

Cape Town Tourism's Board Development Fund announces local beneficiaries

It's often been argued SMEs are the lifeblood of the South Africa's economy, given that they employ 50 to 60% of the country's workforce.



Source: Supplied. Cape Town Tourism chief executive officer, Enver Duminy; IC Africa founder, Ingrid Carelse; mayoral committee member for economic growth, Alderman James Vos and Philippa Taylor, office manager at Baz-Art.

Cape Town Tourism (CTT) sees supporting the sector as pivotal, which is why in 2013, its board of directors took a collective decision to forfeit their annual board remuneration in favour of the Board Development Fund (BDF). This fund assists small, medium and micro enterprises (SMMEs) with support to develop their tourism businesses.

At the recent CTT AGM, the board announced Baz-Art Organisation and IC Africa Travel & Tours as this year's acclaimed BDF recipients. The two local businesses will benefit from a cash injection, customised business interventions, and a marketing and media platform to improve their business profiles and visibility.

Newly elected chairperson of the Cape Town Tourism board, and managing director of the Table Mountain Aerial Cableway Company, Wahida Parker, says supporting SMMEs has become more critical following the challenges of the last few years.

"The pandemic has severely impacted our local economy. That's why we're using the BDF to invest in our SMMEs to create

more jobs and steadily grow Cape Town's economy,” she says.

“Our goal is to support these local businesses using an integrated approach, not just providing cash and, as a result, we hope to encourage other organisations to invest in supporting these small businesses too.”

Investing in Cape Town’s artistic heritage

Baz-Art was founded in 2018 by Alexandre Tilmans and Melissa Cucci to create a unique street art and tourism industry that would place Cape Town on the map. The organisation achieves this by facilitating and managing 25 tour guides annually in the region that use various street art styles to educate and inspire local and international tourists about the Mother City.

The business also creates a sustainable income for locals and empowers them through specialised art and tourism training.

“Although street art is visible to everyone, sometimes a little help is needed to interpret the message the artwork is trying to communicate to the public. By partnering with the tour guide community, which is already knowledgeable about our culture, history, and nature, we can easily share the artwork’s meaning,” says Philippa Taylor, office manager at Baz-Art.



Source: Supplied. Mayoral Committee member for economic growth, Alderman James Vos; Philippa Taylor, office manager at Baz-Art and ex board chairperson Brett Hendricks.

Taylor says winning this award will enable the business to grow its tours and give opportunities to tour guides that otherwise might not have had the platform to showcase their offering.

The organisation will also be able to employ local youth to expose them to the industry and empower them through business training and mentorship.

She adds that working with Cape Town Tourism and its mentors is exciting because it will empower the business to increase tourism in the city by encouraging residents to experience their city’s culture and deeply rooted heritage.

“We’re incredibly honoured to have received this support because we can continue putting money back into the community and put Cape Town on display.”

A business born from misfortune

Owning her own business was something Ingrid Carelse had thought about for years. However, she wasn't a natural risk taker and couldn't imagine not having the security of a fixed salary at the end of the month. At least not until she was retrenched due to Covid-19 in June 2021. That's when she registered IC Africa Travel & Tours and served her first client in September 2021.

Carelse says she's got a newfound appreciation for how different being self-employed and having to do everything for herself actually is. However, she's learning to spread her time to manage all the necessities of running the business so that she can stay on top of supplier payments and subscription renewals.

When asked what being the recipient of the BDF means for her business, Carelse says exposure through all the social media platforms, marketing opportunities and adding value to people's lives tops the list.

"I used to think I wasn't adding value to people's lives besides earning a salary and making strangers' travel fantasies come true. Then this opportunity presented itself, and I realised being a recipient would be the ideal vehicle to add value to the broader Cape Town community. This is such a huge honour."



Source: Supplied. Mayoral Committee member for economic growth, Alderman James Vos; IC Africa founder Ingrid Carelse and ex board chairperson Brett Hendricks.

Carelse says the highlight for her is having access to a business mentor because there's so much to learn about running a business.

She believes creating a sustainable and resilient Cape Town tourism sector will require businesses to be conscious not to overprice purely for profit. "There's enough room for every tourism business to make an honest and successful living. So, the competition must continue to be considered healthy and a way to offer variety."

The BDF, established in 2013, has helped local businesses with funding, networking opportunities, skills coaching, training, and a marketing platform for years and hopes to encourage other sector organisations to invest in similar initiatives to support the industry.

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