

GROW

ECD

Annual Report

2025/2026

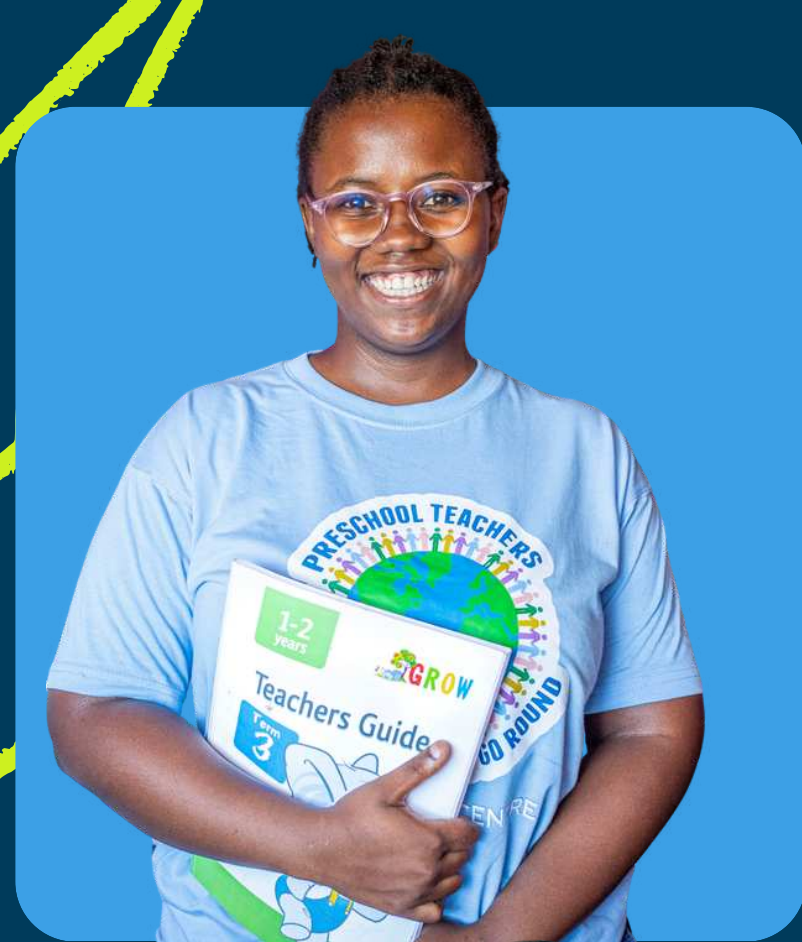


TABLE OF CONTENTS

GROW ECD OVERVIEW

Grow ECD Results	2
ECD Approach & Services	3
Giraffe App	5
ECD Accelerator	8
Small Business Programme	9
Loans & Blended Finance	11
STAR Assessment Results	12
Partnerships & Sector Collab	16
Looking Forward: Grow ECD	20

FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Financial Snapshot	21
Financial Commentary	24
Impact Partners	25



GROWING EARLY LEARNING BUSINESSES

IMPACTING WOMEN, CHILDREN AND COMMUNITY

Grow ECD focuses on transforming under-resourced, informal early learning centres into sustainable, women-led enterprises that deliver high-quality early learning.



**Tracey
Chambers,
CEO**



Early Childhood Development centres are complex small businesses with a social-impact agenda. When we invest in the women leading these businesses, we see a positive ripple effect that improves the lives of teachers, parents, community and, most importantly, children.

ECD Small Businesses are at the heart of economic growth, reduced inequalities, job creation, improved education access and quality and ultimately, poverty eradication.



Learners & Parents benefit

- Quality, nurturing education environment.
- Improved school readiness
- Better health and wellbeing
- Increased parent engagement



Teachers benefit:

- Dignified work opportunities
- Reduced in-work poverty
- Skills development
- Financial inclusion



Communities benefits:

- Improved quality and access of early education services
- Local job creation
- Youth empowerment
- Compliance with local laws

GROW ECD

2025/26 Key Stats

Technology Platform

8,274

Active App Users
(Centre Owners,
Teachers and Parents)

152,355

Children enrolled on
our mobile app

2,758

Teachers used our
online training

2,286

Teachers used our
online curriculum

112,542

Resources
downloaded

ECD Small Business Accelerator

508

Centre Owners Completed
Our ECD Accelerator

4

Provinces Hosted
Accelerator Training

Sector Collaboration

30

Organisations collaborating
with Grow ECD

70

Nett Promoter Score on
partner satisfaction survey

Small Business Programme

315

ECD centres in the
programme network

15,724

Children at
programme centres

1,948

Staff employed at
programme centres

82%

Of 4-5-year-old
learners met expected
developmental milestones.

