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High-Level M&E Framework for the SETA Environment

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This report is one of several outputs from a research partnership initiative addressing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in a SETA environment (<https://www.ru.ac.za/nalsu/projects/>). Implemented by Rhodes University over three years (August 2018 – May 2020), the research partnership was an initiative of South Africa's 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The research partnership is funded by the BANKSETA and ServicesSETA. This particular report needs to be read in conjunction with the Implementation Guidelines, as well as other reports produced in the research partnership initiative, including those relating to the Mandatory and Discretionary Grants.

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Acronyms

APP	Annual Performance Plan
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Services Administration
GWMES	Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System
HR	Human Resources
KPA	Key Performance Area
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPAT	Management Performance Assessment Tool
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NEPF	National Evaluation Policy Framework
NSA	National Skills Authority
NSF	National Skills Fund
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PSET	Post-School Education and Training
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
WBL	Workplace-Based Learning

Glossary of Terms

Activities	Actions undertaken or work performed through which inputs, such as funds, technical assistance and other types of resources are mobilised to produce specific outputs.
Evaluation	Judgement of the performance of planned, ongoing or completed programmes, policy or development interventions, through systematic study. It addresses issues of causality, and analyses why intended outcomes were or were not achieved.
Goal	The higher-order objective to which a programme, policy or development intervention is intended to contribute.
Impact	The results of achieving specific outcomes. Examples include the impact of education and training on income levels and employment. Impact could also refer to changes in a situation that a policy or programme brings about.

Indicator	A <u>measure</u> designed to assess the performance of an intervention. It is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect the changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of an implementer.
Inputs	The resources that contribute to the production of, in this case, skills related outputs. These include finance, personnel, information, equipment, buildings.
Logical framework (Log frame)	Management tool used to improve the design of interventions, most often at the <u>project</u> level. It involves identifying strategic elements (inputs, activities/processes, outputs, outcomes, impact) and their causal relationships, indicators, and the assumptions or risks that may influence success and failure.
Monitoring	Monitoring refers to the systematic collection, recording and reporting of information in order to <i>track progress towards the achievement of objectives</i> , and to identify the need for, and undertake, corrective action.
Outcomes	Outcomes are “ <i>what we wish to achieve</i> ”. Outcomes are the medium-term results specific to beneficiaries which are the consequence of achieving specific outputs. Outcomes are specified in terms of the effect the intervention is expected to have on beneficiaries.
Outputs	The products, goods and services that result from a programme or intervention; may also include changes resulting from the intervention which are relevant to the achievement of outcomes (for example, qualifications).
Performance	The degree to which a programme or intervention, partner or implementing agency operates according to specific criteria/standards/guidelines, or achieves results in accordance with stated goals or plans.
Performance indicator	A variable that allows the verification of changes in the programme or development intervention, or shows results relative to what was planned.
Performance measurement	A system for assessing performance of programmes or interventions against stated goals.
Theory of Change	A tool that describes a linear or non-linear process of planned change, from the assumptions(theory) that guide its design, the planned outputs and outcomes, to the long-term impacts it seeks to achieve.

Introduction

The *National Evaluation Policy Framework* (2019) “seeks to ensure that credible and objective disaggregated evidence from evaluations is used in planning, budgeting, organisational improvement, policy review, as well as ongoing programme and project management to improve performance”. While the Draft DHET *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* (2020) acknowledges that M&E within the PSET system is currently fragmented, it presents a framework for enhanced coordination across the various units and partners within the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). It is the responsibility of the Policy, Research and Evaluation Directorate within DHET to develop and maintain the DHET M&E Framework and to ensure that it is being implemented across the department. This includes across various components within DHET that have their own governance structures and arrangements, namely, the National Skills Fund (NSF), the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), the National Skills Authority (NSA) and the National Artisan Moderating Body (NAMB). This framework assumes that the National Skills Authority will play a key role in the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the SETAs. This ‘*High-level Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment*’ should inform the identification, allocation and resourcing of M&E responsibilities with regard to the SETAs.

The *White Paper for Post School Education and Training*, the *National Plan for Post School Education and Training* and the *National Skills Development Plan* make it clear that “a restructured and refocused National Skills Authority will concentrate specifically on monitoring and evaluating the SETAs” (WP-PSET, p.68) These documents go on to acknowledge that “this implies that [the NSA] will become an expert body with high-level monitoring and evaluation skills”. Two studies commissioned by DHET and undertaken by the Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC) considered the restructuring requirements and the M&E implications, in relation to the *National Skills Development Strategy*, for a refocused NSA. This *High-level Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment* provides a framework for monitoring and evaluating the SETAs overall. Regardless of whether the NSA takes this up or not, it is vital that there be a framework for looking across the SETA system and its functioning, performance and impact as a whole, in order to inform policy and decision-making.

In addition to the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework focused on the *National Skills Development Strategy III* (GTAC, 2018), this High-Level Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment builds on and is supported by a number of other documents. These include frameworks to support SETAs in the M&E of the mandatory and discretionary grants; guidelines for monitoring and evaluating SETA governance; tools for cost benefit analysis as well as tracer studies; a framework for management performance; an outline for capacity development in relation to M&E in a SETA environment; and guidelines for the implementation of this Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment. (See Appendix 1 for Source Documents and Selected References.)

Guiding Principles

This framework is guided by a set of principles that have been developed nationally and internationally to guide monitoring and evaluation. Nationally the *Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System* (The Presidency, 2007) prescribes that M&E should:

- Contribute to improved governance
- Be rights-based
- Be development-oriented (nationally, provincially, institutionally and locally)
- Be undertaken ethically and with integrity
- Be utilization-oriented
- Be methodologically sound, and
- Be operationally effective.

These principles are aligned to a broader set of international insights summarised as follows:

- The independence and quality of evaluation improve the credibility of findings
- There is a need for different types of evaluations
- Standardised systems can overcome limited capacity
- Annual or rolling multi-year evaluation plans are key
- A budget allocation of 2%–5% of programme budgets
- A central capacity to support evaluations in government, both developing policy, systems and supporting methodology and quality assurance
- Improvement plans should be developed based on the evaluations and their implementation closely monitored (Goldman et al., 2015).

The following framework is informed and shaped by these broad guiding principles and insights and it is suggested these are carefully considered as DHET and the NSA work with and further refine this M&E framework.

Purpose of the High-level M&E Framework

The *Skills Development Act* establishes the National Skills Authority and outlines its functions, constitution and administrative structure. Key functions include advising the Minister of Higher Education and Training on a national skills development policy, a national skills development strategy and the allocation of funds from the National Skills Fund. In order to fulfil this role, the NSA has the mandate to conduct investigation into, and monitor and evaluate, the progressive iterations of the *National Skills Development Strategy*. In order to guide this M&E of the NSDS and the various institutions established by the Skills Development Act, including the National Skills Fund, the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations (QCTO) and the SETAs, GTAC (2018) prepared a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework of the NSA. As noted, recent planning and policy documents have repositioned the NSA to have a specific focus on monitoring and evaluating the SETAs. The purpose of this High-level Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is specifically to guide and support DHET and the NSA in terms of positioning and implementing the overall M&E of SETAs within the monitoring and evaluation of the PSET system. SETAs themselves will also conduct their own M&E, which will feed into this high-level M&E process.

This document provides a framework for the overarching M&E of SETAs and clarifies a common focus for M&E within the individual SETAs, which is further elaborated in other reports of the research partner initiative (see www.ru.ac.za/elrc/projects).

Background

Legislative and Policy Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment

Two key policy areas need to be considered for the development of M&E frameworks in the skills development sector of post-school education and training. The first policy area relates to the government-wide M&E system and the second relates to the positioning of skills development within the National Development Plan and associated implementation systems. This is particularly relevant to DHET which has the responsibility of coordinating M&E across PSET. It is also relevant to the NSA that is, according to the *White Paper on Post-school Education and Training*, required to ensure alignment between skills development and national development strategies and priorities.

The *Constitution of South Africa* sets out the basic values and principles governing public administration and makes provision for a number of institutions to monitor and evaluate this service delivery across government. In order to address the constitutional mandates for M&E, and in particular in an attempt to address the fragmented nature of M&E in government, Cabinet approved the development of a *Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation (GWM&E)* system in 2007. The GWM&E System requires that government institutions formally adopt an M&E strategy that includes a description of current and future (planned) M&E systems and a capacity building plan detailing how the institution will put in place the human capacity to fulfil its M&E functions. In addition, the *Public Finance Management Act* requires that each accounting officer establish a monitoring and evaluation system for the institution for which they are responsible. In order to support the GWM&E and associated responsibilities related to M&E, the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) produced the National Evaluation Policy Framework (NEPF) in 2011. The National Evaluation Policy Framework has recently (November 2019) been updated.

