



**MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**Remarks by Deputy Minister of Tourism Fish Mahlalela on the occasion of the launch  
of pilot National Mentorship Programme 2021, Virtual platform**

**9 September 2021**

The CEO of TBCSA Mr Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa  
Co-founder of LIFT Airlines Mr Gidon Novik  
Representatives of National Mentorship Movement, Mr Dave Wilson and Ms Roslyn Solomons  
Mentors and Mentees across the length and breadth of our country  
Members of the Media present  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening

Tonight is a very special night for us as the Ministry of Tourism, and I am sure for everyone involved in the mentorship revolution. It is so because we are launching a Pilot National Mentorship Programme, a very important aspect of skills development, transformation and development.

Mentorship is an expression of leadership. It is the ultimate form of servant leadership. Allow me to share a quote by Benjamin Disraeli: "The greatest good you can do for another is not just to share your riches but to reveal to him his own. And that is what mentorship is truly about – providing an enabling environment to unlock potential.

A strategic pillar of South Africa's economy, tourism, has the potential to address the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality through job creation. Apart from generating revenue, tourism provides the economic opportunities for women and youth, supports the development of SMMEs and has the potential to foster social cohesion. Tourism also has multiple linkages with other sectors of the economy and generates significant multiplier effects.

The sector is a people-orientated sector with people at the heart of its operations as well as its brand. The tourism industry is of great significance and potential to South Africa and is one of the six key sectors of economic growth. While tourism is a key economic pillar, economic development is not possible without people development.

The National Tourism Sector Strategy, under the Pillar: People Development, calls for the development of programmes to ensure transformation of the Tourism Sector. One of the initiatives recommended is the establishment of a formalised national mentorship programme.

Subsequent to the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) Presidential Job Summit, the Department initiated a request for the parties to meet and discuss possible synergies in creating a tourism sector-specific mentor pool. We believe that mentorship can be a major enabler to support, grow and transform the many micro-enterprises in the industry as well as provide support to their networks of students and women.

I am pleased that this Pilot Mentorship Programme is initiated by the private sector, the Tourism Business Council of South Africa (TBCSA) in conjunction with the National Mentorship Movement of South Africa (NMM). This is important because the White Paper on the development and promotion of tourism (1996) and the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS 2016 – 2026) affirms the role of private sector, in that tourism is government-led, private sector-driven and community-based.

We therefore acknowledge and appreciate the role that the private sector continues to play in the economic development and growth in our country. This milestone Programme is such one aspect of the indication of that role.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound adverse impact on the global tourism sector. Governments across the world had to implement necessary measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus so that the capacity of the health system is not overwhelmed by the rate of transmission. These measures directly restricted the movement of people, as well as goods and services globally, with a concomitant adverse impact on the tourism sector. Our sector is arguably one of the worst impacted in the world. And the epidemiological storm now continues to rage, only ebbing and flowing in its intensity. Although the vaccination roll out towards herd immunity is progressing very well, this pandemic has highlighted the need for interventions to keep the sector afloat and one of the needs was a call for mentorship in preparation of the post pandemic and future pandemics.

As the country has since begun to open up, the appetite for domestic travel started to resurface with the help of the Tourism Relief Fund as a relief measure to assist SMMEs. However, due to limited resources, not all businesses could be supported. The Tourism SMME sector has been particularly adversely impacted by the pandemic, hence a need for a mentorship programme became even more amplified.

The tourism sector is one of the critical intervention areas that have been identified in South Africa's Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan. This is so because tourism is a key driver of the economic recovery in the country. The Department of Tourism together with its stakeholders, have collaborated to develop the robust Tourism Sector Recovery Plan. This Plan is anchored on three interlinked pillars or strategic themes: protecting and rejuvenating supply, reigniting demand and strengthening enabling capability for long term sustainability.

We cannot talk about enabling capability for long term sustainability without paying decisive attention to mentorship. Mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced or more knowledgeable person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with vast experience and someone who wants to learn. Mentorship provides critical benefits to individuals as well as organizations. Combining senior and peer mentoring, the mentor and the peers help one another learn and develop appropriate skills and knowledge. Mentoring consists of a long-term relationship focused on supporting the growth and development of the mentee. The mentor therefore becomes a source of wisdom, teaching, and support. That is what we call enabling capability for long term sustainability in the context of skills development.

Transformation of this sector is imperative in promoting inclusivity and a mentorship programme is an apt conduit. Our Department promotes sustainability and good governance, which includes initiatives to transform the sector, promote the practice of responsible tourism and the unlocking of tourism economic development. The UNWTO theme for World Tourism Month 2021 is "Tourism for Inclusive Growth" and the localised theme is "Tourism for Inclusive Growth – COVID-19 Recovery – Build Back Better". The localised theme seeks to ensure that we drive inclusive growth through transformation with a focus on rural and township businesses that aligns to the selection of the SMME beneficiaries in the Pilot Mentorship Programme.

By collaborating with business, the Department can tap into a wealth of resource within the tourism sector through this partnership in order to support beneficiaries of our transformation programmes and thus contribute to the overall impact of the interventions.

We are happy that the arrangement between the National Mentorship Movement, TBCSA and the Department is that the NMM would coordinate and implement the mentorship pilot project, the TBCSA would provide the funding and also assist with sourcing mentors amongst the industry associations affiliated under the TBCSA such as SATSA, SAACI, while the Department would assist in sourcing

prospective mentees through existing programmes, most notably the Enterprise Development and Women in Tourism programmes, the Hidden Gems Initiative under the Tourism Incentive Programme and the Executive Development Programme.

We are also pleased that this pilot programme is directed at the growth and development of approximately forty selected mentees, twenty each in one of the following two streams:

- Hidden Gems Entrepreneurs that have participated and received developmental support under the Department of Tourism's "Hidden Gems", Women in Tourism, Enterprise Development and Tourism Human Resource initiatives. These will be in two geographic focus areas: Gauteng and the Eastern Cape
- Women who have graduated from the Department of Tourism's Executive Development Programme which aims to increase the number of black women at executive and management positions within the tourism sector.

The lessons learned from the pilot will be given due consideration in respect of informing the implementation of a national mentorship programme in 2021/22.

For this pilot, we acknowledge that the accommodation, tour operators, travel agents and MICE industries of the tourism sector have been selected. We look forward to the enrolment of other industries in the tourism value chain.

The Pilot Mentorship Programme is established to test the effectiveness of mentorship to assist in growing the tourism industry and supporting, growing and transforming leadership and enterprises within it.

The tourism industry is ready for a reset. We believe that this pilot programme will lend impetus to the recovery of the sector and position it for accelerated growth. We don't always have to build from scratch – we can also build from experience, the collective experience of our mentors.

A British-American author, Simon Oliver Sinek once said: "When people are financially invested they want a return. When people are emotionally invested, they want to contribute." For those of you that have volunteered to be mentors, I thank you for your leadership contribution and commitment to the tourism sector. To the mentees, thank you for your willingness to learn and grow. Together, we will make this sector great again. And together, we will make South Africa great!

I cannot think of a better way to give expression to Tourism Month than to launch this event. It is my absolute pleasure to warmly welcome you all to this dynamic initiative today. I would like to conclude with a quote by Thich Nhat Hanh: "You cannot transmit wisdom and insight to another person. The seed is already there. A good teacher touches the seed, allowing it to wake up, to sprout and to grow." Best of luck to you as you nurture our green shoots.

I thank you.