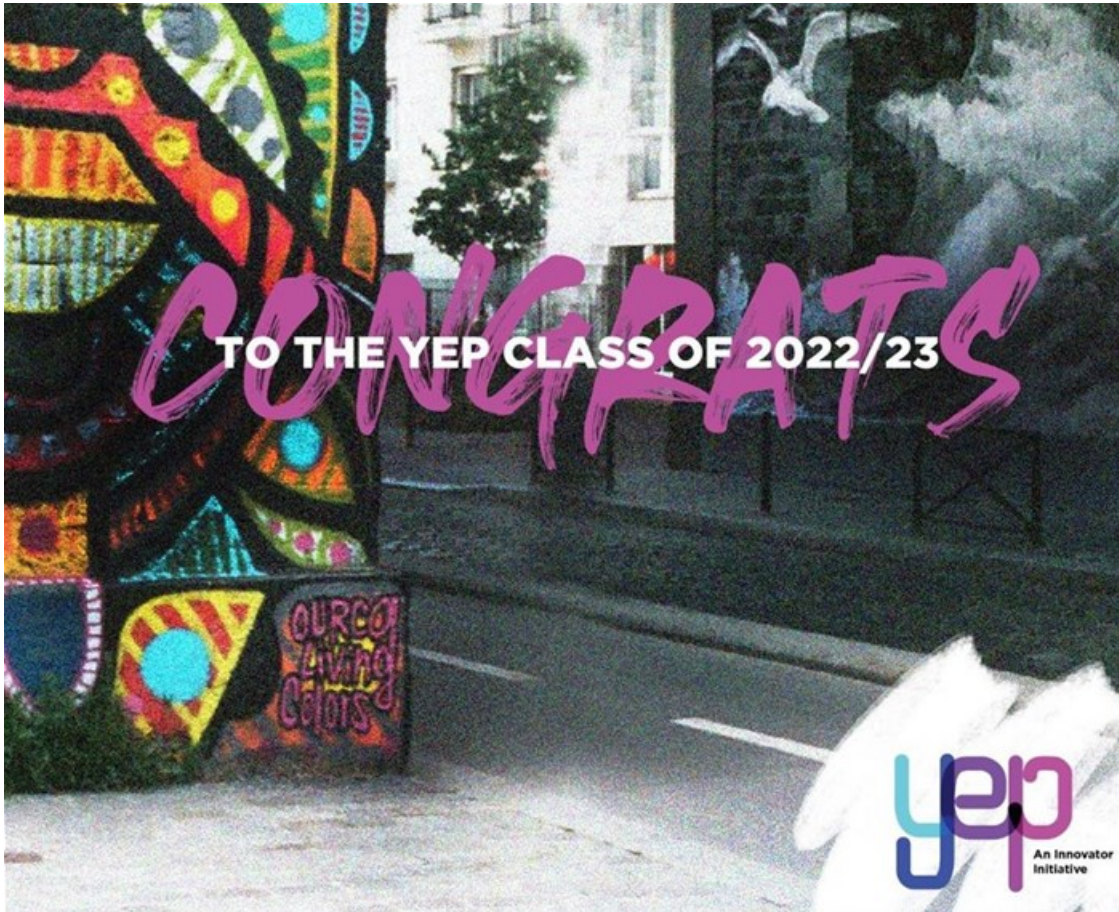


Youth Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP) celebrates 2023 Innovator Trust graduates from across South Africa

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Celebrations were in full throng this Youth Month as fifty young South Africans from across the country were announced as graduates of the 2023 Innovator Trust Youth Entrepreneurship Programme. The graduation was held through an online virtual ceremony earlier this month.



More popularly known as YEP, the Innovator Trust Youth Entrepreneurship Programme is aimed at providing business development and technological skills training to unemployed, matriculated youth with prospects to become future entrepreneurs. In its fifth year now, the YEP programme has graduated more than 154 South African youth, producing new young entrepreneurs to the South African economy.

The YEP programme was initiated as a partnership between Vodacom and the Innovator Trust back in 2017, with the focus of addressing increasing rates of youth unemployment and encouraging entrepreneurial innovation through exposing youth to opportunities in the realm of technology and entrepreneurship.

The Innovator Trust has historically recruited youth from the Vodacom Academy into the 1-year YEP programme annually. “I believe entrepreneurs are not born but rather made. Joining the YEP programme provides you with access to markets, teaches you how to manage your finances and self-management to be a better entrepreneur,” said Senzeni Dladla, CEO of digital communications agency, INFOMedia and former YEP and Vodacom Academy graduate who delivered a keynote address at this year’s YEP graduation event.

As part of the year-long programme, youth are required to conceptualise their own ideas and develop them into business

plans. Thereafter the youth are exposed to a pitching process of their business plans for assessment before a panel of industry experts. Here they are able to receive constructive feedback on their go-to-market plans.

Awards were announced at this year's graduation for top achievers from each participating province who had performed exceptionally while on the YEP programme over the last year as well as for the top business presentations. In an all-female showing, Fundiswa Magwaza from KwaZulu-Natal, Saadiqah Omdien from the Western Cape, and Gauteng-based Innocentia Seloane were announced as YEP Top Achievers for the 2022/23 period.

The Top Three business presentation winners were, Nonhlanhla Sola from Gauteng taking first place, and Divine Thibela and Winny Masangu both from Mpumalanga, who took second and third place respectively.



