



THE
**LEARNING
TRUST**
BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



EVALUATION REPORT

2018/2022

**OUTCOMES OF TLT'S FUNDING
AND CAPACITY SUPPORT
MODEL ON AFTER SCHOOL
PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH
AFRICA BETWEEN 2018 AND
2022**



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About this Document

This evaluation report is based on research commissioned by The Learning Trust and conducted by Impact Consulting (www.impactconsulting.co.za). The objective of the research is to understand the experiences of TLT’s grantees and the impact of the TLT model that combines organisational development support and funding to strengthen After School Programmes and the After School sector.

Acknowledgements

This evaluation report was made possible through the continued support of TLT’s funders and TLT staff. Their commitment to the growth and development of The Learning Trust and the After School sector in South Africa has been instrumental in our ability to assess and strengthen our work and impact. Special thanks to the many individuals and organisations who generously shared their insights, experiences and feedback.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Outcomes of TLT's funding and capacity support model on After School Programmes in South Africa between 2018 and 2022

INTRODUCTION

The evaluation study documents the organisational development (OD) outcomes of The Learning Trust (TLT) on the After School Programmes (ASPs) that they supported between 2018 and 2022, and on the After School sector in general. The study showed that there have been incredible results and success in achieving outcomes, which is due to TLT's unique holistic model in which it provides funding support as well as OD support and close mentoring. Key to its success is its invaluable support to nascent and emerging ASPs, which it supports in order for these organisations to further develop, and implement and consolidate high quality programmes.

The mixed methods evaluation was theory-based, participatory, inclusive and utilisation-focused. Primary and secondary data was analysed from: focus groups with grantees and TLT staff, key informant interviews with TLT partners, an online grantee survey, analysis of Salesforce grantee data, and further information found in reports. In total, 58 participants were involved in the primary data collection, as well as 58 grantee database records analysed (there would be overlap on the database and primary samples).

KEY FINDINGS

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The evaluation found that there have been significant positive changes in the development of organisations in terms of all ten key OD areas:

TLT has helped my organisation with...

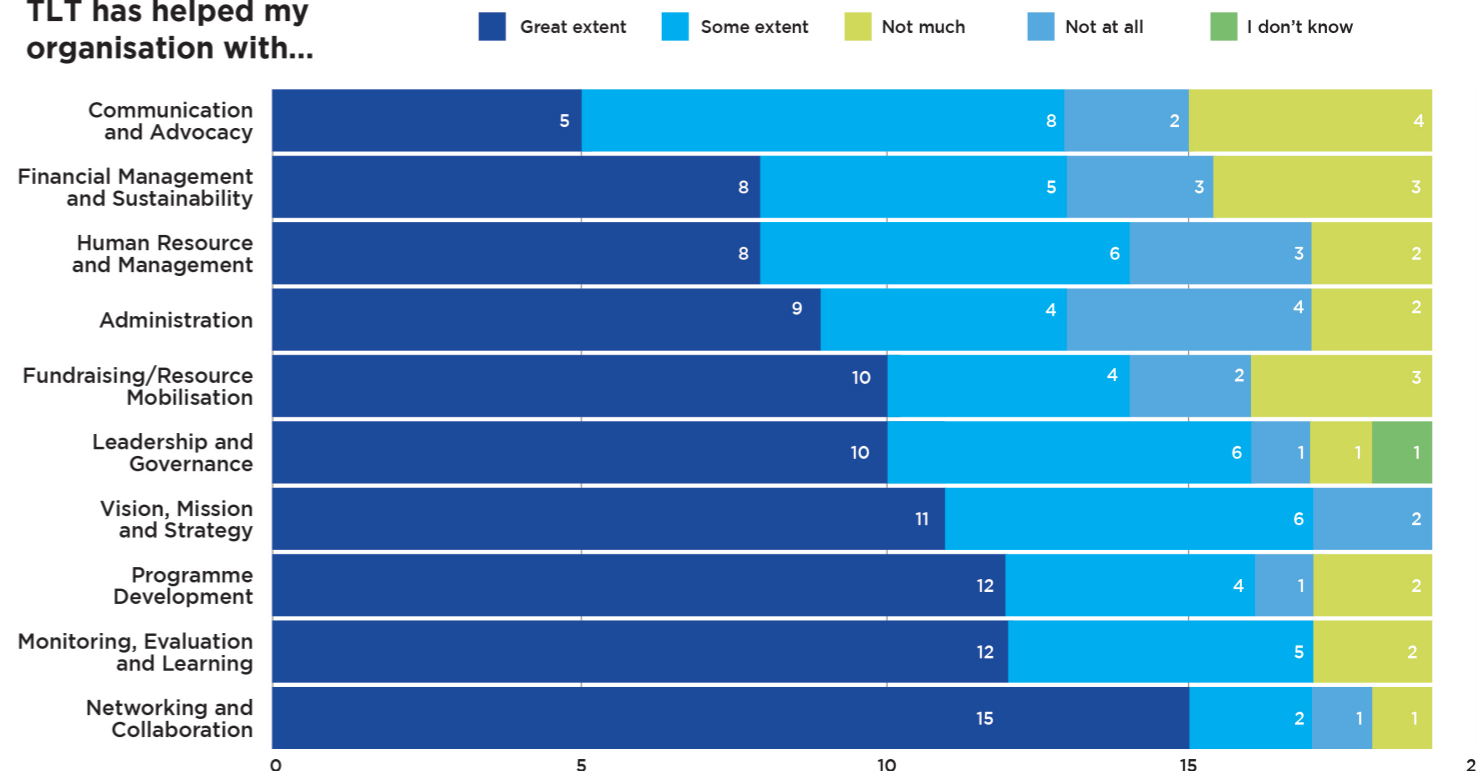


Figure 1: Perceptions of the extent to which TLT's support has improved organisational development of grantees (survey response)

“After we received trainings and were capacitated through fundraising, and taught how to manage our finances, how to write proposals: we managed to receive more funding, building another class with a small office space and kitchen. TLT also helped us expand our programmes...Through TLT we managed to employ six staff members that are rendering services to our children daily” (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2024)

Examples of these outcomes include organisations having:

- Stronger and more **contextually-appropriate visions and strategies**, with aligned implementation plans and being able to articulate these well
- Stronger **leadership and delegation** of management duties, more active boards and stronger governance policies, practices, and being legally compliant
- Resources to pay staff and to set up **legally compliant** contracts and good Human Resources management **systems and policies**, which strengthen programmes: “when you have well capacitated staff members, it strengthens the programmes, including taking pilots into fully fledged programmes” (Grantee focus group, April 2024).
- More **accountability** in terms of administration and financial management, in terms of record-keeping and reporting, and payroll management, and more sustainability as an organisation due to long term funding and **self-sustaining strategies**
- More regular and strategic **external communications, advocacy campaigns**, and the use of technology and online platforms for engagement and advocacy purposes
- **Fundraising strategies** and a calendar of events and the ability to “identify resource needs as well as potential strategies for meeting the needs”, frame their work differently, for example “as an act of social justice and not just a nice to have”, and being able to partner to raise funds (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2024)
- Higher **quality** programmes in terms of them being better designed, more aligned with organisational missions, with expanded service areas that meet the identified needs of target groups, and better and more **responsive implementation plans** that are adapted as necessary to shifting contexts; in particular, undesignated funding allows programmes to innovate and to be sustainable because staff are being paid and delivery is therefore consistent
- Stronger MEL systems in terms of **data collection, data systems, and record-keeping**, which has resulted in evidence-based learning: “We know our organisation better statistically, and can now make better decisions driven by data...The organisation has changed its strategies since monitoring and evaluating its impact” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023)
- More **active networking and collaboration**, which has kept them motivated, helped them to learn and implement good practices, and helped them to collaborate to raise funds, to expand services, and to have more reach: “We now know the power of collaborations and collaborating for a good common goal.” (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2024)

“YOU CAN HAVE A MASSIVE IMPACT IF YOU WORK LIKE [TLT], WHEN YOU STRENGTHEN THE ORGANISATIONS ON THE GROUND AND WHEN YOU BUILD A STRONGER SECTOR, THAT CAN HAVE A MUCH GREATER IMPACT. WE’VE SEEN TLT’S ROLE ALSO IN, YOU KNOW, THE CATCH-UP COALITION AND HOW THAT MORPHED INTO THAT AMBANATI INITIATIVE. AND I THINK THEY’RE VERY RESPONSIVE. THEY LOOK AT WHAT IS NEEDED AND THEY SHAPE THE INITIATIVES AROUND THAT.”

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW, MAY, 2024

SECTOR BUILDING OUTCOMES

TLT’s work has contributed to building the ASP sector by supporting emerging organisations to become stronger and, thus, to grow (84% of survey respondents felt that TLT had supported their organisation to grow to a great extent or to some extent). TLT’s support has shown that grantees have expanded and increased their reach and impact, which means that there are more programmes and services available to more learners and young people in more places, and more impact is being made by the sector.

TLT has also, it is widely reported, contributed to increasing the visibility and credibility of the sector by professionalising the sector, co-developing sector standards, and building awareness of the value of ASPs so as to change perceptions that such programmes are just “nice to have”, but rather showing that they are important social justice interventions. They have also been demonstrating that the After School sector is a legitimate career pathway, and a sector that programmes can grow in. TLT facilitates scale-up of ASPs by growing organisations and by supporting collaborations that allow for scale-up, including, for example, acting as an intermediary to leverage national funding (Social Employment Fund) that has allowed ASPs to scale nationally and access funding mechanisms with rigid entry requirements that could not be accessed by many individual programmes on the ground.

“When you have well capacitated staff members, it strengthens the programmes, including taking pilots into fully fledged programme”

“We know our organisation better statistically, and can now make better decisions driven by data”

WHAT HAS ENABLED THE OUTCOMES?