70%

ELOM 4-to-5-year
learner results

81.2%

STAR Assessment
composite score at
programme completion

R3,5m

Blended finance
provided to ECD centres

OUR UNIQUE APPROACH

THE FORMULA FOR BUILDING PROFESSIONAL, SUSTAINABLE 5-STAR ECD BUSINESSES



Education Components

- Professional, competent teachers
- Play-based curriculum and structured daily programme
- Relevant educational resources
- Safe, conducive learning environment
- Learner development assessment
- Engaged parents

Business Components

- Management and leadership skills
- Money management skills
- Compliance with ECD programme registration requirements
- Compliance with applicable laws
- Efficient administration and reporting
- Investing in the business for growth and quality

Sustainable ECD Centres:

- Businesses are financially viable
- Teachers are paid a living wage
- Centres are registered
- Qualifying centres can apply for a government subsidy
- Cashflow is well managed
- Parents value and pay for the service
- 5-star quality education for every child

OUR FULL-SERVICE OFFERING

IMPROVING EARLY LEARNING AT SCALE



Free ECD Management App

Tools, resources and online training to run a professional preschool, save time on admin and engage parents.

- Mobile app for owners, teachers and parents.
- Admin, compliance and reporting.
- Financial management.
- Learner assessments.
- Parent engagement.
- Teacher development.
- App Helpdesk.



Free Online Curriculum

NCF-aligned, play based curriculum for 0-2 and 2-5 year olds.

- Easy-to-use daily teacher's guide with step-by-step instructions.
- Includes videos, voice notes, photos, songs and rhymes.
- Data-free.
- DBE accredited



ECD Business Accelerator Training

A 6-part training programme for ECD centre owners and managers that teaches the crucial business mindset skills they need to take their ECD business to the next level, achieve registration and compliance, and be more financially sustainable.

- Leadership skills
- Me and My Money
- Financial Sustainability
- Quality Education
- Compliance and Registration



ECD Small Business Programme

3-year training and development partnership with ECD centre. This is a comprehensive programme for running a successful preschool where children thrive.

We provide:

Education Support

- Curriculum implementation
- Classroom kit
- Teacher training
- Education mentoring
- Baby programme

Business Support

- Business training
- Business mentoring
- Registration guidance
- Low-cost ECD finance



Free ECD Resource Centre + AI Assistant

A helpful, data-free online library of over 450 free downloadable policies, procedures, templates, educational guides, classroom tools, and more, curated from multiple ECD experts.



GROW GIRAFFE

SOUTH AFRICA'S MOST POPULAR ECD MANAGEMENT APP

The Giraffe App continues to be Grow's most scalable and inclusive tool, providing ECD centre owners, teachers and parents with free access to online training, interactive curriculum content, classroom, business and financial management tools, assessment templates, downloadable resources and more.

Our EdTech solution equips preschools with the tools and resources to:

- operate professionally.
- improve learner outcomes.
- scale social impact.

5,370

ECD centre owners actively
using the app

152,355

children enrolled

6,795

Online training
modules completed

15,862

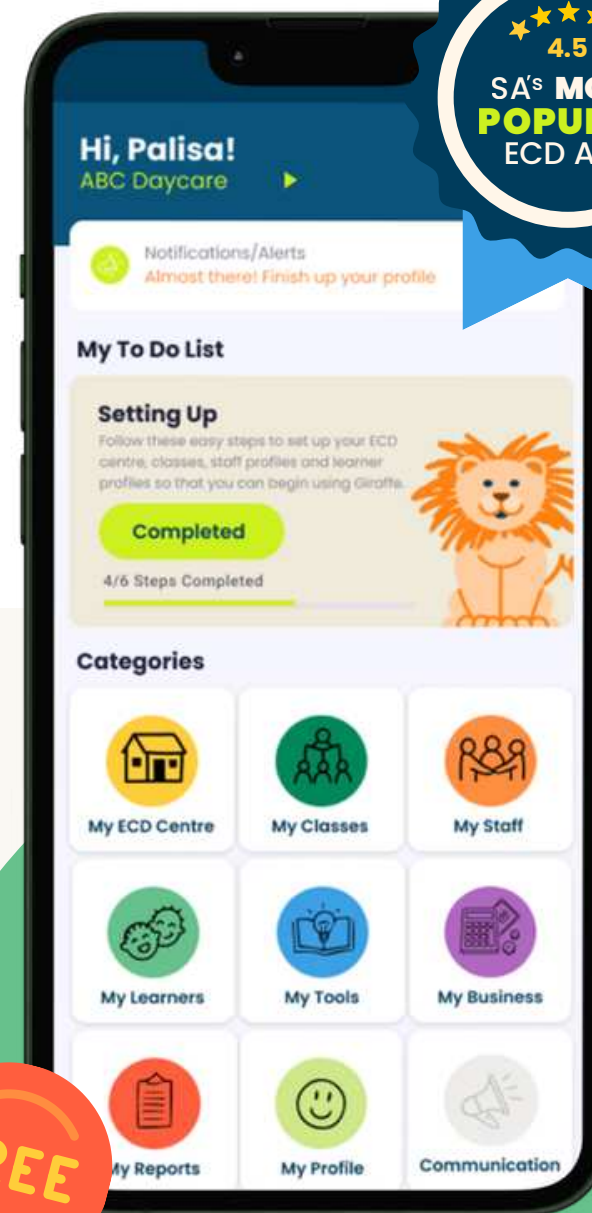
Curriculum engagements

528

Free downloadable
resources available

112,542

Resources downloaded



Giraffe
ECD



Emily Ngobeni

Firm Foundation
Education
Centre, Benoni

What caught my eye about the Grow ECD App is how easy it is to use and how effective.

