



## BEYOND THE HEADLINES: SETAS IN ACTION – REAL SKILLS, REAL BUSINESSES, REAL IMPACT

Despite recent misinformation, South Africa's 21 SETAs continue to empower hundreds of thousands of beneficiaries through training, funding, and opportunities.

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) play a crucial role in South Africa's human capital development ecosystem, yet a troubling narrative persists. Misinformation and isolated criticisms have led to widespread misunderstanding about the role and impact of SETAs. It is important to clarify that SETAs are not employment agencies or job creators. Rather, they are facilitators of sector-specific skills development aimed at enhancing employability.

Working across all major economic sectors, SETAs operate as intermediaries between education institutions and industry. Their programmes, ranging from learnerships and apprenticeships to bursaries and skills programmes, are informed by rigorous research and collaboration with public and private employers, industry bodies, academia, TVET and community colleges, as well as organised labour. These interventions are targeted to address sector-specific skills shortages and improve labour market alignment.

## STRATEGIC PARTNERS IN SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

SETAs were established to close critical skills gaps and to support national economic development by ensuring workforce readiness. They are not stand-alone bodies, but rather strategic partners in South Africa's efforts to match training supply with labour market demand.

Their training initiatives are not random or generic. They are rooted in data, designed through sector skills plans, and tailored to meet the practical needs of each industry. In doing so, SETAs provide learners with the relevant knowledge and real-world experience required to succeed in a competitive and fast-changing job market.

## ENHANCING EMPLOYABILITY

A common misconception is that SETAs are responsible for creating employment. In truth, SETAs empower individuals to access and succeed in employment by providing the skills that are in demand. Employability includes the ability to find work, adapt, grow professionally, and remain economically active in an evolving labour market.

Whether someone is entering the workforce, transitioning careers, or seeking to upskill, SETAs offer a structured pathway. For many who cannot afford formal university education, often referred to as the "missing middle", SETAs are a lifeline, providing financial support and accredited programmes that lead to recognised qualifications.

## WHY SKILLS MATTER MORE THAN EVER

In a rapidly evolving economy marked by technological change, climate transition, and youth unemployment, skills are more critical than ever. SETAs are at the forefront of preparing South Africans for emerging industries and occupations, ranging from digital innovation and manufacturing to renewable energy and the creative sectors.

In the 2024/25 financial year alone, SETAs invested approximately R7 billion in skills programmes, workplace-based learning, internships, and bursaries. These investments are more than statistics. They represent thousands of people whose futures have been positively altered by access to skills development opportunities.

## REAL IMPACT, REAL TRANSFORMATION

The transformative power of SETAs is best seen in the lives of their beneficiaries. Across the country, individuals from various walks of life have accessed SETA-funded training to improve their circumstances and contribute meaningfully to the economy.

Examples of impact include:



**RENEWABLE ENERGY:** EWSETA beneficiaries established an economically active Cooperative to provide affordable clean cooking energy, fresh vegetables to community members who do not have access to electricity. This demonstrates on the ground energy- water & food nexus.



**THE RISING STAR:** A talented young woman in the insurance sector soared from intern to manager after receiving INSETA funding to complete an Advanced Diploma in Business Management. Her story is a testament to the power of opportunity.



**THE THRIVING ENTREPRENEUR:** A salon owner who completed W&RSETA's Informal Traders Programme expanded her business and created eight new jobs. Today, she's a passionate advocate for retail as a viable and rewarding career path.



**A SECOND CHANCE:** Once unemployed, a man secured work as a machine operator after completing CHIETA's Retrenched Workers Support Programme - a program that provides targeted support to those most in need of a fresh start.



**THE DYNAMIC LEADER:** Supported by TETA's International Leadership Development Programme, a logistics entrepreneur went on to found two companies: Laganda Projects and Perennial Growth. She now mentors others, paying her success forward.



**A TRANSFORMED LIFE:** After incarceration, one woman completed SASSETA's reintegration and cosmetology programme. Today, she is a qualified massage therapist operating her own business from a Halfway House - a powerful story of redemption.



**THE RESILIENT ENTREPRENEUR:** In KwaMashu, an entrepreneur launched Vuka Uvukambe Bakery after completing FoodBev SETA-funded training in New Venture Creation and Food & Beverage Handling.



**THE INSPIRATIONAL LEADER:** A participant in FASSET's Women's Executive Leadership Programme credits the experience with refining her leadership approach and advancing her professional growth.



**THE DETERMINED INNOVATOR:** After joining an MICT SETA-funded coding initiative, one individual invented a battery-powered nail dryer - an innovation born of opportunity.



**THE TRIUMPHANT ENTREPRENEUR:** A person living with a disability launched a successful woodwork and landscaping business after completing PSETA's New Venture Creation Learnership.



**THE PASSIONATE ACHIEVER:** Thanks to an ETPD SETA bursary, a committed student overcame financial barriers to complete her Master of Education degree.

## ASCEO Executive Desk

SETAs are enablers. They are the link between labour market-relevant skills training and employability. They prepare South Africans for jobs that exist, and those that will emerge in the future to respond to poverty and inequality, and contribute to employment and inclusive growth."

ASCEO ....



Approx.

**R7,2 billion**  
Invested in Universities by  
SETAs over the past in 5 years,  
with +- 80 000 beneficiaries

**SETAs are not the problem - they are part of the solution!**

These stories reflect the real-world outcomes of SETA support. They are not policy abstractions, they are personal journeys of transformation, resilience, and empowerment. The SETA model is aligned with South Africa's broader development goals, including the National Development Plan and sector-specific masterplans. By funding training, building partnerships, and enabling access to labour market information, SETAs are helping to close the gap between education and employment. Moreover, SETAs contribute to social cohesion by addressing youth unemployment, empowering people with disabilities, advancing gender equity, and enabling small business development, thus driving inclusive economic growth. South Africa's 21 SETAs continue to deliver impact where it matters most, at the intersection of training, opportunity, and hope. Despite occasional challenges and criticism, the model remains sound and the outcomes are visible. The skills revolution that South Africa needs is already underway, driven by committed institutions and real success stories. Let us move beyond the headlines and reaffirm the importance of SETAs in building a capable, skilled, and resilient nation.

## ASCEO CONGRATULATES

**Mr Buti Kgwaridi Manamela (MP)** on his appointment as Honourable Minister of Higher Education and Training and welcomes **Dr Nomusa Dube-Ncube (MP)** to the PSET sector in her role as Honourable Deputy Minister in the Department of Higher Education and Training.