“TLT is unique in that they give core unrestricted funding, as well as run their own capacity building and networking/sector building programmes, such as communities of practice and training.”
(Key informant interview, May, 2024)

The study found that TLT’s significant success is due to its unique and holistic model for developing organisations and supporting them to grow. This model also makes a significant contribution in building up the ASP sector, and scaling up ASP programmes and services quite rapidly. Recently, TLT has even managed to leverage government resources so ASPs are able to reach and impact on more and more learners and young people.

All organisations that participated in the study reflected that by TLT supporting them to develop their organisation, they are now strong, and this has allowed them to grow and expand, and thus have much more reach and impact. Key to TLT’s success has been the combination of the various types of support that they provide, for example more than three quarters (78.95%) of survey respondents noted that their organisations had grown “because of both the funding and capacity strengthening support (could not have happened to the same extent without both)”.

“Once an organisation has become a TLT grantee I think it gives them some value and currency that they carry with them.” (Staff focus group, April, 2024)

TLT FACILITATES SCALE-UP OF ASPs BY GROWING ORGANISATIONS AND BY SUPPORTING COLLABORATIONS THAT ALLOW FOR SCALE-UP, INCLUDING, FOR EXAMPLE, ACTING AS AN INTERMEDIARY TO LEVERAGE NATIONAL FUNDING (SOCIAL EMPLOYMENT FUND) THAT HAS ALLOWED ASPs TO SCALE NATIONALLY

“TLT positions themselves to assist the new and upcoming organisations. I don’t think I have seen a lot of funders taking that stance and really having that kind of interest. So, the number one for me is they listen to you, your concept, and if it fits well within the after-school kind of vision and activities, then you get that full support from the concept.” (Staff focus group, April, 2024)

Financial supporter: unique model of funding emerging ASP organisations with grants intended for developing and strengthening these organisations, and also covering core costs. These grants enable organisations who are not yet “funding-ready” to become so.

Mentor and motivator: TLT’s personalised mentorship of grantees which is responsive and proactive was highly valued as a key enabler of success “The hand-holding and their hands-on approach in supporting upcoming and new organisations for me, that is outstanding. And that is what we are really benefited from, from TLT.”

Door-opener, and a source of legitimacy: because TLT has a track record of investing in successful organisations, when a grantee has TLT funding, other donors and partners trust them by association. TLT also makes direct links between their grantees and possible funding opportunities and likely partners.

Sector builder (through strengthening and growing organisations, supporting collaborations, advocacy and research): Aside from growing organisations, TLT also runs capacity building and connecting events for grantees (a total of 88 over the evaluation period) including webinars, seminars, training sessions, and community of practice sessions. Grantees report huge benefit from these including successfully applying learnings and good practice to their own work, as well as staying motivated and inspired to keep on with their work even through challenging times.

TLT also directly supports collaborations, for example through the establishment and coordination of the Catch Up Coalition and TLT taking on the role of intermediary to access Social Employment Fund (SEF) money for a group of ASPs, which has allowed the scaling and improvement in quality delivery of ASP interventions, by providing consistent human resources. Research and advocacy efforts have also been successful to demonstrate the value of ASPs and to motivate for further funding and support for the sector.

“The connection with other NGOs allowed us as well to leverage from colleagues and the best practice and things that they were doing that we were not doing”

(Grantees focus group, 2024)

“[it is] inspiring and motivating and encourages to keep going, makes us feel ‘wow, we are doing great things so it’s really motivating.’”

(Grantees focus group, 2024)

RECOMMENDATIONS

PROGRAMME DESIGN

More generally, TLT might consider designing/categorising their interventions so that it is less “blanket” and has **more nuance for different “levels”** of maturity of organisations, or for different types of organisations/support (eg those in collaboration vs emerging vs those scaling, etc). This would also help organisations to understand what is expected or suitable for them at their “stage” of maturity - some mentioned that they would like more of an understanding of how they fit into TLT’s grant structures and decision-making.

In terms of the **one on one support**, this works best when it is well structured and consistent between TLT staff and grantees, with frequency based on the organisations’ needs, and a good plan driving the engagements, alongside consistent follow-up and adjustments to these plans, and careful handover of plans and information between TLT staff members.

GRANTMAKING

Grantees acknowledged that they are always needing more funding, and requested more support and clarity with regards to the different types of funds available from TLT, and also from other sources, including collaboration opportunities, for example leveraging government resources such as through SEF. TLT might consider developing an easy to use resource about this.

In addition, despite the nurturing partnership model, TLT is still a funder, and grantees can feel like they have to adhere to expectations from TLT - they mentioned that these can sometimes feel difficult to achieve, for example, short notice for requests for information or to attend events. They also expressed that there is not enough dialogue about certain requirements or decisions, and feel a need to comply even when it feels that realities on the ground have not been considered or understood adequately. On a similar note, grantees requested more support from TLT in their mentoring and advocacy capacity to be able to challenge and push back on other donors’ unrealistic expectations.

ADVOCACY AND SECTOR BUILDING

TLT’s traction in building the sector should be leveraged at this point. There are a number of considerations with regards to scaling programmes, which would reach more young people and in deeper ways, so as to have more impact:

- More **collaboration for scaling**: TLT should consider its collaboration strategy and types of support to different types of collaborations very carefully as this is a significant area in which to achieve impact. This applies to individual connections and also how TLT could play more of an intermediary role to leverage bigger pots of money and scale good practice models, eg SEF.

- There is a need to coordinate **sector level data** - this is helpful to design large scale projects and proposals, coordinate collaborations strategically, design standards for the sector, and for advocacy purposes
- Coordinate the development of **sector standards**, which are needed for good quality, high impact and formalisation of the sector and to build the confidence of investors and funders
- TLT could facilitate the development of **sector level advocacy products** to be used by the sector, in particular to advocate for after-school programmes to be accessible to all young people, and as a career path (and hence a job creation stream)
- TLT should continue its work to mobilise resources at sector level and to advocate for better grantmaking practice from funders to the sector
- Particularly for emerging organisations, and for collaborative ventures, TLT could pilot the model of using **central shared hubs for administrative and operational function** so that founders could focus on the work and on development of programmes, and have standard organisational functions taken care of by professionals that do not have to be on their permanent payroll. It is recommended that TLT look at models being run in the philanthropy sector and possibly pilot the model in the ASP.

INFORMATION IS POWER! BETTER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

TLT could benefit from improving its own institutional knowledge and knowledge management systems, and in line with the ASP needs. This could also assist to map for the future on all levels, and to identify what roles are needed and how to build the organisation and the sector towards a greater goal. The MEL system needs to be adapted to better reflect TLT’s sector building work, and to support the collecting and analysing of data and learning from grantees, and at sector level. This would require a technical and technological system review, and better shared MEL IT could assist in sector level data and knowledge generation. By improving on its own documentation of its systems and approach and processes, TLT could better share lessons and practices, for example amongst donors.

CONCLUSION

TLT has achieved exceptional outcomes because of its unique holistic model for supporting the ASP sector and ASP organisations. Their unusual funding model has proven to have incredible results and needs to be widely shared with other donors, including government. Better documentation of outcomes and impact would be beneficial for further possible uptake of such a model.

INTRODUCTION

This study documents the outcomes of The Learning Trust on the organisational development (OD) of the organisations that they supported between 2018 and 2022, and on the After School sector in general over that period.

Established in 2014, TLT has spent the last decade developing South Africa’s extended learning sector through the provision of funding and capacity support to After School Programmes (ASPs) that work to improve educational outcomes of young people living in underserved communities and exclusion. TLT works with organisations offering ASPs in the Western Cape, Eastern Cape and Gauteng, with a focus on emerging organisations.

TLT’s outcomes are mapped in a Theory of Change, which can be found in Appendix A. The outcomes and impact are as follows:

OUTCOME LEVEL	OUTCOMES
IMPACT	<p>Increased number of people in marginalised and under-resourced communities have the requisite competencies to succeed beyond school age</p> <p>ASPs are mainstreamed into the Education system</p>
SHORT TO MID TERM OUTCOMES	<p>Improved environment and structures to support After School sector collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved practitioner skills and grantee improvement in OD areas Improved coordination and participation in Community of Practices Successful advocacy campaigns and increased awareness of After School Increased resource mobilisation <p>More effective organisations providing child-centred, community-engaged ASPs to a wider pool of learners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased grantee and sector wide collaboration Increased sharing of working practice models
LONG TERM OUTCOMES	<p>Improved academic performance and socio-emotional learning amongst learners</p> <p>Increased access to holistic and quality ASPs</p> <p>Increased research into the value and Impact of ASPs</p> <p>Greater visibility and public recognition of After School</p>

TLT SUPPORTS INNOVATIVE, EARLY-STAGE AND COMMUNITY-BASED EDUCATION NONPROFITS

FOUR PILLARS OF SUPPORT

01 ACADEMIC SUPPORT

02 SPORTS AND RECREATION

03 ARTS AND CULTURE

04 LIFE SKILLS/PSYCHOSOCIAL

SUPPORT

TLT supports innovative, early-stage and community-based education nonprofits through:

- Modest financial support
- Workshops, seminars and one-on-ones
- Providing platforms for sharing and collaboration amongst ASPs that serve young people in underserved communities: facilitating and supporting various group learning forums, community mapping and facilitation
- Acting as an intermediary grantmaker and implementing agent for larger grants, at the moment for the Social Employment Fund (SEF), that leverages presidential employment stimulus and public funding to deploy large numbers of people into the After School sector to help resource suitable organisations to scale their models, increase their beneficiaries, and impact more children and communities.
- After School sector research
- Advocacy support activities.
- Building the capacities of emerging organisations offering ASPs through:
 - Focused training, mentorship and coaching in a variety of organisational development areas:
 1. vision, mission and strategy
 2. leadership and governance
 3. human resource management
 4. Monitoring and Evaluation and Learning (MEL)
 5. administration
 6. fundraising/resource mobilisation
 7. financial management and sustainability
 8. networking and collaboration
 9. communication and advocacy
 10. programme development

EVALUATION OVERVIEW

AIMS AND PURPOSES

The evaluation aimed to evaluate the outcomes of TLT's funding and capacity development support on the organisational development of the funded partners, and general outcomes on the sector, including collaborations and how these have affected organisations and the sector.

