

# Investing in entrepreneurs to drive the economy

South Africa has the potential for greatness, but unemployment chains us to mediocrity. These are the thoughts of Yusuf Rander-Rees, CEO & co-founder of the Awethu Project, who believes we can liberate our potential by investing in entrepreneurs.



Awethu is the leading SME investment company in South Africa, and it is Black and youth owned. It is using entrepreneurship to build the country we all want to live in - an economically and socially just country in which all South Africans can realise their potential.

Since its founding six years ago, Awethu has grown from a R60 000 startup into an institution with R160 million to invest in this vision. It is backed by individuals and institutions ranging from Archbishop Tutu to the South African Government and Discovery Holdings, and it is on the look-out for ambitious, hard-working entrepreneurs.

## Have the talent and hunger to change lives

Awethu invests in entrepreneurs ranging from R5 000 start-ups to those looking to acquire and run R500 million companies. What matters to Awethu is not where an entrepreneur comes from, or the size of investment they need, but that they have the talent and hunger to improve their lives through entrepreneurship.

At present the largest number of opportunities with Awethu are in their micro-business incubator. In this incubator, successful applicants receive the equivalent of R45 000 worth of training and mentorship in exchange for a commitment fee of R1 500.

"We have dozens of incredible success stories; young South Africans who have changed their lives and those of their communities through their talent, hard work, and leadership. We coach these entrepreneurs through an incubation programme for six months and train, support and fund them. During this time the entrepreneurs learn how to formalise and grow successful micro-businesses. The skills learnt include: how to assess whether a market opportunity can be turned into a business; how to perform market research; how to access funding; how to manage their finances and how to recruit and manage a growing team.

"Our micro-business incubator provides a platform for individuals who want to be successful entrepreneurs, but realise the importance of upskilling themselves before venturing out into the unfamiliar - and often costly - territory of entrepreneurship," says Randera-Rees.

The Awethu micro-incubation programme is calling on all entrepreneurs: "Applicants are not required to have a matric or a business plan; our call is going out to anyone who is hungry to improve their life by starting or growing their own business. Through our ground-breaking incubation model, we will partner with you to fulfil your ambition and guide you toward your potential. Awethu is where ambition meets opportunity," concludes Randera-Rees.

To apply to be part of Awethu's micro-incubation programme, SMS 'Ambition' to 45345.

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