

# RESEARCH STRATEGY

## FUTURE PERFECT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT



# Contents

<b>Vision</b> .....	3
<b>Mission</b> .....	3
<b>1. Background</b> .....	4
<b>2. Purpose</b> .....	4
<b>3. Strategic Research Objectives</b> .....	4
<b>4. Research Themes and Focus Areas</b> .....	5
<b>5. Guiding Principles</b> .....	5
<i>A. Evidence-based Research</i> .....	5
<i>B. Capacity Building</i> .....	5
<i>C. Consultation with our sub-sectors</i> .....	6
<i>D. Systematic analysis of sub-sector skills needs</i> .....	6
<i>E. Collaboration with the Universities and FET colleges and Research Institutions</i> .....	6
<i>F. Monitoring and Evaluation</i> .....	6
<b>6. Strategic Research Approach</b> .....	6
<i>About this strategy</i> .....	7
<i>Establishing research priorities</i> .....	7
<b>7. How We Will Deliver</b> .....	7
<i>Our structures, systems and resources</i> .....	7
<i>Research delivery mechanism</i> .....	8
<b>8. Acceptable Academic Standards</b> .....	9
<b>9. Risk Management</b> .....	9
<b>10. Conclusion</b> .....	9

## VISION

“To be a credible and effective skills development partner ensuring the delivery of service excellence that will produce a highly-skilled world-class workforce through various skills development interventions.”

## MISSION

“To establish a credible institutional mechanism that facilitates an efficient and effective skills development process, through a range of quality services and partnerships, to contribute to the achievement of sector competitiveness, transformation and economic growth.”

We are very pleased to introduce our five-year Research Strategy. The Fibre Processing and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA is a recently established organisation, which has a broad mandate to implement the national skills development strategy in 13 industrial sub-sectors. Growing our manufacturing sector is one of the core objectives towards economic growth, transformation, and development strategy, increasing inward investment and decent job creation. The intention behind clustering the FP&M SETA industries under a single SETA was clearly to improve the value chain linkages between the industries and it is this critical factor that makes the FP&M sector fertile ground for research studies. This strategy responds to the pressing challenges identified in the NSDS III that impact on the ability of our economy to expand and provide increased employment opportunities.

The work of the research division informs and underpins the credibility, understanding, and implementation of the skills development strategy by the Board and Executive Management of the FP&M SETA. The Research Division is still in its embryonic stage of development, but with the visionary and strategic leadership of the Chief Executive Officer, Ms. Felling Yende, we are anticipating that this division will give the sector the quantum leap and send it into a new growth trajectory giving it sustainability and competitive edge. Research assists decision makers make informed decisions, and our 2014-2020 Research Strategy will serve precisely that purpose. Our focus will be to ensure that research makes a much greater impact on skills development for our sector.

Although the Research Division has ploughed much of its energy into reviewing and updating the Sector Skills Plan, the work going forward would focus on the following thematic areas aligned to obtaining best practices through benchmarking:

- Access and redress issues in skills development
- Development of industry strategies aligned to skills development
- Impact, quality and return on investment
- Labour market analysis

Critical to the success of the research division in implementing a clearly defined research agenda aligned to the FP&M sector skills strategy, is the research chair partnership with a public HET institution. We are anticipating that once the partnership gains momentum we hope to address our strategic mandate of establishing a credible institution for skills planning by ensuring that the strategic outcomes of the research agenda are achieved.

# 1. Background

The Fibre, Processing, and Manufacturing (FP&M) SETA was established by the Minister of Higher Education and Training on 01 April 2011 to 31 March 2018. The FP&M SETA (SETA) is a result of the amalgamation of the CTFL SETA, FIETA and the Printing, Packaging and Publishing sectors of the MAPPP SETA. The FP&M SETA mandate is:

- to provide skills development services to the clothing, footwear, forestry, furniture, general goods, leather, packaging, print media, printing, publishing, pulp and paper, textiles and wood products sectors;
- to implement the objectives of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III); and
- to ensure that people obtain the critical or scarce skills that are needed to build the capacity of the sector to become economically sustainable and globally competitive.

In alignment to the NSDS III and the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training, the FP&M SETA intends to establish the Research Chair Initiative (RCI) in partnership with public institutions of higher learning, aimed at strengthening the research of the FP&M SETA and the establishment of a Centre of Excellence. It is against this background the FP&M SETA put together this research strategy.

