4th Edition

CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
RAPID INCUBATOR

NEWSLETTER

Themed: "From Skills to Sustainable Impact: Empowering Entrepreneurs, Transforming Communities"

FROM INCUBATION TO IMPACT — THE CANDID FASHION ACADEMY JOURNEY



CfERI proudly highlights the inspiring journey of Frank Ramatsetse, a 2024 incubation programme graduate and the visionary founder of Candid Fashion Academy, officially launched in 2026 in Johannesburg with support from the Centre and the Small Enterprise Development and Finance Agency (SEDFA).

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KEY EVENTS

- **LIMPOPO BAMBELELA BUSINESS AWARDS: CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP**
- **SIYB PROGRAMME: BUILDING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR A THRIVING SEKHUKHUNE**
- **SABS WORKSHOP: STANDARDS, SKILLS, AND SUCCESS: STRENGTHENING MSMES**





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CENTRE MANAGER'S CORNER

Empowering Entrepreneurs, Transforming Communities



Ms. Martha Mamoepa
Centre Manager, CfERI

As we approach the close of the 2025/26 financial year, it is inspiring to reflect on the remarkable milestones achieved by the Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (CfERI). Our core mission remains steadfast: to transform youth, students, and job seekers into self-sustaining entrepreneurs capable of driving meaningful economic growth within the Sekhukhune District and beyond.

This year, CfERI has made significant strides in entrepreneurial skills development, industry-specific training, and innovation-driven initiatives. Through programmes such as the Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB), the Solar Training Programme, and targeted entrepreneurial mentorship and coaching, we have equipped emerging entrepreneurs with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to grow their businesses sustainably.

We are particularly proud of the achievements of our incubated entrepreneurs who have demonstrated resilience, innovation, and impact. Success stories like that of Frank Ramatsetse of Candid Fashion Academy, Kgotso Makuwa of PureField Agriculture, and Hunadi Mabulana of Rea Dira Farm reflect the Centre's commitment to nurturing business talent that creates jobs, strengthens local economies, and addresses societal challenges such as youth unemployment and poverty.enges

Our partnerships with institutions such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO), Sekhukhune TVET College, and South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) have further strengthened our capacity to deliver high-quality, impactful programmes across the district.

As we look forward, CfERI remains dedicated to fostering innovation, supporting emerging industries, and building an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. We encourage all aspiring entrepreneurs to leverage these opportunities, participate actively in programmes, and transform their ideas into thriving businesses. Together, we are building a generation of entrepreneurs who contribute not only to their own success but to the economic prosperity of our communities and nation.

EDITORIAL LETTER



Welcome to the 4th Edition of the CfERI Newsletter (2025/26)

Dear Readers,

It is with great pride that we present the fourth edition of the CfERI newsletter for the 2025/26 financial year. This edition showcases the dynamic activities, achievements, and success stories of the Centre as we continue to empower entrepreneurs and support youth-led innovation in the Sekhukhune District.

In this issue, you will read about our entrepreneurial skills programmes, including the internationally accredited SIYB initiative, the launch of the Solar Training Programme, and participation in South Africa Innovation Week, where youth and MSMEs gained national exposure for their innovative solutions.

We also highlight the remarkable journeys of our incubated entrepreneurs who are making tangible contributions to their communities and the economy. From the establishment of Candid Fashion Academy to the growth of PureField Agriculture and Rea Dira Farm, these stories reflect resilience, vision, and the transformative impact of entrepreneurship.

Additionally, CfERI continues to provide practical support for entrepreneurs through mentorship, training workshops, certification programmes, and hot-desking services, reinforcing our commitment to nurturing a sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem.

We hope this newsletter inspires aspiring entrepreneurs, students, and partners to explore opportunities, engage with our programmes, and contribute to economic growth and innovation within our district.

Thank you for your continued support as we strive to empower entrepreneurs, transform communities, and create a thriving local economy.

