

Eastern Cape Regional Networking Event Report

29 May 2026

B&E Conference Centre, The Quarry
81 Quartzite Drive, Berea



Event Overview

“Building a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the education sector in the Eastern Cape.”

As a national convenor, NASCEE strengthens the education ecosystem in which its members operate by fostering meaningful dialogue, shared learning, and better alignment among key stakeholders in the sector. As part of this mandate, NASCEE hosts regional networking events (RNEs) to foster collaboration, increase transparency, and build partnerships between civil society organisations and other education sectors.

The Eastern Cape RNE was hosted on the 29th of May in KuGompo City (formerly East London), in partnership with **Kagiso Trust**, **LEAP Institute**, and **Axium Education**. Building on the work initiated during the EC Collective Convening in 2024, this RNE reimagined the following focus areas: EdTech; Foundational literacy and numeracy; Hub and spoke model; Leadership; STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics); and Youth.



Event Objectives



Strengthen provincial and district-level collaboration among education NGOs and government stakeholders



Support stronger connections and relationships between key stakeholders



Invigorate the focus areas identified in the 2024 Cluster Convening



Develop actionable next steps in an open, constructive environment

Key Insights

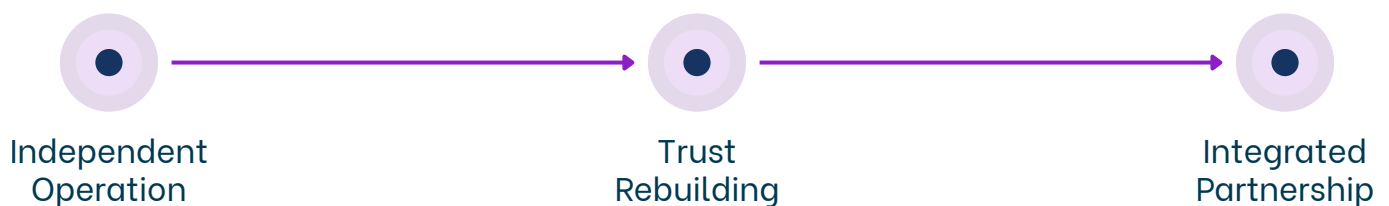
A high-functioning ecosystem requires a clear understanding of the roles played by various stakeholders to ensure optimal resource allocation. The relationship between NGOs and the government is currently evolving from independent operation toward an **integrated partnership model**.

The ecosystem is currently in a restorative phase of trust rebuilding. Historically, NGOs and the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) often operated in parallel, leading to duplicated efforts. Today, the shift toward **strategic coordination** is driven by the recognition that trust is a byproduct of integrated partnership rather than just frequent communication.

Senior ECDoE officials attended the event, with Dr Khayaletu Mdingi, Director of Stakeholder Management, emphasising that the department’s framework of engagement is “**being deliberately updated to diversify stakeholder involvement in shaping children’s futures.**”

Partnership coordination faces many challenges, including the limited visibility of partners, the uneven distribution of civil society support offered to schools and communities, and the misalignment of activities with district priorities.

NED Connect is a platform that responds to this partnership coordination challenge by **amplifying the visibility of organisations** and their work and **facilitating connections** between organisations. It uses data and insights across the education sector for stronger coordination, smarter investment, and ultimately, **greater impact**. Through NED Connect, organisations can ensure that interventions are not just well-intentioned, but **geographically and topically necessary**.



The RNE reaffirmed the six focus areas identified in the 2024 Cluster Convening, identifying 2026 priorities. These areas require **interdepartmental implementation** and a move away from isolated projects.

Focus Area	Core Priority	Key Challenges & Needs
EdTech	Scalable integration of hardware/software to streamline the learning process.	Urgent need for connectivity , zero-rated platforms, a comprehensive infrastructure audit, and a formalised EdTech policy .
Foundational Literacy & Numeracy (FLN)	An unbroken continuum from Early Childhood Development (ECD) through Grade 3.	Closing the development gap by prioritising pre-reading and pre-numeracy skills before Grade R ; ensuring no “gap” exists between ECD and formal schooling.
Hub and Spoke Model	Centralised “hubs” providing computer labs, teacher support, and leadership development to surrounding “spoke” communities.	Must be community-centric, offering a safe space , career expos, and workplace readiness . Requires inter-departmental implementation to address social ills.
Leadership	Strengthening the school’s core via instructional leadership and community engagement.	Focused on increased accountability , constructive collaboration , and building a culture of excellence.
STEAM	Future-proofing learners for the modern economy through science, tech, engineering, arts, and maths.	Developing the non-linear competencies of Critical Thinking , Design Thinking , and Coding .
Youth	Managing the transition from the classroom to the professional world.	Top requirements include employability training , professional mentorship , and holistic social support .



