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MEDIA STATEMENT

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Joburg backs emerging entrepreneurs through JIX Launchpad Pitchathon

The City of Johannesburg's Department of Economic Development (DED), in partnership with Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct, is strengthening support for emerging entrepreneurs through the Jozi Innovation Exchange (JIX) Launchpad programme, which culminated in the Fak'ugesi Pitchathon.

The Pitchathon provided 15 entrepreneurs participating in the programme with a platform to present their businesses to industry stakeholders, potential investors and members of the innovation community, creating opportunities for networking, market access, investment and sustainable business growth.

Speaking at the event, DED's Khomotjo Mathole congratulated the participants and encouraged them to use the programme as a springboard for business growth, innovation and job creation.

"Your selection into this programme is a testament to your potential, creativity, determination and commitment to contributing towards a more innovative and inclusive economy," said Mathole.

She emphasised the City's commitment to creating an enabling environment for emerging businesses, particularly those operating in the gig economy, through improved infrastructure and business support.

"As the City, we are here to ensure that in future we are able to provide that infrastructure for you and your businesses to thrive. We believe in innovation, and it is one of our top priorities as a smart city," she said.

Mathole added that the City hoped to see participating entrepreneurs expand their businesses, enter international markets and create employment opportunities.

Tshimologong Digital Innovation Precinct Chief Executive Officer Mark Harris said innovation must extend beyond developing new ideas and technologies to create tangible economic opportunities, including access to markets and employment.

“The partnership between the City and Tshimologong is intended to bridge the gap between innovation and market application, enabling entrepreneurs to develop their capabilities while exploring opportunities to provide products and services to potential clients,” he said.

The JIX platform is structured around three interconnected streams: the Gig Economy Entrepreneur Programme, Creative and Cultural Industries, and Pan-African SADC Networks. Together, these streams aim to strengthen entrepreneurial capacity, encourage collaboration across the creative and digital economy, and facilitate knowledge exchange with youth networks across the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

The Gig Economy Entrepreneur Programme targets 50 participants across two cohorts of 25, with each cohort undertaking a 12-week training and mentorship programme. Participants are also expected to benefit from connections with enterprise development and support institutions, including the Gauteng Enterprise Propeller (GEP), Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic).

One of the three winners, Gift Temwani of Crossroads Educational Service, highlighted the challenges facing South Africa’s basic education system and the need for innovative, systemic solutions to improve educational outcomes.

“The challenges we are addressing and the systematic processes we are adopting to respond to issues within basic education. The indicators we are seeing point to challenges that require urgent attention, including concerns around learner outcomes and teacher attrition. These are issues we must address to strengthen the education system and improve opportunities for learners,” said Temwani.

The programme responds to challenges faced by independent earners and gig workers who generate income through contracts, digital platforms and service delivery but may lack access to the infrastructure, professional networks and business support needed to scale their operations.

ENDS

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