With entrepreneurial regards,

Ms. Kwena Mehale

Marketing Officer, CfERI

SIYB PROGRAMME: BUILDING ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS FOR A THRIVING SEKHUKHUNE



GYB beneficaries from Apel Campus Hair Dressing group during certificate ceremony

Following the successful Train-the-Trainer SIYB programme established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2025, CfERI continued to equip emerging entrepreneurs with practical skills to overcome common business challenges, such as limited management knowledge, weak financial systems, ineffective marketing, and operational inefficiencies.

The programme develops competencies in:

- Business planning and informed decision-making
- Financial management and record-keeping
- Marketing and customer relationship management
- Operational efficiency and productivity

The SIYB programme progresses through four stages:

1. Generate Your Business Idea (GYB)
2. Start Your Business (SYB)
3. Improve Your Business (IYB)
4. Expand Your Business (EYB)



Training Highlights:

- GYB Training (4–6 February 2026, Apel Campus): 21 Hairdressing students trained.
- SYB Training (9–13 February 2026, CS Barlow Campus): 15 incubated clients trained.
- IYB Training (CS Barlow Campus): 10 incubated clients trained.





Each session concluded with a certification ceremony, acknowledging participants' achievements. During the ceremony, the Centre Manager emphasized that this programme is a vital step in developing self-sustaining entrepreneurs, fostering MSME growth, and contributing to poverty reduction and youth employment in the Sekhukhune District.



CfERI is now an accredited SIYB training provider, enhancing its ability to deliver structured and impactful entrepreneurial training throughout the incubation journey.





FIRST YEAR INDUCTION: INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF JOB CREATORS

From 7–9 January 2026, CfERI engaged approximately 300 first-year students during the Sekhukhune TVET College First-Year Induction Programme at Apel and CS Barlow Campuses. This engagement formed a key part of our mission to transform job seekers into job creators, equipping young people with the mindset, knowledge, and resources to explore self-employment and entrepreneurship as viable career pathways.

Objectives of the Induction Engagement:

- Introduce students to CfERI's suite of entrepreneurship services and programmes.
- Encourage youth to consider entrepreneurship as a career option alongside formal employment.
- Raise awareness of available support structures and resources to grow small businesses.
- Inspire students to adopt an innovation-driven mindset early in their studies.





Programmes and Activities Showcased:

- Ya Rona Digital Skills Programme (in partnership with NEMISA): Providing students with essential digital literacy and skills for business efficiency.
- Start and Improve Your Business (SIYB) Programme (in partnership with ILO): Equipping students with practical business management, financial, and operational skills.
- TVETpreneur Programme: Guiding students through the process of idea generation, business planning, and market entry.
- Entrepreneurship Awareness Workshops: Interactive sessions highlighting success stories and business opportunities within Sekhukhune District.
- Networking Opportunities: Students connected with incubated entrepreneurs, mentors, and industry experts to gain firsthand insights.

Through initiatives like this induction, CfERI aims to build a pipeline of young, skilled, and innovative entrepreneurs ready to contribute to Sekhukhune's economic development. The Centre will continue to engage students throughout the year via workshops, bootcamps, mentorship, and incubation support, ensuring that entrepreneurship is both accessible and actionable within the College.









SOLAR PROGRAMME LAUNCH 2026: EMPOWERING YOUTH IN THE GREEN ECONOMY



CEO of Sekhukhune TVET College and delegates during Salor Programme Launch

On 18 March 2026, CfERI participated in the official Solar Training Programme Launch at the Sekhukhune TVET College Skills Centre. This initiative is part of CfERI's commitment to fostering skills development, entrepreneurship, and economic participation in emerging industries, specifically within the renewable energy sector.

The Solar Training Programme introduces participants to the South African Photovoltaic Industry Association (SAPVIA) PV GreenCard pathway, which serves as the national standard for safe, compliant, and high-quality solar installations. The programme integrates both theoretical and practical components, preparing participants for industry assessment and certification.

Objectives of the Programme:

- Provide hands-on technical training to aspiring solar installers.
- Build a pipeline of accredited professionals ready to enter the renewable energy sector.
- Strengthen youth participation in the green economy.
- Foster entrepreneurial opportunities by equipping participants with skills to start their solar installation and maintenance businesses.
- Support sustainable energy adoption in local communities and commercial enterprises.



