

Cape Chamber

OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

EMPOWERING ECONOMIES

The unseen economic force of
NPOs in the Western Cape

February 2026



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FOREWORD FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE CAPE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are vital contributors to both society and the economy. Beyond their social impact, they generate economic value through job creation, service delivery, and the flow of funding into local communities. While their social contributions are widely recognised, their economic impact is less understood.

This groundbreaking research, commissioned by the Chamber's NPO Portfolio Committee and guided by Henley Business School Africa, provides clear evidence of the scale and value of the sector, offering insights to strengthen collaboration between business and non-profit networks. The Chamber's Board and Council fully supports the NPO Portfolio in advocating for the critical role NPOs play in the economy and the well-being of our communities.

The Chamber is focused on action. We have expanded services, strengthened networks, and introduced Strategic Dialogue Networks to address key economic challenges, alongside precinct development initiatives to stimulate coordinated growth. Our challenge to both business and non-profit sectors is to consciously seek opportunities for collaboration, creating innovative and mutually beneficial solutions for our city.

By intentionally connecting NPOs with broader networks, we can harness their expertise, reach, and resources to accelerate social and economic impact, shaping a stronger, more inclusive trajectory for the Western Cape.



Jacques Moolman

FOREWORD FROM THE CEO OF THE CAPE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

A strong economy is built on the contribution of all its participants. In the Western Cape, non-profit organisations form a vital part of that economic ecosystem.

While their social impact is widely recognised, their economic contribution is less frequently acknowledged. NPOs create employment, pay salaries, procure goods and services, and attract funding that flows directly into local communities. Through education, healthcare, skills development, and social programmes, they strengthen human capital – the foundation of long-term productivity and stability.

This report provides important data and insight into the scale and value of the sector. It enables a more informed understanding of how NPOs contribute not only to social wellbeing, but to economic growth.

For the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry, this marks an important step in deepening collaboration between the profit and non-profit sectors. Sustainable growth requires coordinated effort, shared purpose, and strong networks. By integrating the non-profit sector more fully into structured economic dialogue, we strengthen the resilience and trajectory of the Western Cape economy.

This report provides the evidence. The next step is action.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Lawson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John Lawson

FOREWORD FROM THE NPO PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE CAPE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

To our colleagues in business, investment, academia, government, and the non-profit sector,

On behalf of the NPO Portfolio Committee of the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry, it is my privilege to present this report on the economic contribution of the non-profit sector to Cape Town's economy. Mandated by the Committee, this work reflects a shared commitment to advancing a more inclusive, collaborative, and economically resilient city.

This report is intended not only to inform, but to contribute to a broader shift in how the non-profit sector is understood within the economic landscape. While often framed in social or philanthropic terms, the findings presented here affirm that non-profit organisations are active economic participants—contributing to employment, service delivery, innovation, and the strengthening of local markets.

At a time when South Africa continues to face profound inequality, as reflected in one of the highest Gini coefficients globally,¹ there is an urgent need for new models of partnership. The non-profit sector plays a critical role in enabling inclusive growth—supporting human capital development, stabilising communities, and creating the conditions for more effective and sustainable market participation.

As a Chamber, we recognise that economic growth and social progress are deeply interconnected. This report is part of an ongoing effort by the NPO Portfolio Committee to foster stronger alignment between the private sector and the non-profit ecosystem, and to position collaboration as a driver of shared value.

For business and investment leaders, this presents a clear opportunity: to move beyond compliance-led engagement towards strategic partnerships that unlock both social and economic returns. Whether through workforce development, enterprise support, or community-based innovation, the potential for co-creation is significant.

We invite you to engage with the insights presented here and to join us in shaping a more inclusive and resilient economic future for Cape Town.

Sincerely,



Deidré Moskoff

Co-Author

Chairperson: NPO Portfolio

On behalf of the NPO Portfolio Committee

¹ Statista (2025) 20 countries with the biggest inequality in income distribution worldwide in 2024, based on the Gini index. Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/264627/ranking-of-the-20-countries-with-the-biggest-inequality-in-income-distribution/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (Accessed: 15 June 2025).

GLOSSARY

B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
DEI	Diversity, equity, and inclusion
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early childhood development
ESG	Environmental, social, and governance
GBV	Gender-based violence
HR	Human resources
NPO	Non-profit organisation
PBO	Public benefit organisation
SARS	South African Revenue Service
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDL	Skills development levy
SED	Socio-economic development
SETAs	Sector Education and Training Authorities
VA	Voluntary association
WSP	Workplace skills plan

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INTRODUCTION

Locally led non-profit organisations (NPOs) often emerge not from strategy documents or formal planning processes, but from everyday people's urgent, lived realities. They are born when individuals and communities come together to respond to the unmet needs they witness around them – be it hunger, safety, education, environmental degradation, or social exclusion.

These organisations are powered by a deep sense of place, commitment, and proximity to the challenges they seek to address. They embody the principle that those closest to the problem are often closest to the solution and, in doing so, play a critical role in holding the social fabric together where state and market systems fall short. This report seeks to honour and elevate their contribution to the social well-being of Cape Town's communities and to its economy, resilience, and collective future.

The non-profit sector is broadly referred to as the third sector, the first and second being government and business. The term NPO concerns entities established for public benefit. While they operate similarly to for-profit businesses regarding compliance and adherence to government policies, there is a key distinction. Unlike for-profit companies, which distribute profits to shareholders, NPOs do not have shareholders and must allocate all funds to advance the public good. This ensures that any revenue generated supports the mission and impact of the organisation, rather than individual financial gain. Like businesses, NPOs must comply with South Africa's regulatory framework, including financial accountability policies,

governance, and operational transparency. However, the critical difference lies in the absence of profit distribution, with the primary focus being the social, environmental, and community benefits they provide, rather than financial returns to shareholders.

The South African government has been providing support to NPOs where possible. However, with the continuous increase in the number of NPOs, resources have become increasingly limited. Recognising this challenge, the government is considering policy (Inyathelo, 2024) changes to make NPOs eligible for more substantial support (Parliament of the Republic of South Africa, 2024). In alignment with this, the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry is launching this investigation into the contribution of NPOs to the local economy, specifically in the wider Cape Town area, including Cape Town, the Winelands, and Overstrand, where the Chamber is most active. This initiative aims to bring visibility to and validate that NPOs not only qualify for increased support, but also play a crucial role in providing various support mechanisms to society and significantly contribute to the economy.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

To scope and profile NPO sector in the greater Cape Town area, with a focus on its size, composition, key areas of operation, and contributions to governance, service delivery, socio-economic development, and sustainability.

This objective seeks to develop a comprehensive overview of the non-profit organisation (NPO) sector within the greater Cape Town area by examining its overall size, structure, and scope of activity. Rather than conducting an in-depth impact evaluation, the study focuses on mapping the landscape of the sector to understand how many organisations operate within it, the types of NPOs that exist, and how they are distributed across different communities and thematic focus areas. This includes profiling the composition of the sector in terms of organisational mandates, target populations, and areas of intervention such as education, health, social services, and community development.

In addition, the objective aims to identify the key roles that NPOs play within the broader social and economic environment of Cape Town. This involves exploring how these organisations contribute to governance through leadership and accountability structures, as well as how they complement public service delivery by addressing gaps in areas where government capacity may be constrained. The study also considers the socio-economic contributions of NPOs, including their role in job creation, skills development, and community upliftment.

Furthermore, the objective includes examining the sustainability of the sector by looking at how NPOs generate income, manage resources, and maintain operational resilience in a challenging funding environment. By taking this broad, descriptive approach, the research provides a foundational understanding of the scale, diversity, and functional significance of the NPO sector in Cape Town, thereby informing future research, policy development, and stakeholder engagement.

PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH AND THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS REPORT

This report showcases how NPOs, regardless of their size, are indispensable to South Africa's socio-economic landscape, addressing critical issues, such as poverty, inequality, and unemployment. These organisations provide essential healthcare, education, and social welfare services, often reaching underserved communities through the government and private sector. NPOs in South Africa deliver direct aid and empower individuals and communities through capacity building and advocacy, fostering long-term sustainable development.

This report is imperative, as it seeks to prove that NPOs are equal role players in South Africa's socio-economic well-being and should be recognised by business and government accordingly. By highlighting NPOs' significant contributions to the economy, the report aims to raise their profile as vital contributors in this regard. The findings provide insight and guidelines to enhance support and increase resources to NPOs, ensuring their sustained and continued impact. This report advocates for the structural inclusion of NPOs in policy and social investment decisions, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment for these essential organisations.



This report represents the initial phase of a broader, phased approach aimed at understanding the current landscape of NPOs within the context of the prevailing economic environment. It is important to note that this is not an extensive report. Instead, it serves as a snapshot-level exploration designed to surface key themes, challenges, and opportunities facing NPOs at this moment in time. The intention is to lay the groundwork for deeper, more detailed analyses in subsequent phases. Future reports will build upon the insights presented here, incorporating broader data sets, stakeholder perspectives, and longitudinal trends to provide a more holistic understanding of the sector's evolving dynamics.



Source: Pebbles Project

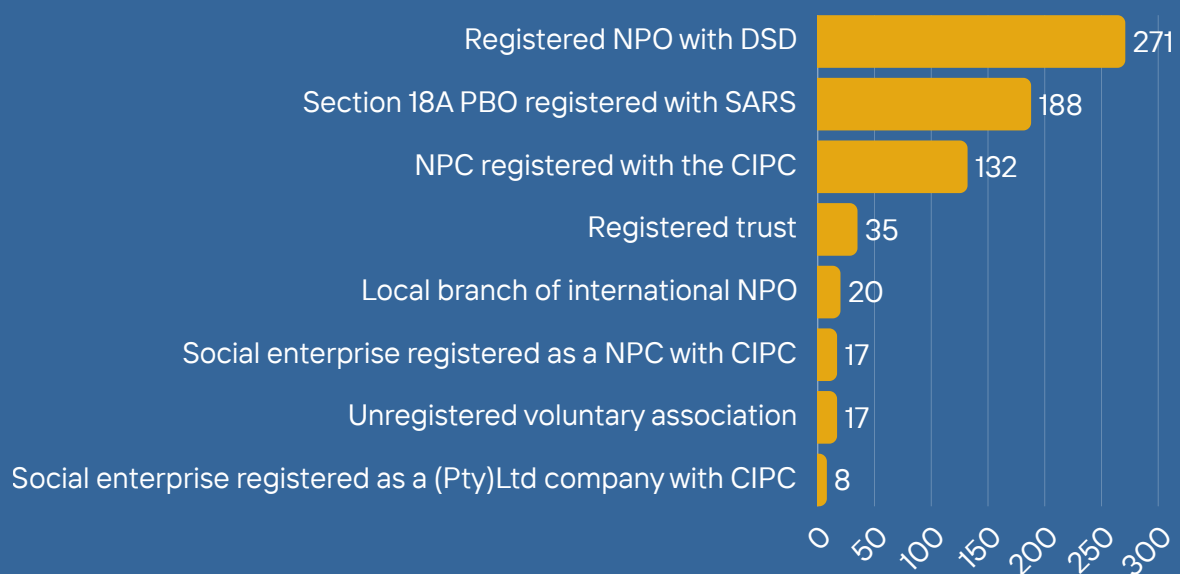
SIZE AND SCOPE OF THE NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION SECTOR

As of May 2025, there were approximately 286 350 registered NPOs in South Africa (International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, 2025). NPOs can register with the Department of Social Development (DSD), the Companies and Intellectual Property Commission, or with the Master's Office as charitable trusts. This report focuses on the greater Cape Town area, where the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry has a presence.

This includes Cape Town, the Winelands, and Overstrand, which are home to around 14 000 registered NPOs, representing roughly 3.8% of the national total. A total of 361 NPOs from this region participated in the report. Most surveyed organisations are registered nationally with the DSD and range from small, community-based groups to larger, more established entities. All are locally led, with only 20 organisations operating as branches of international NPOs under local leadership.

Figure 1: Non-profit organisation registration

Figure 1 represents the different registration forms from the sample: 17 organisations are grassroots and unregistered voluntary associations (VAs), 20 are local branches of international NPOs, and the rest are locally founded, registered, and led. Notably, there is a growing move for NPOs to become more intent on their own economic sustainability by positioning themselves as social enterprises. Interestingly, only 188 respondents were registered with the South African Revenue Service (SARS) as public benefit organisations (PBOs) that can issue Section 18a certificates to donors, indicating an opportunity to train NPOs to position themselves for financial support.



Source: authors' own.

² A tax certificate issued when a donation is made to a PBO.

THE ROLE OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN THE BROADER SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY

The contribution of NPOs to South Africa's economy is substantial. They generate employment, with many NPOs acting as significant employers in their regions. Additionally, NPOs attract local and international funding, injecting capital into the economy and supporting various development projects. For instance, in 2024, 93% of companies surveyed directed funding to NPOs, with these organisations receiving nearly three quarters of corporate contributions (Dialogue Knowledge Hub, 2024). Amidst economic challenges, South African companies are rising to the occasion, collectively investing R12.7 billion in social initiatives throughout 2024 (Larkin, 2024). This substantial financial support highlights the pivotal role that NPOs play in the broader economic ecosystem. It is inspiring to see businesses leading the charge in corporate social responsibility (CSR), setting a benchmark for others.

Understanding the contribution of NPOs to the economy is crucial for several reasons. First, it highlights their contribution to the economy, justifying continued and increased support from both the public and private sectors. Second, detailed data on NPO contributions can inform policy decisions, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to maximise social and economic benefits. Lastly, showcasing the economic value of NPOs can enhance their credibility and attract more funding, enabling them to expand their reach, contribution, and impact. With more resources, these organisations can extend their reach and effectiveness, addressing critical issues more comprehensively.

Beyond financial support, partnering with businesses on initiatives like economic development, skills development, staff training, internships, services, and learnerships can amplify their efforts. These collaborations enhance the capabilities of NPOs and create a synergistic effect, fostering sustainable growth and development within communities. By working together, businesses and NPOs can drive meaningful change and build a brighter future for all.



NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION, LONGEVITY, LEADERSHIP & GOVERNANCE





The duration of an NPO's existence provides valuable insights into its stability and long-term impact. The oldest NPO surveyed was 157 years old, and the average of the group was 19 years, which means 19 years of experience in the third sector. Longevity of any organisation is achieved by means of various resources, including proper leadership and governance. This guides the course of the organisation, as well as its survival and impact. This section focuses on three critical dimensions of leadership and governance: director qualifications, foreign affiliations, and due diligence and governance practices through a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens. These aspects are essential for shaping strategic decisions, operational effectiveness, and equity gaps, underscoring the need for tailored support to enhance the impact of NPOs.

