



THE
**LEARNING
TRUST**
BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

2024

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

STRENGTHENING SOUTH AFRICA'S EXTENDED LEARNING SECTOR

From Grassroots to Policy Influence



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OUR VISION

There is an abundance of After School Programmes providing a variety of learning and development opportunities for all children to become thriving adults.



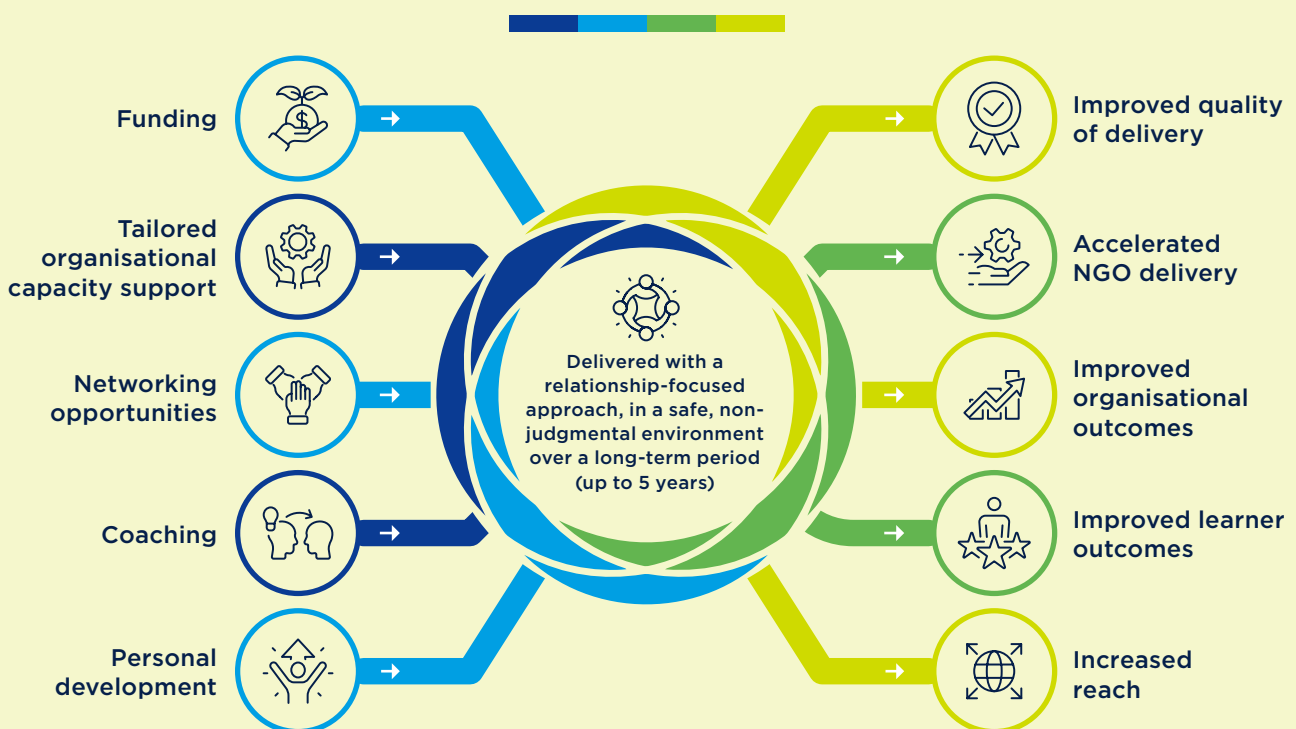
MODEL OF OUR STRATEGIC PILLARS



THE CHALLENGE

Many young South Africans who live in underserved communities often lack the resources and infrastructure to support learning. Without access to opportunities such as a safe space to do homework, participate in extracurricular activities like academic tutoring, literacy and numeracy support programmes, sports and recreational activities, arts and culture, life skills programmes, and various youth skills development initiatives, young people are more likely to engage in high-risk behaviour and are less likely to achieve success.

HOW WE'RE MAKING AFTER SCHOOL WORK



OVERVIEW

In 2022, The Learning Trust adopted an ambitious three-year strategy to deepen our impact and broaden our national footprint. As we move forward beyond this strategy cycle and prepare for what comes next, we reflect on the progress made, the communities reached, and the continued urgency of our mission in an education system still marked by inequality.

For many learners, particularly those in quintile 1 to 3 schools, structural barriers continue to undermine access to quality education. In this context, After School Programmes (ASPs) have remained a critical lever for education equity, offering safe and supportive spaces for learning, creativity, and growth, helping keep learners in school and reducing dropout rates.

We've focused on scale and quality, supporting organisational development, training many practitioners, and fostering knowledge-sharing

through learning communities. At the same time, we've amplified the sector's voice through national campaigns, research, and positioning After School as an integral part of South Africa's education and youth development agenda.

We're proud to share the journey so far, highlighting our wins, milestones and lessons learned in this annual report. We thank our funders, stakeholders, and partners for their unwavering support as we continue to make the case for after school in South Africa.



