



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 through pre-defined criteria 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 allocation at a ratio of 1:0.5 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. Instead, it provides a targeted programme of support for effective labour market interventions that create sustainable employment.

About Siyasebenza

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

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Siyasebenza

Empowering growth: Lessons, leaders and lasting impact

Entrepreneurship, sustainability and social impact are often discussed as separate ambitions. In practice, the most enduring development outcomes emerge when these elements work together. This edition of *Siyasebenza* explores what that synergy looks like in action across the Jobs Fund's portfolio.

Under the theme *Empowering Growth: Lessons, Leaders and Lasting Impact*, the Q3 newsletter reflects on what it truly takes to build enterprises, systems and livelihoods that endure beyond grant funding. It draws on post-implementation learning to understand what happens after the Jobs Fund exits; it celebrates entrepreneurial leaders who balance commercial success with social and environmental stewardship; and it centres on the experiences of beneficiaries whose lives have been transformed through opportunity, skills, and dignified work.

As the Jobs Fund continues to operate in a complex and evolving economic landscape, these reflections are not meant to be theoretical. They are practical insights that shape future interventions and guide how we support partners through implementation and sustainability phases. They help us define success beyond short-term outputs. The stories and lessons in this edition illustrate that sustainable impact is driven by adaptability, meaningful partnerships, and people-centred design, supported by continuous learning and accountability long after a grant ends.

This edition invites you to engage with learning that is grounded, accessible and forward-looking. It affirms that there are no shortcuts to inclusive growth. Meaningful and lasting impact requires sustained financial support (or 'patient' capital), institutional alignment, and a commitment to strengthening the capabilities of people and organisations alike. Ultimately, *Siyasebenza* reminds us that while jobs remain a critical metric, true success is reflected in the lives we help transform and the dignity and confidence we awaken. Success can also be seen in the pathways created for current and future generations to participate meaningfully in the economy. 🌱

Najwah

Najwah Allie-Edries
Head of the Jobs Fund

Lessons from the field



1 Entrepreneur spotlight

Picture: Entrance to Madikwe Berry farm

In a remote, conservation-linked landscape near the Madikwe Game Reserve in the North West Province, Madikwe Berry stands as a reminder that entrepreneurship is rarely linear and that building a viable business in a fragile ecosystem requires patience, discipline and adaptability.

Madikwe Berry is a modern blueberry farming and pack-house operation established on a small piece of land within a broader conservation-focused property. Its founders set out to prove that world-class commercial agriculture could coexist with environmental stewardship and deliver tangible benefits to surrounding rural communities.

The project took root more than two decades ago. In the early 2000s, a lucerne farming venture occupied the land that would later become Madikwe Berry. While moderately successful, the model could not generate the scale of economic activity or employment needed to sustain the property long term. The strategic pivot came with the decision to pursue an intensive, high-value crop that could deliver more substantial returns from limited land, without expanding agriculture deeper into conservation areas.

By 2016 and 2017, blueberries showed budding potential. The crop offered the promise of high yields on a small footprint, aligning commercial viability with conservation priorities.

The socio-economic realities of the surrounding villages strongly shaped the enterprise's purpose. The area is rural, with limited formal employment opportunities and high levels of poverty. As the project evolved, it became evident that many employees, particularly women, had never held formal jobs before. Today, the operation employs 50 permanent staff and scales up to around 600 workers during peak seasons, supporting about 400 households through direct income. For many families, this translates into stability, dignity and greater participation in the local economy.

Like many agricultural ventures, Madikwe Berry's journey has not been without setbacks. Early challenges included underestimating frost risk and navigating the steep learning curve associated with varietal selection and site-specific production strategies. Over time, the operation invested heavily in systems, data and continuous learning, particularly regarding frost protection. These lessons, though costly, have become central to strengthening long-term resilience, and Madikwe Berry is now well-positioned to deliver training through the Madikwe Berry Agric Academy.



Lessons from the field

The Madikwe Berry Agric Academy manages the full training lifecycle, from course design to facilitation and assessment. The programme combines structured theoretical modules including agricultural business management and marketing, with intensive practical modules.

