

The Innovator Trust making a difference, one young entrepreneur at a time

Issued by [The Innovator Trust](#)

23 Jul 2021

With Youth Month concluded, it is not without adversity for South African youth who are battling the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, a waning economy and an alarming youth unemployment rate. Despite the challenges facing the country's youth, the Innovator Trust have intensified their efforts towards making a difference in the lives of young South Africans.





Just over three years ago, the Innovator Trust launched the Young Entrepreneurship Programme (YEP) targeted at young entrepreneurs between the ages of 18-35 in the technology sector. The programme was launched with the aim to stimulate job creation and drive innovation among small black-owned technology-focused businesses in South Africa.

More than 100 young innovators impacted

Since 2017, year-on-year, the Innovator Trust has reported steady growth with regards to their YEP programme. According to figures from their latest 2021 Impact Report, the Trust has inducted 103 young South Africans into the programme since inception, 53 of them women, and seen more than 90 internship opportunities afforded to these youth. The YEP programme has also grown geographically with presence across Gauteng, Western Cape, Free State and Mpumalanga. From the past cohort of YEP graduates, five have gone on to register their own businesses, choosing to embark on the entrepreneurial journey, with a number of beneficiaries currently permanently employed and contributing to the economy.

Cognisant of the digital shift brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, training methods for the YEP programme were adapted in the last year with virtual learning beginning as early as March 2020. Having completed most of the year's training which included a comprehensive set of courses from Business Modelling and Personal Development, to Business Communication, Conflict Management, Coding, Basics of Machine Learning and most recently the inclusion of Digital Marketing and Brand Strategy, the 2021 cohort of YEP beneficiaries are currently gearing up for the final round of evaluation in the programme - business plan presentations - with graduations set to take place in 2022.



Exposing youth to opportunities

With 46.3% of the country's youth (age group 15 – 34) without formal work as at the end of the first quarter of this year according to Stats SA, the question of opportunities remains at the crux of the youth unemployment conversation. Combined efforts from companies such as the likes the Innovator Trust shows the effectiveness of partnership and collaboration in making a real impact to addressing the country's unemployment crisis. The YEP programme builds on candidates' existing knowledge base by exposing beneficiaries to the necessary business skills in order to encourage the youth to start their own technology ventures, and thereby further investment towards the expansion and sustainability of South Africa's IT SMME ecosystem.

At the start of June, the Innovator Trust launched additional opportunities engaging directly with young South Africans. The #MyStartUpMyStory campaign saw the introduction of a new two-year incubation programme targeted at young, technology Start-up Entrepreneurs operating for less than two years specifically. "For 10 bold and innovative start-up businesses who have had the courage and grit to start with the resources they had available, the Innovator Trust will seek to provide support through training, resources and mentorship in building those businesses to a point of sustainability," said Tashline Jooste, CEO of the Innovator Trust.





Tackling the issue of poor financial literacy, the #FIN1k programme launched by the Innovator Trust in June, focused on upskilling 1000 youth in one month on the importance of Personal Financial Management. Utilising digital media platforms such as Zoom, Whatsapp, Facebook and Instagram, multiple training sessions were conducted with the Innovator Trust making provision for data to be covered for the training of 1000 registered attendees throughout the duration of the programme.

“This year, our aim for Youth Month was to provide tangible opportunities for young people to get involved in, that would make an impactful contribution to the future of the IT sector. We want South Africa’s youth to know that a world of possibility exists especially in the realm of technology. Both the Start-Up and #FIN1k programmes empower youth to take a step towards turning their ideas and aspirations into reality,” added Jooste.

For young entrepreneurs in the technology space interested in engaging with the Innovator Trust or to find out more about recruitment for the programmes on offer, visit www.innovatortrust.co.za or make contact via email at info@innovatortrust.co.za.

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The Innovator Trust was created to support the growth of small black-owned Information and Communications Technology (ICT) businesses in South Africa. Our programmes facilitate training that develops their skills as business owners.

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