



Building Skills for Sustainable SMME Growth

As South Africa accelerates inclusive economic growth, skills development remains one of the most powerful and sustainable tools for unlocking opportunity and building resilience. For SMMEs, upskilling goes beyond employability, it is about developing the capabilities that sustain competitiveness and transformation.

At 104⁺, skills development forms a central pillar of our impact model. Beyond funding, we focus on equipping entrepreneurs with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to manage and grow successful enterprises. Through targeted learning, mentorship, and technical assistance, we help SMMEs strengthen operations and build future-fit businesses that can thrive in complex markets.

Developing Talent for Real Impact

SMMEs are the lifeblood of South Africa's economy, driving job creation and innovation. Yet many continue to face challenges, including but not restricted to: limited business experience, financial management gaps and constrained financing options, and restricted access to markets. 104⁺ addresses these gaps through focused skills and mentorship initiatives that deliver practical, applied learning in areas such as financial literacy, digital tools, marketing, operations, and leadership – capabilities that drive long-term success.

Highlights

- R247.45 million **raised in cumulative funding**
- R26.5 million **funding deployed this quarter**
- R20 million **invested into the University Technology Fund II (UTF II), expanding support for youth-led innovation and university spinouts**
- R3.5 million **follow-on loan to Mortgage Market (Pty) Ltd., strengthening inclusive home financing**
- R3.0 million **follow-on loan to Capital Link Partners (Pty) Ltd., reinforcing empowerment-focused partnerships**



Working with education providers, development agencies, and industry experts, 104⁺ integrates these programmes across its Empowerment, Growth, and Development Mandates. This ensures every funded SMME gains both capital access and the skills to deploy it effectively. Mentorship remains a cornerstone, connecting experienced leaders with emerging entrepreneurs to strengthen decision-making, and foster resilience. Through partnerships with funders, corporates, and development agencies, 104⁺ ensures that training translates into measurable outcomes: stronger businesses, more jobs, and resilient communities.

Case Study: Empowering Entrepreneurs Through the UWC Fellows Leadership and Mentoring Programme

At the University of the Western Cape's Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation (CEI), a powerful model of skills development and mentorship is reshaping the trajectory of small business growth. Established in 2013, the Centre was founded with a vision to create a supportive environment for both

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emerging and established entrepreneurs — a response to the high failure rate of small businesses and the limited credibility often afforded to township enterprises. Launched in 2015 as the Fellows Leadership and Mentoring Programme (FLMP), the initiative reflects CEI's ongoing commitment to strengthening South Africa's entrepreneurial ecosystem. Supported under the 104* Empowerment and Development mandates, the programme exemplifies how strategic partnerships can translate training into transformation.

Over the latest quarter,



21 SMMEs
participated in
the programme

of which



100%
Black-owned,

including



14
Black
women-owned

and



7
youth-owned
enterprises

Representing a wide range of sectors such as agriculture, construction, digital services, wellness, manufacturing, and tourism, these businesses embody the potential of South Africa's entrepreneurial landscape.

The programme achieved several milestones in the last quarter:

- Launch of a dedicated WhatsApp learning community for ongoing peer engagement.
- Completion of foundational entrepreneurial leadership training and assessment moderation.
- Administrative and compliance progress; several participants now hold valid B-BBEE affidavits or certificates for the first time.
- Mentorship phase to begin in November 2025, pairing Fellows with experienced business leaders.

The FLMP aims to train and capacitate existing MSME owners with practical entrepreneurship and strategy skills to accelerate both business and personal growth. The programme forms part of UWC's Continuous Education offering, an accredited NQF Level 5 short course in Entrepreneurship and Growth Strategy. Participants are equipped to understand their markets more deeply, refine customer acquisition strategies, strengthen operational efficiency, and ensure full business compliance.

The addition of personalised business coaching and mentorship ensures that learning is not confined to the classroom. As the current cohort progresses, UWC leaders have observed a notable shift in entrepreneurial mindset among participants. Mentorship sessions are enabling business owners to reimagine their potential and gain confidence. Entrepreneurs are learning to identify new opportunities, approach risk strategically, and

navigate challenges with renewed clarity. For many participants, the programme offers a safe space where entrepreneurs learn collaboratively, share experiences, and receive continuous guidance from CEI facilitators.

UWC's approach is grounded in an ecosystem model, recognising that SMMEs need more than training; they need access to markets, finance, and networks. CEI connects participants to key partners such as SEDFA (financial and non-financial support), SARS (tax compliance), and Productivity SA (operational benchmarking and efficiency). This integrated approach ensures that entrepreneurs leave not only with new knowledge but with access to the support systems necessary to sustain growth.

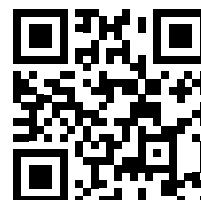
The partnership with 104*, introduced through Sanlam, has further strengthened this framework. 104*'s role is critical in bridging access to funding, expanding mentorship networks, and improving financing readiness, particularly for township-based enterprises. This collaboration aligns with national frameworks such as the National Integrated Small Enterprise Development Strategy (NISED) and the Department of Small Business Development's 2025-2030 plan.

As the programme continues, the focus will remain on deepening mentorship engagement and broadening access to ecosystem partners, ensuring that every graduate leaves equipped not only with a certificate but with the skills, confidence, and connections to thrive.

Together, Unlocking Opportunity

To our funders and partners, thank you for your continued commitment to building an inclusive, opportunity-rich economy. Your investment enables 104* to deliver on its mission: channeling funding, expertise, and development support to high-potential SMMEs that drive job creation, youth empowerment, and women's participation in the economy.

The achievements highlighted this quarter are the result of your collaboration and shared vision. Together, we are proving that strategic funding, coupled with skills development and partnership, is the catalyst for sustainable transformation.



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