

## Access to Resources and Support for Innovation in the Sarah Baartman District

This brief presents key lessons from Mapping the Karoo Innovation Landscape using the Local Innovation Assessment Tools (LIAT). It looks at the innovation infrastructure and resource profile of the Municipality for context. The lessons shared in this brief teaches about the local enterprises' access to resources and support for innovation.

### How was the Mapping Done?

A set of complementary tools of LIAT were used to assess the innovation landscape in the Central Karoo and assess how innovation potential can be best exploited for inclusive local economic development (ILED). Using a set of mixed methods by relying on insights from the survey of local innovators, principles of geospatial analysis, participatory action and observation methods, key informant interviews, and transformative participatory workshops.

### What is the Status of Innovation Infrastructure & Resources of Sarah Baartman District Municipality?

The majority (82%) of the road network in the district are gravel roads, which are maintenance intensive. While the railway is considered a backbone of the economy of the small towns in the district, the railway infrastructure in the Sarah Baartman district is in a state of dilapidation, partly because of neglect. As a result, closure of some routes is considered the main cause of the collapse of towns such as Cookhouse, Paterson and Klipplaat. All the towns in the Dr Beyers Naudé local municipality have at least one public library apart from Nieu Bethesda, which only has one primary school and children commute or relocate to the nearest town such as Graaff Reinet for their secondary education. Willowmore has a public library, a secondary school, private energy solutions facility and Telkom Technical Services. In Graaff Reinet several schools, public and private, and three TVET Colleges; a police academy, Tourism College and East Cape Midlands College campus.

The Beyers Naude local municipality adopted social infrastructure provision as a secondary service with aims to provide clinics, libraries and community halls for instance. The municipality currently has no Higher Education Institutions; however, several schools and libraries are found in the communities in the central business area and townships.

### The Internal Enterprise Environment and Access to Resources for Innovation

Figure 1 shows that the majority (39%) of the innovation activities took place in the farms/fields, while 34% of innovation activity happened in the factories/manufacturing plants of enterprises. Around one in five (21%) of innovators carried out their innovation activities in less formal settings (i.e., homes or villages, etc.), such as a young entrepreneur focusing on computer programming and develops websites and cell phone applications that can be used by businesses or municipal officials while on site from his own home.

In contrast, very few innovators conducted their innovation activities in education institutions (3%) or research laboratories (3%).

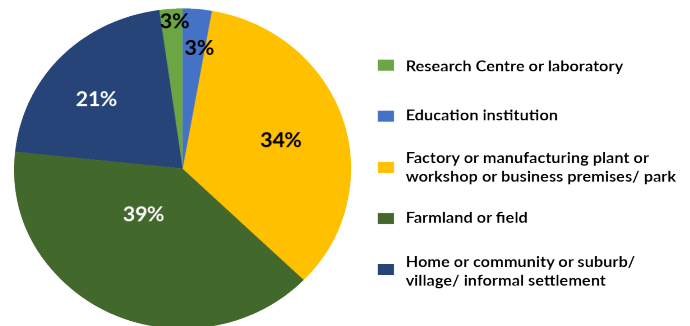


Figure 1 Main Place for Innovation Activities

Innovators face challenges in terms of accessing the resources they require for innovation with only 21% indicating that they could access necessary resources locally (within a radius of 50 km), and 24% in other municipalities within the Eastern Cape. The majority (67%) of innovators indicated that they needed to access resources in other provinces outside the Eastern Cape. For a few (5%), innovators had to access the required resources outside the country's borders.