I can monitor my centre's operations right from my phone, manage my finances better, and the learner assessment tool helps us track each child's progress with confidence.





Giraffe
ECD

NEW!

GIRAFFE 2.0:

With the growing demand for the Giraffe app, we're excited to announce that Giraffe 2.0, the next-generation version developed in collaboration with The Reach Trust, will launch by Aug 2026.

The app South Africa already knows, and loves, will have improved features:

- **Web-based design** to accommodate all devices (smartphones, tablets, desktops) and users (Android and iOS).
- **Data-free platform** to ensure zero-cost access for all users country-wide.
- **Guided onboarding** process to help new users set up their school with confidence.
- **Embedded coaching, nudges and personalised tips** to guide users and increase impact.
- **Improved financial management tools** that can grow with the ECD business.
- **Dashboards, insights** and better reports for ECD centres and partners.

ECD ACCELERATOR

ACTIVATING THE SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR MINDSET

Our ECD Business Accelerator has been a remarkable success, meeting the needs of ECD owners while addressing critical gaps in the sector. The 6-day training course covers financial skills, sustainability, leadership, compliance, registration and quality education.

508 centre owners attended and completed the accelerator this year.

1,677 ECD centre owners have benefited since the launch in 2023.

5 In 2026, we will launch our first Accelerator in Limpopo, expanding our reach from 4 to 5 provinces.



Nontlantla Nkohla
Over The Rainbow Pre-School,
Eastern Cape

The Grow ECD Business Accelerator is worth it. It taught me confidence in everything I do at my centre, from managing finances to dealing with parents and staff. I understand what a business mindset is all about, and I'm making real improvements at my centre.



SMALL BUSINESS PROGRAMME

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE ECD CENTRES, ONE STEP AT A TIME

The Grow Small Business Programme is a comprehensive three-year training, development and transformation journey where we partner with ECD centres on their 5-star early learning journey. In a sector where most centres struggle with compliance, funding, management systems and quality education implementation, this programme provides the building blocks for long-term sustainability and growth.

89

new centres joined the Small Business Programme

3,101

teachers and principals attended in-person training sessions this year (Total attendance; some individuals participated in multiple sessions).

315

centres are now delivering the Grow ECD programme (231 active plus 84 graduated)

2,883

learners (4-5 years old) were assessed by their teachers

15,724

children benefit from our daily programme

82%

of 4-5-year-old learners met expected developmental milestones

81,2%

the average STAR Assessment composite score achieved by an ECD centre on programme completion (+12,9% increase from Baseline)



This year I opened my second ECD centre! Before, I was operating with just a handful of children, and I was struggling financially, but my dream was to reach more children. Grow showed me I cannot run the centre on passion alone. As a business owner, you need systems, planning, the right tools and an excellent curriculum so you can give the children the best education.

Mthwakazi Nancy Soqaka

Grow Buddies Preschool and Aftercare, Khayelitsha

[Read full story here](#)

LOW-COST LOANS AND BLENDED FINANCE

FINANCIAL INCLUSION FOR WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



**Happyness
Moloi**

Bright Future
Preschool



When Grow ECD told us about their low-cost loans, I saw an opportunity to solve some of the maintenance problems we had. They made sure I understood my finances before applying and helped me figure out how to use the loan to benefit the business.

[Read full story here](#)

- In 2021 Grow ECD launched low-cost loans and blended finance
- Since then a total of R12,56m has been invested in classroom kits, equipment, registration compliances, maintenance and classroom expansion.
- This year, we issued 32 low-cost loans and settled 30 loans. Only 3 loans were written off
- Partner contributions help to subsidise loans, improving financial inclusion for low-fee ECD centres.



STAR ASSESSMENT RESULTS

EMBEDDING SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

Developed by Grow ECD for the South African ECD context, the STAR Assessment is a longitudinal quality assurance and improvement framework for early learning programmes. Independent assessors conduct the review at baseline, 12-, 24- and 36-month intervals. Unlike point-in-time audits, **STAR is designed to track how individual centres change over time measuring quality across seven domains:**

- | | |
|---|---|
|  1 Teaching and Learning |  2 Policies and Procedures |
|  3 Governance and Legal |  4 Health and Safety |
|  5 Networking |  6 Infrastructure |
|  7 Nutrition and Food Safety | |



The STAR Assessment makes it possible to identify not just where centres stand, but how they are improving, and what drives those improvements.

