

Eskom's Business Investment Competition calls for manufacturing SMEs

A great leap forward is possible for SMEs in the manufacturing sector who enter the Eskom Business Investment Competition (BIC). Entries are now open and SMEs are encouraged to enter before 12 February 2021 at midnight.



Manufacturing is the fourth largest industry in South Africa and bolstering participation in this sector provides a ripple effect in boosting technology and engineering in the country. It also goes a long way toward creating jobs.

Investment in the manufacturing sector creates an environment that supports other economic hubs that will improve the country's productivity by increasing the ability to trade with other countries.

It has been a tough year for businesses in the manufacturing sector having to contend with a shortage of raw materials, a shrunken workforce and, in some cases, a limited capacity for production due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Even the Eskom's Business Investment Competition 2019 manufacturing category runner-up, Bona Once Bona Twice Drums, has noted that the initial closure and limited reopening of some mining facilities affected its ability to operate at optimal levels.

"Running a business is tough and 2020 proved to be a bigger challenge than normal. We've had to halt our production of steel drums for a little while because our supplier has been operating on one furnace, meaning that our access to this raw material was hampered.

"However, the silver lining this year is that we have been able to play our part in fighting the pandemic by supplying drums to transport sanitiser for some clients," says founder, Ishmael Kunene.

Last year's entrants prove that this sector is diverse and vibrant where so many innovations and entrepreneurs are opening up the industry. This is demonstrated by Bona Once Bona Twice and sisters Kedibone and Kekeletso Tsiloane, founders of a 100% black woman-owned plastic brick manufacturer, Ramtsilo Construction and Manufacturing that emerged as the 2019 category winner. The sisters attribute a part of their success in 2020 to their experience in the BIC.

"We got such value from being part of the BIC, besides having won in our category and the brand awareness that the win provided. As entrepreneurs, we learnt so much about how we could refine our business, which has resulted in us opening up our second and larger production facility in Benoni after only operating from the Free State," says co-founder Kedibone Tsiloane.

Now in its 12th year, the BIC is run by the Eskom Development Foundation to boost enterprise development by creating a platform for South African small and medium enterprises to become part of a community of like-minded entrepreneurs as they look to build on their businesses' solid foundation and realise their true potential.

The competition is open for registered black-owned small and medium enterprises across the country which have been operating for 24 months or longer. Winners in each category will take home R131 250. First and second runners-up in each category will win R75 000 and R50 000 respectively.

"SMEs are the lifeblood we need to move our country forward. It is in SMEs that we see how much creativity, passion and capability South Africans have. This competition takes all of these, puts them in one room where they get to see that they are not alone in their effort to realise their vision. For investors, it offers the opportunity to see what's out there and where their support is needed, especially for those climbing out of this really tough year. So, we encourage SMEs who qualify to enter and take their chances," says Eskom Development Foundation CEO, Cecil Ramonotsi.

SMEs that believe they have what it takes to be the next finalist, should visit www.eskombic2020.co.za.

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