



South Africa Siyasebenza



Reflections from the Head of the Fund

About the Jobs Fund

The National Treasury established the Jobs Fund in June 2011 to support innovative initiatives and approaches to job creation. The R9 billion fund operates on challenge fund principles, and all funding allocations are made on a competitive basis in a transparent and open manner.

Once-off grants are awarded to projects that demonstrate sustainable job creation potential, and project partners are required to match the grant fund allocations at a ratio of 1:1 or higher.

The Jobs Fund is not a mass employment programme, nor is it intended to tackle long-term structural causes of low growth and unemployment. Rather, it provides a targeted programme of support for effective labour market interventions that result in sustainable employment creation.

About Siyasebenza

Siyasebenza is the Jobs Fund's quarterly newsletter. *Siyasebenza* is an isiZulu word meaning "we are working".

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S i y a s e b e n z a

Our 12th Call for Proposals, Breaking Barriers to Employment in the Green and Informal Economies, closed on 5 June 2025. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all the organisations and individuals who responded to this call. The applications received reflect a willingness to co-create solutions that empower our youth and promote inclusive participation and growth in our economy. We commend the thought, effort and innovation evident in these proposals, and we are inspired by the shared commitment to building a better future for our young people.

The theme of this newsletter, Empowering Youth, Building Futures, speaks directly to the heart of our latest call for proposals. South Africa's youth face daunting barriers to employment, with many young people caught in cycles of poverty, exclusion and limited opportunity. Tackling youth unemployment is

both a moral duty and a strategic imperative, as the future of our nation depends on the successful economic inclusion of young people.

At the Jobs Fund, we believe that sustainable solutions to youth unemployment lie in bold ideas, scalable models, strong partnerships and efficient implementation. Through this call for proposals and our broader portfolio, we continue to support innovative projects that empower youth with the skills, experience and opportunities they need to thrive in the dynamic world of work.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to this vision. We look forward to the next chapter of impactful collaboration. 🌱

Najwah

Najwah Allie-Edries
Head of the Jobs Fund



Impact focus: Driving change for South Africa's youth

South Africa continues to grapple with persistently high levels of unemployment, especially among the youth (ages 15–34). This poses a significant threat to inclusive economic growth, social stability and the well-being of future generations. With the youth unemployment rate hovering above 45% by official definition, there is an urgent need for coordinated, scalable efforts to address this national crisis.

By working alongside the private sector, civil society and public institutions, the Jobs Fund supports initiatives that equip youth with relevant skills and practical work experience. These innovative, results-driven partnerships create opportunities for skills development and employment, and open pathways to entrepreneurship.

Youth-centred achievements and strategic partnerships

By 31 March 2025, the Jobs Fund had:



Created over

126 680 permanent youth jobs and placements through co-funded projects

Significantly improved the employability of more than

266 570 young South Africans providing work-readiness training



Supported over **1 130** youth-led enterprises, helping to foster a more dynamic and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem.



Beyond the numbers, the Fund's impact is amplified through strategic partnerships with organisations specialising in youth development. Organisations such as **U-turn** and **Shadow Careers** have played a pivotal role in bridging the gap between potential and opportunity. U-turn offers structured rehabilitation and employment pathways for homeless youth, while Shadow Careers connects underserved graduates to careers in the digital economy, with a strong focus on on-the-job learning and long-term retention.

These partnerships demonstrate how targeted, innovative and collaborative interventions can significantly improve the prospects of thousands of young people to participate meaningfully in the economy.



Sustainable pathways for youth employment

U-turn: Turning waste into opportunity



U-turn works with homeless people in the Western Cape and Gauteng, helping them reintegrate into society and re-enter the labour market. Through skills development, entrepreneurship support and transitional employment, U-turn provides a holistic pathway from the streets to sustainable livelihoods.

This intervention integrates psychosocial support and vocational training, followed by structured work experience. Its six-month holistic support programme equips homeless people with life-changing technical, ICT, customer-service and soft skills. The programme aims to provide sustainable livelihoods and dignified employment through social enterprises. The model is rooted in a “work-to-earn” approach.

It addresses the root causes of homelessness by providing occupational therapy, mental health support, rehabilitation from drug and alcohol addiction and access to treatment for other health issues. Participants are also provided with nutritional meals, safe accommodation and other basic needs to encourage their continued commitment to the programme and ensure that they do not return to the streets.

