

**Pestalozzi
International**

Vontobel Stiftung



The JAF Foundation
FOR WILDERNESS CONSERVATION & SOCIAL WELFARE



SkillsHub Interim Report

Project Year: 1st July 2024 - 30th June 2025



The SkillsHub concept

Overview:

The Vontobel SkillsHub delivers vocational training programs, tailored to in-demand skills and services in Zambia's modern mixed economy, offering fast access to sustainable livelihoods for marginalized youth.

The Problem:

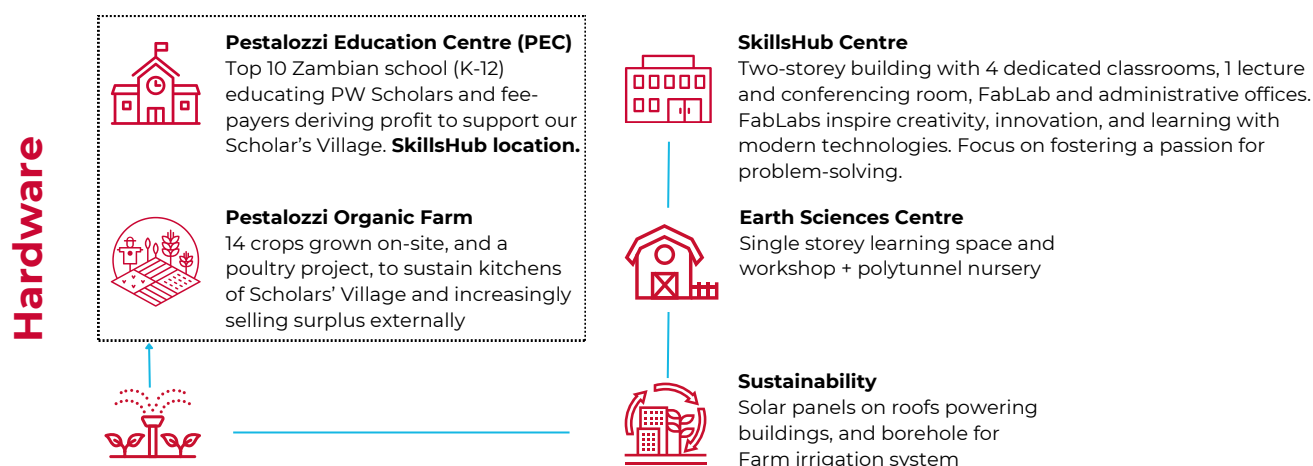
- 97% of children (lowest wealth quintile) do not finish secondary school, 74% never enter formal employment
- Formal Vocational training requires youth to have secondary-level school-leavers certificates, excluding those who need it most
- and is aimed at broad subject mastery over years, time that those living on less than \$2 a day cannot afford at the expense of opportunities that might present for informal, temporary work they need to survive

Solution:

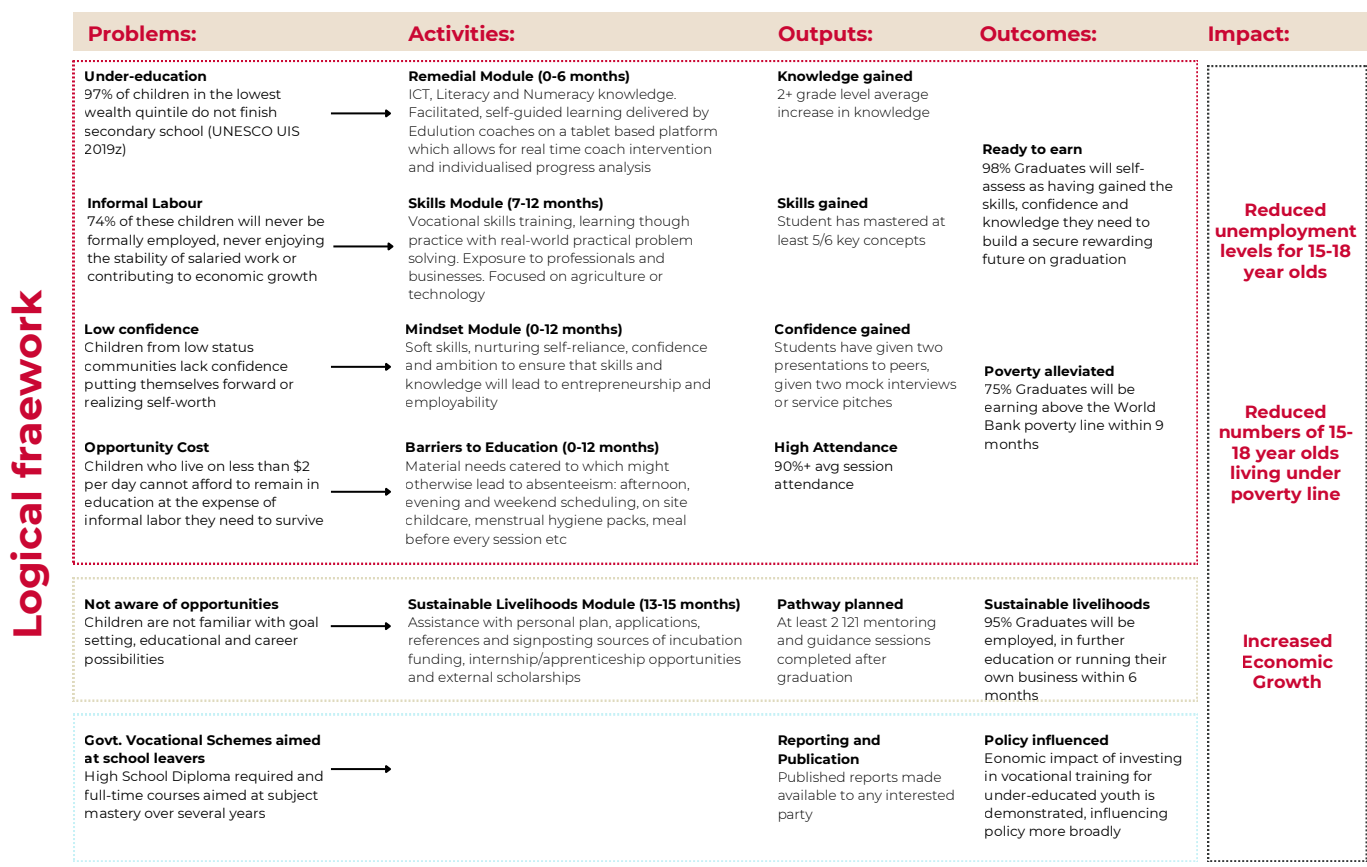
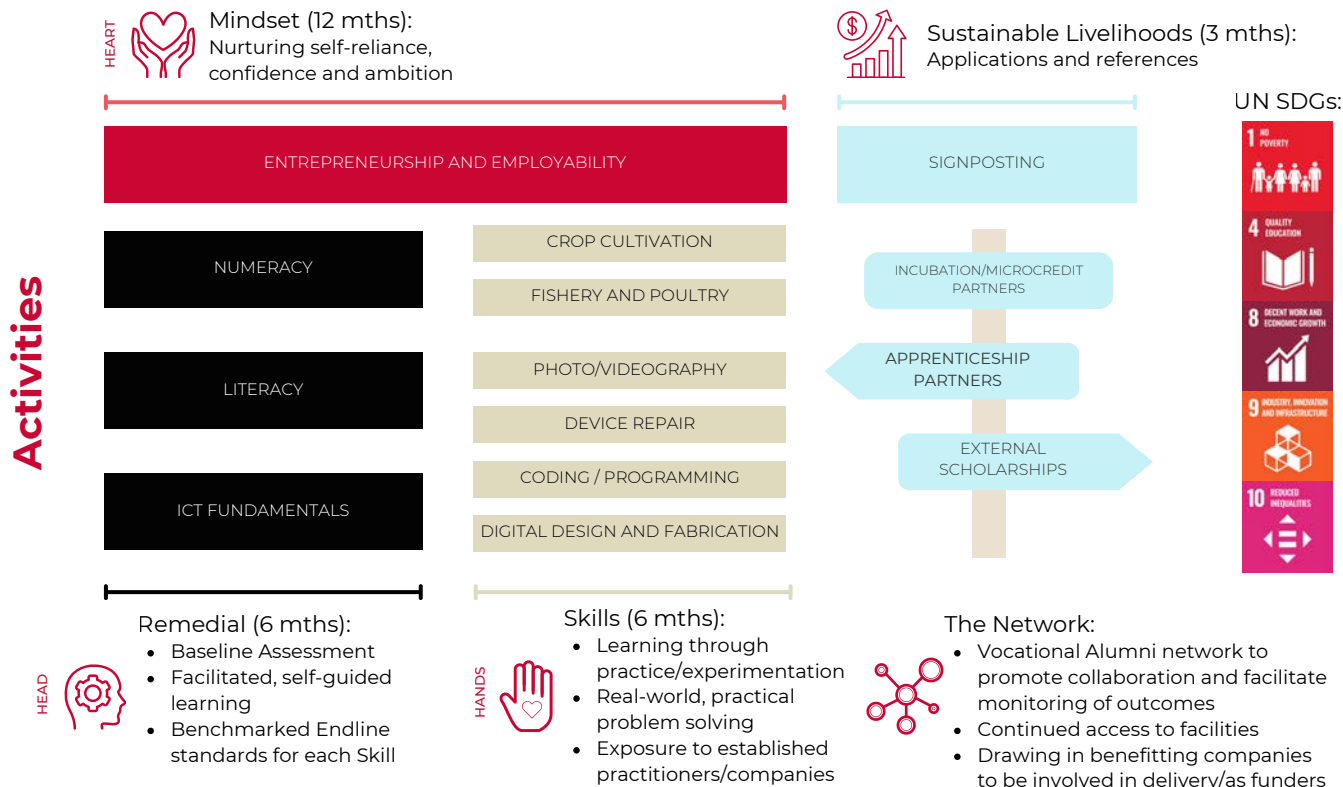
The Vontobel SkillsHub is a multifunctional vocational training facility which emphasizes digital and agricultural science skills for young people who otherwise face unemployment and exclusion from formal economies. It democratizes access to vocational training through the inclusion of remedial numeracy and literacy programs (Head) designed to bring them up to a minimum standard required to develop a skill. Each youth will start their sessions with a meal to ensure they are ready to learn and can afford to invest their time doing so.

Beyond knowledge confidence, self-reliance, and employability, entrepreneurship will be fostered so that when the learning stops, earning starts (Heart). Vocational training will be targeted to in-demand skills/services to produce sustainable livelihoods, quickly (Hands). The SkillsHub will promote trainees to a network of employers seeking apprentices, sources of micro-finance, and pathways to further education to ensure sustainable livelihoods.

The trainee base will be 15-18-year-old youth from the lowest wealth quintile, typically those living in informal slum settlements in the Lusaka environs and Pestalozzi International's existing Village scholars who are selected from disadvantaged rural areas and refugee camps. They are educated at the adjoining Pestalozzi Education Centre School, alongside subsidy-providing fee-payers, who will generate income for the SkillsHub during school hours.



The SkillsHub concept (Continued)



Executive Summary

In its first year, the SkillsHub vocational training program has not only delivered on its intended outputs—it has surpassed them, emerging, as hoped, as the timely solution to the urgent challenges faced by unemployed young adults in Zambia. Conceived to bridge the critical gap between under-education and sustainable employment, SkillsHub has already engaged over 370 young people, igniting strong community interest and, most significantly, catalyzing visible, life-changing transformation in its trainees.



“What distinguishes SkillsHub is its recognition that poverty is not just economic — it’s also psychological.”

Priscilla Mpundu- CEO
Pestalozzi Zambia

Key to SkillsHub’s success is its Heart-led, human-centered foundation: the Mindset Module. Launched through the pioneering Mindset Camp and sustained via immersive soft skills training, this component directly addresses the often invisible barriers of poverty—low confidence and lack of self-belief. Nurturing resilience, self-reliance, and confidence empowers participants not just to learn, but to lead their own change. A renewed love of learning is ignited in them, boosting their vision for their futures.

The outcomes are already clear. Trainees are securing internships, landing their first salaried jobs, and earning admiration from local employers for their professionalism and adaptability. The results show that many are entering formal employment for the first time in their lives.

Key Performance Indicators As of 30 th June 2025	Target	Actual
Completed Remedial/Skills	80	101
Attendance	>90%	97%
Attrition	<10%	7%
Hours per learner	208	204
Remedial grade-level gain	2	2.44
Will assess as more confident	98%	100%
Leave with a plan for future	100%	100%
Employed, back to school or self-employed	95% 6 mo	51% 8 weeks

What began as a response to local need is now beginning to shape that need, with government interest already and new partnerships emerging. The potential for policy alignment and long-term collaboration is strong.

Our motivated and mission-aligned team is a driving force behind this success, with many team members sharing similar life experiences with our trainees.. Their authenticity and expertise have transformed SkillsHub from a promising concept into a thriving, high-impact model.

