THINK BIG SOUTH AFRICA

The PSG #ThinkBigSA competition

In collaboration with ERSA (Economic Research South Africa)

PSG is a leading professional financial services company that proudly serves more than 500 000 clients in South Africa. As a firm we believe in the people and potential of the country, and as a responsible corporate citizen we contribute to its growth and play an active role in driving the progress of South Africa.

With this competition we want South Africans to become aware, involved and bring forward positive, constructive solutions, leading to a sustainable future for our country. We plan to run the competition annually dealing with topical, relevant and real-world challenges.

Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) is a platform for economic researchers across Southern Africa to publish their work, access funding, participate in conferences and training programmes, and contribute to public policy debates. We work to improve the quality of the public debate through research and by convening dialogues among leading international economists, local academics, public-sector officials and private-sector professionals. We are committed to promoting rigorous research that can inform robust policymaking to address the challenges of economic growth and development.

2025 TOPIC: The Role of Capital Markets in Enhancing Economic Growth and Job Creation in South Africa.

Capital markets provide significant benefits to an economy by promoting financial inclusion as businesses can access a large and diverse pool of funds to finance their expansion, innovation and diversification. In addition, governments can use capital markets as an alternative source of funding to finance their budget deficits, public services and infrastructure projects. Capital markets have also reduced volatility in some countries.

Further, the development of capital markets has introduced new discipline into policymaking and led to more jobs and higher salaries in some countries such as the US. However, in the South African context, there are various factors that need to be taken into consideration for capital markets to effectively enhance economic performance and facilitate job creation.

THE CHALLENGE

While capital markets provide opportunities for innovation, financing, and job creation, they also pose challenges, including market inefficiencies, systemic risks, and unequal access. Participants are invited to critically assess both sides and propose actionable solutions.

PSG invites South Africa's "Big Picture Thinkers" to examine this topic and present a discussion paper with novel ideas using the criteria below.

Your paper should address:

1. How capital markets can facilitate enhanced economic performance in South Africa;
2. How capital markets can foster job creation in South Africa; and
3. What the fundamental preconditions for the development of well-functioning capital markets in South Africa should be.

Explore how capital markets can work alongside or be complemented by other economic strategies, like SME development, Public-Private Partnerships or informal sector development, environmental policy and sustainability.

THE PRIZES

Because we believe that the submissions could have a significant impact on rethinking growth strategies in South Africa, we are offering prizes for the top articles

1st prize
R 500 000

2nd prize
R 300 000

3rd prize
R 100 000

2 Special category prizes:

1. Entries from individuals aged 25 and younger: R50 000
2. Entries from individuals without a professional affiliation to formal academic institutions such as universities or research organisations: R50 000

THE PANEL

Francois Gouws
CEO: PSG Financial Services Ltd

Fatima Vawda
CEO: 27four Group

Malungelo Zilimbola
CEO: Mazi Asset Management

Chris Loewald
Head of Economic Research: South African Reserve Bank and member of the Monetary Policy Committee

Dr Leila Fourie
CEO: Johannesburg Stock Exchange

- Your paper will be reviewed by a panel of expert judges.
- Their decision is final.
- Intellectual property of the proposal vests with PSG. PSG may ask you to promote the paper, approve a media edit or make public appearances to promote your ideas.

THE CRITERIA

A discussion document analyses a particular issue and offers policy recommendations. The document describes the problem or issue being addressed, analyses its root causes, evaluates policy options for addressing the problem or its causes, and recommends a way forward. Generally, the analysis is narrative-driven, relying on existing work (academic and grey literature and secondary data) and high-level analysis, although original analysis is welcome.

Criteria	Description	Weight
Relevance to Theme	Align with the competition's theme, addressing the core topics or questions specified. Demonstrate a thorough understanding of the theme and effectively integrate it into the content.	25%
Originality and Creativity	Present unique ideas, perspectives, or concepts that differentiate it from typical responses and exhibit innovative approaches to the topic.	30%
Clarity and Communication	Document should be well-structured, with a coherent flow of argument and clear presentation. Language and grammar must be of high quality, and the overarching message or argument should be conveyed in a straightforward and compelling manner.	10%
Depth of Analysis	Demonstrate in-depth analysis, supported by thorough research and robust evidence. The quality of data or references used should be high, and the conclusions drawn must be well-founded and insightful.	15%
Impact and Feasibility	Meaningful consideration of the potential impact, sustainability, and feasibility of the ideas or solutions proposed in the essay. Submissions should evaluate the practicality of implementing the suggested solutions and their long-term benefits.	15%
Engagement and Persuasion	Document should be engaging and persuasive, capturing the audience's attention and convincingly arguing its case. The ability to resonate with the audience and effectively advocate for the proposed ideas is crucial.	5%

Structure:

The document should be between 2 000 and 3 000 words in length. Ideally, it will include a brief introduction, an analysis or quantitative and qualitative data, and a set of policy recommendations based on the findings of the analysis. The policy implications must be framed in terms of a current policy challenge South Africa is faced with. The document should be referenced with a bibliography.

Example:

We recommend following a similar structure to the below:
https://econrsa.org/publications/covid-19-and-the-south-african-economy/

Formatting:

The discussion document must be submitted as a PDF, with headings clearly marked, and charts must be in a format such that the data and graphics are fixed. If it is a picture, please make sure it has a high resolution so that it is good quality.

Final submission date:

All final discussion documents must be submitted by 30 August 2025 in order to qualify. No late submissions will be accepted. Submit your entry on https://econrsa.org/psg-thinkbigsa-2025/

Note:

Discussion documents can be entered either by individuals or groups. The prize money will not change.

Σrsa Economic Research Southern Africa

PSG Financial Services

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