



LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETA RESEARCH AGENDA

2020 - 2023

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1. Background

This Research Agenda is an output of the webinar Roundtable Discussion held on the 05th June 2020 and it was attended by various stakeholders in the local government sector, i.e, the institutions of higher learning, trade unions, research bodies, professional bodies and sector departments. The Research Agenda has taken into account of local, regional and international trends. A credible sector skills planning should be underpinned by a responsive and comprehensive research agenda. Local Government is at the coal-face of service delivery, therefore it is pivotal that skills gaps are addressed through an informed sector skills planning that talks to the skills needs in the sector. A research agenda is critical in the realisation of the prioritised skills development areas and also to assist the institution to respond to the skills development challenges in the local government sector. In addition to this, a research agenda assists the institution to spend limited resources optimally as the funds would be spent according to the research scope. In the context of the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA), a research agenda will embed on the sectoral and national strategic focus areas. The strategic focus areas are comprised of the following:

- ✓ Enhancing good Governance,
- ✓ Leadership and Management;
- ✓ Promoting Financial Viability and Management;
- ✓ Enhancing Infrastructure and Service Delivery;
- ✓ Enhancing Municipal Planning (Community Participation & Planning);
- ✓ Promoting Spatial Transformation, Environment and Inclusion.

The above strategic focus areas are complemented by the key municipal performance areas which are:

- ✓ Good governance and deepening of democracy;
- ✓ Municipal transformation and institutional development,
- ✓ Municipal financial viability and management,
- ✓ Basic service delivery and infrastructure development;
- ✓ Sustainable local economic development.

A responsive research agenda should also be informed by the National Priorities of the Government which have been identified and agreed on through a series of consultations between the government, business, labour and communities. In the context of skills development and the local government sector, the National Priorities of the Government will include the following: White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, National Development Plan 2030, Youth Employment Accord, Green Economy, Human Resources Development Strategy, National Skills Accord and Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy. Of significant to note is that the research themes will be informed by the above policy frameworks, pieces of legislation, SETA strategic focus areas, key municipal performance areas and national government priorities.

It is the understanding of the LGSETA that a research agenda will be incomplete without a methodology and strategy, consequently the SETA will be partnering with the institutions of higher learning, professional bodies and research bodies through a Memorandum of Understanding. In addition to this, the LGSETA will also forge collaborations with international institutions with the relevant expertise in skills development, particularly in the local government sector.

2. Purpose and objectives of the research agenda

The research agenda intends to achieve the following purpose and objectives:

- ✓ To prioritise the research areas aiming at addressing the skills gaps in the local government sector;
- ✓ To explore the untapped areas in the sector that warrant immediate intervention by the LGSETA;
- ✓ To assist the LGSETA to spend its resources optimally as it will only focus on the priority areas contained in the research agenda;
- ✓ To ensure consistency in the research development and maintain the focus.

3. Policy context

The research agenda will be informed by the following policy frameworks:

- ✓ White Policy on Post-School Education (DHET, 2013) – This policy document was launched on 06th January 2014, and amongst other priority areas that the SETAs should take seriously is the implementation of the research and partnering with research bodies as well as the institutions of higher learning. In responding to this framework, the LGSETA will link its research to the initiatives encompassed in the document;
- ✓ Youth Employment Accord - partnership between government and its social partners to create five million new jobs by 2020. The parties to the accord recognize that youth unemployment is a major national challenge and there is a need to expand opportunities for greater employment and empowerment of youth in the economy (Youth Employment Accord, 2013). In the context of the LGSETA, the youth employment opportunities will be prioritised through a research on marine resources with the aim of identifying the skills gaps in the field;
- ✓ Human Resources Development Strategy - The Human Resource Development Strategy concept was adopted to support a holistic approach to human resource training and development in the Public Service. To enable it to actualize its constitutional mandate of creating a better life for all, the government envisages a Public Service that is guided by the ethos of service and committed to the provision of high quality service. The Public Service is faced with the challenge of training and transforming its employees in a manner that will not only benefit government in its quest for excellent service delivery, but will empower the individual employee as well the Human Resources Development Strategy (2010). In conducting its research, the LGSETA will take into consideration of the skills gaps as identified in the Human Resources Development Strategy;
- ✓ National Skills Development Plan 2030 – A Policy Framework derives from the broader plan of government, namely the National Development Plan (NDP), which aims to put in place the framework whereby we ‘build the capabilities our citizens to make our future work’;

