



IPASA

INDEPENDENT PHILANTHROPY
ASSOCIATION SOUTH AFRICA

EMPOWERING THOSE COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING OTHERS

2023 Collaboration Case Studies

IPASA COLLABORATION CASE STUDIES
NOVEMBER 2023





Foreword and Acknowledgements

This is an initiative by the Independent Philanthropy Association of South Africa (IPASA), in partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation who funded the project.

We would like to acknowledge the participation of the funders and other stakeholders that participated in the research on, and development of the SmartStart, Hamba Nathi and the Jakes Gerwel Technical School and Bonnievale 418 case studies.

Disclaimer

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BILL & MELINDA
GATES *foundation*

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Introduction

THE RATIONALE FOR SUPPORTING COLLABORATION

Collaboration is an integral part of IPASA's work, which is aimed at building a stronger philanthropy sector in South Africa. IPASA supports and promotes independent philanthropy by building connections with key partners and stakeholders, and actively promotes collaboration through the creation of a platform and opportunities for collaboration. IPASA also provides thought leadership on trends in the philanthropy sector, funding focus areas and funding practices. We aim to promote a more impactful and sustainable philanthropy sector that can help address the most pressing social and environmental challenges in the country.

The platform that IPASA creates for funders consists of our member-only platform on the IPASA website, where we share information that is exclusive to our members, including our member profiles which shows what each member is investing in. This allows members to contact each other about potential opportunities for collaboration. In addition to this, our convenings create a platform for our members and other sector stakeholders to connect with each other, for learning about each other's successes and challenges, and for networking with IPASA members, other funders, and sector stakeholders. IPASA's members value IPASA's convenings and knowledge sharing as a unique asset that creates an enabling environment for engagement and collaboration in the philanthropy sector.

Over the past few years, the need for deeper and more effective collaboration has been foregrounded, and funders are becoming increasingly aware that the philanthropy sector cannot optimise its role in society without intensified collaboration. IPASA's interest in partnerships and collaboration has grown over the past three years, and in addition to strengthening our own collaborations with various stakeholders in the local and international philanthropy and development sectors, we have also systematically integrated collaboration as both a theme and an objective into our work.

We are interested to learn more about what collaboration looks like in the philanthropy sector; what the challenges and the enablers are; and how

we can better support our members, other funders, and stakeholders in the sector to collaborate more and better, towards the achievement of shared goals.

IPASA is facilitating learning about collaboration by:

- Creating a platform for funders to share their experiences with and learnings about collaboration with other funders and stakeholders;
- Curating and disseminating knowledge about collaboration to IPASA members and the broader philanthropy sector; and
- Cultivating opportunities for funders and other stakeholders to collaborate on specific topics and issues in their funding focus areas.

Our collaboration initiatives take place in the broader context of the discourse on examining and reinventing the power relations between funders, implementers, communities, and beneficiaries.

IPASA's members share the Association's view on the importance of collaboration. In our annual engagement interviews with members, we have learned that many collaborate in one way or the other with other funders, civil society, government, and other stakeholders. Our members are also interested in more deeply exploring the concept: how it is defined, how it works, how deeper collaboration can be encouraged, and how it can be measured.

IPASA'S COLLABORATION INITIATIVES

IPASA has been exploring collaboration opportunities together with National Association of Social Change Entities in Education (NASCEE) since 2020. As membership associations, IPASA and NASCEE represents different constituencies – funders and implementers in the non-profit sector respectively – but we strive to achieve similar development goals. While IPASA's members fund initiatives in a range of sectors, the majority fund in the education space, and it is in this area of work that IPASA and NASCEE find synergy.

The two associations brought their members together to discuss topics relevant to relationship building, trust, power relations and partnerships in philanthropy, through a series of initiatives.

- **2021:**
 - A thought leadership initiative of IPASA and NASCEE produced an article, [Deep Collaboration for Deep Change](#).
 - A joint [webinar](#) took place where IPASA and NASCEE members deliberated on Deep Collaboration for Deep Change
- **2022:**
 - IPASA implemented a project on trust and collaboration that formed part of the Worldwide Initiative on Grantmaker Support (WINGS) initiative to strengthen trust-based partnerships and promote transparency in philanthropy:
 - Three in-person workshops were held in collaboration with NASCEE in Joburg, Durban and Cape Town.
 - A [Case Study](#) was written up on the learnings derived from the IPASA/NASCEE workshops.
 - A [Growth Pack for Trust-based Partnerships](#) was developed to guide funders in their partnership initiatives.

In 2023, IPASA implemented a collaboration project, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, which consisted of:

- **A series of six workshops:**
 - Three online, open-sector workshops (in [June](#), [July](#) and [September](#)); and three in-person workshops for members of IPASA and NASCEE between May and August, in [Cape Town](#), [Durban](#) and [Joburg](#).
 - The workshops comprised a deep-dive exploration of:
 - What's happening in South African philanthropy when it comes to collaboration?
 - What are we learning: What's working? What can we do better? What do we still need to figure out?
 - What's next: How can we take collaborative philanthropy to the next level?
 - The workshops featured examples of different configurations of collaboration: Collaboration between funders; between funders and implementors; with government; and multi-sector national and international collaboration.

- **Developing collaboration case studies:** Examples of collaboration in the sector were compiled, and three were selected for further research and write-up as case studies.
- **Disseminating learnings and insights on collaboration:** IPASA featured a number of articles on collaboration in our Quarterly Newsletter, Philanthropy Views, and in the 2023 Annual Philanthropy Review.

The three case studies featured in this publication are:

- **SmartStart:** SmartStart's journey has required high levels of engagement, commitment, and reflexivity from its funders every step of the way. It provides a compelling example of what is possible when funders have a common vision and put in the time to build a trusting, collaborative partnership. This initiative's social franchise model and the many lessons learned could be leveraged for social development beyond ECD.
- **The Hamba Nathi initiative:** Although relatively new, the Hamba Nathi initiative has already generated rich learnings, and inspired the funders to go about grantmaking differently. The initiative's larger goals are ambitious, and support from the state and other funders will be needed to achieve them. This next level of collaboration is imperative and needs to be reached with speed in the face of accumulating learning losses and widening inequality.
- **Jakes Gerwel Technical (JGT) School and Bonnievale 418:** At face value, place-based initiatives may appear to have limited potential for wide-reaching impact, but the JGT and Bonnievale 418 demonstrate the great potential this approach holds for deep and important work. This community's heartfelt and thoughtful response to a pressing community challenge has engendered innovation and learnings that are informing and inspiring other communities.

The three case studies are followed by a section that features learnings and insights collected throughout the 2023 collaboration initiative, i.e., learnings that were captured during the six workshops, as well as the learnings that were identified in the case studies. These learnings were compared and synthesised into the section on enablers for effective collaboration.



Methodology overview

EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATION

In preparation for the implementation of IPASA's 2023 collaboration project, which is described above, IPASA, in consultation with the funder and the consultants appointed to run the workshops and compile the case studies, developed a list of examples of collaborations that involve funders from the philanthropy sector. In the preparation phases of the project, and throughout the implementation of the six workshops that formed part of the collaboration project, this list of collaborations was updated, based on information

gathered by IPASA and the consultants, as well as through ongoing engagement with a range of sector stakeholders.

This list of over 30 collaborations informed the selection of collaborations that were featured in the six workshops that forms part of this initiative, (see the text boxes below), as well as the newsletter articles that IPASA published on collaborations and collaboration approaches. Most importantly, this list served as a comprehensive list for the selection of case studies that could be explored in more depth.

COLLABORATIONS FEATURED IN THE 2023 WORKSHOP SERIES

- The Catch-Up Coalition, led by The Learning Trust
- Wordworks' STELLAR/ELIT programme collaboration with provincial education departments and other funders, The National Reading Barometer, led by the Nal'ibali Trust
- Mr Price Foundation's JumpStart Programme
- The DO MORE FOUNDATION's collective impact approach to improve young children's lives
- The Kolisi Foundation's approach to collaboration
- The Presidential Employment Stimulus
- The Gauteng Department of Education's Grade R Mathematics and Language Improvement Programme
- The Cyril Ramaphosa Foundation's KST initiative with the Free State Department of Education
- The DG Murray Trust collaborative funding model
- The Ford Foundation's 100 Day Challenge collaboration model
- JET Education Service's experience of collaboration with international organisations
- The LEGO Foundation's collaboration with UNICEF
- Place-based collaboration through the Bulungula Incubator
- The Bonnievale School of Skills place-based collaboration

IPASA NEWSLETTER ARTICLES ON COLLABORATION

- DG Murray Trust (Collaboration Incubation Model)
- The Learning Trust. (Coalitions)
- DO MORE Foundation. (Backbone Organisations)
- Research collaborations (SVRI)
- Pan-African Feminist Philanthropies – A Collaborative Wave
- The Presidential Employment Stimulus
- The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership
- The Bertha Centre's Human-centred System-wide Social Innovation initiatives



SELECTION OF CASE STUDIES

Case study research can take many forms, and in this process we have looked at specific cases, i.e., specific examples or instances of collaboration initiatives. These examples also belong to a larger category of instances of collaboration. While this compilation of case studies is not aimed at being representative of all collaborations that take place in the philanthropy sector in South Africa, we wanted to ensure that we feature cases that demonstrate the wide range of collaboration models and conditions under which collaborations are developed and implemented as best as possible.

Multi-dimensional criteria informed the selection of the three case studies that form part of this compilation. We wanted to feature case studies that:

- Shows the different pathways that the establishment of collaborations follow;
- Demonstrate different kinds and models of collaboration;
- Involve different sectors, stakeholders and types of funders;
- Are at different points in the development journey of the collaboration; and
- Include scaled-up initiatives or initiatives that could be scaled up, as well as place-based, context-specific collaborations.

Another more practical factor was the extent to which it was possible to access key stakeholders and background information on the collaborations that would be featured in the case study compilation, given that there was limited time available to undertake the research and publish the case studies.

The cases that were selected can be regarded as intrinsic case studies, where the cases have value because they are inherently interesting; and they are also instrumental in that they are exploring and explaining specific, different types or models of collaboration in different contexts.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

We followed an inductive approach to the development of the three case studies, in that we did not have a pre-determined theory to test – we described the cases, and investigated and explained

the challenges and enablers, from which we drew lessons regarding specific collaborations. This approach informed the data collection strategy, which entailed that secondary data was collected through desktop research as a first step.