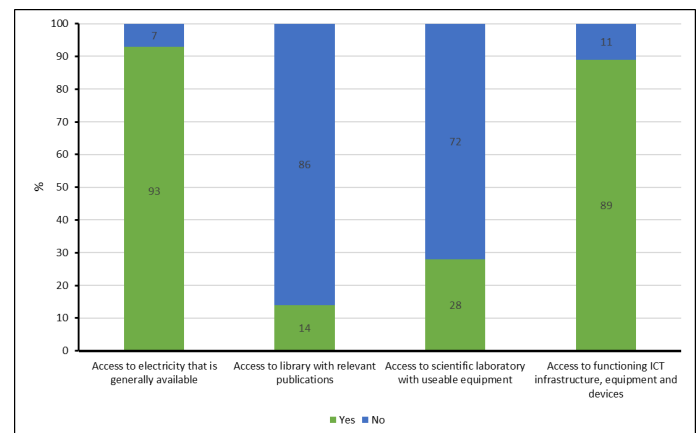


Figure 2 Access to resources required for innovation

### External Enterprise Environment for Innovation

Many of the enterprises used electricity or energy from a public source, with only 11% reporting they did not rely on a public source for electricity or energy, and some enterprises going off the grid completely by using solar panels. A small proportion (10%) indicated that they had private sources of electricity or energy for innovation purposes. In terms of water, almost 70% of the innovating enterprises indicated that they depend on the use of the public water. The results also indicate that 31% use private water for innovation purposes. Evident among innovators, was the use of private boreholes for water reducing dependency on the state as well as reducing costs for water consumption.

The results indicate that a small proportion of the innovating enterprises within the Sarah Baartman district depend on the use of higher education and training from both the public (17%) and private (4%) sources for innovations purposes. Similarly, a small percentage of the enterprises depend on the use of public (3%) and private (10%) research agencies. Private sources are the main sources of ICT services in Sarah Baartman, with nearly two thirds (63%) of the innovating enterprises using these ICT services for their innovation activities. Only 11% of the innovators indicated the use of public sources to protect their innovations, with 62% of the enterprises used the private sector.

### Institutional Support for Innovation

The level of enterprises' awareness of laws, policies, regulations, and agencies that control innovation activities in their sectors. The next figure shows that there were low levels of awareness among most enterprises, as the majority (45%) were not aware at all, with 17% somewhat aware of the laws, policies, regulations, and agencies relevant for innovation support in their sectors. Only 38% of the innovators indicated that were fully aware of these institutions. These results suggest that it will be important for the relevant institutions and agencies to implement awareness or publicity campaigns to improve the exposure of the innovators to their services.

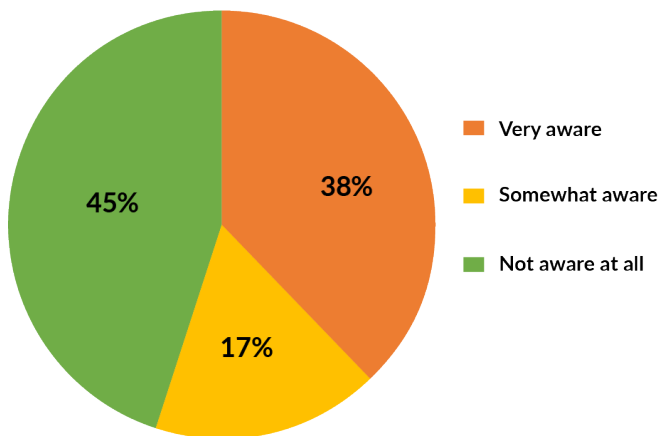


Figure 3 Understanding of STI Policies, Awareness and Access to Government Support for Innovation

Most of the innovators were not aware of the country's policy framework on science, technology and innovation (STI), with only about one in five (21%) indicating that they are aware. The figure also shows that the concept of a national system of innovation (NSI) was not common knowledge among the innovators, with only 14% reporting that they were familiar with the concept. The implication of this result is that the government should put more effort in popularising their policies, as well as the NSI concept, which is the preferred framework for driving innovation in South Africa, as entrenched in the new White Paper on STI.

Figure 4 shows that most (67%) of the innovators felt that the legal, policy and standards regulatory environment was either not supportive to its innovation activities at all (34%) or was only marginally supportive (33%).

