



Evaluation Report on the State of SASSETA Strategic
Partnerships, 2018 - 2023

Final Report

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Executive Summary

The Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) along with other 21 SETAs, was established by the government to facilitate and coordinate skills development across economic sectors of the country. SASSETA had established strategic partnerships with various institutions across a wide spectrum of areas including research and academic programmes, with the goal of deepening connections and advancing its mandate.

SASSETA should be considered in its approach to partnerships, where quality and depth, as well as intended outcomes are to be determining factors in the establishment and sustainability of partnerships. It should develop strategic partnership strategy that would direct the organisation away from ad hoc approaches, towards approaches that enable specific, effective interventions.

The shift towards a more intentional approach to partnerships requires SASSETA to select partners based on an informed rationale and to address a specific purpose or need, in line with its mandate. The specific modalities for each partnership need to be tailored and directed towards targets within one or more of the focus areas. Strategic collaborations and partnerships are significant in driving skills development endeavours, especially in an environment that is continuously facing economic turbulence and developmental challenges. It is also essential to acknowledge that the scope of the relationship is likely to shift over time.

The objective of this evaluation is to assess the state of SASSETA strategic partnerships in terms of efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of the implementation of their programs and, more particularly, to document the actual results and impact attained vis-à-vis the overall objectives and expected results as defined in the MoAs.

The evaluation has been based on a mixed methods approach, to establish a robust evidence base. This was informed by the evaluation matrix and combine an in-depth document review as well as key informant interviews. The evaluation used purposive sampling rather than a random sampling approach. The evaluation found that successful partnerships don't just happen. Strong partnership set a clear foundation for business relationships and nurture them. And they are willing to change things up if needed.

Focusing on these priorities can help partnerships thrive and create more value than they would otherwise. SASSETA will have established a more focus and structured approach to its pursuit of strategic partnerships that pool resources, technology and/or finances to achieve mutual success. Strategic partnerships success depends heavily on adopting a proper strategy, alignment (within the partners and between the partners) and seamless integration into the organization's processes and operations. Nevertheless, it is essential to focus on sharing commitment and competencies to create value.

Bringing different institutions cultures together can be challenging, given partners' varying communication styles and expectations. Open communication lays the foundation for successful strategic partnerships, ensuring clarity of objectives, trust and strong relationships. On the

operational level, the most important group to involve, from both organisations, is middle management and create a special mutually accepted metrics to measure the success of the partnership is also important. When structuring the partnership, equity serves as a substitute for trust. If trust is weak, the partners tend to feel “it pays to cooperate,” whereas strong trust stimulates partnerships to the level of personal relationships, reflecting solidarity and similar cultural values.

It is also important that partnerships activities are reviewed quarterly to track the partnership’s progress against defined metrics and helps to spot potential areas of concern-ideally with enough time to change course. It would be strongly recommended that SASSETA look at its oversight posture and monitoring and reporting regime throughout the partnership cycle.

There was a general agreement that the partnership bring value to the course and pursuant to the SETA mandate. Nonetheless, the MoA should be subject to review from time to time to ensure they still add value to SASSETA. Ultimately, the objective should be to analyse all existing partnerships based on their utility in fulfilling SASSETA’s mandate and thereafter identifying those required going into the future. After all, strategy is about the future and there is no point in continuing with arrangements that do not take you to your intended destiny.

List of acronyms

CBO	Community Based Organisation
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NSDS	National Skills Development Strategy
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
PPP	Public Private Partnership
PSiRA	Private Security Industry Regulatory Authority
SAPS	South Africa Police Service
SASSETA	Safety and Security Services SETA
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WIL	Work-Integrated Learning

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	ii
List of acronyms	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction and background	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background	1
1.3 Purpose of the evaluation	3
1.4. Evaluation objectives	3
1.5 Evaluation questions	3
1.6 The significance of the study	4
1.7 Structure of the report	4
Chapter 2: Literature review	5
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Contextualising the concept of “strategic partnership”	6
2.3 Strategic partnerships in education and training	7
2.4 Strategic partnerships and the underlying reasons	8
2.5 Skills development at the centre of forging strategic partnerships	9
2.6 Policy implication on strategic partnerships and skills development	10
2.6.1 <i>The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998</i>	10
2.6.2 <i>National Skills Development Strategy</i>	11
2.6.3 <i>Sector Education Training Authorities</i>	12
2.6.4 <i>The NSDP and the position of the SETAs</i>	12
2.7 SASSETA and its strategic partnerships	14
2.8 Towards forging partnerships in the safety and security sector	15
2.9 Conclusion	16
Chapter 3: Evaluation approach and methodology	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.2 Toward the principles of the evaluative framework	17
3.3 Methodological approach	17
3.3.1 <i>Evaluation design</i>	18
3.3.2 <i>Target population and sampling methods</i>	19
3.3.3 <i>Sample size</i>	19
3.3.4 <i>Data collection</i>	19
3.3.5 <i>Data analysis</i>	20
3.4 Ethical consideration	20
Chapter 4: Evaluation findings	21
4.1 Introduction	21
4.2 Findings and discussions	21
4.2.1 <i>Relevance</i>	21
4.2.2 <i>Coherence</i>	22
4.2.3 <i>Effectiveness</i>	22
4.2.4 <i>Efficiency and sustainability</i>	23
4.2.5 <i>The other general issues</i>	24
4.3 Conclusion	25
Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations	27
5.1 Introduction	27
5.2 Summary of the findings and implication of the study	27
5.3 Understanding partnerships: Lessons learnt	28
5.3.1 <i>Partnerships need to be regularly renewed and not taken for granted</i>	28
5.3.2 <i>Trust must be built over a period of time through openness, transparency and knowledge-sharing</i>	29
5.3.3 <i>Continuously educating stakeholder constituencies on the purpose and functioning of the partnership</i>	29
5.4 Recommendations	29
5.4.1 <i>Develop partnership policy framework and guidelines</i>	29
5.4.2 <i>Partnership record and deliverables management</i>	30
5.4.3 <i>Centralise oversight, strengthen monitoring and reporting on partnerships</i>	30
5.4.4 <i>Resource, strengthen governance and management of partnerships</i>	31
5.5 Conclusion	31
References	33
Annexures	36

Chapter 1

Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction

In recognition of the broad mandate of each SETA in skills development, and in order to better meet its strategic objectives, it becomes a critical part of the service delivery model to form partnerships with other entities within and across its sector of operation.

Given this context, SASSETA has established numerous strategic partnerships with various institutions between 2018 and 2023, in furtherance of its mandate. Many of these partnerships are established to advance various aspect of the SETA mandate. The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training is calling for partnerships to strengthen linkages between education sector and labour market skills need.

A good partnership has many characteristics although it is unlikely that one partnership will have all good characteristics. The different situations will require tailored solutions and workable agreements that can look totally different from one agreement to the other.

Ostensibly, a significant roll out of skills development programmes in the sector and the country at large is required to build a capable workforce and, to equip young people with the right skills. It is vital that training and skills development interventions are designed in a manner that bridge the gaps between tertiary education and workplace. Partnerships are crucial to drive better outcome and share good practices and reducing duplication of efforts.

The background and motivation for the study, the evaluation questions, the objectives of the study, the paradigm perspective and the evaluation design will be discussed. As part of the evaluation design, the evaluation approach and the evaluation method will be discussed. The chapter will then be concluded with the layout of the report.

1.2 Background

The Safety and Security Sector Education and Training Authority (SASSETA) along with other 21 SETAs, was established by the government to facilitate and coordinate skills development across economic sectors of the country. SASSETA operates within the crucial sector of the South African economy, safety and security, which is a essential services with intensive workforce.

SASSETA has established numerous strategic partnerships with various institutions between 2018 and 2023. Many of these partnerships are established to advance various aspect of the SETA mandate. In it sector skills plan, SASSETA posit that it's formed strategic partnerships for diverse reasons, and each has a 'life' of its own. Strategic partnerships is an arrangement between two organisations to help each other or work together, to make it easier for each of them to achieve the things they want to achieve.

The SETA's partnerships are primarily oriented and focus on advancing its core mandate and general skills development both in the sector and the country at large. Partnerships are crucial among other things, to drive better outcomes and share good practices and reducing duplication of efforts. The SETA admits that it does not have a framework that informs and guides its strategic framework. Nevertheless, the SETA's strategic approach on partnerships is underpinned by the principles of reciprocity, mutual interest and respect.

The SETA uses memorandum of agreement (MoA) as an instrument to establish or enter into partnerships. The SETA's mandate encourages it to forge collaborative partnerships that advance various aspects of its mandate with entities either public or private sector. The SETA partners with institutions across a broad spectrum: research, employers, education and training with the objective of strengthening institutional capacity and performance.

The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training is calling for partnerships to strengthen linkages between the education sector and labour market skills needs. Ostensibly, a significant roll-out of skills development programmes in the sector and the country at large is required to build a capable workforce and, to equip young people with the right skills.

It is vital that training and skills development interventions are designed in a manner that bridges the gaps between tertiary education and the workplace. Partnerships are crucial to drive better outcomes and share good practices and reducing duplication of efforts.