In line with the above requirements, the DHET adopted its first *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* in 2013. The DHET M&E Framework covers Post School Education and Training and, following significant changes in this sector as well as reviews of the DHET M&E Framework by both the Auditor General and the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), is currently (2020) being revised. The diagnostic review by DHET and the DPME (2016) was clear that the external monitoring and oversight used to support education sector outcomes needed to be strengthened. This included the implementation of the policies and procedures for monitoring external entities such as the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). A key challenge in this regard is the multiple role players who have a stake in skills development and therefore an interest in the performance of the SETAs.

The external monitoring and evaluation of the SETAs, as well as the M&E processes within the SETAs, therefore need to be developed to feed into the broader vision and mandates of other entities to whom the SETAs are accountable, and into broader requirements for information, without this becoming too demanding on resources or creating contradictory demands across multiple mandates.

A number of policy and planning documents provide more specific detail on the vision and mission for the PSET system broadly and the SETAs specifically along with related commitments to monitor and evaluate these systems and institutions. The *National Development Plan (NDP)* envisages that by 2030 South Africa should have access to education and training of the highest quality. In the section

of the NDP focused specifically on skills development, SETAs are identified as the entities that are responsible for the delivery of sector-specific skills interventions that help to achieve the goals of the *National Skills Development Strategy* and develop the skills needed by employers. The *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training* (WP-PSET) sets out a vision for a post-school education system that enriches lives, promotes social justice and overcomes historical inequalities. It goes on to provide specific guidance on the role of SETAs and notes that monitoring and evaluation must make it possible *to understand the levels of efficacy that are being achieved, and to identify where any blockages in the system may be emerging*.

The draft *National Plan for Post-School Education and Training* (NP-PSET) gives effect to the vision set out in the NDP and the WP-PSET. More specifically, it sets out key system goals, objectives, outcomes and strategies for the period 2019/2020 to 2029.

The draft NP-PSET is clear that SETAs will concentrate on supporting skills planning, industry engagement, funding and workplace-based learning, and will be monitored and evaluated by the NSA. The plan also states that capacity for M&E must be improved across the PSET system and that the NSA must develop high-level M&E skills.

The *National Skills Development Plan* (NSDP) in turn provides a more specific vision, principles and outcomes relating to skills development within the broader draft NP-PSET. The vision articulated in the NSDP is “an educated, skilled and capable workforce for South Africa” that contributes to economic growth, employment creation, productivity and social development.

The draft DHET M&E Framework notes that it is crucial for each sub-sector of the PSET system to develop their own M&E Frameworks in order to contribute to legislated objectives, transparency, accountability and improved performance. This means for example that SETAs also require their own internal M&E systems. It is further evident from the above that the NSA is required to play a leading role in the overall monitoring and evaluation of the SETAs. While the NSA can use this framework (and accompanying implementation Guidelines) to undertake the high-level M&E of the SETAs, this also provides a framing from which SETAs should derive key aspects of their M&E frameworks, strategies and plans. More detailed guidelines on integration and implementation to support this framework, as well as guidance on the SETAs’ own M&E frameworks and related performance management processes, is provided in other documents.

Intended Users of this M&E Framework

As noted above, DHET have the responsibility of coordinating and supporting the monitoring and evaluation of the PSET sector. The draft *DHET Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* (2020) sets out how DHET will fulfil this responsibility. As part of this coordination role, DHET have stated in a number of planning and policy documents that the NSA will take on an expanded role in the M&E of the SETAs. Finally, since monitoring and evaluation is a management function within government institutions, the accounting authorities (CEOs) within the SETAs are required to ensure that monitoring and evaluation takes place within their organisations. All of this work needs to support better functioning of the public service and better delivery of benefits (outcomes and impacts) to the people of South Africa. Based on the above, three key users of this framework are identified:

- DHET (especially the NSA, the Policy, Research and Evaluation Directorate, the Skills Branch and the SETA Support Branch)
- NSA
- SETAs (especially the CEO and the M&E Manager).

Theory of Change

Background to the Theory Of Change Model and its Purpose

A theory of change for a SETA M&E framework needs to address the following challenges:

1. Shifting scope of what SETAs are responsible for within the PSET system
2. Along with (1), the expanding goals or high level objectives for SETAs
3. Frequent changes to the high level objectives for SETAs (as collective)
4. Resultant lack of clarity on scope and objectives (due to frequent changes)
5. Too many indicators to monitor
6. Due to 1-5 (among other reasons) failure to obtain consistent, relevant, reliable, valid data
7. Non-linear pathways to impact in complex systems.

A theory of change helps organisations *to focus on the most relevant outcomes*, given that it is impossible to monitor and evaluate *everything*. It is a provisional but nonetheless agreed-upon model of process (set of ‘if - then’ hypotheses), in diagrammatic and narrative form. It indicates *how* the change that a policy, organisation or system hopes to bring about, is likely to come about, without assuming simple, linear impact pathways. If organisations or systems can focus and bound their M&E, they are in a better position to collect the data they need in order to come to meaningful conclusions and statements on the actual outcomes and impacts of their activity. If they can model non-linear pathways to impact, they are also more likely to work with reality-congruent models suitable for complex systems. Denying complexity does not simplify things for implementers, because they experience a confusing disconnect between what a simple model (such as a linear log frame) requires them to do, and what they actually experience or observe, and require to do, if they are to be responsive to on-the-ground contextual conditions.

A theory of change model also distinguishes between the contributions and spheres of influence of the respective role players in a complex system. It should thus help to focus the M&E on *what* should be monitored and evaluated, and *what* the role players in the system should be held accountable for.

This is very pertinent here. Over time the expectations of SETAs, what they should be held accountable for and where they should focus their activity and expenditure, have been fluid and at times ambiguous, with some mis-alignment between different guideline documents.

A number of evaluations of, and reports on, the skills systems (see Scoping Reports, Appendix 1) suggest that *as other sources of government funding become increasingly constrained, the Skills Levy and the skills levy institutions are being called on to address a range of needs and challenges in the PSET system and the wider South African context*. This has caused a diffusion of focus due to multiple objectives extending beyond access to skills development. The lack of a theory of change and outcomes pathway with adequate detail, combined with the lack of an implementation plan, and allocation of responsibility, has made it difficult to assess the SETAs’ impact and their relative performance within the skills system.

These challenges are recognised in the WP-PSET (DHET, 2013) which clearly signalled that:

In the future, SETAs (or their equivalent if they are restructured) will be given a clearer and to some extent narrower and more focused role. The aim will be to locate certain functions (such as skills planning, funding and quality assurance) in well-resourced central institutions, thus enabling sector structures to focus on engaging with stakeholders in the workplace, establishing their needs and agreeing on the best way of addressing them, facilitating access to relevant programmes and ensuring that providers have the capacity to deliver programmes that have a genuine impact. A key role of the skills system structures will be to support efforts to implement workplace learning that complements formal education and training. (p. 58)

The adjusted role of the sector skills structures in the planning process will be aimed at supplying reliable sector-specific quantitative data to the national central planning process, engaging with key stakeholders to test emerging scenarios, and planning to support provision in priority areas. Sector, industry and regional input to the national planning process will ensure the provision of comprehensive information on workplaces in terms of the training that is taking place, the kinds of skills that are present in the workplace, and the nature of skills gaps. (p. 59)

The draft NP-PSET makes a similar point when it states that SETAs “need to be rendered more effective and efficient by concentrating their efforts on supporting skills planning through *engagement with industry*, ensuring that *funding is allocated* to support provision against demand, and *enabling access* to and *strengthening provision* of workplace-based learning”.

Further motivating for more focussed M&E, are the repeated calls for a results-based M&E system. As noted by GTAC (2018): “The Results-Based M&E system adopted by the South African government ... demonstrate[s] a critical departure from the traditional Monitoring and Evaluation, which focused on outputs, to an approach which emphasises results (outcomes and impact)”.

Logframes (logical frameworks) are most suitable for project-level M&E, and can be used at the ‘lower’ levels in an M&E system, where SETAs are reporting to themselves, DHET and Treasury in relation to inputs and outputs (Key Performance Indicators). They are suitable for tracking inputs, activities and outputs, but less suitable for detecting policy, programme - and system-level outcomes and non-linear pathways to impact. A theory of change model that is not based on a logframe allows for non-linear change processes, which are common in complex systems such as PSET. Translating a non-linear change model into a linear logframe defeats the purpose of drawing up the theory of change in the first place. For these reasons, a logframe is not recommended for the high-level SETA M&E framework.

