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AJPRODHO-JIJUKIRWA

POLICY BRIEF | 2026

Private-Sector Engagement and Employer Incentives for Workplace Learning and Dual TVET in Rwanda

KEY MESSAGE

Rwanda's target of 1.25 million productive and decent jobs by 2029 will not be met unless private employers become co-producers of skills, and that requires incentives, formal partnerships and a presence in every district.

1.25M
jobs to be created over five years under NST2

211,000
people enter the labour market every year

70%
of interns are employed within 6 months

91%
of 446 firms are unaware of the 2021 WPL guidelines

1. Policy issue

The National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS), 2024-2026, sets an annual target of 250,000 productive and decent jobs, aligned with NST2's overall ambition of creating 1.25 million jobs over the five (5) year period. Approximately, 211,000 people enter the labour market annually, and more than 1 million young people are not in employment, education or training (2026 TVET SSWG retreat report). Workplace learning (WPL), meaning internships, industrial attachments, industry-based training and dual TVET, is the main bridge between school and work or labour market. Yet the 2015 Workplace Learning Policy has run its course, its implementation guidelines only arrived in 2021, and employers carry most of the cost of hosting learners without a structured return.

This brief asks decision-makers to strengthen private-sector engagement and employer incentives so that WPL and dual TVET reach more youth, especially young women, rural youth, youth with disabilities and learners hosted by small and big firms.

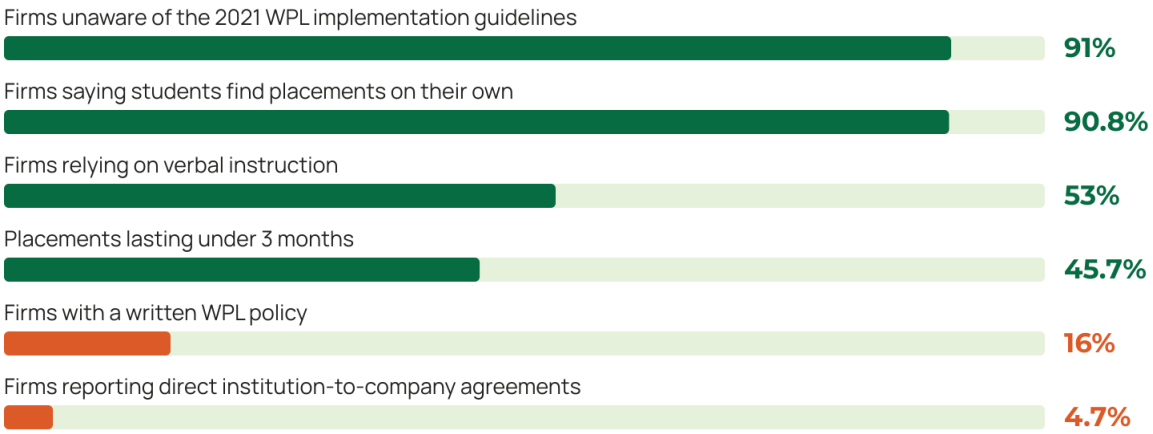
2. What the evidence shows

Workplace learning (WPL) works where it exists: placements lead to jobs. The problem is how few employers take part, how informally and formally they do it and how unevenly it reaches the country.

Findings	Evidence	Source
WPL leads to jobs.	70% of interns employed within 6 months; 78.8% of 2,260 dual-training beneficiaries employed within 6 months; 84.3% of rapid skills training graduates employed.	TVET SSWG retreat 2026; AJPRODHO 2025
Employers are unaware of the rules.	91% of 446 firms unaware of the 2021 implementation guidelines; 91.7% of employees untrained on the policy.	AJPRODHO 2025
Hosting is informal and unequal.	Only 16% of firms have a written WPL policy; 53% rely on verbal instruction; 90.8% of firms say students find placements on their own.	AJPRODHO 2025
Small firms cannot absorb learners.	67% of sampled firms have under 30 staff; 92.2% of Rwandan enterprises are micro-enterprises.	AJPRODHO 2025; TVET SSWG retreat 2026
Costs deter hosts and learners.	Employers see WPL as a cost; some firms charge placement fees; over 50% of interviewed youth cite lack of financial support.	AJPRODHO 2025
Placements are short and urban.	45.7% of placements last under 3 months; 268 of 446 surveyed firms are in Kigali.	AJPRODHO 2025
Skills gaps are specific.	Employers report skills shortages in garment design, pattern making, industrial automation, irrigation, PLC/SCADA and instrumentation.	TVET SSWG retreat 2026

