



Reg: 2021/590183/07
WILLIAMS 2050 (PTY) LTD
Trading as Indaba News

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Project Plan: Indaba News & Meer

Applicant: Williams 2050 (Pty) Ltd – Indaba News & Meer

Funding Request: R950 000 (Grow Tier, Year 1)

Programme: Digital News Transformation Fund (DNTF)

Project Period: 01 February 2026 – 31 January 2027

Executive Summary

Indaba News & Meer requests **R950 000** from the Digital News Transformation Fund to transform from a print-based community newspaper into a sustainable **digital-first newsroom** serving Graaff-Reinet and the wider **Karoo**. The collapse of affordable printing has left the Karoo's rural, isiXhosa-speaking and coloured communities without access to verified, quality local news. Most people now rely on WhatsApp and Facebook, which exposes them to misinformation and leaves critical issues—such as municipal accountability, farming news, cultural life, and township developments—poorly covered.

This project will create a **modern, low-bandwidth multilingual website**, produce **daily news updates**, and launch **weekly podcasts in isiXhosa, Afrikaans and English**. It will also establish new revenue streams, such as renting out podcast studio space to local businesses and partnering with advertisers.

The project directly addresses DNTF's priorities by:

- **Increasing digital reach** with an accessible, multilingual news site.
- **Building and diversifying audiences** across underserved rural and township communities.
- **Strengthening engagement** through podcasts and WhatsApp groups.
- **Diversifying revenue** through rentals, advertising, and partnerships.



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This investment will secure a strong foundation for a **community-owned digital newsroom** that ensures Karoo residents are informed, represented, and connected to credible information in their own languages.

Goal & Fit

The main goal is to establish Indaba News & Meer as a **trusted, multilingual, digital-first community news hub**. This means moving away from dependence on external print subsidies and instead building a newsroom rooted in sustainable digital infrastructure.

The project fits strongly with the DNTF's priorities:

- It will **increase digital reach** by building a fast, mobile-first website that works well on low-data connections, ensuring even farmworkers and township residents can access content.
- It will **build and diversify audiences** by serving isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English-speaking readers in the Karoo, who currently have limited local news options.
- It will **strengthen community engagement** through podcasts, which create two-way conversations, and WhatsApp groups, which allow direct and daily access to news.
- It will **diversify revenue** by opening the podcast studio to local businesses and encouraging small-scale advertisers to invest in regional media.

Who & Where

The newsroom will be rooted in **Graaff-Reinet**, with its reach extending across **Umasizakhe, Kroonvale, farming communities, and surrounding Karoo towns**. These are areas where unemployment is high, and communities often lack access to affordable, reliable news.

The audience is diverse but united by a need for credible, community-focused reporting:

- **Languages:** isiXhosa, Afrikaans, and English.
- **Communities served:** coloured residents, isiXhosa-speaking rural households, township residents, farm workers, small-town families, and youth.
- **Priority groups:** women, youth, persons with disabilities, and communities traditionally excluded from mainstream news coverage.



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Over the longer term, Indaba News & Meer also plans to expand to **Middelburg (Northern Cape)**, which faces similar challenges in media access.

Workplan / Activities & Timeline

The project will run for **12 months**, with activities sequenced to balance infrastructure building and content rollout.

Activity / Task	Start Date	End Date	Responsible
Strategy alignment & onboarding	01/01/2026	31/01/2026	Project Lead & Team
Website development (multilingual, mobile-first)	01/02/2026	30/04/2026	Vendor & Editorial Team
Procurement of podcast equipment & connectivity	01/02/2026	28/02/2026	Publisher & Vendor
Staff recruitment & training (presenters, producers, writers)	01/03/2026	30/06/2026	Project Lead & Trainers
Launch of WhatsApp news groups & Facebook expansion	01/04/2026	Ongoing	Editorial & Marketing Team



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Podcast studio setup & first episodes	01/04/2026	31/05/2026	Production Team
Weekly podcast production (minimum 4 per month)	01/06/2026	Ongoing	Presenters & Producers
Daily digital news production (5–6 stories per day)	01/06/2026	Ongoing	Writers & Editors
Monitoring & evaluation (quarterly)	31/03/2026	31/01/2027	Project Lead

Deliverables & Milestones

Deliverable / Milestone	Due Date	Proof	Dependency
Website launched (multilingual, mobile-first)	30/04/2026	Live site	Vendor delivery
Podcast studio operational	31/05/2026	Equipment in place, first recordings	Procurement



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WhatsApp groups active (75 groups)	31/08/2026	Membership logs	Staff training
Weekly podcasts published (min. 4 per month)	Monthly	Podcast feeds, analytics	Studio setup
Daily digital news updates (5–6 per day)	Ongoing from 01/06/2026	Website & social posts	Writers recruited
Audience growth (+50% website traffic increase)	31/01/2027	Google Analytics	Campaign rollout

KPIs & Targets

Indicator	Baseline	Target	Due Date	Data Source	Reporting Frequency
Monthly website visitors	<500	2,500	31/01/2027	Google Analytics	Monthly
WhatsApp engagement (active groups)	0	75	31/08/2026	Group logs	Quarterly



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Podcast listeners	0	2,000 monthly	31/12/2026	Podcast analytics	Monthly
Daily digital updates	<2	5–6 per day	01/06/2026	Editorial logs	Monthly
Advertising revenue	R0	R40,000	31/01/2027	Finance reports	Quarterly

Risks & Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation	Owner	Residual Risk
Limited funding post-grant	Introduce podcast rentals, advertising, partnerships	Publisher	Medium
Slow adoption of website	Leverage WhatsApp and Facebook to build habit	Marketing Team	Medium
Staff digital skills gap	Provide targeted training and mentorship	Trainers	Low



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Misinformation competing with verified news	Build trust via consistent publishing and podcasts	Editorial Team	Medium
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Problem & Opportunity

The shutdown of affordable print editions has created an **information vacuum** in the Karoo. Rural and township residents no longer have access to credible news in their languages. Instead, they often rely on Facebook rumours or unverified WhatsApp forwards, which has fuelled misinformation and reduced public trust.

