



Services SETA Special Projects Call for Proposals 2026/27

Reference: SP2026/27-01

Opening Date: 19 November 2025

Closing Date: 09 December 2025

Enquiries: specialprojects26@serviceseta.org.za

1. Background and policy context

The Services Sector Education and Training Authority (Services SETA) administers Discretionary Grant funding for Special Projects to support government priorities. Special Projects are used where a targeted, strategic response is required beyond the scope of ordinary Discretionary Grant windows, for example to address sector transformation, systemic constraints or urgent national imperatives.

These projects are funded at the sole discretion of Services SETA. They must align with the Sector Skills Plan, Strategic Plan, Annual Performance Plan, National Skills Development Plan 2030 and other priority government programmes to ensure that scarce resources are directed to areas of greatest need and impact.

This Special Projects Call for Proposals 2026/27 gives practical effect to that policy by opening a focused application window with defined timelines, eligibility criteria and evaluation requirements. For projects that position themselves as rural development interventions, this call must be read together with the Services SETA Rural Development Strategy and Framework. A summary of that framework is provided in Annexure A to guide applicants on how rural areas and rural development interventions are defined for the purposes of this call.

2. Alignment with national priorities and the MTDP

Special Projects funded under this call must demonstrate clear alignment with South Africa's key planning instruments, including the National Development Plan 2030, the National Skills Development Plan 2030, the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and the District Development Model.

In addition, projects must support the Medium-Term Development Plan (2024–2029) and the Government of National Unity's three strategic priorities. Over the next five years, government has committed to driving inclusive growth and job creation, reducing poverty and tackling the high cost of living and building a capable, ethical and developmental state. Special Projects must show a clear and practical contribution to at least one of these priorities, not only to training targets or enrolment numbers. Proposals must spell out these linkages explicitly so that the project's contribution to the broader national agenda is unambiguous.

3. Purpose of this call



The purpose of this call is to fund Special Projects that move beyond routine training interventions and deliver tangible social impact in communities, with a strong emphasis on rural development, township revitalisation and inclusion of designated groups. These projects should help to change how opportunities are created and accessed, rather than simply increasing the number of learners passing through standard programmes.

Unlike standard Discretionary Grant projects, Special Projects funded through this call must be primarily non-PIVOTAL in nature, although some projects may include PIVOTAL components where this clearly strengthens impact, sustainability and the pathway to employment or enterprise development. PIVOTAL programmes refer to structured, credit-bearing learning interventions, such as learnerships, internships and occupational qualifications that lead to formal skills development outcomes

The distinguishing feature must be that the intervention is integrated and multifaceted, combining learning, services, partnerships, innovation and systemic change rather than functioning as an isolated intake of learners.

4. Nature of projects sought: beyond training

Projects funded under this call must extend beyond classroom-based or purely credit-bearing learning. Each proposal must address a verified need, supported by evidence and analysis and must describe a clear theory of change that links inputs and activities to outputs, outcomes and long-term impact. Applicants should explain what will be different for beneficiaries, institutions or communities once the project is complete.

In line with the Services SETA Rural Development Strategy and Framework, rural development is understood as improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas through planned interventions. Rural development projects under this call must make this intent explicit and show who the rural beneficiaries are and how they will be reached.

Where learning forms a central part of the intervention it must be framed as a route to broader impact rather than a stand-alone intake. Learning components should be embedded in a design that supports progression into work, livelihood opportunities or strengthened organisational and community capacity, instead of positioning training as the only outcome.

Where PIVOTAL interventions such as learnerships, occupational qualifications or internships are proposed they must form part of an integrated project that is capable of delivering additional social and economic outcomes beyond enrolment and completion. In this Special Projects window, training is recognised as a core mechanism for change but is expected to operate within a wider package of interventions that supports transition into sustainable opportunities and improved services.



5. Focus areas

Projects should respond to real challenges in the services sector and in communities, with a strong emphasis on equity and inclusion. Proposals are expected to address one or more of the following areas:

- Rural and township development and revitalisation;
- Inclusion and empowerment of persons with disabilities;
- Expanded opportunities for youth and women;
- Support to military veterans and their dependants;
- Community-based social enterprises;
- Local economic development;
- Improvements in public service delivery,
- Job creation and absorption,
- Self-employment and enterprise uptake in the services sector
- and 4IR and digital skills where there is a direct link to meaningful economic or social outcomes.

For the purposes of this call, rural areas are those located within municipalities and settlements regarded as rural in line with the Services SETA Rural Development Strategy and Framework and summarised in **Annexure A**. Any intervention aimed at residents of these rural areas will be regarded as a rural development intervention, even if some activities are implemented in an adjacent town or urban centre because of infrastructure constraints. Applicants who indicate rural development as a focus area must specify the target municipalities and communities.