It is expected that these findings will be used by staff, funders, grantees, the Education department, and other ASP implementers to support their advocacy efforts, to improve TLT's programme implementation and strategy, and to support funders when making funding decisions.

EVALUATION APPROACH

The Impact Consulting team took the following approach to the assignment:

- The evaluation was theory-based – it tested to what extent the theory of change/goals and objectives are being realised on the ground, as well as any other effects that present, and suggest revisions to the theory based on the findings
- The evaluation was participatory – there was engagement with stakeholders through all phases
- The evaluation was inclusive in terms of both external and internal stakeholders
- The evaluation had a 'realist' lens – not only looking at "what works?" and "what does not work?", but "what works for whom, in what contexts, and how?"
- The evaluation was utilisation-focused – aiming to produce findings and follow processes that are useful and build capacity through participation.

To achieve the participatory aspect of the evaluation, we worked closely with TLT programme and MEL staff, who were engaged at all points in the evaluation, most notably for: participatory planning, data collection and reflection, and participatory analysis

DESIGN, METHODS AND PARTICIPANTS

The evaluation used a mixed methods design - working with both primary and secondary qualitative and quantitative data. The data used includes:

- desk review
 - data from TLT's Salesforce database covering 58 grantees who met the sample selection criteria (ie who have been funded for over two years between 2018 and 2022)
 - documents and reports from TLT
- online survey completed by 19 grantees within the sample selection criteria
- focus groups with 12 grantees
- five key informant interviews with sectoral partners
- two reflection workshops with 12 members of TLT staff.

In collaboration with TLT staff, the report focuses on OD outcomes data. Although other data was initially analysed, and all data was analysed according to grantee demographic variables (such as geography, size of grant, thematic pillar, level of maturity of organisation, etc), no interesting or noteworthy results emerged from this analysis. Therefore, this has not been reported here.

FINDINGS

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OUTCOMES

The evaluation found that there have been significant positive changes in the development of organisations in terms of all ten key OD areas and organisations note that TLT has directly contributed to these changes.

As can be seen in the graph on the next page, survey respondents feel that TLT has contributed to all of the 10 key organisational outcomes to a great extent or to some extent. There was the most positive response to the contribution that TLT made to supporting organisations' vision, mission and strategy, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) capacity, and networking and collaboration. Communication and advocacy functions had the "least" contribution from TLT, and administration functions had the most answers that were "not much" or "not at all".

TLT support has been holistic and positively affected organisations on many interacting levels, for example: "After we received trainings and were capacitated through fundraising, and taught how to manage our finances, how to write proposals: we managed to receive more funding, building another class with a small office space and kitchen. TLT also helped us expand our programmes...Through TLT we managed to employ six staff members that are rendering services to our children daily" (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2024).

TLT has helped my organisation with...

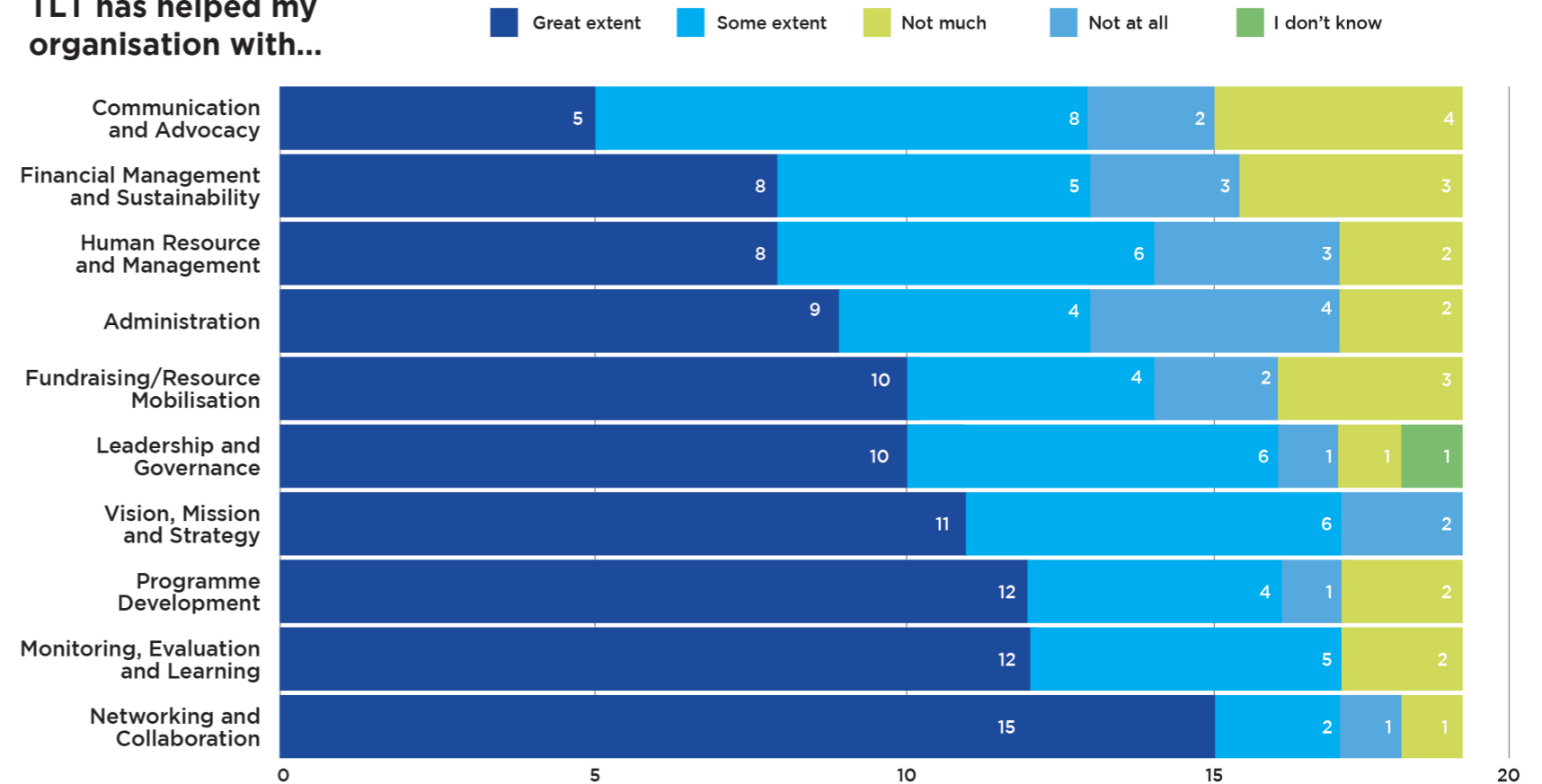


Figure 1: Perceptions of the extent to which TLT's support has improved organisational development of grantees (survey response)

“After we received trainings and were capacitated through fundraising, and taught how to manage our finances, how to write proposals: we managed to receive more funding, building another class with a small office space and kitchen. TLT also helped us expand our programmes...Through TLT we managed to employ six staff members that are rendering services to our children daily.”



A description of the outcomes that were reported by evaluation participants in each organisational development area follows.

IMPROVEMENTS IN VISION, MISSION AND STRATEGY

“TLT has helped us to rework and/or refine our aims, objectives, mission and vision statements. They have helped us in articulating them better” (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2024).

Outcomes in this area were very much attributed to TLT’s support: of the 19 grantees, 89% felt that TLT had contributed to improvements in this area “to a great extent / to some extent”. Organisations reported that they have gained clarity about their purpose, and are better able to articulate it. In addition, they have been supported to make sure that their work is responding to the context and is relevant.

Organisations have been able to develop clearer and more focused strategies because of refining their vision and mission, and to align their practices and activities accordingly. Ultimately, having stronger strategies and more focused interventions are helping some organisations to increase their reach and to have more impact.

Mainly, grantees reported that TLT’s support has helped them to clearly articulate what they are trying to achieve and how they are going to do so, which has helped to market their work to stakeholders such as parents/ caregivers to gain buy-in, and also to funders.

Because they are analysing their contexts and responding, organisations are better able to meet the needs of those they serve. One organisation notes that they “added activities [to address] Gender Based Violence as part of our services” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023).

Another strategic shift that was reported is that some organisations have become more collaborative and this has also, in some cases, increased the activities that they are able to provide to their target groups, for example, “We only used to offer meals and academics, but we were able to collaborate with more organisations and now offer activities like basketball, tennis and arts” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2024).

68%

of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations vision, mission and strategy



“WE ONLY USED TO OFFER MEALS AND ACADEMICS, BUT WE WERE ABLE TO COLLABORATE WITH MORE ORGANISATIONS AND NOW OFFER ACTIVITIES LIKE BASKETBALL, TENNIS AND ARTS”

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE SHIFTS

“Leadership and governance ensure that the system and programme operate fairly, transparently, and in the best interest of the people. Effective leadership inspires, motivates, and guides individuals and groups towards common goals” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2024).

Of the 19 survey respondents, 84% feel that TLT had contributed to strengthening leadership and governance functions in their organisations “to a great extent / to some extent”. Strong leadership and governance is vital for organisations to be effective, efficient and if they want to grow and be sustainable.

Leaders in organisations report that they gained a lot of skills from TLT’s leadership training, and note that this support has helped them to develop and improve their management systems, including being better able to delegate well and manage staff. An important shift has been the devolving of management responsibilities: “As many founding directors we forget to delegate duties and want to do things on our own, but TLT has assisted in developing leadership roles within the organisation” (Grantee focus group, February, 2024). This, along with the development and implementation of leadership succession plans is an essential and significant outcome for organisations to grow and become sustainable.

TLT has supported improvements in governance and hence strengthened the integrity of organisations. For example, respondents reported benefits from developing and improving their policies: “The policies are now updated and makes life easier in running the organisation” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023). In addition, some organisations have reviewed the roles of their Board because of TLT’s input and note that “TLT encouraged us to engage with board members so that they can become active and knowledgeable on their duties and responsibilities” (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2024). Board meetings are now taking place more regularly in some organisations and more involved Board members are playing a valuable role in organisations, for example a respondent reports how he has learnt to “...ensure that the board is active in the work that one is doing, which has been of great assistance for us because that keeps us accountable as the operational staff” (Grantees focus group, February, 2024).