CHAIRPERSON'S LETTER

Sixolile Mabombo-Benson
Chairperson, The Learning Trust



Dear partners, stakeholders and friends of The Learning Trust,

As we present our 2024 Annual Report, I am pleased to reflect on our journey since adopting our bold three-year strategy in 2022. Our guiding purpose remains steadfast: to **strengthen South Africa's extended learning sector so that every child can thrive *beyond the classroom***. Over the past thirty-six months, we have expanded our footprint nationally, deepened collaboration across after-school organisations, and demonstrated conclusively that after-school programmes are not optional extras but essential components for educational equity, learning recovery and youth employment in our country.

In 2021 with early support from Allan Gray Philanthropy South Africa (AGGPSA) and the Tutuwa Foundation, we launched the Catch-up Coalition, which has blossomed into a powerful network now uniting over **60 partners** nationwide. Particularly significant is the Coalition's flagship Social Employment Fund (SEF) project, implemented in collaboration with the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), which has created more than **15,000 paid work opportunities** in the after-school sector since June 2022, whilst reaching **over 180,000 learners** with critical academic support, mentorship and holistic development.

These figures reflect communities empowered, young people gaining valuable work experience, and thousands of learners receiving the support

they desperately need following the disruptions of recent years. By leveraging public employment funding to simultaneously address unemployment and educational recovery, we have demonstrated the multiplier effect of strategic partnerships.

Our innovative initiatives, such as the **Zazi iZandi** pilot targeting early literacy through phonics approaches, exemplify our commitment to addressing foundational educational challenges. External evaluation has shown significant gains in early-grade letter-sound knowledge, providing a blueprint for expansion in the coming years.

Elevating quality and visibility in After School

This year marked the introduction of the **After School Quality Standards and Quality Assessment Tool (QAT)**—a milestone in our efforts to professionalise and elevate the sector. Co-created with input from after-school programmes across the country, these standards provide a framework for ASPs to identify growth areas, build credibility among funders and policymakers, and continuously improve their services.

Early adopters are already reporting stronger programme design and enhanced confidence when engaging with funders and schools, validating our approach to quality improvement.

Our fifth annual **Lights On After School** campaign, conducted in partnership with the Western



Cape Youth & After-School Programme Office and publicly endorsed by Minister Mackenzie, has significantly enhanced the visibility of ASPs as “**builders of strong foundations**” for South Africa’s future workforce. Combined with widely circulated position papers and regular Learning Briefs, TLT has cemented itself as a trusted voice for evidence-based advocacy in youth employment and learning recovery.



A significant transition

As we celebrate our collective progress, we also mark an important transition in our organisation.

After nearly 15 years of visionary service, **Dr Christine V. Downton, our founding donor and trustee, is stepping down from the Board.** Christine’s exceptional contributions to The Learning Trust have been immeasurable. Her belief that grassroots organisations, when properly resourced and connected, could transform South African education laid the very foundations on which we now build.

Christine’s considerable skills and experience – an international career spanning more than four decades in academia, central banking, asset

management, and philanthropy – have shaped the very essence of our organisation.

On behalf of the Board, staff, and the thousands of young people whose futures are brighter because of her foresight, I extend our deepest gratitude. Whilst her formal duties conclude, her legacy of bold experimentation and rigorous stewardship will continue to guide our mission.

