

Emerging learnings: Support for Work Seeker programmes

In support of its learning objective the Jobs Fund commissioned Greater Capital to conduct a review of a sample of projects supported in our support in our Support for Workseekers funding window. Each of our projects has a unique perspective on what matters most to improve job matching in the South African economy. This has resulted in a range of models and interventions supported by the Jobs Fund.

Challenges

Support for Work Seeker programmes targets individuals that are unemployed and seeking work, linking them with the appropriate capacity building and training interventions and facilitating internships that result in placement into a job through effective partnerships with employers.

Support models

The research was conducted with 16 organisations and it identified four programme models for supporting work seekers. These include:

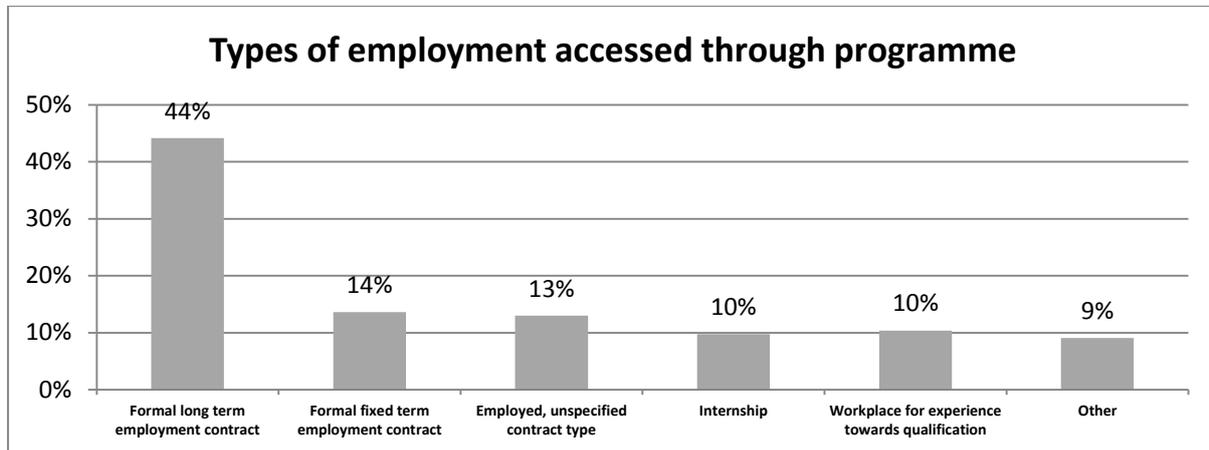
1. Addressing the skills gap
2. Matching, bridging and placement
3. Enabling work experience
4. Facilitating relationships

Figure 1: Support models

Addressing the skills gap	Matching, bridging and placement	Enabling work experience	Facilitating relationships
<p>•Problem: Misalignment between supply and demand for skills</p> <p>•Solution: Occupational training to address skills gap</p>	<p>•Problem: Poor intermediation between supply and demand</p> <p>•Solution: Develop intermediary mechanism</p>	<p>•Problem: Absence of work experience limits prospects because lack of applied competence for labour market</p> <p>•Solution: Provide work experience opportunities</p>	<p>•Problem: Lack of information about work opportunities & applicants</p> <p>•Solution: Facilitating flow of information</p>

These programmes were reviewed and assessed on their achievement of outcomes, performance against targets, adaptability, progression through the programme, perceptions of different role players and a cost benefit analysis.

Figure 2: Types of employment accessed through the programmes by the participants:



Critical success factors

The analysis identified the following factors critical to the success of these programmes:

1. It is crucial to establish reliable demand in collaboration with employers
2. It is essential to profile new entrant positions to determine the selection criteria and process as well as the curricula for the learning component of the project
3. Activities within the results chain are integral including: bridging, training, and work-readiness programmes that are based on documented behaviour change models
4. The project plays a central role in providing direct support to individuals once placed
5. Sustainability of the projects is dependent on cost effectiveness, receiving funds for running the programme in order to continue to provide quality services to young people
6. Reporting, monitoring and evaluation is central to success.

Towards sustainability

The report also made recommendations to ensure that support for work seeker projects become more sustainable. This study has made the point that it is unlikely that programmes that focus on enabling young people that are otherwise excluded from the labour market will become entirely self-sustaining

The following factors were identified as avenues to explore to encourage financial sustainability. This includes:

1. Identifying which section of the project could be self-sustaining
2. Reducing costs
3. Leveraging funding
4. Seeking government support where necessary.

The study found that the stakeholders are willing to pay for services rendered which would contribute to financial sustainability and possibly scalability of the programmes.

- Young people are often willing to pay for education and training which can improve their ability to navigate the labour market
- Workplaces appear willing to pay recruitment costs where it can be shown that there is an improved matching of the new entrants to the needs of the employer and that as a consequence there is reduction in the attrition rate. Employers typically will also contribute to the costs of technical training programmes required for the workplace.
- Government has expressed a willingness to ensure that there are interventions to address the shortcomings in education, and to enable young people to improve their ability to make the transition into the labour market. Government is also often willing to partner with a project in support of a project that falls within their mandate.

The importance of learning

The report noted that while not all of the programmes have been successful (or have not been successful yet), many have begun to demonstrate the different ways of enabling young people to successfully enter employment, or substantially improve their chances of doing so.

While it is essential to find ways of publicly profiling the successful initiatives, it is equally important to capture and present the results of experiments that have been less successful. In doing so to ensure these findings add to the national knowledge base required for changing the face of youth unemployment.

The report outlined the importance of the Jobs Fund having an evaluation strategy that is well communicated to partners. For effective monitoring and evaluation it is essential that the indicators are agreed at inception of the project. This will assure that learnings are well-recorded and can be used to shape and reassess projects.

Conclusion

The report concludes that the Support for Work Seekers programme is seeing positive outcomes and can be enhanced by improving the sustainability of these organisations.