

Guidelines for obtaining Workplace Approval and its application processes



Skills development has become a strategic priority for enterprises wishing to attain or retain an acceptable B-BBEE level and meet the requirements of the Skills Development Act.

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.

What is the purpose of workplace skills planning?

Where businesses require skills development to be recognised on their B-BBEE Scorecard for *B-BBEE compliance* purposes, they should submit, among others, a Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) to the specific Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA).

The purpose of workplace skills planning is to outline how organisations will address their training and skills development requirements. WSPs support employers in the recognition and implementation of *various skills development programmes*, e.g. apprenticeships, learnerships and internships, to deal with skills gaps within a company.

Apprenticeships through training providers

When planning to offer apprenticeships through a training provider, it is of utmost importance that companies notify their respective *Skills Development Facilitators* (SDFs).

Apprentices must be registered with the relevant SETA. Before this can happen, the following three processes must be completed.

The number of days required for approval differ depending on the sector-specific SETA:

- o **Mentor registration** – 5 working days to be approved.
- o **Workplace approval** – 30 working days to be approved.
- o **Learner registration** – 30 working days to be approved.

What are the benefits for companies when registering apprenticeships?

- o Recruit and develop a highly skilled workforce that will help to grow their business;
- o Create flexible training options to ensure that workers develop the right skills;
- o Receive tax credits and discretionary grants;
- o Valuable points on the BEE scorecard for expenditure on learning programmes **and** for the headcount for black people participating in learnerships, apprenticeships and internships.

What is a discretionary grant?

A discretionary grant is funding allocated within a sector-specific SETA such as MERSETA, INSETA, etc. which is paid out to applicants for skills development projects linked to pivotal, scarce and critical skills of the specific sector.

Discretionary grants are allocated at the sole discretion of a SETA in accordance with the Discretionary Grant Policy of that SETA.

The bulk of discretionary funding (49,5%) is directed at the provision of PIVOTAL (professional, vocational, technical and academic learning) programmes which result in qualifications or part qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), or learning programmes made up of the following:

- o Selected Skills Programmes
- o *Bursaries*
- o Learnerships
- o Internships
- o Apprenticeships
- o Graduate placements.

How can a company apply for a discretionary grant?

To obtain discretionary grant funding for Pivotal training, the Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) must submit a prescribed Pivotal Plan to the SETA making use of the Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and Annual Training Report (ATR) source data on individuals completing the Pivotal training.

SERR Synergy assists businesses in implementing Workplace Skills Plans, Annual Training Reports and Discretionary Grant initiatives and ensures alignment of initiatives with the legal requirements of the Skills Development Act. As part of our Skills Development Facilitation service, we assist businesses with the application process for Workplace Approval at the relevant sector-specific SETA.

About the Author: Wickulene De Wet joined SERR Synergy in 2020 and has been a registered and practicing Skills Development Facilitator since 2015. She currently holds the title of Senior Skills Development Facilitator at our Pretoria office.

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