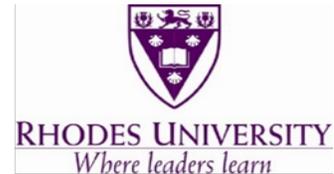




**higher education
& training**
Department:
Higher Education and Training
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



Rhodes University BANKSETA M&E Chair Research Plan: Project 1

TITLE OF RESEARCH	<i>Project 1: Develop a High Level Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for SETAs</i>
CONTRACT NUMBER	<i>475.4710.644</i>
START DATE	<i>23 July 2018</i>
END DATE	<i>01 March 2020 extended to 31 May 2020</i>
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Guidelines for Implementing the High-level SETA M&E Framework

7 May 2020

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This study is part of a broader research chair programme addressing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in a SETA environment (<https://www.ru.ac.za/nalsu/projects/>). To be implemented by Rhodes University over three years (August 2018 – March 2020), the programme is an initiative of South Africa’s 21 Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) and is strongly supported by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). The Chair is funded by the BANKSETA and ServicesSETA. In particular it must be emphasised that this draft report needs to be read in conjunction with the other reports produced relating to both the Mandatory and Discretionary Grants.

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1. Executive Summary of the High-level Framework for SETA M&E

This Implementation Plan guides the National Skills Authority (NSA) and partners in implementing the High-level Framework for M&E in a SETA Environment, which is a framework for monitoring and evaluating the performance, outcomes and impacts of the SETA system as a whole. The Framework itself is published in another document. It consists of a framework for performance monitoring (against outcome and impact level indicators) and a framework for evaluation at the system level, also focused on outcomes and impacts. It is assumed that the M&E of input, activity and output levels will continue within SETAs, and in reporting to the DHET Skills Branch and Treasury, while SETAs should also continue with their own, organisational and sector-level M&E, which will contribute to the high-level, overall framework, but not be replaced by it.

The high-level theory of change and indicators for the overall framework are inserted here for ease of reference. This is followed by an outline of the role players responsible for the implementation of the overall framework and a description of their roles. The NSA, NSA Board, other DHET entities, SETAs and SETA Boards have direct responsibilities outlined in this plan. Employers and education and training providers need to contribute data.

The implementation plan outlines the proposed process, and resources required at a high level. Detail of resources required (such as actual budgets) need to be developed by the NSA in consultation with implementation partners, as the research partners producing this plan are not privy to the necessary details. The heart of this implementation plan is the proposed process which appears in section 4, Figure 2. The process is based on an assessment of the NSA's limited resources, its existing strengths and processes, and an appreciative assessment of the ways in which government have engaged consultatively with stakeholders. The National Skills Conference as well as various Boards therefore play key roles. An addition is proposed in the form of a *SETA Monitor* (a new annual publication) that "tells the story" of what SETAs have managed to achieve as a collective, and outlines the remaining challenges. The other value add is the introduction of reflective learning cycles, whereby a focus for an annual M&E focus is chosen through consultation at the Conference, implemented under the leadership of the NSA with expert research partners, findings reported in the *SETA Monitor* ahead of the next Conference, and then deliberated at the Conference, with a view to making strategic system changes where necessary. A new focus is then chosen for the next year.

High Level INPUT GOALS FOR SETAS:

IF a responsive/aligned and effectively functioning skills (eco)systems exist, THEN



High Level OUTCOME GOAL:

Learners representative of society will benefit from diverse opportunities for skills development WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO



IMPACT GOALS:

A transformed, employable, skilled & capable workforce that is participating in the economy and contributing to society

To achieve this we need a combination (non-linear impact pathway) of the following:

Skills intelligence (including both demand and supply); AND
Learning pathways, qualifications and standards; AND
Functioning providers; AND
Skilled and capable educators and trainers; AND
Funding that is adequate, effectively disbursed; AND
Attention to transformed and equitable access; AND
Career and study guidance; AND
Monitoring, evaluation, feedbacks for continuous improvement.

Not all the above are the remit of SETAs; SETAs' contribution needs to be monitored and evaluated in relation to other system elements, but focussed on the following areas of impact for which they do have a key responsibility, and which should therefore serve as their main indicators (for the overall M&E Framework; other indicators will be needed for internal M&E and reporting to DHET and Treasury at the level of inputs and outputs).