U-turn reimagines the intersection of social justice and the green economy. Its innovative model is rooted in the principles of the circular economy. The initiative integrates textile recycling, recycling centres and the production of eco-friendly goods to generate income and create jobs. Programme participants recycle, upcycle and refurbish donated second-hand clothes that are resold in the U-turn charity shops. This diverts textiles from landfills and reduces environmental waste, promoting sustainable consumer behaviour and actively contributing to environmental sustainability.

The focus on rehabilitating and empowering homeless and unemployed youth – individuals who traditional employment interventions often overlook – generates meaningful social returns, including reduced reliance on shelters, improved health and reduced criminal activities, which ultimately lower public costs.

This programme demonstrates how social and environmental goals can be advanced together, where an environmental impact is matched by a deep social return.

Shadow Careers: Unlocking the digital workforce

Shadow Careers is pioneering a new model of talent development by addressing the digital skills gap in the global business services sector while reducing youth unemployment. The initiative provides underserved youth with on-the-job training, mentorship and placement into high-demand roles in the digital and services sectors. It is a “learn while you earn” model that ensures young people gain not only technical skills, but also valuable work experience to accelerate their entry into the formal economy.

What sets Shadow Careers apart is its demand-driven approach to training that closely aligns with employer needs and its focus on vulnerable youth in marginalised communities. Young individuals are only

For a country facing a persistent youth unemployment crisis, innovation is not just desirable but critical. Among several other impactful projects supported by the Jobs Fund, **U-turn** and **Shadow Careers** stand out for their **bold, sustainable and future-focused approaches** to youth empowerment.

enrolled when there is confirmed demand from its network of 12 employer partners. Shadow Careers engages with employers to identify needs, skills shortages and job roles that need to be filled and then co-designs training programmes to meet the demand. Moreover, it tracks high-demand sectors, identifies growth industries and uses the obtained data to adjust course offerings accordingly. Continuous feedback from employers, human resources teams, sector advisory engagements and pre-placement assessment results are used to ensure graduates are job-ready and retained in long-term roles.

In addition to this, Shadow Careers operates in communities where youth are most vulnerable in the Western Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng. The programme focuses on young unemployed South Africans from marginalised communities aged between 18 and 25 who attended quintile 1–3 schools. By creating direct pipelines from training to employment, the model offers a replicable, scalable and sustainable solution to bridge the youth employment divide.

Driving sustainable impact

Both U-turn and Shadow Careers exemplify how **innovation, relevance and intentionality** can transform employment outcomes for young people. These models do not just create new work, but also build **skills, confidence and long-term prospects**, ensuring young South Africans are equipped to succeed in the evolving world of work.

As the Jobs Fund continues to invest in catalytic solutions, these projects serve as blueprints of how **targeted innovation can drive sustainable change**, empower youth, transform

communities and unlock the full potential of South Africa's future workforce.



Jobs Fund participant stories

Behind every job created or skill learnt is a young person whose life has been changed. The true impact of an innovative model like U-turn is best captured through the voices of the youth who are now building futures they once thought were impossible.



Julian Kayser



Meet Julian Kayser from Cape Town, who overcame a heroin addiction with U-turn's help at the age of 33. After completing a rehabilitation programme, he trained at the Voortrekker Warehouse, sorting donated goods for the organisation. Julian later underwent training in coding and is now a junior web developer and facilitator for U-turn's social enterprise, Connect Solution.

[View Julian's portfolio here.](#)



Denzil George



Meet Denzil George, who joined U-turn after overcoming a 12-year heroin addiction. In November 2022, he received training from AWS (Amazon Web Services) programmers and began coding. He also participated in a JavaScript boot camp with Google employees. Denzil is now a junior web developer and facilitator for Connect Solutions. His work can be viewed at [Institute for Healing of Memories](#), [Oasis Community Projects](#) and [denzil.connectsolutions](#).





Partner spotlight: The Shadow movement

South Africa's youth face daunting odds in the job market. Despite their potential, many young people from marginalised communities are excluded from formal work opportunities – not because of a lack of ability, but because of where they live, the schools they attended or their limited access to networks and resources. However, a new kind of model is quietly reshaping this reality, one permanent job at a time.



Shadow Careers, with the support of the Jobs Fund, is changing how youth employment is created in South Africa. It offers more than training; it secures real jobs. Every young person accepted into the programme knows that if they complete the training successfully, a permanent position awaits them. This bold approach redefines how skills development and placement can work together to enable inclusive economic participation in global business services (GBS), which is one of South Africa's fastest-growing industries.

What is GBS and why does it matter?

GBS, formerly known as business process outsourcing, involves the delivery of customer service, IT helpdesks, back-office operations and finance processing to international clients by local service providers. These services are used across sectors like healthcare, telecommunications, retail and banking.

