

Home Affairs introduces one-stop shop for business applications, work visas

The Department of Home Affairs (DHA) has created a one-stop shop to streamline business applications and give effect to the recommendations of its visa reform initiative.



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The one-stop shop, which is known as the Trusted Employer Scheme (TES), was created with the view to efficiently run the visa regime and to speedily process applications.

The Trusted Employer Scheme was launched on 11 October 2023.

To qualify for membership, an employer, investor or business needs to demonstrate that it has the financial strength to employ a foreign national; that it runs training programmes for South African citizens, and that it adheres to good corporate practices.

The TES is one of the latest developments in the review and streamlining of South Africa's visa regime to attract skills to the

South African economy and promote tourism.

“With the Trusted Employer Scheme, the 22 weeks average visa process will be reduced to an average of 20 days, thereby making it easier for employers to plan their recruitment and onboard expats into local operations within a shorter time,” Home Affairs Minister, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, said in a statement on Tuesday, 27 February.

“This is one scheme that will allow South Africa to attract skills easier and manage immigration, particularly in the processing of applications for senior executives, technical personnel, corporate employees and investors.

“This will happen while we continue to observe and respect existing immigration laws,” the Minister said.

The TES brings the Departments of Trade, Industry and Competition, Employment and Labour and Home Affairs under a single system to finalise applications for companies that apply for critical skills through the TES.

Within the new scheme, business will qualify for priority processing of their visa applications due to the reduced requirements and supporting documents, in contrast to the previous process.

A total of 108 qualifying companies have submitted to the TES, representing a diverse set of sectors, including commerce and finance, consultancy, energy (power generation and renewable energy), services and advisory, automotive, advanced manufacturing, resourced based industries, food and beverages.

Thus far, the department has approved 68 applications.

All local applications will be processed through the Corporate Accounts Unit, which was established in February 2010 to facilitate work visa applications for large companies and corporations.

Applications submitted abroad will also be expedited due to the reduced requirements.



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Review and recommendations

The Trusted Employer Scheme is one of the eight recommendations that were initiated by the DHA, in partnership with the Operation Vulindlela team as part of the work visa review that was conducted to identify inefficiencies in the visa application process.

Operation Vulindlela is a joint initiative of the Presidency and National Treasury to accelerate the implementation of structural reforms and support economic recovery. It aims to modernise and transform network industries, including electricity, water, transport and digital communications.

Since the review, Home Affairs has implemented the following:

- The introduction of TES, which was introduced in October 2023.
- Streamlining documentation requirements and adjudication processes; radiology report requirements have been removed; requirement for professional body registration for lecturers have also been removed, and police clearance is only required for 12 months where an applicant has stayed.
- Modernising IT systems and introducing automation. The department has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and a secure IT system will be provided for the Trusted

Employer Scheme.

- Expanding human resources capacity in the Immigration Services Branch. The department has submitted a revised business case to National Treasury and is working on a partnership with the private sector to expand capacity for Immigration Services. Details of this partnership will be announced soon.
- Upgrading the Employment Services of South Africa (ESSA) database.
- Updating the Critical Skills List more frequently, with the updated Critical Skills list published on 3 October 2023. This was after it was revised in February and August 2021, and will be regularly updated to consider new emerging skills.
- The points-based system on the awarding of certain types of visas was included in the published Draft Second Amendment of the Immigration Regulations, 2014, on 8 February 2024 for public comments.
- The introduction of new visa categories to cater for remote workers and start-ups. These visa categories are in the gazette published in the Draft Second Amendment of the Immigration Regulations, 2014, on 8 February 2024 for public comment.

“We have prioritised implementation of the recommendations of the Operation Vulindlela Report, including introducing the Trusted Employer Scheme, fully convinced that [we] will usher in a new and improved way of dealing with visas.

“Interventions in this regard include the Remote Working Visa and the point-based system on the awarding of certain types of visas,” Motsoaledi said.

Members of the public and stakeholders are encouraged to submit written comments on the Draft Second Amendment of the Immigration Regulations, 2014. The closing date for submission of public comments is 29 March 2024.

Interested persons can access the gazette on the following link: [Department of Home Affairs - Immigration Act, 2002: Draft Second Amendment of the Immigration Regulations, 2014 \(dha.gov.za\)](https://www.dha.gov.za/gazettes/2024/02/08/draft-second-amendment-immigration-regulations-2014).

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