CfERI's involvement ensures that participants receive holistic support, combining technical skills with entrepreneurial guidance, helping them become job creators and innovators in the renewable energy sector. This programme is a strong example of CfERI's commitment to aligning skills development with emerging industry trends, fostering economic inclusion, and promoting sustainable development.



Training Structure and Activities:

- Theoretical Training: Principles of solar technology, electrical safety, system design, and regulatory compliance.
- Practical Training: Installation, maintenance, and troubleshooting of solar PV systems under real-world conditions.
- Entrepreneurship Coaching: Guidance on how to start, manage, and grow a solar business, including customer acquisition and financial management.
- Assessment and Certification: Participants will be assessed according to SAPVIA standards to earn their PV GreenCard, enabling them to operate professionally and safely in the solar industry.



The programme is delivered in collaboration with:

- Sekhukhune TVET College – providing the technical training facilities.
- Sekhukhune Development Agency – offering business support and mentorship.
- SAPVIA – ensuring adherence to industry standards and accreditation.



SOUTH AFRICA INNOVATION WEEK: SHOWCASING YOUTH INNOVATION ON A NATIONAL STAGE



innovators, entrepreneurs and mentor during the SA Innovation Week

CfERI, in collaboration with Sekhukhune TVET College and the Relay Institute, proudly participated in South Africa Innovation Week held at the NASREC Expo Centre, Johannesburg. This annual event brings together innovators, entrepreneurs, industry experts, and investors from across the country to celebrate and showcase cutting-edge ideas and solutions.



Programme Highlights:

- The event featured the top 10 finalists from the Limpopo Youth Technology Innovation Competition, including both TVET students and MSMEs supported by CfERI.
- Finalists presented innovative, practical solutions addressing real-world challenges in sectors such as agriculture, renewable energy, ICT, and social development.
- CfERI participants received mentorship and coaching from industry experts to refine their ideas, strengthen business models, and enhance presentation skills for national exposure.

Activities and Engagement:

- Pitching Competition: Participants presented business ideas and prototypes to a panel of judges comprising investors, industry specialists, and government representatives.
- Workshops and Masterclasses: Sessions focused on entrepreneurship, innovation management, market access strategies, and intellectual property protection.
- Networking Opportunities: Participants engaged with potential partners, funders, and fellow innovators to explore collaboration and investment opportunities.
- Innovation Showcases: Products, prototypes, and technological solutions developed by youth and MSMEs were displayed for public and industry engagement.

Impact of CfERI's Participation:

- Strengthened the entrepreneurial skills of youth and incubated MSMEs through hands-on exposure to national-level innovation platforms.
- Provided a platform for participants to secure potential funding, mentorship, and business partnerships.
- Encouraged peer-to-peer learning and knowledge sharing between students, startups, and established innovators.

Reinforced CfERI's role as a catalyst for innovation-driven entrepreneurship in Sekhukhune District



Student and Entrepreneur Highlights:

- Participants gained confidence in pitching and articulating their business ideas.
- The event inspired participants to think beyond local markets and explore opportunities at provincial, national, and continental levels.

Through its involvement in South Africa Innovation Week, CfERI continues to foster a culture of innovation, strengthen youth-led enterprises, and promote collaboration between academia, industry, and government. This initiative demonstrates CfERI's commitment to empowering entrepreneurs with skills, exposure, and opportunities that enable them to make meaningful contributions to the economy and society.

SABS WORKSHOP: STANDARDS, SKILLS, AND SUCCESS: STRENGTHENING MSMES



On 12 March 2026, the Centre in partnership with the Sekhukhune District Municipality and the South African Bureau of Standards (SABS), hosted a Skills Development Workshop designed to equip micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) with the knowledge and tools required to comply with industry standards, improve product quality, and enhance market readiness.

The workshop was attended by over 50 entrepreneurs representing diverse sectors, including manufacturing, agri-processing, construction, and services.

Workshop Objectives:

- Educate entrepreneurs on national and international quality standards and compliance requirements.
- Provide guidance on product certification processes, ensuring market readiness.
- Enhance the competitiveness of MSMEs by demonstrating how standardization improves credibility and consumer trust.
- Connect entrepreneurs with strategic partners and service providers to support business growth.

