



Member of Executive Council
for Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation
FREE STATE PROVINCE

**SPEECH OF THE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MS.
NTOMBIZANELE SIFUBA, ON THE TABLING OF THE BUDGET VOTE – 12 OF THE
DEPARTMENT OF SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, 21 APRIL 2026,
SASOLBURG.**

Honourable Speaker

Honourable Members of the Legislature

Honourable Members of the Executive Council

Honourable Premier

Boetapele ba Ntlo ya Marena le Ma-Khoisan

Executive Mayors, Mayors and Councilors present

Representatives of the Free State Sport Confederation, Sport Federations
as well as the Cultural Affairs Statutory Bodies

Sporting and Cultural Community

Head of the Department, Management and Officials of the Department

Baahi ba Foreistata

Bomme le Bontate

Comrades

Introduction:

In recognition of the centrality of sport, arts and culture in societal transformation and development, the honourable President Cyril Ramaphosa notes in the **2026 State of the Nation Address** that, and I quote, “our strength also comes from sporting men and women who continue to lift the South African flag on the world stage and bring glory to our nation”, close quote. Underpinning the core mandate of **social cohesion and nation building** the President further reflects in that same address in relation to the National Dialogue that, I quote,

“This year, the National Dialogue process will spread across South Africa, reaching every community, every school, every university and college and every part of our society. . . . In building this national consensus, we must draw not only on the shared values of our Constitution, but on the unifying power of sport and the rich diversity of our culture. As we celebrate those who have reached the heights of global achievement, we must appreciate how sport and cultural activities build a cohesive society. Harnessing the spirit of the women of 1956, the youth of 1976, and the people of South Africa in 1996, the year 2026 must be a year of transformative change. This must be the year that we make South Africa stronger”, close quote.

Honourable Speaker, this State of the Nation Address injunction by the honourable President Mr Ramaphosa is the centerpiece of our mandate as the Department. As we present this 2026/2027 Budget Vote speech it is our pleasure to demonstrate how we have in the 2025/2026 Financial Year responded to this call of the President. Through the Cultural Affairs programme we have indeed strove to realize a socially

cohesive society by implementing various arts and culture as well as heritage programmes. Through the Sport and Recreation programme, as we will demonstrate later in this speech, we have used the unifying power of sport to promote nation building while ensuring that our athletes reached the heights of national, continental and global achievement.

In line with the **2025 State of the Province commitments**, as well as the **2025/2026 Departmental Budget Vote injunctions** and the **Annual Performance Plan**, guided by the Constitution, the National Development Plan, as well as various pieces of legislation in our environment, we have successfully implemented the programmes that we have undertaken to implement in the last Financial Year. However, due to unforeseen factors some of the programmes could not be implemented and have been rescheduled to the 2026/2027 Financial Year. We want to give an unequivocal undertaking to Free State communities in general, and to our stakeholders in particular, that all those programmes will without doubt again be rolled out from this year moving forward.

As we celebrate the **30th anniversary of our Constitution**, the **50th anniversaries of June 16**, and the **70th anniversary of the Women's Anti-Pass March** we are inspired to continue to roll up our sleeves to transform our heritage landscape, enhance social cohesion and nation building and contribute to the goals of cultural tourism. We are in agreement with the honourable President that these commemorative historical events must usher in a transformative change in our country this year.

As we table this Budget Vote, we would like to take this opportunity to welcome Dr. Masego Tshabalala as the Head of the Department. We look forward to her solid public sector expertise which will be fully utilized in assisting the Department to achieve its mandate.

2026/2027 Budget Allocation:

Honourable Speaker, for the 2026/2027 Financial Year, the department receives a total budget allocation of **Six hundred and eighty-five million, three hundred and forty-eight thousand rands (R685 348 000)**.

Programme 1: Administration and Financial Management

Honourable Speaker, the Administration and Financial Management programme is allocated an amount of **Hundred and twenty-six million, five-hundred and ninety thousand rands (R126 590 000)** for the 2026/2027 Financial Year as against the 2025/2026 allocation of **Hundred and forty-three million forty thousand rands (R143 040 000)**.