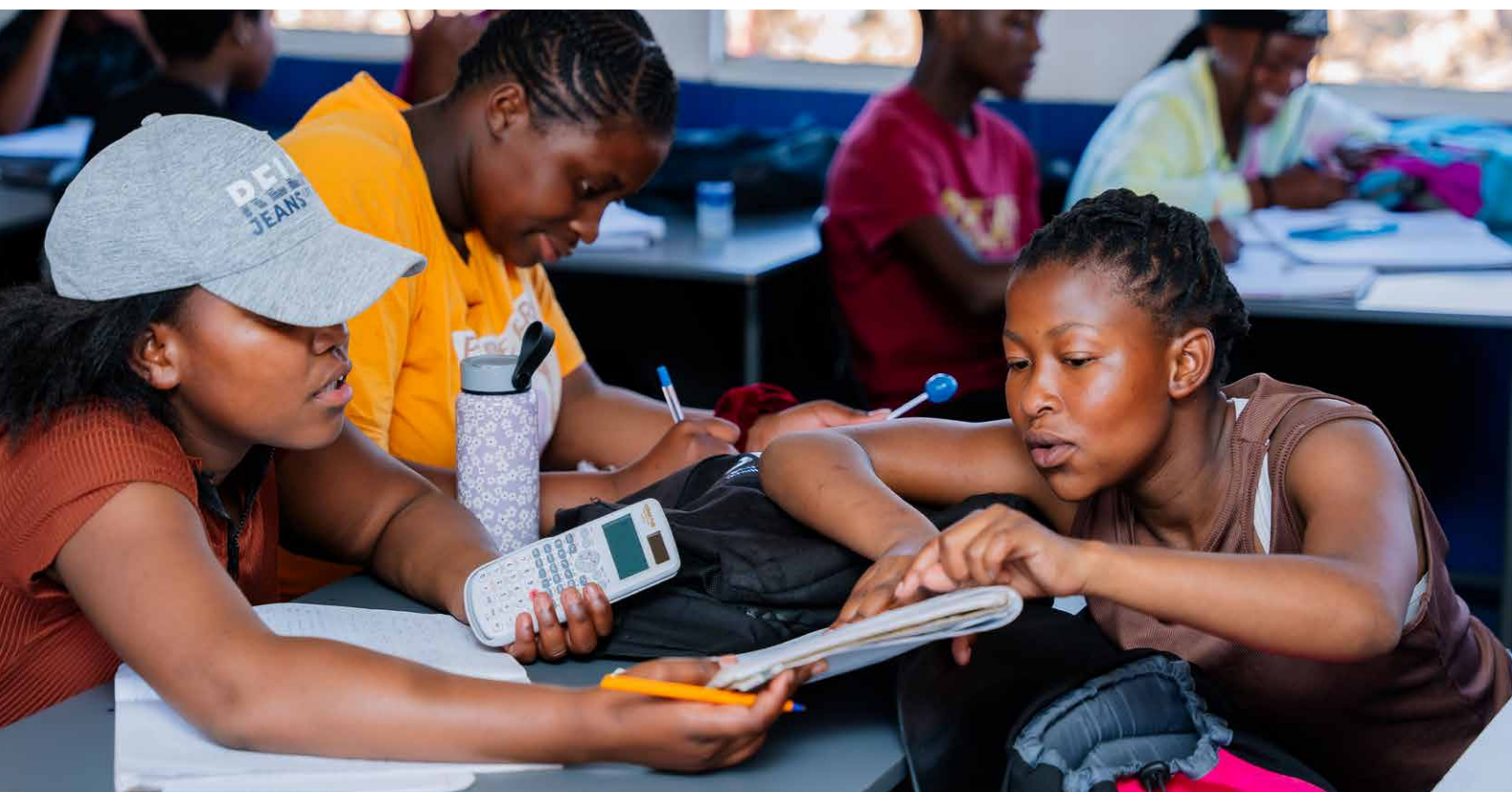
Looking Ahead

While the challenges facing education in South Africa remain significant, our collective efforts are making a tangible difference. As we pursue our strategic priorities, I am reminded daily that TLT’s success is a shared endeavour. To our implementing partners, funders, government allies, dedicated staff, and the resilient young people who show up after school every day—**THANK YOU** for your commitment to building a sector that truly leaves no child behind.

Let us move forward together, confident that extended learning is not only addressing today’s educational gaps but also creating tomorrow’s opportunities.

With gratitude and determination,

Sixolile



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Charlene Petersen (Voss)
Executive Director, The Learning Trust



Dear Grantees, Partners, and Friends of The Learning Trust,

2024 has been a year of deep reflection, intentional transition and opportunity for The Learning Trust.

The initial part of the year was led under the bold leadership of our outgoing Executive Director, Sibongile Khumalo, who guided the organisation with clarity, compassion, and a commitment to grassroots impact. Her departure in August 2024 marked the close of a significant chapter in TLT's journey, one that saw us grow from a responsive grantmaker into a respected intermediary with influence in the after-school sector.

Stepping into the role during the latter part of the year, I was met with an organisation rich in purpose already in motion towards its next evolution. The handover was more than a passing of leadership. It was a shared moment of learning, continuity and trust, symbolic of how we work in The Learning Trust.

This year marked a shift in our identity. While the foundation of our work is rooted in developing

emerging ASPs, we have amplified efforts in building the sector as a whole. We are stepping into our role as a connector and convenor, shaping quality standards, incubating collaborative initiatives and positioning the after-school as essential to South Africa's education recovery.

We are leaning into the difficult, but necessary work of internal alignment: strengthening our team, crafting a new strategy and affirming our values.

These foundations will carry us forward as we explore new models for capacity support, deepen our influence in the broader education ecosystem, and widen the reach of our networks.

To our partners—funders, grantees, collaborators—thank you for your continued trust and support of our work together. As we look ahead, I am energised by the opportunities to co-create and build a sector that not only supports young people beyond the classroom but truly imagines what learning in South Africa can be.

With gratitude and hope,
Charlene Petersen (Voss)



We are stepping into our role as a connector and convenor, shaping quality standards, incubating collaborative initiatives and positioning the after-school as essential to South Africa's education recovery.



BUILDING THE FIELD:

Nurturing a Thriving After School Ecosystem

As a leader and convener in the after-school space, we've always believed that strong organisations are the backbone of a flourishing after-school sector. Our vision is to see an abundance of quality ASPs across the country, creating rich and varied learning opportunities so that all children can grow into thriving adults.

This is not something any one organisation can achieve alone. It requires collaboration, community, and a sector that grows together. That's why our Organisational Development (OD) work focuses not only on skills and knowledge acquisition, but also on connection.