Increased understanding about governance has helped organisations to be compliant with necessary regulations and laws, for example organisations report:

- submitting timeous reports to the Department of Social Development
- gaining tax clearance and being compliant with the South African Revenue Service (SARS)
- adhering to labour laws
- establishing structures and policies that are in line with necessary legal compliance.

“THE POLICIES ARE NOW UPDATED AND MAKES LIFE EASIER IN RUNNING THE ORGANISATION”

84%

of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations leadership and governance

74%

of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations improved HR management

IMPROVED HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) MANAGEMENT

Of the 19 survey respondents, 74% felt that TLT had contributed to them improving their HR management “to a great extent / to some extent”.

Linked with governance, and specifically related to Human Resources, is that organisations have improved their HR policies and procedures, and some report that they now have employment and even volunteer contracts in place, and have implemented labour practices that are legally compliant, including registering their staff for Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2023). Improvements in staff contract

templates include the integration of codes of conduct, and several organisations also reported that they gained better skills and processes regarding payroll and administration because of TLT’s support.

Grantees have more knowledge and experience to deal with employee/volunteer matters, which has impacted organisations’ ability to manage staff well, for example one grantee shared: “we lost a lot of money losing cases at CCMA, but due to TLT guidance this stopped” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023). Another example is how increased knowledge on human resource management has improved organisations’ “understanding about how to enhance employees’ satisfaction” (Survey respondent, KZN, 2023).

A fundamental value-add of the grant funding received by grantees is that staff and volunteers are being remunerated, which creates jobs and sustains services. One grantee stated that: “the stipend is not only for appreciation, but also to give them [staff] hope, encouragement to keep them going to help our children of our community.” (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2023).

The SEF project provides additional human resource capacity to many of the grantees which enables the expansion of services to learners. A grantee also described that “When you have well capacitated staff members, it strengthens the programmes, including taking pilots into fully fledged programmes” (Grantee focus group, April, 2024).



BETTER FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY

“We manage our finances by keeping the records of all our monthly expenditures and auditing them with financial auditors annually. We couldn’t be able do this without the help of TLT because [through the grant] they pay for our financial auditors” (Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2023)

Of the survey respondents, 68% felt that TLT had contributed to positive changes in their organisational financial management and sustainability “to a great extent” or “to some extent”.

68%
of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations better financial management and sustainability

Organisations are more financially accountable, through putting into place more transparent systems regarding management of funds and better record-keeping and financial reporting processes. Some organisations produce annual financial statements and audits, which they did not before. There is also more capacity in organisations for financial management in terms of staff members who are now responsible for this function. The automation of payrolls have saved significant amounts of staff time: “but today through TLT we were able to train admin staff on how to use Sage payroll software, our life became more easier” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023).

Funding from TLT has helped organisations to sustain their programmes, for example they have been able to pay staff, which has led to the consistent delivery of their programmes: “my staff get paid by TLT [grant]; without it, they will get nothing” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023). Several organisations have even become self-sustainable social enterprises, rather than being donor-dependent.



BETTER ADMINISTRATION

“Record keeping and information archiving has taken priority. We have now developed a structure to assist in administration regards. Our administration is linked to Monitoring and Evaluation.” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023)

Of the 19 grantees, 68% felt that TLT had contributed to improving their organisational administration ‘to a great extent’ or ‘to some extent’. Improvements have mostly been related to grantees having more accurate records and files and information, which in turn, they report, has led to them producing better narrative and financial reports, writing better proposals, and improving their MEL function. They also report that they “can submit annual reports and audited financial statements.” (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2024)

Focus group participants noted that they have put systems in place that are leading to more efficiency programmatically and administratively (Grantee focus group, April, 2024)

68%
of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations better administration



MORE EXTERNAL COMMUNICATION AND MORE ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES

68%

of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations external communication and advocacy activities

Of the 19 survey respondents, 68% felt that TLT had contributed to this outcome “to a great extent” or “to some extent”.

In terms of communicating with stakeholders, TLT’s support has helped organisations to improve their use of social media platforms, and some are now more regularly and effectively engaging with stakeholders online. In addition, they report that they have improved their websites and their communication about and marketing of their work and services. All of these improvements have helped them to be more connected with stakeholders, and better able to attract funding.

Grantees mentioned that they have learnt a lot about how to use social media and how to develop effective advocacy campaigns and activities from other organisations, and that this peer learning was enabled by TLT - for example through being part of the TLT communities of practice. In addition, being part of ASP coalitions that TLT has supported has had a significant effect in raising awareness of the importance of ASPs. Grantees also mentioned that they have been involved in advocating for children’s rights to literacy, with TLT support. Their skills and understanding of how to advocate have improved from these experiences, and from other organisations and by being given tools and advice from TLT staff as well as through webinars that TLT has arranged on the topic.



MORE EFFECTIVE FUNDRAISING AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

74%

of survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to their organisations effective fundraising and resource mobilisation

“With the different workshops and events we attended through TLT we have managed to amp up our fundraising campaigns, and it helped us a lot in giving new ideas and ways on how we can go about with different ways of fundraising.” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023)

Of the 19 survey respondents, 74% felt that TLT had contributed to their ability to fundraise and mobilise resources “to a great extent” or “to some extent”.

The main achievement in this area has been that TLT has helped organisations to develop fundraising strategies and methods to secure funding from other sources, including developing annual fundraising calendars. TLT’s assistance with fundraising event planning was noted as very valuable to grantees, as well as TLT connecting and linking grantees to funding sources, including SEF. They also mentioned that the grant has increased their capacity to fundraise by being able to pay dedicated people to work on fundraising.

TLT has also helped organisations to “identify resource needs as well as potential strategies for meeting the needs”, frame their work differently, for example “as an act of social justice and not just a nice to have”, and helped them partner to raise funds.

“WITH THE DIFFERENT WORKSHOPS AND EVENTS WE ATTENDED THROUGH TLT WE HAVE MANAGED TO AMP UP OUR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGNS, AND IT HELPED US A LOT IN GIVING NEW IDEAS AND WAYS ON HOW WE CAN GO ABOUT WITH DIFFERENT WAYS OF FUNDRAISING.”

ENHANCED PROGRAMME DEVELOPMENT

“Better strategies were devised to better suit programme needs and enhance our mission as an organisation. The organisation also was able to shift and establish more programmes that address today’s trending societal ills” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023).

There have been many outcomes in terms of grantees’ improving their programmes. These include better alignment of programmes with organisational vision and strategy, incorporation of good practices that they learn from other organisations, better and more formal planning, and more streamlined processes and systems. In addition, organisations are now doing more research when designing programme activities or approaches which is improving the quality of programme activities and services, for example one organisation describes how “our staff are able to do research and learn more skills to prepare activities for our children through the internet, and to introduce other learning techniques to our children, such as educational games, arts and craft, mathematics play”.

Three quarters (74%) of survey respondents felt that TLT helped them with the design of their programmes “to a great extent” or “to some extent”, for example by helping with the development of programme models. The security of having ongoing undesignated funding means that programmes can be innovative, and also responsive and to adapt to the context as needed, for example during COVID. New methods and opportunities can also be explored and tried out without limitations, and adopted if they work or dropped if not.



74%
of survey respondents felt that TLT helped them with the design of their programmes

This has led to grantees adding programme areas to meet emerging needs of their beneficiaries. Psychosocial support is an addition that many programmes are adding, but evaluation participants also reported adding literacy, sports, arts and culture, computer literacy, child protection processes, amongst others, and to develop more programme systems including stronger MEL systems, child protection processes, etc. The following case story illustrates a change in programme design based on learning from another organisation, and the effects this has had.

CASE STORY: CHANGING PROGRAMME DESIGN

An organisation working with learners and the arts who had recently begun their relationship with TLT, was introduced by TLT to a similar, very well established organisation, and they were invited to visit and participate in their creative programme.

“So we went there, we did the art activities, and we realised through [participating in] the programme that we can actually be very intentional about using art as therapy in our community. And when you speak about art in that manner it becomes of value. So even when you speak to people about the arts, people in our communities just think that you’re just going to play, but they don’t really see the value behind it. So, to have had access to that opportunity, it enabled us to say “It’s not just art, we actually bring healing through art’. It’s helped us to shape our programme in a manner such that we are not looking for artists, we are using art as a tool to heal. So it also becomes inclusive.”



Almost all (89%) felt that TLT helped them “to a great extent” or “to some extent” with implementing their programmes. The grants were the most helpful in this regard, because they have been able to hire staff: “the funding has gone a long way into mostly our human resources, which we will not be able to afford without TLT’s funding” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023). Grantees also mentioned the value of the personalised support provided by TLT that assisted them to plan implementation well, and to adjust these plans as needed.

In terms of sustaining their programme activities, of the 19 survey respondents, almost all (89%) felt that TLT had contributed to this outcome “to a great extent” or “to some extent”. Again, this was because of the secure resourcing that allow programmes to continue, and also because of the knowledge they gained from TLT activities about how to sustain programmes. Organisations also reflected that the support and motivation from TLT was essential to keep them going and to develop sustainable programmes:

“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.” (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2023)

89%
of survey respondents felt that TLT helped to implement their programmes



“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.”

STRONGER MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

“WE KNOW OUR ORGANISATION BETTER STATISTICALLY, AND CAN NOW MAKE BETTER DECISIONS DRIVEN BY DATA... THE ORGANISATION HAS CHANGED ITS STRATEGIES SINCE MONITORING AND EVALUATING ITS IMPACT”

SURVEY RESPONDENT, GAUTENG, 2023

Of the 19 survey respondents, almost all (89%) felt that TLT had contributed to strengthening their MEL functions “to a great extent” or “to some extent”.

