

**“MY LOVE FOR KIDS HAS GROWN”:**  
HOW THE SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT  
FUND IS BUILDING A COHORT OF  
AFTER SCHOOL PRACTITIONERS



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>Background</b>	<b>3</b>	
<b>About the survey</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Research method</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Findings</b>	<b>5</b>	
Who participated in the SEF?	5	
What kind of training did SEF participants receive?	6	
How did work experience in an ASP develop skills, knowledge and experience?	7	
How did SEF participation improve general work readiness?	8	
How did SEF participation develop ASP-specific skills, knowledge and experience?	10	
		How did work experience in an ASP shape young people's interest in working with children? 11
		What other kinds of impacts did participation have? 12
		After participating in the SEF, to what extent did young people access other opportunities? 13
		What can After School Programmes do to make public employment work experiences more effective? 13
		<b>Learning agenda</b> <b>14</b>
		<b>Bibliography</b> <b>15</b>

## About this document

This research brief unpacks the findings of The Learning Trust's Social Employment Fund (SEF) participant exit survey to better understand:

- How are SEF participants benefiting from work opportunities in the After School sector?
- To what extent, and in what ways, can public employment programmes contribute to creating a pipeline of skilled, experienced and committed After School Practitioners?
- What kinds of career pathways are possible for young people who gain work experience in After School Programmes?
- What more needs to be done, to build the human capacity needed to enable an expanded, thriving After School sector?

The brief is based on analysis commissioned by The Learning Trust (TLT) and conducted by Ros Clayton and Katie Huston. It was funded by Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropies South Africa (AGGPSA) and the Social Employment Fund (SEF) managed by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC).

# BACKGROUND

**To expand the reach and improve the quality of After School Programmes, South Africa needs to grow the cohort of skilled, experienced and committed After School Practitioners.**

**After School Programmes (ASPs)** offer children extra support beyond the classroom. They build key academic skills, help children catch up, and support socio-emotional learning and development. This support is sorely needed in South Africa, whose education system is characterised by low achievement and severe inequality.

Globally, ASPs have been shown to accelerate learning and support catch-up,<sup>1</sup> and local ASP evaluations have shown improved learning outcomes.<sup>2</sup> But they are not yet reaching enough children in South Africa.

**The Learning Trust (TLT)** is a grant-making and capacity support provider that champions the After School sector in South Africa. It supports extended learning programmes by developing quality practitioners, sustainable organisations, and platforms for sharing and collaboration.

TLT recognised that to grow the After School Sector, it needs to find at-scale ways to:

- Harness the energy of unemployed young people;
- Offer them structured work experience that builds key skills and capabilities; and
- Retain young people in the sector after these work placements.

To tackle this, TLT partnered with the **Social Employment Fund (SEF)**, part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES). The SEF is a job creation programme that supports non-state actors to deliver “work for the common good” that creates social value and uplifts communities. Work opportunities are part-time (two days a week) at minimum wage.

Phase 1 of the TLT-SEF project ran from July 2022 to July 2023. TLT convened 42<sup>3</sup> community-based organisations (CBOs) to create 3,339 work opportunities that ultimately employed nearly 6,400 people and reached more than 100,000 learners.

Qualitative research conducted in 2023 with TLT’s CBO partners found that participating in the TLT SEF project led to positive outcomes for youth participants, including improved work readiness, expanded networks, accessing other economic activity (concurrently and upon exiting the programme), and accessing other opportunities within host organisations, such as training. This study gathered data through surveys and interviews with organisational staff (not directly from participants).<sup>4</sup>

TLT also administered an exit survey to participants who exited its SEF project between April and June 2023, the focus of this research brief.

<sup>1</sup> Education Endowment Foundation 2024

<sup>2</sup> See e.g. Bohmer et al 2014, Olivier and Harris et al 2022, Western Cape Government 2019, Spaull et al 2012, Clayton 2024

<sup>3</sup> This included 25 partner CBOs, a consortium of 16 small organisations underneath one of the CBOs, and TLT. The exit survey was administered to the 25 partner CBOs.

<sup>4</sup> See Huston and Thompson 2024 and Huston 2024 for an overview of this research.

