

Nedbank, SA Tourism launch new initiative empowering women in tourism

Nedbank, and South African Tourism, has launched an innovative empowerment initiative to promote black women-owned businesses in tourism. Twenty-five women in each province - 225 in total - will be selected for enterprise development training to ensure that women are the catalyst for transformative economic growth and job creation.



Source: Supplied

This initiative between Nedbank and South African Tourism support the Department of Tourism's Women in Tourism (WiT) Programme, which is an initiative that propels and supports the development and empowerment of women in the tourism sector. Premised on the principles of respect, recognition, representation, and reward, the WiT integrates women from diverse backgrounds to converge on a set of common goals and interests that will ensure their success in the sector.

Empowerment of women

"As a bank, Nedbank is committed to supporting the empowerment of women across our initiatives. Using our financial expertise to do good goes far beyond banking - we embrace our role in society as a change agent and building our nation. The WiT initiative will contribute significantly to this," says Goolam Kader, managing executive for Nedbank Business Banking.

"This is an inspiring entrepreneurship development initiative designed to create a knowledge foundation, provide mentorship, and eventually, open markets to black-women-owned small, medium and microenterprises operating in the tourism sector."

Nedbank, along with South African Tourism and McGeralds Entrepreneurship Centre, has issued a call for women to participate in this move to kick-start the tourism sector, which is sorely in need of a massive lift due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"You may ask why we, as a bank, are investing in the tourism sector through this initiative? The answer is simple. Our purpose is to use our financial expertise to do good for individuals, families, businesses, and society. Our tourism sector has been challenged severely during the pandemic. But we have a good opportunity to roll up our sleeves and work together to boost the recovery to grow the economy and create jobs," says Kader.

Growing the economy

Sthembiso Dlamini, the acting chief executive officer of South African Tourism, Sthembiso Dlamini, says statistics from the United Tourism World Organisation (UNWTO) show that although women make up the majority of employment in the tourism industry, and besides them being well represented in service and clerical level jobs, they are represented poorly at professional levels and in leadership positions.

"Currently, many women are excluded from the formal economy and still find themselves in low-paying jobs and economic sectors, while those who are lucky enough to find a job never make it to middle or top management, particularly in the private sector," she says.

Dlamini adds that the challenges have compounded over the past 18 months. The global tourism sector (along with many other industries) was dealt a devastating blow, with many businesses having to shut down due to the Covid-19 regulations and restrictions.

In partnership with the more critical tourism sector, South African Tourism is committed to doing all we can to rebuild and reignite our sector to 2019 levels and beyond. She says that partners like this one with Nedbank are crucial because they are about collaboration for inclusive economic growth.

Since it has started in 2013, the WiT initiative (under the Department of Tourism) has served as a mechanism to elevate the status of women in tourism by providing training, empowerment, and networking opportunities that facilitate their competitiveness as entrepreneurs, professionals, and leaders.

This specific focus on helping women-owned small, medium and microenterprises through this partnership with Nedbank offers a support programme to empower these women-owned businesses with market insights and business acumen.

"We can all agree that the empowerment of women in South Africa is long overdue and that it is, in fact, urgent. It is about transforming our society and addressing gender oppression, patriarchy, sexism, and structural oppression.

"It is up to all of us to ensure that women's empowerment becomes a lived reality. By working together, I am confident that at the end of this programme, we can ensure that women take their rightful place and contribute to the country's socio-economic growth and development," says Dlamini.

Qualifying business owners are invited to apply for this comprehensive programme, including training, mentorship, and business development in a bid to help kick-start the tourism sector, which has been sorely affected by the pandemic.

To qualify, businesses must be:

- A registered businesses in the tourism sector;
- At least 51% black-women-owned. 'Black' means African, Coloured, and Indian people who are South African citizens by birth or descent, or who have become South African citizens by naturalisation before, on, or after 27 April 1994, and have been entitled to acquire citizenship by naturalisation before this date (amended Financial Sector Code, gazetted on 1 December 2017);
- In operation for at least one year;
- Owner-managed and operated; and
- Tax compliant.

Applications opened on 13 October and close on 27 October 2021. For more information and to apply, visit mcgeralds.co.za/wit, send an email to wit@mcgeralds.co.za or call +27 011 592 0593.

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