

Newsletter WORKPLACE CHALLENGE PROGRAMME



the dtic

Department:
Trade, Industry and Competition
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

productivitysa
Inspiring a Competitive South Africa

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MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE MANAGER COMPETITIVENESS IMPROVEMENT SERVICES



Welcome to the last edition of the financial year 2025/26 Workplace Challenge Programme newsletter. The year has been a rollercoaster with developments on many fronts. Just as with any workplace and beyond, there have been ups and downs.

As the saying goes in the Workplace Challenge Programme, *“always strive to do better today what you did well yesterday”*. I will thus focus on the positive developments. That does not mean we do not learn from the negative experiences but, in any business environment, you cannot drive your business while looking in the rearview mirror. You have to look ahead through the windshield and focus on improving what yields positive results.

One of the highlights of the past year has been the performance of the companies who implemented the Workplace Challenge Programme and Kaizen methodology. These companies chose to take the bold step towards greater productivity and improving their establishment's bottom line. Their implementation was driven by a core desire for continuous improvement and choosing not to rest on their laurels.

One of the highlights of the effectiveness of the programmes implemented in the companies that consulted with Productivity SA was at the National Productivity Awards where Mawasha Chemicals scooped gold as the best performing company. This was a proud moment for the Workplace Challenge Programme as it proved that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We are grateful to Senior Productivity Advisor, Ms Lebogang Khumalo, who painstakingly worked with Mawasha Chemicals to take the company to its next level of productivity.

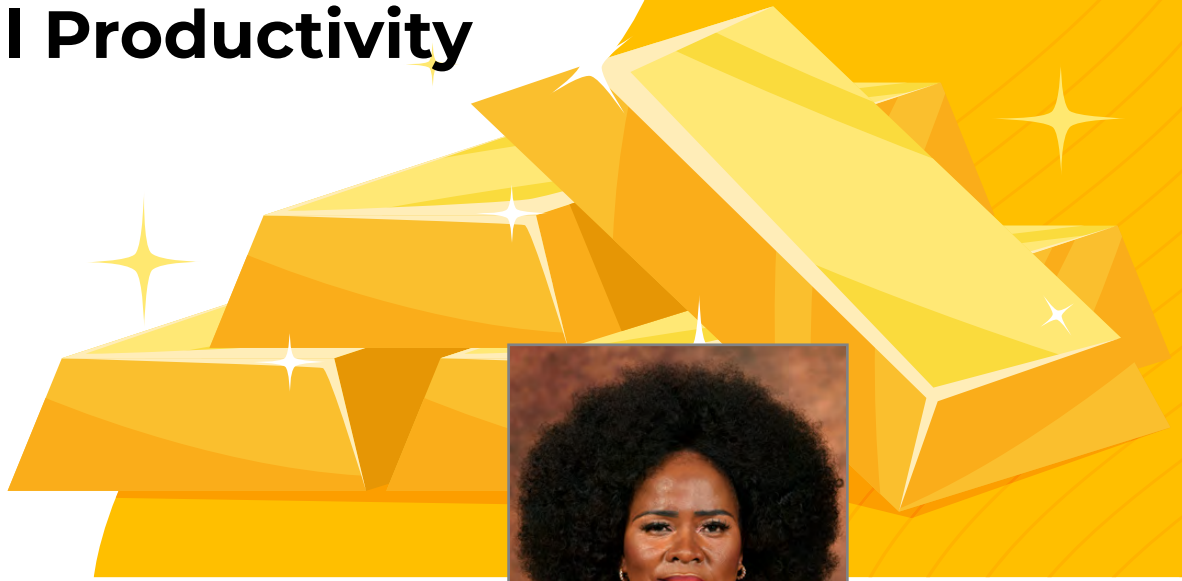
In this edition, we feature an article on the awards and how they recognise businesses who have shown resilience and improved their productivity. We also showcase two companies that implemented productivity improvement programmes in conjunction with Productivity SA and improved their productivity. We round off contents of this edition with a fitting farewell to two foremost members of the Workplace Challenge Programme Mr Sedick Jappie and Mr Guy Harris. Enjoy.

As the saying goes in the Workplace Challenge Programme, *“always strive to do better today what you did well yesterday”*.