# ABOUT THE SURVEY

---

TLT sent an online Google Forms survey to its implementing partners via email and WhatsApp, who forwarded it via WhatsApp to participants who exited the SEF-TLT project between April and July 2023 (when the phase ended). 1834 people<sup>5</sup> from 25 organisations (100% of organisations) completed the survey.<sup>6</sup>

The survey included 14 questions about prior employment status; future goals and exit pathways; training received; skills, knowledge and experience gained; other impacts of participation; and how to improve the programme. Six questions were closed (participants could select from pre-determined responses) and eight were open-ended.

# RESEARCH METHOD

---

**Data cleaning:** Responses were de-duped using name and surname and contact number. In the case of true duplicates, the most recent response was kept. When a response from the same contact number had a different name/surname and different answers to the questions, it was assumed that two people shared a phone to complete the survey and both were kept.

**Data coding:** For open-ended responses, two levels of qualitative categories were established via an inductive process with a sample of the data. ChatGPT was used to assign up to three codes to the remaining responses using the scikit-llm Python module. ChatGPT performed well at the first level of coding but missed nuanced differences between sub-codes approximately 10-20% of the time. Cohen's kappa (a measure of inter-code reliability) was used to compare manual coding to ChatGPT coding. Where it fell below 0.8 (30-50% of the dataset), codes were manually checked and reallocated as necessary. This process was followed by random checks. Additional manual coding was conducted to explore further granularity on some sub-codes.

Responses that were simply in the affirmative or negative without providing detail were not assigned

any code, but positive responses were counted in analysis of e.g. "% of people who report gaining skills."

**Data analysis:** In addition to summarising the proportion of responses per category at summary and detailed level, two-way tables were produced to examine the relationships between certain variables. Results were also produced for special groups of analytical interest (for example, people who were employed after the project; people who reported gaining entrepreneurial knowledge or experience) and compared to the full group. Raw responses were filtered by outcomes of interest to provide qualitative depth to the analysis.

**Limitations:** Participants with more positive experiences may have been more likely to complete the survey. The survey was administered at the point of exit, and respondents may have needed more time to find work. While the open-ended questions yielded rich qualitative data on both anticipated and unanticipated outcomes, they also led to under-reporting and recall bias. Percentages in this report should be interpreted as the lower bound of any reported outcome.

---

<sup>5</sup> After de-duping. The original dataset had 2032 responses.

<sup>6</sup> The 1834 people represent 55% of the total number of work opportunities created (3,339). However, it is not possible to calculate the completion rate in relation to survey recipients or overall participants: the survey was sent directly from implementing partners as people left the programme or indicated they would move on and the exact number of recipients is unknown. Some implementing partners may have sent it to all participants while some may have only sent it as people left. Likewise, one 'work opportunity' may have been filled by more than one person between April and July if the first person left in April or May and was replaced.

# FINDINGS

## Who participated in the SEF?

The project successfully enlarged the pool of After School practitioners by recruiting people who were previously excluded from the economy.

Before participating in the TLT-SEF project:

**75%** of people were unemployed and looking for a job. 19% were students and 5% had their own business.

**45%** of people had never worked before.

While most people were newly appointed, **the project also enabled After School Programmes to pay some existing volunteers:** 14% of respondents reported working with their organisation before the project began.

**Three-quarters of respondents (70%) worked for at least six months,** the minimum amount of time TLT continues necessary to obtain meaningful work experience and make a meaningful impact within ASPs. However, even those who worked for shorter amounts of time reported positive impacts.

## Impact on participants: high-level summary

Among survey respondents:



**90%**  
received training



**99.6%**  
gained skills



**95%**  
gained knowledge  
or experience



**98%**  
experienced a positive  
impact on their life



**96%**  
said the experience  
contributed towards finding  
purpose in life



**92%**  
said the experience  
contributed towards  
independence and dignity  
for themselves or  
their family

## What kind of training did SEF participants receive?



**90%** of respondents reported receiving training.

Among all respondents (including those who did not receive training):

**59%** mentioned training on **specific skills** related to their role.

**31%** mentioned training on **generic work readiness skills**.

**7%** mentioned training on **personal well-being** topics, like financial literacy or mental health.

**2%** mentioned **entrepreneurship** training.

**Job-specific training**, such as tutoring/teaching, childcare, gardening, sports coaching or cleaning, was mentioned most often.

