



# UNDERSTANDING DIGITAL TOOLS FOR AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Gauteng Community of Practice | March 2026



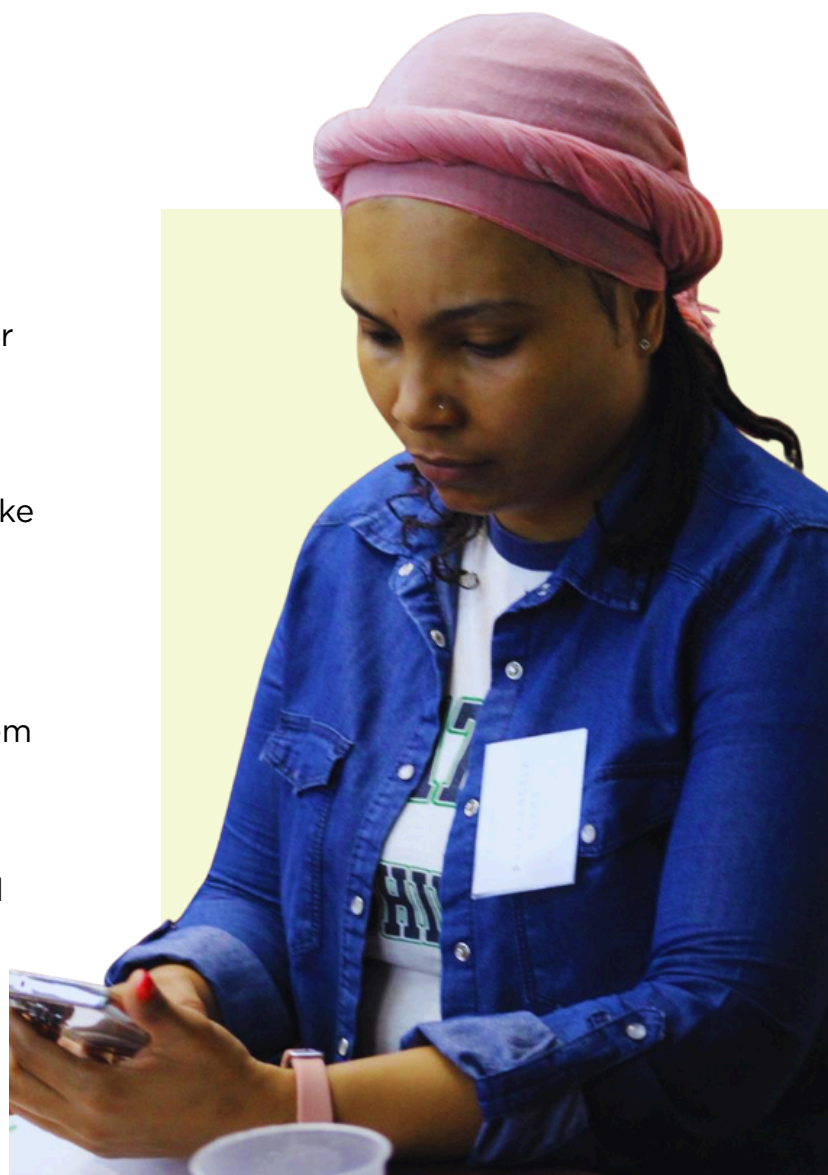
**Part 1:  
Professionalising your  
communications**

# WHY DIGITAL TOOLS MATTER

After School Programmes (ASPs) do important work under real pressure. Small teams, limited budgets, and growing demands for compliance, reporting and stakeholder communication are the daily reality for most.

The right technology, used well, can make a small team feel and function like a much bigger one. Yet many organisations are still managing contacts through personal phones, designing materials on the fly, and communicating without any real system in place.

**There is a tension here:** organisations need professional-grade tools to build credibility and operate efficiently, but cost and capacity are genuine barriers. The good news is that a growing ecosystem of free and discounted digital tools exists specifically for NPOs.



This learning brief captures insights, tools, and resources from The Learning Trust's Community of Practice on Understanding Digital Tools for After-School Programmes, held on 17 March 2026.