MAWASHA CHEMICALS

strikes gold at the

National Productivity Awards



One of the companies featured in this edition of the Workplace Challenge Programme (WPC) newsletter, Mawasha Chemicals, outperformed twelve others to win the coveted prize for the company that improved its productivity the most.

Mawasha Chemicals walked away with the trophy in the Competitiveness Improvement Solutions (CIS) Small Business Category of the 2025 National Productivity Awards. This was a significant achievement, as the company's production targets increased by 80% improvement.

The 2025 National Productivity Awards were combined with the Africa Kaizen Annual Conference (AKAC), under the theme "African industrialisation through fostering competitive firms and value chains on the continent". The conference took place at the Birchwood Hotel in Ekurhuleni.

The Minister of Employment and Labour, Ms Nomakhosazana Meth, delivered the keynote address at the conference at the National Productivity Awards hosted by Productivity SA, an entity of the Department of Employment and Labour (DEL). The awards recognise enterprises, organisations and productivity practitioners



Ms Nomakhosazana Meth
Minister of Employment and Labour

that have demonstrated excellence in productivity and Kaizen implementation.

Speaking at the event, the Minister said: "The Africa Kaizen Annual Conference and awards are an important platform for building a more productive, competitive, and inclusive African economy. Through collaboration, knowledge-sharing and innovation, Africa can accelerate industrialisation and create sustainable jobs across the African continent."

The finalists for the National Productivity Awards were drawn from a wide range of industries and sectors. Companies that have shown resilience, innovation and business acumen in growing their business in difficult economic conditions were high on the list of consideration, while those selected as finalists underwent a stringent adjudication system.

An 80% improvement in productivity demonstrates what is possible through commitment and continuous improvement.

Selection was based on their ratings for various productivity benchmarks such as quality of product, impact on communities, job creation and sustainability of the businesses.

Productivity SA is dedicated to the development and enhancement of South Africa's productivity, and contributes to socio-economic development, competitiveness, and ultimately the general improvement of the quality of life of all South Africans. The organisation's key objectives are to create productivity knowledge and awareness, skills development and accelerated productivity, second economy productivity interventions, industry sector collaborations and strategies, turnaround solutions for companies and labour management collaboration.

Productivity SA's National Productivity Awards are held at the end of Productivity Month (October), a campaign that seeks to promote the importance of productivity and to inculcate a sense of competitiveness in every South African. Through offering these awards, Productivity SA provides a platform that galvanises business, labour, and government to increase productivity. The awards aim to:

- ◆ Promote productivity within South African industry;
- ◆ Raise awareness of the role of productivity in economic growth;
- ◆ Promote outcome-based solutions to boost company growth; and
- ◆ Increase South Africa's competitiveness.

Some of the issues that are taken into consideration when selecting winners include:

- ◆ What did the company want to accomplish and how did it achieve this?
- ◆ Are there clear objectives for productivity improvement?
- ◆ Is management actively involved?
- ◆ Is labour actively involved?
- ◆ How does the company manage productivity?

The results and impacts that are measured are:

- ◆ Financial results - improvements, trends and targets, benchmark results with competitors;
- ◆ People results - employee performance and recognition, absenteeism, incentives;
- ◆ Customer results - percentage returns, complaints from customers, satisfaction index;
- ◆ Operational results - has the broader community benefitted and, if so, how?
- ◆ Challenges/obstacles that were overcome and how they were overcome;
- ◆ Sustainability and transferability;
- ◆ Social and environmental impact; and
- ◆ Quality, safety and working environment.

Award finalists were:

- ◆ M.E.M Works (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Mawasha Chemicals;
- ◆ Ithalomso Waste Management (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Delburg Engineering (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Agata Lonia Chemicals (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Corpchem;
- ◆ Grasp Adhesive;
- ◆ Atlas Trading Company (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Mashabela Business Enterprise;
- ◆ Womech (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Cryochem (Pty) Ltd;
- ◆ Y- Jamodienb and Associates; and
- ◆ East of Eden Excellent Foods.



Mawasha Chemicals team receiving the award at the National Productivity Awards.



Celebrating excellence in productivity improvement.

Excellence is not an act, but the result of consistent effort, collaboration, and a shared vision.

