

African Development Bank awards \$1 million grant to support green skills development for South Africans, with focus on youth

- *The National Business Initiative (NBI), an independent, business movement of nearly 100 South African and multi-national companies, will implement AfDB's \$1 million FAPA grant*



Caption: Energy transition programme beneficiaries install solar panels in a South African community.

Pretoria, July 4 2025 – The African Development Bank, through the Fund for African Private Sector Assistance (FAPA), has awarded a \$1 million grant to South Africa's [National Business Initiative](#) (NBI) to strengthen efforts to build a dynamic, demand-led skills ecosystem that enables South Africans, particularly young people, to access emerging job opportunities in the green economy.

South Africa continues to face significant challenges in youth employment, with [StatisticsSA](#) reporting that 46.1% of young people aged 15 to 34 were unemployed in the first quarter of 2025.

The funding will support the country's [Just Energy Transition Skilling for Employment Programme](#) (JET SEP), led by the National Business Initiative (NBI) in partnership with the management consultancy Boston Consulting Group (BCG). The initiative coordinates private sector efforts to prepare the workforce for the energy transition, in tandem with the government's JET Skilling Implementation Plan, focused on inclusive workforce development and sustainable job creation.

About the African Development Bank Group

The African Development Bank Group is Africa's premier development finance institution. It comprises three distinct entities: the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Development Fund (ADF) and the Nigeria Trust Fund (NTF). On the ground in 41 African countries with an external office in Japan, the Bank contributes to the economic development and the social progress of its 54 regional member states. For more information: www.afdb.org

Specifically, the grant will finance the programme's first phase, including feasibility studies for the design of skills development zones and capacity building within the public technical and vocational education and training system. Skills development zones will anchor the delivery of inclusive skills and foster local economic growth during the country's just-energy transition.

Launched in 2024 and endorsed by the JET Project Management Unit under the presidency of the Government of South Africa, JET SEP has garnered support from over 30 influential South African CEOs, public sector leaders, and civil society leaders in the past year.

Of the grant, Kennedy Mbekeani, African Development Bank Director General for Southern Africa, said: "By linking a strong private sector coalition – the engine for job creation – with government, academia, and NGOs, the FAPA grant will play a catalytic role to support informed policy decisions in skills development and labour market programmes. It will also strengthen skills development efforts for the growth of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and the creation of jobs for youth in South Africa's green economy."

The grant builds on the African Development Bank's significant investment in South Africa's energy sector. Since 2007, the Bank has invested \$3.4 billion to support energy infrastructure, including renewable energy. The current grant will support the government's efforts to identify the skills needed for the sector, with a particular focus on renewable energy.



Three young women participate in a National Business Initiative skills training program, gaining practical trade skills to support South Africa's economy.

Shameela Soobramoney, CEO of the National Business Initiative, said: "This grant from the African Development Bank is a critical step toward turning vision into action, strengthening the national skills system, and ensuring that all South Africans are equipped to seize new opportunities in the green economy. We are proud to continue working alongside our partners and stakeholders to build an inclusive future-ready workforce and to stimulate local economies in a way that leaves no one behind."

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