

THE SUPPLY CHAIN DEVELOPMENT CONUNDRUM

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Betsy Ings is an internationally accredited programme provider to various United Nations organisations and a facilitator of women development and leadership; as well as a community development specialist. Betsy is an ILO Master Trainer in Social Enterprise Development.

O PRAH Winfrey believes a mentor is someone who allows you to see the hope inside yourself. As a business mentor this is imperative, since it speaks to the purpose of your relationship with the entrepreneur.

The subject top of mind for entrepreneurs at present seems to be how to hook the big customer; they request help to 'get in' with the big companies and onto their database. This is the hope inside of most SMMEs in South Africa at present.

Supplier development and diversity is a major tool that can enable this hope of the entrepreneur which aligns with our National Development Plan (NDP) 2030, and the first aspiration for the Africa we want as per the African Union's Agenda 2063: "A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development - Economies structurally transformed to create shared growth, decent jobs and economic opportunities for all." Our NDP has great hope for our SMMEs: setting out ambitious goals for SMMEs, including a target for 90% employment opportunities to come from our sector by 2030.

Gauteng Finance MEC Barbara Creecy confirmed her belief at the Smart Procurement World Conference in Johannesburg that, "at the centre of our efforts to fundamentally change the structure of our economy is a vigorous promotion of SMMEs. SMMEs dominate the world business stage and are currently the main type of business."

MEC Creecy quoted a recent World Bank study which found that the township economy is worth more than R10-billion a year: "Given the important role that this sector plays in our overall agenda to transform, modernise and re-industrialise, government

continues to use our massive procurement muscle - as well as our vast infrastructure spend at a strategic level - to drive meaningful transformation, empowerment, job creation and economic inclusion."

What is the conundrum we are trying to address to keep the hope of SMMEs alive? Indeed, it is the importance of supplier development through diversity and inclusivity by all stakeholders to create an enabling economy. Supply chain development investment is a major key to the hope that can achieve the economic and transformation goals we strive to achieve - sooner, rather than later.

To achieve economic growth required to meet the NDP and social economic goals, government procurement openings need to be more readily available to small businesses, which at present create the most jobs and employ 56% of the South African workforce.

Supplier diversity and inclusivity is a structured, monitored business programme that encourages the use of historically underutilized vendors as suppliers. Examples of diverse business owners include, but is not limited to ethnic minorities, women, disabled persons, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or transgender persons.

Sustainable supplier development is a win-win situation for all: government, big corporates and SMMEs. Above all, it can inspire the hope we so greatly need as an economy, and as a country, right now.