TLT has supported organisations to improve their data collection and their keeping of records and documents. Better data is allowing organisations to engage in evidence-based learning and they are also more able to evaluate their programmes (74% of respondents felt that TLT had contributed to this outcome “to a great extent / to some extent”) because they have developed MEL strategies and methods that have led to many of them gathering feedback from programme participants and other stakeholders regularly. Knowing their own impact/outcomes and effectiveness, and having evidence of this, has greatly improved their credibility which “has increased access to more opportunities” (Survey respondent, Gauteng, 2023). They are also able to share good practices and effective methods that are proven to have good results.

Some organisations are now using technology to assist with MEL, and systems that have been adopted include Salesforce and, with great results, the Teampact attendance tracking system. Teampact has allowed organisations to “keep track of our learners’ data in a more efficient way, we are now able to track the learners’ activity from inception with the programme all the way through to the end and beyond once they have left school for higher education”. (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2024)

89%
of survey respondents felt that TLT helped strengthen their MEL systems

MORE COLLABORATION AND NETWORKING

“We now know the power of collaborations and collaborating for a good common goal.” (Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2024)

Survey respondents felt that TLT had contributed to them engaging in networking and collaborating with others, with 89% of survey respondents saying that TLT had contributed to this “to a great extent” or “to some extent”.

Grantees report that they are collaborating with universities, other NGOs, government, TVET institutions, and schools. There are many examples of specific collaborations in TLT’s Salesforce database. Many collaborations that are listed are for the purpose of expanding offerings to their beneficiaries, so an organisation partners with another organisation that can provide a literacy programme or IT training to their beneficiaries, or parenting programmes or career guidance, or food packages. Collaborations include sharing of academic material or curriculums, and working with organisations who provide training for staff.

89%
of survey respondents felt that TLT helped them engage and collaborate with others

Also, grantees report working with partners who they can refer their beneficiaries to if issues arise that need special support. In addition, some organisations’ programmes or models are being implemented by other organisations in different locations. A few organisations mentioned working with others on arts collectives or arts festivals.

An example is: “We have partnered with an NPO to coordinate our career guidance component as an organisation. This aids in providing quality career guidance and mentorship, which is an area where we do not have expertise nor the capacity.” (Grant application, Gauteng, 2023)



CASE STORY: STAFF RECEIVING TRAINING FROM A PARTNER ORGANISATION

“It was an NLP programme that we attended, and we created a relationship, a strong relationship with the organisation running it. We take our facilitators to go and take part in the programme, so that they can have better emotional intelligence, so that they can manage themselves better. You want somebody who can lead themselves well when you’re running an organisation.

That’s how it helped us to strengthen our team, and even myself from a leadership perspective...I learned that, actually, if you’re going to solve a problem you need to create a system that allows people to be human, you know. And still today we are able to talk, we are able to address issues in a healthy manner because of that programme that another organisation offered to us.”

(Grantee focus group, April, 2024)



OUTCOMES REGARDING SECTOR BUILDING

“You can have a massive impact if you work like [TLT], when you strengthen the organisations on the ground and when you build a stronger sector, that can have a much greater impact. We’ve seen TLT’s role also in, you know, the Catch-up Coalition and how that morphed into that Ambanati initiative. And I think they’re very responsive. They look at what is needed and they shape the initiatives around that.” (Grantee focus group, April, 2024)

TLT’s work has contributed to building the ASP sector by incubating nascent organisations that show good potential for impact and growth, and supporting them to become stronger and to grow. TLT’s support of their growth has shown that they are able to expand and increase their reach and impact. This means that the overall reach of ASPs is improving, and there are more programmes and services available to learners and young people, and more impact being made by the sector.

INCREASE IN REACH AND IMPACT THROUGH GROWING ASP ORGANISATIONS

Almost all (84%) of survey respondents felt that TLT had supported their organisation to grow to a great extent or to some extent. This growth is attributed to long term secure funding as well as capacity building and mentoring support.

Growth has been explained as:

- expansion of programme offerings and services, for example providing financial literacy programmes, interview training, support to get drivers’ licences and other things to make them more employable, support for specialist interests
- geographic expansion and having more sites of service
- growth in organisational staff
- reaching a wider pool of beneficiaries and different target groups, for example from reaching less than 100 children to now 800, and moving into lower or higher grades.

“Through the grants received, we have managed to expand the programmes to three different provinces and this allowed us to be able to have more visibility nationwide as an organisation”.

Survey respondent, KZN, 2023

“As a member of TLT, we were able to greatly expand our after-school programme. We added more tutors, schools, and learners which allowed us to reach more disadvantaged communities and help them with their studies. Thanks to this expansion, we were able to make a bigger impact and touch the lives of more learners who needed our support.”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“We had been facing difficulties in obtaining funding for our After School programme before joining TLT. However, after becoming a part of TLT, we were able to secure a five-year funding round. This has made our programme more sustainable and provided us with the opportunity for expansion. In the third year of our programme, we...expand[ed] to three different provinces.”

Staff focus group, April, 2024

“We introduced a boys-specific programme to compliment our existing girl-focused After School programmes”

Survey respondent, Eastern Cape, 2023

“We were able to run more creative arts clubs because of TLT funding received”

Survey respondent, Western Cape, 2023

“Our beneficiary reach has tripled from the first time we started working with TLT, we are now capable and confident to reach more learners, our programme has now grown to ECD centres and high schools”

Key Informant interview, May, 2024

“Before TLT, we had approximately 150 learners in Gauteng province alone. After implementing TLT, this number increased to over 1,700 learners in two additional provinces: Mpumalanga and KwaZulu Natal”.

Grantee focus group, April 2024

INCREASING THE VISIBILITY AND CREDIBILITY OF THE AFTER SCHOOL SECTOR

Participants noted the huge value of TLT actively building awareness of the value of ASPs, they are changing perceptions that such programmes are just as “nice to haves” and showing that they are, instead, important social justice interventions. They have also been demonstrating that the After School sector is a legitimate career pathway, and a sector that programmes can grow in.

“After school programmes were kind of just seen as like small little manana, like doesn’t really matter kind of things, you know?”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“I’ve been in the sector for so many years and there’s a sense of ‘After School’ that wasn’t happening 10 years ago. So I think TLT has been really influential in that”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“The January 2024 symposium had 180 organisers or representatives from 140 or 150 organisations across the country. So there is a sector there in terms of the organisations and the growing network and relationships.”

Key informant interview, May, 2024

Although this aspect of TLT’s work needs to be grown, they have had some contribution towards quantifying the work of the sector - this is necessary to be able to answer questions of potential investors and necessary partners, including government.

TLT’s work is professionalising the sector, improving quality of programmes and implementation, and co-creating quality sectoral standards. The standards are important to advise policy and to advocate for ASPs to be supported by government. A position paper, for example, has been released about how SEF volunteers are adding value to the ASP sector, and TLT has been sharing information on social media, and producing learning briefs after Communities of Practice (COPs) which are shared.

FACILITATING THE SCALE-UP OF ASPS

TLT is clear that scale is depth and not just breadth. In addition, TLT values the emergence of local and small programmes, to make sure that implementation is at a local level, and that contextually appropriate solutions and interventions are being developed.

Sectorally, they bring different people together and contribute to an ASP sector “system... like a really great pipeline of really strong organisations that you can reach out to this really strong After School sector.” TLT has invested in and contributed to collaboration in the After School sector that has resulted in far-reaching impact and growth in the sector.

One of the new models for scaling and building the sector that TLT has been testing, and has achieved much success with, is to act as an intermediary for the ASP sector to be able to access large funds that enabled national roll-out, in this case SEF resources. Funding mechanisms have very rigid entry requirements that can’t be accessed by many individual programmes on the ground, the intermediary role is a strategic one that facilitates scale-up and further builds the sector through collaboration and working together with some standards.

“IT DOESN’T MAKE SENSE FOR GOVERNMENT TO WORK UNDER A CERTAIN LEVEL OF SCALE, AND THERE ARE VERY FEW NONPROFITS THAT CAN MEET THAT LEVEL OF SCALE...THE ROLE THAT THE LEARNING TRUST CAN PLAY WHERE YOU HAVE AN INTERFACE FOR LIAISING WITH GOVERNMENT OR BIG FUNDERS FOR THAT MATTER, LIKE STUFF AT SCALE...AND BEING AN AVENUE FOR ALL THE SMALLER ORGANISATIONS TO BE PART OF A COALITION SO THAT THEY CAN ACTUALLY DO THE PLACE-BASED FOCUSED, COMMUNITY CONNECTED WORK...AND THEN AS A COLLECTIVE, BEING ABLE TO DELIVER AT SCALE.”

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW, MAY, 2024

“I think that that’s genius because that’s the only money that government’s going to be spending, right? Like everything else is the fiscuses, it is constrained and budgets are shrinking, but youth jobs are something that just has to happen [in terms of government funding]. There’s strong political buy-in for it. So it’s pretty genius that that’s how you access not only government funding, but also a whole army of young people who can deliver these programmes.”

Key informant interview, May, 2024

“What’s interesting with these public employment programmes, though, is that this is billions of rands for stipends but hardly any money for training and mentoring, which is really needed for any kind of programme delivery to have quality. It’s also an amazing opportunity for philanthropy to get a bigger return on its spend.”

Key informant interview, May, 2024

TLT had the first partnership with the Western Cape government, which led to other provincial governments recognising that After School programmes are making a difference. TLT has now taken over the ASP symposium that the Western Cape government previously ran and has made this national. This symposium sends a very strong message about the after school sector, and TLT’s role in it. TLT is perceived to have played an important role in supporting government to be more receptive to ASPs, and for ASPs to be more receptive to working with government: “They have cut the bias that runs both ways”.



CASE STORY: EXAMPLE OF SCALING THROUGH THE SHARING OF A GOOD PRACTICE MODEL

In partnership with TLT, an organisation provided their well established and tested programme to other organisations to implement at schools. They provided interested organisations with all necessary programme materials, and trained them in how to effectively implement the programme and use the materials .

