



**RAISING  
THE GAME  
FOR AFTER  
SCHOOL**

# CONTENTS

<b>Vision &amp; TLT Model</b>	3
<b>Overview: Advancing After School in 2023</b>	4
<b>Raising the Game</b>	5
<b>Chairperson's Letter</b>	6
<b>Executive Director's Note</b>	7
<b>Letter from Collaboration Partner</b>	8
<b>Grantee Spotlight: I Protect Me</b>	9
<b>Our Impact &amp; Reach</b>	10
<b>Growing Together: Collaboration for Organisational Development</b>	12
<b>Management Accelerator Programme</b>	13
<b>Expanding Impact with Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre</b>	14
<b>Catch-up Coalition: Collaboration for Broader After-school Impact</b>	15
SEF Working Sessions	16
SEF Participant Story	17
SEF Snapshot	17
<b>Research</b>	18
Leveraging Public Employment and ASPs to Deliver Multiple Outcomes	18
<b>Advocacy</b>	19
#LightsOnAfterSchool: A Year-Long Effort	19
<b>Finances: 2023 Grant Spend</b>	21
<b>Board of Trustees</b>	22
<b>Thank You</b>	23



## OUR VISION

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

## OUR MODEL



# OVERVIEW: Advancing After School in 2023



Over the past 13 years, The Learning Trust (TLT) has been building South Africa's extended learning sector by providing emerging After School Programmes (ASPs) with funding and capacity support to improve educational outcomes for all young people in underserved communities.

Amidst the myriad challenges affecting education and learners, and the widening socioeconomic disparities, The Learning Trust (TLT) has been resolute in its mission to advance the after-school sector. Our focus on enhancing educational outcomes and empowering communities throughout South Africa has never been more urgent.

Through strategic initiatives, TLT has made significant progress in various areas, contributing to the overarching goal of raising the game for after-school.

In 2023, our efforts have been focused on propelling the after-school sector forward. We have laid the groundwork for continued growth, collaboration, and

impact. By championing innovation, collaboration, and advocacy, TLT remains steadfast in creating transformative opportunities for learners and communities nationwide.

We're proud to share our journey in 2023 and highlight some key moments and milestones in this annual report. We sincerely thank our funders, stakeholders, and partners for their unwavering support. Together, we are shaping a sector that thrives on collaboration, innovation, and impact.




**Starting an organisation requires wearing many hats, but it's essential for growth. Every mistake leads to valuable lessons and the creation of effective solutions.**



Khanyisile Masongwa, Founder and CEO of Khula Unqobe Creative Arts (KUCA)

# RAISING THE GAME



The Learning Trust is championing South Africa's after-school sector by developing quality practitioners and building sustainable organisations. We offer focused training, mentorship and coaching in a variety of organisational development areas and provide platforms for sharing and collaboration amongst ASPs serving young people.

# CHAIRPERSON'S LETTER

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



Dear Partners, Stakeholders, and Friends of The Learning Trust,

As we reflect on the past year, it is with a deep sense of pride and accomplishment that I write to you in our 2023 annual report, themed “Raising the game for after school.” This theme is not just a tagline; it embodies our collective and amplified efforts to elevate and expand the impact of After School Programmes. At TLT, we are committed to “Raising the game” for these programmes, ensuring they continue to provide critical support and opportunities for our youth.

This year, our work in the after-school sector has continued to evolve, driven by strategic initiatives, and strengthened by the unwavering support of our partners and funders. With the successful integration of the Social Employment Fund (SEF), we have not only sustained but expanded our reach, supporting a diverse array of programmes that offer both educational and development opportunities to young South Africans. Our ability to manage these funds effectively has allowed us to deliver on our promises and commitments with integrity and transparency.

Our strategic focus for the upcoming year will concentrate on further amplifying our reach and impact. Our secretariat role in the “Catch-up Coalition” underlines our commitment to broadening our collaborative efforts. This coalition has been pivotal in scaling our initiatives and will continue to be a cornerstone of our strategy moving forward.

Furthermore, we are excited about the potential of new projects such as Zazi iZandi, which targets early literacy through innovative phonemic awareness.

