



# IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

## Work-Based Learning in South African Public TVET Colleges

A Strategic Framework for Implementing QCTO-Aligned  
Occupational Qualifications with Workplace Components

*Prepared for Public TVET College*



## Executive Summary

This comprehensive guide provides South African public Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges with a detailed roadmap for implementing work-based learning (WBL) programmes aligned with the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) framework. As the country transitions from legacy qualifications to the new Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), TVET colleges face the critical challenge of establishing robust workplace learning components that meet accreditation requirements while delivering meaningful skills development outcomes.

The transition represents a fundamental shift in how vocational education is conceptualised and delivered in South Africa. Under the new QCTO model, all occupational qualifications comprise three integrated components: knowledge (theoretical), practical skills (simulation-based), and workplace experience (authentic work environments). This tripartite structure ensures that learners develop not only theoretical understanding but also the applied competencies and workplace readiness that employers demand.

This guide presents a community-centred, action-based learning approach that brings training directly to underserved regions through accredited site extensions. Using integrated digital learning platforms, colleges can connect learners and facilitators 24/7, enabling personalised learning pathways, real-time portfolio building, and seamless evidence collection in workplace settings. This model addresses one of the most persistent challenges in South African TVET: ensuring that learners in rural and peri-urban areas can access quality workplace learning opportunities without relocating to urban centres.

The implementation roadmap follows a proven five-phase approach: Assessment, Infrastructure, Recruit, Train, and Place. This cyclical model enables colleges to continuously develop their regions with employment-ready skills, creating sustainable community development while building strong employer partnerships that lead to actual employment outcomes.

Key success factors identified include: regional needs assessment that matches programmes to genuine employment opportunities; strategic use of community-based training sites to expand access; digital platforms that enable action-based learning and portfolio development; structured employer engagement from programme design through to job placement; and a cyclical approach that builds sustainable skills pipelines for regional employers.

# 1. Policy and Regulatory Context

## 1.1 The National Skills Development Landscape

South Africa's post-school education and training system is guided by the White Paper for Post-School Education and Training (2013), which envisions TVET colleges as central institutions in addressing the country's skills deficit and chronic unemployment challenges. The National Development Plan 2030 sets ambitious targets for expanding TVET enrolment to 2.5 million students, with a strong emphasis on employer-responsive programmes that lead to meaningful employment outcomes.

The National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) III and the subsequent National Skills Development Plan (NSDP) 2030 prioritise workplace-based learning as a core mechanism for skills development. These policies recognise that theoretical knowledge alone is insufficient to produce work-ready graduates, and that authentic workplace experience is essential for developing the practical competencies, soft skills, and professional attitudes that employers require.

Critically, national policy also emphasises the importance of expanding access to communities that have historically been underserved by the TVET system. This requires innovative delivery models that bring training to learners rather than requiring learners to travel to distant campuses. Community-based delivery through accredited site extensions, supported by digital learning platforms, represents a key strategy for achieving this expanded access while maintaining quality standards.

## 1.2 The QCTO and Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework

The Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO) was established in 2010 under the Skills Development Act to oversee the development, accreditation, and quality assurance of occupational qualifications. The QCTO manages the Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework (OQSF), one of three sub-frameworks within South Africa's ten-level National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

A critical transition is currently underway in the TVET sector. Legacy qualifications, including unit standards-based qualifications developed before 2009, reached their final enrolment date on 30 June 2024, with learners having until 30 June 2027 to complete their studies. This transition requires TVET colleges to systematically migrate their programme offerings to QCTO-registered occupational qualifications.

All occupational qualifications registered on the OQSF comprise three mandatory curriculum components:

- **Knowledge Component:** Theoretical and conceptual understanding delivered through classroom-based instruction, covering the foundational



concepts, principles, and cognitive frameworks underpinning the occupation.

- **Practical Skills Component:** Applied skills development through structured learning activities in simulated environments, workshops, or laboratories that replicate workplace conditions.
- **Work Experience Component:** Authentic workplace learning in real employment settings where learners apply their knowledge and skills under supervision, building competence through genuine work activities.

This tripartite structure represents a fundamental departure from previous qualification models that often separated theoretical learning from workplace experience. Under the QCTO model, all three components are integrated and must be completed before learners can attempt the External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA), which is the final national examination leading to certification.

