



THE
**LEARNING
TRUST**
BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

2025

**ANNUAL
REPORT**

BUILDING SOUTH AFRICA'S AFTER-SCHOOL ECOSYSTEM

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



**A 15-Year
Review**

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INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Fifteen years ago, The Learning Trust (TLT) began with a small group of community-based after-school programmes (ASPs) and a belief that the hours spent outside the classroom are as important as those spent inside it. They support young people's learning, development and future opportunities. What started as a small grantmaking partnership in Cape Town has grown into a national movement, one built through relationships, collaboration and a shared commitment to ensuring that learners in underserved communities have access to quality support beyond the school day.

Over these past 15 years, the after-school sector in South Africa has evolved significantly — from a once-fragmented sector to an increasingly recognised sector contributing to improved education and employment outcomes as well as community resilience. The Learning Trust has grown alongside this movement, growing from a funder supporting emerging organisations providing after-school support to learners in underserved communities into a thought-leader, sector convener and advocate working with many partners across the country.

This annual report takes a deliberate step back to reflect on this journey. The milestones achieved, the partnerships built and the collective contribution of the after-school sector in strengthening South Africa's education

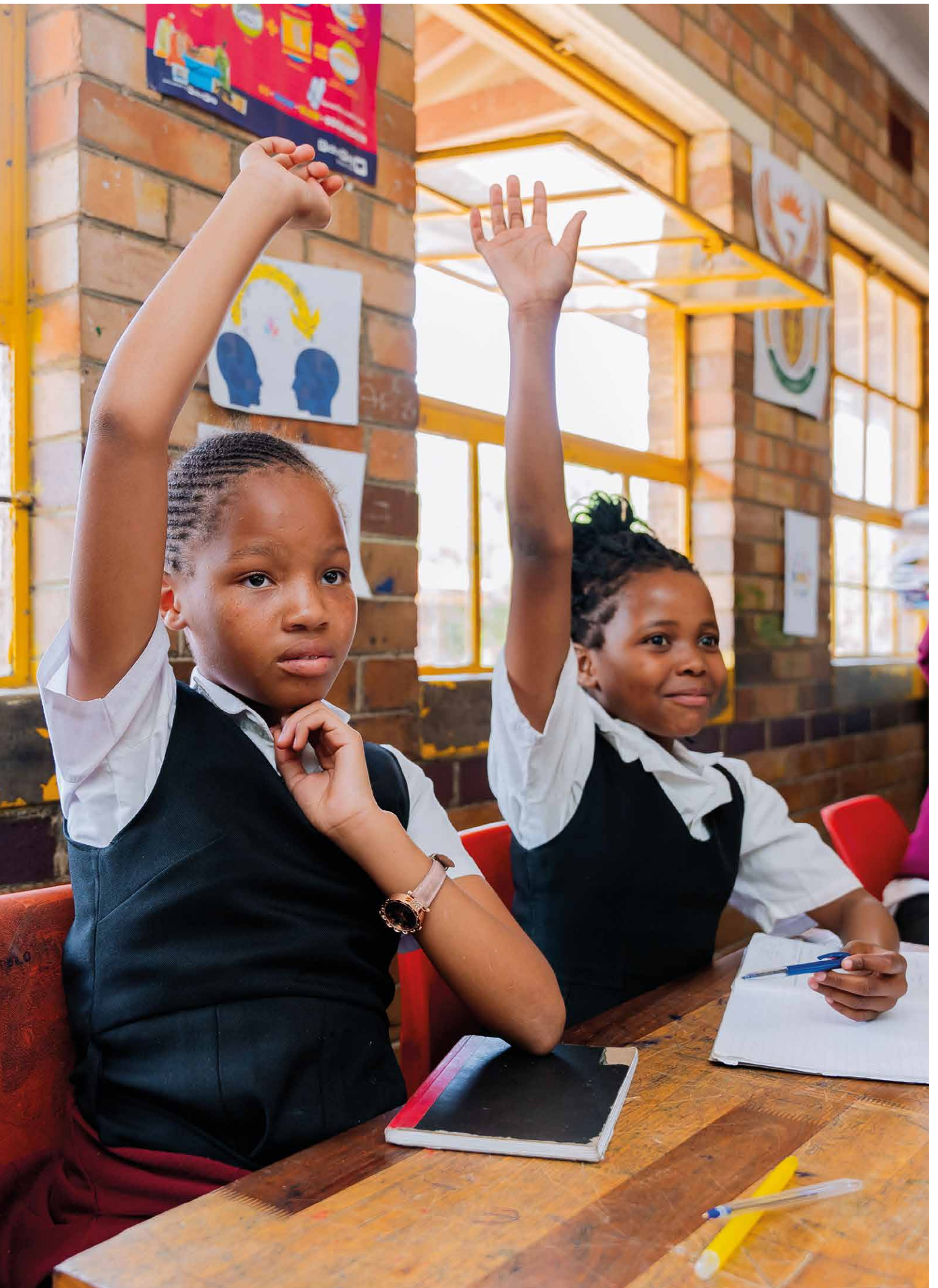
landscape. It is a reflection not only of what TLT has done, but of what has been built together with practitioners, organisations, funders, government partners and young people.

Today, we celebrate a more visible sector, more connected and more credible than it was 15 years ago. The evidence demonstrating the importance of after-school support continues to grow, and the collective ambition to strengthen opportunities for young people is stronger than ever.

As we celebrate 15 years, we do so with gratitude for the partnerships and shared commitment that have made this journey possible, while looking ahead to the next chapter of building a stronger, more integrated after-school ecosystem for generations to come.

15 YEARS AT A GLANCE





MESSAGE FROM OUR BOARD CHAIRPERSON

**Sixolile Mabombo-Benson,
The Learning Trust**



**Dear partners, stakeholders and friends of
The Learning Trust,**

As we present The Learning Trust's 2025 Annual Report, we do so with deep gratitude and a profound sense of responsibility. This year marks 15 years of TLT's work in building, strengthening and championing South Africa's after-school sector. It is a moment that invites us to look back with honesty and appreciation, and to look forward to renewed conviction about what is still possible for our children and young people.

When TLT began, the after-school sector was far less visible than it is today. Many organisations were doing powerful work in communities, often with limited resources, little public recognition, and few structured opportunities to learn from one another. What was clear, even then, was that learning does not begin and end at the school gate. Children need safe spaces, caring adults, academic support, mentorship, creative expression, and opportunities to discover who they are and what they can become.

“That is what TLT has always believed in. That grassroots organisations, when properly resourced, connected and trusted, can shift the life chances of young people.”



Over the past 15 years, TLT has helped to make this work more visible, more connected and more credible. Through grantmaking, organisational development, advocacy, research and partnerships, we have supported organisations not only to deliver programmes, but to build the systems, leadership and evidence needed to sustain them. In doing so, TLT has grown alongside the sector — from a funder and capacity-strengthening partner into a trusted convenor, advocate and sector-builder.

One of the privileges of serving as Chairperson has been seeing the sector not only through reports and strategy documents, but through the people who bring this work to life. I often think about the quiet power of walking into an after-school programme in the late afternoon. The school day is over, the formal timetable has ended, but the learning has not stopped.

There is a child reading aloud with growing confidence; a young facilitator patiently explaining a maths problem; a programme leader checking attendance, following up with parents, and making sure that no child slips through the cracks. In those moments, the after-school sector stops being an abstract idea — it becomes a daily act of care, discipline and possibility.

That is what TLT has always believed in. That grassroots organisations, when properly resourced, connected and trusted, can shift the life chances of young people. This belief has guided our work across many milestones — from strengthening implementing partners through grants and capacity support, to contributing

“As we look ahead, our task is to ensure that after-school programmes are not only celebrated, but embedded, funded and strengthened as part of South Africa’s education future.”

to national conversations on learning recovery, youth development and public employment. It is reflected in the growth of collaborative platforms such as the Catch-up Coalition, the expansion of the Social Employment Fund (SEF) work in the after-school space, the development of quality standards and assessment tools, and the continued investment in evidence-informed initiatives such as Zazi iZandi and the High School Academic Programme.

The sector has changed significantly over the past 15 years. After-school programmes are increasingly recognised not as optional extras, but as essential parts of the education and youth development ecosystem. The disruptions of recent years have made this even clearer. Learning losses, unemployment, inequality and social fragmentation cannot be addressed by schools alone. They require a wider circle of support around children, families, schools and communities. TLT’s role has been to help strengthen that circle.

Collaboration has been central to this progress. No single organisation can build a sector alone. The gains we celebrate in this report belong to many hands — implementing partners working in communities every day; funders who have invested with patience and courage; government partners who recognise the value of extended learning; researchers and advocates who help us understand what works; and the TLT team, whose commitment and integrity continue to hold the work together.

As we look ahead, our task is to ensure that after-school programmes are not only celebrated, but



embedded, funded and strengthened as part of South Africa’s education future. TLT will continue to support quality practice, generate and share evidence, build organisational resilience, advocate for enabling policy and funding environments, and nurture partnerships that expand opportunity for young people.

Fifteen years is an important milestone, but it is not the destination. It is a foundation. The next chapter calls us to be bold, practical and collaborative. To keep building a sector that gives every child the support, confidence and opportunity to thrive beyond the classroom.

With gratitude and determination,
Sixolile Mabombo-Benson



MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Charlene Petersen (Voss),
The Learning Trust**



Dear Grantees, Partners and Friends of The Learning Trust,

As I reflect on 2025, I find myself holding two things at once, the weight of a milestone and the energy of a new beginning. The Learning Trust celebrates fifteen years and we are launching a new strategy. Fifteen years is long enough to have earned the right to speak with conviction and recent enough to still feel the urgency.

When TLT was founded in 2010, the after-school sector in South Africa was largely unrecognised. Grassroots organisations do extraordinary work in communities, with little acknowledgment, limited resources and almost no connection to one another. What began as a modest grantmaker, backing a handful of emerging education nonprofits, has grown into a national sector anchor, convening networks, shaping quality standards, influencing policy conversations and walking alongside hundreds of organisations across all nine provinces. Over fifteen years, we have reached hundreds of thousands of learners, supported more than 200 grantee organisations, trained thousands of practitioners and helped build the case that after-school programmes are not a nice-to-have, but an essential infrastructure for educational equity in this country.

2025 also marked the culmination of a participatory strategy development process that has produced our 2026–2028 Strategic Plan, a framework developed through honest reflection, stakeholder consultation and a clear look at what the sector needs from TLT now. It is built on fifteen years of learning about what works, what doesn't and where we can make the biggest difference.

Our new strategy is organised around four interconnected pillars: strengthening after-school organisations and their leadership; improving coherence, alignment and impact across our programmatic work; deepening our influence, advocacy and resourcing for the sector; and building our own organisational resilience and sustainability. We are focusing on consolidating what works and accompanying our partners more meaningfully over time. We are deepening our role as a sector anchor focused on building the evidence, the relationships and the platforms that position after-school programmes as a key player in the education ecosystem in South Africa.

