



THE
**LEARNING
TRUST**
BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT
OUTCOMES OF TLT'S FUNDING AND
CAPACITY SUPPORT MODEL ON AFTER
SCHOOL PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA
BETWEEN 2018 AND 2022



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EVALUATION SUMMARY REPORT

OUTCOMES OF TLT'S FUNDING AND CAPACITY SUPPORT MODEL ON AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA BETWEEN 2018 AND 2022

A report by Impact Consulting presented to The Learning Trust

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The evaluation study documents the organisational development (OD) outcomes of The Learning Trust (TLT) on the After School Programmes (ASPs) that they supported between 2018 and 2022, and on the After School sector in general. The study showed that there have been incredible results and success in achieving outcomes, which is due to TLT's unique holistic model in which it provides funding support as well as OD support and close mentoring. Key to its success is its invaluable support to nascent and emerging ASPs, which it supports in order for these organisations to further develop, and implement and consolidate high quality programmes.

The mixed methods evaluation was theory-based, participatory, inclusive and utilisation-focused. Primary and secondary data was analysed from: focus groups with grantees and TLT staff, key informant interviews with TLT partners, an online grantee survey, analysis of Salesforce grantee data, and further information found in reports. In total, 58 participants were involved in the primary data collection, as well as 58 grantee database records analysed (there would be overlap on the database and primary samples).

Key findings

Organisational development outcomes

The evaluation found that there have been significant positive changes in the development of organisations in terms of all ten key OD areas:

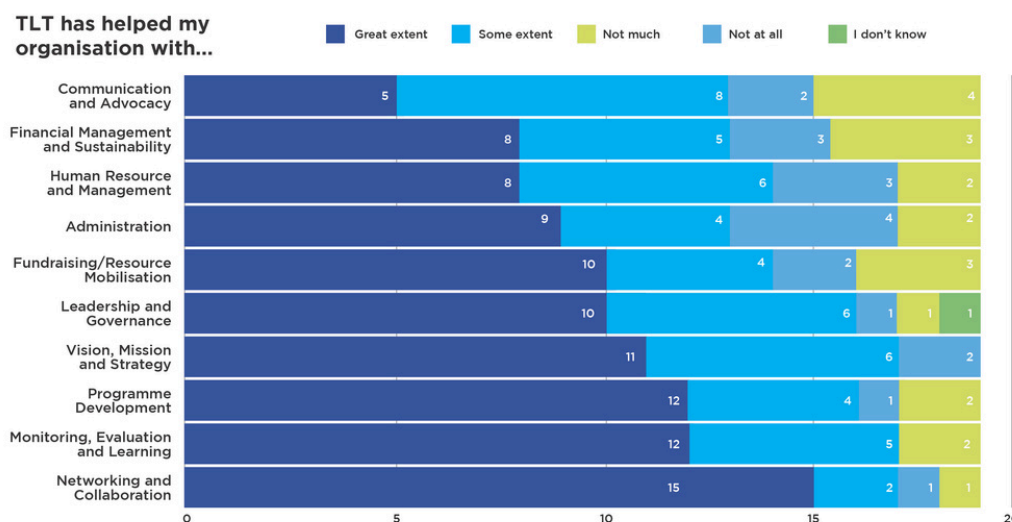


Figure 1: Perceptions of the extent to which TLT's support has improved organisational development of grantees (survey response)

“After we received trainings and were capacitated through fundraising, and taught how to manage our finances, how to write proposals: we managed to receive more funding, building another class with a small office space and kitchen. TLT also helped us expand our programmes...Through TLT we managed to employ six staff members that are rendering services to our children daily”
(Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2024).