### 1.3 The Role of SETAs in workplace learning

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) play a crucial intermediary role in facilitating workplace-based learning. Funded through the Skills Development Levy (1% of payroll for employers with wage bills exceeding R500,000), SETAs provide discretionary grants that fund learner stipends, workplace mentorship, and institutional support for WBL programmes.

TVET colleges must develop strategic partnerships with relevant SETAs to access funding for WBL programmes. Key SETA functions include: developing and maintaining Sector Skills Plans that identify priority occupations; funding learnerships, apprenticeships, and intrnships; supporting TVET college capacity building; and facilitating employer partnerships for workplace placement.

The relationship between TVET colleges and SETAs is governed by memoranda of agreement (MOAs) and service level agreements (SLAs) that specify the responsibilities of each party, funding arrangements, and reporting requirements. Effective SETA partnerships require dedicated relationship management capacity within the college and a thorough understanding of each SETA's strategic priorities and funding cycles.



## 2. Assessing and Building Institutional Readiness

### 2.1 Regional Needs Assessment

Effective WBL implementation begins with a thorough assessment of the socio-economic development needs within the college's catchment area. This regional analysis identifies where specific upskilling and reskilling needs exist and ensures that programme offerings are matched to genuine employment opportunities.

The regional needs assessment should examine:

- **Economic Profile:** Key industries and employers in the region, economic growth trends, and emerging sectors
- **Labour Market Dynamics:** Unemployment rates, skills shortages reported by employers, vacancy patterns, and wage levels
- **Community Demographics:** Population distribution, education levels, youth population, and existing skills base
- **Access Barriers:** Geographic distances to existing training facilities, transport infrastructure, and economic barriers to participation
- **Stakeholder Input:** Direct engagement with community members, local businesses, and municipal economic development offices

This assessment informs decisions about which qualifications to prioritise and where to establish community-based training sites. Programmes should only be offered where there is demonstrable employer demand and realistic prospects for graduate employment.

### 2.2 Community-Based Delivery Model

To expand access beyond traditional campus locations, colleges should identify suitable community-based sites for programme delivery. This approach brings training directly to underserved communities, reducing barriers related to transport costs and geographic distance.

Suitable community training sites may include:

- Community centres and halls
- Church facilities with appropriate spaces
- Municipal buildings
- Employer premises
- School facilities (after hours)

These sites must meet QCTO requirements for accreditation as site extensions. The college completes a site extension application that demonstrates the facility



has adequate classroom space, practical training areas (where required), health and safety compliance, and appropriate equipment and resources for the qualifications to be offered.

## 2.3 QCTO Accreditation Requirements

To offer occupational qualifications, TVET colleges must obtain accreditation from the QCTO as a Skills Development Provider (SDP). The accreditation process evaluates the college's capacity to deliver the knowledge, practical, and workplace components of registered qualifications. For community-based delivery, site extensions must be registered for each delivery location.

Key accreditation requirements include:

- **Physical Infrastructure:** Adequate classroom, workshop, and laboratory facilities that meet the specifications outlined in the qualification curriculum
- **Equipment and Resources:** Industry-standard equipment, tools, and consumables required for practical skills training
- **Qualified Staff:** Facilitators with appropriate qualifications and industry experience, registered as QCTO assessors and moderators
- **Learning Materials:** Curriculum-aligned learner support materials and facilitator guides
- **Workplace Partnerships:** Documented agreements with employers who will host learners for workplace experience
- **Quality Management System:** Policies and procedures governing programme delivery, assessment, and learner support
- **Financial Stability:** Evidence of financial capacity to sustain programme delivery and protect learner interests

Accreditation is granted for a period of five years, subject to ongoing compliance monitoring. Colleges must maintain all accreditation requirements throughout this period and report any material changes to the QCTO.

## 3. Strategic Employer Engagement

### 3.1 Understanding the Employer Value Proposition

Sustainable WBL programmes require mutually beneficial partnerships with employers. Colleges must articulate a clear value proposition that demonstrates how employer participation contributes to their business objectives while advancing skills development goals.



