



PRESIDENTIAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INTERVENTION

Overview

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ONE BEHIND



THE PRESIDENCY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

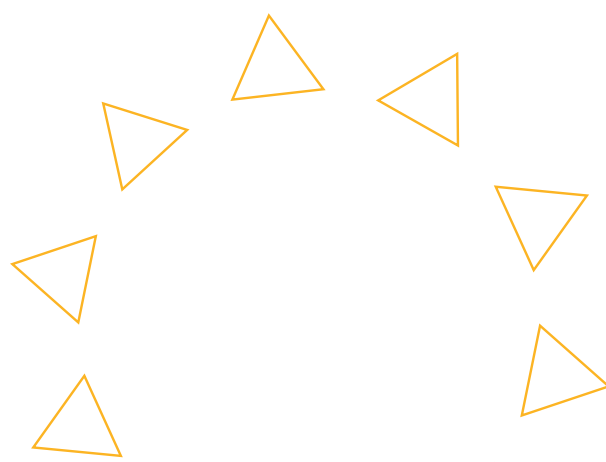


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List of acronyms and abbreviations

CWP Community Works Programme

DEL Department of Employment and Labour

DHET Department of Higher Education and Training

the dtic Department of Trade, Industry and Competition

DWA Digital Work Accelerator

DWYPD Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities

EPWP Expanded Public Works Programme

ERRP Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan

ETI Employment Tax Incentive

IDC Industrial Development Corporation

LEECC Local Ecosystem Enablement Coordination Committee

LEEF Local Ecosystem Enablement Fund

MTSF Medium Term Strategic Framework

NARYSEC National Rural Youth Service Corps

NDP National Development Plan

NGO non-governmental organisation

NIDS National Income Dynamics Study

NPMN National Pathway Management Network

NSF National Skills Fund

NYDA National Youth Development Agency

NYS National Youth Service

P4P pay-for-performance

PES Presidential Employment Stimulus

PMO Project Management Office

PYEF Presidential Youth Employment Fund

PYEI Presidential Youth Employment Intervention

SEDA Small Enterprise Development Agency

SEFA Small Enterprise Financing Agency

SETA Sector Education and Training Authority

SMME small, micro and medium enterprise

TVET Technical and Vocational Education and Training



1. Introduction



The fact that the unemployment rate among young South Africans is more than 50% is a national crisis that demands urgent, innovative and coordinated solutions. Because more young people are entering the labour force every year, the economy needs to create far more jobs for youth than it currently does. This must be done merely to keep the youth unemployment rate steady. It is therefore essential that we proceed without delay to implement a comprehensive plan – driven and coordinated from the Presidency – to create no fewer than 2 million new jobs for young people within the next decade.

– President Cyril Ramaphosa, State of the Nation Address, 2019



Of the **1,2 million young people entering the labour market every year**, more than **65% remain outside of employment, education and training.**

To address the youth unemployment crisis, President Ramaphosa initiated the Presidential Youth Employment Intervention (PYEI) in 2020. Already then, South Africa struggled with a recession and poor economic performance. A myriad of shocks followed, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing electricity crisis and flood damage in KwaZulu-Natal. The real gross domestic product decreased by 0,7% in the second quarter of 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022a) and inequality remains high, with a Gini coefficient of 0,68 (target: 0,63).¹ This has further aggravated unemployment, which reached a rate of 33,9% (or 8 million people) in the second quarter of 2022. Of the 1,2 million young people entering the labour market every year, more than 65% remain outside of employment, education and training. Those young

people who do manage to access opportunities tend to zigzag on broken pathways, falling in and out of education and short-term work so that they are unable to realise their potential and gain a foothold in the economy. As a result, many young people fail to successfully transition from learning to earning.

The need for a comprehensive and sustained effort to address this crisis has thus become even more urgent. The PYEI is a direct response to this crisis. It seeks to realise rapid gains by linking more young people to new and existing opportunities and put them on pathways towards sustainable incomes. Ultimately, the goal is to create 2 million jobs for young people in the course of the decade.

¹ The Gini coefficient is a measure of inequality and describes the distribution of income across a population. A higher index value is a sign of greater inequality

What makes this intervention different from past government programmes?

- ▶ The PYEI recognises that the persistent and structural nature of youth unemployment requires bold and urgent action. This issue cannot be addressed through isolated initiatives. Rather, the situation requires extensive, coordinated and sustained effort to respond to both the changing needs of the economy and young people in South Africa. The effort must cut across sectors and actors. It has to include a wide variety of stakeholders and decision-makers from the government, the private sector, academia, development partners and civil society. This is why strengthening partnerships and providing leadership, urgency and focus to ongoing efforts is a key strategy of the PYEI.
- ▶ The PYEI prioritises delivery in the short term by bringing together the strengths of numerous government institutions and social partners to open more pathways to earning for young people, drive innovation and accelerate the delivery of existing successful programmes.
- ▶ The PYEI is integrated with concurrent government efforts to address key structural issues, e.g., to improve delivery in the education sector and to enable economic growth that can translate into decent jobs. It does not replace broader national youth development strategies of the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities (DWYPD) or the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA). Instead, it contributes to the youth employment creation priorities of these agencies.

The PYEI is guided by **five core principles** aimed at improving outcomes and achieving greater scale.

- 1 The intervention **builds on existing policies, plans and agreements** and focuses on addressing gaps in the policy implementation landscape.
- 2 It is **driven by the Presidency** to ensure effective accountability for implementation.
- 3 It **brings together a wide range of partners, and breaks down silos** between government departments, among the levels of government, and between government and the private sector.
- 4 It is **designed around young people** and is responsive to their needs and concerns.
- 5 It **addresses constraints to job creation on both the supply and demand side** by maximising the allocation of resources.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the intervention, including its rationale and how it contributes to existing interventions.

2. Youth unemployment in South Africa

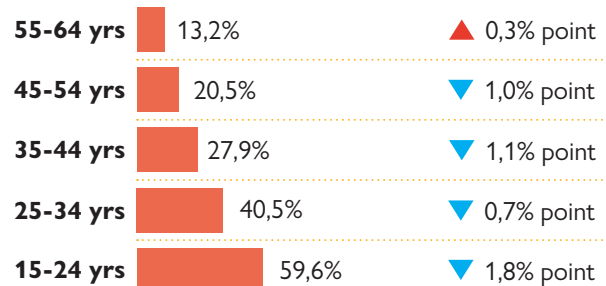


Understanding the challenge

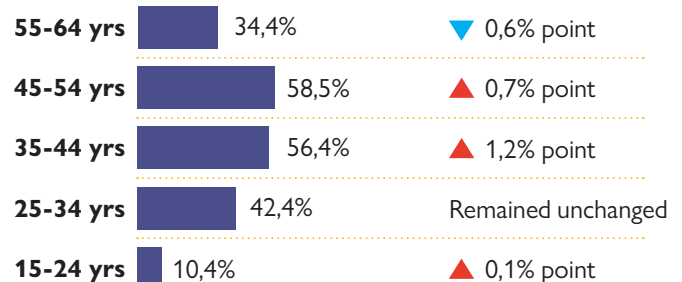
In 2019, President Ramaphosa highlighted “the brutal reality that when it comes to youth unemployment, we have to run just to remain in the same place”.² This is starkly illustrated by current unemployment data. According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey, 59,6% of young people aged 15–24 years and 40,5% of young people aged 24 to 35 were unemployed in the third quarter of 2022 (Statistics South Africa, 2022b). Moreover, of the 10,2 million young people aged 15 to 24 years, 34,5% (approximately 3,5 million) were not in employment, education or training in 2022. Further, close to one in three young people in South Africa between the ages of 15 and 24 years were disengaged from the labour market (see Figure 1).

