



SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
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**ENTERPRISE EXPO AND CERTIFICATE HANDOVER
CEREMONY**

IN COLLABORATION WITH ICEBOLETHU

27 MARCH 2026

**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE
CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE OCCASION OF THE CERTIFICATE
HANDOVER AND ENTERPRISE EXPO IN PARTNERSHIP WITH ICEBOLETHU**

27 March 2026

Programme Director,
Group CEO of the Icebolethu Group,

Colleagues of the NYDA,
Partners and stakeholders,
Young people present here today,

Good morning.

Today's engagement in Hammarsdale is a direct outcome of collaboration between the NYDA and Icebolethu Group. The Ekasi Business Fair created a platform where young entrepreneurs were not only able to showcase their businesses, but were also identified for further development. Within a short period, this partnership translated into concrete support through business management training and integration into the NYDA system.

This progression from identification to intervention demonstrates the value of partnerships that are rooted in implementation. It reflects a shared approach where institutions work within real community spaces, respond to existing economic activity, and align their resources to support young people in a structured way.

The next phase is where the work must translate into economic outcomes. Recent insights from the NYDA Economic Bulletin continue to show that youth unemployment remains critically high, particularly among young people aged 15 to 34. At the same time, a significant number of young people are active in informal and township economies, often without structured support, access to finance, or reliable



markets. What this tells us is that the issue is not only a lack of participation - it is a lack of integration into stable economic systems.

As a practical example this morning, I would like us to use the funeral services sector as a case study of what we mean by a stable economic system. It has consistent demand and a wide value chain that includes project management, events planning, catering, transport, décor, water and gas supply, printing, and manufacturing. Many of the young people we engaged are already operating within these areas.

The opportunity now is to organise that participation and link it to structured, predictable work. This is where the partnership with Icebolethu becomes important and intentional.

Icebolethu operates within a value chain that requires services on an ongoing basis. That creates a practical entry point for young businesses if there is a deliberate approach to integrating them into procurement and operations.

The focus should now be on building a system where young entrepreneurs are identified, supported, and consistently utilised - not occasionally, but as part of standard operations.

There is also a clear opportunity to strengthen local manufacturing within this value chain. There are young people, including students and graduates from TVET colleges, who have technical skills in woodwork and furniture design. These skills can be directed into coffin production, but also into a broader range of products required within funeral services, including seating, fittings, and infrastructure.

This creates a pathway for small-scale manufacturing enterprises to develop, supply, and grow within a defined market. If these skills are supported with access to funding, equipment, and market linkages, they can move from training into sustainable businesses.

The same applies to the entrepreneurs receiving certificates today. The priority now is to organise them into a recognised supplier base, improve consistency and quality, and ensure they are positioned to respond to real demand. This includes catering, décor, logistics, and other services that are already part of this ecosystem.



From the Agency's side, support will continue through business development services, mentorship, market linkages and access to funding where possible. However, the demand for support continues to exceed available resources. This is why partnerships are necessary. There is a practical opportunity to explore co-funding models.

The NYDA can provide the framework for funding, governance, and enterprise development support. Icebolethu can contribute through its corporate social investment initiatives and by creating access to market opportunities within its operations.

This allows both organisations to expand their impact and reach more young people in a structured way. The objective is to increase the number of sustainable youth-owned businesses and to ensure that these businesses are linked to functioning markets where they can grow.

To the entrepreneurs here today, the training you have received is a starting point. The next phase requires application, consistency, and a focus on quality. The opportunity now is to move from operating individually to being part of a structured network that can access larger and more consistent work.

To the leadership of Icebolethu, there is clear alignment between your operational footprint and the NYDA's mandate. There is an opportunity to formalise this collaboration in a way that strengthens your supply chain while expanding economic participation for young people.

Congratulations once more to all the entrepreneurs who have completed this training. The foundation has been established. The next step is to connect people, skills, and opportunity in a structured and sustained way.

Thank you.