

National Gazelles programme aims to assist SMEs

The Department of Small Business Development has launched the National Gazelles development programme for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) which will focus on high potential entities and handhold them to reach desired levels of growth.



The enterprise acceleration programme aims to take 200 promising entrepreneurs and growth orientated enterprises per year to new heights with an intensive support strategy.

The programme will be part of the offering by the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), and aims to identify and ramp up small businesses which have already shown that they have the potential to hold their own and compete effectively in their sectors.

"Our approach ensures that we provide support at the various stages of the growth cycle of small businesses. The National Gazelles intervention is post start-up, and ensures that growth businesses get support when they most need it," said Minister of Small Business Development, Lindiwe Zulu. She stressed that support for other entities will continue as usual. "SMEs are vital in achieving the growth and employment creation of our economy," she said.

Successful start-ups

"The initiative offers a unique and integrated business growth acceleration programme. It is designed for business owners who have successfully navigated the start-up phase, and who are now positioned for growth. We must help high growth small businesses become tomorrow's industrialists and medium-sized companies and thus contribute with the curbing of unemployment and poverty in our communities," SEDA chairman, Dr Ivor Zwane, stated.

Every year, 200 SMEs will be selected through an assessment process in all provinces. The assessment will be done by Ernst and Young and KPMG through an open, rigorous and credible on-line application process. Sizwe Ntsaluba Gobodo are the auditors for the programme.

At the heart of the programme is a Gazelles High Care Platform (GHCP), consisting of specialist business development services providers, who will then provide services to these entities.

By identifying and supporting high-growth SMEs, while at the same time supporting mostly black owned, value-adding and manufacture-focused enterprises, the GHCP enhances their processes, infrastructure and managerial skills, access to markets, and general productive capacity. It specifically searches for and supports resilient black owned businesses that face market access challenges due in part to the dominance of entrenched established businesses.

To apply for the programme, SMEs need to meet the following criteria:

- Owned and operated by South Africans;
- trading for more than two years;
- turnover of between R1m and R30m; and
- operating in the agriculture and agri-processing; construction; energy and the green economy; health and bio-sciences; information and communication technologies; manufacturing; media, marketing and creative; mining, metals and engineering; tourism; or transport and logistics industry sectors.

Businesses in other sectors may enter and will be accepted on a case-by-case basis, subject to their score. Franchises or branches of major corporations do not qualify.

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