CiTi, BCX launch R100m future skills development project

Forming a strategic partnership, the Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative (CiTi) and BCX aim to equip previously disadvantaged, unemployed youth with critical technology skills required by South African businesses to lead innovation in the digital economy.

BCX has committed R100m to the Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative to deliver a skills development and career-readiness programme using CiTi's CapaCiTi programme model. CiTiX – Futured by BCX, will train a minimum of 250 unemployed, previously disadvantaged youth in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Durban annually for the next three years.

Recruitment for the programmes launched mid-December, and training will be delivered nationally from the end of January 2018. Successful candidates will receive rigorous training in either software programming or ICT infrastructure technical disciplines, as well as 21st century and business literacy skills. Completely unique to these programmes is the incorporation of industry-led training in the following core areas, for business leadership in 2018: Geomatics, Artificial Intelligence, Operations Technology, Cybersecurity, and Fintech. The programme will equip candidates to support and manage products and services in Agritech, Marinetech, Fintech and Cybersecurity, among others.

Shortage of work-ready graduates

Says Ian Russell, CEO of BCX: "The South African business sector suffers from a critical shortage of individuals with the tech and workplace competency they need to grow and remain competitive. Furthermore, young South Africans with basic tertiary qualifications remain unemployed because they lack the relevant skills and confidence in the workplace to succeed in today's fast-paced work environment. The reality is that our traditional training institutions are not able to produce work-ready graduates with industry-relevant skills and there is a global shift towards competency-based skills and job readiness.

At BCX we are tech activists and as such we have full support for tech movements such as these ones - movements that remove barriers to entry for South Africans to have the appropriate future skills to enable them to become key players in the technology space and in the growth and sustainability of South Africa's economy," alluded Russell.

The training component of the programme will last six months at training hubs in the four cities. Following the six-month core programme, candidates will complete a three-month internship at either BCX or one of CapaCiTi's partner organisations, returning to complete a facilitated three-month learning project in the critical skill they have been assigned to. Throughout the programme pathway, candidates will be supported by a team of coaches to work through personal or technical challenges.

Training in future skills

Says Soraya Mohideen, programme manager of CapaCiTi: "Nearly 1000 students will be guided through the CiTiX learning journey over the next three years. This is an incredible opportunity for young, unemployed South Africans with a passion for tech to gain the knowledge and confidence to excel in this career. Perhaps most importantly, they'll have a chance to apply their new skills to practical business challenges during the internship phase, ensuring that they're ready to add immediate value to potential employers.

"What sets this programme aside from anything else available is the training in a future skill set such as AI, Geomatics or Cybersecurity that is informed by SA's leaders in these fields. Based on the success of CapaCiTi over the past six years, and through the social investment and thought leadership from BCX as our partner, we are confident that this project will address a massive skills shortage for South African business and enable these young people to be immediately employed. Together with BCX, we'll be developing future-thinking leaders in tech."

Applications are open to unemployed South African youth from previously disadvantaged backgrounds (ranging from those with no formal IT experience to those holding a three-year degree). Interested candidates will need to submit their applications online at www.citi.org.za/citix by no later than 8 January 2018.