Last year, the academy expanded its training offering and, with the support of the Jobs Fund, launched a linked enterprise development initiative: the Bee Farming project.

The project was approved to equip 100 beekeepers and 167 assistants with the skills and resources required to participate meaningfully in bee farming and honey production, creating an additional pathway for job creation and income generation beyond the farm. To support this objective, the programme now includes modules focused on hive management, honey processing, and health and safety compliance.

Participants are assessed at the end of each module to ensure mastery of both technical knowledge and applied skills. To date, 144 new jobs have been created and 229 beneficiaries have been trained, including 100 beekeepers and 129 assistants, moving the project steadily toward its anticipated outcomes.

The training is currently non-accredited, but the academy has applied for accreditation with AgriSETA.

Once accredited, beneficiaries will receive fully recognised qualifications, strengthening their employability and the sustainability of their enterprises. Accreditation will significantly enhance the programme's long-term value. Beyond the scope of the Jobs Fund project, the academy is also positioned to serve as a regional hub for ongoing agricultural training. Quality and accountability are embedded through a structured adjudication process that includes regular internal reviews and periodic external audits to assess compliance, training effectiveness and participant progress. These mechanisms help ensure that skills development translates into viable micro-enterprises rather than once-off participation.



Picture: A group of women beekeepers

For Madikwe Berry's leadership, the most meaningful outcome has been creating a serious base of emerging entrepreneurs, while recognising that enterprise development requires patience and that not every participant will succeed. To embed sustainability in agricultural projects, you also need to support complementary projects.

Having addressed many of its early production hurdles, Madikwe Berry aims to become one of South Africa's leading blueberry farms over the next decade. At the same time, it remains committed to deepening its relationship with the Jobs Fund and exploring future partnerships once both the berry operation and the bee enterprise programme are fully stabilised.

As CEO Andrew Torr reflects, the lesson for entrepreneurs seeking to balance commercial, social and environmental purpose is straightforward: success is built through people, teamwork and persistence. Or, as he says, "Be brave, be patient and build a strong team. The opportunities open up once you have done the hard part properly." 🌱

The impact of the Jobs Fund's support

Amount disbursed	R14.8 million
Matched funding	R14.8 million
Trained and established beekeeper assistants	167
Trained and established beekeepers	100
New jobs created	144



Picture: A group of women building a honey box



Picture: A group of women beekeepers in the field



2 Sustainability and post-implementation learning

What happens after exit: lessons from post-implementation reporting

One of the most critical questions for any development intervention is what happens after funding ends. In response, the Jobs Fund introduced post-implementation reporting to answer this question more systematically and to close a longstanding evidence gap on continued job creation and lasting impact.

Post-implementation reporting requires Jobs Fund projects to report after implementation concludes. These reports focus on job outcomes, financial sustainability, socio-economic impact and catalytic effects that persist beyond grant support. Across our portfolio, a set of recurring lessons has emerged from projects and partners that were supported over the years.

► **Adaptability is central to sustainability.**

Projects that continue to adjust to changing market conditions, sector demand and policy environments are more likely to sustain or grow impact after exit. Initiatives such as Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator and UVU Africa demonstrate how training and placement models must evolve to remain relevant. In contrast, projects operating with rigid designs in fast-changing sectors often struggle to maintain momentum once grant support falls away.

► **Ecosystem and institutional alignment strengthen durability.**

Post-implementation learning consistently shows that projects embedded within broader institutional frameworks are more resilient. Alignment with government policy, sector strategies and regulatory systems

support continuity and scale. Projects such as SmartStart's integration with public subsidy mechanisms alongside TUHF's housing finance models, which recycle loan repayments, demonstrate how institutional alignment extends impact well beyond the grant period.

► **Holistic support models outperform narrow interventions.**

Projects that combine financial support with non-financial interventions such as mentorship, technical assistance and market linkages demonstrate stronger post-exit outcomes. Skills training alone is rarely sufficient. Where beneficiaries receive layered support, they are better equipped to adapt, grow and sustain livelihoods independently.

