



DEPARTMENTAL BUDGET VOTE

2026

HON. M.J LETSOHA-MATHAE
OFFICE OF THE PREMIER(VOTE 1)

**THURSDAY,
30 APRIL 2026**

**Kopanong Indoor
Sports Centre,
Welkom**

#FSBudgetVote26



the premier

Office of the Premier
FREE STATE PROVINCE



**A FREE STATE
THAT WORKS FOR ALL**

Honourable Speaker of the Free State Legislature
Honourable Deputy Speaker of the Free State Legislature
Honourable Members of the Legislature and the Executive Council
Executive Mayors, Mayors and Speakers of Municipalities
Boetapele ba Ntlo ya Marena le Ma-Khoisan
The Director-General and Heads of Department
Chairpersons of our Public Entities and Chief Executive Officers
Leaders of the African National Congress and the Alliance
Leaders of Faith-Based and Civil Society Organisations
Leaders of the Business Community
Comrades, Compatriots and Friends
Members of the Media
Ladies and Gentlemen

Honourable Speaker

We gather here today in **Matjhabeng**, a municipality that symbolises both the historical depth and the immense development future potential of our beloved **Free State**. This is a place where the earth still holds treasures, from gold and natural gas to the even more valuable resources.

As part of our interventions, I announced in the **State of the Province Address** that **eight** municipalities have been placed under **Section 139** of the **Constitution**. These interventions are designed to restore stability, enforce sound financial management, and improve governance.

Our responsibility as the provincial government is to increase municipal revenue, improve audit outcomes, and accelerate service delivery.

As a result, on **25 March 2026**, we convened an engagement with the **Mayoral Committee of Matjhabeng** led by the **Executive Mayor, Councillor Thanduxolo Khalipa**. We were joined by the **MECs for Cooperative Governance, Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements; and Finance, Economic Development and Tourism**.

This was not a ceremonial engagement, but a frank, diagnostic discussion focused on this municipality's **Financial Recovery Plan** to which all parties have committed. Let me be unequivocal, adherence to the **Financial Recovery Plan** is non-negotiable. Progress depends on continuous engagement and consultation. We cannot and will not regress.

We want to reiterate that this intervention is not intended to stifle this municipality. Rather, it seeks to strengthen municipal capacity. The **Executive Council** representatives in **Matjhabeng** are meant to provide guidance and expertise to build a responsive and functional municipality.

And as I table the **Office of the Premier's Budget Vote** today, I do so as the country concludes **Freedom Month**. We had the distinct honour of hosting the **National Freedom Day** celebrations right here in the **Free State** in **Bloemfontein**.

This year's **Freedom Month** theme, "**Freedom and the Rule of Law: Thirty Years of Democratic Citizenship**," reflected on our **three** decades of democracy. Our **Constitution** is a solemn promise that

human dignity shall be protected, and all shall remain equal before the law.

This reflection is crucial and urgent. Just last month, on the **27th of March**, we hosted **His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa** together with members of the **Cabinet** for a joint oversight visit in the **Free State**.

That engagement was a reminder that when we plan together, align budgets, and coordinate implementation, we can transcend the challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality. **President's** visit was a call for action, and it is in that spirit that I present this budget.

Honourable Speaker

This **Budget Vote** is delivered under the theme of the **7th Administration: “The Year of Decisive Action to Fix Local Government and Transform the Economy.”**

As we acknowledged in the **State of the Province Address**, the state of our municipalities is not encouraging. Poor financial management, weak governance, and inadequate basic service delivery have crippled our municipalities. This we will not allow. Never! Our people deserve better.

This is **“The Year of Decisive Action”** to improve service delivery and accountability, root-out corruption, and promote participatory democracy.

The **Freedom Charter** adopted in **June 1955**, still lights our path. The principles of equality, justice, and shared prosperity remain our mandate.

Free State must work for all, and Free State will work for all!

Honourable Speaker

Our pathway to prosperity demands that we work together to achieve more. The **Office of the Premier** will therefore drive the implementation of the following three **Medium-Term Development Plan** priorities:

- **Priority 1.** Driving inclusive growth and job creation.
- **Priority 2.** Reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living.
- **Priority 3.** Building a capable, ethical, and developmental state.