The specific problems are:

- **No reliable online newsroom** serving Umasizakhe and Kroonvale.
- **No podcast platform** despite growing interest and demand.
- **Lost voices:** isiXhosa-speaking and coloured communities feel excluded from the local media landscape.
- **No oversight:** Local government and service delivery issues often go unreported.

The opportunity is to create a **digital-first, podcast-driven newsroom** that not only reports but also engages the community in conversation. By blending multilingual daily updates with audio storytelling, the newsroom will restore trust and provide a platform for voices historically left out of local media.

What We Will Do

The project will establish a **new digital ecosystem for community journalism** in the Karoo, built around a multilingual website, strong distribution, and audience participation.

- **Website Development:** A new mobile-first, multilingual website will be launched. It will be optimised for low-bandwidth users, ensuring inclusivity. Archived content from the print edition will also be digitised to preserve the newsroom's history.
- **Podcast Studio:** A professional studio will be established in Graaff-Reinet. The studio will be used to produce weekly podcasts covering farming news, municipal



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accountability, and township culture. It will also be rented out to local businesses and organisations as a revenue stream.

- **Staffing:** The project will employ two podcast presenters, two production staff (audio/visual and a head of production), and three news writers dedicated to digital-first reporting.
- **Content Production:** The newsroom will produce **daily digital updates (5–6 per day)** and at least **four podcasts a month**, ensuring steady engagement. **WhatsApp groups** and expanded Facebook pages. This will create multiple entry points for audiences.
- **Revenue Generation:** In addition to advertising and studio rentals, the newsroom will build partnerships with local municipalities, NGOs, and businesses interested in supporting credible local journalism.

Deliverables & Success

The project's deliverables and success will be defined by its ability to create consistent, multilingual news products and attract a loyal, growing audience.

Deliverables include:

- A fully functional, mobile-first multilingual website.
- Weekly podcast episodes available on multiple platforms.
- Daily digital news updates covering farming, township life, municipal accountability, and culture.
- A strong WhatsApp distribution network supported by Facebook engagement.

Measures of success will be:

- **Podcast listenership:** At least 2,000 monthly listens by the end of Year 1.
- **Community engagement:** 75 active WhatsApp groups distributing daily verified news.
- **Website analytics:** Tracking steady growth in monthly visitors and repeat readers.
- **Social media growth:** Increased audience and participation across two existing Facebook pages.



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Timeline & Team

The project will run for **12 months (February 2026 – January 2027)**.

Leadership:

- **Everton Sbu Williams** – Project Lead, experienced publisher and member of AIP.

Team roles:

- **2 Presenters** – lead weekly podcasts, bring community voices on air.
- **2 Production Staff** – manage audio and visual editing; head of production ensures quality.
- **3 Writers** – produce daily multilingual news articles and features.

Partners:

- Local municipalities for civic accountability reporting.
- Small businesses for advertising and studio rentals.
- Community organisations for audience engagement and outreach.

Risk & Sustainability

The main risk is **financial sustainability after the grant ends**. Without diversified income, operations may slow down. To reduce this risk, the project will:

- Build **multiple revenue streams**, including advertising, sponsorships, and podcast rentals.
- Invest in **training staff** to manage both journalism and commercial opportunities.
- Strengthen **community partnerships** to secure long-term support.

Sustainability will be ensured by embedding revenue models into daily operations, allowing Indaba News & Meer to continue producing quality journalism after the DNTF grant period.



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Ethical AI & Data Safeguards

The project will comply with **POPIA**, protecting personal data collected through WhatsApp groups and the website. AI will only be used for **transcription services**, under strict human oversight to avoid bias. A multilingual privacy notice will be made available, and the newsroom's editorial policy will be updated to reflect responsible AI use.

Budget Summary (Year 1) - Total Request: R944 500 (Grow Tier)

The budget covers essential infrastructure, staffing, and sustainability measures.

- **Digital Infrastructure & Website Development (R200 000):**
Build a multilingual, low-bandwidth website, digitise archives, and secure reliable hosting.
- **Podcast Equipment & Studio Setup (R150 000):**
Purchase professional audio/visual equipment, furniture, and soundproofing to create a functional studio.
- **Staff capacity (R400 000):**
Cover salaries for presenters, production staff, and writers, ensuring consistent daily and weekly content.
- **Content Production & Training (R100 000):**
Fund ongoing professional training for staff and cover costs of multimedia production.
- **Marketing & Distribution (R50 000):**
Support the growth of WhatsApp groups, social media campaigns, and community outreach activities.
- **Operational Costs & Contingency (R50 000):**
Cover utilities, maintenance, and unforeseen costs to ensure uninterrupted operations.

Total: R944 500