

JF13 FAQs

Q: What is the Jobs Fund?

The Jobs Fund was established in 2011. It is a programme of the National Treasury, designed to support sustainable job creation, and is housed within the National Treasury's Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC). It operates as a challenge fund, providing grants to innovative proposals that can demonstrate credible, scalable job creation. The Jobs Fund co-invests with applicants, requiring matched funding as a condition of support.

Q: What is the difference between the Jobs Fund grant and a traditional grant?

Unlike traditional grants, the Jobs Fund uses a challenge fund model. This means we are looking for the best ideas from the strongest implementers. All applications are competitively assessed against the Fund's impact criteria. This means that even if your application is eligible, there is no guarantee it will be selected for grant funding. Another differentiator is that we require our applicants to co-invest, i.e. provide matched funding, disbursements are milestone-based, and your application must demonstrate a clear path to sustainability. In return, we offer matching grant funding, a partnership that includes technical support, learning exchange, and a credible national platform.

Q: What is the focus of the 13th Funding Round (JF13)?

The 13th Funding Round focuses on supporting demand-led, innovative interventions that address key barriers to labour market entry and unlock job creation at scale. While there is a strong emphasis on opportunities within the green and informal economies, the Jobs Fund remains open to high-impact proposals across all sectors. The central requirement is that projects demonstrate clear, measurable, and sustainable employment outcomes.

Q: Who can apply?

Applications are open to public, private, and civil society organisations that have the capacity to design and implement scalable projects. Applicants may apply individually or as part of a consortium, provided that governance arrangements are clearly defined and demonstrate how each partner contributes to the project's overall delivery and impact. Note, we do not accept applications from individuals; all applicants must be registered organisations with an implementation track record.

Q: Which sectors are prioritised within the Green Economy?

The Jobs Fund prioritises labour-absorptive sectors, including renewable energy (solar, wind, and biomass), energy-efficiency technologies, sustainable agriculture and Agri-tech, waste management and recycling, green building construction, and sustainable water management. Interventions should focus on reducing environmental risks while promoting sustainable development.

Q: What types of activities are supported within the Informal Economy?

JF13 seeks to support a wide range of informal activities such as street vending, small-scale retail, and artisanal activities. It also includes care work (such as Early Childhood Development), informal transportation services, and small-scale agricultural labour. The goal is to assist micro-business owners in overcoming barriers such as a lack of business training or limited access to formal markets and finance.

Q: What support is available during the application process?

The Jobs Fund provides a range of support mechanisms during the application process, including briefing sessions, webinars, and guidance materials. These resources are designed to help applicants better understand the criteria and strengthen their submissions. Applicants are encouraged to engage early and make full use of the available support.

Q: Can we apply if we are in the informal sector?

Yes. The informal and SME economy is a priority focus for JF13. Informal sector organisations that do not meet formal registration requirements are encouraged to apply through a registered intermediary partner. The Jobs Fund will also consider funding costs related to data collection and information systems for informal enterprises.

Q: What types of projects are most likely to be successful?

The most competitive applications are demand-led and grounded in clear market opportunities. Strong proposals typically address systemic barriers such as access to finance, skills, markets, infrastructure, or technology, and demonstrate a credible pathway to job creation at scale within a three-year period. They are supported by capable implementing partners, backed by evidence, and present a clear plan for financial and operational sustainability beyond the grant.

Q: What are common reasons applications are unsuccessful?

Applications are often unsuccessful when they lack a clear job creation logic, fail to demonstrate credible market demand, or present weak financial and implementation plans. Other common challenges include insufficient matched funding, unrealistic assumptions, and insufficient evidence to support key claims.

Q: Are projects targeting women and youth prioritised?

Yes, projects that create meaningful economic opportunities for youth, women, and other economically marginalised groups are strongly encouraged. These interventions align with the Jobs Fund's broader objective of promoting inclusive economic growth and expanding access to employment opportunities.

Q: Can projects operate in rural or township areas?

Yes, the Jobs Fund actively encourages projects that operate in townships, informal settlements, rural areas, and distressed inner-city environments. These contexts present significant opportunities for inclusive growth and job creation, particularly when interventions are designed to address local economic constraints and unlock participation in broader value chains.

Q: What counts as matched funding?

Matched funding must be cash (monetary contributions to the project). It can be sourced from loans, grants, or your own cash, and it must be allocated to project costs, i.e. your current operating costs are not included in the calculation of your matched funding contribution. In-kind contributions increase competitiveness but do not count towards the minimum cash requirement. Sunk costs, projected revenue from the initiative, and recycled loan repayments do not qualify.