These strategic priorities represent the **Office of the Premier's** vision in **Leading the Free State Province towards Service Excellence.**

Programme 1: Administration

Honourable Speaker

Programme 1 is responsible for efficient, transparent, unified, and accountable government. This function includes upholding effective governance and ensuring sound resource management.

We have concluded the filling of the critical post of **Director-General (DG)** with the appointment of **Dr. Molefinyana Phera**, a capable and hard-working leader who will steer the administration with strategic clarity and purpose.

Our commitment to building a capable, ethical, and developmental state requires that we place skilled and vetted professionals in key leadership positions. Since January 2026, we have strengthened the senior

management cadre of the Office of the Premier through a series of strategic promotions and appointments. Over and above the appointment of the DG, we also appointed the Chief Director: Provincial Human Resource Development, the Chief Director: Communication Services, the Chief Director: Corporate Reform, the Director: Delivery Intervention and the Director: Public and Community Liaison Centre.

In March 2026, we appointed the Director: Organisational Development and the Director: Special Programmes and in April 2026, the Chief Director: Provincial Intervention and the Director: Information Technology were appointed. All these appointments are a deliberate and decisive step to professionalise the public sector, entrench stability, and ensure that leadership is anchored by competence, experience, and integrity.

We have also filled the vacant **Heads of Department (HODs)** positions for the departments of **Social Development; Agriculture; and Health**. Processes are underway to fill the vacant **HODs** positions in the departments of **Economic Development** as well as **Provincial Treasury**.

We are pleased that so far, security vetting of the **Director-General, three HODs** and key personnel such as **CFOs** and **SCM** officials has been concluded. Vetting process for the remaining **HODs** and other officials is currently underway and will be finalised in this financial year.

Through the **Executive Council** and respective **Clusters, Forum of Heads of Department**, and the **Premier's Coordinating Forum**, we continue to ensure coherence and collaboration by strengthening cooperative and intergovernmental relations coordination platforms.

Honourable Speaker

In this financial year, we will move decisively from planning to execution.

We are determined to turn around our audit outcomes. After years of qualified opinions, we have set a clear target to achieve a **Clean Audit**. The **Audit Action Plan** is being implemented, with quarterly reports on corrective actions. And to strengthen financial discipline, we will:

- Reduce irregular, fruitless, and wasteful expenditure.
- Maintain compliance in the appointment of service providers.
- Ensure valid invoices are paid within **30** days.
- Spend a minimum of **30%** of procurement on women-owned businesses as a deliberate tool for economic empowerment.

On **9 April 2026**, I led a team of **MECs** in a meeting with the **Office of the Auditor-General**. That engagement focused on a diagnostic and corrective assessment of our departments and municipalities. Our goal is to ensure that every rand is accounted for and used for service delivery.

We will no longer tolerate contractors who take public funds, abandon projects, and simply relocate to other provinces to repeat the same pattern. Such unscrupulous contractors will be blacklisted.

Our fight against corruption is non-negotiable. We will implement the **Fraud Prevention and Anti-Corruption Strategy** and strengthen the **Provincial Anti-Corruption Working Committee**.

In this quarter, we will conduct lifestyle audits in partnership with the **Special Investigating Unit**. The **Forum of Heads of Department** has agreed that the first phase of the lifestyle audits will begin with the **HODs** and **CFOs**, followed by **DDGs** and heads of **SCM** components. This act of leading by example will help embed a culture of integrity, trust and accountability.

The **Risk and Ethics Management Plan** will be implemented, with designated employees submitting their financial disclosures. All cases of maladministration will be investigated, and accountability upheld.

As a result, for the **2026/27** financial year, **Programme 1: Administration** has been allocated **ninety-six million, eight hundred and eight thousand rands (R96.808 million)** to fulfil these critical responsibilities.

Programme 2: Institutional Development

Honourable Speaker

Programme 2 is the backbone of an effective public service. It ensures our systems, processes, and people are equipped to deliver. Our focus is clear: a government that is agile, responsive, and future-ready.

The **Free State Training and Development Institute (FSTDI)** remains an important instrument of skills development in the province. We are investing in accredited qualifications, mandatory training, and professional growth because a capable state begins with capable people.

Through the **FSTDI**, we will provide **56 training opportunities** to officials across national, provincial, and local government. We will finalise the **Departmental HRD Implementation Plan** and report on progress.