The following should also be noted:

- A theory of change will only have value if it is actually applied. If it is replaced or set aside by *ad hoc* decision-making about where the collective of SETAs should focus their attention, it will have little value.
- At the same time, well-thought-through and evidence-based policy shifts would call for a revision of the theory of change model. All theories of change are just that: theories; our best judgement as to how to bring about the desired change. From time to time, they need to be revisited and where necessary, revised. This revision needs to be done by a collective of stakeholders, on the basis of evidence (of what worked, and what did not work) rather than on the basis of opinion or anecdote. It should also *inform* policy.

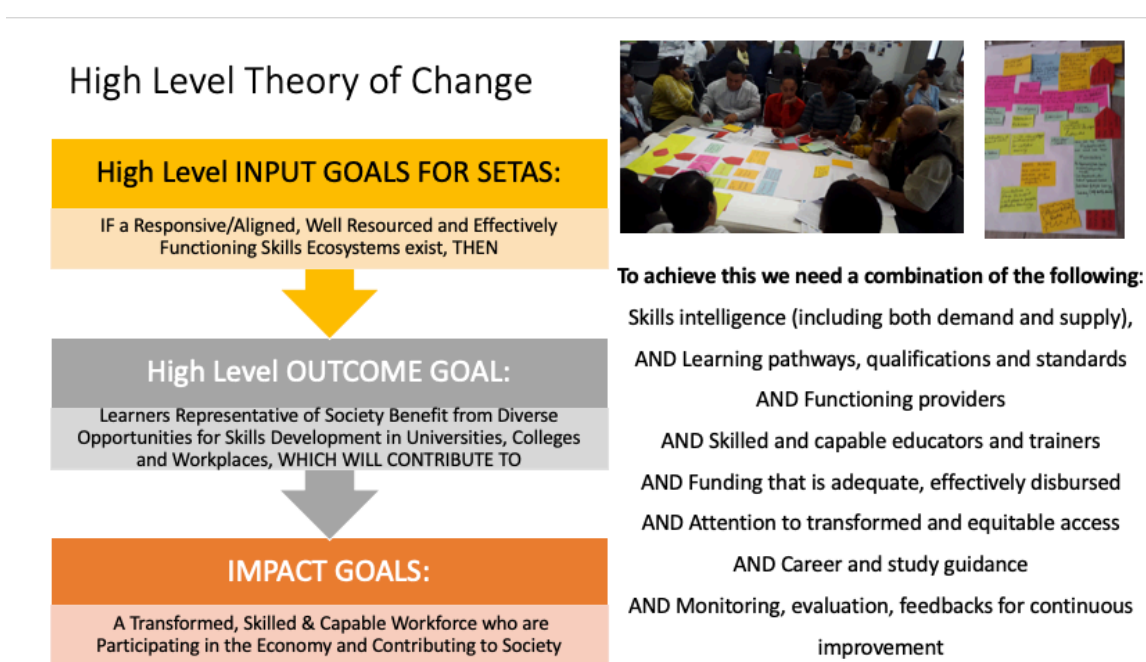
- A system-level theory of change should shape an overall M&E framework and M&E plan, through a judicious and small selection of key, high level indicators (for which multiple lower level indicators may provide data). (See next section.)
- Giving in to the urge to monitor all possibly relevant indicators of change, is likely to result in reporting fatigue and poor data collection, as organisations in the PSET system are still not ready for extensive data collection and management at this time. This may well change in future, and *a greater body of consistently available, reliable and accessible data, will assist the PSET system to expand the number of indicators it can monitor.*

The theory of change for this overall SETA M&E framework (to be used by NSA) was developed with the above assumptions in mind. Important to note is that the theory of change presented here is not based on the authors' assumptions about how SETAs can or should contribute to the desired PSET outcomes and impacts, but *on the guidance in the policy documents and stakeholder consultation.* Specifically, it is based on the following:

- The *National Development Plan*
- The *National Skills Development Strategy* (NSDS III)
- The *White Paper on Post-School Education and Training* (WP-PSET)
- The *National Plan for Post-School Education and Training* (NP-PSET)
- The *National Skills Development Plan*
- Collective engagement with SETAs and DHET in a one day workshop (October 2019)
- Further input from DHET (March 2020)
- Further engagement with SETAs (March 2020).

High Level Theory of Change for High-level M&E of SETAs as a Collective

The theory of change follows, with the attendant core areas for the choice of high-level indicators of system wide SETA outcomes and impacts.



Box 1: High level theory of change with a focus on SETA outcomes and impacts (developed with SETAs and DHET, 2019-2020)

An ‘if ... then’ version of the theory of change (outcomes pathway) is outlined in Box 2 below.

IF SETAs ...

(1) Provide skills intelligence that is regularly updated, sector, industry and region specific;

AND (2) Inform the development of relevant learning pathways, qualifications and standards,

AND (3) Support the development of functioning education and training providers (institutions),

AND (4) Support the development of capable educators and trainers,

AND (5) Effectively disburse funding for diverse and relevant skills development opportunities that is adequate and effectively managed, to provide transformed and equitable access,

AND Career and study guidance aligned with real needs and opportunities,

AND Engage in monitoring, evaluation and feedbacks for continuous improvement,

THEN ... SETAs will have contributed to an aligned, responsive, resourced and effectively functioning skills (eco)system for sectoral and inter-sectoral skills needs and national priorities in South Africa.

AND IF learners enrol in and complete skills training in this system ...

THEN learners will become more educated, skilled and capable (Final Outcome for SETAs).

FURTHERMORE, IF there is in place a responsive skills (eco)system as outlined above, and learners become more skilled and capable as outlined above,

THEN ... South Africa will have a (transformed,) skilled and capable workforce that participates in the economy (economic growth, employment growth and productivity) and contributes to society (social development);

AND this will improve social and economic development in South Africa.

Box 2: “If ... Then” Version of Overall SETA Theory of Change and Non-Linear Outcomes Pathways

These are therefore strategic outcomes for which SETAs should take some (sometimes shared) responsibility:

- Beneficiaries’ **employability** (not employment), and
- The skills system’s **responsiveness** to needs (sectoral and societal)

which in turn depends on

- Learners’ **access** to diverse learning opportunities *as well as*
- Learners’ success/**completion rates**,

which in turn depend on

- Effective **grant management**,
- Sound labour market **intelligence**,
- The availability of appropriate **learning programmes** and pathways, and
- Effective SETA **interface** with employers and training providers, as well as
- Quality providers (both public and private).

Narrative description of the theory of change: The theory of change for SETAs needs to take cognisance of the fact that multiple role players are responsible for producing an educated, skilled and capable workforce. In the first instance, the SETAs' role is to *fund* learners (including workers) so as to *access* the skills system (through career guidance, bursaries, internships, learnerships, apprenticeships, WBL and other mechanisms that might be identified over time), in order to productively *participate* in society and the economy. Over time, however, SETAs have been allocated a growing role in also partly *funding the provisioning and functioning of the skills system* (from building lecturers' capacity to building colleges) and DHET now expects that SETAs report on how they have used their grants to do this, through service level agreements. Other parties responsible for a functioning skills (eco)system include the quality councils and the education and training providers (while the National Skills Fund also funds learner access to skills development). On the other end of the skills value chain is the economy and wider society; SETAs need to fund the development of skills that meet the needs of the economy and society, but they cannot be held responsible for whether learners are eventually employed (for example) given that the growth of the economy and employer decisions are not directly within their sphere of influence. Nonetheless, SETAs are uniquely placed for *gathering information on the needs of the economy and society* in their sectors, as they are the only entities with such a sectoral role (alongside professional and employer bodies). Therefore, another primary role of SETAs, in addition to funding skills production, is to *obtain sector skills intelligence* and to use this to *guide the direction of skills produced*. These are therefore the areas prioritised in the theory of change for this M&E framework.

[It should be noted that this Theory of Change can be readily adapted for other role players with similar or overlapping roles in the skills system, such as the National Skills Fund.]

Management Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation

There is a strong presumption that improvements in management performance will lead to improvement in the outputs, outcomes and impact envisaged in the theory of change outlined above. This in turn suggests that there is value in monitoring and evaluating both management performance of SETAs and the contribution that the SETAs make to skills development in the country. The next three sections therefore consider a framework for assessing management performance; a framework for monitoring the progress towards stated objectives; and a framework for evaluating what has worked, why and for whom.

Management Performance Framework

Section 195 of the *Constitution of South Africa* sets out the basic values and principles governing public administration. These include requirements related to: professional ethics; efficient, economic and effective use of resources; a development-orientation; equity in provision; public participation in policy-making; accountability; transparency; effective human resources (HR) management; and representivity in employment practices. The constitution further makes provision for a number of institutions to monitor and evaluate the implementation of these values and principles. These include the National Treasury with a responsibility for overseeing financial management, the Department of Public Services Administration (DPSA) focussing on HR management, the Public Services Commission focusing on professional ethics, and the Auditor General. While each of these institutions perform important functions, there was by 2010 wide recognition that despite all these institutions, some departments of government had consistently

under-performed in terms of both management and in terms of delivering services to citizens. In 2010, Cabinet mandated the DPME to develop a single, coherent framework that provided a snapshot of management practices in a department. This culminated in development of the Management Performance Framework and the Management Performance Assessment Tool (MPAT), which were launched in 2011.

