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Understanding the role of a Skills Development Facilitator

A Skills Development Facilitator or SDF is needed by most companies because both skills development and employment equity are business imperatives to comply with statutory and Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (B-BBEE or BEE) scorecard requirements.

The Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act are especially relevant to skills development facilitation as they provide a solid framework for organisations to implement learning strategies that will improve the skills of the South African workforce.

In this article we will focus on the instrumental role that a Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) plays to create synergy between the Skills Development Act, the Employment Equity Act and the BEE Codes.

What is Skills Development Facilitation?

Skills development facilitation is the process whereby a Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) analyses, plans, implements and reports on the various training activities in an organisation.

Skills development facilitation includes some of the following aspects:

- Ensuring that your business is registered with the relevant SETA.
- Submitting an annual Workplace Skills Plan (WSP), Pivotal Plan and Annual Training Report to ensure eligibility for mandatory grants awarded by your SETA.
- Claiming annually from your industry-specific SETA.
- Introducing *accredited training* for the business to be presented by accredited training providers.
- Introducing skills development programmes such as learnerships, bursaries and youth subsidies.
- Compiling and submitting an Employment Equity Plan and Reports.
- Assisting in establishing Training and/or Employment Equity Committees.

Skills Development Facilitator and the BEE scorecard

Skills development in South Africa has become a strategic priority for businesses that wish to attain or retain an acceptable BEE level and also meet the requirements of the Skills Development Act.

A prerequisite for recognising any points under *Skills Development on your BEE scorecard* is the submission of the following:

- Workplace Skills Plan (WSP);
- Pivotal Plan;
- Annual Training Report (ATR) prior to the deadline in April each year.

Businesses will only receive points on their BEE scorecard once they prove that a Workplace Skills Plan had been submitted. The new amended BEE Codes further require that the WSP and Pivotal Plan be approved by the SETA prior to earning any points on the BEE scorecard.

Who must pay Skills Development Levies?

Existing legislation requires all businesses with an annual payroll in excess of R500 000 (including director fees) to pay 1% of their payroll to SARS, which will then distribute the money to the appropriate SETA with which the business is registered.

The Skills Development Levy (SDL) serves to fund learning and skills development programmes for socially and economically marginalised groups in South Africa. If your company promotes learning and development in the workplace, you will reap the rewards in the form of a better skilled and more productive workforce.

What are the benefits of paying your Skills Development Levies?

By paying your SDLs monthly, you qualify for–

- skills development grants (mandatory and discretionary);
- substantial tax allowances when you implement *learnerships* in your company;
- a tax rebate of up to 50% for employing persons below the age of 29 (youth subsidy) under certain circumstances;
- a further R80 000 as an additional tax expense to be recouped on all registered learnership programmes;
- an increase in your *B-BBEE compliance level.*

Businesses that are unaware of the above incentives and claiming processes will forfeit valuable revenue.

How can your company claim back portions already paid to SARS?

SERR Synergy advises businesses in this regard and provides a Skills Development Facilitator service that assists businesses in claiming back portions of the Skills Development Levies already paid to SARS.

Depending on the specific needs of your sector/industry and SETA-specific requirements, contributing employers may annually claim back between 20% and 69,5% of skills levies paid to SARS, provided that they–

- register a Skills Development Facilitator;
- *submit a Workplace Skills Plan indicating training for the next reporting period;*
- submit a Pivotal Plan that gives account of all training provided to employees during the reporting period;
- offer SETA-accredited training such as Mandatory training and Learnerships, etc.

In conclusion, the Skills Development Act aims to expand the knowledge and competencies of the labour force to improve productivity and employment. The Act also helps to improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility.

Our *SERR Synergy Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) services* are aimed at businesses that wish to align their skills development to their strategic corporate objectives.

We offer a comprehensive Skills Development Facilitator service using an integrated approach to training and development initiatives as well as labour compliance that are aligned to your organisational requirements. Our team of professionals ensures that you are compliant with the relevant legislation and benchmark with best practice in the industry.

About the Author: Chandré Saaiman joined SERR Synergy in 2021. She has a background in Education but changed her focus to the corporate world in 2015. She is a qualified Skills Development Facilitator at our Bloemfontein office.