



Rhodes University Research Chair Partnership Initiative for

# M&E in a SETA Environment

## Project 9: Develop a Capacity Development Programme

Contract # 475.4710.644

### End Project Report

<b>Prepared by:</b>	Prof Eureta Rosenberg
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**BANKSETA**



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# 1. Executive Summary

This Close Out Report refers to Project 9 of the Rhodes University SETA Research Partnership Initiative. The Initiative addressed Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in a SETA Environment. Project 9 aimed to develop and implement a capacity development programme for SETA representatives, with a focus on research and M&E staff. The capacity building component was to share the M&E tools and frameworks to be developed in the rest of the SETA programme. In summary, the purpose was to:

- Involve SETA representatives in the ongoing development of M&E resources in a way that builds the capacity of participating individuals and the SETAs as organisations (praxis);
- Familiarise SETA representatives with the M&E frameworks developed in the Research Partnership Initiative so that they are confident to implement them and guide others in their implementation, as well as make adjustments in their own contexts where relevant;
- Serve as a form of ‘change management’ to allow SETA representatives and SETAs as organisations to work through the challenges of taking on board new frameworks and processes (this may mean, from time to time, broader participation in the programme);
- Share the training material and implementation lessons learnt with wider audiences;
- Promote SETAs as learning organisations in the national PSET and international contexts.

The capacity building in M&E must enable SETAs to be accountable to their stakeholders and in equal measure, to learn from M&E in order to increase their positive impact within their sphere of influence. This Research Partnership Initiative was an opportunity to co-develop an aligned, implementable M&E framework that sees PSET as a system and supports systemic and institutional learning as much as organisational accountability. The capacity development and training materials were intended to be broad enough to be also used in a future PSET landscape.

Project 9 succeeded in producing training materials and conducting capacity development for SETA and DHET staff involved in M&E through an estimated 10 Collaborative Research Working Group interactive presentations; one additional full-day Learning Event in March 2019; one full-day Theory of Change workshop in October 2019 and a final M&E Planning Workshop in March 2020. An outline for an online course was also developed, to enable SETA staff and other role players to further develop their capacity as and when their schedules allow. Further capacity development is particularly important given that the depth of M&E expertise required to develop Chapter 5 of the Sector Skills Plan was in some instances not available in-house to SETAs; existing quality management staff (who may become redundant with the establishment of a shared QCTO) could become M&E specialists, should training opportunities be available to them. There is potential to develop this online course into an accredited university programme.

The Initiative’s interim findings and recommendations were presented at the 2019 National Skills Conference in Commission 5, on SETA Monitoring and Evaluation.

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## 2. Objectives Achieved

Objective	Achieved
<b>Masters Research Plan</b>	Extensive research to inform capacity development was conducted.
<b>Training Materials</b> – the training version of the report outline, will include case studies, examples, exemplars and practical tools as well as a small selection of readings from the literature.	Training materials were developed in skeleton form. More case studies from SETA contexts are needed. Tools: Tracer study protocol has been developed. Online cost-benefit evaluation tool is nearing completion. Activity system analysis tool and Governance protocol have a no-cost extension due to a delayed start.
<b>Training</b> – Accreditation for a graduate level certificate will be sought through Rhodes University.	In lieu of an accredited short course, 13 training sessions were offered throughout 2018-2020, consisting of interactive presentations during an estimated 10 Collaborative Research Working Group meetings; a Learning Event hosted by BANKSETA which included support for all SETAs to work on an M&E section (Chapter 5) in the SSP; additionally, a theory of change workshop and final training session in March 2020, which focused on implementation.
<b>Book Format</b> – broadly based on the report contents outlined above, with additions and improvements made throughout the course of implementation, as well as a publishing proposal.	Instead of a book format, an online course outline was developed. A Rhodes online platform is available to host this course; and the option to accredit the course is also available. However, it would seem few SETA role players would have the time to work on assignments for an accredited course.

