

- Where service providers and others with a commercial interest in skills delivery are concerned, their role in the Forum must be monitored to ensure that the Forum indeed acts in the national interest as opposed to facilitating opportunities for individuals or for commercial gains to a select few.
- The Forum must have the right to ask individuals and organisations to recuse themselves from meetings when the above is not honoured.

### Operations

Meetings: The Forum meets quarterly either via teleconference or in person. Between meetings matters are addressed via e-mail, phone or fax.

The Forum is chaired by the Director of DEA's Sector Education, Training and Development unit. DEA also provides the secretariat to convene and record the meetings.

### Funding and Institutional Support

Thus far individuals have funded their participation expenses through their organisations, all of which benefit from a national mechanism to create enabling conditions for environmental skills development planning.

Lead partners in the ESSP and BHCD Strategy (DEA and SANBI) have contributed to collective meeting costs (meals, teleconferencing).



# The National Environmental Skills Development Planning Forum

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# The National Environmental Skills Development Planning Forum

## History

In 2010 the Sector Education, Training and Development unit in the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) and partners convened the Forum, responding to a need identified during the development of DEA's Environmental Sector Skills Plan (ESSP, produced by DEA supported by Rhodes University) and of the Human Capital Development Strategy for the Biodiversity Sector. The latter strategy was produced in alignment with the ESSP by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) and the Lewis Foundation. In addition to these partners the first forum meetings were attended by the Department of Water Affairs, Department of Science and Technology, WWF, WESSA, SANParks, East Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and Pretoria University. In 2011 regular participation in the Forum meetings has involved a smaller, active sub-group of these organisations.

## Goals

The Forum is a streamlined, responsive national gathering of individuals from government agencies and partners that are actively involved in catalysing and supporting nationally relevant environmental skills development planning initiatives. The goals of the Forum are to:

- Raise and deliberate matters regarding environmental skills development planning that need to be addressed at a national level, across organisations and sectors

*Examples: To add new environmental occupations to the revised Organising Framework for Occupations (OFO); to comment on environmental priorities in the National Skills Development Strategy; to drive the development of new qualifications where needed.*

- Start actions to ensure that human and other resources are allocated to address these matters

*Examples: Identify members of the forum or others to review a document, meet with a SETA, write a letter to lobby a national agency, lead the development of a funding proposal or concept note. Also, review and advance such contributions.*

- Respond to the absence of a dedicated SETA and an overarching, skills focussed professional body for the environmental sector. This includes advising and assisting the director of DEA's Sector Education, Training and Development unit in addressing this gap and enabling the roll out of the ESSP and attendant human capital development strategies; lobbying DHET and all SETAs; responding to requests for information.

## Rationale

- Environmental matters (operations, mandates, impacts and opportunities) are cross-sectoral and there is as yet no effective mechanism to address cross cutting skills needs in the national system of Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). There is also no sector-wide professional body with a significant focus on environmental skills.
- Environmental matters involve both commercial and social goods and services; SETAs for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, water, energy and tourism may plan to provide skills for the commercial side of natural resource management, but there is as yet no effective mechanism to plan for skills that protect and manage ecosystems as social/public goods and services.
- Environmental skills planning and provisioning has

been ad-hoc, reactive, fragmented and inadequate – to some extent as a result of the above situation, i.e. the absence of a dedicated national mechanism. There is a need for some coordination, and to lobby for sustainable institutional national mechanisms to be put in place. The Forum addresses both these needs.

- Opportunities exist to strengthen skills development – The South African government's decision to embark on a green growth path, King III recommendations on corporate governance that include environmental sustainability, and SA business' realisation of the opportunities in 'going green' all create incentives and demands for environmental skills. The implementation of the Environmental Sector Skills Plan and attendant human capital development strategies is a recognised government priority. In the absence of a forum for environmental agencies to activate and monitor the uptake of these opportunities, they may go unexplored or under-resourced.

## Membership

- This is an open Forum and there is no formal process for joining.
- Participants must share a commitment to the Forum's goals, which reflect a national interest.
- Ideally membership will consist of active parties who represent organisations with a national interest (e.g. government departments and parastatals, NGOs and institutes that drive or support national skills planning initiatives, and universities that support them).

