

SMEgo aims to streamline the funding application process for SMMEs

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a catastrophic effect on the health of the South African SMME sector. The CombatCovid SMME Survey commissioned by a consortium of SMME-focused organisations has revealed that three out of four small, medium and micro-enterprises would not survive beyond July 2020.



Rowan Spazzoli

Unlike large corporates, SMMEs don't have the cash reserves to deal with the setbacks created by the pandemic. For SMMEs, touted as the country's answer to joblessness, to operate at full capacity, the sector will require up to an additional R346 billion credit facility, and the banks - the traditional lenders- cannot fill the gap.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has referred to the importance of bolstering SMMEs on several occasions citing their vital role in rebuilding the economy and creating jobs. He's indicated that along with advancing the agricultural sector and safeguarding food security, growing small, medium and micro enterprises is a strategic priority for South Africa.

According to Rowan Spazzoli, the spokesperson for SMEgo - a web-based platform that promises to radically simplify and streamline the SMME funding application process for both SMMEs and funders - "Finding support in the form of funding needs to be simplified to get SMMEs back on their feet. Running a business in these times is difficult enough, finding support should not be."

The survey revealed that one out of three SMMEs had reduced salaries between 75% and 100% and that the prolonged lockdown would result in 71% of SMMEs needing to retrench their staff.

Developed during the Covid-19 lockdown, Spazzoli says that SMEgo was initially designed to be an online centralised funding application platform for SMMEs, "But by increasing access to finance and simplifying the application process, SMEgo is now the bridge between funders and SMME owners."

How it works

Upon accessing the SMEgo platform, owners are prompted to complete a high-level questionnaire providing SMEgo with their company particulars. "The technology behind the platform determines which of the listed funding opportunities are suitable for the SMME. It then indicates what documents are required all the while highlighting any outstanding information," says Spazzoli.

From a funder's perspective, SMEgo allows organisations to list all available funding opportunities on a single platform and manage the application process online. "Funders can access information about the SMME from a single dashboard and communicate their decision whether to fund or not by updating the application status," says Spazzoli.

Funders also only receive completed application forms which significantly reduces the administrative burden on these organisations, as each applicant must have met the funds minimum requirements to apply. SMEgo allows funders access to more SMMEs that meet their criteria which in turn will give them better quality leads.

"In addition to navigating fund application submissions, the platform will allow SMMEs to update business profiles, mentor SMME owners as their business grows, as well as facilitate training," he says.

Through streamlining the process, SMEgo not only facilitates the growth of our struggling SMMEs but also assists in reviving South Africa's economy at a much needed, speedier pace.

What are the benefits?

Here is a list of benefits of SMEgo for both SMMEs and funders:

- SMEgo saves time for business owners - by working with funders, the accuracy of the application process is improved, ensuring all applications meet data requirements.
- Apply once for all applicable funds - SMMEs can utilise a centralised platform that stores all business information in one central source allowing owners to apply for different appropriate funds immediately.
- Help SMMEs find funding opportunities that are relevant to them.
- It provides continuous feedback from funds on a SMMEs application status.

For funders:

- Reduce wasted administrative time, costs and resources spent on incomplete, inaccurate submissions.

- SMMEs will qualify to apply for relevant funding opportunities thereby improving the quality of applications enabling a new source of leads or deal-flow for funders.
- Provide funders with access to eligible SMMEs whom they may not have had access to previously.
- Application sorting and managing: The SMEgo platform gives funders the ability to sort and manage applications by searching for SMMEs or filtering application status.

For more, go to <https://smego.co.za/>

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