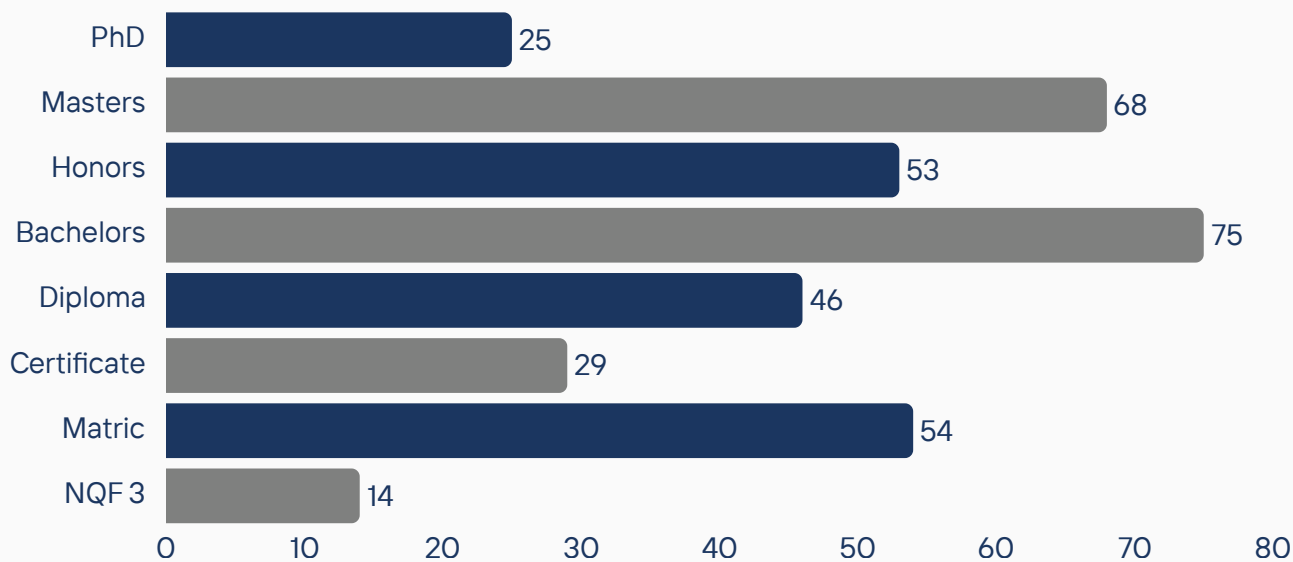
DIRECTOR QUALIFICATIONS

The educational qualifications of NPO directors are pivotal in guiding these organisations' strategic direction and success. Figure 2 examines the highest qualifications of directors, offering a snapshot of the leadership landscape within the sector.

While formal academic qualifications can contribute significantly to strategic oversight and professional credibility, the NPO sector does not uniformly require such credentials for effective leadership. In many cases, experience, personal commitment, and demonstrated capability are equally – if not more – instrumental in driving organisational impact. These attributes often warrant recognition as key determinants of success, much like in the private sector. The unique demands of non-profit work mean that practical insight, sector-specific knowledge, and leadership agility can outweigh formal education in shaping successful outcomes.



Figure 2: Director qualifications



Source: authors' own

These organisations are often managed by highly qualified individuals, with a combined post-matric qualification of 161. The NPO sector does not just attract 'unskilled' workers, but houses many differently qualified experts whose passion is to give back to society, regardless of profit or high salaries.

FOREIGN AFFILIATIONS

324 NPOs serve the Western Cape

25 NPOs operate internationally

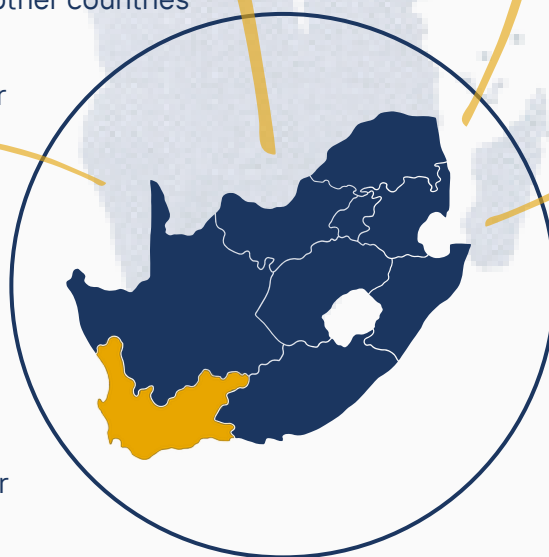
43 NPOs serve all provinces nationally

While deeply rooted in local communities, many South African NPOs rely on critical partnerships with international donors and networks to secure funding, build capacity, and sustain their operations. Figure 3 presents the extent of these foreign links. Understanding an NPO's international affiliations is essential because it sheds light on the role of the global community in shaping the non-profit economy in South Africa. These affiliations often bring financial contributions, technical expertise, advocacy support, and enhanced credibility. In turn, this international backing can significantly influence the scale, scope, and sustainability of programmes delivered by local organisations. By asking about these connections, we gain a fuller picture of how global solidarity and transnational collaboration underpin the non-profit sector's capacity to drive social change locally.

Figure 3 illustrates the extent of foreign connections among surveyed South African NPOs. While a majority (172) reported having no foreign links, a significant number (159) indicated they had received funds, goods, or services from other countries. Smaller proportions reported partnerships with international NPOs (38), operating projects in other countries (24), foreign oversight or management (22), employing foreign citizens (18), or sending resources to other countries (16). The data underscores that while most NPOs are locally grounded, international support plays a meaningful role in the sector's ecosystem. One assumption can be that where NPOs send resources to other countries, it would be to Africa. Therefore, international support and aid can potentially reach Africa through the gateway of South African NPOs, which play a significant role as the 'middleman'.

Figure 3: Description of foreign links

- None
172
- Received funds, goods or services from other countries
159
- Worked in partnership with NPOs in other countries
38
- Provides services or runs projects in other countries
24
- Established, overseen or managed by foreign citizens
22
- Employs or has obtained work permits for foreign citizens
18
- Sent money or goods directly to people in need in other countries
16



DUE DILIGENCE PRACTICES AND GOVERNANCE

Good governance and due diligence are critical to the credibility, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of NPOs. This section examines three key areas of due diligence reported by surveyed organisations: strategic documentation, the presence and engagement of office bearers, and DEI in governance structures. These lenses offer insight into how NPOs define their organisational direction, exercise leadership, and reflect broader societal commitments.

South African NPOs operate within the framework of the King IV Report on Corporate Governance for South Africa (Institute of Directors in Southern Africa, 2016),³ which includes a dedicated Supplement for NPOs. This supplement offers practical guidance on applying the principles of good governance in a way that is proportionate and responsive to the size, nature, and complexity of each organisation. This flexibility ensures governance practices remain meaningful and appropriate across a diverse sector.

In addressing DEI, the report specifically focused on the representation of women and racial diversity within governance structures. This analysis was informed by South Africa's Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE) codes, which prioritise race-based classification, while recognising gender, disability, youth, and rural development. For this report, only race and gender representation were assessed.

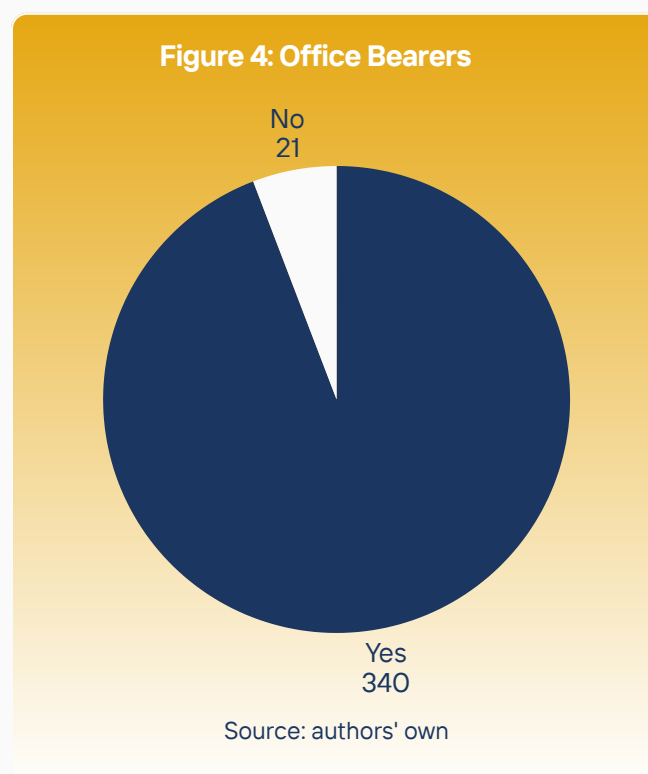
STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS

When asked whether they have a code of ethics that guides organisational behaviour, 82% of NPOs indicated 'yes'. In comparison, 94% of the organisations confirmed they have an official organisational mission, vision, and action plans to achieve it.

When NPOs have strategic documents like a code of ethics, mission and vision statements, and action plans, they benefit from enhanced decision-making, effective resource allocation, and stronger stakeholder engagement. These documents provide a clear direction, inspire and motivate staff and supporters, and ensure that all actions align with the organisation's values and goals. They guide NPOs to operate more efficiently and achieve their mission more effectively (Atmore, 2024).

OFFICE BEARERS

When enquiring whether the organisations have office bearers (including directors, members of the board, and trustees), the vast majority indicated 'yes' (see Figure 4). This is a positive sign for NPO leadership, as organisations should be governed more efficiently by a separate set of individuals. At the same time, operational staff can focus on achieving the organisation's mission and vision.



³ A framework for good corporate governance in South Africa, issued by the Institute of Directors in Southern Africa.



Source: Pebbles Project

Most surveyed organisations reported having formal office bearers, reflecting a general adherence to governance norms and statutory requirements. On average, these organisations appear to have between five and six office bearers, often representing a range of professional and community backgrounds. This diversity supports broader organisational credibility, accountability, and strategic capacity.

It is assumed that the 21 organisations that reported not having office bearers are primarily unregistered VAs. Of these, 17 were explicitly identified as such. This is consistent with the regulatory framework in South Africa, where formal registration typically requires the appointment of office bearers. As such, the absence of office bearers may reflect informal operating structures, rather than a lack of governance intent.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN GOVERNANCE – OFFICE BEARER DEMOGRAPHICS

DEI are essential principles of good governance, particularly in a country like South Africa, where issues of gender and racial equity remain central to transformation. According to the 2023 General Household Survey by Statistics South Africa, 42.3% of households were headed by women – a significant and growing demographic often facing disproportionate socio-economic challenges.

In the global corporate landscape, women continue to encounter barriers to leadership. The 2024 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum reveals that women hold just 36.4% of leadership roles worldwide (Pal et al., 2024). Similarly, McKinsey's Women in the workplace report underscores the persistent underrepresentation of women at senior levels, despite incremental progress (Krivkovich, Goldstein and McConnell, 2025).

In contrast, the non-profit sector demonstrates a different dynamic. Women constitute nearly 70% of the workforce in many NPOs and occupy a notable proportion of leadership roles (Uchida, 2025). However, this higher representation does not necessarily translate into equity. Women in the non-profit space still contend with issues like pay disparities and underrepresentation in the most influential or well-resourced organisations (AAUW, 2018).

By examining gender representation within governance structures, this report explains how South African NPOs reflect broader DEI commitments. While not exhaustive, the analysis focuses on gender and racial representation in leadership, drawing on frameworks, such as the B-BBEE codes, to understand current trends and gaps.

The data reveals a relatively balanced racial and gender composition among NPO office bearers. On average, organisations report having four black South African office bearers and four white South African office bearers, with fewer than one being of foreign African origin. In terms of gender, there is slightly higher female representation – on average, five office bearers are women compared to four men.

This suggests that, unlike many other sectors, gender representation in NPO leadership is approaching parity. Given women's significant role in governance and operational delivery of non-profit work – and their broader economic contribution, particularly in female-headed households – this trend underscores the importance of supporting and sustaining women's leadership within the third sector.



SERVICE PROVISION:

FILLING THE GAPS AMIDST SOCIETAL CHALLENGES

South Africa grapples with deep-rooted social and societal challenges, particularly in education, health, and welfare across both grassroots and policy levels. Despite being a signatory to numerous international agreements and having implemented macroeconomic policies to address inequality, the country still holds one of the highest Gini coefficients in the world, reflecting extreme disparities in income and access to basic services. Structural inequalities inherited from the apartheid era persist, often manifesting in under-resourced schools, uneven healthcare provision, and limited social welfare support in many communities. While national frameworks provide a policy foundation, society-led, local NPOs are increasingly stepping in to bridge the gap. These grassroots actors are vital in delivering community-based interventions, advocating for marginalised voices, and creating locally relevant solutions that advance social justice and equitable development. Additionally, environmental programmes promote conservation and sustainable practices.

By delivering these diverse services, NPOs meet immediate needs and foster long-term growth and stability, making a profound difference in the lives of individuals and communities across the nation. The role of local NPOs is critical for economic advancement, as they address immediate social needs and help build a more inclusive and equitable foundation for sustainable growth. This section examines the types of services NPOs provide, distinguishing between expressive and service activities, and categorises their operations within various thematic areas.

Source: SOZO

TYPES OF SERVICES

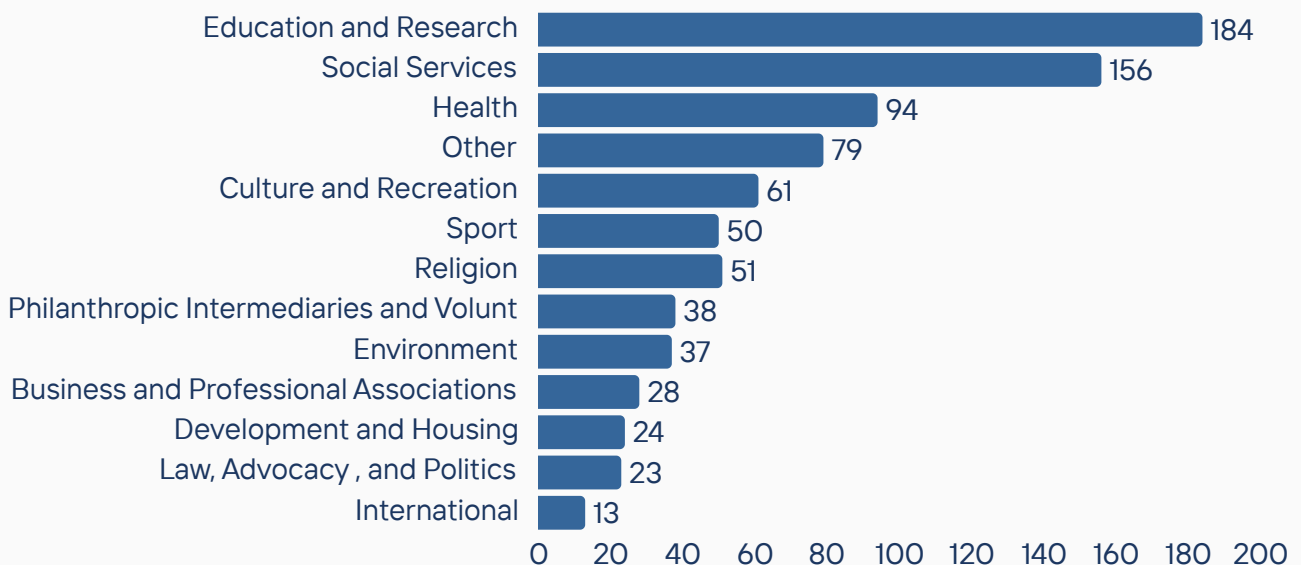
NPOs deliver a wide array of services that can be broadly classified as expressive and service activities. Expressive activities focus on advocacy, cultural expression, and community engagement, fostering a sense of identity and solidarity. Contrastingly, service activities provide direct support and assistance, such as healthcare, education, and social services, addressing immediate needs and improving quality of life. Roughly 65% of the organisations classify their activities as services, while 32% focus on expressive activities. Figure 5 provides an overview of the findings.



