

**LIFE CHOICES
ACADEMY
ANNUAL REPORT**

2025

life choices

Message from the MD

Life Choices' dream is a simple, stubborn defiance: that every young person in South Africa may rise, thrive, and live a life of purpose and possibility. We hold this dream not in ignorance of the world, but in full view of the structural mountains that stand in their way.

In the wind-swept streets of the Cape Flats and the crowded corridors of our townships, we see the weight of the moment. We see young women carrying the future in their arms before they have finished their own childhoods. We see young men reaching for the cold certainty of a gang's embrace because the world has offered them no other place to belong. We see parents, their spirits thinned by the constant need for survival, seeking solace in a bottle.

But we also see the fire.

Research in the South African context tells us that our youth are currently caught in a state of 'waithood' – a forced suspension where the path to adulthood is blocked by a lack of access, not a lack of ambition. Our youth may be discouraged by the market, but they are undaunted in their desire for dignity. They do not merely want a job; they want a life that means something.

A meaningful life is not built on a single pillar. It is a tapestry woven from the threads of our different journeys:

In the Home: Where Family Affairs mends the shredded safety net, understanding that a thriving youth begins with a resilient parent.

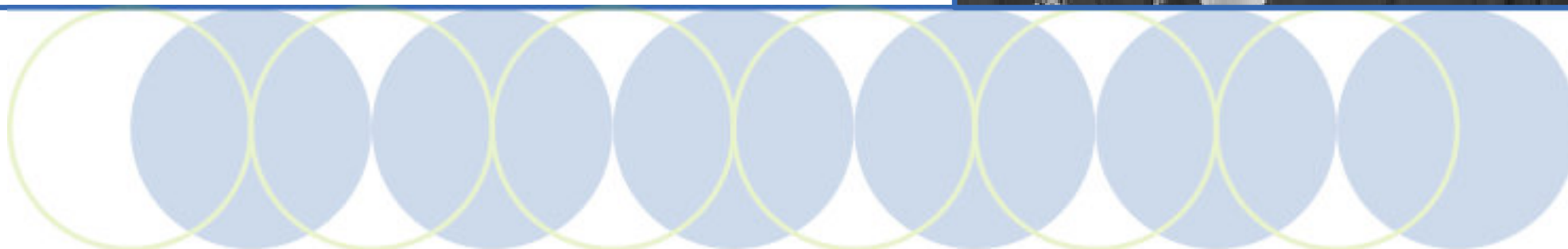
In the Body: Where Health4Life recognises that agency starts with the radical act of taking care of oneself in a world that often overlooks you.

In the Will: Where Leaders' Quest awakens the realisation that we are the heroes we have been waiting for.

In the Mind: Where the Life Choices Academy transforms technical skill into a toolkit for economic liberation.

In South Africa, your postal code can determine your future. However, current research suggests that social capital – the "who you know" and the "where you feel you belong" – is as important as your education. This is why we exist. We are not just a service provider; we are a community of belonging.

We provide the psychological scaffolding for the teen who wants to lead, the technological bridge for the youth who wants to build, and the emotional anchor for the family trying to stay afloat. We do this because we believe that potential is evenly distributed, even if opportunity is not.



Why youth unemployment?

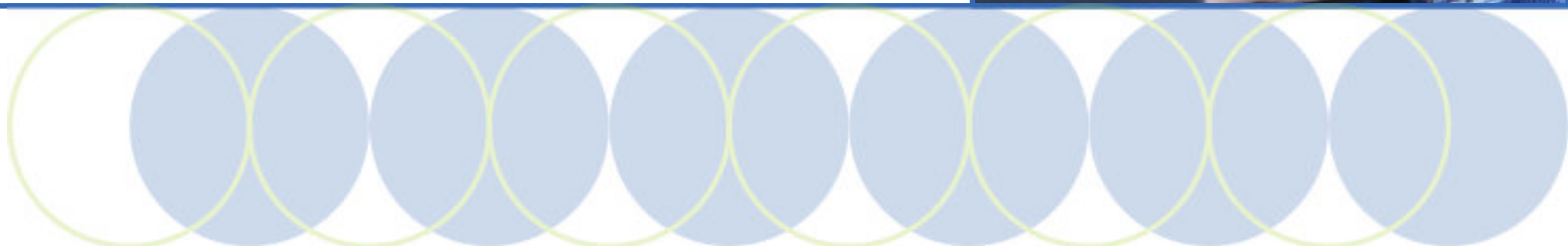
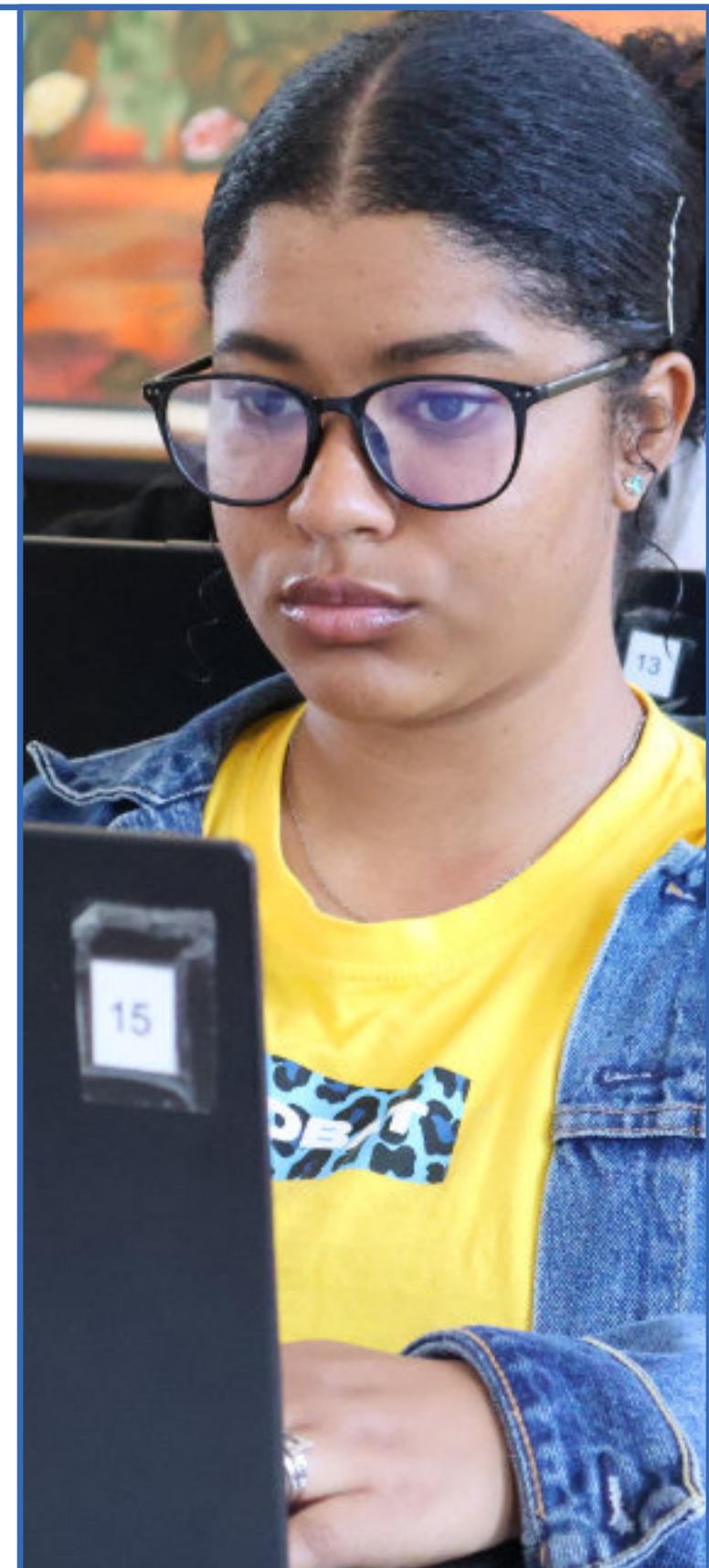
Youth unemployment remains one of South Africa's most urgent social and economic challenges. While the country's overall unemployment rate has stood at around 31% in recent years, young people continue to bear a disproportionate share of the crisis. Among those aged 15–24, unemployment exceeds 55%, while the broader youth category (15–34) consistently records unemployment rates above 45%. This figure is among the highest in the world and poses a massive challenge to our country's future.

Behind these statistics are millions of young people who struggle to find a pathway into the labour market. Even more concerning, based on labour force statistics, is the significant and growing number of young people who are not in employment, education, or training (NEET), meaning they are disconnected from both opportunity and skills development pathways.

The consequences of this challenge extend far beyond individuals. Youth unemployment places significant pressure on the country's social fabric and economic prospects. When young people are unable to participate meaningfully in the economy, the country loses critical productivity, innovation, and tax revenue. Long-term unemployment early in life is also associated with reduced lifetime earnings, diminished skills development, and lower economic mobility. At a societal level, high youth unemployment increases vulnerability to poverty, inequality, and social instability.

For young people themselves, unemployment can shape identity and future opportunity. The transition from education into work is a critical moment in building confidence, purpose, and financial independence. When that transition fails, the impact is not only economic but psychological, affecting self-esteem, motivation, and long-term career trajectories. In many cases, the longer a young person remains outside the labour market, the more difficult it becomes to re-enter.

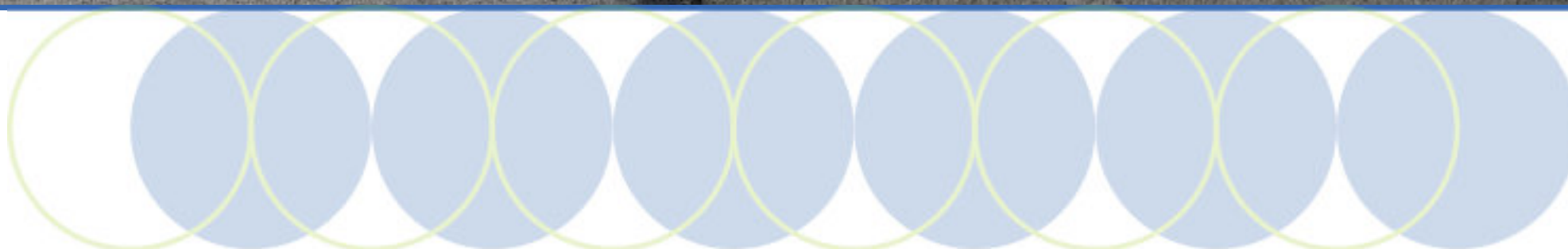
This challenge is further complicated by a rapidly evolving global economy. Technological change, automation, and the rise of artificial intelligence are transforming the nature of work. While these shifts create new opportunities, they also increase the demand for adaptable skills such as digital literacy, AI fluency, critical thinking, problem-solving, and a passion for continuous learning. For young people who already face barriers to employment, the risk is that the gap between available skills and labour market demand will continue to widen.



Addressing youth unemployment, therefore, requires more than job creation alone. It requires intentional investment in skills development, work readiness, and the development of pathways into meaningful employment. Equally important is recognising that employment journeys are rarely linear. Many young people require holistic, wraparound support that addresses not only technical skills but also personal development, resilience, confidence, and access to opportunity.

Sustainable employment outcomes often depend on ongoing guidance and support as young people transition from training into the workplace and navigate their early career journeys. Continuous mentorship, employer engagement, and extended support mechanisms can help ensure that young people not only secure employment but are also able to remain and grow within it.

