

#BeMorePluggedIn



# A YOUTH GUIDE TO ACCESSING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES

FOR YOUTH 15 - 29





**TIP BOX**



**FEATURE BOX**



**ACTION BOX**



**PROMPT BOX**

## WHO WE ARE

bumb'INGOMSO – an isiXhosa phrase meaning “mould the future”  
– is a multi-faceted HIV prevention project that supports  
and empowers young people to fulfil their potential by  
connecting them to key resources, support and networks.

## LET'S TALK ABOUT MONEY AND OPPORTUNITIES

Building your future isn't about having all the answers or the best qualifications.  
It's about starting where you are with what you have and taking the next step.

You don't have to wait for someone to give you a chance or to land the perfect job.

Single career paths aren't the only way forward. Many young people are turning  
hobbies into businesses, creating content online, starting food gardens, freelancing,  
starting small businesses and building innovative ventures of their own.

This booklet is packed with practical tips and ideas to help you find jobs, develop  
useful skills, start your own business and make your money work for you. We  
also advise you on how to handle setbacks, look after your mental health and  
learn from other young people's experiences. You'll find free resources you can  
actually use, all while creating your own action plan to move forward.

Ready? Let's get started. Because your path to success is about  
more than just money – it's about choices and freedom.



Start small. A simple skill, idea or service can grow into something profitable.

# WHERE THE MONEY IS AT

Wondering where the opportunities are right now? There's more than you think. Remember, people will always need things like food, electricity, repairs and entertainment – and that means opportunities.

These are some of the spaces where young people are making money and building careers:

- **Trades:** electrical work, carpentry, plumbing, welding, mechanics, tiling, bricklaying, refrigeration. These skills are always in demand and often pay well.
- **Everyday services:** hair, beauty, decorating, landscaping, painting. People pay for what makes life easier or more enjoyable.
- **Food and agribusiness:** from street food stalls, food trucks and home-baked goods to small-scale farming, food is one of the most resilient industries.
- **Creative hustles:** fashion design, music, performing gigs, photography, content creation. Thanks to social media, you can reach audiences without big budgets.
- **Tech and digital:** software development, data analysis, cybersecurity, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, digital marketing, social media and online tutoring.
- **Call centres:** ideal for building communication, problem-solving and customer service skills. They can also open doors to leadership roles or other office-based work.



Check out **SAYouth.mobi** (100% free, zero-rated) or call Harambee's toll-free line at 0800 72 72 72 to find local opportunities.