As we move into our sixteenth year, I carry with me the lessons of this journey, that trust is built slowly and broken quickly; that the best strategies are co-created and that an organisation's values must show up in how it operates, not just in what it says.

To our funders, thank you for resources and belief, sustained over many years. To our grantees and implementing partners, thank you for your relentless commitment to ensuring that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow and thrive. To the TLT team, thank you for showing up, with both passion and heart.

Fifteen years on, the after-school sector is stronger, more visible and more connected than it has ever been. The work ahead is to strengthen it and ensure that this sector has the recognition, resources and support to sustain it.

Your's sincerely,
Charlene Petersen (Voss)

ABOUT TLT



OUR VISION

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



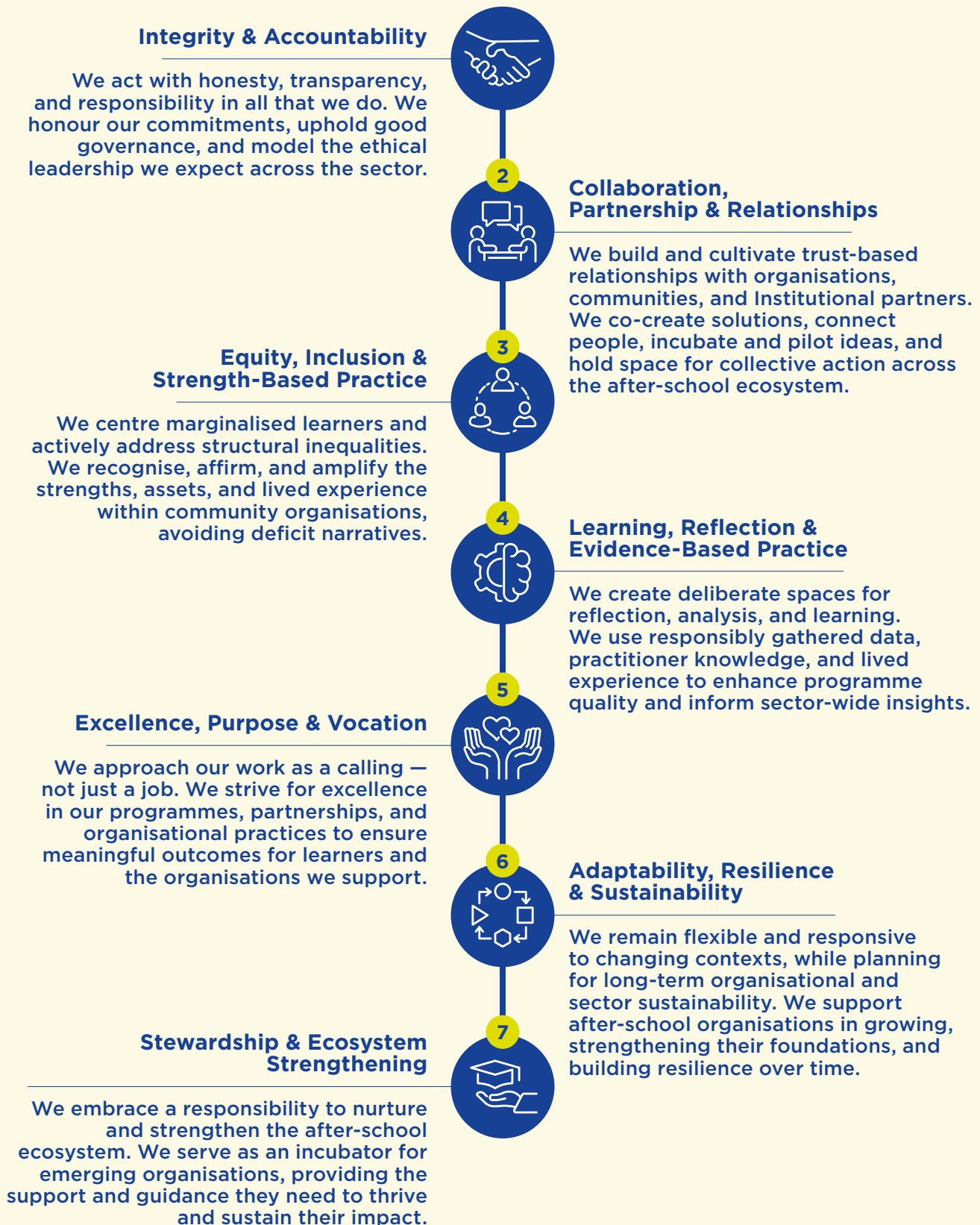
OUR MISSION

The Learning Trust's mission is to advocate for, strengthen and grow the after-school sector in South Africa by increasing both the number and the quality of ASPs that provide safe, structured, holistic and enriching learning opportunities for under-resourced communities. We do this by providing strategic organisational development support to ASP partners, including grants, tailored capacity strengthening, leadership development and quality improvement tools, while serving as a sector convenor that collaboratively tests, elevates and scales effective methodologies across the after-school sector.

Through resourcing proven learning approaches and championing evidence-based practice, we strengthen both individual organisations and the broader ecosystem. Through these efforts, we aim to ensure more learners have access to quality educational experiences beyond the classroom and that the after-school sector is formally recognised as a vital part of the national education system, contributing meaningfully to policy, practice and improved learner outcomes.

OUR VALUES

TLT is guided by a set of core values and principles that underpin all our work:





THE CHALLENGE

Fifteen years on, the challenge that inspired our work remains. While the after-school sector has grown in visibility and recognition, too many children and young people still face significant barriers to learning, opportunity and long-term success. In many ways these challenges have become even more complex.

On average, over half of learners who enter the school system drop out before their Matric year, with many falling behind academically long before they leave school. The learning losses exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, persistent inequality, rising unemployment and increasing pressure on families have further widened the gap for many children growing up in under-resourced and under-served communities. Without access to safe spaces to learn, trusted adults, academic support and meaningful opportunities beyond the classroom, many learners remain left behind.

By the age of 11, children born into poverty are estimated to have accumulated a learning gap of around 6,000-hours compared to their middle-class peers — this is equivalent to five years in the classroom! While this statistic has remained a stark reminder of educational inequality for many years, it also highlights why sustained investment beyond the classroom continues to be essential.

There is a growing recognition that schools cannot address these challenges alone. Government, civil society, communities and funders increasingly recognise that quality after-school programmes play a critical role in supporting learning, wellbeing and positive youth development. Yet many of the organisations delivering these programmes continue to face their own challenges, from limited resources and funding uncertainty to leadership, governance and organisational capacity constraints.

The challenge, therefore, is no longer simply about increasing access to after-school programs simply about increasing access to after-school programmes. It is about strengthening the organisations, leaders and wider ecosystem that enable quality after-school programmes to thrive at scale.

6,000
HOURS

The estimated learning gap accumulated by children living in poverty by the age of 11.



HOW WE'RE MAKING AFTER-SCHOOL WORK

We believe that strong after-school programmes are built on strong organisations. While our work has expanded over time, this belief continues to underpin what we do.

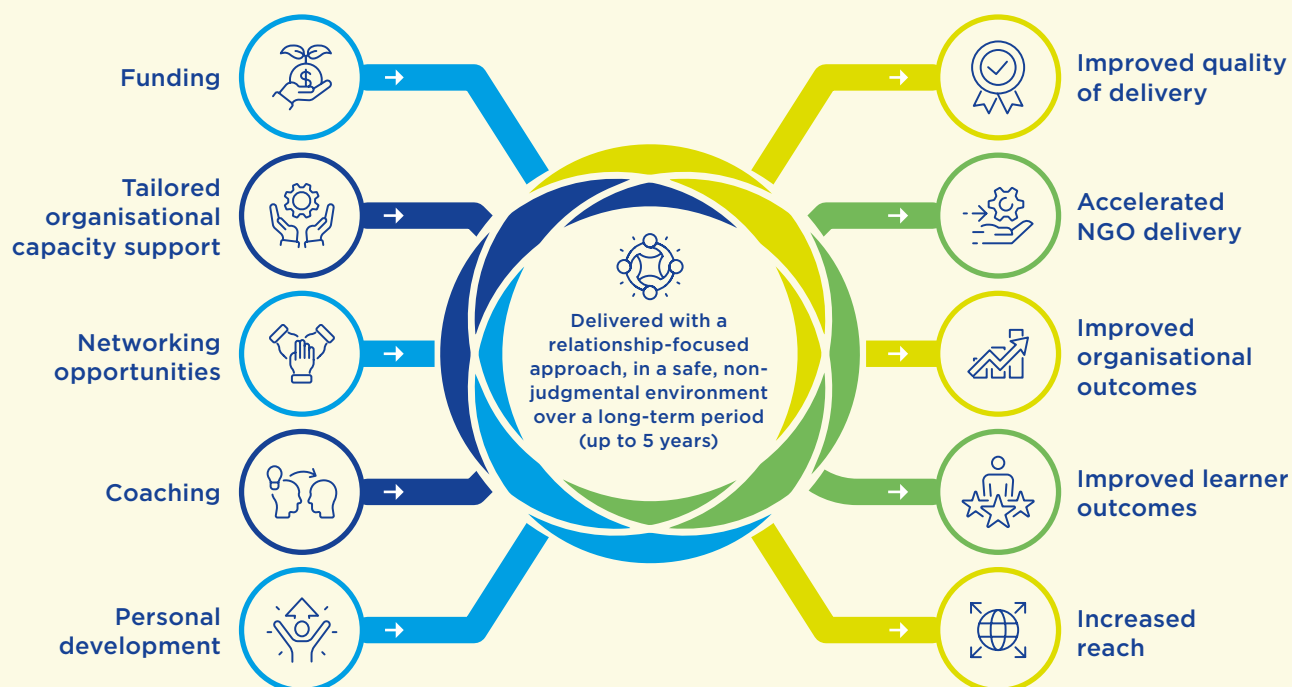
We invest in after-school programmes and organisations through grantmaking, organisational development, leadership support and tailored capacity strengthening, recognising that sustainable impact depends not only on quality programmes, but on resilient organisations with the leadership, systems and resources to deliver on them.

We build long-term trusted relationships with our partners and create space for reflection, shared learning and continuous improvement over time.

Alongside this we have increasingly taken on a leadership role in strengthening the after-school sector. We convene practitioners and partners, generate evidence and champion effective practice and advocate for greater recognition and investment and advocate for greater recognition and investment in the sector.

Ultimately our role is to strengthen organisations, connect people and ideas and contribute to an after-school sector that is better equipped to support every child's learning, development and future.