This initiative, alongside our ongoing commitment to the High School Academic Programme (HSAP) and our expanding work with the SEF, exemplifies our strategy to not only extend our current offerings but to innovate and lead in addressing the educational challenges faced by our nation’s youth.

The theme of amplification also resonates with our commitment to organisational growth and sustainability. This past year, we welcomed new trustees and staff members who bring fresh perspectives and skills to our team. Their contributions are already shaping the future of TLT, driving forward our mission with renewed energy and focus.

As we look to the future, we are guided by a strategic framework that prioritises the deepening of our impact through core programmes, special projects, and critical organisational development. Our work is aligned with national priorities, including enhancing quality education, supporting youth development, and strengthening civil society.

In conclusion, the journey of amplification is both a reflection of our past achievements and a pathway to future opportunities. It is through the collective commitment of our partners, funders, and the communities we serve that we continue to build a brighter, more equitable future for education in South Africa. We are grateful for your continued support and look forward to achieving greater impact together.

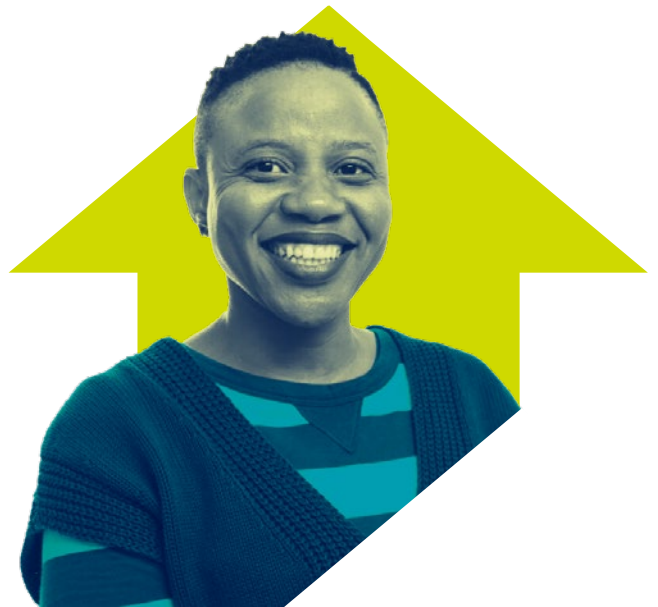
Thank you for being part of this vital mission.

Warm regards,

**Sixolile**

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

**Sibongile Khumalo, Executive Director, The Learning Trust**



As we ended 2023, I was acutely aware of the inflection point that The Learning Trust has reached, and along with it, the closing of a chapter for me as its leader. I am reminded of my initial promise to centre a constituent voice – one that we have actively sought to “Amplify” through all of our work. Ours is not an isolated mission but one that seeks congruence with a wider group of collaborators in our sector’s custodianship. We take very seriously our commitment to championing the work of our partners, and elevating their place in society.

The sub-theme of this Annual Report, “Raising the game” so aptly captures our intention for partnership, our strife for constant improvement, and our organisational culture of continuous learning. In that spirit, the Catch-up Coalition’s work now spans five projects, with our Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) and Zazi iZandi projects off to a great start in 2023. Nothing is ever set in stone at The Learning Trust, and there is something both graceful and exacting about this measure of flexibility.

On the one hand, it allows us to be responsive to the changing South African social landscape; where both employment and learning challenges have demanded all of our active engagement. To this end, the second phase of our Social Employment Fund project has expanded its impact, empowering 50 organisations to scale support to their immediate communities, and reaching over 4,000 unemployed people with paid service opportunities in this year alone.

On the other hand, our constant striving for improvement makes great demands on our team and partners’ attention, skills and resources. Nevertheless, we have embraced agility as a superpower and have set the bar higher for our core work of organisational development. The inaugural Management Accelerator Programme is proof of this, and has marked the beginning of a rewarding leadership journey for the many capable practitioners who have become assets to their After School Programmes and beyond.

As I bid farewell to The Learning Trust, I feel immense gratitude to our After School partners who have embraced the value of self-improvement and learning; to our board who have challenged us to stay the course even as our mandate expands; and to our funders who have rewarded our fervent pursuit of new opportunities in the space. Finally, to the team that holds the clarity of TLT’s vision, carries its mission in their hearts, and lives its values in their day-to-day work – I salute you and will miss you dearly!