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### 3. Performance against Plan

Stage of Research	Activities	Outputs/ Deliverables	Planned Timeframe		Performance
			Start	Finish	
1	Finalise Research Plan	Master Plan Approved	July 2018	July 2018	Completed on time
2	Engage SETAs on their capacity needs and prepare printed, power point and online training materials; record some sessions on video for online tutorials	Training Materials	August 2018	30 Oct 2018	Completed on time. Number of planned sessions was exceeded. Materials confined to printed hand-outs, Power Point slides and online materials. No videos taken.
3	Involve SETAs representatives in a capacity building programme	SETA representatives trained	1 Nov 2018	30 Nov 2019	As above but over an extended period of time. Final workshop on 11 March 2020
4	Revise training materials based on completion of programme and broader research programme outcomes; outline book chapters and content	Book Format	1 Dec 2019	1 March 2020	Requested an extension; completed materials outline 23 March 2020; complemented with workshop materials which are completed. All materials could not be finalized due to the no-cost extension for Projects 1-8.
5	Produce and present close out report	Close out Report	1 Feb 2020	1 March 2020	Requested an extension and then completed 23 March 2020

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## 4. Changes and Their Impact

The fact that a course has not as yet been implemented, has reduced the opportunity to do more in-depth and applied work with SETA role players. However, it was evident that SETA M&E and research staff, in particular managers, and other role players, would struggle to find the time to attend a dedicated short course. This was confirmed by the fact that we could not find dates to run the course in 2019-2020, that suited all who expressed interest. An online course, that staff can attend flexibly, is a compromise option. There is value in an interactive course where people can support each other with case examples of successful implementation, but it is possible to experiment with this in an online format as well.

Either way, time will be needed, and senior management must decide whether this is important enough for them to give staff the time to attend M&E studies. It is important to note that it will not be entirely possible to simply appoint better qualified staff, as much of the content is novel, not taught in current courses, and to some extent requires ‘working it out’ in application. Therefore, even well qualified staff would benefit from undertaking this training. Furthermore, it is ideal that groups from one organisation attend, so as to form an in-house learning network working on new tools, frameworks and case examples together.

The completion of the training materials has to some extent been hampered by the time needed for the National Skills Authority (NSA) to adopt the Overall M&E Framework, from which many of the other resources need to take their cue. This has had a knock-on effect on some resources. There has also been limited engagement from SETA CEOs and therefore there is still uncertainty regarding their buy-in for the initiative.

In lieu of finalizing materials, we have developed a set of 13 Discussion Briefs that SETA CEOs, DHET and the NSA can continue to work through towards finalizing both an Overall M&E Framework, and M&E Frameworks, Strategies and Plans for individual SETAs.

Complementary resources will be coming online in the next few months, including:

- A protocol for standardised tracer studies across all SETAs, to better measure impact
- An online cost-benefit evaluation tool customised for SETAs
- An activity system evaluation tool with a focus on skills for enterprise development in township economies
- A tool for tracking SETA governance.

Using the CRWG meetings for capacity building purposes has been successful. They have been well attended (up to 60 participants per event; see registers) and several SETAs have indicated that the presentations and materials shared have helped them with their own M&E plans; there have also been requests for more copies of the materials, to share within and beyond the SETAs. The National Skills Fund has also expressed in the materials and in the Overall M&E Framework.

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## 5. Quality Statistics

Of the five deliverables, none have been returned, and we have not received any negative feedback on either reports or materials produced or on workshops or presentations delivered.

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## 6. Review of Expected Benefits

SETA role players who attended the capacity development sessions offered are now in a better position to plan for and execute M&E in their organisations. They have a clearer sense of the systemic nature of the challenges and of ways in which they can be addressed. This includes a view of wider options beyond the current focus on performance monitoring and compliance verification.

