



**Western Cape
Government**

**YOUTH CAFÉS:
A DRAFT CONCEPT DOCUMENT**

September 2013

INTRODUCTION

This brief document integrates the content of our previous consultation and the perspectives of the Draft YDS into a draft Youth Cafes Concept Document. The **Youth Cafes** are a critical element of the **Youth Programme** going forward and are also a **priority project** for **MEC Fritz**.

The YS encapsulates its Vision and Long –term outcomes as:

Vision

‘Youth of the Province equipped to confidently, positively and purposefully meet the challenges of the 21st Century’

Long –Term Outcomes

Overall Aim

By age 25 all young people of the Province should be economically self – sufficient and independent, healthy, with positive family, personal and social relationships, and should be active in their community

CONCEPT BRIEF

Central to the practical implementation and achieving of the above **vision** and **developmental outcomes**, are the delivery of **Services, Opportunities and Support (SOS)** that speak to and address the needs and priorities of all the young people of the Province.

The range of **SOS** must also **speak** methodologically and programmatically to the **vision** and **outcomes**-in the sense that it must demonstrate how it will contribute towards the achievement thereof. This is the litmus test of the Youth Café and all the youth –targeted programmes that will be funded and supported by DSD. The bottom line is that if any programme or proposed programme cannot explicitly depict and clarify how what is proposed will contribute towards **meeting the vision and long- - term developmental outcomes**, it is unlikely to be supported. In this sense the Youth Café will therefore move beyond what currently exists.

If there is to be any success in achieving the **Vision and long-term developmental outcomes** of the **Strategy**, the Department needs to make sure that the **SOS is put in place sustainably**. Young people will generally access such SOS if they believe that it meets their interests and that it will make a difference in their lives. Young people are

notorious for 'voting with their feet' particularly **youth older than 18**, those no longer in school or those that fall under the **NEET** category (those no longer in Education, Employment or Training). Yet these are **critical youth cohorts** that must be an integral part of our SOS.

International and local experience and studies clearly show that **young people** will not engage with such SOS if it does not meet their **basic needs** and interests. Alternatively, poorly conceptualised and badly implemented SOS programmes do not reach **youth at scale**, or in sufficient numbers to make a substantive difference. In the context of where the youth bulge in the Western Cape runs into millions, it is imperative that our SOS based programmes and initiatives pass the tests of: **relevance** (to the lives of young people), high **quality** (in relation to delivery and implementation), and **scale** (in relation to the numbers that are reached). These imperatives are the **basic ingredients** that must be in place. The Youth Strategy proposes a wide range of strategies, programmes and initiatives through which SOS can be delivered to young people- one of the most important ones being that of Youth Cafes. The YS describes Youth Cafés as such:

The idea of youth cafes are a relatively new concept in international youth development practice and is an attempt to link youth development practice, services, support and opportunities with youth cultural practice. In many ways the existing youth focal points/units incorporates many of the features of youth cafes but are not working effectively. Their reconceptualization as 'Youth Cafés is not a reinvention of the wheel but rather locates its roles and functions within the outcomes based approach advocated by the strategy. Its primary role is that as the local fulcrum for the provision of services, support and opportunities for young people- but via a delivery model that will encourage far greater levels of youth participation and support than what the current youth focal points do. By situating this model within the approach of the strategy it is envisaged as: A local fulcrum to meet differing levels of youth needs; an outcomes-focused framework that focuses on results, not only outputs and activities, enables, encourages and facilitates the participation of the broadest spectrum of young people; offers a safe and quality space for young people; has a clear purpose; is inclusive of, accessible to and flexible with all cultures, differences and abilities; enables the development of good quality relationships between young people and their peers and between young people and adults, supported by volunteerism; uses a strengths-based approach and is respectful of individuality; is sustainable and well-resourced, inclusive, accessible and flexible; is 'owned' by the young people themselves and the community.

At the same time, the Department doesn't want to **reinvent the wheel** so we don't also want to give the impression that many of the things envisaged in the Youth Café idea haven't been thought of, or even tried before-under various names and guises. The idea of a '**one-stop shop**' for youth is not new but for reasons that still needs to be

researched properly, most, if not all, of these initiatives have failed and are no longer operational or have had extremely limited success and impact. It is therefore critical that Youth Cafés do not repeat the mistakes that led to this state of affairs and has to therefore incorporate an approach that builds on these previous initiatives by learning the necessary lessons- but above all, by doing things differently – by **thinking out of the box**.