The National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) highlights the role of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) as intermediaries and playing a role in linking the world of work and education. In this regard, SETAs are tasked with the critical role of facilitating, and brokering the linkages between the labour market, employers, and sectors with the education and training institutional supply Sector Skills Plan Framework (2022). This includes the placements of graduates. Such linkages can be facilitated or realised through partnerships between SETAs, employers, and other education and training institutions.

In choosing partners, SASSETA must ensure alignment between the SETA's mandate and the objectives of the partnership. In other words, partnerships must clearly and unambiguously contribute to the achievement of the organization's strategic objectives. Due consideration should also be given to completion of all the activities and output activities as per the commitments assumed and to ensure that appropriate results-based monitoring and reporting procedures are followed accordingly. The failure to deliver agreed activities or outputs may harm the reputation of both parties in partnership.

On-going monitoring and evaluation of the performance of the partnership is critical in assuring accountability and its success. Evaluation is the judgement of worth or an appraisal of value. Inherently, it involves a combination of basic assumptions underlying the activity being evaluated. In other words, evaluation provides answers and insights into what is working and what is not. Furthermore, it can provide information for decision making about the policy and practice.

In literature, the term “partnership” is variously referred to as “relationships”, “linkages”, “co-operation”, “networks”, “association” and “collaboration”. These terms tend to be used interchangeably to refer to a “partnership”. For the purposes of this evaluation study, a partnership is broadly defined “as a formal relationship with joint rights and responsibilities between two or more parties in co-operation to achieve mutual goals”. This definition deliberately introduces formality, obligations, shared risk and purposiveness into the relationship, and is a departure from some of the current discourse in which any engagement is viewed as a partnership.

1.3 Purpose of the evaluation

The SETA establish partnerships on the need to advance its strategic objectives and mandate. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess the outcomes and effectiveness (or impact) of the SETA's strategic partnership between 2018 and 2023.

1.4. Evaluation objectives

The overall objective of the study is to assess the state and performance of SASSETA's strategic partnerships. The study has been undertaken with the following specific objectives:

- (i). To assess the state and performance of partnership activities and the extent to which its intended results were (or are) achieved.
- (ii). To ascertain outputs (or outcomes) of these partnerships.
- (iii). To determine the specific reasons for success or failures in the SETA partnerships.
- (iv). To strengthen accountability, and
- (v). To provide practical recommendations to improve the partnership management performance to deliver sustainable outcomes in the skills development.

1.5 Evaluation questions

- (i). To what extent has the partnership achieved its intended objectives?
- (ii). To what extent has the partnership address specific objectives and goals as identified in the MoA?
- (iii). To what extent did the partnership complement the national mandate of the SETA?
- (iv). What are the management factors on both sides that hinders the efficiency and effectiveness of the partnership?
- (v). To what extent did these partnerships achieve its envisaged objectives?
- (vi). To what extent are (or was) the activities implemented aligned with the objectives and mandate of the SETA?
- (vii). To what extent in terms of the quality and adequacy of the resources match the expected results?
- (viii). Were the resources (e.g., staff time, technical, financial) allocated to the partnership programme used effectively?
- (ix). What is value (or impact) of the partnership towards the achievement of the SETA's strategic objectives?

1.6 The significance of the study

Sector partnerships are vital to ensure that education of the employment pipeline is an interdependent continuum, rather than the three distinct intersections of enrolment, skills building and finding employment. The success in education and training initiatives often rely on input from partnerships with employers and industry stakeholders in order to direct skills required by the industry and labour market in general. The beneficiary led (or participant) evaluations of programs its provide some important aspect of SASSETA's accountability and helps to strengthen the future similar program fidelity.

Furthermore, program evaluation ascertain the quality of delivery to which the program has been delivered in a manner likely to have effect on its goals and objectives. Partnerships are crucial among other things, to drive better outcome and share good practices and reducing duplication of efforts. According to Jagannathan (2013), an effective monitoring and evaluation (M&E) process is an important strategic intervention to reduce the barriers to skills programs, by comparison of actual programme impacts against strategic plans, and asks the question whether the programme has indeed achieved what it intended to achieve (Shapiro, 2001).

Effective partnerships are at the core of service delivery by SETAs. As such, it is important that SASSETA identify and operate in appropriate networks in furtherance of their strategic objectives. This evaluation, through the evidence-based knowledge generated, is expected to inform the design, implementation and monitoring of new initiatives within the SETA.

1.7 Structure of the report

The report is ordered as follows: Chapter 1 gives introduction and background of the study. Chapter 2 discusses relevant literature. Chapter 3 present the evaluation approach/methodology adopted. Chapter 4 present and discuss the main findings. Chapter 5 concludes.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1 Introduction

In the 21st century, where technological advancements and the demand shifts are the norm, the importance of skills development and continuous learning cannot be overstated. The need for partnership between industry and institutions of education has become critical in ensuring skills development and innovation in the global workforce. The strategic partnership between parties is made up of formal agreements as they are pursuing common goals. Their agreements include the sharing of funds, information, skills, and other resources that are paramount and required to achieve the goals of the partnership.

The strategic partnerships are meant to benefit both parties whereby the industry acquires a skilled labour force with practical training and specialised expertise (Lewis, 2020), while the institutions that render education and training services have a chance to work on pertinent issues and provide improved teaching and learning processes.

According to PwC (2023), a strategic partnership entails some formal agreement between two (bilateral partnership) or more (network partnership) parties that have agreed to share funds, skills, information, and/or other resources in pursuit of common goals. Businesses have traditionally used strategic alliances to improve their offerings and save expenses. The underlying premise is that two are better than one, and by pooling resources, partner enterprises may each earn additional benefits for the duration of the alliance's existence.

Education and Training (E&T) partnerships are created between stakeholders who have the capabilities to reach a meaningful number of role players in the labour market space. These partnerships assist in improving the deliveries on the mandate of the two players in the labour market. Advantages can include risk-sharing, shared development, and resource costs, decreased time-to-market, and access to new entrants in the market. The partnership is important in itself but should be seen in the context of other partnerships and other strategic activities.

The SETA's strategic approach on partnerships is underpinned by the principles of reciprocity, mutual interest and respect. The SETA uses memorandum of agreement (MoA) as an instrument to establish or enter into partnerships. The SETA's mandate encourages it to forge collaborative partnerships advances various aspects of its mandate with entities either public or private sector. The SETA partner with institutions across a broad spectrum: research, employers, education and training with the objective of strengthening institutional capacity and performance.

The DHET (2019) defines partnerships as “a collaborative agreement between two or more parties intended to achieve specified outcomes directed towards addressing mutually inclusive skills priorities or objectives within a specified time frame.” In other words, collaborative partnerships rely on participation by at least two parties who agree to share resources, such as finances, knowledge,

and people to achieve shared objectives. In pursuit of a vision: “A skilled and capable workforce for an inclusive growth”, the SETA will establish and build various partnerships which seek to foster knowledge, professional skills and improve response of education and training to the needs of the sector and economy. Also, partnerships that promotes occupational directed training programmes fuelled by demand-led skills approach.

Partnership strengthen industry ownership of the skills system and the value of the work-based learning. They also match learning provision with demand to develop the right skills. Arguably, all organisations exist to create value of some kind, and there is likely to be merit in adopting a strategic value creation approach in partnerships.

Similarly, the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013) also calls for partnerships to strengthen linkages between the post school education sector, employers and other role players and industry. Partnerships with industry are, amongst others, aimed at addressing hard-to-fill vacancies and skills gaps in the sector, thus aiding to accurately define relevant occupational qualifications as well as enhancements to the training curriculum bolster relevance.

The National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) also promotes collaboration through partnerships between the public and private sectors to support effective skills development. Furthermore, collaboration across the criminal justice system, intergovernmental sectors and civil society organisations is essential in the prevention of crime and the provision of community safety.

The SETA develop its partnerships on the need that arise in response to a policy or to its strategic objective in order to fulfil its mandate. There are three basic partnership models, namely, equal general partnership, limited partnership and silent partnership. The most successful model that the SETA has been implementing is general equal partnership model as this model allows all the partners to have a common understanding in terms of the goals of the partnership and play an equal strategic oversight role on the implemented partnership.

2.2 Contextualising the concept of “strategic partnership”

The concept of a “strategic partnership” can be understood as a wide-ranging, long-term relationship between two institutions with the aim of assisting each other in realising their goals. According to Mascarenhas et. al (2018), strategic partnerships can be further viewed as a collaboration that consists of common development whereby both parties aim at satisfying the external and internal needs for and expectations of a systematic approach and structure for collaboration between various sectors in the society.

Expanding on this, Eriksson (2020) states:

“A strategic partnership is a formalised collaboration across a higher education institution with a partner organisation outside academia. The partnership is characterised by the engagement and participation of management at both the higher education institution and the partner. The

partnership is based on mutual, long-term commitments, common goals, and challenges, and encompasses a diversity of forms of collaboration and joint activities. The partnership generates and adds mutual benefit and values that neither party could achieve on its own” (pp. 10).

This is a definition that is driving the context of the current study on the assessment of the rate of return on investment made by SASSETA in forging strategic partnerships in the area of skills development through increasing the supply of skills in high demand within the safety and security sector in the South African economy.

The current study maintains that openness, integrity, and academic freedom linked to a well-established relationship between SASSETA and other actors in society create conditions of skills supply within communities that are expected to be on a long-term basis. The concept of strategic partnership is further regulated through the third National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS III) in this study. Hence, the NSDS III follows the integration of higher and further education and skills development into a single Department of Higher Education and Training (Gibberd and Hankwebe, 2022).