The figures total 822, indicating that many NPOs operate across multiple service areas (refer to Figure 5). Social services and education and research emerged as the most prominent sectors, reflecting the diversity of NPO activities and a strong emphasis on evidence-based responses, with 42% of the NPOs surveyed providing social services.

Social services in South Africa are known for their significant social issues, and NPOs play a crucial role in addressing these issues to improve the well-being of the members of society. Research shows that the well-being of individuals is directly tied to their economic inclusion and contribution (Ruggeri et al., 2020). The role of NPOs in this regard is often overlooked and requires more attention, support, and praise.

Figure 5a: Areas of focus for organisational services (as categorised by the Department of Social Development)



Source: authors' own.

Social support services can encompass a wide range of support to improve the well-being of individuals and communities, as outlined in Table 1. This report focuses on employment assistance and crisis intervention as two primary economic contributors.

Table 1: Key areas of social support

Promotion and prevention services	Community education, awareness programmes, skills development, and early interventions designed to reduce risks such as abuse, neglect or social exclusion and improve knowledge and capacity in families and communities
Rehabilitation services	Services focused on restoring or improving social functioning for people whose abilities have been impaired by physical disability, trauma, dysfunction, or chronic conditions. These can include therapy, counselling, life skills support and community-based programmes that help people participate more fully in family and community life
Protection services	Interventions that safeguard the rights, safety and wellbeing of vulnerable individuals and families . These often operate within a legal or policy framework and include child protection, statutory social work responses, family preservation, foster care support, protection against abuse or neglect, and other services ensuring safe environments
Continuing care services	Long-term or ongoing support for individuals who need sustained care , such as older adults, people living with disabilities, or those needing residential and assisted living arrangements. This can include respite care, supported independent living, and services that help people engage with everyday life over time.
Mental health and addiction services	Support for psychological wellbeing and recovery from addiction , including counselling, therapeutic programmes, support groups, rehabilitation from substance abuse, and community mental health initiatives that help people manage emotional challenges and integrate into society.

Source: Department of Social Development (2026).

EMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE: SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



NPOs often emphasise skills development, enhancing individuals' economic inclusion. In South Africa, businesses and NPOs can collaborate effectively through the skills development levy (SDL) system to improve workforce skills and promote economic inclusion. Employers with an annual payroll exceeding R500 000 are mandated to contribute 1% of their total payroll to the SDL, which is administered by the SARS and allocated to Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) for skills development initiatives (South African Revenue Service, 2025). This allows more individuals to become part of the economy, as better skills can result in employment. While certain NPOs, particularly those classified as PBOs engaged solely in qualifying public benefit activities, are exempt from paying the SDL, they can still participate in the skills development framework. These organisations can apply for a T-number to access discretionary grant funding from SETAs. This funding supports various training programmes, including learnerships, skills programmes, and internships, which are crucial for community upliftment and addressing unemployment (SA Campus Online, 2020).

Of the surveyed NPOs, 250 indicated that they also offer skills development opportunities to 687 697 individuals. Although these organisations provide various skills development training for individuals, the above skills development opportunities are the most prevalent. By leveraging the SDL framework collaboratively, businesses and NPOs can contribute to a more skilled workforce, promote social development, and support economic growth in South Africa (GH Skills Solutions, 2024).⁴ Collaboration between businesses and NPOs can take several forms:

- Joint training initiatives: businesses can partner with NPOs to design and implement training programmes that address specific community needs, ensuring that the skills developed are relevant and impactful.
- Resource sharing: companies can provide resources, such as training facilities, equipment, or expertise to support NPO-led training initiatives.
- Workplace skills plans (WSPs): businesses can include collaborative projects with NPOs in their WSPs, which are submitted to SETAs as part of the mandatory grant process.

⁴ GH Skills Solutions (2024) wrote a LinkedIn article on workplace skills plans (WSPs), detailing the process of submitting WSPs and how partnerships with NPOs can be integrated.

TRADE SKILLS

47K

health service
— top category

85 190 total

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

23K

entrepreneurship
— top category

55 727 total

WORK READINESS

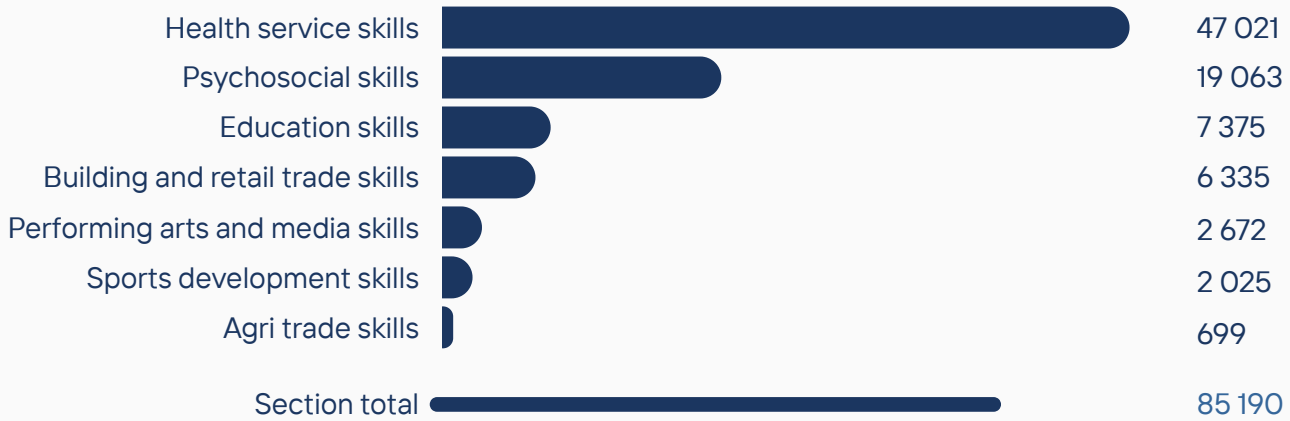
107K

occupational skills
— top category

82 350 total

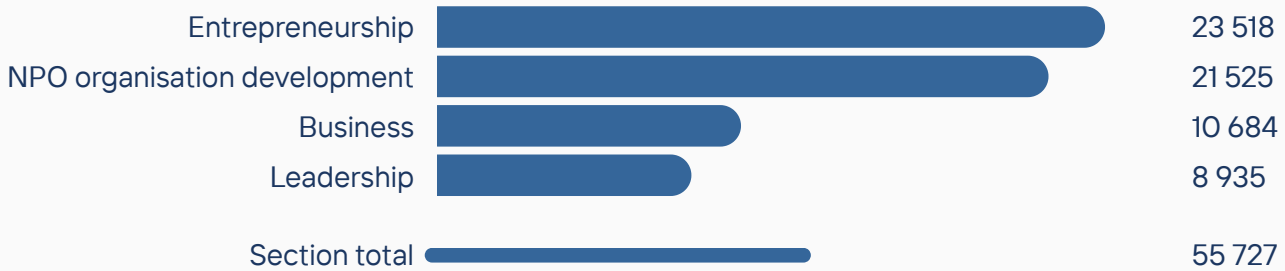
Trade Skills

7 Categories



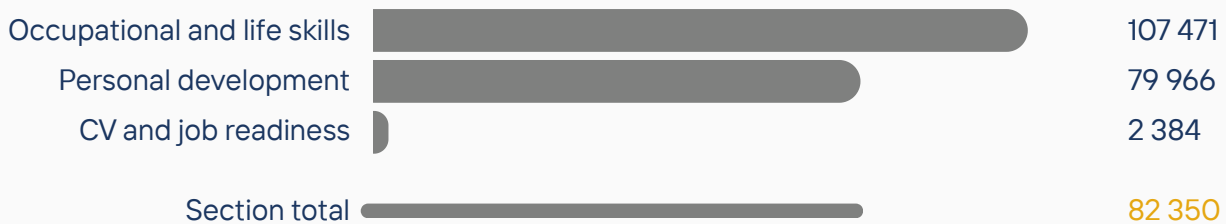
Business development

4 Categories



Work readiness

3 Categories



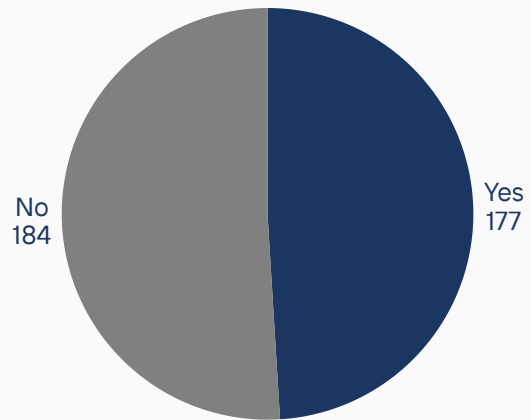
CRISIS SUPPORT

Another crucial area of service provision for South Africa is crisis support. For example, taxi strikes, weather conditions like fires or floods, and health emergencies are all issues that affect society and the economy. While already providing other services, 184 NPOs also give crisis support when needed (Figure 6).

NPOs providing crisis support are invaluable in mitigating the impacts of emergencies and disasters in South Africa. During taxi strikes, health crises, fires, floods, etc., these organisations offer critical assistance that can save lives and help communities recover more quickly.

Their support includes providing immediate relief, such as food, shelter, and medical care, as well as long-term recovery efforts like rebuilding homes and offering psychological support. By filling these crucial gaps, NPOs address the immediate needs of affected individuals and contribute to the overall resilience and stability of communities. This underscores the significant economic and social value of their work, as they help to reduce the long-term costs associated with crises and enhance the capacity of communities to withstand future challenges. Although the NPOs provide various crisis support, Table 2 outlines the most prevalent.

Figure 6: Does your organisation provide any support in crises?



Source: authors' own.

Table 2: Most prevalent crisis support



Source: Living Hope

Lindiwe's⁵ journey: the economic and human cost of gender-based violence – and the power of non-profit organisation collaboration

Gender-based violence (GBV) imposes a profound economic and social burden on South Africa. In 2019 alone, the nation faced losses exceeding R36 billion due to GBV-related expenses, including medical costs, diminished human capital, and judicial expenditures (McCain, 2022). This staggering figure underscores the urgent need for comprehensive interventions to address and mitigate GBV's pervasive impact.

The story of Lindiwe, an undocumented immigrant residing in Kayamandi, exemplifies the harrowing realities many women face. After enduring prolonged abuse from her husband, which escalated to violence against their newborn child, Lindiwe found herself in dire need of a safe haven. Compounding her predicament were the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, including shelter overcrowding and travel restrictions that prevented her from reaching her supportive sister in Johannesburg. Her undocumented status further deterred her from seeking assistance from law enforcement, leaving her feeling trapped and vulnerable.

In response to such pressing issues, organisations like Connect Network – a collaborative alliance of over 90 NPOs and churches dedicated to supporting women and children at risk in South Africa – have initiated trauma-informed programmes focused on GBV. Developed through the collective expertise of NPO leaders, these programmes are designed to equip NPO personnel and business staff with the necessary skills to recognise, understand, and effectively respond to GBV-related trauma. The training has been integrated into learning management systems, enhancing accessibility and facilitating widespread implementation across various sectors.

Through the support of such initiatives, Lindiwe was able to find refuge in a women's shelter affiliated with Connect Network. The shelter provided her and her newborn with immediate safety and assisted her in obtaining residency documents. With newfound legal standing, Lindiwe secured employment, enabling her to support her family and embark on a path towards healing and independence. Lindiwe's journey highlights the critical role that trauma-informed programmes and collaborative efforts play in addressing GBV. By integrating such practices into staff development programmes and fostering partnerships across sectors, companies are better positioned to support survivors and contribute to broader societal efforts to reduce GBV. This collaborative approach addresses the immediate needs of those affected. It fosters a culture of awareness and prevention, helping to alleviate the extensive economic and social costs associated with GBV in South Africa.

⁵ Name changed for anonymity purposes.





BENEFICIARIES

MAKING A DIFFERENCE AND CHANGING LIVES

NPOs are dedicated to making a tangible difference in the lives of their beneficiaries, addressing a wide range of needs and challenges. This section explores the number of beneficiaries served, the capacity-building efforts for other organisations, and the types of programmes they run.

Despite being among the more economically active regions in South Africa, Cape Town, the Cape Winelands, and Overstrand collectively reflect substantial gaps in access to essential services, with many residents depending on NPOs to meet basic social, educational, and healthcare needs. In Cape Town alone, approximately 12.72% of the population – roughly 644 000 people – are estimated to lack consistent access to these critical services (City of Cape Town, 2013; Overstrand Municipality, 2015; Municipalities of South Africa, 2022; Wesgro, 2024; World Population Review, 2025). Access issues in the Cape Winelands and Overstrand are particularly pronounced in rural and peri-urban areas, where limited infrastructure and resource constraints hinder service delivery. Here, NPOs are indispensable in supporting marginalised and underserved populations, addressing the multidimensional nature of poverty and inequality across the region. Given the combined population of over six million, the demand for community-based, NPO-led services is significant and essential for fostering inclusive development and bridging long-standing service delivery gaps.