At Life Choices Academy, this is the space in which we work. We strive to equip young people with the skills, mindsets, and sustained support needed to transition into employment and build meaningful, resilient career pathways in a rapidly changing world.



2025:

A Year of Transition and Learning

2025 marked a year of significant transition for Life Choices Academy. Following strategic discussions at the start of the year, the campus began implementing a revised organisational structure designed to strengthen operational delivery, improve programme alignment, and expand partnership opportunities.

A key focus of the transition was moving away from a project-specific operational model towards cross-functional divisions responsible for the core functions of project delivery. This shift was intended to strengthen consistency across the Academy's projects and ensure that the delivery mechanisms, systems, and learner experience remain aligned across the campus.

Alongside the structural transition, the Academy continued to evolve. A key development during the year was the strengthening of our work-integrated learning environment, enabling trainees to gain practical experience through real-world project work. This approach fortifies the connection between training and employment outcomes while ensuring that learners develop applied technical skills alongside their formal learning pathways.

The Academy also piloted YouthForce and YouthCode as parallel projects to start, allowing both cohorts to share a common foundational learning period before the YouthForce trainees transitioned into their Salesforce certification track. This model allows the Academy to streamline early-stage training while creating clearer pathways into specialised technical roles. Something that we aim to expand on in 2026.

During the year, the Academy also redesigned its recruitment and selection process. Traditional one-on-one interviews were replaced with multi-day workshop-based assessments, allowing facilitators to evaluate candidates across a broader set of criteria, including collaboration, resilience, communication, and behavioural responses under pressure. Early results from this approach suggest improved alignment between selected candidates and the expectations of the programme environment.

Expanding access to learning was another important focus. In 2025, the Academy launched its first YouthCode online cohort, testing the organisation's ability to deliver programmes remotely and extend learning opportunities beyond the physical campus. The results of this pilot have been encouraging and form part of the Academy's longer-term exploration of hybrid learning models that combine online and in-person delivery to increase accessibility, reach and overall impact.

The year also marked an important milestone in the Academy's geographic expansion. Solar Youth Cohort 3 was launched in Johannesburg



in partnership with Green Solar Academy, representing the first time that the Academy delivered a project beyond its Lansdowne campus. This pilot provided valuable insight into how partnership-driven delivery models could enable expansion into new markets while maintaining programme quality.

During the year, the Academy expanded its collaboration with several global technology partners and learning platforms. Through Microsoft's Ikamva Digital initiative, the Academy was onboarded as an implementation partner, providing access to certification pathways and digital credentials that strengthen participants' employability. In addition, the Academy secured participation in Coursera's Access to Skills initiative, providing access to additional online courses and professional certifications.

The year also surfaced important operational lessons as the Academy navigated growth and organisational change. Increased programme activity placed additional pressure on placement pipelines and exposed the need for stronger systems to support employer engagement and internship coordination.

Capacity constraints within the personal and professional development also highlighted the need to rethink how professional readiness support is delivered across programmes. Rather than relying solely on internal

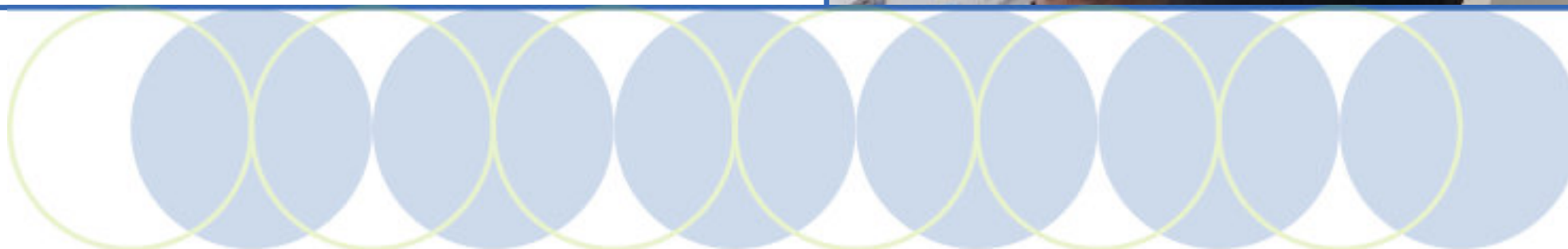
facilitation capacity, the Academy has begun leveraging its partnership ecosystem and digital platforms to strengthen personal and professional development delivery.

Similarly, early efforts to expand the Academy's business development capabilities highlighted the importance of clearer systems, defined partnership offerings, and structured outbound engagement with potential partners. These insights are now informing improvements that will continue into the coming year.

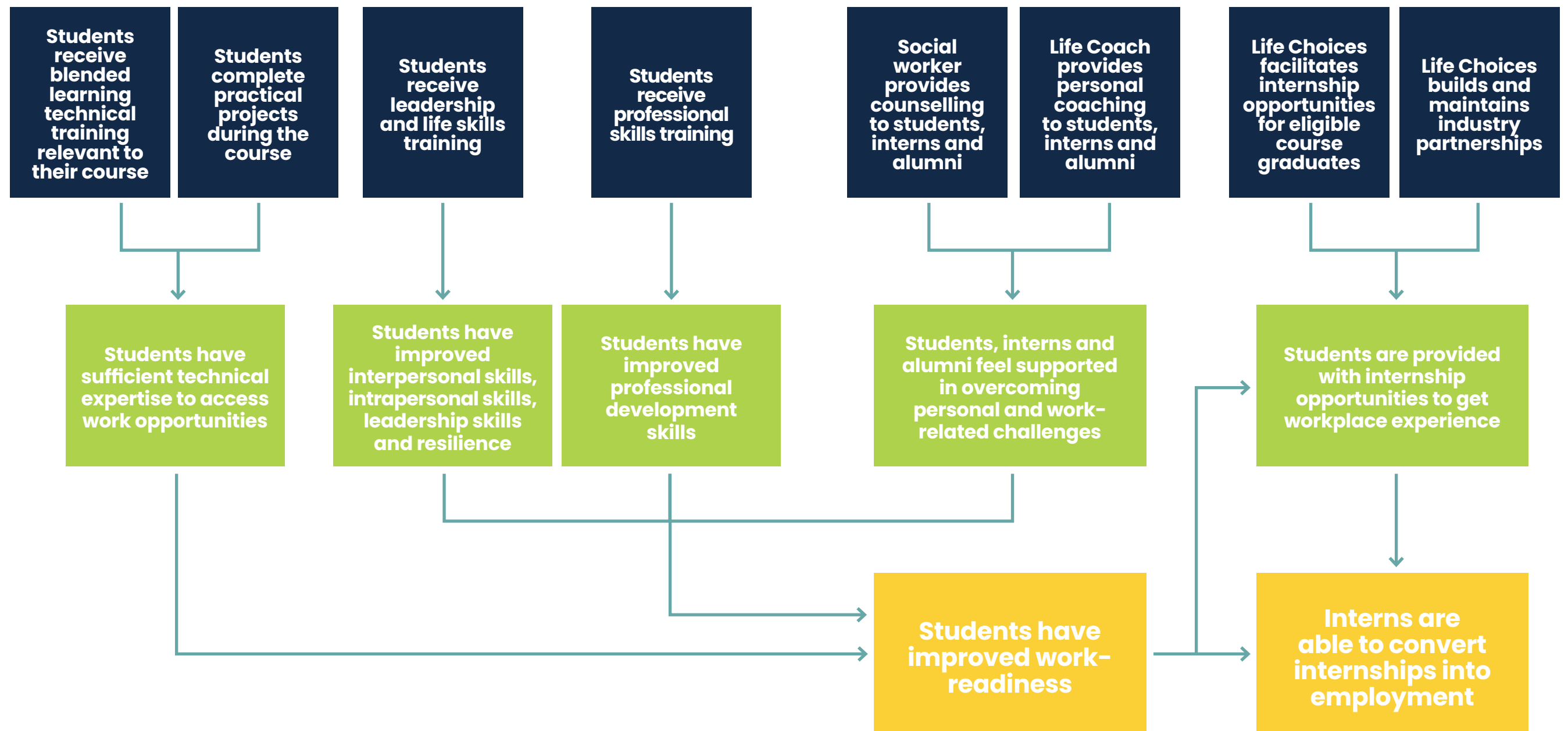
While 2025 presented both opportunities and operational challenges, it was also a year of meaningful learning and foundation-building. Several important pilots have provided valuable insight into how the Academy can evolve its delivery models.

These experiences are helping shape the Academy's next phase of development by strengthening systems, deepening employer and industry partnerships, and expanding programme access through both hybrid learning models and strategic partnerships.

As the Academy moves forward, the lessons from this year will play a critical role in refining how Life Choices continues to support young people in accessing meaningful employment pathways.



How we do what we do



Success Story | Mogamed

Rejection is your redirection

My journey with Life Choices has been anything but linear. I first discovered them through my younger cousin, who was part of their Coding Academy. Not only did he inspire me to apply, but we also have another cousin who joined Life Choices later. The cousin who first introduced me to the organisation is now a web developer with three years' experience. Our story is a reminder of what's possible with the right support and opportunity. At the time, Life Choices only offered coding, and since I had taught myself some HTML and CSS, I applied. Twice. And both times, I was unsuccessful. It was disappointing but in hindsight, it was just a redirection.

When Life Choices launched the Youth Force programme, they reached out to invite me for an interview. I almost didn't go. I had a wedding that same day, and during the entrance test, I was rushing, knowing I couldn't finish on time. But when I explained my situation, Siba and Veronique, the invigilators, offered to reschedule the test for a time that suited me. That small act of understanding changed everything. I aced the interview and became part of the very first Youth Force cohort.

I didn't know what Salesforce was at the time. But I saw Youth Force as a new door opening; my foot in the door to a better life. Transitioning from the

unsuccessful attempt to be part of the Coding Academy to participating in Youth Force didn't feel like failure, it felt like growth.

Growing up in a working-class coloured community, life after matric was uncertain. I'd been working since I was 17: retail, factory jobs, even helping in my dad's construction business. I applied to study at Cape Peninsula University of Technology, saved up R10,000, but it wasn't enough to register. I didn't know about NSFAS back then, and no one had taught me how to navigate post-school options. Like many others, I had the will but not the means.

That's what made the Youth Force programme so impactful. For once, I had a structured, supportive environment that believed in my potential. But it wasn't all smooth. The first two months were tough. We didn't receive stipends right away, and I had to move in with a friend's family to make it work. The construction



industry slows down in winter, so I couldn't earn on the side. I walked to the office every day, and when stipends finally came through, I contributed to the household that took me in. Later, I moved back home when things became more stable.

There were moments I felt discouraged. It's hard not to, especially when things don't work out the way you'd hoped. But I kept reminding myself: the world doesn't owe me anything. If I wanted more, I had to do the work, trust the process, and keep showing up. I'm grateful for the people around me, friends, family and mentors who held me up when I couldn't do it alone.

Today, I have a job I enjoy as a Product Manager. It's not a technical position, but it's still in the tech industry. I'm getting married next month, and we're building a home together. These are milestones I once thought were out of reach. Youth Force didn't just teach me skills, it gave me permission to dream beyond my circumstances.

I used to put pressure on myself to have what others had. I spent money on superficial things trying to fit in. Now, I'm more settled. My goals are mine alone, and they don't need to make sense to anyone else.

My advice? Just be lekker. Don't take education or opportunity for granted. Upskill constantly. Stay open. You won't always get your dream job right away but every skill you learn can be transferred somewhere. Your path won't look like everyone else's. That's okay. What matters is that you keep moving forward.