- ✓ Green Economy Accord - An agreement between government, business and labour, committing each to tangible targets in achieving low carbon based economic development growth through renewable energy (Green Economy Accord, 2013). Regarding a green economy, the LGSETA will be conducting research on green occupations relevant for the local government sector and the outcome will be influential towards qualifications development and conceptualization of strategic projects that will empower both employed and unemployed people;
- ✓ National Development Plan 2030 (The Presidency, 2011) – a policy document that aims to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality by 2030. South Africa can realise these goals by drawing on the energies of its people, growing an inclusive economy, building capabilities, enhancing the capacity of the state, and promoting leadership and partnerships throughout society. The LGSETA Research Agenda will consider mapping an alignment to the NDP’s greater labour absorption target for 2030, with a view to inform annual targets for the Local Government Sector;
- ✓ Comprehensive Rural Development Strategy – Cabinet approved the Comprehensive Rural Development Programme (CRDP) on 12 August 2009. The CRDP is premised on three phases:
 - 1) Phase One, which has meeting basic human needs as its driver;
 - 2) Phase Two, which has large-scale infrastructure development as its driver; and
 - 3) Phase Three, with the emergence of rural industrial and credit financial sectors, which are driven by small, micro and medium enterprises and the village market.

The above phases will be achieved through:

- 1) contributing to the redistribution of 30% of the country’s agricultural land;
- 2) improving food security of the rural poor;
- 3) creating business opportunities;
- 4) decongesting and rehabilitating over- crowded former homeland areas; and
- 5) expanding opportunities for rural women, youth, people with disabilities and older people.

In the context of the LGSETA, research in local economic development will be prioritised and its outcomes will be instrumental in boosting economic opportunities in the local government sector through the identification of the skills gap and implementation of skills development interventions.

4. Research priority areas

For the period 2020-2023, the research priority areas will be centered on the SETA's strategic focus areas as tabled below:

✓ Leadership & Management

Management and Leadership is one of the strategic focus areas of the LGSETA and a heart-beat of service delivery in the municipalities. This area has also been found wanting based on the leadership challenges the municipalities are facing. Such leadership challenges resonate on political interference and skills gaps. It is within this context of understanding that the LGSETA has identified this area as a concern, consequently it is therefore prioritised for research. During the 2020-2023 Financial Years, the following research themes will be areas of focus:

- 1) Talent Management in the Fourth Industrial Revolution: The new role of the SDFs;
- 2) Exploring the skills development intervention of the Section 56 and Section 57 Managers;
- 3) Evaluation of the talent leadership in the local government sector;
- 4) The role of municipal leaders in accelerating transformation and service delivery in local government.

✓ Enhancing good governance and democracy

The extent of poor governance has reached astronomical levels and it is evident that most of our municipalities are suffering from dire challenges. The political and administrative municipal leadership must enable meaningful community participation in the affairs of local government. They should instill a culture of engagement with communities in all their actions. This engagement must be conducted in such a way that it respects citizens' input into municipal governance. The local government sector had newly elected municipal councilors that had assumed the duties and responsibilities in August 2016. In order for the councilors to be effective in their daily activities, strategic interventions should be executed and which should be informed by the research projects reflected below:

- 1) The role of Councils and Senior Officials in performance management;
- 2) Deepening democracy through efficient oversight role by municipal councilors.