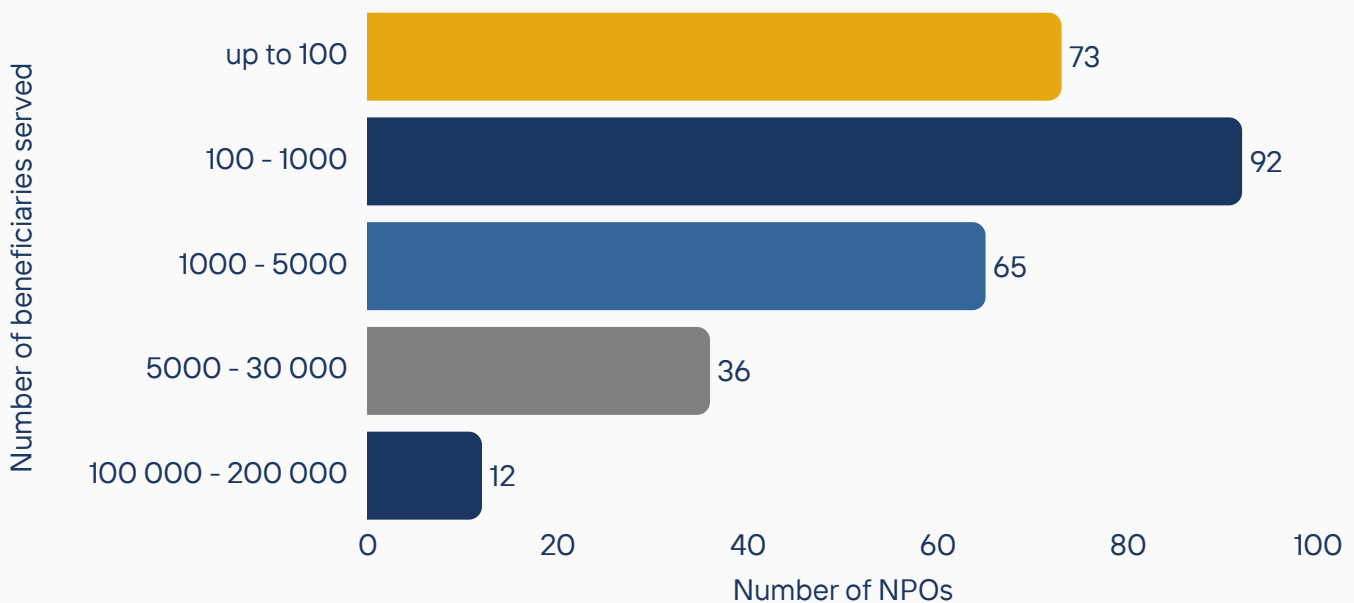
Source: Pebbles Project

NUMBER OF BENEFICIARIES

The reach of NPOs is extensive, with many organisations serving thousands of beneficiaries annually. By providing essential services and support, these NPOs play a pivotal role in improving the lives of individuals and communities across the area. It is inspiring to note that roughly 100 NPOs surveyed serve between 1 000 and 30 000 beneficiaries, as outlined in Figure 7. These numbers are staggering, considering the number of NPOs that were not surveyed. These organisations do not necessarily market how many people they serve, but the impact of their service is immense. This is also linked to previously mentioned research: tending to individuals' well-being has a broader effect on economic inclusion and well-being.

Figure 7: Number of beneficiaries served

Distribution of NPOs by Number of Beneficiaries Served in Cape Town

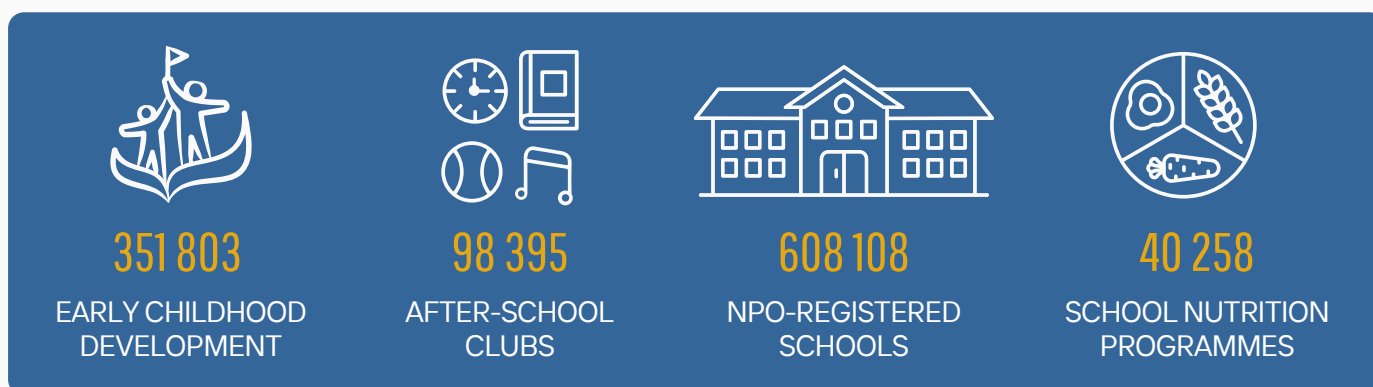


Source: authors own

EDUCATION

From the previous section, it was discovered that most NPOs have a touch point or a sole focus on education. Education and low literacy rates are significant problems in South Africa, and numerous organisations aim to fill the gaps that the government and private sector do not reach. In this regard, these organisations are vital in educating individuals at various levels who otherwise might not have had access to such opportunities. Zooming in on education, the aim was to know how many learners benefit from education support opportunities offered by NPOs in the region – see Table 3.

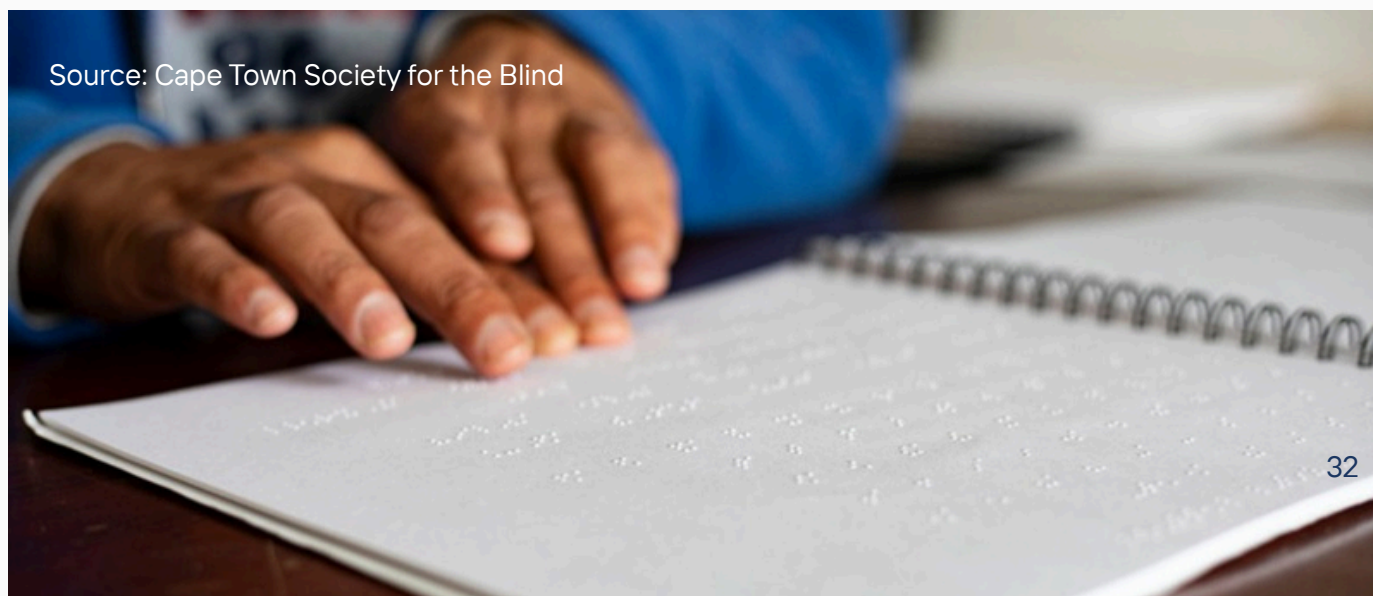
Table 3: Learners benefiting from education support opportunities



In total, 1 098 564 people benefit from NPOs' education support, which only considers those NPOs surveyed. One can only imagine the scaled impact when more NPOs are considered.

Most recent data shows that the combined number of school-going children, including those enrolled in ECD programmes, across the Cape Winelands, Overstrand, and Cape Town areas is estimated at over 1.42 million. This total includes learners in grades R to 12, those with special education needs, and children attending both public and independent schools, as well as those enrolled in ECD centres. The Cape Winelands contributes approximately 200 500 learners, Overstrand around 18 800, and Cape Town an estimated 1.2 million (Statistics South Africa, 2024). This substantial and growing learner population underscores the scale of educational demand in the region. It highlights the importance of strategic planning, infrastructure investment, and equitable resource distribution to meet the diverse learning needs of children across these areas.

Source: Cape Town Society for the Blind



Lungile's⁶ journey: empowering youth leadership through the Gold Youth Development Agency (Gold-Youth) and the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation

Lungile grew up in a township outside Cape Town, facing limited opportunities and a lack of role models. Her leadership journey began when she joined the Gold Peer Education Programme, which equipped her with communication, leadership, and social advocacy skills. As a peer educator, Lungile led workshops on health, gender equality, and youth empowerment, gradually becoming an advocate for change in her community.

Her passion for community development aligned with the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, which supports young leaders with entrepreneurial potential. After applying to the foundation, Lungile was selected for its programme, gaining mentorship, funding, and a network of like-minded leaders. The foundation's support allowed her to expand her entrepreneurship and social innovation skills, empowering her to establish her own NPO focused on empowering young women through education and leadership training.

Lungile's work has had a tangible impact, not only in her local community, but also across sub-Saharan Africa, thanks to the foundation's network. Through her NPO, she has launched initiatives that address GBV, economic empowerment, and mental health, as well as provide scholarships and leadership opportunities for young women.

Lungile's story demonstrates the transformative power of combining peer education with entrepreneurial support. By partnering with organisations like Gold-Youth and the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation, Lungile has become a leader who is contributing to social and economic development, showing how youth empowerment can drive long-lasting change.

⁶ Name changed for anonymity purposes.



Source: SOZO



NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION CAPACITY BUILDING

A distinct yet often under-recognised group within the non-profit landscape is capacity-building NPOs. These organisations focus their efforts on supporting other non-profits, rather than serving individual beneficiaries directly.

Figure 8: Organisations as beneficiaries



Source: authors' own

Figure 8 reveals that more than half of the surveyed NPOs identified other organisations – not individuals – as their beneficiaries. This underscores the pivotal role of capacity-building NPOs in enhancing the non-profit sector's overall effectiveness and sustainability. Rather than delivering direct services, these NPOs focus on strengthening peer organisations' operational and strategic capabilities through training, mentorship, and resource sharing. By investing in the growth of others, they contribute to a stronger, more resilient network of support services. For example, one NPO reported supporting 904 health-focused organisations, while another works with over 700 pre-schools, demonstrating the far-reaching impact that capacity-building efforts can have on service delivery across the sector.

Source: Taking Care of Business



Figure 9: Areas in which organisations are served



Figure 5b: Areas of focus for organisational activities as categorised by the Department of Social Development (reproduced from Figure 5a to contextualise the reach of capacity-building service providers)



As reflected in Figure 9, a significant portion of NPOs in Cape Town fall within the expressive category – those that focus on building the capacity of peer organisations, rather than delivering services directly to beneficiaries. These NPOs offer vital support, such as counselling, mental health services, leadership mentoring, resource networking, and comprehensive training, across various areas of organisational development. This approach demonstrates how NPOs operate within an ecosystem of support, recognising that collaborative capacity building amplifies collective impact. By empowering peer organisations, these NPOs not only extend their reach, but also contribute to a more interconnected and effective social sector. The graph underscores the importance of these capacity-building efforts, revealing a sector in which organisations are interdependent and strengthened through shared resources and mutual development. To better understand the reach of capacity-building service providers, the distribution of NPO activity areas is revisited (see Figure 5b). This provides a useful lens through which to assess the cross-section of organisations being supported. Therefore, it is essential to support these expressive NPOs, as their behind-the-scenes contributions enhance the sustainability and overall effectiveness of the non-profit landscape in South Africa.

JOB CREATION

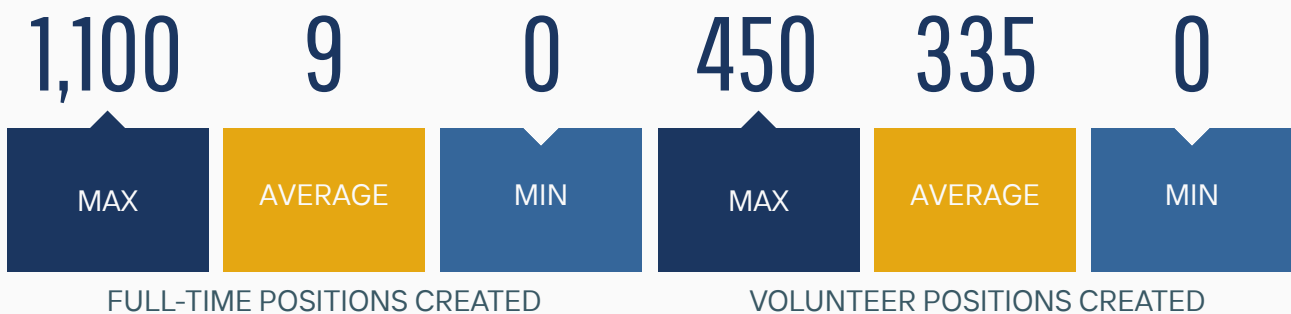
ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION BY CREATING EMPLOYMENT

NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS' ROLE IN EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

NPOs in South Africa are crucial to the economy, creating employment opportunities across various levels. This section explores the significant impact of NPOs on job creation, detailing the number of full-time and part-time employees, the involvement of volunteers, the provision of stipends for volunteers, and the engagement of consultants. NPOs contribute to economic growth and enhance community development and social cohesion by offering diverse employment opportunities. This analysis highlights the multifaceted ways in which NPOs support livelihoods and foster economic stability within the nation.