Based on the information garnered from the desktop research, semi-structured interview schedules were developed for each case study. The interview guides included questions on:

- How the collaborations started and evolved;
- What challenges and constraints they experienced and resolved;
- What opportunities they identified and what enabled the collaboration; and
- What the next steps are for the initiative.

The write-up of the case studies focused on describing the collaborations and explaining the dynamics and complexities of each collaboration. Since we used an inductive approach, it was possible to explore the uniqueness of each case, and to draw out key learnings on collaboration from each case. While the flow of the final case studies is roughly similar, there are differences in the main headings of the case studies – firstly because the content of each case study informs the structure; and secondly because the initial idea was to develop three separate case studies.

SYNTHESIS OF LEARNINGS

When the case studies were completed, IPASA realised that it could be useful to combine the learnings derived from the three written up case studies with the learnings that emanated from the six workshops that formed part of the 2023 collaboration project.

The learnings that came out of the workshops are based on the presentations that were delivered during the workshops; and they include insights that were distilled from facilitated workshop discussions, which shed further light on the challenges and enablers for collaboration. These learnings were thematically analysed together with the learnings derived from the case studies, and a synthesis of these themes is captured in a section on enablers for effective collaboration.



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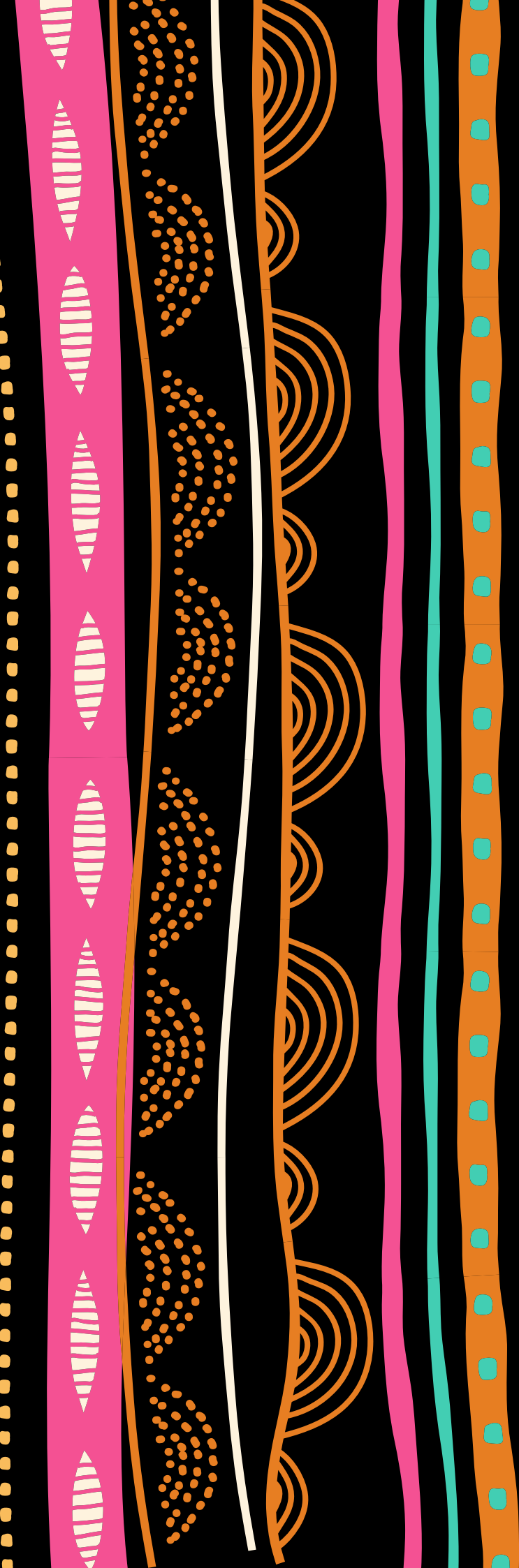
SmartStart

The Role of Funders from Incubation to Scale

IPASA COLLABORATION CASE STUDIES

NOVEMBER 2023





Introduction

IPASA, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation embarked on a series of six workshops in 2023 to explore collaboration in philanthropy. Three of the workshops were hosted online as open-sector workshops, and the remaining three workshops were held in-person in Cape Town, Durban and Joburg, for the members of IPASA and the National Association of Change Entities in Education (NASCEE). The workshops comprised a deep-dive exploration of:

- What's happening in South African philanthropy when it comes to collaboration?
- What are we learning: what's working? What can we do better? And what do we still need to figure out?
- What's next: How can we take collaborative philanthropy to the next level?

In addition to the workshops, IPASA has commissioned three case studies of different philanthropic collaborative approaches, of which this is the second. SmartStart has been selected in order to explore the role of funders at different stages of an organisation's development, from incubation to scale. Many thanks to Grace Matlape, Carley Symms and Siven Maslamoney who availed their time and generously shared their insights and perspectives for this case.



Background and rationale

Access to early learning opportunities is out of reach for 48% of children in South Africa¹, and this was even worse when SmartStart was established in 2015. The organisation aims to address some of the underlying problems contributing to the lack of affordable, quality early learning programmes, including the shortage of early learning programmes and trained and licensed practitioners, by building a national delivery platform.

The SmartStart Early Learning Programme aims to:

- Expand access to quality early learning for all children between 3-5 years old
- Improve children's readiness for learning, school performance and life success
- Build a network of Early Learning Practitioners – smart, caring individuals from local communities who are recruited, trained, and licensed and supported by SmartStart and its partners

The organisation supports a rapidly expanding nationwide network of Early Learning Practitioners who are licenced by SmartStart to implement SmartStart's quality early learning programme to children aged three to five years.

SmartStart's strategy entails closing the gaps of supply of services and funding that stand between quality early learning opportunities and the children who need them. With a goal of reaching 1 million children by 2030, SmartStart has to date trained 9,000 practitioners and reached 101,450 children. This has been achieved by developing a dynamic social franchise, whereby SmartStart partners with public, private, and community-based organisations. Community-based NGOs operate as SmartStart Franchisors, with responsibility for driving recruitment, employing SmartStart Club coaches, and providing support and quality assurance to SmartStart practitioners.

SmartStart was established in 2015 by a group of funders with a shared vision for dramatically increasing access to early learning opportunities. These funders' roles and practices have necessarily had to shift as the organisation grew from an idea in incubation into an independent organisation standing very much on its own feet. Their roles and practices continue to shift as the organisation expands and scales, and it is the lessons learned through this journey that this case study aims to unpack.

¹ Department of Basic Education & Human Sciences Research Council. (2021). 2021 South African Early Childhood Development (ECD) Survey. Pretoria, South Africa: Department of Basic Education.

Establishment and players

While SmartStart has an impressive group of current funders and partners², the focus of this case study is on those involved from the organisation's early incubation; namely:

1. DG Murray Trust (DGMT)
2. The ELMA Philanthropies Services (Africa)³
3. Yellowwoods and the Hollard Trust

HOW IT STARTED

SmartStart's incubation happened in two phases. Before SmartStart was an entity or even had a name, these funders had begun investigating potential solutions to respond to the need for a large-reach early learning programme.

"This important time was donor led and facilitated generous investment in the thinking and strategy from the beginning. Thinking about curriculum, scaling mechanisms, and bringing in, for example, franchising experts. It is thanks to this stage of incubation that the conceptual foundation was strong."

Grace Matlape, Chief Executive Officer

"Yellowwoods hadn't worked closely with the other funders before, and we were invited to co-create and design an initiative to scale quality access to early learning. We entered a journey of problem solving: defining the problem, reframing it, thinking hard about modelling, and investing in a start-up strategy. This led to a shared vision and strong buy-in."

Siven Maslamoney, Manager: Inclusive & Sustainable Growth Portfolio at Yellowwoods Ventures Investments

The second phase of incubation involved registering the organisation and appointing a CEO. During this phase, a partnership was formed between DGMT, ELMA Philanthropies and Yellowwoods. Individuals from these funding bodies comprised SmartStart's founding board, and Yellowwoods held the organisation's incubation in this phase, providing back-end services and financial management. Hollard

provided free office space and services through their various partners⁴.

"The incubation was amazing; a real gift for any new CEO, no matter how experienced you are. It meant that I could focus on the core of the programme without having to worry about fundraising and building the systems that hold an organisation together."

Grace Matlape

The first few years involved testing the assumptions from the design phase. The initial thinking was around a pragmatic, light-cost and light-time model enabling quality learning for as many children as possible. In going to market it materialised that some of these early assumptions were flawed. As parents have a voice in choosing the model for paying fees, they largely rejected the minimum dosage playgroup model, as the value proposition to mothers is childcare, and not necessarily just early learning. Bringing these together was a lot more difficult than initially anticipated and led to dramatic unit cost per child changes as it transpired that one practitioner can reach only 6 children per week rather than 24.

"If we didn't have the backing of these funders who approached the journey from the standpoint of learning together, it would have been a very difficult time. The funders were going through all of this along with us and reflecting on the learnings in strategic and board meetings... this made a big difference."

Grace Matlape

By looking at Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM)⁵ outcomes and dosage data, the team could investigate children's progress and compare results from the minimum dosage versus a full-time classroom-type setting with 15 children. They learned that small ratios yield good outcomes, and a full day produces more. The evaluation data confirmed important elements of the shape of the model and the approach, and they were then able to bring other funders on board.

² Current funders include Imaginable Futures, First Rand Foundation, Hollard Trust, JP Morgan, ELMA Philanthropies, Grand Challenges Canada, LGT venture philanthropy, Jobs Fund, Nikela Trust, Department of Social Development, Letsatsi Solar Park Trust, Nedbank, Lesedi Solar Park Trust

³ SmartStart is funded by The ELMA Foundation and The ELMA Philanthropies are the services arm of The ELMA Group of Foundations.

⁴ Yellowwoods holds significant shareholding in Hollard. Both companies support the Hollard Trust, which is managed by Yellowwoods' impact team.

