ARKCES

PLAYBOOK

Local SEO Playbook for South African Businesses

Show up when people nearby search for what you sell, on Google Maps, in AI answers and in local directories. A practical plan for owners and small marketing teams.

Free resource from Arkces, a South African digital agency.
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The short version

Local rankings come from three things: relevance, distance and prominence. You can't move your premises, so work on the other two.

1. Complete and verify your Google Business Profile, then keep it active.
2. Use exactly the same name, address and phone number everywhere.
3. Earn reviews steadily and reply to all of them.
4. Build a page for each service and each area you genuinely serve.
5. Get mentioned by local and industry sites.
6. Measure calls, direction requests and enquiries, not only rankings.

Why now: Google AI Mode launched in South Africa in August 2025, and since March 2026 AI Overviews and AI Mode also work in Afrikaans, Sesotho, Setswana and isiZulu, among 13 African languages. AI answers to "best X near me" questions draw on the same signals: profiles, reviews, consistent details and clear website content.

1. Google Business Profile

Set-up

- [ ] Claim and verify the profile at business.google.com.
- [ ] Business name exactly as it appears on your signage and documents. No keywords added to the name.
- [ ] Primary category: the most specific one that describes your main service. Add relevant secondary categories.
- [ ] Address, or a service area if you visit customers and don't receive them. Use suburbs and cities you really serve.
- [ ] Local phone number and website link (link to the most relevant page, often the homepage or a location page).
- [ ] Opening hours, including public holiday hours before each holiday.
- [ ] Services or products with short descriptions and prices where possible.
- [ ] At least 10 real photos: premises, team, work, vehicles. No stock images.
- [ ] A description that says what you do, where and for whom, in plain language.

Keep it active

- Post an update, offer or project every two to four weeks.
- Add new photos monthly.
- Answer questions in the Q and A section; add common questions yourself.
- Check for suggested edits from the public and correct wrong ones.

2. Consistent details (NAP)

Your name, address and phone number (NAP) should match character for character across the web.

Decide on one official version, including details like "St" or "Street", unit numbers and the phone format, and use it everywhere. Inconsistent listings make it harder for Google and AI tools to be sure they are looking at the same business.

Where to list (starting set)

Platform	Why
Google Business Profile	Google Search, Maps and AI features
Bing Places for Business	Bing, Copilot and other services using Bing data
Apple Business Connect	Apple Maps and Siri
Facebook and LinkedIn pages	Social proof and entity signals
Hellopeter	Widely used South African review platform
Brabys, SA Yellow, Snupit and similar	South African directories (check each is active and relevant)
Industry associations and chambers	Relevant, credible local mentions

Record every listing and its accuracy in the free Local SEO Citation Tracker.

3. Reviews

Steady, recent, detailed reviews help rankings and conversions. A burst of reviews followed by silence helps less.

1. **Ask at the right moment:** right after a job is finished or a problem is solved.
2. **Make it easy:** send a direct review link (Google Business Profile gives you one).
3. **Ask for detail:** "If you can, mention what we did and where" produces more useful reviews.
4. **Reply to every review** within a few days, good and bad. Keep replies short, specific and calm.
5. **Never buy reviews** or offer rewards for positive ones. It breaks platform rules and can get reviews removed.

> **Privacy note:** when you message customers to ask for reviews, follow the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA): use contact details you collected for that relationship, and respect opt-outs.

Replying to a negative review

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Thanks for telling us, [name]. [Acknowledge the specific problem.]
[What you have done or will do.] Please contact [person] on [number]
so we can put it right.
```

4. Your website

- [ ] Your full NAP in the footer of every page, as text (not an image).
- [ ] A contact page with address, map, phone, email, hours and areas served.
- [ ] One page per main service, stating where you offer it.
- [ ] Location pages only for places you genuinely serve, each with unique content: local projects, team, directions, local questions.
- [ ] LocalBusiness or Organization structured data matching your profile details.
- [ ] Click-to-call phone links and a short enquiry form on mobile.
- [ ] Fast loading on mobile data. Many South African visitors browse on prepaid data, so page weight matters.

Location page outline

```
H1: [Service] in [Area]
Answer: what you offer in this area, how quickly, from where.
Local proof: a project, testimonial or photo from the area.
Areas covered: suburbs listed in plain text.
Questions locals ask, with answers.
Contact: phone, form, map.
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Avoid copying the same page and changing the town name. Thin duplicate pages can do more harm than good.

5. Local links and mentions

- Suppliers and partners: ask to be listed as a stockist, installer or partner.
- Associations and chambers of commerce you belong to.
- Local sponsorships and events with a real web presence.
- Local news: offer expert comment or data on topics in your field.
- Case studies with clients, published on both websites.

Languages

If many of your customers prefer Afrikaans, isiZulu, Sesotho or Setswana, a well-translated version of your key pages can reach searches that English pages miss. Use a fluent translator, not only machine translation, and link the versions with hreflang tags.

6. Measure what matters

Metric	Where
Calls, website clicks, direction requests	Google Business Profile performance
Local search queries	Google Business Profile performance, Search Console
AI impressions in South Africa	Search Console generative AI reports, filtered to South Africa
Enquiries and their source	GA4 conversions, CRM, "How did you hear about us?"
Review count and rating	Citation Tracker, Reviews sheet
Listing accuracy	Citation Tracker, Summary sheet

Monthly routine (one hour)

- [ ] Post one Google Business Profile update and add photos.
- [ ] Reply to all new reviews.
- [ ] Log reviews and ratings.
- [ ] Check calls, direction requests and enquiries against last month.
- [ ] Fix one inconsistent listing.
- [ ] Ask five recent customers for a review.

Report it with the free Monthly SEO Report Template.

Keep going

This guide is free to use and share inside your business. Updates are published at arkces.co.za/resources/local-seo-playbook-south-africa/.

- SEO services
- Website design and management
- All free resources

Want a hand? Arkces builds, manages and optimises websites for South African businesses. Talk to us.