Just over a third of participants (35%) mentioned **training on academic support** (tutoring, ECD or literacy).

### KEY INSIGHT



CBOs managed to train the vast majority of participants and offered a wide variety of training, even though the SEF does not provide a large budget for training, materials or equipment.<sup>7</sup> More than half of TLT's partner CBOs used their own funding or resources alongside the SEF budget to offer training.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>7</sup> 80% of SEF funding is reserved for wages. 20% can be used for administration, monitoring and evaluation, materials and training.

<sup>8</sup> Huston and Thompson 2024 found that 75% of TLT's partner CBOs used their own funding or in-kind resources to deliver the SEF project, and 56% used these additional resources for training.

## How did work experience in an ASP develop skills, knowledge and experience?



**99.6%** of respondents reported **gaining skills** through SEF participation.



**94.5%** of respondents felt they had **gained knowledge or experience** that would be useful in the future.

**55%** mentioned **transferable skills** (like workplace soft skills).

**49%** mentioned **specific skills related to work placements**.

These included:

- **skills for working directly with children**, such as tutoring/teaching, childcare/early learning, sports coaching, literacy teaching, music and art or library work;
- **skills that can support After School Programmes**, like cooking, cleaning, gardening, office admin and marketing.

**40%** mentioned knowledge and experience related to **a specific skill or role**; teaching/tutoring was most common (22%).

**26%** mentioned **transferable knowledge and experience**; workplace soft skills were most common (23%).

### KEY INSIGHT



Many people who did not report training in workplace soft skills still reported developing these skills. This indicates that work experience in and of itself builds workplace soft skills, even in the absence of targeted training.

### PARTICIPANTS SAID



*I have gained the skill of working with people: helping others, communication, reading someone's mind, reading body language, advising."*



*[I gained] problem solving skills, thinking outside the box, [a] challenges are opportunities mindset."*

## How did SEF participation improve general work readiness?

Participation strengthened young people's interpersonal skills, communication skills, professionalism and adaptability.

Just under a quarter of respondents mentioned gaining **transferable workplace skills**, including:

- **Interpersonal skills**, such as teamwork, working with different types of people, respecting different viewpoints, patience and conflict resolution.
- **Communication skills**, such as public speaking, facilitation, presentation, persuasion and listening.
- **Professionalism**, including appropriate conduct, time management, punctuality and planning.
- **Adaptability**, including improved problem solving, working under pressure, creativity and flexibility.

Only 32 people (1.7%) mentioned gaining **entrepreneurship skills** and just 8 people (0.4%) mentioned skills related to **job-seeking**. A handful of people noted that they needed more time and experience to feel ready to find a job or start a business. As the ASP sector works to develop exit pathways, preparing young people to access or create their next opportunity may need more attention.

### PARTICIPANTS SAID

*“Now I know how it feels to work. I know how to deal with different personalities.”*

*“I gained experience in being responsible and punctual.”*

*“I got to know how to analyse situations thoroughly and make decisions with a clear mind... looking at every possible situation and picking the one that will work effectively.”*

Among the 23% of people who mentioned gaining knowledge and experience that improved generic work readiness, the most common themes were:

Interpersonal skills

38%

Communication skills

25%

Professionalism

14%

Adaptability

6%

Leadership and management

6%

Work ethic and initiative

5%

Self-belief and confidence

5%



## Entrepreneurship: an opportunity to increase support

While 40% of respondents wanted to start a business or be self-employed post-SEF:



**Only 2%**  
mentioned receiving  
training on entrepreneurship



**Only 7.4%**  
mentioned gaining  
useful entrepreneurship  
knowledge and experience

People who were trained in traditional ASP skills, like tutoring/teaching or sports coaching, were less likely to report gaining entrepreneurial skills than people who were trained in skills like coffee-making, beauty, gardening or farming, cleaning, recycling, cooking or hospitality.

Where entrepreneurship training was offered, it seems to be effective: people who reported entrepreneurship training mentioned acquiring useful experience at three times the rate of others.

Given participants' high interest in entrepreneurship, **CBOs may want to incorporate more entrepreneurship training and support for new businesses into their programmes.**

## How did SEF participation develop ASP-specific skills, knowledge and experience?

The TLT SEF project is contributing meaningfully towards its goal of developing quality, skilled ASP practitioners.

