

Case Study

DATA COMMUNICATION PRODUCTS FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN DEPARTMENT OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COMPETITION

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data
INNOVATORS

SUMMARY

The following case study outlines the project of developing the 2018/19 and 2019/20 Annual Incentives Reports for the South African Department of Trade Industry and Competition (dtic). On an annual basis, the department is tasked with providing financial and tax incentives to SMMEs and larger companies aimed at supporting businesses and improving employment statistics. In the efforts of rolling out the incentives, they are tracked yearly and used in assessing the department's achievements against their targets and goals.

Data Innovators supported the dtic in data analysis, design and layout, printing, editing, and conducting interviews, which resulted in over 120 pages reports, some of which were presented in parliament. Sections of the reports included data visualisation, features, closer looks, and economic analysis narrative. Over and above producing reports for the dtic the brief includes key learnings for the Data Innovators team and a fresh perspective on considerations for public sector data communications. These are: understanding the key indicators, identifying appropriate data visualisation, design elements and colour for the audience, drawing out the key lessons and stories of change and consolidating the overarching key findings as an infographic.



The dtic Annual Incentive Reports

Every year the South African National Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) provides financial and tax incentives to small, medium and micro-enterprises (SMMEs) and larger companies to support business growth and employment. The progress of these incentives are tracked annually and are a key output of the department in achieving their annual performance plan targets. The scale of the incentive schemes and indicators tracked creates a considerable repository of data and information. These data are consolidated on an annual basis to understand the incentives' progress against the department goals in the Annual Incentive Report.

In 2019, Data Innovators¹ was contracted to compile the 2018/2019 **Annual Incentive Report for the Industrial Financing Branch of the dtic**. The compilation of this report required us to collect data via interviews with private sector companies based in South Africa, as well as analyse secondary data on the existing incentive databases and documents for the 17 incentives. In addition, we provided the design, layout, editing and printing of the report. The Data Innovators team completed these tasks by working closely with the allocated dtic team.

Data Innovators was contracted to support the development of the 2020 report. In both years, dtic's Annual Incentive Report was disseminated to the Minister and other relevant sector stakeholders broadly.



The result

The more than 120-page annual reports included data visualisations, features, closer looks and economic analyses narratives. Given our knowledge of the Department's incentive schemes, we also curated the presentation content and four briefs (Section 12I Tax Allowance Incentive, Cluster Development Program, Black Industrialists Scheme progress brief, and lessons from four international case studies on production models for the Film and Television Production incentive) which was presented to parliament in 2019 and later disseminated electronically to government officials in 2020.

The reports are published for public access on the dtic website – ([http://www.thedtic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2018-2019 Annual Incentive Report.pdf](http://www.thedtic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2018-2019%20Annual%20Incentive%20Report.pdf)) and <http://www.thedtic.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/DTIC-Incentives-Report-2020.pdf>).

As part of the project close-out, our Data Innovators team facilitated our Data Artistry skills development programme for four dtic staff. The programme workshop aimed to build internal capabilities and sustainability within the dtic by handing over data visualisation skills. We provided a memo and resources to strengthen economic analyses for future incentive reports and ongoing M&E. Lastly, we facilitated a session whereby officials reflected on ways to improve the overall report process.

¹ In 2021, Data Innovator Pty LTD joined the Advisory Services Unit of New Leaders Foundation to form the new entity trading as Data Innovators.



Considerations for public sector data communications

Through the process of developing the reports and briefs, Data Innovators has refined the way in which we work with clients and partners for data communications in public sector outputs, these considerations include:

- **Clearly defining the audience** and the intended use of the communication. In the case of the Incentives Report, the detailed narratives ensured readers that it was evidence informed and useful to policy analysts. On the other hand, the shorter summaries allowed senior government officials to review pertinent content, identify key data points, and take action aligned to broader sector initiatives.
- **Understanding the key indicators.** The key to using large public sector data for reporting is to identify priority or key indicators. Without this information, data-heavy reports may be hard to reconcile with the briefs or summaries. By understanding contextual priorities and relevant national indicators, the team worked with dtic decipher pertinent data and to streamline the amount of data to include. All data were reviewed and critiqued during the analysis phase which allowed the team to integrate substantiating points within the narrative.
- **Identifying appropriate data visualisation, design elements** and colour for the audience. The brand guidelines formed the focus of the look and feel of the report, but we explored ways to innovate around design and colour. For example, colour and place-settings were used to differentiate

the report sections. The coloured top-edge of each page provided readers' ease of reference where the sections start and end. Specific graph styles were also identified to depict comparative indicators, geospatial disaggregation, and other formats.

- **Drawing out the key lessons and stories of change.** In the reports, we incorporated narrative and imagery to convey stories. Interviews and follow-ups were conducted with beneficiaries to verify impact and clarify meaning. In 2020, a specific focus was placed on understanding the effect of COVID-19 on organisations supported. Photographs and illustrations were included to represent context and products to reduce the level of text but still convey the impact of the various incentive schemes.
- Consolidating the **overarching key findings** as an infographic. The 2019 & 2020 report structures were designed so that cluster and incentive summaries were available at the beginning of the report. These summaries highlighted key ideas and outcomes, and allowed readers varied levels of content based on their interest.





Helping organisations push data boundaries to create positive futures.

Data Innovators is a social enterprise led by a team of young Africans who are passionate about making systemic change in development through data. Data Innovators Group was founded in 2021, borne from the partnership between Advisory Services at New Leaders Foundation NPC and Data Innovator PTY Ltd. Our core services include Data Driven Solutions, Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning Services, Capability Building and Project Implementation.

Three ways the Data Innovators aims to help organisations overcome data boundaries for a positive future are by:

- Innovating and strengthening impact measurement in across sectors globally
- Collaborating in efforts to drive strategic business intelligence in the development sector broadly
- Providing thought leadership and reach new frontiers in setting up data and MERL systems



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