YouthCode

About the project

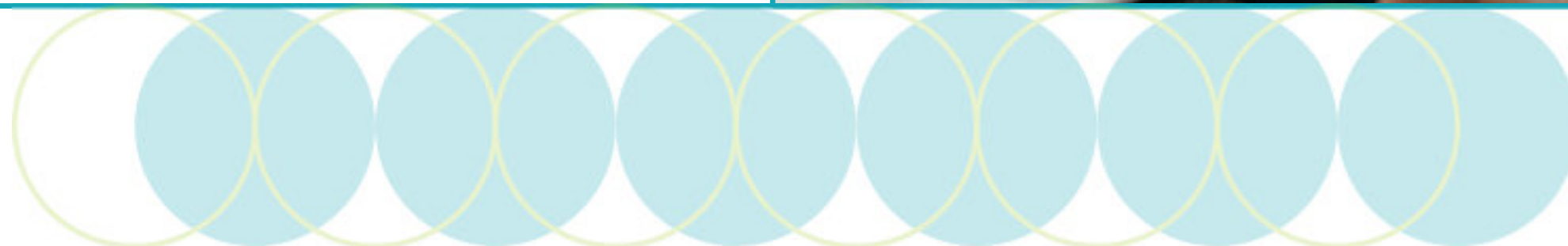
YouthCode is an employment-focused digital skills project delivered by Life Choices Academy to prepare young people for entry-level roles in the ICT sector. The project is designed as a structured skills-to-employment pathway that combines intensive technical training, professional development, and practical work experience to support trainees in transitioning from learning into meaningful work opportunities within the digital economy.

The project follows a 12-month blended learning and development model. The first six months consist of an intensive technical bootcamp focused on full-stack software development, where participants build foundational and intermediate skills relating to full-stack software development practices. This technical training is delivered alongside integrated life skills and professional development components that strengthen communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and workplace readiness.

The second phase of the project is delivered through LC Studio, the Academy's work-integrated learning (WIL) environment designed to replicate real-world software development environments. During this phase, participants engage in a structured WIL experience built around project-based assignments and simulated workplace scenarios that mirror industry expectations.

Working collaboratively on development projects, participants apply the technical skills gained during phase one while gaining practical experience in project delivery, working to deadlines, and responding to client-oriented requirements. This environment enables learners to translate their technical training into applied workplace capability while strengthening their confidence in presenting solutions, communicating with stakeholders, and operating within professional development teams.

Throughout the project, learners receive ongoing coaching, psychosocial support, and professional guidance to help them navigate both personal and professional challenges. The Academy also actively engages with industry partners to create internship and employment pathways, ensuring that participants develop the technical competence, workplace readiness, and professional confidence required to pursue sustainable careers in the ICT sector.



YouthCode Project

2025 Recruitment

Valid applications: 3392



Bootcamp attendees: 944



Workshop attendees: 547



Invited to program: 196



Accepted invitation: 141

In 2025, Life Choices held two recruitment drives – from January to March for Cohort 16 of YouthCode, and from July to September for Cohort 17 of YouthCode, from this a selection was also made for the participants in the YouthForce project (see later report).

In terms of demographics, more than half (55,7%) of the valid applicants were female. The vast majority - 2,685 - were unemployed and 773 had just completed their matric. Similarly, these were largely reaching low-income individuals with household incomes being under R5,000 for 2,183 of the applicants.

The assessment consists of three parts: the first is the online application form, which includes a basic logic/mathematical assessment. From this valid applicants – those who are in the required age range, meet demographic criteria, and are based in Cape Town – are contacted to participate in the second assessment: a one-day bootcamp at Life Choices. At this, they completed a written assessment (to establish basic literacy levels), and are introduced to HTML and python programming, with an accompanying assessment that tests conceptual understanding and practical application.

Successful bootcamp attendees are then invited to an interview (for cohort 16) and a workshop (cohort 17). Since the start of the programme, we have run individual interviews to determine whether the individual meets the right profile for the Academy. This process was followed for Cohort 16. However, for Cohort 17, we decided to shift this to a workshop where individuals worked in teams on problem-solving various challenges. The technical delivery team manage this workshop and are able to identify strong individuals from the groups. This also becomes a fantastic introduction for the participants to the programme and how it is run.

Due to the success of the shift to the workshop as the second assessment, we are continuing this practice for future cohorts, but with a few adjustments. In 2026, we are also included 'soft interviews' with prospective candidates as part of the workshop process to ensure that those selected are able to commit fully to the programme (i.e. have sufficient funds for travel and aren't working or studying at the same time).

Demographics

Cohort 16 and 17

Total Trainees:

141

52% Male

47% Female

1% Non-binary

52% Black African

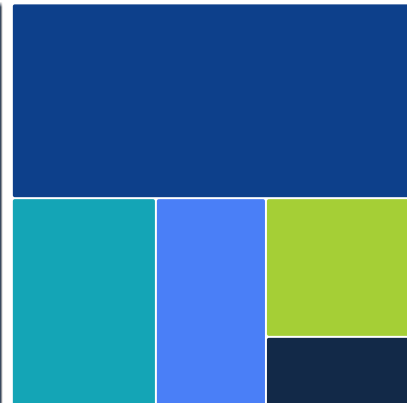
47% Coloured

1% Indian

Average age:

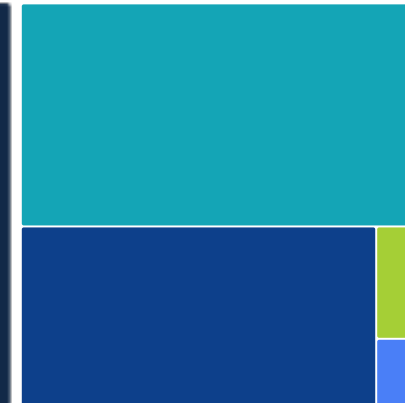
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Prior occupation



- 68 Unemployed
- 26 Matric
- 20 Employed
- 18 Studying
- 9 Volunteering/learnership/self-employed

Home language



- 84 English
- 60 isiXhosa
- 5 isiZulu
- 3 Afrikaans

Home life



- 46% live with both parents
- 28% live with mother only
- 22% live with neither parent
- 4% live with father only

Avg. # of people in household:

4.7

Avg. # of employed people in household:

1.4

Trainees who were parents

11

Education level

123 of the 141 trainees highest qualification was matric

6 had completed tertiary-level degrees or diplomas

The balance had uncompleted degrees/diplomas or had earned certificates of some kind.

Household income and access to resources

Of those who knew and declared their household income, one-third (33%) had a household income below R5,000, and a further 48% had a household income between R5,000 and R10,000 per month.

The majority lived in formal housing (100 out of 141) and the balance of 41 in some type of informal accommodation.

78% relied on public transport and 50% of the trainees spent 30-60 minutes getting to the campus, with the average monthly cost of transport being R1,114.47

Six-month training

Cohort 15 and 16 of YouthCode project completed their six-month initial training in 2025. Our aim is for 80% of those that start the programme complete the first six months and acquire the necessary skills – both technical and personal/professional – to advance to the internship phase.

COMPLETION RATE		FINAL AVG COURSE MARK		DISTINCTIONS EARNED	
Cohort 15:	76%	Cohort 15:	53.8%	Cohort 15:	12
Cohort 16:	90%	Cohort 16:	65.3%	Cohort 16:	22

We introduced a new technical curriculum with Cohort 15, this covered a broader range of subjects than previously. The following formed part of the curriculum:

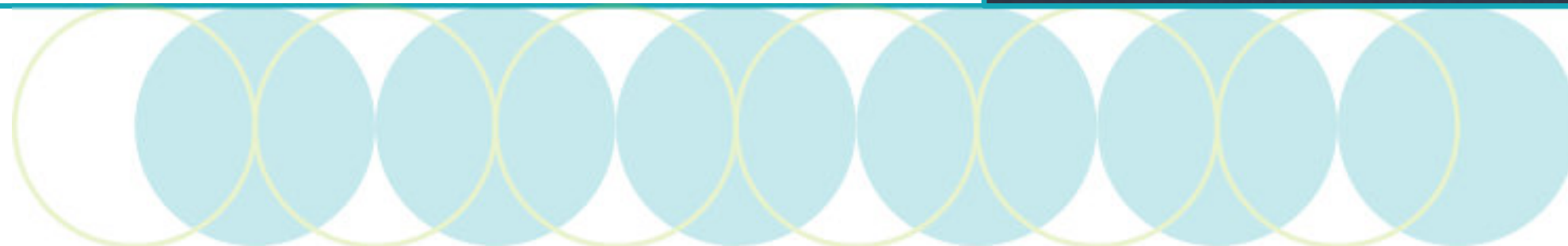
Foundation module introducing youth to computing in general and types of roles in the ICT industry

- **Module 1:** Front-end development (HTML, CSS, Bootstrap, Javascript, VueJS)
- **Module 2:** Back-end development (SQL, PHP, NodeJS)
- **Module 3:** E-Commerce (business models)
- **Module 4:** Enterprise systems and architecture (Oracle, DDL and data analysis)

At the end of the module, there is a project - some of these are group projects and some individual - to showcase the trainees application of their learning. In total, 118 of the 141 youth (83%) enrolled in the YouthCode project progressed to the second phase.

At the same time as the technical upskilling, youth are enrolled in a range of personal and professional development activities that are designed to increase self-awareness, build personal resilience and ensure that they have the soft skills needed for success in the workplace.

While this portion of the programme is not assessed, the trainees self-report on improvements that they have noted in terms of a range of criteria. These self-assessed improvements are detailed are the next page:



Type	Cohort 15	Cohort 16
Interpersonal	26.1%	19.5%
Intrapersonal	38.1%	25.1%
Leadership	43.7%	31.9%
Personal development	65.6%	40.2%
Resilience	41.0%	22.3%
Professional development	48.4%	39.5%

Out of this cohort, 23 youth did not complete the first six months. There are many reasons for drop outs. Of these 12 of the youth signed up for the programme but did not start beyond the induction week, deciding that this was not the right programme for them. In terms of the others, the broad reasons were: accepting a job opportunity (3), personal/family reasons (3), absenteeism (1), unsuitable career path (1), health & financial reasons (1), no reason provided (2).

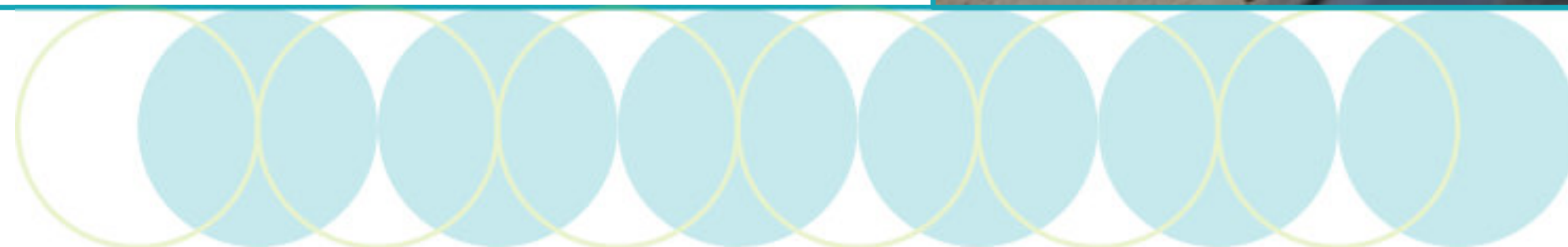
Course satisfaction

Overall, the trainees rated the YouthCode initiative highly, giving it an excellent Net Promoter Score of +71.4. As one trainee commented: “Life Choices is a brilliant program and should be known to more people.”