THE PARTICIPATION GAP IN NUMBERS

Survey of 446 firms, AJPRODHO 2025



It is important to note that employers want to take part. Firms visited during the retreat, from garment makers to dairy and irrigation operators, asked for apprenticeships, dual TVET, industrial attachments, curriculum review and joint planning, and described themselves as partners rather than only employers.

3. Recommendations

1 RECOMMENDATION 1
Establish a National Fund for Skills Development

Establish a sustainable, multi-year financing mechanism to progressively shares the costs of Workplace Learning (WPL) which are currently largely borne by employers and learners, thereby reducing the financial burden on participating Enterprises particularly SMEs, and encouraging wider participation in internship and apprenticeship programmes.

Funding for WPL is fragmented and depends on donors. The Massive Vocational Training programme lost momentum when its main sponsor withdrew, and Rapid Response Training reaches few companies because its budget is small. The 2026 TVET SSWG retreat already committed to a National TVET Financing Framework (approval targeted December 2026) and a Skills Development Fund operational by June 2027. This recommendation asks that the fund be designed around employers and learners.

- **Employer support:** grants to cover mentor time, supervision, consumables, training equipment and trainee insurance, with priority for SMEs and for firms offering structured placements of six months or more.
- **Tax incentives:** tax credits or deductions for firms hosting accredited trainees, designed with RRA and MINECOFIN.
- **Learner support:** scholarships and stipends for transport, meals, accommodation and assistive devices, so that rural youth, young women and youth with disabilities can take up placements.
- **Funding sources:** government budget allocations, private-sector contributions (levy or voluntary) and development partners, with a dedicated WPL budget line in MIFOTRA, RTB and district budgets.
- **Fair rules:** standard internship allowances and costing, on-time disbursement, and a ban on placement fees.

Advocacy targets: MIFOTRA, MINECOFIN, RTB and PSF. The size of the fund and the levy design still need to be costed; this brief does not propose a figure.

2 RECOMMENDATION 2
Formalise employer–TVET partnerships

Replace today's reliance on individual students knocking on doors with written, standard agreements between employers, TVET schools and higher learning institutions.

At present 90.8% of surveyed firms say students secure placements on their own, and only 4.7% report direct institution-to-company agreements. MIFOTRA has pushed for MoUs, but private-sector resistance, partly from limited understanding, has slowed progress. In dual TVET, MoUs signed by funders without involving schools weaken collaboration.

- **Standard MoUs** between companies and training institutions that set roles, learning plans, supervision, assessment and allowances, with schools as signatories.
- **A named WPL focal person** in each host company and each TVET institution.
- **Sector Skills Councils** (four to be operational by June 2027) as the main route for employer input.into occupational standards, curriculum review and skills audits, with PSF mobilising employers.
- **Accreditation of host companies** and training centres, with a database of firms willing to host, so that placements are quality assured and firms can issue recognised certificates.

- **A digital coordination platform** for placement matching, reporting and certification, to cut paperwork for small firms and replace unstructured recruitment.
- **Recognition for good employers** through an annual employer award and a WPL Employer Index.

Advocacy targets: MIFOTRA, MINEDUC, RTB, Rwanda Polytechnic and PSF, with MINICOM on employer links.

3 RECOMMENDATION 3
Launch industry-led excellence short courses

Co-design short, hands-on courses with employers in the occupations where firms cannot find skilled staff, starting with manufacturing, which is projected to create about 80,000 jobs by 2029.

Employers said TVET graduates have sound theory but need more practical and workplace skills, and that technology is changing what they need. Retreat visits found specific shortages: garment design, pattern making and cutting technology in garments (Pink Mango employs about 1,000 and plans 3,000; C&D Products employs over 7,000 and plans 15,000); industrial automation and mechanical maintenance in steel and manufacturing; irrigation, pump maintenance and solar pumping on commercial farms; and food technology, quality assurance, PLC and SCADA in dairy and food processing.