Q: Can early-stage or pilot projects apply?

Early-stage or pilot projects may be considered, provided they are supported by strong evidence and demonstrate a clear pathway to scale. The Jobs Fund prioritises interventions that are implementation-ready, meaning that purely conceptual ideas without validation or proof of feasibility are unlikely to be competitive.

Q: We applied before and were unsuccessful. Should we apply again?

Yes, absolutely. JF13 has been refined in response to lessons learned across previous rounds. Previous applicants are actively encouraged to reapply. Where relevant, we recommend referencing your previous proposal, demonstrating what you have built and learned since then, and clearly articulating how your revised proposal represents genuine additionality. Please visit the Jobs Fund website www.Jobsfund.org.za for information about why past applications have not been successful.

Q: What does “demand-led” mean in practice?

The Jobs will only consider applications that are demand-led.

Demand-led approach

A demand-led approach starts with real, verifiable demand in the economy and designs interventions backwards from that demand.

The need for labour, goods, or services already exists or is emerging, and there is credible evidence that this demand will materialise.

Training, enterprise support, or placement activity is explicitly aligned to employer or market requirements, not generic assumptions.

Job creation occurs because the project responds to market pull, increasing the likelihood that employment outcomes will be sustained beyond the funding period.

Evidence typically includes employer commitments, off-take agreements, customer pipelines, validated market research, or demonstrated sector growth.

In the Jobs Fund context, demand-led models are associated with higher placement rates, better retention, and sustainability, because jobs are created where the economy is already absorbing labour.

Supply-led approach

A supply-led approach starts with what providers want to deliver, rather than what the market demonstrably needs.

Interventions are driven by available capacity, curricula, technologies, or beneficiary supply.

Skills, products, or services are produced in anticipation of demand, often based on assumptions about future uptake.

Employment outcomes rely on hope that demand will follow, rather than evidence that it already exists. Job creation risk is higher because placements, sales, or income generation are not anchored in confirmed market pull.

Supply-led models may expand access to training or services, but do not reliably translate into jobs unless and until demand is secured. This is why Jobs Fund appraisal places significant weight on demand evidence rather than inputs delivered.

In summary: A demand-led approach means that the proposed intervention is anchored in real and verifiable market demand, rather than assumptions. Applicants are expected to demonstrate that there is an existing or emerging need for the product, service, or solution being offered, and that this demand will translate into sustainable job creation. This may include evidence such as off-take agreements, customer pipelines, or validated market research.

Q: What governance structures do we need to have in place?

Applicants must have appropriate financial and project management systems, audited financial statements for the last two years, and a valid tax clearance certificate. In the case of consortia, the governance arrangements must be clearly articulated and logical, demonstrating how the consortium partners' adds value.

We assess capacity to implement as a core evaluation criterion. Note that the Jobs Fund will only contract with the Lead applicant. If the applicant intends to establish a Special Purpose Vehicle for the project, note that all governance issues must be finalised before contracting.

Q: Can we apply for the maximum grant amount?

The minimum grant is R5 million. There is no published maximum. However, the amount requested must be proportionate to your implementation capacity, your matched funding ratio, and the scope and ambition of your proposed project. Larger grants require proportionally stronger evidence of capacity, impact and higher levels of matched funding. Note that using NPO/NGO structures to benefit from the lesser matched funding ratio will attract deeper scrutiny.

Q: What happens after we submit our application?

All applications are acknowledged on receipt. A multi-stage evaluation process follows:

- **Stage 1: Eligibility Assessment.** If your application is not eligible, you will be notified within a month of the funding round's closing date.
- **Stage 2: Concept Assessment.** If your application is appraised as competitive, you will be advised within 3-4 months. Similarly, if your concept is appraised as not competitive.
- **Stage 3: Business Case Assessment.** If you are invited to submit a business case, and you are successful, you will be notified within 3-4 months of being requested to submit your business case. The full application process takes about 9-10 months, including the December-January

closures and depending on the responsiveness of applicants when requested to submit supporting documentation.

- **Stage 4: Contracting.** If your application was successful, the Jobs Fund will require that you sign a Grant Agreement within one month of being advised that you were successful in your application for grant funding. Note that the evaluation process is competitive: not all strong applications will receive funding.

Q: Why should organisations partner with the Jobs Fund?

The Jobs Fund offers more than financial support. It provides a platform for organisations to scale impactful solutions, unlock additional investment, and contribute to sustainable job creation at a national level.