We were particularly interested in constructive feedback on the new technical curriculum, given that this was new. With the curriculum, we were also testing a new delivery style, which included more videos created by our lecturers to supplement the lectures themselves.

We learned that some trainees felt that the pace was too fast, and some suggested shifting time from ‘easier’ sections to ‘harder’ sections to allow them a steadier pace of work. In addition, there were suggestions regarding the balance of time between the technical curriculum and the personal and professional development one. Some trainees valued the videos on the LMS but otherwise wanted more lecturing time.

We are making adjustments to the curriculum and its delivery to see if we can further improve the trainee experience. We were pleased to see that 78% of trainees felt that they had sufficient professional and life skills to perform well in their internship, and that 67% of the trainees felt supported by the lecturers to overcome personal challenges.



Special Report

LC Studio

The 2025 programme year introduced notable shifts in delivery, outcomes, and post-training pathways across Cohorts 15 and 16. While challenges emerged, they ultimately catalysed growth, adaptability, and new opportunities for trainee development.

Cohort 15 experienced a key operational change during the final project phase, where the last brief was delivered remotely due to onsite capacity and resource constraints. Despite this adjustment, the cohort demonstrated resilience and adaptability, successfully delivering functional solutions. Although the final product was not deployable in a live environment, all core functionality was achieved locally, reflecting strong technical competence under constrained conditions.

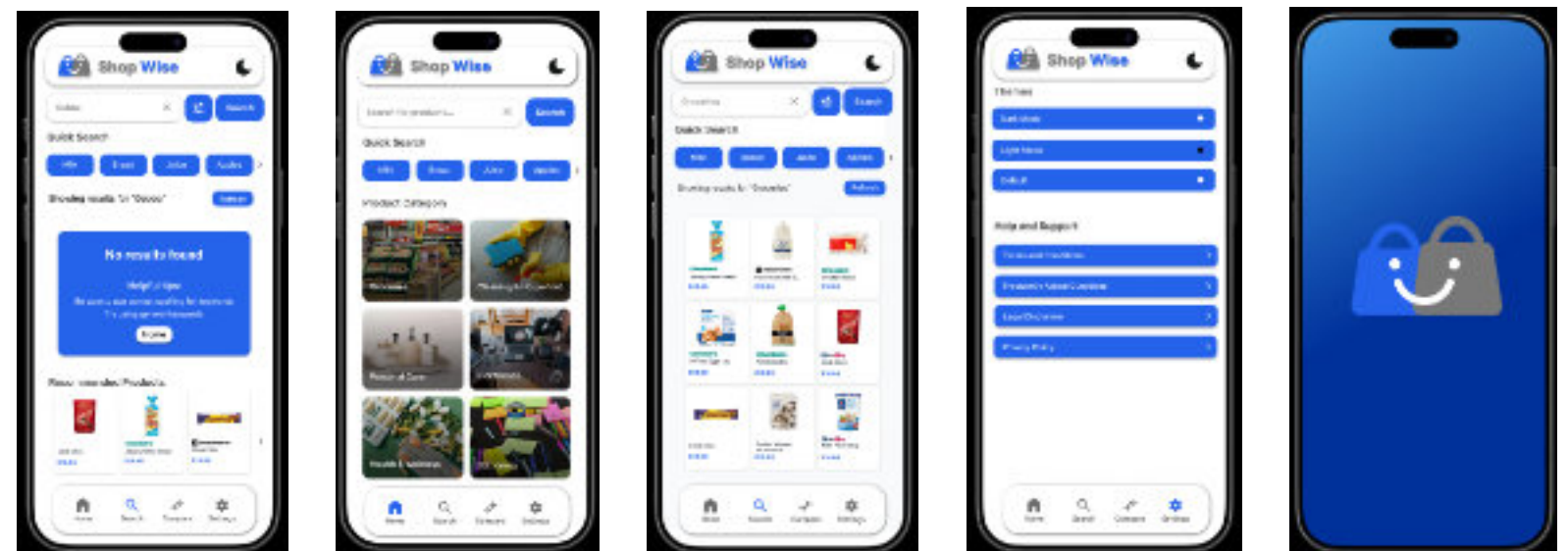
A significant milestone for this cohort was the emergence of a trainee-led start-up. With support from the Technical Development team, the group developed a financial model to support a product pitch to Golden Arrow. This process was further strengthened by the Life Choices fundraising department, who facilitated the engagement and provided presentation coaching. While the pitch outcome was ultimately unsuccessful due to unforeseen factors, the experience proved invaluable. It contributed meaningfully to the professional growth of the participants, most of whom have since secured employment. The start-up initiative is currently on hold, with potential for future revival.

Cohort 16 was characterised by a high-variance performance dynamic. Teams either significantly exceeded expectations or struggled to meet minimum requirements. Despite this polarity in outcomes, the overarching trend was one of substantial individual and collective growth.

Entrepreneurial activity increased notably within this cohort, with three distinct start-ups emerging and seeking opportunities to formalise the offering into ventures. The Technical Delivery team continues to provide structured support to these ventures, reinforcing the programme's growing role as a catalyst for entrepreneurship alongside employment readiness.

There has been a notable improvement to project delivery where trainees are applying themselves in self organised project delivery based on the LC Studio work integrated learning model. The cohort is broken into teams, each team gets an opportunity to work on a project in a self governed manner by which they have to organise their own functions and coordinate effectively amongst each other to deliver on the projects brief.

The below images are part of the third brief delivered in month four of the work integrated learning journey. The brief objective was for the teams to develop an app that would allow the user the ability to compare prices of products across the major retailers. The mandate also required that they learn a new tech stack Flutter and expose themselves to the ethical and legal implications of web scraping.



Our Results

Internships

Following the six months of training, trainees progress to six months of workplace experience in an internship. This starts in LC Studio, and then progresses to an internship with an industry partner.

In 2025, Cohorts 14 and 15 completed their internships. We are thus reporting on their progress through the system.

During this period, 48 students had both an internship with LC Studio and an external partner, while the balance spent their time in LC Studio working on internal projects.

118

Total trainees graduating from the 6 month course

113

Total trainees eligible for internships

100

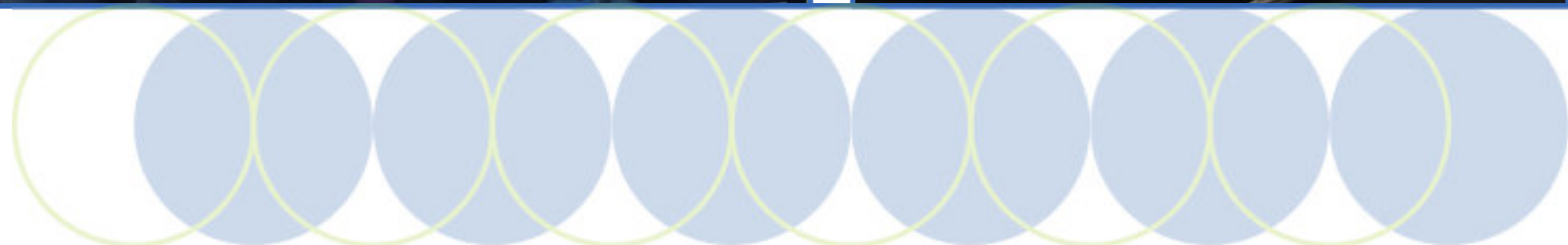
Total trainees completing the 6 month internship

Completion Rate 85%

Our target completion rate for this phase is 80%.

5 trainees weren't eligible for an internship due to poor performance or their own desire to not continue further with the programme. A further 13 dropped out at the internship phase. This was due to abscondment, misconduct, personal reasons, and opting to further their studies elsewhere.

Life Choices is an Implementation Partner with the YES4Youth programme, so trainees earn a minimum wage stipend during their internship.

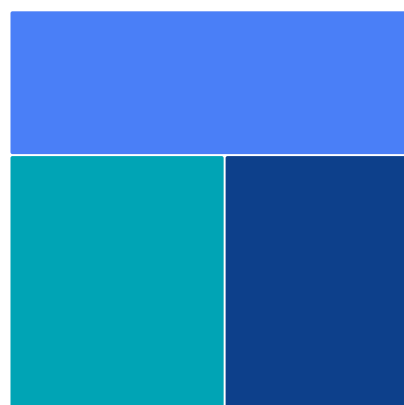


Employment

Life Choices Academy tracks students for a 3-year period from the start of their journey with us. The following data is derived from cohorts 10 to 13, which are the relevant cohorts of youth who are in the job market and fit into this reporting period.

Total graduates: 238

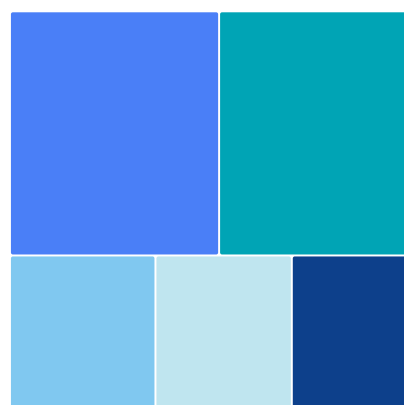
Months to employment:



- **68.9%** Found employment by month 16
- **79.4%** Found employment by month 24
- **83.2%** Found employment by month 36

Please note: These figures include the 12-month training period, so month 16 is the 4th month after the initial 12 months of training/internship. This is also generally the point at which the YES4Youth stipend comes to an end.

Salary ranges:



- **13.4%** < R5,000 per month 16
- **31.7%** R5,000 - R10,000 per month
- **29.2%** R10,001 - R15,000 per month
- **11.7%** R15,001 - R20,000 per month
- **14.2%** > R20,000 per month

Please note that the above only includes those who provided data. The sample is 120 individuals.



Success Story | Tarryn

Journey to Cybersecurity

People often meet my quiet side first. It's the part of me that listens before it speaks, that observes before it moves. But underneath that stillness is a fire. Like the colours I wear in my hair, my energy doesn't stay in one place too long. I'm curious by nature. Always asking questions. Always trying to understand how things work.

I didn't grow up imagining myself in cybersecurity. That kind of future wasn't on the cards where I come from. In Grade 9, living in Heideveld, a community too often written about only in terms of violence or hardship, I stumbled into a three-week HTML course with R-Labs. I say 'stumbled,' but maybe that's the wrong word. I was looking actively for something to pour myself into. Something constructive. Something to hold onto. If you know Heideveld, you know how important it is to find something like that early.

After matric, I wanted to take a gap year to give myself space to breathe, to figure things out. But that wasn't an option. 'No child of mine is just going to stay at home,' my mom said. So I registered for Business Management at Pearson College. It wasn't a passion; it was a placeholder. The only part that felt like mine was the Information Technology module. Information Technology quietly and slowly reminded me of what lit me up years earlier.

Then COVID happened. School paused, and so did everything else. The financial strain made going back impossible. But I didn't stop learning. I returned to R-Labs for short courses and even tried a sewing class. That might sound unrelated, but creativity doesn't work in straight lines. At R-Labs again, I remembered what it felt like to build something from scratch, even with code. That course reignited the spark, and this time I chose to follow it deliberately.

In 2022, I joined the Future Innovation Lab at the University of the Western Cape. In 2023, I interned at my church. While my role was mostly admin, I also designed camp booklets and facilitated youth camps. I realised there that I loved design. Not just how things look, but how they feel, how people interact with them. Colour, layout, experience. It was all connected.

