

**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**“772. Prof C T Msimang (IFP) to ask the Minister of Small Business Development:**

**Whether her department has taken any steps to facilitate the development of information technology (IT) infrastructure, as economic growth relating to the promotion of small, medium and micro enterprises depend largely on the advanced development of IT, which is severely lacking in townships and rural areas; if not, why not; if so, (a) what steps and (b) what are the relevant details?”**

**NW1874E**

**REPLY:**

The Department is working on the establishment of ICT/ Start-up Hubs in townships and rural area, and they will be to ensure linked with the main ecosystems hubs or “Focal Points”. The ICT Hubs are also linked to the program of the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies to extend connectivity to rural and township areas. The Small Enterprise Development Agency (Seda) invested in 8 ICT incubators and ensured access to high speed connectivity and some have MakerSpaces and developed a model for ensuring upscaling of these to focus on industry 4.0 technologies as well.

(a) To give effect to the President’s pronouncement during SONA, an incubation ecosystem mapping project has been concluded. Through Seda, we have started the process of rolling out a network of 100 digital hubs prioritising townships and rural areas. Starting in this current financial year, 2019/20 we are prioritising provinces that have the highest unemployment rate amongst the young people and are rural in nature which are: North West, Limpopo, Free State, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape and Northern Cape.

(b) Details of the current IT supported incubators are:

| **CENTRE** | **SECTOR** | **LOCATION** | **CONTACT NUMBER** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| INVOTECH | Mixed high-tech | Durban, KwaZulu Natal | 031 373 6405 |
| iHUB Incubator | ICT | Port Elizabeth, EC | 041 702 8200 |
| SoftstartBTI (SBTI) | ICT | Midrand, Gauteng | 011 695 4800 |
| Smartxchange | ICT | Durban, KZN | 031 307 1998 |
| Smartxchange | ICT | Ugu, KZN | 039 682 0631 |
| French South Africa Tech Labs | ICT | Cape Town, WC | 021 551 8183 |
| TUKSNOVATION | High Tech Innovation Engineering and ICT | Tshwane, Gauteng | 012 420 3003 |
| Incubation 4.0 | Digital technologies | Gauteng, Sandton | 010 612 6505 |

* Currently, we are in the establishment phase of digital hubs in Mangaung District, Enhlanzeni, Waterberg and Bojanala district Municipalities.
* A new digital hub in Kwa-Mashu has been completed and almost ready to be operational.