



ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2021, the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (OMT) embarked on a two-year process to conduct extensive research across the value chain of the education system, as well as the arts and culture and the social justice sectors. This research informed the basis of our strategic choices and informed the role we needed to play within the ecosystems we support. Given the realities of the education system and the ever changing socio-economic and political landscape, OMT needed to shift our role from grant making small amounts to hundreds of NGOs to supporting systemic change for enduring impact.

This requires OMT to engage in collaboration, convening, advocating, catalysing opportunities and leveraging our funding. We need to be responsive and flexible in an ever changing world, while remaining true to our values – of being curious, pioneering, constantly listening learning and serving, taking action when opportunities present themselves, collaborating to bring about scalable impact and being tenacious – in the pursuit of contributing to building an excellent equitable education system, a thriving arts and culture sector, and ensuring our constitutional democracy is strengthened and preserved.

In 2024, with key personnel in place, OMT embarked on implementing our new strategy. The purpose of this report is to provide feedback on how the different funds are progressing towards achieving their specific goal; how OMT is embracing its new roles and key learnings to inform the way forward. Overall, in this short space of time I am encouraged by the huge progress we have made across each fund. This is a testament to the OMT team and the incredible organisations, initiatives and individuals we are supporting. What stands out is how each fund manager has lived into the OMT roles and values in different ways, weaving together some unique results. Below are a few highlights from each fund.

In the Higher Education Fund, key highlights include introducing two new programmes to build on the idea of supporting individuals from novice to Nobel. Launching the Honours Scholarship programme in partnership with Sol Plaatje University saw 37 students selected for the opportunity. The university developed an intensive wrap around support programme for the students, who reported that while the journey was incredibly challenging, the university helped them navigate this leap forward, and the perseverance and support paid off.

The New Frontiers Research Award was also launched. It aims to provide talented ambitious early to mid-career researchers with five years of funding and the freedom and flexibility to pursue bold ideas and push the boundaries of knowledge. What stood out was the sheer number of excellent applications across faculties, indicating both the vast and deep talent pool in South Africa, but also the dire need for funding for early to mid-career researchers.

Finally, launching the alumni network and portal, OMT Connect, brought us face-to-face with hundreds of exemplary young South Africans who are either pursuing a career in academia or in society. They are eager to play a role in defining the value of this extraordinary talent pool, and how it can be harnessed in shaping the future of the South African academy, as well as their areas of influence.

In the Basic Education Fund, a key highlight was witnessing OMT cross-pollinate ideas and create opportunities for collaboration and learning across OMT's key focus areas, ultimately strengthening the ecosystem. For example OMT introduced several universities offering BEd degrees and grantees offering internship models for teacher training to Reflective Learning, a grantee in our EdTech focus area. The organisation is utilising an edtech tool to identify and close the gap in weak numeracy proficiency of foundation phase students, entering their first year of a BEd degree. We look forward to monitoring the results of this collaboration. In addition, collaborating with other philanthropists to fund the Sesotho and IsiZulu Reading Project (SIRP) and working as a collective not only leverages our funding, but shares the risk and has brought about efficiencies in reporting for the grantee.

Within the Early Childhood and Youth Development Fund, OMT was quick to spot the opportunity and support Yellowwoods in contributing to the ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education) outcomes-based finance fund. This allowed us to leverage our capital as it paved the way to mobilise other local and international philanthropists. Together with new funding committed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE)/National Treasury, a total of R600 million was unlocked for the initiative.

This collaboration of outcomes funders, social impact investors, government and NGOs forms the first social compact to tackle issues of quality teaching and closing the access gap at scale. We believe this blueprint of a social compact will go a long way towards the DBE realising its ECD 2030 strategy of providing universal access to quality early childhood development. In addition, by seconding our fund manager to the DBE's Mass Registration Drive (MRD) "Bana Pele's" project unit, she is able to contribute her expertise and experience in shaping the system of delivery, while simultaneously learning from the exposure. This entails ensuring all Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) are brought into the regulatory net by registering on the eCares platform, and then supporting the neediest early learning programmes and centres to meet the regulatory requirements to unlock the per child per day government subsidy.

What stood out in both the Social Justice and Arts & Culture Funds is that the organisations we fund punch far above their weight, in terms of their impact and the sheer volume of work they are able to deliver in a year. These sectors are completely under-funded and resourced, yet nothing prohibits them from delivering with excellence and being courageous in the face of adversity.

Arts and culture organisations are so often neglected, yet they are at the forefront of expressing our cultural identity, through creating new works across a multitude of disciplines, weaving together multiple languages, and stories from every corner of our society. They hold up a mirror to society, giving voice to the social ills that are a scourge on our society such as gender-based violence, or injustices such as land redistribution or the impact of climate change and lack of service delivery on vulnerable communities.

Apart from producing excellent work they are instrumental in growing new talent by exposing so many children and youth to the arts. While some go on to pursue a career in the arts, others site the impact of this exposure builds their confidence, helps with mental health and improves performance in school work. Exceptional talent and productions were performed globally, building the South African brand and creating role models of inspiration. When reading the reporting, I was struck by the work SECTION27 is conducting with regards to a just energy transition in Mpumalanga to prevent coal mines from starting up again, based on the poor air quality and the impact that they have on the health of women and children. At the same time, the Forgotten Angle Theatre company in Mpumalanga worked with youth to put on original works at the My Body My Space festival. Youth gave expression to the effects air and water pollution is having on their community as a result of coal mining. The intersection between arts and culture and social justice organisations requires further exploration in the future.

We can be extremely grateful to the organisations in the Social Justice Fund that fight daily to eradicate corruption and are at the coalface of building a capable state. Be it protecting the independence of our constitution through litigation, advocating for policy reform, protecting our whistleblowers or themselves blowing the whistle, capacitating the next generation of public servants and ensuring effective implementation of policy. They really are the unsung heroes of our country.

Grantees often find themselves competing for the same pot of funding and telling their story is a critical element of differentiating themselves. OMT convened multiple grantees across all our funds to participate in a storytelling workshop, hosted by StoryNow, that took participants through a hands-on practical course in telling great stories using mobile phone technology, while exploring the neuroscience and healing effects of storytelling. Grantees were extremely grateful for this capacity building workshop.

"Yesterday was one of those workshops that powerfully shifted my way of thinking. It answered the ethical questions I have been grappling with around how we share stories of our participants. How we use these stories and for what purposes. That our participants are heroes, and we become the growth guides."

Gerard Bester, Windybrow Arts Centre

I hope this report sparks hope and ignites in you the belief that excellent South Africans across every sphere of society are working tirelessly to build a South Africa we can all be proud of.

Tracey Webster
CEO

GLOSSARY

AI	Artificial Intelligence
amaB	AmaBhungane
ASB	Assessment for School Beginners
ASSITEJ	Association Internationale du Théâtre de l'Enfance et la Jeunesse
BCCSA	Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa
BEd	Bachelor of Education
BELA	Basic Education Laws Amendment Act
CACNET	Community Arts Centres Network
CAPS	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CASAC	The Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution
CERN	from the French 'Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire', known as the European Organisation for Nuclear Research
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CWP	Community Works Programme
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DGMT	DG Murray Trust
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DMRE	Department of Mineral Resources and Energy
DSAC	Department of Sport, Arts and Culture
DSD	Department of Social Development
eCares	Early Childhood Administration and Reporting System
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ELOM	Early Learning Outcomes Measure
ELP	Early Learning Programmes
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
FATC	Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaboration
FEMEF	The Federated Employers Mutual Assurance Company Education Fund
FLOAT	Partnership to Advance Foundational Learning Outcomes at Scale
FPB	Film and Publication Board
FSSO	Free State Symphony Orchestra
GADRA	Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association
GNU	Government of National Unity
GTI	Global Teacher Institute
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
HSF	The Helen Suzman Foundation
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDAC	Investigating Directorate Against Corruption
IIAL	Incremental Introduction of African Languages
IPAF	International Public Art Festival
IPASA	Independent Philanthropy Association South Africa
IPID	Independent Police Investigative Directorate
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
LEAP	Local Education in Arts Programme
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MARS	Media Attack Reporter System

MBMS	My Body My Space festival
MICM	Morris Isaacson Centre for Music
MISTRA	Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection
MMA	Media Monitoring Africa
MoUs	Memorandum of Understanding
MRD	Mass Registration Drive
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
MRS	Mixed Reality Simulation
MTbBE	Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education
NAC	National Arts Council
NACAC	National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NHC	National Heritage Council
NPA	National Prosecuting Agency
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NRF	National Research Foundation
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NWU	North West University
NYDA	National Youth Development Agency
PESP	Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QASS	Quality Assurance and Support System
QCTO	The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAA	Sibikwa Arts Academy
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SANEF	South African National Editors' Forum
SCA	Supreme Court of Appeal
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal (United Nations)
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SGB	School Governing Body
SIRP	Sesotho and isiZulu Reading Project
SJI	Social Justice Initiative
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London
SOE	State-owned Enterprise
SPU	Sol Plaatje University
STAND	Sustaining Theatre and Dance Foundation
STEAM	Science Technology Engineering Art and Maths
TPP	Tertiary Preparation Programme, implemented by Sivulithuba
UJ	University of Johannesburg
WCED	Western Cape Department of Education
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning
WNMD	World New Music Days Festival
YES	Youth Employment Service
ZEP	Zimbabwean Exemption Permit

HIGHER EDUCATION



“My research brings me immense joy. I have the privilege of spending my days with my legs dangling over the boundaries of human knowledge, and slowly trying to place new puzzle pieces at this edge! I have found that my theoretical quantum research is perhaps the most satisfying avenue for exploration, as these investigations are really at the technological edge of humanity, and so my research may be 'put to work' in our lifetimes. My gravitational research brings me joy for another reason entirely - it answers questions that may not ever be relevant, but it is the pursuit (and expansion of) knowledge that has, and will continue to be, the epitome of what it is for humanity to intellectually explore.”

Cameron Beetar, PhD, Holographic Quantum Thermodynamics, UCT

Context

South Africa welcomed a new minister of Higher Education and Training in Minister Nobuhle Nkabane from June 2024. Her plans for the portfolio include:

1. Rebuilding trust within the higher education system, which has been affected by issues of inequality and inefficiency.
2. Aiming to secure sustainable and stable funding for higher education and training institutions to ensure their long-term viability.
3. Focusing on developing meaningful capacity across the post-school education and training system to improve its overall effectiveness.
4. Expanding access is a priority, and she is committed to making higher education more inclusive and equitable.
5. A significant priority is to address the challenges within the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), including rooting out corruption and maladministration to ensure students receive their allowances on time.

NSFAS introduced a loan scheme in 2024 to support “missing middle” students who don’t qualify for traditional NSFAS support on account of household income being above the minimum threshold. Through conversations with Prof Andrew Crouch (Vice Chancellor of Sol Plaatje University (SPU)) he noted that the take up rate for this model has been poor, citing that a mindset shift needs to take place with the students who are reluctant to enter into a loan agreement after the promise of fee-free education.

Within the sector, significant budget cuts are of concern:

- The budget for the National Research Foundation (NRF) has been reduced by R3 billion, which will fund 1 000 fewer researchers in 2024/2025.
- In 2024, the Skye Foundation announced that it will no longer be supporting South African students to study at Cambridge University. This is relevant as OMT previously would offer co-funding for these students. This further alludes to the decreasing pool of available funds for international scholarship opportunities.

These decisions highlight the precarious nature of research funding in South Africa, which continues to suffer from reduced funding, leading to devastating consequences for research and development, and in turn, South Africa’s ability to compete globally.

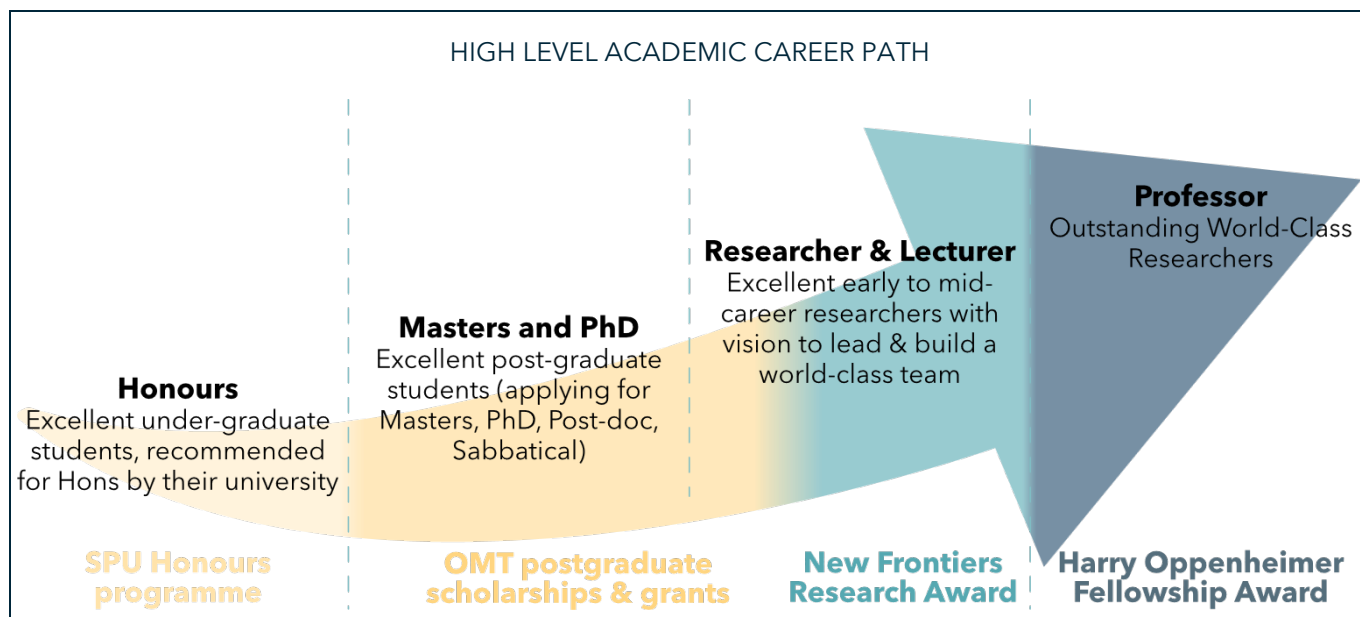


GOAL

To fund and connect excellent individuals to rebuild and sustain South Africa's academic excellence, and to influence and lead in South African society and beyond.

After extensive research was conducted in 2022/2023 to inform OMT's strategic way forward, two additional initiatives were added to the Higher Education Fund in 2024. These were the honours programme in partnership with Sol Plaatje University (SPU), as well as the New Frontiers Research Award, aimed at early to mid-career researchers.

The addition of these two programmes completes OMT's higher education offering, supporting academics at every stage in their career as mapped below.



The underlying rationale is to provide support along the academic journey from "Novice to Nobel". An inspiring example of this is in the academic career of Prof Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, who received OMT funding for a sabbatical in 2009 and 2018, the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship (HFO) in 2021, and has recently been awarded the esteemed Templeton Prize in 2024.

From a postgraduate perspective, OMT continued to receive record numbers of applications across all our programmes. Postgraduate applications totalled 1 377, of which 1 069 were adjudicated and 74 new awards were made. We received 176 concept notes for the 2024/2025 New Frontiers Research award and 73 nominations for the 2024/2025 Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Award.

The sheer numbers of applications we received in 2024 for postgraduate funding and research awards are testament to both the dire need of funding as well as OMT's efforts to promote our funding opportunities.

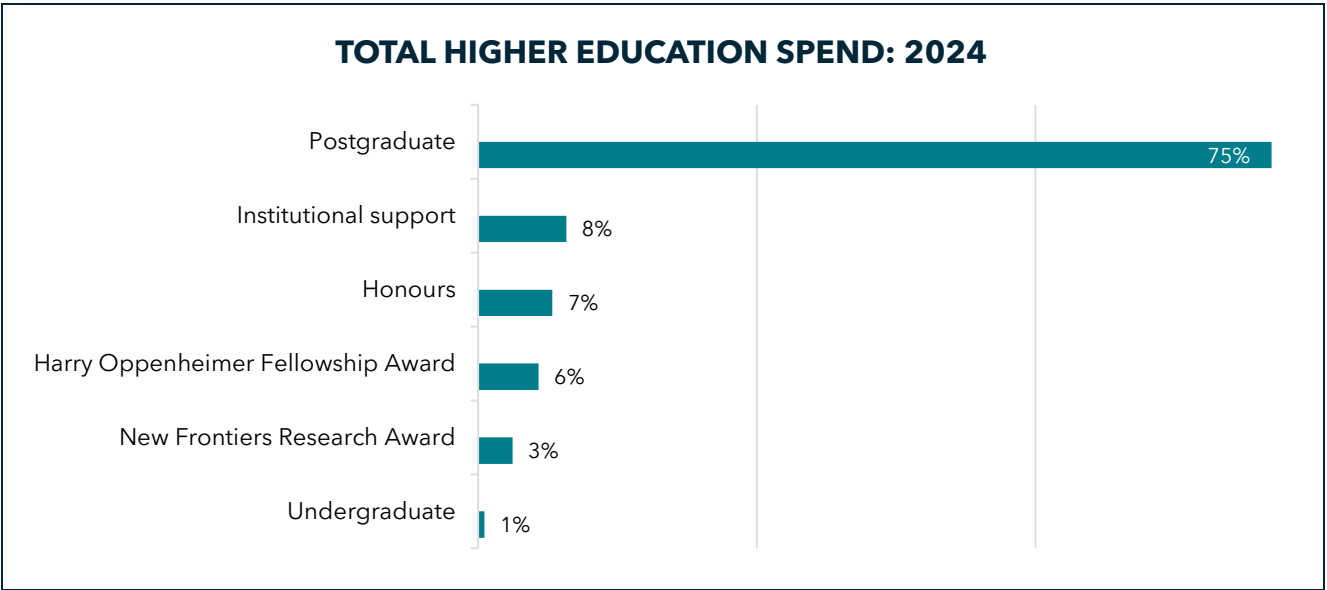
In addition, in 2024 we launched our alumni network, *OMT Connect* to tap into our most valuable resource, our alumni. This was a standout highlight for 2024 as we connected with alum in person who are even more impressive than their applications and continue to excel way beyond our support.

OMT Results

50% of OMT's budget in 2024 was awarded to the higher education fund:

- Undergraduate bursaries (remaining cohorts who completed at the end of 2024) – this funding has now come to an end;
- Honours bursaries in partnership with Sol Plaatje University;
- Postgraduate and research support;
- The New Frontiers Research Award;

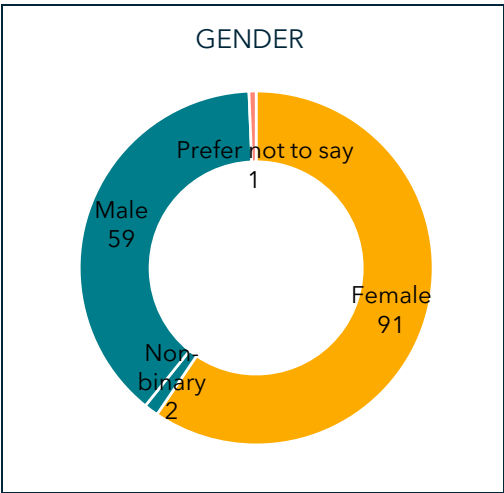
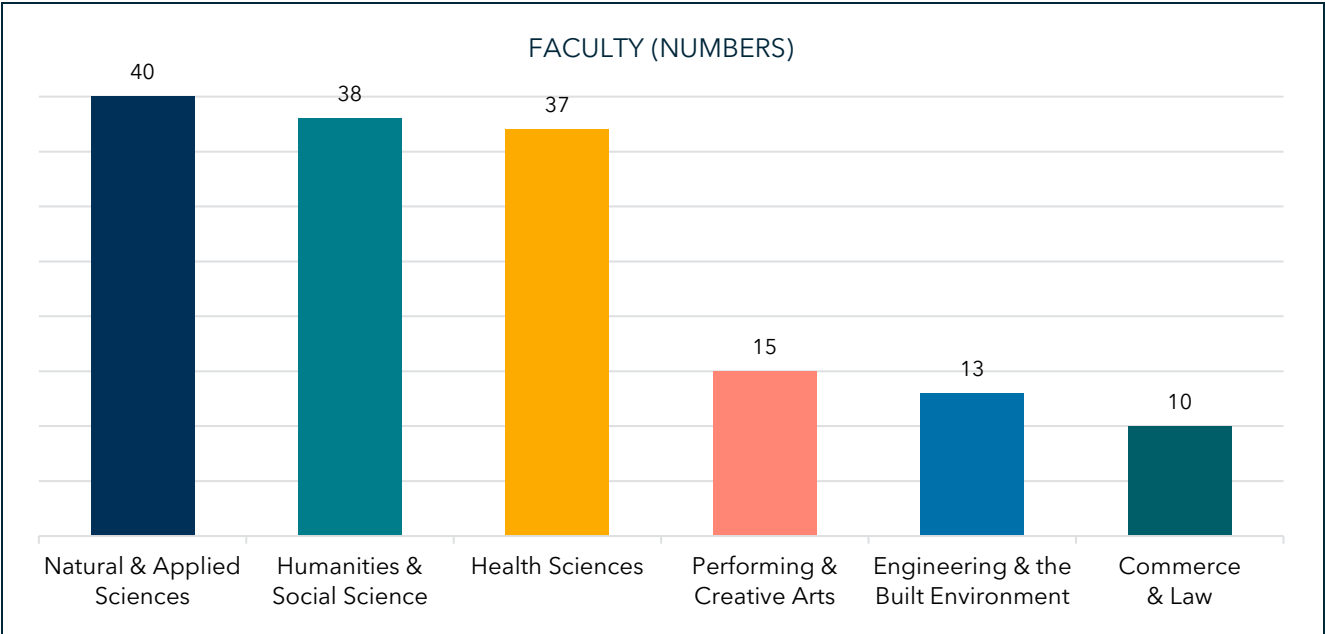
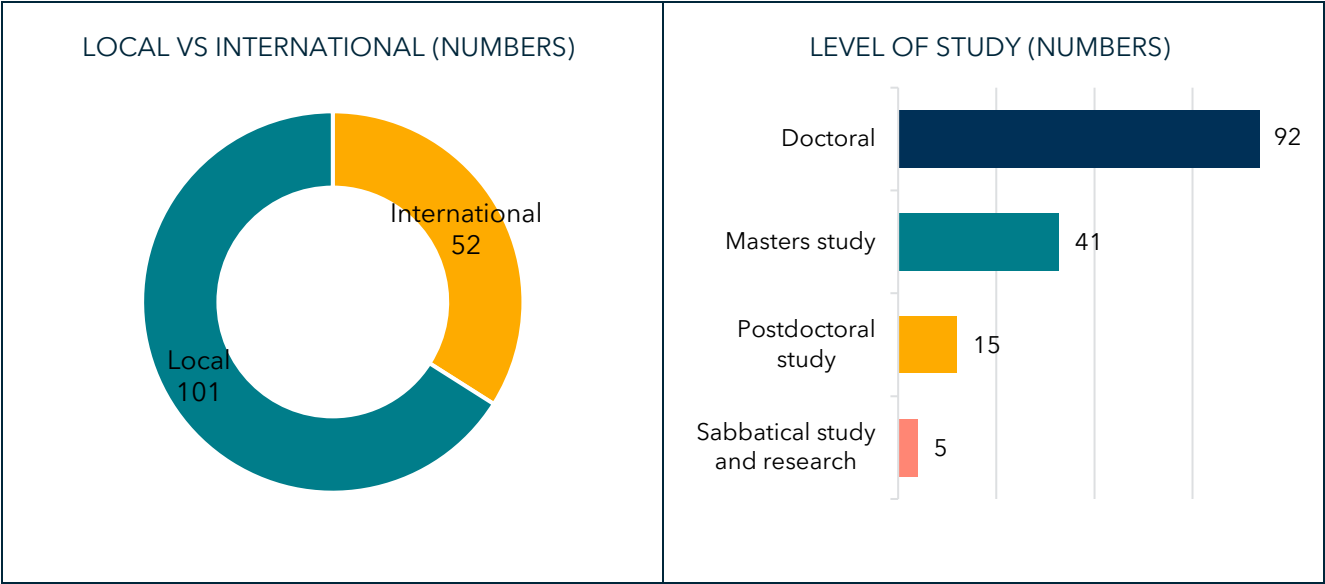
- The Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Award, and
- The remaining institutional grants for the University of the Witwatersrand (ends 2026) and Stellenbosch University (ended 2024).



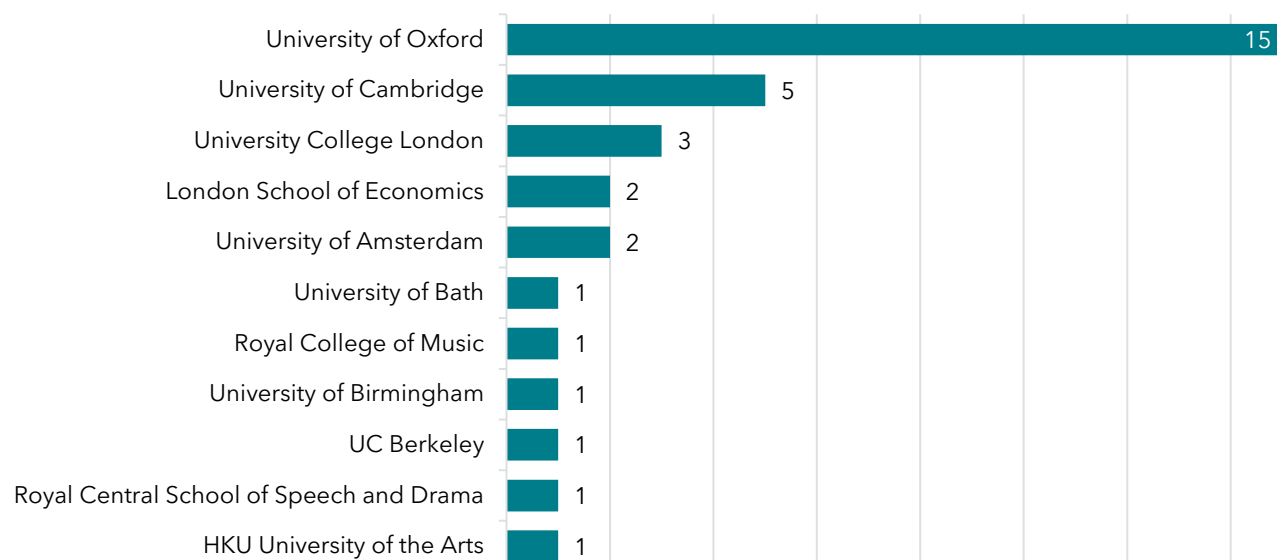
	Undergraduate	Honours	Masters	Doctoral	Postdoctoral	Sabbatical	New Frontiers Research Award	HFO award	Alumni network
HONOURS AND POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS									
Excellent scholars have opportunities to advance their education									
Well-educated individuals enrich academia and society									
Leaders in academia and society inspire, mentor and influence in South Africa and beyond									
RESEARCH AWARDS									
Excellent research teams built by leading early-to-mid career researchers (New Frontiers Award)									
World-class research produced by new teams (New Frontiers Award)									
Cutting edge research advanced by world-class researchers (HFO Award)									
Ground-breaking new knowledge benefits society									
ALUMNI NETWORK									
Alumni connect, and give back to new scholars									
Alumni participate in OMT's advisory networks									

Details of Postgraduate Support

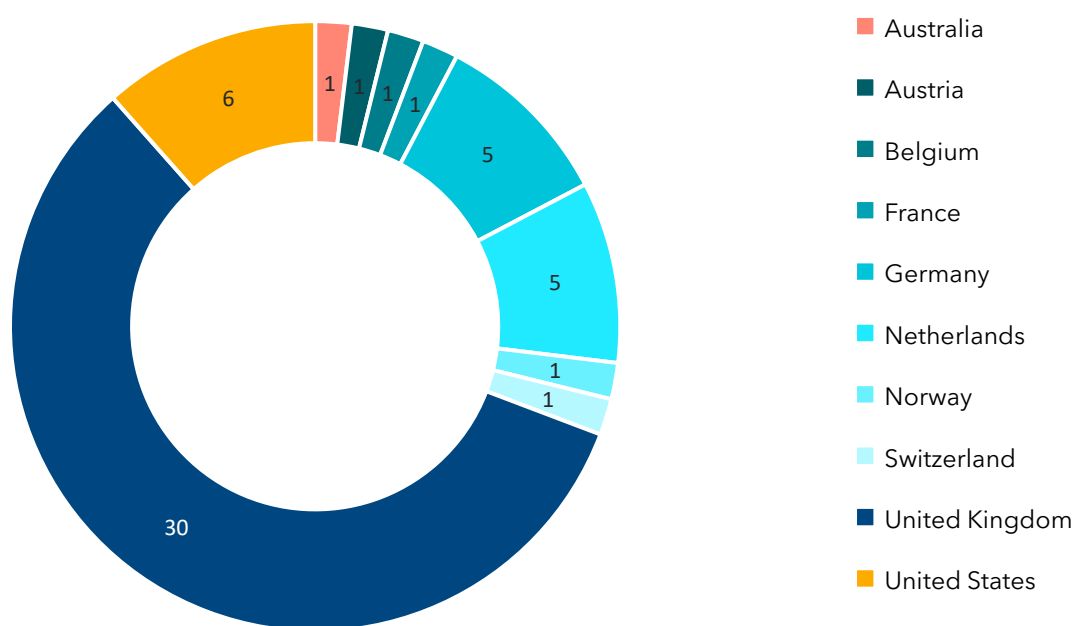
Postgraduate support accounts for 75% of the total higher education budget. This funding was allocated to 153 awardees in 2024 and a more detailed analysis disaggregating the spend is illustrated below:

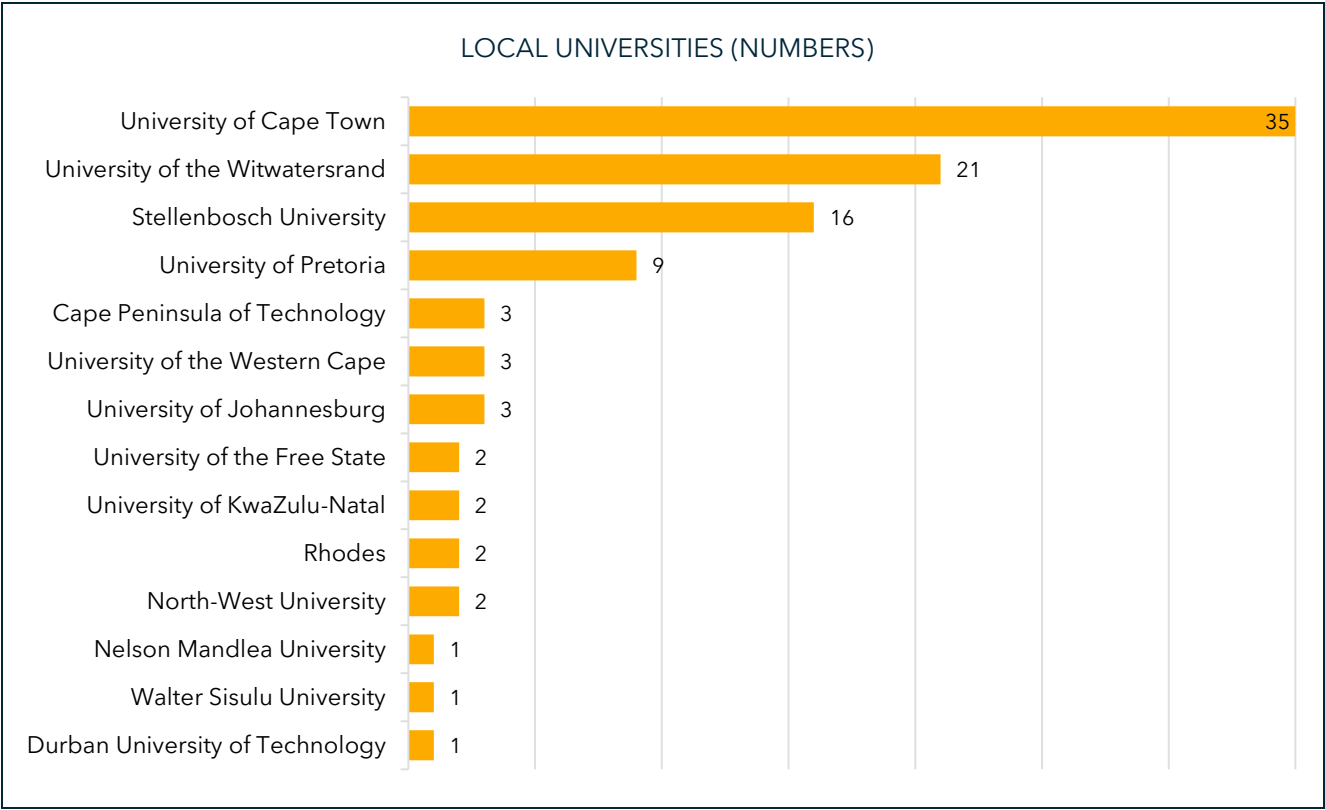


TOP 10 INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITIES (NUMBERS)



INTERNATIONAL AWARDS BY COUNTRY





OMT Roles

In the Higher Education sector, OMT plays a key role as networker. OMT met with key stakeholders both locally in South Africa in August and September 2024 and abroad in the United Kingdom in October 2024. The purpose of these discussions was to share issues, challenges and trends in the sector.