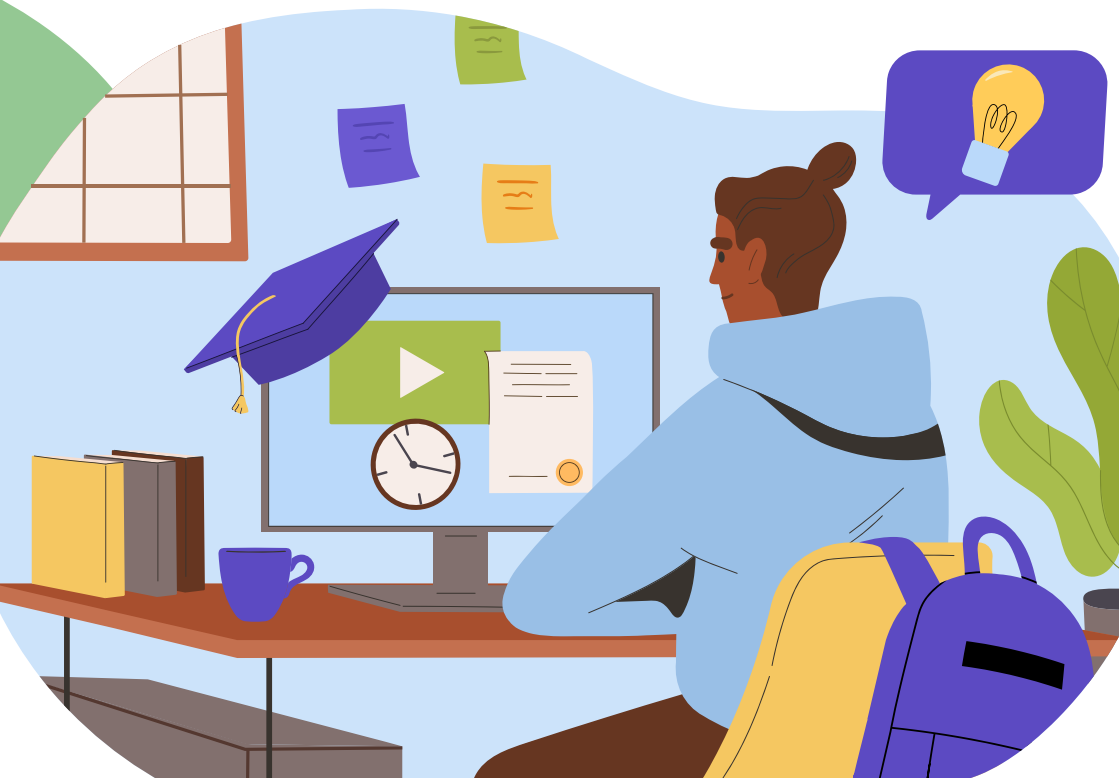
## STUDYING FOR SUCCESS

Higher education is the best way to target sectors with high-demand occupations, like **engineering, healthcare, ICT, finance, renewable energy, education and science**. If you're thinking about university or college, do your research on the courses you qualify for and start applying for bursaries and scholarships – see the list of resources at the end of this booklet.

### LUSAKHANYA GWANQA



I initially wanted to become a lawyer, but in 2024 I wasn't accepted for my course, so I stayed home and reapplied. I visited Lingomso Youth Centre, attended workshops and joined one-on-one coaching. I felt depressed at the time, but now I understand the delay was for a reason. I was accepted into six universities and am now a first-year LLB student at the University of Fort Hare, close to home. My advice to young people experiencing career disappointments is trust the process, apply early and ask for help. Dreams delayed are not dreams denied.



## SKILLS THAT PAY

South Africa is hungry for skills. If you want to stand out and make money, skills are your secret weapon. Employers don't just value technical skills like digital and financial literacy, but problem-solving, adaptability, time management, reliability, communication and the ability to work with others. Learning these can make you more employable and help your business ideas succeed.

The best part is you don't need a degree to get started. You can build your skills on the job, through short courses, by volunteering in your community, or helping out in local businesses. Use any extra time you have to join webinars, training or free classes. Remember the key ingredients are motivation, mindset and mastery. If you want to learn, believe you can do it and develop your skills, you can make it happen.

### LEARN ON THE GO

**Online courses:** Platforms like Coursera, Udemy and free YouTube tutorials.

**Local workshops:** Community centres, local libraries, NGOs, or churches often run free workshops.

**Apprenticeships:** Ask small businesses if you can job shadow – you'll learn real skills and make contacts.

The most important thing in any skill you develop is practice, practice, practice. As Malcolm Gladwell points out, "Practice isn't the thing you do once you're good. It's the thing you do that makes you good." He also found that it takes 10,000 hours to excel at something. We must want our careers so badly that we are willing to spend 10,000 hours pursuing them.



Learning by doing is the fastest hack. If you're into carpentry, volunteer with someone in your area who builds furniture. Many people get their first real job through someone they met while volunteering.



Which skills do you already have that people could pay for? Write down one and think: how can I boost this in the next three months?



### CHULUMANCO MAXAKATO

After Grade 12, I realised I had played too much and needed a new direction. I studied HR at Nelson Mandela University, but financial challenges meant I had to work part-time while studying full-time. This affected my ability to complete my degree. In 2025, I attended bumb'INGOMSO's Work Seeker Support workshops, which reminded me it wasn't the end of the world. Through them, I joined the YES Learnership at the South African Driving Institute as a sales and marketing intern, learning many different skills. My advice is keep trying: if you want to see something change, change yourself first.



# START YOUR OWN THING

You can also start your own hustle by looking for **gaps**.

## Find your SHAPE

- Skills
- Hobbies
- Abilities
- Personality
- Experiences



Write down everything you can think of in the SHAPE categories. Somewhere in that list lies a potential path. For example: if you're good at photography (S), love making reels (H), are good at storytelling (A), are an outgoing person (P), who has experience posting online (E), maybe your path is managing social media pages for local businesses.



Every big business started as someone's small solution to a problem.

## STEP 1: THINK OF AN IDEA

Spot the problems that people are willing to pay to solve by asking yourself:

- What are people complaining about?
- Where are services too expensive, too far or too slow?
- What talents or skills do you already have that could fill those gaps?

## STEP 2: PREPARE AND RESEARCH

Success takes hard work and preparation. Talk to people with more experience – “Indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili”: those who have gone before can show you the way. Use free resources online and plan your next steps carefully.

### STEP 3: TURN YOUR IDEA INTO ACTION

Begin with what you have – your phone, Wi-Fi, a borrowed tool. Work from your kitchen, garage or backyard. Test your product or service on a small scale, get feedback and improve.

