



MINISTRY  
PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

## GOOGLE CLOUD AND CYBERSECURITY SOLUTIONS FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

*“Digital Information in South Africa and the Benefits of Cloud  
And Artificial Intelligence For The Public Sector And National Economy”*

REMARKS  
BY

MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION  
HON. INKOSI MZAMO BUTHELEZI, MP

05 November 2024: The Leonardo Hotel, JHB

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Honourable Deputy Minister for Communications

and Digital Technologies, Mr Mondli Gungubele

Mr Niall McDonagh, Director for Google Cloud Public Sector, EMEA

Google team members,

Stakeholders, guests and colleagues

Today we stand on the edge of a new digital frontier, to address one of the most pressing needs of our time – that is digital transformation for a secure, inclusive, and capable public sector.

With those words I would like to extend my sincere thanks to today's host, Ms Abongile Mashele, who is the Head of Government Affairs and Public Policy, and to Marina Zhunich, who is the Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs at Google, and all stakeholders for their hospitality and unwavering support in enabling this important dialogue on advancing cybersecurity and digital capabilities in our public service.

I am particularly mentioning Ms Mashele and Marina Zhunich because last Friday, I had the pleasure of meeting with them at the Google offices in Bryanston where we briefly discussed strategic partnership focused on the programme we are launching today – which is the upskilling of public servants in cloud and cybersecurity skills.

And here we are today, successfully launching this initiative targeted at upskilling and equipping 13 000 South Africans with advanced Cybersecurity skills and competencies over the next year (from November 2024 – November 2025).

So today is truly a privilege for me to join you as we also address this critical aspect of our journey forward – which is the need for a skilled and adaptable workforce within the public sector.

While some may view it as an investment in skills – but what this truly is – is a commitment to securing our digital future, fostering trust, and ensuring that our national economy benefits from the innovation that cloud and artificial intelligence bring to the public sector. Furthermore, it aligns to Cabinet 2022/23 financial year decision of improving the professionalization of the public service towards improved service delivery.

As we contemplate the opportunities before us, it is crucial to emphasize that South Africa's public service employs over 1.2 million individuals. Yet only a tiny fraction of 0.03% work in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) roles. This gap represents both a challenge and a call to action.

Records show that during the 2021/2022 financial year, the e-Government Services and Information Management (e-GSIM) branch at the DPSA conducted a survey on the available ICT skills in the public service to gain insight of this capability within the sector.

Out of about **1.2 million** public servants during that time, only about **4 500** only were found to be working in ICT Directorates, Chief Directorates or under responsible Deputy Directors-General.

And if a call to action means that we move government online by making services accessible, efficient, and secure for all South Africans – particularly the rural

communities, the elderly, and persons with disabilities – then we need a qualified to have a professional workforce.

This workforce must not only understand the technology but also embody the highest standards of integrity, accountability, and service excellence.

Our digital transformation journey must include every corner of our nation. We cannot afford to exclude rural areas, where internet access remains limited and where too many still lack access to essential services.

For these communities, digital transformation means access to healthcare, financial services, and administrative support that does not require costly, time-consuming travel.

Imagine the impact if a senior citizen no longer must journey to collect medication, as digital infrastructure and innovations like drone deliveries bring it to her doorstep.

This is transformation with purpose—designed to uplift and integrate our most vulnerable populations.

This is also why, under the Professionalisation Programme, we are deeply focused on creating a responsive, inclusive public service. It is not just about upskilling a few departments but about a whole-of-government approach where each public servant understands their role in securing our digital environment.

In this context, partnerships with private-sector innovators like Google are indispensable. By aligning Google's technical expertise with DPSA's mandate for capacity-building and professionalisation, we are therefore paving the way for an ICT enabled public service that is not only resilient but also trusted by its citizens.

There are a few key roles we need to prioritize as part of this transition. First, various business and technical specialist on data management, cybersecurity specialists, organizational design specialists, service design specialists to apply design thinking towards services are all essential. Finally, digital project managers who understand the unique challenges of public-sector transformation will be critical to driving these changes efficiently and effectively.

We also need data analysts and information security officers to ensure we make full use of the data we collect and protect it diligently. Currently, only around 70 public servants operate in cybersecurity across the entire public sector, a figure that underscores the urgent need for growth.

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Our partnership with Google has been crafted with these priorities in mind. Google's commitment to upskill not only our ICT staff but also non-technical personnel will improve the cybersecurity posture across our departments and address a well-known vulnerability: the human factor.

By equipping every public servant with foundational digital and cybersecurity knowledge, we ensure that our transformation is secure, resilient, and grounded in accountability.

Looking ahead, this collaboration exemplifies the best of public-private partnership. Your expertise and commitment to community-oriented solutions as Google links with our dedication to professionalisation.

As we roll out this programme, we will uphold our legislative mandate to secure and enhance public administration through transparent, inclusive, and efficient use of technology. And as government, we remain firmly focused on the Batho Pele principles, ensuring that this digital shift results in a tangible improvement in service delivery for all South Africans.

It has also been identified that locally, cybersecurity incidents have crippled service delivery in numerous ways. For instance, in the National Health Laboratory Services environment, medical professionals had to conduct procedures without insight they would have received from accessing blood tests results.

The same can be said with Department of Justice and Constitutional Development where beneficiaries of their services including child maintenance had to go to courts for verification again after the unauthorized access and activities by a third into the department's information systems. The South African private sector has also not been spared from these cyber security incidents.

In closing, I wish to express my gratitude once more to Google for their vision and commitment and I am confident that through this collaboration, we are laying a solid foundation for a digital South Africa - one that is inclusive, secure, and prepared for the future.

Together, let us work towards a future where digital transformation reaches every citizen and where our public service leads with professionalism and purpose.

Thank you.