A recurring theme of these discussions continues to be funding challenges experienced by students who wish to pursue international study. Locally, OMT met with Prof Jackie du Toit (Lead Implementer: DHET National Collaboration Project: Future Professors Programme) to discuss leadership and other challenges experienced by mid-career researchers in South Africa. The results of these conversations continue to inform the direction of the Higher Education Fund.

Grantee Results

The following extract from our theory of change for the fund illustrates the pathways of change we expect to see in each of the strategic focus areas. The paragraphs that follow describe the summary analysis of results reported by our grantees per outcome.

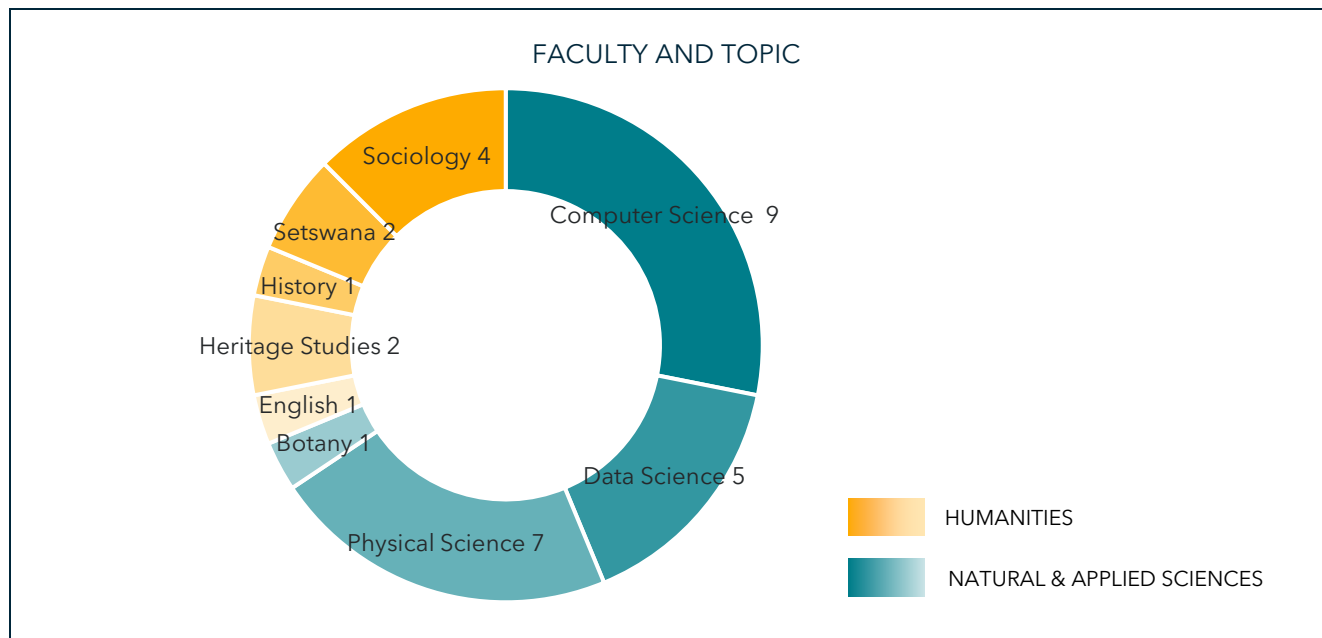
FOCUS AREAS	SHORT-TERM (0-5 YRS) OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM (5-10 YRS) OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM (10-15 YRS) OUTCOMES
HONOURS & POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS	Excellent scholars have opportunities to advance their education	Well-educated individuals enrich academia and society	Leaders in academia and society inspire, mentor and influence in South Africa and beyond
RESEARCH AWARDS	Excellent research teams built by leading early-to-mid career researchers (New Frontiers Award) Cutting edge research advanced by world -class researchers (HFO Award)	World-class research produced by new teams (New Frontiers Award)	Ground-breaking new knowledge benefits society
ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT	Alumni connect, and give back to new scholars Alumni participate in OMT's advisory networks		Leaders in academia and society inspire, mentor and influence in South Africa and beyond

Honours and postgraduate scholarships

Excellent scholars have opportunities to advance their education

Honours programme

OMT launched its inaugural Honours programme in partnership with SPU. Given the Oppenheimer family's deep roots in Kimberley and the lack of funding available for Honours students, this partnership is significant for both parties. OMT provided support to 37 Honours students at SPU in 2024 as follows:



SPU is differentiating itself by prioritising skills in data and computer science, as well as desert studies. 14 of the cohort studied data and computer science in 2024.

SPU designed a wraparound support programme for the students which included synchronised academic writing and activities focusing on self-management, note-taking and study strategies, freewriting and ethics, introduction to research design, methodology and literature review as well as various focus groups on their relevant honours theses. In addition to the workshops, 29 students used one-on-one consultations with the academic advisors and writing officers leading up to thesis submission.

Key learnings that came out of the wrap around support programme will be incorporated into the programme for the next cohort. The following additional sessions will be added: topic specific intervention sessions; motivation sessions towards goal achievement; exam preparation and thesis submission. In addition, SPU recommended OMT increase the award amount to be more competitive with NRF. This will also raise the prestige of the award.

The final results of the cohort is as follows: 28 of the 37 students have successfully completed their honours degrees and will be graduating in the next graduation ceremony. While the remaining nine students still have outstanding marks for their research projects, six of these have submitted their research projects for external examination, and these results are expected in March 2025. The remaining three have not yet submitted their research projects for external examination but are being supported by their respective departments and faculties to address their challenges. The nine students had many challenges, some personal and some linked to bad planning, all of which influenced their progress. SPU is monitoring the situation, and it is university policy to assist until they get the students through the system for the specific qualification. We expect full completion by April 2025.

Plans for the students after the honours year include:

- 14 students plan to seek further study (12 students aim to complete a Masters programmes and two aim to complete a postgraduate certificate)
- Six have secured employment with a further 17 seeking employment.

Receiving this scholarship was not just financial relief, it was a vote of confidence in my abilities and potential. Because of this, I was able to dedicate my time and energy to my studies, ultimately producing research that I am truly proud of. However, my journey was far from easy ... Challenges may slow you down, but they do not define your ability to succeed. It is not always how you start, but how you finish. These milestones reminded me that with dedication and the right support, success is within your reach.

Katelin Thomas, 2024 recipient, BSc in Physical Sciences Geography, SPU

OMT made the decision to increase the individual level of support for the 2025 cohort to be competitive with that of the NRF offering - the total support of R4 000 000 still remains.



2024 OMT Honours Cohort

Postgraduate programme (Masters, Doctoral and Postdoctoral)

OMT provides scholarships to excellent scholars providing them with opportunities to advance their education.

OMT received the following reports from scholars in 2024:

Level	Local	International
Masters	19	8
Doctoral	42	22
Postdoctoral	10	1
TOTALS	71	31

Scholars self-report the personal and professional benefits of their studies. Thematic analysis of scholars' reports gives us insight into the benefits experienced through the study opportunity afforded to them by OMT. The recurring themes highlighted in the paragraphs that follow illustrate the multifaceted benefits of academic and professional experiences, emphasising growth, networking and collaboration, personal fulfilment through real world application and impact.

The pride felt by scholars representing Africa at a global conference, of making their family proud, or of holding down a job while pursuing their studies in order to make ends meet, remind us that scholars grab this opportunity with both hands and make the most of it.

“My wildest dreams are coming true. I am incredibly fortunate to be able to access opportunities because I am in the city where the opportunities are the most readily available for music. One of these moments being that I became the Regional Representative for Africa at International house. During my term, I represented brilliant African students from over 35 countries who came to pursue their masters, doctorate or research in New York. It is fulfilling to be a part of a collective of global excellence in different fields.”

Motswedi Modiba, Masters in Performing & Creative Arts at the Manhattan School of Music

Personal and Professional Growth

The most frequently mentioned benefits can be categorised as ‘personal and professional growth’, as illustrated by the following:

- Acquisition and development of new technical skills
- Learning soft skills like time management, critical thinking, and problem-solving
- Improvement in communication skills – both interpersonal as well as public speaking, through presenting research and findings at conferences and other platforms
- Improvement in scientific communication through writing research proposals, grant applications as well as contributing to scholarly work and publications
- Enhanced understanding and knowledge in specific fields
- Synthesising lived experiences into reflective and generative knowledge
- Exploring passions and developing new and novel concepts.

“On a professional level, I can explore my passion for design and learning, and I have met an incredible array of interesting people in all walks of life. The complexity of working on food systems at a territorial scale is challenging, but at the same time, it allows me to tackle the wicked problems of our time by working in transdisciplinary teams. On a personal level, the PhD journey is teaching me valuable lessons and life skills like resilience, communication, negotiation, better time management, and the ability to ‘sit’ with the uncomfortable and the unknown. In my engagement with different communities, I am very aware of my positionality as a researcher and fellow South African (with all the intricacies that holds), my privilege, and my ethical duty to conduct research that is not extractive. I appreciate that in the process, people are open about their distrust or prejudices but are still willing to explore the questions that I have and to have an open discussion. I believe these kinds of compassionate exchanges are critical to bring about transformation.”

Georgina Truter, PhD Engineering & the Built Environment, University of the Western Cape and KU Leuven

As scholars progress in their academic careers, additional benefits mentioned by PhDs and postdoctoral fellows include:

- Expanding knowledge, skills and cutting-edge techniques in specific fields
- Personal growth including building resilience, confidence, and developing patience and self-discipline
- Passing on skills to students and finding a love for teaching
- Developing as a supervisor, mentor, and demonstrator (especially technical lab skills)
- Improving research skills and solidifying academic profiles
- Continuous learning and deepening theoretical understanding
- Engaging in interdisciplinary projects and broadening knowledge.

Networking and collaboration

Scholars value the networking and collaboration benefits of postgraduate studies. They highlight opportunities to connect and collaborate with students, scientists, and professionals. PhD students also describe the benefits of establishing strong academic and professional networks, as well as collaborating with diverse perspectives and experiences. Postdoctoral fellows add that they appreciate collaborating with experts across disciplines, and establishing a sense of community and fostering long-term connections.

“Moreover, the collaborative nature of my research exposes me to diverse perspectives and expertise, providing invaluable opportunities for professional growth and learning. Working alongside esteemed colleagues and experts in the field not only enhances my knowledge but also broadens my network and opens doors to potential future collaborations and career opportunities”

Nyiko Mzimba, PhD student in Health Sciences (Tuberculosis), University of the Witwatersrand

Impact and real-world application

When analysing the scholars’ reports, a common theme emerged that really excited us. We’ve labelled it “Impact and real-world application”, as it speaks to the values of the candidates and their motivation for their chosen path. This is an aspect we particularly value in our selection process – our assessment rubric is designed so that adjudicators can glean the personal values and motivations of the applicants. Across the board, scholars mention the following:

- The privilege of working on real-world or wicked problems and finding solutions that make a meaningful contribution to society
- Engaging in innovative approaches and tackling complex problems
- Working on projects of national and global significance
- Finding satisfaction and motivation in contributing to meaningful projects.

“Coming from Africa where the burden of disease is so high, support for science and research is undervalued and underfunded, despite its global importance. I am passionate about not only understanding, addressing and potentially mitigating the debilitating impact that cervical cancer has among women, but that many cancers and many diseases have. I am in a position where I can harness my knowledge, skills and experience to improve and expand the cancer research initiative taking place in Africa, as well as bring awareness to our society so they can better understand the challenges we face so we can tackle them together.”

Carly Burmeister, PhD Health Sciences, UCT

International advantages

International scholars particularly highlight that overseas opportunities provide access to world-class resources such as libraries, studios, cutting-edge theories and technologies, lecturers, specialised courses and different methods of teaching and learning.

“Pursuing overseas study has provided exposure to diverse academic traditions, allowing me to engage with globally renowned scholars and cutting-edge sociological theories. This experience has broadened my perspective, enriched my research on masculinities and violence in South African prisons, and enabled me to develop innovative, globally informed approaches to addressing local and international social issues. My global training equips me to develop contextually relevant policies, foster community-based interventions, and mentor future scholars

and practitioners addressing systemic social challenges. My focus lies on improving research in previously disadvantaged universities, and through my experience bring a new way of engaging in supervision with disadvantaged students."

Seluleko Ngcobo, PhD Humanities and Social Sciences, Oxford Brookes University

Students note as professional benefits the ability to establish valuable connections with multiple stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, creating global networks and broadening their academic horizons, perspectives and ideas. Personal benefits noted by the international scholars include cultural awareness, and personal growth such as resilience and adaptability.

Scholars further note their excitement in being able to bring skills learnt back to South Africa; as well as the value of progressing from generalists to specialists in their respective fields.

A common theme identified for the performing and creative arts students is the exposure to international stages, audiences and opportunities that are not possible in South Africa.

"Studying abroad has exposed me to diverse musical traditions and high-caliber mentorship. Collaborating with international artists has expanded my perspectives and performing on global stages has enhanced my professional credibility and cultural adaptability"

Monica Mhangwana, Masters Performing and Creative Arts, Lübeck Academy of Music

Well-educated individuals enrich academia and society

OMT acknowledges that some of the excellent scholars we fund will not pursue a career in academia, and so we expect that these scholars will go on to make their mark in society through their work in the public or private sectors. As yet, we have not collected sufficient data from past scholars (alumni) to ascertain where and how they are contributing. Our plan is to start collecting this data from our alumni in 2025.

The alumni network was launched in 2024 with several networking events taking place in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Oxford, London and Cambridge. Alumni were encouraged to join the online platform, and currently 257 alumni have signed up. Now that we are gaining momentum on the platform we will be able to gather more data on how alumni careers are progressing and how these individuals are enriching both academia and society.

OMT expects that our support of excellent scholars builds the academy through their production of quality research, their teaching of new students, and their supervision of the next generation of researchers. The remainder of this section will provide evidence of how the currently supported scholars are enriching academia.

Academic journal submissions for 2024

The following results pertain to reports received from scholars in 2024. OMT scholars are requested to detail any publications submitted. As a proxy for quality, we have searched for the journals using *Scimago Journal & Country Rank*¹, which categorises journals by quartiles, where Q1 is considered the highest, and Q4 is considered the lowest.



¹ <https://www.scimagojr.com/>

Health Sciences

Masters

- African Journal of Inter/Multidisciplinary Studies²
- Discovery Medicine (Q1: 2021)²
- Journal of Photochemistry and Photobiology B: Biology (Q1)
- Differentiation (Q3)

PhD

- Environmental Research (Q1)
- Heliyo (Q1)
- IUBMB Life (Q1/2)
- Differentiation (Q3)
- Exploration of Asthma & Allergy
- Molecular Microbiology (Q1/2)
- South African Medical Journal (Q3)
- Journal of Clinical Medicine (Q1)
- Journal of Clinical Lipidology (Q1/2)
- JMIR Formative Research (Q2/3)
- BMC Psychiatry 23 (Q1)
- BMJ Open (Q1)
- Elife (Q1)
- Frontiers [in Endocrinology] (Q1)
- ACS Infectious Diseases (Q1)

Postdoctoral

- Current Alzheimer Research (Q3)
- Biomedical Reports (Q2/3)
- Journal of Neuropsychology (Q2/3)
- Journal of Clinical Neuroscience (Q2/3)
- Scientific Reports (Q1)

Sabbatical

- Biomedicines (Q1)
- BMC cancer (Q2)
- South African Journal of Surgery (Q4)
- Reproductive Health (Q1)
- Neurotoxicology (Q2)
- International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health (Q2)

Humanities & Social Sciences

Masters

- South African Journal of Cultural History²

PhD

- South African National Arts Therapist Association²
- ARTEM Book of Abstract²
- Dramatherapy Journal²
- Interpellation and Disillusionment²
- Philosophia Africana (Q4)
- Anthropology Southern Africa (Q1/2)
- Acta Academica: Critical views on society, culture and politics
- LitNet Akademies

Postdoctoral

- African Economic History (Q2)
- Systems Research and Behavioural Science²
- Ecosystems and People (Q1)

Natural & Applied Sciences

Masters

- Global Ecology and Biogeography (Q1)

PhD

- Papers in Paleontology²
- iScience (Q1 rated journal)
- African journal of Hepatology²
- Journal of Arid Environments (Q1/2)
- npj Quantum Information (Q1)

Postdoctoral

- Nature Reviews Physics (Q1)
- FEMS Microbiology Ecology (Q1)
- South African Journal of Botany (Q2)
- Topology and its Applications²

Sabbatical

- Biophysical Reviews (Q1/2)
- Journal of Physical Chemistry Letters (Q1)
- Physical Review A (Q1)
- Journal Physical Chemistry C (Q1/2)

Commerce & Law

PhD

- World Bank Economic Review (review)²

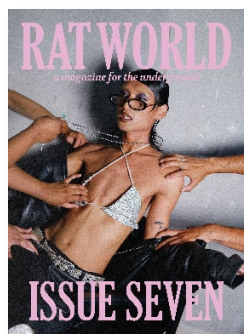
Performing & Creative Arts

Sabbatical

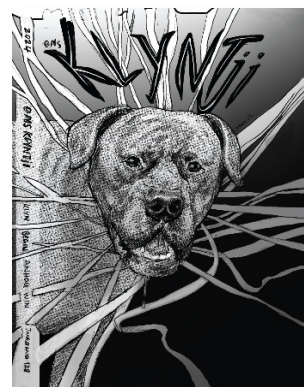
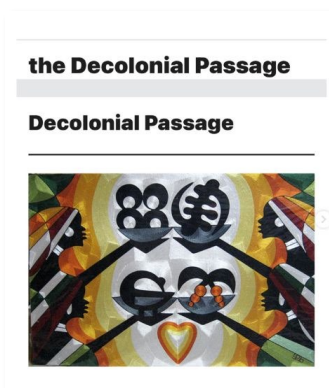
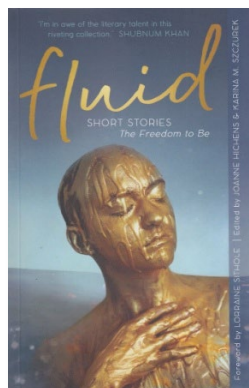
- Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) in the South²

² Not found on Scimago website, but verified on other websites/sources

Fiction, prose and poetry



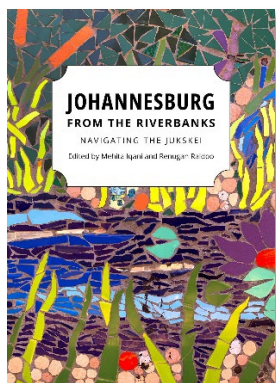
- New Contrast Literary Journal
- Ons Klyntji
- The Woolf
- Rat World
- The Alchemy Spoon
- Decolonial Passage
- Divinations
- Fluid: The Freedom to Be (South Africa's 2023 Short.Sharp.Stories Anthology)



Monographs

- Where Have the Midwives Gone? Everyday Histories of Voetvroue in Johannesburg

Books/book chapters



- Collaborative Conversations: Celebrating Twenty-one Years of the Mother Tongue Project (Book)
- Johannesburg From the Riverbanks: Navigating the Jukskei
- Postcolonial Air and Atmospheres: Elemental Life and Climate Crisis
- Best Women's Short Fiction 2024



"My mother was always late for things. As a result she had mastered all types of stealthy entrances. Throughout my life I'd seen her slip into birthday parties, concerts, and sports events through Staff Only doors and fire escapes, appear from behind curtains, and circumnavigate entire rooms with her back against the wall. She was a plain woman, a waif, and her superpower was not so much her ability to be invisible but her ability to be unseen."

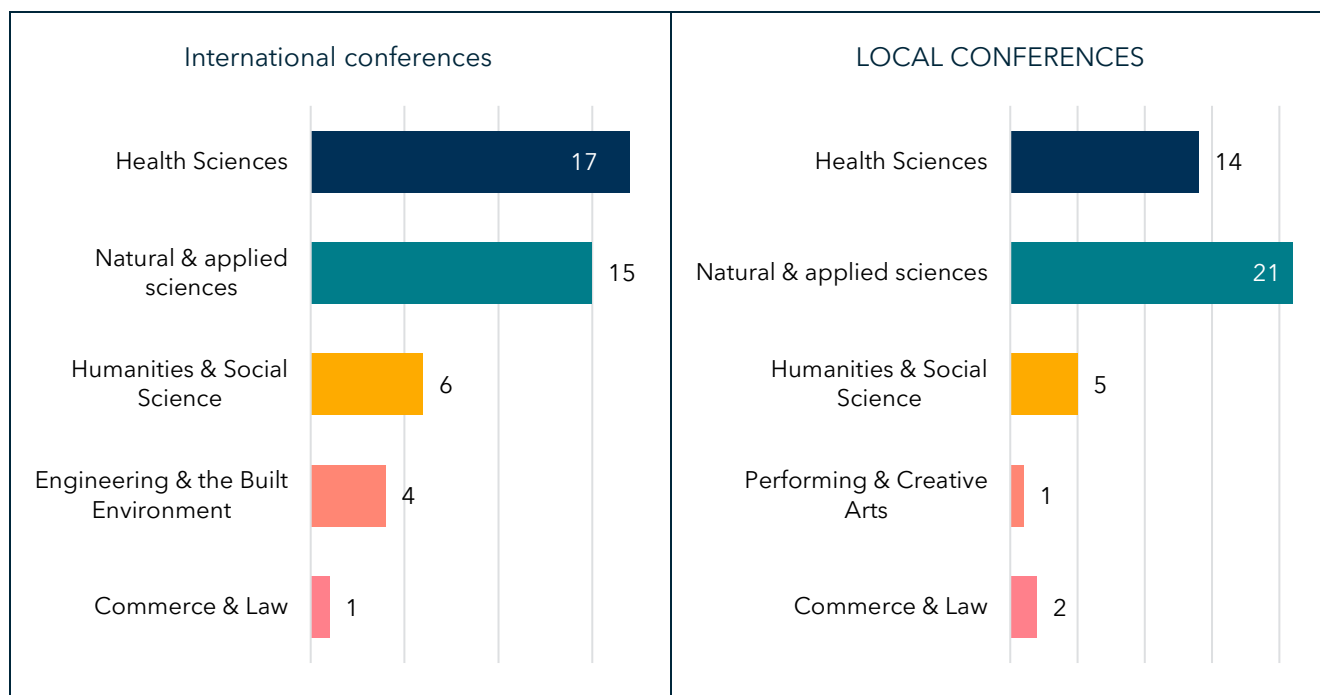
An excerpt from "The Other Box of Smokes" by Robyn Perros

For the full story [please click here](#) or scan the QR code below.



Presentations & Performances

OMT scholars presented at a total of 86 conferences in 2024, both internationally and locally.



OMT performing and creative arts students (both Masters and PhD) have performed, exhibited and been recognised for their artistic talents.



Vuma Levin (Masters student at the Orpheus Institute) was commissioned by the Axiom Brass ensemble to compose work that tried to reimagine the global mining sector through the arts. This project, *The Heavy Metal Suite*, drew musicians from each continent. He was selected to represent Africa, and platinum was his metal of focus. In an interdisciplinary undertaking, he used the mathematical-chemical properties of platinum to inspire the development of melodic, harmonic and rhythmic motives. Subsequent to this, this material was brought into a creative conversation with traditional Venda musical practices, South African Jazz and Western Art music to produce the final score. [View the video here](#) or scan the QR code below.



Supervision of students

An important metric to consider in this outcome is the supervision of students, and the building up of the next generation of young scholars.

Six of the 11 reports refer directly to the supervision of postgraduate students. In total, 11 Honours and 12 Masters students were supervised by OMT postdoctoral awardees. The majority of these students are in the Health Sciences faculty.

Leaders in academia and society inspire, mentor and influence in South Africa and beyond

In 2024, OMT began profiling scholars on LinkedIn who had previously funded by OMT who are leading, influencing and inspiring.



Total profiles
8



Total impressions
19 299



Total reactions
530

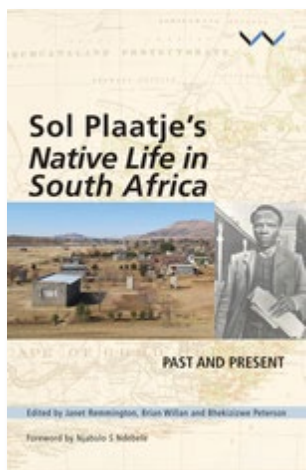


Total comments
31



Total reposts
21

As the OMT alumni network gathers momentum in 2025 we look forward to sharing more examples similar to the stories shared below:



Writer, scholar, poet and publisher **Janet Remington** counts among her greatest achievements the centenary edition of Sol Plaatje's "Native Life in South Africa: Past and Present".

OMT supported Janet in her PhD at the University of York during which she contributed to this important book with fellow academics Brian Willan and Bhekizizwe Peterson which ended up winning the best-edited collection by *South Africa's National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences* in 2018.

Today Janet is the Global Portfolio Director: Humanities, Media, Arts; HSS International at Francis & Taylor Group and is a research associate at the University of York's Humanities Research Centre and at the University of the Witwatersrand's African Literature department, and Wits' publishing unit.

Philosophy professor **Ryan Nefdt** has received OMT support three times and is currently associate professor of philosophy at the University of Cape Town and a senior research fellow at the University of Bristol.

He received an OMT research scholarship to work on the concept of disunified time series within the philosophy of physics at the University of Michigan in 2010, support from OMT for a postdoctoral research scholarship working on philosophical issues in theoretical linguistics at UCT in 2018 and in 2021, Ryan took an OMT-supported sabbatical at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to do research that was published by Oxford University Press in the book, "*Language, Science, and Structure: A Journey into the Philosophy of Linguistics*".

Ryan has a P rating from the National Research Foundation (NRF) and has also been recognised as a UCT College of Fellows Young Researcher, Winner of The Humanities Faculty Emerging Researcher Award and HSRC and Universities South Africa Emerging Researcher. This young man has an incredible future ahead of him, he narrowly missed out on winning the New Frontiers Award in 2024, but we continue to watch his star rise.



Research awards

Excellent research teams built by leading early-to-mid career researchers (New Frontiers Award)



OMT recognised **Dr James Keaveney** (Senior Lecturer in the Department of Physics at the University of Cape Town and the Director of the UCT-CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) Research Centre) as the inaugural recipient of the New Frontiers Research award for his topic "Bringing Fundamental Physics into the Real World".

The award is intended to provide leading researchers with the freedom and flexibility to pursue their research, without bureaucratic constraints and helping them produce significant work and gain international recognition. The award is a total value of R7.5 million over five years.

With the award, Dr Keaveney will leverage the technologies he has developed for fundamental physics at CERN to create ground-breaking applications. His project will develop low-cost ultra-fast quantum dot scintillators that, in combination with the application of real-time artificial intelligence (AI), will significantly improve the accessibility, precision, and efficiency of positron emission tomography (PET) and muon tomography which promises to enhance the diagnosis and treatment of critical illnesses, as well as reducing the cost of these technologies, in order to make it more accessible to larger populations, particularly on the African continent.

Dr Keaveney will build an interdisciplinary team based in the UCT Physics Department with a particular focus on student involvement and will partner with the African Institute for Mathematical Science (AIMS), Muizenberg, while maintaining his collaboration with CERN. In the trust's first six monthly check in with Dr Keaveney, he revealed that recruitment had gone very well and he has established interdisciplinary working groups across institutions as follows:

- UCT Electrical Engineering
- UCT Physics
- AIMS
- University of Zululand
- UCT Chemical Engineering

James noted that he was spoilt for choice when recruiting postgraduate students, and that the prestige associated with the trust and the award was a major contributor to this.

Each unit noted above has between two and four team members who are working on complimentary elements of the project and have made progress in the initial six months of the project. Dr Keaveney himself will be able to focus more time on the OMT sponsored project as he wraps up his teaching commitments.

In terms of research production, one paper has been submitted for publishing in the MDPI Computing (rated Q2) and multiple are in the pipeline going forward.

As a result of OMT funding, Dr James Keaveney was able to leverage funding to build capacity in his team as follows:

1. Team member Declan Mahony (PhD) will spend six weeks in Dr Etienne Auffray's lab at CERN from the end of Feb 2025. Associate Prof Mark Blumenthal (collaborator) will spend one week at CERN in April to consolidate Declan's effort and share knowledge and expertise. These trips will be funded by a successful application to the NRF SA-CERN Technology Transfer project which enables mobility of researchers from SA to CERN to enable transfer of expertise towards advancing SA research. Leveraging the OMT award to obtain further funding will increase the scope and impact of this research project.

2. Team member Ryan Atkin (postdoctoral shared with AIMS) is co-funded from the OMT grant and an award from the NRF. Sharing this cost means that more funding is available for other resources and project elements.

From a leadership perspective, James notes that he has needed to pay special attention to keep the group focused on the common goal and to be “product-driven”. He noted that **Prof Valerie Mizrahi (HFO fellow)** has offered meaningful mentorship, both at the interview stage, and since receiving the award.

World-class research produced by new teams (New Frontiers Award)

As the New Frontiers Research Award was launched in 2024, we will report on this medium-term outcome in future reports.

Cutting edge research advanced by world-class researchers (HFO Award)

Many of the Harry Oppenheimer Fellows are in various stages of their projects, and as such, we have mentioned those that have submitted reports in 2024 below.



Prof Clive Gray (Lead: Reproductive Immunology Research Consortium in Africa (RIRCA) and Professor of Immunology in the Division of Molecular Biology and Human Genetics at Stellenbosch University) was awarded the 2023/2024 Harry Oppenheimer fellowship award in July 2024 for his topic: “Developing a Predictor of Adverse Birth Outcomes and Maternal Cardiovascular Health”.

Prof Gray will use the Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship Award to investigate events in the placenta related to angiogenesis and identify a biomarker that can predict premature birth as well as understand how the placenta functions to ensure the health and well-being of both infant and mother. This work is significant as adverse birth outcomes have a devastating effect on South African society, where impaired child and maternal health is linked with deprived early childhood development.

Prof Gray’s work has for the first time, established a link between long-term antiretroviral treatment and premature birth. The project is multidisciplinary, involving HIV clinicians, cardiologists, immunologists, virologists and statisticians across South Africa and the United Kingdom.

Prof Gray’s project began in the second half of 2024 and progress will be shared in the coming annual reports.

Prof Sunil Maharaj (Senior Professor in the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and Director of the highly productive Astrophysics and Cosmology Research Unit) (HFO recipient for 2022/2023) submitted his progress report for his research entitled “Obtaining an understanding of the gravitational processes in a radiating star in general relativity”. Prof Maharaj’s research explores the intricate workings of gravitational processes within stars, offering crucial insights into our understanding of the universe. This pursuit has been a fundamental scientific challenge since the early days of gravity research. Prof Maharaj’s project is linking researchers in South Africa, Tanzania and India in a joint effort to understand the underlying physics of radiating bodies and their link to geometry.

In Prof Maharaj’s interim progress report, 12 publications were noted as being published as shown below.

- European Physical Journal C (Q1)
- Annals of Physics (Q2)
- Classical and Quantum Gravity (Q1)
- General Relativity and Gravitation (Q1)
- International Journal of Modern Physics D (Q2/3)
- Pramana - Journal of Physics (Q2)
- Indian Journal of Physics (Q3)

In addition, six research visits were conducted across South Africa, India and Thailand. A major conference will be held in South Africa in 2025 to comprehensively analyse their research findings and to develop future paths of research.

Prof Maharaj's project is strengthening local/international relationships, especially with the global South while gaining significant recognition in terms of publications produced and through research visits and conferences.

His project is supervising four postdoctoral fellows, six PhDs and three Masters students, thereby strengthening the local academy through developing his team and exposing them to the connections and activities listed above.

Ground-breaking new knowledge benefits society

Prof Keertan Dheda (Professor of Respiratory Medicine, Director of the Centre for Lung Infection and Immunity (CLII), Head of the Division of Pulmonology in the Department of Medicine at the University of Cape Town) was recognised as the 2013/2014 Harry Oppenheimer Fellow to enable the study of epidemiology, transmission dynamics (spread), optimal diagnosis, and outcomes of highly drug-resistant strains of Tuberculosis (TB). One of the aims of the work was to design a user-friendly test to identify the super-spreaders of drug-resistant TB – the minority of patients who spread most of the disease.