Throughout this report, we hope you’ll see what we see: SkillsHub is more than a training program. It’s a model for inclusive economic empowerment and inspiration for young people who had lost hope. With its dynamic combination of vocational training, mindset development, and strategic alliances, SkillsHub is well-positioned to act as a successful platform for expanding youth-focused vocational opportunities across Zambia and beyond.

Changemaker stories: fostering trust with learners



Mwinji NACHEMBE - Community Outreach Officer

I tell them that their past experiences do not define them. I've made mistakes in my life but there was a point when I changed. You cannot blame yourself for things that happen in the past. For example I would have money and just spend it without thinking of the future. I had friendships that took advantage but now I am making better choices and healthier relationships. Sharing our stories is vital for us to build trust with our trainees so they share.



Nonde MUBANGA - Training Co-ordinator

My biological parents died when I was a child and I went to my uncle. I'm grateful he sent me off to university with one semester paid but then I had to regenerate what money I had to pay for my school fees, my rent and to buy my own food. From those days until now I always have something in my house that I am selling. I say to trainees that losing a parent, or both, is not the end of their future. My story is that an entrepreneurial spirit can beat adversity.

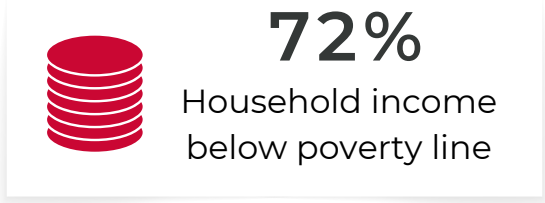
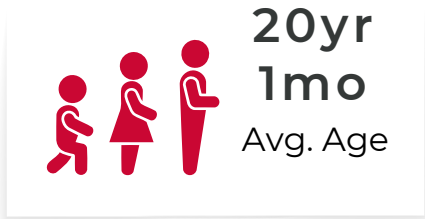
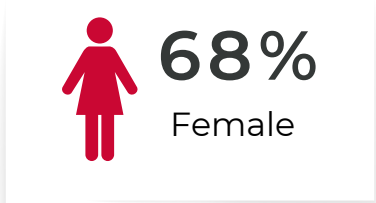
Roundtable event before pilot