Our OD work has evolved in both depth and breadth. We've moved from foundational training to sector-building initiatives that strengthen organisations, cultivate resilient leadership, and deepen relationships. By bringing people together in spaces of learning, sharing, and support, we are strengthening the very fabric of the after-school ecosystem.

Building More, Reaching Further

Across this strategic period (2022-2024), we've significantly expanded our responsiveness and reach. Our national ASP database now includes over **2,000 organisations**, who regularly benefit from our learning events, resources, and network engagements. We've welcomed new grantees, entered Mpumalanga for the first time, and expanded our support to include more diverse leaders and models — including a growing number of organisations led by youth-, women-, and Black-leaders. We've also intentionally increased the representation of arts- and sports-based programmes, broadening the landscape of what quality After School looks like.

We laid important groundwork in 2022, hosting **10 OD events** and reaching **nearly 300 participants**, as we reconnected and re-established learning networks. In 2023, we diversified our offerings and went deeper with our grantees.

We introduced online **Practitioner Masterclasses** on critical themes like gender, sexuality, and substance use; hosted **Learning Visits**; and launched in-person **MEL training** to complement our virtual series. We also launched our flagship **Management Accelerator Programme (MAP)** — a year-long fellowship for After School managers, with early MEL findings showing a **27% increase** in leadership, performance management, and strategic planning skills, as reported by their supervisors.



2024 was a year of consolidating our offerings and extending our reach. We continued to deliver high-quality events while testing new approaches. Highlights include, **12 professional development events**, reaching over **500 participants**, launching OD work in Mpumalanga, and convening the first Leadership Recharge in Eastern Cape, where senior leaders and board members came together for strategic troubleshooting. We also deepened our ecosystem-building work, awarding collaboration grants and initiating a project with Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa (IPASA) to better understand the funding landscape for ASPs.

Creating Ripples Across the Sector

Our OD work is designed to strengthen the entire After School sector. Programmes like **MAP** and **Leadership Recharge** are shaping a new generation of confident, connected leaders. When these leaders meet in **Communities of Practice (CoPs)** or collaborate across provinces, exciting things happen — from joint coding initiatives and chess club facilitator training to innovative approaches to youth wellbeing.



We've seen real shifts across the sector — in MEL capacity, leadership and management capability, governance and HR systems, and the ability to foster partnerships and collaborative projects. We've also co-created shared Quality Standards for After School and launched a participatory Quality Assessment Tool.

Zoe Mann, Programme Director, The Learning Trust



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

01 Vision, Mission & Strategy

- Establish purpose, values, and long-term goals.
- Develop strategic plans for achieving the mission.



03 Administration

- Establish operational systems for efficiency.
- Develop policies and procedures.



05 Human Resource Management

- Recruit, train, and retain staff and volunteers.
- Foster a positive workplace culture.



07 Networking & Collaboration

- Build partnerships for leveraging resources.
- Foster collaboration for increased impact.



09 Fundraising and Resource Mobilisation

- Develop funding streams for support.
- Cultivate relationships with donors.



02 Leadership & Governance

- Implement governance structures for accountability.
- Define roles and responsibilities.



04 Financial Management

- Ensure fiscal responsibility and sustainability.
- Monitor budgets and expenses.



06 Marketing & Communications

- Develop communication strategies for engagement.
- Utilise marketing techniques for promotion.



08 Programme Development

- Design programmes addressing community needs.
- Conduct needs assessments and evaluations.



10 Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

- Establish systems for evaluation and learning.
- Use data-driven insights for improvement.



ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NUMBERS

(2022-2024)



2,000+

**ORGANISATIONS
ENGAGED** through TLT's
national After School
database



40

**EMERGING LEADERS
TRAINED** through the
Management Accelerator
Programme (MAP)



27%

AVERAGE GROWTH
in leadership and
management skills among
MAP participants



40

**PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT EVENTS**
delivered across three years



1,300+

PARTICIPANTS REACHED
through OD events and
learning engagements



92%

**OF CoP PARTICIPANTS
RATED SESSIONS**
as "extremely effective"
or "very effective"



CASE STUDY:

Collaborating to Build a Stronger, Fundable ASP Sector

In 2024, Phakamani Young Minds Academy (PYMA), with support from The Learning Trust, led a pilot project aimed at strengthening the capacity of grassroots after-school programmes to access local funding and deepen parental involvement.

The initiative, known as the NPO Clinic, was a flagship example of collaborative sector development, providing training, mentorship, tools, and peer learning opportunities to 12 emerging organisations.

The NPO Clinic was created to address common challenges facing grassroots ASPs, such as compliance, fundraising skills, internal systems, and sustainable local income streams. Through workshops, customised toolkits, and bi-weekly mentorship, the pilot reached over **90 individuals** and supported **5 organisations** intensively, including Kidz Hub, Ark Soweto, and Soweto Basketball Academy.

One participant shared, **“This clinic shifted how I see my own power. Fundraising is about relationships, not just money.”**

PYMA's role as a lead facilitator showcased the importance of peer-to-peer mentorship in the after-school ecosystem. Beyond just training, the project fostered collaboration, surfaced new grantees, and highlighted the importance of local ownership. The initiative also laid the groundwork for a tiered support model that responds to organisational readiness, moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach.