Benefits that employers derive from WBL partnerships include:

- **Talent Pipeline Development:** Access to pre-screened candidates who are already familiar with organisational culture and work requirements
- **Reduced Recruitment Costs:** Lower costs and risks associated with hiring, as learners have already demonstrated competence during placement
- **Skills Levy Returns:** Employers contributing to the Skills Development Levy can claim mandatory grants and access discretionary funding by participating in WBL
- **B-BBEE Scorecard Benefits:** Skills development spend, including learner stipends, contributes to B-BBEE compliance
- **Fresh Perspectives:** Learners bring current technical knowledge and can contribute to innovation and process improvement
- **Corporate Social Responsibility:** Contributing to youth employment and community development objectives

### 3.2 Employer Mapping and Engagement

Systematic employer engagement begins with comprehensive mapping of potential partners within the identified development region. This analysis should identify employers whose skill requirements align with the college's programme offerings and who have the capacity to provide quality workplace learning experiences.



Community engagement and dialogue with local businesses is essential for determining which QCTO programmes are most suitable for the region. This collaborative approach ensures that programme selection is driven by genuine employer demand and employment opportunities, not simply by what the college has traditionally offered.

The mapping exercise should capture:

- Industry sector and subsector classification
- Company size (number of employees) and structure
- Occupations and skills employed
- Current skills development activities and SETA affiliations
- Previous engagement with TVET colleges or other training providers
- Key decision-makers and HR/training contacts
- Potential hosting capacity (number of learner placements) and employment prospects

### 3.3 Partnership Formalisation

All employer partnerships should be formalised through written agreements that clearly specify the responsibilities, expectations, and obligations of each party. The specific agreement type depends on the nature of the partnership:

- **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):** Broad framework agreement establishing the intent to collaborate on skills development
- **Service Level Agreement (SLA):** Detailed operational agreement specifying learner numbers, placement duration, supervision arrangements, and performance standards
- **Learnership/Apprenticeship Agreement:** Tripartite agreement between the learner, employer, and training provider as required by the Skills Development Act

Key elements that must be addressed in partnership agreements include: duration and renewal provisions; learner selection criteria and processes; workplace mentor designation and responsibilities; supervision and support arrangements; health and safety requirements; stipend arrangements and payment responsibilities; insurance and liability provisions; confidentiality and intellectual property protections; dispute resolution mechanisms; and termination conditions.

## 4. Curriculum Design and Programme Structure

### 4.1 Understanding QCTO Curriculum Documents

Each QCTO-registered occupational qualification is accompanied by a curriculum document that specifies the learning content, duration, and assessment requirements for each component. Colleges must carefully analyse these documents in consultation with industry experts to map out a comprehensive learning programme blueprint.

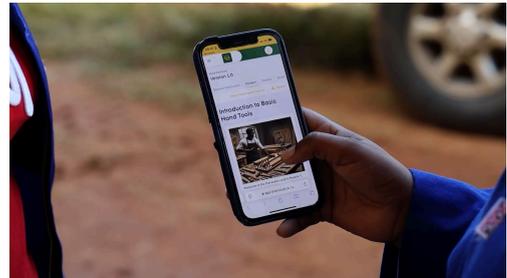
The programme blueprint defines:

- Curriculum structure and sequencing of learning
- Practical components and simulation requirements
- Assessment criteria and methods
- Workplace integration requirements
- Evidence requirements for portfolio building

The curriculum document typically specifies total notional hours for the qualification and each component, minimum duration for workplace experience (typically expressed in hours or months), specific workplace activities and tasks learners must complete, evidence requirements for demonstrating workplace competence, and workplace mentor qualifications and responsibilities.

### 4.2 Action-Based Learning Approach

This implementation model employs an action-based learning approach that integrates theoretical knowledge with practical application from the outset. Rather than separating classroom learning from workplace experience, action-based learning creates continuous cycles of learning, application, reflection, and improvement.



Key principles of action-based learning include:

- **Learning Through Doing:** Learners engage in real work activities and projects, not just simulations or case studies
- **Immediate Application:** Theoretical concepts are applied in the workplace as soon as they are learned
- **Reflective Practice:** Learners reflect on their experiences and integrate lessons into their developing competence
- **Evidence-Based Progress:** Competence is demonstrated through evidence of actual work performed, not just tests

- **Personalised Pathways:** Learning is adapted to individual learner needs, prior experience, and workplace context

This approach ensures that learning and employment happen in parallel, creating genuine skills development with immediate application. Learners develop competence in the workplace while actively enrolled in the programme, building workplace-ready skills that employers value.

