

THE MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND INNOVATION DR BLADE
NZIMANDE ON THE OCCASION OF THE NATIONAL SKILLS FUND BREAKFAST WITH NSF
BENEFICIARIES HELD AT THE CTICC

24 MAY 2023

Programme Director, Ms Merriam Malebo;
Deputy Minister, Mr Buti Manamela;
DHET Director General, Dr Nkosinathi Sishi and DSI DG, Dr Phil Mjwara;
Deputy Directors General present;
Honourable Members of Parliament
NSF Acting Executive Officer, Mr David Mabusela;
Chairpersons and CEOs of all our PSET Institutions;
Officials from my Ministry, the Department of Higher Education and all our entities;
Mr Benson Ngqentsu, Provincial Secretary of the SACP
NSF Bursary beneficiaries;
My special guests from all the Schools who are beneficiaries of Ministerial Projects;
Skills development providers;
Business delegations and Trade Union leadership present;
Members of the media;
Distinguished guests;
Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning

It gives me great pleasure to be hosting the National Skills Fund bursary beneficiaries breakfast this morning on the eve of the Department of Higher Education and Training budget vote.

Skills development and training remains very important in redressing the skewed South African education and skills development trajectory which was characterised inequalities through overt racist policies.

Therefore education and skills development is important because it promotes economic growth and social inclusion by creating a more skilled and diverse workforce.

In our South African context, by providing training and education opportunities to Black South Africans, these skills development initiatives will help to level the playing field and reduce inequality in the economy.

As President Nelson Mandela said: "The power of education extends beyond the development of skills we need for economic success. It can contribute to nation-building and reconciliation."

Most importantly we want to use of skills development interventions to enable South Africans to participate in the new world of work and to support the economic recovery efforts to make the economy more dynamic in tackling inequality, unemployment and poverty in the 21st century.

We will therefore intensify efforts towards addressing the imbalances of skills supply and demand in South Africa through the process of developing a country wide Master Skills Plan under the theme 'One Country One Skills Development Plan'.

This ground-breaking initiative will provide strategic direction to the country's skills system, bring about coherence in skills provisioning and clarify institutional arrangements and ensure that skills development in South Africa is relevant and responsive to the needs of the economy and society.

Mandate of DHET in skills development

Ladies and gentlemen

The Department of Higher Education and Training, together with the 21 sector education and training authorities (SETAs) and entities under the department, has been mandated a leadership role in the skills development of the country, in rebuilding the economy and in leading the reconstruction efforts of the government post-Covid-19.

I am therefore hosting this breakfast to acknowledge and celebrate the accomplishments of NSF bursary beneficiaries.

This breakfast serves as a platform for showcasing success stories and recognising the contribution of NSF beneficiaries who work in various sectors of the economy of our country.

Furthermore, I will be delighted to see out of this event today more networking and collaboration among NSF beneficiaries, academic institutions, industry partners and government agencies - paving the way for future partnerships, funding opportunities, collaborations and knowledge-sharing initiatives.

Our event will also showcase what I always refer to as "differentiated stream of funding" in our post school education and training system.

These streams include funding from the National Skills Fund (NSF), the National Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), the National Research Foundation (NRF), the National Institute for Human and Social Sciences (NIHSS), funding from our Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and the International Scholarships Programme within the DHET.

Ladies and gentlemen

There is universal agreement that a skilled and capable workforce is critical for a country to reach a level of development that meets the needs of its citizens and builds a healthy economy.

In our midst today, we are joined by a selection of about eighty-two (82) beneficiaries of the NSF Bursary Fund and will listen to some of their testimonies today.

We witnessed for ourselves what these outstanding and distinguished beneficiaries have to tell us about their own lived experiences through this important government education and training fund intervention.

I must indicate that NSF beneficiaries are spread across the length and breadth of our country and are training through our universities, TVET Colleges and through our SETAs.

I want to congratulate all of you for your hard work and determination. Indeed the government investment in you is not in vain. Keep on shining the bright star!!!

What is covered by the NSF bursary

The NSF bursary fund is a full cost bursary that focuses on supporting students in scarce skills areas, including channeling some of these funds through NSFAS. It covers educational related costs, which include tuition fees, book allowance, accommodation allowance or travelling allowance, meal allowance and incidental allowance.

However, we have a condition in granting the bursary. The condition is that upon the successful completion of their studies, student have an obligatory work contract within South Africa, meaning they can't work outside South Africa within a stipulated time period.

It is also important to indicate that NSF has existing collaboration with the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) where funds are made available for undergraduate bursaries and scholarships.

On the other hand, the National Research Foundation (NRF) focuses on postgraduate programmes that seeks to advance the objectives of the National Development Plan (NDP) which is to increase the number of academic staff members at South African universities with PhD's to 75% and, the number of PhD graduations to 6 000 per annum by the year 2030.

Half a billion will also be allocated to the SETAs for scarce skills development in the current financial year.

Delivery through PSET partners

Ladies and gentlemen

A sum of R1,7 billion was disbursed by the NSF towards its bursaries programme in 2021/22, benefitting students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in scarce and critical skills. The funding is largely geared towards students pursuing occupations in high demand.

Since the creation of this fund, we have managed to assist students to access higher education, especially those coming from poor and the working-class background.

This bursary funding also offers international scholarships with countries that have bilateral relations with South Africa such as China, Hungary, Sweden and Russia.

We have also provided funding for students in Agricultural Colleges and we will continue to support several national and provincial departments which implements education and training programmes.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges

On the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college front, the NSF spent R545 million in the previous financial year towards finalising the TVET college construction projects in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces.