Key Activities and Sessions:

- Standards Awareness Presentation: SABS representatives outlined the importance of compliance and standardization for business sustainability and market access.
- Product Certification Process Workshop: Step-by-step guidance on obtaining certification for products, including testing, quality control, and labelling requirements.
- Interactive Case Studies: Entrepreneurs analysed real-life examples of businesses that successfully leveraged standards to expand markets and grow revenue.
- Q&A and Advisory Sessions: Participants received direct consultation on their product and service challenges, with expert advice tailored to their sector.
- Networking Opportunities: MSMEs engaged with mentors, government representatives, and industry stakeholders to explore potential collaborations and funding opportunities.





MSMEs attending SABS Workshop

Impact and Outcomes:

- Entrepreneurs gained a clear understanding of compliance requirements critical for operating in competitive markets.
- Participants developed action plans to improve their products, enhance efficiency, and increase marketability.

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- The workshop strengthened the capacity of MSMEs to meet both local and export market standards, positioning them for growth and sustainability.
- Feedback highlighted the value of knowledge transfer, with entrepreneurs expressing confidence in applying the skills and insights to their businesses.

Speaking during the workshop, the Centre Manager emphasized that compliance is a cornerstone of business success and that CfERI is committed to connecting entrepreneurs with resources, knowledge, and partnerships to ensure sustainable growth.



This initiative reinforces CfERI's strategic objective of empowering entrepreneurs with both technical and business skills, fostering a competitive and resilient SME ecosystem in the Sekhukhune District.



LIMPOPO BAMBELELA BUSINESS AWARDS: CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP



Ms.Kanego Thamana topping top 20 out of 68 enterprises in the Limpopo Bambelela Pitching Competition

The Centre proudly acknowledges the participation and accomplishments of its incubated entrepreneurs at the Limpopo Bambelela Business Awards, held from 20–23 January 2026 in Polokwane.

Organised by the Hollywood Foundation, the awards aim to identify, support, and celebrate high-impact small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that demonstrate innovation, sustainability, and growth potential.

The following CfERI-supported entrepreneurs took part in the event:

- **Ms Naum Kwena** – Founder and CEO of Naum Kwena, a company specialising in the production and supply of high-quality cleaning products for both industrial and household use. The business supplies hotels, mines, and schools within the Sekhukhune District, contributing to local economic activity and service delivery.
- **Mr James Phala** – Founder and CEO of Reatahle, a construction enterprise offering installation services for gutters, fascia boards, and downpipes. He has also developed an eco-friendly innovation called the "Turu Turu," a device designed to boil water using minimal energy, reflecting his commitment to sustainability.
- **Mrs Kanego Thamane** – Founder and Director of Nolengka Farm, an agricultural enterprise focused on producing herbal products from indigenous plants such as Monsonia angustifolia and Aloe ferox. Her business blends traditional knowledge with modern agricultural practices to create value-added products.



Ms.Kanego Thamana and team during the Limpopo Bambelela Pitching Competition exhibition

A key highlight of the competition was Mrs Thamane's achievement of placing among the top five out of 68 enterprises in the Limpopo Bambelela Pitching Competition. She was also awarded R40,000 in funding to support the growth of her business.



Participant: Ms. Naum Kwena



Participant: Mr James Phala

SUCCESS STORY: FROM INCUBATION TO IMPACT — THE CANDID FASHION ACADEMY JOURNEY



Frank's entrepreneurial path began with a strong passion for fashion and design, alongside a clear ambition to create meaningful employment opportunities for young creatives. After establishing Candid Fashion as a brand recognized for high-quality products, he identified a gap in skills development within the industry. This led to the creation of Candid Fashion Academy, a platform dedicated to training and mentoring the next generation of fashion professionals.

Key Milestones:

- 2024: Graduated from CfERI's incubation programme, gaining critical business skills, mentorship, and industry connections through the Centre and SEDFA.
- 2025: Expanded his vision by initiating Candid Fashion Academy to provide youth with practical, industry-relevant training.
- ·2026: Officially launched the Academy, complete with a fully operational fashion studio in Johannesburg.

