

Job Skills and Entrepreneurship Programme Overview | 2026



Introduction

We are located in one of the poorest and most remote regions of the country, with a surfeit of young, unemployed people who—through no fault of their own—have no access to education, capital, or other necessary inputs for creating a productive future.

The Job Skills and Entrepreneurship Programme (JSEP) was launched in 2020 by the Bulungula Incubator to provide accredited training, paid internships, and structured work experience for youth in our community. Designed as a bridging year between school and the workforce, JSEP supports young people in accessing formal employment, pursuing further studies, or launching small enterprises. It is the final stage of the Bulungula Incubator's *Pre-conception to Career* development strategy, which aims to ensure that every person in our community has the agency and opportunity to create a pathway out of poverty and live a flourishing life.

Further details about our JSEP strategic goals can be found [here](#).

Programme Overview

JSEP begins with accredited training in professional and vocational subjects, while learners simultaneously complete a one-year paid internship and launch a small business venture. The programme is structured around five integrated phases: skills training, entrepreneurship training, workplace experience, work placement, and post-programme support.



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We have found that the biggest obstacle to success for our young people is the self-belief and the confidence they, their families and their community have in their ability to achieve their goals. One simply cannot leap from this situation into managing a sustainable business or professional role. Therefore, we crafted the JSEP to encompass aspects that allow for incremental achievements that build self-confidence and a real sense of achievement.

1. Skills Training

Learners begin with SETA-accredited training, delivered remotely by our various partner institutions, including Tsiba Ignition Academy (TIA) and Africa Skills Village (ASV). Courses are streamed via television or computer-based platforms in the JSEP classroom, supported by a full-time JSEP Manager who provides in-person facilitation and ensures that learners stay on track. This model enables consistent delivery of quality training despite our remote location.

Accredited courses offered include:

- Business Administration (NQF Level 4 – TIA)
- General Management (NQF Level 5 – TIA)
- Early Childhood Development (ASV)
- Home-Based Care (ASV)
- Handyman Skills (ASV)

Non-accredited modules supplementing core training:

- Leadership and Self-Development (TIA)
- Financial Literacy (Old Mutual and WageWise)
- Interview Skills and Work Readiness (YES4Youth and In-house)
- Research and Presentation (In-house)
- Basic Computer Literacy and Typing (TIA and In-house)

2. Entrepreneurship Training

In 2024, we formalised entrepreneurship as a core, required component of the JSEP curriculum. This was in response to the persistent challenges faced by young people in our community who often view starting a business as too risky due to the lack of safety nets and exposure to successful local business models or mentors to guide them. Despite a strong need for local goods and services, we found that many of our learners hesitated to pursue entrepreneurship.

To address this, we introduced a dedicated Entrepreneurship Specialist to design and lead a hands-on, guided entrepreneurship track. Every JSEP learner now participates in a structured, year-long entrepreneurship training programme that is practical and responsive to our rural context. The Entrepreneurship Specialist is present on-site for three consecutive days each



month, delivering focused, incremental training sessions and working closely with each learner to support their business development.

The entrepreneurship curriculum includes:

- Business ideation and opportunity mapping
- Community-based market research
- Business plan development
- Financial planning, compliance, and budgeting
- Marketing, branding, and customer engagement
- Sales, operations, and risk management
- Scaling and sustainability planning

Between the monthly sessions, the full-time JSEP Manager provides continuity and mentorship for learners. Each learner is required to design, launch, and operate a small business during the programme, using their stipends and existing community networks to test their model.

Examples of learner businesses include catering for local events, tailoring school uniforms, selling eggs from small poultry operations, and supplying local shops with vegetables. These businesses reflect accessible, locally relevant opportunities and offer tangible experience in planning and risk-taking.



This component is designed to teach technical business skills and to shift learners' mindsets from risk aversion to manageable experimentation. It creates an entry point for entrepreneurship that is realistic and aligned with the needs and opportunities of our community's local economy.

3. Workplace Experience

Workplace experience is a cornerstone of the JSEP model. Each learner completes a year-long, paid internship with a relevant Bulungula Incubator project or with one of our trusted partners,



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gaining hands-on experience in a structured and supportive environment. Internships are offered in:

- Early Childhood Development
- iiTablet Tshomiz (school-based maths and literacy tutoring)
- Home-Based Primary Healthcare (CHW/Nomakhaya)
- Office Administration
- Trades (maintenance, bricklaying, painting, electrical work)

Learners spend roughly 75% of their time in their internship, while 25% is spent on classroom-based learning. Learners receive stipends and are taught to manage their income responsibly through financial literacy training. The experience builds workplace behaviour, strengthens accountability, and teaches professionalism.

These internships also build a pipeline of skilled individuals who understand our organisation's work culture and programme operations. We hire our graduates into permanent roles, directly supporting our ultimate goal of becoming a 100% community-run organisation. This reflects our "growing our own timber" philosophy of developing local skills that will sustain our organisation's work from within our community.



Photo: Asekhona Mabhulana, a former JSEP learner, interning at Phaphamani ECD Centre, one of Bulungula Incubator's ECD Centres. Read more about her story [here](#).



4. Work Placement and Career Support

In the final months of the programme, learners are supported in securing clear and realistic post-programme pathways. This may include:

- Link learners to formal employment opportunities through BI's partnerships and networks
- Support applications to further education institutions
- Facilitate the continued growth of learner-led enterprises

We created an [online recruitment platform](#) to help external employers access the profiles and CVs of our graduates. Learners are supported in building resumes, preparing for and conducting oneself in interviews, and networking with potential employers and partners. *Read more [here](#).*

For those pursuing tertiary education, our [Sakh' iKamva programme](#) provides comprehensive support throughout the application and enrolment process. Recognising that many of our learners are the first in their families to consider higher education, Sakh' iKamva ensures they are not navigating this transition alone.

To expand professional exposure, we host business and career expos throughout the year where learners meet professionals from various sectors. These events help build learners' confidence in presenting their work, engaging in professional conversations, and exploring career possibilities beyond their immediate environment. In addition, we welcome external guests for structured networking events and interactive sessions. These engagements provide learners with diverse perspectives and practical insights into potential career paths, while also fostering social connection and expanding their professional networks.

We aim to expose learners to as many pathways as possible, helping them to envision and access opportunities beyond the limitations of our deeply rural context. *Read more about how social connectedness can improve economic opportunities for young people [here](#).*

5. Post-Programme Support

The Bulungula Incubator maintains monthly contact with all JSEP graduates. This enables us to offer targeted follow-up support, respond to evolving needs, and continuously refine the programme based on real-world outcomes.

Additionally, graduates have been monitored across our other BI projects through our person-centred relational database system that tracks progress over time. As part of our *Pre-conception to Career* model, we remain committed to supporting learners until they have achieved stability in their chosen path.



Programme Outcomes to Date

Since its launch in 2020, the Job Skills and Entrepreneurship Programme has graduated **209 learners**, 84% of whom **are engaged in productive activities** or not currently seeking opportunities for personal reasons (taking a gap year). These outcomes demonstrate the effectiveness of our programme in opening multiple pathways for our young people. Their current* chosen pathways are as follows:

Pathway	Percentage	Number
Studying at Tertiary	13%	27
Studying at High School	0.5%	1
Formal Employment	60%	125
Own Employment	2%	4
Formal Employment and Own Employment	3%	7
Own Employment and Tertiary Study	2%	5
In-service training	1%	3
Applying for Work	12%	25
Applying for Tertiary	2%	4
Taking a Gap	1%	3
Moved on	1%	2
Retired	0.5%	1
Deceased	1%	2

**Last updated October 2026*