Given the stubbornness and resistance of the crime rate in South Africa, SASSETA has been positioned as one of the institutions to facilitate the education and training of the labour force in the safety and security sector by promoting learning programmes in the sector (Shabane, 2018). The NSDS III has promoted the existence of the SETAs and ensure that the integration of education and training becomes a reality experienced by all people in South African societies.

The strategic partnerships are not only limited to SETAs but (outside the context of this study) also include partnerships between employers, private training providers, and other institutions of higher education (FET colleges, universities, universities of technology). A guide to strategic partnerships by Eriksson (2020) contends that collaborations of this nature can be considered as a way of securing society’s long-term knowledge and skills supply as well as a means of resolving complex social, environmental, and economic challenges that the South African economy faces, especially the safety and security sector.

The high crime rate potential for misconduct and criminality faced by the security industry in South Africa show that social challenges cannot be resolved through individual industries or economic sectors but demand strategic partnerships that span across sectors of society and subject boundaries.

2.3 Strategic partnerships in education and training

The necessity for graduates and a labour force that is prepared for employment and in possession of relevant skills have been globally advocated in the past years. In the quest to deliver transferable skills required from learners or graduates, governments have introduced skills development programmes partnering with institutions of higher education as a practical response to the market demands. According to Verma et al. (2018), the part of strategic partnerships between parties do not

only focus on producing skilled and knowledgeable graduates but also on sending expertise from an industry context to institutions of higher education to provide learners and academics with the kinds of ongoing professional development in the work industry. Ostensibly, the institutions of higher education have been regarded as role players in upskilling the workforce, fostering economic growth, and fuelling innovation. This rapid change has also been experienced by the sector in terms of demand and funding models has resulted in the remodelling of the relationships between institutions of higher education and industry (Tri, Hoang, and Dung, 2021). There is hard work and commitment from the institutions that are aimed at meeting the new skills needs and work to forge reliable partnerships towards serving the commercial purpose.

Ferns, et. al (2019), argue that there are multiple role players in forging strategic partnerships in higher education, and this includes learners, employers, accreditation bodies, faculties, and societies. The partnerships that took place in the education and training arena aimed at graduating higher calibre learners and professionals who possess the skills and knowledge required to excel or succeed in a competitive work industry.

In the same vein, Tri, Hoang, and Dung (2021) realise a growing interest in the possible contribution of education and training as the producers of knowledge, especially when interacting with industries to build and expand learning, skills training, and technological capabilities in a national system of innovation. It is these possible contributions that make an impact on the growth of sustainable economies and structural change. This confirms the significance of knowledge-based institutions in preparing learners and graduates with critical and infrequent skills, as well as producing research for technological advancement and innovation.

Since the late 1990s, there have been trends in attempting to promote linkages and partnerships between institutions of higher education and industry as a part of the new policy framework that is aimed at providing skills training and bridging the innovative gap, especially between the academic field of science and technology and the industrial system (Eriksson, 2020).

Adding to this, Ferns et. al (2019) reveal that the adjustment in the recent policy is demanding institutions of higher education enter into partnerships that are aligned with the state's reprioritisation of socioeconomic development goals that benefit the impoverished and socially marginalised. Hence, knowledge and innovation are critical to socioeconomic growth and development, but in a country of limited resources like South Africa, interaction and partnerships between universities, science councils, and the private sector are even more essential to achieving these goals.

2.4 Strategic partnerships and the underlying reasons

In the sense of forming strategic partnerships, Bundy, Vogel, and Zachary (2018) are of the view that organisations frequently choose to go into a partnership when their demands and resources are complementary rather than identical. Hence, partners in strategic partnerships frequently contribute their own distinctive capabilities to an identified problem. A need for partnerships can come from a variety of organisational, political, and economic contexts. For example, partners having access to

financial resources can assist a company in starting, expanding, or significantly innovating programmes, Tseng, Huang, and Chen (2020). In addition, they can be used as contingency mechanisms to prevent, anticipate, or absorb uncertainty and achieve dependable resource flow and exchange.

Sometimes an organisation seeks out a reputable partner to improve its image and reputation due to a political need for more legitimacy or credibility from funders, constituents, or clients (Tseng, Huang, and Chen, 2020). In addition to this, organisations form alliances to comply with mandates imposed by law or regulation that they would not have been able to do so on their own (Amey and Eddy, 2023). In other cases, joining an alliance can help a business achieve its objectives, such as boosting production and efficiency (Hora, and Millar, 2023).

Additionally, firms form strategic alliances to accomplish related objectives that would not be accomplished separately (Mascarenhas, Ferreira, and Marques, 2018). These objectives are mutually advantageous but not identical. Organisations create alliances with partners who share their perspectives on or methods for solving a common issue (Bundy, Vogel, and Zachary, 2018).

Last but not least, alliance formation requires confidence. The endeavour is unlikely to get started without a shared willingness to cooperate. This trust is frequently built through already-existing networks (Hora, and Millar, 2023), when individuals with shared interests choose to join alliances based on their familiarity with one another's prior contributions. Robertson et. al contends that open communication, common ideals, and respect for one another can boost inter-organisational trust.

2.5 Skills development at the centre of forging strategic partnerships

The skills system in South Africa is made up of a complex interaction of institutions (including strategic partnerships between the education and labour market or industry) and policies that regulate the said institutions. Various subsystems are generally referred to as part of the skills system (Stachová et.al, 2019).

The work of Powell and McGrath (2019) reveals that the new institutional planning and building of skills development in contemporary South Africa is imagining training across occupations and qualifications rather than just apprentices. Hence, it gives more focus on sectors rather than industries; it also incorporates Small, Medium, and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs); and accommodates people in the labour market, critically including the unemployed and pre-employed (Molla and Cuthbert, 2018).

These crucial strides were being taken to expand the concept of skills beyond just focusing on apprenticeship as well as artisanal training. It is imperative that the workforce is trained appropriately, ready for any challenges found in the workplace and can compete in the global market. Hence, this can be achieved only if the country prioritises skills development.

2.6 Policy implication on strategic partnerships and skills development

Skills development has been on top of the agenda in South Africa's transition from apartheid capitalism to contemporary democracy. The government has aimed to improve structural racial equality for the previously disadvantaged groups, especially the low-skilled and unemployed youth and adults, which remains a pertinent challenge in the country (Papadakis, 2022).

In attempt to redress structural racial inequalities and promote skills development, Masiza, (2020) reveals that several policies were introduced, including the Green Paper Skills Development Strategy for Economic and Employment Growth of 1997, the Skills Development Act of 1998; the Skills Levies Act of 1998; and the National Skills Development Strategy of 2001. These skills development approaches were established on the basis of realising the broad political and economic framework that is regulated in the White Paper on Reconstruction and Development 1994, and Growth, Employment and Redistribution of 1996.

2.6.1 The Skills Development Act 97 of 1998

In 1998, the Skills Development Act was promulgated to build the skills of the workforce in South Africa and the Act allows the strategic element of partnerships coming from different sectors. Hence, due to this demand, each sector has a responsibility to compile a Sector Skills Plan, which is informed by the Workplace Skills Plan, where each sector must identify scarce and critical skills (Van der Westhuizen and Shange, 2018).

This Act plays an important role in encouraging industries to promote occupation-based learning programmes, especially those programmes that are aimed at addressing occupational direct training. Bag, Pretorius, Gupta and Dwivedi (2021) strongly advocate that this can be achieved through learnerships whereby employees that enrol in the learning programmes need to enter into an agreement with the employer and the training service provider.

It is reflected in the South African Qualifications Authority Act 58 of 1995 that the Skills Development Act also aimed to fuse strategies with the national qualification framework. In his work, (Aigbavboa, Oke Ayodeji, and Mokasha, 2016) state:

“The Skills Act likewise emphasis the need to transform skills development through investment, turning the workplace into a democratic environment, and improving the quality and significance of education and learning for the workplace – this is because employers are often (too) hesitant to hire unskilled people”.

As a result, training and development include the attainment of skills, knowledge, and abilities, such as communication and interpersonal skills, which are very important when performing a job. The goals of this Act include, among other things: encouraging employer participation in learning programmes; developing the skills of the South African workforce; improving the employment prospects of persons previously disadvantaged by unfair discrimination and redressing those disadvantages through training and education; encouraging worker participation in learning programmes (Van der Westhuizen, and Shange, 2018).

2.6.2 National Skills Development Strategy

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) was launched by the Minister of Labour in February 2001. This strategy is built on the that was promulgated to advance the process of skills development in the country. According to Gaula, Telukdarie, and Munsamy (2022), the significance of the NSDS is that it shifts the focus from target setting to monitoring and evaluation of the process of skills development. There was a need to improve the skills development system of the country so that it could be effective and efficient for the NSDS to be executed successfully.

According to (Mogamedi and Sithole (2020), the NSDS consists of various initiatives that lead to career development, career path, and promoting sustainable employment and in-work progress. It is the NSDS 111 that seeks to support the integration of practice and theory in the workplace while also helping to integrate new employees in the workplace, especially those who come from institutions of higher learning to join industries or workplace and those who remained unemployed for a long period (Mogamedi and Sithole, 2020).