6. Eligible applicants

Special Projects funding may be awarded to entities that have the mandate and capacity to implement impactful programmes across South Africa's economy and society, with particular priority given to initiatives that advance transformation and skills development within the services sector. The following types of organisations may apply:

- Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit Organisations
- Community-Based Organisations
- Non-Profit Companies
- Organisations of Persons with Disabilities
- Organisations that support persons with disabilities
- Organisations that support military veterans, and

All applicants must comply with South African law and Services SETA Discretionary Grant Policy requirements, including registration, tax compliance and governance standards.



7. Funding parameters and exclusions

Funding will prioritise projects that show strong alignment with Services SETA Annual Performance Plan indicators, Sector Skills Plan priorities and relevant government priorities. Proposals that also secure credible additional resources, whether in cash or in kind, which complement and extend Services SETA funding and enhance overall value for money will be viewed favourably.

Projects that simply replicate existing Discretionary Grant interventions without a broader social impact component, or that consist solely of standard learnerships, bursaries or internships without a wider change model, will not be prioritised for funding. The discretionary grant allocation remains at the sole discretion of Services SETA and is subject to the grant policy, internal processes and the availability of funds.

8. Evaluation criteria

All Special Projects applications will be evaluated against the approved scoring criteria before any due diligence is undertaken.

Evaluators will consider whether the purpose of the proposal is clearly articulated and whether the project's strategic intent is convincingly linked to Services SETA Strategic Focus Areas, Discretionary Grant priority areas, scarce and critical skills, government priorities and the District Development Model. They will assess the definition of the target group or beneficiaries, including learner status, equity profile, disability status, geographical spread and the recruitment approach. The design of the programme and interventions will be reviewed to determine whether the mix of learning and non-learning components, locations, duration and partnerships is coherent and feasible.

The project implementation plan must be realistic and detailed, showing how the project will be rolled out, managed and monitored with an appropriate delivery model and risk management approach. Evaluators will examine the exit strategy and opportunities upon completion, including prospects for absorption, placement or self-employment for beneficiaries. They will also consider the organisation's capacity to manage the project, including governance, management systems and any stipend or fund administration arrangements, as well as its previous track record in managing similar projects.

Financial implications will be reviewed for budget realism, cost per beneficiary and alignment with the Services SETA Grants Policy. Evaluators will also consider identified risks and proposed mitigating factors across delivery, safeguarding and compliance dimensions.

9. Due diligence

Applicants that meet the minimum evaluation threshold will undergo due diligence.

9.1 Compulsory due diligence documents



For all applicants the following documents are compulsory and must be provided when requested:

- Company, NPO, trust, cooperative or other registration and founding documents
- SARS tax compliance status (PIN or equivalent confirmation)
- Bank confirmation letter
- Declaration of Conflict of Interest for board members or other key individuals
- Project organogram for the proposed intervention

Where the proposed project involves persons with disabilities as a specific target group, an additional compulsory item applies:

- A short organisational statement or policy setting out how the organisation accommodates and safeguards persons with disabilities, including reasonable accommodation, dignity, safety and non-discrimination.

9.2 Additional due diligence documents

Depending on the nature of the proposal Services SETA may also request:

- Accreditation documents, where applicable
- Details and addresses of delivery sites
- Evidence of the largest or most relevant projects delivered
- References from previous funders or partners
- Latest audited financial statements or, where not available, recent management accounts

Failure to provide compulsory information, or adverse findings arising from the due diligence process, may result in the application not being recommended for funding.

10. Submission requirements

To be considered for funding, applicants must submit one compiled electronic application pack. The pack must contain at least the following:

- **Completed Application Form** downloaded from the Services SETA website
- **Project Concept Document** setting out:
 - Context and problem statement
 - Theory of change and proposed interventions

- Target groups and locations
 - Exit and sustainability strategy where applicable.
- **Detailed Budget**, including:
 - Total project cost
 - Any co-funding
- **Implementation Plan** with:
 - Timelines and key milestones
 - Roles and responsibilities
 - Key risks and mitigation measures
- **Project Team Details**, including:
 - Key roles and responsibilities
 - Short CV summaries of key personnel
 - Details of core partners (where applicable)
- **Expected Impact Description**, with:
 - Key indicators
 - Targets for outputs and outcomes

Where an item is not applicable, applicants must indicate “N/A” and provide a brief reason.
Incomplete submissions will not be assessed.

11. How to apply

All applications must be submitted using the official online **Application Form**. Once the form has been submitted, applicants will receive a secure link to upload the required supporting documents.

During the application window, enquiries may be directed to
specialprojects26@serviceseta.org.za

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