The SETAs are key institutions in the effort to bridge education and work. They are stakeholder bodies established in terms of the Skills Development Act (No.97 of 1997). SETAs are encouraged to undertake evidence-based research in the development of their Sector Skills Plans (SSP). SETAs also have a research role through which they need to utilise data, undertake research and evaluations to inform skills development strategies and interventions. FP&M SETA is working towards accurate information for the development of its Sector Skills Plan (SSP) and for the implementation of skills planning interventions in FP&M subsectors.

## 2. Purpose

The FP&M SETA is an innovative SETA and had embarked on an initiative to work towards an integrated research strategy that is aligned to the National Skills Development Strategy III goals and objectives, through its new business model and approach. The purpose of research is to answer questions and to advance knowledge. In contributing towards the advancement of knowledge creation in the skills planning and development the FP&M SETA prepared this research strategy document to outline its approach towards the implementation of the research agenda. This research strategy document should be read in conjunction with the FP&M SETA's research agenda, which highlights the SETA's research projects and programmes.

## 3. Strategic Research Objectives

The FP&M SETA's strategic research objectives are outlined below. These will be achieved through the implementation of the Research Agenda and its research programmes.

1. Establishment of a university-based Centre of Excellence to undertake sector-wide research relevant to the FP&M SETA including its 13 sub-sectors
2. Facilitate the establishment of partnership with international training institutions and universities, and global support knowledge sharing
3. Contribute to research in skills, labour market and post-school education relating to the FP&M SETA 13 sub-sectors
4. Produce research instruments and methodologies for monitoring and evaluation of FP&M SETA interventions and projects
5. Conduct impact assessment studies on FP&M SETA funded and non-funded programs, projects and learning interventions; and establish a sustainable FP& SETA learner tracking and tracing system
6. Establish knowledge management for baseline data deposits;
7. Support and enhance capacity on implementing the FP&M SETA research agenda.

## 4. Research Themes and Focus Areas (As per the Research Agenda)

- a) Develop and FP&M SETA Research Focus; ensuring evidence-based research to guide planning
- b) Articulation, clustering and shared services through, creation of a systematic dialogue and collaboration in order to:
  - Facilitate the establishment of partnership with international training institutions and universities that can support skills development within FP& M SETA sub-sectors
  - Support knowledge sharing from international partners
  - Create opportunities for collaboration and centres of excellence
  - Enhance engagements with our service providers
  - Collaborative research into skills bench strength of all 13 sub-sectors
  - Benchmark locally to identify model sub-sectors
  - Benchmark international to establish learning site for us
  - Develop milestones for each sub-sector
- c) Participation in labour market intelligence and post-school education research:
  - Research instruments and methodology for labour market and sector skills planning purposes are produced.
  - Collaboration with industry in the development of their sectoral growth strategies/models for responsive development of the scarce and critical skills lists
- d) Monitoring and Evaluation (Impact Assessment)
- e) Development of research methodologies, data curation systems and establishment of baseline data deposits
- f) Development of an FP&M SETA Recognition of Prior learning model (RPL)
- g) Capacity building and skills transfer

## 5. Guiding Principles

The following key principles are engraved in every project and process that the FP&M SETA embarks on in relation to its research activities. These ensure contact awareness of the importance of research and its role in leading towards addressing skills development issues in the fibre, processing and manufacturing sector. These principles are informed by the reviewed role of the SETAs as mentioned in the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training of 2012.

### A. Evidence -based research

Evidence-informed planning is an important aspect of ensuring that the implemented strategies and interventions target the issues faced by the stakeholders that the FP&M SETA serve in its 13 sub-sectors.

The FP&M SETA's Skills Planning and Research Unit is working towards upholding this principle by ensuring comprehensive research guides its projects and programmes and fostering close interaction with its stakeholders. Through the Tracking and Tracing Research Project, FP&M SETA will gather adequate baseline data from all its interventions and this will contribute to the pool of accurate data to be used for to provide strategic direction on how the FP&M SETA's interventions are impacting on the sector.

### B. Capacity building

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2012) places emphasis on the need for SETAs to acquire the adequate to achieve its mandate. FP&M SETA has been through a process of change and transition, the internal research unit has been through operational changes and has additional in-house capacity.