It must be noted that there is an intention that MPAT should not duplicate existing monitoring by the National Treasury, DPSA or the Public Service Commission, nor should it duplicate the auditing conducted by the Auditor General. Instead, the MPAT draws on secondary data from these departments and oversight bodies, to moderate the self-assessment of departments. It should also be noted that MPAT and the institution in government with the overall responsibility of overseeing the production of a “snapshot of management practices” within a government department is currently under review. Regardless of exactly what form the ‘performance management framework’ and associated tools takes and which institution is mandated to oversee its implementation, it is proposed that DHET and the NSA use the insights from these processes as the basis for monitoring and evaluating the management performance of SETAs. *This will avoid the duplication of extensive work that has gone into developing a national management performance framework and associated performance standards that are aligned to the requirements of transversal institutions* (e.g. National Treasury, the Auditor General.) and are comparable across government institutions. In particular, the adherence to the existing national management performance frameworks will provide a useful reference point across the SETAs and across time.

Performance Areas

In line with many management performance systems in the private and public sectors globally, the performance management framework developed by the DPME focuses on four key areas:

- Strategic Management
- Governance and Accountability
- Human Resource Management
- Financial Management.

In recent years, two additional areas have been highlighted in terms of global best practice in this field, namely Asset Management and Information Management.

Within these Key Performance Areas (KPA), Management Performance Areas are identified and measured against standards. These assessments are measured against both compliance with legislated responsibility and against the efficiency and effectiveness of management practices. The SETAs currently use a version of the national management performance framework (not the full MPAT) and *it is proposed that this practice continues.*

However, *management performance is only part of the picture.* Delivery of outcomes and impacts is another important element of the performance of public institutions such as the SETAs. There is a strong premise that improved management performance is a key enabler of improved delivery. However, *previous reviews of SETA performance and consultations conducted in the development of this framework suggest that a focus on management performance standards either had no effect on delivery, or may have had a perverse impact as SETAs focused on internal reporting on management performance and neglected ‘on the ground’ delivery.* This suggests the need for careful alignment between the management performance framework, on the one hand, and performance in terms of

delivery on the other. Two key questions for consideration by DHET and the NSA (and potentially by SETAs themselves) require careful consideration within an M&E framework. These are:

- How is management performance within the SETAs impacting on skills development?
- What does skills development tell us about management performance within the SETAs?

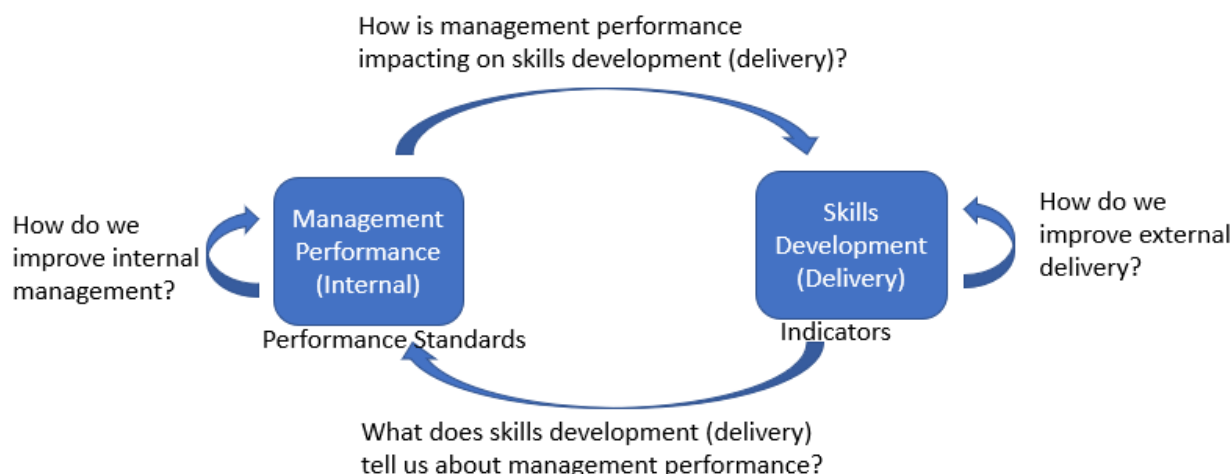


Figure 1: The relationship between management performance and skills development (delivery)

Performance Standards

Performance standards should define the relevant measure of a key component of a SETA's management. In doing so, the standard should reveal the current level of achievement as well as providing information that leads to improvement. This requires that the standards be useful to decision makers, valid with regard to the reality one wishes to measure and modify, reliable in that the sources and methods of data collection are recognised and transparent, and the data should be available. There is an assumption that the quality of management practices (how organisations plan and how finances, assets, data and staff are managed) will influence management performance (the quality of the outputs of the organisation) and ultimately service delivery (the outcomes achieved by the organisation and the impacts on society). While this requires the monitoring and improvement of management practices themselves, it also suggests a need to monitor, evaluate and where necessary improve the relationships between management practices, performance and service delivery. This section focuses on the performance standards associated with management practices and management performance. In line with the current standards in the performance management framework and emerging best practice, the following key performance areas require performance standards.

- 1) **Strategic Management** – this key performance area (KPA) needs to be based on the alignment between the Sector Skills Plan, the relevant skills development policies and plans, the resultant Strategic Plans and the Annual Performance Plan. In addition to a focus on compliance with planning requirements, there is a need to monitor and evaluation the *relevance* and *implementation* of plans in order to improve strategy and planning. It is proposed that *the current performance standards in the MPAT are sufficient to support these dimensions of SETA performance*.
- 2) **Governance and Accountability** – this KPA needs to be focused on ensuring the promotion and maintenance of the standards required of public administration. There are nine standards in the MPAT including: Service Delivery Improvement Plans, functionality of

management structures, Audit Committees, professional ethics, fraud prevention, internal audit, risk management, corporate governance of information communication and technology, and the Promotion of Access to Information Act. It is proposed that two of these in particular (monitoring the Service Delivery Improvement Plans and the functionality of management structures) provide an opportunity to evaluate the relationship between management practices, performance management and service delivery. More specifically the move from level 3 to level 4 of the standards allows for this deepening of insight and potential improvement and should therefore be given additional attention by DHET, the NSA and the SETAs.

- 3) **Human Resource (HR) Management** – this KPA focuses on improving the effectiveness of SETA employees. There are 11 standards in this KPA that are clustered into four sub-areas: HR strategy and planning, HR resource practices and administration, performance management, and employee relations, all of which need to be integrated. Most of the current performance standards are focused on legislative compliance and administration. There is a need to expand to a more strategic view of HR that includes ensuring that personnel are knowledgeable about the sector that they serve and are empowered to make decisions that enhance the efficiency of grant disbursements. As intermediaries between employers/ sector needs and skills development, SETA staff will need strategic competencies such as brokerage and partnering, ‘translation’ work, engaging the research-policy nexus, and understanding and managing the interface with the external environment. HR will need to understand and support the development of such competencies.
- 4) **Financial Management** – this KPA involves resource mobilisation and expenditure management. There are nine standards, all of which are closely related to the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA) and related guidelines and instruction notes. There is a reported tension between the increasingly complex requirements seeking to reduce financial mismanagement and corruption, on the one hand, and the complexity of accessing funding by sectoral stakeholders entitled to this funding. Given the important alignment of the standards with National Treasury requirements, it is proposed that the MPAT standards be used, but that an evaluative component be added that examines *the impact of these standards on service delivery to the sector*.
- 5) **Data Management** – the management performance as well as the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the SETAs in contributing to a transformed skills development landscape in South Africa require robust and reliable data management. The ‘standard on governance of IT’ (existing performance standard under KPA 2) does not cover critical areas related to data management and it is proposed that DHET, the NSA and the SETAs develop a standard that deals with the management practices, performance and impact of data management. (See the section below for some guidance on this issue.)

The details of the performance standards have not been provided in this framework since it is strongly suggested that the national performance standard (currently under review) be used as the basis for performance monitoring. *However, DHET, the NSA and the SETAs need to pay particular attention to articulating the relationship between management practices, management performance and service delivery in terms of relevant and timely skills development.* The shift from management practices to management performance is reflected in a number of the current performance standards as one moves from level 3 to level 4. This will require that substantial attention is given to supporting SETAs to move from level 3 (mainly compliance focused) to level 4 (increasingly performance and delivery focused) by DHET, NSA and the SETAs, as well as other transversal institutions including National Treasury, DPSA, and the Auditor General. As mentioned above, the

monitoring and evaluation of the Service Delivery Improvement Plans and the functionality of management structures (currently under KPA 2) provide an opportunity to focus on the relationship between management performance and service delivery.

