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The Amended Construction Sector Code - how important is Mentorship and Professionalism really?



The Amended Construction Sector Code, which came into effect in December 2017, provides a framework for the Construction Sector to address the capacity enhancement of, amongst others, black contractors, black professionals, industry workers and the community, and to increase the productivity of the sector.

The Amended Construction Sector Code supports the continued research conducted by the Construction Sector Charter Council on how to create a Construction Sector that benefits the economy at large through supporting and building capacity in small enterprises, including black professional service providers.

- The Construction Education Training Authority (CETA) Sector Skills Plan for 2017 – 2020 indicates that the biggest limitation in the built environment is not so much the scarcity of academically qualified high-level workers but rather the fact that although they have successfully completed their studies, they fail to complete the necessary candidacy programmes. Without having completed candidacy programmes, it is impossible to register as a professional with the appropriate professional body and they are therefore unable to practise as a professional. This applies to all categories of professionals in the industry.

What is the difference between a candidate and a professional?

- A candidate is a person who has satisfied the educational requirements for registration in a specific category and is receiving training and gaining experience through employment with the intention of attaining the competency required for professional registration in that category.
- As defined in the Act, a professional means a suitably qualified practitioner requiring statutory registration with a recognised and authorised Council or Body in the Built Environment of South Africa which monitors and regulates competency and enforces codes of ethics and continuing professional development. Once registered as a professional, this person is authorised to practise in a field of expertise and is known as a “professionally registered person” or “registered professional”.

Who is included in the Built Environment sub-sector?

The Built Environment sub-sector includes architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, landscape architects, land surveyors, town and regional planners, property valuers, and project and construction managers.

This group is made up of the professionals governed by the Built Environment Professions Act. They are members of the six councils that fall under this sub-sector:

- Architects – South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP)
- Engineers – Engineering Council of South Africa
- Quantity Surveyors – South African Council for the Quantity Surveying Profession (SACQSP)
- Landscape Architects – South African Council for the Landscape Architectural Profession (SACLAP)
- Project and Construction Managers – South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Professions (SACPCMP)
- Property Valuers – South African Council for the Property Valuers Profession (SACPVP).

Because of the existence of these councils, this sub-sector is often well documented as professional profiles and included in annual reports.

A person who is registered in the category as the candidate must perform work in the profession only under the supervision and control of a professional of a category as prescribed.

To ensure that large companies (also known as *Generic entities*) are incentivised to develop the competencies of black professionals in particular, the Skills Development element, as set out in Code series CSC300, measures the extent to which employers carry out initiatives designed to develop these competencies by way of the following:

Professional registration

- Number of Black Employees registered as candidates with industry professional registration bodies as a percentage of the total number of such registered Employees.

Mentorship

- Implementation of an Approved and Verified Mentorship Programme.

Bonus points

- The number of black employees who had completed a Mentorship Programme during the last 3 years (including the measurement period) and were promoted during the Measurement Period expressed as a percentage of all such employees during those 3 years;
- The number of Black Employees who registered as a Professional with Industry Professional Bodies as a percentage of all Employees who registered as such in the Measurement Period.

One can deduce from the above that there is a strong focus in the Skills Development element on Mentorships, Candidacy programmes and Professional registration of such persons.

Important tips during the verification process

During the verification process of Generic entities, it is important to note the following applicable areas within the Skills Development Element:

1. Steps to be followed by the Verification Professional:

- Compare the company mentor programme with the criteria provided in paragraph 2 below. If the programme substantively complies with the list of requirements, the company will qualify for recognition in the scorecard;
- The verification agent will evaluate the portfolio of evidence for the protégés against the list provided;
- The verification agent will randomly select and interview a few protégés to determine the effectiveness of the programme;
- The verification agent will then sign off to signify that the mentor programme is compliant.

2. Criteria for a Mentorship Programme which must be met by the Measured Entity:

- Each Measured Entity must have one person in the business who is responsible and accountable for mentoring, namely the mentor champion. In a larger business, this may be the chairman of a committee set up to manage a Mentorship Programme;
- A Mentorship Programme must have the minimum number of mentees as per the table below:

Total number of Employees in Measured Entity : Minimum number of Black Mentees

$\leq 100 = 1$

$>100 \leq 300 = 3$

$>300 \leq 700 = 7$

$> 700 = 10$

Other criteria for the programme include the following:

- The objectives and desired outcomes of the programme
- The structure of the programme
- Methods by means of which protégés and mentors will be selected and matched
- The time frames for the implementation of the programme.

The general portfolio of evidence should support the objectives stated above and may include the following:

- Regular report by the mentor on progress made by the protégé on the overall programme (Internal progress review);
- Minutes of meetings and/or communication between protégés and their mentors, including details of time, location and duration of meetings, topics discussed, advice and guidance given and a progress review on required development outcomes;
- Any training provided to support protégé development;
- Individual development plan containing development interventions;
- Annual progress review on individual development plan and targets completed by a mentor or manager;
- Activities undertaken by the protégé, including which departments the protégé worked in, details of job assignments and details of activities undertaken;
- There must be evidence in the candidate file that mentorship took place during the Measurement Period.

When all the above are in place, the Measured Entity will score maximum points in the applicable areas of the scorecard. This will also ensure that bigger companies in the industry do not merely pay lip service to Mentorship and Professionalism but will contribute hugely towards transformation in the industry. SERR Synergy assists businesses with the issuing of their *SANAS-accredited B-BBEE certificates* together with the development and implementation of *B-BBEE strategies*.

About the Author: Louis le Roux joined SERR Synergy in July 2018 and currently holds the title of BEE Project Manager. He holds a B.Comm (Law) degree, a B.Comm (Hons) Business Management degree, a National Certificate: Occupational-Directed Education Training and Development Practices, as well as a SAMTRAC qualification. He has a combined period of 20 years of working experience in the Human Resources and Legal Compliance fields. Having been employed by one of the biggest Construction and Engineering companies in SA and exposure to BEE as a customer provides him with a host of experience and knowledge in the field of BEE.