Warm regards,

**Sibongile**

# LETTER FROM COLLABORATION PARTNER:

## Down in the Eastern Cape, education moves upwards with TLT

In the computer lab of a school in Makhanda, Eastern Cape, 25 grade 7 learners are immersed in the Olico Maths programme. Their faces light up with excitement as they engage in fun maths-related games and exercises.



The room is filled with occasional smiles and quiet laughter, a testament to the joy and enthusiasm this programme has brought to their learning experience. When technology is not enough, maths tutors walk from computer to computer, providing good, old-fashioned face-to-face explanations. Some tutors are recruited through the Social Employment Fund (SEF) project.

With support from the Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation, the High School Academic Programme, a collaboration between The Learning Trust and Olico Maths, has been implemented by 8 organisations, including Awarenet, under the auspices of the Catch-up Coalition since 2022. Awarenet, a long-time partner of TLT, focuses on using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the after-school sector and has leveraged the additional SEF capacity to expand this project.

Additionally, many of the 17 Catch-up Coalition partners who make up a smaller Eastern Cape consortium led by Awarenet, have extended hundreds of paid service opportunities to volunteers in Makhanda, Port Alfred, and Peddie. In their experience, the SEF participants have enabled the local after-school sector to improve both the quality of its projects and the number of learners reached.

For Awarenet in particular, our after-school robotics and coding programmes have expanded from 20 to 160 learners; and the Olico programme has grown

from 50 to 200 learners through the increased engagement of SEF participants. For other organisations in the region, various activities such as music lessons, homework support, sports activities, and mentoring have also expanded significantly.

The SEF project and the funding and training The Learning Trust has provided to other projects have made a meaningful impact. However, many challenges remain for the sector in Makhanda and the wider Eastern Cape. Despite recent TLT-supported collaborative projects such as the Makhanda consortium, the sector still needs to be more cohesive—it is spread across many small organisations in relative isolation.

Additionally, the quality of the ASPs varies considerably between different projects, with insufficient benchmarking of best practices taking place. A strong case can be made for further collaborations between organisations in the region. Such collaborative efforts could lead to improvements across the sector, gaining strength from numbers in a challenging funding environment.

For funders of the after-school sector, the opportunities lie in scaling the footprint of quality projects into more organisations and areas of this vast, mostly rural province where the demand and need for quality educational support is high.



**Kjetil Torp**  
Director, Awarenet



# GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT:

## I Protect Me

### Empowering Youth Through Self-Protection: A Success Story

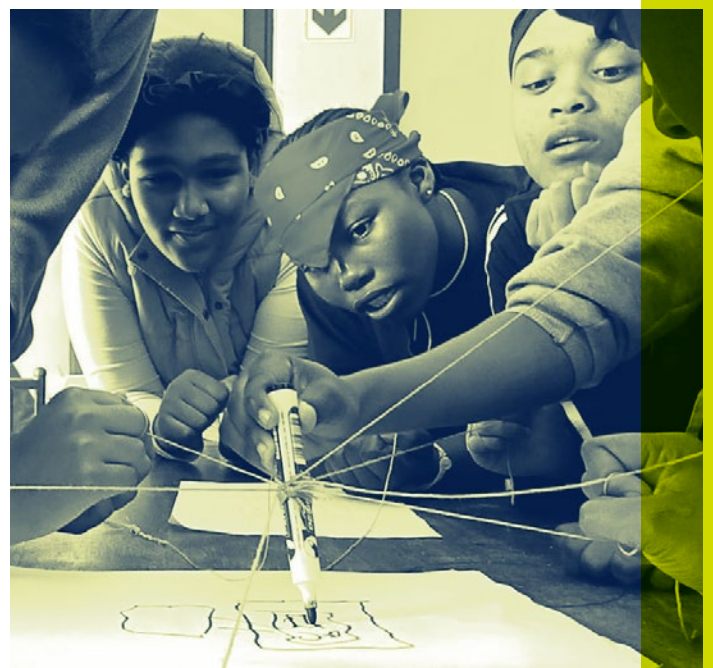
TLT grantee, I Protect Me (IPM), has made significant strides, empowering young learners to protect themselves from violence through its innovative self-protection programme.