TLT'S MODEL



On aggregate, this can keep hundreds of thousands of children and youth engaged in their future development, enhance their life chances of success and produce high social and economic returns on investment at low cost.

CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

Over the past 15 years, The Learning Trust has helped shape South Africa's after-school sector through partnership, innovation and a shared commitment to improving outcomes for children and young people. This milestone offers an opportunity to reflect on the journey so far, celebrate collective achievements and look ahead to the work still to be done.

15 YEARS SNAPSHOT

THEN

NOW

2010



4

COMMUNITY-BASED
ASPS SUPPORTED

2025

A national ecosystem of organisations, practitioners and partners working together to strengthen after-school opportunities for young people.

HIGHLIGHTS



221

ALUMNI
GRANTEES

A TIMELINE OF TLT OVER THE YEARS

2010

- The Learning Trust is founded by **Christine Downton**. Based in Cape Town, we are led by **Charles Ainslie** and supported by three Trustees.
- We fund our first **four promising community-based education initiatives**.

2011

- Our **grantee partners** **increase** more than 5-fold to 22 in our second year.
- We hire our first **Programme Officer** to formalise and deliver our signature one-on-one capacity support coaching.

2012

- In addition to its grants, TLT invests in **Cover2Cover Books** — an independent publisher of children's fiction.

2020

- **TLT turns 10!** Alongside a four-month long digital celebration, we also join the global Lights on After School campaign for the first time.
- A new Community of Practice called **ASAP** (After School Action Project) is launched in Makhanda.
- In response to COVID-19, **TLT propagates emergency support**, including food relief grants in partnership with the Maitri Trust, cross-provincial webinars, and a wellness series with the Rhodes Psychology Clinic.
- The **Gauteng Community of Practice** is launched virtually.
- We partner with **YASPO**, Laureus and **ASSITEJ SA** to produce and distribute the Treasure Box, an innovative physical learning resource for the sector, by the sector.

2019

- A new Executive Director, **Sibongile Khumalo**, is appointed. Our head office moves to Johannesburg.
- TLT commissions research into **after-school impact** and makes the case for further investment into the sector.
- We introduce a range of **new professional development offerings**, including Learning Cafés and Director's Circles, and refine our Theory of Change & MEL Framework.
- Our sister organisation, **The Trust Connection**, is founded with Charles Ainslie at the helm. TTC assumes the Learning Lab and increases the NLP footprint in South Africa.

2015

- We partner with the **Youth & After School Programme Office** (YASPO) in the Western Cape to host our first Community of Practice and begin to map the instances of after-school programmes in the province.
- Together with the **Claude Leon Foundation**, we begin to make grants to schools in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal.
- TLT forms **Community Collaborative Partnerships** with IkamvaYouth and Wordworks to scale their after-school and literacy working practice models.

2014

- We launch our annual **seminar series** and group workshops, focusing on organisational development.

2013

- We partner with **Reel Lives** Inc. to produce film profiles of our non-profit partners.
- Our **Learning Lab** takes off, with NLP courses delivered by renowned international trainers.

2016

- The **OASIS** (Organising After-School and In-School) Community of Practice is launched in Gqeberha (formerly Port Elizabeth) in partnership with Nelson Mandela University's Centre for Community Schools.
- In partnership with **ELMA Philanthropies**, we deliver NLP training to a diverse group of African non-profits from across the continent.

2017

- We partner with **YASPO** to convene the first After School Symposium in the Western Cape.
- **UCLA Anderson's Global Access Programme** researches our work with TLT grantees and publishes a report on the impact of after-school in South Africa.

2018

- Funded by the **Raith Foundation**, we release our first **programme evaluation** to illustrate the impact of our work with grantee partners, and develop TLT's value-add as a result.
- We partner with **Cape Town TV** to produce a weekly television series that highlights the importance of after-school in under-served communities.
- TLT rebrands, takes on the slogan "**Beyond the Classroom**," and launches a new website with a resource repository.

2021

- Marked the close of a three-year strategy built on three pillars: **core programmes**, **sector-building**, and **research and advocacy**.
- **Sixolile Mabombo-Benson** joins our board of trustees as our incoming Board Chairperson.
- After three years in the making, we publish our **After-School Investment Case**, featuring case studies on IkamvaYouth and OLICO and a webinar panel bringing together leading voices in South African education research.
- **OLICO's High School Academic Programme** (HSAP) launches with 8 implementing partners, reaching around 800 Grade 8-9 learners.
- Our **Data Collective** is launched, with Phakamani Young Minds Academy (PYMA) as its first case study.
- Through collaboration grants, the Butterfly Art Project's **Child & Adolescent Facilitator** (CAF) training expands into Gauteng, while MusicWorks partners with UNICEF and the University of Pretoria on arts-and-health research.

2022

- We support 27 grantees, transitioned 6 organisations to alumni after their five-year grant journey, and onboard 5 new organisations. Together, our grantees reach **more than 10,000 learners** directly.
- The **Social Employment Fund** (SEF), managed by the Industrial Development Corporation, launches nationally and we step into our first nationwide implementation role.
- We launch the **After-School Catch-up Coalition**, involving 40+ organisations across 9 provinces and providing 3,700+ paid employment opportunities for the after-school sector.
- We provide **After-School Basics Training** to 40 practitioners across 26 organisations and support the Talking Technology to Power ICT advocacy collaboration in Makhanda.
- We revive our in-person **Communities of Practice** in the final quarter of the year, growing the after-school network.
- We launch the **Teampact** automated attendance app with 5 grantees, and coordinate the roll-out of OLICO's High School Academic Programme to 8 organisations, reaching 800+ learners with online maths support.
- We run our **3rd annual Lights On After School** campaign, with over 2,000 people using the campaign hashtag in October.
- **Siphelele Chirwa** and **Murray Leibbrandt** join our Board of Trustees.

2023

- We launch the **Management Accelerator Programme** (MAP), a year-long training for after-school programme managers.
- The **Catch-up Coalition**, through SEF, grows to 50 implementing partners, reaching over 100,000 learners across 2,000+ schools and ECD centres.
- We run our **4th** annual **Lights On After School** campaign, themed “Rallying for After School Programmes,” in partnership with YearBeyond.
- We begin piloting the **Zazi iZandi** early literacy and phonics model.

2024

- **Zazi iZandi** is integrated into government’s Basic Education Employment Initiative (BEEI) — a pilot model finding its way into national policy.
- **Teaching at the Right Level** (TaRL) is piloted in KwaZulu-Natal and North-West, training 70 facilitators.
- We launch our **Quality Standards and Quality Assessment Tool** (QAT), co-created with grantees.
- We hold our first **Amplify After School Symposium**, bringing together 180 changemakers from 92 organisations in Johannesburg.
- We run our **5th** annual **Lights On After School** campaign, themed “Building Strong Foundations,” publicly endorsed by Western Cape Minister Ricardo Mackenzie.
- **Charlene Petersen Voss** is appointed as our new Executive Director.
- After nearly fifteen years of visionary service as founding donor and Trustee, **Christine Downton** steps down from our Board.

2025

- TLT **celebrates 15 years** of impact! Through a participatory process, we shape our new 2026-2028 Strategic Plan, built on four pillars: **After School Strengthening & Leadership; Programme Alignment, Coherence & Impact; Influence, Advocacy & Resourcing;** and **Organisational Resilience & Sustainability.**
- **SEF** Round 4 is approved, projected to create 2,500 further paid work opportunities.
- **The Doppio Zero and Good Things Guy Wish Tree Campaign** raises R100,000 and stationery supplies for 11 of our grantee partners across Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, reaching 5,663 learners.
- An **independent evaluation** of our organisational development work from 2018-2022 is published, affirming our role as a strategic intermediary for the sector.
- We welcome our second **Management Accelerator Programme** cohort 23 young after-school managers.



CURRENT CORE GRANTEES

Our current grantees are grouped according to TLT's regional portfolio structure. While most organisations are listed under the province in which they operate, some are managed within a different regional portfolio to reflect programme oversight.

Gauteng

- Ark Soweto — Acts of Random Kindness
- PND Centre for Homework & study in Informal Settlement
- Soweto Basketball and Recreational Academy
- Lesedi La Setjhaba Family and Community Centre
- Othandweni
- Thuto Pele Centre
- Sakhimfundo — Growth through Education
- TechnoAfrica Academy (*Emalahleni, Mpumalanga*)
- Khula Unqobe Creative Arts
- Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre

Western Cape

- Advance Edukos Foundation
- Pauline Podbrey Foundation
- Loxion Mobile Library
- Tores Foundation

Eastern Cape

- Harvest Season
- Intlantsi
- Merriefield — Ntinga Ntaka
- Peddie Resource Centre
- Sewelo Chess Academy
- Sophumelela Youth Development Programme

OUR NETWORK OF AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES

Western Cape Current Grantees

- Advance Edukos Foundation
- Pauline Podbrey Foundation
- Loxion Mobile Library
- Tores Foundation

Alumni

- Action Volunteers Africa
- Afrika Tikun
- Amandla Development
- Amandla Edufootball
- Beautiful Gate SA
- Bethesda Community Centre
- Boost Africa
- Butterfly Art Project
- Cape Center for Children, Families and Refugees in Distress (CCFRD)
- Centre for Creative Education
- CoolPlay
- Darling Outreach Centre
- Dream Factory Foundation
- Earthchild Project
- Educape
- Emagqabini Education Academy
- Franschhoek Principals Network
- FunDza Literacy Trust
- GCU Academy
- Ikamva Youth
- Ikasi Soccer School
- ILB — Ikamva Labantwana
- Iliso Care Society
- I Protect Me
- Ithemba Lethu Learning Centre
- Just Grace
- Kronendal Music Academy
- Light of Life Theatre
- Mamelani
- Music Works
- R-Cubed
- Realistic — NPO
- Regenerative Neighbourhood Development Agency
- Ripple — South Africa
- Sisaya Phambili
- Siyakhathala Orphans
- Siyavuselela Sports and Life Skills
- The ASTAR Project

- The Communiversity of South Africa
- The Healing Heart Foundation
- The Sozo Foundation
- The Viva Foundation
- Thethani Debating League
- Thokozani brothers
- Thope Foundation (SA)
- TrueNorth
- Vision Afrika
- VrygrondTrust
- Vulisango
- Waumbe Youth Development Centre
- Waves for Change
- Young Filmmakers Project
- School of Hardknocks

Eastern Cape: Current Grantees

- Aspire
- Harvest Season
- Intlantsi
- Merriefield — Ntinga Ntaka
- Peddie Resource Centre
- Sewelo Chess Academy
- Sophumelela Youth Development Programme

Alumni Grantees

- Assumption Development Centre
- CCS
- Early Inspiration
- Ekhaya Skills Initiative
- Gadra Education
- Ingubo Children's Haven
- Lebone Centre
- Manyano Trust
- Masifunde Siphuhlisa Umfundi
- Masinyusane Development Organisation
- Mfuzo Boxing Camp
- Ntinga Ntaba kaNdoda
- Port Alfred Nemato
- Rhodes University Community Engagement
- Sapphire
- St Mary's Development Care Centre
- Unako

- United Through Sport
- Upstart Youth Development Programme
- Wordworks

Gauteng Current Grantees

- Ark Soweto — Acts of Random Kindness
- PND Centre for Homework & study in Informal Settlement
- Soweto Basketball and Recreational Academy
- Lesedi La Setjhaba Family and Community Centre
- Othandweni
- Thuto Pele Centre
- TechnoAfrica Academy
- Sakhimfundo — Growth through Education
- Khula Unqobe Creative Arts
- Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre

Alumni Grantees

- Bokamoso Educational Trust
- Boys & Girls Clubs of South Africa
- Entandweni
- Hatfield Christian Schools Mamelodi
- Hlalefang Alexandra Club
- Hope Warriors Children's Charity
- Katlehong Early Learning Resource Unit (KELRU)
- OLICO Maths
- Mamelodi Initiative
- Diakonia Aids Ministry (DAM)
- Refilwe Community Project
- Sihle Mtshali Education Consultants
- South African Volunteer Work Camp
- Association
- Streetlight School — South Africa
- Tarentaalrand Centre for Development
- The Viva Foundation
- Transitions Foundation
- Yakha Ikusasa Manje

2025 AT A GLANCE

While this report reflects on 15 years of growth, 2025 marked an equally important milestone — laying the foundations for TLT's next strategic chapter.