⁵ The ELOM is a South African population-based child assessment tool that measures a range of developmental outcomes. For more information see: <https://datadrive2030.co.za/data-tools/>

Progress to date

In 2015, SmartStart served 1,000 children and families. By 2020 the organisation was serving 10,000 children and families.

SmartStart is now an independent and well-established, large organisation. The organisation has moved all of its services in-house, grown and professionalised its team, and requires decreasing levels of operational involvement from the founding funders, who have continued to serve as board members.

As it grew and began working with many more funders and stakeholders, the way in which the founding funders engaged with SmartStart had to evolve, as did the board structure, to reflect additional groups of stakeholders beyond incubation funders.

“When you’re out of start-up phase and working with many other stakeholders, it requires a changed relationship with your incubation phase funders, and the composition of the board needs to reflect more voices. As stakeholders go, impact investors are important, but they’re one group of stakeholders. Additional factors to consider in board composition include a government perspective, a good Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) profile, racial and gender balance, and balancing urban and rural voices.”

Grace Matlape

When the ECD function shifted from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2022 SmartStart reached out to the DBE and seconded a senior team member into its national office. SmartStart’s post-startup five-

year strategy aimed to achieve a population-level shift in quality access through a deeper understanding and shifting of barriers to access, including regulatory and policy factors.

LOOKING FORWARD

SmartStart aims to reach 1 million three- to five- year-olds who do not participate in out-of-home early learning programmes. The organisation is working to establish a national platform and strong public private partnerships to achieve this goal.

Internationally, most ECD service provision is funded by the state but implemented privately, and SmartStart provides part of the solution for what the government is working to achieve in early learning. In the next five years, the organisation hopes to build a strong public-private partnership with the DBE and possibly even the Presidency, as well as the Economic Cluster of government departments. Through these collaborations, SmartStart is advocating for the ECD sector -- highlighting the short-, medium- and long-term economic benefits of ECD for the country -- while at the same time, leveraging philanthropy funding to enhance quality and build in accountability mechanisms.

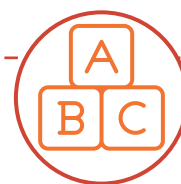
SmartStart has built a decentralised social franchise capability, and offers a platform for the delivery of quality, affordable ECD services, with a focus on outcomes and efficiencies. The organisation and its funders are constantly applying ‘scale thinking’, in looking to keep unit costs down while increasing reach and impact.



In 2015, SmartStart served 1,000 children and families.



By 2020 the organisation was serving 10,000 children and families.



SmartStart is working to reach 1 million three- to five-year-olds who do not participate in out-of-home early learning programmes.

Lessons learnt

THERE IS NO ONE RECIPE FOR FUNDER-LED INCUBATION

SmartStart is funded by funders who have been involved in incubating a number of initiatives in the ECD space, including Ilifa Labantwana, Innovation Edge and Grow Great. Each has had a very different journey and evolution.

"There is no cookie-cutter approach to incubating an intervention. Each of the incubation journeys we have embarked on in the ECD space has had a different structure and evolution. There is no one way to do this."

**Carley Symms, Director of Programmes,
The ELMA Philanthropies Services (Africa)**

TRUST, FLEXIBILITY AND DIVERSITY ARE KEY

The SmartStart journey came off the back of two other journeys that DGMT and ELMA Philanthropies had embarked on already, and the idea for SmartStart came out of the work being done by Ilifa Labantwana, Innovation Edge and Yellowwoods' work with Kago Ya Bana. This provided the funders with a few years of figuring out how best to work with one another in a way that enables these kinds of opportunities: those that don't yet exist but are missing or would be valuable to a system.

i. Unrestricted, core grant funding is vital for incubation

Unrestricted philanthropic investments enable organisations to be quick-footed, responsive, and learning-focused. This kind of funding can be a powerful catalyst to drive innovation and responsiveness to context.

"If we'd had restricted funding in the first three years it would have been very difficult to be responsive to changing context, opportunities, and challenges. In addition, funder management is an additional burden to the system, so when the funds are restricted to certain line items, and there is special reporting on funder-specific indicators, a leader is likely to focus on meeting funder commitments rather than responding to market dynamics."

Grace Matlape

ii. Restricted funding shifts implementers' attention from their core business

From the fourth year onwards, SmartStart began to receive restricted funding from both philanthropy and Corporate Social Investment (CSI), which came along with many conditions and reporting requirements.

"We learned that a lot of this restricted funding really requires careful management as it can move your attention from core business. Rather than being in the business of expanding access to quality learning, you're now involved in the business of the funder, and are now concerned with their concerns and indicators, for example, x people trained or x chairs bought. This can be risky and time consuming."

Grace Matlape

iii. Work with diversity

While the core group of funders share interests and a vision for ECD, they are also quite different. This diversity is important, and while different perspectives and ways of working can make collaboration challenging, working with diversity is necessary to achieve significant impact.

COLLABORATING FOR IMPACT REQUIRES A COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVING MILESTONES AND OUTCOMES

Real collaboration needs to go far beyond photo opportunities, handshakes, and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs). The rubber really hits the road when it comes to implementation and delivering measurable impact.

"Just 'working together' isn't enough; to achieve significant impact, funders need to engage in real work: planning, committing to milestones, and delivering on them"

Siven Maslamoney

i. Focus on the child and child outcomes

Rather than a charitable giving approach, we need to focus on investing in child outcomes.

"We need to get beyond sentiment and be focused on child outcomes in the same way that



we are in our own enterprises. We now have scientific and practical ways to measure ECD outcomes, with a publicly endorsed framework. We need to move beyond funding the child as a charity case, to invest in the delivery of child outcomes and in building human capital.”

Siven Maslamoney

ii. **Work towards shared outcomes**

An open ecosystem is needed, and collaboration doesn't require that everyone is working programmatically together with the same curriculum or approach. It also doesn't require that all funding is pooled and that everyone meets regularly. Diversity of approaches and ways of working are important in an ecosystem that is constantly shifting and requires responsiveness and flexibility. The DBE's national plan to 2030 will also provide a strategy around which the ecosystem can collaborate, and child outcomes provide the architecture around which diverse approaches can position themselves.

“ ... child outcomes provide the architecture around which diverse approaches can position themselves. ”

PUBLIC FUNDING IS CENTRAL FOR SCALE

While accessing government funding introduces onerous restrictions that are very difficult to work with, it is an important milestone for any organisation hoping to achieve scale. In most instances, it is best to tap public funding only once a model has been crystalised, with assumptions confirmed and impact measured. SmartStart accessed funding from the North West provincial government as early as 2017. Initially, the partnership was difficult and unpredictable, and philanthropy funds were earmarked as a back-up in the event that the public funding fell through. Now, many years on, and with the function held by the DBE, the partnership is well-established and strong.

“Achieving significant impact is impossible without collaboration with Government. Even if you took the entire coalition of IPASA it's still not enough to

achieve sustainable impact. So, while the private sector and donors are important, we need contributions from parents paying fees, and from the State. Poverty is a real constraint; we need to tap into public financing for citizens and organisations.”

Siven Maslamoney

i. **Jobs Fund investment as an important advocacy tool**

SmartStart first accessed Jobs Fund money in 2019, which was a very important and deeply enabling foot in the door to government funding. While Jobs Fund money is onerous to receive in terms of the conditions and reporting requirements, if organisations can boost their capacity and systems to manage it well, it can be a powerful advocacy opportunity as it is managed by Treasury. SmartStart was able to leverage their first Jobs Fund investments as a catalyst for further public funding.

ii. **When attracting public funding and support to scale, organisations need to be seen as independent from their initial investors.**

While close partnership with incubation funders is extremely beneficial in the early stages, it can become a hindrance when trying to scale through other partnerships if the organisation is perceived to be too closely enmeshed within a particular company or brand.

“For government to see SmartStart as a real viable solution for ECD, we need to be independent and can't be seen as part of business.”

Grace Matlape

iii. **Funders' scepticism about government can be a hindrance**

Sometimes philanthropy organisations may be somewhat sceptic about government, and this can be a major barrier to the establishment of systemic, scalable solutions. This collaboration shows that it is essential for funders to have an open mind to collaborating with government.

“There is no way philanthropy is going to take on all costs of ECD across South Africa. We have to invest in enabling government to be that player and enabler of ECD at policy, finance, and systems



levels. It can take a long time to get business and some philanthropic foundations to overcome their bias about government ; sometimes one can't even break down that bias. It's important not to give up because philanthropy funding effectively catalyses more sustainable government funding."

Grace Matlape

iv. Systems change requires tapping into the full range of financial instruments

The coalition of funders is working to really understand the different kinds of financial instruments available,⁶ and to create a richer mix of blended financing.

v. Humility is key

Philanthropy backing provides important reassurance to the state that an intervention is sustainable and is vital when looking to establish public private partnerships. However, funders need to have humility and be able to recognise that sometimes their being in the room makes negotiations with government more difficult.

vi. Philanthropy can play an important role in boosting government capacity

DGMT, ELMA Philanthropies and Yellowwoods have reached out to the DBE to offer institutional strengthening support, to help government with data-informed, population-based planning for ECD in South Africa. They are helping to build models and strong data systems that will help us know when we are succeeding as a country in our efforts to reach universal ECD access by 2030.

vii. We need to learn more about execution at scale

There are a plethora of good ideas and innovations in ECD. However, in South Africa what we really need to learn about is how to execute at scale: what this takes, and how to achieve it effectively.

"We often learn the wrong things from Randomised Control Trials (RCTs). It's not the smart, innovative programmatic approach or curriculum that the ECD sector needs to learn

about, but rather how to execute at scale. And in order to do this, we need a big lab. A lab of 300,000 children is better than a lab of 20,000."

Siven Maslamoney

UNDERSTAND AND MANAGE FUNDERS' EVOLVING ROLES OVER TIME

The tensions in balancing founding funders' roles between funding, governance and operational oversight evolve over time as an organisation grows. While the founding funders were very much involved in operational management and oversight in the early years, their role has changed to more systemic inputs.

"It is important that one takes off the donor compliance hat. From the beginning you are here as a partner and not as a compliance funder."

i. Prioritise partnership over compliance

"It is important that one takes off the donor compliance hat. From the beginning you are here as a partner and not as a compliance funder. Then, shifting roles in response to an organisation's developmental phases and needs is a slow and difficult process; it's not linear, and we often have to rejig. We continually check in around how we can best add value and what role we should be playing. The founding funders are still engaged, and feel ownership, and none are arms-length funders. We're all very active in the early learning space and looking to solve things systemically but not operationally."