We will continue to build a representative public service, tracking the appointment of women in senior management positions, persons with disabilities, and youth. Currently, women constitute **57%** of senior management, and we will increase the representation of persons with disabilities in the provincial government from **1.2%** to the national target of **2%**.

In **January 2026**, we launched a project to rollout **NQF Level 5 and Level 6** accredited qualifications. Facilitation is underway and will continue throughout **2026**, with project completion scheduled for **early 2027**.

Currently, **135 participants** are enrolled across the province: **one NQF Level 5** group in **Mangaung** and **one** in **Xhariep**, and for **NQF Level 6**, **two** groups in **Mangaung** and **one** group in **Lejweleputswa**.

In partnership with the **National School of Government**, the **FSTDI** is rolling out a comprehensive suite of compulsory courses to enhance the capacity and capability of our public servants. These include:

- **Compulsory Induction Programme (Levels 1–14)**
- **Executive Induction Programme (Levels 15–16)**
- **Khaedu Action Learning Programme (Levels 13–16)**
- **Ethics in the Public Service (Levels 1–16)**

- **Managing Performance in the Public Service (Levels 6–12)**
- **Supply Chain Management (Levels 9–16)**
- **Financial Management Delegations of Authority (Levels 9–16)**
- **Re-orientation in the Public Service (Levels 1–16)**
- **Basic and Advanced Project Management (Levels 6–12)**

We are particularly pleased to announce that before the end of this financial year, **every official employed in the Office of the Premier will be trained on Ethics in the Public Service.** Leading by example starts here.

In line with the **National Development Plan 2030**, the **FSTDI** spearheaded the implementation of an **NQF Level 7 qualification** equivalent to a university degree. In the **2025/26 financial year**, **10 learners** successfully completed this milestone programme. In the **2026/27 financial year**, we will enrol **20 more officials.**

The **FSTDI** has secured funding from the **Public Service Sector Education and Training Authority** for skills programmes. Currently, **26 officials** from various provincial government departments are enrolled in the **General Manager Qualification at NQF Level 6**, and this programme will be completed before the end of the **2026/27** financial year.

The **FSTDI** has obtained accreditation for this **General Manager Qualification** and is now applying for accreditation for the **Occupational Certificate: Public Service Administrator at NQF Level 5**. We will pilot this Programme with **20 additional officials** enrolled in the coming year.

We are assessing the competencies of our workforce. To date, **99 officials** have completed assessments at a cost of **eight hundred and seventy-nine thousand, three hundred and forty-seven rand**.

A new service provider will further assess **166 officials** at an estimated cost of **one million, one hundred and seventy-nine thousand, nine hundred and twenty-eight rand**. This audit will ensure that we know where our strengths lie and where we need to improve.

We remain committed to nurturing young talent in the **Free State**. The total stipend for **17 interns** over a **24-month** period is **one million six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and forty-two rand**.

In addition, **17 beneficiaries** have been awarded bursaries to the value of **one million, one hundred and thousand rand** for skills development.

I am pleased to announce that we have placed several engineering graduates in a number of our municipalities.

Yesterday, on the **29th of April 2026**, we handed appointment letters to **59 Engineering graduates**. In addition, they also received tools of trade such as **laptops and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**. We also handed certificates of completion to 83 plumbing learners and commencement letters to 61 government officials for an **18 months NQF Level 5 & 6 programme**, which is equivalent to **National Higher Certificate and National Diploma in Public Administration**.

Honourable Speaker

Investing in education is investing in the future of the **Free State**. Through the **Provincial Bursary Management Unit**, we continue to open the doors of learning for young people to pursue their education aspirations.

In the **2026/27 financial year**, we will **maintain full-time bursaries for 248 students** who are already on the programme. This represents a commitment of **forty-eight million, and two hundred thousand rand**.

We are not only maintaining but also expanding our bursary programme. We have allocated **full-time bursaries to over 300 additional students** for the coming academic year, at a cost of **sixty-six million rand**.

The **total number of full-time bursary students** supported by the provincial government in **2026/27** will be **548 young people**, with a total investment value of **one hundred and fourteen million, two hundred thousand rand**.

Honourable Speaker

To date, **6 374** unemployed young people have benefited from **Skills Development Initiatives, Artisan and Workplace-Based Learning Programmes**, and the resolution of their historical debt obligations.

Through strategic partnerships with the **SETAs**, the **National Skills Fund**, and other skills development donors, this administration has secured a total of **three hundred and fifty million, six hundred and**

eighty-nine thousand, six hundred and seventeen rand to fund these interventions.