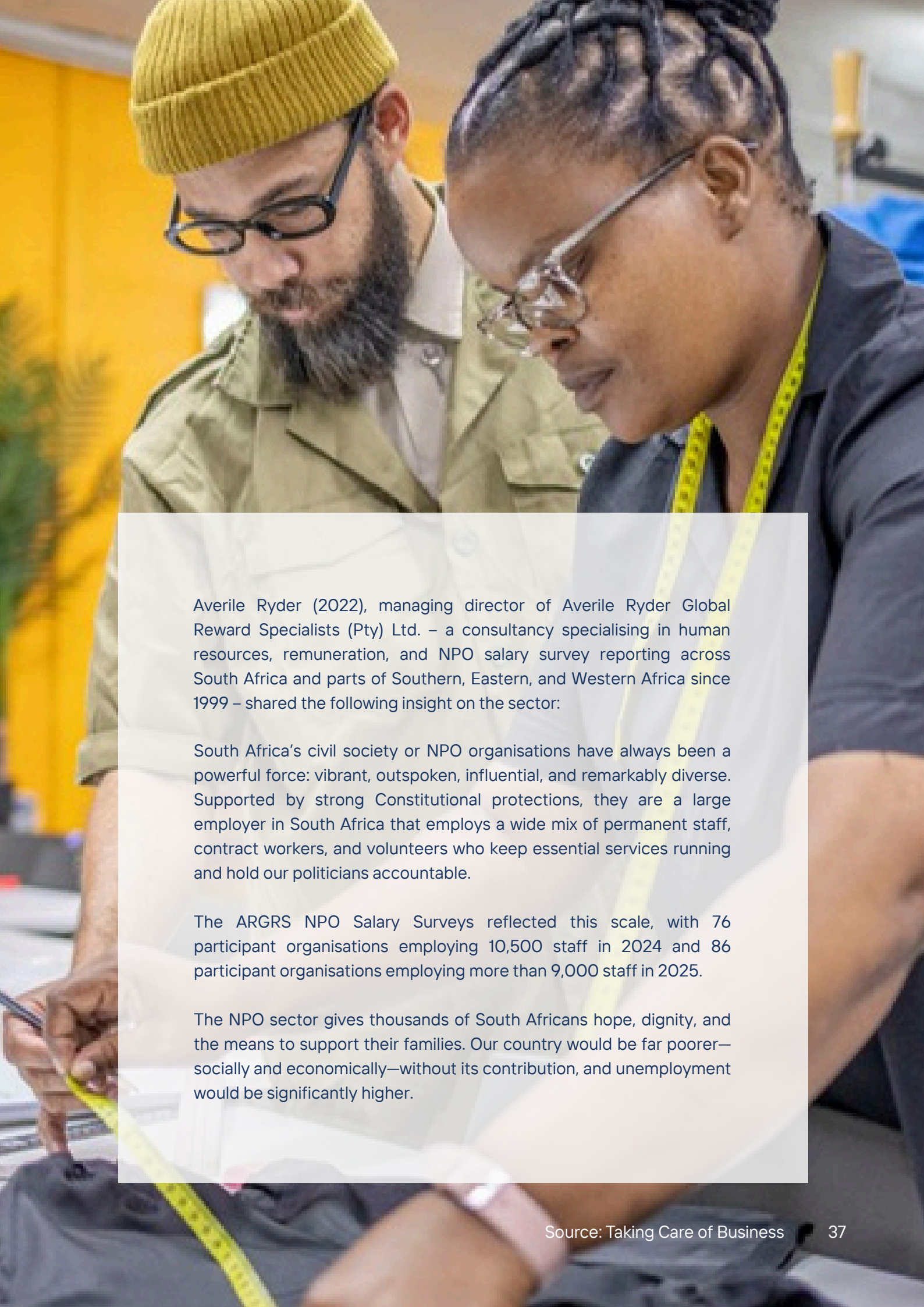
The organisations were asked how many new job positions have been created in their organisations in the last three years. This provides more insight regarding the role of NPOs in job creation, regardless of whether they can pay market-related salaries. Refer to Table 5.

Table 5: Number of jobs created in non-profit organisations over last three years



Source: authors' own

Across the 361 organisations surveyed, 21 398 individuals are employed – excluding consultants – highlighting the scale and significance of the sector's workforce contribution. Furthermore, the non-profit sector relies predominantly on funding from donors and other external sources. Consequently, NPO boards must carefully consider all stakeholders involved in service delivery, ensuring good governance and effective management of people, including employees' remuneration and rewards. While this report focuses on the number of people working in NPOs within the region, it does not currently address human resources (HR) practices concerning remuneration and rewards. However, we plan to explore this aspect in future studies.



Averile Ryder (2022), managing director of Averile Ryder Global Reward Specialists (Pty) Ltd. – a consultancy specialising in human resources, remuneration, and NPO salary survey reporting across South Africa and parts of Southern, Eastern, and Western Africa since 1999 – shared the following insight on the sector:

South Africa’s civil society or NPO organisations have always been a powerful force: vibrant, outspoken, influential, and remarkably diverse. Supported by strong Constitutional protections, they are a large employer in South Africa that employs a wide mix of permanent staff, contract workers, and volunteers who keep essential services running and hold our politicians accountable.

The ARGRS NPO Salary Surveys reflected this scale, with 76 participant organisations employing 10,500 staff in 2024 and 86 participant organisations employing more than 9,000 staff in 2025.

The NPO sector gives thousands of South Africans hope, dignity, and the means to support their families. Our country would be far poorer—socially and economically—without its contribution, and unemployment would be significantly higher.



FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME EMPLOYEES

When considering full-time employment, NPOs were asked how many staff they employ for a 40-hour work week. The numbers were staggering, seeing as this employment contributes significantly to the economy: one NPO employed up to 3 209 full-time employees, while the total full-time employment opportunities over the surveyed sample added up to 10 685.

The numbers looked slightly different when considering part-time employees (less than 40 hours per week). The maximum number of part-time staff that one NPO employed was 1 250, while the total number of part-time opportunities over the surveyed sample was 4 098. It seems that NPOs make more use of full-time employees, while we would perhaps expect them to utilise part-time staff more, because it requires a smaller salary budget. However, this finding is positive for the economic outlook of job creation by NPO entities.

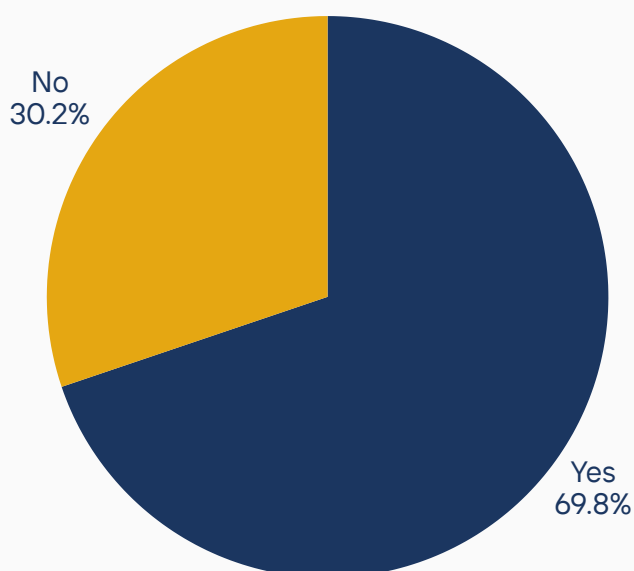
VOLUNTEERS

While the expectation might be that all NPOs use volunteers, only 252 NPOs indicated that they had volunteers. Refer to Figure 10 for the results.

The maximum number of full-time volunteers employed by an NPO is 100, while the average across the group is five volunteers. These numbers change drastically when looking at part-time volunteers. The maximum number of part-time volunteers that an NPO employs is 1 656, while the average across the group declines to 24. Although volunteers are not regarded as full-time or part-time employees, these individuals often receive stipends from organisations. As a result, there is still an economic contribution, as NPOs provide income to individuals who might otherwise not be able to generate an income. The total number of full-time volunteers across the group was 1 027, while the total number of part-time volunteers was 5 588. When asked whether these organisations (252 that have volunteers) provide stipends for their volunteers, almost 70% indicated 'no' (see Figure 11).

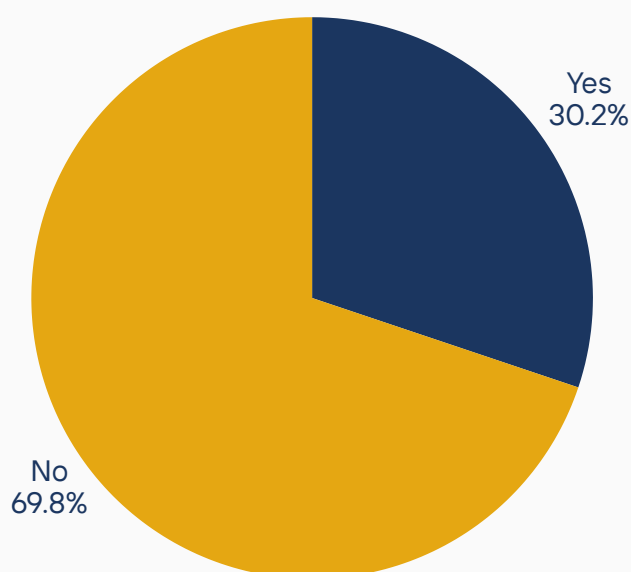
Considering that out of 252 NPOs that have volunteers, only 176 NPOs with volunteers do not provide a stipend. It is mostly part-time volunteers that they make use of, with a total number of 4 749 across the group. The number of full-time volunteers across this group was 566 (also not getting a stipend).

Figure 10: Does your organisation have volunteers?



Source: authors' own

Figure 11: Do you provide stipends for volunteers?



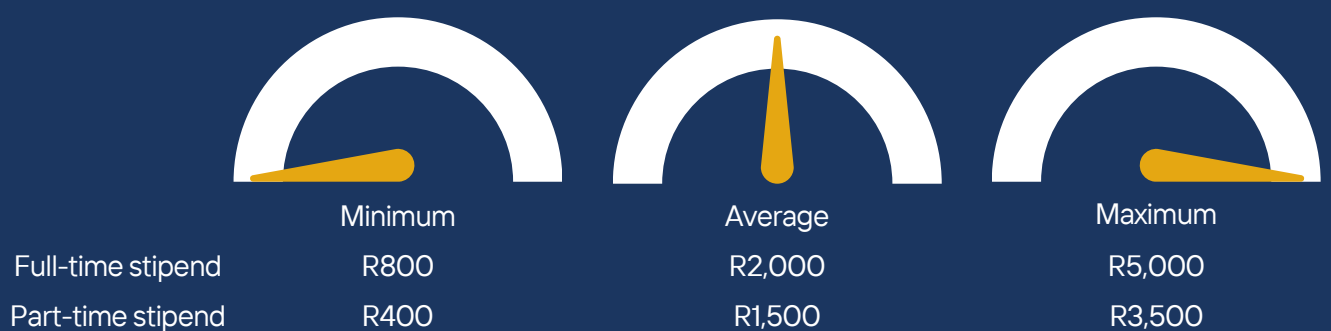
Source: authors' own

Potentially, due to funding issues, NPOs are using part-time volunteers as they feel less obliged to pay them a stipend, which they cannot afford. One NPO specifically indicated that what they pay their volunteers depends on the available funds and often funds are not available. It is also interesting to note that, regardless of the lack of stipends, these NPOs still attract volunteers who are willing to work for them. This can indicate that the level of volunteerism in South Africa is high and people want to make a difference. If NPOs have more funds to provide proper stipends, they may be able to get even more support from volunteers. Additionally, they will be able to give more individuals a form of income, which directly adds to the economy. Table 4 delineates some of the findings from comparing what NPOs pay full-time volunteers to the stipends for part-time volunteers.



Source: Pebbles Project

Table 4: Stipends paid to volunteers



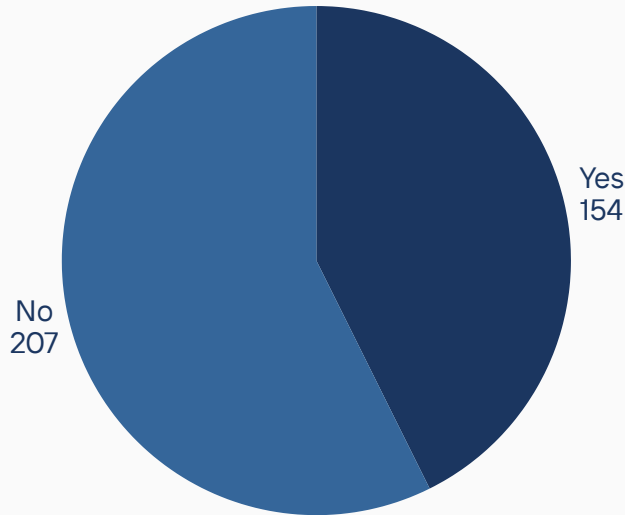
Source: authors' own

It seems organisations, in general, pay part-time volunteers less than they would pay full-time volunteers. However, this could also be linked back to the statement of an organisation that it all depends on the funds available. Perhaps having part-time volunteers makes it easier to pay smaller stipends, as they may be more satisfied with it than full-time volunteers.

CONSULTANTS

Lastly, NPOs were asked whether they use consultants. As outlined in Figure 12, 57% (or 207) indicated that they do not.

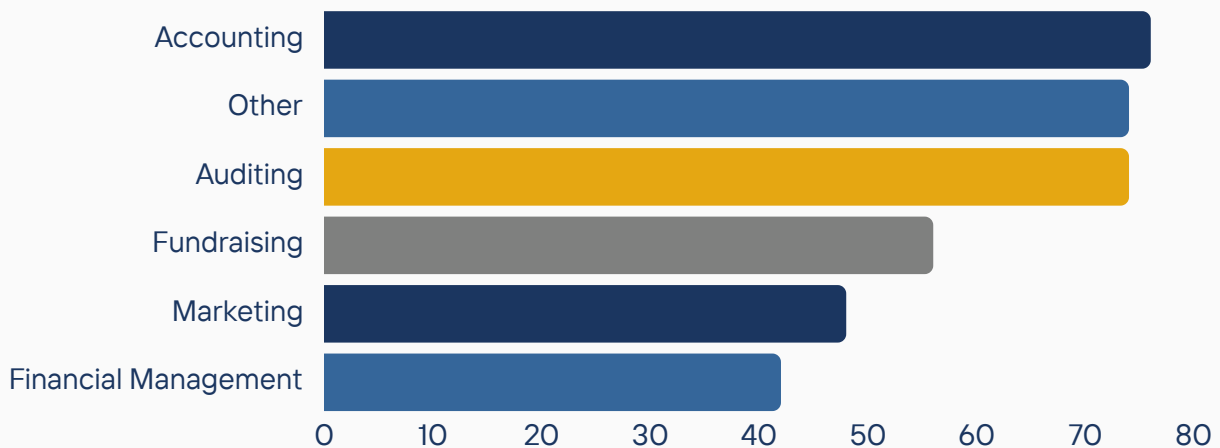
Figure 12: Does your organisation use consultants?



Source: authors' own

The average number of consultants these NPOs use is no more than four, with a maximum of 15 consultants that one NPO uses at a time. The average monthly payment for consultant services is R11 700, with a few NPOs indicating that they receive consultant services pro bono, as this is the consultants' way of contributing to the NPOs. A few organisations stated that it depends on their required services, which they perhaps do not have in-house. These specific areas of expertise can range from a variety of different options as to why NPOs appoint consultants (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Areas of expertise of appointed consultants



Source: authors' own

Accounting and auditing are among the primary services that NPOs require, which could be attributed to the lack of funds to pay a market-related salary for their own in-house employees. Items that were listed as 'other' include:



Source: authors' own

ACROSS THE 361 ORGANISATIONS SURVEYED, 21,398 INDIVIDUALS ARE EMPLOYED – EXCLUDING CONSULTANTS – HIGHLIGHTING THE SCALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SECTOR'S WORKFORCE CONTRIBUTION.



Source: Taking Care of Business

From hungry student to empowered entrepreneur: a story of transformation

In the heart of South Africa's Western Cape, the Peninsula School Feeding Association (PSFA) has been a beacon of hope for thousands of students. One such student, Angela,⁷ began her educational journey at HP Williams Primary School in St Helena Bay. Coming from a community with scarce resources, Angela often attended school with an empty stomach, struggling to concentrate in her lessons.

The introduction of PSFA's school feeding programme changed Angela's life. No longer distracted by hunger, she excelled in her studies, her attendance improved, and her overall well-being flourished. However, the impact did not stop there. Recognising the importance of community involvement, PSFA partnered with local organisations to recruit and train unemployed women from the area as food handlers for the feeding programme. These women received accredited food preparation, safety, and budgeting training, equipping them with valuable skills.