Examples of these outcomes include organisations having:

- Stronger and more **contextually-appropriate visions and strategies**, with aligned implementation plans and being able to articulate these well
- Stronger **leadership and delegation** of management duties, more active boards and stronger governance policies, practices, and being legally compliant
- Resources to pay staff and to set up **legally compliant** contracts and good Human Resources management **systems and policies**, which strengthen programmes: “when you have well capacitated staff members, it strengthens the programmes, including taking pilots into fully fledged programmes” (Grantee focus group, April 2024).
- More **accountability** in terms of administration and financial management, in terms of record-keeping and reporting, and payroll management, and more sustainability as an organisation due to long term funding and **self-sustaining strategies**
- More regular and strategic **external communications, advocacy campaigns**, and the use of technology and online platforms for engagement and advocacy purposes
- **Fundraising strategies** and a calendar of events and the ability to “identify resource needs as well as potential strategies for meeting the needs”, frame their work differently, for example “as an act of social justice and not just a nice to have”, and being able to partner to raise funds (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2024)
- Higher **quality** programmes in terms of them being better designed, more aligned with organisational missions, with expanded service areas that meet the identified needs of target groups, and better and more **responsive implementation plans** that are adapted as necessary to shifting contexts; in particular, undesignated funding allows programmes to innovate and to be sustainable because staff are being paid and delivery is therefore consistent
- Stronger MEL systems in terms of **data collection, data systems, and record-keeping**, which has resulted in evidence-based learning: “We know our organisation better statistically, and can now make better decisions driven by data...The organisation has changed its strategies since monitoring and evaluating its impact” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023)
- More **active networking and collaboration**, which has kept them motivated, helped them to learn and implement good practices, and helped them to collaborate to raise funds, to expand services, and to have more reach: “We now know the power of collaborations and collaborating for a good common goal.” (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2024)

Sector building outcomes

“You can have a massive impact if you work like [TLT], when you strengthen the organisations on the ground and when you build a stronger sector, that can have a much greater impact. We’ve seen TLT’s role also in, you know, the Catch-up Coalition and how that morphed into that Ambanati initiative. And I think they’re very responsive. They look at what is needed and they shape the initiatives around that.” (Key informant interview, May, 2024)

TLT’s work has contributed to building the ASP sector by supporting emerging organisations to become stronger and, thus, to grow (84% of survey respondents felt that TLT had supported their organisation to grow to a great extent or to some extent). TLT’s support has shown that grantees have expanded and increased their reach and impact, which means that there are more programmes and services available to more learners and young people in more places, and more impact is being made by the sector.

TLT has also, it is widely reported, contributed to increasing the visibility and credibility of the sector by professionalising the sector, co-developing sector standards, and building awareness of the value of ASPs so as to change perceptions that such programmes are just “nice to haves”, but rather showing that they are important social justice interventions. They have also been demonstrating that the After School sector is a legitimate career pathway, and a sector that programmes can grow in. TLT facilitates scale-up of ASPs by growing organisations and by supporting collaborations that allow for scale-up, including, for example, acting as an intermediary to leverage national funding (Social Employment Fund) that has allowed ASPs to scale nationally and access funding mechanisms with rigid entry requirements that could not be accessed by many individual programmes on the ground.



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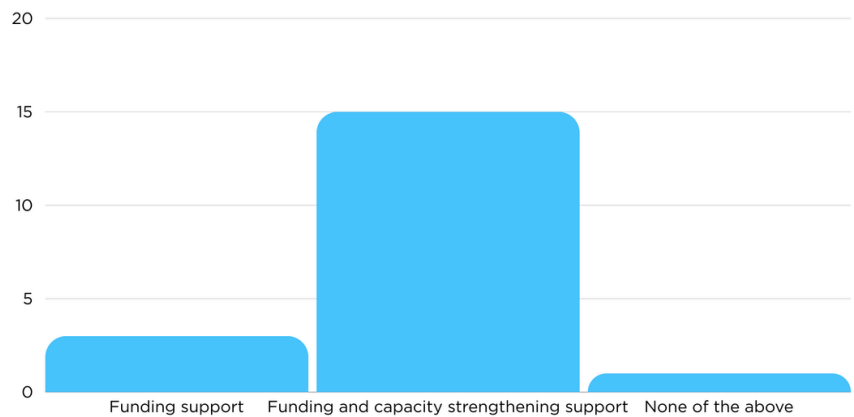
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What has enabled the outcomes?