South Africa has emerged as a global leader in the GBS industry. The country offers several competitive advantages: a large English-speaking youth population, cultural alignment with key global markets, competitive labour costs and a growing digital infrastructure. It is one of the few sectors capable of absorbing youth at scale, offering structured training and clear pathways for advancement from entry-level to supervisory, quality assurance and IT support roles.

According to the BPESA GBS Job Creation Report (2024), the sector added over 6 290 net new international jobs in just one quarter and generated more than R1.8 billion in export revenue. South Africa's GBS workforce has grown from 65 000 in 2019 to over 150 000 in 2024, with nearly 90% of new hires being young people. The goal is to reach a target of 500 000 jobs by 2030, making GBS a national asset in the fight against unemployment.

What does Shadow Careers do?

Shadow Careers is a mission-driven training and placement provider focused exclusively on the GBS sector. It exists to create a sustainable skills pool within the industry by equipping unemployed young people, especially those from marginalised communities, with the tools they need to thrive.

What sets Shadow Careers apart is its demand-led model, meaning that youth are only recruited when job placements have already been secured with employer partners. This ensures that training is not generic, but contract-backed and purposeful.

Bootcamps, job simulations, psychosocial support and mentorship complement the curriculum and result in job-ready youth who are confident, skilled and eager to contribute. Graduates are placed in full-time jobs with starting salaries between R6 000 and R10 000 per month and often receive further on-the-job training and progression opportunities.

Shadow Careers' placement rate exceeds 94% and more than 80% of those placed remain in long-term employment.





Partner spotlight: The Shadow movement *cont...*

Training takes place over 12 weeks in the communities where learners live and is built on three pillars:



The Self

Developing emotional intelligence, self-worth, confidence and clear communication.



The Human

Building skills in customer service, complaint handling and client management – essential for contact centre roles.



The Digital

Developing digital literacy, including the use of workplace tools like email, spreadsheets and customer service software.



What is impact sourcing and why does it work?

Impact sourcing is central to the Shadow Careers model. This is not charity. It is smart, inclusive business. It recognises that South Africa's greatest untapped resource is its youth and that the barriers keeping them from formal work are not a lack of talent but a lack of access.

Impact sourcing actively targets young people who are often overlooked by traditional recruitment systems, particularly those without formal qualifications, work experience or professional networks. Rather than viewing this as a disadvantage, it sees potential. Through structured training,

mentorship and placement support, impact sourcing provides the tools young people need to succeed in the workplace.

This approach also makes strong business sense. It aligns with the growing emphasis on environmental, social and governance goals in the private sector and supports South Africa's national priorities for inclusive employment and transformation. Employers are increasingly realising that inclusive hiring is not only socially responsible, but also a driver of improved performance, staff retention and a stronger organisational culture.

For the **Jobs Fund**, impact sourcing is closely aligned with its core principles for effective and inclusive job creation:

- It is **inclusive**, with a clear focus on unemployed youth from underserved communities.
- It is **demand-driven**, ensuring training is delivered only when real job opportunities exist.
- It is **sustainable**, prioritising permanent employment over short-term placements.
- It is **innovative**, encouraging a shift in hiring practices across the private sector.
- It is **systemic**, synchronising the supply of skilled youth and the demand for talent in growth sectors.

Impact sourcing, as demonstrated by Shadow Careers, is not just a strategy. It is a commitment to building a more inclusive economy by giving overlooked youth the opportunity to succeed.





Partner spotlight: The Shadow movement *cont...*



Real stories, real change

For many learners, Shadow Careers isn't just a programme, it's a turning point.

"Before Shadow, I felt stuck. Now I have confidence, skills and a permanent job that gives me hope."

Nkosenhle, from Durban

"We learnt how to present ourselves, manage our emotions and handle conflict. I never thought I'd feel so ready."

Beeltjies, placed at Ascensos

"We had to pay for computer classes when I was at school, so I always relied on others to show me what to do. Now I can use Word and PowerPoint and even help others. I'm confident in my abilities."

Talitha, from Mitchells Plain

"After rejection after rejection, Shadow gave me my breakthrough. The moment I told my mom, 'Mommy, I'm going to work now,' changed everything."

Tercia, from Cape Town

"I felt like my dreams had slipped away, until Shadow gave me a real chance to build a future."

Riquelme



These **"Shadow Shine"** stories represent not just personal growth, but a broader shift in what's possible when training, support and opportunity come together.

