

Accenture welcomes new SME intake to development programme

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Accenture (NYSE: ACN) today welcomed the next group of 19 small business entrepreneurs into its fourth Enterprise Supplier Development Programme (ESDP) intake.



The two-year programme focuses on developing the skills of entrepreneurial businesses to increase the economic participation and growth of black-owned SMEs within Accenture's supply chain and access to the mainstream economy. The ESD programme is part of Accenture's broader responsible business initiatives in the firm's ecosystem of value contribution to clients, the economy and South Africa.

"Quarterly, we learn of joblessness and shocking record statistics of unemployment numbers in the country. None of us foresaw that in 2022 more than 63% of our youth under 35 will not be contributing to the economy – this is both a job crisis and widespread skills deficit pandemic," says Zandile Njamela, ESD Lead for Accenture in Africa.

According to Accenture, Covid-19 has ravaged the business landscape, particularly for smaller businesses, and as we move forward, there is work to do. All are responsible for rebuilding the landscape by harnessing the ingenuity of our people, developing their skills, and unleashing the value they can bring. "We are the caretakers of our global business village. We believe that we must become part of the solution by developing much needed skills among entrepreneurs and small businesses. When small businesses are well-equipped with the necessary skills, they can employ more people and our nation can become more prosperous and far more competitive," says Njamela.

[Find out more about the 19 SMEs selected for Accenture's ESDP – click here to download their profiles.](#)

Diverse suppliers – often smaller businesses – have an enormous impact on the communities in which they operate. They help improve the livelihoods of people within the community by offering employment, and they also add specialised value to bigger businesses. Accenture believes that big companies must proactively engage with the smaller businesses in their communities and treat supplier diversity and inclusion as crucial goals and an essential part of the company's procurement strategy.

She explains that the Accenture ESD programme provides a blueprint for a more inclusive and empowered marketplace. We are achieving excellent results with the ESDP by developing the skills of black-owned entrepreneurial businesses. And this is why our theme for this class is Access to Market, where we make a considerable effort to convert the programme participants into business partners and suppliers.

"Diversity can help unlock value far exceeding traditional supply chain cost savings. It boosts competitiveness and innovation, builds consumer loyalty, attracts talent, and is for the overall betterment of society," states Njamela.

"Accenture implements inclusive procurement practices to create long-term value for their clients and communities. The ESDP contributes to our broader business context and is a substantial extension of our business. It is not mere compliance or benevolence. Inclusivity helps us remain agile, disruptive, and ahead of the market," she says.

Accenture in South Africa has selected 19 small businesses to support and upskill. "We are building these businesses so that they can become our partners and help us in our offering, gain our bottom-line benefit, and ultimately benefit all of South Africa," Njamela states. "The SMEs gain access to Accenture's resources, including our people, knowledge base, methodologies, technologies, and global network, as the whole of Accenture contributes to growing their business. It gives them a route to market, working hand in hand with a global business leader, adding value to clients and our nation," she adds.

The chosen SME suppliers might not yet be procurement ready, even after the rigorous selection process. But as they progress in the programme, they will be guided and supported according to six pillars:

1. Business and leadership training,
2. Mentorship,
3. Early payment to facilitate cash flow,
4. Business development support,
5. Access to the market through Accenture's network, and
6. Collaboration

"We do not follow a cookie-cutter approach. The development interventions are tailored to each business based on the outcomes of the business assessment, which identified any business gaps and developmental areas," Njamela explains. The development support is extended to their management team to assist the business owner in transferring the new knowledge and skills. We support the business and work with the people who run the business to ensure long-term growth and sustainability.

Njamela advises the candidates to take hold of every opportunity on this programme and soak up their mentors' wisdom and business insights – in addition to the technical and soft skills the entrepreneurs will acquire. "The mentors have honed their skills over the years, and now our ESDP SMEs will have unhindered access to this wealth of knowledge. These SMEs can now harness this gem and reap the long-term business benefits from this learning," she says.

"May each entrepreneur enjoy and find value in their participation. May each mentor find fulfilment in shaping a future business leader, and may our clients reap the value as our SMEs enter the marketplace as our supply chain ecosystem partners. I wish them all the best!" Njamela concludes.

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