OVERALL ACTIVITY
winner

WINNER

KWAZULU-NATAL



OVERALL ACTING
AWARD

WINNER
WESTERN CAPE



BUSINESS PRESENTATION

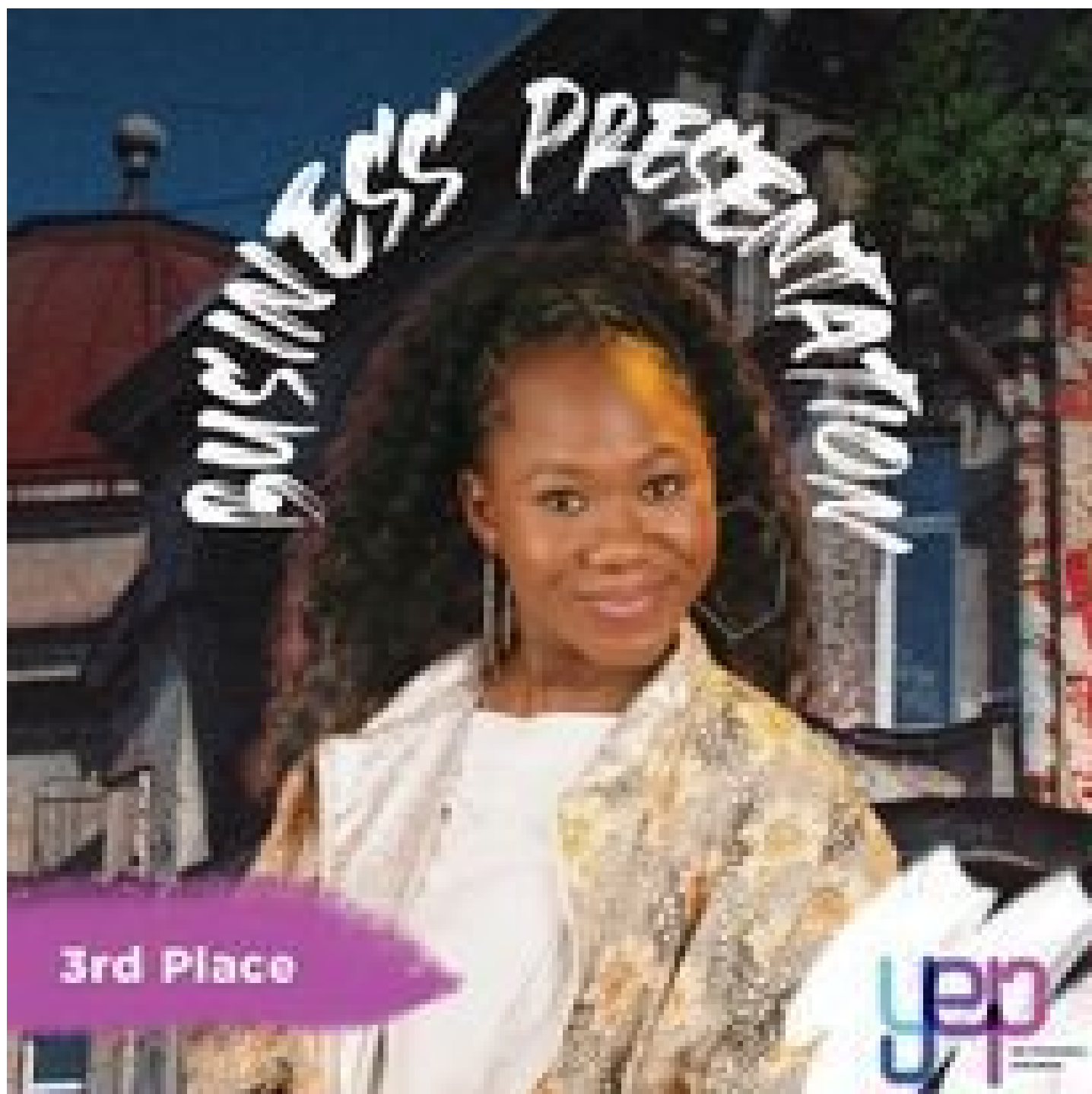
1st Place



GUESTS PRESENTATION

2nd Place





Supporting small businesses while tackling youth unemployment and work readiness

With 70–80% of start-up businesses expected to fail within the first five years of operation, youth on the YEP programme receive the necessary tools required by start-ups to beat the odds and survive, such as the access to digital platforms, equipment, business acumen and networks.

Youth beneficiaries are provided with facilitated training, practical work-ready skills development, personal development coaching and mentorship support to assist youth in discovering their entrepreneurial potential. Beneficiaries are also equipped with laptops and monthly data in order to participate in online training sessions and delivery throughout the programme.

With the country's youth unemployment rate rising to 62.1% in the first quarter of 2023, and youth accounting for 49% of people currently not in education or employment (NEET), key differentiating factor of the YEP programme is its strong focus on addressing the lack of work experience among youth. In its holistic approach, the YEP programme makes it compulsory for beneficiaries to participate in an internship.

Youth are placed with tech-based SMMEs from the Innovator Trust's Enterprise Development (ED) and Supplier Development (SD) programmes, exposing them to a real-life work environment, allowing them to learn on-the-job critical skills while creating awareness of what it takes to be a tech entrepreneur in South Africa. All interns are provided with a monthly stipend by the Innovator Trust. The internship initiative has provided internships to 141 young South Africans, supporting over 140 small businesses in the past financial year alone.

"In a world that is currently experiencing so much instability, our youth have been unapologetic and unafraid in their fight, speaking up for their beliefs and ideas, and demanding greater recognition and representation at the decision making table where their futures are at stake. Through the YEP programme, the Innovator Trust celebrates their innovative thinking, and aim to hone their ability to build something out of nothing. We believe in the youth of South Africa and will continue to provide the support needed to thrive," commented Tashline Jooste, CEO of the Innovator Trust.

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The Innovator Trust was created to support the growth of small black-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) businesses in South Africa. Our programmes facilitate training that develops their skills as business owners.

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