✓ **Promoting financial viability and management**

The auditor general's report showed an overall decline in the number of municipalities that received an unqualified audit report. According to the report, most municipalities disregarded the auditor general's recommendations made in the previous financial year; when these were implemented by some municipalities, the process has been painfully slow. As a result, there is limited financial accountability in most municipalities, as well as poor performance management mechanisms. Although there may be improvement in the municipalities' financial affairs, there are still municipalities that are getting disclaimers each year, a matter which is of a grave concern to the LGSETA and its associated stakeholders. It is the understanding of the LGSETA that a sound financial management seems to be a barrier for the municipalities to achieve the clean audit due to lack of skills amongst the officials. In the light of these challenges, exploring the causes of poor financial management through the following research themes would be critical:

- 1) The implementation of AGSA's annual recommendations in municipalities;
- 2) Understanding the impact of the Municipal Finance Management Act in creating a sound financial management;

✓ **Enhancing infrastructure and service delivery;**

The lack of infrastructure or poor infrastructure and inadequate service delivery in most of the municipalities compromise the lives of the ordinary citizens. The sporadic unrests in most of the municipalities is evidence enough that all is not well in the municipalities. From the skills development point of view, lack of relevant competence in the municipalities may be fueling tensions. The LGSETA believes that the following research themes will be relevant for this focus area:

- 1) Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Local Government Sector IV in the water sector;
- 2) The viability of e-techniques towards service delivery in the local government sector;
- 3) Perspectives on the CET & TVET colleges infrastructure development support (equipment/ workshops/ Connectivity/ ICT);

- 4) Impact of municipal demarcations and amalgamations on service delivery;
- 5) Evaluation of the District Management Model;
- 6) Investigate the requirements for outsourcing of planning, design and implementation of projects prescribed in grant criteria or Council policies on the ability to develop engineering and other built environment professionals in local government;
- 7) The role of Public-Private Partnership in addressing learners/graduates absorption in the local government sector.

✓ **Enhancing municipal planning (community participation & planning)**

Contemporary planning theories acknowledge citizen participation can generate trust, credibility and commitment regarding the implementation of policies. The municipalities need to plan together with their communities to enable the link between the Integrated Development Planning and the needs of the communities. Local Economic Development (LED) is an imperative tool in the creation of the opportunities to the unemployed people. Issues to be addressed in this area consists of the following:

- 1) Green manufacturing as a tool to address youth unemployment and promote sustainable local economic development;
- 2) The role of local government in repositioning the role of inland small scale fisheries with regards to food production and economic development: in response to Covid-19;
- 3) Embracing local economic development through the identification of skills needs of both the co-operatives and small-medium enterprises focusing on established and emergent cooperative as well as of small and emerging enterprises;
- 4) Improving integrated planning in the local government sector: Exploring barriers and enablers in creating a health promoting policy integration;
- 5) Building capacity at the municipal level to develop the LED potential of marine resources.

✓ **Promoting Spatial Transformation, Environment and Inclusion.**
 The developmental mandate of local government is enshrined in the Constitution and the White Paper on Local Government: “local government is committed to working with citizens and groups within the communities to find sustainable ways to meet their social, economic and material needs and to improve the quality of their lives” (Powell, 2012: 15). Local government is expected to be the redistributive, transformative sphere of government closest to the people (Powell, 2012). Local government’s challenge is to fulfil its development mandate, while being expected to do more with less financial and personnel resources, and, at the same time, to build and maintain the capacity and skills required for transformative delivery (Powell, 2012). Local government needs to be given the opportunity to develop the necessary capacity and capability to deliver effectively on these functions. It is with this aim in mind that the Local Government SETA will be conducting research on the projects outlined below:

- 1) The revised National Spatial Development Framework as a tool to promote municipal spatial transformation and inclusion – guidelines for under-resourced municipalities;
- 2) Understanding the impact of green jobs and capacity in the local government sector.

5. Key Municipal Performance areas

Below are the key municipal performance areas complementing the above LGSETA strategic focus areas:

- ✓ Good governance and the deepening of democracy;
- ✓ Municipal transformation and institutional development;
- ✓ Municipal financial viability and management;
- ✓ Basic service delivery and infrastructure development;
- ✓ Sustainable local economic development.

