

## DTI to improve support for film industry

The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) will continue to improve its incentive scheme for the country's film industry, which contributes R3.5bn to the gross domestic product (GDP).



DTI's Rob Davies says apart from the film industry's contribution to GDP, it has created 25,000 jobs in South Africa. Image: GCIS

The department's film and TV incentive scheme came into being in 2004 to stimulate economic growth and participation in the industry.

Speaking at an engagement session with the film and television industry Minister Dr Rob Davies said the scheme has shown much progress since its inception.

Between 2004 and 2008, the scheme supported 49 productions.

"In 2008, there was a beefing up of the incentive programme. It was an up-scaling and I think the figures tell us a significant story. Between 2008 and last year, the film incentive supported 398 projects," said Davies, describing it as a significant expansion.

Of the 398 projects supported, 256 were South African, 77 were co-productions and 65 were foreign productions.

"We've seen a steady increase in the activity of the film sector in SA supported by the incentive programme," Davies said.

While this was good news, the meeting was not just an opportunity for the department "to pat itself on the back", but it was rather a time for the DTI to continue its dialogue with stakeholders, so that improvements to the scheme can be made.

"There are a few features of the current rebate we need to look at. We have to have an incentive that is competitive with what exists around the world. We need to be frank about the fact that we are a small, developing economy," Davies said.

Being competitive was not only important in monetary terms but in terms of "the certainty and reliability of the scheme, so that when filmmakers come, they know that it's not just a vague promise that is made to them but it is a certainty," Davies added.

### Changing with the times

The scheme needed to be continuously improved in line with what is happening in the industry, both domestically and abroad. "It's about making adaptations when they are necessary," Davies said, adding that flexibility was an important aspect.

He also spoke of the importance of progression in attitudes, where South Africa would be seen as more than just a location for making films.

"We will always have good locations but I think we need to make it clear to the world that we've moved on to things like the ability to provide a world class film studio in Cape Town.

"Companies are now moving into the production of animated films, which are particularly popular. [We] also have the ability to produce the industrial materials that go into the construction of sets and the skills to make those sets," he said..

### Numbers game



Renowned actor and broadcaster Eric Myeni believes there is scope for growth of the film industry in South Africa. Image: [Who's Who in SA](#)

Davies - who was this week sworn in as the Minister of Trade and Industry for a second - said the film industry had demonstrated that it had the capacity to contribute to significantly to South Africa's GDP.



Rudi van As hopes to see even more incentives for local film producers. Image: LinkedIn

"It's for that reason that we have been working to continuously improve the film incentive. A baseline study by the National Film and Video Foundation said that the film sector contributed R3.5bn to SA's GDP. It created more than 25 000 full time jobs. That is a significant number of jobs and a significant contribution to the GDP," he said.

In other countries like Nigeria - which has overtaken SA in terms of GDP - the film industry [Nollywood] and telecommunications has contributed to the rise of that country's GDP (which is US\$490bn).

"It shows that we have a real way to improve our own film industry," Davies said.

The department is currently digitising some of its incentive schemes to speed up application processes and reduce the red tape.

The session was attended by major film producers, including Eric Miyeni and Film Afrika representative Rudi van As, who described the DTI's rebate as a "lifeblood for the South African film and television industry, which is regarded as being very efficient".

"Unlike some incentive schemes out there, it is reliable. This allows filmmakers to predict accurately how much their rebate amount will be and that it will materialise," said Van As.

Without the film rebate, the Industrial Development Corporation would not have been able to fund local films, delegates were told.

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