



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

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**MINISTER BUTI MANAMELA SECURES PRIVATE SECTOR COMMITMENT TO
ADVANCE SOUTH AFRICA'S SKILLS REVOLUTION**

TO ALL MEDIA

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For Immediate Release

The Minister of Higher Education and Training, Mr Buti Manamela has successfully secured strong commitments from leaders across the private sector to partner with government in advancing South Africa's skills revolution and strengthening the country's dual system of education and training to employability.

As part of activities linked to the Higher Education and Training Budget Vote speech, Minister Manamela convened a high-level business breakfast with executives and leaders from the agriculture, mining, engineering, ICT, financial services and other strategic sectors of the economy. The engagement brought together government, business, skills development institutions, intermediaries, and start-ups in a collective effort to address South Africa's urgent youth unemployment challenge.

South Africa is faced with more than three million young people who are not in education, employment or training. At the same time, many graduates and qualified and skilled young people remain unemployed, while businesses continue to express concern about the shortage of appropriately skilled workers required by the economy.

The business breakfast sought to directly confront this disconnect by establishing a practical platform through which government and business can work together to ensure that skills development responds meaningfully to labour market demands and economic growth.

The Minister announced that this engagement will evolve into an ongoing partnership platform that will meet regularly and be supported by a clear implementation plan between engagements to ensure measurable progress and accountability.

The discussions were anchored around five strategic themes:

Reimagining public-private partnerships in the Post-School Education and Training (PSET) sector by moving towards strategic, long-term collaboration that builds sustainable systems.

Bridging the skills-industry gap through curriculum alignment, workplace exposure and direct business participation in training design.

Scaling apprenticeships, learnerships and work-integrated learning opportunities by exploring incentives, removing barriers and improving implementation at scale.

Identifying what business requires from government, including policy certainty, efficient processes, accessible funding mechanisms and improved accountability.

Establishing a shared accountability framework that clearly defines roles, responsibilities and measurable outcomes for both government and business.

The session concluded with participating executives making formal commitments and pledges in various forms to support the implementation of the skills revolution agenda.

Among the key outcomes of the engagement was strong support for the revitalisation and repositioning of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

Business leaders emphasised that TVET colleges remain central to South Africa's economic future and should be rebranded as institutions that prepare young people for practical, future-focused occupations that will remain essential even in an era increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence and automation.

Participants also stressed the need for improved coordination within government, as well as stronger alignment between government and business, to ensure that skills development interventions are integrated, responsive and effective.

The engagement further highlighted the importance of entrepreneurship development as part of the country's skills agenda. Business leaders indicated that young people must increasingly be equipped not only to become job seekers, but also job creators capable of building enterprises, creating employment and contributing to economic growth.

The engagement was co-hosted by Standard Bank and Primestars. Co-host of the engagement, Dr Kirston Greenhop of Standard Bank, reinforced the importance of prioritising vocational education and practical skills development as a key pillar of inclusive economic participation. CEO of Primestars Mr Nkosinathi Moshwana emphasised the importance of learning to earning, one of their key campaigns to ensure that graduates are offered job opportunities.

Minister Manamela emphasised that the outcomes of the engagement must lead to practical implementation and measurable impact.

"The report that emerges from this process must speak directly to how we action partnerships and collaboration in a meaningful and measurable way. There is already important work happening across sectors and institutions. Our responsibility now is to identify what is working, understand how to scale it, and take all of these commitments forward into concrete programmes that benefit young people and the economy," said Minister Manamela.

The Minister was supported during the engagement by the Deputy Minister of Higher Education and Training, Nomusa Dube-Ncube, the Director-General of the Department, as well as Deputy Directors-General responsible for skills development and related branches within the department.

Minister Manamela concluded the engagement by reiterating government's commitment to ensure that the post-school education and training system becomes a driver of economic inclusion and opportunity.

“Ultimately, we cannot allow our education and training system to become a waiting room for unemployment for our youth. It must become a platform for empowerment, productivity, innovation and national development,” concluded Minister Manamela.

The Minister will deliver the budget speech in Parliament tomorrow 26 May 2026 at 10:00.

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