

We are working hard to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the WC economy

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Minister Maynier briefing the Wesgro Content Centre for Business this morning. From today, this team has gone virtual.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis and a major risk for the world economy that is inevitably having an impact on the economy in the Western Cape.

However, we remain committed to doing whatever we can to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Western Cape economy and there is an enormous amount of work being done across government to ensure this.

Our economic response

The Premier, Alan Winde, has convened a Joint Operations Centre (JOC). The JOC has a number of workstreams, one of which is focused on mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the provincial economy.

The economic workstream has met every day since it was established and is focused on supporting key sectors in the Western Cape, namely Conference & Events, Tourism and Travel, Agriculture, Exports, Manufacturing and the Services Sector, which includes Retail and Business Process Outsourcing.

Our strategy to support businesses in the Western Cape has three aspects:

1. Containment - gathering information from industries to understand their business needs and respond to their needs
2. Adaptation - collating and sharing best practice to help businesses adapt and become resilient, and
3. Recovery – identifying actions that need to be taken to drive economic recovery once the pandemic has been contained, e.g. tourism and investment campaigns

Consulting business

This week, the economic workstream are consulting with business and industry stakeholders to understand and address the challenges companies are facing in implementing the measures announced by President Ramaphosa to deal with COVID-19. This includes understanding the specific impact in each industry, the adaptation strategies that are required from business and how best government can support them.

On Tuesday we met with stakeholders in the Tourism and Retail sectors, and on Friday we will be meeting with stakeholders in Agriculture. Further consultations with other sectors are being scheduled.

Supporting business

Furthermore, together with Wesgro, the City of Cape Town and industry partners, we have activated the official “COVID-19 Content Centre for Business”, a virtual centre consisting of sector specialists and communications experts, set up to develop reliable content to assist industry and manage daily queries and business concerns.

Businesses requiring support are encouraged to send their questions to supportbusiness@wesgro.co.za.

Tourism and travel

A host of measures are being actioned to support the tourism and travel sector to adapt, which includes assisting industry stakeholders and visitors to the Western Cape with issues such as cancellations and postponement, insurance and other staff and labour-related concerns.

The Department of Health have created flyers advising travellers returning to South Africa about the measures put in place to stop the spread of COVID-19. Twenty thousand of these flyers have been dispatched to Cape Town International Airport to ensure this message is received.

Following our meeting with the tourism sector, these flyers have been shared with to the tourism industry to distribute to visitors in the Western Cape.

Shopping malls and retail

In our meeting with shopping malls and retail, representatives from this sector indicated their commitment to supporting our efforts to stop the spread of COVID-19. We commend those that have already put in place significant measures in their operations, for example Pick ‘n Pay who have provided special opening hours for pensioners to shop between 07:00 – 08:00 on Wednesdays.

Importantly, the retail sector has indicated that at this time they have enough stock of critical materials to get us through this crisis, such as hand sanitiser and toilet paper, and that there is no need for panic buying.

Appeal to business

We acknowledge the major challenges businesses are experiencing right now. Many are taking innovative steps to allow for social distancing, like ensuring their employees don’t have to use public transport and digitising more of their operations, but there is always more that can be done.

We appeal to all employers to do what they can to let employees work from home. Every business should develop a social distancing approach that means staff should not be forced to be in close proximity to each other.

A best practice guide is being developed to assist businesses to stop the spread, and together with other FAQs on COVID-19, will be published at www.westerncape.gov.za/coronavirus

Our primary concern remains the health and safety of all those in the Western Cape. However, we remain committed to supporting businesses through these difficult times. By working together, we will do everything we can to stop the spread of COVID-19 and ensure the recovery of our economy in the Western Cape.

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<https://www.westerncape.gov.za/news/we-are-working-hard-mitigate-impact-covid-19-wc-economy>

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