



Empowered
Administrators
Conference

**AI-Enabled office excellence:
From support to strategic leadership**

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AHA Gateway Hotel



MUT
MANGOSUTHU
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY





Professor José Frantz
EAC Speaker

Professor José Frantz is an Emeritus Professor at the University of the Western Cape and a distinguished leader in higher education, research, and health professions education in South Africa. She currently serves as Deputy Vice-Chancellor: research, innovation and postgraduate studies of Sol Plaatje University, where she is leading strategic initiatives to strengthen research excellence, innovation, internationalisation, and institutional transformation. A National Research Foundation (NRF) C2-rated researcher, Professor Frantz has published extensively in the fields of health professions education, leadership, internationalisation, community engagement, and research capacity development. Her scholarship is underpinned by a commitment to social justice, equity, and advancing African higher education through collaborative partnerships and evidence-informed leadership.

She has successfully led numerous national and international research and capacity-strengthening initiatives and has supervised many master's and doctoral candidates. Beyond academia, Professor Frantz is an accomplished speaker, mentor, and author whose work integrates ethical leadership, spirituality, and purpose-driven service. She is passionate about developing the next generation of scholars and leaders while fostering institutional cultures that promote innovation, inclusion, and meaningful societal impact. Through her leadership, research, and writing, she continues to influence higher education policy and practice across Africa and internationally, championing universities as catalysts for sustainable development and transformative change.





Sandile Mahlaba
EAC Speaker

Sandile Mahlaba is a distinguished technology strategist, public sector transformation leader, and advocate for inclusive digital innovation, with over two decades of experience advancing large-scale digital transformation across South Africa and the African continent.

He currently serves as a Public Sector Provincial Executive at Microsoft South Africa, where he leads strategic engagements across key government institutions including the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government, eThekweni Municipality, the State Information Technology Agency (SITA), and the Mpumalanga Provincial Government. In this role, Sandile drives the adoption of Cloud, Data, and AI-powered solutions to modernize public service delivery, strengthen governance systems, and enhance operational efficiency at scale.

Sandile has been instrumental in designing and implementing data-driven governance frameworks, including award-winning initiatives such as the eThekweni Municipality “Single Source of Truth” platform leveraging data and artificial intelligence to optimize municipal decision-making and service delivery. He also led the development of the KZN COGTA MasterPlan Dashboards, enabling long-term infrastructure planning and water resource monitoring through advanced analytics, as well as the Provincial Government’s Information and Innovation Hub, strengthening real-time, insight-driven governance.

A recognized leader in smart city development and digital public infrastructure, Sandile has driven initiatives such as the repositioning of the KwaZulu-Natal Smart Nerve Centre and the development of AI-enabled urban platforms, positioning cities like eThekweni at the forefront of Africa’s smart city evolution. His work during the COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated digital adoption across government, embedding resilient, technology-enabled service models that continue to shape the “new normal” in public sector delivery.

Beyond his corporate leadership, Sandile is a passionate champion of community-based AI adoption, digital inclusion, and future skills development. As a Co-Founder, Patron, and Strategic Leader of the GoDigitalSA Foundation, he leads transformative initiatives focused on STEM education, AI literacy, and grassroots digital skills development in township and rural communities. His work includes establishing Digital Economy Precincts, Community Innovation Hubs, and youth-focused Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) programs aimed at equipping underserved populations with the capabilities to participate meaningfully in the digital economy.

Sandile has also contributed to national and provincial youth empowerment programs, including involvement in large-scale skills development initiatives such as Tshepo 1Million, helping to bridge the gap between education, employability, and emerging technology opportunities.



On the global stage, he is an active member of the BRICS+ Skills Development, Applied Technology & Innovation Working Group, where he collaborates with international stakeholders to align vocational training systems with future economic demands and shape workforce readiness strategies across member nations.

Known for his ability to build multi-stakeholder coalitions, Sandile works at the intersection of government, industry, and civil society unlocking funding, fostering innovation ecosystems, and delivering scalable, high-impact technology programs. His leadership is anchored in a strong commitment to ethical AI, responsible innovation, and equitable access to digital opportunities, ensuring that the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution are inclusive and transformative for all.

Through his work, Sandile continues to position Africa as a competitive force in the global digital economy driving sustainable growth, empowering communities, and shaping a future where technology serves as a catalyst for inclusive development.



Kwanele Mazibuko
EAC Speaker

Kwanele Mazibuko is a Language Technology researcher currently completing a Master in Internet of Things at the Durban University of Technology.