Academy Highlights:

- Offers QCTO-accredited programmes (NQF Levels 2, 4, and 5) in Fashion and Textile Design.
- Collaborates with Tshwane University of Technology and the University of Johannesburg, creating pathways for internships and real-world project exposure.
- Partners with A.M.CO.ZA (Ambitious Machinery), a Chinese printing machinery company, to strengthen technical training.
- Employs more than 30 graduates and currently trains 30 students, contributing meaningfully to job creation and skills development.









Entrepreneurial Impact:

- The Academy is building a pipeline of skilled professionals ready to participate in South Africa's creative economy.
- It promotes economic empowerment, particularly among youth pursuing careers in fashion and design.
- Candid Fashion Academy serves as a hub for innovation, mentorship, and entrepreneurship, aligned with CfERI's mission, supported by the Centre and SEDFA, to transform self-employment into sustainable, scalable enterprises.

Challenges and Resilience:

- Frank faced early obstacles, including limited funding, restricted market access, and a lack of technical resources. Through mentorship and support from CfERI, the Centre, and SEDFA, he successfully navigated these challenges.
- His determination and strategic approach enabled him to grow Candid Fashion into a recognized brand while expanding into education and skills development.

Vision for the Future:

- Frank plans to expand Candid Fashion Academy nationally, increasing access to quality fashion education and entrepreneurial support across multiple provinces.
- The Academy aims to strengthen partnerships with local fashion industries to unlock more internship and employment opportunities.
- By nurturing creative talent, the initiative contributes to reducing youth unemployment, alleviating poverty, and strengthening South Africa's creative economy.



CfERI commends Frank's dedication, resilience, and forward-thinking leadership, which reflect the core purpose of the Business Incubation Programme, supported by the Centre and SEDFA, to empower entrepreneurs to build impactful businesses that drive social and economic change.

"What started as a single fashion business has evolved into a platform that trains, empowers, and uplifts others—demonstrating how entrepreneurship can transform communities."

ENTREPRENEUR SPOTLIGHT I MEET THE FOUNDER PUREFIELD AGRICULTURE



Meet Kgotso Makuwa, founder and owner of PureField Agriculture, a purpose-driven agribusiness focused on community development, food security, and sustainable farming.

Inspired by firsthand experiences of food insecurity and limited access to nutritious food, Kgotso began his journey with a small vegetable garden in collaboration with local schools and community members. What started modestly has grown into a thriving enterprise dedicated to producing affordable, healthy, and locally grown vegetables.

Kgotso is passionate about empowering others and views agriculture as more than just food production. For him, it is a catalyst for economic growth, skills development, and community upliftment. Through PureField Agriculture, he continues to create opportunities for local farmers, youth, and emerging agricultural practitioners, while contributing to improved food security in the Sekhukhune District.

"Agriculture is not just about growing crops — it's about growing people, communities, and sustainable futures."

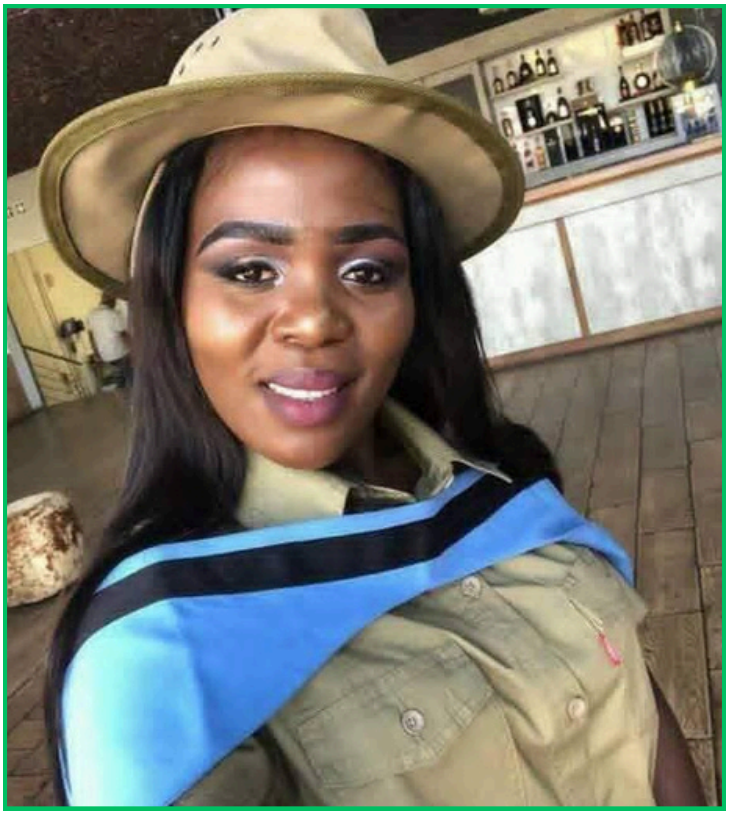
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Entrepreneur Spotlight | International Women's Month



