

Tulani Hlabangana is an Executive Director at Signa Group. In her daily role at Signa Academy, she leads a team of dedicated professionals that are qualified to nurture, measure and guide organisations wanting to meaningfully impact their Skills Development Beneficiaries. She is an accomplished professional in the B-BBEE arena and is credited with providing unique solutions that not only drive Transformation, but create employment opportunities.

Skills Development – Planning and Evaluation

This year's submission deadline for Workplace Skills Plans (WSP) and Annual Training Reports (ATR) that are required annually per SETA recently passed through the calendar on 30th April 2018. Organisations now have a 12-month period to prepare for the 2019 submissions deadline, bearing in mind that progress is measured against the previous submission.

Both the WSP and ATR are measurement vehicles designed to steer Skills Development in a meaningful way that tracks development, plots employee succession plans and monitors the overall progress organisations are making.

Both the WSP and ATR are critical to an organisation's overall B-BBEE score. Failure to comply will negatively impact the Skills Development score as measured in the Amended Codes. As Skills Development is one of three identified Priority Elements, the consequence of not submitting a WSP and an ART could result in the discounting of an organisation's overall B-BBEE status level.

What is a Workplace Skills Plan?

It is a strategically designed document that identifies the skills gaps and needs of organisations. It further, in a systematic manner, identifies how such training and development needs will fill the skills deficit in a particular organisation. It is a fundamental instrument that stems from government's Skills Development Strategy.

Organisations who are Designated Employees are obligated by law to develop and submit an annual WSP to their relevant SETA.

Why is it important?

To be more globally competitive, closing the skills gap facing our nation is a priority. They are a mechanism whereby progress can be tracked and evaluated annually. Such a submission allows the government to track the progress of skills development initiated on a national basis annually.

What is critical to developing a WSP?

It addresses three critical areas that flow into one another:

1. It identifies the knowledge and skills of an organisation's current workforce.

Conduct a skills audit to establish the level of skills available in the current workforce. By identifying existing competencies, it may subsequently reveal hidden talents or skills which an employee may have.

2. This allows analysis of information gathered from the skills audit.

An analysis will allow an organisation to compare the current skills of employees against the requirements needed to fill their skills gap. Identified skills requirements should align with an organisation's overall strategic objectives.

3, A WSP must be based on these findings.

To address skills shortages, it is essential to identify a suitable training solution, which could be in the form of a Learnership that offers either external or in-house training courses accredited by the relevant SETA. Consideration must be given as to whether such an intervention will target individuals or groups. However, it must align with an organisation's resources, policies and budget. The plan, upon completion, should be a strategic priority, supported at an executive level.

What are the benefits of developing a WSP?

Organisations that correctly comply with the requirements of the submission, which includes submitting an ATR, may apply for:

- ✓ Mandatory and Discretionary Grants from their relevant SETA; and
- ✓ Tax incentives.

What is an Annual Training Report?

An ATR must be submitted alongside a WSP as it measures an organisation's progress against the previous year's WSP submission. An ATR highlights the success and failure of identified skills priorities and development objectives.

An ATR allows a SETA to ascertain whether training, development and education initiatives are complete or still in progress. The report must include attendance registers, the training spend per intervention, what training service providers were used, as well as the name of the Skills Development Facilitator.

It is critical to note that there are no consequences to an unsuccessful training intervention. This report provides evidence of the impact of training and allows organisations to re-evaluate their strategy in their next submission.