

Time to revamp EPWP – premier

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THE Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) that has been used as a relief and training programme for unskilled youths can be redesigned to play a meaningful role in creating a skilled cohort of young people.

These were the words of Premier Supra Mahumapelo when he addressed the recent villages, townships and small dorpies (VTSDs) skills development lekgotla in Potchefstroom last week.

Mahumapelo said that instead of roping in young people for menial jobs like sweeping and cleaning, the EPWP could go a long way in assisting in the skills revolution.

He pointed out that the programme had to be refocused so that it formed part of the provincial strategy to deal with the high percentage of unemployment among the youth in the province.

"There is a need to refocus the existing EPWP from being mainly about the cleaning of the environment to being innovation focused and skills development-driven," Mahumapelo said.

The programme has been a safety net for unemployed people who receive contracts to cut grass, bushes and sweep sidewalks.

However, there has been criticism that some of the people spend most of the time sleeping under the shade of trees.

Mahumapelo said that a number of changes had to be introduced to make sure that the new EPWP outfit played a meaningful role in building



SPARKS OF ENERGY: The EPWP will boost youth skills. PICTURE: VIRTUAL CONSULTING

capacity in young people.

"What is important about the refocused EPWP will be to ponder the extension of the employment contract from 12 to 24 months, to enable beneficiaries sufficient time to be trained before being released for their actual work through applicable recruitment processes."

The premier said that some of the schools closed as part of the education department's rationalisation process must be used as innovation and training centres for EPWP beneficiaries.

Mahumapelo said, through the

North West Development Corporation, EPWP beneficiaries would also be trained in fields such as security services – this with a view to pave a way for them to be absorbed or recruited by institutions such as the South African Police Service, the South African National Defence Force, State Security Agency and other government institutions.

He also underscored the need to have some of the EPWP beneficiaries involved in the agriculture, culture and tourism sectors.

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