Carley Symms

ii. The boards of philanthropic organisations can hinder collaboration

Boards tend to have their own interests, requirements, and strategies, and usually require of their executive teams that they demonstrate the organisation's value-add and impact. Needing to demonstrate attributable impact of rands spent within a specific timeframe can hinder collaboration with other funders.

⁶ Available instruments range from corporate donations to results-based financing, as well as public financing instruments such as subsidies, stipends, and infrastructure grants.



RATHER THAN A MICRO-ATTRIBUTION APPROACH, WORK ECO-SYSTEMICALLY

SmartStart's founding funders have adopted an ecosystem approach as opposed to requiring attribution, by providing institutional support funding with general support grants.

"We are fortunate to be working with like-minded funders who aren't having to demonstrate their value in a way that is punitive to partners. We seek to create space and room with our investments, rather than narrow attribution. Rather than requiring that our partners demonstrate linear causal effect, we do retrospective reviews to look at the changes that have occurred over time."

Carley Symms

i. Fund institutions rather than projects, and keep reporting to a minimum

Project-based funding often reflects the strategies and needs of funders over those of implementing organisations. However, if we are serious about strengthening the sector, we need to invest in strengthening its institutions, and enabling them to grow, deliver impact and sustain themselves.

"We want to fund a few core, key institutions that add value beyond themselves and into the ECD space. We set about backing the leadership of these institutions, by providing them with multi-year core funding, with a contribution of a certain percentage of their overall budgets. We do not require any new financial reporting just to us but align with their normal board reporting. We ask them to identify five measures of success – things they're already looking at, with data they're already collecting."

Carley Symms

ii. Make informed decisions when deciding which geographies to fund

"We shouldn't be funding what's close to our offices, or the most rural community because it's far away. We need to geographically map the need, and then collaborate effectively around this, focusing on critical mass."

Siven Maslamoney

FUND FOR THE LONG TERM, BE EXPLICIT ABOUT YOUR NEEDS UP FRONT AND DO NOT FEAR FAILURE

In order for SmartStart to reach where it is today has required high levels of commitment, flexibility, and transparency from its founding funders.

"Commit to a ten-year vision... something like this is never going to take off in two years. You need to give room for growth mistakes and to be very flexible in the beginning years. When it comes to funding arrangements, it is important to establish a big picture vision, establish clear expectations and outline a clear commitment. The boards of each collaborating funder need to agree upfront to multi-year investments. Each funding partner needs to be frank about their capacity and constraints, and to recognise what they truly bring to the table. Each needs to be explicit with the others around their needs to comply with their own board requirements."

Carley Symms

i. Fund organisations to hire high-capacity people who are properly paid

In order to attract and retain the high-capacity people needed to build successful organisations, they need to be competitively remunerated.

"Organisations that are properly backed can bring in the resources they need to mature. Strong skillsets are needed to build and run effective organisations, and unless an organisation is able to recruit and pay its high-skilled people well, the organisation will either be unable to deliver, or the key staff are going to move on."

Carley Symms

ii. Back an existing, well-developed strategy rather than reinventing the wheel

Yellowwoods is collaborating with a UK-based foundation that aims to do similar work in South Africa, and shares the company's catalytic approach and vision for scale. Rather than allocating 15 to 20% of their funding to establishing and maintaining a new entity in South Africa, the foundation has set about backing Yellowwoods instead.

Conclusion

SmartStart's funding journey provides a compelling example of what is possible when funders have a common vision and put in the time to build trusting, collaborative partnership. SmartStart's social franchise model could be leveraged for social development more widely beyond ECD.

From enabling research, testing and innovation at the onset, and supporting organisational establishment and operations in the early years, to enabling systemic shifts and high potential public private partnerships for scale, this journey has required from its funders high levels of engagement, commitment, and reflexivity every step of the way.

With their relentless commitment to delivery, and strong relationships built through learning and iterating together, this group of funders is having a significant impact on the ECD sector at large.

While the core funders work closely with one another in supporting SmartStart, they are also part of a much broader coalition that is working on the national ECD plan for 2030 together with Government. With their eyes on universal access, these funders are investing in other initiatives in the sector, and working with government at all levels, from local municipalities, to the National DBE, Treasury, and the Presidency.

“There is insufficient muscle for collaboration, and we need to build it with practice. In order to do this, we need to be patient with one another, but to act with urgency.”

“There is an invitation to collaborate on a national plan of action and to start building. It's going to be messy; it won't be neat, and we need to sign up for diversity and we need to be open. There is insufficient muscle for collaboration, and we need to build it with practice. In order to do this, we need to be patient with one another, but to act with urgency.”

Siven Maslamoney





IPASA

INDEPENDENT PHILANTHROPY
ASSOCIATION SOUTH AFRICA

EMPOWERING THOSE COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING OTHERS

Hamba Nathi

Responsive, Collaborative Philanthropy in the Face of Crisis

IPASA COLLABORATION CASE STUDIES
NOVEMBER 2023





Introduction

IPASA, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation embarked on a series of six workshops in 2023 to explore collaboration in philanthropy. Three of the workshops were hosted online as open-sector workshops, and the remaining three were held in-person in Cape Town, Durban and Joburg, for the members of IPASA and the National Association of Change Entities in Education (NASCEE). The workshops comprised a deep-dive exploration of:

- What's happening in South African philanthropy when it comes to collaboration?
- What are we learning: what's working? What can we do better? And what do we still need to figure out?
- What's next: How can we take collaborative philanthropy to the next level?

In addition to the workshops, IPASA has commissioned three case studies of different philanthropic collaborative approaches. The Allan and Gill Gray Philanthropy South Africa's (AGGP SA's) Hamba Nathi initiative has been selected in order to explore the new, collaborative approaches to working with grant partners that are emerging as this relatively new initiative develops. Many thanks to Lethabo Rampya, Alicia Okeyo, Sibongile Khumalo, Gabrielle Wills and Jacqui Boulle who generously availed their time and shared their insights and perspectives for this case.



Background and rationale

South African Foundation Phase learning outcomes were dire pre-pandemic: 8 out of 10 Grade 4 learners couldn't read for meaning and 6 out of 10 grade 5s couldn't calculate with confidence. In the wake of the pandemic, learners lost 50-75% of a year's learning, with the most severe impact on the least proficient learners. Learners also experienced psycho-social distress, missed school-provided meals, and had reduced opportunities for socio-emotional skills development. While remote learning facilitated access for middle-class learners, the majority and most vulnerable have been left even further behind. The extent and scale of the problem is devastating: the recently published Progress in International Literacy Study (PIRLS) results found that 81% of Grade 4 learners could not read for meaning in 2019.

AGGP SA's philanthropic strategy is to contribute towards a dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem and sees the education space as providing a pipeline for entrepreneurial talent so that more people are equipped with, and competent in, foundational skills to start and staff businesses. One of its strategic focus areas is foundational literacy and numeracy, and so it supports initiatives serving foundation phase learners.

School closures and rotational timetables implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had significant negative impacts on learning outcomes, and it was evident that learning catch-up initiatives were necessary. AGGP SA moved quickly and established a fund for catch-up interventions serving foundation phase learners.

"Learning backlogs existed well before the Pandemic. COVID-19 further highlighted the need and helped amplify the messaging about catch up. During development stage, the several conversations we had with actors in the education space highlighted that 2021 going into 2022 should be a time to assess, and not a time for recovery. We felt differently. With learning losses happening in present day, we asked ourselves, "who are the partners responding and how can we support them to do this work?" The Learning Trust's Investment Case for After-School Programmes (ASPs) had just been published, and we knew that we wanted to support this space as it contributed significantly towards improving learning outcomes even before the pandemic. We also felt strongly that whatever form of recovery work we would support would be in partnership and collaboration with others."

Lethabo Rampya, Manager: Grant-making Unit, AGGP SA

¹ Howie, S.J, Combrinck, C., Roux, K., Tshele, M., Mokoena, G.M., and McLeod Palane, N. (2017) Progress in International Literacy Study 2016: South African Highlights Report, Pretoria: Centre for Evaluation and Assessment

² Reddy, V., Winnaar, L., Harvey, J., Hannan, S., Isdale, K., Arends, F. & Juan, A. (2022) The South African Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2019 grade 5 results: building achievement and bridging achievement gaps. Cape Town: HSRC Press.

³ Shepherd, D. & Mohohlwane, N. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 in education - more than a year of disruption. Wave 5 NIDS CRAM.

⁴ Olivier (2021). After School Programmes: The Investment Case. The Learning Trust.

Establishment and partners

This collaboration comprises a myriad of organisations, each with different roles, responsibilities and contributions. There are four grant partners comprising the core Hamba Nathi portfolio, namely:

1. The Learning Trust (TLT): An intermediary grant-making and capacity-building foundation that supports, advocates for and commissions research on After-School Programmes (ASPs) within the education ecosystem.
2. Funda Wande: A non-profit organisation (NPO) that designs, implements and commissions independent evaluations of interventions to improve early-grade reading and literacy outcomes.
3. Year Beyond (YeBo): A government-initiated umbrella organisation that receives funding from AGGP SA through the Community Chest. Year Beyond recruits, trains and mentors previously unemployed youth to become practitioners in ASPs run by a range of implementing partners serving Grade 3 and 4 learners.
4. Research on Socio-Economic Policy (RESEP): Based within Stellenbosch University's (SU) Department of Economics, RESEP conducts education research.

Each organisation is participating in Hamba Nathi to further its work on early-grade catch-up in different ways, as outlined below.

With early-on support from AGGP SA, **The Learning Trust** established the Catch-up Coalition in 2021, with six key strategic objectives:

- i. Capacity-building: Providing developmental support to ASPs and coordinate scaled delivery of catch-up programmes.
- ii. Leveraging the Public Employment Stimulus (PES) to create stipended ASP work opportunities.
- iii. Measuring learning and employment outcomes.
- iv. Mapping ASP implementers and funders.
- v. Commissioning research to evaluate the impact of catch-up and ASP public employment initiatives.