### 4.3 Concurrent learning and work model

The recommended implementation model positions learners in workplaces early in their programme, where they work on real projects for employers while simultaneously building their portfolio of evidence. This concurrent model offers several advantages over sequential approaches:



- Learners see the relevance of theoretical content immediately
- Employers benefit from productive work while learners are still developing
- Problems encountered in the workplace drive deeper theoretical inquiry
- Learners build professional networks and employment relationships throughout their studies
- Portfolio evidence is generated naturally through authentic work

## 5. Digital learning platform and evidence collection

### 5.1 Platform-Enabled Learning

Effective WBL implementation requires a digital learning platform that connects students and facilitators 24/7, enabling personalised learning pathways and continuous portfolio building. The platform serves as the central hub for programme delivery, learner support, evidence collection, and competence verification.



Key platform capabilities include:

- **Learning Content Delivery:** Access to curriculum-aligned learning materials, videos, and resources accessible from any device
- **Assignment Management:** Structured learning activities linked to qualification requirements, with clear instructions and submission mechanisms
- **Portfolio Building:** Tools for learners to upload evidence of workplace learning, including documents, photographs, videos, and signed attestations
- **Progress Tracking:** Real-time visibility of learner progress against qualification requirements for learners, facilitators, and managers
- **Communication Tools:** Messaging, notifications, and feedback mechanisms connecting learners, facilitators, and workplace mentors
- **Competence Verification:** Workflow for facilitators to review evidence and approve competencies as learners progress

### 5.2 Workplace Evidence Collection

The digital platform enables seamless evidence collection in workplace settings. Workplaces are prepared with QR codes linked to platform assignments, ensuring the environment is ready to support active learning and evidence collection.

Learners can capture evidence using their smartphones:

- **Photographs:** Images of completed work, equipment setup, or work processes
- **Videos:** Recordings demonstrating practical skills or explaining work procedures
- **Documents:** Scanned or photographed work documents, reports, or records
- **Reflections:** Written or audio reflections on learning experiences

- **Mentor Attestations:** Digital sign-off by workplace mentors confirming task completion and competence demonstration

QR codes at the workplace link directly to specific assignments, making it easy for learners to upload evidence to the correct portfolio section. This reduces administrative burden and ensures evidence is properly organised for assessment and accreditation mapping.

### 5.3 Portfolio Mapping to Accreditation Requirements

The platform enables direct mappings of portfolio items to QCTO occupational qualification accreditation requirements. As learners complete assignments and upload evidence, facilitators review submissions and approve competencies against the specific requirements of the registered qualification.

Portfolio Item	QCTO Requirement	Mapping
K71011	Principles of sanitation	
K71012	Description and technique of waste water treatment	
K71013	Type, characteristics and properties of waste water	
K71014	Type and characteristics of diseases caused by poor sanitation	
K71015	Principles and functions of standards and codes of practice, and their relationship with bylaws	
60500100-K04-03	Tools, Equipment, Components and Site Practice	
K04-03-KT01	Name, properties and functions of tools and equipment used in above and below ground drainage systems and sanitary installations	

This mapping process ensures:

- All qualification requirements are systematically addressed
- Evidence is sufficient and appropriate for each competency
- Gaps in evidence are identified early and can be addressed
- Learners and facilitators have clear visibility of progress toward completion
- The portfolio is ready for external verification and EISA preparation



## 6. Facilitator and workplace mentor development

### 6.1 Facilitator onboarding and role

Facilitators are trained and onboarded as coaches within the learning platform, equipping them to guide learners, approve competencies, and support portfolio development throughout the learning journey. This coaching role differs from traditional lecturing in that facilitators focus on supporting individualised learning rather than delivering standardised content.

Facilitator responsibilities include:

- Delivering knowledge components through classroom or blended instruction
- Supporting learners in the practical application of concepts
- Reviewing portfolio evidence and providing feedback
- Approving competencies as learners demonstrate mastery
- Liaising with workplace mentors to support learner progress
- Preparing learners for the External Integrated Summative Assessment

Facilitators must be registered with the QCTO as assessors and moderators for the qualifications they support. This registration ensures they meet the minimum requirements for evaluating learner competence and contributing to quality assurance processes.

