

SPACE EDUCATION AND OUTREACH SYMPOSIUM (E1)
Enabling the Future - Developing the Space Workforce (5)

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GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT, DEVELOP, AND ENABLE THE SOUTH AFRICAN
SPACE INDUSTRY

Abstract

Aerospace is used to refer to the industry that researches, designs, manufactures, operates, and maintain vehicles moving through air and space. The aerospace sector can be divided into two sectors, namely air and (outer?) space, both of which have military and civil market segments. The South African aerospace industry has followed a development path unlike any other national models as a result of the unique history of the country. This resulted in a wide scope of capabilities and infrastructure for complete vertical product integration far in excess of what would be commercially sustainable in the global market today.

South African industry developed and implemented the capability to design, develop and produce complete aerospace products in terms of aircraft, helicopters, weapon systems, unmanned aerial systems and satellites. This implies integration and technological capabilities that spans a significant portion of the aerospace product and technology stream segmentation as defined in the South African aerospace sector development plan.

With the levels of revenue, access to global markets and level of support required to successfully bring products to market and continue development, the structure of the industry was just not sustainable both economically as well as commercially.

This paper sketches the current milieu in the industry, with various Government departments currently playing an active and significant role in the industry. Central to these departments, are the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Department of Trade and Industry (the dti). Both of these Government departments have invested significantly in the industry over the last couple of years and has partnered with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) to establish initiatives which aim to support, uplift and enable the local South African industry. This paper focuses on two such initiatives, namely the Aerospace Industry Support Initiative (AISI) as well as the National Earth Observations and Space secretariat, and their role in enabling the local space and earth observation industry. The AISI aims to support and improve industry through industrialisation of industry development projects and supplier development initiatives. The National Earth Observation and Space secretariat on the other hand, focuses on the interface with the user communities and addresses such issues as user requirements and access to earth observation data. These user requirements in turn inform the industry.