In 2024, Prof Dheda was recognised by the Academy of Science South Africa (ASSAf) as the recipient of the Science-for-Society Gold Medal as well as by the University of Cape Town for his contribution to research on infectious respiratory diseases like tuberculosis (TB) and pneumonia. TB remains one of the world's most deadly infectious diseases, disproportionately affecting people in impoverished and overcrowded areas. Prof Dheda's work focuses on reducing the TB burden in vulnerable communities while improving lives and social wellness.

His research continues to attract significant awards, while contributing to the benefit of society.

Prof Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela (South African National Research Chair in Violent Histories and Transgenerational Trauma and the Director of the Centre for the Study of the Afterlife of Violence and the Reparative Quest at Stellenbosch University) was awarded the Templeton Prize in 2024.

The Templeton Prize is an annual award that honours people who harness the power of the sciences to explore the deepest questions of the universe and human existence. Her insights into the mechanisms of trauma and forgiveness in post-apartheid South Africa have created a globally recognised model for social healing in the aftermath of conflict, a model she calls "the reparative quest."

"The 2024 Templeton Prize winner, Dr. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, has a remarkable grasp of the personal and social dynamics that allow for healing in societies wounded by violence. As a psychologist, scholar, and commentator, she has served as a guiding light within South Africa as it charts a course beyond apartheid, facilitating dialogue to help people overcome individual and collective trauma. Her work underscores the importance in contemporary life of cultivating the spiritual values of hope, compassion, and reconciliation."

Heather Templeton Dill, President of the John Templeton Foundation

JUNE 4, 2024

Dr. Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela Receives 2024 Templeton Prize

2024 TEMPLETON PRIZE WINNER PUMLA GOBODO-MADIKIZELA PHOTOGRAPHED IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA BY STEFAN ELS FOR THE TEMPLETON PRIZE

Prof Gobodo-Madikizela is the second South African to be awarded the prize, after the late Emeritus Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 2013. She noted in conversation with Tracey Webster that the research she is conducting through the HFO award played a role in her being awarded the Templeton Prize. She was the recipient of the 2020/2021 Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship award for her work in exploring the role of the arts in witnessing and addressing trauma, as a vehicle for repair.

Prof Gobodo-Madikizela reports on her use of the HFO award as follows:

1. She has **collaborated with colleagues in the visual arts and drama departments** of Stellenbosch University who have in turn recommended students for participation. Chosen students used works from key Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) narratives stories identified by Prof Gobodo-Madikizela, chosen to reflect both black and white experiences as their inspiration to produce visual art pieces, animations as well as spoken and written stories, and how they see the arts as a vehicle for healing trauma. The work produced by the visual arts students can be viewed on the website <https://thethingsthatshitwithus.org.za/>
2. Other interesting **collaborations** include those with Artscape (coaching for drama students) as well as the CSVr (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation) and the Joburg Theatre on a project that focused on music culture and conflict resolution, using cultural music performance to bring people together in spaces affected by xenophobic violence.
3. Prof Gobodo-Madikizela's students **hosted two conferences** in December 2023 and August 2024 "Legacies of Violence and Trauma's Repair in the Global South" which were attended by 200 and 150 students from various universities respectively.
4. From a **capacity building** perspective, two Masters students were identified to co-design the book volume which has been handed over to a postdoctoral fellow. Prof Gobodo-Madikizela aims to **publish her book** towards the end of 2025 and she has signed with an agent from the Association of American Literary Agents.

Looking forward, Prof Gobodo-Madikizela aims to bring the TRC stories to Stellenbosch University campus, as a site of institutionally inspired trauma such as racist experiences, marginalisation, rejection, and a sense of not belonging. This is timely, given the university's recent issues of racism and student conduct on campus.

Stellenbosch University itself stands on the site of forced removal of a coloured community. In the 1940s terrible violence was perpetrated by white students trying to chase away coloured people and is referred to as the Battle of Andringa. Ethics clearance pending, the stories will be shared on the university's radio station and the work will be performed by two postdoctoral fellows. This will enhance Stellenbosch University's ongoing work of transformation.

Alumni network

Alumni connect, and give back to new scholars

OMT launched the alumni network in 2024 which entailed an online platform, *OMT Connect*, as well as in person events in South Africa (Johannesburg and Cape Town), and the UK (Cambridge, Oxford and London) where we were able to connect with over 150 alumni across the various events.



Alumni Launch Events: (L to R) Johannesburg, Cape Town and Oxford

The purpose of the online platform is to provide a space where past and current grantees can connect, find other alumni with similar interests and in the same location. The portal is a place where alumni share information, their research, opportunities and events. At the same time, the dream is that the alumni build powerful networks and set up work groups to tackle important and critical challenges and problems. This is also a platform that OMT can tap into for adjudicators, judging panels, and website content.

The alumni platform has 278 members representing excellent, diverse individuals from various backgrounds, skills, training and employment. Alumni at each event emphasised the prestige associated with being an OMT awardee, as well as gratitude for the freedom and flexibility the scholarship afforded them. Alumni have already created groups on the platform based on the following topics: Environment, biodiversity, conservation and climate; Literature and cultural studies; Commodities in Southern African history and African perspectives on regional and global affairs.

Alumni are interested in giving back to OMT through welcoming new scholars in their geographies, and keen to stay connected with one another.

Alumni participate in OMT's advisory networks

Of the 281 active adjudicators, 41 of these are previous recipients of OMT scholarships, showing the willingness of OMT alumni to give back to the trust.

The review panel for the New Frontiers Research Award is made up of previous Harry Oppenheimer Fellowship awardees. They view this as their opportunity to give back to the trust and are incredibly grateful that OMT has stepped into the funding gap by creating this award.

It is also interesting to note that some OMT Alumni have founded or joined organisations that are receiving support through other funding areas of the trust. Examples include:

- Tess Peacock and Yana van Leeve, Founder and Board member of Equality Collective, supported through the ECD & Youth Fund,
- Maureen de Jager, Head of Department of Art at Rhodes University, supported through the Higher Education Fund to set up the Fine Art PhD programme at Rhodes University, and
- Dane Hurst, Artistic Director of Joburg Ballet, supported through the Arts & Culture Fund.

Institutional support

In February 2020, OMT trustees approved a grant of R15 million over five years to the University of the Witwatersrand in celebration of their centenary campaign, specifically to support the two projects outlined below.

The Wits Rising Star Fellowship

The Rising Star Fellowship seeks to explore alternative futures and reimagine Africa's future developmental pathways. The fellowship provides support to rising talent in academia with potential to be leaders and advance interdisciplinary scholarship. Dr Peace Kiguwa (Associate Professor, Psychology and postdoctoral research fellow) was awarded the fellowship. The goals of the project were four-fold:

1. To promote comparative and intercontinental research on African Futures, exploring critical issues related to development, gender, and community building.
2. To examine the connection among violence and gender identities to illuminate how this relationship is represented in specific communities.
3. To examine undergirding systems, structures and practices that hinder how violence may be eradicated, exploring different healing modalities that draw on cultural practices and traditions and the impact of these strategies in communities.
4. Capacity building of postgraduate researchers in the context of a study that seeks to contribute to the knowledge economy through exploring new intellectual frontiers in the study of violence and its transformation, healing modalities, and vitalise Affect Studies for the Global South context.

Besides supporting her costs, the Rising Star Fellowship also supported two Masters and two PhD students.

Other activities for the year included:

- a. **Two reading and seminar groups** were held (Critical Affect Studies Reading Group and Narrative Enquiry for Social Transformation)
- b. **New collaborations and partnerships**
 - i. Empirical Directions for a Decolonial Psychology project (convened by Profs Kopano Ratele, Stellenbosch University and Glenn Adams, University of Kansas), Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study;
 - ii. Project: "Solving for the Social" HIV & Gender Co-learning Lab (Solve Collab), Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill convened by Prof Abigail M Hatcher, Gillings School;
 - iii. "Mobilizing Black and Global South Women's Leadership", convened by Dr Janelle Joseph, University of Toronto;
 - iv. "Towards decolonising the publishing ecosystem through a three-tier intervention to benefit scholars from five Sub-Saharan Countries" convened by Masi Noor, Peace Kiguwa, Idia Thurston, and Kevin Durrheim, Keele University, University of the Witwatersrand, Northwestern University and University of Johannesburg;
 - v. Centred on the gendered dynamics of food insecurity and violations in food rights in the Global South, School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin, Ireland. Collaboration with Prof Caitriona Dowd.
- c. **Student writing retreat:** 23 PhD students attended a joint writing retreat hosted with the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- d. **Conference attendance:** Five students from the reading groups were supported towards presenting papers at the Psychological Society of South Africa Conference and the African Feminisms Conference.

Dr Kiguwa's activities can be summarised as:

- a. **Six conferences/webinars convened** (1 online, 3 local and 2 international)
- b. Two book launch public conversations convened
- c. Two journal articles published:
 - i. Feminist Encounters (Q3 rated journal, first author)
 - ii. American Psychologist (Q1 rated journal, first author)

- d. Three chapters published
- The D-Word: Perspectives on democracy in tumultuous times (Mandela University Press: Gqeberha) (co-author)
 - Cohabitation and the Evolving Nature of Intimate and Family Relationships (Contemporary Perspectives in Family Research Volume 24) (Emerald Publishing Limited, Leeds) (co-author)
 - Social Inequalities (SAGE Publishers) (first/solo author)

As global shifts in the political, economic and social spheres reverberated and continue to reverberate across the world, 2024 in significant ways, became an important moment to reflect on knowledge domains and how they have become impacted by these shifts. But perhaps, even more poignant for South Africa, is that 2024 marked the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA). This is a critical anniversary to note, perhaps more so because of its reminder of the yearning for different political and social imagination that fostered a common sense of humanity for all South Africans, across races and gender. It is this yearning and courage to imagine that positions South Africa to offer a new terrain of scholarship and research that speak to possibilities beyond despair and apathy. Invigorating a vibrant research hub of interdisciplinary researchers, the Rising Star fellowship seeks to deepen collaborations that highlight the global south as a key player in research and innovation: spanning collaborative edited volumes that showcase South Africa and the global south as knowledge producers, advanced research and writing networks, facilitating critical public dialogues amongst other activities, we foreground the legacy of hopeful imagination and yearning for a more humane society through research.

Prof Peace Kiguwa, University of the Witwatersrand

African Future Studies Initiative

The aim was to support postdoctoral fellows across the five faculties (Commerce, Law and Management; Humanities; Sciences; Engineering and the Built Environment and Health Sciences) with focus areas of:

- **Technologies:** 4IR and the future of work
- **Environments:** Climate, contagions and catastrophes
- **Systems:** Inequality, democratic futures and the political economy of the post-COVID-19 world
- **People:** Mobility, migration and cosmopolitanism

The two postdoctoral fellows supported in 2024 were:

- **Dr Juliana Kibatta** (Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management) working of the broad fields of human resource management, strategic management, organisation behaviour and labour studies. She published in Personnel Review, a Q1 rated journal.
- **Dr Smaila Joel Atuman** (Faculty of Engineering) is working in the field of water treatment, carbon nanotechnology, bio hydrometallurgy and characterising and testing hot-mix asphalt pavements. He published in E3S Web of Conferences. (This journal has not been assigned a quartile rating yet, but it is an open access journal).

Learnings

In 2024 OMT engaged with multiple stakeholders in the higher education sector, including OMT scholars/alumni and award recipients, previous HFO winners, University VCs and DVCs as well as other philanthropies operating in this sector.

Through these engagements we have learned:

- Globally, universities are experiencing similar patterns of student enrollment, particularly higher numbers of female students, and an overall decrease in the demand for performing and creative arts programmes, as students tend to favour formal degrees or programmes with greater employment security post-graduation.
- There is an increasing need to assist mid-career researchers and other professionals with leadership development opportunities. This was not only highlighted by Prof Jacquie Du Toit but was also reinforced by requests from our alumni network.
- International funding remains prohibitively expensive for African students and there are fewer sources of funding available for these students to study abroad. International universities such as Guildhall School of Music and Drama, Lübeck Academy of Music and University of Oxford are looking at cost sharing scholarships or in the case of SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), building strategic partnerships with local universities to develop joint online degrees thereby reducing the cost barriers.

Looking Ahead

Taking the learnings from the above section, OMT will focus on the following in 2025:

- OMT is researching academic and non-academic leadership development programmes across South Africa, as well as overseas programmes in order to inform any potential offerings OMT might want to offer to mid-career alumni or academics in the future.
- OMT will continue to engage institutions on any potential partnerships that could allow OMT to leverage its international scholarship spend.
- In 2025, we plan on expanding the reach of the alumni network and keep our members engaged with speaker series and targeted engagements based on feedback received from our survey findings. We will be reaching out to various HFO recipients to be guest speakers to share their knowledge both within their field of research and lessons learnt in carving out their career path.

BASIC EDUCATION



The Department of Basic Education (DBE) kicked off 2024 by launching the extension of Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (MTbBE) from Grade 4 in 2025 in the Eastern Cape (EC). This was in line with the Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) policy of 2013. The Eastern Cape was chosen as a launch site because of its history and having successfully piloted this intervention in the Cofimvaba district. The EC is the only province in the country that offers a bilingual Grade 12 trial examination in isiXhosa and Sesotho for six subjects, and produced its first Grade 12 trial examinations in 2020. To the extent that this initiative is critical in making teaching and learning more accessible to young children in languages they understand, DBE has been taking stock of the human resources and funding required to deliver on this plan.

In South Africa's recent past, very few bills have polarised education stakeholders as did the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act 32 of 2024 (BELA). The bill was first issued for public comment by DBE in October 2017, followed by extensive public hearings in all nine provinces. Subsequent to further amendments, the President signed the bill on 13 September 2024, excluding the two emotive and often polarising clauses on admission and language policies (clauses 4 & 5). The debates largely centred on these two clauses even though there are 56 clauses in the bill. It cannot be denied that the Basic Education Act in the past was based on discriminatory legislation which led to great inequality and injustices in education. This bill proposed to amend the South African School Act of 1996 and the Educators Employment Act to align them with developments in the education landscape. At its core, the bill reflects South Africa's aspirations for a more inclusive and equitable basic education system.

The following paragraphs briefly summarise the more noteworthy clauses of the bill³:

- Clause 4 of the bill gives the DBE greater powers over school admission policies. Specifically, it allows the department to monitor how schools admit children to promote inclusivity and consider vulnerable children, among other things.
- Clause 5 requires School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to submit their language policies for government approval to meet the linguistic needs of the wider community, transferring the decision-making authority from SGBs to the Head of Department (HOD). This change was prompted by instances of discriminatory admission practices, denying admission of learners using language to exclude.
- The inclusion of Grade R (pre-primary education) as compulsory schooling under the South African Schools Act. This aims to relieve parents of the financial burden associated with Grade R education, particularly in no-fee schools.
- Penalties for parents who deliberately keep their children out of school for extended periods.
- Homeschooling requires parents to register their children with the DBE and specify the curriculum being used. Independent assessments of homeschooled children's progress is mandated to ensure they receive quality education.
- SGBs are required to submit quarterly financial reporting and granting the HOD authority to investigate cases of financial mismanagement.
- The bill reiterates the abolition of corporal punishment in schools and expands the definition to include non-physical forms of punishment that undermine a child's dignity.

Lastly, in September 2024, the new Minister of Basic Education, Ms Siviwe Gwarube, raised her concerns about the budgetary constraints faced by provincial departments of education. She cited the wasteful financial bailouts of SOEs (R331bn from 2013-2023) and the public sector wage bill whose increases have outpaced inflation over time as significant contributors to the current budget crisis. For 2025 for example, the Western Cape & Kwa Zulu-Natal would reduce teacher posts by 2 400 and 11 000 respectively. The minister indicated that in the 2025/2026 financial year, four provincial departments would battle to cover their budgets, and this number would increase to seven provinces by 2027/2028 financial year. She urged government to take urgent decisive action and to put education first.

³ For further details on the bill, it can be accessed at:
https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/202409/51258basiceducationlawsamendmentact32of2024.pdf



To fund innovative initiatives that unlock significant and scalable improvement in foundation phase teaching through new teachers and technology

The OMT values that sum up the rolling out of the Basic Education Fund strategy in 2024 would be listening, learning & serving, pioneering and collaborating. Across the three pillars of the Basic Education strategy, there have been noteworthy collaborations, including the two major donor collaborations in foundational literacy and numeracy and initial teacher education.

OMT also worked on building positive relationships with DBE specifically and the process culminated in invitations to attend key events as well as participate in their conferences. Based on common grantees being funded with others, OMT set out to share lessons learnt and draw on good practice from others.

Within the period under review, OMT enabled collaborations across grantee organisations as well as across the focus areas within basic education, as evidenced by the Reflective Learning project where current OMT grantees will now leverage education technology to achieve common desired outcomes.

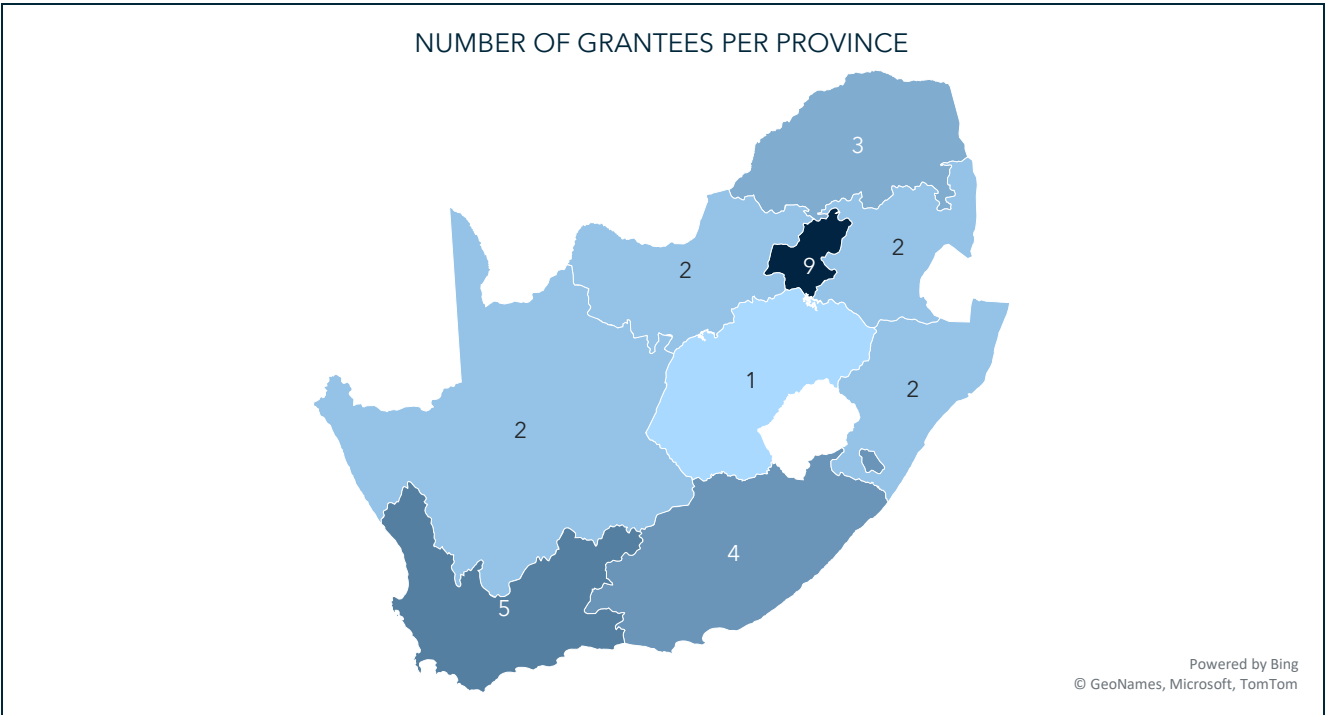
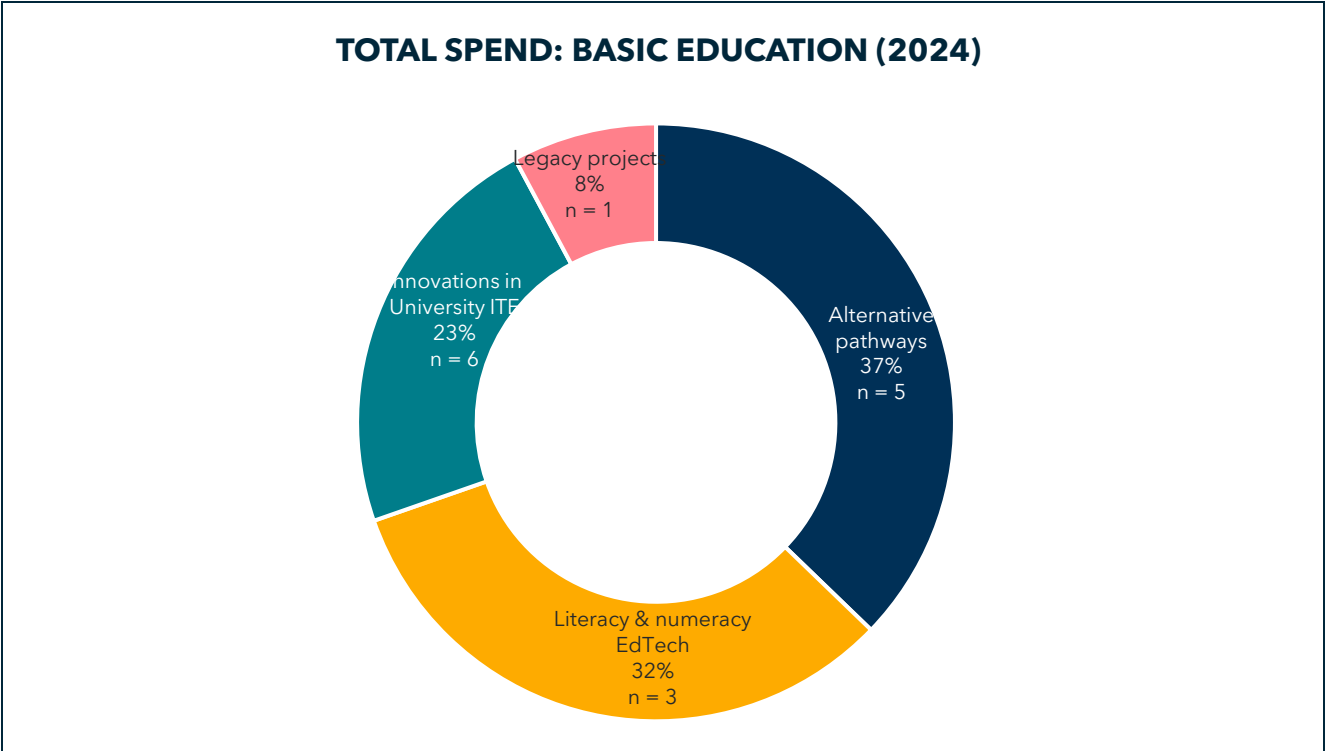
With regard to EdTech, significant effort was put into exploring interventions that had potential, through attending conferences such as the Injini EdTech Summit, the e-Learning Summit convened by the Eastern Cape Department of Education in August 2024, site visits to Apex High School in the Western Cape and speaking to donors who support EdTech like the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation.

More than anything in 2024, government representatives have highlighted the need to be included in informing and creating solutions that are meant for them. OMT continues to listen, learn and act on work aligned with the goals of the trust and the priorities of our education system.

“Education is a massive and complex societal undertaking and one of the most important undertakings for any civilisation. We can be defeatists and throw in the towel now, citing the enormity and complexity of achieving quality education for all, or we can focus on the opportunities that this moment presents us.”

Minister Siviwe Gwarube at the Release of Diagnostic Reports, 4 December 2024.

The approved budget for 2024 was allocated to 15 grants spread over three⁴ focus areas, plus one legacy grant to the Alexandra Education Committee, supporting a cohort of high school learners completing Grade 12 in 2026, shown on the chart below as Legacy Projects.



⁴ For purposes of budget allocation, grantees have been allocated to the focus area where there is the most significant contribution. In terms of reporting on results, a grantee's work may contribute to outcomes across other focus areas.

	GTI	Instill	KICP	Realema	Thandulwazi	Click Learning	SIRP	UJ MRS	NWU MRS	GADRA	Funda Wandé	Rhodes University	Reflective Learning	UJ Tracer Study
ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS INTO TEACHING														
Increase in the quantity of new teachers (via alternate pathways)														
Increase in the quality of new teachers (via alternate pathways)														
Retention of new teachers in the teaching profession														
High quality teaching in schools														
INNOVATIONS IN UNIVERSITY ITE														
Increase in the quantity of graduate teachers (via university innovations)														
Increase in the quality of graduate teachers (via university innovations)														
Retention of university graduate teachers in the teaching profession														
Curricula for teaching reading in African languages and numeracy integrated into BEd qualification														
Teacher educators capacitated and teaching relevant content well														
Student teachers better taught and applying learnings in classroom settings														
Retention of university graduate teachers in the teaching profession														
High quality teaching in learning centres														
LITERACY AND NUMERACY EDTECH														
Identification and closure of learner gaps														
Improved learner literacy results														
Improved learner numeracy results														
Youth employment (e.g. as tech facilitators) and pathwaying into careers in tech or education														
Teacher take-up (embracing technology in the classroom)														
More job opportunities created in Basic Ed sector for supplementary teacher roles														

The table above lists all grantees funded in 2024, however, reporting data gets submitted bi-annually and annually, hence those funded in September and December submit reports in 2025. This new data will be consolidated into the 2025 Annual Report.

In the Basic Education sector, OMT has played a number of significant roles.

Capacity builder

OMT built the capacity of our grantee partners by strengthening their capabilities in storytelling, helping differentiate themselves in a competitive funding landscape. OMT hosted a number of workshops for the organisations in the Alternative Pathways focus area, including some of the teacher interns they support. These workshops were facilitated by Tamara Park⁵ in August 2024. The feedback received from the attendants was overwhelmingly positive, with the stakeholder relations manager of Thandulwazi Maths and Science Academy saying,

"The workshop was absolutely incredible! I loved it - I left there so inspired to go out and tell the world about Thandulwazi! Thank you for affording us such a wonderful opportunity."

Convenor and influencer

OMT convened a workshop on 2 October 2024 with all the alternative pathway grantees as well as two grantees from the Innovations in University ITE pathway, namely Rhodes University and UJ. The objective was to reflect on a year of implementation - discuss successes and challenges, the extent to which they were aligned on theories of change and the short to medium term outcomes committed to.

In as far as individual grantees focus on their own work and challenges, this was an important convening to share what works, tackle common challenges and to look at how they might collaborate rather than viewing each other as competitors. For OMT, it was mission-critical to discuss how the looming teacher post freezes may affect teacher production, placements and absorption by schools.

A significant measure of success from this meeting was the consensus built to act on the identified challenge of weak mathematics proficiency of Foundation Phase students from Grade 12. OMT had invited the founders of Reflective Learning, a tool that diagnoses and remediates conceptual gaps in mathematics, to share their tools and their research findings. As a result of this convening, three of the alternative pathway grantees (Global Teacher Institute, Khanyisa Inanda Community Project and Thandulwazi Academy), requested OMT to fund their interns' diagnostic assessments as well as the remedial programme that will be informed by the gaps identified.

In addition, the University of Rhodes and UJ have committed to take up the Reflective Learning opportunity. The number of first year students and teacher interns who will be part of this study exceeds 500. This added layer of ongoing support for BEd Foundation Phase student teachers/interns starts in earnest in March 2025. Once they successfully complete the programme, it is expected that they will deliver better numeracy outcomes to school learners.

Secondly, the place value application that will be used by Rhodes University in capacitating their university lecturers and students will be shared with mathematics lecturers from other universities from the third year of this programme.

Thirdly, Funda Wande has been encouraged to systematise and institutionalise the use of their materials so the success of the project does not hinge on individual lecturers. To this end, Funda Wande will be establishing a community of practice that will start with a core group of lecturers from Rhodes, the University of the Western Cape, North West University, UNISA and the Nelson Mandela University.

⁵ An award-winning storyteller, founder of StoryNow, executive coach and TEDx Speaker based in North Carolina who was here in person for the workshops.

Collaborator

In 2024, OMT was part of two major donor group collaborations and contributed to the planning/preparatory phases of both:

Partnership to Advance Foundational Learning Outcomes at Scale (FLOAT). Whilst many donors have been working in this area for many years, they have not done so as a collective or worked integrally with the government. This approach focuses on working collaboratively with provinces to understand their provincial reading and numeracy strategies and plans to improve Foundational Literacy and Numeracy outcomes.

OMT together with the other donors contributed funding towards the planning phase and project management fees, participated in the various workstreams and also reached out to its provincial networks to advocate for this initiative. Because a majority decision was made to focus the intervention on in-service teacher training and exclude EdTech or any innovative approaches, this initiative fell outside of OMT's strategy.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Donor Collaboration. This group met regularly throughout 2024, inviting potential grantees, sharing developments and lessons learnt and collaborating on projects with potential systemic impact. The areas of co-funding interest have been:

- **Policy:** The CHE Review of BEd and PGCE programmes across Higher Education Institutions has been identified for collective support. a small group of donors have committed to fund the R14 million budget request by CHE for the review. OMT declined funding, indicated its reservations about funding work that is not innovative and should rightly be funded by government.
- **Curriculum:** Four of the ITE funders, OMT, Zenex Foundation, Maitri Trust and Optima, are currently collaborating on the Sesotho and isiZulu Reading Project (SIRP). This collaboration has brought about efficiencies by utilising common reporting tools, M&E framework and OMT's reporting template.
- **Practice:** Funders have not yet identified areas for joint support. OMT and Zenex Foundation fund the Mixed Reality Simulation initiative and compare notes regularly while OMT also funds GADRA and Rhodes in this area.

Even though OMT is not currently funding this collaboration, we did contribute R300 000 towards the project management costs and the feasibility study that is looking into the higher education institution landscape with respect to the status and the needs of African language teaching and curriculum in Foundation Phase education. The report on this study is expected by 30 April 2025. OMT will continue to collaborate with this donor group as requested.



SIRP Colloquium attendees in KwaZulu-Natal

Grantee Results

The following extract from our theory of change for the fund illustrates the pathways of change we expect to see in each of the strategic focus areas. The paragraphs that follow describe the summary analysis of results reported by our grantees per outcome.

FOCUS AREAS	SHORT-TERM (0-5 YRS) OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM (5-10 YRS) OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM (10-15 YRS) OUTCOMES
ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS INTO TEACHING	Increase in the quantity of new teachers (via alternate pathways)	Retention of new teachers in the teaching profession	High quality teaching in schools
	Increase in the quality of new teachers (via alternate pathways)		
INNOVATIONS IN UNIVERSITY ITE	Increase in the quantity of graduate teachers (via University innovations)	Retention of university graduate teachers in the teaching profession	High quality teaching in learning centres
	Increase in the quality of graduate teachers (via University innovations)		
	Curricula for teaching reading in African languages developed and integrated into BED qualification		
	Teacher educators capacitated and teaching relevant content well		
	Student teachers better taught and applying learnings in classroom settings		
LITERACY AND NUMERACY EDTECH	Identification and closure of learner gaps	Teacher take-up (embracing technology in the classroom)	More job opportunities created in education sector for supplementary teacher roles
	Improved learner literacy results		
	Improved learner numeracy results		
	Youth employment (e.g. as tech facilitators) and pathwaying into careers in tech or education		

Alternative pathways into teaching

OMT has recognised the imperative of identifying and supporting pathways alternative to the traditional full-time BEd degrees offered by HEIs, in particular those that produce better equipped teachers for the reality of the classroom emphasising content knowledge and pedagogy. To this end, the Basic Education Fund has committed funding to explore a variety of Internship models for teacher training. We have supported four grantees (Global Teacher Institute, Realema, Thandulwazi and Khanyisa Inanda) who support students to complete their BEd part-time, whilst interning in schools, and another grantee, Instill Education, who offered graduates a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) specialising in Foundation Phase teaching.

The BEd internship grantees provide wrap-around services that include not only the academic support, induction into university processes and systems, psycho-social support, but importantly, placements in functional schools. Instead of spending minimal unsupervised time in dysfunctional schools, these interns get quality teaching practice and strong endorsements for full time employment post-graduation. These grantees pride themselves in having rigorous recruitment and selection processes where candidates' desire to teach is assessed via essays, references, interviews and personality/integrity assessments.

Once in the programme, the interns are capacitated with strong enriching pedagogies, teaching methodologies, content knowledge, classroom management techniques and building positive relationships with learners. All the grantees in this focus area immerse their interns in all aspects of school life including extra-murals activities, sports coaching training, accompanying learners on field trips, getting involved in cultural events and open days, and attending teacher/parent interviews. All interns are supported to develop their own personal leadership, so that they can show up as resilient professionals in their teaching careers.

All the grantees have partnerships with the provincial departments of education where they have student interns and are guided by the needs of the provinces as well as their ability to absorb and employ the students once they complete their degrees.

Instill Education is the only grantee that offered PGCE among the five grantees in this focus area. Despite PGCE having a lower cost and attracting students who already have undergraduate degrees and extensive content knowledge in their area of study, sadly Instill Education did not have enough traction in the education sector. From 2025, it will no longer be part of this portfolio as it went into liquidation towards the end of 2024.

