

Improving the entrepreneurship ecosystem in SA: Tsogo Sun Entrepreneur of the Year finalists

The Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute's 2017 report, [The entrepreneurial ecosystem of South Africa](#), states that while bottlenecks do exist, such as large-firm dominance, cultural perceptions of entrepreneurship, and structural inequality, “evidence suggests that several targeted actions could address key bottlenecks and further improve the entrepreneurship ecosystem in South Africa”.

It is within this unfolding environment that the Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs programme was established in 2005, to contribute to employment creation, and towards the growth of the South African economy. The programme comprehensively supports emerging businesses in the tourism sector and other industries throughout the country.

Development programmes for entrepreneurs

[Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs](#) holds an annual Tsogo Sun Entrepreneur of the Year Award competition for entrepreneurs and alumni benefitting from the development programme – this year, two hundred were eligible to enter.



From left to right: Devina Dawkinum, Ronnie Nemukula, Noli Mini, Hezron Louw, Nicole Msibi and Nqobile Nkosi

Five 2017 finalists were selected, which include Devina Dawkinum, Gemkids Catch-up Programme, from KwaZulu-Natal; Hezron Louw, Sumting Fresh restaurant and gourmet street food, Gauteng; Nicole Msibi, Before Time Indlondlo Events, catering and events equipment and décor hire, Gauteng; Noli Mini, Relax Spas mobile health spa company, Western Cape; and Ronnie Nemukula, Ronem Maintenance Solutions, engineering services in construction, repairs and maintenance, Mpumalanga.

Candy Tothill, Tsogo Sun's general manager of corporate affairs, congratulated the finalists and wished them luck for the next stage of judging, which will be done by a panel of influential South Africans in business and society, who will rate the finalists using a process that evaluates business performance, self-confidence, presentation, professionalism, knowledge, and overall impression.

Mapping the future for success

“Our finalists represent a diverse range of businesses and come from four different provinces, illustrating the growing reach and impact of our entrepreneurs programme. It is encouraging to see the innovative and industrious methods that they have

employed to succeed in their businesses in these challenging economic times, and we are excited to be able to give them this wonderful Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs Award platform which promises to place them squarely on the map for future success.

Our far-reaching national enterprise and supplier development initiatives provide business and leadership skills, various business benefits such as equipment and advertising, and preferential procurement opportunities to qualifying predominantly black-owned small enterprises and emerging micro-enterprises. As far as possible, the percentage of black-owned businesses supported is aligned with the country's economically active population statistics," says Tothill.

Of the enrolled Tsogo Sun Entrepreneurs, 63% have successfully completed University of Cape Town Business Management Courses presented in collaboration with education company, GetSmarter, co-funded by programme partner Carlson Wagonlit Travel and Tsogo Sun.

"The value of the programme is significant – to the entrepreneurs, to the group, and to the greater economy." He adds that 25% of the businesses enrolled in the programme have expanded their operations as a result of Tsogo Sun's interventions and that each small business employs between one and 50 staff, and reaches up to 30 people in the value chain. "The programme showcases good work by the entrepreneurs, while also assisting participants with skills development and exposure to the markets that Tsogo Sun serves; and it helps them build self-confidence and success. It's a worthwhile programme that empowers entrepreneurs to hold their own in the business world," says Vusi Dlamini, Tsogo Sun's group HR director.

The 2017 winner will be announced at the Tsogo Sun Entrepreneur of the Year Awards dinner on 26 October at Southern Sun Pretoria. Prizes for the winner include R50,000 from Tsogo Sun and a bursary valued at R30,000 from [Tsheto Leadership Academy](#).

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