One of the commendations by the NSDS 111 is that people who have just joined the workplace have to cope, adjust, and succeed in the workplace environment. The NSDS seeks to make a significant impact through the introduction of learnerships and learning programmes, which involve well-structured apprenticeships, learning programmes, learnerships, and skills programmes. It must further make sure that there is increased access to training and skills development opportunities and attain the crucial transformation of existing inequalities in our society, especially with respect to race, class, age, gender, and disability. In their work, Ile and Gxavu (2019) bring forward that:

“...the strategy also pays particular attention to those individuals who do not have the necessary skills that are required in the workplace. It also opens up opportunities for them to participate in other programmes like, writing and numeracy skills to enable them to access employment”.

It continues to play a pivotal role in ensuring that the country can respond to the demands of the labour market for skilled people which will aid the country in participating in global markets. The improvement of skills among employees will be important to their lifestyles since they can compete for positions that are advertised. However, this suggests the development of strong working partnerships between training institutions, employers, and the SETAs.

The NSDS responds to the challenges impacting the ability of the economy to expand and provide increased employment opportunities. These government intervention policies required an extended partnership among different stakeholders, institutions, and industries. Importantly, the government established new sources of funding by instituting an imposed skills levy on certain organisations (Gaula, Telukdarie, and Munsamy, 2022). The partnerships were expanded to other government sectors whereby the levies were channelled into the National Skills Funds while Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) were amongst the key stakeholders responsible for the distribution of funds for skills development programmes.

2.6.3 Sector Education Training Authorities

SETAs are one of the initiatives that were established after the promulgation of the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998. For five years, at least a total of 25 SETAs under the Skills Development Act 97 of 1998 were established by the Minister of Labour on March 20, 2000. However, Vyas-Doorgapersad and Mothabi (2022) argue that on April 01, 2005, these SETAs were restructured from 25 to 23 SETAs. In addition, SETAs that were merged were Primary and Secondary Agriculture and Safety, Security and Police.

The SETAs play an important role in forging strategic partnerships since they represent different labour, business, and the state as an employer, whereby the focus is given to workplace training and the Further Education and Training band. SETAs consist of different stakeholders that make up their expanded partnership, and higher education is one of those key partners because of their significant role in preparing human resources to meet national skills development needs (Vyas-Doorgapersad and Mothabi (2022)). The SETA enters into partnerships with a full range of broad variations because they constitute a range of fields with differing levels of development.

The institutions of higher education are the crucial sector to build partnerships with SETA as they are expected to develop specialised and general knowledge, and especially generic high-level life skills, to help graduates become more productive in a short period of time towards meeting sectoral employment demands (McKay, 2023). SETAs help in realising the expectations of the NSDS as the government uses it as a system to provide skills development programmes, such as learning programmes, skills programmes and learnerships.

The skills development programmes are assigned to SETA Sector Skills Plans, which can be understood as the sector-specific representative that aimed at providing data and analysing workplace skills required and building sector-specific skills through various programmes. SASSETA is expected, as Mofokeng and Aphane (2022) posit to ensure a quality provision of skills development and qualifications, specifically in the safety and security sector through efficient and effective partnerships.

2.6.4 The NSDP and the position of the SETAs

In South Africa, the National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) has been established as distinct from the previous national development strategies. The NSDP has been introduced in a policy context of the White Paper on Post-School Education and Training and also National Development Plan. Its intention is to improve the integration of the post-school education and training system.

The significance of the NSDP is to ensure that South Africa has appropriate, adequate, and high-quality skills which allow labour, business and government to make a positive impact on employment creation, economic growth and social development (The Manufacturing Engineering and Related Services SETA, 2019). The NSDP has been put in place to address problems and opportunities in the skills landscape that were identified in several processes, ultimately being summarised, and

addressed in the white paper. The NSDP is there to ensure that the challenges relating to PSET system are attended to and addressed. These challenges include the lack of achieving set targets, complicated, expensive, and wasteful administrative systems, governance challenges, complicated application processes for the public, and uneven capacity across the SATEs (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017).

The National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) highlights the role of SETAs as intermediaries and in linking the world of work and education. In this regard, SETAs are tasked with the critical role of facilitating and brokering the linkages between the labour market, employers, and sectors with the education and training institutional supply Sector Skills Plan Framework (2022).

This entails placements of graduates such linkages can be facilitated or realised through partnerships between SETAs and employers and between SETAs and education and training institutions. It is the NSDS that gave rise to the SETAs as the implementing agencies of skills development strategy in South Africa. This means that SETA has been seen more as a solution to the issues related to skills shortages in the industry market.

McKay (2023) agrees that SETAs are operating under NSDS with a vision to make an impact on skills development by means of eliminating illiteracy and creating a pool of people who are skilled in all sectors of the economy. Through the presence of SETAs, the NSDP aimed at identifying and increasing the production of occupations in high demand.

In other words, this seek to improve the responsiveness of the post-school education and training system to the needs of the economy and the broader developmental objectives of the country. Inside of demand: the role of SETAs is to conduct labour market research and develop Sector Skills Plans; develop Strategic Plans; Annual Performance Plans and Service Level Agreements; and submit quarterly reports.

On the side of supply: the role of SETAs is to address sector skills needs and priorities; address scarce and critical skills [Professional, Vocational, Technical and Academic Learning programmes (PIVOTAL)] through implementation of learning programmes; Facilitate easy access and different entry points; and to collaborate with the relevant Quality Council, especially the Quality Council for Trade and Occupations to ensure quality and provision of learning programmes (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

The NSDP promote the strategic partnership as a strategy to address skills development issues in South Africa. It is for this reason that SATEs remain the primary authoritative voice of the labour market and experts in their respective sectors as per the purpose of NSDP. The NSDP maintains that in order for South Africa to achieve high levels of economic growth and address unemployment, poverty, and inequality, social partners must work together to invest in skills development toward achieving the vision set in the NSDP of an educated, skilled, and capable workforce for South Africa (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2019).

2.7 SASSETA and its strategic partnerships

The government in South Africa and worldwide is committed to carrying out the responsibility for policy design and the reform of education and training. These responsibilities are said to be successfully achieved through strategic partnerships between the government, trade unions, businesses, organisations, employers, and different stakeholders from both the formal and informal economic sectors. The Sector Skills Plan for the Safety and Security (2023) stipulates that:

“...partnerships are formed for diverse reasons, and each has a “life” of its own. SASSETA partnerships are primarily oriented and focus on advancing its core mandate and general skills development in the country. Partnerships are crucial to drive better outcome and share good practices and reducing duplication of efforts”.

SASSETA has shown a commitment to realise the vision of the NSDP by establishing and building different partnerships that are aimed at fostering knowledge and professional skills and enhancing the response of education and training to the needs of the sector and the country's economy. SASSETA partnerships are also aiming to promote relevant occupational-directed training programmes fuelled by a demand-led skills approach (Sector Skills Plan for Safety and Security, 2023).

In his work, Terblanche (2019) maintains that SASSETA plays an important role in developing partnerships as they are charged with a responsibility to manage skills programmes and learnerships for the private security industry. The learnership in this context is regarded as a well-structured, occupationally-based learning programme that leads to a recognised qualification on the South African National Qualifications Framework.

SETAs have a big role to play in such partnerships, including promoting learnerships by finding workplaces where learners can complete practical work, supporting people who create learning material assisting in finalising learnership agreements, and helping to register learnership agreements.

Mbana et al, (2021) note that the security industry in South Africa has shown to be the second largest growing industry. This shows that a lot of partnerships between SASSETA and other different institutions have to expand in terms of providing basic education and training in the safety and security sector. This includes taking care of the training needs of the defense, legal, police, correctional service, statutory intelligence, and private security (Terblanche, 2019).

There is a crucial need for training of this magnitude to promote skills and sustainability in the security industry. Mbana, Mofokeng, Khosa, and Maluleke (2021) are of the view that expanding partnerships is crucial in the safety and security sector in South Africa, and this requires taking SASSETA to the people instead of taking people to SASSETA. Hence, SASSETA has a responsibility to strengthen its collaborations with various stakeholders including the TVETs Colleges and universities to reach out to all communities, rural areas, and accessible to everyone.

2.8 Towards forging partnerships in the safety and security sector

The safety and security sector in South Africa is experiencing a continuous growth in crime rates. Maluleke and Dlamini (2019) bring forward that the damaging impact of crime on the peace and stability in the country, the safety and security of communities, as well as its effect on the reputation of the country among potential international tourists and investors, and how all these affect the general quality of life of ordinary citizens need no emphasis.

Crime solutions that work and are cost-effective are hardly to be found, and they remain elusive. However, community policing has been shown to be a successful in reducing crime in some other countries, such as the United States of America, during the 1970s (Blair et al., 2021). Community policing has, therefore, become a standard ideological and policy model that seeks to guide mission statements, goals, and reform programmes of policing agencies worldwide.

In South Africa, the National Community Policing Strategy was launched in 2018 to focus on crime and social disorders through the delivery of police services, which include some aspects of democratic law enforcement as well as prevention, problem-solving, community engagement, and partnerships (Makhetha, 2021).

