



# DEPARTMENTAL **BUDGET VOTES**

**2025**

**VOTE 1**

**HON M.J LETSOHA-MATHAE**  
Office of the Premier (Vote 1)



**TUESDAY, 15 APRIL 2025**



**Fourth Raadsaal,  
Bloemfontein**



**10h00**



**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  
Honourable Members of the Legislature and the Executive Council  
Executive Mayors, Mayors, Speakers and our Councillors  
Boetapele ba Ntlo ya Marena le Ma-Khoisan  
The Acting 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 Organizations  
Leaders of the Business Community  
Comrades, Compatriots and Friends  
Members of the Media  
Ladies and Gentlemen

### **Honourable Speaker**

This is **“The Year of Renewal to Make the Government a More Effective Instrument of the People to Achieve the Vision of the Freedom Charter: The People Shall Govern! The People Shall Share in the Country’s Wealth!”**

As I present the **2025/2026 Office of the Premier Budget Vote**, I am compelled to reflect on the **70-years** legacy of the **Freedom Charter**, which represents the wisdom of our ancestors, the fearlessness of our people, and the courage of generations to move this country forward.



Not only do the **Freedom Charter's** principles of equality, justice and shared prosperity continue to define the essence of our struggle, but most importantly, our never ending aspiration of a better life for all.

And upholding these principles require us to root out corruption, improve government efficiency and promote participatory democracy.

Staying true to the **Freedom Charter** demands that we direct social spending towards the marginalized communities, eliminate wasteful expenditure, and invest in infrastructure to ignite inclusive growth.

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

### **Honourable Speaker**

We gather here today, still mourning the untimely passing of **Benny Kotsoane**, a leader of immense strength and unwavering conviction, who left us just a little over two weeks ago, on the **30<sup>th</sup> of March 2025**.

We also hold dear the memory of **Mookho Evodia Sebothelo**, who passed away on the **26<sup>th</sup> of March 2025**. She was the mother of our steadfast comrade, Kaizer Sebothelo, the first Provincial Secretary of the ANC in the Free State, after the democratic transition in 1994.

Comrade Evodia was a remarkable leader in her own right, having served on the ANC Women's League's Provincial Executive Committee and as a ward councillor in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality.





These individuals were towering figures, committed to service delivery excellence. In their memory and honour, we commit to live up to their enduring legacy and improve the living conditions of our people.

Rising unemployment, deepening poverty, and persistent inequality remains our concerns. Amid diminishing budgets, our path to prosperity, demands that we work together to confront these challenges.

At the beginning of the **7<sup>th</sup> Administration**, we pledged to be decisive, making tough but necessary decisions. This remains our goal.

We need to unlock our province's potential to generate jobs, lift people out of poverty, and bridge the gaps of inequality. Our efforts will be driven by a government that is effective, responsive, innovative and ethical.

It was former President of the United States of America Barack Obama who said, and I quote: **"A budget is more than just a series of numbers on a page, it is an embodiment of our values"**.

Used correctly, a budget does not restrict you, it empowers you. It is a tool to guide spending and achieve financial goals. To quote author and businessman Dave Ramsey: **"A budget is telling your money where to go instead of wondering where it went."**

### **Honourable Speaker**

As the coordinating department, the **Office of the Premier** will ensure the success of the realisation of the ideals of the **Freedom Charter**.



To this end, work has already begun. We will soon launch **EXCO Meets the People** community outreach initiative expected to foster shared, collective, inclusive and transparent service delivery approach.

The approach will allow citizens to directly interact with members of the **Executive Council**, allowing them to voice their concerns, and receive updates on implementation of government projects and programmes.

Through integrated planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, we will oversee the effective implementation of government priorities.

This responsibility places the success of this government's performance on the **Office of the Premier**. The centre must therefore remain steadfast and resolute. The centre must hold for things not to fall apart.

We will therefore lead from the front, and lead by example. Our people have high expectations, and it is our duty to turn their hopes into reality.