### STEP 4: TELL PEOPLE ABOUT IT

Marketing doesn't need billboards or a big budget. Post on WhatsApp groups, talk to neighbours, share on social media, or just by word of mouth.

### STEP 5: MAKE IT GROW

If it works, reinvest your profits into better tools, stock or training. Look at:

- **Pitching to funders** – NGOs, youth development funds, or enter competitions.
- **Microloans** – Some organisations offer small, low-interest loans for youth businesses.
- **Partnerships** – Team up with friends who have complementary skills.



Think of one small service or product you could start selling this month with less than R200. What would it be? Who would your first three customers be?



Document everything, even if it's just on your phone. Track what you spend, what you earn and what feedback you get. This keeps you on track and prepares you if you ever want to pitch to investors.



#### MIHLALI MAKAULA

My passion for fashion started as a hobby, creating bags from recycled scraps. As demand grew, I realised the potential for a sustainable business. I now focus on creating unique, eco-friendly bags that people can also customise. I enjoy the creativity of it, contributing to environmental sustainability and having flexible working hours. It's hard to balance the creativity with the business side. Also tricky to find enough materials and compete in the fashion industry. I have found that formal qualifications aren't always necessary, but the know-how of sewing and design skills are crucial.

# GET NOTICED AND LAND THE JOB

Not everyone wants to run a business, and that's okay. A job can give you stability, experience, connections and the income you need to support your goals. The trick is getting noticed and standing out. Here's how!

## MAKE A GOOD CV

Your CV is your personal advert, even if you don't have much experience yet. Include school projects, leadership roles, volunteer work, job shadowing or community involvement. Remember that volunteering shows commitment while internships (even unpaid ones) often lead to references or real job offers.

Employers want to see effort and responsibility, not just degrees. A good CV is tailored to the job you're applying for. Never lie or exaggerate on it – focus on your strengths. Use proper English (no slang or abbreviations), keep it short, spellcheck carefully and make sure it looks smart.



Reach out to bumb'INGOMSO for work seeker support which provides CV writing workshops and practise on how to prepare for job interviews. Visit [canva.com](https://canva.com) for free templates to elevate how you present yourself. You can also find lots of free guidance online of how to write your CV.

## PRACTISE FOR INTERVIEWS

Interviews can be scary, but preparation builds confidence. Look up common questions like “What are your strengths and weaknesses?” and practise your answers. Have a clear two-minute personal story ready when asked “Tell me about yourself”. For example, share three things: (1) your background, (2) your key skill or strength, (3) what you're aiming for. At the end, ask one good question back, like: “What do you like most about working here?”

### Top Tips

- Be on time.
- Dress simply and neatly. You don't need expensive clothes, just clean and tidy.
- Do your homework. Know what the company does.
- Answer confidently. Show enthusiasm and focus on what you bring.

## PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Pair your CV with a professional online presence – make sure you update your LinkedIn profile. Keep your WhatsApp status and social media clean if you're job-hunting, because employers do check them. And keep emails polite and free from slang or emojis. Answer your phone politely ("Hello, this is [your name]"), avoid background noise and always return missed calls. For online meetings, make sure you update your software and test your setup is working in advance.

## BE PERSISTENT

Finding work takes persistence. While pursuing your ideal job, consider temporary work or freelancing. Each step builds experience, skills and connections. Remember: it might not be your dream job right away, but it can get you closer.



# TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR MONEY

Making money is one thing. Managing it wisely is what keeps you empowered. Even if you're just starting out, smart money habits now will lead to a better future.

## BUDGETING WITHOUT TEARS

A budget isn't about killing your fun – it's about knowing where your money goes. Keep a record of your **income** (earnings, allowance, grants, gifts) and **expenses** (transport, data, food, clothes). Write it down or use a free app like *Vault22*. Once you see the figures, you'll spot where you can cut back.

A simple 50/30/20 rule works. Spend:

- 50% on needs
- 30% on wants
- 20% on savings



Plan ahead for big yearly costs like stationery or registration fees.

## SAVING HACKS

Saving money is about planning. Without planning, we waste money out of habit. Small daily spending adds up fast. Instead of R50 lunches a few times a week (R400–R600 a month), pack food at home. Swap buying R15 data each day (R465 a month) for a cheaper monthly bundle.



### Try these saving tips:

- **Start small:** R5 or R10 every week adds up.
- **Keep savings “out of sight, out of mind”:** Use a piggy bank, separate account or app like *Stash (\$T#)*.
- **Team up:** Join a stokvel to buy in bulk.
- **Be savvy:** Watch for sales, compare prices and use discounts.
- **Buy quality:** It lasts longer than the cheapest option.
- **Extra cash?** If you get gifts or bonuses, resist the urge to splurge. Pay off any debts first and save the rest.
- **Fight impulse buying:** Always ask yourself: *do I really need this now?* Wait a day or two to decide if it's truly worth your money.