Outcome and Impact Level Indicators for the Overall M&E Framework

An 'if ... then' version of the theory of change (outcomes pathway) follows.

IF SETAs ...

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

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

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

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

(5) Effectively disburse funds 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 successfully complete skills training in this system ...

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

FURTHERMORE, IF there is in place a responsive skills (eco)system as outlined above, in which learners succeed,

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

ULTIMATELY, this will improve social and economic development in South Africa.

Box 2: "If ... Then" Version of SETA Theory of Change and Non-Linear Outcome Pathways

The following are therefore key areas for which SETAs should take some (if shared) responsibility:

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

which in turn depend 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).

From this, the following high-level indicators of performance and outcomes were derived:

1. Producing 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. Funding and guiding capacity development for educators, trainers & mentors in private and public providers and 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. Efficiently disbursing and effectively governing the skills levy funding	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 skills intelligence	Qualitative
	3.4 Efficiency (time to use)	Quantitative and Qualitative
	3.5 Adherence to PFMA	Quantitative and Qualitative
4. Funding learner participation in PSET in colleges, universities and workplaces, enabling	4.1 Bursaries, Learning /skills programmes funded	Quantitative
	4.2 Apprenticeships / internships funded	Quantitative

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. Funding and guiding career and study guidance for all learners informed by regularly updated skills intelligence on skills needs and 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. Conducting, contributing to and using M&E for continuous improvement of governance, planning and 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. Contributing to an aligned, functioning skills (eco) system		
8. Contributing to a skilled and employable 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. Funding and guiding skills for enterprise development	9.1 Skills are available to start, maintain enterprises	Quantitative and Qualitative
	9.2 Skills development is aligned with enterprise needs and opportunities	Quantitative and Qualitative
	9.3 Enterprise owners/start-ups value SETA support	Quantitative and Qualitative
10. Funding and guiding skills for sustainable livelihoods among the unemployed and under-employed	10.1 Skills are available to support livelihoods	Quantitative and Qualitative
	10.2 Skills development is aligned with livelihood needs and opportunities	Quantitative and Qualitative
	10.3 Civil society value SETA support	Quantitative and Qualitative

The guidelines that follow will put the NSA in a position to monitoring and evaluate one or more aspects of the above, each year, as part of an ongoing and increasingly expanding learning cycle in the PSET system. It is not envisaged that the NSA and partners will be able to fully cover the entire scope of

outcomes and impacts, even at a high level, from the start. A phased and iterative approach, based on expert and stakeholder consultation, is therefore proposed (see section 4).

2. Role Players

Figure 1 depicts the key role players responsible for various aspects of the implementation of the Overall SETA M&E framework. Their roles are described in section 3.