- vi. Identify effective, scalable interventions and engage ASPs to deliver them in schools.

TLT has leveraged its support from Hamba Nathi for catch-up interventions for Grade 1 to 5 learners.

This involves:

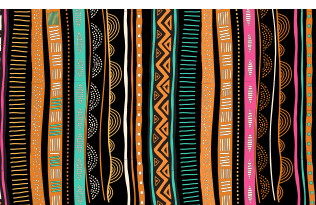
- Convening early-grade intervention partners to collaborate via communities of practice, learning circles and assessments:
- 14 ASPs working with over 8,000 Grade 1-5 learners.
- Coordinating access to public funding for after-school assistants:
- Created 880 jobs.
- Conducting ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) and learner-level assessments:
- Testing and administering various early grade literacy and numeracy assessments in the ASP context, including an online eQuiz with Click Foundation.
- Advocating for and positioning the ASP sector as a key contributor for catch-up.

Funda Wande is leveraging the Hamba Nathi funding to mitigate learning losses in the Eastern Cape by selecting, training, mentoring 347 Teaching Assistants (TAs) in 2022 and 2023.

The impact is significant: learners in treatment schools showed gains equivalent to 78% of a year of learning more than those in control schools, and 46% were able to reach Grade 2 thresholds compared with just 37% in the control schools.

Funda Wande's work has shown the importance of rigorous TA recruitment and selection, high quality training, ongoing monitoring and support, and structured programming. These lessons are pertinent to all interventions leveraging previously unemployed youth to move the dial on learner outcomes, and are being shared throughout the education ecosystem as part of Funda Wande's ongoing advocacy efforts and engagements with government. In addition to this work in the Eastern Cape, Funda Wande is working in Limpopo on a streamlined curriculum for catch-up.

The Youth and After School Programmes Office (YASPO), based within the Western Cape



Government's Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport (DCAS), is the backbone organisation driving and building **YearBeyond**. Hamba Nathi, together with funding from the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation (MSDF), is enabling YearBeyond to extend its literacy and numeracy programming to the Eastern Cape. Hamba Nathi is also enabling YearBeyond to develop materials and learning resources, and hone their action learning and quality assurance systems. YearBeyond leverages public funding (from the Jobs Fund and the National Youth Service) for youth stipends and works with implementing partners who host and mentor the youth. YearBeyond has leveraged technology to support its scale, including platforms to track youth and learner attendance, to track payments to youth, and a learning management system (LMS) that holds the content for YearBeyond's intensive youth development curriculum and development support. With the public employment stimulus enabling many more organisations to engage previously unemployed youth in their education interventions, YearBeyond's rich experience and smart approach to programming (whereby the YASPO team is constantly testing and iterating) provides a wealth of knowledge and insight to the education ecosystem at large.

It is largely thanks to the committed researchers at Stellenbosch University's **Research on Socio-Economic Policy (RESEP)** that South Africa has impressively comprehensive and insightful research

on the impacts of COVID-19 on education. RESEP's research has alerted us to the extent of the learning loss, as well as the widening inequality in learning outcomes, in particular for early grade reading and maths. As part of their work with Hamba Nathi, the RESEP team is also conducting research on grade repetition and dropout, inequality in learning, matric flows into Higher Education, and the implications of the shocks in education for the labour market. RESEP is a compelling addition to the Hamba Nathi portfolio; as research on learning loss is vital for advocacy, well as to inform catch-up policies and interventions. Increased collaboration between researchers, implementers and policymakers is vital for systemic change, and Hamba Nathi is well-placed to catalyse impact well beyond the 49,000 foundation phase learners the initiative aims to benefit.

From the perspectives of the grant partners, each has additional funders contributing towards their foundation phase catch-up programmes, and some partner with other implementing organisations and researchers in conducting the work.

Below is a snapshot of an interactive stakeholder map ([available on kumu](#)) of the initiative. Given the dynamic nature of the work, with new partners joining, and others leaving during the intervention's lifespan, as well as the complexity, this map is by no means comprehensive. Nevertheless, it provides a sense of the multiple organisations working together to help learners catch up.

⁵ Wills, G. & Van der Berg, S. (2022). Covid-19 Disruptions and Education in South Africa: Two Years of Evidence. RESEP, University of Stellenbosch.





Progress to date

When AGGP SA first awarded these grants for catch-up programming, Hamba Nathi did not exist. It was designed as a portfolio of organisations working on catch-up in different ways, with each partner selected for its openness and ability to collaborate with others (primarily with government and not necessarily one another). This value of collaboration is a lesson learned from AGGP SA's 10KJ initiative, which supported ten grant partners to create ten thousand jobs over three years. While the initiative successfully delivered over 12,000 jobs, the bigger success was how the partners actively engaged and shared learnings with each other.

"The big learning for us from 10KJ was the power of the collective: getting people in the room, to share elements of their programming that one might adopt from another, and also to get people to share their challenges. This has really changed how we do things."

Alicia Okeyo, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, AGGP SA

About six months after grant agreements had all been signed, and implementation was well underway, AGGP SA began to ask itself some big questions:

- Are we collaborating?
- Have we designed a collaborative approach to addressing catch-up?
- How do we set about having a unified message?
- Are we measuring the same thing? Or at least towards the same thing, given how different the programmes are?
- How can we measure from end to end?

"We know that collaboration gets you further, quicker, and we're learning that it is disingenuous to fund collaboration and then stand outside of it. We have to be in it... We realised that it calls for us to embody the collaboration we admire and require in our partners, so this is a journey we are

taking together and we know there is so much for us to learn in this process. We're very lucky that our partners have been patient with us while we are on this learning trajectory."

Lethabo Rampya

AGGP brought the grant partners together, to begin co-creating a strategy for Hamba Nathi and to create a platform for each initiative to share their progress to date. Initially there was some scepticism from the grant partners, mainly due to concerns about grant targets being changed halfway through the grant cycle. AGGP decided not to change any grant targets for the current cycle, and is currently working with the grant partners to develop a Theory of Change (ToC) for the initiative, and plans to include goals and targets for Hamba Nathi as a whole in addition to those of each grant partner. For example, increased public demand for, and government response to, the catch-up imperative.

"We realised that this initiative isn't about proving that the models work...we know they do, as all of our partners have solid MEL frameworks, systems and data, and are evidence-based. What we don't know is how these models and this data can be used (practically) to effect change across the entire system. How to support government and contribute towards the collective work from all the actors in this space that is required to drive this change at scale; that is our big question."

Lethabo Rampya

Hamba Nathi is adapting and shifting as the initiative develops. In working towards a more collaborative way of engaging with the grant partners and other partners, assumptions have been challenged, agreements have had to change, and new ways of working have emerged. It was fascinating to learn from both the funder and some of the grant partners about some of their key learnings from the experience so far.

Lessons learnt

ENGAGE WITH THE BIGGEST PARTNER IN ANY INITIATIVE: GOVERNMENT

At the onset, AGGP SA had long, numerous conversations with various government departments, to understand what matters to them. They began with DBE's monitoring and evaluation unit, and then spoke with officials from provincial education departments in the Free State, North West, Gauteng and the Western Cape. Key themes from these conversations were:

- Catch-up efforts need to be evidence-based.
- We need to leverage on work that is already being done, and
- Interventions need to be accessible for the least privileged (e.g. not requiring IT hardware and connectivity).
- Interventions need to work in multiple provinces and must be adaptable in various contexts.

RESPONDING WITH URGENCY REQUIRES INTENTIONALITY AND SPEED

Long timeframes between application and funds in the bank are suboptimal for on-the-ground implementation, which is often responding to existing needs and opportunities within the boundaries of the school calendar. With Hamba Nathi, AGGP SA was able to get grants to grant partners within a two-month period, which they achieved by being up front with grant partners about how much funding was available from the outset, and through fast-tracking some of their usual board processes.

"None of our existing programmes were focused on relief support, and responding to crisis and working in short time-frames forced us to really focus on what matters, and to focus on doing that well. These are lessons that we are taking into post-relief funding mechanisms. Working with shorter timeframes has really served our partners better."

Lethabo Rampya

COLLABORATION CAN BE UNCOMFORTABLE, PARTICULARLY IF YOU DO NOT BUILD IT IN FROM THE BEGINNING

As the grant agreements were developed and signed before Hamba Nathi was conceptualised, the agreements did not feature the initiative's larger advocacy and collaboration goals. AGGP SA's initial impetus was to try and retroactively incorporate them, but following a lot of difficult back and forth with grant partners they ultimately decided not to.

"It can be very frustrating to grantees when funders have preconceived ideas around what grant targets should be, and how they should be measured (and with what tools), rather than looking to grantees to identify the targets based on their on-the-ground experience."

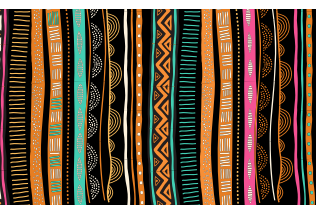
Sibongile Khumalo, executive director, The Learning Trust

"We had to co-create criteria with our partners, rather than having pre-set criteria, which felt like a much more vulnerable space for us. We realised we can't make our partners fit into one approach designed from the top down. We want to shift to being partner-centric and to work with participant-centric partners."

Lethabo Rampya, AGGP

COLLABORATION IS TIME-CONSUMING, AND NON-PROFIT LEADERS NEED SUPPORT TO WORK SECTORALLY

Often the greatest cost to non-profits is the time their leadership needs to spend on collaboration. This is perhaps one of the binding constraints to large-scale collaboration, as non-profit leaders have big competing priorities: running their organisations (usually with insufficient high-level capacity), and ensuring delivery of and securing funding for existing programmes. Funders can help incentivise collaboration by aligning collaborative efforts with grant partners' visions and strategies, and by availing funding to free up space and time for non-profit leaders to think beyond their own organisational mandates, towards sectoral and systemic change.



OPENNESS AND FLEXIBILITY ARE KEY

"More important than implementers' interventions is their openness to learning and sharing. We pursue partners who are already collaborating and from whom we can learn about what collaboration truly requires from the funder, so that we can provide the right kind of support at the right time, and not unintentionally make collaborating difficult to do."

