

ACOEDI 2026: Possible Contributions and Topic Areas

ACOEDI 2026 welcomes academic papers, concept notes, policy briefs, practice cases, company/practitioner experience cases, presentations, panel contributions, innovation showcases and demonstrations. Submissions should clearly show the problem, action or intervention, actors involved, evidence, results or lessons, and relevance to economic development and innovation.

Conference dates: 26–29 October 2026

Venue: Emperors Palace Convention Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Website: www.ifedi.org/acoedi | **Submissions/enquiries:** conference@ifedi.org or theifedi@gmail.com | **Phone:** 065 924 3925

Category	Regular	Category	Regular
Presenting Author	R7,200	Startup / Student Presenting Author	R3,500
Second Paper	R5,000	Startup / Student Delegate	R4,000
Delegate	R9,500		

Early bird registration closes: 15 June 2026. The registration fee covers conference lunches, tea/coffee breaks with refreshments, venue hire and administrative costs. The fee does not include accommodation or transportation.

ACOEDI 2026 welcomes contributions from the following stakeholder groups, suggested topics are in the table in page 2:

1. Universities, Universities of Technology, TVET Colleges and Research Institutions	9. Agriculture, Agro-processing and Food-System Institutions
2. Companies, R&D Divisions, Corporate Academies, ESG/CSI and Supplier Development Units	10. Tourism, Hospitality, Events and Creative Economy Institutions
3. Professional Bodies, Development Agencies, Chambers and Practitioner Networks	11. NGOs, Community Organisations, Traditional Leadership and Grassroots Innovators
4. SETAs, QCTO-linked Bodies and Skills-Development Institutions	12. Digital, AI, Data, ICT and Innovation Hubs
5. Development Finance Institutions, Banks and Impact Investors	13. Energy, Water and Climate Institutions
6. Municipalities, Provincial Departments and Public-Sector Agencies	14. ESG, Sustainability, CSI and Stakeholder Engagement Teams
7. Science Councils and Applied Research Bodies	15. Procurement, Supply Chain, Retail and Supplier Development Institutions
8. Engineering, Planning, Built Environment and Project Management Bodies	16. Sector Associations, Chambers and Business Membership Organisations

No.	Stakeholder group	Possible contributions	Possible submission titles
1	- Universities - Universities of Technology - TVET Colleges and - Research Institutions	Research, technology transfer, applied research, student innovation, skills pipelines and interdisciplinary economic development work.	- Universities as Engines of Local Innovation: Lessons from Applied Research Partnerships; - From Laboratory to Local Market: Technology Transfer for Inclusive Development; - TVET-Industry Alignment and the Skills Pipeline for Regional Economic Growth; - Using Data Science to Improve Local Economic Development Planning; - Interdisciplinary Research Models for Rural and Township Economy Transformation.
2	- Companies, - R&D Divisions, - Corporate Academies, - ESG/CSI and Supplier Development Units	R&D, localisation, supplier development, workplace learning, ESG, CSI, shared value and company experience cases.	- A Corporate Academy Model for Building Local Technical and Supplier Capability; - From CSI to Shared Value: Lessons from Company-Led Community Investment; - Using R&D to Localise Production and Strengthen Local Value Chains; Supplier Development Lessons from Onboarding Rural and Township Enterprises; - Stakeholder Engagement Lessons from Community-Facing Corporate Projects.
3	- Professional Bodies, - Development Agencies, - Chambers/Forums - Practitioner Networks	Professionalisation, standards, implementation capability, enterprise support, investment promotion and practitioner lessons.	- Professionalising Economic Development Practice: Capability Gaps and Standards; - Chambers as Local Economic Development Intermediaries: Lessons from Practice; - The Role of Professional Bodies in Improving Implementation Capability; - Practitioner Networks as Communities of Practice for Economic Development; - From Membership to Market Access: How Associations Support Enterprise Growth.
4	- SETAs - QCTO-linked Bodies - Skills-Development Institutions	Sector skills planning, learnerships, apprenticeships, occupational pathways, workplace learning and skills-to-employment models.	- Sector Skills Planning as an Economic Development Instrument; - Workplace-Based Learning Models for Youth Employment and Enterprise Growth; - Aligning Occupational Qualifications to Local Economic Development Priorities; - Why Training Does Not Always Lead to Employment: Lessons from Placement Failures; - Employer-Led Skills Pipelines for Emerging Economic Sectors.
5	- Development Finance - Institutions, Banks - Impact Investors	Access to finance, bankability, blended finance, impact investment, investment readiness and lessons from funded projects.	- Bankability Gaps in Local Economic Development Projects; - Blended Finance Models for Infrastructure and Enterprise Development; - Investment Readiness Lessons from Township and Rural Enterprises; - Development Finance Risk Tools for Inclusive Growth; - Why Good Development Ideas Fail to Secure Finance.
6	- National and Provincial Government - Municipalities	LED, IDP/SDF alignment, infrastructure, procurement, red-	- Aligning IDP, SDF and LED for Investment-Ready Localities; - Municipal Red Tape and the Cost of Delayed Local Investment; - Procurement as a Tool for Local Enterprise Development;