From this moment forward, our deeds will carry more weight than our words. **We will build a Free State that works for all!**

Our work will be informed by the following national priorities, as outlined in the **Medium-Term Development Plan**:

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



These strategic priorities symbolise our vision of **Leading the Free State Province towards Service Excellence.**

## Programme 1: Administration

### Honourable Speaker

**Programme 1** is intended to drive efficient, transparent, unified, and accountable government. This role includes upholding effective governance, and ensuring sound resource management.

In our quest to meet the demands and expectations of our people, we are in a process to refine our systems, methods, and execution. The critical posts of the **Director-General**, and **Heads of Department for Social Development, Agriculture and Rural Development, and Economic, Small Business Development and Tourism** have been advertised.

We will ensure that successful candidates will lead boldly, strategically, providing the much-needed results-driven leadership.

For the **Office of the Premier**, the **Director-General** will oversee the daily administration, steering and aligning the provincial government's



inherent operations. This function will ensure cohesive planning, coordination, execution, and oversight of government initiatives.

Through the **Executive Council** and respective **Clusters, Forum of Heads of Department**, and the **Premier's Coordinating Forum**, we will ensure coherence and collaboration by strengthening the provincial cluster system and other intergovernmental coordination platforms.

These structures are crucial for joint planning and decision-making, resolving cross-cutting implementation challenges as well as promoting the whole-of-government responses to complex development priorities.

We will lead this coordinating effort to drive integrated planning and implementation, outlining clear targets, timelines and responsibilities in our **Medium-Term Development Plan** and **Programmes of Actions**.

To enhance effectiveness, the **Premier and Executive Support** components will be strengthened, ensuring that there is a drive to forge partnerships with key stakeholders critical to our administrative success.

### **Honourable Speaker**

As we endeavour to stabilise the economy, we need to do more with less. These are trying times of austerity measures. We cannot afford to waste even a cent. Fruitless and wasteful expenditure will be a thing of the past.

I wish to draw your attention to the findings of the **2023/24 MFMA** by the **Auditor General, Ms. Tsakane Maluleke**, who visited the province, on



the **8<sup>th</sup> of April 2025**. The **Auditor-General** presented an analysis of performance, financial health and governance of our municipalities.

The report revealed that municipalities in the **Free State** continue to experience financial sustainability, governance and service delivery challenges. Among the most pressing concerns is persistent revenue management challenges, which contributes significantly to escalating municipal debt.

These challenges signal deep-rooted deficiencies in internal controls, supply chain management and consequence management. While some improvements have been made, the pace of reform is slow.

Our people needs service delivery now. And more of the same will not change the state of our municipalities. We need to get the basics right.

We need to push harder to professionalise our municipalities, enforce accountability, enhance financial and performance management.

We will intensify implementation of the **District Development Model** to enhance integrated service delivery coordination. We are also strengthening our support to municipalities through capacity-building initiatives, skills development, and improved monitoring mechanisms. We have established a multi-disciplinary team involving **COGTA**, **Treasury** and other stakeholders to assist distressed municipalities.





Importantly, we will establish a unit in the **Office of the Premier** to work closely with **COGTA** to provide coordination, planning, performance, intervention, monitoring and evaluation support to municipalities.

## Honourable Speaker

**Risk and Ethics Management** remain at the heart of our work. Given the importance of this function, we will establish an **Ethics Management Office** to embed an ethical culture throughout the provincial government.

I am pleased to report that we have achieved **100%** and **98%** respectively, for **Senior Management Services** and **Salary Levels 9-10**, in compliance with the **Financial Disclosure Framework**.

We will also ensure compliance with the new determination for the 2025/26 financial year for all public servants to disclose their financial interests. As part of this process, **lifestyle audits** will be conducted.

This is how we cultivate professional ethical conduct in government.

We are determined to attain an unqualified audit opinion as a promise to efficient and accountable governance. People deserve no less than this.

We are working closely with the **Auditor-General** for support and guidance in this regard. We are implementing the **Audit Action Plan**, in order to improve our audit outcomes, and therefore financial governance and administration.



