



department of communications and digital technologies

Artificial Intelligence Work at DCDT Presentation to Portfolio Committee

February 2026

Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents a transformative general-purpose technology (GPT), comparable in impact to electricity and the internet, with the capacity to fundamentally reshape economies and societies.

AI presents significant opportunities to revolutionise key sectors of the South African economy, including (but not limited to):

- ✓ Healthcare : through predictive diagnostics, resource optimisation, and patient-centred care.
- ✓ Education : via personalised learning and digital content delivery.
- ✓ Agriculture: through climate-smart farming and production analytics.
- ✓ Finance: by enhancing financial inclusion, risk modelling, and fraud detection.
- ✓ Public Administration: through intelligent automation and improved citizen services.

Within government, AI has the potential to transform operations through:

- ✓ Predictive and proactive service delivery.
- ✓ Real-time policy and planning decision-making.
- ✓ Automated case and workflow management.
- ✓ Advanced data analytics and insights generation.
- ✓ Administrative efficiency and cost optimisation.

Undertakings

Implications / Purpose

Year 2020: Presidential Commission Report on the 4th Industrial Revolution Published

Places Artificial Intelligence (AI) at the centre of the development a digital society

Year 2020 : South Africa as the Chair of the African Union leads the development of AI Blueprint for the continent through Smart Africa Alliance.

Ensuring regional and continental policy harmonization

Year 2023 – 2024: South Africa contributes to the development of AU Continental AI Strategy.

Year 2023: First rollout of AI Hubs (University of Johannesburg & Tshwane University of Technology)

A healthy tagging of skills development, capacity development and application of AI technologies

Followed by Launch of AI Hubs at Central University of Technology and Stellenbosch University (Saldanha Military Academy)

Expansion of capacity to apply AI in food security and food processing applications, as well as strategic defense systems

Undertakings

Implications / Purpose

Year 2024: Launch of the National AI Plan at University of Johannesburg

Consolidation of partnership with private, academic, public and civil sector. Decision to develop a national AI Policy.

August 2024: Publication of South Africa National AI Policy Framework

14 Strategic Pillars based on international benchmarking involving BRICS countries (minus Russia 7 Iran), Netherlands, Chile, Thailand, Norway, Rwanda, EU Act, AU AI Strategy, etc

AI Policy Framework: Published for public inputs (August to November 2024)

Inputs received from private, academic, public and civil sector. Developed into a **Draft National AI Policy**.

- ❖ Ensure the benefits and risks of AI are equitably distributed across society; for present and future generations (Intergenerational Equity).
- ❖ Position AI as a strategic enabler to support inclusive economic growth and social development.
- ❖ Strengthen government capacity to regulate, adopt, and scale AI responsibly.
- ❖ Stimulate local innovation ecosystems and support job creation.
- ❖ Reduce the digital divide through equitable access to AI technologies, education, and services.
- ❖ Enhance South Africa's global competitiveness and partnerships in emerging technologies.

Development Outcomes Sought by the Policy

- ❖ Improved public service delivery.
- ❖ Expanded digital economy participation.
- ❖ Enhanced quality of life for citizens.

The Policy advocates for the following critical areas:

- ❖ Capacity and Talent Development by building national AI skills through education, training, and industry collaboration, enabled by robust digital infrastructure (compute and connectivity).
- ❖ Artificial Intelligence for Inclusive Growth and Job Creation by advancing innovation, supporting startups and MSMEs, and unlocking new economic opportunities.
- ❖ Responsible AI governance by establishing safeguards on safety, security, privacy, and professional accountability on areas of mis (dis) information and deepfakes.
- ❖ Ethical and inclusive AI by promoting fairness, mitigating bias, and developing national ethical AI guidelines in the development and deployment of AI systems.
- ❖ Cultural preservation and global integration ensuring the protection of cultural values while strengthening international collaboration and competitiveness.
- ❖ Human-centred deployment of AI to ensure human oversight, transparency, and explainability in AI systems.

Guiding Policy Intent

- ❖ Promote trustworthy, transparent, and accountable AI.
- ❖ Safeguard human rights, privacy, and data protection.
- ❖ Embed fairness and bias mitigation in AI design and deployment.
- ❖ Ensure human oversight in high-impact AI systems.
- ❖ Advance inclusive participation in AI development and datasets for training AI systems should include all demographics in the country to eliminate bias.
- ❖ Support responsible innovation through risk-proportionate governance.

Proposed Implementation Approach

- ❖ Development of national ethical guidelines and standards.
- ❖ Alignment with existing data protection and cybersecurity frameworks.
- ❖ Collaboration with industry, academia, and civil society.
- ❖ Phased adoption across priority sectors.

Undertakings

Implications / Purpose

Draft National AI Policy: Socio-Economic Impact Assessment System (SEIAS) certification granted (**July 2025**)

Demonstrating a well-thought out plan of deliberate impact towards economic growth, social well-being, and innovations leadership

August - September 2025: All 5 Government DG Clusters Consulted.

All 5 Clusters agreed to transmit the Policy to Cabinet for publication for 60 days.

March 2026: Draft National AI Policy to be gazetted for public comments

Structures to be consulted for gazetting (March 2026):

1. Economic Cluster Ministerial Committee
2. Economic Cluster Cabinet Committee
3. Cabinet

NATIONAL AI POLICY PROCESS