- **MASTER IN IOT CANDIDATE**
- **LANGUAGE TECHNOLOGY RESEARCHER**
- **PUBLIC TECH SPEAKER**
- **FOUNDER OF SINGAWE INNOVATIVE**

Kwanele Mazibuko is a 23 years old Master in Internet of Things candidate under the Department of Information Systems at the Durban University of Technology, where her research is focused on Language Technology. She works actively inside the ARM Lab at DUT, where she engages with both the technical and human dimensions of how connected devices can serve real communities. Her research asks how indigenous languages can be integrated into Internet of Things systems, a question that sits at the intersection of computer science, linguistics, and social development. She was trained as an internationally recognised entrepreneur in Thailand in 2025, where she learned how to build and scale solutions that address genuine needs. She took part in a BRICS competition in 2025 under the Data Analysis and Visualization track and came third place, demonstrating her ability to work with complex datasets and present findings clearly. She was selected for leadership training in the Aspire Program by Harvard in 2025, which equipped her with skills in strategic decision making, team leadership, and organisational management. She has international connections, including with people and organisations in China, which she maintains as part of her broader professional network. Her

skills include project coordination, leadership, data analysis, visualization, cross-cultural communication, and team management.

At DUT, she serves as the Coordinator for the EPIP Engineering Practice Innovation Projects Challenge 2026 under the Faculty of Accounting and Informatics. The challenge has four tracks: Language Technology, Data Analysis and VR, Artificial Intelligence, and Internet of Things with 3D Printing. In this role, she oversees the planning, execution, and mentorship framework for the entire competition. She works with faculty members, industry partners, and student participants to ensure each track runs smoothly. Her responsibility includes guiding senior students who then guide junior students, creating a layered mentorship system that builds capacity across the university. She has made it her mission to make access to extracurricular laboratories easy for all students, breaking down any barriers that might prevent young innovators from using the available resources. She believes that when students produce projects under the guidance of experienced peers, the quality of work improves dramatically, and she has structured the EPIP Challenge around this principle.

Outside the university, Kwanele is the founder and lead coordinator of SINGAWE Innovative, a STEAM mentorship organisation that works with people between the ages of three and twenty five in national and international competitions. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics. Through SINGAWE Innovative, she helps other organisations by serving as a judge, mentor, or coach when they need volunteers to run their events. This is her way of teaching essential skills and tools to learners indirectly while they work on their own projects.

SINGAWE is a youth-led organisation founded in 2024 that addresses the crisis of untapped talent by providing a bridge to opportunity regardless of background. The organisation operates on the belief that brilliance is not absent but often hidden, waiting for the right spark to be unleashed. Through a hybrid model of practical, hands-on mentorship, SINGAWE guides youth on the entire journey from idea to reality, including mentoring in core skills like ideation and prototyping, removing financial obstacles, and championing resourcefulness over resources. In a short time, SINGAWE's work in communities like Estcourt and KwaMashu has demonstrated significant impact, igniting creativity, building confidence in learners, and receiving overwhelming demand for its transformative programs.

Kwanele also works as a freelance facilitator for Microsoft 365 and Artificial Intelligence. She has run five cohorts, and all five have graduated. Her students have included unemployed youth, high school learners, educators, and college Heads of Department. In each course, she teaches practical digital skills that participants can immediately apply in their own contexts. She serves as the Director of ZASDC, the South African Space Design Competition, and as the Coordinator for ZASDC-KZN, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Competition. She served as the Chief Executive Officer for the inaugural competition in March 2026, and the team she co-led won. This was her first time working in the aerospace field. She was also part of the group that selected the top eight learners from grade eight to twelve to form Team South Africa for the ISSDC, the International Space Settlement Design Competition, at NASA in July 2026. This selection process required her to evaluate

technical knowledge, teamwork, and creative problem solving among hundreds of learners across the country.

She is the co-founder of the Indigenous Language Innovation Project, which started in 2026, and she was the project coordinator for the first Indigenous Language Innovation Week 2026, a virtual bootcamp and hackathon held from 25 to 30 May 2026. This event brought together language practitioners, technologists, and students to build tools for indigenous languages in digital spaces. Participants worked on translation applications, voice interfaces, educational software, and language datasets. This project is the direct application of her Master's research in Language Technology, taking what she studies at DUT and turning it into practical, community-driven outcomes. The success of Indigenous Language Innovation Week has confirmed for her that there is both need and capacity for this work across South Africa.

Kwanele Mazibuko is a public tech speaker who has spoken three times at the Data and AI Community Day Durban Edition, from sharing the stage with Someleze Diko from Microsoft to speaking alone. She mostly speaks about data, specifically data being stored and owned by Africans, how to go about that process, connecting African nations, and advocating for continental knowledge exchange and collaborations.