Our shared audit committee continues to provide oversight of internal control, risk management and financial governance of the department.

### **Honourable Speaker**

We oversaw and coordinated the vetting process of **HODs and Supply Chain and Financial Management officials** in government. All **forty-two (42)** officials in this environment have submitted their security clearance forms to the **State Security Agency** and vetting process is still underway.

In this regard, I want to thank SSA for always being available to assist my Office. We recently received a report of three HODs, on their status after being vetted. Feedback was fairly encouraging and positive.

We are prioritising comprehensive security assessment of various risk areas in government. We will invest in advanced technological solutions to improve government security in order to close identified gaps.

Importantly, we will invest in cybersecurity to safeguard our information, technology, systems and networks from cyberattacks. The internet of things has brought with it widespread cybercrimes that include hacking, phishing, spoofing and malware. We will work with our security agencies to protect and enhance our digital infrastructure against attacks.

**Programme 1** has therefore been allocated **one hundred and ten million, nine hundred and fifty-eight thousand rands (R110 958 million)** to fulfil its responsibilities in the **2025/26 financial year**.

## **Programme 2: Institutional Development**



## Honourable Speaker

The work of **Programme 2** is the backbone of effective governance. It ensures that our systems, processes, and people are equipped to deliver services efficiently, transparently and accountably.

As we table this budget, we recognize that strong institutions are not just administrative necessities, they are the foundation of public trust.

Our vision for **institutional development** is clear: a government that is agile, responsive, and future-ready. This requires continuous investment in skills, technology, and systems that enhance service delivery.

We are modernising our work, eliminating inefficiencies, and embedding a culture of excellence. Importantly, institutional strengthening is not just about structures - it is about the people. Training and leadership development are essential to build a capable and ethical public service.

We will assess our structures to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency. Our **Organisational Development** unit will implement a modern and effective structure to serve the needs of the people.

Work to ensure professional, ethical and development-orientated public service is led by our **Human Resource Management and Advice** unit. Emphasis is on building human capabilities as enablers of effectiveness.



We are proud that women constitute **60%** of **45** permanent positions that were recently filled. In the **2025/2026 financial year**, we plan to appoint **9 Senior Managers**, prioritizing youth and persons with disabilities.

We are committed to re-introduce the **Premier's Batho Pele Service Excellence Awards** to pay tribute to all hard-working public servants.

### **Honourable Speaker**

**Skills development** is a foundation of economic growth and social progress. We have made significant strides in enhancing the capabilities of public servants through targeted skills development program championed by **FSTDI**.

During the **2024/2025** financial year, we successfully implemented the **PSETA's Service Delivery and Financial Management Programme**.

Though this initiative with the **FSTDI**, we trained **250** officials on **Service Delivery** and **100** on **Financial Management**. These programmes provide credits towards nationally recognized qualifications.

The **FSTDI** also rolled out **four** accredited qualifications (**NQF Levels 3 to 6**) with **201** participants currently enrolled across our municipalities. These programmes are set for completion in **2026**, further strengthening the skills base of our provincial workforce.

Additionally, we are proud to announce the successful completion of an **NQF Level 7** qualification (equivalent to a degree) by **nine** officials, with a second cohort of **ten** officials set to graduate in the coming year.





Beyond public service training, the province remains dedicated to tackling youth unemployment through strategic partnerships with various **SETAs**.

In the past financial year, we exceeded our target by providing skills development opportunities to **six thousand and eighty-seven (6,087)** unemployed youth, investing **R396 million** in their futures.

In this financial year, we will support **seven thousand and eight hundred (7,800)** young people at an estimated cost of **R1.1 billion**.

Through **Career Development Service Expos**, conducted at the beginning of the 2025 year, we were able to connect learners and job seekers with further education and employment opportunities.

We value the contributions made by the **SETAs**, especially **MerSETA**, **Services SETA**, **LGSETA**, **ETDP SETA** and **Construction SETA**.

