

## Strategic Projects Evaluation Criteria | Reference SP2026/27-04

### 1 Approval status and purpose

These criteria are submitted to the Accounting Authority for approval as part of the complete Strategic Projects Funding Window pack. They establish the mandatory gate, technical scoring method, moderation requirements, due-diligence process and allocation controls. They may be used only after approval and must remain unchanged once the window opens.

### 2 Protected focus areas

Evaluators must assess alignment only against the following Board-approved focus areas:

- Rural and township development and revitalisation
- Youth and women empowerment
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities
- Support to military veterans and their dependants
- Enterprise development and self-employment
- Job creation and local economic development

### 3 Evaluation stages

| Stage                  | Purpose                                                                                 | Outcome                                        |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Compliance screening | Verify timely submission, eligible legal status and published mandatory documents.      | Compliant / non-compliant with recorded reason |
| 2 Technical evaluation | Score the proposal using the approved criteria and evidence anchors.                    | Weighted score and reasons                     |
| 3 Due diligence        | Verify claims, capability, governance, financial and operational readiness.             | Verified finding and risk treatment            |
| 4 Allocation           | Rank and recommend awards within the available budget and approved allocation controls. | Accounting Authority decision                  |

### 4 Stage 1 compliance requirements

| Requirement                                                                                                   | Verification                                                                                           | Outcome  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| Submitted on time through the approved channel                                                                | System submission record                                                                               | Yes / No |
| Eligible applicant category and non-profit legal status                                                       | Registration evidence                                                                                  | Yes / No |
| Tax Registration Status                                                                                       | Tax Registration/Proof of Exemption                                                                    | Yes / No |
| Completed Application Summary Form                                                                            | Submitted prescribed form                                                                              | Yes / No |
| Completed project implementation plan and budget template                                                     | Submitted prescribed template                                                                          | Yes / No |
| Identification documents of authorised representatives certified not more than three months before submission | Compare the legible certification date with the recorded application submission date (validity period) | Yes / No |
| Completed declaration of Interest (Form 1A)                                                                   | Submitted prescribed template                                                                          | Yes / No |
| Completed POPI Act Declaration (Form 1B)                                                                      | Submitted prescribed templates                                                                         | Yes / No |

Failure on a published mandatory requirement results in non-compliance. Reviewers must record the exact reason. Matters reserved for due diligence must not be used as undisclosed compliance gates.

## 5 Stage 2 Technical evaluation and evidence requirements

| Criterion                                             | Weight | Evidence to assess                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Alignment with the purpose and approved focus areas | 30     | Primary focus area; problem or opportunity; target group and location; evidence of need; logical connection between the proposal and the selected focus area.                                                                            |
| 2 Transformational impact and measurable outcomes     | 30     | Depth and significance of the proposed change; results chain; beneficiary profile and numbers; output and outcome indicators; baselines or assumptions; employment, enterprise, inclusion or community outcomes; durability of benefits. |
| 3 Feasibility, implementation and monitoring          | 20     | Methodology; work plan; milestones; delivery resources; roles; partnerships; risk controls; monitoring, reporting and evidence plan; realistic implementation period.                                                                    |
| 4 Organisational and governance capacity              | 10     | Governance arrangements; relevant organisational or key-personnel capability; financial and operational systems; current commitments; partner and subcontractor arrangements; accountability.                                            |
| 5 Budget, value for money and sustainability          | 10     | Quantities and unit costs; cost justification; cost per output or beneficiary where meaningful; avoidance of duplication; co-funding; affordability; continuation or exit plan.                                                          |

## 6 Scoring scale

| Score | Descriptor  | Required evaluator finding                                                                  |
|-------|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 0     | No response | No relevant information or evidence.                                                        |
| 1     | Inadequate  | Materially fails the requirement; major unsupported assumptions or omissions.               |
| 2     | Weak        | Partially addresses the requirement but has significant evidence, feasibility or risk gaps. |
| 3     | Adequate    | Meets the requirement with credible evidence; weaknesses are manageable.                    |
| 4     | Strong      | Exceeds the basic requirement with clear, relevant evidence and low material risk.          |
| 5     | Exceptional | Comprehensive, compelling and highly credible response with no material weakness.           |

Weighted score = score ÷ 5 × criterion weight. The final score is the sum of all weighted scores out of 100. Evaluators must provide written reasons linked to submitted evidence.