ALIGN. BUILD. CREATE

Align. Build. Create was the guiding theme for 2025, as we spent much of the year shaping our next organisational strategy. This period was intended to help us align on our shared mission and goals, build stronger collaboration and teamwork, and create a clear roadmap for the year.

Through a series of consultations and engagements with the internal team, external

partners and our Board of Trustees, we created the necessary space to craft a new organisational guiding tool that reflects TLT's role moving forward in strengthening the after-school sector in South Africa.

Informed by this process, we have sharpened our strategic focus and built the scaffolding for a new chapter that will carry us into our 2026-2028 strategy period.



CORE STRATEGIC PILLARS

(2026-2028)

After-School Strengthening
& Leadership

1

Programme Alignment,
Coherence & Impact

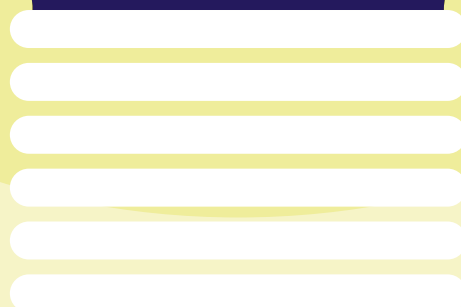
2

Influence, Advocacy
& Resourcing

3

Organisational Resilience
& Sustainability

4



2025 IN REVIEW



Grantmaking

- 17 core grantees in 2025
- 15+ collaboration and special grants activated
- **Teampact:** 15 organisations supported for MEL tracking and attendance monitoring
- **Communications Grants:** 5 organisations supported (branding, websites, social media audits)
- **Deliver Coaching Programme:** 33 participants engaged
- **Butterfly Art Project:** 12 after-school programmes engaged in arts-based support
- **PYMA Clinics:** 16 organisations supported with fundraising and sustainability tools
- R100,000 + stationery donation received through WishTree Campaign (Doppio Zero and The Good Things Guy) Donations distributed to 11 grantee partners across Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape, collectively reaching 5,663 learners



Capacity Support

- 4 Basics Trainings delivered, reaching 85 participants across provinces
- Governance strengthening sessions implemented across multiple provinces
- National-level fundraising and sustainability support delivered to grantees



Advocacy

- 5th Annual Lights On After School Campaign hosted, highlighting mentorship in after-school programmes with YearBeyond with an estimated campaign reach of approximately 6.3 million
- Continued strengthening of public visibility for after-school programmes and youth development sector
- Ran an online storytelling campaign on mentorship in partnership with Keready and the Hold my Hand campaign



Professional Development

- Management Accelerator Programme (MAP) graduated 19 participants
- Hosted 3 + Quality Standards Communities of Practice (CoPs) across provinces reaching 50+ organisations. Quality Assessment Tool introduced across ASP network
- Hosted 8 Practitioner Masterclasses



Sectoral Development

- 18,000+ youth placed through SEF (cumulative programme reach)
- Active presence across Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Gauteng, North West, Free State and KZN
- **4 national flagship projects:** Social Employment Fund (SEF), Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL), Zazi iZandi, High School Academic Programme (HSAP)
- 4th round of SEF placed 2,500+ active participants
- 69+ implementing partners supported across ecosystem

Sectoral Development Project Flagships

Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)

- KwaZulu-Natal pilot and expansion (331 learners across 6 schools in Sweetwaters)
- **North West rollout:** 10 schools during implementation phase
- **Free State:** 5 schools approved for 2026 implementation
- Multi-partner implementation model including Youth Impact, Velle, iThemba Projects and Imbeleko Foundation

Zazi iZandi

(Implemented in partnership with Masinyusane Development Organisation and Binding Constraints Lab)

- 42 schools in Nelson Mandela Bay
- +38 additional schools supported through BEEI-linked expansion
- Buffalo City Municipality expansion to 66 schools

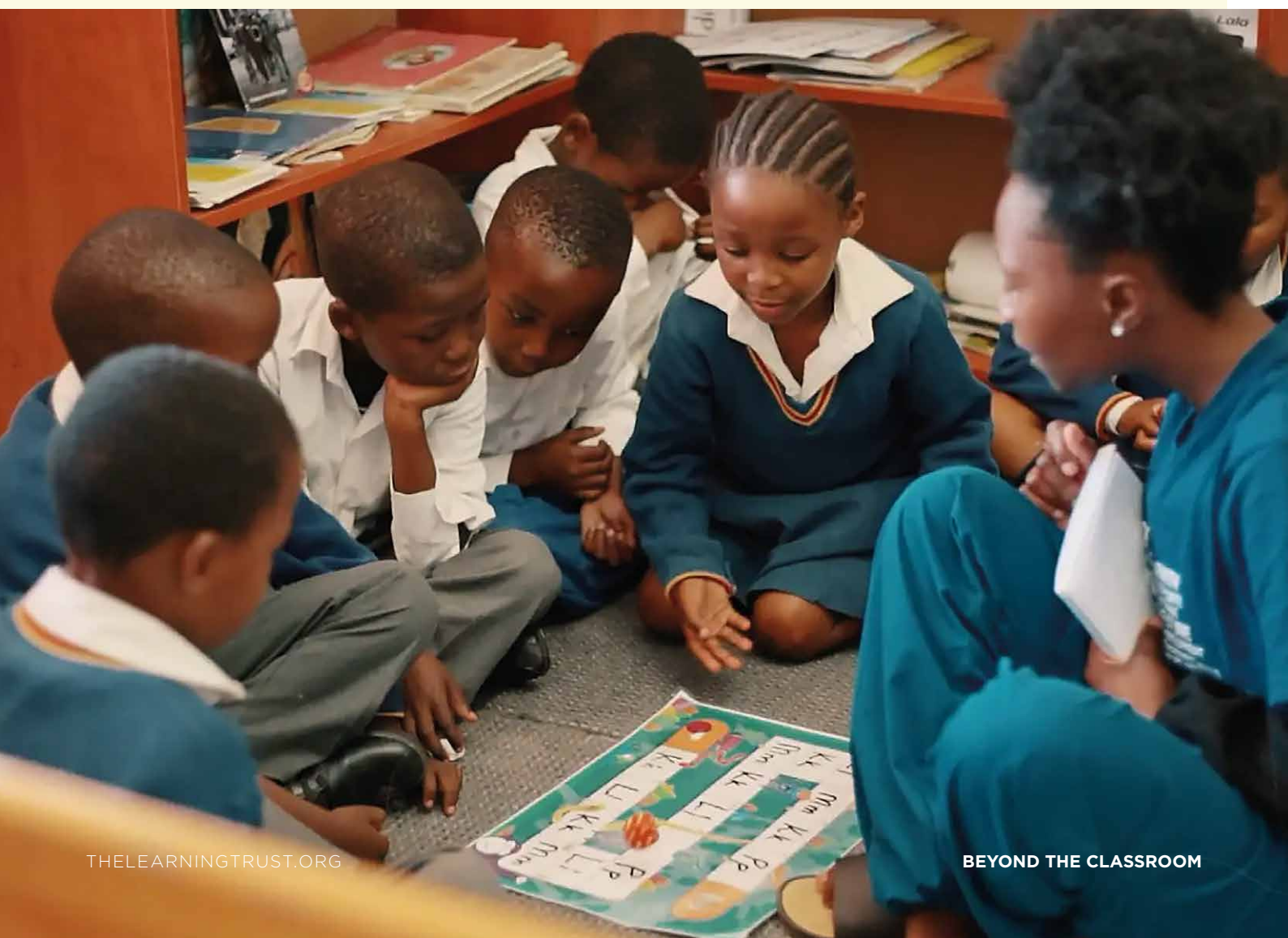
High School Academic Programme (HSAP)

Delivered in partnership with OLICO Maths

- 7 implementing partners
- Approximately 387 learners engaged
- Strengthening secondary education support models through structured academic interventions and partnership-based delivery



The strategic work undertaken in 2025 created the foundation for how TLT delivers its programmes, strengthens ASPs and influences the wider after-school ecosystem. The following highlights demonstrate this strategy in action.



STRATEGY IN ACTION

The impact of our work is best understood through the organisations that have grown alongside TLT.

CASE STUDY: PAULINE PODBREY FOUNDATION

Building a Stronger Foundation for Community Impact

For more than a decade, the Pauline Podbrey Foundation (PPF) has provided children and young people with safe, structured after-school opportunities in Makhaza, Khayelitsha, a township community in the Western Cape. What started out as a City Masters Sport and Education Club is now an organisation reaching over 550 learners through academic support programmes, 800 children and young people through psycho-social and life skills activities, 300 participants through sport and recreation, 100 learners through eLearning initiatives and 85 participants through arts and culture programmes. Through football, netball, book clubs, Lego Robotics and STEM programmes, tutorial support, and regular nutrition initiatives, PPF continues to create spaces where young people can learn, grow and

thrive, while strengthening the systems that make this work sustainable.

Now in its fifth grant year with TLT, PPF has focused on building a stronger organisation alongside delivering quality programmes. Its current strategy is guided by five pillars: community engagement, sustainable funding, staff and board development, partnerships, and communications. This strategic direction has helped strengthen governance systems, improve internal systems, and position the organisation for long-term growth.

