**CONCEPT NOTE FOR THE VIRTUAL NATIONAL SKILLS CONFERENCE 2021**

**Proposed dates 28-29 September 2021**

**Proposed Themes:**

1) "Promoting innovation and digitalization in the skills development ecosystem and contributing towards a responsive future of inclusive growth"

**Pre-Conference activities:**

In light of the recommendations during the previous conference report, the NSA should look at embarking on a provincial consultative programme that will run prior to the actual conference date. This consultative process will seek to track progress on skills development programs and measures put in place to support interventions such as Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Program.

Each provincial report will take stock of considerations of the key conference recommendations. The uniqueness of each province will have to be taken into account in the formulation of the key commission topics to be discussed during the National Skills Conference 2021.

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**PROPOSED DATE: 28-29 SEPTEMBER 2021**

| NO | CONTENT | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction and Background | |
| 2 | Purpose | |
| 3 | Objectives | |
| 4 | Expected Outcome | |
| **SECTION A: CONFERENCE AND COMMISSION** | | |
| 5 | Conference description | |
| 6 | Participants | |
| 7 | Conference Commissions | |
| 7.1 | Conference Commission Description | |
| 7.2 | Discussions in the Commissions | |
| **SECTION B: IDENTIFIED RISKS AND SPONSORSHIP** | | |
| 8 | Sponsorship of Advertisements | |
| 9 | Identified Risks to Skills Conference | |
| **SECTION C: FINANCIAL IMPLICATION AND ADMINISTRATION** | | |
| 10 | Conference Budget | |
| 11 | Conference Planning and Coordination | |
| 12 | Logistics Committee | |
| 13 | Content Committee | |
| 14 | Communications Committee | |
| **DRAFT PROGRAMME VIRTUAL SKILLS CONFERENCE** | | |

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The National Skills Authority (NSA) in conjunction with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation hosts the National Skills Conference and Awards biennially to recognize and promote good practice in skills development among stakeholders. The NSA in collaboration with other skills development stakeholders organizes the National Skills Conference 2021. The theme of the conference is "*Promoting innovation and digitalization in the skills development ecosystem and contributing towards a responsive future of inclusive growth*" which is aligned with national skills development priorities and goals. The conceptualization of the conference and awards dates as far back as the early days of the signing of a National Skills Accord on the role of social partners in transforming skills development trajectory of the South African workforce and creating learning opportunities of the new entrants. However due to the COVID-19 pandemic the NSA will not be hosting the conference awards in 2021.

The fourth National Skills Conference was hosted on 13-14 March 2019 with the theme "***Promoting innovation and digitalization in the skills development ecosystem and contributing towards a responsive future of inclusive growth***". The 2019 conference was attended by the  former Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Naledi Pandor and the Minister of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma.  The overall view of the conference was to encourage developing of strong partnerships and collaborations with industry leaders required as government cannot improve the skills development system on its own.

## 2. RATIONALE

South Africa's unemployment rate and low levels of skills particularly amongst the youth, continues to be a challenge that needs to be addressed. The skills development system is experiencing challenges such skills mismatches, blockages in youth entering the labour market and lack of meaningful partnerships. The conference is meant to be a space where policy makers, researchers, skills experts and stakeholder have meaningful deliberations, which assist the nation in moving the national goals of the skills development system forward.

The context of skills development in South Africa goes beyond contribution to economic growth and speaks to diverse government development goals, but the key focus remains using skills development to achieve inclusive growth for creating a competitive economy. This is also aligned with the goals of the National Skills Development Plan and is in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) where skills are a vital pillar of economic growth.

The South African economy and country has experienced devastating effects of the Coronavirus 2019 pandemic (COVID-19) which resulted in loss of jobs and livelihoods. Similar to other sectors of society, the skills development system has been affected. Through the use of a Skills Strategy on Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Program (ERRP), the sector has developed a plan that serves as a guide in responding to shocks and disruptions experienced. This conference will attempt to assist the government and all role players into building on the strategy to achieve reconstruction and recovery.

The changing nature of work and the South African economy requires skills that will assist the country with a smooth transition to a digital and green-driven economy. This conference will assist in tracking progress towards achieving these priorities and mapping the way forward on best practices to be utilised.

The NSA will host the fifth conference in the third quarter of 2021. The focus of the conference will include the promotion of innovative skills sets required for the future of work and encouraging entrepreneurial skills development programmes aimed at combating the scourge of high levels of unemployment in the country. The theme will also focus on areas to strengthen collaborations with industry leaders and the retraining and reskilling of the current workforce, to ensure that jobs are not lost in the new dispensation as we merge our economy with the forth industrial revolution (4IR) and to increase employability of youth.

