

## R17m skills programme to empower youth

A newly launched R17m skills programme is expected to enhance the employability of people, especially the youth, from poor backgrounds and those that are referred to as the missing middle.



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Labour Minister Mildred Oliphant on Friday, 24 February, launched the skills programme for the Compensation Fund (CF) in partnership with the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA).

The skills programme is aimed at injecting financial, accounting and actuarial skills into the Compensation Fund which is undergoing a major overhaul and realignment to meet its social security obligation in the South African labour market. The duration of the programme will range from three to six years.

Speaking at the launch held in Pretoria, Minister Oliphant said as government they are optimistic that the programme will contribute to addressing what is often referred to as scarce skills and enhance the employability of people especially the youth from poor backgrounds.

“The initiative that we are launching is yet another of many efforts that this government is pursuing to address unemployment, and by extension playing a catalytic role towards an all-inclusive economic participation of our people in general, and our youth in particular.

“We are deeply concerned that unemployment still remains very high among our young people. Stats SA also points out that youth (aged between 15-34) remain vulnerable in the labour market with unemployment rate of 37.1% which is 10.6 percentage points above the national average,” the minister said.

Minister Oliphant explained that the criterion for admission on the programme has been crafted in a manner that is not going to keep out deserving candidates.

The partnership with SAICA seeks to achieve three things namely to:

- Develop specialised skills for the needs of the Compensation Fund in order to enhance the capabilities to deliver on its mandate;
- Train more than what is needed and through the Public Employment Services; facilitate the placement of the learners in job opportunities within government and other institutions; and
- Enhance the employability of participants on the programme and as such contribute meaningfully in addressing the unemployment challenge.

The recent statistics show that the share of employed persons with tertiary qualifications was highest among the White and Indian and/or Asian population groups at 30.3%, while the share of employed persons with a tertiary qualification among the black African and the Coloured population groups, was 17% and 13%, respectively.

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The results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (QLFS) for the fourth quarter of 2016 released by Statistics South Africa last week, also indicate that employment grew by 235,000 resulting in slight decline in the unemployment rate to 26.5%.

It also states that the growth in employment was mainly driven by the services industry which grew by 73,000, followed by transport and manufacturing which grew by 46,000 and 44,000, respectively.

The programme will enrol 100 learners for 2017/18 as follows:

- Medical doctors: (20)
- Medical orthotics and prosthesis: (20)
- Nurses: (20)
- Occupational Therapists: (35)
- Actuaries: (5)

SAICA is the foremost accountancy body in South Africa and one of the leading institutes in the world. It plays an influential role in a highly dynamic business sector.

The mission of SAICA is to serve the interests of the chartered accountancy profession and society, by upholding professional standards.