After seven years of repeated applications to, and rejections from, the Council on Higher Education (CHE), Instill finally received its accreditation in January 2023 to offer a Postgraduate Certificate in Education for Foundation Phase. Instill's PGCE was offered as a one-year full time contact programme or as a two-year distance (part-time) programme. Instill's value and niche was in the fact that they were recruiting and selecting students who would not ordinarily choose teaching but rather students who had studied subjects like psychology and social work, which Instill believed would prepare them to be more resilient teachers given the reality a learner faces in the context of a South African school. The uniqueness of the Instill Education model was that:

1. It drew from world leading institutions to transform the student experience, formulating a learning cycle comprising the four stages that place ownership learning in the hands of the students;
2. Students explored issues in teaching and learning through structured struggle simulations, acquiring skills and knowledge and mindsets for effective teaching;
3. Students were encouraged to 'make meaning' – a process of reflecting and researching newly acquired knowledge and skills through engaging in professional learning communities for coaching and human-centred problem solving;
4. Students researched and acquired knowledge, skills and mindsets necessary to support learners through rigorous observation and feedback cycles, practice and collaborations; and
5. Students transferred learning by implementing one action research project and developing a thoughtfully curated teaching portfolio.

As of 14 February 2025, Instill has been given permission (from CHE) to transition their 61 students to Cornerstone Institute, made possible through the R500 000 OMT grant as well as another R500 000 from the Steyn Group. The status of the studies of the Instill Education interns is as follows:

- 30 have completed more than 50% of their studies
- 13 students have completed 50% of their studies
- 18 students have completed less than 50% of their studies

OMT's disappointment is that the sector is losing the benefit of learning from Instill's innovative ideas.

Having explained what the alternative pathways are, the outcomes achieved by our grantees are now described in the sections that follow:

Increase in the quantity of new teachers (via alternate pathways)

DHET research reports⁶ show that that in 2021 South Africa produced a total of 29 712 graduate teachers. Of these, only 4 610 graduated as Foundation Phase teachers (15.5%). The breakdown by BEd and PGCE is shown in the table below.

	All phases	Foundation phase	Percentage
BEd Graduates	22 460	4 479	19.9%
PGCE Graduates	7 252	131	1.8%
TOTALS	29 712	4 610	15.5%

It is these sobering statistics that reinforce the need for OMT to focus its resources on funding initiatives which produce Foundation Phase teachers.

The five grantees in this focus area are collectively working in 227 schools, with more than 500 interns in all but two provinces (Free State and North West). OMT has been supporting 76 interns for a year, with another 10 added in December due to NSFAS funding challenges. Individually and collectively, these NGOs are increasing the quantity of new teachers who join the teaching profession.

The numbers below show the total numbers of interns across all the phases in OMT's grantee partner programmes. It is important to note that not all the Foundation Phase interns in these programmes are funded by OMT.

Grantee organisation	Total # in all phases in 2024	Total # Foundation Phase interns in 2024	# of Foundation Phase graduated in 2024	Number of interns supported by OMT
Global Teacher Institute (GTI)	123	30	4	15
Realema	74	40	14	10
Thandulwazi	67	21	3	7
Khanyisa Inanda	176	70	38	26
Instill Ed	61	18	11	18
TOTALS	501	179	70	76

⁶ Teacher Education Directorate. (June 2023). *Teacher Education Enrolment and Graduation Patterns at Public Universities in South Africa in 2021*. Trends in Teacher Education 2021. University Education Branch, Department of Higher Education and Training.

Increase in the quality of new teachers (via alternate pathways)

All the grantees in this focus area use various platforms and tried and tested tools to recruit and select students suitable for their programmes, and ultimately for a career in teaching. In terms of subject matter knowledge, pedagogy and types of knowledge, all the grantees are guided by the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) of DHET to produce fit-for-purpose teachers.

A key feature across grantees are extended internships where the students spend three to four days a week in school, mentored and observed by veteran teachers and NGO-appointed mentors. The remaining days focus on academic programme support, reflection on school placements, and psychosocial support. Topics covered include classroom management, literacy, learner relationships, establishing support networks, lesson planning, and enriching pedagogy and teaching methodologies in the Foundation Phase.

The first and second years of BEd degrees do not have much teaching duties as the modules are more theoretical and about observing rather than taking charge of a classroom. While it is too soon to definitively report on this outcome (quality of new teachers), the grantees have been intentional about their strategies to ensure that they produce quality new teachers. While there are similarities in the fundamentals of preparation of teachers, there are nuanced differences in ensuring that they produce quality teachers. The table below highlights some of these differences:

GTI	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Works in rural and township communities across six provinces, preparing the interns to work where the greatest needs are. 2. School placement rate upon graduation has been more than 80% since they started the programme. 3. Weekly sessions cover topics like classroom management, literacy, learner relationships, support networks, lesson planning, and teaching methodologies for the Foundation Phase. 4. Created the Future Leader Information Portal (FLIP) to track intern attendance, punctuality, classroom competence, workshop participation, and social responsibility projects.
Realema	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. From the impact evaluation assessment carried out by IBIS Environmental Social Governance Consulting South Africa Pty Ltd ('IBIS') in 2022, IBIS also found that "100% of the respondents (partner schools) indicated the Realema's interns are well-positioned to provide and contribute towards quality education within their schools of placement" and that some of them "have been given positions that in the past were never given to an intern." 2. Partner schools follow strict guidelines provided to ensure interns are well-prepared for classroom management by graduation. 3. Schools provide detailed biannual feedback on interns, based on mentorship from veteran teachers and Realema support staff. 4. Interns engage fully in school life, including extra-murals, sports coaching, field trips, cultural events, open days and parent-teacher meetings. 5. Interns receive support to develop personal leadership, fostering resilience in their teaching careers. 6. Most Realema partner schools are well-functioning former Model C schools, offering strong mentorship, teaching exposure, stipends, support during teaching practicums, and Medical Aid coverage during the programme.
Thandulwazi	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partnered with Funda Wande Academy for online academic support, with interns taking numeracy and literacy baseline exams at the start and end of their first year. 2. Interns attend four onsite workshops annually. 3. Students spend 20 hours per week in class under a mentor teacher, with coordinators (1:30 ratio) providing policy guidance, academic support, and psycho-social assistance.

KICP

1. As part of its Foundational Literacy and Numeracy support, KICP offers continuous professional development to its student teachers from when they join to when they complete their B Ed programmes.
2. Recruitment is promoted via the UNISA portal, leading to exponential growth in applications.
3. Interns use technology tools like Google Slides, Kahoot, and Mentimeter, integrating them with the curriculum to create engaging lessons.
4. In resource-constrained schools, interns adapt by using mobile phones and speakers for Nalibali stories, songs, and images to maintain quality learning.
5. A 28-week foundational literacy and numeracy course aligns with CAPS, emphasising phonics in both mother tongue and first additional languages to support reading for meaning.
6. Foundational numeracy focuses on hands-on learning of numbers, patterns, place value, and problem-solving to strengthen mathematical reasoning.

With regard to costs per intern, the amounts vary widely, depending on the institution the interns are studying through (private costing more than public institutions), the number and the cost of modules, as well as the intensity of the wrap-around services provided by that particular grantee. All the students who join the grantee programmes must come with government funding, either a Funza Lushaka bursary or NSFAS funding. Without these funds, the cost of these grantee programmes would be significantly higher.

Grantee	Cost of internship	What is covered
Realema	R98 000*	University related costs, academic tutoring, psycho-social support, once off device and data for online sessions, accommodation, medical insurance, (candidate enrichment support before joining the Realema programme)
GTI	R97 000	Funza Lushaka (R50 000), Work Integrated Learning costs, programme staff support to interns, management costs.
KICP	R75 000	R75 000 (R45 000 direct intern cost and R30 000 toward wrap-around services provided by KICP). Interns come with NSFAS/Funza Lushaka funding and are able to pay for academic part of the costs.
Thandulwazi Maths and Science Academy	R130 000	Stipends of R5 000 -R5 900 per month included. Making use of Funda Wande Academy to provide academic support and providing mentoring support themselves through coordinators.
Instill Education	R50 000	PGCE - R25 000 per year for those doing distance learning.

* (R20 000 towards Realema programme management costs included), excludes stipend (paid by the partner schools)

Whilst no independent assessments have been done to compare the quality of BEd graduates via internships to those following a traditional university path, OMT has anecdotal reports of how schools are preferring newly qualified teachers who come from these grantees, as evidenced by the alumni of Realema, where 44 (out of 45) graduates have been placed in schools.

KICP also reports that its partner schools are eager to hire their interns when budgets permit, as they are inspired by KICP and the quality of education and academic support the organisation provides. OMT has funded UJ to conduct a tracer study which includes several of the internship students, this is due to be completed by the end of 2027. It will be a comparative study between distance education programmes and UJ's contact programme which does not have as extensive a wrap-around service as alternative pathway models.



KICP interns workshop held on 4 April 2024

Retention of new teachers in the teaching profession

Premature to report on this outcome.

High quality teaching in schools

Premature to report on this outcome.

OMT funds six grantees in this focus area, four of whom are already implementing programmes and two are at the very early stages of preparing to implement. OMT's strategy has been very clear on *not* funding the 'business as usual' of university programmes. The funded programmes have to be unique, innovative, and not something that would ordinarily be funded by government. The paragraphs below briefly describe each of the university innovations funded in 2024.

- The **Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS)** project is implemented by the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and the North West University (NWU). MRS is an innovation brought about because of COVID-19 lockdowns, when students could not access schools to do their Teaching Practice. OMT supports this innovation because it uses technology/avatars to create classroom-like environments in lecture rooms, with the avatars behaving like grade-appropriate children, with simulation specialists manoeuvring controls behind the scene. OMT supports the strengthening of Work Integrated Learning (WIL), a component of teacher education programmes that has been known to be weak over many years. In the case of these two universities, they are customising the platform/avatars to suit the South African context and versioning into South African languages (isiZulu, Sesotho, Setswana and Afrikaans) with the requisite research and sharing of working practice. While MRS does not replace physical teaching practice, it is showing some promise with improving classroom management techniques at UJ and NWU. OMT has been monitoring the implementation of this innovation and encouraging both institutions to collaborate and share good practice. As of 28 January 2025, they are preparing to exchange summaries of what has been done and observed thus far.
- **Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA)** is implemented by Rhodes University. GADRA is implementing a three-pronged service-learning programme in support of Rhodes University's Teaching Practice component of the BEd Foundation Phase degree. This Foundation Phase programme is not new as GADRA has had a partnership with Rhodes University for Foundation Phase, in-service and pre-service since 2016. OMT supports this initiative because of its uniqueness in that it has targeted programmes from the first to the fourth-year students, who are extensively immersed in Makhandla schools with innovations such as administering the isiXhosa Spelling Bee programme at school levels as well as learning how to diagnose and remediate learner gaps.
- **Sesotho and isiZulu Reading Project (SIRP)** managed by Jet Education Services, implemented by two service providers (Class Act and Southern Hemisphere), and funded by OMT, Zenex Foundation, Maitri Trust and Optima. The initial version of this project came out of the literacy working group of the Primary Teacher Education Project (PrimTEd) in 2016, and the Centre for African Language Teaching at UJ was appointed by DHET to drive that initial initiative. Through this current project, seven modules for improving reading in these languages are being developed and versioned for integration into the curricula of the twelve universities that are part of this innovation. Additionally, university lecturers are being trained to implement the study units. The goal of this project is to produce newly qualified teachers with enhanced knowledge of reading pedagogy in Sesotho and isiZulu, capable of delivering quality teaching in the classroom. The service provider responsible for the project evaluation will track lecturers' changes in perceptions and skills with respect to the SIRP curriculum in 2025 and 2026. The extent to which lecturers effectively convey the SIRP curriculum to their students will be tracked by assessing the growth of students' knowledge of literacy pedagogy. It was decided at an early stage of 2024 that a baseline of student knowledge could not be conducted this year until the shape of the literacy curriculum at participating HEIs had been established. Assessing students' knowledge remains the most sensitive ethical issue and novel approaches are being devised.

"MRS simulations allow for iterative practice, immediate feedback, and opportunities to develop confidence in managing classroom dynamics and delivering content." -

North West University's Prof Carisma Nel

Having explained what the University innovations are, the outcomes achieved by our grantees are now described in the sections that follow.

Increase in the quantity of graduate teachers (via university innovations)

The numbers reported on below are indicative of progress being made through training of *student* teachers, and do not yet reflect any increase in the quantity of *graduate* teachers.

- **Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS)** - both UJ and NWU have integrated MRS into their teaching practice modules, with UJ having trained **217 second year students** and **167 third year students** to design and teach language and mathematics lessons. At NWU, MRS has been used in four language modules (English, Setswana, isiXhosa and Afrikaans) as well as work-integrated learning modules, with **300 students** participating in the MRS sessions (continuous assessment) and making use of the MRS classroom environment.
- **Grahamstown Area Distress Relief Association (GADRA)** trained **89 first year students** on the isiXhosa Spelling Bee programme and **50 fourth year students** have been involved with the Reading Comprehension Study and encouraged to reflect on their learning.



University of Johannesburg coding and robotics lab

Increase in the quality of graduate teachers (via university innovations)

The comments below are indicative of progress being made through training of *student* teachers, and do not yet reflect any increase in the quality of *graduate* teachers.

Student Teachers using Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS) at UJ: Using 10-15 minutes long microlessons, the purpose is to provide time to practice specific skills rather than teaching an entire lesson. UJ has been reporting improvements in how the students are teaching after they engage with the second or third cycle of practice.

- Pre-service teachers are reported to be valuing the realistic scenarios, the ability to pause and redo lessons, and feedback from peers and instructors.
- Teacher educators observed improved teaching skills, deeper reflection, and more equitable access to practice opportunities for all students (contact and distance).
- Mentor teachers at schools also join the MRS classroom and pre-service teachers get actionable feedback and coaching from both the mentors as well as teacher educators.
- UJ has been seeing improvements in students' use of questioning as a core teaching skill and classroom management.
- Initial results confirm that the MRS contributes to the development of African languages as languages of teaching and learning and to improve literacy and language teaching in these languages.

UJ is in the process of setting up Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with NGOs such as GTI to ensure that MRS can also be utilised to support students within internships and that are following a distance learning modality. The aim is to increase throughput rate and also support mentor teachers.

Student teachers using Mixed Reality Simulation (MRS) at NWU: Following some research, the language modules have been restructured to ensure that students' concerns and needs are addressed. The content has also been adapted to ensure that there is greater alignment between theory and practice. The methodology components of the language modules are now required to ensure that MRS is integrated, ensuring students receive authentic and equitable practice-based teaching opportunities. The students who participated in the identified language modules all completed their modules successfully. The quality of their reflections and their assignments are reported to have improved.

Student teachers at Rhodes participating in GADRA programme: Students are reported to have acquired the following skills:

- Practical experience in conducting various types of assessments as a key component of effective teaching;
- How to collect data on learners' progress and interpret the results to identify gaps in literacy skills, such as comprehension, vocabulary, and reading fluency.
- Understanding the varied abilities of learners and how teaching in the Foundation Phase necessitates adaptation, flexibility and differentiated teaching.
- Engaging with learners' educational realities and understand the challenges of teaching literacy in a practical context.

In lectures that followed data-generation, students were tasked with developing strategies to address learner gaps through tailored instructional interventions. Post-programme evaluations revealed that students felt more confident in their ability to analyse and respond to learners' needs, particularly in terms of literacy development. Students reported that their experiences in the programme directly contributed to their professional growth, bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Curricula for teaching reading in African languages and numeracy integrated into BEd qualification

Through the current Sesotho and isiZulu Reading Project (SIRP) project, seven modules for improving reading in these languages are being developed and versioned for integration into the curricula of the twelve universities that are part of this innovation. Additionally, university lecturers are being trained to implement the study units. The goal of this project is to produce newly qualified teachers with enhanced knowledge of reading pedagogy in Sesotho and isiZulu, capable of delivering quality teaching in the classroom.

The seven modules to be integrated into the curricula have been successfully developed, versioned and reviewed in terms of linguistics and pedagogic content by language experts. There were some delays with the versioning from English to isiZulu and Sesotho (where terminology did not already exist and consensus needed to be reached). Another delay was the time spent on introducing the project to the universities, getting buy-in from the relevant personnel, ethical clearance and signing the required MoUs. Training did take place in August and September of 2024 with attendance as follows:

Module	# attended	# institutions represented
Sesotho Module 1	25	5
Sesotho Module 2	11	4
isiZulu Module 1	11	9
isiZulu Module 2	10	4

Within seven of the twelve institutions, the project activities are underway, however the following issues with the remaining five institutions need to be resolved:

- **UNISA:** All modules are taught in English and there is little interest in engaging and changing this status;
- **Wits:** There is integration of African languages as modules but the Foundation Phase programme is taught in English and African languages are taught as additional languages and there is no standardisation;
- **Independent Institute of Education:** Participating in mentoring sessions and hoping to introduce BEd Foundation Phase for African languages in the near future;
- **Stadio:** Has some integration of African languages in BEd Foundation Phase (on a contact basis) and may/may not participate in 2025; and
- **UKZN:** The individual involved claims to be implementing elements of SIRP and sees no need to participate in project activities (may have personal grievances against the first version of this project).

In a meeting held between the funders and project management office in January 2025, it was recommended getting senior decision makers within the university structures to endorse and buy into the project for institutionalisation purposes and leverage the CHE relationship to urgently endorse it.

Teacher educators capacitated and teaching relevant content well

Premature to report on this outcome.

Student teachers better taught and applying learnings in classroom settings

Premature to report on this outcome.

Retention of university graduate teachers in the teaching profession

Within the sector there is very little follow-up research conducted to determine whether graduate teachers remain in the teaching profession.

GADRA programmes are designed with the belief that novice teachers are more likely to be retained in the profession if they are exposed to the realities and challenging aspects of teaching in the Foundation Phase in South Africa and are equipped during their pre-service training to face these realities and learn ways in which challenges can be addressed in their own classrooms. Based on OMT's on-site observation of first year students and newly qualified teachers trained by GADRA, the exposure to school realities in the Makhanda region, the additional resources provided and the psycho-social support were observed to be producing motivated teachers who view the profession as their first choice and rewarding. Considering the very strong sense of community that is palpable through the Rhodes University partnership, students who come through the Rhodes/GADRA programme know and appreciate the difference they make in the Makhanda schools. The Teacher Awards are also a great incentive for the newly qualified teachers to be acknowledged as changemakers, in an environment where unemployment of youth is high.

To reinforce our own observations on the ground, and to more broadly inform the medium-term outcome of retention of university graduate teachers in the teaching profession, OMT has approved a tracer study grant that will inform the extent to which funded students do stay in the profession. This investigation commences in 2025.

"I learnt that a lack of proficiency in the language of instruction can severely impact a learner's ability to engage with content, which underscores the need for more inclusive language strategies in the classroom."

Student responding to the GADRA administered questionnaire.

Literacy and numeracy EdTech

In the context of OMT's grant making, the strategic focus on EdTech has been about supporting content delivery in the classroom and not about buying devices, infrastructure, hardware or software, distribution, warehousing and insurance. In order to learn from the sector and keep abreast of developments in this area, OMT participates in fora such as the Global EduTech Trends, Injini (EdTech incubator and accelerator) and attends relevant convenings focusing on improving literacy and numeracy at Foundation Phase.

This focus area currently has three active grantees (Click Learning, Rhodes University and Reflective Learning), with Click Learning having had a year to implement its activities as an OMT grantee, whilst the other two grantees have only recently been awarded funding and so have not yet reported.



Click Learning learners using e-Quizzes to improve their literacy.

Click Learning establishes and runs computer labs in schools, deploying online literacy applications (Reading Eggs, MyLexia and Fast Phonics) and introducing numeracy applications (Matific, Amira and Mindspark) once the literacy has been mastered. It is important to note that Click Learning's current literacy and numeracy applications are in English (which has an opaque orthography - the relationship between letters and sounds can be inconsistent, permitting many exceptions). As Click Learning gears up to pilot their products in African languages, OMT looks forward to learning alongside the organisation.

Click Learning have implemented literacy and numeracy programmes in more than 300 schools in five provinces, and so they understand how to scale, how to partner with provinces and schools, how to enthuse youth (within the Presidential YES Programme) to give of their time while acquiring skills that make them employable in township and rural schools, and how to capture the attention and the interest of donors to support their growth and learning.

Click Learning has strong partnerships with provincial departments of education in a number of provinces, now evidenced by the negotiated increase in the time allocated to their literacy and numeracy products in Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape schools. Click has been able to negotiate for increased time in the classroom from 18 hours to 20.7 hours per year (which is anticipated to enhance impact significantly). While this is neither a literacy outcome nor an identification and closure of learner gaps, it is no mean feat and Click Learning is to be commended as schools almost never give up timetable slots. This is no doubt a result of many years of building trust with provinces and schools and having demonstrated that their programmes are having observable results.

OMT is supporting the Double Click programme (learners who are on both literacy and numeracy interventions) and the strengthening of the M&E component of Click's work. To this end, OMT has been encouraged by how Click Learning is prioritising research with the University of Stellenbosch - this will add objectivity and credibility from a higher education institution that has a good reputation for education research.

Having explained Clicks Edtech programme, the outcomes they have achieved are now described in the sections that follow.

Identification and closure of learner gaps

In order to identify learner gaps Click Learning have developed their own online assessments/e-Quizzes which focus on testing foundations of literacy. These quizzes (designed with literacy and numeracy experts) are 20 minutes long and they test for identification of letters, word sounds, ability to link words to pictures and comprehension ability.

Improved learner literacy results

Click Learning has determined that when a learner knows 20 letters of the alphabet, they start reading many high frequency words. Additionally, they have also found that when learners can read between 60 – 70% of the words accurately, they start reading with comprehension. Based on a study of 32 schools⁷ in the Buffalo City area of East London, Click Learning reported the following:

- 60% of Grade 1 learners on Double Click (2 hours a week) reached the 77% tipping point for letter sounds (they knew 20 out of the 26 letters of the alphabet), compared to 44% of learners from the control schools;
- For word reading, 39% of Grade 2 learners and 64% of Grade 3 learners on Double Click could read words accurately compared to 33% of learners of Grade 2 and 49% of Grade 3 from control schools;
- At Grade 4, 32% of learners on Double Click dosage had higher levels of reading comprehension compared to 5% of learners from control schools.
- After one year of Click Learning with Double Click interventions, the literacy skills of learners do improve, with the largest impact seen in Grade 5 as one in three Click Learning learners are reported to get 70% or more for reading comprehension, compared to one in ten for the control schools.

These results are extremely encouraging.

Improved learner numeracy results

The comprehensive report evaluating the last two years of numeracy will be ready in May 2025.

Youth employment (e.g as tech facilitators) and pathwaying into careers in tech or education

Click Learning attracts youth facilitators through the Youth Employment Scheme (YES). The youth facilitators are with Click Learning only for a year. Without committed funding, it has not been possible to retain them beyond this period. The biggest number leave because they have found better employment, with a small number leaving to pursue further studies. Although Click Learning's attrition rate has come down from 20% in 2022, to 18% in 2023, to 9% in 2024, OMT is encouraging Click Learning to be intentional about pathwaying these young people into education and technology careers.

Teacher take-up (embracing technology in the classroom)

Through site visits and attentively listening to the experiences of teachers in schools, OMT has been encouraging Click Learning to include in-service teachers in the schools they work in rather than solely depending on their external youth facilitators. These gaps were noted and communicated to Ayanda Mtsatse and Maxine Schaefer of Click Learning, following the site visits in Tembisa, Mdantsane and Makhanda. This layer of involving teachers will strengthen their intervention and its sustainability in the schools Click operate in. This is the one area Click needs to prioritise as there is a risk of teacher disengagement because Click Learning solely depends on the youth facilitators for their interventions to succeed in schools.

More job opportunities created in Basic Education sector for supplementary teacher roles

Premature to report on this outcome.

⁷ 20 schools using Click learning 2hrs per week, 7 schools using 1hr per week, 5 control schools (no Click Learning).

The Fund notes the following significant learnings this year:

- **PGCE qualifications:** A major challenge of PGCE programmes is that they generally receive less/no support from the sector for a variety of reasons (less subsidies compared to longer degrees, schools preferring BEd graduates, students with other undergraduate degrees rarely choosing to leave other careers to teach and do a PGCE). There is a strong school of thought that believes that PGCEs are more suitable for high school teaching and not the lower grades, especially Foundation Phase as teaching at Foundation Phase requires specific methodologies, pedagogies and content knowledge to teach children literacy and numeracy. The Trends in Teacher Education report of 2021 showed that the number of PGCE Foundation Phase students produced by four institutions in 2021 was 131 (out of 7 252 PGCE graduates), with 65% of this number produced by UNISA. PGCEs cost half of what BEd cost per year, and they offer a faster pathway into teaching for graduates with strong content knowledge. In the case of Instill Education students from various disciplines such as social work, arts, and psychology could have brought resilience and other necessary instructive attributes to the teaching profession. Without innovative disruptions of the UNISA monopoly, South Africa will continue producing inadequately prepared Foundation Phase teachers.
- **Internships:** The funding raised from donors to support students who come through the Internships pathways has been on the decline, with funders increasingly indicating that these internship programmes are costly and cannot be funded in perpetuity.
- **Innovation around BEd degrees:** Through engaging with staff from Deans' offices from several universities, there was a marked difference in response from those universities who were prepared to interrogate the validity of their BEd programmes, acknowledge the shortcoming and find innovative ways of addressing the gaps e.g. UJ, North West and Rhodes versus those not interested to change e.g. UNISA and Fort Hare. However receiving concept notes when invited proved to be challenging due to, strained capacity (teaching and research workloads) and not being adequately supported by the main university processes. OMT acknowledges that some universities lack the social capital to initiate change, and require the time and space to re-imagine their BEd offering.
- **EdTech:** OMT is learning that only a few donors have the risk appetite for funding EdTech, as they prefer to sit on the side lines and wait for research to validate the uptake and improvements generated off the back of the technology. EdTech founders do not always see NGOs that work in schools as strategic partners who can help access schools as test sites or co-creators of solutions. The market for EdTech solutions to tackle foundation phase numeracy and literacy is still underdeveloped, but we remain plugged into new products being generated.
- **Donor Collaborations:** OMT was invited to join two donor collaboration groups. Even though the collective agreed that all partners would have an equal voice and say, a power dynamic developed when the core group of funders who committed larger sums of money (R10 million) each per year. Alignment in values, purpose, mutual trust, some convergence on desired outcomes, clear communication and enough time dedicated to build and maintain relationships are key to establishing successful collaborations. Even though we are exiting the bigger Foundational Learning and Numeracy (FLOAT/FLN) group, valuable lessons have been learnt, with intellectual and financial contributions made to the group. OMT continues to be part of the Initial Teacher Education group, with monthly attendance of meetings and an open mind on opportunities to co-create in this area.

- Recognising that alternative pathway grantees are producing better quality teachers but at a higher cost and not at the scale requires us to explore conversations with grantees, funders and government, to look at how technology might be leveraged to deliver quality teaching and learning at scale while keeping the costs down. Apex High School operating in the Western Cape has started this work, where they have bigger class sizes of 100 learners, with one teacher and one to two teacher assistants, providing quality education at less than what the Western Cape Education Department spends per year per learner (R17 000 vs R18 000).
- There is a need to explore and evaluate several programmes that have been piloted in the past to verify the opportunity for replicability into other provinces, for example the District Based Teacher Recruitment Strategy, piloted in the Free State, informed by projections of supply and demand for that district. Two cohorts of Foundation Phase students were supported to do their BEd degrees and then absorbed by the schools with teacher shortages. In addition, convening implementing partners to design a multipronged approach programme (each playing to their strengths) to address multiple shortcomings in Foundation phase numeracy and literacy, but scalable in nature.
- Through engaging the current Chairperson of the Dean's Forum, Professor Madiba (Dean of Education, Stellenbosch University) and advice from Prof Bawa, OMT will embark upon an innovation journey with a group of selected universities, to get them to think innovatively about the BEd degrees they are currently offering and how they need to pivot to prepare Foundation Phase teachers fit for the future. OMT has commissioned the Tayarisha Centre of Excellence housed at the Wits School of Governance to design this innovative programme which will kickstart in May 2025. The team is made up of futures and foresight experts who have decades of experience in designing and executing foresight processes and capacity building programmes in an array of contexts in South Africa. We hope this will stimulate more innovations in BEd degrees and increase the number of proposals we receive.
- In 2025, more time will be spent exploring tried and tested EdTech that is scalable and that could be added to the EdTech focus area.
- OMT looks forward to the commencement of the UJ tracer study whose funding was approved in December 2024. This work will answer the question of teacher retention in the profession, looking at both contact and distance learning students.

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



The Department of Basic Education (DBE) has developed a 2030 strategy and has identified five strategic priorities for Early Childhood Development (ECD) programmes. The strategic priorities align well with OMT's focus areas, enabling us to support the DBE in a way that does not detract from our core business. DBE's priorities are: universal access to age-appropriate early learning programmes (ELPs); improved coordination; sufficient funding with resources targeted more effectively; a capable ECD workforce; and enhanced programme quality. Since the launch of DBE's strategy, elements of the implementation of their strategy were visible in 2024:

- The department held the first Inter-Ministerial Committee for ECD, and along with that developed an Outcomes Framework to collectively track the progress being made as a country in achieving improved child outcomes.
- The Children's Amendment Bill was published for public comment. The purpose of this Bill will be to enable the DBE to streamline processes, reduce red tape and therefore increase access to ECD programmes.
- Through a social compact, the Bana Pele Mass Registration Drive (MRD), a new, streamlined, digitised registration process was designed and launched. Since the start of implementation, over 1 000 ECD programmes were under the DBE's oversight and support in 2024. Registered sites across Gauteng increased by approximately 30% and 31 191 children were impacted/reached due to registration.
- The first phase of the Early Childhood Administration and Reporting System (eCares) was developed, which will now enable planning much more strategically for the expansion of access but will also increase accountability in the system.
- ~ R600 million funding was secured (including from OMT) for an innovative new financing mechanism which harnesses public-private partnerships much more strategically through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) outcomes fund.
- The budget for ECD is progressively increasing, with an additional allocation of R539 million towards subsidies and R50 million for infrastructure support.
- The data driven approach taken by the DBE continues as the 2024 Thrive by Five Index commenced with design and collection of data, of which results will be reported by the third quarter of 2025.

The department recognises that a social compact will be needed for the delivery of the strategy and 2024 was a year in which government, private sector and civil society coalesced around key initiatives such as the MRD and the outcomes fund.

"Through the strong partnerships that have been built between the department and partners, we have significant momentum to achieve the vision of achieving universal access to quality early learning by 2030."

Janeli Kotzé, Acting Director: ECD at the DBE



To leverage our funding to unlock support for a sustainable ECD (Early Childhood Development) ecosystem, driving awareness of the importance of ECD, attracting youth and building capacity so that every child has access to quality early learning.

2024 was the first year for the implementation of OMT's new ECD & Youth strategy. Grantees awarded funding in the year were a combination of existing and new, with the aim of establishing partnerships that drive systemic change rather than localised impact.

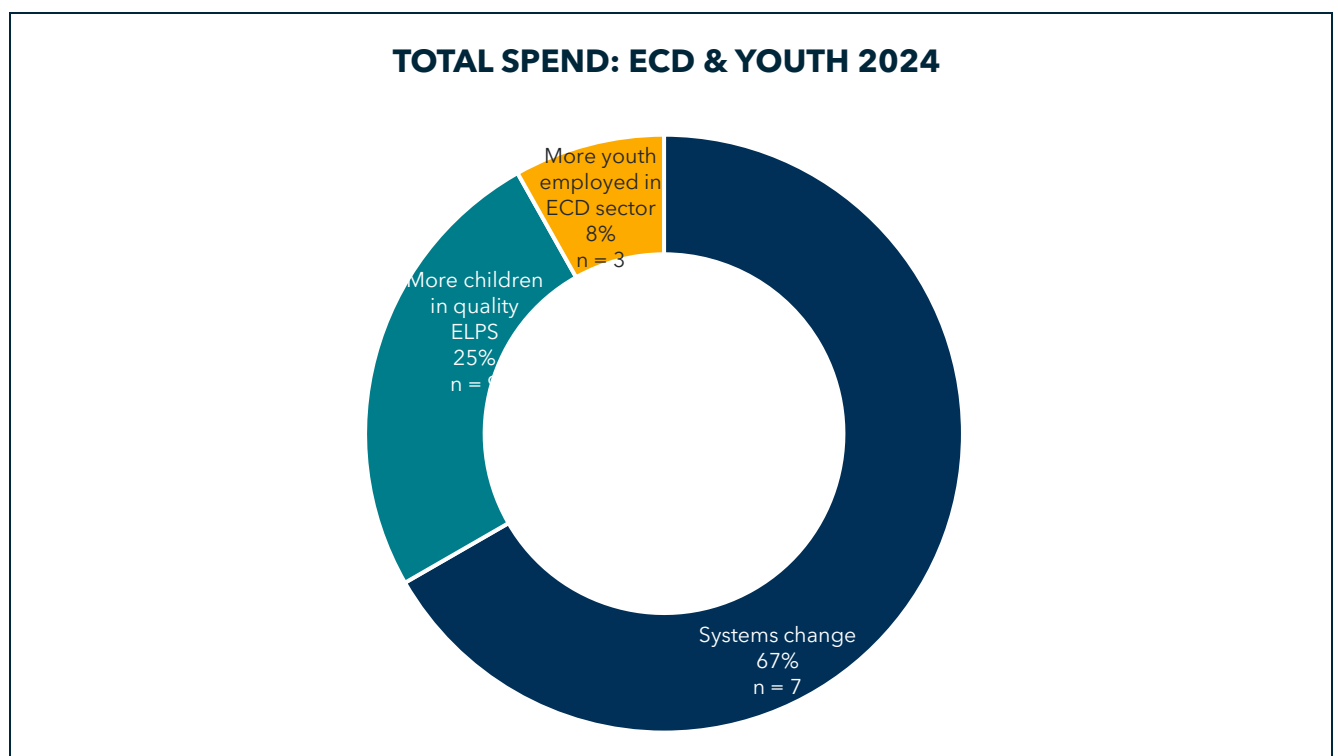
There have been some directionally positive movements across the three focus areas of the fund, with grantees becoming more familiar with the new outcomes focused approach in reporting, and adjusting to reporting on outcomes as opposed to activities.