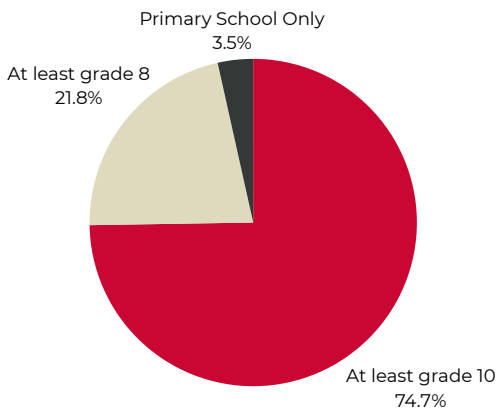
Crowd for pilot selection



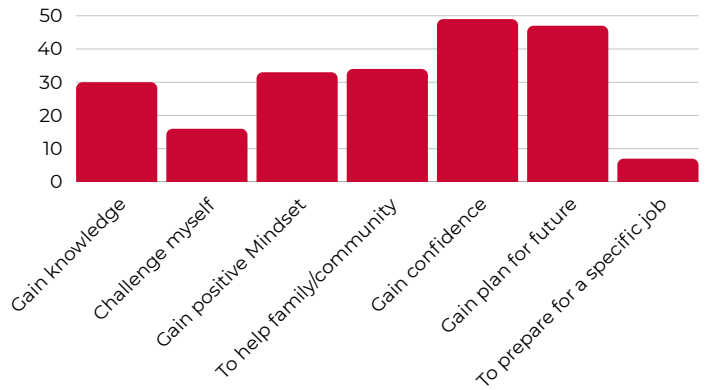
About our pilot trainees - baseline



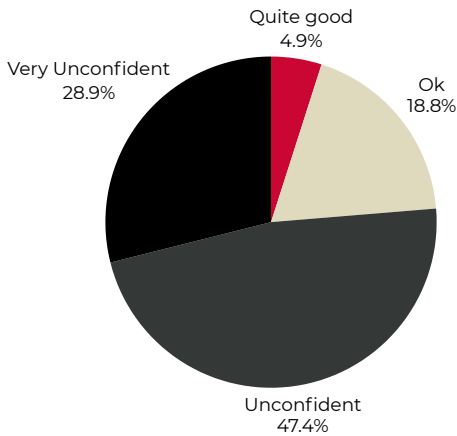
Level of schooling



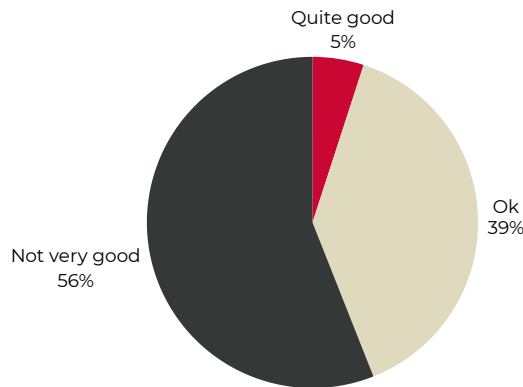
Motivations for applying



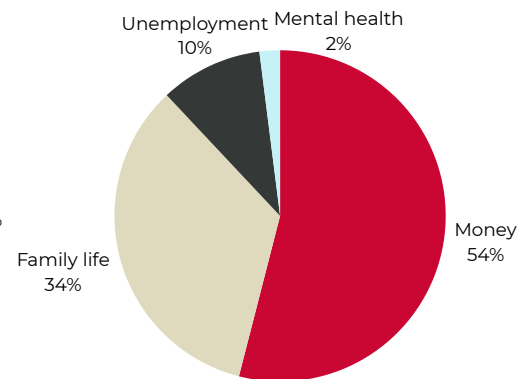
Confidence at selection



Life at selection



Biggest problem in life



Mindset Camp

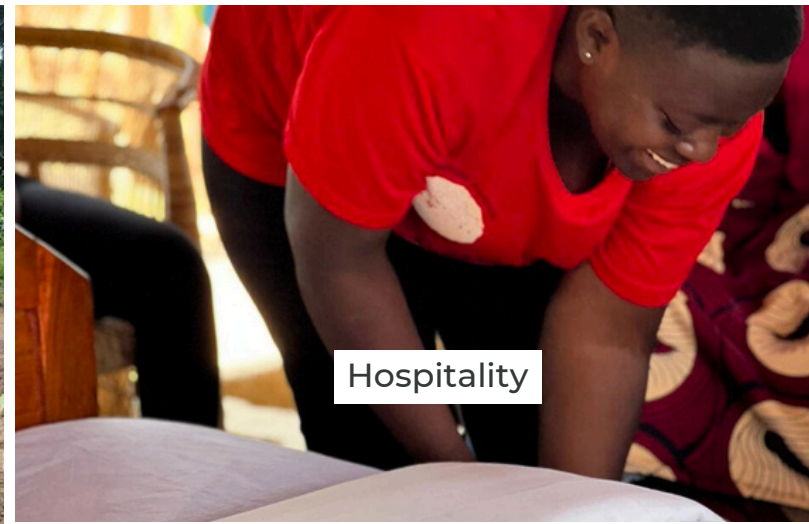




Mindset module under a tree



Existing organic farm has supported the most popular Specialism during pilot



Hospitality



SkillsHub Centre is rising



introducing learners to the programme



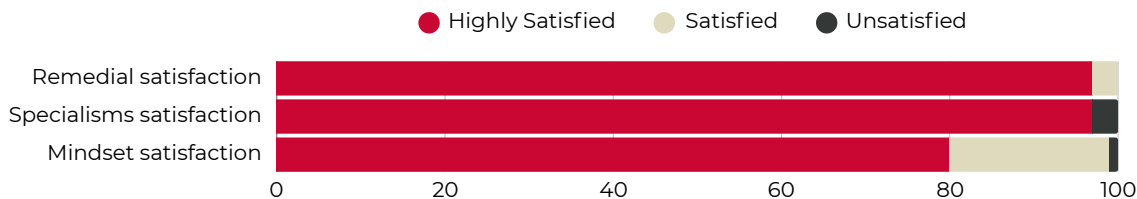
Poultry project



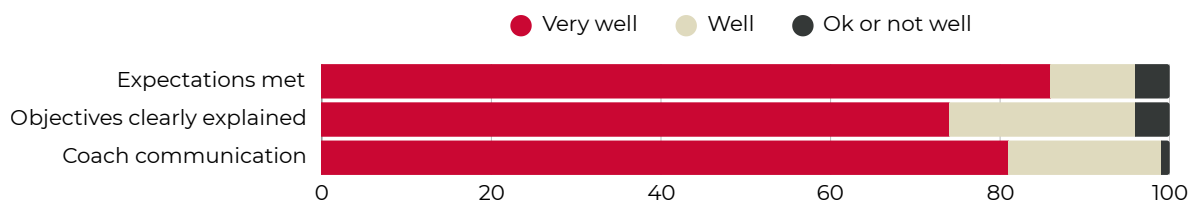
Food Production

Further insights

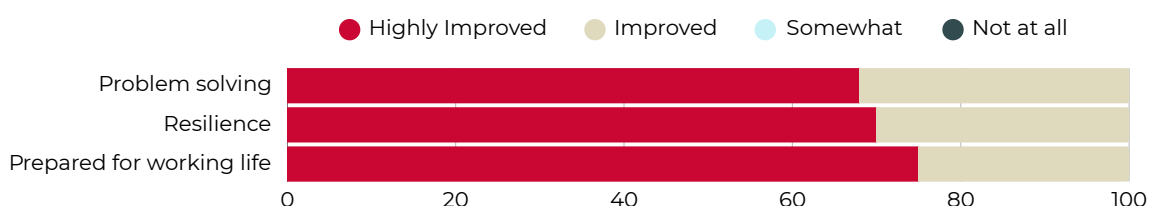
Trainee Satisfaction (%)



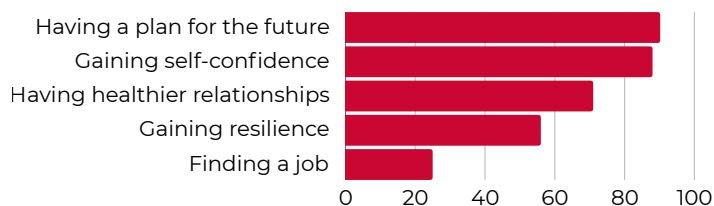
Trainee Feedback (%)



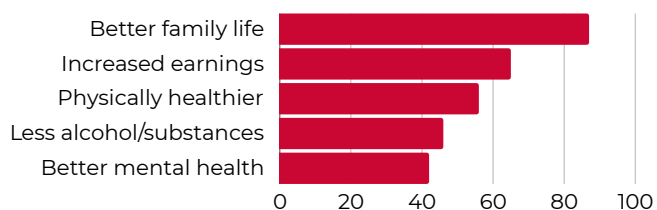
Self-reported trainee skill gains (%)



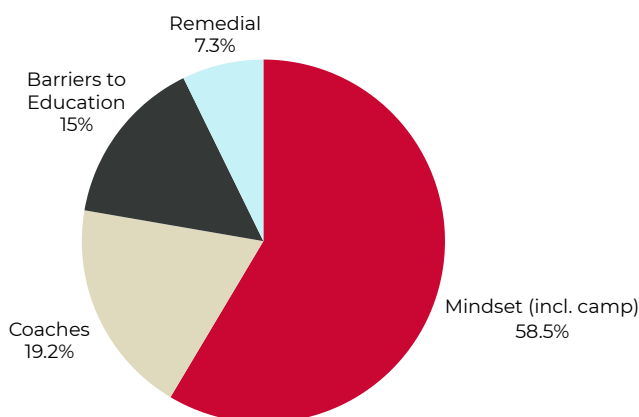
Most valued life Improvements (% respondents)



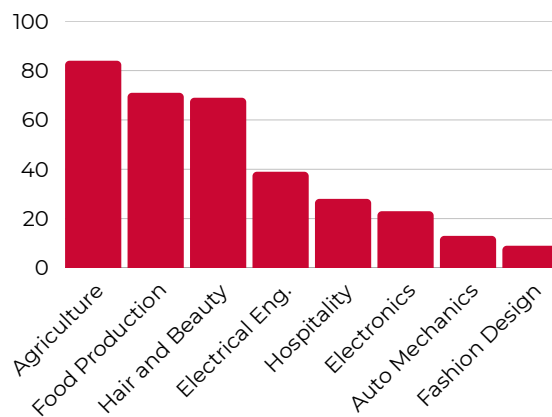
Most valued lifestyle changes (% respondents)



Most valued module (exclusive of Skills)



