

**PRESS RELEASE
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**Imagine if...
You had comprehensive insight and fit-for-purpose tools
to navigate the future and facilitate change**

Tshwane, Gauteng, 15 April 2014 – The Innovation Hub and Blank Canvas International are proud to announce the launch of the Thought Leaders Academy in the City of Tshwane today.

The Academy is born out of an urgent need to prepare leaders to take up the challenge of moving South Africa from a commodity-based to a knowledge-based economy, in line with the Department of Science and Technology (DST) 10-year plan.

The plan identifies the development of human capital, 'knowledge generation and exploitation' (R&D), 'knowledge infrastructure' and 'enablers' as urgent requirements to address the "innovation chasm" between research results and socioeconomic outcomes.

The Academy is also established to help meet the requirements of one of the National Planning Commission's 2030 goals to build a 'capable state' through 'active citizenry' and 'leadership'.

The Academy's ethos is based on Innovation for Sustainability™ thinking, which takes an integrated approach to balancing the six forms of capital – financial capital; manufactured capital; human capital; social capital; intellectual capital and natural capital.

Its world-class curriculum offers cutting edge programmes around Systems Thinking, Design Thinking, Driving Change, Creative Problem Solving, Innovation for Sustainability™, BiomimicrySA, Regeneration and Thrivability.

A wisdom board comprising of facilitation partners, all specialists in their respective fields and all enablers of change, will advise on course content ensuring un-biased, fresh and relevant offering.

This capability-enhancing programme is aimed at open-minded leaders and executives who have a passion to make a difference in their respective industries and companies. It will be relevant to individuals from middle management upward, ensuring that leaders will be empowered and skilled to navigate the future.

Thought Leaders Academy is an unprecedented collaboration between The Innovation Hub and Blank Canvas International, a consultancy leading innovation for sustainable development transformation deployments across industry, and strategic associates

powering the Academy, including The Change Agent, Genius Works, BiomimicrySA, GCX Africa and Sense2Solve.

The Innovation Hub, Africa's first internationally accredited Science and technology park and a full member of the International Association of Science Parks is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Gauteng Growth and Development Agency. It was established by the Gauteng Provincial Government through its Department of Economic Development to promote socio-economic development and competitiveness of Gauteng through innovation.

Strategically located in Tshwane, Gauteng - South Africa's executive capital and 'smart' Province - The Innovation Hub's intelligent community has become a regional centre of innovation and knowledge creation, linked to the fast moving world of global interconnectivity. The focus areas for The Innovation Hub are smart industries (ICT and advanced manufacturing), Green Economy and Bio economy (Health, agriculture and industrial). The Innovation Hub's value-adding business support services contribute to the growth and globalisation of technology-rich enterprises in an environment that promotes innovation and enhances competitiveness for knowledge-based businesses.

The Innovation Hub's CEO, Mr McLean Sibanda said: "We are pleased to be launching the Thought Leadership Academy to improve skills development and build a knowledge economy in Gauteng. We are very proud of our collaboration with Blank Canvas International and Strategic Associates (Sustain our Africa, Genius Works, BiomimicrySA, GCX, Sense2Solve and JASA) as this programme will assist in establishing a community of practice to share knowledge, research, embedding a culture of innovation and embracing best practice for a sustainable future."

The Academy will also work in collaboration with Future Leaders – Powered by JASA (Junior Achievement South Africa) and seeks to provide *engaging entrepreneurial programmes* which foster *confident, empowered young people* who are *possibility seekers* and *creators of opportunities*. Through these programmes JASA aims to contribute to *meaningful economic participation* by *nurturing entrepreneurial thinking among young people*.

In keeping with the National Development Plan's goals but also with the goals of Thought Leaders, we envisage a close collaboration on youth programmes, training the future leaders in innovation, sustainability and creative problem solving. Through Future Leaders, JASA and collaborators will use this platform to bring business closer to the youth and the youth closer to business, changing perceptions on both sides and instilling positive viewpoints and attitudes.

Thought Leaders Academy supports the goals of, and is specifically endorsed by:

- SoA (Sustain our Africa) Collaboration Network – a collaborative sustainability communications platform that acts as a catalyst for change. By cultivating awareness, showcasing inspirational stories and hosting practical tools for change,

SOA aims to build an abundant, resilient Africa that can deliver ENOUGH. FOR ALL. FOREVER. Included in registration for any of the Thought Leaders Sustainability courses is a complimentary 12-month membership to SoA.

- SAINE (South African Innovation Network) – a non-profit network providing a neutral platform for activating the multi-helix principle in Southern Africa where government, academia, industry and society come together and collaborate to find new solutions, innovate and generate value. Included in registration for any of the Thought Leaders Innovation courses is a complimentary 12-month membership to SAINE.

Thought Leaders Academy aims to enhance capabilities in companies and provide a platform for like-minded individuals to collaborate and co-create in order to navigate towards a Thrivable future.

According to Blank Canvas International CEO, Mr Raldu Nel “Business today needs to transition from creating shareholder value in the short term, to creating inclusive wealth to all stakeholders. Thought Leaders Academy provides a platform for collaboration and capability enhancement to assist this process.”

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