Some strategic partnerships have been formed to overcome the issues of crime in South Africa's safety and security sector. These partnerships include a police-community partnership which is a form of community policing employed to combat crime and ensure a safe living and working environment for the public (Saunders and Kilmer, 2021). This is a partnership that is aimed at closing a gap between the community and police through the means of establishing a working relationship and solid engagement between these stakeholders.

As a result, Blair et al. (2021) state that the community is entitled to share responsibilities with the police; hence, communities have a responsibility to do activities such as street patrolling and guarding private and public properties. According to Saunders and Kilmer (2021), community-policing partnerships open space for the participation of various stakeholders, including community members, government institutions, and agencies such as non-profit organisations, schools, private businesses, and the media.

The main intention of such partnerships is to solve crime in problematic neighbourhoods by establishing centres and organisations that enable residents to engage and build strong social bonds and networks while resolving societal problems threatening their safety. The findings of Mangai, Masiya, Murwamuila, and Holtzhausen (2022) in a study conducted in the City of Johannesburg shows that strengthening the partnership between the community and police is the most effective way of reducing crime, as it allows the community to be watchdogs for the police and report the suspicious activities that take place in the community.

However, some challenges have been experienced which are hindering the success of police-community partnerships in this area. The challenges include a lack of resources and insufficient

support from the government. Another challenge faced in this partnership is the lack of knowledge and understanding of inefficient training amongst police and community members (Masiya et al, 2022). This demands a provision of training that must be provided to all police officers at the stations and extended to members of communities who participate in the police-community partnership.

2.9 Conclusion

The literature reveals that partnerships are a strategic tool that can be used to fulfil a higher education institution's mandate and drive development. They can also contribute to a better understanding of the world at large, changes, and trends. Strategic partnerships can be viewed as one of many ways of achieving a higher education institution's goal in a mutual exchange with a central collaborative partner. Hence, strategic partnerships include many relationships and forms of collaboration at different levels, in different parts of the partners' organisations.

The literature further reveals that effective partnerships require that roles and responsibilities be clearly identified, as well as have clarity of division of labour within the partnership. Where this is lacking, delivery may suffer as partners may not feel obligated to fulfil certain deliverables assuming the other partner will carry the burden. Unless roles and responsibilities are clarified, it is also difficult to effectively monitor performance and take corrective action where necessary. The message here is clearly that effective partnerships require good planning and deliverables should never be left to chance. Partnership is only as strong as the partners and therefore it is important to have partners that have capacity to implement and be accountable for deliverables.

Chapter 3

Evaluation approach and methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a methodological approach employed to conduct this evaluation study. This study seeks to provide a qualitative evaluation of the SETA's strategic partnerships with the aim to understand perceptions of stakeholders from higher education institutions on the rate of return on investment through SASSETA partnerships for the period between 2018 to 2023. The principle of the evaluative framework played a significant role in determining the suitable methodological approach and design employed in this study. This chapter offers knowledge on the evaluation approach, design and methodology.

3.2 Toward the principles of the evaluative framework

In this study, the evaluative framework is employed as a tool that helps to present a systematic and clear overview of the evaluation methodology and process. The evaluative framework that is well thought out can help greatly with determining the planned evaluation activities and assist in terms of clarifying the scope of the evaluation. The evaluative framework is a more practical, non-prescriptive tool designed with the intention of summarising and organise crucial elements of the programme evaluation. The evaluative framework played a significant role in contextualising the following activities:

- Assisted in determining a suitable methodological approach.
- Helped to guide the formulation and structuring of interview questions.
- Helped to summarise the crucial elements of strategic partnerships between SASSETA and institutions of higher education.
- Help in understanding the processes and framework for evaluating effective strategic partnerships.
- Clarify components towards strategic partnership evaluations.
- Address misconceptions regarding the purposes and methods to ensure strategic partnership.

The elements (inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, ad impact) of the evaluative framework play a huge role in contextualising the evaluation process. These elements have been used as a driving force for planning and assessing the state of SASSETA strategic partnerships. This has been achieved by adhering to the following outlined design and methodological approaches.

3.3 Methodological approach

The evaluation will be based on a mixed methods approach, to establish a robust evidence base. This will be informed by the evaluation matrix and will combine an in-depth document review as well as key informant interviews. The evaluation will use purposive sampling rather than a random sampling approach. In terms of methodology, the study is based on three types of data that allows to analyse and interpret the SASSETA's strategic partnerships that it seek to pursue and achieve between 2018 and 2023. Firstly, there are official documents, in particular sector skills plan and

various MoAs available which gives SASSETA's position on these strategic partnerships. These documents allows the evaluators to gauge and interpret the intent and further ascertain the output and the level of investment that the SETA has made in these partnerships. Secondly, there are 12 qualitative interviews were conducted within the scope and terms of reference for this evaluation. The qualitative interviews that were conducted aims to understand the implementation and outcomes of the partnerships as well as perceived challenges and lessons learned.

These two types of data form the basis of the main part of the study and were analyzed using qualitative content analysis The literature analysis form the third part of the data analysis as it was synthesized with the two data categories. The evaluation methodology is a very important strategy that can be put in place for solving a particular problem. In this regard, Rajasekar, Philominathan, and Chinnathambi (2006) put forward that research methodology is a science that is usually used to study how the evaluation will be done.

3.3.1 Evaluation design

The present study is mainly based on the primary data, but secondary data are also used. The study is positioned to the exploratory research design to provide a qualitative evaluation of the subject with the aim to understand the perceptions of stakeholders from higher education institutions on the rate of return on investment through SASSETA partnerships for the period from 2018 to 2021. The study used exploratory approach design on the basis that it helped to understand at an early stage if the topic of the study is substance, investigate the resources and time, and determine if it is worth pursuing.

The exploratory evaluation design has been used based on its flexibility to study an evaluative research study from the qualitative point of view using interview schedules. This research design compliments the use of an evaluative framework, which is a tool that helps present a systematic and clear overview of the evaluation methodology and process.

This study relied extensively on the principles of the qualitative approach. This research approach was based on the fact that it helped the researcher to determine more detailed opinions and experiences of participants regarding their participation in the strategic partnership with SASSETA. The qualitative approach has further helped the researcher to comprehend very well the meaning of the participants' actions.

According to Corbin, Strauss, and Strauss (2014), this research approach has the essential strength of giving a researcher the ability to discover the internal experiences of participants and also determine the extent to which the meaning is being shaped. In the context of this study, the qualitative research approach ensured that the process of data collection is more detailed and subjective.

3.3.2 Target population and sampling methods

The target population for this study includes stakeholders from higher education institutions and SASSETA. This population was sampled using the non-probability sampling method. This was an essential method of data sampling since purposive sampling was used as a subjective method. Hence, purposive sampling was used to sample participants from various higher education institutions that are in partnership with SASSETA.

This group of participants was purposively sampled since they fit a particular profile and play a huge role in ensuring the success of the existing partnership towards advancing the mandate of the SETA within the safety and security sector. These key subject matter experts were sampled using purposive because the researcher has prior knowledge about the purpose of this study and the responsibility entitled to these participants, which makes them a suitable population to be sampled.

3.3.3 Sample size

Mason (2010) says that in conducting a qualitative study, it is optional to have a large number of participants. This is because sampling in qualitative research intends to obtain information that is valuable to understand the depth, complexity, context, or variation around the particular phenomenon instead of representing the population as it usually occurs in quantitative research (Mason, 2010).

The total number of institutions of higher education that were available in the existing database was thirty-four (34) for the period 2018 to 2023. As a result, stakeholders were recruited to participate in this study by sending an email invite asking them to confirm their participation. As a result, it was only twelve (12) participants who confirmed their participation. As per the idea of Mason (2010), this number of participants was enough to draw the findings of the study. For data triangulation, at least one (1) from SASSETA participated in this, which makes the overall total size of this study to be thirteen (13).

3.3.4 Data collection

The study relied extensively on the use of interviews for the purpose of collecting data. The interview questions were more in-depth in nature as the evaluator's interest has been in gaining in-depth perceptions of participants on the subject at hand. In-depth interviews are regarded as the most flexible instrument for data collection since they consist of open-ended questions, which can be modified and altered depending on the nature of responses from the participants.

As a result, all participants have an opportunity to express their experiences in depth using their own words. To protect the participants, evaluators explained the objectives, procedures and data protection to the participants and always sought their consent before collecting data. The evaluators rechecked the completion to get accurate and completed questionnaires for the analysis.

The in-depth interviews have also helped to produce a valid outcome in this study because it helped the evaluators to pay more focus to the different experiences and knowledge of participants about

the existing partnerships and the role of SASSETA in advancing its mandate with the safety and security sector. The interviews were telephonically recorded and later transcribed to create solid data for additional investigations and also to help document research findings. In cases where the participants struggled to attend interviews, the set of in-depth interview questions were emailed through Google Forms, and participants responded to them using the paragraph format.

3.3.5 Data analysis

The purpose of data analysis was achieved through the use of content analysis. This is an analysis tool that helps to analyse data, which is in the form of text, interview records, books, websites, and so forth to regulate the frequency of a particular phenomenon. The content analysis was used to analyse and categorise qualitative data on the bases of themes derived from the objectives of the study that was conducted through interviews that were guided by in-depth interview questions.

Moreover, the content analysis allowed a researcher to read the interviews carefully, and afterward, the researcher was able to identify and formulate several topics. Hence, the researcher was able to identify specific notions and trends of ideas that occurred with particular participants. In addition, Nkuna (2016) is of the view that this method of data analysis grants an opportunity for objective analysis of transcribed substantial data and can also identify the meaning of text data.

