

NAF launches Creative City project with EU

The National Arts Festival has announced the launch of a new partnership with the European Union (EU), which will see over R6m invested in the City of Grahamstown's 'Creative City' project over the next two years.



The partnership, through which the EU will support the Festival's "Makana Arts Academy" project, was announced in Grahamstown last week.

"We've seen from the Rhodes University Economic Impact Study also released today [28 January 2014] that the Festival makes a contribution of around R360m to the GDP of the Eastern Cape. That's just from the staging of an annual, 11-day event. Long-term projects such as the one with the EU will enable us to affect the sector and the broader economy positively over a longer period of time, and will result in a more sustained drive to create jobs in the cultural sector," Festival CEO Tony Lankester said.

The Makana Arts Academy is a "virtual institution" which will institute training programmes across the city in various arts disciplines, creating opportunities for Grahamstown residents to become active participants in the national arts economy. It will also establish a shared space in Grahamstown for artists, and which will act as a public creativity hub.

"We know that there are hundreds of talented people living in this City who have never been given the opportunity to explore their full potential. This programme will help identify, nurture and mentor this talent to the point where they are active in the sector and deriving an income from the arts," Lankester said.

"In putting the grant proposal together we drew in partners such as ASSITEJ South Africa (the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People) and Kuns Onbeperk - the company behind the annual ABSA Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees in Oudtshoorn, who face many challenges similar to the ones we face in Grahamstown," Lankester said.

Creative City

The Makana Arts Academy is part of a broader "Creative City" project, spearheaded by the National Arts Festival in partnership with Makana Municipality, Cacadu District Municipality, and the Eastern Cape Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture, which aims to establish Grahamstown as a Creative Capital of South Africa over the next 5 years.

"A couple of years ago the National Minister of Arts and Culture challenged the sector to use the arts to drive 'Mzansi's Golden Economy'. These projects are inspired by that call and are part of our response to the challenge. We have seen first hand what a Festival can do for an economically depressed part of the country. We see that every year. This takes things to the next level - we want to invest in the arts and its capacity to create jobs and support a whole range of industries, including tourism and hospitality. We want Grahamstown to become known as a South African cultural and creative hub. There are a number of projects, both established and new, which will help steer us there, and which when galvanized will build on the positioning that has already been established in the City by the Festival and various institutions over the years," Lankester said.

Ambassador Roeland van de Geer, Head of the EU Delegation to South Africa said: "The European Union is delighted to partner with the National Arts Festival in this very innovative project. The Makana Arts Academy may well become a model for "Creative Cities" that foster creativity and innovation, and economic growth. With a combination of arts education in schools, training and mentoring for young artists, the setting up of production companies and the creation of a public art space, Grahamstown is about to set the standard for how creative industries can lead society".

The Makana Arts Academy is funded by a grant from the European Union.

The Creative City project is managed by the National Arts Festival in partnership with ASSITEJ South Africa, Kuns Onbeperk, Makana Municipality, Cacadu District Municipality, and the Eastern Cape Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture.

Further support for the Creative City project is drawn from the broader contribution to the Festival of the National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund (NLDTF) and the National Department of Arts and Culture.

The National Arts Festival is sponsored by The National Lottery Distribution Trust Fund, Standard Bank, The Department of Arts and Culture, The Eastern Cape Government, The National Arts Council, City Press and M Net.

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