The previous consultation built on the above concept by identifying the following as key factors that must be built into the **development of the Youth Cafés**:

- The Youth Cafés must **learn the key lessons** from previous and similar attempts to develop youth SOS –oriented facilities. The Department needs to understand why they failed. Examples of these include: Municipal Multi-Purpose Youth Centres, Tussong Centres, Youth Portal, Youth Hubs etc.;
- The Youth Café must be a **vibrant, dynamic environment** that young people want to be at and associated with - a key factor in relation to this is having an **understanding** of what young people themselves expect and want from a youth café.
- It must be a **'one-stop shop'** that provides a range of services, opportunities and support to young people – underpinned by programmatic coherence, organisational competence and excellence. It must not **simply reincarnate** the previous or existing one stop shops for young people that do not work.
- Providing a **safe, nurturing, creative environment** that encourages youth innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship.
- The youth café should not be **conceptualised in spatial/physical** terms only (in other words, a **'place' where young people can go-** but should also be understood as a virtual space that makes extensive use of social media applications and technologies, and as a mobile space that goes to where young people are.

In design terms the **Colour, Shape and Smell** of the **Youth Cafés** are critical. The reference to colour, shape and smell indicates the need for the Youth Cafés to have a unique and iconic identify that appeal to the broadest layers of young people.

The **Youth Cafés** must not be identified as a locus for youth at risk only, or place where 'young people with problems' go to for help. On the contrary- the Youth Cafés must imbue the idea that 'it's cool to do good (for others, for community and for yourself)'.

Key Outputs

What can a young person coming to a Youth Café expect to find?

On arriving at a **typical Youth Café** they will encounter the following:

A **physical space-** they will arrive at a venue – typically well located in a place with high levels of youth foot – traffic. The **Youth Café** will be **highly visible, uniquely architected** and will be a **'must be' place** for young people. The **physical space** will

be organised around the **needs of the young people** that use it and will be shaped by their inputs and contributions. It will not be a silent, dry room filled with computers.

A **vibrant, welcoming, positive and affirming environment**- The Youth Café will not be **stigmatised** by any kind of reference to particular strata of young people - it will be shaped by the **needs, cultures and interests of the primary users**- the **young people** themselves.

- An **environment** that captures the following characteristics:
 - **High aspirations** for, and **expectations** of, young people;
 - **Well planned, deliberately designed programmes** and activities that are competently delivered through **high quality** activities delivered by **skilled, confident and empathetic staff** who build **trusting relationships** with young people;
 - A '**deliberate learning environment**' for staff and participants;
 - **Maximises opportunities** for learning and growth, and **meaningfully involve young people** in choosing and designing activities;
 - Have **increasing opportunities** for young people to make decisions and to take on leadership roles as they mature and gain more expertise;
 - Have **structure** that is **developmentally, culturally and environmentally appropriate**;
 - Have clear **expectations for behaviour**;
 - Provides **emotional and moral support**, physical and psychological safety;
 - Builds **strong links** between young people, their families, communities and broader community resources.

As mentioned above, the Youth Café will be much **more than a physical space**. It will also be a **virtual space** in which **new, innovative and ground-breaking social media applications** will be launched and created. These applications will enable the Youth Café to reach out to and engage the swathes of young people that will not pass through its doors. The **virtual space** is a critical element of the **outreach** component of the Youth Café. And the key ingredient to ensure that this virtual space is fully utilised and operationalized is the **energies, knowledge, and creativity** of the young people themselves.

The Youth Café will also be a **mobile, moving space** that reaches out to young people where they are on a daily basis. Such a mobile space will ensure that we reach the vast numbers of young people across the province.

The key outputs of the Youth Café are fundamentally tied into the overall vision and outcomes of the YDS as outlined at the beginning of this document. The outputs need to be organised around the SOS;

Services- It must provide, facilitate, link, connect, inform, educate all young people to those services they need for their own development. These services will cover the entire spectrum required by young people of the Province – with specific emphasis on those services that contribute towards the vision and long –term outcomes of the strategy.

Opportunities – it must ensure that young people have access to, or are connected to, the widest range of opportunities integral to their on-going development. Such opportunities will cover the entire spectrum of youth needs and will focus on those that contribute towards the vision and long –term outcomes of the strategy.

Support – Providing services and opportunities may not be enough for the successful development of young people. These services and opportunities must be underpinned by a supportive environment that encourages young people to flourish and which provides a safety net against recidivism.

A typical Youth Café will have the following functional operational areas:

- Management
- Training/up skilling
- Networking and Linkages
- Channelling

A vision underpinned by real life models

There are national and international models that are useful living examples to draw from. The projects encourage and build youth social entrepreneurialism, and successfully reach thousands of youth.