

# TKZN incubator programme a hybrid for SMME support

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal (TKZN) has handpicked 30 small, medium and micro-tour operators to undergo an enterprise development and incubation programme by the South African Tourism Services Association (SATSA). The programme is a hybrid business incubator model comprising both physical and virtual incubation support.

The first two-week-long work run by facilitators, with over 40 years of experience and first-hand knowledge of the industry started on 3 July 2018, with the second one starting today, 9 July 2018.



South African Tourism via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

As part of the programme's market access initiative, incubatees are given the opportunity and support to participate in trade shows and exhibitions that have been guiding and shaping dozens of emerging tour operators and tourism-related business to success through invaluable and practical support.

TKZN's acting chief executive officer, Phindile Makwakwa said: "If we want to grow tourism in our province and our country, we must focus on small and developing businesses. They are the true champions of our hidden gems and they can bring a new flavour and flare to the tourism sector and ensure that our products are a true reflection of the diverse culture that we have in the province. Furthermore, tourism empowers people, provides job opportunities and instils pride in our beautiful country."

The training programme focuses on financial management, marketing, legal company requirements, how to cost a tour, what to include and what to disregard, the different types of accommodation and a broader understanding of the tourism industry. This is to ensure that they have an in-depth understanding of the sector and can stand head and shoulder with big business in selling and packaging KwaZulu-Natal.

## Tourism, trade market exposure

The incubation programme focuses on leisure tourism SMMEs that operate as tour operators, travel agents and accommodation establishments, and its enhanced strategy is aimed directly at helping these emerging businesses survive during the start-up phase, the stage at which they are most vulnerable. To qualify for the incubator programme you have to have been running your business for two years, be a South African citizen and fulfil all the legal requirements. Tour operators must have itineraries that sell KwaZulu-Natal.

"Once selected and trained they are exposed to markets such as trade shows - like Africa's Travel Indaba, or the KZN Travel and Trade Show. They are also given the opportunity to move onto more broader and bigger shows at an international level," said Makwakwa.

Once they have completed their three years, TKZN continues to offer support and create business to business linkages.

"If we are going to accelerate transformation we must work as a team where everyone benefits and becomes a winner," said Makwakwa.

The recent Tourism KwaZulu-Natal Africa Travel Indaba 2018 saw a 50% increase of small business owners and a total 135 small South African businesses exhibiting. The programme makes sure that more emerging tourism entrepreneurs are assisted, but more importantly that their businesses experience sustainable development and growth.

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