Only a third (33%) of the innovators were of the view that the legal, policy and regulatory environment was supportive of innovation. This suggests a need for policy makers to revise the policies and regulations to create an environment that is conducive and supportive of innovation. This would require the participation of the innovators, so that the changes made are acceptable to them.

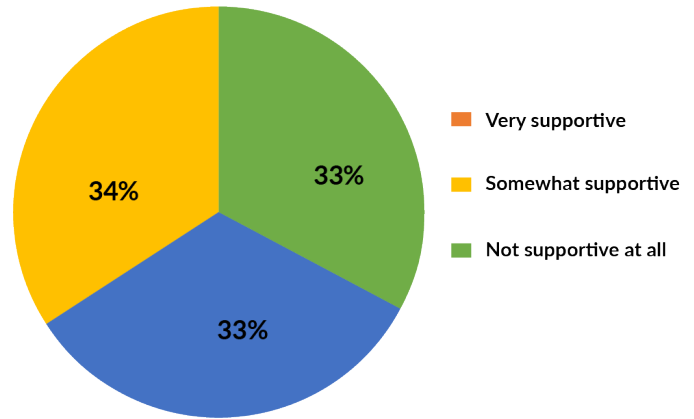


Figure 4 View on the legal, policy and regulatory environment of innovation in South Africa

Less than half 46% of the enterprises were not aware of the different support mechanisms that the Government has put in place to support innovation in the country. As such, it is important that information about these interventions cascade down to the local levels, particularly in the marginalised contexts so that they also can benefit. What is of concern, however, is that only 25% of those enterprises who were aware of the available support had actually applied for it.

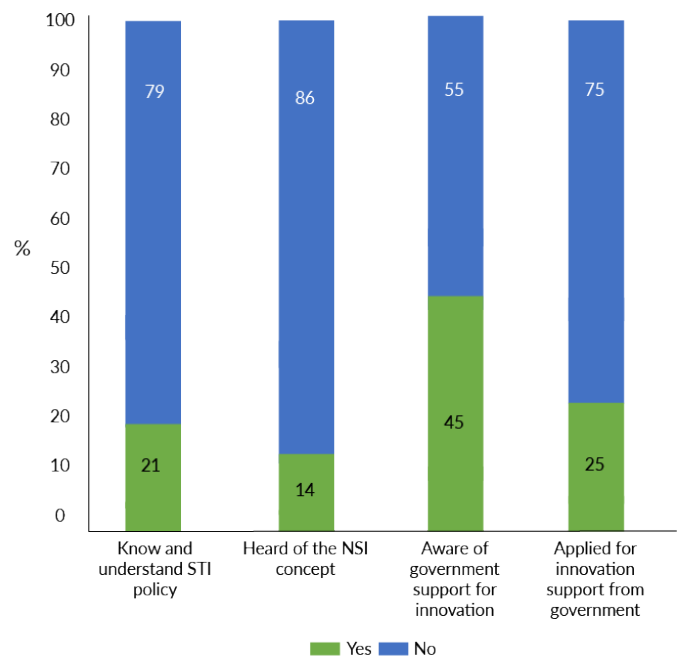


Figure 5 Understanding of STI policies, awareness, and access to government support for innovation

This indicates that there are constraints that these enterprises face in accessing support from government, beyond a lack of information. While improving awareness about the support is necessary, it will not be sufficient to get these small innovators to access government support. This implies the need for a holistic approach to improving government support to the small enterprises, empowering them to access the support successfully.

