



MEDIA STORY

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Turning research into local economic impact – TIA's Technology Station Programme.

South Africa's economic landscape is shaped by persistent challenges – unemployment, poverty, and inequality – that disproportionately affect graduates who are desperately seeking meaningful employment and a foothold on the ladder to economic prosperity. The Technology Innovation Agency (TIA) leads the charge in addressing these challenges.

At the heart of this mission is the Technology Station Programme (TSP), a dynamic initiative led by TIA, as an entity of the Department of Science, Technology, and Innovation (DSTI). Through TSP, high-level research graduates are funded in designated niche areas through the Technology Stations network in science, engineering and technology areas. More than just a skills development programme, the TSP is a strategic enabler that drives local impact as it closes the gap between academia, industry, and the commercial world.

As a catalyst for innovation enablement, we act with intent and accelerate solutions that translate research into commercial impact, empower entrepreneurs, and create a more inclusive economy. By doing this, it unlocks innovation-led growth for SMMEs.

Hosted at Universities of Technology across South Africa, the TSP transforms institutions into hubs of applied innovation, equipping entrepreneurs, start-ups, SMMEs, and cooperatives with the expertise, infrastructure, and real-world insights they need to succeed. There are 15 Technology Stations based at 11 Higher Education Institutions in South Africa.

Technology Stations serve as local active knowledge-transfer platforms, connecting students and researchers to industry while fostering economic impact. Through Work Integrated Learning and Graduate Internships, young professionals gain access to world-class equipment, cutting-edge research applications, and market-driven projects—ensuring they graduate with more than just academic qualifications, but industry-ready capabilities.

"We don't just support SMMEs. We enable them to become globally competitive through access to high-end technology, market intelligence, and commercially viable innovations. The impact of the TSP isn't just in developing products, but in securing and protecting jobs, creating new industries, and strengthening South Africa's economic resilience", says Vusi Skosana, Head of the Technology Stations Programme at TIA.

Between 2020 and 2024, TSP backed over 11,166 beneficiaries, catalysing innovation in sectors such as agro-processing, green industries, advanced manufacturing, and textiles. The programme delivered over 85,000 hours of advanced skills training, rolled out 115 short learning programmes, and provided 264 postgraduates with invaluable industry exposure—turning theoretical knowledge into actionable solutions.

One such success story is BrewSpoon, a simple innovation funded through the TIA SEED Fund and developed at the Product Development Technology Station (PDTs) situated at the Central University of Technology in Bloemfontein. BrewSpoon has blown the market away through the innovative solution it offers. This 100% food-safe polypropylene and stainless-steel product enables single-cup barista-quality filter coffee in a few easy steps.

The final BrewSpoon version was launched in November 2020. The product was commercialised and is being sold at retailers nationwide including Takealot. The product has also been exported to the USA, the company is in discussions with US distributors to expand their market share in the States.

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Supported by TSP, BrewSpoon showcases how practical innovation can transform local ideas into commercial success.

“The TSP opened doors for us that otherwise would have remain shut and helped our product get to market and made our bold dream become a reality. Today our innovation is on sale at retailers across the world and the feedback from customers have been overwhelmingly positive and supportive,” says Allan Kinnear, Director: MyBrew Innovations.

The Agri-food Technology Station at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, focuses on assisting SMMEs in the food and beverage sector to improve their production processes, enhance food safety, and develop new products. Another example is the Institute of Advanced Tooling (IAT), at the Walter Sisulu University. IAT supports the manufacturing sector with advanced tooling design. Their clients include SMMEs that manufacture automotive components.

Through its localisation and export readiness focus, TSP isn’t just empowering entrepreneurs—it’s shaping the future of South Africa’s manufacturing sector.

Also supported by the TSP programme is InnoVenton, a Research Institute at the Nelson Mandela University, whose principal research focus is on Product and Process Development. This year, 2025, marks 20 years of InnoVenton’s existence. In celebration of this milestone, the institute, which incorporates the Downstream Chemicals Technology Station (DCTS), is looking forward to making further impact on the local industry and forging more partnerships and collaborations. DCTS is part of the infrastructure TIA avails to SMMEs and industry including high-level research, technological services, and training,

By facilitating the development of 218 commercially viable solutions, including prototypes, technology packages, and pilot production models, TSP has driven nearly 4,000 competitive improvements across various industries.

A demographic breakdown shows that 56% of TSP beneficiaries are youth under the age of 35 and 45% of enterprises are led by women. TIA is ensuring that South Africa’s innovation landscape is not just expanding—it’s becoming more inclusive. The R157 million in supplementary income generated by TSP underscores its role in securing funding, assisting businesses win new contracts, and fostering sustainable economic growth.

The Technology Station Programme cements South Africa’s position as a global innovator by transforming research into commercially viable solutions, driving entrepreneurship, and positioning local industries for global competitiveness.

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About the Technology Innovation Agency (TIA)

- The TIA is a national public entity that serves as the key institutional intervention to bridge the innovation chasm between research and development from higher education institutions, science councils, public entities, the private sector, and commercialisation.
- Read more at <https://www.tia.org.za/who-we-are/>

About the Technology Stations Programme (TSP)

- The establishment of the TSP was initiated in 2000 by the Department of Science and Technology – formerly known as the Department of Arts, Culture, Technology and Science (DACTS). The intention was to establish an intermediary system that would service the technological needs of sector-specific SME manufacturers.
- The implementation of the Programme started in May 2001, with German Development Cooperation support in the form of strategic advice and technical assistance to establish the systems, as well as

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facilitating working relationships with Transfer Centres in Germany for targeted capacity building and international benchmarking.

- The Tshumisano Trust was established in 2002 as an Implementation Agency of the DST to provide technical and financial support to the Technology Stations, which in turn provided technical support to SMEs in the form of customised technology solutions, services and training.
- The launch of the TIA in 2010 was to further the DST's mandate identified in the National Research and Development Strategy (NRDS) adopted in 2002 to contribute to innovation and technology transfer to SMEs.
- TIA took over the role of the Implementation Agency from Tshumisano in 2010, with DST funding for the TSP ring-fenced in TIA.

Issued by Alkemi Collective on behalf of the Technology Innovation Agency.

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