



DISCRETIONARY GRANT:

**UNEMPLOYED BENEFICIARIES ON PROGRAMMES –
STRATEGIC PROJECTS & COLLABORATIVE
PARTNERSHIPS**

FUNDING WINDOW GUIDELINES
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BANKSETA FUNDING WINDOW GUIDELINES - UNEMPLOYED BENEFICIARIES ON PROGRAMMES - STRATEGIC PROJECTS & COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

1. Purpose

This document has been developed to guide the application process for BANKSETA Discretionary Grant Funding Windows. 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. This guideline must be read together with the BANKSETA Discretionary Grant Policy, Policy Unique Number 28/2026/February 2026, effective 27 February 2026, the SETA Grant Regulations. Where any inconsistency arises, the approved policy, applicable legislation and Delegations of Authority will prevail <https://bankseta.org.za/discretionary-grants/>

2. Invitation Process

- The funding window will be published on the BANKSETA website and will remain open for a minimum period of **four weeks**.
- Applications and supporting documents must be submitted using the prescribed BANKSETA templates through SIMS (BANKSETA Information Management System). Failure to use the prescribed templates or submission process will result in disqualification – <https://sims.bankseta.org.za/login>
- The funding window opens on **16 October 2026** and closes at **16h00** on **17 November 2026**.
- Applications received after the published closing date and time, or through a channel other than the prescribed submission channel, will not be accepted.
- An online briefing session, including guidance on the SIMS application process, will be provided. Attendance is encouraged.

3. Objective

For purposes of this guideline the following applies:

Term	Description	
Applicant	An eligible organisation submitting an application in terms of the applicable Special Projects Funding Window.	
	Category	Potential Applicants
	Eligible employers	• A levy-paying employer must have an approved Workplace Skills Plan (WSP) and Annual Training Report (ATR) following their submission to the BANKSETA by 30 April 2026, or by 30 May 2026 where an extension was granted. • A levy paying employer undergoing an Inter-SETA Transfer and awaiting the BANKSETA registration must provide proof that the Workplace Skills Plan and Annual Training Report were approved by the relevant SETA following their submission by 30 April 2026, or by 30 May 2026 where an

Term	Description	
		extension was granted and that they are in the process of transferring from another SETA. - To submit InterSETA transfer form - To submit proof of approved Workplace Skills Plan and Annual Training Report for 2026 from other SETA.
	Category	Potential Applicants
	Partnerships – Co-Funding	- Government Departments - Public Entities – including other SETAs - Any other eligible applicant - To indicate the contribution from the Entity - To indicate what contribution is required from BANKSETA
	Learning Institutions	- Public Universities - Public Universities of Technology (UoTs) - Community Education and Training Colleges - Technical Vocational Education Training Colleges (TVET) - The BANKSETA will only accept applications and communicate with eligible institutions directly and not through third parties. - It is a requirement that the public training institution delivers the training and not outsources to third parties. - Central Supplier Database registration (CSD)
	Training Providers	Accredited Private Providers. - To submit an accreditation letter with relevant scope - Central Supplier Database registration (CSD) - It is a requirement that the training provider delivers the training and not outsources to third parties.
Unemployed beneficiary/learner/ delegate	A person who is: - Unemployed - Under 35 years of age - Holder of South African identity documents. Note: <u>BANKSETA will prioritise:</u> - Persons with disabilities - Woman - Rural areas	

The objective of this funding window is to invite applications that will support National Priorities that emerge from time to time and contribute to the strategic outcomes of the BANKSETA. The funding of applications under this category will focus on promoting innovation or creativity or immediate needs or national government priorities or a mix thereof and more importantly subject to budget availability. This approach is intended to allow for impact driven, creative and / or innovative or interventionist approach towards skills development.

4. Funding

Any award of funding under this Funding Window is subject to the availability of approved budget.

All the programmes are to be delivered in person and should make provision for refreshments.

For purposes of this window the following funding criteria applies:

Deliverable	Funding Basis (VAT Inclusive)	Key Requirements
Skills programmes (registered or non-registered) ○ Literacy and Responsible Use ○ Cybersecurity and fraud prevention ○ AI and data analytics ○ Cloud engineering ○ Digital product management ○ Payments operations and real-time payments expertise ○ Regulatory and compliance technology ○ Customer experience and digital design ○ ICT Product Certifications ○ Fintech related skills ○ Regulatory & Compliance skills applicable to the banking and alternative banking sector	Capped at R30 000 per beneficiary <u>Funding Exclusions:</u> <i>Costs must be directly related to the approved programme. No purchase of laptops/devices, permanent software licences, general IT infrastructure or equipment retained after training. Programme not longer than 6 months.</i> <i>No work experience is required, but a simulated workplace environment will advantageous.</i>	<u>The following funding basis applies:</u> • Funding will be calculated per beneficiary. • The applicant must apply for the estimated amount (if actual cost is not available) but not exceed the capped amount. • BANKSETA will consider the duration of the Skills Programme when evaluating the application At the time of submitting performance information, the actual costing (Quote) from the Training Provider must be submitted as proof for payment.
AI Bursaries AI – for example: • Applied Artificial Intelligence • Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning • Generative AI & Large Language Models • AI for Financial Services / FinTech • AI for Fraud Detection & Financial Crime	Capped at R80 000 per beneficiary <u>Funding Exclusions:</u> <i>Costs must be directly related to the approved programme. No purchase of laptops/devices, permanent software licences, general IT infrastructure or equipment retained after training. Programme between 6 – 12 months.</i> <i>No work experience is required, but a simulated workplace environment will advantageous.</i>	<u>The following funding basis applies:</u> • Funding will be calculated per beneficiary. • The applicant must apply for the estimated amount (if actual cost is not available) but not exceed the capped amount. • BANKSETA will consider the duration of the Bursary and when evaluating the application At the time of submitting performance information, the actual costing (Quote) from the Training Provider must be submitted as proof for payment.

Deliverable	Funding Basis (VAT Inclusive)	Key Requirements
- AI & Data Science - AI for Risk & Credit Analytics - Natural Language Processing & Conversational AI - AI Automation & Intelligent Process Automation - Responsible AI, AI Governance & Ethics - Computer Vision & Intelligent Document Processing - AI Engineering / Machine Learning Operations		
Graduate and youth employment transition programmes (Work readiness) Workplace Readiness & Professional Skills - Job Search & Career Management Skills - Financial literacy - Customer Service & Client Engagement - Complex problem solving - Critical Thinking - Emotional Intelligence - Analytical thinking and innovation - Digital workplace skills	Capped at R15 000 per beneficiary <u>Funding Exclusions:</u> <i>Costs must directly support work readiness and transition to employment. No general recruitment/HR costs, permanent equipment or unrelated organisational costs.</i> <i>Minimum 2 weeks structured learning assessed practical outputs certificate of completion</i>	<u>The following funding basis applies:</u> - Funding will be calculated per beneficiary. - The applicant must apply for the estimated amount (if actual cost is not available) but not exceed the capped amount. - BANKSETA will consider the duration of the Skills Programme and the method of delivery when evaluating the application At the time of submitting performance information, the actual costing (Quote) from the Training Provider must be submitted as proof for payment.

Note:

In relation to the above BANKSETA will consider Programmes with proven outcomes for unemployed youth to transition to employment or self-employment.

Learners must not be funded by another funder for the same programme costs, including but not limited to NSFAS or another SETA. Learners should not be receiving any government grant/funds.

5. Delivery Model

Applications must align with the relevant requirements of the funding window:

- The interventions are intended for **unemployed** beneficiaries.
- Applicants may apply for only one **category**.
- The applicant must ensure that the proposed provider has the appropriate expertise and capacity to deliver the intervention and **where applicable**, must be accredited by the relevant Quality Assurance Authority for the Qualification applied for or the dedicated licensing authority where applicable. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that when learners have completed the training, they are able to complete all relevant assessments including EISA exams. The applicant is responsible for overall project management, governance and reporting, procurement and/or contracting with the training provider, financial management and record keeping.
- BANKSETA may limit the number of learners approved per institution based on available funding, equitable allocation and past performance and experience.
- BANKSETA may request additional documents during evaluation, due diligence, contracting, monitoring, payment or close-out where reasonably required to verify eligibility, delivery, expenditure or performance.

6. Application / Submission Criteria

Applicants must meet the application criteria as indicated below to qualify for funding:

- The Funding window must be selected and the application submitted on SIMS.
- Applicants may apply for only one programme and only one application form is permitted per applicant. Where multiple submissions are received before the closing date, BANKSETA will assess the latest submission received before the deadline
- The application form must be uploaded to SIMS.
- Applications on the SIMS system closes at **16:00** on the day that the window closes. **No late submissions will be accepted.**

7. Eligibility Criteria

Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria as indicated below to qualify for funding:

Eligible applicants:

- Eligible employer
- Government Departments, Public Entities – including other SETAs
- Public Universities, Public Technical Vocational Education Training Colleges (TVET), Universities of Technology (UoTs) or Community Education and Training Colleges
- Accredited Training Providers

8. Evaluation Criteria

An evaluation panel will be established to assess all applications received. The panel will be appointed by the CEO and will consist of at least three (3) members. Each panel member must sign a declaration of interest before the evaluation process begins. The evaluation proceedings, recommendations and final decisions will be documented and retained for audit purposes.