► **Catalytic effects often outlive funding.**

Some Jobs Fund-supported initiatives continue to influence systems, behaviours and sector practices long after disbursements end. These effects may not always be immediately quantifiable, but they are central to long-term value creation. Post-implementation reporting allows us to identify these outcomes, document them and learn from them over time. For example, based on a small guarantee from the Jobs Fund, the asset management firm Ashburton Investments raised additional funding for small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) development. The company leveraged the R70 million guarantee to raise more than R900 million to invest in SMEs.

► **Ongoing engagement matters after exit.**

A final lesson is the importance of maintaining structured engagement with partners beyond formal reporting

cycles. Reduced communication during the post-implementation phase can lead to delayed data, limited oversight and missed early warning signs. Regular virtual check-ins strengthen accountability, reinforce sustainability planning and create space for shared learning and adaptation.

Crucially, these lessons are not theoretical. They are reflected in tangible achievements and outcomes across the portfolio. Many projects supported by the Jobs Fund have successfully transitioned to self-sustaining models by leveraging diversified income streams, strategic partnerships and continued beneficiary engagement. Since inception, projects in the post-implementation phase have reported an additional 72,087 jobs, including internships and beneficiaries receiving work-related training, demonstrating that employment outcomes can and do continue beyond the grant period.

Beyond jobs, post-implementation outcomes point to broader socio-economic gains, including improved livelihoods, enhanced financial literacy and strengthened community resilience. The catalytic effects of Jobs Fund interventions are most evident where partners have influenced systems, unlocked new sources of investment or fostered durable institutional partnerships. In these cases, impact extends beyond individual projects, creating pathways for replication and sector-wide change.

Together, these lessons are shaping how the Jobs Fund designs, supports and exits future investments. Post-implementation learning is not a retrospective exercise. It is an evolving feedback loop that sharpens policy and strategic decision-making, strengthens partnerships and ensures long-term impact. 



Picture: Ipeleng Kelebonye – Marketing Intern, ITThynk

FIRST DOORS OPEN: Human stories of change

Behind every Jobs Fund project are individuals whose lives have been transformed by opportunity. This section of the newsletter shines a light on the human stories behind the impact. We feature three young South Africans whose lives changed when opportunities arose and they stepped into formal employment.

At ITThynk Gaming, a Jobs Fund partner operating at the forefront of Africa’s digital and creative economy, Marketing Intern **Ipeleng Kelebonye’s** journey reflects the impact of opportunity. Before joining ITThynk, her life was marked by uncertainty. Despite holding a degree in Motion Picture Medium, she faced a challenge familiar to many young graduates: skills without access.

Through ITThynk’s ecosystem, Ipeleng secured her first full-time role and began building a professional identity. “This role gave me stability and confidence,” she reflects. “I now see myself as a working professional, not just a graduate trying to get a foot in the door.” The ability to support herself has given her the stability to plan for the future rather than simply survive month to month.

In the Global Business Services sector, the **Skills4Success Project**, implemented by Merchants in partnership with the Jobs Fund, is creating similar shifts at scale. Designed to address youth unemployment, the project combines work-readiness training with direct pathways to employment.

For **Ntokozo Swelihle Nkosi**, a Skills4Success participant, the programme marked a turning point. “The programme has changed my life,” she says. “I have grown so much over the past year, both professionally and personally.” Exposure to a corporate environment, diverse teams and structured training has expanded her sense of what is possible.

Another participant, **Kiara Giraud**, describes the programme as her first real step into the world of work. “This was my first job after leaving school and it completely changed how I see my future,” she explains. Beyond technical skills, the experience helped her think differently about her career path and long-term goals.

From an organisational perspective, Merchants view the initiative as more than a placement programme. As noted by **Sydwell Shikweni**, Vice President: Transformation at Merchants MEA, “We focus on building capability, confidence and real work readiness, particularly for young people who have qualifications but lack experience.” Through the Merchants Academy and partnerships across government and industry, the project is also contributing to South Africa’s broader Global Business Services growth agenda.