Later, I joined Life Choices. And that's where my love for code deepened. I didn't just learn theory; I started applying everything I'd learned in those



previous short courses. I naturally leaned into UX/UI projects, not because I had all the answers, but because it felt like a language I was starting to speak fluently. The program was tough. There were curveballs like the day my entire codebase disappeared. I panicked, of course. But I also learned something crucial: patience. With tech. With timelines. And most importantly, with myself.

Outside of coding, I give my time to Peace Jam, mentoring young people to step into leadership. Between church, mentorship, and working in tech, especially in a space where I'm often one of the few women, I've come to understand the power of showing up. Again and again. Not perfectly, but persistently. I've learned that leadership isn't about having the loudest voice. Sometimes, it's just about holding space for others to see what's possible.

My story isn't a blueprint. It bends. It pauses. It doubles back. But if there's one truth I carry, it's this: you're allowed to begin again, as many times as it takes. There's power in detours, in mistakes, in starting over. And if you don't see a path in front of you, maybe that's because you're the one meant to build it.



YouthForce Project

About the project

The YouthForce Project is a 12-month upskilling initiative for youth with the aim of getting them skilled to become certified Salesforce Administrators, and find work within corporates, organisations and consultancies that use the Salesforce platform, a global standard in CRM (Customer Relationship Management).

In 2024, Life Choices Academy became a recognised Salesforce Workforce Development partner, and launched the YouthForce training initiative with a first cohort of 26 youth.

At the start of 2025 we continued supporting Cohort 1 in their efforts to obtain a second certification and transition into employment through internships. Securing this second certification presented several challenges, as candidates demonstrated varying interests and began to experience a degree of certification fatigue. This resulted in not all candidates completing the second certification. While this certification pathway was positioned as an additional opportunity it highlighted the need for a review of the programme model.

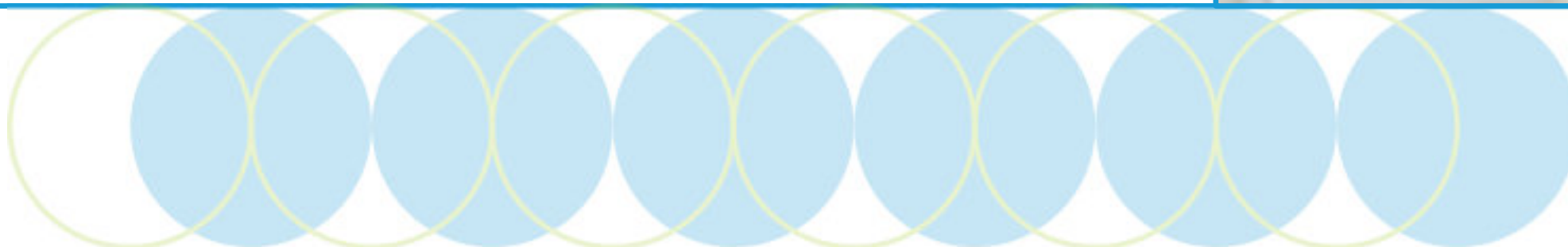
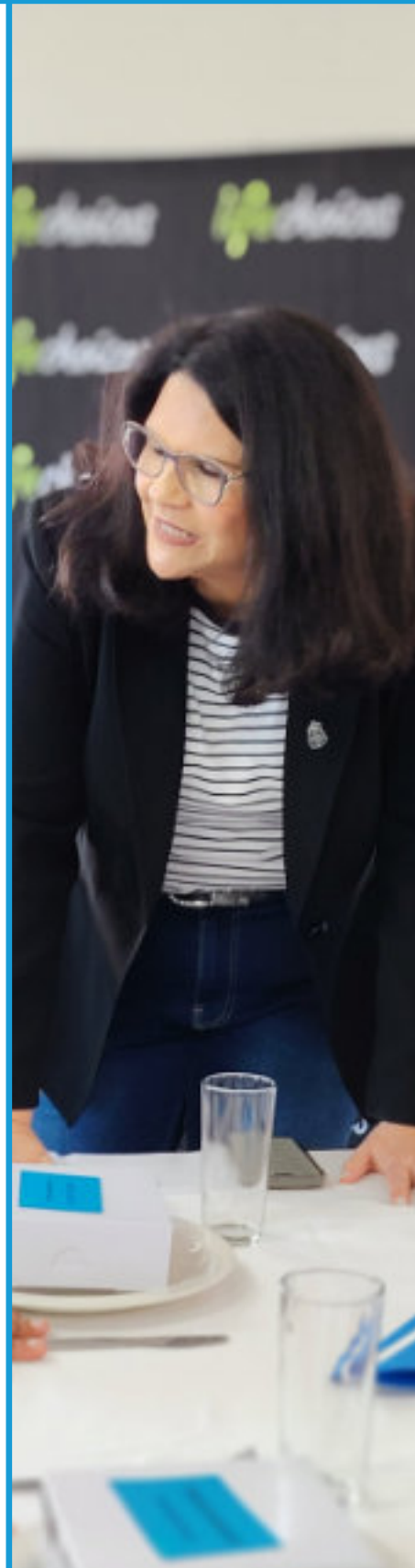
The placement function for this cohort proved to be particularly challenging. Through this process, we developed a deeper understanding of the Salesforce ecosystem, recognising it as a complex environment with multiple stakeholders influencing the employment landscape. This insight exposed a gap in our initial understanding of the ecosystem's dynamics, particularly in relation to internship opportunities. As a result, a significant portion of the second half of 2025 was dedicated to reviewing these processes and identifying ways to secure meaningful work experience opportunities for trainees.

Based on the experience of Cohort 1 and feedback from the market, we

undertook a comprehensive review of the programme ahead of the launch of Cohort 2. The second cohort of the YouthForce project commenced in parallel with the YouthCode cohort in September 2025. Industry feedback indicated that candidates with a stronger technical foundation were better positioned to succeed in the Salesforce Administrator role and were ultimately more employable due to their diversity of skills. In response, we introduced a more technically grounded learning pathway and removed the second certification track.

This phase of the programme was delivered in collaboration with the YouthCode team, who are well positioned to facilitate technical training. Participants engaged in a technical curriculum, with a focus on both front-end and back-end technologies. This foundational phase was designed to better prepare learners before transitioning into the Administrator certification journey in January 2026.

Learners completed their technical training with the submission of a full-stack project in December 2025, demonstrating both front-end and back-end competencies. In parallel, and informed by reflections from Cohort One, we invested significant time in reviewing and strengthening our placement strategy. A key insight was the need for deeper integration with Salesforce implementation partners. In response, we developed a revised go-to-market strategy, which will be launched at the beginning of January 2026.



YouthForce Project

About our trainees

23 trainees were recruited in September 2025 into the second cohort of the YouthForce project. We ran the recruitment differently for this cohort, by combining the recruitment for both YouthForce and YouthCode, and then selecting individuals best-suited for the Salesforce initiative into the YouthForce cohort.

13 Males

10 Females

16 Black Africans

6 Coloured

1 Indian

Average age: **23**

19-21 years: **5**

22-24 years: **13**

25-27 years: **5**

All were South African citizens. More than 60% had been employed, 13% had had some type of employment, and the balance had been studying matric or at tertiary level.

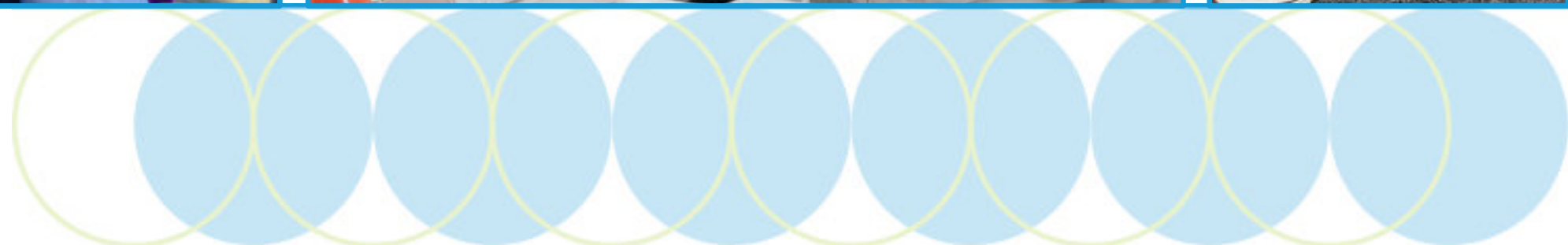
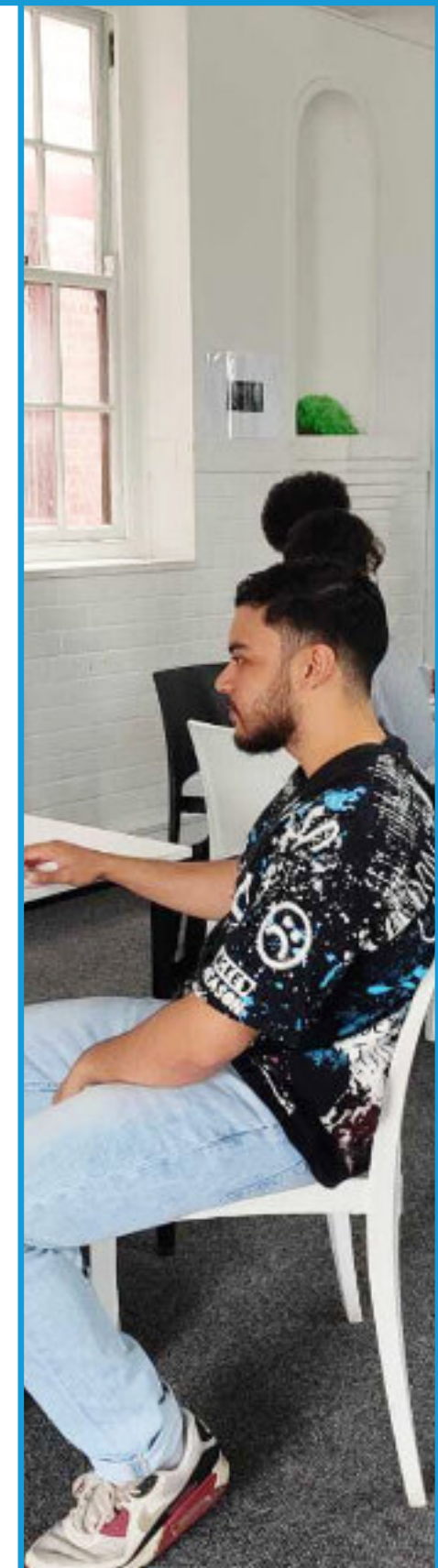
People in household (avg): **5.4**

Employed in household (avg): **1.7**

Trainees who were parents **3**

52% lived with both parents, 30% with their mother only.

91.3% used **public transport** to access the campus at an average monthly cost of **R1,379**.