### WATCH OUT FOR DEBT TRAPS

- Quick loans and store cards look tempting but often come with sky-high interest, which means you pay back far more than you borrowed. Swiping now = suffering later.
- If you're only paying the minimum on a credit card, you're not reducing the debt.
- Stick to what you can pay for in cash and don't open extra accounts.
- Avoid “get rich quick” schemes. If it sounds too good to be true, it is.

If you are already in debt, make a plan:

1. Know who and how much you owe.
2. Pay on time.
3. Clear high-interest debt first.
4. Cut back on extra cards.

### START INVESTING EARLY

You don't need to be rich to invest. Even putting R100 a month into a savings plan or retirement fund grows through compound interest (money making money). The key is consistency. It's not about how much you start with, it's about building the habit now.



Find one expense you can cut this week and decide where to redirect the money – savings, training or your hustle.

# HOW TO BOUNCE BACK

Searching for work can be a daunting process. It's easy to feel discouraged when you apply for roles and get no response. The silence from organisations can make you want to give up. But don't. South Africans are resilient! Youth unemployment is real, but that's no reason to sit back. Remember that setbacks are part of every success story. Some of the world's most successful entrepreneurs failed many times before getting it right. What matters most is to learn, adapt and try again. Every step you take adds value to your journey.



## Setbacks don't define you.

They prepare you. What matters is what you do next.

Staying positive through unemployment or rejection isn't easy. To keep you going:

- **Think positively.** Your mindset is a powerful tool. Instead of thinking "I can't," say to yourself, "I'm learning."
- **Take one step at a time.** Update your CV, send one application, research one option instead of stressing about the whole journey. And do the most important tasks first.
- **Take care of yourself.** Exercise, sleep, hydration and healthy food make you more resilient to stress.
- **Build your support system.** Talk to friends, mentors or support groups who understand your challenges and can encourage you.



- **Remember your purpose.** Make a picture of your vision where you can see it often. Write down affirmations and daily to-do lists.
- **Be flexible.** If something isn't working, try another route – volunteer, take a short course, practice your skills.
- **Avoid comparison.** Social media shows people's highlights not struggles, so don't measure yourself against their posts. Rather spend time with people who motivate and support you. And measure your progress against your *own* growth.
- **Check your mental health:** Rest isn't wasted time – it recharges you. Journaling, deep breathing, uplifting music or a short walk can help reset your mood. Talking with someone you trust often makes the load lighter.
- **Reach out for support:** You're not alone. Community programmes, helplines, youth groups and friends are all resources. Asking them for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.
- **Avoid procrastination:** Delaying creates stress and steals your time.



Think about the last time something didn't go your way. What did it teach you? What's one habit you can start this week to improve your wellbeing?

### ANETHEMBA BONTSO

My dream was to become a nurse, but I didn't meet the requirements because of challenges at home. I first tried upgrading my marks, but that didn't work out. Then I visited bumb'INGOMSO's Lingomso Youth Centre, where I got help exploring different career paths. It was hard to change direction, but I needed a job. I received support with CV writing and interview prep and now I work for a pizza franchise in Mdantsane. I enjoy it because I love to cook. My advice is if the first plan doesn't work, try another good plan.



# REAL RESOURCES YOU CAN USE

South Africa has many free platforms, hotlines and programmes to help young people get ahead. Some have free apps you can use too.

## How to make the most of resources

- **Be proactive:** Apply, follow up and engage.
- **How to spot a scam:** If you have to pay for an interview or to submit a job application, it is probably a scam
- **Network:** Friends, teachers, even social media groups may know of new opportunities.



## DIRECT JOB SEARCH

- **SAYouth.mobi** – Youth portal for job listings, internships and training resources
- **JobJack** – Connects young people to vacancies and internships
- **yes4youth.co.za** – Government-backed portal for youth employment, skills programmes and mentorship
- **Careers24** – Job search platform listing vacancies across industries
- **Career Junction** – Job listings, career advice and CV tools
- **Glassdoor.com** – Job listings, company reviews and salary insights
- **PNet** – Job listings and recruitment services
- **LinkedIn** – Professional networking with job listings and learning resources
- **Facebook Jobs** – Local job listings via the Facebook app
- **Indeed.co.za** – Global job search engine listing local vacancies and company reviews
- **saypro.online** – Connects people to work opportunities and skills programmes
- **ngopulse.net** – job listings, especially in NGOs, social work and community development
- **opportunitiesforafricans.com** – portal of scholarships, internships, fellowships, grants, jobs, competitions aimed at Africans