Monitoring Framework

The *Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWMES)* is applicable to all entities in the national, provincial and local spheres of government. Its main purpose is to promote coordination, and to prevent fragmentation and duplication, within and across complex departmental and intergovernmental structures with diffused powers and functions. The GWMES seeks to support the development of an M&E system that provides *an evidence base for public resource allocation decisions and to help identify how challenges should be addressed and successes replicated*. With this in mind the High-level Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment is aligned to the GWMES to support DHET, the NSA and the SETAs to identify and use the most appropriate indicators for monitoring the contribution of the SETAs to skills development in South Africa.

Purpose of the Monitoring Framework

Monitoring should provide managers, decision makers and other stakeholders with feedback on actual performance relative to what was planned or expected. In doing so, monitoring should help to identify challenges or successes and inform corrective actions or the expansion of best practices. As such the GWMES adopts a broad definition of monitoring as involving “collecting, analysing, and reporting data on inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as well as external factors, in a way that supports effective management.”

Two related challenges with regard to monitoring require attention within the SETA environment. Both have been mentioned at the introduction of the Theory of Change. The first is a tendency to focus narrowly on inputs, activities and outputs. The second is a proliferation of indicators in an attempt to provide comprehensive feedback to diverse stakeholders with a variety of interests. Both these challenges are exacerbated by a lack of comprehensive, reliable and comparable data.

The limitation of focusing monitoring only on inputs, activities and immediate outputs is that a significant amount of effort and energy is put into complying with relatively narrow requirements and immediate performance becoming the main preoccupation. The intended, longer term and more complex outcomes and impacts like employment, productive organisations, and a healthy economy, are not often tracked. It is therefore suggested that a balance of more immediate and longer-term indicators be developed and monitored, as reflected in the Theory of Change.

There is a tendency when working with planning and policy documents, including the National Skills Development Plan, to assume that all the objectives and principles must be monitored. Where objectives and principles have not been well integrated, this results in a kind of matrix that rapidly multiplies areas that require monitoring. In the context of limited resources and capacity for monitoring however, there is likely to be an inverse correlation between the number of goals and indicators that are set, on the one hand, and the number of goals/ indicators that are achieved. In other words, if three or four goals are set with say 10 indicators, it is more likely that these goals and indicators will be tracked and potentially achieved, than if 10-15 goals (of a similar level) are set with 100 indicators. It is also likely that while it is possible to monitor a wide range of activities *there are a few activities that contribute an inordinate amount towards achieving the goals. If these activities can be identified and monitored, then it would make more sense to focus on these.*

Based on the Theory of Change outlined earlier the following high level indicators, along with dimensions of the indicator, are proposed as a focus for monitoring in the SETA environment.

Table 1: Main Areas for Overall M&E and Indicator Selection

High level indicator (Index)	Dimensions of indicator		SETA 1	SETA 2 SETA 21	Sum of outcomes
1. Production of sector-specific and cross-sectoral skills intelligence	1.1 Quality of info					Qualitative
	1.2 Coverage					Quantitative
	1.3 Updated					Quantitative
	1.4 Useful format					Qualitative
	1.5 Applied					Qualitative
2. Fund and guide capacity development for educators, trainers & mentors in private and public providers, workplaces (small, medium and large)	2.1 Spend on cap dev - TVET College staff					Quantitative
	2.2 Spend on cap dev - Community College staff					Quantitative
	2.3 Spend on cap dev - university staff					Quantitative
	2.4 Spend on cap dev - mentors in small to large workplaces					Quantitative
	2.5 Inform provider cap dev with up to date skills intelligence					Qualitative
3. SETA funding is suitably disbursed, effectively managed and governed	3.1 % funding spent on skills (in total across programmes)					Quantitative
	3.2 Funding adequacy at learner level					Quantitative and Qualitative
	3.3 Alignment with Sector Skills Plan and Annual Performance Plan					Qualitative
	3.4 Efficiency (time to use)					Quantitative and Qualitative
	3.5 Adherence to PFMA					Quantitative and Qualitative
4. Fund and guide learner participation in PSET in colleges, universities and workplaces,	4.1 Bursaries, Learning /skills programmes funded					Quantitative
	4.2 Apprenticeships / internships funded					Quantitative

enabling inclusivity in gender, race, disability and geographic spread	4.3 Funds spread across gender, race, disability, geographic areas					Quantitative
	4.4 Aligned with skills priorities					Qualitative
	4.5 Provider quality assured					Quantitative
5. SETAs fund and guide career & study guidance for all learners informed by regularly updated skills intelligence on skills needs & opportunities i.t.o. livelihoods, enterprise development, employment	5.1 In place for all races in urban and rural areas					Quantitative
	5.2 In place for more and less able learners of all genders					Quantitative
	5.3 In place for school and post-school learners					Quantitative
	5.4 Informed to reflect real opportunities incl. enterprises, employment, livelihoods					Qualitative
	5.5 Regularly updated information					Quantitative
6. Use and contribute to M&E for continuous improvement of skills development	6.1 SETA has a coherent M&E framework/ strategy and a feasible M&E implementation plan in place					Quantitative and qualitative
	6.2 SETA produces quality monitoring data against relevant indicators					Quantitative and qualitative
	6.3 SETA undertakes relevant evaluations					Quantitative and qualitative
	6.4 SETA is using M&E findings to guide strategic decisions and actions					Quantitative and qualitative
	6.5 SETA contributes to high level (cross-SETA) M&E					
7. Contribute to an aligned,		Aggregate the above contributions to summarise SETA contributions.				

functioning skills (eco) system		Obtain a view of other contributions to the system (e.g. DHET, NSF, Quality Councils, Providers, Employers, Employer Associations, Labour). Compare SETA inputs to the other inputs (qualitatively and quantitatively) to make a judgement on the SETAs' contribution in relation to the wider system.				
8. Contribute to a skilled and capable workforce	8.1 Skills are available to fill vacancies					Quantitative and Qualitative
	8.2 Skills produced meet employer needs / demand					Quantitative and Qualitative
	8.3 Employers value SETA support					Quantitative and Qualitative
9. Fund and guide skills for enterprise development	9.1 Skills are available to start, maintain enterprises					Quantitative and Qualitative
	9.2 Skills dev is aligned with enterprise needs and opportunities					Quantitative and Qualitative
	9.3 Enterprise owners/start-ups value SETA support					Quantitative and Qualitative
10. Fund and guide skills for sustainable livelihoods among the unemployed and under- employed	10.1 Skills are available to support livelihoods					Quantitative and Qualitative
	10.2 Skills dev is aligned with livelihood needs and opportunities					Quantitative and Qualitative
	10.3 Civil society value SETA support					Quantitative and Qualitative

Sub-Indicators 1.1 - 6.5 should be monitored by all SETAs, the NSA and DHET Skills Branch (a selection of these, those they already monitor). Indicators 7-10 should be monitored by the NSA with SETAs' contributed data on sub-indicators 8.1-10.4 as part of skills intelligence, and aggregated, synthesised and evaluated by the NSA.

An indicator protocol should be developed by the implementers, with definitions and scope as well as data sources and quality guidelines, to assist in the gathering of comparable data across all SETAs.

Central to the use of indicators within a monitoring system is an effective and efficient data management system. Data management in this context refers to the processes of creating, sharing, using and managing information within and across organisations. In the case of the SETA system, the flow of skills development data from industry, training institutions and the SETAs themselves,

through the respective SETAs, to the NSA, DHET and stakeholder departments and agencies defines the SETA data management system. Without the smooth retrieval, processing, and querying of this data, the SETA monitoring systems and the usefulness of relevant indicators would collapse.

A significant amount of investment and work has gone into the development of the Skills Education and Training Management Information System (SETMIS). This system stores and maintains records of skills education and training data related to Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and their providers, employers, assessors, moderators and learners. As of March 2019, all SETAs create electronic data submission files in standard formats and submit them for inclusion in SETMIS. While there is agreement that this system has the potential to support and enhance monitoring and evaluation, there are still concerns that without a clear SETA theory of change, SETAs will continue to commit limited resources to capture data on indicators which do not necessarily support enhanced understanding, organisational learning and performance improvements. It is hoped that the framework proposed here will address this issue, which is one of the most significant changes that can be made to improve M&E in a SETA environment.