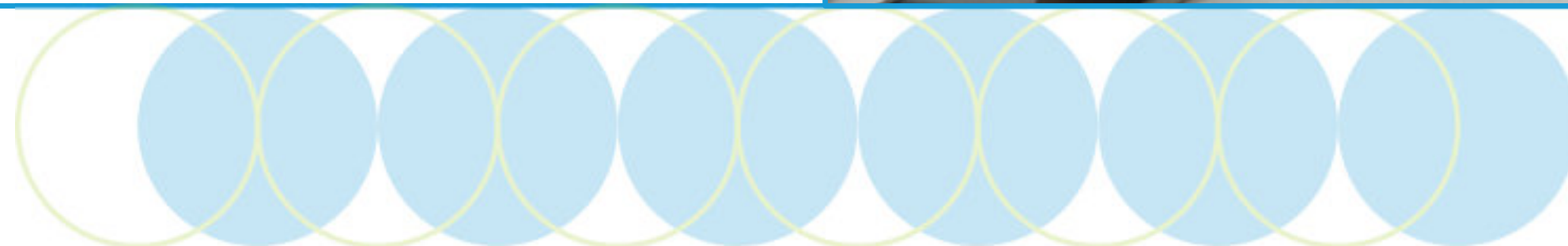
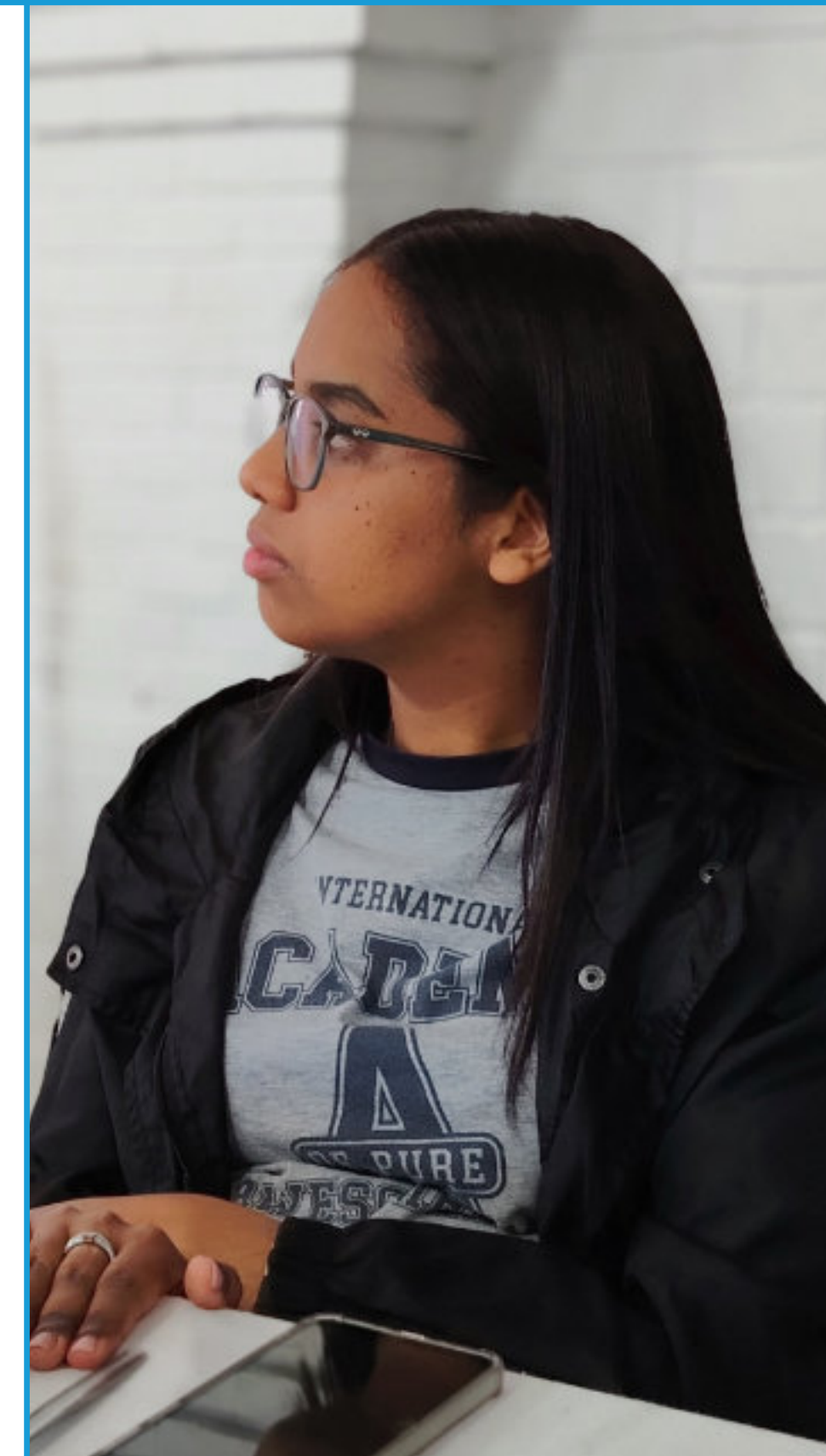
Technical training feedback

The sessions are delivered in a blended format – using an online LMS with self-learning that is supplemented by facilitator support. It was noted that there were times when trainees wanted additional support and the technical team is looking at ways to accommodate this whilst ensuring that the trainees remain responsible for their own learning.

Usefulness ratings for technical training modules

Foundation Module (Theory, Python, CISCO/IBM):	7.7
Module 1 (HTML, CSS, Javascript, DOM Manipulation, SQL):	7.3
Project Brief 1:	5.2
Trailhead: Data & Analytics Management:	7.0
Trailhead: Object Management & Lightning App Builder:	7.7
Trailhead: Productivity & Collaboration:	6.7
Trailhead: Sales & Marketing Apps:	8.1
Trailhead: Service & Support Apps:	8.0
Trailhead: Superbadges:	9.0
Trailhead: Setup and Configuration:	7.5
Trailhead: Workflow/Process Automation:	8.7

Average usefulness rating: 7.4



Here are some snippets of feedback received from the trainees:

“I was fascinated by the different aspects of the training. I have gained an interest in certain topics and am looking forward to learning more about IT and coding. The week did feel a bit dragging which made me want time to move faster so the week could be over, however I did enjoy my week, and time spent at Life Choices so far.”

“The technical training was very useful because of the revision that we usually have every week it helps me understand the content easily and salesforce platform features.”

“The video that was recorded for us was really helpful, the slides and the revision sessions that we normally have.”

“the assistance and explanation received from the the facilitators assisted me by clearing up my confusion and completing what was required of me.”

“My lecturer is very soft spoken and kind. She's also very attentive and helps as much as she can. She explains very well and makes sure everyone is on the same page. She complimented my time management skills and that made me feel very good about myself and how I use my time.”

“She was helpful and encouraging through out this time but sometimes wasn't there for questions i had on exercises, i like her lecture style as she is very welcoming to hearing everyone out.”

“Tough love approach, no spoon feeding.”

Personal and professional development feedback

In addition to the technical training, youth have an extensive personal and professional development (PPD) curriculum. This includes shorter life skills sessions where youth have a chance to delve into various topics that encourage reflection and personal growth, and which impart important tools for building a sense of self and agency in the world.

In addition, there are longer training days hosted by internal and external facilitators that cover leadership development, as well as the building of important professional skills for the workplace – such as communication, financial literacy, project management, and more. As part of the programme, trainees also have access to life coaching and counselling services for one-on-one support.



Usefulness ratings of the PPD programme:

Life Skills:	7.8
Leadership training:	8.3
Communication/Story-telling:	8.2
Project management:	6.7
Financial literacy:	8.5
Life coaching:	8.5
Counselling:	8.7

Here is some open feedback on the impact of this part of the programme:

“Very useful it makes me see money with another perspective and my spending pattern has changed ever since I attended financial literacy.”

“I realized that my happiness does not depend on my achievements and when you are grateful, forgiving, exercising and meditation are things that leads to happiness.”

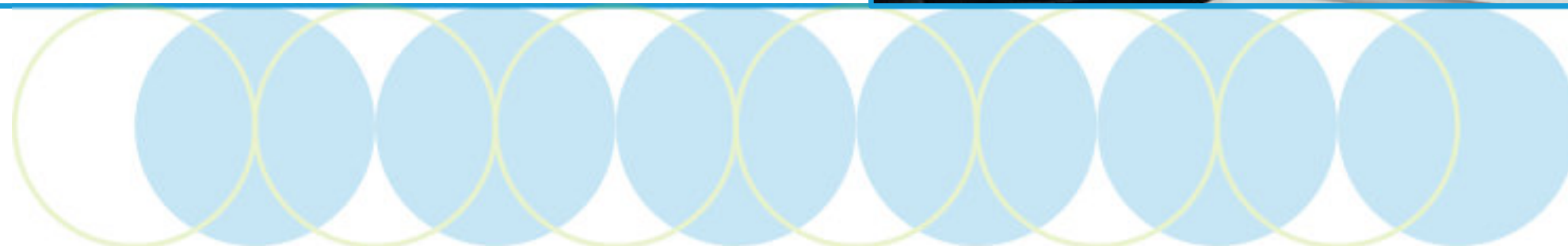
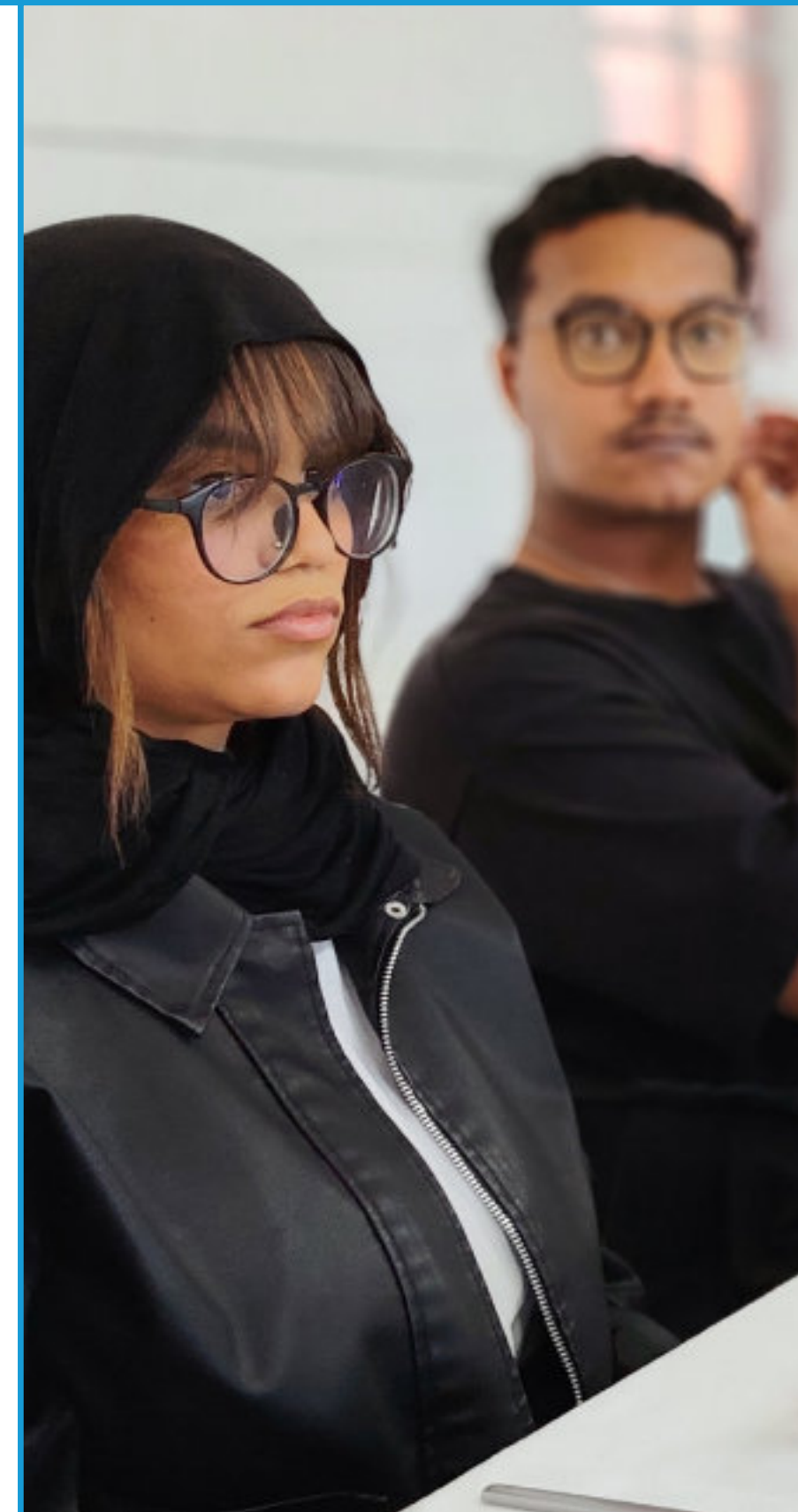
“It helped me understand the real world and how my mindset and the way i view money should change.”

