



**DISCRETIONARY GRANT
FUNDING WINDOW GUIDELINES:**

ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME 2025-2026

BANKSETA FUNDING WINDOW GUIDELINES

1. Background

The Banking Sector Education and Training Authority (BANKSETA) is a statutory body established through the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 as amended by Act, 26 of 2011 to enable its stakeholders to advance the national and global position of the banking and alternative banking sector. As guided by its mandate, the BANKSETA is an agent of transformation and seeks to promote employment equity and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment through skills development. For further details on the BANKSETA, visit www.bankseta.org.za

1. Purpose

This document has been developed to guide the application process for BANKSETA Discretionary Grant Funding Windows. It considers the SETA Grant Regulations and the BANKSETA Discretionary Grant Policy. This document provides guidelines for the opening of funding windows, inviting applications, evaluation of applications, allocation of funds and payment of funds. This document aims to ensure a consistent, fair, and transparent process.

2. Objective

Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs), Cooperatives and Start-up SMEs, have an important role to play in facilitating economic transformation and empowerment. Providing a supportive ecosystem to SMEs, Cooperatives and Start-ups is among the critical enablers for economic recovery, reconstruction, and growth.

The Small Business sector is deemed the cornerstone of any healthy economy and proactive small business development is required to improve, sustain, and expand it effectively.

BANKSETA is inviting applications from stakeholders for the implementation of programmes that will support entrepreneurs, new businesses, and the SME to reach a level of maturity to employ more resources, access existing markets and thereby create employment and grow the economy of the country.

The organisations approved for this funding are expected to render support to individuals, new startups as well as existing businesses in the following:

- Product Development – Market analysis, market needs and trends, business strategy (Price, Product, Promotion and Placement). Commercialization of the product, risk profiling and commercialization of the product.
- SME methodology and process development.

- SME Technology adoption
- Risk identification, legislative requirements and compliance.
- Digitalisation of key internal processes, IT infrastructure support and business support digitalisation.
- Client relationship management.
- Compliance

3. Invitation Process

BANKSETA will publish all funding window invitations on the BANKSETA website: www.bankseta.org.za.

Each funding window will remain open for at least 6 weeks. No late applications will be accepted.

The funding window will open on 11 July 2025 and close at 16h00 on 22 August 2025

**All documents must be completed in full, and all supporting documentation must be provided and valid. Failure to do so may result in disqualification (mandatory documents are application form, proof of CSD registration, Proof of NPO/NGO/CBO registration with DSD, SARS Tax clearance).*

All applications to be submitted **via email, AND online **through SIMS**. BANKSETA will host Information sessions to train all potential applicants.*

4. Eligibility Criteria

BANKSETA has categorized eligible applicants as below:

- 4.1. **Public TVET Colleges, Public Universities** with active Incubation/Entrepreneurship hubs supporting SME in their communities.
- 4.2. **NGO's/CBO's/NPO's** who are supporting entrepreneurial development in their communities. Only entities that have been actively conducting business for more than 5 years will be eligible. Proof of registration with the Department of Social Development and the CIPC (where applicable) to be attached.
- 4.3. **National; Provincial and District government agencies** with a mandate for socio-economic /entrepreneurship/SME development.

**Only applications from the above categories will be considered. No applications from third-party service providers will be allowed.*

Organisations that have any active entrepreneurship or Specials project contracts with BANKSETA that have not concluded yet are not eligible to apply.

5. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation panel will apply predetermined evaluation criteria to score applications. The criteria will include:

- 5.1 Project background and formal proposal of all deliverables. The proposed impact of the programme on unemployment and economic recovery must be clearly demonstrated. Provide a description of the SMEs to be supported and which economic sector they constitute. (10%)
- 5.2 Implementation methodology which defines the project structure with all milestones clearly articulated including training duration of each module and coaching and mentoring. (30%)
- 5.3 Capacity of the applicant to implement a project of this nature. The main project leader and project team must demonstrate competence in complex project management. Examples of projects of this nature done previously will be advantageous. Applicants are encouraged to indicate any significant awards of recognition for projects of this nature implemented previously. At least two reference letters are to be attached, no points will be allocated on capacity if no reference letter is submitted under this section. Previous performance where applicable will be considered for all returning successful applicants *(20 points allocated for capacity and track record, 10 points for exit strategy)* (30%)
- 5.4 Details of the training programme must be provided including programme overview, modules and duration. The coaching and mentoring plan must be included with a detailed description of activities of support to the SMEs. (30%)

**Any application not meeting a threshold of 60% will not be approved. Score will be allocated based on information provided.*

6. Funding Allocation Criteria

- 6.1. There is no cap on the number of learners applied for.
- 6.2. BANKSETA will support each learner up to a maximum of R50,000 for a period between six to twelve months depending on the proposed interventions.
- 6.3. All grants are VAT inclusive
- 6.4. Only projects that ensure that small businesses will be started during the programme, or at completion of the programme, will be considered.
- 6.5. Funding for successful applications will be proportionally allocated to the provinces considering the amount applied for and the unemployment rate in each province.

