



GAUTENG
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

DESIGNATED SMMEs TAKE CENTRE STAGE AT INAUGURAL GAUTENG CONSTRUCTION EXPO

Friday, 16 February 2024

As part of renewed efforts to support and help grow Small and Medium Enterprises (SMME's) in Gauteng's construction and built sector, the Gauteng Provincial Government has held its first construction expo for these targeted businesses.

The "Re Aga Mmogo" Construction Expo for enterprises owned by women, youth, persons with disabilities and military veterans saw hundreds of small business owners from across the Gauteng City Region attend the event held at the Johannesburg Expo Centre on Thursday, 15 January 2024, to access information and help from various stakeholders on how to navigate the construction terrain.

This is the first time that the public and private sector in the province have come together on this scale to advance the economic participation of these designated SMME's in construction, as well as transform the sector, which is historically dominated by men.

The expo served as a platform to introduce SMME's to targeted economic opportunities in the public and private sectors, equip them with necessary knowledge to operate in what is often a complex environment such as compliance and funding, and expose them to business support, skills development and mentorship opportunities.

Gauteng MEC for Human Settlements and Infrastructure Development, Lebogang Maile, announced at the plenary of the expo that it would take place on a yearly basis to help promote preferential procurement and enterprise development initiatives for these designated groups.

"The main challenge is the dissemination of information. That is why we called you today to come receive information. Information is power. We want all the problems of the SMME's solved. Not for you to come here and listen to speeches and go home. This exhibition is not a talk shop," Maile said.

Innocentia Mahlangu, who chairs the South African Institute of Civil Engineering's (SAICE) diversity & inclusivity panel and its education and training committee, told the opening of the expo that designated groups continued to be marginalised in the built environment, because there was an attraction and retention problem.

This was due to deeply rooted systematic barriers, economic inequalities such as limited financing and discrimination from financial institutions, social and cultural barriers, and a limited access to the market.

"We cannot continue on this trajectory if we are to build a sustainable industry. Today we are taking a bold step in the right direction.

"Our responsibility lies in mobilizing our collective responsibility," Mahlangu said.

These included policy reforms, transforming the education system to speed up transformation of the sector, and South African companies actively supporting change.

Thembakazi Moya, who is the Chief Transformation Officer at the Gauteng Council for the Built Environment, agreed with speakers that to create opportunities for targeted groups, decisive action was paramount.

"We need to empower these designated groups. It is their right," she said.

For young people, this could be achieved by offering them networking opportunities, training and skills development.

Also, to bolster the skills pipeline, young people must be supported to take up STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics subjects, and get the much-needed support they needed while studying.

The expo featured four pavilions representing government and public sector agencies, business, funding institutions, and institutions of higher learning and professional bodies. Delegates from these stakeholders held four interactive sessions with SMME's on skills development, training, mentorship and funding opportunities, business incubation, and regulatory compliance.

Acting Chief Director for Transformation in the Gauteng Office of the Premier, Zain Bulbulia, told the expo that the Growing Gauteng Together 2030 Plan charted the province's path to shared prosperity.

On promoting transformation and the socio-economic inclusion of women, youth, persons with disabilities, and military veterans, he said: "The Gauteng Provincial Government is the only province to have its own

sector policies approved by the Executive Council (EXCO) in 2020 to ensure the mainstreaming of these unique groups.”

These included a preferential procurement government spend of 40% for women, 30% for youth and seven percent for persons with disabilities. Also, Gauteng was the only province which monitored its procurement spend.

Premier Panyaza Lesufi, who gave the keynote address, told SMME’s that the construction sector played an integral part in building the province's economy, ensuring economic inclusion and creating jobs.

"We are coming to you as the Gauteng government to say construction is the new economy that we are going to defend and protect. We are ready to take you to the next level. The only question you must answer is if you are ready," he said.

To further enable SMME’s, the Gauteng Provincial Government has released a booklet containing various opportunities from its economic cluster departments, social cluster support departments, opportunities in property development from the Department of Infrastructure Development, as well as a directory of the dozens of exhibitors who attended the expo.

This expo and booklet are a true reflection of the province’s aim of Growing Gauteng Together.

Click this link to access the booklet:

<https://www.gauteng.gov.za/Departments/DepartmentPublicationDetails/%7B1b851653-5998-480b-897b-bcd09f6bcf10%7D?departmentId=CPM-001008>

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