



# BUSIA TECH & INNOVATION SUMMIT



Converge. Connect. Transform.

## **THEME: CONVERGE. CONNECT. TRANSFORM.**

**Bringing together people, ideas and systems for Busia's digital future**

**Date:** December 2026

**Venue:** Busia National Polytechnic

**Target Participants:** Youth innovators, women traders, MSMEs, developers, investors, telcos, county and national government, LREB officials, academia, EAC trade stakeholders, civil society and development partners.

## BACKGROUND

Kenya's technology ecosystem is widely recognised as one of Africa's most dynamic, driven by strong mobile connectivity, digital finance and a growing innovation culture. However, the benefits of this progress remain unevenly distributed. While Nairobi continues to lead as the country's "Silicon Savannah," many rural and border counties still face limited access to advanced digital opportunities, investment and structured innovation ecosystems.

Busia County reflects both this gap and this opportunity. Located along the Kenya-Uganda border, Busia is one of East Africa's most strategic trade gateways, facilitating over 40% of Kenya's transit cargo and supporting an estimated USD 1.2 billion in annual cross-border trade. With a population of more than 740,000 people, and youth aged 15 to 35 making up approximately 35–40% of residents, the county has a young, entrepreneurial and increasingly tech-curious population.

Agriculture supports nearly 70% of households, yet farmers continue to face post-harvest losses due to low adoption of technology and market inefficiencies. Internet penetration remains between 35–45%, with rural areas still experiencing limited quality connectivity. Existing interventions such as Ajira Digital Centres, digital literacy programmes and innovation bootcamps have created important foundations. Still, these efforts remain fragmented, under-coordinated and insufficiently linked to jobs, enterprise growth or investment.

## THE CHALLENGE

In Busia, many young people have received basic digital exposure, yet few have access to structured pathways into employment, entrepreneurship or emerging fields such as AI and digital services. Youth unemployment remains above 30%, leaving many young people disconnected from the country's expanding digital economy.

The effects are visible across sectors. Farmers lose income through avoidable inefficiencies. Traders operating in one of East Africa's busiest corridors still rely heavily on informal and cash-based systems. Women, youth with disabilities and rural communities face deeper barriers to participation. At the same time, government, private sector and civil society initiatives often operate in silos, generating isolated successes without creating system-wide impact.

What Busia lacks is not potential, it lacks a shared platform where stakeholders converge, collaborate and commit to measurable action. Without a convening moment that aligns partners, amplifies local innovation and produces binding commitments, the county risks remaining perpetually on the verge of transformation.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

The ongoing momentum in digital transformation, combined with growing global investment in inclusive technology ecosystems, creates a timely opportunity for counties that are ready to act. Busia is uniquely placed to seize this moment.

Its strategic border location offers a natural advantage for digital trade, logistics innovation, e-commerce and regional enterprise. Existing Youth Empowerment Centres, digital hubs, training programmes and an active ecosystem of partners already provide a practical starting point. In addition, Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum is producing a new generation of youth with stronger foundations in creativity, problem-solving and digital readiness.

With the right platform to align these assets, Busia can become a model county for rural innovation, youth enterprise and cross-border digital growth.

## GENERAL OBJECTIVE

To host a catalytic Tech and Innovation summit in Busia county, aligning multi-sectoral actors to accelerate rural innovation, unlock cross-border commerce, secure strategic partnerships and strengthen emerging digital transformation opportunities

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To showcase youth-led innovations addressing education, employment, agriculture, climate resilience, health and digital rights.
2. To strengthen coordination among key digital actors in Busia County and the LREB region to amplify impact.
3. To advance digital inclusion and participation, ensuring equitable access to digital opportunities across all communities in Busia County.
4. To secure concrete strategic commitments by governments, public and private actors for increased financing, enhanced digital governance and sustainability
5. To leverage digital payments, e-commerce, logistics systems and trade technologies to formalise markets, reduce barriers, and expand incomes for traders and MSMEs.

## THEMATIC TRACKS

The summit will be organised around five practical thematic tracks linked to Busia's economy and development priorities:

### **1. Cross-Border Trade & Digital Economy**

Exploring digital payments, e-commerce, logistics systems and trade technologies that can formalise markets, reduce barriers, and expand incomes for traders and MSMEs.

### **2. Digital Inclusion, Connectivity & Governance**

Focusing on affordable internet access, digital literacy, inclusive participation, stronger public systems, and data-driven service delivery.

### **3. Climate-Smart Agriculture & AgriTech**

Showcasing technologies such as climate advisory tools, soil testing, smart farming solutions and digital marketplaces that help farmers increase productivity and earnings.

### **4. Digital Health & Community Wellbeing**

Examining how digital tools can strengthen healthcare delivery, support frontline workers, improve data systems and expand access in rural communities.

### **5. Youth Skills, AI & the Future of Work**

Building practical digital skills, AI awareness, online work readiness, entrepreneurship pathways and stronger links between training and income opportunities.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The Busia Tech & Innovation Summit 2026 marks the beginning of a deliberate and irreversible shift, from Busia as an overlooked border county to a recognised digital economy hub, where innovation thrives, cross-border commerce is strengthened, and no community is left behind in Kenya's digital future.

This vision is anchored on five concrete outcomes:

1. Cross-border digital trade, payment, and e-commerce opportunities identified and prioritised for structured post-Summit action among traders and MSMEs.
2. A co-developed county digital inclusion agenda endorsed by public and private actors, ensuring equitable access to digital opportunities across all communities.
3. Climate-smart and AgriTech innovations showcased, with farmer and agribusiness priorities documented for targeted follow-up investment and adoption.
4. Digital health gaps and community wellbeing priorities are mapped to inform future partnerships and pilot interventions across Busia's rural populations.
5. Youth exposed to AI, digital skills pathways, and entrepreneurship ecosystems, with opportunities documented for structured post-Summit engagement.

# TO PARTNER, PARTICIPATE OR LEARN MORE:

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