- 6.6. BANKSETA reserves the right to approve / decline applications, without any preference given to any applicant, and to apply discretion to equitably distribute funding per category, based on the availability of funds and to reallocate funds from undersubscribed categories.
- 6.7. BANKSETA may approve additional applications or increase the funding for a particular application should additional funding become available at a later stage. This is subject to Board approval of funding.
- 6.8. BANKSETA will prioritize applications based on the unemployment table as shown below.

	Unemployment
Eastern Cape	49.0
Free State	44.8
Gauteng	40.0
KwaZulu Natal	46.9
Limpopo	48.6
Mpumalanga	49.3
Northern Cape	43.0
Northwest	56.0
Western Cape	24.7

Based on Unemployment statistics released by StatSA: Quarterly Labour Force Survey Quarter 1: 2025

6.9 Preference will be given to interventions in rural areas.

6.10 Beneficiary allocations: Black: 85%, Females: 60%, and People with disabilities: 4%

7. Submission Process

- 7.1. Applications and other related documents are to be submitted on BANKSETA templates, and as per the prescribed submission process. Failure to do so will result in disqualification of the applications.
- 7.2. Applications must be received in the specified timeframes; no late submissions will be accepted. All applications to be sent to entrepreneurshipfunding2025@bankseta.org.za **AND** submitted via SIMS (online platform)
- 7.3. Applicants agree to provide information as required by BANKSETA for the purpose of

reporting to the Department of Higher Education, as well as other statutory stakeholders.

- 7.4. Applications must be submitted via email to a prescribed email address. Submission of the application will be acknowledged, an applicant must contact BANKSETA to confirm receipt of application, however applicants must note that the completeness and correctness of applications will only be evaluated after the closing date.
- 7.5. **Only one application per applicant will be allowed** and therefore applicants are requested to carefully consider business needs and prioritize applications
- 7.6. Each application will be evaluated individually.
- 7.7. All projects must have a coaching and mentoring component.
- 7.8. There is no workplace component for this funding window and therefore learner stipends are not applicable. However, Applicants are encouraged to make provision for learner transport and meals as part of their costing. Proof of disbursement/payment will form part of the supporting documents required when an invoice is submitted.
- 7.9. Applicants must keep a copy of their submission for their internal use and backup purposes.

8. Evaluation Process

- 8.1. In all cases an evaluation panel shall be established to evaluate applications.
- 8.2. The evaluation panel will consist of at least three members including the chairperson.
- 8.3. All members will be required to sign a declaration of interest.
- 8.4. The evaluation panel and decision will be recorded for audit purposes.
- 8.5. BANKSETA will evaluate all applications and approve funding in a way that will ensure the equitable allocation of funding and may include limiting the number of beneficiaries approved for each application and limiting the amount per beneficiary.
- 8.6. Feedback on the applications will be provided to all applicants that applied before the closing date.

9. Approval and Change Request Process

- 9.1. The evaluation documentation will be submitted for Probity Review. The probity review report will be submitted for review to the CEO. Once the CEO has reviewed, the report and supporting evidence as required will be submitted to the Finance and Remuneration Committee for recommendation to the BANKSETA Board.
- 9.2. Final approval will be done by the BANKSETA Board. The BANKSETA Board may

delegate approval functions to the CEO as indicated in the BANKSETA Delegations of Authority Policy.

- 9.3. Change requests must be submitted to the BANKSETA within one month of receiving the outcome and with motivation for the change. The approval of the change request is at the discretion of the CEO provided that the approved amount is not exceeded and that the change is still in line with the guidelines.
- 9.4. Should an (unsuccessful) applicant want to appeal the decision, this must be done in writing and within one month of receiving the outcome. The request will be submitted to the CEO to review, and should there be grounds for an appeal this will be tabled at the Board to reconsider. After their reconsideration, the Board's decision is final.

10. Contracting, Commitment Schedule and Project system update

- 10.1. BANKSETA will sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the applicant for each application that is approved. The implementation plan as indicated in the proposal from the successful applicant will form the basis for invoicing and will be formalised in the MoA.
- 10.2. The approval notification to the applicant should include a deadline date for the return of signed MoAs to the BANKSETA so that funds are not left uncommitted for long periods of time.
- 10.3. The returning MoAs must be accompanied by SARS Tax Clearance, and Proof of Banking Details for the implementation partner and other documents that BANKSETA will indicate. The banking details must remain the same for the duration of the project.
- 10.4. The project manager will monitor all the received MoAs, and any MoA not signed and returned to BANKSETA by the agreed date will be cancelled.
- 10.5. If the MoA has expired, and no project extension request is received by BANKSETA before the lapse of the MoA or if BANKSETA detects there is no project activity taking place and no reasonable cause has been provided, the MoA will be terminated and the funding forfeited.