386

STAR assessments
conducted

283

ECD centres assessed

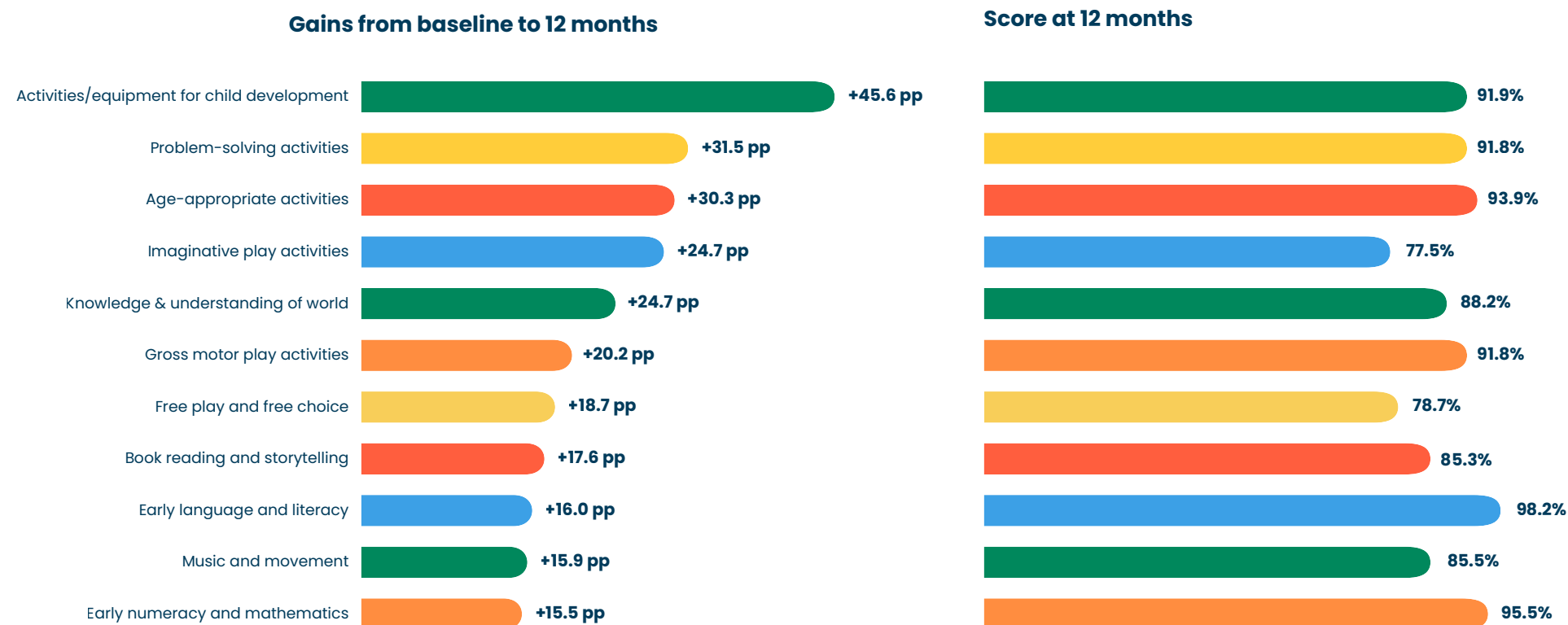
4

provinces covered

TEACHING AND LEARNING IMPROVEMENTS HAPPEN FAST



STAR data show strong early results. Across 11 teaching and learning indicators, centres record significant gains within the first 12 months, particularly in areas directly supported by programme inputs such as curriculum use and classroom practice.



