



## **APPLICATION GUIDELINES FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### **2026/27 FINANCIAL YEAR**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) provides Discretionary Grant funding to support skills development initiatives that advance the objectives of the mining and minerals sector.

These Application Guidelines outline the requirements, processes, evaluation criteria, and funding conditions applicable to organisations applying for funding under the Special Projects and Partnerships funding stream. The guidelines must be read together with the MQA Funding Policy, Discretionary Grants Rules, approved Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and any terms of reference issued by the MQA.

#### **2. PURPOSE OF THE FUNDING**

The purpose of Special Projects and Partnerships funding is to:

- Support innovative and strategic interventions that contribute to skills development within the mining and minerals sector.
- Respond to emerging sectoral needs, skills shortages, technological developments, and national priorities.
- Strengthen collaboration between the MQA and stakeholders.
- Promote transformation, inclusion, sustainability, and economic development.
- Advance strategic objectives identified in the MQA Strategic Plan and Sector Skills Plan.

### 3. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applications may be submitted by any legally registered public or private entity within the Republic of South Africa, including:

- Private sector companies.
- Public entities.
- Government departments and agencies.
- Universities.
- Universities of Technology.
- TVET Colleges.
- CET Colleges.
- Research institutions.
- Industry associations.
- Professional bodies.
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
- Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs).
- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs).
- Other entities deemed appropriate by the MQA.

Applicants must be in good standing and legally authorised to conduct business and implement the proposed project.

### 4. CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

#### 4.1 OPENING OF FUNDING WINDOWS

The application window for Special Projects and Partnerships will be opened through public advertisements and will be subject to the availability of budget as well as compliance with programme requirements.



## 4.2 PUBLICATION OF CALLS

Funding windows will be published through approved MQA communication channels, including:

- The MQA website.
- Social media platforms.
- Stakeholder communication platforms.
- Official notices and circulars.

The published call will include:

- Opening and closing dates.
- Funding priorities.
- Terms of Reference (TOR).
- Funding limits.
- Required documentation.
- Submission instructions.

## 5. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit:

### 5.1 COMPLETED APPLICATION FORM

The prescribed MQA application form completed in full and signed by an authorised representative.

### 5.2 PROJECT PROPOSAL

The proposal must clearly outline:

- Project background and rationale.
- Problem statement.
- Objectives.
- Target beneficiaries.
- Expected outcomes and impact.
- Project implementation plan.
- Sustainability plan.
- Monitoring and evaluation approach.
- Budget breakdown.
- Risk management plan.

### 5.3 SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

The MQA may require:

- Company registration documents.
- Tax Compliance Status (TCS) PIN.
- Certified identity documents of authorised representatives.
- Audited Annual Financial Statements or independently reviewed financial statements.
- Proof of accreditation (where applicable).
- Organisational profile.
- Letters of support (where applicable).
- Proof of relevant experience and previous projects.
- Bank confirmation letter.
- Municipal account or proof of business address.

The MQA reserves the right to request additional information.

## 6. MANDATORY COMPLIANCE REQUIREMENTS

Applications will only proceed to evaluation if they:

- Are submitted within the prescribed timeframe.
- Are submitted through the approved platform.
- Contain all mandatory supporting documentation.
- Meet the requirements stipulated in the funding advertisement and Terms of Reference.

Incomplete applications will be disqualified.

## 7. SPECIAL PROJECTS EVALUATION CRITERIA

All compliant applications will be evaluated against the following criteria.

### 7.1 INNOVATION

The project must demonstrate new or improved approaches to addressing skills development challenges within the mining and minerals sector.

Examples include:

- New delivery models.
- Digital learning solutions.
- Emerging technology applications.
- Novel skills development methodologies.

## 7.2 UNIQUENESS

Applicants must demonstrate how the project differs from existing initiatives and addresses a gap not adequately covered through current MQA interventions.

## 7.3 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Projects must align to one or more MQA priority focus areas, including:

- Green Skills.
- Mineral Beneficiation Skills.
- Technological Advancement Skills.
- Rural Economic Development.
- Research and Innovation.
- Infrastructure Development.
- SETA High Impact Programmes (SIHIP)

## 7.4 SECTOR NEED AND IMPACT

Projects must demonstrate their ability to:

- Address identified skills shortages.
- Respond to sector challenges.
- Improve employability.
- Increase access to skills development opportunities.
- Benefit priority target groups.

## 7.5 ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY

Applicants must demonstrate:

- Technical expertise.
- Project management capacity.
- Financial management capability.
- Relevant experience.

## 7.6 PREVIOUS PERFORMANCE

Where applicable, previous performance on MQA-funded projects will be considered, including:

- Achievement of targets.
- Contract compliance.
- Reporting performance.
- Audit outcomes.
- Financial accountability.

## 7.7 ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Applicants must meet any additional requirements specified in the Terms of Reference.