BANKSETA will use non-scored evaluation criteria to evaluate applications:

- The application form must be completed correctly, in full and signed. Incomplete and unsigned applications will be disqualified.
- Applicant is not under investigation (The applicant must not be under investigation for mismanagement of funds, fraudulent activities, or conduct resulting in fruitless and wasteful expenditure. Applicants that do not meet this criterion will be deemed ineligible for funding in accordance with the BANKSETA Discretionary Grant Policy).
- Consideration of Past Performance and Track Record (The applicant's past performance and track record on previously funded BANKSETA projects) will be assessed in a fair, transparent and proportionate manner. Past performance will not, on its own, result in automatic disqualification nor will it result in automatic approval.

The assessment will consider the applicant's utilisation of approved funding, achievement of project outputs, compliance with contractual and reporting requirements, and overall project performance. BANKSETA may use the Contract Register, Monitoring Reports, Performance Records, Write-back Records, Termination Records, Supporting Documentation and relevant investigation or whistleblowing to verify past performance.

A positive track record may result in prioritisation, while material underperformance may result in a reduced allocation or the application being declined.

9. Allocation Criteria

Funding will be equitably distributed among qualifying applicants, taking into account the following:

- The availability of funding.
- Funding is capped at as per the categories in the section 4 above (Funding).
- The administration fee for each applicant is capped at 2,5% of the total approved amount.
- BANKSETA may decrease the funds allocated for each application with an equal percentage (%) to remain with the available budget.

10. Funding Conditions

- BANKSETA will only fund training related costs
- If the BANKSETA Board approves additional funding for a particular funding window or if there are savings or **underutilisation** by successful applicants, BANKSETA may approve additional applications or increase the funding for a particular applicant. Only approved applications will qualify for additional funding.
- Additional allocations will be approved in accordance with the Delegations of Authority. The Discretionary Grant Policy provides for CEO approval within the delegated threshold and Board approval where the combined additional allocation exceeds that threshold.
- BANKSETA may undertake further due diligence or a risk assessment before final approval and contracting.
- The approved amount may not be exceeded. Where actual eligible costs exceed the approved amount, the applicant must fund the difference or make alternative arrangements without increasing BANKSETA's approved allocation.
- If an application exceeds the applicable capped amount per learner, BANKSETA will automatically apply the approved cap or reduce it
- No material change to the approved programme of study, learner numbers, Training Provider, implementation dates or approved budget may be implemented without prior written approval from BANKSETA.
- The same learner and cost may not be funded more than once. Applicants are responsible for preventing duplicate learners, duplicate claims and double funding.
- Where implementation has commenced or payments have been made, BANKSETA reserves the right to recover amounts paid where due diligence, monitoring or audit identifies ineligibility, material non-compliance, misrepresentation, an undisclosed conflict of interest, a prohibited related-party arrangement, unsupported expenditure or another ground permitted by the MoA and approved policy, subject to an appropriate fair process.

11. Approval, Appeal and Change Request Process

- 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. 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.

- Feedback on the status of the application will be provided to unsuccessful applicants. An unsuccessful applicant may appeal where it believes that the decision was incorrect or that relevant mitigating circumstances were not considered. The appeal must be submitted within 30 calendar days of receipt of the outcome. The appeal must identify the grounds of appeal and must include supporting evidence. Appeals will be considered in accordance with the approved Discretionary Grant Policy and Delegations of Authority.
- Change requests are discouraged but should this be unavoidable, the request which includes a written request signed by the authorised signatory, motivation, supporting evidence, revised implementation plan, revised timelines and revised budget where applicable, must be submitted to the BANKSETA within **one month** of receiving the outcome or whenever a change becomes necessary. 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. No change may be implemented without approval by BANKSETA.
- An extension request must be submitted at least **three months** before the contractual end date, with revised timelines and supporting motivation. An agreement that has already expired will not be reinstated.
- Replacement of approved learners requires prior written approval. Where the approved number of learners cannot be achieved or the funds will not be fully utilised, the contracting party must notify BANKSETA within one month of becoming aware of the underutilisation.