“TLT is unique in that they give core unrestricted funding, as well as run their own capacity building and networking/sector building programmes, such as communities of practice and training.” (Key informant interview, May, 2024)

The study found that TLT’s significant success is due to its unique and holistic model for developing organisations and supporting them to grow. This model also makes a significant contribution in building up the ASP sector, and scaling up ASP programmes and services quite rapidly. Recently, TLT has even managed to leverage government resources so ASPs are able to reach and impact on more and more learners and young people.

All organisations that participated in the study reflected that by TLT supporting them to develop their organisation, they are now strong, and this has allowed them to grow and expand, and thus have much more reach and impact. Key to TLT’s success has been the combination of the various types of support that they provide, for example more than three quarters (78.95%) of survey respondents noted that their organisations had grown “because of both the funding and capacity strengthening support (could not have happened to the same extent without both)”



The key enabling roles that TLT plays were identified as:

Financial supporter: unique model of funding emerging ASP organisations with grants intended for developing and strengthening these organisations, and also covering core costs. These grants enable organisations who are not yet “funding-ready” to become so.

“TLT positions themselves to assist the new and upcoming organisations. I don’t think I have seen a lot of funders taking that stance and really having that kind of interest. So, the number one for me is they listen to you, your concept, and if it fits well within the after-school kind of vision and activities, then you get that full support from the concept.” (Staff focus group, April, 2024)

Mentor and motivator: TLT’s personalised mentorship of grantees which is responsive and proactive was highly valued as a key enabler of success “The hand-holding and their hands-on approach in supporting upcoming and new organisations for me, that is outstanding. And that is what we are really benefited from, from TLT.”

Door-opener, and a source of legitimacy: because TLT has a track record of investing in successful organisations, when a grantee has TLT funding, other donors and partners trust them by association. TLT also makes direct links between their grantees and possible funding opportunities and likely partners.

“Once an organisation has become a TLT grantee I think it gives them some value and currency that they carry with them.” (Staff focus group, April, 2024)

Sector builder (through strengthening and growing organisations, supporting collaborations, advocacy and research): Aside from growing organisations, TLT also runs capacity building and connecting events for grantees (a total of 88 over the evaluation period) including webinars, seminars, training sessions, and community of practice sessions. Grantees report huge benefit from these including successfully applying learnings and good practice to their own work, as well as staying motivated and inspired to keep on with their work even through challenging times.

“The connection with other NGOs allowed us as well to leverage from colleagues and the best practice and things that they were doing that we were not doing” (Grantees focus group, 2024).

“[it is] inspiring and motivating and encourages to keep going, makes us feel ‘wow, we are doing great things so it’s really motivating.’” (Grantees focus group, 2024)

TLT also directly supports collaborations, for example through the establishment and coordination of the Catch Up Coalition and TLT taking on the role of intermediary to access Social Employment Fund (SEF) money for a group of ASPs, which has allowed the scaling and improvement in quality delivery of ASP interventions, by providing consistent human resources. Research and advocacy efforts have also been successful to demonstrate the value of ASPs and to motivate for further funding and support for the sector.

Recommendations

A few improvements and considerations for TLT follow:

PROGRAMME DESIGN

More generally, TLT might consider designing/categorising their interventions so that it is less “blanket” and has *more nuance for different “levels”* of maturity of organisations, or for different types of organisations/support (eg those in collaboration vs emerging vs those scaling, etc). This would also help organisations to understand what is expected or suitable for them at their “stage” of maturity - some mentioned that they would like more of an understanding of how they fit into TLT’s grant structures and decision-making.

In terms of the *one on one support*, this works best when it is well structured and consistent between TLT staff and grantees, with frequency based on the organisations’ needs, and a good plan driving the engagements, alongside consistent follow-up and adjustments to these plans, and careful handover of plans and information between TLT staff members.