This places the SETA in a better position to undertake in-house research as well as better coordination of its research projects. The key areas of capacity that are required by the internal FP&M research staff include:

- Research skills
- Data management and analysis
- Managing research projects
- Information and knowledge management

### **C. Consultation with our sub-sectors**

Gaining timely and accurate information from industry is very important; through constant communication and targeted research projects, it is possible. However, acquiring detailed information about industry growth plans and skills demand strategies would require increased facilitation of closer relations from FP&M SETA and its 13 sub-sectors.

Through support from its newly appointed research partner; the Centre for Researching Education and Labour (REAL) from the University of Witwatersrand and Mzabalazo Advisory Services (MAS), the FP&M SETA has planned 13 sub-sectoral stakeholder engagements that would be followed by internal management and staff workshops. These engagements are geared towards aligning the strategy within the Sector Skills Plan with the Strategic Plan and thus the research project and programmes put in place to achieve that strategy.

### **D. Systematic analysis of sub sector skills needs**

The FP&M SETA's Research Chair Initiative (RCI) will facilitate sector strategy development in line with the NSDS III objectives. These will be done through large-scale industry surveys as well as focus groups and the establishment of industrial strategies for each of the 13 sub-sectors.

### **E. Collaboration with Universities and FET colleges and Research Institutions**

In working towards the NSDS III goal for Establishing a Credible Institutional Mechanism for Skills Planning the FP&M SETA participates in the Post School Education and Training Research Forum formed by the department of Higher Education and Training as a member of the Working Group. It provides strategic research direction through interaction with other SETAs and DHET in this forum.

The FP&M SETA is constantly working towards expanding its partnerships with Universities and TVET colleges. One noteworthy partnership is the formation of the Research Chair Initiative (RCI) with the University of Witwatersrand's Centre for Researching Education and Labour. This unique partnership will benefit from university academic knowledge and resources as well as industry knowledge and resources. The WITS research team will also transfer capacity through this initiative. The FP&M SETA will be setting new standards in research-based skills planning, monitoring, and evaluation knowledge management.

### **F. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The FP&M SETA's research strategy places high importance on effective monitoring and evaluation and strategies to trace the impact of its interventions. Through the RCI the FP&M SETA will identify potential evaluation projects and move from numerical or quantitative reporting towards a qualitative assessment of programme outcomes and impact, through tracking and tracing and longitudinal studies.

## **6. Strategic Research Approach**

Knowledge is imperative for good decision-making and it permits the process of comprehension to take place. Such knowledge and comprehension is possible where a platform of data and information exist. Since the inception of the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) in 2001, knowledge and comprehension of sectors has been pivotal to the daily operations of SETAs. Knowledge and comprehension of any phenomenon lies with the comprehension of research and the ability to acquire knowledge and understanding through various methods of collecting data and information.

### About this strategy

The FP&M SETA will spend approximately R 7 million on research work over the next two years. This strategy explains how the budget for research purposes will be utilised to conduct research in support of the FP&M Strategic SETA Plan 2015/2016 to 2019/20. The FP&M SETA Strategic Plan 2011-2016 is in line with the outcomes of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III). This strategy forms part of the FP&M SETA overall approach to address the skills development needs of the 13 industrial sectors

### Establishing research priorities

The R&I sub-division is central to the FP&M SETA's determination to improve skills development and its key aims are:

- To conduct sector-related research and further disseminate reports to stakeholders
- To manage all information related to the FP&M SETA
- To commission, manage, and oversee research to inform the Sector Skills Plan (SSP)

