



**SPEAKING NOTES FOR EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON
DR SUNSHINE MYENDE**

**CAREER GUIDANCE AND OPPORTUNITIES EXPO
SENEKAL, FREE STATE**

15 MAY 2026

**SPEAKING NOTES BY THE EXECUTIVE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NYDA ON THE
OCCASION OF THE CAREER GUIDANCE AND OPPORTUNITIES EXPO IN
SENEKAL – *Purpose of the day | ±10 minutes***

15 May 2026

*Programme director,
Executive mayor,
Representatives from the office of the premier,
Leaders from government and the private sector,
Educators,
Exhibitors,
Most importantly, the young people of Senekal and the Thabo Mofutsanyana District,*

Dumelang!

This morning, we gather here to have a conversation that many young people have been waiting to have for a very long time. It is a conversation about the future of young people in the country, in particular today, in Senekal. And for many young people, that conversation is not always easy. Because behind the excitement of being young, there is also the anxiety of uncertainty.

There are young people sitting here today who are carrying questions that keep them awake at night. Questions about what happens after matric, whether there will be money to study further, whether opportunities even exist for young people in small towns and rural communities and whether it is still possible to dream in an economy where unemployment continues to affect millions of young people across our country.

We are here to say, we know that reality. We understand that for many young people, especially in communities such as Senekal and across the Thabo Mofutsanyana District, opportunity can sometimes feel very far away. Sometimes it can feel like success only belongs to people in big cities, your Cape Towns, Bloemfonteins, Johannesburgs. Like the future only opens itself to certain people, in certain places, with certain connections.

We are here to bridge that gap today. The Career Guidance and Opportunities Expo exists because opportunity must travel to young people, not only young people to opportunity. This programme is about bringing information, institutions, support and pathways directly into communities. It is about making sure that young people are



exposed to possibilities that can shape the rest of their lives. Because no young person can pursue an opportunity they have never been exposed to.

And that exposure matters. Sometimes all a young person needs is information. Sometimes they need guidance. Sometimes they need somebody to say: there is another pathway available to you. Sometimes they simply need to see what is possible.

As the NYDA, we understand that one of the greatest barriers facing young people is not only the shortage of opportunities, but also the shortage of access to information about those opportunities.

We have brought this Expo to help young people make informed decisions about their future. It is about opening doors. It is about connecting learners, unemployed youth, graduates, TVET students and young entrepreneurs to institutions and opportunities that can help shape their journey.

But as we speak about opportunities, we must also speak honestly about responsibility. Young people, finishing school still matters. Education still matters. And I want to say this carefully and honestly to you today: education does not guarantee success overnight. Yes, many graduates are struggling. Many qualified young people are still looking for work. And while we acknowledge that as a reality, what we also know is that dropping out closes doors even faster.

Education is not only about obtaining a certificate. It is about building your confidence, your discipline, your thinking and your credibility. It is about preparing yourself to participate meaningfully in society and in the economy. If you want to sit at the table where decisions are made, you must prepare yourself to belong there. The first step being education. The second step is self-development, discipline and consistency. Because the future belongs to young people who are prepared - prepared to learn, prepared to adapt and prepared to grow.

But I also want to speak directly to the young people sitting here today who may feel pressured by the belief that university is the only pathway to success. It is not. And it is important that we say this openly. Success does not only wear a suit and sit in an office.

Some of the biggest opportunities in this province and in this district are connected to agriculture, tourism, logistics, construction, technical skills and entrepreneurship. We are sitting in a province with rich agricultural potential. Opportunities exist in farming, agro-processing, food production and agricultural technology. Opportunities exist in tourism, hospitality and local business development. Opportunities exist in technical trades such as plumbing, welding, electrical work, carpentry and construction.



There is dignity in building something with your own hands. There is dignity in becoming an artisan. There is dignity in learning a trade and creating employment not only for yourself, but eventually for others as well.

At the NYDA, we want young people to understand that we are ready to support those journeys too. A young person who completes plumbing training and wants to open a plumbing business matters. A young person who studies carpentry and wants to build a furniture business matters. A young person with a catering business idea, a farming idea, a welding business, a beauty business or a digital business matters.

No dream is too small for the NYDA. These are the foundations of local economies. And through business development support, entrepreneurship support and youth development programmes, the NYDA remains committed to supporting young people who are willing to build, work and create opportunities for themselves and for others.

Young people, this year also marks 50 years since the youth of 1976 changed the course of our country's history. Many of those young people were not much older than some of you sitting here today. They were students. They were teenagers. They were young people who understood that their voices mattered and that their generation had a responsibility to shape the future of South Africa.

Their struggle was different from yours. But your generation also faces a struggle. It is a struggle against unemployment. Against hopelessness. Against poverty. Against violence. Against exclusion. Against believing that your future is already decided for you. And that is why you should be ambitious as young people of Senekal.

The future does not begin when you are twenty seven years old. It begins with the decisions you make now. It begins with the discipline you build now. It begins with the dreams you protect now. It begins with your willingness to continue learning, growing and believing in your own potential even when circumstances are difficult.

You are not too young to become change agents in your communities. You are not too young to lead. You are not too young to shape the future of this country. But to change the narrative, you must prepare yourselves to sit at the table with credibility, with knowledge and with purpose.

As former President Thabo Mbeki once said, "The future is not something we enter. The future is something we create."

And that future starts with you.

I thank you.