



Angie Motshekga, Basic Education Minister.

Government demonstrates commitment

Government's commitment to the NECT in the 2014/15 financial year amounts to an estimated R459 million, comprising both monetary and in-kind support.

An amount of R300 million is earmarked for the NECT in the 2014/15 budget of the Department of Basic Education (DBE). This allocation is a great vote of confidence in our young organisation and will enable the Trust to scale-up its work dramatically.

Equally encouraging is the way in which various government departments have come forward to join the NECT partnership, offering a range of services and resources that will impact significantly on our District Improvement Programme:

- The Department of Rural Development is investing R27 300 in a project that seconds young trainees with construction skills to renovate schools.
- The Education, Training and Development Practices SETA's placement of administration interns in schools is worth R45 million.
- The production of school desks by the departments of Correctional Services, Labour and Environmental Affairs adds value of about R10 million.

The DBE will provide materials for the renovation of schools and will fund the construction of footbridges for learners in a joint project with the Development Bank of Southern Africa.

Basic Education Minister Angie Motshekga voiced government's expectations of the NECT at a recent media briefing in Johannesburg. "Where we find ourselves is really keeping a fragile system together to protect the current learners," she said. "This partnership helps us to get into a programme, as government, of overhauling the system, remediating once and for all."

"We are encouraged by the support shown by government and hope that other sectors will be inspired to strengthen their commitments," says NECT Board Chair Sizwe Nxasana. "The task of establishing the Trust as a fully functioning organisation is complete and the pace of work will increase significantly in the next few months."



Who's who at the NECT

A series of staff appointments was made soon after the confirmation of Godwin Khosa as CEO of the NECT at the end of 2013. The organisation's complement of managers, education specialists and administrators is now virtually complete. Here's the line-up:

Senior Education Specialist	:	John Thurlow
Junior Education Planning Specialist	:	Derryn Craib
Education Planning Trainee	:	Zethu Mhlongo
Education Planning Trainee	:	Lumka Luzipho
Personal Assistant to CEO	:	Nonkosi Mangxangza
Receptionist	:	Koketso Mashaba

The appointment of the Chief Financial Officer should be finalised shortly.

Lead agencies for District Improvement Programme

The NECT's call for proposals for entities to manage the comprehensive district improvement programme (targeted initially at eight districts) drew a total of 29 applicants. To date three lead service providers have been identified:

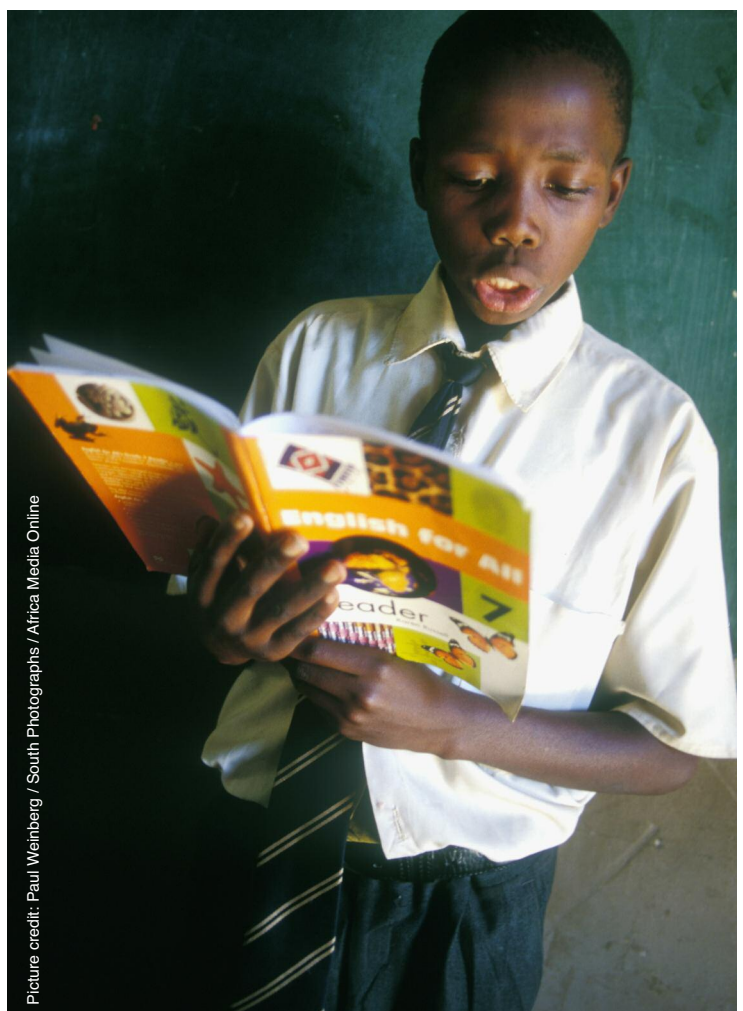
- Deloitte, which will be responsible for planning and implementation of interventions in the Limpopo districts of Vhembe and Waterberg.
- Education Excellence Consortium – consisting of 18 NGOs and SMMEs – which will be responsible for Libode and Mt Frere districts in the Eastern Cape.
- Programme for Improving Learner Outcomes (PILO), which will focus on Pinetown and Uthungulu districts in KwaZulu-Natal.

"The selection of three very different service providers speaks to our approach of mobilising talent beyond the confines of the traditional development sector," says NECT CEO Godwin Khosa. "All three organisations showed clear ability to fulfil the planning, coordination and general management functions required of lead agencies. They will be sub-contracting more specialised organisations to undertake various aspects of project implementation."

The agencies have been tasked with preparing detailed action plans for their districts by end of April, working in close collaboration with the district offices and in consultation with district steering committees consisting of local stakeholders.

In order to maximise available funding, the NECT has standardised its pricing of services provided by lead service providers, says Mr Khosa, and "they have agreed because they understand that the NECT is a developmental initiative, not a profit-making venture".

The process of selecting lead agencies for the districts of Bohlabela in Mpumalanga and Bojanala in the North West is underway.



Picture credit: Paul Weinberg / South Photographs / Africa Media Online

District Forum for collaboration and ideas exchange

The NECT District Forum, comprising representatives of lead agencies and district offices in the priority districts, met for the first time on 6 February. The forum has been created as a platform for the NECT to provide guidance on the implementation of the district programme and for the districts to share ideas and collaborate on common challenges.

A focal area during the first meeting was the Fresh Start Schools Programme which looks at creative interventions for schools that have severe – but quite varied – problems and need intensive help to achieve better conditions for learning and improved results.

The programme also featured progress reports from lead service providers on each district and discussion that allowed for joint problem-solving. The forum will meet on a monthly basis throughout the year.

Search for strategic partners is on

There has been an encouraging response to the call for organisations to submit concept papers for strategic partnerships with the NECT. The advertisement on partnerships was published in the Mail and Guardian and on SANGONeT on 14 February and the deadline for submissions was 7 March.

Proposals could centre on tried-and-tested interventions or focus on new concepts but had to fall within one or more of the major themes of the Education Collaboration Framework: professionalisation of the teaching service; developing effective leadership; improving government capacity; improving resourcing; community and parent involvement; learner support and wellbeing. We will carry news on the selected partners in the next *Briefing*.

WHERE TO FIND US

The NECT has set up office in Centurion within walking distance of the Gautrain Station. The full address is Ground Floor, Block D, Lakefield Office Park, 272 West Avenue (corner Lenchen Avenue).

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