This initiative has deeply impacted nearly 1,000 primary and high school learners, equipping them with crucial skills to identify threats, set boundaries, communicate effectively, and defend themselves when necessary.

One particularly notable success involves IPM's partnership with local schools and community organisations, wherein they have successfully integrated their programme into the school curriculum, ensuring regular touchpoints. Through interactive educational sessions, IPM fosters a sense of confidence and safety among their learners. By embedding the self-protection curriculum into the regular school schedule, IPM ensures that learners receive consistent and impactful training, which is crucial for internalising these essential life skills.

The strong community involvement further demonstrates the programme's success. Parents have taken an active role, participating in and even leading awareness campaigns, highlighting the collective commitment to safeguarding children and promoting their well-being. This community-driven approach has strengthened the programme's impact and has created a supportive environment for children.

Looking ahead, IPM plans to focus on formalising partnerships with government entities, enhancing staff training on data collection and programme implementation, and strengthening collaborations. These priorities align with IPM's strategic goals and TLT's objective to empower communities through educational support.



# OUR IMPACT & REACH

In 2023, TLT successfully fulfilled its core Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) capacity support obligations through the leadership of the Data Collective initiative.

We created practical learning opportunities through the coordination of workshops, including virtual gatherings and in person training sessions. In addition, we developed interactive multimedia resources and targeted one-on-one training sessions. By adopting this proactive stance, we supported ASPs to improve their data collection systems, establishing the groundwork for sector-level outcome analyses. Additionally, our active advocacy and guidance in adopting suitable platforms like TeamPact for attendance and outcomes tracking within ASPs has underscored our dedication to bolstering programme implementation and accountability. These efforts have led to the successful onboarding of five more organisations onto the MEL platforms, further expanding our reach and impact in the sector.



“

**As a leader in the After School sector, I have first-hand experience of the incredible work done by emerging organisations amid numerous challenges. What strikes me the most is the immense resilience I encounter every day from all corners of the sector, which in turn gives me the energy to continue this journey, revitalised and invigorated.**”

Malibongwe Nkunkuma, Western Cape Programme Officer.

# MEL SNAPSHOT



**3** NATIONAL ONLINE MEL TRAINING SESSIONS HOSTED and 2 Data Collective Sessions engaging 150+ participants for a cumulative 20 hours, with subsequent follow-up office hours for additional support.



**6** POST-SESSION MEL VIDEOS CREATED, with a total of 150+ views (cumulatively), serving as valuable resources for strengthening organisational MEL systems.

**3** TWO-DAY MEL WORKSHOPS ORGANISED AND FACILITATED across different provinces, achieving an 80% overall satisfaction rating from 60 participants.



**15+** GRANTEE AND ALUMNI ORGANISATIONS RECEIVED ONE-ON-ONE MEL SUPPORT, contributing significantly to enhancing their data collection and MEL systems.



PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN ONBOARDING AND SUPPORTING PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ONTO THE TEAMPACT MEL PLATFORM, actively participating in incident reporting processes.





# GROWING TOGETHER:

## Collaboration for Organisational Development

The after-school sector is united by a powerful belief: that young people are the engine of progress and opportunity. We are so proud to be associated with the many After School Programmes (ASPs) that are providing effective programmes to thousands of children and youth.

At TLT, our Organisational Development (OD) initiatives are fine-tuned to support organisations to work towards their respective visions. Through grant funding, capacity building, and professional development, we empower after-school partners nationwide.

In 2023, in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng, and Western Cape provinces, our Programme Officers provided quality tailored coaching and training, guiding organisations towards their goals and helping them navigate challenges.

Our impact goes beyond individual support - we've created a vibrant network of ASPs, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange through in-person and online professional development sessions. Our offerings have helped to improve access to skills development, enhance collaboration, raise awareness about ASPs, and fuel our advocacy efforts.

