

Design job creation success in Klein Karoo

In a joint effort by craft and design entrepreneur, AVOOVA, the Jobs Fund (National Treasury) and the Cape Craft & Design Institute, 50 sustainable jobs have been created in the Klein Karoo town of Prince Albert.

Nine years ago, the small business was set up with five employees in an old ostrich hatchery in the town. This month, the business (now exporting its beautiful handmade ostrich eggshell products to 15 countries) celebrated the official opening of its newly renovated, 800-m² factory across the road.



Williams, Allie-Edries, Lottering, Goddard

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Create permanent jobs

Funding from the Jobs Fund through the auspices of the Cape Craft & Design Institute (CCDI) made the new premises possible. This has not only enabled the company to improve the working conditions of its staff and boost productivity, but to create 20 permanent new jobs. The business is now far better equipped to develop the export potential of its products.

CEO, Tom Goddard, believes that there could be further 20-30 positions available over the next one to two years as a result of the funding injection. The factory has sufficient spare capacity to double the numbers employed to over 100 over the next few years.

In addition, the investment has created a shop in the former factory, which has the potential to be an attraction for the growing number of tourists visiting Prince Albert, adding to the number of direct and indirect jobs.

"We made a conscious decision to remain faithful to the origins of our business by keeping our production in the town where it all started," said Goddard. "This has presented many challenges, both logistically and in terms of short term skills shortages, but on the other hand there are many longer term advantages to such a strategy.

"Staff retention is excellent, which is very important when developing and refining specific skills. Because we operate in a small local community, over the years we have been able to establish a relationship with our staff that is founded on mutual trust and dependency. With every year that passes, this bond will strengthen and will enable us to grow and improve not just in terms of quality and productivity, but also in terms of the benefits to our employees, their families and the stability of the community as a whole."

First in the area

Six of the seven local councillors accompanied the Mayor, Goliath Lottering. "This is the first time that there has been this type of initiative in Prince Albert. We normally struggle to attract investors to our small town. Your contribution puts bread on the tables of the poor and marginalised of the community."

Paying tribute to the support from the Jobs Fund, Goddard concluded, "Almost all small businesses that survive the first few start-up years reach a tipping-point where they have the potential to accelerate growth and become much stronger, or they reach a glass ceiling beyond which they can climb no further. To break through that ceiling needs, amongst other things, luck, persistence and, in most cases, an injection of capital.

"We must now ensure that this timely intervention by the CCDI and the Jobs Fund will enable the company to gain some serious momentum. We are all aware and appreciative of what this support has made possible but there is still much to be done and many challenges to address if the investment is to fulfil its job creation goals."

The current business started in Prince Albert in 2005 and now employs 68 staff with four shops in the Cape and Sandton,

plus a newly opened fifth shop at its former factory premises in Prince Albert. It exports to 15 countries and has over 150 products in its range, for more information, go to www.avoova.com.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>