

Contractors' Academy helps SMEs grow



When Clive Ntuli (29), a qualified journalist from Witbank, Mpumalanga, saw a business opportunity two years ago, he immediately decided to pursue it. His company, Bluespectrum Trading & Projects, which was registered in 2013, supplies and delivers industrial chemicals for Eskom.

“I simply identified a gap in the market after realising that Eskom had a shortage of chemical supplies. Currently I buy the supplies from various established companies but in the long run, I’d like to produce them myself,” says the ambitious Ntuli.

Ntuli is part of a group of Eskom’s suppliers and contractors from around the country attending the Eskom Contractors’ Academy from June 2015 to February 2016 in Johannesburg. The programme is offered to contractors and suppliers wishing to receive training in project and financial management, entrepreneurship, legislation as well as technical skills.

The academy is an integral part of the Eskom Development Foundation’s mandate to enhance the quality of life of the communities in which it operates. By equipping small and emerging business people with the necessary skills required to build sustainable businesses, Eskom believes solutions to some of the country’s socio-economic problems will begin to materialise.

Since starting his company, Ntuli has, just like many entrepreneurs, experienced his fair share of challenges. He had to wait for two years to be registered as an Eskom vendor, but he hasn’t looked back since that door opened. “I’ve been fortunate because now I’m part of this group at the academy, getting all the necessary training and skills to be able to take our businesses to the next

level. This is a great initiative by Eskom and I wish many more small business owners could get the opportunity,” says Ntuli.

The Contractor Academy combines both practical and theoretical course work to equip and empower contractors with the necessary skills to successfully negotiate lucrative contracts in order to build sustainable businesses. The entrepreneurs emerge from the course equipped with the financial, legislative, management, leadership safety, health and technical skills to grow their business.

Haylene Liberty-Nel, CEO of the Foundation, says, “The development of small enterprises is critical to South Africa’s future economic growth, but a lack of financial acumen and business skills are the biggest causes of start-up failure in this country. The academy is about empowering local contractors to enable them to participate fully in their local economy and maximise their success.”