## 3. PURPOSE

The purpose of the skills conference is to bring together all education, training, academics and skills development role players to solicit solutions to the challenges and blockages experienced in the implementation of skills development interventions. The skills conference is further aimed at promoting the work within the skills development sector, highlighting the functions of NSA and the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) which are central to the implementation of the NSDP 2030.

## 4. OBJECTIVES

- Strengthening collaborations (public / private / international) that seek to enhance modern, high quality and agile skills development systems.
- To review future skills in the world of work.
- To review the skills of the future: Is it all digital or are there other skills that are needed to empower young people?
- To align with the National Digital and Future Skills Strategy.

- To review the implementation of the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP).
- Provide social partners with a platform to pledge support and commitment to implement the plan.
- Create a platform for skills development stakeholders to highlight their organisations and to disseminate information.
- Highlight the importance of the skills development ecosystem and all its parts such as early childhood development.

## 5. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- The optimal use of collaborations (public and private partnerships) to close the emerging skills gap.
- Entrepreneurial programmes and other forms of work arrangements to keep people active in the economy and increase employability amidst automation and digitization replacing millions of jobs;
- To assess the state of readiness on government imperatives with the future world of work and the fourth industrial revolution.
- An overview on the status of the implementation of the NSDP 2030.
- SETAs, employers, organised labour and State to pledge their support in taking the recommendations of the conference forward.
- SETAs initiate the development of future skills and 4IR learning programmes.
- Employer to commence the review of the enforcements to reskill current workforce.
- Position the NSA as a skills development repository where information is accessible by all skills development stakeholders.

## PART A : VIRTUAL CONFERENCE AND COMMISSIONS

## 6. CONFERENCE DESCRIPTION

A two day Skills Conference to be successfully held in September 2021.
- **1000** delegates drawn from leaders of NSA stakeholders and its fraternal education & skills development organizations attend and participate effectively.
- The opening ceremony is graced by the Minister/Deputy President.
- Presenters will make presentations on the new proposed National Skills Development Plan, SETA landscape, and various research papers.
- An international speaker is to make observations and to share on other international developments and best practice.
- Five commissions will engage in the discussions of different priority areas.

- The 2nd day will continue with remaining presentations, feedback and finalise conference outcomes.
- NSA constituencies will make commitment pledges of supporting and fast tracking of skills development
- Skills Development stakeholder principals will be identified to assist in chairing and participating in the panel discussions.
- Conference outcomes will assist the NSA to deliver on its objectives and areas of advice to the Minister on the NSDP.

## 7. PARTICIPANTS

The total delegates to the 2021 Skills Conference will be limited to **1 000 delegates** and will be drawn from the following organisations and stakeholders:
- **450:** Representatives from NSA constituencies and key stakeholders (organized business, organized labour, community, providers, employment services)
- **21:** Sector Education and Training Authorities
- **50:** Universities
- **100:** TVET Colleges and CETs
- **10:** HRDC, NEDLAC
- **20:** Quality Councils (SAQA, UMALUSI, CHE, Universities South Africa, QCTO)
- **100:** DHET, DBE, DTI, DST, DPLG, DPSA, Presidency, DPME, Minister's guests,
- **10:** Parliament Portfolio Committee on HET
- **40:** PSDFs, PSTF, SASCE, NYDA, other skills development formations
- **10:** Research institutions,
- **20:** SADC and Internationals
- **10:** Media
- **15:** SALGA, DBSA, AGSA
- **10:** SOEs
- **20:** as identified by the NSA

## 8. CONFERENCE VIRTUAL COMMISSIONS

## 8.1 CONFERENCE COMMISSION DESCRIPTION

It is envisaged that the discussions in the commissions will lead to the following:

- Identification of disruptive technology trends that are changing the future of work, workforce, skills and workplace;
- Best approaches to reskilling and retraining;
- Innovative approaches to combat unemployment and entrepreneurial skills programmes;
- Challenges from the impact of automation, digitalisation-risks and opportunities for human machine collaboration;
- Commitment to strengthen institutional capacity of the skills development system;
- Benchmarking on international best practices towards the promotion of skills development;
- Parallel break away sessions divided along the following proposed themes:

- o Commission 1: Promoting high-impact and cutting-edge technological occupations for current and future industries.
- o Commission 2: A review and deliberation on the current status of the implementation of the NSDP.
- o Commission 3: The apprenticeship system for supporting industries.
- o Commission 4: Supporting the green economy skills.
- o Commission 5: Strengthening collaborations for an impactful vocational education and training system.

- Each commission will comprise of about 200 delegates registered up-front for the sessions.
- Each commission will have one presentation focusing on one component of the commissioned papers and will be restricted to not more than 20 minutes, followed by a panel discussion lasting for 40 minutes and 1 hour and 30 minutes for discussion.
- Identified high profile people will be briefed to assume responsibility in chairing sessions and will be provided with the Secretariat to assist them in compiling and presentation of reports the next day.