## WHERE AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES IN GAUTENG ARE STARTING FROM:

A recent survey of After School Programmes in Gauteng gave us a clear picture of where organisations are starting from:



**89%**

have reliable internet access  
(61% mostly, 28% very)



**72%**

use Microsoft's free tier version



**44%**

have access to organisational laptops



**56%**

use Canva's free version



**39%**

have a professional domain name



**22%**

use Google Workspace



**78%**

need data management support

Support with collecting, organising and using data to strengthen programmes and make informed decisions.

These insights help us better understand the needs of After School Programmes and how we can support organisations to thrive, grow and make an even bigger impact.

## SECTION 1

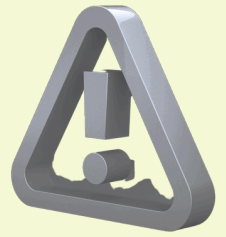
### TECHSOUP: YOUR GATEWAY TO FREE TOOLS

**TechSoup** South Africa should be one of the first steps for any registered NPO. It connects organisations with donated or heavily **discounted** software and technology from major global providers. Think of it as an online store for **nonprofits**, where most things cost next to nothing.

#### HOW TO GET STARTED

1. Visit: <https://techsoupsouthafrica.org/user/register>
2. Sign up as a user, validate your email address, and register your organisation's profile
3. Have your documentation ready: NPO/NPC certificate, PBO letter, or Trust Deeds

## IMPORTANT!



Before you register, make sure you have your PBO letter ready. This is a key compliance document and a requirement for many of the tools available through TechSoup. If your organisation does not yet have one, this is worth prioritising.



# TOOLS AVAILABLE THROUGH TECHSOUP INCLUDE:

<b>Adobe</b>	Creative tools including Acrobat/DocuSign for signing contracts digitally (no more printing, signing, scanning!)
<b>AWS</b>	Cloud computing credits for nonprofits
<b>Asana</b>	Project management
<b>Autodesk</b>	Technology impact programme
<b>Bitdefender/ Norton</b>	Cybersecurity solutions
<b>CleverReach</b>	Email marketing
<b>Constant Contact</b>	Newsletter and email campaign platform (alternative to Mailchimp)
<b>Autodesk</b>	Technology impact programme
<b>Dropbox</b>	Cloud file storage
<b>Foxit</b>	PDF editing
<b>Hootsuite</b>	Social media scheduling and management
<b>Microsoft 365</b>	Productivity suite (see Section 5)
<b>Notion</b>	Knowledge management and collaboration
<b>Question Pro</b>	Survey and research platform
<b>TeamViewer</b>	Remote IT support
<b>WIX</b>	Website builder
<b>Zoho</b>	CRM, email marketing, and operations suite (see Section 6)

## SECTION 2

### DOMAIN NAMES & PROFESSIONAL EMAIL

Your domain name (**e.g., [www.yourorganisation.org.za](http://www.yourorganisation.org.za)**) is your organisation's home on the internet. It signals that you are serious, professional, and here to stay. Yet only 39% of CoP participants have one.

#### Why is a domain name so important?

- Brand awareness and protection
- Reputation and credibility with funders, partners, and the public
- Professional organisational email addresses (**e.g., [info@yourorganisation.org.za](mailto:info@yourorganisation.org.za)**) are far more credible than Gmail addresses
- Better search engine optimisation (SEO) so people can find your work
- Ability to connect your email to **Google Workspace** or **Microsoft 365**, unlocking shared mailboxes, cloud storage, and much more



#### A PRACTICAL TIP:

During the transition, simply forward your domain email to your personal inbox so nothing gets missed. One important rule-always keep a separate personal email address that is not tied to your domain, in case you ever get locked out.



"You need to be visible online so that visibility supports both the services you provide to the community and your fundraising efforts."

— Arnold Netshambidi, Phambano

## SECTION 3

### EMAIL MARKETING & CRM - BUILDING LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

#### Why Communication Matters

People do not fund organisations, they fund stories! They give when they understand the work, when they can see the impact and when they feel something. The tools in this section help you tell your story consistently and at scale.

Consistent communication builds trust, keeps your organisation visible, and opens doors to partnership and funding. The challenge is that as you grow, contacts end up scattered across WhatsApp groups, Excel sheets, personal phones, and email inboxes. Outreach becomes chaotic. A proper system changes that completely.