Our **ICT** unit has implemented **eLearning Management System** for the **FSTDI** in order to allow it to reach wider audience through the website and mobile application. This is in line with our mandate to enhance digital skills for the future as part of changing the digital landscape of the province.

Through the **SA Connect Phase Two** project, schools and health facilities in **Lejweleputswa District Municipality** will benefit from broadband connectivity. This will include provision of **Wi-Fi** access to communities.



We are also overhauling our **ICT** infrastructure. This process entails reconfiguring the government website to incorporate necessary technological advancement and serve as a primary source of information.

We will develop the **Provincial Broadband Strategy and Digital Transformation Strategy**. These strategies will serve as the cornerstone of integrated technologies in the development of infrastructure projects.

### **Honourable Speaker**

Our **Legal Services** unit will continue to provide service to all provincial government departments. This role will entail ensuring compliance with legislation, provision of legal advice and contract management.

In the last financial year, we spearheaded the development of the **Provincial Government Communication Policy**, and **Standard Operating Procedures for communicators**. These strategic documents will go a long way in professionalising communication efforts in the province.

In the **2025/2026** financial year, the **Office of the Premier** will facilitate a process for the review of the **Provincial Communication Strategy Framework**, to ensure that we provide timely and accurate information.

We will also digitize the **provincial government newsletter**, which remains a platform to publicise government programmes, activities and events.



The newsletter is distributed at public places throughout the province. To widen our reach, **CDWs** will be utilised to deliver the newsletters.

We will embark on a process to fast-track the implementation of the **Public Information Platform** to disseminate government information in a responsible, innovative and unmediated form.

**Media monitoring** is one of the strategic functions with a significant influence on shaping narratives, gauging public perception and employing effective communication techniques in the **Free State**.

Towards the end of **2024**, the **Office of the Premier** forged ahead to constitute a rapid response team convening weekly to assess the media environment whilst planning in a coordinated and integrated manner.

In this financial year, we will introduce a media monitoring tool to amplify government's efforts to avert potential crises, misinformation and public concerns by responding proactively and correcting inaccuracies.

Therefore, a total of **two hundred and seventy million, four hundred and sixty-four thousand rands (R270 464 million)** has been allocated to **Programme 2** in the **2025/2026** financial year to perform its functions.

### Programme 3: Policy and Planning

Honourable Speaker



In a complex and resource-constrained environment, the need for integrated and results-driven planning has never been more critical.

Not only does this appreciate the importance of planning as a prerequisite for development, but also as an integral part of budgeting and reporting.

The **Office of the Premier**, as the strategic centre of government, plays a vital role in shaping and steering the province's developmental direction through coordinated planning, policy alignment and institutional oversight.

We will continue to ensure that government functions as a single and responsive system, rather than fragments of isolated departments.

We are strengthening integrated impact by reinforcing alignment between **Strategic Plans, Annual Performance Plans, MTDP, the Free State Growth and Development Strategy** and **District Development Model**.

Work is underway to develop a **Provincial DDM Implementation Framework** to guide the three spheres of government to drive integrated planning, coordination and implementation of district **One Plans** that reflect local priorities and drive integrated service delivery.

Following extensive consultation and refinement processes, the revised Free **State Growth and Development Strategy** will be presented to the **Executive Council** for consideration and approval in this financial year.





This revised **Strategy** provides a clear, evidence-based development trajectory for the province through to **2050**, shaped by national and provincial priorities, community needs, and spatial development potential.

Equally, the implementation of the newly developed **Provincial Spatial Development Framework** in conjunction with the **COGTA** will ensure that our long-term spatial vision and land use patterns align with economic opportunities, infrastructure investment, and environmental sustainability.

After successful completion of the **District Social Compact Izimbizo**, we will host the provincial **Social Compact** as the ultimate hallmark of commitment between government and the people to work together.

We will soon host a provincial business breakfast roundtable discussion with the business sector in the province, where we will also introduce the members of the **Premier's Economic Advisory Council**.

### **Honourable Speaker**

The **Premier's Co-ordinating Forum** will continue to be a strategic and important medium for forging alignment between the different spheres of government.

