

# eThekwini Region ‘flying high’ in supporting emerging contractors

*Report by Vusi Shabalala and images by Sibongile Dlangalala*

The eThekwini Regional Office’s EPWP component stands firm in the delivery of its targeted services. This came at the coalface of service delivery drive when the Regional EPWP team coordinated a workshop for emerging contractors. The workshop was convened on Tuesday the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 at Q-Community Hall in Umlazi, Durban. Leading the collaboration and coordination of the workshop was Public Works team in partnership with the Umlazi Ward Councillor, Umlazi Business Forum, eThekwini Business Unit, Department of Labour, Umlazi Contractors and other attendees who had keen interest in the business subject.

The department’s continued interaction with emerging contractors seeks to achieve its objective of a more holistic approach for an integrated skills development of emerging construction contractors and this can ultimately be managed with quantitative and measurable outcomes.



**Above:** Mrs Thokozani Dumakude during her opening and welcoming address while (seated) Ms Nomusa Nxumalo from eThekwini Municipality Business Support Unit and Mr Lindani Ngcobo from Public Works listened attentively

Welcoming the contractors, guests and interested community members was Ms Thokozani Dumakude who is one of the pioneers of the Regional EPWP team but served as Programme Director for the day. The programme was packed with a significant number of guests who were delegated to deliver on their respective presentation

subjects. Due to the intensity of the programme, the workshop immediately began with a presentation by Ms Nomusa Nxumalo, a representative from eThekwini Municipality within the Business Support Unit. Her presentation was detailed as it reflected more on contractors and construction related issues. However, Nomusa was quite explicit on the role played by the municipality's Business Unit in ensuring that the municipality remains at the centre and heart of its 'citizenry and guests'.



Above (left) is Ms Nomusa Nxumalo from eThekwini Municipality of the Business Unit with Mr Lindokuhle Shange from the Regional Office who made presentations in their respective fields

As the programme unfolded, Mr Lindani Ngcobo from the Department's Regional Office within the Supply Chain Management (SCM) also had his fair share to present all matters that related to the application of bids, completion of required tender documents, the submission of valid required documentation and provisioning of professional advice that would seek to assist emerging construction contractors. After a brief and fruitful '*question-and-answer*' session, the next subject was delivered by Mr Bheki Luthuli from the Department of Labour whose delivery was and related to the registration of established company/ies by citizens. According to Mr Luthuli, the reason for the registration of a business is mainly to circumvent cases that will be directly related to Workers Compensation and Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF). The two aspects mentioned are aimed at ensuring that the registered company complies with all required and set health and safety standards.

A presentation on Professional Services was conducted by Mr Lindokuhle Shange from the Department of Public Works, based at eThekwini Region as Quantity Surveyor. Mr Shange's subject was more focussed on 'pricing'. Lindo's presentation, as he is commonly known, emphasised on very intricate aspects such as individual element costs; unit rates; material; wastage; labour constant and calculations. Of the core to Lindo's presentation was the mentioning of preliminary items, especially where one has to prepare a tender for an identified or intended contract for bidding. Such items included insurance, water for works, site supervision, transport, notice boards, watching and lighting, site supervision or management of works, site accommodation as

well as hoarding and cleaning at the end of the project. As an eye opener, it is quite fathomable that where such items are ignored, the project owner may lose scoring marks in winning the bid.

The day's final presentation was done Mr Victor Smith from Master Builders Association who touched on the following items: Provisioning of contractor training to emerging contractors. Training provided by his institution mainly focus on Tender Pricing; Site Supervision; Business Marketing; Continued enhancement of healthy interrelations with Departments of Public Works and Labour within KwaZulu-Natal; The importance in training is for the contractors to literally read and comprehend the contents of a contract for its effective and successful implementation; the necessity to networking within the construction industry.

In his closing remarks during the vote of thanks Mr Manqoba Shabane, the Chairperson of Umlazi Youth in Business was quite eloquent and clear when he emphasised on some of the concerns previously raised by some contractors during the '*question-and-answer*' session'. Of critical points he reiterated was the state of readiness by individual presenters at such contractor workshops, i.e. some delegates or presenters attend the workshop being ill-prepared and at certain stages cannot afford to provide satisfactory answers to questions posed; that future workshops be well coordinated to accommodate at least quite a reasonable number of attendees; Proper coordination by various stakeholders be put in place so as to adhere to time management. Mr Shabane's concerns were nothing but realistic issues that require one to focus on customer care and service standards redress. In overall, he extended full complements on the efforts made by Public Works' Regional Office, eThekwini Municipality, Master Builders and Department of Labour to ensuring that the day's programme got fulfilled with ease.

It can be safely stated that government is the most integral part of construction industry and it is deemed befitting to ensure that building matters are addressed in constant collaboration with all role players of government. The workshops for emerging construction contractors pave ways and means for the Department and Government to determine whether the contractor is competent or not with regard to various unit standards of operation or expertise. If it is found that emerging contractors still lacked abilities to perform their desired duties despite being regarded as incompetent, it also offer the room for new interventions so as to ensure that together we move KwaZulu-Natal Province forward.