

## Tooling plan to save diminishing industry

With the state of the tool designing industry in disrepute, the Gauteng Department of Economic Development and other partners have launched the Gauteng Tooling Initiative (GTI) to recapitalise the dwindling industry.

By [Michael Appel](#) 8 Apr 2008

"For the last 15 years, the tooling industry has been in a scary state of collapse and unless we revitalise the industry, we will be non-existent in 10 to 12 years," said Chirperson of the Tooling Association of South Africa for the Gauteng Province (TASA GP), Bevan Davis.

"We [as South Africa] face massive competition from the East [who are flooding the market with cheaper tools of a lower quality], and face challenges in terms of finance, training of tool designers and recapitalisation of the industry."

### Designer age gap

The average age of a tool designer in South Africa is 54 years of age, and Davis asked the question, "What is happening between the ages of 18 and 54?"

The GTI stems from national governments plan to revitalise and integrate the country's technologically underdeveloped tooling industry.

There is no continuity in the tool-making profession and if the gap between the ages of 18 and 54 are not bridged in the near future, then the local tool-making industry as well as the manufacturing sector is likely to collapse said Davis.

The tool industry is a R6 billion industry in South Africa, however, local tool designers only constitute R1.2 billion slice of the market.

South Africa is therefore importing about 60% of the tools used in manufacturing.

Tool designing is one of the most difficult skills to master, said Davis, adding the profession requires a lot financial support within a broad framework of government and private sector investment.

"If you are not skilled in this profession from day one, you cannot expect to become the Chief Executive Officer [CEO] of a tool-making company," he said.

### Positive knock-ons

Commenting on the state power utility's load-shedding activities which resumed on 1 April 2008, Davis said the four hours his plastic mould injection company sits without power, it works out to an effective nine-hour loss in productivity due to the technicalities of the industry.

Chief Operations Officer (COO) for the GTI Nepo Kekana said: "One toolmaker creates 35 downstream jobs."

"At the moment, there is about 3,000 tool designers supporting about 75,000 downstream jobs. There are plans to increase the amount of toolmakers to 18,000 significantly boosting the number of downstream jobs," said Kakana.

The GTI will also see the inclusion of women in the industry as well as those persons living with disabilities said the COO.

### **Multi-million rand initiative**

A sum of about R2.7 million will be spent over the next five years as part of an industry turnaround plan, with about R9 million proposed for the near future.

Acting Head of Department for the Department of Economic Development Busi Mhanga said the GTI remains part of the provinces project to contribute 8% to annual economic growth by 2014.

"It further remains an essential element to value added manufacturing and beneficiation. This initiative will be one of the drivers of export growth sectors such as advanced manufacturing.

"This initiative identifies key interventions needed to maximise the growth potential of the highly productive and labour absorbing sectors of the economy so as to create increasing numbers of sustainable employment opportunities," said Mhanga.

She concluded by saying at the provincial level, the tooling initiative will see the creation of Tool, Die and Mould (TDM) industry skills target of more than 6,000 toolmakers along the skills value chain creating over 180,000 jobs by 2014.

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