Should SETA role players undertake further learning through the proposed online course, and continue networking (e.g. through the CRWG) they should be able to implement revised or new M&E frameworks and plans, using new evaluation methods and tools, in their respective SETAs.

A further benefit could be greater collaboration between role players in the system, e.g. SETAs and DHET. There have already been reports of interaction, often for the first time, between SETA M&E and SETA Research staff.

The benefits of better M&E in SETAs and for SETAs, would be exceptionally high. It has the potential to, *inter alia* ...

- improve SETA functioning and governance;
- streamline and strengthen reporting, reducing unnecessary reporting and increasing the use value of reports;
- strengthen data quality and data management;
- improve the quality, relevance and strategic use of evaluation findings;
- improve the impact of SETAs on skills development;
- improve relationships between role players (including SETAs, employers and DHET)
- enable SETAs to *tell their story*; and
- inform evidence-based policy making and practices in the PSET system.

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## 7. Post Project Review Plan

1. Logistics
2. Resources
3. Measurement Methods
4. Timing of measurements
5. Other Considerations

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## 8. Conclusion

The engagement with SETA M&E and M&E management staff was highly positive. Participants regularly attended events, many contributed actively and several indicated that they found the sessions and materials shared helpful in their own organizational contexts.

Nonetheless SETA staff face diverse systemic challenges, in-house and from the wider context, and these are chronic and at times acute in relation to M&E. SETA staff buckle under the weight of reporting to multiple entities on at times conflicting mandates; struggle to improve poor quality data and to access data they need; and are often caught between the strategic trajectory crafted for their SSP, and the requirements of their SLAs with DHET. Evaluation insights into the need to work differently are difficult to implement in the face of having to aim for higher targets as a main objective.

On top of this, several staff have limited M&E experience or training, beyond the basics of performance reporting (funds spent, activities undertaken, outputs produced). Most are keen to evaluate outcomes and impacts; and contribute to meaningful and strategic decision making in their organisations, and thereby to achieve greater benefits for the young and unemployed people of South Africa.

We conclude that it is worthwhile working with SETA M&E professionals and their implementation partners, provided there are going to be wider systemic efforts to adopt better M&E practices, as outlined in Discussions Briefs 1-13 and the various reports produced for this Research Partnership Initiative, and the proposal for an Overall M&E Framework that will provide coordination power. Using an online course to scale up and scale out the networking and capacity building that started with Project 9 and the Collaborative Research Working Group Meetings, could be an important step in this direction. The BANKSETA's ongoing leadership, which has been particularly strong in the early stages of the project, will be very necessary to take this forward.

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## A. Appendix A: Lessons Learnt Report

### Evaluation of Management and Quality Processes

Management and Quality Processes that went well	Management and Quality Processes that went badly	Management and Quality Processes that were lacking
Payment of invoices was timeous.	Inability to pay for Draft M&E Overall Framework (pending DHET and NSA input) led to a cash flow problem	We had no feedback on reports and other deliverables
Support for accessing resources went well, e.g. BANKSETA provided venues and catering for several capacity development sessions.	BANKSETA was expected to Chair the CRWG but unable to do so due to internal circumstances; while this did not always adversely affect the project, it did affect the building of a leadership role for BANKSETA in the scaling up and scaling out of the outcomes of this project.	Opportunity to engage with BANKSETA CEO would have been appreciated. This project has been a significant investment for BANKSETA and there are significant positive outcomes (e.g. training materials, M&E tools) which can be taken further.

### Description of abnormal events causing deviations

#### Abnormal events that caused deviation

The events during the course of the project were not unnatural, although they did cause some deviations, as explained. The further work that lies ahead to scale up and scale out the capacity development started in Project 9, may be affected by the Covid19 outbreak, which may bring about a slowdown in productivity leaving even less time for training or even the required consultations. On the other hand, an online training course has more merit under these circumstances that face to face courses, or ongoing CRWG meetings.