This partnership exemplifies how TLT's collaboration grants can enable trusted after-school partners like PYMA to take the lead in scaling sector capacity, supporting compliance, and inspiring local fundraising mindsets.

Key achievements included:



Adoption of donor engagement strategies by **3 organisations**



Launch of parent-led initiatives in **80%** of mentored ASPs



Creation of a **WhatsApp peer-learning group** and **onboarding of partners** onto funding platforms like ChangeX



Real-time proposal submissions following the April 2025 “Funding & Community Power” Clinic



OUR REACH AND GRANTEE NETWORK

KEY IMPACT FIGURES



87

**TOTAL
GRANTS
AWARDED**



38

**GRANTEE
ORGANISATIONS
SUPPORTED**



17

**NEW
GRANTEES
ONBOARDED**



16

**GRANTEES
TRANSITIONED
TO ALUMNI**



30,000+

LEARNER REACHED



1,200+

PRACTITIONERS SUPPORTED
(through training, coaching,
and Communities of Practice)

**BY THE END
OF 2024, TLT
HAS INVESTED**



145m

**IN GRANTS
FUNDING**



247

**CAPACITY SUPPORT
COMMUNITY BASED
NON-PROFIT ORGS**



215

ALUMNI

OUR GRANTEES

- Advance Edukos
- ARK Soweto
- Aspire
- Entandweni
- Harvest Season
- I Protect Me
- Ikasi Youth
- Ingubo Children's Haven
- Khula Unqobe Creative Arts
- Lesedi la Setjhaba
- Loxion Mobile Library
- Matlogonolo Community Outreach Centre
- Othandweni After School Programme
- Pauline Podbrey Foundation
- Peddie Resource Centre
- Phakamani Young Minds Academy
- PND Projects
- Regenerative Neighbourhood Development Agency
- Sewelo Chess Academy
- Sophumelela
- Soweto Basketball Academy (SBA)
- Intlantsi Foundation
- Merrifield Ntinga Ntaka
- TechnoAfrika Academy
- Waumbe Youth Development
- Thuto Pele
- Sakhimfundo Youth Programme

GRANTEE REFLECTIONS: PND Projects

Over the past few years that we have partnered with The Learning Trust, TLT has played a vital role in helping us shape our journey as a community centre committed to supporting children in informal settlements through after-school programmes.

What began as a response to the urgent challenges brought on mostly by the COVID-19 pandemic, when many learners were struggling, has now evolved into a strong and enduring collaboration grounded in a shared purpose and lasting impact. The support from The Learning Trust has gone far beyond just funding, through investment in capacity support for our volunteers, who are essentially the backbone of our programmes, we have grown a lot in skills, confidence, and leadership as a team. This has directly contributed to the quality and consistency of the support we provide to the children under our care.

We have expanded our programmes, improved our internal systems, and strengthened our ability to deliver holistic programmes beyond just academic support. This includes psycho-social care based on the capacity-building sessions we have attended.

I believe we are now operating in a more structured and sustainable way than when we first started. We have moved on from simply responding to

immediate needs to building what I believe is a long-term model for sustainable impact and opportunity.

We are now able to take what we've learned and apply it beyond Kya Sands. We have also been applying the same model in Inanda, KwaZulu-Natal. Together, we've worked to ensure that children living in informal settlements are not left behind but instead have access to services that allow them to play on the same level as more privileged children.

This journey has been one of growth, learning, and resilience. We are deeply grateful for the continued support and belief in our mission, and we look forward to continuing this journey together, as we create brighter futures for our children and seeing more success stories come out of our community and from learners whose potential extends far beyond matric.

Judith Phiri, Founder, PND Projects



GRANTEE REFLECTIONS:

Waumbe

The TLT grant came at the right time when COVID-19 had just hit the world. It was a season full of uncertainty and questions about how to respond to the new normal. The grant enabled us to face that time with more clarity, because it gave us access to resources through grant support activities as well as community and stakeholder engagements. These platforms allowed us, as grant recipients, to share our journeys, learn from each other, and collaborate.

TLT's grant support allowed Waumbe to appoint quality tutor coordinators, who are the core and engine of our work. They are central to driving quality teaching and learning through the guidance they provide to our learners.

The grant also ensured that our tutors had the resources and training they needed to respond to academic needs. We work in communities where learners are exposed to more negative than positive influences, and our tutors and coordinators must show up fully with the right tools to manage what they face each day at school.

Thanks to the grant, Waumbe's doors are open six days a week, allowing us to support schools in both numeracy and literacy.

And the numbers speak for themselves:

- **Sinenjongo High School**, supported through life skills in partnership with ASSET, was a top performer in the district with a pass rate of over 90%.
- We facilitated life skills programmes in five high schools in Kraaifontein — two of which became the best-performing schools in the district.
- **Fisantekraal High** has maintained consistent success, rising from a 44% pass rate in 2014 to over 80% in recent years, becoming one of the top-performing rural schools.