I must indicate that the completion of these infrastructure development projects will increase the TVET college enrolment capacity by 7 000.

Further, notable developments have been realised following the NSF's R151 million commitment to creating the 26 Centres of Specialisation (CoS) related to thirteen (13) priority trades at our nineteen (19) TVET colleges.

Our flagship Apprenticeship Programme, launched in 2019, is also supported by the SETAs through a discretionary grant to participating employers.

Through the financial support of the NSF, ten (10) of our TVET colleges were accredited as trade test centres.

Through the NSF's R310 million commitment to the TVET Colleges Connection Programme (TCCP), we also connected 283 TVET college sites to the South African National Research Network (SANReN).

The TCCP is fundamentally focused on gearing the public TVET colleges towards playing a meaningful role in the fourth industrial revolution.

To continue strengthening the programme offering of TVET colleges, the NSF also launched the Public TVET Colleges' Capacity Building and Occupational Programmes Phase III Funding Window with a R2,2 billion financial commitment.

Massification of skills provision through the Community Colleges

The NSF also launched its inaugural funding window focused on the capacity building for Community Colleges.

The NSF committed R200 million towards this initiative intended to benefit approximately 3 000 out-of-school youth and adults who require various forms of skilling.

The targeted beneficiaries include those who want to upgrade their education and basic qualifications and pursue second chance learning, non-formal programmes and skills programmes to contribute to different forms of livelihood.

Supported provided to government departments and entities

The NSF also continues to support the National Skills Authority (NSA)- our national skills development statutory body and Human Resources Development Council of South Africa (HRDC) which our national, multi-stakeholder advisory body chaired by the Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa and managed by the me as the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation.

In terms of exploiting opportunities in emerging sectors of the economy, I am pleased to indicate that the NSF's commitment of R625 million from 2018 towards the South African International Maritime Institute (SAIMI) which is assisting to promote partnerships and collaborative efforts toward better education, training and upskilling programmes in the South African maritime sector.

Enabled by the NSF's funding, the institute has also forged partnerships with a broad base of stakeholders from universities, SETAs, TVET colleges, the maritime industry, government and representatives from the African maritime sector.

Importantly, the NSF's commitment of R105 million to Higher Health has also made a meaningful contribution to enable the provision of health and wellness programmes in our PSET system, more especially during COVID-19.

Being appointed fund manager for the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) Phase II intervention is another notable highlight for the NSF.

In this regard, the NSF's role, in the agreement between the Presidency and the DHET, is to perform all the administrative, contractual and other arrangements necessary to operationalise this programme which is focused on reducing barriers and expanding

employment and training opportunities for young people in digital and information and communication technology (ICT) skills.

Supported by a R200 million commitment from the NSF, R100 million from the National Treasury, the PYEI intervention is expected to continue to be rolled out in this current financial year and it is intended to benefit an additional 4 500 youth.

Support for the 21st century apprenticeship skills development

While the artisanal CoS programme funding was funded through the fiscus from the 2022 academic year, some spin-offs from the NSF's investment in this area include continued support of international partners towards the programme.

For instance, the Gandhi-Mandela CoS at the Tshwane South TVET, Pretoria West Campus, was launched in October 2021 with the support of His Excellency Commissioner of India in South Africa and Lesotho, Mr Jaideep Sarka.

Beyond the artisanal CoS programme, the NSF continued its funding support for the participation of aspirant artisans in the World Skills competitions in South Africa and internationally.

The World Skills competition is an important mechanism for promoting artisan skills as a viable career choice and for forging partnerships with the industry.

The NSF has also allocated R2 billion towards training of more than 6 000 apprentices through the Artisan Development Programme.

All this funding support on the development of artisans is designed to contribute toward the production of 30 000 artisans annually as envisaged by the National Development Plan 2030.

I also intend setting aside a substantial amount of money for specialist studies outside the country, especially in those fields where there is huge shortage inside the country.

Conclusion

As I conclude, let me publicly announce that in the current financial year, at least 5 000 students will receive NSF funding for undergraduate and postgraduate studies.

Another important announcement to make is currently the NSF developing mechanisms to resuscitating the Mandela Day programme in which at least sixty-seven (67) students will be identified for funding at each of the 26 universities. I there call upon all aspirant applicants to keep close to these developments.

Let me also indicate that NSF is in the process of finalising the issuing of skills development funding Request for Proposals (RFPs) which include:

- a) Postgraduate studies in natural sciences at Masters, Medical Doctors, PHD and Post PHD level;
- b) Artisan Recognition of Prior Learning (ARPL);
- c) Studies in Wellness and Sports;
- d) Rural Development;
- e) Information and Communication Technology (Skills in 4IR);
- f) TVET College Placement programmes; and
- g) Expansion of Centres of Specialisation

I once more encourage all South Africans to look up for these opportunities.

Lastly, I would like to call for more collaboration of all our PSET institutions with industry, mostly importantly our TVET and Community Colleges. This will ensure that we create more job and training opportunities for our students in these sectors.

I have said it several times to our colleges principals, that our TVET college will not be called a colleges if they do not have well established relations with industry and workplaces within their areas.

I therefore have request Director General Sishi and our TVET Colleges branch in the Department to monitor this very closely.

Lastly, let me take this opportunity to thank the DG Shishi, the NSF Acting Accounting Officer and all staff members who organised this events.

My gratitude also goes to our beneficiaries, our skills development providers, business and trade unions who continue to support the work we are doing as Department in changing the lives of ordinary South Africans. Well done to our beneficiaries, especially those who have completed their studies and are now working.

Thank you very much.