

Business for South Africa gives an update on the vaccination roll out

With phase one of the vaccination programme due to start imminently, BUSA and other stakeholders in the Business environment has resuscitated the Business for South Africa (B4SA) platform. Through this platform, BUSA leaders are liaising on a daily basis with their Government counterparts to render assistance with the vaccination plan. During an update session this afternoon, representatives gave critical feedback on the process to date.

The current focus is on phase one of the process, namely the vaccination of frontline health workers. At this stage the direct involvement of Businesses in the process is largely limited to the private healthcare sector who are making arrangements for their frontline staff to be vaccinated. Subcommittees under the B4SA structure are also looking into registered and accredited private healthcare facilities that can administer the vaccine to frontline health workers.

Involvement by the broader Business sector will likely come into play during the second phase when all essential workers are vaccinated. Whilst there is no clarity at this stage as to who will qualify as an essential worker or not, it is universally accepted that the second phase will involve significantly larger numbers than the first phase. It is also at this stage that the inputs received by Agbiz from members will be particularly valuable given the costs and logistics required to roll out the second, much larger process. Possible commitments made by businesses to assist in the transport, storage (cold chain) and administering vaccines to its staff will become more relevant under phase 2. B4SA is furthermore closely involved in discussions with Government to finalise the list of workers and sectors to be included in the second phase.

As far as costs and finance is concerned, there is still significant uncertainty but clarity should be obtained in the coming weeks. Government, through the National Treasury, is the sole institution responsible for procuring vaccines from abroad. Some medical aids have contributed funding to assist the state but all procurement takes place centrally through the National Treasury. Amendments were also made to Regulations in December to ensure that all medical aids include COVID-19 vaccination amongst its prescribed, minimum benefits.

Agbiz remains closely involved in the initiatives and will keep members informed of developments.