In the first cohort of **2024 to 2026** of the flagship **Engineering Graduate Internship Programme**, **17** engineering graduates were appointed across the five districts of the **Free State**. In the current cohort of **2026 to 2028**, this number has grown to **59** appointed graduates who are being trained for professional registration as engineers. As we do this, we want to ensure that our existing engineers in our infrastructure departments must lead by example by being professionally registered.

Additionally, **50 Work Integrated Learning** students will be recruited and placed across all **five** districts to address the needs of our municipalities.

A total of **fifteen million rand** has been committed to this municipal engineering graduate programme, ensuring that our young engineers do not simply study infrastructure; they build it, right here in the **Free State**.

We will continue to ensure organisational efficiencies, performance management and knowledge management. In **September** this year, we will host the **Premier's Batho Pele Service Excellence Awards** to honour our hard-working public servants who go beyond the call of duty.

Honourable Speaker

On **31 March 2026**, we gathered in **Bloemfontein** to honour our own public servants. On that day, I had the privilege of handing over certificates of long service to **187 public servants** who have given **10, 20, 30, 40 years and more** of their lives to the people of the **Free State**.

These women and men are the enduring centre of our provincial administration. They are the institutional memory, the repository of experience, and the steady hand that has ensured continuity across successive governments, each with its own priorities and ethos.

The presence of **Public Service Commissioner, Professor Brian Nakedi**, who extended the full support of the **Public Service Commission**, rightly noted that the certificates we handed out that day symbolised excellence, resilience, and loyalty to our constitutional values.

That recognition ceremony was not a once-off event. It forms part of our broader effort to instil professionalism across the **Free State** public service. This **7th Administration** commits to investing in the well-being, growth, and professional development of all public servants.

Honourable Speaker

Security and Integrity Management remains key in our efforts of building a capable, ethical and developmental state. Investing in the physical security needs of **O.R Tambo House** is a strategic commitment to protecting government assets, personnel, sensitive information, and the members of the public who visit this building as clients.

The vacant position of **Director: Security and Integrity Management** has been advertised. Filling this position is essential to address existing capacity gaps to ensure effective oversight and strengthen compliance with national security directives and internal control measures.

Our **Communication Unit** continues to execute its mandate with dedication, delivering high-quality work across a range of critical functions.

We are upholding government brand identity through both internal and external communication, professionally designed corporate publications, clear and consistent messaging across the provincial government.

We will implement a media monitoring tool, which will enable real-time tracking of news and social media coverage across the province.

The **creation of a provincial government digital content hub** will serve as a one-stop repository for all government communication materials, including press releases, videos, infographics, and campaign assets.

The Office of the Premier will lead the revival of a provincial digital publication. It will feature government programmes, service delivery updates, and citizen stories.

We will also lead the facilitation of a **transversal audio-visual panel** to enable departments to access professional videography services.

These initiatives will shift our communication approach from reactive to proactive. This transformation will enhance public trust, improve service delivery awareness, and strengthen the accountability of our government.

No government can deliver effectively without a secure and smart digital strength. That is why we are placing **information and communication technology (ICT)** at the centre of our administrative renewal.

We will **strengthen ICT governance, coordination and standardisation**. This means clear rules and uniform systems to manage technology from the smallest rural office to the largest department in **Bloemfontein**.

We are investing in modern infrastructure, expanding broadband connectivity, and rolling out e-government platforms in the province.

We are **improving collaboration with ICT partners and service providers** to benefit from their technical expertise, innovation, and systems reliability.

Two practical measures we are spearheading include the implementation of the **e-Payslips for all government departments**. At the same time, we will finalise the **Provincial Broadband Strategy**, an important pillar of the **Free State Growth and Development Strategy (FSGDS)**.

We will host an **ICT Summit** during the second quarter of this financial year to share innovations and knowledge. This **Summit** is the continuation of the previous **4IR Summit**, and we will continue to work together with the **Central University of Technology, MICT SETA** and other strategic partners.

For this vital work, **Programme 2: Institutional Development** has been allocated **three hundred and six million, and ninety thousand rands (R306.090 million)** for the **2026/27** financial year.