**Skills related to working with children were most often mentioned:** 31.7% of respondents described improving their skills in tutoring/teaching, childcare/early childhood development, sports coaching or early literacy teaching.

Responses focused largely on **transferable skills within the ASP sector**, although some people mentioned content-specific knowledge, particularly improving their maths knowledge.

Many people mentioned that they learned **how to understand and interact with children**, manage groups of children and be patient with children.

Respondents also mentioned learning how to:

- facilitate learning through play;
- develop lesson plans;
- use the SA-SAMS<sup>9</sup> data system;
- identify where learners are struggling;
- support children who have learning disabilities;
- deal with disruptive behaviour;
- work with children from different backgrounds;
- identify learners who are abused and follow appropriate steps.

### PARTICIPANTS SAID

*“ [I learned] patience, approaching children in a more positive manner, and learning how to observe children’s behaviour in order to help them in the ways they need to be helped.”*

*“ I was very slow in maths, but now it feels good to do maths and I really enjoy working with numbers.”*

*“ I can communicate with children in a funny way now to keep them smiling.”*

<sup>9</sup> South African School Administration and Management System

## How did work experience in an ASP shape young people's interest in working with children?

The TLT SEF project has contributed to developing a pipeline of people who are interested in working in education and with children more broadly.

Among the 30% of respondents who mentioned specific career plans and goals, **70% were interested in working with children** as teachers, tutors, ECD practitioners or creche owners, or doing service-orientated, ASP-adjacent work, such as social work or starting a community project. "Tutoring" includes both volunteer and paid tutoring work. Seventeen people wanted to start their own After School Programme.

Of people interested in teaching, approximately 40% described it as a **new passion or career goal**, while 28% were **already interested in working with children or studying education**.

By offering work experience in ASPs, TLT has expanded the pool of people interested in education; affirmed pre-existing interest in working with children; and provided practical, hands-on experience to people already studying to become teachers and ECD practitioners.