TACKLING LOW PERFORMANCE HEAD ON

By Lebogang Esther Khumalo,
Senior Productivity Practitioner, Gauteng

Established 25 years ago as a manufacturer of cleaning detergents and a supplier of various industrial chemicals, Mawasha Chemicals is located in Modjadjiskloof, Limpopo. The business was founded by Ms Gloria Mawasha and is situated 18km from Tzaneen. The business's main activities are processing raw materials to produce automotive cleaners such as industrial cleaners, degreasers, hand cleaners, etc.

When the company grew to over ten employees, several challenges that hampered productivity were experienced. These included:

- ◆ Poor inventory management and control;
- ◆ Waste of raw materials due to spillages;
- ◆ Packaging waste caused by decanting between sizes;
- ◆ Low production output due to poor batch planning;
- ◆ Ineffective time management; and
- ◆ Inefficient use of storage space.

ENTER PRODUCTIVITY SA

Between March and August 2024, Productivity SA implemented a six-month Kaizen Programme, combining hands-on training with building of capacity and the execution of targeted improvement projects. This initiative successfully eliminated production bottlenecks and reduced waste across operations.

The Kaizen programme, offered and implemented by Productivity SA's Competitiveness Improvement Services (CIS), is focused on developing practical skills through a participatory, learning-by-doing, human-focused and process-oriented approach. It promotes continuous quality and productivity improvement to enhance the competitiveness of manufacturing industries.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COUNTERMEASURES

The following actions to address challenges were identified:

COUNTERMEASURES ACTION PLAN	
CHALLENGES	ACTION
1. Wastage of raw materials/ spillages and or shrinkages	Introduced pipettes, syringes, and funnel to reduce spillages
2. Waste of packaging	Organised, counted, and introduced a template linked to each production batch
3. Inventory management	Developed new inventory management templates that link the three parts of the business which are the storage of raw materials, production and sales
4. 5S implementation	The 5S initiative concentrated on sort, set in order and shine.

Key interventions included:

- ◆ Implementing a 5S organisational approach to enhance workplace structure and cleanliness;
- ◆ Introducing visual management tools and a new attendance tracking system to address absenteeism and late arrivals; and
- ◆ Investing in an airtight decanting machine to minimise raw material and packaging waste.

This single investment also transformed production with daily output increasing from 400 litres to 1 000 litres.

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<https://www.mawashachemicals.co.za>

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As a result of the productivity interventions implemented in 2024 and 2025:

- ◆ Raw material wastage and spillages dropped from 32.5% to just 0.5% - a 98.46% improvement.
- ◆ Packaging waste decreased from 50% to 5% - a 90% improvement.
- ◆ Employment increased from 10 to 14 staff members..

The company maintains a robust quality, safety, and environmental (QSE) management system, aligned with ISO 9001 standards and industry best practices. Quality is ensured through in-house laboratory testing and continuous monitoring.

Mawasha Chemicals is a proud host employer for a partner college, offering practical learning and CHIETA-accredited learnerships to nurture the next generation of skilled professionals.

FUTURE ACTIVITIES

Activities planned for the future are:

- ◆ Developing and defining 5S standard procedures and practices to consistently maintain the first three S's, including providing training; and
- ◆ Conducting regular 5S audits.

Before 5S Implementation: Stores



After 5S Implementation: Stores



Continuous improvement is not a once-off intervention — it is a culture.

Company profile

National Adhesive Manufacturers is a South African adhesive and solvent chemical formulation company based in Fillan Park, an industrial area of Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The business is owned by Mr Deepesh Ghela. The business is currently at an early development stage. Its main challenges include acquiring customers and delivering contracted products and services efficiently. The business has a flat organisational structure with a staff complement of five employees reporting to a general manager who is also the owner of the business.



The business specialises in the manufacture of adhesives including neoprene, rubber based, polyurethane, miscellaneous adhesive products and solvent cleaners. National Adhesives targets both industrial clients, which make up the largest share of revenue, and direct consumers. Industrial clients are furniture manufacturers, leather and footwear manufacturers, automotive and construction industries. Products are sold in varying sizes from 100ml to 200l.