Lethabo Rampya

Due to the initiative's ever-evolving, emerging shape, flexibility on grant targets has had to go both ways:

i. Flexibility on under-delivery, in the context of so many unknowns

Each organisation had to identify the targeted gains that their interventions would enable with regards to learner outcomes. However, in the context of learning loss, it is very difficult to estimate achievable gains, especially for interventions without the funding or capacity for measurement against control groups. Is recovery to the poor pre-COVID-19 results achievable, and in what timeframe? And is this enough of a stretch goal, or should targets aim for gains over and above learning recovery?

ii. Flexibility to add targets, as opportunities arise

The Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) has significantly increased the reach of many non-profit organisations, far beyond what they probably anticipated was possible beforehand. For example, participating in the SEF for the first time, TLT was unsure as to whether it would be able to contract sufficient implementing partners to collectively engage the minimum 3,000 youth quickly enough. However, the response was so positive and the opportunity so large that TLT plans to target more than 10,000 youth through the catch-up coalition in the coming rounds of the PES.

MONEY NEEDS TO BE AVAILABLE FOR EMERGENCE AND SPONTANEITY

Advocacy requires quick, opportune responses - whether it's contracting a public relations (PR)

agency following the release of the PIRLS results, or booking a last-minute flight to meet with a government official. When trying to effect real change in a collaborative way, funders need to be agile, and open to the new and different. AGGP SA's board had approved an envelope of funding up to a certain amount, affording the grant-making team more agility in their responsiveness. Lethabo explained that whatever comes up in the next three years of the grant period, the team can motivate quickly and get access to the funds far more expediently than their 'business-as-usual' processes.

TRUST, CONVERSE WITH AND LISTEN TO THE IMPLEMENTERS

Due to the power dynamics between funders and grant partners, there can be a communication void whereby funders' assumptions get more weight than the perspectives of implementers, which are informed by complex and nuanced on-the-ground realities. There is a real need for engagements with grant partners outside of formal communications and workshops.

Engagements with implementers beyond written reporting is needed to really understand the challenges and opportunities. Sibongile from TLT shared an experience whereby they brought their grant partners together to talk about reporting: the team found that there was so much to learn beyond what had made it into written reports, and that the workshop was also an extremely helpful platform for grant partners to learn from one another.

COLLABORATION FOR SYSTEMS CHANGE SHOULD FOCUS ON COLLECTIVE CONTRIBUTIONS, RATHER THAN SEEKING ATTRIBUTION TO A PARTICULAR INTERVENTION OR ACTION

When it comes to influencing the ways in which other programmes are designed, budgets are allocated or policies are changed, it's almost impossible to measure the extent to which



advocacy, research or the sharing of lessons have contributed to change.

"We got the Early Grade Reading Study (EGRS) data on learning loss just in time for the DBE's Lekgotla and the national command council meeting, where rotational timetables were finally removed. Can we say that this was a result of the research findings and recommendations? No. Can we say that it was a significant contribution towards the outcome? Most definitely."

Gabrielle Wills, RESEP

Lethabo noted that AGGP SA has shifted from trying to measure or claim attribution to looking at contribution. This is closely linked to reporting, and while strong accountability mechanisms are no doubt necessary, funders need to find ways to reduce the amount of time implementers and researchers are spending on grant reporting.

"I have spent about two months of my time purely on reporting to funders, which is time away from doing research. I understand that funders need to justify how and where they allocate their funding, but by trying to find the impact of a particular pot of funding we're often diluting the impact we can have."

Gabrielle Wills, RESEP

CREATE PLATFORMS FOR IMPLEMENTERS TO ENGAGE WITH ONE ANOTHER AND WITH RESEARCHERS

Each of the Hamba Nathi grant partners have learned a lot from the others, and there is

definitely value in in-person engagements, to share lessons learned and to advise and support one another. Having access to RESEP researchers is very valuable for implementers, as the research helps them to step back and consider their interventions within the broader context, while it is also very useful for researchers to learn from the insights and perspectives of those working on the ground.

FOCUS ON WHAT IS BEING MEASURED, RATHER THAN THE TOOL

When working with a myriad of partners, there will inevitably be a range of measurement tools in the mix. While it can be tempting to require that everyone use the same tools for ease of analysis and coherence, the reality is that organisations have typically invested a great deal of resources, time, effort, training and expertise into their MEL systems and processes, and the change-management ripple effects from changes to these are significant. There is also the reality that where issues are being tackled in very different ways, that finding common reporting mechanisms is unlikely.

"The tools for early grade literacy assessments are all assessing similar components of literacy. For example, can the child being assessed recognise letter sounds? Can they read full sentences? They all measure this to some extent, and so rather than all of using one tool, the targets need to be more generalised, so that it's not skewed to a score from a particular tool, but rather, can this child recognise letter sounds? And words?"

Sibongile Khumalo, The Learning Trust



What next? A collaborative approach to funding catch-up

NURTURING GENUINE PARTNERSHIP

There is a need for increased collaboration and partnership to further the initiative's advocacy goals.

"The reality of running busy programmes is that we haven't yet had a chance to collaborate with the other Hamba Nathi grantees. The exciting thing about the initiative is that it will enable us to collaborate."

Jacqui Boulle, head of Youth and After School Programmes Office

"We had to learn that our partners are not just grant recipients but active collaborators working towards the same goals as we are. So, instead of solely focusing on reaching a specific number of learners, which in itself is important, our emphasis has been on fostering genuine partnerships so that by reaching the few, we can collectively think through how to reach the many."

Lethabo Rampya

CO-CREATING A THEORY OF CHANGE (TOC) FOR HAMBA NATHI

AGGP SA has contracted Relativ Impact to support in developing a TOC and measurement framework for the initiative. This is a work in progress, having begun with each partner identifying their own goals and targets. An interactive, iterative and collaborative process is currently underway to map collective goals and targets for the initiative as a whole.

"So much is varied across organisations that cohesion around it is elusive. I think we need to look at big picture targets if we are to accommodate this variability... We are learning from what others are measuring, but we should rather zoom out to the big picture rather than nit-pick on detail when we're thinking about MEL for Hamba Nathi as a whole."

Sibongile Khumalo, The Learning Trust

"I don't think it's possible to bring research and implementation reporting together. But there is great value in people meeting together, and it's interesting to learn from what other people are doing."

Gabrielle Wills, researcher, RESEP

COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER FUNDERS

Funders need to talk to each other, explore one another's goals, and find common goals between them, so that implementers don't have to tie themselves in knots trying to deliver on multiple funders' specific agendas and targets. Lethabo noted that opportunities exist for funders in the space to align on reporting requirements, which would make it easier to share reporting and is a great suggestion for decreasing the reporting burden on partners.

MORE ENGAGEMENT WITH GOVERNMENT

Given the extent and scale of learning loss, engagement with the State is crucial if philanthropy-backed initiatives are to make a meaningful contribution. All four Hamba Nathi partners are engaging with various government departments, and are leveraging public funding in different ways, and this work needs to be further supported and bolstered.

BETTER CO-ORDINATION

There is a strong call from all involved for more funding into the catch-up ecosystem, along with increased coordination and documentation of what works and what doesn't. Coordination efforts need to balance the time that collaboration requires with the need for researchers and implementers to be freed up to focus on their core business, rather than, for example, reporting to donors. There may be a role for IPASA to drive some of this collaboration and coordination.

"Everyone's doing catch-up, and there is so much duplication. There is a big need to map who's doing what, and getting people around the table to talk. And then starting to look at what's working, and what isn't, and to get some impact studies and indicators going. We need case studies written up, and the implementers are just too busy to do this."

Jacqui Boulle, YASPO

Conclusion

Although relatively new, the Hamba Nathi initiative has already generated rich learning, with examples of practising grantmaking differently, and it will be interesting to follow the initiative as it evolves. Hamba Nathi comprises an important, yet small, piece of the country's catch-up ecosystem. It would thus be useful to further populate the stakeholder map to get a sense of the other funders, implementing partners, government departments, higher education institutions and businesses who are working to accelerate learning for low-income learners. The initiative's larger goals are ambitious, and support from the state and other funders will be needed to achieve them. This next level of collaboration is imperative and needs to be reached with speed in the face of accumulating learning losses and widening inequality.





IPASA

INDEPENDENT PHILANTHROPY
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EMPOWERING THOSE COMMITTED TO EMPOWERING OTHERS

Jakes Gerwel Technical School and Bonnievale 418

Responsive and Sustainable Place-based Development

IPASA COLLABORATION CASE STUDIES

NOVEMBER 2023





Introduction

IPASA, with support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, embarked on a series of six workshops in 2023 to explore collaboration in philanthropy. Three of the workshops were hosted online as open-sector workshops, and the remaining three were held in-person in Cape Town, Durban and Joburg, for the members of IPASA and the National Association of Social Change Entities in Education (NASCEE). The workshops comprised a deep-dive exploration of:

- What's happening in South African philanthropy when it comes to collaboration?
- What are we learning: what's working? What can we do better? And what do we still need to figure out?
- What's next: How can we take collaborative philanthropy to the next level?

In addition to the workshops, IPASA has commissioned three case studies of different collaborative approaches in philanthropy, of which this is the third. The Jakes Gerwel Technical School (JGT) and Bonnievale 418 have been selected in order to explore the kinds of collaborative practices that can enable long-term sustainable change in a particular location.

Many thanks to Wilhelm de Wet, Curren-David Kühn and Sean Bastable who generously availed their time and shared their insights and perspectives for this case.

Background and rationale

Bonnievale is a small town located in the Langeberg Valley, approximately 215 kilometres east of Cape Town, with a population of approximately 11,000 people. The community is very diverse, with people from all walks of life, and it is known for its award-winning wine production and beautiful scenery.

JGT and Bonnievale 418 aim to provide the children and youth of Bonnievale with a quality education, skills development opportunities, and pathways to employment.

Bonnievale 418 is a non-profit organisation (NPO) with the goal of reaching zero youth

unemployment in Bonnievale by 2030, and aims to:

- Bring quality education to the children of Bonnievale, by supporting early grade learning and by establishing a skills-based high school.
- Build pathways for youth through career planning and placement, mentoring, training, and work experience.
- Overcome youth unemployment by catalysing an employer network and building demand from local employers.
- Share their approach and lessons learned through advocacy and supporting Technical Schools and "Schools of Skills" in other communities.