Through our programmes we're creating a generation of chartered accountants, educators, sports scientists, and business analysts and more.

Thank you to TLT for making this possible. As they say, it takes a village to raise a child — we wouldn't have achieved all this without your support.

Together, we've built a core team that is agile and able to adapt as needed.

Mdu Menze,
Waumbe CEO

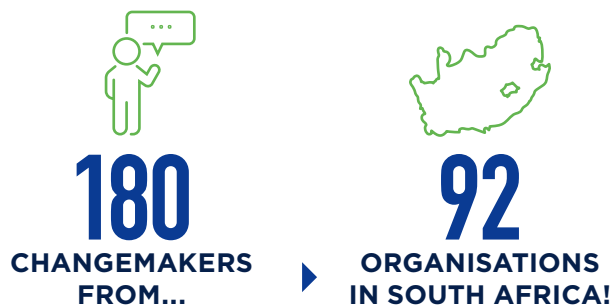


OUR ADVOCACY

One of TLT's goals over this strategic cycle has been to strengthen the visibility, credibility, and recognition of the after-school sector in South Africa.

We've worked to amplify the voices of grassroots practitioners, share research and stories of impact, and position after-school programmes as a vital contributor to national education and youth development priorities.

Our advocacy work recognises that real systems change doesn't happen in silos. It requires collective energy across civil society, government, funders, and communities to reimagine extended learning as a right. That goal came to life in one of our most ambitious initiatives yet — the Amplify After School Symposium.



Amplifying the After School Movement

In January 2024, The Learning Trust hosted the inaugural Amplify After School Symposium, bringing together over 180 changemakers from 92 organisations at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Johannesburg. The event marked a milestone in our strategy, creating a critical platform to celebrate the work of ASPs and forge new pathways for collaboration and influence.

Designed by and for after-school leaders and practitioners, the two-day programme centred on six core themes that served as both discussion anchors and calls to action:

- Amplifying Educational Transformation
- Scaling for Impact
- Leveraging Innovation
- Employing & Empowering Youth
- Strengthening Public Partnerships
- Sustainably Resourcing ASPs



Through deep-dive workshops, facilitated networking sessions, masterclasses and pecha kucha style talks, the symposium created space for learning, reflection, and connection. Participants explored how ASPs drive socio-emotional learning and development in underserved communities, improve learning outcomes, and unlock opportunities for youth employment and leadership.

The success of the Amplify Symposium reflects the growing momentum behind South Africa's After School movement and TLT's evolving role as a connector, convenor, and amplifier of sector voices.

We believe that advocacy begins with presence creating spaces where the sector can see itself, learn from itself, and speak with a united voice. Amplify was a tangible manifestation of that goal.



Voices from the Symposium

“

This symposium is important because it is really giving us an opportunity to amplify the important work that the after sector is playing in helping ensure that no child is left behind. Ensuring that children get the opportunity to dream, to explore and to discover their passions. There are beautiful stories of children who have come through ASPs because these learners we are working with are our change makers, they are the leaders, the scientists, the artists that perform on global stages.”

Wayde Groep, Year Beyond

“

It was amazing to be in a room filled with people all pursuing a similar vision of uplifting our communities in different ways.”

Bridget Harrison,
Access Music Project

#LIGHTSONAFTERSCHOOL 2024: Building Strong Foundations

In October 2024, The Learning Trust proudly led the fifth annual #LightsOnAfterSchool campaign in partnership with the Western Cape's Youth and After School Programme Office (YearBeyond). Under the theme "Building Strong Foundations", the campaign celebrated the vital role that ASPs play in equipping young people with the academic, social and emotional skills they need to thrive in a rapidly changing world and increasingly competitive job market.

Across South Africa, ASPs showcased the power of education *beyond the classroom*. From literacy and numeracy support to arts, sports, life skills, and digital literacy, the range of offerings reflected a holistic approach to youth development. These programmes provide safe, structured, and enriching environments where young people build important skills to become thriving adults in South Africa's economy.

The campaign also highlighted the growing crisis of youth unemployment. In today's economic climate, ASPs serve as lifelines, offering mentorship, practical training, and pathways to employment or further study. By bridging the gap between education and economic participation, ASPs are preparing young people to step confidently into their futures.

Public Endorsement

Western Cape Provincial Minister of Cultural Affairs and Sport, Ricardo Mackenzie, publicly endorsed the campaign and encouraged active citizen participation:



After School Programmes are critical, whether they are run by government, civil society or other organisations. They address challenges of mental health, safety, and academic catch-up. These programmes allow learners to explore their passions, stay curious and active, and connect with positive peer networks, while also creating work and service opportunities for thousands of young people.



LOAS 2024 SNAPSHOT

The campaign received strong media traction across platforms, achieving:

15
MEDIA
HITS

ESTIMATED
6.1m
AUDIENCE
REACH

OVER
R545k
IN ADVERTISING
value equivalency
(AVE)

Coverage included high-profile radio features on Radio 702, GoodHope FM, Smile FM, and Education Indaba, as well as online and print exposure in Good Things Guy, Netwerk24, George Herald, Langeberg Bulletin, and Tygerburger.