In a quest for the realisation of a **capable, ethical and developmental state**, we are proud of the continued positive outcomes that we have delivered. Although we have not reached our final milestone of a clean audit, there are signs that we are on a positive trajectory. Through programme 1, which is Administration and Financial Management, we will continue to ensure that this forward movement is escalated through the following measures:

- **Filling of critical vacancies:** We have made headways in terms of **filling senior management positions** in a quest to ensuring administrative and governance capability in service delivery. The Department will continue to prioritise the filling of vacancies in line with the available budget and in keeping with the Directive on Professionalization of Public Service.
- **Review of the Human Resource Plan** for the period 2026 to 2029 will take place this year. The plan will serve as a guide towards filling of critical and funded posts. This review will be aligned to the 2025/2030 Strategic Plan

review process. The Departmental structure is also in the process of finalization and is currently with the Office of the Premier.

- **Training and development:** The Department continues to priorities the library management skill needs. Towards that end, 18 bursaries were allocated to officials studying in the field of library science to further enhance their skills and knowledge.
- **140 Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)** fieldworkers were appointed through the Arts and Culture EPWP programme with Grant funding of **R2.7 million** plus an additional amount of **R2 million** from equitable share. This Financial Year, the same number of field workers will be appointed for placement in the districts to coordinate arts and culture programmes wherein teaching in music reading and writing, drama production and stage performance training will be provided.

Continuous partnerships with external stakeholders will be maintained to explore other youth development programmes.

Programme 2: Cultural Affairs

Honourable Speaker, the Cultural Affairs programme (Programme 2) receives an allocation of **One hundred and forty-two million, eight hundred and eighty-two thousand rands (R142 882 000)** in the 2026/2027 Financial Year while in 2025/2026 the programme received a budget allocation of **One hundred and twenty-eight million, seven hundred and thirty-eight thousand rands (R128 738 000)**.

We want to take this opportunity to congratulate our local artist, KHADEAIR, for being nominated for the Metro FM Awards in the categories of Song of the Year, Best New Artist and Best Dance. This is yet another demonstration

of the artistic talent this province possesses. It is this talent that we seek to continuously nurture as the Department.

Arts and Culture:

In responding to the call by the honourable President for the usage of arts and culture as a conduit for social cohesion, a number of arts and culture programmes were implemented in the province during the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

One such programme which is the epicenter of our cultural affairs ecosystem is the **Mangaung African Cultural Festival (MACUFE)**. As articulated in the State of the Province Address by the honourable Premier Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae, MACUFE was successfully executed in 2025 as “a celebration of a medley of our cultural heritage and diversity that colours our province”. The following are some of the areas where the impact of the 2025 MACUFE edition was felt after a two-year hiatus:

- 1) A formidable **artistic line-up** of national and local artists entertained the revellers from beginning to end.
- 2) **Opportunities for local Free State artists** surpassed expectations. **80%** of artist in the festival were Free State artists.
- 3) A total number of **24 Community Media houses** were brought on board in a strong media partnership unlike any other period. Community print, online and electronic media passionately advanced the course of the festival.
- 4) Opportunities for SMMEs continued unabated with platforms created for **49 hawkers or vendors** at the festival. With these opportunities, and MACUFE's broader ecosystem, local economic development was yet again a winner.

5) **Temporary job opportunities** were created through the various services rendered, including **902** security personnel, hospitality, stage, sound system, audio visual, ablution facilities and catering services also provided job and economic opportunities for SMMES.

We again will like to thank the MACUFE patrons, and all the stakeholders who have made the 2025 MACUFE edition a success that it was. We look forward to hosting yet another scintillating programme as part of the quest to cultivate a thriving cultural spirit in our province.

Following this successful outcome of the 2025 MACUFE programme, we are thus inspired by the honourable Premier's State of the Province injunction to the effect that MACUFE will again be rolled out in 2026.

This year we will stage the **District Arts and Culture Festivals** which also serve as an extension of MACUFE at district level. The **Free State Homebrew Arts and Culture programme** which also serves as a prelude to, and an extension of MACUFE, will be staged this year. This programme provides opportunities exclusively to Free State local artists.