The following are products the business range of the business

National Adhesives products



REASON FOR PARTNERING WITH PRODUCTIVITY SOUTH AFRICA

The client experienced housekeeping challenges, which negatively affected meeting customer demands. The programme started in October 2024 and the first visit to the client was on 4 November 2024. The project was closed in May 2025.

ACTIONS TAKEN

Intervention 1: Summary of baseline assessment

The main operational challenges were identified at the decanting and production areas and it was therefore agreed with the management team that these would be an area of focus. In order to determine a theme, there was a need to understand the current situation. Housekeeping, which stood at 28% of 100% at the time, needed to be improved to 70%. Production output, at 2 000 litres at the time, needed to be improved to 3 000 litres.

Intervention 2: Summary of capacity building

Capacity building training was conducted on 5 November 2025 during which employees and management were trained on the concepts of Kaizen, covering the following topics:

- ◆ 5S methodology;
- ◆ Muda dori – waste elimination; and
- ◆ Problem-solving.

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Intervention 3: Process flow analysis

A process walk-through was undertaken using 5S assessment and muda check as tools. The theme was confirmed to be housekeeping and quality issues resulting in reworks.

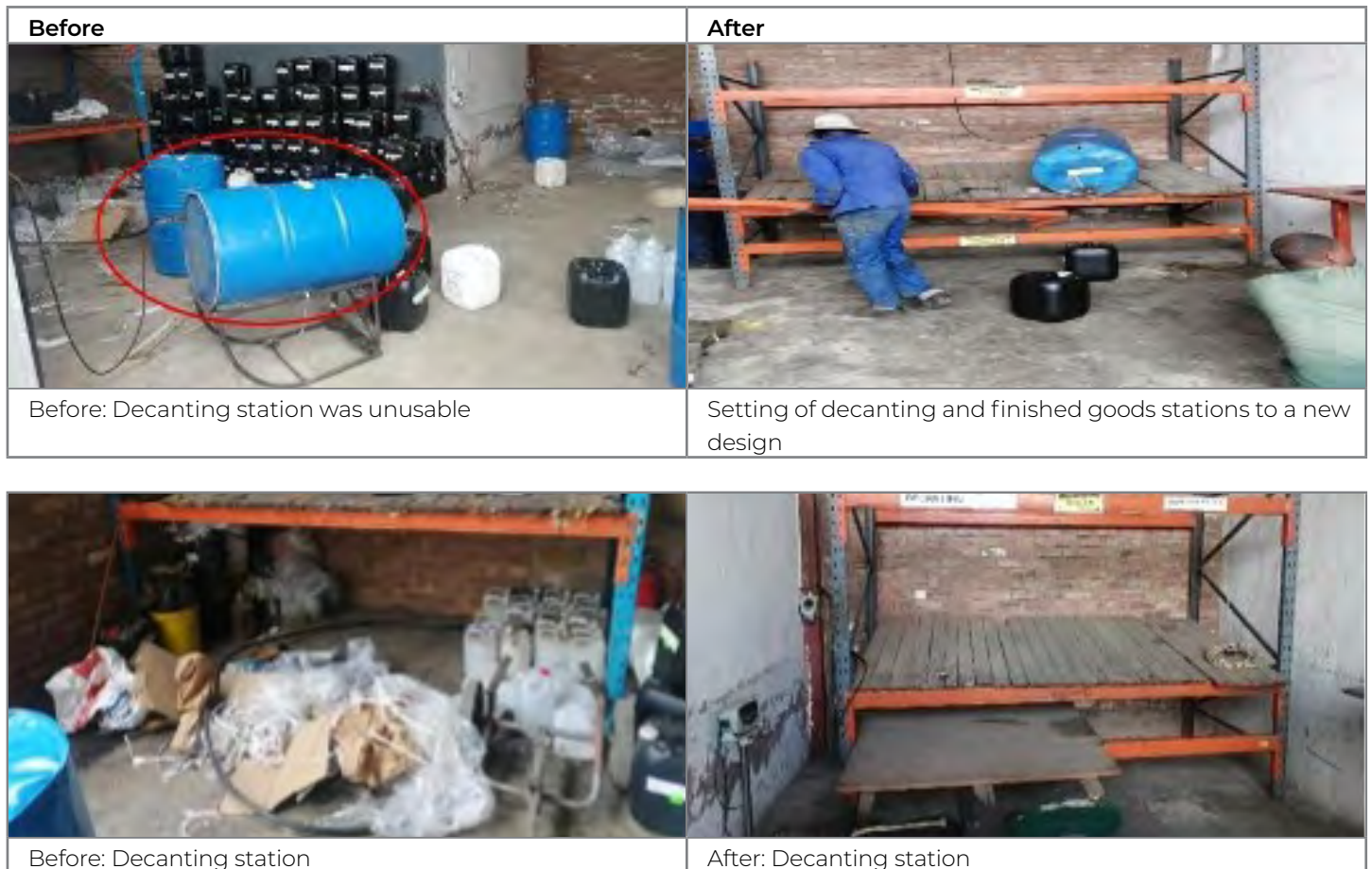
An implementation plan was established as a countermeasure to challenges identified, which were housekeeping, lack of formalised quality check on material before production and single point of failure as there is only one skilled employee.

