

**CAREER GUIDANCE INITIATIVES:
CAREER AWARENESS EVENTS ON
OCCUPATIONS IN HIGH DEMAND —
TECHNICAL, COMPREHENSIVE HIGH
SCHOOLS & LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS ATTENDING
SPECIAL SCHOOLS**

APPLICATION GUIDELINE

1. BACKGROUND s CONTEXT

The Manufacturing, Engineering and Related Services Sector Education and Training Authority (merSETA) has established the **2026/27 Discretionary Grant (DG) Special Funding Window - Specific Initiatives** to expand nationwide Career Awareness initiatives. This project focuses heavily on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, facilitating technical exposure and long-term vocational development pathways, and **specifically promotes occupations in high demand within the manufacturing, engineering and related services sector, in support of merSETA's strategic priorities and the National Skills Development Plan.**

2. TARGET BENEFICIARIES

All project proposals and event planning must strictly target and accommodate the following groups:

- Learners in Grades 8-12 enrolled at Technical and Comprehensive High Schools.
- Learners studying Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.
- Learners with Special Educational Needs attending Special Schools.
- Unemployed TVET learners (integrated into event support and Work-Integrated Learning pathways).

3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applications are invited from suitably qualified organisations, including:

- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs)
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs)
- Private Companies
- Sole Proprietorships
- Cooperatives operating within the merSETA sector
- Trade Unions
- Higher Education Institutions
- Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges
- Community Education and Training (CET) Colleges
- Accredited Skills Development Providers
- Event Management Companies

4. MANDATORY FUNDING SCOPE s APPLICATION CAPS

To ensure equitable distribution across all nine provinces (**Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West, and Western Cape**), the following parameters are legally binding on all applicants:

- National Event Pool: A total of 50 events (25 urban and 25 rural) will be awarded across South Africa.

- **Applicant Event Cap:** An individual applicant may apply to implement a maximum of four (4) events.
- **Provincial Cap:** Events proposed by a single applicant must be distributed across no more than two (2) provinces.
- **Important Window Rule:** The previous 2026/27 DG Special Funding Window (19 September 2025 to 31 October 2025). A brand-new submission on the NSDMS Projects Portal is mandatory for consideration.

Organisations that applied under either withdrawn window must submit a new application; previous applications will not be considered.

- **Applicant Discretion Notice:** Submission of an application does not constitute or guarantee an award. The allocation of provinces, the number and location of events (including the urban/rural distribution), and the final award of funding are made at the sole and absolute discretion of merSETA. merSETA reserves the right to allocate fewer events than applied for, to award in some provinces and not others, or to make no award at all.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated against published criteria, including:

- Organisational capacity
- Relevant experience
- Implementation methodology
- Project team
- Value for money
- Compliance with mandatory requirements

6. CORE OBJECTIVES s EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Selected service providers must systematically manage the following pre-event and execution milestones:

- **Departmental Liaison:** Partner directly with the District Department of Basic Education and localized circuit offices.
- **Legal Protections:** Secure signed indemnity forms from 100% of participating learners prior to the event date.
- **Institutional Approval:** Secure formal participation letters signed by both the School Principal and the School Governing Body (SGB) for every attending school.
- **End-to-End Transport:** Coordinate fully insured, safe transit for learners from their respective schools to the event venue and back.
- **Vocational Promotion:** Actively market Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) qualifications and structural artisan pathways.

7. STRATEGIC TVET COLLEGE PARTNERSHIPS s WIL REQUIREMENTS

Events must be closely linked with local educational ecosystems to build structural pathways for youth:

- **Co-Location Strategy:** Events must ideally be hosted within a nearby TVET college campus. This setup enables learners to tour physical workshops and witness practical trade demonstrations. This strategic partnership is intended to formalise collaborative relationships between merSETA and TVET Colleges to strengthen learner access to career guidance, artisan development pathways and post-school education opportunities.
- **Work-Integrated Learning (WIL):** Applicants must demonstrate a formal partnership with the host TVET college to register unemployed TVET learners for Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) opportunities during project delivery.
- **Institutional MOU:** Proposals must clearly state the targeted volume of unemployed TVET learners to be registered per event. Final funding activation is contingent on executing a formal Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between merSETA and the college.

8. LOGISTICAL s INFRASTRUCTURE SPECIFICATIONS

Each event setup must be engineered to securely and comfortably accommodate a baseline of **1,000 Learners and 100 Delegates**.

a) Venue s Marquee Construction

- **Structure:** A clear-framed, fully waterproof marquee must be assembled on the TVET college grounds. Pegging is strictly forbidden; structures must be safely anchored using heavy weights.
- **Capacity s Clearance:** Engineered to host 1,100 occupants with sidewalls standing at a minimum height of 3 metres. The fabric must be perfectly clean (black or white) and flame-retardant.
- **Universal Accessibility:** Equipped with solid framed glass or plastic doors, continuous flooring/carpeting from the stage to the front rows, and SANS-approved emergency signage.
- **Disability Infrastructure:** Ramps serving raised floors or stages must be at least 1.5 metres wide, feature a maximum gradient of 15°, and be fitted with 1.5-metre handrails.
- **Compliance Certification:** Structural sign-off by an approved structural engineer and an OHS-compliant Certificate of Compliance (COC) must be issued before occupancy. On-site emergency medical services, 15 toilets, and handheld fire extinguishers are mandatory.