Establishment and players

ESTABLISHMENT AND PLAYERS

In 2016, a group of community leaders came together to address a pressing problem: many children in Bonnievale had no access to secondary education in their community, and due to the expense and inconvenience of having to commute further afield, many were dropping out of school after completing Grade 7.

These community leaders set about establishing a technical secondary school, and then in 2021 established Bonnievale 418, which is now working on a range of projects from early childhood development (ECD) to foster care and even community housing.

The JGT school is a no-fee school, funded by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and a small group of corporate and private funders. Bonnievale 418's main funders are the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation, the Rupert Education Foundation, Lactalis and SA3.

HOW IT STARTED

In 2016, Bonnievale was unable to serve the 1,000 learners in the community who needed to enrol in secondary school. Adding 10 classrooms to the single existing high school in the community was not going to be a sustainable solution to the high levels of youth unemployment in the area. A group of community members came together and identified the need for a technical secondary school that can equip the youth of Bonnievale with marketable skills.

"When we embarked on this journey, we were all very naive, and we always joked that if we'd known what we were getting ourselves into we would never have begun. We were a group of Christians who felt a strong calling on our lives to make a difference in our community, and 1,000 children without a high school was a practical way that we could make a meaningful impact."

Wilhelm de Wet, founding Trustee

Four founding members established a Trust through which to raise funds for the construction

of the school. One of the founding Trustees donated half of a large piece of well-positioned land, and another donated funds to cover the price of the other half. Together, the group engaged widely with stakeholders, to build community support and buy-in for the project. These included Lactalis, Pioneer foods, the Bonnievale Chamber of Commerce, the local farming community, Langeberg Municipality, and various churches in Bonnievale. They also started to engage widely with potential funders for the project.

The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) proposed using the Collaboration Schools model, a new type of public school partnership more fully described below. In addition, the Department contributed R4 for every R6 that the Trust contributed towards the construction of the school.

The team set about fundraising in earnest, not only to raise the requisite cash, but also to garner in-kind donations of expertise and equipment, and to build community-wide ownership. The local supermarket ran a campaign whereby shoppers could donate R2.50 for a brick, R80 for a bag of cement, or R2,000 for a meter of wall.

"There was strong buy-in from locals, with people from all kinds of socio-economic circumstances contributing. We believe that R2.50 from someone who is struggling to put food on the table is worth just as much as say, the R2.5m donation from someone who is better resourced. We don't have plaques or contribution lists or anything like that; some gave funds, and some gave labour and as everyone contributed in some way, this is everyone's school."

Wilhelm de Wet

The team raised R100m over 3.5 years through cash donations and in-kind support, while the WCED contributed the remaining R54m to build the school. A local construction company levelled all the land free of charge, while local farmers covered the cost of the diesel. Most of the professional services from architects, lawyers,



engineers, electricians, plumbers, and others were provided *pro bono*. They built a beautiful school.

"We see young kids aged 6,7 and 8 in Bonnievale that believe they can become anything. But due to broken family structures and poverty, by the time they reach high school, they start to measure themselves by what they see around them. And what they see around them is often filthy and

broken and dysfunctional. They lose their dreams, and just exist from one day to the next without dreams or plans for the future. This is why we decided to build a beautiful school – to revive self-worth. We believe in these children, and we will tell them over and over again until they believe in themselves."

Curren Kuhn - founding Trustee

THE COLLABORATION SCHOOLS MODEL

The Collaboration Schools Model is a relatively new type of public school partnership between the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) and non-profit school operating partners, launched in 2015. The goal of the programme is to improve the quality of education at underperforming schools by giving school operating partners additional resources and management flexibility.

Collaboration Schools remain no-fee, public schools. They receive the same resources from the WCED as other public schools. However, they also receive additional financial support from a group of private donors interested in developing a sustainable model for improved education outcomes for learners from low-income communities. The non-profit school operating partner also holds 50% of seats on the governing body of the school. There are currently 11 Collaboration Schools participating in the programme.

The Collaboration Schools Model is based on the United Kingdom's Academy Model, where independent schools are funded by the government but managed by private organizations. They have been shown to improve educational outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Key benefits of the Collaboration Schools Model include:



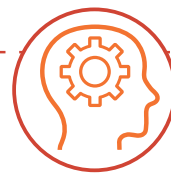
Additional resources and management flexibility:

Collaboration Schools have access to additional financial resources and management flexibility, which can be used to improve the quality of teaching and learning.



Greater accountability:

Collaboration Schools are held accountable to the WCED and to their school operating partners. This helps to ensure that they are meeting the needs of their students and their communities.



Innovative approaches to education:

Collaboration Schools are free to experiment with new and innovative approaches to education. This can help to improve the learning experience for students.

Progress to date

Nearly 700 children are currently enrolled in JGT. The school campus is impressive and meticulously maintained (largely by the students themselves with supervision from their teachers), and filled with happy sounds of children playing, creating, building, and learning.

In its efforts to provide secondary schooling that sets children on a path to economic independence, JGT has developed a compelling curriculum offering. The school offers electrical, mechanical, and civil technology subjects up to Grade 12. However, entry into these subjects requires that learners pass Maths or Technical Maths (which is significantly more advanced than Maths Literacy). As is the case in the rest of the country, Bonnievale schools are producing low numbers of learners taking Mathematics, and so the school also offers Agricultural Technology, Agricultural Management practices and Consumer Studies, which require Maths Literacy and develop skills needed in Bonnievale and surrounds.

Alongside these more traditional technical subjects, JGT also offers subjects that feature in a "School of Skills" curriculum. Schools of Skills offer a viable alternative for learners who struggle in mainstream schools and are unlikely to achieve the National Curriculum Statement (NCS). The focus of these schools is to make learners feel valued, to develop a sense of belonging, and a skill that they can use to enter the labour market and progress in life.

Historically, a School of Skills and mainstream education curricula have not typically been offered together by one institution. However, the Collaboration Schools Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) states that curriculum can be determined in response to learners' needs, and so the Trustees used the opportunity to innovate.

As a result, JGT is the only school in the country to offer pure Maths and Science alongside School of Skills subjects. There is no distinction between learners enrolled in School of Skills and mainstream subjects at the school, and JGT is a sterling example of what a technical high school serving a wide range of learners' interests and industry requirements can look like.

The technical curricula offering unlocks significant public investment for skills development. For safety reasons, the number of learners in a workshop classroom is capped at 15, and the government spends more for every School of Skills learner than they do for those in mainstream education. JGT receives more than 90% of their educator and non-educator salaries from the WCED. The school budget excluding personnel is around R3.5m per annum, of which the Trust needs to raise R1.8m. The total annual contribution from the Trust amounts to approximately R3.3m (to cover educator salaries, school uniforms and the school budget deficit). At the current enrolment rates, the latter amounts to R4,230 per learner, and is predominantly covered by local businesses investing in a stable town and future employees.





"It's hard to get a job with just a Matric Certificate. But if you have a certificate, and you can also, for example, weld and do metal work, you're far better positioned for employment. The learners get experience in not only making products in the workshops, but also selling them."

Wilhelm de Wet

RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Bonnievale 418 aims to partner with Bonnievale's primary schools, in order to improve learning outcomes at the lower grades. In order to do so, the NPO needs to become a trusted development partner, and so they have begun by responding to the stated needs of the schools, with investments in sports facilities and psycho-social support services. Bonnievale 418 has also facilitated the schools' participation in collaborative projects with the Western Cape government through the YearBeyond programme, where previously unemployed youth are deployed through the @Home project (providing mentorship to children at risk of dropping out of school), and as Teaching Assistants in Grades 3 and 4.

The Trust continues to top-up on teacher salaries, subsidise school uniforms, fund the school's budget deficit and supplement the school feeding

programme budget, but it is the WCED that for the most part ensures the school's sustainability.

"It's a biblical principle: where your money is, your heart will also be. People want to see the school succeed: we have no problem with sustainability as the people who contributed to build the school also want to see the school work."

Wilhelm de Wet

Lactalis South Africa, a dairy company that is the largest business and employer in Bonnievale (and a long-term supporter of the school and Bonnievale 418), recently repeated a survey they had conducted in 2016 to measure the company's staff happiness. Seven years ago, when many Bonnievale children could not readily access secondary education, the company's blue-collar workers expressed deep unhappiness. This year, the survey found the same group of employees to be extremely happy, and the company was surprised at the marked difference. Historically, when there was unrest in the Western Cape, the branch would lose production, but today there is evidently more stability in this community, which is required for companies to thrive.

"For many of these kids, they feel that they're succeeding for the first time in their lives, and so we are achieving our main aim, to restore self-worth."

Wilhelm de Wet

Looking forward

There are plans to enrol a further 300 children into the technical high school in the coming years. At the same time as scaling its reach, the school plans to deepen its impact by increasing the number of children who achieve strong education outcomes and go on to access further studies, employment, and entrepreneurial opportunities.

"This model is replicable and sustainable in other communities in South Africa if local businesses and communities play their part. We need to see this replicated. Sixty percent of the children in South Africa drop out before they finish school. Our solution is a technical school with a school of skills, so everyone who leaves the school does so with a skill, and we put a lot of effort into developing character. Local businesses can give input on the kinds of skills they need developed. If you aren't in the top four percent academically in South Africa, your odds of getting

a university degree and a nice job through that route are slim. We're trying to shift people's mindsets – that you don't have to go to university to have a meaningful life, raise your family and take responsibility."

Wilhelm de Wet

SCALING OUT

Bonnievale 418 dreams of a School of Skills in every South African town. JGT was really just the beginning of this team's effort in Bonnievale, and they hope to inspire other like-minded individuals in towns across South Africa. In addition to their work with the other schools in the community, there is a large community housing project on the horizon. Bonnievale 418 is also very busy sharing their model with other communities; they've had over 250 visits from interested outsiders in the past two years alone.





Lessons learnt

PLACE-BASED DEVELOPMENT OFFERS PARTICULAR OPPORTUNITIES

- Challenges and opportunities are more readily identified and understood by people living closest to them.
- Local professionals can be called on to contribute their skills and expertise pro bono.