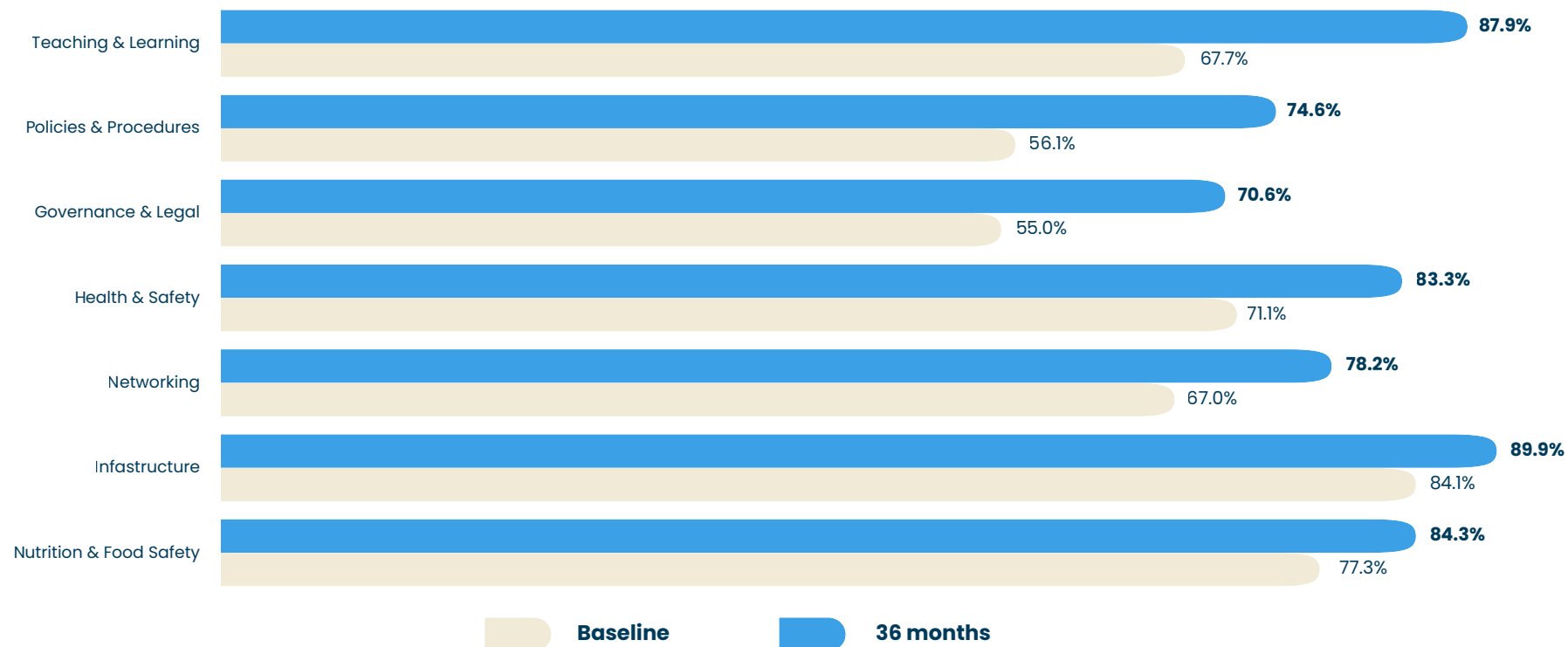
The largest gains were concentrated in structured activity provision and age-appropriate practice, both directly aligned with the ECD kit and curriculum. Early language and literacy (98.2% at 12 months) and early numeracy (95.5%) indicate near-universal uptake of foundational learning practices, with clear positive implications for children's developmental outcomes.

IMPROVEMENTS ACROSS ALL DOMAINS ARE SUSTAINED

STAR data at 36 months show that improvements achieved in year one are not temporary effects of intensive support but are sustained and strengthened over time. Across all seven quality domains, centres continue to improve from baseline, with stronger systems in teaching and learning, governance, safety, operations, and nutrition.

By the end of the three-year cycle, centres are not only offering higher-quality education but also becoming more stable, more compliant, and better equipped to maintain standards independently on programme graduation.

Domain scores: baseline vs. 36 months



81.2%

Composite STAR score at 36 months

+12.9%

Improvement from baseline





Growing up, I never imagined myself being part of the ECD industry. It was something for 'older women'. But watching my mother work with children changed my perspective. I could see the impact she had. At first, when I took over the centre from her, it was hard being a young leader. Many of the staff had more experience than me, but I was determined to make my mother proud. Grow ECD training made a huge impact. I learned how to manage money better, manage staff, and calculate school fees. The Grow App was a game changer. It made life easier for both me and the staff through assessments, registers, and ongoing training that continues to help us develop and improve.

Phelisa Mtengwana,
Yizani Sakhe Ubunye Educare Centre, Khayelitsha

[Read full story here](#)

PARTNERSHIPS AND SECTOR COLLABORATION

Partnerships that multiply impact

Grow ECD's partnership strategy is built on the principle that collaboration multiplies what any single organisation can achieve. By convening funders, government, NGOs and community partners around shared goals, Grow ECD acts as a catalyst that attracts investment, strengthens impact evaluation, improves delivery and creates reinforcing ecosystems of support around ECD centres.

30

Organisations are in official collaboration partnerships with Grow ECD

4

Provinces and over 150 centres reached through partner-funded Accelerators

1,050

children are getting a daily breakfast through nutrition partnerships

11

centres received infrastructure and outdoor equipment investments through partnerships

8

rural and farming communities are benefitting from partnerships outside our core operating areas

6

Registration clinics supported

Unlocking investments in ECD centres

Grow's initial investments regularly attract additional funders. A single grant to one centre has, in several cases, unlocked infrastructure funding, equipment and NQF-level training from separate partners multiplying the original investment significantly. The STAR Assessment creates a shared baseline and acts as a gap assessment to drive appropriate investments. There is a level of trust in Grow ECD's education programme delivery that reduces risk for partner investments in complimentary services.