LOAS SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

The campaign also sparked strong digital engagement through the hashtag #BuildingStrongFoundations, which was used to unify all social media activities during the campaign. On TLT's platforms alone, the campaign generated:



34,400+
IMPRESSIONS




2,400+
ENGAGEMENTS



40+
POST COMMENTS



500
NEW FOLLOWERS
gained during the
campaign period



7.21%
AVERAGE
ENGAGEMENT
RATE

The Learning Trust will continue to invest in growing this international movement by supporting the visibility of After School Programmes, strengthening public partnerships, and creating platforms that ensure learners in under-resourced communities gain the requisite competencies they need to succeed beyond their school years.



THE SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT FUND: an opportunity to scale and strengthen ASPs

Over this strategic period, the Catch-up Coalition (CuC) has emerged as a transformative force in South Africa's educational landscape, evolving from a targeted post-Covid intervention initiative into a comprehensive ecosystem that bridges grassroots innovation with national policy influence.

Supported through funding from AGGP-SA and the Tutuwa Foundation, the Coalition has demonstrated how strategic collaboration can address learning gaps across multiple educational phases while strengthening the after-school sector's role as a critical lever for educational recovery.

What began as a focused response to learning deficits has matured into a sophisticated, multi-phase intervention model that recognises the complexity of South Africa's educational challenges. The Coalition's evolution reflects a deep understanding that learning gaps persist throughout the education system, requiring differentiated approaches that adapt to learners'

needs from foundation phase through further education levels.

The Coalition's flagship project, the Social Employment Fund (SEF), exemplifies the power of strategic scaling, having created nearly 15,000 paid work opportunities in the after-school sector, fundamentally transforming the after-school sector landscape. With the ending of the third round of the project, we have seen the provision of critical capacity and improvement of infrastructure necessary for sustainable after-school programmes.

SEF's success lies in its dual impact: addressing unemployment while building educational capacity. By creating structured employment opportunities for after-school practitioners, the SEF has professionalised a sector traditionally characterised by volunteer-based service delivery. This transformation has elevated the after-school sector's credibility and positioned it as an essential component of South Africa's educational recovery strategy.

SEF SNAPSHOT



EDUCATION
AND ECD

730 000+
Learners

13,900+
schools and ECD



FOOD
SECURITY

1.64m
Meals served



DIGITAL
INCLUSION

92,000
Learners reached

+190
Computer labs
made available



YOUTH
SUPPORT AND
EMPOWERMENT

35,000+
Youth supported
through a skill
development
activity

HUMANS OF THE SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT FUND PROJECT: Championing After School

ANELISA SIYOKO'S STORY

Head Tutor at BGSA | Philippi, Cape Town | Former SEF Participant

"As much as we help learners grow, they help us grow too."

Anelisa joined BGSA in 2023 through the YearBeyond programme. Her dedication quickly made an impact, and by 2024 she was part of the SEF project, eventually transitioning into a full-time, salaried position as Head Tutor.

"Being a SEF participant allowed me to continue doing what I love while earning a stipend that helped cover my basic needs. I went from receiving a stipend to earning a salary. That transition has changed everything for me."

Now overseeing 16 tutors, she also leads planning, mentoring, and academic support activities. Through SEF and BGSA, she gained confidence, learned digital skills, and now co-leads a robotics club and soon to be certified in facilitation.

"When I arrived, I couldn't finish a sentence. Now I lead a team."

Anelisa is currently enrolled at UNISA to study Education and plans to specialise in intermediate phase teaching.



SEF Participant Voices



JAMEELAH PATTON

Participant at Westville Primary | Implementing Partner: Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA)

"These funds [SEF stipend] allow me to assist with household expenses while gaining career experience in education. I work about 56 hours a month, and it's helping me grow in ways I never expected. I'm learning how to understand different personalities, challenge my own abilities, and develop new skills that will help me in my journey to become an educator."

"This is more than just a job for me, it's a stepping stone. I plan to pursue certificates that will help me specialise in education. The SEF experience is giving me a clear path forward."



SAKEENA STRYDOM

Participant at Great Commission United (GCU)

"Before SEF, I didn't have any work experience. Now I'm able to take care of my little one and contribute to my household. Just that alone makes a world of difference."

"It's an honour making sandwiches for the children. You can't teach a hungry child and I see every day how having a meal helps them focus and learn better."

SCALING IMPACT THROUGH TEACHING AT THE RIGHT LEVEL

The Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) model represents the Coalition's most widely adopted intervention, demonstrating scalability across provincial contexts. With successful pilots in KwaZulu-Natal and North-West, and expansion discussions underway for the Free State and Eastern Cape, TaRL exemplifies how evidence-based interventions can be adapted to diverse educational environments.

The model's evolution has been marked by strategic partnerships, with Youth Impact and DGMT's Zero Dropout Campaign leading active implementations. The training of 70 facilitators and establishment of a TaRL Community of Practice have created sustainable support structures that extend beyond individual interventions to build systemic capacity.