Inspired by the opportunities around her, Angela pursued further education and training in culinary arts. Today, she runs a successful catering business, providing nutritious meals to schools and events across the region. Her journey from a hungry student to an empowered entrepreneur is a testament to the transformative power of community-based initiatives. Angela's story highlights the importance of addressing immediate nutritional needs and underscores the long-term economic benefits of investing in community development and skill building.

Angela's success is part of a broader impact achieved by PSFA, which currently provides daily nutritious cooked meals to 34 942 learners across 413 educational institutions in the Western Cape (Peninsula School Feeding Association, 2025). The organisation also empowers local communities by training volunteers – primarily unemployed women – in food preparation and safety, fostering economic development and community cohesion.

This story exemplifies how NPO-led programmes can create a ripple effect, encouraging economic growth, empowering individuals, and strengthening communities. Angela's story is a shining example of how targeted interventions can lead to sustainable economic contributions, illustrating the profound impact of NPOs on the broader economy.

⁷ Name changed for anonymity purposes.



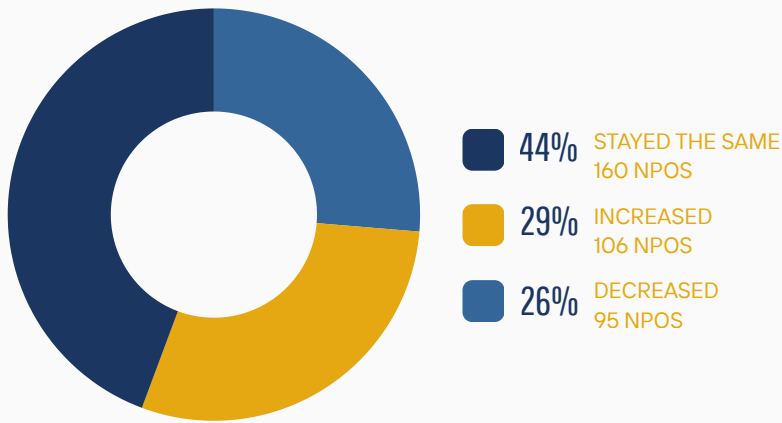
INCOME GENERATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY:

THE ROLE OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS IN FINANCIAL
CONTRIBUTION AND RESILIENCE

INCOME GENERATION FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A snapshot of how South African non-profit organisations generate income, manage reserves, and sustain their mission.

FIGURE 14: INCOME CHANGE IN THE LAST THREE YEARS



1 IN 4 NPOS SAW THEIR INCOME DECREASE OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS.

44% INCOME STAYED FLAT – STAGNATION WITHOUT GROWTH IN A RISING-COST ENVIRONMENT IS ITS OWN RISK.

R639K

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME PER NPO

R1.49B

TOTAL COMBINED SECTOR INCOME

619K

TOTAL DONORS ACROSS ALL NPOS

361

NPOS SURVEYED

FIGURE 15: SOURCES OF INCOME

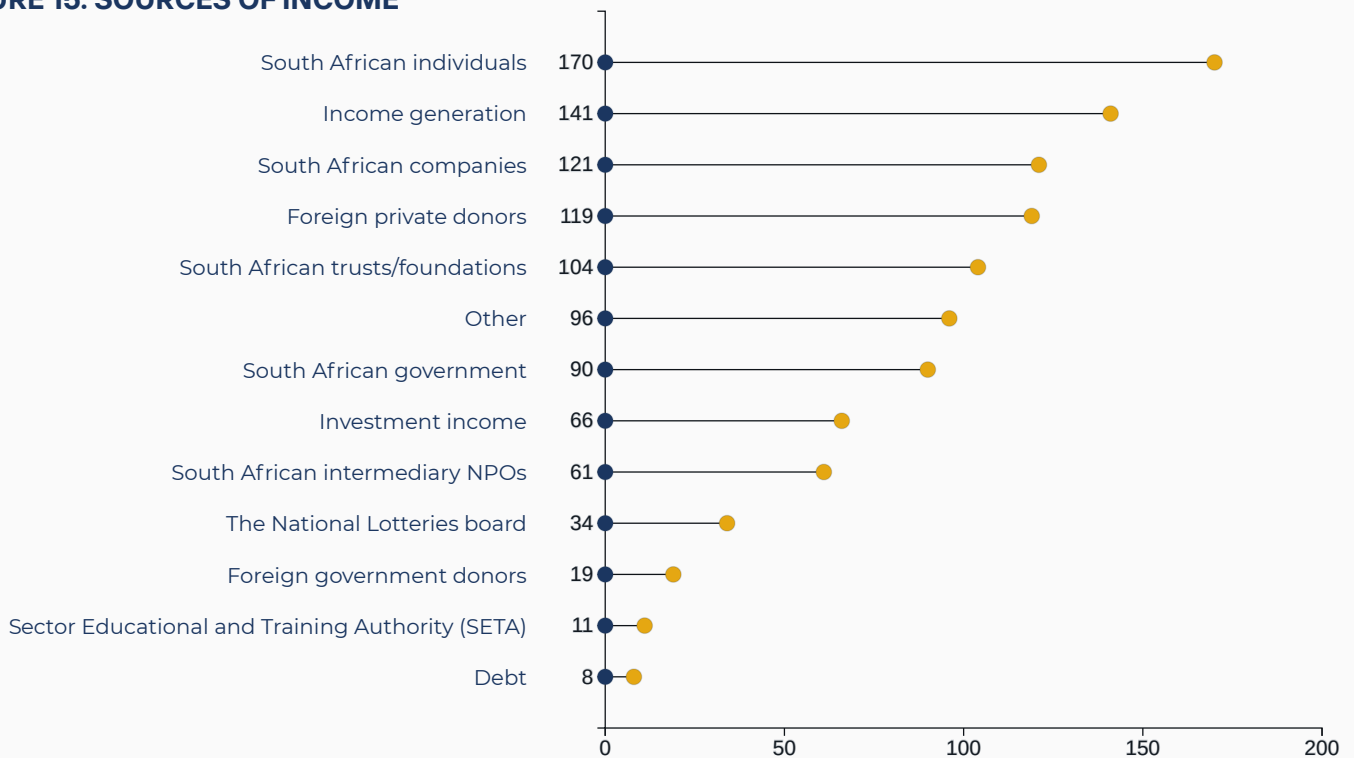


FIGURE 16: DISTRIBUTION OF INCOME GENERATION STRATEGIES AMONG PARTICIPATING NPOS

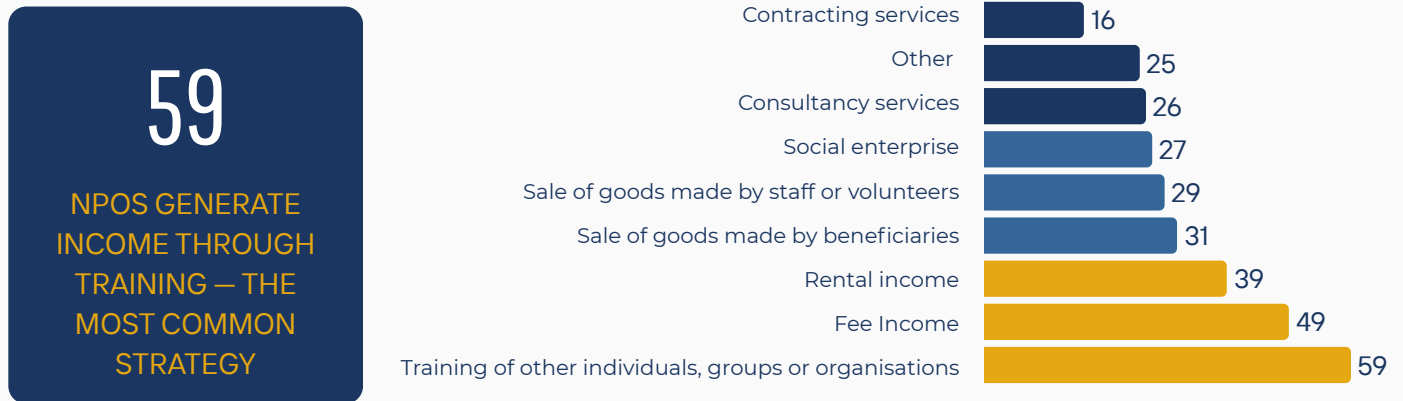


FIGURE 17: CURRENT OPERATING COSTS IN RESERVES

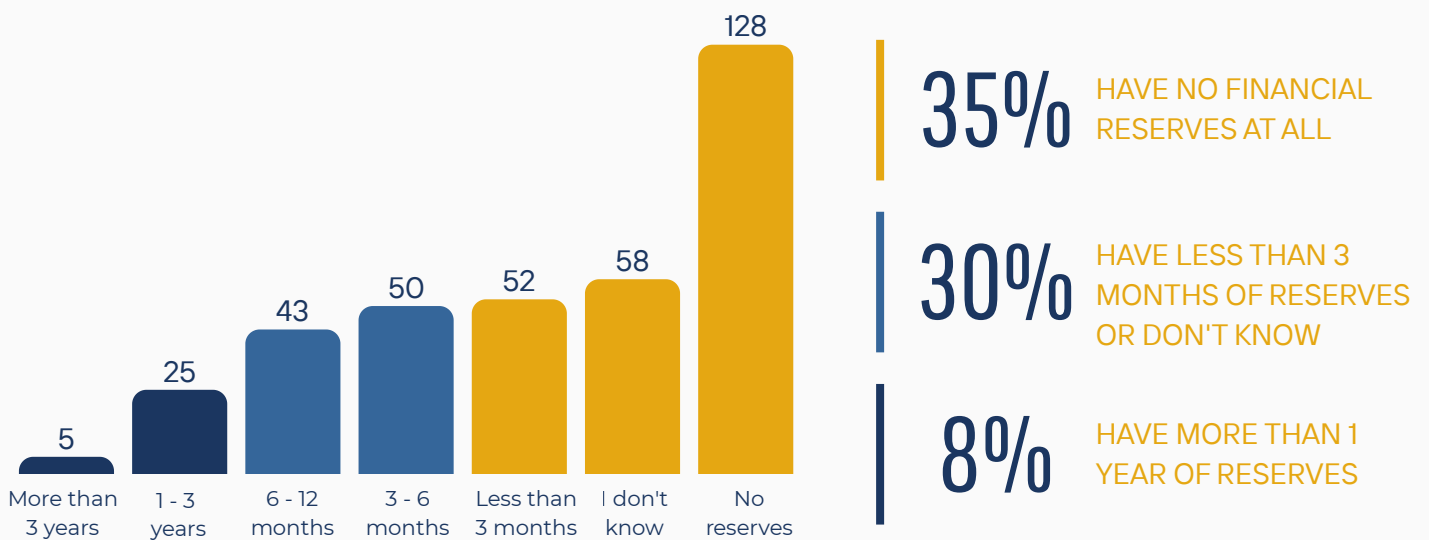


TABLE 6: NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS' ANNUAL INCOME AND DONORS

	Total annual income (last completed financial year)	Number of donors (last completed financial year)
Average	R5 639 159	1 984
Max	R256 350 074	400 000
Min	R0	0
Total combined	R1 488 737 994	619 023

Sustainable income generation is crucial for the long-term viability of NPOs. This section examines the various strategies NPOs employ to secure financial stability, including diverse sources of income, corporate support, and fundraising efforts. By leveraging multiple income streams, NPOs can ensure consistent funding to support their programmes and initiatives. This analysis highlights the importance of financial sustainability in enabling NPOs to continue their vital work, adapt to changing circumstances, and expand their impact within communities. In addition to assessing financial resilience, this section tallies the collective financial contribution of NPOs to the Cape Town economy, illustrating their role not just as service providers, but as economic actors that generate and circulate significant resources within the local context.

SUMMARY OF ANNUAL INCOME

From Table 6, it is staggering to see that the average annual income is roughly R5.6 million. This can be compared to the income of small and medium enterprises. This shows that NPOs can operate even as small businesses, while providing crucial and often life-changing services to society without profit.

An even more staggering number is the total combined annual income in the last financial year across the group of NPOs included in this report: more than R1.4 billion. As for sources of income, Table 6 shows almost 620 000 donors support the 361 NPOs in this report. Should the report be expanded, the numbers will continue to grow. It is evident that various donors, individuals, institutions, and organisations believe in NPOs and support their endeavours.

Comparatively, the DSD's spend on NPOs for the 2025 budget entailed 1 185 organisations and R1 080 355 627 (R1.08 billion) for the whole Western Cape region (Western Cape DSD 2025). This suggests that the 361 NPOs surveyed contribute substantially to the economy by generating significant non-governmental income. While some of their funding comes from the DSD, most of their R1.4 billion in revenue is raised from non-government sources, highlighting their ability to attract private funding, engage in income-generating activities, and secure partnerships.

This demonstrates the NPOs' independence and their role as key economic players – not only relying on government support, but also contributing to economic growth through their fundraising efforts, social enterprise activities, and partnerships with businesses and other stakeholders nationally and internationally. It underscores these organisations' resilience and financial sustainability, which are vital to the broader economy.

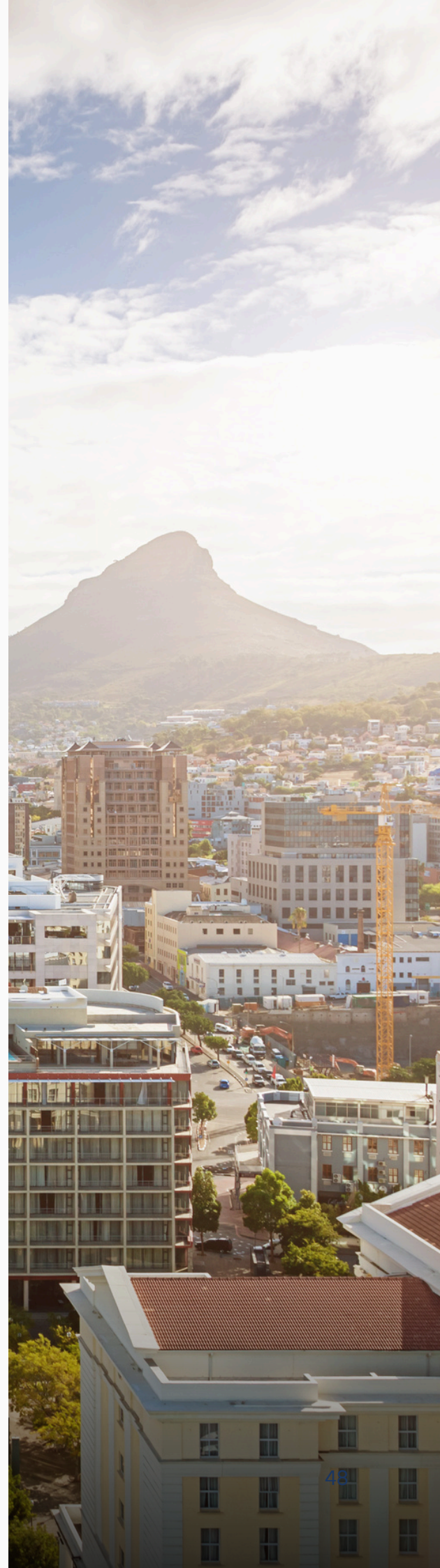


Over the past three years, the funding levels of the 361 NPOs surveyed showed varying trends, as outlined in Figure 14. Of the respondents, 160 NPOs reported that their funding remained consistent throughout the period. In contrast, 95 NPOs experienced a decrease in funding, reflecting the financial challenges many in the sector face. Contrastingly, 106 NPOs saw an increase in funding, highlighting a positive trend for these organisations. These fluctuations in income underscore the vulnerability of NPOs to external economic factors and donor priorities, further emphasising the need for flexible HR systems and diversified funding strategies.

