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MINISTERIAL BRIEFING: Small Business Development

**Progress Made on Interventions to Mitigate the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic in
Small Business Development**

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Introduction

We know that times have been touch for businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that is why, from the start we have been working hard to support businesses, especially small businesses, to open safely and responsibly, so we can save jobs and save the economy in the Western Cape.

Opening the economy

To mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on small businesses, our main priority was to ensure that they could open safely, as soon as possible.

And so, where we thought certain sectors could open safely and responsibly under the risk-adjusted approach to the Covid-19 pandemic, we worked hard to engage with national government to allow these sectors to do so.

With the release of the risk-adjusted approach in April, we worked around the clock to engage with over 445 economic stakeholders across the Western Cape as part of our submission to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

We also received over 40 submissions which, together with our own detailed submission was submitted to the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Many of our recommendations were included in those regulations and our further lobbying on opening the e-commerce, construction and tourism sectors was also successful.

We will continue to back business and support business to open safely and responsibly.

Supporting small business

In addition to our efforts to open the economy in the Western Cape, we have also taken many steps to support businesses, especially small businesses, through Covid-19 crisis:

We have:

- set up the Covid-19 Content Centre, with our partners at Wesgro and the City of Cape Town, to provide support and advice for businesses during the crisis,

We have:

- launched the Covid-19 support finder which helps businesses navigate and access the many financial relief packages available to them,

And, we have:

- Our Red Tape Reduction Unit which assists businesses, including small businesses, with information such as how to start a business and where to register a business, as well as red tape related issues, such as delayed permits

To date:

- Over 202 000 visitors have used our support business website;
- Over 2 700 queries have been dealt with by the Covid-19 Content Centre;
- Over 6 900 businesses have used our COVID-19 Support Finder; and
- Over 1 200 queries have been dealt with by the Red Tape Reduction Unit.

Our Red Tape Reduction Unit have also liaised directly with the Department of Employment and Labour to address the challenges they have in distributing UIF TERS funds in a timely manner.

And, our Red Tape Reduction Unit have followed up directly with the Department of Employment and Labour to request expedited finalisation of these UIF TERS applications where businesses have complained about undue delays.

To date our interventions have resulted in almost 3,000 employees being able to access the necessary and, in some cases life-saving, UIF TERS relief scheme in the Western Cape.

Supporting the tourism industry

The tourism sector has been particularly hard-hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. As a major job contributor that comprises many small businesses, it was critical that we focused our efforts on supporting this sector in the Western Cape.

And so, we have:

- Launched a Tourism Product Development Fund which commits a total of R5 million to support new or existing tourism products and experiences in the Western Cape.

We have:

- Launched a five-part weekly webinar series for the tourism sector that provides support and advice to businesses on opening safely during the Covid-19 pandemic.

And just last week, we announced the launch of our 'We Are Open' domestic tourism campaign which encourages South Africans to take advantage and explore the beauty and diversity of the many affordable and world-class attractions that Cape Town and the Western Cape offers.

This campaign is critical as we seek to rebuild our economy and save jobs by encouraging people to support businesses, especially small businesses in the Western Cape.

Opening safely

To ensure that small businesses remain open and more people get back to work, it is important that all employers and employees adhere to the critical safety measures to stop the spread of Covid-19 in the workplace.

And so, we have made several valuable resources for employers and employees that can be found on the Western Cape government's website.

We have:

- made available health guidelines and information materials on preventing and managing Covid-19 infections in the workplace.

We have:

- assisted businesses to find Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) suppliers through our PPE marketplace. The PPE marketplace also supports small businesses providing PPE to private businesses.

We have:

- provided employees with Frequently Asked Questions that advise them on how to stay safe in the workplace, and what their employer needs to do to ensure their safety.

And, we have:

- provided employees and customers with the mechanism to report businesses that are not following the necessary health guidelines to stop the spread of the virus in the workplace.

To date, we have received 1,493 complaints of business non-compliance via this online form, of which 1,364 (91%) have already been resolved.

And finally, we are distributing 11 000 Covid-19 Business Safety Kits to small businesses and informal traders across the Western Cape. To date, 2,750 have been distributed to areas across the Western Cape.