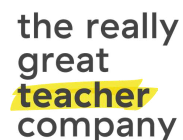
Government alignment and support

Grow ECD is a member of the DBE National Intersectoral Forum and is directly involved in the Bana Pele Shared Blueprint 2030 working group, as well as an implementing partner to the Bana Pele registration drive. Through continuous efforts to align and support the Department of Basic Education's mandate we have grown confidence in Grow ECD as a credible implementation and advocacy partner which resulted in a visit from the Minister of Basic Education, Siviwe Gwarube .



Minister of Basic Education,
Siviwe Gwarube, visits Grow ECD

OUR ECD PARTNERS





“

God is faithful! We started in my dining room in 2017, but I had a bigger dream. I had a site, but I didn't have money to build a proper school. In 2022, I joined Grow, and they introduced us to The Go Group. The two organisations work together, and they helped by building us a beautiful school with proper classrooms. Grow's teacher training, curriculum, and the app have changed how we teach and manage the centre. Now, this year, we received a Gold Star certificate with an outstanding 99% score from the Chief Director of the District Health Services.

Favourite Nompumelelo Mbona,
Zuzulwazi Creche, Pietermaritzburg

[Read full story here](#)

NEW! THE STAR GAME

LEARN TO RUN A 5-STAR PRESCHOOL AS YOU PLAY

The STAR Game is an interactive, facilitator-led learning game developed by Grow ECD to help ECD centre owners and principals understand what it takes to run a high-quality, sustainable preschool. By turning complex compliance, education, and business concepts into fun, team-based activities and challenges, the game creates a safe, low-stress space for learning, reflection, and confidence-building.

- **The game is facilitated free of charge by Grow ECD at ECD forums, networking events, and sector workshops, subject to capacity.**
- It covers the five core operating areas of a 5-Star ECD centre, including business and finance, people and capacity, education programme quality, governance and operations, and health and safety.
- Participants work in teams to answer questions and complete activities, earning puzzle pieces as they go. The winning team is the first to complete their puzzle.



LOOKING FORWARD

ASPIRING TO GREATNESS



Our theme for the year ahead is **Aspire to Greatness**.

As we look ahead to 2026/27, our focus is on deepening impact where we already work, expanding responsibly into new communities and partnerships, and continuous improvements that allow our programmes to scale sustainably.

Grow ECD priorities for 2026/27

- Grow the Small Business Programme in new, targeted communities.
- Launch our new, improved Grow ECD App.
- Expand through partnerships and scalable models that amplify reach without compromising quality.
- Deepen value and impact at existing Small Business Programme centres, focusing on sustainability and education outcomes.
- Strengthen government engagement and align with national ECD priorities.
- Enhance systems, tools, and digital infrastructure to support scale and efficiency.



FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT: TCB GROUP CONSOLIDATED

FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Total income
R100.4m

Revenue, grant
funding and other
income

Grant-funded contribution
53%

R53.2m of total
income

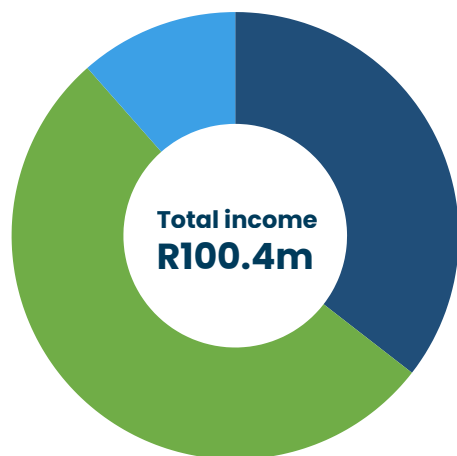
Total group expenditure
R89.2m

Admin, training,
operational and ECD costs

Admin ratio
9.6%

Admin costs as a percentage
of total group expenditure

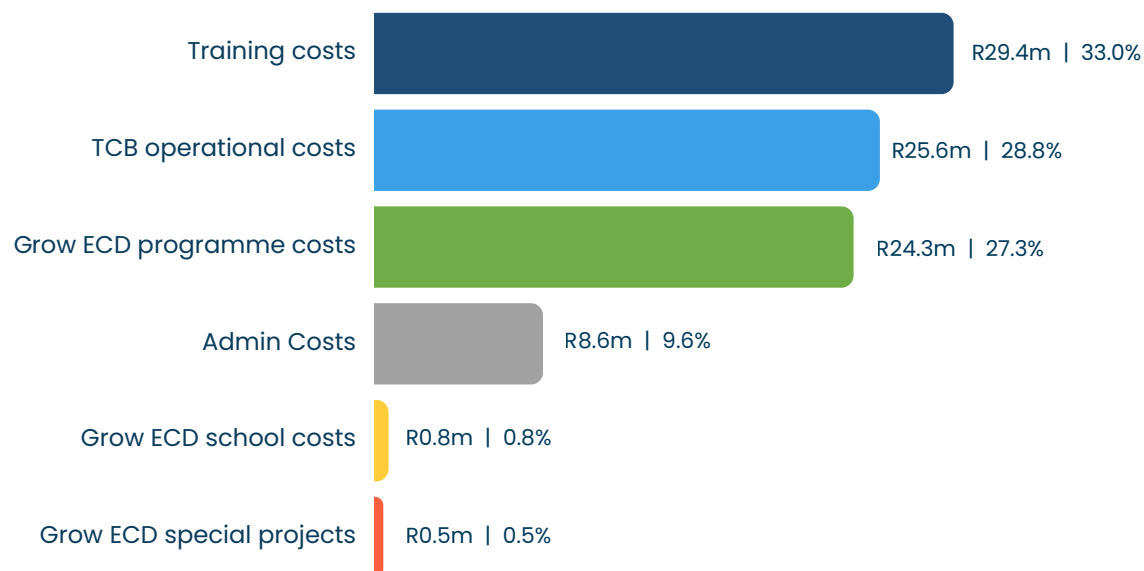
Income composition



- Revenue** R35.6m | 35.5%
- Grant funding** R53.2m | 53.0%
- Other income** (incl. interest) R11.6m | 11.5%

Total group expenditure composition

Total group expenditure: R89.2m



TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS FINANCIALS



FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

Total income
R72.5m

Revenue, grant funding
and other income

Grant-funded contribution
47.6%

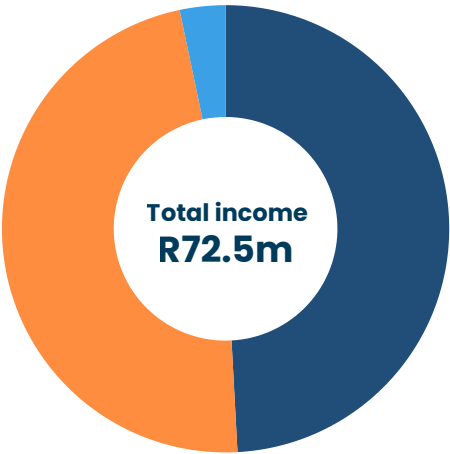
R34.5m of total
income

Total expenditure
R63.6m

Year-end surplus
R12.1m

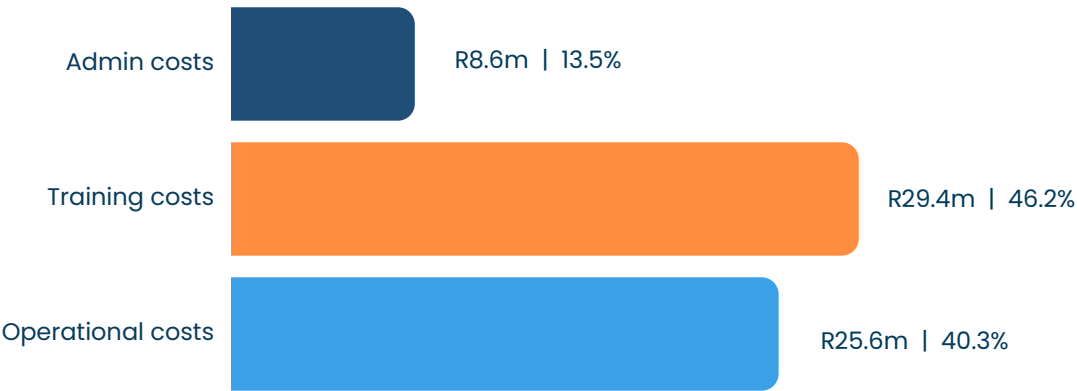
After interest income

Income composition



- Revenue R35.6m | 49.2%
- Grant funding R34.5m | 47.6%
- Other income (incl. interest) R2.4m | 3.3%

