

MEDIA STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**MEC ZONDI COMMENDS MSUNDUZI MUNICIPALITY FOR ADVANCING LOCAL ECONOMIC GROWTH THROUGH THE MUNICIPAL EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE**

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Rev. Musa Zondi, today commended the Msunduzi Local Municipality for its continued partnership and commitment to advancing local economic development through the Municipal Employment Initiative (MEI).

Speaking at the handover ceremony for Phase Two of the initiative held at the Pietermaritzburg City Hall on 04 November 2025, MEC Zondi said the programme represents a tangible demonstration of what can be achieved when provincial and local government collaborate with a shared focus on empowering people, particularly youth and women entrepreneurs.

“Today’s equipment handover marks another milestone in our collective effort to support local enterprises and stimulate job creation through the MEI. It shows that when local municipalities take ownership of development, they can become active drivers of economic transformation,” said MEC Zondi.

The MEI, one of the flagship programmes of the Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs (EDTEA), is designed to empower small businesses, create employment opportunities and stimulate local economic activity.

The Msunduzi MEI partnership, jointly funded by EDTEA (R3 million) and the Municipality (R1.5 million), has been implemented over two phases:

- Phase One supported 43 enterprises and created 137 jobs.
- Phase Two, now being concluded, has supported 27 additional enterprises, creating 60 jobs to date.

This brings the total impact of the initiative in Msunduzi to over 200 sustainable jobs created.

MEC Zondi emphasised that the MEI is part of the province’s broader agenda of inclusive economic growth, supporting township and rural economies and promoting entrepreneurship as a pathway out of poverty and unemployment.

“These are not just numbers, they represent households restored, young people empowered, and small businesses given a real chance to grow,” he added.

The MEC further expressed gratitude to the leadership of uMsunduzi Municipality, led by His Worship the Mayor, Cllr Mzi Thebolla, for continuing to champion the MEI and ensuring its successful implementation, despite challenges.

Mayor Thebolla welcomed the second phase of MEC saying the Phase 1 initiative delivered several notable socio-economic benefits within Msunduzi, contributing significantly to local development, job creation and community upliftment.

“We witnessed participants who used their earnings to start small businesses, invest in education, and support their families. The money circulating through our communities also generated positive local economic spin-offs - benefiting spaza shops, transport operators, and informal traders within the CBD and surrounding townships,” he added.

He said the new phase continued to provide hope and opportunity for local communities aligning with the municipality’s commitment to inclusive and sustainable development.

“Through collaboration with EDTEA and other partners, we aim to expand these benefits even further – empowering our communities, restoring dignity, and ensuring that every participant gains both income and valuable experience,” said Mayor Thebolla.

Addressing the beneficiaries, MEC Zondi encouraged them to view the tools and equipment received as investments in their future:

“Use them wisely. Let them open doors to new opportunities. Government’s role is to empower, but it is your drive and discipline that will sustain what we begin here today.”

The MEC concluded by thanking EDTEA officials, municipal leadership, and implementing partners for their accountability and efficiency throughout the project, noting that initiatives like the MEI reflect the vision of the KZN Premier Thamsanqa Ntuli - a vision of a prosperous and self-reliant KwaZulu-Natal where economic opportunities reach every community.

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For further information, please contact:

Sinenhlanhla Mthembu

Media Liaison Officer and Spokesperson

071 871 6886

ISSUED BY THE KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, TOURISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS and MSUNDUZI LOCAL MUNICIPALITY