

# Cash Smart Strategy – Public FAQ

## A. Strategy Overview and Purpose

### Q1. What is the Cash Smart Strategy?

The Cash Smart Strategy is a national initiative led by the South African Reserve Bank (SARB) to help ensure that cash remains accessible, affordable, secure and reliable as South Africa's payment system continues to modernise. While digital payments are growing, many people and businesses still rely on cash. The strategy aims to ensure that cash does not become scarce, unsafe or too expensive for those who need it.

### Q2. Is the SARB trying to remove cash or force people to go digital?

No. Cash Smart does not aim to eliminate cash or force people to use digital payments. Instead, it supports a payment system that allows cash and digital payment options to coexist. Cash remains important for inclusion, resilience during outages and day-to-day transactions, especially for vulnerable and rural communities.

### Q3. Why is the SARB involved in the cash industry?

As South Africa's central bank, the SARB has a responsibility to protect the integrity and stability of the national payment system. Without coordination, rising security risks, duplicated infrastructure and declining commercial incentives could make cash access unreliable or unaffordable. Cash Smart is a public-interest intervention aimed at preventing this outcome.

## B. Cash Access Channels and Coverage

### Q4. Will there be fewer ATMs?

There may be fewer duplicated or inefficient ATMs over time, but access to cash will be protected. The strategy focuses on shared infrastructure, such as white-label ATMs and retail cash withdrawals at shops, so that people can still access cash without travelling long distances.

### Q5. How will rural and township communities be protected?

Protecting underserved communities is a central objective of Cash Smart. The strategy prioritises maintaining and expanding access in areas where people rely heavily on cash, including rural towns, townships, and informal settlements.

## C. Affordability and Consumer Impact

### Q6. Will cash become more expensive for consumers?

Cash Smart intends to reduce the overall cost of cash by removing duplication and inefficiency in the system. Over time, this should lead to more predictable, affordable pricing for consumers rather than higher costs.

### **Q7. What role do retailers play in cash access?**

Retailers, such as supermarkets, already offer cash withdrawal services at the point of sale. Cash Smart recognises retailers as an important and cost-effective cash access channel and supports their role alongside ATMs and bank branches.

## **D. Safety, Security, and Operational Resilience**

### **Q8. How does Cash Smart improve safety and security?**

By reducing unnecessary cash movements, improving coordination, and strengthening standards, the strategy aims to lower the risk of cash-related crime and improve resilience across the system.

## **E. Implementation Roadmap and Transition Management**

### **Q9. When will changes happen?**

Cash Smart will be implemented gradually over several years. Changes will be phased in carefully to avoid disruption and to ensure that cash access remains reliable throughout the transition.

### **Q10. What does this mean for ordinary people?**

For most people, cash will continue to work much as it does today. Over time, access should become more reliable, safer, and potentially more affordable, especially in areas with limited options.

### **Q11. What is the implementation roadmap, and when will people see changes?**

Cash Smart will be implemented in phases over several years. The roadmap will include milestones such as agreeing on industry standards and confirming operating and funding arrangements before implementation. Timelines will be guided by readiness, consultation, and the need to keep cash services stable throughout the transition.

### **Q12. How will the transition be managed so that cash access is not disrupted?**

The transition will be planned to avoid disruptions. In practice, this typically means keeping existing services running. At the same time, new arrangements are introduced step by step, with strong monitoring of ATM uptime and cash availability, clear roles and responsibilities across industry participants, and agreed contingency plans in place in the event of problems. The aim is for the public to continue withdrawing (and, where available, depositing) cash as normal while improvements are rolled out.

## **F. ATM Infrastructure and the White-label ATM Model**

### **Q13. What is a white-label ATM?**

A white-label ATM is an ATM installed and owned by the National Cash Utility (NCU), rather than by a bank, but it can still be used by customers of different banks. For customers, using a white-label ATM should feel similar to using any other ATM: you insert your card, or use another supported method, follow the prompts and complete your

transaction. White-label ATMs are used in many countries to expand ATM coverage, including in smaller towns and rural areas.

**Q14. Will ATM services change, for example, deposits or other services?**

Cash withdrawals should remain widely available. Other services, such as cash deposits, balance enquiries or services offered by certain bank ATMs, depend on the type of ATM and the systems behind it. As models evolve, the intention is to preserve important cash services where there is a clear public need and to improve convenience through a combination of channels, including ATMs, bank branches and retail cash services.

**Q15. How will rural and underserved areas benefit during the transition?**

Rural and underserved areas are a priority. Any transition should be designed to improve, not reduce, service availability and reliability in these communities. This includes targeted rollout of additional access points where gaps exist, clear minimum service expectations (such as uptime and cash availability), and ongoing monitoring to quickly identify and fix issues.

**Q16. How will operational, customer-service, and fraud risks be managed during the transition?**

Risk management is a core part of any transition. This includes strong operational controls, such as maintenance and cash replenishment processes; clear customer information; transparent fees; reliable dispute resolution and support; and strengthened security through fraud monitoring, physical security standards and rapid incident response.