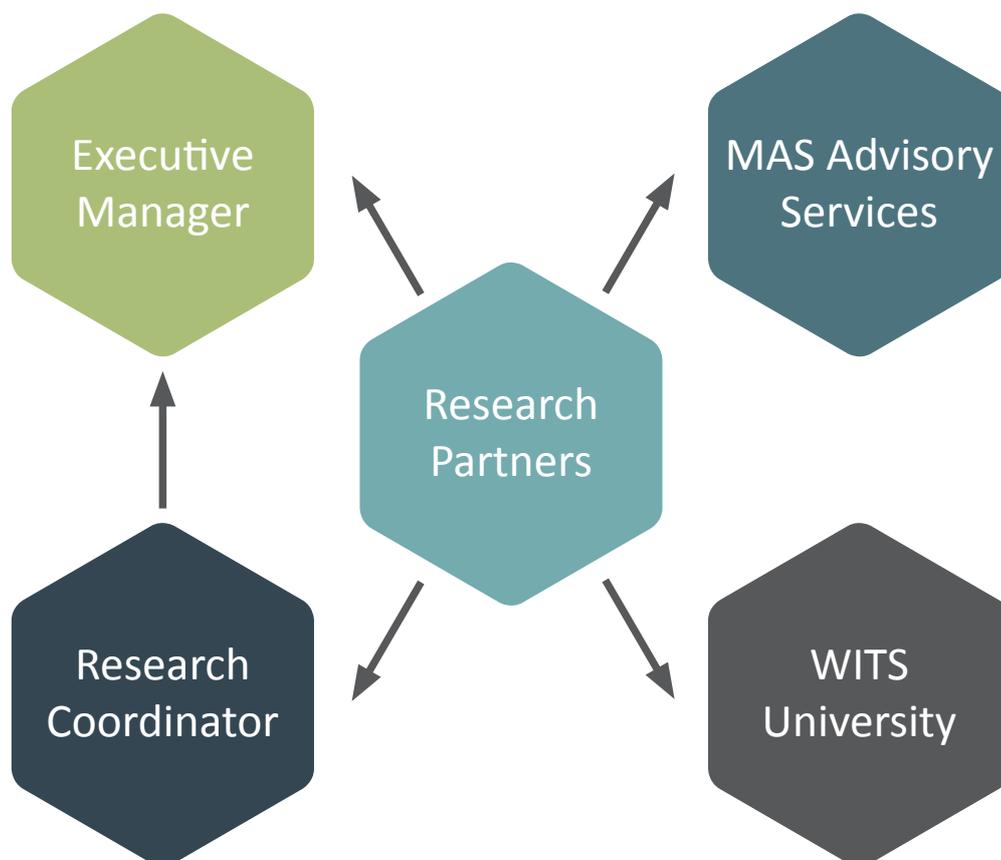
## 7. How We Will Deliver

Our research must be high quality, and it must have impact. So we need to have strong research systems and processes, solid and diverse partnerships, and strong delivery mechanisms.

### Our structures, systems, and resources

The research sub-division must intellectually take the lead in delivering high-quality research that shapes ideas, policy, and practice.