b) Audio-Visual s Power Requirements

- **Sound s Displays:** A complete professional PA system (Mixer, top speakers, stage monitors, and 4 cordless Shure/Sennheiser mics) must undergo a full dry-run exactly one day prior to execution. Visual feeds require a centralized 5m x 2m LED wall paired with four 55-inch stand-mounted LCD screens.
- **Primary Power:** Supplying a fully soundproofed, sealed "silent-type" generator ranging from 75kVA to 100kVA capacity. The vendor must supply enough fuel for a minimum of 12 hours of uninterrupted operations.
- **Electrical Safety:** All electrical work must be performed by certified electricians, with one remaining on standby on-site throughout the event. All

cabling must be completely hidden beneath decor or raised floors to eliminate trip hazards.

c) Furnishings & Stage Decor

- **General Seating:** 1,100 clean, four-legged, wheel-free stackable plastic chairs arranged precisely to the approved seating map a day in advance.
- **VIP Stage Layout:** A 10-seater ottoman lounge setup with glass coffee tables, a glass speaker podium, and fresh floral arrangements.
- **Delegate Seating:** Twelve freestanding, metal-free decorated tables (no folding trestles) configured to seat eight delegates each, balanced evenly on both sides of the front rows.

G. CATERING STANDARDS

d) For Learners (1,000 Pax)

- **Breakfast (08:00 - 09:00):** Individually pre-packaged sandwich accompanied by a 330ml 100% fruit juice.
- **Lunch (13:00 - 14:00):** Traditional pap, cabbage, and savory chicken stew with gravy. Served in durable disposable takeaway containers with packaged cutlery, serviettes, toothpicks, bottled water, and a 330ml fruit juice.

e) For VIP Guests & Delegates (100 Pax)

- **Breakfast (08:00 - 09:00):** Premium tea/coffee service (Five Roses, Nescafé stick packs, decaf options), accompanied by premium choice assorted biscuits, side plates, cups, and metal cutlery.
- **Lunch (13:00 - 14:00):** Buffet-style spread consisting of pap, rice, two sides (Greek salad and hot grilled vegetables), with three protein options (chicken, fish, and beef) served with soft drinks and bottled water.

10. MANDATORY APPLICATION COMPLIANCE DOCUMENTS

Failure to submit any item within the compliance stack will result in immediate system disqualification:

1. **Proof of Company Registration:** Official CIPC document.
2. **Tax Compliance:** A valid, unexpired Tax Clearance Certificate or active TCS verification PIN.
3. **B-BBEE Proof:** Valid B-BBEE Certificate or verified Sworn Affidavit.
4. **Banking Confirmation:** Official letter from an authorized financial institution.
5. **CSD Report:** Comprehensive National Treasury Central Supplier Database printout.
6. **Detailed Cost Breakdown:** Granular quotations outlining specific unit rates for transport, catering, and infrastructure.
7. **School Commitment:** Signed letters of intent from participating school principals validating targeted learner tallies.

- **Incomplete applications will be disqualified.**
- **merSETA reserves the right to verify all information submitted.**

11. BILL OF QUANTITIES s PRICING TEMPLATE

Budgets must conform strictly to the statutory merSETA cost breakdown matrix:

Category Component	Quantity Metric	Target Units	Total Cost (Incl. VAT)
Pre-Planning Forums s Site Visits	4	Meetings	
Learner Logistics (Within 120km Radius)	1,000	Learners	
Delegate Logistics / Support Line	100	Guests	
Learner Catering (Breakfast s Lunch)	1,000	Persons	
Delegate Catering (Buffet Service)	100	Persons	
Full Structure Venue s Layout Pack	1	Package	
Learner Packs (Branded Bag s Stationery)	1,000	Packs	
Integrated Sound s PA System Setup	1	System	
LED Wall s Stand-Mounted TV Screens	1	Package	
Cinematography s Event Archival	1	Service	
Ambulance Services s First Aiders	4	Personnel	
Multi-Platform Live Streaming Feed	1	Stream	
Mobile Sanitation Units	15	Toilets	
Silent Power Generation (75kVA-100kVA)	1	Unit	
Omni-Channel Media Campaign Integration	1	Campaign	
Direct School Donation Reserve	—	—	
Alumni Presenter Honorariums s Travel	5	Speakers	
merSETA Career Booklet Re-printing	1,000	Books	
TVET College partnership on WIL	2	Learners	
SUBTOTAL COST			
Miscellaneous Contingency Allowance	1%	Fixed	
Management / Project Execution Fee	7.5%	Fixed	
GRAND TOTAL			

12. SUBMISSION PORTAL PROTOCOLS

- **System Target:** All applications must be submitted strictly via the online NSDMS Projects Portal.
- **Window Timeline:** Submissions open on **29 July 2026** and lock definitively on **14 August 2026**. Applications submitted after the closing date will not be considered. Manual, emailed, or physical hand-deliveries are automatically disqualified.
- **SDF Setup Window:** New enterprise profiles and Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) links require up to 48 hours to activate on the system. Plan submissions accordingly to mitigate deadline risks.

* Miscellaneous costs are expenses that are not easily categorized or don't fall under standard budget headings like venue rental, catering, or staffing.