RESULTS AND IMPACT

1.1 Housekeeping

Employees were capacitated on 5S. The decanting room was used as a model area for housekeeping. The focus was on 3s as the company had not implemented 5s previously.

Results were:



Improvement begins with understanding the process — and committing to doing it better every day.

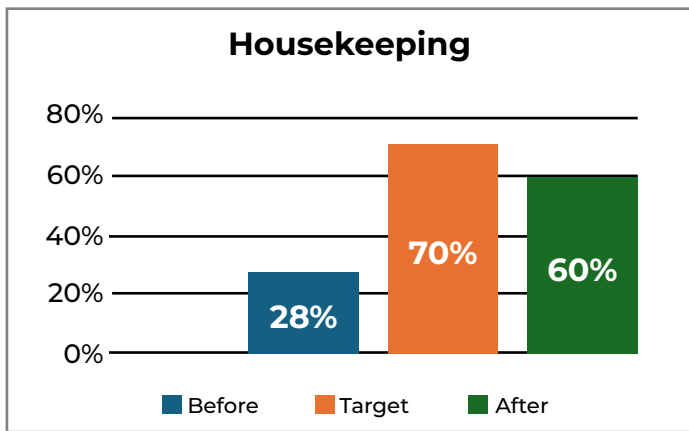


Before: No designated area for finished goods



After: Designated area for finished goods

The results were as follows



The company was able to improve its housekeeping from 28% to 60%. Although the target was 70%, this represents a commendable improvement of 32%.

1.2 Lack of formalised quality check on material before production

One of the quality concerns identified was that there are required standards on chemical composition used for production. However no formalised quality checks are done on material samples used before production. This may be the reason for reworks to meet a required standard. A work instruction on preparation of glue for production was developed.

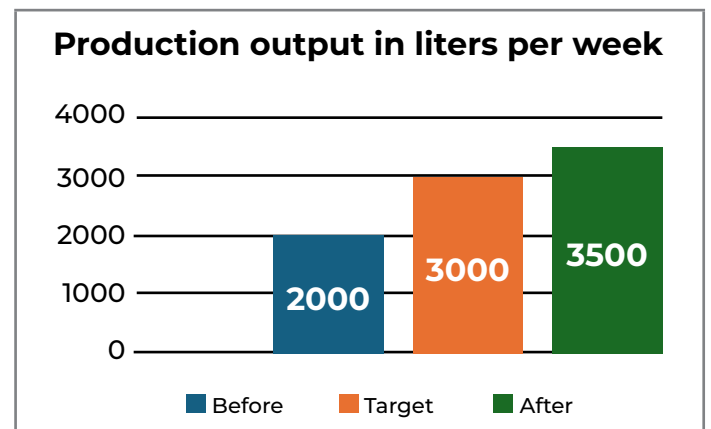
1.3 Single point of failure as there is one skilled employee.

The third major challenge identified was that:

- ◆ Documented formulations existed; however there were no visible work instructions to guide employees; and
- ◆ Production process relied on one experienced employee, exposing a business to a single point of failure.

The first task identified was to develop visible work instructions for production. This was followed by the need to develop a skills matrix to identify gaps and personnel that can be easily rotated. Both documents were developed, and employees were trained to use them.

