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Transnet Matlafatšo Centre to Change the Face of SMMEs

The Matlafatšo Centre, launched today by Transnet SOC Ltd in partnership with Wits University, is set to change the face of the Small, Micro, Medium Enterprises (SMMEs) in South Africa. This will be achieved through the transfer of skills, access to research and development facilities for young business minds.

In response to challenges facing young entrepreneurs when it comes to accessing information, starting businesses, research and training, Transnet has invested in a “one-stop-shop” centre that would assist aspiring entrepreneurs and SMMEs to explore and test their products before accessing the market.

The centre will also allow struggling entrepreneurs, particularly the young black men and women as well as those living with disabilities, to introduce and expand new business ideas in all economic spheres.

The walk-in enterprise development centre was launched by the Minister of Public Enterprise, Ms Lynne Brown accompanied by Transnet’s Chairperson, Ms Linda Mabaso, Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof Andrew Crouch and the Group Chief Executive, Mr Siyabonga Gama this morning.

Transnet plans to invest a total of R62.105 million towards TMC over a five year period. To date, the logistic and freight company has invested R19.4 million towards the centre.

Speaking at the launch, Transnet’s Chief Executive Mr Gama said such investment will try and address the country’s skills shortage when comes to Innovation ,Research and Development and the art of entrepreneurship . “We are expecting to see great and disruptive ideas coming out of this centre. The investment should be used as a springboard for young people to catch up with other leading countries when it comes to research, innovation and technology. We also expect that the new ideas and innovations can be commercialised and create knock-on effects which will have an impact on unemployment as well skills development in South Africa.”

Transnet also stands to benefit from some of the ideas which will come from the hub especially in the manufacturing of components as well as engineering of new products.

Focusing on Innovation, Research and Development, the hub will enable the young business people to fit into the fast-pace and digital space influenced by the 4th Industrial Revolution. Characterised by a mammoth of technologies, the 4TH Industrial Revolution, seeks to disrupt the way industries do business and the way consumers interacts with products.

The centre which is situated at Wits University's Solomon Mahlangu Building and within the Tshimolong, an ICT innovation space at the university, is the brainchild of the Transnet's Enterprise and Supplier Development programme and would be later rolled out country-wide in order to reach broader communities.

To achieve these objectives, the centre has identified the following areas of focus namely, assisting beneficiaries with the protection of their intellectual property on products developed, scaling up manufacturing processes and technology demonstrators inform businesses about the potential of new technologies and give support to upcoming SMMEs.

The Wits University which is fast becoming a leader in the Innovation, Research and Development space among other tertiary institutions in South Africa, will provide the academic and technical support for the centre.

The Matlafatšo Centre has started working on some ideas, as end of 2015, the centre has registered 115 ideas from 136 individuals.

Some of the projects currently live at centre include a proudly South African made Reconfigurable Desktop Computer Numerical Control Machine (CNC), a consumer product that can perform three functions such as Milling, 3D Printing and Laser Engraving.

The CNC enables users to produce prototypes and it is an easy and cost-effective way for students to produce printed circuit boards for experiments and prototypes purposes.

Another highlight includes the Online Riches Unleashed (ORU) solution, a multi-purpose social network tailored for SMMEs. The platform enable users to make new connections, share videos, updates, advertise among other features.

The ORU is a process of registering as many users as possible and has been approved by SEDA () with marketing support to the value of R25 000. .

Other projects comprise of the designing of MyTutorAPP - an online tutoring platform, Adjustable desk for disabled school children, Hair Braids Device and Coin Sorting Machines among others.

Issued on behalf of Transnet SOC Ltd

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About Transnet

Transnet is wholly owned by the Government of the Republic of South Africa. The company is uniquely positioned to provide integrated, seamless transport solutions for its customers in the bulk and manufacturing sectors. This is part of its drive to improve the efficiency and competitiveness of the South African economy.

Transnet has five operating divisions:

Transnet Freight Rail transports bulk and containerised freight along 20 500 kilometres of which 1 500 kilometres comprises rail networks heavy haul lines for export coal and export iron ore.

Transnet Engineering manufactures and maintains rolling stock. It consists of eight product-focused business units which provide services ranging from rolling stock refurbishment, conversion and upgrades, to the manufacturing of locomotives, coaches and wagons.

Transnet National Ports Authority is responsible for the safe, efficient and effective functioning of the national ports system, which it manages in a landlord capacity. The National Ports Authority is also a provider of port infrastructure and marine services at all commercial ports in South Africa.

Transnet Port Terminals owns and operates 16 cargo terminal operations situated at seven South African ports. It provides cargo-handling services for the container, bulk, automotive and break-bulk sectors.

Transnet Pipelines transports a range of petroleum products and gas through 3 000 kilometres of underground pipelines, which traverse five provinces, thereby ensuring the security of supply of petroleum products to the inland market, especially Gauteng. Transnet Pipelines is gearing itself for full commissioning of the new Multi-Product Pipeline.

Specialist units:

Transnet Capital Projects manages our largest capital projects;

Transnet Foundation is responsible for executing our Corporate Social Investment initiatives.

Transnet Property manages our property portfolio.