## 7.8 COST EFFECTIVENESS

Applicants must demonstrate:

- Competitive pricing.
- Appropriate utilisation of resources.
- Value for money.
- Reasonable administrative costs.

## 7.9 SCORING MATRIX FOR SPECIAL PROJECTS (ADVERTISED)

All compliant applications will be evaluated by the Evaluation Committee against the criteria below. The maximum achievable score is **100 points**.

Applications scoring **70 points or higher** may proceed to due diligence, subject to available budget.

## 7.10 SCORING GUIDE

The following guide shall be applied consistently across all evaluation criteria.

## 8. PARTNERSHIP APPLICATION GUIDELINES

MQA partnerships are intended to create strategic collaborations that advance skills development outcomes.

The MQA may initiate partnerships directly with organisations that satisfy the relevant criteria.

## 9. MQA-INITIATED PARTNERSHIPS

For an MQA-initiated partnership to be considered, all mandatory requirements must be met.



## 9.1 MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

The proposed partnership must:

- Be beneficial to the MQA and the mining and minerals sector.
- Advance the MQA's strategic objectives.
- Be informed by credible research and evidence.
- Be supported by an available budget allocation.

## 9.2 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Preference may be given to partnerships that:

- Improve sectoral skills development outcomes.
- Promote innovation.
- Advance transformation objectives.
- Expand the impact of MQA interventions.
- Address identified skills pipeline gaps.
- Support national priorities.
- Emerge from stakeholder engagements.

## 10. PARTNERSHIP CRITERIA BY ORGANISATION TYPE

### 10.1 PRIVATE SECTOR ENTITIES

Applicants should demonstrate:

- Strategic alignment with MQA priorities.
- Proven expertise and sector experience.
- Relevant infrastructure and resources.
- Commitment to transformation and inclusion.
- Ability to generate measurable outcomes.
- Innovation and uniqueness.
- Value for money.

### 10.2 GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND PUBLIC ENTITIES

Projects should demonstrate:

- Alignment with national development priorities.
- Public value creation.
- Sector-wide impact.
- Technical capability and implementation capacity.
- Sustainability.
- Efficient use of public resources.

### 10.3 PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Institutions should demonstrate:

- Relevant programme offerings.
- Industry relevance.
- Research capability.
- Appropriate facilities and infrastructure.
- Accreditation and compliance requirements.
- Value for money.

### 10.4 NGOs, NPOs AND CBOs

Organisations should demonstrate:

- Legal registration and compliance.
- Good governance.
- Financial accountability.
- Community reach and credibility.
- Proven impact.
- Sustainability of project outcomes.
- Value for money.

## 11. DUE DILIGENCE

Applicants that meet the minimum evaluation requirements may undergo due diligence before final approval.

The due diligence process may include:

- Site visits.
- Verification of information submitted.
- Assessment of organisational capacity.
- Financial verification.
- Governance assessment.
- Infrastructure verification.
- Interviews with key personnel.

The M&E Unit will coordinate due diligence activities, with support from nominated officials where required.



## 11.1 DUE DILIGENCE ADJUSTMENT

Following due diligence, the Evaluation Committee may recommend:

- Approval.
- Conditional Approval.
- Partial Approval.
- Rejection.

Where material discrepancies are identified during due diligence, the committee may reduce the applicant's score, disqualify the applicant, or recommend rejection regardless of the initial evaluation score.

## 12. APPROVAL PROCESS

Applications will undergo:

1. Compliance screening.
2. Technical evaluation.
3. Recommendation by the Evaluation Committee.
4. Due diligence assessment (where applicable).
5. Internal approval processes.
6. Final approval according to the MQA Delegation of Authority.

The MQA reserves the right to approve, partially approve, or decline any application.

## 13. AWARDING OF FUNDING

Successful applicants will receive an official allocation letter confirming:

- Approved funding amount.
- Approved targets.
- Conditions of funding.
- Contracting requirements.
- Reporting obligations.

The allocation letter does not constitute authority to commence project activities until the required agreement has been signed.

## 14. CONTRACTING

### 14.1 SPECIAL PROJECTS

Approved projects will be contracted through:

- Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), or
- Service Level Agreement (SLA).

## 14.2 PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships may be formalised through:

**Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)**

Used where parties collaborate strategically without the transfer of funds.

**Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)**

Used where financial commitments, cost-sharing arrangements, or funded activities are involved.

## 14.3 COMMENCEMENT

No project or partnership may commence before all applicable agreements have been signed by duly authorised representatives.

## 15. GENERAL CONDITIONS

The MQA reserves the right to:

- Conduct verification processes at any stage.
- Request additional information.
- Withdraw funding where misrepresentation is identified.
- Suspend or terminate agreements for non-performance.
- Reallocate funds where approved targets are not achieved.
- Reject applications that do not meet prescribed requirements.