Given the importance of the institution of traditional leadership as a constituent part of our democracy, we will continue to monitor and report on the implementation of the commitments made during departmental engagements with **Traditional** and **Khoi-San** leaders in the province.



During the **2024/2025** financial year, we strengthened **International Relations** with several countries and maintained existing relations.

We have made significant strides in several key areas, including hosting the **Free State – India Business Dialogue** to encourage investment and trade between the **Free State** and the **Republic of India**.

Through the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme** and **China-Aid Programme**, government officials will be sent for short courses to develop and advance their technical skills in these countries.

Establishing strong relationships in the **SADC region** and **Africa** in general, also remains a priority for us. Inward missions to showcase provincial developments and outward trade missions will be undertaken to strengthen our relations and attract foreign direct investment.

There is no doubt that attainment of inclusive growth and job creation is predicated on the implementation of the major infrastructure projects.

We will therefore continue to strengthen our relations with particularly **Infrastructure South Africa, DBSA** and **DTIC** to assist in planning, coordinating, funding and implementation of major infrastructure projects.

Engagements are also underway between the **Free State** and **Gauteng** provinces in implementing the **Vaal River City Development** initiative.



Members of **Executive Councils** of the **two** provinces including affected municipalities will soon meet to agree on an implementation plan.

### **Honourable Speaker**

The **Special Programmes** unit continues to play a central role in driving strategic coordination of key initiatives across the province, promoting a government that is responsive to gender, youth, and disability issues.

In the **2025/2026** financial year, the component will host the **Provincial Gender Based Violence and Femicide Summit** to develop an actionable plan addressing **GBVF**, building on previous resolutions.

The **Sanitary Roll-out Programme** will continue to champion women dignity through education and advocacy, tackling stigma and inequity.

A **Dialogue for Employees with Disabilities** will also be convened to advance the finalisation of the **Provincial Disability Framework**.

We will also launch the **Free State Provincial Government Disability Forum** to serve as a platform to raise awareness, educate, integrate and create opportunities for persons with disability.

We will establish the **Youth Advisory Panel** to provide strategic policy advice, ensuring young people have a voice in their development.

We will undertake the **Military Veterans Roadshows** to honour and support veterans and connect them with opportunities.



These initiatives highlight our commitment to equitable development, stakeholder engagement, and the elevation of vulnerable groups, ensuring a more inclusive and prosperous **Free State**.

A total of **seventy-nine million, five hundred and ninety thousand rands (R79 590 million)** has been allocated to **Programme 3** to achieve these important deliverables in the **2025/2026** financial year.

## Programme 4: Monitoring and Evaluation

### Honourable Speaker

If you cannot measure it, you cannot achieve it. This makes monitoring and evaluation vital for driving progress and change.

In the **2024/25** financial year the **Monitoring and Evaluation** unit was instrumental in laying the foundation for institutionalisation of monitoring and reporting of the **MTDP**.

The **2025/26** financial year will be the first year of implementation of the **MTDP**, which replaces the **MTSF**. We will continue with the work of institutionalising the monitoring and reporting of the **MTDP**.





The **MTDP** priorities will form core part of the work of the provincial cluster through the development of the **Programme of Action**. This will ensure oversight and tracking of our province's implementation of this plan.

The **MTDP** will be reviewed mid-term and at the end of the five-year term to assess progress towards the attainment of our development trajectory.

This will be coupled with the function of monitoring of non-financial performance of provincial departments and provision of support to the **Portfolio Committees of the Free State Legislature** responsible for oversight on non-financial performance information.

In the past financial year, the unit has made strides to ensure accountability against planned objectives of provincial departments. Performance reviews will now be undertaken on quarterly basis.

In measuring the effectiveness and impact of our programmes, the **Evaluation Function** is a crucial element that cannot be ignored.

In the new financial year, the **Monitoring and Evaluation** unit will be conducting an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the **Community Development Work Programme**. This is in order to identify areas of weaknesses and strengths. The outcome of the evaluation will be instrumental in refocusing and strengthening this programme.

