

# R50 million allocated for the youth



Executive Mayor Cllr Diphale Motsepe.

## Joseph Ntimba ka Masiah

MIDDELBURG - Local SMMEs have gained some leverage for their businesses as the Steve Tshwete Local Municipality (STLM), in partnership with the National Empowerment Fund (NEF), injected R50 million in the Enterprise and Supplier Development (ESD) Fund.

The municipality is set to provide R20 million and the NEF the remaining R30 million for eligible black-owned and managed businesses in the municipality.

Adv Bheki Khenisa, the municipal manager, said the initiative was part of the municipality's interventions against Covid-19.

"As a post-Covid-19 response, one of the things we identified was that people had lost their jobs. We needed to come up with a counter-cyclical investment method that included infrastructure development," he said.

"So we went big on infrastructure, which absorbed a lot of people workwise. But then we also realised that most local entrepreneurs who get contracts to do the work do not have start-up capital. So we decided to partner with the NEF to assist in reducing the high cost of capital," Khenisa said.

The ESD fund will invest a minimum of R250 000 per SMME for a maximum duration of five years. The municipality portion

will be limited to a maximum of R5 million per transaction. The NEF will contribute a minimum of 60% of the funding requirement for each qualifying transaction and the balance of 40% will come from STLM contributions.

The NEF divisional executive, Setlakalane Molepo, said his institution will assist the municipality to accelerate broad-based black economic empowerment in the municipality. "This is to identify fundable businesses and to provide them a range of support interventions, including mentorship, to enhance the chances of success," he said.

"Loans are repayable at prime rate to be determined by NEF investment committees. The municipal contribution will incur a fixed interest rate of 5%," Molepo said.

STLM's executive mayor, Cllr Diphale Motsepe, said the partnership was proof of their delivery to the commitment to grow and support small business. "Our strategic planning lekgotla earlier this year resolved that we would ensure continuous support to emerging and existing SMMEs and cooperatives in order to contribute to job creation. We further made a bold commitment to implement enterprise development in partnership with the private sector," he said.



Municipal Manager Adv Bheki Khenisa.

## Mpumalanga increases young people's funding to R90 million

### Mbekezeli Mbuli

MBOMBELA - The Mpumalanga government announced it has increased funding for youth-owned businesses in the province to R90 million to boost youth participation in the mainstream economy as unemployment rises.

The recent Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the first quarter of 2021 shows that the youth unemployment rate is at a shocking 63,3%.

Premier Refilwe Mtshweni-Tsipane said the R90 million will be invested in the Mpumalanga Youth Development Fund (MYDF) in the current financial year.

This is an additional R40 million to the fund compared with the previous financial year.

"The fund will, among other things, prioritise SMMEs owned by historically

driver of poverty and inequality," he said.

"We have also spoken to MEGA in terms of the disbursement of the fund. We are looking at the end of July when we are going to see the first disbursement," Nyoni said.

"We are funding businesses that are going to be sustainable and are going to employ more youth. On the other hand, the DA said it was concerned about job losses in the province as shown by the QLFS.

"This shows the devastation of the economy caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the related extended lockdowns," said Bosman Grobler, the DA spokesperson for finance and economic development.

"This has left many families vulnerable, without an income to put food on the table," he said. "The DA challenges the provincial government to work with all stakeholders and political parties to find ways of growing the economy and creating the much-needed employment, as communities are struggling because of this pandemic," Grobler said.

We hope to see more proposals that embrace and promote new technologies

marginalised groups of young people, including young women, young persons with disabilities and above all, youth residing in rural areas," she said.

Mtshweni-Tsipane urged young people to submit business proposals. "We hope to see more proposals that embrace new technologies and promote artificial intelligence," she added.

Peter Nyoni, acting director general in the provincial government, said they are at an appraisal stage in terms of the business plans that have been submitted.

"We have received quite a number of proposals, which is an indication of the eagerness of the youth to advance the course of transformation in terms of participating in the mainstream economy so to undermine unemployment, in particular, which is the



Acting Director General Peter Nyoni.



MEC Vusi Shongwe.

## Overall Friday yields positive results

### Mbekezeli Mbuli

EMALAHLENI - The Overall Friday Programme is quickly yielding the desired results, and it is only the beginning.

This is according to the mastermind behind this crime-busting programme, the MEC for community safety, security and liaison, Vusi Shongwe, after the Overall Friday Programme conducted in and around eMalahleli this past Friday.

During the operation, more than 20 people were arrested for failing to be at their places of residence, in line with Covid-19 curfew regulations.

One person was arrested for being in possession of a vehicle that had reportedly been stolen in eMbalenhle, Secunda.

The police also brought to book seven more suspects in the area who were wanted in connection with cases of assault with intention to do grievous bodily harm.

Other suspects were caught for offences that include housebreaking and theft, driving under the influence of alcohol and

carjacking.

About nine liquor premises and three filling stations were also visited during the operation.

Shongwe welcomed these successes and appealed to the police to spare no effort in making eMalahleli a crime-free area. He further emphasised that government's efforts to eradicate crime will bear fruits if the police do their work with integrity and show no leniency towards perpetrators of crime.

"Our police must not show any leniency towards criminals. The rogue elements must be mercilessly pursued, and no stone should be left unturned," he remarked.

"The police must respect themselves and do their work with utmost integrity in order to win the respect of communities. It cannot be accepted that law enforcement officers are constantly accused by communities for failure to do their work properly," continued Shongwe.

The Overall Friday Programme is implemented from Friday to Sunday in identified areas as part of promoting law enforcement visibility and fighting crime through a multidisciplinary approach.