Scaling with purpose: The road ahead

Since its establishment in 2020, Shadow has placed over 2 000 young people in permanent roles. It has grown from having just one hiring partner to 18 and recently celebrated its 100th graduating class.

In partnership with the Jobs Fund and co-funders like Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, Shadow is now scaling to meet its targeted

demand for over 3000 permanent placements. New training hubs and stronger employer partnerships are helping the organisation grow without losing sight of its mission.

Importantly, the programme includes a clawback mechanism: if a trained candidate isn't placed, Shadow returns the funding. This model of accountability respects public investment and drives performance. 🌱



Driving inclusive growth through purposeful partnership

According to Najwah Allie-Edries, Deputy Director-General of the Jobs Fund at the National Treasury:

"This partnership is a powerful demonstration of how public-private collaboration can address South Africa's youth unemployment crisis. Through innovative approaches like impact sourcing, we are not only transforming the lives of individuals, but also contributing to a more inclusive and resilient economy."



Shadow Careers is doing more than preparing youth for jobs. It is helping to build careers, boost confidence and deliver meaningful change. As the model continues to expand, so does its impact. It is clear that lasting transformation becomes possible when preparation is met with purpose and opportunity.

Jobs Fund Performance Update: 30 June 2025

FUNDING

OVERVIEW

R22.7 billion

total portfolio size

R7.5 billion

grant funding disbursed

R15.3 billion

matched funding leveraged from partners

1 : 2,02

matched funding ratio

R41 million

average grant disbursed per project

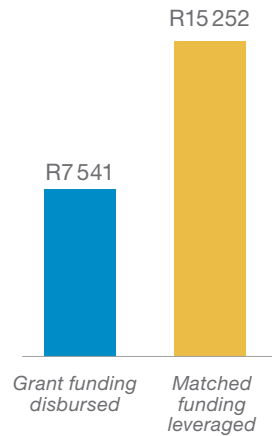
COST PER JOB

R23 566

grant cost per job

(includes the grant disbursed +
Jobs Fund operating costs – training costs)

Total funding for
job creation (R millions)

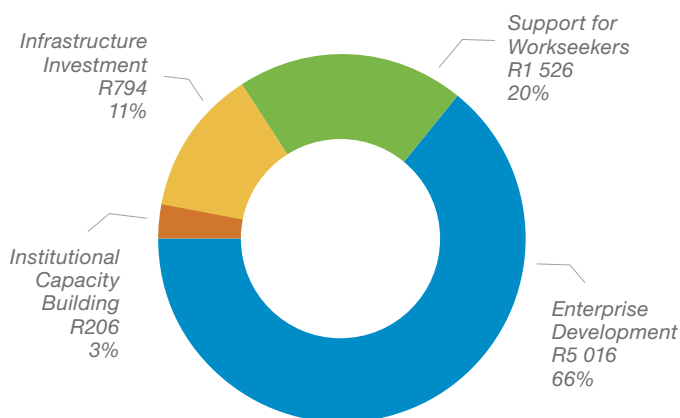


R25 249

grant cost per job

(includes the grant disbursed +
Jobs Fund operating costs)

Grant disbursed by funding window (R millions)



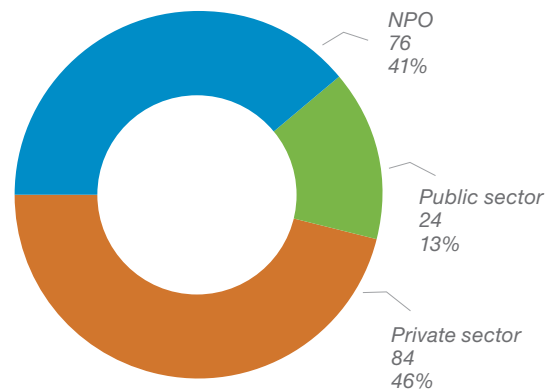
JOBS FUND PARTNERS

OVERVIEW

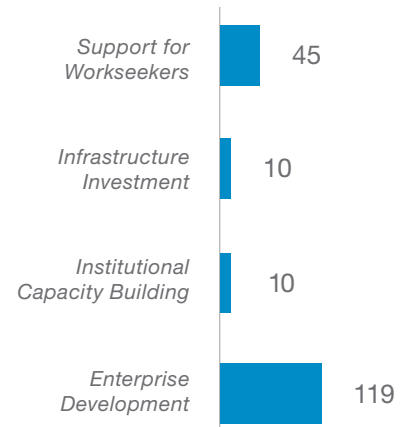
184

contracted projects

Projects by implementer type



Projects by funding window



JOB CREATION

Total jobs, placements & internships facilitated