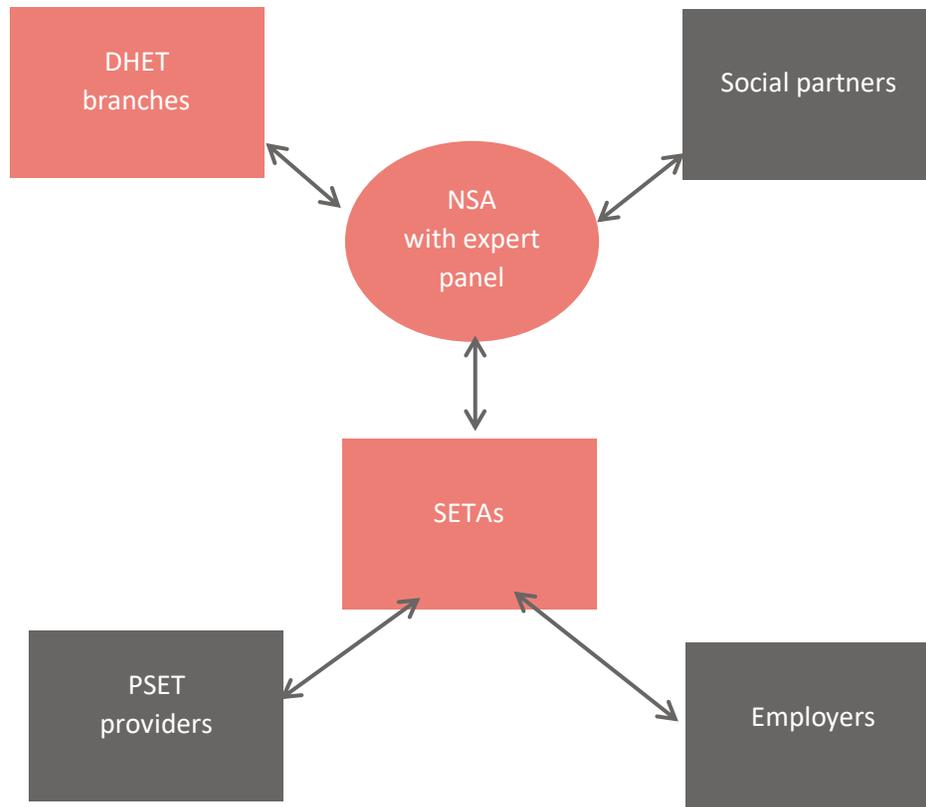


Figure 1: Role players in various aspects of implementing the overall SETA M&E Framework

3. Roles Elaborated

3.1 National Skills Authority (NSA)

The NSA has the primary responsibility for implementing and communicating the findings of the Overall M&E Framework. It should do so through a combination of leadership, and seeking expertise where necessary. This role includes:

1. Being accountable for implementation - ensuring that it happens
2. Appointing and regularly convening an expert panel to provide guidance
3. Engaging stakeholders to whom SETA M&E is important, and who have a secondary role in implementation (other role players in Figure 1)
4. Developing an implementation plan for the Overall M&E Framework based on these guidelines and detailing the implication for and with other role players
5. Ensuring alignment of the various components through high level communications (publications, website, regular general and targeted, ad hoc meetings)
6. Appointing and managing research teams to undertake evaluations
7. Commissioning and facilitating evaluations with experts where necessary
8. Quality control of commissioned evaluations, with experts
9. Synthesizing all relevant M&E findings with expert panel and appointed researchers and lead integration of findings across multiple studies and data sources
10. Planning and convening the National Skills Conference (NSC)
11. Ensuring implementation of actions following the NSC
12. Publishing the findings from the Overall M&E Framework in a *SETA Monitor* or similar publication, to provide continuity between and wider stakeholder engagement beyond the NSC.

3.2 DHET

The Department of Higher Education and Training is the ultimate authority responsible for oversight over the implementation of the Overall SETA M&E Framework and for resourcing it. The NSA is a DHET entity and a close working relationship is required. The entities in DHET have specific roles:

Policy, Research and Strategy Branch

This DHET entity needs to:

- Oversee the implementation of the strategy
- Ensure that it is adequately resourced
- Track its implementation
- Participate in the expert panel, in order to provide shared steering guidance to the NSA
- Arrange for a collective revision of the Overall SETA M&E Framework, first on an annual and then on a five-year basis.

Skills Branch

This DHET entity needs to:

- Provide annual synthesised data on individual and overall SETA Performance as monitored by the branch
- Provide annual diagnostic and other evaluation insights re. SETA Performance based on quarterly and annual reports and engagements with SETAs
- Participate in the expert panel.

SETA Support Branch

This DHET entity needs to:

- Provide annual diagnostic and other evaluation insights based on its engagements with SETAs
- Participate in the expert panel.

3.3 Social Partners

These are entities and groups with a general stake in the work of the NSA and the SETAs. They include organised Labour; other government departments e.g. Economic Development, Small Business Development, Treasury; academia (scholars who study PSET as well as M&E); industry in general; communities. Their shared role is to hold DHET entities including the NSA and SETAs accountable, and to provide diverse perspectives into how the SETAs are functioning within the wider PSET system, the economy and society. They can also reflect on the merit of the Overall SETA M&E Framework and the manner in which it is being implemented; and they should have a shared steering role into the particular annual focus of the SETA M&E and the NSC (from year to year).