Themes ranged from Theories of Change (ToCs) to performance management processes, and we explored topics on gender, sexuality, and neurodiversity in after-school settings, showcasing our commitment to the unique and diverse needs of organisations.

Our Communities of Practice (CoPs) convened in all provinces, hosted nine insightful events on holistic programming, literacy strategies, and local partnerships, to name a few. These gatherings sparked creativity and innovation among ASPs.

### OD SNAPSHOT

**30+**  
IMPACTFUL  
EVENTS HELD

**20+**  
INFORMATIVE  
VIDEOS PRODUCED

**800+**  
PASSIONATE  
ATTENDEES  
ENGAGED

DEVELOPED VALUABLE  
**RESOURCES**  
**6 LEARNING BRIEFS**  
**OD RESOURCE PAGE**

TLT's Practitioner Basics Training, held in Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Western Cape, provided a dynamic platform for practitioners to learn, share, and grow together. The [Practitioner Masterclasses](#), comprising four online sessions, featured experts sharing and inspiring attendees to drive positive change.

**As we reflect on 2023 - a year of celebrating ASP impact and collaboration - we look forward to a transformative 2024, where we will build on our successes and extend our impact alongside our partners.**

# MANAGEMENT ACCELERATOR PROGRAMME

The launch of our Management Accelerator Programme (MAP) in June 2023 marked a significant milestone.

This year-long fellowship empowers young ASP managers to innovate, grow personally and professionally, and forge impactful partnerships. MAP is not just a programme – it’s a catalyst for change, sparking connections that strengthen the after-school sector.



## Management Accelerator Reflection: Zuko Gqadavama

The Learning Trust’s Management Accelerator Programme has been nothing short of transformative. This experience has deepened my appreciation for the vital role that ASPs play in community engagement and development. These programmes not only foster local responsiveness but also promote global engagement, embodying the true essence of our work.

The human resource management session was a turning point. As I grappled with the challenge of humanising the non-profit sector while maintaining essential policies, Ms. Judith’s expertise provided invaluable insights. Her facilitation created a space for learning, unlearning, and relearning, emphasising the importance of building caring organisations. This resonated deeply with me, as I believe our work transcends programming and operations; it is a part of a larger social justice movement. Reflecting on my decade-long journey in this sector, I was inspired to envision and contribute to an ideal organisation. The simplification of policy and legal frameworks was a revelation, making it easier to align our intentions with our actions.



This session illuminated common HR challenges and inspired me to propose policy revisions to my supervisor. With this crucial knowledge for intentional system revisions, we can build structures that reflect our ideal organisation. As an advocate for professionalising this sector, I found the humanising aspect central to our vision. The timing was perfect, as our organisation transitions in leadership and strategy. The message of creating humanised spaces evokes a “back to basics” sentiment, urging us to reflect on our motivations and envision a better future.

**I am immensely grateful to The Learning Trust for providing a mentor during this formative stage of my development. My mentor has been a guiding light. His rootedness, humility, and supportive approach have been invaluable.** Despite our different work areas, we share a commitment to creating positive community change. Our authentic interactions, whether through text or in-person meetings, have been enriching and motivational.

# EXPANDING IMPACT WITH MATLHOGONOLO COMMUNITY OUTREACH CENTRE

The Matlhogonolo Community Outreach Centre (MCOC) began its journey by working in two schools in Diepkloof, reaching approximately 500 learners.

Today, their impact has multiplied significantly, extending to five schools, and reaching over 2,500 primary and high school learners across Soweto. This impressive growth is a testament to the community's trust and recognition of the programme's positive impact on learners.

The expansion of MCOC's reach is driven by the enthusiastic support of teachers and principals who have witnessed firsthand the transformative effects of the programme. They have approached MCOC, requesting the extension of their programmes to their respective schools. This strong community buy-in highlights the success and importance of MCOC's work in facilitating educational and skills development initiatives among young people in Soweto.