Evaluation Framework

The revised National Evaluation Policy Framework (2019) is applicable to national and provincial spheres of government, including DHET and within it the NSA, as well as to public entities listed in Schedule 3 (parts A and C) of the Public Finance Management Act. This includes SETAs which are listed in part A of Schedule 3. The NEPF's main purpose is to "promote quality evaluations, which can be used for learning to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, coherence and impact of government interventions". The NEPF thus serves as a standards-setting guide for planning and implementing evaluations in government institutions and it encourages and supports the use of various evaluation approaches in addressing complex issues. With this in mind, the Framework for M&E in the SETA Environment is aligned to the NEPF and utilises the guidelines for various approaches to, types of and designs for evaluations to support DHET, the NSA and the SETAs to identify and use the most appropriate range of evaluation tools relative to the skills development needs in South Africa.

Purpose of the Evaluation Framework

Evaluations seek to deepen our understanding as to whether particular interventions "are in fact the correct response to a particular socio-economic challenge or nexus of challenges, whether it is effective, efficient and cost effective (providing value for tax payer money), and how the intervention can be improved in subsequent phases" (NEPF, 2019). Despite these intentions, and many successes, reviews of the NESP at national scale and more focused reviews of M&E in the SETA environment, suggest that for a variety of reasons, evaluations are not being effectively designed or used to inform and improve the performance of the SETAs. This M&E framework briefly lists some of the challenges related to evaluation and then sets out some suggestions on how DHET, the NSA and SETAs could develop and implement evaluation processes more effectively.

A recurrent challenge relating to evaluations in the SETA environment (and many other areas) is that despite significant investments in time and resources evaluations are often not used to support and improve the identification, planning and implementation of initiatives. Other challenges include: inappropriate timing of evaluations (with results often being available too late to inform planning processes); a narrow focus on implementation evaluations (often referred to as 'following the money'); poor quality programme plans (including limited theories of change or logical frameworks); insufficient capacity or resources dedicated to evaluations (including insufficient capacity within

DHET, the NSA and the SETAs); a lack of credible monitoring data; and evaluation designs that fail to address critical issues.

To learn from evaluation findings, the learning cycle needs to be closed: findings must be curated and presented (written and verbal form) into the contexts where interpretation, comparison, trend analysis and sense-making needs to take place. This needs to take place on a regular basis and in a supportive rather than punitive atmosphere, in order to establish the sought-after *learning culture*. It is proposed that the NSA plays this role and provides this meta-level function for all the SETAs, as there is not currently a mechanism whereby evaluations conducted in and for SETAs can be brought together with each other, and with the meta-level evaluations that are undertaken from time to time (e.g. the NSDS III evaluation).

If SETA role players do not see evaluations being used, they are less likely to start or support new evaluations. This will result in a skills system that lacks evidence-based strategic direction. It is therefore important that DHET and the NSA work with SETAs to design and use evaluations that are taken seriously. This in turn will require that the evaluations: address relevant questions; are expertly designed and executed; are adequately resourced; draw on credible data; and arrive in time to inform planning.

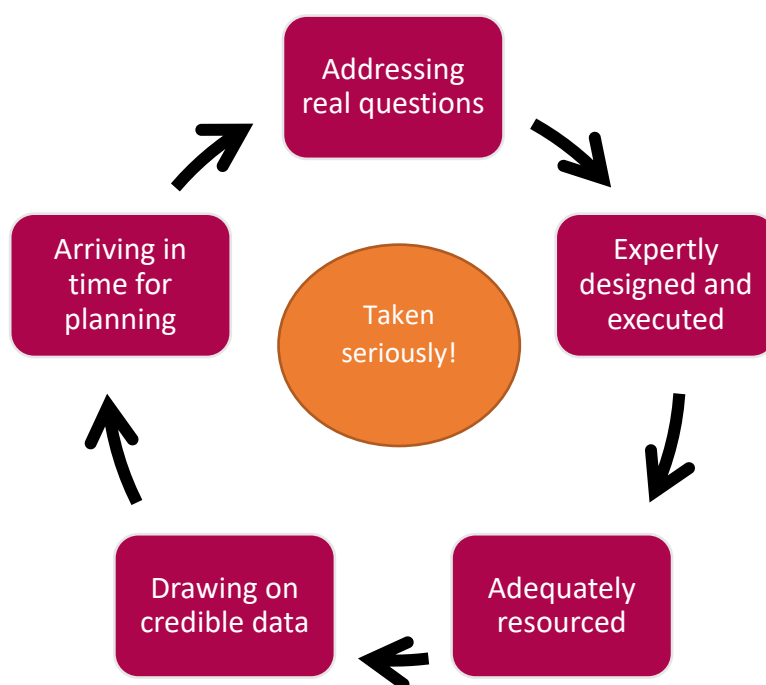


Figure 2: Making Evaluations Work (Source: M&E Discussion Brief 6)

In order to ensure that these criteria are met it is proposed that DHET, the NSA and the SETAs work through a basic template that set out the following:

The **purpose** of the evaluation (WHY?). This should cover both the object of the evaluation (e.g. discretionary grants) and the key intentions behind the evaluation e.g. improving performance; improving accountability; generating knowledge; enhanced decision making; increased evaluative capacity; etc.

The **focus** of the evaluation (WHAT?). This should identify the specific focus area of a particular evaluation including the motivation for the particular focus and the scope of the evaluation.

The persons/ organisations **responsible** for the evaluation (WHO?). This should include who will commission the evaluation, what capacity is required to implement the evaluation and who should be consulted in the evaluation process.

The evaluation **approach** and resourcing of the evaluation (HOW?). This should include broad consideration of methodology, tools and the resources required.

The **timing** of the evaluation (WHEN?). This should ensure that the evaluation fits into the strategic reporting and planning cycles of relevant organisations/ institutions.

The **use** of the evaluation (THEN?). This should include a consideration of the audience or end users of the evaluation findings and how best to ensure the use of the findings and the uptake of the recommendations.

Closely linked to the purpose of an evaluation are a relatively standard set of evaluative criteria that are used worldwide and that are contained in the NEPF. These criteria can be used as the basis for developing the focus of an evaluation through shaping the evaluative questions across a range of evaluation topics and scopes. These criteria need to inform the purpose and focus of evaluations in the skills system. The criteria and questions associated with them are listed in the NEPF as follows:

- **Relevance** – Is the intervention doing the right thing?
- **Coherence** – How well does the intervention fit?
- **Effectiveness** – Is the intervention achieving its objectives?
- **Efficiency** – How well are resources being used?
- **Impact** – What differences does the intervention make?
- **Sustainability** – Will the benefits last?

Evaluation Types and Design

As noted above, the relationship between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts can be understood and expressed using different tools including theories of change and logical frameworks. These tools help to clarify the design features of a particular intervention and to track the subsequent implementation in terms of the relationships between inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts. From an evaluation perspective these relationships can be explored through a number of different types of evaluation. The NEPF has focused on five types of evaluation that are expressed in the diagram below and summarised in Appendix 2.

TYPES OF EVALUATIONS

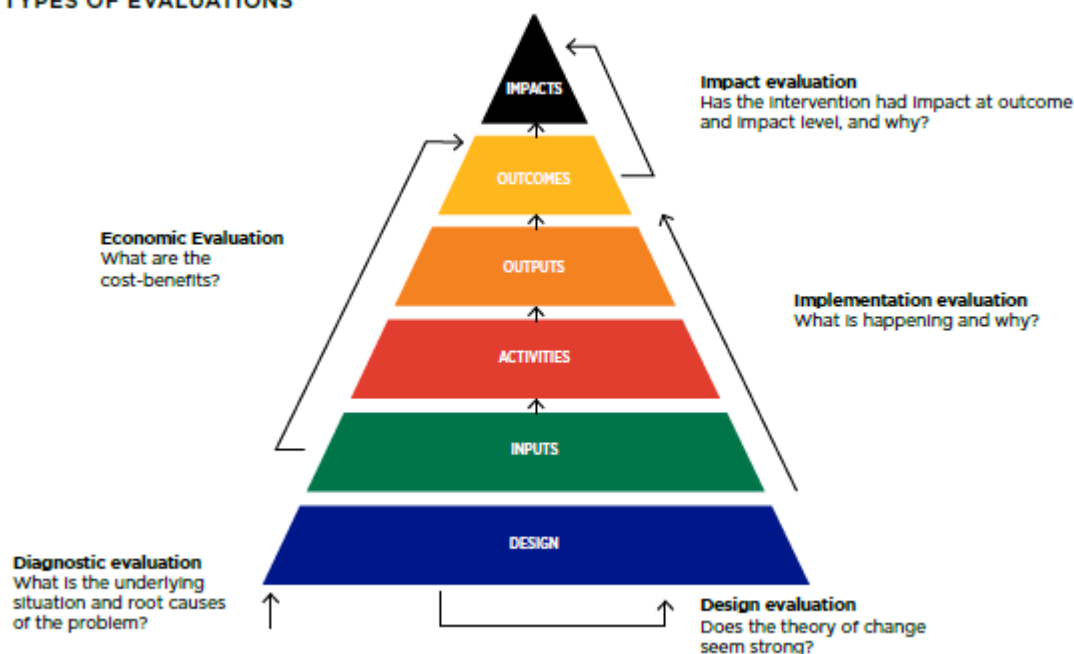


Figure 3: Types of Evaluation (Source NEPF, 2019)

Given South Africa's history and the continuing high levels of inequality the Realist evaluation (Pawson and Tilley) question of 'what works, why AND FOR WHOM?' is particularly relevant. In the context of skills development issues related to race, gender, age and geographic location are all extremely important considerations and need to be included in all of the evaluation types.