“There’s scaling there...by being brought together, we implement the programme in many places, there’s scaling of an efficient programme.”

“That’s such a...well designed programme with a track record. So there’s no reason why it cannot be introduced in other places - small towns close to us probably don’t have it.”

Upon reflection, a key learning in terms of the success of this scale-up model was that there were perhaps not “strict enough” implementation instructions or model protocols, nor enough monitoring to make sure that the model was being implemented according to the instructions. It was also found that implementing partners needed more support to implement than the trainers had envisaged: **“It hasn’t been as ‘pick up and run’ as we had thought.”**

(Key informant interview, May 2024)

OUTCOME ENABLERS

“TLT is unique in that they give core unrestricted funding, as well as run their own capacity building and networking/sector building programmes, such as communities of practice and training.” (Key informant interview, May, 2024)

The study found that TLT’s significant success is due to its unique and holistic model for developing organisations and supporting them to grow. This model also makes a significant contribution in building up the ASP sector, and scaling up ASP programmes and services quite rapidly. Recently, TLT has even managed to leverage government resources so ASPs are able to reach and impact on more and more learners and young people.

TLT plays various roles that all contribute to what they have been able to achieve - and their achievements are even more impressive when considering that the organisation is a small one. It is clear from the findings that TLT’s unusual model is highly effective, and it is very important that they better track and document their impact, and share their approach with other funders and with those trying to support or achieve impact at scale.

The evaluation findings indicate that the key to TLT’s success has been the combination of the various types of support that they provide. All organisations that participated in the study reflected that by TLT supporting them to develop their organisation, they are now strong, and this has allowed them to grow and expand, and thus have much

more reach and impact. Grantees were very clear that this would not have happened if they had been given funding only, that it was the combination of funding and capacity strengthening support that led to these results. These opinions during qualitative enquiry were mirrored in the survey responses, with more than three quarters (78.95%) of respondents noting that their organisations had grown “because of both the funding and capacity strengthening support (could not have happened to the same extent without both).”

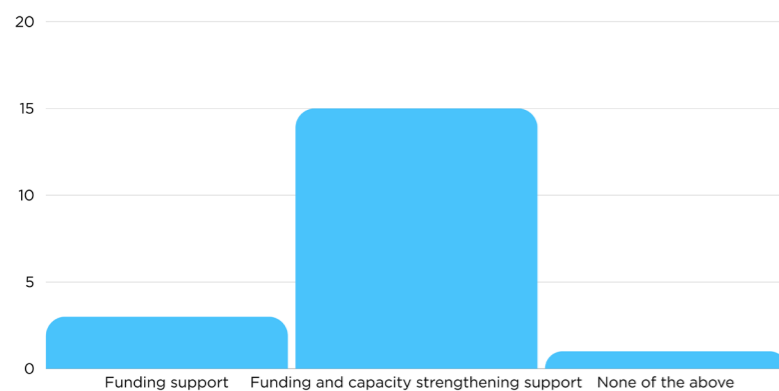


Figure 2: Survey responses regarding organisational growth

The key enabling roles that TLT plays were identified as:

1. Financial supporter
2. Mentor and motivator
3. Door-opener, and a source of legitimacy
4. Sector builder through strengthening and growing organisations, supporting collaborations, advocacy and research

FINANCIAL SUPPORTER

TLT’s funding approach is very unique, and this study shows that it is incredibly effective and has excellent outcomes. TLT provides long term grants (over a number of years, usually five) to emerging organisations who offer After School programmes. The grants are for the development and strengthening of these organisations, and also cover core operational costs. These grants enable organisations who are not yet “funding-ready” to become so. Focus group participants noted that most funders focus on funding programme activities, and want all organisational pieces in place before they will fund these operational/core costs. However, smaller organisations and emerging organisations really need their operating expenses to be covered, and TLT meets this very real need that then has such significant ripple impact.

“THIS KIND OF “CATALYTIC FUNDING” IS MUCH APPRECIATED AND NECESSARY IF YOU’RE STARTING A MOVEMENT AND [THE FUNDING] IS NOT NECESSARILY ONCE-OFF, ONE YEAR OR A SIX MONTH INTERVENTION... [LONGER TERM FUNDING] REALLY CREATES LONG-TERM...SUCCESS STORIES”.

(KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW, MAY, 2024)

“Often the youth development people are passionate, like sports people, that’s... their skill, their drive... but they’re not necessarily fundraisers or organisational developers.”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“Who else will be able to fund an organisation that has never received funding? No matter how small the fund, at least it gives you that ability to be able to start and consolidate your programmes on the ground.”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“TLT positions themselves to assist the new and upcoming organisations. I don’t think I have seen a lot of funders taking that stance and really having that kind of interest. So, the number one for me is they listen to you, your concept, and if it fits well within the after-school kind of vision and activities, then you get that full support from the concept.”

Staff focus group, April, 2024

So TLT helps to employ those with expertise to do these things – a funder who pays for MEL managers or skilled managers are ‘really invested in your development as an organisation’

Staff focus group, April 2024

MENTOR AND MOTIVATOR

TLT are fondly and gratefully called ‘nurturers’ by grantees. Their personalised mentorship of grantees, and the responsive and proactive nature of this support is extremely highly valued by grantees, and was reported to be a key enabler of success for organisations. A strong relationship between TLT staff and the partner organisation is perceived by grantees to really drive their success and outcomes. On the flip side, when there is a turnover of TLT staff or a more distant relationship, organisational development is slower and more difficult. (Grantees focus group, April, 2024)

“You can always go to their offices and they’ll be, you know, always willing to listen to your needs and try to help you as best as possible. And sometimes they even source people from other entities, you know, just to just to make sure that they give you the best possible care”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“There’s a song in isZulu that we sing, a gospel song that we sing that always comes to my mind when you ask me about The Learning Trust, is that ‘Wangthata la (gesturing with hands to indicate DOWN),wangibeka la (hands gesturing UP): it took us from nowhere and it put us to somewhere’”.

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“[TLT staff member is] a lovely sounding board...if I go to her with any questions, she doesn’t give me the answers but she guides me. So, it’s been really lovely to have someone of her skill to be able to have it as a sounding board...We don’t really need to explain to her a lot, like what we’re doing, because she kind of knows it because she’s often there [onsite] and sees what’s going on. So you don’t need to have big reports and trying to say, ‘Actually, this is what we’re doing’.”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“LONG TERM FUNDING IS UNUSUAL AND SO NECESSARY, IT BRINGS SECURITY AND PROPER PLANNING”

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW, MAY, 2024

“THEY SEE WHAT’S GOING ON. THEY KNOW, THEY KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING ON THE GROUND.”

GRANTEE FOCUS GROUP, APRIL 2024

DOOR-OPENER, AND A SOURCE OF LEGITIMACY

TLT connects organisations with funding opportunities that match their work and their ability to receive the specific funds. They help organisations to meet compliance requirements to get other funds, put them in touch with bigger funding opportunities, as well as foster collaborations and coalitions that can attract and access these bigger funding opportunities.

Being a TLT grantee gives organisations credibility because TLT has a solid and well established reputation and they have proven that they invest in successful projects. This allows emerging organisations to be taken seriously in the sector and by funders.

“That helped from a credibility point of view, you know, like we could talk to other donors and say, look, these guys are already sort of quite well respected in the sector. And they’re a core partner or key partner in the project.”

(Key informant interview, May, 2024)

“Once an organisation has become a TLT grantee I think it gives them some value and currency that they carry with them. When an organisation becomes a TLT grantee, it gives them a heads up that they are doing something, and they just need to get to a different stage for greater impact.”

(Staff focus group, April, 2024)

“I WAS SO FRUSTRATED WITH THE SPACE, YOU KNOW, I THINK I WAS DRAINED BECAUSE WE HAD TO KEEP THE ORGANISATION MOVING DURING COVID SO THAT WE DON’T LOSE FUNDING. SO THAT WAS THE HIGHEST MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB. AND THEN AFTER COVID, I WAS SO TIRED. I WAS LIKE, ‘YOU KNOW WHAT? I’M LEAVING THE SPACE, I’M GOING BACK TO ACADEMICS, YOU KNOW, I’M GOING BACK TO SCHOOL. I’M LEAVING AND I DON’T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE AFTERSCHOOL SPACE OR THE INTERNAL SPACE. I JUST WANT TO FOCUS ON ACADEMICS.’ AND MY BOSS WAS REALLY NOT HAPPY AND THE BOARD ALSO WAS NOT HAPPY THAT I’M LEAVING. AND THEN THEY HAD TO TALK TO ONE OF THE TLT COORDINATORS WHO WAS WORKING CLOSELY WITH US AND WORKED CLOSELY WITH ME....SO I REMEMBER I WAS SITTING DOWN THERE AND THE TLT MEMBER KEPT ON EMPHASISING AND TRYING TO PAINT A PICTURE OF WHERE THE SPACE IS AND HOW MUCH AM I NEEDED IN THE SPACE TO MOVE THE SPACE FORWARD... AND THEN I HAD TO CHANGE MY DECISION AND SAY, ‘OKAY, FINE, I’M REMAINING IN THE SPACE.’

I’M TRYING TO PAINT A PICTURE OF HOW TLT KIND OF LIKE HOLDS YOU BY THE HAND, EVEN WITH SOME ORGANISATIONAL ISSUES THAT MIGHT BE BEYOND THE CEO, MIGHT BE BEYOND THE BOARD.”

(GRANTEE FOCUS GROUP, APRIL, 2024)

BUILDING THE SECTOR

TLT has been instrumental in sector building by strengthening and connecting organisations, supporting collaboration, advocacy and research.

