

Enterprise Development Programme equips SMMEs with tools to go virtual

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Virtual training and virtual training environments are designed to simulate the traditional classroom or learning experience. Transnet Pipelines (TPL) together with The Hope Factory (THF) saw the need to equip their current SMMEs on the *Enterprise Development Programme for Entrepreneurs with Disability* with the tools needed to go 100% virtual from the comfort of their own homes. Boosting SMME support whilst staying safe was one of the biggest highlighted needs to stay resilient through our current pandemic challenges.



Amongst many lessons learnt during our current pandemic, a big learning curb that was highlighted was the ability to be tech savvy and run business activities virtually. For most training entities, such as The Hope Factory, this meant equipping their programme individuals and trainers to work online. For this particular ED programme, not only was virtual training and free digital marketing skills offered, but actual equipment was also supplied.

Kenlin Stride, ED Programme manager, comments: "During the national lockdown that we find ourselves in, The Hope Factory quickly realised that it was paramount to ensure the long-term sustainability of our beneficiaries by providing our services virtually and equipping our beneficiaries to be in a place to receive these services. In doing so, we create an enhanced value offering to our stakeholders who allow us to continually positively impact our beneficiaries."

THF together with TPL were pleased to be able to assist SMMEs by presenting to them digital tablets with data packages of 20 gigabytes in order to carry out the remainder of their accredited training modules this quarter.

Mr Vhutshilo Nemutshili, one of the SMMEs on the programme, comments on how being equipped to go virtual during Covid-19 was beneficial. "Not only did going virtual keep us safe, it also makes life easier. I always record our sessions for ease of reference when doing my activities," says Nemutshili.

The 10 SMMEs were able to use these tablets to do their virtual training modules offered by coaches online. The training

commenced in July 2020, each module was split into three days of virtual training. Topics included *interpreting basic financial statements, producing business plans as well as accessibility to secure new business for a new venture*.

Furthermore, the SMMEs were given the opportunity to get additional social media training through collaboration with Digify Africa.

“Exposing our beneficiaries to social media marketing training especially at a time where the lockdown restrictions and Covid-19 pandemic has presented challenges fosters opportunities in the digital space. This opportunity will be able to position the SMMEs in a way that will make their businesses more marketable and visible,” says Kedumetsi Ntombela, enterprise development specialist at Transnet Pipelines.

About the programme

The Transnet Pipelines Enterprise Development Programme for Entrepreneurs with Disability (2018-2020) focuses on developing 10 entrepreneurs (five from JHB and five from KZN) through an Enterprise Development (ED) customised programme.

The programme’s implementation partner, The Hope Factory, aims to assist startup entrepreneurs that result in mobilising economic activity for unemployed Black South African citizens (as defined by the B-BBEE codes).

“Transnet Pipelines has partnered with The Hope Factory to assist entrepreneurs with physical disabilities from KZN and Gauteng with financial and business excellence,” says Ntombela.

Programme focal areas:

- How SMMEs can remain sustainable and competitive in the business environment
- Networking with industry players and mentorship from experts
- Compliance with relevant legislative and regulatory industry requirements
- Skill enhancements and gaining a broader understanding of their business
- Financial assistance in the form of finance coaching and operational funding

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