchwood Hotel and OR Tambo Conference Centre, Gauteng

Address: 44 Viewpoint Road, Bartlett, Boksburg

Universities South Africa (USAf), through its Entrepreneurship Development in Higher Education (EDHE) Programme, will host the 8th iteration of the EDHE Studentpreneurs Indaba, powered by Absa Bank. The two-day conference will take place at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg on 10 – 11 September 2026. The event will convene 350 students from the 26 public universities and other youth, as well as 150 academics and industry partners.

The event will comprise keynotes, fireside chats, panel discussions, workshops, and pitching sessions, as well as a networking event and exhibitions over the two days. For its second consecutive year, the Indaba will host a virtual hackathon as a fringe event in the build-up to the in-person conference. The hackathon will host over 100 students across 26 teams, and a representative from each team will pitch their innovation at the Indaba.

The preliminary programme is outlined below.

DAY 1: THURSDAY, 10 SEPTEMBER 2026

Time	Duration	Activity	Speaker/Facilitator
08:30 – 10:00	90 min	Arrival and Registration Founder Café Open Exhibition Space Open	EDHE
10:00– 11:30	Session 1: Opening Plenary		
10:00 – 10:10	10 min	Opening Ceremony	Master of Ceremonies
10:10 – 10:35	15 min	Welcome address	Dr Edwell Gumbo, Director, Entrepreneurship, Universities South Africa (USAf)
10:35 – 10:55	15 min	Partner Address	Mr Setlogane Manchidi, Managing Executive Corporate Citizenship, Absa Group
10:55 – 11:15	20 min	Ministerial Address	Mr Buti Manamela, Minister, Department of Higher Education and Training
11:15 – 11:30	15 min	Keynote Address	Mr Ludwick Marishane, Director, DryBath Pty Ltd and Headboy Industries Inc.
11:30 – 12:00	Tea Break and Exhibition		
12:00 – 13:00	Session 2: Venture Pitch Festival		



12:00 – 13:00	60 min	Track A: Investment readiness discussion & investor Q&A	Speakers: TBC Session: This session focuses on unpacking the funding landscape across government funding, CSI, ESD, VC, and grant initiatives, helping students understand what is available and how they can access these opportunities. Students should also walk away understanding what it looks like to be investment-ready.
		Track B: Hackathon Finals - teams pitch to investor panel	Facilitator: Geekulcha Session: Hackathon teams will present; each team will be represented by 1 presenter. All 26 teams will pitch their hackathon innovation in-person.
		Track C: Investor x Student Mixer	Moderator: TBC Session: This session is designed as a round-table speed networking session, where pre-selected student ventures that are in the commercialisation process or in the market and need support to grow or scale, are grouped by industry innovation, and will have the opportunity to deliver a 90-second elevator pitch for feedback or investment. Investors will rotate tables every 15 minutes and may choose to have further one-on-one engagements following the mixer.
		Track D: University Ecosystem Resource Mobilisation and Integration	Moderator: Ms Naledi Mathole: Chairperson, EDHE EAO COP Session: A working session facilitated by the EDHE EAO CoP exploring how universities, through the EAO, can plan and pursue resource mobilisation and collaboration to support the entrepreneurial efforts undertaken by the EAO and the university as a whole.
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch & Exhibition		
14:00 – 15:00	Session 3: Innovation Marketplace & Venture Building		
14:00 – 16:00	60 min	Track A: Industry panel discussion – driving commercialisation and support	Moderator: TBC Session: This panel discussion explores the intersection between industry support and the university ecosystem to drive and support the commercialisation of research, innovations and ideas from



			university staff and students. It unpacks where industry can meet universities and what industry players need to incubate, invest in or purchase innovations during their commercialisation journey. Industry also shares where other ecosystem players can come in to bolster the ecosystem and pipeline for support and investment.
		Track B: Hackathon Finals - teams pitch to investor panel.	Facilitator: Geekulcha Session: Hackathon teams will present; each team will be represented by 1 presenter. All 26 teams will pitch their hackathon innovation in-person.
		Track C: Driving Social Impact Through Entrepreneurship	Moderator: TBC Session: This panel discussion will focus on entrepreneurship, impact, and ESG. We would like the panellists to speak to the circular economy, waste innovation, opportunities, and impact funding.
		Track D: AI Tools for Innovation and Startups – workshop and immersive experience.	Canva Africa
15:00 – 15:30	Tea Break & Exhibition		
15:30 – 16:30	What It Takes		
15:30 – 16:30	60 min	Track A: SWEEP	Fireside Chat: Alexis Searle: Founder, The I AM Collective Panel and Showcase: SWEEP
		Track B: Men in Leadership	Facilitator: Kabelo Chabalala: Founder, Young Men Movement
16:30 – 17:30	Exhibition, Networking & Refresh		
17:30 – 20:00	Student Networking Social Hackathon Winner Announcement		



DAY 2: FRIDAY, 11 SEPTEMBER 2026

Time	Duration	Activity	Speaker/Facilitator
08:00 – 09:00	60 min	Arrival and Registration Founder Café Open Exhibition Space Open	EDHE
09:00– 11:00	Session 1: Knowledge Conversations		
09:00 – 10:00	60 min	Track A: Business Financial Literacy Workshop	The Momentum Foundation
10:00 – 10:20	20 min	Track B: Content Monetisation: Leveraging Digital Opportunities	Fireside Chat Ms Babazile Nhlapo: Founder, Pusha Empire
10:20 – 11:00	40 min	Track C: Turning Talent into Money - building a business around your creativity (fashion, music, design, etc.)	Moderator: Prof Peter Baur, EDHE CoP Cultural Entrepreneurship Chair Panellists: Ms Ayanda Holo: Communications Strategist and President, TV BRICS Africa Ms Joyce Nxumalo: Head Work Integrated Learning, UJ Ms Dawn Robertson: Visitor & Creative Economy Catalyst, My Jozi Ms Kagisho Bapela: Head of the Services Strategic Business Unit, Industrial Development Corporation
11:00 – 11:30	Tea Break and Exhibition		
11:30 – 13:00	Session 2: Ignite Talk & Student Showcase: Real Studentpreneurs. Real Stories. Real Success.		
11:30 – 11:50	20 min	Ignite Talk	TBC
11:50 – 12:25	45 min	EDHE Studentpreneur Showcase	Facilitator: TBC Session: Showcase of studentpreneurs in the EDHE community who have participated in EDHE Challenges and won or not, but have gone on to raise money, as well as those who haven't entered a challenge, but are performing well in business.
12:25 – 13:00	35 min	Closing Session	EAO & Coordinator Feedback EDHE Student Activities Vote of Thanks



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			Closing Address
13:00 – 15:00	Exhibition, Networking, Lunch & Departure		