Given that the evaluation types are covered in the NEPF and that detailed guidelines for their use are provided on the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation website, this framework recommends that they be used.

One of the challenges encountered in the use of the types of evaluation is a narrow "focus on implementation evaluations, disregarding other critical types of evaluations within the programme planning results chain" (NEPF). This undermines the potential of evaluation to inform and improve SETA and broader skills planning processes. Drawing on organisational learning theory, this framework proposes that the types of evaluation be understood as contributing different dimensions of a learning spiral.

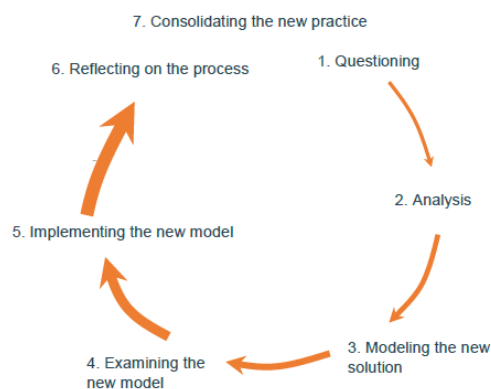


Figure 3: Expansive learning cycle
(Source: Engeström, 1987)

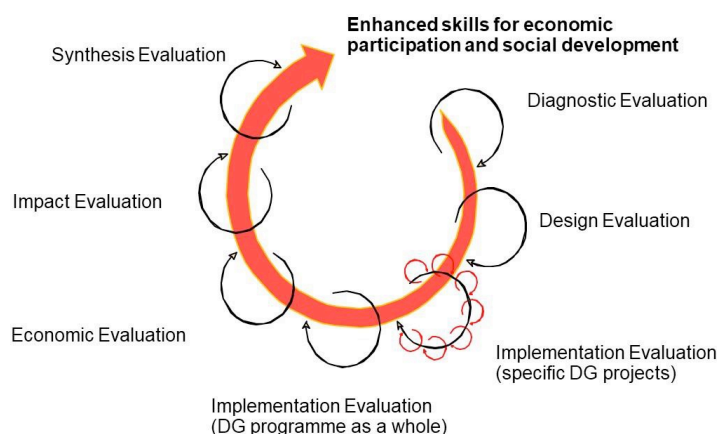


Figure 4: Different forms of evaluation (methods/approaches)
mapped on to an expansive learning spiral

This understanding should help DHET, the NSA and SETAs to view the different types of evaluation as contributing to a cumulative picture, and systemic improvement, rather than distinct processes that can be picked at random or focused on to the exclusion of the other types of evaluation. It is proposed that the NSA work with the SETAs and DHET to develop an evaluation plan that focuses on clarifying the key questions within the skills landscape (diagnostic evaluation), analysing and modelling alternative interventions (design evaluation), examining initiatives through pilots of small scale implementation (implementation evaluation on for example specific discretionary grant (DG) projects), implementing the new model (implementation evaluations/ economic evaluations/ impact evaluations on for example discretionary grant initiatives such as artisan development across all of the SETAs), reflecting on the processes (synthesis evaluation of for example the long-term impact of workplace based learning opportunities based on a collection of implementation evaluations). By working across the SETAs and supporting a more coordinated and cumulative evaluation cycle, DHET and the NSA have the potential to enhance collaboration between evaluation teams both within and across the SETAs and thus enhance organisational learning and improvement.

M&E Planning Without a Log Frame – Two Exemplars

The purpose of a logframe is to help evaluators plan what data they collect and what they do with it. It is strongly argued here that a logframe is not appropriate for a high level M&E framework focussing on outcomes and impacts, as it has the tendency to drag M&E activities to the level of inputs and outputs (more suitable for projects) and prevents it from lifting itself to the level of outcomes and impacts. Nonetheless, evaluators need to plan what data to collect and what to do with it. The following is a demonstration of how the NSA (and/or partners) should work with available data. This section should be read along with the rest of the Framework, in particular the section on Indicator Monitoring, as well as the Implementation Guidelines (separate document).

As outlined in the Implementation Guidelines, the NSA should choose one evaluation question each year, on which to focus its M&E. It will provide a combination of an overall (SETA system wide) perspective, combined with adequate depth of insight to guide decision-making. To this end, we provide two exemplars of potential focus areas, and how the indicators can be used in high-level deliberation, for insight development (evaluation).

Exemplar 1

Evaluation questions: Overall, how well are the SETAs doing in providing sectoral skills intelligence to guide relevant skills provisioning? How to improve or supplement it?

The following areas should be considered in relation to each other, using data gathered against indicators 1.1 - 1.5 (Table 1), and compared to national contextual data and national databases of learning programmes offered by providers.

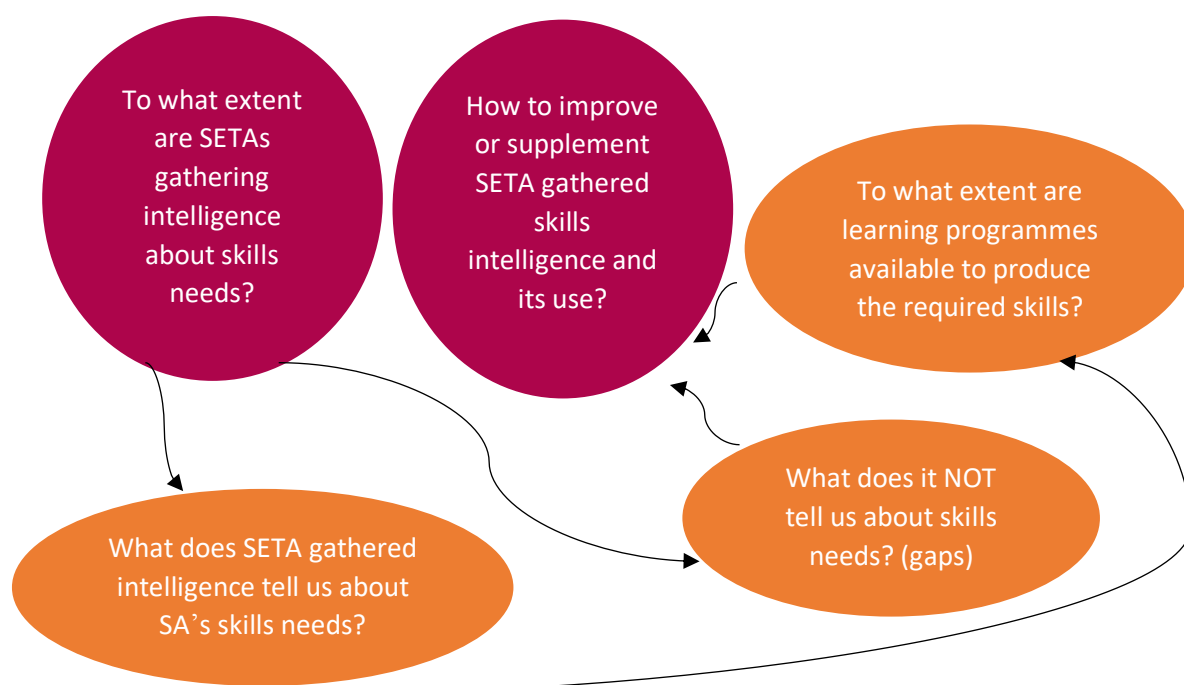


Figure 5: Evaluating SETA Skills Intelligence (derived from Theory of Change)

Exemplar 2

Evaluation questions: Overall, to what extent are the SETAs providing access to relevant skills programmes? How satisfied are stakeholders in this regard?

The following two areas should be considered in relation to each other, using data gathered against indicators 3.1, 3.3, 4.4, 8.1-8.3, 9.1-9.3, 10.1-10.3 (Table 1).