These roles can be fulfilled through the following:

1. Participating on the expert panel
2. Participating in the National Skills Conference (NSC)
3. Engaging with the content of the *SETA Monitor* through online platforms and NSC
4. Contributing data for SETA monitoring and evaluations
5. Conducting commissioned evaluations and contributing own evaluation findings
6. Providing additional resources (financial and in-kind) when warranted.

3.4 SETAs

The SETAs should engage the implementation of the Overall M&E Framework as an additional tool to help shape their strategy, and to provide them with communications and planning resources. They should aim to align / integrate with the framework, but also to shape its particular annual focus of the SETA M&E and the NSC (from year to year). Their specific roles are vital for the successful implementation of the Framework, and should be adequately resourced. These are:

1. Provide evaluation findings, from evaluations they have commissioned or undertaken
2. Contribute to evaluations commissioned and undertaken by the NSA
3. Engage with providers and employers to obtain necessary data
4. Participate through representatives on the Expert Panel.
5. Participate in the National Skills Conference.

3.5 Employers

1. Provide employer data to SETAs (through existing annual processes)
2. Contribute to evaluations commissioned and undertaken by the SETAs

3. Contribute to evaluations commissioned and undertaken by the NSA
4. Participate through representatives on the Expert Panel.
5. Participate in the National Skills Conference.

3.6 Education and Training Providers

1. Provide provider data to SETAs (through existing annual processes)
2. Contribute to evaluations commissioned and undertaken by the SETAs
3. Contribute to evaluations commissioned and undertaken by the NSA
4. Participate through representatives on the Expert Panel.
5. Participate in the National Skills Conference.

4. Process

See Figure 2 for a summary of the Implementation Process, which is outlined in some detail below:

4.1 Appoint an Expert Panel with expertise in PSET, M&E, and PSETA M&E.

The composition will be determined by the stakeholders.

4.2 Prepare for the National Skills Conference (NSC):

Identify and collect what is already available, in terms of existing evaluation findings. Refer to the scoping report, and expand/bring up to date with a survey.

Preliminary identification of the key agenda items at this time: Analyse the available studies, synthesize the findings and identify trends/issues. (Work with the Expert Panel and/or appointed researchers and use a survey and/or Delphi Technique format.

Invite partners to present and propose foci at the Conference.

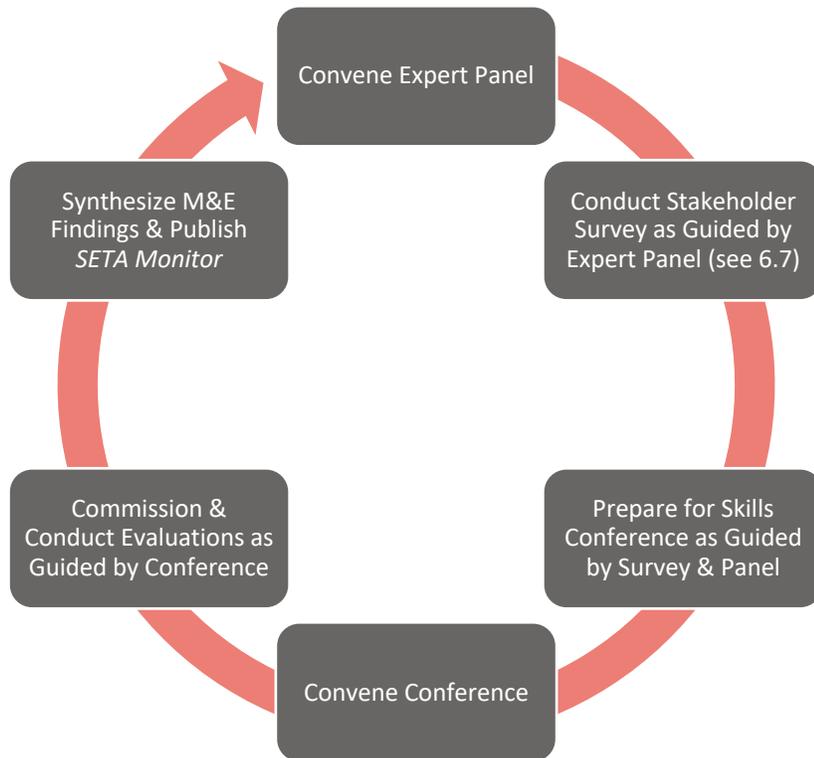


Figure 2: Summary of the Implementation Process

4.3 Convene the NSC for March 2021:

Goal (of this component of the NSC - there will be other goals): *To deliberate the current status quo (state of affairs) with regard to SETAs; identify key issues that need to form the focus for the overall M&E framework's evaluation component, in the next two years; and other related actions to take*

