

YP Workshop at Lanseria: new venue, new ideas

The Young Professionals (YP) Workshop (a pre-event to the AeSSA 2019 Annual Workshop) took place on 15 October 2019, in collaboration with [Sakhikamva](#), in the STREAM Lab at Lanseria International Airport. Organised by the CSIR's Busisiwe Nkonki and attended by President Marié Botha, this year marked the 4th edition of the workshop, which provides a platform for young aeronautics and space professionals to share experiences and network. The event was supported by the AeSSA and the [Aerospace Industry Support Initiative](#).

International invited speakers Billie Flynn, F-35 Lightning II Test Pilot, Lockheed Martin, and Ricardo Traven, Chief Test Pilot – Boeing Charleston, 787 Dreamliner Program, delivered inspiring opening messages to participants. Flynn pointed out that it was not about reaching each milestone along the way; the whole journey in itself was important to teach passion, humility and selflessness. Traven confirmed that the determining factor for how far each individual would go, was what each person was exposed to and what each person did with this exposure.

Nkonki explains the format of this year's event, "I invited four panellists – David Toma of [Flitecare](#), Kai Broughton and Nino Wunderlin of the [University of KwaZulu-Natal](#), and Lesetja Mogoba, [Denel SOC Ltd](#), as well as a facilitator, Fikiswa Majola, of the [Department of Science and Innovation](#) – to review the past three YP events.

"It is clear from their observations that as a forum for like-minded persons, the YP now has attendees who have matured in terms of individual career development and their views on the aerospace industry.

"As an event, the YP workshop and its networking opportunities engender confidence among participants for the upcoming conference. Importantly, we can also talk about pursuing a common goal as a collective and encouraging one another to hope in the future."

A call for government to work with industry for implementation of projects and sustaining of momentum was applauded. Nkonki notes, "Young professionals are keen to stay in South Africa and contribute through their capabilities. However, investors must be encouraged to provide funding over a period as returns take time to materialise."

Nkonki feels some changes to the YP Workshop must be made. "We need to review the value proposition of and admission criteria to future YP Workshops with the view to opening it up to others, including students. Job hunting is seen as a priority and through networking and engaging in the YP Forum, this step into the formal sector can be facilitated."

Interesting suggestions for future YP workshops came from participants. Major Nandi Zama of the SANDF said, "By raising the age limit of 35 years and making the 'price of participation' a young professional as an invited companion, the pool of participants is broadened." Fatima Jakoet of Sakhikamva also encouraged young professionals to register as volunteers, thereby making their unique skills available as a pool of mentors to Sakhikamva, as well as to a growing number of South African outreach

initiatives. Nkonki concurs with this sentiment, “I invite all participants to send me their information, should they be interested in being registered on the mentorship database.” Her email address is bnkonki@csir.co.za

The ‘surprise activity (Appcar)’ was led by Abdullah Harris, a programmer who explained the principles of robotics for kids to the YP participants. Two-person teams competed by building a car and controlling it through a sequence of manoeuvres, with the aid of simple programming on a tablet and using a WiFi connection. The winning team was Busisiwe Nkonki and David Toma.

Nkonki is satisfied that the aims of the workshop were achieved and looks forward to the 2020 edition.