“It gave me a better understanding of wanting to do things because I chose to and how continuously doing things even though I don't like it, will automatically make it easier to do in the future due to my subconscious.”

“It was a nice experience. I found it really enjoyable because the way we all interacted and played games making me feel like a child again.”

“I took this PPD session has an opportunity to speak about a part of my life that has just been shoved deep under the rug and I must say that i felt relieved after speaking up in front, getting a chance to let go of the past that I didnt even know i was holding onto so tight feels really good and it gave me a chance to make peace with what had happened.”

“Helped me understand somethings was not what i interpret them to be and i should try somethings different to get more clear out comes.”



Our results

Cohort 1, which started in September 2024, graduated from the programme in September 2025.

20 of the 26 youth (77%) who started in Cohort 1, completed the course and received their Salesforce Admin Certification. 11 of the 20 youth (55%) who completed their admin certifications went along to obtain their AI specialist certifications.

The individuals were also awarded a total of 2,394 Salesforce Trailhead Badges and 308 SuperBadges, with all achieving “Ranger” Status on the Salesforce Trailhead system.

As of December 2025, 12 of the 20 youth had been successfully placed with host companies. The placements team has committed to supporting the remaining eight learners in securing internship opportunities during Quarter 1 of 2026.

As noted, a number of structural and technical challenges have been identified in placing junior talent into the Salesforce ecosystem. These challenges exist at the intersection between implementation partners who deliver Salesforce solutions and the end clients they serve. This dynamic has a direct influence on how and where entry-level talent can be absorbed into the market.

Based on our experience with previous placement strategies, we have refined our approach to more deliberately position our talent pipeline through implementation partners aligned to client needs. The intention of this shift is to improve the absorption of junior talent and strengthen long-term placement outcomes within the ecosystem.

Cohort 2, as per the end of 2025 had completed the first phase of the technical program focusing on front end and back end development with all participants passing the assignment leading into the admin certification track in January 2026.



Success Story | Tauriq

Being willing to try

Growth happens when you're fearless. But sometimes, it starts when you're simply willing to try, scared or not.

I grew up in Bellville, Cape Town, a place often overlooked, misunderstood, and filled with both tension and resilience. My childhood was shaped by a rich mix of cultures within my family, but also by a constant sense of misalignment. I was the youngest of all my cousins, and from early on, I struggled with communication and connection. While others talked, I tinkered.

Technology was my safe space. I had a habit of breaking things just so I could fix them. It wasn't just curiosity; it was survival. In my late teens, life was chaotic. I neglected my emotional health and masked it with nonchalance. But when I was building or repairing something, I found calm. That was my version of peace.

My path hasn't been linear; it's been more like a maze of trial, error, and unexpected lessons. I began my post-school journey studying architecture, shifted to civil engineering, and then transitioned into web development. It wasn't until I stumbled across a trend on LinkedIn, noticing that several web developers had come through Life Choices Academy, that my trajectory changed.

I applied for the coding program. I was rejected. But instead of a closed door, Life Choices offered me a window, the Youth Force Salesforce program. I didn't even know what Salesforce was but I knew I had nothing to lose.

At Youth Force, I wasn't just handed technical skills; I was asked to

open up. That part terrified me more than the coding. I've always been uncomfortable around people. Vulnerability felt like weakness. But the counselling sessions, the life skills development, and being encouraged to talk about my own life experiences cracked something open in me.

For the first time, I found others like me, people whose values were like mine. We didn't have the same backgrounds, but we had the same hunger to grow. We shared stories, supported each other, and held each other accountable. I learned that communication is not just a skill, it's a form of healing.

I used to avoid people at all costs. I had a wall built so high, no one was getting through. But Life Choices encouraged collaboration. I had to learn how to work in teams, how to give and receive feedback, and how to communicate with kindness. That was hard. But necessary.

Today, I'm not only more skilled, I'm more empathetic. I've

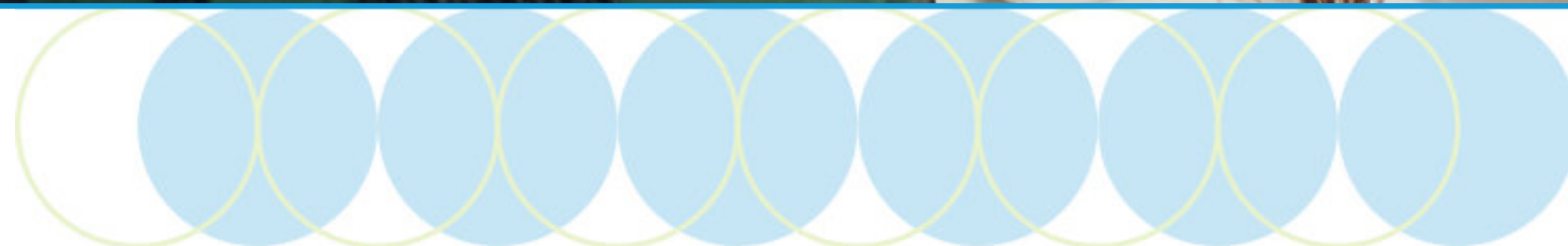


softened in a way that makes me more whole. I can express myself without being harsh. I can lead without controlling. I can listen without preparing a defence.

Now, I'm a Salesforce Administrator at a fast-growing company. I've built a career in a space I didn't even know existed a year ago. My skills have multiplied. In just eight months, my confidence and capabilities have grown in ways I never imagined.

But this isn't just a story about personal success. It's about the systems that don't always work for people like me, and the spaces that try to change that. Life Choices gave me a new chance, not by 'saving' me, but by believing in my ability to transform myself with the right tools and support.

I've failed a lot. And I'll fail again. But that's how growth works. Fail, fail, and fail some more until you're no longer afraid of it. Every failure was a necessary lesson. Every rejection pushed me toward redirection.



Solar Youth Project

About the project

The SolarYouth Project is a 12-month upskilling programme to train young people with an electrical qualification to become Solar PV installers. In 2024, we ran the first cohort of this project.

2025 was a significant period for the Solar Youth project. During the year, we successfully delivered two additional cohorts. Cohort 2 launched in March 2025 following the success of the pilot cohort in 2024. While the programme structure remained consistent, it was delivered within a notably different and more challenging market environment.

In early 2025, we observed a marked decline in the demand for the professional training offerings within the solar sector through our partnership with GREEN Solar Academy. As the year progressed, it became evident that the sector was under increasing strain, largely influenced by the reduction in load shedding, as well as broader market concerns relating to potential regulatory changes, including tariffs and tax implications. These factors contributed to a decrease in market demand, which in turn impacted our ability to place graduates as efficiently as we had achieved with the first cohort.

Despite these challenges, we were able to secure placements for all of the learners within the Cape Town cohort by the end of the year. However, additional placement support was required, particularly for learners who experienced delays or disruptions in securing internships in the second half of the year. Some internships ended early due to shortened contracts and dynamics in commercial projects and hiring models. These were mainly short term contracts that generally don't convert to employment. So, while these are great for work experience, they are not ideal for longer term

employment needs.

In parallel, we made a strategic decision to reassess the timing and approach for the launch of the third cohort. This decision was informed by the prevailing market conditions and concerns around our ability to place graduates into meaningful internship and employment opportunities. As a result, the third cohort was launched in Johannesburg in October 2025, in partnership with Green Solar Academy.

This cohort followed a similar delivery model to the Cape Town programmes. Recruitment was conducted in partnership with Tshwane South TVET College, and the programme was implemented on an accelerated timeline. All trainees successfully completed the programme and graduated in the first week of December 2025, positioning them to transition into internship opportunities commencing in January 2026.



Solar Youth Project

About our trainees

48 trainees were recruited during the two recruitment cycles. The first recruitment cycle ran in March/April in Cape Town, and the second in September in Gauteng. In both instances, we worked with local TVET colleges to recruit students who had the required electrical qualifications for the opportunity.

21 Males

27 Females

47 Black Africans

1 Coloured

Average age: 24

19-21 years: 8

22-24 years: 17

25-27 years: 19

> 28 years: 2

47 were South African citizens and 1 was Zimbabwean. 23 of the 48 were unemployed and 20 had been studying at college/university. 1 had the equivalent of a matric qualification, and 4 were employed or interning.

People in household (avg): 4

Employed in household (avg): 1.3

Trainees who were parents 13

36% lived independently of parents, 35% with their mother, 24% with both parents and the balance with their father only.

83% had a combined household income of less than R10,000 per month.

96.4% used public transport to access the campus at an average monthly cost of R1,298.



Technical training feedback

The technical curriculum is delivered through an online learning platform, which that supplemented by face-to-face lectures; as well as through practical application in the solar yard.

Trainees rated the usefulness of the theoretical training 8.4 out of 10, and the usefulness of the practical training at 9 out of 10. This gives the trainees excellent grounding in how to approach different roof types, and assists the youth in learning how to work as a team.

Here is some feedback on the sessions:

“It's very useful because it prepares us on how to mount, plan, do risk assessment and execute the plan.” “And another thing it prepares us on how one should behave in the work environment and in a teamwork because we come from different areas, background and different cultures, so we must respect each other and learn how to communicate better and how to professionally talk to one another”

“it was really nice getting to experience the practical world , installing on different roofs ,working within a team and also being productive...”

“The theoretical technical training was very nice. as each day passes by the more, I get an understanding of most theory questions. I'm getting better and better with each passing day. inverter was giving me a hard time understanding them but now I understand them better especially the ac coupled and dc coupled.”

“I got the basics of real-life problem-solving calculations, how to size the system, how to approach and explain technical issues to customers. Although I learnt all that I didn't get the chance to learn everything, I lack in some areas

because he was fast paced for me and that frustrates me because I want to be my best.”

The lecturers were also highly valued for their assistance in imparting knowledge and creating a safe learning environment, as these comments highlight:

“He always reach out to us by making sure that we all understand, and he even goes further by giving us more information which is not mentioned in our learning guides. He always keep the environment healthy for learning by giving us jokes making us to lough so that we can break the ice. He is always early in class.”

“Lecturer McDonald has the best teaching skills which I have not only loved his teaching but I have also developed a keen interest into asking him more questions and my knowledge to electricity has increased.In short we have the best lecturer.”

In addition, trainees have guest lecturers and an excursion to introduce them to the inner workings of solar companies. These are generally seen as immensely beneficial with a usefulness rating of 9.1 out of 10. Here are some open comments providing insight into the experiences.

“It was an amazing experience to get to see how batteries are made at Freedom Won and we also learnt many things about the professionalism in the workplace.”