Through tailored capacity support sessions and organisational development support offered by TLT, including strategic planning sessions, the organisation has been able to map out



clear activities aligned with its long-term goals. Meanwhile, additional professional development opportunities, including Business Administration training for an administrative staff member and leadership development through Deliver coaching, have further broadened organisational capacity.

PPF has also expanded learning opportunities. Dedicated tutorial staff now provide academic support at two local schools, extending educational support.

Through partnerships with the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and the Social Employment Fund (SEF) under the project's Western Cape Consortium, PPF created 32 paid opportunities between 2024 and 2026, strengthening programme delivery while providing meaningful work opportunities for young people. Four participants also progressed to internships at Northlink College through the City Masters project, demonstrating how employment pathways can extend beyond programme participation.

PPF's impact has been intensified through collaborative partnerships with Hamilton Academy, FoodForward SA, Advance Edukos Foundation, Inkanini Primary School and Sinako High School. Together, these collaborations have expanded access to quality after-school programmes while strengthening the organisation's ability to support children and young people academically, socially and physically while creating meaningful paid work opportunities.

Today, PPF stands as an example of how sustained investment in organisational development, alongside programme funding and capacity support, can strengthen both an organisation's resilience and its long-term impact within the communities it serves.



PPF is one example of what sustained investment in organisational development can make possible. Across the country, organisations like these form part of a much larger movement that is transforming after-school programmes and learning.

PPF BY THE NUMBERS



550

**LEARNERS
RECEIVING
ACADEMIC
SUPPORT**



800

**CHILDREN
PARTICIPATING
IN LIFE SKILLS**



300

**PARTICIPATING
IN SPORT**



100

**eLEARNING
PARTICIPANTS**



85

**ARTS
PARTICIPANTS**



32

**EMPLOYMENT
OPPORTUNITIES**



GROWTH & IMPACT

■ Some growth stories are told in numbers. Ours begins there too.

When TLT started, we partnered with organisations broadly involved in education, doing their best with limited resources and even more limited recognition. Today, we have provided direct grants to over **200 organisations**, coordinated the **Catch-up Coalition of 69+ organisations** and are in relationship with a **network of over 500 after-school programmes** across South Africa. That growth alone is worth celebrating.

“If we were never funded by TLT, we would be just another dream stuck in the back rooms in Khayelitsha. They motivated and guided us all the way.”

— TLT Partner, Evaluation 2023

“TLT’s support has not only shaped our current success but has set us on a path for sustainable growth and deeper impact.”

— TLT partner, Evaluation 2023

Building the sector is not just about the count of programmes, it’s the shift in what the words ‘After School’ have come to mean.

When we started, after-school was a programmatic description. A time slot. Something that happened after the bell rang and before caregivers came

home. Over the past decade and a half, it has become something else entirely a recognised, championed sector, one that government and funders alike have realised is essential infrastructure in South Africa’s youth development strategy. That semantic shift represents years of advocacy, evidence-building and collective will, and TLT has been at the centre of it.

Building organisations, not just programmes

Our support has never been only about funding. The combination of grant funding with hands-on capacity support is what distinguishes TLT’s model and what has produced the results we are most proud of.

Over 15 years, we have walked alongside organisations through the challenging, necessary work — providing coaching, tightening financial management systems, building HR policies that protect staff, strengthening monitoring and evaluation so that programmes can prove their impact. TLT has delivered a broad range of professional development events and services to the sector.

The cumulative weight of that work is staggering. More than 150 events. Nearly 3 000 practitioners, managers, directors, leaders gathered in rooms and online to learn, to question, to grow. From Communities of Practice (CoPs) to Director’s Circles, Fundraising



and Financial Management Training to the Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) and Management Accelerator Programme, TLT has built a professional development ecosystem that meets people wherever they are in their journey.

Organisational health only matters if what happens in the room with children is strong. That is why practitioner development has been equally central to TLT's work, equipping the coaches, tutors and facilitators who show up every day with the skills, knowledge and confidence to deliver quality programmes.

The results show organisations that once operated on goodwill and grit now have the governance structures to attract and retain funding. Programmes that once relied on intuition now have evaluation frameworks that tell them what's working and why. Models like WordWorks, OLICO Maths and Butterfly Art Project have been tested, refined and shared — raising the standard not just for individual organisations, but for the sector.

The people inside those organisations have grown too. Volunteers have become practitioners. Practitioners have become managers. Young managers have stepped into leadership. More remarkably still, employees of TLT alumni have gone on to establish their own organisations and returned as grantees. The circle keeps widening. This is what genuine investment in people looks like over time — a living network where growth is contagious, and where no one falls without someone there to catch them.



150
EVENTS



3 000+
PRACTITIONERS
ENGAGED



The power of not being alone

“There is something I have come to believe more firmly with every year of this work. Organisational development, like education, is not the job of one organisation. It takes a village.

The spaces TLT has convened: Communities of Practice, NLP Workshops, Webinars, the Management Accelerator Programme, have given people a place to connect and belong. A network of peers who understand the weight of this work, the funding uncertainty, the staff burnout, the learners who arrive carrying more than a backpack.

This sector is not easy. And it is not always kind. Having a community of like-minded, like-hearted people to lean on is not a luxury — it is how people stay. It is how organisations survive.

Those connections have produced something beyond resilience. They have produced collaboration. ”

- Zoe Mann, Programme Director,
The Learning Trust

MAP PARTICIPANT STORY

Reflections from Nompumelelo Mkhwanazi
Programmes Manager, Camp Sizanani, MAP participant 2025

When I applied for the Management Accelerator Programme, I didn't fully know what to expect. I had attended two training sessions with The Learning Trust, and I was mainly seeking professional development because I was still relatively new to my role as Programmes Manager.

I wanted to learn more about the after-school space and better understand the work I was doing. In the MAP sessions, we spoke about programme design, monitoring and evaluation, and how to check whether programmes are actually working for children. Those conversations made me realise how important it is to understand what should be in place to design and manage strong programmes.

Looking back, I can say that my expectations have been met. A lot of what I've learned through the discussions, the engagement with peers, and the trainers has had an impact on how I show up in my work.

I've gained confidence in areas where I previously felt I wasn't qualified to contribute. For example, I used to think I couldn't speak about HR policies because I don't have formal qualifications in HR or policy development. But through the programme, I realised that many people find themselves doing work beyond what they were originally trained for. People shared practical experiences and the tools, structures and frameworks they use to respond to those responsibilities. That gave me confidence to contribute to my own organisation.



ASP VOICES

Reflections from across our community of grantee and alumni partners.

Loxion Mobile Library, Grantee

Litha Sam-Sam, Founder

"The Learning Trust has been more than a funder — they have been a true learning partner. Their support has strengthened our organisation through funding, leadership development, organisational coaching, reporting systems, and programme quality... Their belief in our work has also given our team the confidence to continue serving children, even during difficult seasons."



The Butterfly Art Project, Alumni Grantee

Jane De Sousa, Executive Director

"TLT has been a valued partner of the Butterfly Art Project for the past decade... During the past decade, TLT's partnership has enabled us to expand the CAF Programme and grow the CAF Movement beyond the Western Cape and into the Gauteng Province. This year, TLT are partnering with us to establish the CAF movement in Kwa-Zulu Natal."



United Through Sport, Alumni Grantee

Nosipho Xapile, General Manager at United Through

"The focus moved from just mass participation, to rather developing a pathway to success model that looks at the needs of learners from foundation phase at school level, to out of school youth... Measuring impact by itself is not enough, it's the learnings that inform the organisation of what the challenges are and what interventions are necessary to transform more lives using sport."



Pauline Podbrey Foundation, Grantee

Nceba Matiwane, General Manager of the Pauline Podbrey Foundation

"The Learning Trust's financial and capacity-building support over the past years has strengthened our organisational sustainability and improved practitioner practice. This has directly translated into more consistent, quality programming for our beneficiaries. A key insight is the centrality of relational practice — sustainable impact in the after-school sector is rooted in building trust and safe relationships."



Yakha Ikusasa Manje, Alumni Grantee

Matshidiso Theledi, Project Administrator

"The Learning Trust's support has acted as a catalyst — strengthening Yakha Ikusasa Manje Health Development Centre, equipping our practitioners, and empowering our learners to thrive... Success comes from creating flexible learning environments, tailoring support to individual needs, and balancing academic growth with emotional well-being."



**Ikasi Youth,
Alumni Grantee**
*Stephen Roberts,
Executive Director*

“You gave us hope and direction and you guided and strengthened us with expert analysis and practical support, including vital funding... It is hard to journey alone in the after-school space. Collaborations and partnerships are vital to sustain energy and impact — and even with those there are still no guarantees of sustainability.”



**Khula Unqobe
Creative Arts (KUCA),
Alumni Grantee**
*Khanyisile Masongwa,
Founder & Executive Director*

“The support we received from The Learning Trust went far beyond financial assistance. They nurtured our development through workshops and by connecting us with other ASPs in the sector... As a result, we have employed over 30 young people, reached more than 1,000 learners, and partnered with 10 ECD centres and schools.”



**OLICO Maths,
Alumni Grantee**
*Andrew Barrett, OLICO Maths
Co-Founder & Director*

“When TLT first started supporting OLICO Maths Education in 2012, we were working with just 22 high school learners in Diepsloot. Today we’re working with more than 7,000 learners across multiple provinces... TLT support has been catalytic in every sense of the word.”



**Ikamva Labantwana Bethu,
Alumni Grantee**

“The Learning Trust’s investment has... strengthened the institutional capacity of our organisation but has also enhanced the quality of teaching and learning, contributing to improved educational outcomes... Sustainable learner success is achieved through a strong sense of community and shared responsibility.”



**Sakhimfundo Youth Programme,
Grantee**

“Through the Social Employment Fund, we expanded our tutoring programme from 140 learners supported by 14 tutors... to reaching an additional 170 learners... We are deeply grateful to The Learning Trust for believing in our vision and investing in the potential of children and young people in Alexandra.”

MCOC (Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre), Alumni Grantee

"We've moved from simply delivering tutoring to refining our programme design, co-creating solutions with partners and expanding partnerships... We moved from 'doing for' to 'building with'... positioning us as a trusted strategic partner, both in South Africa and beyond."



The Sozo Foundation, Alumni Grantee

Anton Cuyler, CEO & Founder

"The support from The Learning Trust went far beyond funding. They came alongside us as

a true partner, helping us build our capacity in areas such as monitoring and evaluation, reporting, grant writing, and overall organisational development. They helped us better understand the development sector, strengthen our vision, and guided us through the steps needed to achieve it."



Great Commission United, Alumni Grantee

Mario Van Niekerk, Founder

"The Learning Trust were the first people who truly believed in our education programme. They

changed so much for us. They laid the foundation that we continue to build on. The Learning Trust supported us holistically, and I think that was the key. They really understand communities and they were always incredibly supportive."