## 8.2 DISCUSSIONS IN THE COMMISSIONS

**Commission 1: Promoting high-impact and cutting-edge technological occupations for current and future industries.**

This theme is aimed at tracking and profiling the role of 4IR in shaping the skills development system agenda. The theme is also looking at strengthening the skills development system through sound planning, research, monitoring and evaluation.

a. **Transitioning into future skills: Systematic response to digital skills for South Africa.**

- Digitalisation by small businesses and informal sector,
- Inclusivity and transformation in addressing the skills gaps in light of 4.0 changes,
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for South Africa's Youth within the 4th Industrial Revolution,
- Best practices and strategies for meeting the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged youth (e.g. NEETs),
- Use of new technology by cooperatives and communities for advancing skills development programs,

- Advancing decent work agenda (by enabling workers at all levels to work with technologies brought by the 4IR): And answer the question of, how technological developments act as advancement of workers?

b. **Skills planning, monitoring and research for system: Supporting and monitoring the capacity of the skills development system.**

- Skills planning for the disruptive Fourth Industrial Revolution in economic industries

- Building progress towards an integrated and responsive Monitoring and Evaluation System,

- Skills planning: Reflections of skills planners towards achieving national priorities,

- Quality Assurance: How does the system ensure quality without creating a compliance driven approach?

## Commission 2: A deliberation on the current status of the implementation of the NSDP

The NSDP was approved in 2019 and implemented in 2020. There has been a number of developments in the skills development system such as re-positioning and responding to COVID-19 related disruptions. Below are sub-themes to help in guiding the discussion.

a. **NSDP: Tracking strategies for implementing outcomes**

- Assessing baseline information and data in implementing eight outcomes

- Exploring strategies for accelerating achievements of Outcomes

b. **Funding**

- Funding mechanisms for skills development system in South Africa

- Reflection utilisation of funds for skills development programs

- Funding model: Towards a sustainable funding mechanisms for the system

## Commission 3: The apprenticeship system for supporting industries.

The theme focus will highlight the role of apprenticeship programs in supporting industries to respond to 4IR needs. The topics are as follows:

- Progress made on National Artisan Development Program,

- TVET Colleges and Technological developments: How can the TVET System adapt to changing technological landscape and stay relevant,

- Use of technology by arts and creative industries in supporting skills development interventions.

## Commission 4: Supporting the green economy skills

The theme will focus on reflecting how the skills development system is supporting growing of economic activity in the green industry sector. This focus area will be an attempt to bring together

research and stakeholder views on skills for a low carbon and resource-efficient economy. The discussion will also asses the role of skills development in assisting the shift in the economy towards cleaner industries and sectors. The focus will be on the following topics:

- Policy that supports green economy skills for transition
- Exploring skills development programs for green-based skills
- Role of Agriculture and other key industries in developing green economy skills

**Commission 5: Strengthening collaborations for an impactful vocational education and training system.**

Partnerships play a critical role in building capacity of the skills development sector. The following sub-themes will be used in guiding the discussion.

- Towards an improved partnership model: Exploration of best local and international models that support collaborations in the skills development system

- Case studies: Review on best practices for partnership models

- District Development Model: An opportunity for skills development partnerships for growing rural economies

### 8.3 Plenary / panel topics

- Technological automation and impact on the South African labour market.
- The shift from libraries to technology centres (rural & urban areas).
- The role of quality assurance institutions in recognizing digital programmes.
- Public and private tertiary institutions and their alignment with 4IR.
- Alignment of PSDFs to the District Development Model.
- Update on pledges from previous conference.
- National Digital and Future Skills Strategy;
- Skills strategy in support of Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan and its pillars.

## SECTION B : IDENTIFIED RISKS AND SPONSORSHIP

**Sponsorship of Advertisements**

- Request media companies to sponsor airtime to flight NSA Skills Conference advertisements. Such advertisement will be broadcasted on Community Radio Stations. Press media could be requested to offer advertising space.
- NSA EXCO to do radio interviews in order to market the conference.

**Identified Risks to Skills Conference**

- Changes to conference dates.
- Changes in conference goals.

- Changes in delegate numbers.
- Changes in details of the nominated delegates.
- Delays in procurement processes.
- Changes in commissioned conference papers.
- Non availability of delegates/speakers.
- Changes and delays on the finalization of the conference programme and conference papers.
- Additional accommodation requests.
- Changes in delegates logistical arrangements.
- Additional costs and deviation from budget.
- Delays in processing of invitations due to incorrect email addresses.
- Non registration on the online registration system resulting in long queues.
- Documentation emergency printing.