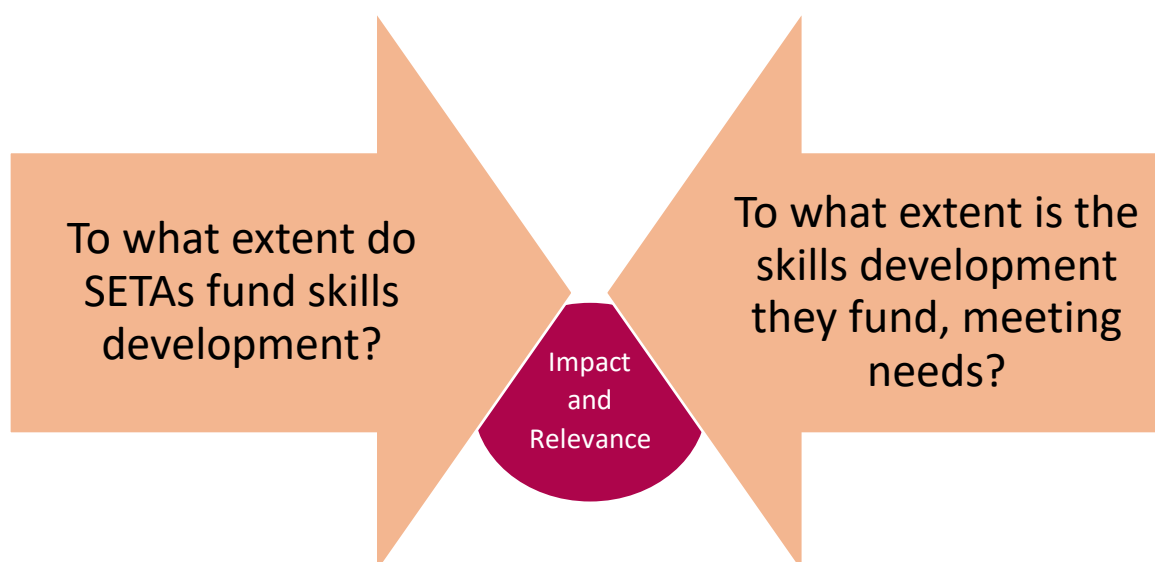


Figure 6: Evaluating SETA Impact and Relevance

The considerations outlined above within this evaluation framework should inform and enable the development of evaluation plans related to the SETAs at appropriate levels by the NSA and the SETAs respectively. The NSA will need to focus on developing an evaluation plan that builds a cumulative and consolidated picture across the SETAs, or within a particular SETA, while the SETAs will need to align their evaluations to this broader plan while simultaneously evaluating key planning processes and implementation of projects. Within this broader ‘learning spiral’, individual evaluations within the plan will need to articulate the purpose, focus, responsibility, timing and use of the evaluation; the main criteria that the evaluation will focus on; and the type of evaluation that will be used. The Implementation Guidelines indicate that the decisions on the kind of evaluation focus to take, should be informed by stakeholder and expert consultations.

Data Management Framework

SETAs manage data from a wide variety of sources including employers, skills researchers, learners and training providers. This data needs to be captured, gathered, stored and retrieved in ways that create new knowledge and inform improvements in the skills system. Many stakeholders need access to this data for a variety of purposes which has led to demands beyond what the Skills

Education and Training Management Information System (SETMIS) is currently capable of supplying. Despite significant improvements in the operation of SETMIS in the past two to three years a number of challenges related to monitoring and evaluation require attention from DHET, NSA and the SETAs. These include a shift in focus from input and output reporting with an emphasis on easily measurable metrics driven by a culture of compliance to a stronger commitment and contribution to organisational learning and systemic improvement.

One of the challenges that the SETA system has faced is that some of the SETAs have outsourced the data management function which has led to a proliferation of data management systems. *DHET and the NSA need to provide centralised support and systems in order to move management information system capacity in-house and thus ensure greater ownership and standardisation of and responsibility for data management.* This should also enable DHET, the NSA and the SETAs to collectively address the duplication of reporting and incompatibility of data across various management information systems. This process should also ensure the integration of data across sectors to ensure better skills planning and provision. *As part of this process of centralisation and standardisation, a review of the kinds of data being collected needs to be aligned to key indicators and aligned with the monitoring, evaluation, reporting and institutional improvement requirements of the skills system broadly and the SETAs more specifically. Capacity to use the data for these purposes must also be built within the skills system.*

Conclusion

The High-level Framework for M&E in the SETA environment outlined here should enable DHET, the NSA and the SETAs to provide insights into the management performance and the delivery of skills development by the SETAs. This in turn should enable better understanding of the skills system, systemic and organisational learning and change, and accountability to a range of stakeholders with an interest in the delivery of skills development.

The Theory of Change provides a high level and focused model of process to guide the implementation of the skills development agenda in South Africa as articulated by a range of policy and planning documents as well as input from stakeholder engagement. By identifying the key areas of activity and the most relevant outcomes, the Theory of Change helps to *focus and bound* M&E on what should be monitored and evaluated, and what the role players in the system should be held accountable for as a collective. One of the key high-level inputs is well governed and competently managed SETAs. This SETA governance and management should lead to better delivery of skills development activities, outputs, outcomes and impact. The monitoring framework provides guidance on which indicators can be used to track the implementation of the skills development processes within the SETA environment, and how this can be done. Finally, the evaluation framework outlines the range of evaluation approaches that should be used to understand what works, why and for whom. The monitoring and evaluation of management performance as well as the delivery of skills development through SETAs requires good data. Brief suggestions are therefore included with regard to the improvement of the current data management in the SETA environment and more specifically with regard to SETMIS.

The combination of performance management on the one hand and the delivery of skills development through the SETAs could be used to provide high level reporting and analysis while simultaneously allowing for in-depth understanding that contributes to accountability and improvement in the SETA environment.

Appendix 1: Source Documents & Selected References

Source Documents

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All DPME M&E Guidelines are available at
www.dpme.gov.za/keyfocusareas/evaluationsSite/Pages/Guidelines.aspx

Appendix 2: Summary of Types of Evaluation across Government

No	Type of evaluation	Covers	Timing
1.	Diagnostic Evaluation	This is preparatory research (often called ex-ante evaluation) to ascertain the current situation prior to an intervention and to inform intervention design. It identifies what is already known about the issues at hand, the problems and opportunities to be addressed, causes and consequence, including those that the intervention is unlikely to deliver, and the likely effectiveness of different policy options. This enables the drawing up of the theory of change before the intervention is designed.	At key stages prior to design or planning
2	Design evaluation	Used to analyse the theory of change, internal logic and consistency of the programme, either before a programme starts, or during implementation to see whether the theory of change appears to be relevant and working. This is quick to do and uses only secondary information and should be used for all new programmes. It also assesses the quality of the indicators and the assumptions underpinning the theory of change.	After an intervention has been designed, in first year, and possibly later
3	Implementation evaluation	Aims to evaluate whether an intervention's operational mechanisms support achievement of the objectives or not and understand why. Looks at activities, outputs, and outcomes, use of resources and the causal links. It builds on existing monitoring systems and is applied during programme operation to improve the efficiency and efficacy of operational processes. It also assesses the quality of the indicators and assumptions. This can be rapid, primarily using secondary data, or in-depth with extensive field work.	Once or several times during the intervention
4.	Outcome Evaluation	Should measure the degree to which the program is having an effect on the target population's wellbeing and/or behaviours. Outcome evaluations help determine whether or not the intended benefits of a programme are actually achieved (i.e. whether or not the programme is able to meet its intended purpose).	After the program has made contact with at least one person or group in the target population.
4	Economic evaluation	Economic evaluation considers whether the costs of a policy or programme are commensurate with the benefits (value add). Types of economic evaluation include: Cost-effectiveness analysis, which values the costs of implementing and delivering the policy, and relates this amount to the total quantity of outcome generated, to produce a "cost per unit of outcome" estimate (e.g. cost per additional individual placed in employment); and Cost-benefit analysis (CBA), which goes further in placing a monetary value on the changes in outcomes as well (e.g. the value of placing an additional individual in employment). ¹⁰	At any stage
5	Impact evaluation	Seeks to measure changes in outcomes (and the wellbeing of the target population) that are attributable to a specific intervention. Its purpose is to inform stakeholders regarding the extent to which an intervention should be continued or not, and if there are any potential modifications needed. This kind of evaluation is implemented at the end of or after programme closure.	Designed early on, baseline implemented early, impact checked at key stages e.g. after 3/5 years
6	Evaluation synthesis	Synthesising the results of a range of evaluations to generalise findings across government or within a particular sector, e.g. a function such as supply chain management, a sector, or a cross-cutting issue such as capacity. The DPME will undertake evaluation synthesis based on evaluations already undertaken in previous national evaluation plan.	After a number of evaluations are completed in a given sector

¹⁰ United Kingdom, (2017). 'Magenta Book', London, Treasury.

Source: NEPF (2019)