



TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) - MQA SPECIAL PROJECTS AND PARTNERSHIPS

2026/27 FINANCIAL YEAR

Mining Qualifications Authority
Special Projects and Partnerships Funding Window

1. BACKGROUND

The Mining Qualifications Authority (MQA) is established in terms of the Skills Development Act and is mandated to facilitate and support skills development within the Mining and Minerals Sector (MMS).

The MQA hereby invites eligible organisations to submit proposals for Special Projects and Partnerships for the **2026/27** financial year in support of strategic interventions aimed at addressing emerging and critical skills development needs within the sector.

These Terms of Reference (TOR) must be read together with:

- MQA Funding Policy 2026/27.
- MQA Discretionary Grants Rules.
- MQA Special Projects and Partnerships Framework.
- MQA Special Projects Allocation Criteria
- MQA Standard Operating Procedures.
- Applicable legislation and MQA governance requirements.

2. PURPOSE OF THE FUNDING WINDOW

The purpose of this funding window is to identify and support innovative, impactful and sustainable interventions that:

- Address current and future mining and minerals sector skills needs.
- Support economic growth and recovery initiatives.
- Promote innovation and technological advancement.
- Improve employability and entrepreneurship.
- Support transformation and inclusive growth.
- Contribute towards national and sector priorities.
- Strengthen partnerships and collaborative solutions to sector challenges.

3. OBJECTIVES

Proposals submitted under this funding window must contribute towards one or more of the following objectives:

3.1 Skills Development Impact

Improve skills development outcomes within the Mining and Minerals Sector.

3.2 Economic Recovery and Growth

Support initiatives that contribute to economic recovery, growth, and employment creation.

3.3 Innovation and Technology

Strengthen technological capability and innovation within the workforce.

3.4 Employment Creation

Promote sustainable employment, entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities.

3.5 Research-Based Interventions

Implement interventions informed by credible research and evidence.

3.6 Strategic Partnerships

Mobilise resources and strengthen strategic collaborations to improve sector outcomes.

4. FOCUS AREAS

Applications must align to at least one of the following focus areas.

4.1 Green Skills

Projects supporting:

- Green hydrogen.
- Renewable energy technologies.
- Solar energy.
- Wind energy.
- Climate resilience.
- Environmental sustainability.
- Just Energy Transition initiatives.
- Environmental compliance skills.

4.2 Mineral Beneficiation Skills

Projects promoting:

- Mineral processing skills.
- Critical minerals value chains.
- Downstream beneficiation.
- Manufacturing linked to mining outputs.
- Skills required for beneficiation strategies.

4.3 Technological Advancement Skills

Projects supporting:

- Digital transformation.
- Artificial intelligence applications.
- Automation.
- Robotics.
- Data analytics.
- Smart mining technologies.
- 4IR implementation.
- Autonomous mining systems.

4.4 Rural Economic Development

Projects aimed at:

- Skills development in rural communities.
- Community enterprise development.
- Local economic development.
- Livelihood enhancement.

4.5 Research

Projects involving:

- Applied research.
- Emerging skills studies.
- Labour market intelligence.
- Occupational forecasting.
- Sector innovation research.

4.6 Infrastructure Development

Projects supporting:

- Skills development infrastructure.
- Equipment acquisition.
- Teaching and learning facilities.
- Training infrastructure.

4.7 Strategic Integrated High Impact Projects (SIHIP)

Projects established through collaboration with:

- SETAs.
- Government Departments.
- Public Entities.
- Strategic national partners.

The objective is to address national priority skills shortages.

5. ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

The following entities may apply:

- Levy-paying employers.
- Levy-exempt employers operating within the mining and minerals sector.
- Government departments.
- Public entities.
- State-owned entities.
- Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs).
- Universities.

- Universities of Technology.
- TVET Colleges.
- CET Colleges.
- Research institutions.
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs).
- Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs).
- Community-Based Organisations (CBOs).
- Accredited Skills Development Providers.
- Industry associations.
- Professional bodies.
- Registered private entities.
- Any other organisation deemed suitable by the MQA.

6. MANDATORY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must submit the following:

Mandatory Documentation

- Completed MQA Application Form.
- Detailed Project Proposal.
- CIPC / Entity Registration Documents.
- Tax Compliance Status PIN.
- Proof of Banking Details.
- Certified Identification Documents of authorised signatories.
- Latest Audited Financial Statements or Independent Review Report.
- Proof of Physical Address.
- Organisational Profile.
- Valid Accreditation Certificate (where applicable).
- Letters of Support (where applicable).

Failure to submit mandatory documents may result in disqualification.

7. PROJECT PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must clearly address the following:

7.1 Project Background

Describe the challenge, opportunity or need being addressed.

7.2 Problem Statement

Identify the skills gap, challenge or market failure.

7.3 Objectives

Specify measurable objectives.

7.4 Alignment

Demonstrate alignment with the MQA focus area(s).

7.5 Innovation

Demonstrate innovative aspects of the proposed intervention.

7.6 Uniqueness

Explain how the project differs from existing initiatives.