WIDE AND DEEP CONSULTATION WITH ALL STAKEHOLDER GROUPS IS VITAL

- Relationships are core to this work and a place-based model requires a deep trust in the people. When it comes to development in a particular community, there is an inherent distrust of outsiders which transcends issues of language, race, and gender. It is therefore important that the work is led by local, committed citizens, and that the investments of time required to steadily build trusting relationships are made for the long-term.
- In working with the other schools, the team has begun providing support in a respectful and responsive way. Trust is everything when it comes to place-based development and requires patience.

"One needs to build a bridge of love before you can drive your truck of truth over it."

Sean Bastable, Michael & Susan Dell Foundation

Trust capital + Relationship capital + Patience capital = Meaningful social capital -> Common purpose and impactful collective action.

Sean Bastable and Marlene Ogawa during IPASA's Place-based development online workshop

LOCAL COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP, BUY-IN AND PHILANTHROPIC INVESTMENT ARE A POWERFUL COMBINATION FOR UNLOCKING PUBLIC INVESTMENT

- Philanthropy can spark momentum and accelerate government's efforts to improve the quality of education.
- Once unlocked, the Collaboration Schools partnership funding model can enable ongoing sustainability as the government's funding is in perpetuity.

A HIGHLY COMMITTED AND TALENTED TEAM IS KEY

- JGT's founding trustees did not know each other very well before the shared vision of a new high school brought them together. There is no doubt that their shared faith and aligned values enabled them to work well together, and they also had very complementary skills.

"You need people who complement each other's strengths. You need someone that's good with finances; you need a dreamer who thinks outside of the box; you need someone who's very structural and operational and can execute the plan. And then you need a peoples' person, the convenor and the relationship person who gets buy-in and builds trust and can engage with politicians. You need someone who holds the interest of the children at heart."

Wilhelm de Wet

LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP AND TRUST CAN CREATE WIN-WIN OPPORTUNITIES

- The Trust has been structured as a Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) ownership vehicle. Small companies often struggle with B-BBEE ratings. Two companies established deals with the Trust where they sold significant shares to the Trust for nominal amounts; in return for paying either dividends or a percentage of turnover to the Trust, they receive a high BEE rating. This setup requires a large amount of trust, but ultimately benefits all involved.

"The Dell Foundation has really helped us to think about how we go from building a school to healing our community. We need to start with ECD on the one hand, and on the other, enable our youth to access learnerships and start businesses."

Curren Kuhn

PHILANTHROPY CAN PLAY A HELPFUL ROLE IN SUPPORTING AND COLLABORATIVELY SHAPING THE STRATEGY

While community-driven, place-based development can bring compelling and innovative responses to local challenges, they don't necessarily have prior experience of the non-profit

and funding space. Bonnievale 418's founding team had an inspiring vision and strong mission, but lacked some of the pieces that philanthropic funders expect from their partners, such as a Theory of Change and a five-year strategy.

The Dell Foundation supported Bonnievale 418 in a collaborative strategic planning process, supporting the team to build on the success of the high school, and concretise the organisation's priorities and strategic goals.



Conclusion

At face value, placed-based initiatives may appear to have limited potential for wide-reaching impact, but the JGT and Bonnievale 418 demonstrate the great potential this approach holds for deep and important work. This community's heartfelt and thoughtful response to a pressing community challenge has engendered innovations and learnings that are informing and inspiring other communities.

South Africa's youth unemployment crisis sits alongside a dearth of skills, and JGT's curriculum offers an innovative solution to both. It is also a sterling example of inclusive education, and what can be achieved by accommodating learners with different abilities and interests on one campus. In a country tackling colossal levels of school dropout, this is a very important contribution.

Bonnievale 418's journey provides a compelling example of what is possible when a group of highly committed people bring their resources, expertise, and networks together, to collaborate and inspire community-wide engagement, as well as public and private support.



Enablers for effective collaboration

SYNTHESIS OF LEARNING ABOUT ENABLERS FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

The three case studies featured in this publication formed part of a collaboration project that included six workshops on collaboration throughout 2023. Three of these workshops were hosted in online, and three were in-person workshops for members of IPASA and NASCEE.

Workshop summaries were compiled and disseminated following these workshops, where key learnings and insights were shared, based on the presentations of collaborations that were delivered during the workshops; and the facilitated discussions that took place during the workshops.

INSIGHTS AND LEARNINGS FROM COLLABORATION WORKSHOPS

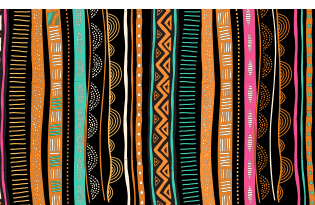
- Collaboration for Scale. In-person workshop in Cape Town on 16 May 2023. Read the workshop summary [here](#).
- Increasing Impact Through Cross-Sector, Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration. In-person workshop in Durban on 9 June 2023. Read the workshop summary [here](#).
- Collaboration with Government: How can Philanthropy Support Effective Government Action. Online workshop on 20 June 2023. Read the workshop summary [here](#).
- Innovative Funding Models for Collaborating. Online Workshop on 20 July 2023. Read the workshop summary [here](#).
- Multi-Sector and International Collaboration. In-person workshop in Joburg on 31 August 2023. Read the workshop summary [here](#).
- Place-Based Collaboration. Online workshop on 15 September 2023. Read the workshop summary [here](#).

These learnings and insights were thematically analysed together with the learnings and insights derived from the case studies, to compile a list of nine “ingredients” that enable effective collaboration:

1. **TRUST:** Trust between partners is essential and enables all of the other “ingredients” listed below. Often, pre-existing trust between a few specific people can spark a collaboration – but that trust needs to be built throughout organisations, so collaborations are ready to weather turnover and change. Building trusting relationships requires dedicated time – particularly at the start, but also throughout the lifecycle of the collaboration as new players come and go. Face-to-face engagement is key, especially in the early stages.
2. **CLEAR SHARED VISION, GOALS AND VALUES:** Like trust, when all partners agree on the ultimate endgame and have aligned values, many of the other “ingredients” required for

effective collaboration can flow. With shared vision, goals, and values, it is easier to draw clear boundaries. It is just as important to clarify what the collaboration is not about as what it is trying to do – and to say no to collaboration when it is a poor fit. Like trust, shared vision takes time to build: multiple partners need to align their understanding of issues and articulate and align the collaboration goals with their organisational mandates and strategies. Shared vision and goals need to include a clear plan to measure and evaluate impact.

3. **DEDICATED RESOURCES FOR COLLABORATION:** Collaboration has a cost: it requires people’s time, face-to-face and virtual gatherings, administrative capacity, monitoring and evaluation, and ongoing reflection and learning. Funders need to allocate resources specifically to collaboration when supporting joint ventures. This can be done by providing convening and coordinating capacity to a



secretariat or project management office that has a mandate from all members to fulfil this function. Funders may also need to include resources in each partner's grant that enable them to participate, for example, covering people's time/travel, and systems development.

4. **TIMEFRAMES:** Long-term thinking and commitment are required to see significant and sustainable change. Funders need to think beyond two- or three-year time horizons when investing in collaborative efforts and commit resources accordingly.
5. **GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION:** To achieve scale, shift systems or sustain long-term change, working with government is critical – but many collaborations bring government in too late or struggle to do so effectively. Successful collaborations understand government priorities, time frames, budgets, and constraints (and engage with Annual Performance Plans). Collaboration with government also requires that key government champions are included in early thinking and design (rather than approaching government once a model or solution has been developed). Stakeholders must be flexible and adapt to government time frames; at times this requires moving very quickly and at other times it means waiting to align with processes. Independent funders in particular can help collaborations work successfully with government by doing what government cannot: for example, because government tends to have a lack of lead time once a policy or programme is given a green light, funders can support collaborations to plan, pilot and model for these scenarios.
6. **AGILITY AND RISK APPETITE:** Effective collaboration requires partners to let go of control; embrace unpredictability; adapt traditional practices and ways of working; and be open to relearning and unlearning. Achieving major change requires a higher appetite for risk, and acceptance that you cannot plan the whole road map at the start. Funders can support this by allocating funds flexibly, allowing the collaboration to spend on what is needed to

achieve the focused goal. This does not mean foregoing accountability, but rather striking the right balance so that too much structure does not constrain agility. Agility is enabled by an extremely clear, shared end goal; open, honest, and transparent communication; and a culture of ongoing learning and reflection.

7. **HUMILITY AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH POWER DYNAMICS:** Power dynamics are present in every collaboration, particularly between funders and implementers, and the implementing partners and communities they serve. It is critical to engage and listen deeply with humility and willingness to unlearn; involve grantees/ implementing partners, as well as the people whom the initiative will serve, in the design of collaborative projects; jointly build monitoring and evaluation frameworks; and create space for partners to say no when something doesn't suit them. Funders often have the most power in collaborations and can play an important role in taking the lead to acknowledge and address these dynamics. Participatory grant-making and involving communities in decisions around how money is spent are under-explored tools in the South African context but offer promise.
8. **CLEAR INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS, INCLUDING EXIT OPPORTUNITIES:** Collaborations need to be clear on each party's roles and responsibilities. Exit strategies should be built in from the start: organisational strategies and the needs of the collaboration will (and should!) change over time, which might call for a different mix of actors at a later stage. Planning for this – by identifying milestones and ways for partners to step out (or in) – means change can be an asset, rather than destabilising.
9. **INTEGRATION INTO FUNDING PRACTICES:** Considering collaboration should become a routine part of funding practices. Funding for collaboration should be embedded into grants; grantees should be asked how they will collaborate; and collaboration must be embedded within staff roles and mandates.

Concluding remarks

This initiative has highlighted the richness of collaborations that are taking place in South African philanthropy, and the high level of interest and engagement from funders and other stakeholders has been very encouraging.

The workshop series has helped participants to deepen their understanding of different types of collaborations and the nuances and key elements involved. It has also increased awareness about the need to be more intentional about working with other stakeholders and recognising that where different stakeholders

have a common purpose, there are opportunities for working together.

We believe that these case studies and insights will further deepen funders' and other stakeholders' understanding of this topic, so that they are better able to navigate the complex dynamics that are an integral part of initiatives that are conceptualised, designed and implemented together with other stakeholders. We hope that these case studies will assist funders to be more purposeful about collaborating, and to improve the quality and impact of their initiatives.