Trainee Skills Choices



4
External vocational colleges partnered with



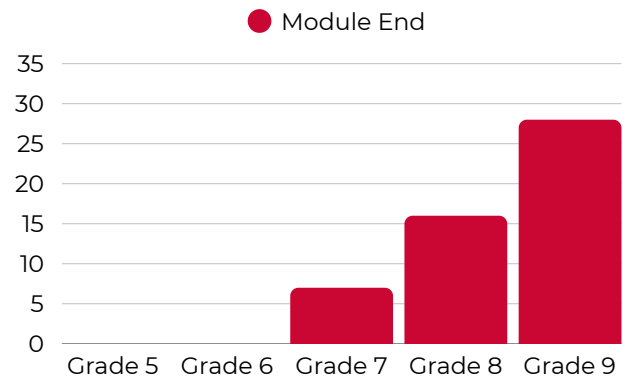
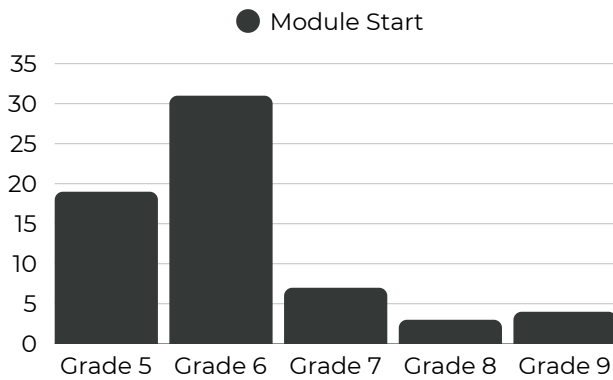
20
Partner employers providing placements and jobs



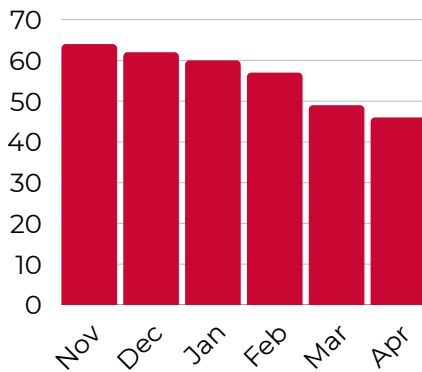
80%
Parents reported transformative change in their children

Remedial Module deep dive

Ability versus age grade level (no. of trainees-grade 9 is standard for 15 years old)



Enrolment over pilot (no. of trainees)



Timewise enrolment variance

Explanation	No. of trainees
Returned to school	4
Employed during Module	3
Dropped out	5
Advanced to Skills early	6

+2.44

Avg. remedial grade level improvement

119

Avg. remedial hours

Trainees were asked if they wanted to upload a photo and share about a goal they had achieved.



Betty Miyayi
The achievement I have gained is going back to school as well as being focused on what I want. I have also gained communication skills to help me deal with other people.



Rabbecca Lungu
To provide a better life for my child, and I achieved it by working hard in everything I do whereby I will earn something out of it.



Peter Chisenga
The goal that I set was to finish the Edulution program and go to the skills and for me to achieve it I never lost hope and stayed confident no matter what came in to my ways I stayed focused. Learning a new skill inspired me to take on more challenge.



Rabbecca Tembo
My goal was that I will be able to speak in public properly and I am now able to speak without fear. Having debates in class at SkillsHub motivated me.



Brenda Mumba
My goal was to start a business. I started working to raise money to start my business. It was too challenging but at last I achieve my goal. It was difficult for me to do basic maths but now I can count and solve maths problems.



"The Remedial pilot, led and coached by Edulution's PI alumni staff, has been a significant success. Edulution's self-guided, trainee-paced learning approach is ideal for these mature learners with uneven baseline abilities. The coaches have contributed enthusiastically to the Mindset transformation aims of SkillsHub by being peer role-models, and displaying Edulution's shared emphasis on the development of the whole-person."

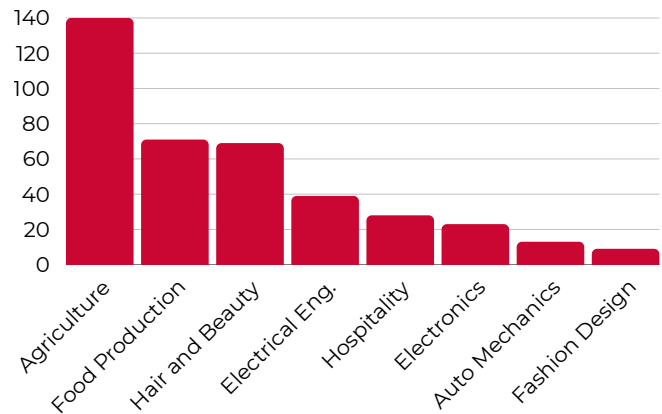
James Haughton - CEO Pestalozzi International

Earth Sciences Deep Dive

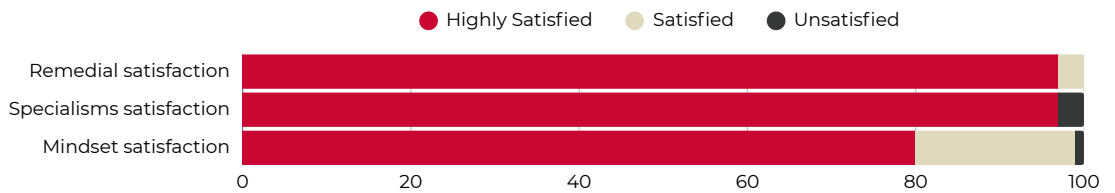
33kg

of agricultural produce has been grown, sold or shared with families and communities on average per client.

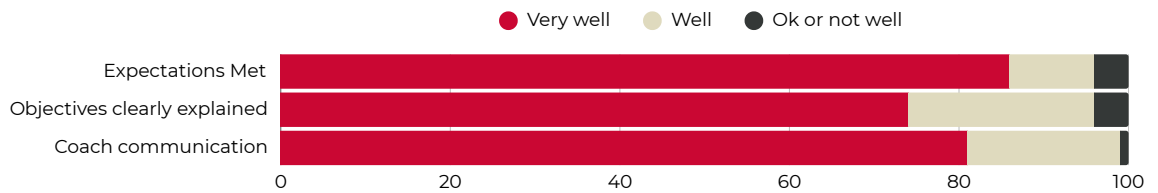
Client Specialism Choices



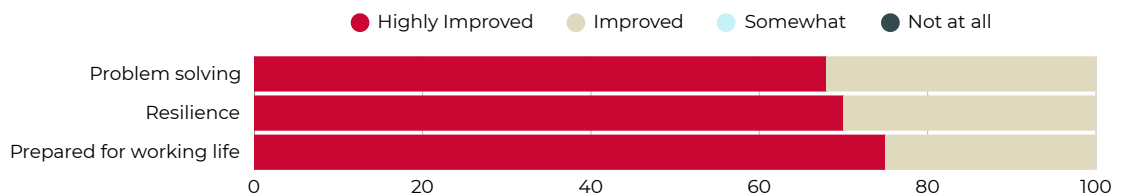
Client Satisfaction (%)