² From the State of the Nation address that year

Unemployment Rate 15-64 yrs 32,9%



Absorption Rate 15-64 yrs 39,1%



Participation Rate 15-64 yrs 58,3%

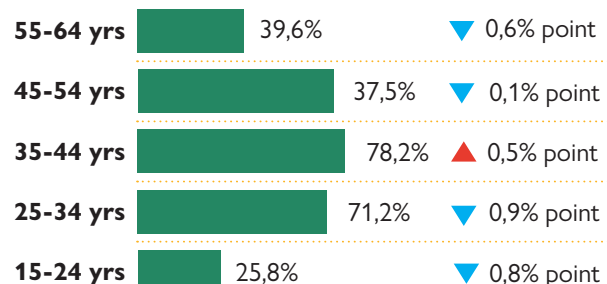
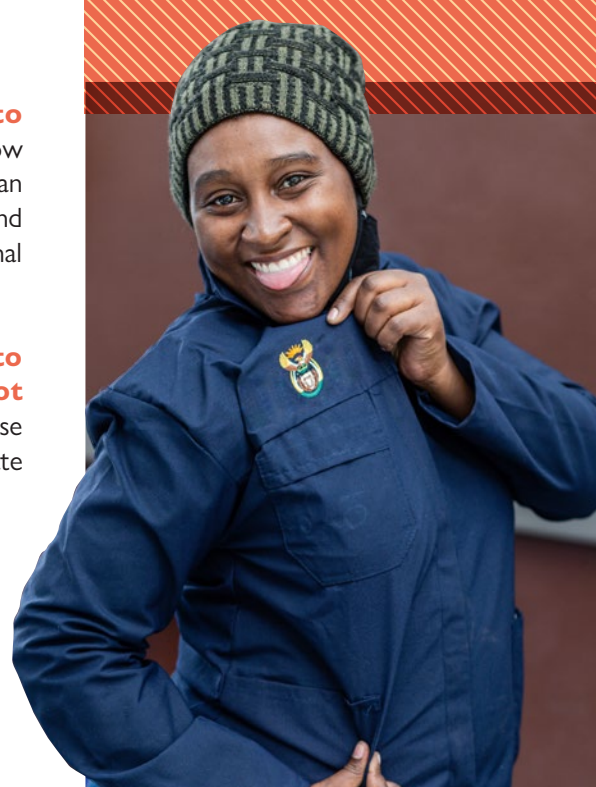


Figure 1: Unemployment, absorption and participation rates by age cohorts, Quarter 3, 2022, Statistics South Africa (2022)

Young people face both supply – and demand-side barriers to employment. On the demand side, job opportunities are limited by slow economic growth and the concentrated, skill-intensive structure of the South African economy. In addition, the systems for demand-led training as well as for placing and supporting talent in the jobs that do exist are weak. These challenges are foundational and interconnected.

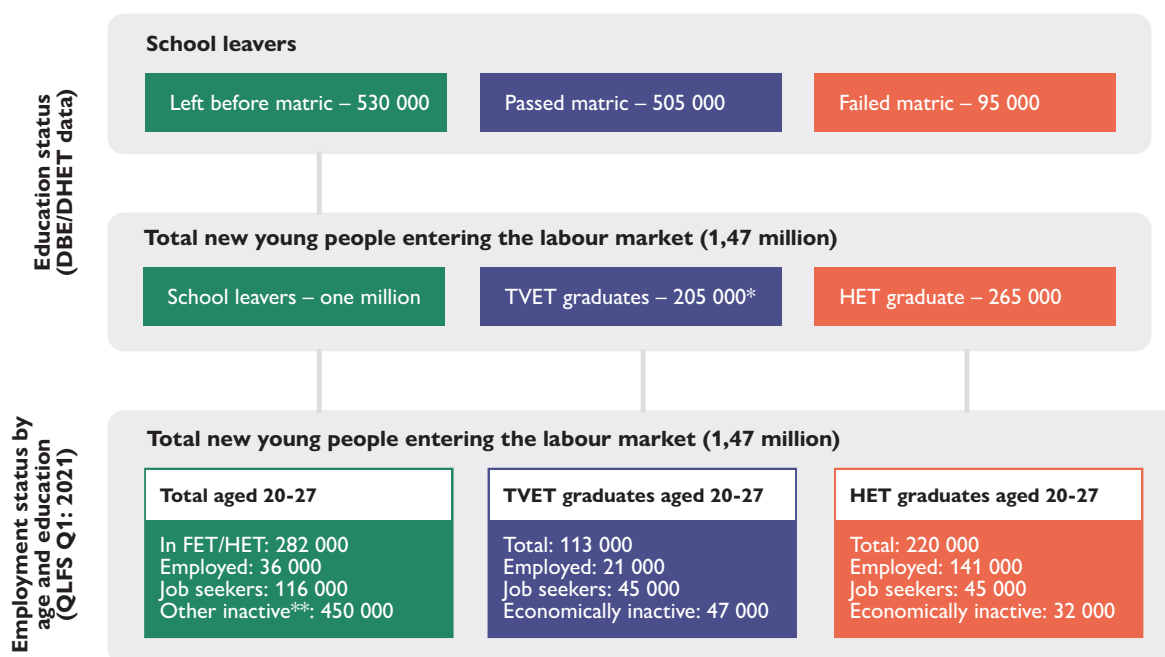
Many young people also lack social networks that connect them to the labour market, have limited access to information, or cannot afford the costs (e.g., transport) needed to access opportunities. These challenges have a particularly severe effect on women and the poor and perpetuate historic patterns of discrimination.

Exclusionary and blunt instruments to judge the potential of young people create further barriers to access. This includes rigid qualification requirements and expectations of prior work experience in the absence of opportunities for young people to gain this initial experience.



Despite these barriers, many young people continue to actively seek employment (see Figure 2). This group likely needs interventions that help them move into and between employment opportunities. Figure 2 also shows the relationship between the levels of education that young people have and the opportunities that they can access. Many (529 000) young people are not actively searching for opportunities and this number is highest among those with the lowest levels of educational attainment. The uneven quality of the education

system has left many young people with deficient foundational skills (including numeracy and literacy) and with gaps in their readiness for work. In this situation, young people are often not offered support to catch up and develop basic abilities to participate in the labour market. This points to the urgent need to continue bolstering education and training. Also, in this group young people will require low-threshold entry points to re-engage with the education system or gain access to work experience.



*DHET counts N3, N6 and NC(V); QLFS data only for post secondary **Not in education or employment

Figure 2: Employment status of new entrants (young people) in the labour market

But even young people who find opportunities often struggle to gain a permanent foothold in the economy. This includes young people who have completed public employment programmes, education and training interventions, or already have worked. Today, such broken pathways are a typical feature of how young people move through the formal economy. The National Income Dynamics Survey (NIDS) (NIDS, no date) has tracked young people over a period of 11 years and has shown how young people that transition from the education system into employment regularly fall back into unemployment³ (Kerr, 2018) or the education system. This suggests that the youth employment problem is not only about finding a first job, but also about stability of employment that allows for a gradual progression towards sustainable incomes (Mlatsheni & Ranchod, 2017).

When young people turn to self-employment, they find limited avenues for support and face a challenging market environment that is rarely skewed in their favour. While the government has numerous programmes to support enterprise development, too few are geared towards supporting young people's early-stage entrepreneurship efforts. In addition, the South African competitive economic environment places additional pressures on young entrepreneurs. For example, many local markets for basic consumer goods are already saturated and it is hard for small-scale start-ups to compete with established, mass-produced brands. In addition, the distance of many townships or rural areas from economic centres can add costs to production activities located there (Philips, 2018). This not only limits the opportunities for young people to establish businesses in such marginalised settings. It also restricts general economic activity in these communities through which jobs for young people could be created.