Programme 3: Policy and Planning

Honourable Speaker

Our growth and development is depended on the implementation of government policy priorities. And in a complex and resource constrained environment, integrated planning is not a luxury, but a necessity. And this work is underpinned by good governance as the hallmark of democracy. In this regard, we need to applaud the adoption of the **FSGDS** and the **Free State Spatial Development Framework**, as a major progress for this administration.

This is the role of **Programme 3** responsible for planning, research, alignment, integration and coordination of the activities of the three spheres of government, to realise our development priorities.

Through our **Intergovernmental Relations and Protocol function**, we made significant strides in strengthening cooperative governance across the three spheres of government. We convened the **Premier's Coordinating Forum** to address cross-cutting priorities, service delivery coordination, economic recovery, and matters of traditional leadership.

We also supported **District IGR Forums** to improve coordination between provincial departments and municipalities. Our technical **IGR**

structures played a critical role in monitoring the implementation of decisions and ensuring that challenges are escalated and resolved.

Other strategic initiatives we continue to support included the **Social Compact programmes, Cabinet meeting, investment conference engagements, and the Men's Indaba engagements.**

We will also coordinate high-level engagements, including hosting the **Interprovincial Forum Meeting** chaired by the **Free State**. We will also prioritise structured engagements that include **MECLOGA** and the **House of Traditional Leaders and Khoisan Leaders.**

We will continue to provide professional and efficient protocol services for Executive **Council** programmes led by the **Premier** and **MECs.**

Honourable Speaker

Our future is tied to the world, and the **International Relations unit** has worked tirelessly to strengthen old friendships and forge new ones.

In the past financial year, we hosted the G20 Cultural Diplomacy Roadshow in the **Free State**. This spectacle showcased **South Africa's** rich and diverse heritage, strengthened international cultural cooperation, and promoted the **G20** vision of inclusivity and collaboration.

We also coordinated **outgoing missions** to strategic partners such as **Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Republic of Cuba**. These visits were aimed at expanding trade opportunities, deepening cooperation in sectors of mutual interest, and building economic linkages.

We received high-level diplomatic visits, including from the **Ambassador Extraordinary of the People's Republic of China** and the **Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba**. These engagements highlight our commitment to bilateral collaboration, development, and people-to-people exchanges.

In this financial year, we will strengthen our skills development through the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme** by sending officials for short courses to develop and advance their technical skills, directly supporting our national priority of building a capable state.

Cultural exchange programmes will also be prioritised. Already, we are deepening relations with **Jiangsu Province in the People's Republic of China**, focusing on joint education programmes, shared artistic platforms, youth engagement, and deeper institutional cooperation.

Collaborations with sister provinces to attract trade and investment will continue. Incoming missions will be used to show what the **Free State** has to offer by turning diplomatic relations into development outcomes.

Honourable Speaker

We are a province that cares for youth, women, persons with disability and older persons. Young people, despite their qualifications and skills, remain the highest cohort of unemployed people.

And to advance the interests, the **Office of the Premier** will engage structures of young people in **Africa** under the auspices of **African**

Youth Charter, World Federation of Democratic Youth and other international countries to solicit bilateral relations for opportunities that will benefit youth.

Our youth international relations engagements will be anchored on economic growth opportunities and capacity development imperatives.

Youth will also be assisted with university registrations, applications of bursaries and **NSFAS**. To reduce the dropout rate, we will work with the **Department of Education** to popularise the **Second Chance Programme** and encourage young people to be enrolled in this **Programme**.

We will also launch the right-to-learn campaign in institutions of higher learning with **NSFAS** and **FSTDI**

As we pursue our priorities of driving inclusive growth and job creation, we will receive quarterly reports from **Treasury** and **Department of Economic Development and Tourism** on economic opportunities for vulnerable groups attained through government spending.

The **Office of the Premier** will ensure that government spending benefits the vulnerable groups through preferential procurement policy framework.

On **23 June 2026**, working together with other departments and social partners, we will celebrate **International Widows Day**, which is a special day established by the **United Nations** dedicated to addressing the poverty and injustice faced by millions of widows and their dependents.

This will also be the day we launch the **Free State Widows' Forum**. We will utilise our coordinating capacity to link women with economic opportunities, facilitate their training on areas such as compliance, financial management and development of business plan to mention few.

Our communities are faced with unprecedented challenge of **Gender-Based Violence and Femicide (GBVF)**. Daily, women are victimised to the point of death by men and those intimate with them.