Meet Hunadi Margaret Lethube Mabulana, founder and director of Rea Dira Farm in Elandskraal Village, under the Ephraim Mogale Local Municipality.

Rea Dira Farm is an expanding agribusiness engaged in crop production—cotton, dry beans, and vegetables—as well as agro-processing, producing items such as beetroot tea, iced tea, dried vegetables, and herbs. Its products are supplied to markets including Great North Cotton, Ekasi Market, retailers, restaurants, hawkers, and the local community.



Hunadi's passion for farming was inspired by her late mother. She began her agricultural journey in 2010 and went on to study Crop Science at Tshwane University of Technology in 2014, further strengthening her expertise while continuing to manage the farm.

The farm now operates on 60 hectares secured through a 30-year lease agreement with the Department of Rural Development and Land Reform, with an option to purchase. Recently, the business has secured two additional market contracts, supporting its continued growth.

Rea Dira Farm is committed to strengthening the Sekhukhune economy by creating jobs, reducing poverty, and equipping youth, women, and people living with disabilities with agricultural skills. As part of this effort, the farm participated in a three-month skills development programme, during which the farm manager helped train 216 individuals from the district, reflecting a strong commitment to community upliftment.

Message to young people in agriculture:

"You are planting the seeds of a sustainable future. Your passion and fresh ideas strengthen communities. Keep learning, collaborating, and believing in the impact you can make. Every effort you invest in the land contributes to something meaningful—from farm to table. Stay grounded in your purpose and move forward with determination."

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PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITY MSMES AND COOPERATIVES WORKSHOP





As part of Human Rights Month commemorations in the Sekhukhune District, the Centre proudly participated in the MSME and People Living with Disabilities Workshop hosted by the Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality on 31 March 2026 at the Municipal Chamber. The initiative aimed to empower persons with disabilities through MSME and cooperative development, highlighting the importance of inclusive economic participation.

The workshop provided a valuable platform for knowledge sharing, capacity building, and engagement with key stakeholders committed to promoting equal opportunities in local economic development. Participants received practical information, tools, and support to help them actively engage in and benefit from economic initiatives within their communities.

During the session, the Centre highlighted its range of services and programmes tailored to support entrepreneurs living with disabilities. It also shared inspiring success stories of incubated clients who have successfully started and grown their businesses through determination and structured support.

These stories reflect the Centre's ongoing commitment to building an inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem where disability does not limit potential. Through accessible training, tailored mentorship, and assistive resources, aspiring entrepreneurs are empowered to turn their ideas into sustainable enterprises and participate confidently in the economy.

The Centre remains committed to strengthening partnerships, expanding inclusive initiatives, and creating more opportunities for meaningful economic participation within the college and the broader community. Together, we can build an economy where everyone has the opportunity to thrive.

WORK SMART. GROW FASTER. — HOT-DESKING & BOARDROOM SERVICES AT CFERI

The Centre for Entrepreneurship Rapid Incubator (CfERI) continues to expand its support to entrepreneurs, students, and small businesses with the introduction of flexible hot-desking and professional boardroom services.

