

Black economic empowerment boosted by activities of The Innovation Hub

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Encouraging and nurturing the development of emerging black companies and hi-tech entrepreneurs from historically disadvantaged backgrounds is a key objective of [The Innovation Hub](#), in supporting the national government's black economic empowerment (BEE) priorities.

The Innovation Hub forms part of the multibillion-rand Blue IQ initiative by the Gauteng Provincial Government to invest in economic infrastructure in smart industries, high value-added manufacturing and business tourism, with the goal of establishing Gauteng as a truly 'smart' province.

"We attain our BEE objectives in two ways," says Corporate Affairs Manager [Tsietsi Maleho](#). "We recruit and train previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs in a pre-incubation business development programme to help them start their own businesses, and we implement procurement practices that target and attract previously disadvantaged service suppliers."

The Innovation Hub has structured its tenders according to pre-set requirements to achieve significant empowerment levels in the appointment of service suppliers. To date the BEE value of the contracted services for the infrastructure development of its site has amounted to 50.3% or R12.5 million.

In addition, the Hub's pre-incubation programme supports hi-tech entrepreneurs with business and leadership skills that help them start their own businesses. The focus is on mentorship and bridging entry into the knowledge industry, such as the ICT sector, by strengthening management skills, enhancing business acumen and providing assistance with accessing the market.

Since the inception of the pre-incubation programme at The Innovation Hub in 2002, a number of hi-tech start-ups run by previously disadvantaged entrepreneurs have become participants. Two of these companies, [Mohwiti Technologies](#) (Pty) Ltd and [TCI-Thoreb](#) (Pty) Ltd have already graduated to the Business Incubator at The Innovation Hub.

Mohwiti Technologies last year launched an Open Source School Management System pilot project that resulted from initial efforts by the Shuttleworth Foundation to develop an open source school management system to cater for the needs of schools in Africa.

TCI-Thoreb CEO, [Mthembeni Mkhize](#), won the Black Business Quarterly (BBQ) magazine's Businessman of The Year Award for 2003. The company is a recipient of an International Quality Accreditation Certificate from a leading German Quality Systems Auditing Company and is involved in providing a wiring system for fire engines with the support of its Swiss-based partner AB Thoreb, one of world's largest producers of multiplex wiring systems for buses, which has now been adapted for fire engines