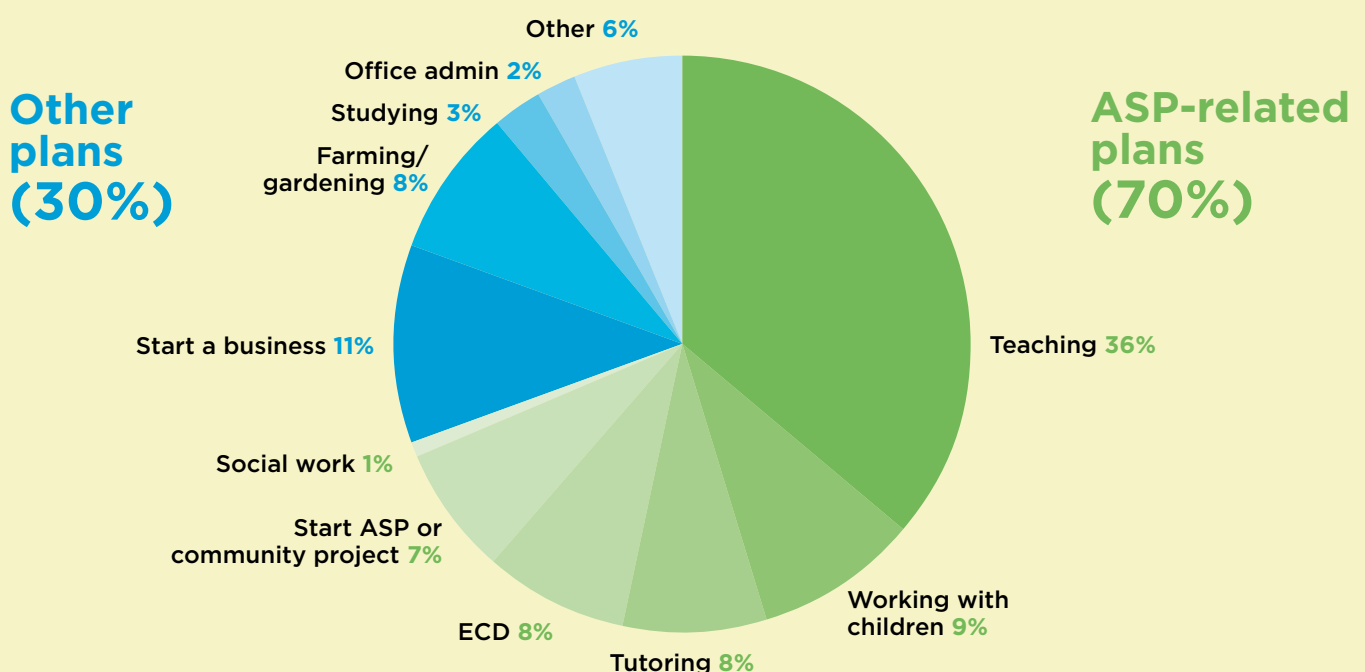
### PARTICIPANTS SAID

*"I'm studying to become a teacher in the intermediate phase. Being with grade 8s and 9s made me understand what it might be like dealing with grade 7s. I will be able to use what I learned during my practicals."*

*"I never had interest in studying education, but working for TLT changed my mind... I noticed things that I never knew I'm capable of."*

### SEF participants' future plans or goals

*n=551 participants who mentioned specific career plans or goals*



## What other kinds of impacts did participation have?



### Work experience improved career readiness and prospects.

SEF participants accessed training, developed skills, gained experience and grew their networks.



### Being part of SEF had positive psycho-social impacts.

Participants reported improved mindset, motivation and optimism, and stronger interpersonal skills and relationships. Service to others also impacted people's lives positively.



### Regular income improved livelihoods and enhanced individual and family dignity.

Nearly two-thirds of people (65.7%) mentioned that a regular income enhanced dignity and allowed them to provide for basic needs. 14% of people specifically mentioned that buying food enhanced dignity. Many people appreciated that earning a wage gave them independence.

Participants also reported that:

- Family relationships improved.
- They used skills gained at work to help their own children and siblings learn.
- They paid study application fees, bought materials for side hustles or saved up to start a business in the future.
- They developed a passion for community upliftment and giving back, and derived meaning from serving others.

Overall, earning wages had the most significant impact on independence and dignity. But when asked about the impact on their lives as a whole, the most-mentioned impacts were non-financial. Positive career impacts were valued most highly, followed by psycho-social impacts.

#### PARTICIPANTS SAID



*I can finally see a future for myself. Even as someone with a disability, I feel part of something."*



*It helped me realise how much helping people makes me happy and high spirited. Even though I am not yet certain what my purpose is in life, I feel strongly that it has to do with making an impact in other people's lives."*



*My family is now respected as it has someone who works, who makes sure the family is well taken care of."*



*Now I can think for myself without expecting any resources from the government. I learned a lot about how to actually start solving problems, by finding the root cause before trying to solve them. I was also able to go outside and talk to people, something I wasn't doing before, which has helped me improve my social anxiety and the fear of approaching people."*



*Now I am a better father to my kids."*

## After participating in the SEF, to what extent did young people access other opportunities?

TLT hoped to gather data on participants' exit pathways. However, due to survey timing and question wording, most people (91%) said they left SEF because their contract was ending without giving more detail.

5.3% (n=96) found other employment, 2.4% (n=44) planned to study, and 1 person started a business.

Of the 96 people who found employment:

- **Tutoring/teaching** had the highest number of placements (n=18).
- People who received **job-specific training** were more likely to find a job than people who received other types of training. This may indicate that job-specific training is more easily signalled or highly valued on a CV than generic work readiness training.

- People who were trained in handiwork, cooking, recycling, cleaning, sports coaching, and gardening/farming were more likely to find a job than people who were trained in tutoring/teaching. This may indicate that there are more jobs available in these fields.

TLT monitoring data shows that about 30% of Phase 1 participants were re-employed in SEF Phase 2 after the survey was administered. Future surveys will be adjusted to better detect exit pathways.

## What can After School Programmes do to make public employment work experiences more effective?

The most common suggestions from participants were that ASPs should:

- **Offer more training** (28%), including training on financial literacy; entrepreneurship; teamwork, critical thinking and confidence; and computer skills.
- **Provide more support for next steps** (11.2%), including job-seeking support (5.7%), new business support (3.8%) and help with study applications (1.7%).

As noted on page 9, **entrepreneurship training** and **support for new businesses** is particularly in demand: 40% of participants wanted to be self-employed after SEF, but very few reported entrepreneurship training.