Overall results on production is reflected below



The target was to improve production output by 50%. The business was able to achieve a 75% improvement, well above the target set.

CONCLUSION

A Kaizen project was implemented with identifiable successes, although the initial scope was reduced to match available time. Employees came to an understanding of the importance of housekeeping. The business is deeply committed to fostering lessons learnt in pursuit of building a productivity culture and sustainable growth. There are still opportunities for improvement on the overall layout, production facility and inventory management. Deliverables implemented added a valuable contribution in giving a roadmap to overcome company weaknesses and develop capabilities with a specific focus on operational efficiency.

THE WPC EXPERT COMMITTEE ANCHORS THE PROGRAMME



The Workplace Challenge Programme (WPC) Expert Committee plays a critical role in the governance and strategic direction of the programme. The committee provides independent guidance, ensures alignment with industry and strengthens impact of WPC programme interventions.

At the start of the previous financial year 2025/26, the dtic outlined three apex outcomes for all programmes and entities of the dtic group, requiring them to contribute as follows:

1. Inclusive economic growth and job creation – focuses on driving industrialisation, increasing investment, and fostering job creation in key sectors;
2. Reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living – aims to address socio-economic challenges through economic transformation, skills development, and supporting small businesses;
3. Building a capable, developmental state – enhances government effectiveness, policy alignment, and industrial policies to strengthen the economy.

The Workplace Challenge Programme (WPC) is funded by **the dtic**. Under the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP), **the dtic** plays a leading role in delivering measures included in the plan. This includes achieving sufficient, secure and reliable energy within

two years, creating mass employment, increasing infrastructure investment, reducing data costs and increasing localisation for reindustrialisation and growth.

The dtic plays a leading role in the following sector master plans: automotive, poultry, sugar, steel and metal fabrication, clothing, textile, footwear and leather, and furniture. The WPC contributes to **the dtic** as follows:

- ◆ Supporting enterprises operating within the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and supply chains.
- ◆ Facilitating training on the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Quality and Productivity Improvement (QPI)/Kaizen Project SA, disseminating knowledge and using tools and techniques across the country through participation in the National Quality and Productivity Network (NQPN).
- ◆ Fulfilling the mandate of providing necessary capacity and capability for effective service delivery at district/metro level through the Cabinet-approved district development model (DDM) framework.



The dtic: Chief Director: Skills for Economy, Ms Jocelyn Vass (left) and Acting Chief Executive Officer: Productivity SA, Ms Amelia Naidoo (right), present WPC Expert Committee Member, Mr Guy Harris (centre) with a certificate of recognition following Mr Harris's 15 years of service as an Industry Expert in the WPC Expert Committee.



The dtic: Chief Director: Skills for Economy, Ms Jocelyn Vass (left) and Acting Chief Executive Officer: Productivity SA, Ms Amelia Naidoo (right) flank outgoing WPC Expert Committee Member, Mr Sedick Japie who represented organised business in the WPC Expert Committee for almost two decades.

To be able to carry out this mammoth task, the WPC has to be a step ahead in terms of the training and productivity methods that are required by industry. However the programme cannot do this alone and requires a panel in the various sectors to guide the programme. To this end, the WPC programme and **the dtic** has formed the Workplace Challenge Programme Expert Committee. The committee comprises productivity experts from labour, business and government.

The Expert Committee plays a critical role in the governance and strategic direction of the programme. As a multi-stakeholder advisory structure, it provides independent guidance, ensures alignment with industry realities, and strengthens the credibility and impact of programme interventions. Through its oversight, the Committee ensures that the WPC remains relevant, responsive, and grounded in the needs of South African workplaces.

The Expert Committee has been instrumental in shaping the evolution of the WPC, providing continuity, challenging thinking, and strengthening decision-making across changing contexts. Their contributions have extended beyond formal meetings by becoming trusted advisors, steady voices and custodians of the programme's integrity.

The WPC implementation model is anchored on healthy collaboration between management and workers, implementation of best practices and dissemination and sharing of lessons learnt. The Workplace Challenge Programme Expert Committee plays a significant role in ensuring the programme meets its mandate.



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