

Programme launched to plug design skills gap in furniture sector

The eThekweni Furniture Cluster (EFC) is offering a new Unemployed Youth Skills Development Programme to empower youth and improve core capabilities in South Africa's furniture sector. The opportunity is open to a limited number of unemployed youths in the eThekweni Municipality.



Source: [Unsplash](#)

Paige Sherriff, project manager for the EFC, says the organisation has put together an exciting 12-month, full-time, sector-specific training course that will give the unemployed youngsters (aged between 18 and 34) the design and leadership skills needed to build a rewarding career in the continuously evolving and dynamic furniture industry.

“The new Unemployed Youth Skills Development Programme is focused on innovation and design as these are core [capabilities] lacking in the furniture sector. By bringing learners and leaders together we will be forging new pathways to develop innovative, impactful solutions that will help to address this skills gap and at the same time, create a talent pipeline to ensure the continued growth of the sector,” Paige explains.

Dynamic talent pipeline

The EFC's Skills Development Programme not only offers an opportunity for unemployed youth, but companies that choose to be a part of the programme will have a chance to invest in their long-term strategic growth and transformation by cultivating future leaders, the organisation adds.

“Through the programme, we will be building up and empowering high-potential candidates to work through the design process in collaboration with entities such as Innovate Durban and the African Institute of Interior Design Professions. We will also be developing their leadership potential through the ability to identify and solve operational challenges,” says Sherriff.

She believes that these skills will provide a dynamic talent pipeline for mid to senior leadership teams that are struggling to focus on strategic and proactive growth as they are handling day-to-day operational and production challenges.

“By providing employment opportunities for the candidates at the end of the programme, these companies will not only enjoy fresh ideas but through the introduction of skilled new blood, leadership will have the space for business development, new product development and strategic planning,” Sherriff adds.



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The EFC is therefore inviting companies in the furniture manufacturing sector to become involved in the Unemployed Youth Skills Development Programme. These businesses will have the first option to identify and employ these individuals and their skills, at no cost to their companies. From work experience opportunities to participating in networking breakfasts to helping design the touchpoints for the learners, Sherriff says the level of involvement of companies in the programme is easily customised.

“We want to help manufacturers to unlock growth through design, but we also want to line them up with the right talent pipelines to be able to do this. So, we are looking for high potential unemployed young people who have passion for creativity and design and want to be on the fast track to a leadership position,” says Sherriff. “Ultimately, the intention is that by the end of the programme, they will be highly employable and will be placed at different companies in the sector.”

Unlocking growth

According to Anu Pather, furniture programme manager for the eThekweni Municipality Sector Programmes Unit, unlocking growth in the sector is critical, and the municipality is committed to playing its part in creating sustainable employment opportunities in the province.

“South Africa’s youth unemployment rate sits at a staggering 75% and we are striving to be part of the solution. We are therefore incredibly proud that through the EFC we can offer a number of young people the chance to capitalise on their academic qualifications and their passion for furniture design, while being rewarded with skills that will make them highly employable,” Pather comments.

For more information about the EFC’s Skills Development Programme or to apply for the opportunity, email efc@bmanalysts.com.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>