“I learned a lot though I still wanted to learn a whole lot more. I wish we had more days like that so we can see what kind environment and what kind of roles do we actually have as well as how they are performed and what purpose each department has in the grand scheme of things.”

“OMG!!!! I'm out of words for that. excursion was fun and also educational. I got an opportunity to be exposed to more in the electrical industry.”

Personal and professional development feedback

In addition to the technical training, trainees undergo personal and professional development skills training.

The professional development training includes time management, CV writing and preparation of interviews (including mock interviews), as well as meeting with alumni of the programme who are involved in the industry. This portion of the curriculum received a usefulness rating of 9.2 out of 10.

Here is some open feedback

“Very helpful .I was exposed to how to prepare for an interview and professionalism at work.”

“Candice was very helpful with the goals and helped us with the contract. I loved how understanding and patient she was with my classmates. We went through the contract and understood everything”

“I learned a lot about time management, reason being I never really thought I could use google calendar to my advantage and also getting reminders. I also learned how to value time.”

“It was very helpful because I didn’t know how to manage my time and had no idea about the not important and urgent rules. Now I manage my time differently if something is not urgent and important I will not do it immediately, I will schedule for another time.”

“I learned on how important it is to take time to make a CV that attracts to who you want employment from and also Why it should look that why. and also to help ourselves on how we can write professional CV's.”

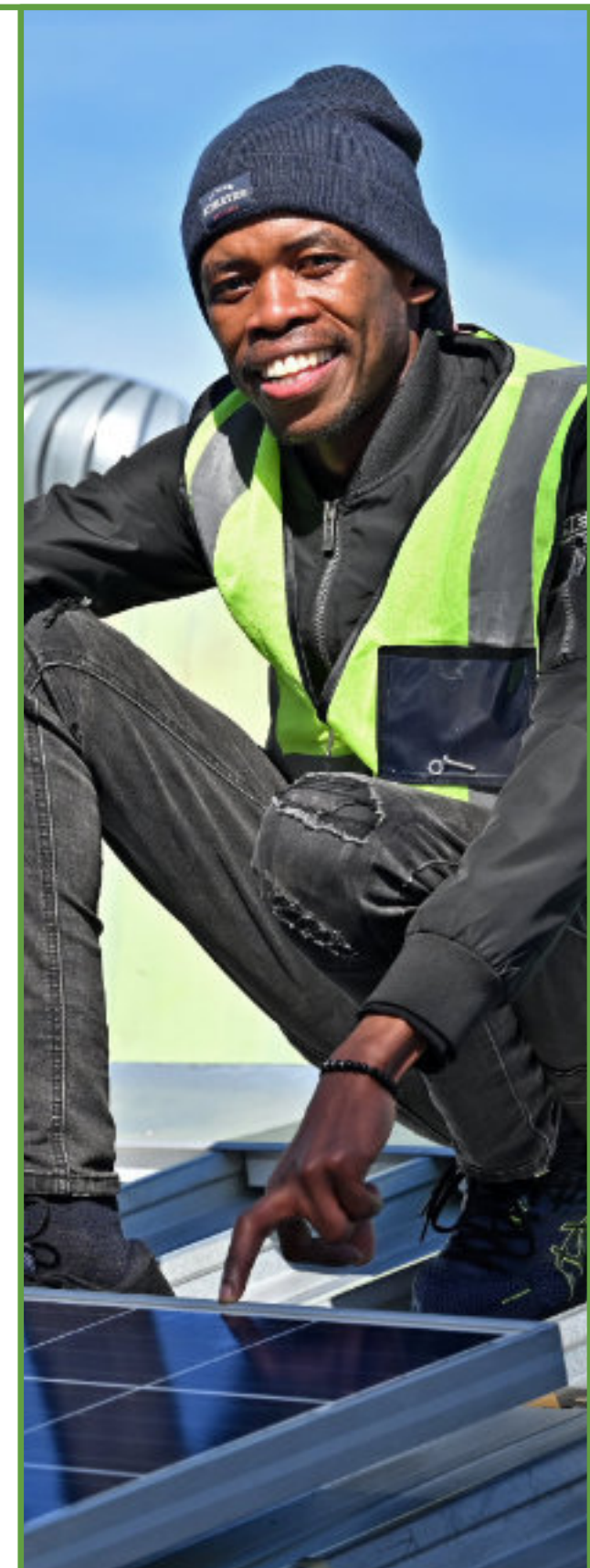
The personal development curriculum, which involves shorter life skills sessions and full-day training, includes a range of topics that aim to strengthen resilience, and provide youth with tools to understand themselves, their motivations, and how to make decisions that will benefit their future selves.

The personal development curriculum received a usefulness rating of 9.3 out of 10.

“Very useful because I got to understand the real me and I wasn’t surprised because deep down I knew I had some characteristics of structure just that sometimes I like to observe and keep quiet . I’m not talkative and that’s my weakness but I’m working on it and making new friends , already have two.”

“I learnt alot of stuff i didnt know... How to calm my self. How to handle been under pressure. How to love myself more... And it had me thinking that i dont know alot of stuff about me”

“It thought me about Growth is an on going mindset that you overcome challenges and professionalism, how to treat others with respect and kindness is on going. We must be disciplined, courageous and well dressed.”



“The skills we were talking about in the session are important skills to apply in a workplace, in public and personal life. These skills will help us to be better human beings and teach others who are not aware.”

Trainees also have access to psychosocial support with a registered counsellor or coach.

The life coaching received a usefulness rating of 8 out of 10, and the counselling a usefulness rating of 9.2 out of 10. From the feedback it is clear that these sessions provide trainees with a safe space to overcome personal challenges that that face, and learn positive coping mechanisms that they can carry on using for their lives. Many young people in our country are exposed to trauma from a young age, and never have the opportunity to work through this, without interventions such as these. Here follows some open feedback:

“The session helped because I learnt advice on how to relax when overwhelmed and I'm starting to practise them.”

“I left there with a huge weight lifted off my shoulders though it's not a same-day miracle plan but i am feeling a bit better now”

“i finally got talk about something i have always wanted to talk about ,i fell no load anymorer on my shoulders”

“She is very professional and I feel like when she listens, she really doesn't just do that just for the fun of it. I would most definitely recommend her to anyone who may need such help.”

At the end of the cohort, trainees measure their self-reported improvements across a range of factors. Here’s a summary of the findings for each cohort:

Skills	Cohort 2 (Cape Town)	Cohort 3 (Gauteng)
Interpersonal skills	29%	49%
Intrapersonal skills	39%	53%
Resilience	47%	68%
Professional skills	28%	45%

Placements

There were 30 placements of youth into internships/employment.

Of the 24 youth that started the project, 22 completed the technical training successfully and were eligible for employment. By Q3 2025 we had managed to secure internships for all 22 candidates however several of these internships experienced challenges that led to them either exiting the internship or not being able to convert the internships into long term employment options.

As of December 2025 eight youth were seeking new opportunities. Our Placement team is working with these youth to assist them to transition into new opportunities.



Success Story | Nozipho

From ambition to action

My name is Nozipho, and I am 22 years old. I grew up in Orange Farm, a township in the Vaal, where my hunger for more in life was shaped. Later, I moved to Cape Town, carrying with me the lessons of resilience and ambition. I am blessed with two mothers and a father who have been unwavering pillars of support throughout my journey.

From childhood, electricity fascinated me. My father often repaired appliances and handled household electrical work, and I loved being by his side, learning and exploring. That passion led me to study Electrical Engineering. I am currently studying my N5. While I was studying my mother introduced me to the Life Choices Solar Youth Programme. I vaguely understood certain things about renewable energy, but not the full aspect of what it can offer. I was curious and started doing my research and I soon realized this was not just an industry, it was a movement, a future I wanted to be part of. To commit fully, I made the bold decision to pause my studies and immerse myself in the programme.

From the moment I joined, I didn't just learn about solar energy, I learned about myself. Life coaching sessions taught me emotional intelligence, leadership styles, and self-awareness. I discovered that I am both a visionary and a structured leader, a combination that gave me clarity on how to lead, collaborate, and grow in any environment.

One of the greatest influences on my journey was my lecturer, McDonald. He didn't just teach solar energy, he taught us how to think critically, solve problems practically, and believe in ourselves. His engaging, structured classes and real-life examples made complex concepts accessible. He encouraged us to compete not with each other, but with the version of ourselves from the day before. His guidance shaped me into a more confident and prepared person.

The programme gave me strong technical skills, an understanding of solar energy from installations to commissioning, and a network of passionate young people who shared the same vision for sustainability in South Africa. The camaraderie of my cohort pushed me to grow every day.

By the end of the programme, my efforts were recognised:

- I finished Top 2 in the class
- I was the Top-performing female
- I earned the Best Morale Award

These achievements were more than awards, they reflected the commitment I put into showing up fully, every day, in both work and attitude. After two months of training, I stepped into an internship, officially entering the renewable energy sector. I am constantly learning and discovering that there is so much more to explore, and I am truly enjoying the experience.

To my younger self: thank you for being brave, intentional, and open to learning. You weren't failing, you were growing.

To the Life Choices staff and coaches: your guidance and belief in me made this journey transformative

To Queen and Coach Matika: your

teachings on mindset, abundance, and emotional intelligence shifted the way I see the world.

To my classmates: thank you for making the journey fun, meaningful, and memorable. You always knew how to cheer me and push me to do the uncomfortable.

This programme didn't just teach me solar energy, it helped me find my voice, my confidence, and my direction. It confirmed that renewable energy is where I belong, and I am ready to pursue it with everything I have, learning, growing, and showing up fully every step of the way.



Finances

Expenses

Total: R9,880,329



■ **Programme salaries:** R4,801,307

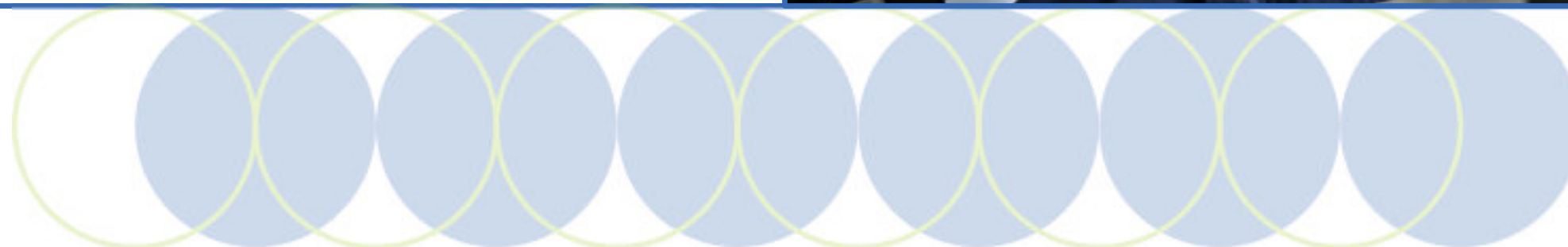
■ **Programme costs:** R1,991,157

■ **Technical and overhead salaries:** R1,500,109

■ **Programme overheads:** R909,564

■ **M&E:** R423,505

■ **Organisational overheads:** R254,687



Partners

Thank you to our incredible partners who believe that the investing in our country's future, starts with investing in our country's future leadership.



Ukhamba
Lezwe
Trust



"Ever since I started Life Choices there have been bumps in my life, I went through so much, but with the friends I made, my lecturers as well as Candice, I don't think I would have made it this far. So thank you, Life Choices. The organisation, as well as the Academy, made me a better person and also the person I am today."

~ Trainee from Youth Code, Cohort 15