Figure 15 presents the various sources of income. It is interesting to note how the support from South African individuals and foreign private donors – not necessarily companies or government – stands out from the data.

Primary sources of income listed as 'Other' in Figure 15 include support from churches, school fees paid by beneficiaries, fundraising activities, and grassroots. Grassroots refer to contributions from the communities the NPOs work in. Individuals in the community will often see the value and the struggles of the NPOs that make a difference in their communities and will assist them with contributions.

Many NPOs are adopting a social enterprise model to reduce their reliance on external donations, where they generate their own income by offering goods and services for payment. This shift allows NPOs to become more financially independent, enabling them to reinvest earnings into their missions and ensure long-term sustainability. As a result, more organisations are exploring innovative ways to blend social impact with revenue generation, such as providing fee-based services, selling products, or engaging in social entrepreneurship. However, not all NPOs can implement this model. Those offering services that are inherently community-focused or heavily reliant on donations, such as healthcare, education, or social welfare, often find it challenging to generate income through sales. External funding remains crucial to these organisations' operations and service delivery.



Respondents were asked to identify all the ways their organisations generate income. As shown in Figure 16 organisations commonly use multiple income generation strategies. Training services emerged as the most frequently cited income source, with 59 organisations providing training to other individuals, groups, or organisations. Fee income was the second most common source (49 organisations), followed by rental income (39 organisations).

Other significant income sources included the sale of goods made by beneficiaries (31 organisations), sale of goods made by staff or volunteers (29 organisations), social enterprise activities (27 organisations), and consultancy services (26 organisations). Twenty-five organisations reported 'other' income sources not captured in the predefined categories, while contracting services was the least common option, selected by 16 organisations. These results indicate that most NPOs employ diversified income generation strategies, combining multiple revenue streams to sustain their operations.



Source: SOZO

Interestingly, regardless of having annual income for their operations, 128 NPOs have no operational cost reserves (see Figure 17), which means they are in constant danger of being unable to survive. Only five organisations have operating costs in reserves for more than three years, while 14% could survive for less than three months. This finding highlights a critical issue facing many NPOs: insufficient operational cost reserves.

The absence of operational cost reserves places NPOs in a precarious financial position. Without these reserves, organisations cannot cushion against unexpected financial shortfalls, such as sudden drops in donations or unforeseen expenses (Dialogue Knowledge Hub, 2024). This financial instability can jeopardise their ability to continue providing essential services and fulfilling their missions. Having robust financial reserves can enhance donor confidence. Donors are more likely to support organisations that demonstrate financial stability and prudent management of resources (National Council of Nonprofits, 2025). Conversely, the lack of reserves can raise red flags and potentially deter funding.



AGILITY IN ACTION

We supported a Cape Town-based NPO facing a sudden funding shortfall by strengthening their budgeting and forecasting systems. With better cash flow visibility and internal financial processes, they could adapt without cutting core services – building lasting resilience in the face of uncertainty.

– EM Solutions

Source: SOZO

In a funding environment marked by uncertainty, financial agility has become essential for NPOs. The ability to adapt quickly to shifts in donor support allows NPOs to maintain service delivery even amid financial disruption.

One Cape Town-based NPO faced a significant funding gap after a key donor unexpectedly withdrew support. With core programmes at risk, the organisation needed to act quickly. They contacted EM Solutions for support in strengthening their financial systems.

We worked together to improve budgeting and forecasting processes, focusing on cash flow visibility and scenario planning. This enabled the NPO to make informed decisions and adjust its spending without compromising essential services.

They also explored alternative income sources, such as local fundraising and partnerships, that had not been fully developed.

The shift was not only about tools and templates. By embedding stronger financial management practices internally, the team built the confidence to respond proactively to future challenges. What made the difference was external advice and a commitment to building internal capacity for long-term resilience.

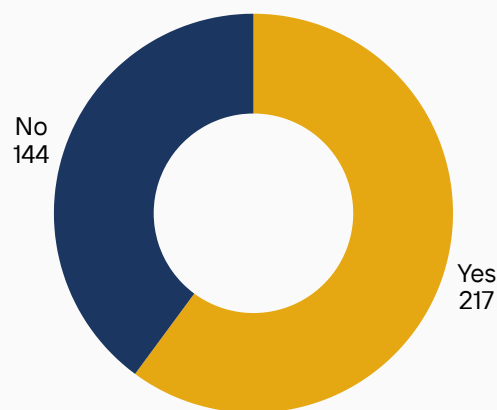
This experience highlights how targeted financial capacity building can help NPOs remain responsive and mission-focused, even when external funding becomes unpredictable.

DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING

NPOs often rely on various donations to support their missions and operations. While cash contributions are common, non-cash donations are crucial in enhancing the resources available to these organisations. These donations can come in many forms, each presenting unique opportunities and challenges.

More than 60% of the organisations indicated they received non-cash donations (see Figure 18). Some of the prevalent non-cash donation items include clothing, food, stationery, equipment of various sorts, and furniture.

FIGURE 18: DID YOU RECEIVE NON-CASH DONATIONS?



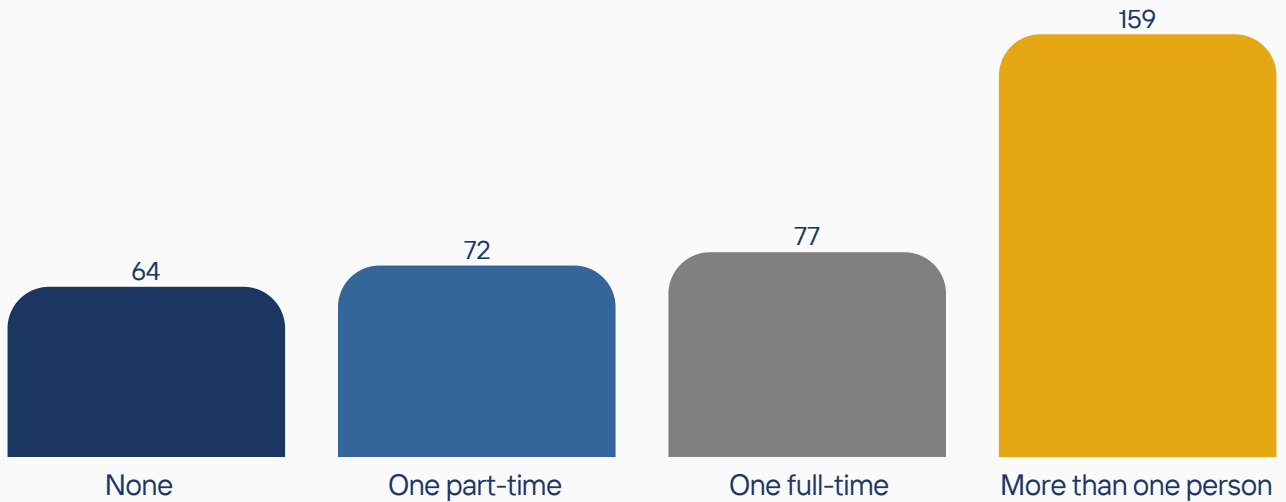
Source: authors' own.

Zooming in on fundraising, we investigated how many staff members or consultants manage the organisation's fundraising efforts and how much of the operational budget is allocated to fundraising activities (Figure 19). This provides further insight into the resources dedicated to securing financial support and the strategic focus on sustainability. While adopting a social enterprise model represents a growing trend for NPOs seeking to generate their own income, it is important to note that fundraising remains a crucial source of financial support for many organisations.

Despite efforts to diversify income streams through training, fees, and sales activities, external funding through donations, grants, and sponsorships continues to be key to NPOs' sustainability and the successful delivery of their projects. Fundraising allows NPOs to bridge financial gaps that arise from fluctuating revenues and ensure they can carry out their missions, especially for services that cannot be monetised or where the social impact outweighs potential profits. The combination of own income generation and traditional fundraising is vital in ensuring NPOs can continue serving their communities effectively.

Source: SOZO

FIGURE 19: STAFF/CONSULTANTS MANAGING FUNDRAISING



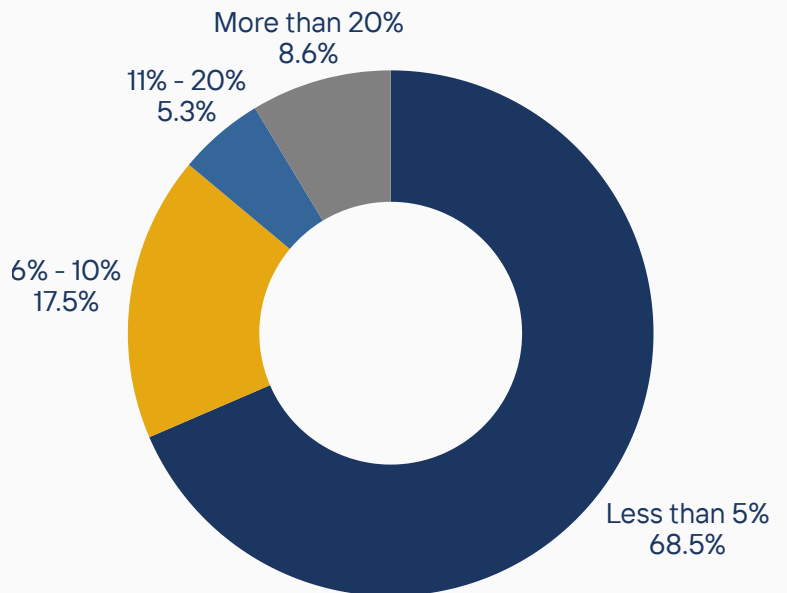
Source: authors' own.

However, donations are often not sustainable and organisations must be equipped to generate their own income through fundraising. Fundraising is a critical lifeline for NPOs, especially those that lack substantial external support and have minimal cash reserves. Unlike for-profit entities, NPOs often have limited financial resources and rely heavily on donations and grants to sustain their operations.

As shown in Figure 20, most NPOs allocate less than 5% of their operating budgets to fundraising. At the same time, earlier findings indicate that many NPOs face significant constraints in their overall operational budgets—making effective fundraising capacity even more critical.

These limitations highlight a key gap: while fundraising is essential for sustainability, many NPOs lack the resources to invest in it adequately. This is where support from the business community becomes particularly valuable. Strategic collaboration between businesses and NPOs can unlock powerful synergies by combining financial resources, expertise, and networks.

FIGURE 20: OPERATIONAL BUDGET ALLOCATED TO FUNDRAISING



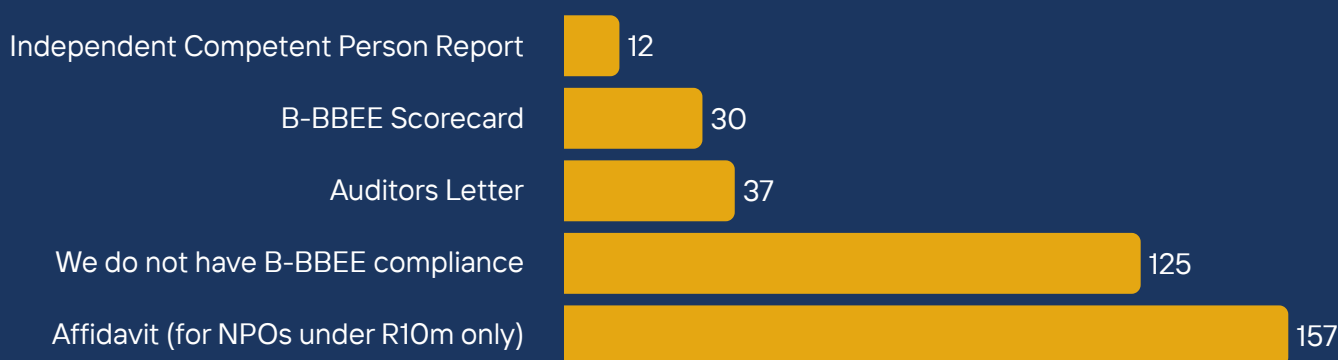
Source: authors' own.

Such partnerships not only strengthen the fundraising capacity of NPOs but also enable businesses to engage meaningfully in social impact initiatives, fostering a more robust culture of corporate social responsibility and community engagement.

CORPORATE SOCIAL INVESTMENT

According to the B-BBEE Codes of Good Practice, Code Series 400 socio-economic development (SED) (Department of Trade and Industry, 2007), companies are encouraged to allocate 1% of their net profit after tax to SED initiatives that promote sustainable economic access for black South Africans. The codes do not prescribe how SED contributions must be spent by beneficiary organisations, provided the contribution benefits at least 75% black beneficiaries. As a result, SED funding – particularly smaller contributions (often up to R100 000) – may be treated as unrestricted funding, enabling recipient NPOs to apply funds to essential operational costs, such as salaries, rent, and administrative expenses. This makes SED one of the few sources of flexible funding available to the non-profit sector. NPOs were asked about their B-BBEE compliance letters – refer to Figure 21 for their answers.

FIGURE 21: TYPE OF BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT COMPLIANCE LETTERS



Source: authors' own

66%

HAVE B-BBEE CREDENTIALS

34%

NO B-BBEE CREDENTIALS

FIGURE 22: NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS AND BROAD-BASED BLACK ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT READINESS

Figure 21 reveals that more than one third of the surveyed NPOs (125 out of 361) lack the necessary B-BBEE compliance documentation, significantly hindering their ability to qualify for SED funding and excluding them from a vital stream of corporate social investment. Considering that many South African NPOs

serve communities where 75% or more of beneficiaries are classified as 'other than white', they are often already eligible under B-BBEE legislation (Republic of South Africa, 2013). For those with an annual turnover below R10 million, a simple affidavit confirming their beneficiary profile and income level suffices for compliance.

Figure 22 below provides insight into this question and indicates the split of NPOs surveyed that do not have the required B-BBEE credentials. This gap indicates a crucial need for capacity building within NPOs to help them navigate the complexities of business regulations and effectively access resources.

As highlighted earlier in this report, corporate South Africa contributed R12.7 billion to social investment in 2024, demonstrating that substantial funds are available to support well-governed and managed NPOs. Empowering these organisations with the knowledge and tools to unlock these resources and further strengthen their contributions to inclusive economic development is essential.



