

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Government Technical Advisory Centre and the Economies of Regions Learning Network in partnership with the University of Johannesburg will be holding a conference on

Theme: Economic Development for Employment: Sub-national Strategies

Gauteng, South Africa

14 to 15 November 2016

The Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) and the Economies of Regions Learning Network (ERLN), in partnership with the University of Johannesburg, will be hosting a conference with the theme of *Economic Development for Employment: Sub-national Strategies*. The conference aims to contribute to evidence-based policy making and development planning around employment creation at the sub-national level.

The conference aims to promote critical dialogue: to this end papers and presentations from both academics and practitioners are being sought, with the latter group including government officials, civil society organisations, labour representative organisations and business. Papers and presentations based on experiences of private-sector initiatives (such as enterprise development) are specifically included in this Call. In addition, papers and presentations that focus on less than successful initiatives are particularly welcome, since these present unique knowledge sharing opportunities. Throughout the conference, delegates will have opportunities to engage with both practitioners and academics in a semi-formal manner designed to stimulate critical conversation.

Individuals wishing to contribute academic papers or practitioner presentations are invited to submit their title and abstracts of up to 500 words for the attention of Dr Tracy Ledger, at TIPS via email to: erln@tips.org.za. Abstracts should clearly indicate if the submission is for a practitioner presentation or academic paper.

To be considered, abstracts should be submitted by 30 June 2016. Between 12 and 16 abstracts will be selected for development of final papers or presentations, which will then be presented at the conference in November 2016. Authors will be notified of the final decision by 20 July 2016. Final papers are due for submission by 1 November 2016.

Abstract submissions should include full contact details of the authors.

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1. The aim of the conference

The conference aims to contribute to evidence-based policy making and development planning at the sub-national level. Its goal is to bring together research and practices on South African and international experiences and approaches to sub-national development that will contribute to economic development and employment; and to share that knowledge and information amongst policy makers, practitioners and academics.

2. The context for the conference

South Africa's cities, metros and surrounding regions face the challenges of low economic growth, poorly functioning spatial economies, persistent socio-economic divides and unemployment, compounded by imbalances in investment potential and opportunity. Racial divisions and underdevelopment in rural areas and small towns with limited economic potential (and often linked to mineral resources), still persist today. In our current fiscally constrained environment, how do we lay the foundations and build the systems that will provide meaningful developmental and employment creation strategies? Fiscally, the option of increasing direct public sector employment has reached its limit. There is a recognition that attention needs to be shifted towards stimulating private sector employment. At the same time as there is an opportunity to realise the benefits of South Africa's demographic dividend to stimulate economic growth, unemployment levels are high and achieving the right skills mix is a challenge. Within this context, what levers do regions have available to stimulate employment?

Government at the regional or local (i.e. sub-national) level is closest to the people, manages spatial investment in the built environment and needs to work in partnership to support employment creation and economic growth, development and inclusion. Collaboration with business, labour, civil society and universities, lies at the heart of working effectively to plotting pathways to development and employment. An important issue for consideration in sub-national economic development is the role of cities, secondary cities and small towns which form a regional system of markets and employment drivers. What kinds of differentiated economic development strategies are needed for cities, secondary towns and small towns? In terms of inclusivity, what kind of impact are specific strategies having?

The conference seeks to grapple with the real opportunities for growing the economy sub-nationally. Economic development is an ongoing priority for municipalities, as part of their approach to building and growing their economies. The relationship however between economic development at the local level and sub-national economic development is not always clear as well as the understanding of how local economic development can contribute to sub-national growth. How do intergovernmental allocations of spend impact at the sub-national level?

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There are many South African experiences of sub-national economic development – good and bad – that are referred to anecdotally but that have not been rigorously documented with a view to learning cross-cutting lessons – in order to replicate what worked and avoid repeating what did not. Examples of such experience include:

- Initiatives where public sector investment stimulates private sector investment
- Initiatives that stimulate local spending, savings and investments
- Coherent economic development policies by municipalities that have transformed local economies
- Establishment of productive networks matched to funding opportunities

3. Within the overall theme of *Economic Development for Employment: Sub-national Strategies*, the cross-cutting themes for the conference are development and inclusion, innovation and evidence-driven planning (the role of data in sub-national development). The papers for the conference should focus on the following broad topics:

1. *Geographies of development and inclusion*

Building the capacities of places for employment, growth, development and inclusion – the spatial dimension:

- 1.1. The rationale for, and principles of, regional (sub-national) economic development – what kind of development and for whom?
- 1.2. How spatial planning and regional planning approaches (including transport systems) contribute to or undermine development – how to improve collaboration in planning and associated implementation
- 1.3. Ways of promoting agglomeration, economic density, productivity and connectivity, such as:
 - 1.3.1. Spatial targeting through SEZs, urban development zones, clusters and other programmes
 - 1.3.2. Approaches to local economic development from a sub-national perspective – Policy and Practice
- 1.4. The role of cities in sub-national development
- 1.5. Economic development and secondary cities

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2. *The role of institutions and institutional arrangements*

Partnerships – successful and not so successful. The challenge of building the right capacities of people and institutions for growth, development and inclusion:

2.1. Sub-national growth through local collaboration

2.2. The enabling environment, including alternative strategies for promoting employment and economic development such as inward investment or indigenous growth

2.3. The link between institutions, institutional arrangements and Innovation

2.4. Financing economic development (including infrastructure) at the sub-national level in the current fiscal environment

2.5. How do intergovernmental allocations of spend impact at the sub-national level?

2.6. Innovation in relationships between business, labour and government.

3. *Employment – where and how do we support job creation: what works, what doesn't work?*

3.1. Which parts of the economy should we concentrate on to maximise employment creation?

3.2. Engaging employers in skills development

3.3. The future of work, new realities and how we take advantage of them.

3.4. The green economy and social economy – where are the real opportunities?

3.5. The role of the informal sector in employment creation

3.6. Universal access to broadband

3.7. Designing effective employment and skills strategies: the view from labour

3.8. Employment creation programmes at a sub-national level: lessons, failures, potentials

Papers selected on the above topics will be a mix of policy experiences, case studies and academic research. The conference will allow for a combination of academic papers to be presented and practitioners to share their experiences.

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