Key highlights for the year include OMT's involvement in the innovative ECCE outcomes fund in partnership with DBE and other philanthropic organisations, secondment to the DBE of the fund manager to support the ECD mass registration drive, using platforms such as the IPASA conference and the 30 Years of ECD in South Africa seminar to spotlight work done by OMT and our involvement in the sector.

Learnings from 2024 will be used to strengthen the fund, ensuring that outcomes are embedded in our grantees and that OMT's position in the sector continues to be seen as catalytic, systemic and scale focused.

OMT Results

In 2024, OMT's ECD budget allocation was awarded to 19 grantees, covering all three focus areas⁸. A breakdown of the grantee distribution across focus areas is shown below.



⁸ For purposes of budget allocation, grantees have been allocated to the focus area where there is the most significant contribution. In terms of reporting on results, a grantee's work may contribute to outcomes across other focus areas.

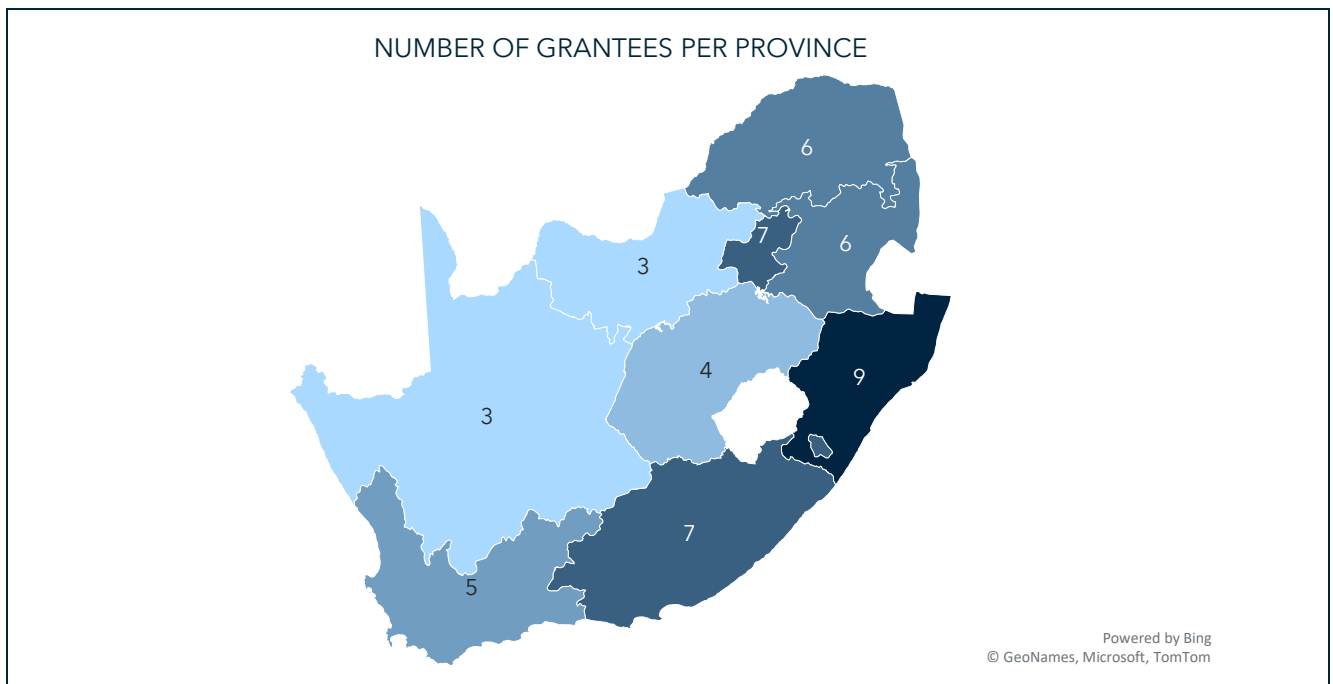
	Lesedi	ELRU	Grassroots	Cotlands	LETCEE	Ntataise	Impande	Goldyouth/SmartStart	Sivulithuba	Penreach	Rhiza Babuyile	SCSA/Unisa	EOF/DBE	PPT	Equality Collective	DGMT	YearBeyond	Bulungula
ECD SYSTEM CHANGES																		
Standardised Child Learning Outcomes Assessment is widely adopted																		
Accreditation standards in ECD sector are adopted																		
Existing public funding sources unlocked to skill, place & pay youth & existing ECD workforce																		
Increased finances available to ECD sector: - Government - Philanthropy & CSI																		
MORE CHILDREN IN QUALITY ELPs																		
Importance of ECD is recognised and valued across society (from gov to parents)																		
Parents willing to pay fees																		
More ELPs able to formalise (be registered)																		
Increase in skilled and/or qualified workforce in ELPs																		
More children enrolled in ELPs																		
More quality ELPs established & sustainable																		
Increase in number of children are school ready and 'thriving by 5'																		
MORE YOUTH EMPLOYED IN ECD SECTOR																		
More youth attracted to ELPs and ECD ecosystem																		
ECD workforce earning at least minimum wage																		
ECD centres & support services become viable business models																		
Youth unemployment reduced due to: - Youth career pathed into sector - Youth retained in sustainable livelihoods																		

The table above lists all grantees funded in 2024, however, reporting data gets submitted bi-annually and annually, hence those funded in September and December submit reports in 2025. This new data will be consolidated into the 2025 Annual Report.

With 2024 being the first year of implementing the new strategy, the fund took a view of ensuring coverage across all focus areas to ensure learnings are gleaned as early as possible, while leveraging opportunities that would arise in the year. These opportunities included participation in the largest ECD outcomes fund, as

well as a communication campaign aimed at improving awareness of ECD in communities (specifically targeting caregivers).

A country distribution of the grantees is shown below, noting that some Grantees work across several provinces, with representation across all provinces. The newly funded Hold my Hand campaign, is currently the only grantee operating nationally with both the national communications campaign and intention to onboard 1000 participating civil society organisations by December 2025, in support of its interventions.



There was a need to support grantees to not only understand the interpretation of the new outcomes but the type of information that would substantiate their contribution to each selected outcome. An online workshop with grantees was hosted in the year, followed by one-on-one sessions. An improvement in the reported information from the half year report (pre workshop) to the final report was seen, although further support is anticipated.

OMT Roles

OMT has intentionally repositioned itself in the sector as a leader, catalyst and valued partner. As a key funder with the new strategy, OMT has created visibility for our work and used our funding to be **catalytic** in various initiatives, such as the key role played by OMT in signing up for the ECCE outcomes fund and contributing to its design. We have also responded to sector/DBE needs and taken leadership by actively fundraising to support unregistered programmes and supporting implementation of the mass registration drive. In addition to this **systemic work**, supporting the Hold My Hand campaign in 2025 will impact the valuing of ECD in future.

There were several **convenings** that the fund was involved in, including leading IPASA ECD dialogue circles, presenting at various conferences and connecting grantees with other organisations with expertise in implementing outcomes fund initiatives.

Grantee Results

The following extract from our theory of change for the fund illustrates the pathways of change we expect to see in each of the strategic focus areas. The paragraphs that follow describe the summary analysis of results reported by our Grantees per outcome.

FOCUS AREAS	SHORT-TERM (0-3 YRS) OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM (4-7 YRS) OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM (8-10 YRS) OUTCOMES
ECD SYSTEM CHANGES	<p>Standardised Child Learning Outcomes Assessment is widely adopted</p> <p>Accreditation standards in ECD sector are adopted</p> <p>Existing public funding sources unlocked to skill, place and pay youth and existing ECD workforce</p>	<p>Increased Finances available to ECD sector : - Govt (ECD budget allocation, PEPs); - Increased contributions from philanthropy & CSI;</p>	
MORE CHILDREN IN QUALITY ELPs	<p>Importance of ECD is recognised and valued across society (from govt to parents)</p> <p>More ELPs able to formalise (be registered)</p> <p>Increase in skilled and/or qualified workforce in ELPs</p>	<p>- More parents willing to pay fees;</p> <p>More children enrolled in ELPs</p> <p>More quality ELPs established & sustainable</p>	<p>Increase in number of children who are school ready and 'thriving by 5'</p>
MORE YOUTH EMPLOYED IN ECD SECTOR	<p>More youth attracted to ELPs and ECD ecosystem</p>	<p>ECD workforce earning at least minimum wage</p> <p>ECD Centre & support services become viable business models</p>	<p>ECD Centres and other ecosystem business owners running sustainable businesses</p> <p>Youth unemployment reduced due to: - Youth career pathed into ECD / Education sector; - Youth retained in sustainable livelihoods in ECD ecosystem</p>

ECD system changes

Standardised Child Learning Outcomes Assessment is widely adopted

The adoption and use of a school readiness assessment by grantees helps to monitor the effectiveness of their programmes and whether they are actually preparing children for school. The DBE has adopted the Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM) tool, which is a set of population-based child assessment tools designed to determine whether a programme supports children to be developmentally on track for their age. This is becoming more widely adopted as a standardised tool for the sector. The ELOM 4 & 5 Years Assessment specifically measures performance across five key developmental domains for children aged 50

to 59 months and 60 to 69 months, namely Gross Motor Development, Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration, Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics, Cognition and Executive Functioning and Emergent Literacy and Language.

Funding was provided by OMT to ELRU, Lesedi, Letcee, Cotlands, Grassroots, Ntataise for training on the ELOM, enabling internal organisational resources to administer the tool and do periodic assessments on children in their programmes. Some organisations have other internal tools, e.g. Grassroot Assessment for School Beginners (ASB) Tool (reported per child), used alongside the ELOM (reported for the overall programme). Having a standardised tool means there can be an objective sector-wide view of programme effectiveness from various organisations over time.

A summary of results from grantees who have conducted the ELOM is provided under the *More children in quality ELPs* outcome.

Accreditation standards in ECD sector are adopted

With the ECD function shift from Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE), there were expectations regarding professionalisation of the sector, and practitioners attaining qualifications to align with school teacher requirements. While there are still questions of feasibility and affordability of this as there are no government bursaries for ECCE diplomas, OMT funded two organisations, namely Sivulithuba and Save the Children, who are testing options of channeling ECD practitioners into university programmes to qualify for a diploma in ECD.

Sivulithuba, a partnership between Midlands Community College (MCC) and TREE (Training & Resources in Early Education) designed and piloted a bridging course for 50 candidates (between 24 and 35 years, 48 female) from the KZN Midlands and Ethekeweni regions to prepare them for online distance learning with UNISA. The Sivulithuba Tertiary Preparation Programme (TPP) bridges the educational gap between the Occupational Certificate in ECCE at NQF Level 4 and the Diploma in ECCE at NQF Level 6. Practitioners who do not have a diploma pass in grade 12 are not able to do the diploma, and access to the Higher Certificate in ECCE Level 5 is restricted as it is not widely offered in South Africa. The TPP has the potential to be converted into a Higher Certificate in ECCE at NQF Level 5, which would require registration with the Department of Higher Education and a partnership with a higher education institution.

Save the Children conducted research with 11 (100% female) students at UNISA registered for the ECCE diploma, with the aim of understanding the support required for successful completion of the diploma for practitioners that are non-traditional learners.

Learnings from these programmes will inform the sector and the DBE on requirements for successfully channeling existing practitioners through an academic programme.

One other grantee, Ntataise, participated in stakeholder meetings convened by the Professional Teaching Standards consortium, contributing to a shared vision of Learning through Play for ECD practitioner professional development. This collaboration involves key national stakeholders, including SACE, ETDP SETA, QCTO, the DBE, and others, aligning efforts to enhance ECD professional standards.

These initiatives will ultimately inform the best route of ensuring standardised professional standards for ECD practitioners to improve the quality of teaching, and ultimately, learning outcomes for children.

"Our main outcome is strengthening the ECD workforce by enabling non-academic and non-traditional learners to gain access to higher education in order to improve their skills and knowledge."

Candy Goodland, Sivulithuba (MCC)

Existing public funding sources unlocked to skill, place & pay youth & existing ECD workforce

Two grantees (Grassroots and Goldyouth) unlocked R12.8 million towards stipends from the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) and The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) for 429 youth and practitioners working in ECD.

Grassroots was funded an allocation of R12.5 million from EPWP. Stipends were provided to 184 playgroup leaders to operate playgroups for children whose parents cannot afford fees, due to unemployment. Another 185 youth were distributed among 20 organisations to intern as ECD Assistants, providing registration support for ECD centres that the organisations work with. Based on previous cohorts, it was found that the majority of the youth do not stay in the ECD sector and move on to find jobs in other sectors or enroll for further studies. While there is a positive outcome for the youth with regards to work experience, the knowledge acquired by the youth is rarely retained in the sector.

Goldyouth, in collaboration with SmartStart unlocked R 271 972.32 from NYDA which translated to stipends for 60 youth (Gold Grads). They were placed in ECD centres to conduct a six-month youth service job experience. The work experience is designed to be transferable to non-sector specific roles, should the youth not want to stay in the sector. The youth will be tracked post implementation to understand movements across sectors.



Grassroots accredited Site Learning Programme training for ECD practioners and owners in Cape Town



Goldyouth Hillcrest ECD Field Assistants orientation

In addition to these, several grantees were able to build partnerships with municipalities and were able to use municipal venues free of charge for trainings and/or use by ECD programmes, which provided financial savings for organisations and practitioners. Grantees have been encouraged to continue finding ways to optimise government funding opportunities such that more funding can be directed to ECDs.

Increased Finances available to ECD sector: Govt (ECD budget allocation, PEPs); Increased contributions from philanthropy & CSI

A key development in the sector was the establishment of the largest ECCE outcomes fund by the DBE to be rolled out in 2026, with the aim of changing ECD delivery from activity based to outcomes focused work.

OMT, alongside local philanthropy (Tutuwa, Firstrand, Yellowwoods), international philanthropy (Lego Foundation) and DBE/Treasury, have jointly unlocked ~R600m towards this initiative. Further funding from social impact investors to support implementation by organisations will also be unlocked.

Selected implementers/social impact investors will be paid from the outcomes fund should they meet required criteria including increased access for children, improved teacher quality and children meeting ELOM standards. The design of the fund, selection of implementing organisations (of which some of those on the shortlist are OMT grantees) and evaluation strategy were well in progress in 2024 and will be finalised in 2025.

Our grantees also worked towards increasing finances for the sector. Notable mentions include:

- **Goldyouth** is exploring a process with CommonGood Marketplace to link the youth-service in ECD to a verified impact aligned with SDG 8 (sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work) and SDG 4 (access to quality education and lifelong learning opportunities), creating a new revenue stream for ECD centers based on work done with youth.
- Both **Sivulithuba** and **Save the Children** are bringing to the fore in various fora the lack of academic funding for students doing birth to four qualifications (ECCE diploma) as NSFAS and Fundza Lushaka Bursary are not available for these studies. The impact of this will be tracked over time as a lack of resolution will prevent many ECD practitioners from pursuing the diploma.

More children in quality ELPs

Importance of ECD is recognised & valued across society (from govt to parents)

Successful implementation of ECD programmes requires that all stakeholders value the importance of ECD. Grantees have multiple stakeholders both in government, communities and media that they engage with to ensure smooth implementation. Some key activities include:

- **Parent engagement:** Grantees supported practitioners on how to hold productive meetings and consistently engage with parents of enrolled children - over 55 200 parents were reached across the grantee networks. Interventions included training events, engagement on social platforms (WhatsApp groups), hosting parent-child play dates, etc. Anecdotally, there has been increased parent-to-child engagement which has led to better home learning environments and some parents have started to pay fees.
- **Advocacy campaigns and events:** Grantees held and participated in events such as charity golf days, community activation days, door to door campaigns, International Day of Play, World Read Aloud Day, career expos, radio interviews, and other child related events, all of which serve to promote the value of ECD in local communities.
- **Engagement with government:** These included meetings held with Department of Arts and Culture to understand best practices with other provinces in order to set up toy libraries in public libraries; and collaborating with Department of Health to link mobile clinics with mobile toy library services, which reached 80 children.



HOLD MY HAND, TEACHER
Imagine if every child had enough brain power.

hold my hand
Action for Children and Teens

www.holdmyhand.org.za 0600 411111 @holdmyhandsa

At the end of 2024, OMT awarded a grant to the DG Murray Trust (DGMT) for the Hold my Hand campaign, a national communications campaign which aims to:

- Mobilise the nation to put young children at the centre of development;
- Enable parents and caregivers to understand the critical roles they play in their children's development;
- Equip parents and caregivers to engage with their young children in a responsive way that builds language proficiency and brain power.

It is anticipated that the campaign will reinforce the efforts of grantees in their respective communities.

More parents willing to pay fees

Early learning is a social good that is currently delivered privately. With the majority of children attending these services being in low-income communities, the challenge of fee paying persists for two reasons:

- Preschool learning is not a priority for parents (hence the need for campaigns such as Hold my Hand), with parents only valuing caretaking, when they need a safe space to leave children as they seek or go to work,
- Low-income areas with NGO support and government public employment schemes have enjoyed free ECD services as some organisations are opposed to promoting fee charging.

This approach is not sustainable and perpetuates the lack of valuing of early learning in communities. Several grantees have, therefore, seen the need to encourage fee payment (monetary or in kind), requiring a mindset shift for both ECD owners and parents. For example, LETCEE introduced fee paying, firstly by hosting open days for parents - teaching them about the benefit of early learning and sustainability - and then continuously engaging with parents. Secondly, LETCEE is supporting programmes with tools such as the GROW App, which enables tracking fee payments, issuing reminders to parents, and maintaining a record of financial transactions, providing programme owners with valuable financial insights. As a result, 52 parents at LETCEE sites started to pay fees.

Other grantees like Grassroots reported in kind contribution by volunteering time and food. Ntataise, another of our grantees, conducted a survey across programmes in the network in 2023 and 2024. They reported an encouraging trend of improvement in fee payment and consistency. In 2024, a higher percentage of parents are paying fees regularly, with 58% of parents paying at least 75% of the time compared to 55% in 2023. Similarly, the proportion of parents who consistently paid fees 100% of the time increased from 10% in 2023 to 22% in 2024. Notably, the percentage of parents who paid fees less than 10% of the time declined, reflecting an improvement in payment behaviour.

While there are encouraging trends, there is still work to be done both from grantees and ECD programmes owners to encourage fee paying. Showing evidence of the impact on children is anticipated to also support the case for this.

More ELPs able to formalise (be registered)

Registration of ELPs became one of the key focuses of the Department of Basic Education, with the launch of the Bana Pele Mass Registration Drive (MRD). The intention of the drive is to get up to 20 000 unregistered ELPs into the regulatory net, through a simplified three stage registration process.



In July 2024, OMT's ECD & Youth Fund Manager was seconded part time to support the MRD team in order to:

- Support fundraising for health and safety and infrastructure support to enable compliance for ELPs, and
- Support implementation of the second stage of registration (Silver registration), which if ELPs are compliant, makes them eligible for the government's R17 per child per day subsidy.

By December 2024, over 1 000 ELP programmes completed and were approved for the first stage of registration (Bronze) and provinces will be systematically brought on line to roll out the registration process in 2025.

Several grantees (Ntataise, Grassroots, ELRU, Impande, Penreach, LETCEE, Cotlands) have supported ECD programmes with registration. This support ranges from hosting registration workshops, provision of registration documents, help with compiling partial care registration and fundraising for upgrades. ELRU and Grassroots are currently contracted by Western Cape Department of Education (WCED) to support registration, with a combined over 2 000 programmes being supported.

A summary of quantitative achievements during the reporting period is as follows:

- 1 572 ECD programme owners were supported with capacity-building workshops;
- 233 programmes received full registration while 560 received conditional registration (~60% compliant with all registration requirements). Gaps include not meeting all municipal compliance requirements, ranging from building plans, rezoning, minor infrastructure gaps;
- 257 registered programmes started receiving the per child per day subsidy. Assuming an average of 30 children per site, this can equate to ~R33 million per annum unlocked for these programmes.

There was a positive trend in the registration status of ELPs who are part of Ntataise's Network programmes. An annual survey conducted by the network showed an increase in the number of fully registered ELPs, rising from 36% in 2023 (174 out of 482 responding sites) to 45% in 2024 (132 out of 294 responding sites). The percentage of unregistered ELPs decreased from 30% to 22%, indicating positive progress towards compliance.

Our grantees are also taking part in the Bana Pele Mass Registration Drive (MRD) launched by the DBE and have been supporting programmes with online registration and submission of required documents. They will be instrumental in creating a pipeline of registered programmes eligible for the per child per day subsidy, thereby adding pressure for the government to increase the allocation of subsidies for qualifying children.

Increase in skilled and/or qualified workforce in ELPs

James Heckman⁹, a Nobel Memorial Prize winner in economics and an expert in the economics of human development, has long been quoted on the importance of quality early learning programmes for children. His research finds that effectiveness depends on program quality, and quality is dependent on the skills and qualifications of practitioners providing ECD services. OMT supports grantees whose focus is on improving the skills and qualifications of ECD practitioners. This investment must ultimately translate to improved child outcomes and ensuring supported children thrive by five.



First aid training for ECD practitioners supported by Penreach in Limpopo

⁹ <https://heckmanequation.org/resource/invest-in-early-childhood-development-reduce-deficits-strengthen-the-economy/>

Grantees provide both accredited and non-accredited training for ECD practitioners and owners. Non-accredited training ranges from ECD curriculum, nutrition, using play material like Lego bricks, story-telling, toy library set-up, Science Technology Engineering Art and Maths (STEAM), first aid and centre management. A total of 2 714 practitioners (playgroup, ECD centre based, home and community based and toy librarians) were reported to be trained across different grantees.

Grantees providing accredited training (Ntataise, Grassroots, ELRU, and LETCEE, Penreach) had 708 practitioners enrolled for NQF level 4 ECD training and 20 for NQF level 5. Save the Children supported 11 students enrolled in the ECCE diploma through UNISA. The purpose of these trainings is to improve an understanding of ECD, and thus the quality of child-practitioner interaction.

Going forward, the correlation between training provided and the ELOM results achieved from their internal assessments will be tracked over time to check for effectiveness of training.

More children enrolled in ELPs



Letcee playgroup session in Greytown

A reach of 73 450 children taught by trained practitioners was reported across all our grantees, which showed an increase over the previous year of just under 7 000 children.

The increase was largely driven by existing ECD programmes increasing capacity (an indication of some recovery after the COVID-19 closures) rather than any substantial increase in access from new ECDs or new programmes like playgroups.

In a survey done by Ntataise across its network, there was an average increase in children enrolled per ECD programme. In 2023, the average number of children enrolled per ELP was 59, while in 2024, this figure rose to an average of 64 children per ELP.

More quality ELPs established & sustainable

Grantees have coupled skills development training with registration support and sustainable enterprise development training for ECD programmes. Most grantees engage in ongoing institutional capacity-building with centre managers, owners and committees. The content focuses on crucial aspects such as registration and compliance, financial management, writing business plans, marketing and advocacy, human resource development and community engagement, fostering relationships with caregivers and communities to leverage resources and support for ECD Centres.

A total of 176 ECD owners were trained in 2024 and 72 centres of excellence were established. Centres of excellence are those that have gone through a series of support and demonstrate the following key aspects:

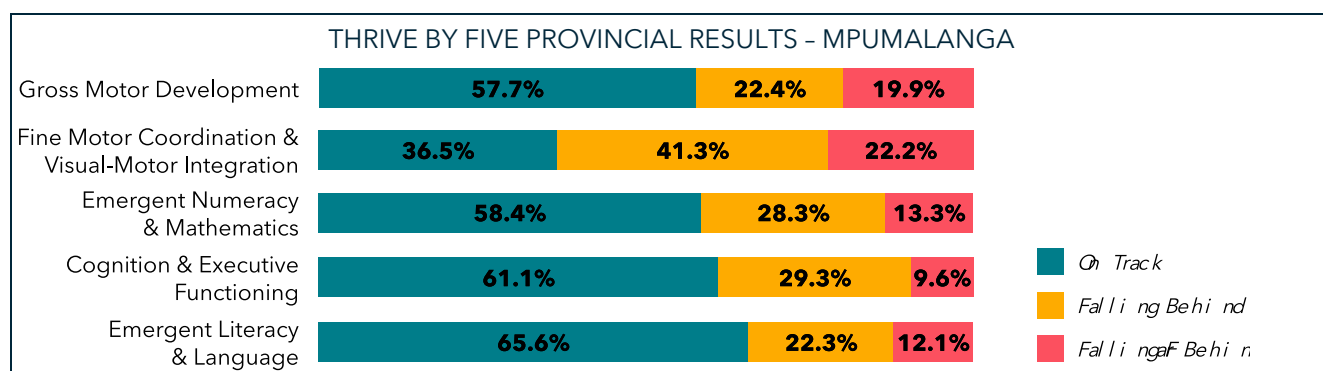
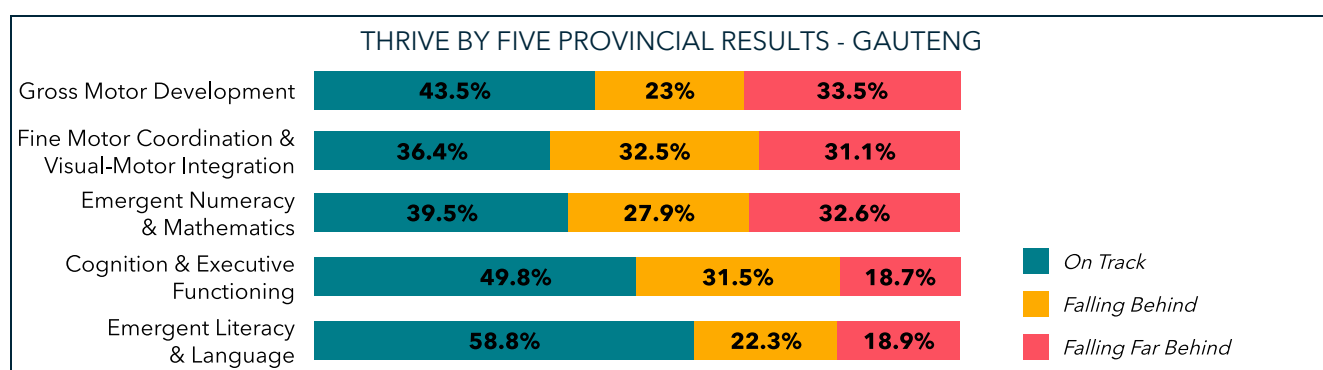
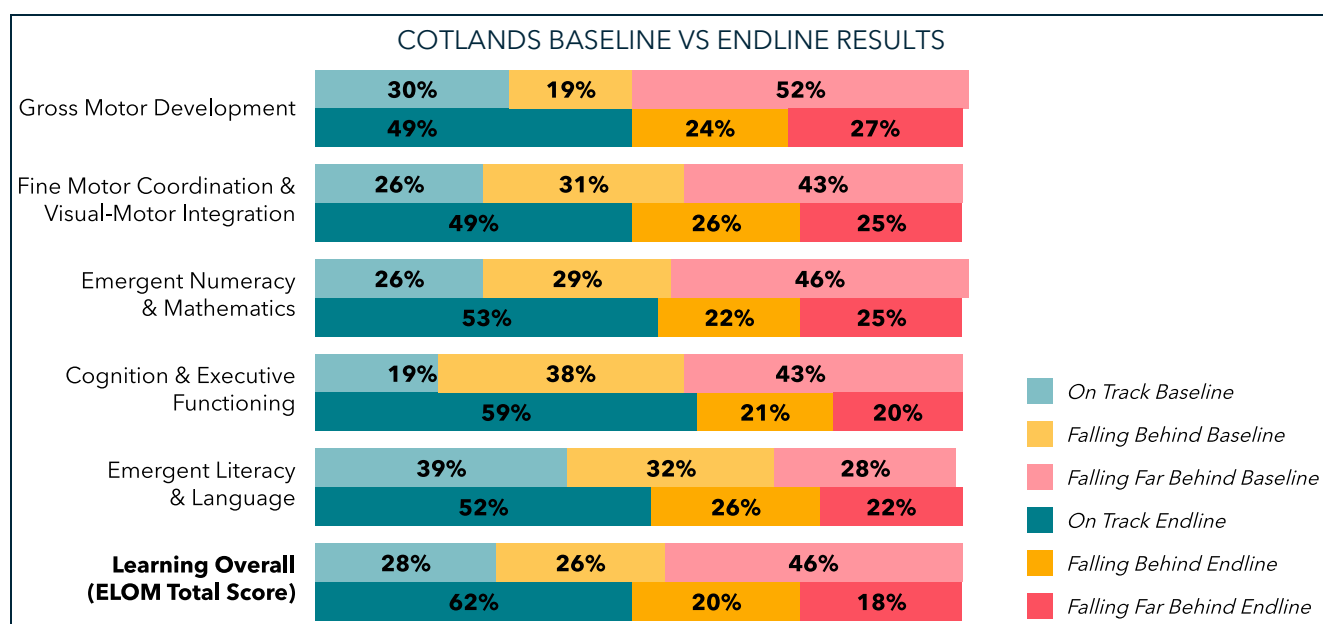
- Registration and compliance with the DBE;
- Lasting improvements in the skills of ECD practitioners, enabling them to apply and adapt their knowledge and being able to train and mentor others, creating a supportive community network;
- Engaging local stakeholders including attendance at local events and community impact;
- Child development outcomes via ELOM, attendance rates, and levels of parent engagement;
- Alignment with educational policies and curriculum.

More effort is required to transition ECD programmes from over reliance on grantees to becoming more independent, so as to allow grantees to shift their support to new ECD programmes.

Increase in number of children who are school ready and 'thriving by 5'

As grantees have been receiving training on conducting ELOM assessments, it is anticipated that there will be increased reporting of results over time. Two grantees conducted ELOM assessments and saw improvements in school readiness for children and dipstick results were better than the reference groups for respective provinces. The ELOM assessments are analysed and reported by DataDrive 2030, an organisation that uses an ELOM suite of tools and insights from assessments, to drive greater access to better quality early learning by enabling data driven programme implementation.

Cotlands conducted an assessment which found that there was an increase in the percentage of children on track in all domains, as well as a decrease in children falling behind and falling far behind. At endline, 62% of the aggregated sample was on track for learning overall (ELOM Total score vs baseline of 51.6% in Gauteng and 65.2% in Mpumalanga). The sample did however remain in the falling behind band between baseline and endline for Gross Motor, Fine Motor Coordination & Visual-Motor Integration, and Emergent Literacy Language as illustrated in the figure below.



Grassroots: An ELOM assessment was conducted at a point in time (dipstick assessment), instead of an assessment at baseline and endline. 95% of the sample were on track for learning overall (ELOM Total score) vs 66% from the Thrive by Five Index for the Western Cape. An interesting detail showed that while 68% of children were on track in the domain Fine Motor Coordination & Visual-Motor Integration vs 63% in the Thrive by Five Western Cape sample, this domain also had the highest numbers of children falling behind as 21%.

Based on an organisation's assessment results, DataDrive2030 provides guidance to the organisation on actions to be taken to improve on domains where children fall behind. There is also information on best practices to support practitioners. Organisations are expected to address any shortcomings from findings and developments can be tracked with subsequent assessments, which will be reported on as they become available. This is critical to track as the impact of investment on training and support can then be assessed.