Opportunity in crisis

From the start we have said that in the Western Cape, we don't want businesses, including small businesses, to just survive through this crisis, we also want to identify opportunities to do things better, to pivot and to adapt to do business in a more innovative way.

That is why our entrepreneurs are important to us.

These entrepreneurs deserve to be celebrated because they play a critical role in creating jobs, supporting skills development and providing opportunities for those who need it most. And they are role models for others, especially young people, who can learn from them and be inspired to start their own businesses.

We support and encourage these entrepreneurs, now more than ever, because their entrepreneurial spirit is exactly what we need as we fight both a health pandemic and an unemployment pandemic in the Western Cape.

And so, since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to our many initiatives to support businesses, we have also been working hard to support entrepreneurs, the lifeblood of small businesses in the Western Cape.

We launched the JUMP for entrepreneurs smartphone app which is a one-stop-shop for existing and new business owners in the Western Cape to get all the resources, tools and advice they need to start, scale and grow their companies.

Importantly, this free app includes the FundingAssist feature, which is a tool for business owners to assess their financing needs, receive recommendations on appropriate funders and products available, and then help them with their funding application process.

Digital technology provides opportunities for new business ideas, for existing businesses to offer their services and products online in a safer way, and even for business operations to move online to support working from home, and so we launched several programmes to support digital skills development in the Western Cape.

The first of these is the GoDigitalWC webinar series, which brings leading experts in digital technology and business transformation to present ideas and advice on how businesses can adapt and innovate during the Covid-19 crisis. To date we have hosted over 13 webinars on subjects ranging from eCommerce to digital marketing, crowdfunding to mobile payments and more.

Our Tech Volunteer programme matches entrepreneurs and small businesses owners with industry experts who volunteer to provide 1-2-1 sessions of 'free' advisory tech and digital related support. To date over 137 small businesses have received support from our tech volunteers.

And the I-CAN Learn platform, which was developed in partnership with IBM and Google, provides free internationally recognised online courses in digital skills subjects including digital literacy essentials, coding and web development, cloud computing, data science and analytics and more.

And, because in a crisis there is often opportunity, we have worked to assist small businesses and entrepreneurs to adapt and provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to government and the private sector.

Together with industry bodies such as the Craft and Design Institute, we compiled a database of 40 small businesses providing PPE in the Western Cape, which included, several entrepreneurs in the textile industry who were adapting to make cloth masks to keep their businesses operating and their staff employed during the lockdown.

We then provided them with opportunities by adding them to the Western Cape Supplier Evidence Bank so that Western Cape government departments looking for these products can find the businesses supplying them.

They were also added to the PPE Marketplace, a website that provides a platform for businesses to market their products to private companies looking for PPE, and they were approached to make cloth masks for our Maskathon Challenge, an initiative that calls upon businesses in South Africa to help donate cloth masks to those who need them most.

Finally, to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit in the province, it is important to us that we recognise and reward entrepreneurs in the Western Cape.

Now in its eighth year, our annual Western Cape Entrepreneurship Recognition Awards celebrates the hard work of entrepreneurs and their contribution to job creation and economic growth in the province. The winning entrepreneurs are also awarded prize money and business support services that help them to sustain or expand their businesses.

A total of R240,000 in prize money will be awarded to entrepreneurs across six categories, including:

- Emerging business
- Women-owned business
- Innovative business
- Township business
- Social enterprises, and
- Youth-owned business

I have had the pleasure of meeting with many of our previous winners of the Western Cape Entrepreneurship Recognition Awards such as Debbie Ncube from Eden All Natural, Lufefe Nomjana from Spinach King and Sivu Mongo from Ziyahlanjwa Laundry Services to hear from them how these awards have helped them to grow their businesses and hire more staff. And I'm incredibly proud that we've could help them do so.

Conclusion

Times have been tough for businesses and people in the province who have faced many challenges during lockdown to allow us to prepare our healthcare system to fight the Covid-19 pandemic in the Western Cape.

We have all pulled together, and we have worked together to stop the spread of Covid-19 in the Western Cape.

That fight is not yet over, but we now also face a daunting unemployment pandemic, hunger and increased levels of poverty in the Western Cape.

And so, to overcome this second pandemic, we will all have to continue pulling together, and working together as we did before to save jobs and save the economy in the Western Cape.