FNB Media Release

FNB extends R8 million grant funding to help micro-entrepreneurs impacted by Covid-19

20 May 2020 – In a bid to extend help to a broader range of small businesses, FNB has committed R8 million in grant funding to enable micro-entrepreneurs to resume work during and post the Covid-19 pandemic.

FNB has partnered with the Supplier Development Initiative (SDI) to assist over 2170 entrepreneurs who provide access to their services through Uber/Bolt, Sweepsouth, Loadit, Wastepreneurs and Tradeway.

The grant funding will be used to enable micro-entrepreneurs to repurpose and acquire assets as well as Personal Protective Equipment to enable them to deliver services in a safe manner in the current COVID-19 environment. The aim of this initiative is to get micro-entrepreneurs back to work as soon as possible to reduce the support that would otherwise be required from relief programmes to sustain their livelihoods and that of their families. Many have no source of income currently, yet could play a significant role in assisting the private and public sector through provision of their services.

The SDI model provides for an aggregation of micro-entrepreneurs across enablers such as Sweepsouth and Loadit. This subsequently creates visibility for these entrepreneurs, as well as provides a level of compliance which enables the private and public sector to utilise services offered through these platforms, with the micro-entrepreneurs being appropriately equipped and trained to play their role.

Heather Lowe, Head of SME Development at FNB Business, says “Given the countless relief interventions needed by SMEs across the different sectors, FNB is proud to partner with SDI in this initiative to help protect micro-enterprises against the antagonistic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact on this market is significant as the country observes the risk-adjusted approach in lifting of lockdown regulations. Sweepsouth is a perfect example where, due to an inability to get back to work until a lower lockdown level, the ladies are not generating an income, with many of them being sole breadwinners and single mothers. Currently they are forced to rely on relief programmes to provide for their families. They can play a meaningful role in provision of cleaning and sterilising office buildings and public areas at scale if provided with the means to do so safely and effectively, and most importantly, if they are visible to the sectors that are procuring these services.”

A challenge that many small, medium and micro-sized business face is that they have limited access to funding, particularly the micro traders, whether in the form of bank credit or other alternative incomes.
In these current times of the Covid-19 pandemic, uncertainty in the economic market has mounted and these businesses are the most vulnerable to come out of the storm.

SDI operates under the banner of SDI Force, an existing services-on-demand platform that aims to uplift micro-suppliers across multiple industries.

Brad Fischer, co-founder of SDI Force, “We have realised that the need for such an initiative is huge and makes a difference for the livelihoods of the SMMEs that we have partnered with. The micro-enterprises are experienced at working with technology and play a much-needed role in ensuring that South Africa overcomes the COVID-19 predicament — from both a medical and socio-economic perspective. We need all the funding backing and rally other corporates to support us by joining us in this cause.”

“COVID-19 could have a devastating effect to the local and global economy, therefore SMEs require all forms of support during this difficult time. We believe that our partnership with SDI will give many entrepreneurs a chance to open ‘their doors’ for business within the current uncertain global economy, and most importantly save much needed jobs,” concludes Lowe.

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