**Honourable Speaker**



We advanced the **Local Government Management Improvement Model (LGMIM)**, collaborating with **COGTA** and **DPME** to enhance municipal performance in the **Xhariep District**, finalizing **Improvement Plans** for **Kopanong, Mohokare, and Letsemeng** municipalities with targeted interventions to address service delivery gaps.

The **LGMIM** is currently under review by the **Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation** and once this process has been completed, we will continue to monitor the institutional capacity of municipalities.

We have also developed a **Provincial Institutional Capability Monitoring Tool** to monitor the institutional capability of provincial departments across a number of key indicators that include financial management, human resource and anti-corruption measures.

The **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** tracks **SOPA** and **Budget Vote Speeches** injunctions on a quarterly basis to ensure implementation accountability. Incomplete infrastructure projects remain closely monitored, with progress reports submitted to **HODs** for corrective action.

Through **Citizen-Based Monitoring oversight**, we work with service delivery departments to determine citizens' service delivery satisfaction.

An annual **Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring Plan** is being implemented in collaboration with **Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation** focusing on key frontline services.



The results of these monitoring projects are utilized to have discussions with different sectors on improvements needed.

Through the **Provincial Intervention** unit, we will continue to foster public participation by providing citizens with the means to access information and engage with government programmes.

This is in line with our unwavering commitment to promote social and economic development through integrated service delivery programmes.

Through our **Thusong Service Centres**, we will therefore continue to take these essential government services closer to our communities.

We have rolled out services to over **30** towns out of the **85** towns in the province and the response of our people is overwhelming.

The recent roll-out was in the **Eastern Free State** areas of **Makgolokweng, Greater Tshiame** and **Intabazwe**.

We are pleased to announce that as of **31 March 2025**, the **Free State Presidential Hotline** performance was **99.40%**, signalling our exceptional performance in responding to service delivery issues.

This year, we will establish a **Contact Centre** to enable people to report service delivery issues through telephone, email, letters and walk-ins.

The **CDWs** play a pivotal role in connecting communities with government services and informing government structures about community needs.



As part of our work to resuscitate our **CDW** programme we had consultations with **Moqhaka, Metsimaholo, Mafube, and Ngwathe Local Municipalities** including **Fezile Dabi District Municipality** to forge alignment and cooperation for improved and better outcomes.

In the **2025/2026** financial year, we will roll-out **CDWs Information Sharing and Empowerment Seminars** with the aim of empowering all of the **262 CDWs** with information on key government programmes.

We will prioritise infrastructure projects implementation engagements with various departments to resolve issues commonly faced during infrastructure rollouts, ensuring past mistakes are not repeated and where bottlenecks are identified, effective corrective measures are devised.

This approach will help avoid fragmented outcomes and enhance the efficiency of infrastructure implementation for improved service delivery.

For this critical work to be undertaken by **Programme 4**, an amount of **one hundred and seventy-two million, five hundred and fifty-nine thousand rands (R172 559 million)** have been made available.

## Conclusion



## Honourable Speaker

This budget presents a hopeful moment to unite our shared endeavours in recalibrating our environment towards **a Free State that works for all.**

It is indeed a testament to our resolve to uphold the **Freedom Charter's vision.** Now is the **time for renewal**, calling upon all of us, to reaffirm our dedication to a meaningful public service. Let us move forward, united in purpose, to deliver on our promises to the people.

I look forward to the support of this team of dedicated **MECs** and their **HODs**, as well as all **Members of the House.** My wholehearted appreciation also goes to the **Acting 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 **2025/26** financial year as summarised in **Annexure A** for your consideration.

**Ke Ya Leboha,**  
**Baie Dankie,**  
**I Thank You.**

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## Annexure A

The total budget allocation for the **Office of the Premier**.

Programme	2025/26 R000.
Programme 1: Administration	R110 958
Programme 2: Institutional Development	R270 464
Programme 3: Policy and Planning	R79 590
Programme 4: Monitoring and Evaluation	R172 559
<b>Total</b>	<b>R633 571</b>