

Community radio lauded

First-ever National Community Radio Awards to be held



ON AIR: The entries for the first National Community Radio Awards have impressed judges with their wide range of skills, talent and creativity.

THE Free State will host its first ever National Community Radio Awards in Bloemfontein this month.

The awards will celebrate the work of community radio in the province and throughout South Africa. With hundreds of nominations for the awards' 11 categories, organisers say they are pleased with how the awards are engaging community broadcasters.

While entries are still being evaluated the judges have already said how impressed they are with the wide range of skills, talents, and creativity across the sector. It is estimated that the staff of about 170 radio stations are expected to arrive in the city from next week. According to chairperson of the National Community Radio Forum in the Free State Manko Tsoehlisi it is all systems go for this ground-breaking event. "We are delighted to be hosting the first community radio awards in South Africa.

This is not about winners and losers, but rather an opportunity to showcase the fantastic work achieved on an hourly basis by community broadcasters in South Africa," Tsoehlisi said. She said the awards would be held in Bloemfontein for the next five years. Tsoehlisi said the event would form part of the programme of the National Community Radio Week (NCRW) that would be held at the University of Free State from February 13 to 18.

The week-long NCRW, which is funded by the provincial government, will start with the celebration of World Radio Day, which is celebrated around the world on February 13. A workshop will take place on campus, where station managers are expected to be trained in management, governance and development skills. She said upon completion of the training participants will receive certificates for management, governance, finance and marketing. "The time has arrived for the sector to move to another level, which is financial health and professionalism in community radio.

"It is imperative that support has to be designed on the basis of a specific and concrete analysis of a particular station's situation," she said. Tsoehlisi says it has become apparent that skills development and management is crucial for the sustainability of community radio stations.

“Because the premier is passionate about community media, he, together with his executive council, decided to go all out to fund this ground-breaking initiative. “We are humbled and glad that they have decided to fund this project,” Tsoehlisi said.

She said responses and nominations they received from some 247 stations across the country had been overwhelming. “It’s been wonderful to have received so many entries and to see so much engagement from the sector in the first year of the award,” she said.

Well known radio personalities Tim Modise and former Metro FM station manager Koos Radebe will be keynote speakers at the awards.

The awards are facilitated by The Thoughts Lounge events.