3.4 Ethical consideration

Informed consent was obtained through a gatekeeping letter informing participants about the aim and purpose of the study. Informed consent was used to protect the rights of respondents by letting them know the aim of the study. The voluntary participation of respondents was considered, as the respondents were granted a right to withdraw from their participation at any time if they felt like withdrawing.

For confidentiality, the evaluators ensured that other people did not gain access to the confidential information shared by participants during the data collection process. It was further ensured that other people do not have access to the confidential information shared by participants during the data collection process. The next chapter is based on the presentation, interpretation, and analysis of the main findings.

Chapter 4

Evaluation findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The findings of this study are qualitative in nature and triangulated with various data sources. This partnership study is born out of recognition that SASSETA must develop effective networks for it to effectively deliver on its mandate. The objectives of this evaluation are as follows: to determine the relevance, coherence, effectiveness, and efficiency of the SETA strategic partnerships that it pursue to advance its mandate and strategic objectives.

4.2 Findings and discussions

SASSETA works with multiple stakeholders such as employers within the industry to collaborate with training institutions, workers' unions, community organisations and other community stakeholders for the purposes of aligning training with the skills needed for the industry to grow and compete. Consistent with the study objective, and as guided by available literature on best practice, an evaluation of current partnerships has been done. This, together with views elicited from internal key informant interviews, findings are presented below on the status quo against the evaluation criteria, issues and questions.

4.2.1 Relevance

The strategic partnerships relevance was assessed in terms of its objectives and their specific needs, and the alignment of its activities. The evaluation found that indeed, the SETA's strategic partnerships are relevant to the broader mandate of the SETA. Another element of relevance for the importance to beneficiary and their specific needs, the alignment of its activities. The evaluation found that specific objective as outline in various MoA are aligned with the activities and relevant in advancing the broader mandate of skills development.

The participants were also satisfied with question on relevance and alignment of the activities. A key informant from SASSETA brought forward that SASSETA is an institution that does not perform the actual training function; therefore, it becomes imperative that it forge partnerships with institutions of higher learning in order to achieve its goal in skills development.

Some of the participants revealed that strategic partnerships are important because they open a space for proper planning, active participation by all involved stakeholders, mutual agreement, support, and commitment with an intention to ensure effective and successful partnerships. The evaluation team could not find issues and questions on the strategic partnership relevance. The participants reiterated that effective and relevant networks and partnerships are critical in assisting SASSETA to fulfil its mandate. The evaluation found the relevance of the partnership between SASSETA and institutions of higher education and significance in improving and supplying skills in the safety and security sectors.

4.2.2 Coherence

The coherence of the strategic partnerships were assessed broadly against the outputs, intended results and activities and fully aligned with government priorities and national policies. The evaluation found that the overall and specific objectives of the initiative are fully aligned with government priorities and national policies. The evaluation teams had not find issues and question to be further addressed on the coherence of SASSETA's strategic partnerships.

The participants stated that it is crucial for institutions of higher education to forge strategic partnerships with industries because their collations can help to foster innovation and better prepare students for real-world challenges, allowing industry partners to benefit from fresh perspectives and talent while establishing the educational institution as a preferred choice for students.

The interviewee went on to mention the importance of relevance and currency of education, whereby collaboration ensures that educational programs remain relevant to industry needs. It helps align the curriculum with the latest industry trends, technological advancements, and evolving skill requirements, ensuring graduates are job-ready (Interviewee #12).

The importance of forging partnerships has also been linked with helping learners acquire practical skills and experience. This is because partnerships provide learners with practical experience through internships, co-op programs, or industry projects. This exposure allows learners to apply classroom knowledge in real-world settings, enhancing their employability.

4.2.3 Effectiveness

The evaluation team could not find the contrary evidence to that the partnerships suffered from significant weaknesses regarding collaboration mechanisms, commitment to timetables, presence of protocols and practices and the existence of progress indicators that would have allowed effective monitoring of achievable intermediate and final results for the various activities stages, including the delivery of project outputs.

Nevertheless, these weaknesses in processes and delays in delivery, which were not documented thoroughly in the project or activities progress reports ultimately compromise the overall outcomes, intended results and activities. The difficulty the evaluation team had on this question was the availability of records to support statements or suggestions on the effectiveness of the strategic partnerships. The records on the partnership projects or activities need to be fully and completely reviewed and addressed.

The evaluation found no evidence of the defined deliverable time table and resources clearly speak to the activities that are planned to be undertaken. The strategic partnership effectiveness is measured against the plan against the deliverables, outputs, intended results and activities. The evaluation team could not find plans that the SETA and its partners developed and committed to in terms of partnerships performance and management.

The question and the test is not to say activities were (or are) not taking place, but the question on whether what happened, how has it happened and to what extent do the activities implemented in delivering the project complement the plan. The evaluation question further look the following variables:

- Evidence of achievement of the main objective, as well as the specific objectives of the project, e.g., enrolment, completion rate vs dropout rate.
- Number and types of contributing factors identified at the level of implementation management and participation of all stakeholders involved in the project.
- Number and types of constraints identified at the level of conception/design, implementation management and participation.
- Number and types of unexpected results, as identified by stakeholders and expected beneficiaries.

4.2.4 Efficiency and sustainability

The most identifying feature of evaluation research is presence of evidence, goals and targeted outcomes whose measure of attainment constitute the main focus of evaluation. For example, the efficiency and the sustainability of what? There is intrinsic relationship between evaluation and planning in terms of the meaning of the evidence found and activities undertaken.

The evaluation found insufficient evidence in an accessible manner to support efficiency and sustainability on the strategic partnerships question and under review. In other words, the evaluation team is of the view that the strategic partnership of the SETA has fall short on the question of efficiency and sustainability. This has wide implication on the issues of partnerships outputs, intended results and activities. The evaluation question on efficiency and sustainability further look at the following variables:

- Number and type of factors linked to resources contributing or affecting the reach of planned objectives and implemented in a timely manner.
- Cost-effectiveness
- Evidence of hindering or beneficial effects of management factors (arrangements for coordination, decision-making, monitoring etc.).
- Level of adequacy of resources to planned activities, including resource planning.
- Level of adherence to project schedule and timely delivery of deliverables as expected in the partnerships.
- Existence of complete and accurate financial information regarding the project's budget and expenditure.

The evaluation found that SASSETA strategic partnerships were unable to tick many of these boxes on the question of efficiency and sustainability. In fact, the evaluation found that there are many shortcoming that should be address including communication framework for these partnerships. This has raise few questions on the performance and management of these partnerships which need to be addressed which include tracking, monitoring and evaluating these partnerships. In the course of the evaluation, participants were asked about monitoring and tracking activities it was clear that there

is no formalised and structure way of monitoring and evaluating the outcomes of the partnership. In responding to the question of how the partners conduct monitoring and evaluation, most of the participants emphasised the importance of having a proper system for ensuring monitoring and evaluation since it is essential for the success of the partnerships. Key informants from SASSETA stated:

“...monitoring has a two-pronged approach, monitoring in terms of the contractual agreement by the learning programmes department to ensure that the work required is on track, taking into consideration quality and cost. Monitoring conducted by the monitoring and evaluation department is an objective view on the projects implemented through these partnerships that seek to provide areas for improvement.”

Evaluations that are conducted allow the SASSETA to analyse and check the impact these partnerships have on the sector and on the bigger picture. It has been revealed that stakeholders are using meetings for briefing and discussion of the status quo of the partnership, including discussing the performance of learners during their respective skills training programmes.

Even though these meetings are not happening regularly, especially with institutions that invest financial resources in our skills development programmes; but meetings are taking place more than once a year. However, participants emphasised that there is a need to have regular meetings and channels of communication must be expanded for the purpose of discussing issues that arise during the year, mostly those issues that have to do with learners who are financially benefiting from SASSETA support.

Monitoring and tracking the intended results in strategic partnerships it cannot over emphasised as it promoting the practice of evidence-based decision making, policy development and reporting in time to partnership deliverables. It will further promote objective decision making for performance improvement, planning and resource allocation and accountability.

4.2.5 The other general issues

The evaluation also found the following issues on existing partnerships:

- No clear policy on partnerships and the approach is largely ad-hoc.
- No effective coordination of partnerships to ensure they deliver on agreed MoU terms.
- Some partnerships lack budgetary allocation and this makes it impossible for them to deliver.
- Need to re-build relationships with stakeholders for partnerships to be sustainable.
- Transformation agenda is key in partnerships.
- Relationships with TVET Colleges currently not strategic, need to identify those that are strategic to SASSETA.
- Some partnerships were driven by lack of resources by partner organisations.
- Need to have more coherent partnerships with other SETA that can assist SASSETA in achieving its strategic objectives.

