



The Key to Unlocking Jobs at Scale for SA Inc

The Global Business Services (GBS) Model

Overview

Global business services in South Africa have been growing in the background for six years, adding 150 000 jobs to the economy (reported first by BPESA on 24 March 2025, Cape Town, with additions by The Citizen, see sources below).

Although there is concern about the lack of economic growth in South Africa, as well as not enough job opportunities, at least one sector grew by leaps and bounds over the past six years: global business services.

Global business services include a range of integrated, shared services designed to support business units and organisations globally, such as finance, accounting, human resources, IT and customer service.

The global business sector grew threefold in just five years, driven by South Africa's business-friendly environment, exceptional quality standards and continuous job creation.

BPESA is the national industry association for South Africa's global business services sector and compiled a refreshed sector value proposition to attract increased foreign direct investment and create 500 000 cumulative jobs by 2030.

Global Business Services bring in almost R53 billion

The value proposition shows that the total headcount in global business services in South Africa grew from 65 000 in 2019 to an estimated 150 000 in 2024, while market revenue grew from \$1.04 billion (approximately R18.9 billion) to an estimated \$2.91 billion (just under R53 billion), driven by significant investment from global players in recent years.

"The refreshed value proposition is part of BPESA's drive to champion South Africa as a premier destination for global business services, working alongside the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition (DTIC), InvestSA, Harambee Youth Employment Accelerator and other government and industry stakeholders," Reshni Singh, CEO of BPESA says.

"We believe the sector's unique blend of cost-effectiveness, talent and infrastructure and its proven track record of success, competitiveness and maturity in this market will continue to attract foreign direct investment to our shores and drive inclusive growth for the country."

While South Africa's offshoring locations are concentrated in Cape Town, followed by Durban and Johannesburg, Tshwane, East London and Gqeberha are also leading locations offering a significant pool of entry-level talent and developing future workforce potential, she says.

Expanded Operations in Global Business Services

Many global and regional companies from a variety of industries, such as technology and communications, financial services, legal and healthcare, have set up or expanded their operations in South Africa.

Singh says the UK remains South Africa's largest source market for global business services delivery, with a 55% share in terms of headcount. The US market has grown rapidly, with 33% of globally focused workers servicing that market, up from just 1% in 2019. Australia and Europe – mainly Germany, France and the Netherlands – are also important source markets for the sector.

The refreshed value proposition, which supports the objectives of the Global Business Services Sector Master Plan spearheaded by the DTIC, rests on six strategic pillars of infrastructure and enabling environment, mature industry and value-driven growth, people prowess, assured service excellence, cost arbitrage and business advantage and tactical advantage.

Advantages for global business services in South Africa

Some of the advantages that South Africa offers include:

- One of the best ICT infrastructures in Africa, enabling seamless global connectivity;
- Access to a [large, young and highly trainable workforce](#) fluent in English, with a neutral accent and strong empathy levels;
- Recognised for its high empathy service delivery, excelling in customer journey management and first-call resolution rates;
- Cost savings of 55-65% over source geographies such as Dallas, Manchester and Sydney;
- Strategic access to Africa through a regional hub-and-spoke delivery model.

“In South Africa, impact sourcing is changing the lives of previously unemployed youth and equipping them with comprehensive training, in-demand skills and sustainable career pathways,” Singh says.

According to Singh, BPO operators have strategically expanded into Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, including Soweto and Alexandra in Gauteng, Ilembe and Umlazi in KwaZulu-Natal, and Mitchells Plain and George in the Western Cape.

“In the process, the sector has catalysed entrepreneurial growth through the emergence of small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) that have created sustainable, quality employment opportunities in regions previously underserved by the formal economy,” she said.

“As we work to attract significant investment and create substantial [job opportunities, particularly for youth](#), developing a diverse, skilled and future-proof workforce remains our highest priority to ensure sustained growth and long-term industry resilience.”

How many Jobs have been created

Zain Patel, BPESA chairperson, said that between January and September 2024, the sector created over 14 000 new jobs, 12 564 of which were taken by the country's youth.

The sector has also contributed almost R13,6 billion in export revenue during the same period. He believes this proves their plan to create 500 000 jobs by 2030 is on track.

In addition, ten new international Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) operators had chosen to invest in South Africa.

“This reaffirms South Africa's position as the world's third most attractive off-shoring destination for prominent international firms in the telco, retail, healthcare, technology and financial services sectors,” he said.

Jobs to be created in the near future

Reshni Singh, BPESA CEO, said that since the masterplan was launched in the first quarter of 2022, they have managed to attract 30 international investors to our shores, of whom 22 converted to invest in SA.

They include 12 Business Process Outsourcing Operators and 10 end-user clients.

“We expect they will create between 13,000 and 17,000 new jobs in the next 18-24 months, which is a fantastic success story for the sector and the country.”

Elevating Global Competitiveness

Singh added that significant strides are being made towards advancing South Africa's demand-side commitment goals under the GBS Sector Master Plan.

“South Africa's efforts to strengthen its global competitiveness in the GBS sector have yielded positive shifts. The DTIC has supported the industry to remain globally cost-competitive by undertaking a review of the national GBS Incentive Programme.

“On average, South Africa is significantly more cost-effective than markets such as Poland and Malaysia.

Initiatives such as the GBS Incentives and cost management strategies aimed at attracting and retaining international clients have also made the country comparable with locations such as Jamaica, Egypt and the Philippines, which are our main competitors.”

Sources:

<https://www.bpesa.org.za/news/662-impressive-growth-in-sa%E2%80%99s-global-business-services-2.html>

<https://www.citizen.co.za/business/global-business-services-sector-committed-to-creating-500-000-jobs-by-2030/>

<https://www.bpesa.org.za/news/670-bpesa-reveals-aggressive-500k-job-plan-for-south-africa%E2%80%99s-gbs-sector.html>