

## Volkswagen introduces 'The Lionesses Den'

As part of its partnership with Lionesses of Africa, the all-female business network in Africa, Volkswagen has introduced 'The Lionesses Den' and is calling on female-owned businesses in South Africa to share a two-minute pitch. The top three pitches will win capital to invest in their businesses and in turn help drive the South African economy forward.



This offers an opportunity for female entrepreneurs to access capital amid the Covid-19 challenges on the South African economy and small businesses in particular.

According to a 2018 survey conducted by Facebook, in partnership with the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), female entrepreneurs are in a minority within the entrepreneurial landscape and, even though half of South Africa's population is female, only 34% of small, medium and micro enterprises are led by females.

In addition to this, regardless of the financial impact of Covid-19, many female-led businesses have already been struggling to stay afloat because of the lack of cash injection to invest back into operations, skills, marketing, and infrastructure.

Martina Biene, head of the Volkswagen Brand in South Africa says a lot needs to be done to support female entrepreneurs to continue their role in helping to alleviate unemployment, poverty and drive the economy forward.

"Volkswagen's Lionesses Den is a chance for female entrepreneurs to use the capital to pay salaries, upskill, purchase stock, invest in marketing or proper infrastructure," says Biene.

## **Who is eligible to enter?**

Female entrepreneurs who are part of the Lionesses of Africa network, across all sectors and industries can enter the competition by submitting their two-minute recorded video business pitch on the Lionesses Den website.

"Two of the biggest challenges facing female entrepreneurs on the entrepreneurship journey is access to markets and funding. In light of the current pandemic which is severely impacting the ability to do business as usual, both of these challenges have become even greater. So, at this critical time, the difference this cash injection will make to the winners, especially in light of this time of 'business unusual', will be substantial," says Melanie Hawken, founder and CEO of Lionesses of Africa.

Volkswagen's Lionesses Den competition runs from 1 July 2020 to 2 August 2020. The selected winners will be announced on 21 August 2020 during the Lionesses Lean-In event.

To become part of the Lionesses of Africa network, go to [www.lionessesafrica.com](http://www.lionessesafrica.com) and to enter the Volkswagen Lionesses Den initiative, go to [www.vwlionessesden.co.za](http://www.vwlionessesden.co.za).

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