11. Invoicing/ Funds Disbursement Process

- 11.1. Upon approval of the application, the Applicant and BANKSETA will sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) to formalize the application and to agree to the disbursement schedule (in line with the specific application)

- 11.2. The BANKSETA will request an invoice from an Implementation Partner upon receipt and verification for completeness of performance information received.
- 11.3. The other tranche payments will be paid subject to all the project requirements being met. This may include a monitoring and evaluation audit conducted by BANKSETA, proof of payment to other parties, proof of disbursement of stipends to unemployed learners, etc.)
- 11.4. BANKSETA will only accept and pay for performance information that is current and started within the current financial year. (1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026)
- 11.5. Successful applicants and payments are subject to a monitoring and evaluation process.
- 11.6. Progress Reports are to be submitted as outlined on each MOA (BANKSETA to provide template).
- 11.7. Invoices will be paid provided all project requirements are met and supporting documentation are provided for the relevant tranche.
- 11.8. Successful applicants and payments are subject to a monitoring and evaluation process.
- 11.9. The BANKSETA will only be paying for beneficiaries who are active in the programme, and on completion BANKSETA will pay for successfully completed learners. In all cases payments will be made once all other tranche criteria requirements are met.
- 11.10. The BANKSETA may withhold grants or recover any grants paid to an applicant if it is found that the grants allocated are not being used for the purpose for which the grant was intended. This includes but is not limited to the employment status of intended beneficiaries stated incorrectly (employed / unemployed), fraudulent identity documents (deceased learners), etc.
- 11.11. Non-compliance will lead to summary termination of the agreement and the Contracting party will, due to non-compliance have neither right to any grants or disbursements nor any other right out of this agreement.

12. Extensions

Applicants should endeavor by all means to meet deadlines and complete the project within the timeline submitted during the application phase. If, however, this is not possible the applicant should apply in writing to have the timelines extended and where needed to sign an addendum to the MoA to extend the end date.

13. Disclaimer, Termination and Breach

- 13.1. In all instances, BANKSETA reserves the right to approve / decline funding at its discretion.
- 13.2. The BANKSETA reserves the right to verify, monitor and audit any of the above approved grants during the implementation period by a designated BANKSETA representative. Payments are also subject to these processes as per the quality requirements stipulated by BANKSETA.
- 13.3. The BANKSETA may withhold grants or recover any grants paid to an applicant if it is found that the grants allocated are not being used for the purpose for which the grant was intended.
- 13.4. Non-compliance will lead to summary termination of the agreement and the Contracting party will, due to non-compliance have neither right to any grants or disbursements nor any other right out of this agreement.

14. Confidentiality of information

- 14.1. In compliance with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI), BANKSETA wishes to inform all its stakeholders that in applying for funding, invoicing the BANKSETA and providing supporting information for such invoices, the below standards will apply:
- 14.2. BANKSETA undertakes to keep all information obtained or received by it for purposes of funding applications, funding agreements, invoicing and performance information disclosed or provided by the employers in confidence and in a safe and secure manner.
- 14.3. Information shall be revealed only to the representatives, agents and employees whose knowledge of the information is required for the purpose related to administering the funding applications, funding agreements, invoices and supporting documentation.
- 14.4. The purpose related to administering the funding applications, funding agreements, invoices and supporting documentation includes the following:
 - reporting skills development initiatives to the Department of Higher Education.
 - reporting enrolments and achievements of programmes to the South African Qualifications Authority.
 - reporting on quality assurance functions to the Quality Council of Trades and Occupations.
 - evaluating and processing applications for access to funding.
 - compiling statistics and other research reports.
 - providing personalized communications.

- providing information for internal and external auditing purposes
- complying with the law; and/or
- for a purpose that is ancillary to the above.

- 14.5. Information related to Memoranda of Agreement will be kept by both parties for 5 years after the stated end date. After 5 years it will be destroyed.
- 14.6. If BANKSETA is required by legal process to disclose any of the information, it shall provide the applicant with prompt notice of such requirement so that the applicant may seek a protective order or agree to the provision of information.
- 14.7. If a protective order or other remedy to ensure that only information covered by such order or other remedy is obtained, the BANKSETA shall use all reasonable efforts to ensure that only the information covered by such order or other remedy is disclosed.
- 14.8. Whether or not a protective order or other remedy is obtained, or the applicant agrees to the provision of information, BANKSETA shall take all the reasonable steps to ensure that only the portion of the information which it is legally required to disclose is disclosed.