



**MINISTRY
HIGHER EDUCATION AND
TRAINING REPUBLIC OF SOUTH
AFRICA**

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KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY MINISTER BUTI MANAMELA

AT THE NSF ERP SYSTEM LAUNCH

“Accelerating the NSF’s Journey to Operational Excellence”

Thursday, 4 December 2025

Acting Director-General of the Department of Higher Education and Training, Mr Sam Zungu,

The Acting CEO of the National Skills Fund, Ms Erra,

Senior officials of DHET and NSF,

Members of the media, esteemed Skills Development Providers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening.

Let me begin by expressing my heartfelt appreciation to all of you for joining us on this important evening. Tonight is not merely a celebration. It is a declaration. A declaration that we are shifting the gears of the National Skills Fund into a new era, one rooted in accountability, transparency, agility, and impact.

For years, the NSF was known more for its administrative struggles than for its catalytic role in our education and training system. Its potential was never in doubt, but its systems, structure, and credibility were under immense pressure. This evening, as we mark the launch of the Enterprise Resource Planning system, we do so not just as a technical milestone, but as a symbol of rebirth and institutional renewal.

This journey has not been easy. The NSF has walked through fire. It has endured qualified audits, forensic investigations, institutional instability, and capacity gaps. But even in the face of these challenges, there was always a core of committed professionals who knew that change was possible.

The ERP launch tonight marks a historic leap from an era of manual inefficiency to a digital platform that will automate our processes, eliminate errors, and bring real-time visibility into every rand spent. It is the backbone of our turnaround strategy and the foundation of future clean audits. It will enable smarter tracking, performance monitoring, and faster delivery. This is how we build public confidence, not through slogans, but through systems that work.

In February this year, we committed to launching the ERP system in ten months. Today, exactly ten months later, we are live. That's more than meeting a deadline. That's meeting the moment. And we did it in-house, collaboratively, and with a vision of transformation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This ERP system is not a panacea, but it is a major milestone in implementing the recommendations of the Ministerial Task Team. When the MTT was appointed in 2021, following years of poor audit outcomes and organisational drift, its task was clear: provide a blueprint to stabilise and reposition the NSF. Tonight's event is one of the most visible fruits of that blueprint.

Through the ERP, we now have over 120 standardised business processes, detailed and approved, forming the operational backbone of this organisation. This is how we begin to enforce consistency, eliminate duplication, and drive efficiency.

But systems alone do not transform institutions. People do. And that is why we have also prioritised human resource reform. The NSF has successfully filled 89 of its 99 contract positions, reduced the permanent vacancy rate to 22%, and filled 139 posts across the entity. We now have a fully-fledged Human Resources Management Unit,

separate from the Department, managing staff development, labour relations, and workplace planning.

We have our first internal Skills Development Facilitator, and our first Workplace Skills Plan, contributing to improved B-BBEE performance and internal capability.

By March 2026, we aim to complete the full organisational redesign, with every critical post filled, every system digitised, and every business unit functioning optimally.

And just as our internal systems are being rebuilt, so too is our governance architecture. I have instructed the NSF to prepare a business case for amendments to the Skills Development Act to formally establish the NSF Board. In the interim, we are establishing an Advisory Committee to strengthen project oversight, approvals, and institutional agility.

As part of our new governance model, all new projects will be implemented on a pay-for-performance basis. No more disbursing funds into a vacuum. No more uncertainty about deliverables. Service providers will be paid on verified milestones. The full list of SDPs, their ownership, their records—these will be published. Public money demands public accountability.

This approach is already being applied in our Artisan Massification Programme, which now represents a R2.39 billion investment targeting over 10,000 artisans. The expansion I approved in September comes with clear conditions: independent monitoring, milestone-based funding, and transparency.

We are applying the same rigour to the Persons with Disabilities Programme, launched last year. With over R650 million committed and 10,211 beneficiaries targeted, the programme is entering implementation in January 2026. Tonight, I am proud to welcome the 28 SDPs who have been approved to implement this programme. Your selection followed a rigorous due diligence process. You are now our partners in transformation. But with partnership comes responsibility. Let me be clear: we will not tolerate non-performance. We will not allow opportunism. You have the mandate. Now you must deliver.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The NSF's future is no longer a question of speculation. It is a matter of deliberate design. Through our strategic planning process, we have adopted a new Portfolio Plan aligned with the Medium-Term Development Plan 2025–2030. This plan commits us to funding priorities that support the Just Energy Transition, digital skills, hydrogen and oceans economies, green manufacturing, and the revitalisation of TVET and CET colleges.

We are aligning our funding with national development imperatives. We are closing the loop between labour market intelligence and funding. We are bridging the gap between training and work.

None of this would be possible without the courageous work of those who stood firm during the NSF's most difficult days. We must acknowledge the teams who, while under investigation, while rebuilding systems, while preparing manual files for audits, stayed the course. You have brought this Fund back from the brink. And you did so while disbursing over R4.5 billion to more than 56,000 learners, with the majority being women, youth, and rural beneficiaries.

We also know the work is not over. The SIU investigation, as mandated by the President's proclamation, is still underway. So is the work of the Hawks and other regulatory bodies. We are not shying away from this scrutiny. We welcome it. Because every institution that serves the public must be able to face the mirror. Those found guilty of wrongdoing will face the consequences.

Colleagues,

Tonight we celebrate not the end of a journey, but the beginning of a new chapter. A chapter in which the National Skills Fund no longer operates in the shadows of inefficiency, but steps forward as a digital, data-driven, transparent public entity. A chapter in which our systems serve our people, and our people serve the future.

We are reforming not just how we work, but why we work. We are here to serve the aspirations of a nation hungry for skills, work, dignity, and hope.

To the NSF team—congratulations. To our partners in DHET—thank you for standing alongside us. To our Skills Development Providers—deliver with discipline. And to all South Africans—watch this space. Because the NSF is back, and it is being rebuilt in your name.

I thank you