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31 JANUARY 2025

Bridging Skills Gaps in the Just Energy Transition



During his special [address](#) at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos on January 21, 2025, President Cyril Ramaphosa emphasised South Africa's commitment to mobilising finance for a just energy transition. He highlighted this as a priority for South Africa's G20 Presidency, aiming to increase both the 'quality and quantity of climate finance flows' to developing economies.

President Ramaphosa also discussed the importance of cooperation and collaboration in addressing global challenges, including climate change. He underscored the need for collective action to halt environmental destruction and promote sustainable and inclusive development pathways that reconcile growth with urgent climate action.

This vision aligns with South Africa's goal to add 120–150 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2050, paving the way for 400,000–600,000 gross jobs over the next 25 years. Realising these opportunities requires significant investment in skills development to prepare the workforce for

emerging industries.

Recognising the need for new skills, the Just Energy Transition Skilling for Employment **Programme** (JET SEP) was officially launched in April 2024. Driven by the **National Business Initiative** (NBI) in partnership with Boston Consulting Group, and endorsed by the Presidency's JET Project Management Unit, Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) and the Presidential Climate Commission (PCC), this programme aims to mobilise the private sector in a coordinated manner to address the skills gap identified in the JET Implementation **Plan** (IP). It is supported by the African Climate Foundation and USAID Power Africa, and has been noted as a first of its kind grant for a programme such as this.

In line with the JET IP, which sets a path for transitioning to a greener energy system, the programme ensures that this shift is not only environmentally sustainable but also socially and economically inclusive within South Africa's unique context.

Insights from the "Powering Futures" Report



JET SEP's first **publication**, Powering Futures – The Green Skilling Opportunity, is a culmination of rigorous discussion with **50+ industry working groups** members to develop a local, industry-endorsed and demand-led fact base for South Africa.

The report provides insight into where jobs will be created and the skills that will be required. It captures key quantitative and qualitative insights across seven sectors – Solar, Wind, Transmission, Green Hydrogen, Battery Energy Storage Solutions (BESS), New Energy Vehicles, and Energy Efficiency.

[Read more](#)

By 2030, South Africa's green energy projects are expected to generate 120,000–200,000 jobs, with the following highlights:

- 50% (59,000–99,000 jobs) in the solar value chain.
- 44,000–74,000 jobs in temporary construction roles.
- 21,000 artisans, 25,000 engineers, and 25,000 technicians will be in demand.
- 72,000 low- to semi-skilled jobs, such as construction workers and security guards, will also be needed.

Key job hotspots will emerge in Gauteng and Free State between 2025–2027, with growth expanding to the Northern Cape, Western Cape, and Eastern Cape by 2030. The forecasting model used in the *Powering Futures* report predicts job creation based on South Africa's current project pipeline (up to 2030) and national targets (up to 2050). It analyses over **200 local municipalities**, **35+ occupations**, and covers the entire project value chain across **7 sectors**.



For the Just Energy Transition to succeed, skilling efforts must:

- Prioritise marginalised communities, especially youth and women.
- Provide individuals with skills to access sustainable job opportunities and equip them with the capabilities to navigate the workplace and the economy effectively.
- Support informal businesses and township SMMEs with technical and enterprise development capabilities, to unlock transformative market opportunities.

Without a focused effort to develop these necessary skills for the just energy transition and the broader green economy, South Africa risks a transition that is slow, costly, and reliant on imported expertise, despite the country's high unemployment rate, which could further marginalise vulnerable communities.

Building a Collaborative Skilling Ecosystem

The insights shared in our report not only make opportunities in the core value chains visible to all stakeholders in the skilling system, but inspires avenues for collaboration. The solution is not just a massive scale-up of training, but a fundamental and sustainable shift towards an agile, and coordinated approach to skilling.



Having established the skills need with a municipal-level fact base, our next publication in this series will share the private sector's perspective on how to develop a fit-for-purpose JET skills ecosystem. This entails bringing the vision of the JET IP to life with a concrete ecosystem operating models that assign clear roles and responsibilities, and advances models for resource mobilisation to meet the skilling need at the pace and scale required by market realities.

President Ramaphosa's vision for an inclusive energy transition inspires a collective responsibility to ensure that South Africa's green future benefits everyone. By investing in skills development today, South Africa can lead the way in creating a fair, sustainable, and prosperous economy.



Identifying appropriate workforce strategies is fundamental to responding to South Africa's just energy transition. Companies interested in learning more about JET SEP are encouraged to contact: **Anthony Gewer (Programme Manager: Economic Inclusion) at AnthonyG@nbi.org.za and Noluthando Mthimkulu (Senior Project Manager: JET Skilling): NoluthandoM@nbi.org.za**



The National Business Initiative (NBI) is an independent and voluntary coalition of South African and multinational businesses launched in 1995 by the then President, Nelson Mandela.

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