

Innovation Orientation: Sarah Baartman District Municipality

State and non-state role-players in the Sarah Baartman District Municipality (SBDM) increasingly see that innovation can lift development of the district to new heights: Municipalities, private businesses, and community organisations in this district recognise that innovation can add value to the economic and social prosperity of SBDM. The Integrated Development Plan (2017-22) mentions innovation in its strategic direction and acknowledges the importance of innovation in economic development through partnerships.

Statements that explain and envision such promising futures accept that SBDM will not become an innovation hub overnight. Making innovation work for socioeconomic change in SBDM requires more than just time. Instead, for innovative change to be achieved, we need to know which segments of the local economy to target and how best to implement real change. Should innovations prioritise farming, renewable energy, or another sector and what are the reasons for this prioritisation? Furthermore, without well-defined developmental goals, the potential benefits of the new ideas, practices and artefacts might never truly be possible.

The weight that innovation occupies in visions of socioeconomic development in SBDM is important and deserves attention. This briefing note sets out the different levels of innovation orientation within the SBDM and summarises the approach used to assign this score.

How to do an Innovation Orientation?

Innovation orientation concerns new ways of doing things in socioeconomic development policies and practices and means that stakeholders in development initiatives are able to fully exploit new ideas, practices and artefacts for local economic progress and higher quality of life.

Formal definitions of innovation orientation typically underline the strategic inclination of an organisation towards in terms of its approaches to building capabilities and processes to encourage innovation-driven economic transformation. The ways organisations allocate their resources, hire certain employees, or make use of certain technologies, are all examples of an organisation's level of innovation orientation.

This working definition makes it easier to conduct an innovation orientation in practice and assess a municipality's inclination toward new and improved ways of doing things. We use a four-level system of analysis to determine the extent to which a municipality favours innovation as reflected in their awareness and attitude towards innovation.

The categories range from Level 0 (red) - where there is no to little innovation awareness - to Level 3 where innovation is firmly established and entrenched throughout their internal and external processes (see Table 1).

This brief form part of a series of briefing notes that share the key findings of a study about local innovation at various rural municipalities conducted by the HSRC in partnership with SALGA and DSI. The findings contribute toward the Small-Town Regeneration and Regional Economic Development Initiative (STR/RED).

Each level has a description which sets it apart from the other levels and helps in interpreting what an innovation orientation 'score' means in practice.

Level 0 <i>Little or no innovation awareness</i>	Level 1 <i>Innovation awareness</i>	Level 2 <i>Innovation prioritisation</i>	Level 3 <i>Innovation entrenchment</i>
Little or no mention of innovation or related concepts in municipal documents. Importance of innovation not acknowledged in the municipal documents	Mention and evidence of awareness of innovation in the municipal documents. Importance of innovation acknowledged. However, there is little or no prioritisation of innovation when resources are allocated	Innovation is clearly defined, mentioned frequently, and its importance emphasised. Documents show innovation understanding and prioritisation in terms of resource allocation	Innovation's importance emphasised, and innovation principles are entrenched in the municipal's internal and external processes. Resource allocation is informed by innovation and there are incentives for innovation

Table 1. Innovation Orientation Analysis Frame: Level Descriptor

- In terms of carrying out the evaluation, we first collected the maximum number of the latest strategic documents of SBDM across the municipality. These documents include the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) Spatial Development Framework (SDF) and Local Economic Development strategy (LED) IDP, SDF and LED strategy. As strategic documents, they guide a municipality and set out its core responsibilities which include local economic development.
- The next step is conducting an electronic keyword search and analysis of each strategic document. This rapid content appraisal detects if the document mentions the word innovation, and related concepts such as technology, science, knowledge, new or improved methods/ ways. Keyword content analysis also detects the context these words are used in and the frequency these keywords appear in the document. The final step uses the results of keywords extracted to sift it through the analysis frame above to arrive at the municipality's innovation orientation score.

What have we learned?

It was relatively easy to access IDPs for most municipalities, it was however a challenge to access the LED plans or SDF frameworks in some municipalities. Either these documents did not exist or were not available from municipalities websites. In the case of the SBDM, only the IDP was successfully obtained and analysed:

- IDP 2017-2022



The analysis revealed that SBDM is at Level 2 of innovation orientation. Meaning that the municipality understands the importance of taking up innovative initiatives to improve the LED and allocates resources accordingly. However, there is very limited awareness and acknowledgement of the role of innovation in driving LED in the Blue Crane local municipality (Level 0), and only low-level recognition of the importance of innovation and no resources are allocated to stimulate innovation for LED in Dr Beyers Naude LM (Level 1).

Municipality	IO level, document analysis
Dr Beyers Naude LM	1
Blue Crane LM	0
Sarah Baartman DM	2

Table 2 Innovation orientation levels of Sarah Baartman District Municipality

What are the learnings for the future?

Although there are signs of the importance of new - and improvement on - core functions, there is room for the municipality to go further. This can be done by incentivizing actors (entrepreneurs, businesses etc) outside of the organisation engaged in innovation activities aligned with the municipality's identified priorities. Especially if those are addressing a key regional challenge.

Being inclined toward innovation cannot only be reflected on paper but requires action. SBDM should aim to go beyond recognising the importance of innovation toward the actual investments to change the course of LED in the region.

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