GRANTMAKING

Grantees acknowledged that they are always needing more funding, and requested more support and clarity with regards to the different types of funds available from TLT, and also from other sources, including collaboration opportunities, for example leveraging government resources such as through SEF. TLT might consider developing an easy to use resource about this.

In addition, despite the nurturing partnership model, TLT is still a funder, and grantees can feel like they have to adhere to expectations from TLT - they mentioned that these can sometimes feel difficult to achieve, for example, short notice for requests for information or to attend events. They also expressed that there is not enough dialogue about certain requirements or decisions, and feel a need to comply even when it feels that realities on the ground have not been considered or understood adequately. On a similar note, grantees requested more support from TLT in their mentoring and advocacy capacity to be able to challenge and push back on other donors’ unrealistic expectations.

“I think sometimes...organisations are kind of just motivated to continue attending these things because they are worried that we’re going to lose our grant from TLT...if we don’t turn up. So like...it’s not really being used for the way it’s supposed to be a lot of the time.” (Grantee)

“The TLT events are always interesting and helpful, however, the invitations are sometimes sent out at very short notices so increasing this time could be helpful” (Grantee)

“With regards to their system,, it does feel like they sometimes make it up as they go, because it’s the first time this year that I’ve heard that there is opportunity for us to apply for other types of loans [grants]. (Grantee)

Recommendations

ADVOCACY AND SECTOR BUILDING

TLT's traction in building the sector should be leveraged at this point. There are a number of considerations with regards to scaling programmes, which would reach more young people and in deeper ways, so as to have more impact:

- More collaboration for scaling: TLT should consider its collaboration strategy and types of support to different types of collaborations very carefully as this is a significant area in which to achieve impact. This applies to individual connections and also how TLT could play more of an intermediary role to leverage bigger pots of money and scale good practice models, eg SEF.
- There is a need to coordinate sector level data - this is helpful to design large scale projects and proposals, coordinate collaborations strategically, design standards for the sector, and for advocacy purposes
- Coordinate the development of sector standards, which are needed for good quality, high impact and formalisation of the sector and to build the confidence of investors and funders
- TLT could facilitate the development of sector level advocacy products to be used by the sector, in particular to advocate for after-school programmes to be accessible to all young people, and as a career path (and hence a job creation stream)
- TLT should continue its work to mobilise resources at sector level and to advocate for better grantmaking practice from funders to the sector
- Particularly for emerging organisations, and for collaborative ventures, TLT could pilot the model of using central shared hubs for administrative and operational function so that founders could focus on the work and on development of programmes, and have standard organisational functions taken care of by professionals that do not have to be on their permanent payroll. It is recommended that TLT look at models being run in the philanthropy sector and possibly pilot the model in the ASP.

INFORMATION IS POWER! BETTER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

TLT could benefit from improving its own institutional knowledge and knowledge management systems, and in line with the ASP needs. This could also assist to map for the future on all levels, and to identify what roles are needed and how to build the organisation and the sector towards a greater goal. The MEL system needs to be adapted to better reflect TLT's sector building work, and to support the collecting and analysing of data and learning from grantees, and at sector level. This would require a technical and technological system review, and better shared MEL IT could assist in sector level data and knowledge generation. By improving on its own documentation of its systems and approach and processes, TLT could better share lessons and practices, for example amongst donors.

“We’re constantly learning how things work and treading new ground and pioneering some new work in the sector, what is that teaching us? How do we inform [the grantees] what we do internally? We need to document these processes, document this whole system that we’ve set up around youth employment and reaching employment and learning outcomes in the after school sector.” (TLT staff)

**“One doesn’t want to be too rigid. But at the same time, it becomes then reliant on people who know how to do that because they’ve been doing it”
(Partner)**

Conclusion

TLT has achieved exceptional outcomes because of its unique holistic model for supporting the ASP sector and ASP organisations. Their unusual funding model has proven to have incredible results and needs to be widely shared with other donors, including government. Better documentation of outcomes and impact would be beneficial for further possible uptake of such a model.