## GOVERNMENT PROGRAMMES

[www.gov.za/issues/government-and-opportunities-youth](http://www.gov.za/issues/government-and-opportunities-youth)

Visit government departmental sites to see what programmes they have:

- Department of Arts and Culture – INDONI “My Heritage My Pride – life skills training education and encouragement for young people
- Trend Setter Initiative
- Public Art Programme
- Emerging Creatives Programme
- Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP)
- National Rural Youth Service Corps Programme

## WORK READINESS

- **dreamXchange** – Connects people with work opportunities, training and tools of the trade
- **bumb'INGOMSO** – provides workshops on effective job application, professionalism and ethical conduct in the workplace, CV writing and interview preparation through mock interviews.

## FREE ONLINE LEARNING (CERTIFICATES MAY COST)

- **Funzi** – Short courses on life skills, business and digital literacy
- **EdX** – University-level courses from global institutions
- **FutureLearn** – Courses from universities and cultural institutions
- **Coursera** – Courses, specialisations and degrees from top universities and companies
- **Regenesys (free.regenesys.net)** – Short courses on business, leadership and personal development
- **Alison.com** – Workplace, tech and personal skills courses

## HOTLINES

- **bumb'INGOMSO Call Centre:** 0800 555 558 | WhatsApp: 021 493 5637  
[www.bumbingomso.co.za](http://www.bumbingomso.co.za) | Facebook: @bumb'INGOMSOProject X: @bingomso | TikTok: bumbbingomso – Youth-friendly info on health, GBV and Economic opportunities
- **Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator:** 0800 72 72 72 – Connects youth to jobs, work-readiness training, advocates for youth employment solutions and has a toll-free support line
- **National Youth Development Agency (NYDA):** 087 158 6345/5738 – Guidance on youth programmes and funding
- **Youth Lab:** 076 666 3173 – Mentorship and youth development resources

## YOUTH ADVOCACY

- **Youth Capital** – Amplifies youth voices, provides resources and campaigns for youth employment. ([youthcapital.co.za](http://youthcapital.co.za))
- **Afrika Tikkun Services** – Cradle-to-career programmes in education, health and skills development.

## SCHOLARSHIPS AND BURSARIES

- **National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)** – Covers tuition for eligible students
- **Funza Lushaka** – Bursary for teacher training
- **Allan Gray Orbis Foundation** – Leadership and entrepreneurship scholarships
- **Provincial bursaries** – Check your provincial Education Department website and follow social media/newsletters
- **University-specific scholarships** – Check each university's financial aid page

## MENTORSHIPS AND NETWORKS

- **ACTIVATE! Change Drivers** – National youth leadership network with training, mentorship and community impact ([activatechangedrivers.co.za](http://activatechangedrivers.co.za))
- **Community youth clubs & NGOs** – Local mentorship opportunities.



Pick one of the platforms above and create a profile this week. Apply for at least one job, course or bursary. Share what you find with a friend – they might spot opportunities you missed.

## YOUR TURN

Empowerment happens through small, steady steps that produce big changes. Put what you've read in this booklet into practice by setting yourself goals. In a notebook or on your phone, write down:

- **3-month goals:** Things you can start now.
- **6-month goals:** Bigger steps, like applying for internships or joining a mentorship programme.
- **12-month goals:** Long-term aims like completing a qualification or saving a particular amount of money.

Now turn those general goals into SMART goals with clear, action plans.

Start with a general goal like: *"I want to improve my chances of getting a part-time job in the next three months."*

Change it into a SMART goal:

*"I will apply for at least two part-time retail or hospitality jobs each week so that within three months I can secure an interview, gain work experience and earn income."*

### BREAK IT DOWN:

- **Specific:** Apply for part-time jobs in retail or hospitality.
- **Measurable:** Submit at least two applications each week.
- **Achievable:** I have a CV ready and some work experience.
- **Relevant:** A part-time job will give me income and valuable experience.
- **Timebound:** Aim to get at least one interview within three months.

### MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

Break your SMART goals into bite-sized steps:

1. **What's the first small action?** (e.g., sign up on *SAYouth.mobi*)
2. **When will you do it?** (set a date)
3. **Who can support you?** (a friend, mentor or group)
4. **How will you measure progress?** (weekly/monthly check-ins)

### KEEP MOMENTUM

It's easy to feel motivated when your goals are fresh, but over time it's easy to lose momentum. Setting reminders or asking a friend to check in on your progress can help keep you accountable.



**You don't need to have it all figured out.** Start where you are, with what you have.



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