### 6.2 Workplace mentor preparation

Workplace mentors play a crucial role in facilitating learning and supporting competence development in the authentic work environment. Before learners are placed, the college must train workplace mentors on their roles and responsibilities.

Mentor preparation covers:

- Understanding the qualification requirements and learning outcomes
- Principles of workplace learning and coaching
- Creating effective learning opportunities through work assignments
- Providing constructive feedback to learners
- Using the digital platform to verify and attest to learner activities
- Escalating concerns to college facilitators when needed

## 7. Learner Recruitment and Support

### 7.1 Community-Based Recruitment

Learners are recruited directly from the community, partnering with local recruitment networks, community organisations, and municipal structures. This community-based approach ensures that training opportunities reach those who need them most and that learners are drawn from the same communities where employment opportunities exist.



Recruitment strategies include:

- Community information sessions and open days
- Partnerships with community leaders and organisations
- Collaboration with local schools for career guidance
- Engagement with municipal youth development programmes
- Social media and local media outreach

Critically, learners are matched to employer requirements during recruitment to ensure that placement opportunities exist. The recruitment process should consider not only academic eligibility but also geographic proximity to partner employers and alignment with employer skill needs.

### 7.2 Induction Training

Before transitioning to workplace-based learning, the college provides basic induction training covering workplace safety, professional conduct, and programme expectations. This training takes place at the accredited training location and prepares learners for success in the workplace.

Induction training covers:

- **Workplace Expectations:** Professional conduct, dress code, punctuality, communication norms
- **Health and Safety:** General occupational health and safety principles, hazard identification, personal protective equipment
- **Rights and Responsibilities:** Learner rights in the workplace, grievance procedures, reporting channels
- **Platform Orientation:** Using the learning platform, uploading evidence, completing assignments



- **Assessment Preparation:** Understanding the portfolio requirements and EISA process

### 7.3 Ongoing Support During Placement

Continuous support during the workplace phase is critical to learner success. The college maintains regular contact with learners through multiple channels:

- **Platform Communication:** Messaging and notifications through the learning platform
- **Workplace Visits:** Regular visits by college liaison officers to observe learners and meet with mentors
- **Progress Reviews:** Periodic review meetings to assess progress and address challenges
- **Early Intervention:** Mechanisms to identify at-risk learners and trigger appropriate support



## 8. Implementation Roadmap

This roadmap follows a proven, step-by-step approach organised into five phases: Assessment, Infrastructure, Recruit, Train, and Place. The model is designed to be cyclical, with each successful cohort creating the foundation for continuous skills development in the region.

### ASSESSMENT PHASE

#### Step 1: Identify Development Region (Months 1-2)

The college identifies a socio-economic development region within its catchment area where specific upskilling and reskilling needs exist. This involves analysing local economic conditions, unemployment patterns, industry presence, and community needs to determine where WBL programmes can have the greatest impact.

#### Step 2: Find Suitable QCTO Programmes (Months 2-4)

The college determines which QCTO occupational qualifications or short courses are suitable for the identified region through community engagement and dialogue with local businesses. This process matches skills development offerings with actual employment opportunities, ensuring programme relevance and graduate employability.

#### Step 3: Design Programme Blueprint (Months 4-6)

The college analyses the QCTO qualification documents and consults with industry experts to map out a comprehensive learning programme blueprint. This defines the curriculum structure, practical components, assessment criteria, and workplace integration requirements specific to each selected qualification.

### INFRASTRUCTURE PHASE

#### Step 4: Secure Accreditation Site (Months 6-8)

The college identifies a safe and suitable location for on-location training, such as a community centre, church hall, or existing campus facility with adequate classroom and practical training space. The TVET college completes a site extension application to the QCTO for accreditation at this address.

#### Step 5: Develop Learning Programmes (Months 8-10)

The college develops structured learning programmes on the digital platform using an action-based learning approach, enabling students and facilitators to connect 24/7 with personalised learning pathways and portfolio building. This includes developing learner support materials, assessment instruments, and configuring the platform for evidence collection.

#### Step 6: Onboard Facilitators (Months 10-12)



The college trains and onboards facilitators as coaches within the learning platform, equipping them to guide learners, approve competencies, and support portfolio development throughout the learning journey. Facilitators are registered with the QCTO as assessors and moderators.