More youth employed in the ECD sector

More youth attracted to ELPs and ECD ecosystem

Several grantees (Ntataise, Sivulithuba, Lesedi, Grassroots, Goldyouth and Rhiza) had activities specifically targeted at exposing youth to the ECD sector. Over 780 youth were impacted in these initiatives which ranged from accredited training on community development, supporting youth into tertiary studies to advance ECD knowledge, immersion into the sector through registration support, internships at ECD programmes and youth in ECD entrepreneurship programmes.

Since the function shift from DSD to DBE, ECD continues to be underfunded, with income for services largely parent (fee) based. This has contributed to low retention of youth, who seek better-paying opportunities in other sectors. We have also seen in the youth entrepreneurship programme that despite support with start-up capital, mentorship and coaching, some of the youth have left for permanent or fixed term employment.

In a survey conducted by Ntataise in 2023, it was found that 32% of existing practitioners in ELPs were youth. In 2024, this figure increased slightly to 35%. This shows a marginal positive trend in youth representation among ELP practitioners over the two-year period. Whilst these figures represent a slight improvement, the challenge of retaining youth in the ECD sector remains.

ECD workforce earning at least minimum wage

The salaries earned by ECD practitioners varies widely due to the absence of standardised policy guidelines. Consequently, each ECD centre determines practitioner salaries based on their financial capabilities and operational income. As grantees support registration, they track salaries for practitioners across different geographical areas for incorporation into their business plans to meet compliance requirements. Some ECD staff, especially in rural areas, are far from earning the minimum wage, with some still volunteering their time.

There is currently no prospect of the DBE employing ECD practitioners, given the budget cuts for schoolteachers, making minimum wage salaries far from reality. Apart from Cotlands, who themselves employ the playgroup practitioners, all other ECD programmes rely on parent fees for income. Some grantees may assist in accessing public employment stipends from the Community Works Programme (CWP) and EPWP. Grantees also assist in preparing donation letters for fundraising efforts within the local business community, which may help to fund a temporary wage increase for several months.

It is hoped that there will be a virtuous cycle with the national Hold my Hand campaign, and other grantee efforts to have parents and communities value ECD and be willing to pay fees (more consistently). To be noted, however, is that the most need for ECD provisioning is in low-income communities, where fee-paying is the most challenging, and so there needs to be acknowledgement that there will always be a need for a multi-income approach, including government support, in order to achieve more sustainable wages for practitioners.

ECD Centre & support services become viable business models

2024 saw the launch of a Youth in ECD Entrepreneurship programme run by Rhiza Babuyile.

Over 200 youth applied and were screened across 3 locations, namely Botshabelo in the Free State; New Brighton in Gqeberha and Soweto in Gauteng. From that group, 50 were selected and given the opportunity to participate in a 5-day boot camp. Here they were coached on developing business ideas by identifying needs/pain-points for ECD programmes in their communities and proposing solutions that could be paid for and prototyping.

14 youth were then selected to move to the next stage which included coaching, focusing on business and personal development. They were also provided with start-up capital towards the end of the year to set up operations for 2025, with a few taking the opportunity for December holidays to use equipment purchased to offer services such as photography.

These small businesses will be tracked from January 2025 as they start operating in earnest.

“Starting was both exciting and daunting for the participants. Their prior experience in the ECD space helped them understand the sector’s needs and develop practical solutions, making them active contributors to an improved ECD system. While the journey felt like ‘stepping up a steep hill’ at first, their determination has proven that unemployed youth can transition into self-employment. As we approach the final phase of the project, ‘Finishing Strong’ remains our focus—to ensure lasting impact and empower these young entrepreneurs to turn their aspirations into sustainable businesses.”

Tsoanelo Mathatjane, Rhiza Babuyile



Rhiza Babuyile Youth Entrepreneurship in ECD finalists in Johannesburg

Youth unemployment reduced due to:

- Youth career pathed into sector
- Youth retained in sustainable livelihoods

Premature to report on this outcome.

Learnings

OMT's outcomes-focused reporting, along with the changing sentiment in the DBE to push for quality outcomes, has forced grantees to re-evaluate their data collection processes and to reflect on how collected information must be used for learnings and continuous improvements. By way of example Ntataise has already started a process of redesigning data collection for its network to ensure all organisations have standardised processes and reporting indicators.

Another significant learning has been for grantees to shift mindsets from charity to empowerment. This requires that they communicate strongly to the ECD centres they support the importance of continuous advocacy with parents and communities on the value of ECD and how it lays a foundation for schooling, in order to encourage a culture of local fee-paying for ECD services.

Looking Ahead

In the second year of implementing the ECD strategy, the aim is to embed understanding of outcomes with grantees to ensure improved implementation of work and reporting thereof. There will also be a review of definitions of outcomes to create alignment on outcomes per focus area.

Further exploration of youth in ECD focus area will be done, kickstarted by hosting an exploratory workshop with Harambee Youth Accelerator and Yellowwoods, with the aim of identifying collaborative initiatives linking ECD and youth.

2024 saw the launch of an MRD to get all unregistered programmes into the regulatory net. The work will continue into 2025 to ensure health and safety compliance, which ultimately can unlock the R17 per child per day subsidy for registered programmes to improve sustainability. The next phase will focus on improving quality through the implementation of the Quality Assurance and Support System (QASS) which looks at process and structural quality for programmes and how to close any identified gaps. Similar to the ELOM, this is an opportunity to streamline and standardise the sector on supporting and managing quality.

OMT also has an opportunity to play a joint advocacy role for the sector through the Hold my Hand campaign, not only through the funding provided, but through coordinating our grantees to support implementation of responsive language and learning initiatives and the general campaign. To date close to 100 organisations (including some of our grantees) have already signed up to be involved with the campaign.

Lastly, OMT will continue being a trusted partner to the DBE, continuing to play a role in the social compact to realise the 2030 strategy, starting with already committed initiatives such as the MRD and the ECD outcomes fund.

ARTS & CULTURE



Context

In July 2024, Gayton McKenzie was appointed as the new Minister in the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC) and has been proactive in meeting with various sector stakeholders to forge ahead on his strategy focused on economic growth, preserving cultural heritage, promoting social cohesion, and developing talent.

In the 2023/24 fiscal year, a total of R6.3 billion (R6.1 billion in 2024/2025 fiscal year) was allocated to sports, arts and culture, representing 0.3% of the national budget, emphasising support to community arts and learning centres and museums. Notably, a significant portion of the budget (20%) was allocated to the Mzansi Golden Economy programme, a programme that aims to create 60 000 job opportunities in the cultural and creative sectors, including support to place more than 1 000 artists in schools over the next three years.

Despite this support, the arts and culture sector faced significant funding challenges in the year, with the National Arts Council (NAC) highlighting that the funding levels are not commensurate with the sector's substantial contribution to the economy. Despite these financial challenges, DSAC continued to collaborate with funding agencies such as the NAC, Business Arts SA, and the National Heritage Council (NHC) in efforts to support the arts.

In terms of government's direct collaboration with arts initiatives, it has been disappointing to note that while the new Minister has engaged with the sector, including several organisations that the trust supports, these meetings have not yielded support, despite proposals and budgets being submitted on request.

Introduction



To fund visual and performing arts initiatives that produce uniquely South African content that inspires audiences, develops young talent, and contributes to building a vibrant and thriving sector.

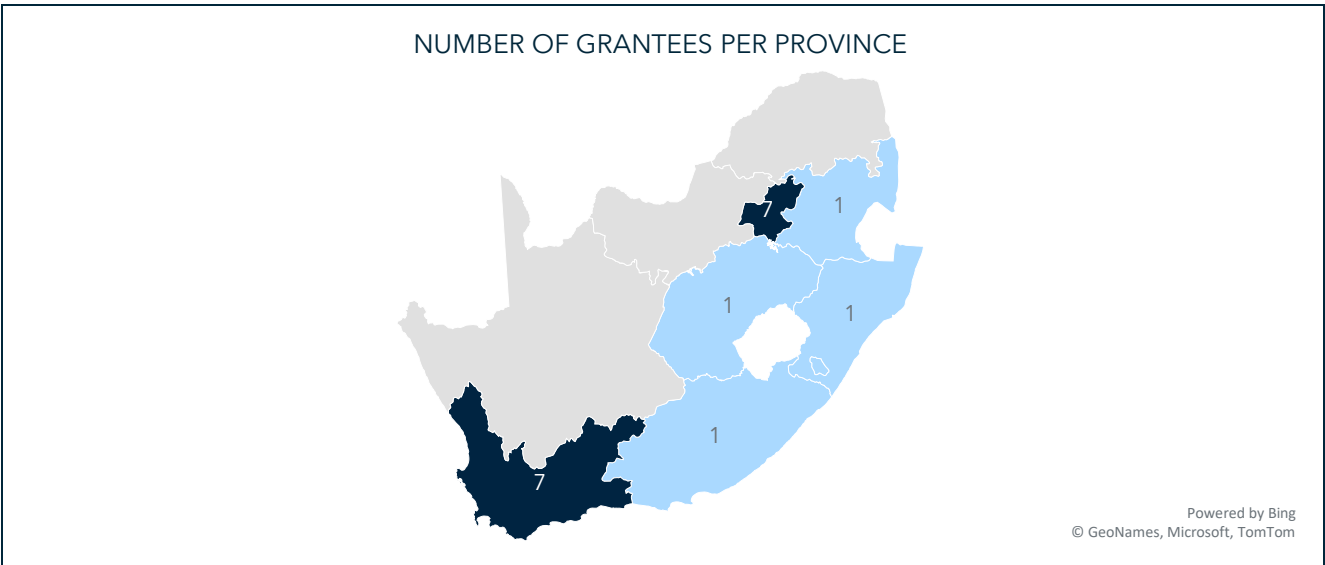
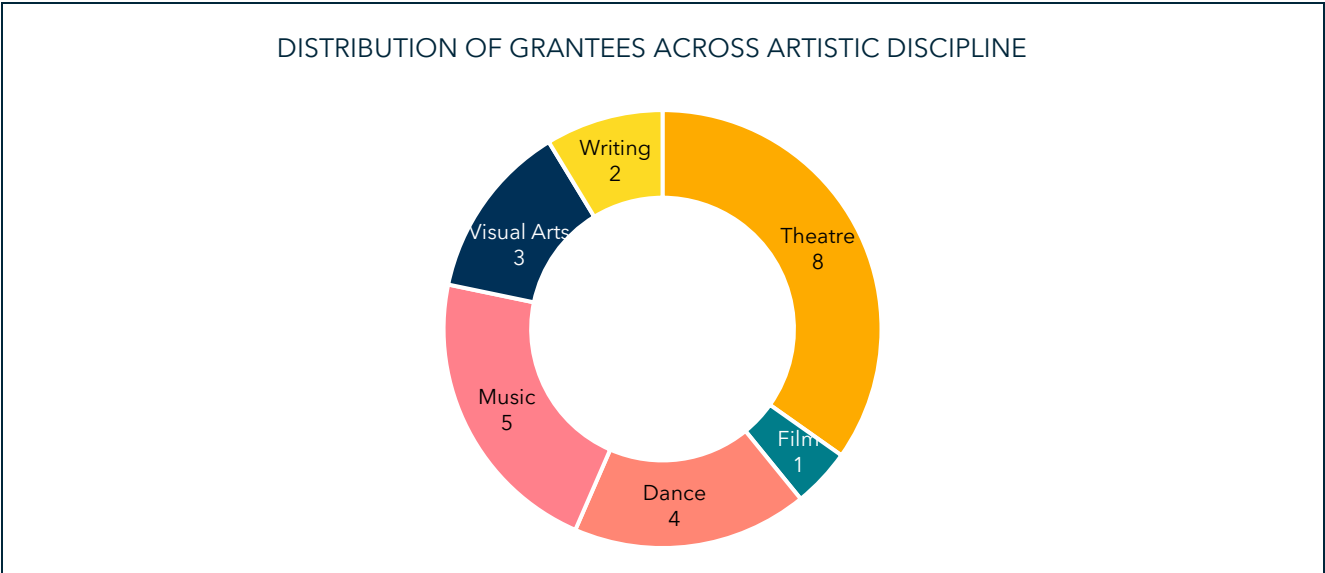
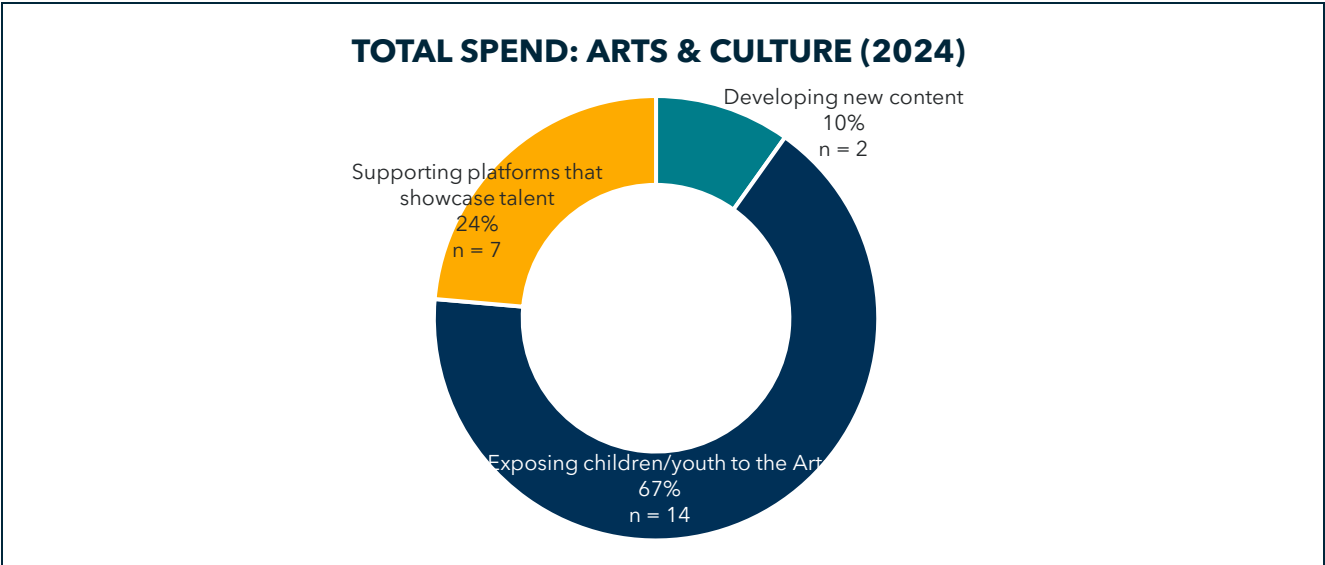
The trust has worked hard this year to assess the steady and growing number of varied application submissions in the arts, whilst keeping abreast of sector needs and developments and, importantly, interesting new initiatives and approaches, especially those in hard-to-reach and under-served locations. Whilst the artistic talent and output in both Gauteng and Western Cape is strong, and the role of the major economic hubs undeniable in their contribution to the creative industry, priority should be given to direct funding to arts initiatives that teach, identify, support and grow talent in communities that have little to no access to creative development processes.

The trust has also witnessed a steady increase in applications from arts organisations, many of them very small and many trying to fit with most, if not all the outcomes of the trust. This includes applications from higher education beneficiaries as word of OMT's support spreads amongst alumni in the new alumni network.

Grantees include existing organisations that are well known to the fund, as well as new arts initiatives that are spearheading exciting programmes in line with OMT's new strategy, including Ripples for Change, a small but determined team in the rural Eastern Cape that is working to shift the perception of the value of creative arts instruction in early years education.

Highlights of the year include positive meetings with local musical maestro Richard Cock to explore opportunities for more effective support to local community-based orchestras, a visit to the Baxter Theatre to meet the five young actors in the theatre's new and thriving Fires Burning Youth Company, as well as a learning visit by the OMT team to the Morris Isaacson Centre for Music in Soweto. The trust has been active in our support of significant events hosted by our grantees over the year, and other highlights include our attendance at the My Body My Space Public Arts Festival in Mpumalanga in March and the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Free State Symphony Orchestra in November.

The approved 2024 budget for the Arts and Culture Fund was awarded to 23 grantees across all three strategic focus areas¹⁰.



¹⁰ For purposes of budget allocation, grantees have been allocated to the focus area where there is the most significant contribution. In terms of reporting on results, a grantee's work may contribute to outcomes across other focus areas.

	Baz-Art	Free State Symphony Orchestra	Forgotten Angle Theatre Co	Magnet Theatre	Baxter Theatre	Jazzart Theatre	Morris Isaacson Centre for Music	Sunshine Cinema	KZN Music Festival	Joburg Ballet	M. Mlangeni Music	Windybrow Arts Centre	National Childrens Theatre Trust	National Youth Music Competition	KwaZulu Natal Society for the Arts	Apollo Music Trust	Africa 95 (Caine Prize)	Joburg Ballet (Special grant)	Ripples for Change	Sibikwa Community Project	Zama Dance School Trust
EXPOSING CHILDREN/YOUTH TO THE ARTS																					
Children/youth explore enjoy & nurture talent & develop life skills																					
Children/youth with exceptional talent are given opportunities to develop their art form																					
New local audiences attracted																					
Talented artists are able to develop a career/earn a livelihood in the Arts																					
SUPPORTING PLATFORMS THAT SHOWCASE TALENT																					
Platforms are supported to showcase talent and build collaboration																					
New local audiences attracted																					
Org capacity is developed to build viable offerings																					
New international audiences are attracted																					
DEVELOPING NEW CONTENT																					
New content builds SA identity, addresses social issues																					
New content is performed in accessible places																					
Excellent content is performed overseas																					

The table above lists all grantees funded in 2024, however, reporting data gets submitted bi-annually and annually, hence those funded in September and December submit reports in 2025. This new data will be consolidated into the 2025 Annual Report.

Over and above funding the sector, OMT plays a number of influential roles.

OMT continues to act as a steadfast **advocate** for the value of the arts in the lives of children and youth and its ability to inspire, challenge, and connect people, making society more vibrant and inclusive. This advocacy role is only increasing in prominence as our Arts funding strategy is more widely shared and as we develop a greater understanding of other funders' strategies in supporting the arts.

The trust has also played the role of **multiplier** through support that has signalled confidence to other funders, as in the case of Sunshine Cinema, where our funding contributed towards a matched grant from the Jobs Fund.

In addition, OMT has played a small yet significant role as **networker** in connecting a number of Johannesburg-based past and current grantees, as well as other organisations in our network, to the Jozi My Jozi initiative ahead of the G20 Summit in the city and plans to profile inner-city arts initiatives. Another key relationship has developed with the Moleskine Foundation and the global Creative Pioneers programme that aims to support organisations that are using creativity to drive positive change at a community level. The trust has also built a relationship with the Ackerman Family Foundation to share sector knowledge, particularly around work done in the arts in rural Eastern Cape and other smaller provinces.

Perhaps the trust's most significant demonstration of our networking and influencing role was in cross-sector support and **encouraging collaborations** in the case of the special grant to support voter education. This support saw the trust bringing together arts and social justice organisations in a concerted effort to educate on active citizenry and encourage people, especially the youth, to vote, through various artistic mediums such as visual art and film. Arts grantees, Baz-Art and Sunshine Cinema, worked closely with several social justice grantees such as Futurelect, Social Justice Initiative, SECTION27 and the Centre for Analytics and Behavioural Change on the project. A detailed report on this special grant was included in the December 2024 board report.

"With song, dance and digital components seamlessly integrated by a polished cast and creative team, this is a production that must surely have a life beyond its short first run."

Review by Business Day of Magnet Theatre's work Manje Manje (an epic)

Grantee Results

The following extract from our theory of change for the fund illustrates the pathways of change we expect to see in each of the strategic focus areas. The paragraphs that follow describe the summary analysis of results reported by our grantees per outcome.

FOCUS AREAS	SHORT-TERM (0-5 YRS) OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM (5-10 YRS) OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM (10-15 YRS) OUTCOMES
EXPOSING CHILDREN/YOUTH TO ARTS	Children/youth are supported to explore, enjoy and nurture their artistic talent and develop life skills	Children/youth with exceptional talent are given opportunities to develop their art form	Talented artists are able to develop a career/earn a livelihood in the Arts
SUPPORTING PLATFORMS THAT SHOWCASE TALENT	Platforms (theatres, screens, stages, festivals, exhibitions, orchestras etc.) are supported, to showcase talent and to build collaborations (local/international)	<p>New local audiences are attracted</p> <p>Organisational capacity is developed to build viable 'offerings', and to offer meaningful employment</p>	New international audiences are attracted and supporting SA visual & performing arts (tourism)
DEVELOPING NEW CONTENT	<p>New content is developed which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • builds South Africa's cultural identity, • addresses social issues, and/or • promotes South African uniqueness 	New content is performed in accessible places - inspiring, driving awareness and educating	Excellent new content is performed overseas showcasing SA talent

Exposing children/youth to the arts

Children/youth are supported to explore, enjoy and nurture their artistic talent and develop life skills

Over the reporting period, over 10 000 children and youth were exposed to the arts across five artistic disciplines that included theatre, dance, music, visual arts and film.

Theatre

Children and youth were exposed to the wonders and enjoyment of theatre, through the work of three grantees, namely the Baxter Theatre, Magnet Theatre and the Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaboration (FATC) in Mpumalanga. These programmes expose young people to theatre-making, and develop important life skills such as communication, problem-solving, and healthy self-expression.

Through the Zabalaza Outreach and Development Programme, **Baxter Theatre** worked with 246 children and 563 youth to transform their personal stories into performance pieces. The 12-month programme offers training and mentorship in all aspects of theatre-making, such as acting, directing, scriptwriting, design, and also provides young storytellers with performance platforms to realise their creative concepts. Children and youth have had the opportunity to transform their narratives into captivating performances showcased at the Zabalaza Theatre Festival. The festival's winning production then receives further mentorship, preparing it for a professional season at the Baxter Theatre.

Magnet Theatre exposed 103 youth representing 6 community drama groups to theatre through the 12-month Community Arts Development Culture Gangs afterschool programme. The programme aims to use theatre arts as a transformation and learning tool for learners and youth, positively occupying free time, increasing skill sets and developing a network of theatre youth and individuals who can take up positions of leadership within their communities. These local drama groups were supported with weekly facilitated

rehearsals, skills workshops on technical theatre, film writing, script writing and conceptualisation and singing to help them in their work towards an end-of-year showcase held in September. The showcase event also featured inspirational speeches by two former programme facilitators who encouraged the participants to continue being a part of the arts.



Certificate ceremony at the end of year showcase for the Culture Gangs Programme

Informal feedback from parents described how the programme kept their children off the streets, with one parent commenting that her relationship with her daughter improved for the better every time she came to watch the showcase. Formal feedback gathered at the end of the programme included the following comment from a young student from Khayelitsha who said,

"[the programme] helped me in a way I was able to see that we as people, we are not the same. This process helped me to know how to combine my ideas with others and now I am able to work in a group."

Participants also had the opportunity to attend eight theatre visits, including productions at the Baxter that provided inspiration, and an opportunity to experience real professionals in action, as well as exposure to different arts venues around Cape Town.

The **Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaboration** engaged over 1 300 rural children and youth in Emakhazeni Local Municipality in processes of exploration and artistic support through the Local Education in Arts Programme (LEAP). LEAP is a dance and arts education programme for children, youth, and persons with disabilities that offers workshops and dance classes through after-school and in-school workshops. LEAP workshops were conducted consistently throughout the year, reaching approximately 300 learners each week in various locations.

A survey of LEAP graduates conducted in December 2023, indicated that 97% of the responders say that their dance skills had grown through LEAP, with top growth markers being collaboration with others, improved strength, increased flexibility and better body awareness. In addition to this, the quotes below are extracts from letters written by LEAP participants to their teachers demonstrating the impact of the programme on their mindsets, as well as improved life skills and positive behavioural changes:

"Dear Ses Nontobeko, thank you for helping me perform. I feel like my dream is activated to be an artist."

"Dear Sis Mandisa, I want to thank you for teaching me how to clear my mind when I am doing my routine."

"Dear Promise...I want to thank you for encouraging me and supporting me through the rough times that I was having during the dance classes. Thank you for having patience with me when I was scared to show my movements in front of people, no words can express how thankful I am. Thank you for taking me to your dance studio and I really learnt a lot."

"Dear Julia, Nicho, Sandile, Mandisa, Promise, I was polluting the environment, but once I met you, I respect the environment."

Dance

A total of 396 children were exposed to dance through **Jazzart** that works with like-minded organisations to run weekly outreach dance classes and holiday or week-long programmes. These programmes provide opportunities for youth to be creative, develop confidence and the value of respect and trust, and learn time management. A total of 287 young people participated in once-off dance workshops presented by Jazzart over the year and 202 youth participated in six one-day dance workshops. A further 302 students participated in dance workshops held at three high schools. A total of 114 children in the Jazzart programmes were also provided with the opportunity to perform their dance works on the arena stage of the Azishe Festival held at Artscape in December.

Music

In music, children and youth were exposed to the musical arts through the work of **Morris Isaacson Centre for Music** (MICM), a purpose-built music Centre in Soweto that provides formal music training in specific instruments through individual lessons during the week, and music theory and ensemble classes on Saturdays. A total of 74 young musicians were supported at MICM in 2024. Encouragingly, MICM introduced two new classes in 2024 on body percussion, choir singing, and music theory fundamentals, to diversify training and accommodate growing student numbers. The 74 young musicians were also able to engage with local and international visiting artists through various workshops and exchanges.

Visual Arts

A further 162 children and youth were exposed to visual and performance arts through the work of **Sibikwa Arts Centre**, an inclusive multi-disciplinary performing arts space. In 2024, the Sibikwa Arts Academy (SAA) worked with registered students to explore and develop artistic talent in dance, drama, drumming, marimba, recorder, visual arts and poetry. These young people also learnt critical life skills such as discipline, teamwork, communication, creative and critical thinking and resilience, and of this total, 20 youth received bursaries that enabled them to access the programme.



Sibikwa Arts Academy junior students performing in the Marimba Jam

Film

In film, 5 491 children and youth across seven provinces were exposed to a total of 208 impact film screenings across seven provinces through the work of **Sunshine Cinema**. These screenings are carefully curated and facilitated to provide a safe space for children to experience hope and learning alongside their peers. Prominent life skills and social themes that were covered in these screenings included mental health, unemployment, gender-based violence and climate change. In addition, Sunshine's Impact Facilitators were retrained on how to manage film screenings, in particular those focused on gender issues, and how to support young women to take action and access help. Youth reported feeling inspired by the films' storytelling and themes, with one young participants commenting that

"...watching this film made me feel understood and showed that it's okay to seek help."

"The film made me proud of my heritage and showed me how storytelling can create change."

Children/youth with exceptional talent are given opportunities to develop their art form

Theatre

Baxter Theatre supported youth with exceptional artistic abilities with specialised training and mentorship and valuable stage exposure through the Zabalaza Programme. 594 young theatre makers were afforded the opportunity to attend workshops at the Zabalaza Theatre Festival 2024 on topics such as scriptwriting, directing, performing, marketing and sales. Employability skills was the main focus of the workshops, and for the first time, the festival incorporated a formal focus on career opportunities in the arts. A panel discussion was led by representatives from five organisations on job opportunities in the arts. Represented were the South African and International organisations of ASSITEJ (Association Internationale du Théâtre de l'Enfance

et la Jeunesse), Theatre Arts Admin, Wave Theatre, Sustaining Theatre and Dance Foundation (STAND) and Community Arts Centres Network (CACNET). STAND also hosted a three-hour workshop on sustainability practices for artists.

Five members of the Baxter's resident Fires Burning Company attended advanced workshops and one-on-one workshops on Shakespearean theatre skills with actor and voice artists Susan Danford. These masterclasses and workshops were in preparation for the Theatre's showing of William Shakespeare's Othello.

Also in theatre, **Magnet Theatre** created opportunities for three young theatre makers who had auditioned for the Magnet Theatre Youth Company but had not been accepted onto the programme. These young actors received mentorship from Magnet Theatre Artistic Directors to produce three solo works which were performed in the end-of-year Summer Season. These creative processes provide young aspiring artists the opportunity to work with skilled and lauded industry professionals. Additionally, 45 talented youth participated in a weeklong Winter School programme in July 2024. These young artists received intensive training in Musical Composition, Writing from Page to Stage, Dance Composition, Artist Personal Branding, and Technical Theatre, and were given tools by industry professionals to support the creation of their end-of-year productions. Feedback on the programme as to which skills participants would take away and teach to fellow group members, and why, included:

"The skills I will take and teach to my fellow group members is about playwriting. I think I have gotten an in-depth of what it means to write a play from idea to page, and from page to stage."

15-year-old student from Chris Hani Arts and Culture School

"....music composition skills because in my group we love to sing and these skills would make us perfect if we use them."

16-year-old student

"I would take dance choreography and teach my fellow group members because it seems like it is not only me who needs this kind of practise, but all of us."

18-year-old student

Three trainees on Magnet Theatre's Culture Gangs programme were also supported to prepare applications for study at the UCT Centre for Theatre, Dance and Performance Studies in 2025. This support was in the form of two audition workshops held in August 2024, as well as help with online applications. Magnet Theatre intern, Sibuyiselo Dywili, was awarded a very prestigious place on a writing residency called Brussels To Karoo, an international playwriting residency collaboration between the Jakes Gerwel Foundation and Passa Porta, a Belgian creative organisation.

Dance

A total of 232 LEAP learners from the **FATC** were given the opportunity to perform their five group dance works at the My Body My Space Festival in March 2024. These young performers performed to an audience of over 500 during the youth day performance showcase.

A total of 19 talented young dancers were supported in their second year of training in the **Jazzart** full-time three-year Education and Training programme. These artists received structured training in contemporary dance, ballet, street dance and traditional African dance styles. 18 trainees were given the opportunity to perform at Artscape in November 2024, and four trainees were given the opportunity to travel and perform alongside company dancers at various dance festivals in Durban, Johannesburg, Rwanda and Pakistan.

Music

55 promising youth were supported across two orchestras run by the **Free State Symphony Orchestra** (FSSO) which maintains an inclusive and vibrant Youth Orchestra programme, attracting young musicians

from the greater Mangaung-Bloemfontein area. Notably, the FSSO was able to start a second orchestra – the Sinfonietta – based on the demand, talent, strength and successes of the organisation.

The week-long **National Youth Music Competition** was also held in December, providing 17 young classical musicians, selected out of 39 applications from across the country, the opportunity to display their talent under competitive circumstances and to develop their musical and technical skills, as well as to experience the demands of competitions and stage performances. All 17 musicians participated in the first 2 rounds of the competition, with 12 progressing to the semi-final round and six finalists having the opportunity to perform with the Cape Town Philharmonic Orchestra in the gala concert at the Endler Hall in Stellenbosch on Saturday 7 December. The concert was attended by 439 people in person, and up to 70 people attended free rounds that were open to the public each day. A 17-year-old young female violinist was awarded first prize and two pianists, aged 16 and 19 years old, were awarded second and third place, respectively.

A total of five music students from **Apollo Music Trust** attended a week-long Masterclass in classical music instruction with voice Professor Martin Hundelt from the Hochschule in Lubeck, Germany. Students were also afforded the opportunity to perform at the end of the week in front of a live audience and panel of judges. One student, Jason September, was chosen for a fully funded year of study at the Lubeck Hochschule. Importantly, Apollo continues to strengthen its relationship with the Hochschule in Lubeck to facilitate access to overseas funding and employment and training opportunities for programme graduates.

A total of 36 talented students who participated in the KZN Music Festival were given the additional opportunity to audition for the prestigious **KZN Schools Jazz Band** and perform with the band on the final day of the festival.

40 students of **Kronendal Music Academy** in Hout Bay took part in a half-day workshop with Spanish group Vertixe Sonora as part of the ISCM World New Music Days (WNMD) festival, hosted by grantee NewMusicSA.

Lastly, 50 students from **MICM** took part in a two-day music workshop with German group, Ensemble Modern, also as part of the ISCM WNMD festival and 15 students had the opportunity to perform with the Ensemble Modern at the University of Johannesburg main auditorium. An additional 82 MICM students participated in Technical Assessments at the Centre to help measure technical knowledge and assess the development of musical skills through home practice.

Visual Arts



In visual arts, 16 students¹¹ in the **Sibikwa Arts Academy** were selected to be a part of an ensemble group and receive more advanced technical training, as well as performance opportunities and learning excursions. For example, the ensemble attended Gregory Maqoma's Rhythm Colour at Soweto Theatre in June, which offered learners deeper insights into movement, storytelling, and the potential for career paths in the arts. Notably, Sibikwa has expanded these excursions to also include museums, art galleries and film visits, in an effort under the new leadership to expose township-based

young arts students to a diversity of arts forms. Of the ensemble members, four were selected as finalists in the Arts & Culture Trust's Nyoloha Scholarship Programme, one was awarded the Performing Arts scholarship to study Dramatic Arts at TUT, and one was awarded a scholarship to study Dance at Moving into Dance. In addition, one ensemble member has been accepted to study Dramatic Arts at Wits and one has been accepted to study at the International Hotel School.