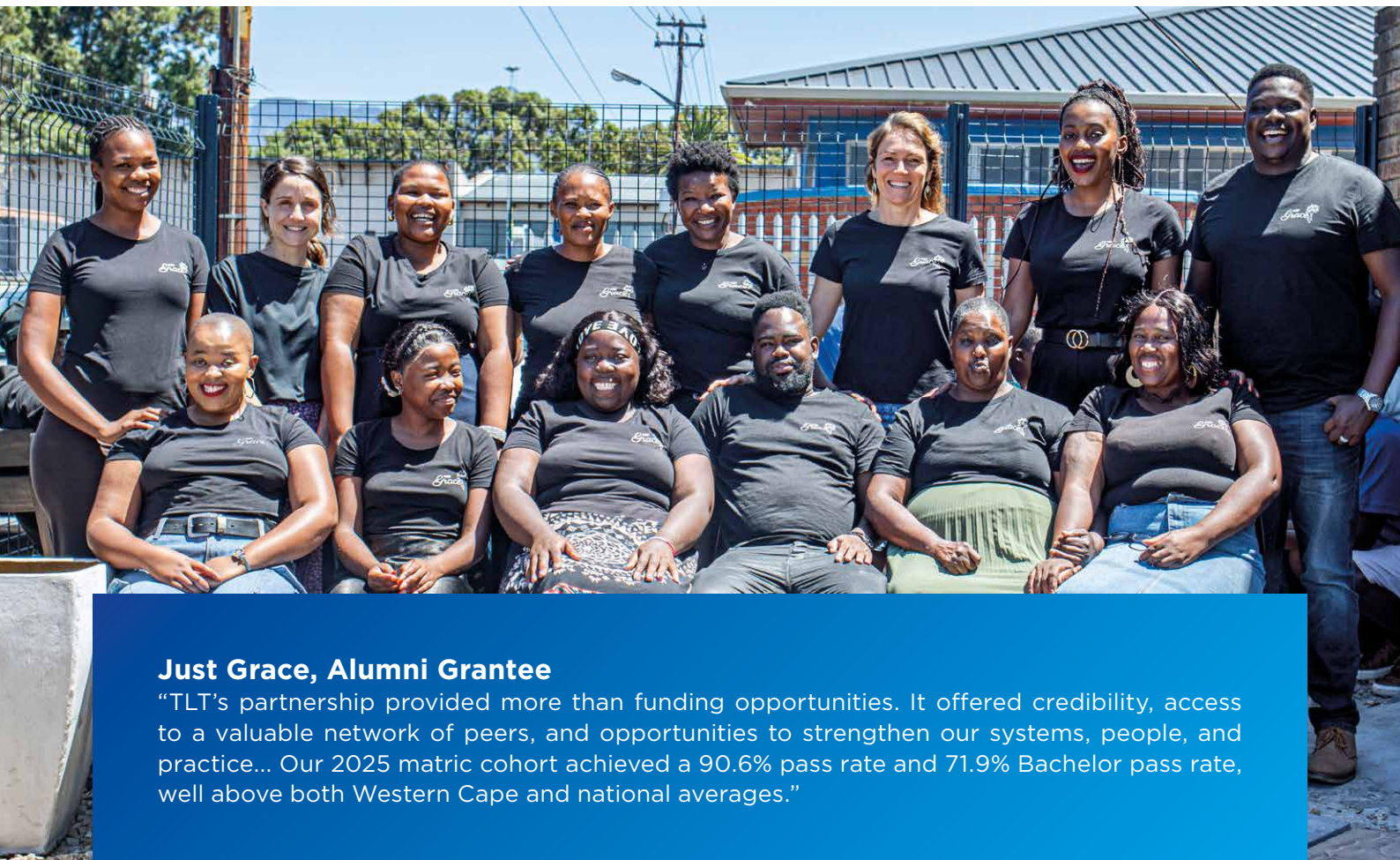


Othandweni AfterSchool Program, Grantee

Mthunzi Kunene, Programme Coordinator

"Meaningful change happens through consistent relationships

rather than one-time interventions... When learners feel supported, valued, and connected to positive role models, their confidence, attendance, behaviour, and academic performance often improve."



Just Grace, Alumni Grantee

"TLT's partnership provided more than funding opportunities. It offered credibility, access to a valuable network of peers, and opportunities to strengthen our systems, people, and practice... Our 2025 matric cohort achieved a 90.6% pass rate and 71.9% Bachelor pass rate, well above both Western Cape and national averages."

ADVOCACY & SECTOR INFLUENCE

Lasting change happens when strong organisations are supported by an enabling environment. Through advocacy, research, collaboration and strategic partnerships, TLT has worked to strengthen not only individual after-school programmes, but the systems, policies and relationships that shape the sector as a whole.

BUILDING THE CASE FOR AFTER SCHOOL

Building the after-school sector requires more than funding individual organisations, it requires making the case, publicly and persistently, that after-school matters.

Our advocacy work has grown from facilitating the first conversations between practitioners in the Western Cape to influencing national policy, convening multi-stakeholder symposiums and joining a global movement of after-school champions. This is the story of that journey, in numbers and milestones.

The most powerful advocacy tool we have built is evidence. When we started in 2010, the South African research base for after-school programming was thin. Over fifteen years, we have invested in changing that.

In 2017, UCLA Anderson's Global Access Programme partnered with TLT to research and publish one of the first rigorous reports on the impact of after-school programmes in South Africa, bringing international academic attention to the sector for the first time.

In 2021, after three years in the making, we published our After School Investment Case — the most comprehensive argument yet assembled for sustained public and private investment in the sector. Featuring longitudinal case studies of our partners IkamvaYouth and OLICO Maths Education and anchored by a panel of leading South African education researchers including

Nic Spaul (RESEP/Stellenbosch University), Merle Mansfield (Zero Dropout Campaign) and Hope Chidawanyika (IkamvaYouth), moving the conversation about whether ASPs need help to challenging the more pressing argument around resourcing the sector at scale.

Furthermore, In January 2025, we published an independent evaluation of our own organisational development work spanning 2018 to 2022. Conducted by Impact Consulting, it validated TLT's role as a strategic intermediary and confirmed that the combination of funding, capacity support and relational support produces outcomes that neither funding nor capacity support alone can achieve.

“Organisational development, collaboration and strategic capacity support are key to sustainable growth for After School Programmes.”

— Impact Consulting, 2025 Evaluation Report

Advocacy is about who you bring into the room. Since 2015, The Learning Trust has been convening After-school practitioners, school leaders,

government officials, researchers and funders in Communities of Practice (CoPs) designed to share learning, surface challenges and build collective solutions.

Started as a single Community of Practice in the Western Cape co-hosted with YASPO (the Youth & After School Programme Office) to map the instances of after-school programmes in the province has grown into a national infrastructure of peer learning spanning three provinces — now expanding into Mpumalanga and Limpopo provinces.

Across all three provinces, our Communities of Practice have consistently served three functions:



Amplifying practitioner voices that rarely reach policy tables

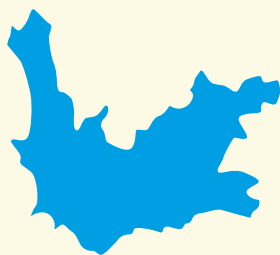


Connecting isolated organisations with peers and potential funders



Generating learning briefs and research that contribute to the national evidence base.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA



Western Cape

Our longest-running CoP network, now in its tenth year, has hosted sessions reaching 80-100 delegates per event. In partnership with the Western Cape Government's After School Game Changer initiative — which named After School as one of six provincial "Game Changers" in its five-year strategy — we facilitated four annual Community of Practice events, produced Learning Briefs for the sector after each session, and co-organised a major provincial symposium on After School's role in education that reached a national audience.



Eastern Cape

The OASIS (Organising After School and In-School) Community of Practice, launched in Gqeberha in 2016 in partnership with Nelson Mandela University's Centre for Community Schools, became TLT's model for community-embedded sector building, eventually adopting Bayview Primary School in Helenvale as a three-year school improvement project, bringing together 30 entities in one of the first CoPs of its kind nationally.



Gauteng

Launched virtually in 2020 in response to COVID-19 restrictions, the Gauteng CoP moved in-person in 2022 and has grown steadily alongside TLT's expanding portfolio in the province.

SHINING THE LIGHT ON AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Building the after-school sector requires more than funding individual organisations, it requires making the case, publicly and persistently, that after-school matters.

Every October since 2020, The Learning Trust in partnership with YearBeyond in the Western Cape, have championed the international Lights On After School campaign in South Africa. This period marks a critical moment in the sector to put the spotlight on the important work that young people, practitioners, ASPs and leaders are doing to improve education outcomes for learners in quintile 1-3 schools. After 5 successful campaign runs, the Lights On campaign in South Africa has highlighted the role ASPs play in addressing some of the critical factors in a child's development. Each year, we highlight a key theme, bringing awareness to factors such as mental

health, foundational learning, mentorship, youth employment opportunities and more, we've seen the campaign grow from strength to strength each year.

Now in its sixth year, the campaign has grown from an awareness moment into a significant media and advocacy platform.

The campaign has become our clearest annual statement of purpose, a moment to remind South Africa that what happens to children between 3pm and 6pm is not a footnote to the school day, but a critical chapter in their development.



LIGHTS ON IN NUMBERS

Over the past five years, Lights On After School has become one of TLT's flagship advocacy platforms, reflecting the TLT's growing role in shaping public conversations around the importance of after-school programmes.

Media Outreach between 2020-2025



122
TOTAL MEDIA
PIECES



99 774 315
TOTAL REACH /
CIRCULATION



R4 963 274
TOTAL AVE
(RAND VALUE)

Media Reach by Channel Type

Media Type	Pieces	Total Reach/ Circulation	Total AVE (Rand Value)
Online	27	75 398 227	801 040
Radio	39	14 996 300	1 806 718
TV	7	6 023 737	888 833
Print	44	1 849 098	1 312 713
Other	3	1 478 000	153 969

CONVENING AT SCALE: THE AMPLIFY AFTER SCHOOL SYMPOSIUM

In early 2024, The Learning Trust held its inaugural Amplify After School Symposium at the Birchwood Conference Centre in Johannesburg, the largest gathering of after-school changemakers TLT had ever convened.



2
DAYS



180
CHANGEMAKERS



92
ORGANISATIONS. ONE SPACE

Supported in part by Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropies SA and the Social Employment Fund, Amplify brought together practitioners, researchers, funders and government representatives to interrogate what a stronger, better-resourced, more coordinated after-school sector looks like and to

begin building the networks that can make it real. In 2025, we started preparing to convene the sector again in Cape Town and mark the celebration of 15 years of TLT. We are proud to convene the second iteration of Amplify under the theme, "Innovation and Impact in after-school programmes."

