FNB Media Release

FNB extends additional help to SMEs

6 April 2020 – In addition to the various COVID-19 measures implemented to provide relief to individual and business customers, FNB has further committed to helping small businesses with alternative funding support, critical business support resources, links to various government resources and private funding initiatives.

Given the various relief interventions needed by small businesses across different sectors, FNB has launched a portal under the “COVID-19 – For My Business” menu on the FNB App or Online Banking, where SME customers in need of help can register their requests for assistance. This will enable the bank to obtain information and present potentially relevant relief solutions.

“The first phase of alternative funding that we are excited to make available to SME customers via the portal is from the South African Future Trust (SAFT), a Public Benefit Organisation established by Nicky and Jonathan Oppenheimer to extend financial assistance to employees of South African SMMEs who are at risk of losing their jobs or will suffer a loss of income because of COVID-19,” says Jesse Weinberg, Head of the SME Customer Segment at FNB.

FNB has received a range of queries from SME customers on various topics from SMEs, from assisting them with cashflow relief on their existing credit and merchant services facilities with the bank, to general requests such as resources and guidance on obtaining alternative funding support for their businesses.

“Requests registered by SMEs through our portal will enable us to rapidly assess the situation and requests of these businesses to determine possible financial and non-financial assistance that could help them,” adds Weinberg.

A challenge for many small and medium-sized businesses is that they often have limited access to funding, whether in the form of bank credit or alternative sources. In times of an economic down-turn or crisis, these businesses are some of the most vulnerable as they generally have less access to liquidity to weather the storm than larger businesses.
FNB SMEs can register their interest to apply for the South African Future Trust (SAFT) funding by completing the SME assessment found under the “COVID-19 – For My Business” menu on the FNB App or FNB Online Banking.

SMEs who meet the following criteria could be eligible for the funding as determined by SAFT:

- The business has an annual turnover below R25m
- The business can clearly demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 on their operations; the business must have been in good financial health prior to 1 March 2020.
- The business must have been trading for at least 24 months
- Confirmation of permanent employment status of employee
- The business must have its main bank account with FNB and be in good standing with the bank; demonstrated sound banking behaviour maintained a good credit history

For more information on SAFT visit https://opp-gen.com/saft/

“As announced in President Cyril Ramaphosa’s address to the nation, we have pledged R1bn to extend a financial lifeline to employees of South African Small, Medium, and Micro-sized Enterprises (“SMMEs”). Our aim is to mitigate the immediate economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis by keeping companies in business and protecting jobs, in order to fast-track South Africa’s economic recovery after this pandemic. Our response, in collaboration with the South African Government and private sector, is to create a structure that will extend direct financial support to SMME employees who are at risk of losing their jobs or will suffer a loss of income because of COVID-19,” said Nicky and Jonathan Oppenheimer.

“In much the same way as our SME clients are dealing with unprecedented uncertainty, we too realised we also needed a different approach to respond to the crisis and try extend help our SMEs in a more holistic way,” concludes Weinberg.

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