¹¹ 6 of these Ensemble candidates were recipients of bursaries that allowed them access the programme

A number of talented artists in theatre and contemporary dance were given dedicated support to develop a career and earn a livelihood in the arts.

Theatre

The **Baxter Theatre** continues to be at the forefront of creating and nurturing cutting-edge theatre and performing arts and supporting the creative energy of young South African artists. Over the year, five young actors were supported in full-time employment through the Baxter's Fires Burning Resident Company, established in 2023. These actors were supported with mentorship and comprehensive training on all aspects of theatre-making to conceptualise, develop and stage new works. In 2024, the Fires Burning Company contributed significantly to four major productions.

These opportunities not only provide work on a major theatre platform but also instil valuable life skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and self-expression, thereby enriching the personal and professional growth of young artists. The four major productions were:

1. **Othello** which provided 17 young individuals with a platform to hone their theatrical skills by collaborating with seasoned theatre practitioners. This group included performers, assistants to the director, designer and the stage manager. This experience included participation in specialised workshops aimed at deepening their understanding of Shakespeare's texts and performance nuances.
2. The play **Trouble in Mind** involved three company members and two additional young performers acting alongside esteemed actors such as Thembi Mtshali-Jones and Royston Stoffels. A young theatre practitioner assisted the costume designer, and a company member served as assistant director. In addition, the young actors participated in both individual and group coaching sessions with a dialect coach for support to master American accents for the performance.
3. **Neighbourhood** provided a valuable platform for 11 young individuals to develop and refine their theatrical skills. This group included the director, playwright, performers, lighting designer, costume designer and sound designer.
4. Lastly **Metamorphoses** (winning the Fleur du Cap Theatre Award for Best Ensemble) provided valuable professional experience for eight young individuals, including performers and a sound designer. These youth gained first-hand experience by collaborating with seasoned theatre practitioners.

Also in theatre, **Magnet Theatre** launched its New Youth Company in 2024 offering young artists a six-month employment contract with a training component. A total of 40 youth were invited to audition out of a total of 80 applications. Auditions were held in April and offered a learning opportunity as well as a chance for the young artists to participate in song, physical theatre, puppetry and spoken text exercises, observed by the Magnet Theatre Directors and senior staff. In the end, nine company members were selected to participate first in a two-month theatre incubation programme, followed by training sessions with industry professionals on object manipulation in preparation for the creation of a new production *Glimmer*, as well as a methodology workshop, including a singing and dance class. It was reported that the young artists displayed a high level of professionalism, arriving on time every day and often working long hours under very gruelling physical conditions.

Company members were given the opportunity to learn new skills, including puppetry and physical theatre, in the creation of two new productions, *Glimmer* and *Manje! Manje* (an epic). The nine members of the Youth Company were also afforded the opportunity to tutor, facilitate and mentor less-experienced youth on Magnet Theatre's Winter School programme, thereby developing leadership skills and fostering peer to peer learning.

In addition to the youth company, Magnet also supported four interns in partnership with the FirstRand FirstJob Programme. These interns received training in arts administration, stage and venue management and theatre arts facilitation and visual documentation, including videography and editing. Lastly, three interns were supported to create their own works including two new performance pieces and one photographic exhibition. The aim is that the interns will use these products and new skills for further development and income generation. Interns were provided with mentorship, technical team assistance and a small budget to manage props and stipends for actors.

Dance

Through the efforts of **FATC**, six dance interns were exposed to meaningful paid-for first time employment opportunities and work based-learning experiences. FATC's internship programme includes exposure to dance, monitoring and evaluation, social media and administration, and interns being stretched in a diversity of aspects to do with dance-making and facilitating and conceptualising dance. Two former FATC youth dance interns were able to take up professional performance opportunities through invitations to present works at the National Arts Festival and the Mbombela Innibos Festival.

In dance, **Jazzart's** three-year dance training programme allows talented dancers to follow a career in dance and eight were employed as company dancers after graduation (2022 cohort). Two of the dancers left and are full time employed in the UK with two others working for other local dance organisations. Of the four still employed, two will be creating a new work for Jazzart's upcoming festival. Jazzart reports that 82% of the past three-year graduates are still economically active in the arts industry. Notably, two Jazzart trainees were invited in 2024 to attend a one-year fulltime programme abroad at the LINES Ballet Company in San Francisco and the EBB Dance Company in France.

Supporting platforms that showcase talent

Platforms are supported to showcase talent and build collaborations

The trust supports a number of platforms that showcase talent and foster collaboration in the arts sector, across theatre, music, dance and visual arts. Over the reporting period these included:

- The Zabalaza Theatre Festival hosted by Baxter Theatre
- The 9th My Body My Space (MBMS) Festival hosted by FATC
- The KZN Schools Jazz Festival in Durban hosted by Nabak Arts
- The ISCM World New Music Days Festival hosted by NewMusicSA
- The 8th International Public Art Festival (IPAF) hosted by Baz-Art
- The 25th Caine Prize for African Writing hosted by Africa95



Zabalaza Programme mini-festival showcase to children in Khayalitshe

Through the **Zabalaza** programmes over 168 children and 398 youth have had the opportunity to transform their narratives into captivating performances. These participants benefited from workshops, mentoring and mini festivals/showcases with the top groups performing at the main festival. Over 30 productions were showcased at the Zabalaza Theatre Festival in March 2024.

The production "Invisible Scars" directed by Themba Baleni that delves into themes of gender-based violence and mental health was awarded Best Production, and a "Best of Zabalaza" professional season at The Baxter. In addition, the festival production "Extreme Lengths" by Savannah Steyn was awarded Best Script and will be published by Junkets Publishers.

FATC hosted their 9th **My Body My Space (MBMS) Festival** in March 2024. The work of the festival aims to promote social cohesion in rural Mpumalanga through public performances and exhibitions, bringing together diverse rural and urban individuals and groups from different backgrounds. By breaking traditional social barriers, the festival brings together diverse rural, urban regional and international audiences, creating opportunities for new and emerging artists to enter the professional arts scene. Through commissioned performances and workshops, the festival not only expands access to high-quality arts but also drives economic growth and job creation, contributing to the arts and culture tourism in the region. The MBMS

Festival 2024 provided the platform to showcase 33 new performance works by artists who responded to a public call for applications. The festival also developed international collaborations with attendance from representatives from ARTCENA French National Centre for Circus Arts, Street Arts and Theatre. The festival also provided official employment to 62 service providers including artists, marketing, transport, accommodation and catering. In addition, a total of 124 performing artists and groups were contracted to perform.

The **KZN Schools Jazz Festival** in Durban included various performances where students showcased their talents to the public. The festival provided 90 young musicians from ten high schools across KwaZulu-Natal the opportunity to hone their musical abilities and develop discipline and confidence under the guidance of 28 professional musicians and music educators. This learning event supports music skills training and practical learning through band rehearsals and performances. In addition, music educators were exposed to new teaching methodologies that they could take back to their classrooms. A special highlight of the festival was the inclusion of Moroccan DJ Reqteq whose performances and workshops introduced a unique fusion of music and provided exposure to diverse global musical styles.



The KZN Schools Jazz Festival hosted by Nabak Arts

NewMusicSA also hosted the **International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM) World New Music Days (WNMD) Festival** in Johannesburg and Cape Town from the 24 November to 3 December 2023. The festival marked the 100th-anniversary edition and the first time it was hosted on the continent. It is an international celebration of contemporary and avant-garde music, and brought together composers, musicians, and music enthusiasts from around the world to showcase and explore new musical works, and participate in rehearsals, workshops, and public performances. The festival ran across 15 different venues and brought together over 150 international music professionals with local musicians over the ten-day programme that featured orchestral, ensemble and solo concert performances, with between five and seven hours of live performance each day. The programme also incorporated sections developed with European partners to feature experimental music from Africa. Music producer and ISCM British Section Board member had this to say of the festival,

“..the reward of making lasting connections with other musicians and of presenting their music in astonishing and historically-significant surroundings - like the Regina Mundi Catholic Church in Soweto and at Johannesburg’s Holocaust and Genocide Centre - will stay with [the UK and Irish composers] for many years to come.”

The **International Public Art Festival (IPAF)** was held in Cape Town in February 2024 under the main theme of collaboration. A total of five local artists were partnered with three international artists to create nine new large-scale public visual art projects around the city. Four graduate interns were selected by **Baz-Art** as part of the 4th Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) Work-Based Experience programme in partnership with Art Bank. The interns gained hands on experience in the running of IPAF 2024 and gained skills in various departments under the guidance of industry professionals.



Baz-Art International Public Art Festival

In writing, ten writers representing five African countries, including Sibongile Fisher from South Africa, participated in the **Caine Prize Writers' Workshop** that was held in Malawi from 16 to 29 June 2024. The workshop was facilitated by two award-winning writers – Nigerian crime writer Femi Kayode and South African novelist Karen Jennings. The writers produced new content in original short stories and reported a huge benefit and increase in knowledge and skills related to their writing craft.

"The workshop has left an indelible mark on the Malawian literary scene. It affirmed our literary pursuits, inspired the literary community, and opened our eyes to possibilities in literature that we thought were beyond our reach. The four [Malawian] writers who participated now have a huge sense of belonging."

Shadreck Chikoti, writer and founder of the Story Club Café in Malawi

In September 2024, the **25th Caine Prize for African Writing**, organised by grantee Africa95, was awarded to South African novelist and playwright, Nadia Davids. The prize witnessed a record-breaking number of submissions, with 320 entries spanning 28 African countries, marking a significant milestone in the Caine Prize's history as it enters its 25th year. Africa95 has worked hard over the year to redefine its goals and work with more partners and collaborators on the continent.

New local audiences attracted

New and more diverse audiences were attracted over the year by grantees in the arts. These audiences included, amongst others, children from ECD centres, high schools and community centres, and adults, including older persons from homes for the aged.

The **Baxter Theatre** continued its commitment to engage new local audiences as a culturally inclusive theatre that celebrates local talent and fosters unique South African theatre. In 2024, this was achieved through a diverse artistic programme that included local standup comic shows, classical ballet, school musical productions, award-winning Afrikaans dramas, a talk by the editor of Daily Maverick, a contemporary African dance performance and a wide variety of musical concerts. Throughout the year, Baxter audience members were afforded the opportunity to access performances through discounted and free tickets, not only making the arts more accessible, but importantly encouraging exposure to performance arts as an integral life experience rather than a special or once off experience.

Language diversity is also key in supporting access to performance arts and attracting a new and more diverse community of art lovers. Examples of this include two of Baxter Theatre's multilingual productions, namely *Othello* and *Neighbourhood*, that were both performed in English, isiXhosa, and Afrikaans. Over 7 300 students were able to experience Baxter Theatre's diverse artistic programme over the reporting year, including over 3 000 learners from 53 local schools to watch the production of *Othello* through discounted tickets. A total of 2 255 senior citizens also attended the discounted Morning Melodies, a regular concert series held at the Baxter that is designed with seniors in mind.

Magnet Theatre reported that their contemporary style of work attracted an increasing number of new audience members, with their production season in the second half of the year reaching approximately 3 000 audience members. Notably, new audiences were attracted through Magnet Theatre's Early Years Theatre programme that gives young theatre practitioners the opportunity to create meaningful, age-appropriate theatre for young children. Magnet trainees created the multilingual production, *Mina Thina*, which explores the theme of family and belonging through playful theatre. The play toured to 19 ECD centres in some of the least resourced spaces around Cape Town, growing new audiences and reaching 872 preschoolers, teachers and carers. Feedback from educators included:

"It was incredible imagery and music. A great way to introduce another language. The children enjoyed the imagery of the dream part although it was the saddest part."

"The performance was very well presented. They knew how to keep the children's attention and it was instructive for us as educators to see how calm the children were. Sound and lighting were also well suited. Next time make more use of Afrikaans vocabulary so that preschoolers understand it more, but my class really enjoyed it."

The **FATC** attracted new and diverse local audiences through its work throughout the year, and primarily through the 9th My Body My Space (MBMS) Festival in March 2024. The MBMS Festival 2024 reached over 2 000 local community members as well as ten European visitors from public arts platforms outside of the region. The event saw participation from over 1 000 youth, with a further 575 local attendees engaging in a single performance event that was held on the 16 March.

Rural children and youth were transported into activated sites and audience members were guided on foot and in vehicles through a variety of performances, installations and exhibitions held in various public sites, such as school-playgrounds, community halls, street corners and abandoned buildings. Transport services were arranged with local providers that helped promote audience participation across the different event locations. In a survey of audience members, 86% of survey respondents expressed that the works that they were exposed to at the festival had prompted them to think about what they should or could be doing better in their lives.

In dance, **JazzArt** dancers performed at the FynArts Festival in Hermanus to a predominantly elderly audience, a new experience for this audience, many of whom had never experienced contemporary dance style before.

In music, new local audiences were attracted to attend and support the **World New Music Days 2023 Festival** hosted by NewMusicSA in Johannesburg and Cape Town. Transport was provided to bring young audiences from previously disadvantaged communities to the main concerts, many of which were offered to the public at no cost.

In visual arts, the **International Public Art Festival (IPAF)** engaged the public with local and international artists to experience new and thought-provoking public art. A total of 278 guided public art tours were conducted over the festival with an additional estimated 300 self-guided public art tours and 4 142 augmented reality mural views over the period of one month. The festival also featured a parallel programme which included 18 roundtables, seminars and masterclasses at the International Public Art Conference.

"It crossed over the great divides that often exist between art, awareness, education, environment and gives relevance to the form of art itself and the fact that the artists are thinkers and have deep connection to their society and the issues and problems prevalent in communities and are many times in essence a voice for others."

International Public Art Conference attendee

"Baz-Art made it possible to connect art making to those who have limited access to creative opportunities. These workshops embodied your 2024 theme of collaboration. I look forward to many more such collaborations."

International Public Art Conference workshop facilitator

Lastly, in film, **Sunshine Cinema** has seen increased interest in their community film screening model, which has led to growing partnerships with local primary schools, local high schools, libraries and ECD centres in particular. This demand has resulted in more partnerships with community-based organisations that provide safe havens for vulnerable children across the country. Sunshine Cinema leveraged a number of key partnerships with social justice, arts, and youth-focused organisations over the year in an effort to increase access and more diverse audiences. Sunshine Cinema also hosted multiple community screenings with local partners such as:

- Encounters Film Festival and UCT for the annual Open Day to extend the message of the power and potential of African storytelling through film.
- WWF South Africa in the screening of the Wall-E fiction film to build awareness and improve social behaviour around climate change issues. The partnership was part of the Earth Hour Impact Campaign and the film was screened in ten different communities, across seven provinces in support of the Earth Hour Initiative.
- 30th anniversary year screenings of Disney's The Lion King across four provinces followed by facilitated reflective discussions led by trained impact facilitators and supported by social workers and educators. These screenings fostered open discussions and encouraged youth-driven community initiatives, such as promoting voter participation and tackling local social issues.
- Sunshine Cinema also created a short voter-based film to raise the voter registration awareness ahead of the 2024 elections. The film highlights how children and youth in South Africa need civic education to address misinformation and disinformation.

Organisational capacity is developed to build viable 'offerings', and to offer meaningful employment

Premature to report on this outcome.

New international audiences are attracted and supporting SA visual & performing arts (tourism)

Premature to report on this outcome.

Developing new content

New content is developed which builds South Africa's cultural identity, addresses social issues, and/or promotes South African uniqueness

It is widely recognised that performance arts are a highly effective tool to address social issues and promote behaviour change, especially amongst the youth. Many grantees also encourage participants to use performance as a way to share their experiences and dreams.

In theatre this is an important tenet of **Baxter's** work through the Zabalaza programme that supports young people to make new theatre in and with their own communities, and importantly, in their own language. Apart from new works created out of the the Zabalaza programme, the Baxter also commissioned local playwright, theatre director and performer Tiisetso Mashifane wa Noni, Fleur du Cap and Standard Bank Ovation awardee, to creatively portray the battle for affordable housing in South Africa. The resulting piece was the play Neighbourhood which involved a month-long research phase that pulled content from media and interviews, as well as submissions from everyday South African citizens. The process also involved collaboration with affordable housing activist organisation Ndifuna Ukwazi. The production premiered at the Baxter Studio from 2 August to 24 August.

Through **FATC's** artistic process, rural youth explored and expressed, for example, feelings of being silenced, and difficulties relating to the expression of sexuality and sexual identity. These, and other complex cultural issues, are explored through FATC's programmes, as audiences are invited to work together to empower young teens to voice their experiences and seek help. In preparation for the 2024 My Body My Space Festival, LEAP children and youth created original works that covered themes such as water and air pollution, teenage motherhood and pregnancy termination, environmental protection, and education rights. Other themes centred around freedom of expression and specific challenges faced by young black females.

Also in theatre, four major new works were produced by **Magnet Theatre** across its various programmes:

1. **Mina Thina** by the Early Years Theatre programme that addresses family and belonging.
2. **Manje! Manje (an epic)** by New Magnet Theatre Youth Company that explores the human condition in the age of the machine, big data and climate change.
3. **For the Record** produced by Magnet Theatre interns as a showcase of three developing works that included a photographic exhibition, a play reading and performance art piece, all exploring various personal themes.
4. **GLIMMER** by New Magnet Theatre Youth Company that explores growing up in the digital era.

"High energy, charming and moving stuff. This is great work by the young cast, the writers, director and designer. It made me excited about the future of theatre"

Megan Choritz of Weekend Special review of GLIMMER

In addition to the above new works, Magnet Theatre's end-of-year showcase also saw students presenting five short plays to 176 audience members. The plays addressed various deep social issues such as love and cultural differences, slavery and community building.



Jazzart trainee dancers

In dance, four new works were created and performed by **Jazzart's** company dancers and selected trainee dancers. These works were developed under the theme of resilience as testament to the strength and adaptability of the South African spirit as we mark 30 years of democracy. In November Jazzart led its theatre calendar with the mixed-bill dance performance titled *Four Frames of Freedom*, that brought together all four pieces in a powerful showcase. In addition, the pieces have training value too and three of the four new works will form part of Jazzart's repertoire to be taught to all trainee dancers for touring in 2025. Works included:

- **I AM AFRICAN** that celebrates our cultural diversity, tolerance and collective vision for a brighter future (Choreographed by Jazzart's Head of Training).
- **BATTLEFIELD** that is a powerful narrative about breaking free from societal constraints and embracing authenticity in a world that dictates how we should act and feel (Choreographed by Jazzart's Company Dancer).
- **Ziyawa** that expresses the essence of Cape Town's vibrant culture (Choreographed by Jazzart's Head of Training).
- **DARK FLOCK** that explores our shared desire for progress and prosperity, while transcending barriers of race, gender, and socio-economic background (Created with acclaimed and award-winning duo Ciara Baldwin and Nathan Bartman of MANACAN the South African Company based in London).

New content is performed in accessible places - inspiring, driving awareness and educating

Through the Zabalaza programme, **Baxter Theatre** works closely with local theatre groups and individuals, ensuring that productions are firmly rooted in their communities. In this way, Baxter's work was performed in mini festivals in communities in Khayelitsha, Delft, Langa, De Doorns, Cloeteville (Stellenbosch), George, Knysna, Malmesbury, Swellendam and Cape Town.

Magnet Theatre's new children's theatre production *Mina Thina* was toured to 19 ECD centres, reaching 872 pre-schoolers and teachers, taking theatre to some of the least resourced spaces in the city. The production further expanded its reach through a week-long tour of the Northern Cape in partnership with the NGO Garage Dance Ensemble based in O'kiep, playing to 380 children and bringing quality children's theatre to very underserved rural areas.

In dance, a total of 825 children and youth were transported by bus to watch **Jazzart's** productions.

Sibikwa Arts Centre held several public events that attracted and engaged new local audiences, supporting both visual and performing arts. A particularly innovative approach to audience development and community engagement was a flash mob performance spontaneously staged by Sibikwa's Ensemble group at Lakeside Mall in June 2024 for Youth Month.

Excellent new content is performed overseas

In theatre, the **Baxter Theatre** presented the play, *Life & Michael K*, in China in May, with performances at the Yunfeng Theatre in Shanghai, and at the Grand Opera House in Guangzhou.

Magnet Theatre was invited to perform at two international festivals focused on theatre for young audiences. In both cases, Magnet's work **BOUNCED**, originally created in 2022 as part of the Fulltime Training and Job Creation Programme, was recognised on global stages in Cuba and Germany. The work was selected out of over 600 applicants to perform at the 21st ASSITEJ World Congress and Performing Arts Festival 2024 in Havana, Cuba in May. The play was performed to a total audience of 438 children. As a global network of theatre practitioners for young audiences, participation in this ASSITEJ event was invaluable for the young cast members to build their confidence and networks. **BOUNCED** was also invited to be performed for the first time as the opening production for the FRATZ International: Festival for the Very Young in Germany in October. It was performed to 353 audience members, over five shows, across the city of Berlin. This was the first time that Magnet has performed at this Festival, opening up a new international collaborative relationship.



Cast of the production BOUNCED on tour in Cuba

In dance four **Jazzart** company dancers and three trainee dancers were invited to perform and participate in two international festivals, namely the Ubumuntu Festival in Rwanda in July 2024 and the World Cultural Festival in Pakistan in September 2024. Notably, the latter invitation was extended by the Karachi festival organisers after watching the performances in Rwanda. Participation in the Ubumuntu Festival included the opportunity to participate in and lead various community outreach workshops. Dancers performed on the opening night of the festival and also on the closing night in a short collaborative piece to showcase the talents of the South African dancers, as well as dancers, actors and musicians from Rwanda. Jazzart dancers also performed at the Neon Project in Greece.

In 2024, **Mandla Mlangeni**, a distinguished South African jazz trumpeter and composer, was invited by Jazz at the Lincoln Centre (JALC) in New York to perform his musical production *Oratorio for a Forgotten Youth* on the 1976 Soweto uprisings. The tour featured four performances in total, with an addition of two extra performances in Newport and New York. The show brought audiences closer to South Africa's rich musical legacy and was testament to how music transcends language and cultural barriers. The tour gave this talented South African artist a valuable platform to share his craft and was also an opportunity to foster and promote international collaboration through the sharing of expertise and networks. A workshop, hosted by Mandla and facilitated by the JALC, was also held with Newport college students to explore the business side of creative arts, with a specific focus on staging and touring. Mandla was also invited to be part of the USA based National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) Awards where American tour promoter Dick Lynn received an award for his contributions in education with particular focus on his promotion of South African artists.

Judging by the number of applications and enquiries for funding across the arts and culture disciplines we were reminded once again that the arts remains the lowest funding priority by both the private and public sector in terms of budget allocation. Our hope is that over time as we continue to gather data from our annual reports we will be able to make a solid case for additional funding to be directed to this sector. It is clear that benefits of support are not only realised at an individual and community level but new content development also intersects with social justice and progresses the development of our collective cultural identity as South Africans, not to mention the economic gains in building a thriving sector.

Our work over the year has emphasised our belief that amazing talent exists everywhere across our country and that talented individuals and groups, across the arts, can achieve success, and in doing so, strengthen and grow the local, and international, creative economy. The past year has affirmed that this is possible only through a holistic strategy that considers both the individual and the industry at large and supports a multi-pronged approach that provides exposure of the arts to children and youth, identifies and nurtures young talent for a career in the arts, supports the platforms to promote this work, whilst providing opportunities to develop new content and attract new audiences to support the arts.

Other notable observations and learnings shared by grantees over the reporting period include:

- Increasingly younger and more diversified audience attendance at orchestral and other classical music events.
- Significant and growing interest from schools and community organisations to access performance arts, however transportation remains a challenge.
- Safety of artists travelling home after events, as well as performers and arts educators who travel into dangerous areas to bring arts closer to communities.
- The enormous value of support to mid-level young professional artists in fulltime structured arts learning programmes that help cover financial obligations of the artists, thereby freeing up creative energy.

Looking Ahead

A critical focus for the upcoming year is the diversification of budget spend in terms of geographic focus in our continued efforts to direct support to under-resourced communities, outside of Gauteng and Western Cape. Whilst this is the goal, we are always mindful that every funding decision for the arts is based on a number of different factors, including consideration of both geography and discipline, as well as the reality that new and innovative models often originate and are located in the more resourced areas. The trust will continue to balance this programmatic versus discretionary support as we work to promote more systemic change for the arts and creative industry.

Other plans, some of which are already underway, include:

- Targeted conversations with grantees to develop a more robust understanding of the funding challenges in the sector, as well as efforts to determine how best to support the sector in holding government accountable to its funding commitments.
- Conduct a survey of our grantees to determine levels of government support, and better understand cases where support has been unsuccessful or delayed. This will be coupled with a review of government's budgeted and actual spend towards arts and culture.
- The trust will continue efforts to influence and gather support for the arts, including the development of a donor database (local and international donors) to support networking and opportunities for the sector.
- Work closer with influential and connected figures in the arts sector in a collective effort to better understand what work is being done on the ground, especially in more isolated communities, and what support is required where.
- Gathering information from grantees on their annual events calendars. This will assist in our own planning and scheduling to ensure OMT can attend more live events and be a more visible and proactive supporter. This information will also assist us to promote upcoming events on behalf of grantees through our own social media platforms, as well as help provide exciting and relevant PR content in the form of interviews and articles ahead of major productions and anniversary celebrations.
- Potential support to selected organisations for case study support to document the development journeys of candidates and stories of successful transitions into viable careers in the arts.
- Training and information sessions with grantees to explain the strategy of the fund in more detail, with particular focus on the theory of change as it relates to the goals and objectives of the fund.

SOCIAL JUSTICE



South Africa has experienced significant political shifts in 2024, notably the ANC losing its parliamentary majority and the formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) in June 2024. The ten parties in this coalition include the African National Congress (ANC), Democratic Alliance (DA), Patriotic Alliance, Inkatha Freedom Party, Good Party, Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, Freedom Front Plus, United Democratic Movement, Al Jama-ah and Rise Mzansi. The national elections were declared free and fair but despite all efforts to increase voter turnout, this was notably low, with only 58% of registered voters casting their ballots. The low turnout has been attributed to various factors, including voter apathy and disillusionment with the political system.

These historic developments marked a pivotal year for the country, characterised by political realignments and significant policy debates.

On the corruption front, the year saw the corruption trial of former President Jacob Zuma facing repeated delays. These delays again raised concerns over the ongoing challenges our grantees and many other organisations face in trying to combat corruption and restore public trust. In media freedom, the Prevention and Combating of Hate Crimes and Hate Speech Act was signed into law in May. The law aims to reduce offensive speech and curb hate crimes in South Africa and outlines effective enforcement measures against those who express prejudice or intolerance.

In education advocacy developments, the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act 32 of 2024 (BELA) was signed into law in September to amend the Schools Act of 1996.

Lastly, with regards to energy and the environment, the Climate Change Act was signed in July 2024. The Act is an important step in outlining how South Africa will address climate change, taking into consideration global standards as well as local short- and longer-term realities on the ground.



Helen Suzman Foundation (HSF) hosted the annual Helen Suzman Memorial Lecture on 14th November 2024. These lectures seek to honour not only Helen's extraordinary contribution to public life in Parliament, but also to uphold the values which she brought to public life outside Parliament. The guest speaker was Dr Imtiaz Sooliman, founder of Gift of the Givers who reminded us that South Africa belongs to its citizens, not the government, and called on us all to stand up, engage with each other and work together to build the country we want to live in.



To fund organisations that uphold the rule of law, and promote the advancement of human rights, so that South Africa's constitutional democracy is strengthened

Against this political and legislative backdrop, the trust worked hard over the year to execute on our new and comprehensive social justice strategy, taking a responsive and increasingly more proactive approach as the year progressed. This proactive approach included extensive investigation to better understand the climate change and local energy landscape, and where best to direct our support.

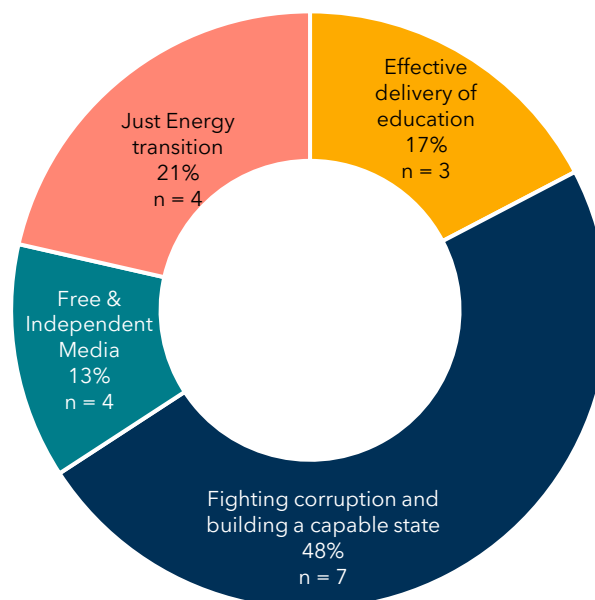
Highlights and successes from the year included broadening our network of like-minded donors in the sector by joining a collaboration of donors hosted by the RAITH Foundation, where organisations share their strategies and are able to learn from each other. IPASA has proved to be an important networker and resource for developing our understanding of the just transition and has been instrumental in connecting OMT to the right players.

We have seen a marked increase in the number of application submissions as word of our new strategy has spread across the sector. OMT also proactively sourced new grantees in order to advance our goals specifically related to education and climate justice rights, as well as supporting additional organisations in the investigative journalism sector.

OMT Results

The approved 2024 budget for Social Justice was awarded to 18 grantees across the four main strategic focus areas for this Fund¹².

TOTAL SPEND: SOCIAL JUSTICE (2024)



The table on the following page lists all grantees funded in 2024, however reporting data gets submitted bi-annually and annually, hence those funded in September and December submit reports in 2025. This new data will be consolidated into the 2025 Annual Report.

¹² For purposes of budget allocation, grantees have been allocated to the focus area where there is the most significant contribution. In terms of reporting on results, a grantee's work may contribute to outcomes across other focus areas.

	SECTION27	SJI	HSF	IJ Hub	MMA	CASAC	Corruption Watch	AmaBhungane	Heartlines	MISTRA	Equal Education	Futurelect	Radio Workshop	GroundUp	PlanAct	African Climate F.	IJR	Unesco Chair
FIGHTING CORRUPTION AND BUILDING A CAPABLE STATE																		
Corruption & poor state performance are monitored & exposed																		
Awareness is created around corruption, state performance & active citizenry is encouraged & mobilised																		
Whistleblowers are protected																		
Research is conducted to inform and advocates for policy reform																		
Capacity of key institutions is preserved and strengthened																		
Litigation is successful in prosecuting corruption and poor performance																		
FREE AND INDEPENDENT MEDIA																		
Censorship and press freedom are monitored																		
Mis/dis-information and propaganda are countered by fact-checking bodies																		
Judicial system used to ensure free & independent media, transparency and access to information																		
Whistle-blowers are protected, journalists are not intimidated																		
All citizens have access to fact-based information																		
EFFECTIVE DELIVERY OF EDUCATION																		
Poor education delivery and poor quality of learning is publicly highlighted																		
Public outrage is mobilised																		
Public litigation is used to hold government & other education stakeholders accountable																		
Effective spend of Education budget																		
Education policies are reformed																		
JUST ENERGY TRANSITION																		
Corruption in energy sector is exposed																		
Accurate information about energy transition is disseminated to citizens and communities																		
Demands for a transition to renewable energy are supported by social movements																		
Clean energy legislation and just transition policies are introduced and implemented																		
Poor governance practices in state institutions responsible for energy are publicly challenged																		
A multi stakeholder consultative approach is working to ensure a just transition for all																		

OMT's role in the social justice sector is beginning to expand as an influencer and leader.

Work over the year and engagements in the sector have highlighted our rather unique strategy that positions the trust, along with a small but growing number of other local private philanthropic foundations, as a **first mover and influencer** in the local energy and climate justice sector. This focus has been repeatedly commended by other donors who are active in climate response, most importantly for the message that our strategy signals to other local philanthropists the importance and urgency for support to this cause.

The trust has been a **significant contributor** to the development of the inaugural IPASA Southern Africa's Funder Climate Commitment, including participation in various workshops, and co-facilitation of a workshop on climate justice at the IPASA Philanthropy Symposium in October 2024. The trust continues to work closely with IPASA to share knowledge and networks in support of their work to assist members donors to take a more proactive and considered approach to climate change support.



The 10th IPASA Annual Philanthropy Symposium, held in October 2024, placed significant emphasis on climate change within its broader theme of "Reimagining Philanthropy for a Better Future." A dedicated panel titled "Re-imagining Philanthropy's Role in Funding to Shift Systems at Scale and Speed" addressed systemic challenges across sectors, including climate change. Speaking is Dhesigan Naidoo, Head of Climate Adaptation: Presidential Climate Commission.

Grantee Results

On the following page, the extract from our theory of change for the fund illustrates the pathways of change we expect to see in each of the strategic focus areas. The paragraphs that follow describe the summary analysis of results reported by our grantees per outcome.