The **Choral, Clap and Tap music programme** as one of the flagship programmes of the Department was implemented during the 2025/2026 Financial Year. The programme was implemented with funding from the national Department of Sport, Arts and Culture as part of funding for flagship programmes. While in previous years Choral Music programme was implemented separately from Clap and Tap programme, in 2025/2026 the two were rolled out as an integrated programme. The programme was implemented through the Department's statutory body, the Free State Arts and Culture Council (FSACC). Following the launch of the programme on 13 June 2025 it was subsequently rolled out in 23 municipalities and 34 towns

of the Free State over a period of six (6) months resulting in the *finale* on the 6 and 7 February 2026.

It is these kinds of programmes which are demonstrative of the impact of arts and culture in our communities. Through this programme, the following milestones were realized:

- Province-wide footprint was created through **42 activations** that included 36 Local Municipality auditions, 4 district elimination events as well as the provincial launch and *finale*.
- About **100 choirs** with a total number of close to **1 200 artists**, **55%** of whom were females, participated in the programme.
- Skills development benefits were optimized through capacity building workshops that benefited **300 participants**.
- Capacitation of hospitality students at TVET colleges, who were given an opportunity to provide catering services at the various Talent Search activations. Further practical training opportunities were provided to students from these colleges who specialize in media and engineering services.
- **190 job opportunities** were created in various fields that included technical crews, coordinators, logistics, stage and sound as well as transport.
- **Local Economic Impact** was made through accommodation, transport, catering and other services as well as opportunities for small scale informal traders. Increased trading activity was experienced in and around the different activations centered around this programme.
- Lastly, stakeholder relations and partnerships were enhanced with various entities that included South African Local Government Association (SALGA), **four (4)** Private Sector partners, **six (6)** Institutions of Higher Learning (TVET Colleges and Universities).

Honourable Speaker, the Department continued to support **Independent Arts and Culture Structures, Programmes and Festivals** in view of the contribution that they make to the enhancement of social cohesion and advancement of the arts in our province.

In order to continue providing local artists in the Mangaung Metro Municipality with performance opportunities in proper facilities, the **upgrading of Mmabana Arts and Culture Centre** is ongoing and includes comprehensive theatre repairs, mechanical works, roof restoration, electrical upgrades, paintworks and general building maintenance. More work still remains to be done. We will continue to prioritise the resourcing and capacitation of Mmabana for arts and culture performance opportunities at this Centre.

In partnership with the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) and DSAC, the establishment of the **Film Hub** in the province is still ongoing as funded by NFVF. The Department of Public Works and Infrastructure has already allocated a facility for this purpose.

The implementation of all the above arts and culture programmes in this Financial Year, as well as the sport and recreation programmes to be outlined below, will culminate in the **Sport, Arts and Culture Legends Awards** this Financial Year. Through these awards we will acknowledge all our Free State artists and athletes by placing them on a pedestal as beacons of hope for the sport, arts and culture fraternity in our province.

Heritage and Museum Services:

Through the Heritage and Museums component of Cultural Affairs we successfully implemented the following programmes:

- **Basotho New Year Celebration** on 3 August 2025 at the Basotho Cultural Village in Qwa Qwa.
- **Promotion of National Symbols and Orders** where educational awareness was created around national symbols that includes the national anthem were rolled out.
- Heritage Day Celebration was implemented on 27 September 2025 in Qwa Qwa.
- **Heritage and Museum Outreach programmes** and well as **Social Cohesion Dialogue** were rolled out in the different towns of our province as part of inculcation of awareness and pride in our heritage.

In terms of **Celebration of Days of National Significance**, the Free State province will be the proud host of the National Freedom Day celebration on the 27th April 2026 in Mangaung under the theme “Freedom and The Rule of Law – Thirty Years of Democratic Citizenship”.

Furthermore, the Geographical Names Changing process will be given a further impetus with the appointment of the **Provincial Geographical Names Committee** whose term has expired. We are in the process of appointing a new Committee. The new committee will fast-track the process of the **renaming of Sand du Plessis Street in Kutlwanong/Odendaalsrus to Siphon Mutsi street** and the **R26 road in Bethlehem to Andrew Mlangeni Road**. This renaming of landmarks and sites is part of the transformation of our heritage landscape and is an added value to the project of social cohesion and national reconciliation. Every South African has to be made to feel part of this country.