### Assessment of the performance of technical Tools and Methods used

#### Tools and Methods Used In the Project

Methods	Tools	Performance	Performance
Desk top research: Literature	Literature will be sourced from the university and DHET library and archives, own publications, online resources.	We were unable to source some key books.	DPME online M&E resources were most useful
Desk top research: Policies and guidelines	Sourced through the Collaborative Research Working Group and DHET	PSET documents were often in the grey literature and hard to access /assess in a fluid environment, e.g. unable to ascertain status of MPAT	The CRWG Secretariat was exceptionally helpful in tracing in-process documents; all requests were dealt with within 24 hours

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Course offering as a form of action research, using focus groups and individual reflections	Offering the course and reflecting on learning outcomes, possibly linked to SETA Collaborative Research Working Group (CRWG) meetings	CRWG meetings were well attended, well organized and worked exceptionally well for capacity development	BANKSETA provided additional support for additional workshops that were well attended
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### Analysis of Project Issues and their results

Project Processes that went well	Project Processes that went badly	Project Processes that were lacking
Most capacity building events were well attended and well received, with active participation from members	Limited NSA engagement with the Overall M&E Framework means that we have no clarity on its adoption; this is partly due to a slow change in the NSA Board	An accredited course was not implemented, but several other capacity development initiatives were

### Measurement on how much effort was required to create products

	Estimated Effort	Actual Effort
Product 1		
Product 2		

### Notes on the quality reviews carried out during the project

Effective and Ineffective Quality Reviews
Progress reports were requested and submitted.

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## B. Appendix B: Follow – On Recommendations

See tables below.

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## Request for change

The following request for change were considered to have merit but were not implemented during the project

ID	Date	Name/Description (Include RFC number if available)	Action Required	Responsible Person/Role	Target Date

## Risks

The following risks were identified during the project and may affect the product in its operational life

ID	Date	Name/Description (include Risk Log ref in available)	Action Required	Responsible person/role	Target Date
1	May 2020	DHET, NSA or the NSA Board may not adopt the overall M&E Framework	BANKSETA to endeavor to convene the relevant role players	BANKSETA CEO	May 2020
2	June 2020	SETA Senior Management may not support participation in the online training course	SETA M&E Managers to see support from their respective CEO's; BANKSETA to engage CEO Forum	SETA M&E Managers (through CRWG?) BANKSETA CEO	June 2020
3		The SETA context may change in such a way that current materials are no longer relevant	Revision of materials	Unsure	

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## Handover and or training

The author must state whether the fault is of high, medium, or little priority.

ID	Date	Name/Description (include particular Product ref if available)	Action Required	Responsible person/role	Target Date

## Other Activities Required

The following were also identified as being required to take the product to the next stage of its life

ID	Date	Name/Description	Action Required	Responsible person/role	Target Date
1	April-May 2020	Adopt the draft Overall M&E Framework	DHET, NSA Board and SETAs to adopt or refine the proposed framework and indicators	Unsure – Possibly Dr Thabo Mashongoane	May 2020
2	April-May 2020	Identify the interest in online training in M&E in a SETA Environment, and whether an accredited option is needed	SETAs to decide whether they want to undertake the online training	BANKSETA Mr Vuyani Ntanjana	June 2020
3	July – October 2020	Further develop the online training materials and populate the course platform	Should a sufficient number of participants be available, the materials should be further developed	Rhodes University Prof Eureta Rosenberg	October 2020
4	July – October 2020	Course accreditation	Apply for Rhodes University / DHET / SAQA / CHET accreditation for a Post-Graduate Certificate in M&E in a SETA / PSET / Skills Environment	Rhodes University Prof Eureta Rosenberg	October 2020
5	Unsure	Course delivery / attendance	Participants to sign up & attend; management approval for some work time to be dedicated to the course	SETA management and M&E staff	Unsure

Date: (This is the date on which these recommendations are effective)

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