#### WHAT IS A CRM?

A CRM (Customer Relationship Management) platform brings all your contacts and communication into one place. For an NPO or ASP, that means:

- Keep all your contact lists in one place - donors, funders, volunteers, parents, beneficiaries
- Send professional communications to large groups without needing a technical background
- See who opened your email, who clicked, who responded - and follow up accordingly
- Maintain institutional memory and organisational knowledge - contacts stay with the organisation, not with individual staff - no one walks out the door taking your relationships with them



## PLATFORMS TO EXPLORE

Platform	Features	Notes
<b>Zoho Campaigns</b>	Email campaigns, contact organisation, automation tools, reporting	Available via TechSoup at discounted rates. Zoho One includes CRM, email, HR, finance tools as an integrated suite. Only 3 organisations at this CoP had used it.
<b>Mailchimp</b>	Newsletters, audience lists, campaign analytics	Free tier available. Good for getting started with email marketing.
<b>HubSpot</b>	Email marketing, contact tracking, CRM	Offers a free tier. Widely used for donor relationship management.
<b>Constant Contact</b>	Newsletter and email platform	Good alternative to Mailchimp, available via TechSoup.

## EMAIL MARKETING IN PRACTICE

A CRM (Customer Relationship Management) platform brings all your contacts and communication into one place. For an NPO or ASP, that means:

- **Newsletters:** Timely updates about programmes and community impact
- **Programme announcements:** Registrations, events, workshops, and camps
- **Impact stories:** Short stories showing outcomes and change
- **Volunteer opportunities:** Inviting people to get involved
- **Donor updates:** Showing progress, learning, and results to funders and supporters



## SECTION 4

### CYBERSECURITY - PROTECT WHAT YOU BUILD

All of these tools are only useful if they are secure. Losing access to your accounts or having them compromised can set an organisation back significantly. The session covered some essential habits that every ASP should build into how they work:

- Enable multi-factor authentication (MFA) on all accounts - do NOT link it only to one phone or one email address
- Add MFA on the account level itself, not just to the device
- Always maintain a personal email address as a backup in case your domain email is compromised
- Use reputable antivirus software such as Bitdefender or Norton (available through TechSoup)
- When a senior staff member leaves, do not delete their email account immediately. Forward it for at least six months - important contacts and institutional memory can disappear overnight if you do not



“Don't pay retail price for cybersecurity tools - they are available through TechSoup for free or at a fraction of the cost.”

## SECTION 5

### CANVA - DESIGN FOR IMPACT

#### WHAT IS CANVA?

Canva is a free (and freemium) graphic design tool that makes professional-looking visual materials accessible to anyone - no design training required. Flyers, social media graphics, presentations, reports, infographics, newsletters, even basic websites - Canva can do it all.

#### BRANDING BASICS FOR ASPs

Good design starts with consistent branding. Your brand is not just your logo, it is the full set of visual and tonal elements that make your organisation instantly recognisable.

##### Start with these basics:

- Two core brand colours - define these using hex codes so they stay consistent across every platform and design
- Two fonts - one for headings, one for body text
- A library of real photos from your own programmes - authentic images of your people and spaces are far more powerful than generic stock photos
- A documented Brand Toolkit or Brand Guidelines. This is not a day-one requirement, but it is a worthwhile next step once your core elements are in place. It becomes especially valuable when more than one person in your team is creating materials.

**One moment from the breakaway sessions stuck with the room: an organisation had been using Canva for months but only to add logos to posters. They had no idea about templates, brand kits, or presentation tools. This turned out to be a common experience. Many organisations already have access to powerful tools - they just have not had the chance to explore them properly.**

#### CANVA FOR NONPROFITS:

Canva offers a free Pro Account to registered NPOs, giving full access to all premium tools, templates, and design assets at no cost. Organisations must apply for this account separately through the Canva website or via TechSoup.

Apply at:

[www.canva.com/canva-for-nonprofits/](https://www.canva.com/canva-for-nonprofits/)

**“I learned how to use Canva to improve our branding and attract more funders”**

# CONTACT US

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THE  
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BEYOND THE CLASSROOM