Such a national reconciliation, social cohesion and nation building quest will also see the **Provincial Homecoming Ceremony** which is still to be finalized following other processes that are being handled by the national Departments.

Honourable Speaker, the Department continues to advance **Language Policy** in partnership with relevant stakeholders. Language is at the core of societal development and transformation. It is our late former President, President Nelson Mandela who quipped, and I quote, “speak to a man in a language that he understands and you speak to his mind. Speak to him in his own language and you speak to his heart”, close quote. Through the Language Service Unit of the Department this goal of societal transformation using the mechanism of language development and literature promotion has been advanced through the following interventions:

- **Fire and Rescue Terminology Development session** was held on 11 November 2025 to make fire and rescue services in municipalities accessible to all communities;
- **Sesotho Literature Museum Annual Literary Symposium** was staged from 27 to 28 November 2025;
- **Celebration of Sesotho Literary Icons** was staged on 13 March 2026. The literary works of one of the Sesotho Literature icons, Ntate K.E Ntsane were celebrated as part of the K.P.D Maphalla literature heritage celebration.

We will continue to roll out these annual programmes during the current Financial Year. Furthermore, the finalisation of the exhibition at the **Wesleyan School Church Museum** is awaiting the resolution of external contractual matters between national DSAC and their implementing agency. The province has been given a directive to continue with other segments of the project in this financial year, including the erecting of a **memorial wall**.

In partnership with the Department of Correctional Services, the first stage towards the erection of the **Memorial Wall at Bizzah Makhate Prison**, which entails securing a site for construction of the wall as well as signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with Moqhaka Local Municipality, have been concluded and the actual work will commence and be concluded in this financial year.

Lastly, the conditional assessment undertaken at the **National Afrikaans Literature Museum** indicates that approximately **R57 million** is required to upgrade the facility to a required standard. In line with the available budget maintenance work at this museum will continue.

All these projects will add further impetus to the heritage preservation efforts in the province, as well as the cultural tourism attraction value which contributes to positive economic spin-offs for our province.

Programme 3: Library and Archive Services

Honourable Speaker, in 2026/2027 the Library and Archives programme is allocated a budget of **Two hundred and fifty-nine million, nine hundred and eighty thousand rands (R259 980 000)** as against **Two hundred and sixty million, eight hundred and eighteen thousand rands (R260 818 000)** of the last Financial Year. **75%** of the budget of this programme is Conditional Grant from National Department of Sport, Arts and Culture which is a total of **One hundred and ninety-five million, two hundred and ninety-six million rands (R195 296 million)**.

Library Services:

As the Department we are proud of our contribution towards the attainment of Education as one of the uppermost priorities of our government. Through provision of library facilities, learning and ICT resources that we provide, we enable educational opportunities to thrive in our communities.

On 18 July 2025 we had the honour of opening yet another one of such a new library facility in the form of **Qibing Public Library** in Qibing/Wepener. The official opening and handover of this library was conducted by the honourable Premier, Me Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae and the honourable Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Mr Gayton McKenzie. This state-of-the-art library is the model of the kinds of libraries that we are building in the different towns of the province for the benefit of local communities. Built to the total cost of **Twenty-three million, ninety-three thousand, nine hundred and fifty-eight rands (R23 093 958)**, it forms part of these libraries that are well-furnished boasting children and adult lending sections, a reading area, reference section, a library hall, a study hall, computer room and an educational toy library. The computer room is equipped with 18 computers providing free internet access, e-mail and word processing facilities. The library also pride itself with the following services:

- **Lending services** with approximately **14 000** library materials.
- **Reference services** with reference collection including encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, study guidelines and yearbooks.
- **E-publications, e-Britannica reference sources** as well as **Sabinet Online services** will be provided online through the internet, making it possible for the community to gain access to research and e-resources.
- **Library Activity Hall** where storytelling, reading clubs and community-based literacy activities will be hosted.
- **Photocopy services.**

With these kinds of libraries right in the centre of our communities, educational access can never be a pipedream for many of our children and adults in education. We appreciate the efforts of Morena E Moholo Mopeli in building a **library for the community of Namahadi** in Qwa Qwa. This is the only community library initiated by the traditional leadership in this local community. As the Department we commit to assisting the traditional leadership to resource this library.

