

22 June 2021

To: Department of Trade Industry and Competition
 66 Robert Sobukwe Street
 Trevenna
 Pretoria
 Gauteng
 0002

Via Email: jmahlangu@thedtic.gov.za

Dear Mr. James Mahlangu,

SUBMISSIONS OF AIS APPLICATIONS AND CLAIMS TO THE DTIC

This letter serves as a request to the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the DTIC) in relation to certain aspects relevant to the submission of Automotive Investment Scheme (AIS) applications and claims.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a variety of change dynamics to the manner in which employees perform their duties. As a result of migrating to a “work from home” environment, many employees now face the following challenges:

- Not all home offices are fully equipped with the necessary consumables and machinery, such as printers;
- Employees have limited access to their employer’s office premises, leading to employees being unable to print the necessary documents for signature;
- Employees that are required to be in quarantine and unable to complete mandate (i.e., sign documents as they are isolated from other individuals); and
- Hard copies must be sanitised by each person required to handle the documents, and this could potentially affect the integrity of the print on the original document.

The use of electronic signatures

We understand that a majority of the other departments within the DTIC presently accept electronic submissions that are affixed with electronic signatures for both applications and claims alike. Furthermore, it has come to our attention that some auditors have already implemented the use of electronic signatures when making AIS submissions and claims. By utilising electronic signatures, we are of the view that this will assist in aiding governments fight to decrease the infection rate of COVID-19, as this will greatly avoid numerous face to face meetings with auditors and/or clients to obtain original signatures.

In light of our current practical position due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we request that consideration be given to the acceptance of electronic signatures in relation to the submission of AIS applications and claims from now on and going forward, provided that the AIS application and/or claim is affixed with a duly authorised electronic signature from both the auditor(s) as well as the applicant/claimant.

Additionally, we propose that a full copy of the electronically signed application or claim pack still be submitted to the DTIC via courier to ensure that the DTIC obtains a hard copy of the application or claim pack for their record purposes. This will enable the DTIC to do the necessary application and/or claim processing, taking into account the risk of paper handling.

Recommendations

Granted, the impact of historically falsified claims and falsified data in the process of making AIS submissions and claims needs to be considered. We recognise that the DTIC has to mitigate their risk of receiving falsified claims and falsified factual findings reports, as well identifying these before they are processed for payment.

To this end, we recommend that widely accredited validation programs such as Signiflow or Docusign be considered for usage by the DTIC in the long term, as a means of validating the electronic signatures that have been affixed to AIS submissions and claims.

The implementation of such programs is highly recommended, as it appears that the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic may potentially affecting our work environments for the foreseeable future.

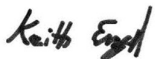
Specific request

We request that you confirm whether we may proceed on the above discussed basis in order to protect our clients, auditors, colleagues and the industry as a whole by playing our part to flatten the curve.

Conclusion

In light of the above, we further request that you consider the recommendations and requests detailed. As SAIT we appreciate your consideration of the content of this request, and we welcome further engagement.

Yours faithfully,



Keith Engel

CEO