To demonstrate the seriousness of this crisis, **His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa** classified **GBVF** as a national disaster. As a province, we have been talking to men and communities to assist us to fight this pandemic.

We have launched **Provincial Men's Indaba** in **Bloemfontein** in **December 2025** under the theme "**Not in My Name**" which was attended by more than **5 000** men and addressed by **President Cyril Ramaphosa**.

This was followed by districts **Men's Indaba** engagements. So far, we have convened **Men's Indaba** in **Lejweleputswa**, which was attended by **1 200** men, **Thabo Mofutsanyana** attended by **1 500** men and **Fezile Dabi** attended by **1 500** men. We will conclude the **Xhariep** and **Mangaung Men's Indaba** engagements in this financial year.

Let me take this moment to briefly educate members in this **House** about the role of the **Premier** in the fight against **GBVF**. The **Strategic Plan on GBVF** states that the **National Council on GBVF** will be replicated at a provincial level, championed by the **Premier**, and at a district and local

level overseen by the **Mayors**. In simple terms, this means the **Premier** is the custodian of the **Strategic Plan on GBVF** in the province.

The **White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** is a commitment by our government to build a society where people with disabilities are treated with dignity, equality, and respect.

To ensure that the voice of persons with disabilities in the workplace is heard, in **2025** we convened a **Provincial Summit for Employees with Disabilities** to discuss the working conditions and support for persons with disabilities in the workplace. The **Summit** was followed by district dialogues, and this financial year we will conclude all district dialogues. All these engagements will culminate in the finalisation of the **Provincial Disability Framework** in this financial year.

The protection of the rights of older persons is essential in building a fair and compassionate society. The **Older Persons Amendment Act 1 of 2025** amends the **2006 Older Persons Act** to address challenges such as abuse, ageism, fragmented services, and coordinated care.

Adoption of the **Amendment Act** will be a significant step in safeguarding the rights and dignity of older persons. We will work with communities to create environments where they feel secure and respected.

Support for military veterans is a vital responsibility that reflects our nation's gratitude and respect. These brave men and women dedicated their lives to protecting the country and contributing to peace and security.

We are now implementing the **Provincial Government Implementation Strategy** on military veterans. We are pleased that we have provided **30** houses for military veterans and more will be provided. Military veterans are also being exposed to various economic opportunities available.

Honourable Speaker

We will promote and implement the now approved **FSGDS 2050 and the Provincial Spatial Development Framework** through purposeful institutionalisation, implementation support, and disciplined oversight.

From these strategic policy documents, we will develop the **Free State Catalytic Projects Book** showcasing potential and bankable investment opportunities to foster inclusive economic growth and development.

We will continue to provide strategic coordination, alignment support, and implementation oversight in relation to catalytic initiatives. This includes working across departments, spheres of government, public entities, development finance institutions and strategic partners to improve coherence, unblock constraints, strengthen projects preparation.

Provincial priorities will be infused into **Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, IDPs, One Plans** and intergovernmental processes.

We will continue to play a critical coordination and support role in relation to provincial catalytic projects with various strategic partners. Projects that include the **Lake Gariep Development, Renewable Energy Initiatives** and **Vaal River Development** will continue to be prioritised.

Implementation of the **District Development Model** will continue to support a more integrated planning and implementation environment that connects provincial priorities with district realities and local opportunities.

Programme 3: Policy and Planning has been allocated **seventy-two million, eight hundred and four thousand rands (R72.804 million)** for the **2026/27** financial year.

Programme 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

Honourable Speaker

Our **Monitoring and Evaluation** function is the compass that keeps government on course. Without measurement, we cannot achieve. Without evidence, we cannot improve.

Implementation of the **Provincial Institutional Capability Monitoring Tool** will allow us to measure the capability of every provincial department across four critical dimensions: **Strategic Planning, Implementation and Monitoring; Anti-Corruption and Pro-Ethics; Human Resource Management; and Financial Management.**

We completed a **three-year trend analysis** covering the period from **2021/22** to **2023/24**, based on **68 indicators** across all departments. Bilateral were also held where the results were presented to departments to discuss the root causes and identify persistent systemic challenges. We will update this trend analysis with a **fourth year of data** (2024/25).