Towards the goal of learning and education we have also rolled out the following library programmes: **Reja Buka Reading Festival; Mobi-Readathon Provincial Competition** as well as the **Digital Transformation in Public Libraries capacity programme**.

The Department pride itself in the excellent **provincialization of libraries** model in accordance with schedule 5 of the Constitution. Following the milestones that we have achieved in this regard, the national Department of Sport, Arts and Culture as well as other provinces have made a request to us to give them an opportunity to benchmark with our province.

Archives Services:

The preservation of memory and knowledge management has become the cornerstone of the digital age. Through the Archives Repository Services, we have embarked on the process of the digitization of archival records through the **Access to Memory (AtoM) digital platform**. All historical records are now being converted into digital form to ensure their posterity well into the future.

We have successfully installed the **Gas Suppression System** at the Archives Centre with a view to ensuring that the records at this centre are protected from fire or any hazard.

The Archive Centre will continue to empower and assist government departments, municipalities as well as other government entities on **records management** which has become a challenge also resulting in disclaimer audit opinions due to the unavailability of records or supporting materials during audits.

Programme 4: Sport and Recreation:

Honourable Speaker, for the 2026/2027 Financial Year the Sport and Recreation programme is allocated a budget of **One hundred and fifty-five million, eight hundred and ninety-six thousand rands (R155 896 000)** compared to the **One hundred and thirty-seven million, six hundred and forty-nine thousand rands (R137 649 000)** of the previous Financial Year. A Mass Participation and Sport Development Grant to the total value of **Forty-two million three hundred and forty-four million rands (R42 344 000)** is allocated to the Department for this Financial Year.

Guided by the **National Sport and Recreation Plan of 2011** as well as the **White Paper on Sport and Recreation of 2013**, we have rolled out the following programmes in the arena of sport and recreation in the last Financial Year:

Hosting of Major Sporting Tournaments:

As reaffirmed in the State of the Province Address by the honourable Premier, “we are also transforming the Free State into a mecca of sporting events”. As we continue to escalate the positive trajectory of hosting major sport events in our province, we are ecstatic that the province again hosted the following national and international sporting tournament since the tabling of our last Budget Vote:

- **Bafana Bafana vs Nigeria World Cup Qualifier match** on 09 September 2025.
- **Bafana Bafana vs Lesotho World Cup Qualifier match** on 05 September 2025.
- **Proteas Women Cricket Team match against Pakistan Women Cricket Team** hosted in Bloemfontein on 22 February 2026.

Building towards the **2026 FIFA World Cup** we want to take this opportunity to congratulate Bafana Bafana for qualifying and call upon the Free Staters to stand behind our national team. We look forward to more Free State based players being included in the final selection of the team that will represent the country like it has been the case before.

Following the collaborative effort between the Department as well as Mangaung Metro Municipality and the Free State Rugby Union, the upgrading of Toyota Stadium will also result in the attraction of more rugby games in the province.

We will continue to strive to make our province a destination of choice for national, continental and global sport tourism while balancing out this strategic orientation with the financial imperatives to advance developmental sport in our province.

Community Sport:

Honourable Speaker, we are ecstatic to report that during the 2025/2026 Financial Year, we have indeed made headways in advancing this grassroot sport development imperative through the implementation of Community Sport programme. Through this programme the province has produced positive results as underscored by the sterling performance of **Moeketsi**

Thebe and **Lebogang Tekane** who were selected into the national men's squad that participated in the Softball World Qualifiers in Nairobi, Kenya from 25 to 29 December 2025.