6. Research methodology and strategy

In the implementation of its research agenda, the LGSETA will utilise a triangulation of research methods which include both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Below are the enablers of these qualitative and quantitative methodologies:

6.1 Secondary sources will be used in conducting research:

6.1.1 Literature Review

- ✓ Government policy and strategic documents;
- ✓ Commissioned Research;
- ✓ Official Reports;
- ✓ Research studies on particular areas;
- ✓ Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS);
- ✓ Stats-SA.

6.1.2. Primary sources will also be used to inform the research:

- ✓ WSP/ATR analysis
- ✓ Expert Panel/Roundtable discussions;
- ✓ Focus Group Discussions;
- ✓ Tracer Study;
- ✓ Research Seminars;
- ✓ Research Colloquiums.

8. Partnerships with the institutions of higher learning, professional bodies and research bodies

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training reflected a need for the SETAs to partner with the institutions, professional bodies and research bodies. It is within this context of understanding that the LGSETA intends to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with such institutions. Below is a list of the institutions that will collaborate with the LGSETA through the MoUs and partnership is centered on the Local Government SETA Strategic Focus Areas, Key Municipal Performance Areas and National

Government Priorities:

- ✓ University of Fort Hare;
- ✓ University of Limpopo;
- ✓ University of Johannesburg;
- ✓ University of Venda;
- ✓ Human Sciences Research Council;
- ✓ Council of Scientific and Industrial Research;
- ✓ Vaal University of Technology;
- ✓ University of Witwatersrand;
- ✓ University of Stellenbosch;
- ✓ University of Pretoria;
- ✓ Productivity South Africa;
- ✓ Nelson Mandela University;
- ✓ University of North West;
- ✓ University of Western Cape;

- ✓ Rhodes University;
- ✓ University of Kwazulu-Natal;
- ✓ University of Free State;
- ✓ South African Institution Of Civil Engineering;
- ✓ Chartered Institute of Government Finance Audit and Risk Officers;
- ✓ South African Council for the Property Valuers Profession;
- ✓ South African Council For Planners.

In addition to this, the LGSETA also intends to enter into collaboration with the institutions at both regional and international spheres to share notes on the best research practices as well as exploring new concepts and ideas in the local government fraternity.

9. Research Funding and Procurement

Funding is one of the strategic resources in the implementation of the research. In achieving the objectives of the research agenda, the LGSETA will be funding all its research projects, but in case of the cross-cutting research, the funding will be sourced from both parties through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The LGSETA will be executing its research through the open tendering system. In addition to this, the LGSETA also intends using a partnership model with the institutions of higher learning and research bodies through the MoUs. It is also significant to note that the LGSETA partners with the institutions with great expertise in the local government discipline and that have a track record in this sector.

10. Communicating the research findings

The LGSETA disseminates its research findings through the Research Seminar Series that are held countrywide in each financial year. In addition to this, other avenues such as the establishment of the Research Repository and Labour Market Intelligence Project have been instrumental in communicating the research findings to the stakeholders in the local government and beyond. In taking research to a greater height, the LGSETA will be establishing the Local Government Sector Research Forum to ensure co-ordination of all the research in the local government sector. The Sector Research Forum will also be a strategic vehicle in reducing duplication of research, promoting research dissemination and utilisation, enabling the sharing of research agendas and fostering helpful collaboration and support in research projects (research partnerships).

Conclusion

This strategic document outlines the methodology that the LGSETA will implement in conducting its research and is underpinned by the Strategic Focus Areas complimented by the key municipal performance areas. The National Government priorities will always be realised, as they play a critical role in addressing the skills gaps. The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training has made it clear that the SETAs must forge partnerships with the institutions of higher learning, professional bodies and research bodies with the aim of drawing research expertise that should be instrumental in providing quality Sector Skills Plan. This document has also taken into account of the need to partner with the international institutions that have strength in both the local government and public management disciplines.



LGSETA BOARD CHAIRPERSON – MR PHUMLANI MNTAMBO

DATE 09/07/2020

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- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), 2010 *Human Resources Development Strategy*. DHET: Pretoria.
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- Powell D. 2012. Imperfect transition – local government reform in South Africa 1994–2012. In Booyesen S (eds.). *Local Elections in South Africa: Parties | People | Politics*. Bloemfontein: Sun Media Metro.