Systemic Influence and Policy Integration

Perhaps most significantly, the Coalition's influence extends beyond direct service delivery to policy shaping and system building. The Zazi-iZandi (ZiZ) model's integration with the Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) workforce exemplifies how grassroots innovations can influence national policy frameworks. By embedding proven interventions within broader government initiatives, the Coalition has demonstrated a pathway from pilot programmes to systemic integration.

The Coalition's work has fundamentally repositioned the after-school sector within South Africa's educational ecosystem. Through strategic intervention design, rigorous testing, and collaborative scaling, the CuC has proven that targeted, evidence-based interventions can drive both immediate learning recovery and long-term system strengthening.

As the Coalition looks toward continued expansion and refinement, its three-year journey stands as testament to the power of collaborative innovation in addressing complex educational challenges. From grassroots intervention to policy influence, the Catch-up Coalition has created a replicable model for educational recovery that extends far beyond its initial scope, positioning after-school programming as an indispensable component of South Africa's educational future.

“

Training and using the SEF participants on the Zazi iZandi programme, we've witnessed children transform from identifying letter sounds to reading full paragraphs. As their skill set progresses from letter sounds to words to sentences to paragraphs, their confidence soars. They're no longer just decoding text, they're discovering worlds, asking questions and proudly reading aloud to family and friends.

At the same time, our young SEF participants are flourishing. By giving them stipends through the SEF project, we've seen these young people blossom from literacy coaches into leaders. Four of them have already been absorbed as supervisors, guiding their peers and overseeing programme activities. Many have transitioned into the BEEI programme, and several are pursuing further studies—often into teaching—because they discovered a passion for education through this experience. This progression pathway is what makes our partnership truly special. We're building readers and leaders in one go.”

Zama Zulu, Executive Director Masinyusane

LIST OF SEF IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS



Eastern Cape

- Assumption Development Centre
- Awarenet
- Axiom
- Centre for Social Development
- LEVA Foundation
- Masifunde Learner Development
- Masinyusane Development Organisation
- United Through Sport

Western Cape

- Advance Edukos Foundation
- Beautiful Gate South Africa
- Education Without Borders
- Great Commission United
- Inclusive Education South Africa
- Ikamva Labantwana Bathu
- Ikamva Youth
- I Protect Me
- Just Grace
- Regenerative Neighbourhood Development Agency
- Social Innovations
- Sozo Foundation
- Waumbe Youth Development

Gauteng

- Lefa VELLE
- Maboneng Township Arts Experience
- Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre
- OLICO Maths
- Outreach Foundation
- Phakamani Young Minds Academy
- Soweto Basketball Academy
- Yakha Ikusasa Manje

Mpumalanga

- Imagine Scholar

KwaZulu-Natal

- iThemba Projects



RESEARCH INSIGHTS

As part of our strategy to deepen sector impact, The Learning Trust invested in research and evidence to strengthen programme quality, track sector shifts, and position after-school as essential to education recovery and youth development in South Africa.

In 2024, we commissioned an independent impact evaluation into our OD work between 2018-2022. This report marked a significant moment of reflection, helping us assess our progress, sharpen direction, and prepare for what is next.

The evaluation affirmed TLT's credibility and influence as a strategic intermediary that:

- Deepens the effectiveness of grantees and implementing partners
- Strengthens the enabling environment for ASPs
- Catalyses collaboration and sector visibility
- Enhances systems thinking and collective learning
- Defining and supporting quality across the sector

Quality Standards for After School

In response to growing demand for clearer standards, TLT launched the After School Quality Assessment Tool (QAT) in 2024. This participatory self-assessment tool was developed in partnership with grantees and aligned to the After School Quality Standards Framework.

The QAT enables ASPs to:

- Reflect critically on their own practices
- Identify areas for growth and improvement
- Strengthen internal systems and accountability
- Foster a culture of learning, collaboration, and continuous development

It is already being used by partners to inform planning, staff development, and MEL systems and stands as a valuable tool for elevating programme consistency and credibility across the sector.

Additional Research Undertaken (2022-2024)

- How The Social Employment Fund is Building a Cohort of After School Practitioners
- Leveraging Public Employment and ASPs: SEF study demonstrating dual impact on livelihoods and programme capacity
- Funding Landscape Study with IPASA, Zenex Foundation and Maitri Trust
- Community-Based Participatory Research training with Rhodes University



OUR FINANCES

2024 Grant Spend

Grant-making	R8,876,460
Organisational Development / Capacity Support	R8,967,000
Communications & Advocacy	R202,570
Research & Mapping	R1,285,890
Academic Interventions - HSAP	R540,000
Leadership Training (NLP)	R208,861
Operational Costs	R3,981,636



THANK YOU
to our donors and funders
our Income for the year was

R25,657,782





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OUR DONORS AND FUNDERS

Thank you to all our donor partners! Your contributions have been instrumental in strengthening the impact of After School Programmes across South Africa.

Thank you to our donors and funders

- Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropies SA
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