In all of these roles, Kwanele Mazibuko operates with a consistent approach: she identifies gaps in access, builds structures to fill those gaps, and trains others to eventually run those structures themselves. Whether she is coordinating a university challenge, mentoring a child through SINGAWE, teaching AI to an educator, leading a space competition, selecting learners for NASA, or running a hackathon for indigenous languages, she focuses on creating systems that outlast her direct involvement. Her research in Language Technology at DUT gives academic depth to her practical work, and her practical work gives real-world direction to her research.



Londiwe Mahlaba
EAC Facilitator Lead

- **BioMedical Technologist – Virology**
- **Application Specialist in Medical Devices**
- **KZN Sales Specialist**

- **Key Account Manager**
- **CIO & Impact Leader**
- **Digital Transformation Advocate**

Londiwe Mahlaba's journey spans 24 years in the medical field. She spent 10 years as a registered and practicing Medical Technologist in the Virology Department, building a career rooted in precision, patient care, and scientific excellence. Transitioning into the corporate medical diagnostics sector, she specialized in medical devices as an Application Specialist for 10 years, working with public and private hospitals and all pathology groups across Gauteng, Limpopo, and Mpumalanga. In this role, she delivered scientific talks, trained healthcare professionals, and provided technical troubleshooting. Her career advanced further when she became KwaZulu-Natal Sales Specialist, Project Manager, and Key Account Manager, overseeing a portfolio worth R150 million. These roles sharpened her expertise in strategic relationship building, project execution, and market growth.

Today, Londiwe stands at the intersection of technology, digital transformation and community education and empowerment in this AI era. As Chief Impact Officer (CIO) and Digital Transformation Advocate at GoDigitalSA Foundation, she leads initiatives that make digital literacy and innovation accessible to communities across South Africa. The Foundation's flagship programs: AI eKasi & eMakhaya Tech Innovation,

Educator Accelerator, and eSport & Gaming are designed to bridge the gap between digital skills and realworld opportunities.

In 2026, she has carried forward the GoDigitalSA Foundation mandate and has collaborated with multiple entities to ensure digital transformation is inclusive, especially for underserved communities. She has been appointed as a Local Lead for the 2026 NASA Space Apps Challenge Durban, an international hackathon connecting technologists, scientists, designers, and storytellers to solve real-world and space challenges using NASA's open data. She also serves on the organizing committee for the BRICS Future Skills Competition, advancing Africa's role in shaping the future of work. Beyond professional leadership, in 2014, she was elected to the Mangosuthu University of Technology's Convocation Executive Committee, representing alumni with a focus on legacy, impact, and strengthening partnerships with the industry.

Guided by values of people-first leadership, holistic wellness, exposure to innovation, continuous learning, and legacy creation, Londiwe believes in changing lives and impacting communities. Her story is one of transformation: from laboratories to boardrooms, from medical devices and diagnostics to digital transformation, from local impact to global influence.



Nothando Mthembu
EAC Panellist

Nothando Mthembu is a Policy Analyst on secondment within the Strategy and Integrated Development Planning Directorate at eThekweni Municipality. Substantively appointed as a Senior Clerk in Water and Sanitation, she brings a unique perspective on the evolving role of administrative professionals in strategic leadership. As a Master's in Business Management candidate, her interests include policy development, strategic planning, organizational transformation, and the responsible adoption of emerging technologies. Drawing on her journey from administrative support to policy and strategy, she is passionate about empowering professionals to embrace continuous learning, innovation, and meaningful organizational impact.





Ntokozo Mbata
EAC Speaker

Microsoft Security Solutions Leader

- Managing Director & Founder
- Trust Net Cyber Solutions

Ntokozo Mbata is a cybersecurity and ICT executive with over 13 years of experience in the technology sector. Her career has focused on leadership, digital transformation and information security, with a particular interest in the relationship between people, technology and organisational risk.

As the Founder and Managing Director of Trust Net Cyber Solutions, Ntokozo works at the intersection of cybersecurity and human behaviour. Her areas of expertise include social engineering, phishing, email security, information handling and the everyday behaviours that can create vulnerabilities within otherwise well-protected organisations.

Her approach to cybersecurity is practical and people-centred. She believes that security cannot rest solely with technical teams or security tools; the decisions made by employees every day are an important part of an organisation's overall resilience. This means making cybersecurity understandable, relevant and actionable for the people who use technology as part of their daily work.

Ntokozo is particularly interested in helping organisations build stronger security cultures by turning complex cyber risks into practical behaviours. Her work explores how people recognise suspicious activity, respond to unexpected requests, handle information and make decisions when technology and workplace pressures intersect.

"Most breaches don't start with a hacker breaking in - they start with someone clicking, sharing, or trusting a little too quickly. Once you can see how that moment happens, you can stop it."