Together, these stories reflect a shared truth across the Jobs Fund portfolio: when access is paired with support, opportunity becomes agency. The human impact of these programmes is visible in the reimagined futures of individuals and local communities. 🌱

Picture: left to right: Sydwell Shikweni, Vice President: Transformation at Merchants MEA; Kiara Giraud and Ntokozo Swelihle Nkosi, Skills4Success participants; Kirsten Warner and Brian Kambira, Jobs Fund



Lessons from the field

4 The legal corner

Straight out of the starting blocks: Contracting made easy



As the Jobs Fund journey unfolds, partners often describe the due diligence phase as a marathon of paperwork, sleepless nights and detailed institutional scrutiny. Yet the actual test of 'readiness-to-implement' lies in the final stretch: concluding the contracting process. This is where the vision proposed in response to a funding call culminates in a binding commitment and successful applicants make the transition to Jobs Fund partners.

Once the funding allocation is confirmed, the contract drafting, negotiation and execution process proceeds at a rapid pace. The Jobs Fund takes pride in its partnerships and has developed a robust contracting matrix that protects all stakeholders and, most importantly, the public purse. Unfortunately, some potential partners fail to enter into grant agreements due to unmet conditions or other challenges.

There are proven strategies to clear this final hurdle.

Contracting best practices

Contracting is not merely a formality. It's the foundation of a commitment between the Jobs Fund and its partners, entrenching accountability and credibility. Three factors commonly derail projects from finalising contracts:



- ▶ **Incomplete documentation:** All template annexures, conditions precedent documents and supporting evidence must be ready and clearly labelled. Missing pieces delay signing and disbursement.
- ▶ **Misalignment with approved proposals:** The Grant Agreement is the final record of all commitments made by partners. It must reflect the approved proposal precisely. Any discrepancies between commitments and documentation can lead to revisions, delays or even withdrawal of grant funding.
- ▶ **Poor responsiveness:** Contracting requires agility. Delays in responses to queries or requests can jeopardise timelines and the flow of funding.

A tip to potential partners: Understand the conditions for signing, the requirements for the first (advance) disbursement and the subsequent quarterly conditions in the grant agreement. Preparing early ensures faster turnaround. Refer to the Jobs Fund's templates, which highlight best practices for that funding round.

Contract trends: Jobs Fund partners are increasingly proactive, sourcing all required documents for the due diligence checklist well before contracting begins. Many are informing their principals, executive managers and board members of the agility required to meet deadlines.

Centralised digital repositories, such as master OneDrive folders, are increasingly being used for storing all project documentation throughout the project lifecycle.

This ensures version control, easy access and faster responses during contracting and beyond. 🌱

DID YOU KNOW?

The most successful interventions have integrated the activity-based costing project implementation monitoring plan (ABC PIMP) framework into their daily operation. Rather than treating it as a checkbox exercise, they use the timelines and budgetary allocations to stay on track and achieve their targets. This discipline has enabled the Jobs Fund to conclude contracting within competitive timelines, reinforcing its reputation for efficiency and governance safeguards.



Jobs Fund Performance Update: 31 December 2025

FUNDING

OVERVIEW

R23.4 billion

total portfolio size

R7.7 billion

grant funding disbursed

R15.7 billion

matched funding leveraged from partners

1 : 2,05

matched funding ratio

R42 million

average grant disbursed per project

COST PER JOB

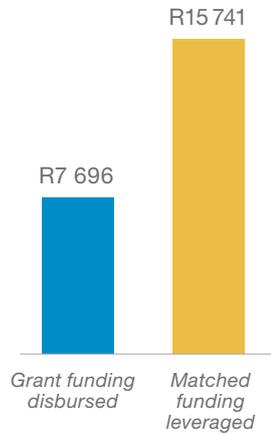
R23 824

grant cost per job

(includes the grant disbursed +

Jobs Fund operating costs – training costs)

Total funding for
job creation (R millions)