This analysis underscores a point often made in youth policy documents: young people are not a homogenous group. Different categories of young people face very different barriers to productive employment and thus require different types of support. It also indicates that supply-side solutions alone (for example, training programmes) will be inadequate in addressing the South African youth unemployment challenge. Efforts more effectively need to link such supply-side interventions to actual gaps and demand in the labour market. Equally, there is a need to connect young people to those support services that are most relevant to their needs. Interventions such as training, employment services and enterprise development need to be closely integrated with broader efforts to improve education at primary and secondary levels and create an economic environment that favours inclusive growth and job creation.

Despite all these challenges, a national study (Singizi Consulting, 2018) exploring the attitudes and aspirations of young people in South Africa found that they are optimistic and resilient. They have a strong sense of their own agency, and a willingness to access networks, seek support and make pragmatic choices. It is this agency and determination that will be key to solving youth unemployment and interventions will need to help unlock young people's potential to enable the growth and development South Africa needs.



³ Kerr (2018) identifies multiple reasons for high churn rates. Churn is often associated with jobs with low wages and observes that it might be that certain low-paying jobs are temporary by their nature or alternatively that these jobs do not pay enough for people to remain employed in them for long periods (for example, if after covering transport costs, net income is too low to justify a person travelling long distances for them)

2.2 National policies and strategies underpinning the PYEI

Social partners in South Africa have agreed that addressing the unemployment crisis facing young people is one of the country's top priorities. This has found expression in many of the strategies and policies that guide the development of the country and its young people. The National Development Plan (NDP) (NDP - Republic of South Africa, 2012) provides an aspirational vision of South Africa in 2030 and a framework within which all youth-oriented programmes should be located.



The NDP states that South Africa must find ways to urgently reduce youth unemployment and “provide young people with broader opportunities” (ibid, p. 26). The NDP continues to say that it will only be possible “to realise the youth dividend, if working-age individuals can be employed in productive activities” (ibid, p. 98) and emphasises the need for government to apply a “youth lens” to policies in areas such as health, labour market entry and labour mobility. Alongside the NDP, the Youth Employment Accord (2013) (Republic of South Africa, 2013), the National Youth Policy (2020–2030) (Republic of South Africa, 2021) and the Integrated Youth Development Strategy (2022–2025) (National Youth Development Agency, 2022) formulate a set of priority interventions to meet the youth unemployment challenge. These include:

- ▶ **Improvements in the school system** and creating second chances for first qualifications for school leavers;
- ▶ **Expanding the intake of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges** while strengthening the quality and relevance of the TVET system to meet industry needs, e.g., by developing short-term programmes through the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs);
- ▶ **Expansion of public employment to provide work for the unemployed**, with a specific focus on young people and women;
- ▶ **Strengthening the NYS** and introducing new community-based programmes to offer young people life-skills training, entrepreneurship training and opportunities to participate in community development programmes;
- ▶ **Creation of tax incentives** for employers that reduce the initial cost of hiring young labour market entrants;
- ▶ **Connecting young people to employment opportunities**, through support for job placement schemes, work readiness promotion programmes and private sector work-exposure programmes; and
- ▶ **Promoting cooperatives and entrepreneurship among young people** through public agencies such as the Small Enterprise Financing Agency (SEFA), the Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA) and the Jobs Fund. This can be in the form of technical business support, seamless business registration, and access to markets and funding among others.

In 2018, the Presidential Jobs Summit gave practical expression to many of these imperatives. Its framework agreement outlined the commitment of social partners to strengthen and introduce multiple interventions for young people. This included more opportunities in the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) as well as initiatives enabling young people to build their profiles and navigate pathways for successful transitions into the labour market. The Summit's working committees also outlined interventions in areas where social partners are collectively working towards growth. Examples can be found in the Global Business Services sector, where initiatives are underway to support growth. These include the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (the dtic) incentive scheme, the Monyetla Work Readiness Programme and industry-led skilling initiatives. They also include initiatives to increase access to work experience and promote inclusive hiring, such as the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator. Similar proposals have been outlined to grow the tourism sector and create opportunities for youth employment there.

The policy framework for the PYEI includes many other key documents – including on youth service, industrial policy, post-schooling education and training, as well as public employment services. The agreements and policies discussed above, however, constitute a core set that guides the intervention.

2.3 Building on success and learning from past challenges

Over the years, a multitude of initiatives to address youth unemployment in the short term have generated invaluable experience and learning. Key insights from past delivery of common interventions are discussed below.

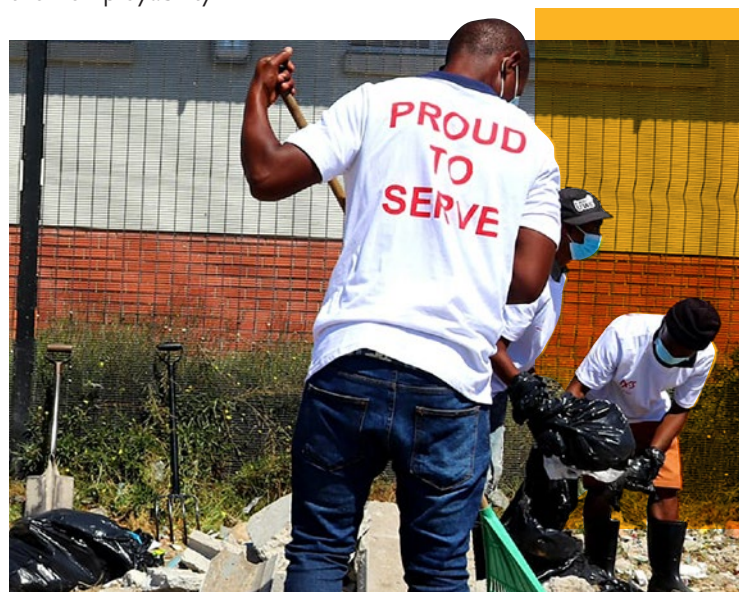
Public employment programmes

Public employment programmes such as the Community Works Programme (CWP) and the EPWP successfully reach young people, providing them with income relief through temporary work. However, there is only limited evidence that young people have been able to progress from these initiatives into other forms of economic activity. There are selected success stories where young people who have worked within community-based organisations, through the non-state sector EPWP initiative, have moved to become social entrepreneurs. EPWP programmes in the social sector also have allowed participants to acquire skills towards a qualification. There are other cases, such as the “Working for Water” programmes, where participants have been able to establish small businesses. These examples suggest that public employment programmes can deliver more than temporary relief if coupled with mechanisms that support participants to unlock further opportunities.

Youth service programmes such as those run by the National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), Department of Public Works, and the National Rural Youth Service Corps (NARYSEC) are an integral part of the National Youth Policy. Despite this, no large-scale delivery of the NYS has taken place to date.

The largest iteration of the programme has been the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development's NARYSEC established in 2010, which has sought to engage young people from the country's 3 300

poorest wards. Many of the young people in this programme have participated in TVET learning programmes, but there has been considerable unevenness concerning their ability to access service activities (Jacobs et al., 2018). Other youth service programmes, generally implemented by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have tended to be more holistic but have been small in scale. A key challenge for the NYS has been that while delivery budgets for the service components are allocated to lead departments, funding of the learning components has relied on complicated relationships with different institutions that form part of the National Skills Development System. As a result, these essential youth development components have often been limited to “leadership” or “life-skills workshops” that cannot ensure that young people are sufficiently prepared to undertake their service work and, in the process, increase their employability.



Enterprise development

There have been many attempts to deliver enterprise development support services (including mentoring, finance and incubators) to young people as well as initiatives to strengthen linkages to value chains. While there are a number of successful programmes, these are outnumbered by the plethora of examples which have not had the desired impact. What has emerged as a key success factor is initial support to budding enterprises in accessing markets for their goods and services (Philips, 2018). There has also been a focus on supplier development programmes, supported by the government, private and development sectors, with investments channelled towards incubators.