- Map key small players in private security and have a working partnership with them as industry is currently dominated by big players.
- SASSETA should positively impact small players within the sector such as Policing Forums, NGOs/CBOs that focus on justice issues, child protection, women abuse, drug/alcohol abuse etc
- Need to partner with individuals who are experts in the field.
- Ensure there is a clear relationship between the partnerships you establish and what the SSP says is priority e.g. if SSP says key issue is domestic violence, focus on that in partnerships.
- SASSETA must focus on sustainable interventions e.g. have partnerships with organisations that focus on repeat offender programmes as this has direct long-term impact on the sector. Also consider sustainable programmes such as for military veterans and cooperatives and partner with organisations already with such entities.
- Some partnerships were (or are) reduced to tick the box exercise.
- Have partnerships with key Government Departments where SASSETA can capitalise on existing infrastructure in a co-funding arrangement.
- Partner with organisations where there are opportunities to piggy- baggy on available capabilities e.g. Fidelity training centres, and SAPs Colleges.
- It's necessary to have coordinating committees to regularly review partnership performance.
- Good partnerships must be characterised by mutually shared objectives, transparency, accountability and responsibility
- TVET Colleges with SASSETA MoU should do more to assist learners obtain qualifications in Safety and Security
- Institute of Security Studies should be a key partner to SASSETA, especially given its research capacity
- Need for a manager accountable for partnership coordination as this is currently done at department level with no overall effective coordination.

Effective partnerships focus on the relationship among partners as well as on the achievement of objectives. In this regard, it is crucial for the interests of each partner to be transparently and honestly tabled at the outset and that these issues are integrated into the MoA. It is also critical that the decision-making and conflict resolution processes should also be designed into the partnership structure to alleviate any potential problems in the relationship between partners. There was a general agreement that the partnership bring value to the course and pursuant to the SETA mandate.

To further buttress the relationships, a well thought out communication strategy should be developed encompassing both formal procedures and informal methods of keeping in touch and improving personal and institutional relationships. Effective partnerships are at the core of service delivery by SETAs. As such, it is important that SETAs identify and operate in appropriate networks in furtherance of their strategic objectives.

4.3 Conclusion

In recognition of the broad mandate of each SETA in skills development, and in order to better meet its strategic objectives, it becomes a critical part of the service delivery model to form partnerships

with other entities within and across its sector of operation. Given this context, SASSETA has established partnerships with Universities, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Colleges (TVET Colleges) and other strategic partners who it anticipates can positively impact on its service delivery.

As Kruss and Petersen (2016) contend that SETAs play an intermediate role, “SETAs should therefore operate at the network level (i.e. coordinate skills development across groups or networks of actors such as universities, firms, TVET Colleges, etc.) articulating skills demand, identifying education and training options for meeting demand, facilitating interaction between supply and demand-side actors, and supporting learning processes for addressing skill needs.

The evaluation found that SASSETA understands this position correctly and works with multiple stakeholders such as employers within the industry to collaborate with training institutions, workers’ unions, community organisations and other community stakeholders for the purposes of aligning training with the skills needed for the industry to grow and compete.

The evaluation further found that SASSETA partnerships are relevant and coherent to its broader mandate and its strategic objectives. On the other hand, SASSETA has fall short on the questions of effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. That said, evaluation found that SASSETA’s strategic partnership are functional within the scope and some deficit that needs to be addressed. The next chapter, therefore, provides the conclusion and recommendation of this study.

Chapter 5

Conclusion and recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The chapter present conclusion and recommendation of the evaluation. The conclusion and recommendations are undertaken to reflect and contextualise the main findings to the objectives of the study while also providing the overall conclusion of the study. These recommendations will be pivotal in guiding further partnerships and effectively managing the performance and impact of the partnerships.

5.2 Summary of the findings and implication of the study

In effecting change, it goes without saying that understanding the present is critical before one can envision a different future. Put differently, only when one has an understanding of the status quo can change be effectively managed. Evaluating current SASSETA partnerships has to start with reviewing key informant perceptions on existing partnerships in terms of the evaluation questions: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability.

The study found that there is relevance and coherence in the partnerships with the broader mandate of the SETA. However, it was clear that these partnerships lacks on the other evaluation criteria. For example, they lack effective co-ordination and clear deliverables with timely delivery. Given the overwhelming evidence indicating the need to change course, a new approach is required to identify stakeholders critical to long-term sustainable service delivery. There was a general agreement that the partnership bring value to the course and pursuant to the SETA mandate.

The following is a summary of informant perceptions on existing partnerships:

- No clear policy on partnerships and the approach is largely ad-hoc;
- No effective coordination of partnerships to ensure they deliver on agreed MoU terms
- Some partnerships lack budgetary allocation and this makes it impossible for them to deliver
- Research Chairs are generally expensive and SASSETA does not have resources to sustain them.
- Need to re-build relationships with stakeholders for partnerships to be sustainable.
- Transformation agenda is key in partnerships.
- Relationships with TVET Colleges currently not strategic, need to identify those that are strategic to SASSETA.
- Some partnerships were driven by lack of resources by partner organisations.
- Need to have more coherent partnerships with other SETA that can assist SASSETA in achieving its strategic objectives.
- Map key small players in private security and have a working partnership with them as industry is currently dominated by big players
- How can SASSETA capitalise on existing infrastructure(e.g. training and research facilities) at other organisations such as South Africa Police Service (SAPS), Defence, etc.

- SASSETA should positively impact small players within the sector such as Policing Forums, NGOs/CBOs that focus on justice issues, child protection, women abuse, drug/alcohol abuse etc
- Need to partner with individuals who are experts in the field
- Partnerships with universities to be with those that are focusing on the security/safety sector as informed by SASSETA strategy and sector needs
- Ensure there is a clear relationship between the partnerships you establish and what the SSP says is priority e.g. if SSP says key issue is domestic violence, focus on that in partnerships
- SASSETA must focus on sustainable interventions e.g. have partnerships with organisations that focus on repeat offender programmes as this has direct long-term impact on the sector. Also consider sustainable programmes such as for military veterans and cooperatives and partner with organisations already with such entities.
- Some partnerships are reduced to a tick box exercise.
- Have partnerships with key Government Departments where SASSETA can capitalise on existing infrastructure in a co-funding arrangement.
- Partner with organisations where there are opportunities to piggy- baggy on available capabilities e.g. Fidelity training centres, SAPs Colleges.
- It's necessary to have coordinating committees to regularly review partnership performance.
- Good partnerships must be characterised by mutually shared objectives, transparency, accountability and responsibility.
- TVET Colleges with SASSETA MoU should do more to assist learners obtain qualifications in Safety and Security
- Institute of Security Studies should be a key partner to SASSETA, especially given its research capacity.
- Need for a manager accountable for partnership coordination as this is currently done at department level with no overall effective coordination and management.

5.3 Understanding partnerships: Lessons learnt

SASSETA is mandated to provide leadership and strategic direction on skills development matters in the safety and security sector. A good partnership has many characteristics although it is unlikely that one partnership will have all good characteristics. The different situations will require tailored solutions and workable agreements that can look totally different from one agreement to the other. The lessons learnt from strategic partnerships are:

5.3.1 Partnerships need to be regularly renewed and not taken for granted

Too often, partnerships are entered into as a short-term compliance intervention. Where the approach is myopic, there is a real risk that there will be no regular review and nurturing of the partnership arrangement in order to make it work for the benefit of all partner organizations. As a consequence, partnerships will only continue to exist in paper but in reality, they will long have ceased to be functional. Partnerships needs to be properly managed and monitored in order to remain relevant and effective to the course.

5.3.2 Trust must be built over a period of time through openness, transparency and knowledge-sharing

In organisational relationships, just like in social relationships, trust is earned and is a consequence of openness and transparency between partners. This calls for consistent engagement and ensuring that each partner continues to see value in the relationship. Where a partner holds a perception that there is no transparency in the relationship, the logical response is to disengage. The partnership consequently suffers as its continued subsistence may then just be nominal while not adding any real tangible benefits to the partner organisations.

5.3.3 Continuously educating stakeholder constituencies on the purpose and functioning of the partnership

At the core of effective partnerships is the need to consistently disseminate information on the purpose and functioning of the partnership to stakeholder constituencies. This is critical because it fosters buy-in from all parties involved with the partnership and allows for free-flow of information within the affected constituencies.

GTZ (2008) contend that the following factors as being absolutely pivotal to partnership success:

- Clearly defined objectives
- Clearly defined scope or area of operation
- Appropriate and sound collective leadership
- Good communication within the partnership and with other stakeholders
- Well defines roles and responsibilities within the partnership
- High levels of receptiveness of partners to new ideas and practices
- Proper governance and accountability mechanisms in place
- Defined and measurable indicators for monitoring and evaluation
- Degree of flexibility
- Partners fulfilling their commitment to resources
- Transparency, equity, and
- Appropriate and effective operating structure.

5.4 Recommendations

The findings of the study identified some shortcomings in the performance and management of the SETA partnerships and to supplement this, this evaluation proposes the following recommendations:

5.4.1 Develop partnership policy framework and guidelines

SASSETA has admitted upfront that it does not have a strategic partnership policy framework or guidelines that informs and direct the formation of the partnerships. Notwithstanding, the chapter 4 of SASSETA sector skills plan does give a convince position that the SETA follows on its formation of strategic partnerships.

Given the fact that in most cases a number of partnerships exist at the same time, managed by different business units, it is important that a formal policy mechanism be in place to guide all staff on how to manage relationships with partners and indeed on how to maximise benefits from such relationships. It is highly recommended that SASSETA develop and adopt a formal institutional policy framework and guidelines on partnerships.