Through the Community Sport Programme, we have implemented the following sport programmes which produces the kind of athletes such as Moeketsi Thebe and Lebogang Tekane:

- **Support to ABC Motsepe** was provided to teams participating in the ABC Motsepe Playoffs hosted from 30 June to 06 July to the tune of **R2.5 million**. **18** teams were provided with financial support of **R100 000** each and the winning team, which is African Warriors FC, was supported with **R500 000** for team preparation for the national playoffs.
- **National Recreation Day and Big Walk** was staged on 03 October 2025.
- **O.R Tambo Games** were successfully hosted from 24 to 26 October 2025. The games, which are staged encapsulate talent identification for the mainstream level of participation, and are rolled out in partnership with municipalities, will again be hosted in October this year.
- **Provincial Women Football finals** were held on 16 December 2025 and ten (10) teams participated with two (2) teams per district. Each district has one (1) team selected for participation in the SASOL League in the next season.
- **Provincial Youth Day Games**, which was implemented as district youth games were staged in all the districts in June 2025.
- **Nelson Mandela Challenge** was held on 23 July 2025
- **Provincial Golden Games for Senior Citizens** were staged from 20 to 21 August 2025.

- **Provincial Indigenous Games** were rolled out from 24 to 26 September. About 600 participants were involved in various sporting codes. Sport equipment and attire were distributed to various teams during this tournament. This programme is growing in stature. 135 Indigenous Games clubs are affiliated and play in leagues culminating in district team selections. The province will again host the games from 24 to 25 September 2026 alongside the celebration of the Heritage Day programme.
- **Sport Equipment and Attire Handover to Clubs and Hubs:** Six sport hubs were provided with sport equipment and attire during the 2025/2026 Financial Year. Sport equipment and attire will again be handed to the identified six (6) Sport Hubs as well as 100 sport clubs under Club Development programme.

During this Financial Year the Free State Sport Awards will be staged to honour our athletes in various categories. The province will also participate in the national South African (S.A) Games that will be staged by the national Department.

School Sport:

The spirit of the Freedom Charter to engender sport as a tool in the mending of our social fabric, and in the opening of the doors of learning and culture was entrenched.

As a demonstration of the impact that our investment has made, we are delighted at the performance of our athletes in the school sport field and would like to congratulate the following athletes amongst so many too numerous to can mention here:

- **Bogolo Koikoi**, from Navalsig High School who was selected into the Under 16 Basketball National Team during the COSAFA games that were held from 04 to 13 July 2025 in Windhoek, Namibia.
- **Rupert Bester**, from Grey College who was selected to participate in the African Youth Championships organised by the South African Table Tennis Board.

Amongst other milestones in the school sport arena, we implemented and participated in the following school sport programmes both within the province and nationally:

- **Provincial Summer Schools Sport Championships** were held on 18 October 2025. These championships featured gymnastics, goalball, softball, rugby 7s and table tennis as the main sporting code.
- **National Winter Schools Sport Championships** were staged in Durban from 11 – 15 July 2025, featuring the under 15 tournament in football, netball, rugby and softball.
- **National Summer School Sport Championships** were hosted from 11 to 15 December 2025. 65 learners from the province were supported to take part in the championships.
- **Provincial Swimming Championships for Primary and High Schools** took place from 18 to 20 February 2026.
- **Provincial School Sport Athletics Finals** were rolled out from 14 to 15 March 2026.
- **Sport Equipment and Attire Handover:** 64 schools were provided with sport equipment and attire.

Sport Science, Academies and Sport Confederation:

Through the Free State Sport Science Institute and Free State Academy of Sport, preparation for sport participation at an elite level has borne out positive results. We are proud of the following achievements by our provincial athletes and sport teams, also too many to mention them all:

- **Mthi Mthimkulu** was part of the history making relay teams at the World Relay Championships in Guangzhou, China where he represented team S.A and won a gold medal in the 4 x 400 metre males final on 11 May 2025. On 9 October 2025, Mr Mthimkhulu was further awarded the 2025 University of Free State Sportsman of the Year.
- **Miane'Smit** was called up by Cricket South Africa Protea Women Team and won her first One Day International (ODI) cap against India on 7 May 2025. She has since been a regular feature in the team selection during their test series.
- **Johanco Greyvenstein and Lathitha Mtengwana** were selected to represent South Africa at the *Taca da Independencia de Karate* in Angola from 27 to 28 June 2025. Both athletes had also performed very well at the *Union des Federation Africaines de Karate (UFAK)* Region 5 Championship held in Durban in May 2025.
- **Bohlokwa Khitsane** won a gold medal in his division at the UFAK Region 5 Championships held in Durban in May 2025. His performance earned him a selection to join Team S.A for the Region 5 Youth Games in July 2025.
- **Thabang Makara** won three (3) gold medals and two (2) silver medals in the Junior Jumper Division staged from 04 to 06 October 2025 at the Mmabana Sports Complex in North West.