- **Course areas:** automation, garment design and pattern making, food processing, irrigation technologies, mechatronics and digital skills.
- **Delivery:** employers and RTB or Rwanda Polytechnic design and deliver together, on company equipment where possible, with trainees placed in the host firm.
- **Target:** at least 10 excellence programmes running by June 2027, as the retreat resolved.
- **Soft skills built in:** communication, teamwork, professional conduct, time management and occupational health and safety, which employers raised in every sector.
- **Certification:** completers receive a recognised qualification and trainers are upskilled through company attachments.
- **Feedback loop:** annual sector skills audits and graduate tracer studies decide which courses to open, expand or close.

Advocacy targets: PSF, RTB, Rwanda Polytechnic and industry partners, with MINEDUC and MIFOTRA.

4 RECOMMENDATION 4
Expand workplace learning to districts

Bring apprenticeships, dual TVET and industrial attachments to young people where they live, through district structures, local firms and community-based placements.

WPL supply is concentrated in Kigali (268 of 446 surveyed firms), while rural youth face transport, meal and accommodation costs and often do not know what is on offer. Demand for placements already exceeds supply. Since 2021, WPL has been written into district Imihigo performance contracts and the Rwanda TVET Board has partnered with firms, which gives a base to build on.

- **Imihigo targets:** every district sets and reports WPL placement targets, with a dedicated WPL line in district budgets, coordinated by MINALOC.

- **Community-based placements:** local firms, Integrated Craft Production Centres (Udukiriro), cooperatives and SMEs host youth in their own communities.
- **Dual TVET at scale:** institutionalise dual TVET in regular TVET programmes, with approval procedures for schools and two model schools per district. Review the 30% school and 70% company split at Levels III to V, which the assessment links to weaker performance, and test a 50/50 split.
- **Longer internships:** extend the professional internship from 6 to 12 months and set minimum standards on length, pay and learning content.
- **Inclusion:** transport and meal support, assistive devices and mentorship for young women, rural youth and youth with disabilities, with CSOs mobilising and following up learners.
- **Reporting:** decentralised tracking of placements across public and private firms, feeding the national labour market intelligence system.

Advocacy targets: MINALOC, district authorities, MIFOTRA, MINEDUC, RTB and PSF, with CSOs for outreach and mentorship.

4. Who should act

Recommendation	Lead	Co-lead and support	Retreat timeline
1. National Fund for Skills Development.	MIFOTRA, MINECOFIN	MINEDUC, RTB, PSF, RRA, development partners	Framework approved Dec 2026; fund operational June 2027
2. Employer–TVET partnerships.	MIFOTRA, MINEDUC	RTB, Rwanda Polytechnic, PSF, MINICOM, Sector Skills Councils	Four SSCs and placement increase of 50% over baseline by June 2027
3. Industry-led excellence short courses.	PSF, RTB, Rwanda Polytechnic	Industry partners, MINEDUC, MIFOTRA	At least 10 programmes by June 2027
4. District workplace learning	MINALOC, MIFOTRA	District authorities, MINEDUC, RTB, PSF, CSOs	Scale-up in 2027–2028 phase

5. Expected impact

- More firms, especially SMEs, host learners because costs and paperwork fall.
- Placements follow written agreements, so quality and fairness no longer depend on personal contacts.
- Graduates in manufacturing and agro-processing arrive with the skills employers are asking for.
- Youth outside Kigali, including young women and youth with disabilities, get real access to placements.
- Rwanda is better placed to reach the NESS and NST2 job targets and the Vision 2050 human-capital goals.

6. Conclusion

The evidence is consistent: Workplace learning (WPL) turns into jobs when employers take part, but only a minority of firms have the awareness, money or structure to do so. The 2026 retreat resolutions give the government a roadmap, and this brief asks that employers and learners sit at the centre of it. Funding, formal partnerships, industry-designed short courses and district delivery are four linked steps that should move together.

Sources

Main reference documents for this brief:

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