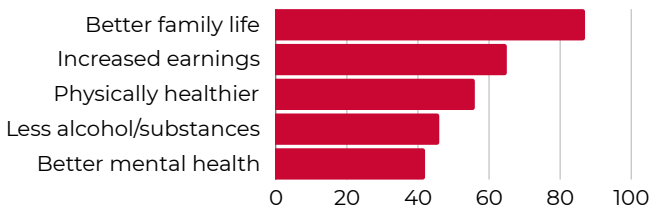
Client Feedback (%)



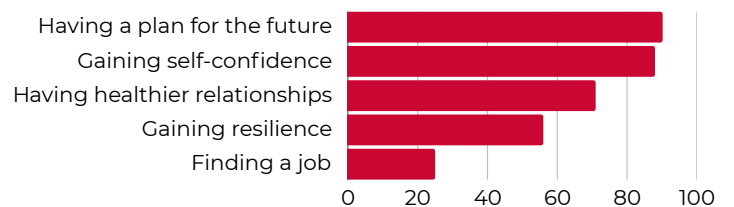
Self-reported client skill gains (%)



Most valued lifestyle changes (% respondents)



Most valued life Improvements (% respondents)



4

External vocational colleges partnered with



20

Partner employers providing placements and jobs



80%

Parents reported transformative change in their children

Case Studies - Sustainable livelihoods

From security guard to aspiring agripreneur



At 22, Fishani Mvula from Chama District in Zambia is a powerful example of resilience. After losing his father in 2022 and dropping out of school due to financial hardship, he moved to Lusaka and took up night shifts as a security officer which hardly pays enough to support his family. Despite the challenges, Fishani was determined to change his path.

When he heard about the Pestalozzi SkillsHub, he applied and was accepted—marking the start of a transformative journey.

Now enrolled in the program, Fishani is gaining life skills, numeracy training through Edulution, and the confidence to pursue his dream career in agriculture and food production.

Motivated by mantras like “I am unstoppable,” he’s balancing full-time work with learning—demonstrating the heart of SkillsHub: empowering young people to overcome adversity and build a better future for themselves and their communities.



“SkillsHub takes a holistic approach to empowerment, addressing multiple barriers while instilling hope, confidence, and a desire to share learning with others. This ripple effect promotes sustainability and unlocks aspirations that reach far beyond their personal transformation.” -

Sonia Omar, Director of Impact

Informal domestic worker to full-time hospitality career



Despite completing secondary school, Kezia found herself working as a domestic worker in Mazabuka, mirroring her mother’s path, due to the limited opportunities available to young people in Zambia. Her family had struggled to afford her education, and further studies seemed out of reach. But everything changed when Kezia joined the Pestalozzi Zambia SkillsHub General Hospitality program. With hands-on training, Mindset Camp sessions, and financial literacy, she quickly stood out for her determination and potential.

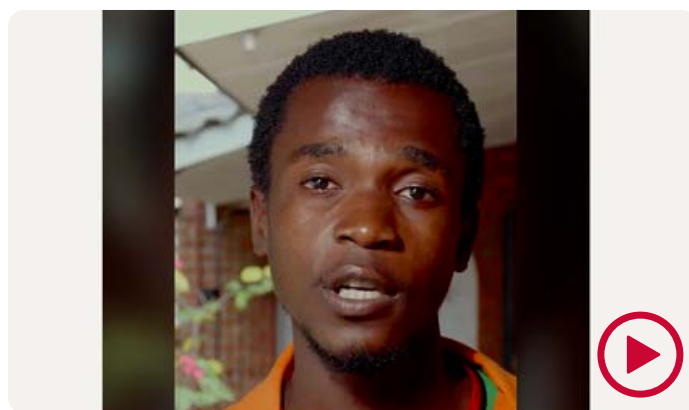
After completing her work experience at a local lodge, Kezia secured a full-time job at a lodge in Luangwa District—an achievement that brought her parents to tears. Now earning a monthly salary, she’s not only supporting herself but inspiring others in her community. Kezia dreams of one day running her own hospitality business and creating opportunities for other young women like her. Her story shows how skills training can transform lives and break the cycle of poverty.

Case Studies - Media

Mindset Camp



Joel - From drugs on the streets to skills



SkillsHub testimonials on Youth Day



Community Leaders & Parents Focus Group



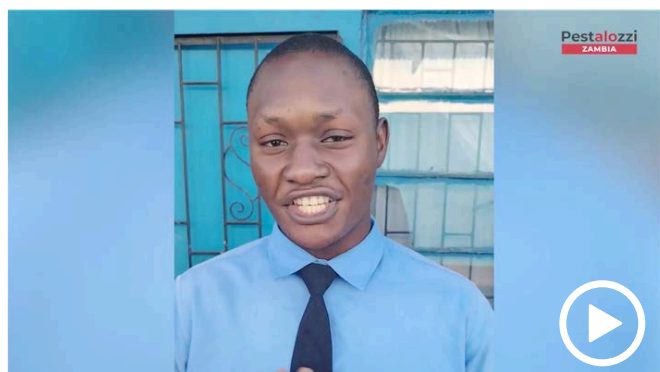
Mutale's mother shares powerful story of transformation



Trainee Focus Group



Joshua - SkillsHub pathway back to school



Agricultural Students



Learning & Conclusion

Planning and Delivery

- Contextual analysis was conducted through desk research and engagement with industry at July 2024's Roundtable event.
- The strong demand for SkillsHub at selection and high attendance rates confirm the program's relevance and value to the community.
- With the development of a sophisticated digital monitoring system now complete, the need to train and equip staff with adequate devices to handout to trainees has been identified to maintain 100% digital data collection.
- We are considering new courses for Year 2 including Plumbing and Sheet Metal, Photography and Bricklaying.
- Although the construction of the SkillsHub facility experienced delays, this has allowed for deeper consideration of the building's design.
- As we prepare for Year 2, dedicated time for reflection and evaluation has helped strengthen future planning cycles.
- Despite the Concept's age-range of 15-18yrs, we quickly learned from stakeholders that 15 is considered too young. The new range is from 18-23 although our own Future Leaders (10-18 housed on site) students will benefit too.

Trust-Building and Engagement

- Soft skills training has proven essential in helping learners engage, persist, and overcome the psychological effects of long-term poverty. (page 7)
- We will build upon Mindset Module, including extending Mindset Camp, as it has been clear that participants face complex challenges which require additional layers of psychosocial and mentoring support.

- Trainees and staff highly value the Camps (page 7 'most valued module') and the Zambian team deserve considerable credit for their innovation before the pilot began.
- The team consider that potential applicants who are very undereducated may not be presenting for selection. In Year 2, we will improve communication during outreach and extend the geographic area.