#MYMENTORMYPLUG: BUILDING A NATIONAL MENTORSHIP MOVEMENT

In 2025, The Learning Trust partnered with Keready and the Hold My Hand campaign to launch #MyMentorMyPlug, a digital-first teen mentorship storytelling campaign running from September through October 2025, and our first dedicated mentorship advocacy initiative.

Rooted in the belief that every young person deserves to feel seen, supported and inspired, the campaign invited teenagers between the ages of 13 and 19 alongside after-school programmes, schools and organisations to share stories of mentors who have shaped their lives. Stories were collected as short videos, voice notes, written submissions, and amplified across TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn through the hashtags #MyMentorMyPlug, #TeenMentorship and #LightsOn2025.

The campaign was the pilot phase of a broader Mentor Movement, a sustained, multi-year initiative aimed at building a culture of mentorship for young South Africans with a potential launch in 2026.

For The Learning Trust, this partnership represents a natural extension of what our grantee network has modelled for fifteen years:

that the relationships between young people and the adults who believe in them are the engine of everything else. By bringing that conviction into the public domain — through teen voices, digital storytelling and a growing coalition of partners — we are amplifying the case for after-school in the everyday conversations of communities across South Africa.

“The relationships between young people and the adults who believe in them are the engine of everything else.”

SINAKHO BLOSE

#MyMentorMyPlug Competition Winner

“Mentorship has become the compass guiding my future. Having someone like Mr. Mthembu who not only excels professionally but also gives back to his community has shown me that engineering isn’t just about machines and systems; it’s about people. His journey taught me that success is most valuable when it’s shared, and that innovation should serve humanity.”



PARTNER STORY: LEFA VELLE

How Lefa VELLE is Building Strong Partnerships for Better Learning Outcomes in Teaching at the Right Level.

Lefa VELLE (Lefa Cooperative Limited) is a social enterprise committed to improving educational opportunities for children in underserved communities and one of our implementing partners within the Catch-up Coalition. By working closely with schools, parents and communities, VELLE seeks to create learning environments where every child is supported in succeeding and reaching their potential.

As one of the implementing partners for Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) in the North West and Free State, VELLE plays a critical role in bringing foundational literacy and numeracy support to learners who need it most. In the North-West, VELLE is implementing TaRL in 10 schools in partnership with Youth Impact, which serves as the Technical and Strategic Implementing Partner. In the Free State, VELLE is implementing TaRL in five schools alongside DG Murray Trust's Accelerated Learning Project (ALP), adapting the approach to a different implementation model.

Over the past year, we have seen VELLE demonstrate remarkable growth and adaptability. In the North-West particularly, the organisation has built strong and trusted relationships with district officials, who have become close sponsors of the programme. Through regular engagement meetings and consistent presentations of school-level progress, VELLE has helped generate enthusiasm for TaRL and interest in expanding the approach to additional circuits. Across both provinces, the team has shown openness to learning, strong coordination capabilities and an ability to work effectively across different partnership models and contexts.

Mr. J.V. Mnisi, Deputy Chief Educational Specialist, Directorate, Bojanala District, reflected during a recent progress reporting engagement: "What stands out for us about this working partnership is the openness to learn together, problem solve together, which gives us hope that TaRL can truly be expanded to other circuits very soon." This spirit of partnership lies at the heart of VELLE's contribution to TaRL and the vision of the coalition.



GROWING THE AFTER-SCHOOL ECOSYSTEM

A thriving after-school sector depends on strong connections between organisations, government, funders, practitioners and communities. Through collaboration, shared learning and collective action, TLT continues to strengthen the relationships that enable quality after-school programmes to grow and thrive.

FROM ISOLATION TO ECOSYSTEM: THE CATCH-UP COALITION

A reflection on the Catch-up Coalition and the power of working together.



“South Africa has never lacked people willing to show up for its most vulnerable children. What it has lacked is a system that makes that showing up sustainable, connected and recognised. The black and brown child in an underserved community has never had the luxury of waiting for systems to work, before democracy, during it, and in the technological age that was supposed to change everything, the structural disadvantages have remained stubborn, compounding and unjust. After-school programmes did not emerge from policy. They emerged from people who refused to look away — a quiet, stubborn presence in townships, informal settlements and forgotten rural towns, long before anyone called it a sector. Yet for all their commitment, these programmes largely operated in silos; little replication of what worked, little shared language, limited collective power.”

— Yolisa Shugu, Projects Director,
The Learning Trust

The COVID-19 pandemic did not create South Africa’s education crisis; it exposed it. When schools closed and learning moved online, technological access became the final decider on who continued their education and who did not. Despite their own limitations, ASPs kept showing up. They held critical space that no one else was holding, and in doing so, made visible just how indispensable, and how under-recognised the sector truly was.

It was at this inflection point that The Learning Trust answered a different kind of call, not to deliver programmes, but to convene a sector. The Catch-up Coalition (CuC) emerged as a formal response to fragmentation, a deliberate effort to bring organisations into relationship with one another, to establish a shared identity and to position the after-school sector as a legitimate and powerful partner in South Africa’s broader education ecosystem.

What the Coalition made possible was, at first, deceptively simple — organisations got to know each other. There is real value, and it should not be understated, in knowing that there is an

OLICO Maths operating in Diepsloot, a Phakamani Young Minds Academy (PYMA) in Freedom Park, a Sakhimfundo Youth Programme in Alexandra, an Outreach Foundation at the centre of Hillbrow, an Assumption Development Centre at the heart of Joza in Makhanda, a Shirley Special Day Care Centre working tirelessly with autistic children in a context where no one else is closing that gap, United Through Sport and Masinyusane Development Organization working jointly in Zwide, an Advance Edukos Foundation in Schaapkraal, a Loxion Mobile Library in Vrygrond, an Ilifa Labantwana Bethu in Crossroads, and an Axiom Education reaching into rural Zithulele. These are not footnotes. They are the sector.

Knowing each other made comparison possible. Comparing notes made learning possible and learning together made scale possible. A collective voice holds more gravitas. You get to align thinking, leverage resources, and sit at the right tables, and have system-wide impact through evidence-based solutions and standardised practice. Tested approaches like the High School Academic Programme (HSAP), Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and Zazi iZandi moved from isolated pilots to shared practice. The Social Employment Fund (SEF) partnership unlocked resources that individual organisations could never have accessed alone.

Most critically, the Coalition surfaced something long overlooked — young people are not just

the beneficiaries of after-school work — they are among its most powerful drivers.

What does this work reveal about the future of after-school in South Africa?

Several things are clear. Fragmentation must continue to be actively closed, not once, but as an ongoing commitment, because silos rebuild themselves in the absence of deliberate connection. The sector must continue to be capacitated and standardised, so that quality is not the exception but the expectation, regardless of geography or funding. Advocacy must grow louder and more evidence-led, translating what practitioners know on the ground into the language of policy and budget.

Above all, the after-school sector must deepen its relationship with government at local, provincial and national level. Not as a supplicant seeking recognition, but as an equal partner in education reform, bringing evidence, reach and community trust that government alone cannot replicate. That seat at the table has been hard-won. Holding it and expanding it is the work of the next 15 years. Lasting change in a sector is built beyond programmes, it is built through trust, relationships, through the slow and deliberate work of helping people see that they are stronger together than apart. The 69 organisation-strong Catch-up Coalition is evidence of that.

CATCH-UP COALITION IN NUMBERS



1.1M+
MEALS
PER YEAR



69+
PARTNERS



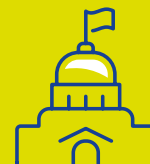
17K+
SEF
PARTICIPANTS



35K+
YOUTH
IN SKILLS
DEVELOPMENT



700K+
LEARNERS
REACHED



2K+
SCHOOLS
ENGAGED
PER YEAR

SEF PARTNERS

Through the Social Employment Fund (SEF), TLT works alongside a network of partner organisations across South Africa to strengthen after-school programmes and expand opportunities for children and young people. The organisations below represent the current SEF partner network by region.

Western Cape

- Regenerative Neighbourhood Dev Agency
- The Sozo Foundation
- Advance Edukos (Western Cape Consortium lead) reporting under the consortium: Ikasi Youth; Loxion Mobile Library; UnityBridge; Pauline Prodbey Foundation
- Beautiful Gate SA
- Education without Borders
- Great Commission United
- Ikamva Youth
- Inclusive Education South Africa (IESA)
- Ikamva Labantwana Bethu
- KC 107.7
- Just Grace NPC
- Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre

Eastern Cape

- Axiom Education
- I Protect Me
- LEVA Foundation
- Masifunde Learner Development NPC
- Masinyusane Development Organization
- Assumption Development Centre
- Centre for Social Development at Rhodes University
- United Through Sport
- Awarinet (Eastern Cape Consortium lead)

Organisations reporting under the EC consortium

- Sophumelela Youth Development
- St Mary's Development and Care Centre
- Child Welfare Grahamstown
- ICDP Trust Lebone Centre
- Inkululeko
- Assumption Nutrition Centre
- Raphael Centre for Support and Skills Development
- Access Music Project
- Joza Reading and Chess Club
- Cathedral of St Michael and St George
- Aspire Psychosocial and Educational Support Services for - Vulnerable Children
- Stenden Port Alfred (Entandweni Development Centre)
- Harvest Season Drop-In Centre
- Sewelo Maths and Chess Academy
- Peddie Family Resource Centre
- Intlantsi Creative Development Project
- Imbumba
- Shirley Miling Project
- YISL
- Lalibela Community Outreach
- Alexandria Tourism

Gauteng

- Yakha Ikusasa Manje Health Development Centre
- Lefa Cooperative Ltd t/a Velle
- Maboneng Township Arts Experience
- Sakhimfundo Youth Programme
- Soweto BasketBall Academy (Gauteng Consortium lead)

Organisations under GP consortium

- GAP Connect
- Impactors Tutoring Classes
- Innovation of Excellence
- JSM Academy
- Khula Ungqobe Creative Arts
- Lesedi La Setjhaba
- Othandweni After-School Program
- Pandas Hockey Club
- PND Projects
- Read Like A Champion
- TechnoAfrika
- Thuto Pele

Mpumalanga

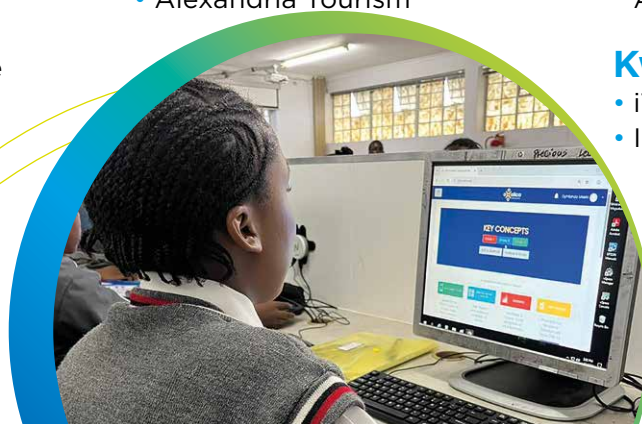
- Imagine Scholar

JHB

- OLICO Maths Education
- Outreach Foundation
- Phakamani Young Minds Academy

KwaZulu-Natal

- iThemba Projects
- Imbeleko Foundation





PARTICIPANT STORY: GCOBISA NTWANAMBI

Gcobisa Ntwanambi started as a literacy ambassador placed through PYMA's SEF project in Freedom Park, Soweto, earning her first stable income while gaining hands-on experience in early childhood development. What started as a placement became a calling. Through PYMA's Stipend-to-Sustainability Pathway, she completed an NQF Level 4 ECD qualification, built financial and governance skills, and left with not just a certificate but a business plan. Today she is the registered founder and principal of Nkanyezi Preschool, a name she chose deliberately, because Nkanyezi means star and a star brightens up — having created employment for young women in her community and actively mentoring other aspiring ECD entrepreneurs in the PYMA network.

