



tourism

Department:
Tourism
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MEDIA STATEMENT

UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING TOURISM PROGRAMME

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LIMPOPO – Chefs from the Mpumalanga and the Limpopo provinces can confidently look forward to unlocking greater opportunities as they enter the hospitality and travel industry accredited with the NQF Level 5 Occupational Trade certificates through the Department of Tourism’s Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme.

The Department of Tourism’s RPL programme for chefs is a Tourism Sector Human Resource Strategy (TSHRS) intervention that recognises prior learning and awards participants with the relevant occupational qualification and designation that sets participants on an optimal path for career success.

In 2025, fifty (50) chefs from the Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces took a bold step to empower themselves and have their culinary skills formally refined and accredited through the Department’s RPL programme. Armed with determination and passion for cooking, these chefs began their careers in the tourism value chain with little to no qualifications. Despite owning a wealth of workplace experience, the lack of an accredited qualification has often hindered their career prospects and further development.

Chef Simon Shilangu, who recently completed the Tourism RPL programme, began his culinary career in 2015 as a trainee chef at the Southern Sun – Mbombela in Mpumalanga province. Through the RPL, he was able to fine-tune his pastry skills and attain a NQF level 5 trade certificate. Following his accreditation, Shilangu was promoted as Chef de partie unlocking an opportunity he believes will elevate his career to greater heights. “I feel confident in my culinary skills, and this qualification will enable me to build a formidable career for myself,” added Shilangu.

Chef Sannah Mphonyana Mbewe said the RPL programme empowered her with the theoretical aspects of her vocation, giving her a better understanding of the industry she is working in. “I have gained so much knowledge about the tourism sector and the critical role I play in advancing the economy. I understand that maintaining service standards is critical in

ensuring a quality experience for the visitors as it ensures that our industry is successful and sustainable,” Mbewe said.

The Chefs’ stories reflect the experience of a percentage of the tourism workforce who have years of vocational workplace experience with no accredited qualification. The RPL programme empowers chefs with refined skills, enabling them to explore diverse career growth opportunities in the hospitality and travel industries. To date, the RPL has upskilled and awarded trade certificates to more than 260 chefs in various provinces.

Addressing guests at the certification ceremony held at the Limpopo Chefs Academy, Limpopo MEC of the Department of Economic Development, Environment, and Tourism, Mr. Tshitereke Matibe, congratulated the chefs, and encouraged them to use their newly attained skills and qualifications to create further opportunities for the people in their communities as well.

“Government’s development programmes play a critical role in ensuring that the tourism workforce is adequately skilled, and emerging entrepreneurs are empowered to start sustainable tourism businesses. The skills you gained through the RPL programme will not only elevate your career but will place you in a position to be able to make a meaningful contribution in your communities.”

“South Africa’s tourism sector needs your talent, your creativity, and your leadership. Today, we celebrate your achievement. Tomorrow, the world will taste your excellence. May this be the beginning of the rest of your lives,” MEC Matibe concluded.

For more information or to apply for the RPL programme, visit www.tourism.co.za

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