

# ReadytoWork programme to employ 2,000 youth

Absa, in collaboration with Lulaway, will be training 4,000 youth in the Absa 'ReadytoWork' programme, and will place 2,000 of these young people in employment. The pan-African initiative seeks to address the challenge of youth unemployment in developing economies. It aims to equip young people with the knowledge and skills they need to successfully transition from the education system to the formal economy.



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The Absa 'ReadytoWork' programme provides access to world-class learning content focused on work, people, money and entrepreneurial skills. The programme is currently running in Zambia, Seychelles, Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius and Zimbabwe.

“A key priority of our Shared Growth strategy is to help young people gain access to the skills and opportunities they need to unlock their potential. We have identified education and skills development as a space in which a sustainable contribution can be made through initiatives such as ReadytoWork,” says Sazini Mojapelo, Barclays Africa Head of Citizenship.

## Work-readiness critical to sustainable economic transformation

Lulaway's research over seven years shows that approximately one in three youth will drop off within the first three months of employment. This high churn rate means that job creation efforts do not have a lasting impact. Those tasked with tackling unemployment recognise that a lack of 'work-readiness' is the primary factor in high attrition.

“Workplace readiness is defined as skills which contribute to the employability of a person apart from technical skills and education. These include codes of conduct, how to present yourself to be marketable for employment, communication skills, financial literacy and workplace etiquette,” explains Jake Willis, Lulaway CEO and Founder.

“When we started out, we thought that once we helped people find jobs, they would succeed and stay employed, but that did not happen. A person would start a job, and abscond or resign for no apparent reason after a few days or weeks,” says Willis.

“We thought that because jobs were so scarce, people would do anything to get a job and keep it. We were initially frustrated until we realised that we did not fully understand the complex dynamics our job seekers faced. The socio-economic challenges – such as crime, poverty, poor healthcare - confronting young people on a daily basis mean that the majority do not enter the world of work with the skills required to succeed in the workplace,” he adds.

Lulaway’s positioning in the job creation cycle – from sourcing, selecting, screening and placement – affords it access to people transitioning into the workplace, along with the operational capability to roll out this national large-scale project. Its responsibilities in the Absa ReadytoWork programme include the sourcing, selecting and training of 4,000 people and the subsequent placement of 2,000 people in jobs.

Will says collaborations such as the one with Absa is the reason for Lulaway’s existence. “Our experience shows us that solving unemployment requires broad thinking and joining forces with all stakeholders – non-profit, business and government.

“This project with Absa is a groundbreaking example of what is possible for South Africa when everybody is willing to play their part in bettering the economy and society. Our vision is a country where we are all driven by the triple bottom line, and the only way to do that is through partnerships,” adds Willis.

Since the year-long project commenced in June 2017, Lulaway has already achieved an average of 25% of the overall target. So far, 919 people have been trained and 572 placed in employment in various industries such as call centres, security and retail.

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