## 7 Scorecard

| Criterion                                           | Weight | Score 0 to 5 | Weighted score | Evidence based reason |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Alignment with the purpose and approved focus areas | 30     |              |                |                       |

| Criterion                                       | Weight     | Score 0 to 5 | Weighted score | Evidence based reason |
|-------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Transformational impact and measurable outcomes | 30         |              |                |                       |
| Feasibility, implementation and monitoring      | 20         |              |                |                       |
| Organisational and governance capacity          | 10         |              |                |                       |
| Budget, value for money and sustainability      | 10         |              |                |                       |
| <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>100</b> |              |                |                       |

## 8 Qualifying threshold

An application must achieve a final moderated technical score of at least 60% to proceed to due diligence. A score of 60% or more does not guarantee funding. An application below 60% is technically non-qualifying and must not proceed.

## 9 Evaluation governance

- Evaluators and moderators must sign confidentiality and conflict-of-interest declarations before accessing applications.
- At least three (3) evaluators must score each application independently before discussing scores.
- Moderator Scores must be anchored in the Application Summary Form and prescribed templates. The full proposal may be used only to understand or verify referenced information; it is not separately scored and cannot cure an omitted required response.
- The moderation record must identify material differences, the evidence considered and the reason for the final score.
- Moderation may correct inconsistency or error but may not create a new criterion or change an approved weight or threshold.
- All score sheets, comments, moderation records (where applicable) and versions must be retained in the official evaluation file.
- Applicants must be treated consistently; clarification may not permit one applicant to improve a proposal after closing.

## 10 Due diligence

Services SETA must conduct proportionate, risk-based due diligence on technically qualifying applications under consideration for funding.

The scope and depth of due diligence will depend on the project's value, complexity, delivery model, risk profile, reliance on partners or subcontractors, prior performance where applicable, and any concerns identified during evaluation.

At a minimum, Services SETA must verify:

- the applicant's legal standing and authority to apply;
- the identity and authority of the authorised representative;
- material declarations relating to other funding, duplication and conflicts of interest; and
- the applicant's eligibility under the published requirements.

Depending on the identified risks, Services SETA may conduct one or more additional checks relating to:

- governance and financial-management controls;
- operational readiness and delivery capacity;

- beneficial interests, related parties and persons exercising control;
- implementation partners and subcontractors;
- current projects and funding commitments;
- prior performance, where applicable;
- proposed outputs, outcomes and supporting evidence;
- budget assumptions, quotations and value for money;
- site, personnel, systems or reference verification; and
- banking and other pre-contracting verification.

The due-diligence record must identify the checks performed, the reason for selecting them, the evidence reviewed and any check considered unnecessary or not applicable. Services SETA must apply comparable checks consistently to applications presenting comparable risks.

Each finding must be classified as:

- verified;
- conditionally acceptable;
- remediable before contracting; or
- material adverse.

Any recommendation to reduce, condition, defer or decline funding must state the verified finding, its effect on delivery or governance risk, and why the proposed response is proportionate.

## 11 Allocation methodology

- Rank all technically qualifying applications by final moderated score.
- Complete due diligence for applications under consideration within the available budget.
- Consider verified capacity, concentration risk, reasonable project scale and balanced coverage of the approved focus areas and geographic need only after technical qualification. Geographic spread is an allocation consideration and not a separate technical score.
- Apply any funding cap consistently and only if approved and published before opening.
- Record a technically qualifying application that cannot be funded as qualifying but unfunded.
- Document every deviation from score order and obtain approval from the Accounting Authority.

## 12 Grounds for rejection

- Failure to meet a published mandatory compliance requirement
- Final moderated score below 60%
- Material false, misleading or unverifiable information
- Material adverse due-diligence finding that cannot be adequately mitigated
- Prohibited duplication or double funding
- Proposal outside the approved focus areas or Services SETA mandate
- Insufficient funds, recorded separately as qualifying but unfunded where the proposal otherwise qualifies