12. Contracting, Commitment Schedule and Project system update

- BANKSETA will sign a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) with the applicant for funding approved.
- The approval notification to the applicant will 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.
- The project manager will monitor all the received MoAs and any MoA not signed and returned to BANKSETA by the agreed date may be cancelled.
- Applicants should endeavour to meet deadlines and complete the project within the timelines submitted during 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. This should be done at least three months before the initial completion date.
- If the MoA expires without an approved extension, it will not be reinstated. Where BANKSETA determines that no project activity is taking place and the applicant has not provided a reasonable explanation, BANKSETA may terminate the MoA, withdraw any remaining funding and recover funds where applicable.

- Supporting learner documents must be submitted within two months of signing the MoA, or by another date agreed with BANKSETA, and may include identity documents, proof of registration/enrolment, learner details in the prescribed BANKSETA template and supporting information required to verify approved costs and learner eligibility.
- All signed agreements, addenda, amendments and payments will be recorded on the BANKSETA Commitment Schedule and reported quarterly.

13. Invoicing/ Funds Disbursement Process

- 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).
- No payment will be made unless the deliverables and supporting evidence stipulated in the MoA and disbursement schedule have been received, verified and accepted by BANKSETA.
- The first invoice to BANKSETA must be accompanied by official proof of banking details, which may not change for the duration of the project, and any documentation required by BANKSETA.
- The final invoice will be paid subject to all the project requirements being met. This may include a monitoring and evaluation process conducted by BANKSETA.
- Progress reports, close-out reports and completion evidence must be submitted with invoices as required. The close-out report may include project risks, deviations and mitigating actions, lessons learned, challenges, achievements, financial management and governance information.
- Invoices will be paid provided all project requirements are met and supporting documentation is provided (such as proof of payment to other parties, etc.)
- Successful applicants and payments are subject to a monitoring and evaluation process.
- Final payment will only be made for applicants who meet the approved completion requirements and once all tranche criteria have been met. BANKSETA may recover payments arising from invalid, fraudulent, duplicated or otherwise non-compliant claims.
- Applicants are reminded that all supporting documentation relating to funded learners, registration, approved costs and learner performance must be submitted as required with invoices and final claims.
- Incomplete or non-compliant learner documentation may result in the approved funding being reconsidered, reduced or withdrawn.
- Only performance information and deliverables relating to the applicable financial year will be considered for payment.

- The contracting party may not use project savings for another activity or purpose. Savings and unutilised or underutilised funds must be disclosed to BANKSETA and written back to the discretionary grant pool. Any reallocation will be subject to the approved policy and Delegations of Authority.

14. Disclaimer, Termination and Breach

- In all instances, BANKSETA reserves the right to approve / decline funding at its discretion.
- 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.
- BANKSETA may withhold grants or recover grants paid to an applicant where the allocated funding is not used for its approved purpose or where monitoring, verification or audit identifies incorrect learner status, fraudulent identity documents, mismanagement of funds, duplicate learners or claims, unsupported expenditure, non-achievement of approved outputs, material reporting failures, fruitless and wasteful expenditure, misrepresentation or other fraudulent or non-compliant claims.
- Material non-compliance may result in withholding of payments, reduction of funding, termination of the agreement and/or recovery of funds, subject to the terms of the MoA, the approved policy and an appropriate fair process.
- BANKSETA monitoring and evaluation may include funding expenditure, project-management efficiency, project risks, confirmation of learners, registration and academic status, verification of approved costs and achievement of approved outputs.

15. Impact Assessment

- Applicants must participate in BANKSETA tracer, evaluation and impact-assessment activities and must provide information reasonably required for this purpose.
- The impact assessment will be conducted in accordance with the applicable SETA Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and parameters determined by the BANKSETA Board. Applicants must notify BANKSETA of any changes to learners' contact details that become known to them, subject to applicable data-protection requirements.

16. Confidentiality of information

- In compliance with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act, 2013 (POPIA), 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:
 - 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

applicant in confidence and in a safe and secure manner.

- 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.

17. Reporting

BANKSETA's reporting function includes the following:

- Reporting skills development initiatives to the Department of Higher Education and Training.
- Reporting enrolments and achievements of programmes to the South African Qualifications Authority.
- Reporting on quality assurance functions to the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations.
- Evaluating and processing applications for access to funding.
- Compiling statistics and other research reports.
- Providing personalised communications.
- Providing information for internal and external auditing purposes.
- Complying with the law; and/or for a purpose that is ancillary to the above.
- Information related to Memoranda of Agreement will be kept for 5 years after the stated end date. After 5 years it will be destroyed.
- In the event that 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. 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.

Whether or not a protective order or other remedy is obtained, or the applicant party 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.

- Applicants agree to provide information as required by BANKSETA for the purpose of reporting to the Department of Higher Education and Training, as well as other statutory stakeholders.