Gcobisa's story is not exceptional within this sector. It is representative.

Across communities, young people and practitioners are leading organisations, working with in- and out-of-school youth across a wide spectrum of programme offerings, and contributing to education reform in ways that are real, tangible and deeply local.

“ Today she is the registered founder and principal of Nkanyezi Preschool, a name she chose deliberately, because Nkanyezi means star and a star brightens up. ”



PRACTITIONER VOICES



Phakamani Young
Minds Academy
Nokuthula Masondo

"As an aspiring teacher, I believe programmes like PYMA (Phakamani Young Minds Academy) are important because they help children become lifelong learners. They develop a culture of learning that continues beyond the school day. Being a volunteering tutor has also helped me grow personally and professionally. I have developed classroom management skills and learned how to support and manage groups of learners effectively. I have also gained the ability to explain complex concepts in ways that children can understand and to handle sensitive topics with care. Most importantly, I have strengthened my problem-solving skills. Every child comes with different challenges, and as a tutor I have learned to think creatively and find solutions that best support each learner's needs."



OLICO Maths
Chumasande Nkcithakalo

"If I wasn't part of the Social Employment Fund, I don't think I would be where I am today. When I joined OLICO, I had

just finished school and didn't really know what I wanted to do. I was also very shy and didn't even think I would enjoy working with children. But over time, I grew. I became more confident, learned how to communicate with people, work in a team and manage my time. Working with learners also helped me realise that teaching is something I really want to do. Today, I'm a full-time facilitator and studying towards a teaching degree because this opportunity helped me see what I'm capable of."



Inclusive Education
South Africa
Lameez Voegt

"Being part of the Social Employment Fund has changed a lot for me. It has helped me support my family financially, but it has also shown me that teaching is what I really want to do. Working with the children has taught me patience, confidence and how to manage a classroom. I was scared to work with the older learners at first because they didn't always listen to me, but with time I learned how to stand my ground. Now I feel ready to go back to school, study teaching full-time and keep making a difference in children's lives."

Outreach Foundation
Tebogo Boemo

“I would say the Social Employment Fund is something that helps to lessen your stress because it gives you an opportunity to gain experience while you are still figuring out your future. Before I joined Outreach, I was worried that I was forgetting the skills and knowledge I learned at university because I couldn't find work in social work. Being part of this programme helped me practise those skills again and grow. Now I've been appointed as a social worker at Outreach, and I'm ready to keep learning, help more people and continue building my career doing something I love.”



FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The Learning Trust's financial investment reflects more than funding alone. It represents a long-term commitment to strengthening organisations, supporting quality after-school programmes and building a more resilient and connected sector across South Africa.

2025 FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, partners and funders, The Learning Trust managed a total income of approximately R23.1 million in 2025.

Investment at a Glance



R23.1m

TOTAL INCOME
MANAGED



R4.3m

INVESTED THROUGH
GRANTS AND
PARTNERSHIPS



26

CORE GRANTEEES
SUPPORTED



R8.2m

INVESTED IN CATCH-
UP COALITION
PROGRAMMES

Investment in Core Programmes

During 2025, **R4.28 million** was invested directly into The Learning Trust's grantmaking and partnership portfolio.

Core Grants	R2.45 million
Collaboration Grants	R1.01 million
Special Grants	R155 000
OLICO HSAP	R660 000
Total Investment	R4.28 million

Investment in Special Projects

Through the Catch-up Coalition, TLT invested more than **R8.1 million** in project implementation during 2025.

Social Employment Fund (SEF)	R3.57 million
Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)	R3.70 million
Zazi iZandi	R523 300
Leadership Training (NLP)	R328 400
WishTree Donation	R100 000
Total	R8.22 million

15 YEARS OF INVESTMENT

Over the past 15 years, The Learning Trust has invested in strengthening after-school programmes across South Africa, supporting organisations that improve learning, wellbeing and opportunity for children and young people.



149M+
GRANTS SPEND



15
YEARS

Supporting the
after-school
sector



500+
GRANTS

Awarded to
current and
alumni grantee
partners



9
PROVINCES

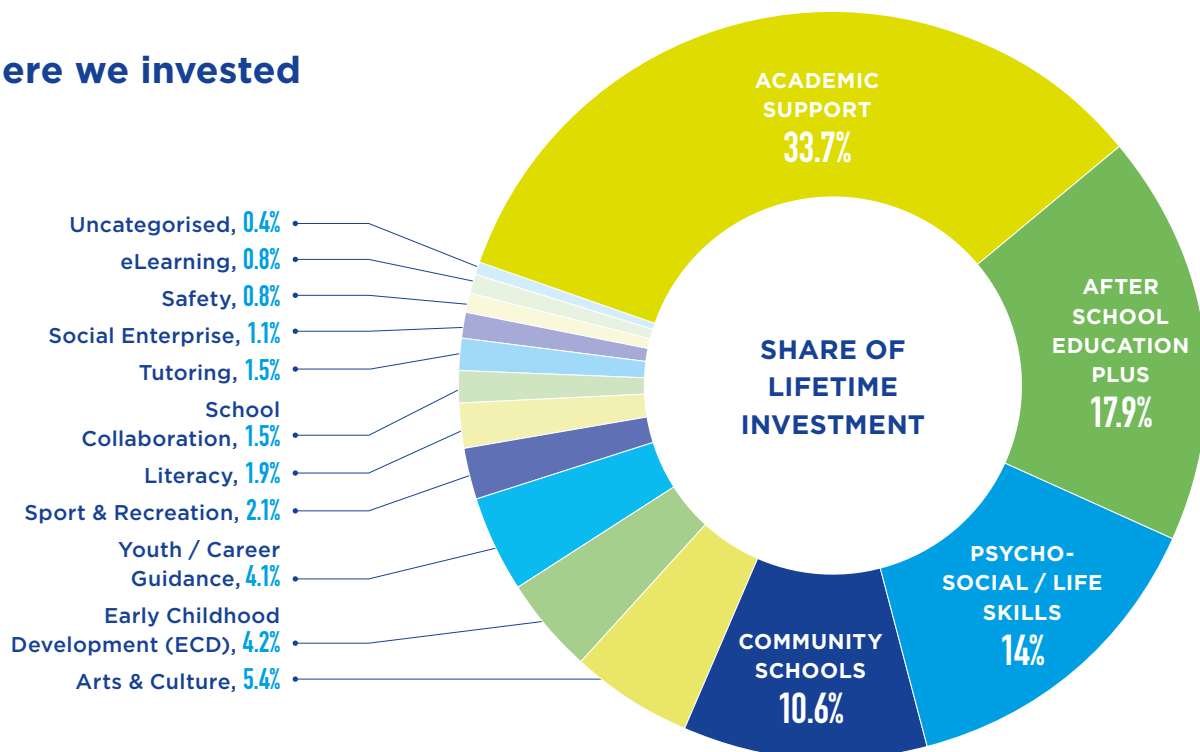
Reached
through
grantmaking



15
PROGRAMME
AREAS

Supported
across the
portfolio

Where we invested



The progress captured throughout this report reflects more than individual programmes, but a sector growing in confidence, capability and influence. Looking ahead, TLT's new strategy builds on these foundations.



LOOKING AHEAD: WHAT 15 YEARS NOW DEMANDS OF US

Fifteen years of learning, partnership and progress have laid a strong foundation for the future. Building on these achievements, TLT's 2026-2028 Strategy sets a clear direction for the next chapter — deepening impact, strengthening the after-school sector and expanding opportunities for children and young people across South Africa.

Strategy 2026-2028 overview

The first 15 years established TLT as a trusted grantmaker, partner and sector builder. The next three years will focus on deepening that role. Our new 2026-2028 Strategy is rooted in everything we have learned over the past fifteen years. It reflects the insights gained through our grantmaking, partnerships, research, programme implementation and engagement with practitioners across the country. These experiences have strengthened our understanding of where we can make the greatest contribution and where the sector now needs us to lead.

The next phase of our work calls on us to move beyond supporting individual programmes alone. It challenges us to strengthen the systems that

enable after-school programmes to thrive, building organisational resilience, championing quality, generating evidence, convening partnerships, influencing policy and mobilising resources that will expand opportunities for children and young people across South Africa.

As we enter this next chapter, our goal is not simply to do more, but to deepen our impact. Guided by four strategic pillars, we will continue building on fifteen years of experience while positioning The Learning Trust as a stronger sector leader, partner and catalyst for lasting change.



THANK YOU

We have been privileged to partner with philanthropic organisations, corporate funders, trusts, foundations, government and individual donors who have shared our belief that every child deserves access to quality learning opportunities beyond the classroom.

The progress reflected throughout this report belongs as much to our partners as it does to TLT. We extend our deepest gratitude to all our funders, stakeholders, and partners for your unwavering support and commitment. Your contributions have been instrumental in amplifying the impact of after-school programmes across South Africa.



DONORS AND FUNDERS

- Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropy SA
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- DG Murray Trust
- Frank Jackson Foundation
- Maitri Trust
- Mapula Trust
- Marr-Munning
- Industrial Development Cooperation
- Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation
- Doppio Zero

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- Margaret Nash
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- ELMA Foundation/ELMA Philanthropies
- Open Society Institute
- Brad Foundation
- RAITH Foundation
- Oppenheimer Memorial Trust
- HCI Foundation
- Nedbank Private Wealth
- RB Hagart Trust
- Wings of Support
- Western Cape Government
- DG Murray Trust
- Maid Foundation
- SegenSolar
- Mapula Trust

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RAUTENACH**
Trustee



CONTACT US



The Learning Trust
WE WORK:
173 Oxford Road
Rosebank
Johannesburg

info@thelearningtrust.org
www.thelearningtrust.org