Barriers to Education

- While financial pressures can contribute to dropout risk, this has been less prevalent than anticipated.
- We will explore tailored, needs-based, support rather than universal approaches suggested in the Concept.
- Home visits for children requiring extra support are being considered for more in-depth understanding of participants' home environments and to offer targeted support where needed.
- Menstrual health management and the regular provision of sanitary products have been made available but more overt promotion may be required.
- Spousal and childcare responsibilities have been mitigated by welcoming trainees' younger children to attend.
- Health-related issues, including anemia, have been noted however ill-health has not significantly contributed to absence.
- While substance misuse is recognized as a broad social risk for our trainees, it has not surfaced as a significant issue within the program.
- Many trainees report reducing reliance on alcohol and substances, which was not an anticipated outcome. (Joel page 11)
- Transport stipends have proven helpful and will be retained as part of the Barriers to Education program.

Learning & Conclusion (Continued)

Benefits of Stipends

- Stipends were also given in lieu of onsite catering during the pilot program, which not only supported participants' immediate needs but gave many of them financial responsibility for the first time.
- Many have saved money to start small businesses or pursue further education.
- No trainees have reported being hungry while learning. Some have used saved portions of stipends to support younger siblings, buy school supplies, or improve their household situations.
- The team in Zambia are considering the merits of continuing stipends into the full program to support financial literacy training.

Sustainable Livelihoods Module

- Due to being ahead in our piloting the 'after-care' module has already launched.
- The program design has been strengthened by integrating work placements—an innovation led by the team, that is actively generating employment opportunities.
- A recent focus group's feedback has influenced the facility design which will feature a dedicated 'business incubator' space with continued mentorship, access to facilities and resources.
- A consideration of the after-care plan is building community, which was raised in focus groups as a significant value of SkillsHub.
- Trainees highlighted the importance of forming friendships and having space for peer-to-peer collaboration to carry forward shared plans post-learning.

Local Partnerships

- We have partnered with over 20 local businesses, providing work placements and paid employment.
- We are committed to expanding these partnerships to address labor gaps and ensure SkillsHub's sustainability.
- The inclusion and expansion of work placements is strengthening relationships with local businesses.

What to expect in Year 2's report

- There will be additional agricultural skills and activities as the course develops its poly-tunnel/oyster mushroom and fish-farming capacity.
- Introduction of digital literacy and Skills as facilities come online.
- In Year 2, we will see deeper impact with more students and increased data. This will enable us to quantify economic gains and better understand the application of skills and sustainability of jobs acquired.
- We will extend the Mindset Camp and assess how a longer duration impacts personal and professional development.
- We will be able to assess the livelihood journey from first job to potential promotions and predict seeing more business collaborations forming.
- We can track the increase of local awareness, both in communities and amongst local businesses, and estimate an increase in work placements being established.
- With expanded reach, we expect to engage a more diverse demographic, giving a fuller picture of the challenges facing Zambian youth.

Learning & Conclusion (Continued)

- Through stakeholder engagement, we will advance our advocacy on youth issues and grow SkillsHub's reputation locally and nationally.
- We will use our monitoring and evaluation systems to offer real-time tracking and to provide a more detailed picture of the project's evolution and how best to respond to the needs of our trainees longer-term.

Sustainability and Strategic Influence

- During a visit, government stakeholders valued how SkillsHub's soft skills and Mindset development components are improving learner engagement, indicating potential for policy alignment and scaling potential.
- 4 Agriculture students were invited to meet local MP's, highlighting the growing influence of the project.
- An MOU was created with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Sports and Youth.
- Collaborations with local vocational colleges are raising awareness of SkillsHub's model and impact.
- We remain committed to sharing findings and evaluations with partners, peers, and policymakers to advocate for closing the skills gap, expanding vocational pathways, and emphasising the transformative power of mindset mastery in youth development.
- A British backed Ugandan NGO has been supported by PI in assessing the feasibility of introducing SkillsHub there.

Conclusion: Why SkillsHub Matters

The early outcomes of SkillsHub have exceeded our expectations, considering our first graduates are only just emerging. As we continue to learn how to empower our youth and make significant strides in their

economic livelihoods, it is exciting to see the mindset transformation and love of learning in all the young trainees.

There is a buzz in the air, with confident role-modelling and well considered innovations happening throughout the program.

Four trainees have returned to formal schooling after completing the remedial component. These are outcomes that we celebrated with the trainees and value highly.

Participants of SkillsHub share they are equally driven by a desire to progress in life and to uplift their communities. The Mindset Module is highly valued, aimed at bringing about inner transformation that is manifesting positively in all aspects of their lives. It is clear that SkillsHub not only gets them 'job-ready' but 'life-ready'.

Our next steps will be focussed on selecting the upcoming cohort, project managing the construction, and developing new work placement partnerships and aftercare support which includes a business incubator. We will also take some weeks to 'step back' and focus on internal evaluation to ensure the key learning is integrated into Year Two plans and program design.

We aim to distribute the findings of this report with our local and global teams and boards as well as key Zambian stakeholders, including the press, government officials and vocational colleges. The potential to further develop and scale this project has promise and is evident from the data.

We thank Vontobel Foundation, Elsa Peretti Foundation & JAF Foundation for their generous support of SkillsHub.

