



# UAE Plans to Boost Number of AI Labs

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The UAE Council for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transactions has announced it plans to increase the number of specialised artificial intelligence (AI) laboratories in the country. The measure is part of a concerted effort to take its AI research initiatives to the next level as the Gulf nation strives to become an industry leader within the next decade.

The Council, which is in charge of overseeing the country's National AI Strategy 2031, met for the first time last month to discuss implementation of the agenda. Almost two years after the launch of the Strategy, concrete results are now beginning to issue forth – and the expansion of AI labs is just one of several exciting developments.

## The lab of tomorrow

Shortly after the announcement of the Strategy in April 2019, the UAE opened the world's first dedicated AI education institute in the shape of the Mohamed bin Zayed University of Artificial Intelligence in Abu Dhabi. Tasked with training the academic AI experts of tomorrow, the University was one of the first phases in the country's AI plan.

The expansion of its AI labs is another step in that process. Sometimes referred to as a "[Laboratory 4.0](#)", an AI lab is one that incorporates automation, digitalisation and smart-enabled systems into all facets of its operation. It's this type of forward-thinking infrastructure which will provide the springboard for future research and development methods.

## Well-placed to dominate

Aware of just how big an impact AI is set to have on virtually all aspects of our lives going forwards, the UAE has set itself the ambitious target of becoming a global leader in the sector by 2031. It's well-placed to do so, as well; the establishment of the Mohamed bin Zayed University and the expansion of its AI lab capabilities demonstrate how it is spearheading adoption of the technology.

Indeed, it appears that the UAE will steal a march on its Middle Eastern counterparts, including Saudi Arabia, which is currently the only economy in the region larger than its own. According to a report authored by consultancy specialists



PricewaterhouseCoopers, the UAE will derive as much as 14% of its GDP – or almost \$100 billion – from AI by the end of this decade.

## **Palpable progress**

The meeting of the Council reviewed the progress made thus far, the next planned steps and the proposed metrics for measuring success going forwards. Already, the Strategy has seen the graduation of over 260 AI experts from a targeted research programme that was developed in tandem with Kellogg College at the University of Oxford in the UK.

The programme involved participation from 90 different local and federal organisations and sought to teach transferrable AI skills to its students. This is in keeping with the 2031 Strategy, the ultimate goal of which is to supervise the roll-out of AI in industries across the board, from education and medicine to transportation and government services. The proposed expansion of AI labs will only serve to facilitate that process.