Significant investments have been made by several government agencies in establishing cooperatives. However, the results have been mixed. Given the variety of existing approaches, more coordination of initiatives within the entrepreneurial ecosystem is needed. Reach needs to expand to rural and township businesses. This would support district development model objectives, with the hope of enabling enterprises to contribute to their local economies and create jobs. Increased dissemination of learning and best practices to actors in the field may help increase the portion of programmes that achieve their objectives.

Interventions to enable access to workplace experience

Lack of prior on-the-job experience presents a common barrier for young people looking to enter the labour market. Multiple initiatives exist to fill this gap, supported through grants and incentives such as the Employment Tax Incentive (ETI). One successful example is the Youth Employment Service (YES), a work readiness programme that provides young people with a paid one-year workplace experience to allow them to understand what employers look for in their staff and adopt attitudes and behaviours that meet these expectations. Other initiatives focus on workplace-based learning for TVET graduates to help them apply and refine the skills they have acquired on the job. This is of particular importance as TVET

graduates often struggle to transition from learning to earning (see Figure 2). In most cases, workplace experience is also a requirement for the qualification and the lack of access to it may keep TVET students from completing their training. Numerous studies (Department of Higher Education & Training, 2018) exist on how these programmes could be strengthened. Key factors include the support that employers provide for the young person in the workplace, improving the “fit” between the young person and the workplace, and the nature of the workplace opportunity.

Interventions matching young people to opportunities

Significant interventions exist which intersect with those above and assist in creating viable pathways for young people into the economy. The most successful of these programmes is the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator which supports young people in finding and securing relevant, learning and earning opportunities. With the initial support of the Jobs Fund, the initiative was developed as a partnership between the national government and the private sector. With additional support from development partners, it is now reaching various provinces.

The growth of the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator has been coupled with rigorous monitoring and evaluation, including three independent randomised control trials (Wheeler et al., 2019). This has illustrated the value of the model and allowed Harambee to learn and evolve. The possibilities of such pathway management networks have also been demonstrated by the Tshepo 1 Million public-private

partnership in Gauteng, as well as through initiatives in the Eastern Cape where the Buffalo City Municipality is working with community-based organisations and development partners.

The value of the networks’ matching processes was recently reaffirmed in the Siyakha Youth Assets Study, which found that “matching is the most important variable for explaining employment” (University of Johannesburg, 2019). This reinforces previous evaluation results which highlight that for initiatives such as the ETI to be effective, there is a need to address labour market matching through “the provision of complementary services such as job search assistance or training” (Betcherman et al., 2004). One study found that employment services both reduced the number of months participants were unemployed and increased average current monthly earnings compared to the earnings of non-participants (Betcherman & Khan, 2015).

Social support services

Cutting across many of these initiatives are efforts to strengthen young people's resilience and agency that helps them build positive social relations and personal skills. Social services programmes also assist young people in facing social challenges that would prevent them from building a career. Services include drug and crime rehabilitation programmes, trauma support, HIV/AIDS counselling, and programmes addressing gender-based violence. These programmes are often supported by community-based youth organisations and the wider network supported by the Department of Social Development. Many young people affected by social issues require such support to return to active participation in their communities and to be able to successfully access further opportunities. At a societal level, these interventions strengthen social cohesion and address underlying challenges to economic development.

Overall, investments in programmes and interventions that seek to address youth unemployment have been – and continue to be – substantial. Looking ahead, the public sector has committed about R16,9 billion per annum towards public employment, entrepreneurship promotion and TVET programmes.

In addition, the private sector plans to invest R400 million per annum towards youth labour market programmes similar to the YES programme. These are conservative estimates that do not include massive public expenditure on post-school education and training. Despite the wide range of existing programmes and the extent of the financial resources involved, the required impact could not be realised.



2.4 Key insights for the design of the PYEI

South Africa has a comprehensive landscape of well-formulated policies and plans to address youth unemployment. These are underpinned by substantial public and private investments in a wide range of interventions relevant to the diverse needs of young people. While these efforts have not yielded the scale of results required, they have produced important learnings on what works and what needs to work better. The need for improved coordination and focus on best practice approaches stands out. Where such approaches have not yet been identified, more courage is required to explore new ways of doing things.

An important starting point and short-term objective is to enable young people to access those opportunities that do exist. This needs to ensure that they are linked to those services and opportunities that speak to their respective situations and will best enable them to progress towards meaningful economic participation. The transition from interventions that build skills and provide initial work experience to successful and sustained participation in the labour market requires special attention.

Economic growth is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for increasing youth employment. Demand-side measures to stimulate the labour market must be undertaken alongside measures to support young people so that they are ready to take up opportunities as they emerge. As important as formal employment is, it will not fully absorb the large and growing number of unemployed young people. The private sector needs to be stimulated in such a way that it can provide additional employment and self-employment opportunities at an

unprecedented scale – particularly in marginalised economies. This includes opportunities in the informal sector, which has strong potential that needs to be unlocked. In addition, there will need to be more inclusive hiring that addresses historical and structural disadvantages and provides opportunities to all young people.

At the same time, the supply side of the labour market needs to be tailored more closely to actual and emerging demand. This means that young people need to be equipped with skills that are and will be needed in the South African economy. For some young people, this may be achieved with shorter-term interventions that enhance work readiness and respond to specific and acute skills gaps. For others, this will require longer-term investments. Ultimately, improved outcomes in the education sector are fundamental to enhancing young people's employment and earning prospects. The ties between government, training institutions and industry need to be strengthened to respond more effectively and rapidly to skills needs. This will support economic growth and further job creation.

Given the scale and complexity of youth unemployment, it will be necessary to combine efforts and address the problem from all possible angles and to grow the range of opportunities – from full-time jobs to self-employment, enterprise, training and workplace experience and national service – that cater to young people's different starting points, backgrounds, needs and ambitions.

3. Accelerating delivery through the PYEI

The PYEI is designed to shift the current trajectory of youth unemployment within five years and unlock the potential of our young people in the economy. It places young people at the centre to harness their agency, resources and energy.

The PYEI does not and cannot replace the work that government continues to do at the level of supply (enhancing the quality of basic and post-school education institutions) or demand (growing the economy).

Rather, the PYEI builds on priorities outlined in the NDP and the MTSF and aims to realise short-term gains for young people. One key goal is to successfully link young people to existing opportunities for learning and earning, putting them on growth paths leading to sustainable income. At the same time, the PYEI aims to strengthen and expand on existing efforts and commitments by the government, the private sector and development partners to enable job growth and address skills deficiencies. Through increased accountability, coordination and innovation, the PYEI will enable faster and more effective delivery on these commitments.

