

Financial support for SMMEs at risk from Covid-19

You may already be aware of this opportunity, but I am writing to highlight a unique funding facility set up specifically to support South African small businesses suffering financial difficulty as a result of Covid-19. Those operating in the wildlife-tourism economy have been particularly badly affected – hence this communication.

The [SA Futures Trust](#) was set up through a grant of R1 billion by Nicky and Jonathan Oppenheimer and has been active for the period of the lockdown. The fund has already committed *and disbursed* over R600 million to 5,700 small businesses, directly benefitting over 56,000 employees.

R400 million is still available but is likely to be committed in the next 2 – 3 weeks, so applicants need to move quickly.

The fund has been designed to be simple and efficient in its operation. No paperwork is involved, and it requires very little administration against minimal qualifying criteria. Applications for funding are assessed and disbursed through participating commercial banks¹. Applicants contact their preferred bank, using dedicated Covid-19 application portals featured on all participant bank websites.

How the Fund works:

Funding is available to SMMEs to cover the employment costs of workers who are at risk of losing their jobs or a portion of their income as a result of Covid-19. Funding takes the form of a five-year interest-free loan repayable directly to the SA Futures Trust.

Applicants must meet **four qualifying criteria**:

1. They must have been in operation for two consecutive years prior to application.
2. They must have been viable businesses prior to 29th February 2020.
3. Their annual turnover must not exceed R25 million.
4. They must demonstrate that their operations have been adversely affected by Covid-19.

The maximum funding available per qualifying SMME is R11,250 per worker. This is calculated from: R750 per designated worker per week X 15 weeks = R11,250 per worker for which support is requested. There is no ceiling on the total number of workers per applicant.

Consult the [SA Futures Trust](#) website for details, especially the FAQ. Funding is available on a first-come-first-served basis.

It is worth referencing two other Covid-19 linked funds that have been established:

- The [Sukuma Relief Programme](#) set up by Johann Rupert and also targeting SMMEs – but it has been temporarily suspended as a result of being over-subscribed.
- [The Solidarity Fund](#) which funds activities linked to detection, prevention, care and support, rather than businesses whose operations are threatened by Covid-19.

I hope this guidance is of use to you.

Stay safe.

Paul Zille

¹ The Big Four banks plus Mercantile Bank, Investec and Capitec are currently SAFT partners, but participation is open to all banks.