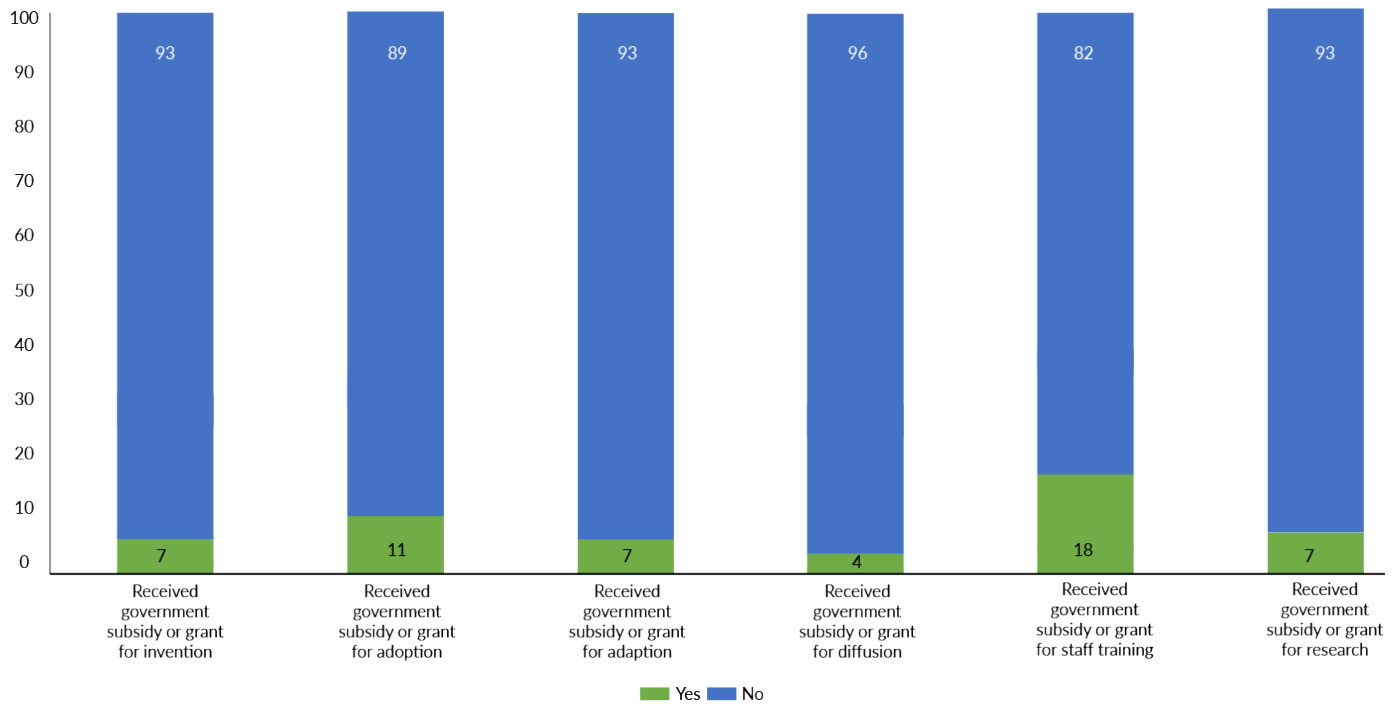


Figure 6 Grant or subsidy received from a Government department or agency for innovation activities

The innovative enterprises received negligible support from government for innovation activities. Provincial government is the most supportive to innovators (55%), followed national government (27%). The support from the local government sphere is limited, with only 18% indicating local.

### Future Actions

This brief has looked at key lessons from Mapping the Karoo Innovation Landscape using the Local Innovation Assessment Tools (LIAT). Attention was given to the innovation infrastructure and resource profile of the Sarah Baartman District Municipality. The lessons shared were concerned mainly about the local enterprises' access to resources and support for innovation.

The local innovators are acutely aware of the available support for innovation; however, they have little confidence in being awarded support for their innovations. Attention should be given to how information and awareness of relevant campaigns reach rural and marginal communities. Pointed awareness campaigns on access to the available resources and support for innovation are in great demand. Consultation with the local system of innovation is paramount when reviewing and developing STI policies and regulations. Lastly, innovation infrastructure plays a crucial role when it comes to access and for innovators to thrive. The internal road network, ICT infrastructure and libraries or information centres with up-to-date resources is crucial.

### Suggested citation:

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