SPECIFICATIONS 1: PROJECT TITLE: SERVICES SETA IMPACT EVALUATION APPROACHES AND OUTCOMES

1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Evaluating the impact of learning programmes by SETAs is a critical function that ensures the quality and relevance of skills development in South Africa. Impact evaluation approaches vary depending on the type of learning intervention and the scope. Impact evaluation outcomes provide feedback and evidence for improving the quality and effectiveness of learning interventions and informing policy and planning decisions for skills development for the broader post-school, education, and training (PSET) system and the industry.

One of the key functions of the Services SETA is to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the skills development interventions it implements. These include learnerships, skills programmes, internships, apprenticeships, and other learning programmes. These interventions aim to bridge the gap between the formal education and training system and the workplace by providing learners with relevant skills that meet employers' and industries' demands. Understanding these interventions' key impact on the targeted beneficiaries is critical.

The Services SETA uses various approaches and tools to evaluate its skills development interventions, such as tracer studies and impact evaluations. These approaches and tools help the Services SETA to measure the outcomes and benefits of its interventions for different stakeholders, such as learners, employers, providers, society, and the economy. These approaches may not be sufficient or even effective. In order to strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning at the Services SETA, it is important to evaluate these practices and recommend areas of improvement critically. The study results will help the Services SETA identify improvement areas, best practices, challenges, and opportunities for future skills development.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Through a collaborative research project that brought all key role players in the PSET system, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) developed a SETA-wide M&E Framework. This framework provides a good benchmark and an ideal platform for comparison. For effective implementation, it is critical to customise its application to the Services SETA context.

The Services SETA is committed to improving its evaluation approaches and outcomes by collaborating with other SETAs, research institutions, government agencies and industry partners. The Services SETA also participates in learning events, workshops and forums to share its evaluation experiences and learn from others. The Services SETA believes that evaluation of the impact of its learning interventions is a key component of its mandate to facilitate skills development in the services sector.

It is important to continuously review and update the methods used to ensure that the process of impact evaluation is undertaken using the appropriate tools and that it is assisting the organisation in achieving its strategic goals and mandate.

The Services SETA has embarked on this project due to its challenges in evaluating its skills development interventions and measuring their impact and outcomes. These challenges include:

- The lack of a standardised and comprehensive evaluation framework and tools that can capture both quantitative and qualitative data and indicators.
- The lack of a comprehensive organisational-wide M&E framework that seamlessly links to the SETA's reporting of the M&E obligations.
- The difficulty of attributing outcomes and benefits to the Services SETA interventions, given the complex and dynamic nature of the skills development system and the influence of external factors.
- The insufficient use of evaluation findings and recommendations to inform decision-making, planning, and improvement of the Services SETA programmes and services.

The Services SETA is commissioning this research project to tackle the above-mentioned challenges. The aim of the project is to review current evaluation approaches and outcomes. The ultimate goal is to develop an organisational-wide Services SETA-specific monitoring and evaluation tool or framework aligned with the DPME prescriptions and the DHET's SETA-wide M&E Framework.

This will include both financial and non-financial aspects. The tool will also help the Services SETA demonstrate its value for money, accountability, and contribution to national skills development goals.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this research are outlined below:

- To identify and suggest strategies and approaches to evaluate impact.
- To evaluate the use of performance information to inform the decision-making process and suggest appropriate strategies.
- To review the relevance and effectiveness of current monitoring and evaluation approaches and practices.
- To propose effective monitoring and evaluation approaches and practices for the Services SETA in line with the DHET's SETA M&E Framework.

4. COMPETENCY AND EXPERTISE REQUIREMENTS

The successful bidder must have the following competencies:

- Have proven capacity to undertake a large-scale research project of this nature and to complete the project by the due date.
- Must demonstrate an understanding of existing evaluation approaches in SETAs monitoring and evaluation in the context of SETA and similar government agencies.
- Must demonstrate monitoring and evaluation in the context of SETA and similar government agencies.
- An overview of the key personnel to be used on the contract. Provision of curriculum vitae of the team who will be responsible for this project.
- Please note that the representativity (in terms of race and levels of employment) of the team is an important factor.
- Description of the current infrastructure arrangements (Organisational structure, systems, and networks).
- The ability to implement the project in a cost-effective way.
- Demonstrate these capabilities through a detailed proposal and project plan as guided by this TOR.

5. DELIVERABLES

A detailed report providing the following:

- Raw data of analysed research results (i.e. interview transcripts and/or focus group notes).
- Database of research participants and individuals consulted.

- A report documenting and critically evaluating   Services SETA's current monitoring and evaluation strategies and practices.
- An implementation-ready organisational-wide monitoring and evaluation framework aligned with the DHET's SETA M&E Framework
- Actionable recommendations on how to improve the current approaches to evaluation.

6. DURATION

In line with the project implementation plan.