Many people also wanted government to **expand the programme** (17%) and **extend contract duration** (16%). A smaller number of people wanted to **increase the**

**stipend** (3%) or **increase working hours** (2%). These decisions are beyond the control of After School Programmes, but indicate significant demand for programmes like the SEF.

### KEY INSIGHT



Preparing young people for next steps lies outside the core mandate or expertise of many After School Programmes. There may be an opportunity for TLT to identify or develop best-practice curricula for in-demand topics, like financial literacy, entrepreneurship and job seeking, and share these across ASPs to elevate training quality and avoid duplication.

# LEARNING AGENDA

---

Future data collection, analysis and research should explore:



---

## EXIT PATHWAYS

- What do SEF participants do after leaving the programme?
  - To what degree are they continuing to work in the After School sector?
  - To what extent are SEF alumni starting their own businesses?
- 



---

## TRAINING

- What is the nature and quality of training that participants receive (including dosage/duration and format)?
- 



---

## DETERMINANTS OF POST-SEF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

- Which organisations, roles, types of training and skills acquired are most predictive of accessing post-SEF economic opportunities?
- 



---

## AFTER SCHOOL PRACTITIONERS PIPELINE

- To what extent do SEF participants want to continue working in the After School sector?
  - What kinds of pathways and opportunities are available to them?
  - What predicts interest in the After School sector?
-

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Böhmer, B., Burns, J. & Crowley, L. (2014). Testing Numeric: Evidence from a randomized controlled trial of a computer-based mathematics intervention in Cape Town high schools. University of Cape Town, Cape Town. [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEC\\_2014\\_-\\_Testing\\_Numeric\\_Evidence\\_from\\_a\\_randomized\\_controlled\\_-\\_bianca\\_bohmer\\_-\\_11\\_2014.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/AEC_2014_-_Testing_Numeric_Evidence_from_a_randomized_controlled_-_bianca_bohmer_-_11_2014.pdf)

Clayton, R. (2024). From Grade 7 arithmetic to matric: A quantitative evaluation of the Numeric afterschool maths program. <https://numeric.org/from-grade-7-arithmetic-to-matric-a-quantitative-evaluation-of-the-numeric-afterschool-maths-program/>

Education Endowment Foundation (2024). Teaching and learning toolkit: an accessible summary of education evidence. Accessed 30 May 2024. <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/education-evidence/teaching-learning-toolkit>

Huston, K. (2024). Leveraging public employment and after school programmes to deliver multiple outcomes for learners, youth and society: briefing note. The Learning Trust. [https://www.thelearningtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SEF-Briefing-Note\\_Digital-1.pdf](https://www.thelearningtrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SEF-Briefing-Note_Digital-1.pdf)

Huston, K. and Thompson, K. (2024). Leveraging public employment and after school programmes to deliver multiple outcomes for learners, youth and society: position paper. The Learning Trust. <https://www.thelearningtrust.org/leveraging-public-employment-and-after-school-programmes-to-deliver-multiple-outcomes/>

Olivier, J., Harris, N., Borole, M. and McDougall, B. (2022). Using technology to improve English literacy: the case of 'Reading Eggs' in South Africa 2012-2021. In Early Grade Reading and Mathematics Interventions in South Africa, eds. Spaul, N. and Taylor, S., page 169. <https://www.calameo.com/oxford-university-press-south-africa/read/006710753e7d90d4a4755>

Spaul, N., Burger, R., Burger, C., van der Berg, S., van Wyk, C. and Dzivakwi, R. (2012). Against the odds: an evaluation of the IkamvaYouth programme. <https://wordpress.ikamvayouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Impact-Evaluation-2013.pdf>

Western Cape Government (2019). 2019 evaluation report of the High School Academic Programme (HSAP). <https://ikamvayouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/2021-High-School-After-School-Programme-Evaluation.pdf>

# CONTACT US



Address:

WE WORK  
173 Oxford Road  
Rosebank  
Johannesburg

[info@thelearningtrust.org](mailto:info@thelearningtrust.org)  
[www.thelearningtrust.org](http://www.thelearningtrust.org)



THE  
**LEARNING  
TRUST**  
BEYOND THE CLASSROOM