7.7 Beneficiaries

Provide details of:

- Number of beneficiaries.
- Demographics.
- Geographic coverage.

7.8 Implementation Plan

Provide a detailed implementation schedule.

7.9 Sustainability Plan

Demonstrate how outcomes will continue beyond MQA funding.

7.10 Monitoring and Evaluation

Provide measurable outputs and outcomes.

7.11 Risk Management

Provide key risks and mitigation strategies.

8. PROJECT BUDGET

Applicants must submit a detailed budget reflecting:

- Personnel costs.
- Training costs.
- Equipment costs.
- Infrastructure costs.
- Administration costs.
- Monitoring and evaluation costs.
- Other project costs.

Applicants must demonstrate value for money and reasonable cost structures.

The MQA reserves the right to approve the full amount requested, a reduced amount, or reject a budget.

9. EVALUATION PROCESS

Applications will undergo:

Phase 1: Compliance Screening

Verification of mandatory requirements and supporting documents.

Phase 2: Technical Evaluation

Assessment against approved evaluation criteria.

Phase 3: Due Diligence

Verification of organisational capacity and proposal information.

Phase 4: Recommendation and Approval

Evaluation Committee and governance approvals.

10. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated out of a maximum score of 100 points.

Criterion	Weight (%)	Description
Innovative	10	Project must demonstrate originality and new approaches to skills development.
Unique	10	Proposal should stand out as distinct, not duplicating existing initiatives.
Alignment with MQA objectives	10	Must align with focus areas (geographical spread, target beneficiaries, exit strategy, opportunities upon completion).
Outside scope of existing programmes	5	Project must not replicate current MQA programmes.
Address skills gaps	10	Should target specific skills shortages, groups, or sectoral challenges not adequately covered by current initiatives.
Applicant's track record	5	Past performance with MQA will be considered.
Additional requirements	5	Must comply with stipulations outlined in the issued terms of reference.
Competitive costing	5	Proposal must demonstrate cost-effectiveness and value for money.
Alignment with socioeconomic imperatives	10	Project must contribute to transformation, equity, and employment creation.
Proof of WSP & ATR	5	Submission of Workplace Skills Plan and Annual Training Report is mandatory.
Project execution plan	5	Must include clear objectives, timelines, deliverables, and measurable outcomes.

Mining Future Skills

Criterion	Weight (%)	Description
Organisational experience	10	Organisation must have a minimum of three years' experience in similar projects.
Project team qualifications	10	Project leader: 5 years' experience in running projects. Team members: At least 3 with NQF Level 6, 3 years' experience, and project management knowledge.

11. MINIMUM QUALIFYING SCORE

Score	Outcome
85 – 100	Highly Recommended
70 – 84	Recommended
60 – 69	May be Considered Subject to Motivation
Below 60	Not Recommended

Only applications achieving a minimum score of 70 may proceed to due diligence.

12. DUE DILIGENCE

The MQA may conduct due diligence which may include:

- Site visits.
- Governance assessments.
- Financial assessments.
- Verification of facilities and infrastructure.
- Capacity assessments.
- Verification of project information.

The MQA reserves the right to reject an application where due diligence findings indicate material risks or misrepresentation.

13. FUNDING MODEL

Funding may be provided through:

- Full funding.
- Co-funding arrangements.
- Cost-sharing partnerships.
- Strategic partnership contributions.

All approved funding shall be subject to available budget and approval by the MQA.

14. DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

Funding shall be paid in tranches linked to approved project milestones.

Disbursements will be subject to:

- Achievement of agreed milestones.
- Submission of satisfactory reports.
- Verification of deliverables.
- Compliance with contractual obligations.

15. MONITORING, REPORTING AND EVALUATION

Successful applicants shall:

- Submit progress reports.
- Submit financial reports.
- Participate in monitoring activities.
- Participate in evaluations.
- Permit site visits and audits.

Failure to meet reporting requirements may result in suspension or termination of funding.

16. RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT

All projects shall be subject to:

- Risk assessments.
- Internal audit reviews.
- External audit reviews.
- Compliance monitoring.
- Pre-award verification processes where required.

Applicants must maintain complete project records for audit purposes.

17. CONTRACTING

Successful applicants will enter into one of the following agreements:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).
- Memorandum of Agreement (MoA).
- Service Level Agreement (SLA).

No project may commence before conclusion of the relevant agreement.

18. SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS

Applications must be submitted through the prescribed MQA application platform.

The window period of the application for special and partnership projects will be opened the whole year within the Financial Year.

19. IMPORTANT CONDITIONS

The MQA reserves the right to:

- Cancel or amend this call for applications.
- Request additional information.
- Verify information submitted.
- Approve all, some or none of the applications received.
- Approve a lower funding amount than requested.
- Withdraw funding where false information has been provided.

20. ENQUIRIES

Email: specialprojects@mqa.org.za

Telephone: 0115472600

Website: www.mqa.org.za

Compulsory Briefing Session Date:

Submissions: specialprojects@mqa.org.za