We will continue to strive to produce more elite athletes who will represent the province and national and international sporting tournaments. We will

optimise the collaborations and partnerships that we have had with private sector sport training institutes such as the Exercise Teachers Academy (ETA).

Through the Free State Sport Confederation, support was provided to the following athletes in the province, amongst others:

- **Cheerleading and Majorettes athlete** attending the National Selection Camp.
- Two (2) **Free State Hockey players** selected for the National Schools Hockey Team.
- **World Fitness Federation athletes** attending the Inter-Continental Competition in Zambia.
- **Chess athletes** attending the National Chess Championships.

The Confederation also hosted and supported the following sport events to advance sport in the province:

- Hosted the **Free State Sport Confederation Annual Golf Tournament** on 13 March 2026.
- Supported the **Free State Athletics** in hosting the 10 KM Road Running tournament.
- Hosted the **Professional Women Boxing tournament** that was held on 16 December 2025. The tournament will again be hosted this year, as well as the Steve Tshwete Boxing Bout as a professional Bout.
- Hosted the **Disability Games** on 19 December 2025.
- Supported LEMO Marathon which serve as the qualifier for the Comrades marathon.

Honourable Speaker, the above programmes in the Sport and Recreation arena will continue to be implemented in the current Financial Year.

Sport Infrastructure Enhancement:

Honourable Speaker, for a meaningful and effective sport participation and development to happen we required state of the art sport facilities. The Department continue to strive towards sufficient and quality sport facilities in order to achieve the goal of enhanced sport performance by our athletes. To that end the following sport facilities have been prioritised.

- **Smithfield Multipurpose Outdoor Sport Facility** to provide playing and training opportunities for athletes in this locality.
- **Combi Sport Courts** are earmarked for construction in Xhariep and Thabo Mofutsanyana districts. Consultations with municipalities regarding the suitable sites are being finalised.

Our commitment is to ensure that these sport facilities are complemented within the set timeframe and are beneficial to the communities that they are intended for. We also appeal to our communities to jealously guard these facilities against theft and vandalism.

Overview of the Allocation:

Honourable Speaker, towards the realisation of an active, creative, winning and socially cohesive Free State I hereby table this final appropriation:

Programme 1: Hundred and twenty-six million, five-hundred and ninety thousand rands (R126 590 000).

Programme 2: One hundred and forty-two million, eight hundred and eighty-two thousand rands (R142 882 000).

Programme 3: Two hundred and fifty-nine million, nine hundred and eighty thousand rands (R259 980 000).

Programme 4: One hundred and fifty-five million, eight hundred and ninety-six thousand rands (R155 896 000).

This amount to a total of **Six hundred and eighty-five million, three hundred and forty-eight thousand rands (R685 348 000).**

Conclusion:

Honourable Speaker, notwithstanding the constrained fiscal environment and budgetary constraints we will continue to strive to ensure the rolling out of sport, arts and culture programmes across the province. The clarion call by the honourable President in the State of the Nation Address for the realization of socially cohesive society will continue to serve as a bedrock upon which we will continue to build.

It is with deep gratitude that I would like to thank the following for their singular and collective contribution in the advancement of our mandate:

- Honourable Premier, Me Maqueen Letsoha-Mathae as well as colleagues in the Executive Council for their steadfast support and guidance.
- The African National Congress for continuing to be the torchbearers in these difficult times of the revolution.
- The Head of the Department, management and all the officials in the Department for continuing to soldier on in the face of constrained resource environment.

- My family and friends for their continued and unwavering support as well as understanding.
- Above all, glory to the heavenly father who is the custodian of the truth and the guardian of faith.

I thank you.