ANNEXURE

2015-2016 RESEARCH PROJECTS

No	Title of research
1.	Water & Wastewater Management In The Local Government
2.	Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Local Government Sector I
3.	Mitigating service delivery protest through skills development and deployment
4.	Local Government Management & Leadership Skills Development
5.	Support strategy for the SMMEs & Co-operatives in the Local Government Sector
6.	Profiling the firefighter occupation within the local government sector
7.	RPL as a significant tool in the implementation of skills development in the local government sector: A case of the forgotten municipal employees
8.	Approaches on the capacity-building for the traditional leadership
9.	Analysis on the critical skills required to respond to becoming a green economy: A perspective of the local government sector
10.	Adult Education and Training as a strategic avenue in addressing adult learning in the municipalities - Content Development and Learning Platforms
11.	Working In Local Government: Perceptions Index Of Potential New Labour Entrants With A Focus On Youth
12.	Water and Wastewater Management Practice in the Process Industries

2016-2017 RESEARCH PROJECTS

No.	Title of research
1.	Technical Skills Challenges In The Local Government Sector
2.	Challenges facing AET intervention
3.	Skills transfer in the workplace
4.	Transport Planning in the local government sector
5.	Green economy occupations in the local government sector
6.	Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Sector II
7.	Boosting local economic development through the marine resources: A perspective of the Local Government SETA
8.	Impact assessment on the discretionary funded programmes
9.	Local Government Middle Management Professionals Skills Development
10.	Challenges facing the Skills Development Facilitators In The Implementation of Skills Development Interventions

2017-2018 RESEARCH PROJECTS

No	
1.	Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Sector – Phase III
2.	Addressing the state of financial management in the municipalities focusing on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Managing audit outcomes and financial capabilities, including the implementation of budgets ✓ Ability of municipalities to improve their revenue collection and revenue sources
3.	Improving the process of collection, collation, analysis and planning of the WSP/ATR in order to improve SETA planning and implementation of programmes. This study will also focus on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ An assessment of Municipal Human Resource systems in collecting skills planning data
4.	Challenges faced by Local Government leadership Councilors that impede optimal functioning in their various portfolios and enhancing good corporate governance
5.	Professionalising/Repositioning Local government sector
6.	Evaluation of municipal wastewater treatment for reuse
7.	An assessment of skills capacity requirements for Traditional Leadership and its institutions in delivering their mandate in municipalities
8.	Mapping of the Local Government Sector Occupations
9.	Developing marine resources at the local government level by identifying the role of local government in the development and management of marine resources

2018-2019 RESEARCH PROJECTS

No	
1.	The synergy between IDP and LED in creating employment
2.	Workplace Committee Training on new water management technologies for emerging challenges
3.	Harmonising relationships between ward councillors and traditional leaders toward infrastructure development in rural jurisdictions.
4.	The role of political leadership in good municipal financial governance
5.	Developing marine resources at the local government level by identifying the role of local government in effective co-operative governance DAFF
6.	Exploring the state of turnover and retention in critical municipal positions
7.	Politico-administrative municipal leadership by employees and multi-sector stakeholders
8.	An evaluation of the LED strategies of municipalities and the impact on local communities
9.	An assessment of the implementation of the Back-To-Basics Programme among the Municipalities
10.	Comparative analysis of the municipal billing system on the revenue collection

2019-2020 RESEARCH PROJECTS

No	
1	A critical analysis on the competency levels for Senior Managers In the Municipalities
2.	Skills Planning Projection Modelling For the Local Government Sector IV
3.	The integration of small-scale fisheries into the tourism value chain
4.	Developing cost sharing models for provision of improved water in local communities
5.	Assessment of the viability and potential of township economy for municipalities;
6.	Assessment of the skills, experience and qualifications of waste management staff in municipalities;
7.	The 4th industrial revolution: implications for local government in the context of skills development
8.	A critical analysis on the competency levels for ward committee members
9.	The effects of skills mismatch in the local government sector and how it can be addressed
10.	A critical analysis on the capacity-building for effective revenue collection and debt recovery in district and local municipalities