**The community buy-in was very important for us, as it enabled us to improve our programme and strengthen our relationships with the schools. We have extended our services into high schools and Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. We are now present in 20 ECD centres and working in nine schools, providing nutrition, literacy tutoring and ICT development programmes.**

**All this was possible through the capacity development provided by TLT as well as the support on key areas of growth to help us scale our programme. The regular personal development opportunities from TLT also made an impact on our work. We were able to partner with a local university (University of Johannesburg, Soweto Campus), where we have volunteers available to support our work and extend our reach.**



Prince Phetoe, Founder and Executive Director, MCOC.

# CATCH-UP COALITION:

## Collaboration for Broader After-school Impact

The Coalition strives to create a coordinated and sustainable response to the educational challenges faced by South Africa's youth.

### THE CATCH-UP COALITION FOCUSES ON SEVERAL KEY IMPLEMENTATION OBJECTIVES:



Building capacity of ASPs



Leveraging employment initiatives for youth



Measuring learning and employment outcomes



Mapping ASPs and their funding



Conducting impactful research and advocacy



Scaling effective practices and models

The flagship project of the Catch-Up Coalition is the Social Employment Fund (SEF), part of the Presidential Employment Stimulus (PES), with its funds managed by the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC).

The second phase of our SEF project has been successfully implemented with 50 dedicated implementing partners. By leveraging public employment programmes to build capacity and scale our work, we've collectively reached over 100,000 learners, engaging over 2,000 schools and ECD centres nationwide. This has increased learner attendance and improved learning outcomes, particularly in foundational literacy and numeracy programmes.

In just this year, we recruited, trained, and placed over 4,000 participants, demonstrating our capacity to scale effectively despite a 55% attrition rate due to participants moving on to further their studies, securing permanent jobs and other opportunities. This is a testament to the dedication of our implementing partners to improving learning outcomes and building the after-school sector, as well as our robust financial management and commitment to the project's success.





**SEF partners offer a range of after-school programmes and youth skills development activities.**

## SEF Working Sessions

Provincial in-person working sessions have been instrumental in keeping implementing partners engaged and aligned with project deliverables. These sessions also provided valuable networking opportunities, allowing partners to share lessons and best practices.

We are deeply grateful to all our partners for their unwavering support and commitment, which has been crucial in successfully implementing the SEF project. Together, we continue to amplify the impact of after-school, driving significant improvements in employment and learning outcomes for South Africa's youth.



**I enjoy learning more about children and their capabilities at different ages. The benefit of this job is that I can apply the training in my personal life. The various life skills I learn on the job are valuable and contribute to my self-development. Being part of something this special has been a fantastic privilege and experience.**



Robynn Solomons (22), SEF participant







## SEF Participant Story

Lusanda Mabandla (27), a Rhodes University graduate, previously held a position as a teacher's assistant at the Joza Assumption Development Centre. Receiving the SEF funds has made a significant impact on her life, enabling her to afford basic necessities and easing the financial burden of parenting.

She enjoyed every aspect of the programme, particularly working with children, which not only requires hard work but also provides opportunities for play and fun, contributing to a positive attitude beneficial for overall well-being.

Her future plans involve gaining work experience to eventually establish her own business.



**I learnt patience and understanding. More importantly, how to communicate well with the children and other practitioners.**



## SEF SNAPSHOT



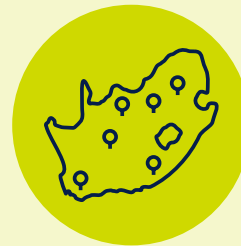
**108 101**

LEARNERS  
REACHED



**137**

SITES



**1 055**

LOCALITIES

	Male	Female	Adult	Youth	Total Participants	Wages
TERMINATED	222	403	84	541	625	R3 103 486
ACTIVE	1238	2417	730	2925	3655	R31 370 685
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1460</b>	<b>2820</b>	<b>814</b>	<b>3466</b>	<b>4280</b>	<b>R34 474 171</b>

# RESEARCH

In our ongoing mission to amplify the impact of ASPs across South Africa, The Learning Trust places a strong emphasis on research. Our strategic focus is on creating thriving adults by improving the scale and effectiveness of ASPs through evidence-based practices.

Through research, we have gained a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by unemployed youth and the importance of collaborative action. These insights guide our efforts to amplify the impact of ASPs, ensuring they contribute effectively to employment and learning outcomes in South Africa.