## SECTION C:  Financial implications  and Administration

## 10     CONFERENCE BUDGET

The hosting of virtual conference is a collaborative effort between the National Skills Authority (NSA) and the SETAs. NSA will cover costs related to the venue, catering and all other conferencing related matters whilst the SETAs will sponsor technical aspects of the virtual conference related logistics. The NSA will assist the required designated NSA constituencies with logistics costs to ensure their involvement (e.g., community constituencies)

The budget will be used to cover the costs of the following:
- Venue (250 capacity plenary hall X2 days, 4X virtual breakaway rooms 1day.
- Ministerial holding room, conference coordinating room and catering (3x Tea X250 & 2x lunch X250)

## 11     CONFERENCE PLANNING AND COORDINATION

The purpose of the conference planning and coordination committee is to plan, coordinate and manage the logistics of the conference. In order to make the conference a success, the NSA Executive Officer will assume the role of Project Manager. The duties will include:
- Processing a guest list and RSVP for about 1200 people assuming 200 declines.
- Booking of Plenary venue with sitting arrangement for 250 people booked three months prior the conference date. 5 virtual breakaway rooms that can accommodate at least 200 people each. Venue to be in Gauteng.
- Conference registration

- Advise on technology needs & procurement
- Catering services (numbers to be confirmed)
- Working closely with a dedicated cohort of 14 DHET personnel comprising of the following:
  - o 4 Skills Development branch officials
  - o 1 HRDCSA Secretariat
  - o 1 TVET
  - o 1 CETC
  - o 1 UNIV
  - o 1 Communications Directorate
  - o 2 SETAs representatives
  - o 2 Procurement ( Fund Manager)
  - o 1 Security official
  - o 2 Ministry
- The Project Manager will report to the NSA/DDG: SD.

## 12  Logistics Committee

The DHET staff members will assist the Project Manager in carrying out the following functions:

- Communications, Marketing  & publications
- Liaison with speakers & sub-committee chairpersons
- Conference documentation

Other sections of DHET are to be mobilized to assist where there is a need.

Updates on progress will be provided to the NSA Conference Task Team and NSA EXCO.

## 13  Content Committee

The purpose of the content committee is to:

- Develop content for the conference discussions including commissions.
- Set criteria and guidelines of the submission of conference papers.
- Identify relevant speakers.
- Call and adjudicate conference papers where need arise
- It will comprise of the following members:
  - o 2 x members of NSA
  - o NSA Secretariat
  - o 2 x Research Monitoring Evaluation
  - o SETA representatives
- Team will develop terms of reference, set implementation schedule and report to Conference Task Team on regular basis.

## 14  Communications  Committee

Conference Information and Communication Technology Requirements

- Entertainment during the opening ceremony
- Sound system for the plenary,
- Travel & accommodation (max 300 people)
- Conference marketing & materials = SETAs
- Conference Project Manager/Events Management Company
- Conference technology
- Conference session speakers
- Entertainment (opening session) = SETAs

## DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR  SKILLS CONFERENCE

### DAY ONE: OPENING CEREMONY PROGRAMME (Detailed)

To give the Skills Conference a high profile status and to set the scene:

08:00 – 09:45 : Registration by delegates

09:45 – 10:00 : <span style="color:red">Entertainment</span>

10:00 – 10:05 : National Anthem

10:05 – 10:15 : NSA Chairperson Welcome address

10:15 – 10:20 : Video show on previous achievements on NSDS III

10:20 – 10:50 : Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (opening address)

10:50 –11:00 : Introduction and welcoming of the Deputy President by the Minister of Higher
                           Education, Science and Innovation

11:00 – 11:30 : Deputy President: Key note Address

11:30 – 11:40 : Vote of thanks and announcements

11:40 – 12:00 : Tea Break


### DAY ONE: AFTERNOON PROGRAMME 12:00 - 16:00

12:00 – 12:40  : Presentation by a commissioned speaker:

12:40 – 13:10  : Lunch

13:10 – 13:40  : Presentation of commissioned papers in parallel commissions

13:40 – 14:20  : Panel discussions on the papers

14:20 – 15:20  : Discussions in the parallel commissions

15:20 – 16:00  : Commission Chairpersons and their Secretariat prepare reports for the next day

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### DAY TWO PROGRAMME (DETAILED): 09:00 - 13:10

09:00 – 09:05 : Opening & welcome by NSA Chairperson

09:05 – 09:30 : Speech by the Deputy Minister

09:30 – 10:45 : Commission reports and discussion

***10:45 – 11:15 Tea***

11:15 – 12:15 : NSA Constituency presentations on NSDP

12:15 – 12:40 : Reflections by an international speaker

12:40 – 13:00 : Closing Remarks by NSA Chairperson

13:00 - 14:00 : Lunch