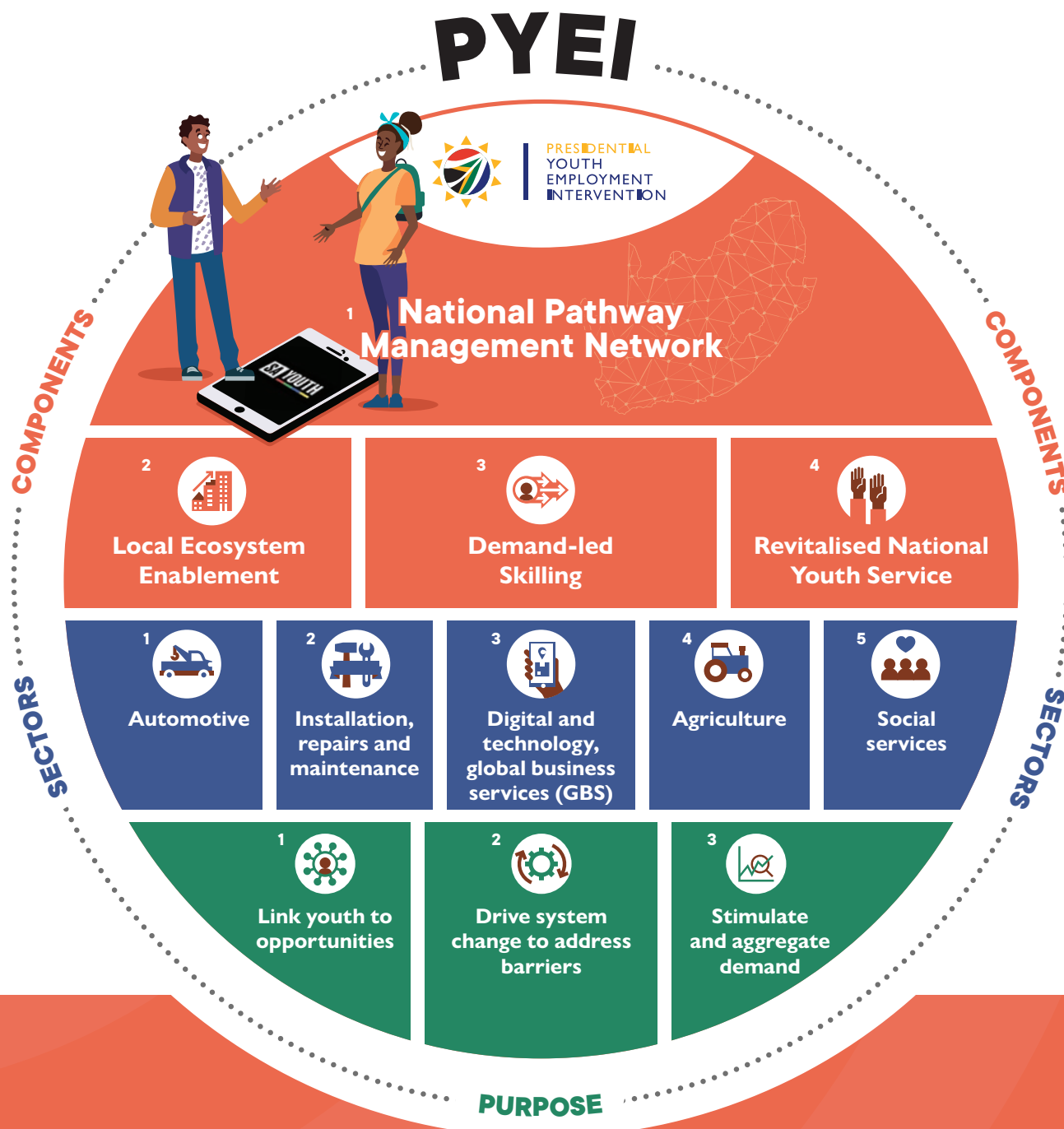
Ultimately, the PYEI wants to increase the prospects of each cohort of young people that enters the labour market and reduce the number of those that are not in education and training or employment.

To this end, the PYEI is focusing efforts over five years in sectors that hold potential for growth that can translate into employment opportunities for young people. These are digital and technology, global business services, agriculture, installation, repair and maintenance, social services and the automotive industry.

The intervention is implementing **four priority components** (Figure 3) to link young people to opportunities for learning, earning and support to navigate the labour market.

- ▶ **The key element is a National Pathway Management Network (NPMN)** that aggregates demand and supply for opportunities in one place and keeps young people moving towards achieving sustainable incomes.
- ▶ **Second, the PYEI supports efforts to equip young people** with skills that meet actual demand in the economy.
- ▶ **Third, improving local entrepreneurial ecosystems in marginalised economies** such as townships aims to facilitate the creation of opportunities in the formal and informal sectors.
- ▶ **Fourth, a revitalised National Youth Service (NYS)** provides entry points for young people via community service to develop basic skills and identify next steps on their way towards a sustainable income. These components focus on sectors with potential for growth that can translate into employment opportunities for young people.





The implementation of the PYEI will harness and scale up existing efforts to ensure that the majority of young people leaving education and training institutions can gain a foothold in the economy. Crucially, the intervention recognises that change is required at a systemic level and at scale. Effective solutions must therefore support and give prominence to what is working in the system, encourage innovation where new approaches are needed and effect changes that will benefit millions of young people over the next decade. This can only be achieved by aligning and upscaling the efforts of the many stakeholders actively working in this space. This is why the PYEI has made coordination and partnership central to its approach (see Figure 2).

Figure 4: Partnership and delivery approach of the PYEI



The Presidency is a custodian and not an implementer of the PYEI. Through a Project Management Office (PMO), the Presidency coordinates, provides strategic direction and supports the key government departments and agencies that lead implementation.

In all components, the PYEI has established coordination mechanisms to improve alignment and deliver greater impact with existing resources. These mechanisms promote greater exchange, dialogue and cooperation within government as well as with partners outside of government (see Figure 4).

The PYEI also integrates with other interventions coordinated by the Presidency to drive structural reforms and enable job creation: The PES creates meaningful employment and strengthens livelihoods. It was initiated as part of the economic

recovery from the effects of COVID-19, but continues to respond to the ongoing crisis of unemployment. The PES also provides funding for several PYEI components and directly delivers employment opportunities for young people. In turn, the NPMN supports the implementation of PES programmes. Alongside the PYEI and the PES, Operation Vulindlela addresses the structural barriers that hinder businesses from creating more jobs for young people.

The purpose of the PYEI across these components is to escalate and accelerate several targeted interventions so that young people can access varied programmes that enable progression and result in meaningful and sustainable economic opportunities. Each of the components is discussed in more detail in the sections below.

Component 1: National Pathway Management Network

At the core of the PYEI is the NPMN, a network of networks that provides information and active support to young people, helping them to navigate pathways into the economy. This is seeking to build on the success of past efforts to match young people to opportunities and provide them with continuous support on their trajectories to sustainable livelihoods.

The NPMN aims to provide at least 3 million young people access to aggregated opportunities for learning and earning as well as demand-focused, geographically relevant support services delivered across public and private access points. On the demand side, the network is mobilising across the economy to catalyse, aggregate and facilitate labour absorption of young work seekers. This will be done by accelerating inclusive hiring and creating work experience and internship opportunities for young people among public and private sector employers. The NPMN also offers access to pathways that lead into structured income-generating enterprise and self-employment opportunities.



A network of networks

There are currently multiple organisations, including the Public Employment Services of the Department of Employment and Labour and the Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator, which provide work-seeker support and match young people to opportunities in the economy. The NPMN also links with the Youth Employment Service (YES). YES provides year-long opportunities for work experience with firms in a wide range of sectors, including SMEs. It was initiated by the private sector with support from the ETI and additional incentives in the broad-based black economic empowerment scorecard.

Through a partnership with these and other entities, the NPMN creates a network of networks with an open architecture that allows young people to access support from different organisations. Here, they can move seamlessly between the various employment services, programmes and opportunities offered by the government as well as by partners in the private sector, non-governmental or development organisations. The NPMN provides ongoing support to young people both to

transition from learning to first earning opportunities and strengthen their foothold in the economy. Young people can engage with the network in ways that meet their needs and aspirations.

Each young person participating in the network can benefit from increased visibility with opportunity holders through a personalised profile. They also receive support to assess and signal their potential for jobs and self-employment/enterprise opportunities in the market – in ways that are not only dependent on traditional qualifications and experience.

Young people actively engaging in the network can assess their competencies and address gaps in their skill sets. Service providers in the network can then assist candidates to pursue opportunities to grow their employability and to “bank” further learning, know-how and work-readiness that prepares them to take up available work opportunities and to keep moving forward on their pathways.