Total group expenditure composition



GROW ECD FINANCIALS

FINANCIAL YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026



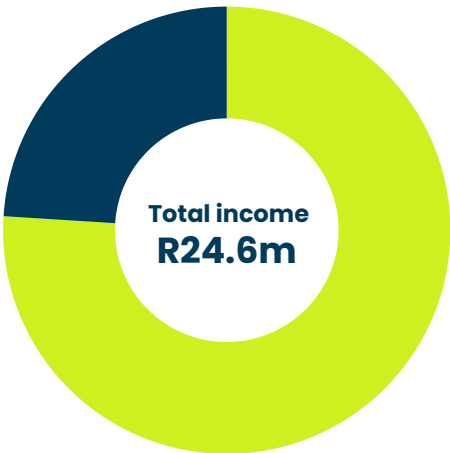
Total income
R24.6m

Grant-funded contribution
76.0%
R18.7m of total income

Total expenditure
R25.6m

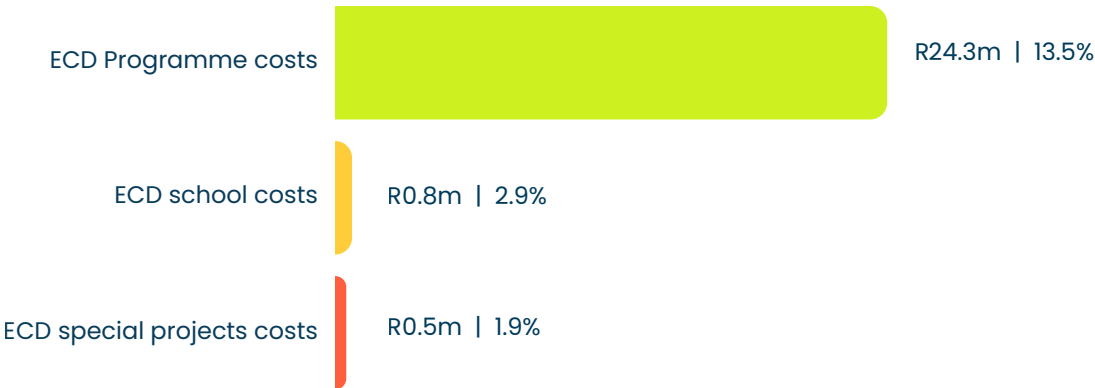
Year-end deficit
(R0.9m)
Defecit for the year

Income composition



Grant funding R18.7m | 76.0%
Other income (incl. interest) R5.9m | 24.0%

Total group expenditure composition



Percentage calculated against total expenditure

FINANCIAL COMMENTARY

TCB, GROW ECD AND SUSTAINABILITY

TCB surplus for the year

R12.1m

Supported by higher grant funding and interest income



TCB reported revenue of R35.6m, marginally below the prior year of R36.1m. Grant funding increased materially to R34.5m from R23.5m – mostly driven through UIF (government) funding for the 'certified' year 2 ISBP (Informal Small Business Program) component of our program, while other income increased to R2.4m and interest income reduced to R3.3m – down from R4.2m in the prior year.

Total expenditure increased to R63.6m from R55.7m. The largest movement was training costs, which increased by R6.5m to R29.4m – again, largely driven by year 2 ISBP related costs – a reflection of scale and programme investment.

TCB closed the year with a surplus of R12.1m compared with a prior-year deficit of R1.0m. The result is positive, but revenue growth, pricing discipline and sound cost management remain important management priorities as program activity scales.

Grow ECD deficit for the year

(R0.9m)

Deficit a result of greater investment into programme delivery



Grow ECD generated total income of R24.6m, broadly in line with the prior year. Grant funding increased to R18.7m and represented 76.0% of total income, while other income reduced to R5.9m from R8.3m. The reduction was driven by lower donations received, interest income and administration fee income.

Total expenditure increased to R25.6m from R21.0m, with programme costs the main driver at R24.3m or 95.2% of Grow ECD expenditure. This increase in programme costs means that Grow ECD reported a deficit of R0.9m which, if we exclude the prior year donation(s) paid, is a decrease from the prior year "surplus" of R4.1m.

The year ahead is supported by the Jobs Fund grant and active funding relationships, with continued focus required on program delivery & execution and fundraising diversification.



**Iesrafeel
Jakoet**
CFO



"From a sustainability perspective, the outlook remains healthy. Both TCB and Grow ECD have been awarded Jobs Fund grants, and the group continues to benefit from active grant funding relationships."

Fundraising remains top of mind, and the group has broadened its fundraising channels through the opening of the TCB Foundation in the UK. The practical focus for FY2027 is to protect earned income, maintain cost discipline and ensure that new grant activity translates into funded and measurable delivery."

THANK YOU TO OUR IMPACT PARTNERS!

Funders who contributed R50 000+

L'ORÉAL

Rotary
Club of Table Bay



Humulani
Empowerment Trust

SIMON
KUCHER



Ruth & Wise
CHARITABLE
TRUST



zensar™



the really
great
teacher
company



ENVIRON®
Skin Care Institute



HONOR



Belgotex™

Other Funders

Raymond Mahlaba Skills Training Centre
iTOO Special Risks
Ingi Tor Hermannsson
ANB Operations
Petco Producer Responsibility Organization
Shareforce
Synchron Markings

WEC
Pattern Matched Technologies
Adinga
ClemGold Foundation
Barker Insurance
Hope Worldwide Africa

Adrenaline Capital
Brightsparkz
The Cipla Foundation
The Domino Foundation
Legacy Ventures
TBI Investment Managers

GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

Independently verified by iZinga Assist

iZinga is a UK-based initiative that independently verifies South African charities, helping international donors confirm the legitimacy and credibility of the organisations they support.

iZinga Assist recognises Grow ECD and TCB as fully verified and compliant — awarded to NPOs meeting the highest standards.

- **Legal compliance:** Up-to-date registration & documentation
- **Strong governance:** Accountable leadership & ethical oversight
- **Financial transparency:** Clear, accurate reporting on funds
- **Proven impact:** Evidence of outcomes, community engagement & sustainable change

[View the Grow ECD verification token here.](#)

[View the TCB verification token here.](#)



Dankie

Enkosi

Ngiyabonga

**Kea
leboha**

Thank You



021 531 2134



info@tcb.org.za



tcb.org.za