“TLT is not just a funder, it’s an intermediary, but also a developer of the sector”
(Key informant interview, May, 2024)

“They strengthen organisations on the ground and when you build a stronger sector, that can have a much greater impact”
(Key informant interview, May, 2024)

Over the evaluation period, in addition to individualised mentoring, TLT ran a number of capacity building and connection sessions, as summarised in the table below:

Type of event	Number of events between 2018 and 2022
Seminars	6
Webinars	12
Learning Cafes	5
Directors’ events	4
Alumni events	4
Practitioner trainings	8
Practitioner masterclasses	6
Community of practice (CoP) sessions	33
MEL events	10
TOTAL	88

CONNECTING ORGANISATIONS

Alongside TLT directly linking and connecting organisations with each other, they convene CoP sessions with their grantees. These have been very well received and have resulted in many positive outcomes. More than three quarters (77.8%) of survey respondents reported that they felt that the CoPs contained a lot of relevant content, and noted that they were always educational and informative. More established organisations did not find the CoPs to be as helpful as the more recently established organisations. Still, even established organisations learned different practices from each other, and the grantees mentioned that they really enjoyed learning from each other. Importantly, grantees reflected that the CoPs have been very important to them because they serve to inspire and motivate them, and for many this was pivotal to them continuing with the work when it is challenging.

“The connection with other NGOs allowed us as well to leverage from colleagues and the best practice and things that they were doing that we were not doing”
(Grantees focus group, 2024).

“[it is] inspiring and motivating and encourages to keep going, makes us feel ‘wow, we are doing great things so it’s really motivating.”
(Grantees focus group, 2024)

“Getting out there in those learning circles and listening into those sessions, especially to well-established organisations, you know, and you really kind of, it makes you continue to dream more, to aspire to be wanting to be sustainable, more findable, in order to be more fundable”
(Grantees focus group, February, 2024)

During CoPs, organisations have shared good practices amongst themselves, and identified how to build local solutions. For many grantees, this has been key to their development and growth. When asked if they had implemented any of the learned good-practice models in their own work, 89% of the 19 survey respondents reported that they had “to a great extent” or “to some extent”.

Practices that are being replicated by other organisations include:

- A collaborative approach for scaling programmes and impact: “through TLT, we moved away from a siloed approach and learned to collaborate well with other stakeholders (even when there could be challenges)”
- MEL practices, including: building research components into programmes, keeping proper records and data, strengthening data management systems, and tracking of every programme participant: “We have successfully implemented some strategies [we learnt from others] in our organisation, such as monitoring and evaluation as well as theory of change. These have greatly helped us improve various processes and measures within the organisation.”
- Gender mainstreaming in projects
- Better legal and compliance and governance functions, eg acquiring SARS exemption for donations and developing proper policies and procedures
- Development and implementation of fundraising strategies: “we have built strong relationships with potential donors through TLT events.”



CASE STORY: THE VALUE OF BEING PART OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE IN MAKANDA

“I just want to emphasise this community of practice, that platform, I will always be grateful for that platform. Because in the context of Makanda, everyone has been working in silos, so now when that platform was created, now I see more organisations collaborating. I think for the longest time, Rhodes University Committee Engagement Office has been the only sort of ‘alpha and omega’ of bringing people together and partners together. But now that community of practice is really, really also playing another role, which is bringing a different voice: because if we’re to be political and look at the space, especially in Makanda, you realise that the context is that the space for the longest time has been embedded in ‘charity’. This is understandable, taking into consideration the context of our country previously, but now...after democracy, people have been working hard to make sure that the space is more an engagement for development, and now there’s discourses of how the space becomes local, responsive, and globally engaged.

The COP then became that space where we can speak about these transformational issues without fear of institutional processes or a stance or politics, so it created a place to discuss serious issues that we wouldn’t discuss anywhere. For example, we could talk about, for example, in the context of Makanda, why do many NGOs have white directors, and why don’t we have young women and black women directors in the space.

So, I’m just trying to paint a picture of how that community has really, really gone beyond just a networking forum and somewhere that might facilitate collaborations. Because those are great, but being also able to discuss the broad issues as it relates to the sector, has been so valuable. And as far as collaboration and networking are concerned: I mean, there’s been so many organisations collaborating on grants, and some on programme, so it’s brought vibrance to the sector.

So, one would look at it and say, ‘NGOs don’t have unions or whatsoever’, but that COP space becomes where we discuss issues as it relates to the space, yeah.”

(Staff focus group, April, 2024)

SUPPORTING COLLABORATION

Collaboration because of TLT has occurred in two ways:

- through direct investment in specific collaborations
- through connections that have been made between organisations because of TLT

Direct support has been in the form of grants from TLT that were specifically to facilitate and enable collaborations amongst ASPs. The table below lists this specific support that was made between 2018 and 2022.

Name of organisation	Year of grant	Amount in ZAR	Description
Organisation 1	2020	200,300.00	To establish a data collective with TLT grantees and ASPs, to develop standardised or aligned datasets within the After School sector to contribute to the measurement of impact, analyse and communicate attendance trends, introduce impact surveys ,and develop MEL tools and systems to support TLT grantee data collection
Organisation 2	2020	115,500.00	To support a community of practice for organisations focused on the arts in after school, to share practice and resources and work towards collective projects.
Organisation 3	2020	114,940.00	To provide group training to other ASPs to run drama clubs with their beneficiaries
Organisation 4	2021	200,000.00	To provide Gauteng ASP providers in the TLT network training in the community art facilitator (CAF) programme
Organisation 4	2024	150,000.00	To maintain community art facilitator (CAF) programme in Gauteng through TLT's ASP network and develop more of a provincial footprint, including providing a support staff member for the network.
Organisation 5	2022	100,000.00	To form a collective of empowered youth from civil society to advocate for improvements in the ICT situation in Makhanda schools and libraries.
Organisation 5	2023	150,000.00	To form a collective of empowered youth from civil society to advocate for improvements in the ICT situation in Makhanda schools and libraries.
Organisation 6	2024	150,000.00	To pilot a peer-capacity support model where alumni organisations provides fundraising clinics and 1:1 mentoring to other TLT grantees in Gauteng.
TOTAL		1,180,740.00	

Two major contributions in terms of supporting collaboration have been the establishment and coordination of the Catch Up Coalition and TLT taking on the role of intermediary to access Social Employment Fund (SEF) money for a group of ASPs.

Participants noted that the SEF collaboration has had very valuable outcomes - it has contributed to sector building by scaling ASP interventions, and assisted ASPs to deliver quality interventions by providing them with human resources.

RESEARCH

To address the paucity in literature about the After School programming sector, TLT commissioned the following research during the evaluation period:

- In collaboration with Rhodes University, research about youth unemployment and barriers to sustainable livelihoods in the Makhanda area, and how ASP could be positioned to support that
- The funding space for ASPs, through a survey to understand funding environment in the Eastern Cape for afterschool programmes - this research led to an investment case which came out in 2020
- A mapping of the ASP sector for funders, which was presented at grant craft workshops, which included providing core funding as a good practice for philanthropy funders in the sector.

TLT staff reflected that research topics have been selected quite opportunistically to date: "If there's been a call and there's some alignment, we'll jump on it and put something together." More strategic research would be of benefit in the future, particularly mapping the impact and reach of the growing ASP sector, and possibly documentation of key lessons and good practices.

ADVOCACY

Grantees perceive TLT as a leader in advocacy for the ASP sector through their showcasing of ASP work and outcomes, and by making sure that ASPs stay on government and funding agendas. They also advocate with other donors regarding the kind of funding that's needed for the After School sector, and good practice in funding, "such as not giving programme funding without some core funding, or investing in MEL if they [funders] want MEL".

TLT has also strategically used the SEF model to advocate for the After School space to be a sustainable work environment for youth, linking public employment and ASPs: "So, they're kind of like collecting data and information that will help them motivate why the SEF programme should continue, so that even After School programmes can be sustainable through human resources."



“THERE’S A HUGE PUSHBACK AROUND POWER RELATIONS BETWEEN GRANTEES OR IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS AND FUNDERS. BUT GRANTEES AND IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS NEED TO HAVE THE CAPACITY TO PUSH BACK AGAINST FUNDERS WHO ARE UNREASONABLE OR WHO ARE BURDENING THEM WITH TOO MANY REQUIREMENTS FOR REPORTING. AND, YOU KNOW, THEY NEED TO BE ABLE TO ENGAGE WITH FUNDERS TO SAY YOUR REQUIREMENTS ARE TOO ONEROUS. WE DON’T HAVE THE CAPACITY TO DO THIS, BUT WE CAN DO THAT.

PARTNER INTERVIEW, APRIL 2024

EVALUATION

RECOMMENDATIONS

The evaluation found a few improvements and considerations for The Learning Trust.

PROGRAMME DESIGN

More generally, TLT might consider designing/categorising their interventions so that it is less “blanket” and has **more nuance for different “levels”** of maturity of organisations, or for different types of organisations/support (eg those in collaboration vs emerging vs those scaling, etc). This would also help organisations to understand what is expected or suitable for them at their “stage” of maturity - some mentioned that they would like more of an understanding of how they fit into TLT’s grant structures and decision-making.

In terms of the **one on one support**, this works best when it is well structured and consistent between TLT staff and grantees, with frequency based on the organisations’ needs, and a good plan driving the engagements, alongside consistent follow-up and adjustments to these plans, and careful handover of plans and information between TLT staff members.

GRANTMAKING

Grantees acknowledged that they are always needing more funding, and requested more support and clarity with regards to the different types of funds available from TLT, and also from other sources, including collaboration opportunities, for example leveraging government resources such as through SEF. TLT might consider developing an easy to use resource about this.

In addition, despite the nurturing partnership model, TLT is still a funder, and grantees can feel like they have to adhere to expectations from TLT - they mentioned that these can sometimes feel difficult to achieve, for example, short notice for requests for information or to attend events. They also expressed that there is not enough dialogue about certain requirements or decisions, and feel a need to comply even when it feels that realities on the ground have not been considered or understood adequately. On a similar note, grantees requested more support from TLT in their mentoring and advocacy capacity to be able to challenge and push back on other donors’ unrealistic expectations.