The NPMN assists with reducing the debilitating cost of work-seeking for young people and addressing obstacles to inclusive hiring and absorption. A central strategy for reducing access barriers is to combine and increase the reach of the NPMN across multiple channels (see below, Reaching more young people).

Beyond facilitating greater access to support services and opportunities for young people, the NPMN also contributes to the actual creation of new opportunities for young people. This is achieved by:

- ▶ Identifying and implementing interventions to unlock growth opportunities that will absorb new entrants at scale (e.g., in the care and social economy, as well as agricultural, digital and technology sectors);
- ▶ Developing public and private sector partnerships for joint planning and delivery; and
- ▶ Changing policy, regulations and incentives to improve labour absorption by the private sector.

In delivering an integrated platform, the NPMN gathers a wealth of information on the skills held by the young people that develop their profiles on the network and how they compare with what opportunity holders are looking for. This can help service providers adapt trainings and develop tailored bridging interventions.



Key activities and delivery

To achieve the objectives of the NPMN and grow its reach and relevance, efforts are focused on the following activities:

Coordination and partnership

The DEL and the Presidency are driving the development of the NPMN. A coordinating committee has been established, including the Departments of Trade, Industry and Competition; Public Works and Infrastructure; Higher Education and Training; Science and Innovation; Small Business Development; DWYPD; and the NYDA. A technical sub-committee brings non-government and private sector stakeholders into the NPMN to develop mechanisms for sharing information and building linkages between partner interventions. Another steering committee coordinates the pilot projects that are driving innovation in the NPMN (see below). Harambee has been appointed as an ecosystem manager for the NPMN to strengthen cooperation among all partners in the network.

This broad partnership allows for the joint development of mechanisms that ensure equitable access to opportunities across the NPMN for all young people in the network. The NPMN will further expand cooperation, especially with social and private sector partners that share its objectives and support the principles of free access, youth-centred approaches and inclusive hiring.

Reaching more young people

The NPMN reaches young people through multiple channels that combine the benefits of digital and telecommunication tools with face-to-face support at physical sites in communities across the country.

Easy digital access is available through the zero-rated mobile internet site, SAYouth.mobi. SAYouth.mobi is a digital platform where young people in South Africa can access the NPMN and find job and income opportunities. The platform also actively provides young people with recommendations for accessing learning, resources and support for growing their profiles and accessing opportunities. SAYouth.mobi has been zero-rated by all South African mobile networks, enabling free access from anywhere in the country. Over 3 million young people and more than 1 500 opportunity holders were already registered on the platform by June 2022. This has already allowed for hundreds of thousands of young people to access opportunities.

Additional telephonic support and career guidance are available through a toll-free number and chatbots via Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

The NPMN also integrates additional digital solutions. These include the mPowa app, which provides location-based and profile-specific information about services on employment, education and entrepreneurship. The Khetha platform is a career advice portal that provides young people with guidance on choosing a field of study, occupation and career.

The DEL's Public Employment Services with its 126 labour offices and additional satellite centres provide a critical resource for young people to access these pathway opportunities in physical sites at the community level. The labour offices are augmented by other youth advisory and public centres (including libraries) where young people can access basic support services.

Other physical access points include the student support centres and work placement offices of the NYDA, TVET colleges and higher education institutions.



Piloting service expansion

Elements of the NPMN are not yet available everywhere. Linkages to other PYEI components such as Demand-led Skills Development and Local Ecosystem Enablement also require strengthening. Pilot projects are delivering insights into how these gaps can best be addressed.

One pilot project is testing how the NPMN can better support intermediation between young people and entrepreneurship support programmes (see 3.3). Another is exploring how the NPMN can facilitate work placements for TVET students and graduates.

The NPMN is also testing a new delivery model for promoting the mental health and well-being of marginalised young people who need to reconnect to the education system or labour market. In selected pilot sites, a combined package of support is rolled out. Here, young work-seekers can register on the

network through the single interface while also accessing additional support such as counselling, interview training, CV development and referrals directly on site. This Basic Package of Support aims to strengthen young people's sense of agency and improve their self-esteem with interventions that relate to their lived realities.

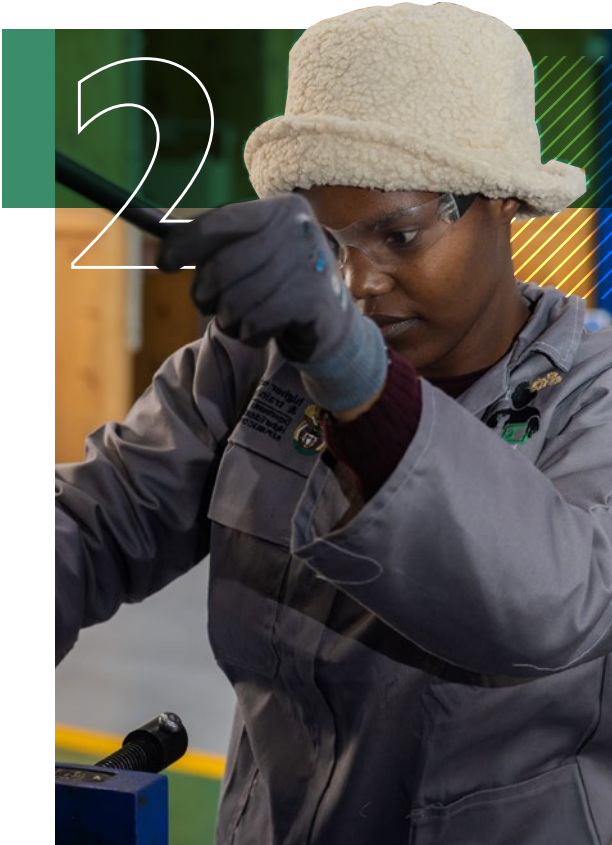
Pilots are further investigating the extent to which ecosystem mapping and linkages are enabled via SAYouth Explorer. This platform has mapped government services and resources available to young people across South Africa.

Results from the pilot projects will inform improvements to the NPMN, including the upscaling of services and the deepening and broadening of support offered through the network.

3.2 Component 2: Demand-led Skills Development

Equipping young people with skills that are in demand now and in the future is a key strategy to both tackling youth unemployment and unlocking economic growth. When adequate skills are supplied to identified growth sectors, this can support their expansion as demand-side measures begin to take effect. As a result, additional jobs can be created.

While the skills development system is oriented to meet skills demand in the long term, the aim of the PYEI is to support interventions that can transition young people into income-earning opportunities in the short-term.



Accelerating impact within the Skills Strategy

The PYEI's work in this component is delivered within the framework of the Skills Strategy for the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan (ERRP). The Skills Strategy focuses on increasing the relevance and delivery of interventions that address current skills gaps and emerging needs. It also seeks to ease transitions from education to work. The DHET leads this component of the PYEI, together with the SETA and National Skills Fund (NSF). To achieve rapid impact and benefit young people, while longer-term changes in the system take effect, the PYEI concentrates on actions that:

1

- **Address current skills gaps and mismatches:**
- The PYEI focuses on support in priority sectors where meeting skills needs can rapidly unlock growth and job opportunities for young people.
- In the process, the PYEI aims to generate learning and create momentum in support of the wider Skills Strategy.

2

- **Support the transition from learning to earning:** Through the NPMN, young people can be matched with the right training opportunities and access opportunities to gain workplace experience.

Current spending on post-school education and training is well over R200 billion per annum, but most institutions have low throughput and completion rates. In addition, the existing skills development system does not cater for new types of jobs that could be taken up by young people, and for which there is no clear pathway for work preparation.

While many SETAs have primarily focused on accredited qualifications, there is an urgent need for “closing the gap” and bridging (work-readiness) interventions that are more responsive to immediate demand. Sector-specific initiatives will be severely constrained if adequate skills are not provided to enable growth.