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	Public-Sector Agencies	tape reduction, digital governance and public-sector innovation.	- Lessons from Implementing Township and Rural Economy Programmes; - Using Municipal Data Dashboards for Evidence-Based Economic Development.
7	- Science Councils - Applied Research Bodies	Applied research, prototypes, pilots, policy evidence, evaluation, research commercialisation and technology adoption.	- From Research Evidence to Development Implementation: Lessons from Applied Research; - Technology Pilots for Rural and Township Economic Development; - Using Evaluation Evidence to Improve Economic Development Programmes; - Research Commercialisation Barriers in Publicly Funded Innovation; - Applied Science Solutions for Water, Energy and Climate Resilience.
8	Engineering, Planning, Built Environment and Project Management Bodies	Infrastructure, spatial planning, construction, project delays, land use, service delivery and infrastructure-led economic development.	- Infrastructure Delivery as Economic Development: Lessons from Local Projects; - Spatial Planning and Investment-Ready Localities; - Community Conflict, Procurement Risk and Project Delays in Infrastructure Delivery; - Local Contractor Development in Construction Value Chains; - Engineering Capability Gaps Affecting Municipal Service Delivery and Growth.
9	Agriculture, Agro-processing and Food-System Institutions	Agro-processing, farmer aggregation, market access, cold-chain logistics, food systems, cooperatives and rural enterprise development.	- Agro-processing as a Driver of Rural Industrialisation; - Farmer Aggregation Models for Formal Market Access; - Cold Chain and Logistics Constraints in Smallholder Value Chains; - Climate-Smart Agriculture and Rural Economic Resilience; - Why Rural Producer Cooperatives Fail: Lessons for Economic Development Practice.
10	- Tourism - Hospitality - Events - Creative Economy Institutions	Tourism-led LED, events, MICE, cultural tourism, creative industries, destination development and local supplier inclusion.	- MICE and Events as Platforms for Local Economic Development; - Destination Development and Investment Readiness in Rural Tourism; - Creative Industries as Engines of Youth Enterprise and Place Identity; - Local Supplier Participation in Tourism and Events Value Chains; - Digital Marketing Tools for Township and Rural Tourism Enterprises.
11	- NGOs - Community Organisations - Traditional Leadership - Grassroots Innovators	Community-led development, traditional leadership, land access, benefit-sharing, social facilitation, cooperatives and grassroots innovation.	- Community Trusts and Benefit-Sharing Models for Local Economic Development; - Traditional Leadership, Land Access and Investment Readiness; - Grassroots Innovation in Rural Enterprise Development; - Social Facilitation and Trust-Building in Community Development Projects; - Why Community Projects Fail and How They Can Be Redesigned.
12	Digital, AI, Data, ICT and Innovation Hubs	AI, digital platforms, GIS, dashboards, civic technology, digital skills, economic intelligence and data-driven development tools.	- AI Tools for Economic Development Planning and Market Intelligence; - Digital Platforms for SMME Market Access and Supplier Visibility; - GIS and Spatial Data for Investment-Ready Localities; - Civic Technology for Municipal Service and Economic Development Innovation; - Why Digital Development Platforms Fail to Scale: Adoption Lessons.

No.	Stakeholder group	Possible contributions	Possible submission titles
13	Energy, Water and Climate Institutions	Energy access, water security, climate resilience, renewable energy, green jobs, circular economy and resilient infrastructure.	- Water Security as a Foundation for Local Economic Competitiveness; - Energy Reliability and the Cost of Lost Productivity in Local Economies; - Community Benefit Models in Renewable Energy Projects; - Climate Resilience and Infrastructure Planning for Economic Development; - Green Jobs and Local Enterprise Opportunities in the Just Transition.
14	ESG, Sustainability, CSI and Stakeholder Engagement Teams	ESG, shared value, CSI-to-impact models, stakeholder engagement, social licence, community benefit and impact measurement.	- From CSI to Development Impact: Building Measurable Shared Value; - Stakeholder Engagement as an Economic Development Capability; - Social Licence to Operate and Community Benefit Models in Practice; - Local Procurement as an ESG and Economic Development Tool; - Measuring Community Investment Outcomes Beyond Compliance Reporting.
15	Procurement, Supply Chain, Retail and Supplier Development Institutions	Local procurement, supplier readiness, market access, logistics, local content, supplier databases and inclusive procurement models.	- Procurement as an Economic Development Instrument; - Supplier Readiness Barriers in Township and Rural Enterprise Development; - Retail Market Access Models for Small Producers; - Local Content, Localisation and the Limits of Procurement Targets; - Digital Supplier Databases and Market Intelligence for Inclusive Procurement.
16	- Sector Associations, - Chambers and Business Membership Organisations	Sector competitiveness, business environment reform, market access, trade promotion, member evidence and business-led LED.	- Business Membership Organisations as Engines of Local Economic Development; - Sector Competitiveness and the Barriers Facing Local Firms; - Chamber-Led Market Access Models for Township and Rural Enterprises; - Red Tape Reduction and Business Environment Reform: Lessons from Members; - Business-Led Local Economic Development Partnerships in Practice.