## RECRUIT PHASE

### Step 7: Recruit Learners (Months 12-14)

The college recruits learners directly from the community, partnering with local recruitment networks and community organisations. Learners are matched to employer requirements to ensure placement opportunities exist upon completion of institutional learning.

### Step 8: Provide Induction Training (Month 14)

The college provides basic induction training covering workplace safety, professional conduct, and programme expectations. This training takes place at the accredited location before learners transition to workplace-based learning.

### Step 9: Prepare Workplace (Months 14-15)

The college prepares partner workplaces with QR codes linked to platform assignments, ensuring the environment is ready to support active learning and evidence collection. Workplace mentors receive orientation on their roles and responsibilities.

## TRAIN PHASE

### Step 10: Induct Learners in Workplace (Month 15)

Learners are inducted into the workplace and immediately begin working on real projects for employers while simultaneously building a portfolio of evidence within the college's learning platform.

### Step 11: Map Portfolio to Accreditation (Months 15-24)

The college maps portfolio items directly to QCTO occupational qualification accreditation requirements, with facilitators approving competence as learners progress. Regular progress reviews ensure learners remain on track for certification.

### Step 12: Concurrent Learning and Work (Months 15-24)

Learners develop competence in the workplace while actively enrolled in the programme. Learning and employment happen in parallel, creating genuine skills development with immediate application. The college maintains regular contact through workplace visits and digital monitoring.

## PLACE PHASE

### Step 13: Assess Competence and Certify (Months 22-26)



Learners complete their portfolio of evidence and undergo final assessment. Upon demonstrating competence through the External Integrated Summative Assessment (EISA), they receive their QCTO certification, validating their workplace-ready skills.

#### **Step 14: Support Job Placement (Months 24-30)**

The college connects certified learners with employment opportunities through its employer network, supporting the transition from learner to employee with placement assistance and follow-up support.

#### **Step 15: Scale and Sustain (Months 30-36 and ongoing)**

The college circles back to induct more learners into the programme, continuously developing the region with employment-ready skills. The cycle repeats, creating sustainable community development and establishing the college as a key skills development partner in the region.

## 9. Funding Models and Financial Sustainability

### 9.1 Understanding the Funding Landscape

WBL programmes can draw on multiple funding sources, and colleges should develop diversified funding strategies that reduce dependence on any single source. Primary funding mechanisms include:

- **DHET Programme Funding:** The core ministerial allocation for TVET colleges, allocated based on headcount enrolment in approved programmes
- **SETA Discretionary Grants:** Project-based funding from SETAs for learnerships, apprenticeships, workplace placement, and institutional capacity building
- **National Skills Fund:** Funding for strategic skills development projects, particularly for programmes addressing critical skills shortages
- **Employer Contributions:** Direct payments from employers for training services, particularly for employed learners or customised programmes
- **International Development Funding:** Grants from development agencies, including EU-funded programmes, for pilot projects and capacity building

### 9.2 SETA Partnership Funding

SETA funding is particularly important for WBL programmes as it provides resources for learner stipends, which are essential for enabling disadvantaged learners to participate in extended workplace placements. Key considerations for SETA funding include:

- **Application Cycles:** SETAs typically open funding windows annually based on their Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans. Colleges must plan applications well in advance.
- **Sector Alignment:** Funding priority is given to programmes addressing skills identified in the SETA's Sector Skills Plan. Colleges should align programme offerings accordingly.
- **Compliance Requirements:** SETAs impose strict reporting requirements. Colleges must maintain accurate records and submit reports timeously to remain in good standing.
- **Payment Timelines:** SETA payment processes can be slow. Colleges must maintain cash reserves to cover stipends and costs during payment delays.