4.4 Follow up Skills Conference: Commission and conduct evaluations; manage them

4.5 Publish findings in a *SETA Monitor* to build up towards next Conference

4.6 Repeat from 4.2, this time taking new evaluation findings into account

5. Resources

The resources likely to be required for the implementation of the Overall SETA M&E Framework are listed in Table 1. These should be regarded as indicative and will need careful scrutiny by the NSA and partners. Table 1, as updated, could guide the drawing up of Terms of Reference and Key Performance Indicators for researchers and staff. In short, the resources required involve the following, comprising of human and operational resources:

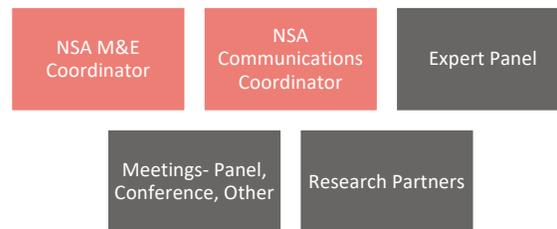


Figure 3: Areas to resource

Table 1: Specific Resources Required (Indicative)

ACTIONS	INDICATIVE SPECIFIC RESOURCES
1. Coordination, advocacy, oversight, alignment, convening of Expert Panel	NSA M&E Manager Panel budget
2. Gather existing M&E data and studies	NSA M&E Manager with research partner(s)
3. Stakeholder surveys	NSA M&E Manager with research partner(s)
4. Conference planning, facilitation	NSA M&E Manager with other NSA staff (the conference exceeds the M&E component); research partners; Expert Panel
5. Analyse conference outcomes and formulate action plans; commission evaluations	NSA M&E Manager with Expert Panel and research partner(s)
6. Conduct evaluations	Evaluation research partners SETAs
7. Supervise, manage, facilitate, quality control evaluations	NSA M&E Manager
8. Meta-analysis of evaluation findings and performance monitoring data	NSA M&E Manager with Expert Panel and research partner(s)
9. Engage stakeholders; communications	NSA M&E Manager with Communications Manager
10. Publication of SETA Monitor	NSA M&E Manager with Communications Manager

6. Next Steps

The NSA needs to take the following steps, which will result in the development of the Overall SETA M&E *Plan*, which the NSA should then follow:

- 6.1 Discuss this document (and the Framework Document) with all role players listed in (3).
- 6.2 Interpret the guidelines in further detail for each role player (e.g. how often should “regular meetings” be? This depends on organisational considerations such as budget, other schedules, etc. of which the research partners producing these Guidelines are not aware. Where necessary, briefs may need to be written).
- 6.3 Plan the resource requirements in detail (how many staff and researchers, expert panel members, at what rates; costs per meeting, conference, publication, etc.)
- 6.4 Put resources in place: staff, budget, research partnerships, expert panel
- 6.5 Plan the next National Skills Conference (e.g. for March 2021) in consultation with the Expert Panel and informed by a survey (see 6.7). Note: The NSC will also cover areas other than SETA performance; this guideline only refers to SETA M&E and does not assume that it will encompass the full programme.
- 6.6. Plan the *SETA Monitor* (an annual publication summarizing overall M&E findings) and put in place a publishing mechanism and oversight (e.g. similar to *DHET Research Bulletin*)
- 6.7 Conduct the survey: What M&E findings are available at this time? What are the burning issues at this time? On which areas of SETA performance should the next National Skills Conference (SETA component) therefore focus?

7. Source documents

High-level Framework for M&E in a SETA Environment. May 2020. Ward, M. & Rosenberg, E. Rhodes University with BANKSETA and ServicesSETA. Grahamstown.

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