FOCUS AREAS	SHORT-TERM (0-5 YRS) OUTCOMES	MEDIUM-TERM (5-10 YRS) OUTCOMES	LONG-TERM (10-15 YRS) OUTCOMES
FIGHTING CORRUPTION & BUILDING A CAPABLE STATE	<p>Corruption and poor state performance are monitored and exposed</p> <p>Awareness is created around corruption, poor state performance, political meddling (in independent institutions) and active citizenry is encouraged & mobilised</p> <p>Whistle-blowers are protected</p> <p>Research is conducted which informs and advocates for policy reform</p>	<p>Litigation is successful in prosecuting corruption and poor performance, and enforcing adherence to process & procedures</p> <p>Capacity of key institutions is preserved & strengthened, reinforcing good governance principles and transparency</p>	<p>Accountability for corruption & poor governance</p> <p>Low tolerance of corruption in government, public and private organisations</p> <p>Strong state & independent institutions are rebuilt & well-capacitated</p>
FREE & INDEPENDENT MEDIA	<p>Censorship and press freedom are monitored</p> <p>Mis / disinformation and propaganda are countered by fact-checking bodies</p> <p>Judicial system used to ensure free & independent media, transparency & public access to information</p> <p>Whistle-blowers are protected, journalists are not intimidated</p>	<p>All citizens have access to fact-based information via various media</p>	
HOLDING GOVERNMENT TO ACCOUNT FOR DELIVERY OF EFFECTIVE EDUCATION	<p>Poor education delivery & poor quality of learning is publicly highlighted</p> <p>Public outrage is mobilised (social movements organised and channelled)</p> <p>Public litigation is used to hold government bodies & other education stakeholders accountable</p>	<p>Effective spend of Education budget</p> <p>Education policies are reformed</p>	<p>South Africa's children are receiving effective (quality) education</p>
JUST ENERGY TRANSITION	<p>Corruption in energy sector is exposed</p> <p>Accurate information about energy transition is disseminated to citizens & communities</p> <p>Demands for a transition to renewable energy are supported by social movements</p>	<p>Clean energy legislation & just transition policies are introduced & implemented</p> <p>Poor governance practices in state institutions responsible for energy are publicly challenged</p> <p>A multi stakeholder consultative approach is working to ensure a just transition for all</p>	<p>South Africa's economy is powered by stable energy supply</p>

Fighting corruption and building a capable state

OMT supports the work of the following organisations whose work focuses on exposing corruption and building a capable state: Corruption Watch, HSF, the Council for the Advancement of the South African Constitution (CASAC), SECTION27, Social Justice Initiative (SJI), Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection (MISTRA) and Futurelect. These organisations contribute to achieving this objective through strategic litigation, research and policy advocacy, active citizenry and values-based leadership development.

Corruption and poor state performance are monitored and exposed

During this reporting period a number of important interventions were pursued including **HSF's** work to challenge the Minister of Home Affairs' decision to terminate the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit and **Corruption Watch's** tracking of the implementation of the proposed Zondo report recommendations. Corruption Watch also referred 3 612 corruption reports to appropriate state organs, showcasing their systematic approach to addressing systemic corruption.



HSF researchers, Sophie Smit and Ezekiel Kekana, attending the 2024 Human Rights Festival at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg

CASAC continued to participate in the Civil Society Working Group on State Capture, which made a submission to Parliament in March 2024. CASAC also supported the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council (NACAC) in making a submission to the President on strengthening the regulations relating to the private funding of political parties.

Five workshops were hosted by **SECTION27** for representatives of the Gert Sibande health facilities and clinic committees to build their capacity in responding to crime and corruption within the health sector. Five corruption and whistleblowing workshops were also conducted with health clinic committees in Gauteng, in partnership with the Treatment Action Campaign. Encouragingly, interest in future training has been expressed by the Mpumalanga Department of Health and the Special Investigations Unit of the Health Sector Anti-Corruption Forum.

Several events addressing corruption were hosted over the year, including a conference on the state of progress of the implementation of the State Capture Commission recommendations hosted by **CASAC** and **PARI** (Public Affairs Research Institute) in November 2024. The conference was addressed by Paul Pretorius SC, evidence leader at the Commission, the Public Protector, as well as a representative from the Presidency

and the Chair of the National Anti-Corruption Advisory Council, Prof Firoz Cachalia. Approximately 75 people attended in person, with 200 joining online.

The Social Justice Initiative (SJI) raised a total of R52 million to support various interventions, with a focus on strengthening democratic processes, securing accountability for mismanagement, bolstering grassroots interventions to improve service delivery, and enhancing transparency. Through its resource mobilisation work SJI has managed to support 18 organisations. SJI is in the final stages of unlocking an additional R100+ million towards promoting democratic participation, anticorruption, good governance, state capacity, grassroots activism, and future leadership.

Awareness is created around corruption, poor state performance, political meddling and active citizenry is encouraged & mobilised

Five of our grantees were actively involved in creating public awareness around corruption and state non-performance.

Corruption Watch conducted a total of 89 media interviews over the reporting period. Topics included state capture, the Corruption Perceptions Index, specific cases involving public figures and investigations by the Special Investigating Unit. Other topics were political donor transparency, municipal governance, and whistleblower safety. Corruption Watch also published a research report entitled *The Impact of Corruption: Insights from a Perceptions and Experiences Survey*. Corruption Watch used social media platforms to launch three campaigns to highlight the State of the Nation Address and Human Rights Day, emphasising access to land and land corruption in Africa. Increased appetite in access to corruption related matters was evident in the growth of Corruption Watch's Facebook followers surpassing 125 000 and LinkedIn growing to 4 806 followers. Awareness was also raised through a mall advertising campaign that reached an estimated 8 820 000 people and radio ads on land-related issues and corruption which were flighted on Ukhozi FM.

Opinion pieces were published by **CASAC** focusing on the work of the National Prosecuting Authority and the need for greater independence and resourcing for this key institution in the criminal justice sector. Radio and television interviews were also conducted and a webinar on the topic of international anti-corruption mechanisms was hosted by **HSF** in October.

An opinion piece by **PARI** was published in the Sunday Times in November 2024, highlighting key aspects from the State Capture Conference. Research was also conducted by PARI to highlight issues of state performance and political interference, with a focus on local government and coalition politics.

Local communities were supported in how to tackle poor governance issues through training hosted by the Ahmed Kathrada Foundation and funded by the **Social Justice Initiative's New Futures Fund**. The training resulted in the opening of a new clinic, the installation of an electrical substation and the establishment of the Johannesburg Crisis Alliance, which was founded to create public awareness around systemic challenges across the city to open discussions on how to manage service delivery issues.

Whistleblowers are protected

Corruption Watch continued its active participation in the Whistleblower Support Platform for Reform and in the planning of the annual awards ceremony which recognises and supports individuals who risk their careers to expose corruption. Corruption Watch also engaged in crucial discussions about whistleblower protection, exploring topics of incentivisation and personal safety. The team also provided direct support, working closely with two individual whistleblowers on specific complaints. Notably, 287 whistleblower reports were received in the reporting period.

With South Africa's 7th national election held in May 2024, many of our grantees focused their research efforts on **Electoral Reform**:

- CASAC responded to the call for submissions from the Electoral Reform Consultation Panel (ERCP). A written submission outlining the distinct **advantages of a hybrid constituency-based and proportional representation electoral model** was proposed.
- Following the convening of a workshop on "Law, the Economy and Society" held in March 2024, CASAC are finalising a document on what innovative policy interventions can be considered by the government to speed up the **realisation of socio-economic rights** in Chapter 2 of the Constitution. This topic will be further canvassed in a Conference on Constitutionalism that CASAC will convene in September 2025.
- One of the chapters of a book by MISTRA Executive Director Joel Netshitenzhe on **state planning** and the positioning of the Centre of Government was published as a standalone Working Paper. That garnered such interest that it was followed up by MISTRA organising, in September 2024, a roundtable discussion with senior management in the Presidency and former senior government officials to discuss ideas emanating from the paper. The frank discussions at the roundtable resulted in a decision by both MISTRA and the Presidency to continue the process with MISTRA conducting more in-depth research on the topic, and more engagements between the two parties, and including other experts, to flesh out what these discussions mean for the GNU and the state.
- Several organisations funded by SJI's New Futures Fund contributed important research reports that have helped advance **electoral reform, transparency, and civic engagement** in South Africa. SALLA/Rivonia Circle produced a factsheet that provided key data and definitions about the May 2024 elections, focusing on the three-ballot voting system and its implications for accountability and electoral reform. PARI conducted action research across 12 municipalities, developing detailed reports on citizen engagement and **local government participation**. The research fed into policy discussions with COGTA (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs) and SALGA (South African Local Government Association). They compiled a synthesised report summarising the common issues across the 12 municipalities to identify trends in governance challenges. My Votes Count (MVC) hired a research consultant to synthesise the findings of the **Civil Society Electoral Reform** Panel. This research is intended to advance civil society's perspective on ongoing electoral reform debates and help shape a unified framework for reform proposals.
- Corruption Watch drafted crucial submissions for the **Constitutional Amendment Bill**.



MISTRA team with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung South Africa Director at the Coalitions Barometer event on 22nd May 2024.

Other policy work included:

- Corruption Watch engaged extensively with the National Treasury on the **Public Procurement Bill**.
- Corruption Watch also produced two notable academic papers examining **land reform policies** and consultation practices in mining-affected communities. These research outputs were strategically developed to be translated into policy papers for parliamentary and policymaker engagement.
- In the closing months of 2023, HSF called out the 'White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection: Towards a Complete Overhaul of the Migration System in South Africa' published by the Department of Home Affairs for offering South Africans a barely discernible solution to the challenges that **migration** poses to South Africa. On 17 April 2024, the Minister of Home Affairs announced that Cabinet had finalised the Draft White Paper, without incorporating any submissions HSF had made – nor any submission from like-minded dissenting voices in civil society. HSF released a press statement in response.
- HSF submitted that broad vetting power be removed from the recently introduced **General Intelligence Laws Amendment Bill**, which was intended to comply with the directives of the Financial Action Task Force and the recommendations of the State Capture Report. However, it includes dangerously broad conceptions of national security that risk allowing the South African Intelligence Agency to vet just about any individual or institution of civil society.
- Government has tabled legislation that seeks to reform certain aspects of the **Public Service Commission (PSC)**. However, those reforms stop short of giving the PSC a role in appointing high-level officials in the public service. This not only sells short the PSC's potential to act as an independent check on the appointment powers of members of the executive, but it also goes against government's own policy position set out in the National Framework Towards the Professionalisation of the Public Sector. As such, HSF submitted that the proposed legislation be amended to craft a role for the PSC in appointing high level personnel in the public service – in particular, members of the board and executive management of state-owned enterprises, national and provincial Directors General and municipal managers.
- Legislation has been proposed to create stability in local government by, among other things: placing strict limits on the number of motions of no confidence in key officials of municipal government; excluding parties that represent less than 1% of the vote from Municipal Councils and ensuring removal votes happen by way of public show of hands. HSF submitted that these proposed changes to the business of local government needlessly sacrificed **accountable local government** for stable government.



HSF's Head of Research & Advocacy, Christopher Fisher participating in a panel discussion looking at the white paper on migration at the 2024 Human Rights Festival at Constitution Hill in Johannesburg

Capacity of key institutions is preserved and strengthened

The key institution receiving focused capacity building this year was the IEC. In addition to the policy work described above on electoral reform, the following additional support was provided to the **IEC**:

- Work by the Groundwork Collective, through SJI's New Futures Fund, saw 2 975 election observers supported on the day, as well as training of 60 peacebuilders by the Social Change Assistance Trust to navigate threats at specific voting stations.
- Media Monitoring Africa worked closely with the IEC and tech platforms such as Meta and Google, to combat election misinformation and ensure a more informed and transparent electoral process¹³.
- Post the election, CASAC also engaged with both IEC and National Assembly to share concerns regarding the management of party lists.

Other institutions whose capacity was strengthened through the intervention of our grantees include:

- CASAC wrote to the **Judicial Service Commission (JSC)** in October 2023 seeking reasons why it recommended only two candidates to fill the four vacancies that were advertised at the **Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA)**, noting inter alia that the SCA was severely under-resourced. Following the JSC's response Freedom under Law instituted legal proceedings which resulted in the re-running of the interviews and the vacancies being filled.
- HSF worked to support the new Minister of Home Affairs in his decision to revive the **Immigration Advisory Board**, through a nomination to the Board. New Minister of Home Affairs, Dr Leon Schreiber has decided to revive the Immigration Advisory Board to help turn around the embattled Department of Home Affairs. The Board is composed of individuals with knowledge and expertise in the field of immigration and will advise the Minister of Home Affairs on regulations, policy formulation, and other related matters. To ensure that the Board is appropriately staffed, HSF nominated Advocate Jacob van Garderen who brings a wealth of expertise in immigration and asylum law, with an exceptional track record spanning South Africa and the broader African continent. As the Director of the Public Interest Practice, he has worked on diverse projects, including developing training programmes on refugee and migration law for judges in the African region and conducting studies on statelessness risks in Botswana. As such, HSF believes he will be a valuable addition to the Board.
- HSF intervened to strengthen the **National Prosecuting Agency (NPA)**. Legislation has been proposed that would make the Investigative Directorate for Corruption (Directorate) a permanent structure within the NPA. The Directorate was formed by presidential proclamation to prioritise high level corruption related crimes following the revelations of the State Capture Commission. HSF welcomed efforts to make the Directorate permanent but cautioned that if it is to be a truly effective independent corruption-fighting unit, the NPA's top leadership, under whose management the Directorate would ultimately fall, could not continue to be appointed solely by the President and the Minister of Justice.
- The **Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID)** is intended to impartially investigate police wrongdoing in South Africa. Historically, HSF has litigated to defend IPID's independence from undue political interference, in particular the Minister of Police. Last year, legislation proposed that IPID's Executive Director be appointed solely by Cabinet, without consulting Parliament, after receiving a recommendation from a panel constituted by the Minister of Police. HSF made two submissions – one to the Civilian Secretariat for the Police Service and the other to Parliament – cautioning that this would not serve IPID's independence from undue political influence. When the Bill was revised, HSF's suggested amendments, which were shared by like-minded civil society organisations, were largely incorporated.
- MISTRA has been actively working on scenario planning with the Gauteng City Region Observatory as well as in the development of the Indlulamithi Scenarios 2035. They were also instrumental in supporting the **GNU** in drafting the Medium-Term Development Plan 2024-2029.
- Futurelect's public leadership development programme prepares candidates to run for political office and embody values of ethical leadership, good governance and transparency. A total of 21 public service fellows graduated from their Southern Africa Public Leadership Programme in October 2023. A total of 15 female political leaders graduated in 2024 from the inaugural Women in Public Office, South Africa (WIPO) programme and of the 15 graduates, 13 ran for political office and one was elected to the

¹³ See more about Media Monitoring Africa's work to combat misinformation in the next focus area.

National Assembly as a Member of Parliament, and another was appointed as a Member of the Mayoral Committee in the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality. Futurelect's 5-year Alumni Programme provides additional and ongoing support to graduates as they prepare to run for elected office and enter the public service. Over the past year many of their alumni have gone on to capacitate the state at national and provincial government as well as key institutions.



The Futurelect Women in Public Office: South Africa fellows with Oliver Dickson and Jacqueline Maphala during Seminar 3: The Elements of Public Life.

Litigation is successful in prosecuting corruption and poor performance

Key litigation cases over the period involved matters on the Zimbabwean Exemption Permit (ZEP) and land distribution legislation.

HSF continued its legal challenge of the government's decision to terminate the **ZEP** which has, for more than a decade, allowed around 178 000 Zimbabweans and their families to live and work legally in South Africa. In 2023, the High Court ruled that terminating the ZEP was unlawful for not following a fair and rational process. Since this success, the Minister of Home Affairs then applied to the Supreme Court of Appeal for leave to appeal the High Court's judgment and was dismissed. A further appeal to the Constitutional Court was dismissed on 18 June 2024.

During the year, HSF also applied to be admitted as a friend of the court in the matter of **land distribution** led by the Legal Resources Centre (LRC). The matter concerns three black farmers who were denied a 30-year lease on land that they have farmed productively since 2009. At the time of reporting HSF were waiting to hear regarding a date for hearing.

HSF also launched an application to seek a court order to address the matter of several instances of **criminal activity under apartheid** going unprosecuted.

CASAC participated as first amicus curiae in the **IEC v Jacob Zuma** case in the Constitutional Court. Corruption Watch NPC was admitted as the second amicus curiae. These interventions resulted in Zuma being declared ineligible to stand as a candidate in the election due to his conviction and sentencing for contempt of court.

Free and independent media

OMT supports the following grantees whose work focuses on ensuring that South Africa protects a free and independent media: AmaBhungane (amaB), Media Monitoring Africa (MMA) and IJ Hub.

Censorship and press freedom are monitored

A key issue during the period has been the advocacy and submissions relating to the **SABC Bill** which poses a direct threat to media freedom and the independence of the public broadcaster. MMA and other civil society bodies (SANEF and SOS) continue to advocate for the withdrawal of the Bill, including presenting and engaging with the Portfolio Committee on Communications and Digital Technologies.

Over the reporting period, MMA also successfully challenged and forced the withdrawal of unconstitutional regulations by the **Film and Publications Board** that were issued just ahead of the elections.

MMA hosted their annual **Media Freedom Festival** at the end of October 2023. The festival hosted a series of master classes and panel discussions to highlight, unpack, and debate some of the critical issues facing media and media freedom in our current context.

Mis-/disinformation and propaganda are countered by fact-checking bodies

MMA entered into an MoU with the IEC to help fight mis- and disinformation in the run up to the elections. Two training workshops were held with political parties on mis- and disinformation and transparency and accountability in political party advertising online. MMA also ran 15 elections and disinformation training workshops with journalists, of which eight were with the IEC and the South African National Editors Forum. A total of nine training workshops on ethical reporting and elections were conducted with SABC journalists.



Media Monitoring Africa team at the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa

Real411, a system operated by MMA in partnership with the SAHRC, was again the official platform for reporting mis- and disinformation in the run up to the 2024 elections. The system allowed for election related complaints to be automatically flagged with the IEC team for review.

- Number of Real411 complaints as of 1 June 2023: 2 872
- Number of Real411 complaints in the systems as of 31 May 2024: 3 422
- Total number of complaints received during the reporting period increased by 550.

For comparative purposes, the Press Council received five complaints during the election period, and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) received three complaints.

MMA also established a disinformation working group, in collaboration with other civil society organisations, including Africa Check and DFRLab, to help coordinate efforts. As a result of these efforts there is greater awareness of the threat posed by disinformation, and there is also greater coordination among key stakeholders. Africa Check received funding through SJI's Future Fund and their fact-checks featured on the following websites: Africa Check, Daily Maverick (2.6 million unique browsers), AFP, and News24 (18.9 million unique browsers).

The digital C.R.I.T.I.C.A.L Campaign was launched by MMA in May 2024. The aim of the campaign is to develop critical thinking skills for verifying the validity of online content. MMA have worked with local experts in developing the content and made sure it is accessible and fun. Those who want to join the movement sign up and spot content they think is mis- or disinformation. The following is an example of content on Spotting a deepfake.

Identifying manipulated videos requires that you be CRITICAL:

- Look for inconsistencies in facial expressions, such as unnatural movements or lack of synchronisation between lips and speech;
- Pay attention to anomalies in lighting and shadows, as well as any inconsistencies in audio quality; and
- Verify the source of the video and cross-reference it with other trusted sources to confirm its authenticity.

The focus for MMA will be to work with media partners and others in civil society to ensure that this is not just a one-off campaign and to ensure that as techniques and technologies change, the content on CRITICAL will be adapted to meet emerging needs.

Judicial system used to ensure free and independent media, transparency and public access to information

This outcome is one that typically spans more than one annual reporting period due to the lengthy legal processes involved.

One of the most impactful outcomes came about as a result of a gag order and demand for a return of documents from AmaBhungane's investigative work on the **Moti Group**. On 1 June 2023 two companies within the Moti Group obtained a partly-interim order from the Johannesburg High Court, requiring AmaBhungane to 'return' the 'stolen' documents they based their reporting on, and to cease publishing further stories until the court heard the final matter, set down for October 2023. This order had been obtained, ex parte – meaning AmaBhungane had not been informed of the application and had not been permitted to provide their side of the argument – and in camera – meaning that the application had been heard in secret. The application had also been heard on an urgent basis. AmaBhungane immediately sought to set aside the order and filed an urgent application which was heard on Saturday, 3 June 2023. In this hearing, the judge questioned how the initial order had been granted ex parte and on an urgent basis and set aside the obligation on AmaBhungane to return any documents. AmaBhungane had denied that they had physical possession of the documents in question, and maintained that, even if they did, any return would threaten the confidentiality of their source. AmaBhungane then had to file another application for a re-consideration of the initial order in its entirety. This was heard on 27 June and Judge Sutherland delivered his judgment on 3 July 2023. The court held that the initial order should never have been granted as its application was 'an egregious abuse of process'. The judgment also set out a strong statement in favour of media freedom and source confidentiality, confirming that journalists should not be held criminally liable for

possession of documents that may have been unlawfully obtained by a source and that it is only in extreme circumstances that a court would order a pre-publication ban on publication. This landmark judgment will serve the journalistic community in South Africa for some time to come. The Moti Group sought to appeal this ruling directly to the Constitutional Court, but this was rejected by that court on 26 September 2023. Their application was dismissed with costs.

Another key case fought by amaBhungane was challenging **SARS secrecy provisions** based on Zuma's tax records. AmaB won at the Constitutional Court in May 2023, declaring that the Tax Administration Act's ouster of the public interest override (in PAIA) was unconstitutional. The Constitutional Court delivered judgment on 31 May 2023. The court found that the absolute secrecy regime within the tax system was unconstitutional and that a public interest exception had to be accommodated in questions of disclosure. This means that any applications for access to information about an individual taxpayer can no longer be refused based purely on the need to keep tax records confidential; SARS will now have to determine whether the public interest in the disclosure of the records outweighs the individual's right to privacy and confidentiality. However, the court did not make a ruling on whether the application made to access Zuma's tax records was in the public interest or not, referring it back to SARS for that determination. AmaB's partner in the litigation, Warren Thompson, submitted a fresh application for access to SARS on 30 June 2023. This application was refused and AmaB filed an appeal with the Information Regulator. In addition, Warren submitted a broader application based on information we have obtained since the litigation began on 6 October 2023. SARS requested an extension in making their decision, but it is anticipated this will be refused again, and then both appeals to the Information Regulator will be filed at the same time.

A number of legal matters were taken up by MMA during the 2024 period. These matters included:

- Challenging the DBE to ensure internet is provided in schools - delayed by appointment of new Minister of Education;
- Issues of homophobia and WhatsApp being used to spread hate speech - delayed due to the Commission on Gender Equality seeking to also join the case;
- Operation Dudula case - holding members of anti-migrant group Operation Dudula accountable for incitement and hate speech;
- Mail & Guardian v Moti Group SLAPP suit - Moti had sought to prevent the M&G from reporting on his group and company affairs. MMA with, Sanef and CFE joined as amici;
- Film and Publication Board (FPB) - just prior to the May elections the FPB CEO issued a regulation that sought to criminalise social media platforms and others on issues of mis- and disinformation and harmful content. MMA launched an urgent application in the High Court to suspend and declare the regulation unconstitutional. On the same day the FBP withdrew the regulation;
- Gag order¹⁴ sought by the King of Eswatini against a journalist;
- Press Council vs IOL - for an article that attacked journalist Karyn Maughan, comparing her to a Nazi and offering no evidence to support its allegations. MMA was admitted as an amicus.

Grantees reporting on this outcome highlight that legal work takes time and see their role as doing the "stitch-by-stitch" work to ensure that legislative developments are monitored for any negative impacts on transparency and accountability.

Whistleblowers are protected, journalists are not intimidated

The online platform Media Attack Reporter System (MARS) was built by MMA last year, with the addition of a new element, PANDA Attacks. The new element seeks to bring positive support to journalists attacked online and publicly highlights the level and extent of threats and online attacks against journalists. Over 1 000 reported attacks against journalists were received during the election period through the MARS platform, signalling continued online abuse and spiralling of online attacks against journalists, especially women journalists.

¹⁴ Commonly known as 'gag orders', a prior restraint interdict involves the review and restriction of speech or publications before their release. Several jurisdictions, including South Africa, are moving away from this form of censorship and have developed a rule for considering prior restraint applications. <https://www.cliffedekkerhofmeyr.com/news/publications/2023/Practice/Dispute/dispute-resolution-alert-22-good-riddance-to-gag-orders-south-african-courts-move-away-from-prior-restraint-orders->

Further to this, a complaint was submitted by MMA to the Press Council following an attack on female journalist Karen Maughan (see previous page). The complaint sought to hold media who are signatories to the Press Council accountable for their actions.

IJ Hub member centres continue to ensure the protection of investigative journalists and their sources, highlighting their courage and the critical role they play in holding power to account.



Delegates at the Media Freedom Festival 2023. The festival is an annual event held in South Africa to commemorate Black Wednesday, when the apartheid government suppressed media and political organisations.

All citizens have access to fact-based information

Premature to report on this outcome.

Holding government to account for delivery of effective education

So far, OMT only supports the work of SECTION27 in this focus area. This means that we are not yet able to report on all outcomes in this focus area.

Public litigation is used to hold government and other education stakeholders accountable

SECTION27 has continued to monitor and apply pressure on the Limpopo Department of Education (LDoE) in the matter of **pit toilets in public schools** in the province. SECTION27 has received six progress reports from the Department since the revised plan was first issued in December 2021 and has worked hard to analyse this data through telephonic and on-site verification exercises with Limpopo schools to determine actual progress. Encouragingly, SECTION27 reports that of the 564 schools identified as Priority 1 schools, almost 96% had been replaced by December 2024. This progress signals significant strides in this work as a direct result of SECTION27's litigation and continuous monitoring.

In 2022, SECTION27 represented the Centre for Child Law (CCL) and the parents of two young learners in the High Court to challenge the lenient sanctions imposed by the South African Council of Educators (SACE) on two educators who pleaded guilty to **assaulting the learners in the classroom**. In this case, SECTION27 requested that SACE's decisions relating to the sanctioning of the two educators be set aside and remitted for reconsideration and that SACE's "Mandatory Sanctions Policy" be revised. SECTION27 has been involved in ongoing litigation in this case and instituted proceedings in the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA), to challenge the High Court's dismissal of the review of SACE's decisions. In February 2024, the SCA heard the case, and on 8 April 2024, affirmed that SACE has a duty to protect the best interest of the child. The specific judgment makes an important statement about the societal impact of violence in schools and requires that SACE do better to protect learners. SECTION27 and CCL, as well as Equal Education Law Centre and Children's Institute, have since met with SACE to discuss its implementation of the court order and a joint submission to SACE on their draft Mandatory Sanctions Policy, is planned for SACE's consideration.

Effective spend of Education budget

SECTION27's basic education budget advocacy centred on the **cost containment measures** that the government effected on 15 September 2023. These measures included hiring freezes and postponement of certain infrastructure projects in a bid to achieve fiscal sustainability. SECTION27 participated in meeting with the Department of Basic Education to express concerns over the provision of quality basic education in a context of resource constraints.

SECTION27 continued in its work in challenging the state's decision to **suspend infrastructure projects at public schools in Limpopo** during the COVID-19 pandemic, and its failure to resume these projects even though the state's public school infrastructure budget has been restored. In this case, the matter of School Governing Body of Ndzalama Primary School versus the Government of the Republic of South Africa remains unresolved because of the state's repeated failures to provide SECTION27 with required documentation. Work on this matter is ongoing. SECTION27 has also carried out extensive analysis of school budgets in Limpopo to better understand how fee-free schools navigate budget cuts.

Based on proposed budget cuts in 2024, SECTION27 published an op-ed in October 2024 calling for the recognition of the National School Nutrition Programme and basic education as essential services that should be spared from severe budget cuts.

Education policies are reformed

In June 2024 the DBE published amended regulations relating to **Uniform Minimum Norms and Standards on Public School Infrastructure**. SECTION27, along with other civil society organisations, continued its work monitoring the implementation of these regulations, and, together with the Legal Resources Centre, Equal Education and Equal Education Law Centre, released a media statement stating general concerns on the most recent amendments. The statement resulted in a News24 article commitment to review the amended regulations written by the new Minister of Basic Education.

Several key submissions by SECTION27 were accepted in the draft **Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA)**. SECTION27 also developed a myth-busting pamphlet to correct some of the false narratives with regards to these amendments. SECTION27 raised concerns over the Bill's treatment of migrant learners and the sale of alcohol on school grounds. Written submissions were made in this case to the provincial legislatures, as well as oral submissions at the National Council of Provinces. SECTION27 led a collaborative intervention with partner organisations voicing disappointment with the amendment pertaining to Head of Department oversight of School Governing Bodies (SGBs). SECTION27 engaged extensively on this matter, including a meeting with the new Minister of Education.

SECTION27, together with the Teddy Bear Clinic, responded to a call for submissions by the Department of Social Development on the **Regulation of the Children's Act** in light of the shift of the ECD Programme from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. Submissions focussed on the registration of ECD centres and the requirement to vet ECD personnel against the National Child Protection Register.

A win was achieved for SECTION27 and Blind SA on behalf of learners with visual impairments when a submission was made to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which resulted in the Committee asking South Africa for information on the steps the state is taking to ratify and implement the **Marrakesh Treaty**, an international copyright treaty that allows people with print disabilities to access books and other materials in accessible formats.

Just energy transition

In this reporting period, only SECTION27 has reported on the one outcome outlined below.

A multi stakeholder consultative approach is working to ensure a just transition for all

SECTION27 continues to increase its work and influence in matters related to the just energy transition. In November 2023, SECTION27 was invited by the Presidential Climate Commission to join the visit to Khutala Coal Mine in Mpumalanga organised by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE). The intended outcome of the coal mine visit from the DMRE was to expose youth activists, who are staunch advocates of renewable energy and the phasing out of fossil fuels, to a coal mine and the “value” it brings to the surrounding community and the national economy. The Minister of the DMRE was there for the majority of the programme which included presentations by representatives of the mine, an underground tour of the coal mine and presentations from, and engagements with, the Minister on the just transition. The engagements were rigorous with youth activists raising their dissatisfaction with the DMRE’s resistance to transitioning away from coal and raising the severe detrimental effects of coal mining at a macro level (climate change) as well as at a community level (water and air pollution). The visit afforded SECTION27 the opportunity to build its network in the climate justice space.

In 2024, SECTION27 conducted research and launched a report that draws the links between climate change and the health and basic education services. The report sets out the legal obligations of the state and proposes measures that should be implemented to safeguard these, and other, socio-economic rights. The report was launched through a webinar that featured representative speakers from SECTION27, Equal Education Law Centre, Wits Reproductive Health and HIV Institute, as well as the Presidential Climate Commission. In addition, a two-day convening was held with civil society and expert bodies to present the findings of the report, solicit feedback and build consensus on recommendations for the way forward.

Learnings

Our support over the past year has highlighted the complex and interrelated nature of social justice work. This was demonstrated in the cross-cutting results reported by grantees, as well as the general emphasis on the relationship between free and independent media and all other focus areas and the critical role that marketing, media and communications, play in the fight for social justice.

Our work also confirmed the maturity of the social justice sector in South Africa, and how it is made up of relatively few, but well-established and highly active organisations. Having said this, the trust has witnessed, through applications and sector engagement and research, an increase in newcomers to the sector, in particular community-based and driven initiatives led by energetic and well-networked young individuals. This is particularly evident in climate change work.

Significant learnings were gleaned from our support to voter education. These included highlighting the importance of this work, as well as to stress that voter education interventions need to be done on a more consistent and continuous basis, preferably through the schooling system. In particular, our support to voter education demonstrated the critical role that the arts can play in addressing societal issues at large, and supporting behaviour change.

Other learnings included that civic education work needs to include, as far as possible, follow up monitoring and reporting, including more explicit definition of reporting indicators to better advocate for best practise in work that aims to change behaviours.

Interestingly, MISTRA highlighted the organisation's growing recognition of the unexpected challenges to their research and production of original knowledge in an era of increasing Artificial Intelligence use.

Looking Ahead

For the upcoming year the strategy for the fund will continue to require balancing the fund's support across the four focus areas relative to the needs and challenges on the ground. Priority will be given to extending more support to initiatives active in fighting to hold government to account for delivery of effective education.

The trust made a number of strategic grants late last year to organisations that address advocacy and basic rights through specific community engagement approaches, including facilitation with local government. Examples include our support to PlanAct's Asidlale Network, which works to empower local communities to advocate for more nurturing local development and educational systems for young children, and the African Climate Foundation in its work to support government's efforts to engage and communicate with local communities about the JET (Just Energy Transition). These grants will be closely monitored and learnings documented to support ongoing development of best practise in work that advances these particular human rights.