## 10. Risk Management and Common Challenges

### 10.1 Common Implementation Challenges

Research on WBL implementation in South African TVET colleges has identified several recurring challenges that institutions should anticipate and plan for:

- **Insufficient Workplace Placements:** Limited availability of quality workplace opportunities, particularly in rural areas and during economic downturns
- **Funding Instability:** Delays in SETA payments, limited discretionary grant availability, and unclear long-term funding models
- **Coordination Capacity:** Inadequate staffing for placement coordination, workplace monitoring, and employer relationship management
- **Learner Barriers:** Transport costs, accommodation needs, and financial pressures that may cause learners to abandon placements
- **Employer Disengagement:** Employers withdrawing from partnerships due to business pressures, restructuring, or dissatisfaction with learner preparation
- **Quality Variations:** Inconsistent learning experiences across different workplace settings and mentor capabilities

### 10.2 Risk Mitigation Strategies

Proactive risk management requires systematic identification, assessment, and mitigation of potential risks. Key strategies include:

- **Diversified Employer Network:** Maintain relationships with more employers than immediately required to provide buffer capacity
- **Multi-Source Funding:** Pursue funding from multiple SETAs and sources to reduce dependence on any single funder
- **Cash Reserves:** Maintain reserves to cover stipends during payment delays
- **Learner Support Fund:** Emergency assistance for learners facing transport or accommodation crises
- **Mentor Development:** Invest in mentor training to ensure consistent quality across workplaces
- **Platform Monitoring:** Use digital platform data to identify at-risk learners or struggling partnerships early



## 11. Conclusion and Next Steps

The transition to QCTO-aligned occupational qualifications presents both significant challenges and opportunities for South African public TVET colleges. Successfully implementing work-based learning requires a community-centred approach that brings training to underserved regions, strategic employer partnerships that lead to genuine employment, and digital platforms that enable continuous learning and evidence collection.

The five-phase implementation model presented in this guide—Assessment, Infrastructure, Recruit, Train, and Place—provides a proven approach to building sustainable WBL programmes. By following this cyclical model, colleges can continuously develop their regions with employment-ready skills, creating lasting impact for learners and communities.

### **Recommended immediate actions:**

1. Conduct a regional needs assessment to identify priority development areas and skills gaps
2. Engage with local employers to determine which QCTO qualifications align with genuine employment opportunities
3. Identify potential community-based training sites for site extension applications
4. Evaluate digital learning platform options that support action-based learning and portfolio building
5. Initiate conversations with relevant SETAs regarding partnership and funding opportunities
6. Develop a detailed implementation plan following the 15-step roadmap with timelines and responsibilities

The successful implementation of work-based learning in South African TVET colleges is essential for the country's skills development agenda. Through community-centred delivery, employer-responsive programming, and technology-enabled learning, public colleges can fulfill their mandate to produce work-ready graduates who contribute meaningfully to the economy and their communities.

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Key Stakeholder Contact Information

Organisation	Role	Website
Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET)	Policy oversight, TVET college funding	<a href="http://www.dhet.gov.za">www.dhet.gov.za</a>
Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)	Qualification registration, SDP accreditation, EISA management	<a href="http://www.qcto.org.za">www.qcto.org.za</a>
South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)	NQF oversight, qualification verification	<a href="http://www.saqa.org.za">www.saqa.org.za</a>
National Skills Fund (NSF)	Strategic skills development funding	<a href="http://www.nsf.org.za">www.nsf.org.za</a>
National Artisan Moderation Body (NAMB)	Artisan development, trade testing	<a href="http://www.namb.org.za">www.namb.org.za</a>
Relevant SETAs	Sector-specific skills development, learnership funding	Various (see DHET website)

### Appendix B: Implementation Roadmap Summary

Phase	Steps	Timeline
Assessment	1. Identify Development Region 2. Find Suitable QCTO Programmes 3. Design Programme Blueprint	Months 1-6
Infrastructure	4. Secure Accreditation Site 5. Develop Learning Programmes 6. Onboard Facilitators	Months 6-12
Recruit	7. Recruit Learners 8. Provide Induction Training 9. Prepare Workplace	Months 12-15
Train	10. Induct Learners in Workplace 11. Map Portfolio to Accreditation 12. Concurrent Learning & Work	Months 15-24
Place	13. Assess Competence & Certify 14. Support Job	Months 22-36+



	Placement15. Scale & Sustain	
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## Appendix C: Acronyms and Abbreviations

Acronym	Full Form
AQP	Assessment Quality Partner
B-BBEE	Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment
CET	Community Education and Training
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
EISA	External Integrated Summative Assessment
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAMB	National Artisan Moderation Body
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSDP	National Skills Development Plan
NSF	National Skills Fund
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-Framework
POE	Portfolio of Evidence
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SDP	Skills Development Provider
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
WBL	Work-Based Learning