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

A CALL TO ACTION

HOW BUSINESSES CAN INCLUDE NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS

Businesses can integrate the services of NPOs into their corporate strategy by partnering with them to support shared social impact and staff development goals. Businesses can foster a more skilled and resilient workforce by leveraging NPOs' expertise in soft skills, such as informed trauma management and GBV, and hard skills like job readiness and industry-specific training. Many NPOs, particularly those registered with SETAs, utilise the SDL to provide specialised training, enabling employees to acquire essential competencies that enhance their job performance and career growth. This collaboration benefits the workforce and the business, creating a more productive and well-prepared team.

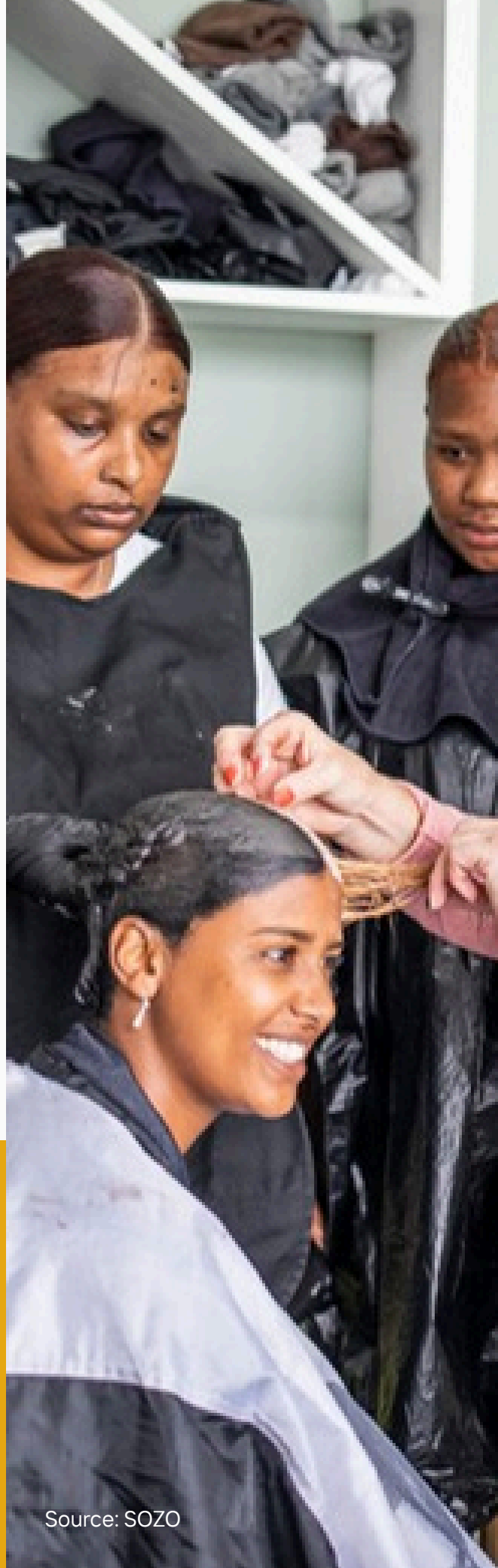
Businesses can leverage the services of NPOs as a key component of their CSR strategies to align with their benchmarking scorecards, including B-BBEE; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) requirements. By partnering with NPOs, companies can address critical social and environmental issues, such as poverty alleviation, education, gender equality, and environmental sustainability, which are often key focus areas within these frameworks. With their deep community ties and expertise, NPOs can help businesses create meaningful, impactful programmes that contribute to achieving the SDGs and meeting ESG criteria. Furthermore, working with NPOs can assist businesses in enhancing their B-BBEE scorecards by supporting skills development, broad-based economic empowerment, and social investment initiatives. This collaboration helps businesses to meet regulatory requirements and fosters a positive public image, demonstrating their commitment to ethical practices and sustainable growth.

Source: Living Hope



Businesses can partner with NPOs in their local neighbourhoods to enhance community safety and reduce crime, supporting community well-being and the company's long-term profitability. By collaborating with NPOs focusing on crime prevention, youth engagement, and community development, businesses can help build safer, more cohesive communities. This can include funding or supporting initiatives like after-school programmes, mentorship for at-risk youth, or community policing efforts. When communities are safe and resilient, it fosters a positive environment for business operations, attracts customers and talent, and reduces the risks associated with crime, such as theft or property damage. Moreover, businesses that actively contribute to the safety and well-being of their neighbourhoods enhance their reputation and strengthen their ties to the community, ultimately benefiting from a more stable and productive local environment that supports social impact and financial performance. If every business joined this wave of positive change, together, we could create a more sustainable and equitable future. Let us not just watch from the sidelines; let us be part of the movement that makes a real difference.

"If every business joined this wave of positive change, together, we could create a more sustainable and equitable future."



Source: SOZO

HOW NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS CAN PREPARE TO ENGAGE WITH BUSINESS

To effectively engage with businesses, NPOs must prioritise good governance practices, compliance, and financial accountability to build trust and demonstrate their ability to manage resources responsibly. Adopting transparent financial reporting, adhering to regulatory frameworks, and implementing strong internal controls are essential for NPOs to align with business engagement criteria. Businesses increasingly seek partners that can ensure compliance with relevant laws, ethical standards, and sustainability goals. NPOs can also demonstrate their value by aligning their activities with the key priorities of businesses, such as the SDGs, CSR goals, and B-BBEE requirements. By establishing clear governance structures, showcasing financial integrity, and demonstrating alignment with business objectives, NPOs can position themselves as credible and reliable partners, capable of delivering social impact, while meeting the expectations of potential business collaborators.



In conclusion, this initial report validates the significant contribution of the 361 NPOs to the economy of the greater Cape Town area, particularly in the context of the size and needs of its population. It also demonstrates that collaboration between businesses, NPOs, government resources, and civil society can create significant positive outcomes for social well-being and the economy. When these sectors work together, leveraging their unique strengths and resources, they can address pressing societal issues, enhance community development, and drive economic growth. Businesses bring innovation and funding, NPOs offer expertise and community connections, governments provide regulatory support and policy frameworks, and civil society ensures broad-based engagement. This collaborative approach fosters sustainable development, reduces inequality, and builds a more resilient society. With the combined efforts of all stakeholders, improved social well-being and a thriving economy become not just a possibility, but an achievable reality.



Source: Pebbles Project

NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS OPERATING WITHIN THE CAPE CHAMBER'S AREA

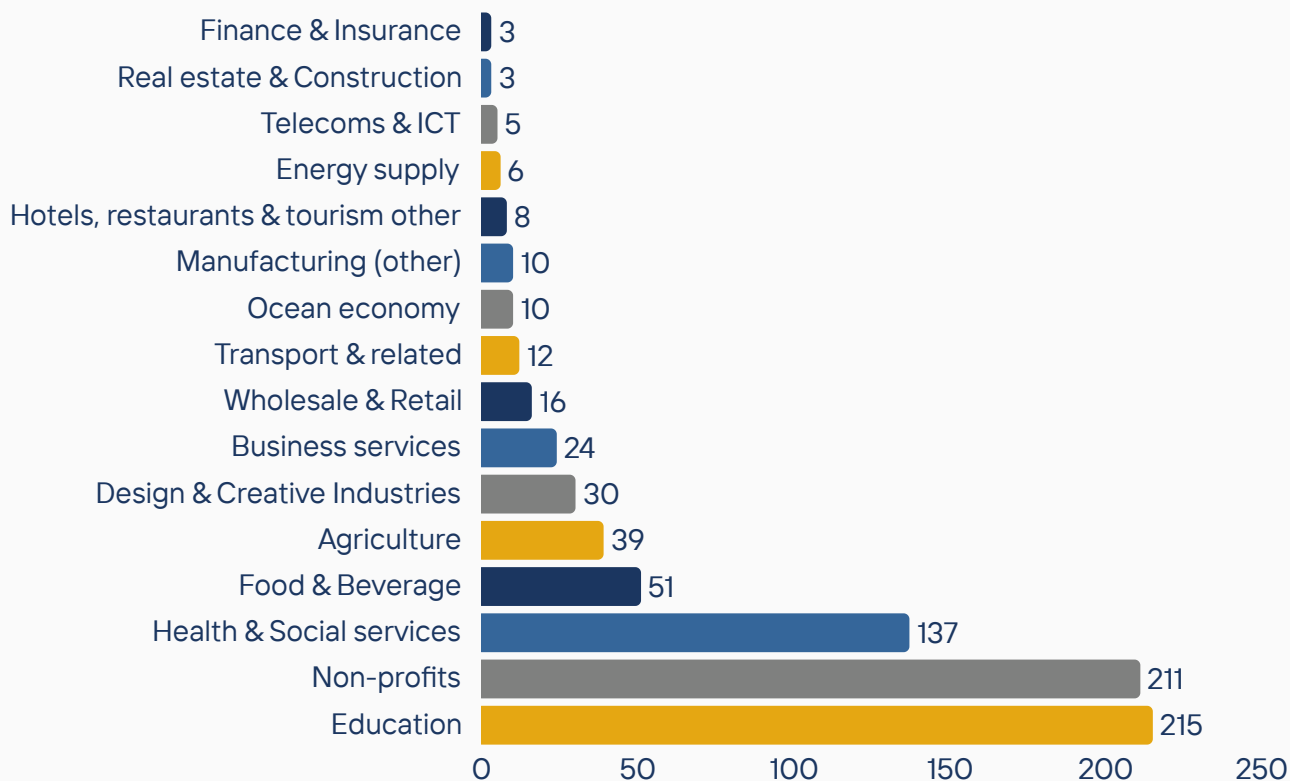
This overview of NPOs operating within the Cape Chamber's area highlights the significant presence of organisations in the region and presents an opportunity for chapters and portfolios to actively engage with them

INDUSTRY SECTORS

The Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry has established a structured network of industry sector portfolio committees that bring together leaders from across key sectors of the Western Cape economy, including agriculture, manufacturing, tourism, transport, energy, retail, and non-profits. These portfolios are designed to reflect the region's economic composition and enable sector-specific dialogue between business, government, and development stakeholders. Each committee is chaired by industry representatives who provide practical insight into market conditions, growth opportunities, and systemic constraints, ensuring that the Chamber's advocacy and research are grounded in real economic dynamics.

Through this structure, the portfolios serve as both a knowledge base and a strategic platform, informing policy engagement, identifying barriers to growth, and shaping targeted interventions to unlock inclusive economic development across sectors. Our research further indicates that NPOs in Cape Town operate across multiple industry sectors (see Figure 23), often intersecting with core economic activities. This cross-sector presence presents a significant opportunity for NPOs to be more intentionally included in industry sector initiatives – not only as beneficiaries, but as active contributors to economic development, innovation, and social impact within the Chamber's portfolio framework.

FIGURE 23: INDUSTRY SECTORS THAT NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS OPERATE IN



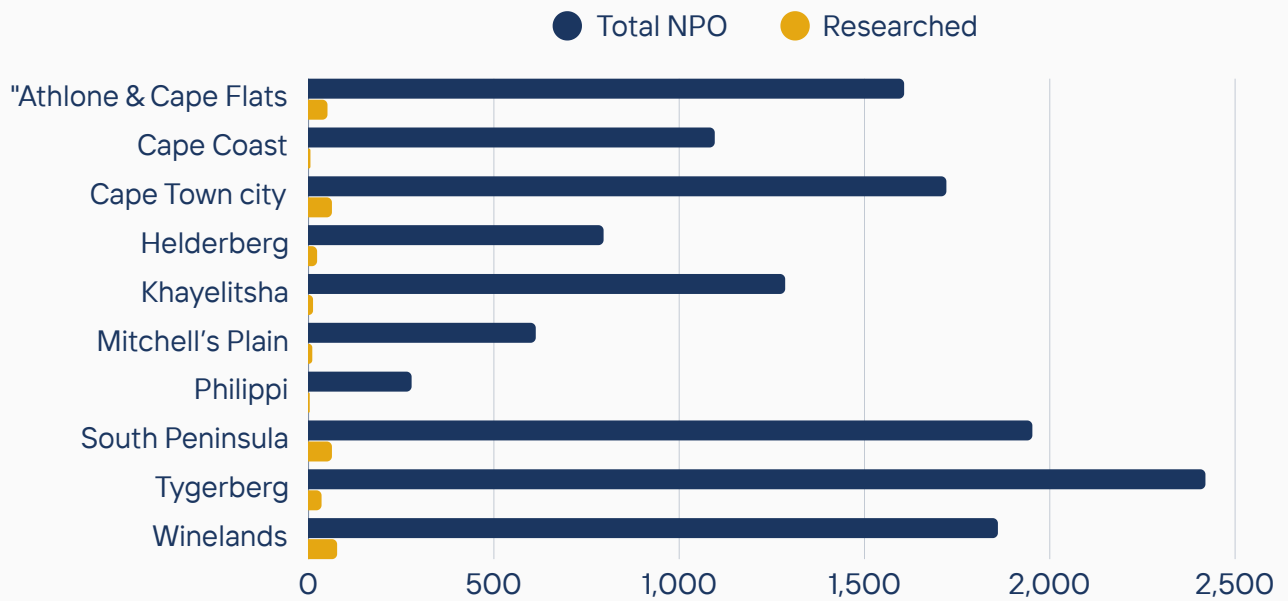
Source: authors' own

CHAPTERS

Complementing the industry sector portfolios, the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry's geographic chapters play a vital role in anchoring its work within local contexts across the Western Cape. These chapters create decentralised platforms for engagement, enabling businesses and organisations to connect, collaborate, and respond to the specific economic realities of their areas. They facilitate grassroots participation, strengthen local networks, and ensure that regional voices inform broader Chamber strategies and advocacy. In the context of this research, the chapters present an important opportunity to deepen engagement with NPOs at a community level, recognising their embeddedness within local economies. According to the Western Cape Department of Social Development (2024), there are more than 14 000 registered non-profit organisations operating within the Cape Chamber's chapter footprint – excluding charitable trusts and non-profit companies – of which 361 participated in this research. By linking the Chamber's sector-based portfolios with its place-based chapters, there is strong potential to foster more inclusive, locally responsive initiatives that leverage the unique contributions of NPOs as partners in both economic and social development.



FIGURE 24: NUMBER OF NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS BY CHAPTER



Source: Western Cape Department of Social Development (2025) and authors' own.

Through this research, it is clear that NPOs play a vital role in the social and economic well-being of Cape Town. The Chamber provides a platform for NPOs to engage with the business community and contribute to the city's economic ecosystem. Launched in February 2026, the NPO portfolio invites organisations to actively participate in strengthening the local economy. All participating NPOs provide evidence of a current due diligence assessment and are listed on the Chamber's portal for member engagement. The initiative encourages businesses to partner with NPOs aligned with their goals and enables NPOs to engage through the Chamber's chapters and industry portfolios, fostering meaningful collaboration across Cape Town's economic landscape.

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