



MEDIA STATEMENT

Launch of the Free State Provincial Human Resource Development Council (FSPHRDC)

The HRDC Secretariat supported the successful launch of the Free State Provincial Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), held at the Office of the Premier in Bloemfontein on 20 November 2025. The Council, chaired by the Premier, Ms Maqueen Joyce Letsoha-Mathae, is mandated to drive human capital development and position the province for inclusive economic growth.

The Acting Deputy Director-General of the Free State Province, Adv Ditira officially welcomed members to the inaugural sitting. In her opening remarks, she reaffirmed that the Council will serve as the province's highest advisory body on skills development and stated that "today marks the beginning of a journey that the Free State is embarking on to prepare for the future." She encouraged Council members to embrace technological advancements—particularly artificial intelligence (AI)—not with fear, but as tools to accelerate and strengthen service delivery. She further emphasised the importance of deepening collaboration and partnerships with the private sector and other stakeholders within and beyond the province.

Guided by the Reconceptualised HRD Strategy and Master Skills Plan, the Head of the HRDC Secretariat, Mr Maliviwe Lumka, presented opportunities for alignment between the Provincial HRDC and the National HRDC. His presentation outlined key mechanisms through which the province can integrate the functioning of the national HRDC into its own development agenda.

Council members were also briefed on the Provincial Growth and Development Strategy (PGDS), with a strong focus on the province's economic drivers—namely agriculture, mining and Manufacturing. These sectors remain central to the province's growth trajectory and are expected to inform the Council's priority areas.

Delivering the keynote address, the Premier Letsoha-Mathae highlighted that the launch comes at a pivotal time, following a 2.3 percentage-point decline in the province's official unemployment rate. She stressed the urgency of translating progress into sustained impact by identifying, noting that "today you will be judged by the work you deliver until the end of the term." The Premier encouraged Council members to expedite the

establishment of standing committees that will drive interventions in economic growth and human development.

She outlined the following key expectations for the Council:

1. Address unemployment by focusing on local economic growth and development, particularly in mining, agriculture and manufacturing.
2. Strengthen collaboration and partnerships with the private sector.
3. Avoid duplication of initiatives and resources.
4. Deepen involvement of higher learning institutions.
5. Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Reconceptualised HRD Strategy and Master Skills Plan.

The Premier concluded by calling on members to work collectively, emphasising that their coordinated efforts are essential to transforming the Free State into a province where all residents can thrive.

The HRDC is mandated to advise government and coordinate social partners in building a capable and skilled workforce to drive economic growth, reduce poverty, and tackle inequality and unemployment. The establishment of today's Free State HRDC aligns with the national directive for all provinces to set up Provincial HRDC structures.

The launch was attended by representatives from government, organised labour, business (including Eskom, Sasol and Transnet), civil society, several SETA CEOs, Higher learning (Principals and Vice chancellors) and other key provincial stakeholders.

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