5.4.2 Partnership record and deliverables management

Aside from the delays and administrative weaknesses in project delivery, the evaluation team noted that records management on partnership deliverables can be improved to allow a proper evaluation of partnership deliverables, investment and accountability.

The record management is essential and will assist with the critical assessment of the state of partnerships and the theory of change and the extent to which its planned logical framework and assumptions compare with the actual implementation and the results achieved.

5.4.3 Centralise oversight, strengthen monitoring and reporting on partnerships

Bringing different organisation cultures together can be challenging, given partners' varying communication styles and expectations. When proper oversight is not in place things can easily fall into cracks and diminish the importance and strategic intent of partnership. It is important that oversight is centralised for accountability and effective monitoring of goals and objectives for the partnership.

Management must demonstrate unquestionable commitment to maximizing the benefits of the partnership. Too often managers responsible tend to fit partnership activities into their already busy programmes resulting in lacklustre performance at partnership level. It is therefore vital that partners commit sufficient time, resources and energy into building successful partnerships.

The well-structured partnership agreements must ensure there is clarity in terms of roles and responsibilities. Where this is lacking, delivery may suffer as partners may not feel obligated to fulfil certain deliverables assuming the other partner will carry the burden. Unless roles and responsibilities are clarified, it is also difficult to effectively monitor performance and take corrective action where necessary.

It is also important that partnerships activities are reviewed quarterly to track the partnership's progress against defined metrics and helps to spot potential areas of concern-ideally with enough time to change course. It would be strongly recommended that SASSETA look at its oversight posture and monitoring and reporting regime throughout the partnership cycle. The MoA should be subject to review from time to time to ensure they still add value to SASSETA.

5.4.4 Resource, strengthen governance and management of partnerships

The reality is: successful partnerships don't just happen. Strong partners set a clear foundation for business relationships and nurture them. They emphasize accountability within and across partner institutions, and they use agreed upon metrics to gauge success. And they are willing to change things up if needed. Focusing on these priorities can help partnerships thrive and create more value than they would otherwise.

The evaluation found that SASSETA does not command a well structure approach on resourcing its strategic partnerships with a clear upfront expected targets. SASSETA should consider its investment approach toward these partnerships and strengthen their governance and management. Good governance and management is the linchpin for successful partnerships; as such, it is critical that senior executives from the partner organizations remain involved in oversight of the partnerships of the organisation.

The governance framework should also look at the hierarchy of control and communication. A successful partnership can only result if there is commitment at 'the top'. Senior management must demonstrate their buy- in and continued support for the establishment and maintenance of the partnership. Partnerships are sensitive to coordination weaknesses and this therefore calls for effective coordination mechanisms to be in place to unlock value from partnerships. It is important to ensure that all partners are part of the decision- making process and are called upon to account regarding implementation

5.5 Conclusion

The SETA's mandate encourages it to forge collaborative partnerships advances various aspects of its mandate with entities either public or private sector. The SETA partner with institutions across a broad spectrum: research, employers, education and training with the objective of strengthening institutional capacity and performance. Partnership strengthen industry ownership of the skills system and the value of the work-based learning. They also match learning provision with demand to develop the right skills. Arguably, all organisations exist to create value of some kind, and there is likely to be merit in adopting a strategic value creation approach in partnerships.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the findings that there is a lack of structure, focus and well defined expected results and timelines in the partnerships that the SETA has. In particular, there is a lack of alignment between SASSETA strategic imperatives and current partnerships. Also important is the realisation that there is lack of long-term thinking in terms of partnerships, a deficit that promotes short-termism in terms of who to partner with.

However, despite all the negative comments on current partnerships, there are some that are working well. Given the overwhelming evidence indicating the need to change course, a new approach is required to identify stakeholders critical to long-term sustainable approach to partnerships and service delivery. The proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for partnership need to be

maintained to ensure centralized oversight of the expected outcomes and progress on the partnership activities in terms of efficiency and other coordination issues vis-à-vis performance improvement, planning and resource allocation and accountability. Partnership structures should be influenced by SASSETA's strategic objectives and consequent 'strategic fit' with partner organisations. Simply put, there should be no temptation to use the same partnership structure in all cases as seems the case now.

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Annexures

Annexure 1: Planned partnerships

No	Name of Proposed Partner Institution	Duration	Nature and Objectives
1	SETA to SETA Partnerships	2030	[1]. MoA [2]. To collaborate on matters of mutual interest: research, funding and skills development initiative that addresses the transversal skills and other strategic imperatives.
2	Professional Bodies/ NGOs	2030	[1]. MoA [2]. To collaborate and advancing matters of mutual interest: funding & skills development.
3	Universities	2030	[1]. MoA [2]. To collaborate on research and skills development.
4	TVET Colleges & Community Colleges	2030	[1]. MoA [2]. To collaborate on skills development and WIL placements and support lecturer development programs.

Source: 2024 SASSETA Sector Skills Plan (2023)

Annexure 2: New partnerships

No	Name of Partner Institution	Duration	Nature and Objectives
1	University of Free State	2022 - 2025	[1]. MoA [2]. Education and training, WIL, Bursaries and lecturer development programs.
2	Garden Route District Municipality	2022 - 2025	[1]. MoA [2]. WIL, Re(up) - skilling workforce.
3	South African Board for Sheriffs	2022 - 2025	[1]. MoA [2]. Education and training and research
4	Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU)	2022 - 2025	[1]. MoA [2]. WIL, Re(up) - skilling workforce.

Source: 2024 SASSETA Sector Skills Plan (2023)

Annexure 3: Existing partnerships

Name of institution/organization	Period	Objectives of partnership	Value of partnership
Public Universities			
Tshwane University of Technology (TUT)	2020 –2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Conducting Policing and Corrections related research e.g., the effect of COVID-19 in skills development in the said subsector ▪ Peer review of research studies 	The partnership is envisaged to bolster information sharing between the two parties and contribute towards research capacity building
Nelson Mandela University (NMU)	2020 –2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To conduct niche are research e.g., GBV and Femicide research and HIV-AIDS and its impact in the safety and security sector 	To bolster the research capacity of the SETA
Public TVET Colleges			
Majuba TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting SASSETA Satellite Office ▪ Graduate Placement (WIL) ▪ Education and Training. 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
eThekweni TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hosting SASSETA KZN Regional Office ▪ Graduate Placement (WIL) ▪ Education and Training. 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
uMgungundlovu TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graduate Placement (WIL) ▪ Education and Training. 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Flavius Mareka TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Sekhukhune TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Sedibeng TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Mnambithi TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Gert Sibande TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
KSD TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Taletso TVET College	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and Practical Training for TVET Graduates 	To increased SASSETA's reach beyond its Head Office footprint and enhanced service delivery
Employers in the sector			
Fidelity Security Services	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Learnership: Electronic Security Systems Installation ▪ Better co-operation between the SETA and Fidelity Security Services 	The enable the co-funding of training interventions and the placement of learners
Department of Correctional Services	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support and practical training for TVET Graduates 	
South African National Defence Force (SANDF)/ Wits University	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve the quality of security management in the SANDF 	

Name of institution/ organization	Period	Objectives of partnership	Value of partnership
Department of Justice and Constitutional Development	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support and practical training for TVET Graduates 	
Civilian Secretariat for Police	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To realize the vision of the NSDP (2030) as well as building capacity and skills development within the Safety and Security Sector by entering into a partnership agreement. 	
Quality Council for Trades and Occupation	2020 –2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The QCTO revoked all previously delegated functions to the SETA as provided for in section 26 1 of the skills development Act No, 97 of 1998 	
Department of Police, Roads and Transport: Free State	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To realize the vision of the NSDP (2030) as well as building capacity and skills development within the Safety and Security Sector by entering into a partnership agreement. 	
Gauteng Community Education Training	2020 –2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To realize the vision of the NSDP (2030) as well as building capacity and skills development within the Safety and Security Sector by entering into a partnership agreement. 	
Council Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)	2021 - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collaborate on research & skills development 	
South African Woman Lawyers association (SAWLA)	2021 - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collaborate on women empowerment initiatives & targeted skills development 	
Law Society of South Africa (LSSA)	2021 - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collaborate on skills Development & graduate placements (Candidacy Attorneys) 	
National Bargaining Council for the Private Security Sector	2021 - 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To collaborate on skills development & collective sector analysis and shared learnings. 	

Source: 2024 SASSETA Sector Skills Plan (2023)

Annexure 4: Partnership Model for SASSETA should be driven by the following questions

Existing Partnerships	Nature of SASSETA Partnership	New and improved SASSETA Partnerships
<p>What is the state of existing SASSETA partnerships? What is the state of the skills development network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> With whom does the SETA partner? What is the strength of the partnership? Which partnerships are the strongest and which are the weakest? Which types of organisation are not included in the skills development network? Which organisations facilitate knowledge flows? What is the role of the SETA in the skills development networks? 	<p>What is the nature of existing SETA partnerships? How successful are these partnerships?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is working well with partnerships? What are some of the problems experienced in the partnerships? What should be done to strengthen the partnerships? Which partnerships have been effective in achieving the intended deliverables? Which have not? Why? 	<p>Which new partnerships are needed and how can current partnerships be improved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which key partnerships are absent from the networks? Which partnerships need to be strengthened? How?

Source: Adapted from Kruss and Petersen, (2016)

End