Achieving a rapid step-change in the employment prospects of young people requires innovative solutions that can deliver training and transition work-seekers into jobs at scale. Workforce development must be:

- ▶ Demand-led in real time so that the actual skills needs of firms can be understood and candidates can be matched immediately to real opportunities;
- ▶ Agile and quick to implement, so that training of workers adapts to market needs regularly, and can shift quickly depending on the available opportunities; and
- ▶ Low-cost, so that young people can be trained in large numbers to enter the workplace each year.



Key activities and delivery

The DHET Skills Strategy builds on aspects of the post-secondary education system that already work and addresses blockages and supports change where needed. Within this framework, the PYEI focuses on coordination and innovation and facilitates increased access to opportunities for young people.



Work stream coordination in growth sectors

There is an urgent need to strengthen dialogue and joint planning between skilling organisations on the one hand, and industry and business on the other. The PYEI has established demand-led skilling work streams in its identified growth sectors to ensure that skilling interventions respond to demand. The work streams also encourage inclusive hiring that promotes greater access to opportunities for young people and marginalised communities.

Within the digital and global business services sector, the approach has advanced via the establishment of the Digital Work Accelerator (DWA). The DWA is a public-private partnership to address skills shortages and create opportunities for young people at scale in a sector that promises dynamic growth.

Improving matching and transitions through the NPMN

The NPMN is also firmly embedded in the ERRP Skills Strategy. The network provides young people with greater access to information about skills that are in demand and interventions that can help them acquire those skills. It facilitates the linkages between young people and training providers. The network can also match suitably qualified young people to workplace opportunities that facilitate further learning and present entry points for employment (such as internships and learnerships). NPMN data can also help identify skills gaps and mismatches since it captures information on skills young people have and aspire towards. It also identifies those skills that are sought by employers on the network.

Testing innovative demand-led skills delivery models

Through the NSF, the PYEI is piloting a pay-for-performance (P4P) model for results-oriented deployment of brief skills-building interventions. This initiative focuses on the development of flexible, demand-led skills training mechanisms that can be rapidly implemented to get more young people work-ready. This training not only focuses on technical skills required in growth sectors but also prepares candidates to succeed in employment generally. These skills will allow young people to keep pace with the rapidly evolving requirements in many growth sectors.

The pilot will test the role of the NSF as an outcome funder, which means that it only makes payments for results that are achieved. In this case, the NSF will only pay for those young

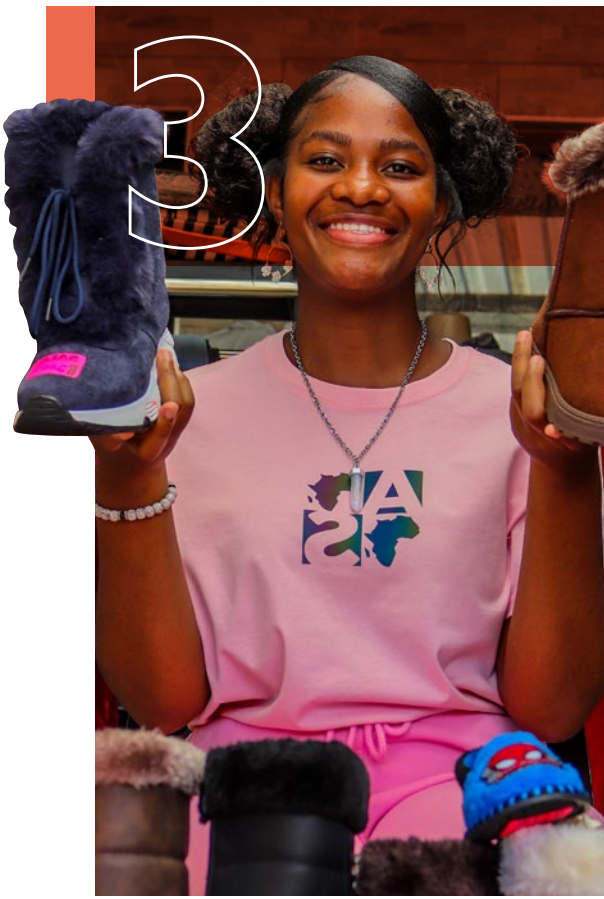
people who are successfully placed in work opportunities after they complete their training. In a scaled-up version of the model, the outcomes funders will be expanded to include SETAs, other government departments as well as non-government stakeholders.

An initial pilot in the digital and global business services sectors is being implemented during the 2022/23 financial year. Once the pilot has been successfully implemented, the model can be expanded to other sectors and be used to attract more funders.

3.3 Component 3: Local Ecosystem Enablement

Unemployment affects young people everywhere in South Africa. However, unemployment rates are exceptionally high in marginalised settings, including townships, informal settlements, rural and inner-city areas. At the same time, the potential for developing small, micro and medium enterprises (SMMEs) in these areas has been stifled by a legacy of spatial segregation and economic policies that favours centralised mass-production focused on urban centres.

Concentrating on township and rural economies, the PYEI aims to help unlock the employment potential of greater business activity in vulnerable communities. This includes efforts to improve access to and better alignment of existing support activities. The PYEI also provides targeted support for young people that want to create work for themselves and others.



More support for young enterprises and entrepreneurs

The typical starting point for local economic development is for entry-level entrepreneurs to produce the basic goods most commonly needed locally, growing in scale and market outreach from there. As discussed earlier, South African markets for basic consumer goods are typically already occupied by established, mass-produced brands, limiting opportunities for small-scale manufacturing. Retail activities distributing such mass-produced goods then become the default entry point into markets instead.

Deconstructing these patterns of inequality holds great potential to stimulate economic growth and create additional earning opportunities for young people. The PYEI pursues the following approaches to tap into this potential:

- ▶ **Aligning existing efforts and supporting innovations that create an enabling ecosystem.** The PYEI employs a combination of private-sector development approaches and tools to stimulate economic growth and job creation in local economies. These include coordinating existing local economic development interventions within government and catalysing financial support for the creation of enabling ecosystems.
- ▶ **Leveraging and strengthening the integrated approach of the PYEI via the NPMN.** This involves, for instance, improving the reach and relevance of efforts that facilitate linkages to skills training, livelihood support, workplace experience and employment opportunities for young people.
- ▶ **Complementing existing direct enterprise and financing support by focusing on systemic enablers.** This includes giving targeted financial support to actors who are implementing innovative approaches through a Local Ecosystem Enablement Fund (LEEF).

Key activities and delivery

Led by the dtic, the PYEI focuses on the following key activities to support greater economic activity and unlock income opportunities in rural and township economies:

Improving coordination among key actors

The PYEI has established a Local Ecosystem Enablement Coordination Committee (LEECC). This committee brings together representatives from concerned national departments (including Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities; Employment and Labour; and Cooperative Governance) and provincial governments. It also includes key agencies such as the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), SEDA, SEFA, Jobs Fund and NYDA.

The LEECC interfaces with relevant actors from the private sector and NGOs. The committee provides a platform for regular exchange, reflection and the development of joint approaches and strategies and guides specific PYEI interventions aimed at stimulating local economies.



The Local Ecosystem Enablement Fund

The PYEI is establishing a LEEF to support innovative solutions that create an environment that supports local economic development, and in particular SMME growth and entrepreneurship. This will consider the kinds of interventions that are required within the ecosystem that make it easier for businesses to start up and grow. The ecosystem comprises all institutions, processes and services that influence how entrepreneurs do business.

While several existing initiatives are providing direct financial or non-financial support to businesses, few efforts focus on ways to enable ecosystems in marginalised communities. The LEEF plans to close this gap.

