

MESSAGE OF SUPPORT BY ACTING PREMIER MR. BASIKOPO MAKAMU
DURING THE LAUNCH OF THE INAUGURAL BROADBAND AND DIGITAL
SKILLS FOR MUNICIPALITIES PROGRAMME, THE RANCH RESORT

03 SEPTEMBER 2024

Program Director,

Honorable Minister for Communication and Digital Technologies, Mr.
Solly Malatsi,

Executive Mayor of Capricorn District Municipality, Cllr. Mamedupi
Teffo,

Executive Mayor of the City of Polokwane, Cllr. John Mpe,

Executive Mayors and Mayors of Municipalities,

United Kingdom High Commissioner to South Africa, His Excellency
Antony Phillipson,

Chairperson and Founder of Umlambo Foundation, Dr. Phumzile
Mlambo-Ngcuka,

Director General of Communications and Digital Technologies, Ms.
Nonkqubela Jordaan-Dyani,

Director General of Limpopo Province, Mr. Nape Nchabeleng,

Heads of Departments,

Chairpersons and Chief Executives of State-Owned Companies,

Representatives from the private sector,

Captains of Industry,

Religious leaders,
Leaders of organised business,
Media representatives,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Ndi Matsheloni, Avuxeni, Thobela, Good morning, Goeie more.

It is with great pride and a deep sense of responsibility that I stand before you today to express our collective support for the launch of the Broadband and Digital Skills for Municipalities Program in the Limpopo Province. This initiative marks a pivotal moment in our journey towards a digitally inclusive future, one where every citizen, regardless of their location, has access to the opportunities that the digital era offers.

Program Director, Limpopo Province, through its agency Limpopo Connexion, has made commendable strides in advancing broadband connectivity. The deployment of 142 km of fiber infrastructure across 12 towns—including Polokwane, Seshego, Mankweng, and others—underscores our commitment to ensuring that the backbone of digital infrastructure is firmly in place. This fiber network, connected to our Data Center, Network Operational Control Center, and Call Center, is the lifeline that will power our digital future.

Moreover, the infrastructure includes approximately 550 km of leased backhaul and a separate failover link from Gauteng to Limpopo.

Province. This robust setup, with a centralized and consolidated internet breakout point delivering high-speed connectivity at 500 Megabits per second, is already benefiting several key clients, including LEDA and its subsidiaries

Limpopo Province's commitment to an open access network architecture highlights our resolve to maximize the limited government fiscus by sharing infrastructure. Our collaboration with state-owned companies, particularly Broadband Infracore, in leasing backhaul infrastructure, is a shining example of how strategic partnerships can drive meaningful progress. This initiative ensures that even the most remote areas of Limpopo have access to reliable and fast internet, laying the groundwork for broader economic opportunities and enhanced service delivery.

Program Director, the nearing completion of the Seshego Digital Hub, stands as a beacon of our commitment to fostering digital inclusion. This hub, along with others planned across the province, will be more than just centers of innovation—they will be the heart of skill development and economic empowerment for our communities.

The undeniable correlation between educational outcomes and the integration of advanced technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), is becoming increasingly evident. In our rural communities, this connection is further emphasized through the rollout of broadband and its impact on digital skills. Access to high-speed internet is the gateway to enabling these communities to participate fully in the digital economy. However,

without the necessary digital competencies, the transformative potential of this connectivity remains untapped.

By equipping our councillors, local agricultural agents, community leaders, and educators with the digital skills they need, we empower them to leverage AI and 4IR technologies. This ensures that the benefits of connectivity and technological advancements are realized for the betterment of all residents, enhancing educational outcomes, and preparing our youth and communities to thrive in an interconnected global economy.

Program Director, in rural areas, where traditional avenues for economic growth are limited, the combination of broadband access and digital skills training can be truly transformative. It opens up new possibilities for education, healthcare, and entrepreneurship, providing residents with the tools they need to improve their livelihoods. Farmers, for example, can access real-time market data, students can engage in online learning, and small businesses can reach customers far beyond their immediate geographic area.

The partnership between the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies (DCDT), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), and the British High Commission, under the UK Prosperity Fund ODA resources, is a powerful testament to the collaborative efforts required to propel our municipalities into the digital age. This program is not just about technological advancement—it is about empowering our councilors and local agents in municipalities

with the digital skills necessary to enhance service delivery and stimulate economic growth.

In a world that is rapidly evolving, it is imperative that our municipalities are equipped with the competencies needed to meet the challenges and opportunities of the digital era. This initiative represents a significant step forward in ensuring that our local governments are prepared to leverage technology for the benefit of our communities. Limpopo is honored to lead the way in this transformative journey.

Honorable Minister, Limpopo Province strongly advocates for strategic partnerships and collaboration among state-owned companies to harness their unique strengths. By utilizing the existing infrastructure of Sentech, Broadband Infracore, Telkom/Openserve, and Limpopo Connexion, we can ensure that our province remains at the forefront of connectivity. We humbly request that the Department encourage state-owned companies to cooperate in supporting the State Information Technology Agency (SITA) in delivering high-quality services to government entities, underprivileged rural areas, schools, clinics, hospitals, households, and businesses.

By utilizing the current government broadband infrastructure owned by Sentech, Broadband Infracore, Telkom/Openserve, and Limpopo Connexion, Limpopo Province will be more than 80% connected.

It is with great pride that we, as the Limpopo government, extend our full support to the launch of the Broadband and Digital Skills for

Municipalities Program. As the first province to host this pivotal initiative, we are setting a benchmark for the rest of the country in bridging the digital divide, a key mandate of our government.

Program Director, Our Premier Dr Phophi Ramathuba, in her opening address of the Limpopo Provincial Legislature, highlighted the critical need to address these disparities and stated that " Our success as a province will be measured by how well we are able to bridge the gap between the urban and rural, the connected and the unconnected. We must ensure that no one is left behind as we journey towards a digitally empowered Limpopo."

In conclusion, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the Minister of Communications and Digital Technologies for choosing Limpopo as the province to launch this important program. Your confidence in our province is a testament to the progress we have made and the potential we hold to lead the way in digital transformation. We are honored by this opportunity and committed to making the most of it for the benefit of our communities.

Let us work together to make this program a resounding success, setting the stage for a digitally empowered future for our province and our nation.

Thank you, Re a leboga, Ro livhuwa, Ha khensa, Baie dankie.