
NEWS UPDATE FROM THE NBI

Building the capacity of TVET Colleges to develop Green Skills: The Nedbank/NBI Solar Water Heaters Installation and Maintenance Project

SWH project extended for a further 6 months

The National Business Initiative (NBI), in partnership with Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator (Harambee) and the Institute of Plumbing South Africa (IOPSA), is implementing a project aimed at capacitating Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges to deliver Green Skills. The placement project started in June 2017 and is funded by the Eyethu Community Trust of the Nedbank Foundation. This is part of NBI's efforts to inform the development of scalable industry/TVET college partnerships aimed at enhancing youth employability and the development of entrepreneurs in technical fields with a particular focus on developing Green Skills through TVET colleges.

Key elements of the project were:

- Sourcing and matching of graduates by Harambee which determined candidates' suitability for the plumbing industry;
- Six-weeks accredited technical training delivered at the Central Johannesburg College;
- Four weeks work-readiness training; and
- A one-week entrepreneurship boot camp.

The candidates were then placed with various plumbing companies for a six-month structured workplace-based learning under the supervision of qualified and experienced plumbers.

The participating companies in the placement programme were: **Rivers Plumbing, Grohe Dawn/Cobra Taps, Plumbcrew, Burgess & Partners Plumbing Services, Phuthanang Ma Africa Plumbing, SNS Plumbing and Projects and Johannesburg Plumbing.**

The six-month placement with host employers concluded on 28 February 2018. Of the 25 candidates who were placed over the six months, 8 were offered jobs by their host companies, 3 are pursuing further studies through a three-year state-funded plumbing internship, 10 are on the extended workplace experience programme funded through leftover funds from the current project which Nedbank has agreed to extend for a further 6 months to end September 2018. 2 candidates exited the programme to explore other options, 1 was asked to leave for conduct unbecoming and 1 got a job offer outside of the plumbing industry.

A briefing session with employers who are continuing with the extended placement was recently held to agree on the structure of the programme for the extension. Over and above the technical exposure, it was decided that the focus will be on getting the learners to be exposed to customer touchpoints, plumbing van preparation, van cost analysis, quoting, payment collections and the creation of a self-development plan for the candidates. The employers agreed that this will be crucial for ensuring that the candidates are prepared for running a small plumbing business. 7 out of the 25 candidates

have been identified as having potential for entrepreneurship and will be supported through a more focused entrepreneurship development programme over the next few months.

The employers expressed a keen interest in having a skills and entrepreneurship development model that can be replicated throughout the industry to respond to the challenge of a lack of qualified plumbers that the country is facing. Their vision is to develop a model that will be an industry benchmark and standard that any plumbing company would want to employ or work with a candidate that has been through such a programme; as they will be in the view that this programme has laid a good foundation for such a scheme that the industry could build on.

There was acknowledgement that training is an important part of the plumbing business and that the model being developed through this project must have its own life, be scalable and sustainable over the medium to long term. The role that public TVET colleges could play to achieve this was acknowledged and the employers said they were willing to step up and work with colleges to ensure the curriculum, equipment and tools used for training by colleges meet industry needs and requirements.

During the session, the different companies shared experiences of what it means to mentor young learners new to the industry, what it means for the mentors and business owners as well as how to deal with the challenges that this comes with. Also included was the fact that college graduates present a possible threat to their mentors who might have years of experience but do not have a recognised qualification in plumbing. The interactions between the companies came to a point where there was agreement that because the companies are small and specialised, they might not be able to offer the learners all aspects of plumbing, but the project does present an opportunity to form a network whereby the learners could be rotated through various companies that specialise in different aspects of plumbing. This would mean that at the end of their placement they would have been exposed to as much a scope of plumbing as what the network could offer. Lastly, this approach will ultimately lead to skilled and qualified future plumbers which is what the industry desperately needs.

The briefing session concluded with the employers expressing their excitement in being involved in the project, especially because of the perception that placements are only done by bigger companies, and saying that they would spread the inspiration they are getting from this project to other smaller companies; and would be ambassadors of such programmes.

For more details on the **Solar Water Heater Project**, please contact **Cecil Macheke**, Programme Manager: Skills Development at the NBI: CecilM@nbi.org.za.

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