The Fund will be managed by the IDC and will provide opportunities to test or upscale approaches that enhance the environment. This may include the development of intermediaries (e.g. business support organisations) that will improve the ability of SMMEs to access finance. It may include other short- and medium-term solutions that increase access to services such as telecommunications or transport. It will also strengthen access to markets, for instance by supporting platforms linking service providers with potential clients.

These efforts will further benefit from the work under Operation Vulindlela, which accelerates national reforms in the key areas required for economic development, such as communication, transportation, electricity and the regulatory environment. While reforms under Operation Vulindlela aim to achieve improvements to the entire entrepreneurial ecosystem, the LEEF will focus on interventions that have more immediate effects on employment creation in local communities.

Linking young people to enterprise support through the NPMN

The NPMN will also be leveraged to support work in this component by linking young people that seek to start their own businesses to relevant resources, training and support services. In one of the NPMN pilots in Empangeni, KwaZulu-Natal, the PYEI is testing how the NPMN can play a greater role in supporting young people in accessing enterprise opportunities. Here, the NYDA will act as the intermediary and leverage the NPMN to provide local opportunity holders with relevant decision-making tools and platforms available on the network. Young people will be linked to enterprise support and digital learning programmes on how to start a business or social enterprise, or access other livelihood opportunities.



3.4 Component 4: Revitalised National Youth Service

Young people who are engaged in their communities become more confident, build networks and are more likely to create income for themselves. The PYEI is revitalising the NYS as an additional option for young people that may not yet be ready for other learning or employment opportunities to gather practical experience across different areas of service.

The aim is to use the NYS as an entry point that allows young people to identify subsequent steps towards building skills and moving towards a sustainable income. Learning from past iterations of the NYS and public works programmes, the revitalised NYS will therefore have a greater emphasis on preparing participants to identify and seize post-service opportunities.



Making a start with the NYS

The NYS mobilises young people to become active citizens of a democratic society while earning an income and increasing their employability. Workplace experience is an essential step towards employment for many young work seekers, providing them with exposure to a work environment, on-the-job training, and an opportunity to prove themselves.

The NYS enhances existing public employment programmes. For example, it will complement the CWP by focusing on the needs of both communities and young people. While the NYS still supports service delivery and improves the lives of all people in marginalised communities, it prioritises activities

that benefit young people. All service opportunities will also need to incorporate principles of youth development and support participants to make plans for after their service term. This includes regular dialogue with NYS participants on the barriers they face in progressing towards skilled work. Taking up just 16 hours per week, the NYS leaves participants with enough time to explore opportunities for further learning, employment or entrepreneurship. Furthermore, all participants will receive stipends that are in line with minimum wage requirements, providing young people – potentially for the first time in their lives – with the experience of earning their own money.




Key activities and delivery

The NYS is led by the DWYPD through the NYDA. Non-profit organisations that are firmly anchored in communities implement the NYS activities. In its first year, the revitalised NYS will provide 50 000 opportunities for young people to serve and gain valuable experience. This will be progressively scaled up over the following years, making this the largest drive to offer young people service opportunities in South Africa's democratic history.

Funding and implementation

A key instrument for the delivery of the programme is the Presidential Youth Employment Fund (PYEF), which is administered by the Government Technical Advisory Centre and the Jobs Fund at the National Treasury. Through the PYEF, funding from the Presidential Employment Stimulus is channelled to organisations that provide service opportunities for young people. At this stage, the focus is on non-profit organisations with well-established structures, the capacity to offer service opportunities at scale and strong existing linkages to the communities they serve.

To provide opportunities that deliver benefits both for participating youth and for young people in the communities they are serving, the PYEI has identified the following priority areas for service:

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
|  | Surveys and digital mapping with a focus on data that is relevant to improving service delivery for young people. |  | Early childhood development with activities such as playgroups, storytelling and reading. |
|  | Sports, recreation, arts and entertainment , especially in support of activities that are available to young people in communities served. |  | Support for campaigns that increase ante-natal health of mothers and prevent physical stunting. |
|  | Learner support programmes that provide services such as teaching or after-school and homework support to school children. |  | Food security and child nutrition , for instance through food gardening or preparation and delivery of food to vulnerable community members. |
|  | Social support and care services , including those with special relevance for young people, such as activities addressing substance abuse or gender-based violence. |  | Community works and greening programmes with a focus on revitalising, maintaining or creating community green spaces and public facilities. |

Opportunities are open to all young people that are interested in delivering quality services, are aged between 18 and 35, and are willing to serve for 16 hours per week over six months.

Integration with the NPMN

All NYS opportunities will be advertised through the NPMN. The NPMN also provides young people with a gateway to a multitude of other opportunities, career guidance and counselling that can assist them in identifying a way forward beyond their NYS experience.



3.5 Targeted outcomes and impact of the PYEI

The PYEI seeks to contribute to a South Africa where young people are actively participating in the economy with greater dignity and a sense of agency over their contribution to society. Through its four components, the PYEI seeks to contribute to the following long-term outcomes:



A transformed ecosystem that supports growth and a more inclusive economy.



Barriers to entry are addressed and young people are economically productive and engaged.



Young people are active citizens contributing to society and their households.



Society and community value and support young people and there is a shared hope for the future.

By maintaining a focus on growing demand, over the first five years of the programme the PYEI will achieve the following key mid-term outcomes:

- ▶ At least 5 million young people between the ages of 15 and 35 will be engaged in the NPMN and access services to help them grow their employability and pursue opportunities;
- ▶ Young people will be supported to access 1,5 million temporary earning opportunities including 1 million work-based placements, 250 000 work-integrated learning opportunities and 250 000 paid-service opportunities; and
- ▶ 500 000 young people will be engaged in sustainable earning opportunities through workforce development programmes.

The intention is to positively change the experience of young people within the labour market such that:

- ▶ Within one year of entering the labour market, young people and especially those from low-income households can access pathways, networks and information to support their transition into the economy;
- ▶ Young people who have exited education and/or training are visible and can signal their potential and capabilities in ways that are inclusive and relevant in the economy and their communities;
- ▶ The costs and disillusion from endless work seeking and waiting for opportunities are reduced, and young people's pathways into productive, income-generating work are accelerated – whether in formal employment, work experiences and internships, community service or self-employment and enterprise;
- ▶ Available opportunities in the economy are more equitably distributed in ways that challenge historical disadvantages and grow the number of households with economically engaged young people; and
- ▶ New pools of talent and potential are unlocked to enable growth in the economy and to take up the opportunities of the digital economy and growth sectors locally and globally.



4. Conclusion

The PYEI is taking forward existing policies, programmes and priorities and driving new interventions to make concrete progress to increase youth employment.

It does not replace the work of government departments, or existing private sector mechanisms, which are critical for building sustainable human resource development solutions and for growing the economy. Rather, the intervention represents a focused set of interventions that can rapidly create greater access to opportunities for young people. At the same time, the PYEI aims to act as a catalyst to reinvigorate the broader response of government and social partners.



The PYEI is designed to reverse the tide of youth unemployment and to transition young people along multiple pathways into the economy. It is an effort to accelerate delivery by coordinating and streamlining the government's response to youth unemployment, and unlocking obstacles to job growth through pragmatic and catalytic actions. It also aims to break down silos and grow effective partnerships with the private sector; academia, civil society; and other social partners. The PYEI is pursuing this by:

- ▶ Better focusing, directing and enhancing the government's existing programmes;
- ▶ Improved coordination across government and social partners;
- ▶ Forging new partnerships between the public and private sectors to accelerate delivery; and
- ▶ Sustaining and growing public and private sector investments, while working towards creating more impact with existing resources.

The overall objective of the intervention is to ensure that **every young person in South Africa has a pathway to sustainable earning in the labour market.**

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Local Ecosystem Enablement to strengthen livelihoods, enterprise and self-employment

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Building skills, networks and communities with the National Youth Service

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Working together to realise the potential of young people