We are strengthening accountability for every promise made in this **House** through the compilation of the **SOPA** and **Budgets Injunctions Report**. We will coordinate departments to submit quarterly progress reports in an effort to facilitate effective performance monitoring and ensure implementation accountability. To this end, we have ensured that the monitoring and evaluation function is headed by an experienced administrator at DDG level.

We will also do sample-based verification to reflect actual performance.

Infrastructure commitments from previous years that remain unfinished – whether due to multi-year timelines or other challenges – will be tracked in a separate **Incomplete and Continuous Projects Monitoring Framework**. These projects will be monitored until completion. In this regard, letters have been written to all municipalities and departments to report corrective measures in relation to incomplete projects.

We have established a **Provincial Citizen Based Monitoring Forum** for mutual learning, networking, and knowledge exchange on how citizens actually experience service delivery. The **Forum** provides an overall picture of service delivery from the user's perspective.

In collaboration with the **Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in The Presidency**, we have developed an **Annual Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring Plan** for **2026/27** to guide our visits to frontline facilities. We will produce **bi-annual reports** and

an **annual report** on our findings that will be shared with each sector visited.

Honourable Speaker

Our **Provincial Intervention** unit will continue to be the direct link between government and communities, taking government services directly to the people, especially those in rural and underserved areas.

Through the **Integrated Services Outreach Programme**, we will bring a single, people-centred point of access for essential services from grant applications, health screenings, skills registration to business support.

Using this integrated outreach programme, a total of **forty-two thousand, six hundred and seventy-three** citizens were assisted during the **2025/2026** financial year, significantly improving access to services.

We are proud that this service delivery approach has received national recognition. On **19 February 2026**, during his reply to the debate on the **State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa** commended the **Free State** for pioneering this integrated services approach.

Building on this momentum, we have scheduled a comprehensive rollout of integrated services across the province for the **2026/27 financial year**.

We are also tracking service delivery concerns from communities through the **Presidential Hotline and Direct Liaison Centre**. This has

contributed to improved responsiveness by departments, as reported issues were systematically referred and monitored to ensure resolution.

Most notably, the **Free State Presidential Hotline** is currently performing at a **99.78%** call resolution rate, reflecting a high level of efficiency and responsiveness in addressing citizen concerns.

The **Executive Council** has decided the **Community Development Workers programme will in the next financial year be transferred to the provincial Department of Cooperative Governance. They will continue** to connect communities with government services to inform government structures about grassroots needs, and act as a direct feedback loop that improves service delivery and citizens' access to services.

I am pleased to announce that in **May 2026**, the **Office of the Premier**, will partner with the **Independent Electoral Commission** on a special voter education awareness workshop. This will strengthen not only service delivery, but also our democracy by ensuring that citizens are informed, empowered, and ready to exercise their constitutional rights.

For this critical oversight and intervention work, **Programme 4: Monitoring and Evaluation** has been allocated **one hundred and eighty-two million, six hundred and eighty-one thousand rands (R182.681 million)** for the **2026/27** financial year.

Conclusion

Honourable Speaker

Let me take this opportunity welcome the appointment of **Lieutenant General Thabang Lesia** as the **Free State Commissioner of SAPS**. With over **three** decades in policing, **Lieutenant General Lesia** is a **Free Stater** who understands the dynamics, and needs of our communities

He brings the kind of leadership, stability, and institutional knowledge required to strengthen crime prevention. We look forward to working with the new **Commissioner** to intensify efforts against crime including **GBVF**.

Let me also congratulate **Dr Moeketsi Mosola** on his strategic appointment as the CEO of the **Maluti-a-Phofung SEZ**. We look forward to his contribution to assist in reigniting inclusive growth in the province.

Honourable Speaker

This budget calls for unity of purpose, determination and action in all things we do. And excellence will therefore be reflected in our actions and not words, as we continue to offer hope for a better future for all.

I am grateful and honoured to work with the team of passionate and committed **MECs** and **Members** of this **House**. I truly appreciate your support. My wholehearted gratitude also goes to the **Director-General**, senior managers, and all staff members of the **Office of the Premier**.

I therefore table the **Office of the Premier's** budget for the **2026/27** financial year as summarised in **Annexure A** for your consideration.

I thank you

Annexure A

Programme	2026/27 R000.
Programme 1: Administration	R96.808
Programme 2: Institutional Development	R306.090
Programme 3: Policy and Planning	R72.804
Programme 4: Monitoring and Evaluation	R182.681
Total	R658 383