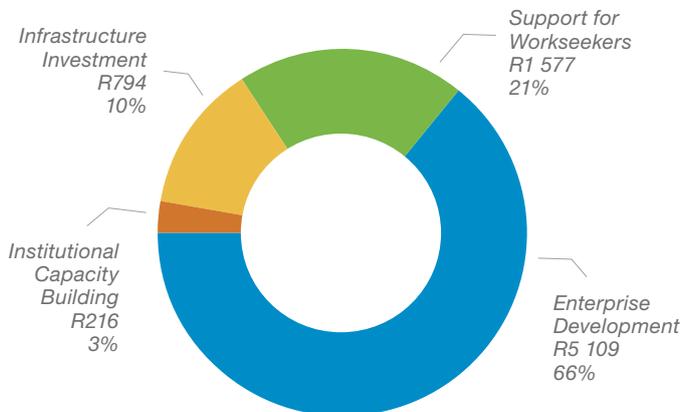
R25 558

grant cost per job

(includes the grant disbursed +

Jobs Fund operating costs + training costs)

Grant disbursed by funding window (R million)



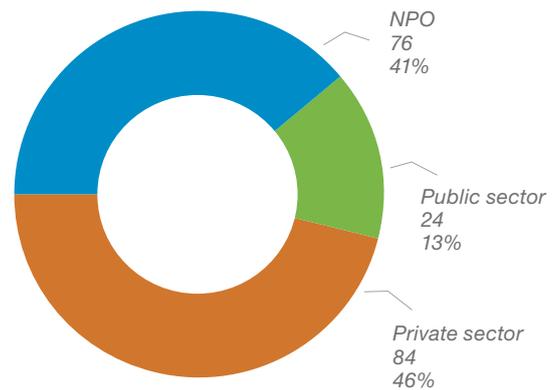
JOBS FUND PARTNERS

OVERVIEW

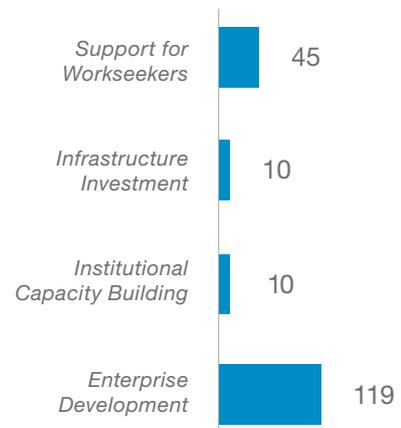
184

contracted projects

Projects by implementer type

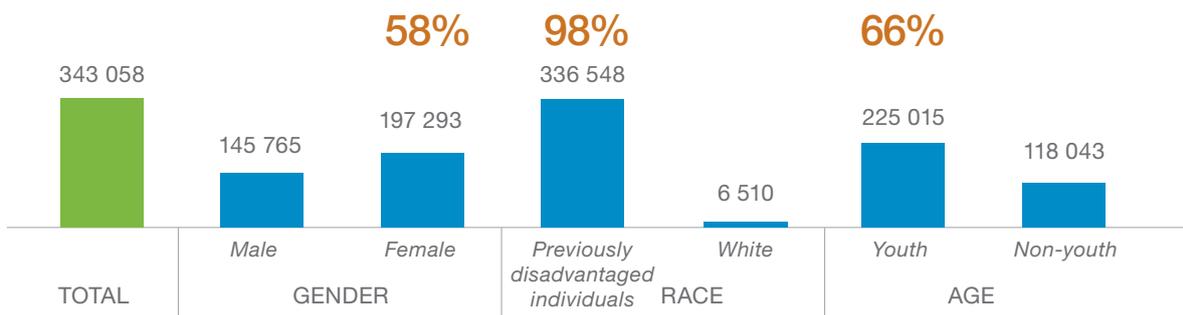


Projects by funding window



JOB CREATION

All Jobs, including Permanent, Seasonal, Fixed-Term and Internships



Note: The Jobs Fund, through its interventions, also supported SMMEs (63 489) and emerging farmers (16 813), and 533 622 participants were supported with job-related training.

Source: Jobs Fund database (showing actual figures reported by projects as at 31 December 2025)