AREAS OF FOCUS

- Microsoft Security Solutions
- Phishing & Email Compromise
- Cybersecurity awareness
- Social Engineering Awareness
- Organisational cyber resilience
- Human-centred cybersecurity



Thandeka Zondi
EAC Moderator

Founder & CEO, Ubukhosi Technology Consulting

- Non-Executive Director
- Speaker

I help governments and large enterprises deploy AI they can actually defend — to a regulator, to an auditor, and to the citizen on the other end of the service.

Thandeka Zondi is a Chartered Accountant (SA) with nearly two decades of executive, board and entrepreneurial experience across the public and private sector.

She is Founder and CEO of Ubukhosi Technology Consulting, a 100% Black-owned, 100% Black-woman-owned South African company building governed AI, data and automation platforms for public-sector and enterprise clients — delivered through its four-stage 4D Method: Diagnose, Design, Deliver, Scale.

She previously founded and exited MoneyWorks Financial Services, a supply chain financing platform enabling early-payment programmes for SMEs. Earlier she served on the executive committee of the Auditor-General of South Africa as Corporate Executive for Strategic Projects and Institutional Cooperation, and led the AGSA's Western Cape business of approximately 240 people.

Thandeka speaks from a rare vantage point: she chairs audit and risk committees and sits on major boards, while simultaneously building the AI systems those boards are being asked to approve.

SIGNATURE TOPICS

- **The Pilot Graveyard**
Why AI projects die before they scale — and what production actually demands.
- **Governed AI**
Building AI systems you can defend to a regulator and an auditor.
- **What Every Director Must Ask Before Approving an AI Budget**
A working question set for boards. Delivered as a tool, not a lecture.
- **Service Delivery Is a Data Problem**
Why failures of public service are usually failures of information.
- **The Cash Flow Gap**
What actually kills small businesses — and the inclusion lessons from African mobile money.



Dr Liile Lerato Lekena-Bayaga
EAC Panellist

Dr Liile Lerato Lekena-Bayaga is Director: Strategic Planning in the Directorate of Institutional Planning and Research at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT). She is a higher education strategist and institutional researcher whose work spans strategic planning, institutional performance, monitoring and evaluation, enrolment planning, governance reporting and decision intelligence. In her role at MUT, Dr Lekena-Bayaga supports the translation of institutional strategy into measurable plans and provides evidence to inform executive, Senate and Council decision-making. She has also served as Acting Senior Director of the Directorate of Institutional Planning and Research for more than four years, experience that has strengthened her ability to lead across academic, administrative and executive environments.

She completed her PhD at Stellenbosch University. Her doctoral research examined how university managers use institutional research outputs in decision-making, reflecting her broader interest in the relationship between evidence, leadership and effective strategy execution. She has served as President of the Southern African Association for Institutional Research, contributing to professional engagement and knowledge-sharing across the higher education sector.

Dr Lekena-Bayaga brings to the Empowered Administrators Conference a practical understanding of how purposeful relationships can expand influence, create access to opportunity and support professional growth. Her contribution emphasises that effective networking is not simply about accumulating contacts, but about building credible, reciprocal relationships anchored in competence, trust and shared purpose.



Someleze Diko
EAC Speaker

Someleze Diko is a Cloud Advocate at Microsoft, where he helps developers and data professionals to leverage the power of the cloud and AI for their projects. He is part of the Data Advocacy team, which focuses on empowering data communities with the latest tools and technologies for data analysis, visualization, and machine learning. He is also an active speaker, blogger, and mentor, who shares his knowledge and experience with various audiences across Africa and beyond. In 2023, he was named as one of the Geekulcha Top 15 Young Geeks in South Africa, an award that recognizes the most innovative and impactful young tech leaders in the country and in Africa.





Dr. Manyane Makua
EAC Speaker

Dr. Manyane Makua is the Senior Director of the Learning and Teaching Development Centre (LTDC) at Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT). Since joining MUT in 2007, he has been a driving force behind the institution's quality assurance and academic development initiatives. Over his tenure, he has held several key senior leadership roles, including serving as the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and previously leading the institution's quality portfolio as the Director of Quality Management.

An active academic development professional and researcher, Dr. Makua's academic interests lie at the center of Higher Education, Quality Assurance, Teaching and Learning, and Academic Development. He holds a PhD from the University of Limpopo and a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education Management from

the University of Bath (UK). His contributions to the global academic discourse include co-editing two prominent volumes: *Sustaining Higher Education through Resource Allocation, Learning Design Models & Academic Development* (IGI Global) and *Online Teaching and Learning in Higher Education* (Springer Nature).

Dr. Makua has served two terms on the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), is a member of the National University Teacher Awards Adjudication Committee, and currently serves as the Deputy Chair of the South African University Teachers. Additionally, he is the Founder and Host of the annual, ground-breaking Focus in Higher Education Conference in Durban; a premier event attracting local and international academics, with its proceedings published by Atlantis Press and Springer Nature.