“Learning Trust in a way is a funder that understands a lot, but sometimes they also don’t understand...for instance, they come with: can we bring 30 learners to a meeting tomorrow for this and that? Yeah, but it’s during school hours, or...we have to inform them...we don’t have learners stocked up...we don’t have them in drawers.”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“I think sometimes... organisations are kind of just motivated to continue attending these things because they are worried that we’re going to lose our grant from TLT...if we don’t turn up. So like...it’s not really being used for the way it’s supposed to be a lot of the time.”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“The TLT events are always interesting and helpful, however, the invitations are sometimes sent out at very short notices so increasing this time could be helpful”

“With regards to their system,, it does feel like they sometimes make it up as they go, because it’s the first time this year that I’ve heard that there is opportunity for us to apply for other types of loans [grants].”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

Grantee focus group, April 2024

“We’re applying for a next round [of SEF]...on the Thursday...a public holiday you have to fill it out and the deadline is Monday. Then you... have to have figures ready for exactly how many sandwiches in your programme...exactly how many people are going to be in digital inclusion. And this is over a public holiday, a long weekend. .”

Grantee focus group, April 2024

ADVOCACY AND SECTOR BUILDING

TLT’s traction in building the sector should be leveraged at this point. There are a number of considerations with regards to scaling programmes, which would reach more young people and in deeper ways, so as to have more impact:

- More **collaboration for scaling**: TLT should consider its collaboration strategy and types of support to different types of collaborations very carefully as this is a significant area in which to achieve impact. This applies to individual connections and also how TLT could play more of an intermediary role to leverage bigger pots of money and scale good practice models, eg SEF.
- There is a need to coordinate **sector level data** - this is helpful to design large scale projects and proposals, coordinate collaborations strategically, design standards for the sector, and for advocacy purposes
- Coordinate the development of **sector standards**, which are needed for good quality, high impact and formalisation of the sector and to build the confidence of investors and funders
- TLT could facilitate the development of **sector level advocacy products** to be used by the sector, in particular to advocate for after-school programmes to be accessible to all young people, and as a career path (and hence a job creation stream)
- TLT should continue its work to mobilise resources at sector level and to advocate for better grantmaking practice from funders to the sector
- Particularly for emerging organisations, and for collaborative ventures, TLT could pilot the model of using **central shared hubs for administrative and operational function** so that founders could focus on the work and on development of programmes, and have standard organisational functions taken care of by professionals that do not have to be on their permanent payroll. It is recommended that TLT look at models being run in the philanthropy sector and possibly pilot the model in the ASP.



INFORMATION IS POWER! BETTER KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

TLT could benefit from improving its own institutional knowledge and knowledge management systems, and in line with the ASP needs. This could also assist to map for the future on all levels, and to identify what roles are needed and how to build the organisation and the sector towards a greater goal. The MEL system needs to be adapted to better reflect TLT's sector building work, and to support the collecting and analysing of data and learning from grantees, and at sector level. This would require a technical and technological system review, and better shared MEL IT could assist in sector level data and knowledge generation. By improving on its own documentation of its systems and approach and processes, TLT could better share lessons and practices, for example amongst donors.



“WE’RE CONSTANTLY LEARNING HOW THINGS WORK AND TREADING NEW GROUND AND PIONEERING SOME NEW WORK IN THE SECTOR, WHAT IS THAT TEACHING US? HOW DO WE INFORM [THE GRANTEES] WHAT WE DO INTERNALLY? WE NEED TO DOCUMENT THESE PROCESSES, DOCUMENT THIS WHOLE SYSTEM THAT WE’VE SET UP AROUND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT AND REACHING EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING OUTCOMES IN THE AFTER SCHOOL SECTOR.”

STAFF FOCUS GROUP, APRIL, 2024

“ONE DOESN’T WANT TO BE TOO RIGID. BUT AT THE SAME TIME, IT BECOMES THEN RELIANT ON PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW TO DO THAT BECAUSE THEY’VE BEEN DOING IT”

STAFF FOCUS GROUP, APRIL, 2024

CONCLUSION

TLT has achieved exceptional outcomes, which has been demonstrated to be as a result of its unique holistic model for supporting the After School sector and developing ASP organisations - mostly with emerging ASP organisations who have a strong concept but are still establishing their organisations, and not yet “funding-ready”. The combination of providing core and organisational development funding to ASPs, and combining this with close bespoke relational mentoring, alongside connecting organisations with each other and others in the sector, has proven to have incredible results. Grantees report that the support towards strengthening their organisations has meant that they have grown, and have more resilient reach and impact, which grows the sector’s impact in general. TLT’s effective good practice model needs to continue to be resourced and more resourced so that more impact can be had, and the approach needs to be widely shared with other donors, including government, to encourage uptake. It would be of benefit for more impact data to become available to better track sectoral growth and impact.





FINAL 2020

The Learning Trust (TLT) Theory of Change (ToC)

If we *identify, fund, facilitate collaboration* and *develop the capacity* of embryonic, After School organisations running in Quintile 1-3 schools¹; then, the After School sector will become better equipped to implement effective ASPs and provide access to a wider pool of learners. Ultimately, an enhanced After School sector will contribute to improved academic performance and develop noncognitive skills² among learners. Thereby setting learners on a pathway of success beyond the schooling age.

Where there is adequate evidence of the efficacy of ASPs we hope to advocate for mainstreaming of ASPs³ within the South African education system.

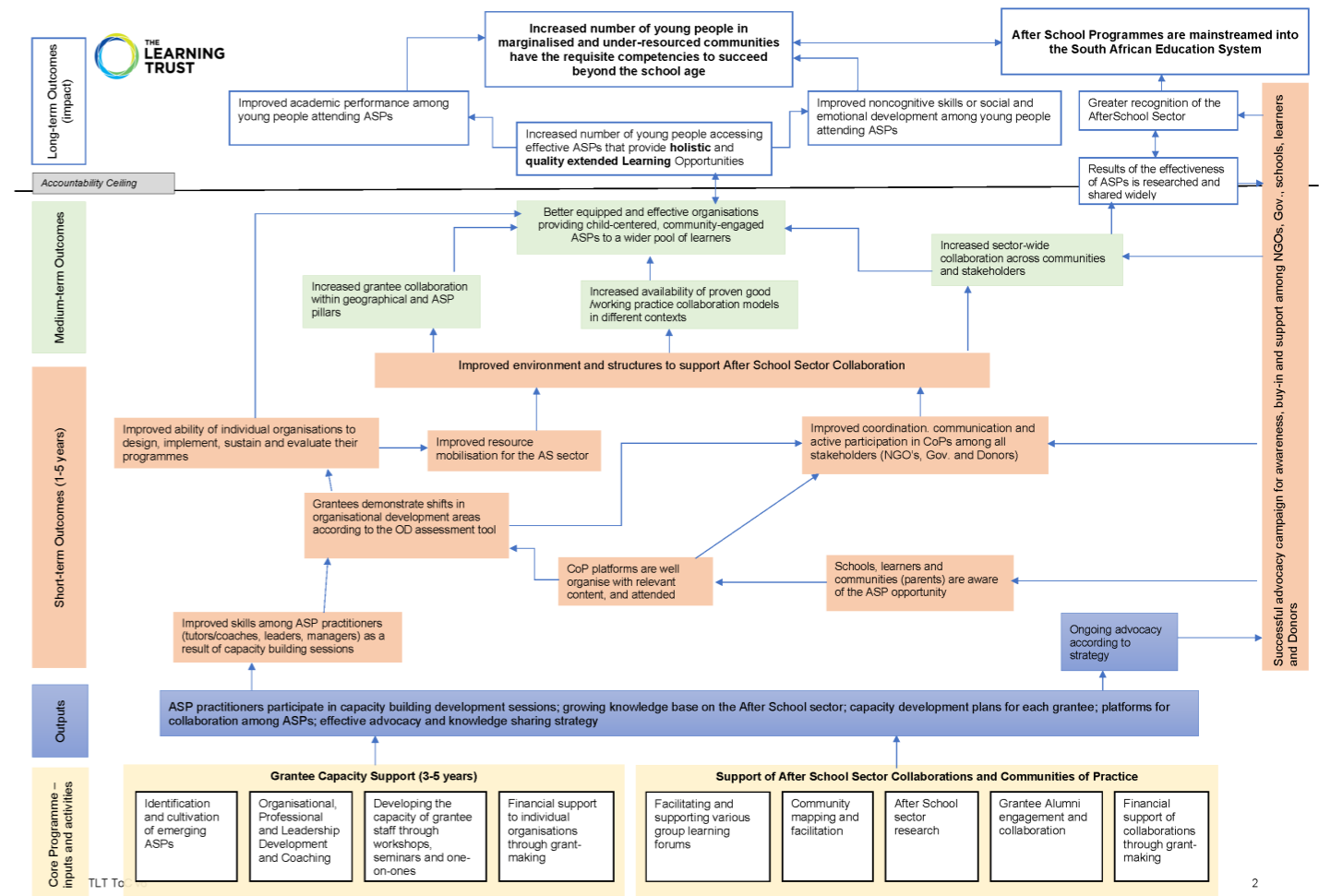
Assumptions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved coordination, advocacy, and sharing of working-practice will reduce fragmentation among ASPs and contribute to a better equipped and effective After School Sector. Capacity building of emerging organisations providing ASPs who already demonstrate positive engagement with the community and schools strengthens and sustains support for learners in under-resourced communities. Better equipped and effective ASPs increase access for more young people to benefit from a holistic, enriching and extended learning opportunity. Practitioner (i.e. all staff of ASPs) training courses will contribute to professionalisation of the After School sector and lead to an accepted minimum standard of quality and practice. ASPs offer a unique and enriching learning environment which positively impacts young people and contributes to requisite cognitive and noncognitive competencies to succeed in life.

On the following diagrams the blue arrows explain the (direction) impact pathway, the orange bidirectional arrows present a systems map of the relationship between the outcomes.

¹ Learners in under-resourced and marginalised communities

² Passion for learning, improved self-esteem, confidence; social and emotional intelligence

³ Mainstreaming entails formalisation of the ASP which includes financial support from government and formal institutional arrangements within schools





THE
**LEARNING
TRUST**

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM



**THANK
YOU!**



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