

Concept Note

BCM SkillsConnect-A Digital Platform Connecting Job Seekers with Local Work Opportunities

Background

Every morning across Buffalo City, hundreds of unemployed men and women gather at road intersections, shopping centres, and street corners holding signs that simply read "Job." They wait for someone to stop and offer them work for the day, whether it is gardening, painting, plumbing, domestic work, construction, moving furniture, cleaning, or other manual labour.

Unfortunately, most residents are hesitant to hire them. The issue is not necessarily a lack of demand for these services, but rather a lack of trust. Homeowners have no way of knowing:

- Who the individual is.
- Whether they possess the skills they claim.
- Whether they are reliable.
- Whether previous employers had positive experiences.
- What constitutes a fair rate of pay.

As a result, many capable workers remain unemployed while thousands of households struggle to find trustworthy people for small jobs.

This project seeks to bridge this gap by creating a trusted digital marketplace that gives unemployed people a professional identity while providing residents with confidence when hiring.

Project Overview

BCM SkillsConnect will be a municipal-supported online platform where unemployed youth and adults can create verified profiles showcasing their skills and experience.

The platform will function similarly to successful international service marketplaces such as TaskRabbit or Uber, but will be designed specifically for the South African context and the realities of informal employment.

Each registered worker will have a profile with the following information:

- Full name
- Professional photograph
- Contact details
- Skills and services offered

- Languages spoken
- Suburbs working in
- Available days and hours
- Hourly or daily rates
- Identification verification
- Star ratings
- Customer reviews
- Number of completed jobs
- Skills certificates (where available)

Residents and businesses will be able to search by:

- Skill
- Location
- Rating
- Price
- Availability

The platform creates transparency, accountability and trust while increasing employment opportunities.

The Role of Buffalo City Municipality

Buffalo City Municipality will serve as the custodian of the platform, ensuring public confidence and credibility.

The Municipality would:

- Platform development.
- Registration drives including verification of identity and skills.
- Maintain the database.
- Promote the platform to residents.
- Ensure quality standards and monitor complaints
- Produce employment statistics that inform municipal planning.



Having the Municipality oversee the platform significantly increases public trust and adoption.

The Role of Ripples for Change

Ripples for Change conceptualized and designed this project and will support the implementation of the project, including partnerships coordination.

The Role of ECDC

The Eastern Cape Development Corporation can strengthen the programme by helping workers become more employable and productive.

Potential support includes:

Skills Development

Participants can receive accredited or short skills training in areas such as:

- Plumbing
- Electrical work
- Carpentry
- Painting
- Welding
- Domestic services
- Gardening
- Landscaping
- Tiling
- Nail technician
- Basic construction
- Entrepreneurship
- Customer service
- Financial literacy



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Starter Toolkits

Many unemployed workers possess skills but cannot afford the equipment needed to earn an income.

ECDC could provide starter kits according to occupation, for example:

- Tool kits
- Drills
- Weed eaters
- Lawn mowers
- Cleaning equipment
- Painting equipment
- Plumbing tools
- Electrical testing equipment
- Protective clothing
- Safety equipment

Ownership of these assets creates dignity while increasing earning potential.

How the Platform Works

1. The job seeker registers.
2. Their identity is verified.
3. A professional profile and photograph are created.
4. Skills are captured and verified where possible.
5. The worker receives basic customer service and digital platform training.
6. Residents search the website for the service they require.
7. The resident contacts the worker directly.
8. After completion of the job, both parties rate one another.

Over time, highly rated workers build strong reputations that increase their chances of securing more work and charging higher rates.

Platform Features

The website will include:

- Worker profiles
- Search by skill
- Search by suburb
- Ratings and reviews
- Verified identities
- Standard hourly rate guidance
- Booking requests
- Mobile-friendly interface
- Safety guidelines
- Complaint management system
- Analytics dashboard
- Skills certification uploads
- Availability calendar

Expected Outcomes

During the first three year, the project aims to achieve:

- Register 5,000 unemployed workers.
- Facilitate over 50,000 short-term work opportunities.
- Improve household incomes.
- Reduce unemployment.
- Build trusted employment relationships.
- Increase skills development participation.
- Formalise parts of the informal labour market.
- Improve community safety through verified workers.

- Generate employment data for municipal planning.

Benefits

For Workers

- Increased employment opportunities.
- Professional identity.
- Fair and transparent pricing.
- Opportunity to build a reputation.
- Skills development.
- Increased earning potential.
- Access to equipment.

For Residents

- Trusted workers.
- Verified identities.
- Transparent reviews.
- Fair pricing.
- Convenient booking.
- Greater confidence when inviting workers into homes.

For Buffalo City Municipality

- Reduced unemployment.
- Digital innovation.
- Improved labour market data.
- Stronger local economy.
- Poverty reduction.
- Increased public confidence.
- Support for inclusive economic development.



- Help other municipalities to replicate the project

Sustainability

The platform is designed to become financially sustainable through a combination of:

- Municipal support.
- Corporate sponsorship.
- Skills development funding.
- Donor investment.
- Optional premium listings for businesses.
- Advertising from local suppliers and hardware stores.
- Partnerships with insurance providers and financial institutions.

No commission would be deducted from workers' earnings, ensuring that the platform remains accessible to those with the greatest need.

Innovation

This project transforms an informal, invisible labour market into a trusted digital economy. Rather than waiting on street corners hoping someone will stop, unemployed residents gain a professional digital identity that showcases their skills, reputation and reliability.

Unlike traditional employment programmes that focus solely on training, BCM SkillsConnect creates a direct pathway to income generation by connecting workers with real customers. It combines digital technology, municipal oversight, skills development and community trust into a single ecosystem that can significantly improve livelihoods.

Once proven successful in Buffalo City, the model can be replicated by municipalities across South Africa, creating a nationally recognised platform for informal workers and helping thousands of unemployed people transition into sustainable livelihoods.