Facilitating
collaboration



60+
participants



6-hour
engagement

Conclusion

The Eastern Cape RNE was an important step in the evolution of the province's education ecosystem. The journey toward educational equity demands persistence and constructive collaboration, as evidenced by the speakers who shared examples of successful collaborative projects from across the province. Tools such as NED Connect will contribute to **intentional and strategic decision-making, data-informed planning, and transparency**. Moving forward, the focus area groups will meet throughout the year to commit priorities to each of the focus areas and to self-coordinate accordingly.

Organisations present at the event made it clear that the Eastern Cape education system is resilient and, through strategic coordination, is capable of delivering quality education to every learner.

Want to become a NASCEE member? Click [here](#) to find out how.



[NED Connect](#)



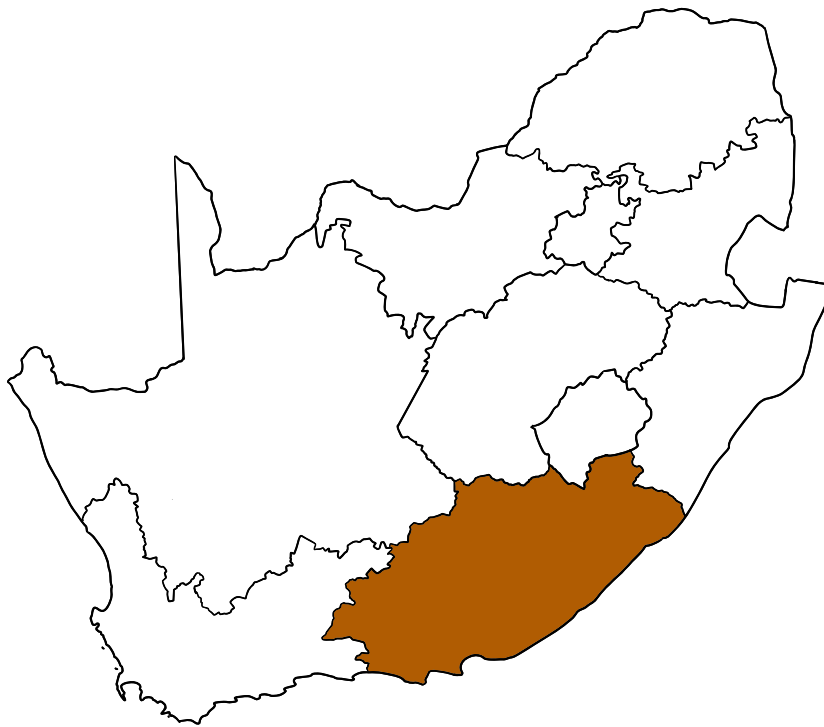
[Kagiso Trust](#)



[LEAP Institute](#)



[Axiom Education](#)



Eastern Cape Regional Networking Event Programme

Time	Session	Presenter
09:00 – 09:30	Registration and tea	
09:30 – 09:45	Opening and background	Zonke Ngidi <i>Executive Director, LEAP Institute</i>
09:45 – 10:15	National Education Directory mapping	Vive Kobokana <i>Consultant, NASCEE</i>
10:15 – 10:30	ECDoE 2026 priorities and partnership objectives	Nandipha Tembo <i>Director: Public Private Partnerships, Eastern Cape Department of Education</i>
10:30 – 10:45		Dr Khayaletu Mdingi <i>Director: Stakeholder Management, Eastern Cape Department of Education</i>
10:45 – 11:00	Q&A	Nonhlanhla Mahlobisa <i>Fundraising & Communications Officer, Axiom Education</i>
11:00 – 11:10	Tea break	
11:15 – 12:00	Eastern Cape stories of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ernest Gorgonzola <i>District Director: Nelson Mandela Bay, Eastern Cape Department of Education</i> - Stanford Ndlovu <i>Special Project Manager, Masinyusane</i> - Sipho Lunyawo <i>Citizen Leader Lab</i> - Zolisa Madasa <i>Community Engagements, ReimagineSA</i> - Ongeziwe Nxokwana <i>Innovation Manager: ACOT, DG Murray Trust</i>
12:00 – 12:30	Panel Q&A	Pearl Biko <i>Partnerships Manager, Axiom Education</i>
12:30 – 13:15	Lunch and networking	
13:20 – 14:20	Focus area breakout discussion	
14:25 – 15:00	Plenary discussion	Focus area groups
15:00	Closing	Sizakele Mphatsoe <i>Education & Civil Society Head, Kagiso Trust</i>





Focus Areas:

- EdTech
- Foundational literacy and numeracy
- Hub and spoke model
- Leadership
- STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts, mathematics)
- Youth

Activity: Choose a focus area from the above list for the breakout group discussion.