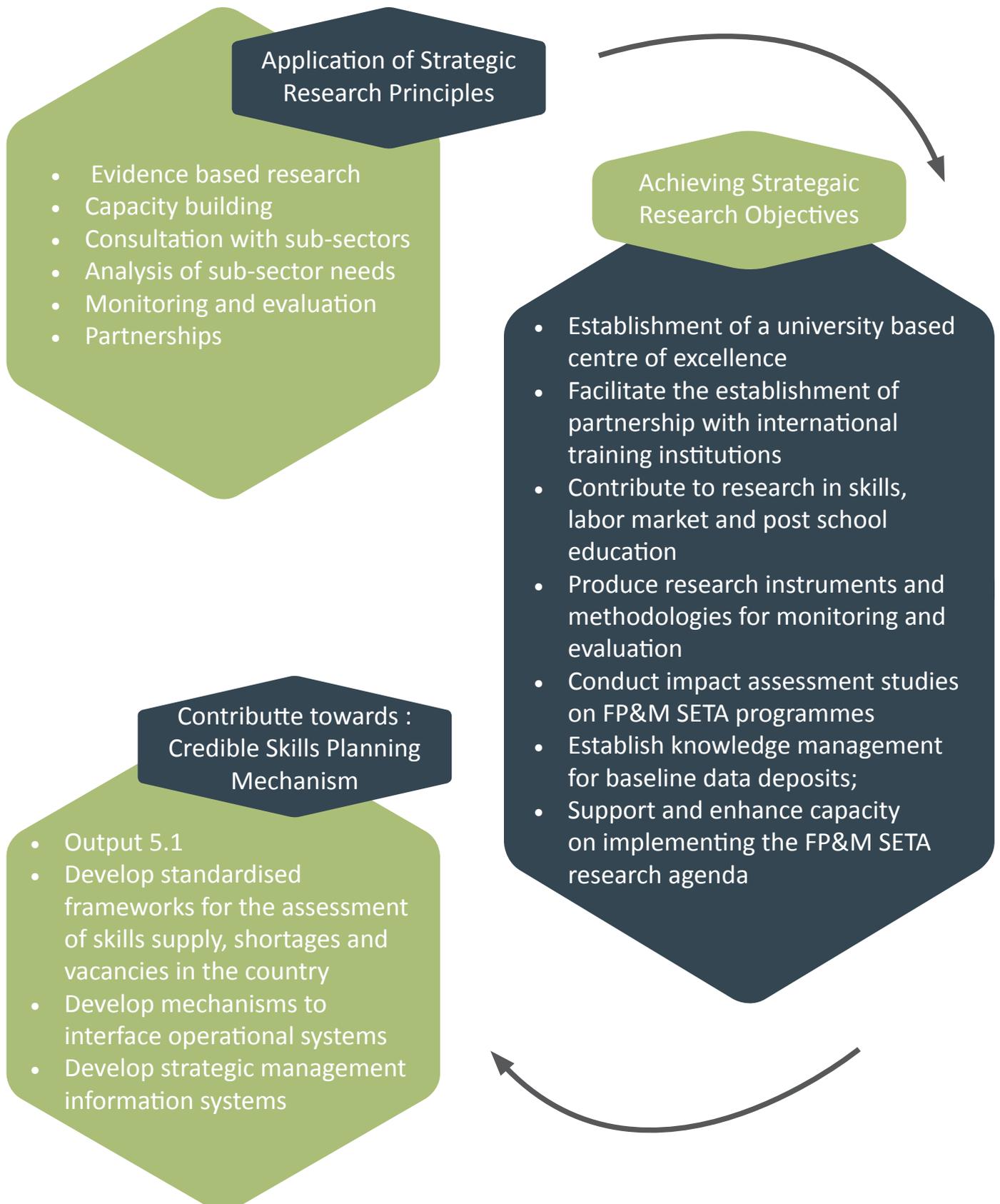
The organogram below demonstrates how these resources will be allocated.



As part of quality assurance, monitoring, and evaluation of research, results will be implemented.

## Research delivery mechanism

The R&I sub-division will support a range of research approaches, depending on what the division wants to achieve. These approaches will include research managed directly by the division, joint research, and research as part of international initiatives. In the next five years, all research work in line with the organisational strategy.



## 8. .Acceptable Academic Standards

All research work will be of acceptable academic standards (i.e. guidelines for conducting academically acceptable research will be strictly followed from writing a research proposal to disseminating research results). Research proposals should comply with the following suggested guidelines for development of research proposals:

- Title and Authors: This section includes the title and name of the researcher, address and name of the institution.
- Research Title: The title should be short, precise, and clear on the unit of analysis.
- Background Information: This section provides information on the rationale behind the study and background information that warranted the need for the study.
- Preliminary Literature Study: This research process provides evidence that some preliminary reading on the research phenomenon has taken place. It indicates how the initial idea was developed which ultimately resulted in the research problem statement or formulation. It also provides information concerning the theoretical literature on the topic.
- Research Statement: The research problem should be a clear and unambiguous statement of the object of study and the research objectives. The problem statement is sometimes formulated as specific research questions or research hypothesis.
- Research Design: The end product of research should be clearly defined. The proposal should determine the kind of study that is being planned and the kind of results aimed at achieving.
- Research Methodology: This section should determine the kind of tools and procedures to be used during the research processes.
- Timeframe: All research work should be time bound. All research processes should be allocated periods to ensure quality research and research that is relevant.
- Ethical Considerations: All ethical principles should be observed at all times when conducting research work.
- References: Quoted and consulted scholars and authors should be properly referenced to avoid plagiarism and to contribute to the body of knowledge of that school of thought.

## 9. Risk Management

As time goes, new developments may arise and may change the course of this strategy. As part of our mitigation plan to manage any risk that may occur, we have treated this document as a working document subject to change when necessary.

## 10. Conclusion

This research strategy is aligned the FP&M SETA's set of strategic goals. This research strategy brings to the fore the approach that will be taken by the research division during the set planning period. The application of research principles, the achievement of the research objectives as well as the implementation of the research agenda, will all be done through a dialogue between all stakeholders.