Appendix 1: Project Milestones and Activity Report

ID	Milestone	In application	Status	Date	Notes	Challenges	Adaptions	Successes
1840	Recruitment of Partners and Management	01/12/24	Completed	01/10/24				SkillsHub recruited a dedicated team—many with lived experience of poverty—and delivered responsive, youth-centred programming including the additions of a Mindset camp and work placements
1841	Program design finalized	01/12/24	Completed	27/10/24		<p>Some trainees faced spousal or financial pressure; mitigated with coaching and stipends</p> <p>Transport issues were solved through stipends</p> <p>Lack of documentation limited access to jobs and services for some participants</p> <p>Clients articulated a desire for condensing the program hours into fewer weeks to complete sooner, the assumption that they needed time to work and learn was unfounded due to higher unemployment than anticipated</p>	<p>Year 2 will prioritise assistance with documentation and additional support with setting up bank accounts from the outset</p> <p>Monitoring platform changes caused some data gaps, recovered through focus groups. Year 2 begins with new tools, trained staff, and a great monitoring dashboard</p> <p>The 2-day Mindset Camp was introduced. It offers an introduction to transformational soft skills through team-based outdoor challenges, helping the clients overcome psychological barriers linked to poverty. Run by familiar staff and grounded in Pestalozzian values, it creates a safe, growth-focused space</p> <p>The team experimented with contracted freelance instructors and partnerships with institutions, which they feel has worked better. Where we have been able to offer Skills in existing facilities, we have done so</p>	<p>We delivered 8 specialist courses, 3 mindset modules and 1 Remedial module to 2 cohorts so far</p> <p>The soft skills component comprises 50 hours of learning per course. Topics include: Team working, Communication Skills/Timekeeping, Problem-Solving</p> <p>A fully digital monitoring system was developed for live-tracking and long-term learning</p> <p>All program KPI's were hit within a tight margin of error albeit with a small sample size</p> <p>The successful condensing of the program offers opportunity for greater throughput and lower cost per client</p>
1842	Construction Completed	01/04/25	Ongoing	01/09/25	Delayed due to severe flooding	Flooding exposed sewage issues	<p>A second cesspit and soakaway has been commissioned from contingency funds</p> <p>A third floor was added to the design</p>	The early piloting of Skills has informed improvements in the buildings specification, a benefit of the delay caused by the flood
1843	Selection for piloting completed	01/08/24	Completed	15/10/24	Target 80 clients vs 140 actual	Over 500 children turned up for selection. The pilot was oversubscribed, which placed some pressure on the team	Early surveys from clients indicated that the vast majority had no source of income and preferred more hours per week, reducing the total duration of the program	We were able to impact more youth quickly whilst adding value to our program design and development, and piloting Skills sooner
1844	Remedial piloting underway	01/01/25	Completed	1/11/24		More students had higher education levels than was assumed in the Concept. This was due to Remedial places being limited to 80 during piloting. To pilot Skills it was necessary to select children with a more complete education. The education levels will decrease in future intakes as we seek to help those in most need	Greater effort will be made to ensure that the most undereducated are aware that SkillsHub is designed for them, so we can be sure that they are not de-selecting themselves due to misunderstanding the program's purpose and scope	<p>Pestalozzi alumni coached the Remedial Learning component, modelling peer leadership and a culture of altruism</p> <p>A safe and inclusive space reignited a love for learning, much needed amongst this demographic</p> <p>Despite financial and caregiving pressures, engagement remained strong showing high levels of motivation and need</p> <p>Trainees became role models to their peers—some reduced alcohol use, citing renewed purpose and hope</p> <p>Others expressed business ambitions to support themselves and their peers</p> <p>The Remedial Learning module (with Edulution) supports entry to Skills courses and some have returned to formal education</p> <p>The ripple effect of the program is being felt—trainees are sharing practical farming knowledge with their families and communities</p>
1845	Skills piloting underway	01/07/25	Completed	15/11/24	Client demand for more intensive remedial training brought forward timetable and allowed Skills to be piloted sooner	<p>Without the SkillsHub building being available, Skills have had to be picked based around existing facilities or external partners</p> <p>Remedial ICT has not been delivered in the absence of facilities although this was as per plan</p>	<p>Piloted Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hair and Beauty - Electrical Engineering - Fashion and Design - Food Production - Hospitality - Sustainable Organic Agriculture <p>Added for Cohort 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Photography - Bricklaying and Plastering - Auto Mechanics - Plumbing and Sheet Metal 	
1846	Pilot group graduation	31/12/24	Completed	01/05/25	Inclusion of Skills piloting delayed graduation		Work placements were found for the clients to compliment their readiness to work	<p>SkillsHub surpassed Year 1 objectives: one pilot has partially graduated and the second cohorts is still learning</p> <p>Unpaid placements produced paid jobs at the same businesses for many</p>
1847	Delivery of Piloting Report	1/3/25	Completed	05/01/25				

Appendix 2: Program Finances, 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025

	Budget	Actual	Utilisation
	CHF	CHF	%
TOTAL GRANTS RECEIVED	585,308	585,308	
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	564,710	498,055	88%
Capital	319,700	232,134	73%
Delivery	245,010	265,921	109%
Core Costs	97,665	113,875	117%
Administration		17,421	
Development Costs		51,530	
Project promotion, Selection & Community Engagement		32,299	
Program Materials		7,189	
Monitoring & Evaluation		5,436	
Mindset	16,129	12,921	80%
Remedial	34,435	51,742	150%
Specialism	81,007	70,521	87%
Management		5,081	
Training fees		43,568	
Agriculture		17,052	
Misc. support for students		4,820	
Barriers to Education	15,767	16,861	107%
Management		2,904	
Transportation cost		7,862	
Uniforms - PPE		3,895	
Miscellaneous - Alumni care		2,201	

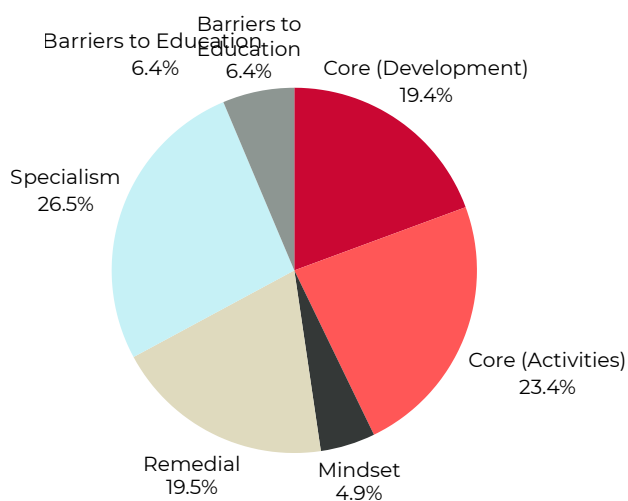
The cost per trainee is below budget, with the more intensive approach getting better value from fixed costs - additional throughput of trainees may be possible.

Expenditure on Capital



Severe seasonal flooding affected the site in early 2025 as the above video shows. It is now anticipated the building will be complete in September 2025.

Expenditure on Delivery



Expenditure on delivery exceeds budget due to Cohort 1 being bigger than plan (140 vs 80) and earlier selection of Cohort 2 (238) in H1 2025.

The clients' demand for more intensive training over a shorter period meant that the activity timetable was pulled forward. A pause in recruitment will take place after Cohort 3 to allow staff to optimise a plan for the use of the facilities.

A third floor has been added to the building with PI underwriting a modest increase in cost until it can be recovered from a donor partner.

Overall trajectory

Program evolution and the building delays have inevitably affected phasing of expenditure but at this time there is nothing to suggest inadequacy of the total budget for 2024-2027 outlined in the initial project proposal.

Learning

The variance in length of Specialisms courses contributes to the need for careful allocation of costs on a cohort basis in order to assess the relative cost/benefit of each course as data on outcomes increases. Work will be done in Year 2 to ensure this is possible.