By embedding research into our strategic framework, we are driving forward a vision of sustainable, community-level economic solutions that uplift young people and their families.

## Leveraging Public Employment and ASPs to Deliver Multiple Outcomes

The Learning Trust conducted a study on the Social Employment Fund (SEF) project to showcase its support of ASPs to access public employment funding. The [research](#) revealed that all SEF partners are keen to participate again, indicating the project's positive impact on their organisations. Benefits included broadening outreach, providing stipends to volunteers, improving programme quality, attracting more funding, strengthening organisational systems, and equipping youth with essential skills and work experience.

### Insights:

- 100% of SEF partners are eager to join again, showing the program's positive influence.
- 15 out of 16 partners reported a significant positive impact, while one noted a somewhat positive effect.

SEF advantages include expanding reach, offering stipends to volunteers, improving programme quality, attracting more funding, enhancing organisational systems, and empowering young people with essential skills and work experience.

## How the SEF helps ASPs deliver multi-pronged impact:



### Learning Outcomes

ASPs have extended their reach, scaled proven models, and enhanced programme quality, leading to better learning outcomes for participants.



### Youth Employment Outcomes

Young people have gained valuable work experience, developed essential skills, boosted their confidence, and accessed further personal and professional growth opportunities.



### Civil Society Outcomes

Community-Based Organisations have enhanced their human resource capacities, improved administrative processes, strengthened monitoring and evaluation, and attracted additional funding to sustain their impactful work.

# ADVOCACY

TLT continued to advocate for the after-school sector, leveraging alliances with decision-makers and creating accessible platforms for public discourse, including government engagements and advocacy campaigns that highlighted our commitment to amplifying the impact of ASPs and advocating for their recognition and support.

## #LightsOnAfterSchool: A Year-Long Effort

In October 2023, we proudly celebrated the 4th annual #LightsOnAfterSchool campaign, a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to shine the spotlight on the work of the sector. This year's campaign, held in partnership with the Youth and After School Programme Office of the Western Cape, was a success held under the theme "*Rallying for After School Programmes,*" and making a tangible impact on the lives of learners *Beyond the Classroom*.

As South African schools entered the critical final exam phase, the #LightsOnAfterSchool 2023 campaign aimed to emphasise the vital role ASPs play in enhancing academic performance and promoting the holistic well-being of learners. The campaign saw widespread participation from ASPs across the country, featuring on-site activities led by our partners and grantees. This collaborative effort successfully generated 25 pieces of media coverage. The theme highlighted the transformative impact ASPs have on communities across South Africa.

Through these efforts, the #LightsOnAfterSchool campaign continues to shine a spotlight on the essential contributions of ASPs, advocating for their integral role in supporting and uplifting South Africa's learners and communities.



**We are quite aware of the learning losses and the challenges that have increased. Through this LightsOn campaign we want every learner and every rural community to know that there are organisations out there that are ready to help, support and get our learners educated.** ”

Charlene Pietersen Voss,  
Projects Director





## SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT

# #LIGHTSONAFTERSCHOOL IN NUMBERS



# FINANCES

## 2023 Grant Spend

Core & Collaboration Grant Distributions	R 3 866 100
HSAP Grants	R 1 109 598
SEF Grant Distributions	R 6 478 067
Social Innovations	R 665 000
NLP Leadership	R 376 543
<b>TOTAL GRANT SPEND</b>	<b>R 12 495 308</b>





## BOARD OF TRUSTEES



**SIXOLILE MABOMBO-BENSON**  
*Board Chair*



**CHRISTINE DOWNTON**  
*Founder*



**ALLAN TAYLOR**  
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**MURRAY LEIBBRANDT**  
*Trustee*



**SIVIWE DLUKWANA**  
*Trustee*



# THANK YOU

We extend our deepest gratitude to 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

- Allan & Gill Gray Philanthropies SA
- Camissa Asset Management
- Claude Leon Foundation
- DG Murray Trust
- HCI Foundation
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- Joan St. Leger Lindbergh Charitable Trust
- Maid Foundation
- Marr-Munning Trust
- The Brad Foundation
- The Frank Jackson Foundation
- The Mapula Trust
- The Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation

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